

**CELLULAR**

Original Story and Screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

Flying low over the massive sprawl of the city.

NARRATOR

There are 2,762,500 cellular

phones currently operating in the  
county of Los Angeles.

QUICK CUTS

Local citizens on their cellulars.

A BUSINESSMAN IN A CROWDED RESTAURANT - simultaneously  
devouring his lunch and conducting a heated negotiation over  
his cellular.

CAMERA PANS THE RESTAURANT

A pretty woman at the next table also on her cell phone.  
And beyond two more on theirs. Half the restaurant seems to  
be talking and eating at the same time.

Even the waiter is in the corner anxiously taking a call  
from his agent.

NARRATOR

Forty percent of all households in  
the city utilize one or more  
cellular devices.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. STREET

A teenager on a skateboard weaves through traffic while  
chattering on the phone.

He whips past numerous motorists at the light who are  
likewise engaged in conversation.

OVER THIS: OPENING CREDITS APPEAR

EXT. THE BALL PARK - DAY

The crowd cheers as the Dodgers score a base hit -- except  
for those who are too busy on the phone to notice.

INT. DARKENED MOVIE THEATE

Packed with customers. At the crucial dramatic moment  
someone's cell phone goes off. The audience voices its  
disapproval, hooting as the owner of the offending device  
dashes up the aisle to the lobby.

EXT. THE BEACH - DAY

Gorgeous sun worshippers -- and many of them glued to their  
telephones.

One couple mouth to mouth in an embrace, oblivious to all around them -- until a cell phone rings. They immediately terminate their lovemaking -- both of them reaching for their cellular at the same moment. Nobody can afford to miss a call.

NARRATOR

An estimated 200 new units are being added each day.

CREDITS CONTINUE

INT. MEN'S ROOM

A long line of gentlemen at the urinals. And one of them using his free hand to punch up a number.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

As the students swarm out, immediately switch on their cell phones and launch into an update of the day's events.

INT. A LAP DANCING CLUB

As a frustrated young lady vainly tries to attract the attention of her middle aged client by giving it her all -- only to find him oblivious to her charms and entirely focused on his cellular call.

Despite the proximity of her bare breasts and the thrashing of her long auburn hair across his face there is no response. It's as if she's not even there.

HIGH ANGLE - ABOVE THE CANYONS

Perched here amidst the wilderness one of the giant dishes that relay thousands of calls to a satellite station in the sky.

ON THE SOUND TRACK we HEAR a cacophony of overlapping voices -- idle babble -- crucial information -- and just plain talk, totally unintelligible -- which quickly begins to take on the quality of chirping insects -- as still more voices join in and the volume rises to virtually engulf us.

CUT TO BLACK:

SILENCE ON SOUND TRACK

NARRATOR

This is the story of 90 minutes in  
the life of one cellular phone.

FADE IN:

EXT. CULVER CITY - DAY

A convertible moves through afternoon traffic with its top  
down. It's a 1995 Chrysler Sebring, colored maroon.

INT. THE CAR

MUSIC is BLARING. It's vintage Tito Puente; "Cherry Pink  
and Apple Blossom White."

THEO NOVAK is alone at the wheel. He's handsome, a sharp  
dresser in his Imperio Armani suit and cashmere turtleneck.  
He seems to be enjoying the ride until the cell phone lying  
on the seat intrudes upon his privacy.

THEO

What now?

The caller I.D. on the cell phone reads "ANONYMOUS."

THEO

Yeah, hello?

There's a woman's voice on the line -- a voice choked with  
fear. Not any voice he expected to hear.

LENORE'S VOICE

Thank God -- thank God I've got  
you.

THEO

Who is this?

LENORE'S VOICE

You mustn't hang up.

PRODUCTION NOTE: WE NEVER CUT TO THE OTHER END OF THE LINE.  
WE REMAIN WITH THEO AT ALL TIMES.

THEO

Do I know you?

LENORE

I've been trying to get someone --  
anyone. For hours ...

THEO

If this is some sales pitch I'm not buying --

LENORE

You don't understand.

THEO

No. You don't understand! You caught me on my cellular on the way to pick up some business associates. And I've got no time to screw around.

LENORE

Will you let me explain!

THEO

And what're you whispering for?

LENORE

I can't talk any louder. They might hear.

Theo switches off the Latin CD so he can hear more clearly.

THEO

Lady, try making some sense.

LENORE

You may be our only chance. I don't know if I can do this again.

THEO

What'd you do! Just pick my number out of the air?

LENORE

They smashed the phone. I've been clicking the loose wires together hoping it'd make a connection.

THEO

Who smashed the phone?

LENORE

They're holding my husband downstairs.

THEO

Sure. And they left you upstairs

to make phone calls?

LENORE

They gave me pills to make me sleep. They didn't realize how much Seconal I'm used to -- that I'd have so much tolerance --

THEO

Well I'm not tolerant of being bothered with this bullshit story when I'm about to make the most important score of my life. This has gotta be some "put-on," right?

LENORE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry to do this to you.

THEO

You're not doing anything to me -- because -- listen to this carefully -- I do not care.

LENORE

I don't believe you.

THEO

(laughs)

You're the one who's not to be believed.

LENORE

My name is --

THEO

I don't want to know --

LENORE

(persists)

My name is Lenore Oberfeld.

THEO

Don't expect me to tell you who I am.

LENORE

I realize you don't want to be involved.

THEO

I am not involved. Keep clicking your little wires. You'll get someone else. Good luck.

LENORE  
You won't disconnect.

THEO  
Oh won't I?

LENORE  
Because you know you'll be killing us.

THEO  
Don't lay this on me!

LENORE  
Then hang up! Do it!

It's the total despair of these words that finally hooks Theo Novak. He can't hang up.

THEO  
Why would anybody want to hurt you?

LENORE  
They tortured my husband. Made him give them the pin numbers of our accounts. Once they get what's in the safe deposit box they'll kill us.

THEO  
Where'd they take you to?

LENORE  
I have no idea. They put us in the back of a van with blacked out windows. The shutters up here are nailed shut.

THEO  
Well isn't there a number on the goddam phone?

LENORE  
No -- nothing.

cars honk furiously. He ignores them.

THEO

Okay. The police are gonna need your full name and address.

LENORE

No! No police. They'll know right away the authorities are looking for us. They'll kill us. We've seen their faces.

THEO

The cops could trace this call back to you.

LENORE

One of them is a cop.

THEO

What makes you say that?

LENORE

He pulled us over as we left the Riviera Tennis Club. Claimed we'd run a stop sign. And when Elliot was reaching for his license --

THEO

Who?

LENORE

Elliot -- our driver. The officer put his gun to the back of Elliot's head and -- fired. It was so quick.

THEO

Oh man. These people mean business.

LENORE

Then they took the Mercedes away -- with his body in it.

THEO

Listen, there's an overpass coming up. I may lose you for a minute.

We see a freeway overpass up ahead clogged with congested traffic. Theo could get stuck under it for awhile.

LENORE

No don't. You could lose me for good. Don't go through that tunnel.

THEO

I'm in traffic. There's no place to turn.

LENORE

Please.

THEO

Shit!

Theo Novak throws on the brakes. The car behind him screeches to a stop nearly rearending him.

DRIVER

Are you nuts?

THEO

Back up. I've got to pull out of this lane.

DRIVER

Fucking idiot!

THEO

I acknowledge that! Just back up!

The cars behind are beginning to honk horns.

Theo is waving at the driver in the next lane.

THEO

Hey Buddy! Can you let me pull over? Give me some space to pull over.

2ND DRIVER

Where do you think you're going?

THEO

Any place.

2ND DRIVER

This is one way.

THEO

I know. But it's an emergency.  
Somebody dying. Okay?

2ND DRIVER

I don't see anybody in there but  
you.

THEO

I would appreciate a little space.  
Thank you.

The driver in the next lane backs up. Now Theo can squeeze his Chrysler through. By jumping the curb he can drive across the sidewalk and into the parking lot of a small corner mall with its donut shop and Chinese laundry. He takes the exit which leads onto a residential side street.

THEO

(into phone)

Fine, no tunnel. Are you still  
with me? Hello?

LENORE

I hear them coming upstairs. I  
won't be able to talk for awhile.  
I have to lay the phone down and  
pretend to be asleep. So don't  
talk. Don't say a word or they'll  
hear it.

THEO

I can't stay on this line. I'm  
picking people up. I'm already  
overdue.

(no response)

Hello?

(no answer but the  
line remains open;  
Theo listens)

Theo quickly puts the convertible top up and rolls up the windows so he can hear more clearly.

There are indeterminate sounds coming over the open phone line. It could be someone walking on a wood floor. Theo keeps listening as he drives. He's not paying a lot of attention to the road. A large trailer truck honks at him nearly blowing him out of his seat. He quickly covers the earpiece of the phone. But the kidnappers may have already heard the sound and have been alerted by it. He waves at the truck driver to hold it down. The truck driver laughs

at him. Honks again.

Theo pulls around onto the main boulevard again. He's bypassed the overpass but not the traffic. He keeps driving and listening. Maybe she's gone. Gone for good.

Minutes ago he wanted her gone. Now he's oddly concerned. He listens harder. Still nothing. Alongside him a black kid in a Honda has his rap music blaring. Theo continues to keep the mouthpiece of the cellular pressed tightly to his chest to muffle all noise. But he has to lift the receiver to his ear now and then to listen. Still nothing.

THEO'S POV - THE INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PANCAKES on the corner ahead. His two partners are waiting to climb in when Theo pulls up.

KLINGER is about sixty. Once a ladies' man he has watched his looks fade. He tries to hide his years with the aid of Clairol, badly applied and a few shades too dark.

CAITLIN CARUSO has the look of a young woman who works out five or six times a week. She's completely buffed. She compensates by dressing in ultra-feminine attire -- pinks with lace cuffs and an abundance of makeup.

KLINGER

You took your sweet time.

Theo still keeps the phone buried in his chest.

THEO

Just get in and keep still.

Klinger climbs in the back seat. Caitlin piles in beside Theo and gives him a fleeting kiss.

CAITLIN

Who's on the phone?

THEO

I'll explain later. I'm sort of on hold.

Theo pulls away into traffic.

KLINGER

You switched license plates?

THEO

It's taken care of.

KLINGER

We have never worked a gig together but I am a firm believer in preparation. So let's go over this again step by step.

THEO

Not this minute.

CAITLIN

He's screwing with us. There's nobody on that phone.

Caitlin tries to take the phone. Theo slaps her hand away hard -- and keeps the mouthpiece tightly covered.

CAITLIN

What was that for?

THEO

You could've made me lose my call.

CAITLIN

So what? What could be important enough to put your hands on me?

THEO

I didn't hurt you.

CAITLIN

You couldn't hurt me. But it's the principle.

KLINGER

That was definitely out of line and totally unprovoked. I heard you were a hitter.

THEO

Bullshit.

KLINGER

That's your "rep."

THEO

Wait! I hear her breathing now. There, she just picked it up again.

CAITLIN

It's some chick you've got on there? With heavy breathing, for Christ sake?

He listens anxiously as he drives.

THEO

Say something ...

CAITLIN

Me, he won't stay on the phone with for five fucking minutes without bitching.

THEO

I'm trying to help somebody. Okay?

CAITLIN

He's at it again. Like that night at the Emerald. This piece of Euro-trash is slapping shit out of his little wife in a back booth -- so Mr. Good Deed here has got to step in and pound the fucker's head into the wall. Meantime "Wifey" recovers enough to pull off her high heel and nearly take our hero's eye out. It took six stitches.

THEO

How was I in the wrong?

Some pedestrians crossing the street shout obscenities at Theo as they jump back on the curb.

CAITLIN

Be careful. There were people in that crosswalk.

KLINGER

That's all we need. Better let me drive.

THEO

I'm fine. She's back on. Hello?  
(uncovers mouthpiece)  
I'm here.

LENORE

(in pain)

They just walked out. The smaller man -- he must be Dominican or Haitian -- he kicked me so hard. I felt a rib crack but I never made a sound. It's starting to hurt now -- real bad. A throbbing. I can't even take a deep breath.

THEO

Don't move around. You don't want to puncture a lung.

CAITLIN

Was someone in an accident?

LENORE

Do I hear a woman's voice?

THEO

I'm with two friends now.

LENORE

Rachel! They're going after Rachel now -- and I can't stop them.

THEO

Stop throwing names at me.

LENORE

Rachel, my daughter. She's an honor student at Parker. My God, she's only nine.

THEO

What do they need her for?

LENORE

They know Jack will give them what they want once they have her.

THEO

Bottom line! There's nothing I can do for you but tip the cops.

KLINGER

What do you mean tip the cops?

(to Caitlin)

Is the man a lunatic or what?

THEO

Will you relax? This in no way affects our business.

(into phone)

Go on.

LENORE

The bigger man is driving our Mercedes to the school. Rachel will recognize the car. She'll get right in.

THEO

Let me call the school -- tell them not to let her go.

LENORE

They don't know you. They won't listen.

KLINGER

(grabs Theo from behind)

Hear this, Novak! Loud and clear. No cops! Who did I get mixed up with here? Has he got a fucking suicide wish?

Lenore has overheard Klinger's outburst.

LENORE

He's right. You'll get my whole family killed.

THEO

He's right? Look, don't try to put blood on my hands. You've got one hell of a nerve siding with him!

KLINGER

Just hand up on the bitch!  
(yells)

Fuck you, madam. And goodbye!

THEO

That's what I deserve for listening in the first place.

He glares at the cellular that got him into this.

THEO

And I thought the worst this thing  
could do was give me brain cancer.

But he still can't bring himself to hang up.

CAITLIN

Wait. Let me talk.

Theo gives up the phone. Caitlin speaks.

CAITLIN

I'm sorry for whatever's happened  
to you but we're definitely not  
the right people to do you any  
good.

LENORE

Don't you have children?

CAITLIN

Matter of fact I did have a kid  
once. But he's a lot better off  
with his father in Milwaukee.

KLINGER

Have you got to tell her your life  
story?

CAITLIN

This is my conversation. I'll say  
what I fucking please.

KLINGER

(directing Theo)

Wake up. Make a right at Ocean  
Avenue. The hotel's a few blocks  
up on the left.

THEO

I know where it is.

(to Caitlin)

Give me that phone back.

CAITLIN

I'm not finished.

(into phone)

Under other circumstances I'd  
gladly go out of my way. I don't  
understand why you just don't

phone some other person.

THEO

She can't! It's busted. Now hand that on back!

CAITLIN

Theo wants to talk again.

THEO

Did you have to tell her my name?

She returns the phone to him.

LENORE

"Theo?"

THEO

Forget who I am. Where's this school located?

LENORE

26th off Wilshire.

THEO

Even if I got there first she wouldn't go with me.

LENORE

She would if she heard my voice on the phone.

KLINGER

Enough! You're not going anywhere!

Klinger makes a wild grab for the phone. Theo reaches back and whacks him across the face. Hard.

THEO

I don't like anybody laying their hands on me.

KLINGER

Just like they say; no fucking self control.

THEO

If you know that just back off.

KLINGER

Shit. There's the hotel. You  
overshot the driveway.

THEO

And stop with the directions.

KLINGER

Make a "U" and go back.

THEO

That's illegal. You want us  
pulled over? I'll turn around at  
the corner if you'll shut the fuck  
up.

KLINGER

You're doing all the talk.

CAITLIN

Will you two cut it out?

THEO

(into cellular)

This Mercedes of yours, what's it  
look like?

LENORE

A 600S black. I feel like such a  
fool. I don't even know the  
license number. We have four  
cars.

Klinger is talking while Lenore is speaking. They overlap.

KLINGER

We still gotta run the drill  
before we walk in that lobby.

THEO

Go ahead then. I'm covering the  
receiver. She can't hear.

KLINGER

First off, this Mr. Chow Yen  
doesn't speak a lot of English.  
The girl with him will interpret.  
There will be a third person to  
accompany you into the men's room  
where you can take count. I hope  
you know Krugerands better than  
they know a Hockney.

THEO

I improved on the fucking original.

KLINGER

Let's hope so. Once you come out and okay everything I'll give Caitlin the sign that she can bring the painting on over.

THEO

It's rolled up in the tube on the floor back there.

They have turned around and pulled into the hotel's circular driveway.

LENORE

Why isn't anyone answering me?

THEO

Just hang on. I've got a life of my own.

CAITLIN

What if they do question the authenticity?

KLINGER

Oh. Seems yours girlfriend is casting doubts on your expertise.

CAITLIN

I am not! Fuck you! Theo's a genius.

KLINGER

Any trouble, we whip out our Treasury Department badges -- show them the wire I'm wearing and read them their rights. Theo seizes the Krugerands as evidence. Naturally they start negotiating. Offer to give us up somebody else. And we listen. Take notes on who bought what stolen art and tell them we have to clear it with our superiors at Justice. We pick up their passports -- escort them to their room and leave them all in

the bathroom handcuffed to the plumbing.

LENORE (V.O.)

Will you please speak to me!  
Theo?

THEO

Another minute.

KLINGER

Got your badge?

THEO

(pulling out folder  
with fake Treasury  
Dept. badge)  
Satisfied, Wiseass?

KLINGER

In any event, whatever occurs you  
do not belt anybody.

THEO

What do you keep making me out to  
be?

Theo spots a pay phone kiosk near the hotel.

THEO

(into phone)  
Okay, okay, Lenore, calm down.  
Either let me call the school or  
better yet, the F.B.I.

KLINGER

Sure -- and they record your  
voice. And later on we all get  
slammed for kidnap and murder.  
That's out!

A parking valet rushes up.

VALET

Checking in?

KLINGER

Here for lunch.  
(hands over a five  
dollar bill)  
Leave it close by.

VALET

No problem. It'll be in that loading zone.

KLINGER

Step out of the car, Theo.

CAITLIN

He's right, Theo. She might not be around to back up your story. You could end up in the middle of this.

THEO

Look -- I've got the lives of maybe three innocent people hanging on the end of this line.

KLINGER

Well, I don't know any innocent people and I don't give a shit.

VALET

Excuse me but you're blocking our driveway. I've got to move the vehicle.

Several cars are backed up trying to depart the hotel.

Klinger jumps out of the back seat opening the passenger side for Caitlin who takes along the tube with the fake "Hockney" inside.

CAITLIN

I know you feel awful but it's not your responsibility.

THEO

Then whose is it?

CAITLIN

You gotta just look the other way.

THEO

I'm sorry. You'll do all right without me. Keep my share.

VALET

(insistent)

Sir?

THEO

I'm moving the car. See! I'm  
moving it!

The passenger door is still open as Theo steps on the gas. The Chrysler careens down the circular driveway into traffic on Ocean Avenue and makes a sharp left.

Caitlin and Klinger stare after it in apparent disbelief.

KLINGER

I knew it the minute I laid eyes  
on him. A fucking flake!

He looks over at the parking valet who now has no car to park.

KLINGER

Give me back that five.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

Speeding now -- and talking into the cellular.

THEO

Hello? It's just me and you  
again.

LENORE

What about the others?

THEO

I kind of dropped them off. They  
were getting on my nerves.

LENORE

What are you doing now?

THEO

What do you think I'm doing? I'm  
on my way to the school like you  
wanted.

LENORE

Forget about us. Just save  
Rachel.

THEO

Tell me what she looks like.

LENORE

They say she resembles me -- dark hair, ponytail, very dark eyes. They all wear the same uniform.

(a beat)

Please. Be careful. The man driving the car must have a gun.

THEO

I'm not looking to get myself killed. I just hope the battery on this phone holds out.

He flips open the glove compartment and searches around inside. Jammed with nothing but CDs.

THEO

Where's the fucking recharger cord? Must be in her car, dammit.

LENORE

How much time do you have left on it?

THEO

I don't know. 80 or 90 minutes, tops.

LENORE

Why didn't you do what your friends wanted and just -- get rid of me?

THEO

I don't know.

(a beat)

I hung up on somebody else a long time ago, and later on I wished I hadn't of.

LENORE

A woman?

THEO

Hey drop it, okay?

LENORE

I didn't mean to open up any old wounds.

THEO

It never healed. I called her a lying bitch and everything else and I hung up on her. "Click." You don't exist.

LENORE

And that was the end of it?

THEO

(laughs)

I sure as hell got my wish. She doesn't exist.

(a beat)

So maybe you reached the appropriate person after all.

LENORE

I'm sorry if I caused you to lose your business deal.

THEO

Well you did.

He feels like hurling the damn cellular out the car window.

THEO

Now I know why I never wanted one of these. I should've made her take it back.

He makes a screeching left against oncoming traffic.

LENORE

What do you do for a living?

THEO

Sometimes I paint.

LENORE

Our house always needs touching up.

THEO

Pictures.

LENORE

I didn't mean to insult you. You're an artist.

THEO

They say my work is somewhat derivative.

He takes a shortcut, racing down a narrow alley behind a line of shops, knocking a few plastic trash bins over.

LENORE

I suppose if you're a struggling artist you need a patron.

THEO

Lady, you don't have to keep up a running commentary.

LENORE

I'm afraid if I stop talking I'll lose you.

(a beat)

Just name any reasonable amount and it's yours.

THEO

Shit, stop with the money! I never asked for a nickel. I was just doing this. And you have to fuck it up with a price tag.

LENORE

I didn't mean to. It's just the way I am.

THEO

A price on everything.

LENORE

I wasn't always like that. I don't think I was.

THEO

I'm about ten blocks from the school.

LENORE

I have no right to ask for help. I've never thought of anybody but myself.

THEO

That makes two of us.

LENORE

(suddenly)  
You're breaking up. I can't hear  
you. Theo?

There's heavy static on the line.

THEO  
There are cables overhead. Hang  
on. It'll clear up.

LENORE  
I've lost you. You're gone. I  
can't hear anything.

Suddenly another voice comes on. As often happens, the  
cellular has picked up another call in progress.

CALLER  
Somebody's on our fucking line!

FEMALE CALLER  
How long have they been listening?

THEO  
Lenore, hang on.

CALLER  
Mister, get off of our call!

THEO  
This is an emergency so you get  
off!

FEMALE CALLER  
Don't tell us what to do. You've  
got some nerve! Dickhead!

THEO  
Lenore, are you still there? Is  
it a right or left off Wilshire?

LENORE  
Make a right. You can't miss it.

THEO  
I'm making my turn. I see the  
school up ahead.

THEO'S POV - THE PARKER SCHOOL - its yard now full of  
students.

The voices on the crossed line still remain, giving Theo a hard time.

CALLER

This shit happens all the time.  
I'm switching to Air Touch!

THEO

Good idea. Get lost!

FEMALE CALLER

Rude asshole.

She hangs up. The line is clear again.

There are school buses already loading up. The day's session has ended.

CAMERA WHIP PANS AROUND - car doors slamming, buses pulling out. Mothers are car-pooling, picking up groups of kids, all of whom are in uniform. Vehicles are departing, none of them a black Mercedes.

THEO

Lenore, I'm here. I'm getting out.

LENORE

I can hear you again, clearly.

THEO

Great. Stay with me. There must be a hundred kids out here.

Theo is out of the car which he leaves double parked.

Camera races with Theo as he enters the school yard.

THEO

I don't see any Mercedes.

He looks around, trying to find any dark girl with a ponytail. He sees one and catches up with her.

THEO

Are you Rachel?

The girl looks at him suspiciously and keeps walking. She's obviously been trained not to talk to strangers.

THEO

Does she have a red ribbon on that ponytail?

LENORE

That's not her.

Whip pan to another prospect.

THEO

Does she wear glasses?

LENORE

No.

THEO

I've got to ask somebody.

Theo approaches a group of boys.

THEO

Anybody see Rachel Oberfeld?

2ND BOY

She always gets picked up by her driver. For dance class. Stuck-up little bitch.

THEO

Is she gone?

Then Theo realizes a female teacher has come up behind him.

TEACHER

May I help you?

THEO

Did Rachel Oberfeld leave?

TEACHER

Of course she did. What business is that of yours?

A uniformed security guard is approaching. This schoolyard is well patrolled.

SECURITY GUARD

Any trouble?

TEACHER

He's asking about the Oberfeld girl.

LENORE  
(on cellular)  
What's happening?

THEO  
(into phone)  
She's gone --

LENORE  
Don't say anything. Don't alarm  
them. Just go!

THEO  
I'm trying to.

SECURITY GUARD  
Is that your Chrysler double  
parked out there?

THEO  
Yeah. I'll move it.

LENORE  
(over cellular)  
They've got her. There's nothing  
you can do but go.

Theo is already exiting the school yard. The teacher stares after him suspiciously. The security guard follows him to the curb, watches him get in.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

Theo pounds his fist on the dashboard in total frustration.

THEO  
I fucking blew it!

He sees the guard copying down his license plate.

THEO  
He's copying down my license --  
for all the good it'll do him.

LENORE  
It's not your fault, Theo. You  
tried.

THEO  
I should've put them out of the

car and come sooner!

LENORE

When Jack sees they've got Rachel  
HE'LL tell them what they want to know.

Theo starts the engine and pulls away from the school. He rounds the corner onto quiet side streets.

THEO

You said they wanted to get into  
some particular safety deposit  
box?

LENORE

The one in Brentwood.

THEO

What bank?

LENORE

The City National on San Vincente.

Theo sees something up ahead. He grins.

THEO

Wait just a minute. Our luck has  
changed.

LENORE

What do you mean?

THEO

Black Mercedes, 600S.

He steps on the gas.

VARIOUS SHOTS

Theo pursues the Mercedes, catches up with it and forces the driver over to the curb. The back windows are tinted.

He leaves the cell phone on the seat as he gets out and hurries over to the Mercedes just as the chauffeur jumps out.

Before the driver can say a word Theo decks him. He goes down hard.

Theo pulls open the back door expecting to see a nine year old girl.

Instead he's looking at an elegant eighty year old woman who tosses her beaded handbag into his arms.

OLD WOMAN

There -- take it and leave us  
alone!

Theo stares at her moment. Then at the handbag he's caught. He hands it back.

THEO

Excuse the misunderstanding.  
(to driver)  
Don't get up!

The driver is sensible enough not to rise until Theo has pulled off.

INT. THEO'S CAR

Moving fast to get out of the neighborhood.

He picks up the cell phone.

THEO

I'm not doing too well.  
(a beat)  
What's the matter?

LENORE

I heard someone pulling in behind  
the house. I heard Rachel  
screaming and then she stopped all  
of a sudden. I don't know what  
they did to her.

THEO

Which means you can't be more than  
five or ten minutes from here.

LENORE

Even if you found us -- what then?

THEO

I'm cutting across to Bundy to  
Brentwood. That bank is our best  
bet. If anybody shows up I could  
follow them.

LENORE

Jack will negotiate with them.  
He'll identify the right key and  
give them the information they  
need to gain access and they'll  
let Rachel go.

THEO

Not a chance.

LENORE

Don't say that.

THEO

Do you know what's in that box?

LENORE

I'm not supposed to -- but I do.  
Millions in cash and bearer bonds.

Theo swallows hard. That's enough to put him into mild  
shock. After all Theo Novak is not known for his honesty.

THEO

They'll recognize it's not your  
husband.

LENORE

Jack was only at that branch once  
when he took the box years ago.

THEO

They've still got to be able to  
sign his name.

LENORE

It's not hard to do. I do it all  
the time.

THEO

I'm pretty good at signatures  
myself.

LENORE

(suddenly)

Oh my God. I heard her scream  
again. What are they doing to  
her? Why can't I do anything to  
stop them?

THEO

You're doing what you can. Why's

all this money stashed?

LENORE

To hide it from the I.R.S.

THEO

How come everybody turns out to be a crook?

LENORE

Don't talk. Don't talk!

THEO

What's going on?

LENORE

The front door slammed. Someone went out. There's a different car starting.

THEO

I might still get there first. The lights are with me.

(a beat)

How would I identify the guy who shows up at the bank?

LENORE

If it's the tall man -- he had one of those hair transplants. Tufts, you know. It still hasn't grown fully in. The other one is from the islands. Braided hair -- very dark.

THEO

It won't be him.

LENORE

Theo, I want you to know, you're probably the most decent man I've ever met.

THEO

Yeah, sure that's me. Ask anybody.

LENORE

But I guess we haven't really met -- have we?

THEO

I've got a lot of respect for you too. For the way you feel about your family.

LENORE

Jack hasn't loved me for years. And now I'm afraid she's turning out to be like him. So cold and distant. I've let him make her like that.

THEO

Why tell me this?

LENORE

Because you're probably the last person I'll ever talk to.

THEO

You can't give up.

LENORE

When they first started questioning Jack -- he answered them in that tone he usually reserves for me. And they began beating him. And I watched. And I didn't feel anything ... What kind of a person am I?

Theo is now on San Vincente approaching the Brentwood community -- the shops, malls and restaurants.

THEO

The bank should be -- there it is. I'm looking for a place to park. Pray for a miracle. I don't believe it. Somebody's pulling out of a meter. Just across from your bank. Better yet. There's 40 minutes left on the meter. Maybe this is my day.

There's a click on the line.

THEO

Did you jiggle the phone?

LENORE

No.

THEO

Did you hear that click?

LENORE

Yes -- I think so. Another  
crossed line?

THEO

Or somebody else there is  
listening in --

LENORE

Downstairs. There must be an  
extension. Oh my God --

THEO

Don't panic. I might be wrong.

(beat)

Hello?

(beat)

I guess I was wrong.

Another rude motorist tries to steal Theo's precious space  
before he can pull in. Theo honks at him.

THEO

Don't even think about it!

The other driver won't budge until Theo threatens to get  
out. Finally frustrated, the other driver surrenders the  
space. Theo backs in -- just as Lenore comes back on in a  
panic.

LENORE

No. I hear them. They're coming  
upstairs. They know!

THEO

Try what you did before. It  
worked before. I won't talk  
anymore.

He gets out carrying the cellular phone which he continues  
to listen to -- even as he crosses the street to the bank.

There's silence on the other end of the line.

And Theo makes no attempt at further conversation lest he  
alert Lenore's captors that the phone is open.

All at once he draws up short. He sees something across the street.

HIS POV - A POLICE CAR - visible at the mouth of an alley -- Someone inside. Is he watching the bank? The windows are pulled up. All Theo can see is a silhouette inside.

BACK TO THEO

Focused on that police car.

BACK TO LONG SHOT - POLICE CAR - BACKING UP

It slowly vanishes back into the alley.

TRUCKING SHOT

Theo quickly crossing the street. He peers through the glass into the bank.

HIS POV - INT. THE BANK

There's plenty of activity. Customers on line. Half a dozen tellers in action.

BACK TO THEO

He decides to go inside for a closer look.

CAMERA FOLLOWS THEO INTO THE BANK

He carries the cellular with him -- still listening.

INT. THE BANK

Theo looks around for some sign of the man Lenore described with such clarity. There's nobody like that. He'll wait.

There are video cameras mounted -- surveying the bank from all angles.

Theo can't just stand idly around. He'd attract attention. He gets on the long line where he won't seem conspicuous.

He keeps the cell phone to his ear and his hand cupped over the speaker portion to muffle even the sound of his breathing. And he listens hard.

There are male voices distant and unintelligible.

Then the sound of some furniture being turned over.

Then A WOMAN'S SCREAM!

Finally there's a rumble as if the receiver on the other end was being roughly dropped and picked up again.

Theo reacts to what he hears while standing in the midst of the crowded bank. He struggles to control his emotions.

A deep voice is suddenly heard on the line.

MALE VOICE

Is somebody there? Answer me.

Theo doesn't know whether to reply.

In the background Lenore is heard screaming again.

VOICE

You shut up!

There's the sound of violent activity. At that moment someone taps Theo's shoulder.

WOMAN CUSTOMER

Next.

Theo looks back at the woman behind him -- blankly.

WOMAN CUSTOMER

Will you kindly pay attention.  
You're next.

Theo covering the mouthpiece tightly.

THEO

Get ahead of me.

He walks off the line -- still riveted to the phone.

MALE VOICE

Whoever you are -- the girl's  
gonna suffer for this. You got  
them all killed.

Theo can't hold back anymore.

THEO

(into phone)

Don't hurt her -- you bastards --

That's all he gets to say before the phone goes dead.

THEO

Don't hang up --

But they have. The line is dead. He has finally lost all contact with Lenore. He's numb with anger.

CAMERA SWIVELS 180 DEGREES around Theo as he experiences a sudden dizziness. Total isolation sets in. He just stares at the dead phone in his hand -- which is trembling now.

CAMERA CONTINUES ANOTHER 180 DEGREE SWEEP around him to reveal a very tall man coming out of the vault area and crossing the bank toward the exit. HIS UPPER FOREHEAD IS COVERED WITH MINUSCULE TUFTS OF IMPLANTED HAIR. His eyes are deeply set and close together. He carries a large leather attache case.

Theo focuses on the man -- just as he reaches the automatic doors which swing open wide. In an instant he's out on the street.

Theo hurries after him. CAMERA FOLLOWS.

EXT. BRENTWOOD STREET - DAY

The tall man is moving swiftly along the sidewalk.

Theo is directly behind him. The dead phone is still in his hand. He realizes this and stuffs it in his jacket pocket.

TRUCKING SHOT - The tall man walks to the corner with Theo behind him. The light is red. Traffic thick.

Suddenly the man abruptly turns looking face to face at Theo.

TALL MAN

Tell me what you want.

Theo struggles to control himself and put on an act.

THEO

My brother's considering one of those transplants and I wondered -- is it painful?

TALL MAN

You were watching me in the bank.

Theo grabs the wrist of the hand that holds the attache case, twists it hard.

THEO

That looks heavy. Let me help you with it.

THE MAN

YOU'RE fucking with the wrong people, Mister.

Theo's instinct is always to hit first. He throws a jarring left that takes the bigger man by surprise.

His adversary is stunned but pulls free and uses his thick attache case as a weapon swinging it hard.

Theo staggers then lurches forward to avoid a second blow tackling the six footer low and propelling him off the sidewalk and into the path of oncoming traffic. WHAM!!!

A Chevy Blazer slams into Theo's adversary knocking him off his feet.

The car behind the Blazer rearends it as other vehicles slam into each other.

The tall man has struck his head on the sidewalk after bouncing off the hood. He's lying quite still and he's bleeding.

Around him a crowd is forming and traffic is at a standstill. Theo takes a step forward and trips over something. It's the leather attache case at his feet. He stoops and picks it up.

It's chaos as the drivers of the stopped vehicles jump out shouting at each other.

MOTORIST

He jumped in front of me.

2ND MOTORIST

Look what you fucking did to my car!

MOTORIST

All of a sudden he was there. Nobody could've stopped.

2ND MOTORIST

Tell it to the cop! Why isn't  
there ever a cop?

THEO

I'll go look for one.

He walks casually through the mob that's forming -- in the  
direction of his Chrysler.

Behind him, the crowd around the accident victim grows. And  
still no police in sight.

A uniformed guard from the supermarket kneels over the body.

SUPERMARKET GUARD

He's hurt bad.

An eyewitness rushes over, shouting.

EYEWITNESS

I saw the whole thing. He was  
pushed! I was sitting at the  
Starbuck's over there and I saw it  
all!

ANGLE ON THEO

he's heard the eyewitness -- any moment he could be pointed  
out.

CAMERA FOLLOWS THEO TO HIS CHRYSLER

He gets in and lowers the sun visor to partially obscure his  
face as he turns the ignition key and pulls out of the  
parking space. He makes a quick right into the Ralph's  
Market lot and heads out the far exit which will bring him  
onto an entirely different street.

He pulls over and turns his attention to the briefcase. He  
fishes in his pocket and finds a small Swiss army knife. He  
uses one of the blades on the lock -- finally breaking it.  
The briefcase snaps open. It's stuffed full of loose money,  
fifties and hundreds -- plus a stack of negotiable bonds  
bound together in wrappers. An impressive haul. Theo tries  
to count it but his head is swimming.

THEO

Some fucking jackpot.

He closes the briefcase but now that the lock's broken it  
won't stay shut. It springs back open. He can barely keep

the money inside it.

He looks around, notices an indoor parking facility across the street.

He drives over, takes an automated ticket -- then pulls up the ramp.

He drives all the way up to the rooftop parking zone. Few cars are up here. He's alone.

He pulls into a space.

INT. THEO'S CAR - ROOFTOP PARKING AREA - DAY

He reaches into his glove compartment which is crammed full of CDs and pushes a button which pops the trunk.

EXT. ROOFTOP PARKING AREA - DAY

Theo gets out holding the attache case tightly shut.

TIGHT SHOT - INSIDE THE TRUNK. Theo wedges the attache case in next to the spare which manages to hold it in place.

We take casual note of an alternate set of license plates lying in the trunk -- before Theo slams the lid shut.

ANGLE ON THEO

Looking out from the vantage point of the rooftop at all the many homes and residences in the distance. And in one of them Lenore and her family are being held captive.

THEO

Where the hell are you, Mrs.  
Oberfeld? And why should I give a  
fuck? Especially now.

He tries to figure out what to do. Should he just keep what he's got and take off? He reaches into the car for his cellular.

CLOSE UP - CELL PHONE - as Theo dials: STAR 69.

He's ringing back the last number that called him. Finally the call is picked up. But nobody speaks.

THEO

Don't be afraid to say hello.  
Your friend with the recent

transplant is in no condition to deliver that briefcase. So I've taken on the task.

VOICE

Who are you?

THEO

Let me talk to the lady again.

VOICE

There's no lady here.

THEO

If you've already killed her that's fine. I'll keep the bonds and the cash. We got nothing to discuss.

VOICE

Hold on.

THEO

If her kid or her old man have been harmed we've also got nothing to talk about.

VOICE

Let her tell you.

After a pause a familiar feminine voice is heard.

LENORE

Yes? Yes?

THEO

Hi Lenore. It's me. I got you back. Courtesy of Star 69. Are you hurt?

LENORE

They dragged me downstairs. I thought they were going to kill me.

THEO

Lucky for them they didn't.

LENORE

What did you do?

THEO

I had a little encounter at the bank and our Mr. Transplant ended up under the wheels of a Chevy.

LENORE

God, if he doesn't come back --

THEO

I'm in possession of the bag he was carrying. And I'm in a position to negotiate. What about your husband and your child?

LENORE

They're tied with duct tape so they can't speak -- but they seem to be --

The phone is grabbed away from her.

MALE VOICE

(to Theo)

Who are you working for?

THEO

I'm self employed. What kind of cut did the hairy one have?

MALE VOICE

Twenty percent.

THEO

Fine. I want half. Plus the release of the family.

MALE VOICE

Whatever you say.

Theo looks over the side of the rooftop -- at the street directly below.

THEO'S POV - AN L.A.P.D. CAR parked there. CAMERA WHIP PANS to the concrete stairs which lead up to the rooftop ... Heavy racing footsteps can be heard. Someone's coming!

BACK TO THEO - hurrying back to his car -- while the conversation continues.

THEO

You're making it too easy.

MALE VOICE

You got time on your side. Pretty soon they'll be missed and we'll have the law up our ass.

THEO

They saw you kill the driver.

INT. THEO'S CAR - ALREADY MOVING

MALE VOICE

You're up on your details, aren't you?

THEO

You can rely on them to keep quiet because this is undeclared money that could land Jack there in federal prison. He can't afford for you to get caught and have this briefcase appear as evidence.

MALE VOICE

Keep talking.

Theo is already careening down the twisting ramp as he speaks.

THEO

You're walking away with a clear fifty percent and a guarantee nobody can afford to I.D. you.

MALE VOICE

There are no guarantees in this life.

THEO

Granted. But I don't believe they're grieving enough for their chauffeur to piss away their own futures.

Theo pauses to pay the cashier before exiting.

PARKING CASHIER

That's four fifty.

THEO

For ten minutes? Fucking thieves

everywhere.

He pays and pulls off onto San Vincente heading west, checking the rearview to be certain he's not being followed.

MALE VOICE

Where do we meet?

THEO

It's a nice day. How about the beach?

MALE VOICE

Pass.

THEO

A large stretch of empty space with no place to hide. Temescal Canyon parking lot.

MALE VOICE

What time frame have you got in mind?

THEO

It should take me twenty minutes. Where are you coming from?

MALE VOICE

We can be there.

EXT. WIDE SHOT - THEO'S CAR - DAY

Weaving through traffic --

THEO

I want you all in one vehicle. Your van. If I see anybody else cruising around I'll keep going. No second chances. You can kill them and I'll keep what I've got.

MALE VOICE

Some loyalty.

THEO

There's no loyalty at the expense of my own ass.

BACK INSIDE THEO'S SPEEDING CAR

THEO

Tell the lady to relax. Tell her  
I can't wait to meet her in  
person.

MALE VOICE

She's somewhat damaged in the  
shipping. But nothing makeup  
won't cover.

THEO

Got a phone in that van?

MALE VOICE

Sure.

THEO

Take my number. When you see me  
-- call me and I'll walk you  
through the exchange. It's  
308-9962 -- Repeat it back.

MALE VOICE

308-9962.

THEO

Beats yelling our brains out  
across some parking lot.

MALE VOICE

You're getting a lot of mileage  
out of that cellular.

THEO

I wish it had never been invented.

HIGH ANGLE - 7TH STREET OFF SAN VINCENTE - DAY

Theo rounding hairpin turns which carry him closer to the  
Pacific Coast Highway and the beach.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

As Theo turns and heads up the coast. Camera follows --

A few hundred yards ahead a boarded up fruit and produce  
stand is closed for the season.

Theo pulls off the highway and parks behind the stand. He  
again pops the trunk using the release button in the glove  
box.

He gets out and proceeds to the open trunk.

TIGHTER ANGLE - Theo again examines the overstuffed attache case that will no longer lock. He flips it wide open, looks over the loose money spilled out and the bonds secured with rubber bands. He begins tying the money up with the rubber bands -- stacking it. Diving it into portions.

He doesn't see or hear the highway patrol car that's quietly pulling up behind him -- out of focus.

The whoosh of passing cars hides the sound of the prowler car's arrival.

STILL IN SOFT FOCUS

We see the uniformed officer getting out and approaching.

Then Theo senses he's not alone. He hears the jingle of keys and handcuffs on the officer's belt.

He turns halfway and the cop is there. The approaching cop is about thirty and his nametag identifies him as "Grillo."

OFFICER GRILLO

Saw you pull over. Thought you  
might have a flat.

The lid of the trunk is still up. Theo casually lowers it.

OFFICER GRILLO

Leave it open.

Theo leaves the lid three quarters of the way shut as he turns to face the cop.

THEO

Since when did you guys start  
changing tires?

OFFICER GRILLO

Only you don't have a flat.

THEO

Seems not.

OFFICER GRILLO

If you weren't going for a spare  
what were you doing?

THEO

Something was rattling around.  
Some loose tools.

OFFICER GRILLO

Mind if I have a look?

The cop's hand is resting on his revolver.

THEO

Why are you picking on me for?

OFFICER GRILLO

Was I picking on you? How come  
you pulled in back of this  
fruitstand?

THEO

Tell the truth, I was going to  
take a much needed leak.

GRILLO

Now that'd be a misdemeanor.

THEO

I got to get going. An agent is  
showing me a house up on Broad  
Beach in ten minutes.

GRILLO

They'll wait. Meantime, raise the  
lid.

Theo is thinking how Lenore described the murderer of her  
driver as a uniformed cop who pulled her over.

Then he sees the cop's police car is identical to the one he  
saw opposite the bank and near the parking garage.

THEO

What'd you do? Tail me from  
Brentwood?

GRILLO

Why would I do that?

Theo lifts the lid to the trunk all the way up and steps  
aside. The cop leans forward for a look.

He sees the attache case jammed shut against the tire. He  
also can't miss the extra license plates that lie in plain

view.

GRILLO

Let's have your license, mister.

THEO

I'm going to level with you  
officer.

Theo flashes the folder with the phony Treasury Dept. I.D.  
which was to be used in the scam.

GRILLO

What's this?

THEO

See for yourself, federal agent,  
U.S. Treasury. On the job.

As the confused cop studies the impressive I.D. Theo moves  
into action, grabbing Grillo's gun hand so he can't draw the  
weapon -- then throwing all his weight against the cop  
forcing him close enough to the lid of the trunk to be  
struck hard as Theo smashes it down on his shoulder.

Grillo is momentarily stunned and can't recover in time to  
avoid the impact of the trunk smashing down again. This  
time on the back of his neck.

THEO

Does that answer your question?

He finishes Grillo with two brutal jabs to the jaw. The cop  
goes limp.

Theo is alarmed as a car zips by on the highway and the  
driver leans on its horn. He fears he's been seen. There's  
no time to delay. He lifts the officer's legs and dumps  
Grillo in the trunk.

THEO

Seems I've got me a hostage.

He removes the cop's .38 calibre sidearm from its holster.

He grabs the attache case before shutting the trunk and  
making sure it's secure.

Some fifty dollar bills fall loosely to the ground as Theo  
hurries back to the driver's seat. He doesn't waste time  
scooping more than one or two of them up.

He starts the ignition and steps on the gas. He pulls away leaving the police cruiser parked where it stands behind the fruitstand.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

He's sweating now. The attache case lies half open across the seat next to him. The windows are down and the loose money starts blowing all over the inside of the vehicle.

THEO

Shit!

Theo quickly puts the windows up but the damage is done. There are loose bills everywhere.

THEO'S POV - THE HIGHWAY

As he passes a mobile home park, he sees the carload that may have spotted him assault the cop. They're at a pay phone -- excitedly reporting it. One of them recognizes Theo's vehicle going by and points.

ANGLE ON THEO

Speeding up.

VIEW THRU WINDSHIELD - TEMESCAL CANYON BEACH TURNOFF

The huge parking lot is coming up on the left. It seems totally vacant. Not another car in sight all the way up the beach. No attendant is on duty so Theo simply pulls in and keeps driving.

There's still no sign of the van.

Theo looks back toward the main highway half expecting to see a squadron of police cars -- but traffic remains normal.

He sees a wooden shack -- a fast food outlet with large colorful signs proclaiming "Fried Clams - Fried Chicken - Ice Cream." It's off season and closed. Only the diehard surfers can be seen far off shore.

He pulls up behind the concession stand so that his car is hidden from the highway. He's only visible from the ocean side.

TIGHT SHOT - INSIDE THE CAR

Theo tries to gather up the money -- flatten it out -- put it back in stacks and secure it inside the attache case. He lays the officer's gun down on the seat while he does this.

Then the cell phone beeps. Theo answers quickly.

THEO

I'm here. Where are you?

MALE VOICE

We don't see you.

THEO

I'm three quarters of the way up the lot behind the concession stand.

MALE VOICE

Stay there.

THEO

I don't want you within two hundred feet. Park down by the lifeguard station. Nobody gets out.

MALE VOICE

It's your call.

THEO

Fucking "A" it is! Any argument and I'm out of here.

MALE VOICE

Just relax.

THEO

I don't need to relax. The woman. Put her on.

MALE VOICE

You'll see her.

THEO

I don't want to see her later. I want to hear her now.

MALE VOICE

(slightly off)

Talk to the man.

LENORE

Thank you. God bless you for helping us.

THEO

Are you okay?

LENORE

They wrapped tape around my wrists and ankles.

THEO

That's coming off. How about the girl?

LENORE

She's awake but she hasn't spoken. I don't know what they did to her. I don't want to think about it.

THEO

Your husband?

LENORE

He's in back. Lying face down. They haven't hurt him anymore -- but he was crying. I never heard Jack cry before --

THEO

You're all three of you in that van?

LENORE

Yes.

THEO

Now you're going to do just what I tell you to. No discussion. No hesitation.

LENORE

Yes sir.

THEO

Put the man back on.

MALE VOICE

Satisfied?

THEO

You already tried to pull one little number on me -- and it didn't work.

MALE VOICE

I don't know what you mean.

THEO

I still don't see you.

MALE VOICE

We're waiting for the light to cross the highway. It just changed. We're in a grey van. It reads "Noble Carpet Cleaners."

THEO'S POV - There it is. The grey Dodge van circa 1992 with the lettering "Noble Carpet Cleaners - L.A. - Santa Monica - Marina Del Rey." The windows in back are painted over.

The van enters the huge empty parking lot and keeps rolling.

THEO

That's far enough. What -- do you fucking need a written map? Pull over.

The van stops. There's a huge distance between them. The negotiation continues over the cellular.

MALE VOICE

We're waiting on you.

THEO

Then just wait. I'm counting this all out and deducting my share. While I'm at it you can be getting that tape off the lady. And her little girl.

MALE VOICE

It's in the process.

THEO

I make my end of the cash at 184,000. Now I'm trying to figure out the bonds. What the face value is.

MALE VOICE

You should've done all this before.

THEO

I'm not accepting criticism today. Now don't make me lose count. There's already a half million in this portfolio.

MALE VOICE

Her husband said there'd be one million eight. So nine hundred to you.

THEO

My pleasure --

MALE VOICE

Be careful in disposing of them. You'll have to discount 'em. You'll be lucky to clear a hundred and a quarter.

THEO

Thanks for the sound advice. Now ask the woman to get out of the van and walk over here. Alone.

MALE VOICE

Negative.

THEO

You'll still have the girl and the husband.

MALE VOICE

And not a nickel.

THEO

Soon as Mrs. Oberfeld is in my car I'll toss out your first third. Then I'll back up 200 feet to behind the public restroom.

MALE VOICE

And then?

THEO

You pull up -- collect your first installment. Then you let the daughter go. When she reaches me,

I'll dump out another third. Same action. I back up again -- you pull forward. Satisfy yourself it's there. Then we do it one last time. The final exchange. And we go our separate ways.

MALE VOICE

And they run straight to the cops who start looking for our van.

THEO

I won't let 'em.

Lenore's voice is heard shouting near the receiver.

LENORE

No! Rachel has to go first.

MALE VOICE

I like it better his way.

LENORE

I want my daughter out of here!

MALE VOICE

Reason with her.

THEO

Lenore -- you promised you'd follow instructions. We're almost there. Simply get out when they slide the van open and walk to me.

LENORE

I'm not leaving my daughter behind. Not with them.

THEO

She's next. In two or three more minutes she'll be free.

LENORE

I can't do it.

THEO

Don't start thinking about it. Is the tape off?

LENORE

Yes.

THEO

Can you walk?

LENORE

Yes. But I want Rachel to come with me.

THEO

They won't allow that. It's one at a time. And you have to be first.

LENORE

Why can't it be her?

THEO

She's a child. She might panic. She doesn't know me. She might not come to me. She might just run.

LENORE

All right. Now that you explain it I see that you're right.

THEO

Once you're in the car with me she's sure to come to us.

LENORE

I'm sorry. You've thought this out better than I ever could. I'm ready now.

MALE VOICE

I'm opening the side door. She'll step out. But before she gets in your vehicle I want to see the first installment put down in plain view. If it isn't there I'm shooting her in the back.

THEO

Are you trying to panic the women?

MALE VOICE

That's how it is. You see her approaching you toss out installment one.

THEO

I'm tying it up in a bundle now.  
Where is she?

THEO'S POV - In the distance across the parking lot the door to the van slides back. A woman in her thirties can be seen -- a bit wobbly on her feet. Her dark hair is disheveled, her clothes askew and she seems disoriented at first. The bright sunlight blinds her.

She looks back at the van door closing behind her. (The phone is inside with her abductors. She can no longer communicate with Theo.)

LENORE

Rachel -- Oh my God.

THEO

(to himself)

Just start walking. Come on.  
Walk to me.

Then Lenore begins to walk. Slowly at first. Then picking up momentum. Until finally she's running.

Theo gets ready with the money and bonds which are held together by thick rubber bands.

He opens the passenger door halfway in preparation to throw the loot out onto the ground.

Lenore is still running toward him.

Then she trips and falls.

THEO

Get up.

For a moment she doesn't.

Then she rises and begins walking again.

She has almost reached Theo's car when he tosses the stack onto the ground where it can't help but be in plain view. Lenore is only a few feet away by now.

THEO

Open the door and get in. Hurry  
up.

She tries the passenger door.

LENORE

It's locked.

THEO

Shit. I'm sorry.

He pushes the unlock button. She slumps in beside him. It's only this close that Theo realizes she's beautiful.

LENORE

Thank you. Thank you for doing this.

She leans over and kisses his cheek. Her face is wet.

THEO

Stop the crying.

MALE VOICE

She's yours. What are we waiting on?

THEO

I'm backing up.

WIDE SHOT - BEACH PARKING LOT - DAY

As Theo backs out from behind the concession stand leaving behind part of the stash.

He backs several hundred feet -- hiding the car from view from the highway behind the concrete public restrooms.

INT. THEO'S CAR

He and Lenore watching the van.

LENORE

Rachel was terrified when I left her. I could see it in her eyes.

THEO

She'll be with you soon. They're pulling up. They'll realize I kept my part of the bargain.

LENORE

She'll never be the same. None of us will.

THEO  
Include me in that.

THEO'S POV - THE VAN

Pulling up. The driver's door opens -- the initial package is picked up.

THEO  
(into cellular)  
Count it.

MALE VOICE  
Don't worry.

THEO  
Next I want to see Rachel. Put her on the phone before she gets out so her mother can tell her exactly what to do.  
(to Lenore)  
Keep her calm. Tell her you're fine and that she can join you in this car.

But Lenore has noticed something on the seat next to Theo.

LENORE  
You have a gun?

Theo covers the mouthpiece of the cell phone so the abductors won't hear.

THEO  
Now I have -- it's a long story.

LENORE  
Why didn't you just shoot them?

THEO  
Because a lot of people would've gotten killed. Probably all the wrong ones.

LENORE  
You're going to let them get away with this?

THEO  
We've almost got your husband and your daughter out. So don't get

any ideas.

LENORE

They tortured us. And you're going to let them have all that money?

THEO

So far they're keeping their part of it.

LENORE

They put their hands all over me.

THEO

Somehow I got along better with you on the phone.

(into cellular)

It's all there isn't it?

MALE VOICE

Seems like it.

THEO

Put the girl on.

Without warning Lenore reaches out and grabs the gun off the seat.

THEO

Don't be stupid. Put it down.

Lenore has a funny smile on her face.

THEO

For Christ sakes don't point it at me. We want to get Rachel out of there in one piece.

(into cellular)

I'm waiting for the girl. Her mother wants to talk to her.

LENORE

Hand me the phone.

Theo keeps looking down the barrel of that police special.

LENORE

Hand it to me.

He passes her the phone.

LENORE

(into cellular)

He had a gun. I have it now.

THEO

Why are you telling him that. Are you crazy?

LENORE

The rest of the money is here in the car. Why don't you come and get it?

MALE VOICE

Yeah. Why don't we?

THEO

What are you planning to do when they got here? They'll kill us. They'll kill Rachel.

LENORE

I doubt that very much.

(a beat)

Because right about now she should be doing pirouettes at dance class.

THEO'S POV - The van is starting to roll toward him.

BACK TO THEO AND LENORE - who still has the gun pointed at him. The full impact of her words is like a slap across the face.

THEO

You're not Lenore Oberfeld.

LENORE

There isn't any such person.

THEO

Whose money is this?

LENORE

It belongs to the man you took it from. Or should I say stole it from?

THEO

The guy with the transplant.

LENORE

Jack Oberfeld in person. Did you kill him?

THEO

Damned if I know.

LENORE

The video cameras will put you with him in the bank, and I'll bet there were enough witnesses.

THEO

At least one.

LENORE

Plus they'll remember you going after his daughter at school.

THEO

You timed that beautifully.

LENORE

They always pick Rachel up early on Thursday.

THEO

I got what I fucking deserved. I had it all. I could've kept going!

LENORE

As they say -- no good deed goes unpunished.

THEO

And all that crap about your driver being murdered by a cop --

LENORE

I thought it was inspired.

THEO

There was no cop involved. Oh shit! Fuck!

He realizes he assaulted a real L.A. cop on the job. Maybe that cop is awake in the trunk and can hear what's going on. But she doesn't know that.

LENORE

Sit completely still with both hands on the wheel -- until they get here.

THEO

Why pick me to be your "mark?"

LENORE

Nobody's easier to con than a con man.

THEO

You knew about me.

Suddenly there's a violent thumping inside the car. The vehicle is shaking. Lenore has no idea what it is. Theo knows immediately.

It's the cop locked up in the trunk. He's conscious and trying to bust his way out.

The distraction causes Lenore to glance toward the rear of the vehicle -- and it gives Theo the chance to clip her across the jaw. With the other hand he twists the gun out of her hand -- even as she is able to fire off one shot. It singes Theo's hair leaving a powder burn across his scalp and shatters the side window.

The van has pulled to a stop six feet ahead of Theo's car. Two men inside are halfway out. A large powerful linebacker and a Haitian with braided hair.

Before they can completely emerge, Theo's foot hits the gas. His car plows straight into the van stunning both men.

Lenore has slumped to the floor of the car as Theo struggles to back up. He's hooked onto part of the torn wreckage of the van.

The larger man inside the van recovers and tries to fire -- but the clip jams. By the time he slams the clip straight Theo is backing away into a hairpin turn.

Several shots are now fired at the departing Chrysler.

TIGHT INSERT SHOT - TWO BULLETS PUNCTURE THE TRUNK -- which holds the unfortunate cop. There's a SCREAM!

WIDER SHOT - Theo smashes through a low barricade and plows down a hillside onto the beach. In a moment he's driving up

the Temescal beach -- a totally illegal route -- but the quickest getaway path. An old man flying a kite dashes out of his way.

There's a ramp up ahead down which beach cleaning equipment may gain access. One such large orange vehicle is just accessing the beach.

Theo leans on his horn. The sanitation dept. vehicle pulls up short just avoiding a head-on smashup with Theo who speeds by and up the ramp -- heading back toward the Pacific Coast Highway.

INT. THEO'S CAR

Lenore still lies on the floorboard along with some of the bonds and the money.

Theo has the gun in his right hand as he steers with his left. The cell phone is on the seat.

The thumping from the trunk continues.

LENORE

Who's in back?

THEO

L.A.P.D.

LENORE

Shit. You couldn't be in much worse shape.

ANGLE ON VAN

Battered but fully operable -- in pursuit.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

The phone conversation between Theo and those in the van remains open. Theo's hands are occupied with the wheel and the gun which he holds on Lenore in an effort to make her behave.

THEO

Your friends are probably still on the line. Pick it up and say hello.

LENORE

There's no way out for you. You

have to deal with us.

THEO

Assure them that you're being well treated.

Lenore finally lifts the cellular and speaks.

LENORE

Nels, are you there? Hello, is anybody there?

The thick voice we've become accustomed to hearing comes on the line. (Now we'll call him by his actual name: NELSON.)

NELSON

I thought you said you could handle him.

LENORE

I'm doing fine. Theo wants to deal.

THEO

Tell them I'm keeping what's left. I earned it. I probably killed some poor bastard for it.

LENORE

He seems to think he's entitled to it all.

THEO

Not all. They already have a third. The question is how much of that are they willing to give to get you back?

LENORE

You won't shoot me. That's not your style.

THEO

We might hit a bump and the gun might go off. Ever see that Tarantino movie -- where Travolta blew that guy away in the back seat -- purely by accident?

LENORE

Do you have to point that?

THEO

Absolutely. And Topanga Canyon has a hell of a lot of potholes if I recall.

LENORE

He seems to be headed for Topanga.

THEO

I'm not trying to lose them. Nor am I exceeding any speed limits.

LENORE

The one thing you don't want is to attract the police.

THEO

Granted, the cops are not an alternative. Certainly not with one of their own still locked in my trunk.

LENORE

I don't hear him moving around anymore.

THEO

Those shots your associates got off may not have done him too much good. That's on their head. All I did I was put him there.

LENORE

A typical fuck-up.

THEO

What's that supposed to me?

LENORE

I knew you were a loser the first night I laid eyes on you.

THEO

You, I would've noticed.

LENORE

Oh no, you were too busy trying to keep some Croatian from slapping the shit out of his girlfriend. She showed her gratitude by almost

taking your eye out with her  
spiked heel.

THEO

You were at the Emerald that  
night?

LENORE

Naturally you didn't learn your  
lesson.

THEO

I guess I ought to stop seeing  
woman as victims.

LENORE

I think it was my tone of voice  
more than anything else that sold  
you. And when you thought I was  
being kicked around, I wish I  
could've seen your face.

THEO

You're enjoying this too much.

Theo squeezes the trigger -- pumps off a shot into the seat  
beside her.

It's the sound of the shot inside the enclosed vehicle that  
shocks her. She SCREAMS.

THEO

Now you're starting to sound like  
a victim again.

LENORE

You could've hit me.

THEO

Only in the leg or the thigh.  
You'd live but you just wouldn't  
wear shorts.

LENORE

You wouldn't --

THEO

Yes I would. Not kill you. But  
blow off a few toes, absolutely.  
I'm entitled to that as  
retribution. It'll help you to

remember me in years to come --  
every time you put on stockings.  
They must have prosthetic toes by  
now -- with little nails on them  
you can polish --

LENORE

Stop talking like that!

THEO

Then scream for me. A repeat  
performance. Let me see how easy  
you can turn it on. Scream! I  
want to hear you scream for me!

Lenore fakes the first two screams but then they become more  
real as she focuses on the gun bouncing around in his hand.  
Her final screams are not act.

Nelson's voice is heard over the phone.

NELSON

What's he doing? Answer me!

THEO

Better reassure him.

LENORE

(into cellular)

I'm still okay.

THEO

Inform him the fee is seventy-five  
large for your return. All parts  
intact.

LENORE

He wants 75 back.

THEO

Plus names, addresses and I.D. for  
the lot of you. We're in this  
together and I need to know who my  
partners are. In case I ever need  
to roll over on somebody.

LENORE

Did you hear that?

THEO

Let me talk to him. Hold the

phone to my ear -- but don't nudge me.

Lenore holds the phone up so Theo can continue driving with his left hand while holding the gun in his right.

THEO  
Who am I talking to?

NELSON  
Call me "Nels."

THEO  
Okay Nels, you can always keep what you've got and haul ass leaving the lovely lady for me to worry about. I'll bet she can be friendly when it's in her best interests.

NELSON  
If you're looking for a quickie all you've got to do is ask.

THEO  
I think I've already had a "quickie." Thank you.

Now Theo makes a sharp tight turn off P.C.H. onto Topanga.

THEO  
Follow me across Topanga.

Theo looks in the rearview and sees the van directly behind him.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - TOPANGA AREA - DAY

CAMERA PANS TO REVEAL - Highway patrol officer in his car -- reporting in.

MOTORCYCLE COP  
Vehicle matching description 1995 Chrysler convertible maroon wanted in connection with missing L.A.P.D. officer. Has turned north onto Topanga. Two passengers. One believed to be female. Request backup. License number G47495J.

BACK INSIDE THEO'S CAR

He hasn't told anyone he fears being spotted by the police but he regularly checks his rearview mirror.

HIS POV - REARVIEW MIRROR

Watching the van following but not too close.

ANGLE ON THEO'S CAR - DEEP IN THE WINDING CANYON

THEO

These mountains kill the  
transmission. He's gone.

(beat)

How's it feel to finally be alone  
with me?

Theo is deliberately making dramatic turns that toss Lenore around as she continues to stare at the loaded gun.

LENORE

Use both hands on the wheel!  
Goddam it!

HER POV - THE TWISTING CANYON FLASHING BY

Rock slides after recent storms have narrowed the road.

TIGHT ON THEO

In total control of the situation now. He's been  
manipulated long enough. Now he's pulling the strings.

Then he hears a SIREN. It echoes off the canyon walls. It  
could be coming from any direction.

THEO

It could be a fire. This is  
Malibu.

LENORE

No, there's a police car way back  
there. See it, in the distance  
coming around the turn? The van  
is blocking it now.

THEO

What's Nels' number?

LENORE

259-7881.

THEO

Dial him up. We need him to run interference.

Theo watches as she dials -- and since they're much higher in the canyon now the call goes through.

LENORE

(into phone)

Nels, don't let that cop pass you.

NELSON (V.O.)

What am I supposed to do?

She again holds the phone so Theo can speak.

THEO

If he pulls me over he gets all the proceeds plus Lenore here.

NELSON

And if you ditch us we get zilch.

THEO

Sure, I end up with some cash. And a lot of bonds I don't know how to dispose of.

ZOOM IN - TIGHT ON REARVIEW

We can clearly see Nelson at the wheel and the Haitian beside him.

THEO

You're going to have to see to it that both lanes of this road get blocked.

NELSON

The fuck I will!

THEO

It's in your interest, Nels, since the additional passenger in my trunk -- an LAPD officer is probably carrying a few bullets in him traceable to the piece you're carrying.

(to Lenore)

Tell the man.

LENORE

Lose the hardware now.

NELSON

We'll toss it when we make the  
blind curve.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY

Narrowed by the rock slide. As the van hits a blind spot where the cops won't see, the Haitian throws a canvas bag holding the guns out into the canyon underbrush.

BACK TO THEO, LENORE

THEO

(into phone)

You researched me. You know where I live. She'll be waiting for you there along with your split.

NELSON

There's two police cars now.

THEO

Tailgate me. I'll jam on the brakes. You go into a spin to avoid an accident and cut them off.

NELSON

You want us to get ourselves killed?

THEO

From what I can see you're a pretty fair wheelman. There's a hairpin coming up -- that's the place for it. The cops'll plow right into you.

NELSON

And I end up in a fucking neck brace for life!

THEO

Then you can sue the cops. Collect from both ends. Tighten your belts. Here it comes.

(to Lenore)

Ready?

LENORE

(yells into phone)

Nels, do what he says!

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

As Nelson's van now speeds forward to tailgate Theo's Chrysler. Behind the van the two police cars now appear around the curve, sirens blasting.

They're reluctant to try to pass on these twisting rock lined roads with traffic coming around blind curves from the other direction. And there's nowhere to pull over.

Then Theo jams on the brakes. The van veers to the left to avoid total disaster plowing into the canyon wall and blocking both lanes.

The first police car can't avoid hitting the van broadside.

The second police car rearends the first.

It's a total pileup as Theo predicted -- a perfectly orchestrated accident.

Then a camper coming from the Valley approaches and passes Theo -- rounds the bend and compounds the accident -- smashing into the disabled van from the opposite side.

Nelson and his Haitian friend are sandwiched between wrecks.

Meanwhile Theo speeds on ahead.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

Theo watching in rearview. Lenore is turned around, looking back.

LENORE

Do you think they'll walk away?

THEO

Ask them.

He passes her the cell phone.

LENORE

(into cellular)

Are you okay? Nels -- answer me!

NELSON'S VOICE

Muthafuck! My shoulder hurts like a bitch. Rodriego puked all over himself. Here come the cops. I'm laying the phone down.

We can hear what's been said, distant but understandable.

COP'S VOICE

Are you guys all right?

NELSON

You could've killed us.

COP'S VOICE

It was the fugitive in the Chrysler that caused this. We were trying to overtake him.

NELSON

No reason to kill innocent bystanders. Shit. I can't hardly move my neck.

COP'S VOICE

We've already got an ambulance on the way. Don't try to get out.

NELSON

I'm not staying in here with him puking all over the place. Get this door open!

Theo and Lenore concentrate on the road ahead.

LENORE

They'll have units blocking us up ahead.

THEO

That's why we're turning off onto a fire road.

LENORE

Some people fall apart in a pinch. But you shine.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

As Theo veers off onto a dirt road kicking up dust.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

Lenore still listens in on the cellular. There are many voices but they're impossible to decipher. Static, noise.

THEO  
What's happening?

LENORE  
I can't hear. Now there's a siren. They must be in an ambulance.

(into phone)  
What about the money? Nels?

THEO  
Wonderful feeling of security knowing your adversaries are both crippled and unarmed.

LENORE  
(into phone)  
The money, Nels ... ?

NELSON  
(through static)  
In the backpack with me --

Then he fades out. She's lost him.

He takes the cellular away from her.

THEO  
I'm learning to love this little invention.

The car plows through backroads that have become overgrown.

LENORE  
Any idea where you're going?

THEO  
I was sentenced to a youth camp out here when I was fourteen. We cleared some of these same roads.

LENORE  
They did some great job of reforming you.

THEO

That's where this Chicano  
correctional officer first taught  
me to slap paint on a canvas. I  
could copy any fucking thing he  
put in front of me.

LENORE

Think you could do a picture of  
me?

THEO

I had it in my mind what you'd  
look like. "Her," I could've  
painted. You, I'd be afraid to  
turn my back to mix the colors.

Theo is now turning off down a construction road leading  
into a partially completed residential project. Several  
small Spanish style home have been left unfinished.

Construction gear stands gathering rust. Theo pulls in and  
shuts off the ignition.

THEO

Developer ran out of money years  
back. I'd hate to think about  
what's living in there.

LENORE

Why are we stopping?

THEO

I need a break. I've been on a  
marathon run ever since I had the  
misfortune to strike up a  
conversation with you.

He removes the ignition key. Taking the gun, he gets out of  
the vehicle to stretch his legs. She follows. He has  
placed the cellular in his pants pocket.

TRUCKING SHOT - Lenore -- as she catches up with him and he  
pauses to look her up and down with an artist's eye. Her  
fragile beauty camouflages her true nature.

THEO

Who'd ever think, to look at you?

LENORE

As a child I hated being told how

sweet I looked. That angelic little face wasn't me at all. I had to hurt people to prove to them they had the wrong image. Sometimes words were enough -- but I wasn't beyond inflicting physical pain in order to be taken seriously. I enjoyed seeing the shock on their poor faces when they realized who I was. That same look you gave me when I turned the gun on you.

THEO

You've had a lot of fun with me today.

(a beat)

What would you have done if I hadn't responded to your call?

LENORE

We had a backup plan. But I knew you'd come through for me.

She presses up against him. He reaches up with his left hand and caresses her breast.

LENORE

Like steering, it's better if you use two hands.

But Theo has no intention of relinquishing the .38.

THEO

Yeah, I was waiting for that suggestion.

LENORE

Sooner or later you'll learn to trust me.

THEO

How about "later?"

She kisses him with an open mouth. He accepts the kiss but gives absolutely nothing back.

THEO

What's really on your wicked little mind?

LENORE

The cop in the trunk -- he could still be alive.

THEO

That's a reasonable possibility.

LENORE

He might've heard everything we said in the car.

THEO

What's your point?

LENORE

We can't leave him to repeat anything.

THEO

Which one of us is elected to do the deed?

LENORE

You're the man with the gun.

THEO

Naturally.

LENORE

Naturally.

THEO

Maybe your friends already accomplished that chore for us.

LENORE

Only one way to find out.

Camera follows them as they cross towards the parked vehicle. The trunk is facing them -- with its two bullet holes quite evident.

He tosses her the keys.

THEO

Unlock it.

Lenore inserts the key in the trunk and steps back as the trunk pops open.

THEIR POV - the L.A.P.D. officer is alive and unhurt as he

squints up at them. The burst of sunlight bothers his eyes but the bullets have missed him entirely.

WIDER ANGLE

THEO

Come on, Grillo, climb out.

Officer Grillo doesn't speak. He looks from Theo with the gun to the pretty woman that accompanies him.

LENORE

(to Theo)

What are you waiting for?

The cop obediently climbs out of the trunk. He moves slowly, with great effort. Being cramped up in there has been painful.

GRILLO

Lady, don't let him do it!

THEO

You got it wrong. I'm the one that's on your side.

GRILLO

You almost brain me and lock me in a fucking trunk and you're on my side? You stupid fuck!

LENORE

He's seen both of us now.

GRILLO

Look, I've got a wife. I don't care if either of you ever get caught.

LENORE

What else did you expect him to say? Do it, Theo -- or give me the gun.

THEO

I'm going to cuff you and leave you in that house. It may take awhile but you'll be found after we're long gone.

LENORE

That's not good enough.

THEO

That's how it's going to be.

At that moment the cell phone in Theo's pocket rings.

THEO

Nels reporting in.

(to cop)

Sit down where you are. Arms folded.

GRILLO

Yes sir.

Theo answers the phone.

THEO

Yeah?

NELSON (V.O.)

I just strolled out of the emergency room while they were admitting Rodriego.

THEO

You couldn't be calling at a worse time, Nels.

LENORE

If he was here he'd know what to do! Let me talk!

She reaches for the phone, he pulls it away.

THEO

I'm handling it.

LENORE

(shouting into  
cellular which Theo  
still holds)

He let the fucking cop out -- but  
he won't --

As Lenore distracts Theo for an instant Grillo tosses a handful of dirt up into Theo's eyes.

At the same time Lenore makes a grab for the gun.

The cell phone is dropped as the three of them struggle over the weapon.

NELSON (V.O.)

What the fuck's coming off?

The cop wrestles the gun from Theo's grasp -- then stumbles backwards covering both of them.

Lenore breaks out into laughter -- like some kind of uncontrollable release.

THEO

Glad you're having a good time.

But she continues laughing. The cell phone lies in the dirt halfway between them and Grillo.

Keeping the gun leveled on Theo, the cop crouches down and picks up the phone. He speaks.

GRILLO

Nels? You asshole. You almost nailed me inside that trunk. Shit, that was close.

CLOSE SHOT - THEO

As the realization hits him. He wasn't wrong about the officer after all. The cop was in on it just as Lenore described on the phone.

WIDER SHOT

NELSON (V.O.)

How the fuck would I know you were in there?

Grillo turns to Lenore --

GRILLO

It took you long enough to get my ass out.

LENORE

With all those holes Nels pumped in I knew you wouldn't suffocate.

GRILLO

You can tell she was really worried about me.

Lenore walks over to the cop and plants a kiss on him as Theo looks on -- a numbness rapidly overtaking him.

GRILLO

(to Theo)

I told you I had a loving wife.

Lenore and the officer make a chilling couple.

GRILLO

In case you crapped out it was my job to go after that briefcase.

THEO

Or relieve me of it later.

GRILLO

Only I was sloppy. I let you take me out. That was quite a humiliation.

Grillo now retaliates by clubbing Theo several times with the barrel of the gun.

Theo goes down and is smart enough to stay down.

NELSON (V.O.)

Don't fuck around. Pop a cap in him.

LENORE

Allow me.

Theo sees what's coming but he's down on his knees in a clearing with no place to run.

Her husband passes Lenore the gun. She can't help but hit him at such close range.

LENORE

Hold the phone out so Nels doesn't miss the show.

Lenore takes careful aim.

LENORE

In appreciation for services rendered, I'll make it quick.

TIGHT ANGLE - LENORE

As she fires. One solitary shot. (We don't see Theo who is on the ground off camera.)

LENORE  
(into phone)  
He took it like a man.  
(to Grillo)  
Toss him in that drainage ditch.

NELSON  
There's a taxi stand here. I can meet you.

As Grillo continues listening camera swivels 180 degrees. We expect to see Theo's body lying sprawled and bloody.

NELSON (V.O.)  
Only be careful nobody "makes" that Chrysler.

GRILLO  
It's only a few miles and our friend was thoughtful enough to bring spare plates.

LENORE  
We're switching plates now.

Instead of a bloody corpse we see Theo kneeling where he was before -- without a mark on him.

Lenore has fired the shot entirely for Nelson's benefit. She's conning him just as she conned Theo.

GRILLO  
(to Nelson)  
See you at the canyon house.

Grillo hangs up. After a silence Theo finally speaks.

THEO  
You missed.

GRILLO  
(to Lenore)  
Any time you decide to let me in on it.

LENORE  
You nearly fucked up your end so

keep quiet. Get him busy on those license plates.

At gunpoint, Theo is forced to kneel down, remove the plates and replace them with the ones lying in the trunk.

He uses the same small Swiss army knife with which he broke open the briefcase.

While Theo works at it, Lenore and Grillo confer in hushed tones out of his earshot.

LENORE

I prefer to have the sucker die at a more convenient location. Once Nels arrives with his backpack full of goodies.

GRILLO

So Theo and Nels will appear to have whacked each other out and we never existed. A thing of beauty. Jesus, the shit you come up with!

Theo finishes the license plate switch, turns to face them.

GRILLO

Peg that knife into the bushes.

Theo obeys tossing the Swiss army knife away.

GRILLO

Now turn around. I'm going to cuff you.

LENORE

Put those away. We can't have marks on his wrists.

GRILLO

You never miss a trick.

LENORE

I'll see that he stays calm. Pack the money up and put it in the trunk.

There's no question about who's calling the shots here -- Officer Grillo gathers the loose money and bonds and stuffs it all in the broken attache case before depositing it back in the trunk.

Lenore forces Theo into the passenger seat in front. She's positioned directly behind him -- the gun at his head.

LENORE

Want to try taking it away from me again?

Grillo gets behind the wheel, starts rolling.

GRILLO

How do we get back to the freeway?

THEO

Bear right till the fire road ends. It's not far.

He reaches out toward the glove compartment. Then he feels extra pressure from the gun on the back of his neck.

LENORE

Both hands on your lap.

THEO

Nothing but CDs in there. I thought maybe you'd like some Celine or Whitney.

Grillo reaches over and opens the glove compartment, spilling out dozens of CDs at Theo's feet. He's satisfied there's no weapon in there. The glove compartment remains open.

GRILLO

I'd like for you to shut up for awhile.

The fire road now widens and down below they can see the freeway -- busy now with afternoon traffic. Grillo continues driving down, finally approaching the on-ramp.

THEO

Yeah, I suppose getting whacked has got to be one of your best ways to die. Particularly if you're not expecting it. You don't know what hit you.

GRILLO

Can you make him stop!

THEO

Mind letting me make the best of a rotten situation?

EXT. VENTURA FREEWAY EAST ENTRANCE - DAY

As Grillo drives down the on-ramp and joins the traffic.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

THEO

Just sitting here listening to her voice does it to me all over again. No harm admitting I fell in love with the sound of you.

LENORE

That's a skill you acquire when you do fantasy phone sex for a living. I must've had thirty regulars salivating at 4.99 per minute.

GRILLO

Which is how we hooked up initially. The woman nearly freaked when she learned I was on the force. Figures it was some kind of sting.

They are in speeding freeway traffic now. Lenore is keeping the gun out of sight of motorists in the adjoining lanes.

THEO

Some nice fantasy you all cooked up for me.

LENORE

Took preparation.

THEO

Exactly who was this Oberfeld?

LENORE

Local lawyer for Dominican dealers. Off to buy a half interest in a mall in Granada Hills on their behalf.

GRILLO

Which is why we had a lot more to

worry about than the law. These are people who don't worry about reading you your rights.

THEO

I'm the one they'd be looking for.

LENORE

And we'll make certain they find you.

They're interrupted by the ringing of the cellular. Is it Nelson calling again?

THEO

Want me to answer it from beyond the grave?

Lenore pokes the gun against his neck before answering.

LENORE

Yes?

It's Caitlin's voice that comes on.

CAITLIN

What are you doing on Theo's line?

LENORE

Taking messages.

CAITLIN

He ran out on me to be with you? Well fuck him! Everything worked twice as good without him. We didn't need him then and I don't need him now.

LENORE

I'm sure he'll be heartbroken.

CAITLIN

I know he's there! He doesn't even have the balls to pick up the phone!

LENORE

I won't let him. He belongs to me now. Bye, sweetie.

She hangs up.

But Theo hasn't been idle during the exchange on the phone. He's casually reached into the now empty glove compartment.

THEO

Know what else is in here?

LENORE

Take your hand out of there.  
Slowly.

Theo does not obey the command.

THEO

There's a little button under my  
finger. And when I push it the  
trunk pops.

Grillo reaches out and grabs Theo by the throat. He continues guiding the vehicle with his left hand.

INSERT SHOT - TIGHT ON THEO'S FINGER

On that tiny button.

THEO

Think about what's going to happen  
to your valuables when that trunk  
flies open at 75 miles per?

BACK TO THREE SHOT IN CAR

LENORE

You won't live to see it.

THEO

It's going to be some fucking  
snowstorm.

LENORE

Pull over! Pull over someplace.

GRILLO

I can't.

They're in the center lane and cars are racing along on both sides of them.

GRILLO

I told you I should've cuffed him.

THEO

I want the gun emptied. I want to see all six slugs tossed up here. And then I want out. That's all. OUT!

EXT. THE FREEWAY - DAY

Cars speeding along at better than 70 mph.

BACK INSIDE

CLOSE ON the police service revolver flipped open so the bullets can be removed.

Lenore spills the cartridges out in her hand.

LENORE

Five ... six.

THEO

Toss them -- one at a time. I don't want to lose count.

She tosses the bullets over his shoulder onto the floor of the front seat -- so Theo can clearly see them.

He's still bent forward with his hand inside the glove compartment -- pressed against that crucial little button.

EXT. FREEWAY - HIGH ANGLE - DAY

Construction ahead. The lanes will soon converge. Traffic will decrease to a virtual standstill. Once traffic slows or stops Theo's threat become meaningless.

INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

Theo realizes traffic is slowing. He's got to act now. He's bent forward so Grillo doesn't notice that he's reaching under the seat with his free hand.

Just as he pops the trunk he uses all the force in his legs and all his body weight to slam the seat back -- straight into Lenore's face.

The impact is quick and violent.

She's struck in the nose and forehead and propelled backwards.

## QUICK CUTS

The trunk pops open.

The loose cash and bonds in the broken attache case flutter and take flight.

As Theo predicted it's a snowstorm of cash and negotiable instruments.

## WIDER SHOT - THE FREEWAY - DAY

As bills of high denominations waft through the air landing upon and sticking to the windshields of other vehicles.

The door to Theo's car is flung open. He's trying to jump.

MULTIPLE SHOTS - Other drivers in their cars reacting to the appearance of cash money on the opposite side of the glass.

It's money they can't reach. They're going at better than 60 mph now and the dough is on the outside of their windshield. Some nearly lose control and veer into other lanes.

## INT. THEO'S CAR - DAY

The front passenger door flung wide open. Grillo panics. His fortune is blowing to hell. Lenore, in back, is still recovering from the blow to the head.

Grillo still has a firm grip on Theo who's attempting to bail out. Theo elbows Grillo, stunning him.

The excavation ahead and the converging lanes have forced traffic to slow to the 40's -- as Theo breaks loose and jumps.

## ANGLE ON THEO'S BODY

Hitting the surface of the freeway and rolling.

Other vehicles are coming at him --

But he rolls out of their path and into the excavation that has narrowed the lanes at this section of the freeway.

He lies there on his back wondering if any bones are broken. He aches all over -- but he's alive.

## WIDER SHOT - FREEWAY - DAY

A few cars and a trailer truck have pulled to a stop.

Motorists and the truck driver rush out to the aid of the man they saw fall from the car. (The trucker is a thickly built Greek.)

They crowd around Theo.

MOTORIST

Talk to me!

TRUCKER

Trying to commit suicide, Mister?

Theo has to think of some response.

THEO

Reach into my inside pocket.  
You'll find I.D.

The motorist finds the folder with the fake badge.

FIRST MOTORIST

Shit. He's a federal agent.

THEO

U.S. Treasury. On the job.

FIRST MOTORIST

If I knew you were a tax man I  
would've run over you.

2ND MOTORIST

Hope you know how close you came.

THEO

I been accident prone all day.

FIRST MOTORIST

This have anything to do with the  
money I thought I saw flying all  
over the fucking freeway?

THEO

Not allowed to discuss it.

TRUCKER

I already called for an ambulance.

THEO

You've got a phone?

TRUCKER

Doesn't everybody?

That's the magic word to Theo. He starts to get up.

THEO

I need a ride. Help me up.

2ND MOTORIST

Better wait for assistance.

THEO

Just give me a hand. See, I can walk. Hoist me up in there.

They all help Theo into the cab of the truck.

INT. TRAILER TRUCK - DAY

Theo looks at his hands. They're raw, having been badly scraped when he hit the freeway. His pants and jacket are torn at the knees and elbows.

THEO

This was once a brand new Armani.

The Greek trucker climbs behind the wheel.

TRUCKER

You ought to be examined.

The truck is already in motion.

EXT. THE FREEWAY

The bottleneck ahead has opened up. The trailer truck barrels on ahead.

THEO IN TRUCK

He sees something of interest ahead.

THEO'S POV - FROM SPEEDING TRUCK

There in the emergency lane to the far right is Theo's Chrysler pulled over.

Lenore and Grillo are out and leaning inside the trunk, trying to organize and secure what's left of their booty.

It seems it's not all gone.

BACK ON THEO

Amused. He reaches for the trucker's phone.

THEO

Can I make a quick call?

TRUCKER

Government business?

THEO

Very official. 259-7881, if I recall.

He dials. Nels answers instantly.

NELSON

Yeah?

THEO

Nels! Guess who? A friendly voice from beyond the grave.

NELSON

Who's this?

THEO

I thought you'd know me by now.

NELSON

What does it take to kill you?

THEO

I suppose you're in your taxi?

NELSON

Why would she want me to think you were on ice?

THEO

Intelligent question, Nels. I believe she had plans for both our bodies to be found in close proximity.

NELSON

That bitch. What's keeping you from taking off?

THEO

My compensation! Somebody still  
owes me -- big time!

TRUCKER

(who's been listening)  
What kind of Treasury Dept.  
business is this?

THEO

(covering phone  
mouthpiece)  
Undercover.

TRUCKER

I thought so.

THEO

(into phone)  
Your partners are currently armed  
and we're not. Our edge is that  
they don't know we're in touch.

NELSON

I can see the benefit in that.

THEO

You could always disappear with  
what's already in your backpack.

NELSON

Not without the name of the  
contact who can discount the  
bonds. I may need to pry that  
information out of her.

(a beat)

What do you stand to gain?

THEO

Sweet revenge plus maybe a bit of  
vigorish off your end.

TRUCKER

The 405 is coming up.

THEO

(to Nelson)  
Where is this canyon house where  
you're supposed to hook up?

NELSON

In the hills above Sunset. Just below the Getty.

THEO  
(to trucker)  
Take the 405 south.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

The truck veers onto the 405.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

THEO  
(into phone)  
How far off are you?

NELSON  
Five minutes.

THEO  
Where do I turn?

NELSON  
Take the Getty Center exit -- make a right onto Cisco. It'll be a narrow winding road. You can't miss the house. It's a mansion built back in '29 -- Spanish -- boarded up since the quake.

THEO  
Have your cab wait at the foot of Cisco -- we'll ride up together.

NELSON  
And make ourselves a hell of a target.

THEO  
We're gonna get there first.

NELSON  
How do you know?

THEO  
Believe me. They couldn't be busier at the moment.

Theo hangs up.

TRUCKER  
I didn't hear nothing.

The truck barrels along.

EXT. GETTY EXIT OFF 405 FREEWAY - DAY

As the truck pulls off and takes a sharp right turn. The Getty Museum looms majestically above.

INT. TRAILER TRUCK - DAY

THEO  
Look for Cisco.

From inside they now see a taxi parked about fifty feet up a narrow side road. The truck pulls over.

THEO  
(to trucker)  
Let's have your name and address.  
The government will want to send  
you a letter of commendation.

TRUCKER  
Who the fuck you kidding?  
(he jots down an  
address)  
Send me money!

The Greek trucker hasn't believed a word of Theo's Treasury Dept. bullshit. Theo climbs out of the truck, not without severe discomfort.

TRUCKER  
You sure know how to take a lot of  
punishment.

THEO  
From here on, I dish it out.

The truck pulls off as Theo hikes up the road to the waiting taxi cab.

Nelson gets out to greet him. They've talked on the phone. Nelson has tried to kill him. They've engaged in a car chase. But they've never formally met.

THEO  
Hello criminal, pleased to meet  
you.

Nelson gives Theo a quick frisk to make sure he's clean.

THEO

Better haul ass if we're gonna be inside to greet them.

NELSON

I've got a couple of spare pieces stashed under the floorboards.

THEO

Where's the backpack?

NELSON

None of your business, but it's in the cab. That's all mine. When we take from them, we divide, eighty-twenty.

THEO

At those prices I'd just as soon your cabbie didn't get a look at me.

Nelson returns to the cab, pays the driver and returns with the backpack.

Theo turns away so the taxi driver can't identify him as he pulls off.

Then he and Nelson double time it up the hill to the dilapidated Spanish mansion.

CAMERA FOLLOWS

Theo looks up at the massive Getty Museum which dominates the hillside above.

THEO

Probably as close to the Getty as I'll ever come. Unless you care to be my "patron," Nels. You wouldn't be the first successful thief to become a patron of the arts.

NELSON

In your dreams.

THEO

Don't underestimate me. I've got original ideas of my own. Warhol got famous doing a soup can. What would you think of a cellular phone done in acrylics?

NELSON

Are you busting my chops or what?

As we draw closer we get a better look at the house. The earthquake has left it rather lopsided. There are cracks evident in the pillars in the front portal. Tiles have fallen off the roof. The lawn is totally overgrown and ivy has invaded the house. Some windows are broken but most are boarded up tight.

NELSON

Once was a palace.

He proceeds to the boarded up entrance -- pries the thick planks apart to gain access to the door. He and Theo slip through avoiding long rusty nails which jut out. Nelson carefully replaces the boards, squeezing them back together.

INT. SPANISH MANSION - DAY

Totally deserted.

The only furniture left is a ratty old sofa and a few beach chairs. There's no electricity in operation and the covered windows allow little light. It may as well be night.

There's a gaping hole in the floor that Theo nearly steps into.

THEO

Somebody better tear this down before it falls down.

NELSON

Stay put! I know my way around.

Nelson proceeds carefully up the cracked marble staircase to the second level.

Nelson disappears into the darkness above.

ANGLE ON NELSON - WITH THEO VISIBLE DOWN BELOW

Nelson kneels, pulls up what's left of a threadbare rug to reveal the once luxurious maple floor. Several planks are

easily pried up and Nelson reaches in and retrieves one of the weapons which have been left here for safekeeping. It's a .45 Glock automatic. The clip is already loaded.

He replaces the rug, then opens his backpack and takes out his own cell phone which he speed dials. Lenore picks up.

LENORE

Nels?

NELSON

I'm still in my cab -- jammed up in traffic. Are you there yet?

LENORE

Any minute.

NELSON

I was worried about you. Both of you.

LENORE

We've had our share of fuck-ups but it's going to work out fine.

NELSON

Give me 20 minutes at least.

He hangs up, stuffs the phone into the backpack, then crosses to the stairs and descends. Theo awaits him.

THEO

Who were you talking to?

NELSON

Them. They won't be expecting us.

THEO

Brilliant -- unless they were close enough to see the cab pull away. In which case you just warned them.

NELSON

Nobody can do anything right but you!

Nelson jacks a cartridge into the chamber of the Glock. Obviously Theo is not to be trusted with a weapon.

NELSON

First thing they'll see when they walk in is you. And while they're wondering how in hell you got here -- I will be picking Grillo off from behind the staircase.

Theo claps his hands in mock applause.

THEO

I'm in awe.

NELSON

Following which we will have a serious question and answer session with your girlfriend.

There's the sound of an automobile coming up the road. Lenore and Grillo are making their arrival. We hear them park.

Theo and Nelson silently await their entry through the boarded up front door.

Moments later they're heard prying away the boards Nelson recently replaced.

Nelson, still carrying the backpack, withdraws into the shadows beneath the staircase with the Glock ready to open fire at Grillo.

He motions Theo to move into the center of the entry hall -- where he can't be missed. He'll be spotted immediately.

The boards are being pulled loose. The door is opening inward. But nobody steps inside.

Instead two quick shots ring out.

Nelson staggers out of his hiding place dragging the backpack in one hand and sprawls face down on the cracked marble floor -- blood oozing out of him.

He's been shot from behind. His .45 automatic is still gripped in his trembling hand.

Theo realizes that either Grillo or Lenore must've come in a back way -- while the other directed Nelson's attention to the front door.

No one's shooting at Theo yet. Maybe he can't be seen from the shooter's vantage point -- and nobody expects him to be

here.

Nelson raises his head a few inches from the floor. He's looking straight at Theo.

Then with the last bit of strength left in him he skitters the gun across the slick marble floor -- directly to Theo who makes a dive for it.

Then the front door swings wide open -- as Grillo rushes in.

It must be Lenore -- behind Theo in the dark -- who fired the fatal shots.

Grillo spots Theo going for the gun.

GRILLO

Lenore -- look out!

Two more shots spray the marble inches away from Theo -- as he grabs the automatic and fires blindly in return.

Grillo rips a heavy plank with rusted nails away from the doorway and makes a mad dash at Theo who's still sprawled on the floor.

Theo stops him with one shot before Grillo can strike a lethal blow.

Grillo tumbles backwards and lies motionless --

Theo fires wildly into the darkness again as he inches forward and reaches out for the strap of the backpack.

Grasping it, he retreats to cover as a bullet aimed at him strikes the backpack instead.

Theo gets to his feet and stumbles down the long hallway. There are half a dozen other rooms on this first level. Plenty of places to hide in the pitch dark.

But Lenore also has many hiding places and she must know the layout of the house better than he does.

CAMERA FOLLOWS Theo from one vacant room to another -- through what once was a huge kitchen. All the appliances have been ripped out. Windows everywhere are boarded up -- blocking out the light. The floor groans under his weight.

CLOSE UP - LENORE'S HANDS

She's leaning over Officer Grillo's body, taking spare cartridges from his belt and reloading.

BACK TO THEO

Waiting in the darkness. An idea flashes through his mind.

He opens the backpack, locates Nelson's cellular phone.

Once again a cell phone may be crucial to his fate.

He steps out into the corridor again. The floor creaks as it did before advertising his progress.

CAMERA MOVES FORWARD WITH THEO

There are half a dozen doorways ahead -- on both sides.

She could be anywhere.

A few more steps forward -- then he pauses. Stays absolutely still.

She's heard enough of the creaking to draw her to him.

It's nearly pitch black in that narrow hall.

If he can't see her then she can't see him.

He's ready to put the cellular to use.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - CELL PHONE

As Theo punches REDIAL.

WIDER SHOT

As in the darkness another cell phone begins to ring.

(Theo guessed right. Lenore is still in possession of the cellular that once belonged to him. The cellular Nelson dialed only minutes ago.)

The ringing in the dark pinpoints Lenore's position exactly.

Theo empties his weapon in the direction of the ringing.

There's a scream. Several flashes as Lenore's gun goes off -- as we hear her fall.

Then just the constant unnerving sound of the cellular

ringing.

Theo waits. Then he hears her.

LENORE'S VOICE

Oh God -- Oh no -- Help me --  
Don't let me -- Die.

THEO

Didn't we play this scene before?

LENORE'S VOICE

Don't leave me here to die --  
Theo, please -- you can't let me  
die --

THEO

I'm afraid I've used up all my  
good deeds for the day.

There's another gunshot fired by her -- a wild shot that blows a hole in the stucco wall inches away from Theo's head.

Then the sound of the gun clattering to the wood floor. A gasp. Then only the continuous ringing ...

After a moment Theo approaches her body. He's still dragging the backpack beside him.

He kicks the .38 away from her cautiously before ascertaining that she's no longer any threat. She won't live much longer. But she can still speak. The phone lying beside her keeps ringing.

LENORE

I picked the wrong number when I  
chose you ... didn't I?

THEO

Turns out you did me a favor.  
You're looking at a rich man.

LENORE

-- The phones, Theo. Don't leave  
any of them behind. The cops  
could pull up a record of all our  
calls and -- find you.

Even lying there losing blood she's still trying to call the shots.

THEO

You are some control freak, lady.

He bends over and retrieves his own cellular, flipping it off before dropping it in the backpack along with Nelson's phone.

LENORE

I've got ... one last number for you, Theo ...

THEO

I don't want it.

LENORE

My fence in San Francisco ...  
305-4410. Maurice. Don't take  
less than a third on the face  
value of those bonds.

THEO

Sure, like I'm gonna take advice  
from you.

LENORE

I told you ... sooner or later  
you'd have to trust me ...

She raises her hand and Theo grips it tightly. He can see she's slipping away.

THEO

You know, I meant what I said  
about falling for your voice.

Through the pain she forces an odd smile.

THEO (Cont'd)

Now just say goodbye.

But she isn't saying anything more. She releases his hand. Her head slumps to the side. She's dead. He looks at her for a long moment -- sadly -- before leaving her there.

INT. ENTRY HALL

Theo pauses by Grillo's body and searches his pockets. He finds his own car keys.

EXT. THE OLD SPANISH HOUSE - DAY

As Theo emerges and crosses to his Chrysler, peers inside --

THEO'S POV - THE MONEY, THE BONDS - THE ATTACHE CASE

All where Lenore and Grillo left them on the seat.

WIDER SHOT - IN CAR

As Theo stuffs everything of value into the backpack and tosses it on the floor next to him.

He starts the engine and backs out.

He executes a turn and heads back down the hill.

He doesn't look back.

EXT. THE ROAD STRETCHING BELOW THE GETTY MUSEUM - DAY

As Theo drives safely away.

INT. THEO'S CAR

He hits Sunset and keeps going.

After a moment he reaches over into the backpack and retrieves his own cellular for one final call. He dials 411 --

THEO

(into phone)

Information -- I need a number for  
the United Airlines shuttle to San  
Francisco.

It seems he's taking Lenore's advice after all. But the call is interrupted by a shrill beeping.

The battery has finally run out.

Theo looks down at the phone fondly.

THEO

I take back every rotten thing I  
said about you.

The much despised cellular which got him into this -- has gotten him out of it and made him rich.

The phone continues beeping plaintively as he smiles at it

with a warmth reserved for old friend who's shared a lot of grief and whose time is now up.

THEO

You did good. Get some rest.

Theo kisses the cellular lovingly -- then flips it off.  
CLICK! SILENCE!

BLACKOUT

THE END