

FAXING OPHELIA

by

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GENRE: Thriller

RATING: R

LOGLINE:

A meddling dot com matchmaker secretly faxes her beautiful best friend's bio to a wealthy new client's posh home where there's a burglary in progress and a corpse downstairs.

FADE IN:

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Dark. Drizzling rain.
Small, silver eatery, like an airstream trailer.

"OPHELIA'S" glows through the precipitation in pink neon.

MCCALL (V.O.)

I know what you're gonna say. You're gonna say that I was a damn fool. That I should have gotten the hell out of there when the gettin' was good. But ask yourself this question. Does a man give his heart to only one woman in this life? Think about it. I'll bet you would have done the same thing.

A teal Lexus pulls into the parking lot alongside the diner. It stops between an old pickup and an eighteen wheeler labeled with huge letters: "G.O.T. I.T. - GATON ON TIME INTERSTATE TRUCKING, INC.".

INT. OPHELIA'S - COUNTER

Interstate TRUCKERS rub shoulders with local REDNECKS.
Ketchup and salt passed around. Mumbled guy talk. Farts.

OPHELIA TYCOUR, mid 20's, black, beautiful, works the grill behind the counter. She flips a burger.

OPHELIA

Damn!

She swats hot grease from the inner thigh of her starched, powder-blue waitress uniform.

GATON TRIKES, 40, an overweight trucker, leers at Ophelia's body, reaches over the counter.

GATON

Lemme help you with that, Ophelia.

Ophelia SWATS his hand with the spatula.

OPHELIA

Keep your hands to yourself, Gatton.

ELKUS FINNS, 50, a ragged redneck sporting a Tasmanian Devil baseball hat, slaps Gatton on the back.

ELKUS

Loosen up that wrist, Gatton. It's party night.

GATON

Shut up, Elkus!

LAUGHS at the counter.

SHISO SUGATO, mid twenties, strides in through the revolving door. A petite Asian beauty in pricey clothes.

She shakes rain from her long, straight, jet-black hair. Takes a seat at the counter.

SHISO

(to Ophelia)

Hey, B.

Ophelia works the grill.

OPHELIA

Hey, slant.

SHISO

I heard on the news that we live in one of the fastest growing areas in the country. That's exciting, isn't it?

OPHELIA

You want the usual?

SHISO

Hold the grease this time.

OPHELIA

(laughs)

Freak you.

She grabs a CAN OF SPAM from the shelf over the grill.
Sprays. CRACKS three eggs.

SHISO

Ahkeem all exited about tomorrow
night?

OPHELIA

He sure is. You gonna make it?

SHISO

Wouldn't miss it.

Ophelia mixes in onions and sweet peppers.

Shiso points to a bowl of fresh tomatoes on the counter.

SHISO

Those from your garden?

OPHELIA

Picked 'em myself this mornin'.

SHISO

Slice me one, okay?

OPHELIA

You got it.

SHISO

Got a good one in today. Brand new.
Haven't put him on-line yet.

OPHELIA

Not interested.

GATON

That grease is gonna stain, Ophelia.

SHISO

He's a doctor.

OPHELIA

I don't care.

GATON
I got spot remover out in the truck.

SHISO
He's rich.

OPHELIA
I don't meet my man that way, Shiso.
It's unnatural.

GATON
Unnatural is okay.

Ophelia flips the omelette onto a plate, slides it in front of Shiso.

SHISO
Looks good.

OPHELIA
Thanks. Coffee?

GATON
You could wait in the cab while I work on the spot.

SHISO
Iced tea.

ELKUS
You think Ophelia's gonna drop her drawers in the cab of your rig?

GATON
I told you to shut up, Elkus!

Ophelia pours iced tea for Shiso.

OPHELIA
Two sugars?

SHISO
As usual.

ELKUS
Work on the spot? Bullshit. You just gonna sniff the crotch and cum in your pants!

LAUGHS from the other guys at the counter.

GATON
That's it, Elkus!

He leaps from his stool, grabs Elkus. They wrestle around.

OPHELIA
Hey! Damnit, Gatton! Cool out!

The other guys CHEER the fight on.

Elkus, surprisingly strong, gets the better of it.
He tosses the bigger Gatton onto the counter.
Jumps on top of him.

Coffee cups and dishes SHATTER.
Elkus beats Gatton's head with lefts and rights.

Shiso calmly pulls a cell phone out of her purse. Dials.

EXT. DR. SITES' SUBURBAN HOUSE

"Money" written all over the place. No lights on.
Battleship gray BMW 740i parked in the driveway.

EXT. MAILBOX

Raindrops PLUNK on it:
"119 MELROSE - DR. R. SITES, D.D.S."

A black Chevy Blazer parked across the street.
Dark tinted windows.

EXT. BLAZER - LICENSE PLATE

New Jersey
PEARL2
The Garden State

INT. BLAZER

MCCALL WILKES, 30, a muscular, handsome Caucasian, wears a
black turtleneck, sits in the drivers seat. He stares
across the street at Dr. Sites' house.

LUXE SAINTES, 45, a scrawny Jamaican also dressed in black,
occupies shotgun. He studies the house through a pair of hi
powered binoculars.

Both men wear Latex gloves.

Luxe DRUMS the dashboard with his fingertips.

MCCALL

Luxe?

LUXE

Yeah?

MCCALL

Stop that.

Luxe complies.

BINOCULARS POV - The BMW in the driveway.

LUXE (O.S.)

He's home.

MCCALL (O.S.)

No shit.

BACK TO SCENE

LUXE

How's it feel to be back here, man?

MCCALL

Strange.

LUXE

How many years?

MCCALL

Ten. Maybe more.

LUXE

Place changed much?

MCCALL

All these rich bastards? Ain't the same town.

LUXE

Dot com millionaires.

MCCALL

Not this guy. He's a dentist.

LUXE

I hate dentists. Richest guy in town?

MCCALL

Always was.

LUXE
He must be asleep.

MCCALL
Looks that way.

LUXE
Just as well.

MCCALL
Yeah. I hate it when they come home in
the middle.

They pull on black ski masks.

MCCALL
Remember. No names.

LUXE
I been doin' this a lot longer than
you have, McCall.

MCCALL
And you've been busted twice. I've
been busted zero. I plan to keep it
that way.

EXT. BLAZER

McCall and Luxe exit the Blazer, shut the doors softly.

They scamper across the street in a low crouch carrying
satchels.

Up Dr. Sites' lawn.

They disappear into the back yard.

INT. POLICE STATION - KINCAID'S OFFICE

KINCAID RHODE, 40's, a beefy, white sergeant, reclines at
his desk, sips coffee, studies reports.

A computer monitor sits on the desk, the screen blank
except for "HOMEJACK" in large letters.

Patrolman HUXLEY LATON, 30, black, hangs up the phone.

HUXLEY

Fight down at Ophelia's.

Kincaid jumps to his feet. Grabs his hat.

KINCAID

Let's go!

The two uniformed cops stride to the door.

HUXLEY

Might need an ambulance.

KINCAID

We'll radio on the way.

They exit. The room empty, quiet.

COMPUTER MONITOR

The Homejack system BEEPS.

"119 MELROSE - DR. SITES" blinks on the screen.

INT. DR. SITES' HOUSE

McCall steals down a dark hallway, flashlight in one hand, silenced .22 Ruger in the other.

He quietly opens a bedroom door. Empty.

He closes the door softly, moves like a cat down the hall to the next room. Slowly opens the door.

Something RUSTLES in the darkness. McCall tenses.

A SHRIEK. A tabby housecat streaks out of the room.

McCall holds his heart, takes a deep breath.

Luxe tiptoes up from behind, taps McCall on the shoulder. McCall jumps. Whispers muffled through ski masks.

LUXE

Found him.

MCCALL

Jesus, Luxe! You scared the crap outta me! I almost shot you!

LUXE

You're a little jumpy, man.

MCCALL
Where is he?

LUXE
Down in his office.

MCCALL
Tied up?

LUXE
Out of commission.

MCCALL
Good. Let's get to work.

EXT. OPHELIA'S

Shiso's Lexus, Gaton's rig, and Elkus' pickup still in the parking lot.

A police car and an ambulance parked in front, lights flashing.

A Paramedic helps Gaton through the revolving door. Gaton holds a wad of blood-soaked paper towels against his nose.

The paramedic helps Gaton climb into the back of the ambulance. The vehicle pulls away.

INT. OPHELIA'S

Kincaid questions Shiso and Elkus at the counter.

Huxley and Ophelia in a booth. Huxley scribbles in a notepad.

HUXLEY
(laughs)
It is a pretty funny remark.

OPHELIA
Gaton didn't think so.

HUXLEY
You wanna press charges? Make the two
hotheads pay for damages?

OPHELIA
Nah. They're both dirt poor. Gaton
hurt bad?

HUXLEY

Busted nose. Maybe a rib. Be laid up overnight. You mind his rig sittin' in your lot 'til he gets out?

OPHELIA

That's okay. I just don't want him back in here. Gatton gives me the creeps, Huxley. Always starin' at me.

HUXLEY

We'll tell him to stay away.

Kincaid and Elkus approach the booth.

KINCAID

Shiso says Gatton started it.

ELKUS

Damn right. I finished it.

KINCAID

I'm gonna let Elkus go. You about done?

Huxley gets up.

HUXLEY

All set, sarge.

He looks down at Ophelia.

HUXLEY

That is gonna stain, by the way. Better put something on it.

He smiles at Ophelia. She smiles back.

Huxley, Kincaid and Elkus exit the diner.

Ophelia gets up, walks to the counter. Slumps onto the stool next to Shiso.

OPHELIA

What a night.

Shiso surveys the broken dishes and splattered food.

SHISO

What a mess. Want some help?

OPHELIA
You got good clothes on. I'll have it
cleaned up in a jiffy. More iced tea?

SHISO
No, thanks. I gotta go, B.

Shiso gets up, heads for the door.
She stops, turns.

SHISO
You sure I can't set you up with --

OPHELIA
I said no, slant.

SHISO
Why? Afraid he'll take you away from
all this?

OPHELIA
Good night, Shiso.

EXT. OPHELIA'S

Shiso's Lexus pulls out onto the street leaving Gatton's rig
alone in the lot. Ophelia's Hyundai in the rear corner.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING

Small, professional building.
Shiso's Lexus pulls up, parks in front.

INT. OFFICE - DOOR

"CUPIDSARROW.COM"
"Shiso Sugato, CEO"
"GOT LOVE IF YOU WANT IT"

INT. OFFICE

Shiso clicks away on a computer keyboard.

SHISO (V.O.)
Her name is Ophelia Tycour. She'd love
to meet you, but is too shy to take
the first step. Ophelia owns the diner
at the corner of ...

LASER PRINTER

Shiso's note slides out of the printer on Cupid's Arrow letterhead.

DESK

Shiso tapes a photo of Ophelia to the note.

FAX MACHINE

The note with Ophelia's photo attached descends into the machine.

SHISO

What are best friends for?

DESK

Shiso clicks on the keyboard.

COMPUTER SCREEN

Bio and photo of DR. RADCLIFFE SITES.

SHISO

Your lucky day, Dr. Sites

INT. DR. SITES' HOUSE - OFFICE

The face on Shiso's screen. Eyes open, unseeing. Blood tracks trace down from the mouth.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Dr. Sites' corpse, in pajamas, on the floor in a pool of blood next to the dentist's chair.

A surgeon's scalpel protrudes from his lower abdomen, an exclamation point at the end of a long gash starting just below the neck.

BEDROOM

Luxe lays the Doctor's jewelry box on the bed. Flips it open.

He tosses a Rolex watch, diamond rings, cufflinks, gold tie bars and other jewelry into his satchel.

DEN

McCall at the open wall safe. He pulls out wads of cash, deposits them into his satchel.

DING! BUZZ! McCall jumps.

A FAX MACHINE on the desk springs to life. Ophelia's beautiful face ascends out of the machine.

McCall, curious, goes to the desk. He picks up Shiso's fax and reads.

He studies Ophelia's photo. Yanks off his ski mask. A smitten smile on his face.

MCCALL

(sotto)

Well, I'll be goddamned. I'll just take this along for good luck if you don't mind, Doc.

He tosses the note in the satchel, goes back to work at the safe.

INT. CHAPEL

SISTER DELPHINA (30's), slender, pretty face, dressed in a classic white nun's habit, lights a candle in front of a statue of St. Jude.

Engraved on the statue's base: "ST. JUDE - PATRON SAINT OF HOPELESS CASES".

Sister Delphina kneels, bows her head in silent prayer.

INT. POLICE STATION - KINCAID'S OFFICE

Huxley and Kincaid enter, toss their hats on the desk.

KINCAID

Well, what the hell are you waitin' for?

HUXLEY

Mind your own damn business, sarge. I just think she's a fox, that's all.

KINCAID

You should ask her out, Huxley. The way she smiles at you ... Lord knows I would if I was fifteen years younger and fifty pounds lighter.

BEEP! from the Homejack system. The two cops turn, study the monitor.

KINCAID
Jesus H. Christ!

They grab their hats, run for the door.

HUXLEY
I wonder how long --

KINCAID
Too long! Get the car!

EXT. POLICE STATION

The patrol car SQUEALS out of the lot, fishtails onto the street.

INT. PATROL CAR - MOVING

Huxley drives. Kincaid in the passenger seat.

HUXLEY
Siren?

KINCAID
No.

HUXLEY
Lights?

KINCAID
No. It might still be in progress. I bet they're still in the house.

EXT. DR. SITES' HOUSE

McCall and Luxe, ski masks on, crouch down. They run across the street, climb into the Blazer.

INT. BLAZER

They pull their ski masks off, SLAP high fives.

MCCALL
Beauty!

LUXE
Not bad, not bad at all.

McCall starts the Blazer.

MCCALL

Once we're outta town I'll call nine
one-one. Tell 'em to go untie the good
Doctor.

LUXE

Don't bother.

MCCALL

I don't want the poor bastard to
suffocate or something. I always call
in.

LUXE

He ain't tied up, man.

McCall stares at Luxe.

MCCALL

Luxe? What did you --

LUXE

I hate dentists!

MCCALL

Oh, well that's just freakin' great!

LUXE

Relax, we'll never get caught.

BLAZER'S REAR WINDOW POV

The police car, no lights, silently rolls up.

MCCALL

That's not the point!

LUXE

That's exactly the point! C'mon. Let's
get out of here. I'll divvy up the
loot.

All the police car lights come on.

KINCAID (O.S.)

(police car bullhorn)

GET OUT OF THE CAR SLOWLY WITH YOUR
HANDS UP! LIE FACE DOWN ON THE GROUND!

INT. POLICE CAR

Kincaid watches the Blazer.

KINCAID

Two of 'em, near as I can tell.

Huxley on the radio, reads from the license plate. Notices a chrome "V8" on the rear of the Blazer.

HUXLEY

(into the mike)

p-e-a-r-l number two. New Jersey. Late model Chevy Blazer. Black.

KINCAID

Ah, shit. They ain't comin' out.

HUXLEY

What do we do now?

Kincaid UNSNAPS his holster, slides out his .38 revolver.

KINCAID

We go get 'em.

HUXLEY

Maybe we should wait for backup, sarge.

KINCAID

Don't be such a baby, Huxley. Let's go.

Huxley UNSNAPS his holster.

EXT. POLICE CAR / BLAZER

The police car doors open. Huxley slowly emerges from the driver's door, Kincaid from the passenger side. They take cover behind the open doors, guns drawn.

Kincaid hoists the portable bullhorn.

KINCAID

GET OUT OF THE CAR WITH YOUR --

The Blazer engine ROARS, drowns Kincaid out. The rear tires SCREAM against wet asphalt. Small rocks and pebbles RICOCHET off the police car doors.

KINCAID

Son of a bitch!

The Blazer rockets down the street.
Huxley and Kincaid take cover, then stand up, guns FIRING.

INT. BLAZER - MOVING

Bullet holes in the rear window.

McCall at the wheel. Arms straight.
Luxe strains around, stares out back.

LUXE

You hit?

MCCALL

Don't think so. You?

LUXE

No. Looks like we got 'em by a quarter
mile.

MCCALL

They're on the radio. That's for damn
sure.

Luxe grabs one of the satchels.

LUXE

I'll take the jewelry. You keep the
cash.

MCCALL

What? What the hell are you --

Luxe opens the passenger door.

LUXE

Time to split up, buddy. Good luck.

Luxe jumps from the Blazer. Disappears into the night.

McCall leans over to the passenger side, SLAMS the door.

MCCALL

Good riddance. Freakin' lunatic.

EXT. WOODS

Luxe tumbles down a hillside, head over heels. He CRASHES
into a wire fence with a sign: ST. JUDE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC
RETREAT HOUSE.

The police siren fades in the distance.

Luxe struggles to his feet, tries to walk, SCREAMS in pain, falls to the ground.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

The Blazer streaks past. No lights

MOMENTS LATER

The police car ROARS by, lights flashing, siren SCREAMING.

INT. POLICE CAR

Huxley drives. Kincaid hangs up the radio.

KINCAID
Stolen. Up north.

HUXLEY
Figures.

KINCAID
Step on it, Huxley! Don't lose 'em.

HUXLEY
I'm givin' it all she's got, sarge!

KINCAID
Friggin' V8's. Should be illegal.

INT. BLAZER

McCall spots the pink neon OPHELIA'S sign through the rain splattered windshield.

EXT. OPHELIA'S

The police SIREN grows louder.

The Blazer, in a panic stop, slides sideways into the parking lot, SLAMS against Gaton's rig, disappears behind the eighteen wheeler.

MOMENTS LATER

The police car streaks past the diner.

INT. POLICE CAR

Huxley squints through the windshield.

HUXLEY

I don't see 'em.

KINCAID

Keep it floored, dammit! We ain't
gonna lose 'em!

INT. BLAZER

McCall lies flat on his back across the Blazer's bucket seats. COCKS the .22 Ruger.

The SIREN gradually fades out in the distance.

McCall's POUNDING heart and nervous BREATHING the only sounds.

He blinks his eyes, wipes the sweat from his forehead.

He slowly raises his head above the seat, takes a cautious peek out the perforated back window.

OPHELIA comes into view around the back of Gatton's rig. Doesn't notice the Blazer. Walks off toward her Hyundai.

McCall watches her, smiles. He opens the satchel, pulls out Shiso's fax. Studies it. Smiles again.

MCCALL

I'll be goddamned.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

A modest, well kept, rural home. Big front yard with a thick old oak tree. No visible neighbors, just woods.

Ophelia's Hyundai pulls down the long, gravel driveway.

She gets out of the car, walks up the steps onto the wood porch, unlocks the front door, walks in.

INT. BEDROOM

Dark. The door opens letting in a shaft of light. Ophelia enters, walks silently to the bed.

She bends down, kisses the small figure under the blankets on the forehead.

AHKEEM, Ophelia's 8 year old son, stirs.

AHKEEM
(drowsy)
Mom? Your late.

Ophelia sits down on the bed.

OPHELIA
I know, sweetheart. There was a little
trouble at the diner.

AHKEEM
What happened?

OPHELIA
Not tonight. You get back to sleep.
Tomorrow's a school day. And you've
got a big party tomorrow night.

AHKEEM
Oh, mom. I'm not a little kid anymore.
Tell me tomorrow?

OPHELIA
Promise.

AHKEEM
Is Shiso coming to my party?

OPHELIA
She wouldn't miss it for the world.

AHKEEM
You think maybe Cayes will come this
year?

Ophelia gets up. Strokes Ahkeem's forehead.

OPHELIA
I love you, Ahkeem.

AHKEEM
Love you too, mom.

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER

The police car crawls down the street. The beam from its
spotlight sweeps the area.

INT. BLAZER

McCall lies across the bucket seats. Eyes wide open.
The .22 Ruger rests on his chest.

He struggles up, peers out the passenger side window.

The glow of the patrol car spotlight shines under Gatton's
eighteen wheeler.

McCall ducks back down.

MCCALL

Shit.

INT. DR. SITES' HOUSE - OFFICE

Forensic technicians dust for prints around the dentist's
chair.

A Paramedic ZIPS up the body bag.

DR. SITES' DEN

Huxley and Kincaid watch Detective BRICK CORDOVINO probe
the contents of the open safe with latex gloves.

BRICK

Picked clean. Professional job.

He turns his attention to the two uniformed cops.

BRICK

You're supposed to wait for backup,
Kincaid.

KINCAID

I didn't think they'd pull a stunt
like that.

BRICK

The lieutenant may want your badges
for this.

KINCAID

It's all my fault. Huxley wanted to
wait, but I --

HUXLEY

No way, sarge. If they take your
badge, they can have mine, too.

Detective COLTRANE SACKS strides into the study carrying a document.

COLTRANE
Good news, Brick.

BRICK
What?

COLTRANE
The good doctor had insurance on his valuables. Everything's listed here. Including one Rolex watch.

BRICK
Serial number?

COLTRANE
Right here, in black and white.

BRICK
Beautiful. Kincaid, you and Huxley make sure that number gets to every pawn shop within one hundred miles of here ASAP. Got that?

KINCAID
Got it, sir.

Kincaid and Huxley turn to leave.

BRICK
Huxley?

They stop.

BRICK
Loyalty goes a long way in my book. I'll see what I can do for you two guys with the Lieutenant.

HUXLEY
Thank you, sir.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Sister Delphina, eyes closed, prays in front of the statue of St. Jude.

BANGING on the chapel doors.

Startled, the nun gets up, rushes to the large wooden double doors, throws them open.

Luxe falls into her arms.

SISTER DELPHINA

My god! You poor child!

LUXE

Help me.

INT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ophelia and Ahkeem munch pancakes at the kitchen table. Ophelia in her blue waitress uniform, Ahkeem in a DALLAS COWBOYS jersey with a big star in front.

The news drones from a table radio on the kitchen counter.

AHKEEM

Elkus beat up Gatton?

OPHELIA

More or less.

AHKEEM

Why?

NEWSCASTER

(radio)

Radcliffe Sites, renowned doctor of dental surgery, was found murdered in his home last night in the posh Melrose section of town.

OPHELIA

They had a disagreement about ... adult stuff, sweetheart. You wouldn't understand.

AHKEEM

That Gatton was botherin' you again, wasn't he?

OPHELIA

Don't you worry about me, young man. I can take care of myself.

NEWSCASTER

Police, responding to a Homejack

alert, arrived as two suspects were leaving the scene.

AHKEEM

Can't wait 'til I grow up so I can kick that fatso's a--

OPHELIA

That's enough! You don't talk like that in this house! Now, go get your books. You're too late for the bus. I'll drop you at school.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOVING

Gaton gingerly touches his heavily bandaged nose. The DRIVER looks over at him.

DRIVER

Leave it alone. Let it heal.

NEWSCASTER

(radio)

A high-speed car chase ensued, during which the suspects eluded apprehension.

DRIVER

Terrible thing, what happened to Doc Sites.

GATON

Never met him. There it is.

WINDSHIELD POV

Ophelia's diner. Gaton's truck in the lot.

DRIVER

Ophelia doesn't want you in the diner anymore, Gaton. The cops asked me to tell you.

Anger on Gaton's face.

NEWSCASTER

The getaway vehicle was a stolen black Chevy Blazer with a custom New Jersey license plate p-e-a-r-l number two.

GATON

You can drop me by the truck. Thanks
for the lift.

INT. BLAZER

McCall, crouched down in the front seat, stuffs cash into his pockets, listens to the car radio.

NEWSCASTER

Anyone with information on the whereabouts of this vehicle is urged to call a special hotline the police have set up --

McCall CLICKS off the radio.

MCCALL

Freakin' great!

EXT. GATON'S TRUCK

Gaton walks to the driver's side door, spots the bullet holes in the dented Blazer. Frowns. Climbs into his rig.

INT. BLAZER

McCall shoves the Ruger into his belt, covers it with the black sweater. He opens the car door.

EXT. BLAZER

McCall climbs out with the satchel and an overnight bag. He ducks down as Ophelia's Hyundai pulls in.

The Hyundai parks in its usual spot in the rear of the lot.

Ophelia gets out of the car, locks it, walks toward the diner.

INT. GATON'S TRUCK

Gaton rummages in a tool box, notices Ophelia walking.

GATON

Bitch.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Ophelia stops and frowns, stares straight at the Blazer, walks toward it.

Ophelia walks around the car, peers in all the windows.
Tries the doors. Locked.

McCall, crouched down, circles with her, keeps himself on
the opposite side of the SUV.

She shrugs, walks away, around Gaton's rig

Elkus' pickup pulls into the lot.

EXT. PICKUP

Elkus speaks through the open driver's window.

ELKUS

Mornin', Ophelia. Sorry about last
night. Can I still come in?

OPHELIA

I'd never deny a man his mornin'
coffee, Elkus. But if Gaton shows up,
you best keep your mouth shut.

INT. OPHELIA'S

Ophelia fires up the coffee maker.

Elkus takes off his Tazmanian Devil baseball hat, tosses it
on the counter, sits down.

ELKUS

You got the place cleaned up real
nice.

OPHELIA

No thanks to you.

ELKUS

Hey, you hear about what happened to
that dentist over in Melrose?

OPHELIA

What dentist?

ELKUS

Doc Sites. Got gutted like a catfish.

EXT. OPHELIA'S - REAR

McCall hides the satchel in some bushes near the dumpster.

INT. OPHELIA'S

Ophelia snaps a lid on a large coffee, hands it to Elkus.

OPHELIA
That's horrible! What'd they kill him
for?

ELKUS
The cops think he interrupted a
burglary.

Ophelia shakes her head.

OPHELIA
What's this crazy world coming to?

Elkus heads for the door with his coffee.

ELKUS
Beats me, Ophelia. You have a nice
day.

EXT. OPHELIA'S

Elkus heads for his pickup.

He gets WHACKED across the back with a tire iron.

ELKUS
Unnhh!

The coffee goes flying, SPLATTERS against the pickup.

GATON
Ain't laughin' now, huh?

He BELTS Elkus in the kneecap with the weapon.
Elkus SCREAMS, crumples down on all fours.

ELKUS
Chrissake, Gatton! You busted my damn
knee! You crazy?

GATON
Party's just startin', Elkus.

Gaton grabs Elkus by the collar, drags him around to the
rear of the diner.

EXT. OPHELIA'S - REAR

Gaton hurls Elkus against the dumpster.

ELKUS

Damn, Gaton! What's gotten into --

Gaton CRACKS the tire iron against Elkus' skull.

Elkus goes down in a heap.

GATON

Don't ever mess with me again, Elkus.

Elkus doesn't move.

GATON

Elkus?

Gaton stares at the corpse for a long moment, PANTS like a wild animal.

He opens the dumpster, hoists the wiry body over the edge. It THUMPS down inside.

INT. OPHELIA'S

Ophelia notices Elkus' baseball hat sitting on the counter.

OPHELIA

(sotto)

Damn it, Elkus! It's a wonder you remember your name.

She grabs the hat, rushes out the door.

EXT. OPHELIA'S

Ophelia sees Elkus' Pickup. Splattered coffee. Looks around the lot.

OPHELIA

Elkus!?

Scratches her head. Where can he be?

OPHELIA

Elkus? Your hat!

Gaton grabs her from behind, gets her in a stranglehold, squeezes her thigh with his free hand.

GATON

Look at that stain! I got stuff in the truck that'll help.

Ophelia flails away. Gaton's too strong.

OPHELIA

Gaton! You let me go right now!

Gaton drags her to the door of the sleeping quarters in the rear of his rig.

GATON

I think the spot remover's back here.

He opens the door, lifts Ophelia off her feet, throws her, kicking and screaming, into the cab.

INT. GATON'S RIG - CAB

Gaton climbs on top of Ophelia.
She struggles against his weight.
He laughs, pins her hands to the bunk.

GATON

We can do this the hard way or the easy way, Ophelia. Don't make no difference to me. I'll hurt you if I have to. What's it gonna be?

Ophelia, winded, crushed under his bulk.

OPHELIA

Okay, Gaton, okay. Get off me. Let me get undressed. I'll make it nice for you.

GATON

You swear?

OPHELIA

I swear.

Gaton releases her arms, gets off her, moves to the edge of the bunk.

GATON

Let's see.

Ophelia slowly unbuttons her waitress blouse.

GATON

Hurry up.

OPHELIA

Don't be in such a rush.

Ophelia slips out of her blouse, reaches behind her back.

GATON

Oh, yeah.

OPHELIA

You know, I always thought someday
we'd wind up together.

GATON

You did?

She removes her bra.

GATON

Oh, god.

Ophelia fondles her breast, motions for Gatton to kiss it.

He leans down. She cradles the back of his head.

She jerks her knee up, SMASHES it into his broken nose.

Gatton HOWLS in agony. Blood flies around the cab.

Ophelia reaches for the door.

Gatton grabs her.

GATON

Bitch!

He throws Ophelia back down on the bunk, punches her in the
face.

She slumps down, semi-conscious.

GATON

Now we do it my way.

Blood streams from his nose.

He unzips Ophelia's waitress pants, pulls them down.

Grabs her panties.

The cab door behind Gatton flies open.

GATON

What the --

McCall reaches in, grabs Gaton by the shirt, yanks him out of the cab.

Gaton sprawls onto the parking lot asphalt.

McCall climbs into the cab, covers Ophelia with the bunk bed blanket.

He lifts her in his arms, carries her out of the truck.

Gaton scrambles to his feet.

GATON

This is none of your damn business, mister! She's my woman!

McCall KICKS Gaton in the groin.

Gaton GROANS, doubles over, clutches his privates.

MCCALL

I'll just stick around until she comes to, get her take on it. Meantime, I'll bet the police will be real interested in what's in that dumpster out back. And how it got there.

GATON

What do you want?!

MCCALL

This your truck?

GATON

Yeah.

MCCALL

Don't ever come back, friend. I might be in a bad mood next time.

INT. OPHELIA'S

McCall carries Ophelia through the revolving door.

In the background, Gaton's eighteen wheeler ROARS out of the parking lot, disappears down the street.

McCall settles Ophelia into a booth.

He goes to the door, hangs up the CLOSED sign.

He walks behind the counter, grabs some towels, fills a bowl with hot water.

He slides into the booth, cleans Ophelia's face with a hot towel.

She comes to, sees McCall, YELPS.

MCCALL

Easy. Your trucker friend's long gone.

Ophelia eyes McCall warily. He gets a fresh towel, dabs at a bruise.

OPHELIA

Ouch!

MCCALL

Sorry.

OPHELIA

You're not from around here. Who are you?

MCCALL

You don't remember me, do you?

OPHELIA

Should I?

MCCALL

High school? I was a senior? You were a freshman?

She studies his face.

OPHELIA

McCall? McCall Wilkes?

MCCALL

Been a long time, Ophelia.

OPHELIA

You saved my life out there, McCall Wilkes. Thank you.

Ophelia smiles up at him, weakly.

McCall smiles back, entranced.

OPHELIA
What brings you to back here?

MCCALL
Decided to take some time off. See the
old town again.

OPHELIA
Time off from what?

McCall hesitates, thinks.

MCCALL
I'm a doctor. Up north.

Ophelia frowns, suspicious.

OPHELIA
A doctor? You remember Shiso Sugato?

MCCALL
The nosy slant? Sure. You two were
best friends, right?

OPHELIA
Heard from her lately?

MCCALL
Last time I saw Shiso she was prancin'
along the sidelines shouting "go
team".

OPHELIA
Uh-huh. And I'll bet you never heard
of cupid's arrow dot com either,
right?

MCCALL
Never heard of it.

OPHELIA
Sure.

Ophelia pulls the blanket tighter around herself.

OPHELIA
You didn't happen to ...

MCCALL

They're right next to you.

Ophelia reaches down, retrieves her blood-stained blouse and bra.

OPHELIA

Could you excuse me for a minute?

McCall gets up, lets Ophelia out of the booth.

She heads for the ladies room.

OPHELIA

Make yourself a coffee if you like,
Dr. Wilkes.

MCCALL

It's still McCall, Ophelia.

Ophelia smiles.

OPHELIA

Okay, McCall.

She disappears into the ladies' room.

McCall walks behind the counter, WHISTLES a happy tune, pours himself a cup of coffee.

Behind him, through the window, outside in the diner parking lot, the police car pulls up behind the Blazer.

McCall pours half-and-half into his coffee, stirs in two sugars.

He carries the coffee mug over to the ladies' room door, TAPS on it gently.

MCCALL

Ophelia? You okay?

The revolving door SPINS (O.S.).

HUXLEY (O.S.)

FREEZE, ASSHOLE!

McCall whirls, drops his coffee. The mug SHATTERS on the diner's tile floor.

Huxley and Kincaid, legs spread wide, level their .38's at McCall's chest.

KINCAID

On your belly, jerkoff! Hands behind
your head!

Ophelia charges out of the ladies' room, buttoning her
bloody blouse.

OPHELIA

Huxley Laton and Kincaid Rhode! Did I
call the police? What's the meaning of
this? Pointing guns at a friend of
mine!

Kincaid sheepishly lowers his .38, Huxley keeps his gun
trained on McCall.

KINCAID

Friend of yours?

McCall and Huxley stare each other down.

McCall lowers his hands.

MCCALL

Hello, Huxley.

HUXLEY

Do I know you?

MCCALL

McCall. McCall Wilkes.

OPHELIA

Doctor McCall Wilkes to you, Huxley.

Huxley slowly lowers his gun. Looks to Ophelia.

HUXLEY

Ophelia, your blouse. What the hell
happened?

OPHELIA

McCall damn near saved my life when
that cretin Gaton, who you boys said
you'd keep an eye on, came back here
this morning and assaulted me.

Huxley eyes McCall suspiciously.

HUXLEY

What are you doin' back in town?

MCCALL
Vacation.

HUXLEY
Where's your car?

MCCALL
Don't have one. Came in by bus.

HUXLEY
Where's Gatton?

MCCALL
He got away. In his truck.

KINCAID
How long ago?

MCCALL
About twenty minutes.

KINCAID
Ophelia, if we catch Gatton, will you
press charges?

OPHELIA
Damn right I will!

The two uniformed cops holster their .38's, rush to the
door.

OPHELIA
Hey! Huxley! Kincaid!

They stop short, turn.

OPHELIA
Don't you think you owe somebody an
apology?

HUXLEY
(grudgingly)
Sorry about the misunderstanding,
Wilkes. No hard feelings, I hope.

MCCALL
None at all, Huxley.

HUXLEY

How long you plan to be in town?

MCCALL

Hard to tell.

HUXLEY

You wouldn't happen to know anything about that busted-up V-8 Chevy Blazer parked outside, would you?

MCCALL

What Chevy Blazer?

INT. ST. JUDE'S INFIRMARY - LUXE'S ROOM

A room of white. Sister Delphina watches Luxe in bed. He slowly comes to.

SISTER DELPHINA

Welcome back to the world of the living, Mr. Saintes.

LUXE

How do you know my name?

SISTER DELPHINA

The doctor took the liberty of examining your wallet. He had to fill out some forms.

Luxe tries to move, grimaces in pain.

SISTER DELPHINA

Don't worry. It's in the night table. We're not exactly thieves.

LUXE

Thank you for helping me.

SISTER DELPHINA

Your ankle is pretty badly broken, I'm afraid. What happened to you?

LUXE

I picked up a hitchhiker. He beat me up, stole my car.

SISTER DELPHINA

Oh my! I'll summon the police!

LUXE

No! I mean, no, it's okay. It was an old car and he's just some poor, misguided individual. Let's let god try to help him out, okay?

Sister Delphina sits near the bed. Strokes Luxe's forehead.

SISTER DELPHINA
You are a very compassionate man.

LUXE
I try.

INT. OPHELIA'S DINER - COUNTER

McCall devours an omelette.
Ophelia leans across the counter, studies him, amused.

OPHELIA
What's that bulge?

MCCALL
Excuse me?

OPHELIA
(laughs)
The one on the side of your belt.

McCall chews, thinks.

MCCALL
Beeper. Doctors gotta carry 'em. You know, in case something goes wrong.

OPHELIA
Ain't nothin' wrong with your appetite.

MCCALL
Ain't nothin' wrong with your cooking.

OPHELIA
Weren't you on the football team?

MCCALL
And the diving team.

OPHELIA
When I was a cheerleader, I remember that you were on the football team, but I don't recall seein' you play

very much.

MCCALL
That's because of that pass I dropped.

OPHELIA
What pass?

MCCALL
The one I dropped when I caught a
glimpse of you on the sidelines in
that short skirt. Broke my
concentration.

Ophelia laughs, playfully punches his arm.

OPHELIA
Why didn't you ask me out if you were
so interested?

MCCALL
I was gonna ask you out.

OPHELIA
Sure.

MCCALL
I was! I struck up a conversation with
you in the hallway one day after
school. Remember? You wouldn't give me
the time of day. I figured you weren't
interested.

OPHELIA
I remember. I got all tongue-tied. I
was interested. Way too interested.

McCall frowns, chews his omelette.

MCCALL
Too interested?

OPHELIA
You were the wrong age. And the wrong
color. Momma would have killed me. And
you too, probably.

She watches McCall sip his coffee.

OPHELIA
I remember when your folks died up

north. That was so terrible. I'm
sorry.

MCCALL
It was a long time ago.

OPHELIA
They were killed during a robbery,
weren't they?

MCCALL
Shot by the police. It was an
accident. A case of mistaken identity.

OPHELIA
You left town all of a sudden.

MCCALL
I had a ... business opportunity. Up
north. Made a lot of money. Put myself
through medical school.

Ophelia goes to the sink, pours herself a glass of water.

OPHELIA
Is there a Mrs. Wilkes?

McCall pauses mid-bite, stares at her, surprised.

OPHELIA
Oh, I apologize. If that's too
personal --

MCCALL
No. I mean no, there's no Mrs. Wilkes.
Never has been.

OPHELIA
Ever come close?

MCCALL
Never. Just never met the right one, I
guess.

OPHELIA
Are you ... sorry, it's really none of
my --

MCCALL
(laughs)
Gay? Hell, no. Just got too wrapped up

in my work. Never had time to meet anyone.

McCall eats. Ophelia sips water. They smile at each other.

MCCALL
My turn. You married?

OPHELIA
No.

MCCALL
Ever?

OPHELIA
Never.

MCCALL
Why not? You a ...

OPHELIA
(laughs)
No, I'm not.

Her face falls, suddenly serious.

OPHELIA
Momma ran the diner when I was growing up. I helped out behind the counter after school.

MCCALL
I remember.

OPHELIA
I developed a terrible crush on a trucker named Cayes who'd stop in every now and then. Cayes was thirty two and married. Had two kids. I was sixteen. A virgin. One night he shows up in this brand new rig. Asks me if I want to see the inside of the cab. "Sure", I said. I wanted to kiss him, that was all. I didn't know anything. One thing lead to another. Couple of months later, I find out I'm pregnant. Cayes says "I'll do the right thing, Ophelia. I'll take good care of you. You'll never have to tell your momma. Don't worry". He never came back after that.

McCall lays his fork on the plate, stares at her.

MCCALL

I'm sorry.

OPHELIA

(smiles)

Don't be. Ahkeem's ninth birthday party is tonight. If you've got nothing to do ...

INT. BANK

Shiso sits across from MR. INGLEWOOD, a nerdish bank manager.

He studies financial documents.

Shiso fidgets, concerned.

SHISO

Mr. Inglewood, many e-commerce start ups have a few bumps before they take off. Surely you are aware of that.

Inglewood reads, doesn't look up.

INGLEWOOD

Mm-hmm.

SHISO

I've devoted three years of my life to Cupid's Arrow. If you could just approve one last small loan. Just five thousand. I know it will turn into a success --

INGLEWOOD

Miss Sugato, I admire your energy and your drive to succeed. But your collateral is already overextended --

Shiso leans toward him, takes his hand, looks him in the eye.

SHISO

I won't let my company die, Mr. Inglewood. I'll do anything for that loan ... anything.

Inglewood slowly pulls his hand away.

INGLEWOOD
I'm sorry, Miss Sugato.

EXT. BANK

Shiso storms out of the building, wipes tears from her face, runs to her Lexus parked on the street.

EXT. GRAMMAR SCHOOL - SCHOOLYARD - DAY

A bunch of pre-teens in a touch football game.
Ahkeem among them in his DALLAS COWBOYS jersey.

Ophelia's Hyundai parked near the fence.

INT. HYUNDAI

Ophelia in the driver's seat. McCall shotgun.
They watch the touch football game.

OPHELIA
Ahkeem's the one in the Dallas jersey.

MCCALL
Cayes has never seen him?

OPHELIA
Doesn't know he exists.

MCCALL
Must be strange. I mean, I could never
do that. Just walk away. Never know.

OPHELIA
Then you're the exception to the rule,
McCall.
(beat)
Catch it, baby, catch it!

EXT. SCHOOLYARD

Ahkeem runs a deep pass pattern. Wide open.
The football spirals down. Hits him in the hands.
He drops it.

His teammates GROAN.

They run over, shove Ahkeem around.

SCHOOLMATE #1
Ahkeem! You suck!

SCHOOLMATE #2
You are so lame, man!

AHKEEM
Shut up! Don't push me!

INT./EXT. - HYUNDAI

Ophelia SIGHS, shakes her head.

OPHELIA
He never had anybody to teach him.

She opens the car door, gets out, YELLS into the playground.

OPHELIA
Ahkeem! C'mon! Time to go!

Ahkeem runs out of the playground, over to the car.

McCall watches Ahkeem wipe a tear from his face as the boy climbs into the back seat.

AHKEEM
Hi, mom. Who's he?

Ophelia puts the car in gear, pulls away.

OPHELIA
This is an old friend, Ahkeem. Dr.
McCall Wilkes from up north. He's on
vacation, visiting his old home town.

McCall reaches into the backseat, gives Ahkeem a firm handshake.

MCCALL
Ophelia's told me a lot about you.

AHKEEM
Are you gonna come to my party?

MCCALL
You bet. I was invited.

AHKEEM
Hey Mom? Is that blood on your shirt?

Ophelia shoots McCall a look.

OPHELIA

There was a little accident at work,
sweetheart. No big deal. McCall helped
me out. I'm going to be fine.

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER - REAR

A containerized waste disposal truck RUMBLES in, inserts
two big metal prongs under the dumpster. Steel-on-steel
SCREECHES.

The dumpster ascends into the air, over the cab. Garbage
pours into the bay of the truck.

The empty container swings back down, BANGS into position
on the asphalt.

The truck pulls away.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

The Hyundai pulls down the gravel driveway and stops.

Ophelia, McCall, and Ahkeem climb out of the car.
McCall carries his overnight bag.

OPHELIA

You can stay outside and play until it
gets dark, Ahkeem. I've got to go in
and get things ready for your party.

AHKEEM

Okay, mom.

He goes into the garage.

Ophelia heads for the house, McCall follows.

MCCALL

I'll help.

Ophelia takes McCall's overnight bag.

OPHELIA

Do me a favor. Stay out here and spend
some time with Ahkeem. He doesn't get
a chance like this very often.

McCall smiles.

MCCALL

Sure.

Ophelia disappears into the house.

McCall saunters into the garage.

INT. GARAGE

McCall watches Ahkeem rummage through a big cardboard box full of junk.

MCCALL

Lose something?

Ahkeem pulls a football out of the box, turns to McCall.

AHKEEM

You know how to catch?

EXT. CITY DUMP

The garbage truck's hydraulic lift WHINES. The bay ascends at an increasing angle. Piles of garbage slide into the dump.

INT. GARBAGE TRUCK

The DRIVER puts the rig in gear, pulls away. His face falls. He SLAMS on the brakes.

REAR VIEW MIRROR POV

Elkus' arm protrudes from the mountain of garbage, as if clutching for some means of escape.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - DUSK

McCall and Ahkeem toss the football back and forth. A big smile on Ahkeem's face.

Shiso's Lexus pulls into the driveway, parks behind the Hyundai.

Shiso gets out of the car with two gaily wrapped presents. She walks toward the game of catch.

SHISO

Hi, Ahkeem! Happy birthday!

AHKEEM

Hi, Shiso! What'd you get me?

SHISO

Not until after dinner, young man. You know the rules.

She approaches McCall, extends her hand.

SHISO

I'm Shiso Sugato. I don't believe we've met.

McCall shakes her hand.

MCCALL

McCall Wilkes.

SHISO

McCall? From high school?

MCCALL

Guilty. How have you been, Shiso?

SHISO

Fine, just fine. What brings you back to town after all these years?

MCCALL

Taking some time off. Renewing old acquaintances.

McCall points at the Lexus.

MCCALL

Looks like you're doing pretty well.

SHISO

Can't complain. Started my own company. Heck of a lot of work but I love it.

MCCALL

Cupid's Arrow dot com?

SHISO

You've heard of it?

MCCALL

Sorry. Ophelia told me about it.

AHKEEM

Wait 'til you see how far he can throw
a football! C'mon McCall! Throw me the
bomb!

Ahkeem takes off across the yard. McCall cocks his arm,
fires an arcing spiral. Ahkeem catches it.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

Get your butt in here and give me a
hand, slant!

Ophelia stands in the front doorway in a fresh blouse,
jeans and apron, arms folded.

Shiso storms toward the front door.

SHISO

And a pleasant evening to you too, B!

Ophelia and Shiso laugh, hug each other, enter the house.

INT. KITCHEN

Ophelia drags Shiso into the kitchen, sits her in a chair.

SHISO

Ow! Stop squeezing my arm, B! What's
wrong with you?

OPHELIA

I told you not to!

SHISO

What are you talking about?

OPHELIA

Do I look dumb? This drop-dead
handsome never-married doctor from a
hundred years ago shows up at my diner
today and you expect me to believe you
had nothin' to do with it? McCall's
the doctor you told me about last
night, right?

SHISO

I sure hope not. The doctor I told you
about last night is dead, Ophelia.

OPHELIA

Dead?!

SHISO

It was Dr. Sites. The dental surgeon
that was murdered over in Melrose.

OPHELIA

Oh my god.

Shiso touches Ophelia's face.

SHISO

Is that a bruise?

OPHELIA

I'm fine. Gatton tried to assault me in
his truck. The police are looking for
him. He would have gone all the way if
McCall didn't show up.

SHISO

Right out of a fairy tale. The knight
in shining armor returns, saves the
damsel in distress. Does he live
happily ever after?

Ophelia can't hide her embarrassed smile.

OPHELIA

Maybe.

INT. DINING ROOM

McCall, Ahkeem, and Shiso at the dining room table in party
hats.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

Somebody get the lights!

Shiso gets up, hits the switch.
The room goes dark.

Ophelia carries in a birthday cake with nine candles.
Shiso SNAPS natural light pictures with a 35mm Nikon.

OPHELIA

(singing)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU ...

AHKEEM

Aw, mom --

OPHELIA, MCCALL, AND SHISO
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY DEAR AHKEEM,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU.

Ophelia places the cake on the table.

OPHELIA
C'mon, Ahkeem, blow 'em out!

SHISO
Make a wish first!

She SNAPS away.

Ahkeem looks at McCall, smiles, takes a deep breath, blows out all nine candles.

Ophelia, McCall, and Shiso CLAP and CHEER.

Ophelia pulls the candles out of the cake, PLOPS them into a brass bowl on the table.

Ophelia cuts the cake.

Shiso gets up, goes to the window, opens it.

SHISO
Smoky in here.

AHKEEM
Mom's cutting the cake, Shiso. It's time. C'mon, you promised.

Shiso reaches under the table.

SHISO
Your mother and I got you a combined gift this year.

AHKEEM
Combined?

Shiso pulls up two gift-wrapped boxes, one little, one big. She hands the smaller one to Ahkeem.

SHISO
Open mine first.

Ahkeem, excited, RIPS the paper off the box, opens it.

An official American League professional baseball.

AHKEEM

Oh, man! This is neat!

Ophelia distributes slices of cake.
Shiso hands the large box to Ahkeem.

SHISO

And now your mother's.

OPHELIA

Happy birthday, sweetheart.

Ahkeem TEARS the present open with gusto.

A brand new, genuine leather, Ivan Rodriguez model
catcher's mitt.

Ahkeem smells the leather. Beams.

AHKEEM

Holy sh-- ! Thanks mom!

SHISO

Gimme a picture. Get closer together.

McCall and Ophelia slide closer, sandwich Ahkeem in the
middle.

AHKEEM

You know how to pitch a baseball,
McCall?

MCCALL

You bet I do, partner.

Big smiles all around. Shiso SNAPS the photo.

MCCALL

I got you a little something.

AHKEEM

Where is it?

MCCALL

Under your napkin.

Ahkeem lifts the napkin, picks up a \$100 bill.

AHKEEM

Wow!

OPHELIA

McCall, you really shouldn't ...

MCCALL

Put it in the bank for him, Ophelia.
Save it for a rainy day.

A thoughtful look on Shiso's face.

INT. MORGUE

Elkus' naked body lies on a stainless steel slab.

The CORONER looks down at the corpse.

The detectives, Brick and Coltrane, along with Huxley and Kincaid, both in uniform, surround the slab.

CORONER

Blunt instrument. Baseball bat,
fireplace poker, maybe a tire iron.
Something like that.

BRICK

Huxley, get on the wire. Have the
charges against Gatton changed to first
degree murder.

COLTRANE

I don't see it that way, Brick.

BRICK

Well just what way do you see it,
Coltrane?

COLTRANE

I see the two guys that did Dr. Sites
hiding out in the Blazer in Ophelia's
lot. Elkus stumbles upon them. They
whack Elkus. Toss him in the dumpster.
They wait until morning when the
heat's off a bit and they blow town.

CORONER

Elkus suffered before he died.

BRICK

Suffered?

CORONER

He's got a cracked shoulderblade and a shattered kneecap. The pain must have been excruciating. Whoever did this wanted Elkus to suffer before he died.

BRICK

My money's on Gatton. Get it on the wire, Huxley.

Huxley and Kincaid stride toward the exit.
Huxley stops, turns.

HUXLEY

Sir?

BRICK

Yes, Huxley?

HUXLEY

Thanks for what you did with the Lieutenant. He ripped me and Kincaid a new one but we're still on the job. He said he would have shit-canned us if it wasn't for you.

BRICK

Just catch me some bad guys, son.

Huxley and Kincaid exit. Brick turns to Coltrane.

BRICK

Coltrane, have an FBI profiler look at this case. See if they think Gatton is still out for revenge.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Ophelia and McCall sit on the porch steps.
They wave at Shiso's Lexus pulling out of the driveway.

MCCALL

You've got a terrific kid

OPHELIA

I thought he'd never go to sleep.

MCCALL

Great party.

OPHELIA
Helluva lot better than last year.

MCCALL
What happened?

Ophelia points to the football lying on the lawn.

OPHELIA
Shiso and I bought him that official
NFL football. He unwrapped it and
started to cry.

MCCALL
Cry? Why?

OPHELIA
He said: "Who am I gonna play catch
with?". Then he stormed off into his
room and slammed the door. It was a
bad scene.

MCCALL
Nice to see him smile.

OPHELIA
Are you too tired to go for a ride?

MCCALL
Where to?

OPHELIA
My surprise.

Ophelia gets up, takes McCall's hand, pulls him to his
feet.

OPHELIA
C'mon, it's not far.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

Wilderness. The Hyundai zips down the road.

EXT. SCENIC VIEW REST STOP

"JACKSON'S RAVINE" on a wooden sign. Ophelia and McCall sit
on the hood of the Hyundai.

OPHELIA
Beautiful, isn't it? I love it here.

The moonlight shimmers off the surface of the lake one thousand feet below.

OPHELIA

Ever bring a girl up here when you were in high school?

MCCALL

Maybe once.

OPHELIA

(laughs)

Yeah, right. I missed all of that. When Shiso and the rest of my friends were up here making out, I was home nursing Ahkeem.

MCCALL

Does your mother still help out at the diner?

OPHELIA

She died six years ago. Lung cancer.

MCCALL

I'm sorry.

OPHELIA

Like you said, it's a long time ago.

MCCALL

How did she take it when you ...

OPHELIA

Told her I was pregnant? Oh, she went crazy. Wouldn't talk to me for weeks. Cried herself to sleep every night. Couldn't understand how the daughter of a good Southern Baptist could let something like that happen. But then, after Ahkeem was born, a wonderful thing happened.

MCCALL

What?

OPHELIA

She loved him so much, and he made her so happy, it was like I never did anything wrong in the first place.

MCCALL

Nice story. Happy ending.

OPHELIA

Know what the weirdest part of it was?

MCCALL

What?

OPHELIA

Turns out I was conceived the same way Ahkeem was. Mama had an affair with a married trucker after papa died. Mama told me about it on her deathbed. I didn't want any secrets between Ahkeem and I, so I told him about Cayes as soon as he was old enough to understand. He keeps hoping someday Cayes will come back. I don't have the heart to tell him it's never going to happen.

McCall grows silent, deep in thought.

OPHELIA

What are you thinking?

MCCALL

I'm thinking this guy Cayes that ran off and never came back ...

OPHELIA

Yeah?

MCCALL

He's a fool.

Ophelia laughs, takes McCall's arm, snuggles in.

OPHELIA

It's a little chilly.

MCCALL

A bit.

OPHELIA

Where are you staying? I can give you a lift.

MCCALL

I really don't ... is that Holiday Inn
still in town?

OPHELIA
My couch is your couch, McCall. What
do you say?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Ophelia tosses blankets, sheets, and a pillow onto the
couch.

McCall PLOPS his overnight bag next to them.

OPHELIA
No mints on the pillows, but you can't
beat the price.

MCCALL
I'll be fine. Can I walk you up?

Ophelia takes his arm.

OPHELIA
I'd like that.

STAIRWAY

They ascend, arm-in-arm.

HALLWAY

They walk quietly. Stop at the door to Ahkeem's room.

OPHELIA
Wait here. Gotta say goodnight to my
little guy.

MCCALL
Sure.

She opens the door. Tiptoes in.

BEDROOM

Ophelia bends down, kisses Ahkeem's forehead.
He rustles under the covers.

AHKEEM
Mom?

OPHELIA
Sorry, sweetheart. I didn't mean to
wake you. Go back to sleep.

AHKEEM
That was the best birthday ever.

OPHELIA
Yes it was.

AHKEEM
Is McCall still here?

OPHELIA
Yes he is. Now, go to sleep.
Tomorrow's a school day.

AHKEEM
Will he be here tomorrow?

OPHELIA
I believe he will.

HALLWAY

McCall watches them intently.

Ophelia comes out of Ahkeem's room, closes the door softly.

OPHELIA
If you have some time tomorrow after
he gets home from school, it would be
great if you could help break in that
new glove.

MCCALL
I'll make time.

They walk down the hall, stop at the door to Ophelia's
bedroom. She turns, smiles.

OPHELIA
Well, this is where I get off --

McCall takes her in his arms, kisses her passionately. She
responds, clutches the back of his head. Kisses him.

They embrace tenderly.

OPHELIA
Let's take this slow, one step at a

time, okay?

MCCALL

Time is something I've got plenty of.

Ophelia opens the bedroom door. Stops. Turns.

OPHELIA

I'll see you tomorrow.

MCCALL

That has a real nice ring to it.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark. Quiet. Crickets CHIRP.
In the distance, the WHOOSH of a big truck's air brakes.

EXT. DINING ROOM WINDOW

Still open a crack. A hand slides it up.

INT. DINING ROOM

Dark. A figure moves through the room.

KITCHEN

The figure moves through slowly.

STAIRWAY

Dim, low watt night lights.
A CREAK. Something heavy.

Gaton ascends the stairs, tire iron in hand, his bandaged nose a bloody stump.

HALLWAY

Gaton silently approaches Ahkeem's room, opens the door.
He sees the boy's small form under the blanket.

He quietly closes the door, proceeds down the hall to
Ophelia's room.

BEDROOM

Ophelia, blissfully asleep.

The door opens. Gaton enters.

He walks slowly to the bed, looks down at Ophelia.

Gaton hoists the tire iron up, over his head.

Rage on his face.

The Ruger silencer presses into the nape of his neck.

Gaton slowly turns.

McCall looks him in the eye.

McCall takes the tire iron out of Gaton's hands, then raises a finger to his lips, "shush".

McCall points to the door.

He grabs Gaton's collar, presses the Ruger against his temple. The two men silently leave the room.

STAIRWAY

The two men slowly descend.

KITCHEN

McCall flips on the light, motions for Gaton to sit down. The large man complies. McCall picks up the phone.

GATON

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

McCall hesitates, stares at him.

GATON

P-e-a-r-l number two. I go down, you go down.

EXT. OPHELIA'S BACKYARD

McCall pushes Gaton through Ophelia's tomato garden, keeps the Ruger pressed against his head.

GATON

Look, mister, I made a mistake.

MCCALL

Shut up.

GATON

Just lemme go. I'll never come back, I swear.

MCCALL

Keep walkin'.

GATON
Please, mister!

They come out of the garden, enter the woods beyond the back yard, go out of frame.

GATON (O.S.)
You want me to beg?! Okay, I'll get on my knees and --

PHFFT! PHFFT! Two suppressed shots from the Ruger.
A THUMP in the woods.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD

The first hint of dawn in the sky.
The garage door open.

INT. GARAGE

McCall searches through gardening tools, finds a big shovel. He lifts it.

AHKEEM (O.S.)
What'cha doin' with the shovel?

McCall whirls.
Ahkeem at the garage doorway with his new ball and mitt.

MCCALL
Couldn't sleep, partner. I was gonna do some work in your mom's tomato garden.

AHKEEM
No you're not.

He marches into the garage.

AHKEEM
I got a better idea.

He rummages through the cardboard box, find's a peewee size baseball glove.

AHKEEM
You can use this one. C'mon.

EXT. FRONT YARD

Ahkeem in a catcher's crouch, POUNDS the new mitt.

AHKEEM

C'mon, Mariano! Pop it right in here!
No batter! No batter!

Forty-five feet away, McCall goes into his windup, hurls a low-speed strike.

It POPS into Ahkeem's glove.

AHKEEM

Strike three! Attaboy, Mariano!

He fires the hardball back to McCall.

AHKEEM

One more, baby! One more! Burn it past
'em!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Ophelia, in her waitress uniform, watches them from the window. She smiles.

She walks to the front door, opens it.

OPHELIA

Hey Rodriguez! You're gonna be late
for school! C'mon and have some
breakfast! You too, Mariano!

Ahkeem and McCall come running in from the lawn, into the room, laughing, sweating.

OPHELIA

Breakfast is on the table getting
cold, you two! Now move it! You
already missed the bus, Ahkeem! We're
gonna have to drive you!

INT. ST. JUDE'S INFIRMARY - LUXE'S ROOM

Sister Delphina sits on the bed, strokes Luxe's forehead.

SISTER DELPHINA

Compassion is a gift from god. You
should feel honored.

LUXE

Right.

SISTER DELPHINA

My favorite saint is Saint Jude. The patron saint of hopeless cases. He was one of the twelve apostles. The brother of James the Less.

LUXE

Uh-huh.

SISTER DELPHINA

I worship the saints. I so admire their untiring desire to serve the passion of the almighty. I feel I fall woefully short of that high ideal.

Luxe props himself up, winces, painfully interested.

LUXE

How so?

Sister Delphina offers her hand. He takes it.

SISTER DELPHINA

Sometimes ... my thoughts are impure.

Luxe strokes her hand.

LUXE

Do you want to talk about it?

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The Hyundai pulls up near the fence. Stops.

INT. HYUNDAI

McCall drives. Ophelia in the front with him. Ahkeem in the back seat.

AHKEEM

You gonna be around after school, McCall?

McCall and Ophelia exchange a long glance.

MCCALL

You bet, partner.

AHKEEM

Neat! See you later! Bye, mom!

OPHELIA

Bye, sweetheart.

He opens the door and gets out, runs into the schoolyard.
An excited, happy nine-year old.

McCall puts the car in gear, pulls away.

They ride in silence for several moments.

OPHELIA

I want you to promise me something.

McCall looks at her, takes her hand. Holds it.

OPHELIA

Promise me you won't just disappear.
You can leave anytime you want, but
promise me you'll have a talk with him
first. Promise you won't just vanish
without explaining things to him.

MCCALL

I'm not going to disappear, Ophelia.

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER - DAY

The Hyundai pulls into the empty parking lot. Elkus' pickup
and the Blazer gone.

INT. HYUNDAI

McCall stops the car. Ophelia looks at him.

OPHELIA

You sure you're gonna be okay alone
all day in a strange house?

MCCALL

I got plenty to think about. Need a
chance to rest up my throwin' arm,
anyway.

Ophelia LAUGHS, leans across to McCall. They kiss,
tenderly, for a long time.

EXT. DINER

Ophelia gets out of the car, trots to the diner's front

door, a happy bounce in her step.

McCall pulls the Hyundai out of the lot, down the street a half a block, out of sight from the diner. He parks against the curb.

EXT. SIDEWALK

McCall gets out of the car, sprints into the foliage, makes his way to the edge of the diner lot.

He hides behind a tree, makes sure Ophelia is safely inside.

EXT. DINER LOT

McCall, in a low crouch, dashes across the blacktop.

EXT. DINER - REAR

McCall rummages in the bushes near the dumpster, retrieves the satchel.

He opens it, checks the contents, smiles, SNAPS it shut.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Hyundai rolls to a stop on the shoulder near a big green highway sign: I-95 NORTH. An ARROW on the sign points to the right, up the entrance ramp.

INT. HYUNDAI

McCall, alone in the car, stares at the sign. Thinks.

He looks over at the satchel, perched on the passenger seat.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

The Hyundai pulls off the shoulder, makes a u-turn, drives away from the entrance ramp.

INT. OPHELIA'S DINER

Ophelia slices a bologna sandwich. The morning crowd GABS at the counter.

Huxley and Kincaid come through the revolving door.

HUXLEY

Hi, Ophelia.

OPHELIA
Huxley. Hello, Kincaid. Coffee?

The two uniformed cops slide onto counter stools.

KINCAID
Thanks.

Ophelia pours a cup for each.

HUXLEY
I'm afraid we've got some bad news.

OPHELIA
What?

HUXLEY
There's no easy way to say this, so
I'm just gonna say it. Elkus is dead.

OPHELIA
What?! Oh my god! How ...

HUXLEY
He was murdered.

KINCAID
The body turned up at the town dump.

Ophelia, a little woozy, comes out from behind the counter,
sits on the stool next to Huxley.

OPHELIA
Good lord! How awful.

Huxley holds Ophelia's hand.

HUXLEY
You okay?

OPHELIA
A little stunned.

HUXLEY
Brick thinks Gatton did it.

KINCAID
The thing is, we haven't been able to
find Gatton yet.

HUXLEY

A profiler from the FBI analyzed the case and, well, the results weren't good.

OPHELIA

Profiler?

KINCAID

Experts that try to get inside a killer's head, figure out what he's gonna do next.

OPHELIA

What does that mean, "the results weren't good?"

KINCAID

The profiler says it's very likely that Gatton will come after you next. Revenge at all costs.

HUXLEY

So keep your eyes open and your doors and windows closed and locked.

KINCAID

We'll keep an eye on this place and your house as best we can.

OPHELIA

If Gatton shows up at my house, he's gonna have a big problem.

HUXLEY

What?

OPHELIA

McCall's staying with Ahkeem and I for a while.

Huxley's face falls. He lets her hand go.

HUXLEY

McCall's staying at your house?

OPHELIA

That's right.

HUXLEY

Overnight?

OPHELIA

Now don't go gettin' the wrong idea,
Huxley. He sleeps on the couch.

EXT. DINER

Huxley and Kincaid walk across the parking lot toward the
police car.

HUXLEY

Somethin' about that McCall doesn't
add up.

KINCAID

Like what?

HUXLEY

I don't know. Call it instinct.

KINCAID

Instinct? Shit, Huxley, you're just
jealous.

HUXLEY

What's that supposed to mean?

KINCAID

You'd give your left nut to be
sleepin' on her couch. Just one flight
of stairs away from paradise.

HUXLEY

Shut up!

KINCAID

He saved her life, for god's sake!
What more do you want?

HUXLEY

Let's just drop it, okay?

EXT. WOODS BEHIND OPHELIA'S HOUSE - DAY

McCall sweats, digs a grave next to Gatton's corpse.

Four feet deep. Done. He climbs out. Wipes his brow.
Looks down at Gatton.

MCCALL

Want me to say a few words?

He KICKS the body. It rolls over.

MCCALL

Sorry, can't think of anything.

He kicks the corpse again. It rolls, THUMPS down into the shallow resting place.

MCCALL

You'll never hurt her again. Nobody will.

McCall loads the shovel with dirt, hurls it on top of the body.

He stops short. A car RUMBLES down Ophelia's gravel driveway.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Shiso's Lexus rolls in, stops behind the Hyundai. Shiso gets out, walks to the front door, knocks.

She waits a moment. Nothing happens. She knocks again.

MCCALL (O.S.)

Shiso?

She turns. McCall on the lawn, sweaty, dirt on his clothes. Shiso frowns at his appearance. McCall notices.

MCCALL

(laughs)

I'm cultivating Ophelia's tomato garden.

SHISO

How nice.

Shiso hands McCall a ONE HOUR PHOTO envelope.

SHISO

I brought the pictures from Ahkeem's party.

MCCALL

Great. How'd they come out?

SHISO

Terrific, if I do say so myself.

MCCALL
Ophelia's at the diner.

SHISO
I know. I'd like to talk to you alone,
if you've got a minute.

McCall walks up onto the porch, Shiso follows. He props the shovel against the house, opens the front door.

MCCALL
How about some iced tea?

They walk inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM

McCall tosses the package of photographs on the coffee table.

MCCALL
How do you take it?

SHISO
Two sugars.

MCCALL
Coming up. Relax. Make yourself at home.

McCall exits into the kitchen.

Shiso surveys the room.

Blanket, sheet, and pillow on the couch. Overnight bag on the floor.

She sits on the couch, the overnight bag near her feet.

SHISO
(loud, to the kitchen)
Know why cupid's arrow dot com is so successful, McCall?

KITCHEN

McCall gets two glasses out of the cabinet.

MCCALL

Why?

INTERCUT: SHISO IN THE LIVING ROOM - MCCALL IN THE KITCHEN

Shiso lifts the overnight bag up on the couch.

SHISO

Because I don't let any of my clients
bullshit me about their backgrounds.

McCall slides the ice tray out of the fridge.

MCCALL

Is that a fact?

Shiso slowly unzips the overnight bag.

SHISO

Yeah, I'm a real nosy broad.

McCall CRACKS the ice tray.

MCCALL

I remember. You were a reporter on the
high school newspaper, weren't you?

Shiso inspects a toothbrush, nailclipper, black turtleneck
sweater.

SHISO

I sure was. You know, Ophelia's my
best friend.

McCall PLUNKS ice cubes into the glasses.

MCCALL

You two have been friends for a long
time.

Shiso slowly zips up the overnight bag, puts it back on the
floor.

SHISO

She's been through a lot. I wouldn't
want to see her get hurt again.

McCall pours iced tea into a glass.

MCCALL

Neither would I.

Shiso looks down.

THE HANDLE OF THE SATCHEL

Sticks out from under the couch.

She frowns, slides the satchel out, puts it on her lap.

SHISO

Did you know there are over a quarter
of a million doctors in this country?

McCall tenses, stops pouring.

MCCALL

No kidding?

Shiso flips the satchel open.

SHISO

Not one of them is named McCall
Wilkes.

McCall thinks, slowly pours two teaspoons of sugar into one
of the iced teas.

MCCALL

I'm ... a chiropractor.

Shiso pulls a wad of cash and a piece of paper out of the
satchel.

SHISO'S POV

The fax of Ophelia on Cupid's Arrow stationary.

BACK TO SCENE

Shiso, horrified.

SHISO

(nervous)

Oh, well, that explains it.

McCall picks up the iced teas.

MCCALL

I'm glad we have that settled.

He carries the iced teas out of the kitchen.

LIVING ROOM

Shiso composes herself on the couch.
The satchel out of sight

McCall smiles, offers her a glass.

MCCALL

Two sugars.

SHISO

Thank you. I hope you don't mind me
looking out for my friend.

McCall sits in an easy chair across from her.

MCCALL

Of course not. I'd do the same thing.

SHISO

As long as we're being completely
honest, I have a confession to make.

MCCALL

Oh?

SHISO

The Lexus is leased. All these clothes
are bought on credit. Cupid's Arrow is
really not doing very well.

MCCALL

I'm sorry to hear that you're having a
bit of a hard time.

SHISO

It's more than a bit. If I can't get a
five thousand dollar loan, I stand to
lose everything.

McCall sips his iced tea.

MCCALL

That's why they have banks.

SHISO

The bank turned me down.

They stare at each other in silence for a moment.

SHISO

McCall, I'm desperate. Can you help me out? I'll pay you back, with interest.

MCCALL

I don't have that kind of money.

Shiso looks down at the couch.

SHISO

Oh, but you do. There's a satchel full of it, right under this couch.

McCall, stunned.

SHISO

Along with a fax, a fax of Ophelia I sent to one of my clients the night before last. I took the liberty of removing it.

McCall looks at her, unable to speak.

SHISO

Look, I don't care where you've been, or what you've done. I just need your help. And now you need mine. What do you say?

McCall gets up.

MCCALL

What can I say? You win.

He walks to the couch, pulls out the satchel.

SHISO

You have no idea how important this is to me.

McCall opens the satchel, pulls out five wrapped bundles of hundreds, hands the money to Shiso.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

The police car rolls down the long gravel driveway, stops behind Shiso's Lexus.

INT. LIVING ROOM

McCall follows Shiso to the front door.

SHISO
I am going to pay you back, you know.
I hope we can still be --

Shiso GAGS.

McCall tightens his stranglehold. He leans down, his lips close to her ear.

MCCALL
I'm sorry.

He SNAPS her neck. Lets the body go.

The corpse slides down into a sitting position against the door.

McCall rummages through Shiso's purse, finds the fax.

DINING ROOM

McCall crumples up the fax, throws it into the brass bowl.

He lights a match, touches it to the fax. It ignites.

A KNOCK on the front door.

LIVING ROOM

McCall runs to the window, peeks out.

The police car in the driveway.

McCall looks around.

The satchel full of cash on the couch.
Shiso's corpse sitting against the door.

Another KNOCK.

EXT. FRONT DOOR

Kincaid and Huxley wait.

KINCAID
Maybe he's out back.

Huxley raises his fist to knock again. The door opens.

MCCALL
Hi, guys.

He comes out, shuts the door, grabs the shovel.

MCCALL
Just heading out back.

KINCAID
Workin' in Ophelia's tomato garden,
huh?

McCall laughs nervously.

MCCALL
Yeah.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Shiso's body topples over. The head BONKS against the floor.

EXT. PORCH

Huxley stops. Frowns.

HUXLEY
What was that?

McCall BONKS the shovel off the wooden porch.

MCCALL
Shovel.

The three men walk down the porch steps onto the lawn.

KINCAID
I wanted to apologize for that little
incident down at the diner yesterday.

MCCALL
Forget it.

KINCAID
No, really, you probably saved
Ophelia's life.

Kincaid extends his hand.

KINCAID
I'd be proud to call you my friend.

McCall takes Kincaid's hand. They shake.

HUXLEY

We found Gaton's rig in the woods a little ways down the road. The FBI thinks Ophelia may be in danger.

MCCALL

FBI?

HUXLEY

There's been a murder. Gaton's the number one suspect. Keep your eyes and ears open around here. Gaton's got nothin' to lose.

MCCALL

For sure.

KINCAID

He'd probably love to whack you, too. You hear anything, anything at all, you call nine-one-one pronto. You hear?

MCCALL

Will do.

The two cops turn, walk to the police car.

Huxley stops, faces McCall.

HUXLEY

Is Shiso here?

MCCALL

What?

HUXLEY

Shiso Sugato. That's her Lexus, right?

MCCALL

Oh. Yeah. She's inside.

HUXLEY

(frowns)

Doin' what?

Huxley and McCall stare at each other for a moment.

MCCALL

Pictures.

HUXLEY

Pictures?

MCCALL

The pictures from Ahkeem's birthday party. She brought 'em over. She's putting them in frames. Wants to surprise Ophelia.

Kincaid laughs.

KINCAID

Hey, Huxley. Long as we're here, why don't you go on in there and tell Shiso you wanna sign up for that cupid's arrow dot com thing? Who knows? You might meet somebody.

Huxley stares at Kincaid for a long moment.

HUXLEY

Very funny.

KINCAID

I'm serious. Go on in. I'll wait.

Huxley looks at the house, thinks.

HUXLEY

Shut up and get in the car.

The cops climb into the police car, start it up.

Kincaid waves to McCall as he backs out of the driveway.

INT. ST. JUDE'S INFIRMARY - LUXE'S ROOM

Luxe sits on the edge of the bed, a heavy cast on his ankle.

Sister Delphina stands in front of him. She holds a pair of crutches.

LUXE

I can't do this, Sister.

SISTER DELPHINA

You can, and you will. God will not let you fall. Neither will I.

Luxe takes the crutches, struggles off the bed. Stands up.
Gets his balance.

LUXE
That wasn't so bad.

Sister Delphina puts her hands on Luxe's waist.

SISTER DELPHINA
Praise be to St. Jude. Now, take a
step forward.

Luxe maneuvers the crutches, takes a step.
He loses his balance. She struggles to keep him up.
They tumble to the floor, Luxe on top of her.

LUXE
Sorry. Are you okay?

Their lips very close. Sister Delphina stares into his
eyes.

SISTER DELPHINA
Luxe ... I can feel god's love
growing.

LUXE
You're an inspiration, Sister.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND OPHELIA'S HOUSE

McCall furiously shovels dirt.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

McCall climbs into the Lexus, starts it up.
Guns the car in reverse down the driveway.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

McCall pulls the Lexus off road, into the woods.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

McCall on foot. He trudges down the gravel driveway.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD

The Hyundai parked near the fence.
Screaming kids pour out of the yard.

INT. HYUNDAI

McCall in the driver's seat. He watches a beaming Ahkeem scamper to the car, jump into the passenger seat.

AHKEEM

My man McCall! How you doin'?

McCall starts the car, pulls away.

MCCALL

Not too good, partner.

Ahkeem's face falls.

AHKEEM

What'sa matter, man?

McCall drives in silence for several moments.

MCCALL

Somebody I liked passed away.

AHKEEM

Somebody up north?

MCCALL

Yeah. Up north.

Ahkeem thinks for a minute.

AHKEEM

You feel too bad to play ball?

McCall smiles faintly, gives Ahkeem a playful poke in the arm.

MCCALL

You gonna play?

AHKEEM

Can Ivan Rodriguez catch?

MCCALL

Then I'm gonna play.

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER

Ophelia scurries across the lot, jumps into the waiting Hyundai.

The car pulls out of the lot, onto the road.

INT. HYUNDAI

McCall and Ahkeem in front.
Ophelia in the back seat, looks curiously at McCall.
They ride in silence for a moment.

OPHELIA
Something wrong?

AHKEEM
He had a bad day, mom.

OPHELIA
What happened?

AHKEEM
His friend died. Up north.

OPHELIA
Oh my god! McCall? Who was it?

McCall drives silently for several moments.

MCCALL
Somebody ... somebody I liked.

OPHELIA
Do you want to talk about it?

MCCALL
Maybe later.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

The Hyundai sits in the driveway.

Ahkeem in the yard with the baseball mitt, tossing the ball
up and down.

INT. LIVING ROOM

McCall and Ophelia watch Ahkeem through the window.

OPHELIA
I've never lost a friend, other than
momma.

McCall stands silently. Ophelia rubs his arm.

OPHELIA
Were you close?

McCall looks at her, doesn't answer.

OPHELIA
Look, I'll tell him you don't feel
good enough --

MCCALL
No. I promised.

Ophelia notices the ONE HOUR PHOTO envelope on the coffee
table.

OPHELIA
What's this?

Ophelia opens the package, flips through the pictures.

OPHELIA
They're wonderful! Shiso was here
today?

MCCALL
She stopped by --

OPHELIA
Why didn't you tell me?

McCall grips Ophelia's arms.

MCCALL
Ophelia, listen to me, something has
happened.

AHKEEM (O.S.)
Hey! McCall! C'mon, my man!

OPHELIA
What happened?

AHKEEM (O.S.)
Get Mariano out here!

MCCALL
She saw the ...

AHKEEM (O.S.)
Rodriguez is waiting, man!

OPHELIA
Saw what?

MCCALL
Saw? No she said ...

OPHELIA
Said what?

MCCALL
She said you're the best friend she
ever had.

OPHELIA
(laughs)
Course I am, that silly slant!

She SLAPS McCall in the butt

OPHELIA
Now get out there, Mariano, and play
ball!

EXT. FRONT YARD

Ahkeem crouches, SMACKS the pocket of the catcher's mitt.

AHKEEM
C'mon Mariano! Pop it in here!

McCall goes into his windup. Throws.

The ball sails over Ahkeem's head, bounces across the yard,
bounces off the big oak tree.

AHKEEM
Hey! What kind of a pitch was that?

MCCALL
Sorry, Ahkeem --

AHKEEM
I'm Rodriguez!

MCCALL
Sorry, Rodriguez. I'll get it.

AHKEEM
I got it, man.

Ahkeem runs off after the ball.

McCall wipes tears from his eyes.

INT. KITCHEN

Ophelia on the telephone.

SHISO

(phone)

You have reached the offices of
Cupid's Arrow dot com. Got love if you
want it. Please leave a message at the
tone.

KITCHEN - LATER

McCall and Ahkeem finish dinner at the table.

Ophelia on the phone, frowns.

SHISO

You have reached the offices of
Cupid's Arrow ...

OPHELIA

(sotto)

Where the heck are you?

Ophelia shrugs, shakes her head. Hangs up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

McCall tosses and turns on the couch.
Gives up trying to sleep.

He lies back with his hands behind his head, SIGHS.

A CREAK on the stairs.

McCall sits up, alert.

STAIRWAY

Ophelia slowly descends. A goddess in a negligee.

COUCH

Ophelia approaches. McCall drinks in her beauty.
She sits on the edge of the couch.

OPHELIA

You couldn't sleep either?

MCCALL

No.

OPHELIA

Mind if we talk for a minute?

MCCALL

Sure.

Ophelia holds his hand.

OPHELIA

Life's a funny thing, McCall. When you think it's good, everything goes wrong. When you're looking at the worst moment of the worst day of your whole entire life, something wonderful happens. That moment is when I met you.

MCCALL

I'm the opposite of wonderful, Ophelia.

Ophelia strokes his face.

OPHELIA

Not for Ahkeem.

She rises, slips out of her negligee, stands naked before him.

OPHELIA

Not for me.

McCall pulls the blankets back, slides over, makes room for her.

She climbs in beside him. They kiss, passionately.

Ophelia pulls McCall's t-shirt off.

They embrace, kiss, roll under the blankets.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

First light of dawn. Long shadows.

INT. STAIRWAY

Ahkeem, fully dressed, walks down the stairs with the catcher's mitt and baseball.

He stops short, sees Ophelia and McCall intertwined, sound asleep, under the blankets on the couch.

Ahkeem smiles, runs back up the stairs.

TOP OF THE STAIRS

Ahkeem takes the baseball out of the glove, rolls it off the top step.

The ball BANGS down the staircase.

LIVING ROOM

McCall and Ophelia jump up, see the baseball roll across the living room floor.

They laugh, hug.

AHKEEM (O.S.)

Hey! Mariano! Get the lead out!

EXT. OPHELIA'S TOMATO GARDEN - DAY

McCall and Ophelia cultivate the soil.

HUXLEY (O.S.)

Put down the tools, please.

Huxley and Kincaid march into the garden.

OPHELIA

Well for god's sake, Huxley, don't walk where we just cultivated!

HUXLEY

There's something important we need to discuss. Let's all go inside, okay?

INT. OPHELIA'S LIVING ROOM

On the couch, Ophelia, distraught, clutches McCall's arms.

OPHELIA

This can't be true! I don't believe it! Not for a second!

Huxley and Kincaid stand in the center of the room.

HUXLEY

She was in over her head at the bank.

KINCAID

Mr. Inglewood claims she practically propositioned him.

HUXLEY

It's the only theory that makes sense.
I'm sorry.

The two cops head for the door.
Huxley stops, turns.

HUXLEY

McCall, apparently you were the last person in town to see her.

MCCALL

Is that so?

HUXLEY

Yeah. That's so. Did she ask you for any money?

MCCALL

No. She just dropped off the pictures and left.

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE

The two cops walk to the patrol car.

HUXLEY

That doesn't add up.

KINCAID

What are you talking about?

HUXLEY

He just said she dropped the pictures off and left. The other day he said she was putting them in frames. What do you think?

Kincaid opens the driver's side door.

KINCAID

I think you should write a letter to

the advice to the lovelorn column,
Huxley. Get in the car.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BANK - DAY

McCall and Mr. Inglewood shake hands.

INGLEWOOD
It's all approved, Mr. Wilkes.
Congratulations, and best of luck.

MCCALL
Thank you, Mr. Inglewood.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Ahkeem with a group of SCHOOLMATES. They choose up sides
for a game of touch football.

SCHOOLMATE #1
We got Ahkeem.

SCHOOLMATE #2
Bull-fucking-shit! Ahkeem's on our
team!

SCHOOLMATE #1
He is not!

SCHOOLMATE #2
Is too!

EXT. ST. JUDE'S - DAY

A gravel path winds through a rolling, manicured lawn.

A group of well-dressed STUDENTS wearing parochial high
school blazers follows a robed PRIEST up to a wooden plaque
attached to an old tree.

PRIEST
First station. Jesus is condemned to
death. We adore thee, oh Christ, and
bless thee.

STUDENTS
Because by thy holy cross thou hast
redeemed the world.

Far across the lawn, Luxe walks with Sister Delphina.

EXT. LAWN

Luxe walks slowly with a cane. Sister Delphina holds his arm, gives him support.

LUXE

I've done some ... terrible things,
Sister. Terrible things. I don't think
god will ever forgive me.

SISTER DELPHINA

His compassion is infinite, Luxe.
Greater than yours. Greater than mine.

LUXE

Infinite may not be enough.

SISTER DELPHINA

Luxe, would you do something for me?

LUXE

I'd die for you, Sister. You know
that.

SISTER DELPHINA

Would you call me ... Delphina?

Luxe takes her hand, smiles.

LUXE

Delphina. Such a beautiful name. Maybe
if I had met the right woman, things
might have been different.

SISTER DELPHINA

There's always time to change, Luxe.
The lord provides the means.

INT. HYUNDAI - MOVING - DAY

McCall drives, Ophelia in the passenger seat.

OPHELIA

So, where are we going? What's the big
secret?

MCCALL

You'll see.

OPHELIA
C'mon. Tell me. I can't stand it.

MCCALL
Then it wouldn't be a secret, would
it? Uh-oh, we're low on gas.

He pulls the Hyundai into a new Exxon station, stops near a
pump.

MCCALL
You like this gas station?

OPHELIA
It looks clean and new. Why?

MCCALL
I bought it.

Happy shock on Ophelia's face.

OPHELIA
Then ... I guess you plan on sticking
around for a while.

MCCALL
Forever.

EXT. ST. JUDE'S - NIGHT

The moon shines down on the rolling lawn. Muffled Gregorian
CHANTS from inside the building.

INT. ST. JUDE'S GARAGE

Sister Delphina, in street clothes, short crew-cut hair,
Holds Luxe's arm.

They look at a

BRAND NEW BLACK CADILLAC SEDAN DE VILLE

SISTER DELPHINA
The lord provides the means.

LUXE
Delphina ... are you sure about this?

SISTER DELPHINA
In my heart, I know it's what god
wants me to do.

LUXE

Keys?

SISTER DELPHINA

In the ignition. We trust in the
providence of the almighty.

Luxe opens the passenger door. Sister Delphina slides in.
Luxe walks around to the driver's side. Gets in. The car
starts.

LUXE

Thank you, Jesus!

EXT. ST. JUDE'S

Luxe prowls in the bushes near the fence. Sister Delphina
holds the flashlight.

In the background, the deVille, parked with the engine
running.

LUXE

Here it is.

He pulls the satchel out of the bushes.

SISTER DELPHINA

What is it, Luxe.

LUXE

Something to help us do St. Jude's
work, Delphina.

He takes Sister Delphina in his arms. They kiss,
passionately. Grope each other.

They fall to the ground, go out of frame.

SISTER DELPHINA

Praise the lord!

EXT. OPHELIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Pouring rain. The garage door open.

INT. GARAGE

McCall and Ahkeem sit on the garage floor, watch the rain.
McCall wears an Exxon shirt.

Ahkeem tosses the hardball. Catches it. Tosses it again.

AHKEEM
Hey, McCall?

MCCALL
Yeah.

AHKEEM
How old were you when ... you know.

MCCALL
When I what?

AHKEEM
When you started to think girls
weren't ... yucky.

McCall looks down at Ahkeem, smiles.

MCCALL
Older than nine.

AHKEEM
By a lot?

MCCALL
Yeah. A lot.

AHKEEM
Good.

MCCALL
Why?

AHKEEM
Cause I don't want somethin' silly
like girls gettin' in the way of my
sports career.

MCCALL
It isn't silly, partner. Believe me.

AHKEEM
Hey! The rain stopped! Let's go!

EXT. FRONT YARD

Rays of sunshine.

McCall winds up, fires the hardball. It POPS into Ahkeem's mitt.

Ahkeem throws the ball back.

AHKEEM

Are you gonna marry my mom?

McCall, stunned. The ball sails by him, bounces past the garage.

MCCALL

What are you, psychic?

AHKEEM

What's that mean?

MCCALL

Never mind.

Ophelia comes out of the house dressed in her waitress uniform. Walks to the Hyundai in the driveway.

OPHELIA

C'mon, guys. We're running late.

AHKEEM

Get the ball, man.

McCall runs past the garage to the ball. Stops cold. Stares into the backyard.

IN THE WOODS

Construction surveyors in hard hats set up tripods, plum bobs. They stick orange tape markings on trees.

McCall, stunned, stares at them.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

C'mon, McCall! Let's go!

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

McCall pumps gas into the Hyundai.
Ophelia leans out of the driver's side window.

OPHELIA

You know, the service at this gas station is terrific.

MCCALL
We aim to please.

OPHELIA
And the attendant is real cute too.

McCall finishes pumping, hangs up the nozzle.

OPHELIA
How much do I owe you?

MCCALL
It's on the house. Oh, by the way,
we're running a promotion this week. A
free gift to every beautiful woman who
pulls into the station.

He leans into the car, kisses her, hands her a small,
velvet jewelry case.

She opens it.
An engagement ring.

Ophelia, in tears, jumps out of the car, wraps her arms
around McCall.

EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY

A display case full of engagement rings, wedding rings,
pinky rings, etc.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

WONG'S PAWN SHOP - OPEN 24 HOURS

Luxe limps up to the door.

INT. PAWNSHOP

Luxe watches WONG, the elderly female Asian pawnbroker,
study a Rolex through a jeweler's loupe.

WONG
Hmm.

LOUPE POV

PAN across the diamond-studded watch face - "Rolex",
"Geneve", "Cellini", "Swiss Made"

LUXE (O.S.)

It's the real deal. Trust me.

WONG (O.S.)

Maybe.

The watch flips over. On the back - "14k Gold",
"Waterproof", "SN 240276"

WONG (O.S.)

Wait here.

BACK ROOM

Wong's hands tremble as she punches numbers on a touch-tone
phone.

PAWNSHOP

Luxe strolls around the small shop, studies comic books,
musical instruments, electronics, all for sale, all
trophies to broken dreams.

Impatient, he SHOUTS into the back room.

LUXE

Hey! Wong! You die back there?!

WONG (O.S.)

One minute, please!

MOMENTS LATER

Wong emerges from the back room, points to the Rolex on the
counter.

WONG

Four thousand dollar.

Luxe, stunned.

LUXE

Really? Praise be to Jesus! You've got
yourself a deal, Wong. I'll take a
grand in twenties, the rest in
hundreds.

WONG

One hour.

LUXE

What?

WONG

Come back in one hour. I go to bank.

EXT. STREET

Luxe limps up to the sedan, gets in on the driver's side.

INT. SEDAN

Sister Delphina in the passenger seat. She puts her arm around Luxe, kisses him.

SISTER DELPHINA

Has god's love smiled upon us?

Luxe stares through the windshield, keeps an eye on the entrance to the pawn shop.

LUXE

Not quite yet, Delphina, but I think it's on the way.

MOMENTS LATER

An unmarked police car pulls up in front of Wong's.

Brick and Coltrane get out of the car, walk into the pawn shop.

Luxe starts the sedan, PEELS OUT down the street.

SISTER DELPHINA

What is it, Luxe?

LUXE

Minions of Satan! Hang on, Delphina!

EXT. GAS STATION

The sedan hurtles into the station, SCREECHES to a stop by the pumps.

The ATTENDANT trots up to the driver's window.

ATTENDANT

May I help you, sir?

LUXE

Fill it up, my son! We're kind of in a hurry. St. Jude's ministry is

depending on us.

The attendant stares at Luxe for a second.

ATTENDANT

Uh-huh.

INT. GAS STATION - SERVICE BAY

McCall climbs into a pickup truck, starts it up.

He waves to the MECHANIC from the open driver's window.

MCCALL

Be back in a bit.

MECHANIC

Sure thing, Mr. Wilkes.

EXT. GAS STATION

The pickup truck backs out of the service bay.

McCall waves to the Attendant at the pump. The Attendant waves back.

ATTENDANT

See you later, Mr. Wilkes.

INT. DEVILLE

Luxe frowns, squints through the windshield.

LUXE

Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

SISTER DELPHINA

Luxe? You had a vision?

LUXE

More like a miracle, Delphina! An absolute fu ... An absolute miracle.

(to the Attendant)

That's enough gas, my son! God has called!

INT. OLPHELIA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

McCall yanks garbage bags out of a kitchen cabinet.

EXT. TOMATO GARDEN

McCall hides in the tomato garden, watches the survey team. They MUMBLE comments about "lunchtime" and move off, out of the woods.

INT. PICKUP

McCall backs the pickup around the garden to the edge of the woods.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND OPHELIA'S HOUSE

McCall digs furiously, sweats.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

The pickup rolls by, two bundles wrapped in garbage bags bounce around in the bay of the truck.

A PARTIALLY DECOMPOSED FOOT

Jutts out from one of the bags.

THE POLICE CAR

Gains on McCall's truck. A WHOOP from the siren.

The pickup pulls off onto the shoulder, stops. The police car right behind it.

INT. PICKUP

McCall sweats, tense, watches Huxley and Kincaid approach in the side view mirror, THEIR GUNS holstered.

The two cops lean against the driver's window.

KINCAID

We've got some news, McCall.

HUXLEY

We need your help.

MCCALL

What is it?

KINCAID

Somebody tried to pawn Dr. Sites' watch at Wong's shop.

HUXLEY

Short guy, thin, about five foot eight. Dark complexion. Jamaican, maybe.

KINCAID

We've got the store staked out, but the guy never came back.

MCCALL

What do you need from me?

KINCAID

Keep your eyes open at the gas station. If a stranger fitting that description pulls in, stall him and call us.

MCCALL

No problem.

Kincaid pats him on the shoulder.

KINCAID

Thanks, pal.

The two cops walk back to their car.

McCall closes his eyes, lets out a deep SIGH.

Huxley frowns, stops, turns, walks back to the truck window.

HUXLEY

What's in the truck?

McCall stares at him.

MCCALL

Supplies. For the station.

HUXLEY

Where are you goin', anyway?

MCCALL

What?

HUXLEY

The station's in the opposite direction. Where are you goin'?

McCall and Huxley in a staredown.

MCCALL
It's kind of personal.

HUXLEY
Trust me. I can keep a secret.

MCCALL
I drive out to Jackson's Ravine every
now and then. By myself. I like to sit
there for a minute.

HUXLEY
What the hell for?

MCCALL
It's where Ophelia and I fell in love.

KINCAID (O.S.)
Hey! Huxley! Let's go!

Huxley GRUNTS, walks away.

HUXLEY
(sotto)
Sorry I asked.

McCall looks down. His hands tremble. The police car doors
SLAM (O.S.).

Kincaid waves as the police car drives by. McCall watches
it disappear down the road.

McCall turns the wheel of the pickup, drives into the
woods.

SHISO'S LEXUS

Buried deep in the woods, trunk open.

McCall takes the bundles off the truck, loads them into the
Lexus' trunk one at a time.

LUXE (O.S.)
Never figured you for yard work.

McCall whirls. Luxe leans against the fender of the truck.

LUXE
Been a long time, McCall.

MCCALL

Sure has, Luxe. How goes it?

LUXE

Good, real good. Been born again.
Lookin' to make a new start.

MCCALL

That's nice.

LUXE

What did those cops want?

MCCALL

In a word? You.

LUXE

Yeah? Well, the thing is, my share of
the job is still too hot to handle. I
could sure use a little scratch until
the storm blows over.

MCCALL

I'm tapped, Luxe. Started my own
business. You can't believe how
expensive it is to go straight. The
taxes alone will kill you.

McCall turns his back on Luxe, shuts the Lexus trunk.

LUXE

Sorry to hear that, McCall. If you
can't help me out, well, then you're
nothing but a liability. And I can't
afford that. You see, I'm doing St.
Jude's work now ...

Luxe flips open a switchblade, lunges at McCall.

LUXE

... and I'm in love!

McCall turns, grabs Luxe's arm. The two men struggle for
the knife. McCall overpowers Luxe, embeds the knife in his
chest.

Luxe gasps, falls to the ground.

McCall looks down at the body.

MCCALL

So am I, Luxe. So am I.

EXT. JACKSON'S RAVINE - SCENIC VIEW PARKING LOT

McCall pushes the Lexus, gets it rolling, it disappears over the edge.

EXT. CLIFF

The car plummets down, SPLASHES into the lake.

PARKING LOT

McCall watches the Lexus bubble down in the water until it disappears.

MCCALL

(sotto)

It's finally over.

The ROAR of a big American V8 (O.S.).

McCall whirls.

INT. DEVILLE - MOVING

Sister Delphina at the wheel, rage on her face.

SISTER DELPHINA

Beelzebub!

PARKING LOT

McCall dives to the side.

The deVille fender catches his legs. He sails over the cliff, the deVille follows.

EXT. CLIFF

SLOW MOTION: McCall and the deVille sail down into the ravine. McCall contorts his body into swan dive position.

MCCALL (V.O.)

They never found any of the bodies.

INT. POLICE STATION

Brick and Coltrane watch Wong study a book of mug shots.

MCCALL (V.O.)

Wong identified Luxe from a mug shot.
But, of course, Luxe never turned up.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER - DAY

The Hyundai, older, rusted, the only car in the lot.

INT. OPHELIA'S DINER

Ophelia, a bit older, still very beautiful, in her waitress uniform behind the counter. She slices a tomato.

Ahkeem, now 17 and well over six feet tall, comes through the revolving door in a full baseball uniform. "TYCOUR", number 24, on the back of his jersey.

He carries baseball cleats, walks behind the counter and kisses Ophelia's cheek.

MCCALL (V.O.)

The boy is an all-state high-school catcher. Big-time college scouts come to watch him play.

AHKEEM

I'm goin' to practice. I'm takin the car, okay?

OPHELIA

Be careful, Ahkeem.

AHKEEM

Love you, mom.

Ahkeem exits. Ophelia continues slicing.

MCCALL (V.O.)

I still feel bad about Shiso. But I couldn't let anything shorten my time with Ophelia. Not even by a single minute.

Ophelia opens a plastic bag. Loads in tomato wedges.

MCCALL (V.O.)

I hope you understand that. If you don't, well, then you've never been in love. Not really.

Ophelia rinses her hands, dries. She opens a drawer, takes out the ONE HOUR PHOTO envelope, yellow with age.

She flips through the snapshots with a wistful smile.

The revolving door SPINS (O.S.).

Ophelia turns, smiles, stashes the photos back in the drawer.

OPHELIA

Hi, sweetheart. I sliced some fresh tomatoes. We better get going. The movie starts in twenty minutes.

She opens her arms, ready to hug.

Huxley, in civilian clothes, walks behind the counter. They hug, kiss on the lips.

MCCALL (V.O.)

Ophelia and the boy think I deserted them. That's the pain I'll carry in my soul for all eternity.

EXT. OPHELIA'S DINER - PARKING LOT

Huxley and Ophelia, arm-in-arm, walk across the asphalt toward the police car.

MCCALL

Huxley's a good man. He'll take good care of her. But a woman gives her heart to only one man in this life. She'll never love Huxley the way that she loved me.

FADE OUT.