

Diving Into The Wreck

INT. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - DAY

Late-afternoon light slants through the windows. Generic office decor. Diplomas and certificates on the walls.

Glancing over them from a chair opposite the desk is FREITAG. Fifty. Imperturbable, pedantic. Not a man of many words.

His eyes settle on a framed photograph on the desk: smiling mom and dad and their two adorable girls.

As if prompted by this, he takes a photo out of his jacket. Its dog-eared condition says he's been carrying it around for a while.

INSERT - PHOTO

A solitary house on a rocky hillside. Someplace far away.

BACK TO SCENE

The ATTORNEY (the dad in the photo) walks in, skimming through some legal documents.

ATTORNEY

... okay, here we go. Consent from the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs... Proof of Title, finally... and that note from the Land Registry with the house in your name. Good.
(sits at his desk)
Took us what, year and a half? Well, all good things to those who wait.

Hands the papers to Freitag, who puts them in his briefcase.

The Attorney notices the house photo, picks it up.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

This is it? Lovely bit of property. Vacation home?

FREITAG

Retirement.

ATTORNEY

Yeah? Good for you, wish I were in your shoes. What line of work did you say you were in again?

Freitag takes his photo back, smiles cordially as he rises.

FREITAG

I don't think I ever mentioned it.

INT. GYM - REC ROOM - NIGHT

Near closing time, only a few people left on the machines.

Freitag runs on a treadmill, wearing earbuds.

He punches a button and the machine slows, stops. Out of breath, perspiring. Wipes his face with a towel.

INT. GYM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

He puts on his clothes after taking a shower.

Notices a handsome young man with a towel around his waist, retrieving his clothes from a locker. Watches him.

Handsome drops the towel and stands there naked, going about his business. Toned body, muscles rippling as he moves.

Freitag stares. Uncomfortable, but can't look away.

Handsome glances at him.

Freitag turns away, shuts the locker, and leaves.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

He sits drinking at the bar. Knocks back a gulp of whiskey.

A WOMAN comes up, gets the bartender's attention.

WOMAN

Gimme another blueberry mojito.

She gives Freitag a once-over, likes what she sees.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hi.

Freitag ignores her.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Buy you a drink?

FREITAG

Thanks, I already have one.

WOMAN

How about you buy me one, then?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

They're having sex, missionary-style. She moans. He grinds away as if he were on a work-out machine.

His absent eyes tell us his mind is elsewhere.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

He gets dressed by the window, back turned to the bed where the Woman lies under the sheets, watching him.

She picks up her purse.

WOMAN

Can't believe you used to be able to
smoke in these. Hotels, airports...
Those little ashtrays in the seats.
Crazy shit.

He ignores her, picks up his necktie. His clothes are neatly folded on an armchair, hers are scattered all over.

She rummages through her purse, finds cigarettes, digs more.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Hey, be a honey, see if you can open
that window.
(rummages more)
Shit... got a light on you?

He finishes with the necktie, reaches for his jacket.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - MORNING

MUZAC PLAYS as he rides down.

His PHONE RINGS. He looks at it, guesses what kind of call this is. Vacillates. Answers it.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Is this Mister Freitag?

FREITAG

Who is this?

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

I understand that you solve problems.

FREITAG

You have the wrong number.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

It's a very simple problem. Three
consecutive jobs. Quick. Low risk.
Full payment in advance.

Pause.

FREITAG
I'll call you back.

He hangs up as the ELEVATOR DINGS, opens on the lobby.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Freitag sits on a bench. Has the photo of the house in his hand. Looks at it. It's out there, waiting for him.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

He's on a PAY PHONE. RINGING. CLICK of someone picking up.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Yes?

FREITAG
(into phone)
I'm going to explain to you how this
is going to work.

A GROWLING CITY BUS pulls up, drowning out the dialogue.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

A maximum security facility. Fences topped with barbed wire. Watch towers and armed guards.

It's rec hour. Inmates mill about the yard or stand talking in groups. Young men work out, old men play chess.

A basketball game is in swing: fast, hard, lots of contact.

INT. CELL BLOCK - BASEMENT - DAY

A maze of HISSING PIPES twists up the cinder block walls and runs along the ceiling, DRIPPING here and there into puddles.

An inmate in a jump suit, late forties, is watching the game through a barred window. He is JULIAN DUFRENE. Jovial, avuncular, constant whisper of a smile.

EXT. PRISON YARD - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

A breakaway. The player with the ball sprints down the court, only one defender standing in his way.

JULIAN (O.S.)
Come on, son, don't be shy now...

The player looks like he might go for a dunk, but then stops, shoots from a distance, misses.

INT. CELL BLOCK - BASEMENT - DAY

Julian shakes his head, disappointed.

JULIAN

When you're gone like that, you man up and dunk it. These kids. Piss and vinegar's all fine, but where's the follow-though? Hmm? Cojones, cojones...

He turns to face three inmates. One of them, a profusely tattooed LATINO MAN, is on his knees, hands tied behind his back. The other two are clearly waiting for Julian's orders.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

What do you say, Alejandro?

LATINO MAN

Go to fuckin' hell.

JULIAN

Hell... Possibly. Well, probably, to be honest with you. But listen, if you believe in hell, as you just implied, then you must also believe in heaven. And surely a righteous, God-fearing man such as yourself can expect to be welcomed with open arms into the bosom of the Lord. What I'm saying is, I'm doing you a favor. No need to thank me. Just give my regards to the Big Man when you see him. Whichever one.

One inmate grabs the Latino Man by the hair, yanks his head back, and the other one plunges a screwdriver into his throat. Does it again. And again. Hits an artery this time. Blood gushes forth in thick heart-beat spurts.

Julian unwraps a candy bar, takes a bite, turns his attention to the game outside.

INT. CELL BLOCK - BASEMENT HALLWAY - LATER

Julian walks out of the room. Two prison guards are standing outside the door, apparently waiting for him.

JULIAN

Hello, boys. Is it time?

INT. CELL BLOCK - DAY

The guards walk him down the block. All the cells they pass are empty, everyone else is out in the yard.

They come to a locked gate. A BUZZER SOUNDS, the GATE RATTLES open, they pass through.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - DAY

A corrections officer puts a box down on the counter in front of Julian: his personal belongings.

EXT. PRISON YARD - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Action under the hoop. The player with the ball jumps, DUNKS.

His teammates give him back slaps and fist bumps.

Then, one by one, heads turn, voices die down. Silence.

Julian, in civilian clothes, is being lead out by the guards.

The inmates stare. All know him, few like him.

One inmate spits in disgust, but doesn't dare say anything.

JULIAN
(smiles at a guard)
Cojones.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PRISON GATES - DAY

The gates close behind him. He takes a moment to enjoy this.

Then he turns and walks toward a limo with tinted windows, the driver holding the door open.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Julian sits across from COATES, his Chief of Security. By his voice we recognize him as the man who contacted Freitag.

COATES
Good to have you back, Mister Dufrene.

He hands Julian a tumbler of Scotch.

JULIAN
Thank you, Mister Coates. So... I understand we have someone.

Coates nods.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Dependable, discreet...

COATES
I made the arrangements myself.
(MORE)

COATES (CONT'D)

This is a very good match for our needs.

JULIAN

Good. Very good.

(swallows some Scotch)

Now let's go see about lunch. I've worked up an appetite.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

WHEELS GRIND GRAVEL as the limo takes off down the road.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

Scorched earth under a brutal desert sun.

Distant mountains quiver mirage-like in the midday heat.

A crow picks at something flat and dead on the highway tarmac.

The shimmering highway horizon. Empty. Then: a dark speck. Getting bigger... coming closer...

A pick-up truck.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

ERIC MOSS, forties, hums to a COUNTRY SONG on the RADIO.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

The truck turns onto a dirt road, raising a cloud of dust.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

A simple rancher in the middle of nowhere.

Eric pulls up.

He carries grocery bags to the front door. Puts them down to unlock one lock, then another.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

He deactivates the house alarm.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Eric shelves away the groceries, whistling that country tune.

He closes a cabinet door, turns -- and gasps in shock.

Freitag is standing in the kitchen doorway, watching him.

ERIC

Wh-who are you? What do you want?

Freitag takes out a business card.

Eric stares. Hesitates. Takes it.

INSERT - CARD

It reads: "COMPLIMENTS OF JULIAN DUFRENE."

BACK TO SCENE

Eric loses color. Looks at Freitag. But there's nothing in those eyes to offer him any hope.

He turns and slowly continues putting up the groceries, his hands trembling.

Freitag looks at his watch, leans on the doorframe, allows him to finish.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - MINUTES AFTER

Eric shelves the last item. He pauses to summon what's left of his courage, then turns to face the intruder.

ERIC

I'm ready.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Zip ties around Eric's wrists and ankles bind him to a chair.

A laptop is set up on the kitchen counter. The screensaver rotates images of white beaches, blue waters, cloudless skies.

Freitag sits reading a book: "THE CROATIAN COAST AND ISLANDS." The cover shows an aerial view of a cluster of small islands, clearly the same part of the world as the screensaver images.

Eric glances nervously between Freitag and an old-style black doctor's bag sitting ominously in the corner.

Freitag looks up and notices what Eric is looking at. Their eyes meet and it confirms Eric's fears. The bag is bad news.

Freitag glances at his watch. It's time.

He goes to the laptop, activates a videoconferencing window.

ON LAPTOP #1

We see the surface of a table with a chair facing the screen.

INT. CALIFORNIA MANSION - DAY

We're in a large room with lofty ceilings. Lots of windows, lots of light. Sparsely furnished. Clean, white, geometric.

We see the laptop on the table, the chair waiting for someone.

ON LAPTOP #2

Freitag's face in CU as he adjusts the camera on his end.

He gets out of the way and we see Eric strapped in the chair.

BACK TO SCENE

Julian sits in front of the laptop. Pours himself a drink.

JULIAN

Hello, Eric. You've lost weight.
You look good.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Eric opens his mouth, can't find his voice.

JULIAN

I hope you don't mind the screen.
It's actually quite intimate once
you get used to it.
(raises his glass)
To old friends. And reunions.

ERIC

Julian, I...

JULIAN

I know, I agree with you, the Witness
Protection Program simply isn't what
it used to be.

ERIC

Please, Julian, don't... don't...

JULIAN

I've always been curious about this.
Do the Feds assign you a new name or
do you get to make one up yourself?

Eric turns beseeching eyes to Freitag. No sympathy there.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Let me recap this quickly for us.
(MORE)

JULIAN (CONT'D)

I trusted you. You betrayed me.
And now we're here. This ugly end-
of-the-road business. How's that?
Pretty accurate?

ERIC

They, they said they'd... My family.
My daughters would've... I couldn't
go to prison. And Jeanne, she...
(tearing up)
She made me promise to do the right
thing. She, she was...

He can't go on, overcome by emotion.

JULIAN

Your wife. Cancer, right? Awful.

A liveried servant puts a plate in front of Julian. Steak.

Julian cuts into it. Blood-rare. He chews as he talks.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Eric, that gentleman standing next
to you is Mister Freitag. Say hello
to him.

ERIC

(at the floor)
Hello...

JULIAN

I don't think he heard you.

ERIC

(to Freitag)
Hello.

JULIAN

Mister Freitag, I think we can begin.

Freitag brings the doctor's bag to the table.

Eric follows his every move with terrified eyes.

Freitag unsnaps the clasps, opens the bag. Takes out a black
leather case and rolls it open on the table.

A set of gleaming dental instruments.

He removes his jacket. Rolls up his shirt sleeves. Puts on
a pair of white latex examination gloves.

A DRIPPING SOUND makes him look down.

Eric's crotch is wet. PISS DRIPS from the chair to the floor.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Desert silence.

GRUNTS and GROANS... escalate into a gut-wrenching SCREAM.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Freitag bends over Eric, holding his head down, digging inside his mouth with a pair of extracting forceps.

Eric twists and struggles in the chair, the zip ties cutting deep into his wrists. He shrieks. A SOGGY CRUNCH.

CLOSE ON:

Forceps clutching a tooth, bloody nerve dangling from it.

Freitag drops it into a plate on the table: CLINK.

A dozen teeth already in there.

ERIC
(whimpering)
... please stop... please stop...
please stop... please stop...

The entire top row of his teeth is gone. Bits of torn flesh hang from the bloody gums and drip down his chin.

Freitag comes at him again. Eric cowers.

Freitag grabs a tooth. CRUNCH. CLINK on the plate.

Freitag wipes perspiration off his forehead, continues.

Eric thrashes, snaps an ankle tie, kicks and jerks.

But now something is different. Freitag takes a step back.

Eric stiffens, grimaces. A heart attack. It doesn't last long. He slumps in the chair, head hanging.

Freitag feels his neck for a pulse.

FREITAG
He's done.

Julian wipes his mouth with the napkin.

JULIAN
Finish it.

FREITAG
He's dead, what's the point?

JULIAN
Is there a problem, Mister Freitag?

FREITAG
(sighs)
No. No problem.

He clutches the forceps and goes back to work.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

As we PAN AWAY from the house: CLINK, another tooth.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

CLINK. The wind swirls dirt and sand.

CLINK. A tumbleweed rolls by.

CLINK. That crow still pecks at that road kill.

CLINK. The crimson sun sinks behind distant mountains.

INT. RANCH HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Freitag rinses the forceps in the sink.

Blood curls down the drain.

He puts on his jacket, grabs his bag. Gives Eric one last look. Isn't too proud of this one. Walks out.

CLOSE ON:

A plateful of bloody teeth on the table.

EXT. JULIAN'S MANSION - SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Julian, wearing sunglasses, floats on an inflatable mattress.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

REGGIE CHILDERS, forties, sits at the breakfast table with his WIFE and eight year-old son, COLIN.

Reggie is reading the papers, Colin is playing with his food.

WIFE
Colin, stop it.

The boy stops. Then starts again.

REGGIE
Colin, listen to your mother.

COLIN
I don't want to.

REGGIE
What did you say?

COLIN
(sheepish)
I'm sorry.

The adults exchange suppressed smiles. Reggie glances at his watch, takes a big gulp of coffee.

REGGIE
I'm off.

He kisses his family.

COLIN
Bye, Dad.

WIFE
Don't forget dinner at the Mangiavellanos tonight.

REGGIE
(puts on his jacket)
I won't, I won't...

WIFE
Are you gonna make it back in time to shower?

REGGIE
Why, were there complaints last time?

He sniffs his armpit, frowns oh-so-very-seriously at Colin.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Strange. I always seem to smell...

Grabs Colin's nose and wiggles it, to the boy's delight.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
... with my nose!

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - GARAGE - MORNING

He flips a switch on the wall and the garage door starts to come up, daylight seeping into the gloom.

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