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## Voice of the Dead

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VOICE OF THE DEAD

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
The Creative Writing Workshop

by

Anthony C. Derrico

B.A. New Jersey City University, 2000

December 2004

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY- STORMY NIGHT

Lightning flashes illuminating the clouds. Pouring rain swirls in the GUSTING WIND. THUNDER ROLLS.

EXT. OPEN WATER- STORMY NIGHT

A 40+ foot luxury yacht, the "LET IT RIDE" rocks and rotates in the rough waters.

EXT. "LET IT RIDE"/DECK- STORMY NIGHT

VIRGIL NOX steps out onto the deck, wearing a dark hooded raincoat that conceals his identity.

He grabs the anchor chain with his right hand. There are three silver RINGS each with a single gem (moonstone, ruby, and olivine) on his middle, fourth, and pinky fingers.

He lets go of the chain once he sees the anchor is secure.

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE- STORMY NIGHT

On the coffee table, a plate of blood-raw tuna steak and a pistol slide back and forth from the rocking of the boat.

Nox's ringed hand twirls the handle of a large Bowie knife as he sits on the couch near the coffee table. Minus the raincoat, he is a tall, handsome, blond man in his mid 40s. His voice is gentle and deep.

NOX

She's a strong boat. She'll make it through just fine.

Nox looks to HELEN WAGNER (30s) lying on the floor, whimpering, wearing a torn shirt and underwear. She is covered with dried blood and bruises, some resemble the pattern of Nox's rings. Her hands are tied behind her back.

JAMES WAGNER (40s,) leans up against a wall, beaten and vacant. His ankles and wrists are bound behind his back.

James looks up and sees a framed photo of their 4-year-old twin sons, sliding forward on a shelf, nearing the edge.

NOX (CONT'D)

No one has anything to say?

Nox chops the tuna into slices with the Bowie knife.

The framed photo falls off the shelf and breaks by James's knee, unbeknownst to Nox.

NOX (CONT'D)

Did you know alligators will leave some  
meat from their kills tucked away in  
the back of their mouths.

James shifts his body, grabs hold of the shattered picture frame, and sneaks it behind him.

NOX (CONT'D)

They let it fester. Sucking out all  
life.

Nox shoves a slice of tuna into his mouth like a wad of chewing tobacco. He bites down, closes his eyes, and SLURPS.

James carefully grinds the rope around his wrist against a shard of glass taken from the frame.

Nox opens his eyes, twirling the knife once again.

NOX (CONT'D)

What do you say, Helen? Got one more  
spin left in you?

Nox grabs Helen by the hair and lifts her up. She SCREAMS. Lightning flashes.

EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- STORY NIGHT

THUNDER ROLLS as a light flickers from a window of a small house tucked away beneath the violently swaying branches of large oak trees.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/ALTAR ROOM- STORMY NIGHT

Photos and newspaper clippings cover a wall above a candle-lit shrine, containing the high school photo of a BLACK MALE in a plaque that reads "Our beloved Michael."

Hundreds of small crosses have been carved into the floor boards, worn down from age--

--MAMA CHIFFON (Black, frail, upper 80s, raggedy clothes) THUMPS a knife into the floor and SCRATCHES in more crosses over and over again, MUTTERING INAUDIBLY.

Mama is surrounded by several RURAL BLACK TOWNSFOLK each holding a candle. Mama's son, ELIAS (Black, 40s) walks before the crowd, relighting the blown-out candles.

Townsfolk listen fearfully as the WIND HOWLS furiously and the old house RATTLING. Mama carves into the floor faster.

MAMA  
(mumbling)  
The house is strong. Quiet yo' cries.  
(frustrated)  
*Arrete l'orage!*

The wind stops blowing and the house stops shaking. Mama stands up and SIGHS.

A forceful WIND GUST blows the front door open. A clipping blows off the wall. Mama catches it.

The title reads: "PATHOLOGIST'S TESTIMONY CAN'T SAVE TEEN." Beneath it is a photo of the PATHOLOGIST (DR. DECLAN McCAFFERTY) standing sadly with Elias. A heart had been painted on the photo across the pathologist's chest.

MAMA (CONT'D)  
*Voix des Morts.*

EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- STORMY NIGHT

Snakes slither up against the window, trying to escape the flooding water. The SOUND of a TRUMPET'S WAIL--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS BURLESQUE CLUB- STORMY NIGHT

The WAIL of a TRUMPET signals for the scantily-clad BURLESQUE DANCERS to rise up slithering like snakes. The BAND begins an old RISQUE JAZZ TUNE.

The AUDIENCE CHEERS and WHISTLES as the dancers perform. Some of the AUDIENCE MEMBERS turn when they hear a gust of WIND and see a few more soaking-wet PATRONS enter the club.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER/MISCHIEF-MAKERS- STORMY NIGHT

The MUSIC CONTINUES as PATRONS enter the club.

Water floods the gutters.

RATS pile up for safety on the branches of a tree.

BUILDINGS and HOUSES are boarded up. Some of the boards have crosses and slogans like "No Hurricane" "Go Away Hurricane Gabriel" and "Screw Gabriel" spray-painted on them.

EXT. SKY ABOVE HURRICANE- STORMY NIGHT

The eye of the hurricane passes over Louisiana. The club's MUSIC becomes LOUDER as the eye spins faster and--

MORPHS INTO:

COCAINE--

--spiraling up the inside of a straw.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE- STORMY NIGHT

DR. DECLAN McCAFFERTY (mid 30s, somewhat handsome, but thin and pale, dark hair disheveled, shirt half-unbuttoned) the "Pathologist" in the photo, pulls his head up after sucking up a line of cocaine and lets out a deep breath. He smiles as LOUD THUNDER ROLLS.

DECLAN

Love a good hurricane.

SUGAR (Black Male, late 20s, thin, flamboyantly dressed) sits at his desk and tosses his bag of heroin onto it.

SUGAR

Dude, you need to let me get you some of this.

Sugar's bare left foot lowers under the desk with a hypodermic needle stuck between his toes. His leg tenses, his toes curl, causing the needle to press against the floor and shatter. The glass cuts into his foot.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Make you relax. Maybe you'll even sleep once in awhile.

Declan snorts more cocaine as Sugar picks the needle out of his foot.

DECLAN

Sleep's over-rated.

Sugar stumbles over to a mirror and straightens his tie.

SUGAR

I gotta go downstairs. Run my big goddamn mouth.

Declan watches Sugar exit the room, wearing only one shoe.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS BURLESQUE CLUB

The CROWD CHEERS as the dancers finish their number. Some LAP DANCERS give private dances. Sugar stumbles up on stage and grabs the microphone.

SUGAR

Fuck the hurricane! Fuck the evacuation!

The crowd CHEERS loudly again.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/DANCERS' DRESSING-ROOM

Declan rummages through make-up kits and finds a stick of deep-red lipstick.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/SECURITY MONITOR ROOM

Eight security monitors show different sections of the club. One shows Sugar on stage with the band. The room is otherwise empty.

SUGAR (ON MONITOR)

Strike it up now!

The band starts playing.

Two of the monitors are blacked out.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE

The lens of a security camera on the ceiling is covered with duct-tape.

Declan stands in front of the mirror and pulls off his shirt, revealing that he's not much more than pale skin and bones. He heaves out his chest to make it appear as wide as possible.

DECLAN

White male, mid-thirties. Cause of death unknown.

His shaky hand draws a large, choppy "Y" over the reflection of his chest and abdomen with the lipstick.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

We fold back the skin and remove the front of the rib-cage.

Declan's hand smears the lipstick on the mirror, creating a large red triangle over the reflection of his chest and abdomen.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE- STORMY NIGHT

Nox's ringed hand smears the blood from Helen's wounds all over her face. She MOANS as he pulls her hair back. Nox leans up from behind and rests his head on her shoulder, smiling.

NOX

Look at your wife.

James looks away as he continues to cut his bindings with the shard of glass.

BACK TO:

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE



Declan runs his fingers across the glass, outlining internal organs.

DECLAN

Damage to the internal organs visibly shows the--

(beat)

--disgraceful way in which he lived.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

James stabs Nox's left eye with the shard of glass.

BACK TO:

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE

Declan outlines the heart over and over again on the mirror.

DECLAN

We must now remove the enlarged heart.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

James and Nox struggle for control of the gun as FLAMES quickly ignite throughout the lounge.

BACK TO:

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE

DECLAN smears his hands in the lipstick, pretending to extract the heart from the mirror. LIGHTNING STRIKES like a gun going and distracts him. He looks down at his hands--

--He is holding a real human heart.

Declan quickly gasps and grabs his chest, smearing the lipstick all over his torso. He looks at his hands again and sees that there is just lipstick on them.

He breathes a sigh of relief and sits down at a chair near the desk. He runs his fingers through the cocaine on the desk, creating a red and white swirl.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN WATER- HURRICANE NIGHT

The "Let It Ride" rotates in the violent water. The glow of a raging FIRE shines through the windows. Another GUN SHOT is fired from inside.

JAMES (O.S.)

Helen!

Another GUN SHOT.

HELEN (O.S.)

Please, God--

EXT. "LET IT RIDE"/DECK- STORMY NIGHT

Nox exits the yacht. His left eye is badly injured and bleeding.

He fights through the wind and rain, holding a life-raft. He pulls the tab and grabs onto the straps tightly as the raft inflates. The wind blows into the raft, lifting Nox up and out onto the water.

EXT. OPEN WATER/RAFT- STORMY NIGHT

Nox ducks his head as the raft is nearly crushed by the front of the aimlessly circling "Let It Ride." The raging current spreads them further apart.

Nox watches the flaming yacht drift away until it is nothing more than a flickering light in the darkness.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS/MISSISSIPPI RIVER BEND- DAWN

The sun rises over a calm river.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER STREET- DAWN

HOMEOWNERS remove the plywood from their windows.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS HIGHWAY- DAWN

CARS HONK throughout the standstill inbound TRAFFIC.

EXT. SWAMP- DAWN

The sun casts a reddish hue in the swamp where a FATHER and SON collect damaged traps and throw them into their boat.

The son watches a white EGRET soar across the water until something much larger catches his eyes. He taps his father and points.

The father steers their boat toward the "Let It Ride" lodged between two large cypress trees. The exterior of the yacht is still in good shape, but all the windows have been burned out. A ray of sunlight FLASHES off a piece of metal.

MATCH CUT TO:

A FLASH--

--from a photographer's camera reflects off of the body of a BLACK MALE.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE- DAY

The warehouse is a shell of its former existence. One of the exterior walls is completely missing, where a crowd of BLACK CITIZENS have gathered to watch the NOPD crime scene.

Two bodies both BLACK MALE (teens) lie on the ground not far from one another next to their AK-47s.

DETECTIVE HUEY LAROCHE (Black, 30s, leather hat and vest over t-shirt, badge on a chain around his neck) speaks with an EMS UNIT WORKER, who is shaking his head. DETECTIVE FRANKLIN (20s) steps over and taps Huey on the shoulder.

FRANKLIN

Dr. Doom has followed the scent of death.

Huey looks over and sees Declan, still wearing the same clothes, showing his "M.E." credentials to a YOUNG OFFICER as he enters the crime scene.

HUEY

Naturally.

Declan kneels down by the bodies. Huey walks over to him.

HUEY (CONT'D)

You wanna cut 'em here? I know how you like it when the innards are still warm.

DECLAN

I was just in the neighborhood.

HUEY

Yeah, you smell like you been in the neighborhood--

Declan looks down at the positions of the bodies.

DECLAN

More kids.

He SIGHS in defeat.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

They shot each other.

HUEY

Looks that way. The one in the Saints' jersey is Lionel Williams, one of Harlan Correy's boys. We don't know who the other cat is yet.

Franklin steps over to Huey.

FRANKLIN

Williams's mother's here!

Declan looks over and sees MRS. WILLIAMS (30s) weeping in front of the crowd.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Is that my baby? Is that Lionel?

Huey pulls Franklin aside as Declan stares pityingly at Mrs. Williams.

HUEY

They always start caring just a little too late.

Declan walks towards the crowd and Mrs. Williams.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Dec, wait 'til she can I.D. him in the morgue!

Declan steps up to Mrs. Williams.

DECLAN

Mrs. Williams. I'm Dr. McCafferty, medical examiner with the coroner's office. Your son, Lyonel's been shot to death. I'm truly sorry.

Mrs. William lets out a SOB.

MRS. WILLIAMS

Who done it? The police?

DECLAN

No, he died in a shoot out with another young man.

Mrs. Williams WAILS as the crowd consoles her.

A look of pity and defeat forms on Declan's face. He turns to Huey with the same look.

Huey grimaces at Declan and turns back to the investigation.

Declan walks off under the yellow tape and takes a pint of whiskey out of his pocket, empties what's left down his throat, and then tosses the empty bottle.

The empty bottle drops through the air and--

MATCH CUT TO:

A HUMAN LIVER--

--lands on a grocer's type of scale.

INT. MORGUE- NIGHT

DR. B.P. STROHMEYER (middle-aged, obese, gray-beard, glasses) casually watches the scale sway then turns to Pathologist Assistant FRED (20s, young and naive).

STROHMEYER

I'll have the chateaubriand, rare.

Strohmeyer laughs and P.A. Fred gives an uncomfortable chuckle as they continue Lyonel William's autopsy.

Huey rolls his eyes at Strohmeyer and turns to the other black male's body lying on a slab, chest and abdomen opened, revealing his vital organs.

Declan, wearing bloody surgical scrubs, stands at a chalkboard with the outline of a human body on it, surrounded by swirls of eraser-dust combined with dried blood.

With a piece of chalk, Declan draws a dot on the upper-left shoulder, two dots on the lower-left abdomen, and one more on the upper-right thigh near the pelvis region. Blood from his glove smears around the chalk bullet wounds.

DECLAN

The bullet that killed him was this one.

Declan highlights the chalk wound on the upper-right thigh, causing more blood from his glove to drip down.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

It severed the common iliac artery, causing him to bleed to death.

Huey stares at Declan's chalk-drawn details.

HUEY

Hey Strohmeyer, what killed your man?

Strohmeyer smiles.

STROHMEYER

Whole lotta bullets!

The automatic doors open with a SWISH. DETECTIVE CONSTANCE CAMBRE(30s, attractive, professionally dressed) walks speedily into the morgue.

STROHMEYER (CONT'D)

Uh-oh, we got a breather.

HUEY

Whoa Constance, what you doin' down here, girl?

Declan's eyes widen when he sees her, then he quickly looks away.

Constance walks over to the body Declan's been working on. She looks at Declan with a sense of awkwardness.

CONSTANCE

Hi, Dec.

DECLAN

Constance.

There's a brief moment of silence between them before Constance turns to Huey.

CONSTANCE

What happened to these men?

HUEY

Correy's gang and the Cienfuegos are saving us some bullets again.

Constance stares down sympathetically at the body. Declan studies her face.

DECLAN

Connie, did you know this man?

CONSTANCE

His name's Antoine Carter. He was my informant.

EXT. BLUES BAR/COURTYARD- NIGHT

A BARMAID carries a tray full of drinks out of the crowded, LOUD BLUES BAR and into the courtyard. Huey steps in front of her holding his badge.

HUEY

Excuse me, I have to commandeer this tray.

BARMAID

But they're not--

Huey takes the tray of drinks and carries them over to where Franklin, P.A. Fred, Strohmeyer, Constance, and Declan are sitting. Huey sets the tray down on the table. They CHEER.

HUEY  
Ain't no biggie.

Everyone, but Declan and Constance, eagerly snatches up a drink. Strohmeyer grabs two and quickly guzzles one down.

Huey sniffs a rocks glass.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
This smells Irish.

Declan reaches for it, but Constance snatches the glass out of Huey's hand.

CONSTANCE  
I'll take that.

Declan drops his arm on the table, eyeballing Constance.

DECLAN  
Didn't know you were drinking again.

Constance shrugs. Declan grimaces and takes the last beverage on the tray-- a huge fruity drink with multiple umbrellas.

HUEY  
(to Constance)  
The way I figure it, Harlan Correy must have found yo' boy was a rat and went after him.

CONSTANCE  
I don't know. We arrested Carter in a crack bust, then spent months straightening him out.  
(looks at Declan)  
Thought he was doing so well.

Declan looks away and unhappily tosses out away his drink's accessories.

HUEY  
(gesturing to Declan)  
Well you know, ol' Gloom 'n Doom here will help us get to the bottom of this.

P.A. FRED



Is that our job? I mean, how involved do we get in the investigations?

STROHMEYER

Dec takes a personal interest in the victims.

P.A. FRED

How so?

STROHMEYER

He's a necrophiliac.

Everyone laughs, but Declan and Constance both give phony smiles.

HUEY

Declan's in touch with the spirit world.

Declan and Constance give each other a look as if they both know where this is going.

HUEY (CONT'D)

A bout a year ago, the grandson of this old hoodoo bitch, called Mama Chiffon, killed a tourist.

Declan looks sternly back at Huey.

DECLAN

Allegedly killed a tourist.

Huey waves his hand at Declan's comment.

HUEY

Anyway, to try to save her boy, she put a spell on Dec, which allowed him to dream about how the tourist really died.

P.A. Fred turns amazed at Declan.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Only now he can't shut the shit off. He dreams about all the people he autopsies.

Constance stares at Declan as he sucks down his drink.

FRANKLIN

Yep, every time we think we have a case wrapped up, Dr. Doom comes along with another nightmare and it's right back where we started.

P.A. FRED

You guys are just fucking with me right?

Declan looks at Constance who shakes her head "no" at him. Declan leans forward and turns to P.A. Fred.

DECLAN

What the hell type of work you think you're going into, kid?

Declan points at P.A. Fred's horror movie t-shirt.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

You want horror-- stand before parents caked in their own kid's blood and describe what's left of their raped, mutilated daughter. Then when they ask you 'why it happened,' see how much sleep you'll get pondering how another human being could cause such an atrocity.

(beat)

Nightmares are inevitable.

P.A. Fred looks away disheartened. Constance puts her drink down and stands up.

CONSTANCE

Wow, I forgot how much fun you guys were. Good night, gentlemen.

Constance rushes out of the courtyard. Declan gets up and follows her.

P.A. FRED

What happened to the witch's grandson?

HUEY

He got a lethal dose of justice about two months ago.

EXT. BLUES BAR- NIGHT

Constance walks up to her car. Declan catches up to her.

DECLAN

Connie!

CONSTANCE

Go back inside, Dec.

DECLAN

Connie, please. I'm doing better.

(beat)

I'm clean.

Constance opens her car door.

CONSTANCE

I'm happy for you.

Declan slams her door shut.

DECLAN

Don't do this to me!

He softly touches her face.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Isn't that what you wanted?

Constance grabs his hand, smells it, and pushes it away.

CONSTANCE

You smell dead.

(smelling her collar)

I should have never gone to the morgue.

Stink gets in your clothes worse than  
cigarette smoke.

She watches as Declan backs away, wounded.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Dec,

(beat)

Call me-- if the spirit world comes up  
with anything about Antoine Carter.

She gets in her car. Declan watches her drive away.

EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan walks up the porch of his Creole cottage in the French Quarter.

Declan finds a dried animal paw tied together with a black feather by a red ribbon. He picks up the claw and examines it.

DECLAN  
What is it now, Mama?

Declan enters his house.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Declan takes out a glass from an upper cabinet. He reaches down, opens up his lower liquor cabinet, and pulls out a bottle of Bushmills.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM

Declan opens up the medicine cabinet and reaches for a vial on a shelf filled with prescription drug containers (all labeled "Stimulants.")

He opens the vial, dumps some cocaine on his knuckle, and stares at it.

DECLAN  
Damn you, Connie.

With his shaking hands, he pushes the cocaine back into the vial, then puts the vial back into the cabinet.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY

An old BLUES SONG plays out a stereo as Declan opens a desk drawer filled with similar voodoo artifacts. He tosses in the claw and closes the drawer.

JUMP CUT TO:

A sheet of paper reading "Patients' Chart" is tacked to a wall. On it is a list of age groups matched with a colored dot: Ages 65 plus- blue, 45-64- yellow, 25-44, green, 10-24- red, 0-9 purple.

The walls are covered with plot diagrams of every cemetery in Orleans Parish. Hundreds of plots are marked with the colors from the chart.

Declan sits at his desk cutting out obituaries from a newspaper.

JUMP CUT TO:

Declan colors in two plots red on one diagram and one plot green on another.

JUMP CUT TO:

Declan stands at his desk staring at all the colors on the cemeteries.

A tear drop THUDS as it lands on one of the photos on the desk.

Declan wipes the tear from his face and sits down. He picks up the photo from his desk. It's attached to a Coroner's Report labeled, "Angola State Penitentiary."

The decedent's name on the report reads, "Chiffon, Michael." Cause of death reads, "Lethal Injection."

Declan tosses the report on his desk and rests back in his chair. He takes a sip of whiskey. His eyes roll back as he passes out.

DECLAN'S DREAM: EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY- CONTINUOUS

Declan snaps awake as Antoine Carter, alive, holding an AK-47, steps into the room.

CARTER

Harlan!

Declan turns and drops to the floor as Carter opens fire peppering Declan's diagrams with bullet holes.

CARTER (CONT'D)

Dagoberto says fuck y'all!

Carter is struck by several bullets. He falls to the ground, screaming, and holding the wound on his chest. Declan rushes over to him.

DECLAN

That's the wrong wound!

Declan applies pressure to the wound above Carter's thigh. Blood gushes out as if Declan wasn't even helping. Carter's body falls limp as he GARGLES out his last breath.

BACK TO:

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY- DAWN

Declan jerks awake, spilling some of the bourbon he is still holding. He wipes the dripping sweat from his brow. He turns and sees no body lying on the floor.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Declan sits down on the couch and turns on the television.

ON TV SCREEN: LIVE NEWS REPORT with video from a helicopter's P.O.V. of the "Let It Ride" still lodged in the trees, but surrounded by police boats.

NEWS BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The yacht was found early last night. We can see below that police officers from two parishes have joined forces to investigate this bizarre accident.

EXT. SWAMP- DAWN

The NEWS HELICOPTER flies over Huey, standing on a NOPD Boat across from a ST. BERNARD PARISH DETECTIVE, standing on his own Parish's boat.

HUEY

Man, you spent the entire night trying to figure out how to dump this shit on us!

PARISH DETECTIVE

Our parish line ends twenty yards north of here.

Huey looks around aghast.

HUEY

How can you find a parish line in this fucking mess?

Huey's CELL-PHONE RINGS. He looks at the number.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
We gonna find out right now what this  
jurisdiction story is.

Huey answers his phone.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Tell me this ain't our's!  
(beat)  
You gotta be shitting me! Damn it!

Huey looks at his phone then frantically waves it in the air looking for a signal. He angrily turns to the Detective.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
Ain't no biggie. You don't have the  
means to conduct an investigation of  
this magnitude anyway!

The Parish Detective smiles.

PARISH DETECTIVE  
Let's go home boys!

Their boat pulls away. Huey turns to the scene of the accident. NOPD OFFICERS set up a perimeter using multiple boats. An NOFD boat is there.

Huey's boat steers over to the EMS Unit's boat. The EMS WORKERS climb off of the yacht and back onto their boat with sick expressions on their faces. The EMS Unit pushes off.

Franklin steps over to Huey and hands him some latex gloves.

FRANKLIN  
Hell of a ship.

Huey and Franklin put on the gloves and climb onto the top deck of the yacht. They bend down and look as Huey shines a flashlight into the burned-out windows.

HUEY

Detective Franklin, you are mistaken.  
This is hell in a ship.

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/CONTROL ROOM

The beam of Huey's flashlight shines around the charred black room. The beam lands on a pair of CHARRED BODIES.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN INK TATTOO--

--of people burning in flames.

INT. DAGOBERTO'S HOUSE/MEDITATION ROOM- DAY

DAGOBERTO SIPILOTE (Latino male, 40s, thin, muscular, arms and back covered with tattoos of flames with little people burning) sits quietly meditating in the center of a lavish room.

TIJUL (Latino male, 30s, obese man with pony-tail) stands by a door.

Dagoberto hears a PUNCH, a MAN'S MOAN, and a CRASH.

The door by Tijul opens and a DOCTOR (50s, white-coat) spills out holding his bleeding mouth. Tijul catches him. Dagoberto puts on a shirt and walks over to them.

DOCTOR  
I couldn't save his eye.

Dagoberto looks up at Tijul.

DAGOBERTO  
(in Spanish- subtitled)  
Get a doctor for the doctor.

Tijul carries the doctor away. Dagoberto GROANS.

INT. DAGOBERTO'S HOUSE/STUDY

Dagoberto enters his large study turned quasi-operating room. Nox stands in front of a mirror in a bloody sleeveless undershirt, stitching up the incision around his left eye-socket. He sees Dagoberto in the reflection.

NOX



And you call me a butcher.

DAGOBERTO  
They found that yacht, *hermano*.

Nox continues stitching.

NOX  
I'll take care of it.

DAGOBERTO  
Sure you will. Meanwhile, I got a shipment stuck out in the Gulf, waiting until this mess blows over. The boss men back in Columbia won't tolerate another fuck up like Miami.

NOX  
Miami was your fuck-up Dago, not mine.

Nox clips the extra thread dangling from his wound.

DAGOBERTO  
What were you thinking, eh? We didn't need another boat!

Nox looks at him apologetically.

DAGOBERTO (CONT'D)  
I know. You couldn't help it. You have a thirst for blood you need quenched, eh? Here--

Dagoberto takes a folded piece of paper out of his back pocket and hands it to Nox.

Nox unfolds the paper, which reveals a mug-shot of a BLACK MALE (20s). The name above it reads: CORREY, HARLAN.

DAGOBERTO (CONT'D)  
Our last attempt to clean this shit from our heels failed. I'm sure he'll pose little threat to a man with your talent.

Nox folds the paper and puts it in his back pocket. He wipes his face and turns to Dagoberto who gives a laugh.

DAGOBERTO (CONT'D)

You really do look like a pirate.  
You'll never be as pretty as Jean  
Lafitte now.

Nox turns away, grabbing his shirt from off of a chair.

DAGOBERTO (CONT'D)

So how are you going to take care of  
our yachting problem?

Nox puts on a pair of sunglasses and grins.

INT. MORGUE- DAY

The automatic doors SWISH open and Declan enters. There are dark circles under his eyes, but the rest of his appearance is very neat. Huey and Franklin stand by two bodies beneath sheets on slabs.

HUEY

Have we got something that's right up  
your alley.

P.A. Fred removes the sheets, revealing charred bodies of James and Helen Wagner, burnt almost down to the bones with some internal organs visible.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Let me introduce you to who we believe  
is James Wagner and his wife, Helen.  
We'll need dental to confirm it.

Strohmeyer takes a look as he wipes a bloody scalpel on his scrubs.

STROHMEYER

They look like beef jerky.

Declan ignores him and looks at the bodies.

DECLAN

Huey, did you file your report on those  
two teens yesterday?

HUEY

Why, you havin' bad dreams again?

Declan gives him an intolerant glance.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
I'll file it today.

Declan bends over one of the bodies and smells it.

DECLAN  
I don't smell any fuel emissions.

HUEY  
It doesn't look like they were  
deliberately torched.

Declan continues visually examining the bodies. He sees a hole in James Wagner's skull.

DECLAN  
This looks like an exit wound.

FRANKLIN  
Yeah, we found a charred .45 near their  
bodies.

Declan looks at Helen Wagner's body. Her head lies up against its right arm, which is in a reaching-out position.

DECLAN  
I can't make out anything.

INT. MORGUE/X-RAY ROOM

Declan places an x-ray of Helen Wagner's SKULL on the back-lighted board and another of her NECK and CHEST.

He puts up one more x-ray of her ABDOMEN, clearly showing a bullet lodged in the backbone.

INT. MORGUE

Declan separates James Wagner's legs. He sees a small clump of fibers stuck to the ankles. He removes the clump, smells the fibers, and places them into a glass jar.

INT. MORGUE- MOMENTS LATER

Declan sticks a metal rod into the bullet entrance wound near the back of the skull to get the exact track of the bullet.

INT. MORGUE- LATER

Declan sits at the desk with reports spread out over it. He looks at the fibers in the jar, then writes the word "HOMICIDE" down in his notes.

One note page shows a diagram of James Wagner's skull and the bullet track entering the rear left side and exiting the near the right temple.

Declan holds up a mini tape-recorder and presses record.

DECLAN

Fibers around the male's ankles indicate he may have been bound. The interiors of both decedents' lungs are clean suggesting they died before the fire.

He presses stop on the recorder and looks at Helen Wagner's stretched-out arm.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

(whispering)

What are you reaching for?

His CELL-PHONE BUZZES as it vibrates on the desk. He answers his phone.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

McCafferty.

SUGAR (O.S.)

It's Sugar. I need to talk to you. It's an emergency!

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/BACK STAIRWAY- NIGHT

Declan climbs up the dark stairway.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE

Sugar sits at the desk, nursing a bloody lip with a handkerchief. Declan stands over to him.

DECLAN

So what's the emergency?

Sugar puts down the handkerchief and picks up a VCR remote.

SUGAR

I should just show you.

Sugar presses play on a VCR and a black and white video appears on the TV. Declan steps over to get a closer look.

ON TV SCREEN: A video montage of Declan snorting line after line of cocaine in Sugar's office.

Declan, stunned, turns to Sugar.

DECLAN

What the hell is this? You swore you taped up all the cameras.

SUGAR

Sometimes I do. Sometimes I like to record my little private parties.

Declan steps closer to Sugar.

DECLAN

Well what the fuck for!!

SUGAR

(looking past Declan)  
Now there's no need for anymore crazy shit!

Before Declan can turn, Nox throws a burlap sack over his head and spins him half way around the room, twisting the bag tightly around his head and neck.

DECLAN

(screaming)  
Sugar!

Sugar stands up. Nox pulls Declan to the ground and sits on his back. Nox tightens the sack and slams down Declan's head.

SUGAR

Yeah, you should try to chill, dude.

NOX

Settle down, Doctor. Are you in charge of the Wagner's autopsies?

Declan hesitates. Nox squeezes the sack tighter. Declan nods "yes."

NOX (CONT'D)

What do they look like? What's left of them?

DECLAN

They're burnt beyond recognition.

NOX

But underneath that charred flesh, you know what I did to them.

DECLAN

You shot them to death.

Nox squeezes the bag tighter, twisting its opening around Declan's neck. Declan GAGS.

NOX

The first person to see my work in years and that's all you can tell me.

DECLAN

I don't understand what you want!

NOX

I want you to convince the world James Wagner shot his wife then killed himself.

Declan hesitates.

DECLAN

I can't do that.

Nox punches Declan's right shoulder with his ring-covered hand. Declan lets out an agonizing GROAN.

SUGAR

Aw dude, don't do that.

NOX

The Wagner family must look like a murder/suicide at all costs. If not that video of you snorting your fucking brains out will be broadcast all over Louisiana.

DECLAN

So fucking broadcast it!

NOX

Consider the consequences. All the  
appeals. All the murderers set free.

Nox squeezes the bags so tightly, Declan's face nearly  
breaks through.

NOX (CONT'D)

I'm sure you won't let me down.

Nox lets go of the bag and darts out of the room. Sugar  
takes the bag off Declan's head and helps him into a chair.  
There are scrapes from the burlap on Declan's cheeks and  
chin.

SUGAR

I'm sorry Doc. I thought tellin' my  
supplier I had a friend with the law  
might get me in good.

Sugar sits down at the desk.

DECLAN

You fucking reptile. You have no idea  
what you've done to me.

Declan feels the scrapes on his cheeks.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

(mumbling)

I'd have to see them all over again.

SUGAR

See who, Doc?

DECLAN

(lost in thought)

I just need to think.

SUGAR

What's to think about? Sign them off as  
a murder/suicide, and I'll give you  
every video I have.

Declan stares angrily at Sugar.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Sorry Doc. You my boy and all, but we  
in this together now. I don't have a  
choice and neither do you.

INT. MORGUE- NIGHT

The automatic doors SWISH open revealing the silhouette of  
Declan as he enters the dark morgue.

INT. MORGUE- MOMENTS LATER

Declan sits at the desk staring at two reports--

--one for Helen which reads "HOMICIDE."

--The other is for James, which reads "SUICIDE." The  
"bullet direction" diagram on James's report has also been  
changed to a bullet entering near the left temple and  
exiting the right.

Declan hesitantly signs them.

He opens his desk drawer and pulls out his mini tape-  
recorder. He rewinds, then plays--

DECLAN (V.O.)

--male cadaver's ankles indicate he was  
probably bound--

He presses stop, ejects the tape, and puts it in his  
pocket.

INT. MORGUE/OFFICE

Declan goes through a stack of packages waiting to be sent  
out and grabs one. He tears it open and pulls out the jar  
of rope fibers taken from James' ankles.

INT. MORGUE/COOLER CABINETS

Declan pulls out James Wagner's body. He lifts the sheet  
over the head and chest.

He looks around cautiously, then takes the metal measuring  
rod and places it inside the bullet wound.

He takes a breath, then forcefully moves the rod down,  
widening the wound down to the left temple with a loud



CRUNCH of the burnt tissue, which ECHOES throughout the dark room.

Declan picks up a scalpel and tweezers and removes a layer of burnt tissue from James Wagners chest.

JUMP CUT TO:

Declan uses a small heat-gun to weld the layer of flesh onto James Wagner's skull, making it look like a smaller entrance wound to the left temple.

INTERCUT TO:

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/BEDROOM- NIGHT

Mama lies in bed, SCREAMING, and holding her head in the same spot where Declan is using the heat-gun on the corpse.

BACK TO:

INT. MORGUE- NIGHT

Declan shuts off the heat-gun and stares into the darkness of the corpse's newly designed wound.

DISSOLVE TO:

SEVERAL PAIRS OF HEADLIGHTS--

--from oncoming traffic seem to glide freely through the darkness.

INT. DECLAN'S CAR- NIGHT

Declan squints as beams from headlight hit his face. He turns his car down an off-ramp.

EXT. DARK BAYOU ROAD- NIGHT

Declan's car drives through a thick layer of fog. The tops of docked shrimp boats stick out above the mist, silhouetted by the rising moon.

EXT. CANTILEVER BRIDGE- NIGHT

Declan's car drives beneath the skeletal frame of the old cantilever bridge and stops halfway across.

Declan gets out and opens the car's trunk.

Inside the trunk, his briefcase is next to a red box labeled "Medical Kit" and a blue box labeled "Surgical Kit." He opens up his briefcase, takes out the jar of fibers and the mini-cassette tape, and closes the trunk.

He walks over to the railing. He looks around and up at the bridge's frame. Large white EGRETS sit on the frame.

EXT. CANTILEVER BRIDGE/PYLONS

Declan looks down and sees dozens of EGRETS waiting.

EXT. CANTILEVER BRIDGE

Several more EGRETS land on the frame. Their long necks crouch in as their heads point to the water, creating a menacing look on their faces.

Declan stares uncomfortably at the birds. He tosses the mini-cassette tape into the river. He unscrews the cap of the jar of rope fibers, then tosses the jar.

Some egrets SQUAWK and fly off the bridge.

Declan gets back in his car. He starts the vehicle, turns it around, and drives off the bridge the way he came.

EXT. DARK BAYOU ROAD- NIGHT

Declan takes a turn down a foggy street, then SCREECHES to a halt when his headlights shine on Mama Chiffon, standing in the middle of the street.

MAMA

*Voix des Morts!*

Declan gets out of the car.

DECLAN

What do you still want from me? I wasn't your grandson's executioner!

MAMA

I know you tried to do well for Michael. I know it was yo' boss who lied in that courtroom, made you look a fool.

DECLAN

So send him fucking nightmares about every corpse he touches!

MAMA

I don't send nobody nothin'. All I wanted was for you to see that Michael didn't kill no one.

Mama reaches out to touch Declan's face, but he backs away.

MAMA (CONT'D)

I didn't know how great the door I was opening. We've got to get yo' mind to accept what it sees.

DECLAN

That's it, I'm running you over.

Declan walks away.

MAMA

I fear something's changed. You gonna make things a whole lot worse!

Declan gets back in his car.

MAMA (CONT'D)

Betray your gift and it's not just yo' soul you damn!

DECLAN

Lady, you have no idea.

Declan starts up his car. He looks up and around, but Mama is nowhere insight.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Mama?

Declan puts the car in gear and drives off, disappearing in the fog, which--

DISSOLVES INTO:

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM- NIGHT

THICK STEAM fills the entire bathroom.

Inside the shower, Declan vigorously scrubs his hands.

JUMP CUT TO:

Declan stands in front of a mirror, looking at his right shoulder-- there is a bruise shaped like the pattern of Nox's rings.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Declan sits on the couch, holding his phone to his ear. He sticks his finger into a pile of cocaine on a small mirror on his coffee table and draws the letter "C" as he listens to the RINGS--

CONSTANCE (V.O.)

Hi. You've reached Detective Cambre--

Declan hangs up and tosses the phone. His fingers have change the "C" in the cocaine to a spiral. He pushes away the mirror, leans back, and sighs. His eyes roll back into his head--

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. RESTAURANT- NIGHT

From Declan's own perspective, he sees he's sitting at a table with the living James and Helen Wagner, both of whom are laughing happily. James and Helen raise their glasses at Declan.

JAMES

To a successful voyage!

Declan raises his glass and sees he's wearing the same three rings on his fingers as Nox.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Declan opens his eyes for moment, but he can't stay awake.

DECLAN'S DREAM: EXT. "LET IT RIDE"/DECK- NIGHT

From Declan's own perspective, he sees that he's standing next to Helen. She's visibly concerned.

HELEN

If you say you can keep us safe from the storm, I'll believe you.

The wind blows a strand of her hair onto her face. Declan reaches out to her with his ringed hand, but she backs away.

HELEN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Declan hears the LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN and turns--

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Declan opens his eyes and sees a plate of raw tuna steak slices sliding back and forth next to a pistol on his coffee table as if the room was rocking it.

He picks up a slice of tuna, shoves it into his mouth like a wad of tobacco, bites down, closes his eyes, and SLURPS

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE- NIGHT

Declan opens his eyes. He sits in the same spot in the yacht as Nox was, wearing the same clothes and rings on his right hand. His hair is blond. He looks at the Bowie knife in his hand as he twirls it.

DECLAN

What do you say Helen? Got one more spin left in you?

Declan stands up, tucking his Bowie knife into its holster on his belt. He grabs his pistol from of the table and steps over to Helen as she tearfully MOANS.

BACK TO:

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

An expression of agony forms on sleeping Declan's face.

BACK TO:

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

Declan yanks her up by her hair and tosses her down on her knees in front of James. Declan kneels down behind her, grabs her by the breast, and pulls her close to him. He points the gun at the back of her head.

HELEN

Please! No more!

Declan's ringed hand smears the blood from Helen's wounds all over her face. She MOANS as he pulls her hair back. He rests his head on her shoulder, smiling.

DECLAN  
Look at your wife.

James turns away and closes his eyes.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
Something wrong Jimmy, you puss? Look at her! Look at her!

Declan grins and pulls out his knife.

BACK TO:

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Sweat pours down Declan's face as he unconsciously shakes his head "no."

BACK TO:

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

Declan cuts Helen's hands free.

DECLAN  
Grab his face! Grab it and hold it!

Helen grabs James' face, forcing him to look at her. James appears to be shaking. Declan grins wickedly.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
That's it, let her feel you tremble.

Declan cuts off Helen's panties. Helen SHRIEKS.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to feel it too.

Declan puts away the knife then starts to unbuckle his belt. THUNDER ROARS. The yacht violently shifts. Helen takes the opportunity and pushes Declan off, then tries to roll free. Declan grabs hold of her and points the gun in her face.

James stabs Declan's left eye with the shard of glass.

BACK TO:

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Declan unconsciously grabs his left eye in pain.

BACK TO:

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

James's feet are still bound as he and Declan struggle for control of the gun. Declan lifts James completely off the ground by his wrists as he tries to shake him off the gun.

Helen crawls across the floor and into the control room.

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/CONTROL ROOM

Helen takes a flare gun out of the emergency kit, loads it, and fires it at Declan.

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

The flare separates the two men. It ricochets off the wall, bounces on the floor, and falls down the stairs.

Declan takes control of the pistol and shoots Helen in the stomach.

James lunges towards his wife.

JAMES

Helen!

Declan fires, blasting a hole from the back left side of James's head through the right temple.

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/CONTROL ROOM

The curtains and floor burn out of control. Smoke pours out from the stairwell.

Helen painfully reaches out towards the stairwell. The flames stretch up the stairs.

HELEN

Please, God--

Helen's eyes close and she falls limp. Declan drops the gun between them, then hits the switch to raise the anchor. He takes an inflatable life-raft out of the cabinet and exits.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- CONTINUOUS

Declan wakes up and rushes out of the room.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM

Declan kneels down and vomits into the toilet.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- DAWN

Declan takes a big snort of cocaine. His PHONE RINGS. He lets the answering machine pick up as he looks at his shaking hands.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE

Please leave a message.

There is a BEEP followed by--

DECLAN'S OWN VOICE (O.S.)

(from the mini-tape recording)

Fibers around the male's ankles indicate he may have been bound. The interiors of--

Declan frantically searches the room for the phone. He finds it and answers it.

DECLAN

(screaming)

Who the fuck is this?

STROHMEYER (O.S.)

Quality communication skills! Dave wants you down at the morgue ASAP.

Declan's eyes widen.

INT. MORGUE- DAY

Declan enters the morgue cautiously to find DR. DAVID BOURGERON (50s, authoritative, white coat labeled "Dr. D. Bourgeron, Orleans Parish Coroner") standing by the cooler cabinets where the Wagners are being stored.



DAVID  
Get over here, Dec.

Declan sheepishly approaches him.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You playing games with me?

DECLAN  
Dave, the Wagner's reports--

DAVID  
I'm not talking about no goddamn  
reports!

David pulls open the Wagner's cabinets and lowers the sheets off of their bodies.

The positions of the bodies have changed-- both James and Helen lie on their backs, arms folded across their chests, as if lying in a coffin.

Declan looks fearfully at David.

DECLAN  
I had nothing to do with this--

DAVID  
Well who did?

Declan struggles for an answer.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I know you hate me, but don't you  
goddamn dare start pulling shit on high  
profiles like this!

David walks towards the door.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Especially when the case is far from  
over.

DECLAN  
What do you mean?

David turns to Declan.

DAVID

The Wagner's four-year-old twin boys  
are missing. Grandparents insist they  
were on that boat too.

David walks off. Declan looks remorsefully at the bodies.  
He hears the SWISH of the doors as David exits. Declan  
covers the bodies with their sheets.

He pushes Helen's body back into the cabinet, then pushes  
in James's body-- It stops halfway in with a SLAM.

Declan jumps back nervously, shakes it off, and pushes on  
James's body, but it stops halfway in again. Declan looks  
to see if something is stuck in the track and finds--

--James's burnt fingers holding onto the side of the  
cabinet, preventing him to be moved any further.

Declan stares wide-eyed, then rubs them in disbelief.

As Declan rubs his eyes, James's fingers release the  
cabinet and creep back beneath the sheet.

Declan looks again; the fingers are gone.

Behind him, the silhouettes of two small skeletal children  
stand in the doorway.

Declan gets a sense something is watching him. He turns  
around as the automatic door SWISH closed.

INT. MORGUE ENTRANCE/HALLWAY- DAY

Declan exits the morgue and looks down the corridor. He  
quickly turns the other way when he hears a CHILD'S MOAN  
and the TAPPING of LITTLE FEET, but sees nothing.

The LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN is heard--

CUT TO:

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET- DAY

A group of CHILDREN laugh as they run through the CROWDS  
browsing the stands of farmers and peddlers beneath the  
moss-draped trees of a rural black community.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET/MAMA'S STAND

The children run past Elias, who smiles as he watches them. He returns to the painting ritual symbols on the alligators skulls on the table before him.

Beneath the shade of some canvas, Mama carefully arranges her altar of voodoo artifacts. She takes a GOLD CROSS out of her pocket, kisses it, places it in the center of the altar.

Mama turns to a tray covered with severed animal paws and feet drying out in the sun. She picks up a chicken foot--

--The toes of the chicken foot slowly curl and point to her left. She looks in that direction--

--and sees Declan pushing his way through the crowd to her stand.

Elias stands up, smiling.

ELIAS

Hey Doc!

DECLAN

Back off, Elias!

Elias sits back down, confused. Declan gets in Mama's face and points.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing to me now?

MAMA

I told you, I do nothing!

Declan's face reddens with anger.

DECLAN

Don't fuck with me! It was bad enough watching people die in my sleep. Now I'm seeing myself do the killings! I can feel it for Christ's sake!

Mama sits down fearfully, grabbing a black gris-gris off her altar, and holding it tightly.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

It's not just my dreams! I hear kids!  
In broad daylight, I'm hallucinating

about two dead kids that never graced  
my fucking slab! Now what's happening  
to me!

Elias grabs Declan's arm.

ELIAS  
Doc, that's enough!

Mama shakes her head at Declan. Declan yanks his arm free.

DECLAN  
I've tried help you fucking people!

Declan turns to find everyone at the market standing  
around, staring coldly at him. Declan makes his way through  
the crowd, feeling their eyes.

Declan's left eyelid twitches. He rubs it as confused look  
forms on his face.

INT. SAILBOAT "CHARON"/LOUNGE AREA- NIGHT

Nox rubs his wounded left eye as he looks in the mirror at  
the damage.

DAVID (O.S.)  
Both the circumstantial and physical  
evidence has provided reason to  
believe--

A News Report is on the television featuring David speaking  
on the courthouse steps. The graphics read: Dr. David  
Bourgeron, Orleans Parish Coroner.

DAVID (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
--that James Wagner shot his wife,  
Helen, and then turned the gun on  
himself.

Nox places his knife in the holster on his belt. He tucks a  
pistol in his pants. He takes a bottle labeled ether from  
off a shelf and places it in his pocket with a  
handkerchief.

DAVID (ON TV) (CONT'D)  
We're still unsure but we think the  
fire was caused by a flare gun.

He grabs the mug-shot of Harlan Correy from his desk and exits.

EXT. BANQUET HALL/COURTYARD- NIGHT

The large courtyard is filled with PEOPLE attending a semi-formal banquet for law enforcement and politicians.

A POLITICAL FIGURE (Black male, 60s), and ORLEANS PARISH SHERIFF (Black male in uniform, 50s) stand with David and Declan

POLITICAL FIGURE

Once they get that yacht into a controlled environment, something should turn up.

SHERIFF

I've got several police boats out searching the nearby bayous either for them or what's left of them.

Declan wipes his sweaty brow.

INT. BANQUET HALL/BUFFET

Declan and David stand by a tray of tuna sashimi. Declan shoves a whole piece into the back his mouth with a look of disgust.

DECLAN

This is terrible.

He shoves another piece into his mouth. David watches him with a raised eyebrow.

DAVID

The Wagner family are up-in-arms about this murder/suicide business.

Declan looks over David's shoulder and sees Constance. David looks sternly at Declan.

DAVID (CONT'D)

We're talking about a Louisiana money family here! Investors rapidly becoming few and far between.

Declan looks at David, left eyelid twitching.

DECLAN

Dave, you're the politician. You deal  
with the bureaucratic bullshit.

Declan walks off.

Constance watches Declan march out of the room and down a hallway.

INT. BANQUET HALL/CORRIDOR

Declan quickly walks down the corridor. He hears CHILDREN MOAN and their FEET TAPPING. He nervously turns around.

He's relieved to see two small, living children, a GIRL and a BOY, playfully chase each other in circles and GIGGLING.

Declan quickly turns back down the corridor.

INT. BANQUET HALL/MEN'S ROOM

Declan enters the empty, stark-white restroom and steps into a stall.

INT. BANQUET HALL/MEN'S ROOM/STALL

Declan locks the stall door, sits on the toilet, and pulls a vial of cocaine out of his pocket.

He hears the DOOR OPEN and the TAPPING of LITTLE FEET. He listens for a moment; everything is quiet. He nervously begins to open the vial, but drops it.

The vial rolls on the floor and stops just before rolling out of the stall.

Declan reaches out for it. He stops as he hears the TAPPING of LITTLE FEET again. He waits a second and hears nothing. He breathes a sigh of relief and reaches for it again.

Two small feet, burnt-black almost to the bone, appear beneath the doorway inches from the vial. Declan quickly snatches the vial.

Declan fearfully climbs up on the toilet, pulling his feet off the ground. He hears the door of the stall next to him OPEN. Declan jerks slightly away from the adjacent stall as he hears a child CLIMBING up on the toilet.

A small, burnt-black, skeletal hand reaches over the stall and out to Declan.

Stunned, Declan slips off the toilet. He hears the DOOR OPEN again, followed by the INAUDIBLE VOICES of two GROWN MEN.

Declan looks up and the little hand is gone. He listens as the men use the sink, then exit. He wipes the sweat off his brow, and sits squarely on the toilet.

Declan dumps some cocaine on his knuckle and sniffs it.

INT. BANQUET HALL

Declan steps through the crowd. Constance stops him and sees the glazed look in his eyes.

CONSTANCE  
Jesus, Dec, are you okay?

DECLAN  
Yeah, it's, uh,--  
(beat)  
--these fucking stiff's are driving me insane.

CONSTANCE  
I never thought I'd hear you say such a thing.

Declan gives an uncomfortable smile.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
Let's get you the hell out here okay?

Declan nods and Constance leads him through the crowd.

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR- NIGHT

Declan and Constance each drink a shot and slam the glasses down on the bar. Declan's hair is a bit disheveled, his tie is off, and collar is loose.

CONSTANCE  
So what's the spirits' take on Antoine Carter?

DECLAN

He wasn't ambushed by Correy's men.  
Carter fired first. He went in to kill.

Constance looks away solemnly.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Obviously that's all inadmissable. The  
name, Dagoberto, mean anything to you?

CONSTANCE

Dagoberto Sipilote, works for the  
Cienfuegos. He must have got to  
Antoine.

Constance turns away. Declan reaches over to Constance and  
pulls out the GOLD CROSS with emeralds inlaid on a chain  
around her neck.

DECLAN

You're still wearing the cross I gave  
you.

Constance gives a shrug. Behind her, Declan sees the  
shadows of the two skeletal children run by.

Declan closes his eyes and pinches the bridge of his nose.

CONSTANCE

Dec, what is it?

Declan shakes his head, almost tearfully.

DECLAN

I'm sorry.

(beat)

I should have never let you go through  
rehab alone and then expected so much  
from you when you got back.

Constance touches his face and gives a knowing smile.  
Before she can pull away, Declan grabs her hand and  
caresses it softly. She watches him uncertainly at first  
then closes her eyes as he presses her hand to his cheek.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

I forgot how warm.



He kisses the palm of her hand. Constance opens her eyes and pulls Declan close to her. He rests his head on her shoulder as she hugs him.

CONSTANCE

Dec, I can't go through it again. You hear me?

(beat)

I can't.

Constance runs her fingers through his hair.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CONSTANCE'S HOME/BEDROOM- NIGHT

Constance holds the back of Declan's head as he GROANS.

DECLAN

I can't.

They are both sweating beneath a sheet on her bed. The room is lit with candles and a romantic JAZZ MUSIC plays from her stereo system.

Declan sits up on the side of the bed and grabs a bottle of Bushmills from off the night-stand. He takes a drink.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you about my father?

Constance sits up, wrapping her arms around him, and kisses his head.

CONSTANCE

What about your father?

DECLAN

He killed eight men in his life. Four in Nam. Three he shot on the beat back in Chicago-- line of duty. A week didn't go by without him visiting their graves.

(takes a drink)

Eighth one was himself.

She presses her lips on the back of Declan's head and closes her eyes.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

I don't have time to visit all my graves.

CONSTANCE

You don't have any graves, Dec.

Declan rubs his left eye.

DECLAN

I just feel like I should be doing something more.

Constance releases him and grabs the CD remote.

CONSTANCE

I should have known this was the problem.

DECLAN

What?

She changes disks. A SOMBRE BLUES SONG begins to play.

CONSTANCE

The mood wasn't depressing enough for you.

They laugh as she pushes him back down on the bed and crawls on top of him. They kiss as she slides her hand down his waist beneath the sheet and massages his crotch. She smiles.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

See.

He kisses her passionately. His hand holds her head tightly.

INT. NOX'S CAR- NIGHT

Nox's ringed-hand grips the steering wheel tightly as he waits in his parked car. He looks at himself in the rearview mirror and sees that his left eye is even more swollen.

Nox sits back as a car with LOUD-THUMPING BASS drives past. Nox looks down at the mug-shot of Harlan Correy in the passenger seat.

EXT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- NIGHT

HARLAN CORREY (Black, 20s) and his THREE-MAN ENTOURAGE pull up in a luxury sedan, with loud MUSIC with THUMPING BASS. Harlan exits the passenger side and walks up to the house.

HARLAN

Wait here.

His men bob their heads to the BASS.

INT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

Harlan's GRANDMOTHER sits in a chair bobbing her head to OLD JAZZ MUSIC. The wall above her is decorated with five antique Mardi Gras masks, the center mask being a CRESCENT MOON with a smile on its face. Harlan enters and smiles at her.

HARLAN

Hey, Maw-Maw.

Harlan kisses her cheek.

HARLAN (CONT'D)

I need to grab something right quick.  
You need anything?

GRANDMOTHER

No, baby.

Harlan exits.

INT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE/HALLWAY

Harlan stands on a chair and pulls open the latch to the attic. He reaches up inside, pulls out a large bag of white powder, and stuffs the bag under his shirt.

INT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Harlan enters to find his grandmother fast asleep, SNORING away in her chair. He takes a blanket from off of the couch and covers her legs with it.

Harlan notices the crescent moon mask on the wall is missing.

HARLAN

What the--

Nox, now wearing the crescent moon mask, grabs Harlan from behind, shoving the handkerchief soaked with ether over his mouth. Harlan struggles, knocking over a night-stand, but his grandmother doesn't wake up.

EXT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE- CONTINUOUS

Harlan's men continue bobbing their heads to the loud BASS.

INT. HARLAN'S GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Nox carries an unconscious Harlan over his shoulder and out the back door.

EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan walks up his steps and finds a small gris-gris bag. He stares at it fearfully as he cautiously approaches it, then kicks it clear off of his porch. He hurries into his house.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- NIGHT

Declan takes a glass out of the upper cabinet and places it on the counter. He looks at the three pills in his hand and pops them in his mouth.

Declan opens up his lower liquor cabinet.

In the cabinet sit the Wagner's four-year-old twins, TIMOTHY and TERRENCE, burnt-black almost to the skeleton, crouching up against each other. They look up with milky-white eyes.

Declan moves back in horror.

The twins crawl out of the cabinet and stand up, Timothy reaches up, fingers grabbing out repeatedly, as they step towards Declan.

EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan runs out of his house and down the street.

DECLAN

It's a dream! It's a fucking dream!

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR/MEN'S ROOM- DAWN

Declan exits a stall and marches over to the sink. He splashes water on his face. He reaches into the paper towel dispenser, but it's empty. Declan looks at the crooked poster of an EGRET above the dispenser.

Someone has written the letter "R" before the word "Egret" on the title, which now reads "The Great REgret"

Declan looks away, wiping the water off with his sleeve.

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR- DAWN

Declan steps out of the men's room, wiping his nose. He sits at the bar where his whiskey waits for him. He takes a sip, looks up at the TV, and watches the morning news.

ON TV SCREEN: The ANCHORWOMAN looks sadly into the camera.

ANCHORWOMAN

This morning, the hopes and prayers of a nation go to the missing Wagner twin children--

ON TV SCREEN: A VIDEO plays of the LIVING TIMOTHY and TERRENCE WAGNER, laughing, as they hide behind furniture and then jump out shouting "Boo!" at the video camera.

ANCHORWOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

--seen here on a video obtained from the family. The search still continues for Timothy and Terrence Wagner.

Declan stares out blankly.

CUT TO:

DECLAN'S FLASHBACK 1: Opening cabinet doors and seeing the Wagner twins.

DECLAN'S FLASHBACK 2: Helen Wagner's burnt arm, reaching out.

DECLAN'S FLASHBACK 3: Helen, alive in Declan's dream, reaching out for the stairwell in the yacht.

BACK TO:

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR

Declan takes a drink while pondering the images; his hands shake. He looks up at the television.

ON TV SCREEN: Timothy and Terrence smile into the recording camera as they walk towards it. Timothy continuously makes grabbing motions up at the camera. The twins' smiling faces fill the screen.

INT. HANGER- DAY

A TRUCK finishes backing the yacht, "Let it Ride," into a crime lab hanger.

JUMP CUT TO:

CRIME LAB OFFICERS put on their jump-suits and gloves, preparing to board. Huey and Franklin stand with the SUPERVISING OFFICER over a table with minimal equipment--small tools, a couple of flashlights.

HUEY

This is all you have! You know what kind of pressure I'm under?

SUPERVISING OFFICER

The heavy equipment we need to chop this big bastard has to be rented--

Declan storms into the hanger.

SUPERVISING OFFICER (CONT'D)

--and they're not gonna send us shit till they have a check in their hands.

Declan walks past the men.

HUEY

Whoa there, Dec.

Dec grabs a flashlight from off the end of the table and climbs up onto the "Let It Ride."

HUEY (CONT'D)

Where you off to, Dec?

Declan enters the "Let It Ride."

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

Declan shines the flashlight around the burnt-black room. He can hear the Wagner's SCREAMS ECHO throughout the room.

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOWER LEVEL

Declan walks down the burnt-black stairs, shining around the flashlight.

INT. "LET IT RIDE"/BEDROOM

Declan enters the charred little room. He shines the flashlight around the walls.

He finds a small, thin opening between the floor and the wall to his right. He kneels down and pushes the ash away. He sees that it is the bottom of a cabinet door.

He feels the wall for the edges, but the burnt panel wall has fused together. Huey and Franklin enter the room.

HUEY

Dec, don't go messing nothing up. Crime lab has a hard enough time finding shit.

Declan smashes a hole in the wall with his flashlight and pries the burnt cabinet door open.

In the cabinet, Timothy and Terrence Wagner's charred remains sit upright, holding one another. Their burnt flesh has fused together.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Aw, damn.

Huey and Franklin stare mystified at Declan as he stands up, hands Huey the flashlight, and exits.

INT. MORGUE- DAY

Declan looks down at the bodies of Timothy and Terrence, now separated on two adjacent slabs. He speaks into his mini tape-recorder.

DECLAN

There are no gunshot wounds. The sediment in their lungs suggests

immediate cause of death was smoke  
inhalation.

He hears THUNDER ROLL and then the SWISH of the automatic  
doors open.

He turns to find David entering followed by the WAGNER  
FAMILY ATTORNEY and MRS. and MR. WAGNER SENIOR (wealthy,  
elderly.) Declan rushes over.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Dave?

Declan holds up his hands to stop them.

DAVID

It's okay, Dec.

WAGNER'S ATTORNEY

My clients have the right to view their  
grandchildren.

DECLAN

Not like this!

DAVID

Dec, they're under my authority!

Mrs. and Mr. Wagner continue walking. Declan stops them.

DECLAN

Sir, Ma'am, you don't want to do this.

MRS. WAGNER

Son, kindly get out of my way.

Declan stands aside as they march over to the slabs where  
the twins lie. Declan does not turn around when he hears  
Mrs. Wagner WAIL. Mr. Wagner turns away grievously.

MRS. WAGNER (CONT'D)

This can't be all that is left of my  
family!

Mrs. Wagner puts her hands on her husband's shoulders.  
Declan closes his eyes in remorse as Mrs. Wagner helps walk  
the tear-stricken Mr. Wagner past him.

MRS. WAGNER (CONT'D)



Dr. McCafferty?

Declan opens his eyes to find Mrs. Wagner standing before him. She slaps his face.

MRS. WAGNER (CONT'D)

How could you believe my son could do this?

Her eyes begin tear, and she quickly turns away. Declan watches the group exit the morgue.

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE- DAY

Declan maniacally knocks everything off the shelves in the office.

DECLAN

Where are they, Sugar?

Sugar sits at his desk, eyes bloodshot, shaking his head.

SUGAR

Dude, you're trippin'.

Declan pulls everything out of a cabinet, including a bunch of video-tapes, which he examines carefully.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

That's just porn, Doc.

Declan, breathing heavily, throws the tapes down and angrily approaches Sugar.

DECLAN

Give me the fucking tapes!

SUGAR

I think I'll hold on to them for the time being. 'Til you calm down a bit.

DECLAN

Children were on that boat!

Sugar shrugs and takes out a bag of cocaine from the desk. He motions for Declan to take it, but Declan doesn't budge.

SUGAR

Dude, it sucks you had to be dragged into this, but you done good. So take this, my treat.

Declan's lower left eyelid twitches. He punches Sugar right in the jaw, knocking him onto the floor. Sugar laughs and spits out some blood.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

You're lucky I'm too fucked up to respond aggressively.

Declan snatches the cocaine off of the desk.

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR- NIGHT

Constance enters and sees Declan sitting at the bar--

--He's leaning back on the bar-stool with his shirt unbuttoned, drawing a "Y" on his chest with a red marker--

She turns to the BARTENDER.

CONSTANCE

How long's he been here?

The bartender looks over at Declan, who leans back too far and drops to the floor. The bartender turns back to Constance.

BARTENDER

A while.

EXT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR- NIGHT

Constance holds Declan up against the side of her car. He holds her and kisses her neck as she struggles to get the passenger door open. She pushes him back.

CONSTANCE

Fuck, you smell like an Irish toilet on St. Pat's.

Declan leans back.

DECLAN

I found them Connie, the Wagner twins. I found them. Me. I think they wanted me to.

Constance rubs her eyes.

CONSTANCE

Aw Dec, what the hell are you talking about now?

DECLAN

I don't know. But it felt like I almost saved someone.

Constance looks at the sincerity in his eyes.

CONSTANCE

C'mon, get in the car.

Declan looks past her and sees the burned Wagner twins run beneath a street lamp and into the moss-draped oaks of City Park.

DECLAN

You little shits!

Declan runs after them. Constance throws her hands in the air and chases after him.

EXT. CITY PARK- NIGHT

Constance sees Declan run beneath the tree and into the "Storybook Land" playground.

EXT. CITY PARK/STORYBOOK LAND

Constance makes her way through the dark, old playground designed with characters and scenes from children's stories and fairy tales, noting the eeriness of the statues and play-sets in the speckled moonlight beneath the moss-draped oaks.

CONSTANCE

Declan! Goddamn it!

She finds Declan staggering by the statue of the "Little Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe."

DECLAN

You know they had to lethally inject Michael Chiffon twice. Because he wouldn't die. Because he was innocent.

CONSTANCE  
Christ, not this again!

DECLAN  
David said he was a sacrifice to the  
gods of tourism, so they can feel safe  
drinking rum and listening to cover  
bands.

Declan sees the shadows of the Wagner twins run behind the  
PETER PAN statue. Constance rubs her eyes in frustration.

CONSTANCE  
Wow, and to think I was actually hoping  
you dragged me in here for something  
kinky like fucking on the Puff the  
Magic Dragon sliding board.

Declan staggers over to a statue of PETER PAN fighting  
CAPTAIN HOOK. Declan looks at the three rings on HOOK'S  
hand holding up a sword.

DECLAN'S FLASHBACK: INT. "LET IT RIDE"/LOUNGE

Declan wears the same rings Nox wears as he grabs Helen  
Wagner by the hair. Her SCREAM ECHOES.

BACK TO:

EXT. CITY PARK/STORYBOOK LAND

Constance walks up to Declan.

CONSTANCE  
Now What?

Declan looks at her and shakes his head "no." She darts off  
angrily. Declan looks back at Hook's rings.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY- NIGHT

Declan sits at his desk watching a slide-show on pirate  
jewelry on his computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: An illustrated image of three rings on  
a pirate's hand. They are almost identical to Nox's.

COMPUTERIZED NARRATOR (V.O.)

As in all aspects of pirate life,  
superstition dictates their choices in  
jewels. The first ring contains  
moonstone to protect against the danger  
of the sea.

A plate of raw tuna steak sits on Declan's desk. He picks  
up a slice and looks at it.

COMPUTERIZED NARRATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The second contains ruby to protect  
against storms. The third contains  
olivine to protect against evil  
spirits.

Declan shoves the slice into the back of his mouth, bites  
down, and SLURPS.

EXT. SWAMP/SLAUGHTERHOUSE- NIGHT

NUTRIAS (large rat-like rodents) BAA like little sheep from  
inside of small, rusty cages as OLD JAZZ MUSIC (similar to  
the music from Harlan's Grandmother's house) mixed with a  
CHOPPING SOUND emanates throughout the old slaughterhouse.

Nox, wearing the moon mask on the back of his head, hums  
along with the MUSIC playing from a radio on a table where  
he chops a dead nutria into pieces with a cleaver.

Harlan hangs on a hook by his bound wrists. He has several  
bleeding cuts on his chest.

HARLAN  
Who sent you? Dagoberto?  
(beat)  
Please man! I can get money, drugs-

Nox puts down the cleaver, picks up a lead pipe, and  
SMASHES in one of Harlan's elbows. Harlan screams  
repeatedly.

Nox goes back to the table. The JAZZ MUSIC is followed by a  
NEWS REPORT. Nox turns the radio's volume up but still can  
barely hear over Harlan's screams.

RADIO NEWS REPORTER (V.O.)  
There are new developments in the death  
of James Wagner and family--

Nox quickly grabs the severed head of a nutria and shoves it into Harlan's mouth, then turns attentively to the radio.

RADIO NEWS REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
--New evidence has surfaced now leading  
NOPD to believe that the deaths are now  
a quadruple homicide.

Nox angrily raises the cleaver and swings down.

MATCH CUT TO:

A NEWSPAPER--

--slams down on a desk. Headlines read, "Wagner Family  
Quadruple Homicide."

INT. HUEY'S OFFICE- DAY

Huey looks nonchalantly up at Declan who angrily points at the newspaper on the desk. Franklin sifts through a file cabinet.

DECLAN  
What new fucking evidence?

HUEY  
Better calm yo'ass. Standin' there  
sweating. Ever see me sweat? 100  
percent humidity, not a goddamn drop.

Franklin shuts a file cabinet drawer.

FRANKLIN  
What's the matter, Doom? Our  
investigation doesn't agree with your  
premonition? Can't be right all the  
time.

Declan shoots a bitter look at Franklin.

HUEY  
Look, the Wagner's family attorney  
brought to our attention a contract to  
pilot the "Let it Ride" signed by James  
Wagner and, uh--

Huey looks at the note pad on his desk.

HUEY (CONT'D)

--Captain J. Patterson, two weeks  
before we found the yacht.

DECLAN

That doesn't prove a damn thing!

HUEY

Got a partial palm print along with  
the--

(wiggling his pinky)

--little pinky. No matches yet. No  
records on any Captain Pattersons.

DECLAN

How do you know Wagner didn't just kill  
this captain too? And-- and dump him  
overboard!

HUEY

We're inclined to take the family's  
side on this one and continue the  
investigation as a homicide.

Declan looks angrily at both Huey and Franklin.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Now why don't you take your bruised ego  
and get its pasty, Irish ass a tan.

Declan turns away, but stops before exiting.

DECLAN

If I have to do another autopsy, it  
will only confirm my original findings.

Huey leans back in his chair.

HUEY

You don't need to trouble yo'self none.  
David's doing the second autopsies as  
we speak.

A look of panic forms on Declan's face.

INT. MORGUE ENTRANCE/HALLWAY- DAY

Declan runs towards the morgue.

INT. MORGUE- DAY

The body of James Wagner is on a slab. P.A. Fred watches as David takes a metal rod and is about to insert it into the bullet wound in the skull.

Strohmeyer sits at an empty slab, eating a sandwich as Declan rushes into the room.

DECLAN

David!

David pauses.

DAVID

What is it, Dec?

DECLAN

I, uh, um--

STROHMEYER

Sounds important.

David inserts the metal rod into skull. The entire skull cracks and crumbles as it caves in.

DAVID

Son of a bitch.

Declan breaths a sigh of relief.

DECLAN

The cranial cavity, sphenoid and temporal bones, have been burnt to near ash. You may want to be more careful.

DAVID

You might have mentioned that in your report.

David tosses aside the metal rod.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan's front door CREAKS open and Nox enters the house.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM



Nox looks around the dark house. He walks over to a bookshelf. He grabs a text book titled "Autopsy."

He flips through, then stops when he finds an illustration of a "Y" incision on a human cadaver.

Nox closes the book and takes it.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY

Nox stands over Declan's desk, staring at all the diagrams of cemeteries.

A drop of puss THUDS as it lands on a report on the desk.

A stream of puss oozes from Nox's left-eye. He wipes it away.

Nox opens a drawer and sifts through all of the voodoo artifacts. He then moves to the computer printer and takes out a printed-page sticking out of it. A bewildered look forms on his face as he examines it--

--On the page is a picture and history of the three pirate rings almost identical to the ones Nox wears.

SUGAR (V.O.)

Dude, I didn't tell him about yo'  
fucking rings!

INT. MISCHIEF-MAKERS/MANAGER'S OFFICE- NIGHT

Sugar sits at his desk, rubbing his bare foot. Nox looks around the room.

NOX

How else does he know about them? And what  
about the voodoo trinkets in his desk?

SUGAR

Voodoo crap. He says he sees ghosts in  
his dreams and they show him stuff.

Sugar grimaces when he sees the infection between his toes.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Says he dreams about the same shit  
until the case is over. Maybe he  
dreamed about yo' rings.

Nox looks at the taped-over security cameras.

NOX

So Dr. McCafferty can commune with the  
dead.

Nox sits down across from Sugar.

NOX (CONT'D)

That's interesting. Hmm.

(beat)

Do you know what my real name is?  
It's Virgil. Virgil Nox.

SUGAR

Well, that's a nice name.

NOX

I want you to tell Dr. McCafferty that  
next time you see him.

Sugar shrugs and continues rubbing his foot.

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR/MEN'S ROOM/STALL- DAWN

Declan raises his head after snorting cocaine off his  
knuckle in a dirty, vibrantly colored bathroom stall.

INT. LIVE OAKS 24 HOUR BAR

Declan exits the men's room and sees Sugar sitting at the  
end of the bar. He walks over and sits down next him.

DECLAN

What are you doing here?

SUGAR

Lookin' for you.

Declan waves to the BARTENDER and tosses a few dollars on  
the bar.

DECLAN

Another Bushmills.

Declan turns to Sugar.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

It's out of my hands. NOPD has made up  
its mind on the case.

Sugar looks down dismally. The bartender drops off Declan's  
drink. Declan waits till the bartender is completely out of  
range before starting up again.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
You have to tell me who killed the  
Wagners before this gets even worse.

Declan's CELL PHONE BUZZES. He pulls the phone out of his  
pocket and answers his cell-phone.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
McCafferty.

DETECTIVE HEZEAU (O.S.)  
Doc, this is Detective Hezeau, 8th  
District.

SUGAR  
His name's Virgil Nox.

DECLAN  
(into phone)  
Hang on a sec.  
(to Sugar)  
What?

SUGAR  
Works for the Cienfuegos. You need to  
run, dude.

Declan turns away from Sugar and speaks into the phone.

DECLAN  
Sorry. What can I do for you?

DETECTIVE HEZEAU (O.S.)  
We're sending a body to the morgue. He  
either fell or was pushed down the  
stairs at the strip club he managed;  
some guy named 'Sugar' Rowlands.

Declan's eyes fearfully open wide. He slowly turns and  
looks at the empty stool where Sugar was sitting.

INT. MORGUE- DAY

Sugar's body lies on a table. The skin on his chest and abdomen is pulled back and the front of the rib-cage removed, exposing his internal organs.

Declan snorts a line of cocaine off of the x-ray of Sugar's head and broken neck. He speaks into his mini-recorder.

DECLAN

Spine severed just below the atlas  
vertebrae.

Declan sneers, left eyelid twitching severely as he turns to Sugar's body. He twirls a scalpel in his fingers.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

We both know you didn't just stumble  
down that staircase.

He steps closer to the body, leans down, and looks bitterly into Sugar's lifeless face.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Who is this Virgil Nox? What did you  
tell him? Where are my tapes?

Sugar's eyes slowly move beneath his eyelids. Declan leans back up. He hears a THUMP and looks at Sugar's chest. The heart gives a beat. The lights in the morgue change from fluorescent white to burning red. Declan begins to sweat.

Sugar's eyes look as if they are bulging out, but SNAIL-SHELLS push through the eyelids.

Webbed feet and hands push out of the sides of the heart.

The SNAILS crawl out of Sugar's eye-sockets and down the side of his face.

Sugar's lungs pulsate.

The heart has turned completely into a BULLFROG, which CROAKS as it pops its head up.

Declan slowly reaches for the bullfrog. A SNAPPER TURTLE'S head launches out from beneath the stomach and SNAPS at Declan's hand. Declan quickly pulls back. The bullfrog jumps out of the chest and onto the scale.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

What the hell is this!

The bullfrog jumps off of the scale towards the floor.

MATCH CUT TO:

The room is now cool blue as Sugar's heart lands on the floor and rolls to the feet of Strohmeier, who has just entered the morgue. He hears a SCREAM and looks in Declan's direction, then sheepishly backs out of the morgue.

INT. MORGUE ENTRANCE/HALLWAY

Strohmeier runs down the corridor.

INT. MORGUE

The lights continue to burn red as Declan wipes the sweat from his face. His nose begins to bleed. All he can hear is the SOUND of his own HEART BEAT.

Sugar's lungs pulsate rapidly then burst as hundreds of PALMETTO BUGS fly out and swarm the room.

The stomach has turned completely into a snapping turtle.

An EEL twists and curls as it oozes out of Sugar's mouth.

Declan screams at the sight of the swarm unaware that the large intestine has turned into a large PYTHON, the head of which, is crawling up his arm. The small intestines have change into dozens of smaller BLACK SNAKES.

Declan notices the python and immediately shakes his arm free. He runs to the door and turns to look back as his HEART BEAT grows LOUDER and LOUDER.

The swarm of palmettos continues to pour out of the lungs. The python has crawled halfway out of the body and slithers on the floor towards Declan.

INT. MORGUE ENTRANCE/HALLWAY

Declan exits the morgue quickly. He rests up against the wall, slides down it, and sits on the floor, shaking. He wipes the blood from his nose.

David, followed by Strohmeyer, rushes down the hall and over to Declan. David looks inside the morgue then turns back with an expression of disgust.

STROHMEYER

It was like he was tossing an organ salad in there.

David grabs Declan and pulls him up.

DAVID

What the hell is the matter with--

David looks at Declan who stares out blankly, then down at Declan's shaking hands.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Alright--

David lets lose his grip.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'll take care of this. Are you listening?

Declan doesn't respond. David gives him a shake. Declan blinks and looks at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You are suspended indefinitely. Get out and pull yourself together.

David enters the morgue. Strohmeyer shakes his head at Declan and follows David.

Declan looks down at the blood on his trembling hands and lets out a deep breath.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM- DAY

Declan grabs all the prescription drug containers and vials and throws them into a plastic bag. He opens up a linen closet and shoves the bag behind a stack of towels.

Declan looks at his reflection in the mirror. His left-eye is completely bloodshot.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY- DAY

Declan tears down his cemetery diagrams and puts them in a closet.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Declan sits on the couch, hair a mess, shirt unbuttoned, left-eye almost completely closed. Constance sits across from him.

CONSTANCE  
I'm digging the new look.

DECLAN  
Fashion's my new passion.

Constance shakes her head.

CONSTANCE  
I ran that name you gave me. Virgil  
Nox.

She places a photo-copy of an obituary on the coffee table and slides it over to Declan.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
He died at sea twenty-three years ago.

Declan picks up the obituary and reads it.

DECLAN  
If this is him, than he must have faked  
his own death.

CONSTANCE  
Dec, what's this about? Where did you  
get this name?

DECLAN  
Let's just say the spirit world told me  
this is the man who killed the Wagners.

CONSTANCE  
The same spirit world that told you  
they were a murder/suicide?

DECLAN  
It's complicated.

Declan continues reading.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Says he was raised at the St. Miguel Orphanage.

INT. ST. MIGUEL ORPHANAGE/CHAPEL- DAY

Constance and Declan follow the orphanage's SUPERVISING NUN (70s) down the aisle towards the altar.

NUN

Yes, I remember Virgil Nox. Came to us at age twelve after his parents drowned in a boating accident. They were both alcoholics.

The nun and Constance walk into another room. Declan pauses to look at two small BOYS lighting candles at the foot of a statue of the Virgin Mary. They look up at him coldly.

INT. ST. MIGUEL ORPHANAGE/OFFICE

Declan enters as the old nun digs through a filing cabinet.

NUN

Such a charming boy when he wanted something. I didn't want within an arm's length of him if he didn't get it.

The nun finds a file.

DECLAN

Kid liked to punch stuff, huh?

Declan snatches it out of her hands.

NUN

I, um--

Constance pulls her attention away from Declan's rudeness.

CONSTANCE

He was never picked up by a foster family?

NUN

People tend to be superstitious of children orphaned from accidental



death. He unfairly missed out on many opportunities.

Declan looks through the file. He sees an old class photo with a BLOND BOY circled in it and a crayon drawing of an alligator eating a person, followed by several pencil drawings of pirates fighting navy soldiers.

DECLAN

Do you know what happened to him after he left?

NUN

He at sixteen he left to become a boat builder's apprentice with another boy. What was his name? Oh they were inseparable.

(remembering)

Dagoberto Sanchez.

Declan looks over at Constance.

EXT. U.S. CUSTOMS BUILDING- DAY

The words "United States Customs Services" is carved above the doorway of the large concrete building.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1 (O.S.)

Dagoberto Sanchez is Dagoberto Sipilote.

INT. U.S. CUSTOMS BUILDING/OFFICE

CUSTOMS AGENT 1 (male 30s, professional) sits on the edge of his desk. Constance and Declan sit in front of him.

Declan looks at some 8x10 photos featuring several shots of Dagoberto speaking with Tijul in front of a black sedan.

DECLAN

What are those tattoos all over him?

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

A symbol of the Cienfuegos, one hundred flames exactly. Desperately wants to be one of the heads of the cartel, but he's Honduran not Columbian.

CONSTANCE

Is it possible Dagoberto could be using luxury yachts to smuggle drugs into the country, maybe through the bayous?

CUSTOMS AGENT 2 (male 30s, t-shirt and jeans, baseball hat on backwards) throws a Nerf basketball at a hoop nailed to the wall. He misses.

CUSTOMS AGENT 2

We looked into it after you called. Three years ago, Customs Miami caught some Columbians posing as a family on a luxury yacht. They were smuggling heroin, moving it through smaller waterways.

Customs Agent 2 picks up the ball.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

The yacht turned out to belong to an American family, which vanished in a hurricane off of Jamaica two years earlier along with it's passengers.

Customs Agent 2 shoots again and misses.

CUSTOMS AGENT 2

The Columbians said Dagoberto has a 'pirate' that gets him ships--

DECLAN

(looks at Constance)

A 'pirate' that hires himself out as a captain and makes the ships look like they disappeared during storm.

CONSTANCE

And then chops the boats and sells them to drug dealers.

The Nerf ball bounces off the wall. Declan watches it roll past his feet.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

It's highly unlikely that's still happening.

Declan looks up. His eyes widen as he sees--

--Harlan Correy hanging by his wrists over the agent's desk.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1 (CONT'D)

One, it would be a hell of a lot of trouble to get a boat.

Harlan looks beaten and exhausted with several cuts on his chest and abdomen, both arms broken at the elbows. Hair from the nutria head sticks out from his mouth. He looks fearfully at the ground and kicks at something invisible.

CUSTOMS AGENT 2

Two, it wouldn't be cost effective to move supplies by such expensive means.

Sweat begins to drip down Declan's head as he struggles to remain composed. Harlan kicks harder, but the invisible force tightly grabs hold of his right leg and tugs at it.

CONSTANCE

But if this 'pirate' was stealing them, it would hardly cost the cartel a thing.

Harlan bites down on the nutria flesh, spraying blood out of his mouth. He kicks at whatever's got a hold of him with his left foot, but that too gets grabbed.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

True, but there are so many better ways.

Harlan groans painfully as his legs twist around. His bones CRACK.

CUSTOMS AGENT 2

They'd use air-drops.

Declan can't focus completely on the Custom Agents. His eyes keep turning over to Harlan, whose waist twists almost completely around.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

Or trucks coming from Texas through Mexico. Parasite smuggling.

Declan covers his eyes. The shadow of Harlan struggling is on the wall behind him.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1 (CONT'D)

Last year, they were welding containers filled with heroin to the bottoms of freighters coming up the Mississippi.

CUSTOMS AGENT 2

That was cool.

Declan looks up with a grim expression. The shadow of Harlan twists around again. The invisible force splits him apart at the waist. Declan almost screams, but covers it up with a loud laugh, which comes across equally deranged.

CUSTOMS AGENT 1

Are you all right Dr. McCafferty?

Declan stands up shaking. The image of Harlan has disappeared. Declan gives Customs Agent 1 a freakishly wide smile and extends his hand.

DECLAN

We've taken up too much of your time.  
Thanks for your help.

They shake hands. Declan walks out of the room. Constance watches him with concern, then stands up.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM- NIGHT

Declan digs into the linen closet, tears open his bag of narcotics, and takes a quick snort of cocaine from one of the vials. He closes up the bag and hides it again.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/STUDY- NIGHT

Constance sits at the desk with her cell-phone to her ear.

CONSTANCE

(into Phone)

No, only the unrecovered SOS calls in the Atlantic Seaboard in, let's say, the last fifteen years.

A database file appears on the computer monitor.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yeah, it's downloading now. Thanks, Sam.

Declan walks in holding two glasses of whiskey and hands one to Constance as she hangs up her phone.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
What exactly are we looking for?

Declan sits down in a chair.

DECLAN  
Private yachts similar to the Wagner's.  
No record of any captains aboard. All  
lost during a a storm.

Constance turns back to the computer screen, reads, and scrolls down a page.

JUMP CUT TO:

Constance sits in a chair reading over pages, tapping her gold cross on her teeth. Declan sits on the floor near her feet with pages spread out in front of him.

CONSTANCE  
It looks like there's a similar  
circumstance once a year.

DECLAN  
If this guy made them look like they  
sank in a hurricane. There would be no  
bodies.

Constance puts down the pages.

CONSTANCE  
Why go through this much trouble? Why  
not just buy or steal a boat and hire a  
crew to smuggle the drugs?

Declan thinks for a moment.

DECLAN  
This is far more sinister than ships,  
or dope, or the Cienfuegos. He gets  
these families to welcome him into  
their lives then he has them under his  
control alone in the intimacy of the  
ocean--

Constance watches Declan's face redden and his eyes become watery.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

--imposing his will as he drains his victims of all memory of happiness and when their depleted existence becomes even numb to agony, he gives them to the sea.

Declan gives a laugh as he wipes the tear rolling down his face. Constance reaches out for him, but he gets up and leaves the room.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Declan gulps down a glass of Bushmills as Constance enters the room. He immediately pours himself another drink. Constance grabs his hands.

CONSTANCE

Stop this!

She turns him around and hugs him.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Dec, what's wrong?

Declan holds her face and presses his lips to hers.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM

Declan and Constance kiss as they fall onto the bed. Declan slides his hands gently over her body. His hands move more steadily and roughly up her body. He kisses her deeply and forcefully squeezing her breast.

Declan tears open her shirt, POPPING off some buttons.

CONSTANCE

What are you--

He presses his face to hers. Blood from his nose runs down her cheek. He kisses her frantically down her neck onto her breasts, smearing blood along the way. She pulls his head back and sees the blood dripping from his face.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Jesus, Dec!

She pushes him off. Declan grabs her neck and slams her back down on the bed with a wild look in his eyes.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

Dec! Get off of me!

Declan tears off her panties. She knees him in the gut so hard he falls clean off the bed.

He tries to stand, but she repeatedly punches his back, then slaps his face. He retreats up against the wall.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

What the fuck is the matter with you?

Declan looks up at her tearfully.

DECLAN

I fucked up real bad, Connie. The Cienfuegos found out about my drug abuse. I've never been able to stop.

CONSTANCE

What are you saying?

DECLAN

I manipulated the bodies so it looked like James Wagner killed his family and then himself.

Constance looks at him so angrily, tears roll down her cheeks.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

They were going to expose me. There would have been dozens of appeals. Convicted murderers released back on the streets. I would have had to dream about their victims all over again.

CONSTANCE

Aw Christ, Dec.

She wipes the tears from her face and sees the blood on her hand. She storms out of the room.

DECLAN

Connie?

He hears the bathroom door slam.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM

Constance controls her sobs. She washes off her face then takes off her bra and drops it in the sink. She takes a towel and wipes off her chest and her gold cross.

EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/COURTYARD

Declan washes off his face with the water from the fountain. He sits on the ground leaning up against it. Constance stands in the doorway buttoning up what remains of her shirt.

CONSTANCE

I used to blame myself. Bringing home  
all that coke. But you went on a  
mission to destroy yourself--

(beat)

--and now you finally have. You must  
tell Huey what you did.

DECLAN

I can't do that.

Constance looks away in frustration, biting her lip.

CONSTANCE

Goodbye, Dec.

She walks away. Declan looks sadly into the water of the fountain--

--and sees a the reflection of the crescent moon behind him. But as the wavy water stills, he sees it's really the reflection of a man in a crescent moon mask.

Declan splashes the water and turns to see no one behind him.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/HALLWAY

Constance walks through the dark hallway, carrying her purse, then in one simultaneous motion--

--Nox, in his moon mask, darts out of the living room and snatches Constance, covering her mouth with a handkerchief and yanking her into the room across the hall.



EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/COURTYARD

Declan hears Constance's PURSE DROP and gets up.

DECLAN  
Constance?

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/HALLWAY

Declan sees the contents of her purse spilled out across the floor.

DECLAN  
Connie?

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/SITTING ROOM

Declan sees Constance lying on the floor. He steps towards her but is grabbed from behind by Nox who covers Declan's mouth with the ether-soaked handkerchief. Declan's eyes roll back into his head.

FADE TO:

DECLAN'S DREAM: INT. YACHT- NIGHT

Declan, appearing as Nox again, leans behind another WOMAN as he did with Helen Wagner. Her face is covered by his bloody ringed hand, seductively rubbing it.

DECLAN  
(hissing)  
Look at your wife.

He merrily grins as he removes his hand, revealing her face-- blood pouring out her empty eye-sockets and gagging mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE- NIGHT

Declan wakes up to find that he is hanging by his bound wrists on a hook in the dark, dank slaughterhouse. His mouth is taped-up and his feet dangle inches off the ground.

He sees Constance hanging by her bound wrists on an adjacent hook, still unconscious. Her mouth is also taped.

He looks around the room filled with rusty instruments of slaughter and cages filled with SQUEAKING NUTRIAS.

He MOANS through the tape and kicks at Constance. Constance wakes up, groggy at first, then quickly realizes her situation and pulls aggressively on her unyielding bindings.

NOX (O.S.)

Welcome to the house cruelty and death  
built.

Nox, still in moon mask, steps towards them from out of the darkness. Declan sees at the three rings on Nox's hand.

NOX (CONT'D)

This is hollowed ground.

Constance instinctively kicks at Nox, who catches her foot and turns to Declan.

NOX (CONT'D)

Ain't she a peach.

Declan stares coldly at Nox as he tosses away Constance's foot. Nox taps on the metal cords of two rusty pulley-systems above their head. He slides his fingers along the cords, which run through two openings above two rotting, barn doors.

NOX (CONT'D)

The amazing thing about this place is  
that despite being abandoned for years,  
the gator population has flourished.

He pushes on the doors.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE/DOCK

The doors open up to a large pool of black water brilliantly illuminated by bright moonlight. The dock ends, leaving a three foot drop-off.

Declan's cord stretches out over the water to a pulley attached to a large tree sticking out of the water.

Constance's cord connects to a pulley on a pole sticking out of the water. Hanging on the cord is the decaying upper-torso of Harlan Correy.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Constance and Declan turn to one another after recognizing the corpse. Nox stares out at the water.

NOX

They love dead tissue. They'll watch a live person hanging there for days, until his entire life drips away in beads of sweat and blood.

Nox steps over to Declan.

NOX (CONT'D)

But I've noticed--

Nox pulls out his Bowie knife.

NOX (CONT'D)

--if I leave some decaying flesh hanging out of their reach, they'll tear into anything else I put up there.

Nox tears open Declan's shirt and cuts a "Y" incision in Declan's chest and abdomen, not deep but enough to bleed.

Declan MOANS in pain and Nox tears off the tape from his mouth to listen to the agony.

NOX (CONT'D)

(admiring the "Y")

I could've been a pathologist.

Nox punches Declan in the face with his ringed hand, dizzying him with pain.

Nox puts the knife up against Constance's face.

NOX (CONT'D)

Let's hear what your scream sounds like.

Nox tears off the tape from her mouth, and she nails him in his good eye with a gob of spit. He wipes it out of his mask and punches her the stomach. Declan regains his composure.

DECLAN

Virgil! Leave her alone!

Nox cocks his head and steps towards Declan.

NOX

My God. Sugar told you my name. You really can speak with the dead.

Constance looks fearfully at Declan as Nox gives a laugh and clenches his fist in excitement.

NOX (CONT'D)

That's incredible! Have you seen any of my others?

Nox prances in circles, spinning Declan around with him.

NOX (CONT'D)

What did they look like? Can you smell them? Are they still in pain? Is there anything left in them or did I take all they had?

DECLAN

I don't know what you're talking about, you sick fuck!

Nox laughs and stops spinning Declan.

NOX

The only down fall of my occupation is that no one else ever gets to see the fruits of my labor--

Nox stands back and holds his arms out towards Declan.

NOX (CONT'D)

--but you! Tell me about my families.

DECLAN

They all went to heaven, enjoying a peaceful eternity.

NOX

Really? In that case--

Nox grabs Declan's face, shoving him down the cord and out over the water.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE/DOCK

Declan looks down at the still water less than a yard beneath his dangling feet. Nox pulls on the cord, moving Declan further out.

NOX

You're no further use to me.

Nox stops pulling on the cord.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Nox grabs hold of Constance and touches her face.

NOX

(to Declan)

Unless you want give me some pointers as I perform my first autopsy.

DECLAN

Virgil! Please, not her!

Constance twists to try to release his grip.

NOX

(to Declan)

None of this would be happening if you kept the Wagners as a murder/suicide!

Nox turns to Constance and touches her face.

NOX (CONT'D)

Let's find out if you're as soft on the inside as you are on the outside.

DECLAN

Please! They found a contract with half a handprint on it! It had nothing to do with me!

CONSTANCE

We can still get you the contract!

DECLAN

Constance!

Nox looks closely at Constance.

NOX

That contract and those prints will lead to nothing.

CONSTANCE

They will because they match a set of prints at Customs.

NOX

What?

CONSTANCE

They found your prints on a yacht they captured smuggling drugs in Miami.

NOX

That's not possible.

DECLAN

Customs is already connecting you with Dagoberto Sipilote and the other yachts!

Nox turns stunned at the mention of Dagoberto then paces nervously.

CONSTANCE

If Customs doesn't get you two, the Cienfuegos will.

Nox angrily grabs a cage of nutrias and throws it at the water.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE/DOCK

The cage hits the water below Declan. He watches the nutrias stick their snouts through the bars, fighting for air as the weight of the cage sinks them down below.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Constance looks out uncertainly at Declan then turns to Nox.

CONSTANCE

I can go into evidence and get the contract. They'll have no hard evidence to connect you.

Nox steps up to Constance.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
But only if you pull him in!

Nox looks out at Declan and then closes the barn doors.

NOX  
As soon as we get the contract.

DECLAN (O.S.)  
Constance!

Nox padlocks the doors.

DECLAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Connie! Don't do it! He'll kill you!

Nox bangs on the doors.

NOX  
Keep your feet up, Doc! If you live,  
we'll reconvene our conversation!

EXT. SLAUGHTER HOUSE/DOCK

Declan pulls his feet up onto the cord.

EXT. ABANDONED ALLIGATOR FARM- NIGHT

Nox carries Constance over his shoulder away from the slaughterhouse and across a boardwalk above the swamp.

EXT. SWAMP/DIRT ROAD- NIGHT

Nox carries Constance over to Declan's car. Nox opens the trunk and throws her inside. Her eyes meet with Declan's "Surgical Kit." Nox closes the trunk.

Nox gets in the car and drives off.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE/DOCK- NIGHT

Declan pulls his feet up onto the cord. He struggles to shimmy along the cord and makes his way to the barn doors.

He kicks on them repeatedly with no results. Declan hears something splash in the water and he stops kicking.

He sees he is not far from Harlan's rotting torso hanging on the adjacent cord.

Declan, exhausted and sweating, struggles to keep his feet up on the cord. They slip off causing him to dangle above the water again.

An ALLIGATOR bursts out of the still water and latches onto Declan's shoe. He kicks himself free.

Declan pulls his feet back up onto the cord and sees that he has lost his shoe. He looks down to find three ALLIGATORS below him, their eyes glowing brightly in the moonlight.

Declan looks out to his right and sees dozens of sets of GLOWING EYES swimming towards him like pairs of headlights through the darkness. He looks to his left and sees even more sets of GLOWING EYES.

Declan kicks at the barn doors again.

He sees Harlan whose eyes now glow like the alligators' in the moonlight. The nutria flesh rolls out of his mouth as he lifts his head and looks at Declan.

HARLAN

You going the wrong way. Get to the tree.

Declan looks at the tree and starts shimmying towards it. Beneath him, dozens of glowing eyes resemble a starry sky.

Declan gets closer to the tree. Another ALLIGATOR jumps up at him. He pulls up as high as possible, just out of the jaws, which SNAP shut so forcefully they spray a mist of water over Declan's head. The alligator flops back into the water.

Declan reaches the tree and sees a large knob sticking out of the trunk. He lowers his feet upon it and carefully pushes up to lift the bounds off of the hook. He succeeds but nearly falls forward. He holds onto the hook with two fingers.

Alligators HISS and open their mouths in anticipation.

Declan grabs onto the hook and pulls up on the cord for support. In the process, he kicks the hook back down the cord.



He manages to get his arm on a branch and pulls up in the tree. He sits where the trunk splits like a giant "Y" and rests his head against a branch, taking deep breaths.

EXT. CLOSED GAS STATION- NIGHT

Declan's car is parked behind an old, abandoned gas station.

INT. DECLAN'S CAR

Nox, dressed professionally, scrapes out Declan's I.D. photo from his "M.E." credential with an Exacto knife.

He then takes a stick of glue and some I.D. photos of himself out of a small black kit on the passenger seat. He glues a picture of himself onto Declan's credential.

Nox puts on a pair of thick framed glasses and looks at himself in the rearview mirror. He grimaces at his swollen left eye. He turns his face and looks at his uninjured profile.

NOX  
That's Doctor McCafferty.

EXT. CLOSED GAS STATION

Nox gets out of the vehicle and opens the trunk. Constance lies motionless with her back towards him.

NOX  
It's time to go over the game plan.

Constance trembles as Nox runs his hand down her back.

Nox reaches for her. She turns, slices his arm with a scalpel, and kicks him in the chest. Nox drops flat on his back.

Constance jumps out of the trunk, kicks Nox in the face, and takes off running.

Nox rolls over and watches Constance run into a tall sugarcane field.

EXT. SUGARCANE FIELD- NIGHT

Constance runs as fast as she can between rows of sugarcane stalks. Headlights shine from behind her.

Declan's car plows through the field towards her. She dives out of the way before it can hit her. The car stops and Nox jumps out.

Constance runs down another row. Nox runs as fast as he can to catch up with her.

He catches hold of her hair and punches the back of her head with his ringed hand. She drops to the ground unconscious. Nox, out of breath, sits down next her.

NOX

Nothing's easy.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE/SWAMP- DAWN

Declan sits in the tree looking out over the now visible swampland. He spies a single small ALLIGATOR swim past. He sees a thin patch of land within feet from his tree.

A pirogue (flat-bottom rowboat) is beached on the little island with a long, wooden staff (used for rowing) lying up against it.

Declan climbs along an out-stretching branch and carefully drops down onto the island. He steps over to the pirogue.

A three-foot-long ALLIGATOR, resting inside of it, HISSES at Declan.

Declan picks up the staff, his left eyelid twitches, and he SLAMS the staff at the gator.

JUMP CUT TO:

Declan sits in the pirogue holding the dead gator, using its jaws to saw through the rope around his wrists.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. ALLIGATOR FARM/SWAMP- DAY

Declan stands on the pirogue, gliding it over the water by pushing the long staff.

He comes to a low opening in the rusty fence around the alligator farm. He grabs the staff, ducks into the pirogue, and pushes off the fence as he slides through the opening.

EXT. MARSHLAND- DAY

EGRETS walk along the edges of a creek as Declan glides the pirogue straight up past them through beige grass stalks, waving gently in the breeze.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUGARCANE FIELD/ROAD- DAY

Declan staggers up a road between two sugarcane fields; the green stalks sway in the wind.

EXT. POOR RURAL TOWN/ROAD- DUSK

Declan worms his way down a street of a poor black community. Most of the homes are dilapidated.

Some OLDER TOWNSFOLK sit on the porch, see Declan (pale, "Y" incision on chest, eyes half-rolled back into head), and rush into their homes. Declan looks at one ELDERLY COUPLE.

DECLAN

Phone?

They walk into their houses.

INT. OLD HOME- DUSK

An ELDERLY BLACK WOMAN watches Declan go past her window as she holds the phone to her ear.

ELDERLY WOMAN

This evil thing has to be your doin'.  
Get it out of our town.

EXT. POOR RURAL TOWN/ROAD- DUSK

Declan shouts at a YOUNGER COUPLE who pull their CHILDREN into their house.

DECLAN

Phone!

EXT. EDGE OF RURAL TOWN- DUSK

Declan reaches a crossroad at the end of town. Exhausted, he falls to his knees, and then to the pavement.

He fights to keep his eyes open.

An old PICK-UP TRUCK stops next to Declan. Mama's son, Elias, gets out of the cab.

ELIAS

Doc!

Declan looks up.

DECLAN

Elias?

Elias pulls up Declan and places him in the truck.

EXT. MAMA'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Mama stands on her porch as Elias's pick-up pulls into the driveway.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/HEALING ROOM- NIGHT

Mama enters the little candlelit room with voodoo symbols on the walls and a mat lying on the floor. Elias carries Declan into the room and places him on the mat. Declan grabs Mama's leg in a panic.

DECLAN

Don't let me sleep.

MAMA

Don't fret, child. No one will harm you here.

Mama steps over to a night-stand and blows out the candles.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE- DAY

Nox leans up against the barn doors with a look of disappointment as he stares at the empty hook where Declan was hanging. He sees ALLIGATORS lingering beneath it.

EXT. FOREST ROAD/REST AREA- DAY

Nox waits up against his car with the same dismal look on his face. A BLACK SEDAN with black tinted windows pulls up next to him. The rear passenger side window lowers revealing Dagoberto.

DAGOBERTO

Get in, *hermano*.

INT. DAGOBERTO'S SEDAN- DAY

Tijul drives the vehicle as Dagoberto and Nox sit in the backseat.

NOX

NOPD has prints on me. Customs may have them as well.

DAGOBERTO

This is turning into a never-ending calamity with you. There was no reason to kill Sugar.

NOX

No one will shed a tear for one less junkie pimp. Besides NOPD's focus is shifting as we speak.

DAGOBERTO

Good. I'm sending in the next wave of shipments. The boss men want this to be the last.

Nox looks away disheartened.

DAGOBERTO (CONT'D)

We've been together a long time. I've given a purpose to these--

(beat)

--things you do.

Nox shifts angrily in his seat.

NOX

And I've made you rich!

Dagoberto avoids eye-contact.

NOX (CONT'D)

With my boats, my plans, my routes! The  
ocean is red with blood that will never  
stain your hands because of me!

Tijul looks at Nox through the rearview mirror. Nox kicks  
the back of Tijul's seat so hard that he causes Tijul to  
swerve the car.

NOX (CONT'D)  
Eyes on the road, fat ass!

Dagoberto turns to Nox.

DAGOBERTO  
Times have changed.

NOX  
No Dago, you've changed. And you can  
tattoo yourself from face to your  
balls, but you'll never be more to the  
Cienfuegos than some fucking Spic mutt  
out to retrieve their sticks.

Tijul pulls the sedan back up next to Nox's car. Nox opens  
the door and steps out.

NOX (CONT'D)  
In the end, it's me and you as always.

EXT. FOREST ROAD/REST AREA- DAY

Nox slams the car door shut. The black sedan pulls away.

INT. NOX'S CAR- DAY

Nox sits down and puts the key in the ignition. He stops  
before turning it when he notices something odd.

Nox runs his thumb over the nicks in the plastic around the  
ignition switch.

Nox gives a conflicted and angry glare at Dagoberto's  
sedan.

INT. DAGOBERTO'S SEDAN- DAY

Dagoberto doesn't flinch as Nox's car explodes in the rear  
window behind him.

DAGOBERTO  
*Adios, hermano.*

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/HEALING ROOM- NIGHT

Declan opens his eyes to the sight of an alligator's face on the floor near him. He jerks back, then sighs in relief when he sees that it's a taxidermic head with a candle on it. He finds that he's wearing a clean set of clothes.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/ALTAR ROOM

Mama murmurs a prayer at an altar to the Black Virgin as Declan steps in the doorway. He sees the shrine to Mama's grandson, Michael.

DECLAN  
How long have I been here?

Mama turns to him.

MAMA  
Damn near three days.

Declan rubs his eyes.

DECLAN  
Jesus.  
(beat)  
Connie!

Declan darts out of the doorway.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Declan picks up the phone, dials a number, and waits for someone to answer. Mama steps into the room.

DECLAN  
How could you have let me sleep for so long?

MAMA  
A whole marchin' band paradin' around that room couldn't have woke you up.

Declan listens as Constance's voice-mail picks up.

CONSTANCE (V.O.)

Hi. You've reached Detective Cambre.  
Leave a detailed message and I'll get  
back to you.

(BEEP)

DECLAN

(into phone)

Connie, it's me. If you get this, I'm  
at Mama Chiffon's place. The number is  
(reads off of phone)  
(504)555-2318.

Declan hangs up. THUNDER ROLLS. The WIND MOANS.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Where's your son? I need his truck!

MAMA

Elias's place down the street--

Declan moves to the front door.

MAMA (CONT'D)

--You have to wait! Listen, child!

Declan grabs the doorknob, but stops before opening it.

DECLAN

What?

Declan listens to the WAILING WIND.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

The wind?

MAMA

Does that sound like wind to you?

Declan listens closer and realizes that it's not the wind--  
it's the WAILING MOANS of MULTIPLE PEOPLE. Mixed with the  
WOEFUL HOWLS are MUFFLED VOICES of MEN, WOMEN, and  
CHILDREN.

VOICES (O.S.)

Help us! Are you in there? Come out!  
Please help! Come out!

Declan pulls his hand away from the doorknob. THUNDER  
ROARS.



MAMA

They've been gathering since you got here. I don't know who they are, but I can feel their pain all around us.

DECLAN

(lost in thought)

I know who they are.

Declan looks at Mama.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

They're the victims of a very dangerous man. They're coming for me, because they can't get to him.

MAMA

Why?

DECLAN

Because I helped him.

MAMA

(shaking her head)

How can you save the souls of others when you cannot save your own?

Mama steps closer to him.

MAMA (CONT'D)

You have to finish this. I knew you felt connected to the dead. Felt it yo' whole life. This is what you were meant for. You a doctor, and yo' patients are in pain. Heal them. Heal yo'self.

(beat)

*Tu es Voix de Mort.*

(translates)

Voice of the dead.

DECLAN

I have to find her.

Declan turns from her and cautiously opens the door.

EXT. MAMA'S CHIFFON'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan and Mama step out onto the porch. The MOANS and VOICES are LOUDER. Declan steps down into the pouring rain.

EXT. COUNTRY STREET- NIGHT

Declan walks steadily down the middle of a street lined with oak trees draped with drenched Spanish moss.

He pauses when he sees that facing him about 30 yards in the distance is a mass of SHADOWY FIGURES. Lightning strikes and the figures glow blue for a moment then fade back to shadows.

Declan takes a breath and walks down the road. One shadowy figure runs towards him. He freezes as the figure--

--a WOMAN (40s)dressed in out-dated clothes from the early 1970s, stops before him. Her eyes and skin are completely pale. She is soaking wet, but not from the rain which runs right through her. She looks at Declan.

1970S WOMAN

I should have stopped it. This wouldn't have happened.

Her HUSBAND (40s, blonde, strong)runs and catches her, yanking her back. His ghostly features match hers. He looks at Declan.

1970S MAN

I know what I did was wrong, but we never deserved this.

They fade away as Declan rushes past them. The next set of SOULS slowly approach Declan-- a FATHER 1 and MOTHER 1(both 40) and SON 1(12.) Their hair and clothing flow as if in a current underwater. Their eyes are as pale as their faces.

VOICES

That's him. Will he help us? Look at us.

Declan tries to avert his eyes, but is compelled to look at their stab and bullet wounds. The hanging flesh around their wounds also flows as if in a current. Their MOANING VOICES sound like they are still underwater.

FATHER 1

Said his name was Gambi.

Declan continues on past three more FAMILIES all with FATHERS, MOTHERS, and CHILDREN (3-15 years of age). All of

the family members' hairs seem to be flowing in different currents underwater.

Declan slows down his pace, studying their wounds. They have been beaten, stabbed, and shot. The mothers are covered with bodily bruises that match the pattern of Nox's rings.

VOICES

Help us! Please, I can feel the knife.  
Can't you help us.

Declan notices the outdated 1980s-style clothing they wear. One FATHER dressed in 1980s garb reaches out for Declan.

1980S FATHER

Called himself Captain Beluche.

Lightning strikes illuminating the BONES of all the souls through their flesh like x-rays.

Declan can clearly see the FRACTURES in some of their arms, legs, skulls, and rib-cages, as well as the bullets that are still in their bodies.

The glow of their bones fades away back into their flesh. Declan continues down the road listening to the WAILING MOANS

Declan looks closely at one brutally BEATEN FATHER standing with his beaten, HALF-NAKED WIFE and three BEATEN CHILDREN.

Lightning strikes, illuminating their bones. The father has been beaten so severely about the head, half his face and skull is nothing but splinters of bones. The glow of their bones fades back beneath their flesh.

BEATEN FATHER

Captain Chighizola.

Declan walks towards two FAMILIES standing with their backs towards him. Their clothing styles are more modern.

The FATHER, MOTHER, and DAUGHTER turn to Declan-- all three of them have blood gushing out their mouths and eye-sockets flowing upward and out into the underwater current they're trapped in.

DECLAN

He's removed the eyes and tongues.

The next family, a FATHER, MOTHER, A TEENAGED DAUGHTER, and SMALL SON also have had their eyes and tongues cut. Declan looks closely the several cuts around sockets and mouths.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

He cut them out while you were still  
alive.

Declan sees a HUSBAND and an OBESE WIFE without children. They have the same wounds as the last two sets of souls with watery blood pouring out of their eye-sockets and mouths.

Lightning strikes, illuminating their bones through their flesh and revealing that the woman is not just obese, but pregnant--

--The bones of a six month old FETAL CHILD glow from within her. The Fetal Child gives a kick as the glow of the bones fade back beneath the flesh.

Declan reaches the Wagner family grouped together. Declan looks upon them apologetically.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Lightning strikes illuminating the Wagners' bones as they walk away. Declan sees one more glowing skeleton standing in the road. He approaches it. The glowing bones fade back into the flesh, revealing--

--Constance standing before him, looking away sadly.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Constance!

He sees she is wearing the same outfit she had when he saw her last. Her arms are folded across her chest holding her torn, bloody shirt closed. She turns to him tearfully.

CONSTANCE

Declan.

DECLAN

Connie?

Constance opens up her shirt and reveals a deep "Y" incision on her chest and abdomen.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Dear God.

Tears roll down Declan's face and mix with rain.

He tries to touch her face, but his hand goes through her chin, giving him a chill. She closes her shirt. APPROACHING POLICE SIRENS are heard, but Declan pays no attention.

CONSTANCE

Declan.

The flashing lights of POLICE CARS pull up the street behind him, coming closer to Mama's house.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)

They found me in the trunk of your car.

Declan turns to the police cars now parked out in front of Mama's house.

Huey and Franklin run out of their car and up her porch.

Declan turns back to Constance, but she's vanished. Elias's pick-up truck pulls up in front of him with the headlights off. Elias shouts through an open window.

ELIAS

Get in, Doc!

Declan gets into the cab of the pick-up. It drives away down the dark street.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

Huey and Franklin stand in the room as other OFFICERS search the house. Huey eyeballs Mama as she walks past them.

A YOUNG OFFICER runs up to Huey.

YOUNG OFFICER

He's not here, sir.

HUEY

All right, lets move out.

He hears a SNIP and quickly turns around to find Mama behind him holding a pair of scissors. Huey looks at his shirt.

HUEY (CONT'D)  
The hell you doing, woman?

Mama holds up a string.

MAMA  
You had a stringy hangin'.

Franklin and Huey walk to the front. Huey turns back to Mama.

HUEY  
You better not be doin' no hoodoo on me. Old lady or not, I'll kick yo' ass.

Huey leaves, SLAMMING the door behind him. Mama laughs as she looks at the string.

INT. ELIAS'S TRUCK- DAWN

Elias yawns as he drives. Declan sits, eyes-glazed, in the passenger seat. Declan looks at his shaking hands and begins to SOB uncontrollably.

DECLAN  
Stop the truck.

ELIAS  
What, now?

DECLAN  
Stop the truck!

EXT. AN INDUSTRIAL CANAL ROAD- DAWN

Elias's truck pulls over on the side of a lonely industrial road by a canal lined with several broken down barges. GUSTING WIND causes dirt and sand to blow like red fog in the low hit sun.

Declan gets out of the vehicles and staggers aimlessly, sobbing and mumbling to himself.

DECLAN  
I've lost her-- everything.

Declan drops to his knees. Blowing dirt clings to the tears on his face. He hears a SQUAWK and looks up.

A large EGRET stands on top of a rusty barge, cocking it's head as it looks down at Declan.

Declan sees a struggling fish beneath one of the bird's feet.

The egret kills the fish with a stab of its beak.

A grave and determined look forms on Declan's face.

EXT. OPEN WATER/LOUISIANA COAST- DAY

A COAST GUARD SHIP passes by a 35 foot yacht named "The Stymphalian." A beautiful LATINO WOMAN (30s, bikini-clad) on its deck, waves at the ship. The COAST GUARDS on their deck WHISTLE and wave as they pass her.

INT. "THE STYMPHALIAN"/CONTROLS

A LATINO MAN (40s) watches the Coast Guard ship pass. A six-year-old LATINO BOY plays on the floor with toys. The Latino Man receives a radio transmission.

DAGOBERTO (V.O.)  
(in Spanish- subtitled)  
Come in Stymphalian.

The Latino Man looks at list of numbers on the radio, switches frequencies, and speaks into the radio microphone.

LATINO MAN  
(in Spanish- subtitled)  
This is Stymphalian.

The Latino Man changes frequencies and listens.

DAGOBERTO (V.O.)  
(in Spanish- subtitled)  
You've been out long enough. Come ashore.

The Latino man changes frequencies again, then speaks.

LATINO MAN  
(in Spanish- subtitled)  
I'm on my way..

The Latino Man looks out his window and sees that a very small, unmanned motorboat floating past the yacht. Nox sneaks up behind the Latino Man and clubs him over the head.

EXT. LIBRARY- DAY

Elias sleeps in the cab of his pick-up truck parked out front of the library of a quaint, Parish town

INT. LIBRARY/INTERNET ROOM- DAY

Declan sits at a computer terminal, wearing a baseball hat and glasses. His hair is dyed blond. He nervously watches a LIBRARIAN walk past.

On his screen is a web-page with the words "PIRATEFACTS.COM" above an old illustration of a pirate dueling with a British Naval officer.

Declan types the words "eye and tongue removal" into the search engine. He clicks the box reading "FIND."

Another web-page opens on the screen, reading "ONE ITEM FOUND," and providing a link entitled "PIRATE SUPERSTITIONS."

Declan clicks on the link. Another web-page opens containing an essay titled "Pirate Superstitions." Declan reads quickly through it until he finds something of interest.

DECLAN

(whispering)

Jean Lafitte ordered his men to remove the eyes and tongues of their victims in the belief that their souls would never find their way to heaven nor be able to speak the name of their perpetrator.

Declan sits back in his chair.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

They didn't find heaven; they found me.

INT. LIBRARY/READING AREA- LATER SAME DAY



Declan sits at a table covered with books on Jean Lafitte, Louisiana, and pirates. He reads a book title "Jean Lafitte's Journal."

Declan reads a page that is nothing more than a list of names labeled "Crew of Jean Lafitte."

FATHER 1 (V.O.)  
Said his name was Gambi.

1980S FATHER (V.O.)  
...Captain Beluche.

BEATEN FATHER (V.O.)  
Captain Chighizola.

Declan finds the names "Vincent Gambi" "Rene Beluche" "Luc 'Nez Coupe' Chighizola" on the list.

HUEY (V.O.)  
The contract was signed J. Patterson.

Declan runs his pen down the entire list. No "Patterson" is on it. Declan circles the words "Who is J. Patterson?" he has written on a piece of paper.

INT. LIBRARY/SECOND LEVEL/AISLES

Declan searches down an aisle and finds a row of pirate books. He takes them off the shelf one by one.

Declan sees Constance through the empty space on the shelf, staring at him from the next aisle and drops the books. Her eyes have turned pale.

Declan sits down on the floor fearfully. He leans up against the book shelf. Constance's pale eyes look over his shoulder between the tops of books and the shelf closest to his head.

CONSTANCE  
Declan, look at me.

DECLAN  
I can't.

CONSTANCE  
You must find him.  
(beat)

I can still feel his hands moving  
around inside me.

Declan lets a tear roll down his cheek.

CONSTANCE (CONT'D)  
He's holding my heart.

DECLAN  
I'm going to kill him.  
(eyelid twitching)  
I'm going to kill the son of a bitch.

CONSTANCE  
Declan, go to aisle 12.

DECLAN  
Connie?

Declan turns to her, but she has disappeared.

INT. LIBRARY/SECOND LEVEL

Declan wipes the tears from his face as finds aisle 12 and  
turns down it.

INT. LIBRARY/AISLE 12

The aisle leads to a dead end. On the wall is a large old  
ILLUSTRATION of a pirate above a map of Southern Louisiana.  
It's title reads: "The Smuggling Routes of Gentleman  
Pirate, Jean Lafitte."

Declan closely examines the illustration.

At the bottom is a picture of a NAVAL SHIP with a caption  
that reads "Commodore James Patterson lead the only  
successful raid of Lafitte's base on Grand Terre." The town  
of Grand Terre is marked near the coast of Louisiana.

DECLAN  
Grand Terre.

Declan hears a WATERY SOUND from above and looks up.

The Latino Woman from "The Stymphalian" splashes through  
the library ceiling as if it was the waterline and she was  
sinking under it. Her body is wrapped a chain attached to

weight, which causes her to sink past Declan rapidly and down through the floor.

Declan hears another SPLASH.

INT. LIBRARY/SECOND LEVEL

Declan steps out of the aisle and sees the Latino Man chained and sinking down in the center of the room then through the floor. Another SPLASH. Declan looks to the front of the building.

The chained Latino Boy sinks down the front of the library. He sinks below the second level indoor balcony. Declan runs over to the balcony, which overlooks the lobby.

Declan sees the Latino boy sinking through floor then SHERIFF DEPUTIES standing at the doorway making PEOPLE exit.

Declan backs away and looks out a window. Several POLICE SQUAD CARS are in front of the building. He sees Franklin patting down Elias.

Declan runs to the stairway entrance and opens the door. Huey tackles him to the ground. They wrestle on the floor.

HUEY

Dec! Cool it, goddamn it!

They roll into a shelf, knocking off some books.

DECLAN

Huey, you know I didn't kill her!

Huey sits on Declan's back and tries to get control of Declan's flailing arms.

HUEY

I don't know what you're capable of.

He gets Declan's left wrist cuffed.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Judging by all the coke and shit we found in your place and them videos in your trunk, I doubt even you do.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Mama ties Huey's string into a bow around the neck of doll made of sponge. A little police star is drawn on its chest. She dunks the doll into a sink full of water and pulls it out dripping wet.

INT. LIBRARY/SECOND LEVEL- CONTINUOUS

Sweat drips down Huey's brow. He wipes it, somewhat confused. He gives up on trying to cuff Declan's right hand.

HUEY

Fuck it.

Huey handcuffs Declan to his own right wrist.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Mama gives the doll a little squeeze, dripping out more water.

INT. LIBRARY/SECOND LEVEL- CONTINUOUS

Huey, clothes and face becoming wet, walks with Declan. Huey grabs his two-way radio.

HUEY

(into two-way)

I got him. Ain't no biggie.

Huey looks at his wet clothes. Declan drags his feet.

DECLAN

A pirate working for the Cienfuegos is setting me up.

Huey pulls on him.

HUEY

That may get you off on an insanity plea.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Mama squeezes the doll again, draining more water.

INT. LIBRARY/STAIRWAY

Huey, dripping wet and exhausted, leans up against the stairway door. Declan looks at him strangely. Huey takes a staggering step towards the stairs.

DECLAN

Huey, you're dehydrating. You need water.

INT. MAMA'S HOUSE/KITCHEN- CONTINUOUS

Mama opens her palm then quickly squeezes the doll tightly.

INT. LIBRARY/STAIRWAY

A mist of sweat sprays out of every gland on Huey's body as he girlishly screams.

Declan snatches Huey's keys from off his belt.

Huey's wet feet slip on the steps. His soaking wet wrist slips right out of the handcuff, leaving Declan on the top of the stair watching him slide steadily down the steps. Declan runs back into the room.

EXT. LIBRARY/FIRE ESCAPE

Declan climbs out a window and onto the fire escape.

INT. LIBRARY

Huey rushes out of the stairwell with no shirt on and kicking off his pants.

Huey's soaking wet pants SPLAT in Franklin's face as he and other OFFICER approach him as he stumbles over, only wearing wet boxers.

HUEY

Around back, damn it!

Franklin and two officers rush to the back of the building. Huey leans up against a shelf.

HUEY (CONT'D)

Somebody get me some water. A lot of water!

EXT. LIBRARY- DAY

Declan peeks his head around the side of the building and sees several OFFICERS waiting out front by the squad cars.

Elias, leaning against a vehicle, sees Declan spying.

ELIAS  
(shouting)  
Y'all are nothin' but a bunch of racist  
pigs! This is racism!

The officers, most of whom are Black, give each other a confused look. Elias takes off running, but is immediately tackled.

Declan sneaks over to Huey's car and enters.

ELIAS (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
They gonna lynch me!

Declan starts the car and pulls away as the officers focus on Elias.

EXT. BACK ROAD- DAY

Huey's car speeds down a country road past rotting crosses on the side of the road.

EXT. BAYOU CEMETERY- DAY

Crosses and sunken tombs stick halfway out of the muddy bank of a bayou. Some larger tombs stick out of the water.

On the other side of the wide bayou is a shipyard where an old, 200+ foot paddlewheel boat, the "CREOLE BELLE," rots at a point where two bayous intersect, creating a "Y" shape.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"

The "Stymphalian" makes it's way up the bayou and turns towards the large paddlewheel boat "Creole Belle."

INT. "THE STYMPHALIAN"/CONTROLS

Nox glides the yacht through the rough water to the right side of the "Creole Belle". The side of the "Creole Belle" appears to have been rebuilt with large aluminium wall. Nox drops anchor.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"

Nox dives off of "The Stymphalian" and swims over to the aluminium wall of the "Creole Belle."

He grabs a rope attached to the corner of the wall and swims along side of the boat with it, pulling the aluminium wall, which is actually a doorway to massive opening in the side of the "Creole Belle".

JUMP CUT TO:

Nox pulls the aluminium door open completely, revealing that the bottom of the "Creole Belle" has rotted away into the bayou. Nox climbs back onto "The Stymphalian."

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"

Nox steers the "The Stymphalian" into the paddlewheel, the interior of which has been transformed into a garage for chopping yachts.

Most of the second floor is missing to make room for tall vessels. There is a dock and workshop area with electricity.

JUMP CUT TO:

Nox ties "The Stymphalian" to the interior dock.

EXT. BAYOU/BOAT HOUSE- DAY

Dagoberto's black sedan pulls up in front of a boathouse. TWO BODYGUARDS, Tijul, and Dagoberto exit the vehicle.

DAGOBERTO

(in Spanish- subtitled)

This fucking boat should have been here hours ago.

INT. BOAT HOUSE

Dagoberto and his men enter.

DAGOBERTO

(in Spanish- subtitled)

Get on the radio. Find out where they are.

The men separate as Tijul turns on a small radio and begins channeling.

TIJUL  
(in Spanish)  
Come in Stymphalian. Come in.

BODYGUARD 1 (O.S.)  
(in Spanish)  
Dagoberto, look at this!

Dagoberto walks out to the dock.

EXT. BOAT HOUSE/DOCK

Dagoberto stands by the two bodyguards and sees that a NUTRIA has been pinned against the wall by its hands and feet. A "Y" incision is on its abdomen with organs dangling out.

Beneath it, the word "*HERMANO*" is written in blood.

DAGOBERTO  
(hissing)  
Nox.

EXT. SWAMP ROAD- DAY

Declan drives down a country road surrounded by swampland and lush moss-draped trees.

INT. HUEY'S CAR- DAY

Declan glances at a map as he drives. He looks out a window.

EXT. MARSHLAND ROAD- DAY

Declan sees he is driving down what was once the main street of a town. All the houses have sunk half way into the marsh.

EXT. BRIDGE- DAY

Declan drives over an old wooden bridge across a marshy bay. Storm clouds gather in the horizon.

EXT. GRAND TERRE- STORMY DAY



Storm clouds provide greenish-gray tone to the already decaying atmosphere as Declan drives past a decrepit sign that reads "Welcome to Grand Terre- *Laisse Les Bon Temps Rouler!*"

He drives through the town. The few houses and shops are boarded up. Lawns overgrown with weeds. Large dead pines with moss draped on their few remaining limbs mark the homes the like crosses in a graveyard.

INT. HUEY'S CAR

Declan sees a large gated area with a old sign that reads "Grand Terre Shipyard."

EXT. GRAND TERRE SHIPYARD/ENTRANCE- STORMY DAY

Declan parks his car by the entrance. He exits his vehicle and checks the gate. There is a new lock on it.

EXT. GRAND TERRE SHIPYARD/GATE

Declan climbs the rusty fence as WIND GUSTS blow and a heavy rain begins to fall.

EXT. GRAND TERRE SHIPYARD

Declan makes his way into the shipyard, a labyrinth of broken- down vessels, through the wind and rain to the dock.

EXT. GRAND TERRE SHIPYARD/DOCK

He sees a light in the window of a sailboat and walks up the dock.

EXT. SAILBOAT "CHARON"/DECK- STORMY DAY

Declan climbs up on the back of the deck. The word "CHARON" is written on the back of the sailboat.

INT. SAILBOAT "CHARON"

Declan quietly makes his way through the vessel, checking each room.

INT. SAILBOAT "CHARON"/STORAGE ROOM

Declan enters a room cluttered with Nox's collection of the trophies he stole from his victims such as photos, jewelry, toys, and so on. Declan sees Constance's gold cross lying on top of a jewelry box.

INT. SAILBOAT "CHARON"/LOUNGE AREA

Declan enters the lounge area and looks around at Nox's collection of nautical maps and books. Declan finds his autopsy book on a desk, and flips through it--

--It's covered with handprints made from dried blood.

He tosses the book down and spies a pistol lying on the desk.

Declan looks out the window. Through the rain he catches a blurry glimpse of a light and movement coming from inside the "Creole Belle."

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"- STORMY DAY

Declan runs and hides up along side of the rotting, broken-down paddlewheel boat.

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"/LOWER LEVEL

Declan sneaks into the lower level of the old boat, which CREEKS and shakes in the storm-raged water. Rain water pours down through holes and cracks in the ceiling.

Declan sees Nox moving around on the deck of "The Stympthalian." He pulls out the pistol.

On the deck of "The Stympthalian," Nox crouches down gathering his arsenal of several pistols. He loads a clip into an assault rifle.

Declan sneaks up onto the deck and quietly steps up behind Nox, pointing the pistol at him--

--Nox quickly turns to Declan pointing the assault rifle at him. Nox gives a sneering grin when he sees it's Declan standing before him.

NOX

Dr. McCafferty, this is an unexpected pleasure.

Nox eases up slightly and looks at the gun in Declan's unsteady hand.

NOX (CONT'D)

That's one of my guns. The barrel's clogged.

Without hesitation, Declan fires, shooting Nox above the left collar bone. Nox falls back, dropping his gun, laughing through his pain.

NOX (CONT'D)

Didn't even consider my bluff.

THUNDER ROARS as Nox grips his shoulder as he kneels up.

NOX (CONT'D)

Did you see them?

(beat)

Of course you did. How else would have found me. And her. I felt her die, organ by organ.

Declan pistol whips Nox in the face, knocking back down. Nox continues to laugh as he struggles back up.

NOX (CONT'D)

C'mon, give me a critique.

Lightning flashes and for a moment, Declan sees all of NOX's victims angrily pushing and pulling on the rocking paddlewheel boat.

DECLAN

I've seen the agony you've caused, and I know how much joy you derived from all those people's pain.

NOX

I knew you'd understand me.

Declan's left eyelid begins to twitch.

DECLAN

Then you'll understand the euphoric bliss I'll feel as I gauge out your eyes, tear out your tongue, and watch the life drain from your heart as it sits in the palm of my hand!

Declan clenches his fist as a wild sneering grim stretches across his face. His left eye is completely closed.

Lightning flashes, THUNDER ROARS, as Declan glances over at Nox's victims outside of the paddlewheel boat. They stare motionlessly back at him.

Nox stands still staring back at Declan cautiously.

The grin fades from Declan's face as he opens his left eye. He takes a step back, visibly shaken.

Nox gives a relieved laugh.

NOX

For a moment, I actually thought I  
might be in trouble.

Declan sees Nox's victims fade away as a burst of AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE from outside shatters the paddlewheel boat's windows.

Nox and Declan hit the deck as a series of bullets strike "The Stymphalian."

Declan drops his gun and it slides across the deck to Nox. Nox grabs the gun, grins, and slides it back to Declan.

Nox grabs his assault rifle, slides off the yacht and into water.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"

Tijul and Latino BODYGUARDS 1 and 2 stand on land and fire their weapons at the paddlewheel boat. They stop firing and Tijul turns to Dagoberto who sits in the back of his sedan.

TIJUL

(in Spanish- subtitled)  
I don't think he's in there!

Bodyguard 2 is shot in the face and drops. Bodyguard 1 returns fire at the paddlewheel boat. Tijul runs onto the boat.

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"/LOWER LEVEL

Declan climbs down off of "The Stymphalian" and onto the interior dock.

Tijul sees him from a distance and opens fire.

Bullets strike the dock behind Declan's feet as he runs. Declan fires back at Tijul, missing every time, until the gun is empty.

Declan runs up a rotting staircase to the second level.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"

Bodyguard 1 runs into the paddlewheel boat.

INT. DAGOBERTO'S SEDAN

Dagoberto loads a clip into his handgun. Nox bashes in the window with the butt of his rifle.

EXT. DAGOBERTO'S SEDAN

Nox drags Dagoberto out through the broken window and throws him onto the muddy ground, using only his right arm.

NOX

Never could stand the sight of blood,  
could you, *hermano*?

Nox pulls out his Bowie knife.

DAGOBERTO

Nox! Please!  
(beat)  
My brother.

Nox looks mournfully at Dagoberto and screams as he goes into a fit, stabbing Dagoberto repeatedly. Blood mixes with rain and sprays all over Nox.

Nox stands and looks at the body of Dagoberto lying in the center of a pond of blood, mud, and water.

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"/UPPER LEVEL

Declan makes his way across what's left of the upper level towards the rear of the boat. Tijul stands at the top of the stairs and fires.

Declan drops to the floor, knocking out some floorboards.

Declan looks down through the hole he created and sees the floorboards land on the head of bodyguard 1 standing beneath him on the lower level. Bodyguard 1 immediately starts firing above him.

Declan rolls out of the way of the gunfire. He runs, head crouched, as Tijul continues firing, blowing out the rear windows. Declan runs to the windows.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"/PADDLEWHEEL

Declan jumps out of the window and down onto the faded red paddlewheel. He crashes through a rotted paddle and lands on the central axis. Support ropes tied to the boat keep the wheel from turning.

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"/LOWER LEVEL

Bodyguard 1 stops firing to reload. Nox bursts out of the water, stabbing the guard in the leg. The bodyguard falls flat on his back on the dock. Nox stabs his throat.

INT. "CREOLE BELLE"/UPPER LEVEL

Tijul looks down through the broken windows and sees Declan on the paddlewheel. He fires.

EXT. "CREOLE BELLE"/PADDLEWHEEL

Declan drops underwater as bullets hit the paddlewheel

UNDERWATER: Declan hides under the main axis as bullets rip through the water. The firing stops and Declan pulls himself out of the water.

ABOVE WATER: Tijul's body lands next to Declan on the main axis. Declan sees that Tijul's throat has been slit before sinking into the water.

Nox jumps onto the wheel, knife clenched between his teeth. He grits his teeth in pain when he hits the main axis.

The support ropes break and the wheel begins to turn. Nox grabs Declan, keeping him above water.

NOX

I should be thanking you, Doc.

They struggle to balance on the turning paddlewheel in the wind and rough water.

NOX (CONT'D)

Knowing pain doesn't end in death,  
gives new meaning to my endeavors!

Declan pushes himself free from Nox and sinks under.

UNDERWATER: Declan holds his breath and turns with wheel.

ABOVE WATER: Declan lets the wheel bring him up for air. Nox swings his knife at him just missing his forehead. The weight of the two men now turns the wheel in the opposite direction. Declan sinks below again.

The paddlewheel breaks free completely from the boat and turns out towards the center of the bayou.

Nox tries to balance himself on the unsteady wheel, but he can barely move his left side from the bullet wounds.

Declan pulls up on a paddle for air. Nox sees him and chops his knife down so hard it lodges into the paddle. Declan sinks below.

UNDERWATER: Declan grabs hold of one of the support ropes.

ABOVE WATER: Nox has trouble balancing and pulling the knife out of the plank at the same time.

Declan climbs up behind him, loops the rope around Nox's neck, and jams the end of the rope in between a spoke and the central axis. The rope tightens as the wheel turns.

Nox chokes but can almost reach his knife. Declan kicks the plank of the wheel. Nox watches his knife sink into the water.

Declan jumps off of the wheel. Nox grabs his foot, and they both go under.

UNDERWATER: Declan struggles to free his foot from Nox's grasp. Nox lets go.

Lightning flashes. In that moment, Declan sees all of Nox's victims in the water, pulling Nox down away from Declan.

Declan swims the best he can through the rough current.

EXT. BAYOU CEMETERY- DAY

Declan swims and climbs up on top of a tomb that is sticking out of the water. The storm passes. Declan lies on his back and sees the paddlewheel sticking out of the water.

It slowly turns revealing Nox's dead body tied to it. The paddlewheel breaks apart completely and washes away.

Rays of sun break through the clouds. Within the rays on the bank of the bayou, Declan's sees Nox's victims, basking in peace inside the warm glow. Their wounds heal as they fade into the light as the sun rays move away.

Declan sees the Wagner family, no longer burnt, fade away in the rays of light.

A ray of light hits Declan, revealing Constance lying on top of him-- her wounds healed and face filled with life. They stare into each others eyes. She touches his face and fades away in the passing ray of light.

Declan looks up sorrowfully and sees an EGRET soar across the bayou and up into the air.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAND TERRE SHIPYARD- DUSK

Declan sits, wrapped in a blanket, on the back of a PARAMEDIC'S TRUCK, holding Constance's cross in his hand.

The crime scene is filled with dozens of OFFICERS. EMS UNITS carry away the bodies. Huey and Franklin supervise the situation.

Huey sees Declan and sits down next to him.

DECLAN

What happens now?

HUEY

I don't think you have to worry about a murder charge no more.

DECLAN

What are you going to do about the drugs?



HUEY

My guess is they were planted on you.  
I'm sure the D.A. will feel the same  
rather than face a hundred appeals. So  
the question really is, what are you  
going to do about them?

Declan pulls the chain into the palm of his hand and holds  
the cross tightly.

DECLAN (V.O.)

My name is Declan.

INT. REHABILITATION CLINIC- DAY

A GROUP meeting is in session. Declan stands at the Podium.  
His appearance is more relaxed. There is color in his face.  
He gives a warm smile.

GROUP

(in chorus)

Hi, Declan.

DECLAN

I've been clean 126 days now.

The group CLAPS.

DECLAN (CONT'D)

Day and night, my world revolved around  
death. When I used drugs and alcohol I  
felt separated from it.

EXT. DECLAN'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Declan walks up his porch.

DECLAN (V.O.)

But the truth was they were draining  
the life out of me--

(beat)

--bringing me closer to death than I  
ever imagined.

Declan picks up the dried and painted chicken foot left on  
his steps. He grins as he brings it inside.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE

Declan walks inside.

DECLAN (V.O.)  
Death is hardly as mystifying as life  
is to me now.

INT. DECLAN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM

Declan gives a smile as he puts the chicken foot with rest of Mama's creepy knickknacks, which he has now turned into a little altar on his dresser.

DECLAN (V.O.)  
How do we keep going?  
(beat)  
How much can we learn to live with?

Declan takes Constance's gold cross from around his neck, kisses it, and places it in the center of the altar. His smile changes to a look of sombre regret.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
I'll always have you--

Declan turns around.

DECLAN (CONT'D)  
--won't I?

Declan sees Nox standing in the corner. His right eye and skin are pale. He stares bitterly back at Declan.

FADE OUT.

THE END

## Vita

Anthony Derrico was born in Trenton, New Jersey. He has a Bachelor of Arts from New Jersey City University and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of New Orleans. He currently resides in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he continues to work in the film industry. He is an independent script consultant and author of several screenplays.