CICADA MAN

written by

Jay Dice

Revised draft — dialogue aligned to the novel
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INT. SIAM COIN BUILDING - SUNDOWN
JAY DICE (30, Black, athletic, short afro) sweats excessively as mania sets in.

Pacing the hallways of an empty office complex just outside Bangkok, his phone translates a directory: "Siam Coin, Floor 3" "Summertime in That Cutlass" by Nipsey Hussle hums faintly while he's in the elevator. He looks up, double-taking.

CLOSE ON:

Jay's "R.I.P Mac Dre" neck tat.

INT. SIAM COIN OFFICE - SUNDOWN
The doors slide open, and the same track blares throughout a sprawling, decadent office.

A YOUNG RECEPTIONIST (18, blonde, Thai) sings along off-key, chews gum, and finally looks up.

YOUNG RECEPTIONIST
Hello.

JAY
Jay Dice. Here to meet the founders.

YOUNG RECEPTIONIST
Dope. One sec.

Twirling, she ducks under an elephant statue. Jay surveys the room. Nineties Silicon Valley inspo, neon signs, and oversized bamboo chairs. Two founders enter from behind a massive white tiger statue, like Siegfried & Roy on a bender.

SHAWN (Black) wears an open Hawaiian shirt revealing twin holstered 9 mm's.

DANIEL fidgets with his sleeves, holds eye contact for way too long.

SHAWN
Jay mutha fuckin Dice.

JAY
(skeptical)
Yup.

SHAWN
Another brotha in the buildin. Bout God damn time. I’m Shawn.

This is my co-founder Daniel.

DANIEL
You technical?

JAY
Uh, no. Well kinda. But naw, I’m the writer.

Jay’s stare falls to Daniel’s bare feet. Daniel’s gnarly yellow curled nails, come into focus. Daniel catches Jay staring.

DANIEL
Humidity. Normal reaction. Will this be an issue?

JAY
Issue? No issue.

Jay’s attention is drawn to Shawn’s pistols next.

CLOSE ON:

Shawn's pistols. Camouflaged, tucked in holsters.

SHAWN
(grinning)
I know what you’re thinking. Come on man, let’s fire off a few rounds!

Jay hesitantly follows, passing employees noting they're all Thai girls wearing Apple earbuds, each hotter than the last.

SHAWN
Yes sir. We hire a specific type.

DANIEL
Young hot females.

SHAWN
No fuckin shit, Daniel. Implication was there, damnit. We’ve been over implications.

JAY
So you guys run a crypto company, yeah?

SHAWN
We touch a few industries.

JAY
But you ICO’d in 2021?

SHAWN
Right. For twenty million.

JAY
Nice.

SHAWN
Yup. It was, but we got forced out of the States. Red fuckin tape everywhere. But fuck it, we been doin great out here.

DANIEL
Thai pussy?

JAY
What?

DANIEL
Have you had it?

JAY
Maybe in college.

DANIEL
(mumbles)
Uncle Sam pussy!

Jay shoots him a “what the fuck” look.

SHAWN
What my associate means, Jay, is you’ll need a lifeguard when you’re writin for us the way you’ll be swimmin in it.

JAY
I’ll keep my head above water.

INT. SIAM COIN SHAWN'S OFFICE - SUNDOWN
Shawn swings open double doors to a vast, empty office, a lone desk in the corner, and walls plastered with bright sunset wallpaper ripped off from Scarface. They enter, and Shawn kicks the back door open. A balcony overlooks a dirt junkyard.

SHAWN
Watch this shit.

DANIEL
Hell yes!

Shawn unloads, bullets plink off rusted car frames, sparks fly.

SHAWN
Fuckin A, that’s nice.

Smiling, pistol smoking, Shawn hands Jay a second gun.

EXT. BALCONY - SUNDOWN
Jay and Shawn stand shoulder to shoulder, guns aimed into the yard, letting off rounds. A frightened stray dog limps out from beneath a car.

DANIEL
Ten points for a kill shot.

SHAWN
(beat)
You sick son of a bitch. Last time was twenty. Go ahead, Jay. She’s a stray. Millions of these fuckers out here droolin about.

DANIEL
Thanks to these fuckin Buddhists.

Jay double-takes and slowly aims into the yard, fires wide and misses the dog on purpose.

SHAWN
See!

You aimed right at it. Rookie move. What we have here, gentlemen, is a moving target.

Shawn lowers his gun, squints one eye.

SHAWN
You gotta aim where the bitch is headed, not where she’s at.

BANG! A deafening pop followed by a high pitched yelp.

SHAWN
So, ya like foie gras, Jay?

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT
A white-gloved butler places a silver platter of foie gras

on the table in front of Jay. Shawn lounges at the head, with Daniel beside him.

Accompanied by SUE in a sharp crimson leather blazer.

SHAWN
Appearance is our primary concern. We need to maintain a certain reputation with the public. You understand, Jay?

Jay starts to reply, Shawn talks over him.

SHAWN
Your job is to polish our image. Not that it’s bad. It’s just not good.

JAY
Sure, I can do that.

SHAWN
Perfect. Let’s get into the payment release schedule.

Daniel aggressively shoves a Manila folder across the table to Jay and it slips off the edge.

JAY
Release schedule?

DANIEL
Correct. A majority of our tokens are locked until 2028.

JAY
And what’s that got to do with me?

SHAWN
We’re payin you ten thousand cash, rest in tokens. Tokens that could easily 20x by unlock.

JAY
(disbelief)
The ad said fifty, cash, for a three-month gig.

SHAWN
Shit changed. Look, thousands of writers are salivatin for action like this.

DANIEL
Salivating.

JAY
Where’s the bathroom?

Shawn motions over his shoulder.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

CUT TO:

OVERHEAD SHOT:

Jay pukes into a gold plated toilet. Hyperventilating, he reaches for a blue pill bottle. His hands shake as he fumbles with the cap. The whole bottle spills into the puke-filled toilet and auto-flushes.

JAY
Holy fucking shit.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: "PART ONE: BIPOLAR JAY"

INT. CHICO STATE GRADUATION - AFTERNOON (8 YEARS AGO)
YOUNG JAY DICE (22) steps onto a stage, the auditorium lights blinding his eyes. He takes his diploma. The dean nudges him toward a cameraman on stage right. FLASH. Iron Maiden loops inside his skull.

MONTAGE - JAY'S FIRST MANIC EPISODE Anime-style cartoon visuals with vibrant colors, wild angles, chaotic, and sped up.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY
Rowdy graduates shotgun beers, foam sprays. Jay slams his can down first.

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT
Jay races down a spiral staircase and a dude at the bottom with a barking dog extends his foot tripping him.

EXT. HILLSIDE - NIGHT
He sprints through rolling hills, full moon massive. His over-ear headphones on, sweat flies everywhere.

INT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - DAY
Jay slaps cash on the counter and snags a Las Vegas ticket. Desk lady gives him a side eye.

EXT. AUTO SHOP - DAY
Mechanics trick out his NSX. He screams at them to limo tint it a few shades darker.

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON
Jay pushes the speedometer to 120 mph in his convertible on a wide open highway. Crying. Closes his eyes while driving.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY
"BIPOLAR" stamped in red across papers, a doctor sliding them over to Jay. He rubs the ink, in disbelief.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING (8 YEARS LATER)
ESPERANZA bounces in, a plate of pancakes wobbling, number 33 candle lit.

ESPERANZA
Happy birthday Jay!

Jay rolls over, wipes sleep from his eyes grinning at the stack.

JAY
Esperanza! Thanks, Boo Boo! What a great present.

ESPERANZA
There’s a surprise.

Jay spots gummy worms in the pancakes, chuckles.

JAY
(playing nice)
Lets split em?

ESPERANZA
Yay!

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER
Jay's girlfriend, ANA, rummages in the kitchen in a checkered apron, hair twisted up.

Jay hops up from the table and sneaks up, kissing her neck. She jumps.

ANA
(snaps fingers)
Dafuq, Jay! Oh hell no. I don’t give a fuck if it is your birthday. That’s fucked. Shit, you know I scare easy.

JAY
(laughing)
Come on, babe.

He pulls her close, playful tug.

JAY
Let that guard down.

Ana smacks his chest, half-smirk.

ANA
Not around your black ass!

JAY
Especially around my black ass.

Ana frisbees a birthday card at him.

ANA
Here’s ya card, nigga.

Esperanza munches gummy worms at the table, slurping Coke through a straw. Jay fills a glass of water.

ANA
Seriously, you drinkin tap water?

JAY
Just a glass.

ANA
That’s ghetto Jay, we got a filtration system and shit.

JAY
Have I told you that Nassim Taleb takes a sip of tap water in India each time he’s there.

ANA
That Santa Claus bearded muh fucka you obsessed wit?

JAY
What? No, the point is babe, it’s antifragile.

ANA
Whateva.

JAY
Let me ask you, the purpose of a strong system, is it to hold up through randomness?

ANA
Youre unbelievable. Fuck it, sure. Yes it is.

JAY
Actually, you wanna gain from disorder. And by drinkin a small amount of chaos, this tap water, I become antifragile.

ANA
Where we eatin tonight?

JAY
Oyo.

ANA
Hell no! Too Brazilian, whole joint reeks like ass.

JAY
But the gold-flaked steak is bomb.

ANA
And if you ever bring home some bread, we can eat gold. Which reminds me, when you gonna ditch these low-rent writing gigs and go back to tech.

Jay takes a gulp of his water.

JAY
My resume is fucked.

ANA
‘Cause you wasted so much time trading. But if you stayed programmin, you’d be damn near three years in now.

JAY
I did well trading.

ANA
Yeah, right. Musta buried all those winnings in the dirt. ‘Cause me and Esperanza sure as hell ain’t seen ‘em and yo ass been hinting at crypto money since we started dating.

(beat)

ANA
Prolly made jack shit.

Jay’s jaw clenches.

ANA
But you did go into debt and ruin yo credit bein all unemployed, so yeah, I guess you did do somethin.

JAY
Oyo 7:45?

Ana eyes her nail polish distracted.

ANA
Sure, whateva.

INT. HOME OFFICE - MORNING
Jay makes a reservation on his phone. An important email pops up. He skims it.

INSERT: An email on the screen reads:

"Dear Jay, Our firm can recover your $990,000 from LunarBit exchange for a flat fee of $51,500. We decline your request for a contingency fee agreement due to the physical location of the crypto exchange. Regards, Mitch McDeere"

JAY
50k? Fuck me!

INT. BART TRAIN - MORNING (FLASHBACK TO 2022)
On a crowded morning train, Jay’s face is smushed under an Indian man’s armpit. Out the window, Oakland rolls past. Tents, graffiti, and barbed wire. Break dancers on the train swing and flip from overhead handles, joints popping out at freakish angles.

A PERFORMER (skinny, headband) grips an old boombox that plays "SWERVIN’" by Fat Tony.

Jay kinda pays attention. The train jerks to a stop. Before Jay can exit, a performer shoves a tip cup in his direction.

JAY
Naw, I’m good.

PERFORMER
Yo! I saw you watchin’!

JAY
Right, but I didn’t sign a contract or nothin’. You just danced where I was already looking!

PERFORMER
Don’t matter. Money always finds its true home.

JAY
What?

PERFORMER
Money is a river, flows with intention. It takes detours sure, but always knows the final stop. Feel me?

Doors beep, closing fast.

JAY
I feel that.

Jay slips him $5, squeezes out just as the doors snap shut.

INT. COMPANY OFFICE - DAY
Jay programs in a cubicle, trying to find the source of a distracting conversation. He removes his wired headphones.

In a nearby glass-walled office, SALES MANAGER interviews SALES CANDIDATE.

SALES MANAGER
(booming)
Understood, but describe how you'd crush it here on the sales team.

SALES MANAGER (CONT'D)
We sell scheduling software for Au Pairs, so keep that in mind. Always keep that in mind.

SALES CANDIDATE
Can I swear?

SALES MANAGER
I don't see why not.

SALES CANDIDATE
I would crush so fucking hard given the opportunity. Closed more accounts than—

The Sales Manager finally shuts the door. Jay exhales and returns to coding.

His MANAGER (50s, wants to fit in) approaches the cubicle in front of Jay.

MANAGER
Rahul, that bug report! Spot on. Proud of you!

Rahul mumbles inaudibly.

MANAGER
Jay, those LinkedIn learning assignments.

He backpedals away.

MANAGER
(beat)
Due EOW, bud!

Manager continues to backpedal to the next cubicle.

MANAGER (O.S.)
Loved those OKRs, Ankit, you stud. Proud of you!

Jay chugs coffee, tearing out his hair, eyes glazing over endless code. Slams his head on the desk. The manager approaches Jay.

MANAGER
All good, Jay?

JAY
Yep, uh, just stuck on this calendar issue.

MANAGER
Good, good. Hey, free for lunch?

JAY
(skeptical)
I am.

MANAGER
Sushi burritos, on me, slugger!

JAY
Uh, okay.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - DAY
They walk out of the office towards the restaurant. The manager pats Jay on the shoulder.

MANAGER
So, how old are you, Jay?

JAY
Thirty.

MANAGER
Noice! Had ya pegged younger. What’s life like for a thirty-year-old these days?

JAY
Okay. Some people call it a milestone year or whatever, but I think any year could be that.

MANAGER
Mmm, I like that. Very Nietzschean.

JAY
Right. So, you live in the City?

MANAGER
Indeed. Upper Pac Heights. Dank little spot on top of the hill. Skaters love to bomb it. Thrill seekers!

They approach a sushi burrito restaurant.

MANAGER
Wanna sit outside?

JAY
Okay sure.

EXT. SUSHI BURRITO RESTAURANT - PATIO - DAY
As they sit at an outdoor table, the manager leans in, serious.

MANAGER
(beat)
Listen, Jay, I need to hit you with some truth. We log employees’ keystrokes to keep tabs. And I see you’re constantly on...cryptographic currency sites.

Jay shifts uncomfortably.

MANAGER
(flutters hands)
Now, I’m a cool cat. And I hate this part, but this is your final

warning. Any more of this behavior, and we'll have to separate— Into the night. Know what I'm sayin?

JAY
Look, I'm not gonna lie. I just found out about this crypto shit and went down a serious rabbit hole. But from now on, the only thing I'll obsess over is this company's mission, serving au pairs scheduling needs globally.

MANAGER
Wow, Jay, you smooth talker! Exactly what I wanted to hear. Now that the tough talk's over, I can be myself again.

Manager looks around the restaurant before continuing.

MANAGER
So, I've got a date with a thirty-year-old smoke show I met at some pickleball tourney. Need some help, we do a lil tit for tat. What are thirty-year-olds into?

JAY
Maybe just ask her, she'll probably tell you right?

MANAGER
Genius, Jay! Gimme more, gimme more! I hear your generation prefers tea over coffee. Truth?

JAY
Bullshit.

MANAGER
Been listening to Drake. He still trends, right? Him and The Weeknd?

Jay looks trapped, eyes darting.

JAY
(beat)
Yes, for sure to both… Hey, wanna get these burritos to go? Can't wait to get back to my desk and

start on that new project you put me on.

MANAGER
(beat)
Sure. And hey, don't you ever jerk my dick off the way you just did. Especially in public! Capeesh?!

INT. BART TRAIN - AFTERNOON
Jay’s sandwiched between four BROS (loud, obnoxious).

BRO 1
It’s all about that B Cash, son.

BRO 2
Sure bro, get trapped in dino coins and watch me 10x.

BRO 3
10x ain’t shit, I did 100x on Sol alone last cycle.

BRO 2
Oh shit, it’s fucking on.

The bros joyfully lunge at one another while the train sways.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON
Jay walks into a basic two-bedroom apartment in downtown Oakland and digs through a drawer for an old trading journal. He sees entries filled with red flags about his impending mania from prior bull runs. He rips out and crumples the pages.

He scribbles on a fresh page: “Dumb money is back.” Jay fires up his laptop. As crypto wallets download, he cracks his neck and grabs a Ziplock filled with hardware wallets. A Red Stripe snaps open. He pours it into a faded Warriors cup.

With his computer's VPN location set to Switzerland, he deposits $10,000.

Jay's roommate SHAH (Persian, diamond stud earrings) in a baggy Enterprise Rent a Car polo, strolls out of his room.

SHAH
What's good Dice man?

JAY
Sup Shah.

SHAH
Hear my new single yet?

JAY
(Distracted)
Naw, but I'll listen in a minute.

SHAH
It’s like Back That Azz Up, but Persian Juvenile.

JAY
You're Persian Juvenile?

SHAH
That’s what they’re sayin.

Shah daps Jay up, flops on the couch and nearly lands on him. Eyes the screen.

SHAH
This that crypto shit, huh? When you gonna teach me to trade bruh?

JAY
Anytime you want, but you gotta commit to get any good.

SHAH
Eh, fuck all that. Plus, I'm next in line for assistant manager at ERAC.

JAY
ERAC?

Shah points to the logo on his polo.

SHAH
Enterprise Rent a Car

JAY
(laughing)
For sure.

SHAH
But that’s a side hustle anyway; you know how passionate I am bout this music shit. I'm finna blow any day; I can feel it. My new mixtape, Explosive Material, is

the truth!

JAY
I'll check it out tonight, gotta get these accounts loaded up.

SHAH
Shit, I respect the hustle. You gonna get filthy rich homie, I can feel it.

JAY
One of these cycles.

SHAH
Im gonna go change. These lightweight groupies meetin me downtown in thirty. Enjoy that Red stripe, señor.

Shah heads to his room, and comes back out a few moments later.

SHAH
Shahbomb!

He rolls a Bluetooth speaker across the floor hands over his ears like it's a grenade. His single "SHAH DOG" blasts.

JAY
(laughing)
Damnit, Shah, that shit eva get old?

A female singer belts the chorus- “Dick me down, Shah Dog. Shah Dog. Dick me down, Shah Dog. Shah Dog.” Jay does a thizz face and bobs his head along while heading back to his room. He opens Excel to track his trades.

Grabs a black wolf-howling-at-the-moon gas station shirt from deep in the closet.

CLOSE ON:

A yellow lighter. Sparking in slow motion, the flame kisses the joint. Jay exhales and reclines on the beat-up burgundy couch. He passes out while the roach burns a hole in the fabric.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON (2 WEEKS LATER)
A new Nassim Taleb poster hangs proudly over his trading station. Jay checks Excel, up 10x in two weeks. He's feeling great and starts setting up his new computer speakers. Shah

knocks.

SHAH
Look, JD, you been locked up in here all week, huh. Miss work again?

JAY
Hot streak.

SHAH
You know I’m your boy, and I got your best interests in mind. Just wanna make sure you’re straight yo.

Shah glances at his waistline, Jay’s eyes follow. Shah's furry nuts dangle from his open fly.

SHAH
Fag for looking!

JAY
Ohh! What the fuck!

Shah stumbles out, his pants sagging. Holding in more laughter he pauses at the door, hand on the frame.

SHAH
(serious)
Open or shut?

JAY
Nigga fuck you!

TIME-LAPSE SEQUENCE BEGINS

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT
Jay bounces from the couch to the bed to the trading desk and back. Journal pages pile up, mostly filled with hand-drawn trading patterns. He smokes joints and pounds Red Bulls. The sun rises, sets, and rises.

TIME-LAPSE SEQUENCE ENDS

INT. APARTMENT - DAY
Jay wakes up to the sound of an email on his computer. Work email: “Last warning. Reply immediately or face termination.” Jay replies: “Terminate me.”

MONTAGE: JAY GETS RICH

P-Lo’s first verse on "AGAIN" rips over his new speakers.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY
Jay heads for the door. Shah blocks him.

SHAH
Yo, Dice, where you headed?

JAY
Grocery store.

SHAH
Cool. Gotta ask you somethin.

JAY
Sup?

SHAH
Slide me three hundred? I’ll get you back.

JAY
For what?

SHAH
Five hundred blank CDs. Studio time ate my cash, but this marketing scheme is gonna put me on the map right before I dip out to Iran next week.

JAY
Do people still sell CDs?

SHAH
Not exactly selling, more like using them.

JAY
Huh?

SHAH
Trust me, man.

JAY
Okay, whatever. You’re payin me back.

SHAH
No doubt my dude!

INT. GROCERY AISLE - DAY
Jay paces the aisles, his eyes bloodshot. He moves erratically as mania sets in. Forgetting what he came for, he stares at random heads of broccoli. Vegetable misters spray, and overhead speakers crackle with rainforest sounds of chirping birds and rustling leaves. Shoppers scurry back.

Jay steps into them, letting the mist soak his face, eyes closed, savoring the moment. His phone rings loudly, and he answers under the misters.

It's his MOM.

MOM (O.S.)
Hey, Jay.

JAY
Hey, Mom. What’s up?

MOM (O.S.)
You good? Don’t get mad but you sound kinda up. Still takin yo medication?

JAY
Yes Ma, all good, come on now.

MOM (O.S.)
It’s just that, well, last time you said that, uhm it really wasn’t.

JAY
That was years ago, for real I’m good.

MOM (O.S.)
Mm hmm. Well, you know the Smiths, right?

JAY
Yep, most of my life.

MOM (O.S.)
Right, well, they’re out of town for New Year’s. I said you’d watch their place if you’re free.

JAY
Uhm, lemme think about it.

MOM (O.S.)
It would mean a lot. They need someone they can trust. Should be

easy.

JAY
Alright, I guess. The big ass house on the hill, right?

MOM (O.S.)
Yep, I'll let em know. Love you honey.

JAY
Love you.

INT. WALNUT CREEK MANSION - NIGHT
11:30 PM - New Year's station plays on a massive TV. Jay paces the plush living room, checking his account balance: "$990,123" Texts Shah: "The trading account almost hit a milli bro! Who wanna bet us we don't touch lettuce?" Doorbell rings, Jay heads to answer.

TV cuts to JILL in a blazer, and NEWS ANCHOR 2 in a suit, behind the news desk.

JILL
Yesterday, around 5 PM, local police received an anonymous call. The caller claimed he had rigged hundreds of cars in various Oakland parking garages with explosive material.

NEWS ANCHOR 2
Scary stuff, Jill.

JILL
You might think, but it turns out the caller, whom police believe to be the rapper Shah Dog, was referring to his mixtape titled Explosive Material, which he placed under the vehicle's windshield wipers.

NEWS ANCHOR 2
Let's hear from some of the victims.

A young guy in a hoodie shrugs on-screen.

YOUNG GUY
At first I was hella pissed cause of the bomb squad blocking my car and everything. But honestly,

after I listened to the mixtape,
I was like, It’s pretty fire.

A woman with braids and a bomber jacket nods.

WOMAN
(fist to mouth)
Yup, I fuck wit Shah Dog. I mean, it is aggressive to market yo mixtape like that and all. But God damnnn! It slaps!

JILL
Police are urging anyone with information about the identity of Shah Dog to come forward. His SoundCloud audio is the only identifiable evidence we have at this time. Here’s a clip from his mixtape:

A clip from his mixtape plays: “Explosive Material I'm out here gettin' it / Banned from the states but my cousin still flippin' it / Had to dip to Iran, cuddy I'm out / Oakland PD can't see my ass now” News footage of the bomb squad waving a massive line of cars out of a parking garage.

“Dick me down Shah Dog, Shah Dog / Dick me down Shah Dog, Shah Dog.” As Jay approaches the living room, the channel returns to New Year's Celebrations. He sets a delivery pizza on the coffee table. Phone vibrates with notifications.

His stomach drops as he reads a headline: “LunarBit Hacked.” It’s Jay's exchange. He leaps to his feet, panic setting in. He can’t bring himself to check his balance. Grabbing a wine glass, he pours the Smiths’ pinot to the top. Bracing himself, he checks.

The nine hundred something thousand is there in full. He sighs with massive relief, falling to his knees and praying. Twenty minutes later, he refreshes, and the portfolio reads $0. With his eyes popping out of his skull, he refreshes once more, still $0. Refreshes again, again, and again.

He screams bloody murder and hurls his phone, smashing a hole in the wall. In the kitchen, in a manic haze, he rips open a bottle of the nicest Cab.

INT. KITCHEN WINDOW - NIGHT
Valley sparkles below. TV counts down: “Ten, nine…” Jay’s lost his grip on reality when midnight strikes. Fireworks boom, and he jumps, tilting the glass as wine sprays artistically across the white carpet. He cocks his head, and

a twisted grin takes over.

Mac Miller’s "STAR ROOM OG VERSION" fades in.

WIDE SHOT:

Outside the mansion looking in through different sized kitchen and living room windows. Wine bottles soar to the ceiling as Jay’s wild rampage erupts. He smashes five, ten, twenty bottles. Glass shatters, red paints the walls, ceiling, and carpet. Fireworks bloom overhead.

CLOSE ON:

Jay's wine covered face. Jay psychopathically flips his soaked dreadlocks back and nonchalantly lies down in a large puddle, stone-faced, making snow angels in the wine.

OVERHEAD SHOT:

Wine drops hang from broken chandelier crystals. Jay laying in the puddle of wine below. Music fades.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: "PART TWO: SONNY THE INDOOR SHRIMP FARMER"

EXT. TRADITIONAL THAI MANSION - AFTERNOON
CLOSE ON:

A mint condition white Silvia S15. Car parked in front of a mansion. Thai cherry blossom trees, mid-bloom, frame the driveway.

SONNY (25, Thai, tall, stylish) crouches in the brush outside the mansion. He rocks a big, jet-black faux hawk and overalls, with a tool bag slung over his shoulder. A cigarette dangles from his lips, he smokes like a chimney, muttering in Thai, nervous energy taking over.

SONNY
(in Thai, subtitled)
Don’t be a pussy. Don’t be a pussy.

NOTE: All subsequent dialogue for "SONNY THE INDOOR SHRIMP FARMER" is in Thai with English subtitles. Sonny's eyes dart to the mansion’s closed windows. He stamps out his cigarette and walks up the driveway, admiring the rear of the car as he passes by.

CLOSE ON:

Sonny's hand digging in his tool bag. A metal rod extends from his bag as he smashes the car window. Glass sprays. An alarm wails throughout the suburbs. His rare Jordans are dusted with glass. His toes shift, looking for traction as he leans through the window.

Shoes are briefly suspended in mid-air. The alarm cuts off, and the door unlocks. His feet hit the cement, door swings wide. Sonny slides in, working the ignition for a second. Sweat drips down his forehead.

The engine finally turns over, and the custom sound system slaps the first verse on "Chevs n Fords" by Mac Dre. He mashes out, drifting around the corner where the scene opened.

EXT. HILLTOP LOOKOUT - NIGHT
(Song continues from previous scene) A small crew crouches on a hilltop, blending into the tall green grass. Police scanners crackle, and walkie-talkies go off. Teens splash buckets of water across the asphalt, connecting a hose to a hydrant and soaking the street’s sharp corners.

Flares are mounted near the starting line.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT
Sonny's sound system vibrates through a packed parking garage. Groupies party as he weaves the stolen car through the crowd. A gorgeous girl with blue hair bends over and scribbles her name and number on Sonny's door with a purple washable paint stick.

He grins through the broken window, checking her out.

RANDOM RACE FAN
Fuck yes, Sonny. Dude is a king!
I know your gonna hit that.

SONNY
Chill out, Arthit.

EXT. STARTING LINE - NIGHT
Sonny rolls the Silvia up beside a blacked-out Mazda RX-7. Engines roar.

The DRIVER, a friend, smiles.

They trash-talk over the noise.

SONNY
It’s over, brother.

RX-7 DRIVER
(laughing)
Nice window homie!

CLOSE ON:

Sonny's Jordans. His feet working the pedals. Broken glass blankets the floor mat. Flares light up, cars tear off into the night.

INT. PIRATE DVD STORE - MORNING
A cramped, dim corner store is stacked with bootleg DVDs. Faded posters like "The Maltese Falcon" and "Point Blank" peel from the walls. Sonny posts up on a stool out front, counting cash with a familiar flick of his wrist.

He wears both pride and exhaustion on his face, fresh off last night’s win.

Across the store, his sister NALINA (LINA) slumps over the counter, with her head in her arms, asleep next to a TV.

Sonny swaggers over and sticks the cash under her nose. She jolts awake, swatting at him and wiping drool from her other

cheek.

SONNY
That sweet smell of baht, lil sis!

NALINA
(grumbling)
Go to hell, Sonny.

Sonny laughs, tossing the cash onto the counter. She eyes it, unimpressed.

NALINA
What’s this? Go-go dancing finally pay off?

SONNY
I won a race. Plus, you’re one to talk. Shit, you’re the first person in history who actualy lost money working for OnlyFans.

NALINA
Sites flooded. For every white model, there’s like fifteen Asians.

SONNY
Model?

NALINA
Yes, but I told you I do implied. No nudity. Anyway, the final blow was marketing costs.

SONNY
You paid for marketing?

NALINA
Had to. The built-in discovery tools are weak as hell.

SONNY
Well, either way, you’re done with that shit, right?

NALINA
For the millionth time, yes.

SONNY
Good, plus there are better ways to scam people.

Sonny smirks, spinning a bootleg DVD on his finger like a basketball.

NALINA
It’s a respectable business.

SONNY
Ohhkay, Lina.

Nalina hops to her feet changing the subject.

NALINA
Movie of the day?

SONNY
Sure. Final four. Two each!

Sonny snags two DVDs from the wall, gently placing them on the counter.

SONNY
The Illustrated Man.

NALINA
That late ‘60s crap? Hard pass. Customers need modern. You wanna scare the hoes again?

SONNY
Hoes? Customers? Lina, positivity is cool, but c'mon now.

SONNY (CONT'D)
(look around)
It’s the same broke-ass college kids comin in here.

NALINA
But Ambiance still matters.

She displays Amelie in a makeshift dvd sleeve cover.

NALINA
For example, Audrey Tatou. Now. This is cinema!

SONNY
Too soft for our crowd. Mostly dudes comin in.

NALINA
Yes to talk to me.

SONNY
Very funny. How bout this one?

Holding up The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes.

NALINA
Seriously? How many times have you watched that?

Nalina puts it back and they continue to scan the wall.

NALINA
You seen this?

SONNY
Nope.

NALINA
(announcer voice)
Ladies and gentlemen, we have a winner!

SONNY
Plot?

NALINA
Wild German flick! A red-haired chick runs across Berlin, lookin for cash to save her man from gangsters. And she only has like half an hour.

SONNY
I'm sold!

Nalina tosses it, and Sonny pops it in. Run Lola Run flickers on the old-school tube.

A DVD CUSTOMER struts in.

DVD CUSTOMER
Boonmee work here?

Sonny and Nalina freeze, exchanging a glance.

SONNY
Not anymore.

DVD CUSTOMER
Makes sense. Haven’t seen him in twenty years. I ran a rival shop across town. So, what’s Boon up to now?

NALINA
Either a gamblin anon meeting, or a casino somewhere.

DVD CUSTOMER
Too bad. Say, you all kinda look like him. He's not your Dad is he?

NALINA
By blood.

DVD CUSTOMER
Ahh, Gotcha.

(beat)
Anyhow, good to see a shop still open. Most died off during the government crackdowns back in the day. Now with streaming taking over. Shit, you gettin any business?

SONNY
Niche crowd. College kids, tourists mostly. Films Netflix won’t touch.

NALINA
And were cheap.

DVD CUSTOMER
Sure was a great business model, shame really. The problem with good times is that the invisible hand always gets chopped off clean by the powers that be.

SONNY
Yup, we’re well aware the good ol’ days are gone.

DVD CUSTOMER
(pointing)
You guys know everyone used to call it the black market. Strong label, direct. The shadow market was a college creation. Professors writing about the underground needed a softer term for constituents. Everything’s so diluted recently. Gen Z doesn’t know it, but you crave a raw, authentic, throwback hero. A man

from the recent past.

Is that The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes?

SONNY
Yup.

DVD CUSTOMER
I’d nearly lost faith, how much?

NALINA
180 THB.

DVD CUSTOMER
Holy shit 180?! Bootleg right?

NALINA
(Smirking)
We prefer non-licensed discs, sir.

DVD CUSTOMER
Oh my fucking god!

He storms out, mumbling. Lina mimics chopping off her hand.

NALINA
The invisible hand! Cut off clean!

SONNY
(chuckling)
Gonna grab some cigs. Hold it down, Sis.

NALINA
With ease.

Sonny heads out, lighter flicking in hand.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY
A blazing hot, bustling outdoor market features fresh fruit stalls, fish, caged animals for sale, and racks of knockoff designer clothing. Vendors shout across booths as Sonny weaves through the madness, pulling a Stussy hat down to his eyebrows, his head on a swivel.

A SHORT STUBBY MAN (the lazy-eyed man from the dinner with Sakda) barrels through tourists, locking in on Sonny.

SHORT STUBBY MAN
Two hundred thirty-three thousand Baht, Sonny! You hear me?

Sonny keeps walking, hands in pockets. He talks under his breath, avoiding eye contact.

SONNY
Yeah sure. Chill out.

The Short Stubby Man grabs at Sonny’s sleeve, but he twists free, vanishing in the crowd. He’s almost in the clear.

A STREET VENDOR with an apron stained in fish guts spots him from a stall.

STREET VENDOR
Sonny! Hey, Sonny, you slippery son of a bitch!

He vaults over his table, knocking over a crate of shrimp. Sonny frantically digs for a pair of keys, cursing and sprinting toward an electric dirt bike parked against a telephone post. He hops on. Tires spin as he cuts through traffic. Horns blare.

He wheelies down the street as the Vendor’s cries fade.

STREET VENDOR
Sonnnyyyy!!!

INT. BASEMENT - DAY (FLASHBACK)
CLOSE ON:

A Pacific White Shrimp. Air bubbles spill out of a shrimp's mouth, rising to the surface of a 200-gallon basement tank. Sonny lights a joint, leaning back in a plastic folding chair.

He admires his work: an intricate pump and filter system with pipes circling the shrimp tank, buckets of chemicals on all sides. Scooping a few dozen shrimp into a bag of ice, he prepares to sell them to upscale restaurants, stepping up to a mirror.

SONNY
Grown local, no middleman. Best deal in town. Grown local…

Spraying cologne on his neck Sonny slaps himself twice before jogging upstairs.

INT. HIGH-END SEAFOOD RESTAURANT - DAY
Sonny stands inside, pitching the owner, MARIA in a suit.

SONNY
I’m Sonny, I grew up here in town. These are indoor shrimp. Cleaner, fresher than anything off the coast. No weather risks, no shipping delays. Please, try for yourself.

Maria listens, intrigued, takes a sample.

MARIA
You grow these?

SONNY
In my house, yes. Controlled tanks, sustainable too.

MARIA
Really?

(chews)
Not bad. I’ll take a batch, see what the kitchen thinks.

Sonny grins, bagging the shrimp for her and heading out.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT
Sonny parties with friends. Lights flash, and house music blasts. He counts the cash from his shrimp sales earlier and buys rounds. Rounds of rum get shoved in Sonny’s direction by a rather emo-looking bartender.

MINTY, who he just met at the club, is drawn to Sonny.

EXT. NIGHT MARKET - LATE NIGHT
(Song continues from previous scene) Sonny and Minty walk the streets arm in arm enjoying each other's company.

INT. CRICKET FIGHTING ARENA - LATE NIGHT
Sonny leads her down into a gritty, crowded basement where cricket fighting matches are happening. He’s a regular, greeted by the locals. Sonny places bets, drinks beers, and exudes confidence. He wins big, collecting his cash with a big smile. Minty watches closely, impressed.

INT. SONNY'S BEDROOM - MORNING
Sonny wakes up in bed next to Minty. His room is cluttered,

sunlit, and warm. They smoke a joint, passing it back and forth, sharing a comfortable silence. Sonny exhales, and they watch the smoke dance in the air.

MINTY
But what do you really want, Sonny? If you could have anything in life?

SONNY
I'm gonna own an indoor shrimp farm, smoke pot, and listen to hip hop.

MINTY
(laughing)
Don’t shrimp live in the ocean?

Sonny grins, proud.

SONNY
Not all of em.

Come and check this out.

Hopping out of bed he motions her to follow.

INT. SONNY'S BASEMENT - MORNING
Sonny guides Minty through the darkness until the basement glows with soft blue light from the water tanks. Shrimp bob in neat, illuminated rows, glowing against the dark backdrop. He beams as he showcases his underground setup.

SONNY
This right here is my ticket out.

INT. SONNY'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON (FLASH FORWARD)
Sonny slouches in the driver’s seat of the Silvia, parked in an empty lot, its white paint covered in a black charcoal sediment. Gripping a fresh bouquet of red roses, he psychs himself up in the rearview mirror.

SONNY
You got this, Sonny. Don't punk out now.

Suddenly, an OLD THAI MAN jams his head through the broken car window. He whispers-

OLD THAI MAN
Where’s the fuckin money, Sonny?

Sonny jumps, caught off guard, but recovers with a smile.

SONNY
Nice timing, old man. On my way to get it right now.

The Old Man glares.

OLD THAI MAN
Bring it to my office, kid. First part, ten thousand USD.

Sonny waves the roses about casually.

SONNY
No worries. Now get the fuck off my car.

The Old Man grins, sizing him up.

OLD THAI MAN
At least you got balls.

He walks away toward a shiny, black, old-school car across the lot. Sonny watches, exhaling sharply and staring in the mirror again.

SONNY
I attract positivity and abundance.

Sonny steps out of the car, wearing khakis and a red polo, cocking and tucking a pistol into the small of his back. He glances at the side mirror, pulling a straight blonde wig and a blue Nike beanie over his faux hawk. An N95 mask, obscuring his face, completes the disguise.

INT. RESTAURANT BACK ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)
Sonny sits at a table with the Old Thai Man, the Street Vendor, and the Short Stubby Man. They discuss a potential business deal over red wine.

OLD THAI MAN
You deal with me, I represent a real organization. When it comes to you, we don’t know what we’re dealin with.

SONNY
You’re gettin an up-and-comer who's gonna deliver.

OLD THAI MAN
Fifty large. We go in now, how fast you in the green with these shrimp?

Sonny looks around the table careful to not over promise.

SONNY
Two years.

OLD THAI MAN
Two fucking years?! You hear this? Give us a taste after nine months, and it’s a maybe.

SONNY
Possible, but electricity bills would be massive.

OLD THAI MAN
(beat)
Just grow the crustaceans. We’ll do logistical costs. Look, you seem like a good kid, Sonny. My kid’s your age, he’s at a private Uni on uppers, and he hasn’t seen the library in two years.

OLD THAI MAN (CONT'D)
Off at a fancy uni, tanning on the deck of a boat all summer. No work ethic.

INT. RESTAURANT BACK ROOM - NIGHT

OLD THAI MAN
(beat)
But you? Different cloth. Got family, Sonny?

SONNY
(hesitates)
Not much, a younger sister.

OLD THAI MAN
Family’s good. But a man with little to lose, more dangerous.

A waiter pours wine. Silence hangs. Old Thai Man whispers to his associate. They nod.

OLD THAI MAN
Alright, Sonny, we’ll put the cash up. I’m in for the majority.

Sonny jumps up, clinks glasses with the men.

SONNY
You won’t regret it, Sakda.

SAKDA
Hope not.

Sakda scans the table, then locks eyes with Sonny.

SAKDA
For everyone's sake.

INT. PHARMACY - LATE AFTERNOON (FLASH FORWARD)
A FEMALE PHARMACIST (20s, glamorous) with somewhat believable fake eyelashes and long fake nails organizes pill bottles behind an empty counter.

Sonny enters, and the door chimes softly behind him.

SONNY
Wow! You have the most beautiful eyelashes.

She bats her lashes, giving him a playful smile. Sonny lowers his mask briefly, revealing his handsome face.

SONNY
I came clear across town hoping I’d meet a girl worthy of these.

He sets the bouquet on the counter and slides it toward her.

CLOSE ON:

The pharmacist's ruby red painted nails. Reaching for the flowers, her nails contrast against the dull counter top. She looks up. Sonny's pistol is pointing directly at her forehead.

PHARMACIST
(freezing)
Please! God! No! no! no!

Sonny leaps over the counter. She drops to the ground, trembling. He stands over her, gun pressed against her skull.

SONNY
Oxies! Roxies! The expensive shit. Now.

She nods, trembling, and points to a locked cabinet behind

her. Her hand reaches for the keys on her belt just as the door chimes. Jay Dice enters, pink prescription slip in hand. Sonny's head snaps up. He forces the Pharmacist lower, keeping her out of sight beneath the counter.

SONNY
(whispering)
One sound, it's over.

She whimpers, frozen. Sonny greets Jay at the counter with a huge fake smile.

JAY
(in English)
Hi. Just need this filled.

Sonny snatches the prescription and pretends to look at it. He grabs a random bottle from the shelf, some high-mg Ibuprofen, and slides it across to Jay.

SONNY
(in English)
Here you are, sir.

Jay squints at the bottle, confused.

JAY
(in English)
Hmm, never seen a blue Lithium bottle. They're white in the US.

SONNY
(in English)
Same thing, different package.

JAY
(in English)
But it's Lithium, right? For bipolar disorder?

SONNY
(in English)
Yes, that's right.

JAY
Look, I'm here on business and I just landed. Got an important meeting in about a week. Really can't afford any type of mixup here.

SONNY
Of course, you're all set, sir.

Jay shrugs, pays in cash, and pockets the pills. He meanders toward the exit, eyeing a dragon-headed metal finger trap in the toy aisle. He fiddles with it for a minute, amused.

BEHIND THE COUNTER:

Sonny crouches once more, sweat beading on his forehead. The Pharmacist shakes. The second hand on the clock ticks away.

SONNY
Hurry, mother fucker.

Jay finally leaves, door chiming. Sonny shoves the gun back into his pants, standing.

SONNY
Listen close. Lie flat and count to thirty! Flowers are on the house.

He leaps over the counter and races out of the store.

INT. SONNY'S INDOOR FARM - DAY (FLASHBACK)
A sprawling indoor shrimp farming facility has come to life. Rows of crops glow under vibrant LED lights. Noisy machinery operates. Sonny dances through the aisles, shirtless and sweaty, arms raised above his head, smiling from ear to ear.

John Forte's first verse on "WE TRYING TO STAY ALIVE" bangs through overhead speakers.

SONNY
(singing along)
Looka-looka-looka-looka-looka-looka-looka here, looka, shorty got back.

He spins while checking monitors and equipment. Everything shines. His dream finally coming true.

INT. SONNY'S OFFICE - LATER
Sonny hunches over a laptop, Excel spreadsheets open. What-If scenarios display on the screen.

SONNY
Come on, faster.

He adjusts variables, eyes narrowing. The spreadsheet updates- Profitability: "15 months." He shakes his head, types again. "10 months." Not enough. "9 months." He leans back, finally satisfied.

SONNY
Nine months it is.

INT. SONNY'S INDOOR FARM - MAIN FLOOR - NEXT DAY
Two ELECTRICIANS install additional equipment. Sparks fly as they wire up the machines. One of the electricians looks concerned.

ELECTRICIAN 1
Yo Sonny, this new setup is pullin a lot more power.

SONNY
(interrupting)
It’s fine, gotta keep the investors happy.

ELECTRICIAN 1
You’re the boss.

INT. SONNY'S INDOOR FARM - NEAR EXIT - NIGHT
Sonny leans against a wall near an exit. He chain-smokes cigarettes and makes bets on his phone, where a low-quality stream of Muay Thai matches plays. He sniffs, frowning; something’s wrong. He sniffs again and smells smoke. A haze creeps through the air.

SONNY
What the fuck?

He steps out onto the main floor. A flicker of light glows from a control panel. Sparks fly. Flames jump across the tanks and spread quickly. Sonny rips off his shirt and races into the fire. He desperately swats at it. Dark smoke fills the air. He coughs, his eyes stinging, and stumbles back.

The fire roars as equipment becomes engulfed. Sonny sprints for the exit, hacking violently, smoke trailing behind him.

EXT. SONNY'S INDOOR FARM - NIGHT
Scrambling outside, he collapses to his knees and gasps for air. He turns, his eyes wide, as flames consume the building. The fires' glow lights up his face, tears streaming down.

SONNY
No God! Please, fuck fuck fuck!

Sonny fumbles for his phone, hands shaking, and dials out.

SONNY
(sobbing)
Help! Send help now! My building is on fucking fire!

He stares blankly as his dream burns to ash, the rest of the call muted by the roar of the flames.

INT./EXT. SONNY'S STOLEN SILVIA - SUNDOWN (FLASH FORWARD)
The white Silvia roars out of the empty pharmacy parking lot after the botched robbery. Sonny, pissed off, grips the wheel, working the stick shift, eyes on the dark road. He fumbles for his phone, dials a number, and wedges it between his ear and shoulder while shifting gears.

A POTENTIAL BUYER answers.

SONNY
2002 Silvia S15, clean, white. You in the market?

BUYER (O.S.)
How much?

SONNY
One hundred seventy thousand baht. Firm.

BUYER (O.S.)
One hundred.

SONNY
One thirty-five, I’ll deliver tonight.

BUYER (O.S.)
Hot?

SONNY
Hotter than steam.

BUYER (O.S.)
Done.

Sonny hangs up, tossing the phone onto the passenger seat and placing a fresh unlit cigarette between his lips while patting down his jacket for a lighter.

SONNY
Come on.

He pulls the Silvia to the side of the road, engine idling. Leaning over to search for a lighter, he pops open the glove

box. A phone falls out. Curious, he powers it on. Multiple texts pop up.

CLOSE ON:

Sonny's phone screen. A text message in English reads: “To confirm, it’s a 3-month contract as a translator for an American writer.” A second message reads: “Writer pays you $15,000 USD up front.” A final text: “Sound good?”

CLOSE ON SONNY:

His eyes widen, mind racing. He glances at the road ahead, then back at the phone. After a moment’s hesitation he replies to the text: "Perfect, thanks!"

FADE OUT.

SUPER: "PART THREE: THE CICADA MAN"

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY
Jay has the email from the law firm still open. His phone buzzes. It's a job offer. The position pays $50,000 for a three-month writing job in Thailand. It's for a crypto company called Siam Coin. Ana enters, and he immediately shuts his laptop like he's guilty.

ANA
The fuck you doin?

Jay looking around for an excuse.

JAY
Looking at porn.

ANA
Clear the history this time, with your nasty ass.

Jay looking down at his phone.

JAY
Guess what? Got an offer for a writing job at Siam Coin.

ANA
Where’s Siam Coin?

JAY
Thailand.

ANA
You must be out yo muh fuckin mind. What about all yo mental issues? What if something happens? I’d never be able to live with myself!

Jay keeps reading.

JAY
$50,000 for three months' work, all expenses paid.

EXT. SFO AIRPORT - NIGHT
Ana and Jay exchange a quick kiss outside the airport entrance. Ana holding Esperanza.

ANA
Secure the bag Papi!

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT
Jay pulls out his phone and types out a text to Ana: "I think we should break up." Just before he sends it, a flight attendant interrupts him with a glass of whiskey. He takes it and leans back in his seat.

INT. SIAM COIN BATHROOM - AFTERNOON (FLASH FORWARD)
Jay paces in a grimy bathroom stall, with vomit splattered on the toilet and floor. A text arrives from Sonny, his driver, with the address of a 7-Eleven across the street and a description of his car. Jay rushes out of the office.

INT. CAFETERIA - AFTERNOON

SHAWN
Either this is the world’s longest deuce, or he bailed.

DANIEL
I’ll inspect the bathroom.

Daniel races to the bathroom.

SHAWN
Did the shipment arrive?

SUE
Just pulled into the warehouse.

SHAWN
Fresh?

SUE
Yes, from Vietnam, some local too.

SHAWN
Very good. I gotta run logistics by Daniel still.

SUE
We need them out by midnight. We gotta be more prompt. You’re too damn soft on these office girls.

Daniel enters the cafeteria out of breath.

DANIEL
He’s gone!

SHAWN
Me, soft huh?

Shawn hops to his feet and yells.

SHAWN
Breaks over, ladies, cameras on, titties out! You work for me now, the lord of the motha fuckin cam girls.

SUE
Nice.

Cam girls scatter from break room tables, logging into oversized monitors.

SUE
And Shawn, please do let me know if you need additional persuasion in the warehouse.

SHAWN
Thanks Sue.

INT. SIAM COIN HALLWAY - AFTERNOON
Shawn and Daniel make their way down a hallway through the office towards the warehouse.

SHAWN
Cigarette?

DANIEL
Absolutely.

Shawn hands Daniel a pack of cigarettes with a warning label and a graphic image of someone with mouth cancer on it.

DANIEL
Funny, they don’t have the balls to put these labels on cigarette packs in the States.

SHAWN
It’s not a balls thing, more like ‘freedom of speech’ thing.

DANIEL
How’s that?

SHAWN
Narrative control. These images are powerful. Memes like this are like introducing predator fish into an ecosystem with no competition. They hijack the entire facade. They’re too real.

DANIEL
So Marlboro loses control of the conversation. And consumers are introduced to a new, ugly reality.

SHAWN
Exactly, and whether that reality is kinda possible or quite possible is anyone’s guess. But Marlboro isn’t willing to let its cash crop of addicts entertain any form of that notion.

DANIEL
When did you start smoking?

SHAWN
Today.

DANIEL
I started at 15. Wanted to be cool.

SHAWN
That’s the thing, man. Those filthy fucking US lobbyists claim these images are too emotional. But really, companies will do just about anything to keep a sure thing goin.

DANIEL
You said it, brother.

Shawn and Daniel pass rows of cam girls at glowing monitors, their chatter fading as they walk. They approach the warehouse doors, and Shawn enters a code on the pin pad.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT
Daniel, Shawn, and YU stand around a white van and a tinted 2004 Subaru Forester with the doors and trunk fully open.

YU
Classic Archimedes principle. We solve it by putting each girl in bath, measure volume displacement. Then we know how many fit.

SHAWN
Fuck that, this is the real world, it’s messy. Not some neat equation. Let’s just ditch the fat bitch, and we smash four in the back and two in the trunk.

DANIEL
We’d lose too much profit that way.

SHAWN
How you figure? People pay more for the whale?

Yu is in the background measuring the trunk space and dimensions of the car.

DANIEL
It’s a kink thing.

SHAWN
But there's fat bitches everywhere!

YU
She's tier one profit cause she a fat and limber, rare combo.

SHAWN
Well fuck me, there’s a tier system?!

DANIEL
We need to rank somehow. For example, midgets are tier one profit and tier one volume.

SHAWN
I don't get it, why not lose the tier three girls and throw in a few little people then.

DANIEL
They prefer midget now.

SHAWN
That can’t be right?

DANIEL
It is, they took the term back.

YU
Jus like nigga.

Shawn looks around the room.

SHAWN
Funny. Remind me, who the fuck are you?

YU
I'm Yu, machine learning.

SHAWN
Well, Yu, thank you very much, but I’m familiar with the history behind nigga.

Now, Daniel! Roll that whiteboard over here before I murder this chink.

Daniel pushes it over and draws a car and different stick figures with dollar signs above their head.

DANIEL
We need to maximize profit, but also use as many prostitutes as possible.

SHAWN
In that case, let’s just use a box truck.

DANIEL
Way too obvious. We’d get stopped and checked.

YU
We use Subaru Forester.

DANIEL
Exactly. It’s the perfect vehicle. Inconspicuous, nice trunk, sleek lines.

SHAWN
How many midgets we get?

DANIEL
Two but there’s a delay.

SHAWN
We get em by tonight?

Daniel checks his watch nervously.

YU
Fifty-fifty chance.

SHAWN
Christ.

YU
Trafficking, it uh sloppy business.

DANIEL
(beat)
Yeah, well, I’m not surprised the Neanderthals on the other end didn’t take our order verbatim.

SHAWN
I’ll just use the extra girl as a cam girl.

YU
Cam girls have big following; this girl start from scratch. Uphill battle.

SHAWN
(yelling)
Jesus Christ, I’m running a circus. Sue!

After a moment Sue enters the room.

SHAWN
This logistical problem. We have one too many girls, and frankly, I’m over this shit. Explain it to her, Daniel.

Daniel turns his back to Sue, drawing up more scenarios on the whiteboard. Sue isn't paying any attention. She walks to the back of the parked Sprinter van and flings the doors open, revealing six blindfolded girls, handcuffed and whimpering in Vietnamese.

She hops in, rips out an Uzi from her blazer, and unloads on a random girl. Blood sprays.

Sue hops down as the girl convulses in the background. Uzi in hand, she stares at the guys standing around the whiteboard. Daniel's marker screeches to a stop. Yu looks up holding a measuring tape.

SUE
Problem solved.

EXT. OUTSIDE FRONT OF SIAM COIN OFFICE - NIGHT
Jay leaves Siam Coin and crosses the street towards a 7-Eleven where Sonny sits in the stolen white Silvia. Sonny hops out.

SONNY
Jay Dice?

JAY
That’s me.

SONNY
I’m Sonny, your translator.

As Jay approaches the car, Sonny recognizes him from the robbery attempt a week ago. BEGIN FLASHBACK: Sonny, in a blonde wig and face mask, hands Jay a bottle of meds in a pharmacy. END FLASHBACK. Jay doesn't recognize Sonny and hops in his car.

JAY
Let’s get the fuck outta here.
Wow! What a shit meeting.

SONNY
Sorry to hear.

Sonny gets back in and hooks up his Bluetooth, looking for a song on his phone.

SONNY
You like rap?

Sonny turns on "THE COUNT" by Curren$y ft. Wiz Khalifa on low volume.

JAY
Motherfuckers, man. Lowballin me.
Flew across the globe for this
shit. Fuck!

SONNY
Everything good with the
contract?

JAY
Yeah, don't trip, you're all good. Just a few surprises. It's whatever tho, life really isn’t linear man.

SONNY
(beat)
Well, as long as you're getting paid. You are getting paid, right?

JAY
(pressured speech)
The Count! This track’s the shit! Turn it up. Business talk later Sonny.

Sonny lights a cigarette while driving down Phahonyothin Road, music playing. Neon signs for 7-Elevens and noodle shops flicker. Motorbikes carrying mango crates cruise past, their tail lights streaking red. Jay’s hand rides the wind out the window. The scenery shifts near Future Park Rangsit.

Golden domes and glass structures sparkle. LED screens flash K-pop ads. Traffic slows, tuk-tuks honking. Jay, head out the window, marvels at the high-tech center. Sonny turns down a narrow lane by Khlong Rangsit. Banana trees frame wooden homes on stilts.

Canals reflect the moonlight; fireflies are everywhere. The car rolls over a creaky bridge, surrounded by rice paddies fading into darkness.

SONNY
You stayin at the Novotel right?

JAY
That’s the one, but it's kinda early, plus I got enough energy to take on this whole fuckin town. Gotta get this shit outta me man! It's really a parasite.

Jay leans back uncomfortably in his seat.

JAY
(wide eyed)
Let’s grab a beer. I need to talk to someone normal for a minute.

SONNY
Sure, I know a spot. You had a SangSom yet?

JAY
A what?

SONNY
How long you been here?

JAY
A week. Or ten days? Can’t be sure, it's blurring together.

SONNY
(beat)
It’s a drink. A SangSom. Tragic nobodies offered you one yet. But you're in luck, this spot has the best ones.

Sonny parks the Silvia out front of a dive bar.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT
Cigarette smoke swirls around lit-up bar signs. Pool balls collide softly as a couple laughs in the corner. Jay and Sonny sit at an uneven wooden bar, Sang Soms in front of them. Jay nearly chugs his in one gulp, his eyes manic. Sonny nurses his drink, watching Jay with curiosity.

JAY
(urgent delivery)
Sorry if I seem off. Lost my meds today. Usually I don’t wear my heart on my sleeve like this, but I've been feeling up for more than a few days now. Lithium must be different here. I'm bipolar, by the way.

Jay fidgets, tapping his glass.

SONNY
Gotcha, yeah, so is my cousin actually. He had a really rough time for years, but he's a lawyer now. Anyway, as your translator, I got your back and am discreet. Anything you need, let me know.

JAY
Thanks. So, uhh how'd you learn English? You really have no accent.

SONNY
American cinema: my sister and I own a DVD shop in town.

JAY
That’s dope. Lemme ask you something, any pharmacies still open? Gotta refill my order; apparently, it takes up to five days to get it. Five fucking days! I'll be talking to the lizard people from Fear and Loathing by then.

SONNY
I happen to know a guy but he's um kinda unorthodox, alternative medicines.

JAY
It’s mainly the paranoia. Fucks me up, if he can help with that then I’m down.

SONNY
My lawyer cousin went to this same guy. Changed his life. We can see him first thing tomorrow.

JAY
Perfect. So, how do you guys make money selling DVDs? Doesn't everyone just stream shit now?

SONNY
Our costs are almost zero. We get blank DVDs from my uncle, who's got a five-finger discount. Content is pirated. Only real cost is creating a convincing display case, which we take a lot of pride in.

JAY
Shit, sounds like a gold mine.

SONNY
Could be, but curating is a bitch.

JAY
You manually search sites?

SONNY
Every day. All day.

JAY
I used to work in Python. Could write a program to scrape em for you, rank the best shit.

Sonny raises an eyebrow, intrigued. A Bartender passes by.

JAY
Two more SangSoms and one for my partner!

SONNY
Maybe we should focus on your writing, articles not code.

JAY
Nawww, I think I'll do both. Text me the names of the torrent sites you use.

SONNY
Okay. Sure.

Jay motions to Sonny's phone on the table.

JAY
Right now so we don't forget.

SONNY
Like at the bar now?

JAY
Why not? This is it. This is our origin story.

SONNY
Have you signed the contract yet? Technically, I get paid right after that happens.

JAY
Chill, Sonny; we're in motion. Have more drinks! This is a celebration!

SONNY
Look, no offense, but this torrent quality problem is complex. Not something you're gonna solve overnight.

JAY
(annoyed)
Let's bounce. These drinks are ass.

SONNY
You're a blunt dude huh Jay?

JAY
Not typically. Look, I think I'll walk back to my hotel. Wanna feel the heartbeat of the town.

They leave the bar together and step outside. Jay looks up at sky and howls at the moon jokingly.

JAY
Howlll!

SONNY
(laughing)
See you tomorrow Jay. Get some rest.

Jay mumbles as he walks away.

JAY
(to himself)
Crawl, parse, rank.

Jay stays up all night in his hotel room and programs obsessively. Possessed, he can't stop until there's a working product. The morning sun streams through the hotel blinds as he finally completes the project.

He saves it to a USB stick and rushes downstairs to meet Sonny, who's waiting in his car, calling Jay. Jay bursts out of the Novotel’s glass doors, backpack strap over one shoulder. He gets in Sonny’s car, the backseat stuffed with grocery bags and pirated DVD cases.

EXT. HOTEL - MORNING

SONNY
Sup Jay? How you doin?

JAY
Not much sleep, but okay.

SONNY
My guy’s a few minutes from here. He’ll fix you up.

Jay leans back over the seat.

JAY
What’s in the back?

SONNY
Some groceries.

JAY
Lemme ask you somethin. Say you visit an American grocery store in a poor neighborhood and then one in a rich neighborhood. Which groceries cost more?

SONNY
Gotta be the rich neighborhood.

JAY
Sure that’s the logical answer.

Jay taps his foot intensely and his knee bounces up and down.

SONNY
So they’re more expensive in the hood?

JAY
Twenty percent more on basic goods. The mom-and-pop shops in the hood have no purchasing power and can’t curate suppliers like, say, a Trader Joe’s can.

Sonny looks over at Jay's rapidly bouncing knee.

SONNY
What’s the point?

JAY
The point is I wrote you a badass motha fuckin program.

Jay holds up a USB stick, dangling it around as Sonny parks the car.

JAY
This is your Trader Joe’s: a low-cost, self-curating movie-finding machine.

SONNY
That's Incredible! Please say it's ready now?!

JAY
Hell yeah it is.

Jay puts the USB in his backpack.

SONNY
(beat)
So why doesn’t Trader Joe’s open stores in the hood?

JAY
(beat)
Dunno, prolly a brand image thing.

So anyways, what’s dude’s name?

SONNY
Not sure. Only met him once. He’s a bit of a recluse.

EXT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW - MORNING
Sonny and Jay hike up an enchanted path lined with trees, gardens, and flowers leading to a wide-open door. The house, carved into a hill and a massive tree, echoes with the song "THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT" by The Tokens.

CICADA MAN (Indian by heritage), Black & Mild in hand, grooves on the back porch. His bathrobe flaps around as he faces a misty forest. He whistles softly to a cage of cicadas, freezing them in a trance.

CICADA MAN
How can I serve you fellas? Poopy pants send you?

SONNY
Sorry Who?

CICADA MAN
No matter, any friend of poops is good in my book.

SONNY
I'm Sonny, this is my business partner Jay.

CICADA MAN
As you were.

JAY
I’m bipolar and ran outta lithium.

CICADA MAN
Whoah! We’re gonna need a proper consultation. Who’s your provider, kid?

JAY
Uh, Kaiser?

CICADA MAN
Fuckin with you baby, I got you.

SONNY
So where you from, umm, sorry I forgot your name?

CICADA MAN
Cicada Man. And Santa Cruz, CA. But I’m Indian by heritage. Been livin in Thailand since the new milleni.

SONNY
So what’s the deal with the cicadas?

CICADA MAN
I put em in a different state of being, with a near silent whistle. It’s the vibrations that really seduces them.

SONNY
You hypnotize bugs?

CICADA MAN
I’d say that I speak their language to an extent. Get all up in their mental. Talk to crickets, too. But crickets are tricky; only seems to work when I’m on the sauce.

Sonny can hardly contain his excitement.

SONNY
You can hypnotize a cricket?!

CICADA MAN
Could. Three years sober, brotha.

Cicada Man pulls out a sobriety chip from his corduroy pant pocket.

SONNY
Man, we could make a shit load of money betting on fights if you could hypnotize an opponent’s cricket.

CICADA MAN
Enticing, but life is good, not worth the squeeze for me compadre.

SONNY
That's a shame. Not too often a sure thing like this comes along.

JAY
So you got some herbal remedy or what’s going on here, boss? Preferably something that works right away, too. No slow-release shit.

INT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW KITCHEN - MORNING
Jay and Cicada Man make their way back into the house, and Sonny takes a seat on the deck, mesmerized by the cage of cicadas.

CICADA MAN
Bipolar is tough. Took me years to perfect this remedy.

JAY
Will it stop mania?

CICADA MAN
That and the other negative side effects. You’ll still get the high energy, the bursts of creativity.

JAY
So the good parts?

CICADA MAN
Right. But it’s different for everyone. Results may vary, blah blah blah.

Cicada Man stands up and grabs a pouch with orange pills inside it.

CICADA MAN
Between us, the U.S. government has been trying to get its dirty hands on my remedies for years. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t advertise where you got this. Trade secret my dude.

JAY
Gotcha, how much?

CICADA MAN
Five hundred bucks for a six-week supply. It takes effect immediately, soon as you digest it. Give me a ring when you're out.

Cicada Man slides Jay a goofy business card with conspiracy theory symbols on it.

JAY
Five hundred?! You shittin me?

CICADA MAN
Listen, this will change everything. Trust me. Other patients I’ve helped have harnessed their madness and channeled it into greatness in a few weeks.

JAY
Aight, old man. I’ll give it a shot. USD cool?

CICADA MAN
Baht please.

Jay and Cicada Man exchange baht. Cicada Man walks them out to the front door.

CICADA MAN
Remember, Jay, soon you’ll be right as rain.

Cicada Man shuts the door.

INT. SONNY'S LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON
Jay and Sonny sit in Sonny's cluttered living room, sipping Bud Lights and playing with Jay's new software. Jay pulls out his medicine and takes two pills, chasing it with beer. The USB stick is plugged into Sonny's laptop. Sonny smokes a

cigarette watching in amazement.

SONNY
So I really just give it a list and it finds the best torrents?

JAY
That’s right. It reads every comment across every tracker, ranks them, and grabs the healthiest seed count. Privately.

SONNY
Wow. How’s it so fast? It’s seeding, right?

JAY
Seeding? Nah, it just downloads the torrent file.

SONNY
Sharing files is how this whole thing stays healthy. If nobody seeded, none of these torrents would exist. Especially not the rare copies we’re after. We have to seed, man. Moral obligation.

JAY
Would murder your bandwidth. Plus, don’t you want the competition to have less access?

SONNY
That’s a scarcity mindset. I believe the more abundant a resource is, the larger the pie grows. Seeding benefits everyone involved.

JAY
Whatever you say, but remember, there’s no honor among thieves.

Jay programs a few more tweaks and thinks out loud.

JAY
In that case, you might as well sell it. You prolly know a few other DVD store owners that could use this.

SONNY
Shit, you’re right! And I do know some old-timers who would throwing money at it.

JAY
Split the profits?

SONNY
(shouts)
Potentially. Gotta run it by someone else. Lina!

Lina stumbles from her room, her oversized City of God T-shirt skimming her thighs, no pants, and a skinny cigarette dangling. Her hair is a wild mess. She locks eyes with Jay. He freezes, star struck.

LINA
You rang?

SONNY
Jay, this is Lina.

LINA
Hello, Jay.

JAY
Sup Lina.

SONNY
Jay’s a writer. I’m his translator.

JAY
Sonny, been meaning to tell ya… the writing gig is a no-go, man.

SONNY
What?!

JAY
Some shit went down, they tried to fuck me over on the contract.

SONNY
But they put you up at the hotel?

JAY
Just one night. Got booted this morning.

SONNY
Fuckin shit, man. I needed that money! I’m a fucking dead man without it, understand me?!

Sonny paces the room, swearing in Thai. Lina tries to calm him.

LINA
How much do you owe?

SONNY
Enough.

JAY
We can make it up selling the program.

SONNY
Need it by tomorrow night.

LINA
It’s still early. Let’s start tonight.

SONNY
Okay. Let’s do it then. You and Lina pitch to the Bangkok shops. I’ll hit the outskirts. We meet tomorrow, pool the cash, I pay off the debt.

Lina smiles at Jay and quickly hides it behind her hand.

SONNY
Fifty-fifty split, okay?

JAY
Cool.

LINA
Gonna change real quick. Meet you out front, Jay.

Sonny storms out the front door. Jay tilts his medicine baggie, the orange capsules glowing inside. A label reads: “Lumifuego.” He flips Cicada Man’s business card, noting a cryptic cicada symbol, pockets the pills, and heads outside.

Lina leans against her blue 2005 Subaru WRX hatchback, her neon-green streetwear jacket glowing.

Jay's eyes light up briefly and he snaps out of it and walks over.

LINA
(teasing)
You gonna stare all night or get in?

Jay smiles and hops in.

LINA
So what exactly are we selling?

Lina’s cigarette smoke curls toward Jay, her eyes mischievous. He fidgets with the Lumifuego baggie in his pocket.

JAY
I wrote a program that finds the highest-quality torrents for hard-to-find films, and downloads them discreetly. The ‘leaves no trail’ part is the main selling point.

So, we’re sellin’ to DVD shops, right?

LINA
That’s the plan. What’s with the pills?

Jay grabs the baggie that fell out of his pocket onto the seat.

JAY
Supposed to help with creativity or somethin’. From the Cicada Man. I’m, um, bipolar.

LINA
Cicada Man? Haven’t heard that name in years. Doesn’t he live in a tree or some shit?

JAY
Sorta. More like bungalow built into a hill and a giant tree.

LINA
What’s it like?

JAY
The bungalow?

LINA
Bipolar.

JAY
Hmm. You know how some artists splash paint all over a canvas in a rapid, crazy-ass manner?

LINA
Sure. Abstract expressionism.

JAY
Didn’t know the name, but yeah. Being bipolar is kinda like abstract expressionism.

LINA
So it feels like you’re making art?

JAY
The greatest art in the world. But it’s impossible to convince anyone else of the greatness. That’s the struggle.

LINA
Nice analogy.

JAY
(sarcastically)
For a lovely illness.

LINA
Well you know they say beauty often hides in tragedy.

JAY
Amen. So, where we headed first?

LINA
Right here off Main Street. These shops are open all night. Mostly hush-hush. We can hit five or more before sunrise.

JAY
Sounds good.

LINA
So why didn’t you go home?

JAY
Whatchu mean?

LINA
You came here to write. That fell through.

JAY
Beyond some very recent motivation, I guess I felt bad.

LINA
How so?

JAY
I was supposed to pay Sonny out of my paycheck that never came. Feels like I gotta make good.

LINA
Don’t feel too bad. Sonny’s not a translator. He found a phone in a car he jacked. Replied to a text on it. The gig was for some rich suburban kid.

JAY
No shit. How you know that?

LINA
He’s my brother. Come on now, we work together too.

So what’s the latest motivation to stay-in-Thailand?

Lina plays with her hair, flirting. Jay misses the cue.

JAY
I need fifty grand quick. This software hustle feels like a start.

LINA
You owe someone money too?

JAY
Opposite. Someone owes me a million dollars.

LINA
Oh damn. You puttin’ out a hit?

JAY
(laughs)
Naw. Just expensive lawyers.

LINA
Are you a finance bro?

JAY
Not exactly, used to trade crypto. Exchange got hacked. Let’s talk about anything else, please.

LINA
Fine by me. Crypto’s just a bunch of fuckboys posting fake gains on X anyway.

JAY
Pretty accurate.

LINA
Okay, here’s the first spot. Easy sell. I do the talking and you just look handsome.

JAY
How am I doin?

Lina parks and gives Jay a look.

LINA
Looks like you’re in character.

Lina hops out and confidently enters the bootleg DVD store.

INT./EXT. KHAO SAN ROAD AND VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT
MONTAGE - JAY AND LINA’S NIGHT OUT The feel good song "PURPLE" by Saucito kicks in, the fun vibes of the track drive the montage.

INT. SMALL DVD STORE - NIGHT
Jay plugs the USB into a dusty computer. Lina leans in, explaining their software with animated gestures. The store owner eventually understands and nods, exchanging cash. Jay and Lina exit, sharing a giddy smile.

INT. ADULT FILM STORE - NIGHT
Lina, now rocking a vibrant purple wig from the store's rack, twirls playfully between shelves of adult DVDs. Jay chuckles, shaking his head. They pitch to the second owner,

who digs Lina. She winks at Jay as they pocket more cash, leaving together.

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT
At a crowded karaoke bar, Jay and Lina cheer Leo beers, Lina still in her purple wig. She’s flirty, gazing at Jay, tugging him toward the stage. He resists. A crew of tipsy girls joins in, dragging him up.

EXT. KHAO SAN ROAD - NIGHT
The street is alive with sizzling woks, tuk-tuks, and tourists. Jay and Lina sit at a night vendor's cart, sharing mango sticky rice and oversized Thai shaved ice. They people-watch, mimicking a quirky tourist’s dance moves, their laughter blending with the music.

Lina feeds Jay a bite of sticky rice with chopsticks as romantic tension builds.

INT./EXT. LARGE DVD STORE & KHAO SAN MARKET - NIGHT
Jay and Lina burst out of a larger DVD store, with Jay counting cash before dropping bills into Lina's purse. They rush into Khao San’s market, playfully dressing each other. Lina drapes a fake Burberry scarf on Jay and buys him a knockoff Rolex.

In return, he gifts her a questionable Chanel clutch. Lina strikes a model pose.

EXT. CITY OVERLOOK - NIGHT
They lounge on the hood of Lina’s car, sharing a single wine glass passed back and forth. Bangkok’s skyline shines below. Lina launches a glow-in-the-dark spinner with a slingshot they bought earlier. The toy soars into the night. Jay watches, mesmerized.

Lina guides his arm around her shoulder. He turns, and they lock eyes. Under the glow of a fading spinner, they share a slow, passionate kiss, lights blurring around them.

INT. SONNY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING
Sonny stands in his living room staring at a sleeping Jay.

SONNY
Yo! I know about you and Lina.

Jay forcing himself to wake up peeling his face off of Sonny's couch.

JAY
What?

SONNY
Look, man, it’s fine. She wouldn’t shut up about it this morning.

SONNY (CONT'D)
I just wanna be sure this isn’t some Asian fetish thing. It’s not that, right?

JAY
Not at all. I genuinely like her.

SONNY
(beat)
Okay if you say so. But this does complicate our business venture.

JAY
Listen, we had a great time, made tons of sales. Everything felt right. We kissed. That’s it.

SONNY
How many sales we talkin’?

Jay reaches for a knockoff Louis Vutton case and empties the contents onto the coffee table.

JAY
Fifteen thousand dollars, give or take.

Sonny empties a trash bag of bills onto the table.

SONNY
Twenty-five large. Guys in the sticks were throwing money at me after the demo.

JAY
Well shit, that’s a clean twenty thou each. You pay your debt, I cut Lina in for her help, and we push the rest into cricket fights.

SONNY
Uhm odds really aren’t great in cricket fights man.

JAY
Not talking about gambling. Talking about a sure thing.

SONNY
But Cicada Man’s out.

JAY
We have cash now. Let’s ask again, what’s the worst that can happen?

SONNY
Lemme think about it. I’m on the clock now. Gotta pay this debt asap.

Sonny divides up the money into two piles.

SONNY
Thanks, Jay. Push comes to shove, you did save my ass.

JAY
All good. And don’t worry, I know you’re a fake-ass translator.

SONNY
Who told you that?

JAY
Lina did. Pretty impressive, though. Had my ass fooled.

They share a laugh together as they count the cash and crack open beers.

INT. SAKDA OFFICE - AFTERNOON
Sonny walks into Sakda's office holding an envelope stuffed with cash. It's a small real estate office that serves as a front for his loan shark business.

SAKDA JR. (19) lounges behind the front desk, feet propped on the counter, gold chain thick enough to anchor a Floridian fishing boat.

He sees Sonny, makes eye contact, and stands. Sonny bows (traditional wai) with a light bow, and the kid hardly nods his head in return. The following scene is in Thai with English subtitles.

SONNY
The fuck was that?

SAKDA JR.
It’s a nicety. Who cares.

SONNY
It’s respect. How old are you, kid?

SAKDA JR.
Nineteen. Whose fuckin’ askin’?

SONNY
Then I’m five years your elder. Look you don’t gotta shove your face in your fuckin lap, but you do gotta bow deeper than me.

SAKDA JR.
Not sure if you realize where you’re standing, but we don’t really abide by societal norms around here.

SONNY
(calmer)
I know exactly where I’m standing. I’m here to see Sakda, you little shit. Look, every man has a code. Doesn’t matter how the money’s made. No code, the world’s full of knuckle-draggers running around in tight suits.

SAKDA JR.
Dad!

Sonny’s here!

SAKDA
Come on in!

Sonny enters Sakda's office and notices a shovel in a trophy case on the wall, along with sports paraphernalia. He bows very low as he approaches his desk.

Sonny slides the envelope across the table. Sakda fumbles with a cigar cutter before finally snipping the tip off a cigar. He chews on it a bit.

SAKDA
Just in time, Sonny. You almost forced me to collect.

SONNY
What’s with that thing?

SAKDA
Memento. First guy I ever killed. Didn’t owe much, but it was a principal thing. Actually he owed me exactly what you owe me now.

Blunt force, more painful.

SONNY
Next time you see me I’ll have the rest, no worries.

SAKDA
(beat)
No, no worries here. But I need the balance in three days.

SONNY
Three days? That’s impossible.

SAKDA
World’s changing, kid. Spinning faster every damn day. People like me? We adapt. So you better start adapting.

Sonny looks up at the shovel and back at Sakda.

SONNY
I look forward to adapting.

SAKDA
That’s right. Now go apologize to my son. Sensitive boy. Gets it from his mother.

SONNY
Yes, sir.

INT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW - AFTERNOON
Cicada Man is watching the movie Fear with Mark Wahlberg when his landline phone rings.

He picks up; his expression changes immediately as he clutches the cord tangled around his arm. A POLICE DETECTIVE echoes on the other end.

CICADA MAN
Yes?

POLICE DETECTIVE (O.S.)
…Mr. Li? This is Detective Phromsiri. I’m so sorry, Mr. Li. Dao was found dead this morning. Her body was discovered…

Cicada Man can't force himself to listen any longer. He hyperventilates, grabbing a crumpled 7-Eleven bag from a pile of trash. Collapsing to the floor, he blows into it frantically. He fumbles for his wallet, hands shaking.

Inside, a faded photo: DAO LI (8, gap-toothed) holding a red soccer ball.

His thumb traces her face.

CICADA MAN
Dao, my love.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY (FLASHBACK - 10 YEARS AGO)
Sunlight dances on a beautiful riverbank.

YOUNG CICADA MAN sits on the riverbank.

YOUNG DAO (8, pigtailed) sits beside him.

They fish, their rods bob in rhythm. Dao giggles as he shows her how to cast.

YOUNG DAO
Daddy, will we catch a big one?

YOUNG CICADA MAN
Bigger than your imagination, my love.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY (SAME PERIOD)
Young Dao, now wearing a soccer jersey, clumsily kicks a ball. Young Cicada Man cheers her on. She mirrors his enthusiasm, determined, and scores a goal. They high-five, her smile a reflection of his.

INT. CICADA MAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (5 YEARS AGO)
The apartment, now a wreck, empty bottles litter the floor.

ALCOHOLIC CICADA MAN (disheveled) sways while clutching a mezcal bottle.

TEENAGE DAO (16, eyes lit up) confronts him.

TEENAGE DAO
(beat)
You’re not my father anymore!
You’re just… this.

She gestures at the mess. Cicada Man slurs, reaching for her.

CICADA MAN
Dao, wait!

She yanks away, tears streaming.

Dao storms out, slamming the door. Cicada Man collapses, the bottle slipping from his hand.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT
Cicada Man stares at the photo, his eyes bloodshot and puffy. The weight of his failure crushes him. He clutches the photo against his chest, broken.

He stumbles to his feet and drags a rickety aluminum ladder from a corner, its legs scraping against the floor. Positioning it beneath a high shelf in the corner of the room, he slowly climbs, each step creaking.

His fingers close around a dusty, unopened bottle of mezcal on a top shelf, cobwebs clinging to the glass. He wipes the dust away on his sleeve.

EXT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW BACK PORCH - MORNING
Cicada Man wakes up face down, naked, on the back porch, an empty mezcal bottle beside him. His outdoor phone is ringing incessantly, and he stumbles to silence it.

CICADA MAN
Cicada Man, who’s this?

SONNY (O.S.)
Hey, it’s Sonny. Me and Jay came by the other day.

CICADA MAN
Sure, yeah.

SONNY (O.S.)
I know you already passed on the cricket fights, but we could make some easy money here. Jay and I will bankroll it. We're hoping

you’ll reconsider.

CICADA MAN
Okay, sounds good.

SONNY (O.S.)
Sorry?

Cicada Man stands up butt naked looking over the forest below.

CICADA MAN
Fuck it, let’s rock ’n’ roll baby.

SONNY (O.S.)
Great! Can we come by now?

CICADA MAN
Bring some Leo.

SONNY (O.S.)
Six-pack?

CICADA MAN
Thirty.

SONNY (O.S.)
Roger that.

CICADA MAN
And Sonny, ten bottles of quality mezcal.

SONNY (O.S.)
Fair enough.

Cicada Man hangs up, Sonny smiles over at Jay on the couch.

JAY
The Cicada Man is in!

EXT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW BACKYARD - DAY
Jay, Sonny, and Cicada Man are preparing to hunt for crickets for the upcoming fight. Cicada Man drinks like a fish.

CICADA MAN
Take these boys.

They take the bamboo sticks. Jay spins his over head.

JAY
I’m confused. We got the edge, right? Why hunt for crickets? Let’s just buy the most badass ones at a local market.

SONNY
Cause we’re doin this from the feet up. Gotta nail every detail. Craft a proper illusion.

CICADA MAN
(slurring)
Smart man.

JAY
Sure. Just sayin, there’s a balance. So where these fightin crickets at?

Cicada Man takes a pull from the mezcal.

CICADA MAN
Follow me. And do me a favor, do as I do, not as I say.

The trio hikes into the dense forest, Cicada Man staggering ahead, waxing on about how to catch a prize cricket.

CICADA MAN
River’s up here. Meanest, biggest bastards love to hide near water.

Cicada Man nearly stumbles over backward and catches himself with his bamboo stick.

CICADA MAN
We spook them out of their hole by making threatening sounds and shit. Just blow through the hole in the bamboo.

Faint singing drifts through the trees, a Thai lullaby. The men pause, drawn toward the creek. Three women taking a break from work in the rice paddies sing the traditional Thai lullaby "YAO YAO." Cicada Man bursts through the brush first.

CICADA MAN
Well I’ll be damned.

The women, white clothes clinging wet, sway as they scrub laundry, their voices humming the lullaby.

CICADA MAN
Howdy do, ladies. Call me Cicada Man!

Jay and Sonny join Cicada Man on the river's edge, watching the women in awe. Cicada Man rips off his shirt and wades through the glistening water, smiling in a trance. The women stand on a small sandbank in the middle of the water.

As Cicada Man nears them, they spook and dive in, swimming away like a school of fish. Cicada Man turns to the guys.

CICADA MAN
Welp, maybe next time. C’mon, fellas, let’s hunt some crickets!

CLOSE ON: A bamboo stick probing a small hole. The stick emitting a low, eerie hum.

OVERHEAD SHOT: The trio, sweat-soaked, kneel in the heat, blowing into bamboo sticks in the ground.

EXT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW BACK PORCH - AFTERNOON

CICADA MAN
Beautiful haul, guys.

Sonny, Jay, and Cicada Man eye a rusty cage packed with chirping wild crickets.

SONNY
So, you back on the bottle huh?

Sonny nods toward the empty mezcal bottle on the porch.

CICADA MAN
Only way I can talk to these crickets. Plus, I like drinkin’.

Silence hangs, Sonny’s stares at the mezcal bottle in a moral quandary. Lina bounds onto the porch.

LINA
Sup, brodies.

SONNY
Our surprise guest has arrived.

LINA
Thought I’d hop on this gravy train if it’s cool with you guys.

Jay stares at Lina smiling.

SONNY
It’s official. Us three are in for ten large each. That covers the Bangkok tourney buy-in. It’s a two hundred thousand dollar take-home. We split it evenly.

JAY
One night?

SONNY
Yep. Eight-man field. High-roller event. Politicians, foreign tycoons, mafia types. Exclusive.

LINA
Three wins in a row: Sonny’s debt is gone, Jay’s a millionaire.

SONNY
Lina told me bout the crypto money.

JAY
Right. You two tell each other everything.

Lina blushes, avoiding eye contact.

SONNY
Fights start tomorrow night around three a.m..

Sonny holds up a beer for a toast.

CICADA MAN
To the eternal dance of reason and wonder!

Cicada Man, wobbling, swings his bottle for a cheers and misses everyone's glasses.

LINA
Jay, I gotta show you somethin.

They walk out front to Lina’s Subaru; the trunk pops open. A faded picnic blanket rests under a neatly packed pile of wine, cheese, and grapes.

LINA
Always wanted to picnic in this forest.

JAY
Didn’t know you were a romantic.

LINA
Well Jay, much for you to learn.

Jay reaches for the blanket and basket.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING AREA - SUNDOWN
Sunlight slices down through towering trees, lighting a forest clearing. A creek trickles into a pond. The checkered blanket is spread across the grass, with picnic goods everywhere: a wicker basket, half-eaten cheese, a nearly empty wine bottle, and two wine glasses.

Lina and Jay sit close on the blanket. Lina moves closer, her eyes meeting his. Everything falls silent. They kiss. Lina's fingers gripping Jay’s hair. She pauses, then swings her leg over, straddling him. Their kissing intensifies. Lina’s hands slide to her skirt’s zipper, pulling it off.

Jay rips off his shorts. Her hips rock in rhythm on top of him. Lina’s moans drown out the creek behind them. Jay grabs her hips, spinning her until he's on top. Lina bites his lip, pulling him in closer from below. He tugs his shirt off, and she arches beneath him.

Jay reaches under the small of her back and flips her onto her stomach, staying behind her. Her gasps rise louder as the sun fades.

INT. SONNY'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING
Jay's passed out on the couch. Sonny towers over him, arms crossed.

SONNY
Jay. Jay. Jay. Look, man, I know, okay? And guess what? She’s falling for you. Bit of a coincidence, just before you head home, right?

JAY
If we win these matches I might stay here.

SONNY
Not sure if you’ve dated a Thai girl before, but if you break her heart, fleeing the country is nothing more than a slight head start.

JAY
No man, for real, I might stay.

SONNY
She’s my kid sister. Growing up we didn’t have much in the way of parents, so I watched her back. I’m just asking you to tread lightly.

JAY
And I respect that.

SONNY
Good. Now c’mon. Gotta prep our crickets.

JAY
Prep?

SONNY
Prep, yes prep. Our prize fighters need some cricket pussy. Getting laid fires ’em up before a big fight. Got some worm tea too. Balances their body chemistry.

JAY
Haha right ‘From the feet up.’

SONNY
Exactly!

So, by the way, your uh meds kick in yet? How you feelin’?

JAY
Great! Hella energy and my head is clear. Anything we need, I got it.

SONNY
Awesome. One thing, I’m worried about Cicada Man. Can you record and analyze his whistle? We can’t be too reliant on him.

JAY
Yup, sounds good. That’s right he did say he has to change his whistle up depending on the cricket species.

SONNY
In that case, look up two-spotted crickets. Those and Asian field crickets. I bet we'll be going against them. Oh, and their cousin, the Teleogryllus occipitalis.

JAY
(laughing)
For sure. So how do we avoid hypnotizing our own cricket? I mean, it is a small ring.

SONNY
Nobody will have the same species as us. Don't worry, we'll get in-depth at Cicada Man's. Only eighteen hours till the fights.

JAY
Looking forward to it.

(beat)
And look… I really do like her.

SONNY
Yeah, I can tell. Go wake her up. I'll be in the car.

INT. CICADA MAN'S BUNGALOW LIVING ROOM - MORNING
Jay is in the zone, computers and sound equipment surround him in Cicada Man's living room. The meds have kicked in and he's hyper focused writing code.

JAY
Let's isolate the whistle more. Shut the porch screen real quick.

Cicada Man stumbles to the back porch and shuts it.

JAY
Yo, Sonny, which ones are these again?

SONNY
I told you. Asian field crickets.

JAY
Okay, nice. Cicada Man, how's your range?

CICADA MAN
I operate on vibes mostly, but pressed I'd I’m usually just a foot or two away say.

JAY
Well, we need five to eight feet. Less obvious. I’m gonna mike you up. Maybe we can push the range if we record your whistle and automate some of this.

SONNY
Back up a few feet, Cicada Man.

Cicada Man turns and takes five steps back, pauses, and spins like a gunfighter. He whistles at the cricket, but nothing happens.

JAY
A step closer.

He whistles again and gets a slight reaction from the cricket but it doesn't last.

JAY
One more step.

The cricket is fully hypnotized.

JAY
That’s the range.

SONNY
Five feet?

Jay drops to a knee with a measuring tape.

JAY
More like three. We’re gonna need a distraction.

LINA
Maybe I can help?

SONNY
How’s that?

LINA
So, check this out. Some of my hottest friends and I will escort you boys into the arena.

We stand opposite of Cicada Man

and divert the male gaze.

CICADA MAN
How hot are they?

LINA
Yikes! Come on Cicada Man. That’s the last thing you need to worry about.

JAY
I like it.

SONNY
But we gotta act as if. Jay, you’re gonna need a top-notch suit.

JAY
You got an extra?

SONNY
My pants are five times too small for you man. Hundreds of tailors outside the venue. Grab one there.

CICADA MAN
How bout the girls stand with me?

SONNY
We’re distracting attention away from you, man. Jesus.

LINA
I’ll go round up some potential girls.

SONNY
Perfect, Jay, make sure the audio samples are ready in case.

Sonny shoots a look at drunk Cicada Man.

JAY
Got you.

SONNY
We’ll meet up at the venue tonight.

JAY
Good shit.

Sonny lights a cigarette as he leaves with Lina. Jay begins programming, sound wave patterns form on his laptop. Cicada Man pours mezcal into a glass on the couch.

EXT. BANGKOK ALLEY - NIGHT
Gamblers and hustlers slip into an unmarked warehouse, where the faint buzz of a small crowd echoes. A bouncer checks the invites with a cold stare. Sonny tucks a pistol into the back of his pants.

JAY
What’s that for?

SONNY
For any drama.

INT. CRICKET FIGHTING TOURNAMENT - NIGHT
Large hanging speakers blast "SMACK MY BITCH UP" by The Prodigy. Jay, rocking a pin-striped three-piece suit, strides into the arena with Lina and two stunning Thai girls, GROUPIE 1 and GROUPIE 2, on his arms. Sonny and Cicada Man trail them, scanning the room.

Sonny exhales cigarette smoke.

THE FONZ (slick Italian businessman, aviators) coaxes crickets in a chipped ceramic bowl.

Sonny leans into Jay, whispering as they weave past rivals.

SONNY
That’s The Fonz. Italian businessman. Round one.

Sonny brushes past BIG RED (imposing redheaded Irishman), his mullet swaying and tatted-up arms flexing as he clutches a large cricket mason jar like it's full of nitroglycerin.

SONNY
Big Red. Mafia ties. Probably semis.

As they approach their station, Sonny locks eyes with Sakda Jr., who performs a slight wai. Sonny returns the gesture with a very shallow wai.

SONNY
So, you fight crickets now?

SAKDA JR.
Been doin this my whole life.

SONNY
Then we’ll see you in the finals, kid.

SAKDA JR.
And after we destroy you, I’ll have the pleasure of collecting for my dad.

SONNY
No need. Got a few ways to pay him back. This is pure leisure.

SAKDA JR.
I’m a man of leisure myself. And I can see it on your face, you’re desperate. Don’t worry, no need to tell him you can’t pay. He’ll be in the crowd soon.

SONNY
I look forward to seeing him.

SAKDA JR.
Sure you do.

Sonny and Sakda Jr. slowly part ways, mean-mugging each other. Big Pun’s verse on "OFF THE BOOKS" blares on the speakers, and the fifty-person crowd roars, waving fistfuls of baht. Jay strides onto the platform with Lina and his groupies, their looks mesmerizing the room.

Cicada Man slips through the onlookers, stopping a few feet from the cricket bowl. A bell clangs, the match is on. The Fonz glares across the platform, jaw tight. The crickets lunge in the tiny bowl, wings buzzing like razors.

Jay’s cricket pins The Fonz’s in seconds, leaving it hurt and twitching. The Fonz storms off disgusted as Jay’s crew advances. Big Red steps up to the cricket bowl, holding a large briefcase. Snapping it open, he shows off a massive cricket in a mason jar.

He sets it free as Sonny fidgets, glancing at Sakda whose joined the crowd. Jay grips Sonny’s shoulder.

JAY
Yo Sonny, we got this.

CLOSE ON: Cicada Man’s lips curling into a subtle whistle.

His fingers tap a strange rhythm on his mezcal glass. The crowd, mesmerized by Jay’s girls teasing, misses it. The crickets clash; Big Red’s is sluggish. After a quick back-

and-forth exchange, it rolls on its back and concedes. Jay’s crew advances to the championship.

SAKDA JR.
Wave to my father. His shovel’s in the car.

Sakda Jr. motions to his dad in the crowd across the room. Sonny is nervous and joins the team in a huddle.

SONNY
Look, it’s six a.m. Crickets get a two-hour break before the championship. Chill for an hour, then meet back here.

CICADA MAN
Where’s the bar?

GROUPIE 1
Out back. I’ll show you.

SONNY
If we lose, it’s lookin’ real bad for me, man.

JAY
Stay up, Sonny. We got the nut hand.

SONNY
Yeah. You’re right.

LINA
Hey, Jay. Can we talk?

JAY
Sure. What’s up?

They talk and walk headed for the exit.

LINA
There’s a rooftop coffee shop right next door. Wanna go?

JAY
Sure.

EXT. ROOFTOP COFFEE BAR - MORNING
A sleek rooftop bar overlooks the city skyline, its tables empty, a lone barista polishes the counter. Jay and Lina sink into an oversized yellow sofa.

LINA
They’re setting up for the water festival.

JAY
What’s that?

LINA
Thai New Year. Biggest water fight on earth. It starts today, and also happens to be the first day of a heat wave.

The barista drops off two ice waters.

JAY
(to barista)
Thanks.

LINA
So, what will you do with a million dollars?

JAY
Depends. After taxes, probably buy a fixer-upper in the Bay, something built in the eighties. Maybe put in a deck in the backyard if there’s room.

LINA
And that’d be all?

JAY
Pretty much.

LINA
So you’d buy a shitty house?

JAY
Well, that’s the problem back home. Dollars don’t stretch.

But not here. A million here? I’d live like a king.

LINA
I’d sure treat you like one.

They kiss, lost in the moment. A waitress comes by, and they laugh, embarrassed. Lina orders them iced coffees while Jay sips his water.

JAY
So what do you think?

LINA
’Bout what?

JAY
Me staying and extending the trip. Maybe even for the foreseeable future.

LINA
I think I’d show you the time of your life.

JAY
(sips water)
I’m sure you would.

Look, I’m not gonna lie. I was struggling back in America. But ever since I landed here everything started… synchronizing. I feel like at home or something. Can’t explain it.

LINA
You know I think we look for the why too often. Who cares? We should be so lucky to notice life’s patterns. When something’s good, you don’t ask why. You ride it out. No questions asked.

JAY
True. Yeah… that’s it. Fuck it, I’m gonna stay here and see what happens.

LINA
Just a heads-up. If you do stay, you’ll hear all kinds of shit about Thai women when it comes to American men. But let me tell you, I’m far from a stereotype.

JAY
What do they say?

LINA
That we’re passive, want marriage on day two, only chasing a farang for his money.

JAY
Is it true?

LINA
For a lot of these hoes, maybe. But not me. I was raised by my brother and American cinema. Been sellin DVDs since I could count. We never had much, but we’re hustlers. When the odds are against us we fight better with our backs against the ropes.

JAY
You don’t need to tell me. I knew you were different the moment we met.

LINA
Really?

Lina smiles and snuggles close against him on the couch. They look out at the beautiful view, taking in the moment.

INT. CRICKET FIGHTING TOURNAMENT - MORNING

SONNY
Where the fuck is he! Where the fuck is the Cicada Man?!

GROUPIE 2
I told you. Him and Nok went to the bar outside and never came back.

Jay and Lina walk into the arena holding hands.

SONNY
Jay!

The Cicada Man’s gone!

Sonny takes a huge drag of his cig. Paces the floor, looking at Lina.

SONNY
Him and her stupid fuckin’ friend Nok ran off together.

GROUPIE 2
Not my fault she liked him, shit she’s prolly fuckin the Cricket Man in the woods somewhere.

SONNY
It’s Cicada Man. And if he’s really gone, start saying goodbye to me too.

Jay, with a sly grin, parts his suit jacket. Wires snake through the lining, connected to a Raspberry Pi hardware device rigged with large, round speakers, faintly blinking.

JAY
Chill out, Sonny. We’re Gucci.

SONNY
Holy shit. Tell me it works.

JAY
Hell yeah it works. Took me all afternoon. Cicada Man was apparently adjusting his pitch live, so I built in real-time modulation.

Jay flicks a switch on the speaker, and its LED glows. He angles his back, shielding the contraption from other competitors. Sonny puts a test cricket in a bowl. Jay tweaks a button, tapping his foot.

JAY
I simply switch up the vibration patterns by tapping my foot.

The cricket falls into a trance.

SONNY
This is genius.

LINA
The range?

JAY
Seven feet.

Jay closes his coat as Sakda Jr. approaches.

SAKDA JR.
Time to meet your maker, Sonny.

SONNY
Eat shit, bitch boy.

A PA crackles, an ANNOUNCER’S voice booming:

ANNOUNCER
(in Thai)
The championship match begins!

The crowd falls silent, spectators huddling around tables. Jay’s foot taps a steady, slow rhythm. The fight erupts. Sakda Jr.'s cricket tries to lunge but is immediately under a spell. He sways, dazed, and is losing points quickly. The crowd cheers them on. Jay and Sonny claim a quick victory.

Their team hugs and jumps up and down together in a circle. Sakda Jr. stands opposite them, defeated. He turns to his teammate.

SAKDA JR.
Something’s wrong… he didn’t even fight back.

Sonny jumping up and down with his arm around Jay.

SONNY
I’m collecting the winnings. Sakda’s meeting me across the street to settle the debt. We split the loot at my house!

Sonny collects the money in the background and quickly disappears. Meanwhile, Lina and Jay embrace as Jay lifts her off her feet and spins her in circles.

LINA
You did it, Jay! I can’t believe—

Suddenly, Jay’s Bluetooth connects to the event’s speaker system. Piercing cricket chirps blast across the venue, and heads whip around toward the overhead speakers. Panicked, Jay fumbles inside his coat, wires now hanging out. Sakda Jr. glares at him from across the arena.

SAKDA JR.
Cheaterrrrr! Motherfucker, get his ass!

Jay rips off his suit jacket and tears free of the wires. "Heat Wave" by Martha Reeves and the Vandellas comes over the speakers. He bolts for the exit with a decent head start.

EXT. WATER FESTIVAL - DAY
"Heat Wave" continues to play. As he shoulders through the front door into the water festival, a Thai teen douses him with a bucket of water. Jay stumbles in shock and keeps sprinting.

Thirty furious gamblers spill out from the cricket fighting venue, chasing him deeper into the festival.

INT. RUBICON JEEP - DAY
Cicada Man driving a kitted out Rubicon Jeep getting road head from Nok.

CICADA MAN
Oh yeah, baby, right there.

Cicada Man takes a pull of mezcal and gets stuck in traffic for the water festival.

CICADA MAN
What the hell is this?

He honks and Nok pops her head up. He hooks a right down an alley, shoving her head back down.

EXT. WATER FESTIVAL - DAY
Jay weaves through festival participants as water balloons burst around him. The mob closes in. A woman heaves a bucket of water across a long, slick plastic picnic table, with crowds cheering on both sides. Jay leaps and slides hip-first across its length, kicking up a spray behind him.

A replay of his slide is shown again from a low angle, and a third time from an overhead angle. Some of the mob tries to race around the table but gets trapped in the crowd. A man chasing him leaps onto the table, loses his footing, and slips off.

A trailing man jumps on the table and trips over the fallen man. Sakda Jr. hurdles both of them, lands on his hip, and slides off the table with ease. Jay dives feet first through an open tuk-tuk, tucking into a tight ball. A replay is shown from a side angle.

Sakda Jr. mirrors the move with ease, landing in a sprint. Jay’s lead shrinks. A gang of kids ambushes them with squirt guns, and water balloons nail Sakda Jr. in the face. He stumbles, wiping his eyes, vision temporarily blurred.

Out of nowhere, Cicada Man's Jeep screeches into the frame, slamming Sakda Jr. into a fruit stand, mangoes and watermelons exploding everywhere.

Jay glances back, locking eyes with Cicada Man behind the wheel. Nok pops her head up again and looks around.

CICADA MAN
Quick, hop in, Jay.

Jay looks back at the mob, then at Cicada Man, who motions to him.

INT. RUBICON JEEP - DAY
Jay leaps into the back of the Jeep, tires screeching as they tear through the chaos of the festival. Once it's behind them, Cicada Man pulls the car to the curb outside a rundown apartment complex.

CICADA MAN
This your place?

NOK
Yep.

CICADA MAN
Well then, thank you for your service.

Cicada Man drunkenly salutes the girl.

She smacks him and hops out of the car, glancing back with a sly smile before disappearing into the complex. Cicada Man leans over the seat, eyeing Jay.

CICADA MAN
Treat ’em like dirt, they stick like wet dirt.

JAY
The fuck, man?! I almost got murdered by a mob. You seriously ditched the championship to bang that chick?

CICADA MAN
No banging! Just road head.

JAY
Drop me off before I lose my fuckin’ shit.

CICADA MAN
Or

We could settle it over some tea.

JAY
The fuck?

CICADA MAN
Southeast-Asian custom. We squash our beef over cool, refreshing tea. Come on.

JAY
I don’t believe this shit.

INT. TEA SHOP - DAY
The guys enter a tea shop, and a waitress immediately takes their order. The atmosphere is tranquil, with the constant hum of coffee grinders buzzing in the background.

CICADA MAN
Two Thai teas and a Sauvignon Blanc, cold.

JAY
We won the tournament, if you care.

CICADA MAN
No shit. Congrats.

JAY
Sonny says you only get half the original cut. I didn’t wanna pay you shit.

CICADA MAN
Wasn’t in it for the money.

The waitress sets down the drinks. Cicada Man traces slow, rhythmic circles around the rim of his wine glass; a soft hum vibrates.

CICADA MAN
You know why I started drinking again, Jay?

Listen closely now. Really follow my words.

JAY
Why’d you start drinking?

CICADA MAN
Just stay with me. In a minute you’ll be right as rain.

Jay looks sleepy and starts leaning in focusing on Cicada Man's every word. He's being slowly hypnotized.

CICADA MAN
(beat)
Sailors came up with that term, you know. After a big storm rolled through, it washed the grimy sailboats clean. Right as rain.

Water sure does have a strong healing power, doesn’t it, Jay?

JAY
Sure does.

CICADA MAN
My daughter, she couldn’t handle my drinking. Ran away at sixteen. Got in with the wrong crowd. Became a lady of the night. You with me?

JAY
Yes. I’m here.

CICADA MAN
I loved her more than life itself. So when the detective called and said someone emptied an Uzi into my Dao in broad daylight, my heart shattered and I picked up the bottle again.

Cicada Man lifts his finger from the rim of the wine glass, silencing its hypnotic hum. Jay, eyes glazed, sits entranced, completely under Cicada Man’s spell.

CICADA MAN
In wars of the past the generals always preferred to send one kind of man into the first charge. Bipolar men. With the right trigger, their mania made them unstoppable. Those little orange pills? They aren't designed for peace, Jay. They’re for war.

Cicada Man scans the restaurant, voice dropping to a hush.

CICADA MAN
And it looks like we got the same enemy. That detective the man who killed my baby said, Dao, works for Siam Coin.

Cicada Man cracks his neck.

CICADA MAN
Now I’m too old to do it myself. And I needed a young warrior. Here you are. Just one final trigger away.

In my Jeep, under the back seat, there’s a blowgun and darts dipped in tranquilizer. That’s for the guard dogs.

JAY
For the dogs.

CICADA MAN
The Dha sword is for the armed guard at the back door. And after that…

(beat)
You’re going to murder every breathing thing inside that fucking hell hole. Except the cam girls. Let them run free.

Cicada Man slides his car keys across the table.

CICADA MAN
So you tell me, when your mission is done, and you’re standing in a red sea, how’s it gonna feel, Jay?

Jay snatches the keys.

JAY
Right as rain.

INT. RUBICON JEEP - AFTERNOON
Jay floors the Jeep, cutting through traffic, typing a song into his phone. “CUDDIES SAY YEE” by Mac Dre ft. Mac Mall vibrates through the four 15" subwoofers behind him. Possessed, Jay’s eyes are hyper-focused.

After a bit, he slows down into a back alley and parks across the street from Siam Coin.

EXT. SIDE STREET - AFTERNOON
Jay hops out and grabs a blow dart gun, Dha blade, and carefully slips on black latex gloves squatting behind the

car.

EXT. SIAM COIN JUNKYARD - AFTERNOON

Looking both ways, he crosses the street. Rounding a corner into the junkyard, he’s met by a barking guard dog. Instinctively, he drops to one knee and fires a dart into its neck. The dog collapses, silenced. Scaling a chain-link fence with ease, he lands silently on the other side.

Spotting a GUARD standing at the back entrance, he ducks behind a rusted junk car, scanning the yard for more threats. A second guard dog scurries beneath the car, snapping at Jay's dress shoes from below. He loads the dart gun, pauses, then extends his leg as bait.

The dog’s head lunges out, and he fires a dart into it from above. Staying low along the building’s side, Jay's eyes stay fixed on the guard, Dha blade tucked through his belt. He scrambles up the wall, gripping a drainpipe, and hauls himself onto the top.

Above the guard, he spots another pipe running parallel to the roof, inches off the ground. The guard below puffs on a cigarette, oblivious. Jay draws the blade, secures his feet under the pipe, and blesses himself. Back to the edge, he allows himself to gradually fall backwards, feet locked in.

On the way down, he plunges the blade over head and behind him through the guard’s windpipe below. Blood sprays against the building wall. His feet yank loose from the metal pipe, and he completes a backflip, landing in front of the guard. He drives the blade into his chest, pinning him to the wall.

Jay picks up the guard’s AR-15 with a 50-round drum and walks into the Siam Coin office.

INT. SIAM COIN OFFICE - AFTERNOON

JAY
(yelling)
Attention! All cam girls, leave the building immediately!

Pandemonium erupts as dozens of cam girls, half-naked, scream and flee from booths and cramped rooms. Jay calmly racks the bolt on his AR-15 and heads toward the stairs. Out of nowhere, a ninja star buries itself in his shoulder, dropping him to one knee behind a massive tiger statue.

Grimacing, he yanks the star out. Peeking around the statue, another star thuds into the tiger's leg, inches from his face. Upstairs, Yu bolts across the balcony, ducking behind a marble Roman gladiator statue. Jay unleashes multiple

rounds, eating up the marble.

Pausing, Yu thinks Jay’s clip is empty, and he lunges out with a ninja star in his hand. Jay mows him down mid-throw. Yu’s body slumps over the railing, crashing into a mini-golf pond below. Jay charges to the base of the second-story stairs.

As he jogs up the stairs, seven armed men burst through a graffiti-covered door. He cuts them all down immediately with his AR-15. A shadow looms behind the door, someone gripping an AK-47.

SHAWN
Jay mutha fuckin Dice.

JAY
Drop the gun, Shawn.

SHAWN
Ehh, not my style. Rather go out inna—

Daniel busts through a flower-adorned paper backdrop that served as a changing station for cam girls. He's unarmed and charging at Jay in a full sprint.

DANIEL
See you in hell bitch!

Across the room, Shawn holds his aim on Jay; their eyes meet in a standoff. Jay keeps his gun on Shawn. Daniel flies through the center of their confrontation like a kamikaze. He trips, stumbles, and his momentum takes him headfirst into a bronze statue of Bruce Lee performing a kick.

He knocks himself out cold. Shawn disappears deeper into the office.

Jay sprints back to the junkyard, fixing his eyes on Shawn’s office window. Behind a large stack of rubber tires, Jay blends into the night. Hours pass as the sun sets, and nothing stirs. Suddenly, a stray dog’s yelp cuts through the silence.

The dog walks into the open center of the junkyard, its frantic yelping echoing. Shawn emerges onto his office balcony, gun ready.

SHAWN
(whisper)
Shut the fuck up, mutt.

He takes aim at the dog. Jay rises from behind the tires.

JAY
Not this time nigga!

He unleashes twenty rounds into Shawn. The junkyard erupts in a storm of gunfire, flashes illuminating the night as Shawn’s body jerks and falls to the ground. Jay ditches the weapon in a pile of junk and breaks into a jog out of the yard.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT
Jay continues to jog across the street back to the Jeep. A speeding motorcycle comes roaring out of the darkness, crashing head-on into Jay. His body launches down the pavement, skidding brutally. The motorcyclist catapults over the handlebars into the air.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT
Jay stirs, in terrible pain as he assesses the damage. A heavy cast on his left arm, a thick neck brace, and bandages covering a head-wound. The bright hospital lighting stings as he opens his eyes struggling to focus.

A MALE NURSE adjusts his equipment.

MALE NURSE
Look who’s finally up.

JAY
Huh? How long I been out?

MALE NURSE
In and out a few days.

JAY
What happened?

MALE NURSE
Motorcycle accident. You were on foot.

Not supposed to say this, but the person who hit you is checked in down the hall. And you definitely got the worst end.

Jay looks down at the damage.

JAY
How fast?

MALE NURSE
Forty-five miles an hour. You’re lucky to be breathing. Relatively minor injuries, all things considered.

JAY
I don’t remember anything.

MALE NURSE
Common with head trauma.

What’s the last thing you do remember?

JAY
The water festival. Runnin’ through the water festival.

MALE NURSE
I wouldn’t be surprised if more comes flooding back later.

JAY
You seen my phone?

MALE NURSE
Right here. Been holding it till you woke.

The nurse hands his phone to him.

ON PHONE SCREEN: A text from Ana, from two days ago.

ANA (TEXT)
Yo! You forget bout me?

Jay swipes past it. Another text from Ana.

ANA (TEXT)
Who u fuckin over there?!

A third text from Ana.

ANA (TEXT)
That's it! I’m done with yo broke ass, it’s over!

Jay rolls his eyes. A text from Sonny pops up.

SONNY (TEXT)
Looks like there is some honor among thieves after all.

Jay is confused for a moment but then notifications from his bank come in: “WIRE TRANSFER RECEIVED.” He's ecstatic. His empty checking account now reads $58,700. He pulls down the screen to refresh, then refreshes again and again. The account remains unchanged.

INT. HOSPITAL FRONT DESK - NIGHT
Downstairs, a woman shuffles along the long hallway, her hospital gown swaying with each measured step. Seen from behind, her movements are slow and deliberate. Reaching the front desk, she pauses.

A HOSPITAL FRONT DESK LADY, glasses perched low, looks up from her paperwork.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK LADY
Can I help you?

SUE
Yes before I check out, I need to pay a visit to a dear friend of mine. Jay Dice. Silly me, I seem to have forgotten his room number.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK LADY
And you are?

The camera swings around, revealing Sue’s face, cut and bruised, her right eye swollen shut.

SUE
Sue.

Fade to black, credits roll and "NO CHURCH IN THE WILD" by Jay-Z and Kanye West plays.