

DREAMLAND LOVERS

Written by

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# DREAMLAND LOVERS

SOME FANTASIES  
YOU DON'T WAKE UP  
FROM



WRITTEN BY  
DENNIS J MANNING

INT. LOW-LIT BAR - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Neon flickers. Jazz hums low. Almost closing time.

ERIC (38) sits alone, sketching words into a black notebook.

He's nursing a whiskey, hoodie half-zipped.

Until Carlos (early 40s) bumps into him. Smooth. Confident.

Eric's phone clatters off the bar. Eric doesn't notice that his phone fell.

CARLOS  
Sorry about that.

He picks it up - but doesn't hand it to Eric.

Instead, he hands it off - behind him - to PAPI (30s).

Papi doesn't speak. Just thumbs across the screen. Calm. Casual.

Seconds pass. Then he slips it back on the bar.

Carlos is already walking out.

Papi vanishes down the hall.

A beat.

BARTENDER (50s) returns with the phone.

BARTENDER  
Eric, this yours?

ERIC  
Yeah... how did-?

BARTENDER  
You gotta be careful. Someone gets access to your personal shit... Then you're fucked. (to himself) a little mystery would be a good thing.

Eric laughs it off. Too tired to think twice.

Back to his notebook.

He scribbles a phrase:

Dreamland Lovers.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - SAN FRANCISCO - SUNSET (THE NEXT DAY)

The bridge is half-lost in fog.

ERIC sits on a bench, notebook open.

He draws. Scribbles. Thinks.

He writes:

"Dreamland lovers are like no other."

BUZZ. His phone lights up.

TEXT - ROBERT:

Hey big boy. It's your birthday  
tomorrow.

Have I got a surprise for you. XXO.

ERIC

(texting back)

Alright. Go easy. - Eric

He lowers the phone. Eyes the bridge.

Writes:

Dreamland. Dreamers. Dreaming...

Dreamland Lovers.

He circles it.

That's it.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

ON SCREEN:

11:11 PM

ERIC (late 30s, wiry strength, the look of a man who's been  
in his head too long) lies still - eyes open. Wide. Waiting.

Eric looks to the clock on the dresser.

ERIC  
11:11. Angels.

Soft moonlight. Crumpled sheets. A bare chest rising slow.

A breeze stirs the curtain.

Something unseen presses into the room.

Then—

A VOICE. Low. Velvet. Dangerous.

PAPI (V.O.)  
Let it go. There's no choice. And  
surrender. It's not weakness. It's  
the truth that we exist.

Eric gasps.

Not from fear — from \*recognition.\*

His eyes close.

PAPI (V.O.)  
(commanding and sure)  
I got you.

Eric lets go.

Beat. Lighting flashes and in the flash a figure is there.  
Thick. Breathing is low and measured.

The Lighting flashes again and the figure is gone.

ERIC  
(Sniff. Sniff. )  
What is that scent?

His breath quickens.

SFX his heart starts to beat faster.

Then slowly, he turns his head — as if he can feel where the  
voice came from.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I would have it no other way, Papi.  
I'm not weak. I'm not your boy. I  
am your man. And sometimes... I'll  
give in. And sometimes... you will.

Whispers in the dark.

The lighting flashes. Movement.

Fingers snap twice.

PAPI  
(teasing circling)  
You're looking the wrong way. I  
will have your full attention.

The air thickens.

ERIC  
(In acceptance of the  
challenge)  
That thrill — of who leads and who  
follows? Both are dangerous. Both  
are holy.

He reaches up. Touches the pillow beside him.

It's still warm.

A sudden inhale. His nostrils flare.

His hand drops under the sheet.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(sniff)  
Who's there?

A beat.

Then—

Papi stands still at the foot of the bed.

Light cuts across his chest — broad, shadowed, gleaming with  
heat.

He doesn't blink. Doesn't speak.

PAPI (V.O.)  
Eyes right here.

Eric' breath catches.

He turns, SLOWLY —

And there, standing at the foot of the bed —Papi.

Shirtless. Still. Solid. Dangerous calm. His chest full and strong with a dusting of hair the trials to his waist and below.

ERIC  
(gasp)  
His scent is everywhere.

His eyes? Locked on Eric.

Not lustful. Not gentle. \*Commanding.\*

His voice barely above a whisper:

PAPI  
Shhh. You're already mine. Case closed.

Eric exhales – like he's been holding that breath for years.

Lightening flares. Electricity crackles. The clock flashes 11:11 then goes out.

Outside a transformer is hit and the explosion is heard. The glow and sound come through the open window.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
Quiet now, boy.

Cut to black.

TITLE CARD: DREAMLAND LOVERS

INT. ERIC' BEDROOM - MORNING

ON SCREEN:

FLASHING CLOCK 11:11 PM

Light is filtering through the window. A breeze passes through. Eric looks at his watch: 6:05. He stretches. Looks as if nothing occurred. He looks and then shakes his head in confidence to shake it off.

ERIC  
(hums)  
*He wakes up in the morning at 6:05.*

He stops.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(Sniff. Sniff)  
That scent? Feels like (he sniffs  
his arm, smells it) God, like I am  
wearing it?

He lifts his arm and smells his armpit.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(he laughs)  
Here to? Oh D-Man, you and your  
imagination.

A shadow moves at his peripheral. He turns.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Ok, Robert, come out! The joke is  
over. Me turning 32 yesterday and  
now you want to play games. I got  
you!

He throws open the closet door.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(excited)  
I got you!

No one is there. He darts in the bathroom.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
AH HA!

No one there. He sniffs. Sniffs. He turns slowly.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I smell you.

He stops. He looks at the mirror. Written in black.

MIRROR:

*You're already mine. Case closed. grrr Papi*

His cell phone rings. The sound jars him. It rings again.  
He looks. Doesn't recognize the number. He answers.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(questioning)  
Hello? (no sound) Hello? (beat) Ok  
Robert, you got me. You fucking  
got me! Ha Ha. So what's the plan  
for me for today? It is my birthday  
weekend. And



PAPI ON THE PHONE

(low)  
Less talk.

ERIC

We better have things planned

PAPI ON THE PHONE

Focus.

ERIC

Ok Ok Robert, enough. What time  
are you/

PAPI ON THE PHONE

You're already mine. Case closed.

ERIC

(breath catches)  
Say that again.

PAPI ON THE PHONE

I don't need to repeat myself. We  
both know.

Phone Clicks. Eric looks around.

ERIC

(calling out)  
Robert! Robert! Are you filming  
this?

Loud WRAP on the door. Eric jumps.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Jesus!

Loud wrap at the door. Twice. Sounds immediate, urgent.

Eric hits the stairs and goes to the first floor.

INT. FIRST FLOOR FRONT DOOR.

ERIC

Ok Robert I know I set up that lap  
dance with Superman for you and we  
all had a laugh but Ok

He opens the door.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Enough is

He looks down and there is a small package, wrapped in brown paper.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(hesitation)  
Enough.

He picks up the package. Looks around. The street is quiet. A Electric company truck is off the to the right working on the Transformer. A woman walks by with her poodle. A serene day in progress. Eric closes the door.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(quiet, almost  
involuntary)  
Pedro...

SMASH TO:

FLASH BACK INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM - YEARS AGO - DAY

Eric slides a small notebook across the glass. Pedro picks it up, eyes tender.

PEDRO  
You really wrote about me?

ERIC  
I only write about things I can't  
let go of.

Pedro smiles. That smile we'll lose later.

HARD CUT

INT. KITCHEN

Eric gets a butcher knife to cut the wrapping and the knife goes to far and the tip stabs the heel of his thumb. Just a prick but enough to make a droplet of blood splat on the counter.

ERIC  
(surprised)  
Fuck.

He puts his hand in his mouth to suck the blood. The blood droplet on the counter smears. His lips are crimson from sucking his hand.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Fuck.

He runs water at the sink. Blots the hand with paper towel.  
Light blood spot appears.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(he grunts)

Now what the hell is this.

He gets the paper off. Opens the box. A note and a compass.

ERIC (CONT'D)

A compass? What am I boy scout  
now. Oh so you want to role bring  
it on. (sarcastic laugh) A fucking  
compass.

He opens the folded paper. The camera reads it while Papi  
voice over.

PAPI V.O.

*Focus on me.  
Go deep.  
Go hard.  
Or go the fuck home.  
Game. The. Fuck. On.  
Wait for your next move.  
I won't tell you twice.  
Xxx,  
Your Papi*

No words.

Just a breath.

And fade to black.

INT. ERIC' LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The phone RINGS. Blocked number. Eric answers.

PAPI (PHONE)

Take the compass. Go to the attic.

CLICK.

Eric scoffs.

ERIC

Fuck that.

He sets the compass down. Then the phone.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Fuuuuccck This. Robert, I am gonna  
 kick your ass when I see you today.  
 You want to test me? Push me over  
 the edge? I dare you.  
 (anger building)  
 I double-dog-dare you to try and  
 make me crack. Bullshit.

He opens the fridge. Inside: a single black rose in a vase.  
 Nothing else.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Shit.

He slams the door.

His phone beeps – a text.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

PAPI V.O.  
 (commanding, controlled)  
*"This is the only time I will  
 repeat myself.  
 The attic. Now.  
 Next time I will not give you a  
 pass.  
 It will be a punishment.  
 Your choice.  
 Ja ja.  
 Like you think you have one.  
 – Your Papi."*

Eric stares.

Looks around.

ERIC  
 (determined and low)  
 Okay. Happy birthday to me.

He grabs the compass. Heads for the attic.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Eric climbs the attic stairs. Slow. Barefoot. The compass in  
 his palm twitches like a heartbeat.

Each step creaks – not loud, but known.

Like the house is listening.

PAPI V.O.  
 (mysterious and mystical)  
 Dreamland lovers are like no others  
 They don't ask questions. They  
 don't tell lies.

CUT TO:

NT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

The door groans open.

Dust swirls in the moonlight. The air is dry, electric,  
 charged. A faint humming – like static or breath just beyond  
 the walls.

Eric steps in. The compass jerks toward a corner of the  
 attic.

A single wooden chest sits beneath a slanted beam.

He pauses. A black rose in a vase stands on the chest. A  
 low spotlight is on the rose.

PAPI (V.O.)  
 They don't need names.  
 They don't need permission.

ERIC  
 (sly)  
 Oh Robert, if you are filming this,  
 if this goes out on TikTok, believe  
 me, I will kill you. (he laughs)  
 you fuck, bring it on.

Eric crouches beside the chest. His fingers hover above the  
 latch.

Then—he opens it.

Inside: neatly folded black fabric. Silk? Cotton? Memory?

And a small envelope.

He lifts it.

His breath catches.

CLOSE ON  
 ENVELOPE:

Scrawled in Papi's handwriting:

*"The first time you broke. Let's see if you've healed."*

Eric opens it.

Inside: A polaroid. Of Eric. Maybe 19. Standing at this same chest.

Naked shoulders. Bruised eyes. Holding the compass.

His hand trembles. Not from fear. From return.

PAPI (V.O.)  
They just appear...  
Right when you need them. Right  
when you're about to run.

Eric lowers the photo.

He looks around.

ERIC  
Where are you? I hear this voice.  
OK it is Sexy as hell, but how are/

The phone rings. Number blocked. He answers.

PAPI ON THE PHONE  
I got you.

CLICK.

Whispers swirl. Not words – reminders.

He doesn't run.

He sits. Still. Ready.

ERIC  
(softly, to the dark)  
I'm here.

And the compass?

It spins.

Then stops.

Pointing deeper into the shadows.

Phone message goes off. New text.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 (arrogant)  
 Clever fuck. Come at me.

The camera sees the text. Papi V.O.

PAPI V.O.  
*Do I have your attention?*

ERIC  
 (scoffs)  
 For now till I'm bored (he laughs)

New Text comes in. The camera sees it.

PAPI V.O.  
*You're already mine. Case closed.*

ERIC  
 (laughs, arrogant)  
 Yea, yea, you must be old. You  
 already said that, Dumbass. Lead  
 the way or I will.

Text comes in.

PAPI V.O.  
*Less talk. I need you to focus.*

ERIC  
 (scoffs)  
 I NEED you to move this along.

TEXT BUZZ

PAPI (V.O.)  
 Game. The. Fuck. On. Turn south.

Eric inhales— Stillness. He lifts the compass. It spins... settles.

South.

He turns toward the attic window. Steps closer. Peers out—

ANGLE: THE BACKYARD

A small box on the grass. Centered. Waiting.

ERIC  
 (low, steady)  
 You better be ready, Papi.

You have no idea who you're up against.

TEXT BUZZ.

ON SCREEN:

Move. Go.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Eric walks fast. Passes the kitchen— Stops. Freezes.

The chef's knife is gone. In blood on the counter: a heart shape. Two Xs. Signed: PAPI.

ERIC  
(whispers)  
What the hell...?

TEXT BUZZ.

He checks the phone.

PAPI (V.O.)  
Dreamland lovers — they got you  
covered.

They don't tell your secrets. And when you wake up, they're already gone.

Eric' breath shortens.

He types—fast, erratic.

ON SCREEN:

ERIC:

Who the fuck is this?

TEXT RESPONSE — IMMEDIATE.

PAPI (V.O.)  
Still asking questions?  
Boy, you're already behind.

Eric' fingers twitch. He grips the phone tighter.



ERIC  
(to himself)  
You lose control now, you're  
fucked.

TEXT BUZZ.

PAPI (V.O.)  
Or maybe...  
you're not up for this.

Beat. Eric looks out the back window again.

Then— he moves.

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Eric steps outside. The grass is wet. Cool. The compass in one hand, the chill in his spine sharper than the air.

In the center of the yard sits a small wooden box.

Simple. Old. Unmistakably placed.

He approaches. Slow. Measured. As if it might detonate.

Kneels.

Brushes dew off the lid.

Opens it.

Inside: a black leather-bound journal.

His hand stops.

No ribbon. No lock. Just history staring back at him.

He lifts it. Eyes narrow.

ERIC  
No. No. No. I burned this.

He flips it open. First page. His handwriting.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Jesus Christ.

CLOSE ON JOURNAL  
— FIRST PAGE:

"March 2nd.If anyone finds this -please forgive me.I don't know how to stop wanting him.I just want to disappear."

Eric' knees falter.

He sits on the damp grass.

He flips page after page.

Drawings. Scribbles. Pain. Shame. Heat.

Entries of rage, lust, prayer, betrayal.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
This can't be. I watched this burn.  
I watched it-

A final page. Different handwriting. Not his.

Papi's.

PAPI (V.O.)  
You didn't disappear. You just forgot who you were. Open your mouth, Eric. Say it.

Eric shuts the book. Holds it to his chest.

He looks up -

To the attic window.

To the sky.

To nothing.

ERIC  
(quiet, trembling)  
I still want him. I still want...  
\*you.\*

Beat.

His phone buzzes.

NEW TEXT:

*Good boy. Keep going. The next test is in the basement.*

*Bring the journal. Bring a candle.*

*There is no light but fire.*

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
I told him to hurt me...  
just so I could feel something  
real. I wanted him to say I was  
his. And he walked away.

A tear cuts down his cheek. Not from sadness. From release.  
He clutches the journal tight.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Okay. Let's see if you can break me  
again.

He turns. Heads back toward the house.

BOOM.

A transformer sparks by the electric crew. Eric jumps.

ELECTRIC WORKER  
(yelling)  
Jack! The power's out! We blew the  
grid!

Eric' phone rings. Blocked number.

ERIC  
(cautious)  
Hello?

PAPI (ON PHONE)  
(dark. low.)  
Hey, Mr. Dream...  
Will you come back tonight? Don't  
be a statue. Don't hide in plain  
sight. Get the candle. Don't keep  
me waiting.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN

Eric gets a candle from the junk drawer. He fishes around and  
get a pack of matches. His hands tremble just a little.

ERIC  
(to himself)  
Robert, when I tell you there will  
be a price to pay for this, I mean  
it.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 And that voice of "Papi" God, what  
 a stale bit of acting he provides.  
 All tough, Christ I bet he's 5'2"  
 (he mimics in a girlish voice,  
*"Good boy. Keep going. The next  
 test is in the basement.  
 Bring the journal. Bring a candle.  
 There is no light but fire."* (mimic  
 stops. Scoff)

A buzz saw is heard in the basement. Eric looks. He tries  
 the light switch nothing. He tries the oven. Nothing. He  
 gets the rolling pin.

BUZZ - Text

TEXT  
 Just you. The journal and the  
 candle.

Black out

INT. BASEMENT

Eric comes down the stairs, leaving the door open to allow  
 light. He gets to the bottom step where it is now dark and  
 the open door slams shut.

ERIC  
 (He jumps)  
 Fuck.

He runs up the steps and tries the door it is locked.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 Ok so maybe you're not Robert. I  
 don't know who the fuck you are or  
 what you want, but come out you.  
 I'm not afraid of you. Just  
 disappointed.

He descends the stairs. Now on the bottom step. He lights  
 the match to light the candle.

Behind him, a shadow looms. Strong. Dangerous

PAPI  
 (slow and low)  
 Case closed.

Eric spins around. Papi blows out the candle.

DARK

PAPI (CONT'D)  
You are mine.

THUD. Body Drops.

The screen lingers black. Only Eric' breath remains.

Then – silence.

Then – nothing

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

DARK.

A beat. Then two. Silence, until it isn't.

The match lights again. Not in front of Eric – behind him.

We hear the scrape. The hush of the flame. The soft crackle of dust and air burning away.

PAPI (O.S.)  
We're past the part where you beg.  
This isn't about permission.

ERIC  
(tight, low)  
Then what the fuck is it?

CARLOS (O.S.)  
Control? Desire? Redemption?

He laughs – quiet, cruel, amused.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Pick one. We already did.

The flame flickers closer. We never see the whole room. Only pieces:

His chest, rising hard with breath

The journal, still in his lap

The candle, relit and placed between his feet

And two shadows circling like wolves

PAPI  
Say it.

ERIC  
Fuck. You.

A pause.

CARLOS  
Is that your truth?

ERIC  
It's a start.

Suddenly—

Something cold touches his chest. Not pain. Not skin.

Metal.

He looks down — A chain? A pendant? A key? It's gone before we know.

PAPI (O.S.)  
No light but fire.  
No answers without confession.

ERIC  
(barely audible)  
Then ask the question.

CARLOS  
Alright.

A beat. Stillness.

Then—

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
What did you bury in that journal?  
The entry you swore you'd never  
write? The one you burned before  
the others could see it?

Eric doesn't answer.

The flame bends, hard. A draft? A breath?

PAPI (SOFT)  
He remembers.

Eric' fingers twitch. He stares into the flame. His lips move — but no sound.

ERIC  
(whispers)  
I let him call me boy  
(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
because I didn't know how to ask to  
be kept.

Silence.

CARLOS  
And now?

ERIC  
(eyes flicker up)  
Now I know I'm not the boy.  
I'm the one they come back for.

He breathes deep.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
And I'm not afraid anymore.

The shadows pause.

A beat. Then— a hand reaches into frame and presses gently  
against Eric's heart.

Not to hurt. Not to push. Just to feel it beat.

PAPI (SOFT, REVERENT)  
Good.

BLACKOUT.

We hear the flame extinguish. Then—

PAPI (V.O.)  
Next door.  
Now it begins.

INT. BASEMENT - POST-CONFESSION - DARKNESS

A cloth slips over Eric's mouth. Quick. Firm.

He struggles. Muffled gasps. Hands yank — then loosen. Chains  
fall.

We hear a ZIPPER. Not sexual. Final.

Then—

THUD.

VOICE O.S.  
(lyrical)  
*Lovers in dreamland wait until  
bedtime  
They wait for the right time to  
whisper in your ear.*

ERIC' BODY HITS THE FLOOR.

A beat of silence. Then:

PAPI  
(tense, controlled)  
Jesus, Carlos.  
What did you do that for?

CARLOS  
(laughs, low and lethal)  
Payback.  
He kicked me when I was down.

PAPI  
You hold a grudge.

CARLOS  
Only when they ask for it.

A beat. Then—

PAPI  
We've got an hour till sundown.  
Then we put him in the trunk and  
head out.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRUNK - NIGHT

Eric' head lolls. A bead of sweat slides off his nose...

MATCH CUT TO:

DREAM SEQUENCE: UNDERWATER

A drop of water falling in slow motion into the ocean.

The ripples spread. Eric floats.



Eric floats naked in indigo depths. His chest rises. Falls.  
No resistance. No fear. Just weightless stillness.

Then— A HAND grabs his ankle. Yanks him down.

STEVIE NICKS (V.O.)  
(singing sounds like it is  
through the water)  
*Drowning in the sea of love. Where  
everyone would love to drown.*

LAUREN (V.O.)  
You told me to leave him.

Dark water churns.

In the haze—

LAUREN.

Pale. Beautiful. Dead-eyed. Her mouth sewn shut with thread  
made of hair.

She floats toward him — not swimming. Drawn.

Behind her — PEDRO. Blood pours from his eyes. He laughs —  
but it's choked, muffled, drowning in place.

PEDRO (V.O.)  
You wanted Pedro? Now you drown."

He reaches for Eric— But it's not rage. It's claiming.

Suddenly—Carlos appears. But younger. Broken. On his knees.  
He sobs at Lauren's feet. Begging her.

She turns her hollow gaze to Eric.

We see it now— It was Eric who told Lauren to walk away. To  
leave Carlos. To choose herself.

But it cost her everything.

INT. BASEMENT - EARLIER THAT NIGHT

Low light. A single candle flickers. An old tape deck plays  
"Sea of Love" — the original 1959 version, warped slightly,  
playing too slow.

Carlos sits at the workbench. Bare-chested. Calm. In his  
hands: a chain. Polishing it. Slow. Ritual. Papi stands in  
the shadows. Holding Eric' old journal.

CARLOS  
He wrote it all down.  
Every lie. Every whisper he put in  
Pedro's ear.

PAPI  
(reading softly)  
"Tell him she's too close to Sean.  
That she was seen laughing with him  
in the gym."  
"...Plant the seed. Let it grow."  
(beat) He didn't just break Pedro.  
He fed him.

CARLOS  
He wanted Pedro.  
But Pedro was already mine.

A long silence. The tape clicks—restarts. The song begins  
again. Slower now. Warped.

PAPI  
I told Lauren to wait.  
I told her love could save him.  
(beat) But Eric got there first.

Carlos doesn't stop polishing.

CARLOS  
And now Pedro's rotting in a cell.

And Lauren's bones don't even have a nameplate.

(beat) But Eric? He gets to sleep. Write poems. Make art out  
of all of us.

PAPI  
Not tonight.

Papi drops the journal on the table. Hard.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
Tonight, we make him remember.

Not with fists. Not with blood. With truth.

Carlos looks up. Dangerous calm.

CARLOS  
Psychological?

PAPI  
First.

Let him think it's his dream. Let him beg for the memory.

Carlos sets down the chain.

CARLOS

Then?

PAPI

Then we take the last thing he  
thinks he owns.

His breath.

His will.

His story.

Carlos nods slowly. His voice lowers – barely a whisper.

CARLOS

You want him broken?

PAPI

No. I want him... honest.

They both look at the journal. On the open page – a line,  
underlined three times:

"I told Pedro what I had to. She was going to take him away  
from me."

Carlos reaches for the candle. Cups it.

CARLOS

He wanted Pedro to stay.  
Now he gets to know what staying  
feels like.

A long pause. The music warps again.

PAPI

Put him in the trunk.

CARLOS

Already done.

They clink glasses.

PAPI & CARLOS

Cheers.

PAPI

Heads or tails?

Carlos flips a coin.

CARLOS  
(smiling dark)  
Doesn't matter.

I'll get both before we're through.

SMASH CUT BACK: INT. TRUNK - NIGHT  
Eric WAKES—gasping. Covered in  
sweat.

PAPI (V.O.)  
You didn't take her from him.  
You just showed her what he  
couldn't be.

Eric SCREAMS.

The car keeps driving.

CARLOS (O.S.)  
Let's see how much more he  
remembers.

ERIC (V.O.)  
I just wanted him to want me.  
Not... bury her

INT. CAR - DRIVING - NIGHT

Papi drives. Calm. Steady. Carlos in the passenger seat,  
sipping from a silver flask.

CARLOS  
You sure about this?

PAPI  
We're past sure. It's time. He  
needs to be unmade.

CARLOS  
Like he unmade us?

Beat.

PAPI  
Pedro's doing life. Lauren's bones  
are dust. But Eric? He gets to  
write books. Get awards. Smile for  
camera.

CARLOS  
Not for long.

They both look forward. Silence but for the engine.

INT. TRUNK - SAME TIME

Eric curls tighter. The dream returns.

Lauren with her lips sewn shut floats by lifeless.

Pedro now as a shark, his face clearly visible, comes up on Lauren.

ERIC  
No! Lauren swim. Swim!

Pedro devours Lauren. The sea goes bloody.

In the bloody sea Stevie is heard.

STEVIE NICKS (V.O.)  
(singing)  
*Drowning in the sea of love.*

Paper valentine hearts float by:

-Pedro + Lauren

-Pedro+ Eric

-Eric + Carlos

-GAME THE FUCK OVER

ERIC  
(screams)  
No! No!

Pedro the Shark rips through the last remains of Lauren. The shark comes eye to eye with Eric.

A net captures Pedro the shark and the Camera follow upward to the surface. The water becomes turbulent as Pedro struggles to get free.

The camera breaks through the water.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MAXIMUM JAIL

Pedro Vanega a 33 well built but beat up and used con in jail for life. Nobody messes with him. He wears a whit tank and orange jail pants. He thick muscled arms display pain and trouble.

A tattoo: REVENGE on his Right bicep.

Black eyes. Black hair. 5 o'clock shadow.

He stands and looks out cold. On his pants: **P VANEGA.**

His cellmate, a younger man of 22, white, thin looks over at him and Pedro gives him a backhand that knocks him to the floor.

WHOMP.

The kid shakes his head and rubs his jaw.

Pedro stands over a younger inmate, who flinches from the slap.

PEDRO  
(low, cold)  
You don't look at me unless I say  
so.

He grabs the boy's chin. Pulls him close.

PEDRO (CONT'D)  
While you're down there...

Pedro turns away. The boy doesn't move. Just breathes.

The camera is held on Pedro's back.

A brand of pain inked in muscle and tattoos.

Fade out. No sound. Just silence.

PEDRO (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Feeding time.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. TRUNK

Eric covered in sweat. The voices of Carlos and Papi heard outside the trunk.

PAPI V.O.  
Carlos you ready.

The trunk opens. POV from Eric. Flashlight blinds his eyes.  
Carlos pulls Eric out with one scoop.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE WATER - MIDNIGHT - BLACK & WHITE

Eric lies on the ground, face half in mud, half in moonlight.  
His chest rises. Bare. Bruised. Breath ragged.

POV - ERIC

The moon flickers in his eyes. Two pairs of boots crush  
gravel nearby - heavy, merciless.

SFX: CRUNCH. CRUNCH.

The boots stop. Silence.

CARLOS (O.S.)  
(cool, deadly)  
Let's see if he begs in Spanish.

THUMP. Eric's body hits the ground like a bag of oranges.  
SLAM. The trunk door shuts behind him. KICK. Carlos drives  
his boot into Eric's ribs - a low, brutal crack.

BLACKOUT.

FADE IN: STILL BLACK & WHITE - EXT. SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

Eric groans.

Gravel shifts again. Carlos and Papi's boots come into frame.  
Papi tosses a half-empty bottle of whisky. Carlos catches it  
without looking.

CARLOS  
Papi, hand me the bottle.

He squats beside Eric - face to face. Carlos' 5 o'clock  
shadow nearly grazes Eric's cheek. The scent of sweat, smoke,  
and rotgut whisky hits him hard.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Hey. Take a drink.

He forces the bottle between Eric' lips. Pours a burning shot down his throat.

Eric gags. Chokes.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
You'll need to swallow better than that. But not much time to learn. Like my patience, your time, boy, is running out.

PAPI  
(quiet)  
Go easy.

WHACK. Carlos spins – lands a punch clean into Papi's eye.

Papi stumbles. Grabs the side of the shack. Blood drips from his brow. He doesn't retaliate.

PAPI (WIPING BLOOD) (CONT'D)  
Still your brother.

CARLOS  
(low, deadly calm)  
You always had a weak grip on power, hermano. You forgot your place. I just reminded you who keeps the leash.

Papi rises, wiping blood from his lip, but doesn't move to retaliate. Not yet.

ERIC  
(careful, testing the temperature)  
So what happens now? What now – two gods fighting, and I'm the sacrifice?

Carlos turns—slow, deliberate—and approaches Eric.

CARLOS  
No, chico. The boy learns what real danger feels like.

He kneels. His hand grips Eric' jaw—not tender, testing. Squeezes.

ERIC  
(quiet, almost a whisper)  
Finally... the storm shows up.



Carlos releases. Stands. Unbuttons his cuff. Rolls it up like he's prepping surgery.

CARLOS

Papi wanted to play games.  
I don't.  
You get five minutes. You scream,  
you lie, you crack...  
I won't stop him next time.  
(beat)  
And maybe I don't stop myself  
either.

ERIC

(a flicker of panic,  
buried fast)  
What happened to love, Carlos?

CARLOS

(sharp)  
Love's a lie the weak tell to keep  
strong men still.

Papi watches. Something... unsteady in his breath.

ERIC

(to Papi, barely audible)  
He doesn't need us. He never did.  
You're just a body.  
A tool.  
A step he skipped.

Papi twitches. Carlos doesn't flinch.

CARLOS

No secrets now, mi amor.  
Let's find out who's really in  
control.

ERIC (LOW, STEADY)

Every man breaks different.

SMASH CUT: BACK TO COLOR

ERIC' POV:

Red blood. Brown dirt. Moonlight glows yellow now. The cold world has heat again.

He coughs. Tries to move. Fails.

Carlos leans over him again. This time, quieter. Intimate. Deadly.

CARLOS (SOFTLY)  
You don't even know what this is  
about yet.

ERIC (RASPED WHISPER)  
You're insane.

CARLOS  
No. Insane's what comes later.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Eric is dragged inside - half-conscious, half-burning.

The shack is dim. Cold. Not just empty - arranged.

A chair in the center.

A candle burning low.

A table in front of the chair.

On it: a framed photo of LAUREN.

And next to it: a roll of duct tape, already used.

In the corner: the journal and a glass of water he'll never  
get to drink.

Carlos tosses Eric into the chair. Papi moves silently behind  
- ties his wrists down. He does it gently. Reverent.

ERIC  
(spits blood)  
What is this... your fucked-up  
altar?

PAPI  
(calm)  
Not an altar.  
A reckoning.

Carlos circles.

ERIC  
What the fuck do you want?

PAPI  
Confession.

CARLOS  
Consequence.

ERIC  
A game show? I'll take "Who Gives  
a Shit" for \$200.

Carlos leans in, you can smell the liquor.

CARLOS  
I will have you on your knees  
before long.

ERIC  
Damn, I left my rosary/

WHACK. A slap to Eric's Face by Carlos.

Eric goes quiet. Carlos puts a photo in his face.

CARLOS  
See her? (points to the photo)  
You don't even remember her face,  
do you?

Eric locks eyes with the photo. It's Lauren. Smiling. Alive.

ERIC  
(soft)  
Lauren. She had... green eyes.

Carlos SLAMS his fist on the table – candle flickers.

CARLOS  
No, she didn't.

Beat.

PAPI  
Tell us, Eric.  
When did it start?

ERIC  
Start?

CARLOS  
When you wanted Pedro.  
When you whispered what you  
whispered.

ERIC  
(smirking)  
First of all. Nice costumes. You  
clowns shop at Target or go upscale  
at Wal-Mart.

Carlos immediately back-hands Eric across the mouth.

Papi doesn't move. Eric shakes it off.

CARLOS

You want to be a smartass I can do this all night, but like I said, you don't have much time.

PAPI

Like I told we won't ask twice.

ERIC

(wise)

Oh it's "we" now, Papi I thought you were the Big Man in charge, "Papi Chulo" seems I've been talking to the second in command so far. I see you let him slap you down, too. Good Boy.

Papi explodes and does a neck-hold choke on Eric.

Carlos pulls Papi off. Eric takes a beat.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(choked)

And there it is. The truth. You're not here for revenge. You're here because you were left out.

PAPI (QUIET, HAUNTED)

You told Pedro she was cheating. You fed his rage. (beat) She trusted him. But she walked into the room with your words in her ear. And never walked out.

ERIC

Like I said, Papi is the boy, Carlos the Daddy. You had me fooled Papi, fuck I thought you were the real-deal.

Eric turns to Carlos.

ERIC (CONT'D)

So, (slyly) who the fuck are you.

Carlos backhands Eric again, and the chair and Eric hit the floor. Eric grunts.

PAPI

Oh that's gonna leave a mark.

CARLOS  
(to Papi)  
Get him up.

Papi toss the chair and Eric back to a seated position.

Eric' lip is cut, blood coming down his face.

ERIC  
Papi, can I get some water?

Papi goes to get the water. As Eric yells out he stops.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
What a pussy. I should have said,  
"Carlos says 'Papi get Eric some  
water.'" What a poser you are. All  
tough on the text messages. Jesus,  
I bet you like Showtunes and Judy  
Garland. (he laughs).

Carlos pulls Eric up by the shirt lifting him off the floor.  
His patience gone.

CARLOS  
Listen here, Boy, you better settle  
the fuck down or

ERIC  
Or what? What? Hit me again? Have  
at it. Happy Birthday to me. If  
you guys were actually butch and  
real Daddies, this could be a hot  
fantasy, but as I see it now, a got  
a couple of Rent-A-Thugs from El  
Paso trying to act like SCARFACE.

Carlos puts the chair down. He gets the duct tape, rips off  
a piece and slaps it across Eric mouth.

CARLOS  
(brutal)  
Now shut the fuck up. Any  
questions?

HOLD. Then Eric starts laughing. Carlos and Papi look at  
each other. Eric laughs.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(leans in and deadly  
voice)  
What is so funny, Boy?

He taps Eric' face. Eric mumbles.

Carlos rips the duct tape off. And Eric Laughs.

ERIC  
(sarcastic)  
You tape my mouth shut...  
then ask if I've got any questions?  
You stupid, Mexican/

CARLOS  
I'm Cuban.

ERIC  
All the same, right?

Carlos gut punches Eric. Eric coughs.

CARLOS  
You know how to beg in Spanish?

ERIC  
(laughing)  
Oh, I live for that lesson.

SILENCE.

Then Papi laughs. Carlos turns and glares.

Carlos takes the duct tape and rips another piece and covers Eric's mouth for a 2nd time.

CARLOS  
I talk. You listen.

Carlos takes a knife from his boot and slashes Eric left bicep.

ERIC (behind the tape, muffled but steady): mmmmmfffhhhhmmm..

PAPI (QUIET)  
He's still laughing.

CARLOS  
Your turn, Papi. I give you 15 minutes to get what you can, do what you want then I'm back and I will get this party started.

Papi rips off the tape.

PAPI  
I've been waiting for my turn.

Carlos heads out the door.

ERIC  
(yelling after him)  
Hey Carlos!

Carlos stops and comes back.

CARLOS  
(sinister)  
What?

Silence.

ERIC  
(low and deadly)  
Good Boy. I see you come when your  
called. I don't even need a  
whistle.

As Carlos tapes Eric's mouth for the third time – tight,  
brutal – Eric doesn't flinch.

He just stares. Lets the silence grow.

And then?

Eric lifts one hand – as much as the restraint allows – slow...  
steady... deliberate.

Middle finger.

Not a joke.

Not a bratty gesture.

A crown.

He offers it like a crucifix.

And then...

He laughs.

Blood in his teeth. Duct tape across his mouth.

And still – he laughs.

FADE.

INT. SHACK – NIGHT – POST-CARLOS EXIT

The door clicks shut behind Carlos. Dust settles. Only  
candlelight now. Flickering like it's holding its breath.

Eric sits bound, bloody, smirking. The tape still on his mouth. His finger still raised like a middle-fingered saint.

Papi watches.

Steps closer. Slow. Unhurried. Like this moment's been years in the making.

PAPI  
(soft)  
You think you won something just  
now?

Eric doesn't move. Doesn't blink. Just breathes — shallow. Arrogant. Laughs behind the tape.

Papi crouches. Eye level. Close enough that Eric feels the warmth in his breath.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
You don't even remember what you  
took. You just wanted to win.  
But this isn't a game, Eric.  
It's a burial.

Papi reaches up — not fast. Just peels the tape away like he's unwrapping a wound.

Eric licks blood off his lip.

ERIC  
Then put me in the ground, Papi.  
But you better make sure I don't  
rise.

A long silence. Papi pulls a chair turns it Backwards , straddles it and sit inches away, face-to-face with Eric. He smiles like a tiger about to slowly and surely have his dinner.

PAPI  
All talk, boy, all talk.

ERIC  
Oh yes, I forgot, you want my full  
attention.

Eric smiles. Then winks like a smug son-of-a-gun.

Papi, leans in head-to-head.



PAPI  
(slow and low)  
Oh I am gonna love breaking you  
down.

Beat.

Eric leans forward and kisses Papi's lips. Just a touch. He pulls back.

ERIC  
I 've been wondering what  
you would taste like.

Papi didn't see that coming for a moment he is thrown off and Eric clocks it. He quickly grabs Eric by throat.

PAPI  
(squeezes out the words)  
And what did I taste like, you  
fuck.

Papi release him. Eric' face is red. He pauses then looks at Papi in the eye.

ERIC  
(dry)  
Like regret.

Papi explodes slaps his face right then left.

PAPI  
Regret? Regret?

ERIC  
Jesus, Papi. You're the one coming  
undone. Maybe that punch from  
Daddy Carlos did you in. You want  
take a break? Put on something  
more comfortable? I could rub your  
feet?

Papi gets up slowly. He puts the chair back to the corner. He walks around behind Eric. The tension builds.

Then:

PAPI  
You remember the gym? Pedro,  
laughing with her? Your hand on his  
shoulder like you owned him?

Eric' smirk falters. For just a second.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
 You told him she was gonna leave  
 him. That she had someone else.  
 And you said it like you were  
 helping. You said it with a smile.

Eric looks away.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
 And when she died? You disappeared.  
 You wrote your poems. You lit  
 candles for Pedro. You never lit  
 one for her.

Eric' voice is quiet. Flat. Real.

ERIC  
 I didn't think it would go that  
 far.

PAPI  
 That's the problem with you.  
 You never think. You just need.

BEAT.

Papi leans in.

PAPI  
 Carlos wants your blood.  
 I wanted your truth.

He sets the journal in Eric' lap. Then the pen.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
 So write. Start where it hurts.  
 And if it's not honest? I'll let  
 him back in. You got 5 minutes.

Papi turns. Blows out the candle.

DARK

ERIC  
 (yelling)  
 Hey dumb-ass. My hands are tied.  
 Kind of hard to/

The door flies open. Just shadows seep in.

SFX: The sound of a switch blade opening.

Eric does a sharp intake of air.

The sound of a chair sliding slowly across the floor.

The sound of a cassette recorder with the record button being pushed.

The knife stabs Eric in the arm.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(Yells)  
Now what was that for? I thought  
we were/

SMACK

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(sarcastic)  
Fuck me. Friends

PAPI  
(no mercy)  
You got 5 minutes to record your  
truth.

Carlos lights the single candle.

The sound of boots walk out. The door locks shut.

Silence.

Eric breaths out.

Silence.

Eric laughs.

ERIC (LOW, FERAL)  
You want truth?  
Then pull up a chair.  
And bring another knife.

Still silent. Still restrained.

Fade.

Eric sits in flickers light. The cassette recorder rolls.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(soft, bored)  
You want the truth?

Silence. He eyes the mic like it's judging him.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Here's the truth. I knew what I was  
doing. I wanted Pedro to hurt. I  
wanted her gone.

(He pauses.)  
But not because I hated them.  
Because they made him love someone  
else.

He stops. Looks at the recorder.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(cold)  
That's for me.

He Kicks the chair towards him. The recorder falling by his  
feet. With his bare foot he smashes the recorder. He cuts  
his foot. No sound from him.

Nothing.

INT. SHACK - 5 MINUTES LATER

The candle still flickers. Eric looks bored. There is blood  
on his foot and on the floor from the smashed recorder.

Papi enters like a priest ready to test the confessional.

PAPI  
Time's up.

ERIC  
Then grade me, Father.

PAPI  
(looking at the smashed  
recorder)  
What's this?

He looks at Eric.

ERIC  
You know, I am just not sure what  
happened. I've been hit so many  
times, well you kind of know what  
that's like already, my mind is a  
little fuzzy. Is that how you feel  
Carlos? (beat) Oh (he laughs) Fuck  
me. I got you two mixed up. You  
are Papi, I thought your were  
Carlos, *the REAL man in charge.*

PAPI

(smiles, slow and sure)  
 It's okay. Confusion's part of the  
 process. You flinch, you forget,  
 you fuck up.  
 (beat)  
 But don't worry, mi amor—Carlos  
 knows his place. And you?  
 You're about to learn yours.  
 (leans in, breath hot, whispering)  
 Now... try again. With my name in  
 your mouth.

Papi circles around to the back of Eric. He leans into his  
 right ear and squeezes he stabbed right arm to make blood  
 squirt out.

Eric winces.

PAPI (CONT'D)

(slow, level)  
 Careful.  
 Carlos throws the punches. I decide  
 if you bleed.  
 (beat — then leans in, quieter)  
 Unless you think he's calling the  
 shots now.

ERIC

Oh. So he *isn't calling the shots*.  
 Good to know. Guess we all got our  
 roles to play.

Beat. Papi stares. Tight jaw. He's about to blow. He squeeze  
 the wounded arm further. Blood runs through his fingers.

PAPI

I would be very careful what you  
 say next.

ERIC

(trying to make a deal)  
 You and I want the same thing.  
 To stop the monster. You just  
 haven't admitted who it is yet.

PAPI

Carlos?

ERIC

BINGO. Plus 1 for

Papi squeezes harder on the wound.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(grimacing)  
Ow. (through his teeth) plus 1  
for, Papi.

PAPI (BEAT)  
Repeat it.

ERIC  
Carlos is out of control.  
He'll destroy you. And when he's  
done. He'll say it was your idea.

Papi comes around. He looks. He bends down and kisses a  
full kiss to Eric. Reacts in pleasure. Papi backs up and  
smears blood from his hands down Eric's face.

PAPI  
(slyly)  
You taste. Like fear.

ERIC  
(breathes in, dazed)  
Then let's begin.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Carlos walks in, boots first, calm as ever.

CARLOS  
How we doing, sweethearts?

Beat.

PAPI (FLAT)  
Your turn.

CARLOS  
(chuckling)  
Gotta bring in the man to do a  
man's job.

WHACK. Papi lays a perfect right hook across Carlos' jaw.  
Carlos stumbles back - stunned.

PAPI (COLD, CALM)  
Don't ever put me down again.  
(beat)  
I won't tell you twice. I'll just  
kill you.  
(pause)  
Fifteen minutes. Then it's over.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Carlos reels from the punch. Jaw flexing. Blood on his lip.  
Papi stands still—chest heaving, knuckles red.

CARLOS  
(low, volcanic)  
That was a mistake, cabrón.

PAPI  
(cool)  
Then you better not make one back.

Beat. Eric—chained, bruised, watching like a cat behind  
glass—smirks.

ERIC  
(purring)  
Boys, boys... save the climax for the  
third act.

They don't look at him. But the tension thickens. Eric seizes  
the moment.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(casual)  
You know, Carlos...  
That scar on your temple?  
Pedro told me how you got that.

Carlos blinks. A crack in the armor.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
He said Papi left you bleeding in  
the dirt when things got too real.  
Said you begged him to stay quiet.  
But I guess now it's his turn to  
beg from behind bars.

\*Carlos snaps his eyes to Papi. That doubt—the first shadow.

Papi doesn't move. Doesn't flinch.

PAPI  
Don't let the pretty mouth twist  
you. He's just a mirror, Carlos.  
And you don't like what you see.

ERIC  
(soft, cutting)  
Oh, but I do.

Eric tilts his head—bleeding, bound, and still dangerous.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I see everything.

Beat. Carlos steps closer to Eric. Face unreadable.

CARLOS  
You think you've got this figured  
out, gringo?

ERIC  
I think I just rang a bell neither  
of you knew you left unlocked.

CARLOS AND PAPI  
Shut up.

ERIC  
Oh, there they are Tweddle Dee and  
Tweddle Dum.

Papi backhands Eric.

PAPI  
I said shut the fuck up. I won't  
say it again.

Eric moves his jaw. The smiles.

CARLOS  
(to Eric)  
You think you're clever. Think your  
mouth buys you time.

ERIC  
(deadpan)  
I think I'm still breathing. So  
yeah. Pretty clever.

Carlos leans in, low and firm, breath just above Eric's ear.

CARLOS  
Breathing isn't living. Not here.

He flicks open a blade. Not dramatic. Just... methodical.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Five minutes. Tell me something  
real. Or I'll cut the difference  
out of you.

ERIC  
And what does that make you?  
Executioner? Priest?



Carlos smirks.

CARLOS  
Cleaner.

He presses the blade just under Eric's chin. A bead of blood.  
Eric swallows.

ERIC  
(careful)  
Papi... you good with this? Or are  
we past team meetings now?

PAPI  
(hard)  
You said I wasn't in charge.

ERIC  
(softly, planting it)  
No... he did.

Papi flinches. Carlos doesn't notice. Or pretends not to.

CARLOS  
Tick tock.

Eric looks from one to the other. Calm now. Calculating.

ERIC  
You know, Carlos... Papi talks a  
big game, but I think he forgot  
something.

CARLOS  
Amuse me.

ERIC  
He thinks you *can't* do it without  
him.

Carlos still. That hits.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
But you don't, right? You got the  
muscle. The plan. The coin.  
(beat)  
He just has the voice.

Carlos steps back. Blade still in hand. Papi watches closely.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(to Papi)  
He's moving without you now. Isn't  
he?

Papi turns. Doesn't answer.

CARLOS  
(to Papi)  
Get the journal.

Papi hesitates. Just for a breath. Eric clocks it.

ERIC  
(smirking)  
You see it, Carlos. Don't lie. He's  
not riding shotgun. He's riding  
your coattails.

CARLOS  
(to Papi, dark)  
Get. The. Journal.

Papi moves. Slow. Something boiling under his skin.

Eric leans back. Blood on his neck. Smile on his lips.

ERIC  
(to himself)  
One crack at a time.

Papi walks out. Calm. Deadly.

Carlos picks up the journal and finds Papi's handwriting

*THERE IS ONLY ONE LEADER. THE REST FOLLOW OR STAND THE FUCK  
ASIDE.*

CARLOS  
(to Eric)  
You will beg me to kill you.

Carlos walks out and locks the door.

CLICK.

INT. SHACK - LATER

He's back in the dark. Candle flickers. Shirtless. Wounded.  
Alone.

He speaks to himself in the silence—

ERIC  
(low)  
Round one.  
Not mine.  
(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
But I made you flinch.  
He licks blood from his lip.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Next round?  
It's just me and me.

Eric looks into the mirror in the shack— And his reflection isn't chained. It's smiling.

ERIC (V.O.)  
Bring another knife.  
Let's see which one of me survives.

EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS (AFTER CARLOS WALKS OUT)

Outside. The moon sharp. Wind moving the trees like breath. Carlos steps out. Papi stands waiting, arms folded. Quiet. Staring.

They circle. Like predators sizing each other up.

CARLOS  
(casual)  
You hesitate again, hermano... and  
I'll finish what Pedro started.

Papi doesn't blink. His fist rises. A slow, deliberate move. Not a threat. A statement.

Carlos doesn't flinch.

Suddenly— Papi SLAMS Carlos against the side of the shack.

THUD. Inside — POV Eric — the mirror FALLS. Cracks. He jerks. Breathing heavy. Eyes locked on the broken reflection.

Back outside:

Papi's forearm across Carlos' throat. Carlos STARES. Cold. Calm. Not resisting — just absorbing.

CARLOS (LOW, LETHAL) (CONT'D)  
Do it. Let's see if you're man  
enough to cross the line.

Papi doesn't blink. He tightens. One more second... then RELEASES.

They separate. One step back. But the stare holds.

Long beat.

CARLOS (ICE) (CONT'D)  
Know your place.  
You ever come at me like that  
again... You're a dead man. (beat)  
Now get the fuck in line.

Papi exhales. Just once. Controlled.

He doesn't answer. He just walks past Carlos – toward the water.

Carlos watches him go. Wipes the blood from his lip with the back of his hand.

CARLOS (TO HIMSELF) (CONT'D)  
One of us won't walk away from  
this.

Carlos heads to the Shack.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Luna llena... el lobo tiene hambre.  
(beat) Tonight he eats.  
(ENGLISH: Full moon. The wolf is  
hungry.)

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SHACK – MIRROR – CRACKED

Eric stares at his broken reflection.

ERIC (V.O.)  
One crack at a time...

CARLOS (V.O.)  
No leash this time, boy.  
Let's see if you laugh when I bite.

*The song "Bad Moon Rising plays"*

INT. SHACK – MOMENTS LATER

Carlos walks in, like Bad Moon Rising. THE MONSTER IS NOW FULLY IN THE HOUSE.

Eric eyes him up and down. Carlos stares cold. His black eyes ignite with fire.

Carlos strips his shirt off. He is ready for war.

ERIC

(upbeat)

Well it is my birthday. Did Robert order a stripper for me? You gonna do the hat dance for me next, Carlos? Jarabe Tapatío style? Full sombrero and all?

"BAD MOON RISING" stops.

SFX - Record needle dragging across the record.

BEAT. Carlos growls

CARLOS

*Cuban.*

Get it right.

He lands a punch straight to Eric's face. Eric's lip splits. His head snaps.

Carlos steps back, chest heaving. He circles like a Gladiator. Shoulders back. Breathing fire.

ERIC

(wiping blood, smirking):)

Okay. I'm now clear on the Cuban thing.

(Sniffs the air.)

Do you wear AXE?

Carlos freezes. Turns slowly.

CARLOS

What?

ERIC

Yeah, there's this... cheap scent.

(Sniffs again)

Oh my God—don't tell me that's Hugo Boss?

(Eric chuckles, lip bleeding.)

Cologne, you stupid boy.

I thought I smelled control.

For a second—one heartbeat—it was there.

But now?

(Sniffs again, darker this time. Slower.)

I smell follower.

(Beat.)

Papi smelled like control.

He didn't flex it.

(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
He wore it.  
You?  
You're trying it on like a borrowed  
suit—hoping no one notices the tag  
still hanging off the back.

Carlos doesn't move. Doesn't breathe.

But his fists tighten. Jaw locks.

Eyes narrowing.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(whispering now)  
What's that Cuban phrase?  
Something about... the louder the  
bark, the smaller the—

CRACK!

Carlos slams Eric's head against the wall. Not to kill.

Just enough to remind him— This isn't a game anymore.

ERIC  
(dizzy but smiling:)  
There it is.  
Finally.  
The man I wanted to meet.

CARLOS  
(low, guttural)  
You wanted danger?  
You just earned it.

ERIC  
Then make it count.  
(Beat. A dangerous smile.)  
Unless you want to call Papi in to  
finish the job?

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Carlos grabs Eric, slams him into the wall, his face inches  
from his.

CARLOS  
(low, dangerous)  
You still think this is a game?

He kisses Eric—hard, punishing, full of heat and rage.

A KNOCK on the door. Handle jiggles.

PAPI (O.S.)  
Carlos?

Carlos growls.

CARLOS  
Not now.

PAPI (O.S.)  
You sure you—

CARLOS  
Take a walk, Papi.

Silence. Then footsteps walking away.

Carlos turns back to Eric.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
The bigger the bark?  
You want the Cuban bark, boy?

He grabs Eric by the shirt, drags him across the room.

CAMERA SWIRLS—disorientation, noise, chaos.

SMACK. THUD.

Silence.

CAMERA REVEALS Carlos' boots beside Eric' collapsed body on the floor. Blood on Eric' lip. His body dazed, breath shallow.

Carlos nudges Eric with his boot.

CARLOS  
Round three in five minutes, boy.

He unlocks the door and exits. The door clicks shut.

WIDE SHOT — Eric alone, broken but not out. His eyes flutter open.

ERIC (V.O.)  
Cuban cigar wants revenge.  
Papi Chulo wants redemption.  
I want control.

A beat. He wipes the blood from his mouth.

ERIC (V.O.)  
Game. The. Fuck. On.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Eric sits slumped in the chair, bruised and rattled, blood drying on his lip. He breathes hard. The silence stretches.

TEXT BUZZES on his phone. It lies just out of reach.

The door opens.

CARLOS enters, shirt off, chest heaving. Dangerous calm.

CARLOS  
Five minutes. Ready for round three?

ERIC  
(choking back a laugh)  
You're consistent, I'll give you that.

Carlos steps closer. Eric stiffens.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
You ever wonder why Papi always sends you in first? Like... he's saving himself for the finale?

Carlos pauses.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(taunting)  
I mean, I get it. You're the opening act. The bark. The bite. But he's the one holding the leash.

Carlos growls, grabs Eric by the collar.

CARLOS  
I'm not on the leash.

ERIC  
(smirking)  
Then why do you keep coming back for permission?

Carlos raises a fist—



KNOCK. DOOR HANDLE JIGGLES.

PAPI (O.S.)  
Carlos?

CARLOS  
(yells)  
Not now.

PAPI (O.S.)  
You need to hear this—

CARLOS  
(shouting)  
Papi, take a walk!

Eric seizes the moment.

ERIC  
Wow. "Take a walk." Bold move. Just hope he doesn't take offense. He's not really the forgiving type.

CARLOS  
Shut up.

ERIC  
Unless you're taking over. Is that it?

Carlos freezes. Eric leans in.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Maybe... it's your turn to lead. Maybe you finish this. And not because Papi says so—because you choose to.

CARLOS  
(gritted teeth)  
I do choose.

ERIC  
Yeah? Then choose to listen.

Carlos backhands Eric across the face. Blood spits.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(laughing through pain)  
There it is. Cuban fire. Now imagine if that energy wasn't wasted proving yourself to him.

CARLOS  
You don't know shit.

ERIC  
I know one thing. Papi's going to  
finish you off the second you  
outlive your usefulness. You're the  
muscle. Not the mission.

Carlos hesitates. Breath shallow. Rage... but doubt.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
But you and me? Frenemies. Power in  
that. Shared enemy. Shared prize.

CARLOS  
(grabs Eric)  
You're a snake.

ERIC  
And you like the way I hiss.  
Whatever happens next, you and me  
that's the real, lasting fire.

RING. Eric' PHONE VIBRATES. Caller ID: PEDRO.

Carlos answers. Eric speaks loud enough to be heard.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Hey Pedro! Is this the part where  
we all pretend Papi isn't using you  
too?

PAPI storms in.

PAPI  
What the fuck is going on?

ERIC  
(smiling)  
Oh, the gang's all here.

CARLOS  
(grabs Eric)  
He's twisting everything.

PAPI  
Pedro said you told him I set this  
all up.

ERIC  
(gasping under pressure)  
Well I mean... did you? Or are you  
just another piece?

CARLOS  
(grabs a rag)  
Enough. He's done.

PAPI  
Maybe we don't kill him. Maybe we  
just walk away.

CARLOS  
(scoffs)  
Papi, fuck that. Walk? You're  
already leashed, perro.

ERIC  
There it is again. The second  
fiddle.

Carlos gags Eric. Tape. Silence.

Eric kicks the floor. Grunts.

PAPI  
(turns to leave)  
He needs quiet.

Eric grunts louder. Points with his eyes at his phone.

Papi lifts it. SEES THE TEXT:

ON SCREEN TEXT: "There's \$3M in Colombia. Split it. Stay  
together. If we figure out who's in charge."

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
Three million?

Carlos rips the gag off.

ERIC  
(choking)  
You didn't know? Oh wow. Papi...  
looks like someone's out of the  
loop. Carlos stashed it before the  
raid in '09 — Colombian accounts,  
triple-encrypted. He promised Papi  
half, then ghosted. That money is  
there.

Papi and Carlos LOCK EYES.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Game. The. Fuck. On.

PAPI  
(to Carlos, eyes  
darkening)  
You promised me everything.  
(beat)  
And now he knows more than I did?

CARLOS  
(flat)  
I never promised forever.

Guns raised. Tension like lightning.

PAPI  
(to Carlos)  
Drop it.

CARLOS  
Make me.

BLAM. Papi SHOOTS Carlos in the shoulder. He collapses.

ERIC  
Holy shit.

PAPI  
(grabbing Carlos' arm)  
You fucked with the wrong man.

He drags Carlos out.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
Goodnight, perro.

DOOR SLAMS.

Eric alone. Still tied. Bloody.

PAPI (O.S.)  
(into the dark)  
Now it's just us, mi amor. Finally.

Eric breathes. Smiles.

ERIC (V.O.)  
One down. One to go.

OUTSIDE the sound of Papi grunting as he lifts Carlos. Heavy steps across the gavel. 1..2..3..

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHACK ON THE DOCKS - CONTINUOUS

OUTSIDE the sound of Papi grunting as he lifts Carlos. Heavy steps across the gavel. 1..2..3..

SPLASH.

Carlos' body tossed in the water.

PAPI  
(Looking at Carlos' body  
floating away)  
*THERE IS ONLY ONE LEADER. THE REST  
FOLLOW OR STAND THE FUCK ASIDE.*

Papi turns towards the shack.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Playtime over. Papi wants 3  
Million.

He opens the door.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(Comical and sadistic)  
Boy, I got something for you...

Papi enters the shack and locks the door.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Papi locks the door.

CLICK.

PAPI  
Well, now we are back to where we  
started.

ERIC  
Yeah, me and the Dancing Queen. You  
can dance, you can jiiiiive..."

CRACK.

Papi back hand to Eric

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(glares and the smiles)  
I see (beat) you still have a  
little strength left. Fuck. It's  
been a long night.  
(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(he laughs) So you want that  
\$3million. We split it.

PAPI  
(commanding)  
Oh we will get it and this I decide  
what you get. Soy colombiano.

ERIC  
(wise) Oh, I thought *YOU* were  
*Mexican, too?* All the same right>  
(chuckle)

He comes around Eric and does a tight chokehold. Eric  
squirms and his face gets red.

PAPI  
*That "Mexican" shit* doesn't work on  
me, boy.

Eric sniffs.

ERIC  
(choking out the words)  
Yep (sniff) you smell like the Man  
I charge. I get. (chokes) But you  
kill me, Papi, no way you one peso  
of that money.

Papi releases him. Still be hind Eric.

PAPI  
So why (he slaps the back of Eric'  
head playfully) why did Pedro call  
on your phone. (he slaps the back  
of his head again)

Beat. Nothing from Eric. Papi walks around he looks.  
Waiting and not patiently.

He leans right into Eric' face

PAPI (CONT'D)  
I won't wait much longer.

ERIC  
(beat)  
Pedro kept my poems. I knew one day  
he'd call. He likes my visits in  
Jail. (smirks) I didn't know it'd  
be perfect timing.

Papi still face to face.

PAPI  
So, all this time

ERIC  
(light hearted)  
I have to say you have excellent  
teeth. I have heard to Colombian  
Dentist are the best.

Papi gets up and goes to the door. There is a bag there. He  
takes out a burlap sack and a Tattoo gun.

Eric' eyes get big. For the first time he has fear in his  
eyes.

Papi gags Eric, puts the tape over his mouth and covers  
Eric's head with the burlap sack.

Eric has muffled screams.

Papi pulls out his phone, hits play.

'Bad Moon Rising' roars through the shack like a curse

PAPI  
This time the REAL WOLF is in front  
of you.

Papi pulls up a chair and locks Eric right forearm on his  
leg. He starts the Tattoo gun. He begins the tattoo.

Eric' muffled screams are heard as the tattoo guns blazes and  
the song plays.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

Papi gets up. Smiles. He puts the tattoo gun back in the  
bag.

He takes of the burlap sack. Eric eyes are glazed.

PAPI  
Ok, on the count of 3.

He rips off the tape.

ERIC  
Fuuckkk.

PAPI  
3.

Eric looks down at his arm. The looks up with no expression to Papi.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
I want you to be clear who is in  
charge, Boy.

The camera looks down and focuses on Eric' newly tattooed right forearm. The arm is bloody and scrawled in forever ink.

*PAPI'S BOY*

Papi smiles. He turn so leave and then stops.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(gentle)  
You hungry? Thirsty?

He nods to the water bottle on the table. Eric nods "Yes"

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(Low)  
Who gives shit?

Papi walks out of the shack and locks the door.

CLICK.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The door open. Papi enters.

He turns and locks the door.

CLICK.

PAPI stands in the frame—chest soaked in blood, arms flexed and trembling, eyes glazed with something ancient. Rage, maybe. Or grief. Or both.

They lock eyes.

ERIC  
(soft, trying to control  
it)  
Papi... you didn't have to—

PAPI steps in. Every footstep thunder.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(working angles)  
He was the problem. Not you.  
(MORE)



ERIC (CONT'D)

Not us.

(leans forward, cuffed  
wrists bleeding)

You're not the monster here, Papi.  
You're the man I—

PAPI

(grunts, low)

Shut. The fuck. Up.

Eric holds. Swallows.

ERIC

You loved me.

Or did you forget? I love you.

You want my full attention. You  
got it. Boom.

Papi raises his hand. Eric flinches.

PAPI

I remember everything.

Beat.

Papi moves—fast—GRABS Eric by the jaw. Forces him to look.

Blood on his hand smears across Eric's face.

ERIC

(quiet)

I never lied to you.

It was always him. Carlo turned us  
into this. Those brothers are bad  
news.

PAPI

(cold, hollow)

He's in the water.

You're still here.

What's that tell you?

Eric breathes harder.

ERIC

It tells me I matter.

To you.

Or you would've killed me already.

(quickly like telling tattle  
tailing)

He kissed me you know. Said he  
wanted "Mark his property."

(beat)

Papi stares.

Then, slowly—he reaches into his waistband.

Eric braces.

But it's not a weapon.

It's a rag.

A filthy, blood-wet rag.

Papi steps forward, smooth and silent now, and STUFFS IT INTO ERIC'S MOUTH.

Tightens it with a rope scrap. Double knot. No mercy.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(muffled, choking)  
Mmmph—

PAPI  
(low, near his ear)  
No more lies.

Beat.

Papi turns.

Heads to the table.

Opens a black duffel bag.

We don't see what's inside—but Eric does.

His eyes go wide.

He writhes. Panics. Screaming through the gag now.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
(singsong, like a lullaby)  
You wanted love, Eric.  
(beat)  
Let's see how deep it goes.

Papi pulls a picture out of the bag. He shows it to Eric.

Papi gives the "Kill Signal" slitting the throat.

CUT TO BLACK.

Eric yells through the gag.

ERIC  
(muffled)  
Noooooooooooo.

Papi paces, calm – phone in hand.

He dials. The call connects. Voices murmur – Colombian henchmen on the other end. Muffled sobbing. Shouts. The sound of guns being loaded in the background.

PAPI  
(quiet, lethal – in Spanish)  
Pon a los padres. Ahora.  
(Put the parents on. Now.)

A long beat.

Then – Two voices. Raw. Real. Familiar.

DAD (O.S.)  
Eric? Eric, don't let them hurt you!

Eric jerks. Gagged. He thrashes.

PAPI  
(smirking, to the phone)  
I got your son here.  
Wise mouth he has. Just never shuts the fuck up.

MOM (O.S.)  
Oh God... what is this? Who are you?  
Where is he?!

PAPI  
(laughs, cruel)  
Too late for that.

MOM (O.S.)  
What?

PAPI  
Your boy has stamina.  
(beat)  
But now?  
He's my boy.

Papi take the bloody rag out of Eric' mouth.

ERIC  
(gasping, desperate)  
Dad? Mom?! Are you okay?! I'm so  
sorry. I didn't mean-  
I didn't-

PAPI  
(to the phone)  
NOW.

Silence.

Then -

TWO GUNSHOTS.

SFX - BANG. BANG.

A heavy thud.

A gasp.

Then -

MOM (O.S.)  
(shrieking)  
BILL! Bill! They just killed your  
father!

SFX - CLICK.  
The line goes dead.

Papi lowers the phone.

Silence.

Eric heaves - can't scream. Just the sound of air choking  
behind cloth.

PAPI  
(whispers, to Eric)  
Now we begin.

Eric is shaking. Tears running down his face.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Eric chokes behind the gag, wrists raw from the rope.

Sweat, tears, blood—who can tell the difference now?

Papi kneels beside the duffel.

Unzips it slowly, like he's unwrapping a gift.

What's inside?

Not a weapon.

Not torture tools.

A tape recorder.

Old. 90s. Cassette deck.

Click. Whir. Hiss.

Papi inserts a tape labeled:

"TRUTH, SIDE A."

He presses play.

ERIC'S VOICE (V.O.)  
(laughing, naive, so sweet  
it cuts)  
Robert, He thinks I love him.  
That's the funny part.

Eric freezes.

ERIC (V.O.)  
Carlos? He's just the puppet.  
Papi? He's the string.  
(casual)  
You pull the right thread, the  
whole house collapses.

PAPI  
(staring at Eric)  
You forgot what you recorded.  
I didn't.

He walks up, slow.

Kneels beside Eric.

Pulls the gag slightly—just enough.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
Say something.  
Defend it.

ERIC  
(whispers)  
I was stupid.  
(MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
I didn't know what love was.  
I didn't—

SLAP.

Not rage.

Reset.

PAPI  
You taught me what love was.  
Pain. Lies. Hunger.

He grabs Eric by the hair—gently now.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
So now... you learn.

He lifts Eric's hand.

Kisses the knuckle.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
Tonight, you feel what you made. I  
am the monster.

He stands. Paces.

Eric begins to sob. For real.

The shack grows quiet.

Too quiet.

Then— a CRACK.

Not wood.

Not a gunshot.

Eric LAUGHS.

Cracked. Unhinged. Terrifying.

ERIC  
(choking, broken,  
delighted)  
That's the best part, Papi.

PAPI  
What?

ERIC  
I don't regret it.  
(leans forward, wild eyes)  
You wanted to make me feel the  
Monster? I AM the fucking Monster.

Beat. Silence. Even the sea stops.

Then—

From the side of the shack—

a phone RINGS.

Eric' cell phone. Papi's cell phone.

Eric FREEZES. Papi turns.

The recorder clicks off.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

PAPI  
Why our the

ERIC  
(low, like prophecy)  
It's Pedro.

CUT TO: INT.  
PRISON - NIGHT

PEDRO holds the phone.

Eyes like dark glass.

On the table before him—

A stack of journals. Eric's journals.

He smiles.

PEDRO  
Time's up, lovers.  
My turn.

SMASH TO BLACK.

INT. PRISON - NIGHT

Pedro lowers the phone.

Fingers slide over Eric's journal, stopping on a page with a sketch—

Carlos drowning.

Papi kneeling.

Eric—smiling.

He traces the smile with his finger.

PEDRO  
(low, to himself)  
I always said he was poison.

He dials.

Click. Ring.

CUT TO: INT.  
SHACK - NIGHT

Papi's head jerks toward the phone. It RINGS again.

ERIC  
That call? That's not a warning.

It's an invitation.

PAPI  
From who?  
(leans forward)  
Pedro's back in the game. And guess  
what, Papi?  
(soft, seductive)  
He's more me than you ever were.

Papi storms over. Rips Eric's head back.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
You think this is a game?

ERIC  
It's not a game.  
It's a ritual.  
And we're almost done.

Phone RINGS again.

Eric lets the smile drop.

Honest now. Brutal.



ERIC (CONT'D)  
 You think I didn't plan for this?  
 You think I didn't want him to see  
 you lose?

Papi falters. One moment of confusion. That's all Eric needs.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 He's not calling for me.  
 He's calling for you.  
 Because he knows—  
 You're the weak link now.

Papi stumbles back. Almost drops to his knees.

Then—

PAPI straightens. Slow. Controlled. Drenched in sweat and blood, but something clicks.

He unzips the duffel again.

Pulls out a blade.

But he doesn't go to Eric.

He strips his shirt off.

Turns the blade—not out, but inward.

He carves a line across his chest.

Vertical. Deep.

Over his heart.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
 What the fuck—

PAPI  
 (grim smile)  
 Now we're equal.  
 Now I've given blood for this too.

He grabs Eric's hand and presses it to the wound.

PAPI (CONT'D)  
 Say the truth.  
 Or I'll feed your lies to Pedro  
 myself.

ERIC  
 (quiet)  
 The truth?  
 (MORE)

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(beat)  
I loved you.  
Just not the way you needed.  
(Beat.)

Papi lets go. Breathing like a beast.

Then—

The phone STOPS RINGING.

PAPI  
Too late.

ERIC  
(whispers)  
No.  
It just means he's already here.

Behind them—

A SHADOW MOVES.

Door creaks.

The Monster returns... with a new face.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. PRISON - NIGHT

PEDRO  
(cool)  
Time for road trip. (to the guard)  
You're coming with me.

Cut to black.

EXT. SHACK

Papi, knife in hand, blood dripping from his self inflicted wound shines a flashlight.

PAPI  
Who's there? ¿Quién está ahí?

Nothing. He goes back inside the shack.

INT. SHACK - DAWN LIGHT BLEEDING THROUGH

Eric sits slumped, bandaged and half-mad. Papi wipes blood from his chest. Calm. Focused. The journal lies open on the table.

PAPI

(quiet)

You wanted to be remembered.  
But memory is just pain dressed up  
for the camera.

Eric looks up, soft.

ERIC

Is that why you're still here?  
To be the villain in my closing  
chapter?

A SHADOW passes outside. BOOM — The door BURSTS OPEN. Pedro enters. Gun raised. Fire in his eyes.

PEDRO

Where is he?  
Where's the bastard who—

He sees Papi. Freezes.

Papi turns. Calm.

PAPI

You want blood?  
Take it. But aim for the truth.

Pedro cocks the gun.

PEDRO

You killed her. My Lauren

PAPI

No. My Lauren, *my sister*.  
You did. You killed her.

Pedro falters.

PAPI (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

You put the knife in her.  
But he— (nods to Eric) — handed you  
the map.

PEDRO

Don't—

PAPI  
You want revenge?  
Fine. But understand the cost.

ERIC  
(voice low, trembling)  
I never meant for her to die.

PEDRO  
You wrote it. You wrote her death  
in that fucking journal.

PAPI  
And then we all followed the  
script. So go ahead, Pedro. Shoot  
me. But don't pretend you're saving  
anyone. Point the gun at the Real  
monster in the room.

BEAT.

Pedro lowers the gun.

Then—

RAISES IT.

PAPI  
But don't pretend you're sav—

BANG.

Papi staggers. Falls to one knee.

BANG.

He hits the ground. Bleeding. Shaking.

Eric SCREAMS—whether in horror or relief, we're not sure.

Pedro steps closer. Gun still trained on Papi.

PEDRO  
She loved me. (to Eric)  
And I listened to you.

PAPI  
You killed the wrong monster.

PEDRO  
You said she laughed with Sean.  
That she'd leave me. You lied.

Eric nods.

ERIC  
Yes. And you believed it... Because  
you wanted to.

Pedro exhales. Then—

BANG.

One final shot.

PAPI is dead.

The room goes still.

ERIC  
Pedro! Thank God you got here in  
time. Papi was the real monster.  
Carlos—

CRACK.

He hits the floor.

CRACK — bone, not just wood.

Eric lets out a short, sharp, involuntary scream.

Pero grabs the chair — lifts Eric roughly back into position.  
Eric' arm hangs wrong. But he smirks through the pain.

ERIC  
(breathless, cocky)  
Not bad.  
Carlos still hit harder.  
(leans forward, blood in his teeth)  
God, all this time... and you still  
don't have a clue. Cuban. Mexican.  
All the same, right?

Pedro SNAPS — He drives the gun into Eric's chest and pulls  
the trigger—

CLICK.

ERIC

(like a snake, quiet and  
lethal)

Same trigger as Carlos. Always  
cocked. Never clean. What is it  
with the Cuban machismo shit?  
Lauren was sick of it. (beat) Told  
me she wanted a real man. That  
night. Before you—

He mouths a blowjob. No words. Just venom.

STARE DOWN. Eric doesn't blink. Pedro's eyes burn.

PEDRO

Let's get the money.  
Then I'll decide how you die.

SMASH. Eric SWINGS his broken arm — bone cracking louder this  
time — but he lands it.

Pedro stumbles. The gun FLIES — Eric catches it. One hand.  
Shaking. Covered in blood.

EXT. SHACK - FLASHING LIGHTS - MOMENTS LATER

Robert bursts in with POLICE. Pedro is down.

POLICE OFFICER

Cuff him.  
(then to the PRISON GUARD)  
Him too.

ROBERT

Eric!

ERIC

(calm, exhausted)  
Don't worry.  
I got the ending.

ROBERT

Pedro? That boy's been wrecked  
since he killed Lauren. Doesn't  
even blink anymore. What a sick  
bastard he is (chuckles).

The officer looks down. Eric's arm — bloodied, raw — freshly  
tattooed:

"PAPI'S BOY."

POLICE OFFICER  
(eyebrow raised)  
What the hell's going on here?

ERIC  
(beat. calm. broken.  
proud.)  
Monsters. They're all monsters. (a  
whisper now) Look at me. (beat)  
Just look at me.

INT. MODERN LOFT - DAY

ON SCREEN TEXT:

ONE MONTH LATER

Sunlight bleeds through minimalist glass walls.

Eric-cleaned up, arm in a cast, bruises faded but not  
gone-sits across from ROBERT.

Between them: a manila envelope.

Stamped: "DREAMLAND LOVERS - FINAL DRAFT."

ERIC  
(low, easy)  
Everything's in there.  
I left the blood in. Just like you  
said.

ROBERT  
(reading)  
It's... brutal. Beautiful.  
Unproduceable.

ERIC  
Not if you sell it right.

ROBERT raises his glass.

ROBERT  
To Dreamland.

ERIC  
To lovers.

They toast. Glasses clink.

Beat.

DING DONG.

ROBERT  
Expecting someone?

ERIC  
Not anymore.

Eric opens the door.

No one there.

Just a package. Brown. Twine-wrapped.

No return address.

He carries it back. Unties the string.

Inside –

A COMPASS.

Old. Familiar.

On the back:

“You still don’t know where true North is.”

He freezes.

A photo drops out.

Pedro. In prison.

Smiling.

Middle finger up.

Tattoo: A heart.

Inside it: “ERIC.”

The heart bleeds.

Behind him?

A SHADOW – someone watching.

Eric doesn’t blink.



ROBERT  
What is it?

ERIC  
(quiet)  
A rewrite.  
(beat)

ROBERT  
Of the story?

Eric looks up – deadly calm.

ERIC  
Of me.

SMASH TO BLACK.

INT. PARIS APARTMENT – NIGHT

ON SCREEN TEXT:

TWO MONTHS LATER – PARIS

Rain whispers against the windows.

Eric, in silk and bare feet, finishes a glass of red.

KNOCK. KNOCK.

He freezes.

Sets the glass down.

Moves to the door.

Pauses.

A beat.

Then opens it–

CARLOS.

Dry. Calm.

A coat draped over one shoulder.

That wicked glint behind tired eyes.

He steps forward, just enough to cast a shadow.

CARLOS  
(quiet)  
My boy...

Eric barely exhales.

Just stands there—

Pulse still, but we know it's roaring.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(stepping in)  
Did you really think I'd drown?  
In that little puddle you call a  
plan?

Carlos effortlessly locks the door.

ERIC  
You were supposed to be dead.

CARLOS  
So were you. Cell phone.  
And yet—here we are.  
Same dance.  
New music.

Eric hand him the phone. Carlos goes behind Eric and without hesitation handcuffs his hand behind his back.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Sit, boy. This time, Eric...  
no scripts.

Eric sits in a kitchen chair. Carlos pulls thin rope from his back pocket and cinches Eric's waist to the chair.

Carlos is restraining Eric. Shirt torn. Blood on his skin. The tattoo's visible: "PAPI'S BOY."

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(sees it, cold smirk)  
Yeah..  
We're gonna need to fix that.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(commanding)  
Stay.

Carlos open a brief case on Eric's lap. Takes out leg restraints, a blindfold and a large manila envelope, title:  
DREAMLAND LOVERS - FINAL DRAFT

ERIC

Then why are you here?

Carlos smirks. Pulls something from his coat pocket—

CARLOS

Open.

He puts the manila envelope in Eric mouth.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Hold it.

Eric' eyes get big. Carlos puts on the leg restraints. He takes out a pen. He takes out Duct tape.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(coy)

Do you think we'll need this. But maybe that's part of *my fantasy*. We'll see. I think I want to up date the ending. Sound good?

He takes the envelope from Eric' mouth and crosses out: FINAL ENDING and writes: LAST ENDING.

He smiles. He takes the pen and puts it in Eric' mouth like a horse bridle.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Hold this.

With ease, Carlos takes off his shirt and reveals a tattoo on his bicep: Cubano para siempre.

Carlos pulls a switchblade from his pocket and with out any hesitation, pops the blade out.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(calm warning)

You might want to bite down, now.

Carlos stabs the blade into Eric' leg. Eric screams.

Carlos pulls the blade out and blood starts to pour. Carlos puts his hand in the blood and the wipes it down Eric' face. He smiles

CARLOS (CONT'D)

There that's how I sort of remember you from last time.

He tosses the pen onto the table beside the glass of wine.

It lands with a thud.

Carlos circles the room slowly.

Eric stays still, but his confidence is cracking—minute by minute.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
You always needed someone to finish  
your story.  
A reader.  
A lover.  
A witness.

He turns to Eric.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Now you have all three in one. Me.

Eric opens his mouth— blood from his leg now dripping on the floor.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(whispering in his ear)  
You're not the monster.  
You're just the bait.

Eric gasps—but he doesn't scream.

He knows.

Carlos steps back.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Lights out, baby.

EPILOGUE — INT. HAVANA CLUB — NIGHT

Cigarette smoke coils through golden light.

A jazz trio plays slow, hot, and mean.

Men in silk. Women in diamonds. The air thick with secrets.

Carlos sits alone at the corner table.

Black shirt. Open collar.

A fresh scar on his neck.

He lights a Cuban cigar—slow. Reverent.

On the table beside him:

- A new passport.
- A photo of Eric, eyes shut, possibly dead. Possibly not.
- A page torn from the Dreamland Lovers screenplay.

Burnt at the edges.

Only one line still visible:

"I am the story."

Carlos exhales smoke.

CARLOS  
Not anymore.

He ashes the cigar directly on the line.

Snuffs it out.

INT. APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Carlos enters.

Eric is there in a wheel chair. Carlos breezes in.

CARLOS  
I think we'll order in for tonight.  
Spend some quality time alone. I'd  
love to hear what you wrote today.  
That work for you?

ERIC  
(no feeling)  
Yes.

CARLOS  
Yes what?

ERIC  
Yessir.

CARLOS  
I talked with your mom today, she  
is a lovely woman.

Eric shoots a look.

ERIC  
She's alive?

CARLOS  
(chuckles)  
Well of course she is. Said she  
was sorry that she could make it to  
Havana for our wedding.

Carlos goes over and lovingly turns the wedding ring on Eric's  
left hand.

Camera pans down on Eric's now-healed forearm – And the  
tattoo has been redone. It reads:

“CARLOS' BOY”  
Clean. Crisp. Fresh ink over old  
scars.

Etched over the ghost of “PAPI.”

CARLOS  
(gently, brushing the ink)  
That's better.  
True north.

ERIC  
Did she say anything else.

CARLOS  
Yes, she asked what song did we  
dance to. I said you a clumsy  
fall, drunk, you know. She said,  
“I know” and I danced with you in  
the wheelchair to our favorite  
song.

ERIC  
And what song is that?

Carlos bends down to kiss Eric full and with passion. He  
pulls back and licks his lips. Carlos smiles.

CARLOS  
Oh I love when you play the “Dumb  
Card.” Well let's remind you.

Carlos pulls out his phone.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Oh, hands up. We do remember,  
right?

Eric lifts his arms and there are shackles on his wrists.  
Carlos hooks those to bolts in the floor.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Oh just one more detail.

Carlos pulls out a rag and duct tape and stuffs the rag in Eric's mouth and duct tapes his mouth shut.

Eric moans.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
I know. I know, I love this game we  
play. I'll be back later for our  
dinner.

He hits play. "BAD MOON RISING" plays.

Carlos strolls out into the Havana night. The door shuts and locks.

Eric looks broken. The camera pulls back. Hold for 10 seconds as the camera pans around the room.

CLICK. The song stops

SFX: record needle dragged across the record.

Carlos opens the door. He gets a white Panama hat. Puts it on in front of the mirror. Winks at Eric.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
(lovingly)  
My love. Game. The. Fuck. On.

POV shot from Eric's broken gaze as Carlos walks out. He leaves and shuts the door.

CARLOS O.S.  
Dreamland lovers don't take your  
phone calls.  
They don't send flowers, but they  
meet you in the night.  
Lovers in dreamland just seem to  
disappear  
The moment you wake up, it is like  
they were never here.

CLICK. SILENCE.

Eric waits. He hears Carlos's steps as he heads into town.

Eric nudges the duct tape with his shoulder and works free. He spits out the rag. He wriggles his right hand. Strains. Pulls. His right wrist slips free from the shackles.

He moves his hand to his waist and with his right hand he pulls out a chef's knife. The camera picks up Eric's reflection in the blade.

ERIC  
(deadly humor)  
Until death we part.

BAM.

The song plays on. Camera swirls back then out of the house.

Carlos at a local bodega drinking, smooth as silk.

Final wide shot of Havana, lit like a dream gone dark.

**THE END**