

EXT. ABANDONED PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Amare sits patiently in his truck. A BLACK SEDAN slides into the lot—silent, purposeful. It stops thirty feet away, perfectly placed. Four men step out; all looking like they meant business, carrying assault rifles. They look like four executioners.

Amare kills the interior light and watches them through the windshield. Every instinct screams.

Army moves forward, practiced menace in his stride. He stops in front of Amare's truck and raises a hand: the invitation to step outside.

Amare opens the door, the cold slices at him. He climbs out, the duffels as heavy as his guilt. He tries to fill his frame with courage he doesn't have.

ARMY
(soft, dangerous)
Bring them here.

Amare crosses the cracked asphalt. The first set of duffels land beside Army's feet with a hollow thud that echoes in the empty lot. Three rifle barrels track him like predatory limbs, their muzzles catching the light.

One shooter moves forward with measured steps, palms the zipper, and peels it open with casual efficiency. He fans back the stacks – and holds the proof up for Army. Army nods once, approval like a verdict. The shooter grabs both bags and carries them to the black SUV, dropping them into the cavernous rear with the care of someone stowing contraband.

Amare moves for the second set, heart pounding under his ribs. The other two shooters close the distance, boots soft on gravel, rifles never wavering. The lot narrows to the sound of their breathing and the scrape of fabric.

The nearest shooter grabs the second set of duffels. He takes them back to the SUV and slides them beside the first set, then snaps the hatch shut with a metallic finality – the sound of a deal sealed. The rifles remain trained on Amare until the last click of the latch.

ARMY (CONT'D)
You doing this solo?

AMARE
(half-smile, brittle)
Didn't think I had options.

Army nods once, approving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ARMY
(low)
Nice work.

Amare exhales. Relief blooms.

AMARE
(trying to stay steady)
He said once this was done – you'd give
me back my mother.

Army reaches into his coat. Amare's stomach drops. He knows this move. He's seen it in movies – the hand that doesn't reach for receipt, but for something that moves the ledger.

A silver barrel catches the light as Army pulls a pistol into view. Not loud, not theatrical – practical, businesslike. Amare's breath locks.

Amare's fingers claw at air. He does what he's always done when cornered: watches for any small angle of escape, but there are none.

ARMY
Turn around.

AMARE
(pleading)
Com'mon man.

ARMY
No need to plead, it's just business. Get
down on your knees.

AMARE
(whisper)
Please. Let my mom go Bro. –

With tears in his eyes, Amare reluctantly follows instructions, while keeping his hands in the air.

Amare's face collapses into pleading. His knees hit the cold ground. Gravel bites his palms. He keeps his hands visible, trembling. Tears burn behind his eyes.

AMARE (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Please. Please just let her go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ARMY

Count down from 100. It'll make it
easier.

He finds a spot on the ground and focus on just that and
counts down.

AMARE

99, 98, 97, 96, 95

Everything contracts—sound thins to the rhythm of his pulse.
Memory flashes in halos: Mama's laugh, the way she smoothed
his hair. He presses his forehead to the asphalt, waiting for
the noise that would end him.

Time stretches. Amare breathes shallow, eyes closed, bargain
prayers under his breath as he continues to count. He comes
to the end of his count, the words flow slower and slower -
10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2..... 1.