

Thief Scene

Tara Buck and Jeremy Flynn

MKTTH

INT. KATZ AND JAMMER BAR - NIGHT

Frank presses through the standing crowd, drinks in hand.  
He finds Jessie at the bar.

JESSIE

What the hell are you doing here?

FRANK

Finding you...

JESSIE

Forget it. Okay?! You're two hours  
late. I mean, I don't need this! I  
don't need a letdown.

He takes her arm. She rips it away.

FRANK

Wait a minute!

JESSIE

Fuck you!

FRANK

I want to talk to you!

JESSIE

No!

Frank grabs her arm. Twenty people are watching them  
fight.

FRANK

I'll take you for coffee and explain...!

JESSIE

Take your goddam hands off of me!!

FRANK

(to Jessie)

Watch out!

HARRY

(large bartender)

Hey, you!

JESSIE

You take me anywhere? Forget it.

Frank strong-arms Jessie.

HARRY  
 (with a sap at his side)  
 I'm talking to you!!

FRANK  
 Maybe there is a reason! Ya ever think  
 of that? What is this big goddamn deal!  
 (to bartender)  
 Take a walk, Flash...

He does. Jessie struggles.

JESSIE  
 I don't know the reason. I don't wanna  
 hear the reason! There is no 'reason'!  
 It just showed me! That's all!

FRANK  
 You were looking forward to this!

JESSIE  
 (rips away)  
 Big mistake!

FRANK  
 Jesus Christ!

Franks drags her out onto the sidewalk by her arm. A  
 half dozen people spectate the fight.

EXT. SIDEWALK - FRANK AND JESSIE

FRANK  
 Get in the car! Don't make a scene!

JESSIE  
 No.

FRANK  
 (mad)  
 Get in the Goddamn car!

He grabs Jessie by the arm and throws her into the car.  
 He moves around to his side. She gets out...

FRANK

Catches her, shoves aside a citizen who tries to  
 interfere, drags her around to his side and throws her in  
 his side where he can keep one arm on her and then drives  
 away.

INT. ELDO - TRAVELING - TWO SHOT - NIGHT

City at night -- taillights on wet, black streets, steel-girder bridges, science-fiction high-rise complexes -- pass by. All dark. Then for the Adlai Stevenson Expressway.

FRANK

In what I do there are sometimes pressures.

No answer.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What the hell do you think I do?

Jessie doesn't answer.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Come on, come on, come on! For five months you and I been saying 'hi' every morning I walk in for breakfast. What do you think I do?

JESSIE

A brain surgeon. You sell cars!

FRANK

I wear 400-dollar slacks, silk shirts and 3000-dollar suits, a gold watch and a perfect D-flawless, three-karat ring...

(pause)

...I change cars like other guys change their shoes.

Jessie looks at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, baby: I am a thief. I been in prison.

JESSIE

Congratulations. Why tell me?

FRANK

'Cause I didn't tell my wife. Who is now gone. I even come on to you? Huh?

JESSIE

No.

FRANK

See?

JESSIE

See what?

FRANK

See I am a straight. I am a true-blue kinda guy! I been cool. Now I'm unmarried. So we can cut the mini-moves and bullshit and have a big romance.

JESSIE

(shrieks)

You are out of your goddamn mind! You think I'm waiting for you to come along?! Where do you come off with your shit?!

FRANK

(blase)

You think I'm kidding? I can tell. This is strictly on the up and up...

JESSIE

(exasperated)

Jesus Christ...!

Jessie looks out the windows in total exasperation.

CUT TO:

INT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

FRANK

You're scared to death.

JESSIE

You are an asshole!

People turn and look.

FRANK

That's lovely. Don't come up into my face!

(beat)

What are you doing in your life that is so terrific?!

JESSIE

I am fine!

FRANK

Sure...

JESSIE

You don't know about me! Where I've been. Where I'm coming from?!

FRANK

Don't shout in here! I know all about you. Inside.

JESSIE

Bullshit you do!

FRANK

So then tell me.

People in next booth move to another table.

JESSIE

(beat; then)

I have put my act together after eight years of a very bad situation. End of story.

FRANK

(to waitress)

Gimme some more coffee here.

(to Jessie)

Sorry... So?

JESSIE

So nothing.

FRANK

What was it like?

JESSIE

Lifestyling. Lot of money. Tucson. Then Mexico City. Culiacan. Bogota. Drifting. Okay?

FRANK

Okay.

JESSIE

Lifestyling got twisted and then empty. It was actually over. But we kept moving through the moves. Then it ended badly. Now I get up in the morning, I take a shower, I go to my job. I have a social security card. My life is very ordinary which is good. And very solid.

FRANK

You are marking time is what you are.  
You are backing off, hiding out. You are  
waiting for a bus that's late and hoping  
it never shows so you won't have to get  
on and go somewhere.

JESSIE

You have a license for this?

FRANK

How much was he moving?

JESSIE

(surprised he knew)

Nothing. Till towards the end. Then  
kilo amounts. I don't know.

FRANK

Then what?

JESSIE

He's dead.

FRANK

He... was a asshole.

JESSIE

There was love and expectations for  
living a life in the beginning...

FRANK

He was an asshole for putting you in a  
box.

(mad, shouts)

You know what'd happen to you day and  
night if you had to do a bit in  
Columbia?! Jesus Christ!

(She likes his attitude-- beginning to enter?)

JESSIE

(smiles)

Don't shout in here!

(beat)

I was left alone with no money, no  
clothes, no visa standing on the corner  
in Bogota, Columbia. "Things" ...did  
happen.

(beat)

Where were you in prison? Pass the  
cream.

Waitress passes.

FRANK

Joliet. Cream's spoiled...

(to waitress)

... some new cream here.

(to Jessie)

The warden was Joe Reagan.

WAITRESS

What's wrong with this?

FRANK

"What's wrong with this?" It's cottage cheese.

(to Jessie)

Joe Reagan. Meatball Joe. If he's a penologist, I'm a jet airline pilot.

(beat)

I did 11 years. I got out four years ago.

New cream arrives. Jessie stars at him in disbelief.

Then:

JESSIE

What did you go up for?

FRANK

I stole 40 dollars.

JESSIE

\$40?!

**END SCENE 1**

FRANK

It started with a two-year bit, a parole in six months. Right away I got into a 'problem' with tow guys, tried to turn me out. Picked up nine more years on the manslaughter beef. Other things. I was 20 when I went in. 31 by the time I got out. Anyway ... you don't count months and years. You don't do time that way.

JESSIE

What do you mean? Why?



FRANK

'Why'? You gotta not give a fuck if you life or die. Forget time. You gotta get to nothing means nothing. When you achieve that attitude, you can survive.

(pause)

I'll tell you a story. All about everything you gotta know about me.

(pause)

Once there was this Captain Morphis: 300-pound slob who couldn't write his name. He had this crew of 16 or 17 guards and cons. Prison group. Crews. They'd go into cells, grab young guys, up to hydrotherapy in the mental wing. Gang bang. Guy puts up a struggle? Beat him half to death. Ends up in the funny farm.

(beat)

Word come down it's my turn tonight.

(beat)

And I know I am going the route...

(snap)

.... like that. 'Cause nothing means nothing anyway, including myself. If I can get hit on whenever some other guy decides. So fuck it, man. Fuck me. I am dead.

(he drinks his coffee)

11:30 or 12:00, lights come on. I got this iron pipe from the plumbing. First guard I get his knees. I go through a convict, another convict, a guard, I get Captain Morphis. I nail Morphis right across the head. Twice. Then they jump all over me and do a lot of things.

(beat)

I'm in hospital section, six months.

(beat)

Morphis is also fucked up real good. Good. Cerebral hematoma. They pension him out, he can't walk straight and dies two years later. A real loss to the planet Earth. Meanwhile I'm to go back into the mainstream population. I know the minute I hit the yard I am a dead man from friends, other guards.

(beat)

I hit the yard. Everyone watches me. Guards. Convicts, bosses. You know what happens? Nothing happens. Nothing.

(beat)

Cause I mean nothing to myself.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

I don't care about me or anything else.  
And from that day I know... I survive.  
Cause I achieved the mental attitude.

Frank reaches into his pocket and unfolds the paste-up collage we saw in the alley behind the car lot and with Okla. He unfolds it carefully like a kid laying out baseball cards. Meanwhile:

JESSIE'S

Never see anything like this. She looks at it, then at Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Later, I worked this all out...

JESSIE

What is this?

FRANK AND JESSIE

FRANK

... in that stone cell. This is what my life will be. No one can stop me from making this happen. 'Cause if it don't...

(re the woman)

That would be you...

Jessie reacts.

THE COLLAGE

A house with a Cadillac glued to the front. Bits and pieces of tree drawn in. A small baby from a Gerber Foods ad. April. A blank spot where Vi was. A woman staring at us. Writing. Okla's face. Everything is creased and ripping a little bit.

JESSIE

(softly)

...who's this old man?

FRANK

David Okla Bertinneau. A Master Thief. He taught me everything I know about what I do. And I told him about you.

JESSIE

These are cut out from magazines?

FRANK

Newspapers. Whatever.

JESSIE

April?

FRANK

She's with me. Vi was a flake. She's gone.

JESSIE

Why the dead people?

FRANK

Inside you are on ice from time. You can't even die right. Out here: people grow. Get old. Die. Children come after.

JESSIE

I don't know...

FRANK (O.S.)

(cutting her off)

Yes you do...

(beat)

Look: I lost 11 years. I can't work hard enough to catch up. I can't run fast enough. The only thing that catches me up is doing my Magic Act.

JESSIE

You'd never know one day to the next whether you're busted, dead or coming home.

FRANK

Yeah. But it does not go on for forever. It ends right here.

(the collage)

When I got this. When I got this here. It ends. I am done.

They don't say anything for a moment.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What you said about 'arrogance'? I cop to it. You know? It's that I got no time. I lost my time. You understand? So I am asking.... you: Be with me.

JESSIE

(low)

I can't have children. I don't fit, Frank...

FRANK

So we adopt... What's the difference?  
April and another. One to follow each  
of us. I got to go away. From when I  
come back, from that point on...

He takes Jessie's hands.

JESSIE

Frank... I'm not ready... I have my life  
so...

FRANK

'...there's nothing in it you can't walk  
from in ten seconds flat.'

(beat)

What is so terrific about your life. My  
life's been a mess. Maybe between the  
two of us we can put something together.  
That means something.

(the collage)

I want you with me and make this happen.  
So I am asking: Be with me. Be my woman.  
I will be your man.

(beat)

I got a way... I could make it happen  
faster, much faster. I'm asking...

(beat)

... You know?

Jessie stares out the window into the shiny black night  
and the lights. The her eyes cross back to Frank.

There's a long pause. Frank holds both her hands tighter  
on the table.

They stare at each other across the table. She smiles.

CUT TO: