

# **LSD/88**

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Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ROOFTOP - 10 STORIES UP

TITLE:

JUST OUTSIDE WASHINGTON D.C.

1954

Rain pours. The dark clouds above appear to be within reach.

FRANK GIBSON, 42, in a soaked black suit, lets the rain pelt him. The rain covers his tears but his face shows anguish.

He slowly steps to the edge of the roof, slipping a few times on his way. Shaking, he steps to the ledge. He peers over.

C.U. FRANK'S FACE

A guttural sob rips out of him. Leans back. But then, a deep, calming breath.

EXT. MIDDLE OF BUILDING

The windows reflect the surrounding forest. A beat. Then Frank drops through frame.

OVERHEAD FROM ROOFTOP

We can barely make out the ant-like heap of man who has shattered below. The rain quickly splashes and spreads the blood.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. DANTE'S BAR - DUSK

TITLE:

CHICAGO

1960

As dusk descends a bar sign flickers on: DANTE'S in neon red.

INT. DANTE'S BAR

YOSHIRO TIFUNE, Japanese-American, mid 20's in a sharp gray suit, leans against the basement door with a cigarette hanging from his mouth, painfully bored.

He glances at the clock. Seconds tick by in slow motion.

At the table in the center bar it is the same. SAL DIMARTINO, an old, fat Italian man, heaves with each phlegmy breath. He stares at the man across from him, his usual scowl set deeper, accentuating his disgust.

VICTOR BARBARO sits across from him in a big puffy coat and fedora that hides his face. Time returns to normal as Vic breaks the silence.

VICTOR (O.S.)

Well, Sal-

SAL

And another thing. I don't like looking at you.

VICTOR is in his early 20's, half-black, half-Italian and impeccably dressed. Under his coat is a crisp brown suit with a blonde kravatt wrapped around his neck. This adornment hides deep burns that go down his body, but the scarred skin licks up under his jaw and chin. He is indeed unsettling to look at. Victor smiles and his scars stretch.

VICTOR

To tell you the truth Sal, I don't much like looking at you either.

SAL

Enough. I don't like dragging my ass down here for this. It's unbecoming for a man of my caliber.

He slurps the remainder of his whisky, slams it on the table-

SAL (CONT'D)

Another!

VICTOR

Maybe you've had enough-

SAL

Shut up!

Sal is drunk, again, even more so than usual. Victor nods to JASPER, the large bald man behind the bar. Jasper begins making the drink.

Sal clears his throat of phlegm and SPITS ON THE GROUND.

Victor looks at the phlegm on the ground with contempt. His calm facade slips as the rage inside him begins to leak.

SAL (CONT'D)

Ha. Now you're getting it.

Victor looks over at Yoshi-

SAL (CONT'D)

Uh-uh, don't look at your chink.  
We're talking here.

Victor slowly turns back and meets Sal's eyes, barely able to conceal his rising anger.

SAL (CONT'D)

Are you getting the picture? You know why you're here right? You're here because a terrible thing happened to you and your family, and someone, bless their heart, feels sorry for you. Pity is what allows you be to here. And while you're here, you and these freaks are our eyes and ears, and when appropriate, our mouths, to the miscreants that border this shithole you call a neighborhood. So we don't have to get their shit on our shoe or their stench in our nostrils.

Sal sucks in phlegm through his nose. Victor's fist tightens under the table.

SAL (CONT'D)

But me, a made fucking guy, still has to trek down here with niggers and spics crawling all over the place. And I'll tell ya, at the end of the day, it certainly smells like there's shit on my shoe!

Jasper places a fresh drink by Sal, takes a few steps back and remains there.

Sal gulps his drink.

SAL (CONT'D)

(wipes his mouth)

And now, now I hear you's are trying to expand your little operation. Stretch your legs, feel a little wind under your balls. You gotta be outta your fucking skulls! To think you'd ever be allowed to do so, let alone have the wherewithal to do it.

Yoshi straightens up now and looks at Jasper.

VICTOR

I don't know what you mean Sal.

SAL

(smiling mischievously)

Victor, you might think you're a good liar behind that face you got there. But you're not.

(chuckles to himself)

You got dumb balls, just like your father. Thought he could marry a jungle bunny and get the same amount of work. He's lucky he was such a good shot.

Victor's jaw tightens.

SAL (CONT'D)

But you.

(looks around)

I've never seen a motlier crew. A mulatto burn victim, a Jap and a mute. Marone! What makes you think you can step beyond your means?

(shakes his head ruefully)

Luckily, you have me watching over you, guiding you. And even luckier, I actually do encourage free market thinking. But dues have to be paid, of course.

A sly smile spreads. Victor returns it with a cold grin.

VICTOR

Of course. These dues go directly to you I'm assuming?

SAL

Naturally.

Victor smiles wide and stands up.

VICTOR

Naturally.

He reaches out his hand. Sal stands, pleased at how easy this has gone, and reluctantly shakes Victor's hand.

In an instant Victor pulls him forward and clocks him with a left cross to the mouth. Jasper catches Sal from behind and wraps his huge arms around him.

SAL

(blood dribbles from his  
mouth)

You fucking half breed, you're  
dead!

Victor quickly punches him three more times in the face. Sal crumples in Jasper's arms.

Jasper lifts him up as Yoshi approaches-

SAL (CONT'D)

Getchur hands off me you-

Yoshi jams two fingers into a pressure point on Sal's neck. Sal struggles. Victor gets in close.

VICTOR

I'd rather wipe my ass with any  
extra money we earn before I ever  
gave it to such a worthless, scum  
sucking, fat wop like you Sally  
boy.

Yoshi increases the pressure and Sal loses consciousness in Jasper's arms.

Yoshi and Jasper look expectantly to their leader. Vic shakes his hand out and looks at each of his men, thinking it over, but he already knows.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Get rid of him.

Jasper begins dragging him to the basement door. Yoshi hangs for a beat, looking at Victor.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

What?! Last time I checked you  
weren't the mute one.

Yoshi holds his look, then goes to help Jasper carry Sal down to the basement.

Victor's left alone in the bar, silence descending on him. He smashes the empty whisky glass against the wall.

INT. BASEMENT

Jasper and Yoshi drag Sal through a dark red hallway. They stop at an ominous, rusted door. Yoshi opens it up and an archaic steel chair bolted into the ground sits in the center of the small room. The chair is covered with straps and ropes.

INT. CHAIR ROOM

Yoshi and Jasper drop Sal in the chair. They strap in his arms, legs and feet. Yoshi puts a gag in his mouth. Jasper looks on uneasy. Yoshi nods. Jasper exits.

Yoshi walks over to a table in the corner with a small turntable on it. He drops the needle and classical music plays loud.

Black leather gloves smoothly pull over his hands. Yoshi cracks his knuckles and takes a slow, deep breath in, and out.

He stands behind the chair and pulls out a length of rope attached to it. He wraps the rope around Sal's neck and tightens it. Sal starts to regain consciousness and moves his head around a bit.

The musical crescendo hits as Yoshi tightens his grip on the rope and begins to fall backwards.

We switch to SUPER-SLOMO:

The music slows and the sound warps. Yoshi drifts backwards in slow motion, allowing gravity to do the work for him, almost parallel to the ground now.

The music returns to normal as we snap back to regular speed.

Yoshi's body goes taut, gripping the strap. Sal's head and neck jerk as he struggles. The chair does not budge. Sal's face is turning an awful shade of red and purple.

C.U. YOSHI'S FACE

Serene, unblinking, staring up at the ceiling, the only motion coming from his hands being jerked by Sal's struggle, which slows, and slows, and...

CUT TO:

INT. VIEWING ROOM

TITLE:

SAN FRANCISCO

TOM KNIGHT stands in the back corner of a dark, smoky, sound-proofed room. He leans against the wall smoking a cigarette. He is 42 years old but looks older. His grey hair is thinning but his grey moustache remains thick. As he drags his cigarette, the glow lights up his eyes. Tom looks tired.

Tom glances at the two young agents sitting at the table in front of him, a recording device between them. The one on the right, AGENT MCGINNIS, takes notes attentively. The one on the left, AGENT JEFFREY, might be asleep.

A voice comes in low over the microphone.

JOHN (O.S.)

What's...what's happening?

Tom returns his gaze to the main show. The three men observe a small bedroom through a large one way mirror.

A robust, 40 year old JOHN sits in his underwear on a faux velvet red bed. A PRO with her top off glances at the mirror.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Why do I feel this way?

PRO

It's okay baby...

The pro leaves the room and locks the door behind her.

The john looks at his hands. He looks at the door.

JOHN

Hey, where'd you go?

He gets up and tries to open the door.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hey...HEY!

Unsuccessfully jiggling the doorknob, he dives back onto the bed and a soft cry is let out.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What the fuck is going on?



He rocks slowly. Then he catches himself in the mirror. He stares at himself...but it almost looks like he's staring through the mirror directly at Tom. His stare intensifies, anger building. He jumps up out of the bed.

JOHN (CONT'D)

YOU!

Close to the mirror. Still staring towards Tom. McGinnis notices and looks back at Tom. Tom stares straight at the john and drags his cigarette.

Suddenly the john laughs and begins making strange faces in the mirror. He starts rubbing his face and sits back down.

Tom exhales smoke as the john continues to blabber.

CUT TO: LATER

The room is clear, the lights are on. Cleaners tidy the boudoir on the other side of the mirror.

Tom has his notepad out.

TOM

So is that how it usually goes?

JEFFREY

Yes, sir.

MCGINNIS

Um, well...

TOM

Agent McGinnis. Something to say?

MCGINNIS

Well, he...I'd say his reaction was a bit strange.

JEFFREY

What are you talking about? They all end up like that, zonked out and blabbing about some bullshit. This guy liked his own face.

MCGINNIS

But, before, he was...he was looking right at you Agent Knight.

Tom stares at him plainly for a beat. Jeffrey shakes his head and eases away from McGinnis.

TOM

You think the subject...saw me?  
Through a one way mirror?

MCGINNIS

I, no, no of course not. It  
just...seemed strange is all.

JEFFREY

That's strange? This whole fucking  
op is strange. And useless.

Tom makes a note and shuts his pad.

TOM

Thank you for having me today  
gentlemen, for your time, and your  
service on this operation. My  
conclusion concurs with Agent  
Jeffrey. This is not an effective  
use of agency time or manpower.  
Consistent with Director Dulles'  
directive to make sure the most  
high-priority operations are  
adequately staffed, your work on  
Operation Midnight Climax is hereby  
terminated, effective immediately.  
You're to report back to Langley by  
week's end for your new  
assignments. I'll need to cross  
check your supply before it ships  
back. Agent McGinnis, if you'll  
show me to the supply room. Agent  
Jeffrey, you're dismissed.

JEFFREY

(big smile)  
Thank you sir.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

Tom and Agent McGinnis walk silently to the supply room.  
McGinnis is fidgety.

MCGINNIS

Agent Knight, I apologize if I-

TOM

Don't apologize. You were just  
doing your job.

A few more beats of awkward silence.

MCGINNIS

Of course you would know whether this op was effective or not. You were one of the founding agents...right? If you're shutting it down, it must be a load of crock.

Tom turns on him with a glimpse of silent, unvarnished anger. McGinnis gulps.

MCGINNIS (CONT'D)

The, the supply room is just there on the left.

He hands Tom the key.

TOM

(cooling)

Thank you Agent McGinnis.

Tom steps forward and McGinnis follows. Tom stops abruptly.

TOM (CONT'D)

Thank you, Agent McGinnis.

MCGINNIS

Of course, erm, thank you sir.

McGinnis practically runs away.

INT. SUPPLY ROOM

In a cramped supply closet, in front of an open lockbox, Tom rifles through sheets of LSD. At the top of each sheet is a label. LSD/25 one after another as he sifts through.

Then he suddenly stops. The sheet reads LSD/88. His jaw slacks. Then it snaps shut and clenches. He looks around in disbelief. He removes it and carefully goes through the rest. All 25. He stands straight and takes a deep breath. He returns the LSD sheets to the box and locks it. Except for the 88. He places that inside his suit jacket pocket.

EXT. BUSY WASHINGTON D.C. STREET - DAY

TITLE:

WASHINGTON D.C

A busy main street hums on a crisp, beautiful morning. Cars drive by, a few beeps can be heard. Men and women wait at the bus stop, reading the paper, keeping warm in their coats.

A shriek is heard above all the noise. A woman looks up from her book and squints out into the street.

A MAN, in only his underwear, runs full speed in and out of traffic. He stops at a parked car and growls at his reflection.

The whole bus stop watches him now as he darts back into traffic. A car passing through the intersection CRASHES into the man. He goes up and over the hood, rolling over the side of the car, landing with a thud. He screams in agony.

INT. TOM'S D.C. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The dead of night. Tom pores over documents strewn across a large desk illuminated by a lamp. He makes notes on a legal pad.

Tom lets out a sigh and lifts his reading glasses. Stands and stretches. He picks up another stack of documents striped with redactions.

He moves over to a chair by his bed and settles in. We can see the heading at the top. "Results of aerosol spray over French village: Hundreds missing". He turns the pages.

ON his desk and the view outside: complete darkness.

FAST FADE: The darkness turns to dawn.

BBBRRRNGGGG

Tom's alarm clock goes off. The bed beside it is still made.

Tom walks over to the alarm clock and shuts it off. In slacks and a disheveled undershirt, he's still got a document in hand; he hasn't slept.

Finishing the last sentence, he moves to the desk and begins gathering the documents up.

INT. TOM'S BATHROOM/BEDROOM

-Tom shaves at the sink.

-Tom reads the morning paper standing up, a cigarette in his mouth and a hot coffee steaming in his other hand.

-Tom puts on a fresh suit.

INT. CLOSET

Tom opens up his closet and moves some shirts out of the way, revealing a massive SAFE. He quickly sets the combination and it opens. It's filled with documents, and above them on a shelf, two small lockboxes. He tucks last night's documents back into a precise spot, closes the safe and resets it.

INT. CIA HEADQUARTERS - LANGLEY, VA - ROGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Tom appears to be in disbelief. ROGER DAWKINS sits across from him behind his desk smirking.

TOM  
(outraged)  
You can't be serious.

Roger's smile doesn't budge.

ROGER  
I thought you'd be thrilled Tom.  
You're finally getting back in the  
field, where it really matters.

TOM  
I'm already doing something that  
matters.

ROGER  
Shutting down hooker ops? My 16  
year old nephew could do that.  
(sly smile)  
Well, maybe not huh?

Tom's seething.

TOM  
They're not just hooker ops and you  
know that. I'm shutting down  
dangerous, wasteful LSD experiments  
within MK ULTRA. Which as I  
understood from the Director  
himself was a top priority entering-

ROGER  
Who do you think the order came  
from? C'mon Tom, I just told you  
you're going to be a main part of  
stopping Castro and you're  
practically spitting in my face.

TOM  
Every fucking agent in this place  
is working Castro-

ROGER  
(enjoying this)  
Agent Knight, I'm not going to sit  
here and have you swear at me.

Tom just gets angrier.

TOM  
This...is...bullshit! In just under  
a year I've saved the Agency  
hundreds of thousands of dollars  
and countless hours of manpower by  
shutting these worthless ops down.  
Meanwhile agents are still spiking  
each other with LSD for kicks, the  
latest resulting in a dosed agent  
streaking across D.C. in his  
underwear, in broad daylight, and  
almost getting himself killed.  
*Three days* after that, you pull me  
off my assignment. Are you out of  
your fucking mind?

Roger just stares at Tom for a beat. The smile's gone.

ROGER  
Listen to me you fucking relic. If  
it were up to me, I'd bury you in  
the basement to die on desk duty,  
exactly where you were a year ago.  
But, for some reason somebody here  
likes you and keeps giving you  
important shit to do. More  
importantly, I don't have to deal  
with you anymore, so Merry  
Christmas to both of us asshole.  
(leans back, finished)  
Pack your shit. You've got a one  
way ticket to Chicago in two days.

Tom shoots out of his seat, unable to contain his anger. He  
puts his hand on the doorknob to leave but stops.

TOM  
Who's heading the op?

ROGER  
Your old friend.

TOM  
(snaps)  
I don't have any friends.

ROGER  
(laughs)  
Ain't that the truth. Don't worry,  
he'll find you. Now get the hell  
outta my-

Tom slams the door behind him.

INT. TRAIN CAR - LATER

Tom stewes in his seat. Something catches his eye down the train; a young man in a suit sitting down reading the paper was just looking at him. Tom stares at him intently but the young man doesn't look over again.

The train car pulls to a stop and the doors open. After a beat, Tom bolts from his seat and out the doors. The young man down the train suddenly does the same. Just as the doors close, Tom hops back onto the train, staring at the washed out tail as the train passes by.

EXT. TRAIN STATION

Tom gets off at a sparsely populated stop. He looks around for any sign of a tail as he turns the corner when a hand pulls him into an alley.

Tom applies a wrist lock but gets a pistol shoved into his stomach. The man is smiling at Tom like the Cheshire cat.

AUBREY  
Not so fast Tom.

Tom can't believe who he's seeing. He releases the lock. Aubrey lowers the pistol. FRED AUBREY is in his late 40's with a round face, pale blue eyes, a nicely combed blonde mustache and greasy, slicked back blonde hair. Despite his girth he looks healthy and vibrant.

Once the shock wears off, Tom's face shifts to anger. Aubrey holds his smile. They size each other up.

TOM  
What are you packing for?

AUBREY  
Why the hell aren't you?

Tom brushes himself off, trying to regain his bearings. Seeing this man has shaken him.

TOM  
You put that tail on me?

AUBREY  
What? Who?

TOM  
Don't play dumb with me Fred!

Fred smiles and nods.

AUBREY  
I'm relieved you spotted him, since you are my head man now. They said you lost a step but I knew you'd still be sharp.

The bigger picture dawns on Tom and he explodes.

TOM  
You took me off my assignment?! You son of a bitch, you, you run away for years and come back like nothing happened! You fucking coward! I had to hear it from your wife you were gone! After, after all that happened-

AUBREY  
Calm down Tom-

Tom's beginning to lose it, his voice only growing louder-

TOM  
Calm?! Frank killed himself and you fucking vanished! You were both gone and I didn't know what to do, Cassidy was still out there-

Aubrey slaps Tom.

AUBREY  
(sharply)  
Don't speak his name.

Tom attacks Aubrey in a rage but Aubrey pushes him back into the wall.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
(hushed, looking around)  
God damnit, get a hold of yourself!  
(MORE)



AUBREY (CONT'D)  
I wouldn't be here unless...  
(dramatic pause)  
It's back Tom. 88 is back.

Tom regains his composure and stares straight into Aubrey.

TOM  
I know. I don't know if it was ever  
really gone.

Now it's Aubrey's turn to look stunned.

EXT. PARK - LATER

Tom and Aubrey sit on a picnic table in the middle of a park, their coats pulled tight. Tom's foot pumps, anger still diffusing out of him.

AUBREY  
I'm sorry Tom. I did run. I could barely process what happened in the woods...then we had to run around cleaning it up, knowing what we set loose. And then Frank...I couldn't handle it. So when I heard work needed to be done in Southeast Asia, I hopped on the first flight.

Tom takes a breath and calms a bit.

TOM  
I didn't leave after Frank, but...I wasn't really here either.

Tom stares off, getting emotional.

AUBREY  
How'd you know it was back Tom?

Tom pauses, suspicious, weighing what he should say.

TOM  
I was shutting down an op when I found it in a supply case, a sleeve of 88 just sitting there with the standard samples.

Aubrey shakes his head.

AUBREY  
(to himself)  
Jesus.  
(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

I had no idea but it makes sense.  
It must have come back first in the  
Agency, then...

TOM

What the hell are you talking about  
Aubrey? How'd you know it was back?

AUBREY

(sighs)

It gets worse Tom. I heard from a  
source there's an unknown figure  
emerging in the Chicago narcotics  
trade. But they're not dealing  
cannabis or heroin. They're pumping  
out different strains of LSD. And  
one of these new products appears  
to be 88.

TOM

(horrified)

How, how the hell is that even  
possible?

AUBREY

I don't know.

TOM

(getting worked up again)

No? You didn't accidentally slip  
out a sample before you destroyed  
what was on the West Coast? How do  
I even know you're telling me the  
truth?

Aubrey goes into his pocket and hands Tom a small plastic  
baggie. Inside is an LSD sleeve...with 88 imprinted on it.

TOM (CONT'D)

(stares at it in horror)

Jesus...

AUBREY

I know you and Frank had your  
doubts about me after my initial  
reaction to 88's...potential, but  
once what happened settled over me  
I wanted nothing to do with it. I  
destroyed what I was supposed to  
and I came back to continue to  
clean up our mess.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

But when Frank took his own way out, I decided to leave too....I mean, how do you even begin to process that? I almost don't blame Frank for-

Tom turns on him furiously.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Sorry, I didn't- what I'm trying to say is, it was a fucking mess and we all reacted poorly. I don't blame you for not trusting me. I knew you'd need proof. So there it is. Keep it, destroy it, do whatever the hell you want with it. I was a different person back then Tom. You seem to have changed as well.

Tom glares at him but can't argue. He's still trying to process all of this. Tom pockets the 88.

TOM

How is this happening? Showing up within the Agency is one thing, but you got this on the street?! Frank destroyed all of his research. If you destroyed the samples on the west coast, and I destroyed the samples on the east, this shouldn't be possible.

AUBREY

Well, like you said, maybe it never really left. It's the Agency for Christ's sake. Dulles could've ordered some to be kept, or that son of a bitch Gottlieb could've swiped some under our nose.

TOM

If they had it this whole time, why are we just seeing it now? And how'd it get out?

AUBREY

What about that Canadian they brought in a few years ago, the Doctor. I heard he was playing around with old strains-

TOM  
(cold as ice)  
Doctor Daniels - I handled him.

Aubrey raises an eyebrow to Tom.

AUBREY  
You really have changed.

Tom looks at Aubrey with no response. Aubrey smiles slightly.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
I was worried about you Tom, but  
I'm glad you've gained an edge.  
We're gonna need it. Right now it  
doesn't matter how it's back, only  
that it is. I found that off a  
hophead in just a few days. It's  
only a matter of time until it  
affects someone and the whole world  
finds out about it. The potential  
for outbreak, for- well, I don't  
need to tell you.

Between the fear, anger, and shock, Tom can barely take it  
all in.

TOM  
Do they know what they're really  
doing- what it can do?

AUBREY  
I don't know if they know it's true  
capability. For all I know we may  
be the only two people in the world  
who do. Which means we're the only  
two that can stop it.

Tom looks at Aubrey, almost frightened. Aubrey stands up in  
front of Tom and gets close.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
I need you on this with me Tom.  
Only you and I can know what we're  
really doing. The CIA thinks we're  
moving weapons and information  
through Chicago to help with the  
Castro plot. The Mob will think the  
same.

TOM  
The Mob?

AUBREY

Yes, the Mob. They want Castro dead more than we do, and they'll be useful for what we need. They already have been.

TOM

What we need...what the hell are we going to do Fred?

AUBREY

We're going to find out where the hell it's coming from and we're going to destroy it and the people making it.

Tom's overwhelmed, he can't speak.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Tom, look at me. We can't make up for all that's happened...with Frank...with what we unleashed that night. But we have a chance now to stop it before it inflicts any more pain on the world. It's our duty Tom. For our country....for Frank.

Tom's getting emotional but brushes it away to steely eyed resolve. Tom looks at Aubrey and nods.

TOM

For Frank.

Aubrey smiles, slaps Tom's arm.

AUBREY

Chicago's the epicenter. I'll see you there in two days and we'll go over next steps.

Aubrey begins to walk off.

TOM

What if we find someone...affected by it?

Aubrey turns back, looking at Tom with almost pity.

AUBREY

We eliminate them.

And walks off.

Tom watches Aubrey go, anger and suspicion racking his face.

INT. FUNDRAISER SOIREE - NIGHT

KATE GIBSON sits at a table trying to listen in on a conversation between two men as the party around her is in full swing. A striking brunette in her early 20's and in a gorgeous red dress, she's surrounded by other fancy couples. Her "date", DICK, gropes at her under the table. Kate wriggles away and tries to focus on the conversation without looking like it.

CHARLES

You see the asshole the other day?  
Clipped on a trip in his underwear?

He laughs at his own joke, but the other man is not amused.

DONALD

Don't even get me started. It's all getting too ridiculous. Let's get a drink, you have to hear the latest.

The men get up and leave the table. Kate swats Dick's hand away again and gets up-

AT THE BAR

The men talk at the corner of a busy bar. Kate huddles in behind others waiting to order a drink, close enough to hear but out of sight.

DONALD

The man is reckless. He doesn't give a damn who the President is, he's going to make sure his little experiments stay funded.

(looks around, quieter)

Did you hear what Gottlieb's sanctioned down in Kentucky? They had boys doped up on acid for 77 days straight! Some new strain they apparently really wanted to work.

CHARLES

Good lord, that's horrible. Why would-

Dick crashes into their conversation, clearly intoxicated.

DICK

(slurring)

Hey, you guys seen Kate?

DONALD  
No, Dick. We're having a  
conversation here, can you-

Kate heads the other way, sneaking through the crowd.

EXT. SOIREE EXIT

Kate exits the revolving door of the soiree. A beat later  
Dick stumbles out after her.

DICK  
Kate...hey wait a minute!

She keeps walking. He catches up and grabs her.

DICK (CONT'D)  
What's a matter with you?! It's  
like you don't even like me!

KATE  
You're so perceptive, aren't you  
Dick?

DICK  
Hey!

He shoves her against the wall.

DICK (CONT'D)  
I take you to all these fancy  
parties, don't I? And what the hell  
am I getting in return. Nothing but  
a mouthy bitch.

He grips her even tighter against the wall. She wriggles  
loose and slams her palm up into his chin, then jabs him in  
the throat, and knees him in the groin. Down he goes.

In a huff she picks her purse up-

KATE  
Lose my number asshole.

-and keeps on walking.

EXT. KATE'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

Kate's retrieving her keys as she arrives home when something  
moves in the bushes-

TOM (O.S.)  
(hoarse whisper)  
Kate...

She's spooked but ready to fight. A haggard Tom stumbles out.

KATE  
Jesus Tom, you nearly gave me a  
heart attack. You look horrible,  
how-

TOM  
Kate...88 is back.

KATE  
I know, I decrypted your message.  
Where have you been? I've been  
flailing in the wind trying to find  
out more. How long have you been up  
now, you know you can't be-

TOM  
Fred Aubrey has reappeared along  
with it.

Kate drops her keys, stunned.

INT. KATE'S APARTMENT - LATER

In Kate's cramped, clean apartment, Tom's sprawled out on a couch, exhausted. Kate sits at a table nearby examining the 88.

KATE  
How do we know this is even the  
real thing? How do we know if he's  
telling the truth?

TOM  
We don't. I don't trust a word Fred  
Aubrey says. Even if it is real,  
it's a certainty Aubrey's not  
telling the whole truth. I don't  
think we should even work with him.  
Just steer clear of him. Wherever  
he goes just leads to more lies and  
suffering.

Kate thinks it over. She grabs a doppel kit on the table and pulls out a syringe and a medicinal bag filled with clear liquid and begins prepping a dose.



KATE

Unfortunately Tom, that seems to be where we need to go. There's no trail to the 88 you found in the safehouse. Aubrey presents himself out of thin air saying it's even worse than we thought. It's no coincidence...but we do need to work Aubrey. We don't have to work with him, but we do need to go along until we figure out what the hell is really going on. Then we can gut the bastard.

TOM

Jesus Kate, be serious.

KATE

I am being serious. The man who killed my father wants to work with us to stop 88 and you want to turn him away? This is our chance-

TOM

He didn't kill your father.

KATE

He might as well have. You told me that. He drugged the both of you. He made my father suicidal and he made you what you are now-

Tom looks at her deeply hurt.

KATE (CONT'D)

I'm, I'm sorry-

TOM

(breaking down)

No, you're right Kate! That's exactly what I'm worried about...I'm in no condition to face this now. I've been trying to prevent this for the past 7 years, and when it actually resurfaces-

Tom's overcome with emotion, shaking his head in disgust. He gestures to the needle Kate's prepping.

TOM (CONT'D)

-This shit does nothing for me! I'm a shell of who I was, and right when I'm needed most, I'm crumbling! I don't know if I can do this Kate.

She softens and comes to his side.

KATE

You can Tom. You're not alone with this anymore. We can stop it together. But in order for us to do that, we have to get close to Aubrey so he can get us closer to the 88. Then we can finally put an end to it, and Aubrey, if he gets in our way.

Tom's calmed by her. Still scared, but he knows he's going to do it. He nods to Kate.

KATE (CONT'D)

Most importantly though, we're going to need you at your best...  
(picks up the needle)  
...with whatever rest we can provide.

TOM

(looking up softly at her)  
I'm sorry Katie. I want to kill the son of a bitch as much as you do, but...88's the real threat...I know what it can do.

KATE

I know Tom. I know.

She rubs his shoulder for comfort. Tom sighs, rolls up his sleeve and leans back. She injects the needle in his arm. He nods off.

INT. TOM'S PLACE - MORNING

Birds chirp outside in the morning blue sky.

Tom's rummaging through the room. Documents everywhere. The closet is open and so is the safe inside, half empty.

A heavy briefcase is opened and splayed on the bed.

CUT TO: LATER

The large briefcase contains a neat stack of documents. A duffel bag next to it is stuffed with more documents. Lighter fluid and a book of matches sit on top of it.

Tom pulls the two lockboxes out of the safe onto the bed and opens them. The first contains the two samples of LSD/88. The second contains an old but pristine mini-shotgun.

He picks up the gun, cocks it, examines it, snaps it shut and puts it back in the box. He places both boxes into the larger briefcase. Looks back at the safe.

Tom reaches deep into it and pulls out a framed photograph: Tom and Frank Gibson stand shoulder to shoulder, in military uniform, trying to subdue their smiles but failing. They look happy, composed, young.

Tom looks at it and smiles. Tears well up and one falls down his cheek. He wipes his eyes, his jaw tightens and anger flashes.

He places the picture into the LSD/88 box, closes it and shuts the large briefcase. He picks it and the duffel bag up.

EXT. WOODS

In the middle of the woods a small fire burns in a pit. Tom stands over it tossing in more documents from the duffel bag. The smoke travels up above the trees to the sky.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO

The river flows through downtown Chicago.

TITLE:

CHICAGO

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tom enters the hotel room. All quiet. He turns the TV on. The Kennedy brothers are fielding questions. Tom sweeps the hotel room for any sign of bugs-

-Under the mattress and bed frame

-Along baseboards

-Unscrews the phone receiver

CUT TO: LATER

Tom sits on the bed smoking a cigarette watching the end of the press conference. Aubrey arrives.

AUBREY  
You like watching those faggots?

TOM  
Jack's a fag? That's news to the women of the world.

AUBREY  
Believe me, he's barely foolin' em.

Tom's not sure how to take this so he feigns a smile. Aubrey smiles back, holding eye contact a second too long with his creepy, signature grin.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
Shall we?

Aubrey pulls files from his briefcase and plops them on the table in front of Tom.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
We got approval from the big pepperoncini himself for this group.

TOM  
S.G.?

Aubrey nods.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Impressive.

AUBREY  
Our interests align.  
(that smile again)  
We are friends.

Tom begins going through the files. Bits and pieces can be seen over his shoulder.

AUBREY (CONT'D)  
This is a real cast of F.U.I.'s (foeys) we got on our hands. They operate out of a hole in the wall on the Southside called Dante's. The right hand man is a young Jap, Yoshiro Tifune. Grew up in an internment camp during the war. He's the hitter. The big guy's Jasper Brodowski.

(MORE)

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Polack muscle the Mob used until he went soft in the head during a particularly grisly job. He hasn't spoken a word since, literally, so they threw him on this crew. He tends bar and serves as muscle. But here is the star, Fucked Up Individual Numero Uno.

Aubrey drops a thicker file on top of the others.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The back of Victor's head pokes out of the bathtub, his scars visible.

AUBREY (O.S.)

Victor Barbaro. Son of a former hitman, big time connected. Daddy marries a negro woman, but he's so good they keep him on. When Vic's fourteen, the family's summer lake house burns down, taking the parents with it and leaving the kid with a burnt skin suit.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Tom reviews the file. Old pictures of the incident: the burnt down house, just a snippet of the child's burnt back. Tom winces.

AUBREY

Hideous burns. When he's finally able to speak again, the kid's delirious, talkin' all sorts of crazy. Says the house was burned down by a man with fire shooting out of his hands-

Tom looks up in disbelief.

TOM

Jesus Aubrey...is this...this is Cassidy-

Aubrey stops him short.

AUBREY

Tom....

He shakes his head--this is not something they'll be discussing in further detail. Tom can't believe it.

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM

Victor stands shirtless in front of the mirror. We see him from behind, the horrible burns running up his back and neck. In the mirror, burns wrap around his chest, up to his jaw. He stares at himself with dead eyes and a hint of contempt.

AUBREY (O.S.)

The guineas find a woodsman, some vagrant they stick it on. Torture and kill him. But the kid's not buying it, he won't let up. They didn't get the right guy. Screams all day long. Nobody can get to him. So he gets put in an asylum until he cracks straight, then lands in an orphanage, but not long after he splits. Goes AWOL.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

AUBREY

Finally reappears a couple years ago asking for a block. Says it's owed. The big sausage thinks, what's right is right. Of course, no goombahs want to look at the poor prick. But they find a use for him. Figure he can do what the high and mighty don't want to do, be seen where they can't be seen, talk to people they can't be seen talking to.

Tom is ashen white. Devastated, hand on his head, staring at the file.

We see: "-fire shot out of the man's hands", "immediately engulfed the house in flames".

Tom leans back. Shallow breaths.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Something wrong Tom?

TOM

Yes....yes, of course it's wrong. We're responsible for this Aubrey, for this child, for his parents' death, for-

AUBREY

We don't know that for sure! And I don't want to hear another thing of it. This op can't change what happened on that day in the woods, and it sure as shit can't change what happened to this kid. All we can do now is focus on preventing anything else like it from happening again. And this poor sap and his crew are going to help us do that.

Tom looks at Fred in disbelief.

TOM

Ok Fred, sure, you wanna ignore what's staring us right in the face. I'll ignore it. But these are trauma cases. What the hell are they supposed to do to help us?

AUBREY

Ah, Tom. You ask me what they can do? Anything we might want.

INT. CHAIR ROOM

C.U. Sal's grey, dead face.

A hand zips up the body bag, covering it.

AUBREY (O.S.)

They're our entry to the underworld. We need to find out where the 88 is going, and most importantly, where it's coming from. And I'm telling you, under your guidance and supervision, they will blossom. They're not much now, but they have something to prove, something to gain. There's a fight in them, a fury. They can be useful.

EXT. DANTE'S - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Victor oversees Jasper and Yoshi carrying the bodybag out the back.

AUBREY (O.S.)  
Plus, they're vulnerable. We believe they snuffed a made guy recently.

They put the body in the back of a van and slam the doors shut.

AUBREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
So we have leverage. And more importantly we'll have discretion. We don't want any people with connections hearing about the nitty gritty of what we're doing. It'd be too much trouble. Too many questions.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The van pulls up to an abandoned warehouse. Yoshi runs out to open the garage door.

AUBREY (O.S.)  
Better to use the freaks in the shadows. They need our help, and they'll know we can hurt 'em real bad, anytime we want. It's a perfect marriage.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Tom looks up.

TOM  
How is Ginny by the way?

Aubrey, surprised, his huge smile spreads.

AUBREY  
Oooh, there's that acerbic wit I missed. I'm glad you're coming around.

Tom holds a sly smile as Aubrey collects his things.



TOM

What about the approach? It might take time to win a bunch like this over.

AUBREY

No, no, believe me, they're open to it. S.G.'s let it be known we are their saving grace. They just smoked a made man, and as far as they know, we're the only ones standing between them and eternal damnation. They'll be begging for our help.

Tom nods.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

Alright, always something to be done, especially in this game we now find ourselves in. Shake a leg Tom. Reach out if you need anything.

And with that, he walks out of the hotel room and closes the door behind him. He's gone.

Tom's smile disappears. He stewes in his seat, anger boiling over. Breathing between clenched teeth, he begins reviewing the documents again.

A photo of young Victor's face wrapped in bandages stares back at him helplessly.

INT. WAREHOUSE

Lit by the orange glow, Victor stares into the fire of the incinerator.

Yoshi and Jasper place the body bag on a gurney and crank it in.

Victor watches, his fedora silhouetted by the flames dancing in front of him.

EXT. DANTE'S BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Jasper's finishing up cleaning the back of the van. A low "meow" is heard in the distance. Jasper turns around.

He enters the bar for a moment and emerges with a bowl. He sets it down near the dumpster by the end of the alley and sits back on the edge of the van. A small cat emerges from hiding and cautiously paws over to the bowl. It takes a sip and then slurps up the water. Jasper smiles watching it.

INT. DANTE'S - NIGHT

Yoshi sits in a booth smoking a cigarette reading a book. Victor paces back and forth.

YOSHI  
(puts book down)  
Can you stop?

VICTOR  
This is how I think.

YOSHI  
I prefer to think out loud.

Victor can't help but smile at his stoic partner's sarcasm. He sits down across from him.

VICTOR  
You think we're fucked Yo?

Yoshi looks down for a beat before meeting Vic's eyes.

YOSHI  
We might be.

Victor looks off, annoyed, but doesn't argue.

VICTOR  
I'm sick of it Yosh. Sick of the orders, sick of living like glorified servants. Sick of that fat faced fuck strolling in here every Sunday asking for more money he didn't earn.

YOSHI  
He didn't leave us many options. Even for him, that was aggressive.

VICTOR  
So. They must be figuring it out by now. It doesn't take a genius. They come here, blow our brains out. Or they snatch us up and torture the living shit out of us. That's what they'll do.

YOSHI  
Keep your head Vic.

VICTOR  
(snaps)  
That's what I'm trying to do.

Victor gets up and paces more.

YOSHI  
We're not helpless.

VICTOR  
So you're saying we fight?

Yoshi shrugs.

YOSHI  
It's that or die.

Vic takes that in, takes a breath and nods his head.

YOSHI (CONT'D)  
We need to be ready. When they  
come, we strike first. But you need  
to have a clear head.

Vic smiles. He's soothed by his partner's lack of fear in the face of death and his willingness to fight. Vic pats Yoshi's shoulder.

VICTOR  
You always know what to say my  
friend.

Vic puts his coat and hat on.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna go clear my head.

EXT. BROTHEL - NIGHT

A few girls hang outside smoking cigarettes. Some shy men loiter nearby.

INT. DARLENE'S ROOM

A young woman, DARLENE, brushes her hair in the mirror. A soft knock at her window. She looks in the mirror and sees Victor's face through the window, wrapped up in his big coat. She gets up and lets him in.

DARLENE

Hi Vic.

He enters all bundled up, gloves under his pits.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Want me to take that coat off-

He shakes his head no.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Are you in one of your moods again?

He glares at her. She cocks an eyebrow and waits. He nods his head yes.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Ok.

She gets on the bed and pats it, inviting him over. After a beat he climbs in, jacket still on. She takes his hat off and spoons him. He nestles in. She begins softly humming and gently traces his face with her fingers. He closes his eyes.

EXT. ABANDONED TOLLBOOTH - NIGHT

The highway jutting out above, Yoshi walks toward the abandoned tollbooth. The Southside projects stretch out behind it.

Inside the tollbooth sits JEROME, warming his hands. He's black, a few years older than Yoshi, solidly built.

JEROME

Took you long enough.

YOSHI

What's the issue?

JEROME

You told us to come to you with anything strange. Well the other day, some white guy in a suit walks into the diner. As if that ain't strange enough, he comes right up to me and Pete and plops a fucking suitcase on our table. Says it's a gift that'll help our community. And then walks the fuck out.

YOSHI

(intrigued)

What was in the briefcase?

Jerome fishes in his pocket.

JEROME

This.

He flashes an LSD sleeve similar to what Tom had earlier. The marking on the top reads: 88.

Yoshi examines it.

YOSHI

This is LSD?

JEROME

I guess. I don't know what this dude was thinking, we don't really mess with that shit. I don't see much profit in it.

Yoshi looks at him.

JEROME (CONT'D)

But, y'know, maybe. I don't know. Either way, some cracker gives me a briefcase full of free drugs, I don't fucking trust it, even if it was Santa Claus himself. And I don't want the big wigs catching wind and raising hell over it. So I thought I'd tell you and you can run it up the chain and see what it's all about. You dig?

Yoshi examines it.

YOSHI

There's a whole briefcase of this stuff?

JEROME

Yeah.

Yoshi nods and puts the LSD in his pocket.

YOSHI

Hang onto it and don't move any. I'll run it up the chain. Thank you Jerome.

JEROME

Yeah, yeah. You let me know Yosh.

And with that Jerome walks off back towards the projects.

Yoshi takes the LSD out and stares at it thoughtfully.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - LATER

Yoshi's heading back to the bar when a sleek black sedan pulls up next to him. The window opens and an older Asian man smiles at Yoshi. This is KOZO. They speak in Japanese.

KOZO  
Hello Yoshiro.

Yoshi just stares back at him.

KOZO (CONT'D)  
Please allow me to drive you back  
to your place of business. I'd like  
to discuss a few things with you.

EXT. CHICAGO STREETS - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Victor walks along peacefully, head cleared.

Suddenly a car passing by speeds up and veers onto the sidewalk going straight towards Victor. Vic dives into an alley, only to be grabbed by two large men and slammed against the wall. TONY DIMARTINO gets out of the car. He's around Victor's age, dressed in an equally stylish suit.

TONY  
I'd say it's good to see you Vic,  
but I'd be lying.

VICTOR  
What the fuck is this?

TONY  
You know what it is. Where's my  
uncle?

VICTOR  
I could say he's out stuffing his  
fat face somewhere and probably be  
right. But how the hell would I  
know?

Tony chuckles. And pulls out a knife. He presses it to Victor's cheek.

TONY  
I'd probably be doing you a favor  
if I carved up that ugly mouth of  
yours, huh?

He slices just enough to draw some blood from Vic's cheek and pulls the knife back.

TONY (CONT'D)

My uncle Sal is missing Victor. And one of the last places we know he was at was your dump. What happened?

VICTOR

He came to collect, we paid him, and he left. We both try to keep our meetings as brief as possible.

Tony looks at him, trying to read him.

TONY

That's understandable. I sure as hell don't want to be looking at you right now, and honestly, I don't like being around my uncle for too long either. A certain smell he's got to him.

Tony wipes his blade on Vic's jacket.

TONY (CONT'D)

If you hear anything, you let us know. And if I hear anything different from your story, well. I don't need to tell you.

The two men toss Victor into some trash barrels, and then all three get in the car and pull out.

Victor gets up panting, furious. He wipes his cheek and looks at his own blood.

INT. KOZO'S CAR

In the roomy back seat Kozo and Yoshi drive on in silence.

KOZO

I heard you've had some trouble recently?

YOSHI

You heard wrong.

KOZO

That's unlikely.  
(sighs)  
Yoshiro.

(MORE)

KOZO (CONT'D)

How much longer do you think you can hang on with these...savages? You don't belong with them. You belong with us. Doing noble work.

Yoshi cracks a smile.

KOZO (CONT'D)

You think it's funny. It won't be funny when the men who control you decide they are done with you. And your friends...do they know what you really are? How do you think they'll react when they find out? I don't think Victor will be very pleased.

Yoshi's smile is gone.

YOSHI

Stop the car.

KOZO

Yoshiro, I'm only looking out for you. You're squandering your potential and-

YOSHI

Stop the car!

Kozo gestures to his driver who pulls over.

KOZO

You know as well as I do what's best for you. I just want to see you return to-

Yoshi exits the vehicle and slams the door.

INT. TOM'S CHICAGO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tom and Kate enter a cramped, musty apartment. Tom sits down. Kate grimaces.

KATE

This is a pigsty.

TOM

I suppose you're staying at the Ritz.

KATE

Yes, actually.



Tom looks up.

KATE (CONT'D)  
(smiles)  
Daddy's money.

Tom takes off his shoes, exhales and relaxes into the chair. Kate brushes off a spot on the bed and sits down.

KATE (CONT'D)  
I don't think you're ready for this Tom.

Tom looks up at her, already tired.

TOM  
It'll be straight forward. We've got something on them and Aubrey said they're open to it.

KATE  
We don't trust Aubrey.

TOM  
You think he's setting me up?

KATE  
I don't know. Even if he isn't, you haven't been in a situation like this in years and you're going in blind. Let me go in first, make sure it's-

TOM  
No. Absolutely not.

KATE  
Tom, I've been at this for years now and I'm more-

TOM  
(forcefully)  
No Katie.

He gets up and tries to light a cigarette but can't get the lighter going. She gets up, grabs the lighter and the cigarette from his mouth, lights it and inhales.

KATE  
So this is all I'm going to be doing then, lighting your cigarettes and tucking you in at night?

TOM  
You're supposed to give back the  
cigarette-

KATE  
Tom.

Tom sits back down.

TOM  
I'd be sending you into the den of  
murderous gangsters. They'll be  
expecting me. And once I lay out  
the situation, what we have on them  
and what they can gain, they'll go  
along with it.

KATE  
And if they don't?

TOM  
I know you doubt me Kate, but I was  
doing this before you were born. I  
can handle a few lowlife gangsters.

Kate doesn't look too relieved. Tom lies down on the bed.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Now please, tuck me in. I want to  
be well rested for tomorrow.

Kate's still mad but she grabs her bag, takes out her  
supplies and sits on the bed. Tom looks at her gracefully,  
with a mixture of fear and pride as she fills the syringe.

KATE  
(without looking up)  
Stop looking at me like that.

TOM  
I'm sorry, you just...when you get  
stubborn, you look just like him.

She looks at him, softening under the face she's still trying  
to hold. Then jams the needle into his arm.

TOM (CONT'D)  
Ah. You gotta stop doing th...

He dozes off.

Kate stands over the now unconscious Tom.

KATE

Tom?...Tom!

She slaps him in the face lightly. Nothing.

She goes over to his suitcase, opens it, and pulls out his files. She sits in the chair and begins reading through them.

INT. VICTOR'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Victor stands in front of the mirror in his robe. He can't take his eyes off the cut on his cheek. Whatever calm he regained has vanished.

INT. TOM'S CHICAGO APARTMENT - EVENING

Tom pulls on his suit jacket. Looks in the mirror, adjusting it. Takes a deep breath. Kate comes up from behind and brushes his shoulders off.

KATE

I'll be here waiting. Good luck.  
And be careful.

Tom smiles.

TOM

I'll be fine.

EXT. DANTE'S BAR - DUSK

DANTE'S shines in RED.

INT. DANTE'S BAR

Tom enters. Jasper's behind the bar, a bit surprised to see him. Yoshi's at a table in the corner reading his book. He glances up and stares at Tom. Tom nods to him and takes a seat at the bar.

TOM

Just a beer please.

Jasper just stares at him. A flush is heard and Victor emerges from the bathroom. He's surprised too. He looks to Yoshi then back at Tom and a wild smile spreads. He goes behind the bar.

VICTOR

I got this one Jasper.

Jasper, still staring at Tom, goes around the bar...and sits on a stool to Tom's right.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
How's it going partner?

Victor pours a beer.

TOM  
Not too bad.

Tom looks around the empty room uncomfortably.

VICTOR  
You from outta town?

TOM  
Yes, in from San Francisco for some business.

VICTOR  
What's your name?

TOM  
(thinks about it)  
My name's Tom.

VICTOR  
What brings you to our humble establishment Tom?

Yoshi approaches and sits to Tom's left, Tom tucked snugly between the two now. Tom takes a moment.

TOM  
I understand...you fellas could use some help?

VICTOR  
(smiles)  
Really? With what?

TOM  
(cautiously)  
You...weren't expecting me?

Victor's smile flickers. Under the bar he puts his hand on a pistol.

VICTOR  
That depends. Who sent you?

Tom takes a sip of his beer.

TOM  
Thanks for the beer, but maybe  
now's not the right time.

He makes to get up but Jasper pats him back down.

VICTOR  
No, no. Stay awhile. There's no  
rush...  
(stares straight into Tom)  
You already know you're intruding.

Tom stares right back at Victor, weighing the options in his  
head.

TOM  
Ok.

VICTOR  
Ok?

TOM  
I'm here to recruit you.

VICTOR  
I'm too old to play college ball.

Tom shakes his head ruefully.

TOM  
(mutters)  
I thought you'd been briefed-

VICTOR  
Excuse me?

TOM  
I'm here...to help you. Things are  
in motion, that extend a lot  
further than this bar, or  
Chicago....

Vic stares at him blankly.

TOM (CONT'D)  
We're not asking much. But for your  
help, we can help you. We can make  
sure the hot water you find  
yourself in doesn't reach a boiling  
point.

Vic's eyes flash. He places the gun on the bar.

VICTOR  
Who sent you? Who do you represent?

TOM  
I'm not affiliated with any gang  
Victor, I represent a private  
commodity-

VICTOR  
(gun against Tom's temple)  
I didn't tell you my fucking name!  
Now cut the shit!

TOM  
I'm with the government.

Vic pulls the gun back and smiles.

VICTOR  
I thought you said you weren't with  
no gang? Huh...  
(thinking it over)  
...Jasper.

Jasper throws Tom to the ground. Jasper gets on top of him  
but Tom knees him in the groin, toppling the giant.

He scrambles towards the door but Yoshi's already there.  
Quick as lightning he smacks Tom in the face with his pistol.  
Tom drops then staggers to his feet, bleeding from his mouth.

Victor walks out from behind the bar, gun pointed at Tom.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
Sell me spook! You'll help us...how?

TOM  
(spits blood)  
No one will ever know about  
your...dust-up. That's settled, you  
can forget about it. You're free to  
expand, with our assistance...and  
complete approval from the big man.

VICTOR  
Bullshit!

Yoshi looks at Vic. That deal sounds pretty good.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
What would we have to do?

Tom leans on a barstool for support.

TOM

All you'd have to do is more of what you do now. A go-between, gathering information, tagging some underworld people for various tasks. All the while never letting on what it is you're actually doing.

VICTOR

And...what are we actually doing?

TOM

I...I can explain. Just put the guns away.

Victor pauses to consider, but his eyes are wild.

VICTOR

On principle, I do not trust the fucking government, nor will I ever trust a cheeseball Fed, if that's even who you really are, especially one promising the blue sky above. It's too late to be taking any chances.

(cocks his pistol)

Let's take a walk downstairs.

TOM

If you just hear me out-

VICTOR

Wasn't a question.

Jasper tries to grab him but Tom pokes him in the eyes. Yoshi sidles up and sticks the gun in Tom's side. He guides him downstairs.

TOM

(panicked)

Wait, this, you're making a mistake. This isn't in your best interest Victor.

VICTOR

Shut up!

INT. BASEMENT

They walk downstairs. Tom tries to remain calm but the dread builds as they descend the dark stairwell.

They go through the red basement hallway.

They get to the room and Victor opens the door. Tom sees the chair in front of him.

TOM

No!

He struggles to turn back.

INT. CHAIR ROOM

Jasper throws Tom into the chair and Yoshi begins strapping him in. Tom struggles, trying to get up-

TOM

You don't understand! I know what happened to you as a child Victor, you, you were right!

Jasper delivers a right and a left to placate him. Yoshi straps the last one around his neck.

TOM (CONT'D)

(barely conscious)

...you were right...the man with fire...you were right...

A look shoots across Victor's face. This hits him deep in his core. Speechless, he's frozen in place.

Yoshi pulls back and begins choking Tom. Tom sputters but can't get another word out. His eyes bulging out of his head, gasping for air and getting none-

TOM'S POV:

The light begins to flicker and dim as Tom's breath leaves him, vision tunneling-

C.U. A split second of Frank's smiling face, then-

BLACK

Silence.

VICTOR (O.S.)

Wait!



SPLASH OF WATER

Tom jolts awake, his vision blurry but regaining. Victor leans in close to Tom's face.

VICTOR

What are you talking about spook?

Tom gasps for breath, dripping wet, bleeding, exhausted.

INT. BAR - LATER

Tom sits in a booth, back to the wall, holding a cold beer can over the welt on the side of his face. The other side doesn't look much better. His lip is cracked and swollen, and the top of his suit is still wet with a towel draped over it.

Victor, Yoshi, and Jasper (pouting, holding his own eye), sit across from him on the edge of their seats.

VICTOR

So. Spill.

Tom sighs and puts down the beer.

TOM

You were right. When you were a kid, the person who...did that to you and your family. It was real.

VICTOR

(through gritted teeth)  
I know.

TOM

He was the result of an experiment the government was conducting. We were testing versions of LSD to see if it had any potential uses in the field, and one of the strains, well...it did something we didn't expect...and couldn't control.

Yoshi clocks this news but watches for Victor's reaction. Victor's eyes fill with rage. He hops out of his seat and points his gun at Tom.

VICTOR

Your government, your fucking agency did this to me! To my family!

Tom's too exhausted to even lift his hands.

TOM

You're right Victor. It was my agency. But as soon I found out what had happened, I...

(breaks down a bit)

-this, this experiment took a loved one from me too Victor. And I dedicated my life to preventing it from ever happening again. I don't know how successful I really was. I'm still fighting it today. And I need your help now.

Victor's still standing there, locked in.

VICTOR

(on the verge of tears)

What happened to him? What happened to that fucking monster?

Tom looks down, ashamed.

TOM

He...he disappeared. As far as we know he could still be out there somewhere....

Victor is shaking with rage.

VICTOR

What...what's his name?!

TOM

Cassidy. Cassidy Morris.

This breaks Victor. He can't control himself and tears leak out. Yoshi gets up to console him, while also pointing the gun down. The fire in Victor returns in a flash.

VICTOR

I want him dead! I want him fucking begging for mercy in front of me, and then I get to say, NO!

He collapses into his seat.

TOM

(a beat)

Victor. I promise you, as part of this mission we're about to take on, I will find the man that did this to you and I will bring him to you.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

On top of that, I'll make sure the three of you become powerful and wealthy beyond your imagination. You'll be free to run your own operation, untouched by rival gangs. All you have to do is help me stop it from happening again. And we can make sure no other child has to go through what you've gone through.

Victor almost breaks down again but composes himself. He looks Tom right in the eye.

VICTOR

You got a deal.

He stands up to shake. Tom painfully gets up and shakes his hand.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

(gripping his hand)

And if you're lying to us, about any of this...tonight will seem like a pleasant evening amongst friends.

Tom nods, knowing he's for real.

EXT. DANTE'S BAR - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Tom limps out of the bar. He takes a deep breath of fresh air. He made it out alive. But he has a long way to go.

EXT. DARK CITY STREETS

Tom limps along the deserted streets when he passes two young black kids sitting on a stoop. They appear to be brothers, the older one around 17, the younger maybe 13.

OLDER

Oh shit man, what the fuck happened to you?

Tom doesn't answer, just keeps walking. They get off the stoop to get a closer look.

OLDER (CONT'D)

You need some help? We can get you bandaged up or somethin'-

TOM  
Mind your business.

YOUNGER  
It's okay.

The younger brother steps in front of Tom and reaches out and touches Tom's hand.

As soon as their hands make contact, Tom's eyes roll back into his head and he COLLAPSES. UNCONSCIOUS.

This doesn't phase the brothers.

OLDER  
Ha! I can't believe this shit works.

The older brother searches Tom's pockets. He pulls out his wallet, takes out the cash, and drops it back onto Tom.

OLDER (CONT'D)  
Hell yeah.

He pockets it and starts jogging away.

The younger brother doesn't move, staring down at Tom sadly.

OLDER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come on Remy!

REMY stares at Tom for another beat then runs to catch up to his brother.

OVERHEAD

We slowly zoom out above Tom, crumpled on the ground, alone and unconscious.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT. RECEPTION ROOM

Tom sits in a bare waiting room as a secretary types in the background. He is younger, fresh-faced. His posture, jawline, and machismo exudes a confidence and poise unfamiliar to us.

A younger Fred Aubrey enters but looks almost the same.

AUBREY

So you must be the young Knight,  
huh? What an apt surname for the  
dashing war hero.

Tom gets up and they shake. Aubrey's eyeing Tom intently.

TOM

(smiles)  
Please, call me Tom.

AUBREY

Fred Aubrey, at your service.

TOM

I've heard about your work in  
Egypt.

AUBREY

Ah, that was nothing. The best  
stuff you've never heard of.

He gives Tom his long, piercing smile and gaze. Tom is uncomfortable but smiles back.

AUBREY (CONT'D)

We're just missing our mad  
scientist now.

Tom opens his mouth to speak but stops. The office door opens. SIDNEY GOTTLIEB (head of Technical Services, mid 30's, balding) greets them with a smile.

GOTTLIEB

Gentlemen. Please come in.

INT. OFFICE OF DIRECTOR DULLES

ALLEN DULLES, newly-minted Director of the CIA, gray-haired and distinguished, sits behind a wooden desk, surrounded by books, diplomas and photographs with important people. Frank Gibson stands smoking a pipe by Dulles' desk. He's composed and dignified, nothing like the man on the roof.

Tom and Fred enter. Gottlieb introduces.

GOTTLIEB

Tom and Frank, you two already know  
each other.

Both men smile affectionately at one another and shake. Aubrey clocks it and hides a sneer before it's wiped into a smile as he shakes Frank's hand.

GOTTLIEB (CONT'D)

Frank Gibson, this is Fred Aubrey.

FRANK

Pleasure to meet you.

AUBREY

Don't be so sure yet.

Both men laugh. Dulles clears his throat. He hasn't gotten up. Frank stands back and Gottlieb recedes to a corner. Tom and Fred sit in the two chairs in front of Dulles. Dulles stares plainly at them.

DULLES

Let's cut the bullshit and get straight to it. Despite it being a deeply classified op, I'm sure you've both heard of MK ULTRA by now. We want you two and Agent Gibson to run your own op within it, independently. Your task will be the creation of new LSD strains and their subsequent testing on various subjects. Agent Gibson will be in charge of overseeing the operation, developing the new strains, and studying the science behind it. He may tap you for assistance in any capacity he may need. Agent Aubrey, you'll be the liaison between the Agency and the operation, as well as observing the drug's potential for the field. We're looking primarily for influence over a target's mind, whether that comes in the form of a truth serum or even better, direct mind control. We're...open to all possibilities.

Fred smiles and winks at Frank. Tom looks uneasy, but has been listening intently.

DULLES (CONT'D)

Agent Knight, you'll gather and oversee the subjects of the experiments, as well as assist with anything Aubrey or Gibson may need.

Tom's finding the courage to ask-

TOM  
These subjects, are they...  
volunteers?

The room gets awkwardly silent for a beat.

DULLES  
No.

Gottlieb interjects.

GOTTLIEB  
You'll have to procure subjects on  
your own, subjects that won't be a  
liability.

Tom looks at Frank and then back at Dulles. Aubrey's  
entertained by his naivete.

FRED  
He's talking about whores, junkies  
and criminals my young friend. Can  
you handle that?

TOM  
We're doing this...to our own  
citizens?

Dulles lets out a sigh, annoyed, and looks at Gottlieb.

GOTTLIEB  
This mission is imperative for our  
nation's safety Tom. The Koreans  
are testing this on our prisoners  
of war right now. The Soviets are  
undoubtedly doing the same to their  
own people. We have the nuclear  
advantage now, but they're looking  
for any way to bring us down, and  
we're already lagging behind in the  
next war. We've got a potential  
mind control gap on our hands and  
we need to catch up.

Tom looks to Frank, who steps forward and puffs from his  
pipe, which crackles unusually loudly-

\*\*\*FLASH CUT TO a BURNING INFERNO\*\*\*

Frank exhales and the smoke drifts up his face.

FRANK

Tom, beyond our nation's safety,  
experimenting with these drugs  
could unlock a whole new path for  
humanity.

All eyes on Tom.

DULLES

Not to mention the god damn  
Director of the CIA is asking you.

\*\*\*FLASH CUT INFERNO\*\*\*

GOTTLIEB

Are you willing to do this for your  
country Agent Knight?

\*\*\*FLASH CUT INFERNO\*\*\*

Tom can't hide his concern but flashes his best smile at the  
men all looking at him.

TOM

Of course.

\*\*\*THE INFERNO BURNS RAPIDLY TO ASH\*\*\*

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP: Tom's eyes jolt open in daylight.

CUT TO BLACK