

DEUCE'S WILD

A modern-day Noir, set in Chicago

Written by

Dennis J Manning

Copyright © 2025 Dennis J. Manning. All Rights Reserved

1165 NW 30th St
Wilton Manors, FL 33311
401-644-4759
Dennis@danforthmusic.org

COLD OPEN: DEUCE'S WILD

EXT. CHEAP VEGAS MOTEL - NIGHT

The sound of one-arm bandits hums in the distance - slot machines coughing coins into the void.

A flickering neon VACANCY sign. Cheap. Sad. Sexy.

V.O. (KING) (FROM SOME OTHER TIME -
LONG PAST OR YET TO COME)
(gravel, measured)
You gotta know where you're going.
Or you won't know it when you get
there. Don't confuse your path with
your destination.

A COWBOY - shirt open, sunburnt, trouble - sidles up to DEUCE. Lean. Leather-jacketed. Trying not to care.

COWBOY
(low, hushed, heat)
You gonna finally give in, darlin'?
No need to look further - it's all
about me.

He brushes too close. Too familiar.

DEUCE
(sharply)
Sure thing, cowboy. Wait by the
phone.

Deuce shoves him aside. Keeps moving. Finds a quiet alley shadow and pulls out his burner phone.

On screen: "DIAMOND"

He hesitates. Then taps CALL.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Come on, Mom. Pick up.

A long pause. Then:

ROBOTIC VOICE
The number you have reached has
been disconnected.

Deuce closes his eyes. Just for a beat.

DEUCE
Chicago burned me once.
Diamond—some excuse for a mother,
chasing some wild card I never met.
I said I wouldn't go to Chi-Town
unless there's blood and money.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
Fuck.
(beat)
You were never there.

He reaches into his back pocket. Pulls out a folded note,
worn, well-handled.

The hands unfold it — perfect penmanship in black ink:
"YOU WERE DEALT. NOW DEAL."

DEUCE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Who am I? Let's go find out.

INT. CITY STREET - PRE-DAWN

Boots hit wet pavement. Black. Heavy. Grounded. The city
glistens like a memory. Still. Expectant.

Deuce stands. The note slides back into his jeans. He steps
into the street.

The world doesn't stop. But it will.

ON SCREEN:

CHICAGO, IL

BLACK SCREEN. SILENCE.

"DANCING QUEEN" (ACOUSTIC, EERIE,
HOLLOW)

The opening lyric — like a whisper in an empty room:

V.O. (THE DUO)
*"Friday night and the lights are
low..."*

BLACK HOLDS.

DEUCE (V.O.)

They say there's a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow. Fuck that fairytale. Gold is due. And my rainbow? It's shining straight at Chicago.

(beat)

They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Hell – this tree has roots. And that apple? I was green... once. This is my story. A kid from nowhere, going – Well, you'll find out. Deuce's Wild.

BLACK SCREEN. SILENCE.

ACOUSTIC "DANCING QUEEN" BEGINS – soft, eerie, distant, like a memory unraveling.

V.O. (THE DUO)

"Friday night and the lights are low..."

BLACK HOLDS A LITTLE LONGER.

V.O. (DEUCE)

They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
Hell – this tree has roots. And that apple? I was green... once.
This is my story. A kid from nowhere going– well... you'll find out. Deuce's Wild.

EXT. DRONE OVER CHICAGO – NIGHT

V.O. (JACK)

Age has nothing to do with the rites to power.
The phone never rings. No fairy godmother waves her wand.
Fuck that.
Chicago is my town. Or it will be.
But I'm not stoppin' there.

A subtle WHIRRING begins. The drone wakes up – watching the city from above.

FAINT GLOW — deep green and gold. Pulsing.

Below, the Chicago River snakes through dark streets — glowing like memory. Distorted. Ominous.

V.O. (THE DUO) (CONT'D)
"Looking out for a place to go..."

THE IMAGE SHARPENS.

The drone rises, gliding over rooftops and fire escapes, moving like a predator.

V.O. (THE DUO)
"You can dance... you can jive..."

CHICAGO COMES TO LIFE.

Neon signs flicker on. Traffic hums. Steam rises from sidewalk vents.

The city moves like it's stretching before a brawl.

V.O. (DEUCE)
 Chicago. You know the city.
 But do you know this story?
 My story?

The camera glides through the skyline. Glass. Smoke. Shadows. Neon blinking like a nervous tic.

V.O. (THE DUO) (CONT'D)
"Having the time of your life..."

V.O. (KING) (CONT'D)
 The Windy City.

Built on power and legends.

CAMERA CUTS THROUGH neighborhoods— Old money. Alley deals. Whispers under bridges.

V.O. (QUEEN) (CONT'D)
 Resurrection Mary.

The City of Big Shoulders. My Chicago... The river that runs backward.

V.O. (THE DUO) (CONT'D)
"See that girl... watch that scene..."

A blade flashes. A deal's made in shadows. Cash slips palms.

V.O. (JACK) (CONT'D)
 Urbs in horto.
 City in a garden. Jazz. Deep dish.
 Love. Hate. In Chicago, we shoot
 first.

V.O. (THE DUO) (CONT'D)
"Diggin' the dancing queen..."

INT. HIGH-STAKES POKER GAME - NIGHT

Cards hit felt. Chips shuffle. A glance.

Someone's bluffing. Someone's bleeding.

V.O. (ACE)
 Beware the green-eyed monster.
 Especially when he's dealing.

V.O. (THE DUO) (CONT'D)
"Dancing Queen..."

THEN - A GUNSHOT.

CUT TO BLACK.
 DEAD SILENCE.

FADE IN:

The faint creak of a door opening.

Still black. Just the sound.

EXT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

A private speakeasy. No sign. No address. No rules. Power is
 exchanged over whiskey, cigars, and calculated whispers.

BLACK SCREEN.

FAINT CREAK.

THEN - THE DOOR OPENS.

A pair of cowboy boots step inside. Slow. Measured.
 Determined. But underneath? Rage. Fear. A memory too loud to
 forget.

The camera adjusts. We adjust. The bar is dim, thick with smoke and shadow. Silhouettes breathe like ghosts.

ON STAGE – THE DUO.

Still. Low-lit. Waiting.

Then – they begin.

"THE CHAIN" (WILD CARD VERSION)

Raw. Acoustic. A warning wrapped in seduction.

THE DUO (SOFT, GHOSTLIKE)

"Listen to the wind blow... watch the sun rise..."

The sound stalks the room like heat.

DEUCE. 35.

He enters like he owns the night – but beneath the swagger? He's starving. For purpose. For control. For something that's his.

At a side table King leans into Jack

KING

(low, parental)

Jackie, I've told you many times,
"Don't confuse/"

JACK

The path with the destination. Yes
Boss, I've that line for years from
you.

This isn't a man looking to play. This is a man who has to win – or disappear forever.

His eyes scan – every threat, every weakness. Every player who might already be two moves ahead.

THE DUO

(sings)

"Run in the shadows... damn your love, damn your lies..."

AT THE BAR — ACE WATCHES.

Polished. Cool. Knows Deuce's type. Knows the stakes. Knows the damage before it walks in.

IN THE SHADOWS — JACK SMIRKS.

A man who studies chaos because he is chaos. He doesn't just notice Deuce — he recognizes him. The familiar pain. The mirror.

BEYOND THE CURTAIN — KING WAITS.

Still as a loaded gun. Watching Deuce not like prey — but like a threat that might need replacing.

THE DUO (BUILDING)

(sings)

*"And if you don't love me now... you
will never love me again..."*

Deuce lights a cigarette. The match flares. His hand shakes. Just a little. But the pain's there.

This isn't confidence. It's survival.

The Wild Card took everything from him once. Now he's here to take it back.

THE DUO (WHISPERED) (CONT'D)

*"I can still hear you saying... you
would never break the chain..."*

Eyes lock. Pieces move. Tension builds.

Jack's stare lingers.

Queen listens from above.

Ace tips his glass.

King doesn't move.

And Deuce?

He stands dead center. Not asking for permission. Demanding a seat.

THE DUO (CONT'D)

(sings)

"NEVER break the chain..."

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Deuce slips out. Rain teases concrete like a warning.

He flicks his lighter. Pauses.

The flame dances.

From a deeper shadow - another flame.

Jack. Already watching. Already ready.

THE DUO (V.O.)

(sings)

*"You don't love me now... you will
never love me again..."*

The music haunts them from inside. But here, in the alley - Chicago holds its breath.

Deuce just stepped back into the game.

And this chain?

It's already cracking.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The door clicks shut behind Deuce.

Rain teases the concrete.

He steps out. Lights a cigarette. The ember glows - a tiny flame of control.

From the darkness, another ember flickers. ROBERTO. Late 20s. Hispanic. Thick build. Hustler. A man who serves more than drinks - he serves temptation and danger with a knowing smile.

He steps too close.

ROBERTO

(low, teasing)

You walk like you don't know whose
city this is.

DEUCE

(cool, unreadable)

That supposed to scare me?

Roberto pins him - hard, fast, up against brick. Deuce doesn't drop the cigarette. He lets it glow between them.

No struggle. No words. Just heat. Deuce's jaw tightens. His fists curl — but he doesn't move.

Is this a fight? A flirtation? Something between desire and violence.

CLICK. A gun cocks in the darkness.

BANG.

A warning shot shatters the moment. Roberto freezes. Breathing hard.

ROBERTO
(low, growling)
We're not done here.
We both know what I want.

He leans in. Too close. Breath against breath. Deuce doesn't flinch. But he doesn't lean in, either.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)
Everybody pays.

From the shadows, JACK steps forward.

JACK
(cool, claiming)
Not tonight.

A long, loaded pause. Jack and Roberto lock eyes. The air is a wire.

Roberto steps back. Smirking. Unbothered. Dangerous.

He heads back inside, licking his lips.

Deuce straightens his collar. Jack lights his own cigarette — smirks.

A claim has been made. And Deuce knows it.

✱ BOOM — THUNDER CRACKS.

COLOR DRAINS. BLACK & WHITE BLEEDS IN.

A HARD, MARCH RAIN FALLS.

THE DUO BEGINS "FIRE" - STRIPPED THEN
EXPLOSIVE

(sings)
*"I'm riding in your car, you turn
on the radio..."*

The Duo sings from stage. Just voices and a single guitar.

BLACK & WHITE. OPENING CREDITS ROLL.

The neon lights of Chicago bleed into puddles. Reflections
twist. A door slams.

Deuce is already moving. Already choosing. Already burning.

INT. THE WILD CARD - SAME

The room is alive but hushed. The Duo owns the silence.

THE DUO
(sings)
*"You're pulling me close, I just
say no..."*

Deuce walks through the crowd like a marked man. Eyes flick
to him. He flicks past them.

 CHARACTER
INTRODUCTIONS:

AT THE BAR - ACE

Cool. Powerful. He nods at Deuce - not respect. Recognition.

THE DUO
(sings)
*"I say I don't like it, but you
know I'm a liar..."*

IN THE SHADOWS - JACK

Slick. Smirking. Already won something. But he wants more.

THE DUO
(sings)
"Ooooooooooh... FIRE."

BEHIND THE CURTAIN - KING

Still. Watching. Already ten moves ahead.

THE SHIFT:
ACOUSTIC →
ELECTRIC

The guitar rips in. The Wild Card lights up.

Deals are made. Glasses clink. Heat rises. The city wakes up.

Deuce takes his seat at the bar. No words. Just a flick of the cigarette. He's in.

THE DUO
(sings)
*"Late at night, you're takin' me
home..."*

INT. KING'S PRIVATE BOOTH - THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Dim lighting. Whiskey glasses sweat. A small TV flickers with St. Patrick's Day parade coverage. Darts thud in the background. Tension hums underneath.

Deuce slides into the booth. A waitress appears, quick.

DEUCE
Black Manhattan.

A drink that says: I'm dangerous, but in control. He needs to project that.

KING
Kid, where you from?

DEUCE
Vegas. That town's too small for me.

Lie. Vegas wasn't small. It was cold. Empty. He left because it took too much.

KING
Too small, huh?
Funny. Most men who leave Vegas do it 'cause they lost big.

King's not just fishing. He's checking for wounds.

DEUCE

I don't lose.
Not when the stakes are real.

True. But he's terrified what "real" might cost this time.

KING

You think Chicago is your table?
That I'm just another dealer?

DEUCE

(leans in, smoke curling)
Something told me...
The Wild Card is the hand I was
dealt. So I'm here to score, settle
up- and take the house.

KING

(smiling, slow, deadly)
The house always wins, my boy.

DEUCE

I see money. Sex. Power.
I want in - and you need me in.

A SHADOW APPEARS - QUEEN.

She slides in beside Deuce, fingers grazing the rim of his
glass.

ROBERTO arrives, Black Manhattan in hand.

Queen reaches first.

Deuce's hands twitch - like he might grab it... or punch her.

But he doesn't. He breathes. Cool.

QUEEN

(silk and steel)
Careful, darling. Some men don't
like being told what they need.

DEUCE

Let the lady have that drink. Bring
me a fresh one.

Control - but also: don't take everything from me.

DEUCE (TO QUEEN) (CONT'D)

Where I come from, it's polite to
ask.

QUEEN

Where I come from... I take what I want.

She's not flirting. She's testing – is he hollow, or hiding something real?

Queen studies Deuce.

She glances at King, then back.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Hmm. You remind me of someone.

Ruby? No. Jade?

(She leans in, touches his cheek) QUEEN (CONT'D)

Ah. Diamond.

Deuce's eyes go black.

DEUCE

What do you know of Diamond?

QUEEN

Unfinished business.

(beat)

My God. You liked her.

(she glances to King)

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Just like your daddy.

KING

(flicking ash,
exasperated)

You two wanna get a room, for Christ's sake?

VOICES erupt from the bar. An argument grows.

Queen watches, calm. One subtle nod.

Two thugs grab the man, dragging him in front of her.

MAN

I'm telling you, Queen, the bet was rigged – double or nothing–

Queen sips her drink. Lets silence suffocate him. Then–

SNAP.

MAN

C'mon, I–

A hand clamps down on his shoulder. Dragged away. A scream.
The door swings shut.

Then—silence.

Deuce's eyes flick to Jack.

JACK doesn't blink. Just throws a dart. Calm. Calculated.
Thunk.

KING SWIRLING THE ICE IN HIS GLASS. THE SOUND MAGNIFIES. THE
CAMERA FOCUSED INTO THE GLASS.

THWACK.

Dart hits.

CUT TO: JACK AT THE BOARD - NIGHT

Jack sips. Watches.

JACK
(low, amused)
New meat in town.

TONY
Thinks he's got a seat at the table
already.

JACK
He's got charm. But charm won't
keep him alive in this town.

THWACK. Dart lands. Just outside the bullseye.

JACK (CONT'D)
(soft, to himself)
Let's see how long he lasts.

JACK STEPS INTO THE BOOTH

JACK
(grinning)
King, I see you already got your
hooks in the kid.

DEUCE
(cool, sharp)
Kid?
Who the fuck made you my daddy? I'm
older than you. Piss off.

JACK
(grin deepens)
Age's got nothin' to do with it,
boy.
(beat)
Besides, you already let me take
control once.

FLASH TO:

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT (BRIEF FLASHBACK)

ROBERTO
(growling)
Everybody pays.

A shadow steps forward. JACK. Calm. Controlled.

JACK
(cool, claiming)
Not tonight.

FLASH BACK TO PRESENT:

JACK
It's a state of mind, kid. And I
think you need me to show you the
ropes.

Deuce leans in. Dangerously close.

KING
(laughing loud)
Jesus, you two - get a room!

QUEEN
(teasing)
Jackie, shouldn't you be out
stealing hubcaps or something?

Deuce smirks, exhales smoke. Jack throws him into a loose
headlock. Laughs.

JACK
You're funny, new guy.
I like funny.

DEUCE
(half-smiling, guarded)
Yeah? We'll see if you like what
comes next.

First moment Deuce drops the guard – just for a second. The kid's got heat, but history too.

KING
(waving them off)
Let the kid and I have a
conversation.

Jack backs off. Mock surrender.

JACK
Ok, King, Ok. Backing off.

Jack looks dead on at Deuce and gives a wink. The sexual intensity smolders.

ROBERTO sets down the second Black Manhattan.

Deuce lifts it. Sips slow.

Jack hovers nearby, watching.

Jack slides away, moving back toward the dartboard. But he doesn't leave.

He watches.

Queen gets up to leave. She take the Black Manhattan then she turns and leans in to Deuce.

QUEEN
(soft, close)
You don't want power.
You want to stop feeling invisible.

BOOM. A line that slices through Deuce's poker face. A wound she names – and he lets her.

DEUCE
(quiet, breathless)
Do you?

INT. AN HOUR PASSES.

The city moves. The bar churns. The game deepens.

Jack? Still watching.

INT. KING'S PRIVATE BOOTH - THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The conversation's already in motion. Low voices, clinking ice, smoke curling into dim light.

KING -It's not about who owes, it's about who remembers.

DEUCE
(stern, sharp)
I want to go it alone.

The tension cuts through the room. A beat. King doesn't flinch - but the smile fades.

KING
Whoa, cowboy.
Not yet.

A pause. Measured. He studies Deuce like he's weighing something breakable.

KING (CONT'D)
I don't trust you that much.

Beat. No grin. Just fire beneath calm.

KING (CONT'D)
Roberto will show you the way.
But I wanna see how you handle
yourself.

ROBERTO
(off-camera)
Yes, boss. Copy that.

A hand CLAPS onto Deuce's shoulder - too familiar, too hard. Deuce stiffens. Doesn't turn. Doesn't give him anything.

The air between them sizzles. Pure disdain - coiled, male, territorial.

KING
You don't get the money?
Don't come back. You fuck with me?
Don't come back.

(leans in)

KING (CONT'D)
I will find you, kid.

Deuce lights a cigarette - cool exterior intact. But that ember burns hot.

EXT. SHANNON DRY CLEANERS - NIGHT

The neon flickers. The street is quiet, the hum of a nearby train cutting through the city.

Deuce and Roberto step out of the car. Roberto adjusts his cuffs, sneering.

ROBERTO
(low, amused))
Hope you can handle this, Vegas.
Collecting dues ain't just about
talkin' pretty.

Deuce doesn't respond. Just pushes inside. Deuce enters first taking the lead.

INT. SHANNON DRY CLEANERS - NIGHT

Old-school. Fluorescent lights buzz. A fan hums in the corner. The air smells of starch and heat.

Behind the counter, MIKE SHANNON, 50s, hard-faced, built like a steel beam, watches them.

MIKE
Store's closed. Come back tomorrow.

Deuce smiles. Easy.

DEUCE
Yeah, I bet it is. But we're not
here for starch and steam. We're
here for King's money.

Mike leans on the counter, shaking his head. Talking like he is in charge. He hasn't met Deuce yet.

MIKE
Business is slow. Thought King
would understand that. Give me
another week.

Deuce tilts his head, chuckling.

DEUCE
See, that's funny. Because King
said you'd say that. And he told me
something else, too.

Mike's eyes narrow.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
The price just doubled.

Beat.

MIKE
What?

DEUCE
Five hundred just became a
thousand. Late fees. You
understand.

Mike stiffens. His jaw flexes. Roberto's eyebrow goes up.

MIKE
That ain't how we do things.

Deuce steps closer, lowering his voice.

DEUCE
Then you must not be keeping up.
King runs this town. When he says
jump, you don't ask how high—you
just start jumping. So pay now...
or we have a problem.

Mike hesitates.

A click. Roberto locks the front door.

ROBERTO
(low, dark)
No interruptions.

Mike's hand tightens around the counter.

Deuce grins, but his eyes? Dead cold.

DEUCE
Clock's ticking, Mike. What's it
gonna be?

No more talk. Just action.

Mike hesitates. Deuce sees it in his eyes—a man weighing his options, thinking maybe he can get out of this. Deuce doesn't let him.

WHAM.

A hard right cross. Mike staggers.

Roberto flinches. Doesn't move – but **we see it**.

Even he didn't know Deuce had that in him.

DEUCE

Time's up, Mikey. You pay, or I
make an example outta you.

Mike knows it's over. His face tightens. Slowly, he reaches into the register, pulls out a wad of bills.

He counts out a thousand. Hands it over.

Deuce takes the cash, smooths it, pockets it.

DEUCE (CONT'D)

Smart man. King'll appreciate your
generosity.

Then—on the way out.

Deuce pauses. His eyes land on a black dress shirt hanging on a rack.

He plucks it off the hanger. Holds it up.

DEUCE (CONT'D)

That's my size.

Mike glares through a swelling eye.

Deuce smirks, slings the shirt over his shoulder.

DEUCE (CONT'D)

Mikey, thanks for the \$500. I'll
let King know you said 'hi.'

Deuce and Roberto step out.

EXT. SHANNON DRY CLEANERS - NIGHT

A cold wind rolls through.

Deuce and Roberto head for the car. Roberto still looks pissed. They slide in.

Roberto grips the wheel, staring ahead.

Deuce leans in. Low. Measured.

His tone? Flatline. Cold.

The kind that makes grown men lock their jaws and pray.

DEUCE

Not a word or you're a dead man.

Roberto stares ahead, jaw tight.

Deuce holds the silence. Lets it sink in. No power struggle. No doubt. Just fact.

DEUCE (CONT'D)

Now drive on.

Roberto starts the car. Pulls out.

FADE TO BLACK.

ON-SCREEN: ACT I - CHICAGO DEALS IN BLOOD

ON-SCREEN: MARCH 16 - EVENING

EXT. SIDETRACKS - BOYSTOWN - NIGHT

The club is a beacon. Neon drips down the brick. Bass thumps like a pulse. Bodies pour in, glitter and leather and want.

INT. SIDETRACKS - CONTINUOUS

DEUCE enters. Stillness in motion.

The black shirt clings. The jeans hug. Boots tap, slow and steady. His face shadowed by stubble - cool, unreadable.

The crowd? Sees him. Tastes him.

A SERIES OF
INTERACTIONS:

A man in leather growls in Deuce's ear. A bear of a man offers a "private tour." Drag queens kiss both cheeks like royalty. Girls flirt. Boys stare. And Deuce lets it happen - not as prey, but as bait.

CUT TO:

INT. SIDETRACKS - A DARK CORNER NEAR THE BALCONY

We see a silhouette. A man with a drink. Half-lit. Half-danger. All control.

VOICE (O.S.)
(amused, smooth)
That cowboy's gonna hang himself
with that swagger.

BACK TO DEUCE - AT THE BAR

He slides into the front edge of the scene.

POV SHOT: SOMEONE WATCHING HIM

We feel the weight of the gaze. Deuce doesn't look around -
but he knows it's there.

DEUCE
(to bartender)
Can I get a beer?

FRANCIS (26) steps into frame - shirtless, sculpted, cool.
Asian, confident, eyes that clock everything.

FRANCIS
You look like you need it.

He sets the beer down with a grin.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
You're new here.

DEUCE
(taking a sip, smirking)
That obvious?

Francis leans in, elbows on the bar, all muscle and charm.
His eyes never leave Deuce.

FRANCIS
Oh yeah.
And I like new.

The seduction is casual. Unspoken.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
So, you just looking? Or you
planning on making someone's night?

Deuce tilts back his beer. Unreadable. He doesn't answer.
Doesn't have to. Francis likes that. He slides closer -
subtle, confident.

A PRESENCE.

Someone watching. From the shadows.

Jack.

He's been there. Observing. Letting it play. But now?

He moves.

Jack eases into the space between them – smooth, unapologetic. Francis pulls back, instinctively. He knows the shift.

Jack doesn't even look at him. Not yet.

JACK
(emerging from the
shadows, voice smooth)
You've been busy.

Deuce turns. Smirks.

DEUCE
Keeping the seat warm.

Jack steps closer. The proximity charges the air.

JACK
Hope you saved me a dance.

Their eyes lock. The world narrows. Francis lingers – unsure if he's been dismissed.

Jack finally looks at him. Just once.

That's all it takes.

Francis smiles. Backs off. Slides down the bar.

Jack owns the space now. Effortless.

JACK (CONT'D)
(smirking, low)
Tell me, cowboy.
You just testing the waters, or
actually here to swim?

Deuce takes a long pull from his beer. Jack watches. The air between them – electric.

JACK (CONT'D)
(grinning, easy)
You want instant gratification, go
with that hand.
You want the JACKpot—

Deuce catches the wordplay. Smirks. His eyes drop — quick glance at Jack's crotch.

Jack doesn't blink. He snaps his fingers — sharp.

JACK (CONT'D)
Hey, cowboy.
Eyes up here. We'll get to that...
if you're ready.

A wink. Deuce just met his match.

Francis reappears. Drops a card in front of Deuce.

FRANCIS
Here's my WhatsApp.

The card sits between them.

Jack stares at it. Then at Deuce. Then back to the card.

Francis lingers.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Jackie, you want another or—

JACK
(cutting, without turning)
I'll be sure to let you know when
I'm ready.
Thanks.

Francis drifts off. The card still sits. Jack leans in — whispers something. We don't hear it.

Francis watches from across the bar.

Fifteen seconds.

Jack pulls back, eyes locked on Deuce.

DEUCE
(slow, in control)
I'll go all in for the JACKpot.

Jack picks up the business card.

JACK
(smirking, flipping it
between his fingers)
So, no need for this.

He drops a five on top of the card.

Turns. Walks out.

Deuce waits a beat. Then follows.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Boots on concrete. Sharp. Intentional. Sexual.

JACK and DEUCE stride in sync. No talking. Just heat and air
between them.

The rhythm of their steps - THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

A guitar string bends into pitch.

The MALE DUO taps a boot on the stage floor.

They trade a smirk.

MALE DUO
Let's give 'em Grace.

VAMP INTO: "GRACE KELLY" BY MIKA

Crowd perks up.

The tension breathes new life.

The beat goes from sexual tension → identity chaos →
emotional surrender.

DUO FEMALE

I wanna talk to you
The last time we talked, Mrs.
Smith, you reduced me to tears
(MORE)

DUO FEMALE (CONT'D)
I promise you it won't happen
again.

The crowd perks up. A sexy chaos brews.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

JACK and DEUCE move through the crowd. Tension cloaked in cool. They board the train, the muffled chords of the song seem to follow.

INT. TRAIN CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Deuce sit across from each other. Boots tapping in sync. Silence doing more than words ever could.

MALE DUO (V.O.)
*Do I attract you? Do I repulse you
with my queasy smile...?*

JACK
They're playing our song.

DEUCE
Sounds more like a warning.

FEMALE DUO (V.O.)
*I could be wholesome, I could be
loathsome...*

JACK
Cowboy, you know the house always
wins.

Deuce stares ahead. Beat. Then—

DEUCE
I'll take my chances.

Jack leans in, slow, deliberate.

JACK
Like you think that chance is yours
to give or take.
Baby, you're already in the game.
My game. Like I said—

Deuce shuts it down. Fast. One finger to Jack's lips.

DEUCE
(quiet, direct)
Shhh.

MALE DUO (V.O.)
*How can I help it, how can I help
 it...*

A kiss. Quick. Sharp. Deadly accurate.

Deuce pulls back.

Jack exhales – not broken, but altered. He licks his lips slowly, like he's tasting a shift in power. Eyes never leave Deuce.

INT. THE WILD CARD - CONTINUOUS

The DUO leans in.

The crowd's gone wild.

FEMALE DUO (SINGING)
*I tried to be like Grace Kelly...
 But all her looks were too sad...*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

They slam into the space.

Flesh. Breath. Clothes everywhere.

They fall to the bed. Laughing. Desperate. No words. Just rhythm and release.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WILD CARD - CONTINUOUS

The DUO & THE CROWD reaching fever pitch.

VO (SUNG)
*I could be hurtful, I could be
 purple... I could be anything you
 like...*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bodies tangled. Heat rising. Then—

JACK
 (gasped, reaching)
 Wait... the light.

Click. Darkness.

Breath. Stillness.

Then — a line. Not loud. Not explained. Just a truth.

JACK (V.O.)
No one's ever looked at me like
that before.

Silence. Then—

DUO (V.O.)
Humphrey... we're leaving...

DUO & CROWD (V.O.)
KA-CHING!

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Their bodies move like shadows—Jack on top of Deuce, breath hot, intimate. Deuce exhales, unsure if this is love, a game, or a trap.

Jack lights a candle. Their faces glow in the flame.

JACK
(low, like a secret)
Don't confuse your path with your
destination, Cowboy. Burn too many
bridges... you might not make it to
the other side.

BEAT.

DEUCE
(quiet, cold, earned)
I know the line, Jack.
Don't confuse your path with your
destination.
(beat)
Too late.

Jack looks deep into Deuce's eyes.

DEUCE (CONT'D)

(A WHISPER, LIKE HE'S SOMEWHERE ELSE)
I tried to be like Grace Kelly

JACK
Shhh.

A hush that says: not now. Not yet.

INT. BALCONY - LATER

Skyline glowing like a set piece from someone else's dream.

They sit side by side—boxer shorts only, skin slick, silence deep. They're not looking at each other.

DEUCE
(beat, foot tapping)
They never let you just be one
thing.

Jack watches, the grin creeping up again—dangerous and unguarded.

Deuce side-eyes him.

And then, together, soft, self-aware, almost bashful:

JACK & DEUCE
(singing)
*"I tried to be like Grace Kelly...
mmm..."*

They crack up.

Fall back onto the bed behind them—limbs entangled, breath shared. And in that silence, something terrifying blooms:

Joy.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Late May. ZOOM into the calendar behind the bar, flyers for upcoming Memorial day. The bar is full, business booming. Deuce brings out a rack of glasses to the bar for Roberto. Still no love between them.

Queen calls Deuce over and she whispers in his ear, slips a business card in his very tight, well fitting jeans.

QUEEN
I need a man who knows how to
finish what he starts.

Deuce's black cowboy boots shine like black gold. He pulls back, considering the option, keeps it cool.

The DUO starts singing "I get along without You very Well" easy, sultry.

CHORD.

MALE DUO

(sings)

"I get along with out you very
well, of course I do"

Jack stops him.

JACK

What's up with Queen?

DEUCE

Nothing. She wants...some work
done.

JACK

Be careful with that one, her
"work" always has a price.

A female patron pulls Deuce to the floor to dance. He winks
a Jack.

FEMALE DUO

(sings)

"Except when soft rains fall and
drip from leaves then I recall"

Deuce spins the woman around and he looks at Jack deep all
the while.

Jack has a sly grin.

DUO

(in harmony)

"The thrill of being sheltered in
your arms, of course, I do. But I
get along without you very well."

MONTAGE AS THE SONG PLAYS ON

No voices heard just storytelling on-screen.

THE DUO

(sings)

"I've forgotten you just like I
should. Of course I have"

-Deuce visits Mike Shannon to get paid. Mike gives him \$500,
Deuce looks at him and hand motions more. He lifts his right
arm like a loaded gun and smiles. Mike Shannon reluctantly
pays up—then something flickers in his face. A tell. A
hesitation. Mike winces and counts out another \$500.

-Deuce and Jack getting a Chicago hot dog on the street, sunny afternoon. Laughing, looking.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"Except to hear your name"

-Jack takes call and then motions he has to leave."

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"Or someone's laugh that is the same. But I've forgotten you just like I should."

-Another night, Deuce and King at the bar. A patron gets out of hand and King nods to Deuce.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"What a guy. What a fool am I"

-Deuce drags the patron outside. Angle on feet. Deuce throws a punch and we see the guy fall on the ground at Deuce's feet. Deuce reaches down and pulls money and drugs out of the guy's pockets.

-Jack at his apartment looking out at the night sky, full moon.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"To think my breaking heart could kid the moon."

-He takes out his cell phone and we see him queue up Deuce. Deuce's cell phone rings but Deuce ignores it. Jack downs a shot of whiskey and slowly exhales. He rubs the phone like it is a magic lamp wishing for Deuce to pick up.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"What's in store, should I call once more?"

-Deuce at the bar stops out side he goes to call Jack.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"no I guess it's best that I"

-Deuce is about to call, he thinks. He presses the call button, the call rings once, then Deuce cancels the call.

DEUCE

Fuck.

HARD CUT TO JACK

Alone in his apartment. The moonlight on his face. He picks up his phone. Rubs it. Starts typing.

JACK (TEXTING)

"Hey Cowboy. It's your Jackpot."

He pauses. Stares at it.

Backs up. Erases "It's your Jackpot." Thinks. Erases "Cowboy." Now it's just... "Hey."

Jack stares at the one word. A long, painful beat.

He inhales slow. Exhales even slower. Then—he hits SEND.

CUT TO DEUCE'S
PHONE—VIBRATING
ON A BAR TABLE.

Deuce sees the text. His face? Fucking unreadable. He doesn't move. Doesn't reply.

Just downs the rest of his drink

THE DUO

(sings)

"No it's best that I stick to my
tune"

HARD CUT

EXT. QUEEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Fireworks in the night sky for the 4th of July.

-Deuce is at the entrance to Queen's penthouse on Miracle Mile. The song fades and real sounds come back.

-A gust of wind ruffles his jacket—something unsettling. He glances up at the penthouse windows. Dark.

-The BOOM BOOM of fireworks makes him flinch just slightly.

SILENCE.

Deuce takes the business card out of his pocket. He studies it. He rubs his thumb over the business card. Thinks. Beat. He breathes out slowly.

-The BOOM of the fireworks should cut to silence just as he hits the buzzer

THEN he rings.

QUEEN V.O.

Do you know what you're walking
into?

DEUCE

(low and sultry)
You tell me, Queen.

INT. THE LOBBY OF QUEEN'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Buzzer sound and he opens the door. He heads to the elevator. He gets on the doors close

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE

Deuce steps into the elevator. The doors start to close. A reflection of himself in the mirror—shaking it off, regaining control. Then— the DUO's last haunting lyric starts. BAM. The TRAIN KISS HITS HIM.

Fast cut to Deuce's face—masking it, but his jaw tenses.

The elevator doors close.

MALE DUO V.O.

"I get along without very well
Except perhaps in Spring."

THE DUO

(in harmony)
"But I should never think of Spring
for that would surely break my
heart in two."

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Fireworks rain in the sky through floor-to-ceiling windows. A half-drunk martini glass rests on a sleek, black marble bar. Queen, effortlessly poised, watches from her perch as Deuce peels off his black cowboy boots.

Deuce doesn't rush. This isn't submission. This is control.

He unbuttons his shirt. Slow. Calculated. Letting her see everything—but on his terms.

QUEEN
(amused, sipping her
martini)
Delicious.

Deuce tilts his head.

A smirk – not playful, surgical.

He unbuttons his shirt.

Slow. Clean. Tactical.

His jeans drop – and he becomes sculpture.

Backlit in gold from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

A Greek god in silhouette.

He holds.

Lets her *see*, but not *have*.

Not performance. ***Control.***

She lingers. Caught – just slightly exposed.

She raises her glass again, masking heat with cool.

Then—he pulls the jeans back up.

No glance. No wink.

He ***owns the room without moving.***

The air thickens.

DEUCE
(low, deadly)
You have no idea.

Queen sips. Still watching.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
But you will.

She smiles.

Not bested – but delighted.

QUEEN
Oh... keep me waiting, cowboy.

CLINK.

The sound of ice swirling in her glass â€œ and something *much more dangerous* hanging in the air.

She sips. The camera lingers on the ice swirling in the glass. The tension remains—unbroken.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. OUTSIDE JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The echo of fireworks still pulses.

Not celebratory — disorienting.

Deuce lifts his hand to knock... then hesitates.

A slow inhale.

His thumb brushes his phone — a flicker of doubt.

He stares at the door.

A long moment.

Then—he knocks.

MALE DUO (V.O.)
(singing, final refrain)
"I get along without you very
well..."

A beat.

The door opens.

Jack. Shirtless.

Backlit in apartment glow.

His hand grips the doorframe — tension in the fingers.

For a second — silence.

Then—his voice is quiet. Measured.

JACK
Cowboy.

DEUCE

Jackpot.

Jack pulls Deuce inside by the shirt.

Deuce eases the door closed with his boot.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Not sex. Ritual. Relief. Reckoning.

Boots hit the floor.

Glasses clink.

Laughter breaks, just barely.

Jack's hand presses against Deuce's bare back.

Deuce grips Jack's wrist - tight. Needing something he'll never say.

Breath meets breath. Eyes locked. No masks left.

THE DUO (V.O.)

(in harmony)

"But I should never think of
Spring...for that would surely
break my heart in two."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE 30-DAY POWER ASCENT - BUT NO KILL YET

RADIO V.O.

The Labor Day Weekend is heating
up. Parade and fireworks will be
on lawn at Grant Park. Get the
Bean. Get to the music. Summer is
almost gone. It's gonna be a hot
day in the park.

MONTAGE - DEUCE RISING IN KING'S WORLD A hard montage plays
under a low jazz score mixed with street noise. No dialogue.
Just images.

- Deuce collecting payments from backroom poker games.

- A store owner hesitates before paying. Deuce slams him
against a counter.

- A gambling den. Deuce stands at King's right hand, learning, absorbing.
- A gun in Deuce's hand. He weighs it, heavy.
- In an alley, Deuce presses the barrel to a man's head. Deuce presses the barrel to a man's head. A flicker of hesitation. The man squeezes his eyes shut. A breath-waiting.

CUT AWAY.

No shot. No sound.

HARD CUT

- Deuce making a call. A dump truck rolling in. A dumpster emptied.

A final image: Deuce at a high-rise window, looking over the city. His reflection blurs into the skyline.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Smoky. Slow-moving. A hush over the bar. The Male Duo starts singing-low, rich, almost painful.

DUO MALE

"Strumming my pain with his
fingers..."

CUT TO
SIDETRACKS.

INT. SIDETRACKS

The neon hums low. Jukebox crackles. The song follows us.

Deuce, nursing a whiskey. Jack slides in next to him.

As Jack exhales-THE FEMALE DUO'S VOICE JOINS IN.

DUO FEMALE V.O.

"Singing my life with his words..."

Deuce sits at the bar, nursing a whiskey. His face unreadable. Francis polishing a glass at the other end.

A flicker of movement. Deuce doesn't need to turn. He knows it's Jack.

DEUCE
 (calm, unreadable)
 Are you checking up on me?

Deuce exhales through his nose. Doesn't look at him. Jack nods to Francis for a beer.

Jack sits down. A long pause. He exhales slow, tapping his fingers against his glass.

Deuce doesn't look up. Jack studies him. Finally—Jack smirks.

JACK
 (low, even)
 Something like that, kid.

Their eyes lock. The tension is fucking unbearable. Jack exhales slow—like he already knows the answer.

DUO MALE V.O.
 "AND THEN HE LOOKED RIGHT THROUGH
 ME AS IF I WASN'T THERE..."

JACK
 (soft, honest)
 We're not gonna say it, are we?

A beat—thick, heavy, charged. Deuce doesn't move. Neither does Jack. The song swells.

SPLIT SCREEN: SIDETRACKS & THE WILD CARD.

On one side: Jack & Deuce, caught in a moment that will never be enough.

On the other: The Male Duo, bathed in blue light, singing the final line.

The split screen lingers. Deuce & Jack, trapped in something unspeakable.

The Male Duo sings the final line.

DUO MALE
 "And he just kept on singing...
 singing my life with his words..."

The Wild Card fades out first—leaving only Sidetracks.

Only Jack & Deuce. No escape. They're still looking at each other. Still not moving.

FADE TO BLACK.

In the darkness.

JACK
(SOUND ONLY)
Slow exhale.

Then—so faint, almost imagined—one last, haunting whisper of the song.

DUO MALE V.O.
**"Strummin my pain with his
fingers..."**

FADE TO BLACK.

ROOFTOP / "Take Me to Church"

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

City pulsing below. Distant sirens. Deuce stands on the edge — shirtless, cigarette glowing, soul unraveling.

Inside The Wild Card, faint through brick and neon — The Duo begins performing "Take Me to Church." Acoustic. Raw. A confession in chords.

THE DUO
(sings)
"My lover's got humor..."

Deuce unfolds a letter from his back pocket. It reads: "The Wild Card is the hand you were dealt."

He stares. Breathes deep.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"She tells me 'worship in the
bedroom'..."

DEUCE (V.O.)
I came back for a job.
That's what I told them. Truth
is... I came back to find out if I
ever really left.

(beat)

I don't want power. I want peace.
But in this city? Peace costs
blood. And I'm done folding.

He folds the letter. Steps back from the ledge. Turns toward
the door.

THE DUO
(sings)
"Amen. Amen. Amen."

INT. THE WILD CARD - CONTINUOUS

The Duo finishes the last verse. The audience is still.
Breathless.

Deuce enters. Changed. Stronger. Still dangerous – but no
longer hollow.

Jack watches from the shadows. He sees it. Feels it.

A nod. A deal unspoken.

DEUCE (V.O.)
The church couldn't save me.
So I built my own altar –
and set the rules.

INT. BACKROOM - THE WILD CARD SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

A slow, acoustic version of "The Gambler" plays live.

DUO FEMALE
"On a warm summer evening, on a
train bound for nowhere."

The singer's voice is barely above a whisper, just adding to
the ambiance.

A haze of cigar smoke. Whiskey sweating in glasses.

SIX flips over her final card—wins. The dealer barely
reacts—like he's seen her pull this shit before.

She collects her winnings slow, letting every man in the room
feel the loss.

Then she leans back, cool as ice, sipping whiskey like she's
been doing this forever.

Across the room, King watches.

When King nods at Deuce:

DUO FEMALE (CONT'D)
*" Know when to hold 'em, know when
 to fold 'em..."*

KING exhales slow, watching the table, eyes unreadable. Then, without looking, he slides a single poker chip across the table toward Deuce. It spins once. Lands dead center.

Deuce sees it. Knows exactly what that means.

King doesn't say a word. Just watches.

He moves in, smooth and controlled, places a hand on Six's shoulder.

DEUCE
 (low, firm)
 Game's over. Let's go.

Jack steps closer, Six sees him.

SIX
 (glances at her cards,
 unfazed)
 I don't know what you mean.

Jack steps in.

JACK
 You're just playing the house.

DEUCE
 (gritted teeth, low growl)
 Look, kid—

Six looks at Jack and smiles.

SIX
 (quick, teasing, dagger-
 sharp)
 Hey, doesn't Jack call you 'kid'?
 You tense up every time he calls
 you that. You don't even know it,
 do you?

Deuce tenses. Six smirks. She knew that would land.

Six, leaning in, voice like silk.

SIX (CONT'D)
(tilting her head, playful
whisper)
You sure he's not already the boss?

Deuce pulls her from the table, dragging her out into the warm, humid night.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

An Indian summer evening. The air thick with the last breath of September.

Deuce shoves Six back against the brick - gently, but firm.

DEUCE
(low, dangerous)
Why the hell are you playing the house?

SIX
(smirk like sin)
Maybe I like the odds.
I haven't figured you out yet.

Deuce exhales sharp. This kid. Too bold.

DEUCE
Are you tailing me?

Six shrugs, flicking something off his collar - way too close.

SIX
Well... you are easy on the eyes.

SIX (CONT'D)
(grinning)
You ever notice we kinda look alike?

DEUCE
(smiles, sipping whiskey)
Guess Chicago breeds 'em pretty.

Beat. Deuce watches her. Something shifts.

SIX
(mock-gagging)
Jesus, don't make it weird.

DEUCE
 (laughs, knocking back the
 drink)
 Trust me. It ain't that deep.

SIX
 (leaning in, breathy, a
 dare, a tease)
 You sure Jack's not the one in
 charge?

A fingertip traces his jaw, slow, testing. Deuce doesn't pull away, but—there's something there. Something off. Not hesitation. Something deeper.

Just a flicker in his eyes—like something in his gut just turned over. Like he knows something but doesn't have the words yet.

Jack. Watching. Amused. But his claim is clear.

Then—Jack steps in. Presence. Control. The moment shatters.

Jack places a firm hand on Deuce's shoulder—calm, but final.

JACK
 (smooth, deadly, to Six)
 Not tonight. Not a good fit.
 You're playing the wrong game.
 Deuce needs a (beat) stronger
 opponent.

Then, nodding toward the door.

JACK (CONT'D)
 King wants to talk to you.

Six studies Jack for a beat. Then flicks her gaze back to Deuce.

SIX
 Well, Deuce, guess you're not the
 Boss Man.

She turns, sauntering inside. Deuce simmers—but not sure why.

As the Door Opens from Outside (When Six Return):

Now, "Queen of Hearts" is playing by the live duo. As the door shuts the music cuts.

DEUCE
 (gritted, muttered)
 Cockblocker.

JACK
(easy tone, measured
smirk)
I've been watching all your moves,
kid. I like what I see. But Six?
She's not for you.

DEUCE
(snaps back, pissed, half-
spitting the words)
Fuck you. You think you know my
type? What I need? What I—

He pulls Deuce in. A beat. Their eyes lock — hard, searching.

Jack kisses him. Heavy. Full-on. A claiming. A battle. A
fucking war.

The kind of kiss that leaves a bruise, not on the skin, but
in the blood.

Then, Jack steps back. Eyes locked.

Deuce slowly licks his lips and nods. He tries NOT to smile.
That doesn't work.

JACK
(low, unwavering)
I know what you need. I *know what I*
need. You. And me.

Deuce breathes hard. Jack just upended everything.

DEUCE
(cocky, hiding the shake
in his voice)
Yeah, right. Piss off.

Jack yanks Deuce in. Tight. Their chests press. Deuce breath
hitches—just for a second.

JACK
(low, venomous, certain)
You don't know it yet, but you
will.
(brushing Deuce's five o'clock
shadow, whispering in his ear)

You want to be King? I can make
that happen. But you don't get
there alone.

Music softly starts inside—just the bassline of “Queen of Hearts.”

Jack grins, stepping back, voice silk and steel.

MALE DUO V.O.
(faint in the background)
“Midnight. And I’m waitin on the
12:05”

JACK
Your jackpot is right here.

Deuce scoffs—but his fingers twitch. No, not just twitch. Curl into a fist. Tight.

A tell. A fucking tell.

His breathing shifts—sharper now. Not loud. But Jack catches it.

MALE DUO V.O.
“Hopin it will bring me just a
little farther down the line.”

JACK
Get inside. King’s got a plan for
you and Six.

MALE DUO V.O.
“The moonlight is just a heartache
in disguise.”

Deuce smirks, but it’s a cover. This just got real.

DEUCE
(grinning, but unreadable)
Jackpot... we’ll see.

As the Door Opens from Outside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

As the door creaks open—“Queen of Hearts” fully kicks in, full-bodied, sultry, and smooth.

The door swings open. Deuce steps inside.

The door swings shut—HARD.

BOOM. The band SLAMS INTO IT.

THE DUO
"Playing with the queen of hearts."

EXT. OUTSIDE THE WILD CARD

Jack exhales, watching the door shut behind Deuce. Smirks. Runs his tongue across his teeth—satisfied. Like he just devoured something.

He rubs his jaw—where Deuce's breath just was. Just for a second.

JACK
(low, to himself, amused
as hell)
Jackpot...

He exhales slow, turns up his collar. Walks off into the dark.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BACKROOM - THE WILD CARD SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

The last chords of "Queen of Hearts" fade out.

BAND
Alright folks, we're gonna take
fifteen. This is Chicago, so go
make some action.

A few laughs. A few clinks of glasses. But at King's table? The game is just starting.

Deuce approaches as Six leans in, full of confidence.

SIX
(easy, slick)
Okay, King, I got it. Easy mark. I
work solo, so no problem.

Deuce watches. King listens. King glances toward the alley door—Jack steps inside. Silent, watching. He nods and Jack comes over.

KING
(calm, absolute)
Well, I'm pairing you up with
Deuce. Jackie, you'll be joining
these two tomorrow.

SIX
 (head back groaning)
 Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. First I
 gotta work with the Kid, now I get
 the other one too?
 (gestures at Jack,
 exasperated)
 You two better not be the needy
 type.

King smiles, flicks his cigar.

JACK
 (slick, unreadable)
 Hey, that makes us newlyweds,
 darling. Hope you don't mind
 sharing a bed.
 (leans in, voice dropping just
 enough to make it sharp as a knife)
 ...Or losing one.

SIX
 (groaning, throwing up her
 hands)
 Oh, for the love of God.
 I got Tweddle Dee and Tweddle Dum
 slowing me down?

SIX (CONT'D)
 (leaning back, arms
 crossed, defiant)
 King, seriously. I can do this
 myself. I don't need these gym rats
 hanging around.

Silence. A long, slow silence.

King watches her. No expression. No reaction. Nothing.

Then—he exhales. A single, slow drag of his cigar.

The camera pulls back, slow — like the breath before a storm.
 They're all in. But is it all for one? Or everyone for
 themselves?

King — cool, watching, unmoving. Six — arms crossed, but her
 knee bounces under the table. Jack — stirring his drink,
 unreadable, but always watching Deuce. Deuce — leaning back,
 but his fingers curl, just slightly.

THE DUO (SINGS)
 "The Joker ain't the only fool to
 be in love with you..."

At the bar, Roberto pours a drink for a patron. He washes a glass — eyes locked, quiet.

ROBERTO
(soft, dry — to no one, or
maybe to all)
People say a lot when they think
the bartender ain't listening.
(beat)
But I always am.

INT. THE WILD CARD - 30 MINUTES LATER

The camera comes back to the table. The Duo is talking to Roberto at the bar. Voices come back up on the King conversation.

KING
(smooth but final)
Settle down, the two of you. This
is how it's going down.

Silence. The weight of the moment settles in.

KING (CONT'D)
(leaning forward, voice
dropping low)
It's a high-stakes poker game.
Carmine Tortorelli's. Tomorrow
night. (to Six) You're at the table.
Your husband, Jack, right beside
you.

SIX
(laughs, shaking her head,
looking at Jack)
King, come on. Jack's a lousy
player.

KING
(grinning, savoring it)
That's right. He's there to set you
up.

Six exhales through her nose. She doesn't like this.

KING (CONT'D)
You clean up. Take all the money.
You three split ten percent.

JACK
(deadpan, relaxed)
Right, boss. Got it. I got your
Six.

Jack puts a firm hand on Six's shoulder. Deuce shifts in his seat, eyes flicking toward Jack. Six rolls her eyes. Something unreadable crosses his face—but he keeps his mouth shut

SIX
(mock offense, laughing
but sharp)
Ten percent? Then what do they get?

JACK
(smirks, slow as hell)
Do the math. Three-way split.

DEUCE
Six, let's not forget that I had to
drag your ass out of here for
trying to steal from the house.

Six, looks then disregards that comment.

SIX
(leaning back, arms
crossed)
King, seriously. I can do this
myself. I don't need these gym rats
hanging around.

Silence.

A long, slow silence.

King watches her. No expression. No reaction. Nothing.

Then—he exhales. A single, slow drag of his cigar.

The smoke curls. Spreads. Thick. Heavy.

The camera lingers.

No one speaks. No one breathes.

Then—King simply flicks the ash.

King watches her. No expression. No reaction. The power in the room shifts.

Everyone feels it.

DEUCE
So King... what's my angle?

KING
(calm, unreadable, but
absolute)
Driver and muscle. If things go
south, you take over. Get these two
out-alive, with all the money.

SIX
(exhales, but covers it
with a cocky grin)
Alright, alright. I get it. You're
the boss, King.

Six leans in, flicking a glance at Deuce

SIX (CONT'D)
Doesn't mean I gotta like my new
buddies.

Then, smirking, glancing between Deuce and Jack—digging in
the knife just a little deeper

DEUCE
Or who's leading and who's just
following.

Deuce leans back. Unbothered. Cool. But—his fingers twitch.
Then curl. Just slightly. A tell. A move so small, no one
sees it. Except Jack.

Jack leans back, slow smirk, watching Deuce—then, lower,
deadlier.

JACK
Careful, Cowboy.

Beat. Just a whisper. Just a breath grazing Deuce's
jawline—deadly, certain.

JACK (CONT'D)
You're already in my game.

Jack taps Deuce's hand on the table—just once, light,
precise. Claiming. Final.

JACK (CONT'D)
And I don't lose.

Deuce exhales slow. His jaw shifts—like he's biting something
back.

Then, unseen beneath the table—his other hand curls into a fist. Tight. Unyielding. Jack doesn't see it. But we do.

The game is on.

The camera pulls back.

INT. THE WILD CARD - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Deuce washes his hands. Splash. Breath. Silence.

He looks in the mirror. One second. He doesn't recognize himself. Behind him — Jack enters.

JACK
You played that well.
Didn't throw a fit. Didn't fuck it
up.

Deuce doesn't respond.

JACK (CONT'D)
(slight smirk)
You're learning. Fast.

DEUCE
(stares at his reflection)
You ever get the feeling...
You're in the middle of someone
else's plan?

Jack shrugs, steps beside him. Quiet.

JACK
We're all part of King's game,
Cowboy. The only question is...
(leans in)
Who flips the table first?

Beat. They lock eyes in the mirror. Then Jack exits.

Deuce stares at himself. A slow breath. A long look.

DEUCE (V.O.)
You think you're pulling the
strings. Until you realize they're
wrapped around your fucking throat.

INT. THE WILD CARD SPEAKEASY - MOMENTS LATER

The bar hums with energy. Glasses clink. Cigarette smoke curls in the dim light. At a table near the back, Queen stirs her martini with a slow, deliberate hand.

Deuce drops into the seat across from her.

QUEEN
(smirking, studying him)
Took you long enough.

DEUCE
(dry, unreadable)
You waiting for me?

QUEEN
(silk and steel)
I knew you'd come. I know men like you.

Deuce exhales, taps his fingers against the table.

From across the room, Jack and Six approach.

JACK
(casual, teasing)
Hey, cowboy. We're going out for pizza. You wanna come?

DEUCE
(leaning back, smirking)
If you think you need it.

Six laughs, nudging Jack. Queen smirks.

SIX
(grinning)
No, you didn't.

Jack shakes his head, throwing a playful headlock on Deuce.

JACK
(laughing, but controlled)
You got jokes now, huh?

QUEEN
(leaning back, amused but sharp)
When you boys are finished..

Jack raises his hands in surrender.

JACK
(mocking)
Yes, Queen. Backing away.

He winks. Queen sips her martini.

Jack and Six head toward the exit, disappearing into the night.

QUEEN
There will be a price to pay for my help.

DEUCE
The house always wins, right?

Queen nods.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
What's the going rate?

Queen swirls her martini. They lock eyes. Deuce swirls his whisky. The ice clinks. Tension locked.

Deuce downs the whiskey. In a smoldering voice. He exhales slow. SILENCE.

DEUCE (CONT'D)
Then let the fucking house win.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

Deuce walks out into the city. Wind howls through the high-rises.

He lights a cigarette. Breathes deep.

DEUCE (V.O.)
Some bets you make knowing you'll lose. Because it's not about the hand...It's about who you burn playing it.

MATCH FRAME
TRANSITION:

INT. LOCAL PIZZA JOINT - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP: A PITCHER OF BEER SWEATING ON A TABLE.

Condensation slides like regret. MATCH DISSOLVE from the whiskey glass.

A low jazz track plays on a scratchy speaker.

Pizza hasn't arrived. Air's thick — is this a stakeout, or a seduction?

JACK
(pouring beer, dry)
The house always wins, right?

SIX
(smirk like a switchblade)
You said I was playing the house.
(beat)
Turns out... I am the house.

She leans in. Dagger drawn.

SIX (CONT'D)
And you?
You bet on the wrong hand.

Jack scoffs. Sips. But his mouth's dry. Six watches — sees everything.

SIX (CONT'D)
(playful, deadly)
You like him.

JACK
(blinking, deflecting)
Who?

SIX
Deuce.
(grins)
Come on. I'm cool.

Jack raises his beer, stalls.

JACK
(smirking, flat)
I'm not gay.

No reaction. Just silence.

She slices a piece of pizza like it's a throat.

SIX
(leans in, low)
But Jackie... I saw you.

Jack freezes – subtle. His grip tightens on the glass.

SIX (CONT'D)
I saw why you stopped us.
It wasn't about the game. It was
about him.

Beat.

JACK
(smooth, cold, final)
Careful, Six.
I don't play games I can't win.

She reaches across the table, squeezes his hand. A pause.
Silence. Jack studies her, weighing if he's being played.

JACK (CONT'D)
(chuckles, shaking his
head)
Yeah, okay. Me and cowboy.
Brokeback Mountain part two.

Six lets the moment sit, then Jack shifts gears.

JACK (CONT'D)
(grinning, biting into his
pizza, shaking it off)
You really wanna know what I think
about Deuce? He's a cocky,
reckless, stubborn-as-hell pain in
my ass. But yeah, he's good. Maybe
even better than you.

SIX
(smirking, teasing, deadly
soft)
Careful, Jackie. You sound like you
actually give a damn.

Jack just grins. Plays the game.

JACK (SMOOTH, SLOW, WARNING)
Don't mistake me for sentimental,
darling.

Jack wipes his mouth with a napkin. Casual. Slow.

Then—he flips the table.

JACK (CONT'D)
(sudden, cold, cutting
through the bullshit)
So. What if you lose?

Six brushes this off, too fast.

SIX
I won't.

JACK
(dead serious now)
You won't. *But if you do?*

SIX
(grinning, confident)
I got insurance.

Jack raises an eyebrow.

SIX (CONT'D)
(leaning in, voice
dropping)
The dealer tomorrow? Ronnie. Old
friend. We ran a grift in St.
Louis. If things go south, he'll
make sure they swing north for me.

Jack exhales, shaking his head.

JACK
(grinning, impressed)
Son of a bitch. You're good.

SIX
(raising her glass)
Yep.

JACK
(leaning back,
considering)
And what does Ronnie cost us?

SIX
(beat, smirk)
Two grand and...

JACK
(eyeing her, suspicious)
And?

SIX
(deadpan, holding it just
long enough)
He wants a date with you.

Jack freezes. Panic. Six starts laughing.

SIX (CONT'D)
(grinning, teasing)
Got you!

Jack glares, unamused.

JACK
(muttering, annoyed)
You're an asshole.

SIX
(grinning, leaning in)
What? You're not his type anyway.

JACK
(scoffs, faux offense)
What do you mean, I'm not his type?
Who doesn't want all of this?

SIX
(raising an eyebrow, sly
as hell)
Hmm. The question is, Jackie... who
does?

Jack narrows his eyes.

JACK
(grabbing a slice,
deadpan)
Have another slice.

They both smirk. In unison-

JACK & SIX
If you think you need it.

FADE TO BLACK.

SOUND BRIDGE - A FAINT MATCH STRIKE IN THE DARK.

A cigarette glows in the night.

The faint scratch of a lighter flicking closed.

INT. PRIVATE BACKROOM - THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Low light. Thick smoke. King sits at a small table, sipping whiskey, cigar smoldering. Across from him—Ace. Quiet. Controlled. A man who never wastes words.

KING
(leaning forward,
measured)
Nothing goes sideways tomorrow. Got
it?

ACE
(nods, simple, absolute)
I got it.

King watches him. Smirks, exhaling smoke.

KING
That's why I like you, Ace. You
don't talk too much.

ACE
(low, unreadable)
Talking don't win games.

They hold the silence. A final nod.

ROBERTO GATHERS THE INTEL - FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

A cigarette ember glows in the dark. The faint scrape of a lighter flicking closed. Roberto leans against the brick wall, unseen, unheard. He listens. He watches.

FLASHBACK 1 - QUEEN & DEUCE (from earlier scene):

QUEEN
(smirking, swirling her
martini)
There will be a price to pay for my
help.

DEUCE
(leaning in, voice low,
smoldering)
Then let the fucking house win.

FLASHBACK 2 - JACK & SIX (pizza scene, earlier):

Roberto in another booth, unseen by Jack and Six. Close enough to hear. Invisible enough to ignore.

SIX
(grinning, cutting)
Come on. I'm cool. Deuce. You like Deuce.

JACK
(smirking, wiping his mouth)
Yeah, right. Me and cowboy.
Brokeback Mountain part two.

MATCH CUT - ROBERTO'S LIP CURLS. HE KNOWS.

The cigarette ember flares. He exhales smoke. Listening. Absorbing. Filing it away.

FLASHBACK 3 - KING & ACE (seconds ago):

Robert at the bar wiping things down. Silent. Inconspicuous. But there.

KING
(leaning forward, voice iron)
Nothing goes sideways tomorrow.

ACE
(low, absolute)
I got it.

MATCH CUT - ROBERTO'S FINGERS TAP ASH OFF HIS CIGARETTE.
Back to the present.

The alley is quiet. Just the hum of the city in the distance.

Roberto smirks, taking a slow drag. Pause (hold 4 seconds)

SOUND BRIDGE—LAST DRAG.

ROBERTO
(murmuring to himself, amused)
Everybody pays.

The cigarette ember burns out. He flicks the cigarette away. Turns. Disappears into the dark. Hold on Roberto walking away.

FADE TO BLACK.

SOUND BRIDGE—LAST DRAG.

MATCH CUT—ROBERTO EXHALES SMOKE → DEUCE EXHALES IN THE COLD NIGHT AIR.

DUO MALE V.O
(whisper)
"Are you some one that I can give
my heart to?"

The sound of his boots queuing up the song "Training Season"
Roberto's feet walking morph into Deuce's feet walking
THE FIRST LYRIC BEGINS—SOFT, ALMOST A WHISPER.

MATCH CUT - BOOTS MOVING.

DEUCE'S MARCH - SONG IGNITES

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT

Deuce walks. Controlled. Boots against pavement.

DUO MALE V.O (CONT'D)
(speaks low and sultry)
Think I found someone to play the
game...

Car headlights flicker past—like eyes tracking him. A doorman flicks a cigarette—mirror of Roberto's movement.

A cop watches him pass—but doesn't stop him.

Reflections in the shop windows shift—like shadows move as he moves.

CITY CUTS - INTERCUTTING SHADOWS & NEON LIGHTS:

Passing headlights cut across his face—like interrogation lights.

A woman steps out of a bar, eyes him, then lets him pass. (No words. Just a choice not to interfere.)

Deuce glances in a shop window—his reflection distorts under the neon. (He's still here. But who is he now?)

THE SHOP WINDOW REFLECTION MATCH CUTS INTO QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE GLASS.

MATCH CUT - DEUCE ARRIVES.

DUO MALE V.O

"Are you someone I can give my
heart to?"

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The skyline blazes below.

DUO MALE V.O

"Are you the poison that I'm drawn
to"

The song fades out... but not fully. A soft echo remains in
the air, threading through the tension.

Queen stands near the bar, swirling her martini.

Deuce stands by the window, watching the lights.

DEUCE & QUEEN - THE PENTHOUSE SCENE THAT EVENING

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The skyline blazes below. High above Chicago, the city hums,
alive. Inside? Silence. The weight of power.

QUEEN

A lady shouldn't be kept waiting.

DUO MALE V.O

"I need someone to hold me close"

DEUCE

(slow smirk, unreadable)
Didn't realize I was on the clock.

DUO MALE V.O

"Deeper than I've ever known"

QUEEN

(drinking, smirking)
There's always a price to pay for
my help. We will figure this out
for us.

DEUCE
 (leaning back, considering
 her)
 Figure this out for me, right?

QUEEN
 (low, teasing, calculated)
 Me? You? Us? Is there really any
 difference?

DUO MALE V.O
 "'Cause training season's over"

Beat. Deuce watches her. Then—he moves.

In the background echoes repeat "Training season's
 over...over"

MATCH CUT - ICE CLINKS IN HER GLASS.

Deuce peels off his shirt—slow, practiced, effortless. We see his sculptured reflection in the window, the city lights catch the angles of his body. Deuce watches himself in the glass. His hand runs down his muscled chest. He smirks. Self - Obsession.

Queen watches Deuce watching himself. She takes a slow, seductive sip of her martini.

He turns and the camera catches the full on version. Deuce locks eyes. Beat. Queen watches, heat flickering behind her cool gaze.

She lifts her martini glass. He walks towards the penthouse door that is still open. When he gets there he turns to face Queen. Eyes locked. Sex and tension suffocate the room.

QUEEN
 (smirking, voice like
 velvet)
 Delicious.

DEUCE
 (low, steady, a challenge)
 I know. You have no idea.

Silence. Tension. The air thickens. Then—Deuce PAUSES.

He doesn't move forward.

Queen raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

QUEEN
 (leaning back, sipping,
 amused)
 Oh... keeping me waiting?

Deuce exhales slow. A flicker of something in his eyes.

DEUCE
 (low, unreadable, but
 certain)
 Just making sure I know the rules.

QUEEN
 (sipping, smiling, eyes
 sharp as a blade)
 The House always wins.

DUO MALE V.O
 (a low seductive whisper)
 "Training Season's over."

Deuce smirks. The tension lingers.

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE

Silence.

ONE. LAST. BEAT.

The door clicks shut. (One sound. Final.)

THE LOCK TURNS—SLOW. LOUD. LIKE A FUCKING GAVEL.

Deuce breathes in. Deep. Final. Like he's standing in gasoline with a match.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Big ending the crowd roars.

THE DUO
 "Training Season's over."

Cheers for 5 seconds.

DEUCE (V.O.)
 (exhaling slow, voice like
 a lit fuse.)
 Then let's burn it all down.

HOLD SILENCE for 5 seconds.

FAINT AMBIENT CITY NOISES (muffled car horns, distant sirens, the shuffle of footsteps). Then—A HORN SCREECHES.

BAM. JAZZ EXPLODES. LIKE A GUNSHOT IN THE NIGHT.

CUT INTO THE CITY BREATHING DANGER.

EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - NIGHT (DRONE SWIRL, A CITY BREATHING DANGER)

-Aerial shot—sweeping over the black river, the city drenched in neon & sin.

-Streetlights flicker.

-A train rattles overhead.

-Cars slink through rain-slicked streets.

SOUND BRIDGE - THE GAME BEGINS BEFORE WE SEE IT.

-Cards shuffling.

-Poker chips falling.

-Glasses clinking.

-A roulette wheel spinning somewhere in the city.

—"PLACE YOUR BETS." (DISEMBODIED. CALLING THEM IN.)

QUICK FLASH CUTS - NIGHT MOVES INTO PLACE

ON-SCREEN—QUEEN.

-Seated. Watching. Waiting. We don't know where yet.

-KING & ACE. Walking. Purposeful. Silent.

-Jack exhales smoke. Six adjusts her cufflinks. A car stops. Doors open.

Jack and Deuce, they take a deep breath, in sync. Both check their revolvers. Tucked in the back. Gangster style.

ANGLE ON DEUCE—OPENING THE DOOR TO TORTORELLI'S.

JAZZ MUSIC CUTS—SHARP. SILENCE

INT. CARMINE TORTORELLI'S BACKROOM - NIGHT

THE DUO (off-screen) is playing some chords and vocalizing. No hint of the song, "Goodbye to love."

Smoke hangs in the air like a lingering ghost. Whiskey glasses sweat under dim, flickering light. The room is a pressure cooker, and every man sitting at the table knows it.

INT. THE WILD CARD

The duo plays in the corner—low, almost an afterthought. A haunting, slowed-down "Goodbye to Love" hums beneath the action. No singing yet, just some vamping. We should not know the song yet.

INT. CARMINE TORTORELLI'S BACKROOM - NIGHT

Jack, Deuce and Six walk in ready take the room. Carmine greets them.

CARMINE TORTORELLI
Ah, what do they call you young
people now, "Z, X, Y?"

SIX
Millennials

CARMINE TORTORELLI
Ah yes, our future is in your
hands. Lovely.

Jack sees Queen at the table. He pulls Deuce aside. In a low stern voice.

JACK
(quiet and stiff)
Deuce, what the hell? Did you know
she was gonna be here?

Deuce responds quickly, too quickly.

DEUCE
(dodging and lying)
No, man. No.

Jack looks. Six catches on and looks at Queen. Six smiles and says to Jack on the side.

SIX
(under her breath)
What the hell is going on?

Now with big dramatic flair.

SIX (CONT'D)
Queen, I didn't know you played cards.

QUEEN
Six I've played more than you'll ever forget. I'm a Vegas girl from way back. Didn't you know? I was a showgirl, turned Vegas dealer. I know all the angles. Just like Diamond.

Six looks at Jack. Deuce looks at Queen.

CARMINE TORTORELLI
Oh we are going to have an excellent game tonight.

Jack and Six take seats at the table, leaving a space open between Queen.

King and Ace enter.

CARMINE TORTORELLI (CONT'D)
Ah King with his Ace! Royalty is in the house. Well We have Jack, Queen, King and Ace!

King spies Queen. He looks at Deuce for an answer.

QUEEN
Oh, King you look surprised to see me?

KING
Funny you didn't mention at our lunch today that you would be here.

QUEEN
Oh, King I never assumed we traveled in the same circles.

King smiles pleasantly. King moves and sits at the chair next to Queen. Queen taps his hand.

QUEEN (CONT'D)
Keep your friends close.

King chuckles slightly.

KING
And your enemies, closer.

QUEEN
Oh, King, you and I at separate
ends of the table? What a tragedy.

The room looks.

KING
You want to sit next to me so bad?
You should be careful, Queen

QUEEN
NEVER! I would kill myself if that
happened.

KING
(cold as ice)
Then why haven't you?

She smiles.

CARMINE TORTORELLI
Let's all get our drink, we are
waiting for one more guest.

Camera pulls back as the conversation is muted to low.
Drinks are served.

On screen we hear THE DUO vocalizing and playing some
underscored guitar strings. NO MENTION OR RECOGNITION of the
upcoming song.

Ronnie the dealer takes his place.

Sal enters. Hands shaken. Smiles. Sal is seated on the
other side of Queen. The Table of Six is set. Ronnie the
dealer, Six, Jack, Sal, Queen, King and Carmine.

Deuce and Ace stand to the back, sipping whiskey on the
rocks.

Six goes to shake Ronnie's hand then whispers:

SIX
(whispers)
Deal it clean or deal it fast.
Either way, make me win."

Jack eyes Deuce. They are not on the same page.

Jack slaps King on the back

JACK
(like a wise guy)
You're not here for the cards are
you?

KING
(not missing a beat)
And you go to confession every
Saturday, right?

Roberto unseen from the kitchen, watches.

Queen runs her fingers along the edge of her glass. Ice.
Steel. Waiting.

CARMINE TORTORELLI
Well let us get started. You have
all squared up with Ronnie our
dealer for your \$25,000 entry to
the game. Betting is limited to
cash, deeded property, authentic
watches, jewelry and cars with
titles. There will be no advances
or I.O.U. May the best man win.

He glances to Queen and Six.

CARMINE TORTORELLI (CONT'D)
Or the best lady as well.

The camera pulls back an hour passes.

At the center of it all—the table. Cards scattered, stacks of
cash thick enough to break a jaw. Carmine puts a pinky gold
ring in. Sal takes off a watch. Tosses it on the table.

Six leans back, all confidence, winning too easily.

Jack lounges, but his eyes never stop moving—watching
everyone, reading the game like scripture. Setting up Six
with every hand.

Deuce sits cool, calculating, wondering how the hell he gets
out of this alive.

Queen is observing.

King swirls his drink—he's waiting, watching. No expression.
Just smoke and control.

Volume comes back up.

INT. CARMINE TORTORELLI'S BACKROOM - NIGHT

Carmine has been loosing. He folds. Then he sees it—Ronnie slipping a card to Six.

Carmine exhales slowly, taps the felt.

CARMINE TORTORELLI
(flat, unreadable)
Something ain't right.

SILENCE.

A long, slow pull in on Sal. He's watching. Calculating.

Six doesn't flinch. But her tell is there—small, imperceptible, unless you're looking.

MATCH CUT TO RONNIE'S HAND. A card slipping where it shouldn't.

SLOW BLINK FROM SAL. THE EYES SAY IT ALL.

THEN—GUN UP.

A creak. The door opens.

TEN steps in—dirty but honest, a cop who knows how the game is played. He adjusts his coat, leans on the back wall.

TEN
(gravel, easy)
Well, well, well. This a private
game, or do I get a seat?

Tension climbs. Queen starts to rise.

QUEEN
I'm leaving.

KING
(cool, absolute)
Stay.

The moment locks—a power shift.

Then—SAL SEES IT. Ronnie slipping another card. Gun UP. FAST.

BANG. A SHOT SPLITS THE ROOM.

SILENT ON THE SCREEN. FREEZE—4 SECONDS.

Then—COLD START to "I'll Say Goodbye to Love" from THE DUO.
This song underscores the on-screen actions.

THE DUO O.S.

(sings)

"I'll say goodbye to love."

Movement starts again but in slow motion—Guy Ritchie style.

BANG.

MATCH CUT: BLOOD SPLASH ON QUEEN'S FACE. DEUCE BLINKS.

DEUCE MOVES.

He grabs Jack and Six without a word. Like a loaded gun just fired itself.

THE DUO

(sings)

"No one ever cared if I should live
or die..."

Sal drops back the chair smashing, blood spurts on Queen's face.

THE DUO (CONT'D)

(sings)

"Time and time again the chance for
love has passed me by..."

Mayhem.

Deuce looks at Jack, King, Queen. He must decide.

BEAT. Deuce pauses. Deuce grabs Jack and Six, shoving them toward the exit.

King locks eyes with Carmine. They have been had by Ronnie the dealer.

THE DUO (CONT'D)

(sings)

"And all I know of love is how to
live without it."

Queen takes a slow sip of her drink—calculating. Blood is dripping down the side of her glass and her face. Ronnie's blood splattered on her face and clothes. She is unfeeling by this.

SOUND OF ICE CLICKING.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
(sings)
"I just can't seem to find it."

Roberto watches from the shadows—he sees EVERYTHING.

TEN doesn't even blink. Just nods, like he expected it.

TEN slaps cuffs on people, pocketing some money from the table.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

Camera back to normal time song continues to underscore.

Jack, Six, and Deuce hit the car. Windshield wipers swipe in the rain.

SIX
(flat, shaken)
Ronnie is dead.

DEUCE
(shaking his head, still
processing)
Ronnie? What do you mean? What's
going on?

Jack watches Deuce in the rearview. Deuce breathing hard. Rain streaks the windshield. Deuce's hands shake—just barely. Jack finally exhales. Turns. Locks in.

JACK (LOW, MEASURED, RAZOR-SHARP)
Deuce... why the fuck was Queen
there?

JACK (CONT'D)
(turning to him, eyes
sharp)
Why the hell was Queen there?

THE DUO
(sings)
"So I made my mind up I must live
my life alone..."

CUT TO: INT. KING'S CAR - NIGHT

King and Ace drive in silence.

KING
 (low, deadly)
 I thought you knew what was going
 on. Why the hell was Queen there?

THE DUO
 (sings)
 "There are no tomorrows for this
 heart of mine..."

Rain pelts the windshield. Streetlights streak through the glass.

THE DUO (CONT'D)
 (sings)
 "Surely time will lose these bitter
 memories..."

CUT TO: INT. CARMINE'S BACKROOM - NIGHT

Blood on the cards. Smoke lingers. The bodies still warm.

FLASH CUTS:

Jack's hand gripping the steering wheel—jaw clenched.
 Six staring out the window, lost in thought.
 King's cigarette ember flaring in the dark.
 Roberto stepping out of the shadows—expression unreadable.

THE DUO
 (sings)
 "And to live for something I could
 live for..."

A hard FLASH CUT to each face—then to the bloodied table, the overturned chair, the single bullet hole in the wall—

THE DUO (CONT'D)
 (sings)
 "All the years of useless search..."

MATCH CUT FROM BLOODY CARDS → TO CLEAN CARDS BEING SHUFFLED.
 NEW PLAYERS SITTING DOWN. NEW GAME. THE DUO SINGS THE FINAL
 LINES.

ZOOM OUT SLOW—THE CITY MOVES ON.

HARD CUT TO: INT. THE WILD CARD SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

The duo is back onstage—singing like nothing ever happened.
Just another night in Chicago.

THE DUO
(sings)
"But for now this is my song. I'll
say goodbye to love."

As the song ends—no final "Ahh Ahh"—

INT. WILD CARD BAR

DUO
We'll be back in fifteen.

Let the camera hang just a second too long.

A drunk man stumbles past. A bartender wipes down a bloody
glass.

A cigarette smolders in an ashtray.

Someone in the background laughs—like they didn't just
witness carnage.

ROBERTO
Last Call.

FADE TO BLACK.

SOUND BRIDGE:

The soft twang of a single guitar string. Not a song—just the
thought of one. A string warming up. Stretching.

MATCH CUT:

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT (LATER)

The first strum hits like it's been buried alive.

The bar is nearly empty—staff cleaning, glasses clinking like
ghosts.

Jack and Deuce burst into the bar. The blood still on Jack
and Deuce's hands.

They push inside, breathing heavy. Jack's jaw is locked tight. Deuce's fingers twitch at his side. MALE DUO tuning his guitar string.

DUO MALE
You boys look like you missed the
last train home...

Jack glares. Deuce starts rubbing his fist like he is warming up a cannon.

DUO MALE (CONT'D)
Hey boys, it's obvious you got
something going on.

DUO FEMALE
Yeah, we see it. You guys should
own up to it.

Jack snorts, shaking his head. Deuce looks anywhere but at Jack. The weight of everything settles between them.

DUO MALE SINGER
(strums)
From where we stand, you're
stronger together.

Jack slams his hands down on the bar. The sound cuts through the room.

The Duo vamps into "Runaway Train."

JACK
You don't know a damn thing about
us.

The DUO just grins. Keeps playing.

The song builds. The tension simmers.

CUT TO:

KING & QUEEN - THE FINAL HAND

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The DUO strumming. A slow, moody vamp. "Runaway Train" starting soft. Underscore this scene.

QUEEN, pacing, robe tied loose, martini in hand.

QUEEN

Did I back the wrong horse?

Knock on the door. 1:30 AM.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Who in the hell is at my door at
1:30 AM?

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The Duo vamps the chords to "Runaway Train."

Jack grabs a drink. Downs it in one go.

Deuce watches him. The silence is unbearable.

DEUCE

Jack, talk to me.

Jack turns, eyes burning.

JACK

Talk? You wanna talk, Cowboy? About
what? How you got me in that mess?
How you dragged Queen into it?

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

KNOCK, 2nd time.

She smirks, sips her drink, opens it.

QUEEN

(silk & steel, teasing)
King.

KING

Queen.

ACE is there too. Silent. Heavy. They step inside. King looks
out at the skyline.

KING (CONT'D)

(soft, remembering)
I always loved this view. Happy I
got it for you.

QUEEN

(amused, circling him)
Connections, King. That's how you
play the game, isn't it?

King turns slow, studying her. The moment stretches.

KING
(easy, deliberate)
I feel like... (he flicks a speck of
ash from his cigar, exhales
slow)...like I've been played.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

The DUO starts to vamp up and the music gets louder underscoring this moment.

Jack & Deuce, slamming into Jack's apartment, clothes flying. Bodies colliding against the wall. Then the bed. Frenetic, reckless, raw.

CUT TO:

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

DUO FEMALE
(sings)
"I'm worried about you."

CUT BACK:

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Queen turns to the bar, slipping a tiny revolver into her robe. She turns back, easy. Smiles.

QUEEN
(playing dumb, smooth as
silk)
Played? By who, darling? Who would
be that stupid?

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

DUO FEMALE
(sings)
"I'm worried about me."

CUT TO:

INT. SIX'S APARTMENT

Six, alone, staring at a photo of Ronnie. Silent tears. A drink untouched on the table.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

DUO MALE

(sings)

"The curves around midnight aren't
easy to see."

CUT BACK:

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

King studies Queen.

KING (SHAKING HIS HEAD, LOW, DARK)

You.

The DUO sings under this scene.

DUO

(in harmony)

"Flashing red warnings
Unseen in the rain"

Queen's fingers flex. The gun is there. Waiting.

QUEEN

(stalling, buying time)

King, I have no idea what you're
talking about.

KING

I saw you. Flashing glances with
Deuce.

Queen's expression flickers.

DUO

(harmony)

"This thing has turned into"

KING

Now I have to deal with him too.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

Jack & Deuce, tangled in the dark. Breathing hard. Then—

WHISPER IN THE DARK:
"I love you."

FREEZE. THE MUSIC VAMP BUILDS.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The DUO vamps, into the music.

DUO
(harmony)
"This thing has turned into"

CUT BACK:

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Queen slides her hand into her robe pocket. Eyes cold now.

QUEEN
"Also?" (beat, playing dumb, a
glint of danger) Oh, I love a
mystery. How can I help?

King just tilts his head. No smile. No warmth.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

Jack & Deuce, tangled in the dark. Breathing hard. Reaching a climax.

CUT BACK:

INT. QUEEN'S PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Queen's fingers close around the tiny pistol.

KING

You can't. (a beat—soft, deadly)
"Sometimes... you just gotta clean
house.

QUEEN

(cool, controlled)
You think I don't have insurance?
There's a key. A copy. A banker
who's very well-paid to hate you.
(beat)
I could bury you in your own
empire.

KING

(smiles, cold)
Good. Then we'll go down together.
(raises the gun)
But I'll enjoy the silence first.

QUEEN

(smirks)
You sure you can pull that trigger,
old friend? Without me... who's the
real King?

QUEEN'S FINGERS TWITCH. HER EYES FLASH. SHE GETS IT—

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Oh... you son of a—

ANGLE ON JUST HER EYES. JUST KING'S BREATH.

Just the weight of it all.

Then BANG. Hold the freeze frame—only the blood moves.

SPREADING THROUGH THE BEIGE NIGHTGOWN. HOLD ONE BEAT

The DUO off set with the image on-screen

DUO

(sing in harmony)
"A runaway train."

UNFREEZE. Queen collapses. The glass slips from her hand.
Shatters. King adjusts his cuff, casual as hell.

KING

And you just move on.

The DUO off set with the image on-screen

DUO
 (sing in harmony)
 "A runaway train."

THE AFTERMATH - NO DIALOGUE, JUST MOVEMENT & MUSIC

THE DUO STRUMS—THE MUSIC BEGINS TO SHIFT.

The DUO continues to sing underscoring the actions on screen.

-Ace calls Roberto.

-Six writes in her diary, staring at the untouched drink.

-Jack & Deuce, in bed, shirtless, Deuce's head on Jack's chest. No words. Just silence.

-Roberto arrives. King & Ace exit.

-Roberto knocks over a few lamps, breaks the coffee table. A robbery gone bad.

-Roberto slips Queen's pearls off her neck. Finishes her martini. Takes off her rings and pockets them all. He flicks Queen's lipstick-stained cigarette to the floor.

ROBERTO
 (smirking, lifting the
 glass)
 House always wins, right? (sips)
 Unless you bet wrong.

-Roberto calls TEN.

-Roberto calls both Jack and Deuce.

-SILENCE

-Jack & Deuce's phones buzz. They don't answer.

-When Deuce doesn't answer his phone because he's wrapped in Jack's arms

JACK
 (low, deadly whisper)
 No more running, Cowboy. We're in
 this.

SILENCE. One heartbeat. Two. Three

Deuce doesn't answer. But his fingers tighten against Jack's skin.

Music comes back in. **"Runaway Train. Like a runaway train."**

-TEN arrives. Then more cops. Crime scene chaos. Queen's body bagged.

-ACE & KING share a drink

KING
To the Queen (beat) Long may she
reign. (beat) Oh wait.

King and Ace cheer and clink their glasses.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

A new poker game is already starting. The DUO plays on. The bartender wipes down a glass—another bloodstain that doesn't matter.

Someone in the background laughs.

The city moves the fuck on.

DUO
(In harmony singing)
"A runaway train. A runaway train.
I'll say goodbye to love."

The duo kisses. Clink their glasses. The scene fades.

FADE IN: EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - EARLY DECEMBER

The city breathes cold.

A fresh dusting of snow coats the rooftops, glistening under streetlights.

Michigan Avenue glows—Christmas lights strung across the Magnificent Mile, flickering in the haze.

A salty gust of wind cuts through the streets, whipping past:

Ice skaters at Millennium Park.

A saxophonist playing a lonely blues tune under the L tracks.

A street vendor selling roasted chestnuts, steam curling into the night air.

WE PUSH IN TOWARD THE WILD CARD.

EXT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The neon Wild Card sign glows red against the night—

A wreath now hangs from the door, a single red ribbon fluttering in the wind.

The camera tilts down—a light dusting of snow on the pavement.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Warmth. Holiday lights. A deceptive sense of peace.

The Duo is softly strumming a torch-lit, jazz version of "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree."

Bartenders wear Santa hats as they sling whiskey and holiday cocktails.

A half-dressed Santa (probably drunk) is getting ready to hand out Christmas Cheer.

And then... the camera lands on it.

THE QUEEN'S CHAIR.

It sits in the corner, untouched.

A brass plaque above it reads:

"The Queen Sits Here."

People take pictures in the chair. It's become an Instagram favorite.

But it doesn't belong to them. It never will.

MOVEMENT THROUGH
THE ROOM:

Six runs a roulette wheel—not for cash, just bar tabs.
(Keeping her honest? Maybe.)

Deuce gets "Fast Money" greased across his palm.

Jack watches. He always watches.

King & Ace sit at their usual table. Drinking. Silent.
Watching.

A moment. The kind you don't realize is important until it's already gone.

DEUCE
 (low, honest)
 Jack... I'm glad you found me.

JACK
 Cowboy, you'd be lost without me.

Deuce scoffs, smirks—they KISS. A slow, easy, tender kiss. No power plays. Just them.

The DUO keeps playing. The world spins around them.

Then—SIX SHOVES BETWEEN THEM. Grinning waiving pizza slices.

SIX
 PIZZA!

They all look at her, deadpan. Then—

IN PERFECT UNISON, THEY SAY:

SIX, DEUCE AND JACK
 If you think you need it!

They LAUGH. Full, easy, genuine. A rare moment of joy.

Across the room—ROBERTO catches Deuce's eye. Motions to the alley. Deuce nods. Looks at Jack. Soft and playful with some weight behind it. Deuce has never felt more alive and connected.

DEUCE
 Hey, Jackpot... I'll be right back.

Jack watches him go. A flicker of something—concern? Jealousy? Just knowing too much?

Six notices Jack watching. Notices everything.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

Cold air. Steam from a street grate. The muffled hum of the bar inside. Deuce steps out. Roberto is waiting.

ROBERTO
 (low, smooth, dangerous as
 always)
 Took you long enough.

Deuce exhales, leans against the brick wall.

DEUCE
 (measured, direct)
 You got something to say, say it.

Roberto steps in closer. Too close.

ROBERTO
 (low)
 I know things, Cowboy. You think
 this city is your playground?

Deuce stiffens. This isn't just flirting.

Roberto leans in, breath warm against Deuce's ear.

ROBERTO (CONT'D)
 (deadly grin)
 Everybody pays.

And then—BAM. Roberto SHOVES Deuce HARD against the brick wall. It's dominance. A test. A dare. A deal? Deuce's jaw tightens. He doesn't move—not yet.

Roberto kisses Deuce out of power and control and not out of passion. Deuce is pinned against the wall.

JACK. BURSTING INTO THE ALLEY. SINGING LOUD AS HELL, HALF-DRUNK, MOCKING:

JACK
 "ROCKIN' AROUND THE CHRISTMAS
 TREE..."

But then— JACK SEES.

—Sees Roberto pressed up against Deuce.

—Sees Deuce—still against the wall.

—Jack's expression CHANGES.

—He doesn't see a threat. He sees an affair.

AND JACK EXPLODES.

—FISTS FLY.

—JACK CLOCKS ROBERTO, DROPPING HIM HARD.

—DEUCE SHOVES JACK BACK—BUT JACK SWINGS AGAIN.

DEUCE
 "Fucking STOP—"

Jack is swinging at anyone. Roberto clocks Jack.

-JACK HITS DEUCE.

-DEUCE STUMBLES BACK, SPITTING BLOOD.

Roberto LAUGHS, wiping blood from his lip. This is the best night of his life.

Jack isn't done. He is wild and furious past the point of no return.

JACK
Cowboy, don't come near me right
now-I'll fucking kill you.

Deuce FREEZES. Roberto smiles.

Jack backs up, chest heaving, eyes burning. His entire body is saying walk away before he does something worse. Jack storms back inside the bar.

Roberto watches it all. Smirks. Licks blood off his lips.

ROBERTO
(he hums sarcastic,
teasingly taunting)
"Rocking around the Christmas
tree..." Round two...cowboy?

-Deuce snaps.

-A fist to Roberto's gut.

-Roberto doubles over.

-Deuce walks back inside.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT

The air inside is thick-heat, tension, whiskey, regret. THE DUO is strumming, slow and sorrowful, easing into "Blue Christmas."

THE DUO
(sings)
"I'll have a blue Christmas without
you..."

Deuce steps in from the alley. Roberto lingers behind him. His lip's split. His knuckles tight. His heart heavier than ever.

DEUCE
 (muttering under his
 breath, shaking his head)
 Fuck me.

Jack is at the bar. Back turned. Shoulder stiff. Face is already bruised. Jack holding an iced glass of vodka to his right eye.

Deuce moves to him—calm, steady. This isn't over.

JACK
 Not now, piss off.

Jack doesn't turn. Doesn't react. His fingers clench around his glass. He's still burning.

DEUCE
 No.

Jack turns, eyes blazing.

A FIST HALF-RAISES—A GHOST OF A THREAT.

Deuce doesn't flinch.

DEUCE
 "Go ahead. Hit me. It's okay.
 (beat, softer)
 I'm not leaving. I'm lost without
 you.

Jack's chest rises, falls. Eyes searching. Warring with himself. The song plays on. The camera pulls back. The world slows.

THE DUO
 (sings)
 "Decorations of red on a green
 Christmas tree..."

They talk, low. No one hears the words, just the weight of them. Jack exhales. Hands still tight, but no longer fists.

Then—A MOTION TO THE BARTENDER.

Three shots are poured.

Jack grabs them, holds one out to Deuce.

Deuce takes it.

Jack's eyes cut across the room. Find Roberto. A nod.

Roberto hesitates. Then, slowly, approaches.

Jack hands him the last shot.

THE THREE STAND TOGETHER. A STALEMATE. A MOMENT OF CHOICE.

Then, as one—THEY DRINK. A pause. A breath. Then—JACK EXTENDS HIS HAND TO ROBERTO.

A beat. Roberto hesitates. Then, finally—HE TAKES IT. A HANDSHAKE. AN UNDERSTANDING.

No one smiles. No one pretends this fixes anything. But it's something.

Roberto walks off, back into the night.

Jack and Deuce—STILL STANDING.

From across the room, KING and ACE watch. King takes a slow sip of his drink.

THE DUO

(sings)

"I'll have a blue Christmas, that's
certain..."

EXT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT - A MOMENT LATER

The tension lingers. The Duo is vamping, stretching out the last few notes of the Christmas song.

Jack exhales sharply, rubbing his jaw. Deuce watches him, like he's memorizing the way Jack carries his anger.

Then—a flicker. An unspoken "We need air." A glance. A hesitation. A deep inhale. Then Jack tilts his head toward the door.

JACK

(low, voice tight)

You coming?

DEUCE

(nods, quiet, loaded)

Yeah.

They move in sync—out the door, into the night.

MATCH CUT → EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - NIGHT [Cue "Lose Control"]

Boots on pavement. Cold air. The city hums. HARD, COLD START to THE DUO singing "Lose Control" by Teddy Swims.

THE DUO
(sings)
"I don't know why I do this..."

MONTAGE - ONE MINUTE OF PURE VISUAL STORYTELLING

Jack lights a cigarette. His hands tremble just enough to betray him. He takes a drag—too fast. Like he needs the burn. Then—without a word—he hands the same cigarette to Deuce.

Deuce takes it. Their fingers brush. He doesn't smoke it right away. Just holds it. Watching Jack.

For a moment, they share something more dangerous than sex.

Silence. Trust. Weakness.

Then, Deuce inhales deep. Exhales slow.

THE DUO
(sings)
"...The way I know that I shouldn't
be..."

Jack's hand clenches. Like he wants to hit something. Deuce takes a step closer. Jack doesn't move away.

A passing cab throws neon light across their faces. Their shadows blur together on the wet pavement.

Jack exhales smoke. Deuce watches the way it drifts between them. For a second, it looks like Deuce might lean in.

But Jack turns. Walks off. Deuce follows. Always.

MATCH CUT—Jack & Deuce's reflections in a store window. They look together, but they're fractured, distorted.

Jack stops walking. A long, tense pause. Deuce waits. Doesn't push. Then, suddenly—Jack YANKS Deuce into an alley.

IN THE ALLEY - HEAVY BREATHING. RAW EMOTION.

Jack SLAMS Deuce against the brick wall. Not in anger. Not in hate. In need. In desperation.

Jack grips Deuce's collar. Their faces inches apart. Deuce just breathes. Lets Jack take what he needs. Neither one pulls away.

THE DUO

(sings)

"...No matter how I try... I just can't
quit you..."

Jack KISSES him. Hard. Messy. Violent.

Deuce fists Jack's jacket, holding him in place. Jack's breath shudders, like he's falling apart. Deuce leans his forehead against Jack's.

THE DUO (CONT'D)

(sings)

"...I lose control..."

They break apart. Jack's hand lingers on Deuce's face.

Then, just as fast—Jack pushes off. Runs a hand through his hair. He can't deal with this. Deuce watches. Says nothing. But his eyes say everything.

Then Deuce takes a firm hold of Jack's hand and pulls him in. They are in a dead stare of anger, lust, love and control.

DEUCE

(low, hoarse)

Then don't fight me. Fight them.

BACK TO THE WILD CARD - SONG ENDING

The Duo plays the last note.

SOUND BRIDGE: Jack and Deuce heavy breathing. Lust.

The Wild Card hums with life. The crowd Roars.

ROBERTO

Merry Christmas!

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. PRIVATE POKER ROOM - NIGHT

Dim light. Thick cigar smoke. The air feels heavy, like secrets have been lost in this room for decades.

A round table—velvet-lined, gold-trimmed. Several men in suits play cards, but the game is slow, deliberate. Carmine TORTORELLI watches from his chair, smoking a fat cigar. He's seen everything, and nothing impresses him.

JACK leans against the bar, hands in his pockets—casual but calculating. He watches Carmine like a predator sizing up another predator.

CARMINE
(without looking up from
his cards)
Kid, I don't trust gut feelings. I
trust money. What's this about?

JACK
(leans in, voice low)
It's about King.

A beat. Carmine exhales smoke. Still doesn't look up.

CARMINE
Lot of people wanna talk about
King. None of 'em smart.

JACK
You wanna keep playing or you wanna
make this interesting?

Carmine finally looks up—amused, maybe. He flicks ash onto a tray. He studies Jack, trying to read him.

CARMINE
(slow, testing him)
Let's say I'm interested. You got
anything better than a hunch?

JACK
(leans in, voice cold)
How about a name?

A longer beat. Carmine's fingers tap the side of his whiskey glass. Then—he gives a slight nod.

CARMINE
You got guts, kid. I'll give you
that.

(MORE)

CARMINE (CONT'D)
(leans forward, voice
lowering to a near
whisper)
Yeah, King's got blood ties. Not
just to the city, To Deuce. To Six.

JACK
(frozen, breath slows)
You're saying—

CARMINE
I'm saying King has been playing
his own damn son this whole time.

The room feels smaller. Jack sits with the weight of the truth. He blinks once, then twice. His mind races, connecting dots that were always there.

CARMINE (CONT'D)
And that pretty little girl? King
killed her mother to keep it quiet.

Jack's fingers tighten around his drink. His face hardens—just for a second. Then he lets out a breath, masking it all behind his usual poker face.

JACK
(nods, stands up, smooths
his suit)
Appreciate the insight, Carmine.
Next hand's on me.

Carmine chuckles, watching Jack like a man watching a dog he respects, but would still shoot if it bit him. He takes another drag of his cigar.

CARMINE
Yeah, yeah. Just don't do anything
stupid, kid.

JACK
(walking away, over his
shoulder)
Not my style.

Jack exits, a storm brewing in his head.

FADE TO BLACK.

SPLIT SCREEN - INT. JACK'S APARTMENT / INT. DIAMOND'S ROOM - NIGHT

JACK'S SIDE - Dimly lit. A single desk lamp casts long shadows. JACK sits on the edge of his bed, phone in hand. He stares at the screen for a long beat, exhaling. The weight of everything is pressing on him. Then—he dials. The phone rings. Once. Twice.

DIAMOND'S SIDE - A different world. Old Vegas glitz faded to memory. Maybe a dimly lit hotel room, smoky air, an untouched glass of bourbon on the side table. DIAMOND STARR, late 50s, still carries the remnants of a showgirl's beauty, but the years have sharpened her. She lifts a cigarette, inhales slow, answers the call.

SPLIT SCREEN BEGINS.

DIAMOND
(low, sultry, with an edge
that time hasn't dulled)
Hello?

JACK
Is this Diamond? Diamond Starr?

DIAMOND
(pauses, tone sharpens)
What is this about? Who is this?

JACK
Let's say you and I both have an
interest in the future of Deuce
Starr.

Diamond freezes, cigarette halting near her lips. A long inhale, processing the name, the weight of it. When she speaks again, her voice is lower, protective.

DIAMOND
He never uses that last name. Who
are you? What have you done with my
Deuce?

JACK
Diamond, calm down. We both want
what's best for Deuce. As for King—

DIAMOND
(sharp inhale. Her voice
drops an octave.)
King? He's around Deuce? Does Deuce
know? That King is his—

JACK
That's why you're coming to
Chicago.

DIAMOND
Oh my God

Jack let's the moment hang in the air.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
Does King still have The Wild Card?

JACK
Oh, that place is alive and well.

DIAMOND
Oh no, no... Is the girl there? Tell
me no.

JACK
Six?

Diamond goes quiet. Then—laughs. Not from humor. From
heartbreak.

DIAMOND
Oh, she goes by that name now?
Jesus. What a mess.

Jack tilts his head. Listening harder now.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
(staring off, voice
distant)
Her name is Sapphire.
She never liked that name.

Beat.

Her mother and I... oh, poor Em.
She got tangled with King after I
kicked him out.
Then he had her killed—after
Sapphire was born. She tried to get
support. King buried her. The baby
went into foster care.

A long pause. Then—Diamond's bitter laugh returns.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)
This is like a Shakespeare drama.
The past crawling back. Like Lady
Macbeth. The blood won't wash off.

JACK
(rubs his jaw, eyes
narrowing)
So Six and Deuce are...

DIAMOND
King is the father of both.

Jack stares ahead. Still. Mind spinning.

JACK
I need you here.
Deuce needs you.

DIAMOND
(a pause, then:)
Yes... yes. When?

JACK
Valentine's Day. 8PM. At The Wild
Card.

A long silence. A flick of her lighter. The sound of an
inhale.

DIAMOND
Okay. That'll give me a few weeks
to sort through things. I own that
bar, you know.

JACK
(blinks, confused)
What?

DIAMOND
Yeah. Back when King was a
nobody—well, he still is—I bought
that place outright. Free and
clear. My name is on the deed.
Alone.

Jack has a slow, dawning realization. He leans forward.

JACK
Wait—so you own The Wild Card?

DIAMOND
Yes. I will be there on Valentine's
day.

Diamond hangs up.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT

A pause. Then—Jack leans back, exhales, smirks to himself.

JACK
Fuck me...

EXT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT (ONE MONTH BEFORE VALENTINE'S)

A slow zoom on the club's neon sign, glowing against the winter sky.

THE DUO BEGINS PLAYING "IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND"

THE DUO
(sings)
"If you could read my mind, love..."

The melody drifts through the cold air, haunting and raw.

TIME-LAPSE BEGINS.

—JANUARY: A lone dealer shuffles a fresh deck at an empty poker table. The Queen's chair remains untouched.

—A bartender wipes down a glass. Another bloodstain that no one asks about.

—Snow falls, then melts. The city moves forward. The game never stops.

—NEWSPAPERS cycle through headlines.

— UNDERGROUND CHICAGO POKER RING UNDER INVESTIGATION."

— KING STARR EXPANDS HIS REACH—WHO CAN STOP HIM?"

A woman's lipstick smudge on a rocks glass. A shadowed hand wipes it away.

THE DUO CONTINUES SINGING.
"If you could read my mind, love,
what a tale my thoughts could
tell..."

—FEBRUARY: The Wild Card's neon flickers—like it's waiting. Like it knows.

-A poker chip flips through the air—lands in a hand we don't see.

-Cigarette embers glow in the dark. Figures in the shadows. Power shifting.

THE SONG SWELLS.

"Just like an old-time movie...
'bout a ghost from a wishin'
well..."

FADE TO VALENTINE'S NIGHT.

The sign flickers once, then—FULL POWER. The club is alive. The music hums under the surface, almost hypnotic.

🎧 CUE THE
ACTION:

-A poker chip spins.

-A glass tilts back.

-A woman in red laughs, but there's no warmth in it.

-A knife glints—just for a second.

THE DUO'S MUSIC FADES INTO THE CROWD NOISE.

-A slow exhale of smoke.

-Someone watches from the shadows.

INT. THE WILD CARD - NIGHT (NOW FULLY ALIVE—THE NIGHT BEGINS.)

INT. THE WILD CARD - VALENTINE'S DAY - NIGHT

A packed house. Neon glow. The Duo strums the opening chords to something slow, something haunting. A charged atmosphere—whispers of deals made, bets placed, futures decided. Tonight, everything changes.

At the center of the chaos:

DEUCE, JACK, SIX, ROBERTO, KING, ACE.

And then... DIAMOND.

She walks in slow, controlled, owning the room. A ghost of the past stepping into the future. Silence creeps over the bar like a cold wind.*

DIAMOND

Well... look at all of you. My, my, my.

King stiffens. Deuce stares. Jack already knew. Six holds her breath.

DIAMOND (CONT'D)

You were a lousy father to Deuce. Even though he has your bloodline—

King's eyes flash.

DEUCE

What?

Diamond turns to Deuce.

DIAMOND

The bar. Everything here. It's yours, baby. Always was.

Gasps. Deuce's face is stone. Jack glances at King—watching his rage build like a thunderhead.

KING

No. No, no, no. This is my kingdom.

CAMERA DOES THIS SEQUENCE IN SLOW MOTION.

THE DUO

(sings)

"I'd walk away like a movie star
who gets burned in a 3-way script."

King pulls a gun. Fast. Too fast. Six lunges, blocking the shot.

BOOM!

ACE FIRES.

SLOW MOTION KICKS IN.

—Diamond's body recoils. Her eyes lock with Deuce's—just for a second. Recognition. Pain. Regret.

—Deuce reaches for her—but too late.

- Her fingers grip his jacket. Blood spreads through white silk.
- Her lips move—one last breath. (No sound. Just the shape of words: "Baby...")
- Her fingers slip from his jacket.

SOUND RUSHES BACK IN.

Diamond collapses.

Blood pools.

Deuce is frozen.

Jack and Six are moving—but Deuce? He's stuck in that last moment.

Then—Jack grabs him. Yanks him back to reality.

JACK
(gritted teeth, urgent)
Deuce—MOVE.

Sirens howl. Chaos explodes. Deuce blinks. Breathes. And finally lets go.

JACK SPINS. FIRES.

BANG. ACE DROPS. DEAD.

Jack breathes heavy. Ace's blood pools, staining the floor black.

INT. THE WILD CARD - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT

CAMERA snaps back into real time as Deuce catches Diamond, lowering her gently to the ground.

Her breath is shallow. Her fingers weak against his jacket. Eyes flickering like a broken neon sign.

DIAMOND
The Wild Card...
is the hand you were dealt.

Deuce freezes. Looks puzzled. He reaches into his back pocket... pulls out the letter.

DEUCE
This was from you?

She doesn't answer.

Because she's gone. In his arms. Still. Soft. Final.

A storm brews behind Deuce's eyes.

The room?

Falls silent.

NEW BLOOD VS. OLD BLOOD

Deuce stands, gun drawn. Across from him—King.

Father and son. Past and future. The same blood.

King laughs—low, knowing.

KING
Oh, the irony... New blood versus old
blood. Funny, ain't it? It's all
the same blood.

THE DOUBLE CROSS—AND THE CLEANUP

Roberto steps forward, casual. Too casual. He speaks to King.

ROBERTO
You know, King... I was always on
your side. Always. Made it look
like I was with them, but you know
me. I'm a company man. The House
Always Wins. That's what I say.

Jack, Deuce, and Six—their faces shift. Sold out. Just like that.

King steps toward Roberto. Pulls him in for a slow, knowing hug. A moment of gratitude. Almost tender. Speaking tenderly like a father in his ear.

KING
I know. Thank you.

BOOM.

Gunshot. King executes Roberto point-blank.

Roberto drops. Blood spreading slow, slow... like a stain that can't be cleaned.

King tosses the gun. Shrugs.

KING (CONT'D)
Sometimes you just gotta clean house.

THE FINAL SHOWDOWN - DEUCE VS. KING

Sirens howl outside. Cops closing in.

King turns back to Deuce. Their guns still drawn.

KING
So, Son—

DEUCE
(cold, sharp)
Don't call me that. You are not my father.

KING
Oh, but I am. I most fucking am.
Look at you. Just like me.

DEUCE
(firm)
No. You and I are not the same.

King laughs shaking his head.

KING
I'll teach you. More than that bitch Diamond ever—

DEUCE
You do not get to use her name.

King grins and steps closer.

KING
Well, kid, you got my name. STARR.
Deuce Starr.

DEUCE
Shut up. We are not related.

King smirks, then in a growl/whisper.

KING
Then why the hell are we both
standing here... pointing guns at
each other?

BANG.

Deuce shoots first. King stumbles back, gasping. Drops to his knees. Blood blooming on his chest. He lifts his head one last time—grinning through the pain.

King laughs. SILENCE

KING
Wait till you meet the rest of your
family.

He collapses. Dead. HOLD 5 seconds.

Jack kneels beside King's body. One hand on the dying man's chest, not out of mercy — but confirmation. He stands.

JACK
(cold)
Now we deal. King taught us what
losing looks like.

Then...

SIRENS.

Blue lights flicker.

The city doesn't stop — but it just changed hands.

TEN and a squad of Chicago cops flood the bar. Guns drawn.

TEN
(commanding)
Everybody freeze. Everybody. Don't
move.

He walks slow. Takes in the wreckage. Bodies. Blood. Deuce, Jack, Six—standing in the center of it all.

He moves to Jack first. Mocking and looking for answers.

TEN (CONT'D)
 So we got The Ace. The King.
 And(looks over at Diamond's body,
 smirks coldly) Well, well... The
 Queen is back in town. But I see
 she can't speak on her own behalf.

He moves through the carnage, taking it all in like a game
 board now played out.

Stops in front of The Duo.

Ten shakes his head, mutters

TEN (CONT'D)
 Fucking Wild Card.

SIX
 (arrogant, ballsy)
 Hey Mr. Chicago PD, If you want the
 Truth, I know *everything*.

Ten steps aside.

TEN
 (to himself, flipping a
 coin)
 All this noise for a piece of the
 pie...
 (beat)
 Wait till they taste what's coming
 next.

TEN (CONT'D)
 What do you two know?

The male Duo shrugs.

MALE DUO
 Hey, man, we just play the music.
 (Beat) Hit It!

THE NIGHT CHICAGO DIED SONG IS PLAYED BY THE DUO

THE DEED - PASSING THE TORCH

Amidst the chaos, a man steps in-Diamond's lawyer. Pulls a
 folder from his briefcase. Drops it in front of Deuce. Deuce
 blinks, picks it up. The paper? The Deed to The Wild Card.

Diamond had it signed, sealed, ready to transfer before she died.

Deuce stares at it. His name. His bar. His legacy.

Jack smirks.

JACK
 Congratulations, Cowboy. You own
 Chicago's favorite mistake.

Six lifts a shot of whiskey.

SIX
 To Diamond.

Jack and Deuce raise theirs, too. They drink.

CREDITS BEGIN TO ROLL ON-SCREEN

The song plays. The bar staff starts cleaning up.

Blood gets mopped up.

Tables get flipped back.

The Duo packs up their instruments.

Life moves on.

This isn't the first time blood has spilled in The Wild Card...
 and it won't be the last.

Deuce's cell phone goes off.

DEUCE
 This city doesn't want men like us
 to love, Jack. So we fight. We
 bluff. We burn it down. But I want
 something after the fire.
 (beat)
 Do you?

Cell phone continues to ring.

THE PHONE CALL FROM DUKE - FIRST INTERRUPTION

Credits fade to black. Silence.

Then—a phone rings.

Deuce, alone in his office.

He answers.

DEUCE
(gruff, tired)
Yeah?

DUKE (V.O.)
Deuce. This is your uncle.

Deuce holds the phone and looks, frowning. Jack looks over.

DEUCE
What uncle?

Uncle Duke laughs slow and dangerous.

DUKE (V.O.)
I'm King's younger brother, Duke.
And unlike King, I don't let
traitors live.

A pause. Then the final gut punch:

DUKE (V.O.)
You and your faggot boyfriend,
Jackie, have nowhere safe to hide.

Click. Line goes dead.

Deuce exhales. Smolders.

JACK
Cowboy, you good?

Deuce sets the phone down, flexes his jaw.

DEUCE
Deuce's Wild.

JACK
All bets are off

They shake hands. Six places her hand on top. They lock eyes.

JACK (CONT'D)
What's our rule?

SIX
The house always wins.

DEUCE
The house always... fucking wins.

"THE NIGHT CHICAGO DIED" PICKS UP AGAIN.

CREDITS ROLL AGAIN - THEN THE SECOND INTERRUPTION

THE FINAL REVEAL - SIX LEARNS THE TRUTH

Fade back in.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT.

Six stands alone. The city is louder now, but she's quiet.

Jack steps out of the shadows. Lights a cigarette.

JACK

(low)

You ready for your inheritance?

SIX

What the hell are you talking about?

Jack takes a drag. Exhales slow. Looks her dead in the eye.

JACK

You and Deuce? Same blood, kid.

Six's face changes. Something shifts. The weight of it finally lands. She doesn't speak. Just breathes.

CREDITS ROLL

3RD FLASHBACK - 1997 - MIAMI "MORE GOING DOWN"

INT. EL IMPERIO DE LA NOCHE - NIGHT

The air is thick with cigar smoke and sin. Red lighting. Velvet booths. The kind of place where deals are whispered and lives are bought.

CARLOS DIAZ stands at the bar-cool AF, shirt unbuttoned just enough to flex dominance. Every eye in the club is on him. They either want to be him or fear him.

KING STARR walks in-young, sharp, hungry. He doesn't hesitate. He moves straight toward Carlos.

Carlos doesn't even look at him at first.

CARLOS
Hey, stranger. You're in the wrong
place. Adios.

King doesn't flinch.

KING
You're Carlos Diaz. You're
legendary. The boys in Chicago talk
about you. A lot.

Now Carlos turns. He sizes King up—slow, calculated. He
circles around him like a hunter measuring prey.

CARLOS
Now, what the fuck does Chicago
care about—

Carlos steps closer. Breathes him in. A smirk.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Not bad.

King doesn't move. The power shift is real.

Carlos leans in, low, dangerous whisper

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Tell me, Chicago.

KING
(steady, unwavering)
King. The name is King Starr.

Carlos steps back. Tilts his head, studying him. Then, he
grins. Intrigued.

CARLOS
And why, Mr. Starr, would I want to
get in bed with you?

Beat. Eyes locked. Heavy. The room disappears. Cool, lethal,
knowing exactly what he's doing

KING
Connections.

Carlos leans in. Smirks. Stares right into King's eyes.

CARLOS
Don't confuse your path with your
destination.
(MORE)

CARLOS (CONT'D)
You burn a bridge— you better have
a plan.

BEAT.

CARLOS
'Cause if I smell smoke and see
your face...
I'm not asking questions.

He turns to the bartender. Snaps his fingers. A bottle
appears.

Carlos pours two drinks—but doesn't hand one to King. He just
stares, waiting.

The message is clear: You take it. Or you don't belong here.
No words. Just a challenge.

King picks up the glass. He holds it for a beat—reading
Carlos just as hard as Carlos is reading him.

Then, he drinks.

A slow nod from Carlos. A slow smirk from King.

SILENCE.

INT. DEUCE'S PENTHOUSE EARLY EVENING

Deuce looks out at the Chicago early evening sky.

Black cowboy boots on, black jeans. Shirtless. We see his
reflection in the window.

DEUCE
(unapologetic)
Blood's got memory. Doesn't mean I
have to repeat it. I don't owe
blood anything.

Jack enters and dangles a set of car keys. Deuce looks,
eyebrow goes up.

JACK
Hey, Cowboy.
Wanna ride with your Jackpot?

Deuce studies him. A long look. A shift.

DEUCE
No one's ever looked at me like
that before.

Beat.

JACK
Get used to it.

They both grin and growl.

DEUCE
Fuck Yes.

EXT. LA FREEWAY - NIGHT

Their car merges onto the empty highway. The city flickers
behind them - a graveyard of secrets.

CAMERA PANS LOW

REAR LICENSE
PLATE:

OTHELLO

Simple. Stark. Black letters on white.

THE DUO
"The night Chicago died. Nah nah
nah nah nah nah nah nah nah nah
naah. Brother what s night the
people saw...Glory Be.."

CREDITS BEGIN TO ROLL - BUT THE STORY'S NOT DONE.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - NIGHT

Ten is walking. Pulls out his cell phone.

TEN
(on phone, walking away)
Yeah... it's done.
(beat)
King folded. Queen retired.
(glances back at Six)
(MORE)

TEN (CONT'D)
Our hand on the table: Six, Jack
and Deuce's Wild. The house *always*
wins.

THE SONG "THE NIGHT CHICAGO DIED" PLAYS.

Then — the sharp scrape of a needle dragging off the record.
Silence.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

INT. JACK & DEUCE'S LOFT - MORNING

DEUCE Jack, you expecting someone? Jesus, it's 8AM. Are we
going to the gym or what?

Deuce opens the door.

Shirtless. Coffee in hand. He sizes up the man standing
there.

SLICK. COOL. EXPENSIVE.

A gold ring gleams on his right pinky.

DEUCE
Can I help you?

FERNANDO (FROM HANDPRINT)
Deuce.

DEUCE
Hey, pal. It's early.
Do I know you?

FERNANDO
Not yet. But I hear you've got a
story to tell.
I'm from Hollywood. I make movies.
My brother Alex... he's gonna play
you.

DEUCE
Alex who?

FERNANDO
Alex Vega.

JACK
(popping into frame)
Alex Vega?! C'mon, Deuce –
handstands, red carpet, heartbreak
and headlines – that Alex Vega.

Fernando hands over a sleek business card. Gold foil. Black ink.

INSERT –
BUSINESS CARD:

Time is money.

FERNANDO
Tick tock, gentlemen.
Let's get your story on screen.

DEUCE
(slow growl)
Vale.

TO BE CONTINUED.

DEUCE (V.O.)
"He said don't confuse the path
with the destination...
Guess I never knew the difference.
But I got here anyway. Burned down
every bridge to do it."

FADE TO BLACK.

THE WILD CARD CHRONICLES.