

MOCKINGBIRD HILL

written by

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TEASER**INT. MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY - ADMISSIONS OFFICE - DAY**

An ADMISSIONS LADY sits behind a large desk. The wealth on display in her office is designed to intimidate.

ADMISSIONS LADY

As you know, Mockingbird Academy isn't just any old school. We have small class sizes, dedicated staff, and the highest test scores in the entire state of Texas. But that's all in the brochure. Why don't you tell me what makes you feel this is the only school for your family?

REVERSE TO REVEAL two desperate PARENTS: NATHAN MAULTIER (37, white, dad bod, the kind of guy who fades into the background) squeezes the hand of his wife, RACHELLE MAULTIER (37, white, presents herself in a sensible, Midwestern way, including her shorter hairstyle).

RACHELLE

We think the educational philosophy here, of challenging students to step up, will bring the best out in our kids.

NATHAN

And with the kids so spread out in age, we love them all being able to go to the same school.

ADMISSIONS LADY

So convenience is driving your decisions about your children's education.

Nathan and Rachelle look at each other. Did he just blow it?

NATHAN

I mean, it's a great bonus. But when we took the tour, we got a real sense of the --

RACHELLE

Community. We highly value that for our children. For our family really. It's one of the reasons we chose to move here.

A beat as Nathan and Rachelle anxiously await her response.

ADMISSIONS LADY

I am so glad to hear you say that. Community is something we really strive for here at Mockingbird. I think your family is going to fit in just fine.

EXT. MOCKINGBIRD HILL, TEXAS - ESTABLISHING

An upscale enclave of Dallas, bisected by a winding creek. Imagine Scarlett O'Hara lived in Beverly Hills. Southern Colonial and Tudor homes mix with gaudy McMansions. The DOWNTOWN DALLAS skyline looms just beyond the neighborhood.

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

This older colonial would have been a mansion a century ago. Now it's the smallest house on the block. We hear a party as we PAN ACROSS a "HAPPY 6TH BIRTHDAY RONNIE!" banner.

RONNIE MAULTIER (6, wearing a cheesy BIRTHDAY CROWN), chases some CLASSMATES through the backyard, dashing around the legs of adults, laughing and smiling the whole time.

At the buffet table, Rachelle holds two platters of food as she talks to a couple of MOMS. MARILOU (30s, white, dressed in Nieman Marcus) clears space on the table.

RACHELLE

When the company was bought out we were a little worried. But C.R.T. asked if I'd come down to Dallas and it was too good to turn down.

MARILOU

I told Ed y'all moved down for your job but he didn't believe me. He never thinks I know what I'm talking about.

YASMIN FISHER (33, Filipino-American, dressed much hipper than the other Mockingbird ladies) chimes in.

YASMIN

After a merger, companies usually keep their people and fire the other guys. You must be something.

RACHELLE

I just have relationships with the clients. And government clearance can be a pain to get, so --

MARILOU

Clearance? What is it you do,
honey?

YASMIN

Don't say. If you told us you'd
have to kill us, right?

The ladies laugh at Yasmin's joke. But not Rachelle. She's heard a version of that a million times.

RACHELLE

It's just satellite stuff. Pretty boring, really.

Ronnie wanders past the moms, a wiffle ball in his hands, looking around with purpose.

RONNIE

Jackson? We need someone to pitch!

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - JACKSON'S ROOM - DAY

POV THROUGH THE WINDOW: Ronnie searches for Jackson in the backyard. EFREN FISHER (14, mixed-race Filipino and black, dresses like he's a pro soccer player) walks up to Ronnie who offers him the wiffle ball.

Reveal JACKSON MAULTIER (9), book open in his lap, watching. He closes the window blinds and goes back to reading.

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

TESS MAULTIER (13, long straight hair and simple clothes like a tween Joni Mitchell) watches Efren throw a pitch to Ronnie.

Ronnie HITS THE BALL! He starts sprinting around the "bases" as the ball rolls up to Tess' feet. Efren runs to pick up the ball, locking eyes with Tess --

EFREN

You could have thrown it in.

TESS

That would be interference.

She walks away. Efren jogs back to the game, just as Ronnie makes it to home plate celebrating excitedly with SAM FISHER (6, Efren's half-brother, mixed race Filipino and white).

Once Tess hears the game start back up she looks over her shoulder at Efren, intrigued.

Across the yard, Nathan flips burgers on the grill as a couple of the DADS drink beers around him. ED (40s, white, wears a big gold watch) indicates one of the burgers.

ED

I think that one's ready to come off.

NATHAN

I was thinking the same thing.

Nathan gives Ed a sidelong glance and takes it off the grill. JERRY FISHER (40, spends an hour on his hair and two at the gym) walks over from the nearby AIR CONDITIONING UNIT.

JERRY

Gotta say, Nathan, I like your whole setup. What's that Goodman A/C put out, fifty thousand B.T.U.s?

NATHAN

Yeah, fifty thousand. That's a hell of a guess.

JERRY

Wasn't a guess. Jerry Fisher, Fisher Heating and Cooling. What's your line?

NATHAN

My line? Oh, uh, I have a little company. Graphic design.

ED

Oh right, I heard you were a stay-at-home dad.

JERRY

Sounds to me like a man who makes his own hours. You thinking what I'm thinking, Ed?

ED

I'm thinking you can ask him.

NATHAN

Ask me what?

JERRY

Do you know about the school trip to Mexico next weekend?

NATHAN

Oh yeah, Misses Fox's class. My daughter Tess is excited to go.

JERRY

That's perfect. Yasmin was going to chaperone with me but something came up. You should come with me.

NATHAN

We're still settling in --

JERRY

Come on, man. A trip to the land of tequila is better than the kind of volunteer work we usually get.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

Rachelle and Nathan carry garbage bags through the house and pick up after the party. [In the b.g. we see Jackson and Ronnie playing video games in the adjacent living room.]

RACHELLE

And then Carol had the nerve to ask me how I managed to get everything ready for the party "what with church in the morning and all".

NATHAN

Which one was Carol again?

RACHELLE

The one who should have stopped after the second face lift.

(laughs)

What did I get us in to?

NATHAN

If it makes you feel any better, Jerry Fisher pressured me into chaperoning that Mexico trip with him.

RACHELLE

Really? You weren't exactly big on volunteering back in Minnesota.

NATHAN

I'm trying to make an impression. Besides, he owns a heating and cooling company. Might be able to get a new client out of it.

RACHELLE

Oh my God. You're turning into one of them aren't you?

Nathan produces a Fisher Heating & Cooling BUSINESS CARD.

NATHAN

Look at this logo! You think I can't do better than this?

RACHELLE

Nathan, I think it's a great idea. But you need to break it to Tess that she's going abroad with twenty of her new friends, and her dad.

NATHAN

Cool dad.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nathan and Rachelle walk past the OPEN DOOR. A beat. Nathan steps back into frame. Something has caught his attention.

He enters and stares at a BLACK DUFFEL BAG on the bed.

NATHAN

Rachelle! Do you know who this belongs to?

RACHELLE

No. I thought everyone got their stuff.

Rachelle enters as Nathan starts to set the trash down --

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

Don't put that there, I just cleaned.

(inspects the bag)

There's no tags.

NATHAN

Just look inside.

Rachelle unzips the bag to reveal IT'S FULL OF CASH! Nathan and Rachelle look at each other wondering what in the hell is going on.

CUT TO MAIN TITLE: **"MOCKINGBIRD HILL"**

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT**

Nathan lets the trash bag slip from his hands, walks toward Rachelle and the bag full of money.

TESS (O.S.)
Jackson's still playing video games.

Nathan and Rachelle spin around, blocking Tess' view of the bag as she pokes her head into the room.

NATHAN
He has ten more minutes. Then you can watch whatever you want.

TESS
Mom.

RACHELLE
Ten more minutes. If you can't wait that long just watch it on the tablet.

Tess exits and Rachelle closes the door behind her.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)
What are we going to do?

NATHAN
There's nothing else in here besides the money.

RACHELLE
Good because I don't want to know whose it is or how they got it.

NATHAN
Whoever this belongs to thought it was safe to bring to a six-year-old's birthday. There's got to be a reason.

RACHELLE
Like bribing a recruiter to get your kids into an Ivy?

NATHAN
Possible. But a more realistic explanation might be...

RACHELLE
 ...tax evasion?

NATHAN
 Or something that isn't a crime and definitely isn't our business. But whoever left this bag is going to be looking for it.

RACHELLE
 And if we don't try to give it back they might think we're trying to keep it.

NATHAN
 Which would be a fine introduction to the neighborhood.

RACHELLE
 Okay. I'll email the parents who came and ask if anyone left a bag behind. And as far as anyone is concerned, we never looked inside.

Rachelle zips the bag up.

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NEXT MORNING

Nathan, dressed in sweats and a "Gophers Hockey" t-shirt, finishes buckling Ronnie into his car seat next to Jackson. Tess sits up front as Rachelle leans out the window.

RACHELLE
 If anyone gets back to me about, the thing they left, I'll let you know.

NATHAN
 Okay. I'll be here working. Have a great day.

INT. BACK SHED - NATHAN'S HOME OFFICE - MORNING

Nathan sits in his "office," which is little more than a wood shed. He sits at an IKEA DESK talking on the phone. We might notice the DUFFEL BAG OF MONEY is in the background.

NATHAN (INTO PHONE)
 Oh yeah, Ralph, the new digs are incredible. You should see it. But I was actually calling because Karl referred me and -- oh.

(MORE)

NATHAN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
 It's already been awarded. I see.
 Well, keep me in mind for next
 time.

He hangs up, wakes up his COMPUTER, revealing a half-finished mock-up of a "FISHER HEATING & COOLING" LOGO. He fiddles with it, before his attention drifts to the bag of money...

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan riffles through a stack of money -- counting to himself -- then he counts the number of stacks -- writes down "200K" on a notepad.

Nathan leans back, not believing the number. An idea forming, he looks out the window towards the house...

INT. MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY - HALLWAY - DAY

Tess walks through the school hallway past other students when VICE PRINCIPAL KEVIN ZEHR steps in her way.

VICE PRINCIPAL ZEHR
 Your hair's too long.

TESS
 What?

VICE PRINCIPAL ZEHR
 School dress code states no hair longer than mid-back. So if you're not going to cut it...

He offers a scrunchy, in faded school colors, to Tess. A beat as she decides whether to comply...

INT. MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY - MRS. FOX'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The BELL RINGS as Tess enters a classroom door with a semicircle of small tables and chairs. Her hair has been put up in a SIDE-PONYTAIL using the VP's scrunchy.

MRS. CHERIE FOX (58, black, dressed conservatively) stands at the front.

MRS. FOX
 You must be the new girl, Tess Maultier. I can see Vice Principal Buzzkill got to you.

The kids chuckle.

TESS

Right.

MRS. FOX

Don't let it get you down. You'll soon know the multitudinous rules and regulations. Why don't you have a seat over there?

She points to a table with an empty chair next to... Efren. Tess sits down as Mrs. Fox starts the class.

EFREN

(whispers, re: her hair)
Not a bad look for you.

Self-conscious, Tess rips the scrunchy out.

MRS. FOX

Before we dive back into the Texas Revolution. Anyone who hasn't, please pass your permission slips for our Mexico trip to the front.

Efren hands a SIGNED PERMISSION SLIP to Tess, to pass on to the front of the room.

TESS

Oh are you going on that?

EFREN

Duh. Aren't you?

TESS

I was. But my dad's chaperoning and he's mortifying.

EFREN

Well mine's going too. Maybe we can be mortified together.

Off Tess, rethinking her decision not to go...

EXT. C.R.T. HEADQUARTERS - DOWNTOWN DALLAS - ESTABLISHING

A contemporary skyscraper emblazoned with a "C.R.T." logo.

INT. C.R.T. - MATEO'S OFFICE - DAY

MATEO PADILLA (35, close-cropped hair, fitted Oxford shirt, no blazer) works as Rachelle walks in, carrying a LAPTOP.

RACHELLE

Are you Mateo?

MATEO

That's what it says by the door.

RACHELLE

Cute. It also says you're Director of I.T. Which means you're the one responsible for onboarding me.

MATEO

Maultier. I assigned you to Williams.

RACHELLE

Well Williams hasn't done shit and I can't get any work done until I get access to the shared drive.

MATEO

Point made. It's all in process. Williams will get it done.

Mateo goes back to work. But she's not going anywhere.

RACHELLE

I'm not telling Mister Cosgrove I just dicked around on my first day. So get me what I need or you can pack up your shit and I'll have the new Director of I.T. handle it.

MATEO

You can really fire me?

RACHELLE

Want to find out?

He grins -- he can't help liking her force of will.

MATEO

Okay, killer. Hand over the laptop, I'll get you what you need.

She gives him the laptop. He OPENS IT and starts working.

RACHELLE

Thank you. I'll be in my office when it's ready. It's the one that says V.P. of Sales by the door.

She's about to go, when --

MATEO
You ever figure out who that bag
belongs to?

RACHELLE
What?

MATEO
(indicates the screen)
Sorry, it's in the subject line.

RACHELLE
Read my personal emails again, and
I really will fire you.

A tense moment as she stares at him. He puts up his hands...

MATEO
Logging out.

She waits to see that he's logged out, then exits, not
letting Mateo see the anxiety on her face.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE ON a stack of hundred dollar bills on the counter.
Nathan places it with the rest of the money from the bag, on
a KITCHEN SCALE. The readout says: **4.7 lbs**

NATHAN
Huh.

DING-DONG! He sees through the window, a POLICE CRUISER
parked in front. Suddenly panicked, he sweeps the money off
the scale and into kitchen drawers.

INT./EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Nathan opens the door to find M.H.P.D. OFFICER BALDWIN (30s,
white, good ol' boy with a badge) waiting.

OFFICER BALDWIN
Are you Nathan Maultier?

NATHAN
Sure am. Can I help you with
something?

OFFICER BALDWIN
That depends. How much cash are you
willing to part with today?

NATHAN

I don't -- Do you mean -- ?

OFFICER BALDWIN

Raffle tickets. For the annual police fund drive. Grand prize is a six-occupant hot tub courtesy of the Chief's nephew, Deano.

A beat.

NATHAN

How much?

OFFICER BALDWIN

Only ten bucks a pop. We draw the winners at the Chili Days festival in two weeks.

Nathan fumbles to produce his wallet. It's empty. He glances back at the kitchen drawer full of money...

NATHAN

Does it have to be cash?

OFFICER BALDWIN

No, sir. We accept Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.

EXT. MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY - HORSESHOE - DAY

Cars line the horseshoe driveway as parents pick up their kids. Nathan stands by his parked SUBARU STATION WAGON. Ronnie is in back, playing on a tablet, as Tess walks up.

NATHAN

How was your first day?

TESS

I need you to sign this.

She holds out a PERMISSION SLIP. He looks it over, surprised.

NATHAN

You do remember I'm chaperoning.

TESS

Which is why I'm expecting you to be on your best behavior, young man.

NATHAN

Well I can't promise I'll be zero percent embarrassing. But I'll do my best.

He takes the permission slip as Tess climbs in, grateful. Just then, Nathan spots Jackson exiting the school. A BULLY, walking his bike, swats Jackson's head from behind.

BULLY

Vikings suck, dickweed!

NATHAN

Hey!

He takes a step forward but the Bully is already biking away. He flips Nathan off. Nathan stares in disbelief as Jackson sulks to the car.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Do you know that kid? Why did he do that?

JACKSON

Remember how my counselor said, ignore bullies and they'll lose interest?

NATHAN

I remember.

JACKSON

I don't think that works in Texas.

Off Nathan, heart breaking for his son...

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nathan, Rachelle, Tess, Jackson and Ronnie all sit at the dinner table, eating leftovers from the barbecue. Jackson doesn't even look up from his tablet.

RACHELLE

Sweetie, you haven't even touched your mac and cheese.

JACKSON

Not really hungry.

Rachelle looks at Nathan, wondering if something's up with their son. Nathan mouths, "Later." DING-DONG.

EXT./INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Nathan finds Jerry Fisher standing on his porch.

NATHAN

Jerry, hey. We're just in the middle of dinner --

JERRY

Oh, did I forget to email your lovely wife back? I'm here for the bag.

NATHAN

That's your bag.

JERRY

It is. You wanna invite me in?

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rachelle leads Jerry into the guest room and shuts the door as Nathan pulls the duffel bag down from inside a closet.

JERRY

Thanks again for reaching out. I can't believe I forgot it.

RACHELLE

Neither can I.

JERRY

You looked in the bag, didn't you?

Nathan and Rachelle look at each other, uncomfortable.

NATHAN

We didn't mean to pry. We just wanted to know who to return it to.

RACHELLE

We never expected to find --

JERRY

All that green? I know it's a bit unusual, but ask anyone. Ol' Jerry's the King of Cash.

Jerry nods out the window. At the curb sits his FORD F-450 with a "Fisher Heating & Cooling" logo, and the motto: **I'm the King of Cash!** Rachelle glares at Nathan.

RACHELLE

Nathan mentioned your company, but I had no idea you were the "the King of Cash."

JERRY

I won't so much as touch a credit card. Usury, man. That's against the Word if you know what I mean.

NATHAN

Oh. Right. Usury.

JERRY

I would appreciate you keeping this on the Q.T. I'm making a down payment on a house, but it's a surprise for Yasmin so...

RACHELLE

You're surprising her with a house.

Nathan squeezes Rachelle's hand.

NATHAN

I'm sure she'll be thrilled. Our lips are sealed.

JERRY

That's good, man. That's real good.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - NATHAN & RACHELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nathan enters from the hallway to find Rachelle sitting on the end of the bed, lost in thought.

NATHAN

Kids are down for the night. Can you believe that shit with Jerry?

She SHUSHES him, pulls him into THE WALK-IN CLOSET and closes the door behind them.

RACHELLE

I don't know what to believe, but I know I don't want the kids to overhear us talking about it.

NATHAN

We gave the bag back. It's over.

A beat, as he reads her expression.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Look, I know his explanation was pretty weird --

RACHELLE

Exceptionally weird.

NATHAN

But think about it. Rich people are weird. Rich Texans are weirder.

RACHELLE

So you're buying "usury"?

NATHAN

Maybe. They take their religion seriously down here. It's not Lutheran services where the pastor's playing his guitar.

Rachelle nods, as she realizes what's truly bothering her.

RACHELLE

Did we do the right thing, moving down here?

NATHAN

Of course we did, we had to follow the money. But we don't have to be outsiders forever. Jerry and Yasmin know people, they're on the P.T.A. We just did them a solid, and after I spend a weekend with him I'm going to be people he knows. Before you know it, we'll be speaking in tongues and riding bulls.

RACHELLE

(laughs)

Slow down, cowboy. Let's start with line dancing and go from there.

She pulls him in for a kiss...

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - NATHAN & RACHELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nathan and Rachelle are asleep in one another's arms. The sound of RUSTLING and a muffled METALLIC BANG comes from outside.

Suddenly, a bright WHITE LIGHT shines through the window waking Nathan. He squints through his fingers but can't see what's outside...

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATE NIGHT

Nathan steps through the door, dressed in his boxer shorts. The MOTION-SENSOR FLOODLIGHTS have been triggered casting the yard in an eerie white glow.

NATHAN

Hello?

Suddenly, Nathan tenses when he hears a rustling behind a nearby tree. Then --

A COYOTE steps out and locks eyes with Nathan. A tense moment before it trots off into the bushes. Nathan lets out a breath -- waits to be sure it's gone -- then heads back inside.

We linger for a moment, before REVEALING --

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Jerry Fisher watches from around the corner of the house.

Satisfied Nathan didn't see him, Jerry slips away into the night.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**EXT./INT. ACADEMY BUS - I-35 SOUTHBOUND - MOVING - DAY**

A HULA GIRL DOLL WITH RED LEI "dances" on the dashboard of an upscale touring bus filled with Mockingbird students. Nathan passes the time by reading a SPANISH PHRASEBOOK. Mrs. Fox leans over to Jerry, who drives.

MRS. FOX

You're a little over the speed limit.

JERRY

Thanks for the catch.

Tess and Efren sit in the back. They're sharing headphones, listening to HIS MUSIC.

EFREN

Tyler gets all the love, but the flow on this Hodgy mixtape is insane. You know?

TESS

Yeah. I think I like it...

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

Rachelle reclines in the porch swing as she thumbs through a thick FILE FOLDER, when -- SPLASH! A STREAM OF WATER strikes the folder. Rachelle quickly pats it dry.

RACHELLE

Ronald Maultier!

But there's no sign of her son. Suddenly, Ronnie presses the barrel of a SUPER SOAKER against the back of her head.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

I thought you were playing inside.

RONNIE

I was but you said we could play with my presents.

RACHELLE

We will when I'm done with my work.

RONNIE

Uh-uh, you *said*. I am not afraid to shoot you.

RACHELLE

Ronnie, don't you dare --

He FIRES, a jet of water splashing Rachelle's head.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

Okay buster, you wanna play? How about some Tickle Torture Machine!

Rachelle SCOOPS RONNIE UP, flips him upside down and TICKLES THE SOLES OF HIS FEET. Ronnie flails, laughing his head off. She stops when she sees Yasmin Fisher PEERING OVER THE FENCE.

YASMIN

Hi, Shell. Am I interrupting anything?

RACHELLE

Just an assassination attempt.

YASMIN

I've survived a few of those. Why don't you bring the boys over and they can all shoot each other to their hearts' content. I called a sitter. You and I have a spa appointment.

RACHELLE

What? Yaz, that's sweet, but I'm on a deadline --

YASMIN

Oh stop, you can put that down for a few hours. Or are we going to let the boys have all the fun?

EXT. BORDER CROSSING/INT. BUS - DAY

A BORDER GUARD steps through the open doors onto the bus.

BORDER GUARD

You've been selected for a random search. I'll need you to pull over so we can check things out.

JERRY

Okay kids. Grab all your bags and get off the bus.

The kids GROAN their disapproval but start gathering their things. The Border Guard scans across all the teens.

BORDER GUARD
What's the purpose of your visit?

MRS. FOX
It's a school trip. Freshman
history.

BORDER GUARD
Anything to declare?

KID
This is boring!

Searching these bratty kids will be one giant pain in the
Guard's ass.

BORDER GUARD
On second thought, you're fine.
I'll wave you through.

INT. HIGH-END SPA - DAY

Rachelle and Yasmin are neck-deep in a steaming HOT TUB.

YASMIN
Dominique was fun and a phenomenal
lay, but ultimately a possessive
creep. So I packed up and drove my
pregnant ass to Dallas.

RACHELLE
Why Dallas? You have family here?

YASMIN
I do, but. This is the part I never
know how people are going to take.
I met Jerry a couple months earlier
at the airport. We traded numbers.
I never planned on calling, but I
had this feeling about him.

RACHELLE
So you stalked him.

YASMIN
It was a hell of a feeling.

RACHELLE
He does seem stable and extremely
self-possessed.

YASMIN

Yes to self-possessed. But stable?
It was more like, I knew he could
keep up with me and not combust.

RACHELLE

Huh... This may sound weird but you
reminded me of my mother just now.

YASMIN

If she turned you out, she must
have been one hell of a woman.

RACHELLE

She was, but not like you mean.

YASMIN

So that wasn't a compliment.

RACHELLE

Sorry, I meant you sound like my
mother if -- It's not like she's --

YASMIN

It's okay, Shell. Moms are tough.

Yasmin smiles, letting Rachelle off the hook.

RACHELLE

She did make me who I am though. I
just do the opposite of what she
would.

EXT. NUEVO LAREDO, MEXICO - VARIOUS - DAY

The school bus drives down the streets of Nuevo Laredo past
restaurants and shops. This is a city with a vibrant economy,
due to being a linchpin of North American trade.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Mrs. Fox gets several keys from the DESK CLERK.

DESK CLERK

Your class has the third floor all
to yourselves.

MRS. FOX

I'm sure nobody wants to share a
wall with a bunch of teenagers.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 315 - DAY

Tess enters her room with a female classmate. Tess throws her PAISLEY OVERNIGHT BAG onto her bed.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - NATHAN AND JERRY'S ROOM - DAY

Nathan and Jerry settle into their room. Nathan meticulously places his clothing in the dresser, while Jerry just places his bag next to the suitcase stand and plops down on his bed.

NATHAN

Kids are meeting at the pool in ten. We'd better go down.

INT. CANTINA SINSONTE - MOCKINGBIRD PLAZA - NIGHT

The upscale cantina is a social nerve center. Rachelle sips a large margarita, as Yasmin WAVES to Marilou, sitting in a corner booth across the restaurant.

Marilou waves back, then turns her attention to the half-dozen Stepford Wives seated with her.

RACHELLE

Should we go over and say hello?

YASMIN

Don't bother. It took me a year to get eye contact and three more to get wave-across-the-room status.

RACHELLE

I thought you were friends?

YASMIN

There's levels to these things. The kind of friends Marilou Goodwyn invites to that table have more money and fewer opinions than I'll ever have.

Rachelle scans the other women, the jewels, the clothes...

RACHELLE

Where I'm from we've got a word for parading your wealth around. Tacky.

YASMIN

That's 'cause you and I are capable of feeling shame.

(MORE)

YASMIN (CONT'D)

But Marilou's not like us. She's been spoon-fed since she was in the cradle.

RACHELLE

Must be nice.

YASMIN

Maybe. But you know who else lives like that? Veal.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - HOTEL RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Nathan and Jerry sit at the bar, nursing a couple beers.

JERRY

Jesus, those kids. Now I know why it's so hard to get volunteers for these things. But hey, the kids are why we do all of it, right?

NATHAN

Sure are.

JERRY

I just wish I had more time to spend with 'em sometimes. You know?

NATHAN

Actually, sometimes I wish I had less.

JERRY

Come again?

NATHAN

My business isn't exactly booming. Rachelle's the bread-winner in our house.

JERRY

I worked for a guy once. He was richer than you could imagine. I saw him kick a dog because it chewed through his boot. That's when I learned money doesn't say a thing about a man's character. And I may have just met you, but from where I'm sitting you're worth ten of that miserable asshole.

Jerry clinks Nathan's bottle and they drink.

NATHAN

Thanks, Jerry. But to be honest,
I'd give a little character to make
a little more money.

JERRY

We ought to call it a night. Big
day tomorrow.

EXT. PLAZA HIDALGO - NUEVO LAREDO - THE NEXT MORNING

Mrs. Fox stands in front of the students, with Jerry and Nathan (who wears a FANNYPACK) in back. Tess watches Mrs. Fox, but Efren is distracted by a nearby CATHOLIC SCHOOL GROUP getting a similar lecture.

MRS. FOX

Texas had just handed Santa Anna
his behind. Officially supporting
the Republic of the Rio Grande
could have reignited the war, so
President Lamar secretly encouraged
a flow of arms, ammunition, and men
across the border.

As she goes on, Nathan taps Jerry on the shoulder...

NATHAN

Necesito el baño.

JERRY

Okay. But hurry back.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Nathan hurries up to the door with a hung sign: ***Volveremos en 15 Minutos***. He looks left and right. There's no one around.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Nathan pushes the door open and makes a beeline for the bathroom.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - BATHROOM - DAY

Nathan flushes the urinal, zips up, and washes his hands.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Nathan comes out of the bathroom door and is surprised to see a man, CLAY (30, white), behind the counter. Clay looks up, just as surprised to see Nathan.

CLAY

The sign on the door said fifteen minutes.

NATHAN

Sorry. I just really had to -- tell you what. I'll buy something.

CLAY

Not necessary.

Nathan eyes a row of unfamiliar candy and treats before settling on something he recognizes: a SNICKERS BAR.

NATHAN

I could use a little something.

Clay looks to the floor behind the counter. There is a lump underneath a DROP CLOTH with an ARM STICKING OUT! Clay kicks the arm under the cloth as Nathan approaches.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You American?

CLAY

Yeah.

NATHAN

It must be pretty interesting living down here huh?

CLAY

It's certainly cheaper. That'll be thirty pesos.

NATHAN

Do you have change for ten U.S.?

Clay can't believe this guy. He snatches Nathan's money, takes out his own wallet and counts out eight U.S. dollars.

CLAY

There's your change.

As Nathan puts his change and the Snickers into his FANNYPACK, he suddenly stops, noticing --

NATHAN
You've got a little blood there.

CLAY
Excuse me?

Clay begins to reach for A HANDGUN tucked behind his back.

NATHAN
Right there on your neck. Must have
nicked yourself shaving.

Clay relaxes his grip on the gun.

CLAY
Thanks for the heads up.

NATHAN
You've got to take it easier. My
dad always said, better a little
stubble than a little cut.

Once Nathan exits, Clay opens a door behind the counter. We
see a group of ARMED MEN wait in the backroom.

CLAY
(subtitled Spanish)
The idiot's gone. Let's get moving.

EXT./INT. ACADEMY BUS - MOMENTS LATER

The group is back on the bus as Nathan climbs aboard. Jerry
turns the ignition but the ENGINE REFUSES TO TURN OVER. He
leans his head out the window.

JERRY
Telling ya, Cherie. This dog won't
roll over.

Mrs. Fox peeks her head from around the open engine hood. She
closes the hood, walks around to Jerry's window.

MRS. FOX
Whatever's going on, I can't see
it. I think it's electrical.

JERRY
Then I'll take it to a shop.
Nathan, I wouldn't mind you having
my back.

NATHAN

Are you sure it's a good idea for us both to go?

MRS. FOX

He doesn't want to get fleeced with the bus. Don't worry about me, if I can wrangle twenty teenagers back home I can do it here.

INT. TOW TRUCK - MOVING - DAY

Nathan sits in between Jerry and ARTURO (20s, Mexican) as the tow truck moves down the road. We can see the bus in tow behind them. Jerry and Arturo speak *in subtitled Spanish*:

ARTURO

This guy seems funny to me.

JERRY

What do you mean funny?

ARTURO

Like that thing around his waist.

Jerry looks at Nathan's FANNYPACK.

JERRY

He's okay -- but you're not wrong.

NATHAN

Do you two know each other?

JERRY

Nope. Just friendly people down here, Nathan. Friendly people.

INT. ARTURO'S GARAGE - DAY

Nathan watches Jerry speak to Arturo, as a group of MECHANICS rolls the bus onto a HYDRAULIC LIFT. Jerry walks over to Nathan as the Mechanics start lifting the bus.

JERRY

We'll be driving back to the kids in about twenty minutes or so. It's just a dead spark plug.

NATHAN

How do you know that? I mean, they haven't even looked under the hood yet.

JERRY

I know because I put it there. The good one's right here.

Jerry takes a SPARK PLUG out of his pocket, holds it up.

NATHAN

I don't understand. Why would you do that?

JERRY

Nathan, I'm going to ask you to turn around. But when you do, I need you to not freak out. Okay?

OVER NATHAN'S SHOULDER, we see Arturo's guys opening up the underside of the bus. Nathan can feel the danger. He nods "yes," turns and sees the mechanics lowering SEVERAL CRATES out of a hidden compartment.

NATHAN

Ohshitohshit. You made me a drug mule!

JERRY

Well, you're half right.

The guys open the crates, REVEALING DOZENS OF MACHINE GUNS, GRENADE LAUNCHERS, AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT ROCKETS. Nathan hyperventilates and Jerry puts his arm around him.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Let's get you on a chair.

INT. ARTURO'S GARAGE - BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry hands Nathan a water and sits down across from him.

JERRY

A million thoughts must be racing through your head right now. I'm scared. I fucking hate this guy. I'm going to the cops as soon as I get out of here. Be honest, you're thinking some of those things.

NATHAN

Wouldn't you?

JERRY

I would and I have. So the first thing you need to know is that we are going to get away with this.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

The school trip is the perfect cover story.

NATHAN

No. I'm not a part of this. I'm not doing this.

JERRY

Those men work for the Juanitez cartel. You want to tell them you're taking their guns back? Besides, even if we could stop the deal you'd miss out on your cut.

NATHAN

I am not taking a cut.

JERRY

You already did. To the tune of two hundred thousand dollars.

NATHAN

The bag? I gave it back.

JERRY

Really? Because I remember you taking it and hiding it somewhere on your property.

NATHAN

You didn't.

JERRY

All I'm saying is, if you were to go to the authorities and claim you weren't a part of this deal, I'd point them to the hidden bag of money that has your fingerprints all over it. Because it does have your fingerprints all over it, right?

OFF Nathan realizing he's screwed...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. ARTURO'S GARAGE - BACK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Nathan and Jerry are right where we left them. The gravity of Nathan's situation has started to land when his CELL RINGS.

NATHAN

Shit. It's Rachelle. I told her I'd check in.

JERRY

Answer it. We don't want anyone coming to look for us right now.

Nathan looks THROUGH THE OFFICE WINDOW. In the Garage, Arturo's men are busy offloading crates of military hardware from the LIFTED BUS. Point taken. He answers the phone:

NATHAN

Hey hon, I was just about to call.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. C.R.T. - RACHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Rachelle reclines at her desk, phone cradled to her ear.

RACHELLE

Oh good. Then you can talk. How's the trip? You learning anything?

NATHAN

Oh, tons.

RACHELLE

How's Tess? She around to talk?

Nathan hasn't noticed the MUFFLED VOICES of Arturo's men inside the repair shop has TURNED TO YELLING...

NATHAN

Actually, we had a problem with the bus so Jerry and I are out getting it fixed --

CA-THUNK! THE BUS AND THE REPAIR LIFT DROP ONTO TWO OF ARTURO'S MEN, crushing them instantly. The BANG is so loud Rachelle pulls the handset away from her ear.

RACHELLE

What the hell was that?

But he can't answer. The repair shop is suddenly a cacophony of SHOUTING and automatic GUNFIRE. Jerry jumps on Nathan, pushing his head below the line of fire as the WINDOW BURSTS.

JERRY

We've got to move.

RACHELLE (ON PHONE)

Nathan, are you alright?

IN THE GARAGE, GUNMEN (wearing nightmarish animal MASKS) are battling with Arturo's men, and winning. Inside the bus, the DASHBOARD HULA GIRL IS HIT BY A BULLET AND EXPLODES.

Nathan is paralyzed, phone still in his hand. This is stupid and insane and... then something occurs to him.

NATHAN

Sorry sweetheart! It's Mexican Independence Day. There's a parade, there's fireworks all over. I have to call you later. I love you so so so much.

RACHELLE

Okay, well just be safe --

LOSE INTERCUT and stay with Rachelle as Nathan hangs up. Rachelle looks at her phone, wondering what that was all about when her boss, HARLAN COSGROVE (50s) barges in.

HARLAN

Mizz Maultier, would you explain why we're about to miss our RAMP delivery deadline to the feds?

RACHELLE

Miss it? No, we're not going to --

HARLAN

Hugh was here all weekend. Said he didn't see you, even though you promised you'd finish that submission by today.

RACHELLE

I was working remotely. And I can understand why a contract of this size would make Hugh Waters sweat, but I assure you this project is airtight and on time.

HARLAN

Well I'd feel better if you got on the horn with our procurement officer to assure *him* it's on its way and he can keep the bid closed.

He exits. Rachelle sighs as her secretary, ALMA, comes in.

ALMA

I'll say it if you won't. Hugh Waters is a sycophantic busybody.

RACHELLE

Well I'm not letting him make me a redundancy.

ALMA

Then I'll get Bernie Munson on the line.

RACHELLE

Great. Now I get to spend an hour calling the world's most talkative public servant while my husband is in Mexico at a fucking parade...

INT. ARTURO'S GARAGE - SIDE HALLWAY - DAY

Nathan and Jerry are crouched in a hallway lined with windows facing into the garage where the GUN BATTLE RAGES ON. Jerry indicates an EXIT DOOR at the far end.

He signals one-two-three, then starts towards it, crouching to keep below the windows. He slinks past the violence, head down, gets his hand on the doorknob, and --

CLICK. He feels the barrel of a pistol on the back of his head. A GUNMAN IN A GOAT MASK has gotten the drop on him.

GUNMAN IN GOAT MASK

(in English)

Hey, Jerry. It's over.

CLOSE ON JERRY, wide-eyed. Does he recognize that voice?

WHAM! Nathan BODY-CHECKS the Gunman, who hits the wall and drops unconscious. Stunned, Jerry looks at the downed Gunman, then at Nathan, who looks as surprised as Jerry does.

JERRY

Where the hell did that come from?

NATHAN
 I don't know.
 (then, realizing)
 Hockey scholarship.

Jerry grins, glad he brought Nathan along. Then, as one of the gunmen spies them through the window and turns to fire --

EXT. ARTURO'S GARAGE - BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The rear door SLAMS OPEN. Jerry and Nathan dart into an alley -- Jerry kicks the steel door closed -- PING-PING-PING! -- it's riddled by gunfire from inside.

JERRY
 Dumpster!

Nathan and Jerry grab a DUMPSTER -- slide it in front of the door -- SLAM! -- just as someone tries to bust through. They start to run towards the street.

NATHAN
 Who's trying to kill us?

JERRY
Sangre de Cabra. Rival cartel.

NATHAN
 So what is this, a hit?

JERRY
 No, I'm pretty sure --

They're almost to the end of the alley when THE MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY BUS ZOOMS PAST, darting up the street. A couple CARS FULL OF ARTURO'S MEN give chase.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 This is a robbery.

NATHAN
 They're taking the bus?

JERRY
 They're taking the guns. God-fuck!

Another group of ARMED MEN run past, in pursuit of the rival gangs. Jerry presses Nathan's back against the wall as one of the armed men stops at the end of the alley.

But this isn't a gunman, it's a POLICE OFFICER radioing for backup. Nathan looks between Jerry and the Officer, an idea forming. Is he going to try to turn himself in?

JERRY (CONT'D)

Nathan, I know what you're thinking
and that is a bad idea.

POLICE OFFICER

(subtitled Spanish)

Hey, hands where I can see them!

The Officer spots them, draws his gun. No choice, Jerry and Nathan put their hands up, when -- WHAM! The Officer is FLATTENED BY THE TOW TRUCK. Arturo throws open the door.

ARTURO

¡Ven conmigo si quieren vivir!

Jerry starts towards the truck, but stops when he sees Nathan, frozen in shock. Jerry locks eyes with him, puts up his hands as if to say "What's it going to be?"

A tense beat, then -- Nathan rushes towards the truck. They climb in and Arturo drives away.

INT./EXT. ACADEMY BUS - NUEVO LAREDO STREETS - DAY

Several blocks away, the *Sangre de Cabra* Gunmen are making their getaway in the bus. The Gunman in the Goat Mask barks orders *in subtitled Spanish*:

GUNMAN IN GOAT MASK

Set the roadblock.

The bus SKIDS TO A HALT in a NARROW ALLEY. TWO GUNMEN jump out and unfurl a SPIKE STRIP across the road as the bus speeds away. Arturo's men drive over the spikes and COME UNDER FIRE from the Gunmen. It's a bloodbath.

IN THE BUS, the leader pulls off his mask, REVEALING CLAY, the man who Nathan encountered in the convenience store.

CLAY

Head to the river, we'll unload the goods and ditch this thing.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN NUEVO LAREDO - LATER THAT DAY

Nathan stares through a BARRED WINDOW: a mile to the East, just beyond the Rio Grande, a giant AMERICAN FLAG flies above a farmhouse. Texas is so close and yet so far.

NATHAN

Are we safe here?

Jerry doesn't hear him as he paces, deep in thought.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Jerry. Are we safe?

JERRY

From *Sangre de Cabra*? Sure. From dirty cops, like that guy you were thinking of surrendering to. Maybe.

NATHAN

You're saying that officer was dangerous?

JERRY

This is a town where the bad guys own the law. Unfortunately for us, right now, bad guys includes my boss.

Just then Arturo ENTERS, locks the door behind him. They speak in subtitled Spanish:

JERRY (CONT'D)

How's it look out there?

ARTURO

Like we're fucked. As soon as Juanitez finds out the guns are gone, our heads are going to roll!

JERRY

No they aren't.
(then, in English)
KESTREL.

A beat as that strange word lands with Arturo.

ARTURO

Are you telling me you can make that happen right now?

JERRY

Why do you think I brought my funny friend?

Jerry and Arturo both turn to look at Nathan...

NATHAN

Somebody speak English, please!

They both ignore him, as Arturo continues.

ARTURO

*If you can get what you promised by
the end of the day, we might live.*

JERRY

*What about the bus? If we come home
without it, we might as well turn
ourselves in to the A.T.F.*

Arturo nods towards THE WINDOW. The TOW TRUCK pulls up outside, towing the ACADEMY BUS. The bus is BATTERED TO HELL, all of the windows shot out, and dripping with rancid water.

NATHAN

Jesus, did they dump it in the
goddamned Rio Grande?

ARTURO

*Let me worry about the bus. You get
me what you promised.*

Arturo looks dead serious at Nathan, then exits.

JERRY

Nathan. Nate. Buddy. As you can
see, we're in a little trouble. I'm
going to need to call in a favor.

NATHAN

What more could you need from me?

JERRY

Well you see... And don't hate me.
But I didn't choose you and
Rachelle by accident.

EXT./INT. FEDERAL PALACE - NUEVO LAREDO - DAY

Mrs. Fox leads the students through a historic building. Tess and Efren lag behind the school group when they hear MUSIC coming from an open door. They duck inside to find --

Three AMERICAN CHICANO TEENAGERS in Catholic school uniforms and IDENTICAL POMPADOUR HAIRCUTS. They SMOKE and bob along to a lo-fi honky-tonk guitar solo playing on a phone.

TESS

What are you listening to?

CHICANO TEEN #1

"Greystone Chapel."

EFREN

Oh, I know them. They're sick.

CHICANO TEEN #2

This guy. It's not a "them," it's a song. Johnny Cash?

Tess is amused by Efren's blown attempt to be cool.

EFREN

What are you, eighty?

CHICANO TEEN #3

Cultural illiteracy isn't a virtue, bro.

EFREN

Neither are matching haircuts --

TESS

Efren. I want to hear this.

Tess takes a seat by the Teens, quietly absorbed in the music. She's watching one of the teens, admiring something about him. Efren fidgets, not used to feeling this awkward.

CHICANO TEEN #1

Cigarette?

TESS

Actually. No, I'm good.

Efren snatches the cigarette from the Teen, inhales -- then Mrs. Fox enters. Efren coughs, PUTTING OUT THE CIGARETTE.

EFREN

I swear I hated it.

MRS. FOX

You two are making my job impossible. I got a message from your dads, we need to find our own way back to the hotel. And hope I don't catch you smoking again.

INT. C.R.T. - RACHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Rachelle has been stuck on the phone for a long time.

RACHELLE

Oh your wife insisted on SCUBA diving? No, I don't know if there's a specific phobia for that.

She notices Yasmin in her OPEN DOORWAY, goes to hang up.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

Hey Bernie? I hate to cut you off but there's a fire at the office I need to put out. Talk to you soon.

YASMIN

Your secretary said you could use an escape. Here, I've got your office-warming gift.

Yasmin hands over a TAXIDERMIED ARMADILLO that's been made into a DESK SET. Pens jut out of its shell. A PLAQUE reads: **To the Impenetrable Shell, With Love from the Fishers**

RACHELLE

Yaz, this is so... Is this a real animal?

YASMIN

If you have to ask.

RACHELLE

It's very sweet. Thank you.

YASMIN

Oh, don't thank me yet.

Yasmin CLOSES THE DOOR and DRAWS THE BLINDS as the armadillo BUZZES in Rachelle's hands. She turns it over finding AN OLD FLIP PHONE set into its belly. It's ringing.

YASMIN (CONT'D)

It's for you. Answer it.

Seeing that Yasmin won't meet her eyes, Rachelle ANSWERS:

RACHELLE

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SAFE HOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN NUEVO LAREDO - SAME

Nathan has a matching, UNMARKED CELL PHONE in his lap. Rachelle is on speaker as Jerry and Arturo stand over him.

NATHAN

Hi hon.

RACHELLE

Nathan? What's going on?

NATHAN

We're in trouble. Some scary guys have me and Jerry in custody. They won't let us go unless we give them what they want.

That lands on Rachelle, panic setting in. Yasmin tries to take her hand, but Rachelle yanks it away.

RACHELLE

Okay. What do they want, money?

NATHAN

C.R.T. has a contract with the Mexican government, right? Surveillance of cartel activity.

RACHELLE

Yeah. KESTREL. But how do you --

NATHAN

We need to get them that data.

RACHELLE

But that's not even my project.

NATHAN

We're counting on you.

RACHELLE

God. How did this happen?

In the safe house, Jerry leans over Nathan to speak:

JERRY

Hey Rachelle, it's Jerry. Look, I'm real sorry I got you wrapped up in this. Yaz will tell you the rest, but we're pressed for time.

RACHELLE

So this is your fault. And those weren't "fireworks" were they?

NATHAN

No. And Rachelle, if we don't come through they won't just kill us. They'll kill the kids.

As that lands with Rachelle, her world turned upside down...

EXT./INT. CITY BUS - NUEVO LAREDO BUS STOP - DAY

Mrs. Fox ushers the high schoolers aboard a CITY BUS. While she takes a head-count, she fails to notice a MAN IN A COWBOY HAT boarding via the rear door. He sits in back, talking on a cell phone *in subtitled Spanish*:

MAN IN COWBOY HAT

I've got eyes on them.

He hangs up as the bus pulls out into the street. From HIS POV we see who he's looking at: TESS AND EFREN, oblivious to the danger.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. C.R.T. - RACHELLE'S OFFICE - DAY**

Rachelle is now alone, processing what's been said to her, when Mateo Padilla, Director of I.T., enters.

MATEO

Hi, killer. You needed to see me?

RACHELLE

Close the door and sit down.

He realizes something is wrong and closes the door.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

I need the data from the KESTREL program for the last six months.

MATEO

Ah. Oh. Um. KESTREL is Hugh Waters' account, isn't it?

RACHELLE

That's right. Which means I don't have access, but I need it anyway. So, what do you want?

MATEO

What do I... is this a negotiation?

RACHELLE

A short one. I need it by the end of the day. Pro tip: that means you have leverage, so act fast.

A self-satisfied grin dawns on Mateo's face.

MATEO

You're trying to make it look like Hugh got sloppy so when it comes time to clean house, he gets shit-canned instead of you.

RACHELLE

You got me.

MATEO

Okay then. I want to hitch my wagon to your star. You take out Hugh, keep rising, and when the time comes, you put me up for C.T.O. Deal?

He puts his hand out to shake. She hesitates, then shakes.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - COURTYARD / POOL AREA - DAY

SPLASH! The Mockingbird kids play in the hotel POOL. Mrs. Fox sits poolside, PAPERBACK in her lap. She barely has to look up when two teenagers FLASH BY --

MRS. FOX

No running or so help me God.

Tess and Efren slow down, then tumble into the pool, laughing and horsing around. Just then MOVEMENT in a THIRD-FLOOR WINDOW catches Mrs. Fox's eye. Is that a MAN IN A COWBOY HAT watching the kids?

UNKNOWN POV FROM THE THIRD FLOOR WINDOW: Mrs. Fox stands up to stare at us -- making herself known. The children's protector holding fast but looking very small.

INT. C.R.T. - OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

Rachelle waits as a COLLEAGUE finishes making a sandwich. The Colleague turns to go, with a friendly nod. Once she's alone, Rachelle opens the FRIDGE, finds WHAT SHE'S LOOKING FOR --

INT. C.R.T. - HALLWAY OUTSIDE SERVER ROOM - SAME

Mateo walks past a door marked **I.T. Dept - Main Server** and into a nearby ALCOVE. He sends a TEXT MESSAGE.

INT. C.R.T. - OFFICE KITCHEN - SAME

Rachelle's phone BUZZES WITH MATEO'S MESSAGE: **Ready when u r**

Rachelle closes the MICROWAVE, punches in a cooking time of TEN MINUTES, presses start and walks away.

In the MICROWAVE INTERIOR, REVEAL a takeout container WRAPPED IN CRINKLY ALUMINUM FOIL. Masking tape on the front reads: **Hugh - Do Not Touch**. As SPARKS begin to fly...

INT. C.R.T. - EXECUTIVE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Rachelle has just reached her secretary Alma's desk when the FIRE ALARM begins to sound.

RACHELLE

Do we have a fire drill today?

ALMA

No, ma'am. We better head
downstairs.

INT. C.R.T. - HALLWAY OUTSIDE SERVER ROOM - SAME

Mateo WATCHES as his I.T. Department colleagues file out of the server room. Once the last of them has left, Mateo swipes his keycard and slips inside, unnoticed.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Fox enters the hallway, padding softly along the carpet. She examines the posted emergency FLOORPLAN -- draws her finger across the room numbers -- stopping on **316**.

She goes to ROOM 316, and listens for any movement inside. Then she moves left to the adjacent room door. As quietly as possible, she unlocks and enters --

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 315 - CONTINUOUS

We see a PAISLEY OVERNIGHT BAG. This is Tess' room! Mrs. Fox moves towards the DOOR CONNECTING ROOM 315 TO ROOM 316. She listens through the door, still nothing.

She prepares to ram the door with her shoulder, then stops, realizing something...

INT. HOLIDAY INN - ROOM 316 - MOMENTS LATER

The door bursts open, as Mrs. Fox surges through, armed with a CLOSET ROD. She regains her balance, brandishing the rod at whoever she's just got the drop on --

But there's NO ONE THERE. She searches the room for any sign that someone was here, that she didn't imagine things. She steps to the WINDOW OVERLOOKING THE POOL.

Outside, the kids are cavorting loudly, oblivious. Then she notices a still-smoldering CIGARETTE on the windowsill.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN NUEVO LAREDO - DAY

Nathan sits in silence, chewing his Snickers bar.

JERRY

You have another one of those?

Nathan sighs, throws the remainder of his Snickers bar to Jerry. As Jerry starts to chew, Nathan holds the empty wrapper, with its bold-faced question: **SATISFIED?**

NATHAN

I just realized that was probably my last meal. Jesus Christ.

JERRY

Then it's probably a bad time to take the Lord's name in vain.

NATHAN

How are you not freaking out?

JERRY

I've got faith Rachelle and Yasmin are gonna come through. And I've got the other kind of faith in case they don't.

NATHAN

You're running guns to a drug cartel, and you think you're getting into Heaven?

JERRY

No man is born without sin, which is why he must beg forgiveness. I did it on the day I received Jesus as my Lord and savior, and I've done it every day since.

NATHAN

Well if you hadn't noticed I'm not, like, particularly religious.

JERRY

Right now it's less about Him and more about you. Nathan, you saved my life today. Why don't you let me save your soul?

INT. SAFE HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jerry holds Nathan's head underwater in a FILLED BATH TUB.

JERRY

"...let the water wash away your transgressions as you inhale the air of a new day in the light of the Lord..."

Nathan gasps as Jerry pulls him back up --

JERRY (CONT'D)
How's it feel to be a new man?

NATHAN
Like I just got drowned.

INT. C.R.T. - SERVER ROOM - DAY

The fire alarm blares. Mateo is alone near a monitor as he DOWNLOADS several terabytes of data onto a PORTABLE DRIVE.

SHARP VOICE (O.S.)
Padilla! What the hell do you think you're doing?

He spins to see a colleague, BOBBIE-ANN (40s, self-serious), standing at the door, staring at him severely. Mateo freezes, caught. The download bar reads **93%**.

MATEO
Bobbie-Ann. Hey, I can explain --

BOBBIE-ANN
I don't want to hear it. You are in a shitload of trouble.

MATEO
It's not what it looks like. I just need to make a backup.

BOBBIE-ANN
You nerds are all the same. You'd rather a fireman risks his life dragging you out of the building than risk losing a little work but as floor captain, your safety is my responsibility.

Bobbie-Ann produces a WHISTLE and BLOWS.

BOBBIE-ANN (CONT'D)
This is not a drill.

That's all Mateo needs to hear. Seeing the progress bar has reached **100%**, he grabs the drive and rushes out.

EXT. C.R.T. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

A FIREFIGHTER sets the SMOLDERING REMAINS OF THE MICROWAVED LEFTOVERS down. Office workers crowd around.

No one notices as Mateo emerges from the building. Rachelle sidles up and whispers:

RACHELLE
Did you get it?

MATEO
Hugh Waters doesn't stand a chance.

He starts to hand the drive over, but holds onto it, leaning in to speak right into Rachelle's ear.

MATEO (CONT'D)
I'm looking forward to working more closely in the future.

He walks away as she slips the drive into her purse, worried about her new "partner."

INT. CANTINA SINSONTE - MOCKINGBIRD PLAZA - DAY

Rachelle finds Yasmin drinking a large margarita.

RACHELLE
Oh were you having fun, Yaz? Sorry,
I was just saving the lives of our
husbands and children.

YASMIN
Does that mean you have it?

In answer, Rachelle open her purse for Yasmin to see. Yasmin takes the drive, on the verge of drunk crying...

YASMIN (CONT'D)
Oh thank God. Thank you, Shell,
I've been so worried --

RACHELLE
Don't you dare. You and Jerry have
done nothing but lie to us since
the moment we met. I don't know who
you are, and you know what? I don't
want to. As far as I'm concerned,
the Fishers and the Maultiers don't
have a relationship. No carpools,
no barbecues, and if you so much as
wave to me at the Horseshoe I will
break your fucking arm.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE - SOMEWHERE IN NUEVO LAREDO - DUSK

Arturo leads Jerry and Nathan out of the fortified apartment. The repaired bus is parked in front, NOT A SCRATCH ON IT. Nathan stares in disbelief, as Arturo tosses them the keys.

JERRY

I'm glad this all worked out.

ARTURO

Me too.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - HOTEL RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The school group is eating dinner as Nathan and Jerry enter.

JERRY

We have returned!

The kids barely look up. Scattered sarcastic cheers. Nathan approaches Tess, wraps her in a tight hug, kissing her cheek.

NATHAN

Sweetheart, you have no idea how happy I am to see you.

TESS

Oh my God, Dad, what did we say?

Jerry, playing it cool, puts a hand on Efren's shoulder.

JERRY

Hope you learned something today.

MRS. FOX

Nathan, Jerry, can I speak with you for a minute?

They follow Mrs. Fox to a quiet corner of the restaurant.

MRS. FOX (CONT'D)

We had a situation. A man was lurking around the kids, could have just been a scammer. But I scared him off. I don't want to freak you out, but I figure you've got the right to know.

Nathan and Jerry exchange a look, knowing she's not talking about any ordinary creep.

JERRY

I'm sorry Cherie, we should have never left you alone like that.

MRS. FOX

Tell you what, it was invigorating. Reminded me of being in the field.

NATHAN

The field?

MRS. FOX

Before I came back to Texas to teach, I worked for Reagan in Nicaragua.

(off their blank stares)

You know, in the C.I.A. Don't tell the kids, I wouldn't want them thinking I'm that interesting.

She laughs as both men force smiles. Holy shit.

INT. HOLIDAY INN - NATHAN AND JERRY'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Jerry sleeps like the dead, having barely changed out of his clothes. PAN OVER to find Nathan, staring at the ceiling, breathing fast. After today, he might never sleep again.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**INT. ACADEMY BUS - I-35 NORTHBOUND - DAY**

The kids are on the bus as Jerry drives. Nathan sits in front, next to Mrs. Fox. A beat, then --

MRS. FOX

Didn't she used to have a red lei?

They see she's looking at the HULA GIRL on the dashboard, who now wears a BLUE LEI. Jerry and Nathan cover.

JERRY

I don't know. I think it was blue.

NATHAN

It was definitely blue.

EXT. MOCKINGBIRD ACADEMY - HORSESHOE - DUSK

Rachelle stands with Jackson and Ronnie as the bus pulls in. She glares at Yasmin across the parking lot. When Tess and Nathan step off the bus, Rachelle runs up and hugs them.

TESS

God, Mom.

RACHELLE

I'm just glad to see you. Both of you.

NATHAN

I've got our things. Let's go home.

TESS

Just a sec. I want to say bye to Efren.

Nathan exchanges a glance with Rachelle.

NATHAN

It was a long trip, hon. Can we just go?

TESS

Fine.

Rachelle and the kids pile into the car. Nathan looks back and sees Jerry wave. Nathan just turns and goes.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan stands as Rachelle paces. The CEILING FAN is running.

RACHELLE

We have to go to the cops.

NATHAN

No. We can't.

RACHELLE

I am not letting them get away with this. They used us, Nathan.

NATHAN

You handed over classified data. That's a felony.

RACHELLE

You were being held hostage. I can turn state's witness.

NATHAN

They know where our kids go to school. Besides, even if we were safe, your career would be over. And let's be honest, mine never started. So that'd mean no more house. No more health insurance. No more --

She walks under the fan, letting the air cool her face, eyes closed, defeated.

RACHELLE

I get it. You're right. So what do we do?

NATHAN

We pretend like it never happened. And stay as far away as we can from the Fishers. Are you with me on this?

Rachelle and Nathan share a moment. This is not the "for better or worse" they imagined when they got married.

RACHELLE

Like it never happened. But what about the money?

Nathan notices Rachelle's hair blowing, the ceiling fan running on high.

NATHAN

I think I know where Jerry hid it.

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Nathan and Rachelle unscrew the side of the AIR CONDITIONING UNIT. Packed between components are STACKS OF JERRY'S CASH.

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

STACKS OF CASH sit inside the barbecue grill. Nathan squeezes lighter fluid all over it as Rachelle STRIKES A MATCH. She tosses it onto the money and everything GOES UP IN FLAMES.

A beat as they watch the cash burn. And then Rachelle takes Nathan by the hand, leading him into --

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - SHOWER - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nathan and Rachelle are all over each other, making love in the steaming shower.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - KITCHEN - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Rachelle, Nathan, and the kids are gathered around the table for dinner. Ronnie starts to eat.

NATHAN

Hold up there, Ronnie. We're going to say grace first.

JACKSON

Since when do we say grace?

RACHELLE

Just hold hands.

NATHAN

I'd like to say thanks for the food. And for our continued health and safety. Amen.

EVERYONE

Amen.

Rachelle squeezes Nathan's hand, as Jackson swats Ronnie's hand away from the biscuit on his plate.

JACKSON

That's mine.

RACHELLE

Tess, when were you going to tell us you got a disciplinary notice?

TESS

You always do this at dinner.

RACHELLE

I wouldn't be doing anything if you hadn't ignored five warnings from the Vice Principal about your hair.

TESS

What does it even matter how long my hair is?

RACHELLE

If it doesn't matter then why not put it up? Or cut it short.

TESS

Like you? No thanks.

RACHELLE

All I'm saying is there's a lot of ways to get what you want in this world. It doesn't always have to be the hard way.

Rachelle and Tess notice Nathan watching them.

RACHELLE (CONT'D)

What are you smiling at?

TESS

What are you smiling at?

NATHAN

Just enjoying a normal, peaceful, family dinner.

RACHELLE

I know what you mean.

TESS

God. You're such weirdos. May I be excused?

INT. FISHER HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Efren walks to the front door, opens it. Tess stands outside.

EFREN

Hey. Your folks know you're here?

TESS
No way. They'd freak.

Tess takes Efren's hand. He leads her down the hallway.

We linger on a FAMILY PHOTO of THREE SIBLINGS at Christmas. A younger Jerry stands next to his SISTER and his brother... CLAY. Oh shit, the masked gunman is Jerry's family!

EXT. MEXICAN JUNGLE - SANGRE DE CABRE COMPOUND - NIGHT

Dozens of workers busily cut COCAINE amongst make-shift buildings hidden in dense foliage. Clay approaches a WEAPONS CRATE and commands two ARMED MEN *in subtitled Spanish*:

CLAY
*Get this ready for transport.
Everything's going out once the
boss arrives.*

EXT. JUNGLE JUST OUTSIDE COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Another group of ARMED MEN watch Clay from the foliage. They consult a DETAILED SATELLITE PRINTOUT OF THE COMPOUND. The word **KESTREL** is printed in the corner.

EXT. SANGRE DE CABRE COMPOUND - BACK WITH CLAY - CONTINUOUS

RAT-A-TAT-TAT! Machine gun fire opens up as the rival cartel attacks the compound! Clay and his men scramble, RETURNING FIRE at the enemy that surrounds them in the jungle.

EXT./INT. ACADEMY BUS - SCHOOL BUS DEPOT - NIGHT

Mrs. Fox, FLASHLIGHT in hand, approaches the BUS THE CLASS TOOK TO MEXICO. She opens the door and climbs aboard.

She examines the interior including the dash with the hula girl. Then she notices a PINPRICK OF LIGHT near the driver's footwell. She crouches to get a better look at -- A BULLET HOLE.

She touches the bullet hole. What the hell is going on here?

INT. FISHER HOUSE - EFREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON TESS' FACE, her eyes closed as a pair of hands runs through her hair.

EFREN (O.S.)

It's done.

TESS

Mirror.

Efren hands Tess a mirror. REVEAL Tess now has a "Johnny Cash pompadour" just like the kids they met in Mexico.

EFREN

What do you think?

TESS

It's awesome. She's going to hate it.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - VARIOUS - NIGHT

Nathan, in sweatpants and t-shirt, shuts off the lights in the kitchen -- and the living room -- and the hallway.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Nathan nears the stairs by the door when -- KNOCK-KNOCK! He looks outside through the curtained window, curses under his breath, and opens the door to reveal Jerry.

NATHAN

Jerry, go home. If Rachelle sees you here...

JERRY

I came for the mea culpa. It's not good for people to have bad blood. Trust me, I know from experience.

NATHAN

I bet you do.

JERRY

First things first. Even if they'd taken our kids, they weren't in danger of getting hurt. Killing American kids is bad for business if you know what I mean.

NATHAN

Funny thing, this isn't making me feel any better.

JERRY

Look, man, all I can say is I'm real sorry how things worked out. I've had people I care about turn into enemies. But I'd rather make you my friend.

NATHAN

You don't have to worry, Jerry. Rachelle and I aren't saying shit to the cops --

JERRY

I'm serious, man. I'm not here about that. My line of work is a bit, lonely. It's hard to find trustworthy guys I like being around. Guys like you.

Nathan hears MOVEMENT UPSTAIRS -- puts his finger to his lips -- waits until he's sure Rachelle's still in bed.

NATHAN

If I say "apology accepted" can we just forget everything and go on living our separate lives?

JERRY

Well, that might be hard. The cartel was so happy with our teamwork, they want a little more.

NATHAN

We already did what they wanted.

JERRY

That was just to get over our screw up. Now they want us to make up the money they lost on the deal.

Nathan is dumb-struck. He thought this was all over.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I realize this is a lot. But you don't need to answer right now. Think it over and tell me at the housewarming.

NATHAN

Housewarming?

JERRY

We got the place! Yasmin was over the moon.

Jerry hands Nathan the HOUSEWARMING INVITATION CARD.

JERRY (CONT'D)

It says R.S.V.P. but you don't need
to bother. See you on Saturday.

Jerry winks and exits, leaving Nathan behind, stunned.

INT. MAULTIER HOUSE - VARIOUS - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nathan walks through the dark hallway -- living room --
kitchen -- all the way to the back door.

INT. BACK SHED - NATHAN'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Nathan pulls open a desk drawer. He rummages through it and
pulls out an object wrapped in paper, which we see is his
finished logo for "Fisher Heating & Cooling".

He unwraps it to reveal A SINGLE STACK OF CASH HE KEPT. He
feels the weight of the cash in his hand...

EXT. MAULTIER HOUSE - BACK YARD - NIGHT

PULL BACK from the home office as Nathan sits alone inside. A
moment. And then the motion sensor lights click off, plunging
everything into darkness.

END OF PILOT