

LIONHEART

by

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FADE IN:

**EXT. SLUMS - NIGHT**

A battered TRANSPORT VAN snakes through the back alleys of a nightmare slum world. Dark forms huddle around fire barrels, faces lit in the embers. The buildings around them are desolate, neglected -- dark husks, no electricity, broken windows, crumbled graffiti walls.

*Our future. Any day now.*

**INT. BEAT-UP TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

LEON, 40s, military fatigues and coat, drives through the ruins. Sitting next to him, his brother FRANK. In the back, with crates of medicine, Frank's wife, HELEN and Leon's 10 year-old niece, NICOLE.

An imposing barbed-wire wall looms in the distance.

FRANK

(anxious)

Are you sure about this?

LEON

Your cover's blown. If we don't get you out now -- *tonight* -- they're going to find you.

The tension is palpable. Everyone is having serious reservations.

As Leon navigates debris in the road --

LEON (CONT'D)

Once we get into the Green Zone, you're in the clear. My contact's waiting for you with new papers. New ID.

Leon finds Nicole's BIG EYES in the rearview mirror.

LEON (CONT'D)

You're going to love it there, Nic. Food for everyone. Good food. Not the rotten stuff in the cans. And fresh water. Green grass for miles.

This brings a smile to her face.

LEON (CONT'D)

We'll get a cottage. With a garden.  
And horses. How about that, Nic?  
Would you like that?

She beams, on a higher, brighter frequency than everyone else. She is non-verbal autistic.

They share a smile and a very strong bond. He loves this girl so much.

**EXT. THE FENCE - LATER**

"The Fence." A towering wall that wraps around the slums, keeping everyone inside like a maximum security prison yard. Loops of electrified barbed-wire serpentine its concrete walls. Darkened GUARD TOWERS are around the gate.

FIND the Transport Van, headlights off, idling quietly in the shadows.

**INT. TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

Leon sits in the darkness, eyes on the nearest guard tower.

He signals the nearest Guard Tower, flashing the headlights twice.

A beat. All eyes on the dark tower, waiting. And then...

A small flashlight blinks back at them twice in response.

Leon breathes a sigh of relief.

LEON

Okay. We're on.

The family is scared. He takes in their uncertain looks.

LEON (CONT'D)

It's going to be okay.

**EXT. BACK OF VAN - MOMENTS LATER**

Leon hides the family behind the crates of medicine. He grabs a dirty tarp and covers them when Nicole instinctively grabs his hand.

He looks at her tiny hand in his. He finds her bright eyes.

He makes a hand gesture. Tapping his heart. And then pointing at hers.

She smiles. Tapping her own heart. Pointing at his.

She hugs him tightly around the neck. There's a sense that she's never going to let go. He would love this more than anything, but they're short on time. He gently pries her fingers away, gives her a reassuring smile.

LEON

See you on the other side, Nic.

She nods. Scooting closer to her mother and father.

He pulls the tarp over them. Closes the back doors of the van. Here goes.

**INT. TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

Leon pulls up to the gate. A GUARD comes out to meet him.

GUARD

Evening, Corporal. Don't see many deliveries past curfew.

LEON

Medicine. Urgent.

Keeping his cool, Leon shows him a slip of paper.

The Guard gives it a cursory look.

GUARD

Right. Pull through.

Leon starts to pull forward --

GUARD (CONT'D)

Corporal.

Leon hesitates, waiting.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Careful out there. The Green Zone's infested with rebels.

Leon nods. He pulls forward, passing through the gate.

**EXT. TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

The Van heads down the long OPEN ROAD, leaving the giant fence and the slums behind.

**INT. TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

Leon drives, eyes on the road ahead. After a moment, he relaxes. They made it.

Suddenly, HEADLIGHTS appear behind them. They FLASH him.

Leon tenses, keeps driving. His eyes say it all: *they're in trouble.*

TWO MILITARY TRUCKS appear in the rearview, slowly gaining ground.

FRANK (OS)

Leon?

Leon makes a decision.

LEON

Hang on.

He hits the accelerator. The Van fishtails off the road, slamming over rough terrain.

SHOTS rings out behind them. GLASS shatters on the passengers side.

Helen lets out a CRY (OS).

Leon checks the mirrors. The TRUCKS encroach from behind like wolves.

He white-knuckles the wheel navigating trees and brush, determined.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT**

The Utility Van blasts through the brush, coming out onto a dirt road, roostertailing dirt and gravel.

**INT. UTILITY VAN - NIGHT**

Leon steadies the van out, shuts off the headlights as he drives. He checks the mirrors.

He's lost them.

After a moment...

LEON  
Everyone okay?

HELEN  
That was close.

LEON  
Yeah...

FRANK  
(disbelief)  
We're in the Green Zone? We made  
it?!

Leon nods, still checking the rear-view in disbelief.

LEON  
We made it.

Helen hugs Frank, crying with relief.

HELEN  
Oh my God...

LEON  
My contact's waiting for us a few  
miles east of --

CRASH -- ! A MILITARY TRUCK side-swipes them, coming out of  
nowhere.

Leon loses control. They veer wildly. Flipping.

The world spins in a blur. METAL SHRIEKS. GLASS SHATTERS.

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT**

The flipped van on the side of the dirt road, tires spinning  
slowly in the air.

SOLDIERS leap out of the truck, flashlight beams crisscross  
across the van as soldiers approach, weapons out.

**INT. TRANSPORT VAN - NIGHT**

Leon, upside down, held by his seatbelt. He blinks through  
the blood in his face as YELLING surrounds him. Sees the  
BOOTS outside his window.

He fights to free himself from the seatbelt holding him upside down.

Behind him the back doors are wrenched open -- VIOLENT RUSTLING -- Frank, Helen and Nicole being taken away (OS).

HELEN (OS)  
No, please --

FRANK (OS)  
Let her go!

Leon struggles harder.

LEON  
Nic!

CRACK -- ! The butt of a rifle hits him in the side of the head, knocking him out.

SCREEN goes BLACK.

CUT TO:

**INT. PRISON CELL - PURGATORY - OUTER HEBRIDES - NIGHT**

CRASH -- ! Leon is thrown into a dark prison cell. He's been mercilessly beaten, clothes torn, mouth bloodied.

CLANK -- ! The door SLAMS shut behind him and LOCKS. FOOTSTEPS fade away, reverberating into the distance.

CLOSE ON LEON

He tries to crawl to his knees, but they beat the strength out of him too. He collapses, curls up into a ball, chest slowly rising with each breath.

LEON'S POV

Floor level, sideways, our twitching hand slowly curling into a fist.

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - PRISON - LATER**

Leon, cleaned up, wearing an orange prison jumpsuit. He sits across a long steel table from THE WARDEN, a man in glasses and a black suit, who is casually reviewing Leon's file.

WARDEN

Corporal Leon Gaultier... I see a lot of commendations and decorations here. Impressive. You fought in the Dark Zone uprising two years ago. Awarded a Freedom Medal in the Insurrection of '32. You were in the elite Kill Squad. You *neutralized* a lot of rebels in the field. Sometimes with nothing but your bare hands. The insurgents feared you.

(nods, at a loss)

On paper, you're a hero.

He looks up at Leon, who stares ahead like stone.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

So what happened? Why did you betray The State?

Leon's jaw twitches slightly. He is too disciplined to give much else.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Says your brother was a known insurgent leader. That didn't have anything to do with it, did it?

Leon gives nothing.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

I suppose it doesn't matter now. You will die here, and then after they've incinerated your body, and your ashes spilled to the sea, your files will be erased. You will cease to exist. Because that is what happens to the inmates that come to my facility. Unless, of course, you can offer me something. The name of a high-ranking rebel? A location? A contact?

Leon remains locked-in, silent. He's not giving up anything.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

I see. Well, enjoy your stay in Purgatory...

He nods for the PRISON GUARDS to take him away. They lift him to his feet, guide him to the door.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

It's clear to me that you have no care for yourself. But perhaps you should consider your family?

Leon turns. Now the Warden has his attention.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Your brother, his wife... Your niece...

(reading file)

"Nicole?"

Terror shines in Leon's eyes. The Warden sees he has struck a nerve.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

They've been taken to the slave camps.

The Warden smiles, enjoying Leon's reaction.

LEON

Where?

WARDEN

We'll continue this conversation later, yes? After you've remembered those names?

He waves the Guards away. They rustle Leon out of the room.

CUT TO:

**INT. LEON'S CELL - NIGHT**

Leon sleeps on a cot in the darkness. He hears MOVEMENT.

He opens his eyes.

A dark shape sits across from him in the shadows.

It's Nicole. Her features barely visible in the shadows.

She smiles, making that hand gesture they shared earlier: tapping her heart, pointing at his.

Tears flood Leon's eyes.

LEON

(whispering)

I'm going to find you, Nic.

His hands tremble as he makes the hand gesture back.

LEON (CONT'D)

Whatever it takes.

But Nicole is no longer there.

*Leon has been talking to himself.*

Her absence slays him. He crumbles inside, shoulders racked with sobs.

CUT TO:

**INT. INCINERATOR ROOM - PRISON - NIGHT**

A cavernous metal room with pipes. In its center, an INCINERATOR ROARS like a mighty dragon, spewing ash out into piles. In the ash, parts of bone, metal fillings, screws.

*They're burning bodies.*

PRISONERS in masks shovel the ash into ELEVATOR BUCKETS on a conveyor belt. The buckets creep along the ceiling, dropping their payloads into waiting DUMP TRUCKS that haul it out through two giant doors at the exit. Beyond the doors, darkness...

FIND LEON in the prisoner line - working, sweaty, just another inmate. He watches the trucks, full of ash, grinding out of the room and vanishing outside. He clocks the GUARDS patrolling on raised scaffolding around the room, looking down on the prisoners.

He scans the area, spotting --

-- a gangly prisoner, RAY, shoveling ash into a bucket. He's acting a little off, making gestures to a HEAVY PRISONER driving one of the trucks. The interactions are subtle, easy to miss if you're not paying attention.

But Leon is. He catches everything.

**INT. ANTECHAMBER - PRISON - LATER**

The sweaty Prisoners emerge from work, shedding their masks and clothes. Leon watches as Ray confers with the Heavy Prisoner that was driving the truck. They speak low, shielding their lips from the CAMERAS in the room.

Leon watches every gesture and nuance.

**INT. SHOWER ROOM - PRISON - LATER**

GUARDS stand by and watch as the PRISONER are sprayed down by powerful jets.

ANOTHER ANGLE

GIANT FANS SCREAM like jet engines, inhumanely drying the Prisoners like livestock.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon steps out of the FAN, following the line of processed PRISONERS.

A GUARD hands him his folded orange jumpsuit. He moves forward with the line.

**INT. CAFETERIA - PRISON - LATER**

Leon stands quietly in an orange line of PRISONERS, tray in hand, waiting to step up and get his slop.

He surveys the area -- the hallways, the doors, the floor levels -- taking everything in. Calculating.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon sits at a table, eating. He watches RAY at the adjacent table, speaking with the HEAVY PRISONER and two other prisoners.

He listens, observing their body language, calculating.

**INT. PRISON CORRIDOR - LATER**

The line of prisoners move back to their cells.

Leon appears behind Ray, speaking low and conspiratorial.

LEON

Whatever you're planning, I want in.

Ray chuckles, uneasy.

RAY

Don't know what you're talking about, friend.

Leon's look says he knows.

RAY (CONT'D)

What are you gonna do? Turn me in?

LEON

I'm not a rat.

RAY

You're worse. You're a soldier.  
(disgusted)  
You have that smell.

LEON

Not anymore.

RAY

(balking)  
Right, I'll just take you on your  
word.  
(watching Leon)  
How do I know you're not a plant?

LEON

If I was a plant, you wouldn't be  
talking to me right now. You're  
smarter than that.

RAY

You don't know me.

LEON

I've seen enough.

RAY

Sorry, can't help you, "Soldier."

He turns away, finished with Leon.

LEON

(low)  
Word of advice? I'd bump up the  
schedule.

RAY

Why's that?

LEON

Because if I know...

He gestures to the CAMERAS watching them in the corridor.

LEON (CONT'D)

They're not far behind.

Ray tenses, uneasy, dismantled by Leon's uncompromising stare.

CUT TO:

**INT. INCINERATOR ROOM - DAY**

Steam and smoke fills this cavernous room as the INCINERATOR ROARS, belching ash onto its mountains.

PRISONERS shovel ash into buckets on the conveyor as GUARDS patrol, keeping them in line.

LEON, works, keeping an eye on the trucks rumbling in and out of the room.

He looks around for Ray. But the gangly prisoner is not in his usual spot.

Suddenly, SHOUTING can be heard over the incinerator's ROAR, followed by GUN SHOTS.

Leon spots RAY in the distance, hopping into the passengers side of a truck with the HEAVY PRISONER. As they take off, ENGINES GUNNING --

FOLLOW LEON

He starts running, pushing through PRISONERS as they catch on, some cheering, others fighting the GUARDS to get in on the action.

A GUARD steps in Leon's way and --

CRACK -- ! Leon clotheslines him to the ground.

Another GUARD appears. Without slowing, Leon throws a sloppy punch, sending him spinning into the wall.

He beelines for some scaffolding. He's going to cut it off.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon runs up a ramp of the scaffolding, watching the fleeing TRUCK as it makes its way to the outside.

A HULKING GUARD at the exit hits a button on the wall, closing the doors.

As they slowly close, shutting off the outside world, and the truck's hope for escape --

LEON

leaps onto a passing BUCKET, full of ash, riding the conveyor, high over the cavern and --

ANOTHER ANGLE

DROPS down behind the HULKING GUARD as the doors slowly close. The guard pulls his weapon.

Leon elbows him. The Guard hits him with the butt of his weapon.

Leon takes the hit. Normally, that would knock anyone out. But Leon's not normal. He's just pissed now.

He launches himself at the Hulking Guard --

**INT. TRUCK - SAME TIME**

Ray in the passenger seat, watching as the DOORS close on them.

He sees Leon fighting the Hulking Guard at the exit -- a seasoned gladiator, taking hits, and returning them.

Ray's eyes widen, impressed.

**INT. EXIT - INCINERATION ROOM - DAY**

Leon fighting the giant, trading brutal hits as the doors slowly close...

Leon punches the Guard once, twice, head-butts and -- finishes with a kick, launching the Hulking Guard into the wall, unconscious.

He hits the button on the wall, triumphantly stopping the closing doors...

As they begin to slide open again --

**INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

The HEAVY PRISONER hits the accelerator. The truck lurches forward, going faster.

**INT. EXIT - INCINERATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Guards OPEN FIRE on Leon. He ducks, rolls, sprints and --

-- leaps onto the escaping truck, BULLETS pinging on the steel around him.

**INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

Ray watches, amazed, as Leon hangs onto the side --

**EXT. PRISON - DAY**

The truck THUNDERS out of the prison, crashing through several barriers.

**INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

Glass SHATTERS as bullets tear up the truck. The Heavy Driver slumps forward, into the steering wheel, his face a pulpy red mash from where the bullet exited.

**EXT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

Leon on the side of the truck. As the truck swerves erratically toward the fence, he sees the problem: the dead driver.

He climbs along the side of the truck, opening the driver's side door with one hand, yanking the dead driver out with the other and --

**INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

-- Leon climbs into the driver's seat, taking the wheel.

Ray crouches low in the passenger seat, flinching as more bullets fill the cabin.

Leon swerves toward a barbed wire fence and hits the gas.

**EXT. BARBED WIRE FENCE - CONTINUOUS**

CRASH -- ! Leon plows through the fence, eyes dead set ahead, engine ROARING.

**INT. TRUCK - DAY**

Ray, crouching low in the passenger seat, watching helplessly as the truck goes faster and faster.

Ahead of them, a ragged cliff... and the dark, tumultuous ocean beyond.

RAY  
That's a cliff!

Leon stares, locked in.

RAY (CONT'D)  
You're gonna kill us! No one's ever survived that water!

Leon's not interested.

LEON  
You got someone waiting for you on the outside?

RAY  
Of course, I do.

Leon's heard enough. He speeds toward the edge of the cliff, CRASHING through one last barrier.

The truck arcs over the edge, trailing rocks and smoke --

**EXT. PRISON - LATER**

The Warden pulls up in a car. He rushes out, meeting a crowd of shocked GUARDS.

They're all looking down at the angry sea below. No sign of the truck. A Guard says what they're all thinking.

GUARD 1  
They're dead. Nobody could have survived that.

The Warden stares in bewilderment.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT**

The waves roll into the horizon. No sign of life.

**EXT. SHORE - NIGHT**

The cold steel ocean, waves lapping on the shore.

Something crawls out of the waves.

It's Leon, dragging Ray after him like a sack of potatoes.

His knees wobble, weak. They both collapse on the shore.

A beat.

Leon stares up at the stars, soaked and shivering, chest heaving, trying to catch his breath.

He glances across at Ray, sees his bloody leg -- he's been shot.

Leon examines the wound. It doesn't look good.

RAY  
(re: his wound)  
How bad is it?

LEON  
(lying)  
You'll be fine.

He rips his own shirt and begins to make a tourniquet for Ray's leg.

RAY  
(re: shot)  
Crazy, didn't even feel it.  
(then)  
Don't feel anything.

LEON  
Water's cold.

Leon works, quietly finishes the tourniquet.

RAY  
Right, yeah.

**EXT. BEACH - LATER**

A silhouette moving slowly up the beach.

Leon trudges through the sand, carrying Ray over his shoulders like a shepherd carrying a lamb.

Ray rambles, almost incoherent, his voice is brittle with panic. He's talking now to fill the silence.

RAY  
Those were some serious moves back there.

(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

Where'd you learn to fight like that? You could make some real money with those skills.

LEON

Shh. Save your energy.

Leon's stares ahead, focused, fighting exhaustion.

RAY

How long we taking the beach?

LEON

The road's are all blocked. Check-points. Fences. Drones.

RAY

Good plan.

LEON

You've got someone waiting for us, right? They can help us?

RAY

About that...

LEON

(realizing)

You don't have anyone...

Frustrated, Leon sets him down. He swallows back his frustration as he tightens Ray's tourniquet.

RAY

How's it looking?

He's lost a lot of blood. It's not looking good.

LEON

We need help.

RAY

(thinking)

There's this guy. But it's been years.

LEON

Yeah?

RAY

Joshua. Joshua Eldridge. He's about fifty miles south of here. In Old Vern. Used to be Inverness.

LEON  
I know the place.

RAY  
He used to hang out by the docks  
there. Under a bridge. No idea if  
he's still there.

LEON  
You trust him?

RAY  
He owes me 12k.

LEON  
Then that's where we're going.

Leon lifts him up onto his shoulders and resumes the torturous trek through the sand.

**EXT. BEACH - NIGHT**

Leon marching along the beach, one foot after the other, Ray on his shoulders.

Ray has finally stopped talking.

Leon gets a bad feeling. He sets Ray down on the sand.

Ray's glazed eyes stare back at him. He's stopped breathing. He's somewhere else.

Leon bows his head.

CUT TO:

**INT./EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS - CONTINUOUS**

A) A pile of stones on the shore marks Ray's grave. Leon places the last stone, paying his final respects.

B) Leon walking along the shore, eyes on the skies. He stays in the shadows as SECURITY DRONES fly past, their lights crisscrossing the area.

C) Leon stumbles, exhausted. Falls to his hands and knees in the sand. Head bowed. He hears a noise. Looks up. A girl in the distance, beckoning him forward. *Nicole?* He finds the strength to stand, and stagger forward. *But the girl is gone now.* Where she was, is now the shape of a beach hut.

D) Leon enters the deserted beach hut, stepping around an abandoned corpse on the floor. He opens all the cupboards, searching for food. There is none. His fingers grope through the cobwebs, find a dusty can of dog food. He opens a drawer. Finds a few pieces of silverware. He rifles through a closet, finds some dusty clothes in a pile on the floor.

E) Leon is eating the dog food right out of the can. He's lost the orange jumpsuit. He's dressed in the dead man's clothes now -- hooded sweatshirt, torn pants. A small pack over his shoulder, filled with the few things he could scrounge up.

F) Leon passes some neglected castle ruins, covered in vegetation. He sees lights in the distance. His eyes fill with recognition.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD VERN - NIGHT**

Leon comes down a narrow alley. The streets are eerily silent. It's a ghost town at night.

He hesitates, blending in the shadows.

HEADLIGHTS approach. A battered POLICE VAN passes.

He continues forward, searching...

**EXT. DOCKS - OLD DUN - NIGHT**

Leon searches beneath a bridge. There's no one here. He spots a VAGRANT.

VAGRANT  
Can't sleep here.

LEON  
I'm looking for Joshua.

VAGRANT  
What's in it for me?

Leon opens his pack, finds a dirty fork he pinched from the dead man's beach hut.

He offers it to the Vagrant, who snatches it up with dirty hands. He bites down on it with a gummy mouth to make sure its real. It means something to him. Satisfied, he looks up at Leon.

VAGRANT (CONT'D)

Warehouse.

The Vagrant points to a dark warehouse in the distance.

VAGRANT (CONT'D)

Basement.

**INT. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT - OLD DUN - NIGHT**

Dimly lit with a few working lights. They flicker, creating an eerie jaundice strobing effect over a RAUCOUS CROWD.

They ROAR with excitement, a sharp contrast to the silent streets above. They make a circle, surrounding --

Two bare-chested FIGHTERS. Bloodied. Delirious. Fighting with cut knuckles. A black man in his 60s is waving his hands, limping back and forth on his bum leg, clutching handfuls of cash.

This is JOSHUA ELDRIDGE. And he's running the bets tonight.

JOSHUA

(over the chaos)

Three-to-one on Nordic Thor! This Nord from the north came to hammer down tonight!

He gestures to the tall, sinewy BLOND FIGHTER who probably works the docks by day.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

And eight-to-one against Scrappy Pappy! He's old, but he got guts and heart and a dream.

He gestures to a HAIRY MEAT-HEAD that looks someone in construction. Like the Blond Fighter, he's blue-collar, cosplaying on his off-hours for extra cash.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Place your bets now or forever hold your peace. Let's go, go go! Ain't got all night! Cash up, bitches! Show me the cash or get your bum ass out!

Leon appears, pushing through the crowd. He watches as the STREET GLADIATORS attack each other, swinging wildly, throwing errant punches, slamming knees into faces, pulling hair, biting -- feral.

The crowd ROARS with each attack, fists full of cash waving wildly.

Nordic Thor beats Scrappy Pappy to the ground and begins to stomp his head.

Joshua lunges forward, intervening.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Whoa, whoa now! Down boy! That's all, folks!

But Nordic Thor isn't going to stop until his unconscious opponent stops twitching.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Goddamnit, gimme that!

He grabs a bat from a bystander and begins WHACKING Nordic Thor across the back.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Down, you dirty dog! Down! Hell you doin'? Spoiling my bet? I said down!

Nordic Thor staggers away, shielding himself as Joshua beats him back.

Joshua points his bat at Scrappy Pappy, out cold.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(catching his breath)  
Somebody check an' make sure Pappy's gotta pulse. Everybody else get your cabbage out. Time to square up. Let's go! Ain't got all night!

As he collects money --

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon finds Joshua in the crowd.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
What's your bet? Hurry up now. Whatcha got for me?

LEON  
I'm not here to bet.

JOSHUA

The hell you here for then? Can't you see I'm workin' here?

LEON

Ray sent me.

JOSHUA

Don't know no Rays.

LEON

Says you owe him 12k.

A beat. Joshua hesitates, furrows his brow.

JOSHUA

Oh. That Ray. Last I heard, they locked him up in Purgatory. Figured him dead since nobody comes outta that hell-hole alive. How's Ray doing? Excuse me one second --

He points to a muscular TATTOO MAN who is slowly making his way out the door.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Yo, Doodles. Where you think you goin'? You're up next. You up against Nordic Thor.

Tattoo Man is terrified. He raises his hands in surrender and slips out the door.

Joshua tries to limp after him, but the crowd is too thick.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Hey! Hey, get back here! We had a deal! Aw damnit!

He faces off with the crowd.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Yo! I need somebody to fill in for Doodle Boy. Volunteers? Anybody wanna make some money? C'mon, gotta be one of you coward bastards! Let's go!

But nobody is coming forward.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Serious? Nobody here wanna eat tonight? For real? C'mon!

Eyes avert away from Joshua. He grumbles, looks at Leon.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

What about you? You look like you can tussle. One fight. I'll toss you thirty percent of the take. Win, lose, don't matter.

LEON

I'm here to collect for Ray.

JOSHUA

If Ray wants it, he can come get it himself. One fight, and I'll bump it to forty on the haul. Yeah? You scratch my back, I scratch yours. You down?

Leon realizes this is going to be harder than he thought.

LEON

Half.

JOSHUA

What?! You lost your damn mind?! Go on home with that!

Leon starts to walk away.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

(desperate)

Alright, alright -- you got a fightin' name?

LEON

Leon.

JOSHUA

Lion? Sure we'll go with that. Lion... Lion... "Lionheart."

LEON

No, it's Leon.

JOSHUA

Leon-heart don't have the same ring, my friend. Now get your shirt off and your fists up. I got bills to pay.

**INT. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT - LATER**

The clamoring bloodthirsty crowd makes a tight circle around Leon. His shirt's off. His fists are up. He faces off against --

The Nordic Thor. Towering, bloody. He was just getting warmed up with his last opponent..

JOSHUA  
 (over crowd)  
 Awright, losers, pipe down! What we  
 got here is Nordic Thor.

He sizes Leon up.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
 We'll call him the five-to-one  
 favorite.  
 (to Leon)  
 No offense.  
 (back to crowd)  
 Up against him, coming from the  
 wasteland safari, we got Lionheart.  
 Rules. Ain't none. Just try not to  
 kill each other too much. Cash up,  
 let's bleed!

Joshua takes the fluttering hands of money and signals for them to begin.

Leon squares off with him, studying his movements, sizing him up.

They circle each other as the crowd RUMBLES behind them, jeering faces strobed in the flickering lights above.

Leon brushes his nose with the back of his hand, signals to bring it.

Enraged, Nordic Thor attacks, throwing his full weight on him.

Leon dodges, jabs him in the ribs and nails him with an uppercut. It's brutal, ugly street-fighting. Leon's domain.

The Nordic Thor slams to the ground, dazed, not sure what just hit him.

The crowd ROARS. Some with frustration that they bet on the wrong horse.

CLOSE ON JOSHUA

watching Leon fight with amazement...

...then he's hit with an *epiphany*.

A slow, hopeful smile touches the corners of his lips.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon circles his prey, never taking his eyes off him.

Nordic Thor crawls to his feet and swings, missing Leon's face, but connecting with his shoulder, throwing him off balance. Nordic's next fist loops around.

Leon weaves, jabs him in the stomach, doubling him over. He pushes him to the ground.

More CRIES go up. Money waves in fists.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

There we go! There we go!

Nordic Thor groans, dazed. Trying to shake it off.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Take a nap, brother. Ain't worth it.

Leon paces in half-circles, eyes never leaving his opponent.

Nordic Thor lunges to his feet, grabbing Leon by the head, twisting him into a head-lock, choking him out.

Leon struggles, turning red, losing oxygen. The big man has him in a tight vice.

Clenching his teeth, Leon elbows him in the ribs, again and again, until the grip loosens.

He slides out, grabs the back of Nordic Thor's head and --

CRACK -- ! Brings his face down into his rising knee.

Nordic Thor flounders back and crashes to the ground, an unconscious heap.

The crowd CHEERS. And GROANS. Depending on their bet.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Can you feel the love tonight?! We have us a winner!

Joshua triumphantly raises Leon's hand.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Lionheart for the win! All hail,  
the King of the Jungle!

Leon stares at his beaten opponent, chest heaving

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Now pay up, losers! Let's see some  
green!

As he collects money from the crowd --

**EXT. WAREHOUSE - OLD VERN- NIGHT**

Leon emerges from the warehouse with Joshua as the BETTORS stream out behind them, scattering into the shadows like cockroaches.

JOSHUA  
Not bad. Not bad at all, my friend.  
Five-to-one against you. Wow...

Joshua tucks a roll of cash into Leon's palm.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
You a hustler or some shit? Where  
you learn to fight like that? Damn  
near ripped off Nordic's head.

Leon counts the money Joshua just gave him.

LEON  
That's not half.

JOSHUA  
Fees. Commissions. What-not.

Leon levels him with a look. Joshua groans and slaps a few more bills into his hand.

Leon starts to walk away.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Whoa, hoss. Where you think you  
going? There's more where that came  
from. A helluva lot more.

Leon keeps walking. Joshua hobbles after him.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

That money ain't gonna get you far.  
Hell, that's just couch change. You  
can keep scrounging for nickels or  
we can start talkin' stacks.

Leon stops. He knows he's not getting far.

LEON

How much?

JOSHUA

Not out here. Curfew's a bitch in  
this hood. Let's take this inside,  
yeah? Drones.

He gestures to a security drone passing overhead.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

What do you say? You hungry?

Leon is starving.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I know the perfect place.

As they start walking --

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Dinner's on you.

#### **INT. DINER - NIGHT**

A run-down diner, a few dirty PATRONS scattered in booths.  
Leon sits across from Joshua, eating unrecognizable slop with  
coffee.

JOSHUA

So how you know Ray?

LEON

We crossed paths.

JOSHUA

(balking)

"Crossed paths." Uh-huh, that's a  
good one. So whatever happened to  
Ray? Why isn't he here busting my  
balls?

LEON

He's dead.

Joshua winces, hiding his relief.

JOSHUA

Well, damn -- that's 12k I don't have to worry about. Nice guy. But his mouth wrote a lotta checks his ass couldn't cash.

He sips his coffee, studying Leon.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

So what about you? People don't leave Purgatory. Unless they're a pile of ash. And you ain't no pile of ash. You escape? You on the run? Something like that?

LEON

It's not important.

JOSHUA

It's important if they catch me with you. I need to know who I'm working with.

LEON

We're not working together. Now what's this about "stacks."

JOSHUA

Right... now I'm guessing you need this money pretty bad, on account of your recent "activities." Takes money to get through the zones. Without money, we're all dogs in their kennel. Am I right?

(narrowing eyes)

So where is it you're trying to get to? You meeting someone? What?

Leon notices a mom and her daughter in a nearby booth. They look impoverished, hungry, like they haven't bathed in days.

He zeroes in on the daughter. *She bares a striking resemblance to Nicole.*

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Hey, you okay there, champ?

Leon blinks back to reality.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

The fact that you're sitting down with me right now tells me you know I'm right. It tells me you're open to new opportunities. Great. Now what if I could set up a fight that makes us ten times what we made tonight?

LEON

How are you going to do that?

JOSHUA

You kidding, right? I'm connected. I'm a head-hunter. This is what I do. I find people like you. Now, would you be down or not?

LEON

I'm still here, aren't I?

JOSHUA

Perfect. I'll take that as a yes. What's your schedule look like?  
(laughing to himself)  
That was a joke.

LEON

When? Where? Who?

JOSHUA

First thing's first, partner.

He slides the bill across the table at him.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

After you grab the tab, we're gonna get some rest. Maybe you catch a shower or something, cause damn, you filthy. And then we rain-check this conversation till morning. We good?

LEON

Yeah.

JOSHUA

Wonderful.

Joshua scoots out of the booth and starts limping away.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(calling back)  
And don't forget the tip.

CUT TO:

**EXT. DILAPIDATED APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING**

The sun rises over the slums, exposing barred windows, graffiti-scarred walls, abandoned cars like rusty carcasses left in the streets, gathering weeds.

**INT. BEDROOM - JOSHUA'S PAD - MORNING**

Leon bolts awake. He's on the floor, with nothing but a blanket. He holds his head, it's still throbbing from the fight last night.

Sunlight slants through the foggy windows, casting shadows across the chipped wood floors. The room is sparsely appointed. The furniture old and broken, relics from another era.

Joshua limps in with two cheap beers.

JOSHUA  
Rise and shine, Sleeping Beauty.

He tosses Leon a beer.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Hair of the dog.

LEON  
How about a glass of water?

JOSHUA  
How about a beer? Water's bad here.

Leon gives up and pops the beer.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
We gotta hit the road if we're gonna make Sutherland by noon.

LEON  
Sutherland?

JOSHUA  
Your next fight. Been on the phone all morning.

LEON  
(shocked)  
...You have a phone?

JOSHUA  
Shit dog, this is a gray zone.  
Private comms is illegal here. No  
phones, no internet. Nothing. You  
get caught with a phone, they send  
you to the camps.

He pulls out his phone.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Of course I got a phone.

LEON  
Can I use it?

JOSHUA  
Nope. Nobody uses Joshua's phone  
but Joshua.

Leon stares at him hard.

CUT TO:

**INT. LIVING ROOM - JOSHUA'S PAD - LATER**

Leon paces, on the phone. He stands by the window, speaking quietly so Joshua can't hear.

LEON  
(into phone)  
Yes. Their names are Frank and  
Helen Gaultier.

A beat. He listens a moment.

LEON (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Nicole? Nicole Gaultier? She's ten.

A beat. He listens.

He doesn't like the information he's getting.

LEON (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Can you check again?

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon hands Joshua back his phone.

JOSHUA  
Everything okay there, champ?

LEON  
Let's go.

**EXT. JOSHUA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING**

The neighborhood looks worse in the sunlight.

Leon follows Joshua to a beat-up car. Joshua starts the engine. It sounds like it's on its last leg.

LEON  
This your car?

JOSHUA  
Hell no. I stole it.

Leon stares at him, incredulous.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
What, you don't like the color? It  
beats walking. Now get in. We ain't  
got all day.

Leon climbs in.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - MORNING**

Joshua drives. Leon looks out at the passing slums, the lines of people outside food shelters, the dirty faces, the soldiers in military fatigues keeping everyone in line.

Joshua tries to get a radio station, but it's all fuzz.

JOSHUA  
There's usually a good jazz station  
here. You like jazz? Miles? John  
Coltrane? Cannonball Adderley?  
(hitting radio)  
Damn it!

It's hopeless. He gives up finally.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Great. Now I gotta listen to you  
not talking to me.

**EXT. SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS - LATER**

Rolling green hills. Leon's crappy car appears, puttering down a small dirt road.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - DAY**

Leon stares out the window.

JOSHUA

I'm curious. How'd a soldier end up in Purgatory?

LEON

Who's says I'm a soldier?

Joshua gives him a knowing side-look: *please*.

JOSHUA

You don't fight like the worms I dig outta the shit pile. There's some experience in those moves. Finesse. Someone like you, that's professional, that's hard to find.

LEON

I'm not professional.

JOSHUA

Hey now, I've been around the block. I know a fighter when I see one. Hell, I used to be one before I got all gimped up. Maybe you wanna tell me, maybe you don't. But you move like maybe you killed a few people on the job. If I was a betting man, and I am, I'd say you were Kill Squad alum.

Leon darkens. He doesn't want to talk about it.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Alright, alright -- none of my business. But people are gonna ask. And I gotta give 'em a story, okay? Gimme something.

LEON

Why?

JOSHUA

Cause what you did last night? Napping old Nordic?

(MORE)

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

That sent a ripple through the community. That got some lips moving.

LEON

Tell them what you want.

JOSHUA

I like the soldier angle.

LEON

Except that.

JOSHUA

Right. Not that. I'll think of something. Anyway, got someone I want you to meet.

LEON

Who?

JOSHUA

Name's Cynthia. We share some history. She puts on the big fights. The real money fights. Runs the mid-tier fighting circuits. Not the D-class shit I do, but not quite S-tier either. She could make this worth our while.

LEON

Who am I fighting?

JOSHUA

You know, I'm not a hundred percent on that one.

LEON

(doubtful)  
Right...

JOSHUA

I wouldn't worry, whoever they are, you'll take 'em no problem. But before that, we gotta make a little detour.

Leon gives him a questioning look.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SEEDY HOUSE - DAY**

Run-down, weeds and trash everywhere. A stripped car sits in the middle of the yard, minus its wheels.

Joshua pulls up and climbs out. Leon comes up after him, cautiously eyeing the house.

JOSHUA

Let me do all the talking. You just do you, lookin' all badass and shit.

Before he can knock on the door, it swings open.

A gaunt, strung-out WOMAN in a sundress, sweater, knit cap and boots holds a SHOTGUN on him. Her name's MICKEY. She squints hard, a joint hanging from her lips.

MICKEY

What part of get your ass out and never come back did you not understand?

JOSHUA

Mickey, hey -- it's so good to see you again. You workin' out? Damn, girl, you lookin' fine.

It's clear she's looked a lot better. Her eyes narrow suspiciously.

MICKEY

(re: Leon)  
Who's he?

LEON

Leon.

JOSHUA

Lionheart

They trade looks.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

That's why we're here.

MICKEY

No more credit, Joshua.

JOSHUA

Now, now -- this is the real deal.

MICKEY

I don't see any money. Money makes it real.

Joshua pulls out a wad of cash.

JOSHUA  
Real enough for you, baby?

CUT TO:

**INT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Leon follows Mickey and Joshua into the dark house. The blinds are closed. MUSIC blasts from speakers. There are PEOPLE clustered everywhere, on the couch in front of the TV, in the corner, at a table playing cards. They all look up at Leon as he passes.

MICKEY  
What exactly are we talkin' about?

JOSHUA  
Need to get to Sutherland.

MICKEY  
Those transit papers are gonna cost you.

JOSHUA  
Just gimme the whole lunch-bag.

MICKEY  
Everything in it? Sandwich, chips, juice box?

JOSHUA  
And cookies.

Mickey is taken aback. She eyes Joshua suspiciously.

MICKEY  
How much money did you bring?

**INT. BACK ROOM - MICKEY'S HOUSE - DAY**

SNAP -- ! A FLASH OF LIGHT reveals --

Leon, sitting on a chair in a portrait studio set-up. He's wearing new clothes now, dark coat and jeans -- more like an up-and-coming fighter.

Mickey comes up from behind the camera, the joint dangling from her lips.

She sizes Leon up. Roughly positions him on the chair. Combs his hair back. She tilts her head, thinking. Then returns to her camera set-up.

**INT. KITCHEN - MICKEY'S HOUSE - DAY**

Joshua sorts through a duffel bag of clothes, picking out shirts, pants and shoes. Leon sits across from him, still trying to figure out what's going on.

LEON

What's this about?

JOSHUA

You know that fella that escaped from prison? Yeah, well, apparently he drowned in that ocean. Never to be heard from again.

He raises a shirt up against Leon's chest, making mental calculations.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Leon Gaultier is dead. You're Leon *Black* now.

LEON

Black? Can I have another name?

JOSHUA

No. It's Black. Black is cool. It's mysterious. Dangerous and vibey.

Mickey enters with a paper lunch-bag and sets it on the table.

MICKEY

Welcome to your new life.

Joshua rifles through it, pulling out transit papers, a fake passport, driver's license, credit cards -- all with Leon's portrait, all saying Leon Black.

JOSHUA

Beautiful work, Mickey, as always. You're a real artist.  
(re: credit cards)  
I'm assuming you backed this up with dummy accounts?

MICKEY

Do I tell you how to do your job?

JOSHUA

(to Leon)

Somebody tries to run your name, they're going to find a fake account. Real enough to throw 'em off the scent. But don't start charging anything. They're just there for show.

LEON

I don't understand.

MICKEY

They belong to dead people, hon.

She smiles sweetly.

JOSHUA

We gave you a complete history too. You grew up in a poor, gray zone family. Your dad was a fighter. He showed you all your moves. They're gonna ask about that. He died in a coal mine.

MICKEY

My idea.

JOSHUA

That's right. Now, you're going to avenge him.

MICKEY

I'd buy it.

LEON

Is all that necessary?

JOSHUA

If you wanna cross into Sutherland, yes. And where we're going, people like to know who and what they're betting on.

**EXT. MICKEY'S HOUSE - LATER**

Leon exits the house, dressed like a new man in a leather bomber and black turtle-neck, holding the paper lunch-bag. Joshua finishes paying Mickey.

JOSHUA

Thank you, Mickey.

MICKEY  
Don't you come back, Jack.

JOSHUA  
I love you too.

He hobbles toward the car, digging for his keys.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(to Leon)  
Ready?

They climb into the car and --

CUT TO:

**EXT. HIGHLANDS CHECK-POINT - LATER**

A line of cars, motorcycles and bicycles wait for SOLDIERS to check their transit papers. They circle each vehicle with dogs, checking its contents.

FIND Joshua's car, waiting in the line.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - DAY**

Leon waits, staring ahead at the line.

Suddenly, Guards surround a car. A scared FAMILY is rustled out.

The Mother breaks away and starts running. A Soldier guns her down in the field.

As the rest of the family are dragged into a black van...

JOSHUA (OS)  
You good there, champ?

CLOSE ON LEON

He blinks. The family was never taken away.

*He imagined it all.*

LEON  
Yeah...

**EXT. HIGHLANDS CHECK-POINT - LATER**

Joshua's car pulls up to the SOLDIERS. They surround it with dogs.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - DAY**

The Soldiers peer in the car. One of them takes PHOTOS of Joshua and Leon.

SOLDIER 1  
Pop the trunk.

Joshua pops the trunk. Leon watches the rearview as they rifle through everything.

SOLDIER 2  
Papers.

Joshua hands him their transit papers. The Soldier examines them. Then their IDs.

SOLDIER 2 (CONT'D)  
Reasoning for crossing zones?

JOSHUA  
Business.

Soldier 2 gives them both hard looks. He returns to his post with their transit papers.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Don't sweat it. Your papers are good. Mickey's the best.

Leon looks straight ahead, nerves of steel.

After a what seems like an eternity, Soldier 2 returns with the transit papers.

SOLDIER 2  
Pull forward. Keep your headlights on.

As Joshua takes the papers and pulls forward --

CUT TO:

**EXT. LONG DRIVEWAY - SUTHERLAND FARM - DAY**

AN OLD 18TH CENTURY FARM on epic rolling green pastures. SHEEP roam freely. Behind the barn, chipped wooden fences.

A HELICOPTER descends in the field, revealing...

A LINE OF RANGE ROVERS, G-WAGONS and EXPENSIVE CARS cluttering the dirt driveway.

The very WEALTHY climb out, greeted by a BLACK-SUITED STAFF who attend to their every need. It's strange that they're all out here, in the middle of nowhere, experiencing the forbidden.

ANOTHER ANGLE

In contrast to all the expensive cars in the driveway, Leon's crappy car RUMBLES up, engine THRUMMING loudly.

Joshua and Leon climb out, approaching a large crowd in the soggy Highlands field.

JOSHUA

I know what you're thinking: all these rich people can't be up to no good. And you're right. They're here for the *dark fights*.

Leon stares at all the wealthy people, unable to hide his disgust.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

This is where the rich come to feed on the poor. That's where the real money is.

He hobbles up the drive. Leon follows.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As they approach the house, they're stopped by TWO SECURITY GUARDS in black suits, each with an automatic weapon over their shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD 1

Invitation please.

JOSHUA

Tell Cynthia Joshua's here.

Security Guard 2 checks his list.

SECURITY GUARD 2

Don't see that name.

JOSHUA

Yeah, uh, Joshua Eldridge. She should be expecting me.

SECURITY GUARD 1  
You're not on the list. You need to  
leave.

JOSHUA  
Just call her. I'll wait.

SECURITY GUARD 1  
You're trespassing on private  
property.

Joshua tries to walk past him.

JOSHUA  
Buddy, this used to be my world. I  
know how this works. Bitches like  
you used to work for me --

Security Guard pushes Joshua back. Joshua hobbles, nearly  
losing his balance.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Hey! Don't lay your hands on me!  
Hell's wrong with you?!

SECURITY GUARD 1  
Turn around, get back in your car  
and drive away.

Security Guard 1 unsheathes his automatic and points it at  
Joshua.

SECURITY GUARD 1 (CONT'D)  
Last warning.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon and Joshua start walking back down the driveway.

LEON  
You said you called them.

JOSHUA  
I did call them. Didn't say I  
*reached* them.  
(beat)  
I left a message.  
(off his look)  
She never picks up. Usually this  
works!

SECURITY GUARD 2 (OS)  
Mr. Eldridge?

They turn around. Security Guard 2 is standing there, listening to his earpiece.

SECURITY GUARD 2 (CONT'D)  
She says you're good.

JOSHUA  
Yeah, "Mr. Eldridge." That's more like it. About goddamn time!

He wobbles back.

SECURITY GUARD 2  
She's waiting at the main stage.  
Follow me.

**EXT. MAIN STAGE - SUTHERLAND FARM - MOMENTS LATER**

Leon and Joshua follow Security Guard 2 through the thick crowd.

They surround TWO BARE-CHESTED fighters in an open field on the "main stage."

One is a hulking man in a kilt, TARTAN, and the other a FERAL man with a long hair and beard. They attack each other like animals, punching, kicking, biting, pulling hair.

The crowd ROARS with blood-thirst at these "sub humans" spar. It might as well be Pit Bull fighting.

As they brutally attack each other, a woman appears in the crowd.

CYNTHIA, 40s, cold all-seeing eyes, stark features, elegantly dressed. This is her party. She's the alpha wolf. Everyone defers in her presence. She's followed by her black-suited bodyguard, RUSSELL.

CYNTHIA  
Joshua. I wasn't expecting you.

JOSHUA  
Oh wow, hey -- Cynthia. Look at you. Haven't aged a day. Just beautiful --

CYNTHIA  
I thought you'd call ahead.

JOSHUA  
I did. You didn't get my message?

She looks to Russell. He shakes his head 'no.'

Her gaze locks on Leon. She examines his stance and physique like a prized horse.

CYNTHIA  
How long's it been? A year?

JOSHUA  
This guy's the real deal.

CYNTHIA  
(to Leon)  
What's your name?

LEON  
Leon --

JOSHUA  
(talking over him)  
His name's Lionheart. Maybe you  
heard of him? King of the Jungle?

She doesn't bother to give him a reaction. Because she hasn't heard of him.

CYNTHIA  
Why don't you let him speak for  
himself?

He holds her stare, unflinching.

LEON  
What he said.

CYNTHIA  
You come with papers?

He gives Joshua a confused look.

LEON  
He's got ID.

CYNTHIA  
No experience?

LEON  
He's been rolling the "underground"  
circuits, if you know what I mean.

CYNTHIA  
Do you have video?

JOSHUA

What, no, of course not. You know video's illegal in my zone.

CYNTHIA

That's never stopped you before. So, I'm just supposed to take your word for it? Put him on the main stage unvetted? In front of my best clients?

Joshua gestures to Tartan, fighting in the ring behind them.

JOSHUA

Tartan's 3-to-1 favorite, right?

She nods.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Well, I put my guy against Tartan and anything else you got on your kindergarten roster.

CYNTHIA

The fights are locked.

Joshua struggles to hide his desperation. He leans into her, speaking low.

JOSHUA

I need this. Please. After this, I'll go away. You'll never see me again. I promise.

Cynthia considers Leon.

CYNTHIA

You said that last time.

JOSHUA

After everything we've been through...

CYNTHIA

You can't pull that card anymore.

JOSHUA

I drove all this way.

CYNTHIA

There are rules. You of all people should know that. Send me video.

(MORE)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

If I call you back, great, come  
back next week. If I don't... well,  
don't bother.

The blood-thirty crowd ROARS as Tartan smashes his opponent's  
head into the ground and begins stomping him mercilessly.

JOSHUA

Fine, then let him open. Give us  
the cage.

CYNTHIA

The cage?

She glances back at Joshua, assessing Leon.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Now, that is something I could  
arrange.

REF

(behind them)

And Tartan is the victor!

Tartan stands over the bloody body of his opponent. He could  
be dead or unconscious, there's too much blood to tell.

As the crowd shouts "Tartan"...

CUT TO:

**INT. BARN - SUTHERLAND FARM - LATER**

A large crowd of WEALTHY BETTORS gather around "The Cage", a  
large chicken-wire CAGE in the center of the barn. Sawdust  
and pools of blood on the floor. Chintzy Christmas lights  
illuminate the area. Looking down on the cage from the second  
floor, the elite watch from the "VIP SEATS."

Wounded FIGHTERS rest on cots. Poor people desperate for  
money. A filled body-bag is taken away. It's demeaning,  
inhumane.

In the cage, two opponents fight.

SAKE SAL, a shirtless overweight Irish man in shorts. He's  
bald, pale, big red handlebar mustache, tattoos covering the  
rolls of fat festooning his frame. He's probably a bartender  
when he's not fighting.

He's viciously beating a WIRY MAN to a pulp, smashing him  
against the inside of the chicken-wire cage, spritzing the  
audience with blood. They ROAR, hungry for more.

Sake throws the wiry man against the other side of the cage. He hits the side, then slides to the dirt, limp, out for the count.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Joshua and Leon watch with Cynthia and Russell. Cynthia sizes up Leon, tentative.

CYNTHIA

Are you sure about this?

JOSHUA

Oh please, Lionheart can take that dog for a walk any day, anyhow. Right?

Leon watches as the bloody body is taken out of the cage. He just wants to get this over with.

CYNTHIA

Prepare your fighter. The next fight begins in twenty.

**INT. BARN - SUTHERLAND FARM - LATER**

Leon stands there, shirt off, psyching himself up. Joshua prepares him.

JOSHUA

4-to-1 favoring Sake Sal. Knock him down before he gets mad. Most of the people here are gonna be betting against you. Not me. I got your back more than you got back.

Leon nods, taking in his opponent.

LEON

How much if I win?

JOSHUA

Well, normally, the winner gets 15 percent off the top. Losers, 5. But since this is proving grounds fight, it's gonna be a little less.

LEON

How much?

JOSHUA

For this fight? You know I'm not really sure --

LEON

Joshua.

JOSHUA

Alright, man, it's about 500 bucks.  
We split that 50/50.

LEON

You said this was a real money  
fight.

JOSHUA

We gotta prove ourselves first.

LEON

You failed to mention that part.

JOSHUA

Did I? Well, I've had a lot on my  
mind lately.

Leon exhales, frustrated.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

You got this, Lion. Any questions?

LEON

Why do they call him Sake Sal?

JOSHUA

He likes the drink? Hell man, I  
don't know.

The Ref approaches with a RINGSIDE GUARD.

REF

Are we doing this or not?

Joshua gives Leon a look.

JOSHUA

Do your thing.

INSIDE THE CAGE

Leon enters the giant cage, taking in all the faces on the  
other wide of the chicken-wire. The wealthy crowd ROARS,  
jeering, mocking, some spitting.

The crowd CLAMORS as the other FIGHTER appears, pushing  
through the crowd.

## ANOTHER ANGLE

Joshua joins Cynthia and Russell in the VIP seats.

CYNTHIA

I hope you're not wasting my time again.

JOSHUA

This one's for real.

CYNTHIA

If he's not, he's dead.

## INSIDE THE RING

Leon stands opposite Sake Sal as faces push against the chicken-wire on the other side.

The REF comes out, waving, quieting the crowd.

REF

Welcome, welcome! In the right corner, we have Sake Sal. He's the 4-to-1 for today's fight. And in the left corner --

The Ref gestures to Leon, standing there.

REF (CONT'D)

(re: Leon)

...Name?

JOSHUA

(calling down)

It's Lionheart, damnit!

REF

Lionheart!

The crowd BOOS the new guy. It charges Leon up. He shakes out his arms, cocks his neck, priming himself.

REF (CONT'D)

You know the rules. No rules. And no mercy!

He blows his whistle and steps back.

## ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon steps forward, toward his heavy opponent. He sizes him up, taking in his gait, which side he favors, which foot he's putting his weight on.

Sake Sal slams his bare fists together, ready to kill.

He charges Leon, who easily steps aside. Then spins and cracks Leon in the face with his elbow, dropping him to the ground like a sack of flour.

CLOSE ON LEON

Face in the saw dust, dazed. He did not see that coming.

The CROWD THUNDERS, chanting "Sake Sal."

Dazed, Leon struggles to get up when --

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sake Sal throws his entire weight down on him, smothering him with his body.

Leon twists and writhes, trying to get free, but the big man holds him down.

IN THE VIP SEATS

Joshua is panicking. His lips part...

JOSHUA

Hey, Lion... get up Lion! C'mon,  
man, get up!

Cynthia sits back, not at all surprised.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon twists back and forth as Sake Sal smothers him, bringing his lips to his ear, whispering.

SAKE SAL

(sincere, desperate)  
Stop fighting. Take the loss. Just  
take your cut. And walk away.

Leon continues to struggle. Sake Sal holds him down.

SAKE SAL (CONT'D)

(into his ear)  
I don't want to hurt you.

Leon fights harder, twisting back and forth. Sake Sal brings his elbow down on him.

But that just makes Leon madder.

He twists free, kicking the big man off of him.

He staggers to his feet, breathlessly wobbling.

Sake Sal turns to face him... feeling bad for Leon. He wishes he would have stayed down.

Leon swings, hitting him in the face. But it has no effect. Leon hits him in the stomach. No effect. The heavy man just takes it, watching him. Unstoppable.

CRACK -- ! He backhands Leon, spiraling him to the ground, hard. Sawdust flies in the air.

CLOSE ON LEON

Dazed, blinking, eyes regaining focus. He sees the heavy man coming down on him from behind.

He rolls aside.

ANOTHER ANGLE

CRASH -- ! Sake Sal hits the ground, missing Leon.

Leon takes his window, leaping on the big man's back, grabbing him in a chokehold.

Sake Sal spins in circles, Leon riding him, hanging on, choking him out.

The crowd SCREAMS as the big man CRASHES into the cage wall, smashing Leon against the chicken-wire.

He spins, ping-ponging back the other way, SMASHING Leon into the other side of the wire cage, pressing the air out of his lungs.

CLOSE ON LEON

Vicing harder, cranking on Sake's neck with all of his strength.

Sake Sal gasps for air, tittering, Leon on his back.

Like a falling tree, he crashes to the ground.

Leon rolls off of him, gasping, crawling to his feet.

The crowd THUNDERS in shock. It's deafening.

IN THE VIP SEATS

Joshua is on his feet.

JOSHUA

There we go! There we go!

Cynthia sits forward, watching Leon, then watching the crowd's reaction.

IN THE CAGE

Leon staggers, winded, braced against the side of the cage as Sake Sal crawls to his feet. The big man is in shock. This has not happened to him before.

He looks up at the crowd, CHEERING. They smell blood.

He charges Leon, who deftly steps aside, punching him in the face. Kicking his feet out from under Sake Sal.

As the big man falls, Leon drives his elbow into his face, sealing the deal.

Sake Sal hits the ground. Bloody sawdust rises in a plume.

The crowd SCREAMS. Stunned by the win. Nobody expected Leon to do this.

Leon waits for the big man to get back up again. But he's out for the count.

The Ref blows his whistle.

REF

And the winner is Lionheart!

The crowd ROARS, begins chanting "Lionheart."

JOSHUA

That's right! That's right!

Joshua runs out, holding up Leon's hand.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Lionheart! You'll remember it now,  
won't you?

Leon looks down at Sake Sal. The big guy is just a mountain of flesh on the floor.

The Ref releases Leon's hand. He stands there, bloody, gasping. Looks down at Sake Sal.

The big man isn't moving.

A little BOY runs into the cage and starts shaking him.

LITTLE BOY  
Dad! Dad, wake up!

But his father is out cold.

CLOSE ON LEON

The crowd noise mutes around him.

He watches the little boy tug at his father's arm, trying to wake him up.

He scans the wealthy crowd, all the jeering faces celebrating the big man's demise.

His eyes cloud with guilt. His victory spoiled.

IN THE VIP

Cynthia is genuinely amazed by the crowd's reaction to Leon. It's clear she hasn't seen anything like this in a long time.

She watches Leon, hand raised victoriously, eyes lit with an epiphany.

CYNTHIA  
(whispering)  
Lionheart...

Joshua grins at Cynthia. He knows that look in her eyes.

JOSHUA  
Eh, what do you say? Can I pick 'em  
or what?

CYNTHIA  
The crowd loves him. He definitely  
has it.

JOSHUA  
Hell yeah, he does.

CYNTHIA  
When is he available?

Joshua clears his throat, ready to roll.

JOSHUA  
What were you thinking?

CYNTHIA  
I'll put him up against Tartan. The  
next fight's at The Junkyard.

JOSHUA

Old Birm, yeah, I know the place.  
Hold on a second. Isn't The  
Junkyard Mr. Sullivan's circuit?

CYNTHIA

It is.

JOSHUA

Damn, girl! That's S-tier. You're  
moving up in the world. How you get  
in with a shaker like that?

CYNTHIA

Can you make it or not?

JOSHUA

Sure, sure. But first thing's  
first, we need to discuss fees.  
Travel, food, petrol. And papers.

CYNTHIA

Of course. That's not a problem.  
You get him there, I'll make it  
worth your while.

As the crowd continues to chant "Lionheart"...

CUT TO:

**INT. BARN - LATER**

Joshua finds Leon toweling the blood and sweat from his face.  
He watches as Sake Sal is taken away on a stretcher, his son  
trying to keep up with him, feeling horrible.

LEON

Is he gonna be okay?

JOSHUA

He's not your problem.

Leon frowns, taken aback by his callousness.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

You think he woulda gave two shits  
if that fight had swung the other  
way? The best man won. And today,  
the best man was you.

But Leon's not so sure. Sake Sal's crying son is breaking his  
heart.

**EXT. SUTHERLAND FARM - DAY**

Joshua and Leon emerge, moving through the crowd of BETTORS. Someone shouts "Lionheart" behind them.

JOSHUA  
Hear that? They love you. You did  
it, my man!

Leon stares ahead, guilt-ridden.

LEON  
Yeah...

JOSHUA  
Just had a very nice conversation  
with Cynthia. She's all in! Next  
fight is in Old Birm.

LEON  
I'm out.

JOSHUA  
(beat)  
Sorry, what was that?

LEON  
I don't have time for this.

JOSHUA  
You gotta be somewhere?

LEON  
Yeah.

JOSHUA  
Alright, maybe you don't understand  
your situation. Cynthia's about to  
put you in a real S-tier circuit  
fight. That's freedom money. With  
freedom money, you can do anything  
you want.

LEON  
I'm not fighting in another cage  
like a dog.

JOSHUA  
Hey, the cage? That's just  
theatrics. That's part of the game.

LEON  
I'll find another way.

JOSHUA

You're kidding, right? You're an escaped convict with a fake ID. The country's locked down. Without money, you might as well be back in prison. Because you ain't going nowhere.

But he sees Leon's not kidding.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

(angry laugh)

Right, right -- here's your 250 bucks.

He gives Leon the money.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Best of luck out there. Not sure how far that scratch is gonna get you, but you seem like the resourceful type. You'll figure it out.

Leon bows his head. He knows Joshua's right.

LEON

You said the next fight's in Old Birm?

JOSHUA

Yeah, about 400 miles from here.

LEON

And the money's real?

JOSHUA

S-tier don't get more real. This is where the elite of the elite drop their greens.

Leon considers his options. There aren't many.

LEON

One more fight.

JOSHUA

Alright, now you're thinking like a champ.

LEON

No more games. I'm done after that.

JOSHUA  
One more fight and you're done.

As they start back toward Joshua's car in the distance --

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(chuckling)  
Hell, one more fight and I'll be  
done too. Dinner's on me tonight.  
What do you say?

LEON  
I lost my appetite.

JOSHUA  
Of course, right -- I'll get us  
some rooms then. It's on me. Least  
I can do as your manager.

LEON  
You're not my manager.

JOSHUA  
Potato, pot-ah-to. I'm just the guy  
that takes care of business.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SUTHERLAND FARM - NIGHT**

Cynthia moves through the crowd to her Range Rover.

CYNTHIA  
Russell, do me a favor? I need you  
to find me everything you can about  
Leon Black.

RUSSELL  
I'll look into it.

CYNTHIA  
If I know Joshua, those papers and  
ID are fake. Which tells me, our  
guy has something to hide.

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT**

Joshua stands at the desk, checking them in. He approaches  
Leon with two keys.

JOSHUA

We're living like kings tonight,  
yessir. Sleeping in real beds. I'm  
not a hundred percent sure they  
have heated water in this place,  
but a shower's a shower, man. Wash  
some of that blood and dirt off.  
Wake up tomorrow a new man!

He hands Leon his key.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

There you go. You earned it.

LEON

Thanks.

JOSHUA

One more thing.

Joshua opens his hand, revealing some pills.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Pain pills. Perks of the job.

He digs in his coat and hands Leon a beer.

LEON

In case you wanna wash 'em down.  
Don't drink the water here.

Leon takes them and starts down the hallway without a word.

JOSHUA

(calling after)

Don't party too hard! We're up with  
the sun. Gotta long drive ahead of  
us!

**INT. LEON'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING**

Leon stirs in a small bed in an old hotel room. He tries to  
move, but he's in too much pain from yesterday's fight.

Winching, he sits up, rustling his hair with his fingers.

His hand claws at some pain pills next to him.

**INT. BATHROOM - HOTEL ROOM - MORNING**

Dirty. Broken porcelain. Stains on the walls.

Leon takes a cold shower, his body covered in cuts and bruises.

**EXT. HIGHLANDS ROAD - MORNING**

Joshua's beat-up car passing through the rolling hills. They pass lines of people that look like refugees walking along the side of the road.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - MORNING**

Joshua drives, perky, well-rested. Leon in the passenger seat.

JOSHUA

Look -- that number you tried to call yesterday? They tried to call back last night.

LEON

And?

LEON (CONT'D)

You in with a dangerous crowd, ain't you?

LEON (CONT'D)

Dangerous?

JOSHUA

Rebels.

Leon's silence answers Joshua's question. Yes.

LEON

The less you know about me, the better.

JOSHUA

If I get pulled over and they find out I'm helping some murderer, my miserable little life is over.

LEON

I wasn't in jail for that.

JOSHUA

But you've killed people?

Again, Leon's silence tells Joshua everything he needs to know.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

So is that where you're going?  
Trying to get back in your  
terrorist gang? Stir some shit up  
with The State?

LEON

No.

JOSHUA

Then what?

Leon struggles a moment.

LEON

My family was taken.

JOSHUA

Oh?

LEON

I tried to get them into a green  
zone. It didn't go as planned.

JOSHUA

So they threw your ass in jail.  
Right, I see...

LEON

I was told they were taken to the  
camps.

Leon stares out at the people on the road, guilt-ridden.

LEON (CONT'D)

They're there because of me.

JOSHUA

Shit, I'm sorry man.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD BIRM - NIGHT**

Joshua's car passes into Old Birm, the smoky ruins of  
Birmingham. Broken, windowless buildings. Abandoned vehicles  
and rubble in the streets. People live like cockroaches,  
scattering into the shadows as headlights expose them.

**EXT. FRONT GATE - THE JUNKYARD - OLD BIRM - NIGHT**

Joshua's car arrives at a large gate. SECURITY GUARDS with visible automatic weapons stand vigil outside.

Joshua pulls up, rolls down his window.

JOSHUA

Hey man, got Lionheart here.

The Old Birm Security Guard looks in at Leon, recognizes him and lights up.

OLD BIRM SECURITY GUARD

Welcome.

He waves them through the gate.

**EXT. THE JUNKYARD - OLD BIRM - NIGHT**

The car passes through a junkyard, literally. Mountains of trash compressed and stacked in cubes.

**INT. JOSHUA'S CAR - NIGHT**

Leon looks out at all the trash, at a loss.

LEON

Didn't think it was an actual junkyard.

JOSHUA

Yeah, man, these people love their spectacle.

In the distance, floodlights illuminate a giant CROWD surrounding "the ring," giant pillars of cubed trash.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Here we are.

**EXT. RING - THE JUNKYARD - NIGHT**

TWO FIGHTERS spar, hand to hand, mercilessly beating each other as the CROWD CHEERS.

ATTILA, a feral, wild-eyed monster. He lumbers, a head above his opponent, a lean, badass MMA FIGHTER, Connor McGregor type. He's delivering a hurricane of punches and kicks, punishing the giant Attila.

This isn't like the other street fighters. They're not weekend warriors fighting for beer. These two are at the top of their game.

Attila takes each strike in stride, steadily advancing on MMA Fighter. As the crowd chants "ATTILA"...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon leads Joshua toward several white "party tents" that have been set up on the other side of the ring. The VIP section.

A few people in the crowd recognize Leon.

BETTOR 1

It's him...

BETTOR 2

Lionheart...

**INT. VIP TENT - NIGHT**

Black-suited SERVERS bring trays of champagne to the very elite as they mingle inside the tent.

Leon and Joshua find Cynthia and Russell with another, older man, MR. SULLIVAN, 60s. He wears an expensive sweater and slacks with his Rolex, forever in recreational mode.

CYNTHIA

Wonderful. You made it. I'd like you to meet an acquaintance of mine. Mr. Sullivan.

JOSHUA

Hello, Mr. Sullivan. What an honor it is to meet you in person. You put on the best fights --

MR. SULLIVAN

Great. Yeah. Whatever.

He ignores Joshua, going right for Leon.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

So this is the mighty "Lionheart." Word of accomplishments has traveled quickly. I hear you made quite a splash in Sutherland.

Leon defers with a shrug.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

The bookies have Tartan at 3-to-1 against you tonight. That, my friend, is very impressive.

JOSHUA

No offense, Mr. Sullivan, but your bookies are on crack or some shit because --

CYNTHIA

(admonishing growl)

Joshua.

Joshua shrinks at her tone.

MR. SULLIVAN

(to Leon)

What do you think about those odds? Who would you bet on tonight?

LEON

The guy with the best odds.

MR. SULLIVAN

Wrong answer. The right answer is: who I tell you to bet on. That is where the money goes. Every time.

LEON

You rig the fights.

MR. SULLIVAN

No, I *design* them.

Leon darkens.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Tonight, you will do exactly as you are told. Follow the rules? And make money. A lot of money. Break the rules. Find out:

His eyes subtly flick to his Security Guards.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

I'd say good luck, but luck isn't a factor in my fights. Obedience is.

He grabs a champagne flute from a passing tray and goes off to mingle with other ELITES in the tent.

**INT. FIGHTER'S TENT - LATER**

Leon, shirts, psyches himself up. Joshua paces, flustered.

JOSHUA  
Don't sweat this guy.

LEON  
I'm not sweating.

Joshua sees Leon's sweating, a little.

JOSHUA  
Just do your thing.

**EXT. THE JUNKYARD - NIGHT**

Joshua walks Leon through the crowd to the ring. BETTORS turn and stare at Leon, some whispering his name, others scoffing.

They meet Cynthia at the ring's entrance.

CYNTHIA  
(to Leon)  
Are you ready?

He nods.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
Follow the rules, and you will be  
taken care of. You have my word.

**EXT. THE RING - THE JUNKYARD - NIGHT**

Leon enters the cubed trash pillars of "The Ring." Blinding floodlights around it silhouette the wealthy crowd beyond. They rumble with anticipation.

Across from him --

TARTAN enters, the giant in his kilt. Up close, his scars give him a Frankenstein vibe.

The crowd ROARS at his entrance. He is clearly the favorite.

He raises his hands, accepting the praise.

REF  
Welcome, welcome!

The REF enters the ring, silencing the crowd.

REF (CONT'D)

Tonight, we have a treat. The Tartan, as you know, is the 3-to-1 favorite. Against him, the underdog -- Lionheart!

The crowd CHEERS.

REF (CONT'D)

Tonight, you are in for a treat!  
Tonight, is a fight to the death.

The bloodthirsty crowd ROARS, loving this.

Leon turns, blindsided by this new information.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua loses his smile at this turn of events.

JOSHUA

What? What's this?

He meets Cynthia's gaze.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Nobody said anything about "fight to the death."

Joshua's gaze finds Mr. Sullivan, watching with satisfaction from his VIP tent.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

You knew, didn't you?

She smiles slowly, enjoying his reaction.

INSIDE THE RING

Leon is upset. He didn't agree to this.

He looks out at the ROARING CROWD, but he can't see their faces. Just silhouettes in the blinding floodlights.

Tartan seems pleased, relishing the moment. This is not his first fight to the death.

REF

Only one fighter walks out of this ring tonight. One lives. And one dies. The victor must end his opponent. Permanently. Those are the rules!

He ceremoniously strolls out of the ring.

REF (CONT'D)

No mercy!

He blows the starting WHISTLE.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The crowd chants "Tartan's" name. Leon looks across Tartan, rattled by these new stakes.

Tartan lumbers forward, meaty arms dangling like a bear.

Leon moves toward him, studying his gait, where he's placing his weight, which side he's favoring

Tartan charges him, swinging. Leon blocks. But can't stop the train as it smashes him into the trash pillar, knocking the wind out of him.

Leon raises his fists, protecting his face as Tartan delivers a volley of punches, hitting him in the ribs. Then the Frankenstein grabs him by the neck and flings him across the ring like an empty backpack.

Leon lands hard... crawls to his feet.

Tartan comes at him again, swinging. This time, Leon isn't fast enough. The fist makes contact with his face, spraying blood and spit into the audience.

Leon staggers back into a trash pillar, bracing himself against it for support.

Tartan grabs him by the neck, flinging him across the ring again. Leon hits the ground. Before he can get up --

Tartan is stomping him in a blur, like a stampede of bulls.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua watches everything unfold in horror. Leon is getting mauled by the giant. And the crowd is loving it.

JOSHUA

Leon! Get up!

He glances across at Mr. Sullivan, who is enjoying every moment.

## INSIDE THE RING

Leon rolls aside as Tartan's boot slams down, spraying dirt in Leon's face.

He crawls forward on his belly, shaking off the vicious attacks.

TARTAN

Where ya goin'?

Laughing, he throws him into another pillar.

CRASH -- ! Leon hits hard, sliding down to the ground, dazed.

HIS POV

The world is a blur... the floodlights are blinding... Tartan's massive silhouette eclipsing him...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon dodges, avoiding the next kick.

He staggers to his feet, wobbling, raspy breathing.

The crowd THUNDERS, the screams and jeering reverberating through his skull.

Tartan comes at him again.

Leon finds his focus. He kicks Tartan's favored leg, breaking his kneecap with a sickening CRACK.

The big man collapses in shock.

Leon follows with an uppercut, launching him onto his back.

Tartan hits the ground, unconscious.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua is up on his feet, beside himself with relief.

JOSHUA

Yes! Way to go, Lionheart!

Cynthia stares in amazement. She did not expect this at all.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

That's how we do! That is exactly how we do!

INSIDE THE RING

Leon staggers for balance, trying to find his center.

BETTOR 1  
Finish the job!

BETTOR 2  
Kill him!

The crowd begins chanting, their voices overlapping.

CROWD  
(overlapping mantra)  
One lives! One dies!

Leon looks down at Tartan, on his back, out cold.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua sees Leon's hesitation as the crowd continues "One lives! One dies!"

JOSHUA  
Oh no...

INSIDE THE RING

Leon staggers, holding himself up against the trash pillar.

The Ref comes out into the ring.

REF  
Finish it!

Leon stares back, reeling. Then looks down at Tartan, eyes fluttering as he slowly regains consciousness.

REF (CONT'D)  
It's not a win until you kill him.

Leon is horrified. He backs away, shaking his head no.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua glances across at Mr. Sullivan, standing, incredulous at Leon's reluctance.

JOSHUA  
Nobody said anything about killing.

CYNTHIA  
Joshua, you know how this works.

JOSHUA  
This is bullshit.

CYNTHIA  
If Lionheart doesn't kill him, it's  
a draw. A draw loses a lot of  
important people a lot of money.

INSIDE THE RING

Leon watches the bloodthirsty crowd. He looks down at Tartan.  
The big man is not getting up any time soon.

REF  
Finish the fight, or forfeit your  
win. Decide now!

The crowd's mantra gets louder and louder. It's all Leon  
hears now.

Leon shakes his head no.

The crowd ebbs to stunned silence.

REF (CONT'D)  
Is that your decision? Are you  
forfeiting?

LEON  
(gasping)  
I'm not killing him.

The Ref turns, listening to instructions in his earpiece. He  
nods finally.

REF  
Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my  
unfortunate position to pass on  
this information to you. But we  
have a draw tonight.

Despite this verdict, the crowd chants "Lionheart."

REF (CONT'D)  
Nobody wins tonight.

He gestures to a RINGSIDE GUARD, who enters the ring with a  
gun, walks up to Tartan and shoots him in the forehead.

Leon reels in shock.

REF (CONT'D)  
(to the crowd)  
Sincerest apologies from the host.

OUTSIDE THE RING

Joshua bows his head. He knows they're in a world of hurt now.

CUT TO:

**EXT. THE JUNKYARD - MOMENTS LATER**

The crowd is still chanting "Lionheart" in the b.g.

Cynthia stands off to the side with Mr. Sullivan, who is beside himself with outrage.

MR. SULLIVAN

How dare you bring me this trash?  
You said he was a fighter.

CYNTHIA

Give him another chance.

MR. SULLIVAN

He humiliated me in front of my own  
clients. No. Unforgivable. Bury  
him. Make him disappear.

CYNTHIA

Seems like an awful waste of  
opportunity.

Mr. Sullivan reads her gaze.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Listen to that.

She nods to the crowd chanting "Lionheart."

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

They love him.

Mr. Sullivan hears it, watches her closely.

MR. SULLIVAN

What are you thinking?

CYNTHIA

Attila.

Mr. Sullivan balks.

MR. SULLIVAN

That's an outright murder. Who in  
their right mind would bet on that.

Then he sees she's serious.

CYNTHIA  
 People don't bet with their minds.  
 They bet with their hearts.

Mr. Sullivan listens to the CHANTING, understanding now.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
 Everyone loves an underdog.

MR. SULLIVAN  
 What's in this for you?

CYNTHIA  
 I want access to bigger fighters. I  
 want to run in my own S-Tier.

Mr. Sullivan watches her with a knowing smile.

MR. SULLIVAN  
 No matter how hard you try, you'll  
 never be me. There's a reason I  
 don't have any competition.

CYNTHIA  
 Then what are you afraid of?

Mr. Sullivan enjoys her ambitious attitude.

MR. SULLIVAN  
 Can you put it together by next  
 week?

CYNTHIA  
 I'll see to it.

MR. SULLIVAN  
 Do that. Come through, and I will  
 raise your cut substantially. But  
 he better perform. Or it's on you.

She hears the warning in his voice.

CYNTHIA  
 He will.

**INT. FIGHTER'S TENT - NIGHT**

Leon sits on a cot, toweling off blood and sweat. Joshua paces next to him. Two armed Guards stand at the door, preventing them from leaving.

Cynthia enters the tent, gesturing for the Guards to go outside.

CYNTHIA

You lost us a lot of money tonight. Millions. Mr. Sullivan is quite upset. When Mr. Sullivan gets angry, people tend to vanish. He was this close to burying you.

Leon continues wiping off his face, showing no fear.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Fortunately for you, I intervened. We're going to give you the opportunity to pay us back for our losses tonight.

JOSHUA

(incredulous)

Pay you back?! We don't owe you shit!

CYNTHIA

(ignoring him)

We're offering you another fight. One more fight to right the wrongs. Should you agree, we'll be square. Your debt to us will be paid. And you will be free to go.

LEON

Who?

CYNTHIA

Attila.

JOSHUA

Get out! You trying to get my man killed?

CYNTHIA

That's the offer.

JOSHUA

Attila's a monster. He's got dozens on his kill sheet.

LEON

What if I say no?

CYNTHIA

That would be a mistake.

Cynthia draws closer, looking right into Leon's soul.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
I did a little digging, Mr.  
Gaultier.

She has Leon's attention now.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
Your fake ID didn't hold up.

JOSHUA  
Fake ID? Hell you talkin' about?

CYNTHIA  
(talking over him)  
We know about your stay in  
Purgatory. Wouldn't it be a shame  
if they were to get an anonymous  
call about their *escaped convict*?  
That would change everything,  
wouldn't it?

Leon's gaze falters, betraying him. She holds all the cards  
and they both know it.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
The fight is in one week. I would  
start preparing, if I were you.

She starts to leave.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
And since I put my neck out for  
you, you are mine until this fight.  
My security will chaperone you.  
(warning smile)  
Wouldn't want anything happening to  
my investment.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT**

Joshua and Leon climb out of the car and head inside.  
Cynthia's SECURITY GUARDS follow on motorcycles, parking,  
making their presence known.

JOSHUA  
If they set you up against Attila,  
they must want you dead.

LEON  
Why do you say that?

SCREAMING taking us into --

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER**

ON A PHONE SCREEN

MMA FIGHTER IS SCREAMING as Attila straddles him, pressing his thumbs into his eye-sockets, pushing his eyeballs all the way into the back of his skull. Blood spurts everywhere. The bloodthirsty crowd ROARS.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Leon and Joshua looking at footage on Joshua's phone.

Their silence says everything: *this is bad.*

**INT. HOTEL BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Joshua and Leon sit at the bar, reacting in horror, nursing cheap beer. Ragged PATRONS are scattered about the run-down room. A Rugby match plays on the old TV hanging over the bar.

Leon looks out at Cynthia's SECURITY GUARDS in the lobby.

JOSHUA  
I'm so sorry for getting you into this. I had no idea. I swear, man.

LEON  
This is never going to end. They won't let me out until they drive me into the ground.

JOSHUA  
You're right. I used to be exactly where you are.

Leon glances across at him.

LEON  
You fought for Cynthia?

JOSHUA  
Mm-hmm. Before she got big in the game. We both had nothing, but she saw something in me. It was us against the world. She had my back.

He sips his beer, reminiscing.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Until she didn't.

LEON  
What happened?

Joshua pats his hobbled leg.

JOSHUA  
Broke my leg in a fight. After that, I was useless to her. She moved on.

LEON  
I'm sorry.

JOSHUA  
Cynthia wants what she wants.

LEON  
Why stick around?

JOSHUA  
Cause my golf game sucks. What else am I gonna do? I ain't good at anything else. I grew up fighting for everything I had. Food. Money. Pride. And it's not like I had a choice either. Everything's rigged. The government. The economy. That game --

He gestures to the Rugby match.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
It's all rigged. They do that to keep us poor in line. Keep us behind the fences like dogs. They take away our phones. Our computers. Our internet. They tell us exactly what they wanna see on the TV and radio. Give us just enough so we don't riot. And nothing more.

He sips his beer, fired up now.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Meanwhile, they're off in their green zones, living any way they like.

(MORE)

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

With their yachts and their soirees and their fancy coffee shops. They pit us against each other for their entertainment. We're race horses to them. Nah, worse than that. We're pit-bulls. They throwing their money around, watching us kill each other. Because that's the only thing that entertains them now.

(beat)

Romans were like that too. Right before they fell.

LEON

You were using me to get back into the game?

JOSHUA

You're a goddamn unicorn, Leon. You're rare. Someone like you comes around once in a lifetime. Do you know how hard it was to find you? I mean, I'm one of the best headhunters out there. I can find anyone. And it took forever.

Leon gets an idea.

LEON

You said you could find anyone?

JOSHUA

Yeah, man, I've been doing this for awhile. I got connections everywhere.

LEON

Help me find my family.

JOSHUA

Ah, man, I don't know... I meant fighters. Hunt-hunting.

LEON

This can't be that much harder.

Joshua realizes the conversation just pivoted into an area he's not comfortable with.

He leans into Leon, speaking low.

JOSHUA

Let's say I do, and then what? You gonna bail?

Leon holds his gaze. They both know what he's going to do.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(nodding)  
Right, right, I see.

He takes a big gulp of his beer, trying to gather his courage.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
I'll see what I can do.

**INT. LEON'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Leon stands at the window, looking down at the Security Guards' motorcycles when there's a KNOCK at the door.

He opens the door. Joshua stands there, pale, anxious. He quickly closes the door behind him and hobbles into the room, pacing, trying to gather his thoughts.

LEON  
What's wrong?

JOSHUA  
I did some calling around. I hit up some of my contacts. "Ear to the streets" guys. Bookies. What-not. Anyway, I found your niece.

LEON  
(excited)  
Nicole?

JOSHUA  
Yeah. Nicole. They got her in a sweat shop outside London. About a hundred miles from here.

LEON  
That's great.

JOSHUA  
Don't get too excited.

Leon doesn't like the look in Joshua's eyes.

LEON  
What's wrong...?

JOSHUA  
Your brother and his wife? They didn't make it.

LEON  
(stunned)  
What?

JOSHUA  
They were killed after that  
crossing you attempted.

Leon reels. His eyes hollow out. He sits on the edge of his bed.

LEON  
(disbelief)  
...They're dead?

JOSHUA  
They were "processed" at a Death  
Camp.

He watches Leon's world crumble.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
Look, it's not your fault. Don't  
start blaming yourself now. Don't  
go there.

But it's too late. Leon blames himself. It's all over his face.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
I'm so sorry...

LEON  
(to himself)  
She's alone? Nic's all alone?

JOSHUA  
Here's the address.

He hands Leon a piece of paper. Leon takes it, hands trembling. He reads it.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
I'm not telling you what you need  
to do right now, but here --

He gives Leon a set of keys. Leon looks at them.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
They belong to one of them  
motorcycles out there. I pinched  
them off one of the guards.

He digs in his coat, hands Leon some cash.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

It's not much. Might help you petrol and check-points.

LEON

Why are you helping me?

JOSHUA

Because I got you into this. It's the least I can do.

(off Leon's look)

I've made a lot of bad decisions in my life, but I'm not one of these people. I'm not "dead man walking" you into this next fight. I couldn't live with myself.

LEON

What about you?

JOSHUA

Don't worry about me. I'll handle me. You just worry about your niece.

Leon clutches the keys in a fist.

LEON

I'll pay you back.

JOSHUA

Hopefully that won't happen because we're never gonna see each other again.

Leon understands. This is goodbye.

LEON

Goodbye, Joshua.

JOSHUA

Good luck, man.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER**

The Guards look up as Joshua hobbles in, his old charming self.

JOSHUA

Hey fellas, how about a beer? On me.

They look at him suspicious.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I feel bad you waiting out here all night. Least I can do, right?

As he distracts them --

**EXT. OLD BIRM HOTEL - NIGHT**

Leon climbs on a motorcycle, starts the engine and drives off into the night.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT**

A) Leon's motorcycle speeding through the ruins of Old Birm, navigating the destruction of an older world.

B) Leon, thundering down a highway littered with the rusted-out corpses of cars and trucks left on the side of the road. Scavengers scatter in his passing.

C) Leon speeding down a highway. He looks down at his tank. He's almost out of petrol. He knits his brow, thinking.

D) Leon digs through a dumpster, finds a large water bottle. He glances across the street at a darkened house with bars on the windows. Zeroes in on a broken GARDEN HOSE in the front yard.

E) Leon crouches behind a car in the driveway. He's using a piece of the hose to siphon petrol from car into the empty water bottle he dug up. It's not much. But enough to keep him going.

F) Leon arriving at a checkpoint. The Guard checks his ID. Goes back to his station. Leon studies the Guard's face as he calls it in. He doesn't like the look, knows this is going to end bad. He doesn't have time for this. Nicole doesn't have time for this. He throttles, crashing through the barrier. SHOUTING and YELLING behind him as he rockets into the night.

CUT TO:

**INT. LEON'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

CRACK -- ! Joshua is punched in the face.

He's sitting in a chair, hands zip-tied. Bloodied, bruised and battered. But still grinning with that Joshua charm.

Cynthia stands over him as her Security Guards beat the shit out of him.

JOSHUA

Cynthia, why would I help him escape? You know I need that money.

Cynthia watches Joshua, trying to read him.

CYNTHIA

No more games. If he doesn't fight next week, Mr. Sullivan will have my head on a platter. Do you understand me?

JOSHUA

I'm not exactly sure how that changes my answer.

Cynthia gestures for Security Guard 1 to continue beating on Joshua.

She starts to leave the room when Security Guard 2 finds Joshua's phone, checks its call history. He recognizes the last call.

SECURITY GUARD 2

His last call's a London number.

CYNTHIA

What's in London, Joshua?

JOSHUA

Fish and chips and a lot of bad teeth.

CRACK -- ! He's punched again. He doubles over, drooling blood.

CYNTHIA

(to Security Guard 2)  
Find out where that number is.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OLD FACTORY - LONDON - NIGHT**

An old brick building from the 18th Century. Barred, broken out windows. Covered in vegetation, and graffiti.

Across the street --

Leon on his bike, scouting it. He checks the address Joshua gave him. This is it.

He shuts off the engine and climbs off his bike.

**EXT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

Leon stays in the shadows, using the darkness as his cover. He spots several security cameras. He avoids them, slowly making his way to the back.

**EXT. LOADING ZONE - OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

A truck is backed into the loading zone. A forklift moves CRATES of fabrics into it. Tired WORKERS in heavy coats and hats move like zombies.

A big Worker passes behind a stack of boxes. THUD. Rustling.

A beat.

Leon emerges, dressed in the heavy coat and hat, adjusting the workers credentials on his coat.

Keeping his head down, hat shielding him from the security cameras above, Leon makes his way in through the back.

**INT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

He enters a large room. Clothes come down through giant chutes, landing in industrial-sized carts. WORKERS push the carts to long tables where they are emptied and processed.

Leon passes through, continuing into --

**ANOTHER ANGLE**

Industrial half-lit hallways. The walls are stacked with boxes full of fabric supplies.

Leon moves down the hallway, head down. He pauses.

Up ahead, he spots a MANAGER. Just the person he was looking for.

He approaches the Manager.

MANAGER

Hey, get back to work --

He stops, not recognizing Leon.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Who are you?

Leon is in his face. Someone you don't want to meet in a dark alley.

LEON

I'm looking for someone.

MANAGER

You can't be back here --

Leon grabs him around the neck and pushes him back up against the wall. He's not playing anymore.

LEON

A little girl. About 10. Her name's Nicole.

MANAGER

Tons of kids here! I don't know all their names!

LEON

She doesn't speak.

The Manager recognizes Nicole now.

MANAGER

Right... right... the mute kid.

Leon slams him back against the wall, resetting his attitude.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Easy, easy!

LEON

Where is she?

MANAGER

Chill, man. It's all good.

Leon releases him. Manager straightens his shirt.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Gutter rats are up on the third floor.

**INT. SEWING ROOM - OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

Leon follows the Manager out of an elevator, they're hit with the THUNDERING MACHINERY.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

A cold, industrial room packed with malnourished POOR KIDS at various stations: sewing, packing, feeding a conveyer belt.

FOREMEN pass through the aisles, making sure everyone's in line. It's straight out of a Dickens novel.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon follows the Manager through a maze of cubicles. He looks down at the working kids. The ones that are off-shift are sleeping on the floor. Dirty faces look up at him, gazes hopeless, afraid, lost...

Leon shudders, wishing he could help them.

MANAGER

She's just up here.

ANOTHER ANGLE

They come to a work cubicle. Three kids are packed inside, working fabric through sewing machines.

LEON

(recognizing)

Nic?

NICOLE

turns, looking up at him. She's dirty and gaunt. But the light is still in her eyes.

Leon breaks, dropping to his knees, embracing her, sobbing with relief. The dam has broken.

LEON (CONT'D)

Oh God... Oh God...

She holds him back, her arms around his neck.

LEON (CONT'D)

How are you? Are you okay?

She nods, forgetting her situation, happy to see him.

LEON (CONT'D)

I've missed you so much.

She smiles. Her eyes reflect the same sentiment. She's missed him too.

LEON (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay...

(gathering his thoughts)

We're going to get you out of here.

We're leaving.

He looks up. The Manager is no longer behind them.

A KLAXON ALARM goes off, pulsing through the room.

He spots the Manager leading several SECURITY GUARDS toward him.

LEON (CONT'D)

Hold onto me, okay?

She nods, climbing onto his back.

LEON (CONT'D)

No matter what. Hold on.

Piggy-backing Nicole, Leon starts running.

ANOTHER ANGLE

FOLLOW LEON, with Nicole on his back, navigating the maze of cubicles, racing to the exit.

A GUARD steps in his path and --

CRACK -- ! Leon throws an elbow, spinning him to the ground.

He veers into --

**INT. HALLWAY - OLD FACTORY - CONTINUOUS**

The ALARM pulses loudly as he charges down the hallway. He doesn't care about security cameras now. He just wants to get out.

WORKERS see him coming through like a bull and scramble to get out of his way.

He careens around another corner to face --

TWO GUARDS. They draw their weapons.

GUARD

Stop!

Leon spins back around the corner, searching for another way out.

He spots the door to the laundry chute.

LEON  
Hold onto me.

He opens the laundry chute door. Embraces Nicole in his arms and --

LEON (CONT'D)  
Ready?

She nods, trusting him.

He leaps down the chute.

**INT. LAUNDRY CHUTE - CONTINUOUS**

Leon slides down the chute, his big arms wrapped around Nicole, protecting her with his own body.

**INT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

CRASH -- ! Leon and Nicole burst out of chute, landing in an industrial cart full of clothes.

Surprised Workers back away as he climbs out with Nicole.

Lifting her up onto his back, he resumes, making his way to the exit.

**EXT. OLD FACTORY - NIGHT**

Leon emerges from the loading zone with Nicole. Armed Guards pour out after him. He beelines for his motorcycle in the distance.

ANOTHER ANGLE

He finds his motorcycle across the street, hidden in the bushes.

He climbs on, starting the engine. Nicole sits behind him, wrapping her arms around his waist.

LEON  
Ready?

She nods, pressing her face against his back.

LEON (CONT'D)

You're doing great, Nic. I'm proud  
of you.

He OPENS the throttle, speeding into the night. Vanishing  
down the road.

A beat.

A BLACK SUV turns its headlights on, revealing its position.  
As it follows --

**EXT. DESOLATE OFFICE BUILDING - LATER**

Leon pulls up in front of a rundown building. It's dark.  
Barred up. Covered in graffiti. Seems to be abandoned.

Guiding Nicole by the hand, he leads her inside.

**INT. ABANDONED OFFICE - LATER**

Neglected. Everything of value has been stolen long ago.  
Broken piles of wood that used to be the desk and chairs are  
scattered everywhere.

Leon enters, closing the door behind them. He goes to the  
window. The glass is gone. But it has a nice view of his bike  
in the alley below.

LEON

We're going to stay here for a few  
hours. Until it's safe. Then we'll  
leave.

She watches him, listening. Understanding.

LEON (CONT'D)

You hungry?

He reaches into his coat, pulls out an old candy bar he  
stole. He gives it to her.

She tears it apart with trembling fingers. She's about to eat  
it when she remembers Leon. She offers him some.

LEON (CONT'D)

No. No, it's for you.

She's still not sure it's okay to eat the whole candy bar.

LEON (CONT'D)

I'm fine.

As she reluctantly eats the candy bar, Leon slides down the wall, holding his knees against his chest.

LEON (CONT'D)

I'm going to get us out of this place. It's going to be okay.

She continues eating.

LEON (CONT'D)

We'll get to the Green Zone. Remember the cottage? And the garden? The horses? It'll be like that, Nic. And we'll never look back. It'll all be like a bad memory.

He's saying this more for himself.

LEON (CONT'D)

We'll be a family. Just you and me.

She stops eating, eyes full of question. She tilts her head, confused by "*just you and me.*"

He realizes she doesn't know about her parents.

LEON (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Oh no...

Her eyes fill with concern... then alarm...

He looks away, his gaze dropping to the ground between his boots. He doesn't even know where to begin.

LEON (CONT'D)

They didn't tell you, did they?

She continues staring at him, waiting. She's stopped breathing now.

LEON (CONT'D)

Nic...

He can't continue. He just shakes his head, his heart breaking.

She understands. He doesn't have to say the words. She knows exactly what happened.

She slides back against the wall, buries her face in her knees, and starts sobbing.

Leon watches her a moment, not knowing what to do.  
Then he leans across and holds her racking shoulders.  
There's nothing left to say.

**INT. ABANDONED OFFICE - LATER**

Leon, asleep on the floor, his coat over Nicole like a blanket.

The floor CREAKS... then FOOTSTEPS...

He opens his eyes, looking up at...

TWO BIG SILHOUETTES standing over him in the darkness.

He scrambles to get up but --

FFFT -- ! He's shot in the neck with dart.

He rips it out, staggering, the drug taking effect.

And then collapses in a heap...

CUT TO:

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - LONDON - NIGHT**

Leon stirs, awakening in a plush hotel room. He's in fine silk sheets on a king-sized bed.

He struggles to focus, finding...

CYNTHIA, sitting in a chair across from him, on her phone.  
Her SECURITY GUARDS stand vigil at the door.

CYNTHIA

That was so unnecessary.

LEON

Where's Nic?

CYNTHIA

Your niece is safe. She's being  
taken care of.

LEON

I want to see her.

Cynthia holds up her phone. ON THE SCREEN, Nicole can be seen in nice hotel suite. She looks afraid and disoriented in this foreign environment, but it's clear she's in a safe place.

CYNTHIA

Do exactly what I say, and there can be a happy ending here. But it's going to require you to play nice.

Leon realizes Cynthia's holding all the cards now.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Don't play nice? End up like your friend, Joshua.

LEON

Where is he?

Cynthia watches him, a cruel smile touching the corners of her lips.

CYNTHIA

Why do you care? He doesn't matter anymore.

LEON

Can I see him?

Cynthia deliberates a moment.

CYNTHIA

I don't see why not.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY**

Leon, flanked by Cynthia's Guards, follows her into this small, third world hospital room. The paint is peeling. The equipment is old and jury-rigged. EKG and EEG monitors beep.

Leon stops, his lips parting...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

JOSHUA, heavily bandaged, hooked up to the monitors. They beat him inches from death.

His glassy eyes slowly drift open. The pain meds make his smile a little goofy.

JOSHUA  
 (weak whisper)  
 Hey... hey... it's you... hell you  
 come back for?

LEON  
 You're my manager.

JOSHUA  
 Oh now I'm your manager... okay,  
 okay...

CYNTHIA  
 I'll let you two catch up.

Cynthia nods for the Guards to leave. She follows them out  
 into the hallway.

LEON  
 I'm so sorry.

Joshua tries to laugh, but he's in too much pain. His ribs  
 are bandaged too.

JOSHUA  
 You should be. You were supposed to  
 get away...  
 (wincing)  
 ...how the hell you mess that up?

Leon doesn't even know where to begin.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
 She coulda killed me...  
 (painful laugh)  
 ...but she kept me alive to make an  
 example outta me...  
 (struggling)  
 I'm a damn cautionary tale... don't  
 mess with Cynthia, kids... or you  
 end up broken like me...

LEON  
 I'm going to take care of this.

JOSHUA  
 How?  
 (then)  
 You gonna fight?

Leon's silence says 'yes.'

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Attila... he'll kill you...

LEON  
I don't have a choice.

Joshua struggles, then gets out:

JOSHUA  
You always have a choice...

He holds Leon's gaze.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
This is a game... game of  
leverage...  
(struggling)  
Find your leverage.

LEON  
I've lost everything.

JOSHUA  
No you haven't.

LEON  
I don't understand.

Joshua coughs, wincing.

JOSHUA  
You have the people... and these  
assholes know it.

He smiles through his pain. He raises his hand.

Leon clasps it. Joshua squeezes it as hard as he can to make  
a point.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)  
The people are your leverage.

CLOSE ON THEIR HANDS

clasped tightly.

CUT TO:

**INT. GYM - DAY**

A very nice gym. The best equipment. Mirrors everywhere.

Leon punches a bag, training. He looks in the mirror's reflection as MR. SULLIVAN enters with his SECURITY.

He approaches, sizing Leon up like a race horse.

MR. SULLIVAN

Looking fierce, my friend. Are you ready for tomorrow?

Leon stops punching the bag. He shrugs: as ready as he's ever going to be.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

I hear you wanted to see me?

Leon grabs a towel, wipes his face off.

LEON

What are the odds on the fight?

MR. SULLIVAN

The bookies have you at 4-to-1 favoring Attila. Normally, it's 5, but you displayed great promise in your last fight. Why?

LEON

I wanna make a side bet.

MR. SULLIVAN

Oh? This sounds intriguing.

LEON

I want to bet on me.

MR. SULLIVAN

With what?

LEON

The money you owe me from the last fight.

Mr. Sullivan glares at him.

MR. SULLIVAN

Did you hit your head, son? You didn't make any money. You lost money. You're in the red. You have no leverage.

LEON

You just went through a lot of effort to bring me back. I must have a little.

MR. SULLIVAN  
You're not as valuable as you  
think.

LEON  
Seems to me I won that crowd over.

Mr. Sullivan's eyes narrow on him.

LEON (CONT'D)  
What if I didn't fight?

MR. SULLIVAN  
Well, that would be a mistake you  
wouldn't walk away from.

LEON  
But you'd probably lose a lot of  
money too. Wouldn't you?

MR. SULLIVAN  
I would.

Mr. Sullivan sees Leon's play now.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)  
Either you're crazy, or you got  
balls. I like it.

He paces, running the math.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)  
Alright, I'm always up for a good  
side bet. Go on.

LEON  
How much would I have won from the  
last fight?

MR. SULLIVAN  
Around 500k.

LEON  
Put me down for that. And freedom.  
For me. My niece. My manager. Safe  
passage to the green zone.

MR. SULLIVAN  
(chuckling)  
Oh, now you're just getting cocky.

LEON  
Someone as powerful as you, it's no  
skin off your back.

MR. SULLIVAN

True.

(thinking)

I could arrange that. And if you lose? What do you I get?

LEON

Whatever you want.

MR. SULLIVAN

Oh? Be careful now. I'll take everything.

LEON

I figured that.

MR. SULLIVAN

You will be in my pocket for the rest of your miserable life.

He mimics a puppet on strings.

LEON

Yeah.

MR. SULLIVAN

Attila will beat you. If he doesn't kill you, he'll leave you hobbled. That girl of yours? I'll find a way to make my money back from her too. And it won't be no sweat shop. Are you a hundred percent sure you want to do this?

Leon nods.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

You're on.

Mr. Sullivan heads for the exit.

MR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

How Faustian. Delicious! I love it!

CUT TO:

**EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - GREEN ZONE - DAY**

A rolling green estate. A fountain. Gated. Party tents set up everywhere. Black-suited guards everywhere.

A giant crowd of WEALTHY and ELITE climb out of their expensive Range Rovers and Jaguars. The excitement in the air is palpable.

**INT. BLACK SUV - DAY**

Leon sits in the back with Nicole. Cynthia is in the passenger seat up front.

LEON  
(to Nicole)  
This is it. The Green Zone...

Nicole's eyes are wide, taking everything in. She hasn't seen the other side of the fence. Everything is green and manicured.

LEON (CONT'D)  
It's beautiful, isn't it?

She nods, looking out the window.

He watches her, enjoying the look on her face.

**EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon and Nicole climb out of the car with Cynthia.

LEON  
I don't want her to see this.

CYNTHIA  
That's too bad.

LEON  
Please.

CYNTHIA  
She's going to be there, and she's going to watch everything. I've arranged for Joshua to see it too. Everyone is going to watch you die, and there's nothing you can do about it. I want everyone to know this is what happens when you cross me.

LEON  
(to Cynthia)  
Can I talk to her then?

Cynthia nods for her Security to give them some privacy.

Leon crouches down to Nicole's level, meeting her eye to eye.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Don't watch.

Her eyes express confusion.

LEON (CONT'D)  
Close your eyes, okay? Will you do  
that for me?

She sees his fear and absorbs it all.

A tear trickles down her cheek.

LEON (CONT'D)  
I'm going to try to make this  
right.

She makes the gesture from before: she taps her heart. Then she taps his. She sets her jaw, eyes determined, filling with strength.

LEON (CONT'D)  
I love you, Nic.

**INT. FIGHTER'S TENT - LATER**

The calm before the storm. Leon, shirtless, psyching himself up. Outside, the crowd rumbles like CRASHING WAVES.

**EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon comes through the large crowd as they chant "Lionheart." He stares ahead, steely-eyed, focused.

The sea of bodies parts, revealing... the ring. The stands around it are filled to the brim with WEALTHY BETTORS. Everyone is here for this fight.

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon steps into the ring as the crowd chants "Lionheart." He looks around, scanning the faces, finding NICOLE in the VIP stands with Cynthia.

Across from them, he sees Mr. Sullivan surrounded by his entourage, sipping a martini with a cruel, taunting smile.

## ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon watches as the CROWD gets louder, and the chants change to "ATTILA."

The sea of bodies undulates, and begins to part for...

ATTILA. The feral, wild-eyed monster lumbers in, a head above everyone else, wearing a fur cloak for theatrics.

## IN THE VIP STANDS

Nicole tenses, watching the monster enter the ring with her uncle.

Cynthia watches her out of the corner of her eye, enjoying this reaction.

CYNTHIA

Don't worry, hon. It'll be over before you know it.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua in bed, watching the scene unfold on a TV. He sees Attila and his expression falls.

JOSHUA

Oh shit...

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon keeps his cool, watching Attila on the opposite side of the ring. The Beast moves slowly, in no rush.

The Ref enters, quieting the crowd.

REF

Welcome, welcome! Today we have Beauty and The Beast. The fight you've all been waiting for! In the right corner, Attila!

The bloodthirsty crowd SCREAMS. Attila just stands there, hard staring at Leon like food.

REF (CONT'D)

The Beast is undefeated with twenty kills and eleven KO's. He's our 4-to-1 favorite. And in the left corner...

He swings his finger to --

REF (CONT'D)  
Lionheart!

The crowd CHEERS. Begins chanting "Lionheart."

IN THE VIP STANDS

Mr. Sullivan takes in the chanting crowd, amazed by their energy.

IN THE RING

Leon keeps his composure, eyes locked on Attila.

REF (CONT'D)  
Will the King of the Jungle beat  
The Beast? Or does The Beast have  
his number tonight? Get your bets  
in now, because it's going to be a  
show!

As money changes hands in the crowd --

IN THE VIP STANDS

Cynthia leans across to Mr. Sullivan, speaking low.

CYNTHIA  
Everything has been arranged. He's  
going down in the second.

Mr. Sullivan gives her a questioning look.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)  
Permanently.

Mr. Sullivan nods, smiling.

MR. SULLIVAN  
Beautiful.

IN THE RING

The Ref stands between the fighters.

REF  
You know the rules. No rules. No  
mercy.

He blows the WHISTLE, leaving the ring.

Leon circles Attila, studying his gait, which side he favors, searching for a limp, a stiff shoulder, any past injuries.

Attila just stands there, watching Leon, trying to figure out how to carve him up.

Leon comes in with a punch, hitting The Beast on the chin. For anyone else, it would be a knock-out.

But Attila just stands there, unfazed by the hit.

Leon hits him in the face again, harder this time. Attila doesn't even try to block it. He takes the punch, his gaze never breaking from his prey.

Attila smiles slowly.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua struggles in his own bandages, yelling at the TV.

JOSHUA

Keep your guard up! Attila likes to  
play with his food!

**EXT. THE RING - DAY**

Leon delivers a flurry of PUNCHES, but Attila just absorbs them all, impervious to pain. Almost enjoying it.

Winded, Leon winds up to punch him again when --

CRACK -- ! Attila backhands him hard, spinning him to the ground.

Leon hits hard, dazed. Before he can get up.

CRACK -- ! Attila stomps on his ankle, BREAKING it with a sickening crunch.

Leon SHOUTS in pain, writhing on the ground.

The crowds stops chanting his name.

An eerie silence fills the stands...

**IN THE VIP STANDS**

Nicole tries to look away, but Cynthia guides her face back to the ring.

CYNTHIA  
No, hon, I want you to watch.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua wincing, realizing what's about to happen.

JOSHUA  
No, no, no... get up Lionheart...

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon crawls to his hands and knees, ankle broken, fighting the pain.

CRACK -- ! Attila kicks him in the stomach, launching him onto his back.

Leon struggles, rolling, trying to get back up.

Attila just circles him, in no particular rush. He's about to stomp Leon again when --

Leon slides aside, hitting The Beast in the ribs, BREAKING a few on his left side.

Attila SHOUTS in pain, floundering. He definitely felt that.

Leon balances on his good foot, hobbling with his broken ankle.

Energy surges through the crowd. They chant "Lionheart."

Leon hits him again. It doesn't drop The Beast, but it sends him staggering in the other direction.

Leon goes for the kill, hitting Attila in a flurry of punches, beating the giant down. He's gaining ground when --

The Ref blows the whistle.

REF  
Round One! Round One!

Leon scowls at this "convenient" call.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua is beside himself with anger.

JOSHUA

Bullshit! He stopped the fight when we were winning! This is so rigged!

**EXT. THE RING - VIP STANDS - DAY**

Cynthia catches Mr. Sullivan's look at this close call.

CYNTHIA

There's nothing to worry about.

MR. SULLIVAN

Oh, I'm not the one who should be worried.

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon leans against the side of the ring, teeth clenched in pain. He looks down at his broken ankle. It's bad.

His gaze swings to Attila in the other corner, holding his broken rib. Angry and humiliated.

REF

Round 2!

He blows the whistle.

Leon hobbles forward, fists up and ready.

Attila lumbers at him from his corner, his gaze fiery. He swings at Leon, missing.

Leon hits him in the broken ribs. Attila tries to guard, but Leon is faster, hitting him again and again, pushing him back into the other corner.

The crowd chants "Lionheart!"

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua is sitting up now, despite his injuries.

JOSHUA

Yes! Go Lionheart!

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon is beating The Beast down, and the crowd is loving it, up on their feet in the stands.

It looks like Leon is going to take this home when --

CRACK -- ! Attila spins, backhanding him hard, sending him sprawling to the ground.

Dazed, Leon struggles to get up. But the shadow of death slides across the ground, enveloping him.

He looks up at Attila, glaring back at him. It's an odd look. There's a finality to it. Like he's about to end his life.

IN THE VIP STANDS

Mr. Sullivan glances across at Cynthia.

She nods.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua sees what's about to happen. His eyes swell with fear.

JOSHUA  
(whispering)  
Get up, Lionheart...

**EXT. THE RING - COUNTRY ESTATE - DAY**

Leon trying to get up as Attila comes down on him like the Grim Reaper, stomping his broken ankle HARD.

Leon SCREAMS in pain.

Attila grabs him by the neck with one hand, begins a brutal assault of punches with the other.

Leon tries to shield with his arms, but that's like stopping a battering ram. Attila lifts Leon and throws him across the ring like a rag doll. Leon hits the ground, leg crumpled beneath him.

HIS POV

Spinning a blur... the bloodthirsty faces...

Attila lumbering toward him...

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon writhing on the ground, trying to get up. The CROWD ROARS like the ocean, about to drown him.

Attila looks back at the VIP STANDS at Mr. Sullivan.

Mr. Sullivan nods: *finish him.*

Attila climbs on top of Leon, like he did MMA Fighter before, and positions his thumbs to press Leon's eyes into the back of his head.

Leon grabs Attila's wrists, trying to hold them off. But Attila is stronger... his thumbs closing in on Leon's eyeballs... a millimeter away and...

Leon twists, bringing his knee up into Attila's balls, breaking his grip.

He rolls aside... exhausted, chest heaving. He scans the faces, finding...

NICOLE. The girl is standing in the stands. She's not looking away in fear.

She's watching him with bright eyes.

*She defiantly taps her heart. And then points to him, his heart.*

Leon feels it. She gives him the strength to crawl to his feet, balancing on his good side.

Attila seems surprised that he got up again.

IN THE VIP STANDS

Mr. Sullivan stares in outrage.

MR. SULLIVAN  
What's happening...?

IN THE RING

Leon doesn't flee The Beast, he hobbles toward him.

Attila swings, grazes Leon's shoulder. But the King of the Jungle has the scent now.

Attila tries to head-butt him. But Leon takes it, the pain giving him energy.

Attila is afraid now. He swings. Leon dodges, hitting him in his weak spot: the broken ribs, fast and hard... once, twice...

Attila doubles over in pain. Leon winds up and --

CRACK -- ! Gives him an uppercut, sending him to the ground.

Staggering and hobbling, Leon looks down at Attila.

The Beast stares up at heaven with glazed eyes, his horribly misshapen jaw driven up into his skull.

The crowd THUNDERS, chanting "Lionheart!"

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME TIME**

Joshua is ecstatic, yelling at the TV.

JOSHUA

Lionheart! Hell yeah! That's right!  
That's how it's done!

**EXT. THE RING - VIP STANDS - DAY**

The chanting is deafening in the stands. Mr. Sullivan slowly looks across at Cynthia. She just lost him a lot of money. She's in trouble.

She shrinks beneath his gaze, looks away, very pale.

**EXT. THE RING - DAY**

Leon staggering in a circle, scanning the crowd for Nicole. But she's not in the stands because...

She's right behind him. She hugs him, hard. Crying with relief. He embraces her, holding her tight.

As the crowd chanting "Lionheart."

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. GARDEN - COTTAGE - DAY**

A rural cottage overlooking rolling green hills. Some horses in the field. A large garden in the back.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Leon and Nicole work in the garden together, hands in the dirt. Leon's foot is in a cast, but he manages with crutches. They don't say much, because they don't need to talk. They're just happy in each others' presence.

Suddenly, there's movement... Leon looks up to find...

JOSHUA, hobbling toward them on his cane, utterly destroying the tranquil vibe.

JOSHUA

Hey, hey -- there you are. Damn, what you two doing in the dirt? Get on up outta there. That's filthy!

Leon stands, happy to see Joshua. Joshua takes in his cast.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Look at you, gimped like me now. What did the doctors say?

LEON

I'll be fine in a few more months. It's good to see you again, Joshua. How'd you find me?

JOSHUA

How you think? I'm a headhunter. Finding people is what I do.

Joshua takes in the small cottage.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Nice place. Kinda small. All that money you made, I figured you'd get a big house or something.

Leon shrugs, smiling, each to their own.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Anyway, I just wanted to come by and thank you for buying me my freedom. That was nice and all. But I'm here for my cut. We're 50/50, right? What's that add up to?

Leon gives him a look. Joshua busts up laughing.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Just kidding! I'm kidding! Damn, will you relax!

He smiles at Nicole.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

You Nicole?

She nods.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Real honored to meet you in person.  
I think I found the Lion's heart  
right here.

He shakes her hand. She softens, immediately liking him.

LEON

Would you like to come in for some  
tea?

JOSHUA

Tea? What? You can drink the water  
here? How about a beer?

LEON

I'm sure I can find one for you.

They start toward the cottage.

JOSHUA

Hey Leon, got a favor to ask you.

LEON

No.

JOSHUA

I ain't said anything.

LEON

I'm not going back.

JOSHUA

It's a lot of money. You could buy  
a bigger cottage.

LEON

Don't you have a life?

JOSHUA

What else am I supposed to do? I  
can't play golf.

As they vanish inside, closing the door...

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END