

BYTES AND GRAMS

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**ACT I**

SCENE I

FADE IN:

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING (CHICAGO) - OFFICE - DAY

EXTREME CLOSEUP - BLANK COMPUTER SCREEN

Just being powered on.

GARY VERNON is busy entering data, as he sits behind a computer.

GARY (V.O.)

Technology. Ain't it something? My name's Gary Vernon. I work as a Network Administrator for AccuCom here in Chicago. I've been at this for about twelve years now, and it's not bad.

(beat)

I get decent pay, benefits, you know the deal. I'm married, have no kids, and I live in a small apartment on the rough side of town. I had a pretty normal, everyday, yuppie life. But all that was about to change.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary carrying huge reams of paper, as he fills the empty printers in his office.

Gary is trying to teach a new employee at AccuCom how to use a mouse and keyboard.

Gary exits through the front door of the AccuCom building, as he looks up at the big company logo on the building, and gives a farewell salute to it.

Gary is now on the highway, in his car, and caught in bumper-to-bumper traffic. Gary mock-hits his head on the steering wheel.

CUT TO:

EXT. TWIN OAKS TOWERS - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Some young kids write their tag names in graffiti on a nearby piece of building, as a Cop spots them, and chases after them.

CUT TO:

INT. TWIN OAKS TOWERS - VERNONS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gary tiredly walks through the front door, and plops down on the sofa. Gary's wife, CONNIE VERNON, takes a seat next to her haggard husband.

CONNIE  
(gently rubs Gary's  
shoulders)  
How was your day, honey?

GARY  
(exasperated)  
There's gotta be a better way to  
make a living. Those new temps  
down in Marketing don't know a  
mouse from a modem.  
(looks around the  
apartment; testily)  
Connie, when was the last time you  
cleaned up? This place looks like  
a pig's pen!

CONNIE  
(upset)  
Is that all I am to you? I made  
breakfast, went food shopping, and  
then I went to do the laundry, but  
the washing machine downstairs was  
broke.

GARY  
Take it easy! I just think it  
would be nice if the apartment were  
a little neater.

Gary looks at the table near the sofa, and sees myriad entertainment and fashion magazines on it.

GARY

(picks up a magazine and  
angrily bangs it against  
his hand)

You're reading this again? How many  
times have I told you not to read  
this garbage? It belongs  
underneath a parakeet cage.

CONNIE

I like to look at the fashion  
pages. They have really nice  
purses.

(mock-begging)

Why don't you get me a Prada bag?

GARY

Should I even ask if you made  
dinner?

CONNIE

Don't bother.

Gary scratches his head, when he decides to go out for a  
smoke. Gary rises from the sofa.

GARY

(grabs his coat from the  
rack)

I'm goin' out for a smoke.

CONNIE (O.S.)

Don't get lost.

GARY

(opens front door)

I won't.

FRONT DOOR

Closes behind Gary.

FADE OUT.

SCENE II

FADE IN:

EXT. TWIN OAKS TOWERS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Gary is standing outside, enjoying a cigarette and casually  
looking around the apartment complex.

Gary's attention soon shifts, as he hears something and swiftly turns around to see.

GARY'S POV

FANCY NEW CAR

Pulls into the parking lot.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary looks dumbfounded at the car, as he finishes his cigarette and exhales the smoke.

PETER BRANCH, another resident of Twin Oaks, steps out of the still-running car, and approaches Gary.

PETER  
(genial)  
Hey, can I ask you a favor?

GARY  
Sure.

PETER  
Could you look after my ride for a sec? I have to do something real quick.

Gary nods approvingly, as Peter departs OUT OF VIEW. Gary watches Peter's car, still astounded by it, as Peter quickly returns IN VIEW.

PETER  
(appreciative)  
Hey, thanks a million.

GARY  
Don't mention it.  
(looks admiringly at  
Peter's car)  
That's some ride ya got there.

PETER  
(looks at his car)  
Yeah, as long as she takes me where I have to go.  
(looks curiously at Gary)  
Say, don't you live in my building?

GARY  
Yeah, if you mean Twin Oaks Towers.

PETER  
 (slightly astounded)  
 No shit. What unit?

GARY  
 Six F.

PETER  
 (friendly)  
 Man, it's a small world. I live in  
 Three C.  
 (amiably extends his hand)  
 The name's Peter Branch.

GARY  
 (extends his hand)  
 Gary Vernon.

PETER  
 (shakes Gary's hand)  
 A pleasure, Gary. Say, how about I  
 park this baby, and then we'll go  
 up to my place and have a beer?

GARY  
 (coily shakes his head and  
 putting up his hand)  
 Oh no. I wouldn't feel  
 comfortable.

PETER  
 (inviting)  
 C'mon now. I don't bite.

INT. TWIN OAKS TOWERS - BRANCHES' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter and Gary enter Peter's apartment. Gary looks awestruck  
 at Peter's decked out apartment.

PETER  
 (a little embarrassed)  
 Sorry if the place looks a little  
 messy. The maid is on vacation.

GARY  
 (astounded)  
 You have a maid?

PETER  
 Yeah.  
 (introduces his wife, PAM)  
 (MORE)

PETER (cont'd)  
Gary, I want you to meet my much  
better half, Pam.

PAM  
(cordially shakes Gary's  
hand)  
Welcome to our home.

PETER  
Claire and I are just getting ready  
for dinner. Chicken Marsala.  
Would you like some?

GARY  
No, thank you.

PETER  
(waves towards Gary)  
Let me show you around, Gary.

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

PETER  
(turns on the light; shows  
Gary around)  
This is the living room. Nothing  
fancy.  
(points to the sofa)  
The sofa's is pretty comfortable.  
(presses the sofa with one  
hand)  
I think we're gonna have it  
reupholstered.

Peter and Gary head toward the bathroom.

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - BATHROOM - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

PETER  
(turns on the bathroom  
light; shows Gary around)  
This is the bathroom.  
(bends down and feels the  
floor)  
We were gonna have Italian marble,  
but it stains too easily, so we  
just settled on porcelain.  
(gets up; waves toward  
Gary)  
Now if you'll come with me this  
way, I'll show you our bedroom.

Peter and Gary depart from the bathroom, shutting the light  
behind them.

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

Peter and Gary enter the bedroom.

PETER

(turns on the bedroom  
light; shows Gary around)  
This is the bedroom. Again,  
nothing fancy, just as long as we  
can sleep.

GARY

(looks on in puzzlement)  
Peter, forgive me for being  
intrusive, but where in the hell  
did you get the money to buy all  
this?

PETER

Hold on and I'll show you.

Peter heads OUT OF VIEW, as Gary stands and looks around the  
bedroom. Gary turns around and is met with an eye-popping  
discovery.

GARY

(jumps back)  
Whoa! What is that?

PETER

(holds a bag of cocaine)  
How I got the money to buy all  
this! Coke, heroine, smack, blow,  
Panama powder, Bogota bullion, you  
name it, I got it, I've sold it.

GARY

(puzzled)  
You mean you're a drug dealer?

PETER

(loud; sarcastic)  
Ding, ding, ding! Gosh, you're a  
quick one!

GARY

(inquisitive)  
But how do you do it?

PETER

(explanatory)  
Easy.

(MORE)



PETER (cont'd)

I sell to some of my clients at work, give 'em a discount and they tell their friends, and they tell their friends, and so on. You won't believe how many accountants do blow.

(beat)

I have a separate phone line set up, so the cops or the feds can't trace any of my calls. I also stash all of the goods in places where no one will find them. Like in the flour bowl, in the remote control of my TV...

(puts his fingers in his mouth; pulls out a small bag of cocaine)

Even here under my palate.

GARY

But how do you get the drugs?

PETER

I have a subnetwork of guys in South America. I keep in contact with them everyday. I mix the drugs and keep track of the orders here and I give them updates by way of pay phone. Our drug trafficking scheme is the stuff of dreams.

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter and Gary are seated at the kitchen table. Pam arrives with a tray of cookies and milk, as Peter and Gary continue to discuss the drug ring.

PETER

I've been at it for about five years now. So, what line of work are you in, Gary?

GARY

Computers.

PETER

(slightly astounded)  
Get the fuck out of here. Where?

GARY

AccuCom.

PETER

Yeah, I heard about that place.  
They have pretty good hard drives.

GARY

Some of the best in the business.  
So, what does your wife think of  
you selling drugs?

PETER

(buoyant)

Are you kidding? She's practically  
part of the business! She takes  
care of small areas: beauty  
parlors, coffee shops, even her job  
at the board of Ed.

GARY

You must have it pretty well.

PETER

(commiserates)

I wish I did. Things are starting  
to get a little tight at work,  
though. My income has decreased  
the past two years because the firm  
is starting to hire more security  
guards.

(beat)

I've been barely escaping from  
getting pinched.

(suggestive)

Hey Gary, how would you like to  
become part of the network?

GARY

(dismissive)

Oh no, I couldn't.

PETER

You would be perfect. You're the  
person I've been looking for. You  
have the one thing I've been  
meaning to use through this whole  
scheme.

GARY

(curious)

What?

PETER

Technology. For years I've been selling this stuff by word of mouth, phone, and through my apartment. It's starting to eat at me. Not only is it difficult, but the possibility that I may get caught is tremendous.

(beat)

With technology, not only do I have the means to sell, I can't be seen in the process of selling. Don't you see, Gary? If we consolidate our resources, we can develop the country's top drug cartel. It's brilliant.

GARY

(looks at his watch; gets up to leave)

Oh shit, look at the time. I really must be going.

PETER

(intervenes)

Gary, wait. I know this a little much to put on you in one night. But how about you sleep on it?

GARY

Okay. Listen, thanks for everything, but I really have to be going.

PETER

Think about it Gary.

GARY

(heads for the door)

Will do.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gary returns from the Branches, as he walks through the door, where he is met with an irate Connie.

CONNIE

Where were you? You said you were going out for a cigarette. There's someone else, isn't there? I knew I should have listened to mom.

GARY

(calm)

Take it easy. I met one of our neighbors and got to talking with him.

CONNIE

(angry)

Don't bullshit me, Gary. You better have a good explanation.

GARY

(gently holds Connie's shoulders; looks her in the face)

What if I told you that our lives are gonna change this very night?

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Connie and Gary are sitting on the sofa, having some coffee. Connie is just being introduced to the Branches and their ingenious scheme.

CONNIE

(takes a sip of coffee)

So you mean to tell me that you two are involved in one of the most covert and successful drug trafficking rings, and you want to put me and Gary in?

PETER

(takes a sip of coffee)

In a nutshell, yes.

CONNIE

(skeptical)

But how is it possible? Won't we get caught?

GARY

(calmly explains)

No, Connie, you don't understand. All the orders are put through Peter. He uses pay phones to put in new orders for shipments and to keep track of the inventory.

PAM

Connie, honey, I've been doing this with Peter for years now, and look at all we have. I'm even getting the new fall Prada handbag.

CONNIE

Prada has a new fall handbag?

PAM

Of course. I have the complete fall catalogue. I get something every month.

(mock-ecstatic)

It's heaven.

PETER

(looks jokingly at Peter)

Heaven for her, hell for my wallet.

(turns to Connie)

So, whadya say, Connie?

CONNIE

(happily)

Where do I sign up?

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Peter breaks out a bottle of champagne, pops the cork, and starts to pour everyone a glass to celebrate the new partnership.

PETER

(raises his flute)

A toast to tonight, and the new partnership that will make us richer than we ever imagined.

Pam, Connie, and Gary raise their flutes, as they join in on the toast.

EVERYONE

(clicks their flutes)

Skoal!

FADE OUT.

SCENE III

FADE IN:

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Employees ascend/descend the front stairway, as they enter/exit the front doors.

CUT TO:

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - EMPTY OFFICE - DAY

Gary is busily working on his computer. He is building a database, where he will keep track of the drug sales.

GARY (V.O.)

It was great from the start. I already took the liberty of setting up a database to place and keep track of orders. I did it with one of the rarely-used computers in one of our offices. I lied and said I had to use it for troubleshooting.

(beat)

I placed a firewall and every security feature available within the operating system. All I had to do was get the orders from Peter at lunchtime, and access the database, before I went home. Not only could I get my work done, I could get all the orders in without a hitch. Technology, ain't it something?

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary works in his office, as he updates the database of the computers in the respective offices.

Gary is outside the AccuCom building, talking on a pay phone to Peter, while writing down the figures for the day.

Gary is walking down the hall to his office, as JEFF CANDACE, a fellow employee and daily menace, appears and tries to talk to Gary, who increases his pace and tries to avoid him. Gary arrives at his office, Jeff not far behind, as Gary closes the door in Jeff's face.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

Gary, just getting in from work, unlocks the door and slowly walks through, as he is met with a most pleasant sight.

GARY'S POV

DINING ROOM TABLE

Complete with a lavish meal atop it.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary looks on in awe, as Connie comes INTO VIEW.

CONNIE  
(exclaims; raises her  
arms)  
Surprise!

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Connie and Gary are eating dinner. Gary ravenously consumes his dinner, as Connie watches in amazement. Gary takes break from chewing and talks to his wife.

GARY  
(mouth slightly full)  
So, what did you do today?

CONNIE  
(mouth slightly full)  
I cleaned the house, got the food,  
and talked with Pam.

GARY  
(nervously hesitates)  
What do you mean you got the food?

CONNIE  
I bought it.

GARY  
(looks incredulous at  
Connie)  
You mean you didn't cook this?

CONNIE  
(humorous)  
I wish. I ordered take out from  
Leonardo's.

GARY  
You're not talking about the place  
on Shaw Street.

CONNIE  
That's the one.

GARY

(nervous)

Connie, do you know how expensive that place is? I went for a dinner meeting there. The meals cost a fortune. Where's the receipt?

Gary gets up from his seat at the table and heads over the kitchen waste basket, and empties it out.

CONNIE (O.S.)

(upset)

Gary, you're making a mess!

Gary gets on his knees, and nervously rummages through the trash. He finds the receipt.

GARY

(reads the receipt; looks nervously at Connie)

Connie, I can't believe you!

CONNIE

What are you getting all worked up for? It's not like we can't afford it now.

GARY

What else did you buy?

CONNIE

(sheepish)

Well, just a little something.

GARY

(demanding)

Show me.

Connie goes over to a corner near the sofa, and pulls out a brand new Prada handbag.

GARY

(excited)

Connie, a Prada bag!

CONNIE

(mock-pleads)

You always knew how much I wanted one. C'mon Gary.

GARY

(angry; explanatory)

That's not the point.

(MORE)



GARY (cont'd)  
 Now that we're in this plan  
 together, we have to be discreet  
 with our money. We just can't go  
 around spending it frivolously.

CONNIE  
 (impudent)  
 Why the fuck not? We've earned it!

GARY  
 Connie, people will get suspicious  
 if they see us with expensive  
 items. They'll immediately call  
 the cops and then we're screwed.

CONNIE  
 (walks towards the  
 bedroom)  
 I knew I should've listened to mom.

GARY  
 Here we go with this mom bullshit!

Gary throws his arms up in the air in frustration, as he goes  
 OUT OF VIEW.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE -  
 MORNING

Employees smoke, converse with each other, and enjoy their  
 brief respites.

CUT TO:

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Gary is working at his computer when his boss, PATRICK  
 OAKLEY, comes INTO VIEW.

MR. OAKLEY  
 Gary.

GARY  
 (attentive)  
 Mr. Oakley. Hello, Sir. What can  
 I do for you?

MR. OAKLEY  
 Come with me, Gary.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - MR. OAKLEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary is sitting in nervous anticipation in a chair, as he  
 awaits Mr. Oakley to enter.

The office door opens, as Mr. Oakley enters and slowly plops down in the chair behind his desk.

MR. OAKLEY

(stern)

Gary, it has come to my attention that you have become involved in a variety of activities during this past year at AccuCom. And for that I have one thing to say to you...

GARY

Nervously awaits Mr. Oakley's next words.

MR. OAKLEY

(smiles)

Thank you so much for assisting some of our newcomers and temps. I've been hearing nothing but good things from everyone down at the Resources, Accounting, and Marketing Departments.

(beat)

You have really been an asset to this company since your arrival, and we hope you can continue the good work. Keep this up, Gary, and I could see a raise in your future.

Mr. Oakley extends his hand, as Gary slowly but firmly shakes his boss' hand.

GARY

(hesitant)

Well, thank you Mr. Oakley. I really don't know what to say. I'll just keep on keeping on.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

Gary quietly and swiftly exits Mr. Oakley's office, as he breathes a sigh of relief. Gary is soon met by Jeff, who follows Gary to his office.

JEFF

(friendly)

Hey, Gary, how's it hanging, man?

GARY

Pretty good, Jeff.

JEFF  
(suggestive)  
Hey, I know this great diner in the city. They hamburgers so thick you can choke on them. Whadya say, Gary?

GARY  
(dismissive)  
No thanks, Jeff. I'm a vegetarian.

JEFF  
(stops in his tracks;  
follows Gary)  
Hey, I can dig that.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary returns to his office and looks at his phone to check his caller id.

GARY'S POV

CALLER ID SCREEN

Displays, "Blue Moose Diner" and the phone number.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary quickly picks up his phone, dials the number, and waits for a response.

GARY  
(talks into receiver)  
Peter, I saw the number on my id.  
What's up?

PETER (V.O.)  
Gary, I gotta tell you something.  
Meet me after work. My place.

Peter hangs up, as Gary remains holding the receiver, looking worried.

FADE OUT.

SCENE IV

FADE IN:

EXT. TWIN OAKS TOWERS - PARKING LOT - WIDE ANGLE - EVENING

GARY'S CAR

Comes SPEEDING into the parking lot, and pulls to a SCREECHING halt. Gary quickly gets out

INT. BRANCHES' APARTMENT - EVENING

FRONT DOOR

Opens, as PETER comes INTO VIEW, as he looks through the peephole and answers it. Gary is standing outside.

PETER

Gary, you're right on time. Come in.

GARY

I came as fast as I could. What's the matter?

PETER

(calmly touches Gary's shoulder)

Relax. Nothing's wrong. I called you because I have something important to tell you.

GARY

(looks around the apartment)

You have a lot of boxes. What's up?

PETER

That's part of the reason I called you here, Gary. Pam just got a call from one of my supervisors. I'm getting to transferred to Miami.

(excited)

We're moving, Gary!

GARY

Congratulations, Peter.

PETER

I asked for a transfer last year, but I just missed out. And getting a place won't even be a problem. Pam I have been saving our whole lives for it.

(beat)

(MORE)

PETER (cont'd)

I put a small nest egg aside just in case, and we'll have enough to put a down payment on a condo.

GARY

So that means we'll have to stop doing the drug ring.

PETER

That's the other thing I wanted to talk to you about. I called you here to tell you that you're now the guy.

GARY

(confounded)

Me?

PETER

Yeah, you. I talked with the guys in South America and they agreed. Gary, you're smart, responsible, and the guys and I trust you. I'll still be involved with the drug ring, only I'll be selling a few grams in Florida. You're set for life, Gary.

GARY

(uncertain)

I don't know, Peter. I mean, this is a huge responsibility. I don't think I can handle something this big.

PETER

(nonchalant)

Gary, please. I want you to stop worrying.

(grabs Gary by the shoulders)

Look at me. There is no one I'd rather have running this operation. You'll do great.

GARY

Will you come back to visit?

PETER

(joking)

Don't know. If I do, I'll bring you back some grapefruits and a snow globe.

GARY

But how will I contact you now that you're moving?

PETER

I've already had a private phone line installed in the condo. I got friendly with an electrician. Gary, I want you to stop worrying. We will leave no stone unturned. Except maybe the ones we sell.

Gary gives a slight smile.

PETER

(excited)

I feel like celebrating. How about you?

GARY

Sounds great. But where's Pam?

PETER

(dismissive)

Forget Pam. Let's have a guy's night out.

EXT. VA VA VOOM! STRIP CLUB - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

Neon lights shine on men, as they enjoy a smoke and talk amongst one another.

CUT TO:

INT. VA VA VOOM! STRIP CLUB - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

MUSIC BLASTS from the loudspeakers, as aroused men enjoy the male entertainment, as bartenders take orders and serve drinks, while scantily-clad waitresses wait tables and deliver drinks. Peter and Gary have just entered, as they find some nearby stools and each take a seat. Peter seems relaxed, while Gary looks pensively at the surroundings. Peter notices Gary.

PETER

(stern)

Gary, will you relax? No one's gonna find us here. If you're gonna be in this ring, you gotta learn to live on the edge.

A stripper at Va Va Voom, GLENDA GIVSALOT, comes INTO VIEW, as she approaches Peter and Gary.

GLENDA  
 (walks up to the guys)  
 Peter, baby. Long time no see.

Glenda and Peter hug and give each other a kiss on the cheek.

PETER  
 (witty)  
 What's the good word, Glenda? What can I say? The wife's had me on a leash, and I managed to break free.  
 (introduces Gary)  
 Glenda, I want you to meet my friend Gary.

GLENDA  
 (shakes Gary's hand)  
 Nice to meet you.

GARY  
 (shyly shakes Glenda's hand)  
 Hello.

GLENDA  
 Peter, when's your next shipment coming in? My brother's been itchin' for some coke.

PETER  
 Rest assured my dear. There's a new shipment coming in on Monday.

Glenda begins to gently caress Peter all over his body, and starts to give him a lap dance.

GARY

Sits all-alone on his stool, looking aimlessly around.

Gary, with Glenda still pleasuring him, notices his lonesome friend, and decides to take action.

PETER  
 (encouraging)  
 Glenda, why don't you spread the wealth, as well as your legs, over to my friend there.

Glenda heeds Peter and heads over to Gary. Glenda starts to give Gary a lap dance.

GARY

Looks uncomfortably downward, failing to even make eye contact with Glenda. Glenda tries to break the ice.

GLEENDA  
(flirting; sotto voce)  
So, handsome, how long have you  
known Gary?

Gary is unresponsive, but continues to sit through the lap dance.

GLEENDA  
(derisive)  
For one of Peter's friends, you  
sure don't say much.

Glenda gets off of Gary and returns to Peter, as she dances for him.

GLEENDA  
(does a lap dance for  
Peter; curious)  
What is he a eunuch, Pete? He  
didn't even look up at me.

PETER  
Relax. We always have Plan B. Get  
Claire.

Glenda gets off of Peter and departs OUT OF VIEW. Peter goes over to Gary.

PETER  
(frustrated)  
Gar, what's up with you? This  
ain't no monastery. It's a titty  
bar. So start acting like it!

GARY  
(coy)  
It's just that Connie gets jealous.  
She can't know I'm in here.

PETER  
What gal doesn't get jealous, Gar?  
These are the last days we'll be  
seeing each other. Let's make it  
memorable.

(MORE)



PETER (cont'd)  
 (puts his arm around Gary)  
 C'mon now.

Gary concedes, as he and Gary take a walk.

INT. VA VA VOOM! STRIP CLUB - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Peter and Gary enter, as they are met with a most pleasant sight.

GLEENDA AND CLAIRE

Stand scantily-clad and smile at the guys.

GLEENDA  
 Gentlemen, allow us to introduce  
 ourselves. I'm Glenda...

CLAIRE  
 And I'm Claire.

PETER AND GARY

Look dumbfounded at each other. Peter grins devilishly, as Gary remains composed.

GLEENDA AND CLAIRE

Approach the guys.

Glenda grabs Gary and escorts him out of the room, as they go OUT OF VIEW. Pam sits Gary on a nearby chair and starts to give him a lap dance.

CLAIRE  
 (gives Gary a lap dance;  
 sotto voce)  
 So what's your name, handsome?

GARY  
 Gary.

CLAIRE  
 (continues lap dance;  
 sotto voce)  
 So, what do you do, Gary?

GARY  
 I work in computers.

CLAIRE  
 (looks amorously at Gary;  
 witty; sotto voce)  
 Really?

(MORE)

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
Well, I just want you to know my  
processor's going into overdrive.  
Say, Gary. Have I introduced you  
to blink and wink?

GARY  
(confounded)  
No. Are they here with you?

CLAIRE  
They're always with me.

Claire pulls off her top.

GARY  
(stares widely at Claire's  
breasts)  
You never told me they were  
identical twins.

CLAIRE

Gives a light giggle, gets off of Gary, and goes to a corner  
to put her top back on. She goes back over to Gary, and  
leads him up from his chair.

CLAIRE  
(takes Gary by the hand)  
I know a good place where we can  
go.

GARY  
(cautious)  
Just to let you know, I'm married.

CLAIRE  
Don't worry. I'll be gentle.

Claire and Gary walk out of the room together.

CLOSEUP - CLAIRE'S FINGERS

As they cross behind her back.

FADE OUT.

SCENE V

FADE IN:

INT. LOCAL DINER - CORNER BOOTH - DAY

Connie and Pam are having lunch together, making small but  
serious talk.

CONNIE

(happily)

Congratulations, Pam! I can't believe you and Peter are moving to Miami. Gosh, some women just have it made.

PAM

(cryptic)

Some more than others.

CONNIE

(concerned)

Is something wrong?

PAM

I had to work late last night. The Board of Ed had a final meeting regarding next year's budget. When I got home there was a note on the fridge from Peter. He said he was going with Gary to get a bite to eat.

CONNIE

Yeah, that's what Gary told me.

PAM

Connie, baby, you have to use your senses. When a man tells you he's going somewhere, he never tells you where he's actually going. The guys were at Va Va Voom!

CONNIE

(confounded)

Va Va Voom?

PAM

It's a titty bar on the lower South side. I'm friends with the one of the bartender's wives. She told me that her husband saw Peter and Gary fondling two big-titted floozies.

CONNIE

(in denial)

No, that's not Gary. That's not Gary.

PAM

That' not Gary now. Believe me, Peter could turn a priest into a pornographer. If I were you, I'd monitor Gary a little closer.

(beat)

I mean, look at him: he's handsome, has a good job, has some money, and he's sweet. I'm not the best shopper in the world, but guys like him come a dime a dozen.

CONNIE

It can't be that bad, Pam.

PAM

(gets hysterical)

Yes it is, Connie. That's why I think you're so lucky. I mean, Gary seems like a pretty normal, straight-laced guy.

(beat; sotto voce)

Pete's a maverick, takes a lot of chances. I can't tell you the number of times I thought we were gonna get pinched. We've been lucky the feds haven't caught on.

(stops crying;beat)

Just remember to try and keep Gary on the straight and narrow. I know you can and will. And there's something else I know.

CONNIE

What?

CLAIRE

Peter's gonna have a dinner he'll never forget

BOTTLE OF EXTRA-STRENGTH LAXATIVE

Rests in Claire's hand.

CLAIRE

Smiles devilishly.

CONNIE

Looks astounded at Claire.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

EXTREME CLOSEUP - GARY'S CLOSED EYES

Slowly begin to open.

Gary awakes, as he is met with a startling sight.

HUGE, RAZOR- SHARPE KNIFE

Rests near Gary's neck.

CONNIE

Tightly and hysterically holds the knife.

GARY

(looks worried at Connie)  
Connie, where'd you get the knife?

CONNIE

Slicing Sammy's Sharp Knives  
Showcase on HSN. Who is she Gary?

GARY

Who?

CONNIE

(angry;hysterical)  
Don't play dumb with me, Gary. Who  
is she?

GARY

(calm)  
Connie, she's nobody. Peter and I  
went to a strip club last night.  
There were a couple of girls there,  
but I swear to you, nothing  
happened. Connie, please.

CONNIE

(angry;hysterical)  
I don't believe you!

GARY

(calm)  
Connie, please put the knife down.  
I would never cheat on you. You're  
the only one for me.

Connie sobs uncontrollably. Gary attentively watches her,  
then proceeds to knock off the bed and onto the floor.

Gary quickly grabs the knife and puts it up to a still fallen Connie.

GARY  
 (angrily holds the knife  
 at Connie's neck)  
 I can't believe this. I put my  
 neck on the line everyday to give  
 you a better life and this is what  
 I get! I should fuckin cut you!  
 Don't ever pull something like this  
 again. Ever!

Gary stabs the knife into the side of a nearby drawer, gets up and departs, as Connie remains on the bedroom floor.

CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 I'm sorry, Gary. I'm sorry.  
 (a cry from the bellows)  
 Aaaahhhhhhhh!

EXT. FRONT - TWIN OAKS TOWERS - DAY

A moving van is parked out front, as moving men finish packing most of the Branches' belongings into their van. Gary and Connie are waiting out front, but stand a few feet apart from each other.

PETER AND PAM

Exit the building.

Pam heads towards Connie, as Peter approaches Gary.

PETER  
 (looks closely up at  
 building)  
 Just gave the landlord our keys.  
 Never thought I'd leave this place.  
 A new condo in Florida. Whoda  
 thunk it?  
 (jokingly turns toward  
 Gary)  
 Listen to me. I sound like an  
 eighty-year old Jew.

GARY

Gives a slight grin.

PETER  
 (calmly)  
 Gary, please.  
 (MORE)

PETER (cont'd)  
 I want you to stop worrying.  
 (puts his hand on Gary's  
 shoulder)  
 Look at me. Everything's gonna be  
 fine. You'll do great.

GARY  
 Promise you'll come back to visit?

PETER  
 I promise. And when I do, I'll  
 bring you back some alligator teeth  
 and a Marlins hat.  
 (throws up his hands)  
 There I go again.

GARY  
 (warmly extends his hand)  
 All the best.

PETER  
 (shakes Gary's hand)  
 Thank you.  
 (painfully holds his  
 stomach)  
 Oh man.

GARY  
 (concerned)  
 What's the matter?

PETER  
 (wincing)  
 My stomach's been upset all  
 morning. I've been shitting  
 mountains. Must have been  
 something I ate.

BRANCHES AND VERNONS

Give each other hugs and kisses, and wish each other a fond  
 and final farewell.

INT. VERNONS' APARMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary is arranging his clothes in the bedroom closet, as  
 Connie sits excitedly on the bed, painting her toenails.

CONNIE  
 (excitedly paints her  
 toenails)  
 It's just too good to be true.  
 We're running a drug ring.

GARY

(hangs up a pair of pants)  
A new shipment is arriving  
tomorrow. Two hundred kilos of  
meth, coke, and Colombian blue.  
I'm meeting with Ken tomorrow  
morning.

CONNIE

Who?

GARY

Ken Damon. The delivery  
man. He brings us the  
packages.

CONNIE

(suspiciously)  
Can we trust him?

GARY

He seems a little flaky, but he's  
good.

CONNIE

(excited)  
Imagine. We're running a drug  
ring. The sky's the limit.

GARY

(swiftly turns  
around; stern)  
No. The sky's not the limit; it's  
only just the beginning. I've  
learned something. It's not the  
drugs that give you the high. It's  
everything that comes with them.

(beat; paces around  
bedroom)

The money, the power, and  
ultimately, the thrill of the hunt.  
The fact that any second of any  
minute of any day you could get  
pinched.

(beat)

It's like a chess match; you have  
to anticipate, stay ahead of your  
pursuer. That's why some of the  
best get caught. They don't stay  
ahead of the game. Peter and I  
oversaw every detail. Nothing can  
go wrong. I won't let it. I have  
to be the best.



CONNIE

(witty)

I wish I could say the same about  
you in bed.

GARY

Smiles sardonically, as he turns serious.

GARY

I want to give you something.

Gary reaches into his pants pocket, and pulls out a small  
box.

GARY

(hands a small box to  
Connie)

Here.

CONNIE

(looks admiringly at the  
small box)

Oh, how cute. What is it?

Connie goes to open the box, but not before Gary intervenes.

GARY

(yells angrily)

Don't open it!

(grabs Connie's chin)

I want you to look at me. If  
anything should happen to me, I  
want you to keep this box with you  
at all times. Do not open it  
unless you're in a dire emergency.

CONNIE

But Gary - -

GARY

(angrily interrupts)

No buts, Connie. Keep this in a  
safe place and don't open it.  
Understand?

CONNIE

Nods at Gary, rises from the bed and heads toward the closet  
to hide the small box.

CONNIE  
(rummages through the closet)  
Well, one good gift deserves another. I bought something.

GARY  
(upset)  
Connie. I can't believe you. What did I tell you about spending...

CONNIE

Pulls out some sexy negligee, as she smiles coquettishly at Gary.

GARY  
(smugly)  
Oh, alright.

Connie collapses on the bed with Gary, as they both play and laugh flirtingly with one another.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

## **ACT II**

### SCENE VI

FADE IN:

EXT. DEA HEADQUARTERS (NEW YORK CITY) - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

The tall buildings dominate the New York City skyline.

CUT TO:

INT. DEA HEADQUARTERS - SMALL OFFICE - DAY

MEL CAPRA, a Head Detective for the DEA, sits pensively at his desk, reviewing some papers. His partner, RON O' ROURKE, enters the office and heads toward his desk across from Mel.

RON  
(walks briskly to his desk)  
What's the good word, Mel?

MEL

(looks at his papers)  
Wish I had one, Ronnie. I just got a report here from the head of the Bureau. Apparently there seems to be an influx of drug shipments.

RON

(curiously)  
Any leads?

MEL

(looks up at Ron;  
confoundedly shakes his  
head)  
Nary a one. They can't find out who's selling them, what's being sold, where it's being shipped to, even how it's been able to get past security.  
(gets up from his desk)  
I think I'm gonna have to pay a visit to our friends below the Equator.

Mel departs from his office, as the office door closes behind him.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary sits by his computer, busily entering the day's tally. Gary is transfixed by the numbers on the monitor, when his work is suddenly interrupted.

JEFF

(friendly)  
Gary. What's up, buddy?

A startled Gary jumps up from his computer and quickly minimizes his work page.

JEFF

(looks curiously at  
monitor)  
Whatcha doin?

GARY

(upset)  
Jeff, don't do that!

JEFF

Hey, whadya say we go on break and get a nice hot dog? The truck's still outside.

GARY

I'd love to, Jeff, but I really need to get the rest of my work done.

JEFF

Oh, come on. Five minutes. That's all. You know, all work and no play make - -

GARY

(angrily intervenes)  
Damn it, Jeff! Can't you take a fuckin hint?

JEFF

(a little hurt; sotto voce)  
Sorry. I'll just be on my way.

Jeff despondently heads toward the door. A slightly embarrassed Gary has a sudden change of heart.

GARY

(calls Jeff)  
Jeff wait.

JEFF

Stops, and turns around at Gary.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - ATRIUM - DAY

Jeff and Gary are seated on a nearby bench in the atrium, munching on hot dogs. Gary pensively eats, as Jeff tries to make small talk.

JEFF

(eats and looks at his hot dog; mouth half full)  
Hey, Gar, did you ever notice how much chili resembles dog food? I mean they can practically pass as twins.  
(looks curiously at Gary)  
Gary?

GARY

Stares pensively and aimlessly while eating. Gary soon redirects his attention to Jeff.

GARY

(turns around)

I'm sorry, what was that Jeff?

JEFF

I was just saying how chili resembles dog food.

GARY

I hear ya. You think you have a can of Hormel, and oops, Alpo all the way.

JEFF

(amused)

That's good, Gar. Man, you're somethin' else. Hey, wanna get together some time? There's this club downtown.

(grabs his chest with both hands)

I'm talking silicon central.

GARY

(soft)

Sounds great, Jeff, but I promised my wife I'd steer clear from those kind of places.

JEFF

(astounded)

You're married? Get out of here! Shit, Gary, what I'd do to have your life. You have it all: a good job, a wife, friends at work.

GARY

You want it, you can have it. To be honest with you, you're the only one here at work who actually speaks to me. And even though you can be a bit overeager, I value your friendship.

Gary extends his hand, as a touched Jeff pulls out his and firmly shakes Gary's hand. Gary smiles then suddenly notices something.

GARY'S POV

DELIVERY VAN

Pulls into the parking lot of AccuCom.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary intently watches the truck, as he decides to cut his break short.

GARY  
 (turns to Jeff)  
 Listen, maybe we can get together  
 some other time. I really have to  
 get goin'.

JEFF  
 Yeah, sure.

Gary departs.

JEFF  
 (yells aloud to Gary)  
 Thanks for the hot dogs.

GARY  
 (dashes away; yells aloud)  
 Don't mention it.

JEFF

Smiles warmly, as he takes another bite of his hot dog.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - LOBBY AREA - DAY

Gary is ambling around the crowded lobby, maneuvering his way past some throngs of fellow employees. Gary quickly spots something.

CARDBOARD PACKAGE

Rests idly and all-alone on a nearby bench.

GARY

Swiftly makes his way over to the package, as he arrives at the bench and is met with his new delivery man, KEN DAMON.

KEN  
 (excited)  
 There you are! I've been looking  
 all over for you!  
 (MORE)

KEN (cont'd)  
 They said you'd be here.  
 (extends his hand)  
 The name's Ken Damon.

GARY  
 (angrily; sotto voce)  
 Where the hell have you been?  
 You're an hour late!

KEN  
 You're not going to believe this,  
 but I spotted a the most beautiful  
 robin red breast and I - -

Before Ken can finish, an irate Gary takes the package and Ken into a corner.

GARY  
 (sternly; sotto voce)  
 Don't ever leave a package like  
 this out in the open. You're gonna  
 get us both pinched! We have to be  
 extra careful.

KEN  
 (sarcastic)  
 Wow, I guess you're not really good  
 at breaking the ice.  
 (mellow)  
 Relax. The goods are delivered,  
 everything's all right.

GARY  
 (sotto voce)  
 C'mon. Let's go to my office.

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ken and Gary are sitting on the floor in the office for their first official meeting. Gary is busily counting wads of money, as Ken lasciviously looks on.

GARY  
 (hands Ken his share)  
 Here's your take.  
 (places rest of money in a  
 manila envelope; licks  
 and seals envelope; hands  
 envelope to Ken)  
 This is for the Latino lads for  
 last month's shipment. Guard this  
 with your life and no funny  
 business. Ya got me?

Ken nods understandingly, as there is a sudden KNOCK at the DOOR. Gary, slightly startled, slowly gets up, as the KNOCKING continues.

GARY  
 (commands Ken; sotto voce)  
 Stay down and keep quiet.  
 (suspiciously heads toward door)  
 Who is it?

Gary receives no response, as he tentatively approaches the door. Gary braces himself, and swiftly opens the door. He is met with BARTHOLEMEW FINCH, a fellow employee and professional adversary, who has come to check on Gary.

GARY  
 (dry)  
 What can I do for you, Bart?

BARTHOLEMEW  
 (uppity; stern)  
 For your information it's Bartholemew, Gary. I would just like to know why your door is locked. I hope you are aware that it is against corporate policy to lock your door unless it is an official company meeting.

GARY  
 (sarcastic)  
 I did not know that. Boy, it seems like some of us have memorized the company handbook verbatim.

BARTHOLEMEW  
 (angrily)  
 I can't believe you're sitting in the chair that you're in. I've busted my hump for ten years here and - -

GARY  
 (impudently intervenes)  
 Well, maybe if you pulled your nose out from other people's asses, you'd be where I am.

Bartholemew, silenced by Gary's words, leaves in a huff, as Gary watches him closely. Gary proceeds to close and lock his door.



GARY  
 (motions to Ken)  
 You can come out now, Ken.

KEN  
 (gets up; curiously)  
 Who was that?

GARY  
 Bartholemew Finch. A brown-nosing  
 corporate prick. Pay him no mind

(looks sternly at Ken)  
 Listen, I don't care if you see a  
 spotted owl, don't ever be late  
 again. Do you hear me?

KEN  
 (heads towards the door)  
 Alright, alright. You got it man.

Ken exits Gary's office.

GARY

Gives a slight smirk and confoundedly shakes his head.

FADE OUT.

SCENE VII

FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary is at his desk, busily entering more of the information  
 for the drug ring.

Connie cheerfully walks out of the mall with a slew of huge  
 shopping bags from all the fancy clothing stores around her  
 arms.

Gary creates AccuCom labels on his computer, which he will  
 give to Ken to put on all of his packages.

Stevedores enter the Vernons' apartment, as they bring in the  
 new sofa, television, and other home appliances. Connie  
 directs the stevedores.

GARY (V.O.)  
 Business was booming. I was making  
 close to a quarter of a million a  
 month.

(MORE)

GARY (V.O.) (cont'd)

Like Peter and Pam, Connie and I decided our apartment needed some upgrades. Connie got some brand new furniture, big screen TV, the works.

(beat)

Best thing was, everything came off a truck. The cops and the feds couldn't trace a thing. I gotta hand it to Peter. He's got more connections than Midwestern Bell. And all this from technology. Ain't it something?

(beat)

Anyhow, work was basically the same. I was busier than ever. Stress was starting to set in. But not even stress could top with what Connie and I would face next.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

Gary is alone in his bedroom, taking inventory. Gary notices a bag of cocaine. Gary looks long and curiously at the cocaine.

SAME - MINUTES LATER

THREE LINES OF COCAINE

Lie on an old vinyl record jacket.

GARY

Proceeds to swiftly snort each line of cocaine, as he cleans his nose and braces himself for the after burn by leaning his head back.

There is a quick and sudden KNOCK on the bedroom DOOR.

CONNIE (V.O.)

(behind bedroom door)

Gary, are you in there? I have to put on my pajamas. Gary, why is this door locked?

GARY

(frantically cleans up the bedroom)

Okay, honey. I'll be right there.

(shakes the residual cocaine out the window)

I'm just cleaning up. Be right there.

Gary quickly puts away the drugs, grabs Connie's pajamas, and goes to unlock the door. Connie enters the bedroom and curiously looks around.

CONNIE  
(suspicious)  
Is everything alright? Why did you have the door locked?

GARY  
(calm)  
I was just cleaning up. My side of the closet was starting to look like a pig's pen. Can't have that.  
(happily shows Connie the vinyl record)  
Hey, remember when I bought this?

CONNIE  
(happily remembers)  
Oh, yeah. You were in junior year of high school. You even had the hairdo.

GARY  
(lovingly puts his arm around Connie)  
Hey, I was just thinking. Maybe we can go somewhere for New Year's.

Connie and Gary exit the bedroom.

SAME - HOURS LATER

Connie and Gary are fast asleep in their bed. A rustling NOISE arises from inside the apartment, as Gary is quickly awakened. Gary reaches over into the night stand near the bed and pulls out a gun. Gary starts to quietly walk out of the bedroom.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - CORRIDOR - LATE NIGHT

Gary walks tentatively down the corridor, as he quickly hears something. Gary puts his ear up against the wall, and listens attentively. He hears the sound of VOICES, as they appear to be burglars.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.)  
(sotto voce)  
Did you find anything?

SECOND MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.)  
 (sotto voce)  
 Nothin'. I thought Tyrone told you  
 he had a stash?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.)  
 (sotto voce)  
 He did. Keep your voice down.  
 You'll wake them up.

SECOND MYSTERIOUS VOICE (O.S.)  
 (sotto voce)  
 Hey, I think I found something!

Gary continues to listen to the burglars, as he has his gun ready to fire. Gary slowly sidles along the wall, as he tries to nail the burglars.

GARY

Jumps out from behind the wall, as he points his gun.

LIVING ROOM WINDOW AND FIRE ESCAPE

As nary a soul is present, while the curtains blow gently in the wind. The burglars have escaped.

GARY

Goes over to the living room window, and looks out.

LIVING ROOM WINDOW POV

WIDE ANGLE - STREETS OUTSIDE

As the silhouettes of the burglars can be seen running OUT OF VIEW.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary continues to look out the window, as a tired Connie enters the living room.

CONNIE  
 (groggy)  
 What's going on?

GARY  
 We've been robbed.

CONNIE

(comes to; incredulous)  
What? You're shittin me. What did they take?

GARY

(heads over to a small bureau draw)  
They made off with a few pounds of weed, nothing else. I'm just gonna have to reimburse the guys.  
(speaks jokingly to Connie)  
At least that's all they got, eh Connie?

Gary gets no reply, as he turns around to see that Connie is nowhere in sight. Gary puts back the drugs and goes to look for Connie.

GARY

(ambles around apartment)  
Connie?

Gary reaches the bedroom, where he opens the door to find Connie speaking on the telephone.

CONNIE

(talks on telephone)  
Yes. Thank you so very much. Good bye.

Connie hangs up the phone, as a curious Gary queries her.

GARY

(curious)  
Who did you call?

CONNIE

The police.

GARY

(incredulous)  
What?! Why did you do that?

CONNIE

Maybe they made off with more than we thought. I have a lot of expensive clothes and jewelry here, Gary. For all we know, they're being sold for crack.

GARY

(nervous)

I can't believe you. Do you realize how much drugs we have in here? They'll put us away for life! Why did you do that?

Connie and Gary are suddenly met with a HARD KNOCK on the door. They both turn around.

FRONT DOOR

As the KNOCKS REVERBERATE off the wood.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

(aloud; behind front door)

This is the police. We're here to investigate a burglary. Open up.

CONNIE AND GARY

Look nervously at one another, as Gary quickly thinks of a plan.

GARY

(sotto voce)

I want you to stall them. Stall them, while I try and hide the stash.

Connie nods accordingly, as Gary departs OUT OF VIEW.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

(knocks hardly on door;

aloud; from behind front door)

Hello. This is the Police. We're here to investigate a burglary.

CONNIE

(aloud; heads towards

front door)

Okay. I'm coming!

Connie unlocks the front door, as OFFICER McCAULEY, and his partner, OFFICER ROBERTSON, stand in the doorway.

OFFICER McCAULEY

Good evening, ma'am.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Officer McCauley and Officer Robertson are closely investigating the living room, as a nervous but composed Gary stands and closely watches.

OFFICER MCCAULEY  
(looks carefully around  
living room)  
Now, did you see what the  
perpetrator looked like?

GARY  
(calm)  
No Officer.  
(points toward living room  
window)  
I just saw the window open when I  
awoke and I assumed they had gotten  
away.

OFFICER ROBERTSON  
(inquisitive)  
Was there anything of value that  
was stolen?

GARY  
Well, I think they made off with  
our stereo system and some of my  
wife's jewelry. That's all to my  
estimation.

OFFICER MCCAULEY  
(points towards living  
room window)  
Frank, dust the window sills for  
any finger prints.

Officer McCauley and Officer Robertson are ready to depart from the apartment, as Connie and Gary are ready to send them off.

OFFICER ROBERTSON  
Well then, we'll just run these  
fingerprints down to the station  
and hopefully we can catch these  
low-lives.

GARY  
(extends his hand)  
Thank you, Officers.

OFFICER MCCAULEY  
(looks suggestively at  
Connie)  
My pleasure.

GARY  
With all due respect, Officer.  
It's late, and there are other  
crimes much more deserving of your  
attention.

OFFICER MCCAULEY

Starts to scowl, as he is apparently insulted by Gary's  
comments. Officer McCauley follows his partner out the door.

POLICE CAR

As it drives away into the night.

GARY

Attentively watches the police car from the living room  
window. Connie walks over to Gary and puts her arms around  
him. Gary responds by shoving Connie to the couch, and  
angrily confronts her.

GARY  
(enraged)  
Don't ever pull another stunt like  
that again! We could have been  
inmates if they found the stash!  
Unbelievable. It never fuckin  
fails with women.

Gary swiftly heads to the kitchen.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Gary enters the kitchen, as he looks frantically for the  
drugs and opens the sugar, flour, and cookie jars, where he  
takes out bags of drugs from each. Gary then heads to the  
refrigerator, where he takes out a bunch of tomatoes and  
places them on the kitchen table. Gary takes one of the  
tomatoes.

TOMATO

As Gary's hand gently pulls on the core, as a vial of  
crack/cocaine emerges from it.



GARY

Looks vigilantly at the vial, and breathes a huge sigh of relief.

INT. VERNONS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Gary is busily gathering up the rest of the drugs from the small bureau draw, as Connie watches from behind.

GARY  
 (takes the remaining bags  
 of drugs)  
 That's all of them.

Gary looks around at the apartment, as Connie looks curiously at her husband.

CONNIE  
 (concerned)  
 What's the matter, baby?

GARY  
 (looks soberly at Connie)  
 Get packed. We're moving out of here.

FADE OUT.

SCENE VIII

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - AROUND PANAMA CANAL ZONE

A young adolescent boy busily shines shoes along a crowded sidewalk.

A young, tattered girl walks the streets, hungry and no shoes on her feet.

Stevedores load crates filled with fruit onto a nearby cargo ship.

An elderly woman, aged by weather and time, sits in the shade, attentively watching the passerby.

Cars pack a crowded highway, as bicycle riders snake their way in around traffic.

END MONTAGE

INT. LOCAL AIRPORT (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - DAY

Mel has just disembarked from his flight, as he waits for his luggage on the carousel.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE AIRPORT - DAY

Mel, with luggage in hand, lifts up his arm, in hopes of stopping a taxi. He succeeds, as a taxi pulls the side of the road.

EXT. BUSINESS SECTION (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - DAY

Pedestrians try to cross the busy streets, as cars and taxis continue to occupy the road. The TAXI holding Mel, comes to a stop, as Mel gets out, pays the taxi driver, and gives him a "thank you" wave.

Mel starts to walk along the busy sidewalks, as he quickly spots something.

MEL'S POV

A suspicious-looking CITIZEN, checking for anyone, and then entering into an alleyway.

BACK TO SCENE

Mel intuitively follows the man into the alleyway.

EXT. ABANDONED ALLEYWAY - DAY

The Citizen waits for someone, as a local DRUG DEALER comes INTO VIEW.

SUBTITLED - IN SPANISH

CITIZEN

(friendly)

Hello, my friend. What have you got for me today?

DRUG DEALER

(pulls out drugs from his pocket and shows them to Buyer)

Well, I have some nice Panama powder, and some hashish from Jamaica.

CITIZEN

(curious)

How much is in there?

DRUG DEALER  
Twenty kilos.

MEL

Quietly listens to the conversation between the men behind a dumpster, while busily taking notes.

Unbuttons his shirt to reveal a small, secretly implanted recording device, which is taped to his chest.

Quickly reaches for his gun, and starts to emerge from behind the dumpster.

MEL  
(points his gun; aloud)  
Okay, put your hands in the air and don't move.

The DRUG DEALER and CITIZEN heed Mel.

Mel quickly but carefully approaches the men.

MEL  
(sternly points his gun)  
Alright, I want you to tell me where you got those drugs.

The Drug Dealer stands unresponsive, as Mel tries again.

MEL  
(calm)  
I'm not going to shoot you. All I want to know is where you got those drugs.

BACK OF MEL'S HEAD

Gets HIT with a GLASS BOTTLE, knocking him unconscious.

HERNANDO CABRERA, a head local drug lord, comes INTO VIEW, as he looks sinisterly at a fallen Mel.

HERNANDO  
(sternly orders the two men; in Spanish)  
Help me take him to the car.

The three men lift up Mel's body and take it to a waiting limousine, which waits for them at the end of the alley. The Drug Dealer and the Citizen enter the limousine, as Hernando follows them inside.

LIMOUSINE DOOR

CLOSES loudly, as the limousine rapidly pulls away.

GARY (V.O.)

I'll admit, I was pretty pissed about the money I had to pay back for the stolen stash. But the best money I ever spent came a few weeks later, when Connie and I purchased our first house.

EXT. VERNONS' NEW HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

THE Vernons' new house shines in the sun along the outskirts of an exclusive suburb.

CUT TO:

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DAY

The front door opens, as Gary, carrying Connie over the threshold, both enter their new home, as they look around in splendor.

GARY (V.O.)

The great thing was that now I had the convenience of privacy. Most nobody, with the exception of Jehovah witnesses, bothers you in the suburbs.

(beat)

And all of the luxuries we enjoyed in the apartment followed us to our new house. Separate phone lines, separate mailing addresses, you name it. The real estate agent that sold us the house was a friend of Peter's, so we got a great deal. And all this because of technology. Ain't it something?

CONNIE

(looks in awe around the house)

I can't believe the size of this house! I gotta see upstairs.

Connie ascends the staircase OUT OF VIEW.

CONNIE (O.S.)

(yells from upstairs)

(MORE)

CONNIE (cont'd)  
 Oh my God, Gary! Look at these closets! They're twice the size of our entire apartment. I could fit all my new wardrobe in here.

INT. VERNON'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Connie, all-alone and curious, takes the small box Gary gave her and looks intently at it. Connie is about to open it, when Gary suddenly beckons her.

GARY (O.S.)  
 (calls from downstairs)  
 Connie, you there?

CONNIE  
 (yells)  
 Yeah, baby.

Connie puts the small box away and heads back downstairs.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Connie and Gary are holding hands, slowly ambling while looking at their new home.

GARY  
 (optimistic)  
 And this only the beginning. If we can keep this going, in a few years we could have a mansion.

CONNIE  
 (puts her arms around Gary)  
 What do you think'll happen to us now?

GARY  
 (embraces Connie; stares eye-to-eye at her)  
 I don't know. But I'll tell you one thing. We won't have to deal with downstairs neighbors complaining about the noise.

CONNIE  
 (laughs gleefully)  
 Ha, ha! You're the best!

Connie and Gary give one another a tender kiss.

GARY  
 (provocative)  
 Whadya say we test the spring on  
 the new mattress in our bedroom?  
 I'll give you a head start.

Connie giddily scampers upstairs, while Gary waits to follow.

GARY  
 (heads towards stairs; in  
 a goofy voice)  
 Ready or not, here I come!

Gary dashes upstairs, as he goes to join Connie.

FADE OUT.

SCENE IX

FADE IN:

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Gary is hurriedly getting dressed for work, as Connie makes  
 breakfast.

GARY  
 (kisses Connie)  
 Bye, honey.

Gary heads out the door.

CONNIE  
 (incredulous)  
 Gary, what about breakfast?

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - LOBBY - MORNING

Gary is just getting into the building, as he sees everyone  
 in an uproar. Gary, curious, stops a fellow EMPLOYEE to pose  
 an inquiry.

GARY  
 (confounded)  
 Hey, what's going on?

ANGRY EMPLOYEE  
 (enraged)  
 Didn't you hear? The company's  
 docking ten percent from every  
 employee's paycheck. These fuckin'  
 federal leeches!

The Angry Employee departs, as Gary stands, astounded by the bad news.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSEUP - GARY'S CHECK

GARY sits pensively on the living room sofa , as CONNIE impatiently paces around.

CONNIE  
(optimistic)  
Look on the bright side. We still  
have the money from the drug sales.

GARY looks sheepishly at Connie.

CONNIE  
(nervous)  
Don't we? Gary, we have money,  
right? Gary?!

GARY  
I had to pay for the house. That  
alone was enough to deplete most of  
our funds. Sales have been slow  
this month. I'm hoping thing pick  
up for the holidays.

CONNIE  
(curious)  
How much do we have?

GARY  
(a little embarrassed;  
sotto voce)  
Under ten thousand.

CONNIE  
(nervous)  
Under ten thousand! I can't  
believe you Gary!

GARY  
(calm)  
Take it easy. Everything's gonna  
be alright. Shipments are still  
coming in. Timing. It's all about  
timing.

CONNIE  
 (derisive)  
 Yeah, as in time to get a new  
 husband.

Connie heads out of the living room, but not before Gary follows and impedes her path.

GARY  
 (intense)  
 Don't you dare fuckin think of  
 walking out on me now! Just  
 remember who gave you all this.  
 We're in this together. Meaning if  
 I get pinched, you get pinched.  
 Don't ever fuckin' forget that!

CONNIE  
 (impudent; pushes away  
 Gary)  
 Don't you dare talk to me that way,  
 you fuckin' hack! Get out of my  
 way.

GARY  
 (tries to hold back  
 Connie; sarcastically)  
 Where are you gonna go? To the  
 mall to max out another credit  
 card? Or how about to Denise's to  
 paint your nails again?

Connie manages to escape Gary's grips, as she quickly grabs her coat and heads towards the front door.

GARY (O.S.)  
 (yells)  
 Where are you going?

CONNIE  
 (opens the front door;  
 turns to Gary and yells)  
 I'm goin' out!

Connie departs, SLAMMING the FRONT DOOR behind her.

Gary remains standing, trying to compose himself after the squabble. Gary slowly turns toward his room.

GARY'S POV



LARGE BAG OF COCAINE

Rests idly on the night stand near the bed.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary looks calmly but intently at his bedroom.

GLASS DINNER PLATE

Holds four lines of cocaine on it.

GARY comes INTO VIEW, as he proceeds to swiftly snort each line. He slowly lifts his head, as he feels the buzz. Gary then exasperatingly waves his fingers through his hair.

GARY

Stands and stares blankly out of his bedroom window.

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

The abandoned warehouse rests idly, as an intense South American sun beats down it.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - EMPTY ROOM - DAY

MEL

Rests unconscious in a chair, with his hands and legs tied, and blindfolded. There is also a piece of tape over his mouth.

FRONT DOOR

Opens slowly, as Hernando and his partner, MIGUEL SALAZAR, enter.

Both men look at Mel and decide to wake up Mel. Miguel takes off Mel's blindfold, as Hernando rips off the tape from his mouth. Mel slowly but quickly comes to.

MEL

(in a daze)

Where am I? Who the hell are you?

MIGUEL

Senor Capra. Allow us to introduce ourselves.

(MORE)

MIGUEL (cont'd)  
I am Miguel Salazar, and if you haven't already met him, this is my colleague Hernando Cabrera.

MEL  
(squirms in his chair)  
Get me out of here.

HERNANDO  
We apologize for your discomfort, but we cannot do that.

MEL  
(angrily)  
Where the hell is my gun? My recording device?

MIGUEL  
We're sorry, Senor Capra. But we had to confiscate some of your belongings, so you will no longer be seeing them.

MEL  
Just tell me where I am, damn it!

HERNANDO  
If you could please lower your tone, Senor Capra. You are in one of the rooms of a warehouse, which is situated on land in which we own. Just call it the eye of the empire.

MIGUEL  
(explains)  
Hernando and I are the leaders of one of the largest, most covert, and most successful drug rings in the world.  
(beat)  
We are currently involved with some gringo from the Midwest. He is doing very well for us.

MEL  
(curious)  
Who is he? Where is he from?

HERNANDO  
Ah, Senor Capra, you are quite the curious one. But if we tell you that...

(MORE)

HERNANDO (cont'd)  
 (quickly pulls out his gun  
 and points it at Mel)  
 I think you know the rest.

MIGUEL  
 We want you to rest assured that  
 you will have all of your basic  
 needs met. Food, supervision,  
 and... well, I wish could say  
 comfort. Just think of it like  
 being at Club Med.

HERNANDO  
 But without the pool and mint on  
 your pillow.

MEL  
 (defiant)  
 You won't get away with this, you  
 bastards!

MIGUEL  
 (cocky)  
 Get away with it? Senor Capra,  
 we're practically gone.  
 (calls out)  
 Rudy!

RUDY, an assistant for Hernando and Miguel, enters, with a  
 syringe filled with a sedative in hand.

HERNANDO  
 (recovers Mel's mouth with  
 tape)  
 Well, Senor Capra, it's been a  
 pleasure, but we must be off now.  
 Time is money, and both wait for no  
 one.

MEL  
 (struggles to speak)  
 Mmmmmmmmmmm! Mmmmmmm!

SYRINGE

Penetrates the skin of Mel's arm.

Mel weakly looks around.

MEL'S DISTORTED POV

MIGUEL, HERNANDO, AND RUDY

Look back at Mel, as everything FADES TO BLACK.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BATHROOM - MORNING

Gary is sitting pensively on the toilet.

THREE LINES OF COCAINE

Rest idly on the side of the sink.

GARY gets up and snorts each one. Gary is interrupted by a KNOCK on the DOOR.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
 (from behind door)  
 Gary, you've been in there for  
 almost an hour. I have to use the  
 bathroom!

GARY  
 (frantically tries to  
 clean up)  
 Just give me a few minutes.

Gary splashes some water on the side of the sink where the cocaine was, then splashes some water on his face. Gary wipes around the sink with a towel, and then dries off his face, as he unlocks the bathroom door and opens it. Connie suspiciously eyes Gary.

GARY  
 (walks out of bedroom)  
 I'm going to work.

CONNIE  
 Gary.

Gary stops, turns around, and looks at Connie.

CONNIE  
 The electric bill is due today.

Gary nods and heads out of the bedroom.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary tiredly works on his computer.

GARY (V.O.)  
 With the tax deduction on my  
 paycheck, I was pulling in even  
 less than before.  
 (MORE)

GARY (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 The holidays were arriving, and  
 with a slight amount of money in  
 the bank, I needed a miracle. And  
 I would get it.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - PARKING LOT - ESTABLISHING SHOT -  
 WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Ken's delivery van sits calmly in a far corner of the parking  
 lot.

CUT TO:

INT. DELIVERY VAN - DAY

Ken and Gary are discussing important business. However, Ken  
 is having trouble concentrating, as Gary subtly notices.

GARY  
 (sotto voce)  
 I just got a letter from the guys.  
 Next month the biggest shipment of  
 the year is coming in. I mean load  
 upon load. You're gonna need two  
 vans for this one.  
 (looks sternly at Ken;  
 sotto voce)  
 Are you listening to me?

Ken fails to maintain eye contact, as his head teeters back  
 and forth, and his body moves lethargically.

GARY  
 (concerned; sotto voce)  
 Are you alright, Ken? What's the  
 matter?

Ken's nose starts to bleed, as Gary starts to worry.

GARY  
 (incredulous; sotto voce)  
 Don't tell me you're snorting on  
 the job. Have you?  
 (intense; sotto voce)  
 Answer me!

Ken does not respond, as Gary hardly grabs Ken and SLAMS him  
 up against the wall of the van.

GARY  
 (angrily holds Ken by his  
 shirt; sotto voce)  
 Look at me, Ken.  
 (MORE)

GARY (cont'd)  
 Our entire year depends on you getting this shipment in. I don't care if you see a rare bald eagle, or a fuckin ptarmigan. You better not fuck this up. Understand?

KEN  
 (painfully)  
 Okay, Gary. You're hurting me, man.

Gary gently puts Ken down, Ken gathers himself and heads to the front of the van.

GARY  
 (a little embarrassed)  
 Listen, I'm sorry for getting hot. I just want everything to go alright. I gotta get goin. Hey, whadya say we grab a beer some time?

KEN  
 (still in pain; rubs his chest)  
 Sounds good.

GARY  
 (concerned)  
 You sure you're okay?

Ken nods, as Gary carefully heads to the back exit of the van.

GARY  
 Can you help me lift this up, Ken?

Ken goes over to the rear door, as he unbolts it and lifts up the door, as Gary exits.

GARY  
 (ready to step off van)  
 See ya later.

Gary steps off the van.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - PARKING LOT - DAY

Gary vigilantly looks around to see if anyone is watching, as he quickly departs from the parking lot. However, what Gary doesn't know is that he is being watched.

MYSTERY POV

BARTHOLEMEW FINCH carefully and quietly spies on Gary and the van from a far corner.

EXT. FRONT VERNONS' HOUSE - DOORSTEP - NIGHT

Gary has just returned from a long day at work. He unlocks the front door and enters.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Gary is inside, as he closes and locks the door behind him. He is met with a nervous and impatient Connie sitting at the dinner table.

CONNIE

(rises from dinner table)  
Where have you been?

GARY

(exasperated)  
I got caught up at work. We had a meeting, and then I had to update the new servers. I'm sorry.

CONNIE

(shows the dinner table to Gary)  
I cooked dinner. I had champagne on ice. I waited and waited. And all you can say is "I'm sorry"?

GARY

Connie, I'm telling you the God's honest truth. I didn't go anywhere. This meal looks lovely. Whadya say we warm it up and talk over dinner?

CONNIE

(angry)  
Fuck you! For years I've been waiting for you to get your head out of your ass and be a real husband. I might as well try to get blood from a fuckin' stone!

GARY

(calm)  
Connie, would you take it easy? I'm home, we're here together.

(MORE)

GARY (cont'd)  
 Let's relax and try to have a good  
 rest of the evening.

Connie goes over to the coat rack, grabs her jacket, and  
 heads towards the front door.

GARY (O.S.)  
 Where are you going?

CONNIE  
 (turns around and yells)  
 I'm goin' out! Unlike our bedroom,  
 there's gotta be a place where I  
 can get some action!

Connie departs, SLAMMING the front DOOR behind her.

GARY

Sits tiredly at the dinner table, looking down at a plate  
 filled with food.

FADE OUT.

SCENE X

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - ESTABLISHING SHOT -  
 WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Laborers work outside the factory, as the broiling South  
 American sun beats down on them.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Mel is still tied to the chair, as he swelters from the  
 humidity inside the empty room.

FRONT DOOR

Opens, as a small girl enters, carrying a tray with Mel's  
 lunch.

MEL  
 (softly; in  
 Spanish; subtitled)  
 Hey there, sweetie. You're so cute.  
 Listen, I really have to use the  
 bathroom. I was wondering if you  
 could loosen these knots. Whadya  
 say? Please?



The little girl looks unresponsively and suspiciously at Mel, as she quickly exits the room.

MEL  
 (in Spanish; subtitled;  
 frustrated)  
 No wait. Damn it!

Mel hangs his head in exasperation.

LITTLE GIRL

Returns to the room, as she stands in the doorway. Mel is ecstatic to see her.

MEL  
 (happy; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Oh, thank you so much. I have to  
 go so bad. If you'll just help me  
 with these - -

Before Mel can finish, a Large Henchman comes INTO VIEW behind the little girl, as he enters the room, and goes towards Mel.

MEL  
 (pleads; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Please, mister. I have to use the  
 bathroom, and I could sure use a  
 shower too! Please, I beg of you!

The Henchman punches Mel directly in the face, as Mel hits the floor upon contact. The Henchman sternly looks down at Mel, and departs from the room with the little girl. The front door closes behind them.

CLOSEUP - MEL'S BLOODIED FACE

Lies listlessly on the warm linoleum floor, as the sun beats down.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NIGHTCLUB (CHICAGO) - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

Club-goers are enjoying a night on the town, as they stand outside in the cold Chicago air, having a smoke and talking amongst each other.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN NIGHTCLUB - LADIES' RESTROOM - NIGHT

## FOUR LINES OF COCAINE

Rest idly atop an automatic hand dryer.

Connie and one of her neighbors, MEGHAN LAKE, each snort two lines each, as they clean their noses and feel the high.

MEGHAN

(excited; cleaning her  
nose)

Man, it's like I just got shocked  
by a switch cord!

CONNIE

I got it from my husband's bureau.  
It's top-of-line blow. Where did  
you say you lived again?

MEGHAN

425 Mason Lane.

CONNIE

(incredulous)

You're shitting me. Mason Lane.  
That's where I live.

MEGHAN

No foolin'. It's a small world.  
So, when are you getting more of  
this stuff? I wanna introduce it  
to my husband. He's a real estate  
agent. He's wound tighter than  
Amish double-knits.

CONNIE

We're getting our biggest shipment  
next month. Listen, thanks for  
coming out with me tonight. I  
really needed some time away from  
home.

MEGHAN

Splendid. Whadya say we get out of  
this fun house and I'll buy you a  
drink?

Connie and Meghan exit the ladies' restroom.

INT. DOWNTOWN NIGHTCLUB - BAR - NIGHT

Connie and Meghan are sitting at the bar, enjoying drinks.  
Meghan notices Connie's purse.

MEGHAN  
(looks admiringly at  
Connie's handbag)  
Man, that is one nice handbag.

CONNIE  
Thank you. It's Prada.

MEGHAN  
(in disbelief)  
Get out of town. Prada?

CONNIE  
My husband bought me it for our  
anniversary.

MEGHAN  
You must have one hell of a man.

CONNIE  
(sarcastic)  
Glad you think so.

MEGHAN  
(curious)  
Why do you say that?

CONNIE  
Well, let's just say my man's in  
the doghouse, and I've filled his  
dish with kibble.

MEGHAN  
C'mon. It can't be that bad.

CONNIE  
(gets hysterical)  
Yes it is. All he focuses on is  
his job and the fuckin drug ring.  
I wish I was white and could be  
snorted up his nose. It's the only  
way I can get him to notice me.

MEGHAN  
(puts her arm around  
Connie)  
It's okay. Don't be so hard on  
him. It gets really busy this time  
of year. Listen, Howard knows  
somebody who's a top travel agent.  
There's a package that includes a  
trip to Hawaii.

(MORE)

MEGHAN (cont'd)  
 Let me talk to him. Not a bad way  
 to start off New Year's.

CONNIE  
 (stops crying)  
 Thanks, Meg.

MEGHAN  
 (happily)  
 Cheer up. Here we are, out on a  
 Thursday night, the weekend's  
 approaching, and the night is still  
 young.  
 (raises her drink )  
 A toast. To us, and the wonderful  
 lives we hope to lead.

Connie raises her drink, as both women CLICK their GLASSES.

CLOSEUP - CONNIE'S BACKSIDE

As a Hand comes INTO VIEW and gently pinches it. A Club-Goer  
 tries to walk by casually, but not before Connie gets up and  
 approaches him.

CONNIE  
 (angrily pushes the  
 patron)  
 Who do you think you are?

The Club-Goer ignores Connie and continues walking.

CONNIE  
 (angrily tosses her drink  
 on Club-Goer)  
 You fuckin' lowlife!

Connie bumrushes the patron, as Meghan and other Club-Goers  
 quickly intervene. Connie continues to harangue and go after  
 the Club-Goer, as Meghan and some Club-Goers restrain her.

CONNIE  
 (angrily swings her arms  
 and legs)  
 You don't know who you're messin'  
 with.  
 (slowly yells)  
 My husband is G-A-R-Y V-E-R-N-O-N.  
 He works at AccuCom. And you're  
 shit, you perverted fuckin prick!  
 That's right, you better walk away!

The Club-Goer is escorted out of the nightclub by a bouncer,  
 but not before he gets a good glance at Connie.

EXT. EMPTY ROAD - LATE NIGHT

Meghan's CAR drives down the road back home.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGHAN'S CAR - FRONT SEAT - LATE NIGHT

Meghan is in the driver's seat, vigilantly watching the road, as a drowsy Connie sits quietly in the passenger's seat.

MEGHAN  
(looks concerned at  
Connie)  
You gonna be alright?

CONNIE  
(groggy)  
I'll be fine.

MEGHAN  
(looking at the road)  
I sure know one thing. You are one  
tough customer.

CONNIE  
(groggy)  
And don't you forget it.

Meghan gives a slight grin, as she continues the drive home.

EXT. OUTSIDE VERNONS' HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Meghan's CAR pulls up in front of Connie's house, and comes to a stop.

CUT TO:

INT. MEGHAN'S CAR - FRONT SEAT

Meghan puts the car in park, as she prepares to say good night to Connie.

MEGHAN  
Well, I'd like to thank you for a  
lovely and interesting evening.

CONNIE  
(tiredly grabs her purse  
and coat)  
Yeah, let's do it again sometime.

MEGHAN  
(concerned)  
Are you sure you're okay?

Connie tiredly nods and gives a slight smile, as she slowly opens the passenger side car door. Connie wobbles as she exits Meghan's car. Meghan pulls away, as Connie starts to make her way to the front door.

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - FRONT PORCH- LATE NIGHT

Connie has miraculously made it to the front door. Connie rummages through her purse, as she finds her house keys, and unsteadily tries to unlock the door. Connie manages to unlock the door, as she proceeds to collapse on the living room floor.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

Gary, fixing himself a past-midnight snack, exits the kitchen and heads to the living room, where he quickly finds Connie's lifeless body on the floor.

GARY  
(sotto voce; concerned)  
Connie?  
(runs over to Connie;  
kneels down beside her  
and checks her pulse)  
Connie.  
(nervously shakes her  
body)  
Connie, wake up! Connie!

Gary takes initiative and runs over to the phone and dials 911.

GARY  
(waits for an operator;  
talks on telephone)  
Hello? Yes, my wife has just  
collapsed. I need an ambulance.  
I'm at 369 Mason Lane. Please  
hurry.

Gary hangs up the phone and goes to tend to Connie before the ambulance arrives.

EXT. FRONT LOCAL HOSPITAL (DOWNTOWN CHICAGO) - ESTABLISHING  
SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - NIGHT

The hospital is having another busy late night, as ambulances pull in and out of the driveway.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Family and friends of patients in the Operating/Emergency rooms wait anxiously, some seated in chairs, others pacing about. Secretaries sit at the desk, filling out paperwork, as well as admitting family or friends of newly-arrived patients. Gary sits pensively in a corner, nervously shaking his leg, as he waits for the news on Connie.

The Vernons' primary care physician, DR. EUGENE AMBLER, enters walks into the waiting room and towards Gary.

GARY

(jumps out of his chair)  
Is she okay, Doctor?

DR. AMBLER

(sober)  
Yes, she's fine. I must ask you Mr. Vernon. Has your wife been using any kind of stimulants, or uppers, as they are called, in the past few weeks?

GARY

(hesitates; shakes his head)  
Not that I'm aware of.

DR. AMBLER

(explains)  
You see, we had to do a complete detox of your wife's blood, and we discovered high amounts of elements commonly found in illegal drugs, particularly cocaine. She also had a slightly high blood-alcohol level.

(beat)

Mr. Vernon, has Connie been consuming any drugs, illegal or prescription, in the past few weeks?

GARY  
Not to my knowledge. Doctor, just  
how much did Connie have?

DR. AMBLER  
Well, put it this way. If the  
amounts were a kilometer more,  
she'd have been a DOA.

GARY  
(concerned)  
How is she now?

DR. AMBLER  
She's resting. I don't see why she  
can't be out by the weekend.

GARY  
Can I see her?

DR. AMBLER  
Yes, you may.

GARY  
(shakes Dr. Ambler's hand)  
Thank you, doctor.

INT. LOCAL HOSPITAL - CONNIE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CONNIE

Rests quietly in her hospital bed after her near fatal night.

ROOM DOOR

Opens slowly, as Gary pokes his head through, as he quietly  
enters and slowly goes over to Connie.

Gary quietly watches Connie, as she sleeps.

CLOSEUP - CONNIE'S SLEEPING FACE

As her eyes slowly begin to open.

CONNIE  
(sotto voce; surprised but  
tired)  
Gary?

GARY  
(sotto voce; kindly)  
How are you feeling?



CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 All things considered, okay.

GARY  
 (sotto voce)  
 I got you a little something...

Gary hands Connie a present bag. Connie looks inside, as she pulls out a new Prada watch.

CONNIE  
 (looks surprised at the  
 Prada watch; sotto voce)  
 Oh, the Prada watch that matches my  
 bag.

GARY  
 (sotto voce; witty)  
 I was going to give it to you on a  
 special occasion. I figured you'd  
 like that more than the dancing  
 flower from the gift shop.

CONNIE

Gives a slight grin.

GARY  
 (sotto voce)  
 Why?

CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 Why what?

GARY  
 (sotto voce)  
 Why have you been acting this way  
 for the past few weeks? The doctor  
 told me you could've died tonight.

CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 Because I don't feel like a part of  
 your life anymore. We haven't  
 spent one day together since you  
 started operating the drug ring.  
 (starts to cry; sotto  
 voce)  
 That's why I started using. To  
 escape my worries.

GARY

(sotto voce; consoling)  
 Connie, Connie. Look at me. I want you to know that no matter how busy I am, I will always have time for you. When we got married, it was the happiest day of my life. Remember what I told you that day?

CONNIE

(stops crying; sotto voce)  
 That I couldn't die before you did.

GARY

(sotto voce)  
 Yes. And why is that?

CONNIE

(sotto voce)  
 Because you didn't want to live without me.

GARY

(sotto voce)  
 And that will always hold true. This operation, like our marriage is a covenant. We're in it together until death. Then, now, always.  
 (beat; sotto voce)  
 I do this to give you the life I always promised you when we married. And I don't intend to stop now. But you have to promise me one thing. No more using drugs.

CONNIE

(sotto voce)  
 Will you promise to cut back, too?

GARY

(sotto voce)  
 I promise.  
 (puts his hand to his chest)  
 On my honor.

CONNIE

(sotto voce)  
 I promise. Will you start to focus less on your job and the drug ring and more time on your home life?

GARY  
 (sotto voce; witty)  
 I don't see why it could hurt.  
 Hey, Thanksgiving's coming up. How  
 about I make the turkey the way you  
 like it?

CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 With the cranberry glaze and  
 stuffing.

GARY  
 That's the one.

CONNIE  
 (sotto voce)  
 Could you make the seasoned small  
 potatoes too?

GARY  
 (mock-complains)  
 Oh, alright.

CONNIE AND GARY

Smile at one another and kiss.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT II

### **ACT III**

#### SCENE XI

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) ESTABLISHING SHOT -  
 WIDE ANGLE - MAGIC HOUR

The warehouse lies still as night will soon arrive.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - EMPTY ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

Mel, still tied in the chair, is starting to lose his sanity.  
 Mel looks on in desperation out the window out at the urban  
 vista. Mel's attention suddenly shifts, as he starts to hear  
 VOICES of MEN from behind the door.

Mel decides to slowly sidle his chair towards the door, as he puts his ear up against the door.

WORKER (O.S.)

(in Spanish; subtitled)

Yes, this is our biggest shipment to date. We have to send it to Chicago. We're talking millions of dollars here.

(beat)

We have to move all of this fast, and be extra careful, so the authorities won't find anything.

Mel slowly begins to maneuver himself, and takes a gander through the door's keyhole.

MEL'S KEYHOLE POV

RANDOM WORKERS

Load some of the cargo on a dolly.

BACK TO SCENE

Mel continues to peer through the small keyhole, when his view becomes obstructed by a key.

Mel quickly sidles back to his original place, as a maid enters, carrying a tray with Mel's dinner. Mel nods his head in gratitude. The maid removes the tape from Mel's mouth and starts to feed him.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - THANKSGIVING DAY

Gary is in the kitchen, busily cooking up Thanksgiving dinner. He opens the oven, as he checks on the potatoes and places them back inside. He then takes out the turkey, bastes it thoroughly, and then places it back in. Gary closes the oven, and is about to check on the corn on the stove, when the PHONE RINGS.

GARY

(aloud)

Connie, could you get that, honey?  
Connie?

Gary receives no response, as he drudgingly goes to the phone and picks up.

GARY  
 (speaks into telephone)  
 Hello? Hey, Peter. Happy  
 Thanksgiving.

INT. BRANCHES' CONDO (MIAMI) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Peter is sitting nervously at his desk in his living room.

PETER  
 (sotto voce)  
 Hey, Gary. Happy turkey day.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

GARY  
 Thanks. How's the weather down  
 there?

PETER  
 (sotto voce; witty)  
 A hell of a lot better than where  
 you are.

GARY  
 (laughs lightly)  
 I can only imagine. So, how's  
 everything?

PETER  
 (sotto voce; commiserates)  
 Can't complain. You know how it  
 is. Same old shit, different day.

GARY  
 I hear ya.

PETER  
 (inquisitive)  
 So, how's business going?

GARY  
 Going pretty good. We just bought  
 a house. You know, nothin' fancy.  
 Just as long as we have a roof over  
 our heads.  
 (beat)  
 The first couple of months, it was  
 like a surge. Then it slowed down.  
 I just got a letter from the guys,  
 though. The biggest holiday  
 shipment ever is coming in.

PETER  
 (sotto voce)  
 Yeah, the Kris Kringle coke run is  
 always the best.

GARY  
 (explains)  
 I'm having Ken and a friend of his  
 deliver it to my house after  
 getting it from the airport.  
 Airport security, screeners,  
 everybody's getting something to  
 cover it up.

PETER  
 (sotto voce)  
 That's my boy. Always with a plan.

GARY  
 So, how's Pam?

PETER  
 Well, Pam and I are having our  
 differences. She says the people  
 here are twice as old as we are and  
 she has no one to talk to.

GARY  
 (witty)  
 I find that hard to believe. Pam  
 can talk from anyone from the  
 prisoner to the President.

Peter turns his head over to the right.

PETER'S POV

PAM AND SOME FRIENDS

Snort cocaine and shoot heroine.

BACK TO SCENE

Peter, perturbed by the sight, continues his conversation  
 with Gary.

PETER  
 (sotto voce)  
 I hear ya. So, how are your  
 finances going? If you don't mind  
 me asking.

GARY

Oh, you know. They could always be better. Bills were starting to pile up, but with this Christmas stash arriving soon, Connie and I will finally ring in the New Year the right way.

PETER

(sotto voce)  
That's really great, man.

GARY

So, do you have any plans for Thanksgiving?

PETER

(sotto voce)  
Not really. We have a bird in the oven. Nothing major.

Peter looks over at his kitchen.

PETER'S POV

PACK OF DELI-SLICED TURKEY AND LOAF OF WONDER BREAD

Rest idly on the kitchen counter.

BACK TO SCENE

Peter despondently continues his phone conversation.

PETER

(sotto voce)  
Gary?

GARY (V.O.)

(over phone)  
Yeah, Pete?

PETER

(sotto voce)  
I just want to tell you how happy I am for you. The boys tell me your doing great. If all goes well, maybe we'll come by and see you in the New Year.

GARY

(appreciative)  
Thank you.

(MORE)

GARY (cont'd)  
 Yeah, that would sound great. You and Pam can stay at our house. We have four bedrooms here.

PETER  
 (astounded; sotto voce)  
 Four bedrooms? Man, you and Connie are certainly livin' it up.

GARY  
 We're tryin'.  
 (looks over at oven)  
 I hate to cut it short, Pete, but I think the gobbler's ready to come out. Tell Pam that Connie and I said "Hello". Happy Holidays, Pete.

PETER  
 (sotto voce)  
 Same to you, Gar.

Peter hangs up the phone, looks around his condo, and starts to break into tears.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Gary hangs up the phone, and goes to check on the turkey. Connie enters the kitchen to help Gary.

CONNIE  
 (grabs some silverware  
 from a kitchen draw)  
 I saw you set three plates at the dinner table. Who else is coming?

GARY  
 (stirs the gravy)  
 Oh, a friend of mine from work.

CONNIE  
 (curiously)  
 Who?

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Jeff is seated at the dinner table, eating and chatting with Connie and Gary.

JEFF  
 (with mouth full)  
 These sweet potatoes are delicious.  
 (MORE)



JEFF (cont'd)

Hey, did you ever wonder what's the difference between a sweet potato and a yam? I mean, they are the same thing. Do you think they just came up with that name?

(yells loudly)

YAM!

Connie, seated next to Jeff, slightly jumps out of her chair, startled by Jeff's yelling.

CONNIE

(politely holds bowl of corn)

Would you like some more corn, Jeff?

JEFF

(politely takes corn from Connie)

Yes, please.

(spoons corn onto his plate)

So, Gary, do you think the company will ever rebound from the recent federal tax cuts?

GARY

(mouth half full)

I don't know, Jeff. I mean, everyone was affected by it, and you hope everyone can do their best to have a comfortable living.

JEFF

(looks in awe around house)

I see you and Connie won't have to worry. I can't believe the size of this house! How much did you pay for these digs?

GARY

(soft)

Well, Jeff, Connie and I feel strongly that it's not how much you pay, but how you live in your house that determines its true value.

JEFF

(points his fork at Gary)

Good looking and prudent.

(turns to Connie)

(MORE)

JEFF (cont'd)  
 Connie, you got yourself a keeper  
 here.

CONNIE  
 (sarcastic; eating some  
 turkey)  
 I tell myself that everyday, Jeff.

JEFF  
 (looks at his watch)  
 Hey, whadya say we watch the  
 football game? The Lions are  
 playing the Bears.  
 (waxes nostalgic)  
 Man, they don't make players like  
 they used to. Remember Walter  
 Payton? Why do you think they  
 nicknamed him Sweetness? Maybe he  
 should've had a candy bar named  
 after him.

CLOCK ON DINING ROOM WALL

Reads two-thirty.

SEGUE TO:

CLOCK ON DINING ROOM WALL

As it now reads seven forty-five.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Connie and Gary sit tiredly on their sofa, as an  
 indefatigable Jeff sits in a nearby recliner, eagerly reading  
 their high school yearbooks.

JEFF  
 (eagerly reads yearbook)  
 Man, I can't believe you guys went  
 to high school.

CONNIE  
 (sarcastic)  
 Doesn't everybody?

JEFF  
 (witty; looks inside  
 yearbook)  
 I can see why you guys are together  
 now, but I couldn't see you as an  
 item then.  
 (looks incredulous at  
 Gary)  
 (MORE)

JEFF (cont'd)  
 Boy, Gary, what were you thinkin'  
 with that Flock of Seagulls hairdo?  
 (looks at his watch)  
 Well, I think it's time I hit the  
 road.  
 (gets up from recliner and  
 grabs his coat; extends  
 his hand)  
 Connie, Gary, I thank you for a  
 wonderful dinner and a delightful  
 evening.

Connie and Gary show Jeff to the door. Connie unlocks the door, as Jeff kindly exits.

JEFF  
 (turns around)  
 Hey, I'm not doing anything for  
 Christmas. Maybe I can - -

Before Jeff can finish, Connie emphatically SLAMS the door in his face and locks it. Gary goes over to Connie and puts his arms around her. Connie jostles Gary in his chest.

GARY  
 (painfully holds his  
 chest)  
 Whoa! What was that for?

CONNIE  
 (angry)  
 That's for having me put up with  
 chatty Chet back there!

GARY  
 (calm)  
 Take it easy. I won't invite him  
 next time!

CONNIE  
 (sternly points her finger  
 at Gary)  
 Don't you dare! Never mind the  
 ham. I'll toss his garrulous ass  
 in the oven!

Connie pours herself a glass of wine and walks away, as an exasperated Gary shakes his head.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary looks pensively outside the bedroom window, as Connie, polishing her nails, curiously watches him.

CONNIE  
(inquisitive)  
What's the matter?

Gary is unresponsive, as he Connie again beckons her husband.

CONNIE  
(concerned)  
Gary, what's eating you?

GARY  
(comes to; turns to  
Connie)  
Oh, I'm sorry, honey. I was just  
thinking.

CONNIE  
(curious)  
About what?

GARY  
(closes window and shuts  
blinds)  
Well, I got a phone call today  
before dinner. It was Pete. He  
sounded sort of nervous, hesitant.  
I think there was something he  
wasn't telling me about.

CONNIE  
(vehement)  
Fuck Peter.

GARY  
(confounded)  
What?

CONNIE  
(strong)  
You heard me. Fuck him. He's a  
thing of the past now. Whatever  
problems he and Pam have are their  
own. I don't see him putting food  
on our table, Gary.

GARY  
(angrily points his finger  
at Connie)  
Don't forget who started all this.  
There's a reason why you have all  
your designer clothes in your  
closet and this house.

CONNIE

(strong)

Yes, and that reason is you, Gary. All you should be worried about is the shipment that's coming in this month and that all our bills are paid.

GARY

(sober)

I've been thinking. Maybe we should push all of our chips to the front of the table and call our hand. I mean, we never thought we could have all this.

CONNIE

(incredulous)

I don't believe you! We have all this and we're ready to complete the deal that'll place us on easy street, and now you wanna back out?

(gets up from bed)

I guess all that talk about the thrill of the hunt was just a crock of shit. I guess I was wrong about you.

Connie goes to depart from the bedroom, but not before Gary angrily impedes her path.

GARY

(intense)

Don't you ever question my will, do you fuckin here me? Is that the way you want it? Okay, here's how it's gonna go. This Christmas will be the last dance for the drug ring. After that we'll count our blessings and leave it for someone else.

CONNIE

Deal.

(playfully rubs Gary's face)

I love it when you get angry. Makes you think better.

Connie exits the bedroom, as Gary remains standing and composes himself.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XII

FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - ESTABLISHING SHOT  
- WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Workers continue to labor in the intense, broiling heat of a South American sun, while others take a well-deserved respite in the shade of tall palm trees.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Mel is now at a personal nadir. He remains bound to the chair, tired, in pain, filthy, unshaven, hot, sticky, and most importantly, devoid of all hope.

FRONT DOOR

Opens slowly, as Hernando and Miguel enter.

HERNANDO

(concerned)

How are you, Senor Capra?

Hernando removes the piece of tape covering Mel's mouth, as he answers Hernando's query.

MEL

(strong)

You're not going to succeed.  
Eventually the FBI and DEA will  
figure everything out. You two are  
skating on thin ice.

MIGUEL

(mock-depsondent)

Senor Capra, have you any kind  
words for us? The holidays are  
almost here. Why can't you get in  
the spirit?

MEL

(strong)

I'll have all the more to celebrate  
once you two are behind bars  
banging each other's asses.

MIGUEL  
 (angrily pulls out his gun  
 and aims it at Mel)  
 I should kill you right here!

HERNANDO  
 (intervenes; calmly pushes  
 gun away)  
 Easy, Miguel. You don't want this  
 on your conscience.  
 (beat; turns to Mel)  
 Senor Capra, we want you to know  
 that we won't have enough room to  
 accommodate your presence here. We  
 are renovating and this room will  
 be used for storing some of our  
 yields.

MEL  
 (cranky)  
 I'm hungry. Where's my supper? By  
 the way, that turkey dinner from  
 yesterday was delicious. Give the  
 chef my regards.

HERNANDO  
 We aim to please.  
 (recovers Mel's mouth with  
 tape)  
 Sadly, we must be going.

MEL  
 (angrily)  
 Hey, what are you gonna do to me?  
 Hey - -

Before Mel can finish, his mouth is again covered with tape,  
 as mumbles beneath the tape.

MEL  
 (struggles to speak)  
 Mmmmmmm!

HERNANDO AND MIGUEL

Exit the empty room, as the DOOR CLOSES behind them.

MEL

Despondently hangs his head.

## SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary types information into his computer as he decides to take a break. Gary's computer mouse has two line of cocaine on it. Gary looks to see if anyone is looking, and quickly snorts both lines.

Connie is home watching the Home Shopping Network on television. Connie is on the phone, credit card in hand, as she starts to do finish some holiday shopping.

Gary quietly and furtively walks through the bad section of town on a late, chilly night, as he finds a man waiting in an alleyway. Gary looks around and seeing no one, enters the alleyway, as he sells the man some product. Gary gives the man a small speech, telling him to keep the drug ring on the down low. Gary then shows the man his gun, in his pocket, as the man nods agreeably and departs.

The vans of Ken and his friend are entering the local airport, as the toll booth guard admits them and they head over to a nearby airplane. Ken and his friend, with the help of some airplane stevedores, unload the stash from the plane onto the delivery vans. Moments later, drugs in tow, the vans exit the airport. Ken looks over and sees a PTARMIGAN, as it flies gently through the wintry air. Ken, however, ignores it and continues driving.

GARY (V.O.)

With all due respect to Bing Crosby, I not only dreamt a white Christmas, I actually lived it. Ken and his friend picked up the stash. Eight hundred pounds worth of cocaine, heroine, crystal meth, marijuana, the works. The only drugs missing were from Pfizer.

(beat)

One of the best things was that the whole shipment and pickup went over without a hitch. Everyone got their due. The security guards, the guy at the gate, Ken and his friend, the crate lifters. They were all taken care of.

(beat)

When they got to my house, it was a done deal. The goods were delivered, Ken and his buddy were given their payment, and Connie and I had a lot of drugs to cut.

(MORE)



GARY (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 I actually felt like Santa, making addicts' dreams come true, as needles and bongs danced merrily in their heads.

(beat)

But as much drugs as we were selling, Connie and I were sniffing twice as more. It was one big snort-a-thon. We practically lost count of the number of lines we did. Stress from work and the holiday rush were starting to take their toll on us.

(beat)

Yet things were going so smoothly, I found it hard to believe myself. I had even mapped out a budget to make sure the channels of distribution were balanced. Little did I know that we were about to lose our equilibrium.

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - CHRISTMAS EVE - NIGHT

There is LIGHT SNOW FALL, as the Vernons' house luminesces with the brightness of holiday lights.

CUT TO:

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CHRISTMAS MUSIC plays on the stereo, as Connie and Gary enjoy a lavish Christmas Eve dinner, when the DOORBELL RINGS. Connie and Gary look suspiciously at one another. Gary rises from the dinner table and goes to answer.

Gary walks slowly through the living room, as he pulls out a gun from a holster in his ankle. The DOORBELL RINGS again, as Gary slowly heads to the door, unlocks, swiftly opens it, and looks.

GARY'S POV

KEN

Stands on porch, bundled up, as his teeth chatter in the frosty air.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary reacts.

GARY  
 (surprised)  
 Ken, what's up, buddy?

KEN  
 (teeth chattering)  
 He...lll...oo Ggg...arrrr...yyy.  
 Mmm...aaa...yyy I  
 ccc...ooo...mmm...eee in?

GARY  
 (invites Ken in)  
 Of course. Please come in.

Ken enters Gary's home.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Gary turns on the light to the living room, as he wields the poker at the fireplace to liven it up.

GARY  
 (escorts Ken to fireplace)  
 Come here and toast yourself by the  
 fire. It's real cozy.  
 (hospitable)  
 Can I get you anything? A beer,  
 coffee? Would you like to join us  
 for dinner?

KEN  
 No thank you. Gary, I was  
 wondering if I could talk to you in  
 private?

GARY  
 Sure, what's up?

KEN  
 I mean private.

GARY  
 (a little leery)  
 Sure.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
 (from dining room)  
 Gary, who is it honey?

GARY  
 (yells back to Connie)  
 It's Ken.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
 (from dining room)  
 Hey, Ken. Happy holidays!

KEN  
 (kindly answers back)  
 Hey, Connie. Thank you.

GARY  
 (waves Ken on)  
 C'mon. We'll go upstairs.  
 (yells to Connie)  
 Connie, I just have to give Ken  
 something from upstairs. I'll be  
 right down.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
 (from dining room)  
 Okay.

Gary and Ken ascend the stairs up to the main bedroom.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - MAIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ken sits on the bed, as Gary stands closing the door and  
 window blinds.

GARY  
 (happy)  
 Ken, I want to thank you and your  
 friend. You did a fantastic job.

GARY  
 (hands Ken a sack full of  
 money)  
 Here's your share. You earned  
 every penny.  
 (sits down next to Ken)  
 Everything couldn't have gone  
 better. So, what is that you  
 wanted to talk to me about?

KEN  
 (sheepish)  
 Thanks. Well Gary, that's just it.  
 I just got off the phone with my  
 friend. You know the one that  
 helped with the shipment?

GARY  
 (nervous)  
 Don't tell me you gave him the  
 remaining storage of drugs, Ken?  
 (MORE)

GARY (cont'd)

(beat)

You told me you would hold those at your house and would bring them to me when I sell off the current load we have now.

KEN

(explanatory; sheepish)

No, not that. That's peachy keen. You see, my friend got that truck all the way from Des Moines, and he thought since he did that he should be entitled to a fairer share of the earnings.

GARY

(curious)

How much are we talkin'?

KEN

(sheepish)

Fifty thousand dollars more.

GARY

(angrily rises from bed)

What? Are you kidding me, Ken? Who does this guy think he is? What's he gonna do if he doesn't get this money?

KEN

(sheepish)

Well, that's the other thing I've been meaning to tell you. He says if he doesn't get his money, he's gonna tell about the drug ring.

GARY

(flabbergasted)

I can't fuckin believe this! I'm being blackmailed by a truck-driving shit kicker. Hold on.

Gary goes over to a painting on the wall above his bed and pushes it aside, revealing a secret safe in the wall.

GARY

(sternly turns to Ken)

Turn around.

KEN

Listens to Gary and turns around, also covering his eyes.

GARY

Carefully unlocks the safe, as he pulls out a huge wad of money, and quickly but carefully counts it. He then closes the safe, and puts the painting back into place.

GARY

(hands wad of cash to Ken)

Here. Count it again to make sure it's all there.

(stern)

Tell your friend that if he even tries to rat on us the only form of transportation he'll need is a hearse.

KEN

Will do.

(extends his hand)

Happy Holidays, Gary.

GARY

(shakes Ken's hand)

Ditto.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - NIGHT

Ken leaves, as Gary waves goodbye, closes and locks the door behind him. Gary then returns to the dining room to join Connie.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gary is back in the dining room, much to the relief of Connie.

CONNIE

(slightly worried)

Where the hell did you go? I was getting lonely in here!

GARY

(sits back down in his chair)

We had to take care of some business.

CONNIE

Is everything alright?

GARY

(smiles cryptically)

Couldn't be better. Let's eat.

Connie and Gary continue their dinner where they left off.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary is all-alone in the bedroom. He is sitting on the bed, surrounded by stacks of cash. Gary diligently counts the stacks, as he is about to put most of them in an envelope marked to the men in Panama. However, Gary hesitates, as he looks at the stacks of cash and takes half of them for himself, and places the rest in the envelope. Gary then hears Connie beckoning him.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
(yells from downstairs)  
Gary? Where are you?

GARY  
(yells down to Connie)  
I'm upstairs, honey.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
(calls from downstairs)  
Come and help me light the tree.

Gary organizes everything before heading downstairs.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOCK ON LIVING ROOM WALL

Reads five minutes to midnight.

Connie and Gary are standing together in front of the yet-to-be-lit Christmas tree. They look at each other.

GARY  
(with control in hand;  
looks at Connie)  
You ready?

CONNIE  
Hit the switch.

Gary heeds Connie.

CHRISTMAS TREE

Glows incandescently, as the lights luminesce with holiday spirit, the star atop the tree shining the brightest.

CONNIE AND GARY

Watch the Christmas tree with child-like splendor.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

HEARTH OF FIREPLACE

As the yule log burns warmly among the incandescent embers.

GARY AND CONNIE

Sit serenely by the fireplace, wrapped in a blanket and trying to keep warm. Connie notices her husband slight grin.

CONNIE  
(observant)  
You look pretty happy.

GARY  
Well, 'tis the season.

CONNIE  
(bewildered)  
Can you believe it? Our first  
Christmas in our new house.

GARY  
(looks at clock)  
Hey, the clock is exactly at  
midnight. I guess it's time we  
open our presents. Wanna see our  
bankbook?

CONNIE  
Please.

Gary pulls the bankbook from out of his pocket and hands it to Connie. Connie opens the flap and reads the numbers by the light of the fireplace.

CONNIE  
(yells excitedly)  
Oh my God, Gary! Ha ha ha!

CONNIE  
(gives Gary his present)  
Merry Christmas, baby.

GARY  
(hands Connie a large wad  
of cash)  
Happy Kwanzaa!

Connie yells with glee, as they both start to laugh with glee and roll around on the living room floor.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XIII

FADE IN:

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - MORNING

The AccuCom Building is festooned with holiday decorations, as well as a large sign that reads, "HAPPY HOLIDAYS".

CUT TO:

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - MORNING

Gary, rested and ready to go back to work after the holiday, walks toward his office. Gary sees everyone is silent and somber. Gary looks curiously, as he continues to walk. He runs into SAM KENNEDY, a fellow employee.

GARY

Sam, everyone looks like somebody died.

SAM

(somber)

You said it. You know Seth from Accounts Payable? They found him dead in his apartment yesterday. Cocaine overdose. They say he was doing an all-night binger and his body just couldn't take it.

(regretfully shakes his head)

A shame isn't it? Only twenty-five, had a fiance`. Boy, whoever sold him those drugs is sure gonna lose sleep tonight.

CLOSEUP - GARY'S CRUSHED FACE

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gary sits despondently on his bed, as Connie tries to console him.



CONNIE

(paces about bedroom)

Gary, you can't beat yourself up over this. It's not your fault that the guy died.

GARY

(stern)

Yes it is, Connie. I sold him the drugs in the men's room at the company Christmas party. He OD'd on the entire stash. Connie, he was young, successful, and was getting married. The guys had a bright future and I extinguished it.

CONNIE

(strong)

Let me explain something to you, Gary. As human beings, we are given free will. That means we have the ability to make decisions and actions.

(beat)

And whatever those actions or decisions are, we have to live with the consequences, good or bad. The guy bought blow from you, did too much, and sadly, he died. What questions should we be asking ourselves?

GARY

(looks sternly at Connie)

What if it were me?

CONNIE

(angrily)

Don't you dare try and pull that reverse psychology bullshit with me! I love you, but I wish you would start thinking more with your head and less with your heart.

Connie exits the bedroom, SLAMMING the door behind her. Gary sits crestfallen on the bed.

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - ESTABLISHING SHOT -  
WIDE ANGLE - MAGIC HOUR

The sun is almost set on another day in Panama, as workers head home, while others are just arriving for the late shift.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - OFFICE - MAGIC HOUR

Miguel sifts through a large burlap sack of mail, while Hernando works on his laptop. Miguel finds the envelope from Gary.

MIGUEL  
(exclaims; excitedly holds  
up envelope from Gary; in  
Spanish; subtitled)  
Hernando, it's here! Merry  
Christmas!

HERNANDO

Closes his laptop and goes over to see.

Miguel opens the envelope in eager anticipation, as his smile quickly disappears, as he counts the money in the envelope.

MIGUEL  
(lividly throws down the  
money; in Spanish;  
subtitled)  
My sister's cunt! We've been  
robbed!

HERNANDO  
(angrily counts the money)  
This is bullshit. Looks  
like there's only one  
thing to do.

MIGUEL  
What?

HERNANDO  
We're taking a trip to the Windy  
City.

EXT. LOCAL CHURCH (CHICAGO) - CHURCH STEPS - DAY

Attendees of the funeral mass for the late Seth Henkes ascend/descend the church steps. Gary appears through the front doors, as he and Connie have paid their respects.

GARY (V.O.)

Work was cancelled on Friday. Seth happened to be the nephew of one of the big wigs at AccuCom. Going to that funeral, I have to admit, really creeped me out. But it didn't stop me from doing a good line or two when I felt like it.

(beat)

As it turned out, the fifty grand that I paid Ken's friend turned out to be a big difference. I had to borrow some money from the guys to pay off the rest of the network. I also had other Christmas gifts and bills to pay, so that money came in awfully handy.

(beat)

Plus, I still had the remaining drugs stashed out at Ken's house. After I sold those I was gonna pay back the guys with that money, and possibly pull a small profit for Connie and I.

(beat)

Even recording the information wouldn't be a problem, because Connie had bought me a new laptop equipped with the software I used to keep track of inventory and add up sales. Technology, ain't it something? I was gonna start the new year off with a bang.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NEW YEAR'S EVE - NIGHT

TELEVISION SCREEN

Shows the ball starts to drop for New Year's.

CONNIE AND GARY

Eagerly watch the ball drop from their sofa, the ball drops, as Connie and Gary cheer and embrace with a kiss.

CONNIE

(kisses Gary)

Happy New Year, baby.

GARY

(shakes his head)

Goes by too quick.

Gary POPS the CORK on a bottle of champagne, pours some into two flutes, and hands one to Connie.

GARY  
 (holds up his champagne  
 glass)  
 A toast. To a new year, and an  
 even better beginning.

Connie lifts her glass, as they both CLICK their FLUTES.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Connie and Gary sit quietly on the living room sofa, as they reflect on the year passed and the future ahead.

CONNIE  
 (commiserates)  
 Wow. A brand new year. It seems  
 like only yesterday we ringing it  
 in.

GARY  
 (understands)  
 I hear ya. I guess when you're  
 busy, time just has no meaning.

CONNIE  
 (complains)  
 The only bad thing is that we have  
 to face another harsh Chicago  
 winter.

GARY  
 I think I have the solution to  
 that.

Gary hands Connie a small envelope. Connie curiously opens it up, as it has two first-class tickets to Hawaii.

CONNIE  
 (shakes excitedly)  
 Oh, my God! Two tickets to Waikiki  
 Beach!

GARY  
 I got to know Meg's husband when I  
 was shoveling snow. Nice guy. The  
 travel agent gave us a good deal.

CONNIE  
 (hugs and kisses Gary)  
 Ah! I love you!

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Connie and Gary are still up, as they plan to discuss the intricate scheme for tomorrow's trip.

GARY

(explains)

Okay, here's how it's gonna go. We leave first thing tomorrow afternoon. We have to have all our bags packed. A limo is going to meet us here at two-thirty sharp. By the time we arrive at the airport, we'll be going through the secret entrance, where Frank the attendant will take and label our luggage. We can't have it on the regular carousel. They'll see we have a stash. You follow so far?

Connie nods in agreement, as Gary continues.

GARY

(explains)

Ken is going to meet me here at eleven-thirty. By that time I should have all the drugs cut up and ready to be placed in our luggage. I just have to make a few calls to let people know we'll be away. After that we'll be on our way for some fun in the sun. Any questions?

CONNIE

(witty)

Just one. Will you feed me poi in the bathtub at the hotel?

GARY

Feed it to you? I'll serve you it to you in Bermuda shorts.

CONNIE

(jokingly)

Gee, thanks for the visual.

GARY

(mock-lifts his fist)

Why I oughta...

Connie and Gary laugh and roll around on the living room carpet.

GARY (V.O.)  
 Whoda thunk it? Our whole New Year  
 was set. Or so we thought...

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

SMALL ALARM CLOCK

Sits on the night stand. It reads four-thirty A.M.

CONNIE AND GARY

Lay sound asleep.

TELEPHONE

Also sits on the night stand near Gary, as it starts to RING.

Gary, awakened by the toll, struggles to get up, as he tosses and turns before finally picking up. On the other line is one of Gary's head supervisors at AccuCom, RUBEN DEPAOLA.

GARY  
 (tiredly speaks into  
 telephone)  
 Hello?

RUBEN (V.O.)  
 Gary? It's Ruben.

GARY  
 (tired; sarcastic)  
 Ruben, nice to hear from you. But  
 couldn't you have called earlier to  
 wish us a Happy New Year?

RUBEN (V.O.)  
 Gary, I'm sorry to call you at this  
 hour, but I just received some  
 urgent news. Due to Seth's  
 funeral, the day that we missed  
 will be made up tomorrow.

GARY  
 (raises his voice)  
 Are you kidding me? Who works on  
 New Year's Day?

RUBEN (V.O.)  
 (understands)  
 I know how you feel, Gary. All  
 we're having is this meeting we  
 were slated to have last Friday.  
 (MORE)

RUBEN (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 We'll be discussing the plans for  
 the new business year. Be there at  
 ten sharp.

GARY  
 But Ruben - -

RUBEN (V.O.)  
 (interjects)  
 Gary, I'm sorry. I wish I could  
 talk to you more, but I have a slew  
 of phone calls to make. See you  
 tomorrow.

GARY  
 (despondent)  
 Yup.

Gary disappointedly hangs up the phone and plops down on his  
 pillow.

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - ESTABLISHING SHOT -  
 WIDE ANGLE - MAGIC HOUR

The auburn skies make way for another hot Latin night.

CUT TO:

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - EMPTY ROOM - MAGIC HOUR

Mel remains tied to his chair, as he tries to keep his ever-  
 fading hope alive. For the moment, Mel is trying to eat a  
 holiday cookie given to him with his dinner. Mel struggles  
 in vein, as he tries to get the cookie up near his mouth, but  
 to no avail, as it repeatedly falls to the floor. Mel shakes  
 his head in quiet frustration.

CLOSEUP - SMALL HOLE IN WALL

As a SMALL RAT exits.

MEL

Sees the rat and starts to squirm with terror in his chair.  
 He tries to sidle away, but soon hesitates, as he seems to  
 gets an idea. Mel starts to maneuver and lean his chair to  
 the floor, as he holds the cookie in his tied hands.

SMALL RAT

Sniffs the cookie, quickly scuttles over to Mel.

MEL

Turns around to see if the rat approaches him.

MEL  
(eagerly invites the rat;  
sotto voce)  
That's it, little fella. Come to  
papa.

SMALL RAT

Busily gnaws away at the cookie, as well as the rope tying  
Mel's hands.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens, as a servant, syringe in hand, is set to give  
Mel his daily tranquilizer.

MEL

Sits readily in his chair.

CLOSEUP - MEL'S HANDS

As they now free. However, to trick the servant, Mel has  
them loosely tied behind his back.

The servant goes over to Mel to inject him, when Mel, quickly  
leaps out of his chair and starts to grapple with the  
servant. Mel throws a quick punch, as the servant is taken  
aback. The servant's head hits the wall, as he is knocked  
unconscious.

MEL

Grabs the syringe from the floor and goes over to the fallen  
servant.

MEL  
(injects the servant with  
the syringe)  
How about a taste of your own  
medicine?

Mel, now free, looks down the hall to see if anyone is  
present. Seeing no one, he swiftly departs the room.



INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Mel aimlessly roves about the hallway, vigilantly watching in front of and behind him. He continues, when he suddenly hears VOICES.

Mel quickly looks around for somewhere to hide. Seeing nothing, his only resort is a nearby wooden crate. Mel quickly takes off the cover, jumps inside, and softly puts the cover back on. Just seconds after Mel hides, two STEVEDORES come INTO VIEW, as they talk amongst each other.

STEVEDORE#1  
 (sees the crate;  
 complains; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Oh, no. Not another one.

STEVEDORE #2  
 (urgent; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 C'mon now. The bosses said we had  
 to have all of them loaded before  
 they leave.

The stevedores lift up the wooden crate, where Mel is hiding.

STEVEDORE #1  
 (complains; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Man, this one's pretty heavy.

STEVEDORE #2  
 (in Spanish; subtitled)  
 Don't worry. I think this is the  
 last one.

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Hernando and Miguel are preparing themselves for their trip, when Rudy comes bursting through the door.

RUDY  
 (frantic; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Senor Ramos, Senor Cabrera! Senor  
 Capra has escaped. I found Hector  
 unconscious in his room.

MIGUEL  
 (angrily grabs Rudy by his  
 shirt; in Spanish;  
 (MORE)

MIGUEL (cont'd)  
 subtitled)  
 You better be kidding.

RUDY  
 (painfully; in Spanish;  
 subtitled)  
 Senor Ramos, you're hurting me. No  
 one can find him.

HERNANDO  
 Let him go, Miguel. He can't be  
 far. We have this whole warehouse  
 armed with security. Anyway, we  
 have someone else to worry about.  
 (looks sternly at Rudy)  
 Tell everyone in the warehouse to  
 be on alert for Senor Capra.  
 (turns to Miguel)  
 Let's rock and roll.

EXT. LOCAL AIRPORT (PANAMA CANAL ZONE) - TARMAC - DAWN

A HUGE STRETCH LIMOUSINE pulls into an open gate leading  
 directly to the runway. The limo comes to a halt, as the  
 chauffeur exits the limousine, and goes to the back door.  
 The chauffeur opens the back door, as Miguel and Hernando  
 step out of the limousine. Hernando gives the chauffeur a  
 tip, as he follows Miguel to their private jet.

Miguel and Hernando ascend the steps of the jet, as they  
 enter inside, the door closing behind them. Stevedores load  
 the crates onto the luggage compartment, as they finish and  
 close the compartment. Everyone clears the way, as the jet  
 prepares for takeoff.

PRIVATE JET

Starts to move off the tarmac, before reaching off the  
 ground, and soaring off into the auburn horizon.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

**ACT IV**

SCENE XIV

FADE IN:

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE ANGLE - NEW YEAR'S DAY

The Vernon's house lies still, as a day of frenetic activity is set to begin.

CUT TO:

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Gary sits all alone on the bed, contemplating today's plans.

GARY (V.O.)

I was on edge. I had to go into work on New Year's day, and I not only had to get home in time to cut the drugs, I had to get ready for our flight, and hope to God that this meeting would be brief. But before I could do anything, there was one person I had to call.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Gary is on the phone, as he is trying to contact Ken.

KEN (V.O.)

(answering machine message)

Hey, this is Ken. I won't be here for New Year's. I'll be at my girlfriend's house. If you need to reach me there, her number is...

Gary quickly grabs a pencil and paper and jots down the phone number.

INT. ELANA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ken and his girlfriend, ELANA, are in bed together, when the PHONE RINGS. Elana picks up.

ELANA

(speaks into phone)

Hello? Yeah, he's right here.

(hands phone to Ken)

Ken, it's for you, baby.

KEN

(speaks into phone; friendly)

Hello? Oh, hey Gary. Happy New Year! Isn't it kind of early?

## INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

GARY  
(speaks into telephone)  
Ken, where are you?

KEN  
I'm at my girlfriend's place.

GARY  
That I know. Where is your  
girlfriend's place?

KEN  
Peoria.

GARY  
Peoria?! Ken, you're supposed to  
meet me at my job.

KEN  
Your job? I thought you said to  
meet you at your house?

GARY  
There's been a slight change of  
plans. I got a call from one of my  
bosses. I have to go to work  
today.

KEN  
Oh, man. Sucks to be you. No one  
works on New Year's Day.

GARY  
(testy)  
I know that. Everyone has to make  
up the day. This is what you have  
to do. My house is too far from  
Peoria, so I want you to bring the  
drugs over to AccuCom.

(beat)  
I'll be where we always meet. I  
want you to bring them over in the  
original boxes marked AccuCom, so  
no one will expect anything. And  
don't be late. You got me?

KEN  
(shakes his head)  
Uh huh.

GARY  
 (nervous)  
 Don't uh huh me, Ken!

KEN  
 Yeah, I got ya. Take the drugs in the original boxes, in the spot where we always meet, and don't be late. I'll be right over.

GARY  
 That's my boy. See you there.

Gary hangs up the phone in exasperation.

INT. ELANA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ken hangs up the phone, as he and Elana are still in bed.

ELANA  
 (gently caresses Ken's face)  
 Was it that mean guy who annoys you about the drugs?

KEN  
 Yeah. Hey, did I tell you that I saw a cardinal on the way over to your place? I got a picture with my camera.

ELANA  
 (erotic)  
 Have you ever seen a red-colored fuzzbox before?

KEN  
 (witty)  
 That one I'm quite familiar with.

Ken and Elana start to cuddle, but not before Elana intervenes.

ELANA  
 Wait.  
 (hands Ken exotic drink)  
 Here, take this. It'll make you stay up longer, if you know what I mean.

Ken drinks the concoction and the two get under the covers.

EXT. BRANCHES' CONDO (MIAMI) - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Peter and Pam are fast asleep in bed, when the DOORBELL RINGS. A tired and cranky Pam gets up to answer it.

PAM  
 (tiredly walks to front  
 door)  
 Alright, I'm coming!  
 (sotto voce)  
 Who the hell comes calling at this  
 hour?

Pam arrives at the front door, unlocks it, and opens. She is met with a surprising sight.

PAM'S POV

HERNANDO AND MIGUEL

Stand in the doorway, with guns in hands.

MIGUEL  
 Good morning, sunshine.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Gary is getting dressed and ready for work.

GARY (V.O.)  
 It was still early for a day I both  
 dreaded and couldn't wait to begin.  
 I was starving, but Connie left a  
 note saying she went to a diner for  
 breakfast. So I decided to start  
 the day with something new.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Gary, sleeves rolled up, takes a syringe, as he free-bases some heroine. Gary then pours some leftover champagne from New Year's into the mix, and absorbs it with the syringe.

GARY'S LEFT ARM

Tied with a tourniquet, as the syringe plunges into his vein.

GARY

Pulls his head back, as he feels the high.

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - MORNING

Gary exits his front door, as he locks the door, and swiftly heads over to his car, which is parked in his driveway. Gary enters his car.

GARY'S CAR

Pulls slowly out of the driveway, as it gets onto the road, and begins to pull away.

GARY (V.O.)

I was going to have to be at my best. Not only did I have to go to work, I had to prepare myself for a lengthy meeting, meet Ken to pick up the drugs, update the company's machines and software for the new year, get home, cut up the drugs, make sure our luggage and the house were ready, and arrive at the airport in time with Connie to catch our flight. All this and I'm barely out the door.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

TOP EXECUTIVES AND ACCUCOM EMPLOYEES

Renew acquaintances and make small talk before the meeting

GARY

Sits pensively at the table, vigilantly watching the clock on the wall.

The meeting is now in session, as executives and head employees discuss the future of AccuCom and the major issues it may face in the new year. An EXECUTIVE has the floor.

EXECUTIVE

(talks directly to everyone at table)

So, can anyone think of an alternative way to increase our company's profit without increasing our expenditures?

GARY

Sits pensively at his seat watching the clock, completely impervious to anything/anyone.

MR. OAKLEY (O.S.)  
 (angrily interjects)  
 Mr. Vernon, would you care to shed  
 some light on this subject?

Gary, his attention now redirected, turns his attention  
 towards the members of the meeting.

GARY  
 I beg your pardon?

MR. OAKLEY  
 (sarcastic)  
 Well, Gary, for those of who were  
 listening, Mr. Quigley was asking  
 how we can decrease company  
 expenditures. You must obviously  
 know the answer, since you've been  
 staring at the clock the whole  
 time.

MR. QUIGLEY  
 (curiously)  
 Well, Mr. Vernon?

GARY  
 (hesitates; starts to  
 speak)  
 Well, I really feel strongly about  
 the personal training and  
 internships of prospective  
 employees.  
 (beat)  
 With proper-on-the-job training and  
 preparation, we can have some of  
 our up and coming employees appear  
 at our seminars and local computer  
 conventions, not only as a means of  
 displaying their skills and  
 knowledge, but especially to help  
 educate users, introducing them to  
 our employees as well as to our  
 software.

GARY

Blanches after giving his dissertation, as he awaits the  
 members' reactions.

CONFERENCE MEMBERS

Remain silent, as one claps, another claps, as the whole  
 board APPLAUDS Gary.



MR. QUIGLEY  
 (happily applauds)  
 Gary, that is absolutely brilliant.  
 I'll have human resources on the  
 phone right after this meeting is  
 adjourned.

Gary remains seated, nervous but relieved.

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

The meeting has ended, as members shake each other's hands and wish each other well in the new year. Gary shakes a few hands, as he quickly makes his way out of the conference room.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary is in his office, updating the software while entering information for the drug ring. He is soon met with a pleasant surprise.

CONNIE (O.S.)  
 Working hard or hardly working?

Gary, slightly startled by the sound, turns away from his work to look

CONNIE

Stands in the doorway, as she has come to pay Gary a surprise visit. She makes her way over to Gary.

GARY  
 (slightly surprised)  
 Connie, what are you doing here?

CONNIE  
 (sarcastic)  
 Well, hello to you too.  
 (gives him a kiss)  
 I figured why not make a visit to  
 my husband's place of business?

GARY  
 Did you pack everything?

CONNIE  
 Affirmative.  
 (caresses Gary's cheek)  
 You look so cute today.

Connie starts to feel up Gary.

GARY

(tries to resist Connie)  
 Connie, please. I've got to finish  
 up entering some data for the drug  
 ring!

CONNIE

(mock-pleads)  
 C'mon. Don't be like that. Don't  
 you have a little time for your  
 wife?

GARY

(rescinded)  
 Alright.

CONNIE

Okay. Go find an empty room.

GARY

(heads towards computer)  
 I have to save my work and shut  
 down the computer.

CONNIE

(restrains Gary)  
 Don't worry. I can do it.

GARY

(uncertain)  
 Are you sure?

CONNIE

(confident)  
 Yes, I'm sure.  
 (shoos Gary away)  
 Now go.

Gary departs from his office, as Connie shuts off the  
 computer, instead of shutting it down. Connie excitedly  
 leaves the office and follows Gary.

Seconds after she leaves, Bartholemew Finch enters Gary's  
 office, as he tries in vain to find a computer to print out a  
 report on.

BARTHOLEM EW

(frantically looks around  
 the office for computer)  
 I have to get this report printed.  
 (frustrated)  
 Shit!

Bartholemew is about to depart, when he sees one computer, the one in which Gary was working on. Bartholemew swiftly heads over.

BARTHOLEMEW  
(looks upward)  
Oh, thank you, God.

Bartholemew sits down and powers on the computer and soon discovers some "interesting information."

CLOSEUP - BARTHOLEMEW'S FACE

Gives a devilish grin.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - PARKING LOT - DAY

Gary stands nervously in the spot where he and Ken always meet, as he anxiously awaits Ken's arrival.

GARY (V.O.)  
After spending some quality time with Connie, I was just in time to meet Ken. As usual, he was tardy and unreliable. I decided to give him a call

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Gary is talking on a pay phone trying to reach Ken.

EXT. HIGHWAY - OPEN ROAD - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

KEN'S VAN

Drives smoothly down the highway.

CUT TO:

INT. KEN'S VAN - FRONT SEAT - DAY

Ken is focusing on the road, when his CELL PHONE RINGS. Ken picks up.

KEN  
(talks into cell phone)  
Hello?

## INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

GARY

(talks on pay phone)  
 Ken, where the hell are you?  
 You're an hour late!

KEN

Sorry, Gar. I hit a little traffic  
 on the way over. Don't you worry.  
 I'm coming.

Ken hangs up, as he steps on the break. Ken continues to drive, when something captures his attention. Ken reaches for his binoculars in his glove compartment and takes a gander.

## KEN'S BINOCULAR POV

BLUE JAY

Perched majestically atop the branch of a surrounding tree.

## BACK TO SCENE

Ken, taken by the beauty of the blue jay, quickly takes out his digital camera and takes a picture. Ken throws his camera on the passenger seat and looks at the road in front.

## FRONT OF CAR

About to collide head-on with the vehicle in front

KEN

Quickly and hardly stops his van, but to no avail, as he and his van CRASH hardly into the vehicle. Ken is killed instantly. His lifeless and bloodied body lies still behind the wheel.

## INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Connie is just about finished packing for the trip, as she places the plane tickets in her coat pocket. The DOORBELL RINGS, as a curious Connie goes to answer. Connie opens the door, and is met with a surprise.

## MIGUEL AND HERNANDO

Stand in the doorway, guns in hands.

MIGUEL

Hi, honey.

HERNANDO

We're home.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Gary, tired of waiting for Ken, decides to call him again. He dials the number and waits for a reply, but receives none. Gary curiously tries again, and again receives nothing.

Gary goes to return to his office, when the television screen in the lobby catches his attention, along with some of his fellow employees.

TELEVISION SCREEN

Shows a Breaking News report.

A local TELEVISION REPORTER gives the report.

TELEVISION REPORTER

Good afternoon, I'm Greg Daniels. I'm here live on the scene of Lincoln Highway, where an accident between a van and pickup truck just occurred moments earlier. Traffic has been at a standstill since.

(beat)

I spoke with one of the motorists who witnessed the accident, who said the driver of the van, identified as local delivery man Ken Damon, seemed to be distracted by something, taking his attention off the road, and collided with the vehicle in front of him. Damon was killed instantly.

GARY

Looks on in shock at the television, as Sam Kennedy comes INTO VIEW.

SAM

Hey, Gary.

(looks at television;  
shakes his head)

Can you believe that? People just aren't cautious behind the wheel anymore.

Everyone continues to stay glued to the television set, as the report continues.

## TELEVISION REPORTER

This just in. I am getting word that authorities have just looked inside the van of Mr. Damon, and have uncovered numerous packages containing drugs and other legal substances. They have the destination address of the technology firm AccuCom. We'll reveal more details as they are brought to us. Back to you in the studio, Karen.

Employees give a collective GASP and begin to talk amongst themselves.

## SAM

(watches television)

I don't know what this world is coming to, eh, Gary? Gary?

Sam receives no response, and curiously turns around to find Gary nowhere in sight.

## INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary is frantically emptying out his desk, as he takes a key to the supply closet and swiftly opens it. The closet contains bags of heroine and other stashes. Gary empties the contents into a duffel bag, as he unlocks one of the draws to his desk, takes out a gun, and inserts the clip. Gary then picks up his phone and decides to make a phone call.

Gary receives no response, and decides to leave a message.

## INT. BRANCHES' CONDO (MIAMI) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

## CLOSEUP - TELEPHONE ANSWERING MACHINE

Plays Gary's message to Peter and Pam.

## GARY (V.O.)

(answering machine message)

Peter, it's Gary. The jig is up. They found out about the drug ring. Ken got killed in an accident and they found packages in his van. Whatever you do, try to get out of town before the guys find out about this. God Bless.

PETER AND PAM

Lie shot dead, bloodied, and hog-tied on their living room sofa, as Hernando and Miguel have permanently expired their lease.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary tries to call Connie.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

KITCHEN PHONE

RINGS loudly and repeatedly.

Connie, however, has no time to answer, as she runs for her life from the men. Connie quickly ascends the stairs, with Miguel hot on her trail. Connie reaches the stairs first, takes a nearby ficus plant, and throws it down the stairs at Miguel. The plant hits Miguel, knocking him over and obstructing his path upstairs.

MIGUEL

(lies on the steps; calls  
Hernando)

Hernando, help me get this mujere!

HERNANDO

(dials a number on his  
cell phone)

Not now. I have to make a call.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Connie dashes into the bedroom, as she closes and locks the bedroom door, then looks frantically around for a place to hide. Before she does that, Connie goes to a draw in the bureau, and pulls out a gun. She turns off the safety, sticks it in her bra, and hides in the closet.

Seconds after she hides, Miguel tries to open the door, but seeing it is locked, starts to BANG it down.

MIGUEL (O.S.)

(tries to bang down door)

Shit! Wait 'til I get in there!

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Hernando remains downstairs, as he is using his laptop to pull up a file, while also talking on his cell phone.

HERNANDO  
 (talks on cell phone; in  
 Spanish; subtitled)  
 Angel, my friend. It's Herando.  
 Do you happen to know a Gary  
 Vernon?

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

ANGEL VINA, a custodian at AccuCom, listens to Hernando on his cell phone. Angel is the same man who Connie berated and fought at the nightclub. Angel notices a photo of Gary on a bulletin board in the hallway.

ANGEL  
 (smiles sinisterly; talks  
 into his phone; in  
 Spanish; subtitled)  
 Oh, yes. I think I know who he is.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

MIGUEL (O.S.)  
 (in pain)  
 Ah! Hernando! This mujere shot  
 me!

Miguel, shot in his left shoulder, pulls Connie hardly down the stairs by her legs, as Connie screams and tries to wrestle herself out of his clutches. Hernando, seeing the two downstairs, rises and pulls out his gun. Miguel, now in control, holds onto Connie and points his gun at her head.

HERNANDO  
 (points gun at Connie)  
 Ok, little lady. Where is it?  
 Where's the rest of our money? If  
 you don't tell us you'll be joining  
 your friends in the big barrio in  
 the sky.

Just as Hernando finishes, a voice suddenly intervenes.

MEL (O.S.)  
 (yells sternly)  
 Freeze! Don't nobody move!

CONNIE, MIGUEL, AND HERNANDO

Startled by the voice, turn around.



MEL

Standing a few feet from them, sternly pointing a gun.

HERNANDO

(astounded)

You should be dead.

MEL

(sarcastic)

I can think of a lot of other things I'd rather be.

MIGUEL

(curious)

Where did you get that gun?

MEL

I found it when I hid in one your crates. I guess you didn't think of everything.

(yells sternly)

Now all of you slide over your weapons and put your hands up!

MIGUEL

Senor Capra - -

MEL

(angrily interjects)

I said slowly slide over your weapons and put your hands up!

Hernando and Miguel heed Mel and slowly slide their weapons over to him.

MEL

(curious)

Now, which one of you has a working cell phone?

(demands)

I want you to slide it over to me. Slowly!

Hernando takes out his cell phone and slowly slides it over to Mel. Mel, his eyes and gun still on the trio, quickly scoops up the phone, opens it, makes a call.

MEL

(talks on cell phone)

Hello? Chicago DEA? Yes, this is Mel Capra, DEA New York.

(MORE)

MEL (cont'd)

I have three perps here on 369  
Mason Lane, a lead on a serious  
drug ring, and one hell of a  
vacation story to tell. Yes, will  
do, thank you. Over and out.

Mel hangs up the phone, as he continues to keep close watch,  
as well as his gun, on the trio.

MEL

(stern)

Fun time's over, kids. Some of  
Chicago's finest NARCs are coming  
to put you away.

MIGUEL

(intense)

We will not leave until we get our  
money.

MEL

(daring)

Just try and make a move buddy.

CONNIE

(exasperated)

Everyone, please. I know where the  
money is. Gary told me to give it  
to you.

(looks at Mel)

May I?

MEL

(stern)

Alright. But don't try anything  
funny!

Connie reaches into her pants pocket and pulls out the small  
box that Gary gave her. She calmly hands it over to the  
guys.

Miguel quickly grabs the box from Connie, as he and Hernando  
eagerly open it up.

INSERT - CONTENTS OF BOX

As it reveals a computerized message reading, "HAVE A NICE  
DAY", followed by a smiley face

BACK TO SCENE

MIGUEL AND HERNANDO

Look curiously at one another.

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

EXPLODES and BURSTS into flames, instantly killing everyone inside.

LIMOUSINE

Scheduled to take Connie and Gary, pulls up to the house and comes to an abrupt halt. The chauffeur gets out of the limousine and stands dumbfounded at the house.

WIDE ANGLE - VERNONS' RAZED HOUSE

FADE OUT.

SCENE XV

FADE IN:

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

Gary is scurrying all-alone down the hallway, hoping that no one sees him. Gary arrives at a nearby men's restroom, and decides to enter.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDIN - MEN'S ROOM - DAY

Gary tentatively enters the restroom, as he carefully walks around to see if anyone is present. Seeing no one, Gary decides to answer nature's call.

GARY  
(shrugs his shoulders)  
Might as well while I'm here.

Gary heads over to a urinal, drops his duffel bag and goes to the bathroom. While there, Gary feels the presence of someone. Before he can turn around, he feels the cold steel of a gun up against his head.

ANGEL

Angrily points his gun at Gary and scowls.

GARY

Keeps his composure, and quickly grabs hold of Angel's arm and knocks the gun loose, while swiftly elbowing Angel in the face.

ANGEL

Counters with a left hook, as Gary falls flat to the floor.

ANGEL

Charges over to Gary, but not before Gary kicks him in the leg, sending Angel to the bathroom floor.

GARY

Seeing his chance, reaches in vain to grab the gun, as it is inches away from his grasp. He gets a slight hand on it, but not before Angel grabs Gary and tosses him into a bathroom stall.

ANGEL

Now up, charges towards Gary.

GARY

Makes a quick move to evade Angel, who hits his head on the side of the stall.

GARY

Angrily grabs hold of Angel's bald head and begins to hardy SLAM it against the porcelain of the toilet. Gary then takes Angel's head and dunks it in the toilet. Now free, Gary rises, grabs his duffel bag off the floor, and swiftly heads to the restroom door and exits.

INT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - CORRIDOR - DAY

GARY

Dashes down the hallway, as some employees in search of him, have their backs turned. One EMPLOYEE, however, quickly spots Gary.

EMPLOYEE

(spots Gary)

There he is! Let's get him!

EMPLOYEES

Chase after Gary.

EXT. ACCUCOM BUILDING - PARKING LOT - DAY

GARY

Quickly dashes to his car, the employees hot on his trail.

ANGEL

Recovered from his fight with Gary, hides in a corner of the parking lot, and FIRES his GUN.

GARY

Gets shot in his shoulder and winces in pain, as he reaches his car, and enters. He makes a break for it.

Gary's flawless new SPORTS CAR speeds and weaves its way through the parking lot, as it BURSTS through the parking lot, and enters onto the road.

GARY

Holds tightly to the steering wheel, as he starts to speed up on the busy open road.

SPORTS CAR

Makes a SCREECHING TURN, as it runs through a red light. It just makes its way past two cars, coming on opposite ends. The cars HONK their HORNS, as they CRASH into one another.

GARY

Nervously looks at the accident that just occurred, as he turns his attention to the front.

FRONT OF SPORTS CAR

About to hit a large truck.

GARY

Swiftly jerks the wheel, as he avoids the truck, and enters into his left lane. Gary continues to drive, when he hears a WHIRRING NOISE. Curious, Gary looks up.

CHOPPER

Hovers in the sky, as it closely follows Gary.

Gary ignores the chopper, as he continues driving. He then hears SIRENS. Gary looks in his rear view mirror.

REAR VIEW MIRROR

Shows a bevy of police cars, as they quickly pursue Gary.

GARY

Steps on the break, as he tries to evade capture.

POLICE CARS

Increase their speed, as they try to clear their way through traffic. One of the cops slings a GUN out of his window and FIRES.

ON GARY

As the GLASS in his back window EXPLODES. Gary retaliates by taking his GUN, and FIRES back at the police car, while driving his car.

Gary, still in hot pursuit, then gets an idea. Gary quickly makes a move.

SPORTS CAR

Quickly veers and enters onto an opposite route, while all of the police cars miss and enter onto a busy service ramp. Gary is now free of the police and helicopter, as he makes his escape out of town.

GARY

(cocky; looks in back of  
him)

Happy New Year, suckers! I'll see  
you on the other side of town!

Gary then turns around, as he becomes startled and steps on his break.

CAR

Pulls out of a local gas station, as GARY'S CAR CRASHES head on into it.

GARY

Feels the impact of his car, as the AIR BAG BURSTS out.

CARS

Lie totaled on the side of the road.

GARY

Remains behind the wheel, motionless and expressionless.

## CAR

The owner of the other totaled car steps out. It is Jeff Candace, as he sees Gary and exclaims.

JEFF

(excitedly waves to Gary)  
 Hey, Gary! Happy New Year, buddy.  
 Are you okay? Don't worry I have  
 insurance. Hey, how about we stop  
 off for a drink? I know a good bar  
 downtown.

## POLICE CARS

Pull up to the scene of the accident. Police officers get out, guns in their hands, as they surround Gary's wrecked vehicle. One POLICE OFFICER reaches the front seat and beckons Gary.

POLICE OFFICER

(yells and points his gun  
 at Gary)  
 Chicago PD. You're under arrest.  
 One move and I'll blow your fuckin'  
 brains out!

## CLOSEUP - GARY'S EXPRESSIONLESS FACE

## INT. LOCAL POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

Gary is being interrogated by a POLICE DETECTIVE at his desk. He is seated, handcuffed, and his shoulder is bandaged. Gary, too stunned to speak, stares blankly down at the floor.

POLICE DETECTIVE

(stern)  
 So, you're not going to talk to me?  
 That's alright. You'll only make  
 things worse on yourself. Keep in  
 mind, I'm not the one that's going  
 to be snacking on a sausage  
 sandwich.

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Enter through the doors of the police station, as they are holding the packages from Ken's van.

They empty out the contents onto a nearby desk, revealing all types of drugs and drug-related items.

GARY

Looks speechless and shocked at the contents.

POLICE DETECTIVE (O.S.)  
 (sarcastic)  
 What do we have here? Some Gold Medal flour, some exotic teas. Heh, heh. Your time's up, prick. See you on the other side.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)  
 (jokingly)  
 I hope you have soap on a rope, buddy. You're gonna need it where you're going.

FADE OUT.

SCENE XVI

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSITION - ONE WEEK LATER

INT. LOCAL COURTHOUSE - COURTROOM - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Court is now in session.

GARY

Fresh in arm cast, sits on the witness stand, as the DEFENSE ATTORNEY begins his interrogation.

GARY (V.O.)  
 Like Crockett at the Alamo, this was my last stand. I was being tried from nearly everything in the book, from illegal drug distribution, embezzlement, false identity, even the red light I ran during the chase. I'm surprised they left out jaywalking. I just had to do the best I could to defend myself.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
 (walks around the courtroom; inquisitive)  
 Please tell us, Mister Vernon.  
 (MORE)



DEFENSE ATTORNEY (cont'd)  
Did you become involved in the drug  
ring with the late Peter Branch,  
and his wife, the late Pamela  
Branch, respectively?

GARY

Nods sheepishly, as the attorney continues.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
(paces around the  
courtroom)  
And it is to my, as well as the  
court's knowledge, that you were  
also associated in the drug ring  
with other notable individuals,  
among them the late Miguel Ramos,  
the late Hernando Cabrera, and the  
late Ken Damon?

GARY

Again nods sheepishly. The presiding Judge, JUDGE FRANCIS  
MCKENNA, mandates Gary to speak.

JUDGE MCKENNA  
(sternly)  
Mister Vernon, it is my and the  
court's ruling that you please  
answer the questions posed to you  
vocally instead of by way of body  
gestures.

GARY  
(scratches his head; sotto  
voce)  
Yes, that is correct.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
(inquisitive; stands  
still)  
And is it true to say that you  
operated this illicit drug network  
with the full knowledge that you  
would eventually be apprehended?

GARY'S ATTORNEY intervenes.

GARY'S ATTORNEY  
(angrily intervenes)  
Your Honor, I object.

JUDGE MCKENNA

(stern)

Objection overruled.

(looks at Gary)

Mister Vernon?

GARY

(sotto voce)

No.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

Mister Vernon, you can't  
seriously think that you  
would never - -

GARY

(intervenes; raises his  
voice)

You heard me. I never thought I  
would get caught. The network we  
had was so intricately committed to  
detail that there was no way we  
could get caught.

(beat; rises from the  
stand)

We had every detail accounted for,  
from the very amount of each drug  
that was sold, right down to the  
manila envelopes we sent payment  
in.

(beat)

We had everyone paid off: mail  
carriers, security guards,  
telephone workers, airline  
employees, even a few cops.  
Everyone did their part, and  
everyone was taken care of. One  
hand washing the other, washing the  
other. And now it's over.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY

(smug)

The defense rests, your Honor.

JUDGE MCKENNA

(inquisitive)

Is there anything more you would  
like to add, Mister Vernon?

GARY

(looks at Judge McKenna)

As a matter of fact, your Honor,  
there is.

(MORE)

GARY (cont'd)  
 (looks at everyone in  
 courtroom)  
 In the words of former First Lady  
 Nancy Reagan, when you're either  
 offered to do, sell, or become  
 involved with drugs, Just Say No!

EXT. COOKE COUNTY PRISON (CHICAGO) - ESTABLISHING SHOT - WIDE  
 ANGLE - TWO WEEKS LATER

The skies are overcast, as it looks like rain.

CUT TO:

INT. COOKE COUNTY PRISON - DAY

GARY

In orange jumpsuit, walks through the prison, as he is  
 escorted to his new home by two beefy prison guards.

GARY (V.O.)  
 The judge wasted no time  
 in handing down my  
 sentence. Twenty-five to  
 life. So this is how it  
 would all finish up. I  
 went from Gary Vernon,  
 head operator of one of  
 the biggest drug networks  
 in North America, to  
 inmate number V6B6G in  
 Cooke County Prison.  
 (beat)  
 My last meal on the outside was  
 prime rib with garlic-roasted mash  
 potatoes. My first meal in the  
 joint was a bologna sandwich on  
 stale bread with a glass of water.  
 I went from living in a three  
 hundred and fifty thousand dollar  
 house to a small ten-by-twenty inch  
 cubicle cell, with a rock-hard  
 mattress and a toilet that  
 overflowed.

Gary finally arrives at his cell, as a short PRISON GUARD is  
 about to lock him up for good.

PRISON GUARD  
 Can you believe this? We recently  
 had our security system upgraded.  
 (shows Gary remote  
 control)  
 (MORE)

## PRISON GUARD (cont'd)

With the push of this button, I can close your cell, without ever having to worry about you stealin' a key. Technology, ain't it something?

The Prison Guard pushes the button

GARY

Stands stock still, as the BARS begin to CLOSE on him.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Gary cleans up around the prison, as he mops the floors, washes dishes, sweeps around the floors, etc.

Gary is in the shower room, washing under a shower head, as he vigilantly watches in front and in back of him.

Gary is on the cafeteria line, waiting for his meal. The cafeteria maid scoops a gruel-like mess onto his tray. The cafeteria maid smiles dryly, as Gary's looks stoically at his "supper".

Gary is on line with a bunch of his fellow inmates, as they are being led back to their cells.

Gary sits reflectively in his cell, as he stares down at the cold concrete floor.

GARY (V.O.)

The hardest thing about spending the rest of my life in the big house was the fact that I was all-alone. Everyone I had ever known or been affiliated with was either dead, or had left Illinois. Connie, Peter, Pam, and Ken were all dead. My mother died when I was in high school. My father has Alzheimer's and is in a nursing home. I had no brothers or sisters, and I barely knew anyone from AccuCom. Even Jeff got transferred to, of all places, Miami.

(beat)

And to top it all off, everything I had put my neck on the line for was gone. All of my belongings, including my now-barbecued home, were seized.

(MORE)

GARY (V.O.) (cont'd)

Every penny I made off the drug ring was either seized by Uncle Sam or used to pay my attorney. I couldn't even peddle drugs in prison. The remaining stash I had was either taken by NARCS or went up my or Connie's veins and noses.

(beat)

But on the bright side, now that I'm in prison, I have a whole new life. I can do lots of things I never had the chance to do before. There are some awfully good books I've been itchin' to read, not to mention some exercise. When you work in front of a computer all day long, you're bound to pack on a few pounds. I even spoke to my parole officer. He said with some good behavior, I could have my sentence reduced to twenty, maybe fifteen years. And with the way time goes. Maybe things wouldn't turn out so bad after all...

INT. COOKE COUNTY PRISON - WEIGHT ROOM - DAY

GARY

Enters the weight room, as he waves to one of the prison guards who is friendly with.

Gary sets the weights to his preference, as he prepares to do a couple of bench presses.

Gary positions himself, as he starts to lift.

CLOSEUP - GARY'S FACE

Showing strain, as he diligently lifts weights.

GARY

Decides to take five, as he puts the weight back in its holder.

CLOSEUP - GARY'S FACE

Showing slight exhaust, as he tries to catch his breath.

Suddenly a WEIGHT comes out of nowhere, and DROPS on Gary's neck.

CLOSEUP - PAIR OF ARMS

Muscular and tattooed, press the weight on Gary's neck.

ANGEL

Now a prisoner himself, angrily pushes the weight on Gary's neck, as two Prison Guards quickly intervene, and pull Angel away. One of PRISON GUARDS quickly alerts his supervisor.

PRISON GUARD  
(frantically speaks into  
walkie-talkie)  
Fred, I got an inmate attack in the  
weight room. Get backup in here  
STAT!

The Prison Guards pull Angel out of the weight room.

CLOSEUP - GARY'S HAND

Lays lifeless on the weight room floor, as blood begins to trickle down it.

FADE OUT.

THE END

**Deleted Scenes**

FADE IN:

EXT. VERNONS' HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - HALLOWEEN NIGHT

The Vernons' house is festooned for Halloween, with lights and other ghoulish decorations.

CUT TO:

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Connie hands out the last of the Halloween candy to some lucky trick-or-treaters. Connie thanks them, as she closes and locks the door and turns off all of the Halloween lights. Connie then heads upstairs to join Gary.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connie walks through the door, as she sees Gary, who is dressed as Superman, snorting some cocaine, as she stares at him. Gary, feeling her presence, looks up at her.

GARY

What?

CONNIE

(mock-complains)

That's just it.

GARY

(confounded)

What's it?

CONNIE

(complains)

It's the same old shit, but a new day. Pour, line, snort. Pour, line, snort. It's not fun anymore.

GARY

Who said it was supposed to be fun?

CONNIE

It's Halloween, here we are, dressed for the occasion, and I'm bored out of my wits.

GARY

So, is that all you want? Fun.

CONNIE

Well, am I the only one who thinks a little excitement wouldn't be all that bad?

GARY

Okay, if that's what you want. I think I have just the thing for you.

Gary heads over to the safe, which is behind a mural on the wall above the bed. Gary hits the combination, opens the safe, takes out a bag, and closes up the safe. All the while, Connie looks on curiously. Gary holds up the bag, which contains a white-blue colored powder.

CONNIE

(inquisitive)

What the hell is that?

GARY

Our entertainment for tonight. Heroine. Colombian turquoise. It's nicknamed "Snake Venom".

CONNIE

(slightly scared;  
objective)

No fuckin' way! I'm outta here!

Connie quickly heads toward the bedroom door, but Gary gets there first, as he SLAMS the DOOR shut, and stands in front of it.

GARY

What's the matter? Scared? Seems like we wanted to swim in the deep end, and now we're afraid we'll drown.

CONNIE

(stern)

Gary, I mean it. Let me out.

GARY

(strong)

Not a chance. You wanted some action, and now you've got it.



CONNIE

(stern)

Gary, get the fuck out of my way.

GARY

I ain't movin', honey. Not until we shoot up some of this.

CONNIE

Gary, I love a good buzz just as much as anybody, but this is different.

GARY

Really? So snorting coke is the equivalent of a glass of wine.

CONNIE

That's not the point, Gary. I just don't think it's safe.

GARY

Well, there's only one way to find out.

(beat)

C'mon, just do a little with me. We won't do a lot, I promise.

CONNIE

(concedes)

Okay.

(stern)

But just a little bit.

Connie and Gary sit on the bedroom, floor, as Gary is free-basing some heroine, while Connie looks on.

GARY

Okay, I just have to let it warm for a little more. That way it'll go down easier.

CONNIE

You know how to do this?

GARY

Pete showed me.

(points to them)

Bring those syringes and tourniquets over. We're gonna need them.

Connie gets them and brings them over.

CONNIE  
 (nervous)  
 You mean we're gonna inject this?

GARY  
 (sarcastic)  
 No, we're gonna let it get hard and  
 stick it up our asses. Of course  
 we're gonna shoot up.

CONNIE  
 (nervous)  
 Gary, I really don't wanna do this!

GARY  
 Relax. Pete showed me everything.  
 Trust me. Okay, I think it's  
 ready. Give me a syringe.

Connie hands Gary a syringe, as he absorbs some heroine into  
 the syringe.

GARY  
 Give me your arm.

Connie presents her arm, as Gary tightly ties the tourniquet  
 around her arm, and SLAPS it for a vein.

GARY  
 Okay, I found a vein. I'm goin'  
 in.

Gary gently positions the needle, as he is about to inject  
 Connie

CONNIE'S ARM

Vein exposed, as the needle penetrates her arm.

Connie gently leans her head back and closes her eyes, as she  
 absorbs the high.

GARY  
 How do you feel?

CONNIE  
 (high)  
 Oh, like I'm on ether.

GARY  
 Wrong. You're on heroine.

CONNIE  
 (absorbs the high)  
 Oh, man, this is a trip.

Connie starts to breath heavy, as Gary attempts to assuage her.

GARY  
 (calm)  
 Just take it easy. Absorb it, and  
 take it easy.

Connie keeps her eyes open a little longer, as the buzz finally leaves her.

GARY  
 (concerned)  
 How are you feeling?

CONNIE  
 (calm)  
 Good.

GARY  
 Ok, now it's my turn.  
 (shows Connie)  
 Take the syringe and absorb some of  
 the heroine.

Connie heeds Gary, as she fills the needle.

GARY  
 (hands her a tourniquet)  
 Now take the tourniquet and tie it  
 tightly around my arm. Then slap  
 my arm 'til you find a vein.

Connie heeds Gary, as she readies Gary.

GARY  
 (calmly explains)  
 Now, gently take the syringe and  
 inject it into my vein.

Connie takes the needle, as she is about to inject Gary with the heroine.

GARY'S ARM

As the syringe is about to penetrate into his vein.

Gary leans his head back and closes his eyes, as he absorbs the high.

GARY  
 (feels the high)  
 Yes, yes, this is alright. I can  
 feel it...  
 (hesitates)  
 Wait, what's goin' on?

CONNIE  
 (worried)  
 Gary? You alright, baby?

GARY  
 (slightly worried)  
 I don't know, Connie. I feel the  
 high, but I'm startin to feel  
 something else.  
 (beat)  
 No, wait a sec. Oh shit, oh shit!

CONNIE  
 Gary?! What's going on?!

GARY  
 (wriggles around)  
 I don't know, Connie. But it ain't  
 good.

Gary starts to wriggle and squirm around the floor, as Connie  
 watches in horror.

GARY  
 Connie, I love you honey. Always.

CONNIE  
 Gary, why are you talking like  
 that?! Gary!!

Gary starts to TREMBLE uncontrollably on the floor, as Connie  
 goes to his side, BANGING on his chest, in hopes of reviving  
 him. It is to no avail, as Gary lies motionless, as Connie  
 sobs incessantly.

CONNIE  
 (hysterical)  
 Gary! Gary! Wake up, you son of a  
 bitch, wake up!

Connie looks at Gary, who is still immobile.

GARY'S LIFELESS FACE

As his eyes start to move and slowly open.

Connie looks alertly at her husband, who looks hesitantly at her.

GARY  
 (in a Southern girl's  
 voice)  
 Connie Vernon, you're my hero.

CONNIE  
 (looks incredulous at him)  
 You were foolin? Gary, that's not  
 funny!

GARY  
 (jokingly)  
 Faster than a speeding bullet, more  
 powerful than a locomotive. Da-da-  
 da-da-da-da.  
 (laughs out loud)  
 Ah, ha, ha!!

CONNIE  
 (angrily)  
 You fuckin' asshole!

Connie hits her husband hard, takes the drug paraphernalia off the floor and flings it at him, as it hits the bedroom door, seconds after Gary departs.

INT. VERNONS' HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Connie and Gary lie quietly and contemplatively on their bed, as they hold each other warmly. Connie breaks the silence.

CONNIE  
 Gary?

GARY  
 Yes?

CONNIE  
 I wanna have children.

GARY  
 (sighs)  
 Oh, c'mon, Connie.

CONNIE  
 What? During the entire time that  
 we've been married, haven't you  
 ever thought about it?

GARY

Of course I have. But we can't,  
end of discussion.

CONNIE

Why not? It's not like we can't  
afford it. I mean, we can give  
them everything we never had.

GARY

(slightly annoyed)  
That's not the point, Connie. We  
wouldn't be model parents.

CONNIE

What are you talking about? I'm  
responsible and I love children.

GARY

It just wouldn't work, that's all  
I'm saying.

CONNIE

(objective)  
What do you mean, Gary? We do  
great together. We've worked real  
hard, and look at all we have.

GARY

Don't give me that. All of the  
stuff we have came off a truck.

CONNIE

Don' be like that, Gary.

GARY

(snappishly retorts)  
Be like what, Connie? You wanna  
have a kid, letting them grow up  
around all of this? Drugs,  
separate phone lines, having to  
look over their shoulders for Narcs  
and Feds? Their classmates staring  
at them in school?

(beat)

Their lives will be a Doctor Phil  
episode waiting to happen. You  
nauseate me.

Connie gets up from the bed.

CONNIE

(frustrated)

You know, I thought I could talk to you about something serious, but I guess I'm better off talking to a fuckin' wall!

Connie goes over to a nearby night stand, as she starts to snort some cocaine, which rests on the night stand near her side of the bed. Gary looks on disgustedly.

GARY

(intense)

Yeah, that's it. This is what our kids going to see every day. Mommy snorting fuckin' blow off of the night stand.

(beat)

What next, Connie? You gonna snort some off the ledge of the crib?

Gary grabs the plate of cocaine from under Connie and angrily tosses it across the room. Connie gets up and angrily attacks Gary.

CONNIE

(enraged)

You fuckin' prick! Get out of here, now!

GARY

(intense)

Go ahead and do some more, Connie. Then you'll have premature, underweight baby with no chance of making it. Yeah, just what you want.

(beat; calmly)

How can we take care of a child, when we can't even take care of ourselves?

Gary leaves the bedroom, calmly closing the door behind him. Connie calms herself, as she sits on the bed, and looks despondently down on the floor.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - WIDE ANGLE - DAY

Gary is in the downtown area of Chicago in a not-so-friendly neighborhood.

He is here to pick up some ice cream at a mini-mart for Connie, because it is the only place in town he can find it. Gary walks toward the mini-mart, when he encounters a STREET HUSTLER.

STREET HUSTLER  
(sotto voce)  
Excuse me?

GARY  
Yeah.

STREET HUSTLER  
Can I talk to you for a sec?

GARY  
Sure. But make it quick. My car's on a meter.

The Street Hustler takes Gary into a corner alley.

EXT. CORNER ALLEY - DAY

The Street Hustler takes Gary into the alley, as they stop.

STREET HUSTLER  
My man, you look like the kinda guy that use some loosenin' up, if you know what I mean?

GARY  
(confounded)  
Actually, I don't.

The Street Hustler pulls out a bag of marijuana and a vial of crack/cocaine, as he shows it off to Gary.

STREET HUSTLER  
(grins widely; sotto voce)  
How do you like this, partner?  
Pure, fresh from the lab and garden, and ripe for your pleasure.

GARY  
(inquisitive)  
Looks like some nice shit. Where'd ya get it?

STREET HUSTLER  
(suspicious)  
Why do you ask?

GARY  
Just curious.



The Street Hustler tries to get away, but Gary quickly grabs his arm and pulls him back.

GARY  
Hold on. Just tell me where you got the goods.

STREET HUSTLER  
(suspicious)  
Yo, are you a narc, dog?

GARY  
No, I'm not a narc. I just wanna know where you got the goods.

STREET HUSTLER  
(curious)  
And what if I don't tell you?

Gary shows the Street Hustler the gun inside of his inner coat pocket.

STREET HUSTLER  
(nervous)  
Okay, no need for that, dog. I've seen my fair share of those.

GARY  
Listen, I'm not a cop, narc, or fed. I ain't gonna shoot ya. Just tell me where you got the goods.

The Street Hustler pulls out a business card.

STREET HUSTLER  
(hands business card to Gary)  
Here. He's the best downtown. I work for him, but I don't know him.  
(beat)  
If he asks for Lamond, you don't know who I am. Got me?

GARY  
I got you.

STREET HUSTLER  
(extends his hand)  
Alright, brother. Keep the peace in the Middle East.

Lamond departs, as Gary remains in the alley, as he looks at the business card.

INSERT - BUSINESS CARD

Has the name Mister Happy, along with a smiley face and contact information.

BACK TO SCENE

Gary looks closely at the card.

EXT. CHICAGO EL - WIDE ANGLE - LATE NIGHT

The El Station is barren, as nary a soul can be seen. HUGO VELANCHEZ, a.k.a. Mister Happy, slowly and carefully ambles about the empty station, as he looks for the customer who called him. Hugo sees no one, as he starts to call out.

HUGO  
 (calls out)  
 Hello? Are you there? It's Mister  
 Happy. I have your order.

There is no reply, as Hugo disappointingly shakes his head. Suddenly, a RUFFLING NOISE emerges. A startled Hugo quickly pulls out a gun, aims and looks around. He sees no one, as he takes a few steps back. Suddenly, two pairs of arms grab Hugo and shanghai him.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. CHICAGO EL - TRAIN TRACKS - LATE NIGHT

CLOSEUP - HUGO'S EYE

Slowly begins to open.

Hugo awakes, and finds himself bound to the train tracks. His hands and feet are tied tightly, and he can't even scream for help, because his mouth is covered with duct tape. Hugo tries starts to wildly wriggle, but to no avail. Suddenly, a bright light shines on Hugo as turns his head.

HUGO'S POV

SIX TRAIN

ROARS down the track, about to run him over.

BACK TO SCENE

Hugo again tries to wriggle his way out, but it's no use, as the train comes closer and closer.

The train is about to run him over, when all of a sudden, he is pulled off the tracks just in time, as the train continues along the tracks.

EXT. CHICAGO EL - PLATFORM - LATE NIGHT

Hugo, now out of harm's way but still bound up, rests on the platform, when he sees what appears to be two people standing above him and watching him.

KEN AND GARY

Clad in black ski masks, look angrily at Hugo. Gary lifts Hugo off the platform pavement, pulls out a gun, points it at Hugo, and gives him a stern warning.

GARY

(enraged)

You two-timing, low-life cock sucker! I shoulda let you get flattened back there. Instead, my friend and I are gonna leave you with some words of wisdom.

(beat)

Stop selling around your hood. The territory's already taken. And if you do, well Senor Happy, we know what time the seven train arrives. Understand?!

Hugo, unable to answer vocally, nods his head, as Ken and Gary place him on the stool on the platform and depart.

FADE OUT.

