

TOWERS

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. SMALL CITY - AMERICA - DAY

Two towers. One taller than the other. Not by much. An otherwise flat landscape. Strip malls. Wisps of industry.

But those towers...

CLOSER

One is definitely newer. The taller one. Flush, reflective blue glass. A one-way mirror to success.

The other -- not so new. And beige. Concrete grids separate the windows. Easy to see inside. We close in on one of the top floors. Not the top floor. But one of them --

CLOSER

-- where JEFF ARMSTRONG (40's) stands in his corner office, staring through a pair of binoculars. Sights fixed on the top of --

-- the BLUE BUILDING.

BINOCULAR POV

He can't see much. There's a railing. People milling about. Some sort of rooftop club...

Jeff steps closer -- as if an extra foot will make a difference. The binoculars CLINK against the window. He peers deeper...

...and for the briefest moment, he seems to hear DISTANT LAUGHTER. Mocking him. Producing a RINGING in his ears.

Jeff rips the binoculars from his eyes. Wipes his brow. Reclaims his breath. He's about to walk away...

-- when something occurs to him. He returns to the window. Flips the binoculars around. Stares through the big lenses. The 'objective' lenses.

From this POV, the Blue Building looks a million miles away. Miniature. Myopic. Meaningless...

He smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. - BUICK REGAL - SMALL CITY - EARLY EVENING

FRANK SINATRA (SONG)
Fly me to the moon...

Jeff drives down the city's Main Street, listening to Frank Sinatra. There's a bit of charm to the town. Some decent brickwork. A few restaurants with ambience...

FRANK SINATRA (SONG) (CONT'D)
*...let me see what spring is like,
 on Jupiter and Mars...*

The song builds to Jeff's favorite part. He's getting into it. Awkwardly moving his head back and forth --

FRANK SINATRA (SONG) (CONT'D)
*...in other words, please be
 true...!*

-- when a red light undercuts his momentum. He flinches. Slows down. But it's all right. He's still in the groove. Starts singing along --

FRANK SINATRA (SONG) (CONT'D)
...in other words, I love -- !!!

-- BOOM!!!

Jeff's car rattles. For a second, he's disoriented. He can't hear anything -- BOOM!!!

-- then he realizes: it's the souped-up SUBARU next to him. Two MEXICAN KIDS. Sinatra drowns in a sea of bass.

Jeff stares at them. They stare back. The light turns green. The Subaru SKIDS away...

...and now Jeff can hear Frank again. But the magic is gone. He turns it off. Watches the Subaru disappear around a corner.

INT. KITCHEN - SUBURBS - EVENING

A pre-made LASAGNA on the table. Iceberg lettuce salad. Ranch dressing. Jeff's daughters -- TARA (15), bleached blonde, wearing a SURFER SHIRT, and MONA (12), skinny, still in soccer uniform -- eat dinner while listening to music and texting. SERENA (40), Jeff's wife, noticeably overweight, reads the CARDBOARD PACKAGING to the lasagna --

Over Jeff's shoulder, the news plays on TV -- muted with CLOSED CAPTIONS. Something about immigrants. Maybe. Hard to tell without his glasses...

SERENA
I'm not sure we should eat this
anymore...

She hands the packaging to Jeff...

JEFF
(absently)
What --?

SERENA
Look at all this.

Serena taps the ingredients list.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Look how long it is?

Annoyed, Jeff breaks his focus from the news.

JEFF
What am I looking at?

SERENA
The ingredients. Look at all those
things.

He looks closer.

JEFF
I don't understand.

SERENA
When I make homemade lasagna --

JEFF
-- when do you do that?

SERENA
The point is, there aren't all
these ingredients. There are too
many here.

JEFF
Who wrote that fucking rule?

The girls both look up. Serena purses her mouth.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Sorry -- I'm just...
(he gestures to the TV)
...I'm trying to watch this. It's
important.

SERENA
So is our health.

JEFF
Serena, we've been eating this
lasagna for years. We're all still
here, right?

He looks to his daughters. Tara gives him a thumbs up, still
listening to music. We hear the faint throb of SURF GUITAR --

JEFF (CONT'D)
(lowering his voice)
I mean, we like the fucking
lasagna, don't we?

SERENA
What I don't like is when you talk
that way.

JEFF
I do it to make a point.

SERENA
Which is?

JEFF
If we enjoy the lasagna, why does
it need to change?

Serena sighs. She can see this isn't going anywhere.

SERENA
(folding the cardboard)
I'd just like to be healthy.

JEFF
I'd like that for you, too.

She shrinks a little. Jeff returns his attention to the
news...

NEWS (CLOSE CAPTIONED)
...TO THE...SIX TEENS WHO...RAPED
THE DRIVER...THEIR FOOTAGE IS...

Jeff sits straight up.

JEFF
Jesus --

SERENA
(clasping her heart)
-- what?

JEFF
Those guys!

The TV shows a number of SOUPED UP cars, including one vaguely similar to the Subaru Jeff encountered.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I was right next to those guys today!

SERENA
What guys --?

JEFF
Those guys in that car! Six of them raped somebody.

SERENA
Oh no...

JEFF
(to his daughters)
Girls, watch the TV --

The girls look from one screen to the next. Tara pulls off her headphones --

JEFF (CONT'D)
-- you see those kind of cars?

MONA
Those are frogs.

It's true. The news has moved on to a story about frogs.

JEFF
Okay, well you know those kind of cars that look like maybe, once, they were normal, but the kids have turned them into --

TARA
-- Stocks?

JEFF
(snapping)
How do you know that term?

TARA
Because lots of kids do that.

JEFF
Kids you know?

TARA
Some.

JEFF
Well stay the hell away from them.
They just raped six girls.

TARA
I thought you said six of them
raped a driver.

JEFF
Does it matter how many? Stay.
Away.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - DAY

Jeff sits at his desk, fixated on the blue tower...

An AQUARIUM gurgles nearby. Nothing fancy. A freshwater tank
with fish swirling about a motorized decoration --

-- a sunken WWII PLANE, generating sizable BUBBLES. They
mushroom toward the surface every few moments.

One fish stands out from the rest: a WHITE HALFMOON, with
delicate, lacy fins that flow like a ballroom gown...

Jeff shifts his focus to the fish. He smiles, admiring her
grace --

-- when a harsh ray of light causes the Halfmoon to abruptly
change course.

Tracing the light back to its source, Jeff realizes it's the
sun -- blasting off the windows of the blue tower.

JEFF
Mother fucker...

Crossing quickly to the window, Jeff yanks the blinds,
cutting off the light. Allowing his fish to swim in peace...

Jeff returns to his monitor, where he has pulled up various
photos of STOCK CARS. A headline:

STOCK RACING BECOMES CITY'S NEWEST FAD

KNOCKING at the door.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Yes --?

DANIEL (20's), a rather effeminate SECRETARY, leans inside.

DANIEL

Hi Jeff. Clarence has got --

JEFF

(interrupting)

Did you open my blinds?

A beat.

DANIEL

Your blinds?

JEFF

Yeah.

DANIEL

I don't come in here, Jeff.

JEFF

Well, who does?

DANIEL

The janitor.

JEFF

What's his name?

DANIEL

Her.

JEFF

Could you tell her not to pull up
the blinds?

DANIEL

No. But you can.

(redirecting)

Clarence has ten minutes right now
if you want them.

JEFF

Right now --?

Jeff's eyes briefly flit to his desk, where a small plaque
reads: TIMING IS EVERYTHING

JEFF (CONT'D)
(calculated)

No.

Daniel shrugs...

DANIEL
Okay.

JEFF
But --

DANIEL
Yes?

JEFF
When he's got fifteen minutes, you
let me know.

DANIEL
I'm sure if you needed...

JEFF
Daniel.

DANIEL
Yes...?

The finality intended by using Daniel's name is lost on Daniel. Jeff tries again.

JEFF
Daniel.

DANIEL
Yes?

They stare at each other.

JEFF
You let me know about those
fifteen.

INT. CEO'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

CLARENCE
Armstrong!

Jeff steps into his CEO's top-floor, Asian-themed office. A bowl of fortune cookies sits on the desk. CLARENCE O'CONNELL (50's), indulgent gut, tie to match, waves him inside.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Sorry about the wait -- all this
China business --

JEFF
Of course...

CLARENCE
-- and sorry if I don't make any
goddamned sense. Jet lag from
China. Doesn't get any easier, you
know.

JEFF
Sure doesn't.

CLARENCE
China. Anyway, take a seat.

Jeff obliges, palming a fortune cookie. He nods to the
window...

JEFF
Always love the view up here.

CLARENCE
Top of the world.

JEFF
Well, used to be.

Clarence cocks his head. Jeff sees his opening.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Clarence, I want to talk about
something.

CLARENCE
(sitting down)
Sure.

JEFF
I want to talk about a club.

CLARENCE
What club?

JEFF
Our club.

A beat.

CLARENCE
Sorry, Armstrong...it's probably
the ol' Chow Mein brain -- what
club do we have...?

JEFF
We don't. Not yet. But I think we
need one. And fast.

CLARENCE
For who?

JEFF
For whoever pays the premium.

CLARENCE
(gesturing to the blue
building)
You mean something like the Tower
Club...?

Jeff visibly shivers at the name.

JEFF
No. Nothing like that.

CLARENCE
So it wouldn't be on the roof.

JEFF
Yes, it would. But it would be
different.

CLARENCE
Different how?

JEFF
Classy. Old school. Not like
whatever they've got up there.

CLARENCE
Have you ever been up there?

JEFF
Of course not.
(a beat)
Have you?

Clarence opens his mouth -- hesitates...

CLARENCE
No. But I've seen pictures online.
Need to know the competition...

JEFF

Of course.

CLARENCE

...and I must say, it would be hard to top.

JEFF

Respectfully, I disagree. We find a good chef. A great designer...

CLARENCE

...but I mean literally top. That's their whole thing. Tallest building between LA and San Jose. It even rhymes.

JEFF

Okay. Let's take them out of the equation for a minute. What do we need.

CLARENCE

Profit.

JEFF

And how do we increase that profit.

CLARENCE

Overseas commerce...
(lowering his voice;
putting up a muting hand)
...which is something I'd like to talk with you about. A possible development in getting back your 'you know what'...

JEFF

Sure, sure -- but what can we do now. Know what I mean? We've got the Blues killing us on the club level, and that doesn't look good to anybody.

CLARENCE

I suppose not, but they've got something different going on --

JEFF

Exactly. That's why we bring back what this company is really about. Old. School.

Clarence stares at Jeff. Finally, he clasps his hands.

CLARENCE

I like it. You look at permitting
and such - because I actually don't
think we're zoned for that sort of
thing - and in the meantime, ask
yourself this question: would you
ever eat a hundred year-old egg?

JEFF

A what?

CLARENCE

Exactly. And before you say
anything, know this: the answer is
yes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPEEDWAY - SMALL CITY - EVENING

REVVING Engines. Falling light...

A half-dozen turbo-charged cars line up at the local
speedway. Packed attendance. A ROAR as they SPEED away from
the starting line!

Outside, in the parking lot, Jeff gets out of his Buick. He
looks around suspiciously. Heads to the front entrance. Near
the ticket counter, he notices a POLICEMAN. Jeff ambles over
in his direction.

JEFF

Evening, officer.

POLICEMAN

Evening.

JEFF

So what's all this about?

POLICEMAN

What?

(pointing to the track)

This?

JEFF

Yeah. I heard about the rape.

POLICEMAN

(doubly confused)

The what?

Jeff looks past him, catching a glimpse of the speeding cars...

JEFF

Rape. I heard about it. Those six animals.

POLICEMAN

I have no idea what you're talking about.

JEFF

On the news. Didn't you see it?

POLICEMAN

I guess not. Maybe it was from somewhere else.

JEFF

I don't think so.

An impasse.

JEFF (CONT'D)

It cost money to go to this thing?

POLICEMAN

It does.

JEFF

(laughing)

Unbelievable.

PARKING LOT

Jeff returns to his car. He's about to get inside, when:

CARLOS (O.S.)

Nice car.

Jeff freezes. Across the way, a group of young Mexican men are VAPING beside their TURBO HONDA CIVIC. CARLOS (early 20's), tough, good hair, gestures to Jeff's Buick.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

It's nice. I dig Regals.

Jeff looks for the policeman. He's gone.

JEFF

Thanks...

CARLOS
No problem, bro. What'd you pay for it?

JEFF
That's none of your business.

A bunch of "WOAH'S" and LAUGHTER erupt from Carlos' friends.

CARLOS
Hey man -- I'm not trying to fuck with you. I like your car.

JEFF
Look, I don't want any trouble --

CARLOS
What trouble?

JEFF
(pointing)
-- I know the policeman.

Frustrated, Carlos crosses to Jeff -- who takes a step back.

CARLOS
Bro. I just asked: how much you paid for the car.

JEFF
I...I don't remember.

CARLOS
Okay. You don't remember.

JEFF
No!

Jeff jumps into his car, locks the doors, and starts the engine...

KNOCK! KNOCK! Carlos is standing outside his window. Jeff can't hear what he's saying.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Check the Blue Book!!!

He screeches away.

INT. BEDROOM - SUBURBIA - NIGHT

Jeff and Serena lie in bed. He's on a laptop, she's on a phone.

JEFF

Look at this --
(swiveling; photos of a
nightclub)
-- this place, Melvyn's. In Palm
Springs. This was one of Sinatra's
favorite spots.

SERENA

Very pretty.

JEFF

See how classy it is?

SERENA

I do. I like it.

JEFF

Good. Now look at this:

He pulls up a new set of photos. A club with a completely
different vibe. Modern. Lots of blues.

SERENA

That's nice, too.

A beat.

JEFF

Nice, too?

SERENA

Yeah. I mean, it's different, but
it's nice.

JEFF

It's ridiculous! Who wants to have
dinner in a ray gun?

SERENA

A ray gun?

JEFF

Yeah! A science fiction gun.

SERENA

I don't know.

JEFF
"Nice, too..."

He gets rid of the screen. Serena goes back to her cellphone.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

SERENA
Calculating.

JEFF
What?

SERENA
Calories.

Jeff turns off his light. Serena remains on her phone. After a beat.

JEFF
Serena, would you put that away?

SERENA
Why?

JEFF
Because you don't need to be doing that.

SERENA
But it's working. I lost a few pounds this week.

JEFF
You don't need to lose a few pounds.

SERENA
I think I do.

JEFF
Why?

SERENA
So you might touch me more.

Silence. Jeff's body tightens and recoils. Serena is unperturbed. She simply goes on crunching numbers...

EXT. ROOF - BEIGE BUILDING - SUNRISE

A CREAKING door. Shoved open...

Jeff steps onto the flat roof of the Beige Building. Orange sunrise spreads across his face. A gentle breeze...

The majority of the roof is taken up by a smaller structure, HUMMING with electricity. The AIR CONDITIONING unit.

The rest of the available 'real estate' has a somewhat abandoned look. A few sun-bleached CHAIRS. Cigarette butts. Coke cans...

...but you wouldn't know it from Jeff's expression. He walks to the edge. Hands on his hips. He sees something here. Something the others don't. Potential.

Reaching into his pocket, Jeff produces the FORTUNE COOKIE from Clarence's office. Holding his breath, Jeff breaks it in half. Pulls out the fortune...

...and slowly looks down. The paper flutters between his thumbs.

Everything is possible for one who believes.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

An emboldened Jeff picks up his phone. Props his feet confidently on the desk. Dials. Leans back...

...winking at his White Halfmoon, gliding through the water.

JEFF (TELEPHONE)

Hello, yes. I'd like to schedule a preliminary meeting with one of your planners. What's his name?

(a beat)

Okay, what's her name?

(a beat)

I said preliminary. It means 'first. How's Friday?

(a beat)

Well is this Friday an alternate or not?

(a beat)

Then next Friday. My name is Armstrong.

(a beat)

Arm. Strong.

Annoyed, Jeff hangs up and presses the intercom. A second later, Daniel enters the office. Before he can speak:

JEFF (CONT'D)

Can you believe these people?

DANIEL
What people --?

JEFF
I just got off with the city
planners. They have every other
Friday off.

DANIEL
Lucky them.

JEFF
I don't think you understand what
I'm saying.

A beat.

DANIEL
I guess not.

Daniel is about to close the door --

JEFF
One more thing --

DANIEL
(sighing)
What?

JEFF
Where are we with the janitor
thing?

DANIEL
What janitor thing?

JEFF
About the blinds --
(gesturing to the tank)
-- so my white moon doesn't get
roasted.

DANIEL
I have no idea what you're talking
about.

JEFF
I'm talking about my white moon.

DANIEL
Well, I wish you wouldn't.

He leaves.

EXT. SOCCER FIELDS - SUBURBIA - NIGHT

Shouts from the bleachers. Jeff and Serena sit halfway up, watching a tide of 12 year-old girls race up and down the field...

SERENA

Go Mona!!
(to Jeff)
She's doing good.

JEFF

Sure is...
(pridefully)
I was always athletic.

More shouts of encouragement -- but underneath, Jeff can hear something else. A BOOMING...

JEFF (CONT'D)

Do you hear that --?

He looks behind the bleachers. Sees a slow moving FORD EXPLORER, bass blaring. BANDA MUSIC floating above...

JEFF (CONT'D)

Those mother fuckers...

SERENA

(sharply)
Jeff.

JEFF

We're trying to watch a game.

The players rush past -- and Jeff gets to his feet, shouting extra loud.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Yeah!!! Yeah!!!

Everyone gives him a strange look. Including his wife.

LATER

SERENA

You. Did. So. Good!

Walking into the parking lot, Serena has an arm around Mona, who is limping a little bit. Jeff looks for the car.

MONA

I got another bruise. Look at this...

She runs a finger up her leg. It's pretty bad. Serena GASPS.
Jeff rolls his eyes..

JEFF

That's what competition looks like,
Serena.

SERENA

Does it hurt --?!

MONA

Not really...

JEFF

Where the hell did we park...?

They turn to the next row of cars. Only a few there. Not
Jeff's Buick.

JEFF (CONT'D)

What the hell...?

He doubles back to the first row. Probably only twenty cars,
total. Enough to count. He goes halfway down the row --

-- and stops at an empty stall.

JEFF (CONT'D)

I swear to God, this is where we
parked. Serena, look --

He points to a BLUE FLYER, stapled to an electrical pole.

JEFF (CONT'D)

-- you remember that? Remember what
I said about that?

SERENA

No...

JEFF

I said it looked like litter.

SERENA

You didn't say that.

JEFF

Well, I thought it. This is where
we parked. This is where we parked!

Jeff starts blinking erratically.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Where the fuck is it?

SERENA

Jeff...

JEFF

Where is my goddamned car!

HARD CUT TO:

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - SMALL CITY - NIGHT

JEFF

I know who did it.

A half-interested policeman, OFFICER MARTINEZ (40) looks up from his paperwork.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

You do?

Jeff sits across from him, mouth in a permanent frown. The rest of the station is nearly empty.

JEFF

Yes. This group of...

He trails off, staring at the officer's plaque. Martinez...

OFFICER MARTINEZ

(flatly)

Were they Latino?

JEFF

I don't know. But they weren't American.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Those are two different things.

JEFF

That's what I'm saying.

Officer Martinez sighs.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Who were they?

JEFF

How the hell should I know?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

You said you knew who they were.

JEFF

I do! This group of...kids.
Teenagers. At the speedway. They
liked my car. They told me.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

A group of kids told you they liked
your car.

JEFF

That's right.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

And this makes you think they stole
it?

JEFF

Why else would they say something?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

(sarcastically)

Good point. You do drive a Buick...

JEFF

What's that supposed to mean?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Nothing. Look, Mr. Armstrong, a
group of Latino kids at the
speedway doesn't give us a lot to
go on.

JEFF

Why?

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Because most of the kids who hang
out at the speedway are Latino.
Except for you, apparently.

JEFF

I was just checking it out.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

What for, may I ask?

JEFF

I heard about the rape.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

What rape?

JEFF

On TV. At the speedway. That stuff
didn't use to happen around here.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

Those things have always happened
around here. But not at the
speedway.

JEFF

I'll go ahead and trust the news.

OFFICER MARTINEZ

That's funny. You don't seem like
the type.

INT. JEFF'S GARAGE - SUBURBIA - NIGHT

Music plays in a dim garage. Familiar music. Sinatra.

SINATRA

...come fly with me...

Squinting in the dim light, Serena navigates stacked boxes
and bicycle gear...

...to find Jeff, sitting under the central light, cleaning
his .45. A few empty MILLER HIGH LIFE's beside him.

SERENA

Jeff -- what are you doing?

JEFF

Cleaning my gun --

SERENA

It's midnight...

JEFF

Serena -- if the same kids I saw
stole the Buick, that means they
followed me. If they followed me,
they may have come here first. Our
house could be a target.

Serena sees the logic.

SERENA

Anyway, Mona isn't feeling well.

JEFF

The bruise?

SERENA

Yes, but something else. She's very tired.

JEFF

She just ran a thousand miles.

SERENA

It's something else.

JEFF

What?

SERENA

I don't know. She'd like to see you.

JEFF

(lifting up his soiled
hands)

I'm cleaning the pistol.

SERENA

I see what you're doing. Your daughter would like to see you.

INT. MONA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jeff pushes into Mona's room with his knee - hands still covered in grease. He walks into the dark like an awkward monster, both palms held before him.

JEFF

Mona...?

A rustling in the sheets. Mona rolls over, pained face illuminated by the crease of hallway light.

MONA

Hi dad.

JEFF

What's going on?

He kneels down.

MONA

I don't feel well.

JEFF

What is it?

MONA
I don't know. My body hurts.

JEFF
Is it from the game?

MONA
I don't think so. The start of the season I get sore. But not now. I don't know.

She waits for his solution.

JEFF
Well, why don't we wait until tomorrow. See how you feel then?

MONA
But I feel bad now.

An open silence. Jeff considers the dilemma. Finally:

JEFF
You know what my dad used to tell me?

MONA
What...?

JEFF
Everything is possible for one who believes.

Mona stares back, confused. Jeff smiles. Rises up.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Sweet dreams.

Keeping his hands vertical, Jeff walks away. Mona sees a DROP of grease fall from his palm. It lands on her carpet. Seeping into the fibers as the door closes...

CUT TO:

INT. CITY PLANNERS OFFICE - DAY

Jeff sits in a waiting room. By himself. Faint music piped overhead. Banda music. He frowns...

Behind the front desk, the SECRETARY is smiling at something on her cellphone. She giggles...

Jeff checks his watch. 2:04. Unacceptable. He looks back at the secretary...

...who giggles again. She's texting. Excited by whatever message popped up. Doesn't she have work to do?

The RINGING returns to Jeff's ears. His scowl transforms into a diabolical sneer...

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Mr. Armstrong --?

Jeff whips his head around. KATHERINE CHAVEZ (30's), business suit, toned figure, extends a hand.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Katherine Chavez. City planner.
Sorry I'm late -- I was told the
meeting was at 2:30...
(shielding her voice from
the front desk)
...hard to find good help these
days.

INT. KATHERINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Encouraged by Katherine's attitude, Jeff takes a seat in her office - and is immediately struck by the decor: Americana. Everywhere. Including a framed AMERICAN FLAG behind her desk with a faded signature.

JEFF
(pointing to the flag)
What's that?

Katherine looks up from her computer. Smiles.

KATHERINE
Reagan's signature.

JEFF
(eyes bulging)
Wow.

KATHERINE
My father came over here first.
Served in the military. He did
something quite brave, and was then
able to bring us over.

JEFF
What did he do?

KATHERINE
He doesn't like us to talk about
it.

Disappointed, Jeff watches her scan the computer.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
So, you - wow. You work over at...

JEFF
(proudly)
That's right.

KATHERINE
And you want to...oh, I see.

She blinks. Processing. Slowly, she turns to the window -
where the Blue and Beige buildings rise in perpetual
standoff.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
...you mean, build a club just
like...

JEFF
(sharply)
No. Not like that.

KATHERINE
Then...

JEFF
...we're looking to do something
different. Something that reflects
the values of our company.

KATHERINE
Something a bit more -- old school?

Jeff's eyes alight.

JEFF
Exactly.

KATHERINE
Very ambitious.

JEFF
Thank you.

KATHERINE
(returning to the screen)
...my only initial concern is the
age of the building.

JEFF

What do you mean?

KATHERINE

Well -- your competitor had their rooftop establishment in mind when they started construction.

JEFF

So?

KATHERINE

So, all the design, physical access - it's organic to the structure. In your case, you would have to retrofit so it's accessible to everyone.

JEFF

What do you mean by 'everyone'?

KATHERINE

People with disabilities, for example. Everyone. And then there are climate regulations.

JEFF

Climate --?

KATHERINE

Yes. Your competitor has already had to overhaul their club to deal with the temperature spike.

JEFF

What if I don't believe in that? Any way around those regulations?

KATHERINE

There's no way around the sun, Mr. Armstrong -- though with a name like yours, you could certainly try!

She laughs. Jeff doesn't.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

...anyway, the next step will be visiting your site.

JEFF

When are you available?

KATHERINE

Let's see...

Katherine pulls up her calendar -- then pauses. She looks at Jeff with a shy smile. Even a flicker of attraction...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Who do people say you look like?

JEFF

What --?

KATHERINE

I mean, who do you get? Who do you look like?

Jeff thinks about it.

JEFF

Nobody.

KATHERINE

(smiling)

Never mind. How about next Friday?

JEFF

(flatly)

Don't you have next Friday off?

Katherine draws a hand to her mouth.

KATHERINE

My gosh, you are so right!

PRELAP SFX: A ROARING ENGINE...

INT. SPEEDWAY - SMALL CITY - NIGHT

Stock cars drill down the speedway. Roars from the crowd! Lights blare...

...illuminating Jeff in the upper bleachers, watching the cars pass the finish line. A massive LCD SCREEN projects: \$100,000 POT! Everyone on their feet --!!

-- but not Jeff. He eyes the fans suspiciously. Predominately Latino. As the next race sets up, he notices someone familiar. Lifts his binoculars --

-- to see Carlos, the guy from the parking lot, readying his Honda Civic. The race is about to begin. Carlos revs the engine --

-- just as Jeff's CELLPHONE rings.

JEFF
(shouting)
Hello --?

The cars ROAR past --

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
Where are you --?!

JEFF
(shouting)
I'm -- nowhere. Where are you?

SERENA
...I'm...

The crowd JUMPS to its feet again! Carlos has already won - a time projected on the screen. 8.8 seconds.

JEFF
-- where?!

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
I'm at the hospital!!

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - SMALL CITY - NIGHT

Mona lies in a hospital bed, IV stretching from her arm. Serena sits beside her, face etched with worry. The door opens --

JEFF
Goddamned arrows point both ways --

-- Jeff stops speaking the second he sees Mona. Serena sucks in the air.

MONA
(looking up)
Hi dad.

Moving slower, Jeff crouches beside her. Genuinely concerned.

JEFF
What's wrong, little lady?

MONA
They don't know...

SERENA

The doctor is running blood tests.

JEFF

Why?

SERENA

Because she's sick, Jeff.

Suspicion creeps into his eyes...

JEFF

Did they say that...?

SERENA

What do you mean?

JEFF

I mean, we don't know anything yet.

SERENA

Jeff, her bruises aren't going away. I went on the internet, and --

Jeff sighs loudly. Closes his eyes.

JEFF

-- and now we get taken to the cleaners no matter what.

MONA

Dad, don't be mad...

JEFF

I'm not mad, sweetie. But now you're scared, and you don't need to be.

SERENA

How do you know?

The door opens again. DR. GANDHI (50's) walks in, heritage self-evident. He smiles at Mona.

DR. GANDHI

Good evening, Mona. How are you feeling?

MONA

(shrugging)
I've felt better.

DR. GANDHI
We'll see what we can do about
that.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Jeff and Serena sit across from Dr. Gandhi, whose good humor has fallen away. He chooses his words carefully. Jeff scans the walls. PUNCH IN on Gandhi's degree from Harvard...

DR. GANDHI
Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong -- we don't have the tests back yet, but I've been doing this a long time, and I find it's important to prepare people for difficult news.

SERENA
What do you mean...?

DR. GANDHI
I'm afraid Mona is exhibiting many symptoms associated with leukemia.

Serena GASPS...

DR. GANDHI (CONT'D)
Mrs. Armstrong - you showed great foresight bringing Mona in when you did. Most would chalk this sort of thing up to sports injuries.

Jeff purses his lips.

DR. GANDHI (CONT'D)
I'd like to keep her overnight. At least, until the tests come back. If it is indeed leukemia, we'll want to start an aggressive treatment right away.

JEFF
What about a second opinion?

Both turn to Jeff.

DR. GANDHI
Mr. Armstrong, we don't yet have a diagnosis...

JEFF
But what if you're wrong.

DR. GANDHI
You mean, about the diagnosis I
haven't made?

JEFF
Exactly.

Dr. Gandhi squints.

DR. GANDHI
I guess we'll cross that bridge
when we get there.

EXT. HALLWAY - HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Jeff and Serena stand outside Dr. Gandhi's office, speaking
in hushed tones --

JEFF
I don't like it.

SERENA
Don't like what?

JEFF
This Harvard bullshit. Scaring us
before he knows what he's talking
about.

SERENA
What if he does know what he's
talking about?

JEFF
He insulted me to my face.

SERENA
When?!

JEFF
Never mind. You stay here. I'll go
home. God knows what Tara's into.

SERENA
Don't --

JEFF
What?

SERENA
-- don't tell her about Mona until
we're sure.

JEFF

Okay.

SERENA

Tell her it was a sprain from practice. Promise?

JEFF

I promise.

INT. LIVING ROOM - JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tara sits on the couch, face in her hands, quietly crying. In an adjacent armchair, Jeff nods understandingly. Her tear-stained face lifts...

TARA

Do they know for sure...?

JEFF

They're not positive. But the doctor's from Harvard, so...

She wells up again.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Look, your mother didn't want me to tell you. Not until we were certain. But I think it's important to prepare people for bad news, just in case.

Tara nods her head...

JEFF (CONT'D)

The most important thing is you don't tell your mother I said anything. Understand?

TARA

Yeah...

JEFF

I'm glad we talked.

TARA

I love you dad.

JEFF

Thanks.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. BEIGE BUILDING - SMALL CITY - MORNING

An overhead shot. The two buildings, shimmering under oppressive heat...

Far below, a car turns off the bisecting road, disappearing into the Beige underground lot...

INT. PARKING LOT - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

A ridiculously small GEO METRO RENTAL CAR parks beneath a Reserved Sign: VICE PRESIDENT - JEFF ARMSTRONG.

Jeff grunts as he pulls himself out of the tiny rental. Paler than usual, he heads towards the elevator...

...when LAUGHTER echoes through the lot. He pauses. The laughter is familiar - and very close.

He approaches a MERCEDES S-CLASS beneath another Reserved Sign: PRESIDENT - CLARENCE O'CONNELL...

JEFF
Clarence...?

Jeff peers through the driver's window. Inside, Clarence seems to be examining something on his armrest -- as a jeweler might inspect a diamond.

Daniel, Jeff's assistant, giggles in the passenger seat. Then he sees Jeff. No more giggling.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(confused)
Daniel...?

Clarence's head WHIPS up, as he takes a long SNORT. He turns to the window -- vigorously wiping his nose.

CLARENCE
Armstrong! Fuck!

He reaches violently back, trying to open the rear door. He can't quite get there.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Come on in --

JEFF
(awkwardly)
That's all right. Daniel -- I
need...well, Clarence. If you've
got time today.

CLARENCE
I've got time now!

JEFF
It's all right. I'll see you
upstairs.

INT. CEO'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

Clarence sits at his desk, eyes a bit bloodshot, vigorously
tapping the oak finish. Across from him, Jeff is quite
somber.

CLARENCE
Jesus, Jeff. That is terrible.

JEFF
It is...

CLARENCE
First the Buick, now this.

JEFF
I know...

In a swift motion, Clarence shoves up from the desk. He walks
to the window. Hands on his hips...

CLARENCE
What do you want to do?

JEFF
Serena wants me to take some time
off.

CLARENCE
I'm sure you've got the days...

JEFF
I do. But of course, I will
continue with the roof project.

CLARENCE
You will...?

JEFF

The inspector comes on Friday. Once she gives her okay, I start the budget.

CLARENCE

Well, if you feel you have time...

JEFF

This is important, Clarence.

Clarence makes an odd gesture, acknowledging nothing. Jeff hesitates.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Serena asked about the health plan.

CLARENCE

What health plan?

JEFF

Well, exactly. She was wondering if there was some sort of window, seeing as it's only been...

CLARENCE

There's no window. It's gone. You voted for that. So did I.

JEFF

I know.

CLARENCE

What plan did you pick up instead?

A beat. The men stare at each other. Clarence's eyes widen. If that's possible.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

You didn't...?

JEFF

It's all such a racket, Clarence. I was still deciding. And with everything else I put in...

CLARENCE

Mother fuck.

Clarence SLAMS his hand against the window. To both of their surprise, it results in a small CRACK. Clarence looks at his hand, as if discovering he was superhuman...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
 (distantly)
 Bolivia...

Jeff shifts uncomfortably in his chair.

JEFF
 What about...
 (lowering his voice)
 ...my investment? Would it be
 possible to --

Clarence's eyes bulge. He lifts a finger to the ceiling, swirls it around, as if to say: someone is listening.

CLARENCE
 What investment...?

Silence.

JEFF
 Nothing, Clarence. I must've been
 thinking about something else.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - DAY

Jeff sits dejectedly before his computer. We circle behind him as he types entries into Google...

KATHERINE CHAVEZ

Results pop up. He clicks on 'images'. Nobody resembling Katherine. Just a few random women. A couple weird cartoons.

Another search:

KATHERINE CHAVEZ FATHER WAR HERO

More of the same -- and more of the cartoons. Jeff is about to click on one...

...when a BAND of LIGHT catches his eye. Most of the blinds are closed --

-- but one is still open. Jeff tracks the sunlight, reflected directly from the blue tower --

-- into the aquarium. Again, threatening his White Halfmoon.

JEFF
 God. Damn it.

INT. JANITOR CLOSET - BEIGE BUILDING - DAY

JEFF

Hello --!

Jeff storms down a long service hallway, headed towards an open janitor closet. A RADIO crackles from inside...

JEFF (CONT'D)

-- hello?!

Another step --

-- and a surprisingly young woman pokes her head out. A JANITOR (20s), Mexican, cute as a button -- eating her lunch.

JANITOR

Yes?

A strange beat. Beyond her innocent appearance, Jeff notices the name on her uniform.

Mona...

He's momentarily lost for words.

JEFF

I'm...

JANITOR

Mr. Armstrong. From the twelfth floor.

JEFF

Yes...

(reasserting)

Look. I need you to listen. In my office -- you keep the blinds closed. Understand? Otherwise...

JANITOR

...the fish will die.

Jeff blinks.

The janitor rises, reassuringly, but he takes a cautious step back.

JANITOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Mr. Armstrong - I do close your blinds, for just that reason. But...

JEFF
(snapping)
-- but what?

JANITOR
Whenever I come back...they're open
again.

A beat.

JEFF
What do you mean?

JANITOR
I mean, I see you...standing there.
For hours.

JEFF
(dry swallowing)
You're saying...I open them?

The janitor smiles compassionately.

JANITOR
I don't blame you. The building,
it's a nice shade of blue...
(taking another bite)
...like the ocean.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - DAY

Jeff yanks ALL the blinds, twisting the wands, plunging his
office into darkness.

He returns to the glowing computer, where his Google search
on Katherine is still up -- yielding the strange cartoons...

Jeff clicks one of the panels.

It depicts a beautiful, BUSTY WOMAN wearing an American flag
T-Shirt, sensually touching a man's face. She looks
surprisingly like Katherine...

The dialogue bubble reads:

KATHERINE (CARTOON)
*You may only be a man. But you can
still be a hero...*

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. ROOF - BEIGE BUILDING - SUNSET (FANTASY)

RUMBLING...

A woman stands at the edge of the roof, hands on her hips -- cup-size generously expanded beneath a scant American flag T-Shirt.

This is Katherine, converted to look like a Latina Wonder Woman. Her eyes are leveled soberly on the Blue Building. A figure moves behind her --

-- Jeff, wearing a gray suit, hair slicked back, 50's style, AK-47 slung over his shoulder. Quite out of place.

JEFF

What is it...?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

(pointing)

It's growing.

Jeff joins her on the ledge. The RUMBLING returns. Then he sees it. The base of the Blue Building, shaking. PUSHING UP. Producing an entirely new floor!

JEFF

My God. Can you stop it --?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

There's a force field. Only you can pass through.

JEFF

How...?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

You already know...

Katherine squeezes Jeff's hand, then gestures behind him. He turns --

INT. BEDROOM - SUBURBIA - EARLY MORNING

JEFF

Gahhh --!

In bed, Jeff grunts as he ejaculates all over Serena's back. She's fast asleep. He freezes...

Dawn is just breaking through the curtains. Distant bird calls...

Ever so slowly, Jeff reaches for the tissue box. Sees the clock. 6:01. He finds a tissue. Pulls it out...

...and brings it towards Serena. Almost touching her...

...when she ROLLS squarely onto her back. Squelch.

Jeff sighs. He turns away. Stares at the ceiling...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SMALL CITY - MORNING

Mona, decidedly sicker, lies asleep in bed. Another IV runs along her arm, which we follow...

...past the concerned faces of Jeff and Serena, Dr. Gandhi standing a few paces behind...

...to a bag marked CHEMOTHERAPY...

DRIP...

INT. PATIENT FINANCIAL - HOSPITAL - DAY

Jeff glares at the woman across from him. BRIANNA (30's) African American. Expensive weave. A piece of lint in her hair -- of which she is unaware. Brianna reads through Mona's file on her computer...

BRIANNA

So, Mona has no insurance...

(looking up)

...am I right?

JEFF

Yes.

BRIANNA

Are you yourself insured, Mr. Armstrong?

JEFF

Didn't I just say no?

BRIANNA

No. You said Mona has no insurance. Sometimes it's possible to add a child to work health insurance.

JEFF
Why would my company have
insurance?

Slightly confused, Brianna glances out the window, where the
Beige and Blue towers are clearly visible...

BRIANNA
Don't you work at...

JEFF
Yes.

BRIANNA
And they don't...

JEFF
Not anymore.

Off Jeff's seething expression, Brianna moves on --

BRIANNA
Anyway...
(returning to the monitor)
...there are still one or two
options for children with pre-
existing conditions. They are
expensive, but they exist...
(looking closer at his
file)
...did Dr. Gandhi speak to you
about the additional treatment?

JEFF
What additional treatment?

BRIANNA
He has listed a progressive stem-
cell replacement therapy. It's
quite expensive.

JEFF
He didn't say anything about that.

BRIANNA
Well, do speak with him.

JEFF
He's the one that should be
speaking to me!

BRIANNA
Okay, Mr. Armstrong. Please lower
your voice.

Jeff stands up. Points a finger in Brianna's face.

JEFF
You have lint in your hair.

EXT. PARKING LOT - HOSPITAL - DAY

Serena follows briskly behind Jeff, who is checking his watch, irritated. She is compulsively eating a bag of APPLE CHIPS. Despite her anxiety, she's looking healthier...

SERENA
I didn't say anything because I
knew you'd do this --

JEFF
-- do what?

SERENA
Get upset! Dr. Gandhi says this
treatment works 90% of the time!

JEFF
I have to meet the inspector.

They reach Jeff's Geo Metro. Serena digs her hand into the chip bag.

SERENA
Jeff, we need to do this.

JEFF
Serena, I may be the Vice President
of a highly reputable company, but
sales aren't...

SERENA
Aren't what?

JEFF
The point is, we don't have the
money. These numbers -- we'll lose
the house. We'll lose...

SERENA
But this is your daughter!

She chews furiously. Jeff watches her in disgust.

JEFF
Why are you eating those!

SERENA
Because I'm starving!

JEFF
Why!!!

Jeff's phone rings. He doesn't recognize the number.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Mother fucking wrong number! Hello!
(a beat)
What?

In an instant, everything changes. Jeff looks to Serena.

JEFF (CONT'D)
They found my car.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE LOT - SMALL CITY - DAY

The Buick. Parked in front of us. And yet -- not the Buick.

Sure, there are traces of Jeff's old car. But the vehicle before us looks more like a rocket ship. It has been completely transformed...

...into a STOCK CAR.

Jeff stands a few feet away, bewildered.

JEFF
What happened...?

Officer Martinez, whom we recognize from the station, shrugs.

OFFICER MARTINEZ
A bust early this morning. Drugs. A few guns. And this car.

JEFF
What time was the bust?

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Around six.

Jeff's eyes widen. Flashing to --

-- *himself in bed, panicked, having just ejaculated on Serena's back. Reaching for the tissue. The time. 6:01*

This means something.

JEFF
(approaching the car)
You're sure this is mine...?

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Found your plates in the apartment.
Same VIN.

JEFF
But...

OFFICER MARTINEZ
(smiling)
...they sure did a number on it,
didn't they? I'd say a good twenty
grand worth of work.

JEFF
My God...

Officer Martinez hands Jeff the keys...

JEFF (CONT'D)
I can't drive this thing --

OFFICER MARTINEZ
(walking away)
Guess you gotta learn.

JEFF
Officer, wait --

Officer Martinez turns back.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(sincerely)
-- was it Mexicans?

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Salvadorans.

JEFF
What's the difference?

OFFICER MARTINEZ
Go fuck yourself, pal.

He exits the parking lot. Leaving Jeff with...

INT. STOCK BUICK - SMALL CITY - DAY

...the Stock Buick.

Jeff carefully lowers himself behind the wheel. The interior has completely changed. There is now a WELDED ROLL CAGE, DIGITAL CONSOLE, CARBON STEERING WHEEL, and a BUTTON BOX.

Fearfully, Jeff sets the key into the ignition. Turns it over. The entire console ALIGHTS! Engine ROARS --

-- and Jeff instinctively jerks his hands away from the steering wheel.

SUPERHERO KATHERINE
Don't be afraid...

Stunned, Jeff turns to the passenger seat...

...where Superhero Katherine sits in her short-cut American flag T-shirt.

SUPERHERO KATHERINE (CONT'D)
...this was meant for you.

Eyes wild with confusion - and excitement - Jeff returns his hands to the steering wheel. REVS the engine...

...and the car SCREECHES out of the parking lot!

EXT. BEIGE BUILDING - SMALL CITY - AFTERNOON

The Stock Buick swerves onto the street dividing the two towers...

As Jeff steers towards his building, the Blue windows reflect across his windshield. He accelerates...

...about to enter the underground lot, when he notices Katherine standing near the front doors, clipboard in hand. He jerks the wheel --

-- coming to a stop right in front of her. Katherine gawks as Jeff steps out. He sizes her up. Not quite the superwoman he's cultivated in his mind. Still --

KATHERINE
Good lord, is this your car --?

JEFF
(confidently)
Who else?

KATHERINE
I just didn't realize...

JEFF

What?

Katherine smiles. The flicker of attraction returning.

KATHERINE

I just didn't realize.

EXT. ROOF - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The pair steps onto the rooftop. It's an exceptionally hot day. Katherine shields her eyes...

KATHERINE

Jesus...

She puts on her sunglasses. Looks around the space. The cigarette butts and coke cans come into focus.

JEFF

So? What do you think?

The answer is printed on her face, which she attempts to conceal. Jeff follows behind as Katherine circles the wide area, marking her clipboard...

KATHERINE

What do I think...

They come full circle. Spinning around, Katherine smiles.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

...I think it's a challenge.

JEFF

(frowning)

How so?

KATHERINE

Well...how much is your employer willing to spend?

JEFF

Unclear.

KATHERINE

You do realize this rooftop houses the building's air conditioner.

JEFF

Yes.

KATHERINE

It would have to be moved. The building rewired. That's before you could even think about a new structure up here. Also, this space is quite a bit smaller than...

JEFF

...don't say it.

Katherine averts her gaze from the Blue Building.

KATHERINE

What about just a bar? A simple outdoor bar -- but classy.

JEFF

I don't think that would cut it.

KATHERINE

Why not?

JEFF

We need to compete.

KATHERINE

(feigning ignorance)

With who...?

Jeff grits his teeth. Finally manages:

JEFF

Them.

EXT. BEIGE BUILDING - SMALL CITY - AFTERNOON

Jeff and Katherine pass through the lobby -- unassuming, unimpressive -- and return to the front steps of the building. She summons a bit of optimism.

KATHERINE

Okay, first things first. Get approval to move central air and zone a new location - most likely the garage. If that happens, we can jump right back into this!

JEFF

How long will all that take?

KATHERINE

Depends. You might have to wait until fall to turn off the A.C.

JEFF
That seems like a long time.

KATHERINE
Hey, one small step, am I right?

Again, her Armstrong joke falls flat. Katherine sighs. They walk a few more feet to Jeff's car. It reflects in her eyes...

Jeff's about to get in, when --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Mr. Armstrong.

JEFF
Yes --

KATHERINE
What are you doing this weekend?

A beat.

JEFF
What do you mean?

KATHERINE
Do you have plans?

JEFF
I don't understand.

KATHERINE
I'm asking if you will be busy the whole time.

JEFF
As opposed to doing what?

KATHERINE
Having dinner with me.

Jeff opens his mouth to respond -- when the message finally clicks...

He immediately looks around to see if anyone is watching. They aren't.

JEFF
(lowering his voice)
Where...?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SMALL CITY - NIGHT

A CREAKING door. Light spills into Mona's hospital room...

Jeff pokes his head in. Shades are drawn. Serena and Tara are asleep next to the bed...

...but Mona is awake.

She waves at Jeff. He moves to her side -- accidentally bumping the IV. Mona flinches, but nobody wakes.

MONA
(whispering)
Hi dad.

JEFF
Hi honey. How are you feeling?

MONA
A little cancery.

Jeff smiles; pats her head. Undeniably his favorite.

MONA (CONT'D)
Dad...

JEFF
What?

MONA
What if I don't get better?

The question takes him off-guard. For a moment, Jeff has to look away --

-- then, recovering, he considers a response.

Removing his wallet, Jeff produces the fortune from his cookie...

JEFF
Remember when I told you my dad's
advice --?

MONA
Yeah.

JEFF
Look what came in my fortune cookie
today.

He hands her the paper...

MONA
(reading)
Everything is possible for one who
believes...woah!

JEFF
Crazy isn't it? So crazy it must be
true.

MONA
Yeah.

JEFF
Do you believe you will get better?

MONA
Yeah.

JEFF
Good. Then you will.

Jeff sits back. Rubs his face.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Know what else is crazy?

MONA
What?

JEFF
A bunch of Mexican rapists turned
my car into a goddamned speed
racer.

MONA
A what?

He takes out his cellphone. Shows her a picture.

MONA (CONT'D)
That's your car?

JEFF
Sure is.

Mona looks back at her dad. Grins.

MONA
Cool.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOFTOP - BEIGE BUILDING - NIGHT (FANTASY)

Echoing music...

Jeff and Superhero Katherine are right where we left them - with Katherine pointing to something OFF SCREEN...

...only now we see the reason Jeff 'erupted' on his wife's back. Atop the Beige building, flanked by POTTED PALMS, beneath a WHITE AWNING...

...is the J-CLUB. SPOTLIGHTS swing about. Sinatra plays from deep inside...

FRANK SINATRA (SONG)

...you make me feel so young...

In SLO-MOTION, Jeff and Superhero Katherine walk side-by-side...

...into the stunning J-Club. The place is PACKED. Socialites mingle through palms, banquettes, and along a sparkling bar. Everyone tips their hats as the POWER COUPLE pass through...

...including Clarence, seated at the bar with Daniel -- who has a hand on Clarence's leg. This produces brief confusion in Jeff. He shakes it off...

...and steps onto the balcony. He and Katherine approach the railing. We realize the Beige building is much higher than usual. Far below, the faint glow of another...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

It's incredible. You can barely see it...

JEFF

(smirking)

See what?

Without looking, he reaches over his shoulder for a martini. Finds one waiting.

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

It was a such a smart idea to make it bigger.

JEFF

Well, I figured while we were down there...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

It's just so...big.

JEFF
 (drawing closer)
You like it big, don't you?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE
You know I do --

PRELAP SFX: KNOCKING!!!

INT. BATHROOM - HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

SERENA (O.S.)
Jeff --?!

Jeff freezes. He's crammed inside the small hospital bathroom, jerking off.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Jeff, what are you doing in there?
We need to meet with Dr. Gandhi.

JEFF
Coming!!

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - HOSPITAL - MORNING

Dr. Gandhi leans across his desk. Jeff and Serena stare back at him.

DR. GANDHI
The chemotherapy isn't working.

Serena immediately starts crying. She grips Jeff's hand.

DR. GANDHI (CONT'D)
Mrs. Armstrong, this by no means
implies Mona won't be cured. What
it does mean is we need to explore
those other treatments. I know this
is a financial burden, but the
hospital can put you on a payment
plan --

It takes every fiber of Jeff's body to speak calmly.

JEFF
What other options do we have?

DR. GANDHI
Simply put, Mr. Armstrong - you
don't.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. CEO'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Jeff sits in Clarence's office. Staring across the desk.
Trying to appear patient --

-- as Clarence attempts to operate a marijuana VAPORIZER.

CLARENCE
Goddamnit...

He shoves the weed deeper. Presses one of the buttons. Sucks
on a tube. Holds in a breath.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Do you know how to work these
things --?

JEFF
No...
(making sure the door is
closed)
...are you sure you should be doing
this?

CLARENCE
(exhaling)
It's legal.

JEFF
Sure, but...

CLARENCE
This is the new martini lunch.

JEFF
Right...

CLARENCE
...though it's easier to tell if a
martini's working...

JEFF
Clarence - did you have time to
consider moving central air?

A long pause. Clarence stares back at him.

CLARENCE

What?

JEFF

Central air. Moving it to the
basement. I know we'd lose some
parking spaces...

Clarence nods...

JEFF (CONT'D)

...but there's plenty above ground,
and new units take up less space.

CLARENCE

Sure...

JEFF

...sure, yes?

Now Clarence is shaking his head.

CLARENCE

No.

JEFF

No?

CLARENCE

(blinking)

Armstrong, I love the initiative.
But I thought you were talking
about one of those things...

JEFF

What things?

Clarence starts opening his hands, in a 'bursting' motion.

CLARENCE

...what do they call them?

JEFF

I don't know...

A smile spreads across Clarence's lips. He starts to giggle.

CLARENCE

Me neither.

JEFF

Are you saying I should give this
up?

Disappointment ripples through his voice. Clarence can feel the vibrations.

CLARENCE
No. No, Armstrong. Don't give up.

JEFF
Okay...

CLARENCE
Just let me crunch a few more numbers.

Not wanting to push it further, Jeff gets up and heads to the door.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Hey Armstrong --

He turns back. Clarence grins.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
-- it's definitely working.

INT. ACCOUNTING - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Footsteps down a linoleum hallway...

Jeff reaches a door labeled: ACCOUNTING. He lifts a fist, then pauses. Curses under his breath. KNOCKS...

KIM LEE (O.S.)
Come in!

EXT. ACCOUNTING - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

The wide room is a sea of papers, stacked floor to ceiling. In the center sits KIM LEE (60's), Chinese, spectacled, perched behind a MACINTOSH CLASSIC. Rubber-band stacks of FLOPPY DISKS form a cityscape across his desk.

KIM LEE
Yes --?

JEFF
Kim, I'd like to talk.

KIM LEE
About what?

JEFF
(lowering his voice)
About...the investment.

Silence. Kim's face twists into deep concern...

...eyes drawing Jeff's attention to a MAN (40's) in a NAVY BLUE SUIT - previously unseen - sifting through files. Kim narrows his brow.

KIM LEE
(charged)
What investment?

Blue Suit is now staring straight at them.

JEFF
Did I say investment?

KIM LEE
I'm not sure what you said.

JEFF
Neither am I.

Jeff backs out of the room. Blue Suit watches...

...as Jeff enters the hallway. Walking away. Faster and faster. The linoleum floor blurs beneath him...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT./INT. STOCK BUICK - FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Asphalt flies beneath the Stock Buick. The road is empty, surrounded by dry, golden hills. Not a cloud in the sky.

Inside the car, the new digital console streams with information:

WATER: 84.5 - P OIL - 3.4 - LAP 1:18

Completely mystified, Jeff reaches for the CD Player. No longer there. In its place: a brand-new stereo with no discernible buttons. He taps the blank screen.

JEFF
(frustrated)
Turn on.

That does it -- voice activation.

STEREO (VOICE)
Connected. Searching. For. Phone.

JEFF
What...?

He notices his phone LIGHT UP on the passenger seat.

STEREO (VOICE)
Found. Playing. Playlist. For. Dad.

Jeff lifts his hands in confusion --

-- when the first HARPSICHORD notes of "You Still Believe in Me" by The Beach Boys comes into the car...

THE BEACH BOYS (SONG)
*I know perfectly well I'm not where
I should be...*

Body tense with protest, Jeff stares at the stereo...

THE BEACH BOYS (SONG) (CONT'D)
*...I've been very aware you've been
patient with me...*

...but slowly, the muscles loosen. He likes this song. Lowering the window, breeze circulates the car. He sits back...

...and we rise above the Buick, higher and higher, until we can see, far beyond the rolling hills, the SPARKLING SEA...

EXT. SEASIDE TOWN - SUNSET

Seagull cries. Lapping waves. Distant BARKING...

Jeff gets out of his car, face painted with the falling light. He takes a SHOPPING BAG from the backseat, then moves towards an idyllic view...

...a quiet COVE, with a pier stretching into the blue water. A RESTAURANT perched at the end. Under the posts, lazy SEALS bark their complaints...

Jeff walks down a rocky outcropping to the edge of the surf. He takes in a deep breath of salty air...

Down below, a few families enjoy the beach. One in particular...

...a MOTHER and FATHER, sitting beneath a striped umbrella. Swimwear oddly outdated. The husband is passed out, beer in hand...

...while the mother, sunglasses on, watches her only SON play in the surf. He splashes about, LAUGHING at his freedom...

The ocean SPARKLES. The mother smiles at her son, lovingly...

...her white swimsuit lacy as the Halfmoon. Hint of a BRUISE behind her sunglasses...

A strange look comes over Jeff. He focuses again on the pier. Squints.

He's been here before...

INT. THE OLD INN RESTAURANT - PIER - SUNSET

KATHERINE

What do you think --?

Jeff and Katherine sit at a table, next to windows overlooking the water. She wears a green summer dress, complimenting her slender shoulders -- but Jeff isn't looking at her. He's transfixed by the waves...

JEFF

(absently)

It's nice.

KATHERINE

There's something in your eye...

Confused, Jeff lifts the back of his spoon to inspect.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

No, I mean -- like you're thinking about something.

JEFF

Oh...

He returns to the view. Shakes his head...

JEFF (CONT'D)

It's the strangest thing...

KATHERINE

What --?

WAITER (O.S.)
Good evening, you two!

The WAITER (40's) steps forward, interrupting the moment.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Can I start you off with sparkling,
flat, or tap?

KATHERINE
Oh, geez. I wouldn't mind --

JEFF
Tap.

A bit disappointed, the waiter walks away.

KATHERINE
You were saying...?

JEFF
Forget it.
(eyeing the waiter)
These fuckers try to get you at
every turn, don't they?

Katherine smiles.

KATHERINE
I figured out who you reminded me
of. All your little ticks.

JEFF
Who?

She lowers her voice, as if betraying a dirty secret.

KATHERINE
My dad.

JEFF
The war hero?

KATHERINE
Yes.

Jeff shrugs approvingly.

JEFF
My grandfather, he flew in WWII.
(a beat)
What was he like...?

KATHERINE

My dad?

She runs through a list of adjectives. Settles on:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Confusing. A good heart, but talked one way and acted another. What do you think is more important?

JEFF

Which?

KATHERINE

Words or actions?

JEFF

I think you should say what you mean.

KATHERINE

What if you don't know what you mean?

JEFF

Then how the fuck can you know anything at all?

Jeff picks up the menu. Scans the prices.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Jesus.

LATER

Night has fallen. White lights glitter across the water. The waiter reaches down to take plates --

JEFF (CONT'D)

Hold on a damn second --

Jeff grabs a piece of bread, sopping up the rest of his steak juices. The Waiter tries to conceal his distaste, while Katherine watches with amusement. Another of those ticks --

After permission is granted, the waiter disappears and Jeff returns his attention to the water -- consternation reappearing...

KATHERINE

What's the matter, Jeff...?

JEFF

Why did you pick this place?

KATHERINE

I don't know. It's far away...

She reaches over. Places a hand upon his.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So. Are you going to ask me?

JEFF

What?

KATHERINE

Why I brought you here.

Jeff stares back at her. For a long time...

JEFF

You know I'm married.

KATHERINE

I do.

JEFF

That doesn't bother you?

KATHERINE

It does.

They continue to look at each other...

...until Jeff reaches under the table -- and produces the SHOPPING BAG. Hands it to Katherine.

Surprised, she lifts out something wrapped in tissue paper. Opens it up.

A wry smile moves across her lips...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SEASIDE MOTEL - NIGHT

Wearing a tight AMERICAN FLAG T-SHIRT, Katherine lies on the motel bed, knees to her chest, with Jeff on top of her --

KATHERINE

Yes...do it...!!

Jeff grunts. Eyes blinking. In front of him, above the headboard, is a rather odd painting...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

...for your country...!

...of a TREE filled with FURRY CREATURES. Sharp little teeth.
It displeases Jeff. He hears a strange CHATTERING --

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
What...is it...?

Jeff looks back down. Katherine coming in and out of focus...

JEFF
I was just...wondering...

KATHERINE
...yes...

THRUST...

JEFF
...what did...your father do...

KATHERINE
(confused)
...yes?!

THRUST...

JEFF
...in the military...?

KATHERINE
He doesn't...like to...

THRUST...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
...talk about it!!!

They both CLIMAX simultaneously!

PRELAP MUSIC: "Pipeline" by The Chantays...

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Reverb-drenched SURF GUITAR cascades like a waterfall as Jeff
PEELS onto the freeway. The MOTEL SIGN fades from sight...

He's feeling good. Real good. Speeding through the night, the
console of TURBO BUTTONS illuminates his face...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE
Do you see...?

Jeff looks over --

-- to find Superhero Katherine sitting in the passenger seat, still sweaty from the sex. She PRESSES down on his leg, causing him to accelerate...

JEFF

See what --?

Superhero Katherine runs her hand over a BRIGHT RED BUTTON...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

Push it...

JEFF

Are you sure --?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

Push it, fag!

Alarmed, he obeys -- and is instantly THRUST back! A BOOSTER explodes, and the Buick ZOOMS past 100 MPH!

JEFF

Son of a bitch --!!

Jeff can barely handle the turns, but wildness has returned to his eyes!

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

(pointing)

Look...

-- and now he sees it. Hanging in the sky: the gigantic SPEEDWAY SCREEN. It reads -- \$100,000 TO THE WINNER!!!

Now the dots connect. Jeff gets it! He grips Superhero Katherine's hand -- so tightly she tries to pull it away --

JEFF

I see!!!

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - JEFF'S HOUSE - MORNING

Birds chirping. Aerosol cans spraying...

In morning sweatpants, Tara steps curiously onto the front porch. She walks towards the Stock Buick, parked in the driveway.

TARA

Dad...?

She finds Jeff on his knees, spray-painting letters through a STENCIL. We can't quite make out the word...

JEFF
(looking up)
Good morning, surfer girl.

TARA
What are you doing?

Jeff lifts up his phone.

JEFF
Did you put music on here for me?

TARA
Like, two years ago.

JEFF
I like it.

TARA
(shrugging)
Cool.

She goes back inside. Wiping off his hands, Jeff gets up to admire his handiwork. The door opens again...

...and this time, it's Serena, in workout clothes. She's looking quite fit. A BOOK tucked under her arm.

The Medical Bill Survival Guide...

SERENA
Jeff...

JEFF
(absently)
-- what?

SERENA
Did you even come home last night?

JEFF
Of course I did. Slept on the sofa.
Didn't want to wake you.

SERENA
What kept you so late?

JEFF
Serena, I'm trying to make money
for this family.

SERENA

So am I --

(tapping the book)

-- turns out there's all sorts of
subsidies that can help with --

JEFF

(interrupting)

That's great. But we don't need
help. We need action.

SERENA

Action. Is that what you were
getting at two in the morning?

JEFF

No.

(reconsidering)

I mean -- yes. And you know what? I
succeeded.

He ushers her over, proudly gesturing to the new name: MONA.

SERENA

What am I looking at?

JEFF

Do you see it?

SERENA

I see our daughter's name on a
ridiculous car...

Now she realizes...

SERENA (CONT'D)

...you're going to sell it! That's
so smart! I'm sure you could get --

JEFF

(cutting her off)

I'm not going to sell it.

SERENA

What, then?

JEFF

I'm going to race it.

A long pause. Serena stares at her husband.

SERENA

You're a fucking idiot.

She goes back inside.

JEFF
(calling after)
I don't like that language!

EXT. SPEEDWAY - SMALL CITY - AFTERNOON

Smoking. Vaping. Brown bagging...

It's early, but clumps of fans are already hanging out in the speedway parking lot -- when the grumbling of a RESTLESS ENGINE draws attention. Everyone turns their heads...

...and their jaws drop. WHISTLES and SHOUTS!!!

Jeff nervously drives his Stock Buick down the aisle, pulling into the spot from his previous visit. Cutting the engine, he checks the rearview --

-- making sure the Police Officer is still posted in front of the track. Then he shifts focus to the parking lot. Just as he'd hoped --

-- the same group of Latinos, led by Carlos, are hanging beside their souped-up Civic.

Jeff steps out. He's wearing a vintage BOMBER JACKET and AVIATORS. Probably his grandfather's. His version of tough.

Walking cautiously towards Carlos, Jeff keeps looking over his shoulder. Carlos stares back, agape...

CARLOS
Bro...

JEFF
I don't want any trouble --
(pointing)
-- I know the cop, remember?

CARLOS
So do we. He protects us.

JEFF
From who?

CARLOS
(of Jeff's clothes)
From weird fucking zombie test pilots.

Jeff gives him a flat look.

JEFF
Do you remember me?

CARLOS
Sure, I remember you...
(glancing at the Buick)
...but I don't remember that.

As the boys swarm around the Buick, Jeff steps closer to Carlos, lowering his voice...

JEFF
Look, I need something. I need...

CARLOS
Help --?

Jeff winces at the word. He places \$20 in Carlos' hand....

JEFF
I need to know what I'm driving -
and how to drive it.

Carlos, a quick study, glances down at the bill.

CARLOS
That's not a lot of money, bro.

Jeff's eyes dim.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The family sits around the dinner table, eating LASAGNA. Mona lifts a bite to her mouth. Due to the chemo, all of her hair is gone. The food is about to reach her mouth --

-- when her hand starts shaking. She drops the food back onto her plate, splattering a little on the tablecloth.

MONA
Sorry...

SERENA
Don't be sorry, sweetie.

JEFF
You need some help?

TARA
I've got it --

Tara slides over, lifting a bite to Mona's lips - who smiles and chews. Serena clutches Jeff's hand under the table.

SERENA
Feel good to be home, love?

MONA
Smells better.
(chewing)
Lasagna tastes different...

SERENA
It's homemade!

Jeff starts to chew a little slower. Mona smiles at him.

MONA
Dad...?

JEFF
(distracted)
Yes?

MONA
How come my name is on your car?

JEFF
Because, I've found a way to help
you feel better --
(to Serena)
-- I knew this tasted different.

MONA
How?

JEFF
Something about the noodles.

MONA
No, how will you help me feel
better?

JEFF
By winning the race, of course!

SERENA
It doesn't taste different. It
tastes better.

MONA
Really?!

JEFF
Different does not mean better.

TARA

Dad -- how are you gonna win a race? You don't know how.

JEFF

I found an expert. Been at the track forever.

SERENA

And there's money in this?

JEFF

It isn't all about money, Serena.

SERENA

I thought that's exactly what this is about.

JEFF

And I thought lasagna was supposed to taste like lasagna.

SERENA

If you've only had frozen lasagna, then you don't know what it tastes like!

MONA

Dad, can I come to the races?

JEFF

Of course!

MONA

But what if I'm too sick...?

JEFF

You won't be.

MONA

How do you know?

JEFF

Same way I know what real lasagna tastes like.

SERENA

And that is?

JEFF

Because I know.

INT. BEDROOM - JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

SERENA

Jeff...?

Lying in bed, Jeff's face is illuminated by his phone. Serena looks at him from the her side.

JEFF

(absently)

What --?

SERENA

I'm afraid.

JEFF

Of what?

SERENA

What if the new treatment doesn't work?

JEFF

Muhammad said it works over 90% of the time.

SERENA

Gandhi --

(Jeff rolls his eyes)

-- and that's still not 100%. You don't seem very worried, Jeff.

JEFF

Excuse me?

SERENA

You don't! You crack jokes like it's nothing.

JEFF

You mean, I don't break down crying every time Mona speaks? One of us has to be strong, Serena.

SERENA

Yes, but --

JEFF

I'm more concerned about making sure we still have a home for Mona when she does get better.

SERENA

But didn't you talk to Clarence
about the investment --?

JEFF

(finger to his lips)
Shhh...

SERENA

Jeff -- who do you think is
listening?

JEFF

You never know.

SERENA

What are you talking about?

Setting aside his cellphone, Jeff shuffles closer. Whispers
into Serena's ears.

JEFF

I think the company's being
audited...

SERENA

So...?

JEFF

So...there are things I haven't
told you about the you-know-what.

SERENA

What kind of things...?

JEFF

A plan. Clarence and I came up with
it. And a couple other guys. That's
why we're strapped. But if it works
out -- this cancer won't mean a
damn thing.

SERENA

It won't?

JEFF

No. It won't.

SERENA

But is what you're doing - is it...

JEFF

Serena, what do you think those bastards across the street are doing every day? It's war out there -- and if we're going to stay afloat, we have to take risks.

A beat. Serena realizes she's closer to Jeff, at least in proximity, than she's been in months.

SERENA

Jeff...

JEFF

What?

SERENA

Do you notice anything different about me?

JEFF

It's dark.

SERENA

But recently -- anything?

JEFF

Well, I know this hasn't been easy for you...

She lifts a gentle hand to his face.

SERENA

No. But I figure, if you can do something difficult during hard times, then you can do it anytime.

JEFF

I don't know what you mean...

SERENA

I got through to CHIP. It's this government program. Took twenty calls, but it looks like they might help bridge the gap. Also...

(a beat)

...I've lost over fifteen pounds. I weigh as much as on our honeymoon!

JEFF

Really?

SERENA

Yes, really. I was thinking about that the other day. The beach where we stayed...

Jeff tightens up.

JEFF

What about it?

SERENA

Remember those paintings in the hotel? Of those weird creatures in the trees...?

JEFF

No...

The RINGING slowly returns to his ears...

SERENA

...you don't? I do. They were so crazy. Little puffballs with sharp teeth. What were those things?

That's enough. Jeff rolls back to his corner.

SERENA (CONT'D)

What --?

JEFF

Nothing.

He picks his phone back up.

SERENA

What did I say?

JEFF

You didn't say anything. I'm just tired.

Serena's hope for romance lingers, then evaporates. She returns to her side, eyes glistening under the moonlight...

Jeff discreetly flips through his phone -- the CARTOONS that inspired SUPERHERO KATHERINE. In impossibly short shorts. Flying through the air...

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFFS - SMALL CITY - SUNSET (FANTASY)

...Superhero Katherine lands on a cliff top. In front of her: Jeff's silhouette, AK-47 slung over his shoulder, staring beyond the edge. The ground TREMBLES...

Drawing closer, Superhero Katherine sees what he's looking at...

...the two towers, shimmering against heat waves. There are no other buildings. No roads. No cars. Just the towers amongst a wasteland...

JEFF

It's growing again...

More TREMBLING. Superhero Katherine sees the Blue Building burst from the ground, sprouting until it's the tallest, once again.

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

If it's always growing, how can we stop it?

Jeff's about to answer -- when he sees Katherine's exposed legs.

JEFF

Nice shorts...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

Thanks.

JEFF

Where'd you get them?

SUPERHERO KATHERINE

I'm not really sure...

Jeff returns his focus to the towers.

JEFF

There's only one way we can stop them now...

PRELAP SFX: Sound of a POWERFUL ENGINE...

EXT. ABANDONED TRACK - DAY

-- as the exhaust pipe KICKS OUT!

Beneath a cloudless sky, on an abandoned track outside of town, Carlos sits behind the wheel of the Stock Buick. Jeff is beside him...

...watching curiously as Carlos leans against the steering wheel, feeling the hum of horsepower...

CARLOS

Nice, bro. Very nice...

He cuts the engine. Takes a long pull on his VAPORIZER, exhaling a cloud that envelops Jeff's entire body.

JEFF

Thanks.

Carlos emerges from the haze.

CARLOS

They chopped this thing up pro-style. This'll get you an 8.5, no problem.

(off Jeff's expression)

That's a drag race time. Eight point five seconds. Very good.

JEFF

Good enough to get me the hundred grand?

CARLOS

What hundred grand?

JEFF

A hundred grand -- isn't that what you win for a race?

Carlos starts laughing. Loud enough to COUGH on his vaporizer. He disappears in the cloud...

...and reemerges, still laughing.

CARLOS

Bro, you don't get paid to race. You pay to race.

JEFF

The hell are you talking about? I saw the screen! \$100,000 jackpot!

CARLOS

That's just some bullshit casino ad.

JEFF
What casino?

CARLOS
The one built by those blue
building guys.

Jeff looks at him in horror...

CARLOS (CONT'D)
You want a money race -- you gotta
find dudes with money. Those are
bad dudes. Probably the same ones
who took your ride in the first
place!

JEFF
You know how to find them?

CARLOS
Why...?

JEFF
I need the money - and I think I
could win.

CARLOS
What the fuck makes you think that?

JEFF
Because, Carlos -- I believe in
myself, and everything is possible
for someone who believes.

CARLOS
You sound like a goddamned fortune
cookie.

JEFF
Just show me what the fuck to do.

Carlos shrugs. Turns the key. REVS the engine --!

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PLANNERS OFFICE - SMALL CITY - DAY

Invigorated, Jeff speeds the Stock Buick down the freeway...

BEACH BOYS (SONG)
...wouldn't it be nice if we were
older...

Taking the next exit, he circles into a Business Park...

...parking before the City Planners office. He grab's a new SHOPPING BAG from the backseat, about to get out...

-- when he sees Katherine exiting the front door. Jeff smiles, excited to see her. Then he realizes --

-- she isn't alone. She's walking beside someone. Someone Jeff recognizes...

The man in the blue suit.

JEFF

What the fuck...?

He slides behind the wheel - as if the Buick didn't stand out enough. Luckily, the pair heads the opposite direction, pulling out in a Blue Mercedes.

Jeff pursues...

EXT. BLUE BUILDING - SMALL CITY - DAY

The Mercedes enters the turn-around of the Blue Building, shimmering brilliantly in the sunlight. Katherine and Blue Suit get out, hand the keys to a valet, and enter...

Jeff parks a good distance from the entrance -- absolutely speechless. He is torn. He doesn't want to go inside.

But he has no choice...

INT. LOBBY - THE BLUE BUILDING - DAY

It's spectacular...

The lobby hums with the cheerful rhythms of steady commerce. No apathetic staff at the front desk. No wood-paneled walls. In fact -- no walls at all. Just massive LCD SCREENS, projecting ENVIRONMENTS that shift every few minutes...

A tropical beach. An evergreen forest. A European hillside...

DOORMAN (O.S.)

Here for the club, sir?

Jeff wheels around. A pleasant MEXICAN MAN (50s) smiles back at him.

JEFF

What --?

DOORMAN

The club. Are you here for lunch?
The elevator is right over there.

INT. ELEVATOR - THE BLUE BUILDING - DAY

The spacious elevator shoots up. Only one button: TOWER CLUB. It's nicer than most apartments. But that's not the worst part. The worst part is the music playing overhead...

FRANK SINATRA (SONG)

*...you make me feel so young. You
make me feel so Spring has
sprung...*

Blood drains from Jeff's face...

INT. TOWER CLUB - THE BLUE BUILDING - DAY

The doors open. Jeff steps out...

...and can't believe his eyes.

This is not the club he saw online. To the contrary. It looks nearly identical to the 'J CLUB' from his dreams! Potted palms. Beautiful woodwork. And goddamned FRANK SINATRA, continuing to play...

FRANK SINATRA (SONG)

*...you and I are just like a couple
of tots, running across the
meadow...*

A panoramic window spreads to his right, displaying the entire city. Horrified, Jeff walks towards it. Gets within an inch of the glass...

...and there it is. Far below: the Beige Building. Innocuous. Insignificant. Inferior...

JEFF

My God...

Pale and disoriented, Jeff tries to get back to the elevator, but is intercepted by a BLONDE HOSTESS (20's), smartly dressed, piercing BLUE EYES --

HOSTESS

Welcome to the Tower Club, sir!
First time?

JEFF

How do you know that...?

He slams his hand against the elevator button.

HOSTESS

We know our members -- but you've got that prospective look. Care for an application?

JEFF

(repeatedly pressing the button)

This place -- it's not supposed to look like this...

HOSTESS

We recently renovated. Decided to take a more classical approach.

JEFF

Classical...?

HOSTESS

Yes. Modern can scare some people away. Better to keep it a bit -- what's the expression? Old school.

DING! The elevator doors open, and Jeff throws himself inside, gasping for breath. Just before the doors close --

-- he sees someone coming from the bathroom. Stopping before him. Katherine. Her face painted with shock and surprise.

KATHERINE

Jeff...?

The doors close.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. CEO'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

JEFF

Something is going the fuck on, Clarence.

Jeff is pacing back and forth in Clarence's office. Behind his desk, Clarence appears concerned -- at least, for a man who's drinking scotch at 1 p.m.

CLARENCE

What's the problem, pal...?

JEFF

That woman - the city planner who I brought up here. She's eating with the blue man right now.

CLARENCE

Who --?

Behind Jeff, Clarence can see Daniel peaking inside -- concerned. Clarence winks, waving him away...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Who is the blue man --?

Jeff stops pacing. Gets closer to the desk.

JEFF

The one going through Kim's papers in accounting. Are we being audited, Clarence? Are we being --

CLARENCE

What were you doing in accounting?

JEFF

(defensively)

I wanted to make sure there wasn't some sort of company loan plan.

CLARENCE

Company loan?

JEFF

To bridge the goddamned gap! I've got nothing, Clarence! My kid's sick, and the only hope I have is pulling a 2.0 in 8.6.

(off Clarence's confusion)

It's a racing term. Forget it.

Clarence rises from his desk. He pours two glasses of scotch. Hands one to Jeff, then leads him over to the window...

...where they both look upon the Blue Building.

CLARENCE

Look at that building, Jeff. What do you see?

JEFF

You know what I see.

CLARENCE

That's good. That's the right instinct. And yet, if you were to look closer. If you were to get right up close to those windows, what would you see...?

JEFF

Them.

CLARENCE

No, Armstrong. The glass is reflective.

JEFF

(deducing)

Myself...?

CLARENCE

Exactly.

Clarence downs his scotch. Let's out a gasp of pleasure.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Scotland...

(turning to Jeff)

Armstrong, when I asked you to risk everything on our 'deal', I told you not to ask too many questions, didn't I?

JEFF

Yes.

CLARENCE

And why did you agree?

Jeff starts to answer, then realizes: he's not quite sure.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you why. Because you and I made the same mistakes. Married too young. Had kids because we thought we should. Now we stand here trying to figure a goddamned way out. And there is only one way out.

JEFF

War?

CLARENCE

(smiling)

Money.

Noticing Jeff hasn't taken a sip, Clarence obliges - draining the second glass.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Hold on a little longer. This is all going to work out. Not in the way you think. But it's going to work out...

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

GLUG...GLUG...

Oxygen bubbles rise in Jeff's fish tank, originating from the WWII plane. They break upon the surface...

Distraught, Jeff shoves into his dark office. Grabs a bottle of water. Gulps it down. Wipes his brow. Only to notice...

...one of his metal blinds is bent - producing a peephole to the blue tower.

Allowing a single beam of light to penetrate the aquarium....

...where two DEAD FISH now float on the surface.

JEFF

No...

Jeff rushes over, scanning the rest of the tank. He lets out a sigh of relief.

The White Halfmoon is still alive, albeit worse for wear. Her fin is oddly shredded. As if something has taken a bite...

GLUG...GLUG...

The familiar RINGING rises in Jeff's ears...

Placing the dead fish in the trash, Jeff finds himself crouching behind the aquarium.

Eyeing the blue tower through its watery filter...

GLUG...GLUG...

...watching as the next air bubble MUSHROOMS up. Perfectly aligned with the blue building. To his surprise, it takes on the form...

...of a nuclear explosion.

Jeff cocks his head. He waits for another bubble to rise, enveloping the Blue Building in a beautiful atomic cloud...

He smiles.

PRELAP SFX: EXPLOSIONS --

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED TRACK - DAY

Jeff REVS the engine...

The Stock Buick is back on the abandoned track. This time, Jeff is behind the wheel. Carlos watches nervously from the passenger seat, lips hovering above his Vaporizer.

CARLOS

All right. Now remember what I said. First, we...

SCREECH!!!

Jeff floors the gas! Carlos is knocked back, as Jeff zooms towards a distant pair of CONES. He reaches for the RED BUTTON --

CARLOS (CONT'D)

-- don't!

He presses it. The booster sends them straight past the cones, towards a sharp turn. Strangling the wheel...

...Jeff slams the breaks - but turns too quickly. The car goes into a spin! Both men shout at the top of their lungs!!!

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Carlos sits beside the steaming car, shaking his head. Jeff looks at him with a bit of adolescent shame...

JEFF

Sorry...

CARLOS

Why am I here?

JEFF

I wanted to show you what I could do...

CARLOS
You don't know what you can do.
This shit's dangerous, man. And
it's not all about going fast. You
can lose by going too fast.

JEFF
That doesn't make any sense.

Carlos spits.

CARLOS
I got a trick for you. It's easy to
remember. You ready?

JEFF
Yes.

CARLOS
If you listen when someone is
talking, it helps you understand
what the fuck they're saying.

Carlos gets up. Leans against the car.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Now. Let's talk about racing...

Reaching into his pocket, he produces a notepad full of
chicken scratch.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
I wrote down some notes...

JEFF
Really?

CARLOS
You're paying me, aren't you? Here
it goes. Drag racing...it's about
going against your instincts.

JEFF
Okay...

CARLOS
(reading)
You want to grab the wheel tight,
but you gotta keep it light...

JEFF
Nice rhyme.

Carlos shoves the pad back in his pocket.

CARLOS

-- fuck it, the point is, you turn too far left, you want to correct hard right. Right? But you can't.

JEFF

Why not --?

CARLOS

Because this shit's about control. You overreact, you're done. A drag race is one choice stretched over a quarter mile. So you gotta be...I don't know. Centered. In control.

JEFF

I'm in control.

CARLOS

Really? Seems like you're going through all kinds of midlife shit. What's the plural for crisis?

JEFF

Crises.

CARLOS

That's you. Anyway, once it's in motion, that's when you're making split-second decisions. You're adjusting, but in small ways. You also gotta watch how the other guy's driving.

JEFF

Why? I'm in my lane, he's in his.

CARLOS

You hope. We're crossing lines all the time. Maybe you'd like to think there's a barrier, but there isn't. Just paint on the concrete.

Jeff stares at Carlos.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

All right. Let's start over.

INT. BEDROOM - JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jeff lies in bed, looking at his cellphone. Circling towards the screen, we expect to see something Katherine-related...

...but instead, we see photos of RALLY CARS. Jeff is looking at stats. Drive times.

SERENA (O.S.)

Ow --!

Jeff glances at the bathroom door. A seam of light underneath.

JEFF

What are you doing in there?

No response.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Serena? You've been in there --

The door opens. Serena steps out...

...wearing BLACK LINGERIE. Garters. Tassels. The whole thing.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Jesus --

Jeff sits up. Completely surprised. She grins, pleased at his response. She walks over to his side of the bed, running a hand over the lower sheets.

SERENA

What do you think...?

JEFF

I...

Turning off the overhead light, Serena slides into bed next to him. Puts her arm across his chest.

SERENA

Do you like it?

JEFF

Yes...

SERENA

Do you want to --

-- BEEP!!!

Both of them freeze...

A dull light illuminates Jeff's side table. Not wanting to ruin the mood, Serena offers a sexy wink, reaches to turn off the phone --

-- then notices something odd.

SERENA (CONT'D)
Who's Katherine --?

A beat.

JEFF
Who?

SERENA
Katherine. And why does she 'need
to see you'?

Jeff takes the phone. Panic.

JEFF
Oh, shoot. I forgot...

He swings his legs out of bed...

SERENA
Forgot what --?

...goes to the closet.

JEFF
She's an employee, Serena. I
promised I'd help her.

SERENA
At ten p.m.?!

JEFF
I can't talk about it. It's got to
do with business.

Jeff flips on the light. Serena squints, quickly drawing up
the covers...

SERENA
Jeff --

JEFF
(turning)
What?

Her lips tremble.

SERENA
You can't leave. Not now.

Jeff hesitates. To his surprise, he really doesn't want to.

JEFF
I'm sorry.
(a beat)
You look beautiful.

CUT TO:

INT. MEXICAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's late.

Bleary eyed, Jeff sits in a dimly lit Mexican restaurant. The place is nearly empty, save for a few SPANISH COUPLES seated beside a small STAGE. A sign hangs above:

Mariachi Mondays!

The front door JINGLES. Jeff watches Katherine maneuver towards him. She takes a seat, offering a vulnerable smile.

KATHERINE
Hi.

Jeff looks suspiciously behind her, making sure nobody followed.

JEFF
Where's your friend?

KATHERINE
What friend?

JEFF
(leaning closer)
The man in blue.

Katherine stiffens a bit.

KATHERINE
Jeff, I'm a city planner. I don't
get to choose who I see.

JEFF
Bullshit. I saw him in accounting.

KATHERINE
What does that mean?

JEFF
That something is up.

KATHERINE
Nothing is up.

JEFF
Everything is up.

Jeff sits back in his chair. Dips a chip into salsa. Crosses his arms.

JEFF (CONT'D)
You wanted to talk with me?

KATHERINE
I have something to tell you...

JEFF
Like you've been sneaking around?

KATHERINE
Jeff - we are the ones who've been sneaking around.

Katherine sighs. She's about to go on -- when she notices him staring at the table...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
What?

JEFF
Let me see that...

He points to her knife. Awkwardly, she hands it over. Jeff picks up his own knife. Holds them side by side. His is significantly shorter.

JEFF (CONT'D)
What the hell...?

KATHERINE
Jeff --

He snaps out of it.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
-- I'm pregnant.

A suspended moment...

...they stare at each other.

RESTAURANT OWNER (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen. Los Hermanos
Felix!!!

Scattered APPLAUSE. In a state of shock, Jeff can't help looking to the stage --

-- where a pair of elderly MEXICAN BROTHERS (70's), tan riverbed skin, sit down with acoustic guitars...

KATHERINE

Jeff...

The brothers start playing in haunting, soft strokes...

THE FELIX BROTHERS

(singing)

*Acerquense hermanos dondequiera que
esten...*

Jeff feels Katherine's hand upon his. He turns back...

KATHERINE

Say something...

THE FELIX BROTHERS

(singing)

*...aguas siguen creciendo forman
inundacion...*

Avoiding eye contact, Jeff stares at the tablecloth. A skeleton pattern from *Día de Muertos*...

JEFF

What are you going to do...?

KATHERINE

Well I can't keep it.

JEFF

You can't?

KATHERINE

No...

(a confused beat)

...I mean, unless you want me to.

THE FELIX BROTHERS

(singing; in Spanish)

*...y te ahogas ahí mismo,
una piedra en el mar...*

The RINGING returns to Jeff's ears. He flinches...

JEFF

What the hell are they singing...?

KATHERINE

Jeff, look at me.

She snaps her fingers. He returns focus.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
What do you want?

It's all too much. Surreality crashes down. Jeff pushes back his chair and rushes out of the restaurant...

...leaving Katherine alone at the table.

With a direct line of sight to the Felix Brothers, she watches in resignation as the men croon in perfect harmony...

THE FELIX BROTHERS
(singing)
...el que sale perdiendo, un dia
ganara. Los tiempos van cambiando.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - SMALL CITY - DAY

Pale and tired, Jeff sits in Mona's hospital room. She sleeps peacefully...

Serena is beside her, arms crossed, purposefully avoiding eye contact with Jeff...

Still in a daze, Jeff notices his left hand is clenched...

...and drops of BLOOD are falling onto the carpet. Loosening his fingers, Jeff reveals...

...his CAR KEYS. He blinks...

JEFF
I'll be back...

Serena doesn't bother watching him go.

EXT. ABANDONED TRACK - DAY

VROOM!!! VROOM!!!

Jeff grips the steering wheel...

At the other end of the track, Carlos eyes his STOPWATCH. He exhales vape, lifts a flag...

-- and brings it down!

SCREECH!!!

The Rally Buick bursts to life! It flies down the track.

1...2...3...

Inside, Jeff grips tighter. The outside world turns to a blur...

4...5...6...

SUPERHERO KATHERINE (O.S.)

Easy...

...Superhero Katherine sits in the passenger seat, pointing to his hands. Against his instincts...

...he loosens his palms.

7...8...

The car ZOOMS past Carlos - who clicks his watch...

EXT. RIDGE - ABANDONED TRACK - DAY

CARLOS

Not bad...

Jeff and Carlos stand on a ridge above the track. The city skyline hovers in the distance...

...both towers clearly visible.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

...another couple months, you might be competitive.

JEFF

(focused on the towers)

That's too long. Did you talk to your guys?

Carlos inhales his vape.

CARLOS

I told you. You don't want to get mixed up with them.

JEFF

Yes I do.

CARLOS

Don't be stupid, man. You lose, your shit is fucked. You win, your shit might also be fucked. Plus you don't have any money.

JEFF
I'll bet the car.

A beat. Carlos takes a drag...

CARLOS
Guess that could work.

-- BEEP!!

Jeff draws out his cellphone. Reads the screen...

JEFF
Christ...

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC - SEASIDE TOWN - DAY

Jeff and Katherine sit in a blue, sterile waiting room. A SEAGULL swoops past the window. From the muffled seals BARKING, we know they're back in the seaside town...

KATHERINE
Thanks for coming.

He nods, staring blankly ahead...

A PAINTING hangs on the opposite wall. It depicts a vast forest, spreading into darkness. Oddly, it seems to be the same artist from the motel...

...only this time, there are no strange creatures. Just empty woods. Jeff leans forward. Searching the painted trees. He can almost hear the CHATTERING. See the gleaming sharp teeth...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I heard how you got your car.

JEFF
(turning)
What --?

For the first time, he sees a bit of anger in Katherine's eyes.

KATHERINE
I know a few cops in town. I heard them talking about some 'asshole' whose car got stolen, and when they found it, someone had turned it into a street racer.

JEFF
Asshole --?

KATHERINE
Who are you, Jeff?

JEFF
What do you mean?

KATHERINE
I mean - what are you doing? Do you have a plan, other than building that ridiculous bar on top of your prehistoric building?

JEFF
As a matter of fact, I do.

Katherine raises an eyebrow. Waiting.

JEFF (CONT'D)
I'm going to race my car at the speedway on Sunday. I bet a Mexican gang \$50,000. If I win, I can pay for my daughter's treatment. If they win, they keep my car.

A beat.

KATHERINE
Are you insane?

JEFF
I don't think so.

KATHERINE
What makes you think you can win?

JEFF
(sharply)
Because I've put my mind to it.

Katherine stares back in disbelief...

KATHERINE
My God...

JEFF
What?

KATHERINE
You want to know something? You want to know why my dad got his medal?

JEFF

Why?

KATHERINE

A mistake.

DOCTOR

-- Ms. Chavez?

A DOCTOR (40's) stands in the doorway. Katherine holds up a finger. Leans closer to Jeff.

JEFF

You said he didn't like to talk about it...

KATHERINE

He didn't like to talk about it, because he didn't do it! It was some other soldier who died - but my dad took the credit. After a while, he started believing what he said - and from then on, we had to treat him like a war hero.

JEFF

Why are you telling me this?

Katherine FLICKS Jeff's forehead.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Ow!

KATHERINE

These things in your mind, Jeff - they aren't real. Even if you want them to be. Do you understand?

Realizing he doesn't, she places his hand on her belly.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

This. This is real. Not the racing. Not the buildings. This. Do you understand?

Jeff looks deep into Katherine's eyes. For the briefest moment, he sees his own reflection...

JEFF

Maybe.

CUT TO:

INT. JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tara and Mona sit together, eating an unusual dish for the Armstrong household: VEGETABLES and QUINOA...

Jeff watches his daughters from across the table. Tara listens to her headphones, sharing an earbud with Mona, who balances the grains on her fork. He smiles affectionately...

SERENA

You don't like it --?

He breaks from his trance. Serena is frowning at his full plate.

JEFF

I haven't tried it yet.

She reaches to take it away...

...but Jeff stays her hand. He takes a bite. Offers a pleasant nod.

INT. KITCHEN - JEFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Serena washes dishes. Jeff leans against the counter, looking out the window. Through his neighbor's backyard, he can see a sliver of downtown...

SERENA

So? How did it all turn out?

JEFF

(absently)

What...?

She stops washing.

SERENA

The employee who needed your 'help' the other night.

JEFF

Oh, that. It was fine.

SERENA

I still don't think it's appropriate.

JEFF

I told her. She won't contact me again. She just...

SERENA

What?

JEFF

(looking back)

Didn't have anyone else to talk to.

Serena stares at him. Bitterness on her lips.

SERENA

You know what I remembered this morning --?

JEFF

What?

SERENA

Senior year. Those Spanish exchange students. Everyone thought they were so hot - especially the guy who liked me. Remember?

JEFF

I don't.

SERENA

Sure you do. We were all down at the beach, and he splashed water on me after I told him not to. You ran at him like a maniac. Tackled him, right in the ocean.

JEFF

Oh yeah...

SERENA

Would you do that for me now?

A beat.

JEFF

Tackle a guy if he splashed water on you?

SERENA

Yeah.

Jeff thinks about it. Smiles faintly.

JEFF

Of course I would.

Serena turns back to the dishes. A slight nod. Jeff's about to leave the room...

...when he pauses in the archway.

JEFF (CONT'D)
The big race is on Sunday...

Serena shakes her head, washing a colander.

JEFF (CONT'D)
...maybe I don't know what I'm
doing, but I'm doing it for us. I'd
like you and the girls to be there,
if you can.

She places the colander on the dry rack. Sighs.

SERENA
Okay.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPEEDWAY - SMALL CITY - MORNING

Sun rises above the city...

...drawing out the SHADOWS of the towers. They spread across
the smaller buildings...

...shade from the Beige Tower stops near the edge of
downtown...

...but the Blue Tower continues, reaching all the way to the
Speedway.

Standing on the track, somehow able to sense its looming
presence...

...Jeff looks up from beside his Stock Buick. Squints at the
sky. A cloud of VAPE passes over him...

CARLOS (O.S.)
Jeff --?

Carlos stands a few yards away -- along with a couple of his
buddies. Other STOCK CARS pull onto the track for open
practice...

CARLOS (CONT'D)
We gonna do this?

JEFF
(nodding)
Let's.

A BEAT LATER

In a side-bay, Carlos' crew descends on the Stock Buick. Jeff watches in fascination as they check tires, fill fluids, etc.

CARLOS

The boys are fixing a coolant leak.
Also, we're gonna take out your
subwoofers. Make you a little
lighter...

JEFF

No music?

CARLOS

You're gonna make your own music.

Carlos and Jeff step off the track...

CARLOS (CONT'D)

After you're done, take a few laps.
Get yourself loose. See that --

He points to a DODGE CHALLENGER, surrounded by an intimidating group of Mexicans.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

-- that's who you're racing. I'll
introduce you soon. Don't say shit.

Jeff observes the group. Sees the tattoos. The cigarettes.
His brow narrows...

JEFF

Can I ask you something?

CARLOS

Sure...

JEFF

What happened with the rape?

CARLOS

The what?

JEFF

I saw it on TV. Something about six
guys.

Carlos stares at him...

...and starts to laugh.

CARLOS
Oh, bro - you saw that?

JEFF
(somberly)
Yeah, I did. Got me into this whole thing.

CARLOS
(still laughing)
You must've been watching it on mute, right? What do you call them? The words on the --

JEFF
Closed captions.

CARLOS
Closed captions! Yeah, man. My buddies were making a documentary about this chick racer. Guess they typed it wrong on the TV. 'Tape' not 'Rape'. They got a call apologizing.

Jeff slowly turns to Carlos.

JEFF
Are you kidding me...?

CARLOS
(slapping Jeff's back)
No, man. But that is some funny shit.

EXT. STANDS - SPEEDWAY - AFTERNOON

Footsteps ECHO as Tara and Mona hurry through a concrete tunnel, followed briskly by Selena...

They emerge in the stands, under the afternoon sun. Seats are filling up. Despite Mona's pale features, she smiles...

...at the CARS below, speeding along the track. So does Tara.

MONA AND TARA
Cool.

They navigate their way to the bottom. Peering across the track, Serena tries to locate Jeff's car. She takes out her cellphone, about to call --

CARLOS (O.S.)
Serena --?

Carlos is walking towards her.

SERENA
(confused)
Yes?

CARLOS
I'm Carlos. Guy who's teaching your
husband to do this crazy shit --

He sees the two girls -- and immediately claps a hand over
his mouth.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
Sorry...

SERENA
It's all right --

She's taking in Carlos' rugged good looks. Smooth brown skin.
Tattoos...

SERENA (CONT'D)
-- you're not what I expected.

CARLOS
Thinking I was more of a crusty old
white guy?

SERENA
Yes.

CARLOS
Not surprised. Jeff's just about to
take his car out for a spin. There
he is --

He points across the track --

-- now Mona sees him, wearing his tone-deaf leather jacket.
He waves, then gets into the car.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
(scribbling on paper)
Here's my number - in case he
doesn't pick up.

She nods appreciatively. The attraction lingering...

INSIDE THE BUICK

Sitting down, Jeff sets his new DRIVING GLOVES upon the wheel. He turns the key --

-- and the engine ROARS to life. He looks once more to his family against the rails, watching eagerly.

A few cars whizz past. Jeff waits for his entry point...

JEFF

Okay...

He slams on the gas --

STANDS

-- as "Pipeline" spills into Tara's ears. Wearing her headphones, she nods to the surf tune --

-- while Jeff whizzes around the track, flying past the girls, who wave furiously! Serena waves too, glancing over at Carlos --

-- who smiles. Digging her curves.

-- another lap, and Jeff finds himself next to the Challenger. He can almost make out the driver --

-- when a punch of gas sends it scorching ahead, kicking up a cloud of rubber and exhaust. The crowd CHEERS!!

SOUND BRIDGE TO:

EXT. STANDS - SPEEDWAY - NIGHT

The crowd continues to SHOUT -- stands now completely filled!

Two STOCK CARS line up beside each other, SCREECHING past the starting line! They fly down the track -- a giant DIGITAL CLOCK tracking their time --

5...6...7...

-- and just as quickly, the race is over!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And the winner is ROSIE THE
RIVETER!!!

More CHEERS!!!

Under the stadium lights, Serena and the girls sit near the front, eating popcorn, enjoying the spectacle...

Pulling away from the Armstrongs, we move towards the entrance...

...and find someone else familiar. Katherine. Leaning against a concrete wall, watching the family...

...not with malice or intent, but curiosity - as if they couldn't possibly exist. She turns her attention to the track. To Jeff's car...

Worried...

EXT. TRACK - SPEEDWAY - NIGHT

CARLOS

Jeff Armstrong, this is Rafael Recinos.

Jeff stands before the Challenger - his Buick parked a few feet away. An entourage of GANG MEMBERS leans against the car. In front: RAFAEL RECINOS (30's), stringy, tattooed from head to foot, steps forward. Jeff extends his hand...

...but Rafael ignores the gesture, walking past him to the Buick. He runs his hand along the hood.

RAFAEL

Mikey did a good job with this - before he got popped. Be careful with it...

(turning to Jeff)

...I don't want you to fuck up my car.

A few chuckles from the group. Carlos sucks nervously on his vaporizer.

JEFF

With all due respect, Mr. Recinos, I have to win tonight.

RAFAEL

What did you say --?

Carlos coughs. Turns away...

JEFF

I said...I have to win. And Carlos told me if I do, you still might not pay me.

Rafael looks to Carlos, who vigorously shakes his head.

RAFAEL
Carlos didn't say that.

JEFF
He didn't?

RAFAEL
No. Because that would mean he
thinks I can lose, which I can't.

JEFF
What if you do?

RAFAEL
What if I don't?

A beat.

JEFF
My daughter's life depends on it,
Mr. Recinos.

Another beat. Rafael breathes through his nose, then returns
to his posse. Carlos pulls Jeff aside...

CARLOS
Remember that listening trick I
told you about --?!

JEFF
No...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN --!!!

Carlos checks his watch. One minute until 8:00 p.m.

CARLOS
It's go time.

THE STANDS

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
...on the left, you have Jeff
Armstrong, driving Mooooona!!!

Mona's eyes brighten! She stands up, cheering! Serena looks
around. Only a few other chaste claps...

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
...and on the right, Rafael
Recinos, driving *La Bestia*!

Nearly the entire crowd rises to its feet! Rafael steps in front of his car, blows a kiss to the stands, then gets behind the wheel...

...eye-level with Jeff, who keeps his focus straight ahead. Carlos taps the window.

CARLOS

Remember. Don't overreact. Just make a choice. Then, small adjustments...

JEFF

Right...

CARLOS

...small adjustments, bro.

Rafael REVS his engine. Jeff turns over the ignition. He looks from Rafael...

...to his family across the track...

...to the road ahead of him...

ANNOUNCER

Get ready...

In the shadows, Katherine clasps her hands together, closing her eyes...

KATHERINE

(under her breath)

One small step...

...as Jeff watches the STAGING LIGHTS move up the tower towards GREEN -- SCREECH!!!

ANNOUNCER

-- and they're off!!!

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN

EXT. PARKING LOT - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

We drift high above both towers. The faint DIN of traffic sounds...

...and a dot moving far below...

...the GEO METRO RENTAL CAR. Disappearing into the bowels of the Beige Building.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

Jeff sits at his desk. Dark circles under his eyes. The blinds are fully closed.

He stares at his computer screen. Turned off. Nothing but his odd reflection. Floating in blackness...

KNOCKING at the door.

DANIEL (O.S.)
(muffled)
Jeff --?

No response.

DANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(muffled)
Clarence wants to see you. It's important.

Jeff hesitates. He reaches forward, pulling a drawer halfway open. He stares at what's inside --

-- but we do not see its contents.

Deciding against it, Jeff pushes the drawer back in.

EXT. HALLWAY - CLARENCE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jeff walks towards Clarence's office. Before he gets to the door, the handle turns...

...and someone steps out. Jeff freezes.

The man in the BLUE SUIT.

Blue Suit smiles. He closes the gap and offers his hand.

BLUE SUIT
Armstrong, right --?

No reaction. Jeff can't move.

BLUE SUIT (CONT'D)
You've done good work, pal. Wanted to tell you that.

He winks, then continues on, disappearing around the corner...

INT. CEO'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - MORNING

Clarence stands beside his window, surprisingly sober. He looks across the flat city. Expression: unreadable.

Entering the office, Jeff takes a cautious seat at the desk. He notices a signed CONTRACT on the table.

Hearing the squelch of leather, Clarence abandons his view. Sees Jeff...

JEFF

What is it, Clarence? What's happened?

Clarence rolls the answer around his mouth. Finally:

CLARENCE

Breakthrough...

Pushing away from the window...

...Clarence kneels beside Jeff -- unable to keep a grin from spreading...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

It worked, Armstrong.

JEFF

What worked...?

CLARENCE

Our investment.

Jeff blinks.

JEFF

It did?

CLARENCE

China, Armstrong. I told you.

JEFF

You made the sale?

CLARENCE

Yes. But not to them.

JEFF
(leaning forward)
To who...?

Clarence raises an eyebrow. Getting up, he retrieves a BLUE PEN sitting upon the contract. Hands it to Jeff. An inscription on the pen reads: Tower Club.

CLARENCE
I ran into them in Beijing. We ate
hundred year old eggs. I tell you --
sometimes it takes going halfway
around the world to find your own
backyard.

JEFF
I don't understand...

CLARENCE
They've bought us out, Armstrong.
The whole damn thing.

A horrible, deafening silence...

JEFF
No...

CLARENCE
Yes. And far above asking. Millions
of stories higher!

He is now shaking with excitement...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
They see the value. They see both
sides. They want to keep us as we
are. Even better -- they want to
use your idea!

Jeff is speechless...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
The club! The roof! They pay for
everything! Move 'old school' class
over here, push the future over
there!

The RINGING has returned to Jeff's ears...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Don't you understand? You and I
don't have to do a damn thing for
the rest of our lives!

Jeff twitches. Clarence reframes his enthusiasm...

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
 Look, I'm sorry I kept you in the
 dark. I know how you feel about...
 them. But with all that's happened,
 you must see -- this is the only
 way!

A beat...

Jeff gets up from the chair. His lips part. About to say something...

Instead, he walks out of the room.

INT. JEFF'S OFFICE - BEIGE BUILDING - DAY

Jeff slowly reenters his office. Moves towards the blinds.
 Finds the plastic wand. Twists --

Light FLOODS the room. He shields his eyes. Vision adjusts...

...and there it is. Rising before him. Glinting in the sun.
 His new employer.

Turning away from the awful sight...

...he sees SUPERHERO KATHERINE. But she's not looking at him...

...she's looking at the aquarium, where the White Halfmoon floats upon the surface.

Dead.

Jeff slowly crosses to the tank. Dipping his hand into the water...

...he gently cradles the delicate fish. It's tail is entirely gone -- a set of strange TEETH MARKS clearly defined.

Jeff peers into its lifeless eyes.

JEFF
 My mother used to keep fish...

He tries to contain his emotions...

JEFF (CONT'D)
 She loved the ocean. How blue it was.

Jeff turns bitterly to Superhero Katherine. Rather than answer...

...she guides his focus back to the desk. To the drawer...

...and a familiar sound rises. CHATTERING. Like the creatures from the painting.

A RUSTLE in the darkness...

EXT. BEIGE BUILDING - SMALL CITY - DAY

Jeff exits the Beige Building. He wears a jacket -- odd for such warm weather. He descends a few steps...

...then takes out his cellphone. Dials.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SMALL CITY - DAY

SERENA

Hello?

Serena sits beside Mona, who is receiving her treatment. Looking rosier...

JEFF (TELEPHONE)

How's she feeling?

SERENA

Why don't you ask her yourself?

She hands the phone to Mona.

MONA

Hi dad.

JEFF (TELEPHONE)

How do you feel, sweetie?

MONA

Okay. Good. The doctor came.

JEFF

And --?

MONA

He said I'm going to be okay.

ON JEFF

Jeff holds the phone away - a sob catching in his throat.

MONA (TELEPHONE) (CONT'D)
Dad...?

JEFF
I'm here.

MONA (TELEPHONE)
(a beat)
Sorry you lost the race.

JEFF
It's okay.

MONA (TELEPHONE)
And the car.

JEFF
Yeah.

MONA (TELEPHONE)
Do you think they'll keep my name
on it?

JEFF
Probably not.

MONA (TELEPHONE)
Yeah.

BEEP --!

ON MONA

Mona hands the phone to Serena --

MONA (CONT'D)
Someone else is calling...

Serena checks the screen. We see the name: CARLOS.

A flicker of a smile. Serena sends the call to voicemail.

SERENA
Jeff, I should probably go. But...

JEFF (TELEPHONE)
...but what?

SERENA
We need to talk about things when
you get back.

JEFF (TELEPHONE)
What kind of things?

She smiles at Mona, then turns away. Lowers her voice.

SERENA
Us things.

ON JEFF

He closes his eyes...

JEFF
Okay.
(a beat)
Just wanted to let you know...we
have the money.

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
What?

JEFF
For Mona. For everything. We have
it.

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
Wait -- but, how? What are you
talking about?

Jeff sits on the steps, looking squarely at the Blue
Building...

JEFF
What was that food you made the
other night?

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
Jeff --?

JEFF
The little grains. Kind of like
rice.

SERENA (TELEPHONE)
You mean -- quinoa?

JEFF
Yeah. Quinoa.
(smiling)
I liked it.

He hangs up.

Reaching into his pocket...

...Jeff removes a PISTOL. The .45 from his garage.

He turns it in his palm. Sun glints off the steel -- causing him to squint.

Rising up, Jeff walks towards the blue tower...

CUT TO BLACK.