

Over the Waves

A Screenplay in Four Acts

Written by
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FADE IN:

EXT. WOODED ROAD IN VIRGINIA — DUSK

We are moving quickly, high above a dense snow covered wood in Virginia. It is just after sunset on a clear evening. We begin to drop and slow down. We find and then follow a black MERCEDES LIMOUSINE which is driving on a winding 2-lane highway. We move in closer to see the DIPLOMATIC FLAGS of Bahrain flying over the headlights of the limo.

As the diplomatic limo hits a straightaway, a parked SEDAN flashes its headlights. The diplomatic car pulls off on the opposite side of the road from the sedan and turns off its headlights.

BRIAN ASTON, ISIAH THOMAS, ALEX SMALL and MARK BENDER get out of the parked sedan. All four men are in their late twenties and have the strong fit bodies of soldiers. They move with the confidence and tempo of men accustomed to working together.

For this occasion, Aston has died black hair parted on the left and is wearing a thick fake MUSTACHE. Thomas, who is holding a LETTER-SIZE ENVELOPE, is dressed like a chauffeur. He has a black chauffeur's CAP under his arm. Small and Bender are dressed in plain black suits with white shirts; their hair is cut short in the military style. All three men, except Thomas, are wearing long black winter coats and leather gloves.

They have a quick conversation over the top of the car which we are too far away to hear. Thomas speaks to each of the others in turn, his breath freezing in the cold. Each man nods an agreement and when he is done they all look around and give a final nod and grin.

Aston and Thomas start walking across the road towards the limo. As they cross the road, Thomas puts on the chauffeur's cap. When they approach the limo, the real CHAUFFEUR gets out and opens the door for the real SECRETARY. We see now that both pairs of men are dressed identically. Aston and the Secretary have the same mustache and the same hair but the Secretary is twenty years older than Aston and his complexion is much darker. Aston and the Secretary shake hands.

ASTON

(Gesturing to Thomas, who hands the envelope to the Chauffeur, in a light, almost joking, tone)

Here're the photos. My driver has the negatives. He'll give them to you when you arrive...I'm sorry it had to come to this but you refused my other offers twice and this is a party which I can't miss...All I need from you, my friend, is the invitation.

The Secretary turns towards the Chauffeur, who has been looking through the photographs in the envelope. The Chauffeur gives a nod of consent and the Secretary takes a SMALL ENVELOPE from his breast pocket and hands it to Aston. Aston pockets the envelope without bothering to check its contents.

SECRETARY

You will be caught.

ASTON

Well, I'll be discovered, of course. I don't really look anything like you and one doesn't go to a party with out making an appearance. Catching me, however, will be another matter. But don't you worry. The Senator's a friend of my father's. He'll keep his private problems to himself; and no one will ever know you were involved. But I have a party to attend and you, I believe, have some negatives to destroy.

As the Secretary and the Chauffeur cross the street towards the sedan, Aston gets into the back of the limo and Thomas gets into the drivers seat. When the Secretary and the Chauffeur reach the sedan, Bender grinds out a cigarette and opens the door for the Secretary.

The two cars drive off in opposite directions. We follow the limo as it continues up the road some for half a mile and then turns into a driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

In the driveway, the limo pulls to a stop before a large gate in a tall ivy-covered brick wall. A GUARD, in a suit, steps out of a small guardhouse and approaches the car. The front window of the car rolls down.

THOMAS

(As the guard leans to look in)

Mr. Maheibsur, Secretary to the ambassador of Bahrain.

Thomas hands the guard the small envelope which the Secretary had given Aston. The guard opens the envelope and takes out an EMBOSSED CARD. He reads a bar-code on the back of the card with a HAND-HELD COMPUTER. He looks back up at Thomas, clicks with a stylus a few times on the hand-held, and nods towards the rear window.

The rear window rolls down and the guard peers in. Satisfied, he walks up to the front of the car, slaps the top as he passes by the driver's window, and gives a wave of his hand. He returns to the gatehouse and a second later the gate begins to open.

CUT TO BLACK:

MAIN TITLE - WHITE LETTERS AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND

Over the Waves

EXT. GROUNDS OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

We follow the limo up the winding driveway of a lavish estate as it approaches a large white Virginian mansion of the colonial period.

The limo pulls around a turnabout encompassing a sculptured fountain and comes to a stop in front of a flight of broad steps that lead down from a portico embellished by columns.

Thomas gets out, walks around and opens the door for Aston. Aston steps out, the two men clasp hands and lean their shoulders together for a short hug. Aston turns and walks up the steps towards the door. Two doormen open the doors for him and he enters.

INT. LARGE FRONT ROOMS IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

We see Aston enter the open doors into the crowded foyer of a colonial mansion. The room bustling with well-dressed people who are talking, laughing and drinking. A banner which reads, "HAPPY NEW YEAR" has been stretched under a balcony in the front hall. One of the doormen takes Aston's coat.

In the front hall, a pair of staircases in a dark hardwood curve out to each side of a broad balcony which looks down on the room. The walls are lined with portraits of the many Wilcoxs who have presided over these halls. Over the whole scene, hangs a massive crystal chandelier of intricate workmanship.

The party guests are American and foreign officials of rank. The Admirals and Generals are in their dress uniforms, the men are wearing tuxedos and tailored suits. The ladies are dressed in designer gowns; beautifully revealing, or tastefully restrained, each according to their age and station.

Aston, dressed in a tuxedo, mingles in the crowd. He knows many of the guests, and most of them know him. We cannot hear his words over the din of the crowd; however, some of his acquaintances seem to make some reference to his mustache. He is humorous and gracious but the whole time his eyes calmly cast about the room in search of someone.

As Aston moves through the room he is noticed and then watched by SAMMY STILLER, a tall, thin, shifty-looking man in his early fifties. Stiller is in conversation with a number of investment bankers and their wives but his eyes constantly scan the room, fixating on Aston.

We move through a side door to the left into a ballroom where an orchestra plays a waltz and a few handfuls of couples dance. Most of the guests stand around drinking, nibbling and chatting. We focus in on IRENE WILCOX, a beautiful woman in her mid-twenties who is dressed in a simple, elegant evening dress.

Irene is flirting with two young men around her own age. As much as she enjoys this attention, she is also preoccupied and her eyes are roaming the room looking for someone.

We move past Irene to focus on the SENATOR, Irene's father, a man in his late fifties, who is chatting with a distinguished looking elderly couple. In the background, IRENE'S COUSIN, in his mid thirties, is speaking to two men.

INT. LARGE ROOMS IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

We are in a drawing room which is off the front hall to the right. Irene's cousin is speaking to a DRAB MAN in glasses while the DRAB MAN'S WIFE stares absentmindedly at the other guests.

We move through the side doors into the front hall to find the Senator speaking to a couple in their mid-thirties. As we continue on into the ballroom we find Stiller flirting with a woman in her forties.

Stiller's gaze keeps shifting off across the room and we follow it to find Aston trading jokes with an old general, eyes still scanning the room. As he scans the room, we move in close and slow to a still of his face.

CUT TO BLACK:

ACT 1 TITLE - WHITE LETTERS AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND

Brian Aston

INT. BALLROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

We see the Senator across the crowded ballroom engaged in a discussion with two other men of his own age and position. While the Senator is in conversation, an elderly BUTLER comes up behind him and whispers in his ear. The Senator excuses himself and the two men confer. The Senator excuses himself again and the two men leave the room together through an inconspicuous door behind the band.

INT. SECURITY ROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

The Senator and the Butler enter a dark mahogany-sided room which contains a large panel of security monitors. Two SECURITY OFFICERS in cheap gray suits stare up at the security monitors and smoke.

The room is thick with smoke and, as soon as the Senator steps in, he takes out a cigarette and lights it. The HEAD OF SECURITY, wearing a brown jacket over a blue polo shirt, is pacing in the middle of the room puffing on a cigar as the Senator enters.

A WET BAR is set up on a SIDEBBOARD, consisting of a few different types of WHISKY, GLASSES and a BUCKET OF ICE.

SENATOR

(Walking over to the wet bar and
pouring himself a drink)

What is it?

HEAD OF SECURITY

The Aston kid's here.

SENATOR

Where?

HEAD OF SECURITY

(Pointing at one of the screens)

Right there. Talking to the Delgados. He got
himself a mustache but it's him all right.

SENATOR

(Approaching the screen, drink in hand)

Yep, that's him. Well, we'll just have to wait. I
should have expected he'd be here. I suppose one
has to admire his tenacity.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Do you think he's armed?

SENATOR

So far as I know he's always armed, but he's not
a threat, just a nuisance. I told my daughter he
wasn't invited because I don't like him and I
don't want her with him, not because I'm afraid
for anyone's safety... We'll just wait a little.
Once he's away from the rest of the guests, throw
him out however you see fit.

INT. FRONT HALL IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Guests are seen milling through the front hall underneath
the balcony. Irene comes out of one of the side doors onto
the balcony that overlooks the hall. She leans against the
railing above the "HAPPY NEW YEAR" banner and watches the
crowd.

Aston walks into the front hall, still scanning the crowd,
and spots Irene on the balcony. He walks up the stairs
towards her. Their eyes are bright and fixed on each other
the entire time he climbs the steps.

From the other side of the room, Stiller watches Aston as he ascends the stairs. Aston, grinning, strolls up to Irene and leans against the railing. Stiller watches Irene and Aston throughout the following conversation.

IRENE

(Beaming, but looking down at the crowd)

How'd you get in?

ASTON

(Still smiling, also looking down at the crowd)

I told you I'd be here.

IRENE

When did you get into town?

ASTON

Two days ago.

IRENE

So, what's been keeping you away?

ASTON

(Turning towards her)

Trying to figure out how to get in tonight.

IRENE

(Turning towards him)

When did you grow a mustache?

ASTON

(Grinning)

I didn't grow it. I bought it.

IRENE

(Laughs, then suddenly serious, she puts her hand on his)

They can see us, you know.

ASTON

I like being seen with you.

IRENE

(Taking him by the arm)

Follow me.

Irene leads Aston down a hallway away from the balcony. The hallway is lined with doors. Irene opens a door, pushes Aston in, and follows him, closing the door behind her.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Irene and Aston have entered a finely furnished bedroom dominated by a large CANOPIED BED and lit by exterior lights coming through a large set of FRENCH DOORS.

Aston removes his mustache, and looks around the bedroom while Irene, who has just shut the door, locks it behind her back. Both are grinning like children. They rush into each other's arms. While they are kissing, Irene pushes Aston backwards until he falls onto the bed. She jumps on top of him.

INT. SECURITY ROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

The Senator and the Head of Security are watching a screen that shows the door that Aston and Irene have just entered. Irene's Cousin bursts into the security room. He is flushed and breathing heavily.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Brian Aston's here. I saw him on the balcony with Irene.

SENATOR

They just went into one of the bedrooms.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Where?

SENATOR

(Swirling his drink and pointing at one of the doors on a screen)

That one.

IRENE'S COUSIN

You don't have cameras in the bedrooms?

SENATOR

(Humorously)

This is my home. Some of us still have a sense of propriety.

IRENE'S COUSIN

I thought you told me you talked to his father.

SENATOR

I did. But I knew it wouldn't do any good.
There's almost nothing that can keep an Aston
from the woman he's set his eyes on. Brian's
father used to / sneak out and drive all night...

HEAD OF SECURITY

(Cutting him off)

How d'you think he got in?

IRENE'S COUSIN

That's what he does. He gets into places where
he's not wanted. I've worked with him. He's good.
Reckless, but good. (To the Senator) Do you want
me to take care of this?

SENATOR

(Talking to both men)

The bedroom that they're in shares a bathroom
with this one (Pointing to another door on the
same screen). You'd either have to break down the
doors in front of my guests, which I won't have,
or rappel down from the roof to the windows, a
possibility which seems a tad too extreme for the
circumstances. But we have the window here
(pointing to another screen) and we'll know as
soon as he leaves.

IRENE'S COUSIN

You're gonna leave them alone in there?

SENATOR

Oh, she'll hear about it from me! For now, just
wait for him to leave. It can't be that long.
When he does, security will take care of it.

IRENE'S COUSIN

I'd rather you let me take care of it myself.

SENATOR

You're here as my guest. Go downstairs. Enjoy
yourself.

IRENE'S COUSIN

This is a family affair.

SENATOR

(After a pause)

Fine. Take care of it, but be mild. His father is a friend of mine.

IRENE'S COUSIN

(To the Head of Security, holding up three fingers)

Three men.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Irene and Aston are making love. They finish together and stretch out on the bed. Irene's arms are stretched out above her head and Aston is running his hands over her body.

ASTON

(Whispering in Irene's ear)

I love you.

IRENE

(Stretching like a cat)

I love you. I've been missing you like crazy... I told my mom.

ASTON

What did she say?

IRENE

It was funny, she said she always just assumed that we would get married.

ASTON

Did she have any suggestions about how to tell your dad.

IRENE

No good ones... We should just elope.

ASTON

Yeah, I know, but I want our parents to have to deal with it. I want them to look each other in the eye... I want your father to hand you over to me, the old fashioned way... When was the last time our dads spoke?

IRENE

I don't know. Years ago I guess. Just after we first started sleeping together.

ASTON

(Pressing up against her)

I still remember that like it was yesterday. I hadn't seen you in a few years. I had just come back from some training. The last time I'd seen you, you were just a kid and then there you were beautiful and sexy and grown up. I couldn't take my eyes off of you.

IRENE

You were looking at me like you wanted to eat me alive. I felt naked in my bathing suit, but I liked it. It sent chills through my whole body.

ASTON

It was unbelievable how much I wanted you, how much I've fantasized about you over the years.

IRENE

I love you.

ASTON

When am I going to get to see you again?

IRENE

(Smiling)

Soon but now you have to go. We'll find a way by the back door.

ASTON

(Playfully sarcastic)

Oh, now I'm your backdoor man!? You want me to leave already?

IRENE

If I stay in here any longer my father will hand me my ass.

ASTON

We'll, we can't have that. We want him to hand *me* your ass.

Irene jumps up from the bed and hurriedly pulls on her cloths. Aston gets up and starts to dress. Irene runs over

and opens the set of French doors that lead onto a balcony. She returns to Aston's side and pulls on his arm while he fumbles with his pants.

IRENE

You'll have to climb down into the garden. I'll meet you there in a minute.

Aston comes to the French doors and looks out. The balcony overlooks a courtyard flanked by two wings of the house. Aston looks down over the balcony at the wall beneath.

The wall is made of large pieces of rectangular stone with only small cracks to serve as finger-holds. Aston turns back to Irene and takes her in his arms.

ASTON

I love you, babe.

Irene hurries back into the bedroom while Aston climbs over the railing where it meets the wall and begins to feel around for finger-holds on the wall to the right of the balcony.

INT. SERVANTS HALLWAYS IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

Irene hurries through the servants hallways of the house. She hears someone coming down the hallway towards her and she ducks into a side room while one of the security guards runs down the hall where she was.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

Irene enters a large laundry room and picks up a bundle of CLOTHS and a pair of SNEAKERS that are sitting, prepared on a shelf near the door.

INT. KITCHEN IN THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

Irene runs through the staff kitchen. The spacious room is the mansion's original kitchen but has undergone many renovations and improvements. She sets the bundle of cloths and the sneakers on baking rack and hurries out the back door.

EXT. GARDEN OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

We see Irene come out of a small side door into a broad stone and gardened courtyard. The courtyard borders upon a British restoration hedge-garden with sections in different styles. Irene moves quickly through the courtyard towards a flight of steps.

The stone stairs lead down to a four-way junction with paths leading out from FOUR BENCHES and a ring of HEDGES. In the center of the ring, a neo-classical SCULPTURE portrays a muscular naked man wrestling with a large snake.

Straight ahead is a tall hedge maze which surrounds a large shallow lake containing a small gazebo. The path to the right leads to the rolling hills of a country manor garden while that to the left leads to the wooden bridge of a Japanese rock garden. There are lights located along the paths.

Irene, searching as she goes, runs down the steps into the ring of benches. The ring of hedges that encompasses the benches contains FOUR ALCOVES. Aston is seated on a bench in the shadows of one of these alcoves and cannot be seen.

IRENE

(Whispering)

Where are you?

ASTON

(Standing up and whispering)

Over here.

IRENE

(Running over and kissing him)

I talked to my cousin. He said he'll have one of the servants leads you to the back gate and he'll make sure the security guys and my dad aren't watching... I think he has a crush on me.

(Holding up a STRIP OF BLACK CLOTH) But you have to wear this, he said, so you won't remember where the gate is.

ASTON

(Taking the cloth - amused)

A blindfold?

Aston shrugs and grins while Irene puts the blindfold over his eyes and ties it in back.

IRENE

I told him it was a stupid idea.

Aston sits down again while Irene returns to the house.

EXT. MAZE GARDEN OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

A moment later, Irene reappears dressed as a young man. She is wearing the cloths that were in the bundle she left on the pastry rack in the kitchen. Her hair is tucked up under a black wool WINTER CAP. She has on jeans, a sweatshirt, sneakers and a long black overcoat. She approaches the alcove where Aston is hiding.

IRENE

(In a gruff, affected male voice)

All right, kid, step it out.

Aston comes out of the alcove slowly with his hands in front of him. He can't see but he is aware that there is a bench somewhere in front of him. Irene roughly grabs the back of his arm and begins to direct him towards the opening of the hedge maze.

IRENE (In an affected voice)

So, they told me you snuck in and risked a run in with the Senator's security just to nail his daughter. (Aston says nothing as they start to move through the twisting paths of the maze.) Well, she's certainly got the looks worth risking for it.

ASTON

That she has.

IRENE (In an affected voice)

What're you doing with a girl like her anyways?

ASTON

I think I may be falling in love with her... (A pause) What do you mean "like her," "a girl like her"?

IRENE (In an affected voice)

Well you know she's a society girl. She expects a lot. And she plays.

ASTON
Plays what?

IRENE (In an affected voice)
Would you ever think of marrying her.

ASTON
I've already thought of it.

IRENE (In an affected voice)
Yeah, she is a sight, and there's the money; but
it must be more than that, huh? She must be
pretty lively.

ASTON
That's not really any of your business.

IRENE (In an affected voice)
No, I guess not... (Another pause while they
walk) You know you're not the only guy who's
chasing her.

ASTON
Well, she's a beautiful, intelligent, capable
woman.

IRENE (In an affected voice)
Then there's Mayor Bradley. He's even got as far
as asking her to marry him – and I don't think
he'd want a wife he hadn't tried. (She laughs at
her own joke). Plenty of others too. Even her
cousin, the DEA big shot.

ASTON
Look, maybe you should lay off her.

EXT. GARDEN OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION – NIGHT

Irene's Cousin and three security guards come out of the
house and run across the courtyard into the garden.

EXT. MAZE GARDEN OF THE SENATOR'S – NIGHT

Irene and Aston are still winding through the tight turns
of the maze.

IRENE (In an affected voice)

I think she gets off on all the attention. She's just vain, you know: a little princess. She knows she'll end up marrying some fool who will just let her do whatever she wants and she's just getting in shape for it, like practice.

ASTON

Alright, that's enough. I can't let you talk this trash.

They fall silent as they come to a gate in the wall of the maze garden. Irene opens the gate and leads Aston through into the rolling hills of the country garden.

The slopes are broken up here and there with groves of trees and flower bushes in the vibrant disorderly clusters of an English country garden. Irene begins to move quickly, pushing Aston ahead of her.

EXT. COUNTRY GARDEN OF THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Irene's Cousin gives a gesture of command to the security guards as they run. They spread out and follow Aston and Irene and a wide circle.

EXT. COUNTRY GARDEN GROVE AT THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Irene slows down as they come to a grove of trees at the bottom of a long incline. The trees are not thickly clustered but it is dark and there is some underbrush. Irene seems to know her way well.

IRENE (In an affected voice)

Well I'm just saying, if you lived here and saw what I see you might not put so much stake in that girl.

ASTON

(Coldly)

You're putting me in a situation here. Under normal circumstances, I would have already shut you up but, as it is, I'm obliged to you for helping me out. You can see my predicament.

EXT. COUNTRY GARDEN GROVE AT THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

Irene's Cousin and the guards follow, moving from tree to tree.

EXT. COUNTRY GARDEN GROVE AT THE SENATOR'S MANSION — NIGHT

IRENE (In an affected voice)
Look here, I'm just letting you know the score.
You know what I mean. Irene isn't worth your
hope. She spends more time / in bed than...

ASTON
(Cutting her off)
That's it you little shit (he swiftly pushes the
blind fold onto his forehead) I'll get out on my
own.

Aston yanks Irene around by the shoulder in order to drive
his fist into her stomach but, as he does so, her winter
cap flies off and Irene's long hair pours out in a wide
circle.

Aston stops himself in mid-swing and steps back examining
her. He breaks into a grin. She steps towards him and the
two embrace, laughing.

ASTON
You're a sick little girl.

IRENE
(In Aston's ear)
Let's elope right now.

ASTON
Right now? I don't think your father will go for
that. He might even have us followed.

IRENE
I don't care. I'm sick of his shit. He keeps
pressing me to marry Mayor Bradley. I can't stand
it here and I'm not needed back in New York for a
while. We'll get married in Vegas and then leave
the country for our honeymoon. We can go down to
South America. You know people down there, don't
you?

ASTON
Yeah. (Beat.) Alright, let's go.

Aston puts his arm around Irene's shoulder. At this moment, Irene's Cousin and the three guards step out from behind bushes, with pistols leveled at Aston.

IRENE'S COUSIN

You two aren't going anywhere together.

Irene's Cousin motions with his gun for Aston to step away from Irene and put his hands on his head. He frisks Aston and removes a CELL-PHONE and TWO PISTOLS, one under each arm. One of the security guards takes Irene by the arm.

IRENE'S COUSIN (cont'd)

(To Aston)

I'll walk you to the gate.

Irene's Cousin walks over to Irene and lifts her chin with his hand, as he does so she puts her hand behind her back and removes a RING from her left hand.

IRENE'S COUSIN (cont'd)

And you, my dear, are going back to the ball.
Your father's expecting you.

IRENE

(To her Cousin)

Oh go fuck yourself.

Irene yanks herself out of the security guard's grip and hugs Aston.

IRENE (cont'd)

(To Aston)

I love you, babe. I'll give you a call when I get to New York.

ASTON

I might be busy. I have a big job coming up. I love you.

As the guard separates them, Irene presses her ring into Aston's hand. The security guard leads Irene back up towards the house. Irene and Aston watch each other until Irene disappears into the trees.

Aston and Irene's Cousin move towards the outer wall of the estate followed by the other two men. They walk in silence

until they reach a VINE-COVERED WALL. One of the men pulls back the vines revealing a SMALL DOOR.

IRENE'S COUSIN

(Handing Aston his phone)

Keep veering right on the path and eventually you'll hit the road. Give your driver a ring. He should be able to find you there. If I had my way, I'd make you regret this little exploit.

These remarks produce in Aston a faint smile but he makes no move to leave. He cocks an eyebrow at Irene's Cousin and waits.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Well?

ASTON

My guns.

Irene's Cousin hands Aston his guns.

ASTON

(Holding up the guns by way of explanation for a moment before holstering them)

One never knows.

Aston opens the gate and steps through. He turns around and grins.

ASTON

It's always a real pleasure running into you.

Aston closes the door. The guard lets the vines fall back into place. Irene's Cousin stares at the vine-covered wall.

INT. HAIKO'S HONG KONG OFFICE — DAY

HAIKO'S office is spacious and finely furnished.

We are looking out of a set of FRENCH DOORS down onto the city of Hong Kong. We move back to find two sets of French doors set into the walls of a spacious office. Between the doors is a BLACK LEATHER SOFA.

The furnishing and decorations in the office are all of Asian manufacture - a blend of old and new, simple but

fine. Against one wall is a sideboard containing a WET BAR. Above the wet bar, there is a JAPANESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING stretched onto a solid frame.

HAIKO, a powerfully built Asian man in his late forties is sitting at a large OAK DESK. The desk has very few furnishings: a BRASS DESK LAMP with a green glass shade, a JADE BUDDHA – fat and laughing. In the middle of the desk there are a few piles of papers across which lies a thick FOUNTAIN PEN. To the side of the papers is an open LAPTOP. Two BLACK LEATHER CHAIRS face the desk.

Haiko is wearing a shirt with French cuffs and a silk tie. His tailored jacket hangs behind him on a rack made for this purpose. He is leaning back in a large LEATHER DESK CHAIR talking on a tiny CELL PHONE. Haiko speaks with a slight accent but his English has all the signs of a North American education.

HAIKO

So, how's San Francisco?... Use your own discretion... Fine... No, we can't let them get away with that; do whatever's necessary... Yes, just finish it. I don't want to hear about it again... Huh, we'll see what comes of it... That is strange, how long have you known him?... Sure, if you think you can... Okay, keep me informed.

He hangs up the phone, sets his elbows on the desk, and lightly taps the tips of his fingers together staring expressionlessly into the middle distance.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM IN THE SAN FRANCISCO FBI BUILDING - DAY

The briefing room is a large office space full of FOLDING CHAIRS and a number of FOLDING TABLES set up around the walls. A few METAL FILING CABINETS and a folding table with COFFEE AND PASTRIES line the back wall. The walls are covered with CORK BOARDS pinned with MAPS and PHOTOS and WHITE BOARDS covered with names and figures.

Around fifty LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS are seated in the chairs and standing around in groups. Their uniforms and jackets identify them as FBI, DEA, and SFPD. As the dialog below takes place we scan the room and pass by a DAY-BY-DAY CALENDAR which reads APRIL 16.

There are large maps of San Francisco's docks to the east of Potrero Hill hanging on the cork boards at the front of the room. An OVERHEAD PROJECTOR is projecting the floor plan of a warehouse onto a bare wall. Surveillance photos of Haiko and a number of his men hang beside one of the maps.

Irene's Cousin is standing with a group of plain clothes FBI at the front of the room.

A COP RECEPTIONIST opens the door and leans into the room.

COP RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Aston is here with someone else. A Mr. Stiller.

PLAIN CLOTHES FED

(Looking around quizzically until he sees Irene's Cousin nod)

Show them in. (To Irene's Cousin) Who's Stiller?

The COP RECEPTIONIST leaves the room.

IRENE'S COUSIN

A friend of Aston's father. He's also been attorney for some of Haiko's West Coast operations for years. That'll be why Aston brought him in.

PLAIN CLOTHES COP

Can he be trusted?

IRENE'S COUSIN

He can be bought. I'm sure he's actually seen the warehouse in operation. We'll keep him in the car with Aston when the action begins so there'll be no possibility of a problem.

Aston enters followed by Sammy Stiller who is carrying a BRIEFCASE.

Stiller is dressed in a well-made suit, simple and conservative. Aston is more flashy. He is also wearing a suit but of a light, natural linen. His shirt is a vintage cut. It has a straight loose hemline at the waist and the cuffs poke out a good 3/4" beneath the jacket. His shirt is open at the neck and he wears the lapels outside of his jacket collar.

ASTON

Good afternoon gentlemen. This is my associate Mr. Stiller. He and I have worked together in the past but, more importantly, Stiller's been employed as a legal advisor by Acephalus Trading a number of times over the years.

A number of the officers look around at each other with closed expressions, annoyed by this news.

PLAIN CLOTHES COP

(To Aston)

Last minute changes?

ASTON

Very minor ones. It looks like there have been a couple of changes in the setup that weren't filed with the city. Mr. Stiller has been inside the warehouse under its current state of operation and he's agreed to brief us on it.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Okay, Stiller. What have you got?

STILLER

(Acknowledging the room in general)

Morning. Alright, you all have the background. At the end of each quarter Acephalus needs to make sure the boxes we're gonna seize have all left the building before the foreman does inventory. The pace of distribution always doubles but this needs to look like a regular fluctuation. (He turns around and looks over the maps. He turns back to the audience and finds a pen on the projector. He taps and points while he speaks.) As soon as the truck comes in, another identical one will leave. Sometimes it's the same truck but never at the end of the quarter. All our boxes are labeled as Sony monitors -- which start a third of the way into the carton. So, after the truck goes in, we can just hang out for a while until they've gotten a third of it done. As the monitors come out, the foreman at the head of the belt sets it so that every third crate of 22x's and 22AV's are ours. When they come off the belt they'll be over here in sectors 2 and 3, not 8. They are set on the right of sector 2 and the

left of sector 3 so that they are all clumped here (drawing a circle), between these two posts. Most of the workers don't even know what they're moving. There will be 100 boxes in the order we're after. If there're any boxes still on the belt we'll need to pick 'em up in that order beginning from the bulk which are all kept in one place -- because that way when an order comes in the right "monitors" can be put on the right truck. All of Haiko's men who know what's going on will be focused around sections 2 and 3 so that's where you're gonna need to concentrate.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT

(Moving up to the front and pointing at Stiller's circle)

Okay, we'll be moving into the west once we get in. We can't know how many of the employees will be armed so we should expect the worst. Even if there are only a few they will all be professionals, and loyal. We don't want a hostage situation like we had in LA. We'll need to secure the building in the first few minutes.

PLAIN CLOTHES COP

Alright, let's go get the lay of the streets.

INT./EXT. SEDAN/INDUSTRIAL CITY STREETS -- DAY

A large late model BLUE SEDAN is following a DELIVERY TRUCK down crowded city streets in San Francisco near the Bay, east of Potrero Hill. The neighborhood is industrial.

Although the streets are busy, there are very few pedestrians. Large warehouses and machine shops are broken up here and there with a smaller business; a tire garage, a liquor store.

The sedan is being driven by an FBI AGENT in a blue FBI windbreaker. Stiller sits besides him in the passenger seat, his briefcase on his lap and a pair of small BINOCULARS in his hand. Aston and the Plain Clothes FBI Agent are in the back seat with HEADPHONES, LAPTOPS and a slew of monitoring electronics.

The sedan pulls over on the other side of the street as the truck turns and enters the parking lot of a gated warehouse

compound. They watch as the door of a huge warehouse opens and the truck drives in.

ASTON
(Speaking into the headphones)
She's going in.

A moment later an identical truck comes out and the doors close.

ASTON (cont'd)
Alright, the second one's rolling.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT
Units 16 & 20 you'll be heading that one off. (He waits while the truck turns onto the street.)
It's going South down Illinois Street. Wait until we move on the building before you pull it over.

STILLER
(To the driver)
Let's drive around the block while we wait for 'em to get to the monitors. We can check on the placement of the vans.

The driver turns around to look at Aston for an Okay. Aston looks up quickly and nods. The sedan pulls off the curb and drives around. There are a number of WHITE VANS in the neighborhood.

INT./EXT. SEDAN/INDUSTRIAL CITY STREETS - DAY

Aston is looking at his watch. The sedan is driving slowly down the street that passes in front of the warehouse. Aston and the Plain Clothes FBI Agent look at each other.

ASTON
(Speaking into the headphones)
Alright, lets get this thing underway. Cameras.

The VIDEO SCREENS on the laptops in the car become active. As the sedan approaches the warehouse, the white vans careen into the parking lot. Men pour out of the vans in full SWAT gear. They blow off the MAIN DOOR and batter through the side doors.

The streets are blocked off by a police line made up of BLACK-AND-WHITE COPS that appear out of nowhere with sirens blaring and lights flashing.

Gunfire erupts, the citizenry scatters, Aston and the Plain Cloths FBI Agent are speaking urgently into their headphones and clicking through the cameras on their laptops.

Stiller is looking down the street past the police line, away from the main action, through his pair of binoculars.

A late model DARK GRAY LEXUS parks in front of a different warehouse complex a few blocks down. We move in closer to see a young Asian man opening the back door. Mr. Haiko steps out of the car. Followed by two of his men, both young Asian men, he walks across a parking lot towards the front door of one of the warehouses.

The front door of the warehouse opens directly into a wall of metal corrugate siding with no steps or awning. Directly above the front door is a small SIGN that reads 'ACEPHALUS TRADING.'

Stiller reaches around and grabs Aston. In the conversation that follows everyone is speaking at once, not waiting for a response.

STILLER

(Shaking Aston and handing him the binoculars)

Hey look!

ASTON

What! (Annoyed - taking the binoculars.) Who!

STILLER

It's him!

ASTON

Who?!

STILLER

Right there! Haiko! Down the street!

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT

What the hell are you doing?!

ASTON
(looking through the binoculars)
Shit!

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT
Here! We need you here!

Aston takes off his headphones and checks the positioning of his guns. He gets out of the car and throws his laptop on the seat. Stiller also gets out of the car and takes his briefcase with him. Again, everyone is talking at once.

ASTON
I'm going after him.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT
What the hell?! Who?

STILLER
(To the Plain Cloths FBI Agent)
Haiko.

ASTON
(To the Plain Cloths FBI Agent - as he
throws the computer)
Cover this. There's a gunman above 8!

STILLER
(To Aston)
I'm going with you.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT
(Into the headphones)
8, it's coming from 8.

ASTON
(To Stiller)
No you're not.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT
(To Aston and Stiller)
We can't prove that he's involved.

STILLER
Of course he's fucking involved. Those are the
offices.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT

We don't have a warrant for those buildings.

ASTON

(To the Plain Cloths FBI Agent)

We'll get it later.

PLAIN CLOTHES FBI AGENT

Bastards.

Aston and Stiller run down the street toward the warehouse. As they approach the police blockade, Aston holds a BADGE in front of himself, still running.

A few of the police seem confused but one of them recognizes Aston and waves the two men through. They hardly slow down.

When they clear the blockade Aston takes out a HANDGUN. When they get to the door of the warehouse office they fall to its flanks, backs to the wall.

Aston slowly reaches over and grabs the doorknob. He opens the door and enters in one motion, gun leveled in front of him.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM IN ACEPHALUS TRADING — DAY

Aston and Stiller are alone in a newly-renovated, corporate reception room. The room is furnished in glass and polished steel. There are two sets of STEEL CHAIRS placed loosely around GLASS COFFEE TABLES. There are large ART BOOKS on the tables featuring art works from the Chinese collections in Taiwan.

A few JAPANESE LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS hang on the walls and two glass cases hold VASES and other ART OBJECTS from the Ming dynasty. The ACEPHALUS TRADING LOGO hangs on the wall behind a large semi-circular RECEPTION DESK. In the wall to the right, behind the reception desk, is the room's only other door.

Aston walks behind the reception desk. A COMPUTER MONITOR shows a login screen. Aston flips through a few papers and opens some drawers. Stiller stands in the middle of the room, almost unconcerned.

ASTON
(Whispering)
Check the door.

STILLER
What?

ASTON
I'll cover you.

As Stiller walks over to the door, Aston moves into the middle of the room so that he has a straight shot on the door. Stiller stands to the side of the door against the wall. He reaches out and slowly turns the handle. He pushes the door and it swings open. Stiller sweeps his briefcase in a gesture which says, "After you."

INT. HALLWAY IN ACEPHALUS TRADING — DAY

Aston and Stiller are moving slowly down a dark, narrow hallway. The lighting is so bad that we can only see shadows and profiles broken up here and there with light gleaming off exposed pipes.

Aston leads the way, gun in hand. Whenever they come to a door, he quietly checks to see if it's locked. Finally, he finds one that's open. Aston opens the door and lets himself in with one motion, leading with his gun.

The room is pitch dark and we watch Aston from behind as he disappears into it scanning the blackness with his eyes and gun.

INT. STORAGE ROOM IN ACEPHALUS TRADING — DAY

Everything is in darkness. A flood-light is turned on, targeting Aston. Aston is standing in the shipping and receiving section of a massive warehouse. Industrial strength shelving, loaded with boxes, rears up into the darkness.

Mr. Haiko is standing in an isle directly in front of Aston. His hands are at his sides. Aston sees Haiko as soon as the light comes on and he fixes the sights of his sidearm on Haiko's face.

Two of HAIKO'S MEN are also in the room. They are Asian men in their early twenties, wearing loose fitting jackets and slacks over knit shirts.

One, HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT, is seated on a fork-lift, the other is standing on a crate of stereos; both are looking at Aston through the sights of assault rifles.

HAIKO

Check your chest.

Aston glances at the two ruby beads flickering around on his arms and chest. He shows the palm of one hand while slowly crouching to set his gun on the floor with the other. Beads of sweat begin to form on his temples.

Stiller is standing behind him holding his briefcase in front of himself with both hands.

Haiko walks towards Aston and as he does so, he takes out a GUN and a SILENCER. Haiko's gun is an old officer's issue that has been beautifully inlaid with jade of all hues. The silencer is a more modern addition but it has been crafted to complement the gun, likewise adorned with jade.

In the background, we see Stiller walk over to a desk. He is met at the desk by Haiko's Lieutenant, who has climbed down from the fork-lift. When Haiko gets to where Aston is standing, Stiller opens his briefcase and hands Haiko's Lieutenant a folder. Occasionally, throughout the rest of the scene, we see these two men watching Haiko and Aston.

Aston and Haiko lock eyes. Aston, having regained his composure, watches Haiko closely while he tightens the silencer. As Haiko raises the gun to Aston's forehead, the younger man appears calm and resolved. The following conversation alternates between English and Chinese.

ASTON (Chinese)

(As though remembering something)

Wait...

HAIKO (Chinese)

(Philosophically)

Are you afraid to lose your life?

ASTON (Chinese)

No. But it would be painful for someone who I could never willingly hurt.

HAIKO (Chinese)

Will you beg? (Aston's eyes make a faint gesture of affirmation.) On someone else's account?

ASTON (Chinese)

I don't think I have any choice.

Haiko flicks the tip of his gun down twice, motioning to Aston. Aston, without taking his eyes off Haiko, gets down on his knees.

HAIKO (Chinese)

I don't know whether this is admirable or despicable.

ASTON (Chinese)

What?

HAIKO (Chinese)

To lower yourself to begging for the sake of someone else. You're either very loyal or very stubborn; you're obviously stupid.

ASTON (English)

It's a woman.

HAIKO (English)

Yes. (A pause.) I never give to beggars. You'll have to offer me something; something you've never offered before.

ASTON

(A Pause)

Let me keep my life but use it as your own. (Beat.) Give her the comfort of knowing that I'm alive but keep the benefits of that living for yourself.

HAIKO

(Breaking into a grin)

I can't give what I don't own and if I were to give you your life now, then I would have had it at my disposal only briefly, and never made use of it. And, of course, I can't give it back to

you; I'm not even sure you would know what to do with a life like yours. You seem to have so little regard for it. I could find uses for such a life. I'm good at that. Even now, just down the street there are a number of lives that might otherwise have been wasted but, because they are mine, they have been spent looking after the interests of many people... (A pause) You must love this woman beyond all reason if you would consider giving up the little you have for her comfort. I don't suppose it matters to her who you belong to, so long as it isn't / another woman...

ASTON

(Cutting him off)

I don't think she's ever considered the possibility.

HAIKO

No, I doubt she has. (Beat.) Here's my offer: I'll give you her comfort in exchange for your life. You should consider closely; you may never see her again. She'll be kept informed that you are living, as long as you are, but you will belong to me... If you disobey me, or break our bargain, I'll remove your skin with a scalpel. But you know that.

ASTON (Chinese)

I understand. You have my word.

HAIKO (Chinese)

Get up.

INT. EMPTY WAREHOUSE IN HONG KONG - DAY

Aston and one of Haiko's men are overseeing activities in a large empty warehouse. The warehouse is old and in a state of disrepair. The floor is covered with oil stains and various debris.

A number of working class ASIAN MEN are carrying boxes from one beat-up DELIVERY TRUCK to another. Aston is leaning against a BLACK SEDAN, watching them. Haiko's man is watching the warehouse door, smoking.

INT. DINGY HOTEL ROOM IN HONG KONG - NIGHT

Aston and four of Haiko's men are lounging around a dirty little hotel room. A MONEY COUNTING MACHINE is set up on a low CHEST OF DRAWERS in front of a LARGE MIRROR. On a bedside table a few lines have been pulled out of a large pile of COCAINE.

One of Haiko's men is feeding money into the counting machine. Two others are taking turns at the coke. Aston is laying on his back on the BED staring up at the ceiling. The other man is sleeping in a dingy EASY CHAIR in the corner. All of them look greasy, bleary-eyed, and unshaven.

INT./EXT. CAR/DOCK IN HONG KONG -- DAY

A small BEAT-UP CAR is parked on a vacant dock near a number of old cinder-block and steel warehouses. Aston, in a foul mood, is in the driver's seat of the car.

Two of Haiko's men are on the dock near the car; they have with them a THIRD MAN, badly beaten, whom they are pushing and dragging. They let the third man fall down on the dock and one of them shoots him once in the head. Both men roll the corpse into the water with their feet.

EXT. STREET NEAR A BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN SINGAPORE -- DAY

Aston, Haiko's Lieutenant and a few of Haiko's men are walking down a busy city street in Singapore. They are all talking and laughing. They pass in front of the steps of a large Buddhist temple.

The temple has a pointed roof with red and gold-gild trim in the Burmese fashion. Two carved lions, with right paws upraised, flank the stairs that lead up to a door set behind black columns.

 HAIKO'S MAN 1 (Chinese)
 (To Haiko's Lieutenant)
 Take some photos here.

Haiko's Lieutenant takes out his camera.

 HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese)
 Okay, everyone over there. By that statue. Closer together.

Haiko's Lieutenant takes a photo.

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese)
(To Haiko's Man 1)

Okay, now you take one with me in it.

They switch places and Haiko's Man 1 takes a shot.

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese - cont'd)
How about one of just Brian and me?

Everyone else steps away. Haiko's Lieutenant and Aston put their arms around each others shoulders and Haiko's Man 1 takes a shot. Haiko's Lieutenant steps away and Aston is left alone, absentmindedly staring out at the city. Haiko's Lieutenant snaps another photo.

INT. HAIKO'S RESTAURANT IN HONG KONG - NIGHT

Aston, Stiller and Haiko are all having dinner at Haiko's restaurant with some GERMAN BUSINESSMEN. Haiko's restaurant is in a beautiful old building from the late Victorian era.

The building itself, and the furniture, has a British colonial style but many of the decorative items are of Chinese manufacture. The walls have dark wood wainscoting topped by a William Morris wallpaper in a delicate print.

A soft light fills the room from gas lamps on the walls. The restaurant is packed with an elegant dinner crowd. Everyone at Haiko's table seems to be having a good time. The conversation cannot be heard above the general clamor of the restaurant.

INT. EMPTY STUDIO APARTMENT IN HONG KONG - DAY

A 35mm CAMERA with a large ZOOM LENS is set up on a TRIPOD in an empty studio apartment. The apartment is a single room with a small kitchen area and a larger living space. The only furnishings are a few MILK CRATES and a FOLDING CHAIR near the camera.

Haiko's Lieutenant is watching a building across the way through the camera and occasionally taking a picture. A few of Haiko's other men are lounging around the room on SLEEPING BAGS and milk crates. There are FLOOR PLANS and NOTES all over the floor. ASTON is in the kitchen area cooking with the help of one of the men who is cutting vegetables.

ASTON (Chinese)

Hurry up.

INT. IRENE'S OFFICE IN NEW YORK — DAY

Irene's office has high ceilings and large windows that look out over East Greenwich Village, Manhattan. The space is open and bright; the walls are off white, the floors are a deep yellow hardwood and the long curtains, pulled back, are made of light cotton.

A few PLANTS invigorate the atmosphere. A LARGE DESK faces the room between two windows. This desk is uncluttered and organized. A low CLOTH SOFA faces the desk across an ORIENTAL RUG. In the middle of the rug is a small CIRCULAR TABLE containing a number of CHINESE JADES.

A SMALL DESK is build into a BOOKSHELF on one wall. This smaller desk is covered with various TOOLS and ART SUPPLIES. The bookshelves which engulf the smaller desk are overflowing with books many hundreds of which are ART BOOKS.

Irene is in the center of the room, circling the jades on the little table and making notes on a LEGAL PAD. She is fashionably dressed but has her own hand picked look. Her hair is worn up, tied with a green and yellow cloth. She has on a light yellow T-shirt with floral print on the front in an Asian style; the collar also has an Asian look, a white hem fits closely around her neck. A fitted, deep absinthe green skirt stops just above her knees. She is wearing slip-on clogs with a thick lather strap from under which her toes poke out.

A GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER is sprawled on the couch, watching her. He is wearing a light blue turtle neck sweater, navy blue corduroys, and black shoes with sculptured soles and an overabundance of stitching.

IRENE

No, I told you I'm not going to date you. I'll do lunch, but dinner and dancing is too much.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

When we went to Anthony's opening that wasn't a date?

IRENE

That was just to get to know you, and I told you at the time that I was seeing Brian.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

I know you find me attractive.

IRENE

Sure, but that's irrelevant. I love Brian.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

Irene, when was the last time you saw him?

IRENE

He called me a couple weeks ago.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

Come on. The last time you saw him.

IRENE

At my father's New Years party. He didn't get an invitation so he blackmailed one of the guests for his and came anyway.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

That's pretty good but, come on, that's over six months ago.

IRENE

He's been working. He's in Asia right now.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

How do you know? How do you know he's really working?

IRENE

It doesn't matter: I trust him. (He gives her a quizzical look.) Because he's trustworthy.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

You're too much.

IRENE

I'll do lunch. Pick a day.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

Irene, come on. The man kills people for a living. He'll probably get killed / himself one of these days.

The intercom on Irene's desk phone interrupts the Good-looking Hipster with the voice of a young girl in her late teens.

IRENE'S SECRETARY (via INTERCOM)

Irene, there's a guy who wants to see you: Sam Stiller. He doesn't have any appointment or anything but he wants to talk to you anyways.

IRENE

(Pressing a button on her phone and speaking into the intercom.)

Who is he?

IRENE'S SECRETARY (via INTERCOM)

I guess he's a friend of you dad's. That's what he says. He says he needs to talk to you about something. It seems like important.

Irene stares at the Good-looking Hipster for a moment before they both shrug.

IRENE

(Speaking into the intercom)

Go ahead and show him in.

Irene moves behind her desk and looks out the window. We move in closer and slow to a still on her face.

CUT TO BLACK:

ACT 2 TITLE - WHITE AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND

Irene Wilcox

INT. IRENE'S OFFICE IN NEW YORK — DAY

A moment later IRENE'S SECRETARY shows Stiller into the room. Stiller stands behind the sofa holding his briefcase in both hand front of himself.

He looks down for a moment at the back of the Good-looking Hipster's head and then up again at Irene. Irene gestures

towards the door with her head and the Good-looking Hipster gets up to leave.

GOOD-LOOKING HIPSTER

I'm gonna go get a coffee. Either of you want anything?

IRENE

No thanks.

STILLER

(Walking around the sofa towards Irene)

No.

IRENE

(Shaking Stiller's hand)

Hello. I'm Irene Wilcox.

STILLER

Sammy Stiller. We've met before. You were a lot younger.

IRENE

Oh, I'm sorry. I don't remember.

STILLER

You were young... (A pause) I need to talk to you about Brian. Did your cousin tell you what happened in San Francisco?

IRENE

A little.

STILLER

Have you heard from him since?

IRENE

A couple of months ago I got a photograph of him standing in front of a temple in Singapore. His note just said, "In Singapore on business. Wish you were here."

STILLER

Your father told me that you still won't marry Major Bradley; does he know about the photo?

IRENE

No. They're all sure he's dead. And the photo doesn't prove anything. It doesn't make any sense that he would run away in the middle of a bust and head to Asia without contacting anyone.

STILLER

I was with him in San Francisco. The two of us split off from the rest. We were chasing Mr. Haiko - the guy whose shipment we were after. We followed him into another building complex; and we found him. I think we were set up, or Haiko had heard about the raid and was just being cautious. Either case, we didn't have a chance.

IRENE

How did you get out?

STILLER

I'm a lawyer. Mr. Haiko doesn't kill lawyers; he only kills police. His enemies and the police. And he doesn't take prisoners.

IRENE

So the photo was a fake?

STILLER

No, Brian's alive. That's what I came here to tell you, to try to explain. Brian is working for Haiko now and he'll probably be kept in the East to avoid the people he knows. But he doesn't just work for Haiko; he belongs to him.

IRENE

What? How can they trust him?

STILLER

I don't know. He gave Haiko his word. I guess you'll know better than me what that means. But he didn't do it on his own account. That's why I came here in person. Haiko knows you can't trust a photo. He wanted me to tell you that Brian's alive. That's his part of the bargain. He let Aston live for your sake and you'll be kept informed how he is but, in exchange, Aston belongs to Mr. Haiko.

IRENE

What kind of a deal is that?

STILLER

I don't know. I heard 'em make it but half the discussion was in Chinese. They're strange men.

IRENE

Can I buy him out?

STILLER

I doubt it. Haiko doesn't need money. He doesn't need much of anything, but it's worth a try. He'd probably find you a lot more convincing than me.

IRENE

Do you know where I can find him?

STILLER

Yep. I made some calls before I came over. (He opens his briefcase on IRENE'S desk and pulls out a folder, which he hands to Irene.) It's not very detailed but it should be enough.

Irene sits down behind her desk and begins to leaf through the contents of the folder. We watch her over her shoulder.

The pages have all been printed by a fax machine. There is a PHOTO OF HAIKO, a number of BUSINESS CARDS, RESTAURANT BROCHURES, and NAMES and NUMBERS written in a number of different hands – including some Chinese.

Stiller watches Irene for a few moments and then he takes out his billfold and removes a business card. Irene notices this and looks up.

STILLER

It was nice to meet you, Irene. (He hands her his business card.) Let me know if I can do anything else.

IRENE

(Standing up and taking his card)

Thank you. Did you tell my father about Brian?

STILLER

No. I'll leave that to you. Take care.

IRENE
(Shaking Stiller's hand)
Thanks again.

INT. IRENE'S BEDROOM IN NEW YORK — DAY

Irene's bedroom is in an 1880's tenant building that looks out onto Manhattan's Upper West Side. The room is dominated by a QUEEN-SIZED BED, covered with puffy white linens and a pile of PILLOWS.

To one side of the bed, is a low VANITY DESK from the 1920's in dark maple, upon which is mounted a LARGE CIRCULAR MIRROR. On the other side of the room, is a BOOK SHELF and an open closet door.

Irene is packing for a trip. A few mid-sized SUITCASES and a BLACK LEATHER BAG lay on the bed. The suitcases are full and closed.

Irene collects a few stray pieces of JEWELRY from the vanity desk and puts them in her JEWELRY BOX. Irene's jewelry box is full of expensive pieces — some of them quite old. She puts the jewelry box into the black leather bag.

INT. INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - JFK AIRPORT — DAY

Irene, in jeans and a long black coat, is waiting around at a gate in the JFK Airport. The airline sign behind the counter reads, "Los Angeles/Hong Kong...9:47...On Time."

INT. HAIKO'S RESTAURANT — NIGHT

We are inside the foyer of Haiko's restaurant looking at a set of LEADED-GLASS DOORS. A HOSTESS' DESK faces the front doors. Broad, open doorways reveal dining rooms to each side of the foyer. The place is busy with the dinner crowd. We can't hear any dialogue over the general commotion.

One of the front doors opens and Irene enters wearing her long black coat. A HOST takes her coat, revealing a black evening gown and a pearl choker. She keeps her black leather bag with her when the butler disappears with her coat.

She looks around for a moment and then we see her speak to the HOSTESS. The Hostess makes a phone call and then

responds to Irene. A few moments later one of Haiko's men enters the foyer and introduces himself to Irene.

We follow these two as Haiko's man leads Irene towards the back of the restaurant. The back room is a large dining hall above which stands a balcony with two symmetrical stairways in front of a set of double doors. They climb the stairs to the right, Haiko's man opens one of the doors and motions Irene to enter. He follows her in and shuts the door behind him.

INT. HAIKO'S HONG KONG OFFICE - NIGHT

Haiko is sitting behind his desk in a black leather chair. His son is sitting in one of the smaller chairs which he has pulled over to the side of the desk so that they can look at some paperwork together. The two of them have turned from their conversation and are sitting back in their chairs to watch Irene enter.

Irene walks into the center of the room followed by Haiko's man. She stands awkwardly in front of the desk. No one offers her the other chair.

HAIKO

Hello, I'm Haiko. I own this restaurant.

IRENE

I'm Irene Wilcox.

HAIKO

Hello Irene. What can I do for you?

IRENE

I want to ransom one of your men.

HAIKO

None of my men are held at a price.

IRENE

You must have some opinion of what you think each of them is worth to you.

HAIKO

If you want to make a purchase, you should make an offer. Who're you interested in?

IRENE
(Walking towards Haiko's desk)
Brian Aston.

HAIKO
Of course.

Irene reaches in to her black leather bag. As she does so Haiko's man takes out his GUN and aims at the back of her head. Haiko makes the faintest gesture with his hand to hold his man off. Irene, fumbling in the bag, is oblivious to all this.

She takes her jewelry box out of the leather bag and places it on Haiko's desk. Haiko's man puts his gun away. Haiko gets up from behind the desk and comes around to the box and opens it.

HAIKO
(Taking out some of the pieces of
jewelry and laying them on the table)
They're very fine. You appear to value him much more than I do. Some of these seem quite old. They must come from your family and you have your memories in them. But to me they are just jewels; things that can be bought. I don't care much for things which can be bought.

Haiko moves over to the wet bar above which hangs a Japanese landscape painting, stretched onto a solid frame. He pulls on the corner of the painting and it swings open on hinges to reveal a SAFE.

Haiko opens the safe and takes out a BLACK VELVET BAG. The safe is full of MONEY, BONDS, GOLD BARS, JEWELS, and so forth. Haiko's gun is hanging on the inside of the door of the safe and we can see now that the jades are inlaid in the shapes of DRAGONS.

Haiko pours jewels from the velvet bag into a BRANDY SNIFTER and we hear them tinkle on glass. He carries the snifter over to the desk and sets it down, full to the brim with DIAMONDS, next to Irene's jewelry box.

HAIKO
This glass of diamonds would be worth a good deal more than your jewelry if we took them both to a

dealer. But they mean nothing to me; they run like water through my fingers.

IRENE

They're worth much more than I can offer.

HAIKO

Would you like to have them.

IRENE

(Distracted)

Who wouldn't?

HAIKO

(Amused at her lack of attention)

You can have them, if they are worth more to you than Aston. Take these trinkets and walk away. Leave the boy with me; his life will be well spent in my hands.

IRENE

But they're not.

HAIKO

Then I'll trade you a life for a life. (Pointing to his son who does not look pleased with the turn of the conversation) That boy has a mother who is my wife, but she's not so young any more. One wishes that one could preserve the original flush of love, but the world grows on us. You will live here with me as my mistress and Aston will go free.

IRENE

(Nodding — reflectively)

That doesn't seem quite fair. Brian isn't your lover.

HAIKO

Fair? Here, I decide what's fair. And this, my dear, is very just: you are free to accept my bargain or to leave unharmed. I don't need to give you choices. It amuses me.

IRENE

He'll come after me.

HAIKO

I would hope so. I'm betting on it. He seems to be the type: foolish and full of ideals... I don't know if I would. Will you give up the little you have for this one hope?

IRENE

Yes.

HAIKO

Show me how little you regard my diamonds. Take this cup and throw these gems to the people eating outside like so many pennies.

IRENE

(Distracted)

It seems a waste.

HAIKO

I don't give a shit about them one way or another. Do you?

IRENE

I suppose not.

HAIKO

Show me. When you return Aston will be free and you will be mine.

Irene stands rigid for a moment and then picks up the snifter with determination and begins to move towards the door. Haiko watches her go. As Irene approaches the doors, Haiko's man throws them open.

We wheel around her so that, when she reaches the balcony, we are looking over the crowd up at her face though a shower of falling diamonds.

EXT. DOCKS IN SINGAPORE HELICOPTER — DAY

An helicopter flies over the city of Singapore and lands on an abandoned dock. Aston and Haiko's Lieutenant get out and run away from the wind.

Haiko's Lieutenant is carrying a DUFFEL BAG. When they get away from the wind Haiko's Lieutenant sets down the duffel bag and opens it. He takes out a BROWN PAPER PACKAGE and

hands it to ASTON. Both men shout over the sound of the helicopter.

 HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese, shouting)
You're free to go.

 ASTON (Chinese, shouting)
 (confused)
What? Why?

 HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese, shouting)
 (turning to go)
Take care. I'll miss you.

Haiko's Lieutenant runs back to the helicopter while Aston opens the package. The helicopter takes off as Aston unwraps Irene's jewelry box. Taped on the top of the box is a note. Aston lifts the note and reads it.

 HAIKO (V. O.)
Not these jewels, but the body they once adorned
bought you your freedom. When you come for her, I
hope you will not be so stupid as to run straight
into my guns again. I will be expecting much
better from you next time. — Haiko

EXT. IN FRONT OF HIGH-RISE IN HONG KONG — DAY

A large BLACK LEXUS pulls into the circular driveway in front of an upscale high-rise. The Lexus stops in front of the building's awning. Haiko's men open the doors while he and Irene get out of the car. Irene is dressed in a white gown of a South East Asian cut.

One of Haiko's men takes Irene's bags out of the trunk of the car. Haiko kisses Irene's hand and Haiko's Lieutenant leads her up the stairs to the door. Haiko's man follows with Irene's bags. Haiko watches them go.

INT. IRENE'S PENTHOUSE IN HONG KONG — DAY

Irene's penthouse is white and clean and new. The furnishings and appliances are expensive but they lack any personalized sense of style. Someone has simply gone to a fashionable store and ordered pre-assembled sets.

An open kitchen, which has two solid walls looks down onto a living room with sliding glass doors that open out onto a

balcony. An open dinning room is set off to the right and beyond that is a foyer with a hallway leading off to the bedroom and bathroom.

The penthouse is too large for Irene and she seems swallowed up in all its space. Although furnished, it is still lacking all those little things that would indicate that someone actually lived in it.

Irene is drinking tea at a BREAKFAST TABLE in the kitchen surrounded by a pile of BOOKS. In front of her a *New York Times* CROSSWORD PUZZLE, which has been cut out of the paper, has been abandoned near completion. She is staring out at the city.

We back out of the kitchen. Moving through the dinning room, we leave Irene in the distance and find two of Haiko's men playing chess at the dinning room table.

INT. INDOOR MALL IN HONG KONG — NIGHT

Irene is walking through a crowded mall talking to Haiko's Lieutenant. In the background, crowds of people can be seen shopping and strolling though the bright arcade. A number of Haiko's men are walking behind Irene and a few are carrying SHOPPING BAGS.

IRENE

When was the last time you saw him?

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT

I was the one who dropped him off in Singapore the day after you arrived.

IRENE

What did he say?

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT

I didn't give him time to realize what was happening. He was still confused when I left.

IRENE

I miss him.

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT

So do I.

INT. DINNING ROOM IN IRENE'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Two of Haiko's men are sitting around the dinning room table shooting dope. Irene, dressed in a night gown, is watching them from the hallway.

One of them draws the clear liquid out of a spoon with his needle. When he raises the needle to tap out the air bubbles, he looks up and is startled to see her. The other is too preoccupied with finding a vein to notice.

Irene smiles briefly and raises her hand in a half-wave. She turns to go back to her room and the man taps the bottom of the plunger, pushing a few drops of liquid out of his needle with the air bubbles.

INT. KITCHEN IN IRENE'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Two of Haiko's men are playing CHESS on the breakfast table in the kitchen. Irene comes up from behind and watches them play. They both glance up at her and then at one another.

One of the men stands up and pulls his chair over to Irene, offering it to her. When she sits, he goes and gets another chair for himself.

INT. KITCHEN IN IRENE'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

Irene is cooking in her kitchen. She has enlisted the help of two of Haiko's men and they are separating eggs, marinating meat, etc.

IRENE

That meat will need to sit. You can help with cutting these mushrooms. (To the other) How are those eggs coming?

INT. BEDROOM IN IRENE'S PENTHOUSE — NIGHT

It is pitch dark. A BEDSIDE LAMP is switched on and we see STILLER'S hand move out of the pool of light. Besides the lamp, Irene is sleeping in a QUEEN SIZED BED. As soon as the light comes on, Irene begins to wake.

Stiller sets a STYROFOAM CUP of coffee down on her bedside table under the lamp. Irene wakes slowly and fitfully but when she finally notices Stiller, sitting on the side of her bed, she sits bolt upright against the headboard, pulling her covers around her.

IRENE
(Startled but not scared)
What are you doing here?

STILLER
I came to get you.

IRENE
What? How did you get in?

STILLER
Through the door.

IRENE
Where are the guards?

STILLER
They're there.

IRENE
How did you get into my room?

STILLER
We picked your lock.

IRENE
Haiko sent you?!

STILLER
Yes.

IRENE
You still work for him?

STILLER
Yes. (Handing her the coffee.) Here's some
coffee. You need to wake up.

IRENE
You still work for him. You set me up... how
long...

STILLER
A while. I saw you in Virginia. I was interested.
My profession is really just a matter of buying
and selling. I cause changes of ownership which
already took place to be legal. It doesn't seem

to matter what I buy or how I sell it. I bought you and sold you – in a sense.

IRENE
Does Haiko know?

STILLER
He knows I'm not like him – or you. He knows I'll do things that neither of you'd ever consider doing, ever even think of. He pays me well for it.

Irene stares at him with disgust and some fear. He shrugs blankly.

STILLER (cont'd)
Get dressed. I'll wait by the door.

Stiller rises and leaves the room.

INT. HAIKO'S OFFICE IN HONG KONG – NIGHT

Irene is lead into Haiko's office. Haiko is sitting behind his desk. A number of his men are lounging around the room. There is ANOTHER MAN beaten an inch from death lying in a fetal position on the floor.

HAIKO
Hello Irene. Are you well?

IRENE
It's the middle of the night.

HAIKO
Yes... Thanks for coming. Someone has put a price on you. (Indicating the man on the floor) This man was paid to kill you.

IRENE
Who paid him?

HAIKO
We have just finished asking him. How should I punish him and his employer?

IRENE
Who was it?

HAIKO

What do you care? I brought you here to decide his punishment.

IRENE

Who...

HAIKO

(After a pause)

It was my wife.

IRENE

You can't hurt her.

HAIKO

She must be punished. She thinks that you are taking all my time; that I'm always with you.

IRENE

But I haven't seen you since you brought me to that apartment.

HAIKO

She doesn't know that.

IRENE

Where the hell have you been? Why are you keeping me? Your wife doesn't even / know where you...

HAIKO

(Cutting her off)

I thought that you would give me pleasure. I thought that owning you would give me some satisfaction but I have so little interest in things which can be bought. Maybe when Brian returns things will get more interesting. He will come for you, won't he? No one has had any news from him since we dropped him off.

IRENE

He will come.

The two of them stare at each other a moment. Haiko looks away for a few moments.

HAIKO

(Breaking his reverie)

You will move into the big house with my family.
My men will be able to keep a better eye on both
of you, and my wife will see that I have much
less interest in you than she does.

IRENE

That will only make her more uncomfortable.

HAIKO

(Amused)

She tries to have you killed and you worry about
her comfort... I'm still her husband, her comfort
is my concern.

EXT. OPEN-AIR MARKET IN SINGAPORE — DAY

We are moving quickly through narrow streets in Singapore.
Suddenly, we break out of the dark streets into a bustling
open-air market. We are assaulted by the shouts of vendors
hawking their wares, customers haggling and children
playing.

BOXES, overflowing with FRUITS and VEGETABLES, fill the
streets; trays of MEATS and SEAFOOD line storefronts.
Shops, which sell CLOTHING and KNICKKNACKS, have their
wares displayed on RACKS that bulge out onto the sidewalk.

Aston, dressed as an American tourist, is meandering
through the market. He is wearing jeans, a windbreaker, a
baseball cap, basketball shoes and a pair of dark shades.

He buys a few fish from an old woman and enters a camera
shop. We swing around the storefront window while he looks
at some digital cameras and zoom lenses.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Haiko's house is part of a walled estate consisting of a
number of buildings, a pool, and lush gardens. The
buildings are of an eclectic mid-nineties design,
characterized by walls of glass set into long lines of
steel and rough stone. They are surrounded by an abundant
garden.

A DARK GREY SEDAN winds up a driveway which is almost
completely enclosed by the lush garden. We follow the sedan
up the driveway until it pulls to a stop in front of a
complex of buildings jutting out from the side of the hill.

We move back to take in more of the estate. Detailed metal and stone work are set against open stretches of flat, dull wall. The buildings are split-leveled to such an extent that we cannot tell where one story ends and another begins.

All of the horizontal surfaces have been covered with thick gardens that thrust skyward and hang down in thick clusters.

We pull back yet more to see the estate in its surroundings. The terraces of this hanging garden look down the northern slope of Victoria Peak towards a modern Babylon. The curves of the Hong Kong Convention center can be seen jutting out into the water beyond Hong Kong's downtown and, on the other side of Victoria Harbor, Kowloon sprawls out in every direction.

INT. MAIN HOUSE OF HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

HAIKO'S WIFE is standing on a landing inside the main house looking out a window towards the driveway. She is watching Irene and a number of Haiko's men get out of the gray sedan.

HAIKO'S BUTLER hurries to the door and opens it. Irene walks in followed by a number of Haiko's men who are carrying her BAGS, they look slightly awkward and bashful.

Haiko's Wife watches them from a distance. Irene, overcoming her embarrassment, looks up at Haiko's Wife and the two women lock eyes.

Haiko's Butler breaks the tension by stepping between them and gesturing Irene towards some stairs on the left. Irene begins to walk in that direction, followed closely by Haiko's Butler. Haiko's men follow at a distance, carrying Irene's bags.

INT. IRENE'S ROOM AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Haiko's Butler shows Irene to her bedroom. It is a large room with sliding glass doors that open onto a third-story balcony. The place is well furnished with very recent pieces. A number of abstract paintings hang on the walls.

Irene motions to Haiko's men to leave her bags on the bed.

IRENE

Just put them here for now... Thank you.

Haiko's men leave followed by the Butler, who bows as he backs out of the room.

Irene wanders slowly around the room as one would in a hotel; absentmindedly checking the furnishings. When she comes to the sliding doors she opens them and steps out onto the balcony.

We follow her out and look down with her onto a huge pool surrounded by three sprawling buildings overgrown with blooming plants. Tucked away in a corner between two buildings, sloping up from the pool, is an elaborate water fountain.

Haiko and his Wife are sitting at a table on a stone patio near the pool; they are both silent. Haiko's Son is speaking to a number of Haiko's men at another table on the opposite side of the pool. No one seems to notice Irene.

INT. UNFURNISHED FLAT IN SINGAPORE - DAY

Aston is milling around a dingy, cramped studio apartment which is furnished with only a MATTRESS and a FOLDING CHAIR. The kitchen area is littered with the EMPTY BOXES of restaurant food spiked with pairs of dirty CHOPSTICKS.

A CAMERA is set up on a TRIPOD near a window with half closed blinds. On the bed, very neatly arranged, is a large collection of ESPIONAGE EQUIPMENT and a BRIEFCASE containing a LAPTOP and two GUNS. Laid out in careful piles on the bed, we see RECORDING EQUIPMENT, CAMERAS, CLIMBING GEAR, A GRAPPLING HOOK & GRAPPLING GUN, WIRES, COMPUTER CHIPS, small CIRCUIT BOARDS, and so forth.

Aston is moving back and forth between the bed and the camera. He is keeping an eye on the building across the street and taking a mental inventory of his equipment. He touches each item, not in geometrical order, but as though running through an arbitrary but well-known list.

EXT. POOL AT HAIKO'S ESTATE - DAY

Haiko is standing on a balcony lined with blackened steel COLUMNS, HANGING PLANTS and a wide SHEET OF FALLING WATER.

Below is a tiered water fountain and, beyond that, the pool. A number of Haiko's men, and some young women, are lounging around a table at one end of the pool, sunbathing.

Irene comes out of a building at the opposite end of the pool dressed in a bathing suit and carrying a TOWEL. She scans the scene. As she does so, Haiko draws back behind the broad waterfall that falls from the balcony above him down to a small pool near the water fountain.

A moment later, he slowly reemerges and watches Irene as she moves down to the edge of the pool and sits on her towel.

INT. HALLWAY IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Irene is walking pensively down a brightly lit hallway. The floors are a light hardwood and the bare white walls are broken up here and there with tall doors made of solid oak.

Haiko's Son suddenly steps out of one of the rooms almost hitting Irene with the door. The two stare at each other.

HAIKO'S SON

(With a thick accent)

My mother hates you.

IRENE

I know.

HAIKO'S SON

She wants to kill you.

IRENE simply stares at him.

HAIKO'S SON (cont'd)

Only my father prevents it.

Haiko's Son turns and walks rapidly down the hall. Irene watches him as he goes and then turns around and peeks into the open door of the room that Haiko's Son came out of.

INT. UNFURNISHED FLAT IN SINGAPORE - NIGHT

Aston has tidied up the apartment. The camera by the window has been put away and the kitchen is cleared out, if not clean. Aston is wearing black, pocket-covered cargo pants

and a black, military jacket, also covered with pockets. He is buckling on a CLIMBING HARNESS.

He has laid out all his equipment in a wide semi-circle on the floor. At the far right is his laptop, briefcase, and a pile of POWER BARS. He kneels in the center of the semi-circle and begins to systematically equip himself. When he gets to the power bars he has no more empty pockets so he stuffs them, one-by-one, into any spare space he can find.

INT. SITTING-ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

We see Irene poke her head into the room that Haiko's Son has just left. It is a large sitting-room with two sets of couches surrounding two coffee tables. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out over the bright lights of Hong Kong's skyline.

Haiko is sitting on one of the couches, leaning over a coffee table cleaning his gun. The gun is in pieces which have been methodical arranged on a pale green SQUARE OF SILK.

HAIKO
(Without looking up)
Hello Irene.

Irene says nothing but takes a little step forward to see what he is doing.

HAIKO (cont'd)
Come in.

Irene walks over to the couch.

HAIKO (cont'd)
(Gesturing to the couch opposite
himself - still not looking up)
Sit down.

Irene sits down and watches as Haiko slides the pieces of the gun back together. Haiko's fingers trace out the shapes of the inlaid jade dragons as he works.

HAIKO
(Holding the gun out towards Irene with
the ends of his fingers so that the
barrel points up)

Very beautiful, no?

IRENE

Yes.

HAIKO

(Shifting the sidearm into his palm
with his fingers in firing position)

It was my father's. It was given to him by a close friend... and then one day my father had to kill his friend. (Admiring the gun) So after he killed him... with his own gun... he took it to a jeweler, an old man who knew them both, and he had this dragon inlaid. (He points to a large dragon on the handle.) He was a young man then. That was the first friend he ever killed. Throughout his life there were others. Every time... after... he took his gun to the jeweler. When he gave it to me it was almost completely covered... My father died an old man. He went quietly. All of his friends were killed, shot, tortured, always in blood, always with violence, but not him. He died in his bed, calm, serene. Why do you think that was?

IRENE

I don't know.

HAIKO

Neither do I, but my men say that it was because of the gun. All those friends, the memories, the regrets. Because they are honored every time it speaks. They say that whoever carries this gun is protected by all those dead; that he will never be shot down, never die fighting.

IRENE

Do you believe that.

HAIKO

No. But they say that it doesn't matter whether I believe it or not, so I always carry it with me.

Haiko looks at Irene with a trace of a smile waiting for her to laugh at his joke but she merely watches him, expressionless.

HAIKO

(With an amused shrug)
But I know that this gun has killed many people
and I believe that it will soon kill your Brian,
my former lackey.

INT./EXT. UNFURNISHED FLAT/STREET & WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The apartment is now empty except for the mattress and the folding chair. Aston is laden with equipment.

He loops one end of a CLIMBING ROPE through a CARABINER attached to a BOLT which he has fixed to the window sill above the window and then attaches the other end of the rope to his GRAPPLING HOOK. He slides the hook into the gun and sights the roof of a warehouse across the street with a LASER SIGHT.

We look across the street through Aston's point of view. A door faces out onto the roof from a small shed built around a stairwell. The red BEAD of the laser sight finds the doorframe on the stairwell encasement.

Aston fires the grappling-hook gun and the hook sinks into the doorframe with a dull thud. He pulls the loose end of the rope tight through the carabiner and ties it off. He quickly sets a PULLEY BOX that is attached to his harness onto the rope and jumps out the window. He slides down the rope, across the street onto the roof of the warehouse.

He lands silently in front of the door. He releases a CATCH on the back of the grappling hook. With a click, the SHAFT slides out of the hole leaving the HEAD in the door frame.

He reloads the shaft and fires the rope back into his apartment. We hear a commotion on the stairs; someone is running up them.

Aston reaches into a pocket and takes out some WHITE PUTTY which he uses to fill the large hole left by the grappling hook.

As the door is unlocked, Aston silently moves around to the back of the stairwell shed. A guard comes out and scans the roof. He and Aston circle the shed once and then the guard reenters the building.

INT./EXT. DINING ROOM AT HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

We are outside looking through floor-to-ceiling windows at the interior of Haiko's dining room. The dinning room is set down a few steps from a large open kitchen and above an expansive living room. Reflected in the windows we can see the lights of the city skyline around Victoria Bay.

Haiko and his Wife are sitting opposite each other hosting a large dinner party. The guests are BUSINESS MEN and PROFESSIONAL CRIMINALS, their WIVES and MISTRESSES. Irene, Stiller, Haiko's Son and Haiko's Lieutenant are all present.

SERVANTS bustle back and forth between the dinning room and the kitchen. The guests, seated around the long table, come from a number of Asian, European, and American nations.

Everyone appears to be having a good time, but the room is full of tension. Occasionally, Haiko's Wife glares briefly at Irene. Stiller is talking intently to the man next to him, nonetheless when he looks at Irene, his gaze lingers.

INT. HAIKO'S WAREHOUSE IN SINGAPORE — DAY

We are looking down on Haiko's Singapore warehouse from the height of the curved steel rafters. The warehouse is massive, full of long rows of boxes and crates stacked on shelves 40 feet high.

At the top of one of these shelves, Aston has moved some boxes around so that there is a small indentation a couple of boxes deep that cannot be seen from the floor.

We move down towards Aston, who is sitting cross-legged in this space hunched over a DIGITAL CAMERA attached to his laptop. He has a FILM CAMERA hanging from a strap around his neck.

The nest is littered with his equipment, PLASTIC BOTTLES, and some SEALED PLASTIC BAGS containing POWER BAR WRAPPERS and HUMAN WASTE, etc.

Once the digital camera is finished downloading to the laptop, Aston wipes the memory and crawls out to the edge of the shelf.

We move in and watch Aston as he sights through the camera. We follow the gaze of the camera as it swings out to focus on a number of Haiko's men in an open section of the

warehouse who are dismantling firearms and loading the pieces into unassembled furniture.

Aston takes a number of shots with each camera.

INT. HAIKO'S WAREHOUSE IN SINGAPORE — DAY

The lighting is very low. We can barely make out Aston curled up in boxes in Haiko's Singapore warehouse. Aston, asleep, is unshaven and filthy. There is more debris in his nest.

He is woken by the sound of large doors being opened and the lights being turned on. He climbs over to the edge of the crates with his camera to watch the scene.

We follow his point of view to see three TINY CARS drive into the warehouse and the doors close behind them. Haiko's men drag two CAPTIVE MEN out of one of the cars and seat them in CHAIRS on either side of a RICKETY TABLE.

Haiko and his Lieutenant get out of another car and walk over to the table. Haiko whispers in one of the captive's ear while his men hold the captive's hands palm down on the table. In the background, Haiko's Lieutenant goes over to a TOOLBOX and takes out a MEAT CLEAVER.

The captive makes no response until Haiko's Lieutenant starts removing knuckles with a meat cleaver. Haiko's men hold both of the captives still. Eventually, after much howling, Haiko looks satisfied.

He takes his gun out. The man falls to his knees holding Haiko's calves, begging and crying. We pull back to see that Aston has been taking pictures all the while.

We move back in to see Haiko shoot one elbow and then the other. He chuckles a little when he shoots the man in the back of the head. The blood makes a widening puddle around Haiko's shoes. We close in on Haiko's face and slow to a still.

CUT TO BLACK:

ACT 3 TITLE - WHITE AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND

Mr. Haiko

INT. DINING ROOM AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Haiko is sitting at the long dining-room table, PEN in hand, going over accounts. He is wearing no tie, his shirt is open, and his sleeves are rolled up. He is wearing a shoulder holster. His jacket hangs neatly over a chair besides him.

His gun and his CUFF LINKS are laid out on the table in front of him. Irene comes in wearing an evening dress and walks over to a WET BAR in the living room to mix herself a drink. Her dress is cut low in the back. Haiko watches her admiringly.

IRENE

(Without turning)

Where have you been?

HAIKO

Come here.

Irene finishes mixing her MANHATTAN and then comes up the stairs into the dinning room. She moves quite close to Haiko. He turns his chair to face her. He stays seated but leans back and gazes up at her.

HAIKO (cont'd)

Very fine. An excellent purchase... I was in Singapore torturing some men. There was a raid. I was hoping that your Brian, my flunky was involved. So I went to talk to the survivors myself... I can never understand why they surrender. It's much less painful to die fighting. (His voice becomes soft.) The second man took hours to die... I kept thinking of you while he was shuddering... I was thinking about how delicate your body is and wondering how it would have held up under the stress of that torture. What would I have felt if I had been watching you taken apart like he was? I think you would die much more quickly / ...

IRENE

(Sharply)

I hope for it almost every day!

HAIKO

You shouldn't drink so much...

Haiko places his hand on her waist and the small of her back. She doesn't stir.

HAIKO (cont'd)

People may take it for fear, but you don't fear me, do you?

She is silent. He releases her waist with a gesture of distaste.

HAIKO (cont'd)

But you are very beautiful. I thought you would please me more when your hair was a little longer. (With a chuckle) Maybe I can't take pleasure in anything which can be bought... No, but I'll have some amusement from you. I thought that there were no more games for me; no more games and no more fights. But now I have both; in you and in my lackey... (He pauses and looks her up and down.) Go on, go drink.

EXT. POOL AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Irene is sunbathing and reading a BOOK in a LOUNGE CHAIR at one end of the pool. On the other end of the pool, Stiller and some of Haiko's men are working around a table spread with BRIEFCASES, PAPERS, TEAS, and COFFEES.

Stiller is wearing a nearly transparent white short-sleeved shirt, open in front, revealing a tight fitting wife-beater. His arms and shoulders are covered in jailhouse tattoos.

Occasionally, he stares across the pool at Irene. Irene is wearing sunglasses which hide her eyes. Haiko comes out of a pair of sliding doors behind Irene and walks towards her. He picks up a light POOL CHAIR on his way and sits down in it besides her.

HAIKO

A beautiful day.

IRENE

How long has Stiller been working for you?

HAIKO

He worked for my father when I was still young. He was a different man then.

IRENE

I don't see how you can trust him.

HAIKO

I know who he really is. For my father he was just a thug, a killer, but for me he is much more. I discovered him, I found his use.

IRENE

He scares me...

HAIKO

(With a chuckle)

But he doesn't scare me, even though I have more reason to fear him. I know what he's really capable of. And he knows all of the details of my business... He weighs every life at a price. His reasoning is never marred by considerations of conscience or passion.

IRENE

What does he do for you?

HAIKO

(Calling across the pool)

Sammy!

Stiller silently excuses himself from the table and quickly walks over to Haiko and Irene. He stands in front of Irene, blocking the sunlight from her face.

HAIKO

You must be a formidable man, Sammy; Irene here is afraid of you.

STILLER

(With an grin)

Well, she's only a girl. She's only a girl and I'm only a lawyer. Lawyers are said to be the scum that holds the world together. Necessary but harmless.

HAIKO

But Irene's a Christian and they say that Christ acts as a sort of advocate, a lawyer between a Christian and her god. So in a sense, she

worships a lawyer. What do you think of this other lawyer, Sam?

STILLER

(Grinning more)

I suppose it's possible he may have been the Messiah.

HAIKO

But you still don't worship him.

STILLER

It wasn't really worship that he wanted. He asked for love, remember. My love isn't given for asking.

HAIKO

I'm not sure I understand you.

STILLER

You will. In time you will.

HAIKO

In time?

STILLER

I used to hope for the time to come; but I don't hope anymore. I only wait and watch. I clean up your messes. I buy and I sell. No one seems to pay me any mind.

HAIKO

It hardly matters. I don't give a shit for these metaphysical speculations... I don't see why I should be required to have prejudices concerning the universe. It may be that there are gods somewhere; I just can't imagine that they would waste their time thinking about me...

IRENE

Some choices we make out of need, a slight few we make of our own volition, but the vast majority are made for us by our indifference.

Both men stare at Irene for a moment. She stares back at them, expressionless behind her sunglasses.

HAIKO

Well Sam, all this philosophy is beginning to bore me, let's get back to work.

Stiller smiles. The two of them walk together back to the table where Stiller was working. As Haiko approaches, one of his men brings over a chair for him.

EXT. SINGAPORE STREET ASTON — DAY

Aston is walking quickly down a narrow, overhanging street in Singapore. The air is full of brightly colored COMMERCIAL SIGNS that jut out from all levels above the road. PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLES and VEHICLES jostle for position.

Aston is weaving through the crowd, talking on a CELL PHONE. He is clean again and back in his preferred mode of dress. He is wearing a light jacket, loose fitting pants, leather shoes, and a vintage shirt open at the neck - lapels covering his jacket's collar. He dodges pedestrians and traffic as he talks.

ASTON

Yes, I got the photos... Everyone important, including Haiko... No. Murder; he shot a man in the back of the head... Digital and film... No, I'm gonna hang onto them. I have to keep you honest... I'll bring prints to the meeting. After we've picked him up I'll send you the negatives... He'll be in town on the 16th; set up the meeting with the local authorities before that... Alright, keep in touch.

EXT. POOL AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Irene is sunning herself on a LOUNGE CHAIR by the pool. A MANHATTAN sits on a small table besides her. Stiller walks up to her. He pulls a POOL CHAIR over to face her lounge chair and sits down, adjusting the crease in his pants.

IRENE

Can I help you?

STILLER

We thought maybe you were bored.

IRENE
(Taking a sip of her Manhattan)
Who?

STILLER
Haiko and I. Actually, I thought maybe you were bored, and Haiko thought maybe I was right.

IRENE
Oh really? Well I am.

STILLER
There's some art I want you to look at. It's from part of the Taiwan collection that was supposed to show across North America but it's not gonna make it in one piece.

IRENE
You've stolen some art and now you want me to appraise it?

STILLER
Well, you're a curator: we thought you might have some fun. It's good stuff.

IRENE
You stole it for my benefit? From the Taiwan collection. It's probably priceless.

STILLER
Sure, but we'd like to know just exactly how priceless you think it is.

IRENE
No. Forget it. I'm not going to help you value your stolen art.

STILLER
(A pause)
Well, suit yourself.

INT. MEETING ROOM IN THE SINGAPORE POLICE STATION — DAY

A number of high level American and Indonesian OFFICIALS are having a meeting in a high-rise in downtown Singapore. One wall of the room is a window that looks out onto the city. The opposite wall is solid and nearly bare. The two other walls are solid and feature large corkboards.

About fifteen people are seated around a large seminar table. These include SINGAPORE POLICE, both plain clothed and uniformed, INDONESIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL, all in uniform, and DEA AGENTS, all in plain cloths.

Irene's Cousin is sitting with the other DEA AGENTS. Aston is at the head of the table. All of them have various papers in front of them.

The PHOTOS from Aston's stakeout of Haiko's Singapore warehouse are pinned to the corkboards on the walls along with a blueprint of the warehouse. We see various shots of Haiko and his men. One photo shows Haiko looking down the barrel of his gun at the lowered head of a man prostrated at his feet, begging.

DEA LEADER

...Okay, that takes care of the warehouse.
(Turning to SINGAPORE COP 1.) Your team will bring in Mr. Haiko. Brian will go with you and make himself useful. Haiko's plane gets in at 3:35, his position will be monitored until he settles and we can begin.

ASTON

He'll go to Lan Suk's Place.

DEA LEADER

Yeah. Maybe. Anyway we'll let you know.

INT./EXT. COP CAR/STREET IN FRONT OF LAN SUK'S PLACE - DAY

Aston and four SINGAPORE COPS, in plain clothes, are sitting in a large late model BEIGE SEDAN across from a new restaurant constructed in glass and steel. The sign above the restaurant reads "Lan Suk's Place."

Aston is checking the status of his guns; one under each arm and one strapped above his right heel. The others watch him silently. He releases a clip, checks it and slides it back in. He cocks the first round into the chamber.

When he's done, he pulls a zippered MAKEUP POUCH from his pocket. It contains DISGUISE PIECES & MAKEUP. ASTON puts on a fake nose and an imperial goatee and begins to apply makeup.

SINGAPORE COP 1
What are you doing?

ASTON
They know me. This will help throw them off.

SINGAPORE COP 1
(Softly)
Bastard.

SINGAPORE COP 2
(In broken English – pointing at
Aston's goatee)
What you call that?

ASTON
A beard... A goatee...

SINGAPORE COP 2
A goat... I have a goat once, long (he gestures
to the middle of his chest)... It was burned...
My friend had flame, a torch to cut metal, burned
my goat...

All of the Cops and Aston watch him silently as he speaks.
A CELL PHONE begins to RING. All of the men slowly reach
for their phones as Singapore Cop 2 continues to speak.

SINGAPORE COP 2 (cont'd)
I cut the rest... No good to have short goat
after long...It's no good to go back... I cut it
all off.

Once Singapore Cop 1 is satisfied that the other is done
speaking, he pulls out his phone and answers it.

SINGAPORE COP 1
(Into the phone)
Uh... Yeah... (He hangs up.) Okay. We go.

The four men get out of the car, straighten their jackets,
ties, sun glasses, and begin to walk across the street to
Lan Suk's Place.

INT. LAN SUK'S PLACE - DAY

Lan Suk's Place is a large, bustling restaurant with split
levels and many stairs leading to each level. It is made

almost entirely of glass and steel with a high vaulted roof made of glass panes suspended from thin steel beams.

The upper levels jut out over the lower levels at all angles. In the center of the lowest level is a tall water fountain consisting of planes of glass intersecting each other at every turn, over which cascade continuous sheets of water.

The restaurant is packed with the lunch crowd. Haiko and his men are sitting at a table on one of the upper levels. Aston and the Singapore Cops walk across the first level towards various stairs leading up to where Haiko is sitting.

They are spotted by two lookouts who are sitting near the railing. One of the lookouts runs to warn Haiko, the other stands up and pulls out a pistol. Aston and the Singapore Cops pull out their weapons and scatter through the tables.

EXT. HAIKO'S WAREHOUSE IN SINGAPORE - DAY

Haiko's Singapore warehouse has no parking lot and takes up a small city block. The heavy corrugate siding looms above the narrow city streets, crowding them.

A swarm of OFFICIAL VEHICLES descends on the warehouse. Teams of MEN pour out of the vehicles, charge the doors, and fall against the walls. Two of the delivery doors are blown out with explosives, windows are broken and the fighting begins in earnest.

INT. LAN SUK'S PLACE - DAY

Haiko and his men pull their weapons and spread out. The fighting begins. The DINERS and BYSTANDERS run and duck beneath their tables.

INT./EXT. LAN SUK'S PLACE/HAIKO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

The scene cuts back and forth between the raid on the warehouse and the shootout at Lan Suk's Place. Both fights are involved and bloody. When the dust clears the warehouse has been secured; Haiko's men are either dead or have surrendered. Of the combatants at Lan Suk's Place, only Haiko and Aston are left alive.

INT. LAN SUK'S PLACE - DAY

Both Haiko and Aston are crawling around in the debris trying to prevent the nearby diners from giving away their position. Aston aims his gun at one of the bystanders a few tables down, who screams and ducks. Haiko moves in that direction. Aston sneaks up behind him and puts a gun to his head.

 HAIKO (Chinese)
 (Grinning)
Much better than the last time, but hardly
smooth.

 ASTON (Chinese)
 (Taking Haiko's gun and holstering it)
Quite. Hands to head.

Haiko puts his hands on the back of his head and Aston cuffs them. He leads Haiko over to the body of the Singapore Cop who had been driving. Aston frisks the dead cop for his KEYS.

INT. COP CAR — DAY

Aston is driving the large late model gray sedan. Haiko is riding in the passenger seat. Haiko, who is sitting uncomfortably on his hands, has to strain to remain upright in his seat as Aston takes a hard right. Aston removes his fake nose and goatee.

 HAIKO (Chinese)
What do you have on me?

 ASTON (Chinese)
Murder. I have photos of you executing that man
on the 4th in the warehouse.

 HAIKO (Chinese)
 (Reflecting for a moment)
I can never remember dates... (In English) You
must be much smarter than your infatuation with
this girl would suggest.

 ASTON (English)
How is she?

HAIKO

She's comfortable... I think. She sees me as no more than an annoyance... I would be much more pleased with her if she hated me. No one has ever considered me with so little regard. (He grins) She is a pure spirit.

ASTON

You're beginning to admire her.

HAIKO

I'm past beginning. She's just as stubborn as you; just as stupid / ...

Aston backhands Haiko with his right hand and takes the wheel with his left. Haiko manages to turn away so that the blow glances off the side of his face.

ASTON

You know I can't let you talk that kind of trash.

HAIKO

(Grinning and shaking it off)

In the end, I suppose, one of us will kill the other. It's the only rational conclusion... (A pause) But not here, not in Singapore. Here I won't even fight with you. How do you think you took me so easily? Right now my life and my freedom are very important. To both of us... or at least to her.

ASTON

Why? Where is she?

HAIKO

You're a strange blend of cunning and folly. My wife has tried to have Irene killed, twice. I moved her into the family house to keep an eye on both of them. I was expecting you in Hong Kong. If I go away in Singapore, I won't have much control over the organization; my son will take over. He'll humor his mother. A boy always does. (Beat.) How quickly can you get to Hong Kong?

There is a long pause. Aston continues to drive, staring out at the road.

HAIKO (cont'd)
(Softly)
Brian, I would never lower myself to ask you for anything on my own account.

ASTON
(Sharply)
I could never make it. The cops on your payroll will let him know as soon as you're booked; and I'd have to go in alone, unprepared. They'd cut me to pieces.

HAIKO
I still don't understand why you did it here.

ASTON
(Angrily pulling off the road into a nearly empty parking lot)
Oh shut up! I'm thinking.

Aston parks the car, gets out, slams the door and paces up and down a couple of times. Then he goes over to Haiko's door and opens it.

ASTON
Get out.

Haiko gets out and Aston unlocks the handcuffs.

ASTON (cont'd)
I bet no one's ever insulted you and lived.

Aston takes out Haiko's pistol with his left hand and holds it ready at his side while he slaps Haiko back and forth across the face three times.

Haiko trembles with rage but manages not to strike Aston. Aston, chuckling, releases the clip from Haiko's gun and begins to empty the rounds into his pocket with his thumb.

ASTON (cont'd)
Yes, she must be growing on you. You're even beginning to lose your disdain for life.

Aston cocks Haiko's gun, removing the bullet from the chamber. He pockets the last bullet and hands the weapon to Haiko.

ASTON (cont'd)
You'll need all the help you can get from this
when I come to Hong Kong.

Haiko shudders to think that he would need any help at all.

INT. SINGAPORE POLICE STATION COPS ASTON - DAY

Aston is running through a large room in the Singapore Police Station towards the smaller room where the previous meeting was held. The room is full of desks with people working at many of them.

Two of the outer walls are half wall, half windows. The wall that Aston is running towards is solid and contains four evenly spaced solid doors. Many of the people working at the desks look up startled and then return to work. An Indonesian OFFICER who was in the previous meeting sees Aston running and follows him into the conference room.

INT. MEETING ROOM SINGAPORE POLICE STATION - DAY

Aston rushes into the room followed by the Officer. Irene's Cousin is sitting at the table reading a newspaper. When Aston and the Officer enter, he watches them over the paper. Aston walks up to the photos of Haiko, on the far wall, and begins to remove them.

IRENE'S COUSIN
Brian, what's going on?

ASTON
(Shoving the photos into his pockets)
The deal's off. (Moving towards the door.) We
can't bring him in here.

Both Irene's Cousin and the Officer move to block the door. The Officer closes the door.

IRENE'S COUSIN
Slow down, Brian. What d'you mean we can't bring
him in here? Where are the others?

ASTON
If we lock him down in Singapore, they'll kill
Irene.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Nobody's gonna kill Irene. Give me the photos.

OFFICER

You're gonna fuck us over some girl?

IRENE'S COUSIN & ASTON

Shut up!

IRENE'S COUSIN

Where is she?

ASTON

In Hong Kong. At Haiko's main house with his son and wife. They'll burn her alive.

OFFICER

She's worthless to you now. They've probably been gang-banging her for months.

ASTON

(To Irene's Cousin)

I can't let him talk this trash.

IRENE'S COUSIN

We can figure this out. We'll keep the arrest under wraps. Where did he go?

OFFICER

She's nothing more than his whore.

Aston pulls out a GUN and covers Irene's Cousin while he kicks the shit out of the Officer. He takes out a pair of HANDCUFFS, cuffs Irene's Cousin to a cross bar underneath the SEMINAR TABLE and gags him with his own TIE. He handcuffs the limp body of the Officer to the table as well, using the Officer's own HANDCUFFS.

ASTON

(To Irene's Cousin)

Sorry, I can't risk it.

INT. SINGAPORE POLICE STATION - DAY

Aston is running back out of the station. He runs through the large room full of desks, out a door in one of the half windowed walls, down a long corridor to an elevator door.

INT. FOYER OF SINGAPORE POLICE STATION - DAY

The elevator door opens into a large, open foyer. About halfway through the foyer stands a security blockade with a METAL DETECTOR and a X-RAY BELT.

As Aston walks quickly across the foyer, an alarm begins to sound. A SECURITY GUARD at the metal detector tries to stop Aston but he gets by and exits the building in a hail of bullets.

EXT. IN FRONT OF SINGAPORE POLICE STATION - DAY

Aston runs out of the station followed by a number of cops. He runs down the street to where a civilian is starting a small MOTORCYCLE. Aston grabs the bike and takes off, weaving through traffic, while the pursuing cops take a stand and start shooting.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

Aston is standing in front of the MIRROR in a small, grimy public bathroom containing only a SINK, a TOILET and a PAPER-TOWEL DISPENSER. There is a SHOPPING BAG at his feet. He takes out his makeup pouch, ages his face, and grays his hair.

When he is satisfied, he puts his makeup away, picks up the bag and begins to change. He takes everything out of his pockets and puts the various items on the rim of the sink. He puts on a cheap synthetic shirt and a clip-on tie, a dull gray suit and faded black shoes.

He looks like a middle aged salesman down on his luck. He steps up to the mirror and examines himself. He starts putting the things laying on the rim of the sink back into his pocket. He takes his BILLFOLD from the sink and counts his MONEY.

INT. COVERED MALL IN SINGAPORE - DAY

Haiko is walking down a busy commercial arcade. The street is full of BOOTHS and VENDORS. The light is muted by large strips of TRANSLUCENT CLOTH that have been hung across the road from the roofs of the buildings on either side. The crowd of merchants and customers is lively and loud. Haiko is talking on a CELL PHONE as he threads his way through the crowd.

HAIKO (Chinese)

...I'll need Chang... No, it will have to be by boat until I'm closer to Hong Kong... He's still with Sevelor Trading... Brian? I guess he's on the run now too.. One of our informants says he managed to get out with the evidence that tied me into it... Yes, of course, so tell Chang to move it... Give me Stiller... (In English) Sammy... Never better... I'm going to have Chang bring me on the yacht... Listen, keep an eye on Irene, but don't let her know what happened here... I don't want her to know anything she doesn't hear from me... Yes, I think Brian will be coming soon. He's on the run right now and he'll have a hard time getting out of Singapore. I want you to send someone to pick him up; someone he likes. He can come with me... I owe him that much, at least... Okay, put Flessner & Webb on the defense for this one. They're good at creating confusion (We begin to move back and the sounds change focus from Haiko to the ambient noise) with these international things. Also they have contacts here... We'll talk strategy when I get back...

EXT. WHARF SMUGGLING SHIP - DAY

Aston, still in the cheap suit, is walking down an industrial wharf towards a midsize SMUGGLING SHIP. The ship is small for an ocean going craft. It is made of steel, rusting in places, and covered with thick coats of enamel in white and blue with black trim.

The crew is getting her ready for sea. A number of SAILORS and DOCK WORKERS are loading SHRINK-WRAPPED CRATES into the hold with the ship's LOADING CRANE.

The 1st MATE is walking around the deck directing the sailors. As Aston approaches, the 1st Mate leans on the ship's railing near the GANGWAY and watches him. Aston walks up the gangway and stops at the top before he reaches the deck of the ship.

ASTON

Where you headed?

1st MATE

Bangkok.

ASTON

Do you have room for a passenger? I'll make it worth your while. I can also work.

1st MATE

No papers?

ASTON

No.

1st MATE

American?

ASTON

Yes.

1st MATE

2000 American and labor.

Aston pulls out his billfold and takes out 8 HUNDREDS, leaving only small BILLS.

ASTON

I have 800 and this.

Aston unclips the cheap tie and unbuttons his shirt. He reaches around behind his neck and unclasps a NECKLACE. He brings the necklace up in front of him revealing a RING which hangs between the two men's eyes. It is the ring that Irene gave him at her father's party.

1st MATE

Let's see it.

Aston steps onto the deck of the ship. He takes the ring off the necklace and hands it to the 1st Mate, who examines it closely. After a few seconds the 1st Mate looks up.

1st MATE (cont'd)

Okay. Give me the cash. (Aston hands it to him.)
Go get your things, you can start work now.

ASTON

I'm ready.

EXT. WHARF SMUGGLING SHIP - DAY

Aston, with no jacket and rolled sleeves, is helping load cargo onto the smuggling craft using the crane. He looks up from his work towards the dock and notices Haiko's Lieutenant walking along the wharf, looking around.

Aston excuses himself from the work and goes over to the ship's railing where he left his jacket and shoulder holster. He picks up his things and begins to move slowly towards the prow. He is watching Haiko's Lieutenant all the while.

He puts on his HOLSTER and jacket, takes out his GUN and SILENCER, and screws the two together concealing this action between his body and the ship's railing. He jumps over the railing and down onto the dock in a single motion.

He lands hard and Haiko's Lieutenant steps back a pace. Aston approaches Haiko's Lieutenant with the gun behind his back. The crew of the smuggling craft has stopped their work to watch the scene.

ASTON (Chinese)
Hello there, Looking for someone?

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese)
(With a slight smile, peering at Aston,
trying to see past the disguise)
Yes... you...

ASTON (Chinese)
Did Haiko send you?

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese)
Yes, he wants to return the favor. We'll take you
as far as Hong Kong and cut you loose there.

ASTON (Chinese)
Why should I trust you?

Haiko's Lieutenant just stares at Aston.

ASTON (Chinese - cont'd)
Fine, when do we leave?

HAIKO'S LIEUTENANT (Chinese)
They're waiting for us. We should go.

Aston glances back at the smuggling craft before he and Haiko's Lieutenant move off. The ship's crew is watching them.

ASTON

Let's not waste time.

They move off quickly. As they go, Aston takes the silence off the gun and puts both pieces back in his holster.

EXT. CHANG'S YACHT — TWILIGHT

CHANG'S YACHT is a replica of a British Clipper schooner, designed and built in the 1840's for transporting opium from Calcutta to Hong Kong before the second Opium War. It is 158' in length and boasts two masts. The schooner's decks and trim are a deep hardwood that contrast beautifully with the cream colored hull and sails.

Aston is standing to the starboard side of the quarter deck, leaning against the wood trim of a railing, staring out to sea. Although the sun has set, the sky is still quite bright.

Haiko comes out from the captain's cabin beneath the quarter deck carrying two GLASSES OF WHISKY and stands beside Aston, staring off in the same direction. He hands Aston one of the glasses and Aston takes it without turning.

Throughout the following conversation neither man ever turns towards the other; they both just stare into the middle distance sipping calmly.

HAIKO

What are you looking for? The sea is a blank, it has no answers.

ASTON

I'm not looking. I'm missing... Wanting... Missing a pair of bright eyes, a familiar smile. I'm wanting her laughter. Laughter that I used to hold and never really cherished... I knew her as a child, but when I first really wanted her, she was a young woman and her father's house was full of laughter.

HAIKO

She's as beautiful as ever, but I never heard her laughter. Not her real laughter. When I first met her, she already knew she was in my power. She just accepted this fact, as though it were a storm or an earthquake. Something that just had to be put up with... I hate her tolerance of me. I sometimes don't know if I'd rather fuck her or kill her.

ASTON

She is beautiful, but when I first began to love her, it wasn't just her body I desired. I wanted her to share her life with me. I wanted her to fill my house with laughter. The two of us are very different, but we link together. We each fill out what the other lacks.

HAIKO

When I first really wanted her she was already mine. But she considered this only a minor inconvenience. It was merely the price she paid for something she wanted. She was able to make a sound decision concerning her desires. There is a great deal of similarity between she and I.

ASTON

I'll start planing your ruin tomorrow. I'm gonna bring your whole world down around you, and one of us will kill the other. But tonight we drink - together. I don't have the energy to hate you. When I'm not wanting and missing, I'm only planning and waiting.

HAIKO

Tonight we talk and drink - and dream - like countless other idiots before us. Brian, whatever we do in Hong Kong will be an absurdity. We're both drunk. Loaded on eyes and lips and legs. But even in this we're different, because what I do there will make a mockery of everything I am. I should just kill you before I make a fool out of myself.

ASTON

You're already ridiculous, Haiko. You only contemplate what you can take. You never consider the unknown - you never imagine what you can

give. You use the world but in the end, you'll have only the stings of your weight in flesh. But I'll have all the actions of a lifetime.

HAIKO

No Brian, you're the fool. What is given is inaccessible, doubtful and then lost. A vivid appetite perceives - with certainty - the accessibility of every woman, when properly handled - even one who's lost - or lost to us.

EXT. PRIVATE DOCK ON HONG KONG ISLAND - DAY

A large house looks down on a private dock on the south side of Hong Kong island. A couple of large black late model SEDANS are parked in a driveway that runs down besides the house to the dock. Chang's yacht is pulling away from the slip under full motor.

Haiko's men are milling around checking the grounds and packing BAGS into the cars. Two young Asian women in bathing suits are watching them from the back porch of the house.

Aston is standing on the dock near the yacht watching the women. Haiko and Haiko's Lieutenant come down the gangway onto the dock. Haiko approaches Aston. Some of his men come over and stand around as the two men talk.

HAIKO

We'll leave you here. Do you need anything? Do you have any money?

ASTON

I'll be alright.

Haiko turns to go.

ASTON (cont'd)

I could use another gun. I always carry two.

Haiko stops and looks around at his men. He takes out his own gun and hands it to Aston. Aston takes the gun and examines it.

HAIKO

It was my father's gun. It should serve you well.

Haiko continues on his way to the car where one of his men holds the door for him. As he is about to get in, he pauses and calls back to Aston.

HAIKO

(Gesturing towards his men)

Do you know what they say about that gun?

ASTON

What's that?

HAIKO

They say that whoever carries it leads a charmed life; that no one will ever be killed while carrying that weapon.

Haiko grins at Aston and gets into the car. One of his men closes the door. Haiko's men all take a few last glances at Aston before they get into the cars and drive off. Aston watches the two cars until they disappear.

He looks up at the women and then turns his attention to the gun. He switches it admiringly from one hand to the other as he walks towards the edge of the dock. He tests the weight of it in each hand and looks down the sight. He releases the CLIP, notes that it's loaded and slides the clip back into place. He looks at the handle and runs a finger gently down the back of a DRAGON. Finally, he takes the barrel in his right hand and, leaning back a little, throws the gun as far as he can out into the water.

INT. LARGE FURNISHED FLAT IN HONG KONG — NIGHT

We are looking at the door of a large furnished flat. The living room, kitchen and entrance area are all one room. The kitchen is separated from the living room by an COUNTER-TOP ISLAND on the other side of which is a CIRCULAR TABLE of matte steel.

Beyond the table, two steps lead down to the living room. In the center of the living room, two BLACK COUCHES, made of canvas and matte steel, face each other across a long matte STEEL COFFEE TABLE.

The kitchen is also furnished in matte steel with black trim. All of the floors are a dark hardwood. Large windows look out over the bright lights of downtown Hong Kong.

We hear the door being unlocked. The door swings open and Aston, well-dressed again, picks up two large ALUMINUM SUITCASES, one in each hand. He walks in and kicks the door closed behind him.

Aston walks over to one of the couches and sets the suitcases down flat on the steel coffee table. He pops the clasps open on the cases and opens them revealing rows of HANDGUNS and two DISMANTLED RIFLES laid out on gray foam.

Aston takes a CELL PHONE out of his breast pocket, sits down on the couch and makes a call. As he is talking he picks up the guns one by one and examines them, feeling their balance and looking down their sights.

ASTON

Hey, Man. What's up? ... Yeah, it's me... Well it's a long story. But listen I've got a job lined up... Well it's gonna be a little different this time... Well that's the thing. I've got somebody here who's willing / ... Hong Kong... Just hear me out. I've found someone to cover all the expenses but we're gonna have to get our payment on the job... Yeah, well it is a heist... I know, but this is important. It may be the most important job of my life... Yeah well it is personal, Irene's involved... Fuck all that. I need you here. Her life is at stake and I have to go in. Don't make me do it alone... Good. Bring the whole team. Like I said it's personal so we can't count on getting any special clearance... I know, I'm working on her father to see if he can bring the local authorities on board, but you know he hates me... If you're gonna bring in any equipment you'll have to get it by customs... Fine. It's your call. But I have some resources here as well. I'm working for some people who want him out of the way. Talk it over with the others and give me a call... Alright just let me know what you decide and I'll start to line up the rest... Thanks. I owe you... Alright, talk to you soon.

Aston sets his phone on the coffee table, pulls out his gun and sets it in one of the cases. He looks down at the weapons, running his hands over them until they come across two IDENTICAL HANDGUNS. He tests the weight of the guns for

a second before holstering them, one under each shoulder. He picks up his phone and begins dialing.

INT. DINING ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Stiller is seated at the dinning room table looking over legal papers, etc. His CELL PHONE and a CALCULATOR are laid out on the table in front of him. Irene comes in and, without saying a word, goes to the bar in the living room to mix herself a drink.

STILLER
(Stopping his work to watch her)
Hello, Irene.

Irene silently mixes her drink.

STILLER (cont'd)
Do you despise me, as well as fear me?

Irene finishes making her drink and turns around to face Stiller, leaning back against the bar. She stares at him while she sips her MANHATTAN.

STILLER (cont'd)
(Gesturing vaguely at the papers in front of him)
You see what my life has come to? I've turned into the kind of man my father was. He made it possible for men who were criminals to escape the consequences of their crimes. I make crimes that haven't even happened yet, appear legal. I make the men who commit these crimes look like respectable business men. I don't think anyone's fooled, but no one seems to give a shit.

IRENE
Did you love your father?

STILLER
He was my father... I didn't know him well... I never understood him... Yes, I guess I did love him. I guess I still do.

IRENE
Are you surprised?

STILLER

I don't know. Surprise comes from having too many expectations. From not understanding that life is uncertain at best. I wouldn't have predicted it, that's all. My father was a good man, and I'm not.

IRENE

Do you regret it?

STILLER

A life can be full of regrets. Too much holding on, too much letting go. I sometimes wish that I had held on to what I wanted and loved through everything. Like you do, like he does.

IRENE

It's hard to believe that you ever loved anything.

STILLER

What about admiration? Do you think I could be capable of admiration?

IRENE

What could you possibly admire?

STILLER

(Turning to look out the window at the city below)

All my life I've been buying and selling but I would never have considered selling the only thing I really own for the only thing I really cherish.

We move in and slow to a still of Stiller's face.

CUT TO BLACK:

ACT 4 TITLE - WHITE AGAINST A BLACK BACKGROUND

Sammy Stiller

INT./EXT. BEAT-UP GRAY CAR/QUAY IN HONG KONG - DAY

Aston is sitting in a beat-up GRAY CAR in an empty parking lot next to a small quay. A SIGN on the quay, with a heraldic logo, reads, "Victoria Yacht Club Ferry," in both English and Chinese.

A 45' SAILING BOAT, which is quite obviously not the ferry, is pulling up to the quay with sails furled. Isiah Thomas, Mark Bender, Alex Small and JOEY MARTINEZ are standing on deck holding ALUMINUM SUITCASES and DUFFEL BAGS, scanning the shore. Aston steps out of the car and waves. A three man CREW docks the boat at the quay.

A GANGPLANK is thrown down onto the quay and Thomas, Martinez, Small and Bender walk down grinning. There are handshakes all around and Aston takes one of the bags. As they talk, they move rapidly towards the car and put the luggage in the trunk.

THOMAS

It's good to see you, man.

ASTON

I'm glad you made it. How was the trip.

BENDER

Fine. Fine.

MARTINEZ

I haven't been in Hong Kong since the switch over.

SMALL

Well it's business as usual in the city that opium built. Eh, Brian?

ASTON

I guess that depends on what business you're in.

The conversation dies down as they load the bags. As they are putting in the last few bags, Aston speaks up.

ASTON (cont'd)

Did you bring everything?

SMALL

We brought everything we talked about. I'm still gonna need to do some shopping, but I got it all lined up.

Small closes the trunk. Aston moves up the driver-side door and Thomas moves up the passenger-side door. The others go to the back doors. They continue talking as they move and

then pause before getting into the car to finish the conversation.

MARTINEZ

What's our budget, Ese?

ASTON

Like I said, expenses are covered.

MARTINEZ

Good. 'Cause I'm gonna shake this town up.

THOMAS

(Gesturing at Martinez)

You know where I found this crazy fuck? He was down in Columbia blowin' up air fields for the guerillas and drug boys.

MARTINEZ

Hey, an hombre's gotta do what he loves.

ASTON

All right then. Let's go do what we love.

They all into the car and drive off.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Haiko, Stiller and some of Haiko's men are on the COUCHES in Haiko's living room, talking business. Irene comes in swaying a little and walks over to the bar to mix a drink. She is wearing a close fitting evening dress and the men stop talking and watch her as she mixes her drink.

When she is done, she turns around and looks at them leaning with her hip against the bar. She walks over towards the couches, swaying as she comes.

IRENE

What're you'all staring at... What?

HAIKO

You're a rare find.

IRENE

You like that? You like what you're looking at? Is that what you paid for? (She runs her fingers down the outer curve of her body.)

HAIKO

Yes, Irene, I like that.

IRENE

What's your problem? ... You don't even fuck me. You gave up Brian just so that I could prance around your house in these ridiculous dresses you buy me looking like a useless little slut.

HAIKO

Sit down, Irene.

IRENE

Fuck you! What about the rest of you assholes? I bet you'd fuck me if you didn't think he'd cut your balls off. How'd you like that? Maybe, I'll line these fuckers up and screw each one of them.

HAIKO

Okay, that's enough.

Haiko gestures to two of his men who stand up and move towards Irene.

IRENE

(Disgusted)

That's enough? That's enough? That's all I am. A house whore who can't even get laid. Fuck all of you.

Haiko's men take Irene by the shoulders.

IRENE

Get your hands off me, you stupid shits. I bet you don't even have any balls. I bet he already cut them off.

HAIKO

You're drunk. You need to go to sleep.

Haiko waves his hand and his men begin to take Irene away. She shouts back at him as they drag her off.

IRENE

Of course I'm drunk. These assholes won't give me any junk, all I can do is drink. What about you two. You want to fuck me? Hey Haiko, I'm gonna

suck these two bastards dry. What d'you think of that...

As they drag her off, shouting obscenities, Haiko and Stiller stare at each other for a moment.

EXT. POOL AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Irene is sunbathing in a LOUNGE CHAIR by the pool at Haiko's estate. Haiko's Wife is also sunning herself on a different side of the pool. Stiller is working at a TABLE on the opposite side of the pool from Haiko's Wife. Haiko's Son and a number of Haiko's men are drinking at a TABLE between Stiller and Irene.

Haiko's Lieutenant comes out of one of the buildings and walks over to Stiller's table carrying a BRIEFCASE. He waves to Irene on his way over. When he gets to the table he and Stiller joke quietly, but we are too far away to hear their conversation. Then Stiller calls to Irene.

STILLER

Irene! (She looks over at him.) Come over here a second.

Irene takes a sip of her drink. Haiko comes out of a sliding door in another building and stands looking down at the scene from a patio behind Stiller's table. Irene looks up at him and over to Stiller.

She gets up slowly and begins to walk over to Stiller's table. As Irene passes by Haiko's Son, he reaches out and grabs at her waist. He and Haiko's men laugh. She turns and looks down at him in disdain.

IRENE

Can I help you?

HAIKO'S SON

Are you still looking for some?

IRENE

What are you talking about?

HAIKO'S SON

(Shifting his hand on her waist and pointing his thumb down)
That's what I'm talking about.

Seeing this situation, Stiller stands up, about to go over to them. At this moment, Haiko, who had come down a short flight of steps behind him, puts a hand on his shoulder and motions him to sit back down. Haiko begins to walk over to Irene.

IRENE

Get your hand off me.

HAIKO'S SON

Don't forget who you're talking too. What belongs to my father belongs to me.

IRENE

I'm not a house to be inherited.

HAIKO'S SON

No, you're less. You're nothing / but a...

Haiko's Son breaks off as he sees his father approaching.

HAIKO

Irene, what's happening here?

IRENE

I was just asking your son to take his hand off of my waist.

HAIKO

(Pausing a moment while he looks at his son)

Well, Boy? Do as the woman says.

HAIKO'S SON

(Taking his hand off Irene)

I'm sorry, Sir. I don't take orders from... servants.

Several of Haiko's men scoff at this euphemism.

HAIKO

Irene isn't a servant. She's our guest.

HAIKO'S SON

A guest? I wonder if my mother sees it that way.

HAIKO

Leave your mother out of this.

HAIKO'S SON

You bring a whore into the family home and you expect me to leave my mother out of it?

HAIKO

What did you say? What did you just call Irene?... Speak up? (Haiko's Son remains silent.) What about the rest of you? Did you hear what he said?

HAIKO'S MAN 2

(A little drunker than the rest,
mumbling under his breath in Chinese)
Whore...

HAIKO

What was that? In English. If you're going to insult someone, you need to make sure that they understand you.

HAIKO'S MAN 2

(In English)
Whore.

Haiko takes out his gun and shoots Haiko's Man 2 three times in the chest. He looks around the table.

HAIKO

Anyone else? (He scans the whole scene.) Anyone else care to insult my guest?

Haiko turns to Irene as though to comfort her, but she only stares at him in shock and terror. He moves towards her, but she flinches and steps back. They stare at each other for a moment before Irene turns and walks quickly away. Haiko watches her as she goes.

INT. LARGE FURNISHED FLAT IN HONG KONG — NIGHT

Aston and his friends are working in the apartment.

Small is working at the circular dining room table which is covered with COMPUTERS and ELECTRONICS. Martinez is sitting cross-legged at the coffee table surrounded by a pile of EXPLOSIVES and ELECTRONICS.

Thomas and Bender are in the kitchen putting TAKE-OUT FOOD onto PLATES. Aston is at the island in the kitchen loading and cleaning WEAPONS. They are all talking across each other, jibing and laughing.

MARTINEZ

How'd we know this is gonna be worth our time and our sweat? I thought we don't do heists.

THOMAS

We don't, but this is different.

ASTON

I've been inside the compound. You'll get your wages.

MARTINEZ

It's different how?

THOMAS

'Cause the fool's in love.

SMALL

The fool's crazy.

BENDER

Sure. But it seems to me that if this is a heist then we should be getting more than our wages.

SMALL

What's your angle?

BENDER

Well a heist is wrong. So we should be getting something extra for the damage. Like morality pay.

THOMAS

Morality pay. That has a ring to it.

ASTON

You're cracked. It would take more than all the treasures of this world to sanctify your doings.

MARTINEZ

Listen to this vato. He's got us half-way across the world working on spec, risking our asses to

fetch out his bitch and we're cracked for looking at the money side.

SMALL

Joey's got a point here Brian, we can't all live in never-never land. Some of us have responsibilities back here in reality.

ASTON

I know the house. There's enough in there you can each buy your own castle in never-never land.

THOMAS

What about you? You're doing this all in the name of love?

ASTON

I'm doing this because this is what I love to do, and this is what I'll do for love. And you're gonna help me because I can't do it without you.

The others glance around shrugging and grinning.

INT. READING ROOM AT HAIKO'S ESTATE - DAY

Irene is sitting in a large EASY CHAIR reading a BOOK in Haiko's reading room. The room is snug and cozy. It is sunk into the ground and the windows towards the top of the walls look out on a garden.

The furniture is heavy, dark and soft. BOOKSHELVES full of BOOKS line the walls and a FIRE burns in a deep FIREPLACE set into a stone wall. An arched doorway leads into the room down two wide steps.

Haiko comes to the doorway and looks in. He walks down the steps and sits in another chair lazily watching Irene for a few moments before he speaks.

HAIKO

I've had word of that boy of yours.

Irene folds the book closed on her finger and sets it in her lap.

HAIKO (cont'd)

He was working with the Singapore police. They raided a place I own. He killed quite a number of my men. He's good isn't he?

IRENE

That's what they say.

HAIKO

Yes, well they're right. He is good. I should be glad to have found him and he will come for you, I think. You deserve at least that much.

IRENE

He'll come.

HAIKO

(Getting up in anger)

Then what's keeping him? It's been more than a year and all he's done is kill some of my men in Singapore.

IRENE

He knows your organization. He knows he has to come prepared. It'll take time and money. And for him it'll take the permission and support of powerful men. Men who hate you and will look the other way when he comes.

Haiko gets up and walks over to a window and looks out at the garden.

HAIKO

I think he's playing with me. With both of us.

EXT. BASEMENT GROCERY STORE IN HONG KONG — DAY

Aston and Irene's Cousin are milling around the produce section of a crowded basement grocery store. The store is packed with FRUIT, VEGETABLES, MEATS, and SEAFOOD piled on top of green DISPLAY RACKS and falling off onto the floor.

The ceiling is low and covered with the obnoxious lines of bare florescent bulbs. The floor is flooded and, to combat this contingency, the proprietor has covered it with paths of chopped-down produce boxes.

Aston, wearing sunglasses, a baseball cap and running gear is picking his way over the boxes trying to avoid getting muck on his shoes.

Although Irene's Cousin is wearing a suit and good leather shoes, he seems much less concerned about the floor. They are talking as they go. Aston is picking up various items, seemingly at random, and checking them for quality before including them in his WIRE SHOPPING BASKET.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Her father is concerned, of course. He thinks you're too reckless. That you're moving too slow now and you're gonna move too fast when you go in and fuck it all up.

ASTON

(Picking up a small EGGPLANT)

Uh, uh. And what do you think?

IRENE'S COUSIN

Well I know you're too reckless. But I also know that you can get inside that house and that you can probably do it as quickly and efficiently as anyone.

ASTON

(Showing Irene's Cousin the eggplant)

And what about this?

Irene's Cousin looks at it for a moment.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Look Brian, this is gonna take / more than my opinion...

ASTON

(Cutting him off)

Yea. Well, you're right. (He drops the eggplant into his basket.) We can get in and we've got the backing of his enemies. What I need from you and her father is help with the authorities. I need the Senator to win over the local police with his charming smile and any other things he may have that charm. When is he planning to get here?

IRENE'S COUSIN

He's on his way. But listen, I told you he has doubts. I'll talk to him, but I think you should meet him and give him your assurance.

ASTON

Alright. But let him know what you think. Give him your professional opinion. Remind him that we're good at what we do.

IRENE'S COUSIN

I should go. Do you need any money.

ASTON

I'm covered. It's good to be working with the both of you. I almost feel like family.

IRENE'S COUSIN

Oh, fuck off.

ASTON

(Waving another vegetable)

You should come over for dinner sometime.

IRENE'S COUSIN

(Over his shoulder as he leaves)

I'll contact you when he gets into town.

ASTON

You do that.

Irene's Cousin walks away at a leisurely pace and Aston, amused, watches him go.

INT. DEN IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Irene, wearing a bathing suit, is sitting on a COUCH in a den in one of the smaller buildings that opens out to the pool through sliding glass doors. Behind Irene, a SOLID BAR lined with BAR STOOLS curves out from the wall.

BOTTLES are set up on a counter behind the shelves and, above these, GLASSES are stacked on shelves.

Stiller comes in and pours himself a drink behind the bar. His short-sleeved shirt is open in front and he is wearing loose linen pants and sandals. As he pours his drink, Irene gets up and walks over to the bar to make herself another.

Stiller leans back and watches her move towards him. They lock eyes. As Irene mixes her drink, Stiller gazes at her body. She gives him a cold look. As she raises the glass to her lips he moves towards her and wraps his arm around her from behind.

IRENE
(Going rigid)
Don't you dare.

STILLER
(Pulling her in)
What's the matter, Baby? You don't like being touched?

IRENE
Get you hands off me.

STILLER
I like the feel of your body.

IRENE
What if I tell Haiko? He'll cut off your dick and shove it down your throat.

STILLER
(Slowly sliding his hand off Irene's waist)
Yes, he just might... Who do you tell when he touches you? Who do you turn to then?

IRENE
Haiko's allowed to touch me. He paid my price. My body belongs to him.

STILLER
So that's all it takes? To pay your price.

IRENE
That's what it takes.

STILLER
What is your price, Irene? How would a man pay your price?

Irene steps up close to him and looks up into his eyes.

IRENE

In order to do that he would have to be capable of delivering goods or services that I want. (She spins away from him.) Or need.

Irene walks back to the couch, swaying.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR/STREET IN HAIKO'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Aston is driving a white LUXURY RENTAL CAR through the wealthy neighborhood where Haiko lives. Nearly every house has its own high wall and electronic gate. All of the estates have long driveways and lavish grounds.

Aston and Small are sitting in the front seats. Thomas is in the back seat. He is wearing all black military clothing. Aston and Small are dressed in civilian clothes.

Small has a BRIEFCASE open on his lap. The brief case is actually a COMPUTER. It has a SCREEN in the top half. The bottom half has a KEYBOARD and is full of WIRES, CHIPS, CIRCUIT BOARDS, and miscellaneous ELECTRICAL GADGETS.

Small hands Thomas a homemade ELECTRONIC DEVICE with ETHER NET PORTS and some short ETHER NET CABLES.

SMALL

This is the inside, here, by this chip. So you need to run it in here (pointing to one end) and out here (and to the other).

ASTON

(Interjecting from the front seat)
I still think you should let me go in.

THOMAS & SMALL

No.

Small hands Thomas a HEAD-SET and puts one on himself.

The head sets have a small CAMERA above the left ear and a tiny MICROPHONE on the right that swings down to the corner of the mouth.

Both men swing the little microphones down to their mouths.

THOMAS

(Whispering into the microphone)

One, two, three.

SMALL

Okay. (Whispering into the microphone) One, two, three.

THOMAS

Okay.

ASTON

I know the lay of the house.

THOMAS

But I'm faster, and I don't want you killin' nobody.

SMALL

(To Aston)

We can walk him through it.

Aston pulls over to the side of the road. Small hands Aston a head-set. Aston puts it on and tests the microphone.

ASTON

(Whispering into the microphone)

One, two, three.

SMALL

Okay. (To Thomas) Alright, check the camera.

Thomas fiddles with the small camera that sticks out above his left ear. Small types rapidly on his keyboard.

An IMAGE pops up on the screen showing the view from the camera – the back of Aston's head, the dashboard of the car, the road, etc.

SMALL

Okay, we're ready to roll.

THOMAS

Back in a minute.

Thomas gets out of the car and walks quickly along a WALL to the street corner. He peeks around the corner at one of the long walls around Haiko's estate on the other side of the street.

ASTON (V. O.)

There's a rotating camera in the middle of that wall and another on each corner.

Thomas takes a pair of NIGHT GOGGLES out of his side pocket and watches the SECURITY CAMERAS. When the cameras face away from him, he runs across the street and quickly climbs the wall. He pauses on the top of the wall, watching another camera on the other side facing inward.

EXT. GROUND'S OF HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Thomas is running quietly across the grounds of Haiko's estate, weaving in and out of bushes.

ASTON (V. O.)

There's another one on the far corner of that building to your left. (Thomas looks in that direction.) Yea, that's it.

Thomas drops to the ground and waits for the camera to turn before he moves out again.

EXT. GROUND'S OF HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Thomas is sneaking along the side a building, walking silently and keeping his back to the building.

ASTON (V. O.)

That's good. Stay tight against the wall. There is a camera right above the door you're going through.

Thomas comes to a sunken door that leads to a basement.

ASTON (V. O. - cont'd)

Yea. That's it.

Thomas jumps down a five foot cement wall to the door. He picks the lock, rigs the alarm and slips inside.

INT./INT. CAR/BASEMENT IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

The following scene cuts between Aston & Small, who are still in the white car, and Thomas who is in Haiko's basement.

The basement is dark. We can just make out some CARDBOARD BOXES and EXERCISE EQUIPMENT stacked up against one wall. Thomas makes his way across the room to some ELECTRICAL BOXES. He opens them to reveal a tangle of gray ETHER NET CORDS.

ASTON

(Looking at the mess of gray wires on the computer screen – speaking into the microphone)

I don't know. Inside the buildings the secure system is marked with red cords and the connected LAN has gray cords.

SMALL

(Speaking into the microphone)

Just go into one. I'll let you know.

Thomas unplugs one of the ether net cables and plugs in the device that Small gave him. He completes the network with one of the small ether net cords.

Small starts typing rapidly, entering some command lines in a small window. The names of the computers on the network scroll by on the screen.

SMALL

(Speaking into the microphone)

No. This is the connected system. I've already been on all these boxes.

Thomas plugs the device into a cable from a different set. Small lists the boxes again.

SMALL

Okay, we're good to go.

Thomas starts to make his way back the car. As he does so, Small starts hacking away in earnest, muttering to himself and typing like a fiend.

Just as Thomas returns to the car, a video window pops up on the computer screen showing Haiko and Haiko's Lieutenant watching TV.

SMALL

(Turning the screen towards Aston)

We got it. Watching the watchers.

INT. MIRRORED RESTAURANT IN HONG KONG — DAY

The Senator, Irene's Cousin and two of the Senator's men are sitting at a ROUND TABLE in the back of a half deserted restaurant. The Senator is wearing a conservative suit of navy blue and a red tie. He looks out of place in his surroundings.

The walls of the restaurant, above a four foot drywall wainscoting, are solid MIRRORS. The cheap CHAIRS have high straight backs put together from thick tubes of black enameled metal wrapped around padding in a muddy floral print.

The chairs are clustered around CIRCULAR TABLES with white TABLE CLOTHES covered with a thick sheet of CLEAR PLASTIC. The larger tables feature LAZY-SUZANS stocked with CONDIMENTS, CHOPSTICKS and FLAT-BOTTOMED SPOONS.

Aston and Thomas, carrying a BRIEFCASE, enter the restaurant and walk towards the table. The Senator watches them closely as they come. There is only one free chair at the table.

As they approach, Aston grabs a CHAIR from a nearby table, swings it around and sits down backwards so that his arms wrap around the back of the chair. Thomas sits down in the empty chair at the table and sets the brief case on the table in front of himself.

ASTON

Gentlemen.

SENATOR

(Gesturing at Thomas)

Who's this.

ASTON

This is our fearless leader.

SENATOR

I thought you were in charge.

ASTON

Well, you know what my father always says: I'm hardly fit to govern myself. I've got no place leading others.

The Senator looks over at Irene's Cousin, but he only returns a shrug.

THOMAS

(Opening the briefcase and taking out some FOLDERS, PAPERWORK, and a bundle of DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS)

I've had diplomatic IDs made up for myself, my four men and your daughter. (He passes the Senator a folder.) Everything you need to know is in this folder.

Irene's Cousin takes the folder and starts flipping through the papers. The Senator takes one of the passports and opens it; inside is a DRIVERS LICENSE, a SOCIAL SECURITY CARD, a CREDIT CARD, etc.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Irene's the only one of us who won't have time to familiarize herself with the particulars of her new ID, so her info has been kept as close to reality as possible. Aston will have to brief her on the rest when we find her.

The Senator flips through the passports until he finds Irene's. He opens it and examines the various cards.

THOMAS (cont'd)

Everything you need to know is in the folder. Now about timing. Have you talked to the local authorities?

SENATOR

I've made the initial contact and set up a meeting but we haven't gone over any of the details.

THOMAS

We're gonna need 40 minutes from the first gunshot, half an hour at the very least. They can spend the whole time at the gate debating how to bust it down for all I care, but I don't want them on the grounds until we have the place secured.

SENATOR

Half an hour? That's too long.

THOMAS

We're not Marines. We don't just storm into places with our dicks waving. We use intelligence, skill and careful planning. That's why you hired us.

SENATOR

I didn't hire you.

THOMAS

Yea well, anyway / we know what...

SENATOR

(Cutting him off)

I let my nephew convince me that you were the lesser of two evils.

THOMAS

Listen, We can get your daughter out alive and we can make sure that no one comes after her. We can finish this now; we just need 40 minutes of peace and quite to work with.

SENATOR

I'll get you half an hour but it damn sure better not be peaceful.

THOMAS

(Picking up the IDs and putting them back in the briefcase)

Everything you need is in that folder. We'll go in as soon as we're ready.

Thomas puts the passports in the briefcase and closes it. He stands up from the table. Aston stands up as well.

SENATOR

I want to know when you're going in.

THOMAS

I can't tell you that.

SENATOR

Well hurry up.

Thomas stares at him for a second and then takes the briefcase and turns to go. Aston turns to go as well. Aston

and Thomas walk out and the others watch them go. As they go, Aston puts his arm around Thomas' shoulder.

INT. IRENE'S ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Irene and one of Haiko's men are playing chess at a small TABLE in her room. We hear a knock at the door.

IRENE

Come in.

The door opens and Haiko enters in a black temper. Irene and Haiko's man watch him as he paces around the room, glowering. He looks at his man and gestures towards the door with his head.

Haiko's man gets up from the table, gives a slight bow to Irene and leaves, closing the door behind him. Haiko takes his place at the table and studies the CHESS BOARD.

HAIKO

Who's move.

IRENE

Yours.

Irene is playing white and Haiko is playing black. The board is set up as follows: BlRa8, BlNb8, BlBc8, BlKe8, BlNg8, BlRh8, BlPa7, BlPd7, BlPf7, BlPg7, BlPh7, WhBd6, BlPb5, WhNd5, WhPe5, WhNf5, WhPh5, WhPg4, WhPd3, WHQf3, WhPa2, WhPc2, WhKe2, BlQa1, BlBg1.

After a few seconds Haiko speaks.

HAIKO

Men today are a disgrace to their fathers. I'm wasted on this time. There won't be any more fights for me and all my games are played.

IRENE

Just shut up and play.

HAIKO

(He makes a move [playing black — Na6])
Stilller's been in the States. He saw your family... The news isn't good.

IRENE
(Studying the board)
Oh, yeah.

HAIKO
Your cousin has taken a new position. Something more prestigious in the FBI, but a desk job. He won't be coming for you.

IRENE
(She makes a move [playing white - Nxg7+] and looks up at Haiko)
Check. Is that right?

HAIKO
(Their eyes lock for a moment)
He received the news at a wedding... (He looks back down at the board.) It was Aston's wedding... He married an old lover of his: Melanie. (He makes a move [Kd8].) I'm told you know her.

Irene is silent. After a second she makes a move [Qf6+]. Her hand shakes slightly.

IRENE
Check.

HAIKO
It's an old story and one my wife knows well. A man forgets. When it comes to the bodies of women a man's mind only reaches as far as his hands. He has forgotten you, Irene. (He looks at her.) But you haven't forgotten him.

IRENE
It's your move.

HAIKO
You seem calm.

IRENE
Yeah... I don't know... I hope they're happy.

HAIKO
That's all? You hope their happy. How Christian of you.

IRENE

She'll have the real Brian, I guess. With all his quirks, his bloodshed; the fact that he probably won't live to see his children grow up. She'll have the real Brian, whoever he is, but I'll still have the memories of the Brian I love. The Brian who gave up his freedom for me.

HAIKO

You love a man who only exists in your dreams.

Haiko looks down to study the board.

IRENE

Isn't always that way.

HAIKO

What you love in him may be something that only you see.

IRENE

(Softly, studying the board)

Maybe it's better this way. The real Brian is probably more sensible than the one I loved... He was never sensible. Ever since he was a boy he seems to misunderstand what he could expect from life...

Haiko moves [Nxf6]. He takes her queen and sets his piece down with a click.

IRENE (cont'd)

I could always beat him at chess because he would protect his queen at all costs.

HAIKO

And so now you throw yours away.

IRENE

A queen's just a piece. She doesn't know it, but she serves a higher purpose. Sometimes, sacrifices are necessary. (She moves [Be7++].) Check. Check and mate.

HAIKO

(Standing up from the table)

You distracted me. You're worse than he was.
You're living a fantasy. The man's married and
you're still playing to win.

IRENE

I work with what I have.

Haiko walks towards the door in disgust. Behind him, Irene
begins to shake with emotion.

INT. LARGE FURNISHED FLAT IN HONG KONG — NIGHT

As Haiko walks away from the table the scene becomes B&W
and the camera pulls back to reveal a security screen in a
bank of similar screens set into a makeshift shelf in
Aston's black and steel apartment.

Aston is sitting at a simple metal desk in front of the
screens watching as Haiko leaves the room.

In the background, Thomas is sitting on a black canvas
chair, watching TV. He turns off the TV with the remote,
gets up, and walks up behind Aston.

THOMAS

(Putting his hand on ASTON'S shoulder)

Brian, get some rest.

ASTON

We've been here almost a month. It's time to go
in.

THOMAS

We'll move when we're ready. Now, go get some
sleep.

Thomas walks off towards one of the bedrooms. Aston is left
watching Irene.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE — DAY

Three Hong Kong POLICE OFFICIALS, in plain cloths, are
standing around an unmarked parked SEDAN on one of the
middle floors of a multilevel parking garage. They are all
smoking. One of them leans over the ledge and spits down
onto the street below.

A large blue RENTAL CAR pulls up onto this level of the garage. The Senator and his two men get out of the car and walk towards the Police Officials. The Senator is carrying a BRIEFCASE.

POLICE OFFICIAL 1

Do you have everything we talked about?

The Senator places the briefcase on the hood of the car. Police Official 1 turns it away from us and opens it. He looks inside and rummages around.

POLICE OFFICIAL 1

Good. We'll give them at least half an hour after the first shot. Anything else.

SENATOR

I want any of my people left alive to be brought to the Embassy. Especially the girl. I want her brought to the Embassy dead or alive.

POLICE OFFICIAL 2

Okay, we will call you when it happens.

INT. OFFICE AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — DAY

Stiller and Haiko are sitting on either side of Haiko's DESK going over some PAPERWORK. The office at Haiko's estate is open and bright, but much more cluttered than the one at his restaurant. It looks like he actually does some work here.

The furniture is of a high quality but practical. Several COMPUTERS are running on a different DESKS. There are BOOKSHELVES lined with BOOKS; legal books, computer books, business books, but also a section with histories and works in philosophy, in both English and Chinese.

Directly behind Haiko we can see, among others, the following texts: Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, all of Machiavelli's books, the writings of Confucius, Sun Tsu's *Art of War*, and a number of books on the history of Hong Kong.

Irene knocks on the half-open door and peeks into the room

HAIKO

Yes, Irene?

IRENE

Can I come in?

HAIKO

Please do.

IRENE

I'll do it if you still want.

HAIKO

What's that?

IRENE

I'll look at the art from the Taiwan collection.
If you still have it.

HAIKO

Oh yes, the art. We haven't lost the art have we
Sammy?

IRENE

I just thought you might have sold it already.

STILLER

But we don't know what it's worth.

IRENE

I thought you might have another curator that you
use.

STILLER

We don't steal a lot of art.

HAIKO

We thought you might change your mind, so we kept
it around. Sam, why don't you show her where
we're keeping it?

STILLER

Alright.

Stiller and Irene leave the office.

INT. UNDERGROUND HALLWAY IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - DAY

Stiller and Irene walk down some stairs and along a drab hallway in Haiko's estate. The hall is well lit, but there are no exterior windows.

IRENE

What was the wedding like?

STILLER

It was fairly lavish, both families were involved, of course.

IRENE

Did he seem happy?

STILLER

I guess so. He seemed resolved.

They walk in silence for a while.

IRENE

Why did he do it?

STILLER

I don't know. You know how these girls are. They can be very persuasive.

IRENE

What would you know about that. Brian's not as desperate as you are. He has choices.

STILLER

Maybe he thought he'd lost you. I don't know. Maybe he just grew up. One girl is much like another.

IRENE

It doesn't make any sense.

They arrive at a dull metal door and Stiller takes out a key and unlocks it.

STILLER

Well, everybody's got to grow up eventually - even that fool. (He opens the door and turns on the light.) Let me know if you need anything. Anything at all.

INT. WORKSHOP IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - DAY

Stiller has left Irene in a well-outfitted workshop. WORK BENCHES line all the walls. A TABLE SAW, and other POWER TOOLS, take up much of the interior space. A LATHE for metal work is set up in corner. TOOLS hang from PEGS set into every wall and TOOLBOXES line the backs of the work benches.

A stack of crisp CARDBOARD BOXES sits on one of the work benches in the back of the room. Irene has opened one of the boxes, taken out a number of the PIECES and set them on a nearby work bench.

Irene is carefully examining a CERAMIC VASE under a large MAGNIFYING GLASS which is attached to the work bench by a pivoting arm.

INT. LARGE FURNISHED FLAT IN HONG KONG — NIGHT

Aston is sitting in front of the bank of security cameras in the black and steel apartment watching Irene work on one of the screens. Thomas comes up behind him, pulls over a chair and sits down.

THOMAS

What's she up to?

ASTON

She's trying to figure out just how much your paycheck is gonna be.

Thomas leans into the screen and watches Irene for a moment.

THOMAS

(whistling under his breath)

She sure is. How much d'you think that stuff is worth?

ASTON

I don't know.

THOMAS

Where did they get it.

ASTON

I have no idea.

THOMAS

That's not what you were thinkin' of? What'd you have in mind? What else do they have in there?

ASTON

I don't really know, various things.

THOMAS

You don't know? Or you don't care?

ASTON

I care, man, I just wasn't exactly sure.

THOMAS

What if those pieces hadn't been there? How'd you think we was gonna get paid?

ASTON

Well, I guess I wasn't sure exactly but there's lots of good stuff in there. I knew it would work out.

THOMAS

You knew it would work out, how? Maybe you just didn't give a shit. Maybe you're just thinking with your dick and the fact that we're risking our asses on this thing just doesn't make a damn to you. Why did you bring us in on this?

ASTON

I need you.

THOMAS

That's it? You want her and you need us and you set all this shit up based on that. You know what your problem is? You're an arrogant, selfish prick.

ASTON

I guess you're right. I didn't really see it that way.

THOMAS

No, of course, not. Because you live in your own little fantasy world and you can't even see the world the rest of us are in. I hope she knows what she has.

ASTON

She doesn't even have me.

THOMAS

Oh, she has you. She's got you all right. And tomorrow, with our help, and a lotta fucking luck, you'll have her.

ASTON

We're going in?

THOMAS

I got word from her father earlier this evening. It's all clear on his end, and I'm not letting those vases go anywhere.

Thomas gets up and starts to leave the room.

ASTON

Look, I'm sorry about not thinking this through. I don't know. I just thought it would work out. I had a feeling, you know... I'm sorry.

THOMAS

You know what, Brian? None of us are stupid. We know you, and we knew what the story was. We didn't come to Hong Kong to get rich. We came here to back you up. I just wish you'd focus on what's in front of you a bit more. Tomorrow we're gonna break into that fortress and it may cost us our lives. I'm doing it to help a friend and to steal some art. I hope you know why you're doing it.

INT. LIVING ROOM AT HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Stiller is sitting on a couch reading *The New York Times*. Irene walks in, sits down and watches him fitfully.

IRENE

Give me a section of that.

STILLER

You know I can't do that.

IRENE

What the hell's happening out there.

STILLER

All the things that always happen. Wars, crimes, negotiations, buying and selling... All the little things too. They're still making movies and talking about 'em more than's needed... I think the Yankees'll win the series this year.

IRENE

Fuck off.

STILLER

You don't like the Yanks? Don't tell me you're a Mets fan.

Irene gets up and walks towards the door.

STILLER

(Mockingly looking through the pages)

No one seems to have noticed your absence. (Irene flips him off over her shoulder.) Irene... Do you want to leave here?

She stops and slowly turns.

IRENE

Where would I go? Where could I really hide from him? (Beat.) It doesn't matter; I gave him my word.

STILLER

Your word? What if you could have your freedom back? (Beat.) What would that be worth to you?

IRENE

What exactly are you asking me?

STILLER

I want to know what price, exactly, you would pay for your freedom.

IRENE

You know what, Sammy? I don't trust you. You're not trustworthy.

STILLER

I've never met anyone like you.

IRENE
(Turning to go again)
No, I wouldn't think so.

Irene leaves and Stiller watches her go.

INT./EXT. BEAT-UP GRAY CAR/HAIKO'S NEIGHBORHOOD — NIGHT

Aston, Thomas, Martinez, Small and Bender are driving in the beat-up gray car through Haiko's neighborhood at night. Small is driving. They are all dressed in military clothing and bristling with GEAR — GUNS, EXPLOSIVES, COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT, etc.

They pull over in the same spot as before. Aston, Thomas, Martinez and Bender start to get out of the car. Small sets up the briefcase computer on the passenger seat. The following conversation takes place as they prepare themselves for the raid.

ASTON
(To Small)
Alright, the cops said they'd give us 30 minutes but keep an eye out.

MARTINEZ
I want four minutes from go to set charges.

THOMAS
You only have two.

MARTINEZ
I won't be able to set them all.

BENDER
Give me the extras.

MARTINEZ
You're a fucking medic.

BENDER
It doesn't take a genius.

MARTINEZ
Fuck off.

THOMAS
Okay, let's move out.

Aston, Thomas, Martinez, and Bender begin to head towards Haiko's estate. Martinez is handing explosives to Bender who is shoving them into his pockets.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Using the head-set cameras, the head-set microphones and Haiko's security cameras, which Small has accessed on his computer, they begin to infiltrate the grounds.

Martinez and Bender move together towards one wall, while Aston and Thomas go over to another one. One by one, they jump the walls and enter the estate.

We switch back and forth between the four men as they move silently across the grounds. The estate contains many gardens and a number of buildings. There are inner walls connecting various buildings.

We see Thomas creep up behind one of Haiko's men and overpower him. Thomas drops the man and silently slits his throat.

Martinez and Bender are planting explosives at the base of walls, in gates and on doors. While they are rigging a tall steel door, it opens and one of Haiko's men steps out. Haiko's man sees Martinez and Bender and he gives a SHOUT as they move towards him. Both of them attack the man and quickly kill him.

Two of Haiko's other men hear the shout and approach the scene from the grounds. They start shooting at the Martinez and Bender, who draw their guns and take cover in the bushes.

We move in closer to Haiko's men. HAIKO'S MAN 3 takes out a cell phone and makes a call.

HAIKO'S MAN 3 (Chinese)

Yes. We're under attack from the West gate. One man down... They're professionals.

INT. IRENE'S ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

The main house in Haiko's estate is full of hectic activity. Stiller runs down a hallway and enters Irene's room.

Irene is crouching on her balcony, peeking over the railing to see what is going on. Stiller moves carefully up to the balcony door.

IRENE

What's going on?

STILLER

Haiko's enemies are coming for him.

IRENE

Why now?

STILLER

Because I told them to. It's time.

IRENE

You betrayed him?

STILLER

I never served him. This was my plan from the beginning. Follow me.

Stiller takes Irene by the arm and leads her out of the room and down the hall.

IRENE

Why? Where are we going?

STILLER

Haiko will be killed. It's not safe for you here.

IRENE

Who's going to kill him?

STILLER

I removed the firing pin from his gun. He won't use his own gun until he needs to, and then it will be too late.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Haiko and several of his men are engaged in a gunfight with Aston and Thomas across the courtyard in front of the pool. Haiko's men are trying to escort Haiko from one building to another.

Haiko is not fighting, but he is surrounded by four of his men who are all shooting at Aston and Thomas. After a hectic bust of activity, Haiko takes cover. He takes out his gun and makes a run for a door in one of the buildings.

As Haiko moves across the courtyard, he tries to shoot at Aston but only produces a dull clicking. Aston sees that Haiko's gun is not firing. Aston abandons his cover and takes two shots at Haiko. He dives back into the nearby bushes.

Haiko falls to the ground, hit. His men cover each other, firing wildly at the bushes into which Aston has retreated as they drag Haiko inside. Thomas shoots one of Haiko's men as they go.

INT. SECURITY ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Stiller leads Irene into a long, narrow security room. A wall of SECURITY SCREENS rises up to the right of the door above a narrow WOODEN DESK occupied by two COMPUTER MONITORS, a KEYBOARD, a MICROPHONE and an ASHTRAY full of CIGARETTE BUTTS.

The opposite wall features a SCHEMATIC SECURITY MAP of the grounds with various LEDs on it in red, yellow and green. Next to the map, a mass of ETHER NET CABLES is plugged into the slots of a tall networking panel. Stiller points to a screen which shows Haiko's men sitting Haiko on a couch.

STILLER

There. He's already been shot.

IRENE

Why would you do that to him?

STILLER

For you. For me.

IRENE

You're sick.

STILLER

Yes, I suppose. We should go to him.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

We are looking down on Haiko's estate from above. We can see Haiko's men running around inside the buildings through the large windows. We can't see what is happening on the grounds. DARK FIGURES run here and there. We hear sporadic GUNFIRE. We hear EXPLOSIONS begin to join the gunfire. We see bright flashes light up the grounds.

INT. DRAWING ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Stiller and Irene walk down another hallway into a large drawing room to find Haiko sitting on a beautiful ALABASTER COUCH holding his stomach. His shirt and his hands are red with blood.

The lavishly furnished room was designed for the entertainment of guests. Large DOUBLE DOORS open out near the fountain above the pool.

Haiko's Son is sitting morosely in a READING CHAIR near a corner of the room. Two of Haiko's men and Haiko's Lieutenant stand guard near the double doors.

HAIKO
(To Irene)
Come here.

Stiller leaves the room as Irene approaches the couch and kneels besides Haiko.

HAIKO (cont'd)
Yes, you were a fine purchase. Maybe the best I ever made. But with you I also bought some misery, even death. My enemies have come to my own house... My gun jammed... I'm dying because my gun wouldn't fire, almost by accident. But it wont be an accident. I was shot twice in the belly.

Haiko lifts his hands to reveal two wounds that immediately begin to run with FRESH BLOOD.

IRENE
You need a doctor.

HAIKO
No. No, there's no time. I'm dying. I can already feel the cold in my feet. (Beat.) It's strange to think that I can feel it down there, creeping up.

IRENE

What are we going to do?

HAIKO

There's no more need for lies. The man who shot me was Brian... Yes, the idiot has never stopped attacking me since the day you bought his freedom. I lied to you because I hoped you would forget him. I hoped that he would forget you, like I would have.

IRENE

But he didn't.

HAIKO

No, he didn't. His madness, like yours, is absolute. The love this man appears to have for you must be stronger than anything I have ever felt.

Irene kneels and puts her hand on Haiko's.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

The fighting outside has quieted but not slowed. Aston and his friends are slowly surrounding the building that Haiko was dragged into. Haiko's men are defending it. From time to time, we hear a GUNSHOT.

INT. DRAWING ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Haiko is still on the couch with Irene kneeling in front of him. Haiko's Son watches them from the corner.

HAIKO

So this is how it ends between us. He was a good enemy... Irene, I still think the two of you are ridiculous. We live in a world that was not of our choosing and for the most part we try to make the best of it, but you two see it only as a testing ground full of obstacles for your insanity to override...

Stiller returns and Haiko watches him for a moment as he enters the room.

HAIKO (cont'd)

I don't understand your passion but I think I envy it. I think I always envied you more than I loved you. I wanted you to love me but, even more, I wanted to be able to love you as Brian does. I was incapable of it... I think that's why I never played with the toy I bought.

IRENE

Yes, I know.

HAIKO

Sammy, take her to Brian.

IRENE

No. I won't leave you until... I can wait...

HAIKO

No. It has to be now, while I'm still alive. My wife hates you and will kill you slowly when I'm gone. (Looking over at his son) And my son will permit it... No, it must be now.

Stiller walks up behind Irene and, taking her by the shoulders, helps her stand up.

HAIKO

Irene, I wanted you and I came to love you in my own way... Irene, do me one last favor.

IRENE

Yes, I'm here.

HAIKO

Someday, when Brian holds you in his arms you will tell him what kind of man I was and you will remember all my stupidity. Remember me with kindness.

Irene bends down and touches Haiko's cheek. Then she and Stiller leave the room.

After the door closes behind them, Haiko's Son gets up from the chair and walks over to Haiko; he is holding a gun at his side. Father and son lock eyes for a moment before Haiko's Son fires three rounds into his father's chest.

EXT. GROUNDS IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Aston and Small sneak up to a door in a tall inner wall. The door's LOCK, a dull STEEL BOX with two LEDs, requires a magnetic card. Small takes out a HANDHELD COMPUTER and attaches an ADD-ON COMPONENT that includes a broad flat CORD leading to a MAGNETIC CARD.

Small slides the card into the lock and begins to hack the lock, tapping rapidly on the screen of the handheld computer.

In a few moments, a GREEN LIGHT flashes and Aston opens the door. Aston slips in and closes the door behind him, whispering something to Small as he does.

INT. SECURITY ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Irene and Stiller return through the hallways to the security room. Stiller points out a B&W image of Aston on one of the security screens.

Aston has entered a courtyard and is manually picking the lock on a door into one of the side buildings with a set of LOCK-PICKING TOOLS.

STILLER

When he enters that building, I'll kill him.

IRENE

He'll be expecting you.

STILLER

No. He thinks he's accessed our security system but he's only breached one system. Once he gets into the buildings he'll have no more control. I'll be able to kill him at a distance. Just like Haiko.

Aston enters the building and Stiller and Irene watch him sneak down a hallway on another screen. Stiller sits down in front of the key board and starts typing, entering commands.

IRENE

Please... Don't...

STILLER

I can't let him live. You know how determined he is. He's trapped in that building now. It'll be just like killing a cornered animal.

IRENE

Please... (Putting her hands on his shoulders)
I'll give you anything.

STILLER

Anything?

IRENE

Yes.

STILLER

Good. Follow me.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE — NIGHT

Stiller leads Irene back down another hall and into a large, but obviously unused, bedroom.

IRENE

Why are you doing this?

STILLER

I don't know. Why does it matter? I've wanted you since I first met you. You were only 16. We met many times but you never remembered my name. Never even remembered having met me before.

IRENE

I'm sorry.

STILLER

You were just a girl. But when I saw you with Brian at your father's party. Saw the tricks you played on both of 'em, I had to have you. I toyed with you, tested you. I considered that you might try to sell yourself to Haiko for Brian's freedom, but when you really did it I was amazed. I fell in love with you at that moment. My whole life I have bought and sold for my own gain, but never with so much confidence. Never with so much at stake.

IRENE

Will you really save Brain?

STILLER

Will you really pay my price?

IRENE

Yes.

STILLER

Okay, wait here.

Stiller looks out into the hallway and calls out to one of Haiko's men who is running towards him.

STILLER (Chinese - cont'd)

Hey! Come here. Keep an eye on her.

Haiko's man enters the room while Stiller takes off down the hall.

INT. SECURITY ROOM AND HALLWAYS IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Stiller runs into the security room, sits down in front of the keyboard and starts typing. When he is finished he jumps up and takes off down the hall again.

He runs through the halls for a while: down a long flight of stairs and through a long underground passageway. At the end of the passageway he comes to a door with an electric NUMERIC-KEYPAD LOCK.

He punches a code into the keypad and opens the door. He takes off his JACKET and wedges it into the door to keep it ajar and then turns around and runs back down the passageway.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Stiller returns, out of breath, to the room where he left Irene.

STILLER (Chinese)

(To Haiko's man)

Okay, you can go.

Haiko's man leaves the room.

IRENE

Will he live?

STILLER

If he's as good as they say he is. He's not trapped any more, and most of Haiko's people are locked outta the building he's in.

IRENE

Thank you.

STILLER

Have I paid your price?

IRENE

Yes.

STILLER

Come here.

Irene steps up to him. He puts his hand to her cheek and softly turns her face towards his.

STILLER

Will he still want you after all this?

IRENE

I don't know.

STILLER

But you are willing to run the risk.

IRENE

What would you do in my place?

STILLER

I don't know. I could never say. I wonder what would he do.

IRENE

He would kill you.

STILLER

Yes, he would. (Beat.) What will he say, this boy who's fought for you, killed for you, when he sees you. When he realizes how ineffectual he was. That it was you, always you, who brought him back to you. I can't think what anyone would say.

IRENE

I don't think that he should ever find out.

STILLER

No, he shouldn't. But he'll see soon enough for himself. The only door that I unlocked leads to this building. He's coming here now. Have I paid your price?

IRENE

Yes.

Stiller leans in to kiss Irene. She does not back away. He kisses her briefly on the lips and pulls away.

STILLER

It's enough that you wouldn't back down. I admire you too much to fuck you with your lover in the next room.

IRENE

You admire me? It's hard to imagine that you admire anyone.

STILLER

(With a dry laugh)

You gave all your resources, all your attention, even your freedom, to get what you wanted. Even if your desire amounts to no more than the company of a stupid boy and your real happiness is no surer for it.

IRENE

Why is it so hard for you to see the value in what I want?

STILLER

It makes no difference what we want. All that matters is how we go about getting it. You played my game and beat me at it.

IRENE

You're lying. You know as well as I do that some things just aren't worth wanting.

STILLER

Do you think we have any choice?

IRENE

No but we have a choice about how much energy we put into getting them.

STILLER

I wonder / sometimes...

A loud EXPLOSION rocks the room.

IRENE

Take me to Brian.

STILLER

Yes, Haiko's son will have you killed.

INT. HALLWAYS IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Stiller takes out his gun and begins to lead Irene through the house. As they run down a long hallway with large windows that look down onto the outer grounds, they encounter HAIKO'S MAN 4 shooting out a window at someone on the grounds.

HAIKO'S MAN 4 (Chinese)

Where are you taking her.

STILLER (English)

(Shooting the Haiko's Man 4 in the face)

To her lover.

INT. LIVING ROOM IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Stiller continues to lead Irene through the house. Eventually, they come to the main living room. The room is unlit but the lights from the pool, the garden and the city cast a pale glow.

Stiller and Irene move slowly in from the hallway and begin to go down the steps into the living room. As they walk down the steps, they hear a RUSTLING from the within the room.

Stiller quickly shields Irene with his body. We hear four GUNSHOTS. Stiller falls. Irene catches him and the two of them fall onto the stairs; Irene holding Stiller's head and shoulders in her lap.

Stiller looks up and locks eyes with Aston who is walking towards them, covering Stiller with his GUN. Aston pauses and stands still in the middle of the room. He lowers his gun as Stiller twitches and dies in Irene's arms.

Irene gently sets Stiller's head on the top step and closes his eyes. She stands and looks at Aston. The two of them begin to walk towards one another.

Suddenly, we hear a burst of AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE and the windows explode into a shower of falling glass.

Both Irene and Aston drop to a crouch. Irene crawls over to Stiller's body and takes the GUN out of his dead hand. She gestures to Aston to follow her.

They make a break back down the hallway through which Irene and Stiller had come. The gunfire follows them ripping up the walls behind them as they go.

EXT. INNER GROUNDS IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Irene and Aston have reached the inner grounds near the pool and are involved in a shootout with Haiko's Son and some of Haiko's men. We hear EXPLOSIONS and GUNSHOTS erupt in the background as the HONG KONG POLICE begin to move in.

Aston and Irene separate around the pool in order to surround Haiko's Son. They move slowly down opposite sides of the pool, shooting as they go.

As Aston creeps around a building, under a balcony and behind some bushes, a DOOR opens behind him. Haiko's Lieutenant leans out of the doorway looking down the barrel of his HANDGUN at Aston.

Aston swings around and their eyes meet. They lock eyes for a moment and then Haiko's Lieutenant gives a slight nod and lowers his gun. Aston nods back and Haiko's Lieutenant pulls inside and closes the door.

EXT. POOL IN HAIKO'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Irene is ducking and weaving in and out of cover by the pool; she runs out, fires a few shots, then dives back into the bushes or behind a banister. She kills one of HAIKO'S men as she closes in on Haiko's Son.

Aston is closing in on him from the other side of the pool. The three of them come to a standoff on the slope by the fountain. Aston makes a break from his cover in order to draw out Haiko's Son.

It works, Haiko's Son takes a few steps out from his cover and shoots Aston, hitting him in the leg. Irene swings her gun up and locks her sights on him. He notices her too late, and as he begins to swing his gun towards her, she shoots him in the face.

Irene watches him drop and then starts to run towards Aston as the whole scene is wracked by EXPLOSIONS and wreathed in TEAR GAS.

The grounds are crawling with Hong Kong police with AUTOMATIC RIFLES, wearing green camouflage, combat helmets and gas masks.

Irene drops to Aston's side where he has dragged himself for cover. Irene and Aston are taking off their shirts and holding them, bunched up, over their mouths and noses to block out the tear gas.

They are starting to cry as they hold each other. A HONG KONG COP approaches them slowly, crouched in full gear, looking out of his mask down the barrel of an automatic rifle.

They watch him, halfway between tears and laughter, as he edges up at a snails pace, his rifle's aim swinging methodically back and forth between them. When he is about five feet away he speaks to Irene.

HONG KONG COP
Irene Wilcox?

IRENE
Yes.

HONG KONG COP
(To Aston)
Brian Aston?

ASTON
Yes.

HONG KONG COP

Come with me.

INT. IRENE AND ASTON'S APARTMENT — DAY

Irene and Aston are hanging out in their kitchen cooking. There are two windows above the sink and three around a breakfast nook tucked into the corner. All five look down on a garden in the back yard.

The kitchen is old fashioned and snug. Thick wooden CUTTING BOARDS have been set up along the TILED COUNTERTOPS. The place is cluttered with cooking INGREDIENTS..

A few PANS are sautéing on a beautiful old gas stove detailed with ivory enamel. A large POT OF WATER is set to boil on one of the back burners.

Irene and Aston are casually dressed. Irene is bustling about the kitchen cooking and Aston is sitting at a stool near the counter cutting vegetables for a salad.

ASTON

I don't see why this party should be considered obligatory. The last party you claimed was obligatory was completely unnecessary.

IRENE

(Reaching over Aston's shoulders and taking hold of the KNIFE and adjusting the CELERY he is cutting)
Cut it lengthwise first. I didn't say it was obligatory it's just that some of the people from the Met will be there and I want to meet them.
(Setting a small serving bowl next to him.) Put them in here when you're done.

ASTON

And I have to go?

IRENE

Don't even go there. Anyway, some people from the Major's office will be there and I thought you were considering doing some work for them.

ASTON

I think you were considering my doing some work for them. Actually, I just heard a contract in Columbia. It sounds interesting.

IRENE

What is it?

ASTON

Well it sounds interesting. That I can say.

IRENE

Interesting? That's your euphemism for dangerous?

ASTON

It's more than just dangerous. It's involved. It'll take foresight and precision. It will be a challenge. You know how good that feels.

IRENE

I know, but I don't want to be missing you for months on end without even being able to expect that you'll come back alive.

As Irene walks by Aston reaches out to her but she brushes by.

ASTON

Listen. I need you to consider this. I can't stay cooped up in this city forever. I need to work. I'm getting stir crazy.

IRENE

You need to consider a new line of work. I can't have you getting killed.

Aston goes over to Irene and stands close behind her as she busies herself at the stove.

ASTON

I'll tell you what. I'll think seriously about getting some work here, and you think about letting me take this job.

Irene leans back into Aston's arms to acknowledge his proposal.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END