

Saint Vincent

by

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EXT. BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD - CIRCA EARLY '60'S - NIGHT

Moving down a row of brownstone storefronts: pizzeria, shoe store, newsstand, appliance repair, etc.

VINCENT (V.O.)
For most people, life...is work.

Tired-looking shop keepers turn off neon signs and pull security gates tight.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
That's why it's important to find your calling. Ya hate feet? Better not sell shoes.

But on the corner, the night is still young. For this is a union hall - LOCAL 186. Out front, wiseguys in silk suits laugh, smoke and generally enjoy themselves.

From the doorway comes A SHARP-DRESSED MOBSTER -- good-looking, supremely confident, a spring in his step.

The wiseguys invite him to stick around. He begs off.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
I found my trade in the army.

We follow the mobster as he heads towards A PARKING LOT across the street -- a sea of fins and chrome.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Some might call it a talent.

IN THE PARKING LOT

The mobster, now humming "FLY ME TO THE MOON", pulls out his keys and opens the door to A BIG RED THUNDERBIRD.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Others might call it a gift.

The mobster slides in and starts her up.

KA-BOOOOM! A THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION BLOWS THE T-BIRD SKYHIGH!

As all the wise guys come running and shouting, we pull back and away to A ROOFTOP across the street, where we discover

A LONE FIGURE

silhouetted against the flames and smoke now billowing from the burning wreckage below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After a moment, the figure slowly turns and lights up a cigarette.

Meet VINCENT FRANCIS DE PALMA -- an able-looking man with intelligent eyes.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
And to have a gift, and not use
it...well, that's a sin.

He moves off.

CUT TO:

A COMPLICATED INSTRUMENT PANEL FULL OF WIRING AND WIDGETS

In moves A GLOVED HAND holding a pair of wire-snippers. A careful cut here. A precise snip there. And it's done.

VINCENT (V.O.)(CONT'D)
I believe an important part of a happy
working life is job satisfaction.

Vincent drops the snippers into a small toolbox, slips out of his coveralls to reveal a business suit underneath.

He pulls out a pair of thick, horn-rimmed glasses and puts them on.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And for me, that means a nice challenge
every now and then.

INT. HIGH-RISE APT. BLDG - STAIRWELL - DAY

Vincent, in his business-man disguise, hustles up the stairs, huffing and puffing.

INT. STAIRWELL LANDING - A SHORT TIME LATER

Vincent arrives at the 20TH FLOOR stairwell landing.

He catches his breath, checks his watch, then relaxes.

But only for a moment.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vincent emerges from the stairwell and rounds a corner where he sees A BALD, NERVOUS-LOOKING MAN waiting for the elevator.

The bald man looks over at Vincent, who nods back as he strolls along.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Assuming no one this odd-looking could be a threat, the bald man turns back to face the elevator doors.

ANGLE ON VINCENT

He just strolls along leisurely, humming and smiling.

When he gets within a dozen feet of the bald man, the elevator doors OPEN.

The bald man begins to step in, then suddenly stops --

BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING THERE.

The bald man peers down into the DARK, EMPTY SHAFT...

...as Vincent comes up quietly behind him.

Suddenly, the bald man gasps, pitches forward into the shaft... and is gone.

A muffled cry echoes up from the empty shaft as Vincent continues down the hall.

VINCENT (V.O.)

At the end of the day, there's nothing better than looking back on a job well done.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - DAY

CRACK! A Yankee batter smacks one to deep center, bringing the crowd to its feet.

It's going...going...gone! And the crowd goes wild!

Among the screaming fans, we find Vincent, in sunglasses, smiling and trading affirmations with those around him.

VINCENT (V.O.)

To be at the top of your game. That's the goal, I think. Guys work their whole lives just to get to that place. And maybe they only stay there for a few seasons. But it's those guys who can clock out, peaceful, knowing they got there...if only for a little while.

EXT. STADIUM - CONCOURSE - LATER

Fans are filing out, happy and satisfied. In the crowd we find Vincent, reading a program as he walks along.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT (V.O.)

It takes a lot, though. Discipline.
Sacrifice. Ya gotta be able to ignore the
distractions of everyday life.

AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE WOMAN catches Vincent's eye. He acknowledges her for the briefest moment, then goes back to his program.

Behind him, a group of teenage boys nudge each other as they ogle her.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sometimes that means ya gotta be hard. Ya
gotta turn your back on things.

Suddenly, Vincent stops -- he hears something.

With practiced expertise, he scans the area and finds

A LITTLE BOY

standing alone in an alcove, obviously lost and crying.

No one in the crowd gives the boy a second glance.

Vincent hesitates for a moment, looks around and spies A COP up ahead.

Satisfied the situation will be handled, Vincent moves on.

Suddenly, a commotion breaks out nearby -- a brawl between two drunks.

The cop heads off to break it up.

Vincent turns his attention back to the boy, still crying, still pitiful.

Vincent can't be concerned with this. It's not his problem. He moves on.

But after a dozen or so steps, he reluctantly slows down.

Then, against his better judgement, he stops.

CUT TO:

THE LITTLE BOY'S FACE

He's no longer crying. His eyes are alert, eager.

He seems to be floating just above the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As we pull back, we see why -- he's sitting atop Vincent's shoulders, scanning the sea of flowing people.

VINCENT
(to the boy)
How ya doin?

LITTLE BOY
Don't see 'em.
(suddenly points)
WAIT! THERE SHE IS! MOMMA! MOMMA!

VINCENT
Where? Where?

LITTLE BOY
Over there! Go! Go!

The boy starts rocking and kicking, urging Vincent on like a jockey astride his horse.

Now a young woman comes running up.

YOUNG WOMAN
Tommy! Tommy!

Vincent moves toward the woman, a pretty young thing in a summer dress.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh thank god! Thank god!
(to Vincent)
Thank you, mister.

Vincent nods as she reaches up and pulls the boy to her.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
(to the boy)
Where did you go? Don't ever go off like that again! Are you alright?

LITTLE BOY
Aw, everything's ducky, ma.
(hooks his thumb up at Vincent)
This guy gave me a ride-

The boy turns back towards Vincent -- only Vincent is gone.

His mother looks around, searching the dense crowd.

No sign of him. A clean getaway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT (V.O.)
Distractions. Sometimes they can be
really hard to avoid.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Vincent walks up to a local newsstand, buys the evening
edition of the paper and walks off.

VINCENT (V.O.)
I'm lucky. I never had to punch a clock.
I've worked out an arrangement.

WITH VINCENT

As he walks, he scans the "PLUMBERS" section of the want ads
and finds

EXPERIENCED PLUMBER NEEDED IMMEDIATELY!

CALL MU-2387 ASK FOR MR. BELLS

The "immediately" part gets Vincent's attention.

He drops the newspaper in the nearest trash can and heads off
as church bells chime in the distance.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPTY LOT - NIGHT

Vincent walks across the deserted area strewn with trash.

Broken glass crunches under his feet as a few tough-looking
teenagers regard Vincent with a menacing stare.

Vincent ignores them as he walks up to the side entrance of
an old, crumbling building; the sign over the door reads
SAINT AMELIA'S CATHOLIC CHURCH.

INT. SAINT AMELIA'S - CONTINUOUS

It's quiet inside this old cathedral. Two dozen or so people,
mostly old women, are spread out among the expanse of empty
pews. All are deep in prayer.

Vincent walks up a side aisle and finds A LARGE, FEARSOME-
LOOKING MAN seated off by himself in the back.

He walks up to the pew directly in front of this man,
genuflects, eases in and kneels down.

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CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON VINCENT

As he settles down to pray, he carefully reaches under his seat and finds A SMALL MANILA ENVELOPE taped to the underside.

He quietly removes it, slips it into his jacket, "prays" a few more moments, then rises up and heads off.

Throughout this entire episode, neither man so much glances at the other.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

as they are pulled from the envelope.

The headline of the first clipping reads:

BANKER KNOX LINKED TO MOB RACKETS

The story features a picture of AN OLDER, DISTINGUISHED-LOOKING MAN WITH THREE BURLY BODYGUARDS.

INT. BUS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Vincent sits in the back of a half-empty bus.

With a small, lethal-looking knife, he slits open another envelope, revealing PACKETS OF HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS...and another CLIPPING. The headline reads:

KNOX TO ANSWER GRAND JURY NEXT WEEK

In the body copy, A HEARING DATE is circled in red.

Vincent reaches up and pulls the courtesy line. The bell rings.

INT. YMCA - PAY PHONE - LATER

Vincent talks while men stream in and out of the locker room behind him. The sounds of a basketball game echo in the b.g.

VINCENT

Mr. Bells? This is Mr. Sloane from Yonkers. I read your ad.

(pause)

Yes, it's a job I can handle. But the timing is a factor.

(pause)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I'll have to charge time and a half, plus expenses. I'm thinking fifty-five dollars. Yep. Well, I can't do it for any less.

(pause)

Good. I'm glad you understand. Yes, the usual arrangements. Fine. Good-bye.

He hangs up.

INT. LOBBY - FANCY APT. BLDG. - DAY

We are looking past the concierge desk attendant, past the elevator doors...to the FIRE EXIT DOORWAY.

The door OPENS and out come THREE BURLY FBI AGENTS. They make a quick check of the vicinity, then motion for someone to follow...and out comes KNOX THE BANKER, looking mildly concerned but still distinguished as ever.

The agents surround Knox as they all hustle towards the back exit.

The coast is clear except for an OLD WOMAN in black lace, her face hidden by a veil. She totters along with her walker.

The agents spot her, size her up, then ignore her.

As they pass her, she loses her footing and keels over.

NOW EVERYTHING GOES INTO SLOW MOTION

The youngest of the agents slows and turns to look at the old woman, now sprawled on the floor. As he does, the senior agent barks at him.

SENIOR AGENT

Keep moving!

As the younger agent turns his attention back to the job at hand, the old woman pulls out a SMALL, SILENCED SUBMACHINE GUN and starts blasting away.

The youngest agent goes down as the other two shove Knox to the floor and reach for their guns.

But the old woman, whom we now recognize as VINCENT, quickly obliterates them, leaving Knox to scurry for cover behind a small antique bench.

Vincent rises and moves in to finish the job.

As he gets closer to the cowering Knox, however, he hears the THUD OF FOOTSTEPS rushing up behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent turns to face his attacker -- it's the CONCIERGE ATTENDANT, brandishing a government-issue shotgun.

Before Vincent can react, the attendant fires -- KA-BOOM!

Vincent takes the blast square in the chest and is blown off his feet -- his wig and gun go flying.

WITH VINCENT

As he lands, hard and bloody.

The concierge looms over him, pointing the shotgun right in his face.

With a sour look on his face, Vincent glances up at the concierge.

VINCENT
(annoyed)
Well, what's next, genius?

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

Vincent, with the same sour look on his face, sitting in a cozy overstuffed chair, puffing on a cigar as he examines a carefully hand-drawn SCHEMATIC of the scene we just witnessed: angles of fire, various escape routes, etc.

He takes a few puffs, ignites the paper with the lit end of the cigar and drops it into a small metal trash can at his feet.

He settles back into his chair, thinking. Behind him is a bookcase overflowing with books.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - DAY

A very well-to-do neighborhood.

Down the street comes a florist delivery man, carrying huge bouquets of roses.

As he gets closer, we see it's VINCENT, who uses the bouquets to obscure his face from the PLAINCLOTHES AGENTS seated in a car across the street.

Vincent pretends to check addresses against a receipt as he cases a particularly elegant townhouse.

He spots MORE AGENTS on a roof across from the townhouse.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT (V.O.)
 Feds round the clock.
 (beat)
 Feds. All comin' outta college now. Can't
 fool 'em. Can't bribe 'em.

Vincent continues briskly up the street.

WITH VINCENT

Now about a block away, he slows his pace. He passes a few older buildings which are in the process of being demolished. A wrecking ball hangs from a crane as jackhammers rumble in the background.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Fifty-five grand. Shoulda asked for more.
 (beat)
 Shoulda said no. A week ain't enough
 time. Why do I always do this to myself?

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Vincent eats a TV dinner as he watches a pro wrestling bout on a black-and-white TV.

VINCENT (V.O.)
 Six Feds on the street. Which means at
 least that many inside. Can't take him
 from the roof. Can't wire the car. Can't
 poison the sonofabitch.
 (beat)
 There's gotta be a way.

Vincent looks at a framed message on the wall. It reads:

TRADITION IS THE ENEMY OF PROGRESS

He turns back to the TV, where a large masked wrestler body slams his opponent to the mat, then climbs up and stands atop the corner top ropes, balancing as he prepares to hurl himself down on his semi-conscious opponent.

Vincent begins to watch with more interest as the masked wrestler jumps off the ropes and pancakes his unfortunate opponent.

Something clicks inside Vincent's head. He smiles.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - DAWN

It's quiet. Peaceful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We are looking at the particularly elegant townhouse Vincent cased previously. A pair of gray sedans are parked out front, both filled with alert agents.

We hear muffled walkie-talkie chatter. The driver of the lead sedan starts his car. The other driver does the same.

Now we begin to pull back and away as a BLACK LINCOLN CONTINENTAL slowly emerges from the side driveway of the townhouse.

We catch a very quick glimpse of what appears to be Knox seated in the back, flanked by agents on either side.

We continue to rise above the scene as the lead sedan pulls out, the Lincoln falls in behind it and the other sedan brings up the rear.

We glide down the street, tracking the cars as they head down the block towards the corner.

We pass through the construction site as we continue following the cars.

And now we find VINCENT, seated in the operator's compartment of A LARGE CRANE.

As he calmly adjusts the controls, the crane slowly begins to turn -- and an ENORMOUS WRECKING BALL comes into view as it swings out, high over the street.

Vincent carefully moves the ball into position over the intersection, directly above the path of the oncoming motorcade.

VINCENT (V.O.)
Bottom of the ninth. Two outs.

Vincent grabs a small remote control device and presses a button.

At the intersection, the traffic light goes YELLOW.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
De Palma steps up to the plate.

The motorcade slows down.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Last couple of innings been kinda tough
for Vinnie.

He presses the remote button again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The traffic light goes RED.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But he's not worried.

He smiles as the motorcade stops.

Above the motorcade, THE WRECKING BALL now hangs directly over the Lincoln and its unsuspecting occupants.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
No, he's at the top of his game.

His hand moves to a LEVER.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's the windup.

He waits for a few moments, watching the motorcade just sit there.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And here's the pitch.

Convulsively, he slams the lever forward.

Chains rattle and clack as the wrecking ball releases and plunges down toward the Lincoln.

KA-B000000000M!

The ball smashes the Lincoln flat, the thunderous impact rattling everything in sight.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Holy Toledo, that one is outta here,
folks! De Palma has done it again!

The agents in the lead and rear sedans jump out and rush to the demolished Lincoln. A few are clearly freaked out.

One of the agents, A TOUGH-LOOKING GUY WITH A CREWCUT, looks off toward the crane --

-- where the operator's compartment is now EMPTY.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And the Yankees win the pennant.

INT. LITTLE ITALY - MARIO'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Wiseguys stream into this popular mob hangout as A NEWSPAPER TRUCK pulls up and double parks outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WITH THE TRUCK DRIVER

We follow him as he grabs a big stack of late edition newspapers off the passenger seat, hops out and hustles toward the restaurant.

Before he even gets in the door, wise guys are swiping papers left and right.

Now we catch a glimpse of the banner headline on the front page. It reads:

GOVT. WITNESS ASSASSINATED, UNDERWORLD SUSPECTED

We stay with the driver as he makes his way through the crowded restaurant, which is abuzz with comments like "beautiful"... "fuckin' genius"... "a work of art, like dat thing Michaelangelo did on the ceiling"... "the rat bastard had it coming"... "it was outta Chicago, Genovese's boys"... "I hear those guys got squished flatter than Angela Tucci's tits"... "...whatta thing, something to tell the grandkids"...

The driver drops off what's left of his stack with the bartender and we move past him, heading to a small, out-of-the-way table sandwiched between the kitchen door and the cigarette machine.

And there, quietly and inconspicuously soaking it all up, is Vincent, enjoying a plate of clams and a bottle of Chianti.

VINCENT (V.O.)

In my line of work, you don't go looking for pats on the back. But sometimes, it's nice to know your work is appreciated.

Nearby, a bunch of mobsters kid around with a fat waiter, joking that they'd like to drop *him* on their enemies.

Vincent smiles and refills his glass.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ya gotta be careful, though. Pride...
...pride can trip ya up. It ain't a venal sin for nothing.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH - FOUNTAINBLEU HOTEL - DAY

Vincent, dressed as a tourist, gets out of a cab out front.

INT. PRIVATE CASINO - LATER

Vincent, now dressed to the nines, walks into

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE AMERICAN VERSION OF MONTE CARLO

High rollers dropping thousand dollar chips, beautiful ladies dripping diamonds.

And Vincent, doing his best to keep up as a beautiful young lady sidles up next to him.

INT. SHOWROOM - LATER

Vincent and his new lady friend enjoy the stage show and a bottle of champagne.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

It's dark. Quiet. We find a trail of clothes on the floor.

An empty bottle of Dom Perignon on the side table.

The young lady asleep on the bed.

And Vincent, a cigarette dangling from his lips, a towel around his waist, a lonely silhouette against the window.

He stares out at the lights of Miami Beach.

VINCENT (V.O.)
...top of my game.

INT. SAME - PRE-DAWN

Vincent, now dressed, holds a small box that contains an elegant diamond pendant.

He places it on the nightstand next to the bed, takes one last look at the sleeping girl, then grabs his suitcase and leaves.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The desk clerk makes pleasant small talk as he takes Vincent's key and hands him his bill.

Then the clerk remembers something, reaches back, retrieves a note from a mail slot and hands it to Vincent.

VINCENT
(taking the message)
Did you see who left this message?

CLERK
No sir, it was here when I came on. Would you like me to see if I could find out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent waves off his offer, signs the bill and moves off.

WITH VINCENT

He unfolds the message as he walks towards the front doors.
It reads:

PIER 24 - SNACK BAR - 8 AM

In lieu of a signature is A CRUDELY DRAWN SMILE.

Vincent pulls out a lighter, lights the message, then drops it in the nearest ashtray where it burns rather quickly.

VINCENT (V.O.)
Frankie Smiles. AKA Frankie the icepick.

EXT. SOUTH MIAMI WATERFRONT - MORNING

A storm is rolling in over the aging tuna boats and rusty freighters.

Vincent drives up in a non-descript Buick.

VINCENT (V.O.)
Whatever Frankie wants, it can't be good.
Frankie only knows two things. Scaring
people to death...and killing people to
death. Usually in that order.

He pops open the glove compartment and pulls out a small
HANDGUN.

EXT. SNACK BAR - CONTINUOUS

He slowly approaches, scanning the surrounding area.

The wooden boards creak beneath his feet.

He finds a vantage point where he feels safe..and waits.

After a few moments-

DEEP MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Down here.

Vincent looks around.

DEEP MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Go behind and take the stairs down.

He realizes the voice is coming from underneath the pier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pulls out his gun and holds it down by his side.

AT THE STAIRS

Vincent stands at the top and looks down. It's dark. The water sloshes and echoes.

VINCENT

Frankie, why didn't ya come see me at the hotel? We coulda seen a show.

A long, ominous pause.

DEEP MALE VOICE

Number one button.

(beat)

You've made me wait before. But not this time.

Now, for the first time, we see apprehension in Vincent's eyes.

Cautiously, he heads down the stairs.

EXT. BENEATH THE PIER - CONTINUOUS

Vincent reaches the bottom of the stairs, stops and looks around. He keeps his gun at the ready, but still out of view.

Then, from a dark corner, a large, hulking form emerges.

As it looms into view, we recognize this thuggish shape as the fearsome-looking man from the church.

This is FRANKIE SMILES. A walking sledgehammer.

Not seeing anyone else, Vincent calmly slips his gun back into his waistband.

VINCENT

Hello, Frankie.

Icy silence as Frankie just stares at Vincent.

Finally, he lights a cigarette.

FRANKIE

He's alive.

VINCENT

Who?

Frankie takes a long drag and slowly exhales.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKIE
Who do you think?

VINCENT
(can't believe it)
No.

Another pause. Another long drag. The smoke fills the small space between them.

FRANKIE
He was in the trunk.

At first, Vincent doesn't understand. Then, all at once, he does.

VINCENT
Damn it.
(beat)
Where does that put us?

FRANKIE
Us?
(beat)
Where does that put *you?*

VINCENT
(pressing on)
Will he make it? Can he still testify?

FRANKIE
He'll live. He's got a dozen federal marshalls guarding him at Bellvue. They might settle for a deposition. For now.
(beat)
But he's all they got. And the grand jury will be waiting for him as soon as they wheel him out.

VINCENT
So...what's the next move?

FRANKIE
I'll let you guess.

VINCENT
(beat)
They'll be looking for another hit.

FRANKIE
Yeah.
(takes another drag)
Dazzle us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Frankie drops his cigarette, slowly grinds it out under his heel, then lumbers off.

CUT TO:

A VOTIVE CANDLE BEING LIT

Then another. And another.

INT. SAINT AMELIA'S - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

An old woman in tattered black lace (just like Vincent in Knox's lobby) blows out her long wooden match, then carefully places some coins in a small repository box in front of the bank of flickering votive candles.

Now she lowers her veil, kneels and prays.

Behind her we find Vincent, sitting alone, thinking.

VINCENT (V.O.)

The sonofabitch was in the trunk. And if I missed again, I'd end up there, too.

Vincent pulls out a cigarette and nervously plays with it.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The hospital would be a Fed convention. And I got no contacts inside. Plus, they'd probably move him as soon as they could.

CUT TO:

Vincent wandering around the cavernous church, gazing at various things: the crucifix behind the altar, the stations of the cross, a shrine to the blessed virgin.

The church bells begin to toll. He turns to leave.

On his way out the front doors, however, something catches his eye: A CHURCH BULLETIN

Below a call for donations for a proposed youth center, we focus on AN ANNOUNCEMENT regarding the annointment of the sick.

Vincent stops and investigates. The announcement identifies the parish PRIESTS performing the sacrament, the various TIMES they'll be visiting local hospitals, etc.

CUT TO:

A HAND STUFFING DOLLAR BILLS INTO THE POOR BOX

Vincent hustles out of the church and into the darkness.

EXT. BELLVUE HOSPITAL - EVENING

Security is tight. Police cars are parked outside. Plainclothes detectives patrol all entrances, stopping and questioning all who enter.

A carload of Feds pulls up. They get out and head inside.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

We are behind the plainclothes detectives guarding the front door, looking out into the street -- where we see a dark figure approaching.

As the figure gets closer, we see that it's A CATHOLIC PRIEST. He wears a hat with the brim pulled low and carries a small, weathered briefcase.

SENIOR DETECTIVE
(calls out to the priest)
May we see some identification?

The priest looks up -- it's VINCENT.

VINCENT
Is there a problem?

SENIOR DETECTIVE
Just a precaution.

VINCENT
Oh, I see.

Vincent obliges and produces a Parish business card.

SENIOR DETECTIVE
(examining it)
Saint Amelia's? That's Staten Island.
What's your business here?

VINCENT
I'm visiting one of my parishioners. He was transferred here for special treatment.

SENIOR DETECTIVE
His name?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT
Herbie Steinberg.

This strikes the senior detective as odd.

Another detective, a younger, eager-to-please type, steps up behind the senior detective.

EAGER DETECTIVE
Ya want me to check the name, Sol? Only
take a minute.

The senior detective cuts him off with a curt gesture.

SENIOR DETECTIVE
(to Vincent)
You're telling me a guy named Steinberg
goes to Saint Amelia's?

VINCENT
Well, no.
(chuckles)
But what a feather in my cap if he did,
huh?

The senior detective is not amused.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Actually, Herbie's an old friend from the
neighborhood. The only fella in all of
Richmond who ever beat me at chess.
(low)
He just found out he has the cancer.
Probably won't last the year.

SENIOR DETECTIVE
(still suspicious)
What's in the briefcase?

Vincent stiffens.

VINCENT
Oh. Well, I...
(leans in close to the senior
detective)
Can I trust you?

Still skeptical, the senior detective waits expectantly.

Vincent opens the briefcase just enough to reveal A BAG
STUFFED WITH JEWISH PASTRIES AND A CHESS BOARD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Herbie said they have him on a strict diet. But I thought, well, you only live once.

(beat)

And he loves his rugulach, ya know?

The senior detective smiles.

SENIOR DETECTIVE

(steps aside)

Go with God, Father.

VINCENT

Shalom Alechiem.

And nodding to the other detectives, Vincent enters the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vincent heads towards a MAIN DIRECTORY on the wall.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Flatfoot morons. The sappier the story, the easier they swallow it. Now the Feds, they're something else. You could be Jesus Christ come down off the cross...your story don't check out, you're gone. *End of story.*

AT THE DIRECTORY

Vincent finds POST-OPERATIVE/RECOVERY - FIFTH FLOOR

He notes specific wards and numbers.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now that I was inside, the plan was simple: find out where he was...and where he was going. And that's all.

He heads off down the hall.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Vincent quietly climbs the stairs.

VINCENT (V.O.)

I'd greased four Feds already. They'd be looking for another hit. And they'd be ready.

INT. FIFTH FLOOR - POST OPERATIVE WARD - CONTINUOUS

Vincent looks around a bit and finds what he's looking for: THREE FEDERAL AGENTS guarding a door at the far end of the hall.

He then heads directly towards the nurses' station and makes mental notes of faces, nametags, the work schedule on the wall, anything pertaining to business on this floor.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Which exact room he's in. What kinda shape he's in. Medication. Allergies. When they were carting him off. Everything I needed to know...these broads knew it. And then some. All I'd had to do was stick around, wait till they took their break, follow 'em to the cafeteria and listen. They'd babble it all away like magpies.

As Vincent turns to leave, he notices an agent he didn't see before, standing in a glass-walled office behind the nurses' station.

The agent is staring at Vincent. He raises a walkie-talkie to his mouth, says something quickly, then heads for the office door.

Cool as a cucumber, Vincent makes a detour towards the elevator, which mercifully opens as he approaches.

The agent makes his way through the crowded nurses' station and out into the hallway.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A professional never panics.

A large, sad-looking Puerto Rican family files out as Vincent steps aside. The women are crying loudly. They all nod respectfully as they pass.

The agent heads toward the elevator.

AGENT

(to Vincent)

Excuse me, sir? Father?

Vincent pretends not to hear him as he edges his way past the exiting family members and towards the open elevator door.

The agent stops, his path now blocked by the family, and politely waits for them to move out of the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Meanwhile, Vincent slips into the elevator, quickly presses a button and stands quietly by as the elevator doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

After a moment, Vincent lets himself relax.

Then-

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

We've been looking all over for you.

Vincent turns and discovers another federal agent right behind him -- THE TOUGH-LOOKING GUY WITH THE CREWCUT.

CREWCUT AGENT

You've been busy.

Vincent is caught. But he won't go easy. His hands ball into fists.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

Yeah, the sisters told us you'd already made your rounds.

VINCENT

(not missing a beat)

They did, did they? Well, I had a few more people to see.

(points to the collar)

It's hard to miss. Nobody wants to go under the knife without a blessing.

CREWCUT AGENT

I'll bet.

(moves closer)

What about confessions? You do take confession, right?

VINCENT

Of course. That's the best part of the job. Especially when the fleet's in.

The agent smiles. Vincent, relieved, smiles back.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The crewcut agent walks with Vincent

CREWCUT AGENT

Saint Amelia's, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

Yes.

CREWCUT AGENT

My partner's from there.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Never fails.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Really?

CREWCUT AGENT

Yeah, you must know his mother. Mary Tarr.

VINCENT

(curious)

Mary Tarr.

CREWCUT AGENT

Yeah, little sawed-off Irish broad, always wears black to mass, even though her old man's been dead for fifteen years. She goes in and prays everyday. Sometimes twice.

VINCENT

Hmmmm...a small, old Irish woman who wears black and attends services everyday.

(to Crewcut)

Well *that* narrows it down.

Crewcut smiles curiously at Vincent.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(earnest)

Actually, I just rotated in from Yonkers. Only been in the parish three months.

CREWCUT AGENT

(brightening)'

Oh, Yonkers, huh? My girlfriend's family's from there.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Oh, this ain't happening.

CUT TO:

A LESS TRAVELED PART OF THE HOSPITAL

They round a corner and heads toward a set of double doors marked "County Welfare - Children's Ward".

Through the windows in the doors, they can see another agent, a homely fellow dressed as a doctor.

The homely agent sees them approach and unlocks the double doors.

CREWCUT AGENT

We really appreciate this, Father. I know you're busy.

VINCENT

No trouble at all. Happy to do it, officer...?

Crewcut whips out his wallet, flashes his FBI ID CARD.

Vincent nods, impressed.

INT. CHILDREN'S WARD - CONTINUOUS

Crewcut and Vincent head inside. It's mostly empty beds, except for a few sickly kids here and there. Most are asleep.

HOMELY AGENT

(to crewcut)

We gotta do this now. The DA's coming back in a hour. Maybe less.

CREWCUT AGENT

Is everything set up?

Homely agent nods.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

Ya test it?

Oops. Homely heads off quickly.

Crewcut turns to Vincent.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

Father, when you take someone's confession, it stays just between you and him, right?

VINCENT

And God.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREWCUT AGENT

Yeah, but the thing I gotta know is...is there ever a situation where you would have to tell what you've heard?

VINCENT

Well, I've heard of cases where the police have questioned priests who have heard the confession of criminals and the like.

CREWCUT AGENT

And what's the policy on that sorta thing?

VINCENT

You mean, what is the official dogma of the Holy Roman Catholic Church...as it pertains to the priest/penitent privilege?

CREWCUT AGENT

(impatient)

Yes. Yes.

Vincent pauses for dramatic effect.

VINCENT

What is said between a priest and those who come to reconcile themselves with the almighty...is sacrosanct.

CREWCUT AGENT

(unsure)

Sancro...

VINCENT

We don't spill the beans.

Relieved, Crewcut leads Vincent to the far end of the ward, towards another set of double doors marked "Special Care", where another agent dressed as a doctor stands guard.

CREWCUT AGENT

(quietly to the agent)

Is the-

The agent nods.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

(to Vincent)

Okay, he's in there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Crewcut brings Vincent close to the doors.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS

They observe someone lying on a bed, partially obscured by a privacy curtain.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

He's been through a lot. And he wants to get some stuff off his chest. Just let him talk as long as he wants to. Okay?

VINCENT

Sure.

CREWCUT AGENT

And what you hear, or may hear, never gets repeated, right?

VINCENT

Not in this lifetime.

INT. "SPECIAL CARE" ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crewcut leads Vincent into a large, private infirmary.

To the right, a single bed is partially hidden by a privacy curtain.

On the far wall, a portable metal storage locker has been pushed in front of the window.

Slowly and quietly, Crewcut leads Vincent to the bed.

As they move around the curtain, we see the person in the bed is KNOX, asleep.

His arm is in a cast and his face is bruised and bandaged up. An IV is hooked up to his relatively good arm.

VINCENT

What'd I'd tell ya about those Feds. Got everybody fooled, thinking the banker's upstairs. Including me.

Crewcut moves closer to Knox.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Well, scratch one banker.

(glances at the agents)

Might have to clip these fellas, too.

Well, I don't make the rules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crewcut turns back to Vincent.

CREWCUT AGENT

Can you stay a little while? Till he wakes up?

(moves towards Knox.)

Listen, I'll wake him up now.

VINCENT

(cuts him off)

No, no, please don't. I can just sit here with him till he's ready.

CREWCUT AGENT

Are you sure?

VINCENT

(leads Crewcut to the door)

I'll catch up on my reading. One of the Dominicans gave me a trashy novel. Lolita.

(as they reach the door)

I'll lend it to you.

CREWCUT AGENT

(smiles)

Thanks Father.

Vincent winks as he closes the door on Crewcut.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Now some might call this luck. Just plain dumb luck.

He turns and looks at Knox.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Maybe. But I go by what Winston Churchill says.

Vincent glides over to the bed.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Luck is simply what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

Vincent's trained eye spots A THIN WIRE running up a metal bedpost behind Knox's head.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I guess this is not a private audience.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Intrigued, he picks up his briefcase and heads into the bathroom next to Knox's bed.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vincent closes the door behind him and carefully places his briefcase atop the sink.

THE BRIEFCASE

Vincent opens it, quickly removes the bag and the chessboard, along with various holy items (vestments, oils, holy water, etc.) then he deftly extracts VARIOUS METAL COMPONENTS that have been hidden in secret compartments.

CUT TO:

AN ASSEMBLED GUN

Vincent attaches a silencer.

VINCENT (V.O.)

When I walked into this meathouse, I was hoping, at the very most, just to luck into some information. Anything.

Vincent flushes the toilet and looks at himself in the mirror.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now I'm about to grease this mook as easy as pissin' in the public pool. No one the wiser...and ya leave with a nice, warm feeling.

He places the gun in a small ankle holster.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Clean living, that's all there is to it.

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vincent moves back into the room.

He glances towards the windows in the door. The homely agent peers in.

Vincent pulls a chair up to the bed and sits.

He pulls the curtain to block homely's view.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WITH VINCENT AND KNOX

Vincent eyes the wire. It troubles him.

VINCENT (V.O.)

The mark of a true professional is the ability to improvise. Turn the situation to your advantage.

He finds some extra pillows on a shelf next to the bed.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There we go.

Then, he hears the sound of a bus pulling up outside.

WHEEESSSHHH go the airbrakes.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

listening in on earphones; he flinches at the sound of the airbrakes.

CUT BACK TO:

VINCENT

reacting to the same sound.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Perfect.

He spends a few moments trying out different ways to place the pillow over Knox's head, trying to find the optimum position.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The buses come every couple minutes. The next one pulls up, I time the shot with the airbrakes, and - *phfft!* Banking hours are over.

Satisfied, he sits down.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I call the two feds in, plug 'em and that's it. Home in time for dinner.

CUT TO:

VINCENT CHECKING HIS WATCH

From far off comes the sound of the bus approaching.

Vincent pulls his gun from the ankle holster.

He stands up, grabs the pillow and prepares to force it down on Knox's head.

The bus is getting closer.

Vincent brings the gun up -- calm, patient, confident.

Then, out of nowhere, comes a new sound -- a raspy, pitiful WHEEZING.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

listening in. He hears the wheezing.

CUT BACK TO:

VINCENT

as he realizes the wheezing is coming from inside the room.

The bus slows down, preparing to stop.

Meanwhile, more wheezing.

Vincent tries to scan the room through a space in the curtains.

Outside, the bus pulls to a stop.

Vincent snaps back to the job at hand. He aims the gun and moves the pillow into position, just inches over Knox's face.

Vincent listens for the brakes, then-

More wheezing, now followed by a PITIFUL MOAN.

Vincent quickly lowers his gun.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

as he reacts; he motions to Homely, urgent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREWCUT AGENT
(low)
Where's the nurse?

CUT BACK TO:

VINCENT

as the AIRBRAKES HISS.

The moment's gone. He's missed his chance.

Anger flashes through him, but only for a moment as he quickly holsters his gun, calmly puts the pillow back and coolly steps out from behind Knox's curtain.

He looks around and spots another curtain, over in the corner.

AT THE FAR CURTAIN

Vincent peers around its edge, where he finds A HUGE IRON LUNG MACHINE.

As he moves around it, he spots an angled mirror, which reveals THE FACE OF A SMALL BOY.

The boy's eyes are closed, but his face contorts with every tortured breath he takes.

Vincent just stares at this pitiful sight for a moment, then-

KNOX (O.S.)
Excuse me!

This outburst causes the little boy's eyes to flutter open.

Vincent ducks out immediately and moves towards

KNOX'S BED

where a nurse is administering an injection as Vincent approaches.

KNOX (CONT'D)
(to the nurse)
Your bedside manner is lacking in several crucial areas.
(notices Vincent and brightens, slightly)
Ah.

Crewcut enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CREWCUT AGENT
Knox, this is Father...

VINCENT
...Fontana, from St. Amelia's.

KNOX
(nodding)
How do you do, Father?

Vincent nods politely.

Crewcut signals to the nurse to leave. She does.

CREWCUT AGENT
Okay then, I'll leave you to it.
(pulls Vincent aside)
If he goes goofy, I'll be right outside.

Crewcut leaves and Vincent moves to Knox's bedside, finds a stool and sits.

Now comes an awkward silence as they regard one another; Knox is uncomfortable, avoiding direct eye contact.

Vincent, meanwhile, steals a few furtive glances behind him; the little boy presents a new complication.

KNOX
(finally)
Can I trouble you for a cigarette?

VINCENT
Hmmm? Oh...no, no I don't have any-

KNOX
No cigarettes? Next you'll be telling me
you don't have any liquor on your person.
(beat)
Are you sure you're a priest?

Vincent smiles, a patient, *priestly* smile.

VINCENT
I'm told you have a few things you'd like
to get off your chest.

KNOX
Is that what they told you?
(glances towards the door, then
back to Vincent)
Please bear with me. It has been some
time since I...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Knox trails off, embarrassed and uncomfortable.

VINCENT

Forget about the formalities. Just say what's on your mind.

This seems to encourage Knox.

KNOX

When I was coming out from under sedation, I had an image in my mind. It was the image of a man next to a horse. The man was wearing a uniform of some sort. And he was in a strange position, prone, on the ground...with his hand up in the air. I thought I must have dreamed it. I told the attending physician about it. He informed me that it is highly unlikely that a human being can dream while under anesthesia. However, he did add that hallucinations are not unheard of.

(he pauses, then)

I could really use a cigarette. Are you sure you don't-

VINCENT

Honest to God.

KNOX

(smiles, then continues)

The image was too vivid, too defined, to be a hallucination. So I began to concentrate on it. And it became clearer in my mind. Then I realized what it was. It was a painting. A painting I had seen at an auction. It must have been over a year ago. I remember the piece intrigued me, but I didn't connect with it. I didn't understand it. I *couldn't* understand it. Until now.

After a thoughtful moment, Knox abruptly changes the subject.

KNOX (CONT'D)

You're familiar with the story of Saul?

VINCENT

(after a moment)

King Saul?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

KNOX

No, the other one.

(he nods towards a bible on his
night stand)

It's fascinating reading. Saul persecuted the early Christians. From all accounts, he was a fairly unpleasant fellow. On his way to Damascus, a great light appeared to him, knocking him to the ground. He was blinded for three days. When he regained his sight, he had changed. He was filled with a new purpose. He even changed his name-

VINCENT

-to Paul.

KNOX

Yes.

Knox looks at Vincent, as if expecting him to now make sense of all this.

KNOX (CONT'D)

Saul- Paul... was the man in the painting. "The Epiphany of Saint Paul"...by Vermeer, I believe.

VINCENT

(as if he understands all this)

Ah, yes.

Knox is quiet for awhile. When he speaks again, he is subdued, humbled.

KNOX

I saw a light.

(pauses)

I was almost crushed to death. I was trapped, in darkness. The pain was excruciating. Then, a light filled my eyes. And I saw my life. Every moment.

(beat)

Every worthless moment.

He turns away, ashamed. This movement causes him considerable pain, and he cries out.

VINCENT

(reacting)

Can I-

Knox waves him off, endures the pain until he can talk again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Vincent watches, taking inventory of Knox's various injuries.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry you're in so much pain.

KNOX
(matter of fact)
Why? It's not your fault.

The irony of this flickers through Vincent's eyes.

KNOX (CONT'D)
I think I'd like to rest now. I'm sorry
to have troubled you.
(starts to drift off)
Perhaps, we could...tomorrow?

And with that, Knox closes his eyes.

Vincent glances down at his ankle, back up at the concealed wire near Knox's head, then he looks back at the other curtained-off bed.

He glances at his watch.

VINCENT (V.O.)
At least another thirty minutes.
(beat)
A professional always adapts. To any
situation.

Then, from far off, comes the sound of another large vehicle approaching.

Vincent is confused for a moment. Then it dawns on him.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Trash day.

Louder than the previous bus, the screechy, rattling rumble of the garbage truck gets closer and closer.

As Vincent reaches for the pillow on the shelf, Knox opens his eyes.

The garbage truck gets closer.

Vincent smiles at Knox as he reaches down for his gun.

Knox, embarrassed by his unguarded display of emotion, is about to say something when Vincent shakes his head and places his free hand on Knox's shoulder, as if to say "Don't be ashamed".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Now, as the rumble gets louder, Vincent readies his gun with his other hand.

Knox looks into Vincent's kind, compassionate eyes.

The truck gets closer and closer, the rumble echoing through the street below.

Vincent, still holding Knox's gaze, starts to bring the gun up when-

CREWCUT AGENT (O.C.)

Father?

Vincent expertly slips the gun behind Knox's pillow, then turns to face Crewcut, who peers around the edge of the curtain.

Knox closes his eyes, disappointed.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. The DA is here.

VINCENT

Of course.

(puts a hand on Knox's hand)

If we could just have a moment.

Crewcut gets the hint, and steps back from the curtain.

Immediately, Vincent grabs his gun with his free hand, holsters it, then he rises to leave -- but something stops him.

He looks down to see that Knox has GRIPPED HIS HAND.

Knox whispers something.

Vincent can't hear it. He draws closer to Knox.

KNOX

(whispers)

Dunhills. And Chivas...if you can.

VINCENT

(to Knox)

Sure.

Grateful, Knox closes his eyes.

Vincent's gaze moves back up to the WIRE; he follows it trail under the bedframe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

He looks under the bedframe, where he spots A SMALL RADIO TRANSCEIVER.

He hears the sound of the door, rises up quickly, just in time to see Crewcut enter.

CREWCUT AGENT
(impatient)
Father?

Vincent rises and Crewcut hustles him back towards

THE CHILDREN'S WARD

Through the window, Vincent sees the DISTRICT ATTORNEY, flanked by more detectives.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)
Sorry 'bout barging in on ya.
(nods towards the DA)
We get everything set up...then it all changes.

Vincent FOCUSES ON THE DA, watching him talk to the detectives.

VINCENT (V.O.)
This could be a problem.

Crewcut glances at the kids in the ward.

CREWCUT AGENT
(re: the kids)
You deal a lot with this kinda stuff?

VINCENT
Hmmm? Oh, yes. When I can. Not as much as the sisters, though.

CREWCUT AGENT
My partner reads to them. Comic books.
(shrugs)
I guess that's something.

But he doesn't really believe it.

He looks at Vincent; he needs something from this priest.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)
You want a cup of coffee?

CUT TO:

A PAPER CUP GETTING FILLED WITH STEAMING COFFEE

Crewcut grabs the cup from the coffee machine dispenser,
hands it to Vincent.

VINCENT

Thanks.

They begin walking down the hall together.

Vincent sips his coffee.

CREWCUT

How is it?

VINCENT

(matter-of-factly)

It's awful.

Crewcut laughs. Vincent smiles.

They turn a corner and pass a gurney with a body on it,
covered by a sheet.

The sight of death gives them both pause.

CREWCUT

A kid died last night.

Vincent looks at him.

CREWCUT (CONT'D)

Yeah, a little redhead. Had a hole in his
heart. They thought they fixed it.

(grunts)

They thought wrong. They just threw a
sheet over him and wheeled him out.

(nods back at the gurney)

Just like that.

VINCENT

(after a moment)

For those who suffer...the end is a
blessing.

CREWCUT

(flat)

Uh huh.

(pauses)

My partner's kinda taking it hard.

(beat)

Not me. You wanna know why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent looks at him expectantly.

CREWCUT (CONT'D)

'Cause that's beyond my control.

(explaining)

There are certain life and death situations that I have no say in. Then there are others in which I do. What happens to those kids...beyond my control. What happens to Knox...and his buddies, that's different.

(carefully)

How's the confession coming?

Vincent looks at Crewcut.

CREWCUT AGENT

I'm just asking because I think it would really help him. The confession part, I mean. Helping him to get it *all* off his chest.

(friendly)

How long ya been taking confessions?

VINCENT

Oh, must be going on, what? Fifteen years?

CREWCUT

Fifteen years.

(shakes his head)

Wow. People confess their sins to you, and you wave your hand and they walk out, clean as a whistle...no matter what they've done?

VINCENT

I absolve them of their sin and assign penance.

CREWCUT

Penance?

VINCENT

Prayer, mostly. Maybe a little scripture to read.

CREWCUT

Homework.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT

I counsel them to reflect on their transgressions...to help them understand *why* what they did is wrong...so they won't do it again.

CREWCUT

Uh huh.

(beat)

How many repeat offenders ya get?

(off Vincent's look)

How many guys come back with the same sins over and over?

VINCENT

No one's perfect. All I ask...all the Lord asks, is that you try.

CREWCUT

Uh huh.

(beat)

What about the guys with more than unclean thoughts? Lotta stuff falls off the backs of trucks in your neighborhood.

VINCENT

Ah. Well, if someone has broken the law, I urge them to go to the authorities.

They reach the elevator. Crewcut presses the button and turns to face Vincent.

CREWCUT

And do they?

A meaningful pause.

VINCENT

Not always.

CREWCUT

(snorts)

Not ever.

(takes a sip of coffee, regrets it)

There's a line, Father. And if you cross it, you're dirty. And nothing can make you clean again.

(lets that sink in, then continues)

Doesn't matter if you march in the Knights of Columbus parades, or how much you drop in the collection plate...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Crewcut lights up a cigarette.

CREWCUT (CONT'D)
 (lightening up)
 I'm sorry, Father, I don't mean to...
 you're the last person I should be
 lecturing.

VINCENT
 That's alright.
 (evenly)
 You're a moral man.

DING! The elevator doors open.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 (stepping into the elevator)
 I'll see you in the morning.

CREWCUT
 (nods, then thinks about it)
 If we're not here tomorrow, I just want
 you to know we appreciate you taking the
 time with us.
 (beat)
 Sorry about the coffee.

VINCENT
 No apology needed.
 (as the doors close)
 It's beyond your control.

EXT. BROWNSTONE ROOF - NIGHT

Vincent, dressed as a TV repairman, negotiates his way
 through a forest of TV and radio antennae.

VINCENT (V.O.)
 If they're not there tomorrow, I'm a dead
 man.

He finds an antennae near the roof's edge, puts his toolbox
 down and opens it: inside is A RADIO RECEIVER and a SMALL
 REEL-TO-REEL TAPE MACHINE.

He clips a wire from the receiver to one of the smaller radio
 antennae nearby, then puts on a pair of headphones.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The professional knows when to act...

He aims the radio antennae towards the adjacent building,
 which we see is the HOSPITAL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We push in towards the hospital, towards A SPECIFIC WINDOW.

We dissolve through the hospital window and into KNOX'S ROOM, where we glide underneath Knox's bed, until we find

THE SMALL RADIO TRANSMITTER

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and when to listen.

CUT TO:

VINCENT

adjusting the frequency on his radio receiver.

Through his earphones, he hears voices, slightly distorted.

CREWCUT AGENT (O.S./FILTER)
...I'm not hearing this.

KNOX (O.S./FILTER)
Agent Kinney, it's a very simple proposition.

CUT TO:

KNOX'S ROOM

We see Crewcut arguing with Knox.

CREWCUT AGENT
Listen-

KNOX
Nine-hundred, seventy-two thousand dollars.

CREWCUT AGENT
You need to pull yourself together, my friend.

KNOX
It all makes sense, don't you see? I have no use for it now.
(re: the kids)
But for them...

CREWCUT AGENT
Your good deed is to testify. In front of the grand jury. Then we talk about your extended vacation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KNOX

I'm a dead man, you idiot! I'll never make it to that courtroom alive. But I am willing to give you a complete deposition. Right here. Right now.

(beat)

But I want something from you.

(re: the kids)

For them.

CREWCUT AGENT

This is nuts.

KNOX

Just tell me you understand what I'm trying to do and I'll tell you where his money is! I tell where his books are! I'll tell you where the bodies are!

CREWCUT AGENT

Okay, enough of this bullshit. Three agents died protecting you. Without us, you'd be dead already. You came to us. You shystered this deal. You don't testify, and you're back at county. No protection. Nothing. So you better find some courage.

KNOX

Yes, I'm a coward, Agent Kinney. Anyone in my position would be. All I want to-

CREWCUT AGENT

Hey, asshole, look around you. Look at these kids. They're staring death in the face. No shyster's deal for them.

KNOX

You don't care anything for these children! Listen, I'll accept my fate, I'll testify, I'll admit to starting the great Chicago fire...but only if you give me your word that you'll take the money and-

CREWCUT AGENT

Goddamnit, enough! Enough! You're gonna testify. In court. End of story.

He storms out of the room, leaving Knox alone and frustrated.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vincent taking off his headphones, pondering what he's just heard.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

Vincent, now wearing thick, horn-rimmed glasses, steps up to the cashier, who also wears thick, horn-rimmed glasses.

VINCENT

A fifth of Chivas, a pack of Dunhills and
a pack of Lucky Strikes.

The cashier gets the stuff and bags it.

CASHIER

That'll do it for ya?

Vincent nods and pulls out some cash.

The cashier starts to ring it up as Vincent suddenly remembers something.

VINCENT

Actually, now that ya mention it...

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Vincent walks along, a paper bag under one arm.

In his other hand, he holds a comic book, which he reads as he hums quietly to himself.

Suddenly, he senses something.

He looks up -- and sees

FRANKIE SMILES

standing across the street, smoking a cigarette.

Vincent stops humming.

VINCENT (V.O.)

The eye...

EXT. BEHIND SAINT AMELIA'S - NIGHT

Frankie follows Vincent through the same ABANDONED LOT, where the same mean-looking teenagers smoke and curse.

VINCENT (V.O.)

The eye wants an audience.

EXT. SAINT AMELIA'S - SIDE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Vincent enters and heads for the far right side of the church.

He looks back at Frankie, who leans against a wall, under a particular station of the cross: the scourging of Christ by the Romans.

INT. CONFESSIONAL DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Vincent slowly walks up to a door marked "Penitent". Next to it is another door marked "Father-confessor".

Vincent hesitates a moment, then he carefully opens the "penitent" door and steps into the confessional. He closes the door behind him.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Vincent puts his bag down, then looks around the small, dark, enclosed space, which is barely illuminated by a tiny, dim bulb set into the ceiling.

There's a threadbare, padded kneeler, a small, sloped shelf above it, and a small rack next to the shelf that hold a number of small cards entitled "Your act of contrition". He picks one out, considers its usefulness, and pockets it.

He then brings his attention to the small window just above the shelf, which frames a GRATE with a delicate, ornate pattern.

Vincent can't see what's beyond the grate, as the view is blocked by a wooden panel.

A long moment passes as Vincent waits.

Then a scraping noise is heard as the panel behind the grate is slid aside, revealing

THE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN'S HEAD

Vincent then realizes he'll actually have to kneel down on the kneeler to speak to the person on the other side of the grate.

He eases himself down onto the kneeler and rests his arms on the small shelf.

Now comes a voice -- low, solemn, almost a whisper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN'S VOICE

I don't want you to talk. Just listen.

(pause)

I want you to know that I'm not angry. These things happen. No one's perfect. Not even you. So I'm not mad. I know you will fix the situation. I know you'll... atone. That's why I'm not concerned that you've been inside. Gotten close. Very close. And still it's not finished. But I'm not worried. I know you have your ways. But I gotta make you understand something. This thing...this thing is complicated. And if you should hear something, anything, in the course of your duties...you must let me know.

(pause)

I don't have to tell you...but I'll tell you anyway. You gotta finish it, Vincent. You understand? Whatever it takes.

The silhouette leans in close, right up to the grate.

Through the ornate pattern, A MAN'S EYE is visible.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I can forgive you once.

(beat)

Once.

The panel slams shut.

Vincent hears the adjacent door open and close, followed by the sound of footsteps walking away.

INT. CONFESSIONAL DOORS - CONTINUOUS

Vincent exits the confessional and starts to head quickly for the main doors -- until something catches his eye.

He slows his pace as he observes

A LARGE, ORNATE CASKET BEING CARRIED UP ONTO THE ALTAR

Transfixed by this, Vincent momentarily flashes on:

A SMALL, SIMPLE CASKET BEING PLACED UPON A SIMILAR ALTAR

Vincent turns his head away.

CUT TO:

An LP record placed carefully on a 50's-style record player.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

As Tony Bennett begins to sing "If I ruled the world", Vincent, carrying a fisherman's tackle box, walks in and sits down at the table, where the Chivas Regal and the Dunhills are already set out on the kitchen table.

NOW BEGINS A SERIES OF SHOTS

Pulling on rubber gloves

Taking various small bottles out of the tackle box

Carefully pouring a specific amount of whiskey into a glass beaker

Extracting liquid from a small bottle with an eye dropper

Consulting a well-worn notepad filled with handwritten notes

Dripping the liquid from the dropper into the beaker

Tapping out all the Dunhill cigarettes from the pack

Dripping more liquid onto the filtered end of each cigarette

Laying out all the doctored cigarettes on a paper towel

CUT TO:

Vincent tapping out a Lucky Strike and lighting it up.

He picks up the empty Chivas bottle, thinks a moment, then puts it down.

INT. BEDROOM CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Tony continues to sing as Vincent pulls down various boxes from the high shelf.

He places them on his bed and begins going through them.

It's all stuff he's used at one time or another: a small camera, brass knuckles, police badges, press pass, etc.

He finally finds what he's looking for: A SMALL SILVER FLASK.

As he puts the boxes back up on the high shelf, A CIGAR BOX falls to the floor, its contents spilling out.

He stops, frozen, like someone who's just dropped a priceless heirloom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After a moment, he slowly kneels down, his eyes roving over the lost treasure before him -- a shiny metal WHISTLE, DECODER RING, BASEBALL CARDS, smooth, shiny ROCKS, a partially-melted GREEN ARMY MAN FIGURE, all kinds of MARBLES, a MAGIC WAND and a pack of MAGIC CARDS.

As he picks up the wand, his eye is drawn to A SMALL SNAPSHOT, which he tenderly picks up before we have a chance to see it clearly.

INT. VINCENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vincent turns out the light and climbs into bed.

After a few moments, he turns the light back on.

He reaches over to his bedside table, and gently picks up the snapshot.

CUT TO:

POV FLASHBACK

A small boy runs up to us, laughing. We pick the boy up and hoist him over our head, spinning around with him. The boy squeals with delight.

CUT TO:

VINCENT ASLEEP IN THE DARK

Still clasping the photo as Tony softly finishes his song.

FADE TO BLACK.

IN THE DARKNESS

Silence.

Then, the quiet rustle of sheets...and muffled, troubled groans.

Now it's quiet again.

SUDDENLY, WE FLASH ON JARRING IMAGE:

A CAR screeching to a halt, A KITE mangled under its right front tire.

The sound of the SCREECHING TIRES becomes a SCREAM as we

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - PRE-DAWN

Vincent, nude, walks into the blue-gray light spilling in from the window.

IN THE SHOWER

He turns the "cold" knob.

He groans as the icy water cascades over him.

CUT TO:

VINCENT SHAVING IN THE MIRROR

He does it methodically, leaving hardly any shaving cream to wipe away afterwards.

Outside, a car screeches in the street.

Startled, Vincent flinches at the sound, nicking himself.

CUT TO:

Vincent adjusting his priest's collar.

He checks himself in a hallway mirror, gingerly touching the small cut on his face.

VINCENT (V.O.)
That sick kid can positive ID you.

He stops.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You don't make the rules.

CLOSE ON VINCENT'S FACE

He looks up as we hear the sound of a

DING!

WIDEN TO REVEAL VINCENT IN THE HOSPITAL ELEVATOR

The doors open, he steps out and heads down the corridor with purpose. He's carrying a small brown bag.

AT THE CHILDREN'S WARD

As Vincent approaches, the homely agent rises and motions to someone in the ward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Vincent reaches the door, Crewcut appears and opens it.

CREWCUT AGENT
(nodding towards Knox's room)
He's having some tests done.

Crewcut eyes the bag.

Vincent opens it, Crewcut looks inside and nods.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Crewcut leads Vincent towards the
DOORS OF THE CHILDREN'S WARD

Through the window in the door, HOMELY appears, flanked by two doctors.

The look on Homely's face is tense, concerned.

Crewcut reacts, walking faster.

CREWCUT AGENT
Dammit!

Vincent is lost for a moment, then it hits him.

VINCENT (V.O.)
(hopeful)
Did I catch a break? Did Knox clock out?

Masking his eager anticipation with solemn piety, Vincent enters

THE CHILDREN'S WARD

Inside, Vincent sees Crewcut conferring with Homely and the doctors.

After Crewcut gets some answers, Vincent sees him visibly relax.

Vincent approaches the group; Homely remains concerned as the doctors continue to confer with each other. One of the doctors looks at Vincent, and nods to the others.

Vincent now scans the ward itself and notices a few nurses clustered around a bed at the far end, where the curtain has been partially drawn aside, revealing THE IRON LUNG.

The senior doctor pulls Vincent aside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENIOR DOCTOR

(whispering)

He probably won't make it through the night. So I think that now would probably be the right time.

That said, the doctor leads Vincent around to the front of the lung. The mirror and upper part of the metal tank has been removed, revealing THE LITTLE BOY'S PALE HEAD AND WITHERED CHEST.

Even though the little boy is unconscious, the pain in his face is plainly evident.

VINCENT (V.O.)

...beyond my control.

Vincent notices that Crewcut and the doctors have respectfully backed off.

They all look at Vincent expectantly.

HOMELY AGENT

(whispering to one of the doctors)

Are other people allowed to watch him do this? Maybe he wants some privacy.

Then it dawns on Vincent.

VINCENT (V.O.)

I studied up on everything.

(beat)

Almost everything.

He stands there, lost for the moment.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Some things, though, once ya seen it, you never forget.

He looks down AT THE BRIEFCASE in his hand.

He places it on a small side table, opens it, pulls out a purple cloth and places it around his neck.

He pulls out a special "catechism" bible and deftly finds "LAST RITES" in the index.

He turns to the appropriate page, where the entire sacrament ritual is scripted out: Apostolic Pardon, Lord's Prayer, Viaticum, Prayer before Anointing, Anointing, Concluding Prayer, Blessing, Sign of Peace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Acting as if he's done this all his life, Vincent moves to the boy and begins the ritual.

Crewcut retreats from the group, detached and seemingly disinterested. He starts to light another cigarette, but one of the doctors taps him on the shoulder, shaking his head "no".

Annoyed, Crewcut stubs it out; he just wants this to be over.

WITH VINCENT

He reaches into the tank, grasps the boy's slender hand and begins to read the Latin prayer from the book.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(reading)
Et nomini et tu patri, et filii, et
spiritu sancti...

CUT TO:

Vincent as he opens a small jar of oil, dabs some on his fingers and anoints the boy's head.

Now he begins to really look at this little boy, so helpless, so frail.

Vincent looks back down at the book, concentrating on reading the verses.

Now comes the sound of breathing, labored, deliberate.

Vincent looks down at the boy...then realizes the sound is coming from

HOMELY

now standing near him, staring at the little boy.

Vincent looks away, only to find

KNOX

clinging to his IV stand, watching this entire scene from the WINDOW OF HIS PRIVATE ROOM.

Knox's eyes, like Homely's, are also moist.

But as Knox's eyes meet Vincent's, they take on a more accusatory glint.

Knox slowly turns away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Vincent takes a deep breath, trying to stay focused.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...a professional...a professional never
 lets himself...he always...he must...

Vincent closes his eyes and finishes the prayer from memory.

He bows his head, relieved that he's made it through this.

Eyes still closed, he slowly makes the sign of the cross over the boy...and the ritual is over.

He lets out a deep breath and relaxes his grip on the boy's hand. Then-

HOMELY AGENT (O.C.)
 Father. *Father.*

Vincent opens his eyes and looks at Homely, who motions towards the boy.

Vincent looks down and sees that THE BOY'S EYES ARE NOW OPEN.

The boy looks directly at Vincent. Using what little strength he has, he squeezes Vincent's hand.

Homely, meanwhile, has gone and brought the doctors back over, who now step in front of Vincent.

SENIOR DOCTOR
 Excuse us, Father.

Vincent begins to step back, but the little boy won't let go of his hand, so Vincent gingerly steps around to the side, while the doctors quickly check the boy's vital signs.

They confer, and the decision is made to move the boy for further treatment.

Vincent once again tries to remove his hand from the boy's grip, but the boy hangs on.

Vincent looks at the doctors for help.

The senior doctor comes over and gently pulls the child's hand away.

SENIOR DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 (to the boy)
 Don't worry.
 (thinks fast)
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SENIOR DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Father just wanted to see how you're doing. I told him you're very strong.

The boy's eyes dart to Vincent, who gives him the most reassuring look he can muster.

This seems to comfort the boy; he closes his eyes.

The doctors call the nurses over and together they all roll the boy out of the ward.

Vincent and Homely watch the procession carefully maneuver out the door, until they're all out of sight.

Vincent and Homely continue to stand there.

HOMELY AGENT

Father?

Vincent turns to Homely.

VINCENT

Yes?

Homely struggles to find the words. He wants to make sense of this, or at least have Vincent make sense of it for him.

Vincent picks up the paper bag and pulls out the COMIC BOOK.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(hands it to Homely)

If he makes it...

Homely takes it, nodding.

On other side of the room, Crewcut lights up his cigarette.

INT. KNOX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vincent sits down at Knox's bedside, makes sure no one is watching from outside...then opens his jacket and produces the FLASK AND THE PACK OF DUNHILLS.

Knox smiles at the gesture, but then shakes his "no".

Vincent gives him a look: "Are you sure?"

Knox nods and Vincent reluctantly slips the stuff back into his jacket.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Coulda gone out easy.

They sit there in silence a few moments.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent eyes the wire behind Knox's head.

Presently, Knox begins to speak, though his voice is quiet and humble.

KNOX

May I ask you a question?

VINCENT

Yes.

Knox takes a moment to compose himself, to collect his thoughts. He proceeds slowly, methodically.

KNOX

The first time you administered the last rites...to a child...

Knox pauses, trying remain composed.

KNOX (CONT'D)

...how did you...I mean, it must have...

(stops, starts again)

...how did you...make sense of it?

(his voice cracks)

Even with all your faith?

(the tears start to flow)

Because I can't.

Now the damn bursts. Knox breaks down, unable to stop his tears.

Despite himself, Vincent reaches out to Knox, putting a hand on his shoulder.

And he just keeps it there while Knox lets it all out.

Presently, as Knox's sobbing subsides a little, Vincent starts talking.

VINCENT

It was just after my birthday. I just turned thirty. And there was a little boy...

(carefully)

...a kid from the neighborhood. And he was, maybe, what? Six, seven years old? No, he was six. Six and a half. He made sure everyone knew that. His name was Paul, after the saint. And he was everybody's favorite. I mean, this kid, just a smile on his face, all the time, always laughing. I remember I used to...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Vincent stops. He's going somewhere he hasn't been in a long time.

Knox notes his hesitation.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 ...I used to carry him...on my shoulders.

Vincent looks away.

KNOX
 Did you...

Vincent looks back.

VINCENT
 (matter-of-factly)
 He was hit by a car. Just one of those things. Flying a kite at the park...with his dad. He ran in the street.
 (pauses)
 A priest was there, at the park. He gave Paulie the last rites, right there in the street. Before the ambulance got there. Paulie was...
 (stifles the emotions creeping up on him)
 I don't think he suffered. At least, I hope he didn't.

Vincent stares off, lost in the memory of it.

KNOX
 Is that when you had your epiphany?

VINCENT
 Epiphany?

KNOX
 ...when you received your calling...to become a priest?

VINCENT
 Maybe...yeah.

Knox contemplates this.

KNOX
 What...what ever happened to the father? Of the boy who was killed?
 (waits)
 Did you ever talk to him about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VINCENT

No...no we never talked about it.

(beat)

I never saw him much after that day.

Another pause.

KNOX

Do you think he ever got over it?

This hits Vincent like a kidney punch, knocking him off-balance.

VINCENT

(finally)

Ya know, I don't...

(barely gets it out)

...I don't think he ever did.

Vincent starts to tear up a little, but he blinks them away.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

listening in. He wasn't prepared for this.

CUT BACK TO:

KNOX AND VINCENT

Knox is comforted, and strengthened, by Vincent's unguarded display of emotion.

KNOX

Father, do you believe in moral absolutes?

VINCENT

(after a moment)

Yes.

KNOX

To kill is wrong, I suppose. According to you.

VINCENT

According to God.

KNOX

And yet, soldiers are asked...ordered... to kill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

Yes.

KNOX

And soldiers are not considered
murderers.

Vincent considers this.

KNOX (CONT'D)

And then there is the issue of lying.
Bearing false witness. A lie is always
wrong, I'm assuming.

(not waiting for a response)

Yet, the people who hid the jews from the
Nazis...these people lied to protect
others. They saved lives...by lying. By
deceiving. By hiding the truth. Wouldn't
you agree?

Vincent contemplates this.

KNOX (CONT'D)

Father, is it possible...can a person do
something wrong...to do something right?

VINCENT

That's a question for the philosophers.
I'm just a simple parish priest.

KNOX

A simple parish priest.

(pause)

And your parish, your parish is...
working class, I presume?

Vincent nods.

KNOX (CONT'D)

I assume there are families, with
children...more children than they
possibly expected?

VINCENT

Children are always a blessing.

KNOX

Of course. Of course. But the collection
plate only goes so far. I'm sure there
are little ones, in your parish, who
could benefit from an unexpected
windfall. A roof that doesn't leak? A new
communion dress? A baseball glove?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KNOX (CONT'D)

(beat)

Perhaps even a playground. Or a retreat.
Somewhere clean. And safe.

VINCENT

The most important thing are parents who
love them. Who look after them.

KNOX

And what about those without parents?
Without love?

Knox looks over at the curtain on the other side of the room,
where the iron lung was. Where the boy was.

Vincent gazes at the empty space.

The two men look at each other.

KNOX (CONT'D)

Would you take my confession now?

Vincent pulls out a purple vestment, drapes it around his
neck and pulls his chair closer to Knox.

VINCENT

Do you remember your act of contrition?

KNOX

No.

VINCENT

That's fine. Just close your eyes and
take a few moments to tell God you're
going to be honest and that you truly
seek his forgiveness.

Knox closes his eyes, giving Vincent the opportunity to reach
down and pull THE GUN out of his ankle holster.

As he reaches down, however, something falls out of one of
his pockets: THE ACT OF CONTRITION CARD from the
confessional.

He tries to pick it with his free hand, but he only succeeds
in flipping it over -- and what he sees stops him cold.

It's a picture of a horse. And a man on the ground next to
it, his arm outstretched. The title below the picture reads
THE EPIPHANY OF SAINT PAUL.

Vincent remembers Knox's words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

KNOX (V.O.)
...a great light appeared to him,
knocking him to the ground...

He picks up the card and slips it back in his pocket.

Holding the gun out of sight, he glances through a space
between the curtains to make sure no one is in the room.

The coast is clear.

After a few moments, Knox opens his eyes.

VINCENT
Are you ready?

KNOX
Father?

VINCENT
Yes?

KNOX
If it's not too much trouble, I'd prefer
to whisper my sins to you.

Vincent grabs a pillow and puts it behind Knox's head.

VINCENT
There.

He leans in close to Knox's face, expertly bringing the gun
up behind the banker's head.

From outside comes the sound of the bus approaching.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Right on time.

Knox closes his eyes and begins whispering in Vincent's ear.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

listening in. All he can hear is the bus.

CREWCUT AGENT
(frustrated)
Damn it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO KNOX AND VINCENT

Knox whispers in Vincent's ear.

After a moment, Vincent reacts, surprised at what he hears.

The bus gets closer.

Everything slows down, as Vincent steadies

THE GUN

His finger rests on the trigger, ready.

KNOX

keeps whispering, using his hands to gesture as

VINCENT

listens, surprised at what he hears

From outside comes the sound of the bus pulling up, creaking and rattling.

Vincent steels himself, resolved to his task.

Yet there are still creases of doubt in his face, as he continues to listen to Knox.

But he has a job to do.

The moment stretches out, everything moving in slow motion as

VINCENT FACE'S TIGHTENS

while he waits for the inevitable airbrakes

Waiting...waiting...

Time slows to almost a standstill when --

WHOOOOOOOOOOOOSSSHHHH! The airbrakes come, echoing slowly

Vincent closes his eyes.

His finger begins to tighten on the trigger.

The airbrakes keep hissing until --

DING!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly, everything snaps back to normal as Vincent opens his eyes.

CUT TO:

ELEVATOR DOORS SLIDING OPEN

Vincent exits the elevator and moves slowly into the hospital corridor.

He appears disoriented, and looks back down the hall, as though he's forgotten something.

EXT. MAIN FLOOR - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Vincent walks along, still a little unsure.

VINCENT (V.O.)
A professional is ready for anything.

But gradually, with each step, he gains more confidence.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He covers all the angles. All the
unexpected surprises.

He begins to walk a little faster, taking long, purposeful strides.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But how the hell's a pro supposed to
prepare...

And now he begins to smile.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...for an epiphany?

Picking up the pace, he rounds a corner -- AND FREEZES IN HIS TRACKS.

For there, pushing a laundry cart, is FRANKIE, dressed like an orderly.

They lock eyes for one heart-stopping moment -- then each continues on his way.

WITH VINCENT

Still reeling from the shock, he heads for a bank of phone booths -- all occupied.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Desperate, he flags down a nurse.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Where are your courtesy phones?

NURSE
I'm sorry, Father, they're out of order.
(proudly)
They're being replaced with new modern ones.

VINCENT
(annoyed)
Well that's just goddamn great.

And he leaves her there, shocked to her shoelaces.

EXT. STREET - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Vincent hustles down the street, searching for a phone booth.

All the ones he finds are occupied.

Struggling to remain calm, he zeroes in on

A NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

and heads inside.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

It's half-empty. A few tough-looking locals and the bartender watch a black-and-white TV.

Vincent slaps a dollar bill on the bar.

VINCENT
(to the bartender)
Ya gotta phone?

The bartender, without looking, jerks a thumb towards the back.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(taps the dollar)
How 'bout some change?

The bartender, annoyed, slowly ambles over and makes change as Vincent waits impatiently.

He throws it rudely on the bar and goes back to the TV.

Vincent grabs it and hustles towards the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARTENDER
(under his breath)
Big Al's gonna love you.

IN THE BACK HALLWAY

Vincent finds the pay phone --

-- where BIG AL, a thick, tough-looking wiseguy sitting on a stool, is putting down bets.

Vincent waits a few moments, then approaches him.

VINCENT
Excuse me sir, but could I bother you to let me place one very brief call? It's a matter of life or death.

Big Al barely looks up.

BIG AL
I'm busy.

And he goes back to his bets.

Trying his best to control his desperation, Vincent politely tries again.

VINCENT
Please sir, a man's life is-

BIG AL
(grabbing Vincent's lapel)
Hey, listen, I don't care if you are a priest, you get outta here now, ya hear?
I got business.

Big Al shoves Vincent back, then turns back to his business.

Big mistake.

Vincent looks around to make sure they have some privacy.

Then, with frightening speed and fury, HE WHIPS THE PHONE CORD AROUND BIG AL'S NECK and chokes him until the utterly surprised wiseguy slumps unconscious.

With practiced efficiency, he dumps the limp body into the men's bathroom.

Then he goes back and picks up the dangling receiver.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT
 (into the receiver)
 He'll call ya back.

He hangs up and calls the operator.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Yes, I need the number for Roosevelt
 General Hospital.
 (pause)
 Thanks.
 (hangs up, deposits coins and
 dials)
 Yes, I'd like to speak with Alex-
 (quickly catches himself)
 Uh, the children's ward, please. What? Uh
 huh? Well, could you connect me with
 Agent Matthew Kinney?
 (pause)
 I just spoke with him ten minutes ago.
 (pause)
 Well, could I please speak with any
 federal agent there, please? I have
 important information about- No. No,
 don't connect me to the- Listen to me.
 Hello?

Frustrated, he hangs up the phone and hustles out.

EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

As Vincent runs out, a FIRETRUCK screams by.

He looks off towards the hospital and sees

FIRE AND SMOKE COMING FROM ONE OF THE TOP FLOORS

CUT TO:

THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE HOSPITAL

Frightened people are streaming out as firemen storm in.

Vincent fights the crowds to get in.

A policeman stops him.

POLICEMAN
 No one goes in!

Vincent is about to protest when the policeman spots a
 reporter and photographer trying to slip by. He lets Vincent
 go and goes after them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent bolts down the hallway, towards

THE STAIRWELL

Vincent bursts through the door and vaults up the steps, squeezing past more doctors and patients, some badly injured - up and up he goes, the smoke getting thicker -- until he stops at the sixth floor landing, where the door has been propped open, smoke belching through.

FLASHLIGHT BEAMS dance crazily around the swirling smoke, at least three feet thick from the ceiling down. The lights are out. Moans, cries for help, barked commands all echo in the darkness.

Vincent hits his knees and begins crawling around.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Goddamnit! Tell 'em to turn off the gas now! The whole place'll go up!

MALE VOICE #2 (O.S.)

Break open the windows! Use the chair!
Let the smoke out!

WITH VINCENT

He scrabbles around a corner. The smoke is thicker now. Vincent coughs.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

We gotta get outta here now! We can't get hoses up here!

MALE VOICE #2

Have we got everybody?

Vincent keeps moving toward the voices.

Suddenly, a loud, sharp "crack" is heard, followed by a deep rumbling.

MALE VOICE #2 (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh shit! Oh shit! Get down! Get-

KA-B00000M! Vincent drops flat as a huge explosion rocks the entire floor.

Now comes a sound of rushing air -- followed a HUGE FIREBALL that comes rolling up the hallway along the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Powered by a jolt of pure adrenaline, Vincent hurls himself against the nearest doorway, kicks it open, rolls in and shuts it just in time.

IN THE ROOM

Vincent gets as far away from the door as he can. The glow of the fire flickers around the edge of the door.

Safe for the moment, Vincent takes stock of his new surroundings: it's an empty room just off the children's ward, save for A FAMILIAR-LOOKING IRON LUNG, which seems to have been pushed into the room haphazardly. Tubes and wires trail off from underneath it.

Vincent goes to the iron lung and finds the little boy, unconscious.

Vincent looks back at the door. The glow is getting brighter as smoke begins to seep in around the door's edge.

He looks around, grabs some linens off a chair and begins stuffing them around the door.

He then goes to the double-paned, wire-meshed window and tries to open it. It's stuck tight.

He looks down at the crowd in the street and waves frantically.

VINCENT
Hey! HEY! Up here!

Nobody sees him.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Sonofabitch!

Frustrated, Vincent rushes back, grabs the chair and hurls it against the window.

It bounces off.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Shit!

He picks it up and takes another whack.

No effect.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Goddamnit! GODDAMNIT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He tries again. No luck.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(pleading to heaven)
Come on, please! I need ya! Gimme
something! Please!

KA-BOOM! Another explosion rumbles through, making the door shudder.

Some ceiling plaster cracks and falls on the boy.

Vincent runs over to shield him.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(angry, desperate)
Hey! HEY! What about the banker? What
about that? Huh?

More plaster falls.

Vincent brings his head near the boy's face.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(pleading)
Please, please, don't let him suffer.
He's just a kid.

KA-BOOM! Another explosion - this one closer. Tendrils of fire now search hungrily around the door's edge.

This is it. This is how it ends.

Vincent closes his eyes.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(praying)
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed
be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will
be done. On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive
those who trespass against us...and lead
us not into temptation, but deliver us
from evil.

Vincent stops.

He raises his head -- and finds AN OXYGEN TANK marked "empty"
in a corner.

Vincent gets an idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

He rushes over and gets a grip on the tank. It's very heavy.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 (tries to lift it)
 For thine is the kingdom-
 (tries again)
 For thine is the kingdom-

He stops. Closes his eyes. Summons everything's he's got and-

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 For thine is the kingdom-
 (lifts the tank)
 -and the power-
 (heads for the window)
 -and the glory-
 (almost there)
 -forever and ever-

Vincent hurls the tank through the window -- BOOOOOM! It shatters with the force of bomb blast!

He leans out and watches the glass and the tank fall to the street below, causing the crowd to scatter.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
 Amen.

Now he spots a fireman running up with a megaphone.

FIREMAN
 (via megaphone)
 How many of you are up there?

VINCENT
 (yelling)
 Just me and a little kid. The kid's unconscious.

A policeman runs up to the fireman, confers with him, then runs off.

FIREMAN
 (via megaphone)
 We can't get the ladder over here. Stay there and we'll bring the net.

Now a group of policemen and civilians bring over a large bullseye safety catcher.

They quickly position it below the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(via megaphone)
Just follow my instructions. Throw a
blanket over the edge of the window, then
bring the kid.

Vincent looks around quickly, then realizes the only available material is stuffed around the door.

He yanks the linen from around the door, rushes back to the window and drapes it over the edge.

Smoke now begins billowing in from the door.

Vincent goes to iron lung and begins unlatching it. He opens the lung and finds the boy's pale, bony torso --

-- and an air tube connected to his trachea.

He hesitates, then he pulls the tube out and gently picks the boy up, swaddles him in the blanket, and moves to the window as smokes begins filling the room.

AT THE WINDOW

Vincent looks down at the catcher -- and reels at the drop of at least sixty feet.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(via megaphone)
Okay! Now I want you to straddle the edge
of the window. Just bring one leg over.

Vincent hesitates.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(via megaphone)
C'mon, now! Don't think! Just do it.

Vincent takes a deep breath and lifts his leg over the edge.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(via megaphone)
Great. Now hold the child with your right
hand and grab the window frame with your
left.

Vincent takes another breath and does it.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(via megaphone)
Great! You're doing great! Now listen to
me carefully.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

FIREMAN (CONT'D)

I'm gonna explain how you're gonna fall.
You're gonna bring that other leg over
and sit on the edge. Then I want you to
just lean over to your left and let
yourself just fall. Don't push off. It's
not a dive. You wanna keep your head up.
Okay? Now I'm gonna take you through it.
Just follow me step by step. Ready?

VINCENT

(to himself)

No.

(yelling)

Yeah!

FIREMAN

(via megaphone)

Okay! First step. Swing the leg over.
Nice and easy.

Vincent does it, his breaths now coming fast and quick as he
balances on the edge.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)

(via megaphone)

Excellent, now-

KA-BOOOOOOM!

THE DOOR OF THE ROOM IS KNOCKED OFF IT'S HINGES BY A MASSIVE
FIREBALL -- WHICH BLOWS VINCENT OUT THE WINDOW AND INTO
SPACE!

Below, the crowd reacts -- screaming and running for cover.

WITH VINCENT

Time slows and sound fades away as Vincent twists through the
air, reaching out to the boy -- who has fallen free of his
grasp.

Drawing on all his strength and determination, Vincent
stretches out to the child, focusing his whole being on the
child -- who is still inches from his fingertips.

Nothing else matters.

Not the crowded street below as it looms up at him.

Not himself.

Just the boy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

Vincent calls on all his strength, straining with monumental, herculean effort.

The catcher grows larger and larger beneath him.

Closer. Closer.

And at the very, very last moment, Vincent closes his eyes --

-- and with his last bit of strength, he pulls the boy to him, shielding him with his body.

FOOOOMMPPPP!

Time snaps back to normal as Vincent smacks down in the middle of the catcher.

A huge gasp goes up from the crowd as fire and police officials rush in to help Vincent, who just lays there, dazed, clutching the child.

VINCENT'S POV

A huge policeman looms in.

HUGE POLICEMAN

Are you okay? Are you okay?

A fireman comes into view, pulling the policeman back.

FIREMAN

Give him air, give him air.

ANGLE ON VINCENT

Hands reach in and pull him up to a sitting position. A doctor reaches in for the child -- but Vincent, still dazed, won't let him go.

DOCTOR

It's okay. It's okay. I'm a doctor. I just wanna make sure he's okay.

The doctor tries again to take the boy -- and this time, Vincent relents.

VINCENT

(dazed)

He was in the big metal... he needs his tube thing...

DOCTOR

That's okay. That's okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

The doctor rises up with the boy and hustles off, barking out commands.

A cheer goes up from the crowd.

The fireman moves in next to Vincent.

FIREMAN

Father, are you hurt? Can you stand up?

VINCENT

(coming out of it)

I don't know.

The fireman and others help Vincent to his feet.

As he straightens up, Vincent looks up and sees

CREWCUT

staring back at him from the edge of the crowd.

Before Vincent can react, another cheer goes up from the crowd and the people mob him.

CROWD (VARIOUS)

That was unbelievable! Good job, fadder!
You grabbed that kid right outta the air!
You're a hero - a goddamn hero! Hey,
whatcha mouth 'round da father, here!

Vincent is obviously overwhelmed, so the policeman steps in.

POLICEMAN

Alright, folks, give him some room. Give
'em some room.

The fireman takes Vincent by the arm.

FIREMAN

Father, let's have 'em take a look at ya.
Just to be safe.

The crowd continues to mob Vincent as he is lead by the fireman to a couple of nearby ambulances.

Vincent looks around for Crewcut, but he's gone.

AT THE AMBULANCES

The fireman leads Vincent along, checking each ambulance, looking for one that isn't full of injured people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

He finds one that isn't in use yet, and raps on the back doors.

A paramedic opens the door.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
This guy just fell about sixty feet.
Check him for concussion, will ya? He's
still a little dizzy.

The paramedic nods and reaches for Vincent.

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
(to Vincent)
I swear I thought you bought it. Someone
up there likes you.

And the fireman heads off.

INSIDE THE AMBULANCE

The medic checks Vincent's pupils with a penlight.

PARAMEDIC
Looks good. Looks good. No concussion...
that I can see.
(clicks off the penlight)
Okay, ya seem alright to me. No broken
bones. What's your name, Father?

Vincent just stares.

PARAMEDIC (CONT'D)
Father? Father? Do you know who you are?

He turns to the medic and smiles.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

As inconspicuously as possible, Vincent is hustling away from the crowds.

Suddenly, a voice calls out.

REPORTER (O.S.)
Hey! Father! Wait a minute!

Vincent flicks a glance over his shoulder -- and what he sees makes him move faster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVING WITH VINCENT

As Vincent hustles along, looking for an escape route, we spot the REPORTER AND HIS PHOTOGRAPHER trailing about 30 yards behind him.

The reporter breaks into a run.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
(to the photographer)
Stay with him!

Vincent finds an alley and disappears into it.

IN THE ALLEY

Now sprinting, Vincent follows it until it reaches another alley which runs perpendicular -- Vincent looks both ways, chooses to go right.

He heads down the alley towards where it empties into a street -- until A POLICE CRUISER pulls into view ahead.

Vincent flattens himself into a doorway.

He hears the police radio chatter -- then a new sound -- running footsteps getting closer and closer.

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(breathing hard)
Maybe the cop stopped him!

With nowhere to go, Vincent tries the doorknob -- it turns and he pushes his way into

THE BACK HALLWAY OF A BAR

Vincent closes the door behind him and locks it.

He moves quickly down the hallway and into the bar area -- where he stops for a moment.

It's the same bar from before.

The place is empty, everyone is still out in the street -- except for a lone figure at the bar, who slowly turns to face Vincent.

It's BIG AL -- still a little groggy, nursing a drink.

For a moment, the two men just stare at each other.

Then Big Al reacts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BIG AL
(reaching for something)
My lucky fucking day.

He pulls out HIS GUN -- but Vincent is already on him. He grabs the gun and shoves it in the wiseguy's face.

VINCENT
Car. Where's your car?

BIG AL
Fuck you, I ain't-

SMACK! SMACK! Vincent viciously pistol whips Al across the face, then shoves the gun barrel into his now shocked-open mouth.

VINCENT
(hard)
Where's-your-car?

EXT. SIDE STREET - CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Al, with Vincent right behind him, steps up to the passenger door of a beautiful black Lincoln Continental.

VINCENT
(quietly)
Get in and slide over.

Al does as he is told. Vincent gets in after him.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(shoving the gun into Al's side)
Do exactly as I say or I'll chop your legs off with the trunk lid. One at a time.
(beat)
Now start the car.

Al looks at Vincent, then starts the car.

BIG AL
(under his breath)
You ain't no priest.

EXT. JERSEY MARSHLANDS - AFTERNOON

The Lincoln cruises down a lonely stretch of highway.

INT. BIG AL'S LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT
(looks up ahead)
Make a right at that road up ahead.

EXT. HIGHWAY TURN-OFF - CONTINUOUS

The Lincoln pulls onto an unpaved road that leads into a wooded area.

INT. LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT
When we get to that bunch of trees, stop.

EXT. COPSE OF TREES - CONTINUOUS

The Lincoln pulls up to the trees and stops.

INT. LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

VINCENT
Switch it off and kill the lights.

Al obeys.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Gimme the keys and put your hands on the dash.

Al does it.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Don't move.

Vincent gets out, moves quickly around the front of the car and opens the driver-side door.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Get out and start walking towards those trees.

Al, a little fear now visible in his eyes, slowly gets out and starts moving.

Vincent, gun at the ready, follows.

MOVING THROUGH TALL GRASS

Al is trying his best not to betray the fact that he's scared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIG AL
You're making a big mistake, my friend.

HEADING DOWN A STEEP TRAIL

The sound of rushing water can be heard as Vincent and Al emerge onto the sandy bank of a fast-moving stream that's about sixty feet wide.

Al stumbles. His wallet falls onto the sand. Al doesn't notice.

Vincent picks it up as Al turns around.

VINCENT
(pointing the gun)
Turn around.

Al complies as Vincent flips through the wallet: Driver's License identifying him as ALPHONSO MARIO DI NOVI, hundred dollar bills, betting slips, etc.

But then Vincent finds something he didn't expect: A MAGIC CLUB MEMBERSHIP CARD.

Vincent looks up at the mobster, standing at the water's edge.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Al?

BIG AL
Yeah.

VINCENT
Do you like magic?

BIG AL
What?

He tosses the wallet in front of Al.

VINCENT
The Magic Club.

BIG AL
(understands)
Yeah, magic. I like magic.

VINCENT
(genuinely curious)
Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BIG AL
(annoyed, he turns)
Why?

Al looks at THE GUN in Vincent's hand.

Then he looks up at Vincent, who now has a calm, "professional" look on his face.

VINCENT
Talk to me, Alphonso.

Al realizes Vincent is serious. He changes his attitude.

BIG AL
I...I like magic. I like magic
'cause...because...
(at a loss)
Christ, I dunno.

VINCENT
There's no wrong answer, here.

Al thinks about it.

BIG AL
(quietly)
I like it cause people think I'm
something special when I do it. And
people wanna believe in magic, ya know?

Vincent nods, then falls silent, thinking.

Al searches Vincent's face; has his honesty paid off?

VINCENT
Turn around Al.

Al deflates.

BIG AL
(still trying to hide his fear)
Hey, alright, I'm sorry I grabbed ya-

VINCENT
(firm)
Turn around.

Al obeys, mumbling to himself.

Vincent looks down at the gun in his hand.

He looks back up at Al.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Start walking, Al.

BIG AL
Please, mister, I ain't-

Vincent raises the gun and cocks it loudly.

VINCENT
Move.

Al, trembling now, walks slowly into the water. He has some difficulty navigating the fast-moving water.

ANGLE ON AL

He is desperately trying to stay upright, his eyes flicking from side to side, fearing the gun shot that might come at any moment.

He stumbles and goes under a moment - then comes up sputtering and grunting.

AL
Ah! Oh God! Please! Don't! Don't do it.

Finally, he makes it to the other side.

He flops down on his hands and knees, shivering from cold and fear.

AL (CONT'D)
Ah! Ah, God!

Relieved, but still afraid, he turns to look back across the stream.

Vincent is gone.

FADE TO BLACK.

IN THE DARKNESS

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING)
Father, a significant sum is in a metal suitcase...

FSSSSTTT!

A MATCH is struck, illuminating VINCENT'S FACE.

He lights a cigarette.

INT. LINCOLN - NIGHT

Vincent is parked on a dirt access road, somewhere out in the country.

KNOX
...the suitcase is hidden in a cemetery.

CUT TO:

THE LINCOLN PULLING UP TO A HIGH-FENCED CEMETARY

The sign reads "St. Therese's Memorial Cemetery".

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING)
St. Therese's. Just outside of Yonkers.

The main gate is locked.

He backs up and follows a small side road around the outside of the high-fenced cemetery until he comes to a

SMALL MAINTENANCE SHACK

He parks the Lincoln behind it and gets out.

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
Look for a large statue.

ANGLE ON VINCENT

He looks through the wrought-iron bars of the fence, searching among the old-style headstones and monuments --

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
An angel. Carrying a small child on her shoulder.

-- until he finds THE LARGE STATUE OF AN ANGEL WITH A CHILD ON ITS SHOULDER.

Now that he's found what he's looking for, he looks around for a way in. He spots a

SMALL GATE

He moves to it -- it's slightly ajar. He inspects it and finds the lock is broken.

Smiling at his good luck, he opens it and heads in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

IN THE CEMETARY

Vincent moves through the ancient upright headstones.

In the distance, a truck wails past on the highway.

Vincent heads toward the angel statue. Nearby is a large mausoleum.

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
The suitcase is under the statue, in the
base. Look behind it. Just behind the
foot.

AT THE ANGEL STATUE

Vincent walks up to it. A plaque on the base reads:

Beloved Mother
Eleanor Catherine Knox
1889 - 1947

He walks around behind it, kneels down and touches the heel of the angel.

KNOX (V.O./WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
There's a tile...beneath her foot. It's
just plaster. Break it.

Vincent gets down on his hands and knees and knocks on a few of the tiles along the base, listening for the hollow one.

But then he finds one of the tiles has already been already broken, revealing A GAPING HOLE.

He pulls a flashlight from his jacket and shines it in the hollow space beneath the statue.

Empty. Nothing.

This puzzles Vincent -- until he hears FOOTSTEPS coming up behind him.

He turns around to see KNOX being shoved towards him by FRANKIE SMILES.

Knox is beat up pretty bad.

Frankie holds up a METAL BRIEFCASE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANKIE
(re: the briefcase)
Looking for this?
(shoves Knox to his knees)
Ah, the number one button.
(points his gun)
On your knees, hands on your head.

Vincent obeys. Frankie comes over and pats him down.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
(as he pats him down)
I knew if I kept watchin' ya...one day,
you'd slip.

Frankie steps back.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
The bank here says it was the kids. But I
think nine hundred gees mighta had
something to do with it. Either way, it's
bad for you. Good for me.

VINCENT
The fire...

Frankie smiles, an evil smile.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
They were innocent people.

FRANKIE
Yeah, I'm all broke up about that.
(beat)
Okay, on your feet, we're gonna take a
little ride.

Vincent stands up and looks at Knox.

KNOX
(to Vincent)
I'm sorry I lead him here. I hoped you
would have beat us to it.

VINCENT
I'm sorry he worked you over.

FRANKIE
Oh stop or I'm gonna bust out crying.

Vincent shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VINCENT

You're pretty proud of yourself, huh?

Frankie looks at him expectantly.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(like a teacher to a student)

You're a known associate of our employer. And there are probably, gee, only fifty people at the hospital who can put you at the scene. You kill a busload of civilians to get to one- count 'em, one guy. You leave a trail that even the three blind mice could trace back to the organization. You think this is gonna put you in good with the eye?

(grunts)

Jesus, I almost feel sorry for you.

Frankie, stung by Vincent's logic, tries to be cool, unruffled.

FRANKIE

You're gonna die. And I'm number one now.

VINCENT

(looks at him)

Frankie, you know what you are? And I'm gonna tell you the honest-to-god truth here, because I think I owe you that at least...seeing as how I've spoiled your whole life with this "number one button" thing. So I'm gonna be a hundred percent honest. Are you ready?

Frankie's eyes narrow, cold, but curious.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(deep breath)

Franco Augustino Nunnari, you are...

(long pause, then softly)

...an amateur.

(looks back at Knox)

You're an amateur, Frankie.

Seething, Frankie steps up behind Vincent and smacks him on the back of his head with the gun.

Vincent crumples to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANKIE

You coulda gone out quick. Now it's gonna
be slow. Real slow.

FADE TO BLACK.

DARKNESS

Muffled voices. Metal scraping on cement.

Suddenly, the darkness gives way to light as a creaky trunk
lid is opened.

Frankie's big, mean face looms into view.

FRANKIE

Wake up, sweetheart. You got people
waiting.

CUT TO:

THE OPEN TRUNK OF A BIG BUICK

Frankie roughly yanks Vincent out.

Still groggy, Vincent rubs his eyes as he is shoved towards a
chair in the middle of a big, empty warehouse.

As he approaches the chair, he spots TWO OLDER WISEGUYS, SAL
AND PETE, sitting at a small table in a far corner, counting
money and piling it up in neat stacks.

They both glance at Vincent, then turn back to their task.

The metal briefcase is on the ground at their feet.

VINCENT

Where's Knox?

FRANKIE

(shoves him towards the chair)
Where you're gonna be soon.

Vincent sits and Frankie moves off to attend to other
business.

Vincent, as casual as he can, surveys his environment:

Two exits, one at either end.

Some metal scaffolding against a far wall.

A big Blatz bottlecap clock above the scaffolding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A metal stairwell leading up to a small office with a single window; the grimy blinds are drawn tight.

Vincent shifts his gaze to the two wiseguys counting the money; he finds A TELL-TALE BULGE just below the armpit on Sal, the wiseguy closest to him.

VINCENT (V.O.)

He's packing. Probably a .45. These old bastards love 'em. The other guy's probably got a .38 in his pocket. Then there's my gun Frankie's flashing. My best chance is to strip the icepick as soon as he gets close, blast him and the geezers and somehow get to the car.

(beat)

The wild card here is the hard-on up in the corner office. Might just be the "eye" himself...might be a whole friggin' platoon.

Frankie brings out a small metal table and places it in front of Vincent.

He then pulls out A REEL OF AUDIO TAPE and holds it up for Vincent to see.

FRANKIE

You got a real nice place, De Palma.
Lotsa nice stuff.

Frankie then steps over to the tape recorder, threads the tape and is about to press play when-

RING! RING!

Sal answers the phone, then calls out to Frankie.

SAL

Frankie!
(off Frankie's annoyed look)
Bonasera.

Frankie quickly hustles over and grabs the phone.

FRANKIE

Yes, Mr. Bonasera.
(pause)
Yep, they're all here.
(pause)
It's all set up.
(pause)
Oh no, no, I wouldn't-
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

(pause)

But I thought-

(longer pause)

Okay. Sure. Sure.

He hands the phone back, obviously disappointed and frustrated at what Angie had to say.

Sal listens to Angie for a few more moments, grunts affirmatively, then hangs up.

Meanwhile, Frankie just stands there, fuming, focusing all his frustration at Vincent.

Vincent eyes THE GUN stuck in Frankie's waistband.

VINCENT (V.O.)

A professional creates opportunities.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Hey, I'm sorry, Frankie. Did I spoil all your fun again?

This is all Frankie needs to hear. Eyes full of hatred, he moves towards Vincent, who focuses in on Frankie's GUN.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's it, hard-on. C'mon-

Sal calls out to Frankie.

SAL

Frankie, forget it. You know what to do.

Frankie, eyes still burning, stops short of Vincent.

FRANKIE

I'll be there, De Palma. When they go to work on you. Ya hear me?

SAL

Frankie.

Frankie glances back at Sal, then turns back to Vincent.

FRANKIE

I'll be there.

Frankie leaves.

Now it's just Vincent and the two wiseguys.

Vincent eyes the space between himself and the wiseguys, then the space between himself and the exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VINCENT (V.O.)

Too far. They'd plug me before I got halfway. Need to get them to come to me.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Sal.

SAL

(not looking up)

No.

VINCENT

You don't even know-

SAL

You stay in that chair, De Palma. You don't get up for nothing. That's the orders.

Vincent deflates a little. But he's not done yet.

VINCENT (V.O.)

A true professional...improvises...with what's at hand.

He crosses his arms, pondering his situation.

He feels something in his breast pocket.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

You guys mind if I have a drink?

Without waiting for permission, he starts to reach inside his jacket.

The two wiseguys react immediately, guns drawn.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(stops)

Easy, easy.

Sal motions to Pete.

SAL

Pete, see what he's got.

Pete is already there, his gun pressed against Vincent's temple.

PETE

If you even blink funny...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

VINCENT
Wouldn't dream of it, Pete.

After a quick pat down, Pete finds the flask and the pack of Dunhills. He backs off, opens the flask and sniffs.

PETE
(looks at Sal)
Whiskey.

Sal looks at Vincent, who gives him his best "humble" look.

Sal motions for Pete to give it back.

VINCENT
(taking it)
Thanks.

Vincent raises it to the group.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Te salud.

Sal and Pete nod, still suspicious.

Then Vincent raises it to his lips.

CLOSE ON THE FLASK

Vincent sneaks his thumb over the opening, then fakes a big swig.

After a moment, as if remembering his manners, he offers it to Sal.

Sal just looks at him.

SAL
(in Italian)
What are you drinking?

VINCENT
(in Italian)
What else? Chivas.

Vincent extends the flask to Sal.

After a moment, Sal cautiously accepts the flask, then takes a decent swig.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
One down...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Vincent looks at Pete.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Pete?

Pete declines, so Sal hands the flask back to Vincent.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(to Pete)

Can I have my cigarettes?

Pete looks at Sal, who nods.

Pete hands the Dunhills back to Vincent, who casually opens it.

CLOSE ON VINCENT

as he focuses on the FILTERED TIPS -- he finds one that's been DISCRETELY MARKED.

He takes out the marked cigarette for himself, then casually taps one out for Pete.

Pete hesitates.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Never appear too eager.

After a moment, Vincent shrugs and offers one to Sal, who takes one.

Taking his cue from Sal, Pete relents and takes one, too.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

(to Sal)

Got a light?

CUT TO:

VINCENT LIGHTING PETE'S CIGARETTE WITH AN ENGRAVED ZIPPO

He snaps it shut and reads the inscription:

- Tradition is the enemy of progress -

SAL

(off Vincent's look)

Got it in the army.

Vincent tosses it back to Sal, who pockets it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

Thanks.

Vincent takes a long drag.

He glances at the bottlecap clock: 2:34

He looks back at Sal and Pete, both puffing away back at the table.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A little patience always pays off in the end.

Vincent smiles, a big smile.

Sal glances over.

SAL

What are you smiling about?

Vincent just keeps smiling.

CUT TO:

THE BOTTLECAP CLOCK: IT'S NOW 2:41

Vincent casually rises off his chair and walks over to

A BODY LYING ON THE FLOOR

Vincent rolls it over, it's Sal, eyes staring, shocked and surprised.

Vincent goes through his pockets. He doesn't have what Vincent's looking for.

He gets up and goes over to Pete, crumpled in a corner.

He finds a PAIR OF KEYS in Pete's back pocket.

He reaches back down for the wiseguy's gun when suddenly-

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Lookit you.

Vincent whirls to see the SILHOUETTE OF A MAN in the warehouse door.

The man is holding what appears to be a sawed-off shotgun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN IN SILHOUETTE
 (like a proud father)
 Lookit you.

Vincent rises slowly as the man enters the warehouse. He wears an eyepatch.

This is ANGELO BONASERA - AKA "ANGIE THE EYE". One of the most powerful, most feared leaders of New York's underworld.

He stares at Vincent with his one good eye, which is to say he can see with it and move it around. Otherwise, it's not something you want to look at too long.

ANGIE
 Talent.

Angie goes over to the table, sees the flask and the pack of Dunhills. He looks at the dead men on the ground.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 God-given talent.

He grabs a chair and drags it over towards the tape machine.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 You either have it...
 (looks back at the dead men)
 ...or you don't.

With his shotgun, he motions for Vincent to sit in the chair in the middle of the warehouse.

Vincent obeys.

Angie then sets his chair down next to the tape machine and sits, facing Vincent.

A long, quiet moment passes between the two men.

VINCENT (V.O.)
 Angelo Bonasera. Angie the eye. Albert Anastasia used to call him "patch", a name Angie didn't much like. Then someone whacked Al and Angie became boss. And no one uses the "p"-word now.

Angie's good eye starts to water. He dabs it with a handkerchief.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 There are some who say Angie's own father took his eye. For looking at him funny.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 On Easter Sunday.

Finally-

ANGIE
 Vincenzo.
 (pause)
 How long we known each other?

VINCENT
 Professionally?

ANGIE
 No. Just...how long you known me?

VINCENT
 Since...I was a kid, I guess. You've
 always been around.

ANGIE
 When ya mother passed on, God rest her
 soul, who helped ya with that? With
 money?

VINCENT
 You did.

ANGIE
 When that no-good jew broad tried to take
 off with your kid, who got her ass thrown
 in jail?

VINCENT
 That was you, Ang.

ANGIE
 And when your kid got run down, and you
 started boozing it up, who got you all
 straightened out and helped you get into
 the army?

Vincent nods.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 Who gave you a livelihood when you got
 out? Huh?

Vincent nods.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
 Me.

Angie cocks his head to the side, curious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Then the eye goes cold.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Vincent, when was the last time you come around for the barbeques? Huh?

(long pause)

I invite you to my house. To my *house*. I don't even invite my brother to my house.

Angie lets that last statement sink in.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Hey, that's okay. Maybe you don't like me. I can't help that. All I ask for, all I want...all I deserve...is your respect. Your respect. And your loyalty. And I have that.

(leans forward)

I do have that, don't I, De Palma?

Without waiting for an answer, he reaches over and presses the "play" button on the reel-to-reel machine.

Angie stares at Vincent as the little reels starts turning.

CREWCUT AGENT (O.S./FILTER)

Listen-

KNOX (O.S./FILTER)

Nine-hundred, seventy-two thousand dollars.

CREWCUT AGENT (O.S./FILTER)

You need to pull yourself together, my friend.

KNOX (O.S./FILTER)

It all makes sense, don't you see? I have no use for it now.

(re: the kids)

But for them...

CREWCUT AGENT (O.S./FILTER)

Your good deed is to testify. In front of the grand jury. Then we talk about your extended vacation.

KNOX (O.S./FILTER)

I'm a dead man, you idiot! I'll never make it to that courtroom alive. But I am willing to give you a complete deposition. Right here. Right now.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

KNOX (O.S./FILTER) (CONT'D)
 But I want something from you.
 (re: the kids)
 For them.

CREWCUT AGENT (O.S./FILTER)
 This is nuts.

KNOX (O.S./FILTER)
 Just tell me you understand what I'm
 trying to do and I'll tell you where his
 money is! I tell where his books are!
 I'll tell you where the bodies are!

CLICK!

Angie snaps the tape machine off.

ANGIE
 Frankie told me some things.
 (beat)
 He told me you had the banker, had him
 cold...but you let him go. He also told
 me the banker told you about some
 money...money that belongs to me...and
 that you were gonna take that money, *my*
 money, for yourself.
 (almost sad, like a jilted
 lover)
 Vincent...is this true?

Vincent just stares at Angie.

VINCENT
 Every word of it.

Angie leans back.

ANGIE
 I don't understand this. I don't
 understand this. You're a smart guy. You
 know what we do to people that do these
 kinda things. You're the guy that does it
 to 'em.
 (beat)
 Help me understand this.

He sits back, waiting for an explanation.

VINCENT (V.O.)
 How do you explain the Sistine chapel to
 a blind man?

Vincent considers his situation: what has he got to lose?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Angie, have you ever heard of something called an epiphany?

CUT TO:

SERIES OF DISSOLVES OVER TONY BENNETT SINGING "IF I RULED THE WORLD"

Vincent talking.

Angie listening, curious, nodding.

Vincent describing the kids.

Angie smiling.

Vincent re-enacting his jump out the window.

Angie listening, engrossed.

Vincent, re-enacting the last rites for the little boy in the iron lung.

Angie, thoughtful, almost emotional.

Vincent finishes his story, then sits back, spent.

Angie's quiet now, contemplative.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After hearing it all again, it felt like a dream. A beautiful dream. But I knew it was gone. But at least it would give me something nice to think about when the time came for them to blow my head off. And make no mistake, they would. 'Cause now matter how gushy Angie felt now, it would wear off quick and he would still have me greased. Maybe they wouldn't bring out the car battery or the pliers, but they would ice me.

Angie shifts in his chair.

ANGIE

I'm trying to think of the word that means what this thing is.

(beat)

Royal? Is that it? No. Shit.

(pauses)

Noble? Yeah. Noble. It's a noble thing you tried to do. A noble fucking thing.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

ANGIE (CONT'D)

(explaining)

Lotta guys do things, they wanna get richer, get more power, get the broads. And here you are, you do something above all that crap.

(beat)

But then, you always been different. I know that. That's how you are. Like how we don't see you around too much. You do your job, and that's it.

(he pulls out a small, thin cigar)

Lemme ask you something. And I want you to be honest.

(pauses)

You think you're better than us? Better than me?

Angie looks at Vincent expectantly.

VINCENT (V.O.)

Hey, I don't apologize to nobody. Especially now, when I'm about to get clipped.

Vincent shifts in his chair.

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Maybe... maybe I do...

(hesitates, then goes for it)

...Patch.

Angie heard it. But he can't believe it.

His eye goes cold.

ANGIE

(a raspy growl)

You...

Then, as if he's just heard a funny joke-

ANGIE (CONT'D)

(smiles)

...you are something, ya know that?

(gestures)

Like this, you got 'em. You know I give the order, and that's it for you. And still ya got 'em clankin'. That's why I like you, de Palma. You don't lay down for nobody. Men like me always need men like you.

(he stands)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

ANGIE (CONT'D)

But we got this thing here. This thing
you done.

Angie sets the shotgun down next to the tape machine.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

I know ya been casing this place,
figurin' an angle. I know ya capped, what
was it, five guys that one time in
Rockaway? They beat ya till ya was half-
dead, and still you took 'em out. You're
a stone killer, Vincent. That's what you
were put here on this Earth to do. Even
now you're thinking 'bout makin' a move.

(re: the shotgun)

If you could get your hands on this...

(in Italian)

Am I right?

VINCENT

(in Italian)

Yes, you are right.

ANGIE

(in Italian)

Then you are my enemy.

Angie picks up the shotgun.

VINCENT

(in Italian)

Yes.

Angie thumbs back the hammer with a loud CLICK! It echoes
through the warehouse.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...beyond my control.

Angie raises the gun a little higher, aiming it directly at
Vincent's head.

Vincent just stares back, ready for the inevitable, as the
moment slows down.

And here, in the last moments of his life, come flashes:

THE BOY, looking up at him from the iron lung

The CATCHER looming up at him as he hurtles toward it

A KITE falling to the pavement

People crowded around AN ACCIDENT SCENE in the street

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

The old woman lighting the VOTIVE CANDLES in the church

KNOX whispering in his ear

A CHILD laughing and running

THE PARAMEDIC asking him if he knows who he is

A CHILD'S COFFIN being carried out of Saint Amelia's

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON ANGIE

He lowers the gun.

ANGIE

I think I understand this now.

He sits back and lights up his cigar.

Vincent sits there, waiting.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

You have a talent. A skill. I think this whole thing with the kids, with the hospital...you forgot that. And that's understandable. You got all caught up in it, it made ya light-headed. You went a little ugatz.

(beat)

You fucked up, De Palma.

(pauses for effect)

But...what's done is done. And really, things ain't so bad. We got the money back. And the banker...hell, the banker ain't gonna talk to nobody. Frankie thinks he saved the day, but that dumb sonofabitch ...that business at the hospital. Amateur hour. We'll deal with that later.

(leans closer to Vincent)

So here's the thing...

(takes a long drag)

I'm gonna let this one slide.

As soon as he says this, everything slows down dramatically, almost to a standstill -- the only thing moving seems to be the smoke from the cigar as it languidly twists and sways.

CUT TO:

VINCENT'S FACE

His right eyebrow has arched ever so slightly.

VINCENT (V.O.)

That one-eyed bastard...I got myself all toughed up, ready to die. And he pulls that out of his ass.

CUT TO:

THE CIGAR SMOKE

It starts moving at normal speed again.

ANGIE

I'm gonna give ya a second chance. Wipe the slate clean. You did a bad thing... but ya did it for a good cause. Hey, who doesn't wanna be the good guy, right? But now, you've seen the error of your ways. Ya seen how foolish it is. You're not a saint. You are a hitter. I know that. And now, after all this...aggravation, you know it, too.

(rises)

So, now that we understand each other, you can go back to what things were before. Of course, I will expect a few favors...as a show of good faith, ya understand.

He pulls out another cigar and offers it to Vincent.

Vincent declines. Angie shrugs. Back to business.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

(hard)

One of those favors I want you to do...you pay a visit on Frankie for me.

Vincent, despite himself, nods.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

He's talking, always talking. Thinks he's gonna make a big move. He's forgotten his place.

(beat)

You're gonna do this thing for me, right?

And Angie, with his one good eye, bores in on Vincent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT (V.O.)

All of a sudden, it was easy, so easy, to go back to things the way they were. Maybe he was right. I am what I am. And so before I knew what I was saying-

VINCENT (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah, no problem.

Angie smiles.

ANGIE

Good. Good.

(smiles)

Like I gotta twist your arm to put the closed sign on that gorilla's cage.

Angie stands up and motions for Vincent to rise, too.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Okay, now we settled things, we can get back to business.

He puts the shotgun on the table and motions for Vincent to walk with him over to the far end of the warehouse.

VINCENT (V.O.)

It was all happening so fast. I guess I should have felt bad. Or ashamed. Or something.

(beat)

But I guess cowards don't feel those things.

ANGIE

Oh, there is one thing I need ya do to for me real quick. Won't take ya a second.

AT THE DOOR

Angie opens the door and leads Vincent outside.

EXT. WAREHOUSE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Angie leads Vincent through a scrap yard to a small shack almost totally obscured by tall piles of metal scrap.

He fishes a key out of his pocket, unlocks the padlocked door, opens it and stands aside.

ANGIE

Won't take ya a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And he motions for Vincent to look inside.

ANGLE ON VINCENT

He steps forward, peering into the dark shack.

Behind him, Angie flicks on a grimy lightbulb that hangs from the shack's awning.

The light spills into the shack, revealing

THE BATTERED, BLOODIED FORM OF ALEXANDER KNOX

Half-dead, he tries to recoil from the light, whimpering and moaning like a wounded animal.

Bound and gagged, he's completely naked, his chest, back and genital area covered with cuts and burns. His face is almost unrecognizable.

Vincent closes his eyes in disgust.

Angie steps up beside Vincent.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

There he is, the fink who got you into this mess. We had a little talk with him.

(pulls out a long, vicious-looking knife)

And just so we have no misunderstandings, I saved him for you.

Angie hands Vincent the knife.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

I'm gonna watch you do it.

Vincent, knife in hand, looks at Knox, who is cowering in a corner.

Again, everything slows down.

CLOSE ON VINCENT'S FACE

Imagine the face of a man who has lost everything.

VINCENT (V.O.)

We're all beasts, when you get down to it. I don't make the rules. The biggest and the meanest make the rules. And when you forget that, that's when the trouble starts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks at the knife.

VINCENT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I forgot that. I forgot everything.
That's why everything went wrong. And now
I had to make it right.

Vincent looks up at Knox, who now slowly turns to see Vincent
-- and THE KNIFE.

Knox's eyes widen in fear.

Everything snaps back to normal speed as Angie speaks.

ANGIE
You can do it quick.
(beat)
But not too quick.

VINCENT
Whatever you say.

Vincent gets that calm, "professional" look.

Knox realizes he's dead. His eyes go half mast in defeat.

Vincent adjusts his grip on the knife -- and with one
lightning swift move

HE BURIES THE KNIFE DEEP IN ANGIE'S HEART

With his free hand, Vincent chokes off any sound Angie tries
to make.

As Vincent lowers the dying Angie to the ground, Knox makes
weak, muffled noises of disbelief.

ANGLE ON VINCENT AND ANGIE

Angie starts to reach for a .45 stuck in his waistband, but
Vincent beats him to it.

He finds Knox's discarded hospital gown and stuffs it into
Angie's mouth.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
(leans close to Angie)
Even with one eye, Ang, ya shoulda seen
that one comin'.

He pulls the knife out -- blood gushes forth like a fountain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Wet with blood, Vincent turns to Knox as Angie's life seeps quickly away.

VINCENT (CONT'D)
Hang on, my friend.

Still reeling from what he just saw, Knox feebly tries to muster up some hope.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vincent hustles back in, pockets the Dunhills and the flask, steps around the dead bodies and starts throwing the money into the silver briefcase.

EXT. WAREHOUSE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Carrying the briefcase in one hand, Vincent fireman-carries the bleeding, barely-conscious Knox over his shoulder.

EXT. BACKSIDE OF WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Vincent arrives at A BIG PLYMOUTH. He opens the rear door and gently lays Knox down in the back seat.

KNOX
(barely audible)
He's here. He's here.

Vincent doesn't hear him, closes the door, then turns as

THREE RAPID-FIRE GUNSHOTS KNOCK HIM OFF HIS FEET

Vincent, shot in the face and chest, lands hard on his back, the briefcase tumbling out of his grasp. (This should mirror the scene where Vincent imagines being shot in Knox's lobby.)

In vain, he tries to reach for his gun, but he is too badly wounded.

Now a dark figure looms over him, pointing a gun in his face.

It's FRANKIE.

FRANKIE
Number one button.
(shoving the gun in Vincent's
face)
I told you I'd be there.

Suddenly, footsteps are heard.

Frankie whips around to face someone we can't see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VARIOUS VOICES (O.S.)
Don't move! Drop it!

More angry shouts fill the air as a SPOTLIGHT finds Frankie.

Robbed of his final victory, Frankie angrily drops the gun and raises his hands.

HOMELY AGENT (V.O.)
Get on your knees, shithead! On your knees!

The homely agent runs over to Frankie, shotgun at the ready.

Trying to salvage his pride, Frankie smiles as he hits his knees.

FRANKIE
(to Vincent)
I beat you. Ya hear me? I beat you.

CUT TO:

VINCENT, SPRAWLED OUT, BLEEDING BAD

Crewcut runs over to him, pointing a shotgun. Behind him comes another agent, his partner.

CREWCUT AGENT
(yelling)
It's not Bonasera!

Another agent picks up Vincent's .45 as Crewcut shines his flashlight on Vincent.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)
What's in the suitcase, greaseball?

Vincent slowly turns his head to face Crewcut.

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)
Huh? Going on a trip-
(recognizes Vincent)
Holy shit.

OTHER AGENT
What?

CREWCUT AGENT
Get on the horn and get an ambulance now!

The other agent hustles off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREWCUT AGENT (CONT'D)
 (examining Vincent's wounds)
 Jesus...Jesus...
 (kneeling next him)
 Breathe slowly-

Vincent grasps Crewcut's hand.

VINCENT
 Ask me...ask me...

CREWCUT AGENT
 What?

VINCENT
 Ask me...if I'm sorry for all my sins.

Crewcut just looks at Vincent, not comprehending. Then, all at once, it dawns on him.

CREWCUT AGENT
 But I'm not a priest.

VINCENT
 You're a moral man.
 (wheezing)
 Please.

CREWCUT AGENT
 Are you sorry for all your sins?

VINCENT
 Yes.
 (beat)
 Ask me if I seek God's forgiveness.

CREWCUT AGENT
 Do you seek God's forgiveness?

Vincent reaches into his jacket and pulls out THE SMALL SNAPSHOT.

VINCENT
 (tears in his eyes)
 Yes.
 (prompts Crewcut to repeat after him)
 Then in the name of the father-

CREWCUT AGENT
 In the name of the father-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VINCENT
 (as he presses the snapshot
 into Crewcut's hand)
 And the son-

Crewcut looks at snapshot in his hand.

CREWCUT AGENT
 (after a pause)
 And...and the son.

VINCENT
 And the holy spirit, I absolve you of all
 your sins.

CREWCUT AGENT
 ...the holy spirit...I absolve you of
 your sins.

VINCENT
 Thank you.
 (looks down at the briefcase)
 I have one more thing...
 (motions for Crewcut to draw
 close)
 ...one more thing to ask.

Crewcut leans down close.

Vincent, struggling for breath, whispers desperately into
 Crewcut's ear.

Crewcut listens, as Vincent grips his hand tightly.

Now come more footsteps.

Crewcut quickly rises up to see who's coming.

It's Frankie, hands behind his head, with Homely behind him.

CREWCUT AGENT
 Where's his handcuffs?

HOMELY AGENT
 In the car.

Frankie steps up, to get a better look at Vincent.

FRANKIE
 Who's the amateur, now? Huh?

He smiles and laughs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Crewcut looks at Frankie, then levels him with the butt of his shotgun.

Frankie goes down, gasping.

CREWCUT AGENT
(to homely)
Get him outta here.

ON FRANKIE

He grabs something lying on the ground near Vincent as Homely pulls him to his feet.

Frankie rises and smiles at Crewcut.

Then Homely hustles him off.

Crewcut kneels back down by Vincent's side.

Vincent is dead.

Crewcut looks at the snapshot Vincent pressed into his hand.

It's picture of Vincent as a younger man, with A LITTLE BOY riding on his shoulders.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT APPROACHING A CAR

Frankie sits in the back seat while Homely stands nearby, talking to a senior agent.

The senior agent notices Crewcut carrying the briefcase.

SENIOR AGENT
(re: the case)
How much?

CREWCUT AGENT
(non-chalantly)
A grand. Maybe two. Mostly small bills.
These greaseballs'd rather kill their
grandmothers than part with money.

Surprised, Homely starts to say something to Crewcut, but Crewcut silences him with a meaningful look, then heads off.

IN THE BACKSEAT

Frankie, now cuffed, sits with a cigarette dangling from his lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Homely turns to see Frankie trying to slip THE PACK OF DUNHILLS back into his jacket.

FRANKIE
(cocky)
Got a light?

DISSOLVE TO:

CHURCH BELLS RINGING, high atop SAINT AMELIA'S.

Down below, we witness the noisy throng of church-goers leaving Sunday mass, spilling out the front and side exits.

We find HOMELY among the faithful milling about outside.

He checks his watch, then something catches his eye.

CUT TO:

A BIG BLACK CHEVY

as it negotiates a parking spot on the street in front of the church.

Through the crowd, Homely watches the driver, A LARGE MAN IN BLACK, get out and open the trunk. The flow of people prevents us from clearly seeing the large man's face.

Homely turns and heads towards the rear of the church.

EXT. BEHIND THE CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Homely comes around a corner and walks up to CREWCUT, lighting a cigarette. They speak in low, serious tones.

HOMELY AGENT
He's here.

CREWCUT AGENT
Is he alone?

HOMELY AGENT
(nods "yes")
Are they ready?

CREWCUT AGENT
(nods, then looks around)
They're thinking outside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOMELY AGENT
(as he heads off)
I'll take care of it.

CUT TO:

THE LARGE MAN walking alongside the church, favoring the shade, lugging AN OVERSIZE SUITCASE. He's sweating profusely.

We're behind him, so we still can't see his face.

Homely approaches him.

HOMELY AGENT (CONT'D)
(low)
We're going to do it outside. In the back.
(re: the suitcase)
You okay?

LARGE MAN
(puffing)
Fine. Fine. You guys are gonna be there, right? In case...

HOMELY AGENT
(reassuring)
Everything's going to be fine. Just relax.

Homely pats him on the arm.

CUT TO:

CREWCUT

standing outside what appears to be A TWO-STORY HOUSE behind the church.

Homely peers around the corner, nods to Crewcut, who nods back and then moves toward a side door.

As Crewcut slips inside the house, we follow Homely back around the house to

THE BACKYARD

where we see the large man has just finished transforming his suitcase into a table with a fancy-fringed banner that reads "THE AMAZING ALPHONSO!"

The man dons A TOP HAT, then turns to face Homely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's BIG AL -- DRESSED IN A MAGICIAN'S COSTUME.

We're talking tails, funny mustache, the works.

HOMELY AGENT

Looks great.

BIG AL

(mopping his brow)

Yeah. Gonna try out some new stuff today.

Suddenly, we hear gasps, followed by excited squeals.

Homely turns to see the FACES OF CHILDREN at the back windows of the house. They disappear for a moment, reappearing at the

BACK DOOR

where a procession of smiling kids is lead by various nuns and nurses out into the backyard. Some use crutches, some are in wheelchairs, some are pale and sickly-looking, but despite their various infirmities, all these kids beam with excitement.

After the last kid exits, the door starts to swing shut, then it STOPS, held open by SOMEONE'S FOOT, which belongs to

CREWCUT

who swings the door back open. In his arms he holds THE BOY FROM THE IRON LUNG.

The boy still looks frail, but he's bright with anticipation as Crewcut carries him toward the group of kids now settled on the grass around Big Al.

We spot a COMIC BOOK in Crewcut's back pocket.

WITH BIG AL AND THE KIDS

BIG AL (CONT'D)

(funny Italian accent)

Hello, everybody! I am the amazing Alphonso! I hope I've come to right place! Do you like magic?

CHILDREN

YESSSSSS!

And as Al continues his practiced patter, we slowly pull away from this idyllic scene, up and over the house, where a we see a prominent sign out front that reads

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAINT AMELIA'S YOUTH RETREAT

A smaller, hand-lettered sign next to it reads: *Dedication Ceremony next week!*

As we continue to pull back we see A PLAYGROUND under construction next to the newly-built retreat, brightening what was formerly the abandoned lot.

Just beyond the playground stands an old tree...and in the shade of this tree we find what appears to be THE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN...WITH A SMALL BOY ATOP HIS SHOULDERS, both silently watching Al and the kids from afar.

VINCENT (V.O.)
To have a gift, and not use it...well,
that's a sin.

FADE OUT.

THE END