

FADE IN:

Pale beige skin washes the entire screen. Blood droplets stream down it. Heavy panting becomes more labored.

A brush smears the red stream.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - DAY

More blobs of paint smack the beige canvas followed by the hiss of dragging brush bristles. The strokes are slow, meditative. A condensed breath wafts the painting.

DAVID paints a woman in Baroque style. His collection of paintings is engulfing, eclectic and magnificent.

David is 31 with soft features. While he says he's enigmatic, everyone else calls him meek. His pant legs are slightly too long and his arm sleeves slightly too short. He's in layered sweatshirts, Carhartt jacket and a painter's coat with a tattered scarf wrapped around his neck.

The studio is small and hoarded with art and art supplies. Scrap 2x4s, plywood, and chewed up insulation foam board sloppily construct the room.

Everything is jerry-rigged including a paint-splattered light bulb above the easel strung up by an extension cord. The bulb goes out, interrupting David's momentum.

David taps the bulb with the back of his brush. Nothing.

He grabs half a cigarette off the easel, smoking it as he checks his phone before ripping off his painter's coat.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

David rushes out of his studio, a makeshift pigeon coop wrapped in tarps.

Snow falls on a frozen Manhattan. David savors his cigarette as he gazes at the surrounding skyscrapers.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

The space is a long, narrow, suffocating micro-unit turned store. A wall-to-wall desk splits customer and employee areas. An elevator and small waiting area on the customer side; obsolete printing technology, materials, and a hidden cot clutter the employee side.

MURIEL stands at the front desk examining a family photo.

Muriel is 56 with an aura of grit bursting from her. Something in her face, her eyes, reveals rigor. She's exacting, a presence that forces everyone to listen. She's bundled up in layered sweats, beanie and worn peacoat.

Her customer, ROHIT, stands across from the desk. Rohit is older than the printers, if that's even possible.

MURIEL

Listen, it's a big job.

ROHIT

Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am, it is *not* that big of a job. My grandson knows all about the computers. If it cost this much, I wouldn't be paying his tuition.

MURIEL

If you want to save a few pennies and have your son do it, spoil the surprise, I'm not stopping you.

ROHIT

(huffs)

Two-hundred and forty dollars is not a few pennies.

MURIEL

We all want the best for our kids. Sometimes you have to make sacrifices. You know this.

Rohit goes to speak but is cutoff by the clang of steps pounding the fire escape. David scales down it, opens the window and slides into the shop.

Muriel folds her jacket tight to keep warm.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Christ, Close that window!

David does. He eyes the unplugged extension cord, then Muriel, shaking his head. He brushes the winter off him.

DAVID

Think it's warmer outside.

MURIEL

Welcome back, smart mouth.

DAVID
Sorry, lunch break.

ROHIT
On the roof?

MURIEL
And you didn't bring me anything?

Before David has a chance to answer, Muriel does:

MURIEL (cont'd)
Betcha ten bucks not. Who's he to
worry about his mother? And don't
think I can't smell the smoke on you.

DAVID
(laughing it off)
What can I do for you, sir?

ROHIT
Tell me where I can go get this done.

DAVID
You're in the right spot.

ROHIT
Not for what this woman is charging!
Just a simple invite-tation flier.

Muriel simmers.

DAVID
We can work it out.

David plops a folder on the counter top, motioning for Rohit
to peruse his portfolio.

DAVID (cont'd)
This was a great piece. Local
theater, environmental piece. I went
around collecting all these non-
recyclables, scanned all the textures
and arranged them.

Rohit flips the page.

DAVID (cont'd)
This was a brand redesign for a
Boston Bruins-themed cafe. What's
Bruin? Did wonders on this one... had
to avoid the copyright.

ROHIT
This exceeds my needs.

Rohit looks at the coffee-stained counter and grimy walls.

ROHIT (cont'd)
I came to this place because I
thought it was cheap.

MURIEL
Two-forty is cheap.

DAVID
We'll do two hundred.

There is a lull as Rohit thinks about the offer.

MURIEL
(checking wall clock)
Better decide soon if you want anyone
to show up.

Rohit glances at the clock, then to his watch.

ROHIT
Your clock is broken.

DAVID
All the more reason we need your
business.

Rohit has had enough. He pays up. The money is handed to David but Muriel snatches it. She ducks into the other room.

ROHIT
When can I expect it?

DAVID
Give me three days.

ROHIT
(indicating watch)
Three days my time
(indicating clock)
or your time?

DAVID
Our time. You and me.

David smirks awkwardly. Rohit grumbles as David writes up the receipt. He tears it off the pad.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

The hectic public transportation morning commute. David struggles to carry his stack of paintings.

Muriel clumsily boosts herself over the turnstile. She opens the accessibility door for David. No one reacts or cares.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

David sets up his section with great precision. Muriel sits on a crate, shuffling through David's title cards.

MURIEL

Is this a popular gallery?

DAVID

How do you mean?

MURIEL

Lotta people coming through?

DAVID

I don't know.

Muriel scribbles an extra zero on all the prices as David hangs a painting on the wall.

Across the gallery, a fellow artist, MALLORY (28) is setting up her booth. She resembles the subject of David's painting. She smiles at David, who waves at her.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

Dozens of amazing sketches and a few full-color mock-ups are spread about David's desk. He is meticulously stippling one.

The elevator booms. David is horrified. He sprints to the thermostat, cranking it down back to fifty.

He stares at the vent which chugs on. Walking back to his desk, he keeps his eyes on the vent, droning on and on.

DAVID

C-c-come on, b-buddy.

His breathing becomes exasperated. He leans against his desk, growing faint.

The elevator dings, right as the heat shuts off and David collapses in his chair.

Muriel steps out of the elevator carrying a brown paper bag.

MURIEL

Pimple face forgot to give me the buy
one, get one coupon. Tomorrow we'll
have one each, OK?

Muriel strolls to David. She rips his scarf off.

DAVID

Careful, careful.

She digs into his desk, removing an asthma inhaler.

MURIEL

It's expired but use it.

DAVID

I'm good.

Grabbing David's face and forcing the inhaler into David's
mouth, Muriel hits the button. David takes it in, calming.

MURIEL

How many times do I have to tell you?
Don't. Touch. The. Thermostat.

LATER

Four chicken sandwiches worthy of any QuickChek. The duo eat
two while the other two are wrapped.

David finishes his, picking up his second sandwich.

DAVID

I'm going to have my other one.

MURIEL

That's dinner. And you'll only have
lunch tomorrow.

David puts it down.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Go 'head. Just letting you know.

Unsure sure of what Muriel wants him to do, David unwraps
it, takes one bite, then wraps it back up and sets it down.

Something about this action frustrates Muriel. Her gaze
grows sterner the more she thinks.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Why are you always undercutting me?

DAVID
Huh?

MURIEL
"Huh?"

DAVID
When have I undercu-

MURIEL
-Like with the Indian before. Giving him a deal. We can't afford to give people a break. You need to get in the practice of giving us a break.

The elevator powers to life as David fidgets.

DAVID
Thought two-hundred was better than zero. Especially with the big man.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - DAY

The mechanics of the building elevator turn and groan.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

MURIEL
How do you expect to pay the big man by undercharging customers?

DAVID
The guy was like ninety. Doing something for his grandson.

MURIEL
And I started this business to do something for my son. My family. Us.

David deflates.

INT. ELEVATOR SHAFT - DAY

The elevator car creaks up the shaft.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

MURIEL

David. David. Just do as I say... and
let me handle him, the big guy.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

TINY rides the elevator—a sputtering coffin turned upright.

Tiny is 43 and comically large for his name. He has the
strength of a moose and the temperament of a toddler.

He wears a turtle neck, cable knit sweater, black leather
jacket and a Newsboy cap.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

MURIEL

Been dealing with him for years.
Ain't had no trouble.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Tiny breathes deeply before shuffling uncomfortably, moving
a revolver from his waistband to back pocket.

The elevator dings and the doors open.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

Tiny steps out of the elevator as David's eyes widen as if
to take in all of Tiny. Muriel's head whips around as Tiny
approaches the counter.

TINY

What's new guys?

MURIEL

Nuffin'.

DAVID

Nuffin'.

Removing his cap, Tiny dabs his sweaty forehead and wipes
his bald head dry.

TINY

"Nuffin'." Yeah, well,
that's the problem. Some
people have noticed
"nuffin'" is going on.

MURIEL

Y'know, we were just talking
about you.

Tiny squints, as if to say, "here goes the routine." He
plasters on a smile.

TINY
Speak of the devil and he shall
appear.

MURIEL
(laughs)
So... is it Wednesday already?

TINY
No. I was here on Wednesday and youse
weren't. Today is Friday.

MURIEL
Oh right, wait, where are our
manners. Let me get you a water and a
towel... those elevators can be
killer.

Muriel puts coffee on. Only she knows how long its been out.

TINY
I'm all right, Muriel. Actually
started working out, eating better.
Just the small space, slow ride...
damn thing is a pressure cooker.

MURIEL
That's good, Tiny. You've been
talking about that for a while.

TINY
Yeah, even got a dietician.

David raises a thumbs up.

DAVID
Proud of you.

TINY
(laughs)
Thanks, kid.

Tiny sips his coffee, lets out an "AHH" with the smack of
his lips.

TINY (cont'd)
As much as I would like to stay
here... let's get to it, huh?

MURIEL
Look, Tin-

TINY

-Seven G's.

MURIEL

How do you figure that?

TINY

Principle fifteen large, five percent a day. Now I gave you a grace period, as a friend, but youse have taken advantage of my kindness. Not including that time, you've stiffed, avoided, or strung me along for thirty-six days.

Muriel is tired of this.

TINY (cont'd)

You're into me for forty-two. And since I gotta start paying up, you gotta start paying up. Capisci?

(sips coffee)

Youse two are on a payment plan. Six easy installments of seven thou.

MURIEL

Look, I'm trying my best. What can I do? I'm cursed with a son that spends his time in a bird house. And when he's not there, he's in here giving discounts.

This doesn't sit right with Tiny.

TINY

Discounts? When you owe me?

Tiny slams his hand into the counter. He's menacing.

A tense moment as Tiny stares the duo down. He simmers.

TINY (cont'd)

No good being cooped up all day, David.

David doesn't know how to respond. After brief thought, he goes with:

DAVID

Good one, Tiny.

Tiny hardens, unlatching the flip-up counter top and walking on David and Muriel's side of the room. He pulls out his revolver.

TINY

Let's get something straight. We was acquaintances *up* until *you* borrowed money from *me*. You made this a strictly business relationship.

MURIEL

We understand.

DAVID

Yeah, we got some money.

Tiny motions with his gun. Muriel glares at David before she storms off to the other room.

TINY

How's the painting going, Picasso?

DAVID

It's going good. Thanks for remembering. I have an exhibition in a few days. Hectic setting up.

TINY

Your exhibition stuff for sale?

DAVID

Yep.

TINY

Good to hear.

Muriel comes back. Handing five twenties to Tiny.

Staring at the bills for... too... long, Tiny is baffled.

TINY (cont'd)

You think I'm a joke?

No response.

He raises his revolver. David throws his hands up.

MURIEL

C'mon, Tiny. No disrespect.

Tiny takes aim at Muriel.

DAVID

Wait! Calm down. I'll go get it.

Muriel contorts her face.

TINY

Good kid. Shows respect. Musta got it
from dad.

Muriel's eyes narrow. Tiny lowers his revolver. David looks
between them before climbing out the window.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - DAY

David frantically flips through his finished paintings. He
considers each one.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

Tiny and Muriel have a stare down. Tiny blinks.

TINY

Don't be mad at me, Muriel. Blame
David. Blame his problem.

This pisses Muriel off.

TINY (cont'd)

What's the deal with that anyway?
Letting him do that. I mean, he's uh,
a little retarded, right?

Disgust washes over Muriel's face.

TINY (cont'd)

(re: Muriel's face)

Not retarded, but, y'know. Sauvignon?

Muriel laughs.

MURIEL

You're clearly not a sauvignon.

Picking his pistol up from the counter, Tiny corners Muriel.

TINY

You can get one over on me. But you
can't get one over on them.

He presses Muriel harder.

TINY (cont'd)

The last guy that got one over on me
made me short for my friends. It was
bad for me, but for him? They snipped
his toes with a bolt cutter.

Tiny forces Muriel to meet his gaze. He mimes scissors snipping with his fingers.

TINY (cont'd)
I'll make sure they go for Picasso's fingers.

The window flings open as David returns. Tiny backs off Muriel, picking his pistol and hat up from David's cot.

TINY (cont'd)
David, I'm gonna let you keep a couple hundred for a new bed. How do you sleep on this, marone?

DAVID
I make do. Here ya go.

David places the painting in Tiny's hands.

TINY
What's this?

DAVID
Your money.

Tiny analyzes David's work.

TINY
It ain't even fuckin' green, David.

DAVID
Oh, trust me, there's green there... it's muted, don't want to overwhelm the piece but it accents. Start with your base white, yellow and brown to blend then add...

David notices Tiny simmering.

DAVID (cont'd)
Hey, it's an original work by me. You can sell this for, like, a few thousand at least. Just until we get the rest.

TINY
What hand do you paint with?

DAVID
Huh?

Tiny frisbees David's painting out the window. David rushes to the window as if to catch it.

David storms back to fight Tiny. David is promptly pistol whipped. He falls to his knees, clutching his head.

MURIEL
Calm down, David!

Tiny presses the barrel to David's cheek.

TINY
Should spend more time painting
horses, not betting on 'em David.

Tiny cocks the hammer.

MURIEL
Tiny, don't you dare shoot my son in
my place of business. Don't you dare!
Put the gun down. I'm not asking you,
I'm telling you.

They have another stare down.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Now, I'm gonna count to three.

Tiny lowers his pistol.

TINY
One, two, three days. Get my money.

Tiny lumbers to the elevator, pressing the button.

David rubs the imprint of the barrel on his cheek.

As the elevator dings and the doors open, Tiny gets one last menacing look before getting on the elevator.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

A modest exhibit which, barring the David and Muriel, is devoid of any sign of life.

MURIEL
Well this is great, David.

They look out the window, seeing the art gallery across the street swarmed with visitors that spill into the street.

MURIEL (cont'd)
What are they doing over there that
you're not doing here?

DAVID

Maybe I should stop hanging around reckless individuals.

MURIEL

Says you. Bum-rushing that prick. Irresponsible, David. You know we don't have dental coverage.

DAVID

We don't have any coverage.

David rubs his temples as a flash of pain strikes him.

DAVID (cont'd)

What was he talking about horses?

MURIEL

Not a clue.

DAVID

Nevermind. I just want to enjoy this.

MURIEL

Are we not enjoying this? I'm having a blast.

DAVID

Oh sorry, I'm just a little nervous standing next to you. Might almost get me shot... again.

MURIEL

Huh, I guess I'm just the worst mother in the world.

DAVID

Oh stop it.

MURIEL

Tell you what. I'm going over there. See what the artists are doing right.

Muriel storms off. Mallory hugs David, resting her head on his shoulder.

Mallory is sweet, watchful eyes and casual demeanor. She wears a crochet, bead snood, cardigan and homemade jewelry.

MALLORY

Sorry, David.

DAVID

Aw, no worries. Mom's been like that for... ever. I remember the first time she said if I moved out of the state she would disown me. I was six.

MALLORY

Oh, no, I meant the Lermontov debut. Bad scheduling.

DAVID

Oh yeah. Crazy. Sell anything?

MALLORY

Place is dead.

Mallory looks at David's work.

MALLORY (cont'd)

I love this. How did you get such fine detail in the hair?

DAVID

Oh, uh, it's called sgraffito. Basically like detailing wet paint by cutting into it.

MALLORY

Oh? What did you use for this?

DAVID

Back of my brush. I angle and size them all differently.

MALLORY

Fascinating...

They linger.

MALLORY (cont'd)

Well hey, maybe sometime I can swing by and you can show me how you do it? If that's all right with you?

DAVID

Oh, um, how about you just have it.

David hands Mallory his painting.

MALLORY

No, no.

DAVID

Take it. No one wants it anyways.
Show me what you come up with.

MALLORY

Thanks, I will. Hold on.

Mallory scurries to her section, returning with one of her paintings. She gives it to David.

DAVID

Thank you.

David begins analyzing Mallory's painting. He traces the sgraffito in it with his thumb.

Mallory looks from his thumb to his face before looking back to her section. She sees a patron eyeing her work.

MALLORY

OK, bye!

Mallory runs back.

INT. NYLA BALSHAW GALLERY - LOBBY - NIGHT

A hive of ATTENDEES make it near impossible to move. The place is grand and the dress code is tacky dystopian future. Muriel takes it all in as she struggles to break through.

She stares at the walls, not comprehending the minimalistic paintings are what everyone is here to see.

INT. NYLA BALSHAW GALLERY - HALL - NIGHT

Muriel shimmies past the worshipers. She stands in the mass hypnosis of Lermontov's "UNTITLED #4", a 10x15 ft. painting of solid beige canvas.

Her face contorts at all the onlookers. She eyes the title card. She fixates on: "\$71,000" and "Sold".

She scans title card to title card, from artwork to artwork.

As she thinks, her eyes glimmer.

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Most artists and patrons have gone home. Muriel strolls through the gallery. She returns to David's section. He sits in darkness, breathing heavily.

MURIEL
Why are you in the dark?

DAVID
My light burnt out.
(facing Muriel)
How's it over there?

MURIEL
Kooky. But they're making money.
You're just kooky.

David sighs, coughing as he exhales. He rubs his chest.

MURIEL
Maybe I should coach you or
something? Y'know? Get some life
perspective guiding your brush.

David's breathing becomes erratic, he struggles and coughs.

MURIEL
Just an idea. Either way, something's
gotta chan-

He rises, speed-walking away.

MURIEL (cont'd)
-what? Where'r'ya goin'? What's
wrong?

INT. ART GALLERY - LOBBY - NIGHT

David hurries out of the gallery.

MALLORY (O.C.)
(hushed)
David, David, David.

David turns, greeted by a smiling, shocked Mallory.

DAVID
(hoarsely)
Yeah?

MALLORY
I sold something. I frickin' did it.

DAVID
Hey, amazing.

They embrace as David goes into a coughing fit.

MALLORY
Seventy-five frickin' bucks.

Mallory pulls back, clutching David's shoulders.

MALLORY (cont'd)
You all right?

DAVID
Oh yeah, just had um... spicy food.

MALLORY
Sounds like you need a drink to wash
it down, on me. Do you drink?

DAVID
No.

MALLORY
No you don't drink or no you don't
want to go out for a drink?

David begins backing away, wheezing.

DAVID
Rain check. Text you. Proud of you.

David leaves. Mallory stands there, her shock compounded.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

David slouches in his cot, sketching a portrait of a woman.
He draws then erases, then draws, then erases.

Muriel drops a seltzer tab in a glass of water as she reads
a book on great missing artworks, bunny-earing pages.

With each page turn brings a missing masterwork. Muriel's
eye widen, flutter but not due to the beautiful art. She
savors in the estimated dollar value.

She stops on a page, "'MADONNA AND CHILD' BY SANDRO
BOTTICELLI."

MURIEL
You talking to me yet?

No response.

MURIEL (cont'd)
I didn't realize you were having an
asthma attack. You're just so quiet.

DAVID
A you-induced asthma attack.

MURIEL
Hey. If you would've said something,
I would've given you your inhaler.

DAVID
I don't need that shit.

MURIEL
And yet I always keep it on me.

Muriel sips her water before eyeing David's sketch.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Fanny Hansel?

David smirks.

DAVID
Yeah...

MURIEL
What was that whole thing about? I
can't remember why Mimi was so in
love with that painting.

DAVID
It reminded her of her mother.

MURIEL
Oh yeah.

Muriel goes to David's side with newfound inspiration.

MURIEL (cont'd)
David, that's it! You replicated that
painting for her to the brushstroke.

DAVID
To the brushstroke? Don't think so.

MURIEL
It was good enough for Mimi, so I can
assume you did quite the bang up job.

David can't help but crack a smile.

MURIEL (cont'd)
That's what you should do. Like, like
a creative exercise. Copy some
masterpiece. See if you can do it.
Get the juices flowing, y'know?
(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)
You did that portrait in highschool
— what was the guy's name?

DAVID
Moritz Oppenheim.

MURIEL
That's right! Moritz Oppenheim. I
don't know him, but he's one of the
greats!

David's smile fades, a realization striking him.

DAVID
We should worry about the money, not
my abilities as an artist.

MURIEL
What?

DAVID
The money. Tiny... what are we gonna
do about it?

MURIEL
Let me worry about that.

David doesn't know what to say. He stops scribbling and
turns his head to look at Muriel.

MURIEL (cont'd)
I'll handle it. Don't worry. I'm not
about to let you waste seventeen some
odd years to mope.

Muriel grabs the missing arts book, opens it to the
Botticelli page and pushes it into David's hands.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Show me what ya got.

David nods, accepting the challenge. He layers a few more
hoodies before analyzing the page as he climbs out to the
fire escape.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - DAY

David rips a painting from a pile on the ground. Clearly,
it's not one of his. He places it on the easel and covers
the canvas in white paint so it is once again blank.

As it dries, he clips the open book next to it. Hanging on
the wall, high in the background, is Mallory's painting.

Lighting a cigarette, David steps back and squats. His eyes dart from the reference photo to the blank canvas like a military tactician searching for his best point of attack.

David squeezes paints on his palette before snatching a brush and launching at the canvas.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - NIGHT

Muriel awakens. The store is pitch black save for the orange light of a coffee pot button that catches her eye.

Muriel goes for some coffee. Empty. She flicks the pot off.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Muriel knocks and waits a moment before peeking in. She stares at David's easel, now covered in a tarp.

MURIEL

David?

Muriel enters, seeing a sleeping David laid out in a chair. He grips a styrofoam cup half full with coffee.

She glides to his easel. She gently uncovers the painting. The gold paint catches the light, washing Muriel's grinning face. She's astonished at the perfect copy.

DAVID

(grumbles)

It is... complete.

Muriel goes to David, stopping halfway and turning back to the painting.

MURIEL

Where has this been?

DAVID

According to that book, it's been missing for a few decades.

(sips coffee)

That's terrible.

MURIEL

You left the coffee pot on again.

DAVID

Yeah, yeah, sorry.

David opens the door to toss his coffee. He stretches.

DAVID (cont'd)
(yawns)
What time is it?

MURIEL
It's late. Should be getting to bed.

Muriel goes to the door.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Talk more in the morning... Great
job, son.

A sweet, tender smile appears on David's face.

DAVID
Thanks, ma.

Muriel leaves.

David eyes his replica. He dips his brush in white, signing his name in the lower right corner.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - NIGHT

David cozies up in his small, lumpy cot. He pulls out his phone, whispering into speech-to-text:

DAVID
Celebratory indoor picnic?

He stows away his phone.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. FAIRWAY MARKET - DAY

Sun bathes the city, melting snow and icicles. It's still a bitter cold. This doesn't stop cosmopolites from swarming the supermarket nor the fruit and vegetable stands and Sabrett carts lining the street.

INT. FAIRWAY MARKET - DAY

David and Mallory stroll the supermarket mid-conversation. David carries a basket full of groceries.

DAVID
Oh my God...

MALLORY

It was crazy. He showed up to present his final project hungover, scribbled his interior page and handed it in.

(chuckles)

Professor loved it! How abstract ooh, ahh. I spent four weeks on mine! The guy went on to work in art cert. Did stuff for Guggenheim.

PRODUCE SECTION

DAVID

That's wild.

MALLORY

I know, right? That's when I realized... some people got all the talent and all the luck. Probably why I dated him for a while.

David makes a face that says "oh?"

MALLORY (cont'd)

Dang. Isn't that like the one thing your not supposed to do?

DAVID

It's all right.

MALLORY

It was like a frickin' fling, y'know? Friends who got drunk one time thing. Just wasn't right, agreed to be friends and stuff. Which is good cause he's a great friend. He's like the only friend that came to my exhibit the other day...

David points to the grapes.

MALLORY (cont'd)

Oh, red please.

David throws them in.

MALLORY (cont'd)

Soooo, where did you study?

DAVID

I, uh, never studied formally. I had some health things and mom kinda kept me inside. I sketched and painted a lot lookin' out my window.

WINE & SPIRITS SECTION

David points to the wine.

MALLORY

Eh, let's skip it. Did you want to go to school?

DAVID

Not then. Now I kinda wish I had.

MALLORY

Trust me. You didn't miss much.

CHEESE AND MEAT SECTION

DAVID

Anything jump out to you?

MALLORY

Actually, I don't eat red meats.

DAVID

OK, a cheese-centered board then.

MALLORY

... I realized I've eaten so many of these things at art events but don't really know what they are.

DAVID

I usually take the scatter shot approach.

Mallory gives a "go ahead" nod. David closes his eyes and randomly scoops a bunch of cheeses up.

He opens his eyes, presenting Mallory with them.

MALLORY

Cute.

CHECKOUT LINE

They unload their basket before David grabs his wallet.

MALLORY
No let me. My treat,
remember?

DAVID
No, no, no.

MALLORY
We'll split it.

DAVID
No, no. Celebrate your sale.

MALLORY
My *first* sale.

DAVID
Especially your first sale.

David turns to the elderly CASHIER who is scanning the items. David pulls out forty dollars... all of his money.

Behind David, Mallory takes out her phone. David watches the bill rise. Each scan bleep causes a slight panic in his eyes: "\$25.07", "\$33.48", "\$39.91" ...

Mallory giggles at something on her phone.

MALLORY
David, look at this.

CASHIER
Total is fifty-seven, sixty-two.

David leans over the register.

DAVID
(whispering)
Take that off.

CASHIER
Sorry?

DAVID
Those two. Take 'em off the bill. I
can't afford it, please don't
embarrass me. Please man.

Cashier stares. She rolls her eyes before removing them.

CASHIER
Lucky girl.

INT./EXT. FAIRWAY MARKET - ENTRANCE - DAY

David and Mallory huddle under the awning near the doorway as a heavy snow blankets the streets.

MALLORY
Really coming down.

DAVID
Yeah? How far are you again?

MALLORY
I'm uptown fifteen stops.

DAVID
I'm down two stops.

Mallory contemplates.

MALLORY
All right, let's go.

DAVID
Ummm...

MALLORY
If that's OK with you?

He's expression signals he really wants to say "absolutely not" but it's impossible for him to say what he feels.

Mallory rubs her hands together and shivers.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Better decide before we freeze to death.

DAVID
(snaps to)
Oh, yeah, no, let's go. Sorry just trying to remember what train it was.

MALLORY
The train home?

DAVID
Yeah.

MALLORY
You got it?

DAVID
Yep. The red one.

They hustle cautiously into the blizzard.

MALLORY
Which red one?

DAVID
Either.

Mallory grins before almost going down. David catches her but almost goes down in the process.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

David and Mallory laugh, trying to navigate the slippery patches. They wait at the crosswalk.

The red hand turns to the white walk figure. As they step into the crosswalk a car barrels in.

It screeches to a stop, nearly striking David.

The window rolls down revealing Tiny. Honks immediately blare from the trail of cars.

TINY
Hey man, sorry about that. Gotta get my wipers fixed can't see through the frost.

DAVID
No worries. Be careful.

TINY
You too! And watch out for your lady friend there. Wouldn't want nuffin' bad to happen.

DRIVER (O.C.)
MOVE JERKOFF!

Tiny turns and waves before returning to David and Mallory.

TINY
Impatient. Can't blame him. I'm impatient too.

With a smirk and a wink, Tiny speeds off.

Mallory and David walk across the street.

MALLORY
That was scary.

DAVID
Yeah, never got that close to being hit.

MALLORY
Not that. The creep.

DAVID
Oh.

MALLORY
Do you know that guy?

David shakes his head.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Dang, it's cold.

David directs her to the subway stairs. They go down.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

David and Mallory, wrapped in the picnic blanket, run across the rooftop.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - DAY

The shack has turned into an igloo. Sounds are muffled except the crackling of ice and snow sliding off the roof.

Mallory flips through David's paintings as David sits on the ground arranging the charcuterie board. The covered painting has been pushed back to the wall.

MALLORY
Any from when you were a kid?

David joins her, flipping through them. He pulls one from the back. He shows Mallory, holding one side while she holds the other.

The watercolor is expressionistic with vibrant colors.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Kid shows promise.

They laugh.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Your window was certainly rose-tinted.

DAVID
I loved this city.

MALLORY
You captured it.
(beat)
Loved?

DAVID
It was mysterious, spurred wonder.

MALLORY
What changed?

DAVID
First time I stepped out... hated it.
Too cold.

MALLORY
Just need a heater.

David is confused but Mallory laughs hard at her own comment. He laughs along. It fades.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Don't you wish you could go way back
when. How everything used to be?

David fishes for a response before turning to the picnic.

DAVID
I think that cashier forgot to put
some of the stuff in the bag.

MALLORY
Really?

DAVID
Mm-hmm.

LATER

The two sit snacking. Mallory indicates the tarped easel.

MALLORY
Work-in-progress?

DAVID
Oh, that. It's like, a creative
exercise. I wanted to see if I could
replicate a Botticelli.

Mallory doesn't know who that it is and doesn't have a problem asking.

MALLORY

Who?

The excited David rushes over to the tarp. He unpins the reference photo and tosses it to Mallory. She examines it.

DAVID

One of those Renaissance guys. Did the Birth of Venus.

Mallory is impressed.

MALLORY

Quite the challenge. How'd you do?

DAVID

You tell me.

David uncovers the painting. Mallory's mouth drops open.

MALLORY

David, you're real sweet.

David's smile and confidence dissipate. He sees that his Botticelli copy has been replaced with his portrait of the woman resembling Mallory.

David thinks before crouching next to Mallory. She crawls closer, putting a hand on his knee.

DAVID

Ow, that was, y'know, just a reference.

MALLORY

Mm, sure.

(giggles)

Looks exactly like me.

DAVID

... Yeah, it's you.

MALLORY

You're real sweet. I'd kiss you, I really, really want to kiss right now. But, it's only the first date.

David is too preoccupied, thinking of what happened to his painting.

MALLORY (cont'd)
Oh! Botticelli!

Mallory searches through her phone. She finds the text. David looks. Sure enough, it's his Botticelli copy. David zooms in on the lower right corner—his signature worn off.

David tunes Mallory out as his mind races.

MALLORY (cont'd)
'member that guy I was talking about
in art cert? He sent me this thing. I
mean, looks perfect. He said it was
perfect, except the painting
underneath the painting.
(laughs)
But imagine selling the thing.
Wouldn't hafta worry about rent,
bills, nothing.

The door to David's studio creaks open...

Muriel stands in the doorway, the sounds of arctic winds accompany her gunfighter stance. She stares at David, unmistakable rage in her eyes, but she speaks to Mallory.

MURIEL
Who's this?

MALLORY
My name is Mallory.

MURIEL
I've seen you. Where have I seen you?

DAVID
M-Ma-Mallory is an artist in the
exhibition.

Muriel takes in the scene.

MURIEL
Sheltered together like a buncha
homeless bums.

MALLORY
I think they're unhoused people.

MURIEL
What did I say?

DAVID
Do you need something right now, ma?

MURIEL

I do.

DAVID

Right now.

He makes a face like, "please, if you ever loved me". Muriel seems to revel in this control.

MURIEL

When you're finished.

Muriel turns and leaves.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - SIDE ROOM - DAY

Paint peels from wherever there aren't holes in the walls.

Muriel enters, going straight for the inoperable, ancient fireplace. She does double take before ducking into the fireplace and reaching.

When she comes back out, she's got a wad of cash.

INT. MURIEL PRINT & COPY - WORK AREA - DAY

David stands over the Mr. Coffee, watching for the dripping to cease. It's hard to hear with the rain that hammers down outside. Thunder rumbles in the distance.

With the ding of the elevator, Muriel emerges as David fixes his coffee.

DAVID

Almost thought you weren't coming back.

MURIEL

You'd be so lucky... y'know that's how your great uncle died? Slipped on an ice patch, laid out in the freezing rain, got pneumonia and he was done for.

Fear strikes David.

DAVID

Yeah, you've told that story a lot.

His trembling hand causes his spoon to keep clinking on the cup. He snatches his hand, massaging it. Calming his breathing, he powers through and faces his mother.

DAVID (cont'd)
Did you try to pass off my painting
as the real thing?

MURIEL
Nope. No.

They linger. David, dejected, returns to his coffee.

MURIEL (cont'd)
So what if I did?

David flips around.

DAVID
How could you do that?

MURIEL
How could I not? That fucker kneeling
on my neck. *Our* necks.

DAVID
Why couldn't you just tell me? We're
in this together.

MURIEL
Because I'm your mother. Because I
know how you'll react.

Muriel grabs the missing artworks book.

MURIEL (cont'd)
We have exhausted all options. You
have to do this.
(pause)
Y'know, Botticelli made that thing at
twenty-five. You couldn't even copy
him at thirty.

David goes to speak but Muriel cuts him off.

MURIEL (cont'd)
First, carbon in the paints made it
impossible to be authentic. From now
on, you mix your own paints.

Muriel flips through the pages.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Second, you don't paint over
paintings or sign your own damn name.

Muriel closes the book as thunder booms.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Third, you don't rely on old books
that have lost paintings that were
found years ago!

DAVID
You gave me the book!

MURIEL
I'll give you the fucking book!

She pelts him with the book. He fails to shield himself.

DAVID
You're insane!

Muriel stomps her foot.

MURIEL
You're insane if you think you're not
going to do this.

David and Muriel standoff. The rain hammers down. Lightning strikes nearby, the booming thunder immediately follows. David flinches, Muriel doesn't.

MURIEL (cont'd)
God is angry with you, David.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - DAY

The storm has passed. Rain droplets drip off the fire escape railing and window pane. The streets are covered in that horrible, hard, frozen snow slush.

Muriel drops a seltzer tab in a glass of water, staring blankly as it dissolves. Her eyes drift up to David, sitting on the fire escape, smoking and talking on the phone.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

David and Mallory talk on the phone, mid-conversation.

DAVID
Anyways, I was just wondering if I
could uh, uh, you know, take you out
this week sometime.

MALLORY (V.O.)
I'm, gosh this is so embarrassing,
I'm having some trouble with rent
this month.

(MORE)

MALLORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
So, I have to take on all these extra
shifts... any shift really.

David doesn't say anything.

MALLORY (V.O.) (cont'd)
But I want to. Um, how about two
Saturdays from now? Does that work
for you?

DAVID
Let me check my calendar.

David takes a drag, looking through the fire escape grate.

DAVID (cont'd)
Yeah, that works for me.

MALLORY (V.O.)
Sweet. Can't wait.

DAVID
Me too.

MALLORY (V.O.)
Hey, by the way, craziest
coincidence. I think that guy lives
on my block.

DAVID
What guy?

MALLORY (V.O.)
That guy that almost hit us! I keep
seeing him around. Isn't that wild?

David's eyes widen.

DAVID
Stay away from him, he's dangerous.

MALLORY (V.O.)
What do you mean?

DAVID
I mean, his driving. A dangerous
driver.

MALLORY (V.O.)
(laughs)
Oh yeah. Shoot, is that the time? I
gotta go.

DAVID
Me too. Bye.

MALLORY (V.O.)
OK, David. See you. Bye.

Mallory hangs up. David pockets his phone. He tosses his cigarette, coughing as he climbs

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - DAY

inside. David approaches Muriel. He wheezes a bit.

MURIEL
Y'know, when you have asthma, smoking
doesn't make ya look cool. It makes
you look like an asshole.

David goes to head out to the fire escape. Muriel stops him.

MURIEL (cont'd)
All right, enough. Stop.
(sipping her water)
Look, let's move on. We both said and
did terrible things.

David scoffs.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Let me tell ya something. If we don't
try this. We're dead.

Muriel moves closer to David.

MURIEL (cont'd)
But, if we can forge a painting, if
we can sell it, we can buy our lives
back. We can *change* our lives. Give
up this dive, leave, start again. You
can focus on nothing but painting.
Think of it, son.

Muriel wraps an arm around David.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Come on. Think of those old guys you
admire. Half of 'em died penniless
no-names. You think they like that
millionaires are using their art,
their blood, to measure their pricks.
(leaning in)
Imagine all of those who rejected
you, all of those art critics,
connoisseurs... everyone. All of 'em
who said we don't like you, we don't
want you and we don't accept you.
(MORE)

MURIEL (cont'd)
Imagine them admiring your work,
talking about how great Picasso is
when they're too stupid to realize
it's you. Too stupid to realize *your*
as talented as any of 'em.

She forces David's eyes to met hers.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Don'tcha wanna get back at them? Huh?
For the artists? For you? For us?

They share a long, tense silence.

DAVID
I'll do it.

Muriel bows her head and clenches him in a silent rejoice.

DAVID (cont'd)
If I can pull it off. I'll do it just
once. Just to have some cash to never
have to deal with these people again.

MURIEL
That's my boy.

Muriel cradles his face before hugging him. David cringes,
unsure of how to react to his mother's embrace.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - DAY

The point of a pin is methodically pricking wax paper which
is laid over an aged Masonite board.

David steps back, admiring this perforated sketch he has
created. He wraps charcoal in a cheesecloth, scrubbing the
wax paper.

He wipes his forehead before removing the wax paper,
revealing the charcoal line drawing on the board below.

A carton of eggs is tossed onto the table.

David flips it open, pulling and cracking eggs. In a small
cup, he whisks the yolks.

A pot is filled with equal parts linseed oil and vinegar and
put to boil on a single burner.

Light bursts into David's studio as Muriel enters with an
armful of bags.

MURIEL
Christ, David. What's that smell?

David rushes over, scavenging her bags of all the supplies:
natural pigments, hog hair brushes, etc.

DAVID
Very nice. Very nice.

MURIEL
This shit was hard to find.

David notices an yellow acrylic paint tube.

DAVID
No, no, no. This is wrong.
"Nontoxic", why would you get this?

MURIEL
Your health, David. I don't want to
make you sick.

DAVID
No where on my list did I write
acrylic. Think the Old Masters used
nontoxic materials?

MURIEL
Well mix the shit! Figure it out. One
minor thing. All this specificity.

DAVID
Did we learn nothing from the last
time? Specificity is the difference
between zero and a million, ma.

MURIEL
It better be a million because we are
flat broke after this.

David has returned to his preparatory work. Muriel deflates.

MURIEL (cont'd)
All right, I'll go back.
(re: drawing)
What's it called?

DAVID
I don't know, I made it up.

Muriel grabs her temples, shaking.

MURIEL
David... the whole point of this-

DAVID

-I know. I'm replicating style.

MURIEL

But-

DAVID

-I got it. Trust me. I know what I'm doing.

Muriel raises her hands and sneers.

MURIEL

All right. He's got it.

Muriel leaves.

DAVID

Lead-tin yellow light! Type one!

MURIEL (O.S.)

Yes!

David mixes the egg and linseed and vinegar mixture together.

He begins sprinkling pigments into different sections of the egg carton. With great precision, he drips the mixture in, beating it to create his palette.

David holds the hog hair brush up to his eyes. He brushes his palm, admiring it.

DAVID

Ah, beautiful, beautiful.

He gets to work. He's delicate, graceful as he paints. As if he's just arrived home after being gone for far too long.

INT. PIGMENTS, PAINTS AND PALETTES - AISLE - DAY

The place is an ole man's paint shop. Homey, a bit grimy but organized. The type of place you get high just walking in the joint.

Muriel searches for David's pigment.

MURIEL

Lead-tin, lead-tin, lead-tin.

Her eyes dart to a container full of yellow dust and a huge "HAZARDOUS MATERIALS" warning label. Sure enough, it's what she's looking for.

MURIEL (cont'd)
"Warning: this product contains lead.
Handle with extreme care. Lead can
damage central nervous system and
fertility. Do not eat, drink-

Her eyes drift up to the price.

MURIEL (cont'd)
-Forty-six dollars!

Muriel stares in awe. Not knowing what to do.

INT. PIGMENTS, PAINTS AND PALETTES - KIDS AREA - DAY

A little girl, ALICE, sits painting at a small kids' section. Her GRANDPA stands behind the register with a watchful eye.

Muriel dons a smile and approaches.

MURIEL
Hi. What's your name?

ALICE
Alice.

MURIEL
Hi, Alice. Can I see what you're painting?

Alice shows her. A scratchy, five-year-old's rendition of a family in a flower garden.

MURIEL (cont'd)
Oh, wow! Beautiful. Who's that?

ALICE
My mommy, my daddy, grandpa, grandma.

MURIEL
What's the dog's name?

ALICE
Bishop.

Muriel sits down at the table, putting the container on the table. She grabs a paper and brush.

MURIEL
Mind if I join you?

Alice is too busy shoving her fingers in her mouth to respond.

MURIEL (cont'd)
All these chemicals. Your parents
shouldn't let you sit in here. You
might get sick.

Muriel begins painting figures. She's just as talented as Alice.

MURIEL (cont'd)
(indicating man at
counter)
Is that your grandpa?

Alice nods.

MURIEL (cont'd)
(calling to him)
She painted a family portrait. She
captured just how handsome her
granddad is.

Grandpa grins ear to ear.

GRANDPA
Hope she didn't paint my wife.

His laughter booms. Muriel reciprocates, dying quick as she rolls her eyes.

ALICE
Bad Grandpa!

MURIEL
That's right, keep him in check.
(smiles)
Your parents are lucky to have such a
good girl.

Alice and Muriel work on their respective pieces.

ALICE
You are a mommy?

MURIEL
Oh yes.

ALICE
To uh, uh a girl?

MURIEL
No, I wanted a girl. But I got a boy.

ALICE

Ew.

Muriel snorts.

MURIEL

Yeah...

Muriel watches Alice return to her painting, before eyeing Grandpa, who is busy with his crossword.

Muriel knees the table, sending paint flying. It covers Alice who shrieks.

Muriel pockets the pigment and putting on her best faux concern.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Oh my God, are you all right!

Grandpa hurries over.

GRANDPA

Ah, shit, Alice! You spilled it everywhere.

MURIEL

Let me get some paper towels.

GRANDPA

Behind the counter. Thank you.

Muriel runs over to the counter but ducks out of the shop.

The painting of Muriel and David is slowly engulfed by black paint.

INT. DAVID'S STUDIO - NIGHT

David and Muriel view the finished piece of a girl looking out a window. It's magnificent. Like it's been ripped straight from a Wyeth exhibition.

Muriel doesn't heed David's head bopping and body swaying.

MURIEL

What now?

DAVID

We... frame... it.

MURIEL

Right, get our story straight.

DAVID
No, no... buy a fra-

David collapses. Muriel tries to catch him, she can't hold his weight.

MURIEL
Oh, David!

David groans on the floor.

MURIEL (cont'd)
See? All that lead.

DAVID
I haven't... I need sleep. I'm exhausted.

MURIEL
What about the frame?

DAVID
Old... frame...

David snores. Muriel nudges him with her foot to no effect.

Muriel removes her sweater, laying it over David. She balls up a painter's jacket and puts it under his head. She kneels next to David, rubbing his head.

FADE TO:

INT. AUTHENTICATION FACILITY - WAITING ROOM - DAY

In this place, even the waiting room is a work of fine art - chic and luxurious.

Muriel taps her foot and holds her face like she's waiting for a cancer diagnosis.

A balding AUTHENTICATION EXPERT enters.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT
Miss Engelman?

MURIEL
Yes?

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT
Come in.

Muriel follows him.

INT. AUTHENTICATION FACILITY - OFFICE - DAY

The Expert goes behind his desk, opening a file. He removes the plastic wrap from David's forgery, which is secured to an easel.

Muriel expects the worst. She stands.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT

Miss Engelman, every painting that comes through our doors, whether for authentication or appraisal or both, is put through hell to prove it's authenticity. This is especially the case when someone brings us a painting, claiming that it is an undiscovered Wyeth.

The Expert puts on surgical gloves.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT (cont'd)

Now, follow along. First, good news is the subject and style are perfectly fitting with Wyeth. This is definitely something he would paint.

The Expert waves his hand above the painting.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT (cont'd)

The paint is egg tempera. Whic-

MURIEL

-Sorry, sorry. 'Scuse me. Tempura? Like sushi?

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT

No, honey... no.

They linger for a moment.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT (cont'd)

Which fits with his technique. However, the underdrawing of this painting is pounced in charcoal. This is something that painter's hundreds of years ago did.

MURIEL

So it's fake?

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT

Not necessarily. Wyeth used ink for his underdrawings but famously replicated techniques of the Renaissance. Could be simple experimentation or that, early on, Wyeth replicated his inspirations techniques to the T. It is done on Masonite, which is consistent.

MURIEL

What about the chemicals of the paint? The dating or whatever?

The Expert removes his gloves.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT

That's all fine and good.

Muriel shifts in anticipation.

MURIEL

You said "good news." What's the bad?

The Expert takes off his glasses and sighs.

AUTHENTICATION EXPERT

Well, Miss Engelman. There's no easy way to say this... but you're the proud owner of an authentic Wyeth.

Muriel falls into her chair, awestruck.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Muriel walks calmly out of a bank before sprinting down the street like she's being chased despite no one chasing.

She ducks and weaves pedestrians.

She hails a taxi.

INT./EXT. TAXI - DAY

Muriel rides in the back. She double checks the wad of cash in her purse - more money than most have held at one time in their life.

The taxi stops. She tips the DRIVER \$100.

MURIEL

Thanks.

Muriel exits.

INT. MURIEL'S PRINT & COPY - DAY

David pours himself a cup of coffee. He takes in the shit heap that is his home in disgust. He picks at the coffee stains before trying to scrub them off with a spoon.

The elevator dings.

David turns right as the wad of money smacks him in the mouth.

DAVID

Ow!

MURIEL

Forty-six thousand, three hundred and sixty-five dollars.

DAVID

(wiping mouth)

That's disgusting.

MURIEL

I know right? All for some stupid cocksuckers painting.

DAVID

Me?

MURIEL

No, come on, David. The other guy. Wyatt.

Muriel rushes David, scooping him up in her arms. She pecks his cheek.

MURIEL (cont'd)

I love you, I love you, my boy. You did a fine job, such a fine job.

David pries away.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Oh no you don't.

DAVID

All right, all right. Come on, stop!

Muriel stops.

LATER

David and Muriel stand staring at the thermostat.

MURIEL

Ready?

DAVID

Yeah.

MURIEL

You do the honors.

David cranks the heat up as it sputters awake. They bask in the hot air, eyes closed and mouths open.

DAVID

Now you know what we do?

MURIEL

What?

David raises an eyebrow.

MURIEL (cont'd)

No. C'mon. We have enough to spend a little bit.

LATER

Muriel is on the phone. David stands over her.

MURIEL

Tiny. Come get your money.

She goes to hang up but Tiny speaks.

MURIEL (cont'd)

Huh? Hello? Hello?

Muriel checks the phone. Line's dead.

DAVID

What happened?

MURIEL

He wants us to take it to him.

Fear washes over David's face.

INT. MUSSO SOCIAL CLUB - NIGHT

David and Muriel enter cautiously.

They are greeted by a bunch of older, well-dressed Italian men (including Giacomo and Ralphie), smoking and drinking. A dingy, invitation only place with smoked-filled rooms and shady characters sipping bourbon.

Tiny sees them, stumbling over.

TINY

Welcome, my friends. I hope you've been well. Hope you've been making money.

MURIEL

We have.

TINY

Good, good.
(BEAT)
Enough?

DAVID

More than enough.

Tiny can't help but show his surprise. Muriel shakes her head in annoyance at David.

TINY

Guess those extra days helped out.

DAVID

Definitely. Thank you.

MURIEL

Yeah, what happened? You've never been one to not harass. Scared me, thought you might've had a date with a chunk of lead.

TINY

Let's just say collections took a backseat while we handled a little tiff among associates that demanded everyone's attention.

MURIEL

Oh good, I wouldn't want to feel like I wasn't a priority.

Tiny has had enough of the back and forth.

TINY
Well, let's have it.

Muriel hands Tiny and envelope full of cash.

Tiny checks it.

TINY (cont'd)
Bet finally paid off huh?

Muriel chuckles.

Tiny looks between them.

TINY (cont'd)
Seriously, how'd you two make this
dough?

MURIEL
Are you really asking me how I make
my money?

TINY
I am.

MURIEL
... Go fuck yourself.

Tiny looks back at his fellas.

TINY
Don't test me. Tell me. And no lying.

DAVID
I... I forged a painting.

TINY
Really? In a week?

DAVID
Few days.

Muriel nudges David to shut up as Tiny thinks.

TINY
Don't move.

Tiny goes back to the table of associates.

MURIEL
(whispers)
What the fuck is wrong with you?
Can't you just shut your mouth?

DAVID

I'm trying to get us out of here as quickly as possible with no bad blood.

MURIEL

You have done the exact opposite my son.

DAVID

Whaddya mean?

Tiny comes back.

TINY

Hey, well, listen, uh... youse are gonna keep making forgeries for us.

Muriel shakes her head as if to say "I told you so."

TINY (cont'd)

We're gonna make it nice and prosperous for us. *All* of us.

The three go to verbal blows, which fades as the ceiling light flickers. Getting closer and closer and closer until there's nothing to see but the white light of the bulb.

Something is there that shouldn't be... a tiny black speck. Closer and closer... it's a wire attached to a foam block.

INT. ABANDONED APARTMENT - NIGHT

An FBI AGENT has headphones presses tightly against his ear. He notifies the FBI PHOTOGRAPHER standing at the window.

FBI AGENT

Hey, Rog. Get more shots of that lady and the sickly dude. Might be in on this racket.

FBI Agent throws a soda at the sleeping FBI AGENT #2.

FBI AGENT (cont'd)

Artie, get the Arts Crime Division on the line.

FBI Agent #2 groans and mumbles awake, his hair a mess.

INT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - MEETING ROOM - DAY

The room is a shoebox of nauseating beige walls devoid of any natural light. A projector, sandwiched by American and Japanese flags, displays, "WELCOME JAPANESE DELEGATES." Three ancient Japanese scrolls are on display.

The meeting room has been sloppily rearranged to accommodate the presentation and small group of attendees and journalists. The drum of AC and journalists' camera clicks fill the room.

A bunch of suits, Two JAPANESE DELEGATES, FBI Art Crime Director ALLEN and FBI agent GUY MCNAMARA, gather in front of the projector.

ALLEN

And with great honor, I introduce our
General Consulate of Japan,

(struggles)

Mr. Tadashi Kawamoto and, all the way
from Kyoto, the Commissioner for the
Cultural Affairs Agency,

(struggles)

Mr. Tomoya Sato.

Scattered applause. Despite butchering the names, Allen smiles wide, proud. Tomoya takes the podium, speaking with a thick accent.

TOMOYA SATO

Thank you. Good morning, everyone.

ALLEN

(whispers to Guy)

How'd I do?

GUY

Aced it.

Allen smirks.

TOMOYA SATO

On behalf of the Agency of Cultural
Affairs and, my country, I want to
thank the ladies and gentleman of the
FBI for their diligence and hard work
in recovering these artifacts and...
and repatriating them.

Guy stands in the corner, clapping along with all the applause breaks. He's in his 40s. He's an average Joe, clean cut, old school.

EXT. FBI FIELD OFFICE - DAY

Guy hurries out of the skyscraper and into the plaza. ARTIE, the FBI Agent from the sting, runs after him.

ARTIE
McNamara.

Guy doesn't slow for him to catch up but, eventually, Artie does.

ARTIE (cont'd)
McNamara, hey.

Artie follows alongside Guy.

GUY
How's it going?

ARTIE
Good. Smith. Transnational Organized
Crime.

GUY
I know.

ARTIE
We're investigating some nasty
players and came across something we
could use your opinion on.

The sounds of the city are deafening as they cross the street and walk through the crowd.

ARTIE (cont'd)
Might be a case in it for ya. Open
and shut.

Guy doesn't stop walking as he considers.

GUY
I'm going to Astro. I like to talk
over coffee and eggs.

ARTIE
Don't really like Greek food.

They keep walking as Artie awaits a response.

INT. ASTRO DINER - DAY

It's a real greasy spoon, jampacked, 24-hour Greek diner complete with loud conversations, shouting chefs, clinking silverware and bells dinging to summon servers.

Guy and Artie sit in a booth drinking coffee.

ARTIE

We got these guys, David and Muriel something on wire tape paying off Calabrese some money they owed.

Artie slides Guy a file. Guy dangles it in the air as if to say "too thin."

ARTIE (cont'd)

This is fresh... fresh as can be.

Guy scans the photos of David and Muriel entering then leaving the Musso Social Club.

GUY

What's the relevance to the Arts Crime Team?

ARTIE

Apparently this David fella is a painter. Sold a forgery.

GUY

Forgery of what?

ARTIE

Unsure. Didn't say on the tape.

Guy reads a short brief in the file as Artie removes his jacket.

ARTIE (cont'd)

Hundred degrees in this place.

Guy sips his coffee, taking it all in.

ARTIE (cont'd)

Worth checking out?

Guy makes a face as if to say, "no shit."

GUY

Should give this to a youngin, not me. This is a career-making case.

ARTIE

I'm trying to make *my* career. Figure having a veteran like you working on it, even adjacently, would be good.

Guy smirks.

GUY

Let me get back to you. See what I can find.

ARTIE

Well, just let me know if you find anything to help prosecute any of my guys, OK? I'm outta here.

Artie dabs sweat from his forehead, scooting out of the booth right as Guy's breakfast is delivered.

Guy sits, somehow tranquil in the hectic environment.