

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH: THE JIM STEFFMAN STORY

Written by

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Based on the Memoirs of  
Jim Steffman and his book  
Shadow of DEATH

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FADE IN

BLACK SCREEN

Loud KNOCKING on flimsy door with the butt of a flashlight sounds.

Heavy, ragged, gasping breaths.

VOICE

Police! Open the door!

Breathing continues, but subdued, as if trying to be stifled. Swallowing sound.

INT. LAKEHOUSE - NIGHT

The sound of a flashlight CLICKING on, as jagged, intermittent beam finds JIM STEFFMAN's face, beaded with sweat, hair matted, beard unkempt, as he is sitting on a dilapidated sofa. Another sweep of the light makes him gasp, stiffen, and become agitated, nervously raising an AR-15 and leveling it to his front, his hands shaking uncontrollably.

From Jim's POV, there is a rickety door in a very small house. The flashlight's beam can be seen sweeping from side to side and up and down through the wide cracks.

More insistent POUNDING with a nightstick.

VOICE

Police! Open the door!

Jim's face hardens and his eyes narrow to slits.

JIM

Whadaya want?

A long beat as two voices converse outside the door (words are indiscernible).

VOICE

You need to move your vehicle that's blocking the GMC! It's being repossessed!

A gulp as Jim grips the weapon more tightly.

JIM

Just take it!

VOICE

Sir, you need to move your other vehicle!

JIM

You came here for the car! Just take the goddam thing!

VOICE

Sir, you need to move the other vehicle!

JIM

I'm not moving anything! Take both of them, for all I care!

A loud THUMPING on the door occurs as a flashlight beam sweeps past the door several times. Door handle turns, but is locked.

Jim panics and CLICKS the weapon from semi- to automatic.

Heavy breathing, jagged and erratic.

More THUMPING as dust falls from the top of the doorjamb.

Jim closes his eyes tightly and his arms tense, ready for the door to open. He grits his teeth, trembling with insanity.

FOOTSTEPS recede from door. Light diminishes. In darkness, Jim's breathing halts. A motor STARTS and a truck's reverse warning TONE sounds as flatbed backs up.

ANGLE ON side of door as Jim's face nears cracks. Meager red and blue flashing lights illuminate his face as he watches a TOW TRUCK OPERATOR gearing up to take his vehicle. A police cruiser is sitting on the property, the OFFICER in the driver's seat, on his radio.

Jim's head bows in fatigue and relief as he lets out a deep sigh.

He draws away from the door.

A light CLICKS on as he sits on his sofa. SLOW ZOOM out to reveal an arsenal of weapons and a large cache of ammunition surrounding Jim.

FADE OUT

INT. ALEX'S MINIVAN - DAY

ALEX THORSSON is driving his vehicle on a small road as he CLICKS off the radio dial, ending the song. He eyes a high-fenced parking lot and pulls into the gate.

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP BAY - DAY

Alex enters a large repair shop bay, haphazardly strewn with all manner of tools, equipment, engines, parts, a few boats, oil stains and a heavy odor of gasoline. A small friendly pit bull appears to quickly greet Alex as he puts out a hand to let the canine sniff it.

MIKE (O.S.)  
Bella! Get down!

Looking up to his left, Alex spots MIKE standing atop a stairwell to the upper level office. Mike is a large man, typical of the high school wrestler frame, wearing the garb of a mechanic manager.

ALEX  
Jim?

MIKE  
No, he's up here. C'mon up!

Alex pats the excited young dog on the head and moves around the prancing, leaping animal as he weaves his way through the myriad equipment toward the stair.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Bella! Get down!

The pit bull obediently leads the guest around the bay and up the stairs, making sure to escort him every step of the way. As Alex gains the second floor, he sees Mike standing near the back of the small office next to a business desk. Seated behind the desk is a bearded man wearing a sportsman's cap and the clothing typical in a mechanics shop. This is JIM STEFFMAN who is smiling politely, but not climbing from his seat.

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - DAY

Alex steps into the office.

MIKE  
Bella, go downstairs!

The dog follows Mike's instructions and quickly skitters down the stairs.

ALEX

I'm Alex. Nice to meet you.

He shakes hands with Jim who doesn't stand.

JIM

This is my business partner, Mike.

They shake hands; a strong grip.

ALEX

Nice to meet you.

Mike towers over Alex and he continues to stare down at the visitor, a large grin stretching from one side of his face to the other. Alex begins to realize that he's being "sized up."

ALEX (CONT'D)

Uh, so, nice to finally put a face to the voice on the phone.

JIM

You can go now. Thanks.

Mike nods and departs, leaving the door to the office open. Alex watches him as he passes by and looks back toward Jim.

JIM (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

Alex puts his binder down on the small table next to his seat and sits.

ALEX

I really appreciate the opportunity to talk with you. I've been excited about this meeting all week.

JIM

Me, too. Maybe I'll finally get the chance to tell my story to someone who's not going to run out on me at the last minute.

ALEX

Well, I'm very interested to hear all that you've got to say.

JIM

As I said on the phone, Alex:  
you're either going to be much more  
interested in this project after  
this meeting, or you're going to  
leave here and never come back.

ALEX

I assure you, Jim. I'm not going  
anywhere.

Alex shuffles papers in his binder as he pulls out a pen and  
poises to begin writing.

ALEX (CONT'D)

So, Jim, I was thinking that we  
could begin by talking about -

JIM

Alex, listen to me for a minute.

Alex pauses and looks up in earnest at Jim's serious, yet  
serene face.

JIM (CONT'D)

I know it's going to be hard for  
you to understand where I'm coming  
from and I'm not expecting you to  
necessarily sympathize with me.

ALEX

No, Jim, I get it that you don't  
want to -

JIM

Alex, you don't get it. Not yet.

Alex takes a breath and looks as though he is about to speak  
when Jim continues.

JIM (CONT'D)

But after this meeting, you *will*  
get it. Trust me. After I finish  
my story and show you what I have  
to show you, you'll understand why  
six other writers and three  
publishers have quit on me midway  
through this project.

Alex stares in silence.

JIM (CONT'D)  
What I'm about to tell you, only  
two people in this world know. I'm  
one, of course.

Jim shifts uncomfortably in his seat as it creaks.

JIM (CONT'D)  
The other person is John Hurley.

Alex begins writing.

ALEX  
(as he is writing)  
Is that H-U-R -

JIM  
Alex, stop, stop.

Alex looks up suddenly and his mouth opens slightly in  
anticipation.

JIM (CONT'D)  
You don't need to write anything  
down yet. I've got a shitload of  
documents that I copied for you to  
look at later. What I need right  
now is for you to just listen.

ALEX  
Okay, Jim.

Jim sighs again and leans back in his chair.

JIM  
My memory is going because of all  
the medications that I'm taking, so  
I may repeat things. Bear with me.

Alex keeps his gaze focused on Jim's eyes as he resists the  
temptation to ask questions.

JIM (CONT'D)  
You look around yourself and you  
think, "Hey, this guy is just your  
average Joe Blue-Collar Working-  
Man," right? But if you knew me  
twenty-five years ago, you wouldn't  
be thinking that. I was one of the  
most successful businessman in  
Connecticut with liquid assets of  
over two million dollars.

Jim stops and looks Alex right in the eye.

JIM (CONT'D)  
So, you're probably asking  
yourself, "What happened?" Well,  
I'll tell you. I met John Hurley  
and after one year, I found out  
that his real name wasn't John  
Hurley at all. In fact, he wasn't  
even a businessman, like I thought.

Jim pauses and fidgets, as if this is a very uncomfortable story to tell. Gazing down at his shaking folded hands, Jim continues in a small voice.

JIM (CONT'D)  
John Hurley is one of the most  
dangerous men in the country and he  
was one of my best friends. But  
let me back up a little. Let me  
tell you how I began my life as a  
single father.

DISSOLVE TO:

LEGEND READS: SPRING 1986

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Jim and DEB (mid-teens) are sitting in the seats of a theater as they cuddle and watch the screen.

JIM (V.O.)  
My first marriage to Deb was really  
one of curiosity. Her wit matched  
mine and we just clicked.

CUT TO:

INT. AUTOMOBILE - NIGHT

Jim and Deb are making out in the car and steaming up the windows in a wooded area.

JIM (V.O.)  
She became pregnant at sixteen and  
I immediately asked her to marry  
me. Being twenty years old,  
however, I knew that this was going  
to be difficult legally.



INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

Jim is sitting in a chair opposite LAWYER's desk and talking to him (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

I didn't want a charge of statutory rape on my record and wanted to do the right thing. We were in love. So, I went to a lawyer to ask for advice.

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER - DAY

Car approaches and halts as Deb, somewhat pregnant, hops from the vehicle and turns toward Jim at the wheel.

DEB

See ya' in Mary-Land!

She giggles and Jim guffaws as he puts the car into drive and pulls forward past a sign that reads, "Welcome to Maryland". As Deb walks over the State line, matching the speed of the creeping vehicle with the open door, she looks at Jim.

DEB (CONT'D)

Hey, sailor, you want some company?

They both laugh again as she climbs back into the car and closes the door, the car regaining the freeway.

JIM (V.O.)

In order for me to get married to Deb when she was still only sixteen, we had to go to Maryland. But I couldn't take her over State lines. So, my lawyer devised this plan so that we could get hitched with no legal ramifications. Technically, I never actually took her over a single State line.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE - DAY

Jim and Deb are taking their vows in front of a COUNTY OFFICIAL with no fanfare or guests.

JIM (V.O.)

Soon after our road trip, we were officially parents of a baby boy.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
It wouldn't be long before my  
decent job at Pratt and Whitney was  
also supporting my next son.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

Jim is holding his FIRST SON up to the bed as Deb is cuddling  
their SECOND NEWBORN SON.

INT. PRATT AND WHITNEY - DAY

Jim is welding large pieces of machinery for aircraft.

JIM (V.O.)  
My job as a welder was an excellent  
way to spend my time as I devised  
better methods of performing the  
tasks assigned to me. It wasn't  
long before I realized that my  
talents weren't making me a very  
popular figure at the job site.

CUT TO:

INT. PRATT AND WHITNEY PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim is driving his four-by-four out of the parking lot as a  
LARGE MAN in a small car creeps up behind him. They are in  
line at the exit behind many other cars, waiting to go home.  
The small car BUMPS the four-by-four and Jim looks into his  
mirror in surprise. Ignoring it, he continues to move  
forward when the car behind BUMPS his truck again.

JIM (V.O.)  
Many of the veterans at Pratt and  
Whitney didn't like my productivity  
and expressed those sentiments in  
their own special way.

Jim now angrily gazes into the mirror to see the man in the  
small car smirking at him. The cars ahead move, but Jim  
stays put. He suddenly turns the radio on full volume.  
"Rock and Roll" by Led Zeppelin BLARES. Then, when a gap  
appears between him and the cars ahead, he suddenly floors  
the truck, SCREECHING to a halt, and quickly puts it into  
reverse and presses down hard on the accelerator, cruising  
backward at a high speed.

JIM (V.O.)  
I may have been just a kid at the  
factory, but I didn't bow to  
bullies.

The truck SMASHES into the small car's front end, completely wrecking it, as steam begins to pour out from under its hood and fluids spill upon the ground. Jim stares into the mirror into the eyes of the shocked driver.

JIM (V.O.)  
My days as a welder were numbered.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

A PRIVATE DETECTIVE sits in a dark car staring at a house across the street.

JIM (V.O.)  
As it turned out, my days as a  
married father of two were also  
numbered.

The lights in the house suddenly go out. The detective CLICKS on a penlight and writes something on a pad of paper.

JIM (V.O.)  
I discovered soon after the birth  
of my second son that Deb was  
cheating on me. I hired a  
detective to track down where the  
hell she was going at all hours of  
the night.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Jim is sitting in the courtroom with his lawyer as Deb sits across from them with her own ATTORNEY.

JIM (V.O.)  
It wasn't long after that I sued  
her for divorce and full custody of  
our boys. She had confessed that  
she never wanted kids and it broke  
my heart.

Jim's lawyer stands and calls a witness and faces Jim's ACCOUNTANT who is on the stand.

JIM (V.O.)  
Deb had been sleeping with my  
accountant.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The detective read off all the multiple reports of witnessing Deb as she was whoring herself all over town with eight different men.

Deb sinks lower into her chair as she stares at her lap.

JIM (V.O.)  
It was a demoralizing experience for her, but I needed to establish that I was the only alternative to caring for my boys after the divorce. In that day and age, a single father who had won full custody was an anomaly.

SOUNDS of the courtroom fade away as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. MODERN CAR WASH - DAY

Jim's car is exiting the car wash, gleaming in the sun.

JIM (V.O.)  
With the divorce finally over and my life moving forward as a single father of two, I began dating the sister of one of my Pratt and Whitney friends. As I left a car wash one day, I couldn't have known that my life was about to change in a very big way.

Jim drives past the pump room where the door is open. He slows his car as his eyes marvel on the machines that are running the wash.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is playing with his KIDS on the floor as his new wife, JANET, watches. Her children, a boy and a girl, are playing with Jim as well.

JIM (V.O.)  
Within the year, I had remarried and was suddenly a father of four as Janet had two kids of her own.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jim is looking over his finances as Janet enters the room.

JANET  
The kids are sleeping.

JIM  
(looking up from  
checkbook)  
Oh, good.

JANET  
What's the matter?

JIM  
Nothing.

JANET  
Jim?

Jim looks up and then closes his mouth as he folds his hands.

JIM  
I wanna leave Pratt and Whitney.

JANET  
What?

JIM  
I've been looking at our finances  
and well, you know how I feel about  
the job.

Janet stares down at him, but says nothing.

JIM (CONT'D)  
Well, for a while now I've been  
thinking about going into business  
for myself.

JANET  
Doing what?

JIM  
Car wash.

JANET  
You want to leave Pratt and Whitney  
to work in a car wash?

JIM  
To own a car wash.

Janet is silent.

JIM (CONT'D)  
I was driving through a car wash  
and saw the pump room and -

JANET  
Are you kidding? Is this a joke?

Jim's face suddenly falls.

JIM  
I hate the job, Janet.

JANET  
You've got four kids now.

JIM  
Right. And I can't stand not being  
given the recognition I deserve.

Still silent.

JIM (CONT'D)  
I've got a chance to be my own boss  
here. To take a risk on a business  
that I know I can run successfully!  
And I'll be much happier.

JANET  
So, take your chance, Jim. And  
when it fails, then what?

Janet walks out of the room in a huff as Jim looks defeated.

JIM (V.O.)  
I knew that the prospect of  
quitting Pratt and Whitney was a  
scary one, but my heart burned with  
a fire I had never felt before. I  
was determined to prove her and  
everyone else wrong.

The sound of a cell phone RINGING abruptly takes the scene  
to:

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - DAY

Alex is leaning forward in his chair toward Jim's desk. Jim  
distractedly picks up his phone from the desk and looks at  
it.

JIM  
Just a minute.  
(opening phone and  
speaking softly)  
Yeah? Yeah, I'm fine. Yup, good.  
Okay. Thanks.

Jim closes the phone and puts it back onto his desktop.

JIM (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Sorry. That was Mike. Just  
checking up on me.

ALEX  
No worries. So, all this because  
you just happened to glimpse a pump  
room of a car wash.

JIM  
That's right. All my life, I have  
had the ability to look at  
something and just know how it  
worked. It didn't matter if it was  
a TV or a car or a vacuum cleaner.  
Even if I never saw that type of  
motor, I could take a cursory look  
at it and suddenly, the whole  
mechanism came into focus.  
Whatever was wrong with the thing,  
I could just fix it. One of my  
teachers called me a technical  
genius.

ALEX  
That's a rare talent.

JIM  
Well, it was the same thing with  
businesses, Alex. I could look at  
an empty building, a parcel of  
land, or a vehicle where most  
anyone else would see junk real  
estate or scrap metal, I would  
envision an instantaneous  
revelation of profitability and  
success.

Off Jim's look of assurance, we:

RESUME FLASHBACK

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Jim is driving along a scenic road at a leisurely speed. As he approaches a large bay building on the right, he slows. The Axelrod Tires building is set back from the road. A "Land For Sale" sign looms.

JIM (V.O.)

For months, I had been fantasizing about opening my own business. Ever since that day when I first saw the inner workings of a car wash, my sights were set on finding a location for my own place. I didn't have the faintest idea about how to open a business, but I knew that if I did the research and had a clear vision of what I was trying to create, I would be successful.

Jim stares at the property from his car as he comes to a halt.

JIM (V.O.)

Axelrod owned a pretty substantial plot of land where his tire business was located. Since he only used a very small part of it, I thought I might have a shot at buying some of it and opening my car wash there.

Jim pulls away from the curb and continues along the road.

JIM (V.O.)

Before I had even arrived home that night, I had already envisioned a plan of development for a property I didn't even own yet.

SHOT PULLS OUT to encompass vacant, overgrown plot.

JIM (V.O.)

Doug had already attempted to build a gas station there on his own land, but was denied in the past and gave up on the prospect. I had found a loophole in the township's ruling and was able to take advantage of it.



INT. AXELROD TIRES OFFICE - DAY

Jim approaches Doug's desk with papers in his hands. As he places them in front of him, Doug's face drops and his eyes narrow.

JIM (V.O.)

As soon as he saw the signed documents for the sale and the fact that my plans to build a gas station went through, he got so upset that he picked up a paperweight on the desk and threw it across the room.

Jim flinches as Doug goes into a tirade and throws a paperweight at the wall. Jim is smirking despite the situation. Doug eyes Jim angrily and then picks up the phone.

JIM (V.O.)

He got on the horn with his brother and just went crazy. "What the fuck is goin' on with this?" and "Who the hell okayed this?" After his brother, the judge, told him there was nothing he could do, he slammed down the phone and told me to get out.

Doug argues into the telephone handset and then SMASHES it onto its cradle before standing up and shouting and pointing at Jim (subdued audio).

JIM (V.O.)

He never let it go.

EXT. AXELROD TIRES PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim is walking briskly toward his car and stops to gaze out at the undeveloped property that was now his. Smiling, he then turns around and looks at the empty lawn in front of the tire emporium.

JIM (V.O.)

It was a sobering moment to be able to imagine that there were no limits on my ability to create a new business.

Off his smile and lingering gaze, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOT - DAY

WORKMEN are busy throughout the lot as backhoes are employed to level terrain, ditches are dug, lines are snapped, and stakes and flags are tapped into place. Jim is busy talking to the Foreman as he points around the property.

JIM (V.O.)

The construction started immediately.

Jim scales a ladder to the top of the steel girders that will be the overhang for the gas station near the road. As he gains the top, he looks out and can see nothing but beautiful Connecticut countryside. Then he spots Doug Axelrod as he is staring up out of the window of his "sky" office on the second floor. As they lock eyes, Doug SLAMS the window loudly.

JIM (V.O.)

The plan for my business was to ultimately pair my car wash with, not only the gas station with an attached convenience store, but also a multi-unit storage facility, all four built on the same property.

Various CONTRACTORS are working on a foundation and water lines.

JIM (V.O.)

As the work progressed on my car wash, I was busy researching the ins and the outs of the gas station industry. With the loan approved for the next phase of the construction, I had the workmen begin building the gas station as well. In the meantime, I began interviewing for managers for the car wash.

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Intercut scenes in fast forward motion of people entering with applications in hand and departing.

JIM (V.O.)

I was very picky when it came time to hire a manager for my new business and I interviewed dozens of potentials.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
After hours of disappointment and  
the light waning outside, my  
prayers were answered.

RESUME NORMAL SPEED

Large, rough-around-the-edges, disheveled, brutish MAN with unkempt hair, enters the office with application in hand.

JIM (V.O.)  
But the saying goes that God works  
in mysterious ways. Brother, they  
weren't kidding.

Jim stands and shakes hands with the man as he approaches the desk.

JIM  
I'm Jim Steffman, nice to meet -

BEETLE  
I'm Leon Bailey, but everybody  
fuckin' calls me "Beetle", as in  
Beetle Bailey, you know, like the  
fuckin' cartoon character?

With a very serious face, Beetle stares at a wide-eyed Jim.

JIM  
Okay. Well, B-Beetle, mind if I  
take a quick look at your  
application?

Beetle hands the application over, but then quickly withdraws it, as he fishes out a pen from his pocket.

BEETLE  
Oh, fuck, I forgot to add in my  
Social! I meant to out in the  
lobby, but I started watching the  
fuckin' guys out there tearing up  
the ground and I got sidetracked,  
you know? So...

He sits and quickly pulls out his wallet and consults his card in order to record the number on his application. Writing quickly, he stops and begins scribbling.

BEETLE (CONT'D)  
Aw, fuck! Man, I'm so sorry. I  
just put the numbers in the wrong  
spot!

JIM

That's okay, just leave it until  
the end of the inter -

BEETLE

(scribbling furiously)

There, I got it! It's fixed! This  
fuckin' pen is so cheap!

Beetle hands the application over to Jim who sits and begins  
reading the document.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

That part where it says previous  
work experience? There's a fuckin'  
space for the telephone number for  
Pools Galore because I couldn't  
remember the -

JIM

That's fine, that's okay. Relax.

Beetle folds his hands, but nervously TAPS his foot. He then  
folds his legs, unfolds his hands, and begins TAPPING both  
hands in beat on the arms of the chair.

JIM (CONT'D)

So, you've worked in management  
before?

BEETLE

Well, not management per se. I've  
done management-type things -  
duties in my other fuckin' jobs.

JIM

But...

BEETLE

But no management stuff.

JIM

Okay, Leon -

BEETLE

Beetle.

JIM

Beetle. As you can imagine, I've  
got a lot of potentials for the job  
and a good portion of them have  
experience.

BEETLE

I really need this fuckin' job.

JIM

Yeah, I'm sure. But you really don't have the experi -

BEETLE

I'll do anything you want, sir.

Jim stops and stares the big unpolished man in the eye.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

I've got - I've got three fuckin' kids and a wife to support. I've been looking for a job for eight fuckin' months and this would really help me provide for my family.

Beetle's face is desperate and deadpan. Jim stares with sympathy.

BEETLE (CONT'D)

Please, sir.

After a very long pause, Jim sighs and looks back down at the application.

JIM

If I was to - IF I was to hire you, Leon - Beetle - you would have to make some major changes.

BEETLE

This fuckin' tie blows, doesn't it? My wife picked it out and I knew it was a fuckin' deal-breaker, but -

JIM

No, no, no, Beetle. It's not the tie.

BEETLE

(after puffed cheeks let out air)

The body odor thing is a medical issue.

JIM

No, please, Beetle. Listen.

Beetle stares at Jim and becomes silent.

JIM (CONT'D)

This is a new business for me and I want things to go smoothly. But, I'm going to need a manager who is not only personable, but professional, okay?

BEETLE

O'course!

JIM

Well, this habit you have of saying the F-word constantly? It would have to stop.

BEETLE

(genuinely puzzled)  
Whadaya mean?

JIM

C'mon, really? You do know that you say "fuck" in almost every sentence, right?

BEETLE

Uh...

JIM

Seriously. It would have to stop. Look, Beetle, I wanna give you a chance. I know you need the job. But you have to make those changes.

BEETLE

No problem.

Jim stares at Beetle for a long, hard moment. Then, he abruptly stands and extends a hand.

JIM

Welcome aboard.

Beetle clumsily rises from his seat and knocks over a stack of papers on the desk as he reaches across to shake Jim's hand.

BEETLE

Fuckin' "A"!

FADE OUT

EXT. BUDGET CAR WASH - DAY

Jim is out in front of his car wash with a spit-and-polished Beetle standing by his side, admiring its "Open for Business" banner.

TIME LAPSE

Beetle is standing beside Jim, awaiting the very first customer through the car wash. The new manager is visibly nervous.

JIM

Relax, Beetle. You'll do fine. If you need help, I'll be right here next to you.

Beetle nods through this anxious energy as the first customer's car enters the lot. A Ford Escort, driven by an ELDERLY WOMAN, approaches their station. She looks up at Beetle and he leans over to make eye contact.

BEETLE

Good morning!

ELDERLY WOMAN

Good morning to you! How much is the car wash?

BEETLE

It's, uh, three dollars, ma'am.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Okay.

The woman begins to dig in her purse.

JIM

(whispering)  
White walls?

BEETLE

(half-whispering)  
Oh, yeah!  
(to woman)  
Um, would you like your fuckin' white walls done for an extra dollar?

The woman suddenly stops fishing in her purse and looks up at him in shock.

JIM

Beetle!

BEEBLE

Oh, uh...  
 (a beat as he pastes on a  
 fake smile)  
 Would you please let me wash your  
 fuckin' white walls for an extra  
 dollar?

Off Beetle's elated face, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Establishing as cars are in line to go through car wash. Jim is cleaning glass on the door of the attached convenience store as a car stops nearby.

MAN IN CAR

Hey, buddy.

Jim looks over at the man in the car.

MAN IN CAR (CONT'D)

When's this gas station gonna open?

JIM

Soon. Maybe three weeks.

The man thanks him and waves as he drives up to the rear of the car wash line.

JIM (V.O.)

The car wash was doing tremendous numbers. Paired with clever advertising and my inherent business sense, the lines never seemed to diminish.

EXT. TEXACO GAS STATION - DAY

Jim is arranging letters on a sign outside his car wash and gas station. The sign reads: "One Free Car Wash With Every Eight Gallons of Gas!"

JIM (V.O.)

I immediately began pairing my car wash business with my gas station.

SWITCH TO:



EXT. TEXACO GAS STATION - DAY

Jim's assistant manager, LESLIE, is handing a check to a WOMAN, while they pose for a REPORTER's photo for the local newspaper, the Middletown Press.

JIM (V.O.)

I had a drawing every week for one hundred dollars worth of free gas to the randomly picked name.

EXT. BUDGET CAR WASH - DAY

A long line of cars for the gas station and car wash fill the screen.

JIM (V.O.)

Every idea I had that I thought would bring in more business, I employed. When all was said and done, at the end of the first month, my station had pumped over one hundred and sixty thousand gallons of gasoline.

INT. BUDGET CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Leslie opens an envelope with Texaco's logo on it, drawing out a check for \$12,000.

JIM (V.O.)

I'm sure that my name is engraved in stone over at Texaco Headquarters. And not in a good way.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim is standing outside the facility, watching the traffic through his businesses. He is leaning over a bill-changing machine, attempting to extract a stuck one dollar bill from the slot.

JIM (V.O.)

The storage facility was filled to near capacity within a month of opening. Within a few months, the construction loans would already be paid off.

(MORE)

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

I was beginning to eye other businesses in the area to resuscitate. I longed to solidify my belief that I was the King Midas of business. Of course, John Hurley chose that very moment to enter my life.

HURLEY drives up in an expensive Porsche. He is a good-looking, dark Mediterranean-type, dressed very well and polished to perfection. Jim's eyes slowly rise from his work at the bill-changer as he watches the car pull close to the curb.

HURLEY

Hello there!

JIM

Afternoon.

HURLEY

(indicates storage facility)

Your establishment?

JIM

Yes, sir.

HURLEY

I've been driving past this place for the last few months, waiting for it to open. I'm currently renting in a facility, but this one's much more convenient for me.

JIM

Well, by all means, c'mon in and we can talk about what you need.

HURLEY

Thanks!

Hurley turns off the engine and climbs out.

JIM

That is one beautiful piece of machinery.

HURLEY

Yeah, sure is.

JIM

Oh, I'm Jim Steffman.

HURLEY  
John Hurley.

JIM  
(indicating car)  
Porsche Nine Twenty-Eight?  
Nineteen eighty?

HURLEY  
On the money. You know your cars.

JIM  
It's a hobby. I love engines.

HURLEY  
Oh, then we have something in  
common.

INT. BUDGET CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim and Hurley are looking over the facility map.

HURLEY  
I'm actually looking to store a few  
vehicles here and a couple of  
boats, as well as some personal  
belongings.

JIM  
Oh, what kind of boats?

HURLEY  
There's a SeaRay Motorboat and a  
Donzi Speedboat, three hundred  
thirty horsepower engine.

JIM  
Nice.

HURLEY  
You boat?

JIM  
On occasion. When I can get out.

HURLEY  
We'll have to go out sometime.

JIM  
Definitely.

They continue to talk (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

I liked him immediately. Not only because we had the same taste in cars and boats, but because he appeared to be someone who understood money and business. He offered to pay for the storage of his things six months up front, in cash. Of course, I said "yes" and offered him a discount. Part of me wondered if he was yanking my chain, because he said he'd come back the next day. But, when the next day rolled around, just like he promised, John was there with a big wad of cash in hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Hurley is dropping off the vehicles.

JIM (V.O.)

One by one, the vehicles arrived. First, there were the bikes, a Honda twelve-hundred see-see Gold Wing Aspercade, and another eighty see-see Trail Bike. Then came the two boats, followed by the eighty-six Ford Taurus. The last vehicle to arrive, however, put them all to shame. A four-door automatic Stutz Diplomatica with gold trim (a beat) one of only seven in the world.

Jim stands next to Beetle, who is watching the parade of vehicles.

BEETLE

Who the hell is this guy?

JIM

Somebody who has great taste.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jim and Hurley are talking over dinner.

JIM (V.O.)

Over the next few months, I began to develop a genuine friendship with John. In addition to his great taste in vehicles, he seemed to be a man who knew how to run a business. I discovered that he owned a couple of jewelry shops, so I took my wife down to his place.

CUT TO:

INT. JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Jim and his wife are looking at jewelry inside the glass enclosures.

EXT. JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Jim and his wife depart the shop, while she is admiring a necklace in the window reflection.

JIM (V.O.)

We left there that day after having purchased a very expensive necklace. At one point, John began to be a frequent guest at my house.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is laughing as Hurley is telling a joke around the dinner table, while Janet shakes her head (SUBDUED AUDIO). The kids are pretending that their spoons are swords.

JIM (V.O.)

He was always lavishing myself, my wife and my kids with gifts.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim sits on the sofa with his wife and Hurley as the kids unwrap boxes of toys.

JIM (V.O.)  
It seemed that the generosity of  
this man was boundless.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT ON LAKE - DAY

Jim and Hurley are relaxing on the stern of a large 40' yacht, while talking and laughing.

JIM (V.O.)  
We went on boating trips together  
and talked about everything.  
Business was one of our favorite  
topics of discussion. He became  
one of the few friends that never  
judged me or expected anything from  
me. More often than not, he would  
inquire about my home life and  
always seemed genuinely happy when  
I told him things were going well.

EXT. CLOSED BUSINESS - DAY

Jim is driving past a boarded up business in Meriden, Connecticut. He slows to assess the location and possibilities of its profitability as a car wash.

JIM (V.O.)  
While driving one day, I happened  
upon a small, closed-down bar. The  
location was one that was just  
begging to be made into a car wash.  
I called my accountant and then my  
newest lawyer, Bill DeZinno, who  
had a real estate background and  
asked him to put a bid in for the  
property. The asking price was one  
seventy-five. When my lawyer said  
I wanted to buy the property, the  
agent asked, "Do you want to make  
an offer?"

CUT TO:

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim sits behind his desk with Alex still rapt with interest.

JIM

My lawyer replied, "We just did."  
So, without ever having seen the  
inside, or not knowing if the  
planning board of Meriden would  
even approve it, I had purchased  
the property.

EXT. MERIDEN TOWN HALL - DAY

Jim approaches the stairs of the Town Hall.

INT. MERIDEN TOWN HALL CORRIDOR - DAY

Jim walks along the halls toward the Planning Commission  
offices.

JIM (V.O.)

With the plans already drawn up for  
the proposal of a car wash, I  
entered the planning commission  
office with the confidence that  
they'd certainly approve the  
business and I'd get to work on the  
construction right away. All I had  
to do was knock down the existing  
structure and start over.

INT. PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICE - DAY

Jim is at a table with two planning COMMISSIONERS, his plans  
in front of them.

JIM

This would be the entrance and exit  
here so that the flow of traffic  
would be in this direction.

PLANNER

This is a good plan. But the  
problem, Mr. Steffman, is that  
Meriden is a drought-prone  
township. If we were to okay this  
plan, we would have to go before  
the zoning board to explain why we  
approved a business whose main  
commodity is water.

JIM (V.O.)

And just like that, they said "no".

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is looking over old plans and making adjustments.

JIM (V.O.)

I made adjustments in the plans and returned to the planning commission.

INT. PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICE - DAY

Jim is explaining changes to his plans to the two commissioners.

JIM

So, with the three-tank water reclaim system, the usage would be one and a half to two gallons of water per car.

The planners are silent as they stare at the plans.

JIM (CONT'D)

That's the equivalent to the water usage of a Dairy Queen.

PLANNER

Okay, Mr. Steffman, this is all fine and good, but you're still talking about a car wash.

JIM

Yeah, but the whole reason you said "no" in the first place was due to the drought, right? What I'm proposing will preclude the water usage that made it undesirable.

The planners are visibly dubious as Jim continues to champion his car wash.

JIM (V.O.)

The planners were unmoved. To them, it didn't matter that I had solved the water issue. As far as they were concerned, they had said "no", and nothing I could have argued or done would have made them say "yes".



INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim sits in a chair, watching TV and sipping a bourbon.

JIM (V.O.)

So, now I owned a trashed property and building and I couldn't even do anything with it. Reselling it would most certainly result in a loss. The idea of failure, though, was the farthest thing from my mind.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jim is driving his car down the street and stops outside a bar. Exiting the car, he enters the establishment.

INT. BAR - DAY

Establishing shot. Jim enters different bars and begins to formulate another idea. He sees that some of the businesses are strip joints.

JIM (V.O.)

As I did research on running a bar, I began to realize that strip joints pull in a very substantial haul. That's when it hit me.

INT. PLANNING COMMISSION OFFICE - DAY

Jim places his plans down in front of the planners. They gaze at the documents in front of them.

PLANNER

(looking up in disbelief)  
A strip joint? It'll never get approved.

JIM

Not true. It's already zoned as a bar. Wouldn't take me more than paying the fee to change it into a strip joint.

PLANNER

I don't understand. Why the radical change in plans, Mr. Steffman?

JIM

Well, you can either approve my car wash, which won't even affect the township's water supply. Or...

PLANNER

A strip joint.

JIM

Or a strip joint and bar.

Planners are silent.

JIM (CONT'D)

Look, I don't want to open a strip joint. I'm a religious man. My kids go to Catholic school in the area. But, if you won't approve my car wash, then I'm stuck with a property that I can't use. Unless, I open a strip joint. So...

The planners lean back in their chairs and gaze up at the ceiling and around the room.

JIM (V.O.)

The plan was foolproof. This planning commission would have to be crazy if they wouldn't concede to my very fair offer. While I'm not a man to bluff on something this important, this commission didn't know that. But with the new plans proving that water usage would be virtually non-existent, I knew that the township would simply see reason.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is on the phone and hangs up. He puts his head into his hands and runs them back slowly through his hair.

JIM (V.O.)

I am rarely wrong in judging people. And I'm almost never wrong with my business gut. However, these Meriden commissioners couldn't or wouldn't see reason. They said "no" the first time and they apparently meant it. They called my bluff.

Jim picks up the phone and dials.

JIM  
(into phone)  
John?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
Hey, Jim! What's up?

JIM  
They said "no" again.

HURLEY (V.O.)  
You're kidding.

JIM  
No. So I went back today and told  
them, either they approve a car  
wash or I open a strip joint.

HURLEY (V.O.)  
Excellent work!

JIM  
So, guess what?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
They caved?

JIM  
They still said "no".

HURLEY (V.O.)  
Oh, shit. So, what's your next  
move?

JIM  
That's it, John. I'm out of  
options. I can't not open a strip  
club.

HURLEY (V.O.)  
Slow down, Jim. You don't even  
know the business.

JIM  
I know, I know. But they called my  
bluff. I gotta respond.

HURLEY (V.O.)  
I get it, but... You lie with  
dogs, Jim...

JIM

Yeah.

Jim continues to talk on the phone.

JIM (V.O.)

In my gut, I knew he was right.  
And against my better judgment, I  
continued with plans to get the  
Dollhouse up to code.

EXT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

ROOFERS work on the roof while CONTRACTORS set up equipment.

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - NIGHT

Alex is grinning.

ALEX

So, you opened the strip club  
anyway.

JIM

Of course! I wasn't about to lose  
money on an investment.  
Particularly when I had the ability  
to make some sort of profit.

ALEX

So, I'm curious. What was the  
township's reaction.

JIM

They could only hope that I would  
drop dead of a heart attack.

Alex laughs loudly as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

CREWS are working on the building as Jim is overseeing the  
work. He walks into the building.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

Jim walks through the construction and makes his way to the  
office.

JIM (V.O.)

In the weeks during construction, I began to look at other options of managing a business that I really didn't want any part of.

Jim picks up the phone and dials.

JIM (V.O.)

When I spoke to my lawyer and explained my dilemma, he made a suggestion that I contact a local club owner who was well-versed in the business and very successful.

EXT. SHEHERAZADE'S - DAY

Jim gets out of his car and walks to the entrance of the nightclub, its parking lot empty of cars.

INT. SHEHERAZADE'S - DAY

Jim enters and looks around at the tables with chairs up off the floor. He wanders slowly toward the bar.

JIM

Hello?

After a moment, a man enters the room from a doorway beyond the bar.

DEMATTEO

Morning. Can I help you?

JIM

I'm looking for J.D. DeMatteo.

DEMATTEO

You found him.

JIM

Oh, hey. I'm Jim Steffman. I was referred to you by Bill DeZinno.

DEMATTEO

Okay.

JIM

Well, I just bought the old Shamrock down on the Pike...

DEMATTEO

Congrats.

JIM

Thanks. It's kind of a weird favor I need to ask. Can we sit down for a minute?

DeMatteo invites him to a bar stool and goes behind the bar. Jim moves to a seat and sits.

JIM (CONT'D)

So, I bought the club with the intentions of turning it into a car wash...

DEMATTEO

Won't fly.

JIM

Yeah, I found out. So, I gave them an ultimatum. Car wash or strip joint.

DeMatteo begins laughing loudly and SLAPS the bar a few times.

DEMATTEO

Nice.

JIM

Well, that didn't work either.

DEMATTEO

No.

JIM

I'm a car wash guy. I don't know anything about running a nightclub. I'm looking to offer a third share of the ownership for fifteen grand.

DeMatteo doesn't blink, but continues to stare.

JIM (CONT'D)

I mean, you could stock the employee roster, pick the managers, the bouncers, the girls. I really don't have any interest in all that. I'll take care of the bills and the mortgage, as well as the permits.

DeMatteo still remains quiet.

JIM (CONT'D)  
It's a really good offer.

DEMATTEO  
Sure.

JIM  
Sure, it's a good offer, or sure,  
you're interested?

DEMATTEO  
Both.

Jim smiles and stands to shake hands as they continue to talk  
(no audio).

JIM (V.O.)  
This was a boon for me. All I had  
to do was make some calls and have  
my lawyer draw up the papers and  
we'd be in business.

CLOSE ON DeMatteo as he points to the stage and the sound  
systems overhead.

JIM (V.O.)  
If I had known at that time that my  
new partner was a low-ranking  
captain in the Gambino crime family  
out of New York, I would have fired  
my lawyer on the spot for even  
suggesting this partnership. As it  
was, this was just the first of my  
accidental entanglements with the  
mob. I was really just so clueless  
in those days.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

Jim is watching the CREWS clean up the construction materials  
and debris as he inspects their craftsmanship.

JIM (V.O.)  
The construction on my nightclub  
was complete. All that was needed  
was an inspection and the final  
touch-ups by the contractors and we  
could be open for business.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

Jim is wiping down the bar counter with a towel and spiffing up the place.

JIM (V.O.)

Three days prior to opening up for business, I was in the club, doing what I always did right before the big day...a little spit and shine action. Things were about to get really weird.

The front door opens, sunlight pouring into the windowless club from outside. A very LARGE MAN, sporting a long, thick beard, steps through the door. Behind him, two somewhat SMALLER MEN, carefully maneuver a heavy, stemmed table through the door as well. They stride forward and the bearded man points to a spot on the floor near the stage. Jim stops rubbing the towel over the bar's surface as he stares in confusion. The two others place the table carefully down on the floor where the bearded man is pointing and then step back behind him.

BEARD

This is my table.

Jim stands up straight.

JIM

Uh, huh.

BEARD

When I come into the club, I'm going to be sitting right here.

Jim continues to stare as he puts down the towel and crosses his arms. The bearded one thumbs to one of the men behind him.

BEARD (CONT'D)

This is my cousin. He rents video games and poker machines. I strongly suggest that you rent his machines only.

Jim continues to stare, unmoving. The two lock eyes for a moment.

JIM (V.O.)

I knew when I was being threatened. And this whole bizarre exchange took only a couple of minutes.

(MORE)



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

I recognized this guy immediately, though. His name was Jackie Baltis and he was the president of the local motorcycle gang known as The Diablos. They were the strong-arm for the Patriarcha crime family out of Rhode Island. Whenever the family needed collectors or shit-work done in this area, they'd contact these guys. Apparently, this bar fell smack dab in the middle of both territories and, through colossally impossible odds, I was suddenly actively engaged in the mob underworld.

The man with the beard turns and departs the premises, his two cohorts in tow. Jim uncrosses his arms and leans heavily on the bar.

JIM (V.O.)

And although I put on a brave face, these guys scared the shit out of me.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is talking quietly on the telephone while his wife and kids are watching TV in the background.

JIM

And then they just walked out.

HURLEY (V.O.)

(through phone)

Didn't I warn you about the fleas?

JIM

It's too late for "I-told-you-so's".

HURLEY (V.O.)

All right, listen. Here's what I want you to do.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley is sitting on an expensive sofa, a Fortune magazine folded open in his lap and a phone to his ear.

HURLEY

Tomorrow morning, you go in and take that table and move it out to the median by the curb. You hear me?

JIM (V.O.)

(through phone)

Yeah.

HURLEY

Just move the thing and leave it by the curb. I know some people in that area and I'll make some inquiries and find out what the hell it's all about. Okay?

JIM (V.O.)

You're sure about this, John? Just move the table? I mean, these guys looked serious.

HURLEY

I'm serious, too, Jim. Trust me. Do what I told you and I'll take care of the rest.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is on the phone and briefly looks at his family when he notices his wife is staring at him with curiosity. He smiles at her reassuringly.

JIM

Okay, John. I'll do it tomorrow morning...first thing.

He hangs up the phone and ambles over toward his family, putting his arm around his wife and squeezing her.

JIM (V.O.)

John's advice was odd, coming from a businessman who didn't seem to have much in common with nightclubs and thugs.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

Jim struggles to move the table to the curb, as per Hurley's instructions. When he sets it down by the street, he stands up straight and looks around nervously.

JIM (V.O.)

And even though I was very nervous about doing it, I went ahead and moved the table out to the street. I was not prepared for what happened later that afternoon.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - DAY

Jim is cleaning the mirrored shelves behind the bar and stocking liquor bottles. Behind him, the door opens and he can see in the mirror's reflection that it's the big, bearded man again. Jim climbs down off the step stool and turns to face him. The bearded man is carrying a Jim Beam decanter.

BEARD

Hey, we got off on the wrong foot. I didn't know who you were yesterday, so I'm sorry about the misconception on my part.

Jim is genuinely bewildered, silently staring.

JIM (V.O.)

He didn't know who I was? "Who am I", I thought.

BEARD

(handing decanter to Jim)  
Uh, this is for you. A little housewarming gift.

JIM

Thanks.

BEARD

And if you ever need anything, we're always right here for you. Me and the boys. Good luck with the club.

The man then turns and walks out the door. Jim looks down at the decanter, opens it, cursorily peering inside, and then places it down on the bar top. Turning, he makes his way to the office.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE OFFICE - DAY

Jim sits behind the desk and strokes his chin. Then he picks up the telephone receiver and dials.

JIM

Hey, Bill, it's Jim Steffman. Do me a favor, will ya'? I want you to run a credit check for me. John Hurley. H-U-R-L-E-Y. Yeah.

JIM (V.O.)

I didn't know exactly what had just transpired, but for all intents and purposes, a jewelry shop owner had just intimidated a whole bunch of muscle with a single phone call. I was no detective, but this certainly sent up a dozen red flags. And I was understandably curious as to who my friend, John Hurley, was and who he knew. That night, I would get my answer.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim is in the office, going through and filing receipts when the phone rings. Jim picks it up while continuing to file.

JIM

Dollhouse Cafe, Jim speaking.

LAWYER (V.O.)

(through phone)

Hey, Jim, it's Bill.

JIM

Oh, hey! What's up?

LAWYER (V.O.)

That guy, John Hurley, that you had me run?

JIM

Yeah?

LAWYER (V.O.)

Nothing much. Married, kids... condo in East Hampton...owns a couple of jewelry stores, about a hundred and twenty-five "K" a year. Nothing to write home about.

JIM  
Really? That's it?

LAWYER (V.O.)  
Yeah. Why? What'd you expect to  
find? A mobster?

JIM  
Yeah, right? Well, thanks.

Jim hangs up the phone and then stares at the Jim Beam  
decanter.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

The nightclub is packed with MEN as music loudly PLAYS,  
lights move and flash and an attractive GIRL in lingerie is  
dancing on the small stage. CAMERA finds various men as they  
shout and wave bills at the girl, WHISTLING, HOOTING, and  
HOLLERING. The BARTENDER moves urgently up and down the bar,  
filling drinks and changing cash. A man lingers in the rear  
of the crowd, well-dressed, as he paces slowly, hands clasped  
behind his back, eyeing the crowd. This is the club manager,  
DANE GRACCINI. COCKTAILERS are busy carrying trays of drinks  
to the various tables.

JIM (V.O.)  
The Dollhouse finally opened and  
sales went way beyond any  
projections. It was a huge  
success! For days, this went on.  
Each night, the profits just  
continued to climb. By day seven,  
we had cleared close to forty-five  
thousand in profit. Within that  
first week, I had earned enough of  
a profit to pay off the entire life  
of the mortgage's interest rates  
for the club.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

Later that evening. A WAITRESS is sweeping the floor, chairs  
are up on the tables, the bartender is washing glasses, and a  
YOUNG MAN is wiping down the stage floor.

CUT TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

The manager is counting money at the desk. There are enormous stacks of ones, fives, tens, and twenties, lined up in front of him. Counting off some of the cash, he carefully wads it into a thick roll and rubber-bands it, tucking it into his dress jacket vest pocket.

JIM (V.O.)

After a few weeks of incredible sales, profits suddenly and drastically dropped off. In fact, on each successive night, the profit margin continued to decline until I was sure that someone was dipping into the till.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is looking over bank statements and deposit slips and is getting angry. His wife is reading in the background. Jim SLAMS some deposit slips on the tabletop.

JIM

What the hell is this shit?

JANET

What's the matter?

JIM

The club receipts are all screwed up! Someone's stealing from us!

Janet continues to study his anguished face.

JANET

Why don't you give John a call?

Jim shuts his eyes tightly and rubs them with one hand.

JIM

Yeah, I guess.

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley is on the phone. He is pouring a glass of wine.

HURLEY

They're stealing from you.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is on the phone, his head bowed with his free hand propping it up.

JIM  
Gotta be. Right?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
No doubt.

There is a long pause.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley is on the phone. He is tilting the glass toward his mouth, but then hesitates and, when he hears nothing on the other end, he puts the glass down on the counter.

HURLEY  
Tell you what. I'll help you take care of this, Jim. All right?

JIM (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
Well, what should I do? I never ran into this problem before.

HURLEY  
Just listen. This guy, DeMatteo, your partner, right?

JIM (V.O.)  
Right.

HURLEY  
Okay. He owns a third of the Cafe, right? And you own the other two-thirds?

JIM (V.O.)  
Yeah.

HURLEY  
All right, then. I'll make you a trade. One-third ownership in the Cafe and five thousand for my Porsche.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is on the phone, looking out the window into the darkness.

JIM

What? Wait, wait! You want one-third ownership in the club?

HURLEY (V.O.)

(through phone)

Yeah. And you get my Porsche.

JIM

But wait. I don't understand. Why do you wanna buy in? I don't -

HURLEY (V.O.)

Jim, you're dealing with real scumbags here. Low-life scumbags. You wanna fix this?

JIM

Of course. That's why I called you. I thought you might have some advice. I didn't plan on partnering up with you.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley sips his wine while he holds the phone to his ear.

HURLEY

(into phone)

Yes or no?

JIM (V.O.)

(through phone after a long beat)

Deal.

Hurley continues speaking on phone as he walks around his living room, wine glass in hand.

JIM (V.O.)

I didn't quite understand why John wanted to partner up at that time, but it soon became apparent that I was in way over my head with this club business.

(MORE)



JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Hurley told me to sit tight and  
allow him to "clock" the club.

JIM (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
I don't understand. What's that?

HURLEY  
I'm gonna send someone to the club  
who'll sit at the bar all night  
long and count all the sales and  
money that passes hands with the  
bartender and waitresses and we'll  
be able to compare what he comes up  
with against the manager's deposit.  
Then we'll know for sure.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Off Jim's worried face, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Jim is driving along a dark suburban street.

JIM (V.O.)  
The next night, after sales had,  
once again, been markedly lower  
than they should've been, John  
called and told me that I was  
definitely being ripped off and to  
pick him up at his place. He told  
me that he was going to have a chat  
with DeMatteo. He had me call  
DeMatteo and set up this meeting on  
the pretense of meeting the new  
partner.

Jim turns onto a street and continues to drive. The  
neighborhood becomes more upscale.

JIM (V.O.)  
I was beginning to accept the fact  
that John seemed to know a heck of  
a lot more about nightclubs and  
their operation than I did. That's  
why it became more and more easy to  
allow him to call the shots. I  
was, after all, lost in all this.

Jim approaches a very nice-looking condo and pulls into the driveway and up to the multi-car garage. John is at the door and descends the steps to Jim's car casually, but deliberately, carrying his ever-present camera bag.

JIM (V.O.)  
John didn't smile that night. And he seemed more serious than I had ever seen him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Hurley opens the door and climbs into the vehicle.

HURLEY  
Hey.

JIM  
All set?

HURLEY  
Before we go to DeMatteo's place, we need to go down to the K-Mart Plaza, okay?

JIM  
Okay.

Jim looks at an unblinking Hurley for another moment before looking over his shoulder and putting the car into reverse.

EXT. K-MART PLAZA PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jim's car pulls into the sparsely occupied parking lot and drives across the painted spaces.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jim is driving as Hurley suddenly points ahead through the windshield, squinting.

HURLEY  
Right there, Jim. The black Lincoln. See it?

JIM  
Yeah.

HURLEY  
Pull up alongside it.

Jim's eyes slightly turn to the right to gaze at Hurley, but he nods instead and steers close to the parked Lincoln.

JIM (V.O.)

This was a very strange request, as far as I was concerned, but I assumed that Hurley, being as well-informed as he was, probably discovered that DeMatteo was part of the Gambino hierarchy and wanted to bring some insurance of his own.

Jim stops the car and he looks into the windows of the Lincoln, but its windows are tinted.

HURLEY

Good.

As they watch, the driver's side door opens and out steps an enormous MAN. The vehicle rises several inches as he exits.

JIM (V.O.)

The man in the black Lincoln was Butch D'Aquilla, a very loyal Patriarcha soldier. And even though I didn't know it at the time, he had only recently helped to bury three bodies in a shallow concrete grave in a local condominium basement.

The big man waddles slowly around the back of the Lincoln and Jim watches him in the side rearview mirror as he approaches Jim's vehicle and reaches for the handle of the back door. Opening the door, he squeezes himself into the seat, causing the car to CREAK and GROAN as his weight presses down on the axles. He closes the door with a THUD.

HURLEY

Jim, this is Butch. Butch, this is Jim Steffman, the owner of the Dollhouse.

Jim doesn't turn, but looks in his mirror and nods as their eyes meet. Butch nods in kind.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Okay, Jim. Let's go.

Jim pulls the car away from the Lincoln.

EXT. SHEHERAZADE'S - NIGHT

Jim's car pulls into the nightclub parking lot slowly and stops.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jim puts the car into park and turns to Hurley in the passenger seat. D'Aquilla looms in the back seat. Hurley turns toward Jim and begins speaking softly.

HURLEY

Okay, Jim. Just go in there and tell him that we'll meet him across the way at the pizza shop.

Jim hesitates as he reaches toward the door handle.

JIM

Okay. Be right back.

Jim exits the car.

CUT TO:

INT. SHEHERAZADE'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jim enters the busy nightclub where music is PLAYING loudly and PEOPLE are CHATTERING. Jim wends his way through the crowd and finds the corridor leading to the office. Stopping at the end of the bar, he shouts to the BARTENDER who has noticed him.

JIM

Is J.D. here?

BARTENDER

Yeah. In the office.

JIM

Thanks.

Jim makes his way to the office and KNOCKS on the door. The POUNDING of the music's bass is rumbling in the walls. A muffled voice shouts through the door. Jim reaches for the door handle and gently opens it.

INT. SHEHERAZADE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

DeMatteo is sitting behind a desk and doing paperwork as Jim opens the door and enters.

DEMATTEO

Hey, you made it.

JIM

Yeah. John wants a quick sit-down at the pizza place across the street. Is that cool?

DEMATTEO

Yeah, sure. Let me just put this shit away. Better yet, why don't I just meet you over there.

JIM

All right. See you in a few.

EXT. SHEHERAZADE'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jim approaches his car and opens the door, leaning in and talking with John.

JIM

He'll meet us there in a couple of minutes.

HURLEY

All right, get in. Let's park this thing.

Jim climbs into the car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Jim pulls the car into an empty space and turns off the engine.

HURLEY

Okay, Jim...a few things. First off, I'll do all the talking. This guy is out! He fucked with your profits, so he's out.

JIM

But, John, we don't know if it's DeMatteo or Graccini. I mean, maybe we're getting mad at the wrong guy.

HURLEY

No. He's the one calling the shots.

(MORE)

HURLEY (CONT'D)

The Dollhouse manager is skimming profits for this fuck. Get it?

JIM

And he has ties to the Gambinos in New York.

HURLEY

Jim, look at me.

Jim hesitates before opening his mouth again.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

This guy is a pimple on my ass! Understand? So, let's just do what we talked about and get this over with. This guy's out.

Jim, Hurley, and D'Aquilla climb out of the car.

JIM (V.O.)

Admittedly, I was nervous. I didn't know how this was going to play out, but I realized that John and I were about to fire a guy with mob ties and my stomach was doing back-flips.

EXT. PIZZA HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim, Hurley, and D'Aquilla wait outside the entrance until they spot DeMatteo nearing. As he sees the trio, his stride slows just the slightest bit, as if he's unsure.

DEMATTEO

Gentlemen.

DeMatteo extends a hand toward Jim who takes it.

JIM

Hey, J.D., this is John.

DeMatteo extends a hand toward Hurley.

DEMATTEO

Good to meet you.

Hurley merely nods without extending a hand.

HURLEY

Let's talk.

Turning, Hurley walks toward the entrance and cocks his head toward Jim to follow. Jim follows obediently and DeMatteo's eyes flick to D'Aquila's face, whose stony look tells the whole story. DeMatteo follows after Jim with the big man taking up the rear.

INT. PIZZA HOUSE - NIGHT

The pizza house is empty of customers. The owner of the restaurant spots the men entering and immediately walks to the door, turning the lock and flipping the "OPEN" sign to "CLOSED"

As they pass a rounded booth with a wrap-around seat, Hurley points to the seat to indicate that Jim should sit. As he takes his seat, the other three men continue past that booth to the very next identical booth. Jim looks confused, but stays put, nonetheless.

Hurley sits on one side of the rounded booth and DeMatteo sits on the opposite side. D'Aquila's shadow suddenly looms over DeMatteo and he looks up at the big man. DeMatteo's POV: D'Aquila is staring down at him. DeMatteo begrudgingly slides over toward the wall and D'Aquila squeezes into the booth seat with difficulty, the table and seat CREAKING. DeMatteo is now blocked in at the table.

Jim cranes his neck to hear the conversation.

HURLEY

Before we start, I want to make clear that Jim Steffman is my very close friend. So are all of his family and most of his friends.

DeMatteo stares, but is listening without apparent fear.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

That being said, Jim has sold me a one-third ownership of the club. He has also agreed that I will be acting on his behalf from now on regarding all business decisions for the club.

There's a long beat as he stares into DeMatteo's eyes and leans forward.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

That makes me majority owner.

ON Jim as he strains to hear. BACK TO Hurley.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Now, I know about the drug use going on in the club.

DeMatteo is beginning to look concerned.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

And I've also been concerned about the recent drop-off in profit.

D'Aquilla clears his throat and CRACKS his knuckles.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

So I had the place *clocked*.

DeMatteo straightens in his seat uncomfortably, breaking eye contact with Hurley who then lowers his voice considerably.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

I don't fuckin' appreciate the fact that money is being taken out of Jim's pocket or that food is being taken out of his kids' mouths. You understand?

DeMatteo's eyes flick to the pizza house owner as he wipes down the counter.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

So, here's the solution. First off, we're goin' down to the club and that fuckin' piece of shit masquerading as a manager gets the axe. You hear me?

DeMatteo's eyes dart to Hurley's face.

DEMATTEO

I hear you.

HURLEY

Second, the drug use stops. We don't want any of that shit inside the building. You wanna have that shit in your own place, that's your business. But as of tonight, those fuckin' goons down there supplyin' that shit to the staff and the customers...that ends!

DeMatteo stares hard at Hurley.



HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Third...you're out.

DeMatteo looks suddenly angry.

DEMATTEO  
I bought in. It's all legit.

Hurley smirks sarcastically toward DeMatteo.

HURLEY  
Are you telling me, "no"?

DEMATTEO  
I'm telling you that I bought  
in...legally.

HURLEY  
I'll tell you what. You go back to  
your office and you make the  
fuckin' call to New York and you  
tell 'em what I said. Then, we're  
takin' a drive down to Meriden and  
throwing that fuck out on his ass.  
Got that?

DeMatteo is steaming.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
And if Jim or anybody else he cares  
about even stubs a toe by  
accident...

Hurley cocks his head toward D'Aquilla who then struggles to free himself from the booth. Hurley stands as well and looks down toward DeMatteo.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
We're done here. We'll be outside  
in the car for ten minutes and then  
we're heading down to the  
Dollhouse. With or without you.

DeMatteo doesn't move a muscle. Hurley walks toward Jim and taps him on the shoulder. Jim stands clumsily and follows Hurley without looking back. D'Aquilla lingers for a moment, staring down at DeMatteo. The seated man briefly gazes up at D'Aquilla with a defiant look.

DEMATTEO  
Fuck you.

D'Aquilla grins with amusement and leaves behind the other two men.

DeMatteo's gaze follows them as they exit the building before looking at the restaurant owner who makes busy work and pretends to ignore the scene.

EXT. PIZZA HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim follows Hurley as they approach the car with D'Aquilla in tow.

JIM  
Holy shit.

HURLEY  
Calm down, Jim. Take a breath.

JIM  
Holy shit.

HURLEY  
Relax. It's all over.

They climb into the car.

INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Jim is in the driver's seat, Hurley, the front passenger, and D'Aquilla is still struggling to climb into the back seat.

JIM  
Whadaya mean, "all over"? That guy is with the Gambinos, John! It's not all over! Why didn't you tell me about this?

HURLEY  
Calm down and listen.

Hurley pauses as he looks out the window and watches the front door of the pizza house. Jim's POV through windshield reveals DeMatteo as he exits the restaurant.

On Hurley.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
That son-of-a-bitch is gonna go call his bosses and they're gonna tell him to back off.

JIM  
Why? Why would they do that?

HURLEY  
Just trust me.

Jim worriedly shakes his head.

JIM  
I have no choice, right?

The three men continue to wait.

JIM (V.O.)  
Hurley ended up giving DeMatteo fifteen minutes before finally leaving without him. All I kept thinking the whole ride was, "He just threatened the Gambino family."

CUT TO:

EXT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

Jim's car pulls into a sparsely populated parking lot and halts in a space.

INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Hurley turns to Jim.

HURLEY  
All right, listen to me. I'm gonna do all the talking.

Jim just nods as he stares at the steering wheel, his hands gripping it tightly. Hurley touches Jim's shoulder.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Jim. This guy is stealing from you. Okay? He brought this on himself.

Jim relaxes his grip and takes a deep breath while bowing his head.

JIM  
Right.

HURLEY  
All right, let's -

JIM  
But, please, John! Don't kill this guy. Please.

Hurley chuckles lightly and shoots a look back at D'Aquilla. He claps Jim on the shoulder.

HURLEY

I'm not gonna hurt anybody, Jim.  
He doesn't know that, though.

Jim chuckles nervously.

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

Jim, Hurley, and D'Aquilla enter the nightclub. The lights are slightly turned up because it's close to closing time. A girl dances on the stage and the bartender is cleaning up his very untidy bar. Two customers are drunkenly quiet and watching the girl. Near the bar is Dane Graccini, the club manager, who is talking to one of the cocktail waitresses and holding the bar register drawer, overstuffed with cash.

As the trio enters, the bouncer by the corner, overlooking the stage and floor, stands up straighter and uncrosses his arms. Jim waves to him and the bouncer smiles and nods. As Jim gazes to his left, he suddenly notices eight very large Diablos bikers sitting at tables and silently drinking beers. All of them are staring at the trio.

JIM (V.O.)

The Diablos there in their colors, meaning their jackets with logos, was out of place considering we had a no-colors rule stated right at the door. What I found out later was that D'Aquilla had arranged for them to be there in force to ensure a smooth confrontation.

The cocktailer spots the men and her stare causes Graccini to turn and face them. Hurley makes a casual beeline for him and the other two follow. The cocktailer leaves the manager's side and passes by the men.

COCKTAILER

Hey, Mr. Steffman.

JIM

Hi, Monica.

Hurley stops in front of Graccini and stares at him menacingly. Graccini keeps his eye on Hurley.

GRACCINI

What's up, Jim?

HURLEY  
Good take tonight?

GRACCINI  
Jim, who the fuck is this?

Hurley puts up a hand to stifle Jim.

HURLEY  
Listen to me, you little shit.  
You're gonna put that drawer down  
on the fuckin' bar and walk outa  
here. You hear me?

Graccini is defiant.

GRACCINI  
I ain't gonna do anything! Not  
till I know who the fuck you are.

HURLEY  
You got one minute, fuck-face.

Hurley peers at his watch. Graccini reaches behind the bar and grabs a telephone. He dials a number and faces Hurley as he listens.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Tick-tock.

GRACCINI  
J.D.? It's Dane. Steffman's here  
right now with some prick and his  
goon and he's threatening me. He  
just - why? Who the fuck is this  
guy to tell me to leave my club.  
I'm the manager and I'm not gonna -

HURLEY  
Thirty seconds, fuck-face.

GRACCINI  
J.D., what the hell am I supposed  
to -

Graccini's face drops and he hesitantly hands the phone receiver to Hurley.

HURLEY  
(into phone)  
Yeah. You got twenty minutes.

Hands phone back to Graccini, but continues to stare hard at him.

JIM (V.O.)

Those twenty minutes were the longest twenty minutes of my life. We literally stood there, silently staring at each other for a full third of an hour, waiting for J.D. to arrive.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

DeMatteo enters the club in a long trench coat and approaches the scene of the standoff.

GRACCINI

J.D.! This fuck just threatened me and there's no way I'm leaving this drawer with them.

DeMatteo stops near them and only stares at Graccini.

DEMATTEO

Time to go.

GRACCINI

What! Are you outa your fuckin' mind?

Before DeMatteo can answer, Hurley reaches forward and removes a pack of cigarettes from Graccini's shirt pocket. Graccini jerks himself back in disbelief. Hurley TAPS the pack on the heel of his hand, exposing a couple of cancer sticks. He offers the pack to Jim who shakes his head and then removes a cigarette from the pack. He then replaces the pack in Graccini's shirt pocket, but forcibly pushing it down so that it crumples. TAPPING the cigarette, he pops it into his mouth. Leaning forward toward Graccini, he stares him in the eye.

HURLEY

Light it.

Graccini stares him down.

GRACCINI

Are you seriously letting this go, J.D.? Make the fuckin' call.

Hurley sneaks a peek at DeMatteo who is unblinking. He pulls out a lighter and lights the cigarette in his mouth. Blowing the smoke past Graccini's face, he points toward the drawer of money in Graccini's hand.

HURLEY

I'll take the drawer now.

GRACCINI

J.D.! Make the fuckin' call, will ya'?

DEMATTEO

Sometimes, it's just better to walk away.

Graccini is in shock.

GRACCINI

What the fuck are you talkin'-

DEMATTEO

Dane! Put down the drawer.

Graccini closes his mouth, staring in disbelief. Darting a look toward Hurley's hard stare, he slowly puts the drawer down on the bar counter.

DEMATTEO (CONT'D)

Let's go.

(Graccini begins to speak)

I said...let's...go!

Graccini slowly departs as DeMatteo follows him. Graccini darts another dagger look at the trio, but DeMatteo never looks back.

JIM (V.O.)

That was the last time I saw either one of these Bozos in my club. And although John made the singular decision to cut J.D. out of the day-to-day operations, he insisted that I keep him on the contract as a third owner. That was also the last time that J.D. ever received another penny from our profits. DeMatteo called me the very next day to say that he wanted out. When I explained to him that John was calling all the shots and that he specifically wanted J.D.'s name to remain on the contract, he was furious.

HURLEY

(turning to bartender)

What's your name?

BARTENDER

Larry.

Hurley hands the drawer to the bartender.

HURLEY

Well, Larry, congratulations.  
You're now the new manager of the  
Dollhouse Cafe.

Larry takes the drawer, tentatively looking toward Jim.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Jim, give him your keys to the  
place.

Jim fumbles to remove the keys from his keyring.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Who here was close with that piece  
of shit I just booted?

BARTENDER

Close?

HURLEY

C'mon, Larry the manager. Don't be  
shy.

After a long pause and looks around the sparsely populated room, Larry leans closer to Hurley over the bar and begins talking (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

That night, John wasted no time in purging the payroll of one hundred percent of J.D.'s people. He promoted the stripper on the stage to assistant manager and charged them both with hiring new staff to replace the ones he just fired. As we left that night, I asked John what I should pay the bartender now that he was the manager and he just replied, "Seven", without hesitation. Only weeks later, after having paid Larry seven hundred a week, did John question the amount. I replied, "You told me, seven!" To which he replied, "I meant seven dollars an hour."

CUT TO:



EXT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim sits outside his home on the back deck, smoking and relaxing. Hurley is smoking as well, but standing near the rail overlooking the yard. He has a glass of wine in his hand.

JIM  
Thanks for the Porsche.

HURLEY  
We had a deal. How's she handle?

JIM  
Like a dream.

HURLEY  
Well, you earned it.

JIM  
That Stutz Diplomatica...

HURLEY  
Yeah.

JIM  
Now, that's a beauty.

HURLEY  
One of only seven in the world.

JIM  
Yeah, I remember.

Hurley smirks at Jim in a weird way suddenly.

JIM (CONT'D)  
What?

HURLEY  
I got a secret.

JIM  
Oh, yeah?

HURLEY  
Yeah.

Hurley approaches a chair next to Jim and sits, facing him.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
That Stutz? I sent it to Italy  
years ago for reconditioning.

JIM

Uh, huh.

HURLEY

Well, you know that the fixtures and trim are all gold-plated, right?

JIM

Yeah. Weren't they all?

HURLEY

Yup. Well, when it was in Europe, I had them replace all the fixtures and trim. Instead of gold plating, those bad boys are solid gold.

JIM

Get the hell outa here!

Hurley puts his hand over his heart.

HURLEY

On my mother's grave.

JIM

Holy shit. That must be worth a small fortune.

HURLEY

Well, you never know when you're gonna need the cash. And what better way to hide it than right under their noses.

They laugh heartily as the sounds fade away.

JIM (V.O.)

These little get-togethers went on for months. Between all my businesses and John's frequent travel abroad, however, it never seemed like quite enough. Our outings ran the gamut, from attending a hockey game here and there, to sitting down and him telling me about all the famous people he'd known throughout his life, from Liberace to Linda Evans. Or even the two Hard Rock Cafes he helped to finance in New York and Hawaii.

Jim raises a glass in toast. John CLINKS his glass to Jim's.

JIM (V.O.)  
 Life seemed almost perfect. And  
 that's when everything I thought I  
 knew about John Hurley, turned out  
 to be dead wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is sleeping in bed with Janet as his phone near his  
 bedside RINGS, startling him awake. Sitting up, he CLICKS on  
 the lamp and groggily peers at the alarm clock.

JIM  
 Christ. Two-fifteen.

JANET  
 Answer the damn phone.

Jim picks up the receiver.

JIM  
 Hello.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley is sitting by his dining room table, a cigarette  
 clutched in his hand and the phone in his other.

HURLEY  
 Jim. It's John.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is holding the phone to his ear in bed.

JIM  
 Hey. You okay?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
 (through phone)  
 Can you pick me up?

JIM  
 Now?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
It's real important

Jim looks over at Janet, who has already gone back to sleep.

JIM  
Yeah, sure, John. Gimme a half-hour.

SWITCH TO:

INT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Hurley is sitting, holding the phone to his ear, taking a drag on his cigarette. Blowing out, he nods.

HURLEY  
Thanks, Jim. See ya' then.

EXT. HURLEY'S CONDO - NIGHT

Jim's car pulls into the driveway, its headlights beaming brightly against the garage. Hurley descends the steps very casually, his camera bag on his arm. He reaches the car and opens the door, climbing into the vehicle.

HURLEY  
Hey, buddy.

JIM  
What's up? You okay?

Hurley points backward with his thumb.

HURLEY  
Back it out.

Jim hesitates for a moment, then follows the instructions. Sneaking a quick glance at his friend, he sees Hurley lighting up a cigarette and rolling the window down. As they gain the street, Hurley points ahead.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Five blocks down, take a right.

JIM  
Where are we going?

HURLEY  
New England Chicken House. Know it?

Jim shakes his head.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
I didn't think so.

Jim continues to drive in silence as Hurley keeps smoking, one bogey after another.

JIM (V.O.)  
He didn't say anything the whole ride. I thought maybe that he was just being John, where he just wanted some company...somebody to shoot the shit with.

INT. NEW ENGLAND CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim and Hurley enter the rundown greasy diner and there is no one there except the OWNER and a WAITRESS. They find a booth and sit down. Jim notices a slit in the seat, the stuffing popping out of it as he sits. The waitress approaches to drop off menus and they both order coffee (subdued audio) as she takes the menus back.

JIM (V.O.)  
As I watched John's face that night, though, there was something there that suggested this was a different sort of night.

The coffees arrive.

HURLEY  
(with Jim)  
Thanks.

The waitress walks away and sits down at the counter to watch the television with the owner. Hurley stirs sugar into his coffee.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
In this world, Jim...there are the good guys and there are the bad guys.

Jim's eyes narrow in confusion. There is a long hesitation as Hurley stares into his cup of coffee, swirling it slightly. Looking up into Jim's eyes, he puts his cup down.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
I'm one of the bad guys.

Jim chuckles nervously, but then slowly loses his smile as Hurley sips his coffee, his face emotionless.

JIM  
Whadaya talking about?

Hurley checks his watch.

HURLEY  
Look, Jim, we've got two hours,  
tops. I've got a lot to tell you  
and then...

Jim waits for the rest of Hurley's statement.

JIM  
And then what?

Hurley lights a cigarette.

HURLEY  
Never mind.

JIM  
What happens in two hours, John?

Hurley takes a puff on his cigarette and looks Jim in the eyes. After an uncomfortable moment where Jim feels like he's being probed, Hurley taps the ash from his cigarette.

HURLEY  
About three hours ago, the feds  
raided my house in New Hampshire.

JIM  
Feds?

HURLEY  
They, uh, found a safe in the house  
and there are some documents in  
that safe that I really don't want  
them to see.

JIM  
Are we talking FBI?

HURLEY  
No, DEA. Anyway -

JIM  
Drugs?

HURLEY  
Jim, please.

JIM

Sorry.

HURLEY

The stuff in the safe will lead them here to Connecticut. I've got three days before that happens.

JIM

How do you know?

HURLEY

The guy that made the safe for me assured me that it'd take them three days to open it...if they don't wanna damage what's inside. Anyway, the stuff in that safe is gonna bring the DEA here. And I can't be here when they come snoopin' around.

Jim is still confused. Hurley tamps out his cigarette.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

(rolling his R's)

My name is Salvatore Michael Caruana.

Jim's eyes widen noticeably.

JIM

What?

HURLEY

My real name is Savatore Caruana.

Jim continues to stare in confusion and shock.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

I'm a distributor of drugs on the Eastern seaboard.

Jim's eyes quickly dart to the owner and waitress who are out of earshot.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Mostly marijuana. I work with a whole bunch of families in the area.

ANGLE ON Jim's hand as it strays to the foam stuffing in the slit of the booth seat. He pulls a piece of the foam off as he listens with a nervous look on his face.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

My family is part of the Contrera family. In high school, I didn't want to be part of the family business, so I left. Married my high school sweetheart, did the honest-living bit for a while, and then began forming a small gang of thugs to knock off local banks.

Hurley sniffs and looks out the window as his hand reaches into a cigarette pack to light up another.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Well, we did, but everybody got caught. Everybody but me. I ran with the money and got my pilot's license, laying low in South America for a while until things cooled off. Soon after that, I began working in small time importing and distributing with some Columbian bigwigs and, like magic, I was suddenly making big deals with the Italian families back here. Pretty soon, I was operating on my own. No loyalties. So I even dealt with my own family's rivals.

Jim is now pulling at the foam stuffing furiously, keeping a stony face.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

But I got caught about a year and a half ago. By that time, I already had dozens of officials in my back pocket. Lawyers, accountants, police, federal judges, State Reps, Senators. Hell, I even had a guy from the Bahamas who was being knighted by the Queen of England who was on my payroll. He's the guy who was laundering money for me.

JIM

Why are you telling me this?

Hurley pauses and looks serious once again.

HURLEY

'Cause you're my friend and I care about you.

(MORE)



HURLEY (CONT'D)

I'm going to be disappearing in a few days and I didn't want to just leave without you knowing why. I don't have a lot of friends. And you're the only one who never asked me for anything. So, I feel like I owe you, at least, an explanation.

JIM

How long are you gonna be gone?

Hurley takes a long drag while looking out the window.

HURLEY

I won't be back again.

Jim stops pulling the foam from the seat. His other hand that's gripping the coffee mug tightly, loosens.

JIM

That's it? You're gone for good?

Hurley blows smoke and nods.

HURLEY

That's it. So, here's the extra keys to my condo.

Hurley removes papers and a set of keys from his coat and slides them on the table toward Jim.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

If the feds don't end up seizing the property, that's the deed. It's all yours.

Jim stares down at the keys with his mouth slightly open.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

If they do come around, I'd get rid of that deed.

JIM

Christ, John.

HURLEY

Listen to me. You've been a good friend, so I won't lie to you. Those guys are coming and they want me bad. They're gonna be insistent. But I've got contacts all over the place. So, I'm not worried for me. You, however...

JIM  
I'm not telling them anything,  
John.

HURLEY  
Listen, I appreciate -

JIM  
I won't tell them about you.

HURLEY  
Jim, they'll already know about  
you. The thing is, you gotta  
convince them of the truth, that  
you didn't know anything about my  
business.

JIM  
But I didn't.

HURLEY  
Exactly. You have got to convince  
them. Otherwise, they'll try to  
link you to me. You get me?

Jim nods sullenly as he looks out the window.

JIM  
I'm sorry, John.

HURLEY  
Don't you be sorry. I'm the bad  
guy.

JIM  
Because you're distributing  
marijuana? You could've been doing  
a lot worse.

HURLEY  
(chuckling)  
They think I did. These assholes  
think I actually ordered a hit on a  
federal judge down in Texas. Or,  
at least, they used to. I think  
they finally figured out it wasn't  
me.

Jim shuffles in his seat uncomfortably.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Some guy hired Woody Harrelson's  
dad to take out this judge down in  
Texas.

(MORE)

HURLEY (CONT'D)

That's why Harrelson's father's serving time, you know? Anyway, for a while, they tried to pin that on me 'cause I was flying over that area frequently to make contact with the Columbian bosses.

Hurley digs into his wallet for cash and puts a fifty down on the table.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

When they caught me a little over a year ago, they were gonna charge me with all kinds of shit...drug trafficking, tax evasion, money laundering...they wanted something to stick, right? So, for all intents and purposes, the judge should've set my bail at a million, at least. Which would've been fine. I could afford it. But what they didn't know was that my lawyer made a little phone call the night before to the judge seeing my case and made sure I wasn't gonna be spending a fortune on this.

Hurley laughs as he drinks down the last of his coffee. Jim watches silently.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

The judge gave my lawyer some push-back on the phone, but in the end, he agreed. So, as payback the next day, I embarrassed this judge. I knew that the bail was going to be set at five hundred grand, so I had my lawyer show up with fifty grand in a briefcase. You shoulda seen that asshole's face when the bail was announced and my lawyer opens up the case with stacks of hundreds in the exact amount.

Hurley stops laughing and puts out his cigarette with some force. Leaning forward toward Jim, he lowers his voice.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

These fucks push you, Jim...you gotta push right back.

After a moment's serious look toward his friend, Hurley pulls away and takes out a piece of paper from his pocket, handing it to Jim.

JIM

What's this?

HURLEY

That's a list of pay phones around your neighborhood. You got the streets on there. Get familiar with them. From now on, that's how I'm gonna contact you. You'll get a call from my lawyer in the next day or so. He's gonna say "Bingo" and that means you go to the pay phone and wait for my call.

Jim smiles in spite of his nerves.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

I know it sounds ridiculous, but trust me, Jim, once these clowns find out about your friendship with me, they're gonna tap your phones. I'm just planning ahead. The first phone on that list (a beat) that's the first one I'll be calling. Every time we talk, I'll tell you the next phone we'll be using. Okay?

Jim nods slowly. Hurley stands and Jim follows.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

(to waitress)

Thank you.

They walk out of the diner.

EXT. NEW ENGLAND CHICKEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jim and Hurley exit the diner and Hurley turns to his friend.

HURLEY

You okay?

JIM

That's a hell of a question.

HURLEY

I know. I'm sorry. Listen, I'm not gonna pretend that all this goes away once I leave. You're gonna get both barrels from the DEA thugs. But, trust me.

(MORE)

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Try your damndest to convince them  
that you knew nothing. Otherwise,  
they're gonna rip your life apart.  
These guys don't fuck around. Know  
what I mean?

Jim stares down the street at nothing.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
I'll call you tomorrow. We got a  
few errands to run.

JIM  
Errands?

HURLEY  
Yeah. You good with that?

Jim looks at Hurley despondently and then snaps out of it,  
nodding.

JIM  
Yeah, I'm good.

They climb into Jim's car.

INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

As they BUCKLE their seatbelts, Jim and Hurley look at each  
other.

HURLEY  
I wish things were different, Jim.

JIM  
Yeah...me, too.

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim and Alex are sitting opposite each other.

ALEX  
(consulting watch)  
Holy shit! We've been at this for  
three hours.

JIM  
You need to go?

ALEX  
(smiling and taking out  
his cellphone)  
(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Are you kidding? Now? No, I'm  
just calling my wife to let her  
know I'm still gonna be awhile.

He rises and opens the phone.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
That's okay, right? You can keep  
going?

JIM  
Alex, I've been waiting to tell  
this story for twenty-five years.

ALEX  
Okay, then. I'll be a second.

Alex walks out of the office and his voice can be heard in the background (inaudible). Jim gazes down at the documents in front of him. CAMERA finds mug shots of Hurley on the Top Ten Most Wanted bulletin. His eyes glaze over slightly.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Okay, we're good. I bought at  
least another two hours from the  
warden.

Jim looks up and laughs lightly.

JIM  
You want me to order food or  
something?

ALEX  
No, no, no. I'm perfectly fine. I  
mean, if you're hungry, by all  
means, but...

JIM  
You sure?

ALEX  
Yeah, yeah. I'm fine. Okay, so,  
where were we?

JIM  
The Chicken House.

ALEX  
Right. The Chicken House.

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim is sitting at his desk with his hands folded, head down, and a hot cup of coffee in front of him.

JIM (V.O.)  
Exactly three days later, my life  
became even more complicated.

LESLIE (V.O.)  
(through intercom)  
Jim, there are three gentlemen here  
to see you.

Jim looks up slowly at the intercom.

JIM  
Who are they?

LESLIE (V.O.)  
They say they're from the DEA.

Jim's eyes close and he calmly breathes out.

JIM  
I'll be right there.

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

Leslie is standing behind a cashier's counter and THREE MEN, dressed casually in T-shirts, jackets, jeans, and sneakers are milling about.

JIM (V.O.)  
DEA agents always operate in  
threes, just like the Three  
Stooges. FBI guys travel in twos,  
like Laurel and Hardy. A  
journalist once said that FBI stood  
for "Fat Bungling Idiots". I don't  
know if journalists had an  
alternate for DEA, but in my  
opinion, it stood for "Don't Ever  
Antagonize".

One of the agents is looking out the window at the cars, another is flipping through a magazine, and the third is scanning the snacks on the display rack by the counter. He picks up a bag of peanuts and fishes money out of his pocket to pay Leslie.

BAD

Glad I don't work here. I'd be eating up all the profits.

He laughs and winks at Leslie who smiles uncomfortably and takes the money. He then directs a comment over his shoulder to the other two.

BAD (CONT'D)

Ain't that right?

Jim enters the lobby through a door behind the counter. The man with the peanuts SNAPS his fingers twice and the other two stand and converge at the counter.

JIM

Can I help you, gentlemen?

BAD

Mr. Steffman?

JIM

Yeah.

BAD

I'm Agent Ruck with the DEA. This is Agent Murphy...

(indicates Bald)

And Agent Valcourt.

(indicates Bland)

Do you have a moment to sit down in private.

Jim looks over toward Leslie who pretends not to hear.

JIM

I'm good right here.

Bad glances toward his cohorts and then nods, sporting a fake smile.

BAD

All right, well...the DEA has dispatched approximately forty agents to Connecticut for the express purpose of locating and apprehending John Hurley.

Bad stares into Jim's eyes for a reaction.

BAD (CONT'D)

In speaking with various folks in the area, we were informed that you and he were pals.



JIM  
Yeah. We're friends.

BAD  
Are you aware, Mr. Steffman, that  
John Hurley is a wanted fugitive?

JIM  
I am now.

BLAND  
Oh, he never mentioned it?

Jim looks toward the second agent.

JIM  
Mentioned that he was a fugitive?

BLAND  
Yeah.  
(a beat as he folds his  
arms)  
Never came up in conversation?

JIM  
No, sorry.

BAD  
Can you give us an address or phone  
number where we can contact him?

JIM  
Uh, no. He usually just shows up.

BALD  
How about his usual hang-outs?

Jim feigns thinking about it and then shakes his head.

BAD  
How long have you known Hurley, Mr.  
Steffman?

JIM  
I dunno. About a year or so.

BLAND  
(whistling scoff)  
Wow. So, in a whole year, you've  
never spoken with him on the phone?

BALD  
And you don't know where your best  
friend lives?

BAD  
That is extraordinary. Really  
unbelievable.

JIM  
Yeah, truly. Anyway, I'm real  
busy, gentlemen. Good luck in your  
investigation.

BAD  
Uh, Mr. Steffman? We're not done  
here.

JIM  
Listen, if you wanna talk to me,  
please set up an appointment.

The three exchange glances.

BAD  
We'll be speaking soon.

The three exit the lobby. Leslie watches the three get into  
their car.

LESLIE  
What the hell was that all about?

Jim just stares as they drive off.

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim is looking over receipts when the phone rings.

LESLIE (V.O.)  
(through intercom)  
Jim, your wife is on line one.

Jim picks up the phone.

JIM  
Hello.

Looking up from his paperwork, his eyes show concern.

JIM (CONT'D)  
Listen, don't...no, don't let  
them...all right, all right, I'll  
be right there! Don't say anything!

Jim SLAMS the phone down and exits the office quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim's car pulls into the driveway and comes to an abrupt halt. As he exits the car, he sees the agents' vehicle parked illegally at the curb. Jim grits his teeth.

JIM

Assholes!

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Janet is standing in the living room, holding the baby and looking uncomfortable while the other kids are on the floor, drawing on pads of paper. Bald is on the floor, one hand on a pad while one of the boys is tracing his hand with a crayon. Bland is sitting on the sofa and arranging wanted posters of Hurley on the coffee table.

Jim enters the house with urgency. He looks down at his kids as they are drawing and gazes at the agents who look up at him with smiles.

JIM

(to Janet)

Where's the other one?

She nods her head toward the kitchen. Jim cocks his head and ambles sideways like a crab. Jim's POV as CAMERA slides left until Bad can be seen in the kitchen, using their house phone.

JIM (CONT'D)

Go upstairs, sweetie.

She obliges and takes the baby with her.

JIM (CONT'D)

(to Bland)

What is this? I told you to call me for an appointment.

BLAND

This is a criminal investigation, Mr. Steffman. Not a business meeting.

JIM

And I'm not a criminal!

BALD

That all depends on whether or not you cooperate, Mr. Steffman.

BLAND  
Hurley doesn't usually make  
friends. That's why we're soooo  
interested in you.

Jim keeps a close eye on his children and on Bad in his  
kitchen.

BLAND (CONT'D)  
He trusts you, Mr. Steffman. That  
has enormous value in our  
investigation.

JIM  
You mean in your pursuit.

BALD  
Right.  
(to boy with crayon)  
Excellent work!

JIM  
So, what am I supposed to do?

BLAND  
If you call Hurley and, I don't  
know, tell him you need to talk to  
him, it would aid us in setting up  
a sting.

JIM  
You mean, you'll use me as bait to  
catch him.

Bland looks at Bald.

BLAND  
Look, Mr. Steffman, if you're  
worried about your safety, we've  
already got a contingency set up  
for your complete protection.

JIM  
I've got a wife...and kids, if you  
hadn't noticed. If you're telling  
me that Hurley is dangerous, why  
would any rational person willingly  
set him up?

BLAND  
Any rational person in your  
position would be willing to do  
just about anything to help us  
bring this guy to justice.

JIM  
Whaddaya mean, "my position"?

BAD (O.S.)  
He means, someone who knows Hurley  
best.

Jim's head turns toward the kitchen where Bad is in the doorway, staring with a serious look, the phone receiver still in his hand. Jim's face is strained.

BLAND  
You know this guy, Mr. Steffman.  
You could call him and make it  
sound like you're in some sort of  
trouble.

JIM (V.O.)  
Little did I know that I already  
was.

JIM  
Look. Even if I do what you  
say...and - and you capture  
him...he still gets to make his  
phone call. One call to his  
buddies and me and my whole family  
are...are done.

BLAND  
I think you're underestimating us,  
Mr. Steffman.

JIM (V.O.)  
Little did I know that I was.

JIM  
Look! I've done nothing illegal!  
I run straight businesses! I pay  
my taxes! Yes, I know Hurley! For  
Christ's sake, he was just a guy I  
met who had the same hobbies as me!  
I have never helped him with...with  
whatever it is he does! So,  
please! I have no interest in  
cooperating in a sting operation.

Bland, Bald and Bad stare at Jim. Bad chuckles. Bald removes his hand from the coloring pad and folds his arms.

JIM (CONT'D)  
You gentlemen don't really have any  
more business in my home!

Bland clears his throat.

BLAND

I don't think you understand, Mr. Steffman. You really don't have -

JIM

I understand that I have rights!  
(pointing toward children)  
Kids, go upstairs to your mother!

The kids climb to their feet.

JIM (CONT'D)

Go, go, go!

The kids race to the stairs and THUMP up to the second floor.

JIM (CONT'D)

You people have invaded my home without a warrant...and now you're trying to coerce me into some ridiculous plan that could get my whole family killed.

They continue to stare. Jim walks toward Bad and grabs the phone from his hand. He hangs it up and dials his attorney's number.

JIM (CONT'D)

Yeah, it's Jim Steffman. Not so good. I've got three DEA agents in my living room right now who invited themselves in while I was at work. Right now, they're harassing me and -

Jim falls silent as he listens. Bad looks at the carpet and shakes his head slowly.

JIM (CONT'D)

Seriously? So, I'm just supposed to allow them to come and go in my house as they please? Cooperate.

(scoffs)

Great advice from a lawyer I'm paying to protect my rights.

He HANGS UP the phone angrily. Bad paces into the living room and sits down, picking up a magazine. Jim stares at them.

JIM (CONT'D)  
 Can I get you some warm milk? Or a  
 ham on rye!?

Bland laughs. Jim grabs a phone book and begins looking through the Blue Pages. He dials a number.

JIM (CONT'D)  
 Jim Steffman. Meriden,  
 Connecticut. I am looking at three  
 DEA agents who are sitting in my  
 living room and I want them to  
 leave. D-E-A. They're looking for  
 a drug guy! They want me to be  
 their bait!

Jim's face falls yet again.

JIM (CONT'D)  
 You have got to be kidding me.  
 You're the F-B-I! You have no  
 jurisdiction!? Really!?

Jim SLAMS the phone down.

BLAND  
 Look, Mr. Steffman, we can see that  
 you're on edge.

JIM  
 I'm on edge!

Bad and Bald get to their feet.

BAD  
 We'll be speaking again, Mr.  
 Steffman.

They file out slowly.

BALD  
 (as he exits)  
 You have a lovely family.

Jim scowls and SLAMS the door. He watches through the sheer curtains of the window as they climb into their car and leave.

JIM (V.O.)  
 The first volley had been fired.  
 And I suddenly felt like Custer at  
 Little Big Horn.

Off Jim's strained face, we:

FADE OUT

EXT. TEXACO GAS STATION - DAY

Jim is talking with Beetle (inaudible dialogue) when a car pulls into the lot. He immediately recognizes it as the agents' car and pats the manager on the shoulder as he walks toward his car wash office, following their slow-moving vehicle. The car stops in front of the office and the agents climb out as Jim approaches them.

JIM  
Gentlemen. Can I help you?

BAD  
We need you to open Hurley's storage unit.

JIM  
Where's your warrant?

Bad is not amused, but Bland and Bald snicker.

BAD  
It's not really good practice, Mr. Steffman, to impede a federal investigation...particularly when you're claiming innocence.

Jim stares for a moment.

JIM  
Follow me.

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim leads the men to the first row of storage units and turns the corner. He looks at the units and slows, as if trying to remember which one is Hurley's.

JIM  
I think this is it.

BAD  
You think?

JIM  
Well, look, it's been almost a year since he rented the space.

Bad stares for a moment before looking at Bland and cocking his head in the door's direction.



Bland reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a small leather case. Opening it, he pulls out a slender pair of instruments and steps forward. He crouches and examines the padlock. Inserting the tools into the key slot, he quickly and cleanly picks it. The CLICK of the padlock sounds as he removes it from the door's latch.

The agents raise the corrugated door and are surprised to see a unit stuffed from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, with junk. Dismembered bicycles, car radios, steering wheels, upholstered bucket seats, motorcycle helmets, and tons of other refuse are apparent. As the door halts at the top, a lone helmet falls from the stack and just misses Bland, who jumps out of the way.

BLAND

Shit!

The three stare at Jim.

BAD

This isn't funny, Mr. Steffman.

JIM

I'm - I'm sorry. I thought that this was the one. Maybe it's behind in the next row.

Jim walks quickly away as the agents exchange glances. Bland purses his lips in frustration as he drops the padlock to the asphalt with a loud CLATTER.

JIM (V.O.)

I was beginning to skate on thin ice. I could just feel their eyes boring into the back of my skull.

Bad opens a snack wrapper and begins eating. Jim approaches the corner of the second row of units and, as he turns, there is an open, empty storage unit. Without warning, Bad shoves Jim into the empty space. Instinctively, Jim turns to face him, but he is pushed backward into the metal wall of the unit, making a loud, rattling BANG as Bad leans in close to him and grabs a hold of his jacket. ANGLE ON Jim's profile as Bad's profile eases toward Jim's, nose to nose.

JIM (V.O.)

His breath made me want to vomit. It smelled like freshly-chewed peanuts.

BAD

We're done fucking around, Steffman.

JIM (V.O.)  
Uh, oh. They dropped the "Mister".

BAD  
The next unit better be the right  
one.

Jim stares into Bad's face and wrenches Bad's hands from his clothing. He puffs up slightly and pushes past the agents.

JIM  
Then I suggest you run along and  
fetch your warrant.

Jim continues to walk, turning the corner and ignoring the trio. The agents follow him with angry looks.

JIM (V.O.)  
The Alphabet Men, as I later  
started calling them just to  
maintain my sanity, were now  
officially pissed off at Yours  
Truly.

Jim's POV spots a peanut wrapper on the ground. Stooping, Jim turns to regard the three who are ambling along casually behind him. He stoops to retrieve the discarded wrapper, CRUMPLES it up, and then lobs it into a trash can. As he passes their car, he notices that their trunk is open and is surprised to see, not only a variety of breaking-and-entering tools, but also three state-of-the-art phone boxes.

Entering the car wash lobby, he closes the door behind him and approaches Leslie.

JIM  
Are they coming in, or leaving?

LESLIE  
(half-looking around his  
shoulder)  
Leaving.

Jim bows his head and breathes.

JIM  
Thank God.

LESLIE  
What'd they want?

JIM  
Apparently, my nuts.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is sleeping on the chair in the living room, a stub of a burned-down cigarette clutched between his fingers. The phone RINGS, startling him. He sits up and reaches for the receiver blindly.

JIM  
(into phone)  
Yeah.

SWITCH TO:

EXT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Bad is leaning against the car, eating snacks. Bald is reading a car wash pamphlet, and Bland is on one of the trunk phone boxes.

BLAND  
We've got a warrant, Steffman. And  
it's got your name on it.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is sitting up in the chair with the telephone to his ear, rubbing his eyes.

JIM  
I'll be right down.

EXT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim's car is pulling up near the office.

INT. JIM'S CAR - DAY

Jim's POV through the windshield finds the agents' car parked by the side of some of the units and the agents are leaning up against the vehicle. Jim looks toward the office to see Leslie approaching his slow-moving car. He stops and rolls down the window.

LESLIE

Jim, I'm so sorry. They took the master list.

JIM

It's all right.

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim climbs out of the car and approaches the agents.

JIM

Got the warrant?

The three ignore Jim and stand up, walking toward the closed unit near their car. Reaching into his pocket, Bland once again produces his thieving picks and deftly opens the lock.

INT. STORAGE UNIT - DAY

Blackness. The door is raised as light streams in to reveal the agents staring into the CAMERA. Jim is in the background, silent and troubled. The agents smile. Bad grabs a pad from the car and takes out a pen.

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

The storage unit can be seen to hold the motor vehicles of John Hurley. As Bald climbs around the vehicles and calls off VIN numbers, Bad is writing them down. Meanwhile, Bland is picking three more locks as intercut scenes are shown of doors being raised and boats and motorcycles are revealed. Jim chain-smokes as they continue their raid.

JIM (V.O.)

Over the next hour, the Alphabet Men took a detailed inventory of the contents of all Hurley's units.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim is leaning up against the storage unit wall as the agents carefully close the doors to the units and replace the padlocks on the door latches.

JIM (V.O.)

Once they finished up, Bald left with the list en route to Hartford to obtain a search warrant from a federal judge. The other two hung back to guard the units, or me, or both.

Bland and Bad sit on the ground as Jim smokes another cigarette.

JIM (V.O.)

Within the hour, Bald had returned.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

The agents' car pulls up and stops. Bald climbs out and opens the trunk. The other two climb to their feet as Bald removes crowbars and a sledgehammer from the car. Jim tamps out his cigarette and stares as Bald hands a crowbar to each of his cohorts and they spread out over the four units.

JIM (V.O.)

First came the shove into the wall. Now, I was about to receive my second lesson in DEA intimidation techniques.

Bald raises his crowbar and stabs its straight end right through the corrugated door.

JIM

Hey! What the hell do you think you're -

Another loud THUD as Bad begins BATTERING, SLAMMING, DENTING, STABBING and RIPPING metal and wood from the doors.

JIM (CONT'D)

Are you guys fuckin' nuts!

Bland follows suit. Finally, Bald begins demolishing all the doors with the sledgehammer.

JIM (V.O.)

And so, for the next thirty excruciating minutes, I had to stand by and watch as these assholes completely destroyed four of my storage units, simply because I feared for my family's safety.

Bald takes a final swing as one of the doors finally falls from its rails, dangling like a broken tooth of a wounded animal. The CLANGING of the dropped crowbars sounds and Bald finally puts down the sledgehammer, hard enough to put a dent in the dark asphalt. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out a piece of paper. Breathing heavily and sweating profusely, he stares down at Jim and CRUMPLES up the paper in his hand.

Bald's POV as he looks down on Jim whose back is against the wall as he sits on the ground, knees pulled up close to his chest, and head bowed, an ashy cigarette in one limp hand. The crumpled ball of paper bounces down on the pavement next to Jim.

Jim's POV looking up at Bald.

BALD  
There's your warrant.

FADE OUT

EXT. CAR WASH LOBBY - NIGHT

Jim and Leslie exit through the door as Jim locks up.

JIM  
Good night, Leslie.

LESLIE  
Yeah, see you in the morning.

JIM (V.O.)  
Directly after obliterating my storage units, several flatbeds arrived on queue to begin loading all of Hurley's vehicles and boats for seizure. The only things they left behind were the custom-built trail bike, worth about five grand, and a quaint little paddle boat.

Jim climbs into his car and STARTS up the engine. He pulls out of the lot and turns onto the main road.

JIM (V.O.)  
Needless to say, after all the money these guys had cost me, I sold them for a tiny compensation of my losses.

INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Jim is driving and notices a car's headlights in the rearview mirror. He puts on a right turn signal and turns. Keeping an eye on the lights, he sees them turn and continue to follow. Several odd turns later, the car is still following.

JIM  
Son-of-a-bitch.

EXT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim's car pulls into the driveway and the other car pulls up to the curb. Jim exits his vehicle and walks toward his steps, watching the car. Then, the doors open and the Alphabet Men climb out. Bland and Bad lean up against the car as Bald walks across the lawn toward Jim. Quickly, he makes a big show out of checking under the bushes and then walks up to Jim.

BALD  
We need to use your phone.

JIM  
You gotta be shittin' me.

Jim is incredulous as Bald continues to stare at him.

JIM (CONT'D)  
You can't use the twenty phone boxes you got in your trunk?

BAD (O.S.)  
Better let us use your phone, Steffman.

Jim looks out toward Bad who is now standing up straight and smoking a cigarette. Jim growls and turns to put the key in the door.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is heating up food for himself as Bad is using the phone. Bland is sitting on the couch and Bald is in the hall, looking at photos of the family.

BALD (O.S.)  
Smells good!

Jim shakes his head disdainfully as he fixes his plate and grabs a napkin. He sits down at the table and begins eating.

Bad hangs up the phone and walks out toward Bland. Bald joins them.

BLAND

Be reasonable, Steffman. Things are not going to get any better until you cooperate.

Jim ignores them.

BAD

You really don't have a choice, Steffman. I mean, we can always just get a court order compelling you to cooperate.

JIM

(while chewing)  
Then, do it!

Bland smirks.

BALD

Chew, Steffman. Didn't your mother ever tell you that?

JIM

You don't like the way I eat, then leave.

BALD

We're kinda' hungry.

Jim stops chewing, swallows, and SLAMS the sandwich down on his plate. The agents smile. Jim stands and enters the living room from the dining room.

JIM

You know, for guys who are supposed to be cops, you really are stupid.

The agents laugh.

BAD

Oh, yeah? How's that, Steffman?



JIM

Oh, I don't know. Let's see.  
Three DEA agents are in the home of  
a man who was friends with a known  
felon...a felon who's still at  
large...and you geniuses decide to  
park your fat asses on the only  
couch where the backs of your heads  
are perfectly positioned in front  
of the largest picture window in  
the house.

The three agents' faces suddenly become serious as they  
instinctively duck down low and scatter to areas of the room  
where they are not near the window. Bad turns out the main  
light as Bland lets the curtains drop.

JIM (CONT'D)

Geniuses.

The three continually check the street through the drawn  
curtains.

JIM (V.O.)

After about twenty minutes of  
checking the neighborhood through  
cracks in the curtains, they  
finally left. Of course, there was  
the parting promise that we'd be  
speaking again. Of course, like  
everything the DEA did, the number  
three was involved. Three days  
later, they showed up at my door  
with yet another promise of  
protection.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is opening the front door. The Alphabet Men are there,  
smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim sits on a chair across from the three on the couch as  
they each take turns speaking.

BAD

You have an obligation to assist  
us, Steffman. An obligation as a  
US citizen.

Jim is silent and staring.

BALD  
Cooperate with us, Steffman, and  
you and your family will be well  
taken care of.

JIM  
Witness Protection Program?

BALD  
Exactly.

BLAND  
Full protection, Steffman. No  
worries. We'll house you and your  
family in the Catskills, then  
transfer you from there to a new  
home in a new state.

Bad stands and moves toward the kitchen. Jim's eyes follow  
him.

JIM  
I have five kids. Young kids. It  
would be impossible for them to  
keep their mouths shut about this.  
You really expect these kids to sit  
on this for the rest of their  
lives?

The three just stare.

JIM (CONT'D)  
Sorry. I appreciate the offer and -  
and your position here, but...

The three continue to stare in silence.

JIM (CONT'D)  
I'd appreciate it if you just leave  
now. That's all I have to say.

BLAND  
Steffman...I'm afraid it isn't that  
simple.

BAD (O.S.)  
We'll be speaking again.

As they prepare to leave, Jim stands.

JIM  
You know, you don't have to say  
that every time you leave! I know  
we'll be talking again!

EXT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

ANGLE ON front door as it opens and the three agents are  
exiting. They are smirking.

JIM (O.S.)  
(shouting)  
It goes without saying, right?  
(mimicking agents in deep  
voice)  
"We'll be speaking again,  
Steffman." Whoa! There's a real  
shocker!

Bald pauses to hear the last words before gently closing the  
door behind him.

JIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
God! Assholes!

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim is on the phone.

JIM  
Okay, I'm sorry about my behavior  
this morning. All right? Listen,  
you guys can talk as much as you  
like, but please, as a courtesy to  
me and my family, just call ahead.  
Name the time, the place, the day,  
and I promise I'll be there. I  
just don't want you in my house  
ever again.

Jim continues negotiating (subdued audio).

JIM (V.O.)  
I thought that, since I was a  
legitimate businessman, I could  
actually negotiate with a branch of  
the federal government using reason  
and rationale. It's what I did  
best, after all. I really believed  
that this was a good compromise.

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

Jim enters the lobby from his office door. Leslie is there at the counter.

JIM  
Leslie, could you do me a favor and get the pressure readings from the equipment room?

LESLIE  
Sure. Hey, Jim?

JIM  
Yeah.

LESLIE  
I know this is going to sound weird...

JIM  
What?

LESLIE  
Well. Remember those dudes with the crowbars who broke into Hurley's units?

Jim's face drops slowly.

JIM  
Uh huh.

LESLIE  
Maybe I'm just paranoid, but I think they've been following me.

Jim stares out the window.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
Stupid, huh?

Off Jim's stare, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim is walking through the lot and approaches a work truck. A CREW is repairing the damage to the four units. Jim observes their progress.

CREWMAN #1

Hey, Jim.

A beat as he climbs down the ladder.

CREWMAN #1 (CONT'D)

There was a car here earlier. A few guys in the car were asking about how often we worked for you and if you paid us in cash.

Jim stares incredulously.

JIM

You gotta be kidding me.

CREWMAN #1

Jerry thinks you're the next Scarface.

He begins laughing as Jim sports a fake smile.

JIM

Thanks, Bryan.

CREWMAN #2

Say 'ello to my leetle friend!

The others begin laughing. Jim shakes his head as he walks away from the group.

EXT. STORE - DAY

Jim is leaving the store as he runs into an EMPLOYEE of his gas station.

BOY

Hey, Mr. Steffman!

JIM

Hey, Chris! Day off today, huh?

BOY

Yeah. Running errands.

JIM

Well, I'll see you at the station on Tuesday then.

BOY

Okay, Mr. Steffman. Oh, Mr. Steffman!

Jim turns to face him.

JIM

Yeah?

BOY

The other day, I -

Suddenly he stops and looks around. He then draws close and lowers his voice as Jim's face drops a bit.

BOY (CONT'D)

The other day, these guys came into the station to get gas. When they paid me, this bald guy asked me if I knew that my boss was involved with organized crime.

JIM

(feigning hilarity)

What? You're kidding!

BOY

I laughed, too. After I took their money, I told them to suck my -

JIM

Okay, Chris. Okay, thanks. See you soon.

Jim pats him on the shoulder and walks away as Chris enters the store.

JIM (V.O.)

This kind of harassment continued for weeks. Every day, I faced someone else who had a new story to tell me about the Three Stooges. Anything from asking my night manager if I ever added money to the floor safe to telling my local florist that I once threatened a neighbor that I'd bust his kneecaps if he crossed me.

Jim climbs into his car. He sits in the driver's seat, staring ahead.

JIM (V.O.)

All this was an attempt to plant the seeds in the community that I was a crime lord, in addition to breaking my resolve and forcing me to go along with some ridiculous sting operation.

Jim starts the car and slowly pulls away.

JIM (V.O.)

Thing about paying your employees well is that they remained loyal no matter what the threat. The bad thing about it was that, unknown to me, I was beginning to agitate the DEA. This, of course, would eventually turn ugly.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim opens the front door to a SHERIFF serving him papers (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

Three days later, the sheriff served me with a subpoena to testify against John Hurley before a grand jury in Boston.

Jim opens the papers in the doorway as the sheriff walks off down the front path. CLOSE ON papers as he unfolds them. "United States Supreme Court of Boston". Hands visibly begin to tremble. ON Jim's face as he looks out at the sheriff's car departing.

JIM (V.O.)

And three days hence, I had to be in Boston.

CUT TO:

INT. BOSTON SUPREME COURT - DAY

Jim is sitting in a seat outside the Grand Jury room, holding a single sheet of paper. CLOSE ON paper from Jim's POV: "I refuse to testify on the grounds that my testimony may incriminate me." Other words follow, but only those above are prominent.

JIM (V.O.)

Three days and a five thousand dollar retainer later, I sat in a chair outside the Grand Jury chamber as my new criminal attorneys negotiated with the prosecutors. After two hours, my attorneys emerged and told me that I could go home. Apparently, the court decided that they didn't care to listen to a Minah bird repeating the same line in response to every question.

The ATTORNEYS come out from the Grand Jury room as Jim stands. They talk and Jim folds the paper in half (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

Now my non-cooperation was official and duly noted by the courts. It was now also officially Open Season on Jim Steffman.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim answers a RINGING phone.

JIM

Hello.

LESLIE (V.O.)

(through phone)

Jim, it's Leslie.

JIM

Hey, what's up?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

Leslie is holding the phone to her ear and staring out at the lobby seats.

LESLIE

Uh, some gentlemen from the IRS are here and want to look at our books and records.



ANGLE ON three pairs of shined shoes as shot rises slowly to reveal well-dressed, serious-looking IRS AGENTS, armed with books, pens and calculators, ready and eager to dig into their work.

JIM (V.O.)  
I'll be right there.

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - DAY

Jim, Leslie, and the three IRS agents are busy with many files and books. Leslie is paging through receipts and talking to one and another who is talking lightheartedly to Jim, appears jovial (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)  
Ironically, the IRS visit was pleasant. The agents were very professional. Next to the Alphabet Men, these guys seemed like Boy Scouts.

One agent, standing, leans over to retrieve a book from the desk, when his jacket opens and Jim (sitting) notices a weapon in a holster. Jim's eyes peer at the others. They are similarly armed.

JIM (V.O.)  
Owing to their pieces, though, I wondered exactly what the Three Stooges had told them about me and my "dangerous associations". But, three days later, the IRS departed my office, pleasantly noting the amazingly accurate records, thanks to my meticulous bookkeeper, and a few minor violations to the tune of about three hundred dollars. The Stooges were going to be pissed.

EXT. TEXACO CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Jim is fixing some displays inside his gas station's convenience store. The phone RINGS and the CASHIER answers.

CASHIER  
Jim? It's for you.

JIM  
(taking phone)  
Hello?

BAD  
Had enough, Steffman?

Jim's face screws up in anger.

JIM  
You seriously have nothing better  
to do?

The line goes dead. Jim hangs up. The cashier smiles amiably. Jim grins a fake smirk.

JIM (V.O.)  
That wouldn't be the last call of  
that kind.

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

Jim is sitting in the lobby and watching Beetle enter his office. A WELL-DRESSED MAN with a stack of papers in one hand and a pen in the other, holds the door open. As the employee enters, the man gazes briefly at Jim and closes the door again.

JIM (V.O.)  
Three days after the IRS packed up  
and left, I got a visit from the  
Department of Immigration and  
Naturalization. They used my own  
office as a makeshift Inquisition  
site to determine if I was  
employing illegals. Each employee  
got a forty-five minute workover  
before being released back into the  
wild.

SWITCH TO:

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

Time lapse film shows fleeting images of EMPLOYEES and GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS as they engage in various activities through, in, and around the lobby.

JIM (V.O.)

Following the IRS and the INS, we were graced with the presence of the Connecticut Labor Board, followed by the Food and Drug Administration, for which I was fined for selling cough syrup without a Pharmaceutical Dispensing License, and the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles.

SWITCH TO:

INT. FRIENDLY'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Jim is drinking coffee across from TWO WELL-DRESSED AGENTS.

JIM (V.O.)

The FBI was kind enough to invite me to coffee at a local Friendly's. They wanted to clue me in about the living hell that was about to become my life. I thought, "ABOUT to become?"

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

The phone RINGS, waking Jim from sleep. He groggily grabs the phone from the cradle.

JIM

Hello.

BALD

Had enough, Steffman?

JIM

Not by a long shot, asshole!

Jim SLAMS down the phone and roughly unplugs it from the wall.

INT. JIM'S CAR - DAY

Jim is driving and intermittently gazes at the car in back of him.

JIM (V.O.)

The harassment continued, of course.

(MORE)

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

I don't know what the record is for visits by government entities, but I'm pretty sure we broke that record in the first nine days of the Witch Trials.

Jim turns sharply off the main road and the car follows.

JIM (V.O.)

I got pretty good at spotting cars that were tailing me. What I had issues with, though, were the agents who were nosing me. What I came to find out later was that the DEA also drove vehicles ahead of yours. If you turned, they phoned another car to keep you in sight. It was like reverse tailing. Very ingenious.

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

Jim stands near a CROUCHING MAN in a white shirt and tie. A testing kit is opened neatly on the ground next to him as he holds up an eyedropper and a test tube with liquid. He shakes the test tube as Jim leans in close to inspect it. Close on the agent's hard stare.

JIM (V.O.)

The Environmental Protection Agency was the next scheduled executioner. Waste Water Permit Division.

Jim smiles as sample appears clear.

JIM (V.O.)

The car wash system passed with flying colors.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR WASH LOBBY - DAY

The EPA agent is handing a clipboard to Jim.

EPA AGENT

I'm sorry, Mr. Steffman, but we're gonna have to shut you down.

Jim's face falls.

JIM

What? What the hell are you talking about? The samples were clear.

EPA AGENT

Yeah, that's true, but we never actually received your Quarterly Waste Water Sample Results.

JIM

Yes, you did! I sent them myself! I never miss those! They're like Gospel!

EPA AGENT

Well, uh...you got a copy of the Certified Mail slip?

JIM

(eyes narrowing)

No. I never send it Certified. Never had a problem before.

EPA AGENT

Well, Mr. Steffman, they're supposed to be sent Certified.

JIM

No way! That's not in the criteria!

EPA AGENT

Look, Mr. Steffman, I'm sorry.

The agent points to the clipboard and hands Jim a pen.

JIM (V.O.)

I could tell that he really was, too. This wasn't about lost paperwork. This whole visit was just more of a pile-on by the Three Stooges. This little violation shut me down for three full months, for which, every three days, I would look forward to another "Had-enough-Steffman" call.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Janet is cooking breakfast as Jim goes to grab the paper from the doorstep.

As he closes the door and paces back toward the kitchen, he opens the local paper. CLOSE ON headline, "Portland Gas Station Shut Down by DEP".

Jim stares at the paper as he halts in place, reading. He lowers his hands with the paper as he looks at his kids eating their breakfast.

EXT. TEXACO GAS STATION - DAY

A CUSTOMER is filling his tank when he takes the nozzle out and spills a modest amount of fuel on the ground.

JIM (V.O.)  
The station re-opened...finally.  
But one month later, an unlikely  
incident blindsided me.

Man who spills the gas begins waving to the MANAGER in the station office.

JIM (V.O.)  
I had given my brother, Bill, a job  
at my station after his body shop  
had burned to the ground. He  
managed the station most every day.  
He was very good at what he did.

Bill runs up to the customer and smiles, waving him off (no audio). Customer climbs into his car and drives off. Bill goes into the supply shed and retrieves a broom and some Speedy Dry. After brushing the debris away from the catch basins, he bends to clean up the residue. POLICE cruisers suddenly appear at the entrance to the station, blocking it off with sirens BLARING.

Bill stands, the debris in a dustpan in his hand. Right behind, the PORTLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT appears in a fire truck. Next comes a bunch of cars and trucks where GOVERNMENT AGENTS in HAZMAT suits and gloves storm the lot. Finally, a large van with the bold letters "DEP" on the side pulls into the lot.

JIM (V.O.)  
Poor Bill was accused of  
contaminating the State's water  
treatment systems by sweeping fuel  
spillage into a State-owned catch  
basin.

Bill puts down the dustpan and begins talking to the DEP AGENTS.

JIM (V.O.)

Despite the fact that these multi-department entities converged on a remote, small-town establishment within minutes of the so-called violation exactly in synch with each other, and with all the proper accoutrements for a biological hazard, Bill defended himself. After an hour, they packed it in and left, but not before making a big show of it by waving passing cars slowly through the "crime" scene and all its yellow tape.

SWITCH TO:

INT. BILL'S HOME - NIGHT

Bill is being cuffed by POLICE in his front yard. He is only wearing a pair of jeans. Cruiser lights are flashing as NEIGHBORS in nightclothes watch from their sidewalks.

JIM (V.O.)

The DEA couldn't let that slide, I guess. Later that night, Bill was arrested for contaminating the environment.

Bill is led to a cruiser and carefully put in the back seat.

JIM (V.O.)

And as Bill sat in jail for a day, I was busy with my lawyers negotiating with the DEP. In exchange for a large check made out to the Department of Environmental Protection, all charges against my brother were finally dropped.

SWITCH TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - DAY

Bill is being released from the cell and led out.

JIM (V.O.)

A small price to pay for Bill's freedom. But State-compelled bribery, nonetheless, in my opinion.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is making sandwiches for his kids and cutting them in half when he hears a back-up warning BEEPER of a truck near his driveway. Going to the living room and peering out, Jim sees a flatbed truck backing into his driveway. On the street is a wrecker. He opens the front door and there on his doorstep are the Alphabet Men.

BLAND

Good afternoon, Steffman.

Bald hands a document to Jim. Jim takes it and reads.

JIM

Search and seizure warrant? For the Porsche? Is there a point when you assholes have to actually provide real evidence in order to legally steal someone's property?

The three just smile back in his direction.

BAD

We have reason to suspect that this Porsche was used in the sale and transfer of illegal substances under U.S. Code ---

JIM

Yeah, yeah, yeah! Right! No evidence! No proof! Just reason to suspect! Got it!

Jim leads them into the driveway and opens the door. They proceed to wave to the FLATBED DRIVER to take the Porsche.

BLAND

Now for the other car.

JIM

(confused)  
What other car?

BLAND

That Jaguar.

Jim seethes as he realizes that's what the wrecker is for.

JIM

(angrily pointing in their faces)  
You guys are way out of line!  
(MORE)



JIM (CONT'D)  
 That car has nothing to do with  
 Hurley! That's always been my car!

The three continue to stare.

JIM (CONT'D)  
 You got a warrant?

Bad bows his head and then looks Jim in the eye.

BAD  
 Well, Steffman, you can expect  
 another visit from us soon, then.

BALD  
 Meantime, we're gonna have a look  
 around your house.

Jim balks.

JIM  
 Like hell, you will!

The three proceed to walk around Jim and head for the front door. Jim bursts through and blocks the door. The agents stare at Jim from the steps. Jim relents and goes out to sit on the fender of the flatbed, staring at the Porsche and lighting a cigarette.

JIM (V.O.)  
 I said goodbye to my Porsche. It  
 wouldn't be a week before I  
 actually saw it again, being driven  
 along Ninety-One North near Rocky  
 Hill. The driver: Agent Ruck.

SWITCH TO:

INT. DOLLHOUSE CAFE - NIGHT

Bad and Bald are offering ONE of the dancers a hundred dollar bill as she dances close to them. Bad beckons her closer with a finger. She bends down and he says something in her ear. She takes the bill and pulls her top up to reveal her breasts. The agents' smiles fade as they stand and exit the club casually and immediately.

JIM (V.O.)  
 My club was the next target.  
 Agents made easy work of it,  
 offering the girls big tips to show  
 off their assets.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Three days later, I'm receiving  
 fines of seven hundred dollars for  
 violating Connecticut indecent  
 exposure laws.

Multiple shots of AGENTS bribing girls to expose themselves.

JIM (V.O.)  
 For every three violations, I had  
 to appear for a hearing in front of  
 the Liquor Commission Board. And  
 even though J.D. helped to make  
 those fines disappear through his  
 contacts in the local government,  
 it didn't stop them from trying.

Off GIRL snatching a fifty from an AGENT's hand, we:

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is sleeping in bed. The phone RINGS, startling him. He looks at the clock that reads 5:17 a.m. He reaches for the phone.

JIM  
 Yeah?

BALD (V.O.)  
 (through phone)  
 Had enough, Steffman?

JIM  
 I'll have enough when you burn in  
 Hell, asshole!

He hangs up. Jim sits up in frustration and rubs his face. He stands and ambles toward the bathroom. Washing his face, he straightens and dries off with a towel. Suddenly, the phone RINGS. Jim looks and grimaces as he charges the phone, picking it up violently. Before Jim can say anything, a voice comes through the receiver.

MYSTERY MAN (V.O.)  
 (through phone)  
 Bingo.

Then a HANG-UP occurs.

JIM  
 Hello? Hello?

Jim hangs up the phone slowly and stares into the mirror. Then, he reaches for his wallet and pulls out a folded piece of paper. Unfolding it quickly, he consults it and then re-folds it, tucking it into his wallet and dressing quickly.

EXT. PAY PHONE #1 - DAY

Jim's car pulls up to a pay phone on a small street near a bus stop. Jim climbs out and approaches it. He waits for only a moment before the phone RINGS. Jim quickly picks it up.

JIM

Hello?

HURLEY

How you holding up, Jim?

Jim breathes relief.

JIM

Holy shit, John! You would not believe what I've been through!

HURLEY

Jim, listen to me. I need you to pick me up.

Jim's face falls.

JIM

What?

HURLEY

I need you to pick me up.

JIM

John, they've been following me everywhere!

HURLEY

They're not following you today.

JIM

What? How do you know ---

HURLEY

Listen. Pick me up at Grossman's Hardware in Rocky Hill.

JIM

Well, where are we ---

HURLEY  
I'll see you in, like, two hours?

Jim is quiet.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Two hours?

JIM  
Yeah, John.

The line CLICKS. Jim hangs up and wanders back to his car.

JIM (V.O.)  
Two hours wasn't much time, but since I knew that the Stooges could be just about anywhere, I decided to plan a somewhat complex blueprint for losing any tail that would be potentially following me when I went to meet John.

When he reaches the door, he looks up and down the empty street. Climbing into his car, he STARTS it up and drives away from the curb.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim enters the house and immediately gets on the phone with his brother-in-law.

NEIL  
(through phone)  
What's up, man?

JIM  
You wanna go to the mall? I gotta pick up some fishing poles.

NEIL  
Yeah, cool!

JIM (V.O.)  
That was code speak for us amateurs. It meant that my brother-in-law was going to get his friend to drive my truck over to the back entrance of the mall, while Neil picked me up in his car and we pretended to go shopping.

JIM

You drive. I hate constantly looking in my rearview mirror and seeing those ugly sons-of-bitches from the DEA.

NEIL

Okay, cool. See you in a few.

JIM (V.O.)

It was always a pleasure to insult the Stooges, knowing full well that they were listening in on every conversation.

Jim hangs up and quickly changes his clothes. He goes to the back door and puts his truck keys in a planter pot on the back step, before going to sit on the front stoop.

JIM (V.O.)

Once Neil and I were gone, the tail would follow us to the mall. Neil's buddy would arrive, fetch the keys and drive my truck quickly to the mall.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim and Neil pull into a parking spot and exit the vehicle. Jim pretends not to see the agent's car as it slowly glides by in the adjacent row.

The two make their way casually to the entrance of the mall.

INT. MALL - DAY

Jim and Neil enter the front doors of the packed mall and continue to walk into the CROWDS. At one point, Jim chances a glance behind and then claps Neil on the shoulder before breaking into a full run through the mall, dodging the many people in the aisles.

JIM (V.O.)

My window of opportunity was limited. Since I didn't know what it was that John wanted from me, I knew I had to make up some time.

Jim continues to race through the mall, eventually making it to an exit near the other side of the mall. He makes for the door and suddenly slows to a brisk walk.

Opening the door, he looks both right and left and puts his head down, walking straight across the street toward the parking lot full of cars.

EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim weaves in and out of the parked vehicles, and then spots his truck.

JIM (V.O.)

Just like I had planned, my truck was there. Neil's friend had made arrangements to not be in the area once I arrived (a beat) just in case.

Jim approaches his truck, looks around, and then opens the door briskly. Stooping, he fishes the keys out from under the seat and climbs in, smiling. STARTING up the truck, he pulls it out of the space.

JIM (V.O.)

I can't tell you how exhilarating it was to lose the DEA tail. Now, I had to meet John.

INT. GROSSMAN'S HARDWARE - DAY

Jim enters the store and looks around.

ASSOCIATE

Welcome to Grossman's!

JIM

Thanks.

Jim continues to wander the store. As he passes the concrete aisle, he hears a familiar voice.

HURLEY (O.S.)

Man, you look like shit.

JIM

Oh, my God! John!

They shake hands, half-embracing.

HURLEY

C'mon.

They walk together toward the exit.

JIM  
Wait, wait. Why don't I go out  
first.

HURLEY  
Relax.

Jim closes his mouth.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
C'mon.

They walk out to Jim's truck and climb in.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Jim stares over at Hurley as he BUCKLES his seat belt.

JIM  
They got every fuckin' government  
agency on my ass right now, John.  
You shoulda seen the brilliance of  
this mall plan, though.

Hurley chuckles knowingly.

HURLEY  
I'm really sorry about all this.

JIM  
They won't believe me.

HURLEY  
Buckle up.

Jim stares for another moment, then BUCKLES his own seat  
belt. He STARTS the truck.

JIM  
Where to?

HURLEY  
Your storage facility.

Jim's eyes widen. After another long moment, Jim puts the  
truck in gear and pulls out.

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY LOT - DAY

Jim's truck pulls into the lot and slowly creeps to the rear-  
most row of units.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Hurley points ahead.

HURLEY

Right up there...second to last.

JIM

Is this yours?

HURLEY

Technically, it's Ted Millstein's.  
I rented it a few months ago.

JIM

Who's Ted ---

HURLEY

Fake name.

Jim's eyes drift toward Hurley as they come to a stop.  
Hurley gets out and looks in the door.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Pull up a little more.

EXT. PORTLAND STORAGE FACILITY - DAY

Jim's truck edges forward as Hurley approaches the door of the unit. He turns the combination lock dial and POPS it open. Pulling the door UP AND OPEN, Jim sees a lone 8x8 hitch trailer inside the unit.

HURLEY

Gimme a hand here, would you?

Jim exits the truck and they approach the trailer. They lift the trailer by the hitch bar and roll it out of the unit. They maneuver it so that they can hitch it to the truck. Jim hooks up the tail and brake light wires and they get back into the vehicle.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Jim BUCKLES and looks at Hurley who is DOING THE SAME.

JIM

Now, what?

HURLEY

Another storage facility in  
Newington.



Jim nods and puts the truck into gear.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Oh, and (a beat) nice and easy,  
okay?

Jim looks toward Hurley.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
There are agents in your office out  
front.

Jim's eyes go wide in fear.

JIM  
What! Why would you do this?

HURLEY  
Just be cool, okay?

Jim starts to drive slowly.

JIM  
Be cool? Be cool! What the hell's  
in that trailer anyway? Drugs?

Hurley chuckles.

HURLEY  
No. It's cash.

JIM  
Cash?

HURLEY  
Yeah, cash.

JIM  
How much cash?

HURLEY  
Good question. It's packed top-to-  
bottom, side-to-side, front-to-  
back.

JIM  
Cash and what else?

HURLEY  
Just cash.

Jim turns back to gaze at Hurley. As they pass the office, Jim glances out of the corner of his eye toward the building. Inside are three agents who are milling about.

JIM  
 (breathing heavily)  
 Oh, Jesus! Jesus!

HURLEY  
 Easy. Just drive.

Jim continues to the exit and stops momentarily as he looks for traffic. None. He turns left and makes his way down the road. Checking the rearview mirror obsessively, he sees nothing.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
 Relax, Jim. You're good.

JIM  
 This is insane.

They pull up to an intersection at a red light. Alongside them, a police car pulls up on Jim's side. Jim notices it and begins to panic. Hurley grins.

HURLEY  
 Roll down your window, tough guy.

JIM  
 What?

HURLEY  
 Relax and roll down your window.

JIM  
 C'mon, John -

HURLEY  
 Roll down the goddam window.

Jim hesitates as he stares with fear into Hurley's eyes. Hurley nods in the direction of the window. Jim obliges.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
 (loudly through window)  
 Excuse me! Excuse me!

Hurley waves as the OFFICER in the squad car looks over at him. He rolls down his window. Jim is completely terrified and trying to hide it.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
 Morning! Know a good place to get  
 breakfast?

Smiles.

OFFICER

The Tuscan Diner up the road here  
on the right. 'Bout a quarter  
mile.

HURLEY

Sounds great! Thanks!

OFFICER

Have a good day.

HURLEY

Oh, we intend to. Oh, and,  
hey...thanks for the job you do!

The officer mock salutes him and rolls up the window as the  
light changes. Jim rolls up his window without looking at  
the officer.

JIM

You are an insane son-of-a-bitch!

Hurley begins laughing.

HURLEY

You should see your face right now!  
Go ahead, look in the mirror.

Jim is not amused.

JIM

Where to?

Hurley continues to laugh.

HURLEY

You heard the nice officer. The  
Tuscan Diner.

Jim shakes his head as they drive on down the road.

JIM (V.O.)

Hurley derived some sort of devious  
twisted pleasure out of tempting  
fate. It never seemed to make a  
difference how much danger he  
faced. It was almost as if he knew  
that he'd never be caught. As if  
he had paid out so much money, he  
was absolutely invisible when he  
wanted to be. After the diner  
breakfast, we went down to the new  
storage facility.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY #2 - DAY

Jim's truck pulls into the storage facility parking lot. As they drive through the entrance, ANGLE ON Jim through windshield as his gaze is pulled up toward a surveillance camera mounted above them. They pull up in front of the office.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Hurley leans toward Jim.

HURLEY

All right, Jim. I want you to go in and register a single unit in your name. Pay for it in cash.

Hurley removes the cash from his wallet and hands it to Jim.

HURLEY (CONT'D)

Just rent a unit big enough for the trailer.

JIM

There was a camera at the entrance, John. Did you see it?

HURLEY

Don't worry about that. Just rent the unit.

Jim stares for a moment and then exits the vehicle.

EXT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Jim leaves the truck and enters the office.

JIM (V.O.)

He said not to worry. But I couldn't help it. The DEA was splashed all over me like cheap cologne. If they traced me and Hurley to this facility, one look at the security tape and they could confirm that I had contact with John after I had been interrogated.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Jim climbs into the vehicle and closes the door.

HURLEY  
You get a receipt?

Jim looks toward Hurley incredulously as Hurley begins laughing.

JIM  
I'm so glad that you think this is funny.

Jim tosses a new padlock in its package onto Hurley's lap as he continues to enjoy the moment.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY #2 - DAY

Close on hand clicking the padlock closed with a loud metallic CLINK.

Jim watches as Hurley lets go of the padlock. Turning to Jim, Hurley smiles.

HURLEY  
All right, we're all set here.

Jim turns and climbs into the truck. Hurley follows suit.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Hurley watches as Jim goes to put the key in the ignition.

HURLEY  
I really appreciate all this, Jim.

Jim nods without looking.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Really, Jim. Once I'm gone, hopefully, these clowns will just stop bothering you. But as long as you live, you won't ever have to worry about things on my end. Understand?

Jim looks at Hurley with a creased brow.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
You are now officially under the umbrella.

Jim continues to stare.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
You're protected.

Suddenly, Jim's eyes soften.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
C'mon, let's get outa here.

EXT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Engine STARTS UP and the truck pulls away from the unit.

JIM (V.O.)  
After leaving John off at  
Grossman's, I went home. But I  
just couldn't stop thinking about  
the security camera at the storage  
facility.

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is in his basement, talking with his cousin, RICK (no  
audio)

JIM (V.O.)  
I called my cousin to do me a  
favor. I knew he'd do it with no  
questions asked. He would go to  
the storage facility, take out a  
unit in his name, move the trailer  
from one to the other, and I could  
actually get some sleep.

EXT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Rick leaves out the back door and skirts between two hedges  
before disappearing into the darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - NIGHT

Jim is sitting on the edge of the bed, head bowed, hands  
folded, and contemplative. A car horn BEEPS twice outside  
the window a few streets down. Jim stands and stares at the  
window, waiting. A third BEEP sounds and Jim sits again,  
more relaxed.

JIM  
Thank God.

EXT. PAY PHONE #2 - DAY

Jim is standing nervously by the phone, pacing and smoking a cigarette. The phone suddenly RINGS and he jumps for it.

JIM  
Hello?

HURLEY (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
What the fuck are you trying to pull?

JIM (V.O.)  
John's voice was not normal. He was pissed and I actually felt fear when I heard his tone.

JIM  
John, the security camera -

HURLEY (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
Where the fuck is my money!?

JIM  
I moved it, John! I moved it, for Christ's sake!

A long moment of silence ensues.

JIM (CONT'D)  
Sorry, John, but I couldn't contact you. I felt so nervous about the -

HURLEY  
(dangerous and low)  
Where is my trailer?

JIM  
It's - it's in the unit next to the one I rented. But - but it's in my cousin's name. I'm sorry, John, but the camera really scared me and -

HURLEY  
You pick me up at the K-Mart in Rocky Hill right now.

JIM

I need some time to figure out if I'm being followed, John.

HURLEY

You're not being followed. You need to leave right now.

JIM

Yeah, John. Sure.

The line CLICKS dead. Jim hangs up with dread in his eyes.

JIM (V.O.)

It dawned on me that this trailer was John's lifeline to survival. When DEA Armagaeddon went down, they'd seize everything he owned, including bank assets here and abroad. If he lost this trailer, he'd literally be living on borrowed time.

Jim climbs into his truck, lights up another cigarette with shaky hands, and pulls out from the curb.

EXT. K-MART PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim's truck enters the K-mart parking lot and a sitting car, situated all by itself, flashes its headlights. He pulls up to the space next to the car.

John exits the other vehicle and approaches Jim's truck. Jim rolls down his window.

HURLEY

Can we make it to the storage facility and back in forty-five?

Jim nods. Hurley turns to the other car and waves at it. The other car starts up and drives away. Hurley gets into Jim's vehicle.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY #2 - DAY

Jim's truck pulls up to the storage unit.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

As the truck passes the unit where the trailer had originally been housed, Jim goes suddenly numb.



Jim's POV reveals the unit door raised and police tape all over the entrance. Hurley says nothing.

EXT. STORAGE FACILITY #2 - DAY

The truck halts outside the very next unit and Jim gets out quickly. He OPENS the lock and RAISES the door. Hurley exits the truck as well. As they enter the unit and approach the trailer, Jim feels a hand on his shoulder. On Jim as a dark figure behind him looms. Jim turns to look up at Hurley.

HURLEY  
You son-of-a-bitch.

Jim's face is stoically unexpressive.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
You just saved my life.

Jim waits silently as Hurley suddenly takes his hand in both of his own and grips it securely.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
You're a fuckin' genius.

Still, Jim waits nervously. Hurley holds eye contact for one moment more, then releases his hand shake and moves around Jim toward the trailer.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
Let's get this bitch outa here.

Jim moves to help.

JIM (V.O.)  
Whatever John had been thinking previously about me, he never said. But, in that one moment, he thanked his lucky stars that I had come along to second-guess his plan. The DEA had apparently swept an entire twenty-mile radius for storage facilities and located this exact one where my name was registered. But because the second unit was listed under my cousin's name, they never made the connection. I could just imagine the DEA agents opening the unit like Geraldo opening up Capone's vault.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Only, the anticipated payload stood  
just ten feet from their grubby  
hands, hidden from view.

I/E JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Intercut scenes of truck on highway as they make their way  
back to Meriden. The vehicle makes it to the destination and  
pulls into the K-mart parking lot. As they pull in, the  
other car is waiting.

INT. JIM'S TRUCK - DAY

Hurley points toward the car and Jim heads for it.

JIM  
Who's in the car? Butch?

Hurley shakes his head.

HURLEY  
That's William Grasso. Ring a  
bell?

Jim indicates "no" with a head shake.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
He's the second-in-command of the  
Patriarchas. Well, for now anyway.

Jim looks at Hurley curiously.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
He's been taking way more than his  
share of the cuts. Pissing off a  
lot of underlings. His days are  
numbered. Mark my words, Jim, one  
of his own is gonna snap.

Jim slowly looks at Hurley who smirks.

HURLEY (CONT'D)  
For the time being, though, he's  
making sure I'm invisible to the  
feds.

JIM (V.O.)  
Whether it was prophetic or just  
that John was so well-connected  
that he knew all the high-level  
politics of the families behind the  
scenes, he was spot-on.

(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Within a month of this night,  
William Grasso was gunned down, mob-  
war style, in his car on the  
street.

Jim looks back at the car as they pull up. Jim's POV on the driver as he stops in the space next to the car. The driver stares out the front, not looking in their direction.

HURLEY  
This is it, Jim. I won't be seeing  
you again.

Jim turns to face Hurley.

JIM (V.O.)  
His goodbye was actually one of  
relief. I couldn't go through any  
more of this clandestine business  
without suffering a stroke or  
mental breakdown. I was done.

They shake hands again as Hurley smiles.

HURLEY  
Take care of yourself.

JIM (V.O.)  
And that was it. As simply as he  
had entered my life, he had  
departed it. Only now, I was the  
DEA's favorite punching bag simply  
because I happened to know John  
Hurley. And as long as John was  
MIA, I was the only punching bag in  
town.

Off Hurley's affectionate gaze, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is on the phone with Leslie. He has a large handful of documents.

JIM  
Is this even possible? But, if we  
have that much money in the  
account, what the hell is all this  
bullshit about?

JIM (V.O.)

The next morning, I found a large envelope in my mailbox. My bank had waited thirteen days before bothering to tell me that my checks were bouncing. And every day after that, another and another. By the time I found this letter waiting for me, I was in the hole to the tune of forty-two large ones.

SWITCH TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

Jim is standing, leaning over the BANK MANAGER's desk and angrily speaking to him (no audio).

JIM (V.O.)

How was it possible that a man who micromanaged his success to the point where it resembled an artform, would suddenly start bouncing checks? By some miraculous event, my very reliable and responsible banker inexplicably called in a ninety-day note in my name for a hundred and five thousand dollars, completely draining the balance of my gas station account. In addition, each and every daily deposit I made was applied to pay down the note. "Right of Offset" is what it's called in banking terms.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK - DAY

Jim leaves the bank angrily and walks to his car.

JIM (V.O.)

Every single check written in those thirteen days had bounced, including the gas station mortgage payment. The bank began swallowing up the balances of all my other accounts, including the one I used to pay quarterly business taxes. Within a few short weeks, the bank moved in for the kill.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Jim is on the phone.

JIM

Foreclosure! You believe this!  
Texaco's already shut off my  
supply! No! These bastards  
visited the bank! The DEA!  
Whadaya mean, "can I prove it?" A  
one hundred and five thousand  
dollar note in my name? Jesus! I  
have never missed a payment!

JIM (V.O.)

After word of my financial troubles  
hit the street, Texaco, my vendors,  
even some of my employees, jumped  
ship. Luckily, I had kept a  
sizeable stash of about fifty grand  
tucked into walls and under  
floorboards. Leslie called in  
apologies, paid off the bad checks  
with cash, and Texaco re-  
established our relationship on a  
temporary basis. Cash only.

Jim continues raving on the telephone.

JIM (V.O.)

It wasn't long before my other  
banks jumped on the bandwagon.  
And, like clockwork, the IRS  
magically appeared to strip my  
office of desks, chairs, shelves,  
file cabinets, and potted plants.  
They even sized up my motorcycle  
before they left. I knew they'd be  
back.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

Janet is crying and Jim sits across from her, reading bank  
documents.

JANET

My house? You promised, Jim! You  
promised!

JIM (V.O.)

My banker had been deposed by the courts. The deposition, the sworn document that was supposed to uphold the truth, was an out-and-out lie. The banker swore that I had told him during one of my visits that I placed the home in my wife's name so that my creditors could never go after it.

Janet hangs her head and sobs into her hands.

JIM (V.O.)

The Alphabet Men, in a small, thirty-minute, behind-closed-doors meeting with my very discreet banker, managed to not only bring down my financial empire, but also my ten-year marriage...all with a single, swift stroke. I was now realizing that all the money I possessed was still not enough against these kinds of odds.

INT. JIM'S HOME - DAY

The telephone RINGS and Jim enters the room to retrieve it.

JIM

Hello.

BAD (V.O.)

(through phone)

Meet us at the parking garage in Rocky Hill next to the Smuggler's Inn.

JIM

When?

BAD (V.O.)

Now.

Jim hangs up, grabs his keys from a dish on the counter, and robotically moves to the door.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Jim's car pulls into the underground parking garage and stops inside a space. The building is empty and still under construction.

The engine cuts out and Jim climbs out of the vehicle. He looks around, glances at his watch, and the SOUND of a car engine reaches him. He looks up and sees the car approaching. They double-park in front of his vehicle.

JIM (V.O.)

Two weeks previous, I had been questioned by the Stooges yet again about Hurley's whereabouts. In an effort to remain defiant, I reached back in my memory and remembered John mentioning a yacht he owned, called "Criteria". He had told me that he sold it to a guy in Tampa. So, in a moment of grasping at straws, I told them about the boat and the location. What I failed to mention was that Hurley had not been aboard that vessel for many years.

INT. BOAT - DAY

DEA Agents are watching through binoculars the yacht "Criteria."

JIM (V.O.)

After agents staked out the yacht for two weeks, they boarded the boat and quickly learned of my deception. What I was about to learn was that my "Don't Ever Antagonize" moniker for DEA, was dead-on correct.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

The three agents climb from the vehicle and two converge on Jim slowly and deliberately. The third, Bald, moves out toward the street exit and turns, facing outward, obviously on watch. Bad walks directly up to Jim, pulls out a handgun, shoves it into Jim's stomach, and pushes him up against the concrete wall.

BAD

We're done fucking around with you!

Jim looks shocked.

BAD (CONT'D)

You don't cooperate right now, so help me, the gun in my back pocket will explain everything to the local cops after I've tossed it on your dead body.

JIM (V.O.)

Like death, when you relive everything in a series of flashes, this moment felt exactly the same way. The only difference was that these flashes were of all the intrusions that the DEA had made into my life. My businesses dissolved, my credit ruined, my wife gone, my kids threatened with being fatherless. (a long beat) I already felt like my life was no longer worth very much. And so, I...pushed...back!

Jim's eyes go from wide and uncertain to steely and enraged. He suddenly stands tall and pushes forward with his chest, making eye-to-eye contact with Bad. In that moment, a subdued THUMP sounds and Jim's eyes soften slightly. The agent pulls away and Jim falls back against the wall.

BLAND

What the fuck?

BAD

Shit!

Bald looks back over his shoulder and quickly paces over to the other two as they look at Jim who is sliding slowly down against the wall.

BLAND

Dammit, Ruck!

BAD

Shut the fuck up!

BALD

Nice work, shithead!

BLAND

Stomach?

Bad looks toward the street and nods.

BAD

God dammit!



BALD

He's done. Let's get the fuck outa here.

The three pace quickly toward the car. Bad stops mid-stride and then turns to regard Jim, who is now sitting on the ground lazily against the wall. A large pool of blood is forming rapidly beneath him. Bad scowls, chiding himself silently.

BLAND

Ruck!

Bad turns and climbs into the vehicle. They drive quickly off and exit the garage. HIGH ANGLE on Jim as he continues to be in a half stupor.

JIM (V.O.)

The bullet entered me at the belt-line and exited out through the back of my knee. I waited for minutes, maybe longer, sure that the Stooges would be back to finish the job. After what seemed hours, my body tingling with a frosty numbness that's hard to explain, I decided in my mind that they would most likely finish me off at the hospital. But I needed help fast.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Jim is driving crouched over and wincing in pain. He is yelling with agony. A bloody hand grips the steering wheel.

JIM (V.O.)

Somehow, I managed to get into the car. Somehow, I convinced myself to drive. On the way to the hospital, I suddenly realized what would happen if I showed up with a gunshot wound.

Jim suddenly steers sharply off his current route and takes an off-road.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR WASH - DAY

Jim's car pulls in and crookedly makes its way toward the office. The car halts awkwardly and Jim drags himself lamely from the vehicle. He brokenly limps to the door, spilling blood in a gory trail behind him. Fumbling with the keys, he manages to open the door and enters the building.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR WASH OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim is leaning against the window pane and raises a .22 handgun out the open window. He FIRES off a shot. DROPPING the gun on the floor, he collapses into the chair and puts his head on the desk. After a moment, his hand reaches for the phone. He struggles to dial the number as he becomes light-headed. The phone begins RINGING.

DAD (V.O.)  
(through phone)  
Hello.

JIM  
Dad.

DAD (V.O.)  
Jim?

JIM  
Dad. I need you.

DAD (V.O.)  
What's wrong?

JIM  
I - I shot myself.

DAD (V.O.)  
Oh, my God! Where are you?

JIM  
The station. At the station.

DAD (V.O.)  
I'll be right there!

Jim DROPS the phone as the line goes dead.

FADE OUT

INT. HOSPITAL BED - NIGHT

FADE IN on Jim as he opens his eyes. He has a tube in his mouth, in his stomach, an intravenous in his arm, and monitors are BEEPING. From Jim's POV, we see Leslie smiling down at Jim.

LESLIE  
Hey, there he is.

Jim's eyes close and then open. He tries to talk, but he gags.

LESLIE (CONT'D)  
No, no, don't.

JIM (V.O.)  
Surgery went well. Leslie had told the staff that she was my wife and she stayed there at my side throughout my entire recovery. Leslie told me that they cut me from the belly button down to do an exploratory for the bullet, but found none. That was good news.

Leslie smiles at him again before grasping one of his hands in hers.

JIM (V.O.)  
For days, I laid in that hospital bed, terrified that the next visitor through the doors would be the Alphabet Men. I don't remember sleeping that much, despite the high dosage of medication. I do recall yelling at a nurse for trying to turn on the television.

Intercut scenes of Jim being attended to by the HOSPITAL STAFF and being visited by FAMILY and FRIENDS. All the scenes show Jim staring intently at the door.

JIM (V.O.)  
After days in that room, I began to obsess over my security. I was worried about the inevitable visit by the Stooges Three. I contacted my friend and had him smuggle me in a nine millimeter to keep under my pillow once I arranged for a private room.

A NURSE ADMINISTRATOR with a chart and paperwork is talking to a worried-looking Jim.

JIM (V.O.)  
Once they told me that my insurance  
wouldn't cover a private room, I  
offered cash, which they accepted.

Jim is being taken to his private room down the hall on a hospital guernsey as he continues to stare at all PASSERSBY in a suspicious way.

JIM (V.O.)  
In a private room, I could at least  
prevent a mass congregation of the  
Stooges and their minions.

SWITCH TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Jim is placing his pillow over a small handgun and laying his head down in exhaustion, his hand tucked beneath his headrest.

JIM (V.O.)  
I didn't sleep in the private room  
either, sure that, at any moment,  
the Alphabet Men would be quietly  
stealing into my room to finish me  
off. I resolved that if I was  
gonna go, I was going to take at  
least one of them with me.

The clock on the wall shows time lapse of many hours.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

Door opens quietly after a SOFT KNOCK. Jim sits up quickly. The SURGEON enters.

SURGEON  
Mr. Steffman?

Jim stares at the doctor.

JIM  
Yeah.

SURGEON  
I'm Dr. Klein. I performed your surgery.

JIM  
Oh, hey, Doc.

SURGEON  
How ya' feeling?

JIM  
Like I've been shot.

The doctor chuckles, but only politely. He approaches the bedside.

SURGEON  
Mind if I...

JIM  
No. Not at all.

The doctor leans over and rolls back the blanket and sheet to reveal the bandage. He examines Jim.

SURGEON  
How're the pain levels?

JIM  
Could use some meds.

The doctor nods. He pulls out his stethoscope and listens to Jim's chest.

SURGEON  
Breathe normally.

After a moment more, the doctor removes the earpieces and sits down beside Jim. He writes some notes in the chart and CLICKS his pen, stowing it in his lab coat pocket.

SURGEON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Steffman, you are a very lucky man. Normally, in cases like this, after the police interviews are done, I don't really concern myself with the facts surrounding the accident.

Jim watches the doctor with a steady gaze. The surgeon suddenly looks Jim dead in the eye.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

I've been doing this a long time. In fact, I was removing bullets from soldiers in the field in Germany during World War Two. I've seen self-inflicted wounds, Mr. Steffman. More than I care to recall. Soldiers faking wounds to get their ticket back Stateside.

Jim stares without blinking as the doctor returns the favor.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

All right, Mr. Steffman, I'm just gonna throw it out there. This wound wasn't self-inflicted, was it?

Jim remains silent.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

Look, the trajectory is all wrong. The muzzle was pressed up tight against your gut, contra-indicative of a self-inflicted (finger quotes) "accidental" shooting. There's also the frequency damage that tells me that your story doesn't really add up. The necrotic tissue was minimal around the entrance wound, again indicating that the muzzle was right there. The staff tells me that you paid cash for this room. And that you never even glance at the television...keep a close eye on the door at all times.

Jim looks down at his lap for a moment.

SURGEON (CONT'D)

So, are you gonna tell me what really happened?

Jim chuckles.

JIM

You, uh...you abide by that whole confidentiality rule?

SURGEON

Absolutely.

JIM

Hold on to your stethoscope, Doc.

Off Jim's sarcastic smirk, we:

FADE OUT

BLACK SCREEN

Legend reads: TWO YEARS LATER

FADE IN

INT. JIM'S CAR - DAY

Jim is driving along a road.

JIM (V.O.)

I had degenerated into little more than an animal. In the two years since my *accident*, I had lost my entire previous existence. My marriage, my businesses, my friends, my self-esteem, my confidence. Even some in my own family abandoned me. I looked into the mirror and couldn't even recognize my own reflection.

The car enters an old, familiar neighborhood.

JIM (V.O.)

After my recovery, I had been continuously badgered by the DEA, as well as multiple departments of the local and State government. One day, I'd be driving and the police would stop me, only to inform me that my license was suspended. Two months and many fines and fees later, I would be exonerated and, in correspondence, informed that my license had never been suspended to begin with, that it was merely a clerical error.

Jim slows as he nears the gas station and car wash complex he once owned. He stares at it with a deep sadness in his eyes.

JIM (V.O.)

Another day, I would be very close to closing a new business deal, only to have it scuttled at the very last minute.

(MORE)

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

Now, I truly understood when one of the Stooges had said to me that I would never operate another business as long as I lived.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODED PARKING LOT - DAY

Jim exits his vehicle and walks into the woods along a forest path, limping slightly.

JIM (V.O.)

Needless to say, the government finally got what they had been after all that time.

Jim reaches the summit of a mountain and looks out over the forested hills.

JIM (V.O.)

I was compelled to testify after U.S. Marshals served me with immunity to force my testimony against a member of the Patriarcha family of Rhode Island. How did they finally squeeze me? Through deception, of course. When served with immunity, I asked what that meant. They answered, "It means that anything you say in a courtroom can't be held against you." After I commented that only guilty people are given immunity, the agents explained that I really didn't have a choice. You didn't choose to have or not have immunity. They just served it and you testified. There was no choice involved. Much to the delight of the Three Stooges, they visited my holding room at the courthouse to gloat and make derisive comments toward me because they had finally broken me.

Off Jim's pensive gaze, we:

DISSOLVE TO:



INT. LAKEHOUSE - NIGHT

Jim is sitting on the sofa, aiming his weapon at the door as a flashlight beam sweeps up and down the door in random patterns.

JIM

Just take it! Take the goddam thing!

JIM (V.O.)

The lowest point in my life happened when I realized just how close I came to killing a cop. That night is indelibly etched in my mind. And I've often wondered what stroke of Divine Providence prevented that rickety door from collapsing under the weight of the cop's pounding nightstick, transforming that non-event into what could have been a deadly shoot-out.

Off Jim's nervous look in the half-light, we morph the scene to Jim's present countenance in the Boat Repair Shop Office.

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim's distant gaze with unblinking eyes suddenly becomes lucid again.

JIM

And so (sighs loudly) here we are.

ALEX

(looking up toward Jim and stopping his note-taking)  
So, you never heard from Hurley again?

Jim shakes his head and sighs again.

JIM

Nope. A couple of months after we saw each other that final time, the authorities had good intel and closed in on him at a Motor Inn in Groton. They busted down the door, but all they found was a four-day-old newspaper, days-old food, and a couple of weapons and cash.

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)

Then, a few days later, the police located his SUV near a train crossing. There were a couple of loaded weapons under the seat, his wallet, a small black book with contact numbers and pay-off amounts, as well as some cash. It was ruled a mob hit.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. MOTOR INN ROOM/TRAIN TRACKS CROSSING - DAY

Intercut scenes of agents storming Motor Inn room and examining Hurley's SUV crookedly parked on train tracks crossing a road.

CUT TO:

INT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP OFFICE - NIGHT

Jim and Alex face each other in the artificial light of the small office.

JIM

(chuckling)

Only one important detail was missing that would otherwise have sealed this as a hit. Fingerprints. The entire vehicle had been wiped clean, flying in the face of a routine mob hit.

ALEX

So, you think he's still alive?

JIM

I have no doubt in my mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOAT REPAIR SHOP PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jim is walking Alex out to his minivan in the darkened parking lot. Alex turns to face Jim, his folder under one arm. They shake hands.

JIM

So, what are we looking at? Two months...a year?

ALEX  
What? For the script?

Jim nods.

ALEX (CONT'D)  
Nah, a few months...maybe a bit more.

JIM  
Wow.

ALEX  
I mean, I've got some research to do. But, after that, it'll be a breeze.

Jim extends his hand and Alex shakes it enthusiastically.

JIM  
Well, I guess we'll be talking soon, then.

ALEX  
You bet. Thanks, Jim.

JIM  
You're not gonna get scared off or anything, right?

ALEX  
Nothing is gonna scare me.

Jim smiles. Alex climbs into his minivan and leaves the lot, giving a final wave as Jim closes and LOCKS the large entrance gate to the business. Close on Jim's gaze that's guardedly hopeful, as we:

CUT TO:

INT. ALEX'S MINIVAN - NIGHT

Alex has a cellphone to his ear as he drives along a lonely, dark road.

ALEX  
So, I'll just be - Hello? Hello?

Alex looks at the phone and can see that the call has been dropped. He re-dials and there is only a BUSY SIGNAL. He places the phone down on the console.

BACKSEAT POV reveals Alex's reflection in the rearview mirror as, over the horizon, behind him, high beam headlights wink on through the darkness. Alex gazes at them momentarily and then ahead.

Once again, his eyes are drawn back to the headlights behind as he squints. The lights are rapidly approaching. Alex continues to squint into his mirror as the headlights brighten.

FADE OUT

BLACK SCREEN

Legend reads: In exchange for his testimony, Jim Steffman was rewarded with a complete and utter destruction of his good name, his fortune, his businesses, his marriage, and eventually, his good health. For all his misfortunes and fear, Jim was never formally charged with any crime, never arrested, never convicted, and never served even an hour of time in a federal jail or prison.

The many instances of injustice heaped upon this man have been met with nothing but denial, ignorance, and threats. His former reputation as an amazing visionary with uncanny business acumen was all but erased by an over-reaching government entity that operated well beyond the scope of the law and existed under the auspices of protecting the very people that Jim Steffman embodied.

Today, Jim lives with his wife, Leslie, in the very same community in which he built his former business empire, leading a very different life of existing paycheck to paycheck and worried about his family's future.

Still recovering from his legal run-ins with the relentless arm of the U.S. Government known as the Drug Enforcement Agency, Jim continues to hold onto a small vestige of hope that one day, he will finally be exonerated for having done nothing more sinister than befriending another man.

As of the date of this project, Salvatore Michael Caruana remains at large and is considered armed and extremely dangerous.

FADE OUT

Sounds of BIRDS TWITTERING.

FADE IN

EXT. BACK DECK - DAY

Jim is sitting on his back deck, overlooking a beautiful, serene, summer lake scene. He is smoking a Capone cigarette and sipping coffee as he watches a small boat on the water in the distance.

A tone SOUNDS as he reaches nonchalantly for his cell phone. Opening it without fervor, he answers.

JIM

Hello?

VOICE

(after a beat)

Bingo.

THE END