

WOVEN

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FADE IN:

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

The night's sky is pleasant on the eyes.
The air smells spell-casting.

The stars dance and twinkle alongside the moon which is
bright and bold tonight.

This night feels absolutely astonishing.

WORDS ON SCREEN: WOVEN

A black Ashton Martin rips through the empty-ish downtown
Detroit streets seemingly in a fun-rush.

JAMES , 39, thin, but built (and extremely easy on the eyes)
doesn't wait long at red lights.

He stops just long enough to check both ways, then ...

He's off again.

His hand rides the inside of his wife's bare thigh while she
sits shotgun.

MAISON, 37, sits comfortably gripping her seatbelt nervously
as James' hands romantically wander between her legs;
teasingly.

She's uptight, but she enjoys it.

Until...

MAISON
Watch out, James!!

He sees it, but...

No dice.

CRASH! (viewed from inside the vehicle).

THERE'S A MULTICOLORED JALOPY of sorts mangled by James'
damage.

It's smoking and puttering.

James checks Maison.

JAMES
(intimate & groggy)
Fuck. May, are you ok?

MAISON
(Just groggy)
I'm ...ok.

James unhooks his seatbelt.

JAMES
Maison! Look at me!

He reaches over the center console and unhooks her seatbelt.

MAISON
...Shit.

JAMES
Don't move - don't move.

James pops the door open and darts over to the passenger.

EXT. JEFFERSON AVE - NIGHT

Maison's door opens without issue.

JAMES
Come on..
I gotchu.

He assists her to a nearby curb.

She's moves, but slowly.

The other car sits motionless across the street from them facing the opposite direction.

There's no movement from the vehicle.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you ok?!

Still.

No movement.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I'll be right back.

James approaches the jalopy's busted window. There's A MAN, maybe mid 50's covered in fresh shards of broken glass.

He's unconscious.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(Frantic)
Sir?!

Unresponsive.

James shakes him.
Nothing.

James pulls at the door, it does not open.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Sir, can you hear me?! Wake up!
You've been in an accident!

James reaches into the car and presses his hand on the mans chest.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Sir?

James pulls at the door again.
No dice...again.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(shouts to Maison)
Call 911!!!

The man starts to come to.
He's woozy.
Drooling.
In and out.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Come on, Sir. I'm going to try to
pull you through the window. My
name is James Philips. Can you hear
me?

The man shakes his head: Yes.

James ducks his head into the broken glass wrapping himself around the man to pull him through.

Small cuts engrave into the back of Jame's neck.

The man tries to wrap himself around James, but can't get a good grip. He panics. James stops.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Stop!
Please stop, sir. I got you.

THE GUY

My...
Bag...

JAMES

Ok. I'll get your bag after you!

James uses all his might to pull the man through the window.

He drags him to the curb.

There's an obvious leg injury ripped through his pants.

Maison runs over.

MAISON

Oh my God! Is he okay!?

James dusts broken glass from his clothing.

JAMES

I don't know. Did you call 911?

The guy groans.

MAISON

I did.

She pulls out her phone showing she's still on the line with Emergency Services through a bluetooth device in her ear.

MAISON (CONT'D)

I'm still on.

He grabs her hand.

JAMES

Stay over there with him. I need to look at the car.

MAISON

Ok. I'll keep him awake. He's not looking too well.

Maison sits next to the man inspecting his leg injury.

James finds that the bumper is damaged, but the overall damage to the vehicle is minor.

James twists on a flashlight attached to his keychain. He kneels underneath the car and shines his light in a specific area.

There's ripped tape as if something was there.

He flashes the light around on the ground - then toward the curb...looking...

EXT. JEFFERSON AVE - NIGHT

45 MINUTES LATER

Two Detroit police cars park at opposite ends of the accident.

Paramedics tend to the mans leg injury while James is away from the growing crowd *holding an uncomfortable conversation.*

JAMES
Yes! 20 fucking years!...ok.
Manager!..
Manager! Now!

Maison notices.

MAISON
(approaching)
Everything ok?

James shifts away from her.

JAMES
Yea?

Maison doesn't follow.

MAISON
...doesn't sound like it.

James slightly paces.

JAMES
Horrible customer service, that's
all, May. Just give me a second.

Before Maison can leave, a policeman approaches James and hands him a ticket.

OFFICER
Alright. Looks like we're all set.

The officer hands him a citation.

James hangs up from the call.

Frustrated.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
This is for you.

The officer looks at James, at Maison, and then back at James.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
A word?

Maison frowns.

James nods.

JAMES
Yes. Of course.
(to Maison) Be right back.

Maison continues to frown while James walks off with the officer.

OFFICER
(slightly whispering)
There's a warrant ...

He fiddles with paperwork clipped to his clipboard.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
...for your ...arrest, but...

Continues to fiddle...

OFFICER (CONT'D)
I don't have time to book you. I
promised the wife I'd be out on
time and...

The officer checks his watch.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
...on time was - 25 minutes ago.

James smiles.

JAMES
Please, hug your wife for me.

The officer chuckles.

OFFICER
Make some calls in the morning and
figure out if you can make a
payment. It's a bench warrant for
child support. (smiling) How many
you got?

Befuddled.

JAMES
I don't have children.

The officer rattles through the paperwork again.

He leans over to show James the information.

OFFICER
This you, correct?

James inspects the paperwork using the flashing emergency lights from their vehicles to see.

He stares without a blink.

...almost for too long...

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Everything o-

JAMES
Everything's fine.

He snaps out of it.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That's me, but no. No kids ...

OFFICER
I've seen the craziest mix-ups,
but...it looks like I did right
pullin' you away from the young
lady to tell ya.
And honestly, I hate going after
dads. I almost always let them go.

James doesn't react.

He's seemingly shellshocked; frozen in time.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Listen,

He writes a number on the back of a piece of paperwork, rips it, and hands it to James.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Call this number. They'll tell you
exactly what's in the system.

James accepts the paper.

JAMES

You do this for everybody?

OFFICER

(smiling)

Oh - uh, no, sir. I recognize your face, sir. It is truly an honor to extend a favor to you tonight. A good majority of my training came straight from your old body cam footage. You were...remarkable.

The officer extends his hand for a shake.

James accepts.

JAMES

You're a good man. Thank you for this. I'll be sure to put in a good word for you, high up. I swear, since we've gotten back into town, everything's been an overdue mess. You have no idea how much I'll remember this moment.

The officer smiles as James gives him the nod to leave.

The officer practically skips away.

Maison walks over to James after watching closely.

MAISON

What was that about?

JAMES

(fixing his perfect clothes)

Tickets from a car I never had. I have to make some calls in the morning to clear things up.

MAISON

Oh. Ok, ...cool.

He -uh, couldn't say that in front of me? That's odd.

JAMES

Guess not; however, it is 2am on Jefferson Avenue in fine Detroit, Michigan. Let's get going.

James opens Maison's door for her. She sits. On his way around to his seat, he folds THE PAPER the officer gave him. As he places it into his wallet, we see the words:

Plaintiff: Karmen | Defendant: James | Detroit, Mi | Case #-
...but the remainder of the information is ripped off.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

10 MINUTES UP THE ROAD.

JAMES
Be right back.

James exits the car leaving Maison in the passenger seat.

He pays for gas at the pump.

:DECLINED.

He attempts again.

:DECLINED.

He wipes the card onto his shirt. He tries again.

:DECLINED. PLEASE SEE CASHIER.

He ducks his head into the window.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Gotta go inside. The pump isn't
taking payments.

MAISON
Ok! Grab some Hot Cheetos! Please!

James jogs off gleefully.

JAMES
Gotchu!

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

JAMES
(to the clerk)
Hey man, \$45 on 2.

The clerk punches in the numbers.

CLERK
Cash or card?

JAMES
Card.

CLERK

Swipe when the green light shows.

The light appears.

James swipes his card and turns to leave.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Sir! My apologies, but your payment did not complete. Please try again.

James looks at the card.

JAMES

It's not working at the pump either. Um, try as credit?

CLERK

Sure.

He attempts again.

:DECLINED.

Confused.

JAMES

Let's try it again.

DECLINED.

He pulls another card.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What the fuck? Lets try this one. Sorry about this.

He tries the different card.

DECLINED.

Maison walks in.

MAISON

I can see you through the window. What's going on?

Frustrated.

JAMES

Maison please go back to the car.

Maison taps her card onto the card reader instantly paying for the \$45 gas.

MAISON

You didn't grab the hot Cheetos?

James stares insulted and humiliated.

The receipt prints.

The clerk chuckles to himself and hands it to James.

MAISON (CONT'D)

This happened last month after we went out, remember? The bank locks up your card after you spent 4 grand. Did you remember to change your limit?

James nods.

JAMES

Ahh, I'll look into it first thing.

They walk out together.

Maison pulls out a \$20 bill. She hands it to James.

MAISON

Grab snacks.

She walks out.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - MORNING

THE NEXT MORNING - 7:44 A.M.

James drives Maison's car to his office: PHILIPS & BOYD angrily wiping glitter and feathers from her steering wheel.

Arriving in the parking lot, James sees his employees leaving out of the parking lot driving in a single file line.

James parks and hops out hoping waving his hands to catch at least one of them before everyone's gone.

JAMES

Hey!

Someone stops and rolls their car window down.

LAWYER

Hey boss!

JAMES

Where's everyone going!?

LAWYER

Lights are off! Sissy called to pay the bill, but the company account isn't clearing any payments. I'm off to meet my client in person. Also, my check didn't hit yesterday. You go bankrupt on vacation?

The lawyer laughs at his own joke, but James doesn't.

JAMES

Very funny.
I'll double check and get back with you!

James rushes inside.

INT. PHILIPS & BOYD LAW'S FRONT DESK - DAY

Sissy, 35, James' assistant - always dressed in a skirt and attitude.

She stands behind her desk drowning in paperwork when James bops in with a forced smile.

SISSY

Hey boss! Shit's hitting the fan this morning. The only fan I like is the one that dries my nails. I can't pay the light bill. How was your vacation? Don't answer that because I don't care.

James turns and slowly walks away toward his nearby office. Sissy follows.

SISSY (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're back. Let's not leave again. What's wrong with the company account? I can't pay the bills! You left me in charge and it looks like I can't handle shit without you!

Before he can answer, she slams at least a weeks worth of mail on his desk as he goes to sit down.

SISSY (CONT'D)

My check didn't post yesterday. You got an update for me?

James notices a letter from the courts within the mail she slammed down.

JAMES
Let me ...um...

Scattered.

JAMES (CONT'D)
-figure it out, right now. Are you
about to leave, too?

Sissy starts to pick up on James' sketchy behavior.

SISSY
I leave when you leave. Call your
wife, boss. She'll know what to do.

He rips the letter from the courts open and closes the door.
He flips the light, but it doesn't come on.

JAMES
Fuck.

He forgot.

He opens the door again for the extra light and twists open
the blinds.

COURT DOCUMENTS READS: IF YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS LETTER, YOU
OWE A DEBT.

A few lines lower reads: CHILD SUPPORT ORDER KARMEN ALLEN VS
JAMES PHILIPS FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY OF KAMEN AND KADEN AGES
17.

FLASHBACK: (The officer to James) "There's a warrant ...for
your arrest. How many ya got?"

Flashback ends.

There's another letter in a red envelope with a picture of
twin teenage boys with a hand written script on the back that
reads, "We need to talk. -K"

JAMES (CONT'D)
Fuck!!!

His outburst startles Sissy.

INT. PHILIPS & BOYD LAW FRONT DESK - DAY

A caucasian OFFICER walks in. Early 40's, in shape, he gives good-bad vibes. He's best described as handsome to a lot, but disgusting to many.

SISSY

There you are! Hey you!

Chipper.

The officer leans over her desk and kisses Sissy's cheek.

OFFICER BOYD

Sissy, at some point, you're gonna give me your number.

Sissy hits his head with an envelope.

SISSY

I'll give you some pussy before you get my phone number.

OFFICER BOYD

(Intrigued)

Oooo, you always talk like that at work?

They laugh.

James walks out of the office.

JAMES

(Impatient)

Marcus. Get in here, man.

James walks out as abruptly as he walked in.

MARCUS

(to Sissy)

There's a new stick up his ass?

Sissy organizes a folder.

SISSY

You just reminded me. I'm calling Maison. He's been a special kinda crazy ever since he walked in.

Sissy pulls out her cellphone.

SISSY (CONT'D)

Yesterday - we never got paid.
Today- the lights are off.

(MORE)

SISSY (CONT'D)

And, by the scrapes on the back of his neck, he had a bad night last night. They're fresh. Check on him please. He's got that look, again.

INT. JAMES OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marcus walks into James' office closing the door behind him. He flips the light switch. Nothing.

MARCUS

(sarcastic)

Hmph. That's new.

James sits behind his dark desk. Not looking nor responding to Marcus' antics. His eyes stare to the floor with his palms on his forehead.

Shook.

Marcus walks further into the room. He looks around; inspecting.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Annnndd, the scratches?

James doesn't lift his head.

JAMES

Car accident.

INT. FRONT OFFICE - SAME TIME

SISSY

(into the phone)

Hey May! How was your vacation??

INT. MAISON'S WALK-IN CLOSET - SAME TIME

Maison sits on a chair fumbling through underwear with the tags still on them.

MAISON

Hey you! It was very much needed.

(pause)

She puts the underwear down sensing a problem on the other end of the call.

MAISON (CONT'D)
(Worried)
...what did he break, Sissy?

INT. PHILIPS & BOYD'S FRONT DESK - SAME TIME

Sissy takes in a deep breath in.

SISSY
Our checks didn't deposit on the first. Problemo numero uno. Problem number 2 - I tried to use the company account to pay the light bill but - it's declining. I log into it and it's empty. The lights were on yesterday; they're off today. He's in the office screaming. My husband just got here so - you know that can't be good. Fix it, mom!

Maison laughs.

MAISON
Not the big bad wolf!

Maison laughs again, but this time sarcastically.

SISSY
I wish I could share in your laughter, but the shit in here is tense. I saw court docs on his desk.

INT. MAISON'S WALK-IN CLOSET - SAME TIME

Maison stands up from her chair dressed in a thigh length white silk robe.

Nothing under.

MAISON
Ok-ok. I'ma call him and see what's going on. In the meantime - I'll cover your checks from our private account. He didn't increase his limit and overspent last night. That's all I believe this is. I dunno about the empty account. I'll fix it. I told him to increase his limit. Listen...
(MORE)

MAISON (CONT'D)

Send an apology email to the staff
and announce that deposits will be
made by noon. I'm gonna log into
the system and deposit checks,
right now.

INT. PHILIPS & BOYD'S FRONT OFFICE - SAME TIME

Sissy plops down in her seat and opens a piece of candy.

SISSY

Awesome. I'm on it. Thanks step-
boss.

MAISON

(laughing)

'Step-boss' cracks me up every
time.

She tosses the candy in her mouth.

SISSY

I'll spy on the guys and see what's
going on.

INT. JAMES OFFICE - SAME TIME

Marcus sits on James desks with his head down holding the
picture of TWO TEENAGED BOYS in his hand.

Marcus stands across the room; militant. Aggravated.

MARCUS

This shit was handled.

JAMES

(crashing out)

It doesn't fucking seem like it!

MARCUS

Calm down.

JAMES

Fuck calming down! Once Maison
finds out about Karmen...

Sissy walks in.

SISSY

Who's Karmen?

Marcus walks over to James, takes the photo, and casually slides it into his uniform pocket.

MARCUS
Women have karma -
Men have Karmen, honey.

Sissy chuckles and hands James another envelope.

SISSY
I don't mean to interrupt, but it
looks important.

James snatches the envelope.

JAMES
Fuck. What now?

He opens the envelope.

Sissy walks out not bothered by the snatch.

As she exits, she pulls the door to a crack, she set her phone to record, and places it discreetly on the wall behind the door.

She walks away.

INT. MAISON'S CLOSET - AROUND THE SAME TIME

Maison sits back in her chair, but this time with a laptop. She's logging into the system.

She dials out to call James. He answers on the last ring.

JAMES
(into phone)
Hello?

MAISON
Hey you. Everything ok?

JAMES (V.O.)
Yea, honey. Everything is fine. I'm
still dealing with the bank.

MAISON
(into phone)
Dealing? It should be an easy
change. "Dealing" sounds difficult.

Marcus signals for him to hang up.

JAMES

(pause)

It's a little complicated.

Maison looks up from the laptop. Suspicious.

She doesn't comment.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm thinking I just need to pick up another job. This shit is going to take a while to sort out and I need money. The limits are there are a reminder. I kinda wana leave it.

Marcus nods "yes" in silence

MAISON

Well, that may not be so bad, honey. We've been talking about investing in a coffee shop and that could help as start up money, too.

INT. JAMES OFFICE - SAME TIME

James stands next to Marcus with his cell phone sitting it on the desk on speaker.

JAMES

Exactly. That's all I'm thinking about, babe.

MAISON

You know ...Gabriel moved back a few years ago. He's been dying to go out with me. I'll shoot him an email to see if he needs a sexy lawyer on his team. He was in the paper last week discussing why he pays higher wages than other employers. He'll do anything for me. If you're ok with that - I can place a call to fix your money problem.

JAMES

Uh-Ok, thanks babe. Uh..cool. I'll call you back.

James hangs up before Maison can say another word.

INT. MAISON'S WALK-IN CLOSET - SAME TIME

Maison chuckles to herself.

MAISON

Men.

Fine, I won't *call*.

She goes into her mail account and types:

Hey Gabriel,

It's been a long time.

INT. JAMES OFFICE - SAME TIME

The two still stand in front of the phone like Maison's on the other end.

MARCUS

You hung up on her.

JAMES

No, I didn't.

MARCUS

Yes, you did. You look suspicious.
What the fuck was that?

JAMES

I think I'm freaking the fuck out,
bro.

Marcus takes deep breathes.

MARCUS

Don't you do that 'anxiety attack'
bullshit, right now. It's not the
time.

Still taking deep uncontrolled breathes.

Marcus grabs James' hand.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Breathe, brother.

JAMES

The last thing I need is her
thinking I need her ex!

MARCUS

She'll never do it. Women like to offer where they can help. That's all. She ain't callin' him.

INT. MAISON'S WALK-IN CLOSET - SAME TIME

Still typing:

My husband is going through a financial deficit and we could use some of your pull. Let me know if you can help. We could use immediate assistance. He runs Philips & Boyd Law Firm currently looking for side work to help along the bills. Give me a call or you can reach him at: 313-555-0111.

Sent.

INT. JAMES' OFFICE - DAY

James and Marcus stand like zombies when James' gets a call on his cell phone.

James places it on speaker.

FEMALE VOICE

Hello?

JAMES

Your father put you up to this?

FEMALE VOICE

Things have changed. I called you. New number?

JAMES

Yea. 12 years ago.

FEMALE VOICE

Guess it would've be beneficial to keep me in the loop.

JAMES

What do you need to go away again?

FEMALE VOICE

It's not about that. The boys want to know who their father is. They're smarter than the lie we came up with. I couldn't find you -

JAMES
 Facebook - instagram - twitter -
 threads - tic toc - gmail - yahoo -

An unknowns call comes in. James swipes it away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Google, Bing, Outlook-

Marcus snatches the phone.

MARCUS
 That's enough.

James continues to talk even though the phone is with Marcus.

JAMES
 (hollering)
 Three hundred thousand dollars is
 enough for me to have her ass
 killed! Talkin bout she couldn't
 find me - you didn't try!

Sissy pops in.

SISSY
 Who is this "Karmen"??

Marcus trots over to Sissy.

MARCUS
 I'll tell you later, honey. At home
 where I've had time to fix some of
 this with him.

JAMES
 (hard whispering)
 No, don't tell her shit! May
 doesn't even know!

MARCUS
 She already heard you yellin' about
 Karmen! You fuckin' told her!

FEMALE VOICE
 (from phone)
 Who the fuck worried about me?!

Marcus signal nicely for Sissy to leave the situation alone.
 She listens and tends back to her front desk duties. This
 time, she closes the door all the way and grabs her phone
 from the wall behind it.

James drops his face into his hands and plops on top of his desk.

MARCUS
(into phone)
Karmen, it's Marcus.

FEMALE VOICE
'The Big Bad Wolf'? I should have
known you wouldn't be too far
behind. How's life *dirty cop*?

Marcus laughs.

MARCUS
You know the arrangement. James
doesn't exist to you. You wanted
him gone, I did that -

FEMALE VOICE
-No! That was my father's wishes.
He's dead now. I want my family
back. James told me if my father
wasn't around, we'd be the perfect-

James hollers from too far away.

JAMES (O.S.)
There is no fucking way!

INT. PHILIPS & BOYD'S FRONT DESK - SAME TIME

Sissy doesn't have to eavesdrop. James is shouting loud enough for the neighborhood to hear. Sissy sits behind the desk listening expressionless.

She checks her recording and replays Karmen saying "The kids wana know who their father is!" Sissy stops the recording with a look of shock. She begins to send it to Maison, then...

She stops and decides to put the phone away.

INT. JAMES OFFICE - SAME TIME

FEMALE VOICE
(over speaker phone)
I can't believe you're saying these
things, right now! I just - I
can't!

The call ends.

James stands up from the desk.

JAMES
(to Marcus)
Where does she live?

MARCUS
She's moved last I know, but I can
find her. Give me 24 hours. I know
a guy that knows a guy.

James pulls the picture from his pocket and slides it across
the desk to James.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Told you to stop fuckin' white
girls.

Marcus leaves James' office slamming the door behind him.

He passes Sissy kissing her forehead before leaving out the
front door without saying a word.

James sits behind his desk. Devastated.

Sissy walks over and stands in James' doorway.

SISSY
Boss?

JAMES
What, Sissy?!

She flips the light switch. The light comes on. James' eyes
light up.

SISSY
You have a call.

Shocked. Apologetic. Confused. Happy. He pulls the phone from
the receiver.

SISSY (CONT'D)
Line 1.

James takes a seat, gathers himself, and answers.

JAMES
Attorney James Philips...
Oh - wow, yes.
Hello! I'm so... shocked...yes...
Absolutely!
My ...my wife?
(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I can...I can - yep.
On the way, right now.

Sissy still stands in the doorway.

SISSY

You have a sugar daddy or
somethin'? As soon as the lights
popped on, the call came though.
That wife of yours doesn't play!
Haha! I told you!

James bolts up from his desks.

JAMES

Listen - I just got a call. If I
get this second job, you go from
clerk to Administrative Department
Lead.

Sissy eyes grow wide.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How about that?!

SISSY

Let's get you out of here, then!

EXT. THE RENAISSANCE CENTER DETROIT - DAY

James stands outside the large Detroit skyscrapers staring
upward capturing the clouds in the back.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

James stands awaiting for the elevator to get to his floor
nervously. He does not join in on any of the small talk with
the rest of the business men and women in there with him.

Floor 18.

James exits the elevator and approaches the first person he
spots sitting behind a desk.

JAMES

(to receptionist)

Hello, I'm James Philips. I'm here
to meet Gabriel Barns for a job
interview.

The receptionist doesn't look at him. She hands him a sheet
of paper without lifting her head.

RECEPTIONIST

I know who you are. I had to pay your light bill to get in contact with you. I called your cell first, but 'busy' signal. Mr. Barns is expecting you. Head on back. It's the gold door.

James takes the paper and makes his way to the gold door.

When arrived, he knocks softly.

GABRIEL

(through the door)

Come on in, James! Let's talk shop!

James walks in. Hand extended.

JAMES

Nice to finally meet you. Thank you so much for this. My wife speaks highly of you.

Gabriel shakes his hand.

GABRIEL

Have a seat.

James does.

Unexpected awkward silence happens as James sits, Gabriel flops open a huge news paper and reads it as if James isn't there.

After a short while, Gabriel looks through papers on his desk.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I talked to Maison. She said your money was tied up and you thought it would be best to get a new job? What do you currently do?

JAMES

I opened a law firm with my best friend Marcus Boyd, sergeant and head of Intelligence. He's a silent partner -

GABRIEL

- but a heavy hitter to have as a reference.

(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

It's hard to not hire you with that reference at the tip of your tongue. I know Marcus very well.

They share a quick laugh.

Gabriel continues to read through stacks of organized papers.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

How is Maison?

JAMES

Um - Maison is...Maison. I'm sure you remember how that can go.

James laughs alone.

GABRIEL

Yea. So - I have a little scandal I need help with. Mostly paperwork. Low level paralegal mess, truly. My current attorney was let go. He was stealing and covering his steps very well for years. I need everything undone that he did. I could use you. I've been googling your whole life since you've been on the way. I know what I need to know.

Gabriel closes the FOLDER he was digging through. When we close it, we see the words: JAMES on the front.

JAMES

Easy peasy. I'd need access to everything he had access to. When lawyers steal, it's a play of words. It's easy to locate. I can handle that before lunch.

GABRIEL

Tell you what, Maison says you're overqualified and so - I believe her. You're hired. Under...one condition.

James is excited but contains it.

JAMES

One condition?

GABRIEL

You and Maison must come out tonight!

(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

There's a huge gathering we all look forward to every year. If you have plans, cancel them! All the company leads will be there. It'll be the perfect place to announce my newest addition, the wife, and possibly scope out other work opportunities. You're not just tied to me, you can work cases for all the partners.

Excited.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

And trust me, they all have enough scandals to make you a millionaire over night. These guys are horrible.

JAMES

Well, you just gave my assistant a promotion. Gosh, I-

He fiddles with his clothing.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How can I ever repay this gesture...?

Gabriel smiles.

GABRIEL

Since you asked, I'll think of something...

James smiles in return. Gabriel reaches into his desk and pulls out a pile of stabled papers. He slides it into that folder. He grabs a pen and writes the word: "CONTRACTOR" underneath James' name.

JAMES

I don't work for the company?

GABRIEL

Baby steps.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

They'll be time to talk more tonight. Go celebrate.

Gabriel stands and opens a closet door. He reaches for a shoe box.

He walks it over to James with it.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I'm not sure of the errors that are here, but these are the responsibilities my previous lawyer controlled.

James stands and takes the box.

JAMES

I'll sniff out and reverse everything he's touched.

Firm hand shake.

GABRIEL

I'm certain of it!

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

James fumbles his phone trying to call Maison, read the casework from the shoebox while driving.

His driving is even worse. The other cars blow at him.

MAISON

(into phone)

Hello?

James turns the car and all the papers slide out of order to the passengers side.

JAMES

Shit!

MAISON

(into the phone)

James?

INT. JAMES & MAISON'S BATHROOM - DAY

Maison sits on the toilet with the phone to her face.

Possibly #2.

MAISON

James? Hello?

Maison hears the tires screeching.

JAMES

You won't believe what just happened!!

MAISON
I'm all ears...

JAMES
Nope! I'm racing in the door now. I
just fixed every problem we had!!
What room are you in?

Maison laughs as there's a loud SCREETCCHH as James slams
into her normal parking spot.

MAISON
Respectfully, I am alone in the
bathroom and I'd like to keep it
this way.

Maison hears the front door bang open and slam shut. Now,
excited footsteps approach.

The call ends and there's a knock at the door.

JAMES
Can I come in?

Maison hears his smile through the door.

MAISON
Come on in.

She laughs to herself.

MAISON (CONT'D)
Hold your breath.

James enters.

JAMES
Jesus! ...Tacos?

MAISON
Fajitas.

JAMES
Ahh.

James sits next to the toilet on the floor.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Well, first - I want to thank you
for taking care of my employees.

He pulls a rose from inside his shirt.

JAMES (CONT'D)
This is for you.

She takes it. Smiling.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Second - thank you for putting a
word in with Gabriel.
I got the job.

He pulls out another rose and hands it to her.

Her smile grows.

MAISON
Congratulations..!

JAMES
He said he trusts you. He didn't
give me a hard time or ...ask me
many interview questions.

MAISON
(chuckling)
Well, then! I am just overjoyed!
Did the bank cooperate?

James lifts up for a kiss.

JAMES
(laughing hardy)
They did. Easy peasy, sweetie.
Everything's handled.

MAISON
Very good.

JAMES
Now - we are going out tonight!
Gabe says there's a work thing.

MAISON
Gabe?

JAMES
Too soon?

They both laugh.

James phone rings.

It's Marcus.

He hesitates before he answers and turns the volume down.

Maison notices.

MAISON

Since when do you do that?

He answers the phone but not her question.

JAMES

Yo? ...Oh? ...that was... fast. Yea-
yea, no-no. I'm on the way.

Call ends.

MAISON

What's going on?

James stands.

JAMES

It looks like Phillips & Boyd was
sued. We were on vacation, I didn't
receive the information until
today. The judgement ruled against
me. I have filed a 'Motion to
Vacate Judgement'. Everything will
be alright.

Maison stares neither in belief or disbelief.

JAMES (CONT'D)

The effects of taking a long
vacation.

MAISON

And, the bank?

JAMES

Called this morning, too. Handled.

MAISON

Was that before or after you called
me?

JAMES

When?

MAISON

That you handled it.

JAMES

Oh- yea, *after*, babe.
Well-well-well, after.

James almost leaves, but Maison catches him.

MAISON

Wait! What do I wear? What vibe is it tonight?

JAMES

Knock 'em dead, vibes.
Show a little, tease a lot.

MAISON

You've forgotten, haven't you?

James' entire mood drops.

JAMES

About...?

MAISON

Mom fly's in today. You said—

JAMES

I can still get her, but...I'm not in the mood for her nose next to the stick stuck in my ass about her. Your mom reported my company as fraudulent. She can walk to the nearest hotel for all I give a —.

INT. UNMARKED CAR (NOT MOVING) - DAY

1 HOUR LATER.

James and Marcus sits in an unmarked police vehicle; watching. Marcus watches the pedestrians through a pair of compact binoculars while James watches with his natural eye.

MARCUS

Since when are you dropping "F" bombs when you talk to Maison? You searchin' for a hurtin'?

JAMES

Her mom is bad luck to me. Always has been.

MARCUS

Well, in kindergarten the girls used to hit me when they liked me.

James stops spying and looks at Marcus.

JAMES
She's already shown me she likes
me...

Marcus lowers the binoculars returning the intense eye
contact.

MARCUS
What?

James nods.

JAMES
You heard right.

Marcus' mouth drops open, James goes back to spying, but
Marcus' mouth won't close.

James finally notices.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Oh, the story? Sure.

Marcus breaks scene; laughs.

JAMES (CONT'D)
It was our wedding night.

MARCUS
(astounded)
You devil!

JAMES
I'm the good guy! Lemme finish!

Marcus covers his mouth like a girl getting the gossip she
always wanted.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She stayed the night.

MARCUS
(flabbergasted)
At your home?!?!

JAMES
Marcus! I'm trying to tell you!

Marcus giggles and hides behind his hands with his eyes wide
as if James is getting ready to tell a scary story.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(ignoring Marcus)
Shit! Okay? You done??

Marcus physically zips his lips holding back his true laughter.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I was drunk! Like...as fuck. I forgot she was there. I went to the kitchen ...naked. Typical porno story from here: We must get thirsty at or around the same time cause here she comes around the corner 'ass naked.'

MARCUS
You smashed moms??!

JAMES
Nn-of course not! I thought you were done! I'm done talkin' about it! I'm threw!

Marcus makes a fake sad-face like a small tender child.

MARCUS
Sowwy. I'm done. The first zipper was defaulted. I got a new one.

He zips his lips again.

James hesitates but begins again.

JAMES
She got to grabbin' at it. Providing compliments. Before I can put the water pitcher back, she dun fell on her knees and swallowed me whole, bro.

MARCUS
You lyin!

JAMES
Maison don't know and she never will.

MARCUS
Moms try to go back for the reup?!

JAMES

From time to time. I just pretend
that I don't remember. It's better
for me if it never happened.

Marcus' mouth has reopened for business. His eyes sit stuck
to the side of James' face.

James squints then grabs the binoculars to see better.

Marcus continues to stares.

MARCUS

(overly animated)

You stroked on moms, didn't you??!

James lowers the binoculars.

JAMES

Absolutely not!

Marcus snatches the binoculars.

MARCUS

You tellin me, she threw it in, and
you strictly jumped back?! Pulled
straight out?! No "hokey" or
"pokey"??

Marcus dances around in his seat imitating 'dancing around in
someones mouth.'

They stare at each other just of a spell before they both
burst into laughter.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I knew it!!

James laughs.

JAMES

I ain't sayin' nothin'! I don't
remember shit!

There's a small silence, then they both burst into another
laughing fit.

MARCUS

You committed to the lie before you
thought to be honest. That makes
you a fucked up person. I woulda
told Sissy.

JAMES

Sissy's different. Maison grew up with that 'church' on her. She don't go, but those morals are still heavy in her. She woulda left. No doubt.

MARCUS

What do you think happens if she finds out 8 years after her marriage?

JAMES

'Happy Wife, Happy Life,' don't say shit about "honesty."

MARCUS

See. And look at you now. A mental 'slave' to the very thought—

James does a heavy chuckle.

JAMES

You shot your grandfather.

MARCUS

Cause he touched me on my ass!

There's a hilarious tension building in the car on James' side while Marcus' anger could be mistaken for seriousness.

JAMES

Ya'know, that was never *verified*.

MARCUS

That filthy fuck deserved every bullet I put in his ear!

James takes the binoculars and chuckles quietly to himself.

JAMES

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is how you get Mr. Boyd to shut thee entire fuck up.

James glances through the binoculars again.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Also, there they go.

Marcus bites his sandwich.

James watches as a semi-heavyset caucasian woman walks along the outdoor mall system with two tall (clearly mixed) teenage boys.

They stare up at each business header as if they're a bit confused.

MARCUS

A partner of mine found them
leaving that church we all used to
go to.

James still watches through the binoculars.

JAMES

Shit. You still got that nose, I
see.

Marcus still chews.

MARCUS

(garbled)
Big Bad Wolf, got big wolf friends
now. I'm getting old, man.

JAMES

I feel it.
I wonder why Karmen still goes to
that janky ass church...

MARCUS

Pastor wasn't shit. He locked the
doors on their brains. She's just
one of the zombies that go there.

EXT. OUTDOOR OUTLET MALL - CONTINUOUS

The two curly headed twins walk behind their chubby mother.
There's no conversation. Just walking.

The dynamic looks rushed.

INT. UNMARKED CAR (NOT MOVING) - SAME TIME

James passes the binoculars to Marcus.

JAMES

Yea, that's them.

Marcus takes the binoculars to see.

JAMES (CONT'D)
...ya'know, (chewing cold fries)
you should come out tonight.

Marcus shakes his head: no.

JAMES (CONT'D)
After this work event, I gotta get
Maison's mom from the airport, then
I'm hiding.

MARCUS
Can't. Got a work-thing with the
bad-guys.

JAMES
Ahh, the double-life dealer. Leave
me hangin', then.

MARCUS
Gladly. Gotta pay my dues. Bad guys
pay more than good guys. (Chuckles)

JAMES
Need back up?

MARCUS
Already got it.

Marcus sips a drink through a fast food straw.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
So, how do you want to handle this?

JAMES
Ask nicely, I guess.

Marcus hands James a ripped piece of paper with an address
written on it.

MARCUS
This address was heavily associated
with her Amazon deliveries. I'ma
check this spot out later to know
for sure. Want me to dig?

JAMES
Absolutely.

James takes the paper.

Marcus grabs a pistol with a silencer attached to it from
underneath his driver side seat. He begins unscrewing the
silencer. He slides the silencer into his pocket.

He notices James staring at the boys with a "fatherly look."

MARCUS

(nodding yes)

Get over it. You can make other
ugly ass kids with Maison. The
right woman.

James picks through the cold fries sitting on his lap.

JAMES

Ain't no such thing as "bad kids."
Workin at this new building
downtown, I might be able to grab
some extra clients and fill this
debt the regular way... And -

MARCUS

And KEEP payin child support?!

Marcus pulls the silencer from his pocket and screws it back
on the gun.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I remember a little conversation in
a garage after I got rid of her the
first time that if she ever came
back - for any reason...

Marcus hands James the pistol. He doesn't take it.

James looks at the boys again.

JAMES

They're handsome boys. They look
like my mother. That's crazy...

Marcus looks at James in disgust.

MARCUS

You've grown soft. Them boys ugly
and so is they mama.

Marcus tosses the pistol back underneath the seat.

JAMES

Their. You mean to say,
"T - H - E - I - R" mama.
Not "they".
"They mama" ?
How do you not swallow your tongue
talking like that?

MARCUS

Fuck you - and Detroit Public
Schools. It's called condoms stupid
mother fucker! And stayin away from
white women!!

James laughs.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(Serious but playful)
Stupid mother fucker.
Get out the car! Let's go do a
routine 'meet & greet.'

James still laughs. Marcus opens the door.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Like old times.

James exits the car.

JAMES

Like old times.

EXT. OUTDOOR OUTLET MALL - CONTINUOUS

Shoppers fill the area. Large families and small families
mingle around the front doors. Some people are smoking and
others are waiting to ask for change.

The sun is out, therefore, so are the tank tops, the shorts,
and the skin.

James and Marcus are headed for a collide with Karmen and the
boys. Through the crowd, Karmen lifts her head just in time
spotting Marcus.

She's a deer in headlights.

Sure not to frighten her boys, she contains her posture.

Marcus bumps into her slightly spilling her beverage. The
boys don't notice the attack.

Marcus turns around.

MARCUS

Oh - my bad. (slaps his own wrist)
bad cop. (smiles at Karmen)

Karmen is too shocked to verbally respond. James bumps into
Karmen almost spinning her around in the opposite direction.

Her beverage topples out of her hands crashing to the ground.
The boys notice and help their mother's mess.

JAMES
(eye contact)
Apologies, ma'am.

James bends down to grab her cup for her, but Karmen hurriedly grabs her boys by the hands and fast-walks out of the area. They're dragged away confused.

Marcus and James both stop pursuit.

MARCUS
She looked like she saw a ghost.

JAMES
She did.

EXT. RENAISSANCE CENTER - NIGHT

James and Maison arrive to the event in her vehicle.

James is uncomfortable in her small car.

MAISON
We'll get your car in the shop
soon, baby.

Valet takes over for James and Maison as they head inside the dinner party.

TIME: 7:49 PM

Maison: dressed in a form fitted backless gold trimmed red dress with gold shoes.

James: dressed in a black tuxedo complimented with a gold tie - also accenting Maison's fit.

Maison's shoes have a pattern that matches James' tie.

All eyes are on them.

Photographers are scattered about the valet photographing every inch of the event. James and Maison are asked to pose for a photograph.

They do.

They glide through the ravishing double front doors and there stands: Gabriel.

Standing poetically. Waiting for someone...

He looks over at Maison and smiles; dearly. Too...dearly.

INT. RENAISSANCE CENTER - NIGHT

The elegant work gathering responds well to it's environment. The outdoor bushes and statues of gargoyles line the inside of the property's gates.

A band performs jazz music at the top of a grand staircase at the events entrance.

Maison spots Gabriel just as he pretends to just see her approaching.

Gabriel grabs for her hand. She accepts; smiling.

James opens his arms for an embrace and respectfully kisses her cheek.

Maison returns the warm welcome.

MAISON

Gabby! It's so nice to see you! Hi!
Thank you for looking at my email.

GABRIEL

My May.

The embrace is tender, but not (yet) concerning James.

However, it goes on a little too long.

JAMES

(smiling w/ hand extended
awkwardly)
Hey - hey! I don't wana kiss ya,
but a 'handshake' would make my
night.

Gabriel releases Maison and shakes James' hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Thank you again, for everything.

Gabriel lets go first.

GABRIEL

I'm glad you could make it, James.
Very glad.
(to Maison) Especially, you.
(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Thank you for coming, May.
Seriously. It's been too long.

He kisses Maison again...casually, but this time, he
'mistakenly' pecks perfectly onto the corner of her mouth.
Tasting her.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(To Maison)
Oh shit, I'm so sorry.
(to James) Horrible habit.

Maison touches her lip shocked.

MAISON

Oh, Gabriel!

She pulls a tiny hand held mirror from her tiny purse.

She checks her lipstick.

James moves the mirror and checks that her lipstick is
perfect.

JAMES

(observing)
You're beautiful. It's ok.
(To Gabriel) I should make kissing
beautiful women my personal
horrible habit, too.

MAISON

(to James)
No smudges? You promise?

GABRIEL

(ignoring James)
I think a little. Come here.

Gabriel pulls Maison away from James just as a server steps
in between them with a tray of sliders. James tries to get
around the server, but he'd crash into other parties.

He falls back and waits, but he's no fool.

He grabs a sandwich for himself and Maison and holds small
talk with the waiter to better watch Gabriel.

James stares over casually. He sees Gabriel grab Maison's
hand and they walk to a nearby table with a stack of napkins
on it.

Another guests grabs James' attention to compliment his shoes
and offers to pose in a photo with him. James accepts.

Gabriel grabs a napkin and tilts Maisons head slightly toward the light. Innocently, she allows him.

Nothing is smudged on Maison's mouth.

Gabriel gently dabs where he 'accidentally' kissed her.

MAISON

Is it a bad smudge? I left my
lipstick in the car.

GABRIEL

No.

Gabriel still dabs at nothing.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

There's no smudge. I just wanted to
get you away from my lawyer.

Maison chuckles.

Gabriel smiles adoringly.

MAISON

Your lawyer just so happens to be
my husband, remember?

Gabriel leans in just ...a little too close.

He blows a piece of napkin from her lip.

GABRIEL

I don't like to call him that.

Maison is uncomfortable.

James finally catches up.

Gabriel backs away before James can outwardly suspect anything.

JAMES

Everything good? Ya'll ran off
kinda quick. What happened?

James hands Maison a plate.

GABRIEL

(joking)
Where's mine?

JAMES
(not joking)
I only serve my wife. You gotta get
yourself one.

GABRIEL
(smiling)
A wife or a sandwich?

James looks at Maison.

JAMES
Both.

GABRIEL
(still smiling)
Touché.

Maison grabs James hand.

MAISON
Come on, babe. Let's go look around
and find somewhere to sit. I think
I saw Sissy.

Maison turns to Gabriel and hugs him again.

MAISON (CONT'D)
Thank you again. It's always good
to see your face.

He keeps his lips to himself this time.

GABRIEL
(to Maison)
Likewise. (to James) If you don't
mind, James - I'm going to pull you
around 8:30. I have a few
announcements to make while I have
everyone in the same place at the
same time. Will you stay a while
for a quick meeting with me?

JAMES
Absolutely. I can't wait to get
acquainted.

The two men shake hands and Gabriel departs off into the
party.

KIM (O.S.)
Is that my girl Maison in the
building?!

An old friend of Maison's: KIM, Early 30's. Long natural straightened hair. Often mistaken for extensions. Beautiful by definition inside and out. Loud, but quiet. Professional, but fun.

Maison turns to see who called her.

MAISON
Kimmie!!!!

The two hug and chat-away leaving James standing alone.

EXT. KARMEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marcus watches the front door of Karmen's last known delivery address. He wears a white hoodie pulled over his head with white jogging pants to match.

He walks heavily up wooden creaky stairs to a wooden creaky porch with peeling paint. He peaks discreetly through the small natural gaps in the window's blinds.

He pulls the pistol with a silencer from his appendix and bangs the butt-stock on the door.

BANG. BANG. BANG. (Gentle)

A boy comes to the door. A long curly hair, mixed, tall, athletic, twin boy.

MARCUS
Hey boy. What's ya name and where's
ya daddy?

BOY
(Stutters)
Ka-Ka...den?

MARCUS
Kaden?

The boy shakes his head: yes. Afraid.

Marcus laughs like an asshole at his own joke.

KADEN
(frowning)
Mooommm!

Marcus steps inside.

MARCUS
That works, too.

INT. KARMEN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Karmen rushes down a raggedy staircase near the door.

KARMEN

You get the fuck out of my house!

Marcus shuts the door behind him.

The other twin enters the room; confused.

MARCUS

Hi, you must be Kamen.

The boys are identical. They wear the same build and the same clothes.

KARMEN

Dad!!!!

Marcus points the pistol into the direction Karmen called in.

MARCUS

I knew you were full of shit.

Karmen's father walks into the room. He's old. His hair is white; dry and brittle. He walks through a bad limp.

He sits sloppy in a squeaky recliner wearing over-worn overalls.

KAMEN

(Pointing)

Wait, you're that guy from the mall. What's going on, mom?

KARMEN'S FATHER

(To Marcus)

I thought someone would have killed you by now.

Marcus doesn't respond.

Karmen gathers her boys in her arms; concerned.

KARMEN

(wishes)

Go up to your rooms.

MARCUS

(waving the gun around)

Eh. Stay a while. We've got some catching up to do.

Marcus extends his hand to Kaden.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
(Joyful)
Hi, I'm Uncle Marcus.

Kaden shakes his hand, but Kamen smacks their hands apart.

Marcus keeps the gun on Karmen's father, but looks both boys in the eyes.

Karmen keeps a tight hold on them.

KARMEN'S FATHER
Cut it out already!

He screams through breaks in his old voice.

KARMEN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
You're scaring the boys!

He waves his large frail arms in the air in anger.

KARMEN'S FATHER (CONT'D)
And what the fuck they gotta call
you "uncle" fa? You ain't no kin to
me!

MARCUS
(sarcastic)
Oh, those black boys are kin to
James which makes them kin to me.

KARMEN'S FATHER
You here to take em?

Karmen's father stares at the boys like he's seen...a ghost.

MARCUS
I'm here about the money.

KARMEN
James' child support obligation is
legal! You have no right to be here
about this!

Karmen's father looks Karmen in the face like a stranger.

KARMEN'S FATHER
You told me they were Puerto Rican!

MARCUS
(laughing)
That's black, too! My wife is
Rican. Veeerry much black.

Karmen ignores her daddy's gaze, but he doesn't take his eyes off her.

Marcus turns to Karmen; pistol still on the father.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
What kind of delusional bullshit is
this? You have black sons that
don't know they're black?! What
type of "Get Out" shit is this?!

KARMEN
You can't have black kids where I
come from! You know that Marcus!

Marcus lowers the pistol.

Karmen's father keeps his eyes fixated on Karmen. Tears fall down his face.

MARCUS
You're telling me you're raising
black men in a world where they
will be hated - and they don't know
they're black? Are you fucking
crazy?!

Kaden and Kamen speak to one another in Spanish. They seem to argue. One boy seems angered: Kamen

...and the other is scared: Kaden.

KAMEN
Don't talk to my fuckin' mom that
way!

Marcus walks into Kamen's face.

MARCUS
Most of my friends get off on
putting your kind in coffins. I
would be nice to Uncle Officer
Marcus.

KAMEN
We don't need your fuckin' help! We
ain't niggers! Get the fuck-

Kamen pushes Marcus ferociously ready to rumble, but two shots ring off.

Startled, Marcus jumps behind a loveseat to take quick cover. He see's one of the twins fall to the floor spewing in blood from the neck. It's Kaden.

Dying.

Karmen's father sits in the squeaky recliner struggling with a powerful shotgun trying to fire another round and struggling to stand to his feet.

Gun's jammed.

Karmen falls to the floor in shock. She tries to aid her obviously dead son back to life.

Marcus' white jumpsuit is now designed in red.

EXT. KARMEN'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

7 additional gunshots ring off from inside of Karmen's house. There's no movement inside.

EXT. RENAISSANCE CENTER - SAME NIGHT

WORDS ON SCREEN: 8:30pm

James mingles comfortably throughout the party trying new champagne and sandwiches. He joins in on the dance floor when Maison hears her favorite jam.

Kim plays third-wheel, but the threesome mingles well together.

As Gabriel walks by, James checks his phone. It's 8:31pm. He catches Gabriel.

JAMES

Hey, boss man! We still meeting?

Gabriel checks the glamorous watch on his wrist.

GABRIEL

Ah. Absolutely. There's paperwork in my office for you. Follow me.

James follows.

JAMES

Who will I be meeting?

Gabriel smirks

GABRIEL
My lawyer.

James frowns. Confused, but still follows.

JAMES
The one you fired?

Gabriel laughs sneakily.

GABRIEL
(snickering)
Ah, I did tell you that, didn't I?

JAMES
Yo, what's going on?

INT. OFFICE HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

James still following...

It's getting darker ...and quieter.

Gabriel opens the door to his office.

INT. GABRIEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A man sits behind a desk. Gabriel sits in the first of the two chairs across from him.

GABRIEL
Have a seat, James.

Gabriel points to a chair.

Hesitantly - James sits.

JAMES
What's going...on?

The door closes automatically behind them.

GABRIEL
James, I lied to you. I don't need you as my lawyer. I have a good team of people with currently no openings available, therefore you have no place here. I want Maison.

JAMES
(scowling)
What?!

GABRIEL
Let's not try to buy ourselves time
with fruitless questions, James.
You heard me.

Gabriel glances at the lawyer.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
Paperwork.

The LAWYER, FRANK, late 40's, thin, 'in the closet,' but obvious to some responds to Gabriel by sliding about a dozen unstapled papers to James in a messy pile.

FRANK
My name is Frank. Outside of work
you can call me Fran. (Pops lip!)

GABRIEL
(snickering)
He's very very gay. Don't let the
suit fool you. Cover your ass when
you get up to walk out of here.

They both chuckle. James doesn't.

FRANK
You are here today because Maison
needed a favor. We've taken care of
the bills at your place of work and
I can give you back what you lost
in child support as an advance to
settle any tension this may cause.

James doesn't know where to look. He's caught off guard entirely. No eye contact.

JAMES
What? What the fuck are ya'll
asking me?? To - like - what?! Fuck
my wife?!

GABRIEL
Why do people play games like this
when they're befuddled? I tax for
that because it's unnecessary. Time
is money. Listen, Maison requested
'immediate assistance' for you.
I've done my part.
(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

This is the cost. Ask another dumb question and the advance is gone...

James takes a moment. His heart rattles in his chest without rhythm.

Breathing...

Thinking...

JAMES

You want Maison...?

GABRIEL

There you go...

JAMES

And you want to pay me an advance...to ...fuck her?

GABRIEL

No - God no. Not to 'fuck her.' I mean - if she lets me, sure, but - I love her. No. She didn't tell you what happened with us?

JAMES

(aggressive)

Nah...

Gabriel sits up properly in his seat. He looks bothered.

GABRIEL

Interesting...

JAMES

Are you asking for my permission 'legally'?

GABRIEL

Blessing. I want your 'blessing.' ...legally...

James stands up from the desk and paces by the door.

JAMES

I just need a fuckin' minute.

Gabriel stands, but stays by the desk.

GABRIEL

Look - you don't even have to work for me at all.

(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I'll call you for very low level
shit if absolutely necessary, but -
all I want from you ...is Maison.
I'm sure that's 'work' in some
form, right? I'm paying good money
for something even better.

FRANK

(light bulb moment)
It's an investment!

GABRIEL

(Smiling pointing at
Frank)
I like that!

Gabriel points at James.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

It's an investment. Will you allow
me to invest?

James' phone buzzes giving him the ability to ignore their
banter. There's 42 missed calls and a text from Marcus that
reads : NIGGA! 911! PLS!

James drops the phone back into his pocket and faces the
door. He's rattled, but hiding it well. His eyes blink
rapidly as he doesn't know where to focus.

JAMES

I can't agree to something like
this. As a husband, I'm agreeing to
sign my marriage up for cancer!

GABRIEL

And I'm paying for the best
treatments, James! Don't be
difficult. I'm not dealing you
pennies here. Do we have a deal or
no?

James goes to stand, but Frank looks a bit too antsy. James
freezes.

JAMES

(Both hands up)
May I stand for a moment? I need to
move around. Lemme think. Please.

Gabriel nods.

Frank relaxes.

James paces.

A while passes. The room is thick.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We need the money...

He paces controlling his breathing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
...but Maison ...just...she can't
know that I agreed.

GABRIEL
(to Frank)
Write this man a check!

JAMES
No!

Everyone stops rejoicing.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Change the paperwork to reflect
that, now. This stays a secret. A
complete and utter secret! I mean,
I'm going to be a complete fool of
this shit. Maison can't know that I
know. At. All.
Add that, and you have a deal.
But...

James checks his watch.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I really have to return this call.

Gabriel snaps his finger.

GABRIEL
Easy Peezy.
(To Frank) Add the changes. Get his
signature. Give Maison a gift card
to her favorite store.

Frank begins to move a bit faster.

FRANK
That was a fast deal. What amount,
sir?

GABRIEL
Let's start off with five.
Not too much.
(MORE)

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

If there's anything I remember
about 'My May' is she can be a real
bitch when she's not in control,
but money...

Gabriel shakes his finger toward James.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

'Money' has always been her
language.

Gabriel tries to bond with James, but there's nothing.
Gabriel looks away back at papers on his desk. He passes 2
papers to Frank.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Give this to him, too.
I found an extra account of mine
with a lil' over \$300,000 in it.
Take it, James.
I'm letting you rob me!

Gabriel and Frank laugh together; leaving James out yet
again.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I'm sure Maison has no clue about
Karmen's case against you,
either...huh?

James locks eyes with Gabriel astounded at his comment.

They finally bond.

Gabriel smirks at the threads being made between them.

They speak with their eyes a very aggressive conversation.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

There he is... atta'boy...

James doesn't respond.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Am I right? ... James?

He still doesn't respond.

Frank grabs the phone on Gabriel's desk, places it on speaker
phone, and dials a number from memory.

There's a quick answer.

INT. RENAISSANCE CENTER - DANCE FLOOR - SAME TIME

Maison dances on the dance floor with a group of women not dressed as glamorous as her.

MAISON
(into phone & out of
breath)
Hello?

INT. GABRIEL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

GABRIEL
(To Maison into phone): My May, we
need you in on this meeting. Come
down the hall, to the left-

JAMES
-Ne-nevermind! I figured it out! I
got it... I can do it.

GABRIEL
Oh? You... can?

JAMES
I. Can.

GABRIEL
(into the speaker)
Oh...Well...in that case, my
apologies, My May. We're all set.
Be out in a sec.

Gabriel ends the call before she can agree.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - SAME TIME

Maison stares at her phone and excuses herself from her friends.

She calls James.

INT. GABRIEL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Everyone's silent...for far too long.

Gabriel stares intensely at James.

James cellphone starts to silently rattle against his thigh.

He puts his hand in his pocket to quiet the ring.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The call answers on Maison's end.

MAISON
(into phone)
Hello?

No response. Just rustling.

MAISON (CONT'D)
(into phone)
James?

Maison looks around plugging one ear to hear better. She searches for privacy and sees restrooms.

INT. GABRIEL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

JAMES
Let me sign so I can get the fuck
out of here. I also need a copy of
each of these.

GABRIEL
You need copy for what?
No. Fuck no. You're too messy.
Maison will find this.

JAMES
No, she won't. I need to protect
myself, I need to read it, I need
to fully understand this past
today. I've been drinking. I need a
copy so I can look things over.

GABRIEL
We'll the rules aren't on here.

JAMES
Rules?

Frank gets Gabriels attention silently by waving his hand. He then puts his index finger over his lip insinuating 'being quiet.'

Gabriel looks around.

GABRIEL
Are you on an active call, James??

INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Maison hears the commotion clearly.

She panics and hangs up.

MAISON
(To herself)
What the fuck is going on?!

INT. JAMES OFFICE - SAME TIME

Gabriel stands up.

GABRIEL
Pull out your phone.

James does, and the screen is black. James clicks the side button, but ...just the time and a beautiful picture of Maison kissing James' cheek is displayed.

Frank is insistent.

FRANK
Go through it. Check the call log.

Gabriel grabs at the phone, James pulls it away, and there's a knock at the door.

Gabriel and James stare at one another - yet again.

Both melting in a lava level of anger.

James leans over and signs multiple sheets of paperwork.

The knock at the door happens again.

JAMES
She shops at Target and Michaels.
She's been learning to sew lately.
Preferably Michaels.

Gabriel points at Frank.

Frank nods and fills out more paperwork.

James starts toward the door, but stops.

JAMES (CONT'D)
When does this shit end, Gabriel?

GABRIEL

This ends if My May says 'no.' I just wana see if there's anything still there...one second we were engaged to be married, next her parents die in a crash, and I don't see her again until 6 years ago. I ran into her at Target.

Gabriel smiles.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I opened a warehouse here ...merely because I saw her. I knew she'd need me sooner or later. I could tell by the shoes she wore. I'm sure My May is still in there. Somewhere. I just wana look.

James opens the door and walks out. He brushes past a scrawny man standing there with a large headset stapled to his head and a clipboard in his hand.

UNKNOWN MAN

(to Gabriel)

Mr. Barns, you're needed. They're setting up the stage for the rewards.

INT. JAMES AND MAISON' HOME - NIGHT

2 HOURS LATER

James paces in their luxurious living room.

Maison sits on the couch. Her face is very angry.

James doesn't respond to Maison's body language. He keeps pacing in the same spots periodically checking out the window.

His breathing seems to pick up every time he checks out the window.

He checks his phone.

No new notifications.

He hears the backdoor open.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Aye!

James takes off toward Marcus.

Maison jumps to her feet.

MAISON

James?!

James tackles Marcus thrusting him into the door he just walked through.

MARCUS

What the fuck?!

Marcus tries to get away from James, but is unsuccessful.

James wraps himself around Marcus's neck.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

(wheezing)

Stop!! What did I-

He can't breathe.

He punches James square in the face.

James doesn't let go.

Marcus lands body shot after body shot.

James let's go to fight back. He's hurt.

He throws a punch: misses.

Marcus socks him good.

James stumbles.

Maison jumps in between them.

MAISON

Stop! Stop!

JAMES

Say it again!

MAISON

Say what?

Marcus wipes blood from his nose.

MARCUS

The fuck?! Say what?

JAMES

NIGGA!

MARCUS

What?!

James pulls out his phone and throws it at Marcus.

JAMES

That!

Marcus reads the message.

MARCUS' FLASHBACK: Sitting on the floor in his white jump suit covered in red. He's aiding Kamen with a gunshot wound to the shoulder.

Marcus walks over to the father who's shotgun has jammed, again.

Marcus shoots the man killing him in his squeaky recliner chair.

END FLASHBACK

MARCUS

Well, brother. Excuse me if I went through extreme measures to gather your attention.

Marcus does three gently knocks on the backdoor.

James then notices the red designs all over Marcus clothing.

The door opens and there's Kamen with a bloody white shoulder sling bandage.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

I need to talk to you because I saved your son from his very much alive and racist grandfather that just so happen to learn that his favorite grand son is black!

KAMAN

Are you my dad? Because...I really don't know what to do or where to go.

Maison walks out of the room.

THE END.

*