

BLANK COMPUTER SCREEN

As a LEGAL BRIEF is begun...rapid typing...CREDITS... a man (ROMAN) starts voicing text when "STATEMENT OF THE CASE" is reached...

CASE NO. 00-001

SUPREME COURT
Of
ABSOLUTE UNIVERSAL LAW

(Los Angeles Division)

ROMAN J. ISRAEL, ESQ.

Petitioner

V.

HIMSELF

Defendant

NOTICE

To Permanently Disbar Roman J. Israel Esq. From the California Bar and Human Race for Being a F*cking Hypocrite and Turning His Back on EVERYTHING he Ever Claimed to Actually Stand for.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

1. For 26 years defendant/plaintiff has been employed in the Law Office of WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON, a two person, criminal defense firm in the city of Los Angeles. During that time, defendant/plaintiff's duties centered on drafting briefs, motions and pleadings, thereby allowing principal partner William Jackson to focus on court appearances. This work relationship was disrupted three weeks ago, initiating a chain of events leading to the gross moral, ethical and criminal misconduct of ROMAN J. ISRAEL, ESQ and forming the basis for the above-mentioned notice for immediate and summary judgement...

FADE TO BLACK

Silence...V.O. And typing bleed away as FRAME FILLS with
BOOK SHELVES

All 400 volumes of CALIFORNIA LEGAL CODE...walls lined with
bound APPELLATE RULINGS ... LAW REVIEWS ... COURT
DIGESTS...hundreds of POST IT NOTES stuck to gold-lettered
bindings and

WIDER TO SHOW

A LAW OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM

Now being used for what appears to be storage...rows of over-
flowing FILING CABINETS...boxes filled with DOCUMENTS and
BRIEFS...and there, in the center of the room, in a pool of
lamp light, his back to a dusty window and 10-story view of
the L.A. AQUADUCT sits

ROMAN J. ISRAEL ESQ.

Glasses ... mustache and beard ... graying afro ... sweater
vest over a belly...hunched over a PC...sleeves rolled as he
speed-types with two fingers...ROMAN uses no notes or
references as we hear his VOICE OVER of what he writes...

ROMAN (V.O.)

...Defendant Anthony Dowd was charged
with violation of CPC 374.962, burglary
in the first degree, CPC 374.962
provides, in relevant part: a person
commits the crime of burglary in the
first degree IF the person violates CPC
374.962, burglary in the second degree,
AND the building is a dwelling.
"Dwelling," for purposes of CPC 374.962,
is defined at CPC 248.715 as a building
which "regularly or intermittently is--

His FLIP PHONE rings..."Work To Do" tone...answering...

ROMAN

Hello...Hey.
(beat)
They don't fall off, you cut it off.
(beat)
It's a big difference.
(beat)
Because that's a violation.
(beat)
You can't tape it back around your ankle.
(beat)
Oh they're definitely on their way.
(beat)

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

I can't advise you to flush drugs down the toilet.

(beat)

I hear banging.

(beat)

Well open it before they kick it in.

(beat)

Hello?...Hello?

ROMAN hangs up...pulls a doughnut from an old, bulging legal case...eats and CUT TO

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON'S EMPTY OFFICE

JACKSON'S 50-year career traced in photos on wood panel walls...from young black lawyer in the 1960s to a vigorous 85-year old with black ACTIVISTS and POLITICOS...trademark pin-stripe suit with matching tie and pocket square...a big PORCELAIN BULLDOG stands by his imposing desk and chairs as

ROMAN enters...sets a Brief on JACKSON'S desk and CUT TO

RECEPTION AREA

Decorated with degrees and awards...clock clicking 9:20...VERNITA (75, long time receptionist) is on the phone as ROMAN leaves JACKSON'S office...returning to his back room...

VERNITA/ON PHONE

...No...Dear Jesus...

(removing her glasses)

...When?...Oh God...

(finding a pen)

...Where did they take him?...*Which one?*

(cupping the phone, calling)

Roman!

ROMAN down the hall...turns...

VERNITA

William's had a heart attack! Outside his building! He's at M.L.K.!

ROMAN

Is it serious?

VERNITA

Of course it's serious! He's at the emergency room! Call the hospital and see what you can learn!

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON'S OFFICE

Minutes later...VERNITA, coat and hat, gathering some documents from William's desk...ROMAN pacing...

ROMAN

You know what to do? I'll tell you what to do. I'll tell you right now. There's only one thing. Get Kibby, he can cover.

VERNITA

Kibby retired.

ROMAN

When?

VERNITA

Years ago. Now listen Roman, William had a full day today, you have to fill for him. Tell the clients and prosecutors and judges what's going on.

ROMAN

Okay.

VERNITA

Get continuances.

ROMAN

Got it.

VERNITA

Just continuances.

ROMAN

I'm quite certain I know what to do.

VERNITA

I typed up his day. On my desk. Dear lord.

VERNITA hurries out...ROMAN regards the bulldog and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

As ROMAN comes into view...shot from below he's towering...tall as the buildings...60s R&B song heard...ROMAN wearing a wrinkled jacket and wide tie...headphones...lugs his old, bulging legal case with a name plate reading

ROMAN J. ISRAEL ESQ.

ROMAN approaches the SHORTRIDGE FOLTS CRIMINAL COURT... removes his headphones... music ending as ROMAN enters the

COURTHOUSE LOBBY

And joins a line to go through the metal detectors... ROMAN taking in details... off-duty COPS and DETECTIVES here to testify ... DEFENDANTS and FAMILY MEMBERS ...

button-down LAWYERS ... BAILIFFS with GUNS ... ROMAN empties his pockets into a bin ... takes an old ipod from his legal case...

ROMAN

(to the BAILIFF)

I don't want my ipod to go through the machine. Before you say it won't hurt it I have over 8000 songs here. The last time it went through I noticed distortion in the bass range of "Big Love, Small Heartache."

BAILIFF

Everything gets scanned.

ROMAN reluctantly places his ipod into the tray and CUT TO
COURTROOM HALLWAY

ROMAN exits a crowded elevator into a busy hall... joins PEOPLE (black and hispanic) entering a courtroom...

WOMAN BAILIFF

Phones off. All phones off.

ROMAN notes she's black, middle-aged, not unattractive ...

ROMAN

Where's the court for white people?

WOMAN BAILIFF not returning ROMAN's smile and CUT TO
COURTROOM

Court not yet in session ... LAWYERS sign in on a clipboard of the day's busy docket ... two ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEYS at a big table covered by numbered folders ... ROMAN signs in ... addresses one of the A.D.A.s ...

ROMAN

What do you have on number 32? Langston Bailey?

A.D.A.

(pulls a file)

This says William Jackson's his lawyer.

ROMAN

Mister Jackson had a heart attack this morning. I'm Roman Israel, his partner.

A.D.A.

I didn't know Jackson had a partner.

ROMAN

I don't have patience for the butchery that occurs here, Mister Jackson does.

A.D.A.

You want a continuance?

ROMAN regards him... looks around the court ... conflicted ... unable to not dip a toe in ...

ROMAN

What bail are you offering?

A.D.A.

No bail. He pleas the top count, I'll tell the judge and request the minimum. Five-to-seven. He's facing 15 at trial.

ROMAN

For a 17-year-old on a breaking and entering? Jesus let's just get it over with and kill him.

A.D.A.

That's the offer, do what you gotta do.

ROMAN

He's not taking a top plea, hell you're already over-charging him. Let's talk mitigating circumstances.

A.D.A.

He was caught wearing a t-shirt with a gang symbol.

ROMAN

Like the flag pin on your lapel?

A.D.A.

Five-to-seven, that's as low as the people will go.

ROMAN

People? What people? There's no people, there's just you making a bullshit, career-climbing offer.

A.D.A.

Present it to your client.

ROMAN

His name's Langston. He's a high school junior in good standing, plays on the soccer team, all despite his father being in jail and his mother in drug treatment.

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Due to a legion of forces beyond his control he joined a gang for acceptance, safety, family. He has a single prior, minor offense. Each of us is more than the worst thing we've done.

A.D.A.

Deep bows. Please.

ROMAN

Our firm fights civil rights cases, our criminal work is what funds it actually. So I'll give you a heads up, I'm warning you in advance, without a more equitable offer I'll bring a motion to dismiss evidence seized during the illegal search of the vehicle, a motion to suppress his statement on grounds it was coerced, a motion for damages for warrantless entry and a motion to withdraw the plea on his prior charge on the basis of CPC 458-464, failure to properly instruct the jury regarding intent.

A.D.A.

Talk to your client. My conviction rate's a 100 percent.

COURTHOUSE LOCKUP

Removed from public view... barely lit... bleak ... over a hundred jump-suited PRISONERS milling in open pens as CAMERA FINDS

ROMAN

In a row of booths ... bars separate LAWYERS and CLIENTS ... ROMAN faces LANGSTON BAILEY (17, terrified) ...

LANGSTON

Five-to-seven? I thought I was going to juvey. I want to talk to Mister Jackson.

ROMAN

He's in the hospital.

LANGSTON

When's he coming back?

ROMAN

I wish I knew that.

LANGSTON

I want a new lawyer. I want to switch. I have the right.

ROMAN

Yes you do, and I understand that, but know this: William's the one who comes to court but he comes to me for legal guidance. You're being over-charged to force you to accept a plea. To keep things moving they aim to punish you for even asking for your day in court. It's a volume business with guards getting overtime and private companies owning the prisons. That's fact. Now if you say fight we'll fight, but if you decide to take it to trial and lose they'll slam you with 15 years, and they rarely lose.

LANGSTON...reality hitting ... breaking ...

ROMAN

I'm sorry.

ROMAN reaching through the bars ... hand on his shoulder as

GUARD

No contact!

ROMAN withdraws his hand and CUT TO

COURT HOUSE HALLWAY

ROMAN exits another elevator ... jaw set ... checks JACKSON'S typed schedule ... enters another busy COURTROOM and CUT TO

A PRELIMINARY HEARING

In progress ... ROMAN sits with a DEFENDANT (a Latino man, 40s) ... COURT OFFICER addressing the court ...

COURT OFFICER

This is a preliminary hearing on the case of People of the State of California versus Wilmer Carlos Ramirerz, case number A649725. Counsel will please state your names.

ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

People are represented by Michael Wesley.

ROMAN

Roman J. Israel Esquire on behalf of Mister Ramirez.

JUDGE

Mister Israel, I'll grant a continuance given lead counsel's medical emergency.

ROMAN

No I believe I'd like to dive right in.

JUDGE

Proceed.

PROSECUTOR

Your honor, people request indictments against Mister Wilmer Carlos Ramirez on three counts of violating Health and Safety code section 11351, possession of powder cocaine for sale. Mister Ramirez was observed and filmed making three drug sales to undercover officers. Mister Ramirez made a confession to detectives that he supported himself selling drugs.

ROMAN

Objection, motion to strike. Mr. Ramirez was told he was not under arrest and interrogated without benefit of a Miranda warning, yet he was refused use of a bathroom. Violation of civil rights.

A.D.A.

It wasn't an interrogation it was an interview.

JUDGE

Overruled.

ROMAN

If a cop hauls you in and says you can't use a bathroom you're being detained.

JUDGE

We're moving on.

ROMAN

What was he supposed to do? Soil himself to prove he felt trapped?

JUDGE

You can wait to address this at trial.

ROMAN

We have a real honest-to-God problem with this case and it's serious enough that--

JUDGE

Mister Roman did you hear what I said?

ROMAN

If the armed guards in this courtroom refused your request to relieve yourself you would by any definition be detained. Good for the goose, good for the gander.

JUDGE

I'm going to hold you in contempt if you continue to pursue this.

ROMAN

You're asking me to obey an erroneous court decision. You tell me to wait. In my experience wait means never.

JUDGE

Okay. I find you in contempt. Do you have anything to add before I set fine?

ROMAN stands, clears his throat and

A CAR

Honks as ROMAN crosses a NIGHT-TIME DOWNTOWN STREET ... lugging his legal case ... reaching a graffitied bus-stop ... dialing his cell ...

VERNITA/OVER PHONE

I've been trying to call you. Roman, you were fined for contempt today.

ROMAN

I'm filing an appeal.

VERNITA/OVER PHONE

Five thousand dollars?

ROMAN

I wouldn't trust a lawyer who didn't get complaints from the prosecutors or the court. Who said that? William.

VERNITA/OVER PHONE

I could always count on you to say the utterly inappropriate thing. I'm with Lynn now. She's very upset about it.

ROMAN

What about William?

VERNITA/OVER PHONE

It's not good.

ROMAN

I'm on my way to the hospital.

VERNITA/OVER PHONE
Don't, they're busy running tests.

ROMAN
I'm coming to see him.

VERNITA/OVER PHONE
He's not in his room. Lynn says we'll
talk about it all tomorrow. Good night,
Roman.

ROMAN hangs up ... lost for a beat ... finding his compass
... dialing his cell ...

ROMAN
It's Roman, I can meet you tonight ...
Este noche, si...Yes, half an hour...

L.A.'S SKID ROW

Is a dark canyon lined with tents and tarps ... a teeming
purgatory for THOUSANDS who've veered off the rails as ...

ROMAN

Comes down the sidewalk with his legal case ... trash can
fires reflected in his glasses and CUT TO

CORN FIELD

Stalks swaying in a night breeze as CAMERA FINDS ... ROMAN
sitting on an overturned shopping cart ... reading a brief
flashlight and WIDEN TO SHOW

A COMMUNITY GARDEN

Tucked in the glow of DOWNTOWN ... ROMAN with a group of
ORGANIZERS ... one translating to Spanish as ROMAN speaks

ROMAN
The condemnation order has a clause that
allows the city to resell the property
for non-public use within two years of
the sale. This clause was added in a
closed door session. I'll file a brief
challenging the condemnation order citing
due process and lack of transparency.

ORGANIZERS regarding him ... unsure ...

ROMAN
This will stop the eviction until it's
resolved. It's far from over.

Smiles ... Thank yous and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN STREET

Gritty giving way to gentrification ... DERELICT BUILDINGS sandwiched between massive, UPSCALE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS as

ROMAN

Enters a run-down TENEMENT bordering a busy, flood-lit BUILDING SITE ... Foundation being poured and CUT TO

TENEMENT FOYER

ROMAN fishes several BILLS from his mailbox... starts up the stairs and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

Is two threadbare rooms ... crammed with everything that takes the place of family ... 1000s of BOOKS ... vast RECORD COLLECTION ... walls covered with eclectic PHOTOS, including

A PHOTOGRAPH OF A 1960S CIVIL RIGHTS PROTEST

Showing college-age ROMAN standing above a crowd ... speaking into a bullhorn ... CONSTRUCTION SOUNDS heard as ... ROMAN looks out the window and a CRANE swings by ... ROMAN dials his cell ...

ROMAN/INTO PHONE

Yes, my name is Roman J. Israel Esquire.
I'm reporting a construction-noise violation at 560 South Gladys. City regulation 5612 prohibits construction or repair of any kind between the hours of 7 PM and 7 AM the following day.

A RECORD NEEDLED DROPS

And an R&B song plays as we see ROMAN's night ...

ROMAN standing over the sink eating dinner ...

ROMAN trying to work ... distracted by construction noise ...

ROMAN taking a trash bag out a BACK APARTMENT DOOR ...

ROMAN going down a BACK STAIRWELL to an

ALLEY

ROMAN putting the trash in a bin ... regarding the construction site up close returning inside and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN calling in another complaint ...

R&B tempo increasing as ROMAN tries to read a law book ...

ROMAN making an angrier call ...

ROMAN in a reclining chair ... noise stopped ... pulls a comforter over himself ... turns off the light and CUT TO

LAW OFFICE

Dust motes float in morning light ... ROMAN in his back room ... typing a brief as VERNITA sticks her head in ...

VERNITA

Lynn's arrived. She'd like to see you

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON'S OFFICE

LYNN JACKSON is WILLIAM HENRY'S niece ... professional, proud ... she sits with GEORGE PATEL ... 30s ... slick and savvy ... pure self-interest ... neither stand as ROMAN enters ...

LYNN

Hello Roman. This is George Patel.

GEORGE

Nice to meet you.

ROMAN doesn't shake his hand ... sits ... pours a water ...

LYNN

The doctors have concluded that William is in a permanent, vegetative state.

ROMAN

He'll surprise 'em.

LYNN

Well we'd like to believe that, but not this time.

ROMAN

You get a second opinion.

LYNN

He's had three. William's directive gives me financial and medical power of attorney. If the firm was stable we'd have time to mourn but it's not and we don't.

(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)

William's directive asks using George in the event of incapacitation and George has generously offered to take time from his busy practice to sort through the remaining cases, help close the office and collect what's due.

ROMAN

I probably haven't had time to consider all the various ramifications of this.

LYNN

None of us have.

ROMAN

I can't live on my accolades.

GEORGE

Lynn was hoping to give you and the receptionist a severance, however looking over the books it doesn't seem possible.

ROMAN in free-fall ... grasping on the way down ...

ROMAN

I'll take over.

LYNN

You're not capable of continuing the practice.

GEORGE

On your contempt fine we can argue extreme emotional distress, hope for a reduction.

ROMAN

In the architecture of this firm I'm a pillar.

LYNN

And I'd hoped to reward you for that.

ROMAN

Hope don't get the job done.

LYNN

What does that mean?

ROMAN

I'm saying your give a damn gave out.

LYNN

Is it ego or delusion? Honestly I never paid enough attention to you.

(MORE)

LYNN (CONT'D)

This place has been more of a charity service than a law firm, it's run a deficit for years. We, his family, can't afford it anymore. We want to clear the books. We're handing this off to George.

LYNN leaves ... GEORGE takes a call about a case and CUT TO
ROMAN'S BACK OFFICE

As GEORGE enters behind ROMAN ...

GEORGE

(obligatory, as he's texting)
Sorry man, I feel for you.

GEORGE glances up ... stops as he takes in the scale of legal clutter ...

GEORGE

Is this where the bulldog did his work?

ROMAN sits, future looming as ... GEORGE regards the hundreds of post-it notes plastering the law books ... each one filled with fine, careful handwriting ...

GEORGE

What a mind. He was great in the seat and great on his feet. Jesus didn't he ever throw anything away?

ROMAN silent ...

GEORGE

My secretary's gonna call. She'll be point on this. What do you use, Legal Pro? Quicken?

(no response)

Hey I'm your friend here.

ROMAN finds a small plastic box ... removes filing cards ...

GEORGE

What's that?

ROMAN

Status of all motions, depositions, investigations, conferences.

GEORGE

On cards? You're kidding.

ROMAN

I'm not helping you fast plea these to get a fee.

GEORGE
I'm in court every day, I fight for my clients.

ROMAN
You're a low-flying bee.

GEORGE
Is that what William said about me?

ROMAN
William never mentioned you.

GEORGE
So what's that about?

ROMAN
Recorded fact.
(the room)
Every case organized and available.

GEORGE
(heading out)
I don't have time for this. My office will call to coordinate going forward.

ROMAN
Let's watch him now. Young George. State of California V Jay Angelo Fisher. One of his early cases.

GEORGE at the door ... turns ...

ROMAN
Fisher's first offense. Could have been reduced to a misdemeanor with precedents and persistence but you plead him out to felony conspiracy and possession. That became your M. O. Take a retainer, waive clients' right to pre-lim then dump them on public defenders when they complain.

GEORGE
What? You worked Fisher? His appeal?

ROMAN
I remember reading the record.

GEORGE
That was seven years ago.

ROMAN
Right.

GEORGE
You're saying you knew that from memory?

ROMAN
I'm quite confident of my recollections.

ROMAN pulls a clip-on tie from his case ... putting it on ...

GEORGE
MY win-loss record is above 90 percent.

ROMAN
False and misleading. That's only if you include your three years as a prosecutor.

GEORGE
William thought highly enough to bring me in if something happened.

ROMAN
Believe me I'm gonna find out why.

GEORGE
What exactly is it you do here?

ROMAN tugging his jacket on inside out ... striding out as

GEORGE

Looks at ROMAN's filing cards ... same writing on the 100s of post-it notes ... regards the room's legal clutter and CUT TO

A TESLA

Silently accelerates from a curb ... SPEED-DIAL heard as

INSIDE THE MOVING CAR

GEORGE talks to a LAW PARTNER on speaker ...

GEORGE
I want to bring someone in.

LAW PARTNER/OVER PHONE
You asking me or telling me?

GEORGE
Jackson had a guy drafted all his memoranda, paid him 500 a week. We could bill him out that much an hour.

GEORGE sees ROMAN walking down the sidewalk lugging his legal case ... headphones on ...

GEORGE
Call you back.

GEORGE glides up beside ROMAN ... powers his window ...

GEORGE
Where you going?

ROMAN
M.L.K.

GEORGE
I'll give you a ride.

ROMAN
I'd rather walk.

GEORGE
C'mon, let me take you. I just want to talk.

INSIDE THE MOVING TESLA

As ROMAN settles into luxury ... city noise gone ... ROMAN is riding in an oasis of comfort, calm ... alien sensations ...

GEORGE
William taught a term at Cal. That's where we met. I was top of my class.

ROMAN
Potential's a bitch.

GEORGE
I'll tell you what's not. Having four offices and 30 people working for you.

Burst of speed ... GEORGE accelerating through a light ...

GEORGE
William picked me because I tossed him work, loser cases I didn't want or was too busy to handle. This, closing his office, is payback. I'll collect a fee. So last night I get the call from Lynn, and I know who she is but why is it no one's ever mentioned anything about you?

ROMAN regarding the displays ... leather ... burled wood ...

GEORGE
As it happens I can use someone with your ability and power of persuasive argument. I'll pay you twice what he gave you.

ROMAN

What makes you different from this car?

GEORGE

Okay, I'm gonna tell you something I think may both surprise and disappoint you. I got a kickback from William for every single case I gave him.

ROMAN

Bullshit.

GEORGE

I have the records. Apparently you've been untouched by the messy business of running a small criminal defense firm. Was it wrong? On some level sure. Does it diminish what he did? Hell no. It allowed him to keep the doors open, kept you two going.

ROMAN clutching his legal case ... universe off its axis ...

GEORGE

To this day I remember quotes from his class. That voice. "What is tolerance? It is the consequence of humanity. We are all formed of frailty and error; let us pardon reciprocally each other's folly -- that is the first law of nature." So let's forget the past and move forward.

ROMAN

Pull over.

GEORGE angles to the curb ... ROMAN gets out ...

ROMAN

I'm not working for you.

GEORGE

What're you gonna do?

ROMAN

I'll continue in criminal litigation.

GEORGE

Bitch of a market, particularly at your age. What if you can't find something?

ROMAN

What?

GEORGE

For argument's sake. If you can't find a firm to take you on. What's next?

ROMAN

What do you mean "argument's sake?"
Underwear model or activist attorney,
there is no next.

ROMAN dons his headphones ... striding away and CUT TO

MARTIN LUTHER KING HOSPITAL

ROMAN lugging his legal case ... stops at a FLOWER STAND ...
picks a small bouquet ... uncrumples some bills and CUT TO

HOSPITAL HALLWAY

As ROMAN checks room numbers ... enters

WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Filled with elaborate floral arrangements ... an unmoving
FIGURE in bed we NEVER FULLY SEE ... monitors beeping ...

ROMAN

Sets his unimpressive bouquet in a small water glass ...
standing over the bed and CLOSE ON

ROMAN'S HAND reaches for WILLIAM'S ... grasping and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN eating dinner over his sink ... record playing ...

ROMAN at his desk ... going through BILLS and CUT TO

OUTSIDE ROMAN'S APARTMENT

WELDING sparks shower through the night as ... the FIRST I-
BEAM rises from the construction site ... FOUNDATION finished
and DISSOLVE TO

THE CONSTRUCTION SITE

Beside ROMAN'S BUILDING now rises several stories ... NETWORK
OF STEEL GIRDERS glistening in the sun ...

TWO WEEKS HAVE PASSED

As we hear the WARNING beep of a backing-up BULLDOZER and

ROMAN

Exits his TENEMENT ... carrying his legal case ... wearing his wrinkled jacket and clip-on tie ... Small against busy, bustling L.A. And CUT TO

THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Occupies a soaring space in an abandoned office building ... young ACTIVISTS work at card tables ... murals on walls ... sleeping bags in corners as CAMERA FINDS

ROMAN

Sitting between two columns, eating something as he waits...

YOUNG MAN/JEFF
Mister Israel?

ROMAN
Yes. That's me. I'm him.

MAYA HUSTON

Is in her 40s ... committed ... intelligent ... she watches, unsure, as ROMAN sits in her office overlooking the main room ... YOUNG MAN/JEFF in the doorway throughout ...

MAYA
Sorry to make you wait. I usually work off scheduled appointments.

ROMAN
I drank a soda and had a pretzel from out there.

MAYA
That's fine. You told Jeff you worked for William Henry Jackson.

ROMAN
26-and-a-half years. We were partners. He was the firm's public face and I was the man behind the curtain so to speak.

MAYA
How is he?

ROMAN
Unconscious. Several weeks now.

MAYA
I'm sorry to hear that.

ROMAN

I had no safeguard against unemployment. So. William and Ronald were friends and associates, going back to Berkeley.

MAYA

I'm aware. Ronnie mentioned William in his book.

ROMAN

I'd like to speak with him.

MAYA

Ron's in Washington at our headquarters. Is there something I can help you with?

ROMAN

First, notwithstanding, I doubt I'll be able to do this much longer, progressiver lawyering. I'm not accustomed without William. You see the criminal side of our practice funded our legal and policy challenges, as in defendant's rights, prison conditions, drafted attacks on state and federal criminal code. If I were freed of criminal work I could return to my roots, the bigger battles, organized mass action supported by sweeping legal challenges. With my skills and experience I'm quite confident I could bring this organization right back in line with its core beliefs.

MAYA

I wasn't aware we'd strayed.

ROMAN

I'm not talking about nickel-and-dime reformism, I'm speaking of igniting sustained mass movements supported by rule change and injunctive relief and aggregate results using class action tactics. I'm taking about a return to using activist litigation creatively, defensively and counter-offensively.

MAYA

I'm proud of what we've done. I think we're making significant headway in many areas.

ROMAN

That's just an excuse to feel better and slack off.

JEFF
Who's slacking off?

MAYA shoots JEFF a look ... ROMAN hands MAYA his RESUME

ROMAN
I attended Western State College of Law at Argosy University in Fullerton. I started the first student union there. Getting my degree I chose cause over ambition. I could've joined a big firm, seduced like the rest of them, but I was inspired by Mister Jackson and went to work for him. Our civil rights victories are all detailed right there. As for my personal life, at a certain point I had to decide whether to have a family or a career, I couldn't have both, so I stayed on the front lines and I'm offering now, at this time in my life, to work exclusively as your long-haul, three-dimensional, revolutionary, in-house, full-time paid legal advocate.

MAYA
Mister Israel, we're all volunteers here. Our few salaried staff work at the national headquarters in Washington.

ROMAN
I'd go to interview but am precluded for pecuniary reasons. Money of late has become a motivating factor in my life.

MAYA
Be that as it may the position's filled. As for nickel and dime reformism, there's been a shift in tactics away from the idea of some ultimate, mass victory. Our focus now is challenging the everyday impacts of racialization and oppression and applying them to individual action.

ROMAN
I'm worth having in this thing.

MAYA
I have no doubt of that.

ROMAN
Because there is something to be fired up about.

MAYA
We are, believe me.

ROMAN

I'll keep going through William's rolodex then, thank you for taking the time.

MAYA

If you'd like to volunteer we have a meeting next week. We could use someone with your legal expertise to give a talk.

ROMAN

I'd like that. Here's my card, I crossed off my old office address and wrote in my home, that's if you contact me via mail.

MAYA

I'll probably just text you.

ROMAN

I know how to do that. Good day.

ROMAN lifts his legal case ... leaves ...

JEFF

What a freak.

MAYA

You stand on his shoulders.

DOWNTOWN DINER

ROMAN eating a piece of pie ... finds a discarded magazine ... looking through glossy ads and pages ... stopping at a

PHOTO

Of an idyllic, BEACH-FRONT SHOP ... to the COUNTERMAN ...

ROMAN

More coffee please.

COUNTERMAN

50 cents.

ROMAN

Never mind.

COUNTERMAN

You can't charge your phone like that.

ROMAN leans over the counter ... unplugs his phone and CUT TO

L.A. LIVE

ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX lighting the night as ... ROMAN passes ... observing COUPLES and FAMILIES ... pausing to look into a

RESTAURANT

Filled to the door ... hurried VALETS parking luxury vehicles ... one bumps into ROMAN as he stops to regard a HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR SPORTS CAR and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN BUST STOP

Night ... ROMAN on a bench ... holds his legal case like an anchor ... headphones on ... R&B song playing as ... the music stops ... ROMAN removes the dead batteries and CUT TO

ROMAN'S TENEMENT

ROMAN fishing a lone piece of MAIL from his box and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN staring at the open letter ... notified of a rent increase as ... his phone rings ...

ROMAN

Hello...I remember, for car-jacking.

(hardens)

William and I spent months getting you off.

(beat)

The same charge?

(beat)

Well maybe you deserve to be in jail.

(beat)

No I won't take your case.

(beat)

Because I don't have the time or resources and you repeaters piss me the hell off.

(beat)

Do me a favor and lose my number.

ROMAN hangs up ...

KILLS the lights ...

GOES to his chair ...

RECLINES in the dark ...

CRANE SHADOW arcing across the walls and CUT TO

A DOWNTOWN OFFICE TOWER

Lit by morning sun as CAMERA ascends ... looking into floors of activity ... various COMPANIES ... settling on ROMAN unpacking his legal case in a cell-like space and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

Is barren save for a desk, chair, dusty plant and a framed poster-size company logo of a HAMMER AND GAVEL and the words

LAW OFFICES OF GEORGE A. PATEL

YOU HAVE RIGHTS

WE PROTECT THEM

ROMAN sits ... stares out the window ... like a caged animal and CUT TO

GEORGE PATEL'S OFFICE

GEORGE at his big desk sitting with FLORENCE ELLERBEE ... 50s ... uneasy ... skeptical ... eyeing ROMAN as he enters ...

GEORGE

Florence, this is Roman Israel, he'll be working closely with me on this. Roman's a terrific attorney and we're very very lucky to have him.

FLORENCE

Hi.

ROMAN

Hello.

GEORGE

Florence's nephew, Darrell, was arrested two days ago in connection with an armed robbery during which a clerk was killed. Darrell's been charged with assault, kidnapping and first degree murder.

FLORENCE

It was his friend who was there with him, it wasn't Darrell. Darrell didn't know he was going in to do anything like that.

GEORGE

Of course, and we completely understand. The way it will work moving forward is Roman will be the point person on this. You were very wise to retain private counsel, Florence. Darrell's only going to get one chance with this.

LAW FIRM

ROMAN walks FLORENCE out through a warren of busy offices ...

FLORENCE
I had to mortgage my house.

ROMAN
I'm sorry.

FLORENCE
I don't like lawyers.

ROMAN
I understand.

FLORENCE
If I don't get answers to my questions,
if I don't get results, if I see padded
shit popping up on my bill I'll fire your
ass. I'm putting up my house. You always
dress like that?

ROMAN
In lieu of a wardrobe I have a reputation
as a devoted advocate. This is my card.
Call me anytime, any questions, concerns,
no charge, we're in this together. It's
not the crossed out number, it's the new
number that's written in here.

FLORENCE
What's esquire mean?

ROMAN
It's a professional designation in the
legal arena. Also a title of dignity,
above gentleman and below knight. I'll
talk to our investigator and visit
Darrell tomorrow. I'll call you after.

FLORENCE pockets the card ... leaves ... ROMAN returns to his

OFFICE

And is just sitting down when his phone rings and CUT TO

GEORGE'S OFFICE

As ROMAN re-enters to find GEORGE with an ASIAN MAN ...

GEORGE
Roman, I'd like to meet James Lee. Jim,
this is Roman Israel, he'll be working
closely with me on this. Roman's a
terrific attorney and we're very very
lucky to have him.

JIM

Hi.

ROMAN

Hello.

GEORGE

Jim's wife, Mari, was cited for felony DUI hit-and-run last night with added charges for reckless driving and injury. The way this will work, Jim, is Roman's going to be the point person on this. You were smart to get private counsel. Your wife's only going to get one chance with this.

LATER

ROMAN walkin an HISPANIC MAN through the office ... handing him his card ... pointing out the phone number change and ...

LATER

ROMAN in his office ... typing fast as ... a PARALEGAL carries in more CASE FILES ... phone ringing and ...

LATER

ROMAN with FRITZ MOLINAR ... retired L.A.P.D. Detective ... current private investigator ... going over a file ...

FRITZ

... it's at that point, per the night manager, that Darrell's friend, Carter Johnson, shoots the clerk twice in the head. They empty the register, roughly 500 dollars, and run to the alley where Darrell is caught and Johnson escapes. Johnson's a shot-caller with the Rollin' 100. He's got four outstanding warrents, including two for prior shootings. Your boy Darrell--

ROMAN

Don't use boy.

FRITZ

Your client's seen entering the store on the outside camera but the inside video wasn't working. The Armenian Business Council's put up a \$100,000 reward for Johnson's arrest, for the clerk who was Armenian. There's reports of a transient hispanic who was inside but good luck with that.

(MORE)

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Your client, Darrell, has two priors going back four years, one for drug possession, marijuana, and one for theft, some tires, report attached.

LATER

ROMAN is in the FIRM KITCHEN ... eating cookies as ... two LAWYERS (NOVAK, 50s and CONNOR, 20s) enter ... go to the refrigerator ... removing drinks ...

CONNOR

I have a domestic violence case. This guy assaulted the same woman six times and she's swearing out an affidavit for non-prosecution.

NOVAK

Did you hear about Tempura House?

CONNOR

No what's that?

NOVAK

A shelter for lightly battered women.

ROMAN

That's funny.

NOVAK and CONNOR look over ... leaving with their drinks ...

ROMAN

Hit the lights and they run like roaches.

NOVAK

You work here?

ROMAN

As it happens I do.

NOVAK

I'm Brett Novak, supervising attorney.

ROMAN

Roman J. Israel Esquire. The new guy.

NOVAK

Did you compare us to roaches?

ROMAN

There's no tip-toeing sideways into this.

CONNOR

We're just blowing off steam.

ROMAN
You're tourists.

ROMAN takes another cookie ... eats as he leaves and CUT TO
OFFICE BUILDING

Lit against the night ... end of the work day as ... ROMAN
exits ... walks across the plaza ... headphones on ...
doesn't hear GEORGE calling his name ... catching up to him
near a fountain ...

GEORGE
Roman. Jesus. I heard about you today in
the kitchen. Novak's our number two. And
that's not all. Schooling Sanchez in a
crowded elevator?

ROMAN
The man doesn't understand character
evidence.

GEORGE
I sent you an email to come to my office.

ROMAN
People think they send an email it goes
straight to your brain.

GEORGE
This is a huge problem. You better take
what I'm saying seriously because I'm
being very very fucking sincere with you.

ROMAN
You knew what you were getting when you
brought me in.

GEORGE
I thought you were functional.

ROMAN
I think you hired me, George, to hold
your feet to the fire. Because you're
tired of treating low-income clients like
dollar signs and because just maybe you
remember what it feels like to care.

GEORGE
I hired you to make a buck, which is why
I thought you took it.

ROMAN
I need money, of course, badly, but what
I need more is an ally.

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

I'm offering to partner with you on a piece of ground-breaking litigation I've worked on for over twelve years now.

ROMAN holds up his old bulging legal case ...

ROMAN

Inside is arguably the most important brief in American legal history, and I say that with due competence. This is a job for a legend or someone who wants to become one. Let me tell you about it.

GEORGE

No, Jesus. Just stop. Do you want this job or not? Yes or no.

ROMAN

Yes.

GEORGE

Then stop harassing people. From now on you stick to clients and memoranda only. Nothing else, under no condition. That's it. Anything else you run by me. And don't come in tomorrow without a suit.

GEORGE walks off ... ROMAN remaining and CUT TO

ROMAN'S CLOSET

Is crammed with clutter ... meager selection of clothes ... ROMAN pulling a plastic storage bag ... unzipping it ... mothballs rolling out and ...

MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL

Flourescent lights ... incessant cacophony of caged MEN as

ROMAN

Is buzzed through a door ... wearing a 70s suit ... he approaches TWO OFFICERS at reception ... slides his ID ...

ROMAN

Roman Israel to see Derrell Ellerbee.

JAIL VISITING ROOM

ROMAN is seated as DERRELL ELLERBEE enters ... manacles ... GUARDS shackle his feet to bolts in the floor ... leave ...

ROMAN

I'm Roman Israel, one of your lawyers. How are they treating you?

DERRELL silent ... chained foot tapping fast ...

ROMAN

Do you need anything?

DERRELL

I need to get out of here.

ROMAN

Do you understand the charges?

DERRELL

Yeah they want to bury me.

ROMAN

From here out everything we discuss is confidential.

DERRELL

I gotta be careful.

ROMAN

Have you been threatened?

DERRELL

I didn't shoot that guy, I just went in. I didn't know what he was gonna do.

ROMAN

You gave a statement to the police.

DERRELL

I asked for a lawyer.

ROMAN

Prior to that, after they read you your right, you continued to speak to the detectives. I'll demand the tape and transcript but they claim you said you knew Carter Johnson had a gun.

DERRELL

Not that he was gonna use it.

ROMAN

Entering the store knowing he had a gun will be argued as planning and abetting. That's the criteria for First Degree murder.

DERRELL

CJ shot the clerk. I saw it. I'll testify if they'll let me out.

ROMAN

They won't release you, the charges are too severe and the case is too strong. We could approach the DA see what they'd offer for your testimony.

DERRELL

Probation.

ROMAN

The best you could hope for is possible reduction to murder in the second degree.

DERRELL

I know where CJ's holed up.
(leans in, whispering)
Plus testifying. What's that worth?

ROMAN

Possibly a lot. The two combined could carry significant weight. You understand the risks? What you're looking at?

DERRELL

I gotta be transferred to protective custody first.

ROMAN

This is what you want to do?

DERRELL

I don't want to but I will.

GEORGE'S OFFICE

ROMAN enters ... it's empty ... ROMAN taking in the sweeping view of LA ... sitting behind GEORGE'S impressive desk ... imagining a different life as ...

GEORGE'S ASSISTANT comes in ... sees ROMAN ... the suit ...

ASSISTANT

No one's supposed to be in here. Who are you?

ROMAN

I'm an attorney here. I need to speak with George about moving on a case.

ASSISTANT

He's in depositions all day. Mister Novak is supervising attorney in his absence. You'll have to leave.

NOVAK'S OFFICE

Door ajar ... NOVAK on the phone ... ROMAN can't bring himself to go in ... ROMAN continues by ... walks through

THE BUSY LAW OFFICE

ROMAN aware he's an object of derision ... leaving laughs in his wake ... comments about his clothes ... ROMAN enters his

OFFICE

And shuts the door ... stung ... ROMAN paces ... stares at the company poster of the hammer and gavel ... pulls a file from a pile ... checks the DA's number ... dials and ...

WOMAN/OVER PHONE

Hello.

ROMAN

Yes, I'm Roman J. Israel Esquire from the law office of George Patel. I represent Derrell Ellerbee. Is Kate Becker there?

WOMAN/OVER PHONE

Speaking.

ROMAN

My client, Mister Derrell Ellerbee, is interested in discussing a deal.

KATE/OVER PHONE

I have 40 open cases, refresh me.

ROMAN

Convenience store shooting- An Armenian clerk was killed. Reward offered.

KATE/OVER PHONE

I have it.

ROMAN

The shooter's a fugitive, Carter Johnson. My client may know his whereabouts. He might also be willing to testify.

KATE/OVER PHONE

He'll deliver on that?

ROMAN

Well that depends.

KATE/OVER PHONE

If you waive all objections and appeal and he agrees to cooperate we'll drop the assault and kidnapping and reduce murder one to manslaughter, voluntary, 10-to-15.

ROMAN

Involuntary. Three-to-five.

KATE/OVER PHONE

A 21-year-old clerk was killed in the commission of a robbery, won't happen.

ROMAN

My client's giving you the whole case at great risk to himself, and let's discuss the mitigating circumstances.

KATE/OVER PHONE

Let's not. Involuntary manslaughter. It's a good deal.

ROMAN

It's an enema of sunshine.

KATE/OVER PHONE

I don't have time for this.

ROMAN

Sorry for taking a nano-second off your assembly-line, rubber-stamp existence.

KATE/OVER PHONE

Fuck you. People withdraw their offer.

Click ... ROMAN stares at the phone and CUT TO

NIGHT-TIME LA

Reflected in the slow-flowing LA RIVER as CAMERA FINDS

ROMAN

Walking across a downtown LA BRIDGE ... suit ... legal case ... headphones and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN WAREHOUSE

MAYA waits outside ... ROMAN emerges from the darkness ...

MAYA

Hey Roman, you can park closer in this lot over here.

ROMAN

I don't have a car.

MAYA

That's gotta be tough in LA.

ROMAN

I've imagined life with one.

MAYA

Thank you for doing this.

ROMAN

I welcome it. Public speaking is something I'm usually encouraged to avoid.

PEOPLE head inside ... most are young ... multi-ethnic ...

ROMAN

I'll just need a few moments to prepare.

WAREHOUSE BATHROOM

ROMAN alone in the washroom ... regards himself in a stainless steel mirror and CUT TO

WAREHOUSE LOFT

Several dozen ACTIVISTS GATHERED ... MAYA before them ...

MAYA

In anticipation of Tuesday's protest, we've invited attorney Roman Israel to speak tonight about your rights and what you can expect if you're arrested.

ROMAN

(going up, taking the mike)
Back to my beginnings. It feels good. Hell that was 40 years ago. Well we're gonna rap a while about some good old-fashioned, grass-roots, in-your-face protesting. You don't have to write any of this down because I found a bust-card from my student days and printed some for you to carry into battle so to speak. Last time I checked to constitution's still the same. Can everyone hear me in the back?

Silence ...

ROMAN

Look at you, just starting your fight against the dominant tendencies of our society. Well all I can say is get ready for the commitment that comes with a resistant lifestyle. Start forging the armor to withstand the temptations and financial and emotional toll.

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

Because when it comes to social injustice and judicial indifference and institutional racism and outright goddamn greed, let me tell you something the overwhelming majority of people don't CARE.

ROMAN reads the room ... MAYA'S uncertainty ... refocuses ...

ROMAN

The difference between civil and uncivil disobedience. The first amendment protects your right to free speech so long as you don't incite violence or law-breaking. Now there's always those who will get caught up in a march and commit vandalism or violence... excuse me, I see sisters standing by the wall back there. No sisters stand while brothers sit.

WOMAN ACTIVIST

If we want to sit we're able to ask.

ROMAN

You ladies have to make yourself known.

SECOND WOMAN ACTIVIST

This ain't 40 years ago.

ROMAN

There's not statute of limitations for chivalry.

THIRD WOMAN

That's gendered and sexist.

ROMAN

It's polite.

SECOND WOMAN

It's patronizing.

SECOND ACTIVIST

What kind of law do you practice?

ROMAN

I'm a criminal defense attorney.

WOMAN ACTIVIST

Do you represent domestic violence defendants?

ROMAN

Many times.

WOMAN ACTIVIST
Knowing they're guilty?

ROMAN
Meaning what?

WOMAN ACTIVIST
Meaning you have a choice.

ROMAN
Watch out, some day you may need the
sixth amendment.

WOMAN ACTIVIST
That's lawyer talk.

ROMAN
Oh-oh, we got a red-neck in the soul
band.

WOMAN ACTIVIST
Who're you calling a red-neck, asshole?

ROMAN
You're talking refried confusion.

WOMAN ACTIVIST
Fuck you!

Room erupting ... MAYA quickly stepping in ...

MAYA
Okay stop, let's just settle down. Thank
you, Roman. Jeff will take it from here.

ROMAN frozen for a beat ... hands her the mike ... drifts
into the shadows and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN STREET

ROMAN heading home ... walking beside a busy THOROUGHFARE as
... MAYA catches up ... falls in beside him ...

MAYA
Roman, I'm so sorry. I had to apologize
on their behalf.

ROMAN
It's my fault. I say things.

MAYA
Are you all right?

ROMAN
This is nothing.

MAYA

It was just getting out of hand.

ROMAN

My meanings seem to obfuscate more than clarify.

MAYA

The discourse has changed over the years. It's what we first talked about.

ROMAN

You did.

MAYA

That's a lot of what this is.

ROMAN

I can't remove myself from what's happened.

MAYA

It's where we are now, the world.

ROMAN

I didn't even want to come out. The nuns said I was a forceps baby.

ROMAN stops ... sees a HOMELESS MAN facedown before them ...

MAYA

Oh god.

ROMAN crouches ... feels his wrist ...

MAYA

Is he okay?

ROMAN

I can't feel anything.

MAYA

His neck.

ROMAN rolling him ... feeling his neck ... looking at MAYA as ... A POLICE CAR pulls up ... two PATROLMEN stepping out ...

PATROLMAN #1

What happened?

ROMAN

We just found him. He's dead.

ROMAN searching the MAN'S pockets ... empty ...

PATROLMAN #2
Don't touch anything, step back.

PATROLMAN #1 calling it in as ... ROMAN pulls his card ...
jots something ... tucks it in the HOMELESS MAN'S pocket ...

PATROLMAN #2
What'd I tell you?

ROMAN
He has no ID.

PATROLMAN #2
What'd you put in there?

ROMAN
My card.

PATROLMAN #2
Take it out.

ROMAN
Without ID he'll be cremated and mixed
with a thousand others.

PATROLMAN #2
Take it out.

ROMAN
It's my name and number for the coroner
to contact me.

PATROLMAN #1
Did you hear my partner?

MAYA
Do as they say, Roman.

ROMAN
I want to pay for the burial. I'm making
money now, what else is it good for?

PATROLMAN #2
I'm not telling you again.

PATROLMAN closing ... ROMAN stands his ground by the body ...

ROMAN
I'm not letting him just get swallowed
up. I'm not letting him just disappear,
completely forgotten. Because he most
certainly was SOMEBODY.

ROMAN stops ... because the COPS have stopped ... because

THE BODY

Is suddenly rising ... HOMELESS MAN pulling a pint ...
drinking ... moving off as ... the COPS regard ROMAN ...
return to their car ... drive away and

ROMAN stands there ... MAYA staring at him.

ROMAN

I'm sorry.

MAYA

What are you talking about? That was
unfucking believable.

ROMAN

I didn't feel a pulse.

MAYA

No one does that.

ROMAN

For good reason.

MAYA'S cell rings ... answering ...

MAYA

I'll be right there
(hangs up)
Listen I gotta get back.

ROMAN

I gotta go too.

MAYA

But I'm going to call you.

ROMAN

You too.

Both moving away ... ROMAN re-crossing the bridge and CUT TO
PATEL LAW OFFICES

ROMAN enters his office ... next morning ... shuts the door
... sees a stack of new case files as ... NOVAK enters ...

ROMAN

A knock would be appreciated.

NOVAK

We got a big problem.

GEORGE'S OFFICE

ROMAN in a chair ... GEORGE before him ... NOVAK watches ...

GEORGE

Where did you get the idea you could try and negotiate a plea? Who told you you could do that? To just ignore what I emphatically fucking told you. Derrell Ellerbee was stabbed and killed this morning in general lock-up.

ROMAN ... news hitting hard ...

GEORGE

His aunt told me Derrell requested protective custody last night but was delayed because the prosecutor said you pissed on her deal. That offer should by law have been presented to the client, which it was not. So as of right now you've exposed us to a malpractice suit I'd kill to be on the other side of. You've had difficulty comprehending my meaning so I'll be very clear. As much as I want to fire you I can't, as that could be construed as acknowledgement of wrongdoing. So I'm going to retain you until this matter's resolved. If you attempt to quit or stop coming in I'll hit you with a motion to recoup damages and have you disbarred. Now go back to circling the drain.

ROMAN rises ... breaking but seems made of stone and CUT TO

OFFICE BATHROOM

Empty ... or appears so until ... we find ROMAN hiding in a stall ... he steps out ... splashes water on his face and ... FRITZ MOLINAR comes in ...

FRITZ

Goodbye Ellerbee, huh? My source says it's a gang thing, his fugitive friend heard he was flipping.

ROMAN processing ... leaving and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

ROMAN at his desk ... afternoon sun slanting in ... his back to the window and the world and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LA

ROMAN walking home at night ... end-of-day TRAFFIC and HUSTLE
... carrying his legal case and CUT TO

SKID ROW

ROMAN walking a dimly lit stretch of tarps and garbage ...

MAN V.O.

There's another motherfucker not from
here.

ROMAN has his headphones on ... doesn't hear as

A HOMELESS MAN

Appears behind him ... following ... dim becoming dark ...
ROMAN walking between street lights ...

HOMELESS MAN

What's in the case?

HOMELESS MAN grabbing ROMAN from behind ...

ROMAN

Whoa!

HOMELESS MAN

Give it to me.

ROMAN

(offering a piece of paper)
This is a meal ticket to the Aliso
Mission.

HOMELESS MAN

You don't know where you are.

ROMAN

I was here long before you I can tell you
that. Good evening.

ROMAN starts off ... MAN darting in front of him ...

HOMELESS MAN

Give me the fucking case.

ROMAN

Under no circumstances.

HOMELESS MAN grabbing ...

ROMAN recoiling and ...

HOMELESS MAN punching ...

SMASHING ROMAN'S face ...

ROMAN'S GLASSES flying ...

ROMAN stumbling ...

ROMAN

HELP!

HOMELESS MAN kicking ROMAN as he goes down ... again ...

ROMAN

ASSAULT!

HOMELESS MAN trying to pull the legal case from ROMAN ...
ROMAN holding tight ...

HOMELESS MAN

MOTHERFUCKER!

HOMELESS MAN picking up a brick ... beating ROMAN with it ...

ROMAN

MURDER!

BLOWS landing ... ROMAN trying to cower ... head bleeding ...

HOMELESS MAN

RICH SONS OF BITCHES!

ROMAN

I'M THE WRONG GUY!

HOMELESS MAN crouching ... feeling through ROMAN'S pockets
... grabbing his wallet ... ipod ... running off and

ROMAN

Tries to stand ... flat-backs ... bloodied ... clutching his
legal case ... staring at the STARS and CUT TO

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

ROMAN in a clean, bright cubicle ... holding a towel to the
back of his head as ... a NURSE enters ...

NURSE

Are you Roman?

ROMAN

Yes.

NURSE

I have a few forms for you to fill out.

ROMAN takes a clipboard ... peers ...

ROMAN
I can't see without my glasses.

NURSE
I think I can find some that might work.
I just need to take your insurance card.

ROMAN
Here it is.

ROMAN hands her a card ...

NURSE
This is out-of-network.

ROMAN
Okay.

NURSE
You're not covered here.

ROMAN
So that's what's happening.

NURSE regarding him ... lifts the towel to see the cut ...

NURSE
Do you have a headache? Any neck pain?
Dizziness?

ROMAN
I'm just tired. I believe I need a
respite from all this, an opportunity to
put it all down and just relax for one
single moment and do nothing and not care
but I always thought no, there's too many
wars to fight, too many colonnades to
dismantle, don't waste time if it's only
about me.

NURSE
Do you know where you are?

ROMAN
I'm in a six-foot, 190-pound body.

NURSE
You're in a hospital.

ROMAN
I knew that.

NURSE
Are you employed?

ROMAN
Technically.

NURSE
Mister Israel, we have to treat you by law, you have that right, but you should know you won't qualify for discounted care. You seem okay except for the laceration. You need stitches. In this setting it could cost over a thousand dollars. At a clinic the price be as little as several hundred. You might want to look into different alternatives.

DOWNTOWN CLINIC

Reception area ... cramped ... crowded ... ROMAN holding a towel to the back of his head ... ROMAN'S gaze going to

AN OLD MAN

Alone and ill and CUT TO

CLINIC TREATMENT ROOM

DOCTOR regarding the cut on ROMAN'S HEAD ...

CLINIC DOCTOR
You need maybe 15-to-20 stitches. You want a painkiller? It's 50 extra.

ROMAN
I want it.

CLINIC DOCTOR
Some people complain when they see the bill.

ROMAN
I won't complain.

CLINIC RECEPTION AREA

ROMAN paying ... bandage on the back of his head and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN turns on the lights ... it's 2:42 in the morning but

ROMAN

Has never seemed more awake ... emptying his pockets ... some change ... placing the clinic bill on a stack of others ... ROMAN finds an old pair of heavy black frame glasses ... puts them on ... surveys his living space ... every utterly shabby and depressing detail ...

ROMAN

What?

ROMAN spinning ... as if he heard something ...

ROMAN

WHAT?!

No response ... distant siren and CUT TO

MLK HOSPITAL

At morning ... wail of an approaching ambulance as ... ROMAN appears ... not stopping at the flower stand and CUT TO

WILLIAM HENRY'S HOSPITAL ROOM

Is now graced by only a few, wilting bouquets ... beeping from the machines very erratic ... VERNITA sitting at his bedside as ... ROMAN enters ...

VERNITA

Well well. Come over and sit. He'll be glad you're here.

ROMAN

He's awake?

VERNITA

No but I imagine somewhere he knows. He was so very fond of you.

ROMAN

He's a lot worse.

VERNITA

It won't be long now. The last ripple of a night wave washed ashore here.

ROMAN

And left us high and dry.

VERNITA

He didn't leave us. He'll never leave us.

ROMAN

I thought it was all built on good ground but there's nothing under it. All of his barriers are worthless.

VERNITA
Roman, what's wrong?

ROMAN
You're sitting too close to him. You don't see. Well it's clear as crystal.

VERNITA
What?

ROMAN
We filed the wrong brief. In the wrong court. To the wrong judge.

VERNITA
What are you talking about?

ROMAN
A world where everyone's feeling are reciprocated? The capacity for everyone to contribute? Come on. Freedom's something you can only give yourself.

VERNITA
That's nothing he agreed with.

ROMAN
I don't have another second to waste, telling people to not sleep so tight, trying to turn things around. Toward what? Some glory of fantasy over the real world? All I ever did was run around with too much to do, feeling guilty all the time, flat broke, it's quite nearly killed me.

VERNITA
Sit down.

ROMAN
There's no need anymore. The incapacity ceases with the cause which produces it.

VERNITA
Roman, he can hear you.

ROMAN
That's what I came to say but he's gone.

VERNITA
What he fought for, what he takes with him, that lasts forever.

ROMAN
Eroding as it was conceived.

VERNITA

What's wrong with you?

ROMAN

Do you know there's a shop by the ocean
that makes maple glazed bacon doughnuts?
People eat them under palm trees with the
breeze blowing and dolphins playing.

VERNITA

All right sit down.

ROMAN

I'm gonna go there. I'm gonna get me one.

ROMAN leaves ... VERNITA goes to the door and CUT TO

LAW OFFICES

Work day in full-swing as

ROMAN

Walks through ... utterly ignored ... a ghost and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

ROMAN at his computer ... clicks his lone email ... opens an
OFFICE-WIDE MESSAGE

WE'RE CLOSING EARLY TODAY

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, IN

OBSERVANCE OF TOM HOPKINS' BIRTHDAY

HAVE A RELAXING & HAPPY WEEKEND!

ROMAN

Deletes the message ... gets up ... stands in the corner ...

Stares at the CASE FILES on his desk ...

GEARS turning ...

ROMAN goes close ... hesitates ... charged beat as he opens

DERRELL'S FILE

Police reports ... preliminary motions ... ROMAN pulls the
arrest record of

CARTER JOHNSON

Lengthy ... PRIOR SHOOTINGS ... ROBBERIES ... ASSAULTS ...

ROMAN

Finds a memoranda ... zeroing on a few isolated words

... Armenian Business Council ...

... \$100,000 REWARD ...

ROMAN staring ... world weighed in the balance and CUT TO

SUNNY DOWNTOWN street

ROMAN walks into view ... stops at an abandoned TELEPHONE BOOTH and CUT TO

AN OLD PUBLIC TELEPHONE SIGN

Above an empty telephone stand ... ROMAN heads off and CUT TO

A PAY PHONE

Almost camouflaged against a vivid outdoor mural ... ROMAN appears ... deposits a coin ... dials ...

MAN/OVER TELEPHONE

Armenian Chamber of Commerce.

ROMAN

Yes, hello, I'm calling in reference to the reward for the deceased store clerk.

MAN/OVER TELEPHONE

I'm sorry?

ROMAN

I meant to say the shooter of the deceased store clerk. Earlier this week. The \$100,000 reward for his arrest.

MAN/OVER TELEPHONE

Hold on a sec.

MUZAK beat before ...

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

Yes, can I help you?

ROMAN

I know where he is. Who shot the clerk.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

I'm ready.

ROMAN

I'm calling for the reward. \$100,000.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

You know the name of the suspect?

ROMAN

Carter T. Johnson.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

We've had a lot of false leads.

ROMAN

The man who did it is at an address.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

The clerk was my nephew.

ROMAN

As it happens I'm uncomfortable with identifying myself. I have a mechanism to collect which protects who I am.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

You could just say where he is. Civic duty. Basic human dignity.

ROMAN

This is an achievement for me, not an inherent state of my existence. I want it in cash, as soon as he's arrested.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

Can't do cash. Too risky.

ROMAN

I'm the one taking the risks. It has to be cash. That's the only way.

ARMENIAN MAN/OVER PHONE

...Okay. Fine. I don't care who you are, I just want the fucker caught. The reward stands, information leading to an arrest. You want cash, I'll do cash.

ROMAN

As it happens non-action isn't a viable option for me at this point. Now then...

ROMAN observed from across the street ... on the payphone ... traffic passing ... CAMERA ANGLE GETTING WIDER as the

MOUNTAINS

Ringling LOS ANGELES are for the first time seen and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

End of the work week ... ROMAN stands on a chair ... peering furtively through the window above his door ... watching

AN OFFICE BIRTHDAY PARTY

For one of the LAWYERS ... festivities winding down ... PEOPLE heading home for the weekend as

ROMAN

Gets off the chair ... goes to his phone ... dials ...

WOMAN/OVER PHONE
LA County Sheriff.

ROMAN
Custody check.

WOMAN/OVER PHONE
One moment.
(beat)
What's the name?

ROMAN
Carter Johnson.

SECOND WOMAN/OVER PHONE
... Carter Thomas?

ROMAN
Johnson, that's correct.

SECOND WOMAN/OVER PHONE
He's in custody. Picked up this afternoon. Booked into Devonshire.

ROMAN
Thank you.

ROMAN hangs up ... stands there ... starts circling his office ... breaking into a mad, tight spiral and CUT TO

INDUSTRIAL STREET

DOWNTOWN TOWERS glitter against the NIGHT as CAMERA FINDS

ROMAN

Crossing an empty AVENUE ... he stops in an island of lamp light ... looks around ... pulls a roll of TAPE ... marks a dumpster with a large taped "X" ... quickly retreating and

LATER

ROMAN a silhouette ... pressed into an unlit alcove ...
staring at the dumpster ... senses tuned to every sound and
movement ... passing TRUCK ... PLANE ... stray DOG as

HEADLIGHTS

Appear ... SEDAN splashing through a pothole ... driving by
and ... brake lights as the

SEDAN

Backs up ... stops behind the dumpster ... charged before

AN ARMENIAN MAN

Emerges ... regards the taped X ... reaches in the car ...
pulls a BACKPACK ... drops it inside and the

MAN

Stands there ... lighting a cigarette ... climbing back in
the car ... driving off and ... time stops as

ROMAN

Emerges ... carefully crosses the empty street ... retrieves
the backpack ... feeling its heft ... hurrying off ... gait
increasing and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

As ROMAN bursts in ... locking the door ... setting the
backpack on his desk ... regarding it before ... he unzips
the flap ... peeks inside and

ROMAN

Steps back ... something inside him starting to peck its way
out ... a smile ... grin ... ROMAN laughing and CUT TO

A STREET SWEEPER

Passing ROMAN'S TENEMENT ... spraying away grime ... leaving
a clean trail stretching back to a SUNRISE and CUT TO

ROMAN

Emerging from his TENEMENT in shorts ... t-shirt ... sandals
... paper shopping bag rolled under his arm and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN SUBWAY STOP

ROMAN with a weekend crowd of BEACH-GOERS in the cavernous
station ... COUPLES ... FAMILIES ... excited CHILDREN with
inflated air mattresses as

A SUBWAY

Glides in ... ROMAN caught up as the CROWD pours aboard ... doors close ... SUBWAY moving on ... station empty and CUT TO

THE SUBWAY

Speeding through a tunnel and CUT TO

ANOTHER SUBWAY STATION

Whoosh of air as the TRAIN pulls in ... more BEACH-GOERS get on and CUT TO

MOVING SUBWAY

ROMAN in a packed car ... party vibe ... groups of TEENS play competing music from portable speakers and CUT TO

SUBWAY TUNNEL

ROMAN standing at the front of the first car ... staring out the front window and

ROMAN'S POV

Peering into the tunnel ... GREEN SIGNALS flashing by as a

DOT OF WHITE LIGHT

Is seend ... brighter and brighter and the

SUBWAY speeds above ground ... BRILLIANT SUN over LA'S WESTSIDE ... PALM TREES ... broad boulevards ... and CUT TO

SANTA MONICA STATION

Subway pulling in ... packed cars emptying into the ocean-side air ... shimmering light ... cloudless as CAMERA FINDS

ROMAN squinting and smiling and CUT TO

BEACH SIDE BAKERY

Racks of fresh bread ... cookies ... cakes and doughnuts ... ROMAN at the counter ...

COUNTERPERSON

Good morning.

ROMAN

It is. I'd like three of your maple-glazed bacon doughnuts, please.

COUNTERPERSON
Something to drink?

ROMAN
Yes. The hibiscus pomegranate cooler.

ROMAN opens his paper bag and

ROMAN'S POV

Inside are a towel and PACKETS OF CASH

ROMAN
Can you break a hundred?

COUNTERPERSON
Of course.

SAND DUNE

ROMAN sitting under the shade of a palm ... finishing his third doughnut ... sipping his iced tea ... staring out at a

VAST EXPANSE OF BLUE

Stretching to the horizon ... bright umbrellas opening across the sand ... gulls circling and CUT TO

DEPARTMENT STORE

ROMAN taking an escalator to a men's sportswear section ... searching the racks ... SALESMAN approaching ...

SALESMAN
Can I help you?

ROMAN
Yes, I need a bathing suit.

FITTING ROOM

ROMAN emerges in a new, stylish bathing suit ...

SALESMAN
That fits.

ROMAN
Look good too.

SALESMAN
Anything else today?

ROMAN
How about some sunglasses.

EYEGLOSS SECTION

ROMAN picking a pair of designer shades ... looks at himself in the mirror ... sees something in the reflection and ROMAN turns ... regards a MEN'S SUIT DEPARTMENT and cut to

THREE-MIRRORED PEDESTAL

ROMAN in an expensive three-piece ... admiring himself ... TAILOR fitting him ... finishing ...

TAILOR

That's the one.

SALESMAN arriving with an armload of shirts and ties ...

TAILOR

Did we say socks?

ROMAN

Please. How long will the suits take?

SALESMAN

When do you need them?

ROMAN

As soon as possible.

SALESMAN

We can do tomorrow for an added charge.

HIGH-END BEACH HOTEL

ROMAN checking in at the front desk ... holds shopping bags of clothes and CUT TO

HOTEL SUITE

Spacious ... ocean view ... ROMAN putting his money packets in a room safe ... locking it and CUT TO

BEACH

THOUSANDS filling the wide strip of sand as we find

ROMAN threading through the throng ...

REACHING the shore ...

SURF covering his bare feet ...

ROMAN lays his hotel towel by a life guard station and CUT TO

ROMAN

Up to his waist ... wave hitting ... knocking him down ...

FINDS his footing ...

LAUGHING at himself and CUT TO

MID-DAY

ROMAN walking the short ... eating an ice pop ... seeing a shell ... pocketing it and CUT TO

HOTEL SUITE

Sunset through the balcony doors ... ROMAN showering and CUT TO

SUITE SAFE

ROMAN peeling off HUNDRED-DOLLAR BILLS and CUT TO

HOTEL

At night ... SURF sweeping up designer lit sand ... LAUGHTER and MUSIC filter from inside and CUT TO

HOTEL BAR

Upscale ... crowded ... CAMERA panning

A BUFFET TABLE

Laid with ham and beef and asparagus and lobster ... passing a large ice sculpture of a rearing STAG ... melting from the heat as we find

ROMAN

Sitting at the rail ... in his new clothes ... drinking a daiquiri ... squeezed between several groups as ... a MAN backs into him

MAN

Sorry.

ROMAN

Not a problem.

WOMAN

He's drunk.

ROMAN turns ... WOMAN beside him ... middle-age ... money ...

WOMAN

We're on the same board. Weekend conference.

ROMAN

I'm on vacation. I've just recently discovered that taking a break gives perspective. You see things at a distance that you can't see up close.

WOMAN

You have to do it. My husband and I leave the kids once a month and check into a hotel.

ROMAN

My wife and I do the same.

WOMAN

Sometimes you gotta get away from the spouse as well, get some alone time.

ROMAN

What's that?

WOMAN

Right?

MAN

(down the bar)
Table's ready.

WOMAN

Well have a nice night.

LATER

ROMAN at the rail ... drinks with some YOUNG BUSINESSMEN ...

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN

Is your firm looking for any first-years?
Because my roommate's bringing straight
fire flame in his resume.

ROMAN

Has he considered public defense work?

The YOUNG BUSINESSMEN laugh ... ROMAN realizes he made a joke
... joins in CUT TO

LATER

ROMAN drinking and laughing with some TOURISTS ... snippet
overheard ...

ROMAN

I won because I'm supposed to win. Hello.

TOURISTS laughing ... ROMAN transformed and CUT TO

LATER

ROMAN'S drunk ... pleasantly so ... tosses several HUNDREDS on the bar ... moving through the loud, crowded room ...

BITS OF CONVERSATION

--It's on a bluff with a four-story foyer and 200-foot infinity pool.

--Everything's interruptive now. It's not rocket science, it's neuroscience.

--You drink this red root, trip your lights out and wake up completely cured.

ROMAN'S HOTEL ROOM

ROMAN in bed ... staring out the open balcony doors ... ocean view ... soothing sound of surf and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

As we left it ... bright ... hot ... hemmed-in as

ROMAN

Emerges from a SUBWAY STOP ... arm loads of clothes and suit bags and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN sets the sea shell he found on his desk and CUT TO

CLOSET

ROMAN hanging up his new clothes ... returns the unused money to the backpack ... regards the stacks of cash and CUT TO

PATEL LAW OFFICES

Monday morning ... firm in full, caffeine-fueled swing as

ROMAN

Arrives in his new suit ... sunglasses ... walks through and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

ROMAN takes the ELLERBEE FILE ... shoves it in a drawer as ... his phone rings and CUT TO

GEORGE'S OFFICE

ROMAN enters ... GEORGE behind his desk ...

GEORGE
Come on in. Sit down.

ROMAN
I'd rather stand.

GEORGE
Sit.

ROMAN sits ...

GEORGE
That's a very nice suit.

ROMAN
Thank you.

GEORGE
Lynn went to your apartment this weekend
to speak with you but you weren't there.

ROMAN
I must have been out.

GEORGE
You don't know what I'm talking about.

ROMAN
You're firing me.

GEORGE
No. People became concerned after you
went to the hospital Friday morning.
After some discussion we decided it was
best not to just leave a message on your
phone. William died.

ROMAN
When?

GEORGE
Friday night actually.

ROMAN watching the world outside ...

GEORGE
I'm sorry.

ROMAN
You didn't kill him.

GEORGE

There's going to be a small, private funeral on Wednesday and then a full memorial in several weeks.

ROMAN

Was that it?

GEORGE

I don't know what you're feeling, I mean given how close you were. I guess maybe I can imagine.

ROMAN

I put that behind me-

GEORGE

I'm sorry for my outburst the other day. Lynn's been telling me how vital you were to William's work, always in the shadows, never flagging. It was insane to expect you to check all that at the door when you came here.

GEORGE comes around the desk ...

GEORGE

I've gotten Florence Ellerbee to sign a document absolving us of any wrong-doing in her nephew's death, so that's in the rear-view. I also learned today that we've picked up three new clients, all of whom came as referrals from your cases. Seems your personal attention, giving out your cell number, is quite the calling card. I want to institute the practice for all our attorneys. Look you can still leave of course, and I'd fully understand, but if you want I think maybe there's a place for you here, if we can work it out. If you'd like to stay.

ROMAN

I want to stay.

GEORGE

You would?

ROMAN

I'm tired of doing the impossible for the ungrateful. I now have more practical considerations.

GEORGE

Well the suit's a big change.

ROMAN

I prefer a double breast over the single.

GEORGE

Broke open the piggy bank huh?

ROMAN

My lack of success was self-imposed.

FIRM COFFEE ROOM

NOVAK and CONNOR chatting cases ... laughing as ... ROMAN enters ... pouring coffee ... conversation continuing ...

ROMAN

We had a case once at my old firm.

NOVAK, CONNOR turn ...

ROMAN

It was a DUI. The arrest report read, "number of drinks: one. Type of drink, Coors Light. Size of drink, bucket."

Getting grins ...

NOVAK

George claims you know the C.P.C by heart.

ROMAN

Guilty as charged

CONNOR

Pleadings.

ROMAN

948-973

CONNOR

Dismissal for irregularity.

ROMAN

1248

CONNOR

Money laundering

ROMAN

186.9-186.10, however all pleadings under these sections remain subject to the rules of joinder and severance in section 954.

NOVAK
Fuck me, seriously?

CONNOR
Listen I got a prop 36 I could use help
with.

ROMAN
We handled a lot of D.T.C motions.

ROMAN talking case law ... new demeanor and suit ... a happy
animal in a healthy herd and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

ROMAN walking through the night ... close to the CITY CENTER
... passes a bright, just completed

APARTMENT HIGH-RISE

ROMAN stops to read a sign outside ...

PEGASUS

PROPERTY RENTALS

NOW RENTING

Inquire inside

MIRRORED ELEVATOR

ROMAN ascending with a WOMAN REALTOR ...

REALTOR
Where do you reside currently?

ROMAN
Farther away.

REALTOR
If you lived here you'd be home by now.

NEW APARTMENT

A two-bedroom on a high floor ... sweeping city view ...
contemporary ... ROMAN wandering through ... taking in the
staged furnishings ... REALTOR watching ...

REALTOR
There's very high demand. If you're
interested it's not a place I'd advise
walking away from.

HIGHRISE GYM

ROMAN standing in the new, huge empty gym ...

ROOFTOP POOL

ROMAN regarding the lit pool ... high in the sky ... empty lounges and cabanas ... everything needed except people ...

REALTOR

What do you think?

ROMAN

Money has gravity, it draws things to it.

REALTOR

I'm sorry?

ROMAN

Whatever we're chasing it seems like you've caught it all here.

REALTOR

In a busy market not standing out is the same as being invisible.

ROMAN

When can I move in?

REALTOR

Immediately.

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

Music on the turntable ... ROMAN busy boxing his many books as ... his phone rings ...

ROMAN

Hello.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Roman it's Maya.

ROMAN

Hi.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

How are you?

ROMAN

Wonderful.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

I meant what I said last week about staying in touch. How's the new job?

ROMAN

Excellent. I'm suggesting a new slogan for the firm. "You ring, we bring."

MAYA/OVER PHONE

That's funny.

ROMAN

It wasn't meant to be.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Oh.

ROMAN

Like fast food.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

I can't tell when you're joking or when you're serious.

ROMAN

I have that effect.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

But you like the job?

ROMAN

I'm writing lengthy interrogatories, amending complaints, no social redeeming qualities or context. It's awesome.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

(laughing)

Okay. I'm actually calling to see if you'd like to have dinner.

ROMAN

With you?

MAYA/OVER PHONE

(laughing)

I am so fucking confused.

ROMAN

I'd like that.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Great.

ROMAN

I could do tomorrow night.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Works for me.

ROMAN'S BATHROOM

ROMAN searching his medicine cabinet ... finds a pair of scissors and CUT TO

PATEL LAW OFFICE

GEORGE leading a firm conference ... 20 LAWYERS at a large table ... ROMAN with them ... beard and mustache trimmed ...

GEORGE

Under the new fee structure, felony advances rise from two thousand to twenty-five hundred. The felony daily rises to fifteen-hundred from one. Of course some people gag at the new numbers. What we're selling is our impressive win-loss record, depth of talent and lower all-in costs. Take time to explain it. If a potential client's heading for the door, emphasize our new personalized approach. Lastly I've decided to devote a share of our time to pro bono. It's not an area we have much experience with but someone here does. It's the first he's heard about it but Roman will be heading our new pro bono program.

ROMAN

Will this cut into my salary?

The room cracks up ...

ROMAN

In terms of my billable hours?

More laughs ... ROMAN serious ... senses he's far removed ...

ROMAN

Of course.

GEORGE

Connor will be assisting you with this. I want to get moving right away, it's already in the new brochure.

AERIAL

Looking into the FIRM from outside ... ROMAN in CONNOR'S office ... the two play basketball with a small hoop on the wall ... ROMAN enjoying himself immensely and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN RESTAURANT

Refined ... expensive ... ROMAN and MAYA shown to a table ...

MAYA

I didn't dress for this place.

ROMAN

There's no code.

MAYA

It's just--

ROMAN

You don't like it.

MAYA

Roman this will be a fortune.

ROMAN

We deserve it.

LATER

ROMAN and MAYA mid-meal ...

MAYA

I really heard what you said the first time you came in. How progressive lawyering is a cornerstone of modern activism, particularly in the long period we're hopefully coming out of. You, the few lawyers like you, took up the mantle of leadership with your own advocacy. Out there and alone. I feel like, I don't know, like I was meant to meet you.

ROMAN glancing up from his meal ...

MAYA

I've been going through my own struggles you know, trying to balance what I do and the sacrifices and so many times I think why do I see things differently from other people? Why do I care? That our humanity is connected to each other. I have moments, I mean extended periods of real fucking doubt. Like sometimes I'm holding on by a thread. So hearing you and understanding and being aware what you went through, just knowing you, I mean honestly, Roman, you're inspiring.

ROMAN

I've never had it before but I imagined duck l'orange to be something different.

MAYA

Jesus I'm being serious.

ROMAN
I'm uncomfortable.

MAYA
You're modest. I'm sorry.

ROMAN stops eating ...

ROMAN
Perhaps you have to try looking at things differently.

MAYA
How?

ROMAN
I mean the world is for wonderful things, isn't it?

MAYA
Define wonderful.

ROMAN
Okay, as an example, who said you can't steal a car in self-defense?

MAYA
In reference to what?

ROMAN
If one required a means of escape so to speak.

MAYA
Escape from what?

ROMAN
From possibility to actuality. It follows. The logic is valid thus the premise is true. I mean every weapon is a tool if you hold it right.

MAYA
You're saying to justify something?

ROMAN
I'm saying purity can't survive in this world. Living conditions have bearing.

MAYA
I was talking about the burden of activism.

ROMAN
Exactly.

MAYA

What are you talking about?

ROMAN

My ears are ringing.

MAYA

That's someone's phone.

ROMAN aware she's staring ...

ROMAN

It's a difficult thing to be truthful,
not just to principles but to yourself.
To admit you want something else and to
act on it.

MAYA

I don't want anything else. I feel I'm
blessed to believe in something. The way
you do.

ROMAN reaches for his wine ... drinks ... spills some ...

ROMAN

Damn.

ROMAN sees a stain on his tie ...

ROMAN

This was brand new.

ROMAN wiping with water ...

ROMAN

How the hell do you get this out?

OUTSIDE THE RESTAURANT

ROMAN and MAYA emerge ...

MAYA

Thank you for dinner, that was very
generous.

ROMAN

The portions were small. I'm moving to a
new apartment in the next few days, after
25 years.

MAYA

You're going through a lot of changes.

ROMAN

I woke last night and took in the sights
and sounds and was worried I'll miss it.

MAYA

You should hold off until you're sure.

ROMAN

I signed a contract, it's too late to go
back. I'll get a cab.

MAYA

I can walk.

ROMAN

No I'll drop you off.

MOVING CAB

ROMAN stares out the window ... MAYA regards him and CUT TO

MAYA'S BUILDING

ROMAN comes around and opens her door ...

MAYA

Thanks again. Well. Good night.

MAYA starts inside ... turns ...

MAYA

I just want you to know how much you've
helped me. By meeting you. What you do.

MAYA kisses him ... goes inside and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

Record playing ... ROMAN taking down photos from the walls
... wrapping them in newspaper ... removing the shot of

YOUNG ROMAN

With the bullhorn as

ROMAN

Regards himself ... sits on the floor ... shaken by a deep,
inner tremor and CUT TO

ROMAN'S CLOSET

ROMAN burying the BACKPACK of money under mounds of clutter
and CUT TO

LOS ANGELES CEMETERY

Broad, grassy expanse crammed with headstones and palm trees
... downtown in the BG ... small group gathering on a hill as

A CAB

Arrives ... ROMAN gets out ... suit ... sunglasses and CUT TO

GRAVESIDE

VERNITA, LYNN, LYNN'S HUSBAND and GEORGE with an old PASTOR
as ROMAN arrives ...

VERNITA

Roman? Goodness, I hardly recognized you.

VERNITA bugging him ... staring ... ROMAN pulling away ...

LYNN

It's so good to see you, Roman.

(embracing him)

Look at you, you look wonderful.

ROMAN

I never put much emphasis on my personal
administration.

LYNN'S HUSBAND

Hi Roman.

GEORGE

Hey Roman.

PASTOR coming close ... smiling ...

PASTOR

Hello.

ROMAN

I'm Roman.

PASTOR

Of course you are.

ROMAN

I wasn't sure you remembered.

PASTOR

We've met.

ROMAN

Years ago.

PASTOR

You made an impression. William used to speak of you often.

ROMAN regards the casket hovering over the hole ...

PASTOR

Are we all here?

LYNN

Yes.

ROMAN

And the small group circle the grave ... PASTOR in brief silent prayer before ...

PASTOR

He lived on grand notions. Influenced by unrealistic and impractical ideals. In a house trembling with promises and shouts of triumphs yet to come. Imploring and inspiring. A believer that the moral arc of the universe is long but bends toward justice. He ignited a spark in each and every one of us, a light that can never die.

VERNITA breaks ... LYNN'S arm going around her as

ROMAN

Shuts his eyes and CUT TO

CEMETERY ROAD

A few cars parked ... GROUP descending the hill ... ROMAN passes amid stone cherubs and angels ...

LYNN

We have over a thousand attending the memorial.

ROMAN

Not one of 'em returned his calls when he was alive.

LYNN

I think it would be great if you spoke.

ROMAN

And tell them what?

LYNN

You two talked the same language.

ROMAN

No.

LYNN

If it's nerves.

ROMAN

It's not.

LYNN

There's no one more deserving.

ROMAN

They wouldn't want to hear it.

LYNN

Hear what?

ROMAN

The real enemies aren't outside they're within.

Reaching the CARS ...

VERNITA

(embracing LYNN)

We'll talk soon.

LYNN

I'll call you.

VERNITA goes to ROMAN ... stops ... sees something in him ...

VERNITA

You take care of yourself.

ROMAN

I am.

VERNITA

I disbelieve that.

LYNN'S HUSBAND helps VERNITA to her car ...

GEORGE

(hugs LYNN)

I'll be in touch. Roman, I'll see you at the office.

GEORGE departs ...

LYNN

I have something for you.

LYNN goes to her car ... opens the trunk and CUT TO

MOVING TAXI

On an LA FREEWAY ... ROMAN in back as CAMERA PANS TO SHOW
THE LARGE PORCELAIN BULLDOG

In the seat beside him ... ROMAN pointedly staring out his
side window ... it takes all his energy to glance over and
CLOSE ON

THE CERAMIC CANINE'S

Unblinking visage ... life-size and life-like ... steadfast
... resolute ... staring at him and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

ROMAN with an HISPANIC COUPLE ... uninspired as he utters ...

ROMAN

Twenty-five hundred is a higher advance
than average, but I'd direct you to our
firm's win-loss record, lower all-in
costs and personalized service. It's all
in the brochure there you received.

COUPLE sharing a brochure ... peering at the copy ...

WIFE

I don't know.

ROMAN

It's wise to price shop, but when it
comes to defending a loved one, well
there's a lot of people in prison who'd
attest why that's a bad idea.

COUPLE conferring ... ROMAN regards the BULLDOG in the corner
... facing the wall ...

HUSBAND

We're going to do it.

ROMAN struggles to find a smile and CUT TO

LAW OFFICES

Evening ... ROMAN carrying an armload of case work ... sticks
his head in an OFFICE ... CONNOR at his computer ...

ROMAN

I want to get started on the pro bono.

CONNOR

I'm close to cutting out.

ROMAN

Now you have something constructive to do.

CONNOR swiveling to say something ... ROMAN already gone ...

GEORGE

(calling to him)

What's the big rush all of a sudden?

AERIAL

OFFICE BUILDING mostly dark ... one room glowing and CUT TO

LAW OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM

ROMAN speed-reading a lengthy file ... CONNOR on the opposite side of the large table ... flipping a page on a document ... reaching for a slice of pizza ... none left ...

CONNOR

It's getting late.

ROMAN jotting a note ... deep into reading ...

CONNOR

When are we wrapping up here?

ROMAN

You could've come up with a defense in all the time you've used to complain.

CONNOR

What defense? They're all dead ends. This guy's guilty as hell.

ROMAN

Of what?

CONNOR

Judging by the facts everything. The cocaine charge, stolen property count, owning the car used in the drive-by.

ROMAN

You're arguing the other side.

CONNOR

Those are the facts.

ROMAN

(as much for himself)

What about *why* he did it? What about the reasons?

(MORE)

ROMAN (CONT'D)

What about the pressures he was under and circumstances going back to when and where he was born? You don't think that breeds disillusionment, anger, need? You don't think he's human? Just how much do you think a person can take?

CONNOR

What are you saying?

ROMAN

What are you saying?

CONNOR

There's some really bad people out there.

ROMAN

Yeah and a lot of 'em work in office buildings.

Beat ... facing each other across the conference table ...

ROMAN

Go home.

CONNOR wants to ... hesitates ...

ROMAN

Don't worry, I won't badmouth you to George.

CONNOR assuaged ... gathering his things ...

CONNOR

Hey I'm a team player.

ROMAN

I have no doubt.

CONNOR leaves ... ROMAN alone at the large table CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

78-size record spinning fast ... old R&B SONG blasting as

ROMAN

Tapes up boxes ... manic ... apartment in complete disarray ... packed crates ... garbage bags of clothes ... ROMAN stops ... last thing left is the turntable ... ROMAN lifts the

NEEDLE

And music is replaced by city sounds ... construction ... ROMAN wraps the record player in newspaper and CUT TO

SUNRISE

Spreading over the Southland and CUT TO

GEORGE'S MOVING TESLA

GEORGE drives ... ROMAN in the passenger seat ...

GEORGE

It's a capital case. You have experience with those.

ROMAN

We handled quite a few.

GEORGE

I'll make the introduction and then bow out. You'll stay. You might want to look at the file before we get there.

ROMAN regards a file in his lap ... mind elsewhere ...

GEORGE

I looked up the overcrowding case you and William worked on.

ROMAN

That was a long time ago.

GEORGE

Must've had quite an impact.

ROMAN

It was later overturned.

GEORGE

How's your big brief going? The one you've worked on for 12 years.

ROMAN

I put it aside.

GEORGE

Tell me about it.

ROMAN

I've reached an impasse.

GEORGE

Don't give up.

ROMAN

Actually I don't believe I'll finish it.

GEORGE
That's too bad. I hear you're moving to a
new apartment.

ROMAN
How?

GEORGE
Payroll check. Comes across my desk. I
know that building. Not cheap.

ROMAN
I had money saved.

GEORGE
I meant it's great, it's a nice building.

ROMAN
The money's from way back.

GEORGE
What else is it good for?

MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL

Cement complex ringed by high walls and razor wire and CUT TO
RECEPTION

GEORGE AND ROMAN are buzzed through a steel door ... approach
several OFFICERS ...

GEORGE
Roman. License.

ROMAN hands him his drivers license ... GEORGE adds his ...
puts them on the counter ...

GEORGE
George Patel and Roman Israel to see our
client, Carter Johnson.

ROMAN freezes at the name ...

ROMAN
Carter Johnson?

GEORGE
From the Ellerbee case. They picked him
up on Friday. We've been retained.

ROMAN reeling ... stares at teh file ...

GEORGE
At least crack it before we go in.

ROMAN
I'm acquainted.

JAIL VISITING ROOM

ROMAN and GEORGE seated before scratched plexiglass ...
charged beat before

CARTER JOHNSON

Appears ... sits opposite ... cuffed ... stocky ... aware ...

GEORGE
Hello Carter. I'm George Patel and this
is my associate, Roman Israel. Roman is a
devoted advocate and fabulous attorney
and he's going to be the point person on
your team.

CARTER regards ROMAN ...

CARTER
He's good huh?

GEORGE
He's better than good. Did you review the
fee structure?

CARTER
What you sent over, yeah.

GEORGE
You understand this is a capital murder
case?

CARTER
Yeah.

GEORGE
First off you'll want to be fully up to
speed on your file. You'll make better
decisions if you're informed about every
aspect of your case and know all your
options.

CARTER
I know my options.

GEORGE
We can't unchange what's been done. That
means facing this head-on. I think you
understand that the penalties you're
facing are very severe.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

In overview we're going to study the discovery the prosecution gives us, we're going to force the prosecution to give us anything and everything we need -- you want to step in here, Roman?

ROMAN

... We're going to perform our own private investigation and devise a defense.

ROMAN drifts off ... distracted ...

GEORGE

That's not all we're going to do. We're going to outwork the prosecution. We're going to out-work them and out-prepare them and we're going to get you the most favorable outcome possible.

CARTER

Life in a cage.

GEORGE

That's the outcome we're fighting. It's going to be a long process and cost quite a bit of money. With that in mind I'd suggest there's no need for two billable attorneys at this early phase so if it's okay with you I'm going to bow out and let Roman continue.

CARTER

Okay with me.

GEORGE

I'll be in touch.

GEORGE departs ... ROMAN opens the file ... CARTER staring through the plexiglass ...

ROMAN

The prosecutor's going to favor a grand jury over a preliminary hearing, which will allow them to wait to reveal their evidence until trial.

CARTER

You represented Derrell.

ROMAN

Briefly.

CARTER

I asked for you.

ROMAN ... head down ... finds a pen and pad of paper ...

CARTER
After speaking to his cellie.

ROMAN
We have a number of legal maneuvers we
can employ to try and force a pre-lim.

CARTER
I don't care about the pre-lim.

ROMAN
I'd advise we pursue it.

CARTER
You knew where I was.

ROMAN
When was that?

CARTER
Before they picked me up.

ROMAN
I don't believe so.

CARTER
I know you did.

ROMAN
I'm sure Derrell shared that information
with quite a few persons.

CARTER
No, he only told you. That's what he told
the guy. And you called it in for the
reward. Don't look away from me.

ROMAN returns his gaze ...

CARTER
You fucked me.

ROMAN
I presented myself on your request for an
attorney.

CARTER
You're talking and it don't mean a thing.
I'm never getting out of here, they got
me cold, but I'll tell you this -- I got
you anytime I want. Anytime. Anywhere.
Any moment. I could've done it already
but I want you where I am.

(MORE)

CARTER (CONT'D)
Thinking about it. Giving you a little
time. Not too long.

ROMAN stands ...

ROMAN
(calling)
Guard.

CARTER
Go tell someone what you've done, broke
your own law. Privileged information.
They'll put you in here with me.

ROMAN
GUARD.

CARTER
Gonna run? Try it.

GUARD appearing ...

ROMAN
I'm done here.

CARTER
Damn right you are.

CARTER led away and CUT TO

OUTSIDE THE JAIL

ROMAN steps into the sun ... crossing the plaza ... rounding
a corner and

ROMAN

Doubles over ... gives us a sense of the fear demon inside
and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

Mid-day ... ROMAN exits a TAXI ... scans the busy sidewalk
... quickly crosses into his office building and CUT TO

LAW OFFICE

ROMAN enters ... sees several TOUGHS waiting in reception ...
ROMAN stops ... scared as ... a LAWYER comes out ... greets
the two ... they're clients and CUT TO

ROMAN'S OFFICE

ROMAN locks the door ... his office phone rings ...

ROMAN

Hello?

Silence ...

ROMAN

Hello?

Click ... ROMAN dials the front desk ...

ROMAN

I just received a call. Did they give a name?

RECEPTIONIST/OVER PHONE

No.

ROMAN

There was no one there.

RECEPTIONIST/OVER PHONE

They asked for you.

ROMAN hangs up ... edges to the window ... stares down at

THE CITY

Below ... crowded with PEOPLE and CARS and CUT TO

LAW OFFICE RECEPTION

ROMAN leaving ... pauses at the door ... peering into the hallway ... regards the WORKERS waiting for the elevator and

GEORGE

Roman.

ROMAN sees GEORGE, NOVAK and several LAWYERS heading out ...

GEORGE

We have an emergency case, all hands on deck, you're coming with us.

OUTSIDE THE OFFICE BUILDING

ROMAN steps into the night ... anxiously scans the sidewalk ... walks close with GEORGE and the OTHERS and CUT TO

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

LIMO passing ... rush-hour traffic and CUT TO

MOVING LIMO

ROMAN squeezed in with the other ATTORNEYS ... GEORGE giving instructions ...

GEORGE

These are high-value clients who need immediate attention. It's going to take everything we have to get them out of this jam. That means everyone brings their A-game. Okay here we are, we're here.

The LIMO stops ... ROMAN gets out with the OTHERS ... finds himself at

THE STAPLES CENTER

LAKERS FANS pouring in ... GEORGE and the other LAWYERS laugh and CUT TO

STAPLES SKYBOX

MID-GAME ... GEORGE in a recliner ... drinking ... ROMAN beside him ... uneasy ... surveying the CROWD ...

GEORGE

Man you've had some crash course huh? From William Henry Jackson to George Patel, what a ride. Seems like you're settling in.

ROMAN

From all appearances.

GEORGE

Well I have a lot of plans you know. Nothing I want to get too deep into here, understand, but down the line I mean there's a lot to discuss. Alternative work arrangements, closer community offices, all while actually increasing productivity and retention. I don't have to explain any of this to you. You get it. Hell you're gonna be right in the middle of it.

LAKERS score ... GEORGE jumps up ... FANS cheering and CUT TO STREET

GEORGE and the GROUP exiting with the CROWD ...

GEORGE

Back in the sled. Nightcap.

ROMAN
(scanning the THRONG)
Not for me.

GEORGE
Come in late tomorrow.

ROMAN
I have a lot of work to do.

GEORGE
(to the other LAWYERS)
He's making you all look bad.

GEORGE buzzed ... shaking ROMAN'S HAND ... hugging him ...
heading off with his COLLEAGUES and CUT TO

U-HAUL TRUCK RENTAL

Under a FREEWAY OVERPASS ... ROMAN APPEARS ... crossing the
rental lot ... looking up as a JET passes and CUT TO

U-HAUL OFFICE

ROMAN at a counter ... REPRESENTATIVE checking inventory on
his computer ...

REPRESENTATIVE
All we have are 20-footers.

ROMAN
I need something tonight.

REPRESENTATIVE
So you want one?

ROMAN
Does it require a special license?

REPRESENTATIVE
No.

ROMAN
It sounds big.

REPRESENTATIVE
Where are you going?

ROMAN
Away.

REPRESENTATIVE
Where?

ROMAN
Where would you go?

REPRESENTATIVE
For what?

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

A large U-HAUL TRUCK comes down a dark street ... double-parked cars make it a tight squeeze and CUT TO

MOVING U-HAUL TRUCK

ROMAN hunched anxiously over the wheel ... not an experienced driver ... inching his way through the narrow gap as the

SIDE MIRROR scrapes a van ... ROMAN not stopping and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

Is dark ... silent as ... a lock turns and CAMERA FINDS

THE KITCHEN UTILITY DOOR

Opening ... ROMAN enters ... closes and locks the door ... looks at the boxed and stacked clutter in the spill light from the construction site and CUT TO

ALLEY

U-HAUL parked in the shadows behind ROMAN'S TENEMENT as

ROMAN

Comes out the back door ... carries a load of boxes ... ROMAN looks around ... loads them inside the big truck's cargo hold and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

ROMAN working in the dim darkness ... carrying crates ... grabbing garbage bags of clothes and CUT TO

PARKED U-HAUL TRUCK

ROMAN loading the back with his boxed-up life and CUT TO

ROMAN'S APARTMENT

Mostly empty ... scattered detritus as ... ROMAN appears ... standing in the shadows ... sweating ... exhausted ... he catches his breath ... goes into the closet ... takes the

BACKPACK OF CASH

And goes to the door ... ROMAN looks back at this dwelling of two decades and CUT TO

LOS ANGELES

At dawn ... FREEWAYS already filled and CUT TO

MOVING U-HAUL TRUCK

ROMAN in traffic ... gripping the wheel ... 18-WHEELERS close either side ... ROMAN braking too hard ... backpack and boxes in the front seat hitting the dash ... spilling open and

CASH

Scatters on the floor ... ROMAN reaches ... eyes off the road ... blare of a *HORN* ... ROMAN bolting upright ... back in his lane ... glances in his side mirror and

A WINDOW-TINTED CAR

Is seen ... two MEN inside ... ROMAN staring and CUT TO

LOS ANGELES OUTSKIRTS

The CITY'S a distant, jagged smudge ... traffic thinning ... U-HAUL passing and CUT TO

MOVING U-HAUL

ROMAN glued to his mirror ... WINDOW-TINTED CAR behind him ... following close ... ROMAN sees an EXIT and he suddenly

VEERS

Across lanes ... taking the ramp ... onto

A HIGH DESERT ROAD

As ROMAN looks in the mirror and SEES

THE WINDOW-TINTED CAR

Right behind as

ROMAN

Accelerates and CUT TO

DESERT ROAD

U-HAUL TRUCK through heat waves ... ribbon of blacktop ... no sense of speed until the TRUCK roars by ... WINDOW-TINTED CAR trailing ... middle of nowhere and CUT TO

MOVING U-HAUL TRUCK

ROMAN speeding ... sweating ... SEES

THE WINDOW-TINTED CAR

Suddenly pulling into the opposing lane ... speeding up ... pulling abreast of the truck cab and

ROMAN

Ducks down ... into the passenger seat ... trying to steer as he protects himself ... peeking over the dash to SEE

THE WINDOW-TINTED CAR

Roar by ... U-HAUL TRUCK drifting as ... ROMAN sits up ... driving on the dirt shoulder and

ROMAN over-corrects ...

TRUCK swerving onto the dirt SHOULDER ...

ROMAN slamming the brakes ...

LOUD CRASH of his belongings in the cargo hold ...

CLOUD of dust as

ROMAN steps out ... SEES

THE WINDOW-TINTED CAR quickly backing up and

ROMAN

Takes off ... running into the desert as ...

MAN'S VOICE

Hey!

SECOND MAN'S VOICE

You okay?!

ROMAN running through the brush ... glances back ... SEES

TWO TEENAGE BOYS

Standing by the WINDOW-TINTED CAR ... innocent and unimposing ... genuinely concerned as they call to him ...

TEENAGER

Hey you all right mister?

ROMAN stops ... 100 yards into the desert ... looks back ...

ROMAN

I was running.

TEENAGER #2

Do you need help?

ROMAN

It was a bad decision, not my first.

The TEENS get back in their car ... drive off ... leave

ROMAN

Alone in the vastness ... searing sun ... standing in a sea of sand and scrub as ... his CELL PHONE rings ... "Work to Do" melody now mocking ... ROMAN regards it ... answers ...

ROMAN

Hello.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Hey it's Maya.

ROMAN

Hi Maya.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

What are you doing?

ROMAN

Not much.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

You'd tell me if I was bugging you.

ROMAN

No.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

Honestly, thank you. I call you when I'm down. That's horrible, right? It's only ten and I'm swamped. My friend, one of my best staffers, quit yesterday. Said working here was only for his resume.

ROMAN

The ability to hold conflicting ideas in one's head takes effort.

MAYA/OVER PHONE

How's your day going?

ROMAN

You know, life smiles I smile back.

MAYA/OVER PHONE
You don't sound like you're smiling

ROMAN
I'm a little anxious actually.

MAYA/OVER PHONE
Just tell yourself most of the things you
worry about will never happen.

ROMAN
I'll try that.

MAYA/OVER PHONE
Alcohol works better...Roman?

EXTREME WIDE SHOT

ROMAN distant ... phantasmal ... swimming in heat shimmer ...

MAYA/OVER PHONE
It's a bad connection. Where are you?

ROMAN
In a desert.

MAYA/OVER PHONE
It seems taht way sometimes. You just
gotta keep going.

ROMAN
Which way?

MAYA/OVER PHONE
Head on, straight through it. You can't--

Static ... connection lost ...

ROMAN
What did you say? Which way? Speak
louder. I can't hear you!

A DUST DEVIL

Passes in the foreground before us ... ROMAN erased from view
and CUT TO

DESERT ROADSIDE

ROMAN opens the back of the truck ... all his belongings have
been tossed and broken open ... his books, records and photos
scattered as

ROMAN

Rummages through his strewn clothes ... digs out his legal case and CUT TO

U-HAUL TRUCK

Making a U-turn ... ROMAN driving back down the TWO-LANE ROAD ... returning the way he came and CUT TO

LAW OFFICE

ROMAN arrives ... old jacket ... clip-on tie ... carrying his legal case ... a lawyer passes in khakis and open shirt ...

LAWYER
Casual Friday.

LAW OFFICE LIBRARY

Lined with LAW BOOKS ... ROMAN pulling specific volumes ... knows what he's looking for and CUT TO

LATER

ROMAN'S taken over the library ... stacks of legal tomes ... jotting post-it notes ... NOVAK passes

NOVAK
(looking in)
What are you working on?

ROMAN rises ... wordlessly shuts the door on him ... keeps working and CUT TO

LATER

ROMAN completely absorbed

PARALEGAL
Mister Martinez had this room booked at three.

ROMAN'S OFFICE

LAW BOOKS are stacked on the floor ... piled on his desk ... ROMAN carries in a new armload ... shuts the door and CUT TO

PASSING HOURS

ROMAN writes a last post-it note ... puts it on the wall in front of him ... papered with dozens of others ...

ROMAN swivels to his computer ... begins typing and CLOSE ON

BLANK SCREEN

Filling as ROMAN speed-types a legal document ...

CASE NO. 00-001

SUPREME COURT
Of
ABSOLUTE UNIVERSAL LAW

(Los Angeles Division)

ROMAN J. ISRAEL, ESQ.

Petitioner

V.

HIMSELF

Defendant

NOTICE

To Permanently Disbar Roman J. Israel Esq. From the California Bar and Human Race for Being a F*cking Hypocrite and Turning His Back on EVERYTHING he Ever Claimed to Actually Stand for.

TIME LAPSE

ROMAN typing ... consumed ...

ROMAN checking legal passages ...

ROMAN takes his ringing phone off the hook ...

ROMAN turns off his vibrating CELL PHONE ...

SKY outside fading from blue to black ...

FLASH of a gaudy sunset and

REAL TIME

Knock at ROMAN'S OFFICE door ... ROMAN typing away as ... the door opens ... stopped after only a few inches ... hitting a file of books on the floor ...

FRITZ

Hey.

ROMAN'S fingers flying ...

FRITZ

I just heard something disturbing about you from a solid fucking source.

ROMAN not stopping ...

FRITZ

It was about the Ellerbee case. Carter Johnson. You collected the reward? Is that fucking true?

ROMAN fishes out his old headphones ... puts them on ... no longer connected to anything ... resuming work as ... FRITZ retreats and CUT TO

OFFICE BUILDING

Soaring into the night sky ... ROMAN comes out ... carrying his old legal case ... clutching the big porcelain BULLDOG ... striding across the plaza ... pure purpose and

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Of ROMAN walking off ... *unsettling sense* SOMEONE'S watching as he passes and CUT TO

MOVING TESLA

GEORGE stuck in DOWNTOWN TRAFFIC ... on speaker phone ...

GEORGE

Did you check his office?

RECEPTIONIST/OVER SPEAKER

That's what I'm saying, he left already

GEORGE

When?

RECEPTIONIST/OVER SPEAKER

A few minutes ago.

GEORGE

Well goddamn it keep trying him.

GEORGE hangs up ... inching with other CARS and

GEORGE'S POV

ROMAN passes right by him on the sidewalk ... other direction ... carrying the briefcase and porcelain BULLDOG ... walking with the many WORKERS heading home as

GEORGE

Lowers his passenger window ...

GEORGE
Roman! ROMAN!

GEORGE angling his car ... muscling onto the curb ... trying to make the turn at the next corner ... blocked by rush-hour TRAFFIC and

GEORGE'S POV

Through the TESLA'S passenger side mirror ... ROMAN seen continuing down the sidewalk ... entering a BAR and CUT TO

INSIDE THE BAR

Crowded ... MAYA at the rail ... sips a drink ... sees ROMAN approach ... place the big BULLDOG on the seat beside her ...

MAYA
Oh my God, what is that?

ROMAN
It's for you.

MAYA
It's a bulldog.

ROMAN
Among other things.

MAYA
It looks so real.

ROMAN
Actually it's alive.

MAYA
Why are you giving it to me?

ROMAN
To take care of.

MAYA
You are a fucking trip.

ROMAN
You're worth having in this thing.

MAYA
Was it yours?

ROMAN
For awhile.

MAYA
You should keep it.

ROMAN
I don't have room.

MAYA
Your new apartment.

ROMAN
I'm giving it up.

MAYA
Why?

ROMAN
I'm going away.

MAYA
Where?

ROMAN
Whoever they send me. You see something's occurred...something which will take a career that was sincere and well-intentioned and launch it right into the realm of truly transformative. And I can promise you the advocate who triumphs in this instance won't be the one with the most formal education or legal skill.

MAYA
Let's have a drink, Roman, come on.

ROMAN
I don't need one.

MAYA
There's a table right there.

ROMAN
No I can't stay.

MAYA
What's wrong?

ROMAN
It's quite interesting actually.

GEORGE appears ... pushing through the CROWD ... flushed ...

GEORGE
There you are.

ROMAN
George this is Maya.

GEORGE
Hey.

MAYA
Hello.

GEORGE
I need a word with him.

ROMAN
I was leaving anyway.
(to MAYA, re: the bulldog)
I think you two will get along.

MAYA
Roman--

GEORGE already angling ROMAN toward the door ... MAYA watching him go and CUT TO

OUTSIDE THE BAR

GEORGE and ROMAN step out to the busy sidewalk ...

GEORGE
What the hell is going on?

ROMAN
From my point of view?

GEORGE
Fritz called. He says he has reliable information that you turned in Carter Johnson and collected the reward.

ROMAN
Here's what the prosecutor's not going to tell you.

GEORGE
Jesus it's true.

ROMAN
I've been given a gift.

GEORGE
You acted utterly improperly, broke the law, it so wasn't a gift.

ROMAN

I'm not talking about the money. I don't care about the money, George. Fruit of the poisonous tree, I left it back in the office. If you want to understand what's happening here you'll have to get past all the smoke of legal disputation.

ROMAN heading off ... GEORGE trailing ...

GEORGE

These are dangerous fucking people. There's no walking away from this.

ROMAN

I'm not walking away. I'm going to turn myself in. The precinct on Sixth.

VIEW FROM THE STREET

SOMEONE watching from a CAR ... starting to trail and CUT TO

ROMAN

Threading the crowded sidewalk ... GEORGE right beside ...

ROMAN

All those years practicing, to achieve what? Technical triumphs, scouring law books for loopholes and confabulation. Then, today, in the middle of nowhere I had a revelation, an insight so sweeping, so clear, building directly off my other brief. It was me, George. It was always there. I never saw it before because I never experienced the other side. You see I'm plaintiff and defendant simultaneously. I file against myself. I represent myself, thereby expanding the full scope of the legal desert. The judgement's built in. The only thing left is forgiveness, and I grant that to myself. Because the act doesn't make a person guilty unless the mind is guilty as well. Of course I expect challenges as there's no precedents or derivative interpretation but the argument is sound, the premise true and I have no doubt it will be upheld by the highest courts in the land.

GEORGE

You're insane.

ROMAN

I've never been more clear.

GEORGE

That's what we'll argue.

ROMAN

Be careful what you say. You don't represent me in this so the rules of confidentiality won't apply. My entire defense will be based on an unequivocal recitation of truth.

GEORGE stopping ... stunned ... ROMAN continuing on ... calling back ...

ROMAN

You get it, George. You have such a tremendous future. It's so bright I swear it's blinding.

ROMAN rounds the corner ... gone as ... GEORGE suddenly SEES

A TALL MAN

In a windbreaker leave a still rolling CAR ... quickly crossing the street ... same direction as ROMAN ... wearing sunglasses at night and CUT TO

GEORGE

Follows ... concerned ... rounding the corner and

GEORGE'S POV

ROMAN disappearing down the crowded sidewalk ... entering

THE PULSING HEART

Of revitalized DOWNTOWN ... towering HOTELS ... NEON ... Friday night CROWDS as

ROMAN

Weaves through PEDESTRIANS and CAMERA TRACKS BACK to the

MAN

In sunglasses ... catching up as CAMERA TRACKS FURTHER to

GEORGE

Following ... real fear ... searching for ROMAN and CUT TO

BAR

MAYA hurries outside ... looking around and CUT TO

ROMAN

Turning down a darker, less busy STREET as

THE MAN

Appears in the dim BG ... trailing ROMAN ... hand going in his pocket as

ROMAN'S PHONE

Rings ... familiar melody ... ROMAN pausing to pick up ...

ROMAN

Hello...Hey, of cours I remember.

(beat)

No that's why I gave you my number.

ROMAN stops under a circle of lamp light and CUT TO

GEORGE

In the midst of the thriving city center ... running as he scans the street and

BOOM!

As a gunshot echoes off the buildings ... absorbed by city noise ... other PEDESTRIANS unaware as

GEORGE

Takes off toward the sound and CUT TO

MAYA

Several blocks back as

TWO MORE SHOTS

Are heard ... MAYA freezes ... world passing around her ... unchanged and CUT TO

GEORGE

Sprinting around a CORNER ... bolting down the darker street ... suddenly stopping ... seeing something ... spinning from the sight ... overcome as

SIRENS

Filter in ... louder and louder and DISSOLVE TO

BLACKNESS

Silent, still beat ... time's passed before FADING IN ON

MAYA'S EMPTY OFFICE

View through glass into the busy COALITION OFFICES ... MAYA seen but not heard ... speaking with a group of ACTIVISTS as CAMERA FINDS

THE BULLDOG

Sitting beside MAYA'S desk now ... resolute ... persevering and CUT TO

AERIAL

CAMERA climbing the side of a familiar office building ... seeing inside COMPANIES ... watching WORKERS within as we

SETTLE

On the LAW FIRM ... busy day ... CAMERA PANNING

THE FULL FLOOR

To show ATTORNEYS at work ...

CONNOR finishing with a client ... handing him a card as ... we stop at

GEORGE'S OFFICE

GEORGE is seen inside speaking on the phone ... sleeves rolled ... pacing as he argues a point and CUT TO

INSIDE THE OFFICE

As GEORGE hangs up ... rolls his sleeves down ... goes to his closet ... putting on his jacket as he SEES

ROMAN'S LEGAL CASE

Tucked in back ... GEORGE about to close the closet ... stops ... pulls the case ... regards it ... sets it on his desk ...

GEORGE

Looks at it ... pops the latch ... we sense for the first time ... pulling out ROMAN'S THICK LEGAL BRIEF and

GEORGE

Scans it ... about to put it away ... something in hte pages catching his eye ... scanning down to read further as

ASSISTANT/OVER PHONE INTERCOM
Mister Novak's ready.

GEORGE
Tell him I'll be there.

GEORGE turns a page ... *increasingly interested* as ... CAMERA
REVERSES and

GEORGE

Is seen from behind ... reading ROMAN'S brief ... LOS ANGELES
stretching as far as the eye can see through the windows as

GEORGE is immersed ... ignores his ringing phone and

That's it ...

THE END