

'DEATH WISH'

Screenplay by Joe Carnahan

5-9-15

Paramount Pictures/MGM Releasing.

OVER BLACK

A VOICE. Powerful and profound in issuing the following--

VOICE

--And this is what guns do guys--

The erratic, cacophonous din of a TRAUMA E.R. overtakes--

VOICE (CONT'D)

--CLEAR OFF!

Defib-paddles FIRE. The low thump of voltage follows. A HEART MONITOR falters, then fails to the drone of a flatline.

SMASH CUT ON UP ON:

A GUNSHOT VICTIM (GSV) prone on a gurney, his last breath evaporating inside a respirator mask.

E.R. NURSE

He's coding. Full arrest.

The VOICE belongs to this man--

PAUL KERSEY

*--forget it. I'm gonna split him.
Fifteen.*

PAUL KERSEY, 40, possesses the relentless sense of purpose and hawk-eyed precision common to his calling: Trauma Surgeons wield out-sized egos and skill-sets which tend to separate them from their Hippocratic contemporaries.

The E.R. NURSE hands him a scalpel with a 15 series blade. He pauses before passing it quickly over the sternum. The skin splits like stretched silk. A bone saw follows the scalpel's path, cleaving through the dense mass of breast plate.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

(urgently precise)

*Spreaders. Move. Let's go guys.
Losing time.*

A set of RETRACTORS slot inside the rib cage and actuate, separating the two halves of the chest cavity with a sickening *thunk...*

...the victim's heart appears. Quivering in full arrest. Only crucial seconds remain before it shuts down completely.

Paul remains composed and in full command.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 Rapid Onset of cardiac tamponade,
 let's peel him, pericardiocentesis.

He's handed a surgical needle and isolating the sub-xyphoid region sets about gently puncturing the pericardium...the protective sac surrounding the heart.

Blood floods up through the chamber fast, spilling over--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
*--he's hemorrhaging. I'm pulling
 it, I'm pulling it...*

The pericardium is torn free like tripe as Paul strips off his surgical gloves, reaches in with his bare hands and gently removes the man's heart.

He begins massaging it manually. Short, compact, sure-handed compressions. He concentrates. The glistening surface of the heart distends lightly with each squeeze but the organ refuses to restart.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 (imperceptible then grows)
*...if you start me up...if you
 start me up, I'll never stop...*

Paul keeps massaging. His thumbs patiently working either side of the heart's ventricles. The song increases in volume.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
*...If you start me up, I'll never
 stop, never stop, never, never
 never stop--*

--suddenly, the heart seems to leap to life inside his hands. Beating hastily, irregularly before slowly settling into an abnormal but stable rhythm. Paul can't help himself, keeps singing along to the 'Stones.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
*...you make a grown man cry...you
 make a grown man cry...*

The Trauma Team actually applaud and laugh aloud as the respirator mask begins to mist with new breath.

Paul Kersey issues the smallest of smiles...Some internal confirmation...gratitude for gifts given...a saver of lives.

He meets the gaze of JANINE RAY, 30's, Chief anesthesiologist and proof that sometimes long hours, constant stress and sheer exhaustion simply *cannot* dent or diminish great beauty.

She smiles.

Paul winks at her as the patient's vitals return. He then carefully replaces the beating heart inside the chest cavity.

MUSIC slowly rises up over the SCENE. ***Smentana's 'Ma Vlast' Overture.***

The Trauma Team works quickly to stabilize the patient and get him sewn up. Paul sits down on a corner stool gazing down absently at his blood-soaked hands.

The MUSIC SWELLS...

A droplet of blood beads off his index finger and hangs there, suspended...we wait an eternity for it to drop but it never does as WE CUT TO:

A WOMAN'S HAND

Lovely and fine and slender. Age is just beginning to show in the small, tributary-like veins tracing her palm. Kersey clasps his hand overtop. It's rough and calloused against the soft refinement of her fingers.

INT. DISNEY CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

The Orchestra in full measure. A beautiful crescendo rises and swells before gently ebbing away to a lone cello.

Paul grips the hand tighter. Its owner squeezes back and turns toward him, giving us a look at her face for the first time...Dark shoulder-length hair framing delicate features and perfect, pale blue eyes.

AUDREY KERSEY is nearly 40 but looks ten years younger and her husband gazes at her like it's something he will never tire of doing.

A tear slips free, the cello solo getting the better of her. She smiles as if caught. Paul grins, thumbing the tear away.

She indicates the goose bumps on her arm. He runs his hand over them, bringing her hand up and kissing it, kneading her fingers before kissing them again.

The MUSIC CONTINUES as we CUT TO:

Paul and his wife make love in their bed.

INT. KERSEY HOME - NIGHT

Slow and sensual. They whisper to one another throughout. Audrey rolls over on her stomach. Sweat beads off her shoulder blades as Kersey kisses her neck, roaming down her back and over her ass.

Her eyes flutter as she grips the sheets tight, building toward a slow, shuddering climax--

--when the sudden chime of their doorbell destroys the moment entirely.

Audrey, breathless, then *incredulous*--

AUDREY

--Oh no! What!? What time is it?

(beat)

Who is that??

Paul rolls out of bed, trying to catch his breath as he grabs a towel off the floor and cinches it around his waist.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Paul?

PAUL KERSEY

(moving to the window)

Baby, how would I know who's ringing the doorbell?

He peers out. A HANCOCK SECURITY VEHICLE is parked at the curb.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Security.

Audrey sits up in bed. Squints at the clock.

AUDREY

It's almost 2am.

PAUL KERSEY

Something must be up.

He starts out of the bedroom.

AUDREY

Tell 'em they screwed up my orgasm, will you?

PAUL KERSEY

(as he exits)

I don't think they patrol that part
of the complex babe.

She laughs and hurls a pillow out after him.

INT/EXT. KERSEY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Paul opens the door on a bleary-eyed NIGHT PATROLMAN:
Hispanic. Large and imposing with a thick, keg-like gut.
Tattoo removals have scarred the skin on both sets of
knuckles. Paul guesses gang ink.

The man smiles, semi-pleasant.

NIGHT PATROLMAN

Mr. Kersey--

(extending his hand)

Henry--

PAUL KERSEY

(returning the handshake)

--yeah, Hi, Henry, I know. We've
met. What's up?

Henry's massive paw swallows Paul's as he shakes exuberantly,
prolonging the greeting as a form of apology.

HENRY

Sorry about the hour but we had a
complaint. Some strange characters
loitering in the neighborhood.

PAUL KERSEY

'Strange characters?'

HENRY

Might be nothing but we're checking
in with all of our residents,
making sure everything's ok.

PAUL KERSEY

Things were *better* than ok until
you rang the doorbell Henry.

HENRY

Sorry sir?

PAUL KERSEY

Nothing. I'm kidding.

(an exhale to convey the
end of the conversation)

(MORE)

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
I haven't seen or heard anything
weird tonight, so--

HENRY
--and can I ask, do you own a
weapon sir?

PAUL KERSEY
Do I--?

HENRY
--A pistol? Any sort of firearm?

PAUL KERSEY
Ohh, no, no, not in this house. We
don't do that. We don't do guns.
(beat, a bit alarmed)
Why? Is there *that* kind of cause
for concern?

HENRY
No, not at all but we had a house
burglarized over on Windsor Blvd.
about a month back and a couple of
handguns were stolen. One of these
guns was then involved in an armed
robbery, so if you do happen to own
one, just make sure it's registered
and on file--

PAUL KERSEY
--I don't and I most likely won't.

HENRY
Ok sir.

PAUL KERSEY
And as I said, it's been pretty
quiet tonight.

HENRY
Well, if that changes.

As Paul closes the door...

PAUL KERSEY
...You'll be the first to know.
G'nite Henry.

The door closes. Henry lingers an extra beat longer before
returning to his car.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A 17 year old African-American KID in complete hysterics, thrashing inside a head restraint, his face soaked with tears and stained with blood as he BLEATS--

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID
 --NO! NO! PLEASE-PLEASE-PLEASE--
 M'GOIN' T'DIE!?! M'GOIN T'DIE?
 M'GOIN T'DIE!?!

His clothing is cut away, stab wounds and lacerations cover his abdomen, A SCREWDRIVER, snapped off at the grip, protrudes from his partially punctured spleen.

The trauma unit works with frenetic speed and pinpoint skill.

AFRICAN AMERICAN KID (CONT'D)
 --I DIDN'T DO SHIT-- WHY? I-- I--
 WHY THEY DO THAT? I DIDN'T DO
 NUTHIN' --

Paul Kersey bends down over him, steady, reassuring.

PAUL KERSEY
 Jamal, I need you calm down now. Ok
 son? I need you nice and *calm*.

But Jamal is inconsolable, babbling breathless and pulling at his surgical restraints. His heart rate and respiration race.

JAMAL (AFRICAN-AMERICAN KID)
 THEY JUST STARTED STABBING ME
 N' SHIT! I DIDN'T DO NUTHIN' --!! IS
 IT BAD? IS IT BAD? M'GOING T'DIE!?!

Intravenous drugs are prepped and administered. Transfusion bags are strung on portable stands and tied into the drips.

PAUL KERSEY
 Nobody dies in here dude. I don't
 let that happen but I need your
 vitals, which is your heart rate
 and your breathing, to slow down so
 we can do our thing and get you
 situated.

JAMAL
 Why I feel like I'm sliding!! Like
 I'm sliding off the-- why's it feel
 like I'm falling!

PAUL KERSEY

That's shock Jamal. You're going into shock. That's why I need you to chill and calm down for me so that doesn't get out of hand. Ok?

Sweat cascades down the kid's face as he clutches the table, distracted by the swarm of activity swirling above, his eyes darting everywhere. Paul tries to hold his focus.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

How old are you Jamal? Jamal how o--

JAMAL

--Seventeen.

PAUL KERSEY

Seventeen? You're a good-looking kid, *big kid*-- y'got a girlfriend?

Jamal shakes his head 'no...'

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Ahh, so you got a *couple* of 'em!

Janine, who is nearby, prepping the anesthesia, grins.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

My daughter Amanda is sixteen.
(matter-of-factly)
Where do you go to school?

Jamal seems overwhelmed, terrified. Paul places himself directly in the kid's eye-line.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Where do you go to school?

A beat. Jamal winces as they insert a shunt into his side.

JAMAL (AFRICAN-AMERICAN KID)

Hillcrest in Inglewood.

Paul doesn't miss a beat.

PAUL KERSEY

So does my daughter!

Jamal's blinks. Blinks again. Head cocked, 'What!?'

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Nah, I'm playing with you, she goes to Archer on the West Side. She's a pain-in-the-ass rich kid.

Janine carefully affixes a respirator mask over Jamal's face.

JANINE RAY

I just want you to breathe now
Jamal. Ok? Slow and steady hon.

PAUL KERSEY

You're gonna take a little nap and
when you wake up, there's gonna be
all these flowers and good food and
your whole family is gonna be here.
(beat)
Cool?

A sluggish nod as Jamal succumbs and slips away under the anesthesia. Kersey dons his scrubs and pulls on his surgical mask, staring down at the partial screwdriver impaled in Jamal's side. He sighs, shakes his head.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Let's get this poor kid patched up.

INT. BREAKROOM - LATER

Paul reads the LA Times, absently sipping on a cold cup of coffee, post-surgery. Janine enters, stretching, yawning, scanning the vending machine selections.

PAUL KERSEY

The coffee's coming out ice cold.

JANINE RAY

They have *no* intention of ever
fixing this machine, do they?

PAUL KERSEY

I think it's an elaborate plot to
piss us off.

JANINE RAY

Well then, it's proceeding
according to plan.
(turning back to Kersey)
Y'know, you were very sweet with
that kid in there.
(with great warmth)
That's a gift.

PAUL KERSEY

What is?

JANINE RAY

Compassion. Being sincere. I worked two other trauma wards before Keck and the attending physicians were like *blocks of ice* by comparison.

Janine turns back to the vending machine, feeds it quarters.

PAUL KERSEY

Well, kid's had a screwdriver plunged into him and he's losing blood by the *pint*, some basic 'kindness' should be *built-in* at that point, no?

JANINE RAY

No.
(beat, punches buttons)
Not from what I've experienced.

The machine deposits a bag of trail mix. She retrieves it.

PAUL KERSEY

Then you my dear have spent far too much of your professional life working with assholes.

JANINE RAY

Amen...
(opening bag of trail mix)
Nice to see that they aren't *all* that way.

She starts out of the breakroom.

PAUL KERSEY

Oh no, I'm an asshole, I'm just less *obvious* about it. Keep an eye on me, you'll see shimmers of it.

Janine, this little head turn, hair toss...nothing overt but flirtatious just the same.

JANINE RAY

I'm *always* keeping an eye on you.

Paul raises his coffee cup in a mock toast as she exits.

INT. SIMI VALLEY HOME - DAY

Backyard BBQ. Buffet. Bucket of beer. Balloons.

A banner: '**HAPPY 21st B-DAY MOMMY...FOR THE FOURTEENTH TIME!**'

A surprise party for TARA KERSEY, Paul's sister-in-law and wife of his brother, FRANK KERSEY is in full swing.

Tara, a lean, striking redhead with a runner's physique, stalks her twin boys, EVAN and SEAN, 5, with an open bottle of sunscreen as they dart through a sprinkler squealing and diving headfirst down a Slip 'N Slide.

As many exhaustive laps as they've done, they're still able to elude capture by their mother and she finally resigns her pursuit.

TARA

Ok, you little freaks want to fry,
don't blame me if you get wrinkles
early in life.

The twins bleat and bay at mom. A garble of barely formed thoughts at *decibel-defying* levels. She waves them off.

TARA (CONT'D)

No, no, go on now, I'm done chasing
you two. Go find your father and
torment him, Mommy wants to enjoy
her wine with aunt Audrey. It's
Mommy's magic juice that makes 24-7
with you two, *tolerable--*

--Evan crashes into her anyway, wet and covered in cut grass.

TARA (CONT'D)

Evan! C'mon 'goose' Mommy needs a
break on her birthday! It's adult
time now baby.

At a nearby picnic table, AMANDA, Paul and Audrey's 16 year old daughter gossips with her cousin Marie. Also 16.

AUDREY

Sweetie, Mandy.
(firm now as she's clearly
being ignored by her kid)
Amanda.

Amanda deadpans her mother with that classic, half-lidded look of adolescent annoyance.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

Would you get a couple of towels
for the twins?

AMANDA
 (with mock disdain)
 Mom, why would I know where the
 towels are?

AUDREY
 Well is that not your cousin
 sitting next to you sweetheart?
 (A beat before maternal
 sarcasm at its finest)
 Might she know? Dare we ask?

Amanda launches off the bench in a huff and hangdogs it
 inside the house. Marie clambers to her feet and follows.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
 (to Tara)
 Oh, it's *all* such a chore, poor
 things.

The women titter as they polish off their Pinot Grigio.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

FRANK KERSEY, Paul's older brother, leans against the grill
 of a newly restored '83 HURST OLDS, securing the wingnut over
 the carburetor cover.

Frank is everything Paul is not. From bearing to behavior: A
 reform school kid who became the scrubbed clean state college
 standout as his brother conquered Stanford Medical school.

Beyond a vague physical resemblance no one would ever confuse
 these two for *relatives* much less siblings. Still, they are
 as close and connected as two brothers could possibly be.

WE ENTER THE SCENE mid-conversation--

FRANK KERSEY
 --then the patrolman, Diaz, he gets
 a little bit closer and the guy
 says. '*Hey man, I don't give a
 shit, I've got full blown HIV, I
 don't care about dying, I swear,
 you guys keep coming toward me, I'm
 gonna jump...*'

Paul snickers, nursing a Bud Light.

PAUL KERSEY
 But wait, what are you even *doing*
 up there?

FRANK KERSEY

Sergeants's bars boyo. Promotion. I ride around doing field checks, supervising crime scenes. Anyway, the other kid, Diaz's partner, I can't remember his name, he can't handle heights, has uh, um-- what is it, *agoraphobia*--?

PAUL KERSEY

--Acrophobia. How does he graduate the academy and *not* disclose that.

FRANK KERSEY

No idea. So. This asshole is gonna jump and I decide to state the obvious, which is '*Pal, it's not even 20 feet to the ground. If you jump, you ain't gonna die.*'

Paul blurts out a laugh and beer *erupts* from his nose. Frank is laughing now as well. Paul waves his hands frantically--

PAUL KERSEY

--wait, wait, the kid, the other cop, he couldn't go up on a 20 foot roof!?

FRANK KERSEY

You ruining the punchline man. So this putz, the HIV guy, he's like '*Try me, take a step closer, see what happens*' and he's all tough about the whole thing and I can't resist, so I take another step and this fucking idiot jumps...

A gale of laughter cripples Paul as he fumbles his beer, catching it before it spills.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

...lands, *shatters both* legs. He's rolling around on the ground crying and screaming and I haven't laughed *that* hard in, I can't even *tell* you how long.

PAUL KERSEY

Jesus Christ, that's *classic*!

Frank slams the car's hood closed with a big smile.

FRANK KERSEY
 Alright Andretti, you ready?
 (a hopeful beat)
Let's turn it over.

Paul opens the driver's side door and slides in behind the wheel. He looks up at Frank. A perfectly timed beat and a grin just before he cranks the ignition over and that gorgeous Olds V-8 rumbles to life.

This chugging, throaty growl that's given gearheads everywhere proof that God resides in the Motor City.

Paul's face furrows with sheer satisfaction as he mashes the pedal to the floor, listening to the engine ROAR.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)
 (over the engine noise)
 You sure you want *your* daughter and
my niece rolling around in this?
 Why don't you get her a Jetta or a
 little VW cabriolet. A chick car.

PAUL KERSEY
 (letting off the gas)
 'Cuz she loves old cars, like her
 old man.

FRANK KERSEY
 Does Audrey approve?

PAUL KERSEY
 What do you think? She hated my '67
 Shelby Fastback, which is, c'mon--

FRANK KERSEY
 --oh man, *that car*. That was a
 sweet ass ride.

Paul cuts the engine, retrieving his beer from the console.

PAUL KERSEY
 Y'think I should give it to her
 tonight?

FRANK KERSEY
 Don't spoil the surprise! When's
 her birthday? Day after tomorrow?

Paul nods. Drains his Bud.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)
 Yeah, wait till then. Does she have
 any idea?

PAUL KERSEY

She thinks she's getting a I-pad.

Paul clambers out of the car and wanders over to the fridge, digging out two bottles of beer and tossing one to Frank.

FRANK KERSEY

You're a good dad. This is about a million times more than the old man would've done for either one of us.

PAUL KERSEY

But here we are, drinking like fish on a Saturday afternoon, throwing 'em back like he used to--

FRANK KERSEY

--difference being, our cut-off is three or four, not thirty or forty and chased with a bottle of Jamey.

(old bile bubbling up)

I wish I would've blasted him. Just once. Might be shitty to say this now but there was a night I was with him, he was in hospice, tubes up his nose, those chemo-scabs and he said something really nasty to me about mom and I was, literally--

(indicates with fingers)

--this close to just *plowing him*. Punching him right in the mouth.

PAUL KERSEY

That would've accomplished what?

FRANK KERSEY

Well it would've knocked him out, one, which would have felt good, two.

PAUL KERSEY

We had *vastly* different relationships with him.

FRANK KERSEY

Yeah, you chose to indulge and disguise his bullshit and abuse and I didn't.

PAUL KERSEY

He was a drunk. He had a disease.

FRANK KERSEY

He was a horribly violent asshole who never got the *Hammer-Of-God* beating that he had coming to him.

PAUL KERSEY

You still want to fist-fight our dead father?

FRANK KERSEY

(mock hopeful)

Could you arrange that?

PAUL KERSEY

Why lug that shit around Frank? What good does it do you?

FRANK KERSEY

Keeps me sharp. Gives me the third eye.

PAUL KERSEY

Good. Then be grateful.

(beat)

Maybe it's why you became a cop. Hm? Get to beat up the bad guys? Do right by those wronged?

(beat)

Avenge a childhood spent getting the shit slapped out of you by a grown man, twice your size...

Paul's voice clenches suddenly, like he's let too much off the spool and wants to reel it back in. Then:

FRANK KERSEY

Is that the last time you were hit?

Paul stops mid-sip. He wipes his mouth on his wrist. A beat.

PAUL KERSEY

What?

FRANK KERSEY

With dad.

(beat)

Was that the last time anyone struck you?

Paul seems embarrassed but tries to bluff past with...

PAUL KERSEY

...what do you mean, '*struck*'?

FRANK KERSEY

What does it sound like I mean?

Frank leans back against the Olds. Beer pressed to his chest. He doesn't seem to be prodding or probing but when Paul's silence stretches to the point of being staid--

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

--have you been in any kind of physical altercation, since we were kids?

PAUL KERSEY

Of course.

FRANK KERSEY

Name one.

Paul shrugs. Stalls. His gaze plays over the garage floor. Finally, with this odd, harried tone, he says--

PAUL KERSEY

--I don't know, little bullshit stuff here and there! High school.

(trying to redirect)

I wasn't the street fighter Frank, that was you.

(off Frank's non-reply)

You remember all of your fights?

FRANK KERSEY

No but that's because they number in *the hundreds*. The math shouldn't be that complicated for you.

(beat)

Was our childhood, the last time you were in a physical altercati--

PAUL KERSEY

--this is dumb man...

(polishing off his beer)

...and I don't get the point.

Paul tosses the empty bottle into a recycling bin.

FRANK KERSEY

The point is, we responded to our upbringing, the *trauma* of what that was, in very different ways. Our professions are reflections of that, no?

PAUL KERSEY

Frank, listen I love you to death
but nothing is worse, or more
brutally boring, than beer drinkers
pontificating and laying bare their
souls, so can we please stop.

Paul raises his bottle up to toast. Part capitulation, part coping mechanism. The subject of their childhood is rocky ground to travel over. Frank clinks the bottles together if only for his younger brother's benefit.

FRANK KERSEY

Here's to our dead father, long may
he rot-- *c'mon! I'm kidding!*

Paul cracks up laughing as Frank wraps an arm around him.

EXT. SIMI VALLEY HOME - LATER

Paul sits down behind Audrey, looping his arms around her and nuzzling her neck, inhaling, sighing, relieved somehow.

AUDREY

Is the monstrosity road ready?

PAUL KERSEY

Babe, it's an '83 Hurst Olds
anniversary edition.

AUDREY

That doesn't have air-bags. Anti-
lock brakes--

PAUL KERSEY

--You mean like the cars we grew up
driving?

AUDREY

If we can do better for our kids.

PAUL KERSEY

She's gonna be fine. It's L.A. Are
we really worried about a fender
bender in the land of the Prius.
(like this will comfort)
Guess who wins that one?
(beat)
And she loves that car, trust me.

AUDREY

God knows why.

PAUL KERSEY

She has her mother's good looks,
intelligence, wit, common sense and
kindness--

Audrey smirks back at him.

AUDREY

--Then what's left?

PAUL KERSEY

Her father's awesomeness.

Audrey titters as Paul buries his face in her neck and burrows, bringing her to hysterics.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Amanda Kersey steals the opposing team's inbound pass and rockets up the wing like a gazelle. Paul leaps to his feet.

KERSEY

There she goes! There she goes!
(yelling)
GO MANDY! GO! CROSS BABY! CROSS IT!

Amanda launches a cross from the corner but the opposing keeper is able to knock the ball down and send it up the other way. Paul sags back down to his seat.

AUDREY

She's gassed. They don't have enough subs.

KERSEY

(paternally indignant)
What's with this other team!? It's like they cloned the same blonde, kid and bred an entire battalion of 'em! And are they all named Brianna or Brittany or Brie!? *Jesus.*

A gym-muscled dope with the douchebag's de riguer wraparound shades, berates one of the opposing team's pubescent blonde zombies. This is MMA DAD.

MMA DAD

*--Bury their little asses Brianne!
Don't you let up! All 60 minutes!
You go hard for 60! YOU GO HARD!*

Paul eyeballs this clown: Gold's Gym tank. Jet-Ski tan. The previous night's Vodka binge leeching up through his pores.

The polite gathering of PARENTS titter nervously, trying to the ignore his increasingly profane outbursts. He persists.

MMA DAD (CONT'D)
Get back on the ball. Shit! MOVE!

He smashes the chain-link fence with his fists.

MMA DAD (CONT'D)
BRIANNE! MOVE YOUR ASS!

Audrey looks imploringly at Paul. He nods quiet. Then--

PAUL KERSEY
--Hey pal.

MMA DAD turns, seething, sheathed in hangover sweat. These bloodshot, bovine-like eyes that are bereft of anything resembling intelligence, compassion or sensitivity...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
(indicates small children)
We've got kids here.

MMA DAD'S dulled gaze darts around. No one will look him directly in the eye.

MMA DAD
I'm not talking to you bro.

PAUL KERSEY
No, I'm talking to you. Be respectful.

MMA DAD leers back at Paul, half-turned, a physical taunt in the form of flexed biceps, embossed with fratboy tribal ink. His true punk pedigree surfaces like a shark fin.

MMA DAD
I wouldn't say anything else to me.

PAUL KERSEY
I won't, I just asked you t--

--And with no further provocation, MMA DAD lunges toward the bleachers and vaults up the steps so aggressively quick and purposeful, that *gasps* escape more than one bystander in anticipation of something horrible about to happen.

Paul gazes up into this violent, vein-bulged visage BOOMING down at him, a VOICE like a bull-horn--

MMA DAD
 --TOLD YOU NOT TO SAY ANYTHING ELSE
 TO ME MOTHERFUCKER!

Paul's fear saturates, short-circuiting physical and mental fluency. His balls shrink and flee. His throat constricts despite a queasy surge tunnelling up it.

His hands tremble. His mouth twitches. He feels like a fool for feeling faint...

...he wonders if his wife sees any of this.

MMA DAD, like the most brutal of bullies, senses fear and feeds on the scent. He balls his fists. Loom/Lords over.

Paul's physical space is completely violated and occupied. He tries to placate. An appeal that sounds like pleading.

PAUL KERSEY
 (strained, weak)
We have kids here. Please.

Audrey. Ten times more forceful than her husband.

AUDREY KERSEY
 Back off!

MMA DAD has no qualms about eye-fucking her in front of her feckless husband and issuing a salacious little sneer and theatrical flex just for her.

He glowers back over at Paul. Leans in. The waft of recently belched Vodka brings the following admonishment..

MMA DAD
 ...I kick your faggot ass in front
 of your wife, there's no living
 that down dude...

Paul. Incapacitated. Impotent and powerless. The gut-wreching reality of being considered less than a man. He blinks up, then blurts out in this mewling voice--

PAUL KERSEY KERSEY
 --I don't want to fight with you.

Kersey's warbling delivery draws MMA DAD's biggest grin: Small, Skoal-stained teeth yellowed like curdled custard.

MMA DAD
 (sneering)
 Shut the fuck up.

He stands and assumes this swaggered thrust that brings his pelvis far too close to Kersey's face, like a convict asserting dominance over a newly acquired cellmate.

Audrey fumbles open her purse, foraging for her cellphone.

AUDREY KERSEY

You back off now or I'm going to call the police.

The gathered parents, bolstered by her show of bravery, begin chastising MMA DAD until he backpedals down the steps, scowl fixed on Kersey before abruptly stalking off and shooting Akimbo middle-fingers over his shoulder for all concerned.

Kersey. Still reeling, gazes out at absently, gauges spiked, his blood just beginning to settle.

He feels disconnected from everything all at once.

PAUL KERSEY KERSEY

(mumbles uncertain)

...hell was that...?

Audrey lays her hand on his. Feels the tremors rippling across but doesn't acknowledge them.

Paul sees one of his daughter's teammates whispering to her, pointing at him from across the field.

Amanda squints in his direction, puzzled, then looks back at her teammate as if she'd made some mistake. The teammate shakes her head emphatically.

Amanda stares across the field at her father, crestfallen...

INT. CAR - LATER

Stifled silence hangs like a summer storm cloud. An unspoken subtext of *'what if's'* seems to be bouncing back and forth between husband and wife. Finally:

AMANDA KERSEY

What was that guy's problem?

AUDREY KERSEY

I'm sure he has several, ongoing, *clinical*.

AMANDA KERSEY

Did he just freak out on you Dad?

Kersey inhales tight.

PAUL KERSEY
Pretty much, yeah.

AMANDA KERSEY
About what?

PAUL KERSEY
Doesn't matter babe. Guy like that
isn't worth the trouble.

Paul feels for his wife's wavering. For this sense that she's lost some vital, *unrecoverable* form of respect for him...but he feels nothing like that and sighs a silent relief.

AMANDA KERSEY
You should have just nut-shot him.

PAUL KERSEY
I should've *what*?

AMANDA KERSEY
Nut-shot. Punched him right in The
Throne Room.

Audrey cackles. Can't help herself.

PAUL KERSEY
'*Home Room?*'

Audrey and Amanda, in stereo exasperation--

AUDREY AND AMANDA
--Throne Room!

AMANDA KERSEY
God Dad!

PAUL KERSEY
Well who the hell calls it 'throne
room?' How would I know that?

AUDREY KERSEY
Sooooo unhip!

Paul seizes his wife's leg, tickling her in retaliation for the snide comment.

AMANDA KERSEY
Hey, can we have my birthday dinner
somewhere cool, like 'Cut.'

PAUL KERSEY
'Cut'? The steak house?

AMANDA KERSEY

Yeah.

PAUL KERSEY

If it's just us three, sure--

AMANDA KERSEY

--no--

PAUL KERSEY

--then *nooo*, little girl. I'm not springing for sixty dollar steaks for you and Team 'Teen Angst.'

AMANDA KERSEY

It'll just be me, Valentina, Shavonne, Bailey, --

PAUL KERSEY

(like a game-show buzzer)
--AAAAAAAANNNNNNNNKKKKK-- *wrong!* Not at 'Cut.' Now, 'Chucky Cheese' in the valley? Done. You can invite your whole class.

AMANDA KERSEY

DAD! Chucky Cheese is gross!

PAUL KERSEY

Those animatronic animals are darling! Sure they smell like pizza grease and B.O. but *besides that!*

AMANDA KERSEY

I'm turning sixteen! It's a milestone!

PAUL KERSEY

So are thousand dollar dinner tabs.

AMANDA KERSEY

Baby, if you wanna go to 'Cut' we'll go to 'Cut' your Dad is just being old.

AMANDA KERSEY (CONT'D)

He's *brilliant* at that!

Paul cuts a '*be careful*' look to the rear-view mirror--

PAUL KERSEY

--keep it up smartass. There's a 'Sizzler' right on Western, always empty. Homeless people in the parking lot. \$5.99 Sirloins, yummy!

Amanda busts up laughing, can't help it

AMANDA KERSEY

You are sooo *bizarre!* Why!?

Paul smiles. Things seem to have quelled and gone quietly back to normal.

PAUL KERSEY

Keeps my family entertained.

EXT. HOME - MOMENTS LATER

They pull up. Amanda, already engrossed in a flurry of texting, leaps out.

PAUL KERSEY

Mandy, hey, ho-- *wait a minute!*

AMANDA KERSEY

Dad, I have mid-terms this week and I have to Facetime Patricio--

PAUL KERSEY

--Ok, fine, *two minutes*, I need to talk to you.

Amanda deflates with a big '*for show*' sigh.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Two minutes and you're not in trouble.

She veers into her dad who wraps an arm around her.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

When did this whole thing start?
This impatience streak?

AMANDA KERSEY

You should talk!

PAUL KERSEY

I'm a grown man, I *earned* the right to be impatient, you're a punk kid and should have plenty of time at *all times*.

Paul tickles her, she squeals, caught off guard, tries to squirm free but her father gets her in a mock headlock.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

C'mon.

He drags her toward the garage, winking back at Audrey. She mouths 'Now?' He nods. She rushes after them, fumbling with her camera phone.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Dark until sunlight filters in from an open door and Amanda is greeted by the sight of the '83 Hurst Olds with a red bow atop the hood.

She immediately dissolves into a fit of tears, waving her hands excitedly in front of her face, near-frantic, repeating over and over--

AMANDA KERSEY

--ohmygod, ohmygod, ohmygod!

She spins and launches herself into her father, wrapping her arms around him and nearly knocking him over.

Audrey snaps pictures, her eyes misting up.

PAUL KERSEY

So you like it?

AMANDA KERSEY

I LOVE IT DADDY! I'm shaking, I'm so freaked out right now!

PAUL KERSEY

Better than an I-pad?

AMANDA KERSEY

(squealing anew as she
peers inside the car)
*OHMYGOD! It has the lightning-rod
shifting!*

Paul shrugs back at his wife...*'what did I tell you...'* She nods. Smiling warmly. Wiping tears.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Amanda bounds in ahead of her parents, bouncing on the balls of her feet, a font of exuberance and excitement--

AMANDA KERSEY

--when then?

PAUL KERSEY

Right after dinner I'll take you,
didn't you say you had to study for
mid-terms?

AMANDA KERSEY

I want to show the car to Patty!

PAUL KERSEY

We'll drive over after we eat boo.

AUDREY KERSEY

Get your work done sweetie.

AMANDA KERSEY

Ok. On it.

She dashes upstairs to tackle her studies.

PAUL KERSEY

What do we want to do about dinner?

AUDREY KERSEY

You mean '*what do I want to do
about dinner*'

PAUL KERSEY

Babe, if you want me to cook--

AUDREY KERSEY

(mimicking him)

--*babe if you want me to cook--*

(beat)

That's just so transparently lame.

PAUL KERSEY

You have an incredible touch in the
kitchen and your husband loves your
cooking, *boo-hoo*, poor baby.

He dive-bombs the back of her neck. Kissing her hard. It gets
amorous fast as he runs his hands over her ass. She leans
back into him, grinding on his crotch.

AUDREY KERSEY

Ok, you win. I'll make that chicken
before it goes off.

PAUL KERSEY

(a last kiss and squeeze)

--And I'll read the Sunday Times
down in the den. See? Good
marriages are about teamwork!

She grabs a sink towel and cracks it at him as he flees the kitchen laughing.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS DEN - LATER

Paul reads, eyes heavy, mid-day sun playing across the couch. He folds the paper across his lap and gradually drifts off...

A DREAM

Flophouse hotel. Dingy. Dark. Fluorescent ballasts buzz overhead. Acrylic casings burned yellowed with neglect. The silhouettes of dead moths scattered across inside. Entombed.

He sits on a bed. Soaking wet. Shoeless. Sleeves rolled. Fresh, gaping track-mark scabs pave the crooks of his elbows.

The walls leak like sieves. Sheet rock crumbles away in clumps. Brown-ringed water damage stretches ceiling to floor.

Fluid snakes down in rivulets of something oily.

Paul looks across and finds himself staring back.

On the opposing bed. His mirror image, only naked with a disturbing shock of white hair and cobalt blue eyes.

His doppelganger is completely still. Motionless. Unblinking.

Paul stares.

Moments lapse like milenia. The irregular electrical thrum of the lights is the only sound in the room.

Then, his doppelganger leans forward slowly, as if he were falling and like a reflection, Paul mimics the movement, leaning forward as well...

...and they come to rest, their faces inches apart, this odd twin 'profile'...staring back at one another.

The doppelganger's lips peel back like an alien pod splitting open, exhuming these putrid black teeth right before he abruptly rams the crown of his skull into Paul's face--

--His nose explodes, blood bursting from his shattered septum.

His doppelganger, this clown's mask of frozen gaze and pasted perma-smile, begins smashing him in the face. Brutally bashing him with his fists. Each blow like a felled redwood.

Paul stumbles up. Gags. Blood hydrants from his head. He holds up his hands as another blow lands, then another.

He lunges, reaching, breaking the plane between sleep and consciousness with a shuddering, gasping surge.

INT. DEN - DAY

On his couch, sitting up, the throb of pain still on him from the dream...

...his head pounds as the cobwebs clear, the gauze of slumber slowly lifts...and that's when he notices the droplets of blood hitting the newspaper in his lap.

He reaches up dully, touching his head. *Feeling wetness--*

--then he HEARS someone snicker in the room-- he startles, looks up and is struck by something hard and metal.

He feels teeth crack and loose as he collapses, a piece of shattered molar is in his mouth, he gags, it tumbles down his throat, sharp and dragging--

--WAIT, WHAT-WAIT--

--someone kicks him hard, a steel-toed boot tip bows his ribs as air explodes from his lungs-- another snicker, a hideously cruel CACKLE right behind it--

--I'M, I'M, THIS IS WRON--

--blood smears across his field of vision, flooding his sinuses, the smell of battery acid-- his mind fights for reason, fragmenting, imploding into shock and pain--

--NO-NO-NO-WHAT'S HAPPE--I DI--

--An errant punch strafes his right eyelid, splitting it like ripe fruit, he coughs up a mouthful of blood as a knuckle ring grazes his browline and catches, *tearing--* a sensation like he's being scalped.

--PLEASE-- I DI--

--that boot crashes defiantly back down, destroying two fingers on his left hand.

--N'T DO ANYTHI-- I DON'T--

--that cackle again-- another boot stomp, his wristwatch snaps free-- Paul struggles to his knees, an excruciating searing stab, like a thousand ice-picks impaling his spine--

--MY W--WHERE IS MY WIF--

--someone straddles his back like he's been saddled and begins pummeling him with wild, breathless, giggling glee, the heels of their fists hammering his temples over and over--

--PLEASE STOP, STOP--

--a piercing sonic hiss fills his head, scrambling what remains of his senses-- his right eardrum has been ruptured, he hears blood filling the canal and overflowing--

--stop...stop...stop...plea--

--the base of his skull is struck, a blow that cancels consciousness-- his vision flutter-flickers and burns out black.....

.....

.....VOID.....

.....nothing.....

.....black.....

.....then.....sound.....

.....dulled and muffled...seeping in....

.....

Awake.

Alive.

This terrible squelched frequency, like the futz of a blown speaker, fills my right ear...

...struggle to crack my eyes open, badly swollen slits gummed with blood...everything numb, buzzing...

...I look back up along these horribly bruised arms, hematomas bloom yellow-black...

...boot stomp marks imprinted on my biceps in mottled bluish rings, skin splayed wide from a sharp steel heel, blubber-white muscle exposed...

...heavy-braided boating rope I recognize from my garage is cinched thickly around my wrists and ankles and wrapped around a ceiling stanchion, secured tight as I try to tug b--

--A SCREAM. Audrey. Upstairs.

My head snaps straight up--

--*Ohmygod--Ohmygod--*

--she SCREAMS again, *pleading*, her voice choked with fear--

PAUL KERSEY

--no-no-no-no-no--!

(yelling at ceiling)

HEY!!

--*footfalls* above now. *Skittering* away. Furniture shudders as it shifts--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--**AUDREY!!**

--She's running-- my vision pulses and blurs--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--**CALL THE POLICE!! CALL THE POLICE!!**

--that CACKLE echoes down like a taunt, heavier *footfalls* follow, wood creaks with a man's running weight--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--**STOP! STOP WHOEVER YOU ARE!! PLEASE STOP!!! YOU CAN HAVE THE MONEY! I HAVE MONEY!!**

Haul on the rope restraints-- plant my feet and pull--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--**AUDREY!!! AMANDA--!!**

--the rope constricts and digs, lacerating my wrists, exert every last ounce-- feel my veins rise-- my face bloat red and overheat with effort--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

CAN YOU HEAR ME!!!

--A SCREAM suddenly fills my head-- my daughter's-- over and over until it dries up hoarse--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

AMANDA!

(beat)

**PLEASE WHOEVER YOU ARE!! PLEASE,
TAKE ANYTHING!! DON'T HURT THEM!!
I'M BEGGING YOU!!**

--keep wrenching on my restraints-- the rope sinks deeper into gaping wrist wounds--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

**--PLEASE GOD! PLEASE GOD! DON'T LET
THIS HAPPEN!**

--something heavy topples, lands, dust is loosed from the ceiling above...the wood creaks with weight...

Weeping...pleading...female.

Muted laughter follows...MALE.

Foot scuffs-- something is being dragged--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

**--DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN! DON'T-LET-
THIS-HAPPEN TO ME!!**

The rope digs deep, peeling skin away like a rind, scraping the tendons-- raw white pain rips in hot knife-points-- sobs surge up and spill out--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

I'M BEGGING YOU! I'M BEGGING YOU!

...blood pulses, squeezed from the wounds, flooding up over the rope-- **PULL-PULL-PULL-PULL-**

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--GODDAMN YOU! NO! NO! NO!--

--PULL HARDER--!

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

---FUCKING GET FREE!!!

**--PULL YOUR FUCKING ARMS OUT OF THEIR
SOCKETS YOU WEAK MOTHERFUC--!!**

--feel both wrists dislocate with a hollow pop.

A HOWL expands up my throat, exploding in a desperate rasp--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
HELP US!! HELP ME!!

--these prolonged, agonized SCREAMS from above-- and then they're gone, snatched out of the air like a cord was cut--

..silence.....
.....
.....
.....

The door leading downstairs is opened.

A SHADOW falls across the wall.

Someone is up there. Breathing shallow. Winded.

...please god, let it be her...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
...Audrey?

--that LAUGH. That CACKLE. Then, A VOICE...

VOICE
.....
.....that was fun.

Something metal clatters down the steps and lands--

--A GAS CAN, upended, spilling its contents to the floor.

--A FLOOSH from above--

--FLAMES appear, racing down the steps and engulfing the can.

The wall follows, tendrils of fire lick up the face, devouring the plaster and wood, smoke pours from it--

Feel your head fade and go light.

...don't fight it...don't fight...

Flame unfurls fast across the ceiling above, combusting from the chemicals, *feeding*.

Feel your vision pinhole and go gray at the edges.

...you know they're dead...

Pitch black smoke encircles you like a shroud. Suffocating.

...you let them die...

Feel the heat singe and burn as the flames surround you.

...your girls are gone...

Blisters rise and bubble and burst from your exposed flesh.

...they're gone...

Smoke scorches your lungs. Burning.

...and you couldn't protect them...

Another fire ignites now...rising from within.

...they died terrified...

Anger.

...they died screaming...

Fury.

...they died in vain...

Rage.

...they died like you're about to...

NO...Feel nothing now.

Not the flames spreading over you.

...don't pass out...

Not the skin hanging in melted strands from your arms.

...concentrate...

Not the buttons on your shirt being branded into your chest.

...stare at those rope restraints, blackening, fraying...

Not the embers showering you from above as the roof shifts and groans.

...pull...

Not the smoldering clumps of hair sluicing off your skull--

--*the ropes give*--

--**CRAWL NOW**--

--vision smeared-- breathing soot--

--you're blacking out--

--get to...t-e do-r-- it's ac-oss th- r--m.

--you're shutting down--

--han- ov-r h-nd acros- the fl--

--don't die now--

--t-- door is r--ght ther--

--reach for the knob, turn--

BLACK.....shimmers.....
blood.....
burning.....
faces.....
bludgeoned.....
audrey.....
 amanda.....fists.....
lifeless..... >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

SOUND.....

>> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

A HEARTBEAT MONITOR.....

>> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

My heartbeat >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >> >>

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Bandages. Both arms in casts. Trussed up in traction rigs.

...what happened..?

Senses sedative-numbed. Heavy meds to moderate my mood.

...did I dream it...?

Swelling squeezes my vision to a blurred slice.

...why am I here then...in this hospital...?

I can smell my brother's colonge.

...I didn't dream it...they're dead.

Pain plunges in and gouges me like something serrated and barbed.

...everything you ever loved on this earth...

A SOUND RISES that I don't recognize, shrill and helpless.

...you're alone...

This stillborn scream

...all alone...

It's coming from me.

Suffering that feels like my soul being slashed in half.

Torment I *cannot* withstand.

Frank hovers over of me now. Tears spilling. Bucking sobs. He places his hand on my head, mouthing something.

...I can't hear you...

A HOWL rips free of me, like a wild animal. A tidal rush of tears flow down my face. Parched lips I can barely part--

--I push my brother's name past them--

PAUL KERSEY

--*frank*--

--he breaks down and buries his head in my bandages, blubbering, his words fumbling forth like a confession--

FRANK KERSEY

--***they're gone Paul...the girls are gone...***

I close my eyes and wish for the world's end.

BLACK OUT

.....DAYS
PASS.....
.....
.....
.....WEEKS.....

The sky dissolves. Light and dark.

Minutes melt into hours, days, weeks.

No sense of time passing. Drugged sleep. Deep and black.

Awaken suddenly with a shudder, confused, alarmed--

PAUL KERSEY
(sputtering)
--Audrey--

--My wife's face flitters across the dark ceiling above me...
...drifts and fades...
...fades and drifts...*and disappears completely.*

CUT TO BLACK

FADE UP ON:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - UNKNOWN

Dope pumped. Drifting in and out. Languid. Barely lucid.

Janine is there. Ellipses of her. Feel her soft hands for only a second...

...the drugs drag me through....dark, then light again.

NT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

My eyes snap open. Room empty. A light flare trails as I gape around, vitreous floaters blot my vision.

The meds still manage my state. Keep me semi-lucid.

...*thank God...*

My body feels waterlogged, loose insides slosh around.

Find the clock. **10:33pm**. Flowers everywhere. Get well cards.

My head pounds. Squeeze past the pain.

Look. Bandages thinned. Swelling down.

Arms and legs removed from the traction rigs.

Everything aches...like I haven't moved a muscle in years.

Broken bones slow to reset.

Muscles at the edge of atrophy.

Bedsore just beginning to fester and spread.

...*get up...*

Swing my legs around. They feel wooden. Unnatural.

Feet to the floor. Let the weight settle on one...then the other.

...stand...

Woozy. A wave of nausea rushes in like a flash flood.

The world tilts. Grip the bed's hand-rail for balance.

...get to a mirror...

Feet pad in a slow, painful stagger to the bathroom.

Dark inside. Grope the wall for the light-switch.

Flip it.

The fluorescents cycle on, this irregular electrical futz and buzz as the filaments ignite, crackling to life...

...and illuminate your likeness for the first time in months.

A face you don't recognize...A man you don't know.

Gaunt. Ghoulish. Pitch black pupils glowering back.

The sheen of anti-burn gel over denuded skin, falling away in charred flakes as you crane your neck, examining...

...who the FUCK are you...?

Bring a splinted hand slowly up to the mirror like what you're seeing is an optical illusion

*...that can't be **you** staring back...*

Touch your face in disbelief. Run your fingers over its surface:

The cold congealing of stitches.

...look what they did to you...

The burst capillaries spidering from either side of your nose. The stippling of gashes and abrasions everywhere.

...and they laughed...

The butterfly sutures holding your brow-line in place.

...they laughed while they tortured and terrorized...

The milky red nebula of broken blood vessels in either eye.

...and killed your entire family...

Pull your hospital gown up. A hemostatic dressing, partially bled-through, covers your lower abdomen.

...and you didn't do anything...

Remove your hospital cap. Head shaved from surgery. Touch it.

...you weren't strong enough...

Rough silvery black stubble, crisscrossed with a lattice of catgut and subcuticular stitching.

...you weren't strong enough to stop them...

This sudden purge. Sobs overtake me before I feel them coming...crying so hard it feels like wretching.

The tears wash down my face. Collect in my stitches. Evaporate into my stubble...

...the sobbing slowly subsides.

Stand there. Nearly motionless. Surveying your face.

Reach back from the wall switch now.

Flip it off.

The room goes black.

...stare into that mirror...

Your silhouette...dark and still...stares back.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAYS LATER

Frank sits close. He's whispering. Two LAPD DETECTIVES crowd the doorway to my room. Their heads bowed. Silent. Somber.

FRANK KERSEY

...if you don't want to. It's up to you. I don't want to push this right now, if you--

PAUL

--no...

This razored-rasp addles my voice now.

PAUL KERSEY
...I want to talk.

Frank pats my clasped hands. The splints have been removed. Permanent scars, fibrous and rough, cover my knuckles.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
 Mr. Kersey, I'm Detective Garcia--
 (indicating other man)
 --and this is Detective Raines.
 Thanks for seeing us.

FRANK KERSEY
 Paul, these men are with RHD,
 'Homicide Special' and they're the
 best investigators in the city.

Raines forages his coat pocket, producing a notepad and pen.

DETECTIVE RAINES
 Mr. Kersey, before we begin this
 interview, you should know and take
 whatever comfort you can, from the
 fact that we will apprehend and
punish the men responsible.

Nod your appreciation, even as a heat rises and radiates
 within like it's going to burn a *hole* right through you.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
 We have no greater priority as
 professionals, than to see them
 locked away for life, or put to
 death.

Tears fill Frank's eyes and he's quickly overcome by emotion,
 turning away to compose himself.

...reach out and take his hand...

He turns back, nodding down at you, embarrassed, ashamed. He
 wants to be a rock for you right now but he can't.

Garcia presses ahead without further prompt.

DETECTIVE GARCIA (CONT'D)
 Can you recall the events of that
 day, in any kind of detail?

DETECTIVE RAINES
 And nothing is too small Mr.
 Kersey, every bit is helpful, so if
 it occurs to you--

DETECTIVE GARCIA
 --just say it. We'll sort out the
 chronology.

Feel the hairs on your arm bristle. Your fists flex.

...relive it...

PAUL KERSEY
 ...we...we came home, from my
 daughter's game, I gave-- showed
 her, her gift...

Tears burn out before they can form, ignited by this roiling
 down deep inside, rising swiftly...hardening into hate.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 ...her birthday was--

...but you need this...this nothingness...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 --was the next day. We went inside,
 into the house. I went downstairs
 to read. I woke up...

...you need it to avenge this...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 ...and they were on me. Beating me.

...that laugh...that cackle...

DETECTIVE GARCIA
 How many assailants. If you had to
 guess?

PAUL KERSEY
 Two.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
 Two of them, for sure?

Nod. They note this in their notepads.

DETECTIVE RAINES
 Could you describe either one?

PAUL KERSEY

No.

DETECTIVE RAINES

White? Black? Hispanic?

PAUL KERSEY

White.

Another notation.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

What about their height? Build?

PAUL KERSEY

No.

DETECTIVE RAINES

The type of clothing they were wearing--?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

--tattoos, jewelry, do you remember any rings or wristwatches--?

PAUL KERSEY

No.

DETECTIVE RAINE

Did they have an accent, a lisp? Something about the way they spoke?

PAUL KERSEY

No.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Anything else you might recall?

Shake your head 'no'...*then tell them a lie.*

PAUL KERSEY

I lost consciousness. When I woke up. Everything was on fire. I don't remember anything else.

Raines and Garcia scribble notes. A strained silence slowly suffuses the room.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

...do you have any suspects?

Raines stops writing. Garcia pockets his pen.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Not yet.

DETECTIVE RAINES

We're proceeding with our investigation under the theory that this was a random home invasion.

PAUL KERSEY

Random?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Crime of opportunity.

DETECTIVE RAINES

There was a similar incident in Los Feliz late last year. Two intruders followed a family home, forced their way in...

Raines' voice tapers off behind horrors he'd rather not verbalize.

...ask him anyway...

PAUL KERSEY

...survivors?

Garcia. A curt head shake 'no'--

FRANK KERSEY

--ok guys. Let me have some time alone with my brother, huh? I'll do a follow-up, get you whatever else you might need.

Raines and Garcia nod their acknowledgment, pocketing their notepads as each of them produce a business card.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Our cellphones are right there on the front, call anytime. If you can't get ahold of us--

(nods to Frank)

--your brother can have us paged. We'll get back to you right away.

Extend your hand. Shake theirs.

PAUL KERSEY

I appreciate everything you're doing.

Both issue tepid handshakes to avoid doing harm to still healing bones. They depart. Frank locks the door behind them.

He returns to your beside, sits and after a moment, takes ahold of your hand in his...saying nothing...staring off.

You close your eyes and lean your head back...

...the quiet, dulcet sounds of your brother's breathing reminds you of being a boy and listening to him fall asleep, long before you were able to...

FADE OUT:

SUPER: ONE WEEK LATER

FADE UP ON:

INT. FRANK KERSEY'S HOME - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Tara opens the door for me. I step inside. I've slept here twice before...with Audrey. Too much to drink after a dinner party.

...we laughed till we passed out...

Tara is saying something, pointing to the bed. A box sits atop it. I recognize my handwriting on the side. It's from our storage unit in Culver City.

Pry it open. Old clothes inside. Winter wear: A peat coat, a knit cap, a hooded sweatshirt, work boots.

...I haven't seen this stuff in years...

PAUL KERSEY

There's nothing left is there?

Tara hears my question but pretends she doesn't.

TARA

Hmm?

PAUL KERSEY

From the fire. My house.

(beat)

There's nothing left.

Then, from behind me--

MARIE

--Uncle Paul?

I turn. My niece Marie. Red-eyed. She's been crying.

PAUL KERSEY
Hi sweetheart.

I extend my arms for her, she walks into my embrace.

MARIE
(whispering)
I don't want to hug you too hard.

PAUL KERSEY
(whispering back)
You can't hug me too hard honey.

Kiss her forehead, she steps back, wiping her eyes, holding something out for me.

MARIE
Mandy left her I-Pod over here. I
thought you might want to have it.

Take it from her. Hoping to feel your kid for even a *second*.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I don't think it's charged but I
can, if you want, I can--

--Marie starts to cry. Pull her in. Hold her. This soft, muffled, tear-soaked voice...

MARIE (CONT'D)
...I miss her so much...

Catch our reflection in the mirror...*it looks like I'm holding my own daughter.*

PAUL KERSEY
I know you do baby...I do too.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Black everywhere. Suits. Dresses. Men. Women.

Indistinguishable.

A Priest prattles on over a pair of closed coffins.

Mourners I don't remember or recognize.

Faces I've forgotten or forsaken.

Strangers stealing looks.

Frank sits next to me. Tara on the other side.

My hands feel dead inside theirs.

Standing now. Numb. People embrace me. Smells overpower. Sickening. Perfume. Cologne. My head begins to throb.

Too many people now. Crowding. Smothering. I try to move.

They surge forward, sudden and abrupt like a convulsion.

A panic. This sense that I'm being *swallowed*.

Red droplets fall, splatter my face. Look up.

My doppelganger gapes down. Suspended in mid-air above me.

Blood beads off black, bared teeth.

He vomits down a horrible torrent of red.

Both coffins burst into flames.

My wife and daughter explode out SCREAMING, engulfed--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

--Head under a cold tap. Let the water run and rinse the nightmare off me.

Stand up from the sink. Catch my reflection in the window.

A rebuilt face. Grim. Grave. *Galvanized* somehow.

My soft jawline is gone. Replaced by the hollows of hard right angles.

Striations of scar tissue that read like a lifetime of combat

Shock ward eyes. A thousand yard stare that I'll never shake.

Lean your head back. The light from above makes your shorn skull an almost *phosphorous white*.

The color of your eyes changes, *shifts*...notice a child's rainbow prism, hung up over the window sill. The refracted light-play in the glass makes your eyes appear blue.

Fix your gaze into that glass...

...and watch as your reflection grins back.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Standing at the stern. Balance shifting with the swells. Frank and his family are arrayed behind me. Heads bowed.

I lift the urn containing my wife's ashes and cast them out onto the sea breeze. They hover is a swirling mote, then drift down into the tumbling surf.

PAUL KERSEY

...there is no one I ever loved as magnificently as I loved you my sweet...and that love will be forever without end.

Amanda's urn now...last time I allow myself to shed tears.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

...baby girl...you were my heart's content...I couldn't have been more proud or honored to have you as my daughter...and I love you more than life...safe journey...

The ashes arc away beautifully, whirling and dancing in the wind as they scatter across the sea.

Feel what remains of my family approach from behind.

Turn and embrace them tightly. They weep...I don't.

INT. FRANK KERSEY'S HOME - DEN - NIGHT

House still. Everyone asleep. Walk in. Flip the lamp on. A stack of papers near the fireplace. Sort through them. Looking for something. Beneath more recent editions of the L.A. TIMES. The followed headline hits you.

'Hancock Park Physician Assaulted, Family Slain.'

Flip through the back editions as the story; the murder of your family goes from headline to back page as the days and weeks elapse. Toss the stack into the empty fireplace. Turn the gas on the mantle. Light a match...watch the stack roast.

Framed photos of Frank and our family adorn the wall behind his desk, alongside LAPD commendations. A decanter of Scotch sits on a sideboard. Pour a tumbler to the top of the glass. Gulp it back as you examine one photograph in particular

Audrey and Amanda on either side of me, kissing my face...

Your gaze travels across the room to a gun safe. Approach it. It's locked. Return to your brother's desk, ease open the top drawer, sift around, rummage through...find the key.

Unlock the gun safe. Pull the weighted steel door open...

...The FIREARMS inside are arranged with great care. Reach out. Remove a SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL from Frank's trussed up shoulder-holster. It sits flat in your hand.

Study it. Feel its heft and weight. Assess its power.

Light refracts off the weapon, revealing the manufacturer's name...**SIG-SAUER**.

Look down the iron sight. Your index finger moves along the barrel. Your thumb flicks the slide release repeatedly.

The grip is embossed with the marking **P229**.

A small, circular, metal-grooved button sits to the left of this marking. Press it. The magazine suddenly slides out-- You catch it before it falls and hits the floor.

Gleaming, brass-jacketed rounds are glimpsed inside the magazine. You reinsert it into the stock, pushing it up until it resets with a pleasing metallic *snap*...You stare.

Something suddenly prompts you to pull the pistol's slide back. It locks...*you look*...chambered inside the weapon's breach is one of the brass-jacketed rounds.

Your thumb returns to the slide release. You flick it *down*. The slide ratchets forward. The hammer cocks back. The pistol is loaded and ready to be fi--

FRANK KERSEY

--Paul.

Whip around-- Frank is standing there in his robe.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

...would you put that down please?

Look back down at the gun. This red-handed guilt.

PAUL KERSEY

...first time I've ever held one.

FRANK KERSEY

Which is why I'm asking you to please put it down, on my desk, with the barrel facing away.

PAUL KERSEY

Relax.

Read his expression: Pity camouflaged as 'concern.'

FRANK KERSEY

That won't be a problem--
 (like a lecture)
 --when you put that down. On my
 desk. With the barrel facing away.

Seethe at Frank's unspoken suggestion of 'suicide.'

PAUL KERSEY

You can't be thinking what I think
 you're thinking, 'cuz that would,
 fucking *infuriate* me Frank.

FRANK KERSEY

Paul, you have a loaded firearm
 and *no experience* handling one.

PAUL KERSEY

Tell me you don't believe that I
 would *take my own life*--

FRANK KERSEY

--Paul--

PAUL KERSEY

--Tell me. It's important.

FRANK KERSEY

I don't believe you would take your
 own life but I also don't believe
 that you holding a handgun right
 now, does *anyone*, any goddamn good.

Set it down. Step away. Frank walks over, picks up the gun,
 jacks the slide and pops the chambered round free before
 returning it to his holster inside the safe.

INT. DEN - LATER

Frank and I sit in silence. Two glasses of Scotch between us.

PAUL KERSEY

...I wasn't strong enough to stop
 them.

FRANK KERSEY

Don't let your mind linger there
 and pick over that shit Paul--

PAUL KERSEY

--I let...*strangers*...these
animals, take my girls away.

FRANK KERSEY

You did no such thing.
(as though he's trying to
convince *himself*)
You did no such thing.

PAUL KERSEY

Weak.
(like something spit out)
...fucking *weak*.
(beat)
I've known I was a coward for a
long time...just able to bluff by.

Frank looks up at me-- shocked by what I've just revealed or surprised that it's taken me this long to realize.

FRANK KERSEY

Don't say that. Paul, it's
pointless to-- what could you have
done? You were ambushed. You were
attacked in your sleep--

PAUL KERSEY

--they never called for me.

FRANK KERSEY

...what?

PAUL KERSEY

Audrey. Amanda.
(beat)
It's like they knew...they *knew* I'd
be useless, so they never called
out for me. Not once.

Frank flashes the slightest flicker of suspicion. The cop in him hard-wired to doubt and distrust everyone at all times.

FRANK KERSEY

How would you know that though?
You blacked out--

--*shit*, you slipped up-- Nod your confirmation fast. Keep your story intact and mollify him.

Frank seems satisfied as he leans forward purposefully, determined to make his point.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

We're gonna get these guys Paul.
Paul, we will capture these pieces
a'shit, I swear to you...as your
brother and someone who loves you
dearly and deeply, there aren't
enough miles for them to run, or a
hole *deep* enough for them to hide
in. I promise.

PAUL KERSEY

What have they found so far? Those
detectives? Are there leads?

FRANK KERSEY

Let 'em work the case. Those guys
are doorkickers. Something will
shake but patience, unfortunately,
is what you need in surplus. This
is gonna be a really frustrating
time for you and it's gonna piss
you off because things won't move
like you think they should.

PAUL KERSEY

So what do I do now?

Frank sips scotch, trying to sort out some words of advice.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

What do I do Frank?

FRANK KERSEY

You stay here with us. You get
healthy. Then you go back to work
when you're ready.

PAUL KERSEY

So I just stand still--

FRANK KERSEY

--that's not what I said--

PAUL KERSEY

--stand down--

FRANK KERSEY

--Paul. *That is not what I said.*

PAUL KERSEY

That's *exactly* what you're saying
Frank.

(pause, flatly)

I want to learn to shoot.

Frank's head sinks into his hands with a sigh--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
--you said I didn't know how to
handle a gun and you're right. I
want to learn how.

FRANK KERSEY
Then take a training course.

PAUL KERSEY
Like the one you teach every week?

FRANK KERSEY
That's for cops.

PAUL KERSEY
And that's the training I want.

FRANK KERSEY
Why?

PAUL KERSEY
I can't sleep. I *don't* sleep. I'm
exhausted and I'm scared.

FRANK KERSEY
Then the last thing, you should be
messing around with right now is a
gun. Jesus, you see what those
things do to people every day Paul!
Somebody shows up on your table,
shot to shit--

PAUL KERSEY
--I'm asking you for this Frank. To
help me. To give me some peace of
mind. I could've gone out and
bought one and figured it out on my
own but I don't want to do that.
(beat)
...I'm never gonna feel that
fucking powerless again Frank...
(beat)
...*please*.

Frank considers this, takes a sip of Scotch and stares off.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FIRING RANGE - DAY

The gun shudders and kicks in my hand as I FIRE. The rounds go wide of my ringed target. I pull off my ear protection.

FRANK KERSEY

Don't lock your arms out, leave a little give in the elbows, let's the recoil absorb up through your arms and not your shoulders, which throws your aim off.

(beat)

Ok. Gun down.

I set it down. Frank takes up his pistol, aims downrange and burns a full mag before reloading lightning fast, spent clip out, fresh clip in-- the slide racks forward to ready-fire.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

That's a combat reload, my eyes never leave the target and all the weapons manipulation--

(indicates with his hands)

--is right in here, in this triangle, so I'm not looking down and losing the target for even a second.

(beat)

We don't need to get into that though.

The perforated targets cycle forward on the conveyor. Frank swaps them out for silhouettes.

PAUL KERSEY

Why not?

FRANK KERSEY

Let's just get you shooting straight.

(points to a specific gun)

Try that. That's an H&K 9mm USP. I like this gun. It's got very little kick, smooth and light and it sits really nicely in your hand.

(beat)

Ok. Load.

Gun pointed down. Finger on the trigger-guard. Slide a full clip in. Pull the action back to hammer-lock. The silhouettes travel down the conveyor as Frank makes small adjustments to my stance.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

Don't square your body when you shoot, it's a bad habit. You want to be more sideways--

(Frank demonstrates)

--like this.

The silhouette settles about sixty feet away from me.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

Ok. Safety off. Get yourself lined up to target.

(adjusts the gun down)

Lower. Center mass is best. Aim for the middle, chest and gut. Forget the head.

(beat)

That weapon is a little over a pound and a half in weight so it won't bite.

Pull. The sharp crack of the gun's report and recoil ripple through me as I put a round right through the silhouette target's sternum.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

Nice.

(beat)

In the practiced hand, a gun is a *precision* instrument Paul. Just like a scalpel. You know how to cut with that...

(beat, aiming downrange)

...you'll learn how to cut with this.

Frank draws down and FIRES his gun, putting three more holes in a ring right around mine.

INT. FIRING RANGE LOBBY - DAY

Frank confers with the MAN at the counter. I see a familiar face laughing with a group of off-duty cops and wander over.

PAUL KERSEY

...Detective Raines?

Raines turns, still chuckling from whatever comical exchange just took place between he and his fellow cops. His expression doesn't register *any* familiarity with me at all.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Yeah?

PAUL KERSEY

Paul Kersey.

Extend your hand and *to his horror*, he realizes--

DETECTIVE RAINES

--Oh Christ, *Mr. Kersey!* I'm sorry.
I didn't recognize you.

He shakes your hand vigorously by way of contrition.

PAUL KERSEY

Well you wouldn't. Would you. I
look a lot different now.

(beat)

What's happening with the case?

DETECTIVE RAINES

Good. It's going good. We're
confident we're gonna put it down
and catch these guys.

PAUL KERSEY

Mm-hmm. How so?

Raines is thrown. This small head cock as response. His
demeanor then turns mildly defensive.

DETECTIVE RAINES

We're pursuing every available
lead.

PAUL KERSEY

So what do you have?

DETECTIVE RAINES

Well, the fire destroyed a lot of
the physical evidence, so it's been
time consuming, sifting through
that. In addition to the theft of
your wife's vehicle, it appears
some valuables were taken. We found
two jewelry boxes about a half mile
from the crime scene, your sister-
in-law Tara identified them as
belonging to your wife, there was
also a cigar humidor--

PAUL KERSEY

--that was mine.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Do you recall what was in it?

PAUL KERSEY

Watches. Two Panerai watches I think. I had some rings in there.

(beat)

And you know, on the day of the attack, I didn't recall it before but I had an Oris wristwatch on.

Raines nods but doesn't bother taking this information down.

DETECTIVE RAINES

I know this must be *miserable* for you right now Mr. Kersey because what you want and really all that matters is end result and that means an arrest--

PAUL KERSEY

--or killing the men that did it.

Watch Raines react. Perplexed by this comment.

...lean in, let him know...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

I don't care how they're caught Detective Raines...*I only care that someone catches them.*

INT. CAR - DUSK

Smog-diffused sunlight creates a dull grey glare that makes my eyes sore. Slow-mo drive time traffic slogs by outside.

PAUL KERSEY

What are the actual chances that they apprehend these guys Frank?

FRANK KERSEY

Homicide Special has *the* best detectives in the LAPD Paul.

PAUL KERSEY

But it's been what? Six weeks? I thought the first 48 hours were the most crucial and after that your chances of solving a case fall dramatically-- *drastically*, no?

FRANK KERSEY

Not with something like this.

PAUL KERSEY
 What's 'something like this'? Why
 is this case any different?

Frank looks over at me as though I've insulted him.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 I know why it matters to you and to
 me...and I know it can't possibly
 matter that much to them.

FRANK KERSEY
 I can tell you that it's a top
 priority.

PAUL KERSEY
 Frank, the murder of my wife and
 daughter and your niece and sister-
 in-law, doesn't get solved at a
 fucking shooting range.

FRANK KERSEY
 Just because you don't see Raines
 on the job doesn't mean he isn't
engaged Paul. These cases run 24-7.

PAUL KERSEY
 C'mon, I feel like you're sticking
 up for 'em now. This 'fraternal'
 bullshit, 'Brotherhood of cops'--
 (beat, remind him)
 --Y'got one brother Frank--

FRANK KERSEY
 (frustrated,)
 --Paul, what do you want me to say
 to you? *What do you want*--

I erupt--

PAUL KERSEY
 --WHAT I WANT, IS MY FUCKING LIFE
 BACK! WHICH IS MY GIRLS! WHAT I
 WANT IN *LIEU* OF THAT, YOU DON'T
 WANT TO KNOW...

Feel this *surge* ebb through you. Like a fevered heat that can
 be tempered and controlled...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 ...and I don't want to think about.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wide awake. Wired tight. Watching the crack at the bottom of my bedroom door...waiting for the kitchen light to switch off, signalling that Frank is turning in for the night.

The kitchen goes dark.

Ease out of bed. Pull that peat coat and knit cap on. Edge toward the door. Climb quietly into my boots as I wait...and listen for the door to the master-bedroom to close and lock...

...it does.

Move.

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. FRANK KERSEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Head down. Hands in your pockets. Hood up. Long strides. Your legs feel fresh. Your pulse pounds strong and purposeful.

The night air feels good. The Santa Anas have cleared out the smog and you can smell everything: Exhaust fumes. Eucalyptus. Every single sense feels super-charged. Everything single thing appears crisp and vivid and *clear*.

The world feels brand new to you now.

Block after block. Mile after mile. Your pace doesn't falter.

EXT. KERSEY HOME - LATE NIGHT

Your house is gone...reduced to manageable mountains of charred debris, demarcated by LAPD crime scene tape.

You move over the remnants like a man crossing a minefield.

You stoop down and sift through a pile, hoping to recover a reminder or a keepsake; a photo or piece of jewelry...some small token of your life, your family, your time together...

...but only rubble and ash remain.

EXT/INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Push past the taped off door. Duck under the makeshift cordon

Your daughter's birthday gift...The '83 Olds...badly damaged and blackened by the fire but *intact*.

Walk around to the driver's side. Pry the door open and look inside...the keys are still in the ignition.

A flashlight strafes you from behind. A VOICE follows.

VOICE

Hancock Security! Identify yourself!

Recognize the voice. Blink back the beam in your eyes.

PAUL KERSEY

Henry, it's Paul Kersey.

The light falls as this hulking form steps from the shadows.

HENRY

Mr-- Kersey, I-- I'm sorry sir, I didn't.

Say nothing. Be still and stare.

HENRY (CONT'D)

How did you get into the complex?

PAUL KERSEY

How did the men who murdered my family get in Henry?

He blanches, bloodless white, blurts out his rebuttal--

HENRY

--*I wasn't here*-- I'm-- sir, you don't know how, *horrible*, and...
(his thoughts trail off)
...I haven't really slept since this happened. I sat with the Detectives for the third time yesterday. I gave them every last bit of-- everything I could remember.

PAUL KERSEY

Which is what, exactly?

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GUARD SHACK - NIGHT

A bank of VIDEO MONITORS displaying live security feeds from around the complex. Henry is foraging for something in back.

Another GUARD that I don't recognize, can't stop stealing little sidelong glances at me.

I turn and catch him cold and stare right through him. He looks away just as fast, mumbling some excuse to Henry as he stumbles out of the guard shack.

It confirms a feeling I've had.

...you can intimidate people now...

Henry returns with a DVD and slots it into the machine.

HENRY

The detectives took the original
but we had to make a copy first--
(struggles to say)
--for, uh, legal reasons.

He presses '**play**'...a grainy image appears. An OVERHEAD ANGLE showing a long concrete wall which encircles the complex.

A TIME STAMP reads: **7-13-13 3:43am**

TWO MEN appear at the top of the wall and drop down one at a time. They wear hoodies which they pull snug as they crouch along the wall and head toward the camera...

...hold your breath...

They approach. Henry pauses the image just before they pass. Their features are murky. Their faces *unrecognizable*.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I think this was them. They snuck
into the complex on the morning it
happened.

PAUL KERSEY

Can you shuttle this, a frame at a
time?

Henry nods and starts to frame advance the IMAGE.

I put my face less than two inches from the screen and study every single pixel.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Stop.

The IMAGE freezes. Lean in. Look. Study it.

...see something they didn't see...

The two are mid-stride, right beneath a street lamp.

...some clue...

You scan and study and scrutinize every square inch of the frame until it abruptly crunches and splinters, the screen breaking right before your eyes...

...and it's only then that you realize that you've just struck the glass with your fist and shattered it.

You turn your still closed fist over. Little fissures of blood leak up over slivers of glass.

You stand and stare down at it as the blood pools to a bead under your palm.

Henry says nothing as he steps out of the guard shack.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The '83 Hurst Olds...the car my daughter never got to drive, rolls through the streets of downtown like something scorned. This spectral wraith...blackened and burned but not beaten.

Find yourself cruising the seedier section of downtown L.A. Looking for two men you've never met...

...Two men who took everything from you.

...Two men that must be made to pay.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Park. Climb out. You're on the outskirts of downtown near the dreaded Dogtown projects.

Start walking. This strong, steady, unhurried stride.

Looking for trouble and letting your surroundings know...

...it doesn't take long to find you...

THREE THUGS start shadowing me from the opposite side of the street. They mirror me for one block, then another. I can hear them conspiring. Heated whispers from a moving huddle.

One of them crosses at an angle designed to cut off my path.

HOOD #1
Wassup holmes!?

Look over. Casual. Keep my stride the same. He picks his up.

HOOD #1 (CONT'D)
Orale Gavacho!? If y'lookin' for
 ass, you on the wrong track holmes.
 The bitches don't stroll down here.

One of the HOODS drops back, crossing the street directly behind me. The other one runs ahead and then across the street, thirty or so yards in front of me.

A series of shuttered businesses and burned out storefronts blocks any escape to my right.

HOOD #1 (CONT'D)
 Y'look lost holmes.

He's close now. I can make out his features. A meth-scabbed wannabe Vato white kid with fraying cornrows.

HOOD #1 (CONT'D)
 Y'get fucked up out here, y'lose
 your way ese.

Up the block, his buddy approaches. The other is rushing up behind, launching their low-grade, ghetto-level Pincer move.

Wait for that familiar surge of fear to seize hold...for the panic that constricts your insides like a chokehold...

...but it never comes.

--you smile just as you're hit flush from behind at full speed, a form tackle hard enough to jar your vision and empty your lungs.

...it's okay...don't resist...

The other two rush in with frenzied, hyenic glee, pouncing and pounding and braying.

...you're not afraid...

Cornrows boot stomps the back of your neck, sending a stinger along your spine.

...they can't hurt you...

One of them misses with a punch and trips, slamming his fist into the sidewalk and landing near your boot heel.

His face is right there. You kick out hard and feel a sickening, *pleasing* crunch. He squeals a mouthful of blood as it ruptures from his crushed nasal cavity.

...BUT YOU CAN HURT THEM...

Another punch wings me. Then another. My stitches snap. I feel fresh blood flow, collecting in my brow and draining down the inside of my nose.

I lunge for a disembodied leg and bite down. I gnash my teeth and *pull*, jaw-locked-terrier-tight as I thrash my head madly.

A frenzied, caterwauling SCREAM erupts from above. Blood fills my mouth with the taste of dirty pennies. I spit.

Cornrows VOICE climbs in shrill octaves as he realizes that I'm getting back on my feet. He rushes in with a flailing barrage of windmill punches, thrown wild and off balance.

I see it like it's happening in slow-motion and slip the attack, letting his momentum take him past me, then without even realizing it, my left hand lashes out in short, sharp, snapping jab that craters the side of his face.

He crumbles. My right hand feels for the steel on my waist, *cold and true* and ***pulls it--***

--Cornrows looks up and finds himself staring down the business end of my brother Frank's Sig-Sauer P229.

The two other Thugs abandon their aggression altogether and go stock still. Hands hovering, half-raised.

I thumb the pistol's hammer back as punctuation.

Cornrows cups his bleeding ear as he staggers to his feet, beaming this shit-scared, bug-eyed boggle up at me that looks like *begging*.

I feel my heart pounding in my ears. The adrenaline surge fires through me in a way I've never experienced.

I just beat them...and it feels fucking good.

Then A VOICE issues forth from me...One that I have no recollection of ever constructing much less hearing...

PAUL KERSEY

*...I could murder all three of you
motherfuckers right now and not a
single soul would miss you.*

I tighten my finger over the trigger. The Thug directly behind me bolts back up the sidewalk in full flight.

The other one flees as well. I glower at Cornrows. I want to see his will wilt completely.

...there's no one around...

I scan the street for witnesses before I shift my stance, set my weight...and prepare to shoot him.

...do it...

Cornrows turns and sprints away as I lick the gathering blood off my upper lip and *fight the urge to blast him in the back.*

He clips the curb and spills to the sidewalk but pops up limping a second later, in visible pain but putting as much distance on me as possible.

I keep my aim on him until he disappears down the block.

INT./EXT. OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

Park it a few streets over from Frank's house. Tarp in the trunk. Pull it overtop so neighbors can't eyeball the damage.

Check my surroundings. Clear. Check my watch: **4:07am.**

INT. FRANK KERSEY'S HOME - DEN - EARLY MORNING

House silent. Everyone still asleep. I slip quietly inside the den, replace the Sig-Sauer in the safe and lock it.

My hand is still shaking...I stare at it until it stops.

INT. GUEST ROOM BATHROOM - LATER

Check my reflection. Nearly healed wounds have been reopened. A careful mesh of medical stitches above my left eyelid has torn.

Reach up. Pinch the frayed piece between your fingers and slowly pull, drawing the stitching back out of your brow.

Wipe the blood off with a handful of toilet paper. Flush.

Another stitch has been ripped free along your jaw, just beneath your right ear. Remove it. The stitches unspool slowly, pleasingly.

It doesn't hurt...

...and you don't want these wounds to heal.

Prescription meds line the sink basin, three deep. Grab the trash bin off the floor and toss out every last bottle.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP ON:

INT. KECK HOSPITAL - THE NEXT MORNING

Walk into the Admittance area. Whiplash doubles-takes turn into *triple-takes* from passing staff.

MAN IN SCRUBS
--hey, that's--

NURSE
--oh my God--

No one recognizes my new face. I try to smile to remind them that it's me...but who I am now is *nothing* like they remember

This procession of *shocked-to-somber* faces and sudden tears as co-workers and colleagues fill the halls to greet me.

I tune out their sympathies while absently allowing for them. This bullshit sense of 'shared grief' that I go along with.

I return embraces warmly, reassure old friends and do my best to hide my emerging self...*determined to conceal the violence coursing through me.*

Janine is standing in front of me now. A weak smile and wiped tears as she loops her arms around my neck. I pull her in tight and *inhale her*.

JANINE RAY
(whimpering, faint)
...I'm so sorry Paul. So, so sorry...

Hold her a little longer.

PAUL KERSEY
...it's ok...I'm gonna be ok...

INT. BREAKROOM - NIGHT

Janine sits across from me. Tentative. Fingers tented. Her brow knits at the awkward silence stretching out between us. I see no reason to fill it...finally:

JANINE RAY

There was press all over the place
for awhile.

PAUL KERSEY

I imagine there was.

JANINE RAY

Honestly, to look at you, you
could've walked right in here past
them. I barely recognize your face
from before...

She reaches out and brushes my hair back.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)

...you look so *different*.

She's suddenly self-conscious and draws her hand away.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)

So how are you holding up? I mean,
I know that sounds--
(shakes her head as if
correctly herself
--but in terms of, just *physically*,
recovery-wise, how you doing?

PAUL KERSEY

I've still got some stitches, some
pain, swelling...stuff that'll
become chronic over time.

JANINE RAY

They put you on some good meds?

PAUL KERSEY

They did. I got rid of them.

JANINE RAY

Why?

PAUL KERSEY

I wasn't feeling it.

JANINE RAY

It?

PAUL KERSEY

The loss. The totality of it all.

Janine nods, looking down at the table top.

JANINE RAY

Do you think that's-- I mean, I'm not questioning that or saying you're wrong but why do that to yourself? Why dwell in that?

PAUL KERSEY

It would feel fake not to. Like I wasn't honoring them. Audrey and Amanda, and I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna go through this doped up-- *in disguise*...that make sense?

(beat)

At the same time, I don't want to come back here and endure these *endlessly* sad faces, people worried about what to say to me.

JANINE RAY

Yeah but you can't-- no one knows what to say after something like this Paul. Look, I'm tongue-tied just sitting here, talking to you now. It's beyond words, it's beyond anybody's ability to express grief or, sympathy-- y'know?

PAUL KERSEY

I just don't want to have to deal with all that right now.

JANINE RAY

Are they requiring that you attend any type of therapy?

PAUL KERSEY

How did you know?

JANINE RAY

Friend of mine was mugged, she was a third year emergency room resident and they made her do some therapy sessions before she was cleared to return to work.

PAUL KERSEY

They're 'requesting' that I go but it doesn't feel like I'm being given much of a choice.

JANINE RAY

Would you skip it if you could?

PAUL KERSEY

I need to fix some things Janine.
On my own, by myself.

(beat)

I need to make some things right.

JANINE RAY

Then you should Paul.

(puts her hand over mine)

You should take care of the things
that need taking care of.

...She has no idea.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. - NIGHT

Rolling east on Olympic. The walled manses and manicured lawns give way to creeping industrial decay and ramshackle single level businesses and homes.

Pre-Prowl. Cruising.

Looking for a place to bunk down and disappear.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Ease the '83 Olds into the parking lot of long forsaken and forgotten, pre-War, bungalow-style hotel block. An ancient neon sign radiates: '**VACANCY.**'

INT. HOTEL/BATHROOM - NIGHT

A dingy, rundown room. Paint-chipped plaster, rotted with age, swollen with water damage. Linoleum floors ripped up to the foundation.

A kitchenette with a partially plugged sink. A gas stove-top missing all four grates. The shower has gone green with mildew. The broken toilet bowl is *bone-dry*

I toss my duffel bag down on an abused-looking bed.

Home.

EXT. MTA STATION - NIGHT

Hop the MTA Train in Little Tokyo, East to Maravilla Station.

A crew of Cholos have commandeered the far end of a mostly empty car. Chinos. Wife-beaters. The tattoos tell me they're 'White Fence' gangbangers.

They mad-dog me. Hate glares aimed my way. Splif smoke wafts up. I stare back. Dead-eyed. They make me for crazy and ignore me until they empty at the next stop.

There is a stagnant, stifling quality to me as a person now but I enjoy the edge it affords...the enmity...it's freeing.

I jump off at Maravilla station. It's nearly midnight.

INT. METRO BUS - NIGHT

Late night and the bus is nearly at capacity. Condensation from heat and sweat collects and beads off the windows.

Knit cap pulled tight. Hood up. Head down. Staring at my bandaged/taped fingers...Boxer's hands I haven't earned.

I disembark the bus and start walking through South Central, Los Angeles. A white face at this hour, this far south, glows like a Martian's and says one of two things...Cop or Crazy.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

...there's certainly a percentage of people who don't see the need for counseling or therapy after a horrible tragedy such as this...

CUT TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. REDMOND, a polite, left-leaning, academic-looking sort sits across from me. He's maybe mid-40's, maybe older. He hasn't given me his first name...I doubt he will.

DR. REDMOND

...but that's not you.

PAUL KERSEY

I can't say yet.

DR. REDMOND

Does it put you off at all? The hospital mandating these visits?

PAUL KERSEY

Yes.

DR. REDMOND
Why? If I can ask.

...don't let him dissect you...

PAUL KERSEY
It implies *damage*.

DR. REDMOND
Damage? To you?

PAUL KERSEY
To me. Emotionally. Mentally.
It also suggests some basic failure
that would make me *unfit*.

DR. REDMOND
To return to work?

Nod along. Keep him appeased.

DR. REDMOND (CONT'D)
And that's something that's
important to you? Your work?

PAUL KERSEY
It's what I've done for nearly
twenty years.

DR. REDMOND
Certainly but is it *important* to
you? To your well-being? To your
emotional state?

PAUL KERSEY
Work in general is important to me
right now...

CUT TO:

INT. 'GUN RANGE' - SOUTH CENTRAL L.A. - NIGHT

Feel the 9mm pistol as I squeeze the trigger. Zero recoil.
I'm the sole shooter on this ghetto gun range, secreted from
the cops on an abandoned cul-de-sac.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)
...how so?

A series of strung-together shower curtains denote firing
lanes, surplus sandbags from the DWP are stacked twelve feet
at the back of the alley to absorb bullets.

PAUL KERSEY (V.O.)
To occupy the mind, the spirit...

Henry, my new protector/purveyor has brought me. Homeboys and hood rats congregate...but my *emerging madness* gives me the gravitas of a hand grenade...and they refuse to fuck with me.

PAUL KERSEY (V.O.)
...to give purpose and drive.

Reload. Resume my stance. Fire a full clip into the target.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)
Can I ask you to elaborate?

Bring the target forward hand-over-hand on the jerry-rigged conveyor of clothes-lines.

PAUL KERSEY (V.O.)
Elaborate on...?

Center mass shots. Chest and sternum. Perfect spacing.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)
That. That sense of direction and *drive*. I'd really like to hear what those things mean to you...

Hang the line with a new silhouette. Send it down range. Extend your arm. Sight down the target. Aim. Squeeze. FIRE.

SMASH RETURN TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Don't respond. Smile. Mask yourself from him.

VOICE (V.O.)
The H&K 9 mil model's a flat *badass* gun...

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. 'GUN RANGE' - LATER

Standing at a picnic table/sales counter listening to GLEN 'G-BO' TATUM, mid-20's, whip smart and built like a butcher's block. We're looking over ordnance: A half-dozen handguns of different makes and manufacturers, arranged in front of me.

G-BO
 ...that's the official sidearm of
 the Bundeswehr, which is German
 Special Forces. You shot one?

PAUL KERSEY
 I have. I like it.

G-BO
 H&K also make a .40 caliber and .45
 ACP version but if a short recoil
 is what you like, stick with the 9.

Pick up the pistol. Let my fingers settle over the grip.

HENRY
 G-Bo did-- what dog? 2 tours? 3?

G-BO
 Three and a half. Force Recon, 33rd
 Marine Expeditionary Unit. Sixteen
 months in Baghdad as a street
 sweeper, Another seven in
 'Asscrapistan' spelunkin' caves,
 huntin' 'skinnies.'

I nod my show of appreciation for his military service.

G-BO (CONT'D)
 Listen, I just picked up this USP
 ELITE 9mm Parabellum last week
 that's just cuts dead to target...
 (lifts weapon off table)
 ...beautiful lil' gun. My cold shot
 double tap was spaced--
 (indicates with fingers)
 --'bout this far apart.

Take it from him. It feels good in your hand. Lighter than
 Frank's version of the same gun. G-Bo indicates features:

G-BO (CONT'D)
 Finger recesses right here in the
 grip frame, tapered magazine for
 faster reloading and this model is
 fixed with a LEM trigger variant--

PAUL KERSEY
 And that's what exactly?

G-BO

'*Law Enforcement Modification.*' It ain't considered street carry but if you're just shredding paper with the shit--

(as he smiles broad)

--I can't see the harm.

(now, the sales pitch)

Now normally, gun with these specs run y'upwards of 2k, *easy*. Since you appear to be a responsible, straight-laced, professional type, I'll go eighteen-hundo for the 9mm.

I spot an odd looking, revolver-style pistol in his gear bag.

PAUL KERSEY

What's that one there?

G-Bo beams 'proud papa' as he retrieves the gun from his bag.

GUS

Y'like that? That's the Rhino .357 Magnum Revolver. Odd lookin' lil' muthafucka but my boy here *bangs*. I got a six-inch in my trunk. This is the three-inch for concealed carry, fires from the bottom barrel, so it 'centers' the recoil in your hand and make your follow up shots fast and accurate as fuck.

PAUL KERSEY

What's it run?

G-BO

(nods to Henry)

Since my man Henry steered you right, I'll go \$850.00

Remove my money clip *deliberately*.

PAUL KERSEY

And for both?

G-Bo fixes a Pavlovian-like stare on me as I count out bills.

G-BO

Knock another \$150 off and toss in two boxes of Super X Silvertip and a box of German BAT ammo, pure hollow-point round, very rare and hard to find. \$2500 out t'door.

PAUL KERSEY
 And isn't there a 'waiting period'
 on a handgun purchase?

G-Bo flashes me a big gold-plated grin.

G-BO
 Fifteen days mandated by law but...

Return his grin with my own. Henry passes out cans of beer.

PAUL KERSEY
 ...but?

G-BO
 There are ways around that Mr.
 Kersey.
 (nodding to my money clip)
Hundreds of ways.

INT. JERRY'S FLYING FOX RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Henry and I are at a booth in a divey, cracked-leather, soul
 food spot off Martin Luther King and Crenshaw Blvds.

PAUL KERSEY
 (between mouthfuls)
 I finally feel hungry.

HENRY
 I would've taken you to a Taqueria
 I know in Boyle Heights, *La*
Estrella, hands down, best tacos in
 L.A., *best ever* but they're closed.
 (beat)

And I never get to grub on soul
 food. My ex was a homegirl, lived
 up off of Crenshaw and 57th, Park
 Mesa Heights, not that far from
 here. She used to make the baddest
 shit, BBQ Okra, braised collard
 greens, best fried chicken on the
 planet. I mean it was all fat and
 grease but somehow--

(pats his substantial gut)
 --I didn't mind that much.

I find a smile for that and take a big draw off my bottle of
 Bud. Henry has a question he's keeping to himself. I take
 another bite, wait for him to ask it and when he doesn't--

PAUL KERSEY

--I don't want you to worry about this Henry, what you did for me, setting this up tonight. It won't come back on you.

Henry nods...I watch him for a moment...now I know.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

But that's not what you're worried about, is it?

Henry glances up from his food, wiping his mouth.

HENRY

Worried about where you're going Mr. Kersey...and how it all ends.

PAUL KERSEY

How *what* ends?

Henry sets his fork down, wipes his massive hands, threads them together, leans on his elbows and looks over at me.

HENRY

Y'know my brother Leonard barely made it to 20. Thug shit, like our old man, old Veterano, 'Hazard Grande'...We grew up in City Terrace, Ramona Garden housing projects, so our whole life was a hustle. Y'gotta lay on armor early, get mean young, live in the hood.

(beat, sips beer)

Leonard was jumping cats, rival Klikas, doin' beatdowns and strong arms, time he was eleven years old. Killed his first man at twelve, killed five more men 'fore he turned eighteen...and if my mother said this once, she said it a hundred times about my brother.

'Ese chico lleva la muerte.'

(beat)

'That boy carries death.'

(beat)

He was killed when I was ten years old but I remember *exactly* how it felt to be around him as a kid and I had forgotten about that feeling until the other night.

PAUL KERSEY

What 'other night'?

HENRY

When I found you at your house Mr. Kersey. S'the first time in almost twenty-five years that I felt my brother Leonard. That I remembered that thing about him, that *dread*. That terror he had to him, the sense that at any second, shit could just *explode*.

(beat)

'Ese chico lleva la muerte.'

(beat)

It's all over you too. You carry it the way my brother did.

PAUL KERSEY

Do you believe in vengeance Henry?

HENRY

We build *shrines* to it in the hood. Revenge is a religion.

(beat)

But I fell from that faith--

--Henry rubs his knuckles where those tattoos were taken off--

HENRY (CONT'D)

--and don't worship the way I did.

PAUL KERSEY

So what would you do--?

HENRY

--I'd want 'em dead.

PAUL KERSEY

I didn't ask what you wanted, I asked what you'd do.

HENRY

You're gonna get caught or you're gonna get killed Mr Kersey.

PAUL KERSEY

Why do you say that?

HENRY

Because you don't give a shit. You want blood.

PAUL KERSEY

You see that?

HENRY

That's all I can see.

PAUL KERSEY

That's all there is. That's the only thing I think about or *feel*.

HENRY

Then hide it.

PAUL KERSEY

I have been.

HENRY

Do a better job.

INT. KECK HOSPITAL - OFFICE - DAY

Dumping dated mailers and trade publications into the trash. Straightening up my office after more than a months long absence. A KNOCK behind me. I turn. Frank.

...fuck...

Try to keep cool-- remember Henry's admonishment.

PAUL KERSEY

Hey!

FRANK KERSEY

Where you been!?

PAUL KERSEY

I got a place downtown. Hotel.
(off his look)
'Dark cloud' man, c'mon, you don't want that around your family.

FRANK KERSEY

You are my family.

PAUL KERSEY

I'm doing you a favor right now.

FRANK KERSEY

Where are you staying?

He's nosing around now. The detective in him can't help it.

PAUL KERSEY

I told you, I'm downtown. It's nice. Let's me be alone, spend some time sorting things out.

FRANK KERSEY

I disagree with that.

PAUL KERSEY

And I respect that but it's what I need right now. I'm seeing a therapist through work and I feel like I'm-- starting to put it back together, it's, a *battle*, but...

...trying to bait him off topic. It doesn't work.

FRANK KERSEY

How you getting around?

No way you can duck the question, so use your answer to divert him off.

PAUL KERSEY

The 'Olds. Mandy's car.

FRANK KERSEY

You went back to the scene?

PAUL KERSEY

I went back to my house Frank.

(beat)

The car was all that was left.

Watch Frank feel some sense of shame for saying 'scene.'

FRANK KERSEY

I'm worried about you.

PAUL KERSEY

I know you are but I'm fine.

FRANK KERSEY

I don't believe that Paul.

PAUL KERSEY

You don't have to but I promise, I'm doing my best and-- that's it Frank...I'm doing my best.

FRANK KERSEY

Well, can we get you back over to the house for dinner soon?

PAUL KERSEY

Sure.

Frank's eyes still roam around my office...*searching*.

FRANK KERSEY

When?

PAUL KERSEY

I don't know, I'm gonna pull some extended shifts, keep my myself busy for awhile.

FRANK KERSEY

Maybe we can go shoot too, huh?

PAUL KERSEY

Hmm?

(shit-- recover)

Oh, yeah-- yeah, I'd like that.

FRANK KERSEY

You been out since? Since we went?

Lie.

PAUL KERSEY

No, so it'd be good to get out again. Maybe we can hit the range later this week, then grab dinner.

FRANK KERSEY

Ok. Call me tomorrow then.

Initiate the hug between you two.

PAUL KERSEY

Thanks for checking up on me.

Then, as you break--

FRANK KERSEY

--You didn't ask me about the case.

My brother is concerned but the cop bluffs to see if I bite.

PAUL KERSEY

If you haven't told me anything by now, then there's nothing to tell.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INDUSTRIAL SHOOTING RANGE - NEAR SAN PEDRO - NIGHT

Blasting the middle out of a silhouetted target with the USP ELITE 9mm.

Perfecting the combat reload. Getting fast and fluid with this gun. The .357 is next. Leave the target hung up.

Load. Extend. FIRE.

Four out of five shots strike the face and head.

INT. METRO BUS - NIGHT

Back on the bus. Eavesdropping on urban drama: A young PROSTITUTE cowers in the corner at the rear, being verbally berated and abused by a hulking PIMP.

The girl has a horribly split lip and recent bruising around her eyes, blood-mixed-with-mascara.

She's been beaten before...she'll get beaten again.

PIMP

--getcha shit on lock Trick then I ain't gotta get in that ass!

She nods obedient, shrinking further into her seat.

PIMP (CONT'D)

...y'ain't got the legs f'runnin' from me bitch! Ain't no point. I find you, then we back, doin' this same ol' bullshit, I gotta tighten y'ass up, put my goon hand down.
(grabs her for emphasis)
Y'ain't got the legs to run! Y'hear what the fuck m'sayin to you!?

I watch without realizing I'm staring, then--

PIMP (CONT'D)

--y'best cut your eyes and get'm off my business muthafucka--
(growling aggressive)
--Fuck y'lookin' back here fo'?

...he's talking to you...keep staring.

He stands. 6'5 maybe 350 and lumbers up the aisle toward me. Built like a bull elephant. Big, over-sized fists flexing. He's reaching into his pocket--

PIMP (CONT'D)

--If it ain't one bitch I got t'get right, it's another--

--ten feet from me and I see him draw a shiv of some kind from his pants pocket..

I've still said nothing to him...

...and I don't have to--

--the .357 leaps out of my coat pocket FIRING. The Pimp's right knee denotates, flying apart like a blown tire.

He grunts his surprise at being shot. I pull my aim and put two more rounds into his left thigh.

The BUS DRIVER HEARS the shots and slams on the brakes, sending us sidelong into a rough, shuddering skid.

The slingshot of the sudden momentum shift and the loss of both legs claims the pimp in this ugly, lurching collapse as he timbers into the aisle, the shock now engulfing him in full in the form of halting, hyperventilated SHRIEKS.

The Driver and two other PASSENGERS abandon the bus.

I stand overtop of the pimp, brandishing the smoking .357.

The young prostitute gapes up at me from the back of the bus, unsure of my intentions...

...I flash her what humanity remains in me.

PAUL KERSEY

Go.

She does. Dumping her heels in favor of stocking feet and *fleeing*. I lean over the downed pimp as I pass and deliver the following just loud enough for him to hear:

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Now you ain't got the legs to run.

I step off the bus, stuff my hands in my pockets and set a brisk stride, walking west.

EXT. HOTEL - OUTSKIRTS OF DOWNTOWN L.A. - MORNING

The sunrise is just beginning to rim the skyscrapers of downtown...just after dawn and the streets are still quiet.

INT. HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Store both guns in an ancient, key-punched hotel safe. Empty your pockets of ammo: Two speedloaders and two 9mm mags.

Close the safe. Yank the handle hard to ensure it's locked.

Flip on the battered, wall-mounted Zenith. Tune to the K-Cal local morning show. News update. Top of the hour...no mention of the bus shooting.

Tune to another station. Again, no mention.

A third station-- wait, the newscaster in mid-report--

A CHYRON GRAPHIC depicts a mugshot of the pimp with the heading: 'FUGITIVE SHOT ON BUS'...crank the volume up.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN)

--ay was considered a dangerous fugitive and was wanted by the both the local police and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department for outstanding warrants stemming from a 2009 domestic violence incident and the unrelated murder of a Torrance man from 2011...

Footage from the bus...A CCTV CAM. The image is pixelated and distorted. I'm too far down the aisle to be accurately ID'ed.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

...Tremay was taken to White Memorial Medical Center for treatment and will be transferred to the LA County Correctional facility to await arraignment...

The pimp approaches me in time lapsed single frames, a muzzle flash, then he's down. The bus driver and passengers flee.

I exit a few frames later.

NEWSCASTER (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

...the gunman remains at large and police are asking anyone with information about this incident to contact the LAPD's Crime Hotline at 800-222-8477.

Feel this flood of satisfaction for the first time in forever. This sense that I *did* something, *stopped* something.

That I turned violence on violence for a greater good.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

...I'm sensing this shift in you Paul...

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Back on the couch. A stern Dr. Redmond methodically fills a steno pad with notes and 'observations' on me.

DR. REDMOND
...since our last session, you seem to be developing this 'distance.'

PAUL KERSEY
I wasn't aware of that.

DR. REDMOND
Do you feel *engaged*? Sitting here? Discussing these things with me?

PAUL KERSEY
Honestly, I feel indifferent.

DR. REDMOND
To therapy?

PAUL KERSEY
At the moment, yeah.

DR. REDMOND
So, you don't see the benefit?

PAUL KERSEY
I didn't say that. I've advocated it for people in the past, I believe in it but in this instance, it isn't *specific* enough for me.

DR. REDMOND
How so?

PAUL KERSEY
Are you opening up my head and examining what's inside?

DR. REDMOND
In a manner of speaking, yes I am.

PAUL KERSEY
When I open someone up, it's not in a *manner of speaking*, it's with a scalpel and I see everything not the 'imagined' or 'perceived' damage but the actual bullet that punched through some kid's back and is now embedded in his spine.

DR. REDMOND

So you don't believe I have the ability to diagnose you?

PAUL KERSEY

I think in my situation a dart board would work just as well because you'd be basing a diagnosis on what you think because it's *impossible* to see.

DR. REDMOND

What I see is a man in great pain. What I see is a professional ego that won't allow itself any assistance but as a *trauma surgeon* you should recognize your situation for *exactly* that. A man afflicted. Traumatized--

PAUL KERSEY

--bullshit. That's *assumption*. Someone's personal pain. 'Well I know how I'd feel, so they must feel the same. No. You don't. You can't-- You cannot know the true measure of yourself as a man until you've been to the very brink. To the very edge, of the end, of your life. Till you're all but blind and breathing blood and your body is shutting down...until then, you don't know a *fucking thing*, about who you are.

DR. REDMOND

And who are you?

PAUL KERSEY

I know who I'm not.

DR. REDMOND

Who's that?

PAUL KERSEY

Paul Kersey. Husband and Father. That man is no more.

DR. REDMOND

Meaning?

PAUL KERSEY

Meaning he didn't survive...Listen, I could sit here and go on and on about 'recovery' and 'getting my life back together' but that life is gone. It was leveled and there's nothing left standing.

DR. REDMOND

You're still standing.

PAUL KERSEY

But for what? Pity? *Loss*?
(beat, teeth clench)
How 'bout reprisal? Retribution?

*...how about **revenge**...*

DR. REDMOND

Is violence met with violence your answer?

PAUL KERSEY

Is fighting fire with firewood yours?

DR. REDMOND

What does the Avenger do, if not abdicate life for death? Abandon the present for the past? Where is his mercy and compassion?

PAUL KERSEY

White flags. Tools of the weak.

DR. REDMOND

Where is his forgiveness?

PAUL KERSEY

You listen to the sounds of your family being raped and murdered right above you, then, by all means, feel free to lecture me on the finer points of forgiveness.

DR. REDMOND

Paul, all I'm trying to do here is help heal what I see as--

PAUL KERSEY

--there is nothing to heal.
(beat)

(MORE)

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

We're all so fucking *fixated* on mending and healing that we fail to see *the power* that can be derived from *devastation*. From being completely destroyed...*That's* where strength comes from. From the ability to rebuild and *remake* yourself. Nature does it all the time. A white dove dies out from smoke stack pollution during the industrial revolution and its entire population is reborn black as night and they *thrive*.

DR. REDMOND

Is that what you've done Paul?
Rebuilt yourself?

PAUL KERSEY

It's what *I've done* because of what was done. To me.

DR. REDMOND

So if I'm not sitting with you. Who am I sitting with, exactly?

(beat)

Who are you?

Think but don't say...black as night and thriving.

INT. FRANK KERSEY'S HOME - NIGHT

Frank answers his ringing house phone.

FRANK KERSEY

Hello.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

Mr. Kersey?

FRANK KERSEY

Yeah.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

This is Philip Redmond, I'm a occupational therapist with Keck--

FRANK KERSEY

--yeah, yes.

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

--Your brother Paul has been coming to see me, it was a hospital requirement in order to--

FRANK KERSEY

--Yeah, he mentioned he was doing therapy. Is everything alright?

DR. REDMOND (V.O.)

There's nothing wrong per say and I don't want to be an alarmist here, your brother is clearly dealing with a tremendous amount of emotional turmoil and anger but I'm hearing things from him, things that he's saying in session that are of, great concern to me...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

EMT's plow in with a gurney, post haste. The victim has been I-V bagged and put on a respirator. One of the PARAMEDICS feeds back incident particulars--

PARAMEDIC

--*This is Clemons Eppert, 32, white male, he's a suspected mugger and was stabbed in a street altercation, weapon was a linoleum tile cutter--*

The Trauma unit mobilizes around him. Surgical shears cut away his blood-sodden shirt.

PAUL KERSEY

Awww-- he's a mess.

Too many voices start competing. Too many people pinballing off one another. Commotion that requires clarity.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Hey! if you're not part of the trauma service, not a nurse helping out, not blood bank, not radiology, then I need you behind the red line or emptying out of this room right now! *ONE VOICE! Mine.* Listen up.

Scan the victim's injuries and make surgical assessments.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 Multiple thoracic and mid-thoracic
 puncture-style wounds, looks like a
 a massive amount of tissue damage
 to the anterior mediastinum,
 internal bleeding and a hem--

ATTENDING NURSE
--we need a chest tube set up!

SEE IT-- his right index finger: STANFORD '91. My class ring.
 Look back at Epperts. He's black. *It's not him.*

...He wasn't one of them.

PAUL KERSEY
 --let's get him off the litter and
 onto the table--

I move to the Eppert's side, near that hand as the EMT's
 bookend him top and bottom--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
Lift him up in 3-2-1--!

--Hoist him up-- and slip my ring off his finger.

The heartbeat and respiration monitors begin sounding
 'failing vitals' klaxons as the patient abruptly flat-lines.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
Crash cart! C'mon! C'MON GUYS!

The Defib cart is wheeled in. The paddles are charged with a
 pitched electrical whine and FIRED. Eppert's body leaps with
 the surge of voltage but he remains non-responsive.

The Defibrillator is recharged and Epperts is jolted again. I
 press two fingers to his carotid and find no pulse.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
Hit him again!

The whine. The charge. The paddles discharge...

...nothing.

I begin working on him furiously. Doing rapid chest
 compressions in concert with the Defib paddles. Determined to
 save this man if for no other reason than to acquire answers.

The flatline drones on. I work in spite of it.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SCRUB ROOM - POST SURGERY - DAY

Staring at my Stanford ring as I pull Detective Raines business card from my wallet and grab my cellphone, dialing.

Something stops me mid-dial and I disconnect the call. Thinking this through as my finger hovers over '**redial**'...

I finally pocket my cellphone as I tear up Raines' business card and toss it into the trash.

INT. ADMITTING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

RHEA, the desk nurse gives me a warm smile when she sees me.

RHEA

How's my favorite surgeon?

PAUL KERSEY

Still your favorite I hope.

RHEA

Without a doubt.

PAUL KERSEY

Rhea, the stabbing victim we lost, Epperts, were his personal belongings checked in?

(hold up my ring)

Found this on the operating table.

(beat)

Have his next of kin been notified?

She holds her hand out in anticipation of receiving the ring.

RHEA

No, but I can take care of that Doctor Kersey.

PAUL KERSEY

You know what, I'd like to call them myself. We worked pretty hard to save him and I want them to hear that from me.

RHEA

Of course.

(pointing)

I think we labeled the bin but didn't file it, it should be on that table in there, next to the wall charts.

PAUL KERSEY

Thanks.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - CONTINUOUS

A plastic tray containing Eppert's personal belongings. Rifle through them. No credit cards. An expired Driver's license and nothing else of interest beyond a betting slip with a phone number scrawled on back. I'm about to pocket this when--

JANINE RAY

--Hey--

--Jump, caught out cold-- *play it off*.

PAUL KERSEY

Hey.

JANINE RAY

I heard you lost one.

PAUL KERSEY

Yeah.

(holding up the slip)

Looking for a phone number. I want to call his family myself.

JANINE RAY

Let someone else handle that Paul.

PAUL KERSEY

No. He was on my table. In my care.

Janine nods, yawning...she suspects nothing.

JANINE RAY

Listen, if you want to, I mean, if you're free and feeling up to it, maybe we get together for lunch?

PAUL KERSEY

Yeah. That'd be great. When?

JANINE RAY

This weekend? Earlier if you like.

PAUL KERSEY

Ok. Let's play it by ear but Friday could work.

JANINE RAY

Okay, I'll check back in tomorrow.
 (beat)
 You ok otherwise?

Force a smile.

PAUL KERSEY

I'm ok otherwise.

She smiles back and blows me a little kiss. I wait for her to get halfway down the hall before I bolt the nurse's station and exit the hospital through a maintenance door.

EXT. PAYPHONE - DUSK

Eppert's betting slip in hand, tremors ripple across my fingers as I dial the number...It rings through.

A VOICE answers: Gravelled, *Baltic*-- Russian or Ukrainian.

VOICE

Divik Pawn.

Hang up. Grab the sun-bleached tome connected by a security cable to the booth and flip to the yellow pages.

Skim the '**D's**'... scroll down and find: '**DIVIK PAWN SHOP**'
 Tear the page out.

EXT. STREET - NORTH HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

Park the Olds in front of a burned out storefront on an abandoned stretch of storefront off Van Nuys Blvd.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

Your cellphone buzzes on the passenger seat. The CALLER I.D. reads '**FRANK**'...let it go to Voicemail. Climb out.

EXT. DIVIK PAWN - NORTH HOLLYWOOD - CONTINUOUS

Divik Pawn is the centerpiece of a forsaken strip mall. Glaring Cyrillic-lettered neon beams out behind greasy display glass that hasn't been cleaned in years.

Security shutters hover halfway up the windows, like they're spring-loaded and ready to slam down.

It looks overheated and unwelcoming.

A battered buzzer with an ad hoc duct-taped repair sign reads: '**RING.**' I do. The buzzer blares inside and sounds like an electrocution. A heavy lock retracts a second later.

I press my way inside. The front door is heavy with steel reinforcement. The humid smell of Shchi soup and sour milk hits me, pungent and overpowering.

A humorless, heavily-bearded MAN in his late 50's is waiting for me as I walk around the corner. I nod a 'hello' and begin browsing. I can feel him eyeballing me.

...be cool...

I grip the .357 inside my coat pocket for reassurance and keep my back to him. Another MAN slips into my periphery. Younger. Block-headed. Big. He wears an ill-fitting v-neck tee, stretched over his expansive bulk.

...watch yourself...

I turn and approach the counter and begin casually scanning the items beneath the glass, when this borscht-soaked growl is belched across the counter at me--

BEARDED MAN
--what you looking for?

PAUL KERSEY
Just looking.

Further down the display case-- one of my Panerai's...then my spine goes ice cold as *I recognize my Oris wristwatch*. Broken. The face cracked. Imprinted with the time and date of the end of my world.

One row over I SEE the diamond tennis bracelet I bought Audrey for our 5th wedding anniversary. My mouth goes dry.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
(voice trembling)
Could I see that?

The bearded man trundles over with a set of keys. I can feel his hulking counterpart moving around behind me.

The bearded man unlocks the case and scoops up the tennis bracelet, handing it across the counter. I reach for it as small spasms cramp my fingers. I turn the bracelet over...and SEE that the inscription has been scratched off.

That VOICE again. Emanating from me. Foreign and unnatural...
...and I realize that this is sound of my Doppelganger.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

This used to read: *'I've loved you like nothing else in my world for the last five years...and I'll love you till that world ends.'*

Look up the bearded man. Let it register-- then feel a *truncheon* land across my back-- a concussive blow that seems to bows my shoulder blades inward and send me sprawling over the display case.

--Try to breathe in but my lungs are locked.

The bearded man slams the K-Bar knife he was concealing behind his back down onto the counter, splintering glass-- trying to impale my hand but missing me.

I fall backwards, groggy from the blow, groping for my coat pocket. I land flat-- looking up at the massive Russian, preparing to brain me with a short-barrelled baseball bat.

I yank the .357 and *squeeze*, blasting straight up his body. Bullets ripping into his mid-section. He doubles over like a gut-punched man and topples headlong into the display case.

I backpedal on my ass BLASTING away-- blowing out the display glass, catching the bearded man hip-high as he's reaching for a .44 Magnum from behind the register.

He grunts and falters to a knee, swearing at me in Russian. I dump the .357 on the floor and reengage him with the HSP 9mm, FIRING. The shots travel wide, punching holes in the wall behind him, plumes of plaster explode and strafe his eyes-- I leap up with the pistol, sighting him down.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

DON'T FUCKING MOVE MAN!

He spits. I see blood blossoming beneath his arm as he digs plaster dust from his eyes. I kick the .44 across the floor.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

LAY DOWN! FACE DOWN!

He falls forward onto his elbows. I plant the gun barrel in his back and shove him the rest of the way down.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

DON'T MOVE FROM THERE!

Look back. The big Russian is still breathing but motionless. Keep an eye on him-- make sure he doesn't move.

Pull a bag out from behind the counter and begin looting the display case. I recognize random pieces of my wife's jewelry; earrings, necklaces. I grab my watches, sense something-- look up and SEE an old security camera aimed down at me.

...they recorded you...

Shoulder your way into the office. Four separate B&W video monitors on a desk...a hard-drive on the floor beneath it.

...take it...

Yank the cables clean. The video feeds go black. Lug the hard-drive up and lay across your shoulder-- return to the store. A blue log book is lodged between a pair of binders next to the register.

Open it. A ledger. Names and Driver's licenses. Items pawned. Cash paid out. Run your finger along till you find the items:

'Diamond Bracelet, earrings, emerald necklace, jade ring, Panerai and Oris watches, cufflinks, class ring, Garmin GPS'

Stop. Wait-- LOOK-- two display cases over. The GPS Audrey kept in her car. The case is locked. Smash it open with the butt of the 9mm. Dig the unit out. Tuck it under your arm.

Refill your gun hand as you move over the bearded man. Keep The 9mm trained on his prone form as you pass. Blood pools beneath him. His complexion has gone a ghastly white.

Flip the wall phone from its cradle. It crashes down to the counter, dial 9-1-1 with the tip of the 9mm barrel, it rings.

Keep moving. Grab the .357 off the floor before bashing out the front door.

Fresh air burns. Like breathing in acid. You lungs boil.

EXT. DIVIK PAWN - NORTH HOLLYWOOD - CONTINUOUS

Your head swims for the entire block before finally settling. Reach the Olds. Pop the trunk. Dump the hard-drive inside. Cover it with the car tarp. Check both shoulders.

Not a soul in sight. No sirens. Nothing. Slide into the front seat. Crank the ignition. Lay smoke off the curb.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Flip the light on. Close and dead-bolt the front door. Toss the bag of jewelry down on the bed.

Hustle to the bathroom. Place a '7-11' bag on the counter.

Dump the hard-drive into the bath tub. Pull up the drain plug. Turn both faucets full.

Pop the clip on the 9mm and place it in the sink. Follow suit with the .357. Soap them up with your hands.

Bath water crests the hard-drive. It lists and sinks. Pull the drain plug. The tub empties.

Rinse off both guns. Dry them thoroughly. Wrap both in hand towels and secure them in the safe.

Your cellphone buzzes...it's Frank again...let it go to VM.

Return to the bathroom. Remove a bottle of lighter fluid from the 7-11 bag. Douse the hard-drive. Drop a match. Smoke roils toxic from the engulfed drive. Let it burn until the walls of the tub turn black and the smoke detector sounds.

Hit the shower full. The hard-drive bubbles and pops.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Out back. A trash dumpster. The half-melted hard-drive inside a pillow case. Hoist and hammer-throw it over the lip of the bin and slam the lid shut.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.

FADE UP:

INT. DIVIK PAWN - NORTH HOLLYWOOD - PRE-DAWN

News vans and satellite trucks pump live feeds as REPORTERS jockey for prime camera placement, arrayed around the front of the now police-cordoned pawn shop.

Detectives Raines and Garcia slalom through the press scrum, ignoring a barrage of questions as they brace a PATROL SARGEANT on scene.

DETECTIVE RAINES
Sargeant, I'm Raines with RHD.
Who's holding my swag?

PATROL SARGEANT
(looking, pointing)
I think-- there's-- one of the CS
guys bagged it.

DETECTIVE RAINES
Which one, the redheaded guy?

PATROL SARGEANT
Yeah. Ask him.

Raines and Garcia crunch broken display case glass on their way over to a CS (CRIME SCENE) TECH, labelling evidence.

DETECTIVE RAINES
Raines and Garcia, RHD.

CS TECH
Hey, ok-- you guys are-- you're working the Kersey--

DETECTIVE GARCIA
--Yep.

The Tech forages over a counter-top, looking for something.

DETECTIVE RAINES
Security cameras give us anything?

CS TECH
Most likely, but the shooter stole the hard-drive. System wasn't backed up, so, no bueno.

The Tech locates a glassine evidence bag. There's a ring inside. A braided gold band...a piece of jewelry Paul missed.

CS TECH (CONT'D)
The Kersey woman, the wife, she was named 'Audrey?'

Raines takes the evidence bag from him.

DETECTIVE RAINES
That's right.

CS TECH
Right there, inside the band.
(points to inscription)
A.K. 2-7-73.
(beat)
Most of the time these guys will acid-out the inscriptions so they can resell the pieces. They either missed this one, or...

Garcia takes it from Raines, holds it up to the light. Squints to read.

CS TECH (CONT'D)

The owner and his younger brother
were taken out of here, GSW--

DETECTIVE RAINES

--Yeah, they're both in the I.C.U.,
so we can't speak to them.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

(looking around)

I'm wondering why whoever sacked
this shithole didn't steal
everything, wasn't bolted down.

DETECTIVE RAINES

He would have bought time, taking
the hard-drives, security feed.

(to the Tech)

How close are you to finishing an
inventory?

CS TECH

How close are you to retirement?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Y'gotta press for us. Push this to
the top. If our shooter-- *shooters*
are the same duo, did the Kersey
multiple, then we got a break.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Examining my broken Oris watch. I slip it on.

Blue log book opened. Every single transaction notated.
Troubled by the list of pawned items. Everything accounted
for and in my possession excepting a gold ring I overlooked.
Ignore it for now. Underline the name **DONALD KOTT**.

Plug the GPS into the wall socket. Let the system boot up.
The other plug is occupied by Amanda's I-Pod. I look at the
face. It's fully charged. I hesitate before powering it up.

Photos of her begin dissolving on and off the screen. I set
The I-pod down quickly...I can't bear to see these now.

I return to the GPS. Select '**PREVIOUS DESTINATIONS**' from the
main screen and see a recognizable list show up on-screen
with one exception:

71452 San Carlos Ave.

I don't know that address. Scribble it down.

EXT. SAN CARLOS AVE - MORNING

Sitting inside Henry's tricked out '70 Chevy Stepside. Rolling slow past 71452 San Carlos. Henry downloads me with Donald Kott's verbal dossier.

HENRY

...Kott used to claim Hoover Street but he made too many beefs inside the set and they *banished* his shit.

(beat)

Rumor was he put a half dozen heads out off Normandy last year, big cripp BBQ, some kid's birthday, he turn up with a .12 gauge shotty and unloaded it into the crowd. He tortures and kills dogs for fun and likes to fuck old ladies. Forcibly.

(beat)

If he's laid up there and you feel like running at him Mr. Kersey, you better have both your hands full.

Stare at the house as we pass. It looks dark and fortified, even behind the smog-suffused scrim of L.A. sunlight.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Henry drops me off. I'm halfway out of his truck when--

HENRY

--you pop some dude on a metro line Mr. Kersey?

PAUL KERSEY

Pop?

HENRY

Shot. Shot this man in his legs.

No point prevaricating.

PAUL KERSEY

I did. A friend?

HENRY

Hell no. Lamont Tremay. Rough trade. '

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Bout as bad as Kott and you should know he put a number out on you, somewhere just south'a 5 G's and that's a lotta rent money, folks down this way.

PAUL KERSEY

What can I do about that Henry?

HENRY

Hide.

PAUL KERSEY

That's not happening.

HENRY

Then this is when we part ways sir.
(extends his hand)
I got a three year old and an eight year old and I can't afford to fight any man's battles but my own.

Shake his hand...let him know how much this mattered.

PAUL KERSEY

I understand Henry.

(beat)

Thank you. You're a good man.

Henry stares after me.

HENRY

Don't drown in all this Mr. Kersey.
We can't breathe blood.
(beat)
We need air. And light.

PAUL KERSEY

Some of us...Not all.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY - LATER

Pop the trunk on the Olds. Pull the car tarp out, lay it lengthwise across the Olds. Line up a specific area over the front windshield.

Pull a pen-knife from your pocket and start cutting.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Raines and Garcia enter the room, trailed by Frank Kersey.

Handcuffed to the gurney with both legs bandaged is LAMONT TREMAY, the pimp that Paul shot on the bus. He scowls at their arrival. Frank takes up a position against the wall, allowing the Detectives to work their routine.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Lamont! What happened homey? We heard you got *bitched* on the city bus!

Tremay stays tight-lipped, eyes fixed in a '*fuck you*' glare.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Some wild gunman knee-capped you? Did you in front of your girl?

LAMONT TREMAY

Fuck is 'one-time' fuck'n with me for? I'm stretchin' in County so kick rocks 'witcha bullshit.

DETECTIVE RAINES

How much'a that stretch you wanna do? Two years in state for aggravated assault or six months on a county tier for the same beef?

Garcia holds up a smashed .357 round.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

This slug was pulled out of the belly of a comatose Russian this morning.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Shot in a pawn shop in North Hollywood last night.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

It's a .357 wadcutter.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Just like the ones they dug out of your legs.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

And fired from the exact same gun.

EXT. SAN CARLOS AVE - DAY

The street sign spray-painted over with shitty graffiti/gang scrawl...the tarp-covered '83 Olds sits half a block away.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

A pen-knife slit in the car tarp gives me a perfect view of **71452 San Carlos**. Check my watch. 10am. The stakeout begins.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Raines and Garcia continue their shakedown of Lamont Tremay.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

You haven't given the investigating officers jackshit here Lamont.

DETECTIVE RAINES

You saw this guy. You can I.D. him.

LAMONT TREMAY

This nigga don't snitch.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Even on the fool that *shot* your ass? And put you in here?

DETECTIVE RAINES

You don't dime *him* out!?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

You don't dime him out 'cuz it's comin' up off the street that you put a '*burner*' on this guy, 'ghetto bounty.' Yeah?

Tremay's scowl intensifies.

DETECTIVE RAINES

How deep into your pocket y'going Lamont? Couple hundo? Couple thou?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

What's his head worth? 'specially since it looks like you're gonna walk with a limp for a *long time*.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Like '*rest-of-your-fucking-life*' long time.

FRANK KERSEY

Guys, lemme have a minute here huh?

Raines and Garcia exchange a look, then exit the room a moment later. Frank drags a chair toward Tremay's bedside.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)

Lamont, I'm not gonna make threats, promise you a reduced sentence and I refuse to fuck around with you a split-second longer than I have to. You put a price on this cat, good. He winds up dead, and you take tribute, I could give a shit. Doesn't weigh with me.

(beat)

But I want you to hear what does.

(beat, sitting)

The man that did this to you may have been one of the two men that raped and murdered my niece and my sister-in-law, after nearly beating my brother to death, before burning his house to the ground.

(beat)

At this moment in time, I'm not talking to you like a cop or looking at you like a criminal. I see another man, just like myself and I'm asking for his help. 'Cuz for whatever shit you've done in your life, for whatever shit you're sorry about, or asked forgiveness for...for all your cold-blood Lamont, you're not a killer--

INT. OLDSMOBILE - DUSK

Waiting. Watchful. Vigilant. I've been here for hours now.

FRANK KERSEY (V.O.)

--but the man who shot you is.

An older model Impala pulls to the curb in front of 71452 San Carlos. Two MEN climb out and head into the house.

I waistband the .357 and slip the 9mm into my coat pocket.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - LATER

Frank emerges from Tremay's room. His expression oddly muted.

FRANK KERSEY

White man. Late 30's, early 40's.

DETECTIVE RAINES

On *that* bus? At that hour?

FRANK KERSEY

What reason would he have to lie?

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Your brother made the initial I.D. of his assailants as white men.

DETECTIVE RAINES

And one of 'em just up and blasts Lamont on the metro bus for no apparent reason--

DETECTIVE GARCIA

If he did a double murder, nearly two months old, no one's tapped him on the shoulder, fuck does he care?

FRANK KERSEY

Lamont was knocking this trick around, girl on the bus with him.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

And that's why Lamont thinks he got shot?

FRANK KERSEY

On his way out of the bus, the shooter said to him '*Now you ain't got the legs to run*' because Lamont was saying the same thing to this girl, she was ghosting on him, he caught her, beat her ass.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

Do we make either of the assholes responsible for a double murder, giving a shit, some hooker's catchin' hell from her pimp?

FRANK KERSEY

I don't.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

And what's he doing in a pawn shop
in North Hollywood the next night.

Frank shrugs.

FRANK KERSEY

It's something and it's nothing.

DETECTIVE RAINES

You gonna tell your brother about
the ring we booked into evidence?

FRANK KERSEY

Yeah, he can confirm it belonged to
her-- to Audrey.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

I wish there was something more we
could give him...

Frank nods, troubled by something he can't get a grasp on
yet. This terrible sense of dread that's slowly descending.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Slide down a stockade-style fence and creep quiet across a
barren patch of backyard. Discarded old furniture and auto
parts lie strewn about. Dozens of trash bags overflow.

A rotting, rusted-out doughboy pool brims with rancid water.

SEE a half-dozen dead animals. Pit-Bulls. Fighting dogs.
Their bodies flung carelessly into a pile. Their fur is eaten
away at and discolored. Several empty bottles of bleach sit
nearby...an effort to conceal the smell. Flies swarm.

Keep moving to the back door. Try it. It's unlocked...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The concentrated stink of cigarette smoke and congealed
cooking grease floods your sinuses. The kitchen is filthy and
hasn't been touched in months, maybe longer. Roaches roam
free. Ant trails span the walls and ceiling from the sink.

VOICES bellow and bark from an adjoining room. Laughter.
Listen for it...that cackle...say a little prayer...*please*.

Grip the 9mm. Feel the heft and the accompanying swell of
bloodlust. The overpowering urge to bust in, gun blazing--

--fail to notice the THUG rounding the corner to the kitchen until he's standing right in front of you--

THUG

--WH-- WHAT THE FUC--!!

--instinct overrides everything as muscle memory floods over with fight or flight and you find yourself squeezing the trigger with the gun still in your pocket.

Bullets slam into the archway, detonating molded wood and wainscotting. The thug shoulder-charges, somehow slipping between the gunshots and hitting you chest high.

You stagger-slip together-- two more errant shots and the 9mm jams, the heat roasting your hand. You're grappling with it when the thug rips an elbow across your snout and you feel cartilage crunch and blood begin draining down your throat--

--You slam into the sink basin together, dishes topple and shatter, you fill your free hand with broken shards and grind them into the his face.

He rolls off shrieking, clawing at his eyes -- HEAR a pump-gauge rack close and feel the BOOM-- a concussive crack that cancels your hearing and replaces it with a relentless buzz.

Smoke chokes. Heat singes. You're dazed and half-deaf staring at a stovepipe jam in the 9mm.

Look over in time to SEE the other THUG re-racking a sawed-off pump shotgun.

Kick the refrigerator door out as he hip aims the gauge and FIRES. Lead shot shreds. Fumble for the .357 with your offhand as you skitter out the back door.

EXT. YARD - CONTINUOUS

Motor skills muddled. Fingers that won't function. Guns in both hands and you can't find the focus to FIRE either --

--another SHOTGUN BLAST from behind-- the doughboy pool implodes in front of you, collapsing in a torrent of water that takes your balance and shoulder-rolls you against the stockade fence-- loosing the .357 from your grip.

Facedown in fetid water, gagging as you grope for your lost gun. Smash the 9mm into the fence and pop the jammed round free-- rack the slide fast and FIRE BLIND over your back--

HEAR as the thug hit by a stray, a grunt followed by a guttural WAIL-- Wipe the water from your eyes and SEE HIM, pacing in half-circles and staring down at himself, HOLLERING for help as blood spreads over his upper groin.

Stand spitting up stagnant water-- the first THUG, his face streaming rivulets of red, bashes through the screen door wielding a snubnose revolver-- train your aim and FIRE the 9mm to slide-lock, blowing him back through the door frame--

--swap the 9mm for the .357. Shell casings spill over your shirt front as you struggle with a slippery reload-- the cylinder drops, stuff the speedloader down, snap it shut--

Advance on the first thug as he sits down in gutted sofa chair, the flow of blood from his pierced torso fascinates and fixates him-- the pump gauge lies draped across his lap.

PAUL KERSEY

Donald Kott!?

He gapes up, glassy-eyed, then returns his attention to the bleeding, his hand playing absently over the shotgun's grip--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--DON'T DO THAT!

He looks up again, glowering...this *fury* filling his eyes--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--TAKE YOUR HAND OFF THE G--

--the business end of the barrel jumps up in his lap. I drill three holes in his chest, blowing him against the sofa back.

...ohmyGod...

His weight sags forward and he goes completely still.

...you killed him...

Approach slowly. Waiting for him to move.

...you just killed a man...

He wheezes this low, disturbing death rattle. I let the last of him expire, then quickly move in and strip his pockets: a partially damaged cellphone, no wallet, no other I.D.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rush back in. The other thug lies on his side. Dead gray eyes staring at the open refrigerator. You step over the blood pooling around his form.

...you killed them both...

Vomit into the sink. Your stomach roils and spasms uncontrollably. Rinse your mouth out as you heave for air and hyperventilate--

--shovel cold water in your face and ***just fucking breathe...***

Get your bearings. Ransack the counter tops now-- mail, overdue bills, anything with a name. Jam your coat pockets till they overflow and exit through the front door.

EXT. 71452 SAN CARLOS

A gunfight in the ghetto gets closed blinds and extinguished porch lights.

Run.

Reach the car, haul the tarp off and only when searing hot pain rips from your lower ass to rib-cage, do you realize that you've been shot.

Feel the damage with your fingers. Buried pellets under your skin read like Braille. Your hand returns wet with blood. Wipe it on the seat as you slide inside the Olds.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

A POLICE CRUISER rounds up the block ahead, sirens full. Start the Olds and floor it back up the street in reverse, running over the car tarp, your head-lamps off.

Pitch the Olds around the corner, power-sliding it 180 degrees as you engage the lightning-rod shifters.

Roar up the block, lamps still extinguished. A slow-moving CRUISER appears, spotlight searching the alleyway, rip a hard right before the light can find you.

Punch the gas. Pop the headlamps. Blow a handful of stop signs and run a red light at over 100mph, narrowly avoiding a sideswipe. Transition to an adjacent alley, then another.

A LAPD helicopter appears over the horizon. Xenon-light strafing. Turn the headlamps off, pull in behind another parked car, roll under the dash, kill the ignition and wait.

The chopper rotors by overhead, you track the Xenon as it darts erratically over the alleyway, playing over the parked cars as it gradually recedes away.

Sit back up the seat, crank the ignition and peel off.

Check your mirrors-- no police in sight.

EXT. SAN CARLOS AVE - MORNING

News choppers swarm the air space above. A crush of REPORTERS crowd saw-horse barricades that have been built up at either end of the street.

Garcia stalks up to 71452, YELLING into his cell, finger jammed in his ear against the thwack of rotors above.

DETECTIVE GARCIA

*It's too late-- Tom, it's too late,
horse is outta the barn, this is a
two-bagger and both Dave and I
think it's the same shooter from
the pawn shop in North Hollywood.*

*(shielding his eyes as he
looks up at the choppers)*

*C'mon, they're pigs in shit, are
you serious 'leaked' how's this one
supposed to stand still T? It's got
serial gunman all over it.*

(to a COP on scene)

*There's a five hundred foot ceiling
within city limits, get ASD Astro
up there and control that airspace.*

(back into the cell)

T, I'll getcha back.

He clicks off.

INT. 71452 SAN CARLOS - CONTINUOUS

Weaving his way through the front room. Raines is there, pulling off a pair of plastic gloves as he finishes conferring with a pair of UNIFORMS.

DETECTIVE RAINES

*Neighbor, this old lady across the
street saw a car, parked under a
tarp, wasn't from the neighborhood.*

DETECTIVE GARCIA
She see the actual car?

DETECTIVE RAINES
No. Tarp's lying in the street out there.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
She hear the shots?

DETECTIVE RAINES
'Course she did and then did what everybody else in the 'G' does, they hear gunfire--

DETECTIVE GARCIA
--hit the floor. *Fuck me.*

Raines turns over his palm, showing Garcia a smashed bullet sitting next to a folded jackknife.

DETECTIVE RAINES
Dug this outta the archway. 9mm boat-tail hollow-point or I buy the beer for the next month.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
The Russians at the pawn shop, the old one, that was a hollow-point they pulled outta him--?

DETECTIVE RAINES
--fuckin'A bubba. Exotic. Some German-made, hard to find handload.
(entre nous)
Vic out back, by the door, hit in the throat and upper sternum, I eyeballed the damage, HP entry, tissue collapse, thru and thru, second Vic in the sofa chair, three pattern grouping, high-chest, it's a fucking different weapon.

DETECTIVE GARCIA
.357?

DETECTIVE RAINES
If it is, then we got five people shot, two dead in three days...

DETECTIVE GARCIA
...by the same sonofabitch.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Pounding on my hotel room door. Plod toward it. Open it on JANINE. She looks me up and down, this horrified expression as she assesses my state--

JANINE RAY
 --OhmyGod Paul! *What happened to you!?*

Pull her inside. Shut and lock the door. Limp to the bed.

PAUL KERSEY
 I got mugged. I was shot.

She sets supplies down on the night stand.

JANINE RAY
 Let me see.

Peel off a full-sized bath towel soaked through with blood.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)
 Good God, I can't-- When did this happen!?

Sit on the bed.

PAUL KERSEY
 Last night.

Janine rips a hemostatic dressing out of its packaging and preps a syringe of Lidocaine.

JANINE RAY
 Why didn't you go to emergency room!? Come to Keck, we're just--

PAUL KERSEY
 --I couldn't wander in there, looking like this, it would be like a bad joke, what I've been through.

She goes to work right away, slathering Dibucaine anaesthetic over my raised wounds.

JANINE RAY
 Shotgun?

PAUL KERSEY
 Yeah.

JANINE RAY

These look like *grazing* wounds,
thank God but they could be
infected already. You feeling any
wetness or heaviness in your chest?

PAUL KERSEY

No. I don't think they penetrated
beyond the posterior.

A syringe slips in. Feel the pinch as the plunger depresses.

JANINE RAY

Give the Lidocaine a minute, get
you numbed up.

(beat)

This would be a lot easier if I
could put you in the tub.

INT. BATH ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lowering myself down onto my side into a warm tub.

JANINE RAY

What are you doing staying down
here anyway!? It's no wonder
something like this happened.

(beat)

Lift your arm for me.

Remain silent as she goes to work with a pair of surgical
tweezers, pulling out pellets and fragmented lead shot. Bath
water ebbs a faint pink before turning blood red.

She sets the extracted pieces along the tub basin.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)

Did you see who mugged you?

PAUL KERSEY

No.

JANINE RAY

Where were you when it happened?

PAUL KERSEY

Just walking.

JANINE RAY

Where?

Wince intentionally, trying to distract/draw her off this
line of questioning.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)
Are you feeling that?

PAUL KERSEY
A lot. Yeah.

JANINE RAY
Ok. Try to relax and keep still. I
need about 30 minutes to do this. I
won't talk if you don't want me to.

Just nod and confirm the ensuing silence between us...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Lie down gingerly on my good side, bath towel around my
waist. Janine close. Feel her hands gently guiding me down.

PAUL KERSEY
Please don't mention any of this.

She nods and smiles soft.

I hold her hand and let mine linger over it a little longer,
caressing these slender fingers that remind me of Audrey--

--suddenly she's overtop of me and I'm pulling her down and
kissing her before I can make any sense of it--

Ignore the dull throb and pain rippling up my side as my
hands fumble over her form and we roll onto the bed full.

Clothes are pulled at and tugged free. Her mouth is on mine.
The contours of her back dip and arch, her hair spills across
my face, fanning over me.

We break suddenly and stare at one another, breathless and
dazed. I sweep away a strand of hair in front of her eyes.
I'm shaking my head from side to side without knowing why and
tasting tears before I feel them streaming down my face.

She whispers something and kisses me. I hold her tight try to
breathe and feel her heart beat against my chest...

INT. HOTEL - LATER

Wake with a start. Sweating out from under another nightmare.

Become aware of Janine standing next to the bed, staring down
at me. She extends her closed fist and unclasps it, letting
loose bullets spill onto the bed.

I look down at them, scattering across the sheets.

PAUL KERSEY
 ...please don't ask me anything...

She sniffs. Tears well.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 ...you did nothing wrong Janine and
 I won't let you be hurt by this--
 by what I'm doing.
 (beat)
 By what I *have* to do.

JANINE RAY
 You're hunting them Paul. Aren't
 you? You're hunting the men who
 murdered your family.

No need to confirm this for her...she already knows.

JANINE RAY (CONT'D)
 They could kill you.
 (gesturing to my bandages)
 They nearly did.

PAUL KERSEY
 I don't care.

JANINE RAY
You're a physician. A *preserver* of
 life. It's what you've trained your
 entire career to do. To keep death
 at bay. Not invite it in...not work
 hand in hand with it.

(beat)
 Do you really believe this is what
 your wife would want? Or your
 daughter? You sacrificing your own
 life to avenge theirs?

(beat)
 And what will you have won? The
 satisfaction of killing?

(beat)
 Then what's left of you in the end?

PAUL KERSEY
 The end came and went...The end was
 Audrey and Amanda.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MORNING

Frank Kersey sits in a booth in his police P.T. gear, post-workout. His coffee cup hangs frozen above the front page of the L.A. TIMES. The headline:

'SERIAL GUNMAN ON SHOOTING SPREE THROUGH THE SOUTHLAND'

He reads. His expression rigid. He quickly fishes a cellphone from his gym bag and dials. The CALLER I.D. SCREEN reads **'PAUL'** as it call connects...rings...and goes to VM.

Frank disconnects and dials another number. An LAPD line.

FRANK KERSEY

Dave? Frank Kersey. Listen brother,
I need a quiet tap and trace on a
cellphone. Can you hook me up?

(beat)

Take the number down then, you got
something to write with?

INT. KECK HOSPITAL - BREAK ROOM - MORNING

Janine watches the KTLA newscast. Unsettled.

NEWSCASTER

*...law enforcement officials are
considering putting an emergency
curfew of into effect, covering the
greater downtown and southeast
areas of the city. This follows the
formation of an LAPD Task Force.
But with no additional leads,
authorities are reluctant to
comment on the ongoing
investigation any further. The
victims named are not being
released by the police and sources
close to the case have confirmed--*

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Splayed out on the bed. Surrounded by mail from Donald Kott's home. I stare at the television.

NEWSCASTER

*--that a single suspect is being
sought in these shootings.*

Click off. Retrieve Kott's damaged cellphone from a wall plug...it's only a matter of time before everybody knows he's dead.

...notice Amanda's old I-pod, sitting nearby...ignore it.

Scroll back through Kott's call log. Check old text messages. Find One from someone named '**BLANO**' dated the night before the murders.

...read it and feel your guts tighten like a vise...

might hav a litl knokdown in HCP,rich pussy marvin iso'd, all cake,bring bats,

Make 'HCP' Hancock Park. Make a mental note of '**MARVIN.**'

Kott's reply:

--can't roll, got drama--

Examine Kott's other texts. Read his replies, study his syntax/writing style, pick up his patois, his pattern of speech...*and mimic it.*

Now text Blano. Your fingers tremble as you type out:

dog i got shit we can hit, bev hill, serious \$\$\$, u an Marvin down?

Send the text. Drop the phone on the bed. Realize you need to catch you breath...the phone buzzes back inside ten seconds.

Fuk yah , whur?wen?

Scroll his phone. Find reference to a place. *740 Club.*

740 club, pop bottles. 10?

Hit 'Send.' Blano's response is instantaneous.

bet, c u ther

Toss it. Your cellphone chirps on the nightstand. Check the caller I.D.: the number comes up '**LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPT.**' Feel your chest flutter, your throat tighten-- suppress this sudden barrage of nerves and answer it.

PAUL KERSEY

Hello.

DETECTIVE RAINES (V.O.)
Paul? It's Detective Greg Raines,
LAPD. How are you?

...fuck...

PAUL KERSEY
Detective Raines. Hello. Yeah, I'm
alright. What's going on?

INT. PARKER CENTER - DAY

Raines is at his desk.

DETECTIVE RAINES
You're a hard man to get ahold of.

INTERCUT

PAUL KERSEY
Sorry, I've been busy. I'm back at
work now--

DETECTIVE RAINES
--that's great to hear. Listen, Ray
and I, Detective Garcia and myself,
we'd really like to sit down with
you, some things have been
happening, I don't know if you've
been following the news.

...oh no...

PAUL KERSEY
The news?

DETECTIVE RAINES
Yeah, there's been a-- well,
there's been some shootings over
the past few nights and we feel
that they may be related to you--

PAUL KERSEY
--to me?

DETECTIVE RAINES
To your case. Some stolen property,
your property was fenced at a pawn
shop in North Hollywood and both
proprietors were shot.

...bluff by now...

PAUL KERSEY

Jesus.

DETECTIVE RAINES

We think one of the suspects in the murder of your family might be the shooter and it would benefit us a ton, if we could sit you down and get a more thorough, more in-depth statement from you. I know you don't want to rehash that but it's important and could move our investigation forward.

PAUL KERSEY

When?

DETECTIVE RAINES

As soon as possible. Tomorrow?

PAUL KERSEY

Of course.

DETECTIVE RAINES

You have the address? Parker Center downtown?

PAUL KERSEY

I'll get it.

DETECTIVE RAINES

9am work? We're on the 5th floor.

PAUL KERSEY

Ok, I'll see you then. Thanks for the call.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Frank Kersey sits in his unmarked, his window rolled down, observing something O.S. His cellphone rings. He answers and Raines's VOICE crackles over the vehicle's speakers.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Frank?

FRANK KERSEY

Yeah.

DETECTIVE RAINES

Greg Raines.

FRANK KERSEY

Hey man.

DETECTIVE RAINES

I finally got ahold of your brother
and updated him on everything, he's
coming in to see us tomorrow
morning, you wanna be there?

WE SEE what Frank is looking at...the front of Paul's hotel.

FRANK KERSEY

I do.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Finish cleaning the .357. Pull the 9mm out of the safe and
wipe it down. Load both weapons. Prepare the speed loaders
and two extra clips. Lose rounds rattle around. Low on ammo.

Tuck the weapons into my coat. Feel sweat gathering across my
forehead. Cold to the touch. I feel off. Leaden. Feverish.
Check the bandages along my side. They're seeping.

Forage through the drugs Janine brought. Find the Lidocaine
and syringe and administer small self-injections. Layer the
bled-through bandages with toilet paper and tissue.

Slip my broken Oris wristwatch on.

...time to hunt...

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Heading toward the Olds. Feel like I'm being watched. Nerves
tweaked from the news report. Spooked for good reason. Do a
slow 360. Keep moving toward the Olds. Stop. Look it over. On
my hands and knees, peering under the chassis.

Climb in. Pull away.

INT. OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

Slashing in and out of dense traffic migrating downtown along
Olympic Blvd-- eyes cutting from the road to the rear-view
mirror, looking for tails.

...you're being paranoid...

Run a red light at Western in Koreatown. Horns blare in protest. Punch the gas, clipping 90mph on surface streets as you cross over Normandy, Hoover St, then Alvarado--

--SEE a darkened stretch of curb and pull in, parking the car impulsively as a City Bus slows to a stop near the corner.

Hop out. Lock the Olds. Rush over and board the bus.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank Kersey watches his brother hop aboard a Bus. He holds a moment before pulling off an alleyway and resuming his tail.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Slide into a seat near the rear with a good view of the street...traffic flows normally along E. Olympic behind you.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank curbs his car as the bus makes its stop a block ahead.

INT/EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Jump up as the bus slows and crowd the folding exit doors, pressing through as they open. Scan the street before crossing against heavy traffic and into a residential area.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank observes Paul crossing over Olympic and waits for him to disappear before slapping a portable red-light on his roof and flashing the lights without the accompanying siren.

He swerves across oncoming traffic and barrels across and up a parallel street to the one Paul fled down.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Running. The pain returns. Stop to check your side. Blood saturates the bandages, soaking through the belt-line of your pants. Sweat drips like a spigot.

Slow to a walk, clutching your side. Check the street behind you as you move onto the next block.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank hangs back, headlights off, staying just behind Paul and out of sight.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

SEE an MTA STATION SIGN ahead. Hustle up the block and around the corner toward the steps leading down to the MTA platform.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Frank catches a sliver of his brother retreating down the MTA steps at Pico Station. He yanks his car to the curb and leaps out on foot, tearing off after him.

INT. MTA - PICO STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Look around the crowded platform. Trying to catch a stranger stealing looks, slow your gaze to study faces. The inbound train arrives. Next stop. 7th Street Metro Station.

INT. MTA - PICO STATION - CONTINUOUS

Frank Kersey slips into a rear car as Paul steps onto the train, two cars ahead. A few more passengers rush to aboard.

INT. MTA TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Watch the doors. A two-tone alert sounds and they begin to slide shut. Quickly slip between them and back out onto the platform as they close and seal.

The train pulls away.

...now get moving...

INT. MTA TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

A pissed off Frank Kersey, trapped on a moving train, watches his brother Paul retreat up the stairs toward the street.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLUB 740 - NIGHT

A line of CLUB-GOERS stretches up the block and wraps around the back side of the building.

Proceed to the front of the sprawl. Pull a rubber-banded roll of \$100's from your front pocket. Flash the DOORMAN. He nods his consent as you palm him the cash and start into the club.

A BOUNCER suddenly braces you for a frisk as you approach the door and you find yourself raising your hands in horror as he steps in to pat you down and in doing so, discover both guns.

DOORMAN

--No Dre, he's cool. Let him pass.

The Bouncer nods to the Doorman and waves you through.

INT. CLUB 740 - CONTINUOUS

Hip-hop remixes and house music pound out across a packed dance floor. Wall-sized monitors displaying everything from 'SportsCenter' to 'Real Housewives of Beverly Hills' play out in muted pantomime throughout the club.

Keep your gaze light, liquid...looking for him.

...this is it...

You can't make out a soul. Faces streaked with strobes. Details dipping in and out of darkness. Keep pressing through the throng. Maybe pure proximity will signal his whereabouts.

Climb the stairs leading to the second level. A clear view of the bar and the dance floor below. Kott's phone vibrates. Grab it, read the text:

'Whur U?'

Respond.

'At the bar'

Watch the bar. Blanco texts back a moment later.

'Me 2. Got sum bitches'

Look. There, near the end of a crowded bar. A shaved head, sleeves of tattoos, prison-built bulk. He's chatting up a pair of CLUB GIRLS and sipping champagne from the bottle.

He laughs at his own joke...erupting in that familiar cackle.
 Feel a feeling like a hot iron hitting a nerve ending.

...there he is...

But no Marvin. Text Blanco.

'Marvin with u?'

Press back through the crush of club-goers, eyes locked on Blanco, watching him text back as you struggle through the teeming mass. His response arrives. Read:

'Nah, ain't herd from hm'

...*fuck*...

Look back up for Blanco-- his attention is diverted to something O.S. He stands off the barstool abruptly. Alarmed.

Stop. Spin back. A monitor right behind you: 10pm News.

SEE the on-screen graphic. '**SHOOTING VICTIMS NAMES RELEASED.**'

A Donald Kott mugshot follows...

Turn back to the bar. Blanco is gone--

--**GO!**

Plow through the swarm of people, elbowing them out of the way, realize it's taking too long--

--brandish the .357 in full view. It has the intended effect.

People cower and shriek, confusion and fear fuel chaos as the crowd cleaves in half and scatters, allowing you access down.

SHOUTS barked from security. Pull your hood up to conceal your face as you flee.

A back door closes near the bar. Barrel toward it and bash through at full pelt.

INT. 740 CLUB - BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

I carom off the wall, extending the gun as I SEE Blanco running shoeless down the corridor in front of me. My aim dips and falters as I leap up and stumble after him.

He collides with the exit ahead, scrambling outside. Fresh pain scorches my side as I try and steady my aim, sweat burning my eyes and blurring my vision.

I reach the exit a second later and shoulder through, spilling out onto the street.

EXT. SOUTH BROADWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Blano rushes over to a slow moving vehicle held up in late night traffic and tears open the passenger side door.

SCREAMS from inside. A woman's. Terror stricken as Blano crawls inside the cab and begins battering her with his fists. She's ejected from the driver's side door--

--I see a clear shot and squeeze.

--this sharp tangle of limbs as Blano spasms unexpectedly, the bullet hitting him in the side. FIRE again. Blood bursts like a popped balloon over the dash and windshield. The car's owner scrambles to her feet and runs off SCREAMING.

Gears grind and gnash as the car lurches forward, bashing off a smaller vehicle in front of it which quickly speeds away. Blano does a lazy loop, steering into the opposing lane when he's suddenly hammered sidelong by an oncoming car.

The impact vehicle banks off ugly and careens into a post. An older MAN, baffled and in shock, staggers out of the car and simply plops down on the curb, staring back at the wreckage.

I stalk toward the car Blano jacked as traffic swerves wildly around me. Blano falls from the cab and pendulums off the seat-belt, re-gripping it for balance as he tries to haul himself upright. He's contused and bleeding from both ears.

SIRENS approach.

...hurry and end this...

Reach Blano just as he collapses against the stolen car. Kneel down so that I'm eye level with him.

He gapes at me groggily, vacant. Look at him for as long as you can, then bring Amanda's I-Pod up...photos of my wife and daughter flash, illuminating his bloodied face this close.

PAUL KERSEY

Do you see them?

(beat)

Do you know now?

Resist the need to bash in the face with gun butt. Put the barrel to his head instead. Press it into his skull.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Where's Marvin?

His eyes stray from mine as he turns away from the gun, on all fours now, trying to crawl away. Car headlights shone, illuminating him as he drags himself toward them.

Shoot him in the spine.

He shrieks and goes prone, sobbing and begging as he rolls over onto his back, hands flailing in front of his face.

Let this moment refresh your rage as you tuck the .357 away and pull the 9mm from your coat pocket.

Empty the entire clip into his chest. Lean in close and put the gun barrel flush with his face as he breathes his last...

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

...this is for Audrey--

--FIRE--

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

--and this is for Amanda--

--FIRE.

Now flee. Turn and sprint up the block, your speed flagging badly. WITNESSES point at you from a distance.

Veer into a parking structure as red and blue strobes descend on the scene. The pain in your side is unbearable now, legs sticky with rushing blood as you fight to stay on your feet.

Bolt out the backside of the parking structure to the adjacent street. A CAB is rounding the corner. Hail it. The driver fails to see you.

Another CAB sits idling a block back. Rush toward it. Pile in. A startled CABBIE appears behind his newspaper. Glaring.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

Hospital. I've been shot.

CABBIE

Call ambulance.

Fish your front pockets, drop crumbled \$20's over the seat.

PAUL KERSEY

Please.

CABBIE

No, notify an ambulan--

--*Fuck this.*

The .357 comes out, the hammer goes back.

PAUL KERSEY

TAKE ME TO THE HOSPITAL NOW!

The Cabbie spins back in his seat, bitching under his breath in Arabic as he starts the car and lurches onto the street, moving south down Flower, away from the downtown corridor.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Frank searches through Paul's hotel room when his cellphone goes off. He snatches it on the first ring.

It's Raines. His voice is bleak.

RAINES (V.O.)

Frank. Greg.

(beat)

This guy Darren Blanco was just executed outside the 740 Club downtown. We've got good reason to believe he was one of the two men behind the murders of your brother's family. The other, we think is a man named Marvin Blaylock.

Frank swallows hard. Hoping...

FRANK KERSEY

...is Blaylock the shooter?

A loaded beat. The worst kind. Frank can feel his stomach bottom out.

RAINES

Blaylock has been in county holding for the last six days awaiting arraignment for aggravated assault.

(beat)

Frank...where's your brother Paul?

INT. KECK HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Graveyard staff. Weeknight quiet. Wait for an ORDERLY to clear the hallway in front you and creep quiet through a stairwell entrance and down the hall toward the E.R.

An unoccupied exam room. Slip inside.

INT. EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lock the door. Strip down shirtless behind *throbbing* pain. Ball up your clothes and bury them in the medical hazard bin.

Check the mirror. Your gunshot wounds have become infected and you're bleeding badly.

Go to the cabinet. It's locked. Force it open, snapping the bolt hasp. Grab hemostatic dressings, gauze and anti-bacterials. Begin ministering to yourself.

The door knob is toggled. Then again. A VOICE from outside.

VOICE

Why is Exam room five locked?

Shit.

ANOTHER VOICE

Shouldn't be.

A knock now. Freeze. Don't answer. The door is tried again.

VOICE

It's locked. Who's got the keys?

Look around the room...There's no way out-- spot a disposable bin for gowns and scrubs.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

An ORDERLY fetches a ring of keys for an older SURGEON.

SURGEON

If janitorial's doing this, locking the rooms, tell 'em to stop.

ORDERLY

(approaches with the keys)
I cleaned this one out awhile ago.
Thought I left it unlocked.

The Orderly finds the appropriate key, slots the lock and turns, opening the door and flipping on the light switch to reveal: PAUL. In medical scrubs, lying on the exam table, acting as though he'd just been awoken from a nap.

SURGEON

Paul?

PAUL KERSEY

(rubbing eyes)

Hey Mitch.

SURGEON

I didn't know you were on call.

PAUL KERSEY

Yeah, I've been grabbing extra shifts, not sleeping a lot--

SURGEON

--Wondered why this was locked.

PAUL KERSEY

(stretching)

Just popped in for a nap.

SURGEON

Well, we'll leave you to it.

PAUL KERSEY

No, I'm getting up now. Do me a favor, is my coat right there? I left it in the hall.

SURGEON

(turning back to the hall)

I don't see it. You need one?

ORDERLY

I'll grab you one Doctor Kersey.

PAUL KERSEY

Who's that? Keith?

ORDERLY

Yeah.

PAUL KERSEY

Yeah, if you could. Thanks.

(back to Surgeon)

What time is it?

SURGEON
 (checking watch)
 Still got fifteen minutes or so.
 (beat)
 I didn't see you on the roster for
 tonight.

PAUL KERSEY
 Yeah, I've been pinch-hitting here
 and there.

The Orderly appears with a white lab coat. Paul takes it.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)
 Appreciate it. Keep misplacing
 mine.

The Surgeon closes the exam room door.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Surgeon turns back to the Orderly just as two UNIFORMED
 COPS round the hallway ahead.

INT. EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blood has soaked through the back of the scrubs. Forage
 through the cabinet for a compression garment. Slide it on,
 cinch it tight. Slip both guns snug on either side and pull
 the coat on over.

Wait a beat. Woozy. Steady yourself. Wipe the sweat from your
 forehead as your breath begins to rasp and wheeze.

...hold it together...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Two steps into the hallway when--

OFFICER
 --Excuse me, Doctor?

Turn. The Surgeon is standing with a pair of COPS. Approach
 them, this faint feeling like you're consciousness is about
 to capsize. Perspiration seeps from your hairline. Mop it on
 the sly. Stuff sweat-soaked hands into your coat pockets.

SURGEON
 Paul, these officers are saying
 that a wounded man was dropped off--

OFFICER

--A cabbie said he dropped off a guy about a half hour ago, bled all over his cab. We had a shooting outside a club downtown, we think this man was involved.

PAUL KERSEY

Well, I just got here a bit ago.

OFFICER #2

Did you see anyone? Wounded man?

PAUL KERSEY

Hospital is typically filled with those. Can you be more specific?

SURGEON

Is this the gunman? The one from the news?

Look down...blood gathers pre-drip on the seam of your left pant leg.

...don't move...

OFFICER

Can't say. We've got the cabbie on his way back, help us with an I.D.
(to Surgeon)
We'll need to alert the rest of your staff.

OFFICER #2

We're going to want to lock down the hospital. There's an LAPD task force on their way here, so for now, let's just quietly inform your people, have everyone remain calm.

PAUL KERSEY

I can help with that Mitch.

SURGEON

Let's just go by wards, let the supervisor on each floor know.

PAUL KERSEY

I'll start downstairs in pediatrics.

Remain rooted to the spot as they peel off and take the two cops with them. Move your left boot to one side. Blood smears beneath it.

Turn and travel the length of the hallway as fast as possible, trailing blood the entire way, pain searing with each step.

Approach the sliding glass doors.

POLICE CRUISERS arrive outside, braking right up to the curb. Detour down an adjacent corridor, past a sparsely populated waiting room--

--stop.

ON-SCREEN, a LIVE NEWS REPORT from the scene of the shooting. A REPORTER, her voice muted behind the glass, holds up a rough sketch of the shooting suspect...

...it looks exactly like you...

Keep moving, hobbled by this horrible pain.

Stairwell ahead. Try the door. It's locked. Find yourself leaning against it, your breathing labored. Head light.

...they're gonna catch you...

Shove yourself off the door, legs buckling as you carom down another corridor, catching sight of a circular mirror mounted on the wall ahead...

...Raines and Garcia's reflections appear in it as they arrive at the hospital with a host of uniformed cops.

Try the door to the Administrative offices. LOCKED.

Double back as the cops converge at the head of the hallway.

INT. UNMARKED CAR - NIGHT

Frank Kersey slaloms late-night traffic. His police band radio blaring:

POLICE DISPATCH (O.S.)
*...four-thirty-one-six, suspect is
 a white male, late 30's possible
 GSW, last seen in the vicinity of
 Marengo and Britannia, LAC-USC
 Medical center--*

Frank punches the gas.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Push your way into an empty recovery room, pull the privacy curtain closed and slide down the wall, winded, wiped out. Kick your boots off. Blood pours from them like pitchers. Pull the sheath-covering free from an examination chair.

Use one of the leg stirrups to stand as you peel off your socks. Wipe your feet clean of blood and douse them with rubbing alcohol.

You flank feels like its caught fire the pain is so intense.

The door to the recovery room is bashed open abruptly-- get prone and army crawl across the tile under the next section of curtain as the one behind you gets yanked back.

COP VOICE

Bunch of blood here! He was in here!

Keep crawling. Stuffing yourself into the cabinet beneath an exam table and quickly closing the shutter-style doors just as the cops throw the next section of curtain open.

COP VOICE (CONT'D)

Get all these rooms swept, everything on this floor!

Radio chatter and squelch crisscross at high volume as the cops coordinate the search...

...wait till the noise recedes...

Tumble out of the cabinet and stagger to your feet. Your exhausted mind in full revolt, your body breaking down.

...you're not gonna make it...

Edge into the hallway. See a placard for the INFIRMARY. Dash across the hallway and inside before anyone spots you.

INT. INFIRMARY - MOMENTS LATER

Loot the cabinets, locate an I-V bag; 250ml Dextrose solution. A catheter. Transfusion tubing-- epinephrine pen. Pull the cap off with your teeth and plunge it into your leg, depressing the pin...Adrenaline surges. Cobwebs clear fast.

Grab a I-V bag. Connect the tubing, prep the catheter as you prime the vein in the crook of your elbow. Slip the catheter in, connect the tubing and crank the flow control full.

The drip begins. Squeeze the I-V bag rhythmically, over and over...

...be reminded of the human hearts that you have held in those same hands, pulsing them back to life.

Place the I-V bag into your coat pocket.

EXT. KECK HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A perimeter of police cruisers surround the hospital as you slip out near an unattended emergency room exit, leading into the ambulance bay.

The cops are everywhere.

...there's no way out of here...

--then you SEE Janine, walking toward her car in the parking lot, puzzled by the massive police presence. Watch her expression shift as she figures out what this is about.

You can signal her. You can sneak around to her car and have her get you the hell out of h--

--No....no.

Don't involve her any longer.

She's done enough.

Watch as she glances around furtively, searching for me. Stay hidden. Out of sight. This flicker of panic from her as she fishes out her car keys, still surreptitiously scanning...

...One last look before she climbs into her car and somehow she spots me.

Her eyes plead, desperate. Her gaze shifts to the police, then back to me. The invitation is there. She's still willing to help, rescue me from the moment...

...I could have loved this woman...

I shake my head 'no...'

She holds my gaze for a moment longer, I can see her tears from here. Finally she climbs into her car and drives off.

...you're stranded now...

...think...think...think.

An idea seizes hold. Pull your cellphone. Dial.

VOICE (V.O.)
***Nine-One-One, what is your
 emergency?***

INT./EXT. KECK HOSPITAL - NIGHT

TWO EMT'S rush out and climb aboard an ambulance. They flip on their sirens and roar out of the parking lot on their way to a call.

INT. AMBULANCE - REAR - CONTINUOUS

Stay hidden beneath the gurney until Keck's facade fades from view. Roll out onto your back. Wait for the next stop.

EXT. TRAFFIC LIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The ambulance slows at a red light as I fall from the rear doors and begins running.

One of the EMT's, alerted to my presence, YELLS after--

EMT
 --HEY!!!

Don't look back. Just run.

EXT. HAZARD PARK - NIGHT

Sprinting blind. The wail of SIRENS everywhere. More than I've ever heard at one time, closing in, cutting me off--

--hide from a CRUISER as it blows past at high speed, it's spotlight barely missing me through the trees.

Vault a chain length fence at San Pablo Street. Stick close to the shadow of the buildings but run...

...across East Valley Blvd and into Lincoln Heights.

Rush into the lake surrounding Plaza De La Raza, belly flop into six inches of water as a fast moving LAPD Suburban blasts by.

Two CHOPPERS approach, their searchlights moving over football-sized fields. I haul myself up, muscles screaming as I stagger toward 7th street in the distance.

Halfway there when a CAR appears, high-beams blinding me, lamps lit red, braking just a few feet in front of me.

...it's over...

I fall to my knees. All out of fight. I clasp my hands above my head and sob as the last of my will melts away. I'm hauled roughly to my feet and tossed into the back of the cop car.

I hear the door slam shut and the car pull away. I want to apologize or offer some explanation, I open my mouth to speak and HEAR my brother Frank's voice from the front seat.

FRANK KERSEY

Stay down.

PAUL KERSEY

Frank?

FRANK KERSEY

Don't talk Paul. Don't say a thing.

Frank pulls the rooftop lamp into the car and kills his high-beams, racing across an open expanse of Lincoln park and crashing out onto a parking lot...

...I glimpse a street sign: 'N. SOHO' just before I pass out.

BLACK

FADE UP FROM BLACK

INT. UNMARKED CAR - NIGHT

Awake. My hands are plastered to the vinyl seat. I pull them free, palms spackled brown with dried blood.

Frank sits in the bench-style seat in front, chin across his forearm, looking back at me. No telling how long we've been parked here...or what he's been thinking.

I blink up at him. A long, leaden silence ensues, broken by:

FRANK KERSEY

Give me the guns.

Wince as I retrieve the .357 from my injured side. Hand it across the seat silently, follow it with the 9mm. Draw myself up into a sitting position, slouched, neck slack, propped up against plastic sheaths of Frank's dry-cleaning.

We're at the water's edge somewhere. Maybe the L.A. Harbor. A light rain is falling. Water beads off the windscreen...

PAUL KERSEY

...I was awake Frank. Conscious.

(beat)

I listened to them die.

(beat)

That's how I knew they never called
out for me...

Frank remains mute. There's no real response for that.

PAUL KERSEY (CONT'D)

...this whole fucking thing *found*
me Frank. It found me. Some guy,
stabbing victim, lands on my table,
wearing my Stanford class ring.

(beat)

You think that's coincidence? And
if so, what's the difference
between that and fate?

(beat)

You know the thing that, confuses
me the most, but still gives me an
odd sense of peace, is that I now
believe that this is who I am and
who I've always been. I wasn't
transformed so much as the fraud in
me, the good father, husband,
physician, was *exposed*.

(beat)

A killer who had never killed.

Frank exhales with a kind of pain that sounds like part of
his soul escaping.

FRANK KERSEY

That night, the night I found you
with my gun. I think I knew then
that...that we'd wind up here.

(beat)

I couldn't nail down the reason why
I agreed to teach you to shoot and
put a gun in your hand, until now.

(beat, fighting emotion)

Whatever that attack did to you and
took from you, whatever was left of
my brother. The man that remained--

(beat)

--I wanted to arm.

(beat)

And make strong...

Tears flood Frank's eyes.

FRANK KERSEY (CONT'D)
 ...but I'm asking you to stop
 Paul...and shut this down now.

PAUL KERSEY
God couldn't shut me down now.

FRANK KERSEY
 You'll be caught or you'll be
 killed, if you keep going and I'll
 lose you.

PAUL KERSEY
I'm already lost.
 (long pause)
 I'm running on *blood* Frank. So much
 of it, so much rage. This darkness,
 I can't even measure much less
 contain. I want *so badly* to touch
 my wife one more time, part of me
 thinks I can manifest her, make her
 whole again, if I wipe out every
single fucking thing that took her
 from me.

FRANK KERSEY
 Half the LAPD is hunting you and
 the other half is about to start.

PAUL KERSEY
 Then give me back those guns and
 let me put this last piece of shit
 down and be done with it.

FRANK KERSEY
 The man you want, Marvin Blaylock,
 is in country lock-up and probably
 on his way to the state pen.
 (before I can respond)
 --Paul, there is no scenario, where
 you can get to him, without
 engaging law enforcement *head on*
 and potentially hurting innocent
 people, so you have to trust me
 when I tell you, *the system will do*
him. He won't last. Blaylock will
 die and die badly. The word will be
 out on him, the second he hits that
 cellblock. I'll make *certain* of it.

PAUL KERSEY
 And you would put your faith in
 that Frank?

FRANK KERSEY

No. I'd ask that you put your faith in me and when I tell you this will be taken care of and that that motherfucker won't make it, you believe me and you stop short of *obliterating* the rest of you life.

PAUL KERSEY

That doesn't matter to me.

FRANK KERSEY

It does *to me*. To me it matters because I don't want to look at my little brother behind fucking glass for the next fifty years. The Mayor's office, LAPD brass, you running around, revenge-killing after what happened to your family, that is their worst fear...and it's why they'll *never* come after you unless you get caught and making a run at Blaylock gets you *just that*. Then prosecuted, then imprisoned for the rest of your life.

PAUL KERSEY

Why not come after me anyway?

FRANK KERSEY

The press. They'd lose. The public would see you as hero.

(beat)

The violent crime index dropped 57%, city-wide over the last week. 53% of that decrease happened in the last two days.

Something stirs in me. Some deep sense of satisfaction. I can't recall ever feeling it so strongly or succinctly. This long, drawn out silence envelops us for a moment. Then:

PAUL KERSEY

No one misses them...the men I've killed. No one lost anyone that mattered. I know that. If anything society is *lighter*...Less afraid.

(beat)

I never realized how *brilliant* a bullet could be Frank...

(beat)

..or how clean it could cut.

FRANK KERSEY

Paul. You have to go. You have to leave L.A. and let what needs to happen, happen. I'm begging you man. Please know that this is the only way it can end.

(beat)

Because from this moment forward, you're a murder suspect and I'm a fucking cop and you *must* understand everything that that means. I've been your brother up to this point but I can't go any further. I'll be forced to join in the hunt that hands you over to the law.

(beat, this plead)

Please Paul, *listen to me*...I love you but I can't protect you now...

Lay my head back. Let the scenario play out in my mind. The 'lose-lose' of it all.

The car goes crypt-quiet again save the steady patter of rain as I finally glance up at my brother...

...and nod my consent...

...End game.

EXT. CITY HALL - MORNING

A SPOKESMAN for the office of the Mayor addresses the ravenous press ranks packing the steps outside city hall.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN

...the Office Of The Mayor wishes to extend its deepest condolences to the families of the victims of these senseless killings as well as our assurance that those responsible...

INT. UNION STATION - BATHROOM - DAY

Paul finishes buttoning up one of Frank's dry-cleaned suits, discarding his bloody clothes in the trash.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)

...for such wanton and callous disregard for human life will be captured and prosecuted to the fullest measure of the law...

EXT. UNION STATION - TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Paul and Frank Kersey bid goodbye to one another. Paul embraces his brother long and hard and whispers something to him before clambering aboard a train bound for San Francisco.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)
*...there have been widespread
 rumors about the nature of these
 killings...*

INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY

Paul sits as the train pulls away, leaning his head back and letting the sunlight find his face as he watches the buildings begin to recede and give way to the sprawling industrial area surrounding the downtown.

His reflection passes in and out of shadow as the train travels along, offering us these elliptical glimpses of his still present Doppelganger...

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)
*...attributed as vigilante-style,
 'revenge' murders and carried out
 by a renegade private citizen...*

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Mayor's Spokesman continues his oratory.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN
*...these rumors do in fact have
 some basis in truth but are largely
 the product of the panic and
 hysteria that have gripped our city
 over the last few days...*

EXT. TRAIN STOP - ALHAMBRA, CA - DAY

The train pulls in. Passengers pile on, en masse. One pair of well worn boots disembark and WE FOLLOW THEM...

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)
*...and we vow to bring a swift and
 decisive end to this crisis,
 utilizing the considerable
 resources and talents of one of the
 most vaunted and respected police
 departments in the entire
 country...our very own LAPD...*

INT. CAR - DAY

Frank Kersey drives from the train station. Tired. *Troubled*. A jolt of panic overcomes him as he gropes for his jacket and pulls his lapel back to reveal an empty shoulder holster.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Paul Kersey removes his brother's **SIG-SAUER P229** pistol from his jacket pocket and replaces it in his rear waistband as he stalks up a steep hillside overgrown with ragweed and scrub.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)

...there is a singular system of justice available to us as Angelenos and that system must be managed and implemented by our law enforcement agencies and our courts.

(beat)

Regardless of the crime, citizens have rights and the protection and enforcement of those rights fall to us. Therefore we will not allow due process to be dragged into the street. Nor we will permit the prosecution and sentencing of our citizenry in those same streets...

As Paul crests the hillside, THE CAMERA BOOMS UP with him, revealing the smog-blanketed spires and buildings of downtown Los Angeles in the distance.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)

...and we will punish with grim resolve and grave consequence, those that act in direct defiance of this. The lawful right to judge, try and condemn the guilty, belongs to our system of justice...

Paul stalks up over the barren hillside and vanishes behind it.

MAYOR'S SPOKESMAN (V.O.)

...and not any one man.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK

THE END

