

CUTIE PIES

by
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FADE IN:

LOS ANGELES - THAI TOWN - MIDNIGHT

Nestled in a small quadrant of East Hollywood lies Thai Town, a six block hamlet where neon signs illuminate dingy sidewalks. A place overflowing with immigrants and transplants who can't afford the glitz and glamor of a cleaner LA neighborhood.

Steam billows into the air as STREET VENDORS shrilly call out to passersby as we move down Hollywood Boulevard to land on -

PASTIME THEATRE

An art deco, cinematic beacon for those who seek a few hours relief from the outside world. THE HUSTLER - STARRING PAUL NEWMAN - ALL DAY blazes on the marquee as we follow the lights up to -

THE ROOF

CALVIN (28) stands, toes over the edge, staring at the horizon, where the Downtown skyline is enveloped in a smoggy haze.

Sadness drips from his eyes as he stands, emotionally bankrupt in the face of the world. He solemnly looks down to the street below, teetering, testing his balance.

THAI TOWN STREET - NIGHT

Under a GOLDEN APSONSI (half woman/half lion) statue, sits Calvin, nose in a book and cigarette in his mouth.

ACROSS THE STREET - a man BURSTS out of a small convenience store. He's quickly followed by three THAI THUGS, who catch up to him quickly and throw him against a wall.

The man tries to plead with them, but they're having none of it. Calvin watches as the TALL THUG savagely beats him as the other two watch. He can do nothing to help, so he leaves.

Walking down the road, he sees a place familiar to him-

Over a nondescript brick wall hangs a Mylar sign with an illustration of a pin-up girl lounging on a steaming slice of pie. It reads: CUTIE PIES

INT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

There is a sort of soiled elegance to the atmosphere, one where decades of lust and cigarette smoke have permeated through the walls and clientele, making this a place of worship for those seeking solitude and relief, the kind that can only come from the beauty of a dancing girl in nine inch heels.

There is one stage with one pole, where, for one song, one alluring siren captivates an audience whose members are all too willing to volunteer hard-earned cash for a fleeting feeling of false affection.

IN THE CHAIRS surrounding the stage are a group of men, all in black suits (We'll come to know them as MAURICE, ARMAND, CURTIS, & VIKTOR) some are drunk and all are throwing lots of cash, as COFFY (25), a beautiful, Afro-plumbed seductress dances in lingerie. Armand tries to put a twenty in her stockings. She stops him. No touching!

Mirrors surround the stage and adorn the ceiling. Every eye is fixed on Coffy.

ABOVE THE BAR is a crows nest office, where one man watches all.

INT. CUTIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

CUTIE (60) is a forboding figure. Years have eroded the once handsome face of a man who seems to be more charm than substance. In clothes a style out of date and a size too small, he overlooks his kingdom, devouring an enormous slice of ice-cream-topped cherry pie.

A table in the center of the room is covered with STACKS of money; twenties, tens and mountains of ones. SQUINTS - wiry, with huge glasses, is counting and wrapping bills.

Sitting by the door is SAL, a teardrop of a man, with his face buried in a raggedy copy of FINNEGANS WAKE.

KNOCK! KNOCK!

CUTIE

Yeah.

The door opens and in strides NICKY DARBANYAN (Late 40's) tall, thick, handsome and in the slickest black suit money can buy.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Nicky!

Cutie embraces him.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Sorry about your father.

Cutie heads to his dry bar, pours two Whiskeys and hands one to Nicky.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

To Uri. A good businessman and an even better friend.

Cutie swallows the shot. Nicky toasts but doesn't drink.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Your boys having fun down there?

NICKY

I think you need to diversify this place, Cutie.

CUTIE

Oh yeah, how's that?

Nicky goes over to the window overlooking the club.

NICKY

All I see is skinny white bitches.

CUTIE

What are you talking about? We got Coffy dancing right now. She's beautiful.

NICKY

She's white. I like my girls black as midnight. Nubian like. For when that jungle fever hits.

Squints looks up from his count for the first time.

CUTIE

C'mon Nicky, don't talk like that. It's undignified.

Cutie opens up the bottom draw of his desk, pulls out an envelope filled with bills and gives it to Nicky.

NICKY

Undignified? You run a strip club.

CUTIE
Burlesque Bar.

NICKY
(Shaking his head)
Burlesque Bar...

He begins counting the bills in the envelope.

NICKY (CONT'D)
What about you Squints? If you ever
get a chance to stop counting those
bills, what kind of girls do you
like?

SQUINTS
(not stopping the count)
Green.

NICKY
Green? What the fuck does that
mean? Green? Like virgins?

SQUINTS
No. Like green skin.

NICKY
Green skin? What are you talking
about?

SQUINTS
Like in Star Trek. I used to watch
it as a kid. One episode Scotty
fell in love with a green woman. A
dancer. Ever since then, I've had
this fetish for green women.

SAL
What about the which from the
Wizard of Oz? She's green.

SQUINTS
She doesn't do it for me. She's got
that nose.

NICKY
Green. Never heard that before. You
ever get a girl to go green here,
Cutie? I bet it'd stain that pole
pretty good.

Nicky laughs at his own joke. Cutie just grunts as he sits
down at his desk.

NICKY (CONT'D)

But hell, I guess these whores will paint themselves whatever color you like if the money is right.

CUTIE

Nicky!

NICKY

They're whores, simple as that.

CUTIE

If you're gonna be like that, send one of your guys to pick up the money. I don't wanna hear that derogatory talk about my girls.

NICKY

Okay, okay. Sorry. Their beautiful, innocent girls... Dancers... Who strip down to their thongs for crumpled up dollars bills thrown by horny, old sleezbags. It's all very... dignified.

(beat)

You know you're right, though. I shouldn't be coming around here to pick this up. Now that I'm the boss, I gotta staff these things out. But the thing is... This-

He holds up the envelope.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Is short.

CUTIE

What do you mean short? I've never been light my whole life. Ten G's, as agreed.

Nicky sits down opposite Cutie.

NICKY

You know about inflation? See, I like economics. My father made me go to business school. I never finished, too many tests, but I learned a few things. Now, when you made the agreement with my father, ten thousand was a reasonable amount based on the market value of protection. But!

(MORE)

NICKY (CONT'D)

The way things are now, with my father gone, Phan's gang is starting to make moves - thinking they can encroach on my business. And I can't be seen as weak. Ergo, in these turbulent times, the market has fluctuated, and the price of you doing business here in Thai Town has gone up. Cutie Pies is a valuable real estate property in what's called a "volatile market." So, with the trouble that's on the horizon, ten g's doesn't get you what it once did. You understand.

(beat)

So, let's call it twenty now. You pay the difference next time.

CUTIE

I'll pay ten next time. That's what I owe.

NICKY

Cutie. I've known you since forever and my father knew you long before that. I know you. How you tried to run with my dad's crew for a while but once you got a taste of what this life is about, I mean really about... the dirty, nitty-gritty of it all - you balked. And that's okay, it's not for everyone. But you still live in this world, and you do business in this world. And the wolves of this world are howling at your door. I'm the woodsman who keeps them at bay. So, if I don't get twenty thousand, those wolves will be blowing down your door... Think about it.

He gets up and makes his way to the door. Before he goes, he howls like a wolf.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Ahooooooooo.

Nicky leaves, letting his words sink in.

Squints goes back to counting as Cutie goes to the window, looking down on Nicky as he walks through the club floor.

INT. CUTIE'S BAR - NIGHT

The red lights give off a soft glow of sinful indulgence. As the prying eyes watch the stage, Nicky walks by his gang, whispers in Armand's ear, when he get's up, they all follow.

As they go, we see Calvin walk in and take a seat at the end of the bar.

SHANE (60), the overly-made-up barmaid comes over.

SHANE

Hey, sweetie. Haven't seen that scrumptious face in here for a while. How've ya been?

CALVIN

(lying)
Great. Best day ever.

SHANE

Hmmm. Alright... Place hasn't been the same without you.

Calvin swallows a laugh.

SHANE (CONT'D)

PBR?

CALVIN

Sure. What's fresh today?

SHANE

Cherry, strawberry and rhubarb.

CALVIN

(perking up some)
Rhubarb? Really... I'll take a slice.

SHANE

You got it.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BAR

ECHO (25) tall, with a shadowy innocence, is sipping a drink from a straw, listening to an OLDER CHAP gab in her ear. She watches Calvin as he pulls out a book and begins reading.

She picks up her drink and makes her way over to him, her grey kimono tailing her as she moves across the room, leaving the Older Chap vexed.

She slides in next to Calvin. He doesn't notice.

ECHO

Hi.

Calvin lifts his head up and is shocked at what he sees - Long, dirty blond locks framing an inviting face, who's gaze is locked, almost uncomfortably on his eyes.

She tilts her head to spy the title of the book.

ECHO (CONT'D)

The Hustler... Any good?

CALVIN

Yeah. It's a movie - I mean, there is a movie. Based on the book.

ECHO

Never seen it.

CALVIN

It's great! Paul Newman, Piper Laurie, Jackie Gleason, George C. Scott. It's amazing.

ECHO

You like movies?

CALVIN

Love 'em.

ECHO

What's your favorite movie?

CALVIN

Oh... I don't know...

ECHO

C'mon everyone's got a favorite.

CALVIN

I do... It's just...

ECHO

I won't judge.

Calvin is hesitant.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Promise.

Calvin takes a deep breath before answering.

CALVIN

Titanic.

ECHO
 (letting out a laugh)
 Really!?

CALVIN
 I knew you would laugh. That's why
 I don't tell people.

ECHO
 No, no I'm not laughing at you,
 it's just that... Wow. That's my
 favorite.

CALVIN
 Bullshit. You're just saying that.

ECHO
 No, it's true. Girl scouts honor. I
 don't think I've ever met a guy who
 said it was his favorite movie
 though. Guys always say Star Wars
 or something like that.

CALVIN
 Well, Star Wars is awes-

ECHO
 Titanic, huh? I think that's great.
 I'm Echo.

She puts her hand out. Calvin takes it.

CALVIN
 Echo?

ECHO
 Echo.

CALVIN
 Calvin.

ECHO
 Nice to meet you, Calvin. So why do
 you like Titanic so much?

CALVIN
 Well... I know it's not a perfect
 movie by any means. I saw it when I
 was young and I just fell for it. I
 love epics. Especially epic love
 stories.

(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Two people by all accounts should never have met and the tragedy of their love is only eclipsed by the tragedy of their situation.

Calvin is becoming very passionate. Echo is loving it.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You know from the start that they're never gonna get where they're going. It can't ever work out between the two of them, but you still root for 'em. Even though they're on a course fated to crash with destiny.

ECHO

'Course fated to crash with destiny.' I like that.

From across the bar the Older Chap is not pleased as he watches Calvin talking with Echo.

CALVIN

They're hurling towards inevitable destruction, we know that as the audience, but for the characters, they're headed to the new world. New possibilities. They're open to the unexpected. That's why they fall in love so easily, because their hearts are open.

(beat)

That's what I think anyway.

ECHO

You've thought about this a lot.

CALVIN

Yeah... Well... I've seen it a lot.

ECHO

I love Leo. Especially in Romeo and Juliet. I once-

OLDER CHAP

So what's your answer?

The Older Chap is breathing down Echo's neck. Calvin seems a little lost with the situation.

ECHO

I already said no.

OLDER CHAP
C'mon! Fifty bucks for a shirt.
That's a good deal.

ECHO
No.

OLDER CHAP
Why the hell not?

CALVIN
(finding confidence he
never knew he had)
She said no.

OLDER CHAP
I wasn't talking to you.

CALVIN
Neither was she, so why don't you
move along, Gramps.

Echo laughs -- Older Chap does not like to be laughed at.
He smiles though, turning away to leave. That was easy.
BAM! Calvin is sucker punched and goes straight to the floor.
Two HUGE bouncers come over and grab the Older Chap and
Calvin and start dragging them out.

ECHO
(re: Calvin)
Not him. That guy is the one who
started it.

BOUNCER ONE
You know the rules.

ECHO
He's with me.

The Bouncer rolls his eyes and the two drag the Older Chap
out.

OLDER CHAP
This is bullshit! I didn't do
nothin'! Do you know who I am? Do
you know who I am!??

No one cares. Once he's gone, the room goes back to business
as usual.

Echo helps Calvin up from the floor.

ECHO
You okay?

CALVIN
That's the first time I've ever
been punched in the face.

ECHO
How did it feel?

CALVIN
It hurt.

ECHO
Well you took it like a champion.
Defending a woman's honor, so
noble.

CALVIN
Thanks.

Calvin stumbles a little as he tries to sit back on his bar stool. Shane hands Echo an ice cold beer.

ECHO
Here.

She presses the can against his face.

ECHO (CONT'D)
This'll help.

Coffy comes over to Echo.

COFFY
(to Echo)
You're up.

ECHO
Shit! Thanks.
(to Calvin)
Gotta work.

Echo scurries over to the JUKEBOX on the other end of the room. Calvin watches her through his blurred vision.

She presses the buttons with authority, then disappears into a back room behind the stage.

There is a moment of silence before Radiohead's TALK SHOW HOST begins to play through the speakers. Echo slowly walks onto the stage, her demeanor has changed completely. Looking past everything in the room, she begins to seductively move her body to the rhythm of the song.

Calvin can't keep his eyes off of her. He's not alone, the whole room is captivated by her. Dollars are being thrown at her feet and on her body as she plays to the drooling mass sitting in the front row.

THEY SEE EACH OTHER

Their eyes lock in unison as Calvin feels a shock wave pass through him. He's lost, fallen into the black hole of her caramel eyes. Connecting through the fog of lustful stares, their gaze is less about knowing or attraction but one of mutual curiosity. Carefully in that moment they converse silently for what seems like an eternity. As quickly as the moment had come, it's gone, she turns, climbs the poll, ascends to the top and back-bends over herself, throwing Calvin's world upsidedown.

EXT. CUTIE PIES - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Calvin is looking at his reflection in a car window, checking out his split lip and the developing bruise. He winces in pain, poking at it. He pulls out a cigarette from his pocket and lights it.

ECHO (O.S.)
I thought you left.

CALVIN
Just checking out my battle scars.

ECHO
Do you play pool?

From the spire of her heels, she smiles down on him.

CALVIN
Pool?

ECHO
You're reading a book about it
aren't you?

Calvin nods, still holding his jaw.

ECHO (CONT'D)
So do you play? I know a place down
the road that has a table. It isn't
fancy, but they got beer.

CALVIN
I love beer.

ECHO

Cool.

Echo smiles, spins quickly and leaves Calvin to ingest what just happened.

DISSOLVE TO:

THAI TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The two walk down the sidewalk, smoking. In red Converse, Echo is a head shorter than Calvin. Covered up in an old sweatshirt, she is the antithesis of what we saw at Cutie Pies. With a large bag slung over her shoulder, she walks in stride with Calvin, conversing.

ECHO

...I didn't see all the movies, but I get what you're saying. It's like - everyone is more than who they appear to be. The way one person sees you is how they want to see you. It's a projection.

(thinking)

Maybe it's societies projection of who they think Batman is that makes Batman who he really is... ahh? ahh? Did I just blow your mind?

Calvin is surprised by her insightfulness.

ECHO (CONT'D)

(pointing to an apt.
Building)

This is me. Just gonna drop my bag off.

She runs off and goes into the apartment building. He watches as a light illuminates the window, spying Echo's silhouette through the curtain.

The THUNDERING sound of billiard balls ROLLING through table rails can be heard as Calvin looks on.

CUT TO:

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Small and dank - this place hasn't been cleaned since Regan was in office.

AT THE POOL TABLE - Calvin is racking the balls as Echo chalks her cue.

CALVIN
What's your name?

ECHO
Echo. I told you.

CALVIN
Your real name?

She just smiles.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Okay... So why Echo?

ECHO
(mocking)
So why Echo?
(beat)
You heard the story of Narcissus
and Echo?

CALVIN
Narcissus... didn't he fall into
his own reflection?

ECHO
Yep. Most people know the part
about the man. Poor Echo gets the
shit-end of the stick in the
retelling. And she's the whole
reason that happened. Anyway... She
was a mountain Nymph, the most
beautiful and Zeus' favorite. He
loved to listen to her talk. He'd
come down to earth just to be
enraptured by her.

She bends over the table, lining up a shot to break.

ECHO (CONT'D)
One day, Hera, being the jealous
bitch that she is, came looking for
Zeus. Echo was sent to distract her
while Zeus was off getting it on
with some other Nymph.

CRACK! The balls scatter across the table, two fall into
pockets.

ECHO (CONT'D)
Hera, annoyed with listening to
Echo drone on and on, curses her.
(MORE)

ECHO (CONT'D)

Never to speak from her own mind,
only to repeat the last words
spoken to her.

Calvin listens intently, watching as Echo makes her way around the table, lining up another shot and sinking it.

AT THE BAR - Three HUGE THAI THUGS sit down. The biggest of the lot, calls the bartender over with a "come here" motion with half an index finger.

Calvin notices that these are the same thugs he saw laying a beating on someone just hours ago.

THUNK! The two ball falls into the side pocket.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Echo is broken. She wanders the mountain forest, lonely and miserable. Until she comes across the most handsome man she's ever laid eyes on, Narcissus. She falls madly in love with him, obviously. And as she creeps on him though the forest, he hears footsteps and calls out, "Who's there?" Echo can only call back, "Who's there?"

She sinks another ball - she's on a run.

AT THE BAR - The thug whispers something in the Bartender's ear. The bartender turns around and goes to the register.

ECHO (CONT'D)

She pines over Narcissus and after days of stalking him, she gets the courage to reveal herself. Narcissus, who cares only for himself, spurns her, saying he would never love someone who wasn't as beautiful as he.

(beat)

And all she can do is repeat the cruel words he spat at her.

Another ball sinks. It looks like Calvin isn't going to be able to even make a shot.

ECHO (CONT'D)

She still loves him though. Even though he's vain, uncaring, and an asshole... Some things never change.

(MORE)

ECHO (CONT'D)

So whenever he comes to the forest to hunt or whatever, she's always there, creepin', hoping that he'll change his mind.

Only the eight ball remains on the table for Echo to make.

AT THE BAR - The bartender comes back with an envelope and hands it to the fingerless thug. He inspects it before leaving with his friends in tow.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Then one day, he's by a river and is struck with an enormous thirst. But a curse has been put on the water. So when he bends over to get a drink, he see's a reflection of himself, the image the eyes of the world see. Entranced by his own self, he leans over to kiss it...

Echo has stopped shooting, she now is talking to Calvin, ready to finish the story.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Narcissus says "Beautiful boy, my whole life, I've loved you in vain, farewell." Echo tries to call out, to warn him but she can't and he falls in, leaving her alone, repeating 'I've loved you in vain, farewell.'" There she is, staring at the person she thought she loved but didn't even know, helpless, watching him die.

(beat)

Echo withered away and died on that river bed. All that was left was her disembodied voice, echoing back all that she heard.

CALVIN

That's a sad story.

ECHO

I like sad stories.

She lines up a long shot at the eight ball. Their eyes follow the ball as it rolls across the table, sinking with a THUD.

CALVIN

That game was a sad story. Are you hustling me?

ECHO
 (excited)
 No. Wow. I don't think I've ever
 run the table from the break like
 that. You must be good luck.

Calvin goes to re-rack the balls.

CALVIN
 Must be. How did you get so good?

ECHO
 My dad. Pool was the only thing he
 was good at. We had a small
 Brunswick in the basement. I used
 to play down there for hours.

With the balls racked again, Echo lines up to break. CRACK!
 This time no balls fall.

CALVIN
 You grew up playing pool and you've
 never seen The Hustler?

She shrugs.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 That's something we shall have to
 remedy. Lucky, I happen to own a
 copy of it at my place.

ECHO
 (teasing)
 Are you inviting me back to your
 place to watch a movie and chill?

CALVIN
 Something like that.
 (cocky)
 Seven, corner pocket.

Calvin lines up an incredibly hard shot, CLACKS the cue into
 the seven, banking off two rails, giving the ball a touch of
 sideways spin. The two watch as the seven comes to a stop no
 where near the corner pocket.

INT. PASTIME THEATER - FOYER - NIGHT

DARKNESS

A CRACK resonates as the power hums on. Echo stares in
 amazement at the theater foyer.

Slightly run-down and decorated with old movie posters and memorabilia, the lobby hasn't been renovated since the seventies and the Formica finish is cracked and curling in certain places.

The small concession stand sits against the far wall with theater entrance doors on either side.

ECHO
You live here?

CALVIN
There is a small apartment in the basement. It's kind of a family business. I run it mostly, but my aunt helps out a few days a week.

Calvin goes behind the concession stand, turns on the popcorn machine, adds kernels, oil and salt. Near him is a cast-iron spiral staircase that leads to a second floor.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
This will only take a sec.
(to Echo)
Follow me.

She does and they ascend the stairs together.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM - NIGHT

Calvin leads Echo into the small projection room. In the center is a large, five-tier apparatus with 35mm prints on circular slabs. On the top tier sits an old film print. Calvin puts his hand on it, proudly.

CALVIN
Here she is. The Hustler, in glorious 35mm.

ECHO
Wow.

Echo is impressed as she inspects the dark room.

ECHO (CONT'D)
Why do you have this?

CALVIN
Well...

Calvin pulls from the center of the print and begins the process of feeding the film through the projector.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Back in the day, there weren't any strict movie times. They'd just play the movie and when it was over, they'd play it again. My mom was eleven when *The Hustler* came out. She went to go see it and loved it, so she decided to stay and watch it again, and then again and again. All day and night. Her parents didn't know where she was, they called the police, there was this whole uproar about. They finally found her, asleep in the theatre, with her hands in a big bag of popcorn.

Echo inspects the film, amazed, as it stretches from the slabs to the projector.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

She loved telling that story. When she met my dad, his family owned this theater, so for a date he ordered the film. And I guess it worked. They got married and for a wedding present, he bought her this print. So I keep it up here, and every year on her birthday, we play it. All day.

ECHO

Do they come and watch it?

CALVIN

They died some time back...

ECHO

Oh... I'm sorry.

Calvin keeps his head in the projector, still getting the movie ready. He threads the film onto a collection slab and looks to Echo.

POP!

CALVIN

You hear that?

(beat)

Popcorn!

He switches on the projector and a loud CLICKING sound fills the room.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
We've got a few minutes for the trailers to play through. Let's get snacks.

INT. PASTIME THEATER - LOBBY - NIGHT

Calvin is scooping popcorn into an extra large bag.

CALVIN
Butter? No butter?

ECHO
Butter. Obviously.

CALVIN
Good answer. Now, candy wise...
What are you into? Personally, I'm a Rasinets fan but have a soft spot for Red Vines.

ECHO
M&M'S please! I like to put them in the popcorn, so they get all warm and melty and delicious.

CALVIN
M&M'S it is! And Red Vines for me. If you can grab the sodas, we'll be on our way.

INT. PASTIME THEATER - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The vintage theater screen stretches above a small stage, buttressed by black curtains. It's not overly large and has small stains here and there but it holds the nostalgic charm of a bygone era. Echo and Calvin sit dead center, eyes fixed on the flickering silver screen.

CALVIN
Ballet? Really?

ECHO
Yep. Ballet. Classically trained. I was really good, too. I had a scholarship to the School of American Ballet.

CALVIN
Wow. I would have never thought that.

ECHO

Because I dance on the pole now?

CALVIN

No. I just... ballet. I've never actually seen ballet in real life...

Popcorn spills on Calvin as Echo plops the bag in his lap, pops out of her seat and climbs onto the stage.

She stretches for a moment, takes a deep breath, then falls into a perfect plie. The black and white film flickers over Echo's body as she points on the toes of her Converse, before spinning and going into a whole routine.

ON SCREEN Paul Newman as EDDIE FELSON is giving his famous speech to Piper Laurie's SARAH.

EDDIE FELSON

(on screen)

I just had to show those creeps and those punks what the game is like when it's great, when it's really great. You know, like anything can be great -- anything can be great ... I don't care, bricklaying can be great. If a guy knows. If he knows what he's doing and why, and if he can make it come off. I mean, when I'm goin' -- when I'm really goin' -- I fee like... like a jockey must feel. He's sittin' on his horse, he's got all that speed and the power underneath him, he's comin' into the stretch, the pressure's on him -- and he knows -- just feels -- when to let it go, and how much. 'Cause he's got everything workin' for him -- timing, touch. It's a great feeling, boy, it's a real great feeling when you're right, and you know you're right. It's like all of a sudden I got oil in my arm. Pool cue's part of me. You know, it's a -- pool cue's got nerves in it. It's a piece of wood -- it's got nerves in it. You feel the roll of those balls. You don't have to look. You just know. Ya make shots that nobody's ever made before. And you play that game the way nobody's ever played it before.

Calvin is entranced by Echo. Life seems to have slowed for him as he is lost in the movement of her.

SARAH

(on screen)

You're not a loser, Eddie. You're a winner. Some men never get to feel that way about anything. I love you, Eddie.

EDDIE FELSON

(on screen)

You know, someday, Sarah, you're gonna settle down. You're gonna marry a college professor, and you're gonna write a great book. Maybe about me, huh? Fast Eddie Felson, hustler.

SARAH

(on screen)

I love you.

EDDIE FELSON

(on screen)

You need the words?

SARAH

(on screen)

Yes, I need them very much. And if you ever say them I'll never let you take them back.

Echo proudly finishes her routine. Calvin is hypnotized.

ECHO

School of American Ballet, mother fucker!

INT. THEATER BASEMENT - CALVIN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Calvin's room is small, cramped and dark, with a bed, desk, overflowing bookshelf, and a lonely chair parked under a gutter window.

ON THE BED - Echo and Calvin are making out. She is on top. They stop for a moment as Calvin admires her face, brushing her hair back.

CALVIN

What did you think of the movie?

ECHO
Amazing.
(beat)
Sad.

CALVIN
You like sad stories.

ECHO
I do.

She pops up from the bed and starts exploring the room as curiosity takes her over. Running her fingers over everything, tacitly absorbing the space, she finds her way to his desk, grabs a stack of papers and picks them up...

ECHO (CONT'D)
What are you a writer or something?

He shrugs his shoulders.

CALVIN
It's just a movie script I
started... it's pretty terrible
actually...

Calvin reaches for a cigarette, but can't find his lighter. Echo puts down the script and opens the top drawer of the desk...

CALVIN (CONT'D)
It's a family farce that takes
place in the English countryside...

Her eyes go wide when she see what's inside - A REVOLVER.

Calvin notices what she's found.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Shit!

Echo freezes. Then hastily shuts the drawer.

ECHO
I should go.

She makes to leave, Calvin springs out of bed.

CALVIN
Wait. It's not what you think. It's
just-

ECHO
Don't worry about it. It's none of
my business.

CALVIN
No. Please, let me explain.

ECHO
You don't have to.

She is tying her shoes, Calvin kneels down in front of her,
desperately needing to make eye contact.

CALVIN
I want to. You don't understand.
It's just...

ECHO
I really should go.

She gets up and goes to the door.

CALVIN
Please. Please don't. Let me....
(thinking)
Can I show you something?

ECHO
What?

CALVIN
It's a cool, little- Can I show it
to you and then you can decide to
go... okay?

ECHO
...Okay.

INT. PASTIME THEATER - STAGE BEHIND THE SCREEN - NIGHT

Calvin leads Echo through the black curtains that frame the
movie screen. She is hesitant but also amazed to find herself
on a full stage.

Only illuminated by dim, emergency lights, Echo strains to
see all that is around her.

Calvin gently puts his hands on her shoulders.

CALVIN
Stay here.

He takes a few steps back, fading into the darkness.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

This was originally built as a playhouse. My Dad's family used to rent it out to community theatre groups. But that dried up, so they just started playing movies.

In near darkness, all Echo can hear is Calvin's voice. The farther he gets from her, the more he raises his voice.

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(voice raised)

One day my Dad took me back here. He said he wanted to show me a secret. He disappeared into the darkness so all I could hear was his voice.

(beat)

He said, "It doesn't matter where people are, if you focus on them and listen... "

It sounds as if he's somewhere above her.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

(whisper)

...you'll hear what they're telling you."

STARTLED, Echo whips around expecting to see Calvin behind her. He's not. Calvin's voice is hardly above a whisper but she can hear him as clearly as if he were in her ear.

ECHO

How are you doing that?

CALVIN (O.S.)

(whisper)

He used to scare my mother all the time with this trick.

Echo marvels at the strangeness of it all.

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

She'd always end up laughing though.

Echo begins to explore the theatre, looking for Calvin as she hears his voice in her ear.

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(whisper)

He got cancer when I was sixteen. Then died a year later.

(MORE)

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I never heard my mother laugh again. I tried to stick around and be with her. But she was always either angry or depressed. I couldn't handle it. So I left.

Echo finds a wooden ladder attached to the wall. She climbs.

CALVIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(whisper)

She died three years after him. We hadn't spoke in almost six months.

We see Calvin, talking directly into a beam on the wall. It's easier for him to tell this story if he doesn't have to see Echo's face.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I came back, feeling like running this theatre was my penance. But all the loneliness and guilt had become too much to bear.

Echo comes to a small CATWALK at the top of the ladder.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Adrift in sea of strangers. I thought my mind was made up. I took one last walk and found myself in a bookstore. I was just about to leave and go home, and I saw it, out of the corner of my eye - as if it were calling to me. The Hustler. And I got this feeling... I can't explain it. I just knew that my parents put it there. So I listened. I started reading and that kept me alive a little while longer. Then I walked by Cutie Pies and just went in. I don't know why.
(beat)
Then I saw you... and I didn't feel alone anymore.

Calvin feels Echo's hands from behind find his shoulders.

Calvin turns to see her face. She gently kisses him.

ECHO

Charlotte.... People call me Charlie.

INT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT - THE NEXT DAY

As Calvin walks in, smiling like we've never seen him before. The Cartigans' *Lovefool* plays as Echo dances on the stage. Calvin sits down at the bar as he watches her. She doesn't see him, she is in her own mind, dancing, feeling the music, staring off into her own thoughts.

SHANE

What'll it be, sweetheart?

CALVIN

Shane, lovely, I'll have a slice of cherry pie and a PRB.

SHANE

Someone's chipper. Comin' right up.

CUTIE (O.S.)

Calvin, my boy!

Cutie gives Calvin an enormous handshake with his bear paws.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

How are ya, you little bastard?

CALVIN

Great. Really great. Thanks.

CUTIE

Good. Good. How's your aunt? I haven't see that old bird in ages.

CALVIN

She's good.

Cutie, speaking almost tenderly.

CUTIE

She was such a looker back in the day. I remember one time, we were up on Mullholland in my old Z-IROC, loved that car, it was the color of cream caramel... Your Aunt and I had just seen Springsteen and the E Street Band at the Colosseum, we were so zooped on blow-

(wait... should he be telling this story?)

Well... good old days. Anyway, you tell her I said hello.

Calvin is looking over his shoulder, he hasn't been listening. Echo gives Calvin a sexy wink... Then sticks her tongue out at him.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Ahh... I see.

They both are now watching Echo dance.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Incredible, isn't she?

CALVIN

You have no idea.

CUTIE

She's the best dancer I got. She's a sweet kid too. Shane! I've got to step out for a bit - shouldn't be long.

(re: Calvin)

Anything he wants is on the house tonight.

CALVIN

No, you don't-

CUTIE

It's my pleasure. I know that look. You enjoy yourself. And good luck.

He grabs Calvin's fork and takes a bite out of his pie.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

MMMMmmmm. Best Pie is Los Angeles!

As he leaves, in one sweeping motion, he digs his hand into his pocket, pulls out a huge wad of bills, flings it into the air and it explodes, raining all over Echo. The crowd loves it!

Calvin goes back to eating his pie as another song plays and a new dancer takes the stage.

Echo comes over to Calvin and sits next to him.

ECHO

Back again.

CALVIN

Can't stay away. Best pie in Los Angeles.

ECHO
Can I have a bite?

Before Calvin can answer, she begins wolfing down the pie.

ECHO (CONT'D)
(mouth full)
Thanks.

CALVIN
(to Shane)
Can we get another slice?

Shane nods.

ECHO
(talking a mile a minute)
Busy tonight. We had a boat load of people here earlier, they just left. Bachelor party. They were nice, demanding though and Kiki called out, so we all have to pick up her slot. I've had so much coffee and no food.

She is LOVING the pie she is devouring.

ECHO (CONT'D)
Mmmmm. This is as good as sex. I think I might need a cigarette now.

EXT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

Echo leans on the brick facade as Calvin reaches into his pocket and grabs a cigarette.

ECHO
Let's just split one. That's healthier, right?

CALVIN
It has to be...

He hands her the cigarette. She smiles as he lights it, pressing the cigarette between her red lips, staining it with a kiss.

ECHO
So what's the deal? It's like everyone here knows you.

CALVIN

I used to come here a lot. But... I was away for a while.

ECHO

Oh...

She feels there is more to the story but doesn't pry, she just hands him the cigarette.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Well I'm glad you're back... Or else I'd never have seen The Hustler.

The door beside them opens and Coffy comes out, phone in hand, texting.

ECHO (CONT'D)

Coffy!

COFFY

(not looking up from her phone)

Yo.

ECHO

Do you know Calvin?

She gives Calvin an up and down look.

COFFY

Yeah... I've seen you in here.

ECHO

His favorite movie is Titanic.

Echo smirks at Calvin's embarrassment.

COFFY

Oh!? Okay... Where were you this morning? We had a meeting.

ECHO

I know. Sorry. But it was okay.

ECHO (CONT'D)

We were supposed to go...
(thinking of a lie)
Get lunch before my class.

CALVIN

What class?

ECHO
Comparative Mythology.

CALVIN
Ahhh.. I see. Echo.

ECHO
Now you get it... We just started to get into the themes of the Christ myth. How it relates to the Buddha, Krishna, Ra, etc. It's interesting. Like religion is all one big story, just told from different cultural perspectives. Like... it's all inside us and were just struggling to express it in a way that resonates. That's what I want to write my thesis on.

CALVIN
So you're just doing this to pay for school?

He passes her the cigarette.

ECHO
Yeah, haven't you heard? I'm a cliché.

CALVIN
Aren't we all.

Coffy's phone rings. She answers.

COFFY
Hello...

ECHO
We just finished up with Arthurian Romances. Tristan & Isolde - You'd love it.

CALVIN
Am I that predictable?

ECHO
Yes.

Just then, Shane pops her head out the door.

SHANE
Hate to break up the party but Coffy, you're up.

COFFY

Shit!

(To Echo)

Can you dance my spot? I've got to finish with this idiot, sorry.

(in the phone)

Yes! You're an idiot.

ECHO

Sure. No worries.

Echo flicks the cherry ember from the half smoked cigarette and hands it to Calvin.

ECHO (CONT'D)

We'll finish this later.

Calvin puts the cigarette back into his pack and goes to follow her inside.

COFFY

Calvin!

He turns back to Coffy.

COFFY (CONT'D)

(making fun)

"I'll never let go..."

CALVIN

I was young. It had an affect on me.

Echo grabs Calvin's hand and pulls him in with her.

EXT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

Calvin takes his seat as Echo makes her way to the jukebox. He gazes at her while she flips through songs. She decides, hits the buttons and with a sideways glance to Calvin, smiles.

Echo takes the stage. It's like she's only dancing for Calvin. The whole world melts away as the two stare into each others eyes. She breaks eye contact to keep eyes on the room and the men that are there to give her dollars, they need attention too. But every so often, she keeps glancing back to Calvin.

Now -upside down on the pole- her eyes are closed as she is smiling, deep in concentration.

Calvin sips his beer in quiet devotion, consuming all of her that he can. Hoping this feeling never ends.

Echo opens her eyes only to have them fill with FEAR, Calvin notices and quickly glances to where she's looking-

BAM!

A shotgun BLASTS the mirrored ceiling above Echo. She falls to the floor as shards of glass rain down on her.

BAM!

Another blast EXPLODES the jukebox as THREE MEN, heavily armed and in balaclava masks, storm in.

TALL MAN

Everybody on the fucking ground!

Everyone complies. Calvin keeps his eyes on Echo, she has cuts all over her body and is bleeding badly. He rushes to her.

WHACK!

He is smacked in the face with the butt of a gun.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)

Where you going, loverboy?

Calvin's head is split open and his face is covered in blood.

CALVIN

She's hurt.

Tall Man puts his gun to Calvin's head.

TALL MAN

And you're about to be dead.

(yelling)

Everyone! Just sit still and no one will die tonight.

(to his two GOONS)

You two! Upstairs.

The two GOONS make for upstairs.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)

We'll just be a minute here, folks.
Then you can go back to ogling the girls.

Echo's breathing is becoming more shallow, her face is losing it's color.

There is a deep slash on her arm, where an artery has opened. She is looking to Calvin for help. He can see her slipping away. She's so close to him but he can't get to her.

CALVIN
Please... please...

TALL MAN
What?

CALVIN
Let me help her.

SMACK! Calvin is pistol whipped hard in the face. He folds to the ground, spitting out blood and teeth.

The Tall Man turns Calvin over, pressing the gun barrel right between his eyes.

TALL MAN
One more word-

He grabs Calvin by the collar, bringing him up to his knees, making him face Echo. The Tall Man is standing behind Calvin with his gun to the back of his head, execution style.

TALL MAN (CONT'D (CONT'D)
And I'll blow you brains out all
over those tiny tits of hers.

The Tall Man says something to the crowd but Calvin can't hear it. All his senses are directed at Echo, as if he could will her to stay alive.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
(in Calvin's ear)
Don't cry. People like her don't
deserve your tears.

The blood around her is growing, she is fading, Calvin can see it. He watches helplessly.

CALVIN
No... Please...

Tall Man is ready to fire, he pulls back the hammer.

GOON ONE
All good.

The two GOONS return with two duffle bags filled with cash.

BOOM!

Goon One's arm explodes as he falls to the floor.

From the Bar- Shane COCKS a HUGE shotgun, she's too slow to get another round off.

BAM! BAM! BAM! She's shot to ribbons and falls to the ground, dead.

GOON TWO

Let's go!

Goon Two grabs Goon One and drags him out the door.

TALL MAN

Thank you for your hospitality.

He reaches into a duffle bag and throws a handful of cash into the air as the three run off.

Calvin goes straight for Echo, he takes her in his arms but it's clear she is already gone.

CALVIN

No no no no no.

Like snowflakes, dollar bills slowly rain down on Calvin as he cradles Echo's lifeless body.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CALVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Calvin is smoking a joint, looking off into the stars past his ceiling. Echo sits in an armchair beside him, reading his movie script.

ECHO

(giggling as she reads)
This is funny.

CALVIN

Do you think people are meant to meet?

ECHO

How do you mean?

CALVIN

Like... People have trajectories in life. And maybe ours were meant to intersect. I don't know... Do you think soulmates exist?

He passes her the joint.

ECHO
(dismissive)
Oh my god... Soulmates?

CALVIN
No... I mean... I don't know...
(rebounding)
Soul travellers.

She rolls her eyes, tosses the script to the ground then jumps on top of him.

ECHO
Calvin, this is real life. You can't be such a romantic. It's revolting.

Her laughter fades into...

EXT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

SILENCE - Red and blue lights flash as police cars and ambulances have encircled the small club. Calvin sits on the sidewalk, covered in Echo's blood, staring off into space. Hoards of people are around; police, paramedics, news crews - it's a mad house of activity.

An ethereal voice can slowly be heard speaking.

VOICE
(whisper)
Calvin.

It's Echo's voice.

ECHO (V.O.)
Calvin.

Calvin seems to be waking from a dream.

CUTIE
Calvin!

A cacophony of sound HITS Calvin like a wave as he snaps back to life, looking up to see Cutie standing above him.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
You okay?

Calvin's empty eyes search Cutie's face. He puts a hand on Calvin's shoulder.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Someone here wants to talk to you.

Behind Cutie is DETECTIVE MARIA ORTIZ, 40's, short but strong, and with a stern face.

ORTIZ

Hi Calvin, I'm Det. Ortiz. Can you tell me about what happened?

CALVIN

I don't... I don't know... These guys in masks came in and started shooting.

CUTIE

Did you get a look at any of them? Any distinguishing features? Tattoos? Anything like that.

CALVIN

No. I don't think so. I... I saw her on stage. She's gone...

ORTIZ

(flipping through notes)
Ms.... Oread?

CALVIN

Who?

ORTIZ

Charlotte Oread... She was one of the victims.

CUTIE

Echo.

Calvin realizes he didn't even know her last name.

ORTIZ

Anything else you can remember?

He shakes his head.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)

If you remember anything, call me.

Ortiz hands Calvin a card, then moves on.

CUTIE

You should go home.

CALVIN
Don't cry for her, he said. People
like that don't deserve your tears.

CUTIE
Go home, Calvin. Pour yourself a
drink.

Calvin says nothing.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
Go home.

CALVIN
Right... yeah... Home...

He's completely lost.

CUTIE
Coffy!

Coffy, shaky and chain smoking nearby, pops her head up.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
Can you give Calvin a ride home?
He's pretty shaken up.

She gives him a less-than-friendly look.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
Just do me a favor, will ya?

She rolls her eyes, but Cutie knows with her, that's as good
as a yes.

INT. COFFY'S EL CAMINO - DRIVING - NIGHT

The lights of the city reflect off the windows as Calvin
silently stares out into the streets of oblivion.

He looks at his hands, moving his fingers, as if testing that
he is really in control of them. Coffy looks at him
apprehensively.

COFFY
Were you guys close?

Calvin thinks for a moment, but doesn't have an answer. He
just looks out the window. She stares off onto the road.

COFFY (CONT'D)
(to herself)
She danced for me.

Calvin turns to see her.

COFFY (CONT'D)

I was supposed to be on stage.

They sit in the moment... Until Calvin looks away.

EXT. PASTIME THEATER - NIGHT

Coffy's car pulls up and Calvin gets out.

COFFY

You gonna be okay?

Calvin shuts the door without an answer.

INT. CALVIN'S APARTMENT

Calvin stands over his bed, looking at the messy sheets, where he and Echo were just hours ago. The silence consumes him, he is breathing deeply, unable to comprehend the situation which he finds himself. After a moment, he goes to his dresser, opens the top drawer, seeing his pistol, tempting him.

INT. THEATRE - STAGE BEHIND THE SCREEN

Calvin sits cross-legged, staring up at the reverse image of The Hustler projected above him. Tears streaming, he puts the gun in his mouth pulling hammer back.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CLUB

The empty club bears a close resemblance to Cutie Pies but parts are missing, the periphery is haphazardly constructed. Calvin sits alone on a stool, looking around, he sees Echo on the stage in her sweatshirt and a tutu, sitting cross-legged.

PSST... CRRRRRR... The sound of a needle DROP on a record is heard before MUSIC starts.

Calvin calls out to Echo. No sound escapes his lips.

On the stage, Echo is shooting pool. Calvin calls out again, nothing. He tries again, and again.

In place of felt on the table is water, still, like a glass mirror. She takes her head up from her shot.

Does she see him? She stands up straight, puts her hand on her ribs, just below her right arm pit as blood seeps through her fingertips.

Calvin looks down at his hands, they're COVERED in blood.

He looks back to Echo who is alone on stage, staring right at him. Shaking her head "No."

ECHO

Calvin!

BOOM! A shotgun blast is heard as-

BACK TO THE THEATRE

He jolts awake. Alone on the floor.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

BATHROOM - Calvin inspects his wounded face. Bruised and swollen, he is hardly recognizable.

BEDROOM - He puts on a hooded sweatshirt, clearly in pain with each movement.

PROJECTION ROOM - He stares at the projector with dead eyes as the film CLICKS through. He takes a moment to look at the print of The Hustler, set on the steel plate.

OUTSIDE THEATRE - MARQUEE - Perched on a ladder, Calvin hangs new letters onto the marquee.

OUTSIDE THEATRE - SIDEWALK - Calvin looks up at the Marquee - COMING SOON - THE BATMAN. He stares for a moment, before pulling out his pack of smokes. He sees Echo's lipstick stained cigarette. He takes a moment before pulling out a different one and lights it.

He puts a cap on his head, pulling it down low to cover his face, flips his hood up and leaves.

EXT. ECHO'S APARTMENT - TWILIGHT

Calvin stands outside Echo's place in the spot where he waited for her before. This time she's not coming out.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Calvin buries his head in a glass of whiskey. The CRACK of billiard balls startles him. Looking to the table, he sees a young couple playing - smiling. He downs his drink.

EXT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

Calvin stands at a distance, lurking on the periphery, smoking, unable to take a step closer.

Nicky, in a flat cap, walks out of the front door as images of Echo, bleeding on stage, FLASH in Calvin's head.

NICKY
Got a smoke?

CALVIN
...Yeah.

Calvin keeps his head down.

NICKY
Shit! That's quite a shiner.

Calvin searches for a moment before finding his pack and hands Nicky a smoke. He offers him a light.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Thanks. I've got one.

Nicky lights the cigarette.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Tragic isn't it? This neighborhood
used to be safe. Clean.
(beat)
You live around here?

Calvin nods.

NICKY (CONT'D)
Me too. Grew up just a few blocks
away. It makes me sick to see how
things have deteriorated.
(beat)
These Thai people bring in so much
filth with them. Makes me sick.
Somebody's gonna clean this place
up. Wash away all this muck and
mire. This place will be great
again. You'll see. Till then...
Save your tears...

He flicks his cigarette and gets into an SUV that pulls up.

NICKY (CONT'D)
People like that don't deserve 'em.

Before Calvin realizes what was said, the car is gone. But he catches the license plate as it drives off.

INT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

An "Irish Wake" is in progress. Pictures of Shane and Echo are perched on the bar as people drink, toast to their memory and tell stories. No girls are on the stage as it is in need of repair. Blood has been cleaned but the mirrors are still broken. Cutie is holding court over the crowd.

CUTIE

Thirty years I'd known her.
Toughest old bird there ever was. I
remember once, stopping by her
place, it was a little messy, ya
know - clothes and things all over
the place. She starts cleaning up
and I see this huge strap on dildo.
Must have been eight - nine inches.
"I didn't know you were a lesbian."
I say - She looks me right in the
eye with this big fuckin' grin.
"This," she says, "This is for
guys. Any man wants to put his cock
in me has gotta let me put my cock
in him first!"

Everybody laughs.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

That's the kind of broad she was.
Didn't take no shit.

CALVIN

(bursting through the
door)
Cutie!

CUTIE

Calvin, hey-

CALVIN

I need to talk to you.

The crowd is a little displeased with Calvin's interruption.

CUTIE

Sure...
(to the crowd)
Excuse me a moment.

INT. CUTIE'S OFFICE

Cutie leads Calvin inside.

CALVIN

Who was that guy? The man with the hat?

CUTIE

What are you-

CALVIN

He just left. He was wearing a grey cap!

Cutie seems to realize something. He goes to his bar cart and fills two glasses with whiskey, giving one to Calvin.

CUTIE

What about him?

CALVIN

Who is he?

CUTIE

You don't want to know.

CALVIN

He killed Echo.

CUTIE

What?

CALVIN

He's the guy who robbed you.

Cutie takes a big swig.

CUTIE

How do you know?

CALVIN

He had a gun to my head. Pretty hard to forget. You know him?

CUTIE

I've known that little shit his whole life.

He pours another drink, opens the door and calls-

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Squints! Get in here!

CALVIN

We need to tell the police, or something.

Squints enters.

SQUINTS

What's up? Hey, Calvin.

CUTIE

Calvin here says he knows who knocked us off

SQUINTS

Really? Who?

Before Calvin can answer-

CUTIE

Nicky Darbanyan!

SQUINTS

Hmm. Figures.

CALVIN

Can someone please tell me who this guy is!?

SQUINTS

His father was head of the Armenian mob... Died a few days ago. His uncle's in prison, so Nicky's acting boss. They control Little Armenia surrounding Thai Town. They've slowly been encroaching too. See, we pay-

CUTIE

That's enough. Calvin doesn't need to know the whole bloody affair.

CALVIN

Can we go to the police?

CUTIE

You go to the police, he'll find out. And you'll be dead. You're sure it was him?

Calvin's certain. Cutie and Squints share a look.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

That's how they knew.

CALVIN

Knew what?

CUTIE

That we wouldn't be here. I had a meeting that night with his uncle. That little bastard!

CALVIN

What can we do?

CUTIE

We? There is no we Calvin. There's only I. And there is nothing I can do. Not unless you want me to take on the whole Armenian mob.

Another drink for Cutie.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

This is because I wouldn't give him more. Fuck! I thought I was out of this shit. I run a legitimate business, Goddammit!

(to Calvin)

Thanks for telling me, now heel it.

CALVIN

Heel it?

CUTIE

Go! Calvin, you can go. Let the adults handle this, go back to the movies. Forget you saw anything.

CALVIN

Forget. You want me to forget her?

CUTIE

(realizing)

Echo...

(cooling off)

You didn't even know the girl.

CALVIN

So he gets away with it...

CUTIE

Maybe. Sometimes the world is shitty, Calvin. Sometimes we don't get what we want.

Calvin takes in these words, realizing Cutie is useless. He goes to leave.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
 Don't do anything stupid, Calvin.
 I'll handle this.

Calvin slams the door.

EXT. POLICE STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

Calvin pulls up in his beaten down Chevy Nova, watching as police officers come and go.

INT. POLICE STATION - RECEPTION

An overweight PATROLMAN with a surly face mans the desk, reading the screenwriting book *Save the Cat*.

CALVIN
 I'm looking for Det. Ortiz?

Without looking up, the Patrolman points down the hall.

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN

In the corner of a near-empty bullpen, Ortiz sits at her computer typing away when Calvin approaches.

CALVIN
 Detective.

She looks up from the computer.

ORTIZ
 Yes...
 (searching)
 Calvin, right? Have a seat.

He does. Ortiz sits, but shutters in pain. The badge on her belt pinched her. She unhooks it and drops it down on her desk.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
 What can I do for you?

CALVIN
 It's about the other night-

PATROLMAN
 Ortiz!

A patrolman drops a file on her desk.

PATROLMAN (CONT'D)
Coroner reports. GSWs for the
bartender, lacerations from the
falling mirror for the stripper.

Calvin can't believe the glibness of this guy. Ortiz shoots the patrolman a look. He leaves, rolling his eyes.

ORTIZ
Sorry. What can I do for you?

CALVIN
Well-

RING! Ortiz holds her finger up to Calvin as she answers the phone.

ORTIZ
Ortiz... What!? No, I logged it
last night ...No, that's not
right... What!? Tell him he's-...
I'll be-... Fine! I'll be right
down.

She SLAMS the phone down.

ORTIZ (CONT'D)
Sorry, would you mind waiting just
a sec? I need to run down to the
evidence room. It'll only take a
minute.

Calvin sits, dejected. Looking around the bullpen he sees cops lounging around, some are doing work, most are just bullshitting. One is giving him a suspicious look. Calvin stares back at him. The cop looks away. Would these people really be any help to him?

He sees the file on Ortiz's desk and takes the liberty of opening it. Flipping through he lands on a photo of ECHO'S BODY, naked on a steel slab. All the radiance of her dimmed, dulled into a grey pile of empty flesh.

He closes the file and puts it back on the desk.

Calvin looks around to see if anyone is watching him. No one is. He swipes Ortiz's badge and quickly leaves.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

AT A PAY PHONE - Calvin holds the phone to his ear.

CALVIN

Hi... This is Detective Ortiz,
badge number
(reading off the badge)
3253 - Can you run a licence plate
for number me? 2SAF0529

He pulls a pen out of his pocket and scribbles on his palm.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Uh huh.... Yeah... thank you.

CLICK!

Two cops walk by Calvin. He catches up to them.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

They stop.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I found this.

He hands them the badge.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I think someone dropped it.

INT. CALVIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Calvin comes in, heading straight for his dresser. Rummaging through draws he finds what he is looking for - his revolver. He grabs it, holding it in his hand, he looks at it for a moment, absorbing the power he feels.

EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Parked across the street is the beaten down Chevy Nova, inside we see Calvin, munching on Red Vines. He leans his seat back, turns up the radio and grabs his copy of The Hustler from the front seat, revealing the revolver next to it.

Day turns to night as the Nova keeps its vigil.

Finally, in the dead of night, the Black SUV pulls into the driveway. Out of the car staggers MAURICE with his left arm in a sling. He stumbles his way to the door, dropping his keys along the way, clearly drunk.

INT. HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Maurice shuts the door, takes his coat off and lets it fall to the floor.

MAURICE

Watson? Watson, where ya at buddy?

Maurice looks around for a bit until he see's a CAT, perched on the windowsill.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

There you are you little bastard.
You hungry?

VOICE

Psst!

Maurice WHIPS around at the sound of an intruder - BAM! He is smacked in the face with the butt of Calvin's revolver. He collapses to the floor.

Watson looks from Maurice to Calvin, not caring at all.

INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER

Maurice awakens to find himself tied to a chair, bleeding from the head.

MAURICE

What the fuck?

He looks down to see Watson, rubbing up on his legs. Picking his head up, he sees a figure lurking in the shadows.

From the darkness - a duffle bag slides on the ground into the light in front of Maurice.

CALVIN (O.S.)

Look what I found.

Another duffle bag slides out of the darkness.

MAURICE

You know who's money that is?

CALVIN (O.S.)

Not yours.

MAURICE

You're a fucking dead man.

CALVIN

I know. Have been for a while. Tell me...

Calvin steps out of the shadows.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Where can I find Nicky Darbanyan?

Maurice spits in Calvin's face.

Calvin wipes it away, unbuckles his belt and walks behind Maurice.

MAURICE

What the fuck are you doing?

Calvin wraps the belt around Maurice's bandaged arm and tightens it. Maurice SCREAMS in pain as stitches SPLIT and blood POURS from the re-opened wound.

Calvin stops. Maurice catches his breath.

Calvin comes around to face him.

CALVIN

Now, I'll ask you again. Where can I find Nicky?

A small pool of blood collects below the chair. Watson comes over, licking it.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You know if you die in your home and no one finds you... Your cat will eat your remains. Isn't that crazy? Dogs go insane when their masters die, they can't handle it, they're too emotional. Cats don't care. They know your body is meaningless. Once you're dead... you're just meat.

Calvin picks up Watson and begins petting him.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I wonder what Watson will look like without a head?

He pulls out his revolver and puts it to the cat's head.

MAURICE

Hey man, what the fuck? Leave him alone!

CALVIN

Tell me where I can find Nicky.

MAURICE

Everyone knows where to find Nicky.
That ain't the problem. You want
him, he'll be at The Vacancy.

CALVIN

(putting Watson down)

See... I wouldn't hurt an animal.
I'm not a monster.

MAURICE

You ain't never gonna get to him.
He owns that place. You and your
crew will all end up in the ground.

CALVIN

Lucky it's just me then.

MAURICE

Just you? Ha! Go after him man, I
dare you. Look, I told you what you
wanted, now why don't you let me
go.

CALVIN

Why did you guys knock off Cutie
Pies?

Maurice takes a closer look at Calvin's face.

MAURICE

Shit... I remember you. You were
the guy trying to help that dancer.
Hahaha. I bet you ain't even fired
a gun before. You have no idea who
you're messing with. You're out of
your fucking mind.

Calvin heads to the staircase, about to leave.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Did she die?

Calvin stops. He sees Echo standing at the top of the stairs,
looking down on him. Shaking her head "No."

MAURICE (CONT'D)

She was bleeding pretty good. She
must have died to get your panties
in a bunch. Too bad. Waste of good
pussy if you ask me. Bet it tasted-

BAM!

Maurice's head explodes as Calvin stands, arm raised, revolver smoking.

Looking down at the limp body, blood dripping, he's horrified at what he's done.

He stumbles up the stairs and sees Watson cowering at the foot of the door.

INT. 101 DINER - MORNING

The 101 Diner hasn't changed decor or clientele for half a century. That's just how Cutie likes it, as he sits at his regular booth, drinking his regular coffee, reading the newspaper.

CUTIE

President's in town this weekend.
Traffic's gonna be a mess.

Sal, sits at the counter with his copy of Finnegans Wake.

SAL

Seems like he's always here.
Shutting down roads.

CUTIE

It's a re-election year. That fat fuck's gotta raise that cash.

SAL

So he's gotta dance for it just like the rest 'em?

That makes Cutie laugh.

CUTIE

Seems so.

The diner doorbell DINGS as Nicky saunters in, followed by ARMAND. He slides into the booth with Cutie.

NICKY

Cutie! I knew I'd find you here.
You're a creature of habit.
(to Sal)
You still reading that book, Sal?
Last I saw you, you were almost finished.

SAL

I'm reading it again... I think you have to. It's kinda cyclical, ya know?

NICKY

Cyclical... Where do you find these guys, Cutie?

A WAITRESS comes over to the booth.

WAITRESS

Hey hun, can I get you something?

NICKY

Cup of Coffee. Irish it up for me will ya, doll?

WAITRESS

Sure thing.

She's off.

NICKY

I heard you guys are opening back up tonight. That's good to hear. We need to get things back to normal around here.

The Waitress comes back with Nicky's Coffee.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

CUTIE

So... Any word on who shot up my place?

Nicky sips his coffee.

NICKY

We're Pretty sure it was those zipper heads.

CUTIE

Oh yeah?

A steady stream of CAR HONKS can be heard from outside.

NICKY

You hear that? Do you know what today is, Cutie?

He shakes his head.

NICKY (CONT'D)

April 24th. Medz Yeghern. You like history? I love it.

(beat)

My family comes from a town called Anatolia. Beautiful place. Generations of families thrived there. My grandfather was a doctor, a community leader... an intellectual, if you will.

(beat)

He was one of the first to be rounded up. Sent to the desert with no water, no food. Sent to die. His wife took their son and emigrated to America. To the most inviting country in the world. A country that, to this day, will not recognize the genocide of 1.5 Million Armenians by the Turks. So on April 24th, we celebrate. We remember.

(beat)

My father was a serious man, as you know, and every year on this day, we were not allowed to speak from sun up to sun down. To show us what silence feels like. The silence of our adopted country. And of the world. I learned that silence can be deadly.

(beat)

The Turks wanted to expand their empire. And no one stopped them. Phan is trying to expand his empire. Over the years he slowly encroached on our territory. My father looked the other way. He was silent. As long as money was making its way into his pocket, he was happy. Not me. This is my home. No one is gonna push me out. He was a hypocrite and now he's dead.

Armand gets a phone call.

NICKY (CONT'D)

No one stopped the Turks. No one was brave enough. This world needs brave people to stand up to those who live without morals. I will stop Phan.

(MORE)

NICKY (CONT'D)

What they did to your club
constitutes an act of war. So all
that he has, all of Thai Town, will
soon be mine.

Armand comes over and whispers something in Nicky's ear.

NICKY (CONT'D)

What?

CUTIE

Something wrong?

NICKY

Just business. You know how it is.

Nicky gets up to leave.

CUTIE

I run a clean business.

NICKY

All business is dirty business. But
I'm glad you're back in business.
I'll need that twenty thousand by
the end of the week. War's coming.
And war costs money. Take care,
Cutie.

Nicky leaves with Armand in tow.

INT. CALVIN'S ROOM - MORNING

A BOWL is filled with cat food. Watson suspiciously inspects
the food.

Calvin plops himself down on his bed. He takes a few deep
breaths.

SUDDENLY he retches, bolts to the wastebasket and vomits.
Watson watches.

RING!

Calvin pops his head up from the wastebasket.

RING!

Where's that coming from?

RING!

It's coming from under the bed. Inside a duffle bag.

Calvin pulls the bag out from under his bed. Unzips the front pocket and pulls out a cell phone.

RING!

He answers, holds the phone to his ear but says nothing. An eerie moment goes by, until...

VOICE
(on the phone)
Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Nicky, with a phone to his ear is staring at the body of his dead friend tied to a chair. Armand and Viktor are there behind him.

NICKY
You made a big mistake, friend. And
what you took...

INT. CALVIN'S ROOM

Calvin stares at the mountains of cash filling the duffle bags.

NICKY
(through the phone)
I'm gonna need that back.

Watson MEOWS at his bowl of food.

NICKY (CONT'D)
What's the matter? Cat got your
tongue?

Calvin hangs up the phone.

INT. BASEMENT

Nicky, with Armand behind him, looks at his phone-

CALL ENDED.

NICKY
They hung up. Some people have no
manners.

ARMAND

What do you want to do about this?

Nicky silently stares at his dead friend.

NICKY

Someone's been killed. Call the police!

EXT. PASTIMME THEATRE - ROOF - DAY

Calvin stands on the edge of the roof, where we've seen him stand before. With a fire in his eyes he looks over Thai Town and the surrounding area. A parade of cars with Armenian flags propped to their windows fly down the street as music is heard.

Calvin takes a deep breath, letting the view sink in.

EXT. ECHO'S APARTMENT BUILDING - TWILIGHT

Calvin lingers on the sidewalk, looking up at Echo's empty apartment window. Reaching into his breast pocket, he pulls out his pack of smokes, only one left - stained with Echo's lipstick. He puts it back and is about to leave when he sees something move in her window. Is someone inside?

INT. ECHO'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY

Calvin makes his way to Echo's door, pressing his ear against it. Hearing nothing, he tries the handle - it's unlocked.

INT. ECHO'S APARTMENT

Desolate and barren, with bare walls and only a small loveseat, Calvin tip-toes into the empty space, taking the liberty of looking around.

IN THE BEDROOM

Calvin slowly steps in. The bedroom is much more inviting - art and pictures decorate the walls, trinkets are on shelves, it has all the physical representation of memory. He peeks in her closet. It's messy and overflowing with clothes, heels and large rolled up papers. He grabs one, unrolls it and sees it's a charcoal sketch of a nude model.

A CREAK in a floorboard is heard. Scared, he pulls out his gun.

Footsteps TAP. They're getting closer. Calvin positions himself near the door, hidden from whoever will walk in.

The door opens, Calvin is ready...

It's Coffy.

Calvin puts his gun away. Coffy turn to see him and SCREAMS.

COFFY

Jesus!

CALVIN

Coffy?

COFFY

...Calvin!?

Coffy plops down on the bed, catching her breath.

CALVIN

I'm sorry...

COFFY

What the fuck are you doing here?

CALVIN

I saw someone in the window - I could ask you the same thing.

COFFY

I came to pick up some of my things and...

(beat)

And haven't been able to leave.

Calvin aimlessly inspects the room. Running his fingers over the dresser, landing on clothes that have been thrown on top. He sees a small TV, perched on a table. Near it is a small stack of movies. On top he sees the last one she watched - TITANIC. He smiles.

COFFY (CONT'D)

Cutie is opening back up tonight. I'm never going to that place again.

Calvin picks up a photo that is on the bedside table. It's Echo, with her arm draped around some guy.

CALVIN

(re: photo)

Who is this?

COFFEE

The reason she came to LA. She didn't tell you?

CALVIN

No.

COFFEE

Yeah... Don't see why she would. We grew up together. Bet you didn't know that either. We weren't really friends... but knew each other. She got in touch with me a while back. Said she needed to get out of New York and was coming to Los Angeles and I was the only person she knew. Her boyfriend was some prodigy ballet dancer, tell his broke his ankle. He got hooked on pain killer, couldn't dance like he used to, oxy graduated to heroin and his life was spiraling out control and he was taking her with him. She tried to him get help but he wasn't having it, so she broke it off. And well... He went a little crazy. Told her he couldn't live with out her, she was the only thing that mattered... all that jazz. Then he shot himself in the head right in front of her.

Calvin looks at her, unbelieving.

COFFEE (CONT'D)

Crazy, right? She came out here looking to start over. I told Cutie about her situation and he wanted to help. You know how he likes to take in strays.

Calvin folds the photo in half, rips it and puts the section with Echo in his pocket.

COFFY

Why are you here, Calvin?

CALVIN

I didn't even know her. I hear what you're saying and... It's like a dream. When I first saw her she was so beautiful it hurt. Right in my chest. Like something being pulled out. Something I had forgotten.

(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)
I wanted to live in that feeling
for as long as she'd let me.

Coffy sits, hanging onto his words.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Have you ever seen someone die?
Watched as life slips away? All
this beauty shined through her
eyes. I held her as it faded to
nothing. She was the only thing I
felt connected to. He took that
from me.

Coffy's confused. She doesn't know who "he" is.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
When I was with her I felt whole.
Now here I am again with nothing.

Calvin pulls out the gun from his waistband.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
Except this.
(beat)
The people who killed her don't
deserve to live in this world.

COFFY
And you get to make that decision?

CALVIN
He decided.

COFFY
Who is he?

CALVIN
Nicky. Nicky Darbanyan.

COFFY
You can't...

CALVIN
I hear he's an easy man to find if
you know where to look.

COFFY
He's someone you don't mess with.
He's not just one man.

He stops for a moment but says nothing, before walking out
the door, leaving Coffy alone in Echo's room.

COFFEE

Echo was really trying to change her life. I was helping her with that. I used to be involved in some real bad shit. Shit like Nicky Darbanyan is involved with. Cutie came along and helped me. Pulled me out of it. I was trying to return the favor. I guess I failed. But he told me the person you are isn't the person you have to be. There is always a way out, Calvin.

CALVIN

Out of what!?

COFFEE

Out of the darkness. You said you found beauty in Echo... Hold onto that. Don't turn into someone you're not.

CALVIN

With her I could have been someone else. This is who I am now.

He walks out the door leaving Coffy alone in Echo's room.

EXT. THE VACANCY BAR - NIGHT

A long line of well-dressed, beautiful people wait outside the posh Hollywood bar as a hipster DOORMAN stands sentinel at the velvet rope.

Nicky and ARMAND, deep in conversation, walk right past the line.

NICKY

They're here?

ARMAND

Inside waiting.

NICKY

Good.

Nicky and Armand get to the front of the line and pass the Doorman without even a word. The hipsters whine at his lack of line decorum.

INT. THE VACANCY BAR - HALLWAY

Nicky and Armand walk down a hallway and enter the last door on the right.

INT. ROOM

A Beautiful GIRL, in elegant flapper attire, is reclining on a steel framed bed, reading a leather bound book. The room matches her outfit. It's as if the two have entered a time warp.

ARMAND

If they got Maurice they could get-

NICKY

(interrupting)

Shhh... This is my favorite part.

GIRL

Mr. Darbanyan, welcome back. I believe you know the rules.

NICKY

Indeed, I do.

GIRL

Well then...

With a wave of her hand the bed MOVES, sliding to reveal a hidden staircase underneath.

GIRL (CONT'D)

Enjoy yourselves, gentlemen.

NICKY

(heading down the stairs)

I love Hollywood bars. It's like going to Disneyland.

INT. THE VACANCY - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The interior of The Vacancy is built in the style of a 1920's southern country house, filled with tables, chairs, and a fireplace. Beautiful people populate the open room and crowd the large bar.

Armand and Nicky head to a table near the fire place where two men are sitting. CURTIS is small, wearing an Ed Hardy shirt and a gaudy gold chain around his neck. Next to him is VIKTOR, broad and bald with a Viking beard, dead eyes set deep into his stone face.

Armand and Nicky sit down.

CURTIS

I can't believe it about Maurice.

NICKY

I can. The drunken idiot. I should have never had him sit on that money.

CURTIS

You can't blame yourself.

NICKY

I don't. I blame you. You were with him that night. What happened?

CURTIS

Last I saw him was at the Chateau around midnight. I left with my girl.

ARMAND

The one with the hairlip?

CURTIS

What the fuck did you say?

NICKY

Both of you, shut the fuck up. We need to get ahead of this situation.

CURTIS

It was Phan's guys, right?

ARMAND

Could be. We don't know.

CURTIS

You don't think this could have been done by someone still loyal to your father? Because that was done clean, looked just like he went in his sleep.

In a flash, Nicky reaches across and SLAMS Curtis' face on the table. His nose GUSHES blood.

People look, but no one seems to really care. Viktor hands him a handkerchief.

NICKY

You got a big fucking mouth.

CURTIS

Sorry.

NICKY

You speak about that again it will be the last words to ever come out of your mouth, understand?

He nods.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Look, it could've been anyone with a beef. We can use this to our advantage. Cutie's was the first step. We find some chink who runs with Phan, pin this shit on him, then the other families will have to back us. It's not what we planned but it'll still play. Right now, the only people who know about this are at this table. I don't have to tell you how important it is that we keep it that way.

A waitress comes over and drops off four shots.

NICKY (CONT'D)

We all know what today is. It's a day to celebrate those who are still here, and a day to remember those who have been taken from us. Let's drink to Maurice's memory.

They all down the shots.

NICKY (CONT'D)

(to Viktor)

Take him out of here and get him cleaned up. I don't need him bleeding all over the place.

Viktor and Curtis leave.

Nicky pulls out a small vile from his breast pocket. He dumps out two yellow pills into his hand. He offers one to Armand. The two swallow the pills.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Look at all the talent that's here. Best looking women in the world live here in Los Angeles.

As the two look over the room we see-

AT THE BAR is Calvin, hunched over his drink, eyes on Nicky.

As he stares him down, he slowly pulls out his revolver. He's about to get up from his stool when he sees someone in the crowd.

It's Echo. Standing dead still, staring right at him. He stares in disbelief as she says something, but only her lips are moving. Calvin tries to understand.

ECHO
(silently mouthing)
Leave.

Calvin can't take his eyes off her.

ECHO (CONT'D)
(silently mouthing)
Leave now.

He shakes his head and closes his eyes. When he opens them, she's gone. He shrugs it off, gets up from his stool and heads to Nicky. He bumps into a few people as he gets closer.

He's close, he's about to raise his arm, when-

COFFY
Hey!

Coffy steps in front of him, puts her hand on his chest, stopping him.

Calvin hides the gun.

CALVIN
What are you doing here?

COFFY
She was my friend too. My only friend.

CALVIN
You have to leave.

COFFY
You can't just blow him away in a crowded bar.

CALVIN
Why not?

COFFY
Do you wanna die?

CALVIN
Can't die twice.

COFFY
Let me help. I know how to work
these guys, they come into Cutie's
all the time.

She looks over at Nicky and Armand.

COFFY (CONT'D)
There is only two of them. When
they leave we'll follow them.

CALVIN
If you're going to get in my way,
you should just leave.

COFFY
You don't understand...

ARMAND (O.S.)
This guy bothering you?

Armand has positioned himself behind Coffy. She turns to see
who's talking to her. If she's frightened, she doesn't show
it. Calvin tucks his gun away.

COFFY
We just talkin'.
(flirty)
Why, you tryin' to bother me?

Calvin hides his face from Armand.

ARMAND
Maybe...

Coffy gives him an up and down look.

COFFY
I seen you before.

ARMAND
And I you.

COFFY
Follow me, I wanna show you
something.

She whispers in Calvin's ear.

COFFY (CONT'D)
Wait here.

She takes Armand's hand and leads him down a dark hallway. Calvin watches, trying to keep his eyes on where they go. He loses them when they turn a corner.

Calvin looks back to where Nicky was. He's gone. Looking around, he sees nothing. He turns- SMACK! Running into someone.

CALVIN

Sorry I-
 (noticing it's Nicky)
 I didn't see you. Sorry.

NICKY

Don't worry about it.

Calvin goes to leave.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Wait... I know you.

CALVIN

I don't think so.

Nicky grabs hold of Calvin's arm in an assertive way.

NICKY

Nah, I've seen that face before.
 You gave me a smoke a few days ago.
 I couldn't forget a shiner like
 that. Tell me, who did this to you?
 I'll make sure they get a lot
 worse.

CALVIN

Don't worry about it. I'm working
 on that.

NICKY

A man who likes to get his hands
 dirty. I like that. I'm the same
 way.

(beat)

You get it. I can see it in your
 eyes. Nickel's worth of free advice-
 Don't let them see you coming.

Calvin smiles.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Let me buy you a drink.

CALVIN

That's not necessary.

NICKY

I want to.

CALVIN

Twist my arm.

Nicky orders two shots.

NICKY

What's your name?

CALVIN

Calvin.

NICKY

Nicky.

They raise glasses.

NICKY (CONT'D)

To getting the fucker who gave you
that.

They down the shots.

NICKY (CONT'D)

It's important to do things
yourself. To be a man. Nobody's
gonna give you anything in this
world. You gotta take it. Ya know
my father died recently... Your dad
still around?

Calvin shakes his head. Nicky orders two more.

NICKY (CONT'D)

See... That's why you get it.
When he died that's when it hit me.
That I wasn't beholden to anyone
anymore. No one's around to tell
you what mistakes you've made.
Wrong moves you've taken. You're
the master of your own fate.
Scary... that kind of freedom.

The drinks come and Nicky toasts.

NICKY (CONT'D)

To the ones we've lost. May they
set us free.

They drink.

Calvin leaves. Nicky's observing gaze lingers on Calvin. Something is off about that guy... He goes to follow him but is stopped by a FLIRTY GIRL.

FLIRTY GIRL

So... Got any more of those pills I saw you take?

Nicky forgets all about Calvin.

We follow Calvin as he bumps his way through the crowd, down the hallway we saw Coffy disappear.

He passes employees and couples making out until he turns a corner and pushes into the Mens Room - Nothing.

He turns around and leaves as a Woman comes out of the Ladies Room.

CALVIN

Is there someone in there?

She shakes her head NO, dubiously walking away.

Calvin's reached a dead end. Where could they have gone? He begins to head back when he sees-

EMERGENCY EXIT DOOR, slightly open. He pushes through to-

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Armand has Coffy pinned against a wall. With one hand around her throat and the other up her skirt.

COFFY

Slow down, honey.

ARMAND

Just let it happen. You'll enjoy it.

COFFY

Stop.

She struggles to free herself, he slams her against the wall - HARD.

ARMAND

I like when a woman fights back.

He inhales deeply the perfume in her hair as we see Calvin's REVOLVER press against his temple.

Armand lets go of Coffy, putting his hands up.

ARMAND (CONT'D)
Okay. Easy now.

CALVIN
Step back an-

SMACK!

In one swift move, Armand elbows Calvin in the face, spins, and knocks the gun from his hand. Calvin stumbles back, grabbing his face.

Coffy lunges at Armand but he quickly dispenses with her, head-butting her and throwing her in a pile of garbage.

Armand wraps his big mitts around Calvin's neck. He smiles as Calvin struggles for air.

ARMAND
Quiet now. It will all be over soon.

Calvin's face goes from red to purple as life slowly leaves him.

Calvin struggles but he's losing focus and strength. His eyes begin to roll back into his head. He's almost gone when-

BAM!

Blood splatters on his face. Armand's body falls to the ground as Coffy stands over him, smoking revolver in hand.

As Calvin gasps for air, Coffy rifles through Armand's body, pulling out his GUN.

COFFY
C'mon, we gotta go.

She puts the gun in her purse, helps Calvin up and the two run off.

INT. CALVIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Coffy sits alone on the bed, blood splatter still on her face and dress, staring at the mug in her hands. Calvin comes over and pours a shot from a flask into her coffee. She takes a sip.

CALVIN
You okay?

COFFY

Yeah. Fine.

A silence weighs heavy between them. The moment ends when Watson JUMPS into Coffy's lap, urging her to pet him.

COFFY (CONT'D)

Who's this?

(looking at his name tag)

Watson huh... Think he can deduce a way out of this?

CALVIN

I don't think he'll be much help.
He's kinda lazy.

Calvin kneels down, reaches under the bed and pulls out the two duffle bags. Coffy's eyes go wide when he unzips them.

COFFY

How much is that?

CALVIN

About 200,000. That's what her life was worth. That's what she died for. Now, I'm in this till the end and I'm grateful for what you did tonight, truly, but you don't have to go any further. I've made my choice.

COFFY

Your choice? To die? What about your life?

CALVIN

What life? I live in a movie theater with only silver screen friends. Fading away from myself two hours at a time until the credits roll and the lights come up on real life.

(beat)

I was ready to die for nothing. Some lives have no meaning. Mine didn't, until meaning found it.... She made me want to live for something.

COFFY

Sounds like love.

CALVIN

Maybe... I'll never know. He stole that ending.

(beat)

Why did you help me?

COFFY

I don't know... When I was at her apartment, I didn't feel anything. I mean, she's dead and all I thought about was how it could have been me. Not sad that it was her. I'm a pretty shitty person most of the time. You said... beauty shined through her. You're right. She cared about me... not many people in my life have... And when you showed up. I can't explain it, but I could feel her presence with you there. That kind energy she had. I took her for granted. I know I was helping her out but I feel like she was trying to make me a better person. Just by being around. She saw some good in me that I never saw. I felt like I needed to be there for you. I knew I could help. You're not alone, Calvin. As much as you think you are or want to be. Maybe that's where Echo lives now. Inside you, where she belongs.

CALVIN

She showed me there was good in this world. Some people burn bright, while the rest of us just flicker, destined to fade away. She was the only brightness I ever found. All the dreams she put in me are gone now.

COFFY

They don't have to be. You can still do all those things. You have to. To make all this shit worth something.

CALVIN

There's no going back for me. This is what I have to do.

COFFY

Well then I'm here, Calvin. I'll stay with you till the end.

(MORE)

COFFY (CONT'D)

You need help anyway. You don't even know you're in over your head.

CALVIN

Take the money. Run. Start a new life.

COFFY

Running is what brought me to where I am now. Running doesn't solve anything. Things catch up to you eventually. I can't say I've ever taken down a mob boss. But I've stood up to men scarier than Nicky Darbanyan. Besides, what kind of person would I be if I left you now? Echo would haunt me if I didn't help.

Calvin finds himself laughing.

COFFY (CONT'D)

So what are we gonna do about Nicky?

Watson meows softly.

INT. CUTIE PIES - NIGHT

Shiny and new, the stage sparkles. Music blares while a BEAUTIFUL GIRL dances. She spins around the poll as the packed house of lustful men droll and shower her with dollar bills.

ABOVE - IN HIS OFFICE

Cutie scrutinizes the scene from his tower. The rebuilt interior seems false to him, too sterile for the history haunting walls.

CUTIE

So clean. Like nothing ever happened.

SAL

We know better.

With his face in his book, Sal sits by the door across from Squints, who is counting the money on Cutie's desk.

CUTIE

Do we? Seems like we don't know anything that's going on in this town anymore. Do we know who got Nicky's man?

SAL

I've got feelers out.

CUTIE

Feelers?

SAL

Ya know? Men on the street.

CUTIE

And why isn't your fat ass out on the street?

SAL

My sciatica, you know this. Just because I'm not out there, doesn't mean I don't keep an ear out.

CUTIE

How can you keep an ear out when your nose is always in that fucking book!?

SAL

It's a tough read...

SQUINTS

Word is, when they popped Darbanyan's man they took off with our money and his fingers. With that much cash, they could be half way to Tangiers by now.

CUTIE

(to himself)

Fingers... Phan takes fingers...

SAL

Tangiers? Who absconds to Tangiers?

SQUINTS

People with class.

SAL

I'd go to Cuba. They got some beautiful women down there.

SQUINTZ

Beautiful women are everywhere. You want beautiful, you go to those Nordic countries. It's all amazon women up there. Tall, blond, big eyes!

SAL

That don't do it for me... See, I like small and curvy... Latino girls have the right figures. And they know how to take care of a man. White chicks only care about selfies and likes.

CUTIE

Idiots. I'm surrounded by idiots.

Squints and Sal share a look - Something's up his ass.

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Women are more than what they look like.

SAL

Says the guy who owns a titty bar.

CUTIE

This isn't a titty bar. It's a burlesque club. Girls get naked at titty bars. This is a temple for admiring beauty. The beauty of dance and the artistry of the tease. See all these girls... They're all beautiful in their own way. Kiki is also a dominating amateur wrestler, Akira runs her own knitting business, and Daisy is getting her PhD in Environmental Studies. Do you care? No. You only see them for their bodies. You marginalize them by viewing them solely as objects to stick your dick in. It's disgusting. There's elegance to what they do. Everyone thinks they're getting taken advantage of in this life, but it's the guys who give up the money that are taken advantage of. All these girls are smarter than us lustful fools. And they know it.

(beat)

I've seen lots of things in my life.

(MORE)

CUTIE (CONT'D)

Mountains, waterfalls, sunsets that stretch across the sky and fall into infinity. All of it beautiful. A landscape can take your breath away, but the gaze of a woman, a real woman, who can see right through you to your soul... that can stop your heart. We're here only a short time gents. We're made to experience the splendor of this world. The Romans and Greeks knew...

SAL

You think those missing arms of the Venus De Milo were holding onto a poll?

Squintz and Sal share a laugh. Cutie is not amused.

Looking out on his kingdom, he spots Nicky as he PLOWS through the front door. His eyes follow as Nicky bumps his way through the crowd.

CUTIE

Shit! Looks like we're gonna have a visitor.

Sal gets up and opens the door as Nicky comes in, red-faced.

NICKY

Did my guys get here yet?

CUTIE

Nice to see you too, Nicky. Would you care for some pie?

NICKY

Are they here?

CUTIE

I haven't seen any of your boys tonight.

Nicky lights up a cigarette. Squints gets up to leave.

SQUINTS

Sorry, I can't stand the stench.

Nicky eyes him as he leaves.

NICKY

Armand's dead. Pow! Right in the back of the head. I don't know who coming after me, but I swear...

Nicky is clearly tweaking out, his eyes are bloodshot and he's fidgety.

CUTIE

Calm down.

NICKY

Fuck you! You're not the one with a target on his back. I mean, who the fuck does this guy think he is? I'm gonna put him in the fucking ground!

Muffled voices can be heard from outside the office.

SQUINTS (O.S.)

He's with someone.

COFFY (O.S.)

I don't care, I need to see him.

Sal is almost at the door when it BURSTS open and Coffy storms in. She has blood splatter on her face and dress.

CUTIE

Coffy!? What the hell happened?

NICKY

What the fuck is this?

CUTIE

Shut up, Nicky.

Coffy heads straight to Cutie's bar and pours a tall drink. She takes a big gulp.

COFFY

It happened right in front of me.

CUTIE

What happened?

NICKY

What kind of place is this Cutie? Can you clean her up, isn't there a pole she needs to wrap her ass around?

Cutie gets in Nicky's face, with a ferocity we've never seen.

CUTIE
You can leave!

Nicky matches his intensity, he looks like he's about to reach for something on his belt when-

COFFY
We were just outside of The
Vacancy... and...

Ignoring Cutie, Nicky grabs Coffy's arm.

NICKY
Where!? Where were you?

COFFY
The Vacancy...

NICKY
Did you see it? Who was it?

CUTIE
Let go of her.

He does. He tries to calm himself.

CUTIE (CONT'D)
Tell us what happened.

COFFY
We met at the bar, we chatted for a
bit and he asked if I wanted to
have a smoke. So.. He led me to the
alleyway and... Ya know.. We're
going at it when...
(she takes another sip)
When this guy comes up behind him
and just... Bam. Blows his head off-

NICKY
Did you see him?

COFFY
He ran off.

NICKY
(losing patience)
Did you see his face?

COFFY
Yeah... It was that guy. He comes
in a lot. He was friends with Echo.
He's face is all fucked up.

Nicky's eyes go wide.

NICKY
Calvin?

COFFY
Yeah! That's him.
(reflexive)
I gave him a ride home once.

Cutie knows she's made a mistake.

NICKY
Where?

CUTIE
Let me handl-

NICKY
Where did you take him!?

COFFY
I- I don't remember the address.
It's a movie theater. I can show
you.

KNOCK KNOCK

Curtis, with fresh bandages on his nose, and Viktor step in.

NICKY
Where have you been?

CURTIS
(pointing to his nose)
I was at the emergency room.

NICKY
Shut the fuck up and let's go.

CUTIE
Nicky, wait!

Nicky turns, calm as a smile.

NICKY
This is where it ends. I told you
I'd solve the problem. Let the big
boys handle this. Wouldn't want you
to get those clean hands of yours
dirty.
(re: Coffy)
She coming with us.

Nicky leaves, with Curtis, Viktor and Coffy in tow.

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Calvin watches as *The Hustler* flickers on screen. He takes a long pull from a whisky flask.

AT HIS FEET, Watson rubs his face around Calvin's ankles. Calvin scoops him up and tenderly pets him.

Watson nuzzles him.

CALVIN

You ever seen *The Hustler*, Watson?
It's one of my favorites. See,
Eddie is kinda lost. He's trying to
shake the idea that he's a born
loser. Sometimes the way people see
you changes the way you see
yourself. No one ever thought he
was worth much, so he didn't
either... then he meets Sarah. They
both kind of live in the same dirty
world, but it's the way she looks
at him and how she loves him that
changes him. Makes him feel like
he's worth something.

RING!

Calvin get's up, making his way to the ringing phone in the Lobby.

RING!

Calvin puts the phone to his ear.

INT. CUTIE PIES - CUTIE'S OFFICE

Cutie looks out over the bar with a phone to his ear.

CUTIE

They're coming for you.

INT. PASTIMME THEATRE - LOBBY

CALVIN

So you decided to do something
after all.

CUTIE
(through the phone)
Calvin...

Calvin hangs up.

CALVIN
I hate to spoil it Watson. But
Sarah dies. And Eddie's got to keep
going. To prove he's worth
something.

Calvin puts Watson down and pulls out his revolver from his
belt. Flipping the chamber open. Only four bullets.

INT. CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

In a car full of gangsters Coffy seems strangely calm.

COFFY
If you take a left here it will be
up on the right.

As the car turns, Nicky, in the front seat, smiles as the
lights from the marquee reflect off the windshield.

The car pulls to a stop and the doors fly open. Nicky, Curtis
and Viktor get out.

NICKY
Pop the trunk.

From the trunk, Nicky grabs a SHOTGUN and throws it to
Curtis. He pulls his pistol from his holster and loads one
into the chamber.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(to Curtis)
You're with me.
(to Viktor)
You stay with her. Keep a look out.

Looking discontent, Viktor says nothing. Nicky and Curtis
head into the theater.

INT. THEATER FOYER - NIGHT

The foyer is dark and eerily empty. Nicky and Curtis slowly
walk in and cautiously look around.

POP!

Nicky and the Curtis flinch in terror at what they think is gun shot.

POP!

POP! POP! POP!

Nicky laughs, realizing it's just the popcorn machine.

EXT. THEATER - NIGHT

Viktor forebodingly stands sentry outside the theater.

Coffy pops open her door and gets out of the car.

COFFY

Need to stretch my legs.

She begins to riffle through her purse.

COFFY (CONT'D)

You smoke?

He doesn't answer. He doesn't even move.

COFFY (CONT'D)

Probably best. They'll kill ya.

She pulls out a cigarette, puts it between her lips and lights it, keeping her eyes on Viktor the whole time.

COFFY (CONT'D)

You only live once though, right?

She takes a big drag.

COFFY (CONT'D)

Not much of a talker, are ya?

He turns, giving her the scariest fucking look ever.

INT. THEATER FOYER

Nicky and Curtis decide to split up. Curtis heads up the spiral staircase up to the projection room, while Nicky heads into the theatre.

INT. THEATRE

The Hustler flickers on the screen of the empty theatre. Nicky cautiously makes his way through, looking for Calvin.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

The intrusive TICKING of the projector blares. Curtis looks over the room, gauging where he is. Below the projector, he spots the two duffle bags. He bends down, unzips one, finding the money.

Light beams from the projector shine through the small window that overlooks the theatre. Curtis looks through to see Nicky searching the theatre below.

CURTIS
Nicky! Nicky!

BELOW Nicky can't hear anything over the sound of the film.

Curtis BANGS on the window.

Nicky hears this and looks up, seeing Curtis shouting down at him.

NICKY
What the fuck are you saying?

IN THE PROJECTION ROOM

CURTIS
I found it! I found the money!
(to himself)
Fuck.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Hey.

Curtis TURNS to see Calvin, emerging from the shadow with his gun raised. BAM!

BOOM! Curtis gets a shotgun round off.

IN THE THEATRE

BAM! Nicky hears the third shot and sees the FLASHES through the window. He runs out of the theatre to head to the projection room.

EXT. THEATRE

Coffy is still smoking her cigarette as Viktor looks around.

COFFY
So you've killed people?

He gets right up in her face.

VIKTOR
Lots of people. Now shut the fuck
up.

BAM! BOOM! BAM! The two hear three muffled shots coming from
inside.

COFFY
That's what I thought.

Viktor rushes to the theatre door.

BAM!

A bullet rips through his leg. SCREAMING in pain, he falls to
the ground as his gun flies out of reach.

Coffy, steps through the smoke billowing from her pistol,
looking down on the man in pain.

VIKTOR
You fucking cunt.

COFFY
Your mother should have taught you
better manners.

She raises her gun to his face. He looks to his gun, can he
reach it? Might as well try...

BAM! He's gone.

INT. PROJECTION ROOM

Nicky bursts into the room, gun at the ready. He sees Curtis'
dead body on the floor, covered with bloody dollar bills.

ON THE FLOOR - he spots a trail of blood, leading out the
back door of the projection room. He follows it into a-

HALLWAY

The blood trail leads down a narrow hallway with a door at
the other end. To his right, Nicky looks out an open window,
seeing if this could be an escape route. Nothing - just a
two story drop into an alleyway with a dumpster.

RING!

Nicky pulls out the phone from his pocket.

MAURICE CALLING

He flips it open.

NICKY

Hello...

CALVIN

Don't cry for him. People like that
don't deserve your tears.

INT. THEATRE - STAGE BEHIND THE SCREEN

The reversed image of The Hustler plays on screen as we see Calvin, wrapping his arm in a makeshift tourniquet. He's been hit bad by the shotgun blast.

INT. HALLWAY

Nicky comes to a door at the end of the hall. It leads to a staircase. He goes down.

NICKY

That was my cousin you killed.

CALVIN

(on the phone)

Hurts, doesn't it? Losing someone
you care about.

At the bottom of the stairs is a door. Nicky slowly opens it - seeing that it leads to-

THEATRE LOBBY

Peeking his head through, he spots Coffy. She's just come inside and has her gun by her side. He waits in the darkness until she's in a position with her back to him.

He sneaks out of the doorway, slowly coming up behind her, he puts the phone down, and rases the gun to her head.

NICKY

Drop it.

INT. THEATRE - STAGE BEHIND THE SCREEN

Calvin finishes wrapping his arm with the tourniquet.

CALVIN

(into the phone)

Now you listen to me...

COFFY
(through the phone)
Calvin...

Her voice is hollow and shaky.

CALVIN
Coffy?

NICKY
(through the phone)
Give me back my money and she
doesn't have to get hurt. I'm
afraid it's too late for you. But
your friend here might have a
chance.

CALVIN
Let her go.

INT. THEATRE - AUDITORIUM

Nicky is leading Coffy through the aisle, pointing his gun
everywhere looking for Calvin.

NICKY
Why would I give away my best
bargaining chip? I don't think you
get how this game is played. You
give me my money, and I'll let her
go.

CALVIN
(through the phone)
Okay. Okay. I've got your money.
Behind the curtain. You'll find me
there.

Nicky sees the curtain on the stage. He pushes Coffy towards
it.

The two climb the stairs onto the stage and shuffle through
the black curtain.

INT. THEATRE - STAGE BEHIND THE SCREEN

Nicky, with his gun pointed at Coffy, looks around the
darkened stage.

NICKY
C'mon little man, no more games.

CALVIN (O.S.)
Do you remember what you said to
me... at The Vacancy?

Calvin's disembodied voice spooks Nicky as it reverberates off the walls and into his ear. Nicky SWINGS around expecting Calvin to be behind him. Nothing.

NICKY
What the fuck is this? Some sort of
magic show?

CALVIN (O.S.)
Never let them see you coming.

NICKY
Hey! Phantom of the Opera! Give me
my fucking money or this bitch is
gonna be a head shorter.

CALVIN (O.S.)
You want it. You got it.

A faint CREAK is heard from above Nicky. He sees something. He quickly raises his gun and FIRES as we see the duffle bag FALLING- Coffy dives for cover.

SMACK!

The heavy bag hits Nicky full force in the head. Dollar bills EXPLODE into the air. Falling to the ground, his gun flies out of his hand and slides away.

BLACK

Nicky comes to with Watson licking his face. Calvin is standing over him, clutching his ribs, just below his right armpit, blood seeping through his fingertips. He still has enough strength with his other arm to keep his revolver pointed at Nicky.

NICKY
You got me kid...

Nicky looks at Calvin and his wounds.

NICKY (CONT'D)
But it looks like I got you better.

Coffy comes over.

CALVIN
There's a phone in the lobby. Call
this number.

He hands her a business card. She gives him a look.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
I'll be fine. Go. Tell them to send
an ambulance.

She leaves.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
You let her die.

NICKY
It was just business kid. A little
fun to stimulate my surroundings. I
don't see why you're getting all
bent out of shape over some
stripper-

BAM! Calvin shoots him in the gut.

CALVIN
I've only got one bullet left.

NICKY
Do yourself a favor and put it in
your own head.

Calvin looks down at his revolver.

CALVIN
I almost did once. But she stopped
me. Saved me. Gave me something to
live for.

Nicky sees his gun, it's only a few feet away. Maybe he can
get to it.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
You stole that from me.

Nicky laughs shallowly.

NICKY
Aww. Do you think she loved you?
She was a stripper... batting her
eyes at anyone with a dollar.

Calvin squeezes the trigger, wanting to fire, but doesn't.

NICKY (CONT'D)
(coughing up blood)
You gonna finish it?

CALVIN

No. I'm gonna watch you bleed.

Calvin kneels down, close to Nicky.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

The way you made me watch her.

NICKY

You wanna know something about that girl... the one you loved so much...

CALVIN

You didn't know anything about her.

NICKY

(laughing)

I gave her fifty bucks to blow me once.

FIRE fills Calvin's eyes as he rears up to pistol whip Nicky. He's too slow. Nicky pulls a knife from his boot and BURIES it in Calvin's ribs.

CALVIN

Ahhhh!!!

BAM! Calvin FIRES. One shot to the head. Nicky's lifeless body hits the stage with a resounding THUD.

Falling onto his back, Calvin stares at the ceiling. He drops his gun and wraps his hand around the knife in his side.

He CRINGES as he slowly pulls it out.

EDDIE FELSON

(On the screen)

We really stuck the knife in her, didn't we, Bert?

Calvin chuckles as he hears Paul Newman's voice.

EDDIE FELSON (CONT'D)

(on the screen)

Boy, we really gave it to her good.

BERT

(on the screen)

If it didn't happen in Louisville, it'd happened someplace else. If it didn't happen now, it'd happen six months from now. That's the kinda dame she was.

Calvin gingerly sits up. Smiling as he watches the enormous reverse black and white image in front of him. Watson prances over, curling up in his lap.

Searching his pockets, he pulls out his pack of smokes. He's tucked the photo of Echo he stole between the plastic wrapper and the pack. He opens it. One left. Calvin puts Echo's lipstick stained smoke in his mouth and lights it, kissing her one last time.

EDDIE FELSON

(on the screen)

And we twisted it, didn't we, Bert? Course, maybe that doesn't stick in your throat cause you spit it out just like you spit out everything else. But it sticks in mine. I loved her, Bert. I traded her in on a pool game. But that wouldn't mean anything to you. Because who did you ever care about? Just win, win, you said, win, that's the important thing. You don't know what winnin' is, Bert. You're a loser. 'Cause you're dead inside, and you can't live unless you make everything else dead around ya.

Through the screen, Calvin sees a silhouette. Echo is on the stage. Her shadow dances, the same ballet that she showed Calvin the night they met. He smiles.

EDDIE FELSON (CONT'D)

(on the screen)

Too high, Bert. Price is too high. Because if I take it, she never lived, she never died. And we both know that's not true, Bert, don't we, huh? She lived, she died. Boy, you better... You tell your boys they better kill me, Bert. They better go all the way with me. Because if they just bust me up, I'll put all those pieces back together again, and so help me, so help me God, Bert ... I'm gonna come back here and I'm gonna kill you.

BERT

(on the screen)

All right... All right.

Echo now stands right above Calvin as he looks up at her.

She puts her hands on his cheeks and looks him square in the eye and kisses him.

Calvin, alone, gently falls to his back while his life slips away into eternity.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. THEATRE SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Red and Blue police lights paint the marquee of the Pastime Theatre. It's a hotbed of activity. Patrol cars, ambulances, news vans, fire trucks and crowds of people swarm the sidewalk.

Coffy is smoking a cigarette. We see Det. Ortiz writing in her notebook.

Coffy stands alone for a moment, looking up at the theatre marquee. From her pocket, she pulls out Ortiz's card, the one Calvin gave her. She turns it over. There is a note, written with a shaky hand.

Dumpster

INT. CUTIE PIES - CUTIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cutie is scarfing an enormous piece of pie. Squints is counting bills and Sal is still reading *Finnigans Wake*.

A KNOCK on the door is heard.

CUTIE

Come in.

In walks PHAN, a tattooed, menacing Thai gangster, with TWO equally imposing friends.

PHAN

Hi Cutie. Long time... I always wondered what the inside of this place looked like.

Cutie leans back, chewing his pie, looking at the new man he'll be paying tribute to.

EXT. ALLEY WAY BEHIND THEATRE - NIGHT

Coffy stands feet from the dumpster, just staring. She steps closer, tip-toes to the edge and looks in.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - HALLWAY OUTSIDE PROJECTION ROOM - MOMENTS AGO

Calvin stumbles out of door of the projection room. His arm is bleeding badly. With one duffle bag slung over his shoulder and the other in his hand, he limps over to the window. He opens it and looks out over the alley, seeing the dumpster. He takes the bag off his shoulder and drops it.

THUD!

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - MORNING

Coffy's El Camino flies down the highway as the radio blasts.

She reaches behind the passenger seat to grab her sunglasses. As she does, we see Watson sleeping on top of the black duffle bag full of cash.

Putting her glasses on, she smiles as she drives off into the mountains.

FADE OUT.