

BLUE MUSTANG

Written by

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EXT. BURTON'S BARN - DAY

"OKEFENOKEE SWAMP - BAKER COUNTY, FLORIDA. 1986"

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

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

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

SLU RENARD, 50 steps out. Gingham cowboy shirt clings sweaty to his hairy chest. Silver belt buckle with chunks of turquoise holds his Levi's just below a small belly.

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

As he swaggers in, Slu eyeballs a boy with a mullet loitering by a beat-up MOPED off to the side. TODD, 17.

A plastic gallon MILK JUG, label removed, is 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 beat up "Pac-Man Fever" shirt browses. OSSIE, 12.

Slu is buying a box of TRIX CEREAL from BURTON, 70.

BURTON

'Fraid this is the final box, Slu.

Slu looks up surprised from his wallet.

SLU

What for?

BURTON

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

Slu glances around at the bare shelves.

BURTON (cont'd)

You stay outta them dirty books, boy.

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

Slu watches him turn toward Todd.

He shakes his head and takes his Trix in a brown bag.

EXT. BURTON'S BARN - DAY

Slu turns the corner in time to catch Todd trading Ossie the clear jug for cash.

Slu sets down his Trix bag.

SLU
You're Ossie Jenkins.

Ossie closes his eyes 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 GRABS the jug from him.

TODD
Leave 'im alone.

Slu glares at Todd, then SWIGS the moonshine.

He SPITS it out.

SLU
This ain't nothin' but warm piss and
formaldehyde.

He dumps the moonshine out on the ground.

SLU (cont'd)
Go on. Get the fuck outta here.

Ossie gladly leaves.

Slu turns to Todd.

SLU (cont'd)
Brew that mash yourself, boy?

TODD
Ain't nobody better.

Slu takes a SWISS ARMY KNIFE from his pocket. He pulls out the CORKSCREW.

He shoves it up Todd's NOSTRIL.

Todd moves helplessly on his tiptoes as Slu pushes him backwards against the wall, pinning him there.

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

TODD (cont'd)
Holy fuck, man!

SLU
You tryin' to blind that kid?

Todd shakes his head the best he can.

Slu kindly removes the corkscrew. He puts Todd down, and is visibly winded by his own badass-ery.

SLU (cont'd)
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 Slu Renard, ain't cha?

SLU
So?

Todd gets in Slu's face.

TODD
They say you turned rat.

Slu's eyes narrow. He shoves Todd back with two fingertips.

SLU
You're gonna hurt my feelings.

Todd takes a SWING at Slu's face.

Slu DUCKS it, and puts his fist into Todd's GUT.

Todd folds over, gasping for wind.

A basket attached to the Moped holds two FULL JUGS. Slu walks over and POKES HOLES in each with his corkscrew.

Todd groans as the moonshine glugs to the dirt.

TODD
Awwww. You dick.

SLU
Get on your tricycle, and clean up your act.

POW.

Todd PUNCHES Slu in the face. Hard.

Slu moves to hit back. Todd socks 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 everywhere.

Slu stands. Groans all the way up. Wipes his bloody nose. He watches as Todd gets away.

SLU
Your daddy was a prick too.

INT. MALONE'S WHOLESALE CLUB - NIGHT

Big-box supermarket. Long aisles with large quantity packages. Big sign reads, "COORS BEER now available!"

Slu walks down the main aisle.

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

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

She gives a dirty look as he grins and starts down an aisle labeled "CEREAL."

His eyes widen when he looks at the shelf.

EXT. MALONE'S WHOLESALE CLUB - NIGHT

Slu exits, barely holding a pallet of twenty TRIX boxes.

He tosses the cereal in the back of his Mustang.

He gets in and starts her up. She purrs.

He flips on the Country Western station, and DRIVES AWAY.

A black 1977 PONTIAC LeMANS follows him. HEADLIGHTS OFF.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - NIGHT

Slu lights a wood-tipped cigar. He sings with the radio and lays heavy on the gas pedal. Soon he's flying.

He grins as the Mustang takes curves in the road at top speed. *Best moment of his day.*

The LeMans HEADLIGHTS flip on in the darkness behind.

Slu is startled, even swerving a second.

The LeMans keeps up with Slu's breakneck speed.

SLU
Who's this turkey?

Slu cuts close 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 (cont'd)
Alright. Let's see ya stand on it.

Slu floors it. Tall grass parts way under the cars.

Slu pulls onto a path spotted with TREES.

The Mustang zigs-zags between the trees, narrowly missing.

The LeMans keeps up.

SLU (cont'd)
You kidding me?

A FALLEN TREE TRUNK lays in the road.

Slu swerves to avoid it, sending him off into the weeds.

The Mustang goes AIRBORNE.

He *nearly* lands safely on the other side of a MUD PIT.

The rear tires spin, stuck in the THICK MUD.

The LeMans goes around the fallen trunk.

It pulls up alongside the Mustang, clear of the mud pit.

The LeMans's passenger window rolls down.

Driving the LeMans is JACK BASS, 72. White slacks. Loose white shirt over a considerable belly. Straw boater hat over white hair. Leathered face with a pencil thin 'stache above a silver-toothed grin.

Slu rolls down his window.

Jack raises an eyebrow at him.

SLU (cont'd)

Oh shit.

Slu revs.

The Mustang lurches out of the mud.

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

Slu speeds away.

Jack continues pursuit.

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

The LeMans begins SINKING.

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.

Jack wipes mud off his face with his sleeve.

JACK

Slu?

Slu sees Jack is okay...

so he SPEEDS away.

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. The yard is more weeds and rusty junk than lawn. No neighbors close enough to complain.

Slu puffs a cigar in a rocking chair on a COVERED PORCH. It overlooks a NARROW DOCK running about a hundred feet into the SWAMP WATER beyond the yard.

A sawed-off 12-gauge SHOTGUN rests in his lap.

He chuckles and blows smoke rings as a mud covered Jack LIMPS up to join him on the porch.

JACK
You sumbitch.

SLU
Where'd you get the fancy walk, Jack?

Jack sits in the rocking chair by Slu. He lifts up 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 and laughs.

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. You always greet company with a twelve gauge?

SLU
When the company has busted me twice.

JACK
Only sent ya to prison once.

SLU
Not sure what happened the second time round was any better.

Jack glances around the property.

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

Jack takes an exasperated breath.

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

Slu shakes his head.

JACK (cont'd)
Irish mafia. They own most of Hell's
Kitchen up in New York City.

SLU
Sounds like the perfect place for
'em. How the hell would I know?

Jack lights a Marlboro 100.

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

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

JACK
Had plenty of time to rehearse it on
the walk.

A mosquito sizzles on the 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 Charlie
Mahoney.

(MORE)

JACK (cont'd)

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

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

JACK

You piss on it now, but let me finish. Charlie has a son. Conor. Charlie won't let the boy follow into the family business. Got the kid into Columbia University instead, wastin' his time studyin' philosophy.

Slu impersonates Groucho Marx with his 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 hearing that name.

He stands and looks out at the swamp. *Can't face Jack.*

SLU

She mixed up in any of this?

JACK

Not the bigger picture, no.

SLU

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

JACK

They're exploring that connection.

SLU

Ain't no connection. Not for years.

JACK

Conor ain't as clean as Papa thinks. Just piss-ant dope deals. But the Bureau noticed. And you know how we do when we want a King Rat. He and Sue is 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 set.

Slu squints back tears and rage.

SLU
Fuck am I supposed to do about it?

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

Jack lights a cigarette with his previous one.

JACK (cont'd)
So let's say I just thought a father
should know.

SLU
Does Donna know?

JACK
Some of it, probably. Reporters
usually know more'n they let on.

Slu composes himself enough to turn back to Jack.

SLU
Don't think I can help ya out this
time. Need to call a cab?

JACK
Yeah. Where's the phone?

SLU
Remember how you busted me second
time round?

JACK
Yeah. I tapped your phone.

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

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

SLU (cont'd)
Just mind any U-Haul trailers lurkin'
'bout in them waters out there.

JACK
You're a real prince, Slu.

SLU
Fuck you, Jack.

Slu goes in and shuts the door.

Jack groans. Another kamikaze mosquito zap makes him jump.

INT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

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, 82, 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 turns off the TV and takes the jug to bed.

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

"COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - BUTLER LIBRARY - NEW YORK CITY"

A young woman enters the library.

SUSAN MATHIS, 21. Jeans and sneakers. "Columbia U" sweat shirt. Shoulder length dark 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 reading *Sassy Magazine*.

Susan walks to the MAIN HALL. Rows of books below arching windows. Long study tables with small lamps.

LARA, 19, sits alone at the farthest study desk, head in her binder. Stack of books. Thermos. No-Doze.

SUSAN

Hey. Got that book for me?

Lara snaps out of it.

LARA

"A Tale of Two Cities." Right there.

Susan pulls the book from her stack.

SUSAN

Thanks. I'll get it back to you.

Susan takes a baggie of SPEED PILLS from her pocket.

She slips it in Lara's backpack.

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

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

Susan gets in a waiting burgundy '86 LINCOLN TOWN CAR.

At the wheel is CONOR MAHONEY, 23. Short blonde hair. Softly handsome. Designer leather jacket over a K-Mart red flannel.

She tosses the book on the seat. He opens the cover.

Inside is a HUNDRED DOLLARS cash.

CONOR

"It was the best of times..."

He puts the money in his pocket. He kisses Susan.

Over her shoulder, still kissing, Conor sees something.

CONOR (cont'd)

Hey. See that car over there?

She looks out the back window and shakes her head.

CONOR (cont'd)

The one with the guy in it. Think he's watching us?

SUSAN

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

Conor drives up Broadway. Nobody follows.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Morning sun stirs Pops awake. 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 one hand. LEATHER BAG in the other.

He's wears a blue cowboy shirt with the sleeves rolled up to show off his silver and turquoise bracelet. Gator boots.

SLU
I topped it off for ya.

He sets the jug next to Pops. He 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 walks to the kitchen.

POPS
The fuck's up there?

SLU (O.S.)
New Yorkers.

Pops rolls it around his head.

POPS
Christ. Donna?

SLU (O.S.)
The other one.

Pops rethinks. Brow furrows as he gets it.

POPS
Nothin's wrong with lil Sue?

Slu comes back. He hands a bowl of Trix to Pops.

SLU
It's nothin'. Yet.

POPS
Then don't go.

SLU
Feelin' I got, Pops... I have to.

POPS
Who's gonna get me cereal?

Slu points to rows of Trix boxes alongside the couch.

SLU
And now you got a bowl and a spoon.

Pops looks down at his cereal bowl.

POPS
What do I do for milk?

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

POPS
My jugs.

SLU
Under the bed. And all you could ever
smoke. Everything you need.

Slu starts searching around the room for something.

POPS
Goddamn, I think he means it. You
gonna bring your family back with ya?

SLU
I don't know. Maybe. Look. I drank
the whole thing over last night, now
my mind's made up.

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

Slu looks up from a box.

SLU
No. I was gonna roller skate all the
way 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? The 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 you can drive.

POPS

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

Slu goes back to his searching.

A-ha. He finds it.

Slu puts on his gorgeous black STETSON COWBOY HAT. On the front of the band is a sterling SILVER FOX. The fox's belly is a huge rounded piece of turquoise.

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.

He slams the door.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Small house. Well kept. Mellow yellows and browns. Sunny.

There's a knock at the door. No answer.

Another knock.

MARSHALL (O.S.)
Hold yer bird! I'm a'comin'!

MARSHALL REED, 55, walks to the door. African American. Lanky in jeans. Willie Nelson t-shirt. Puffy green vest. Red trucker cap. Sweet set of sideburns. Once a wisecracking badass, always a wisecracking badass.

He opens the door to find Slu smiling back.

SLU
Trick or treat.

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

They both laugh.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
Get inside here. Veronica! Bring out some brews! We got company!

Slu comes in, removing his hat. Marshall closes the door. Veronica calls from the other room.

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

Marshall looks at his friend embarrassed, but still smiles.

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Crappy apartment in Greenwich Village. Ratty curtains. Warped wooden floors.

Juxtaposed by a fancy leather couch, marble coffee table and new Nintendo system. Framed poster of young Marlon Brando hangs on stained wallpaper.

Conor sits at a desk in a smoking jacket over PJ's. Pen down in his BLACK LEATHER JOURNAL. He concentrates on the page. The pen never moves. Dark circles under his eyes.

Susan comes from the back. She grabs her backpack.

SUSAN
Decent writing last night?

CONOR
Nothing. Got midway through, then
total blockage. When are you home?

SUSAN
One-ish. Why?

CONOR
Need you to make a drop off in
Alphabet City.

She starts for the front door.

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 him.

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

CONOR
Here it comes.

SUSAN
We promised to speak up if we saw
this, Conor.

CONOR
Since when do drug dealers have
principles?

SUSAN
Oh, fuck you right there, Scarface.
Maybe if you could imagine, for one
second, a drug dealer being human
enough to have a conscience, then you
could understand humanity enough to
finish your book.

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!

She steps back a bit when his voice raises.

SUSAN
And so are we. We're supposed to
squirrel this cash, so you can write
your masterpiece. Not spend it on
"Duck Hunt."

He lets down a bit.

CONOR
I'm sorry. I'll dial it back.

He goes to kiss her. She gives in.

CONOR (cont'd)
You like some of the stuff, right?

She shakes her head.

CONOR (cont'd)
The cappuccino maker?

SUSAN
Okay. I like some of the stuff.

They kiss again. She smiles this time.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Don't get greedy. I almost like Jazz.
I don't want to see what she's like
pissed off.

CONOR
Let me deal with Jazz.

SUSAN
Fine. But if I come home to a white
tiger sitting on the 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 to start over.

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.

CONOR
I love you.

He feels the sting as she smiles and closes the door.

He sits back at his desk.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

VERONICA REED, 50, is tall, beautiful and round. All things
her husband Marshall ain't. She speaks her mind and has
plenty of it.

She walks Schlitz cans to the boys in the LIVING ROOM.

VERONICA
Where you been, Slu?

SLU
Oh, y'know. Up places. Down places.
Sideways places. Mostly home places.

She 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 about right.

VERONICA
She want you to walk her down the aisle or somethin'?

SLU
College. My little girl got accepted at Columbia University.

VERONICA
That's just the best news, Slu. That's up in New York City, ain't it?

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 goin'?

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 anymore.

SLU
He'll be happy to see you.

MARSHALL
Bullshit. Pops hates my guts.

Slu laughs.

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

Never knew that's how it worked.

SLU

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

The two men are cracking each other up. Not Veronica.

VERONICA

How ya gonna get there, Slu?

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

VERONICA (cont'd)

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.

Marshall gives him a dirty look.

MARSHALL

Well now. What's wrong with the Mustang?

SLU

Pops wants it with him.

MARSHALL

You said he don't walk no more.

SLU

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

VERONICA

Why you need Marshall to go see 'im?

SLU

Cause Pops is an idiot.

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?

Marshall shakes his head mournfully, looking to the Heavens.

MARSHALL

My Lucille.

SLU

This ain't like that.

Light bulb goes off in Marshall's head.

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. She may appreciate a truck.

MARSHALL

Lil Sue'll thank 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.

Slu blushes.

EXT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Slu crosses the yard to a BARN STYLE GARAGE.

He gazes at the green '74 DODGE CHALLENGER in the driveway.

He shakes it off and slides open the barn door.

And there she is. Huge red MACK TRUCK. "RAPID REED TRANSPORT" painted on each door. Ugly as sin, yet glorious. 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.

She RUMBLES on fine as ever.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Marshall and Veronica still sit in the living room.

VERONICA
Can you believe that guy?

MARSHALL
Crazy son of a bitch

VERONICA
No, like, do you believe a single
goddamn word comin' out his mouth?

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

VERONICA
Ain't nobody movin' into 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 get's
hissself into more hot water than a
crowdad 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 (cont'd)

Best day of my life. 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. I'll never
stop owin' that boy.

She sighs.

VERONICA

Go on. Get.

Marshall grins ear to ear. He kisses her. They look into
each others eyes for a loving moment.

MARSHALL

Stay beautiful.

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

MARSHALL (cont'd)

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 truck.

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. He stands with the DUFFEL BAG he's had time to pack.

SLU
No. 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 for this.

Marshall gets 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 (cont'd)
Now you go on and tell the real story to ol' Marsh, and I'll have us back home before Baker County realizes its Black Friend is missing.

The two men are ON THE ROAD to New York City.

MONTAGE

Truck drivin' Country music plays as scenery passes.

They pass from swamp lands into small Southern towns.

Bertha trucks along miles of empty highway.

Day fades to night as the South is left behind.

More traffic in Northern towns, suburbs and small cities.

A minor car chase 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 proudly.

SLU (V.O.)
Wanna find out how they can fuck up
grits on the Upper West Side?

Marshall drives Bertha into the Holland Tunnel.

Bertha towers over the sea of yellow cabs. 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.

EXT. CENTURY BUILDING - DAY

Slu looks tensely up to the top from the passenger window.

SLU
She ain't home. Let's grab a drink.

MARSHALL
Don't be so nervous.

SLU
She's got a TV show now, y'know.

MARSHALL
No shit?

SLU (V.O.)
Yeah. When you're that good... well,
then they give you your own goddamn
TV show.

MARSHALL
Told ya, don't be so nervous.

SLU
I ain't nervous.

MARSHALL
I know how you get. That silver
tongue gets all tarnished up.

SLU
Said I ain't nervous.

MARSHALL

Just breathe, son. It's only Donna.

SLU

Maybe to you. I'm nervous.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Small set. Two plush chairs. An aerial photo of Manhattan on a sunny day covers the wall behind them.

"Brighter Day with Donna Mathis" mugs sit on a coffee table.

A SMALL CREW watches from behind cameras.

In one seat is CONGRESSMAN GARRY, 57. Pale. White hair sticks to the sweat on his forehead.

In the other is DONNA MATHIS, 45. Gray dress with shoulder pads. Dirty blonde hair. Eyes that see right through you. She can love you or level you.

DONNA

That's all the time we have for today. Thank you for joining us, Congressman Garry.

GARRY

I wish I could say it was a pleasure.

DONNA

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

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

DONNA (cont'd)

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

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 walks away.

Crew she passes compliment her.

A man in a tacky beige suit approaches. KENTON, 42. 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.

Donna's director ADAM, 36, approaches. Brown hair and beard.

ADAM
That'll light up the switchboard.

DONNA
Congressman Garry will probably sue.

ADAM
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. A DOORMAN, 52, sits bored behind a desk.

Hallway lined with tenant's mailboxes and elevators.

Marshall plays with a mess of FIVE BARKING DOGS, all leashed by one poor MAN, 75, just wanting to get his mail.

Slu sits, staring at the street beyond a revolving door.

A WHITE LIMO gets his attention. *Is that her?*

Donna gets out of the Limo.

She's stopped by a FEMALE AUTOGRAPH SEEKER, 18. She signs.

Slu stands as she enters. He removes his hat.

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 seeing Marshall with all the dogs.

Marshall stops playing around.

They lock eyes as she passes.

But she walks on by.

She gets on the elevator.

Now that they can't see, she grins as the door closes.

INT. DONNA'S HALLWAY - DAY

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

No answer.

SLU
C'mon darlin'.

The sound of unlocking. Donna opens.

DONNA
Why are you the only person who makes
me nervous?

He smiles.

SLU
Some butterflies never die.

She smiles back.

DONNA
What the fuck are you doing here?

SLU
Can I come in?

DONNA
Against my better judgment.

He walks inside.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

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. PATIO with a high rise view of Manhattan.

DONNA (cont'd)
Have a seat. Whiskey?

SLU
Won't say no.

DONNA
You never have.

Slu sinks into the leather couch.

SLU

Hey. I bet some U.N. Ambassador's ass has sat right where mine is now, huh?

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 is genuinely impressed.

SLU

He always wear that yellow coat?

She laughs and hands him a whiskey. She sits.

SLU (cont'd)

You've done well for yourself, Donna.

DONNA

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

He gets serious.

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.

SLU

Know anything 'bout the boy?

Donna lights a Virginia Slim.

DONNA

I know all about Conor Mahoney. And his gangster father.

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 can't hide that hurts.

DONNA (cont'd)
 If it makes you feel better, I have
 sources. Conor checks out.

SLU
 I can have sources too.

DONNA
 Who? Jack? Slu, they aren't going to
 tell Jack anything I wouldn't know.

SLU
 She in love with him?

DONNA
 Hardly. Conor's apartment's above her
 favorite coffee shop. I doubt it's
 more complicated than that.

There's a 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 turns toward the hootin' and hollerin'.

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.

He puts her down.

MARSHALL

I hear they put that face on TV.

DONNA

Just a segment on a morning show,
but... we plan to go bigger 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

Know who's ass sat right there before
yours?

Marshall shakes his head.

SLU (cont'd)

Howard Cosell.

MARSHALL

He always wear that yellow coat?

Slu and Donna laugh. Tension lifts between them.

MARSHALL (cont'd)

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

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - SUNDOWN

ON THE PATIO.

Donna, Slu and Marshall are all pretty well toasted.

All laughing. Full ashtray. Two whiskey bottles. One empty.

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

KITCHEN.

Slu fills the ice bucket from the freezer.

He notices a piece of SCRAP PAPER magnetized to the door.

"Susan - 120 Macdougall"

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

He goes back out on the PATIO and sets the ice down.

SLU

Just thought of it. If you're here,
who's checkin' on Pops?

DONNA

Pops is still alive?

MARSHALL

Old bastard won't quit. Well, shit.
I'll call Veronica. I'll probly catch
hell, but she'll check in on 'im.

Slu stares out at the big city.

SLU

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

MARSHALL

It'd save me an earful if 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. Slu is still distant in thought.

SLU

Gonna stretch my legs.

MARSHALL

Need a partner?

SLU

Try not to drink everything before I
get back.

Slu leaves them.

INT. JACK BASS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A rotary telephone rings in the greasy KITCHEN.

Jack grunts and groans getting up in the other room. He ain't a pretty picture in heart boxers and undershirt.

A snaggle-toothed Bulldog starts barking. BUFORD.

JACK
Goddammit, Buford. It ain't the
goddamn doorbell.

He limps his way to the wall phone.

JACK (cont'd)
Yeah?

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Slu is calling from a pay phone.

SLU
(in a goofy lisp)
Greetingsth and thalutationsth from
the thity that never thleepsth.

Cut back and forth 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
Go check on Pops for me.

JACK
What for? That guy hates my guts.

SLU
Probably.

JACK
I gotta wear riot gear?

SLU
I'll owe ya one.

JACK
Fuck it. Fine.

SLU
I'll call you tomorrow night.

Slu hangs up the phone and turns around.

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

Nearby street sign reads MACDOUGAL ST.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marshall cleans dishes in the kitchen sink. Donna enters.

DONNA
Veronica must love having a guy
around who does the dishes.

MARSHALL
Since the kids left, some days the
dishes're the only thing needs doin'.

She sits on the counter top and pours two drinks.

DONNA
You could always get Bertha back on
the road. Pull short-distance loads.

MARSHALL
Everybody hires fleets now.

DONNA
Just remind 'em you're the best.

MARSHALL
Never had the stomach for bullshit.

They laugh. They clink their glasses.

DONNA
How is Slu? Really.

Marshall stops laughing.

MARSHALL

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

DONNA

Because he'll never tell me.

MARSHALL

What makes you think he tells anyone?

DONNA

Is he running moonshine?

MARSHALL

Not so you'd notice. A little out the back door to keep the Cablevision on. He can't run hooch like he used to.

DONNA

Why?

Marshall lights a cigarette and shifts around awkwardly.

DONNA (cont'd)

You're gonna blame it on me.

MARSHALL

Some stories you wrote in the newspapers up in Georgia.

DONNA

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

MARSHALL

Honey, *your* name was all over it. Didn't take long for folks in Baker County t'figure out the cat you named Gator was 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. Not no more. It's you and Sue leavin' him that stings.

DONNA

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

Marshall shrugs his shoulders.

MARSHALL

One way to see it. Other way is the world's most hard-headed man changed hisself to near breaking for a woman who answered by taking his baby away anyway.

DONNA

That's not fair.

MARSHALL

Not supposed to be.

DONNA

He would've started 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 corn brewin'. And he loves the smell of grease. But none of that shakes a stick at the way that boy loves his family.

DONNA

You're romanticizing him. Like everybody does.

MARSHALL

Maybe so. But I can tell you the only way I am along for this adventure in the first place... is cause that big bad criminal of yours wouldn't disobey his Poppa.

INT. FIELD & SHORE COFFEE ROASTERS - NIGHT

Small cafe. Wooden tables. Cozy and artsy. Glass store front looks out on Macdougall Street.

Susan sits, studying a big textbook over a cappuccino.

A SHADOW falls over her book as she reads.

She looks up. GASPS.

Slu Renard looks his daughter in the eye.

SLU

Hi Sue.

SUSAN

It's Susan now.

SLU

Know who I am?

SUSAN

I've seen pictures.

He smiles awkwardly.

SLU

Can I have a seat?

SUSAN

If I said no?

SLU

I'd walk out that door.

She thinks for a moment.

SUSAN

Only until my friend gets here.

Slu takes his hat off and sits down across from her. He just stares at her with soft eyes.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Shouldn't you be the one to say something?

SLU

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

SUSAN

So... why... just why? Pick any one, but give me some kind of why.

SLU

I wanted to see you.

SUSAN

And you were in the neighborhood?

He lights a cigar. She coughs. He puts it out.

SLU
Heard you go to Columbia University.
I'm mighty proud of you.

SUSAN
Again, why?

SLU
What do ya study?

She lifts up the Chemistry textbook. *A-duh.*

SLU (cont'd)
Chemistry, huh? Use that in my line.

No response. He has no clue how to handle this.

SLU (cont'd)
Don't get much Ivy ball in Florida.
Where we're from. But yeah, I hear
the Columbia Lions are a great team.

SUSAN
I don't follow them.

SLU
Huh. Too bad. I watch a lot of
football. 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.

SLU
So you took your stepdaddy's name?
Susan Mathis?

She scowls at him. *He has some nerve.*

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

SLU
 C'mon, kiddo. This ain't as easy as
 it looks. You gotta let me try.

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

FRANK
 Hey, Susan.

SUSAN
 Oh thank God.

SLU
 Oh thank God.

FRANK
 Huh?

SUSAN
 Nevermind, Frank. This is the guy who
 was supposed to be my dad.

Poor Frank looks confused.

FRANK
 Hi. I got that book for you, Susan.

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 for a minute?

SLU
 I, uhm... maybe we can get a drink
 next time?

SUSAN
 Now *there's* something we can finally
 talk about.

He smiles.

SLU
 I'll be in touch.

SUSAN
 Don't doubt it.

He waves. She walks away with Frank. She doesn't look back.

He feels stupid. He slaps his hat.

SLU

Welp... Doggie Daddy you ain't.

Slu looks up to see Susan and Frank outside.

He sees Susan PALM a bag of pills to Frank.

Slu looks sick as she gets in the Lincoln. Conor driving.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Conor drives Susan uptown.

CONOR

Going to tell me about the cowboy
that sat at your table?

She takes a deep breath.

SUSAN

That was my father.

CONOR

Your dad's dead.

SUSAN

George was my stepdad.

CONOR

You never told me.

SUSAN

Didn't think it was important.

CONOR

Not important? Your father?!

SUSAN

I haven't seen him since I was three.

CONOR

You never kept secrets before.

SUSAN

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

She rolls her eyes at his paranoia.

CONOR

What's he want? He been following us?

SUSAN
He didn't say. It didn't seem that
thought out. Like... at all.

CONOR
What're you going to do about it?

SUSAN
Told him I'd have a drink with him.
Let him talk out whatever truth his
mid-life crisis needs answered or
whatever.

CONOR
He better not fuck anything up.

He screeches to a stop near Columbia University.

SUSAN
Conor. Don't get weird.

Susan grabs her backpack and gets out.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Don't you have a final?

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

She watches him drive away.

SUSAN
Fuck.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Donna smokes in the dark. Drinking and spinning an old LYNN
ANDERSON ALBUM on the HI-FI.

Marshall sleeps face down on the other couch.

Slu walks in. He flips on the light and walks past her.

DONNA
Where have you been?

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

DONNA (cont'd)
What's wrong?

Slu catches his breath from the long drink.

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 takes his hand.

DONNA
Tell me what happened.

He takes another swig.

SLU
How long has our daughter been
selling drugs?

Donna looks confused.

SLU (cont'd)
You really don't know?

DONNA
Honest. What's going on?

SLU
I saw Sue slip a bag of pills into
her friend's hand.

DONNA
Are you sure that's what you saw?

SLU
Been in enough races to know what
speed looks like.

Donna takes the bottle from Slu. She takes a chug.

SLU (cont'd)

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 have no idea how to fix it.

Donna drinks 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

After thirty years in this job... I
have never sold out or traded on a
story. Not once.

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

SLU

You've had enough.

DONNA

Wait. Don't patronize me. Hear me
out. So, this shithead... Congressman
Garry. He happens to spend half his
time traveling around the country
"Just Saying No" with Nancy, right?

SLU

Okay?

DONNA

Okay. 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
prick 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
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? Beside
prison?

He grunts in offense.

SLU

She wouldn't be peddlin' speed back home, y'know.

DONNA

No. Just corn liquor.

SLU

Different thing. And I didn't run again til after you left.

DONNA

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

His voice raises.

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

Funny, comin' from you. Cause when I asked you to do the same for me, you up and left.

A deeper understanding of Slu washes over her.

DONNA

All this time I thought you were being 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 (cont'd)

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

DONNA
There's more?

SLU
Oh, you bet there's more. I...

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

SLU (cont'd)
Uh... yeah, I guess that's it.

She laughs and puts her arms around his waist.

DONNA
Staying the night?

Marshall snores loudly from the couch.

SLU
Wellllll... he's so comfy.

DONNA
It's a comfy couch.

Slu nods. Looking in her eyes.

SLU
How's the bed?

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
Goodnight, Donna darlin'.

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 lit up street.

Conor exits an adult store, HORNER'S CORNER.

He looks 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 TRANSVESTITE steps in front of him.

Dress covered in yellow sequins, red stiletto heels, and a blue feather boa. Lips red and furious. This is JAZZ, 40.

JAZZ
Where you goin' without sayin' hello?

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

CONOR
Jazz. There you are.

He pulls a roll of cash from his pocket.

CONOR (cont'd)
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.

She pulls him down a...

EXT. DARK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Conor claws at the boa as she pulls him away.

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

JAZZ

You got the University 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 told 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 tonight.

CONOR

I can't visit my 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.*

A black LIMOUSINE drives 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 Limo door opens. A morbidly obese Italian man in a gray pinstriped suit and gold rings looks right at Conor.

CONOR

Is that...?

Jazz nods as FAT TONY, 59, beckons Conor over with a wave.
Conor apprehensively gets in the Limo and shuts the door.

EXT. CENTURY BUILDING - DAY

Slu and Marshall follow Donna out the lobby.

DONNA
Please don't go bother Susan today.

SLU
I'm not gonna go bother Sue.

DONNA
Be patient for once. We'll figure it out when I get home. An *actual* plan.

SLU
Told ya, I'm not gonna go bother Sue.

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

MARSHALL
Hey, we could go see the Mets.

She gets into the white Limo awaiting her.

SLU
We'll find something.

The chauffeur drives her away.

Slu starts walking South.

MARSHALL
Where we goin'?

SLU
To find Sue.

MARSHALL
Hey, buddy? I side with Donna on this one. Leave that girl alone today.

SLU
Ain't got time to sit on it.

MARSHALL
What's your endgame, son?

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. Nervous.

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

He flashes a toothy grin.

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, 32.

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

Marshall throws the first and last 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.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

"Meanwhile, Back in the Swamp..."

Jack cautiously steps up on the porch.

He peeks in the window. Curtains closed.

He knocks.

JACK

Mr. Renard?

Pops coughs on the other side.

POPS

The fuck is it?

JACK

It's Jack Bass. Mr. Renard?

POPS

Don't know no Jack Bass.

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

POPS
I got a twelve-gauge shotgun.

Jack is sweating.

JACK
Noted.

He reaches for the door knob.

The bug zapper strikes again. Jack gives it a dirty look.

He goes inside.

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jack enters the living room with raised hands.

JACK
You in here, Pops?

Pops is on the couch. "GUNSMOKE" on the TV.

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. You talked to Slu?

JACK
Who else could talk me into checkin'
on yer ugly ass?

Pops squints his bloodshot eyes, inspecting Jack.

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

JACK
I had a job to do.

POPS
Yeah, n'so did we! But ain't no more.

Jack gets it. He nods and smiles.

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

Pops smiles. That turns to a laugh.

Pops 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. He takes a puff.

The two old-timers watch "Gunsmoke."

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Large garage warehouse of parked YELLOW TAXI CABS.

Slu and Marshall are 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 stare.

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

Charlie looks Slu over. He points with a lit cigarette.

CHARLIE

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

Slu turns to Marshall.

SLU

This here's Charlie Mahoney. Leader of the Westies.

MARSHALL

The what now?

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE

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

He steps to Marshall.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

You. I don't know you.

MARSHALL

I'm Donald Duck.

Charlie laughs. He turns back to Slu.

CHARLIE

Pardon my introduction. I was told my son and his girl were being followed by some creep. 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. Little 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 (cont'd)

Riley. Hit the lights.

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

CHARLIE (cont'd)

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.

Slu and Marshall nod.

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 over surveillance photos of Congressman Garry with young girls.

Adam, her director, knocks and enters excitedly.

ADAM

Network gave us Congressman Garry.

Donna sits up in her seat. Her pep can't match his.

DONNA

No shit.

ADAM

Well, they wish you'd said "call girls" instead of "hookers," but yeah. On a silver fucking platter.

DONNA

Fan-fucking-tastic.

ADAM

And wait for it... they're giving you the full hour to roast 'im.

She halfheartedly smiles.

DONNA

This is really it.

Adam sees through her.

ADAM

Donna!

She jumps at his vocal spike.

ADAM (cont'd)

You aren't happy.

She gets up and hugs him.

DONNA

Of course I am.

ADAM

Wanna crack open a Glenfiddich?

DONNA

Thanks. But not up for any celebration today.

ADAM

Okay, fine. Only the best moment of our lives, but whatever.

DONNA

Sorry. A family thing's on my mind.

ADAM

You okay?

DONNA

Just been a while since I felt needed at home. I'm checking out.

Adam's brow furrows. She kisses her friend on the cheek.

ADAM

You've got my number if you need.

DONNA

Thank you.

She leaves the office. He goes to her desk and takes a bottle of Glenfiddich from a drawer.

ADAM

I'm gonna be drunk though.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Charlie, Slu, and Marshall sit at the table. Cracking up. All a little drunk

Despite making nice, Slu and Marshall are still TIED to their chairs by one hand each.

Riley and Blackie stand nearby.

MARSHALL

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

CHARLIE

And the cat?

MARSHALL

Pussycat didn't grow hair for a year.

Charlie laughs hardest.

CHARLIE

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

SLU

Curious bout the boy livin' with my lil girl.

Charlie gets serious.

CHARLIE

If he's good enough for her?

SLU

Is he?

Charlie takes a drink 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.

Charlie's eyes get red. His voice quivers.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

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

MARSHALL

I'm real sorry, Charlie.

CHARLIE

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

Riley steps behind Charlie's seat and massages the upset man's shoulders.

SLU

Can't imagine.

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.

Slu puts on a smile, but is clearly nervous.

SLU

That's incredible.

CHARLIE

He got himself into Columbia University on his own, y'know. Didn't even 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 cackles at himself.

Slu looks ready to burst.

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

Charlie stops laughing. He looks cold at Slu.

CHARLIE
Come again?

SLU
I've seen it myself. Your son... and
my Sue. Dealing speed pills in
Greenwich Village.

Marshall can't believe his ears.

MARSHALL
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 in his pocket.

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

CHARLIE (cont'd)
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.

CHARLIE
You see Conor do more than drive?

He shakes his head. Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE (cont'd)
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. Go get my son.

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susan studies at the kitchen table as Conor enters.

CONOR
My father's sitting with yours as we
speak.

SUSAN
What happens now?

CONOR
Whatever it takes.

Susan slams down her pencil. She stands up.

Conor follows her to the bedroom.

She starts packing a bag.

CONOR (cont'd)
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 you?
Congratulations! You stumbled upon
doing the only thing that would ever
make me give a shit about what
happens to my dad.

CONOR

I thought this would make you happy!
You go around acting all self-aware
and independent, but you're just a
scared little bitch like the rest.

She bristles and steps up to him.

SUSAN

Go on. Call me scared one more time.

Conor SLAPS her across the face.

She's shocked for a moment. Pink hand print remains.

Years of unchecked rage ERUPTS from Susan.

She PUNCHES upper places.

KICKS lower places.

RIPS at his hair.

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

She yells as she womps on him.

He can't move. Every blow lands.

She shows no sign of stopping until...

CLICK

Conor holds up his BERETTA.

Susan stands. Arms up in retreat.

Trembling.

SUSAN (cont'd)

You motherfucker.

Conor stands up. Gun trained on Susan.

He dusts himself off.

Checks all the places he's bleeding.

CONOR

Now, when I get back --

A KNOCK at the front door interrupts him.

CONOR (cont'd)

Yeah!

Riley's voice comes from outside.

RILEY

It's Riley! Charlie wants to see you!

Conor smiles. He looks back to Susan.

CONOR

Unpack.

She spits at him.

He turns to go.

When the door slams, she breaks down and SCREAMS.

Eyes closed. Face red. *Goddamn him!*

She goes back to packing.

She pauses at Conor's desk.

She flips through the little black journal his masterpiece is scrawled in.

She thinks for a tick.

And puts the journal IN HER BAG.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

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

Conor CHARGES into the room. Riley behind him. Conor's energy puts everyone in the room on edge.

CONOR

He's lying to you, dad.

CHARLIE

Conor. Calm the fuck down. These men --

He double takes at Conor's BRUISED, SWELLING FACE.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

-- What the hell landed on you?

Slu starts cracking up. Marshall catches on.

MARSHALL

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

CONOR

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

MARSHALL

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

Conor turns back to his dad.

CONOR

Who the hell is this?

Charlie looks sternly at Slu and Marshall.

CHARLIE

That's enough, boys. My son here.

Back to Conor.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

And it doesn't matter who *he* is. You know who he's with.

Conor looks disgusted at Slu.

CONOR

Things were fine until you 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

That I'm doing something with his daughter that I'm not.

CHARLIE

What exactly?

CONOR

Why do you believe *him*?

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's telling that kind of truth.

Conor is getting timid and fidgety. His face turns 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 (cont'd)

That's stupid.

Conor whispers some more.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

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

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

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Hey, fellas? Why don't you go for a doughnut 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.

CHARLIE
Conor. My miracle. You disappoint me.

CONOR
It was only supposed to be until we
finished school. And I write my book.

CHARLIE
I offered to set you up with money.

Conor tears up.

CONOR
You never asked what *I* wanted.

CHARLIE
What more could there possibly be?

CONOR
Being part of the family 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 made a promise to 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 is exasperated.

CHARLIE

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

CONOR

It's Western Literature, you illiterate slob! You robbed me of the family business. Of my birthright.

CHARLIE

Where is this coming from, kid?

Conor straightens up defiantly. He 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 in Conor's hand. Then down at THREE HOLES in his chest.

He drops DEAD.

Slu and Marshall sit slack-jawed.

Conor is shocked he went through with it. Tears run down his beaten face. He turns to Slu and Marshall.

Conor wipes his prints off his Beretta with his shirt and sets it below Slu's tied hand.

SLU

You can't be serious.

Marshall stands and SWINGS his chair over his head.

He BREAKS it across the table.

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. He jabs his elbow, landing in Marshall's ribs.

Marshall lets go and doubles over.

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 run in from outside.

They spot Charlie's bloody body.

They draw their GUNS.

Marshall smiles.

Then RUNS.

Slu follows behind.

Riley goes after them.

He FIRES a few misses.

Marshall ducks through the rows of taxi cabs easily.

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

CONOR

Bastard killed my father.

Blackie sees the gun where Slu sat. He gets mad.

Blackie takes off after them.

Marshall makes it to the EXIT.

Riley reaches for Slu from behind. Almost grabs him.

Slu stops, turns, and...

BUSTS his chair across Riley's FACE.

One of Riley's big capped teeth goes flying 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.

Slu reaches into the wheel well of the driver's side. He comes back up with the SPARE KEY.

Slu gets in and starts it up.

MARSHALL
Classics work every time.

Riley and Blackie are soon out the door after them.

Slu drives off with Marshall still jumping in.

Riley and Blackie are outrun.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Conor is on a 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, not knowing how she knows.

INT. JAZZ'S CADDY - DAY

Intercut between sides of conversation.

Jazz is in her tricked out, purple 1971 CADILLAC ELDORADO.
Parked within sight of Charlie's Garage.

The interior is fur-lined, including the car phone she's on.

JAZZ

Oh you didn't think I was taking my luscious lashes off of you? Next time, 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 til he's had enough.

She hangs up.

INT. CHARLIE'S GARAGE - DAY

Blackie and Riley approach. Riley's face bruised. Holding a rag up to the gap where his front tooth was.

BLACKIE

They got away.

RILEY

In your car.

Conor groans.

CONOR

Where did you pick them up?

RILEY

Century Building.

Conor smiles.

CONOR

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

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

Susan walks down MacDougal Street. 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.

SUSAN
You stealing cars now?

SLU
I'm proud of you for leaving, honey.

SUSAN
Go home, asshole.

SLU
Heading to your mother's?

She walks silently.

SLU (cont'd)
Look, goddammit, we're headed to the same place. I can explain on the way, or you can just meet me there after a long walk with a heavy suitcase.

She turns and walks the other direction.

Slu puts it in reverse and keeps pace.

SLU (cont'd)
Conor killed someone.

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.

She yelps at Marshall in the back.

MARSHALL
Hiya, Sue.

SUSAN
Who the hell are you?

SLU
That's Uncle Marshall.

MARSHALL
I'm your godfather, or some such
thing.

She gets in the front by Slu. He drives away.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
Hate to bust up the reunion, but I
need to get to Bertha. Thinkin' it's
best if we roll outta this party
separately.

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 was poking around what he thought was an empty
apartment. He dropped a glass figurine, broken on the floor.

They are surprised to see each other.

She gives him an annoyed look with a raised eyebrow.

She calls out to the next room.

DONNA
Susan?

EXT. NYC ALLEY - DAY

The Lincoln pulls over. Marshall gets out.

MARSHALL
You take care of this ol'boy, Sue.

SUSAN
Whatever.

SLU
Hey, Marsh? Thanks.

Marshall smiles.

MARSHALL

I'd say don't mention it, but I know you will.

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 (cont'd)

Awwwww. My baby.

He pets her grill. Soothing the truck.

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

He shrugs his shoulders.

MARSHALL (cont'd)

Don't sound half bad though.

He gets in. Thank God, she starts.

Marshall rumbles Bertha out on the road home to Florida.

INT. SUSAN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Riley and Conor in the living room. Conor is seething.

Stuffing pokes through slices in the couch. Brando poster in shreds. Cappuccino maker busted on the floor.

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

RILEY

Where is she now?

CONOR

Probably headed to her mother's.

Conor looks down at his desk. His face goes stone.

Where is his book?!

CONOR (cont'd)

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

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.

SLU
Don't think anyone'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 here.

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

Susan takes out a key, unlocks the door, and walks in.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Slu follows Susan in.

SUSAN
She probably won't be home for
another hour or two.

Slu notices the broken figurine on the floor.

Susan reacts to the concern on his face.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Oh my God. What?

SOUNDS of a struggle in the kitchen.

Susan boldly runs into the KITCHEN.

Blackie has his HANDS AROUND DONNA'S THROAT. Her face is puffy and red as she PRIES at his fingers.

Susan freezes at the sight.

Slu RUNS past her.

He takes a FLYING LEAP for Blackie.

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

Susan goes to her gasping mother on the floor.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Mom? What the hell's happening?

Slu takes a WIDE SWING at Blackie's face. The punch does nothing but hurt Slu's knuckles.

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

Slu goes down.

But gets back up. Bloody nose.

Donna DASHES out of the kitchen.

Slu lowers his head and runs to charge Blackie in the gut.

Blackie FLIPS Slu by his shoulders, 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 pot over his head. NAILS Blackie's face.

Blackie finally FALLS.

Upon his ass hitting the floor...

POP!

The gun goes off.

Bullet hits Slu's RIGHT SHOULDER. He clutches the wound.

SUSAN (cont'd)

No!

Blackie turns his aim to Susan.

He stands. Focused on her.

Donna RUNS back in the room.

Slu sees the SILVER PISTOL in Donna's hand.

Worry replaces pain. Slu moves to block her.

Blackie spots Donna in his periphery.

He moves his AIM.

POP.

Donna is shocked.

She looks down at the blood spreading across her Florida shirt. She looks to 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. A basket-ed round bottom holds a few gallons of wine. Three-foot long ornate glass bottleneck.

She SMASHES it on Blackie's face. Red wine and green glass go everywhere.

Dazed Blackie doesn't fall, but he drops the gun.

Susan JUMPS onto Blackie's back and YANKS at his hair. His head is forced backward.

Slu gets in a hard left THROAT PUNCH on Blackie.

Blackie falls forward.

Susan rides him all the way down.

Her fingers still 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...

She keeps going.

Blackie ain't moving anymore.

SLU (cont'd)
SUSAN!

She snaps out of the rage, but not the trance.

She looks around, confused and out of breath.

SLU (cont'd)
He's not goin' anywhere, baby. But we
gotta move. Now.

He holds out his hand.

She takes his hand to stand.

Then PUNCHES him in the already bloody nose.

He YELPS and doubles over.

He stands back up. *Figures he deserved that.*

SLU (cont'd)
We gotta get home, girl.

She is still very numb and dazed. He puts his good arm around her and leads them out.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DUSK

Slu drives the Lincoln through city traffic. He keeps looking behind him. *Nobody giving chase.*

Sue somberly watches her city go by out the window.

SLU
Can't anybody here drive?

She doesn't answer. Doesn't look.

Slu honks his horn at jaywalkers.

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

She sits up straight, realizing what's happening.

SUSAN

Oh no. No. No. No. No.

SLU

Outta options, kiddo.

Tears fill her eyes. She whimpers.

SUSAN

Noooooooooooo.

He looks at her, his heart breaking.

SLU

Not how I wanted it either.

She looks back to the window. Silent.

EXT. CENTURY BUILDING - NIGHT

NYPD have arrived. Two cops question the Doorman as Donna's COVERED BODY is wheeled out on a gurney.

REPORTERS have gathered. Taking photos and asking questions.

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

CONOR

Shit. How many bodies?

RILEY

Only see one.

CONOR

See Blackie?

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 police.

Blackie is frightened, hiding flat against the wall. Bruised face. Broken nose. He shrinks in the headlights.

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

CONOR (cont'd)
Slu Renard did this to you?

The broken nose gives Blackie's breathing a whistle.

BLACKIE
You were right, Conor. Your girl hits hard.

CONOR
They got away?

BLACKIE
I think it was the mom I shot.

CONOR
What about a black book. Did Susan have a black book with her?

Riley looks back concerned.

RILEY
Black book?

CONOR
She stole my little black book.

RILEY
Shit man. Why didn't you tell me? 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.

RILEY
Yes sir.

CONOR
Do you know what hillbilly haven this guy crawled out of?

RILEY
Something swamp. Charlie said it. Uhm. Yeah. Okie Dokie Swamp.

BLACKIE
Are we going on a trip?

EXT. SHARKY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Slu's in a PHONE BOOTH outside a BAR. Blue neon sign blinks "Sharky's." Phone tucked under his chin. His call rings.

Shirt off as he SEWS UP the wound on his right shoulder. He winces as he stitches.

SLU
Fuuuuck. Jack! Pick up!

Another stitch and a wince.

SLU (cont'd)
Pick up. Pick up. Pick up.

He slams the phone in the cradle.

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

Slu puts on his cowboy shirt. The right arm, the source of thread, unraveling from the cuff.

He looks out. Concern and pain marking his face.

SLU (cont'd)
Be okay Pops.

He catches a glimpse of himself in the phone booth glass. His ripped, bloody sleeve makes him stand out.

He exits the phone booth and goes to Conor's car.

He opens the trunk. He grimaces at what he sees.

INT. SHARKY'S - NIGHT

Lots of brick and neon. White collar patrons mix with blue.

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

He stops and sits in the booth Susan is already in. Two double whiskeys on the table.

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

She stares at nothing in particular. Sips her drink.

SUSAN
Did I kill that man?

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

SUSAN
We need to call the police.

SLU
Wrong idea.

He offers her a cigar. She shakes her head. He lights up.

SLU (cont'd)
Believe it or not, my F.B.I. file is stamped "Good Guy." And I still got a Federal friend who'll believe my side of this. He tipped me about Conor sending red flags to the Bureau. And it's him we gotta get to fix this.

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
Judge would've loved that answer.

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

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

He takes a big sip.

SUSAN
I know nothing about Charlie's business. He kept Conor out of it.

SLU
Wouldn't matter. You were leverage. And I couldn't let you serve time. You're enough like me without it.

SUSAN
Of course you've been to prison.

SLU
Do I need to worry about Romeo following after you?

SUSAN
Conor hates my guts. But he might come looking for something I took.

SLU
Of his? What?

SUSAN
His little black book.

Slu knocks the table, frustrated.

SLU
Great. What's in it?

She shrugs.

SUSAN
Something important to him.

SLU
Yup. He'll come lookin' for that. Him, that big red gorilla, and Fat Fuck Tony for all I know. Finish that drink, girl. This just became a run.

EXT. STOP N' GO - NIGHT

Freestanding snack mart on the side of the highway.

Riley and Blackie walk toward the Cadillac. Riley balances three coffees. Blackie has an armful of road snacks.

BLACKIE
Hey, Riley?

RILEY
Yeah?

BLACKIE
I keep thinking... How did that guy get a gun after we tied him 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 in the passenger side.
 Conor sits in the back seat, studying a FLORIDA ROAD MAP.

EXT. U.S. ROUTE 1 - NIGHT

Slu drives South. FAST. Nobody else on the road.
 Susan plays like she isn't terrified by his driving.

SLU
 You weren't taking any of those speed
 pills, were ya?

SUSAN
 Only a couple times. Not my thing.

SLU
 Good. Just had to know if I need to
 be expecting the shakes. Besides,
 you're pretty with all your teeth in.

She's warming to him. A tiny bit.

SUSAN
 How long were you in prison?

Slu shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

SLU
 First time? Seven years.

SUSAN
 Long time. Judge must have hated you.

SLU
 They usually do.

SUSAN
 Was it for running moonshine?

SLU
Some of it.

SUSAN
What else?

SLU
I wouldn't rat on Uncle Marshall.

SUSAN
And that got you seven years?

He shrugs.

SLU
I maybe wrecked a lot of municipal property.

Slu cracks that grin.

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

He giggles.

Susan can't resist. She tries to hide her grin.

SUSAN
God. Judge probably couldn't tell if you were a smartass or a dumbass.

SLU
Either way, makes you half ass.

Despite herself, she laughs. He cackles again.

SLU (cont'd)
Want the wheel for a while?

SUSAN
What? Like drive?

SLU
Yes, like drive. My shoulder's killing me.

SUSAN
I don't know how to drive.

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

SUSAN (cont'd)
What? Never needed to.

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

SUSAN (cont'd)
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 (cont'd)
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 to the driver's seat. He climbs in and closes the door.

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 is already on the gas as she puts it into Drive.

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

SLU (cont'd)

(nonchalantly)

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.

EXT. FRED'S DOG HOUSE - DAWN

A HOT DOG-SHAPED DINER alone off the highway. Gas pumps in rows to either side.

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

Across the highway is a sparkling LAKE.

Marshall is filling Bertha's tank. He yawns.

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

Marshall smiles and gives the three-fingered Boy Scout salute. They return the gesture.

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.

She idles up about 10 feet from the Cadillac.

The Scouts see Marshall at the wheel.

He rolls down his window and points at the clueless gangsters inside.

MARSHALL
Those are the bad guys.

He puts his finger up to his lips. *Shhhh*.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
(to Bertha)
Don't worry, baby. You had a facelift
comin' anyway.

Bertha revs. He turns up his Elvis 8-Track.

Bertha GOES.

CRUNCH!

Marshall SMASHES Bertha into their Caddy.

The Boy Scouts of America cheer.

The gangsters run out of the hot dog.

All they can do is shout obscenities as Bertha PUSHES their Caddy across the highway.

SPARKS fly off the bottom of the car as it DRAGS across the asphalt. Its tires blow out.

Marshall cackles gleefully behind the wheel.

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

Once it's 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 drives away from the yelling gangsters.

INT. MARSHALL'S HOME - DAY

Veronica answers the RINGING PHONE.

VERONICA

Hello?

SLU

(on phone)

It's Slu. You heard from 'im yet?

VERONICA

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

SLU

How'd you hear bout that?

TV NEWS plays in the background. Photos of Donna. Interview with a bereaved Adam. 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. What the hell have you gotten my man into?

SLU

What are they sayin'?

VERONICA

Poor thing was shot dead in her home. How much you know about that?

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Slu on a pay phone. Lincoln parked nearby.

SLU

All of it. They mention me any?

VERONICA

No, you little egomaniac. Where's poor Sue?

SLU

Safe with me. Marsh know 'bout it?

VERONICA

He didn't mention it last night.

SLU

What he say?

VERONICA

None of your damn business.

SLU
Goddammit, not that part. He say when
he'd be home?

VERONICA
I expect him in a coupla 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. Goodbye.

He hangs up. He takes a deep breath.

He walks past some beautiful green forest on his way back to
the car. He gets inside.

Susan is in the driver's seat. Crying.

The CAR RADIO is reporting Donna's death.

Slu turns it off.

SLU (cont'd)
We're almost home.

Susan slaps her hands on the wheel.

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

He looks at her sympathetically.

SLU
Don't worry. We'll get Momma justice.
I promise, baby.

She lets out a growl and steps out of the car.

Slu gets back out.

SLU (cont'd)
It's not how I wanted it either.

SUSAN

You keep saying that like it should mean something to me. Who gives a flying FUCK what you wanted?!

SLU

I lost Donna too.

SUSAN

Twenty years ago! I lost her last night! God. Damn. I can't reconcile what she ever saw in a guy like you.

SLU

We were like TNT. Great combo until its not.

SUSAN

When you showed up, I thought maybe, just maybe... I'd finally get some answers to what someone like her was doing with someone like you. Now... I can only see why she left.

Slu's face turns red.

SLU

Don't you dare tear down what me and your momma had.

SUSAN

My mother moved on from you. She married a great man. Someone who supported her. The real her. And she loved him. And it took a drunk driver to end that. Not some old flame showing up on her doorstep.

SLU

You weren't there to know how beautiful it was.

SUSAN

Why'd you blow it then? I'll tell you! Because it would never cross your mind to do something that's not centered around you.

SLU

You don't know shit! I gave it all up for my girls! And I was the BEST!

SUSAN

If your so goddamn good, how do you explain your prison record?

Slu is truly flummoxed by that one. Only makes him madder.

SLU

Cause I... no, she... cause... Cause when your the best, they send the best to catch you! When best meets best, its all just a matter of luck.

SUSAN

If I had your luck, I'd never leave the house again.

SLU

I gave her you. Think that's gotta be worth somethin'?

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 at her. Decides to leave it unsaid.

SLU

You need a rest.

SUSAN

Let's not try this, Slu. Let's just get what we have to done... and get me home.

Slu swallows his feelings. *She's right.*

Slu walks around the car. Susan gets in the passenger side.

He drives the Lincoln back into traffic.

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.

He hugs Slu as he gets out of the Lincoln.

MARSHALL
So sorry, brother.

Slu yelps. Marshall notices the wound.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
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. She 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 (cont'd)
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 without looking away from
Debra Winger on her deathbed.

JACK
Not a word.

Slu RAGES through the front door.

Jack jumps.

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

Marshall and Susan follow in.

Jack stands surprised. Bloodshot eyes practically glow red.

JACK
I only took it home and back to check
on your old man for ya. For fuck
sake, you put my LeMans in the mud.

SLU
I put it in the mud?

JACK
And while were 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.

She explores the disorganized room. *Unimpressed.*

She gets to Pops' bed.

He stares up at her. Eyes sunk in and red.

POPS
Hey. You. You're lil Sue, ain't cha?

She nods.

SUSAN
Who are you?

He tries to recognize her 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?

She smiles awkwardly as she straightens back up.

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 to Jack.

SLU

This here is Jack Bass. Jack, my daughter Susan. Least, she was my daughter at some 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.

MARSHALL

You alright, darlin'?

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.

We hear her heaving down the hall as Slu speaks up.

SLU (cont'd)
Alright, alright. We're all ducking
it. What's our situation, Jack?

JACK
New York P.D. say you're a sumbitch
of interest. That's all. For now.

SLU
And Susan?

JACK
They're more concerned nobody's seen
her. Only reason this thing went
Federal is they think a Congressman
was involved. Turned out he was
nothin' but a pederast and she knew.

MARSHALL
Wasn't no Congressman.

JACK
No shit. Who then?

SLU
Conor Mahoney.

JACK
Why would Conner shoot Donna? Some
kind of family revenge?

MARSHALL
Conor shot Charlie Mahoney too.

Jack's mind is blown.

JACK
Whooooooooooooa. Killed his own daddy?

Marshall nods. He takes the joint from Jack.

MARSHALL
Saw the whole thing. Front row. Kid's
batshit.

SLU

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

MARSHALL

Ten-Four on them goons too. I ran into those boys in Carolina. Bertha and me slowed 'em down a spell.

JACK

So what have you got?

SLU

Susan has something. A little black book. She nabbed it on her way out.

JACK

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

SLU

Maybe numbers? Connections?

MARSHALL

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

Susan pops her still queasy head out the hallway.

SUSAN

It's his novel.

SLU

Say what?

SUSAN

The black book's a novel Conor's writing. Some awful shit about Irish coal miners. I only 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're gonna have to come up with Conor Mahoney hisself to make anything move on your end.

SLU

Sounds like he's coming to us anyway. Look. We stood on it all the way down. If they drive like New Yorkers, I gained four or five hours on 'em easy. You say you slowed 'em down?

MARSHALL

Pinned 'em to a spot for a while. They could either wait for the cops, or thumb the eighty miles to the next rental car.

SLU

Fine. Let us catch our breath a few hours then. I'm cracking up, and the poor kid's pukin'.

JACK

Yeah. Sure, Slu. I'll call my guys in the morning. Early though, huh?

EXT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

Marshall heads for Bertha. Jack follows behind.

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 (cont'd)

To the Lincoln.

Jack looks to the Lincoln and smiles.

JACK

Ridin' first class.

MARSHALL

Don't get too attached. 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. Few dirty towels. One toothbrush.

Susan sits on the toilet lid wiping her tears.

Slu knocks and speaks through the door.

SLU (O.S.)

Doin' okay?

She doesn't answer.

We cut back and forth between her and him out in the hall.

SLU

I'm goin' to bed. I'll take the guest room across the hall. Room at the end is mine. You take it. Sleep comfy.

Still no answer.

SLU (cont'd)

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

Nothing. His eyes are getting red.

SLU (cont'd)

I... I fuck up a lot. I mean, not everything, but... I fuck up a lot.
(MORE)

SLU (cont'd)

I, uh... I guess... when Jack first told me you was in trouble... I guess I saw my chance to... to unfuck something up for us.

Niagara Falls on Susan in the bathroom. But she is silent.

SLU (O.S.)

I'm sorry I couldn't fix it.

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. A lot of wood paneling. Slu has a style. *Mid-Century Varnished.*

She switches on a record player. A Lynn Anderson album spins. Same as Donna's. She turns it down, but not off.

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

She lays down on the big bed. It wiggles beneath her. *Fuck. She hates WATERBEDS.*

She reaches for a SCRAPBOOK on the shelf. It's filled with PHOTOS of Donna and Slu. Happier, sillier, younger times.

The back half is old NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS penned 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."

She reads the thinly-veiled stories of how her father met her mother helping the F.B.I.. Tears stream down her face.

The Lynn Anderson drifts down the hallway. A few doors down, into the...

INT. GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A moonbeam lights Slu's face in bed. His eyes open.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

Slu starts up the Mustang and speeds down the driveway.
His bumper hits dirt as he turns fast onto the road.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - NIGHT

Slu is furious.

Taking his aggression out on the road for a few miles.

He blasts his old Country Western station.

He takes wild turns.

Takes the Mustang airborne over dips.

He SCREECHES to a stop just before a BRICK WALL.

Slu gets out and looks over the wall.

A new STRIP MALL. Fast food. Supercuts. Sign declaring:
"Walmart coming soon!"

SLU

Shit wasn't there a year ago.

He lights a cigar and turns around to home.

EXT. SUBURBAN FLORIDA STREET - NIGHT

Riley slowly drives a rented DODGE ARIES K STATION WAGON.

Conor checks out driveways to either side. Blackie snores
with an annoying whistle in the back.

RILEY

I can't see shit.

CONOR

It's a tiny shitkicker town. We can
search every house three times before
the sun comes up.

RILEY

Or, just hear me out... just once
after the sun comes up?

CONOR

They already have an advantage 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. It's parked in the driveway of a cute yellow RANCH HOUSE.

They park behind it.

INT. JACK BASS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the BEDROOM, Jack and his wife VERA, 65, snore in bed. He's in boxers. Vera has rollers in her red hair.

Wedding picture on her nightstand. Picture of younger Jack shaking hands with J. Edgar Hoover on his.

A sound startles Vera awake.

Blackie covers her mouth.

Jack stirs awake.

He double takes as his blurry vision reveals the business end of Riley's PISTOL.

JACK
Oof.

Conor stands by Riley, looking down on the old man.

JACK (cont'd)
Buford?

INSERT

Buford snoozes clueless on a pillow in the kitchen.

Back to Riley and Conor looking down on Jack.

CONOR
That Lincoln outside. Where did you get it?

Jack plays dumb and shaky.

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
Some kid in the Kroger parking lot. Sumbitch didn't say where he got it. I didn't know it was stolen. 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. Wanna try a different story, Pig?

Jack face turns mean.

He JUMPS out of bed toward Riley.

The old man knocks him down.

Vera screams bloody murder. She bites the hell out of Blackie's palm.

He soon has her pinned again.

The scream woke Buford, who runs snarling for their door.

Conor slams the door in the dog's face.

Buford barks incessantly on the other side.

From the floor, Riley sweeps Jack's bare 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 (cont'd)
Want one more shot at this?

JACK
You're Charlie Mahoney's kid.

Conor looks curiously at this stranger who knows him.

CONOR
What 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
momma down the stairs.

Conor laughs.

He nods at Riley.

Riley SHOOTS.

In a quick spray of blood...

Jack is GONE.

Vera goes hysterical.

Riley aims his gun.

She stops.

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. Tasteful paintings of Kama Sutra positions. Mirrored ceiling.

ALARM CLOCK goes buzzes.

Marshall's eye pops open. He groans and smacks the clock.

He gets up and gets dressed.

Veronica, nude under the blanket, turns to him sleepily.

VERONICA
What if I say no?

He turns to her and smiles.

VERONICA (cont'd)
I'm serious.

MARSHALL
So is this.

VERONICA
I mean it, Marsh. I have a bad
feeling. Don't you have it?

MARSHALL
How I feel's got nothin t'do with it.

VERONICA
You don't owe him anything anymore.

He smiles. He kisses her.

MARSHALL
Let's not fight, huh? Y'know.

She nods. She starts to cry.

VERONICA
I know.

He kisses her again. Longer this time.

MARSHALL
I'll be back before supper's cold.

She nods.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
Stay beautiful.

He leaves the room.

She hears him calling 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.) (cont'd)
You take care of momma, huh?

She sits crying in bed as she hears the front door close.

INT. SLU'S ROOM - DAWN

Susan wakes from a nightmare. Scrapbook open on her legs.

She takes a moment to remind herself where she is.

She goes into the hallway. She stops at a door with a scribbled sign: "Pops room! Git out or else!"

Temptation too great. She opens the door into...

INT. POP'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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.

Slu snores on the other side. She opens to find...

INT. LIL SUE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Not altered since she was a toddler.

She gazes in wonder.

Lincoln Logs. Plastic food. Raggedy Anne. Horse posters. A whole mountain of stuffed animals.

A PHOTO of younger Slu holding his baby hangs on the rose wallpaper. In a wood frame, hand carved to read "BIG SLU" above the picture, "LIL SUE" beneath.

She tries and fails at not crying when she sees Slu...

Asleep in a fetal position, cramped in her tiny TODDLER BED.

EXT. JACK BASS'S HOUSE - DAY

Marshall drives his green Challenger toward the house. Head bops to the radio. He plays drums on the steering wheel.

He approaches Jack's place.

Four COP CARS and an unmarked GOVERNMENT SEDAN in front.
FOUR COPS in the yard, 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 a DEAD BODY under a white sheet from the house. The metal leg rests atop it.

Buford trots after him. The orphaned dog cries and whines.

Marshall drives past the scene as inconspicuously as he can.

MARSHALL (cont'd)

Sure got yourself some mess, son.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Slu enters the living room scratching his crooked toupee.

Pops is watching cartoons and eating a bowl of Trix.

SLU

Susan got you Trix?

POPS

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

To the dock, I think.

Slu looks out the window. He sees Susan on the end of their long dock, staring into the swamp.

SLU

You tell her there's a gator hole out
there?

POPS

And spoil th'fun of findin' out?

Pops laughs.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

The SWAMP SUNRISE is a sight to behold. The light dances off the water, lighting up lush land chirping with life.

Slu walks out to the start of the dock.

Susan stands at the end, over the water.

SLU
Really somethin', isn't it?

She turns to face him. Tears in her eyes.

Held to her chest is a STUFFED ANIMAL of a FOX IN A BLACK COWBOY HAT.

SUSAN
What's his name?

Tears welling up in Slu's eyes too.

SLU
That's Mr. Fox.

She looks again at Mr. Fox, and back to Slu.

SUSAN
I think I remember... he was my favorite.

Slu takes a deep breath and smiles.

Lone teardrop.

SLU
He's so glad 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?

SUSAN
This.

She takes the toupee from his head.

Bald. White hair on the sides. Still handsome.

He laughs. She laughs.

They hold tighter.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - SAME TIME

On another side of the house, the Aries K pulls up.

In the back seat, Conor takes out his gun.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Slu and Susan enter the KITCHEN through a BACK DOOR. Holding hands, smiling, and talking. Slu still bald.

SUSAN

No. Never had, nor do I intend to
ever have, a grit.

Slu starts filling a pot with tap water.

SLU

In half an hour you'll be fighting
Jack over the last bowl.

She starts making a pot of coffee.

Reaching for the filters, she sees two COFFEE MUGS. A
chipped, stained one reads, "SLU." A pristine white one
reads, "DONNA."

SUSAN

You really loved her, didn't you?

He's taken aback, but smiles.

SLU

More than anything I was ever good
at.

SUSAN

I'll be back home for the funeral?

He deflates. He looks to her and nods.

SLU

Hell or high water.

He gazes out the window. He spots the Aries K.

SLU (cont'd)
Son of a bitch.

Susan is alarmed and goes to 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.

She lets out a frustrated grunt.

SUSAN
They exist! I've seen them!

Conor, Riley, and Blackie get out of the car.

SLU
Under my bed. Bring it here. Now.

She bolts for the bedroom.

Slu heads for the LIVING ROOM.

SLU (cont'd)
If you can walk, ya ol' bastard,
now's the time to show me.

POPS
What th' hell is it now?

Slu looks out the curtains.

SLU
Just be ready for some shit. Hear me?

POPS
They ain't takin' my grass.

Outside, Conor holds his Beretta. Riley pulls his pistol. Blackie is large enough to pull 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 (cont'd)
If it ain't us, shoot 'im.

Susan comes 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.

1EXT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The gangsters are at the door. Riley and Blackie await Conor's move. Blackie's 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.

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Slu FIRES the rifle through the window.

Slu and Susan drop for cover.

Blackie gives it to them.

Uzi fire crosses the living room from outside.

Glass shatters. Wood splinters.

Slu fires again.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Conor goes to one side of the house. Blackie to another.
Riley scurries around back.

Marshall obliviously pulls his Challenger in front.

He gets out and heads to the house.

He spots the Aries K and gazes around concerned.

SLU
(from inside)
Marsh!

Blackie isn't seen, but his Uzi's sure heard.

Bullets whizz past Marshall as he ducks and hops to the front door.

MARSHALL
Oh shit oh shit oh shit...

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Slu opens the door. Marshall DIVES in on top of him. They fall to the floor.

MARSHALL
Guess I shoulda knocked.

They stand up.

Pops cocks the sawed off. It MISFIRES into the ceiling.

The Uzi answers back outside.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
Jesus Christ!

SLU
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 police car has arrived.

SUSAN
Cops. Two of them.

SLU
Two cars?

SUSAN
Two cops.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

DETECTIVE HAL JONES, 42, opens the car door.

Blackie fires on the police from the back of the house.

OFFICER NED WESTON, 29, grabs the CB Mic.

NED
Shots fired! 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.

The machine gun begins again.

The cops shoot back.

Conor shoots from his side of the house.

Figuring they're surrounded, Hal and Ned shoot in every damn direction.

INT. SLU'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Bullets pass through the house from all sides, barely missing our heroes ducking down 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 pop.

POPS
Sonsuvbitches!!!!

Things go silent.

Riley SNEAKS in the room via kitchen door.

They're all looking out the window. Not seeing him.

Except Pops.

Riley doesn't notice Pops in his bed.
Riley raises his gun.
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 over 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 his rifle.
She fires the rifle through Riley's ear.
He 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 he gets help. Gonna
hurt like a motherfucker, son.

Pops cackles victoriously from the ground.

SLU
Great... savin'... Pops.

Gunfire continues outside.

Susan sits Pops up on the couch side.

Slu HOWLS as Marshall slides him across Pops'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 stops for another reload.

Marshall very carefully looks out the broken window.

The Unmarked Sedan has pulled up next to the cops.

TWO FEDS, guns drawn, share the cop's car door as a shield.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
Couple Federal buddies joined us.

SLU
Jack?

MARSHALL
Forgot to tell y'all. Jack's dead.

Slu and Pops groan.

MARSHALL (cont'd)
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 is coughing up blood.

SLU
Get me... to the Mustang.

Marshall gives him a dirty look.

MARSHALL
No way.

Slu does a shit job pretending to feel better.

SLU
I can do it.

MARSHALL

You never planned anything in your life. Suddenly this is the one you got?

SLU

You know I'm right.

SUSAN

What's in the Mustang?

Slu struggles to sit himself up.

SLU

If I can sit, I can drive. Can still feel my toes. I can make 'em chase me a few miles at least.

POPS

Damned fool. Stay down.

SLU

Worst they can do is arrest me.

POPS

Then what the fuck they do with me?

MARSHALL

You got two holes you didn't wake up with this mornin', buddy-roo. You ain't goin' nowhere.

Slu turns to Susan.

SLU

Them gangsters. Least one of 'em left out there. They won't follow me. Have you got 'em?

Susan exhales. She nods.

SUSAN

Strong maybe.

SLU

I can make it.

MARSHALL

Not breathin'.

SLU

Don't make no difference now.

Marshall looks out the window.

Not much distance between the garage and the police cars.
Wheels turn in his head.

MARSHALL
Goddammit. It could work.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Cops and F.B.I. listen out for more gunfire.

REVVING SOUND inside the GARAGE.

The authorities nod to each other to look that direction.

The Mustang CRASHES out the garage door.

Top speed in their direction.

They roll away safely as the Mustang snaps off the DRIVER'S
DOOR on the cop car.

The F.B.I. are on their feet first.

They jump in and speed off behind the Mustang.

Ned and Hal look at each other in the F.B.I.'s dust.

NED
I don't wanna stay.

HAL
C'mon.

They jump in, sans driver's door, and join
the CHASE.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang roars through the swamp lands.

Through tinted windows is the shape of Slu's hat.

The other cars give solid chase.

SIRENS BLARING.

Hard turns.

Twists.

Over a rickety wooden bridge.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Conor comes around to the front of the house. He looks around cautiously.

CONOR
Riley? You there?

Nothing.

CONOR (cont'd)
Blackie?

He's startled to hear a RIFLE RACKING.

Susan walks off the front porch, holding the rifle.

Conor laughs.

SUSAN
What the fuck's funny?

CONOR
I was actually scared for a second.

BANG.

Her bullet breezes past his face. His fear looks so frustrating.

SUSAN
Bet you'll always wonder if I missed.

He sets his gun down.

She picks it up and CHUCKS it in the swamp.

She takes the rifle off him and straps it to her back.

She takes out his journal, tucked in her belt.

His eyes transfix on it.

She RIPS OUT a page.

Let's it float to the ground.

He sees red and moves toward her.

She holds up another page.

He stops. In near panic.

CONOR
Let's not get crazy.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang continues its chase.

Another cop car joins.

And another.

And a few more.

The Mustang never slows.

Cops enjoy the chase.

The F.B.I. never smiles.

Ned holds on for life with a missing door.

He's loving it.

NED
My pappy had a chase with Slu Renard
once. Still tells it every Easter.

The Mustang takes a reckless turn with grace.

Cop cars swerve.

Several CRASH OUT.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Blackie enters the living room. Nose still whistling.

He spots Riley's body on the floor. The brute looks sad.

A COUGH from the other side of the couch.

Blackie turns his Uzi to it.

He sees Pop's legs sticking out behind the couch.

POPS

Left me here to die, the miserable bastards. Just get on and finish me.

Blackie looks around for anyone hiding.

POPS (cont'd)

C'mon over and finish an old man to his face, you trigger happy ijit.

Blackie starts toward the couch.

EXT. FLORIDA BACK ROADS - DAY

The Mustang continues chase with a good lead.

A SWAMP FOX trots IN THE WAY 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.

Smoke and hissing 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 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.

Marshall cracks up laughing. Blood runs down his chin.

MARSHALL (cont'd)

The fox gets it... He thinks it's hysterical.

The cops don't understand.

He spits blood at them.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Susan walks the yard, ripping pages out and dropping them.

Conor chases around each loose paper, collecting them.

She reads from his book.

SUSAN

"Her heart fairly throbbed for his calloused working hands." Christ, Conor, I'm doing you a favor.

She rips another page.

CONOR

No! Stop it!

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Blackie makes his way cautiously around the couch.

POPS

The fuck you waitin' for, blockhead? Element of surprise?

Blackie turns the corner of the couch.

There's Pops, laughing up at him with the sawed-off.

Slu pops up from the bed.

He sticks his CORKSCREW up Blackie's broken nose.

Blackie freezes. He drops the Uzi.

Cross-eyed. He raises his hands in surrender.

Slu hurts, but holds strong on his knees on the bed.

SLU
Hiya there, Alibi.

EXT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Susan has led Conor near the swamp water.

He grasps for every page she removes.

SUSAN
Rest of the pages are blank. Except
this last one.

CONOR
Please!

SUSAN
I warned you. Don't start what you
can't finish.

She tosses the whole journal in the swamp.

He wails pathetically.

He CHARGES at her head first.

He head rams her in the gut.

Both PLOP into the water.

Neither has any grace. They FIGHT clumsily. Amateur hour.

But when a hit lands, it lands hard.

Holding nothing back.

They FLAIL around in the water violently.

Susan gets the upper hand.

Conor is face down in the muck.

She straddles his back and holds his head down.

Mud bubbles.

She gets a CHOKE HOLD on him, pulling his muddy face from
the water.

She leans into his face.

SUSAN (cont'd)
You can finish it in prison, asshole.

An ALLIGATOR snaps out!

Centimeters from their faces.

She covers her mouth in shock.

Conor falls back in, wrestling a gator CHOMPING on his arm.

CONOR
Help me!

She backs away from the water.

He kicks and screams.

The gator makes an easy lunch of Conor.

It slips him below to become part of the peat moss.

She is wide-eyed and breathing heavy as she looks at the loose pages floating atop the now smooth water.

SUSAN
Fuck me.

INT. SLU'S HOME - DAY

Blackie sits obediently on the edge of the couch bed. Pops has the Uzi on him.

Slu has gone back to laying there bleeding.

Sirens return in the distance.

Susan enters the front door in a daze, covered in mud.

SUSAN
Those alligators don't come up to the house, do they?

Pops cracks up.

INT. SLU'S HOME - NIGHT

"Three Months Down the Line..."

The walls have been patched up. The windows fixed. Cardboard and duct tape work miracles.

Pops's TV is replaced with a bigger one.

Pops sits on the couch bed, enjoying an old Western.

Slu lounges next to him, eating a TV dinner. Toupee back on.

Both have HOUSE ARREST ANKLETS on.

A TELEPHONE RINGS.

Slu stands and LIMPS past Pop's WHEELCHAIR.

Buford trots in and starts BARKING.

SLU
It's the goddamn phone, Buford!

He picks up his new Sports Illustrated FOOTBALL PHONE.

SLU (cont'd)
Slu's place.

Susan on the other end.

SUSAN
Hey, Pop.

He smiles to hear her.

SLU
Hiya, hun. How's school?

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. Fox rests on the couch.

SLU
(on phone)
Let's say Santa Clause couldn't have done better if he had a Bertha too.

SUSAN
They let him out already? Tell Uncle Marsh thank you.

SLU
Wish I could have delivered it
myself --

EXT. FIELD & SHORE COFFEE ROASTERS - NIGHT

The conversation is heard fading through her window.

SLU (O.S.)
-- but I figured a Daddy's supposed
to do something for his girl when she
gets her driver's license.

Down below, parked in front of the cafe...

The BLUE MUSTANG. Fully repaired and gorgeous.

New York license plate reads "LIL SUE."

THE END