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Out the Loop

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OUT THE LOOP

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The Department of English

by
Matthew Anderson
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ABSTRACT

Often referred to as resembling an architectural blueprint, the screenplay is known for its laconic style. Discarding the subjective abstractionism of a more flowery writing, the screenplay's brevity forces the writer to make use of the physical world of the text to display its underlying currents of thought. This trend in artistic representation, of which the influence has been heatedly discussed since the onset of the cinema, is not stagnant but evolving. The screenwriters of today produce their craft with an increased savoir faire not only in relation to plot and form but also in regards to the aesthetics of the composition itself.

"Out the Loop" serves as an indicator of the emerging trend of screenplays to be composed with an attention to the aesthetics of writing. The goal is to with the writing add another layer of meaning for the readers of the screenplay and producers of the would be film. Irregardless of whether or not this is achieved, the physical world of the text examines the plight of an emerging class of dispossessed Americans and asks the question: where do they go from here?

OUT THE LOOP

FADE IN:

EXT. COASTAL WETLANDS - NIGHT

In the dark of the early morning hours, a truck with three guys inside carrying a boat large enough for the Gulf turns left after a train of other vehicles, the large majority with Louisiana license plates, all hauling boats onto a road that runs alongside a large canal, which leads to the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

The structures alongside the road on the far side of the canal, the old or the rare new constructions, look weather-beaten and covered with a film of the indigenous muck, perhaps more felt than seen at this time of the morning.

Between the road and the large canal is a smaller canal, which could be mistaken for a drainage ditch if one were in the inner city except for the profusion of dinghies and other small vessels moored to the tenuous shore of the marshland.

Connected to the thin strip of marshland between the ditch and the canal or built over and into the water are fishing camps, bait-stores, boat-launches, and whatever other structures are associated with the marshland industry raised out of the water on thick wooden poles.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

PAULIE and LINUS ride in the truck's cab, and NADJA, the largest whose hair is in beads, is crowded into the rear section.

Hunched over his legs sprawled to the side because there's no way his knees could fit behind Linus' seat even with it all the way forward, Nadja looks at the back of Paulie's head at his unkempt hair.

NADJA

When my grandpa took me and my pops
fishing, we brought his boat to the
launch on the right. Down that-a-way.

Nadja catches Pualie's eyes in the rearview mirror and points his thumb backwards.

Paulie extinguishes his cigarette in the ashtray and slaps Linus' thigh for another. Linus unwraps the cellophane and slaps the pack against the heel of his palm.

PUALIE

You woulda gone down to that one.. I mean that's the only other public launch in this area. We've always gone to Lenny's. It's been family owned and operated for my twenty-seven years. Day in and day out, they open at five and close at five. Everyday. After the morning rush until afternoon, things are dead. But they've gotta be there. It takes more than a couple too. After the morning, they pretty much just bum around.

Linus hands Pualie a cigarette. He's panting. He always seems to be panting. His voice is breathy and when he gets goin it sounds like he's talking from the back of his mouth.

PAULIE

That's why they don't hire many people outside the family to work there. They've gotta be able to depend on 'em everyday.

Paulie hurries a drag of his cigarette. Linus looks back at Nadja and smiles as if this is a behavior of Pualie's they've talked about before.

PAULIE

Like I was saying, I overheard Lenny mention to my dad this time when he wanted to go on vacation. Only problem was his wife wanted to go also. Boy is she a bitch. Won't talk to anyone. Just sits in the bait shop all day and won't even look at you if you come in..
Goddammit!

The truck slows and gets in line behind about six or seven others. Linus pats Paulie on the shoulder.

LINUS

(putting on a Jamaican accent)
Simmer down now. Ain't no reason to get
yourself all up into a boil.

Paulie slaps the steering wheel.

PAULIE

If we wouldn't of had to stop and get
gas for the boat we could have been
closer to the front.

LINUS

Don't look at me. I went and bought the
sandwiches last night.

Paulie looks at Nadja, shaking his head in disbelief.

PAULIE

Now idn't that something. Can't even
make some sandwiches but has to go out
and pay for the damn things.

NADJA

I don't know what was happenin. Ise be
to busy scooping ice in the cooler.

PUALIE

Pitiful. Just pitiful. It appears that
I've got a bunch of freeloaders on my
hands.

A tanned GRUFF MAN taps on the outside of the truck's window.
Paulie slides the window down.

GRUFF MAN

You need to line the boat up
perpendicular to the launch straps, let
us lift it, and then lose the truck
over there in that lot.

PAULIE

Can do. Let me just tell these yahoos
what to do.

Paulie slides the window back up and looks at the others all
business.

PAULIE

Linus, you get the bait, a couple pounds of the live shrimp, and pay for the launch. Nadjer, wait for the boat to get set in the water and then walk her around into the canal and wait for us.

NADJA

Walk who around? Where?

PAULIE

Go wait down there on the dock, and when the boat gets set in the water, whoever will hand you a rope so that you can lead the boat around into the canal. Don't go jumping in now but wait for us to get done, and we'll meet you on the dock behind the bait shop. Don't worry. It's highly unlikely that they'll talk to you. They don't say much of anything.

Linus gets out of the truck and makes for the bait shop.

NADJA

I don't care if they talk to me.

PAULIE

Whatever—lets get to it.

EXT. BOAT LAUNCH - NIGHT

Nadja gets out of the truck, and Paulie backs the truck up under the careful scrutiny of a couple of LAUNCH WORKERS. He tries to angle it just right but almost slams it into a post.

LAUNCH WORKERS

Hey! Whoa there!

One of the workers slaps the side of the truck. Finally, Paulie gets everything lined up straight, while Nadja makes his way to the dock to stand around and wait. Nadja's examined indirectly by a couple of the gruff launch workers who eventually pay him no mind.

A tanned, older somewhat portly man, LENNY, walks around and oversees everything. Lenny stands by the worker lowering the boat into the water.

LENNY

These boys are too young for a boat
this nice.

EXT. CANAL - DAWN

A hint of light creeps up in front of them as the boat races through the canal out to the Gulf past crab traps, a few boats fishing the inside, and the increasingly tenuous marshland grasses.

The boat has only one thin column in the middle that houses the steering wheel and a windshield to stop the bugs from splattering into their face as they cut through the water. Their loose shirts and shorts flap in the wind.

INT. BOAT - DAWN

Paulie steers and shares the captain's seat with Linus who holds his head steadily behind the windshield. Nadja crouches beside the seat with his arms wrapped around his hulking body occasionally rubbing over the goose bumps populating his skin.

Linus almost loses his hat, so he turns it backwards.

Nadja keeps his head down or looks sideways, crown of the head facing the front. Occasionally, Nadja attempts to stare ahead with his eyes squinched looking through his eyelashes, but the insects pelting him in the face cause him to spend the majority of the time staring down at the boat's hull or looking sideways at his companions' legs.

With the sun above the horizon, pink streaking the sky, no other boats in sight, the craft passes the last remnants of marshland grass forming the borders of the canal and enters the open seas of the Gulf.

As they travel out into the Gulf, different sorts of small birds become visible. In the Gulf, the most prominent, however, is the brown pelican.

The large brown birds fly less than a foot over the water. The large bill slanted down to slice through the air as one races alongside the boat.

Then it climbs into the air a good thirty feet and dives straight down into the water to arise with a fish in its bill. It tilts its bill down to drain the water and then it swallows the fish.

The boat comes to a stop. Another pelican plummets downward and slaps into the water. Paulie checks out the instrumentation on the column's dash next to the steering wheel. Nadja rises from his crouch. Linus digs in the glovebox above the windshield.

NADJA

Did you see that. That's incredible.
It's been so long I've forgotten about
that. Maybe, I never saw it.

Linus is breaking up some dosia to roll a joint.

LINUS

Those birds are enormous. I didn't see
any last time we came out here.

NADJA

That's the state bird.

LINUS

I didn't know that.

PAULIE

Yeah, and the state insect is the
mosquito. Where are those cigarettes?

NADJA

Don't let them hear you. They might
give us the West Nile. Paulie, do you
have any repellent?

Linus is rolling up the joint. Nadja walks around the back of the boat examining their surroundings.

PUALIE

According to our coordinates on the GPS, rig nine should be not too far southeast. That's a good spot to catch 'em, unless somebody beats us out there or it's too late.

Linus sticks the joint in his mouth and covers it with a thin layer of saliva, then runs the lighter up and down it to dry it.

NADJA

Do you wanna cast a few?

PAULIE

We can do that. But you see those porpoises over there. That's not a good sign. They'll eat all your fish if they get too close.

NADJA

I didn't even see that. Holy Mohammad! I forgot all about porpoises. Do you guys mind if I jump in the water to swim with them.

LINUS

You better watch out. They'd probably kill you.

Linus lights the joint.

PAULIE

Yeah, they've got that bottle-topped nose. There's been reported cases of them killing sharks by ramming their nose into them.

Linus passes the joint to Paulie.

PAULIE

This that good?

LINUS

It's the diggidy... I've heard porpoises are like the patron animal of sailors and that they've carried people back to shore and shit.

Paulie hits the joint like he's making love to it and tries to suck up the smoke coming from the tip like he doesn't want to waste any of it.

LINUS
(putting on the Jamaican accent)
No, no, no. No,

Linus takes the joint from Paulie, imitates him, and makes the sucking noise that he does.

LINUS
(accent cont.)
This is stupid. Smoke the joint like a normal person.

Laughing, Nadja lifts the aerator and reaches for a shrimp to bait his hook.

PAULIE
(flustered)
Sorry 'bout that pro. Haven't passed my connoisseurship classes yet.

After Nadja casts his line, Linus bypasses Paulie's waiting hand and passes the joint to Nadja.

LINUS
Not until you've demonstrated that you'll behave properly.

PAULIE
Alright then, First-mate. Drop the anchor, so I can do some fishing without my line getting tangled up with the boat like your date there.

Nadja struggles with his line that appears to have drifted under the boat.

LINUS
I thought Nadja should be the first-mate. It would be a good experience for him.

NADJA
I ain't goin to be nobody's mate.

PAULIE

First time's the luxury cruise. You know that. I need someone with a little experience to assume the responsibility.

Nadja lifts the aerator to re-bait his hook.

LINUS

Aye aye, Captain. Next time, Nadja, you get to be first-mate.

NADJA

Hurry it up with that anchor, ya mullet.

INT. BOAT - NOON

The sun is noticeably higher in the sky. There are hardly any clouds. The boat now skips on the waves rather than cuts through the sea.

They're coming up on a rig, which already has another boat fishing off it. Paulie slows and then kills the engine.

PAULIE

That's the one, rig nine.

Linus lights up another joint, hits it a couple times, and offers it to Nadja who's lying down on the bench in the front of the boat, looking a little green.

NADJA

No can do. I need to take a little breather.

LINUS

It's supposed to help with nausea.

NADJA

I just need to lie down for a minute.

LINUS

I'm a little uneasy also.

Linus takes a lip smacking puff off the joint. He holds up the joint for Nadja to see.

LINUS

This helps my nausea.

The boat drifts slowly in the direction of rig nine. The FISHERMAN on the other boat appear to be having some success.

LINUS

How do you know that this is rig nine?

PAULIE

For one, because of the GPS. Two, because that's Marteen in the other boat.

LINUS

Do you want me to drop the anchor?

Paulie snags the joint from Linus, rests his other hand on Nadja's knee.

PAULIE

Let her drift in closer.

Nadja sits up.

NADJA

This isn't the same Marteen who has access to the stuff I've been kidding about.

LINUS

The same.

Paulie grabs the club hanging off the hook on the side of the column. He grabs Nadja by the beads and holds the club under his nose, twitching as if ready to jab a hole in his face.

Although Nadja's over six feet and weighs somewhere around three hundred pounds, Paulie's stout enough to put a hurting on him, at least with a club.

NADJA

Linus, what's happening here. Get him off me. I'm about to puke.

LINUS

Paulie, ease up. He's real with this. We surprised him.

Linus' fingertips touch Paulie's shoulder. Paulie steps to Linus, jerking Nadja's head by the beads, and thwacks Linus in the nose with the club.

PAULIE
(breathy)

Listen up Nadjer. I know you from town, but I don't know you. You seem to be ok for a... black guy. But if you fuck Marteen, not only will he fuck you, Linus, and whomever else you've said hi to in the last year; but he'll fuck me, my restaurant, and my wife and kids, not necessarily in that order.

Linus straightens up with his hands over his nose as blood drips through his fingertips and down his chin. A brown pelican dives into the water.

LINUS
Son of a bitch!

Paulie lets go of Nadja's hair and a few strands of beads fall from out between his fingers. Nadja pukes what looks like Big Mac special sauce on Paulie's feet. Paulie stomps in it and splatters it everywhere: legs, shorts, shirts, Nadja's face.

A GUN FIRES. Paulie slips in the puke and falls flat on his back.

MARTEEN
(o.s.)

Ahoy, assholes. Hurry up and drop your anchor or your going to crash either into my boat or the rig.

Blood soaked Linus grabs the anchor and throws it overboard narrowly missing Marteen's boat. Paulie raises wearily to his knees as his boat drifts into Marteen's.

PAULIE
What have I done. Mother fucker! I've talked about this I don't know how many times with Anna. Think before you act.

Paulie slaps himself with a puke-covered palm, splattering the orangish puke on the windshield.

PAULIE

I just thought that you two had finalized things. What am I doing. Linus, where are those cigarettes?

LINUS

Go fuck yourself, Paulie.

INT. MARTEEN'S BOAT - MIDDAY

MARTEEN is a tall, formidable, angular man in his mid forties, deeply tanned, and looking to be from Honduras or some other Central American country.

Marteen's girlfriend KRISTIAN, a tall blond with long legs, is holding the stainless steel HK forty caliber Smith and Wesson that she puts down at his bequest to grab the fishing net.

By the bend in his pole, one can see that Marteen hooked something.

MARTEEN

Paulie, Paulie Robicheux, is that you. Stand your ass up so that I can see you.

EXT. GULF - MIDDAY

Paulie stands up with the club dangling from his wrist by the strap. Puke dripping from his hands. Nadja takes off his shirt and jumps in the water. Linus searches for the first-aid kit.

LINUS

You broke my nose. I think you broke my friggin nose.

Marteen pulls a fish out of the sea and holds it against the boat by the fishing line. Kristian motions to hold the net under it.

MARTEEN

I'm not going to need that, baby. Go and see if you can help those derelicts.

Nadja climbs back into the boat.

MARTEEN

Paulie, throw me that there club.

Paulie pushes the strap down off his wrist and tosses the club to Marteen. The club cartwheels end over end sprinkling Marteen with his fair share of barf before he plucks it out of the air.

MARTEEN

You worthless little ingrate. I reschedule my day to meet...

PAULIE

Oh God, Mr. Sorocaba.

Paulie grabs the partially wet with ass sweat and barf-chunk infested towel that was under Nadja, and scampers to the bow to attend to Marteen.

MARTEEN

Whoa, whoa there big boy. Hold up. Stay where you are. In fact, sit your ass back down, so I don't have to see you for a few minutes.

Marteen's fish slaps against the boat's hull. Kristian prepares to board Paulie's boat, so Paulie extends his hand.

MARTEEN

No, not you. Didn't I tell you to sit your ass down? Should I ask Kristian to hand me my gun. A few minutes, Paulie. That's all I ask.

Nadja comes from the stern of the boat, watching not to step in any blood or vomit. Paulie sits down.

MARTEEN

You there, excuse me sir. Could you help this pretty young lady aboard your vessel.

Nadja points a finger at himself.

MARTEEN

That's right. You there, the enormous black man with wings.

EXT. GULF - DAY

Linus smokes on a joint with what looks to be about three feet of cotton up each nostril. Paulie flicks a cigarette butt into the sea as he walks around his boat cleaning up the remainder of the vomit.

On the other boat, Marteen reels in another fish while Kristian goes over his body with a dampened towel to get the last of the vomit he was sprinkled with.

Nadja sits uneasily to Marteen's side in the other captain's chair, holding the fishing net in one hand and the club in the other.

INT. MARTEEN'S BOAT - EARLY AFTERNOON

MARTEEN

Once that Dramamine kicks in you won't feel quite so bad. It might make you a little drowsy though.

NADJA

Anything is better than this. Do you want to net this one?

MARTEEN

Hold on. Lets see what he is first.

Kristian unbuttons the top few buttons of Marteen's shirt. Marteen yanks what looks to be a fair-sized fish out the water and lets it dangle next to the side of the boat.

MARTEEN

Give me a second, baby. Hand me the club.

Nadja hands him the club.

MARTEEN

Let's go over things once more.

Nadja shakes his head obediently.

MARTEEN

You've got three weeks to pay me back half of what you owe me. Usually, I demand half up front but since this is your first time, and both Linus and Paulie appear willing to vouch for you, I'm going to make an exception. Two weeks after that for the second half.

Marteen grabs the fishing line not to far above the fish and steadies him against the outside of the hull. He steadies the club over him and brings it down flat on top of the fish's head. Some blood squirts on Nadja's face, and the fish pops off the hook and drops into the sea.

Kristian traces her fingernails over Nadja's chest as she blots the blood off his face with her swimsuit top. Nadja appears uneasy.

NADJA

You didn't want to keep that one?

MARTEEN

It was a hardhead cat. They're not good eating.

Nadja gets up to leave.

NADJA

By the way, where's the marijuana?

MARTEEN

There will be a boat waiting at the entrance to the canal.

NADJA

How much?

MARTEEN

The hundred fifty plus an extra fifty.

EXT. GULF - DAY

MARTEEN

Too bad about your Achilles injury.
This kind of activity would have lived
up to the expectations of the team you
were drafted by.

Nadja steps cautiously between the two boats.

NADJA

You're right. When Lomax was arrested
in Nevada, they told him he faces three
to five years in prison or two seasons
with the Mudslingers.

MARTEEN

I like this guy. He makes me laugh.
Goodbye..

LINUS

His real name's Kenny, Mr. Sorocaba. He
just changed it after he switched
careers.

MARTEEN

Thank you Mr. Poughty. I'll see you at
the restaurant. Bye Nadja.

PAULIE

Have you caught anything, Mr. Sorocaba?

MARTEEN

Only two croakers. I think the seas are
too rough.

INT. CELLPHONE STORE - MORNING

The rear of Nadja's khakis are damp with ass sweat. He stares
at his wrist watch while the woman who was attending to him
disappears into the back of the store.

There are a few customers besides Nadja talking about
upgrading their plans or purchasing a cell phone. The MANAGER
comes from the back with a concerned look on his face.

When he spots Nadja, he hesitates for a minute. Then a look of recognition comes over his face.

MANAGER

Well I'll be damned. I didn't know we had a celebrity in our midst. Why you're Kenny Nix, offensive guard Southwestern Tennessee, drafted by the Mississippi Mudslingers in the third round.

NADJA

My name is Nadja now.

MANAGER

Whatever did happen to you... Some kind of tendonitis thing. Boy, you were the biggest bust since Ryan Leaf.

NADJA

Thanks, I really appreciate it. Trust me that's how I intended for things to go down.

The Manager pulls out a chair for Nadja at one of the little sales stations.

MANAGER

Oop, can you fit? Or do you need me to find something bigger for you?

Nadja checks his watch.

NADJA

I'll stand thanks. I've got a court date, can we hurry things up.

MANAGER

By the way my name's Ryan Ellis. What can I do you for?

NADJA

On my last bill, ya'll are trying to say that I made all these calls while roaming, but if you look at the bill, you can see that I wasn't roaming. Look: this call's from Metairie; this one's from Kenner; here, this one's made from Baton Rouge. This isn't outside my service area and I'll be damned if I'm going to kowtow to you shits and pay charges that I don't owe.

Nadja knocks the display off the counter.

MANAGER

Look here big guy. Violence isn't going to get you anywhere. Let me see that Bill.

Nadja wipes the sweat off his brow and hands him the bill.

MANAGER

There. Now that's better.

The Manager examines the bill and highlights a couple of the roaming charges with a red pen.

MANAGER

Well I'll be. Yep, that does appear to be the case. Do you mind if I have a copy made of this, so we can go over it and recalculate the correct amount.

NADJA

I've already paid the charges for that month but go ahead if it makes you feel better.

The Manager stands up and puts his arm around Nadja.

NADJA

Don't touch me.

MANAGER

Can I offer you a belt clip to help smooth things over?

NADJA

They're only five dollars. How about one of those leather cases.

MANAGER

You got it big guy. Can I call you Kenny?

NADJA

Don't call me anything until my service is restored.

The Manager leads Nadja to the door.

MANAGER

As sure as it'll still be raining in twenty minutes, your phone will be turned on by then if not before. I'll call you personally to make sure.

NADJA

I'd appreciate it.

MANAGER

Good, then you'll be hearing from me in a few.

EXT. COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT - DAY

Nadja looks at his watch, which reads ten minutes before the hour, and nods in approval. There are still plenty of spots in the parking lot, but it's filling up.

Nadja pulls his Mazda Protege into space seven, checks his phone, and sees that his service has not yet been reconnected. He turns off his windshield wipers, and the rain blankets his vision outside the vehicle. He flips the papers in a manila folder with a sticky note connected to the front reading IMPORTANT.

Nadja looks in his wallet and doesn't see any bills, so he begins picking quarters out of the change in the console. He counts out eight.

He keeps the quarters in his palm, straightens out the papers in the manila folder, checks himself in the rear view,

rearranges a few of his beads, gets out of the car, and jogs to the parking lot attendant.

He checks his watch, which now reads about five minutes to the hour. He looks cool and collected.

The ATTENDANT, a little old lady in police blues and rain gear, lifts up her palm. Rain drops splash off it.

ATTENDANT

Five dollars.

Nadja smiles big and displays his pearly whites.

NADJA

I've got two dollars in quarters here, but I should only be in there for a couple of hours. If you really need me to—is there an atm inside the courthouse?—I'll pull out some money and get it to you on my way out.

The Attendant doesn't bat an eye. Another person trots by and puts five dollars in her upturned palm. She sticks the bill in her brassiere and sticks her hand back out for Nadja's money.

ATTENDANT

Listen bitch. Did I stutter? Ffff-five dollars.

Nadja's wife's attorney, BUCK, a real worm, comes from behind carrying an umbrella.

BUCK

Hi Norma Jean. Is the Big Nasty trying to get over on you also. Has he gotten violent? If you need me to, I can call someone.

ATTENDANT

I'm two seconds away from macing his big black ass.

BUCK

Don't give him another reason to push back the court date. Spare him for the slaughter if you will.

Buck makes an effort to keep the umbrella from covering any part of Nadja.

NADJA

Can you loan me three dollars, Buck?

BUCK

What and add that to rest of the money you already owe us? I don't think so. You can park on the street for free a few blocks away. Get used to it. After we get through with you, you'll always be looking for the free spot.

Nadja pockets the quarters and hurries back to the car.

BUCK

Don't be late, Big Nasty. You've only got a couple minutes.

Nadja get to his car and sets the manila envelope on the roof. He looks around for another parking spot. Reaches in his pocket and pulls out nothing.

He opens the door and looks at his phone in the center console, still no service. He jumps in the car, turns on his wipers and squeals his tires while backing out.

EXT. SURROUNDING STREETS - DAY

All the spots around the parking lot and in the parking lot itself are now taken. Nadja cruises the area and neighborhood behind the courthouse but can't find anything.

Fifteen minutes after the hour, a spot opens up by the governor's mansion. He jumps out, loads the meter up with quarters, turns for the courthouse, only to realize that he doesn't have his folder.

Palms plastered to the window, he doesn't see it inside the car. He looks at the roof and slaps it. He fumbles with his keys at the door and then jumps back in.

EXT. COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT - DAY

Nadja skids into the parking lot behind space seven and stops his car in the middle row, so no one could pass. He leaves his door open and immediately finds one of the pages under the car parked in seven, covered in tread marks with the ink blurred in the part openly exposed to the elements.

He sprawls around space seven getting soaked. Somebody HONKS. He keeps on crawling around the parking lot looking for more of the pages.

INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Clothes frazzled, soaked with rain, Nadja busts into the courthouse. Charges through the metal detector, and the ALARM sounds.

The two officers monitoring the station put their hands on their pistols ready to draw and command Nadja to stop.

NADJA

I'm running late. Sorry.

OFFICER 1

Back it up.

NADJA

Right. Of course. Sorry.

Nadja backs up, pats himself down, and pulls out a two dollar coin from the change pocket inside his pocket. He puts it in the basket and walks back through.

NADJA

Do you know who's presiding in courtroom 134?

OFFICER 1

Judge Francis Black, I believe.

NADJA

Good. Sounds as if it might work in my favor. Do you know what time they started?

OFFICER 1

About forty minutes ago.

Nadja takes off up the stairs.

OFFICER 2

Downstairs.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Nadja enters the courtroom and lets out a big SIGH. Rain DRIPS on the courtroom tile. Besides the JUDGE, girl, her mother, and the attorney now being addressed, the courtroom is empty, and except for the BAILIFF, all female.

The bailiff makes his way around the side of the courtroom.

BAILIFF

Court is now in session. Be seated.

NADJA

Yeah, I just got here.

JUDGE

Mr. Adib, I presume.

NADJA

Yes mam.

JUDGE

Be seated until I address you.

NADJA

Yes, your Honor.

The Judge finishes her business with the girl relatively informally, since no one's really left in the courtroom. Then she pulls a file that she has set to the side and examines it.

JUDGE

Nadja Adib, please approach the bench...The other parties engaged in this dispute have been given a short recess, so that I could handle business with the young lady. In the meantime, would you mind relating to me your understanding of the events at hand.

NADJA

I'd be happy to your Honor. We married before my senior year in college. After graduation, I was drafted third in the NFL draft. Upon the announcement of the draft we purchased our house.

JUDGE

Did your wife work?

NADJA

No, your Honor. She stayed home and cared for the kids.

JUDGE

Did you bring the required documentation?

Nadja reaches in his pocket, pulls out a crumpled sheet of tread-marked documentation, and hands it to the Judge.

NADJA

Judge, I can ex-

Just before the sheet lands on the Judge's fingertips, the Bailiff snatches the document from Nadja's hand.

BAILIFF

If you need to pass anything to the Judge, hand it to me first.

The Bailiff hands the document to the Judge who then examines it.

JUDGE

Did you have separate bank accounts?

NADJA

No, your Honor. We shared the one.

JUDGE

When did you start the annuity?

NADJA

Around a year after the marriage.

JUDGE

Do you receive any severance pay for your involvement in the NFL?

NADJA

That decision is currently under litigation, your Honor.

INT. COURTROOM - FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER

JUDGE

The court has decided to award the former Mrs. Kenny Nix: \$1,500 a month child support, fifty percent of the proceeds of the sale of the couple's expansive Argyle home, fifty percent of any severance pay that might be awarded by the NFL, fifty percent of the annuity, and half of the couple's joint accounts.

EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON

It's been raining all day. The city's water-logged. Nadja's ten year old Mazda Protege turns after an SUV down a side street, trying to avoid some of the slow moving traffic.

INT. NADJA'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Up ahead where the street appears to slope downward are some orange barrels pushed off to the side. A little ways past that at the lowest point, the street appears to be constructed over what might be a canal, but unless one is familiar with the area, one couldn't be sure.

Nadja slows as he checks this out and watches an SUV and a good-sized truck in front of him plow right through the questionable area.

Nadja sees an SUV in the rear view mirror coming behind him. He hesitates for a moment and then punches the accelerator.

His car dies before he makes it past that section of the street that could possibly be mistaken for covering a canal, little ditch, or something.

On closer inspection, Nadja can most definitely tell that the road in this area covers some sort of waterway. He sits in the car almost chuckling at himself with madness. The SUV behind Nadja plows past covering Nadja's windows with its wake.

Nadja lifts his phone with his new leather case out of the center console, only to see that the service still hasn't been reconnected.

NADJA

Well over twenty minutes. And you're right, Fucker, it's still raining.

Nadja opens his door and water seeps in. Where he stalled, the water is clearly higher than the body of his car. He shuts the door, carefully removes his fancy loafers, and places them on the seat rather than on the floorboard where they would surely get wet.

EXT. FLOODED STREET - AFTERNOON

Nadja slowly dips his socked feet into the water. Water soaks his pants up to the knee. He positions himself behind the door with one hand on the steering wheel and trudges through the water.

A truck stops at the orange barrels and surveys the area. It waits a moment and decides to drive on through. Nadja hears the vehicle and quickly closes his car door before any more water has the opportunity to seep in.

Once the truck passes, Nadja reopens the door and rolls down the window. He closes the door happy with himself and sticks his arm through the open window to guide his vehicle.

Nadja's clothes are completely drenched. He focuses on the task at hand: pushing this vehicle a good thirty yards or so to the high ground.

While trudging through the deluge, something inside the car catches his attention. The light on his cell phone has come on. His service has been restored.

In the midst of his admiration, Nadja doesn't bother to notice the large black Yukon barreling through the flood. Its wake splashes through Nadja's window and soaks his expensive loafers.

Once past, the Yukon comes to an abrupt stop, then slowly reverses. The dark tinted window slides down, and a thick cloud of smoke billows from out the car.

A kid, GRAHAM, with blood shot eyes sticks his head out like a turtle.

GRAHAM

Ohhh shit. Mr. Adib, that is you. Are you ok? Do you need some help? ...Do you want a hit?

Nadja considers things silently for a moment. Graham works his spliff. A truck passes by, and a car backs away from attempting to part the Red Sea.

NADJA

Do you have something I could dry my hands off with?

Graham turns into his car to look around. He throws Nadja out a golfing towel.

NADJA

I've got a cell phone, and once I push this wreck to higher ground, I was going to give my girlfriend a call to have her come pick me up.

GRAHAM

Do you want some help pushing?

NADJA

Naw, I got it. But you could give me a pull off that spliff.

Between tokes, Nadja admires the craftsmanship of this well-structured spliff.

NADJA

Did you roll this yourself?

Graham's eyes flare up. Nadja covers the spliff with his palm so that it doesn't get wet.

GRAHAM

I went to France this summer and met this sweet little thing who showed me how to do it. She liked to mix it with a menthol cigarette, but I just rolled this one straight.

NADJA

The weed could be better, but you did a good job rolling it.

Nadja hands the spliff back to Graham.

GRAHAM

All I can find is schwag or pretendica.

NADJA

What's that, pretendica?

GRAHAM

That's the shit we call the well-groomed mid-grade punks try to pass off as the Kind.

NADJA

I know that, um hm.

GRAHAM

Well, I'm gonna bolt, Mr. Adib. My girlfriend's expecting me.

Graham turns into his car.

NADJA

Thanks for the smoke. Do you want your towel? Let me clean it, and I'll bring it to class.

Graham tosses Nadja a pack of rolling papers.

GRAHAM

I don't care about the towel. Listen though, if you ever need anything give me a ring. My number's on the papers. I'm gone try to track down some of that good.

Graham slides up his window and drives off. Nadja opens up the pack of rolling papers and looks at his phone number. Another truck creeps past.

Nadja gets down to business and pushes his car to the high ground. He gets in the car, reaches for his phone, and notices that the phone is dead. It was sitting in a little puddle of water.

Nadja tries to start his car and to his surprise it sputters before dying. He tries some more and each time it sputters progressively more.

Smoke billows from the exhaust and it starts. Smiling, Nadja starts down the road, turns left, right. Then it sounds like the bottom of the engine dropped out.

Nadja rolls to the side of the road, gets out, and sees his oil pan on the concrete behind him. He walks away from the car down the road.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Nadja pedals a BMX bike over the same area where his car's engine was flooded. From the look of it, his hulking figure on the small dirt bike, an observer could be pretty sure that the bike isn't his.

The bike is so small for him that he can't sit down on it but is forced to ride with his torso leaning perpetually forward (not a comfortable looking position for someone of his magnitude) with his ass up off the seat the whole time.

Nadja pauses for a minute to check out the drainage ditch, and how low it is now. Then he cuts across the street with surprising speed.

EXT. CROSS STREET - DAY

He turns down a cross street into an area shaded from the sun by the trees from the surrounding dwellings. The bike has a card stuck between its spokes, so that the bike makes a CLICKING noise when pedaled.

In the middle of the cross street, the orange flag sticking off the rear of the bike disappears down an alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

The CLICKING slows down significantly as Nadja pulls the bike up to the fenced backyard of a one-story house. He carefully parts the vines to sneak a look at the house.

A big dog GROWLS exposing its large canines, and Nadja jumps back causing the bike to fall over on its side.

The dog keeps BARKING, so Nadja scampers back on the bike, and the orange flag turns around the side of the house on the far side of the alley away from the house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Nadja brushes himself off. Blood drips down from his knee to his sock. He lifts his fist to knock on the door, and JOHN opens it.

JOHN

Whoa, hey. How you doin'?

NADJA

Kool, great. I was coming by to settle on the terms of that, of the..

JOHN

Oh yeah, sure. Come in.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

A pistol case is on the bookshelf by the door. A computer hooked to the satellite receiver on top the big screen television to keep the signal from going down when the distributors try to zap the hackers.

The furnishings are minimal but nice, not bad for a hustler with no college education slinging pretty much whatever he can get hold of.

John thinks a lot of himself and it comes off in the way he carries himself and the polite things he does like shut you off to answer the perpetually ringing cell.

NADJA

Is that a new pistol?

JOHN

Yeah, Ferarra got it for my birthday.
So what we looking at? I was on my way
out the door.

John goes to the back door to let the dog inside. John's cell RINGS.

JOHN

Who dis? Shit, nigga. I tol' ya I'd be
there in a few... Uh huh... I know... Handlin
some biznass wit New Jack City... A
buster. I know...

The dog comes in and goes straight for Nadja. He pushes him back into a corner, SNARLING.

NADJA

John. John.

John puts his palm over his free ear.

JOHN

Yeah, we can settle this on the court.
Ya heard me?

The dog SNAPS a couple times, saliva bubbling from its mouth.

NADJA

Nigga please. Get your ass off the
phone and get your dog outta here.

JOHN

I'll holla back. I gotta bitch cryin up
in here.

John sets the cell phone on the table.

JOHN

Sativa, Sativa!

John grabs the rotweiler by the collar and slaps the fuck out the side of its head. He drags it to the door still growling.

JOHN

Get the fuck outside. Damn, I ain't never seen him act that way. You got some pork chops in your pocket, fat man?

Nadja wipes saliva off his shorts onto the carpet. Blood from his knee that got on his hand streaks the white carpet.

JOHN

What the fuck? Get your ass on outside my house. Worse than the fucking dog, dirtying up my carpet and shit.

NADJA

I didn't mean to... what about?

John opens up a cabinet and pulls out some pet stain spray.

JOHN

You heard me. Go on. Get your ass outside.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Nadja waits outside for a second or two, then knocks on the door.

No one comes to the door. He waits a second more, and then opens the door a crack.

NADJA

John?... John?

John barges outside slamming the door into Nadja's knee and waving the pet stain remover.

JOHN

You lucky I don't spray this shit up in your eye. Dirtying up my carpet. I might go get Sativa. Let him have his way with your big black ass.

Nadja slaps his palm on his forehead and holds his knee with the other.

NADJA

Elijah Mohammad!

John steps back wearily.

JOHN

Are you threatening me? Back off! Back off! Break yourself fool.

NADJA

My knee, my knee.

John settles down.

JOHN

Serves your big sweaty ass right.

NADJA

We still on? I went ahead and reserved the shipment. I wouldn't of done it unless I knew I could count on you, like you said.

JOHN

Do I look scairt? Like I tol you brother, once everything comes through with that steroid shipment, I'm ready to roll.

NADJA

That was supposed to be at the beginning of the week. Now it's Thursday.

JOHN

Yes, and the good Lord works in mysterious ways. I'm going to Gulf Shores for the weekend. I'll be back Monday. By then, everything should have arrived, and I'll be ready to roll.

NADJA

Alright then. Later.

John shuts the door. Nadja painfully gets on the bike and pedals off.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Nadja rides past a crowded college bar with a large duffel bag on his back, the marquee reads: "Saturday Night: Ladies drink free." Some HECKLERS in the parking lot make a spectacle out of Nadja.

The drunken lot can barely contain themselves at the sight of Nadja.

HECKLER 1

Where'd you steal that bike, niger.

The crowd erupts with laughter.

HECKLER 2

Who you runnin from?

Nadja pays them no mind. He just sticks up his middle finger almost losing his balance and pedals his awkward self onward, single minded of purpose.

EXT. TOWNHOME CARPORT - NIGHT

Nadja steps off the bike and flings it into the wall of the carport. It bounces off and almost slams into the side of a pink Mary Kay Cadillac. He slams open the gate and is BARKED at by a mastiff that quickly stops when it recognizes its owner.

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

The mastiff approaches wagging its tale forcefully from side to side happy to see Nadja.

NADJA

Back it up, Chevas. Back it up!

INT. TOWNHOME KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is filled with smoke from the fruit steak fajitas HRUNDI is cooking. Hrundi is a small vivacious girl more in the sense of temperament than conduct.

A steady THUMPING and incessant YAPPING come from the other room.

HRUNDI

Karl, I ask you to stop. Don't you make me come in there.

INT. LIVING ROOM

KARL has his plump self lodged in the recliner in the living room throwing the tennis ball against the high ceiling driving Chi Chi, their pet Chihuahua, and Hrundi nuts.

INT. KITCHEN

The backdoor slams open, and Nadja storms in. He lets the duffel bag slide off his shoulders and plop on the kitchen floor. Hrundi comes at him with the spatula.

HRUNDI

(hushed tone)

Karl's in there. You must move this.
Get it out now. Move, move, move.

Nadja raises his finger as if ready to yell but then bends down and slings the duffel around his back.

KARL

(o.s.)

Dad, is that you?

HRUNDI

No, Karl. It's me muttering under my breath the many different ways I'm going to kill you if you don't stop.

Nadja slips out the back door.

KARL
(o.s.)
It sounded like Dad.

Hrundi peaks through the banister of the staircase at Karl.

HRUNDI
You know I wouldn't allow your father
to enter the house like that.

KARL
Well maybe he got sick of your shit,
Hrundi.

HRUNDI
Well maybe if you don't take your face
into your room, I'm going to slap the
shit out of it with the spatula.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Hrundi walks toward Karl threateningly waving the spatula, and he jumps up half laughing and crying with excitement and runs to his room. Chi Chi follows him nipping at his backside.

HRUNDI
And you stay in there until your father
comes in and tells you that it is ok to
come out.

KARL
Bitch!

HRUNDI
Keep it up and you'll never come out.

INT. KITCHEN

Nadja stands over the oven and picks at the steak. Hrundi catches him and thwacks the back of his hand with the spatula. She pushes him out of the way and finishes the fajitas.

NADJA

What was all that about?

HRUNDI

Oh nothing. Your son's just a brat. I should be with asking you the same question.

NADJA

You don't wanna know.

HRUNDI

I think maybe I do.

NADJA

Ragu gave it back. Something about his friends. You saw it all.

HRUNDI

How much did he have?

NADJA

Fifty pounds. He gave me this.

Nadja hands Hrundi an envelope. She stops organizing things so that they can serve themselves.

HRUNDI

What's this for?

NADJA

He took one. At the price I gave him for moving the lot no less. This is fucking great. What am I going to do? I'm fucked.

HRUNDI

Are you still going to be able to cover my rent? I've already done my budget figuring on it. If I don't get it, I'm not going to make it this month.

NADJA

If this doesn't pan out, I'm not going to be able to cover myself. Even if it does, I'm still deep in the hole.

HRUNDI

I could of looked for another job, but you told me don't worry about it, your education is an investment. What about my credit card debt? You said that you would help me while I paid it off.

KARL

(o.s.)

Dad, is that you?

Hrundi stops straining the grease from the bowl with the steaks and fruit and holds it over the dog bowls.

KARL

(o.s.)

Dad, can I come out?

HRUNDI

Did you want this? Cause I can't eat anymore. I'm going to give it to the dogs. This is very much stress.

HOWLING Nadja comes at Hrundi and with the force of exertion and the proximity to her face brushes her hair back out of her face as he punches a fist-sized hole in the wall.

Hrundi drops the bowl and it SHATTERS. Chi Chi yaps, and Karl SQUEALS WHIMPERING and SLAMS his door shut.

HRUNDI

Are you going to threaten me, big man. Go ahead attack. You might be able to win. I'll tell the cops what you've got upstairs.

Nadja slumps his shoulders, backs up, and leans against the counter.

NADJA

Sit the fuck up. This isn't helping. The problem exists. How are we going to solve it? The question isn't how can we extort more money from my boyfriend.

HRUNDI

I cook and clean around here. Take care of the brat. You don't even put your dishes away anymore.

NADJA

Things get done, maybe not always on your timeline, but I survived before I met you.

HRUNDI

For what? two months. And let me tell you, you were in the best of conditions.

NADJA

Hrundi, I appreciate what you do around here, and what you've done for me; however, I didn't ask you to run up your credit cards, and if you really want to, you should drop out of school and go ahead and pick up that extra job. I was just trying to recommend what I thought would be best for you in the long run.

Hrundi picks up the dustpan and begins sweeping up the mess.

HRUNDI

What about Charlie and Fazande downtown? How are they doing with what you gave them?

NADJA

I'm not sure exactly. You know Fazande. If I ask him what day it is, he tells me what stage the moon's in or what Nostradamus predicted would happen on this day four hundred years ago.

HRUNDI

How much do you need to give Marteen?

NADJA

\$350,000 by the end of next week and the rest two weeks after that.

HRUNDI

You know what you need to do? You need to call Linus and tell him you don't want it and why your at it get the wedding present back, no marriage/no present, simple as that.

Karl creeps into the kitchen. Nadja sees him and waves him over.

NADJA

There's a no return policy. Come here son and give your father a hug.

Karl doesn't budge.

HRUNDI

Not for you there's not.

KARL

Did you bring my bike back?

NADJA

I put it in the carport. I was played.

KARL

Next time, ask before you take it k.

NADJA

Will do Mr. man. Will do.

KARL

Is dinner ready yet?

HRUNDI

I'm going to run to McDonalds. I need you to come with me. Just give me a second.

KARL

Hallelujah.

Karl runs off to his room.

NADJA

You know what gets me though? Is how quick Linus is to line this thing up and tell me that he has a guy to take half of it. But when my ass is puckering, what does he tell me: "I wish I had more liquid assets, so I could get in on this deal."

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Nadja stands at the front of the classroom writing a reading assignment on the chalkboard. The CLASS looks anxious and ready to leave. A few have already started packing up their belongings.

Graham sits to Nadja's left. He's sketching something on his notebook: a giant weed leaf.

NADJA

So before you go and observe whatever subject it is that you are profiling, which I'm sure the large majority of you are going to run out and do immediately after class, think about you preconceptions: for example, what you think you know about the subject, under what conditions do you think it operates, and how does it perform whatever it is that it might do... I want those rough drafts by Monday no later.

Everyone starts and finishes packing up to leave. Some bolt out the door, and a couple of STRAGGLERS wait for the opportunity to speak with Nadja.

NADJA

Food for thought: A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush.

STRAGGLER 1

(chuckling ingratiatingly)
Mr. Adib, do you think if I get my draft in by Friday, you could take a look at it and we could talk about it after class on Monday.

Hrundi wades through the students walking out and waits for Nadja, holding her big purple purse and key at the side of the classroom.

NADJA

Get it to me by Friday, and I'd be more than happy to tell you what I think.

STRAGGLER 1

Thanks, Mr. Adib. I'd really appreciate it.

Graham inconspicuously walks past Nadja's desk and heads for the door. Straggler 2 waits impatiently to get in a few words with Nadja.

NADJA

Graham, could I have a word with you before you leave?

Graham looks up startled.

GRAHAM

No problem, Mr. Adib.

Hrundi makes her way in a little closer since there are only the three besides herself.

NADJA

Go ahead.

STRAGGLER 2

I'm not sure I understand the assignment, so I have no idea for a topic.

NADJA

Have you done the reading? They provide some great examples of possible topics.

Straggler 2 looks around kind of sheepishly.

STRAGGLER 2

I just don't think I get it.

NADJA

Do the reading and we'll talk about it tomorrow.

Straggler 2 shuffles out, Graham steps forward, and Hrundi plops her bag down on Nadja's desk.

HRUNDI

Boy, it's hot out there. Are you almost done?

NADJA

One second, babe.

GRAHAM

If this is about the journal, I'm sorry it's late. I'll bring it to you tomorrow.

NADJA

No, no, I just wanted to...

HRUNDI

Are you picking on this nice looking young gentleman? You should be ashamed of yourself.

Nadja scowls at Hrundi and shakes his head no.

NADJA

Hrundi.

HRUNDI

It's just that I know how much of a hardass you can be at times and I would hate for you to terrorize such a fine looking impressionable young man. You could make it, so he scares everyone away from taking your classes.

GRAHAM

This beautiful woman isn't your wife is she Mr. Adib?

NADJA

Well no. I just wanted to-

Graham extends his hand to Hrundi.

GRAHAM

A pleasure to meet you, Graham Sperrier Kinnel II.

Nadja breaks them up and throws Graham his towel. Hrundi fusses over the interruption.

NADJA

I just wanted to say thanks for the towel, you know. Get me those journals and try not to be late with your draft. I'll see you Wednesday.

GRAHAM

Don't mention it Mr. Adib. It was my pleasure.

Graham winks at Nadja and cups Hrundi's hand with both of his. They wait for him to exit.

NADJA

And what was all that about? Are you trying to come on to one of my students.

HRUNDI

(singing)

Whe ch-ch, whe ch-ch, look how made he gets.

EXT. GHETTO - DAY

A pink Mary Kay Cadillac turns past the neighborhood corner store. Outside, LOITERERS are congregated just hanging out. The Cadillac pulls up to a one-way street with no stop sign and stops.

The Cadillac starts to turn the wrong way and then stops. Some CHILDREN ride their bikes past. A car behind the Cadillac begins to HONK.

The LOITERERS by the store attracted by the commotion stare and begin to shout at the Cadillac for heading in the wrong direction.

The driver, Nadja, looks back and lifts a hand up. The car behind the Cadillac continues to HONK.

INT. CADILLAC - DAY

Nadja turns the Cadillac quickly down the wrong way and pulls alongside a house two driveways down from the corner. He checks the contents of two large department store bags, pounds of marijuana. He opens the glove box and pulls out a pocket Buck knife. He slides the knife in his front pant's pocket, then gets out the car with the two bags.

When he gets out of the Caddy, an OLD WOMAN from down the street is YELLING at him.

OLDWOMAN

You ought to know better than that. You oughta be ashamed driving around in that flashy car. He must cut hair.

EXT. GHETTO - DAY

Nadja starts to walk down the driveway when he's called from inside the abandoned house next door.

FAZANDE

(o.s.)

Adib... Big Man, in here.

INT. BROKENDOWN HOUSE - DAY

The inside looks like a large rat's dwelling: a mattress and bedding are in one corner, clothes and belongings in another, and food, water, a bowl or two and some silver ware in the other.

Candles are spread on exposed 2x4s around what looks to have been a living room, the room most concealed from the elements.

Sage is burning in a pan in the middle of the room and Fazandes artwork is hanging from exposed nails.

FAZANDE, a thin white woman with eclectic clothing (a mismatch of whatever at one time stylish clothes she could get her hands on) greets Nadja at the hole in the wall with a big hug and pat on the back.

NADJA

What's this?

Fazande points at her artwork hanging all the way around the room.

FAZANDE

I finished it all. It's set up as a showing.

NADJA

The room, the house. Why aren't you staying next door?

FAZANDE

Some shit about me needing to pay rent.

NADJA

Well, yeah, I guess I could see that being a problem.

FAZANDE

I told him I was going to give him some money. I even went and did a few naked gigs.

NADJA

?

FAZANDE

The nude modeling, but he wasn't having it. He said some shit about not getting paid for the past three months. I told him "holdout," but I guess he capitulated to the pressures of the system.

NADJA

Is everything all right with the...?

FAZANDE

We'll talk in a second. I want you to try something.

Fazande walks over to a crossbeam to what used to be a door.

NADJA

Look man. This ain't-

FAZANDE

How many pull-ups can you do?

NADJA

Shit, I don't know. I haven't been fooling with that.

FAZANDE

Do you want me to go first... I'll go

Fazande jumps up and rips out fifteen full reps, hangs for a minute, then rips out five more before dropping.

FAZANDE

This is what separates the women from the boys my friend. Jump on up there and give it a go.

Nadja hesitates, and then drops the bags.

NADJA

Ok.

Nadja reaches up and during the first steady rep the crossbeam creaks and Fazande starts CRACKING UP. Nadja starts laughing also but gets another good rep before dying on the third.

FAZANDE

We can add a couple to that, since I made you laugh.

NADJA

I don't need that. I'll work on 'em. Remember I got over an extra hundred pounds to pull up. I know I'd get you on rows and just about anything else.

Fazande pats Nadja in the belly. Nadja knocks her hand away.

FAZANDE

I'm pretty good at dips. Let's drink some whiskey. I went and bought a pint when you told me you were coming. We'll smoke some too, and I can show you my art.

NADJA

I don't have all kinds of time.

Fazande pulls out the only chair and insists that Nadja sits. She goes over to her belongings and pulls out a blunt.

FAZANDE

Then we'll smoke, have a whiskey, and I'll only show you my best work.

INT. BROKENDOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

All the candles are lit giving the hovel a rustic, cozy feel. Fazande is holding a candle in front of one of her pieces, showing it to Nadja.

The art is made from different colors of construction paper cut into shapes and arranged together. Some pieces emphasize movement, some a theme, and others convey a message.

A short poem, description, definition, paragraph of prose accompanies each piece.

The illuminated piece contains a black woman with a big afro holding a double-headed spear. One side of the spear pierces a turtle in the shape of the earth, while the other pierces a devil.

FAZANDE

This is called "Spine of the World."
That's turtle island and that's
capitalism.

The caption underneath reads: COMPOSITION DEFINES ME

FAZANDE

Art equals crystallized inspiration
amalgamated with discipline.

NADJA

I gotta split bra... Did you get rid of it all? I brought some more.

FAZANDE

Well, I got rid of some, but the dudes out of town and hasn't given me the money yet.

NADJA

You know this guy well?

FAZANDE

Yeah, he's straight.

NADJA

Be straight with me ...woman. It's been over two weeks. How much do you have left?

FAZANDE

It's like this. You flooded the market, so things are slow right now. Jazz Fest is right around the corner though, so things should be picking up. Just ease up a little bit... I've got a thousand if you want that.

Nadja runs his hand through his beads.

NADJA

Go ahead and sit on it. I'll be back in a few days.

Nadja makes for the hole in the wall, holding the two department store bags.

NADJA

I respect your privacy, Fazande, and I'm not trying to harass you but please do what you can with this shit and do it quick. I've got a bad feeling about these people. They don't operate on the same plane we do.

FAZANDE

All right brother. I'll do what I can to expediate things.

INT. NADJA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

With the living room's lights on dim not too unlike Fazande's dwelling in regards to lighting maybe some candles, Hrundi sits on the couch in the middle of the living room watching television and eating grapes while she mixes some of her cosmetics on the coffee table.

The colors in the room are mostly African and Mediterranean.

The front door swings open. Nadja's hulking figure looks ominous the way the shadows from outside cut across his face.

Hrundi jumps knocking over some of her cosmetics.

NADJA

Karl's in bed?

HRUNDI

He's in his room anyway. Didn't go so well did it?

NADJA

Fazande's dicking me around, greasing me down, sliming my pole, giving me the run around.

Nadja sets the two department store bags down by the side of the couch. He takes his shirt off and throws it over the bags.

HRUNDI

That's not like her to do that. I'm sure she'll come through.

NADJA

Even if she does, which I don't think she'll do for whatever reason—she was thrown out her room again—it's still looking like I'm going to come up shy.

Hrundi scoots over on the couch and pats the cushion next to her.

HRUNDI

Maybe if you come up with the large majority, these people will let you slide.

NADJA

This isn't that kind of venture. I've already been given an extra week and still I have nothing.

Nadja plops down into the couch. Hrundi falls into him and begins rubbing his chest and arms.

HRUNDI

Then we'll have to pull out all the stops. I'll talk to the girls at work. I'll even call my stepbrother in Michigan. You keep working on John, Charlie, Fazande, and whoever else you know. You can even call Ragu back.

NADJA

No way. I aint never calling that dude back. I met him today to pick up that extra grand he owed me. He was a real bitch.

HRUNDI

You need to let things go right now, so you get a good night's sleep. There's nothing else you can do tonight. Relax...

Hrundi picks up the bong from the other side of the table and sets it on the coffee table in front of Nadja.

Nadja sits up just enough to grab the bong and the lighter.

HRUNDI

Why don't you help me mix my cosmetics.

NADJA

There is this one guy I could try. He wrote his number on a pack of zigzags. I thought I threw it right here on the coffee table.

Nadja starts shuffling around some of the papers under Hrundi's cosmetics, knocking bottles and a card board display over.

Hrundi pushes the display over the pack of zigzags when trying to keep these small plastic vials separate from her makeup.

HRUNDI

Not these. These are toxic and would not mix well with our new hand-cream.

Nadja gives up looking and sits back.

NADJA

Wha?

HRUNDI

Front Line, flea and tick medication. It doesn't mix well with the new hand-cream.

NADJA

Who'd a thought that?

Najda's cell phone RINGS (Nokia Oriental Style) from his pants pocket. He answers it and sits up. The mastiff looks up from his nap on the stairs' landing.

NADJA

Hey John, yeah... How was the trip?
...Good, good. Bring it over? At what time? You got it.

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Duffel bag on his back over one of his Mudslinger's jerseys, Nadja pedals into the gravel of John's drive having gained, although still awkward looking, a certain level of comfort on the bike.

He skids his back tire to stop kicking up some gravel on a car that wasn't there the last time. He takes a second to check it out before approaching John's door.

JOHN

Well if it isn't new jack city. Hey boy, what's up? Let's get that shit inside.

NADJA

How you doin? Where's the dog?

JOHN

I put him outside for you.

NADJA

Good, good.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Inside two GUYS are waiting. One appears dressed and ready to play basketball, and the other is a trendy looking white guy with some earthen silver looking rings and a bracelet.

The air is charged, and Nadja begins to look a little uneasy, although one would still wonder whether or not these guys together could overpower him. He sets the duffel bag down at his feet.

JOHN

These are my boys. This is Simon.
You've met Juan.

Nadja nods at Juan.

NADJA

What up nigga?

Simon steps close to shake hands.

SIMON

(under his breath)

Looks like the tables are turned,
chump.

Nadja half tosses his hand aside. Turns his broad back on Simon making him disappear and faces John.

NADJA

So what's the deal man? You got the funds?

JOHN

What numbers were you throwing at me,
boy?

NADJA

Thirty five hundred a pop for twenty-
five. More than that and I can probably
knock it down some more.

JOHN

How much for five?

NADJA

What? You mean twenty-five, because you
originally asked about fi'ty. What the
fuck is this? Great. My ex wants half
my shit, my car floods, and this nigger
comes at me with five.

Simon flips his hair back and runs his fingers through it
before putting his hand on Nadja's shoulder.

Surprisingly agile for a man of his size (he played
professional football for a reason), Nadja swims his left
arm over on the far side of Simon and pushes him into the
hook he has coming across with his right, not unlike a move
he would've performed numerous times in the trenches around
the line of scrimmage.

Simon drops in an instant out cold. Nadja turns around
invigorated.

NADJA

These people do this for a living.
They're not fucking around. So what's
it gonna be?

John's knocked down a notch and the distance between the
two appears to have grown.

JOHN

I sent the cash to my boy and those
steroids never arrived. I can't come up
with anymore funds right now. Why? Are
you threatening me? Is this the way you
operate? Cause you know what, boy? It's
not good business.

REVERSE ANGLE

The handle of John's pistol is clearly outlined through the back of his shirt.

Juan slides into the kitchen.

Nadja gradually inches closer and closer to John until each can smell what the other had for lunch. As this occurs, John's hand inches closer and closer to his pistol until he even begins drawing it from the back of his pants.

NADJA

I ain't your boy and do you wanna know what's not good business? Telling somebody, who's always been there to give you a hand with your shit, that your going to take fifty pounds and then reneging on the deal. THAT'S not good business, fucker... And if you pull out that gun any farther, I'm going to ram it up your ass.

REVERSE ANGLE

Nadja can see John's backside in the mirror on the wall he's backed him up against. John's hand drops to his side, and Nadja backs away from his face.

JOHN

You can leave it, and I'll see what I can do with it.

NADJA

Can I borrow your 9?

JOHN

...I'll call somebody who'll maybe take five and get back with you.

Nadja picks up his duffel bag and heads out the door leaving it open as he goes.

INT. NADJA'S HOUSE - DAY

Nadja comes in through the backdoor into the kitchen with the dogs prancing after him. His clothes are covered in sweat. He lets the duffel bag slide off his shoulders, throws his sweaty shirt on the kitchen tile, and walks to the refrigerator.

On the door to the fridge is a note: DEBRA'S ATTORNEY BUCK CALLED. Nadja rips it down, crumples it and tosses it over his head.

He opens the door to the fridge, grabs a gallon of whole milk, and a two-liter of coke. He sticks the cold two-liter under his arm and it rests against his sagging breast.

He's about to walk to the pantry when he sneaks over to the cake container and peeks under the lid. A freshly baked carrot cake sits underneath.

LIVING ROOM

Nadja comes into the living room puts his goodies on the coffee table, smiling at how the two-liter of coke made his nipple hard.

Nadja takes off the drinks lids and carefully arranges everything on the coffee table with the carrot cake in the center. The dogs follow his every move.

He goes into the bathroom sticking his head out once to warn the dogs and comes out with some Tiger Balm (Ben Gay).

NADJA

Stay away from my food or I'll cook you
two up.

After plopping down on the couch, he takes off his shoes, flings his wet socks against the wall, and grabs a piece of cake with his hand before applying tiger balm to his Achilles tendon with the other.

This continues not that long until he's devoured three fourths of the cake. With cake still all over his hand, he grabs the gallon of milk and proceeds to start downing it while he squeezes out a good quarter of the Tiger Balm in his palm to apply to his other Achilles tendon.

A good half gallon of the milk gone, Nadja proceeds to work on the coke while licking the cake off his fingers and from around the milk container.

All the while Chi Chi and the mastiff sit patiently inching closer as Nadja occasionally YELLS at them.

NADJA

Back the fuck up.

Crumbs sitting all over his blubber, Nadja bounces his head from side to side as if considering something. He digs around on the coffee table under the papers and junk mail, looking for something.

Nadja knocks the vial/dropper of flea and tick medication into Hrundi's file folder sitting on the side of the coffee table.

He drags it over to him, stretches it open, and pulls out a pack of zigzags along with the flea dropper. He lifts the lid of the pack and sure enough Graham's number is written in the inside.

Nadja stares at the number and then where it came from.

NADJA

Hmm.

He struggles to get himself off the couch and he walks into the kitchen holding the flea dropper and the phone number. The dogs watch him leave surreptitiously.

INT. KITCHEN - ETC.

Nadja grabs the portable phone off the wall presses talk and the red light comes on. He looks at the number. He can hear the dogs finishing off the cake in the living room.

He presses talk again and the red light goes off. He clears his throat and sets down the POISONOUS flea dropper by the flavored extracts in the spice rack between the refrigerator and stove.

He stares at a picture of Hrundi stuck to the fridge with a magnet, and then he looks at the number and shakes his head.

He presses talk and the red light come on. He dials Graham's number.

NADJA
(in an unconvincing woman's voice)
Graham.

Clears throat.

NADJA
I mean Graham...

EXT. GATED COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Beside the guard shack, the GUARD looks up from his podium next to the road as a pink Cadillac slows to approach the speed bump before him. The tinted window of the Cadillac slides down to reveal a massive forearm adorned with a gold rolex.

Nadja lifts his hand and rolls his thick black fingers at the guard.

As the back tires of the Cadillac roll over the speed bump, before Nadja had the opportunity to just drive past, the security Guard steps into the road and raises his hand for Nadja to stop.

After Nadja comes to a complete stop, the Guard shuffles timidly toward the Cadillac's window.

GUARD
Do you have a delivery? Give me your company name, phone number, and your license number; also, the name, address, and phone number of the customer.

Nadja pushes his beads back off his forehead and looks the Guard in the eye.

NADJA
I'm a visitor, thanks.

The Guard takes a step back, lodges his foot in the crook of the curve, and stumbles around before snapping himself back to full attention.

GUARD

Name, address, phone number, please.

NADJA

How 'bout a name and his cell. Look here.

Nadja lifts up his cell phone for the Guard to see.

NADJA

I'll call him now.

GUARD

No can do, big guy. For all I know, whoever answers that cell could be lying in the back of your truck.

Nadja snaps his thick black fingers in front of the Guard's nose.

NADJA

Shucks! Once again, the keen wit of the guardsmen has foiled our evil plans. Back to the hideout.

The Guard circles his finger in the air and does a little WHISTLE.

GUARD

Turn her around.

Nadja drives slowly to the end of the median, with the Guard, hand on his nightstick, watching carefully; but instead of taking a left to turn the Cadillac around, Nadja turns right and drives into the community.

The guard scrambles to the patrol car, turns on the SIREN and WARNING LIGHTS, squeals out, and fish tails after the pink Cadillac.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - NIGHT

Hrundi's pink Cadillac turns into the dark cul-de-sac and stops in the street in front of a driveway with a black Hummer blocking it.

The Cadillac turns its wheel to park in the street in front of the house but is blocked by the patrol car that skids to a stop in front of it.

Nadja nonchalantly gets out of the Cadillac, talking on his cell phone.

The security Guard jumps out of the patrol car and stands behind the door, shouting into a WALKIE-TALKIE and holding a megaphone.

GUARD

I've got a code yellow gate infraction
and request backup, over.

GUARD

(megaphone)

Step away from the vehicle with your
arms raised.

WALKIE-TALKIE

Give me your location, over.

GUARD

At the Poughy residences, over.

Nadja raises his arms in mock surrender.

The porch light to the house comes on, and Linus Poughy steps out of the front door, chuckling.

Linus is dressed conservatively, button down and khakis.

LINUS

Is there a problem?

The guard steps from behind the patrol car door, eyeing Nadja wearily and holding a can of pepper spray.

GUARD

(megaphone)

Return inside, Mr. Poughy. This man
ran the gate. We'll remove him from the
premises once my backup arrives.

NADJA

Didn't you tell them to be expecting me?

LINUS

I must've forgot.

Another patrol car, SIRENS sounding, warning lights flashing, skids behind the Cadillac. The Guard readies his nightstick.

LINUS

This man is an acquaintance of mine. I can handle it from here.

GUARD

Not meaning to be rude Mr. Poughty but next time could you instruct your visitor on the correct entry procedure?

LINUS

Will do Guardsman. Thanks for your help. I'm going to have to mention your careful attention with this matter to my Paw Paw.

GUARD

Have a good night, Mr. Poughty.

The Guard returns to his patrol car. Both patrol car's kill their SIRENS and LIGHTS and drive off.

Nadja watches them leave and then shakes his head at Linus.

NADJA

You shit sack. I've a mind to pound you.

Linus cuts his eyes in Nadja's direction.

LINUS

Park that fag mobile. We's gon' take a ride in the Hum-V.

NADJA

Good, I've been waiting to see this thing.

INT. HUMMER - NIGHT

The car is spotless except for some change and a few rap cd's in an open spot between the drive shaft and the stereo.

LINUS

Let's go to Robicheaux's and grab a bite to eat.

NADJA

I'm really not that hungry. I had one of my special chocolate floats on the way over here.

LINUS

Oh really, what's in that?

NADJA

I take three scoops of Byer's chocolate ice cream (less expensive than some of those fancy ice creams, but it's great), fill my big glass to the top of the Mudslinger's emblem (about three quarters of the way full), a good squirt of vanilla extract, top it off with whipcream, chocolate syrup, sprinkles, and a cherry on top. Presto.

LINUS

You wouldn't not want to go because you don't want to see some people?

NADJA

What makes you think that?

LINUS

Paulie called me and said something about Marteen telling him that you've asked for a brief extension but that everything sounds fine.

NADJA

Yeah, yeah, I'm on it. I've been keeping up with ya'll, and everything's kool. No problems.

LINUS

You can drink some beer than. He'll probably give us a break on the bill.

NADJA

Whatever. I'll hang out.

LINUS

You know Lamont's been asking me to hook him up with someone who can move his product. He calls me collect from prison. We could talk three-way.

NADJA

He's so hot I'm sweatin now. You know I can't move his numbers. I mean product. What you tryin to do to me, Satan. This isn't full time. I don't need this.

Linus reaches for the STEREO remote and presses a button. He rests his finger with a tan line where the wedding ring used to be on the button.

LINUS

Listen to this. Marteen just signed them to his record label.

STEREO

Still watch what you say to me punk./
Cause I got what it takes to make the whole place jump.

NADJA

Who that?

Linus lowers the volume.

LINUS

State Property with Bienie Siegel and Freeway.

Out the windshield passes a sign for the lakefront. Linus veers off the interstate.

EXT. ROBICHEAUX'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Hummer parks facing the lake. Nadja and Linus exit the vehicle and begin crossing the street to a decent sized building on the corner lot.

Nadja's dressed flashier than usual adorned in his jewelry and a pair of glossy dress shoes.

If one looks closely they can see subtle reminders of the last business that owned this building: different color paint under the chips, the old lettering showing through the paint on the sign over the door.

INT. ROBICHEAUX'S FOYER - NIGHT

The inside has been recently renovated, and although possessing a homely elegance, it is clearly makeshift.

The food, at the tables or on serving trays, like the interior features a tasty modern Creole flavored seafood sensation: good but not quite secure in its style.

OLD MAN Robicheaux mans the host's podium and greets Linus and Nadja when they arrive.

Old Man Robicheaux has been shortened with age, and with his mumbled French Creole accent he isn't unsimilar to a nutria.

Old Man steps to the side of the podium and sticks out his hand to greet Linus. Nadja is squeezed in tight between Linus and the door.

OLD MAN

Linus, good to see you tonight.

LINUS

How are you Mr. Robicheaux. Is Mrs. Robicheaux giving you a hard time tonight?

OLD MAN

Not anymore. We had to send her home. She's got the arthritis, and her knees wouldn't stop giving her pains tonight.

LINUS

Sorry to hear that, Sir.

OLD MAN

God bless ya, boy... Do ya wanna sit in the dining room or at the bar?

LINUS

At the bar, please.

Linus glances at Nadja and heads to the bar.

Nadja is noticeably awkward (for one, he's the only black guy in the place) with his beaded hair and flashy sense of style.

Nadja steps forward quickly, lifts his big mitt to shake hands before noticing that Old Man Robicheaux has stepped back behind the podium. Nadja does a sort of half-wave and hurries after Linus.

Old Man Robicheaux emits an amused rodent squeal as Nadja passes.

INT. ROBICHEAUX'S BAR - NIGHT

The bar is the newest edition to the restaurant and it shows. There are three or four dining tables in the room, and everything is crammed together to the point that you're not sure if you should participate in the conversation with your friend at the bar or the people at the table behind you whose chair legs are intertwined with the legs of your bar stool.

Linus takes a seat at the middle of the bar.

Nadja squeezes into the bar stool next to Linus that is pushed tight to the bar because of the two couples dining at the table behind him.

Although the atmosphere is cramped, everyone appears engrossed in their own conversations and familiar with the environment except Nadja. Nadja is perspiring and trying to create some space between his pants and waistline.

PAULIE ROBICHEAUX approaches Linus and Nadja from behind the bar. When he's not schmoozing with customers in the dining area, Paulie can usually be found nipping on drinks at the bar, or barking orders at his dogs (the staff).

PAULIE

What's happening Linus? Good to see you. I see you brought your meat.

Paulie looks at Nadja.

How's it going tonight? Did ya'll see the man?

At the end of the bar sits Marteen in a sharp white linen suit with his WIFE, a mature woman of her early forties who looks to be from the same region as her husband. Linus gets up to talk with him.

Nadja attempts to get out of his seat but is trapped in by the counter and the people behind him. He looks ingratiatingly at Marteen.

Marteen motions toward him but shrugs it off when he sees that Nadja is not willing to leave his seat.

Paulie sets his hands on the counter around Nadja. Linus returns to his stool. Old Man Robicheaux waves his fingers in Nadja's general direction while talking to one of his employees at the end of the bar by the kitchen.

LINUS

Paulie, give us two beers, two soups, and one of those fried appetizer platters.

PAULIE

Coming right up. I did the crab bisque myself. Came out great.

Nadja lifts his shirt up off his stomach so that his perspiration doesn't make it stick.

NADJA

No soup for me thanks. I ate something on the way over here.

Paulie grabs two beers out of the cooler and opens them. Old Man Robicheaux walks behind Paulie considering something.

LINUS

Why don't you have some soup? It'll make you feel better.

NADJA

That's alright.

LINUS

You should really try the soup. It's great. You know you'll be sorry you didn't.

Nadja slaps his fist down on the counter.

NADJA

Enough with the soup, a'ight.

Paulie walks into the kitchen. Old Man Robicheaux goes into the dining area.

LINUS

(to himself)

Not one to instill trust are we?

NADJA

Huh?

Linus leans in close to Nadja, so close that his lips are nearly touching his ear.

LINUS

I almost cut you off for good. When you called me up screaming into the phone about the product with that crazy bitch in the background nagging about the wedding present, Kat happened to be in the car, and I told her no more. I wasn't going to deal with your psycho ass anymore. I planned on returning the present, but yours was one of a few hundred, and I made the mistake of thinking that my friends could wait.

Linus leans back a little and begins to slice his thumb across his throat—

LINUS

All I got to do is give the man a call and that's it. You're out the loop.

Paulie sets a tray on the bar. He puts the platter of fried seafood in the middle of the two and gives each a small plate. He also sets down two serving bowls of red and white sauce and a soup for Linus.

As Paulie gets them two more beers from the cooler, Nadja grabs a fried crab claw and dips it in the bowl of red sauce.

Linus uses his spoon to scoop some of the two sauces onto his plate before eating any of the fried seafood. Nadja watches him sheepishly before doing the same.

LINUS

Try some of the white sauce. It's another one of Paulie's concoctions.

Nadja obediently tries a big gob of the white sauce on a piece of calamari.

NADJA

You know what? I called you today to apologize for the way things went down. You didn't deserve to be screamed at for my being played, and we didn't need the wedding gift back especially only a few days after Kat skipped out on the wedding. But to tell you the truth, I don't care if I'm out the loop if the problem I'm having is that the price doesn't match the quality and that your cronies are going to fuck me every chance they get.

LINUS

What did Ragu do?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH'S FRIED CHICKEN - DAY

Sitting on his son's bike with the kickstand down and the tires flattened, Nadja holds a box of chicken tenders, dipping one into some sauce.

After he finishes the tender, Nadja scrolls down the menu of his cell phone. When he lands on NAG, he presses dial.

NADJA

...I know supper will be ready shortly...
Five more minutes, then I'll leave the
sonofabitch. Baby, you there? ...Fuck!

RAGU'S beat up old pickup pulls into the spot in front of Nadja. He gets out holding an envelope.

Ragu is a big fat Italian guy who is perpetually late to any meeting and always high; however, when it comes to financial matters, his ass is so tight you couldn't fit a ten penny nail up it.

RAGU

Sorry for being late, brother. I got held up at my mom's, and the traffic's a bitch.

NADJA

Don't worry about it Sauceman. What's this situation you wanted to talk about? Did you want to re-up?

RAGU

In reality, brother, I think I'm gonna ease on up for a little while, maybe permanently. Ever since Ol' Boy left for Hawaii, I really haven't had anybody to get rid of the product to.

Nadja spits a half-eaten chicken tender out of his mouth into the box.

NADJA

What the fuck's goin on? First, my downtown connection tells me I've flooded the market and he's having trouble getting rid of anything. Now, you and Linus (aka Bigtyme) don't wanna go no more? How am I supposed to get mine? What am I supposed to do with all this flower?

Nadja balls up the chicken tender box and tosses it into the back of Ragu's pickup.

RAGU

Like I said, all my friends are married now or starting careers. I just don't know what to tell ya.

NADJA

Bigtyme's all roses when he's securing a delivery. Where's he gonna be when it's time to pay the piper?

Ragu hands Nadja the envelope. He walks to the back of his pickup, lifts out a duffel bag, and sets it on the concrete.

RAGU

I took one for personal. The rest is in the bag.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBICHEAUX'S BAR - NIGHT

Nadja swallows a piece of catfish dipped finger-licking deep in the white sauce. After licking his fingers clean, Nadja gulps the last of his beer.

Paulie pours him a shot of whiskey.

PAULIE

This one's on the house.

Linus hasn't touched any of his white sauce. Paulie slides Nadja another beer and gets one for himself.

PAULIE

This one's on you.

LINUS

Ragu did ya like a true playa, huh.

NADJA

He dropped the rest in the parking lot, and bang, he was outta there.

LINUS

I never would've taken it back.

NADJA

He told me on the phone we were meeting so he could give me the money. What was I supposed to do? Throw it in the back of his pickup as he drove off and hope that he pays me back the rest later. I figured you had something to do with it, since you haven't needed any more. Whatever the case, you can tell his dimply wop ass to keep away from me.

The last of the dinner crowd has left, and more of the late-nighters (a pack of attractive WOMEN) come into the restaurant.

LINUS

I get a special deal from Marteen now, that's why I haven't called, but if you want I can give-

NADJA

No worries. I finally found my boy.

LINUS

How much you got left?

NADJA

About a quarter. And that should be gone in a few.

LINUS

Oh, so this is a business call.

NADJA

More like goodwill. I've been exploring other avenues.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Nadja's stretched out loaded in the back of a cab. A WOMAN who appears to be made from thin moral fiber has Nadja's arm wrapped around her and his cell in her hand.

NADJA

We're on our way to Tips right. I've got to meet with Hrundi, Graham, and Fazande. Oh my God, my stomach's bubbling over. They'd love to meet you. Did you do what I said?

WOMAN

Steve Morse and Johnny Vidacovich.

Nadja hands her a napkin with some chicken scratch on it.

NADJA

Just do it.

The Woman presses dial on the cell phone and holds up the napkin to read.

WOMAN

Here it goes.

NADJA

I would do it, but they'd recognize my voice.

WOMAN

Hi, this is the road manager for the Dixie Dregs. We just finished our set at the House of Blues, and Steve, Steve Morse the lead guitar player, was wondering if we could pop in and surprise his old friend, Johnny Vidacovich. Maybe sit in and play a set if that's cool with Johnny...ok... Lisa Murry plus two, thanks.

INT. CAB - LATE NIGHT

The Woman is stroking Nadja's head, which is in her lap, when the cab stops in front of Tips. She shakes him by the shoulder. Then lifts his head up by his beads. Nadja stirs to life.

The CABBIE, a guy with a guido mustache and long thin hair, looks at Nadja and the Woman through the rearview mirror.

CABBIE

That'll be thirty-five dollars, please
and thank you.

One eye sealed shut and a hand resting carefully on his
stomach, Nadja scoots across the seat.

NADJA

Huh?

Nadja opens the door and leaves the cab. Alarmed, the
driver turns around.

CABBIE

Thirty-five dollars, honey.

The woman reaches for her door handle and it doesn't budge.
The Cabbie gets out of the cab to block the open door.
The woman comes out feet first and pokes the Cabbie one in
the nads with her shoe's pointy toe.

INT. TIPS - LATE NIGHT

The bar is packed, the music is blaring, the drinks are
flowing, and spirits are high.

Nadja's barges into the bar similar to how he left the cab.
He makes it to the back bar before security has a chance to
get to him.

NADJA

I'll just have a Makers and Coke.

A few BOUNCERS attempt to drag him to the front, so they
can find out what's going on. Needless to say, Nadja's
causing quite a commotion.

NADJA

Easy on the stomach. Don't fucking
touch me.

Nadja picks up one of the bouncers and body slams him on
the bar. Glasses break and the crowd gasps. The MUSIC
stops, and everyone looks to see who is the asshole.

The Woman from the car explains herself to the doorman. The
doorman points at Nadja, who everyone else is already
looking at.

HRUNDI

(o.s.)

Nadja, Nadja Adib is that you.

The Woman from the cab gets to him first with her hand out demanding money for the Cabbie.

The Woman slaps Nadja.

WOMAN

What do you think this is? Is my time so worthless that you feel free...

Hrundi dragging Graham behind her by the hand isn't able to see Nadja until he has his money out slapping bills indiscriminately into the Woman's hand.

Hrundi shoves the Woman aside. Bills fly everywhere. Hrundi spits in Nadja's face before storming out the door dragging Graham behind her by the hand. The crowd parts like the Red Sea out of Hrundi's way.

EXT. NADJA'S BACKYARD - TWILIGHT

The fence wobbles as a FIGURE clad in black straddles the top.

The Figure lowers itself to the ground and its chin disappears under a ski mask.

Vision impaired by the homemade ski mask and the knee-high grass of the unkempt yard, the Figure trips in one of the many pits dug by the dogs and falls to the ground.

Opening his eyes, the Figure stares eye to plastic eye with the dog's blue mousy toy. The Figure slowly rises, brushes itself off, and sneaks to the window above the sweat covered air-conditioning unit at the side of the town house.

On top of the air-conditioning unit, the Figure slides the window up and reaches under the blinds for the drawstring that raises them. As the Figure leans forward groping for the drawstring, the worn rubber treads of its running shoes slip against the wet top of the ac unit.

Knocking the blinds off the wall, which fall to the bathroom floor, the Figure crashes onto the top of the ac-unit denting the thin metal lid. The air conditioning thuds to a stop.

EXT. COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

Between the front of the town house and a row of adjacent town houses, a courtyard stretches, split in the middle by a sidewalk, which is illuminated by lampposts.

On the other side of the sidewalk, two YOUNG MEN smoke cigarettes and drink beers with the false bravado and sense of authority attributed to two guys beginning their second year of fraternity life.

Their two dogs play in the grass near the fence behind which the Figure creeps.

When the Figure slips, the two dogs, unlike their owners, notice and approach the fence. They nose at the planks and growl at the intruder's commotion.

INT. NADJA'S LIVINGROOM - TWILIGHT

Perched on top the arm of the love-seat, Chi Chi'S ears perk when the air conditioner THUDS. He jumps to his paws when the blinds fall to the bathroom floor.

Yapping toward the bathroom, Chi Chi leaps to the floor, looks at the bedroom upstairs, and stops to listen.

Chi Chi runs to the window in Karl's room at the front of the town house and continues YAPPING. Then he proceeds to run between the study and the living room BARKING the whole time and waking the mastiff from his slumber on the landing.

INT. BEDROOM

Nadja pushes his head into the pillow and emits a defeated moan. He throws the pillow into the closet and knocks over the trashcan set beside the bed.

Nadja lifts up the trash-can before anything can spill out. Then he lifts up the pillow over the Woman next to him. He nods his head in disbelief.

DOGS BARKING

Nadja groans, throws the blanket over the woman, and peaks out his window.

NADJA'S POV

From the lamppost, he follows the winding sidewalk to his town house and notices nothing out of the ordinary. He looks along the edge of his walls as best he can and sees the tail ends of the two neighbors' dogs up against his fence.

BEDROOM

Nadja hurries to the door and realizes that he is naked. He goes to the pile of clothes on his closet floor and throws on some tight cutoff sweats and an aquamarine shirt. Then he looks out the window again.

NADJA'S POV

The neighbors' dogs are still barking by the fence. From the far edge of the window, Nadja can see the two neighbors' shadows lounging over the walkway.

NADJA

Rotten sonofabitches picked the wrong time.

BEDROOM

Practically on all fours, Nadja scurries to the door. He stops, walks briskly to the dresser, and rummages through the drawers.

The Woman on Nadja's bed moans plaintively and turns her face on the pillow into a puddle of drool.

Hands in the bottom of a drawer, Nadja flinches when glass SHATTERS downstairs, and his two dogs continue to BARK.

Nadja hurries out the bedroom door.

INT. BATHROOM

With a film of perspiration covering the neck between the ski mask and the v-neck collar, the Figure lifts its pelvis to hump its midsection and the attached fanny pack through the window into the bathroom.

The strap to the Figures fanny pack is snagged on one of the metal frame's clasps.

Chi Chi skids to a halt on the tile under the window. The dog jumps up and nips at the ski mask covering the Figure's head. Then Chi Chi runs back to Karl's room to check on the activity of the mastiff.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Nadja rushes down the stairs to the first landing and stops. Alarmed by the dogs' urgency, he spins around, grabs the rails, and climbs back up the stairs into the bedroom.

As he closes the bedroom door softly so that he doesn't wake the Woman, something SNAPS downstairs and is followed by a THUD.

BATHROOM

The Figure lies on the ground with his feet propped on the wall above him. The fanny pack dangles from the window frame.

STAIRCASE

With a pair of yellow knee-high waders to accompany his already colorful outfit, Nadja stands on the landing and cocks his forty-five.

BATHROOM

With his feet still propped against the wall, the Figure hears the dull plop of waders hurrying down the stairs. He looks above him at the open window and then at the blinds under him.

NADJA'S POV

When he turns on the light, the first thing Nadja notices is the fanny pack hanging from the closed window. He traces the dangling pack to the blinds on the floor. Then he grips his pistol tight and looks at the shower curtain, which appears to breathe.

Nadja throws aside the shower curtain. Nothing's there. Then he turns to the fanny pack dangling from the window and tugs on it with his free hand.

SHOUTS come from the two neighbors outside. Stealthily, Nadja maneuvers out of the bathroom.

BATHROOM

The Figure's masked head pushes open the cabinet doors of the clothes hamper.

EXT. TOWN HOUSE COURTYARD - TWILIGHT

Nadja bursts out the front door and moves threateningly at the two NEIGHBORS. He holds his pistol tight to the back of his enormous thigh.

The window in Karl's bedroom cracks from the pressure of the mastiff.

NADJA

Do you think you can keep your fucking dogs away from my window? My dog's going nuts in there. When is it enough? It's three o'clock in the fucking morning. Is there something wrong with your backyard?

The BLOND holding a beer bottle comes to the edge of the grass on his side of the walkway. The BRUNETTE collects the two dogs.

BLOND

Who the fuck are you? How long have you lived here? What do you think this is?

The Blond lets the beer bottle slip down into his palm, so he's holding it by the neck. The Brunette puts the dogs

inside one of the town houses and approaches, not quite as eager as his companion.

BLOND

Look at you. I've seen you driving around in your pink Cadillac, you fucking faggot. It's not our problem that you can't control your dogs.

NADJA

Can't control my dogs. Your dogs and you would be dead right now if I couldn't control my dogs.

INT. TOWN HOUSE BATHROOM

The Figure rolls out of the clothes hamper and tries to detach his fanny pack from the clasp on the window frame. He can't get it, so he unzips the main compartment and begins grabbing the contents: phone numbers, appointments, charm from a voodoo lady, a small glass vial of a thick, yellow pungent liquid.

Nadja and the neighbors can be heard YELLING from outside.

The Figures black sweat-pants don't have any pockets, so it sticks its notes in its ski mask and tries to hold on to the rest.

The vial falls out of the ski mask, and the Figure crushes the glass on the tile under his shoe before running out of the bathroom.

STAIRCASE

On the landing, the Figure takes a quick look at the open front door before racing to the bedroom door. While opening the door, TWO GUN SHOTS fire outside.

The Figure crashes into the bedroom, tripping over the mattress on the floor.

BEDROOM

WOMAN

(under the bed sheets)

Nadja? Are you ok? Was that a gun?

Obviously frightened, the Figure smothers the Woman, grabs up around her throat, and chokes her until the Woman's lifeless body stops moving indefinitely.

The Figure gets up slowly, goes to the closet, slings one duffel bag around its shoulders, and carries the other one out the room.

LIVING ROOM

Nadja walks in from outside cradling the neighbor's boxer that has been shot twice in its body.

NADJA

Wake up. I need some help. Hurry.

As Nadja turns into the bathroom, the Figure steps out from behind the kitchen wall and leaves out the front door, walking ever so steadily.

BATHROOM

Nadja nudges the bathroom light on with his shoulder. He cradles the bloody boxer against his chest and swipes off the items on the bathroom counter, a towel, mirror, hair-dryer, toothpaste, etc., onto the floor to make room for the dog.

NADJA

Hello, upstairs. I need some help down here.

Nadja carefully rests the boxer on the counter. Two bullet holes can be seen on its side amidst a film of blood covering its coat. Nadja pulls out the .45 from his waistband and sets it next to the sink.

Nadja's forearms and aqua shirt are also covered with a film of blood and there's a large smear on the side of his face. Nadja turns on the faucet and then looks out the door before punching a hole in the wall with his fist.

NADJA

Goddamnit! I need some help. Get the fuck down here!

Bending down to get a washcloth from a cabinet under the counter, Nadja looks up at the metal clasp on the window frame from where the fanny pack was dangling.

His gaze travels downward and recognizes some miscellaneous debris that wasn't swept off from the bathroom counter.

Nadja rises slowly and tosses the washcloth in the sink under the running water. The boxer MOANS plaintively.

Nadja steps toward the window and lowers himself onto his haunches. He picks up a piece of glass covered with a yellow pungent liquid and doesn't have to hold it that far from his nose to smell it.

Nadja closes his palm around the glass and begins to stand, but before he does, he notices in the corner by the tub a black string tangled up with the hair-dryer cord and connected to what looks to be some sort of voodoo medallion.

The boxer MOANS some more. Nadja can't get the string untangled, so he just throws it down but clenches tightly to the glass in his other palm from which some blood begins to drip.

NADJA

Help me, dammit!

Nadja takes the wet washcloth out of the sink and cleans the area around the boxer's wounds. He sticks the washcloth back under the faucet to rinse out the blood. A tear drops from his eye.

LIVING ROOM

SIRENS can be heard from outside the wide-open front door. Nadja pokes his head out of the bathroom and listens.

He hurries to the front door and locks it. Then he hurries to the staircase and bounds up the stairs.

BEDROOM

The woman's body lay like a lifeless lump under the mound of sheets and blankets as Nadja bursts in through the door. He flips on the light.

NADJA

Stupid mother fucker shot his own dog.
Then he runs inside to hide.

Nadja puts the piece of glass down on the desk by his wallet and keys.

NADJA

Did you hear me down there? I need your help. You need to wake your drunk ass up and help a nigga out.

Nadja finishes throwing off the bloody clothes and pulls out of his bottom drawer a pair of long johns. He sits on the edge of the bed and gently shakes the dead woman.

NADJA

We're going duck hunting. I hope you've been before. Well, really you don't have to go, but we're not going to sit around while the cops come and ask questions. If we hurry, we can meet Linus and them before they leave. Also, I kind of want to have someone with me if I'm going to meet with these guys. I've got a bad feeling about what they could do if they felt it was in their best interest or if they knew they wouldn't get caught.

The SIRENS sound as if they're right outside now.

NADJA

I'll bring the dog next door, and you go through Hrundi's things to find something to wear.

In only his long johns, Nadja slips on a pair of flip flops. He shakes the lifeless body of the girl briskly. A postmortem NOISE/GASP emits from the dead woman's body.

NADJA

I'm serious now. We don't have any time to waste. Hurry up.

On his way out the room, Nadja pulls the sheets off from the foot of the bed.

The FLASHING of police lights can be seen through the bedroom window. Moments later, Nadja bursts into the room cradling the boxer in his arms. His dogs are heard BARKING from the backyard.

Nadja plops the boxer on the bed next to the dead woman. He flips off the main light and turns on the lamp on the nightstand next to the bed.

NADJA

There's been a change of plans. They're already here and...and...you're dead. You're fucking dead... You bitch.

Nadja shakes the dead body and investigates it to see if he can determine what the cause of death was. He lifts the body to stare at it eye to dead-eye and lets it fall to the bed.

He hurries to the closet, throws on his camos, and opens up a camouflage duffel. Inside are his waders and a twelve-gauge shotgun, his knife and a flashlight. He pulls out a few boxes of shells and shoves them in the bag.

There's a HEAVY KNOCKING from the front-door.

NADJA

(under his breath)

We don't want any... We gave at the office.

BEDROOM BATHROOM

Nadja tears down the drape covering the window, slides the window open, and sizes it up to see just what could fit through there. A cop car pulls behind the woman's vehicle in Nadja's carport

His dogs in the back yard BARK ecstatically.

BEDROOM

Nadja goes to the closet and looks for the marijuana. He throws almost everything on the floor out of the closet. The wounded boxer WHIMPERS.

NADJA

She must've hid it.

Nadja runs into the bathroom, and the sound of things being thrown around can be heard from in there. HEAVY KNOCKING continues from the front door downstairs.

Nadja picks up the dog and carries it out the bedroom door.

LIVINGROOM

Nadja steps off the staircase carrying the dog, flips on the light switch to the living room, and walks to the front door.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Inside a compact car so filled with trash that the dead woman's feet don't even rest on the floorboard, Nadja speeds along on the interstate dressed in his camos.

NADJA

(speaking to the corpse)

Well, I guess if I smoked that much, I might be a little tired also. But c'mon, this is getting a little ridiculous. Ahh haha. Just kidding, really. So what was your name again? I drank too much Hennessey, and when I do, as you can understand since you have a firsthand experience with my situation, I tend to forget things.

Nadja reaches in her purse.

NADJA

Do you mind?

He turns her head so that her eyes, which are still open, look at him.

NADJA

No? I didn't think so. You're so much more compatible than Hrundi. Not that I mean to test your limits by talking about the ol' battle-ax... Lisa that's it Lisa.

Nadja puts her wallet in his bag in the back. The car drifts onto the shoulder.

NADJA

Whoa, keep your eyes on the road there big guy.

Nadja pats Lisa's thigh.

NADJA

Don't be scairt. I've resumed control. Anywho, it seems like the less amount of power that I've had—power being measured by my ability to buy whatever the fuck me and the Mrs. wanted—the less control I've had over the Mrs. and whatever the fuck else I've been involved in.

I know what you're thinking...

Nadja puts his index finger up against Lisa's mouth.

NADJA

Shhh. Don't you say a word. I know that if I smoked half of those buds you must of, I'd have cotton-mouth so bad my lips be plastered together. By the way, where did those buds disappear to?

Nadja considers her expression.

NADJA

Do you not want to talk about it?

Nadja slaps Lisa in the face, and while so doing, he presses down considerably on the car's accelerator.

NADJA

I know you didn't OD because I didn't find anything on you, and a pickled barroom tramp like yourself is immune to alcohol poisoning, so tell me who did it? Who are you hiding?

Nadja notices police lights flashing in the rearview mirror. He slaps the steering wheel as he begins to slow.

NADJA

Son of a bitch! Look what you made me do. When's it gonna be enough? When?

Nadja pulls over to the shoulder of the road, and the STATE TROOPER'S vehicle follows closely behind him.

While he approaches Lisa's car, the State Trooper's flashlight probes the interior. Nadja slides Lisa's eyelids shut with his palm. Then he rolls down the window.

NADJA

Can I help you sir?

STATE TROOPER

License, registration, and proof of insurance. Did you know that you were traveling well over twenty miles per hour over the speed limit?

Nadja hands him the required documentation, which is easy to find considering the slob-like state that the rest of the car is in.

NADJA

Well officer, I was following another police vehicle like yourself because the speedometer's out in this car, and I figured that they would be traveling at the correct speed. When they pulled significantly ahead, I just maintained my current speed.

The State Trooper peers into the vehicle at the girl and in the process takes a closer look at Nadja.

STATE TROOPER
What's wrong with her?

NADJA
She had a little too much to drink, and I'm trying to get her home so I can meet my boys before they head out to the marsh.

STATE TROOPER
Duck hunting, Kenny?

NADJA
Start of the season.

STATE TROOPER
Do you mind if I call you Kenny?

NADJA
It's Nadja now, but yeah, you can go ahead.

STATE TROOPER
I'd just like to say that it was a real pleasure to watch you play. There weren't many if any who owned a section of the gridiron like you did. Would you mind signing this?

A small caravan of eighteen wheelers roar past as the State Trooper hands Nadja the backside of a ticket to sign. As Nadja steadies the ticket to sign his autograph, blood smears on the ticket.

NADJA
What's your name?

STATE TROOPER
Make it out to Michael Kozlowski. I could say it was for my son, but I'd be lying. It's really for me.

NADJA
It's my honor.

When the State Trooper notices the blood, he double takes Nadja and shows him the ticket.

STATE TROOPER

Is everything ok?

Nadja opens up his palm and shows the officer the vial shard, the outline of which has punctured his skin.

NADJA

I found this stuck in my hunting dogs paw. I was so upset that I wanted to bring it and show it to my buddies. I meant to put it in my bag. I must've forgot.

Nadja reaches back and drops it in an open pocket of his camo duffel.

The State Trooper slaps the hood of the car.

STATE TROOPER

Move it on. Just ease up a bit on the gas.

NADJA

Yes sir. Will do.

STATE TROOPER

Thanks for the autograph.

NADJA

My pleasure.

Nadja and Lisa accelerate on the shoulder and merge onto the interstate. Nadja scoffs in Lisa's direction.

NADJA

Are you going to try and cause any other delays while you're at it? If you need to pee, you can forget about me stopping. If you need to go so bad, pee on yourself, because we'll be lucky now to meet them at the landing.

Not too much to say, huh? Well let me clarify a few things then. We didn't do a thing. I've got nothing to feel guilty about, although I could tell Hrundi wasn't at all thrilled to see you palm-out at the bar. What the hell was she doing marching out hand in hand with that little punk ass bitch, Graham. I'll have a talk with him after class.

Nadja sits Lisa up straight by the collar of her dress.

NADJA

Back to my previous question, who stole my marijuana? I'll throw out some names, and if you know what's good for you, you'll nod when one of them sounds familiar, or else we'll probably be buried together, forever.

Ragu: he's so tight with Linus though it really wouldn't make sense unless he or the two working together were that desperate to pocket a couple extra hundred grand.

John: he and his losers just might be wacky enough to try it. I'll have to keep an eye on them. Why else wouldn't they take some after they had asked for it. He said something about a lost shipment but that was probably bullshit.

Fazande: she claims we're like brothers, but how come I'm always scraping the bottom of my pockets when she's around? And whenever she has the chance to stand up and represent like a man—I mean a woman—her interests always place higher than mine. She smiles at your face and chuckles with her other friends behind you back.

INT. FLATBOAT - PREDAWN

The flatboat is traveling through one of the many crooked passageways deeper and deeper into the marsh with FABIAN, Marteen's wacky son, steering and Linus, Paulie, Nadja, and Lisa riding as passengers.

Fabian kills the engine and starts digging through his bag. It's still dark outside.

FABIAN

Paulie, bring your flashlight over here. I say we take a smoke break, put the pirogues in the water, set up the decoys, and get in our spots.

Fabian pulls a mirror and a razor from out his bag and proceeds to cut up five lines of cocaine. Paulie, I've got a zip-lock full of joints. Find that if you can and pass one around.

Paulie lights a joint and sends it in rotation around the flatboat. Fabian sends the mirror with the cocaine in the other direction.

LINUS

I don't know if this is such a good idea, in the middle of the canal and all. Maybe, we should wait until we get into our spots.

FABIAN

Linus, put a cork in it. Who's going to tell us something? We're four armed guys in a secluded waterway in the dark. If something does happen, you can shoot Nadja to scare them off. Hahahahaha.

LINUS

Just remember that I said so.

FABIAN

Paulie, could you write that down?

PAULIE

Write what down?

FABIAN

What Linus said.

PAULIE

Sorry, my pen's fresh outta ink.

After passing the joint, Nadja gets handed the mirror.

FABIAN

That fifth rail is for you and I to split, a small token of my appreciation for helping out my father and for having the balls to break up the monotony of an ordinary hunting trip by bringing a corpse out here.

NADJA

I don't touch the stuff.

FABIAN

No really, I insist.

Not having to be told twice—he is out there to have them help him dispose of a body—Nadja slowly almost painfully snorts the cocaine. When he's done, he throws up over the side.

FABIAN

A little stronger than what you might find in the ghetto. This is pure Peruvian flake my friend.

NADJA

I drank a little too much earlier tonight.

LINUS

I never would've thought to see you out here tonight.

NADJA

Well, I've kind of got some extenuating circumstances.

PAULIE

I'd hope so, because not only have you not paid back Mr. Sorocaba yet, but now you're already asking for another favor.

NADJA

I would never...

FABIAN

Nah, no Paulie. It's not like that. I like to look on this as a good thing. If Nadja had any intention on screwing us, than we would be the last people who he would see to help him with this. This act will be an insurance of good faith between the two parties and a promise of successful negotiations yet to come.

PAULIE

I hope so.

NADJA

I know so.

FABIAN

There Paulie, you see. Straight from the horses mouth. And if not, he'll lose his life, and you and Linus will lose a finger if not a hand.

LINUS

You can keep me out of this.

FABIAN

I wish we could... Anyhow, lets put the pirogues in the water, set up the decoys, and get to our spots. Linus, you set up a pirogue for you and Nadja. Paulie, you're coming with me.

Linus flips over a pirogue and begins to load it with some decoys, a wood blind, a camouflage drape. Paulie does the same with the other pirogue. Fabian brings an extra pair of waders to Nadja, and they put Lisa in them.

Fabian pulls out two lighters and hands one to Nadja.

FABIAN

Do the strap up tight and then melt it
some, so that it sticks to the buckle.

Fabian puts the flame to the strap and in the process
catches Lisa's hair on fire.

FABIAN

Dammit, this woman must use a little
bit of hairspray. Watch out.

He puts it out by dunking her head overboard. Nadja can't
finish the other side because water got on the strap, so he
wraps over the buckle a few times with some duct tape. Then
he and Linus put Lisa in their pirogue.

After passing around the mirror with more lines of coke for
everyone, they carefully board their pirogues and paddle
down one of the smaller waterways.

When they first set out, they encounter a man in his
pirogue with his son. Fabian paddles over to them and grabs
their pirogue.

FABIAN

Cheeba, where's my cheeba. Give it to
me.

The man and his son sit in their pirogue stunned. Paulie
paddles Fabian away from them. Around the next bend, Linus
pulls out a bag of joints and hands it to Fabian.

FABIAN

My cheeba!

They set up the decoys, and the two pirogues paddle to the
reeds on opposite sides of the waterway. Once against the
reeds, Linus motions for Nadja to get out.

Nadja gets out and sinks up to his chest in the mud and
continues to sink almost over his waders as if he were in
quicksand. Linus hesitates. Then, reaches out from the
pirogue.

LINUS

I'm not quite ready to lose a finger
yet.

Nadja gets to where the reeds are thicker, and the ground firmer. He pulls the pirogue in, and Linus gets out. They begin to set up the blind and the drape.

LINUS

Once the mud gets into your waders,
you're a goner. You'll sink straight to
the bottom, wherever that may be.

NADJA

Yeah, I kind of got that impression.
Thanks for the hand.

Nadja lifts Lisa out of the pirogue and sets her in the mud where he almost sank. Linus flips the pirogue over and pulls the camouflage bottom up alongside the reeds.

LINUS

So, what kind of shot are you using?

NADJA

You have to use steel don't you? Didn't
they make the lead shot illegal...

LINUS

Since it would poison the ducks that
were wounded and not killed. Yeah, but
the steels so light that you need a
much more solid hit to bring the duck
down.

Paulie's making a duck call from the other side, so Linus and Nadja get behind the blind and talk with a hushed tone.

LINUS

I've been using tungsten. It's heavier.
The only problem is that it's three
dollars a round, so I'm a bit more
hesitant to shoot unless I know that I
have a sure shot. Fabian and Paulie
give me hell for it. Those two will
fire if there's a cloud in the shape of
a bird.

Fabian fires six shots, and Paulie unloads three at a flock of ducks pretty clearly out of reach.

NADJA

Aren't you supposed to only be able to hold three shots in the chamber.

LINUS

Big surprise, Fabian removed his choke so he can hold six.

NADJA

The game warden'll bust you for that.

Fabian's motioning at Linus and Nadja like crazy. Once he gets their attention, he points at the girl, who is still sticking half way out of the mud.

Nadja gets the camouflage drape and throws it over her. Fabian smiles and gives him the thumbs up.

LINUS

Fabian and his family know most of those guys.

Paulie makes the duck call again. Everyone waits silently.

LINUS

Do you think that I could get some of that herb from you? They're out right now, and I've got all kinds of people hounding me.

Nadja glances at Paulie and sees him pointing the shotgun in his general direction. Then Paulie puts his extended index and pinky fingers up to his eyes and points to the air behind Nadja.

Nadja raises his rifle and aims at one of the pair of ducks.

NADJA

(under his breath)

I would, but everything I've got left is spoken for.

Nadja fires twice and one of the ducks plummets to the earth.

LINUS

Great. Good shot. That's what I like to hear. You got a mallard.

NADJA

How do you know it's a mallard?

LINUS

Mallards fly in pairs. Pintails fly in flocks with a bunch of hens and one drake—the male duck—with a long tail

INT. NADJA'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Fazande and Graham are playing Madden '03 on the PlayStation while Hrundi hurries herself around cleaning up.

Dressed in his camos with his shotgun resting on his shoulder and holding the mallard that he shot, Nadja walks in the backdoor. Blood smeared on his person.

HRUNDI	Fazande	Graham
Speak of the devil.	Adib, where y'at.	Mr. Adib.

NADJA

What's this? We're having a party?
Where's Karl.

Fazande gets up to greet Nadja, and Hrundi butts in front of her.

HRUNDI

I asked his mother if he could stay there for another night or two. I very well couldn't of let him come home and see this mess. Now could I? Would you mind telling me what happened the hell here last night?

NADJA

If you would've been home, maybe you'd know.

Nadja puts the shotgun and the duck down on the kitchen table.

HRUNDI

The water in the bathroom was on. Blood everywhere, leaves, glass, plants knocked over. I can't live like this.

Hrundi's poking Nadja with her index finger as he stares off blankly into space.

HRUNDI

Can you hear this Mr. Big Stuff? You break everything, and I have to help fix it. Too much stress.

NADJA

What are they doing here? They don't need to witness this. You've got just as much explaining to do as I have.

Bowing up his chest, Nadja steps toward Hrundi in a threatening way. Graham puts his hand on the back of Nadja's arm.

Nadja grabs Graham by the collar and lifts him off the ground.

NADJA

(spit flying)

Who the fuck are you, kid? Did you just touch me? Why the fuck are you in my house? Did I ask you to come here.

GRAHAM

Mr. Adib, she asked me to stay. She was scared when she saw the place.

NADJA

Why were you still with her?

FAZANDE

I came from city, she sounded so worried about you.

HRUNDI

(whimpering)

I didn't know what to think. I thought maybe 'they' had come.

Nadja lowers Graham.

NADJA

What the fuck do you know about 'them'?

FAZANDE

Look at the place, man. What did you expect her to think?

Nadja glares at Fazande and releases Graham.

NADJA

(to Graham)

Get outta here.

Graham turns to Hrundi for her approval. She nods.

NADJA

What the fuck was that about? You heard me.

As Graham passes Nadja to get to the door, right before he's out of the big man's reach, Nadja grabs the black leather string from around Grahams neck, snapping it off and hurtling Graham to the floor.

Palming the voodoo medallion with one hand, Nadja grabs the shotgun with the other.

NADJA

What the fuck is this? Elijah and Mohammad

HRUNDI

You see. I tol' you he's lost it.

FAZANDE

Kenny, put the gun down.

Nadja stares down the barrel of his gun at Graham.

HRUNDI

(crying)

What is it? It's me. I did this... I found it on the bathroom floor. He asked. I didn't know.

Nadja lowers the barrel. Graham pushes it away and gets up.

GRAHAM

You're sick man, really twisted. Go ahead and keep it. I'll get one at the dollar store.

Nadja looks down foolishly. Graham walks over to Hrundi, rubs his hands on her shoulders.

GRAHAM

Are you going to be ok?

HRUNDI

Go.

Graham leaves.

FAZANDE

Ya'll need to straighten things out. You two were so good with each other. This is just a temporary setback.

NADJA

Fazande, who the fuck asked you? Do you have my money?

Hrundi storms up the stairs to the bedroom and slams the door.

FAZANDE

Well bro, I've got half, but it's at my place. If you want, I'll find a ride there and back. Today, if I can.

I talked to DJ last night. My bro, he's still playing in the big show. He gave me like three hundred tabs and told me to just put it to my art.

NADJA

That's nice. I wish I could do that. Are you my friend?

FAZANDE

Hell yeah, we're like brothers.

NADJA

And you wouldn't fuck me?

FAZANDE

No, you know I'm good for it. You know I don't buy into any of it though. Let me print the money. It's just paper, man.

No man is better than another man. Who's a judge? Who is he to tell me what I can and can't do? He's no better than me. It's all gonna crash anyway. The city's goin under. It's below sea level, ya know?

Everyone's gonna be equal when the banks crash. Wouldn't you rather of have invested in a friend? It's real.

NADJA

You know what? I must not be your friend, because you are fucking me. I'm not a credit card company or some kind of lending institution, but you treat me like one. Do you understand that I had two weeks to get the money to these guys? They still don't have it, and you're still yanking my knob. This is what these people do. Their livelihoods depend upon it, and if they suffer, I suffer worse. Capis.

FAZANDE

Their gonna need a mighty big stick if they wanna fuck wit you.

NADJA

They got one. Next time I see you, which very well might be tomorrow, have your money.

Fazande leaves, and Nadja goes up the stairs.

BEDROOM

Hrundi is pulling the bloody sheets off the bed.

NADJA

Did you mess with him?

Hrundi holds up the bloody sheets for him to see.

HRUNDI

Do you mind telling me what this is? I don't want to live like this. It's over. I don't want to be with someone who's going to bring me down. I don't want to be in a relationship like that.

Nadja punches a hole in the wall, grabs Hrundi, and throws her on the bed.

NADJA

Where were you last night? I'll rip his fucking anus out and shove it down his throat.

HRUNDI

That's just it. Don't you understand? It's over. Get away from me. We're staying in separate rooms. Tell me which one you want? I'll go upstairs or downstairs. I don't care just so long as I'm away from you.

Nadja drops to his knees sobbing.

NADJA

Baby, I'm so sorry. Everything that could possibly go wrong has. The weed was stolen.

HRUNDI

I don't care. I don't want to hear it. This is what I'm talking about. Get away from me. I hate you.

Nadja tries to approach her. She takes out her cell phone.

HRUNDI

I'll call 911. Get away from me. I mean it.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

INT. HOUSE AND CLASSROOM - WAITING FOR FATE

At a loss for what to do with his life, Nadja continues with his ordinary routine.

--Nadja receives a phone call on his cell. The caller id reads "Linus," so he doesn't answer.

--In the classroom, Graham sits there with a smirk. Nadja hardly looks in his direction.

--Nadja scrolls through his menu, presses talk on "Hrundi," but no one answers.

--Nadja watches John's house from a distance and sees nothing other than John unpacking his dogs kennel from the back of his truck.

--Graham moves seats to sit by a group of guys, by the looks of them quite possibly potheads, who misbehave flagrantly. Graham's cell phone rings in class; Nadja snags it and answers; the person on the other end hangs up.

--Nadja receives a phone call from Paulie and doesn't answer.

--Nadja gets his money from an unsociable Fazande.

--Nadja pleads with Hrundi and she just pushes past him.

--Graham shows up to class late in a v-neck t-shirt that clearly displays the medallion Nadja had ripped off of him.

--Linus calls. Nadja answers and tries to explain but is cut short by the dial tone.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Before class has started, Nadja's in the back of the room looking at a school newspaper when Graham walks in so high he can barely open his eyes.

Graham sits in his seat and pulls out a vial of musk from his fanny pack. Nadja double takes this, pulls out the piece

of glass vial from his pocket and smells it. Then he quietly walks behind Graham and flares his big nostrils.

Nadja tosses the piece of glass on Graham's desk.

NADJA

You left this at my place.

Students are strolling into the classroom preparing for class to begin. A GUY sticks a flyer out for Nadja to take. The Guy's hand is missing a ring finger.

Graham tries to get out of his desk.

Nadja turns and before he can say anything, receives three .45 caliber slugs in his gut.

He falls on top of Graham and receives one in the forehead before the hand with the missing ring finger bolts out of the class.

Nadja's body falls off the desk onto the ground to reveal that in the process one of the bullets tore clean through his midsection through Graham's mouth and out the back of his head.

VITA

Matthew Anderson was born in Louisiana. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in the Spring of 2000. Then, he entered the creative writing program at Louisiana State University and will have received the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Spring of 2003.