

**ARTIFEX**

**"The Fog City Killer"**

Written by

Garret Ray Brinkley

EXT. CALIFORNIA RURAL ROAD - DAY

The sun hangs in the sky like a blistering revelation.  
Complete glowing white envelopes all of the unseen expanse.

Below, mellow blue takes hold, like a pool just yearning to receive a cannonball. It too is soon outmatched by the shrubbery of a deep, isolated forest - one of many in California.

Settle on a torn, gravel road cresting through a narrow gap in the wooded clearing. Thick, heavy fog crests the surface of the road, leaving little visibility into the shrubbery.

This is a quiet area. Deep, intimate, and devoid of the nonsense of city life. Just CHIRPS, SQUAKS, and WHISTLES; the natural world encompassed in this little area.

A CROW stumbles onto the road, rhythmically clawing and stretching forward along the unmaintained path. He happens upon another crow in the middle of the road, standing still. It's hard to tell sometimes with animals, but the look in its eye says it senses something.

It CRIES out. The other mimics the sound. A sudden GROWL of kicked-up rocks and pelted dust, growing closer, louder.

The crows pause. Quiet, waiting....

Their wings shoot up, and they soar into the air just in time to avoid a rolling set of tires.

A '74 PITCH-BLACK FORD MUSTANG traverses the winding gravel road, barreling through the fog, separating it with a clean swift cut. The mustang snakes along the road, sandwiched between heavy green lush on both sides.

SUPER: 30 MILES OUTSIDE SAN FRANCISCO -- 1974

The unmistakable, subtle static of a classic AM/FM radio guts the silence...

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)  
... This Equality Act bill, which  
prevents, in their words, quote  
unquote, "discrimination" in  
employment, housing, etc.

The mustang continues roaring through the thickness, the radio voice cutting out...

INT. MUSTANG - SAME TIME

The vehicle's tinted windows gives the interior a dark, gloomy, and dusty-laden ambiance. A soft patch of green light gleams in the center.

RADIO VOICE  
Will... give these peo-- same  
rights as everyone else--

A hand appears, flipping the dial, silencing the voice.

EXT. CALIFORNIA RURAL ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The dirt-rotted tires barrel up and over several uneven surfaces. It passes a clearing where another vehicle becomes visible...

A WHITE VAN. Vintage, but rotting, nestled in a dense area of the grove, barely visible through the thicket.

The RUMBLE of the mustang's engine becomes the sole noise. No tires advancing. It's as though it slowed down, or stopped.

It reverses, inching back like a predator sensing its prey.

INT. VAN - SAME TIME

The inside of the van is just as crusty and disheveled as the exterior.

The startled face of DALE HEATHCOAT pops up beside the window, peering through dried mud spots and small cracks. He's a burly mustachioed man who could take most anyone in a fight, which is curious, why he's startled at this.

KENNETH (O.S.)  
What is it?

DALE  
Shhh!

EXT. CALIFORNIA RURAL ROAD - SAME TIME

The mustang sits unmoving. Like someone knows something is going on, but they're savoring the moment of uncertainty.

The wheels slowly trudge forward, picking up speed and, finally, moving on.

INT. VAN - SAME TIME

Dale keeps his gaze out the window until he's sure enough distance has passed.

Dale snatches up his pants, including underwear tucked in them, and hastily buttons and zips.

KENNETH (O.S.)  
What's going on?

Kenneth stands up in the cab. He's a twenty-something transgender male. Thick rouge and a tight corset top, straight from the Lady Marmalade music video.

Dale ignores his question and goes to the driver's seat, flips the ignition.

EXT. CALIFORNIA RURAL ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

The van careens over bushes as it reverses out of the clearing. Moving into drive, the small-house-on-wheels barrels over the dirt, speeding in the opposite direction the mustang came from.

INT. VAN - DAWN (LATER)

Kenneth now has a worn high school Tigers jacket draped over him. Also, a plain black ball cap with the bill folded excessively down.

Dale and Kenneth sit in awkward silence. Kenneth glances at Dale.

Dale has a fixed gaze forward, unblinking. Kenneth doesn't avert his gaze, like he wants Dale to acknowledge him. It takes a beat...

DALE  
Stay away from the shop.

KENNETH  
You keep reminding me. I know.

DALE  
This can't happen anymore.

KENNETH  
You called me.

Dale bites his lip. Deep exhale through the nostrils.

KENNETH

You don't have to be afraid. It's getting easier. People are fighting for us--

DALE

There is no 'us.'.... You're a good fuck, that's all.... Do you wanna go home?

Kenneth shoots Dale a troubled, hurt glance. Leans back, shaking his head.

KENNETH

You know where to take me.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO, BAY AREA ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

The van rolls along onto San Francisco's famous Golden Gate Bridge, meshing with a sea of other commuters entering the city. A rich tapestry of color and richness to each vehicle, from beaten down to brand new and polished - all walks of life yearning for a piece of some Bay Area beauty.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

The van rolls to a stop outside a plain-looking warehouse building.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Kenneth looks at Dale, waiting. Dale doesn't offer Kenneth so much as a nod. Kenneth shakes his head, understanding the situation now. Gets out.

EXT. VAN - SAME TIME

Kenneth shuts the door and treks over gravel toward the warehouse. He gets to the center, where a piece of the metal outer wall juts out.

Before he can make a move, the metal CLANGS open and two MEN, arm in arm, dressed in skimpy tie dye, stumble out, nearly bumping into Kenneth in the process.

Kenneth enters into...

INT. GAY BAR/WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A barrage of bright colors swaying and illuminating a sea of HOMOSEXUALS and LESBIANS - dancing, chatting, drinking, flirting, kissing, feeling each other up.

Abba and The Carpenters bellow from two different turntables.

Kenneth makes his way through the crowd and up to a congested bar. Takes a seat.

An unseen PERSON sitting in a dark corner of the bar appears to have their sights on Kenneth, who's just ordered a beer. Taking swigs.

The person sips from a glass of dark liquor and grabs a napkin.

Back at the bar, Kenneth, looking lonely and crestfallen, takes long, slow drinks, gaze fixed downward.

A napkin appears before him. But this napkin appears to have writing on it. Kenneth turns to the side to spot the unknown patron leaning on the bar.

Kenneth takes the napkin up and sees that his portrait has been drawn in marker. The level of talent and detail on this drawing is astounding. Kenneth's disappointed profile is captured perfectly. Kenneth is speechless. Can't help but smile.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Kenneth leads the unseen person by the hand along a sandy, isolated beachfront.

KENNETH  
Come on. Come on. I haven't done  
this in forever.

Kenneth has an arm full of untouched beer bottles, CLANKING together in a plaid sheet he's using to carry everything.

He arranges the blanket in a pseudo-picnic setup and places the bottles side by side in the sand.

He sprints down the sand toward the swashing sea, removing layers of clothing with each step.

The unseen person merely strolls unhurriedly. As he steps, he reaches behind his back and removes a LARGE TIRE IRON from his khaki shorts.

Kenneth has stopped just shy of entering the water, removing the last piece of clothing. The unseen person begins to move with purpose.

Kenneth, fully naked, spins at the exact moment the tire iron is coming down on his head. He collapses instantly.

The person begins wailing on Kenneth with the fury and intensity of a psychopath.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The trunk of a vehicle is open. The person tosses the iron in, letting it bounce and CLANG around. Shuts the trunk.

The familiar ROAR of the mustang engine ignites, and the vehicle rolls away...

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Kenneth's lifeless, unblinking, sand-covered eyes. Blood trickling down and into them. This carries over into...

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

LAPPING WATER and the faint, early light.

Kenneth's profile, as it was.

A sudden, horrifying SCREAM carries into...

CUT TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

DENNIS WILCOX

HOMICIDE BRANCH LIEUTENANT

SAN FRANCISCO, CA DIVISION

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Flashing, SHRIEKING red and blue siren lights in motion atop a standard-issued police cruiser, halting to a stop.

Homicide Branch Lieutenant DENNIS WILCOX, 43, steps out. He's classic 70s tall and handsome with bushy hair, sideburns, and thick glasses. He's seasoned enough to know the drill as he trudges through the heavy sand toward a crowd of fellow DETECTIVES speaking with shaken witnesses, and POLICE OFFICERS setting up crime scene tape, kneeling by the body, or standing, waiting for his command. A CRIME-SCENE PHOTOGRAPHER snaps pictures of Kenneth's corpse.

DETECTIVE JAKE, a pudgy veteran, 40, spots Dennis approaching, shuffles over to fill him in.

JAKE

Homicide. Adult male, probably early-twenties. Discovered at 0800 this morning by a couple of teenagers about to go for a swim.

DENNIS

Decomp?

JAKE

Fresh as the daisies my wife planted this morning.

DENNIS

Murder weapon?

JAKE

Not in sight. Definitely blunt. Maybe a pipe or a bat. He's also a nanc. The victim is.

DENNIS

Nanc? The hell's a nanc?

Jake leads Dennis to the body, ducking under the crime scene tape. He'll show him what it means. Jake whistles for the kneeling officers to get lost.

A sheet has been draped over Kenneth's body. Jake lifts it up and over, exposing Kenneth's face down to his pelvis. Dennis has been at the job for many years, so this should be standard. However, he subtly winces and looks away for a brief moment.

JAKE

You never heard of 'nanc?' Nancy-boy. One of them.

DENNIS

Them?

JAKE

Faggots. Crossdressers. Those kind of people.

DENNIS

You forgot dead. That's pretty important.

There's an obvious tension between the two. Jake glares daggers at Dennis, whose attention is squarely on the body.

JAKE

Wanna know what I think?

DENNIS

Do I?

JAKE

He...whatever, looks like a girl in the dark. Some guy approaches, he doesn't notice the adams apple. He sounds enough like a chick to fool him. They shoot up or do a line, he spots the guy's swinging firehose, loses his shit, and--

DENNIS

That's one theory. Let's get all the facts first. What are the stooges doing?

Dennis indicates three officers huddled together, telling animated stories, cackling.

JAKE

Stooging.

Jake rises and moves away. He is heard away from the scene, barking orders at the stooges.

Dennis moves to the other side of the body. He squats and examines the body. He notices a string of track marks and cuts along Kenneth's left wrist. Regrettably, Jake may be right after all.

Spurts of blood have caked themselves down Kenneth's face and neck. Dennis carefully nudges Kenneth's head the other direction and spots something else--

Blood on the side of his neck looks as though it was wiped clean. CRUDE WRITING in Sharpie a single word - "INITIUM."

JAKE

Working on positive ID now. What the fuck is that?

Dennis looks up at Jake.

DENNIS

You a God-fearing man, Jake?

JAKE

If I wasn't, I am now. Do you know what that means?

DENNIS

Unfortunately, I do. It's latin for beginning. I guess this guy you speak of got so pissed off, he took the time to mark him.

Dennis rises, rubbing the sand off his pants.

DENNIS

This part of the beach is a mile down from the main public access section. Close it off. Nobody gets within spitting distance. Find where he entered. Should be at least two sets of footprints. And, keep it close. This... was not random. When you ID him, let me know. Whoever did this had some axe to grind.

Jake hesitates to make a move, almost like he doesn't agree fully with Dennis' sentiment. Nevertheless, he swallows his pride, nods, and moves away.

Dennis looks down at Kenneth's gray, unblinking eyes, then back at the sun breaking over the ocean. The morning glow feels like a mockery.

MATCH CUT TO

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - DAY

Still on Kenneth's face, only now it's in the form of a black-and-white photograph.

BLAISE (O.S.)

Kenneth Keane became the first in a string of murders by an individual known simply as "The Illustrator."

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER/OVER BLACK:

PRESENT DAY 2025

BLAISE PATTERSON

FORMER INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST - 21ST STREET MEDIA

HOST OF THE PODCAST - "BLAISE OF GLORY."

## INT. RECORDING BOOTH - DAY

The photograph gleams from a wide monitor screen mounted above a recording booth. A glowing sign adjacent reads, "Blaise of Glory." The room is dark, dreary, percolating only a soft red glow from several overhead lamps. Very atmospheric.

BLAISE PATTERSON, 24, a fast-talking Gen Zer sporting the brightest pink hair and endless tattoos exposed under rolled-up plaid sleeves, sits below the still image of Kenneth, speaking into a mic. From the angle she's sitting, it looks as though Kenneth is now gazing down right at her.

No sounds other than her own voice. She speaks with vigor and confidence, yet in a soft, hushed tone to convey the seriousness of her words. Behind Blaise, the monitor displays a SLOW SLIDESHOW of faded '70s photos and police files.

BLAISE (O.S.)

Little else is known about 'The Illustrator.' Not even their gender. Why is that? Many reasons. The most prominent being that the victims were not considered worthy of justice. A few handwritten notes and an empty file – the department actively forgot these men simply because they were homosexual. We are seeing an increase in rampant homophobia returning to our society, so I think it's important we remember stories like this, so we don't revert to what we once were. History tends to repeat itself. Let's stop it before it gets that far. We'll be right back after a word from our sponsor...

Blaise hits a button, and a nostalgic crime-show beat rolls from the speakers. This audio begins to mix with a quicker, louder base...

## INT. TIPPY TOPS NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

A dance floor. Enthused patrons jump and pop their hips to the beat of some eclectic jams. Thick strobes point down an iridescent glow, highlighting several sensual, flirty interactions and bustling activity in every square inch of the club.

Blaise, however, is not one of them. She has chosen to sit at her own table, alone, and scroll through TikTok on her phone. Occasionally, she'll crack a smile.

A sudden PING on her phone. The BOLD headline above the text reads - FINAL NOTICE OF PAYMENT. This freezes Blaise into a blank stare. Her fingers twitch over the glare of her phone screen, slowly inching forward before swiping the entire message away.

She sets her phone down and finishes off her Moscow mule.

As she sets the drink down, a sheet of drawing paper is set beside her. Blaise's entire profile is perfectly sketched with immaculate detail. Is this the Illustrator?

Blaise lifts the drawing and examines it, her expression more annoyed than concerned.

BLAISE  
You're the new illustrator, I take  
it?

HEIDI, 24, Blaise's partner, sits on the stool next to hers.

HEIDI  
I could be...

Heidi's voice is a deep, almost resonant contralto voice – the kind that makes people turn their heads when she speaks. Blaise is not amused.

HEIDI  
If you remove all of the homicidal  
ideations and all that, frankly, I  
think how he approached those  
people was...kinda romantic.

BLAISE  
You're starting to sound like me.  
That's terrifying. You don't have  
to listen.

Heidi seductively leans in.

HEIDI  
Pre-spousal obligation.

BLAISE  
Really?

HEIDI  
(to BARTENDER)  
Two down here, please.

BLAISE  
I'm good, babe.

HEIDI  
Those are for me.

Heidi's drinks show up, and she downs one in a single gulp.

BLAISE  
How'd the audition go?

HEIDI  
I choked. Dead ass had a complete brain fart halfway through my monologue. Don't worry I got another slated for next week.

BLAISE  
Rent's due next week and I don't have half of the half I need to cover it.

Heidi downs her other drink. Blaise watches the liquid go down like its literal money going down the drain.

HEIDI  
We've been late before, and Cy hasn't said shit. If he does... I'll ask my dad for money. I got a great feeling about this audition. It fits my style. Oklahoma... I'm a country chick at heart.

(off Blaise's concerned expression, Heidi cackles, lightening the mood)

C'mon, it's fine. You got a niche you're passionate about, and I'm gonna get that part — the fog's clearing for us. I gotta piss.

Heidi kisses Blaise before rising from her stool and strolling away. Blaise does not appear reassured.

Heidi passes a dark sector of the club. A PERSON, face obscured in the shadows, steps from the dimness. They are utterly still, observing Blaise—who sits preoccupied, rubbing her forehead with her palms.

As Heidi shuffles toward the women's facilities, she takes an abrupt left into a more shaded area of the club. She runs smack dab into a GOTH CHICK, who instantly smirks upon seeing Heidi. They clearly know each other.

Heidi beams back. The goth chick holds up a small, plastic baggie. Heidi seems giddy as a schoolgirl as they disappear around the corner.

The beat in the background shifts to a high-pitched, ear-ringing wail...

MATCH CUT TO.

EXT. I-880 FREEWAY - OAKLAND, CA - DAY

The blaring sirens of a Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor as it speeds and drifts down the bustling streets of the Oakland -I-880 freeway, narrowly missing oncoming vehicles as it attempts to overtake several others.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER/OVER BLACK:

2000

SETH SHARPE

NARCOTICS/OAKLAND, CA DIVISION

EXT. "GHOST TOWN" - OAKLAND, CA - LATER

A dented maroon-red Toyota Camry speeds down a neighborhood street, passing a layered brick wall, scrawled across which are the haunting words: "GHOST TOWN."

The Camry dashes past steady rows of condemned business buildings and graffiti-laden dwellings.

It makes a swift left turn down a narrow alleyway, screeching its tires. The police cruiser is in hot pursuit, ROARING past numerous onlookers.

The cruiser is now hot on its heels, inching its front end closer and closer to the Camry's bumper, occasionally making solid contact. With each missed nudge, the cruiser attempts to overtake the Camry, but is swiftly cut off. This can't go on much longer.

Up ahead is a cramped entryway onto a main street with vehicles driving in both directions. The cruiser approaches the rear of the Camry and attempts a pit maneuver. The Camry stabilizes. Again. Stabilizes. On the third attempt, the Camry loses control and barrels into a 't' formation with the cruiser, ramming its front bumper into a thick, chain-link fence.

TWIG, 23, a young drug dealer, doesn't waste any time as he pops open the passenger side door and hops a fence.

The driver of the cruiser, SETH SHARPE, 31, jumps out of his squad and pursues on foot. He's a clean-cut, all-American good guy with a strong compulsion for heroism, and it shows as he moves swiftly, bounding the fence like he's on a Gladiator show.

SETH  
Hey! Twig!... Fucking stop! Stop!

Twig hustles through several backyards. Seth is gaining ground, breathing audibly, heaving.

SETH  
(into radio)  
All units, I got a 10-43 off 25th  
and 39th. Backyards. Suspect  
fleeing. Terrence 'Twig' Martin.  
Pursuing on foot.

Twig passes the final backyard and bounds down a neighborhood street toward the opposite side of the main street. It takes a moment for Seth to catch up. He's already spent, panting.

SETH  
Twig! Stop!

Seth removes his firearm and raises it, centering it on Twig's back. He hesitates.

SETH  
I'll fucking shoot you!

Seth inches his finger over the trigger...

EXT. STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Seth was in the same position, only several years prior. He looks youthful, less hardened.

A different perp is hauling ass away from him. He raises his firearm.

The perp halts and spins to face him. His hand is in the back of his pants. He makes a swift lunge forward with his right arm...just as Seth unloads several rounds into him. The perp falls to his knees as blood trickles from his mouth and bullet wounds. He falls to the ground...

But as he collapses forward, a LITTLE BOY, around 8, comes into the picture behind him. The boy appears startled, mouth agape.

He peers down at his shirt. He feels something on his dark red shirt. Bringing his fingers up, he sees...blood!

The boy locks eyes with Seth, who stands in a frozen state of shock, letting his gun lower.

The boy looks at Seth for a beat, a million questions peering through his innocent, milquetoast gaze. He groggily stumbles and slumps to the pavement, not losing eye contact with Seth the whole way down.

A crowd of despondent townspeople rushes to the boy's aid. Seth continues to stand in his perpetual trauma

EXT. "GHOST TOWN" - OAKLAND, CA - DAY - PRESENT

Seth's finger is inching back on the trigger. It's getting close to pulling fully...closer...closer...

Twig is almost to the main street...

Seth bites his bottom lip, perspiration all over him...

HE CAN'T. He removes his finger from the trigger guard.

Twig slows his stride to more of a brisk walk as he approaches the main street, but is immediately cut off by several squad cars. Several OFFICERS jump out, guns raised. Twig instantly gives up.

Seth, hands on his hips, breath rapid, observes the arrest with pure regret and concern on his face.

SERGEANT STANLEY (O.S.)  
I can't give you any more time...

INT. OAKLAND PD BUILDING - SERGEANT'S OFFICE - DAY

A treasure trove of an office. Walls lined with plaques, antique-framed newspaper clippings, and black-and-white Oakland A's baseball memorabilia.

SERGEANT STANLEY, 48, stocky, buzzcut. He still radiates drill sergeant vibes. This was an easy lateral move for him from the military. His desk is a madman's den - papers, manila folders, writing utensils scattered all over.

SETH  
I'm not asking for another three  
months--

Stanley rips the plastic off a bottle of Pepto Bismol and downs over half in one gulp.

SERGEANT STANLEY  
You shouldn't be asking at all. You just got back two weeks ago...

Stanley takes a moment to study Seth, sees there's heavy hurt in his features. He removes a phone book from his file cabinet and sifts through it.

SERGEANT STANLEY  
My wife started seeing this...  
Doctor--

SETH  
Shrink?

SERGEANT STANLEY  
Don't pooh-pooh it. They're doctors. It got her through a tough time.

Stanley uses a pair of scissors to cut a square out of a page in the book. He attempts to hand it to Seth, but he does not take it. Stanley doesn't press. Instead, crumbles up the paper he just cut.

SERGEANT STANLEY  
You need to do something.

SETH  
33 dot 087 of our policy says I am not required to dispense my firearm--

SERGEANT STANLEY  
No...it says it must be a "last resort."

SETH  
I was hoping you could give me a partner like I've been asking for for over a year. Pick a trigger-happy one for all I care.

SERGEANT STANLEY

(pure sarcasm)

Gee, why didn't I think of that?  
That whole dot-com bubble bullshit  
must be...bullshit...

(off Seth's less-than-  
hearty expression)

I'm squeezed tight here, Seth. I'm  
barely getting by with the manpower  
I got. You're a good cop, but if  
you can't do the job, you can't--

SETH

I just need more time to get my  
head straight.

Stanley eyes Seth for a short beat. Examining, thoughtful.

SERGEANT STANLEY

No.

SETH

So, I'm fired then?

Stanley sighs. Plays drums on the surface of his desk,  
racking his brain.

SERGEANT STANLEY

Come with me.

Stanley rises and shuffles around his desk. He opens his  
office door, waits for Seth to follow, but Seth is too much  
in his head to pay attention to his superior.

SERGEANT STANLEY

Come on.

Seth snaps out of his haze. Stands from his seat.

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Blaise's profile, eyes shut. MOANS in the background. Her  
arms and shoulders flutter relentlessly.

CY, 40s, balding, bespectacled, sits MOANING with pleasurable  
satisfaction. Eyes rolling back.

LATER--

Blaise furiously scrubs her hands clean. The CLANG of a belt  
buckle tightening.

CY (O.S.)  
You got another month. We can't  
keep doing this. I need physical  
cash.

Blaise shifts her gaze to the mirror, peering daggers at Cy.

BLAISE  
You'll get it next month.

Blaise turns and starts for Cy, who is actually shorter than Blaise standing up. She crowds him into the open bathroom doorway.

CY  
I'm not saying we have to stop--

BLAISE  
What would be the point?

CY  
I... Well--

She gets him past the doorway...

BLAISE  
Goodbye, Cy.

And shuts the door on him. A moment of obvious regret hangs in the air for Blaise, who lets her forehead fall to the now closed bathroom door.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - LATER

Blaise is back in her recording studio, now lit with standard lighting.

She has her laptop open on an article about The Illustrator's third victim, Anthony Martinez.

She checks Google Images for other photos of Anthony. Several appear, including some with his family - his wife Cecilia, and son, Theodore.

Blaise copies the photo...

Opens a facial recognition software called PRO-File. She plugs the image in. One by one, each face is scanned. Anthony, of course, DECEASED/MURDERED. Cecilia, DECEASED/STROKE.

Theodore's picture yields his full name and date of birth.

She goes back to Google and types in the info.

Various images and search results of a San Diego Police Officer appear. Blaise clicks the top-left photo. Theodore grins in the photo, now a handsome, middle-aged man of the law.

THEODORE (O.S.)  
It wasn't a crime, obviously...

INT. SAN DIEGO PD - BULLPEN - DAY

THEODORE, 51, seasoned, personable, sits at his desk in the middle of a bullpen teeming with technological advancements. A stark contrast to the '74 era. Most officers type on computers or diddle with their phones, giggling or showing off to other officers in the background.

Blaise's phone rests screen-side down on Theodore's desk, recording.

THEODORE  
But if you were a homosexual and  
you got caught, consider your  
personal and professional life  
over.

BLAISE  
One of those unwritten rules?

THEODORE  
You host a podcast, you said?

BLAISE  
Blaise of Glory. The title.

THEODORE  
And your name is Blaise. Nice. I  
need something to listen to when  
I'm patrolling. It gets boring.

BLAISE  
What was the initial reaction to  
the murders? Do you remember...?

THEODORE  
The second the police decided it  
was a 'random maniac' instead of a  
big, splashy headline, the whole  
thing just vanished...like they  
wanted it to.

BLAISE

Dozens of murders seem like a case designed for the San Fran PD at that time.

THEODORE

There were investigations. I can't remember their names, but from everything I've heard, they were good detectives.

BLAISE

What happened?

Theodore takes a breath, holding back emotion.

THEODORE

My mom hated the psycho who killed my dad, but never once blamed them. She always blamed the city. The cops. Most of them. Said they treated the victims like trash that needed swept under the rug. Dad had secrets he took to the grave—secrets that...people were happy to keep buried right along with him.

A beat of reflective silence as Theodore seems lost in his thoughts.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PD - BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

A middle-aged investigative detective, GUS, 50s, stands before a sizeable corkboard giving a briefing to a room full of DETECTIVES, OFFICERS, and LIEUTENANTS, all sitting around a substantial rectangular table, listening with focused intent.

A map of California encompasses the corkboard, lined with red string on various sections of the state. An easel adjacent to the corkboard displays a slew of photos of homicide victims.

Gus, while not possessing the same vigor he once had, does have enough respect to command the attention of the squad. He first indicates the new victims, and corresponds to the map where the crime took place.

GUS

Debbie Hawkins, stabbed over twelve times outside Merv's Grocery on 24th.

(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

Dolores Friend, gunned down while waiting for a bus on 12th and Pitkin. This is the fourth murder in three weeks where the victim was an elderly Caucasian.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Zebra?

GUS

Definitely Operation Zebra. Dolores and I went to the same church. Her last name was Friend for a reason. She was to a lot of us.

CHIEF ZABOWSKY, 40s, bald, Bay Area gym enthusiast, sits at the back of the table, taking notes. Pinned to his shirt, above his badge, rests a large CAMPAIGN BUTTON: VOTE CARY WRIGHT FOR MAYOR. A salt-and-pepper-haired gentleman's mug is plastered to the pin, giving a typical politician's thumbs-up. His slogan just below: "YOU HAVE MY WORD."

Dennis stands in the back corner, leaning against the wall. As Gus speaks, Dennis' attention shifts to a small stack of photos he has in his hand. He looks at them...

Different photos of other homicide victims - blood-covered faces, bodies contorted strangely in some pseudo-death pose, and one in particular where their skin has been marked like Kenneth's. Except this time, it is a single word - "Effigy."

GUS

We've been given the green light to stop any suspicious-looking vehicle or question pedestrians who we feel may be up to no good. Chief?

ZABOWSKY

The two you mentioned happened at dusk. We'll shift patrol to the busiest parts of town - restaurants, shops. Dealer's choice. All units coordinate at 4 pm on the dot. I'll tell you where to go. Sound good?

Everyone nods in agreement, but no one moves.

ZABOWSKY

What are you waiting for? A fucking hot coffee? Get out there.

Everybody lunges up and files out of the room, except for Dennis, who attempts to get the attention of the room, but it is too chaotic.

Dennis spots Zabowski shaking hands with Gus, conversing intimately together. Dennis takes one last look at the photos before trudging up to them.

Dennis stands adjacent to the two chatter boxes. It's that uncomfortable moment where you just stand there and wait for someone to catch on that you're waiting. Gus finally notices. Zabowski turns.

DENNIS  
You got a second?

Zabowski looks slightly put off.

GUS  
I'll catch up with you later.

ZABOWSKY  
Okay.

Gus exits without closing the door. Dennis hurries over and closes it behind him, softly.

ZABOWSKY  
This'll have to be quick. We're in  
the shit here...

Dennis lays the photos on the table, lining them in a straight row. Zabowsky takes them in, more a curious expression than a concerned one.

ZABOWSKY  
New case?

Dennis removes a rolled-up newspaper from his back pocket and puts it on the table next to the photos. The headline: "THE ILLUSTRATOR" CLAIMS FOURTH VICTIM.

DENNIS  
New name.

Zabowski takes up the newspaper.

DENNIS  
Like Zebra, Illustrator's claimed four victims, only in half the time. So far, the only person on this case is yours truly. I need help.

ZABOWSKY

(reading)

Visible signs of hemorrhaging most often indicate excessive needle use or possible cocaine overdose.

Primary victims remain those in the homosexual community...

(scoffs)

Don't understand why they don't just call them fags.

Zabowsky lets the newspaper fall onto the table with a SMACK. Dennis conceals a sigh and a hint of annoyance.

DENNIS

Besides the point. Who can you give me?

ZABOWSKY

As of now, no one. Were you paying attention? Indicates excessive needle use--

DENNIS

What do fourteen stab wounds or total implosion of brain matter from blunt-forced trauma indicate?

ZABOWSKY

Ask Debbie Hawkins... Oh, wait, you can't 'cause she's fucking dead... I know what you're getting at, Dennis. Look, I'm not glossing over this, but come on. Manson, Zodiac, and now Operation Zebra. We've got bigger fish to fry.

DENNIS

How many officers do you have working those cases? For this, it's me? These people are dying, too. People.

ZABOWSKY

You were with me at the Pulpo, remember? Twenty-four limp-wrists taken into custody for drug trafficking. These...poor bastards most likely just pissed off their pimp and paid the price.

DENNIS

The gay rights movement is growing. You know about Castro Street.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)  
If they find out we're actively  
ignoring obvious hate crimes,  
they're liable to start rioting.

ZABOWSKY  
Bring me some evidence, tangible  
evidence that these were, in fact,  
"hate crimes," and I'll consider  
it. First, let's get out of the  
weeds, so we can see the rest of  
the field.

Zabowsky levels Dennis with the most condescending pat on the back and bustles to the door. Dennis, possibly against his better judgment, decides to go for it.

DENNIS  
I didn't know you were political,  
chief.

Zabowsky gives a soft eye roll before turning back, indicating the pin.

ZABOWSKY  
This city needs an overhaul.

DENNIS  
What's his stance on the homosexual  
community? Do you know?

Zabowsky peers inscrutably at Dennis. He clears his throat.

ZABOWSKY  
We have a new hire starting  
tomorrow. South Beach. Rookie, but  
word is she's a fast learner. Take  
her, show her the ropes. She can be  
your number two. If there's  
anything else you know where I  
won't be.

Zabowski flings the door open and hastily exits.

INT. WESTFIELD CENTRE - TIFFANY & CO - DAY

A speckless display case exhibits a vast assortment of the most luxurious jewelry selection, from rings to necklaces, bracelets to earrings.

Blaise stands above them, eyeing them like something she really wants, but, peering down at the prices, Blaise gives a sly smirk, understanding it's just not possible.

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
Nothing on sale this week...

Blaise shifts her attention up to sales associate, TAYLOR, 21. A happy-go-lucky, soft-featured college student. She speaks to Blaise with a familiar ease.

TAYLOR  
Hopefully next week.

BLAISE  
I'm just looking. Thanks.

TAYLOR  
You come in to look a lot. We do offer financing, you know.

BLAISE  
I know. Credit card. I wouldn't qualify anyway.

Taylor leans closer to Blaise. Something in her side smile indicates she 'likes' Blaise.

TAYLOR  
Who's this for?

BLAISE  
Girlfriend.

TAYLOR  
Engagement?

BLAISE  
I don't know.

Taylor reaches underneath a shelving unit and retrieves a tray with a wide assortment of jewelry, clumped together in a gleaming pile.

TAYLOR  
I haven't had time to put them out.  
These are scratch units. Some damaged, some pretty much brand new. They're discounted. Have a look.

Blaise obliges and sifts through. Tossing aside necklaces and bracelets until she finds a ring that catches her attention. The front displays a metal heart with a crack down the middle, allowing it to split into a broken heart.

BLAISE  
How much for this one?

Taylor thinks.

TAYLOR

\$499.

(takes the ring back to  
observe it)

It's got some scrapes along the  
outer coating. Tell you what, if  
you purchase this today, you get a  
sixty-day return policy. You know,  
in case of buyer's remorse. I'll  
knock off another hundred.

Blaise looks honestly tempted.

BLAISE

One second.

Blaise pulls out her phone and goes into her banking app.  
Surprise, surprise, she has a whopping \$55 in her checking  
account, but \$400 in her savings.

Blaise thinks deeply for a beat.

BLAISE

Let's do it.

INT. WESTFIELD CENTRE - LATER

Blaise strolls through the bustling mall, weaving around  
fellow shoppers. She removes the ring, now nestled in its own  
special box. She observes it, possibly wondering whether she  
should return it.

Her phone RINGS. She checks... It's Heidi. Answering...

BLAISE

Hey... Wait, what?... Wait. Slow  
down... I'm on my way.

Blaise swiftly hangs up and breaks out in a jog.

INT. FORD FOCUS/TRAVELING - DAY

Blaise drives like a woman super late for work. Barely  
stopping at a stop sign before making a sharp turn and  
accelerating toward a house where Heidi paces on the lawn  
outside.

EXT. AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Blaise bolts from her car and makes her way to...

A CROWD - gathered around Heidi, who is shouting obscenities at Cy, tightly gripping his jaw, wincing in pain.

CY

Get your shit and get the fuck out!

HEIDI

Fuck you!

BLAISE

Babe. Babe. Hey, what's going on?

Heidi heaves, forcing her words out loudly.

HEIDI

He's fucking kicking us out. I popped him in the mouth. That's it.

CY

Leave now, and I won't press charges. I will.

Blaise leaves Heidi, steaming, to go get Cy's story.

BLAISE

What the hell happened?

CY

Talk to your girl. Get off my property!

BLAISE

Listen--

CY

No, I'm not listening to any--

HEIDI

Whatever he's telling you is a lie, Blaise! He's a lying piece of shit!

BLAISE

Heidi! You wanna get arrested?

CY

Just go!

BLAISE

Cy, we don't have anywhere else to go. My studio's up there. That's... I need it.

They lock eyes for a solid beat.

CY

Get better taste in partners. Get everything out by tomorrow morning. If you guys are still here, you'll be hearing from my lawyer.

Cy pushes past various confused onlookers.

Blaise stands stiff, head a frenzied mess.

Heidi begins to walk backwards, flipping the bird at Cy. Her eyes well with tears. She backs up into Blaise's car, wiping accumulated snot from her nose. Blaise fixates on Heidi.

HEIDI

Fuck him!  
(hollering, to Cy)  
Fuck you!

BLAISE

Did you get the part?

HEIDI

What?

BLAISE

The audition, Heidi, the part. Did you get it?

Heidi doesn't seem to register the question for a beat...

HEIDI

Oh... Oh, I... No... Wait. I don't know. They'll...  
(gripping her head,  
wincing)  
I don't know. They'll let me know soon.

BLAISE

How soon?

HEIDI

In a couple days. Don't worry about it. Let's go.

BLAISE

Where?

Heidi's already in Blaise's car, shutting the door.

Blaise's eyes widen with worry. For a brief moment, she's frozen. Blaise, zombie-like, trudges around to the driver's side and gets in.

Down the street, the familiar image of a CLASSIC MUSTANG. Blurry in the distance, but definitely a more vibrant color than the pitch-black one. The vehicle is parked adjacent to the sidewalk, facing Blaise's car.

INT. OAKLAND PD BUILDING - EVIDENCE ROOM - DAY

Pitch black. A light is turned on, illuminating a cramped evidence room. Two metal shelving units on both sides of the door house columns of secured evidence boxes.

Stanley steps in first, followed by Seth.

SERGEANT STANLEY

Take your pick.

SETH

Are these the cold cases?

SERGEANT STANLEY

Same thing you do now. Some of these are over twenty years old, so corroborating may be a bit tricky.

Seth checks some of the names.

SETH

Never heard of any of these.

SERGEANT STANLEY

This is low-priority storage. The ones city precincts don't have room for anymore--

SETH

Get transferred here. Lovely. Is this a play to force me to occupy my time?

Stanley looks at him, tongue-in-cheek. Not saying it, but pretty much.

SERGEANT STANLEY  
I'll be around. Lock the door on  
your way out.

SETH  
(sotto)  
Of course.

Stanley exits. Seth eyes the boxes, perplexed. Where the hell  
to even start?

He snatches a box and sets it in the doorway, another.

The final one he grabs has a familiar label:

SPD 74-H-198

New label underneath:

CLOSED: 11/15/74

STATUS: UNSOLVED (ILLUSTRATOR)

INT. SETH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The same box, under a stack of others, is plopped onto an  
oval kitchen table.

LATER--

Seth sits below dim kitchen lighting, sifting quickly through  
folders. A grease-stained pizza box rests atop the evidence  
boxes, partially open. The light above him is like a  
spotlight, front and center, among a dark, dreary rest of the  
apartment.

Folder after folder, photo after photo, nothing seems to keep  
Seth's interest. He gets to the Illustrator box and flips  
through the first folder. Photos of drawings on napkin paper  
clipped to crumpled typed documents. Seth stuffs them back in  
the folder and tosses it back onto the box.

INT. SETH'S APARTMENT - BRIANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Seth pokes his head in to find his daughter, BRIANNA, 7, a  
cutey beaming with innocence, sitting up on her thick, pink  
comforter watching SpongeBob on TV. She turns to him.

BRIANNA  
Hi, Daddy.

SETH

What did we say about staying up  
this late on a school night?

BRIANNA

It's Friday.

Seth looks genuinely surprised.

SETH

It is?... Hmm. How was your day?

BRIANNA

Good. Tommy took us to the  
amusement park.

Seth steps closer, interested in the name 'Tommy.'

SETH

Oh yeah? Who's Tommy?

BRIANNA

Mom's new friend. He's around a  
lot. I like him. He's funny.

Seth bites his bottom lip. Deep breath. Moving on.

SETH

Don't stay up too late, okay?

Brianna reaches for something on her nightstand.

BRIANNA

Daddy? I drew something for you.

Seth approaches and takes up the paper. It's a drawing of her, Seth, and the face of a WOMAN, Seth's ex-wife, Melissa. It's not professional by any means, but for a seven-year-old girl, it's terrific. Seth grins heartily and kisses her forehead.

SETH

I love it. I'm hanging it up in my  
room. Still...don't stay up too  
late.

INT. SETH'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Seth walks from Brianna's room into the hallway, eyes focused on the drawing as he continues into...

## INT. SETH'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen. Seth takes the same seat, focus still on the drawing. After a moment of admiration, he takes it to the fridge and sticks it to the surface with a magnet.

Adjacent to the new drawing is a calendar. Each day apart from the current has been marked with an 'x.' Above the x, labels such as: 112 days, 113 days, etc. A SOBER CHIP sits on the latest day. Seth moves the chip to the next day, marks an 'x' on the last one with a Sharpie, and writes 116 days.

MOMENTS LATER--

Back at the table, Seth removes multiple folders from the Illustrator box. He opens several at a time, eliminating different papers and photos. The ones that get his attention are the ones with drawings - on napkins, paper, the corpses of the victims, etc. Seth seems to have a new focus and determination in his movements as he studies documents and observes pictures.

A CHEERING CROWD, muffled, like the sound is underwater. The sound becomes clearer...

## EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CITY HALL - DAY

A wide variety of skin pigmentations clap their hands together in joint enthusiasm.

RALLY MEMBERS wave their signs showing support for MAYORAL CANDIDATE Cary Wright.

San Francisco City Hall sits in the background - a famous landmark akin in size, scope, and appearance to the Capitol Building.

CARY WRIGHT, 50s, a well-spoken, textbook politician, stands before the rousing crowd. No podium, just speaking with his potential constituents.

CARY WRIGHT

I grew up in San Francisco. North  
23rd, next to Old Joe's Pizza. Best  
in the country. This is home.

Cheers.

CARY WRIGHT

I can confidently say everyone  
gathered today is the beating heart  
of America.

(MORE)

CARY WRIGHT (CONT'D)  
Sadly, I've noticed San Francisco  
has succumbed to some horrible  
things. Very anti-God things. We  
got men dressing up as women, men  
flaunting their gay ways, openly.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PD - OFFICE - DAY

Cary continues his speech, only on a classic CRT television set.

CARY WRIGHT  
We love all of God's children, but  
that does not mean we have to  
support, or even legalize, that  
lifestyle, especially when we gotta  
take our kids to school, to the  
grocery store, or to church.

Dennis inscrutably watches from his desk. His office is nondescript and very much of the time.

CARY WRIGHT (O.S.)  
If you elect me as Mayor, I can  
promise you that I will return this  
great city to the biblical values  
it once held sacred. It will again.  
You have my word.

The CHEERS on TV erupt. Dennis gets up and flicks the TV off.

KNOCK KNOCK.

JODI (O.S.)  
Mr. Wilcox...?

Dennis turns to see the new officer, JODI, 23. She is young and eager with a warm smile. She definitely got this job because she wants to make the world a better place. She hesitates to proceed further, definitely respecting the hierarchy.

JODI  
Sorry. I saw the door was open.  
I'm--

DENNIS  
Jodi, I assume. Come in. Shut the door.

Jodi obliges.

DENNIS  
Have a seat. By the way, Lieutenant  
Wilcox. You are Officer Patterson.  
It is Patterson, correct?

Jodi looks taken aback. Slowly squats down and sits.

JODI  
Yes sir. Sorry about that.

DENNIS  
We have three other Dennises and  
two Wilcoxes if you can believe it.  
Best to make it clear to avoid  
confusion. Tell me about yourself.

JODI  
I'm twenty-three years old. I'm  
from San Jose. I--

DENNIS  
What made you wanna be a cop?

Jodi has to think. It feels like it's the first time anyone's  
genuinely asked that question.

JODI  
I just really enjoy helping people.

DENNIS  
I see you're married.

Jodi instinctively reaches for her wedding band.

JODI  
Yes sir.

DENNIS  
Kids?

JODI  
One. A daughter. Do you have any--

DENNIS  
I hope you've seen enough of them  
to last you for a while, because  
you're gonna see very little of  
them going forward. I've been  
working cases like this day in and  
day out.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Chief Zabowsky's allocating all the resources to Operation Zebra, Zodiac, and all that other shit. San Francisco's gonna be worse than what you're used to. I wanna make sure you're prepared for that. If not, it won't hurt my feelings if you walk out that door right now.

Jodi thinks on it a beat. Expression bordering on possible regret, but she appears to buck herself up. She didn't get into this profession to give up. She wants to help people, and she will.

JODI

I am.

Dennis takes her in, studying her. He reaches into his desk cabinet and removes a file. He removes pictures from the file (the Illustrator photos seen earlier) and lays them out for Jodi to see. She visibly looks uncomfortable, bordering on disgusted.

DENNIS

They call him the Illustrator. All of his victims are gay men. He--

Jodi, out of bravery or desperation, cuts him off, but for a good reason.

JODI

Draws portraits of the victims. He tends to use anything he can find. Napkins, notebooks. So far, he's slaughtered each man differently, using different weapons. The press coined the Illustrator name. Some seem to think he's homosexual himself, but is scared to come out.

Dennis can't hide his impressed stare.

DENNIS

What's your theory, Officer Patterson?

JODI

Kenneth Keane, Anthony Martinez, and Gerald Hughes, all gay men who weren't afraid to show it. They went to parades and frequented gay bars.

(MORE)

JODI (CONT'D)  
I believe this is a physical  
manifestation of his own attempts  
to conceal his urges. We stick  
close to popular gay areas, and  
we'll find him.

Dennis nods in agreement. He obviously likes her.

DENNIS  
We start tomorrow. Meet me  
here...here, in my office, at 9 AM.  
I leave at 9, so if you're not  
here, you can find another  
department.

JODI  
I'll be here, sir.

DENNIS  
Lieutenant...

JODI  
Lieutenant.

Dennis rises from his chair. Following the leader, Jodi does the same. He offers a handshake.

DENNIS  
I'll see you tomorrow then,  
Officer.

She shakes his hand.

JODI  
You as well, Lieutenant.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PD - OUTSIDE DENNIS' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Jodi shuts the door behind her and proceeds away from Dennis' office, carrying a large stack of papers. It is a serious investigation, but Jodi can't hold back an excited grin and subtle fist bump, clearly proud of herself. For good reason.

INT/EXT. MARTINEZ'S APARTMENT - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK.

A door opens, revealing Seth waiting on the other side.

SETH  
Hello. Cecilia Martinez?

CECILIA MARTINEZ, mid-fifties, Hispanic, leans on a cane in the entranceway.

CECILIA  
Can I help you?

Seth shows her his badge.

SETH  
I'm Detective Sharpe with the Oakland PD.

CECILIA  
Oakland. But--

SETH  
I'm investigating cold-case files throughout the state and would like to ask you some questions about Anthony.

CECILIA  
You absolutely may not.

SETH  
Ma'am--

THEODORE, younger, 26, appears at his mother's side. He's dressed in standard issued police uniform. He's got a firmer stance and more intense demeanor than his older self demonstrated previously.

THEODORE  
Everything okay, momma?

Teddy takes Seth in. Seth gives him a casual smile.

CECILIA  
Teddy, go back to the table. You know how to serve yourself.

Seth extends a hand.

SETH  
Detective Sharpe.

Before Theodore takes it, he takes note of Seth's badge clipped to his belt...

THEODORE  
You 415?

SETH  
Bay Area, yeah.

Teddy doesn't shake his hand. Instead, gives Cecilia a kiss on the head and keeps a firm eye on Seth as he backs into the living room. Seth seems perplexed, if not slightly insulted.

CECILIA  
My husband's been dead for over twenty years. Whatever you're doing makes no difference.

SETH  
Records indicate his killer was never captured--

CECILIA  
Because of crooked police. You seem genuine, so I'm going to offer you some words of wisdom - you're still young. I can tell, so pick a different profession.

Cecilia shuts the door in Seth's face.

Defeated, Seth trudges back to his squad car. He removes a yellow pad from his blazer pocket. A list of crossed-out names, the last of which is Cecilia's. He crosses it out.

He opens the passenger door of his squad car and is forced to watch as the contents from the evidence boxes spill out before him. Seth merely shakes his head.

SETH  
(to himself)  
Naturally.

Seth squats and begins shoving everything back in the boxes. Folders, papers, etc. He spots a tightly folded yellow sheet of paper, much like the one he's using. He picks it up and unfolds it, scanning it over.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PD - BULLPEN - DAY

Numerous phones RING. Officers hustle around each other. It's a perfect picture of law enforcement during a period of heavy crime.

Dennis finishes a conversation on a rotary and hangs up. Jodi fervently enters the bullpen, gripping a short stack of papers.

JODI

Witness saw a white Ford van drop off Kenneth the night he was murdered.

Dennis perks up, hopeful.

DENNIS

Did he get any numbers on the plate?

JODI

No. DMV records indicate that there are over fifty white Ford vans registered in San Francisco.

DENNIS

That's not promising. You checked DMV records?

Jodi presents a report to Dennis.

JODI

Melvin's Custom Trade, Hopkins' Auto, and Belt Force Buyers. The only licensed Ford dealers in the state.

DENNIS

If it's from out of state, that's another issue.

JODI

I thought so, too. Turns out, the day Kenneth was murdered, he needed an alignment done.

DENNIS

Where'd he go?

JODI

Melvin's. Guess who financed a fleet of white vans for roadside service requests, including pick-up and drop-offs?

Dennis immediately gets it. He snatches up his blazer.

DENNIS

Let's go.

EXT. MELVIN'S CUSTOM TRADE - DAY

Dennis whips his custom squad car into the parking lot of Melvin's Custom Trade. Jodi and he get out and make their way into...

INT. MELVIN'S CUSTOM TRADE - CONTINUOUS

Jodi follows Dennis as he strides to the check-in counter. They present their badges to a chirpy FRONT-DESK CLERK.

DENNIS

Lieutenant Wilcox. My partner,  
Officer Patterson.

FRONT DESK CLERK

What can I do for you, officers?

DENNIS

One of your vans was seen at a  
crime scene several months back.  
Could you let me know who was  
driving that van?

The clerk's demeanor shifts. This sounds serious.

FRONT DESK CLERK

Give me one moment.

The clerk moseys to a back-office corner. She pokes her head in a doorway and chats with someone behind a wall, indicating to the officers.

From around the wall and into the doorway comes Dale! He trudges to them, offering a handshake.

DALE

Officers.

DENNIS

You Melvin?

DALE

Dale. Melvin's my dad.

DENNIS

Is Melvin the manager?

DALE

I am. What's this regarding?

DENNIS

You got someplace private we can  
talk?

INT. MELVIN'S CUSTOM TRADE - DALE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dale lets Dennis and Jodi into his austere, clean office, shutting the door behind them.

DALE

(attempting distracting  
humor)

If this is about my state taxes, I  
assure you I sent a check.

Dennis, unamused, removes a yellow notepad from his blazer pocket, ready to take his statement.

DENNIS

Sir, how many white vans does your  
company have on standby?

DALE

On any given day? Six, seven. I'm  
sorry, can you tell me what's going  
on?

JODI

(eager)

Kenneth Keane.

Dale shakes his head.

DALE

I'm not sure I--

DENNIS

He came into your shop on the 20th  
of May of this year for an  
alignment. That's only four months.

DALE

We get many customers here, I don't  
see how--

DENNIS

Kenneth was murdered.

Dale's reaction shows he's reminded of the hurt, but he's had enough time to force himself to get over it.

DALE

That's tragic, but I don't see what  
that has to do with us.

DENNIS

Witness stated they saw Kenneth get out of a white van, which dropped him off mere hundreds of yards from where he was murdered.

DALE

We sell a lot of white vans, sir. Do you have evidence it came from our lot?

Dennis nods. Seems Dale's got them caught.

DENNIS

That's what we're trying to figure out, sir. Could you please check your records and tell me who gave Kenneth a ride so we can get out of your hair?

Dale hesitates for the slightest moment. Dennis notices. Writes something down.

DALE

I would love to help you, but we don't keep records of that. I can give you the names of everyone who worked that day, but if I recall correctly, the 20th was a Friday. It's our busiest day. Everybody works that day. Is there anything else I can help you with?

Slight standoff. Dennis clearly senses something is up, and Dale knows it. Their eyes stay locked for a beat.

Jodi watches with a curious fascination as Dale continues...

DENNIS

Before we depart, I need some contact information. D-A-L-E, correct?

DALE

Yes.

DENNIS

Last name?

DALE

... Heathcoat.

DENNIS

Birthdate?

DALE  
9/17/42.

DENNIS  
Address?

Dale hesitates.

DALE  
At what point does it become an  
obstruction if I don't tell you  
something?

Dennis folds over the notepad, smiles slyly.

DENNIS  
I think I got what I need.

Dennis removes a card from his pocket and offers it to Dale.

DENNIS  
If you think of anything else...

Dale takes it.

DALE  
I hope you find whoever did this.

Dale turns and proceeds to his office, scrunching his face  
tight with a look of pure pain and hurt.

Dennis and Jodi spin and proceed out into...

EXT. MELVIN'S CUSTOM TRADE - CONTINUOUS

The parking lot. They defeatedly plod to the cruiser.

JODI  
What should I do now?

DENNIS  
Look into those other  
registrations. Maybe Kenneth had  
ties we didn't see at first. They  
just happen to drive a white van,  
too.

JODI  
You think it's possible?

DENNIS  
Get used to 'possibility' having no  
bearing on what we do.  
(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Aside from black magic and faux religious miracles, I advise you look at anything and everything under the purview of likely. Even those things aren't far-fetched anymore.

JODI

What are you gonna do?

Dennis gestures back to Melvins.

DENNIS

I'm curious about our new friend here.

They open their respective car doors. Before stepping in, Dale rips out Dale's statement and folds it tightly. Shoves it in his pocket.

EXT. CECILIA'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Back to Seth, scanning the notepad.

Dennis Wilcox signed at the bottom. Above the signature lies what Dennis wrote before the standoff...

Under the general information, Dennis has written something in ALL CAPS - "RESEARCH ASAP!"

INT. LOS ANGELES NIBRS - SAME TIME

A gorgeous redhead crime analyst, Allison, 30s, sips from a styrofoam coffee cup while unenthusiastically peering at her computer screen. A phone RINGS beside her. Answering...

INTERCUT:

SETH

Remember how you said you owed me a favor?

Allison seems to perk up upon hearing Seth's voice.

ALLISON

(chuckles)

As I recall, I said it depended on the favor.

SETH

Are you busy?

Allison's computer screen displays a vast assortment of skimpy lingerie of various colors. She scrolls down.

ALLISON  
You and your silly questions. What do you need?

SETH  
Dale Heathcoat.

Allison realizes this is all business. She clicks over to her database screen and types.

ALLISON  
One second... Do I need to ask if Stan's approving this?

SETH  
He put me on it. Well, sort of. He gave me a lot of rope. Let's see how long I can stretch before I'm hung?

ALLISON  
They say I'm kinky.

SETH  
(playful sigh)  
What am I gonna do with you?

ALLISON  
Hmmm...

SETH  
How's your husband doing?

PING. Results. Dale's profile shows him twenty-five years older, looking every bit of it, with shining ghost-white hair and heavy-bagged eyes. Allison chooses to ignore Seth's question.

ALLISON  
Dale Heathcoat. Born in San Francisco, 1942. Currently resides at 641 Oxtail Lane, Cedar Edge, Colorado. I'm assuming that's what you need to know?

SETH  
That's why I love you.

ALLISON  
(playful)  
What's not to love? Shame you  
missed your chance...

Both smile flirtatiously on their separate ends of the line...

SETH  
You don't got enough storage for  
this level of baggage. Talk to you  
later.

ALLISON  
You'd better.

Both hang up. Seth turns over the ignition and speeds away.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT

Blaise stands just outside the recording studio, facing in. It is a dark, quiet, eerie night on this lonely road.

VOICE (O.S.)  
You comin' back tomorrow?

BLAISE  
If that's okay. There's like no  
room in the hotel.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Yeah, I gotchu.

BLAISE  
I'll get you some money soon.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Don't worry about it. Get home  
safe.

BLAISE  
Thanks. See you tomorrow.

Blaise begins her quiet stroll down the desolate sidewalk towards her car, nestled fifty feet ahead. Moonlight above presents an illusion of peace.

The familiar sight of dense fog gives almost silent hill vibes.

Behind Blaise, about fifty feet, an ignition turns over, and headlights flash on, barely piercing the weighty fog.

Blaise slows, sensing. She turns to spot the vehicle's headlights. They don't appear to be moving.

Blaise doesn't regard it for too long, choosing instead to increase her pace.

Moving along the road, Blaise seems to be more at ease... Until the sound of TIRES ROLLING across asphalt forces her to turn back.

The headlights begins a slow crawl toward Blaise, who keeps a steady pace. Moving swiftly. The faster she moves, the quicker the mustang speeds up. They are side by side now, jockeying for position. Blaise can just make out the color of the car - a dark, reddish-orange coated with black flames.

Blaise's car is so close that she decides to break into a sprint. The second she does, the mustang accelerates. ROARING like a pissed-off dragon.

Blaise gets to her driver's side just in time to unlock the car door...and to see the mustang speed past and make a sharp left turn, removing it from her sight. She takes a moment to catch her breath, trying to steady the sudden adrenaline rush.

EXT. CEDEREDGE, COLORADO - DUSK

ESTABLISHING - A quiet, small mountain town. The main street is empty, and lights are beginning to turn on in the cozy, snow-dusted homes nestled against the dark foothills of the Rockies.

Crows in tall Aspen trees CAW in unison, gazes fixed impassively, like they are waiting patiently for something to happen.

EXT. CEDEREDGE, COLORADO - 641 OXTAIL LANE - DUSK

Seth shuts the door of his running personal silver Miada, headlights beaming forward.

He trudges up a stone path leading to an isolated cabin. A near-frozen lake glints under the pinkish glow of the setting sun.

Seth gets to the front door and knocks, abiding.

He waits in the cold for a freezing beat. Nobody is answering. He knocks a second time.

A woman, DINA, 50s, small-town friendly, answers. Homy cabin light filters outside, spreading glistening rays over Seth's face.

DINA

Are you lost, sir?

SETH

Potentially.

(shows his badge)

Detective Sharpe. Oakland Police  
Department. Is--

DINA

Oakland? California Oakland?

SETH

Yes, ma'am. I'm looking for Dale  
Heathcoat. Does he live here?

Dina suddenly registers that there might be a problem.

DALE (O.S.)

Give us a minute, Dina.

Dina steps out of the way of the doorway to reveal Dale - into his sixties, but looking well. Clean plaid shirt, pressed Wranglers, and a trimmed goatee. He's escaped the insanity that was his past life...until now.

Dina goes upstairs. Dale and Seth lock eyes for a beat.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Whiskey is poured over ice. Seth sits at a kitchen island. Dale gestures to Seth if he wants any. Seth waves him down, declining. Dale proceeds to down his glass. Finishes, observing the glass.

Dale notices Seth does not have a weapon holster.

DALE

You don't carry a firearm.

SETH

Not on me now, no. Call me a  
trusting person.

DALE

Not too many of them nowadays.  
Glenlivet whiskey. I've had that  
bottle since '83 and have never  
opened it.

SETH

If I may ask, what's the special occasion?

DALE

Does there need to be one?

SETH

I suppose not.

Dale pours himself another glass.

DALE

California, huh? This must be pretty important.

Seth removes the folded sheet of yellow paper from his pocket and unfolds it.

SETH

In '74, you spoke with Detective Wilcox about Kenneth Keane. Do you remember him?

DALE

Nope. I do not. What exactly are you after, detective?

Dale takes another drink. Seth tries another tactic.

SETH

My research took a long time to dig up-records from '74 aren't exactly at the top of the stack anymore. Detective Wilcox was one of the primary leads investigating the Illustrator killings. What about those? Ring a bell?

Dale maintains composure. Sighs.

DALE

It was a crazy time in California. The state was practically burning. You couldn't cross the street without feeling that ugly sense of dread. It was a time I chose to forget.

SETH

I understand. I'm just asking you to help me with one piece. Wilcox seemed to think you knew something more than you led on.

DALE

Detective Dennis Wilcox. Yes, I remember him. Have you done much research into Mr. Wilcox's past? Around that time?

Seth is silent. Dale checks his watch.

DALE

If there's nothing else--

SETH

I drove up here from visiting the wife of Anthony Martinez. He was...another victim of the Illustrator. She seemed keen on telling me the city let her husband down. I understand you may be scared. You can be honest with me. What if what you tell me next helps solve a mystery buried for twenty-five years? You'd give so many people closure...including yourself. Please, tell me what you know.

Dale keeps firm eye contact with Seth, unbroken. A subtle half-smile creeps across his face, almost forced.

DALE

I don't know what to tell you, officer. I'm not that important. If there's nothing else, my wife and I would like to get back to our evening. If you could let yourself out.

Seth hides it well, but his eyes scream disappointment. He removes a card.

SETH

If you change your mind...

DALE

That won't be necessary.

Seth, taken aback, puts the card back in his pocket. He exits the kitchen, leaving Dale standing in a haze, peering forward. Unblinking.

The door SHUTS in the background.

Dale yanks a hidden piece of plaster from under the kitchen island, revealing a miniature cubby.

Dale reaches in and retrieves a .38 cal revolver pistol. Dale takes the gun in, eyes welling with tears, his face scrunching tightly.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A hotel room door opens. Blaise enters, still visibly reeling from the encounter.

She shifts her gaze into the room to spot Heidi sitting rigid at the end of the bed.

Moving boxes, overstuffed travel and duffel bags, strewn everywhere.

HEIDI

Hey. You okay? What happened?

Heidi's demeanor screams anxiety. Blaise takes note, suspicion growing.

BLAISE

The show went long. Are you okay?

HEIDI

I'm good, babe. Did you have a good show?

BLAISE

It was fine. What did your dad say?

Heidi indicates her phone.

HEIDI

He'll call back. Hey...

Heidi rises and approaches Blaise. She attempts deep kissing and fondling, but Blaise barely reciprocates. Heidi tries even harder to get more out of her. Their eyes close, slowly getting into it.

Blaise gingerly opens her eyes and notices that the top drawer of the nightstand is cracked open. She slows down her kissing. She pulls away and moves to the nightstand.

BLAISE

I think that drawer is stuck.

HEIDI

Blaise...

Too late. Blaise has ripped open the top drawer and has seen what's inside.

Heidi eyes her, waiting for some reaction, which she gets in the form of Blaise reaching in and pulling out a small, tightly bound packet of white powder next to a tarnished spoon. Blaise tosses it hard in Heidi's face. Heidi, realizing how much she's fucked up, lets it happen.

Blaise stares daggers through her. Heidi can not make eye contact.

BLAISE

You told me you were clean. You've been clean for months. Those were your words.

Heidi finally looks up, her facade exposed.

HEIDI

I tried...

BLAISE

Why did Cy kick us out?

HEIDI

I told--

Blaise's face becomes beet red, and her eyes well with tears.

BLAISE

He found out you were bringing drugs in the apartment...

HEIDI

Babe, sit down, and let's...please-

-

BLAISE

Your dad said no, didn't he?

Heidi can't deny it. Blaise chuckles nervously at the sheer unbelievability of the whole situation.

BLAISE

Oh my God. Do you even go to your auditions? Do you even wanna be an actress? Have you told me a single thing that was true.

Heidi rises and tries to hold Blaise, who is having none of it.

HEIDI

Yes. I love you. Blaise, just...sit down and let me explain--

BLAISE

Tell me the truth, Heidi. I don't want to hear any other words out of your mouth than the truth. Tell me, or I'm leaving and I'm not coming back. And that is far from a threat. Tell me!

Heidi can't seem to muster the courage as her gaze falls back to the floor. Blaise brushes past Heidi on her way to the door...

HEIDI

You always take the rent money to Cy...

Blaise halts, spins to face Heidi.

HEIDI

You barely said two words to me before you were up in his face, talking to him. So...

BLAISE

Are you seriously trying to turn this around on me?

HEIDI

I'm not wrong...

Heavy tears trickle down Blaise's cheeks.

BLAISE

You know what? Maybe he was right about one thing.

Blaise storms out of the room with vicious fury, slamming the door behind her, leaving Heidi to break down into a sobbing mess.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PD - BULLPEN - NIGHT

A newspaper falls to the hardwood of a desk. SMACK. The headline reads:

CARY WRIGHT ELECTED MAYOR.

Dennis sits with his feet up on the desk, pouring himself a drink.

DENNIS

Our friend, Dale, has led quite a squeaky-clean life.

Jodi stands on the other side. He offers her one. She declines. He drinks.

JODI

I can't get any of the other family members to talk. It's like they're scared or something.

DENNIS

When I was growing up, you found out someone was a homo, you just teased them a little bit. It was pretty much the same with all minority groups. Things seem to be changing...

(re: the newspaper)

At least, they seemed to be.

JODI

You don't think he's gonna do well?

DENNIS

I think he'll do fine for whoever he feels he needs to please the most...just like any other politician. He won for a reason. We'll see.

JODI

Can I ask you a random question?

DENNIS

I suppose you've earned it.

JODI

Before I moved out here, everyone I knew called San Francisco fog city. Is that just because the fog is super thick or...?

Dennis takes Jodi in, seems impressed with her question. Dennis takes up the newspaper and observes it as he speaks...

DENNIS

In 1950, the Navy sprayed bacteria into the fog here to test biological warfare defenses. They conducted the tests at night, thinking the fog would be gone in the morning when everyone woke up. Well, it wasn't. Thousands of people got seriously infected. One man even died, Edward...something, I can't recall.

(MORE)

DENNIS (CONT'D)

Noble as the sentiment was, they neglected to understand Mother Nature bends to no rules but her own. To this day, people think that bacteria still lingers in the fog. The most accepted theory is it's breaking down people's brains little by little. I'm inclined to agree. Makes sense why some people are so God damned stupid these days!

Dennis tosses the newspaper onto his desk. It SMACKS flat on his desk, a metaphorical exclamation point to his final words. Dennis tops himself off with more whiskey. Down the hatch.

Jodi sits on Dennis' words for a quiet beat before checking her watch.

JODI

I'd better get home to the little one. Need anything else from me?

DENNIS

Nope... You've done good, so far. Keep it up and...who knows.

Jodi smiles contentedly.

JODI

See you tomorrow?

DENNIS

Bright and breezy as always.

Jodi strolls away, leaving Dennis alone to gaze down at the newspaper. He takes it up.

Dennis pulls out the bottom drawer to his right. He removes a stack of manila folders and loose sheets of paper. He shimmies the bottom slab of wood until it pops out, revealing a lengthy row of clean, crisp one-hundred-dollar bills. Dennis removes a chunk of it...

INT. CAR/DRIVING - NIGHT

The dark, dreary, inside of a moving car, the driver completely shadowed. Barely any streetlights outside to provide visibility.

The car pulls up to a group of scantily-clad girls, all of whom attempt to wave the car down. One girl, taller, overtakes the rest. Goes to the passenger window.

The girl speaks in a deep, masculine voice, trying to raise the pitch - a drag queen.

DRAG QUEEN  
Need directions, honey?

MAN (O.S.)  
Get in.

The tall girl obliges.

The vehicle pulls away and proceeds down the street.

MAN  
How much?

DRAG QUEEN  
Let's say...six hundred?

The man hands over a clean stack of hundred-dollar bills...weirdly similar to the stack Dennis removed in the previous scene.

EXT. HOTEL - POOL - NIGHT

Blaise sits by the pool, both feet dipped in the water. She's eyeing the ring she got for Heidi, opening and closing the metal heart.

She suddenly looks determined, letting out a heavy sigh from her nostrils. She gets out, water sloshing beneath her.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Blaise traverses the hallways with a fierce determination on her face. She rounds a corner, nearly colliding with another PERSON, dressed in all black, who swerves to avoid her.

She arrives to her hotel room door to find it ajar. She approaches with caution and slowly nudges the door open, revealing...

Heidi splayed out on the hotel room bed, throat slit.

Blaise SCREAMS painfully, dashing over to Heidi, taking her up in her arms. Blaise tries to cry out for people, but she can barely get the words out.

Luckily, some passersby see what's going on and dial 911.

Blaise grips Heidi tight, tears steaming, blood staining on her hands and clothing.

On the floor rests a terrifying picture...

A painted picture of Blaise and Heidi, nude, in an embrace much like they are now.

Blaise has dropped her ring. It's nestled adjacent to the portrait, heartbroken apart!

EXT. HOTEL - SAME TIME

A modern police charger speeds to the scene and screeches to a halt.

The ever-familiar fog hangs low in the air, a staple in the city at this point; like the grim reaper himself hanging out waiting for his opportunity.

A suited individual bolts from the car and hustles up to the hotel entrance...

INT. HOTEL ROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

The high-pitched RINGING in Blaise's ears drowns out the chaotic chatter of the CRIME TECHS. The world moves in slow motion.

In the room, EMS work to clean up the scene. One worker notices something on Heidi's chest...

Through the blood, a hint of black below the surface. They take some alcohol solution, spray, and wipe, revealing a horrifyingly familiar sight...

Just like the Illustrator victims in '74, Heidi has a single word scrawled deep in black ink into her skin...

"INITIUM FINUS" (translated to "Beginning of the End")

She looks down at her hands - Heidi's blood is drying in the cracks of her knuckles. It looks like rust.

A shadow falls over her. A pair of worn leather dress shoes stops in front of her.

Blaise slowly tilts her head up.

SETH! Twenty-five years older. Thinner with visible aging lines, salt and pepper locks, and a fading-brown goatee. Still, that same determination in his face.

He flashes Blaise his badge...

SETH  
Ms. Patterson, I'm Detective  
Sharpe. San Francisco Homicide. I  
have a few questions for you.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER/OVER BLACK:

This series is a work of fiction. While the themes and issues depicted may be inspired by historical events, the characters, dialogue, and plot are entirely fictional. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, is unintentional.

In memory of the victims of violence in San Francisco during this era.

FADE OUT.