

AN IMPOSSIBLY FINE LINE

by

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER:

"Inspired by actual events."

FADE IN:

INT. LUKAS HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

BOYD LUKAS, 54, his worn face a portrait of a homicide cop's career, stares at the ceiling through the misty grey light just before dawn.

Lukas stretches his arm to the empty side of the bed without looking at it, then rises.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

Dark. Close. A match is struck, a candle lit. It barely illuminates a rudimentary altar, strewn with talismans, powders, bowls. A rhythmic chanting begins.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Lukas, in sweats, jogs along a typical New York street.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

Two hands, patterned with symbolic scars that stand in relief against the black skin beneath them, grind something dark and moist in a mortar and pestle that rests on the altar.

INT. LUKAS HOME - BASEMENT - DAY

Lukas bench-presses decent weight. A nearby police band radio crackles periodically with crosstalk.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

Dark liquid and feathery powders are added to the contents of the mortar and stirred.

INT. LUKAS HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Lukas stands before a dresser, adds a gun and detective's gold shield to his suit. He then kisses his fingers, touches them to a picture of a little girl that rests on the dresser.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

The chanting gets louder. The mortar is brought to lips, the contents drunk. A single drop of liquid traces down the chin, the unmistakable crimson of blood.

INT. LUKAS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lukas leans against the counter, blows on a cup of coffee, sips it. His wife, DEELIE, 45, a fit and arresting woman, sits at a table nearby.

DEELIE

How's the Joe?

LUKAS

Nobody better with a coffee bean, Deelie. Wish I could make it like you.

DEELIE

Should we start buying decaf now?

LUKAS

Let's not be reactionary. I'm not out of there yet.

DEELIE

Three days, Boyd. You promised me. Costa Rica. Marlins.

A look lingers a bit too long between them.

Lukas moves to the table, sets his coffee cup on a piece of note paper lying there, then moves toward the door.

LUKAS

Gotta go. Call you later, baby.

DEELIE

Don't be too rough on 'em today.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

The empty mortar slams on the altar, punctuating an inhuman roar. A thumb and forefinger extinguish the candle.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Lukas sits in the witness dock, a greased-back, sharp-dressed ATTORNEY before him.

ATTORNEY

You were the arresting officer, Detective Lukas?

LUKAS

I took the suspect into custody, yes.

ATTORNEY

Is repeatedly punching a suspect part of 'taking him into custody'?

Prosecuting Attorney CAROL DILLARD, 30's, jumps to her feet.

DILLARD
Objection. Detective Lukas is not
on trial here.

ATTORNEY
Goes to bias, Your Honor.

JUDGE
I'll allow it. Proceed.

ATTORNEY
Again, Detective Lukas--did you punch
my client while arresting him?

LUKAS
I wouldn't call it that.

ATTORNEY
What would you call it, Detective?

LUKAS
I subdued the suspect as the situation
required. He was acting erratically.

ATTORNEY
Erratically.

LUKAS
He was naked, and urinated on anybody
who came near him.

ATTORNEY
You couldn't have controlled him in
some other way?

LUKAS
He wasn't open to any suggestions.

ATTORNEY
What happened to patience? Waiting
him out? Was it necessary to assault
him so vehemently that you broke his
nose and jaw?

LUKAS
What do you want me to do with a guy
like that, Counselor? Shake it off
for him?

A subtle throat-clearing from the JUDGE draws a quick glance
from Lukas.

INT. CAPTAIN MARCHANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Homicide Captain OSCAR MARCHANT, trim, late 40s, shirt and
tie, sits behind his desk, feet propped on an open drawer.

He balances a cup of coffee on his knee with one hand, punches a TV remote with the other.

The small TV in the corner flips through channels as Marchant surfs. He stops on CNBC, the business channel.

ON TELEVISION IN BACKGROUND:

A long shot of a man, 60s and silver, climbing from a limousine and hustling into a building, surrounded by bodyguards.

REPORTER

(on TV)

...the problem for CEO Shelby Farner are the unconfirmed reports of his using the convoluted multi-national structure of Farner Industries...

A knuckle wrap on his door draws Marchant's attention. He looks up to see Boyd Lukas, waves him in.

MARCHANT

Have a seat.

The TV sound continues as Marchant sits up and Lukas flops into a chair nearby.

REPORTER

(on TV)

...to influence the investigation into his diverting millions of dollars earmarked for AIDS vaccines for Africa, a felony. This could cost Farner control of his company and...

Marchant clicks the TV off, tosses the remote on the desk.

MARCHANT

So. You had an interesting morning.

LUKAS

If you want to call it that.

MARCHANT

Well, I don't think the Prosecutor's office is going to miss your testimony on their cases.

LUKAS

He was an asshole.

MARCHANT

All lawyers are assholes. Thing you never understood is that we gotta try to help the assholes on our side.

LUKAS

I told them what went down. That's all I'm supposed to do.

MARCHANT

Uh-huh. You file your paperwork yet?

Lukas is silent.

MARCHANT

Figured. How 'bout that retirement seminar? Do that yet? Or the exit session with the shrink? Any of that shit?

Again, Lukas is silent.

MARCHANT

It's mandatory, Boyd. Everybody goes at fifty-five. Which for you means Friday. Come on. You've been a street warrior for thirty years. Time to go. It's a young man's game these days anyway.

Lukas rises, leans on Marchant's desk.

LUKAS

I guess that's where I have a problem, Cap'. See, I never thought this was a game.

INT. DUTY ROOM - DAY

Lukas walks up to a pair of desks that face each other. He tosses his keys on one of them, drops into the chair.

Lukas's partner, VERNON KERSCH, 40s and doughy, looks up from the facing desk.

KERSCH

We still havin' fun?

LUKAS

Oodles.

A young detective, JACK CLAUSSEN, a cocky late 20s with model looks, walks by.

CLAUSSEN

(to Lukas)

You still here? Thought you were gone already.

Kersch holds Lukas's eyes.

KERSCH

Let it go.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A cell phone sits on an open newspaper spread on a small kitchen table.

Over the paper, black scarified hands roll a brush twig between them, crushing the dried leaves from the wood. The hands pick at what leaves are left, set the twig aside.

The cell phone rings. One of the hands picks up the phone, touches the "Answer" button. The other hand continues to crush the leaves.

RANDOKU (O.S.)

(foreign language)

Yebo.

[Yes.]

The first hand comes back, takes another twig, begins to roll and pick it.

RANDOKU (O.S.)

(heavily accented
English)

Yes, I am.

The crunch of the leaves punctuates the quiet in the room.

RANDOKU (O.S.)

Four days ago.

Another twig is picked up.

RANDOKU (O.S.)

Do not threaten me. I do things as they must be done. I prepare myself. Then I prepare for you. All will be ready in time. We meet tomorrow, yes?

(beat)

You have the payment?

The bare twig is set aside.

RANDOKU (O.S.)

Then we have nothing more to say.

Hambe kahle.

[Goodbye.]

The cell phone beeps off, is dropped on the table. The hands scoop up the crushed leaves and begin rubbing them into an even finer powder.

A low, rhythmic chanting begins.

INT. DETECTIVE'S UNMARKED CAR - MOVING - DAY

Kersch drives. He and Lukas talk without looking at each other. Their eyes scan the streets out of habit.

KERSCH

Maybe you'll like it.

LUKAS

Uh-huh.

KERSCH

I'm serious. How do you know you won't?

LUKAS

I know.

KERSCH

Bullshit. You didn't even take off when you had the pukin' flu.

LUKAS

What's it to you, Vernon? Why you pushin' on this?

KERSCH

I'm just thinking you might like not havin' to punch a clock after thirty years, that's all.

LUKAS

This's the only thing feels sane to me, okay? Only thing I feel right doin'. I can't imagine not--

The radio snaps alive.

DISPATCHER

(on radio)

One-thirty. Body reported in the grasslands along the Hudson, end of Eleventh Street. You open?

Lukas reaches for the radio mic.

KERSCH

What are you doin'?

LUKAS

Takin' the call.

KERSCH

Why bother? You're gone in two days. Tell 'em we're 10-7 for gas or something.

LUKAS

You not listenin' to me just now?
 (into mic)
 One-Thirty responding.

DISPATCHER

(on radio)
 Ten-four, One-Thirty. See the Officer
 at the scene.

Kersch shakes his head, sets the bubble on the roof, guns the car.

EXT. REAR OF WAREHOUSE ON THE RIVER - DAY

Lukas and Kersch tread through knee-high reeds toward the river, listening to OFFICER PETE WILLEN, 30s and thin as the reeds.

WILLEN

Wouldn't have found it at all if the security guy hadn't gone out for a smoke. As it was, he said he smelled it before he saw it.

Kersch casts a withering glance at Lukas.

KERSCH

Wonderful.

Lukas, Kersch and Willen join the MEDICAL EXAMINER, whose pallid skin betrays his 43 years in a dark lab. His ASSISTANT and a FORENSICS TECHNICIAN kneel near him. They're all looking down at a small, naked, human body.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Floater. Maybe two days. Maybe little more.

Lukas and Kersch lean over the Medical Examiner to get a better look.

KERSCH

Oh, fuck me.

The body lies on its back. Two dark holes gape where the eyes and eyelids once were. Chalky teeth protrude from a lipless mouth. Where the genitals once were, another dark, deep hole. The left hand is gone.

KERSCH

Just a kid.

LUKAS

Male or female?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Hard to tell, huh? But it was a
'she', maybe seven, eight.

Lukas's jaw sets. He stands upright, looks away. Kersch
sees it, steps closer to the Medical Examiner.

KERSCH

Crabs get to her?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

You don't lose the parts she's missin'
to wildlife. She was cut before she
was dumped.

Lukas turns back.

LUKAS

Cut? Like stabbed?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Like mutilated. Specific stuff cut
out...off...whatever...by somethin'
awful damn sharp. I'll be able to
tell you more later.

Lukas and Kersch turn and walk back through the reeds.

KERSCH

What are you thinkin'?

LUKAS

I'm thinkin' this's a whole 'nother
level of fucked up.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The low, rhythmic chanting continues under.

The fine powders rendered from the leaves now rest in several
small piles lined up across the newspaper.

At the close edge of the table, one of the black scarified
hands holds a long, nasty-looking, bone-handled knife. The
other hand slowly and carefully draws a sharpening stone
along the knife edge.

The sharpening stone is set down and a patch of thick, rough
rawhide is picked up.

The chanting stops.

The knife is drawn across the edge of the rawhide, cutting
through the entire piece so effortlessly it might as well be
jello.

The sharpening stone is again picked up and slowly drawn
down the length of the blade.

The low, rhythmic chanting begins again.

EXT. WAREHOUSE ON THE RIVER - DAY

Lukas pulls a paper cup of coffee from a machine, sips it. His face indicates its horrid quality, but he sips it again, then sets the cup on the roof of the squad car.

Lukas pulls out his cell phone, speed dials.

DEELIE (V.O.)

(answering machine)

Hi. It's Deelie. We're out. But you can leave a message and one of us'll get back to you. Probably me, 'cause, well, you know Boyd.

The tell-tale beep.

LUKAS

Hey.

(a long pause)

Could sure use a cup of your coffee right about now--

Lukas snaps the cell phone closed as Kersch walks up to the other side of the car.

LUKAS

Find anybody but the security guy who saw anything?

KERSCH

Nobody sees shit down here, nobody knows nobody. 'Specially if they got dead in a bad way. You ready?

Lukas looks back toward the river, then nods. He tosses the coffee on the ground, crumples the cup.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Five YOUNG BLACK BOYS, ranging in age from 8 to 16, laugh and jive-walk down the street. They wear matching red leather jackets with a large Black Widow spider on the back.

TYRELL, 16, the tallest of the boys leading the pack, turns to his brother JA'QUAN, 8, the smallest, running to keep up behind the other four.

TYRELL

I tol' you get on home, Ja'Quan. Momma won't like it you're late.

JA'QUAN

She ain't never home anymore. I'm hangin' wit' you.

Tyrell stops, looks down on Ja'Quan.

TYRELL
No, you ain't, lil' bro'. We got
business, you got homework.

JA'QUAN
You never did no homework.

MIKEL, 15, in doo-rag and shades, laughs and points at Tyrell,
who quiets him with a single look.

TYRELL
(to Ja'Quan)
I ain't as smart as you, neither.
You got a chance to get up outta
this shithole, you study. And that's
what you gonna do. Momma or no Momma.

JA'QUAN
I wanta be a Spider.

MIKEL
You only eight, little man. Can't
be no Spider at eight. Ten maybe,
but no eight.

Ja'Quan sneers at Mikel.

JA'QUAN
(to Mikel)
Got a jacket jus' like you.
(to Tyrell)
Come on, Ty.

TYRELL
I let you wear the jacket 'cause
you're my brother. That's all. But
where we goin' today, you ain't
comin'. Now git home 'fore I knuckle
you.

Tyrell gives Ja'Quan a gentle push toward a side street.

TYRELL
Go on, now.

JA'QUAN
Shit.

TYRELL
Go on. I ain't tellin' you again.

Ja'Quan kicks at the sidewalk, reluctantly heads up the side
street.

INT. BLACK VAN - DAY

A black, scarified hand drapes over the steering wheel.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD

can be seen Tyrell and his boys as they move on down the main street to the right. To the left, Ja'Quan walks up the side street alone.

The hand turns the steering wheel left.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Ja'Quan shuffle-steps slowly in rhythm to a tune he's listening to through earbuds.

Behind him, and unnoticed, the black van slides slowly along the empty street.

Ja'Quan glances over his shoulder, catches sight of the van. He moves on, as if it makes no matter to him, though his shuffle-step gets a bit more exaggerated.

The van stays with Ja'Quan.

Ja'Quan casts another glance over his shoulder, giving a hard eye directly at the van. But he doesn't stop.

Neither does the van.

Ja'Quan finally has enough, turns and walks directly at the van, his bravado turned way up.

JA'QUAN

What you want, sucka? You followin' me?

The van stops. The driver's side door opens.

M'GUSHU RANDOKU, an imposing black man in his 40s, unfolds from the van. His face and hands are covered in scarred icons and tribal patterns. A bone earring hangs from an ear.

The badass look on Ja'Quan's face melts.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S EXAM ROOM - NIGHT

Lukas, Kersch and the Medical Examiner. On a steel examination table in the center of the room are the remains of the girl found by the river.

MEDICAL EXAMINER

If it wasn't a scalpel, then it was sharp as one. Eyeballs, eyelids, lips, vulva, clitoris, left hand-- all gone.

LUKAS
That what killed her?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Death was courtesy of this.

The Medical Examiner lifts the chin, reveals a deep, nasty gash that goes ear to ear. He then moves to the feet.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
These marks here--rope of some kind.

KERSCH
She was tied?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Hung by her feet. Like a side of beef.

LUKAS
Goddamn it.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
She was bled out after the throat slice. Nothin' in her veins but river silt.

KERSCH
This ain't gettin' any better.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Seldom does. I'll have more for you tomorrow. Stomach contents, that kinda thing.

KERSCH
Can't wait. Send it upstairs, will ya?

The Medical Examiner nods, moves off.

Kersch turns back to Lukas, who stares intently at the girl on the table.

KERSCH
What?

LUKAS
How old he say she was?

KERSCH
Eight, maybe.
(realizing)
Hey. Let's go, Boyd. We're done here.

EXT. ACCESS ROAD - NIGHT

Dusk. The black van bounces along the dirt road, which runs along the river.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - NIGHT

A weathered old shack set back among the reeds at river's edge.

The black van skids to a stop in front. Randoku climbs out, slides open the side door. He picks up a bundle wrapped in a canvas tarp, slings it over his shoulder, and carries it into the shack.

The bundle jumps and ripples on Randoku's shoulder.

INT. PRECINCT HOUSE - MISSING PERSONS DESK - DAY

SGT. MELINDA DOWNS, 40s, big, blonde, and sassy, hands Lukas a clipboard, thick with pages.

DOWNS

There's fifty missing kids in there could be yours. Twice that, you want to include other ethnicities.

KERSCH

(glancing at Lukas)
Fifty.

DOWNS

Mm-hmm. And that ain't countin' however many more nobody gives a shit about reporting as missing, and in this lovely city, who knows what that number is.

Lukas flips through the clipboard pages.

LUKAS

Looks like none reported in the last two days.

DOWNS

The sun comes out once in a while.

LUKAS

How many you find?

DOWNS

Most of 'em are runaways come back after they see the real world a day or two. But some--well, it's like they just evaporate. Poof. Gone. Never seen again.

Lukas hands the clipboard to Kersch.

LUKAS
Unless they wash up on a riverbank.

DOWNS
Well, honey, that's when they become
your business.

INT. CAPTAIN MARCHANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas and Kersch stand, Marchant sits.

LUKAS
No witnesses, nothing traceable on
what was left of the body.

KERSCH
Missing Persons had nada. Leastwise
nothing recently that matches up.

LUKAS
How can you not miss your kid? Even
for one night?

An awkward silence.

KERSCH
(to Marchant)
Somebody sure did a number on her,
though.

MARCHANT
My kid pisses me off, but I don't
hack him up. Gang thing, maybe?

LUKAS
No gang tats, nothing to indicate
it. Gang shit's flashy, anyway, for
show. This was more methodical.

MARCHANT
Meaning what?

LUKAS
Like whoever did this had a purpose.

KERSCH
Like Ted Bundy had a purpose?

Lukas shrugs. Marchant catches it.

MARCHANT
Aw, no. Don't be goin' there. We
don't know that. Don't know anything
right now, seems to me.
(to Kersch)
Put it up on the wall with the other
floaters.

(MORE)

MARCHANT (CONT'D)

You got other cases with better leads.
You need to work them first.

LUKAS

Come on, Captain. It's a kid.

MARCHANT

(undeterred)

We keep it alive, and if something
breaks, we work it. But I'm pulling
Kersch, putting him where he can do
some good. As for you--you need to
get your paperwork in. Take your
last two days. I'll tell 'em you
worked it.

Lukas ignores him.

LUKAS

This one isn't going away. I want
to--

MARCHANT

Take your pension, Boyd. Go live
the good life. And that's not a
request, 'case you didn't hear it
right.

Lukas looks to Kersch.

KERSCH

Told you not to take the call in the
first place, partner.

LUKAS

The hell with both of you. If thirty
years in doesn't give me the right
officially, then I'll handle it off
the books.

Lukas moves toward the door.

MARCHANT

(to Lukas)

Hold on, hold on.

Lukas stops at the door, turns. His eyes meet Marchant's,
drill steadily. Marchant blinks first.

MARCHANT

You can't cowboy out there and you
know it. Your badge is yours 'til
Friday. Do what you want. But Kersch
moves on.

INT. DUTY ROOM - NIGHT

Lukas and Kersch walk to their desks.

KERSCH

How 'bout I tell him to shove it?

LUKAS

Nah. You don't need your ass in a sling too. I can handle it.

KERSCH

Then how 'bout I buy my soon-to-be-ex-partner a nightcap?

LUKAS

That you can do. Give me a second.

KERSCH

Meet you downstairs.

Lukas guy-nods. Kersch leaves.

Lukas sits at his desk, picks up the phone and dials.

DEELIE (V.O.)

(answering machine)

Hi, it's Deelie. We're out--

Lukas drops his head, listens to the message, then the beep.

LUKAS

Hey, D. Stoppin' for a drink with Kersch. Be home soon.

Lukas drops the phone in the cradle, takes a deep breath, then rises and walks from the room.

INT. LOUIE'S BAR - NIGHT

Lukas and Kersch huddle in a back booth. Lukas waves a shot of bourbon over a beer, then drops it in, stirs it with his finger.

KERSCH

You don't need to be dealin' with something like this after...well, you know. Were me, I'd be gone in a heartbeat.

LUKAS

Not you.

KERSCH

I'm just sayin', is all.

LUKAS

Uh-huh.

KERSCH

Wasn't there some talk about goin'
after marlins in Costa Rica?

LUKAS

Talked about it, yeah. Was more
Deelie's idea than mine.

KERSCH

Would be, wouldn't it?

LUKAS

Meanin' what?

KERSCH

Meanin' between the two of you, she's
the only one lookin' past the job
all these years. And you still
haven't listened. Even now.

A long stare hangs a moment between them.

KERSCH

(shrugs)

Look, fuck me, you know? Ain't none
'a my business, right? I'm just
your partner, and glad of it. You
want to hang, I'll hang with you.

LUKAS

Appreciate it.

Kersch downs his shot.

KERSCH

I gotta go. Manana.

Lukas nods, but his eyes don't leave his beer as Kersch rises
and leaves.

After a moment, Lukas lifts the glass as if to drink, but
instead sets it down and shoves it aside. He looks at his
watch, slides from the booth.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - NIGHT

A faint, flickering light dances in a side window barely
covered by torn, gauzy curtains.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - NIGHT

Darkness cut by the jump of candlelight, just enough to see
Ja'Quan, naked, bound hand and foot, hanging upside down
from the rafters.

JA'QUAN

Come on, mister.

(MORE)

JA'QUAN (CONT'D)

What I do to you, huh? What?
Nuthin', that's what. I didn't do
nuthin' to you. Come on, man, listen
to me. Goddamn. Please, man, please,
don't be doin' nuthin' to me, man.
Ah, shit.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Randoku kneels before a makeshift altar, rocks back and forth,
chants in a low, rhythmic cadence.

Randoku drops a pinch of powder into a mortar before him,
then another. He stirs them with his finger.

Randoku then reaches over and picks up the long-bladed, bone-
handled knife. He stands. His chanting gets louder and
more forceful.

JA'QUAN

Oh, shit, man, no!

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - NIGHT

A cacophony of frogs croaking at water's edge.

A light on the river--a FISHERMAN in a small boat near shore.

A piercing scream so horrifying it stops the frogs from
croaking.

INT. LUKAS HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lukas is propped up on pillows in bed, shirtless, sheet to
his waist. Deelie, in a nightgown, leans against him.

DEELIE

Why can't you just walk away? They
already got the best of you. You
don't have to give them the rest.

Lukas says nothing.

DEELIE

Why, Boyd? What's holding you?

LUKAS

You get caught up, you know? It
takes over. When you're a rook',
you tell yourself you won't let it,
but it happens anyway.

DEELIE

So it happened. So now it's over.
Let it go.

LUKAS

It's not that easy, Deelie.

DEELIE

What the hell's ever easy, Boyd?
You think it was easy for me all
those years? You gone most of the
day and night? Me sitting in this
house, alone, after...?

Deelie bites her tongue, can't go there. She takes in a
long, slow breath.

DEELIE

I waited thirty years. Waited for
your arms to hold me without being
tense, ready to bolt on the first
ring. Now you can walk away for me
and you don't?

Lukas rises.

LUKAS

Something's come up.

DEELIE

Something always comes up, Boyd.

LUKAS

This one's different, Deelie. He
cut up a little girl in a way that...

Lukas's throat catches.

LUKAS

...that...

DEELIE

(softly now)

What?

Lukas picks up the picture of the young girl that sits on
his dresser.

LUKAS

All I was seeing on that M.E.'s table
was Jesse.

DEELIE

Don't. Please, don't.

LUKAS

We let them cut her apart, Deelie.

DEELIE

They were trying to save her life.

LUKAS

They took a different part of her every day. 'Til there was nothing left. And I just stood there, helpless.

DEELIE

It was a necrotic infection, Boyd. Even the doctors were helpless. What matters is that she knew you loved her.

Lukas sits on the side of the bed.

LUKAS

Did she? I wasn't even there when she died. I was out on the street somewhere.

Deelie reaches out, touches his shoulder.

DEELIE

Boyd. Please. Let it go. I need you.

LUKAS

I know. I know I wasn't there for you either. But I can't do nothing again, Deelie. I can't. I know it's not the same, but if I can stop--

Deelie interrupts him by turning his face to hers.

DEELIE

Alright, baby. Alright.

LUKAS

(after a moment)
I'm sorry.

Deelie lays her head on his shoulder.

DEELIE

Don't. You don't have to.

LUKAS

For everything.

A heavy look between them.

DEELIE

Me too.

Deelie puts her arm around him, hugs in tight. Lukas stares out the window into the night.

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - NIGHT

A Boston Whaler beaches in the reeds. Its occupant, an ELDERLY MAN in flannel shirt and khakis, sets his fishing pole down, climbs out, listens.

Another horrific scream cuts the silence.

The Elderly Man looks to the shack as another scream, and another, fill the air.

The Elderly Man moves quickly toward the shack.

INT. LUKAS HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Early morning. Lukas stands at the dresser, looks at himself in the mirror. He kisses his fingers and touches them to Jesse's picture.

INT. LUKAS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Lukas enters. His coffee mug sits on the piece of paper on the table. Lukas moves the mug, looks at the paper.

INSERT: THE PAPER: It's a note from Deelie, which reads, "Coffee's ready. Just turn it on. See you after work. Love, D."

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas sets the mug back on the paper, moves to the door and leaves.

INT. HOLIDAY INN MEETING ROOM - DAY

A mousy, toupee'd ACCOUNTANT drones on in front of a room full of MEN and WOMEN, pointing with a stick pointer at a projected graph on the wall.

ACCOUNTANT

The value of each allocation to an investment vehicle, plus any earnings and/or less any losses, distributions and charges--

Lukas sits at a worktable near the back of the room, a large workbook packet open on the table in front of him. He looks at the Accountant like he looked at the Attorney in court.

ACCOUNTANT

--must be considered when trying to calculate the monthly amount available for withdrawal. Now, as new retirees...

Lukas sucks his teeth, looks at his watch. He closes the workbook, picks it up, and walks from the room.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN MEETING ROOM - DAY

Lukas emerges, drops the workbook in a trash can by the door, rubs his palms on his jacket as if they were dirty.

Lukas's cell phone rings.

LUKAS

Lukas.

(looks around)

Just walked out of Hell. Why?

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Lukas falls into step with Kersch as they walk along the shack wall nearest the river.

KERSCH

Wife called him in missing about one
in the morning. Said he night fishes,
but never stays out past ten.

They walk past the Boston Whaler, the night light on the bow, and a fishing pole resting on the gunwale.

KERSCH

Search copter saw him here this
morning, radioed in.

Thirty feet on, they come upon the body of the Elderly Man, lying on his back at the water's edge. His throat is cut ear to ear, and a gaping hole shows where his heart used to be.

Kersch looks toward the shack.

KERSCH

Looks like he was killed up there,
then dragged down here and tossed in
the water. Got hung up in the eddy,
washed back ashore.

LUKAS

Why'd you call me?

KERSCH

Besides the similarity of bodies by
the river missin' parts?

Kersch points at the shack.

KERSCH

'Cause of what's in there.

He moves past the access road about fifty feet, turns into a rutted lane partially obscured by overhanging trees.

EXT. RUTTED LANE - DAY

Randoku drives down the lane a couple of hundred yards and parks. He moves like a jungle cat through thick brush and trees to the top of a granite ridge.

EXT. GRANITE RIDGE - DAY

The ridge overlooks the access road, above the shack. Randoku kneels near the trunk of a tree and watches.

He sees Lukas emerge from the shack, talk momentarily with a pair of UNIFORMED COPS, then stand and look around the area.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Lukas moves to where the Elderly Man's body has been lifted onto a gurney and is being wheeled off toward the M.E.'s van.

Lukas looks around the general area where the Elderly Man had lain. He then starts to move back toward the shack, but stops, seeing something on the ground.

Lukas squats down, moves some grasses. He picks up what looks like a cross-section of bone. It's etched with a word and a symbol, and has a wire attached.

EXT. GRANITE RIDGE - DAY

Randoku watches as Lukas calls to one of the M.E.'s MEN, and holds up the bone earring.

RANDOKU
(quietly, to himself)
Hunter.
(smiles)
Warrior.

Randoku reaches up and touches his pierced but empty ear. The smile disappears.

RANDOKU
But that you will return to me.

Randoku carefully rises, moves off the ridge toward his van.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas stands with the Medical Examiner at his desk. Through a plate glass window that looks into the Exam Room are two steel gurneys, one with the Elderly Man, one with Ja'Quan.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
(referring to Elderly
Man)

He would'a bled to death from his
throat bein' cut if he'd had anything
left to pump it out. Heart was sliced
out clean, and the lack of blood
from the throat tells me it was awful
quick.

LUKAS

How quick?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Might'a still been beatin'. That
kinda quick.

LUKAS

You find it?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Wasn't at the scene. Might'a thrown
it in the river, but who the hell
knows with a guy crazy enough to be
doin' this kinda shit?

LUKAS

What about the boy?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Pretty much the same as the first
kid. Mutilated, parts missing.
Whatever the guy's using, it's sharp
as hell.

(indicates the desktop)

Something interesting here, though.
That stuff you found on the table at
the scene?

The M.E. picks up some bags with powders in them.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Well, this one--
(holds it up)
Powdered gold.

LUKAS

Gold?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Like in Fort Knox. Finely ground.
(holds up other bags)
And these are herbs.

LUKAS

Oregano? Chives? What?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Entirely different. Only been able to ID one of 'em so far. Rooibos.

LUKAS

What the fuck is that?

MEDICAL EXAMINER

Rare plant. African.

EXT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - WASHINGTON SQUARE SOUTH - DAY

Lukas walks among students, a manila envelope under his arm. NYU banners hang here and there.

Lukas stops in front of an ivy-covered building. He guy-nods to a passing STUDENT, points to the building.

LUKAS

This the library?

The Student nods, moves on.

Lukas mounts the steps.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - BOBST LIBRARY - DAY

Lukas enters, scans the cavernous space. It's quiet, but busy. He spots the Central Counter area, moves toward it.

INT. - BOBST LIBRARY - CENTRAL COUNTER - DAY

Behind the counter are several desks and file cabinets with STUDENTS and FACULTY working at them.

Lukas approaches a YOUNG WOMAN with ponytails and braces at the counter.

YOUNG WOMAN

May I help you?

LUKAS

Hope so. There anybody here knows anything about foreign languages? Maybe somebody in the reference area?

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sure we could find someone. What is it you need?

Lukas pulls a photo from the manila envelope, slides it across the counter.

LUKAS

I need to know what language this is, what it says.

The Young Woman looks at the photo of the graffiti from the shack by the river.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wow. I'm not even sure how to pronounce this.

(she tries haltingly)

"Humu mimi nitakamata tani
Humu mimi kuwa tani"

As the Young Woman says the words, the head of a MAN at a file cabinet at the back of the Counter area snaps up and looks at the Young Woman, shock on his face.

Lukas's eyes catch the motion and expression before the Man quickly looks back down and turns his back.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm not really sure what language that is, sir.

The Man, black and in a tweed jacket, closes a file drawer, picks up a briefcase, and quickly moves toward the main doors. Lukas watches him.

LUKAS

Uh-huh.

Lukas takes the photo back, points to the Man just getting to the doors.

LUKAS

You know who that is?

The Young Woman turns, but the Man is already out the doors.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sorry. Who...?

LUKAS

Nothing. Thanks.

Lukas moves quickly to the front doors.

EXT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - WASHINGTON SQUARE SOUTH - DAY

Lukas emerges from the Library, stops at the top of the steps, looks up and down the street. Half a block up, weaving among the pedestrians around him, is the tweed jacket.

Lukas falls into step behind him.

The Man turns right onto Lafayette Street. Lukas jogs to the corner, looks around, continues to follow.

EXT. - LAFAYETTE STREET - POLK BUILDING - DAY

The Man enters the building, holding the door momentarily for a FEMALE STUDENT to exit.

Lukas stops the FEMALE STUDENT as he approaches the building.

LUKAS

Excuse me. Was that Mr....uhm...going into that building...Mr...

FEMALE STUDENT

You mean Professor Mackles?

LUKAS

Right. Professor Mackles. What's his first name again?

FEMALE STUDENT

Freeman, I think.

LUKAS

That's it. Freeman Mackles. Thanks.

Lukas enters the building.

INT. POLK BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Lukas checks offices left and right. He stops in front of a door that's partially open. To the right of the door is a nameplate.

INSERT: NAMEPLATE: "Freeman Mackles, Ph.D, Department of Africana Studies"

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas knocks on the door.

MACKLES (O.S.)

(African accent)

Yes. Come in, Dennis.

Lukas pushes the door open.

INT. MACKLES' OFFICE - DAY

FREEMAN MACKLES, the Man in tweed, stands at his desk, his back to the door as Lukas enters.

MACKLES

(as he's turning)

You're late. I don't have all day to--

(seeing Lukas)

May I help you?

Mackles is African, in his 50s, tall and thin, his rheumy eyes without light. The tweed jacket and tie look totally wrong on him.

Lukas shows his badge.

LUKAS
Detective Lukas, NYPD.

MACKLES
(wary)
Yes?

LUKAS
You Professor Mackles?

MACKLES
Yes. Freeman Mackles.

LUKAS
You were just at the Library over on
Washington Square.

Mackles hesitates a moment, then turns back to his desk, looks through some papers.

MACKLES
Yes? I'm there a lot.

LUKAS
You left in kind of a hurry.

MACKLES
Did I?

LUKAS
Looked like it. Thought maybe you
heard something surprised you.

MACKLES
I realized I was about to be late
for an appointment. I thought in
fact you were he.

LUKAS
Nope. Sorry.

MACKLES
(still wary)
What is it that you need, Detective?
I'm rather busy.

LUKAS
Says "Africana Studies" on the door.
That what you teach?

MACKLES
Yes.

Lukas looks around the room.

LUKAS
You from there? Africa?

MACKLES
Yes. Lesotho.

LUKAS
Where's that?

MACKLES
It's a small country in the heart of
South Africa. Is my being African
important?

LUKAS
Could be. Can you tell me what
rooibos is?

MACKLES
(it's obvious)
Tea.

LUKAS
Just tea.

MACKLES
Well, it's sometimes used medicinally
in poultices or potions.

LUKAS
What about this?

Lukas pulls a plastic evidence bag from the manila envelope,
hands it to Mackles.

Mackles looks at the bag, glances at Lukas, then opens it
and sniffs. His head immediately snaps back from the bag.
He shoves it back to Lukas, his eyes locked on it.

MACKLES
Where did you get this?

LUKAS
Why? What is it?

Mackles continues to stare at the bag.

LUKAS
(more insistent)
What is it?

MACKLES
It's...dried Yohimbe bark, some
fermented root...Where did you get
it?

LUKAS

It was found at a crime scene.

Mackles' eyes slowly rise to meet Lukas's.

MACKLES

What kind of crime?

Lukas pulls a photo from the manila envelope, hands it to Mackles.

LUKAS

Murder.

Mackles looks at the photo.

INSERT: THE PHOTO: The inside of the shack by the river. Visible is the altar, and Ja'Quan's body, hanging.

BACK TO SCENE

Mackles freezes, his demeanor completely changed. He hands the photo back to Lukas, turns to his desk, arranges papers.

MACKLES

I cannot help you. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a student--

LUKAS

Professor Mackles--

MACKLES

(faces Lukas)

It's Doctor. And again, I can't help you. Now, I have to go.

Mackles moves toward the open door. Lukas beats him to it, slams the door closed.

LUKAS

Two kids are dead, Doctor Mackles. Butchered like hogs.

Lukas pushes the photo into Mackles' belly.

LUKAS

Take another look.

Mackles doesn't respond at first, or look at the photo.

LUKAS

Come on, Doctor.

(holds up photo)

You know what this is, don't you?

Mackles leans against his desk, stares at the photo a long moment.

MACKLES

Both victims were like this?

LUKAS

Basically. Eyes and genitals missing.
Hand on one, tongue on the other,
throats cut, bled out.

MACKLES

Young, yes?

LUKAS

No way to know exact ages, but both
six to eight, far as we can tell.

Lukas pulls the picture of the graffiti from the envelope.

LUKAS

You recognized this when you heard
it, didn't you?

MACKLES

Where was this written?

LUKAS

On a wall at the scene. We thought
it might be gang graffiti.

Mackles stands.

MACKLES

It's not.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Lukas tears the crime scene tape from the door, pushes it
open.

LUKAS

Watch your step. Still a crime scene.

He and Mackles enter.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Mackles moves to the center of the room, his eyes adjusting
to the darkness.

LUKAS

What is it you wanted to see?

Mackles takes in the scene--blood in the dirt, ropes still
hanging from the rafters, the bloody altar. His eyes fall
to the graffiti on the wall.

The breath goes out of Mackles. He hangs his head, rubs his
eyes, then turns and glances at Lukas as he moves quickly to
the door.

LUKAS
What? What is it?

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Mackles stands in front of the shack, stares at the ground, mind somewhere else.

Lukas emerges from the shack, stands next to him, waits.

Mackles finally looks up to him.

 MACKLES
It's tribal. Swahili. It identifies territory.

 LUKAS
Identifies how?

 MACKLES
A center of power. A place of connection to that power.

 LUKAS
What does it say?

 MACKLES
Roughly translated, it says, "Here I take the power; Here I become the power."

 LUKAS
You know who wrote it?

 MACKLES
Not who. What.

Mackles gets into the car. After a moment, Lukas follows.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas fires the engine, drives.

 MACKLES
Your man is a *sangoma*. A medicine man. In your culture, you would call him a witch doctor, I suppose.

 LUKAS
You're kidding.

Mackles' steady gaze tells Lukas he isn't.

 MACKLES
Have you ever heard the term "Muti", Detective?

EXT. SWANK UPTOWN RESTAURANT - DAY

The black van pulls to the curb in front. Randoku emerges. He completely ignores the stares and glances of PEDESTRIANS passing by.

Randoku glances at a piece of paper in his hand, then at the name of the restaurant in front of him.

Randoku enters the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Randoku's eyes sweep the room, settle on a table in the far back corner, tucked behind a spindled partition. The back of a silver head of hair is just visible.

Randoku moves toward the corner.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Lukas drives on. Mackles looks straight ahead.

MACKLES

It's a Zulu word. In a practical sense, Muti means "medicine". In a metaphysical sense, it's tied to what is multi-culturally referred to as "The Warrior Tradition".

LUKAS

Let's take this out of the classroom.

MACKLES

(resolved, indulgent)
Put simply, it's a ritual performed to order, Detective, to make one a Warrior, to provide power to that Warrior. African sangomas have practiced Muti for centuries.

LUKAS

But this isn't Africa.

MACKLES

(after a moment)
No. It's not.

LUKAS

You said "to order". Who orders it?

INT. SWANK UPTOWN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A table in a dark corner. Randoku on the far side, the silhouette of a silver-haired MAN on the near side.

MACKLES (V.O.)

A politician. A businessman. Even
you, Detective. Anyone.

The Man pulls an envelope from his suit jacket pocket, slides it across the table to Randoku.

MACKLES (V.O.)

The person paying for Muti seeks
personal success, or power, or
protection. Someone who wants
assurance they'll defeat a rival.

Randoku looks inside the envelope, slides it into his pocket, smiles and nods.

MACKLES (V.O.)

They believe Muti strengthens their
personal force, gives them an edge.

Randoku rises and leaves, pats the shoulder of the Man as he walks past him and exits the restaurant.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas pulls the car to the curb in front of Mackles' NYU building.

LUKAS

We call that murder for hire.

MACKLES

It's not considered murder. Murder
implies emotion and there's no emotion
involved. No hate, no pleasure.
The victims are random. They simply
provide raw material.

LUKAS

Raw material? We're talking about
children here, not lumber!

MACKLES

Children hold power, in the form of
luck and vitality. Young children
have used up very little of theirs.
Sangomas believe it can be harvested.

LUKAS

Oh, Christ. What kind of sick fuck--

Mackles has had enough.

MACKLES

--Good day, Detective.

Mackles exits the car.

LUKAS

Hey.

EXT. LAFAYETTE STREET - POLK BUILDING - DAY

Lukas jumps from the car.

LUKAS

Hey!

Mackles stops, turns to look at Lukas.

MACKLES

I told you I didn't want any part of this, Detective. But you gave me no choice. Now, if you don't want to hear this--

Lukas puts up his hands.

LUKAS

--No. Finish it.

Mackles considers Lukas, then looks around the busy sidewalk.

MACKLES

(indicates the building)
Inside.

INT. MACKLES' OFFICE - DAY

Mackles leans against his desk, Lukas against a bookshelf.

Mackles speaks quietly, as if it's painful.

MACKLES

In the world of Muti, different body parts have different effects. Genitals bring virility and good luck, particularly if they're virginal and white. Eyes provide farsightedness, or greater clarity of vision. The brain, knowledge and political power. The sangoma takes the parts he needs for a specific outcome.

This is obviously affecting Lukas too.

LUKAS

Jesus.

MACKLES

There's more. The sangoma must take the flesh when the child is alive. Because in order for the powers to be acquired, the sangoma must awaken the Gods to bestow them.

EXT. RIVER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Elderly Man sits in his Boston Whaler, pole in hand.

A scream cuts the night. The Elderly Man looks up.

MACKLES (V.O.)

The screams of the child are critical
to doing so.

Another scream, more horrific.

MACKLES (V.O.)

The more intense the screams, the
more powerful the Muti.

INT. ABANDONED SHACK BY THE RIVER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Black, scarified hands work a mortar and pestle.

MACKLES (V.O.)

The body parts are then mixed with
the victim's blood, along with herbs,
clays, powdered gold, each of which
is believed to attract and hold power.

The hands bring the mortar to lips, which drink its contents,
a drop of blood tracing a line down the chin.

MACKLES (V.O.)

The elixir is then drunk by the client
or the sangoma himself to acquire
the powers they seek. In doing so,
he believes he becomes a Warrior.
An undefeatable one.

INT. MACKLE'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

Lukas stands stunned.

LUKAS

This is a horror movie.

MACKLES

To you, detective. But to him, it's
very real. And simply a business.
Whatever he's about to do, he's felt
he needs power for it.

Mackles stands and stares directly at Lukas.

MACKLES

But you'd better understand this:
these first two were just a warm-up.

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE - APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Randoku walks out of the building, crosses the street, enters a seedy bar.

MACKLES (V.O.)

He'll now feel he's invincible--a Warrior protected by Muti. He'll fear nothing, see everything as a hunt. He'll be brazen, without emotion, and absolutely ruthless.

INT. SEEDY BAR - DAY

Randoku sits at the bar. The BARTENDER sets a beer in front of him.

Just down the bar, DIRK and CARL, all flannel, jeans, and wallet chains, sit drunk. They eye Randoku.

Dirk downs a shot, sets the glass for the Bartender to refill. He nods toward Randoku.

DIRK

(loudly, to Bartender)
Didn't know you let just anything in here, Walter.

The Bartender pours a shot in Dirk's glass.

BARTENDER

Not today, Dirk. Okay?

Dirk picks up his shot glass.

DIRK

No, I'm serious.
(looks at Randoku)
But maybe he's lost, huh? Lost his map back to Africa?

Dirk taps Carl's arm. They smile at one another, stand and walk to Randoku, who remains absolutely motionless.

DIRK

Hey, boy. You lost?

No response from Randoku.

DIRK

Hey. I'm talkin' to you.

CARL

Maybe we can help ya find yer way back home, Sambo.

DIRK

You need some help, boy?

Dirk tosses his shot in Randoku's face.

DIRK

Oops.

Randoku is immediately standing. His nostrils flair, his eyes burn like coals. He stares directly at Dirk, then at Carl.

Carl senses something, takes a step back.

CARL

Hey. Maybe we oughtta just let it be, huh?

But Dirk wants to push it.

DIRK

Naw. We need to teach this mandinga some manners.

In one sudden move, Randoku grabs Dirk by the throat and lifts him from the floor like he's a feather. He pulls Dirk's terrified face millimeters from his own.

RANDOKU

(a clenched-jaw hiss)
Indodana imbuzikazi.
[Son of a goat.]

Randoku snaps his hand, crushing Dirk's throat. In the same moment, Randoku's other hand pulls a bone-handled knife from his belt and in a swift, fluid motion, slices Dirk's heart from his chest.

Randoku lets the body drop like a bag of peat moss, bends and picks up the bloody heart.

BARTENDER

Goddamn!

CARL

Fuck me!

Carl and the Bartender back off to the rear of the bar.

Randoku throws Dirk's heart on the bar, picks up his beer and finishes it. He slams the empty mug on the bar hard enough to crack it, eyes the two men, then walks calmly from the establishment.

INT. CAPTAIN MARCHANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Marchant selects files from his desk, stacks them.

MARCHANT

(to Lukas, skeptical)
A witch doctor. In New York.
(to Mackles)
And I should believe this because...?

MACKLES

I have seen this before.

MARCHANT

Where?

MACKLES

In Africa.

MARCHANT

This ain't Africa.

Lukas and Mackles exchange a glance.

LUKAS

(to Marchant)
He's preparing for something, Oscar.

Marchant pulls his suit jacket from his chair back, slings it on.

MARCHANT

Like what?

MACKLES

He is servicing a client. A child of pedigree and pure innocence will be taken--a virgin, most likely white.

Marchant picks up the files, moves toward his door.

MARCHANT

(to Kersch)
You buyin' into this?

Kersch shrugs.

KERSCH

This's New York, Cap.

Marchant stops at the door.

MARCHANT

Yeah, well, that aside, witch doctors are a little too far out for me. For my money, we're looking for a headcase targeting kids. Plain and simple.

Marchant turns and walks out the door.

INT. MAIN SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Lukas and Mackles follow Marchant across the room toward a bank of elevators.

LUKAS

(points to Mackles)

What if he's right, Captain? What if the guy we're after is as sane as you or me--

MARCHANT

--Bullshit. He's a lunatic, Lukas. You should be talkin' to a shrink, not a college prof.

(to Mackles)

No offence.

Marchant pushes the "up" button.

MACKLES

The sangoma is practicing a century's-old tradition, accepted regularly in Africa by businessmen and politicians-- sane men by anyone's standards.

MARCHANT

Sane men don't do things like this-- what'd you call it? Moodi?

LUKAS

Define 'sane', Oscar. You sure of the side of the line you're walking these days? I'm not.

MACKLES

More to the point, sir, in today's world, one man's insanity is often another man's religion.

MARCHANT

Intellectual bullsh--

MACKLES

Sane or insane, sangomas are clever, resourceful men, sir. It would not do to underestimate them.

MARCHANT

Go back to the classroom, Professor. Leave this to us. It's what we do.

The elevator doors open, Marchant steps into the cab, turns to Lukas.

MARCHANT

(to Lukas)

You're supposed to have paperwork
for me, aren't you?

LUKAS

I got one more day.

MARCHANT

Right. One more day. Then the gun
and badge are on my desk.

The elevator doors slide closed.

EXT. PRECINCT BUILDING - DAY

Lukas and Mackles emerge onto the street.

MACKLES

He is a difficult man.

LUKAS

He's okay. Just been away from the
street too long.

MACKLES

In Africa we have a saying: The man
who refuses to believe in the
possibility of something gives that
something the power to defeat him.

LUKAS

Here we'd say if you turn your back
on an alligator, it's your ass you're
offering him.

MACKLES

Perhaps more to the point.
(after a moment)
Despite what your superior may think,
Detective, there's a sangoma working
in this city. That much is certain.
You don't have much time.

LUKAS

Then help me.

MACKLES

I cannot be involved any further.

LUKAS

Why not?

Mackles looks at Lukas a moment, then shakes his head.

MACKLES

I cannot. Good day, Detective Lukas.

Mackles moves up the street. Lukas watches him go, then checks his watch and goes back into the precinct.

INT. PRECINCT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Lukas moves toward the squad room at the end of the hall.

A door on his right suddenly opens, and DR. MARTIN BISPELS, 50s, small and pinched, emerges, almost running into Lukas.

BISPELS

Detective Lukas. I was just coming to look for you.

LUKAS

Yeah, well, I been meaning to drop by, Doc, but you know how it is.

BISPELS

(not buying it)

Sure you were. So how about we talk a few minutes?

LUKAS

Would love to, but I have--

BISPELS

--I can pull your shield right now, Detective, if you want to make the conversation we're having in this hall your psych exit interview.

Lukas drills Bispels with a stare. Bispels sends it right back.

After a moment, Lukas brushes past Bispels, enters the office.

INT. BISPELS' OFFICE - DAY

Lukas sits stiffly in a chair facing Bispels in another chair.

BISPELS

I'm just saying it's a matter of acceptance.

LUKAS

I love how you guys always want to take it out of the gut and intellectualize it.

BISPELS

I'm not suggesting you stop feeling here. But accepting and moving on is a natural part of the process.

LUKAS

Yeah, well, you don't have to do the accepting, do you?

BISPELS

Fair enough. Doesn't change the dynamic, though. We all have to let things go in our lives, whether we want to or not.

LUKAS

Maybe I don't want to.

Bispels considers for a moment, then plunges in.

BISPELS

Boyd, you've sustained the kind of loss no man should ever have to. That by itself is an impossible burden. And now you're facing another-- the end of your career, a time when most men question their relevance. It's a lot to handle if you're not--

LUKAS

--Afraid I'm gonna cross the line, Doc? Join that long list of cops who kiss their guns when they turn civilian? That what this is all about?

Bispels doesn't respond, but his eyes don't leave Lukas as Lukas stands and moves to the door.

LUKAS

I'll tell you what I know about that line. Nobody knows where the fuck it is. I'm lookin' for a guy right now thinks cutting up children is good medicine. It's "accepted".

Lukas opens the door.

LUKAS

So I gotta ask you, Doc--between him and me--which one of us you think you should be puttin' on your couch first?

Bispels watches the door close.

INT. PRECINCT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Lukas stands outside Bispels' door, pinching the bridge of his nose, eyes closed.

KERSCH (O.S.)

Aspirin or Advil?

Lukas looks up at Kersch and Claussen coming up the hall.

LUKAS

Advil.

Kersch pulls his right hand from his coat pocket, tosses a bottle of Advil to Lukas.

KERSCH

Where you headed?

LUKAS

Was gonna check Missing Persons again.

KERSCH

It can wait. Somethin' you might want to check out.

Lukas falls into step with Kersch and Claussen.

INT. SEEDY BAR - DAY

Lukas and Kersch stand looking at the bloody heart on the bar. The Bartender stands nearby.

Lukas bends over Dirk's body.

LUKAS

(to Bartender)

He just picked him up, cut out his heart?

BARTENDER

Like he was slicin' an orange. Done in a second.

LUKAS

Big guy?

BARTENDER

I guess. Couldn't believe he just picked Dirk up like that.

KERSCH

What's he look like?

BARTENDER

Black as midnight in a well. Got these marks on him. Scars. Around his eyes, on his hands. Weird lookin'.

LUKAS

Seen him before?

BARTENDER

Once. Drank a beer, said nothin', left.

LUKAS
How long ago?

BARTENDER
Day before yesterday.

LUKAS
Know where he stays?

BARTENDER
My world ends at that door. Who you
are, where you go, not my business.

LUKAS
(to Kersch)
You canvassing?

KERSCH
Got Claussen knockin' on doors.

Kersch and Lukas move toward the end of the bar, where a
FORENSICS TECHNICIAN is dusting a cracked beer mug and the
bar rail with fingerprint powder.

LUKAS
(to Forensics Tech)
Anything?

FORENSIC TECH
Lots of anythings. Thumb, forefinger,
ring finger. Blood's sticky. Makes
a nice print.

Lukas and Kersch move toward the front door.

KERSCH
Your guy, you think?

LUKAS
Know anybody else in this city cuttin'
out hearts?

EXT. SEEDY BAR - DAY

Just as Lukas and Kersch emerge onto the street, Claussen
approaches them.

CLAUSSEN
Old woman couple doors down says a
black man's been going in and out of
that apartment building.
(nods across the street)
Hadn't seen him around here 'til a
few days ago. Said he's "painted".

Lukas, Kersch, and Claussen move across the street. Lukas
points to two UNIFORMED COPS, directs them to follow.

INT. NINTH FLOOR CORNER APARTMENT - DAY

Randoku stands near the window, looks down at the street.
Lukas and the others are crossing toward the building.

Randoku moves back into the shadows of the room.

INSERT: A long, bone-handled knife rests on a table. A black scarified hand picks it up.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - FOYER - DAY

Lukas talks with the BUILDING MANAGER, 60s, slouched in a loose, silk bathrobe, stroking a long-haired cat.

BUILDING MANAGER

He pays cash, doesn't make trouble.
Why? What'd he do?

LUKAS

Where is he?

BUILDING MANAGER

Ninth floor, corner room. What'd he do?

KERSCH

(moving off)
I'll take the stairs.

LUKAS

Claussen. You're with me.
(to the Uniforms)
One of you stay here, the other take the back.

They move off.

INT. NINTH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Lukas and Claussen emerge from the elevator, move down the hall, guns in hand.

They approach the corner apartment with caution, sliding along the wall. When they get to the apartment, the door is already cracked open.

Claussen moves to the opposite side of the door, nods to Lukas.

LUKAS

Police! We're coming in! Make no sudden moves! NYPD!

INT. RANDOKU'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lukas moves into the apartment, Claussen right behind him.

They fan out, guns raised and swinging. It's a small apartment, only two rooms. Neat. Spartan. Unoccupied.

Claussen pulls a radio from his belt.

CLAUSSEN
(into radio)
Apartment's clear. You got anything,
Kersch?

Static on the radio.

CLAUSSEN
(into radio)
Kersch?

Lukas moves to the window, looks down to the street.

CLAUSSEN
(into radio)
Front and back. Anything?

UNIFORMED COP 1
(over radio)
Front's clear.

UNIFORMED COP 2
(over radio)
Nobody out back.

CLAUSSEN
(into radio)
Kersch. What's your twenty?

Static.

LUKAS
Shit.

Lukas moves to the door. Claussen follows.

INT. NINTH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Lukas moves across to the stairwell.

LUKAS
(to Claussen)
Stay on this floor, lock the elevator.
Send the Uniforms up the stairs.
I'm going down.

Claussen moves down the hall.

CLAUSSEN
(into radio)
Front and back. Come up the stairs.
Come hot.

Lukas pushes the stairwell door cautiously, then moves into the stairwell.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Lukas moves to the stairs, gun out in front.

Lukas starts down the stairs slowly. He makes a turn halfway to the Eighth Floor, then again around the Eighth Floor landing.

LUKAS

Kersch!
 (to himself)
 Where the fuck are you?

Lukas continues down toward the halfway turn above the Seventh Floor landing.

LUKAS

(shouts down)
 Anything down there?

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - DAY

Uniformed Cops 1 and 2 move slowly up the stairs, guns drawn.

UNIFORMED COP 1

Nothing so far. On Three, headin'
 to four.

Suddenly Uniformed Cop 1's attention is pulled to his right. Something is hitting the black railing and splattering. He reaches out and touches the railing, turns his fingers up. Red with blood. Two more drops hit the palm of his hand.

UNIFORMED COP 1

Oh, shit.
 (yells up)
 I got blood down here! Comin' from
 up there!

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Lukas hears this and jumps the last stairs to the landing halfway between Eight and Seven.

LUKAS

Goddamn it. Kersch!

Lukas makes the turn halfway to the Seventh Floor landing, stops dead.

Draped forwards over the far side railing on the Seventh Floor landing is Vernon Kersch's body.

Lukas jumps the final stairs to the Seventh Floor Landing, moves to Kersch's body.

LUKAS
Jesus. Vernon.

It's obvious he's dead. His eyes are fixed open, his throat cut ear to ear. Kersch's gun is still in his hand.

LUKAS
Ah, goddamn it!

A CRASH from above. Lukas looks up. Another CRASH, and the sound of splintering wood.

LUKAS
He's goin' for the roof!

INT. STAIRWELL - FOURTH FLOOR LANDING - DAY

The two Uniformed Cops begin to run up the stairs.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Lukas sprints up the stairs. He takes the turns without looking up. Eighth Floor, Ninth. He starts to slow, winded. But he forces himself on. Tenth.

Lukas comes to the last small section of stairs above the Eleventh floor landing. Daylight streams into the stairwell through an open doorway. Lukas raises his gun, moves toward the open door to the roof.

Lukas cautiously throws a peek out the door onto the roof. Nothing in sight. He moves quickly out the door.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Large A/C condensers, equipment shacks, tall brick chimneys.

Lukas moves across the open area among them, gun raised and ready. He spins, constantly watching his back.

Lukas moves along the side of a huge A/C condenser. He stops, throws a glance around the corner. Nothing.

But as he turns back, he sees a shadow cross him.

Lukas spins and brings his gun up toward the top of the condenser, but it's too late. Randoku drops on him from above.

Lukas gets off a shot, but it misses, and his gun arm is immediately slashed deep and wide by the swish of a scalpel-sharp blade. His gun falls from his hand, as arterial blood shoots from the gaping wound.

Randoku keeps Lukas off-balance, staggering him backwards with his hand closed on Lukas's windpipe, finally knocking him down against a low brick wall, choking for air.

Randoku stands over Lukas, coal fire in his eyes, bone-handled knife in his hand, the point an inch from Lukas's chest. He starts to push the blade forward. Recognition hits his eyes.

UNIFORMED COP 1 (O.S.)

Lukas!

Randoku casts a quick glance toward the rooftop stairwell door. The footfalls of the cops are clearly heard.

CLAUSSEN (O.S.)

Lukas! Respond!

Randoku looks hard at Lukas, releases his throat. He points his blade at Lukas's heart.

RANDOKU

Warrior.

Randoku points his blade at his own heart.

RANDOKU

Warrior.

Their eyes lock, hold a long moment.

Lukas manages a response through gasps for air.

LUKAS

Fuck you, you sonuvabitch.

Randoku smiles.

RANDOKU

I and you. Soon.

Then Randoku bolts. He sprints away across the roof, easily jumping an alleyway, sprinting across another roof and disappearing.

Lukas pulls his belt from his pants, wraps it around his severely-bleeding arm.

Uniformed Cops 1 and 2, followed closely by Claussen, run to Lukas.

CLAUSSEN

You okay, Boyd?

Lukas is pulling tight on the belt. He can only look up at Claussen, his breath coming hard and fast.

INT. LUKAS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lukas sits on the couch, his arm bandaged. He drops a shot of bourbon into a glass of beer, stirs it with his finger.

LUKAS

I think I met Death today.

Deelie sits down next to him.

DEELIE

Must not have been him. You're still breathing.

LUKAS

Sure felt like him.

DEELIE

What did he say?

LUKAS

He indicated we're alike.

DEELIE

And you said?

LUKAS

I cursed him for Jesse.

Deelie lays her head on Lukas's shoulder.

LUKAS

I think he made an appointment with me.

DEELIE

He eventually makes an appointment with all of us, doesn't he?

LUKAS

I suppose.

DEELIE

You don't have to show up, you know.

Lukas looks at Deelie a moment, then pours himself another shot of bourbon, sips it slowly.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A volley of shots ring out through the sunny afternoon. Again. And again.

The sharp reports trigger wincing on the faces of the MOURNERS standing around a grave. Everyone except Boyd Lukas, who stands motionless and stares at the coffin of his partner as it is lowered into the ground.

A PRIEST intones a benediction as Marchant, in full uniform, hands a folded flag to MELANIE KERSCH, a petite blond in black, tears streaming down her face.

Lukas looks across the coffin at Melanie, catches her eye. They stare at one another a moment, an unspoken understanding. Lukas nods, turns and walks from the grave.

Marchant comes up beside Lukas, walks with him.

MARCHANT

We need to talk.

Lukas continues to move away.

LUKAS

I left the gun and badge on your desk this morning, as ordered.

MARCHANT

I know. I put 'em back in your desk drawer.

Lukas stops, looks to Marchant.

MARCHANT

I also misplaced those papers you never filed. Probably take me a few days to find 'em.

LUKAS

Meaning what?

MARCHANT

Get this motherfucker. Whatever it takes.

Lukas holds Marchant's eyes a moment. His jaw sets and he abruptly turns and walks directly to his car.

INT. BLACK VAN - DAY

Randoku sits in the van at the curb. He flips through a yellow pages phone book.

INSERT: PHONE BOOK: the pages turn to "Schools". A long-nailed finger follows the column down to "Private", then past several listings. It stops on one of the listings, the nail cutting into the page under the words "...For Girls".

BACK TO SCENE

Randoku tears the page from the phone book, tosses the book in the back of the van. He fires the engine, pulls into traffic.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

An enclosed playground full of YOUNG GIRLS, 5-9, mostly white, in matching school dresses. They laugh, chase one another around.

On the wrought-iron bars of the fence is a sign that reads, "The William C. Masters School for Girls".

EXT. STREET BY ENCLOSED PLAYGROUND -- DAY

The black van is parked at the curb.

Randoku stands at the corner of the fenced playground, under a grove of trees. He leans back against the trunk of a tree, his eyes scanning the Young Girls at play.

RANDOKU'S POV:

Randoku's eyes fall on one Girl, then another. They follow a third Girl as she swings on a swingset, then pick up another as she runs across the gravel and plops in a sandbox.

Then his eyes lock onto a small girl, KATIE FRANKLIN, sevenish, white and blonde. Katie sits in a patch of lawn by herself.

Katie's little hand reaches out and plucks a dandelion from the grass, holds it to her mouth and blows. She giggles as the fuzzy seeds stream into the air.

The picture of innocence.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A young TEACHER, 20s, her loose ponytail in contrast to the conservative skirt and school jacket she wears, emerges from the front door, claps her hands.

TEACHER

All right, girls. Time for class.
Hurry now.

The Girls stream toward the door. All except Katie. She continues to pick dandelions and puff their seeds into the wind.

The Teacher moves to Katie, squats by her.

TEACHER

That means you too, Katie.

Katie hands the Teacher a dandelion, her bright smile impossible to refuse.

KATIE

Make them fly!

The Teacher blows the seeds from the stem. She and Katie laugh as they rise and move toward the door.

EXT. STREET CORNER BY ENCLOSED PLAYGROUND - DAY

Randoku watches intently as the Teacher and Katie disappear into the school.

Randoku glances at his watch, leans back against the tree trunk and slides down into a squat.

INT. SQUAD ROOM - DAY

Lukas sits at his desk, flipping through pages on his computer screen.

INSERT: THE SCREEN: Various pages flip by, with headlines like "Horrific Murders in Name of Ritual Medicine", "Medicine Murder", and "Muti: Africa's Dark Side".

Marchant leaves his office, comes to Lukas's desk.

MARCHANT

Whattaya got?

LUKAS

More than I wanted.

MARCHANT

Might be time to talk to your professor again.

LUKAS

He's not exactly enthusiastic about helping out.

MARCHANT

Maybe we don't let it be his choice.

The phone on Lukas's desk rings. He puts the receiver to his ear.

LUKAS

Lukas.

After a moment, he drops the phone in its cradle, then stands.

LUKAS

Forensics has something.

INT. PRECINCT TECH ROOM - DAY

Lukas stands with Marchant behind the Forensics Technician, who sits at a computer.

On the screen is a large thumbprint.

FORENSIC TECH

Got that from the bar. There was no match in the U.S. databases. But at Interpol--

The Tech hits a couple of keys. A second window opens on the screen--another thumbprint. He hits another key.

FORENSIC TECH
When I superimpose them--

The two thumbprints become one.

LUKAS
Who is it?

The Tech hits another key, a mugshot of a younger Randoku comes up.

FORENSIC TECH
I give you one M'Gushu Randoku.
Born in South Africa, Zulu heritage,
but last seen in Sudan. Interpol
tags him as a *janjaweed* enforcer and
assassin, part of the militia in
Darfur.

MARCHANT
Ganja weed? Sounds Jamaican.

FORENSIC TECH
Janjaweed. One word. Means "warrior"
in Sudanese.

LUKAS
Warrior.

Something about the way Lukas says it catches Marchant's ear.

MARCHANT
(looks to Lukas)
What?

Lukas shakes his head, his eyes glued to the screen.

LUKAS
(to Forensics Tech)
Got a lead on him?

FORENSIC TECH
Well, yes and no. See, old M'Gushu's
been dead for nearly six years.
Disappeared around the time the U.N.
started nosing around Darfur.
(hits a key)
Here's his death certificate, signed
by some Sudanese general.

MARCHANT
Doesn't mean he's dead--just that he
has friends in high places can help
him disappear.

Lukas stares into the eyes of Randoku's picture. He reaches over and hits "print" on the keyboard.

LUKAS
He's not dead.

Lukas pulls the picture from the printer.

LUKAS
Not yet.

EXT. US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION AGENCY - DAY

Lukas mounts the steps to the entrance. The Agency sign spreads across the top of the door.

INT. US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION AGENCY - DAY

A command post type of room. Computers, monitors, tape machines, phones, HOMELAND SECURITY AGENTS.

Lukas sits next to Agent CARL JESSUP, who points to the computer screen in front of him, filled with names.

JESSUP
He came in through Reagan
International three weeks ago.

LUKAS
Why wouldn't he be flagged? He's in
the Interpol database.

Jessup shrugs.

JESSUP
Your Homeland Security dollars at
work.

LUKAS
Does it say where he went? Any
sponsors? An address?

Jessup clicks Randoku's name. A form pops up.

JESSUP
No. Just says he came in on
"business".

LUKAS
If you want to call it that.

EXT. THE WILLIAM C. MASTERS SCHOOL FOR GIRLS - DAY

A wave of YOUNG GIRLS flows from the doors. School's out for the day.

From the center of the crowd emerges a well-dressed BLACK WOMAN, 40's, holding the hand of Katie Franklin.

The Teacher walks with them.

TEACHER

Katie's going to lead the Young
Ladies' Group on Monday.
(to Katie)
Aren't you, honey?

KATIE

Uh-huh. In my new dress.

TEACHER

You'll be beautiful, I'm sure.
(to the Black Woman)
You might want to let Mrs. Franklin
know.

BLACK WOMAN

Thank you. I will.
(to Katie)
Ready to go, Katie?

KATIE

Yup.

Katie and the Black Woman move through the school gates toward a Mercedes parked at the curb nearby.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Randoku squats under the tree at the corner of the playground area. His eyes fall on the Black Woman and Katie.

Randoku rises, moves onto the sidewalk toward them.

The Black Woman puts Katie in the back seat of the Mercedes, then opens the driver's side door.

Randoku is immediately beside her, his knife held down by his leg. One swift movement, and the Black Woman slumps.

Randoku drops the Black Woman onto the front seat, slides in beside her. He takes the car keys from the Black Woman's dead hand, starts the car, and drives off.

Katie's screams are muted by the squeal of the car's tires.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Lukas walks with Deelie.

LUKAS

He's going to do something inhuman,
but it's me that feels crazy, D. I
feel like I'm waiting again.

DEELIE

Leave it, Boyd. Get out.

LUKAS
That's not an option.

DEELIE
Why not? You can't be responsible
for every child in this city.

LUKAS
No. But I'm responsible for the
next one. I had a chance to take
him out, Deelie, and I blew it.

They stop.

LUKAS
I don't want to be the reason another
father cries.

Lukas looks down at the headstone in front of them.

INSERT: HEADSTONE: "Jesse Marie Lukas -- Whole and at Peace --
April 2, 1998 - August 16, 2009"

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas kneels in front of the headstone.

LUKAS
I miss her.

Deelie puts her hand on Lukas's shoulder. He reaches up and
takes it, squeezes it.

The quiet of the moment is jarred by the ring of Lukas's
cell phone. He stands, pulls out the phone.

LUKAS
Lukas.

INTERCUT: LUKAS AT CEMETERY / CLAUSSEN AT PRECINCT

CLAUSSEN
You wanted to know about any kids
gone missing or grabbed up?

LUKAS
Yeah.

CLAUSSEN
Young girl was snatched just before
three o'clock. Witnesses said a
large black man forced his way into
a Mercedes had the kid in it. Car's
owned by Nathaniel Franklin, some
big deal over at the Metropolitan
Opera. There's been no calls, no
notes, nothin'.

INSERT: THE PHOTO

It's the pretty little blonde girl from the school.

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas looks at the photo, takes a deep breath and releases it slowly. There's more than a passing resemblance to Jesse.

LUKAS

Jesus.

CLAUSSEN

Yeah. A real sweetheart. Been at the school two years. One of those private deals. Exclusive, expensive. Good spot to troll if you're lookin' to make a career move into kidnapping.

LUKAS

What about the woman?

CLAUSSEN

Live-in housekeeper. Worked here since the kid was born. Takes her every morning, picks her up every afternoon. Never a problem.

LUKAS

Anything on her?

CLAUSSEN

No record. Just gone. Like the kid.

Lukas throws a chin at the FBI Agents.

LUKAS

How are they handling it?

CLAUSSEN

Usual Fed playbook. We need to tell 'em about Randoku, right?

Lukas looks across the room at Regina, her arms wrapped tightly around herself, her eyes riveted to the floor.

LUKAS

When you do, do it in the other room.

CLAUSSEN

Where you going?

LUKAS

Back to school.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - HALLWAY - DAY

A bell rings. The classroom door opens and STUDENTS exit, flowing past Lukas, who waits for them to pass.

Lukas steps into the room.

INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Lukas follows the steps down into the amphitheater area.

At the podium, Freeman Mackles puts lecture papers into his satchel.

Mackles looks up at the sound of Lukas's approach.

MACKLES

I don't suppose you're here to learn about the tribes of the sub-Saharan.

LUKAS

Not today.

MACKLES

I told you I can't help you any further, Detective.

LUKAS

He's taken a young girl. White. Seven years old.

Mackle's shoulders drop.

MACKLES

When?

LUKAS

(glancing at his watch)
Four hours ago.

MACKLES

You don't have much time then. He'll do it tonight.

Mackles puts his satchel under his arm, moves past Lukas, starts up the stairs.

LUKAS

You don't help me, you're letting her die.

Mackles spins.

MACKLES

I'm not doing anything of the sort, Detective. I can't get involved in this.

LUKAS

Whatever your reasons are, are they worth the life of that little girl? When you see her mother crying on the front page tomorrow, will you be able to look away and say "I couldn't get involved" and believe it?

Lukas and Mackles stare at one another a long beat.

Mackles drops his satchel on a seat.

MACKLES

Do you have your car, Detective?

EXT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas and Mackles stand on either side of the car.

LUKAS

Where to?

MACKLES

Hundred Thirty-fifth Street.

LUKAS

Harlem.

MACKLES

Not quite. Harlem's too American.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

The car moves uptown. Mackles looks up at the concrete canyons, studying them with interest.

MACKLES

They say this is the land of opportunity.

LUKAS

For some.

MACKLES

Looks cold and hard today.

LUKAS

Why'd you come here? From Africa, I mean...

MACKLES

A new start, I suppose.

LUKAS

You have family here?

MACKLES

They are still in Africa.

LUKAS
They teachers too?

MACKLES
My father is in...medicine. He works
with the tribes. My mother serves
him.

LUKAS
You always teach?

MACKLES
No. But it is what I do now.

LUKAS
What'd you do in Africa?

Mackles doesn't immediately answer, watches the streets.

MACKLES
I left it behind.

LUKAS
Your choice or--?

Mackles looks at Lukas.

MACKLES
Is all this important, Detective?

LUKAS
Just making conversation, that's
all. You don't want to talk, we
don't have to.

MACKLES
That would be fine.

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE - 135TH STREET - DAY

The rooftops of the buildings seem like any other in New
York. But at street level, it's another world.

It's a bazaar-like atmosphere, with carts and tent-like tarps
that spread over tables of produce, clothing, baskets, and
crafts.

Pedestrians crowd the sidewalks, spill into the street.
They're all African-American, draped in colorful clothing
more at home in Swaziland than New York City.

Lukas's car pulls in among them to the curb.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Mackles looks out the car window.

MACKLES

If someone knows anything about a sangoma, that someone is most likely here.

LUKAS

Didn't know this was here.

Mackles pulls the handle of the car door.

MACKLES

You wouldn't. Most of us stop here when we first arrive. Most never find a way to leave.

Mackles exits the car. Lukas follows.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Lukas is immediately aware that his presence is without doubt noticed. Eyes follow him as he joins Mackles on the sidewalk.

LUKAS

I feel like my zipper's down and I'm the only one doesn't know it.

The slightest knowing smile cracks the corner of Mackle's mouth.

Lukas looks at the shop in front of them. Its dark window is filled with statuary, bowls, urns, bundles of bushy twigs.

LUKAS

What's this?

MACKLES

It's a...Well, I suppose you could call it a pharmacy.

INT. AFRICAN ETHNIC SHOP - DAY

Lukas and Mackles enter.

It's dark and close. Wooden shelves jammed with apothecary jars filled with unknown things. Tables of bowls, mortars and pestles, empty mason jars. Bags of dried bushes, herbs, leaves, desiccated animal parts, hang from the ceiling.

At a counter in the back sits the proprietor of the shop, ZENDE JABILI, eerily ageless, rail thin, with skin like dried black paper stretched across sharp sticks.

Mackles stops to look at something on a table. Lukas moves to Jabili.

LUKAS

You the owner here?

Jabili's eyes are steel. A slight raising of his eyebrows is the only acknowledgment he gives.

Lukas holds up the picture of Randoku.

LUKAS

This guy come in here the last week
or so? You seen him?

Jabili's eyes shift slowly to Mackles as he moves to the counter, then back to Lukas, but he doesn't look at the picture.

JABILI

No.

Lukas smiles, but his face flushes.

LUKAS

Might help if you glanced at the
picture. You want to maybe take
another stab at it?

Jabili's eyes shift to the picture, change ever-so-slightly, then drift back up to Lukas.

JABILI

Who is asking?

Lukas reaches over the counter and grabs Jabili's shirt, pulls him off of his stool.

LUKAS

I'm asking. And I don't have time
to play Shoots and Ladders with you.
(holds up picture)
I know you know him. When was he
here?

JABILI

(cold)
I tell you nothing.

Lukas pulls Jabili to within a half inch of his face.

LUKAS

You sonuvabitch--

MACKLES

Detective!

Mackles, quiet and motionless until now, reaches out and grabs Lukas's arm.

MACKLES

(to Jabili, in Zulu)
Yena u amaphoyisa.
[He is police.]

Jabili's eyes shift to Mackles.

JABILI

Pho?
[So?]

Mackles leans into Lukas, speaks quietly.

MACKLES

He will tell you nothing like this.

Lukas stares at Jabili, then releases him.

MACKLES

(to Jabili)
Ngubani igama lakho?
[What is your name?]

Jabili looks at Mackles, considers.

JABILI

Zende Jabili.

MACKLES

(to Jabili)
Wenazokhuluma ku mina?
[Will you talk to me?]

Jabili looks away, disdain on his face. Mackles leans into him, his lips almost in Jabili's ear, his voice a slow, whispered threat.

MACKLES

Minaba umZulu, ngiyi sangoma.

Jabili looks back to Mackles, the steel gone from his eyes.

MACKLES

Siyokuzokhuluma manje, yebo?
[We will talk now, yes?]

Jabili does not take his eyes from Mackles, nods his head once.

Mackles pulls Lukas aside.

LUKAS

What'd you say to him?

MACKLES

Perhaps you'll let me talk with him
alone.

Lukas looks hard at Jabili, then brings his eyes to Mackles'.

LUKAS

Yeah. Sure.

Lukas moves to the door and exits. Mackles looks back to Jabili, his eyes locked on Mackles.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas slouches in the driver's seat, listens to his cell phone.

DEELIE (V.O.)
 --leave a message and one of us'll
 get back to you. Probably me. You
 know Boyd.

The beep sounds. Lukas closes the phone, flips it open again, hits a speed-dial button, puts the phone to his ear.

DEELIE (V.O.)
 Hi. It's Deelie. We're out. But
 you can leave a message and one of
 us'll--

Lukas snaps the cell phone closed and sits up as the passenger side door opens. Mackles slides into the seat.

MACKLES
 He was here.

LUKAS
 When?

MACKLES
 Yesterday. He bought yohimbe,
 rooibos, ground gold. He's making
 ready.

LUKAS
 Guess it helps to speak the language.

MACKLES
 Only if you know where the fears
 lie.

Lukas eyes Mackles, who stares straight ahead. Lukas fires the engine, noses the car into the crowds on the street.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Lukas turns the car onto Broadway, heading downtown.

LUKAS
 Where's Randoku?

Mackles shakes his head.

MACKLES
 Even if someone down there knew where
 he was, they wouldn't tell us.
 (MORE)

MACKLES (CONT'D)

It's none of their business. It's simply accepted, the way things are done.

LUKAS

Accepted. Jesus. How insane has a culture become when it accepts the mutilation and murder of its children?

Mackles doesn't answer immediately. He looks at Lukas driving, then speaks slowly, almost as if to himself, as he gazes out the window at the New York streets.

MACKLES

Civilization rests precariously on an impossibly fine line, Detective, and it wobbles there like a drunken high-wire walker a thousand feet up. One moment it leans toward brilliance and the promise of God. The next instant, it teeters so far into the pit of hell's madness that one has doubts it will ever recover.

LUKAS

We all wobble on that line every day, Doctor. But most of us don't kill children.

Mackles looks at Lukas.

MACKLES

I suppose it depends on which side of the line you're standing, doesn't it, Detective? And how you perceive which side that is.

EXT. LAFAYETTE STREET - POLK BUILDING - DAY

Lukas pulls his car to the curb.

MACKLES

What will you do now?

Lukas scans the city skyline.

LUKAS

He's out there somewhere. He's got a kid. And I know what he's going to do with her. But there's not a goddamned thing I can do about it.

MACKLES

(after a moment)

In Africa, when a hunter loses the track of his prey, he goes back to

(MORE)

MACKLES (CONT'D)

the last place he knew the animal was and looks again. He assumes it was he who lost the trail, not the animal who eluded him.

Lukas's eyes fall back to Mackles.

LUKAS

Feel like taking another ride?

INT. RANDOKU'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lukas and Mackles enter. They stand in the center of the main room and look around.

MACKLES

What are we looking for?

LUKAS

Whatever doesn't fit.

MONTAGE: Lukas and Mackles search the apartment:

-- Lukas looks through empty drawers in a dresser;

-- Mackles opens a closet, where only two shirts hang;

-- Lukas tosses the contents of a trash can, kicks a stack of newspapers on the floor next to it;

-- Mackles opens a medicine cabinet door, picks up the empty bottle of aspirin sitting in it;

-- Lukas pulls the sheets from the bed, lifts the mattress;

-- Lukas opens a nightstand drawer, withdraws a phone book, thumbs through the pages;

-- Mackles moves what few cans there are in a kitchen cabinet;

-- Lukas lifts the cushions from a couch, feels down into the seam;

-- Mackles opens the fridge door, looks at a solitary bottle of pomegranate juice, three-quarters empty;

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas and Mackles stand again in the center of the main room, back to back, looking around.

MACKLES

Nothing.

Lukas sits on the couch.

LUKAS

There's got to be something.

Lukas looks around the room again.

LUKAS

I'm just missing it.

Lukas's eyes catch, focus. He walks to the trash can he'd tossed, moves the top newspaper on the stack with his foot. Beneath it is a magazine. He bends and picks up the magazine and the newspaper.

The newspaper is the second section of *The Wall Street Journal*. The magazine is *Forbes*.

LUKAS

Why do you suppose a guy like this-- a sangoma witch doctor, right? Why would he be reading business shit?

MACKLES

He wouldn't.

LUKAS

Unless--

They put the paper and magazine on the small table in the room, start to look through them, each glancing from the paper to the magazine as they turn the pages.

LUKAS

Wait. Go back a page.

Mackles flips back a page in the *Forbes*. Lukas points to a profile article, complete with picture.

INSERT: MAGAZINE ARTICLE: The headline reads, "Farner, LTD. The New Africa?". A large picture of a man in a business suit, about 60, craggy and silver-haired, captioned, "Shelby Farner, CEO".

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas brings the *WSJ* section close to the magazine spread.

INSERT: *WSJ* SECTION: Across the top of the page is a headline: "Farner's Hopes Rest on U.S. Proxy Outcome--Vote Tuesday".

BACK TO SCENE

Lukas picks up the paper, scan-reads it.

LUKAS

"Farner, LTD--multi-billion dollar, multi-national--"

MACKLES

--I know the company. It's South African.

LUKAS

"--Board shaken by accusations--vote Tuesday will determine if Farner is to retain control--"

Lukas looks up at Mackles.

LUKAS

And he's in town for the vote.

MACKLES

Farner is an Afrikaner. Born and raised there.

LUKAS

They believe in Warriors?

Mackles nods.

Lukas tosses the paper onto the table.

LUKAS

How important you think that vote is to this guy?

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas snaps his cell phone closed as he drives.

LUKAS

His entry papers list the Ritz Carlton as his address while in-country. Let's pay Mr. Farner a visit.

MACKLES

You can't do that. He won't go anywhere near the sangoma if he thinks he's being watched.

LUKAS

We're running out of time. We have to make a move here.

MACKLES

Impulsiveness in a hunter will lose the prey, Detective. He will lead you to the ritual, but you must be patient, lay in wait.

LUKAS

Patience has never been one of my virtues.

EXT. RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - DAY

Lukas pulls his car into a "No Parking" zone across the street from the hotel entrance.

MACKLES
Now we wait, yes?

Lukas opens his door.

LUKAS
Be right back.

INT. RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - DAY

Lukas shows his badge to the FRONT DESK ATTENDANT.

LUKAS
You have a Shelby Farner registered here?

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
Yes, sir, we do, but--

LUKAS
--Any way of knowing if he's in his room?

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
(with a little attitude)
As I was about to say--he just left.

LUKAS
Checked out?

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
No. Just left the hotel. A limousine picked him up out front.

LUKAS
How long ago?

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
Two, three minutes.

Lukas bolts for the doors.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas slides behind the wheel.

LUKAS
We just missed him.

MACKLES
Night is coming. He has gone to meet the sangoma.

LUKAS

I know. I know.

Lukas slams his fist against the steering wheel.

LUKAS

Goddamn it!

Lukas and Mackles sit in silence a long moment.

LUKAS

He's worked by the river, right?

MACKLES

Sangomas usually do. They use the currents to carry away...what's left.

Lukas ignores the image this generates.

LUKAS

To get to the river from here, a limousine would have to go in only one direction to get clear of midtown traffic and head downtown.

Lukas puts the car in gear, floors it, tears into traffic.

EXT. 57TH STREET - DAY

Lukas's car screams down the street, weaving around and through traffic at breakneck speed. He even runs up on the sidewalk at one point, and careens through an intersection.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas drives crazily. Mackles holds tight, but calmly keeps his eyes forward, glancing up every side street they pass. But no sign of a limousine.

EXT. 57TH STREET - DAY

Lukas's car flies into the intersection at Ninth Avenue, running a red light. The car smashes into the tail end of a taxi heading downtown through the intersection, spins it into another car, which hits another.

Lukas's car comes to an abrupt stop in the middle of the wreckage and the intersection.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DAY

Lukas grinds the engine a couple of times. It won't catch.

LUKAS

Come on...

Lukas grinds it again.

LUKAS
Come on, goddamn it!

As if on command, the engine fires.

Lukas looks up and down Ninth Avenue, then ahead on 57th.

LUKAS
Which way?

MACKLES
You are a Warrior. Think like one.

Lukas looks at Mackles. The comment resonates. He then looks ahead at 57th Street.

LUKAS
He's gotta have gone this way. It's
the way I'd go.

MACKLES
Then go.

Lukas floors the car, shoots down 57th, again weaving around the few cars he comes across.

Suddenly, two blocks ahead, making a turn onto 12th Avenue heading downtown along the Hudson River--a sleek black limousine.

MACKLES
There!

Lukas guns his car to the corner, then slows and takes the turn carefully, slips into traffic about a half block behind the limo.

LUKAS
This better be our guy.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE OFFICE - DAY

The room is dark--no windows.

Frightened whimpering and sniffing emanates from somewhere in the room.

The flash of a match. A black, scarified hand touches the match to a candle, then a second, then a third. The candles rest on a crude altar, barely illuminate the close room.

The black hand carefully pours a pile of powdered herb on the altar, then another. A muted, golden shimmer dances off a third.

Two long, bone-handled knives are set on the altar, side by side. A carved wooden mortar and pestle are placed next to them.

Low, rhythmic chanting begins.

EXT. 12TH AVENUE/WEST SIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dusk. The limo moves downtown toward the tip of Manhattan. Lukas's car follows a respectable distance behind.

The limo eventually takes an exit. Lukas follows.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN - WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT

The limo moves past dilapidated warehouses along the river, reed-choked lots between them. An occasional old wooden pier juts out into the Hudson.

A block back, Lukas's car shadows the limo, headlights off.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Through the windshield can be seen the taillights of the limo.

LUKAS

He's gonna run out of island soon.

Mackles looks at the deteriorating hulks they pass.

MACKLES

What are these places?

LUKAS

Future million dollar lofts once the developers find 'em.

The limo's taillights flare. It stops in front of a large, very old, wooden warehouse. A faded sign painted on its side reads "Mangini's Seafood".

About a block back, Lukas tucks his car between two concrete shipping docks attached to a warehouse.

EXT. OLD WOODEN WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The LIMO DRIVER climbs from the limo, opens the back door.

SHELBY FARNER, 60's, his silver hair shining even in the dark, exits the limo, followed by a large man, his BODYGUARD.

Farner looks around the immediate area.

FARNER

(points to warehouse)

Inside.

(to Limo Driver)

Wait here. No matter what.

Understand?

The Limo Driver nods. Farner and the Bodyguard climb the short set of stairs to the warehouse landing. The Bodyguard pulls a steel door, which creaks as it opens. They disappear inside.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - NIGHT

Lukas watches Farner enter the warehouse.

LUKAS
How much time we have?

MACKLES
Randoku will begin almost immediately.

Lukas pulls his cell phone from his pocket, dials.

MARCHANT
(through phone)
Marchant.

LUKAS
Captain. Lukas. Just listen. I think I have Randoku marked at a warehouse long the river, just south of Thames Street, off the West Side Highway. Says Mangini's Seafood on the side. Odds are the Franklin girl's with him.

MARCHANT
(through phone)
Don't be a hero, Boyd. We'll be there in ten minutes.

LUKAS
Can't wait. He's gonna hurt her. Come 10-40, you hear me? No sirens, no lights. And nobody comes inside until I call for it.

MARCHANT
(through phone)
Lukas--

LUKAS
We spook this guy, we lose it all. You wait for my signal, understand?

Lukas snaps his cell phone closed.

INT. CAPTAIN MARCHANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Marchant slams the phone down.

MARCHANT
Goddamn it!

Marchant grabs his jacket, moves to the door.

MARCHANT

Claussen!

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - NIGHT

Lukas turns to Mackles.

LUKAS

You stay here.

MACKLES

I've come this far, I'll go the rest
of the way.

Lukas stares at Mackles a moment, then nods.

Lukas and Mackles exit the car and move through the dark
toward the Mangini warehouse.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Lukas slides quietly along the driver's side of the limousine.

The Limo Driver smokes a cigarette in the front seat, his
arm extended out the window. A ball game play-by-play spills
from the limo's radio.

Lukas nudges the barrel of his 9mm into the Limo Driver's
neck.

LUKAS

Not a sound. Get out of the car.

The Limo Driver rolls out of the car, hands extended in front
of him. Lukas cuffs him, takes his keys, then pops the trunk
as he walks the Limo Driver to the back of the limo.

LUKAS

Get in.

LIMO DRIVER

No fuckin' way.

Lukas shoves his 9mm into the Limo Driver's ribs.

LUKAS

It's the trunk or a shot through
both lungs. I don't care which.

The Limo Driver stares at Lukas a moment, then awkwardly
climbs into the trunk, lays down.

LUKAS

Not a sound. You're sittin' on twenty
gallons of gasoline that won't like
a hot bullet. Understand?

The Limo Driver nods. Lukas quietly closes the trunk lid.

Lukas looks to Mackles, nods toward the door of the warehouse. They move to it and carefully pull the door open with a minimum of noise.

INT. JUST INSIDE THE OLD WOODEN WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The dark swallows them.

Lukas pulls a small flashlight from his jacket, shines it around. It's an endless space, filled with row upon row of crates stacked to the ceiling, large commercial freezers, shipping containers, rusting canning machinery.

Lukas and Mackles stop and listen. Nothing.

Lukas reaches down to his foot, lifts his pant leg. He pulls a snub-nosed .38 from an ankle holster, hands it to Mackles.

LUKAS

Just point it at his chest and pull the trigger.

Mackles shakes Lukas off.

LUKAS

(insistent)

Take it. You can't hesitate a second with this guy.

Mackles gingerly takes the .38, puts it in his jacket pocket.

MACKLES

Not even that long.

Lukas and Mackles move carefully forward. A distant sound stops them.

A voice. But coming and going. Or rising and falling-- louder, softer. It's chanting.

MACKLES

He's started the Muti. If we don't get there right now, it will be too late.

INT. DEEPER INSIDE THE WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lukas and Mackles move quickly among the trash, detritus, crates, and machinery. As they come around a long, ten-foot-high container, Mackles points.

At the far end of the warehouse, a dim light.

They move closer.

The light comes from the curtained windows of a room along the back wall of the warehouse space--an old office.

Lukas points Mackles to the far side of the door to the office. He nods and moves quietly there.

Lukas moves to the window in the office wall. He moves slowly up to the window ledge, peeks over the sill into the room.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas's POV:

The right side of the Office room. Dimly lit. A makeshift altar made from planks across 50-gallon drums rests in the center of the room, draped in an African-patterned cloth.

Several candles rest on the altar, along with piles of powders, a mortar and pestle, and two bone-handled knives.

Kneeling in front of the altar is Randoku, in a ceremonial robe. He chants as he takes a pinch of powder from one pile and drops it into the mortar, then repeats the move with another powder.

Kneeling beside Randoku, chanting in a ceremonial robe, is Shelby Farner, who follows Randoku's moves exactly--pinch of powder, pinch of powder.

EXT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas shifts his weight, looks to the left side of the room. His jaw sets.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Hanging upside down, twisting and struggling, is Katie Franklin. She's naked, bound as if in a cocoon. Her eyes are wide, riveted to Randoku.

Katie whimpers quietly, gravity pulling her tears across her forehead into her hairline.

EXT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas turns his head again, tries to see the wall near the door, and--

The barrel of a .45 automatic is stuck in his ear. The Bodyguard comes around the side of the Office, takes Lukas's 9mm and points it at Mackles. He motions them both into the office.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Randoku rises at the entrance of Lukas, Mackles, and the Bodyguard. Farner stands quickly as well.

FARNER
What the hell is this?

RANDOKU
(to Farner)
Do not worry. It is not a problem.
Nothing changes.

Randoku smiles, walks to Lukas.

RANDOKU
Welcome, Warrior. Now you will see
the power of Muti.
(smiles wickedly)
Perhaps you will partake, yes?

LUKAS
Perhaps I'll cut out *your* fuckin'
heart, yes?

Randoku's smile wanes, his eyes harden, locked on Lukas's.

Randoku jerks his head to the side, indicating the side of
the room.

The Bodyguard roughly shoves Lukas and Mackles there, forces
them to their knees.

Randoku turns back to the altar.

EXT. MANGINI WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Several marked and unmarked police vehicles pull in silently.

Marchant exits one of the cars, is joined by Detectives
Claussen, MACAVOY, WINSTED, and SHEFFIELD. A dozen UNIFORMS
pour from their vans, deploy across the front of the
warehouse.

CLAUSSEN
Luke's car's back a block. No sign
of him.

MARCHANT
Knowing him, he's inside already.
(to Sheffield)
Check out that limo.
(to MacAvoy and Winsted)
You two check out the far side. But
do not enter until my signal. Do
not. Understand?

MACAVOY
Got it.

They move off.

CLAUSSEN

I'm goin' in.

MARCHANT

No. This is Lukas's call. We wait
for his signal.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Randoku again kneels at the altar, chanting, mixing herbs in the mortar with his fingers.

IN THE CORNER

Lukas and Mackles kneel, hands behind their heads. The Bodyguard stands over them, his .45 aimed at Lukas's head.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROOM

Farner has kneeled next to Katie Franklin, who continues to whimper.

KATIE

Please. Please don't hurt me.

Randoku rises, mortar in hand. He chooses one of the bone-handled knives on the altar. His chanting grows louder, his arms spread as he faces Katie Franklin. His eyes roll back into his head, as he drops to his knees.

IN THE CORNER

Lukas winces.

LUKAS

Jesus Christ! How can you people do
this? This is insanity, Farner! It
gets you nothing!

BODYGUARD

(cocks the .45)
Shut the fuck up.

Suddenly the chanting grows louder, as Farner joins in.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROOM

Randoku touches Katie's hair with the knife. She screams. Randoku smiles. He touches the blade to her cheek, draws a bead of blood. She screams louder. Randoku looks to Farner, smiles, nods his head.

IN THE CORNER

Desperation plays across Lukas' face.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROOM

Randoku reaches out, tries to grab one of Katie's eyelids. She screams intensely and twists away from him.

Randoku motions to Farner with his knife hand. Farner grabs Katie's head, holds it under his arm. She screams.

IN THE CORNER

Lukas watches the scene with horror. He looks to Mackles, whose head is bowed, his eyes closed.

Lukas grabs a glance at the Bodyguard, whose eyes flit between Randoku and Lukas.

Lukas nudges Mackles with his elbow. When Mackles looks over, Lukas casts his eyes down to Mackles jacket pocket.

Mackles head nods almost imperceptibly.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ROOM

Farner holds Katie's head tightly. Randoku reaches out, pulls one of Katie's eyelids out and raises the knife.

Katie lets out a blood-curdling scream.

IN THE CORNER

The Bodyguard's attention is pulled to the scream.

Lukas immediately jams his hand into Mackle's jacket pocket and swings it up toward the Bodyguard.

The jacket pocket explodes as Lukas fires twice.

One red blossom appears in the center of the Bodyguard's chest, another on his forehead. The Bodyguard drops straight back, dead before he hits the floor.

Lukas pulls the .38 from Mackle's pocket, and swings around toward Randoku.

But all Lukas sees is Katie Franklin swinging, and Shelby Farner scooting to the back wall.

As Lukas's eyes sweep left, he catches sight of Randoku leaping forward and crashing through the window of the room.

Lukas fires, but the slug hits the window sash.

Lukas immediately moves to the door, bending to pick up the Bodyguard's .45.

 LUKAS
 (to Mackles)
 Cut her down! Get her out of here!

MACKLES
 (indicating Farner)
 What about him?

Lukas tosses the .38 to Mackles, looks at Farner with disdain.

LUKAS
 Shoot him for all I care. Just get
 her the hell down.

And Lukas is out the door, into the dark.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lukas moves into the darkness, the .45 cocked and ready. He stops. Listens. Moves a bit more.

A shrill call pulls his attention to his left. It's like a bird, or an animal, calling in the darkness. The call echoes through the warehouse a second time.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Mackles has freed Katie, is wrapping her in his jacket.

MACKLES
 You're all right. I'll get you out
 of here--

The shrill call snaps Mackles head up. It's obvious he recognizes it.

MACKLES
 Oh, no.

FARNER
 Know what that is, don't you, *kaffir*?

Mackles stands, points the .38 at Farner.

MACKLES
 (to Farner)
 Not another word.

Mackles looks around the room quickly, sees a small door in the side wall. He moves to it, opens it. It's a small closet of brooms, boxes of cloths.

MACKLES
 (to Katie)
 Come here, little one. Get in. In
 the back. And don't make a sound.

Katie hesitates.

MACKLES
 Come. You will be safe.

Katie runs into the closet, scoots back behind the boxes. Mackles smiles at her, closes the door.

Mackles moves to the window, constantly glancing back at Farner. He looks out into the darkness.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lukas moves toward where he thought the call had come from. But another call spins him around again--it's now behind him.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Mackles hears the third call. He yells out the window.

MACKLES
It's a hunting call! He's not
running! He's coming after you! Do
you hear me?

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lukas's face. His eyes steel up, his jaw sets.

LUKAS
That makes two of us.

Lukas moves along a high stack of tractor-trailer-sized shipping containers, trying to see anything at all--any movement, flash of light, anything--in the darkness.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Mackles leans against the window, also trying to peer into the dark warehouse.

Farner slowly stands.

FARNER
You can't stop this.

Mackles considers Farner, then glances into the dark again as another hunting call echoes through the warehouse.

FARNER
Your friend's a dead man.

MACKLES
Be quiet.

FARNER
He's no match for a sangoma with
Muti medicine flowing in his veins.

Mackles considers this, looks to the darkness in the warehouse. When he looks back, his eyes fall to the altar.

Farner is emboldened by Mackles seeming indecision.

FARNER

Don't be a fool. You don't know
what you're dealing with here.

Mackles' eyes glaze over at the comment. His jaw sets. He stands straight and faces Farner.

MACKLES

I know exactly what I'm dealing with,
Mr. Farner.

CLOSE ON: Farner's face. Recognition, then fear, washes over it. His eyes widen. His jaw drops as if to scream, but no sound comes out. His crossing eyes try to look down to his chest.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Another call, from another direction. Lukas spins.

LUKAS

What is this guy--a fuckin' bird?

Lukas moves again toward the new call, rounds the corner of one of the stacks of large shipping containers.

Lukas is suddenly swept from his feet, one leg snapped from beneath him by a hunter's rope trap rigged through the I-beam rafters above.

Lukas dangles eight feet from the floor, like a rabbit caught in the forest.

Randoku jumps from the top of the container, landing not twenty feet from the flailing, spinning Lukas. Randoku has his knife in his hand, his eyes almost alight with fire.

RANDOKU

This was not your business, Warrior.
Not your place. You are in my world
now--

LUKAS

--Last time I looked, we're in fuckin'
New York City, asshole! That makes
it my world.

Lukas swings the .45 up, fires one shot that catches Randoku high in the right leg before he can move toward Lukas. The shot knocks Randoku off his feet.

Lukas tries to get a bead for another shot, but he's swinging too wildly on the rope. Lukas brings the .45 up and fires a second shot through the rope that holds him. He crashes to the floor, painfully landing on his right shoulder.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas bursts into the office, gun raised. He's stopped dead by what he sees.

Farner is slumped against the back wall, a gaping hole in his chest, dead. His eyeballs are missing.

Lukas spins around, taking in the room.

LUKAS

Mackles! Katie! Goddamn it!

Lukas bolts for the door but slows as his eyes fall to the altar. Blood and powders smear an empty mortar. The second bone-handled knife is gone.

LUKAS

Jesus H. Christ. Who--?

Lukas turns and looks into the dark warehouse.

LUKAS

Mackles!

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lukas runs three steps back into the warehouse, but is nearly jerked off his feet as he's grabbed from behind, his gun hand slashed, forcing him to drop the .45.

A blade is immediately at his throat, cutting into the flesh just enough to draw blood.

Randoku's face is at Lukas's ear. He speaks calmly, almost whispered, threat drenching every word.

RANDOKU

The art of hunting is to know when you are the prey and when you are the hunter. A warrior should know--

LUKAS

--Fuck your "warrior" shit, you sonuvabitch. You're nothing but a murderer of children.

Lukas struggles, but the blade at his throat only cuts a little deeper.

RANDOKU

That is good. Get the blood up. Make the warrior heart big. You will make plenty good Muti.

Randoku starts to drag Lukas back to the office. Lukas takes the opportunity to struggle again, but Randoku only pulls the blade tighter to Lukas's throat.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

As they enter the office, Randoku catches sight of Farner's body. His eyes flit to the wet blood on the altar, the empty mortar tipped among the piles of powdered herbs.

Randoku's eyes go wide, and he looks quickly to where Katie Franklin had been hanging.

It's momentary distraction enough for Lukas to kick off the altar and push Randoku off-balance and back against the doorjamb. Randoku's knife hand is knocked from Lukas's throat. He twists away.

The altar falls over, the candles drop to the floor. The herb powders hit the candle flames and flare like magnesium. The tinder-dry walls of the office are suddenly crawling with flame.

Randoku is immediately at Lukas, who has jumped behind the barrels that once held the altar. Lukas parries away Randoku's knife thrusts with one of the altar boards.

The entire office is alight with flame.

Lukas kicks one of the barrels at Randoku. The top falls off as it hits the floor, a liquid spilling across the concrete and out the door.

The liquid is flammable, and explodes into flame, carrying a river of fire out the door and into the warehouse proper.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - CLOSET - NIGHT

Katie Franklin cowers in the back of the closet. But she sees the flames through the cracks in the door and the wooden plank wall. She smells the smoke.

Katie screams.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Lukas hears Katie's scream, glances momentarily toward the direction it came. He sees the closet door, the flames dancing around it.

The glance is enough for Randoku. He's on Lukas before Lukas can bring his attention back.

Randoku sinks his blade deep into Lukas's belly, his face a half inch from Lukas's.

RANDOKU

It is finished, Warrior.

Suddenly there's a blade at Randoku's throat.

MACKLES (O.S.)

Yes. It is...

Mackle's face is at Randoku's ear, his mouth bloody, his eyes burning coals.

MACKLES

(spit disdainfully)

...Warrior.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The burning liquid from the office barrel spreads across the floor to a stack of similar barrels, dark liquid seeping from their rusted bases. The flames leap among the barrels. Almost instantly, one explodes, then another, and another.

Fire is immediately everywhere.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Marchant spins at the sound of the explosions. Windows along the side of the warehouse blow out and spit bouquets of flame.

MARCHANT

(into radio)

MacAvoy. Sheffield. We got fire here. Get in there and pull Lukas out. Now.

Claussen sprints to the warehouse door, pulls it open and enters.

Marchant turns to a Uniformed Cop.

MARCHANT

Get Fire and Rescue down here. EMT too. Tell 'em it's gonna be a big one.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Mackles drags Randoku back from Lukas, his strength seemingly far greater against the larger Randoku than one would have anticipated.

Lukas slumps against the wall, his hands wrapped around the bone handle of Randoku's knife.

Mackles yells over the roar of the fire in the warehouse behind him.

MACKLES

The girl! In the closet!

Lukas looks up.

MACKLES

It is up to you now, Detective! You alone can save her!

Slowly, Lukas pulls Randoku's blade from his stomach, struggles to stand. He pushes off the wall, moves toward Randoku.

LUKAS

Not before he's dead.

MACKLES

He is no longer your business. It is now between he and I. Between sangomas.

LUKAS

Sangomas? You--?

MACKLES

--Like you said...we never know what side of the line we're on. I thought I'd left this in Africa. But you see--

Mackles looks at Randoku with hate.

MACKLES

It does not matter. The line no longer exists for me.

Randoku struggles.

RANDOKU

You are both dead men.

Lukas staggers toward them, raising the knife in his hand to stab Randoku.

LUKAS

Fuck you.

Mackles pushes the blade deeper into Randoku's throat, pulls him back a step.

MACKLES

(to Lukas)

Detective! You must make a decision-- save the girl or kill this dog. You have time for only one of them. Which will it be?

Lukas stops, stares at Mackles. Then he looks back to the closet door, flames now licking at it.

Lukas steps back.

MACKLES

The right choice.

And with that, Mackles pulls Randoku out of the office door and into the inferno of the warehouse.

INT. FRONT SECTION OF WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Claussen tries to move toward the back, but the flames are jumping from box to box, container to container, coming at him like a freight train.

Claussen realizes he can't get through, runs back out the front.

EXT. SIDE OF WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

MacAvoy and Sheffield aren't doing any better. They try to push into a side entrance, but are forced back by flame.

MACAVOY

(into radio)

We can't get in, Captain! The place
is goin' up!

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Marchant listens to his radio.

MACAVOY

(over radio)

If he's in there, I don't think he's
gettin' out.

MARCHANT

Damn it!

(to Uniformed Officer)

Where's Fire and Rescue?

UNIFORMED OFFICER

On their way, sir. Less than two
minutes.

Marchant looks at the warehouse, where the roof has exploded into flame.

MARCHANT

I don't think we have that long.

INT. WAREHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

Flames on all the walls, smoke thick in the air.

Lukas tosses the knife, grabs a piece of the altar cloth, balls it up, holds it to his bleeding wound.

Lukas struggles to the closet, kicks open the burning door. Katie cowers in the corner. He reaches for her.

FIREFIGHTER TWO
 (to Firefighter One)
 Is there another one? He was yelling
 for somebody.

The Firefighters move to the window, but are immediately
 blown back as the fire bursts through the opening.

FIREFIGHTER ONE
 If anybody's left in there, there's
 nothing we can do for them now.
 This one's gone, man.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Marchant watches as Lukas is loaded into an ambulance. The
 back doors are closed, an EMT smacks the side of the vehicle,
 and it takes off.

Claussen approaches.

CLAUSSEN
 How is he?

Marchant shakes his head. He turns to the warehouse, now a
 fireball of flame and smoke, illuminating the night city sky
 like a bonfire in a jungle.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lukas lies on a bed amid the subtle sound of ticks and beeps
 from the machines surrounding him. A large bandage wraps
 his abdomen, an IV trails to an arm.

Deelie sits next to the bed, holding his hand.

Lukas's eyes drift open, try to focus. He takes in the room,
 then rests his eyes on Deelie. He smiles.

LUKAS
 Jesse--

DEELIE
 I know.

LUKAS
 She's all right.

DEELIE
 Mm-hmm. And you? You're all right
 now? She told you what you needed
 to hear?

LUKAS
 She told me she loves me.

DEELIE
 We both do.

Lukas nods.

LUKAS
It's time for Costa Rica, D.

Deelie smiles, reaches up and touches Lukas's cheek.

DEELIE
Sleep then, my Darling. Dream of us
there.

Lukas takes her hand. His eyes drift closed.

INT. HOSPITAL SIXTH FLOOR ELEVATOR ALCOVE - DAY

Marchant comes out of the elevator with Claussen.

MARCHANT
Only three? You're sure?

CLAUSSEN
Only three. One was a South African
national named Farner--some big shot
business guy. Another some muscle
that worked for him. Guy we found
in the limo trunk gave us that much.
They were found in the area that was
the office. Third body was in the
heart of the warehouse, burned
completely. Bones were powder. If
there was a fourth, he vaporized. I
guarantee you he wasn't in that
building.

MARCHANT
Before he passed out, Lukas said
there were four, plus the girl.

CLAUSSEN
Maybe he mis-counted.

Marchant sees a DOCTOR come out of a room, move up the
hallway.

MARCHANT
I'll be down in a minute.

Claussen guy-nods to Marchant, goes back to the elevators.
Marchant moves into the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Marchant jogs to catch up with the Doctor.

MARCHANT
Hey, Doc. Hold up a minute.

The Doctor looks back at Marchant, but keeps moving. Marchant falls into step with him.

MARCHANT

Lukas. Any change?

DOCTOR

He's one tough cookie, I'll tell you that. Severe trauma, blood loss you or I wouldn't survive. Should probably be dead. May still end up that way.

MARCHANT

He come around at all?

DOCTOR

Not that we've seen. He's hanging in a kind of neverland coma, if you know what I mean. Out, but talking. Or mumbling would be more accurate.

Marchant and the Doctor turn into Lukas's hospital room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

They stand at the foot of the bed, as the Doctor lifts Lukas's chart and checks it.

Lukas is alone, unconscious on the bed.

MARCHANT

Mumbling? About what?

DOCTOR

Only word I could really hear sounds like "deal" or something like that.

MARCHANT

Deelie. His wife.

DOCTOR

Noticed the wedding band. Haven't seen her here though. She been notified?

Marchant shakes his head.

MARCHANT

His wife killed herself about five months ago, couple months after their kid died.

DOCTOR

Aw, Jesus.

MARCHANT

Real rough on him, losin' both. I always wondered if it sent him over the edge. He was never quite the same, you know? But what the hell do I know about shit like that? Christ, my wife tells me I'm crazy every night.

The Doctor smiles.

DOCTOR

Mine too.

Marchant stares at Lukas.

MARCHANT

Ever wonder maybe they're right?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

SUPER: "Two Months Later"

Lukas stands before Jesse's grave. He looks rested, calm, tanned. He's in slacks, a Tommy Bahama shirt, sneakers.

Lukas kneels down in front of the headstone. The stone next to it is visible this time as well. It reads:

"Adele Lukas, 'Deelie', May 12, 1962 - October 20, 2009"

Lukas kneels, lays a single rose by each headstone, sits in silence a moment. Then he pulls a picture from his shirt pocket, looks at it.

LUKAS

Got one, Deelie. A real beauty.

Lukas smiles, sets the picture by Deelie's headstone.

INSERT: THE PICTURE: Lukas stands on a Costa Rican dock, rod and reel in his hand, a huge marlin hanging next to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER ON BLACK:

"Each year, it is estimated that as many as 500 African children go missing without a trace.

Though no one will officially confirm it, the commonly-held belief is that they are kidnapped for the express purpose of Muti ritualistic murder, performed by *sangoma* practitioners at the behest of their 'clients'.

The unspeakable practice has grown beyond African borders in the last several years, with mutilated children documented

in Great Britain, Belgium, Italy, and most recently, the
United States.

No arrests have ever been made."

FADE OUT:

THE END