

City Of Nets

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FADE IN:

EXT. CHICAGO TRIBUNE BUILDING - DAY

Bright, sunny day.

JEN MALONE (late 30s), slight, pretty woman strolls across the street toward a parking garage. She carries a briefcase and bouquet of lilies.

Jen's husband, JAKE MALONE (40s), gruff exterior, the exact opposite of Jen, walks beside her, gets angrier and angrier as he talks on his flip top cell phone.

JAKE

No way. I'm workin' solo again --
(raises his voice)
I always tread lightly!

Jen giggles.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Jake and Jen walk down a row of cars, heading toward a vintage Mustang convertible. Jake stops.

JAKE

I only work with the people I trust
and I count that on one...

Jen gives Jake a peck on the cheek as he hands her the car keys.

JAKE (CONT'D)

...maybe two fingers.

JEN

(smile in her voice)
Tell Stan my bags are packed and
I'm ready to hit the road on his
HOG anytime he wants.

Jen walks to their car and slides into the driver's seat.

JAKE

And you're the maybe.

Jen turns the ignition on.

The car EXPLODES. Jake is flung backwards.

He recovers and rushes toward the burning car but...

Flames shoot out. The other cars explode in a chain reaction. Pieces of cars crash around the parking garage. Jake is thrown to the ground, his right leg on fire.

JAKE (CONT'D)

NOOO...

INT. JAKE MALONE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jake passed out on his roll-out bed, hugging a Jack Daniels bottle, bolts up. The bottle crashes to the floor.

JAKE

...NOOO!

Rain beats outside.

Jake slowly rolls off of his bed in his underwear, revealing scarring on his right leg. He shivers.

A Silver Zuni Eagle Fetish hangs around his neck. He climbs into the dirty jeans and sweatshirt on the floor.

Jake walks through his dingy pigsty, one-room apartment, stepping around and over crumpled up papers, cluttered boxes and near empty Jack Daniels' bottles.

A baseball is wedged to keep the window open. A baseball bat lies by the door. An old Remington typewriter, with a ragged sheet of paper rolled into it, sits on a crooked three legged table, a stack of clothes piled beneath the table.

Jake empties a whisky bottle into a dirty glass. He slugs it back, BLASTS a Jethro Tull CD on the stereo and ignores the neighbors who POUND on the wall.

EXT. PORT OF CHICAGO - DAY

BERNARD TRIACHI, an attractive, well-dressed man with that perfect combination of a seductive smile and steely gaze, watches RORY O'CARROLL accept a sheaf of papers from a Shipping Agent.

Rory, an Irish, red headed woman, smartly dressed in black, hands Triachi the papers.

They stroll through the shipyard past freighters and the workman unloading them.

TRIACHI

All of the arrangements are made?

RORY

(thick Irish brogue)

The cargo arrives Thursday from Bandar Abbas to New York, Los Angeles And Chicago. Our usual shipment in combination with a little something extra. As my Ma would say, they'll be gobsmacked, never know what hit them, or who. And no worries, I'm using a small independent, nothing traceable to you.

Triachi grunts his approval.

RORY (CONT'D)

I do have one concern.

TRIACHI

Mr. Malone will be otherwise distracted. You did see to it that his anniversary gift is being delivered today, didn't you?

RORY

Of course.

TRIACHI

I do not want Jake to ever think I have forgotten him, especially on this day of all days.

Triachi and Rory get into a black Lexus.

RUSS SHEINBERG (late 20s), wearing a well-worn Cleveland Indians cap, watches from the shadows, snaps pictures and types into his iPhone.

Rory drives Triachi away.

Sheinberg walks over to the Shipping Agent.

SHEINBERG

I'd like to talk to you about some of your shipments.

SHIPPING AGENT

Not without a warrant.

SHEINBERG

(hands him money)

I'm no cop.

INT. CHICAGO TRIBUNE OFFICE - DAY

"Stan Marshall, Managing Editor" plaque on the door.

Scattered around the office, remains of computer printouts, random papers from The Chicago Tribune and ashtrays half-filled with unsmoked, chewed up cigarettes.

TV news report plays in the background, "Fox News" like network with TriCom logo.

STAN MARSHALL (60s), balding, leans comfortably back in his chair, chews on a cigarette while scribbling red marks over papers.

Sheinberg stalks over to Stan, takes an unsmoked cigarette from the ashtray.

SHEINBERG

I thought you quit.

Stan spits his cigarette into the ashtray.

SHEINBERG (CONT'D)

(points to the papers)

I'd get it out quicker if you'd sanction my blog.

STAN

Not as accurate. Dig deeper.

(clicks the TV off)

You do this right and maybe people'll realize this paper's not as antiquated as it's made out to be.

SHEINBERG

Most are too scared to talk.

STAN

Then use some of that initiative I hired you for.

SHEINBERG

That was Jake's strong suit. I need his help.

Stan shakes his head no.

SHEINBERG (CONT'D)

He deserves another chance.

STAN

The last chance I gave him cost the paper more than he's worth. Let it go, you're as good as he ever was.

SHEINBERG

No one's as good as Jake. And if it wasn't for me, Jen would still be alive.

Stan chews on another cigarette, looks out his window at the rain.

STAN

If it wasn't for all of us...

INT. JAKE MALONE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Music still BLARES. Neighbors still POUND. Jake refills his glass.

On his desk, a framed picture of Jen with her nameplate leaning against it: "Jenifer Malone, Assistant District Attorney, Cook County, Illinois."

JAKE

(toasts the picture)
Love ya, babe. Miss you.

Jake's eyes shift to the newspaper pictures and articles about Triachi papering his walls. More than half have been ripped.

On the right wall, a collage of Triachi and a woman (KATE LINDSEY). Kate, wearing a large brimmed hat, exudes sexuality. Adjacent, front page newspaper headlines "DRUG CARTEL WITNESS KILLED IN PLANE CRASH".

Another grouping on the left, Triachi at various official city, state and national gatherings with CHICAGO MAYOR GLEASON and other political dignitaries. In all of these pictures, Rory is in the background.

Jake swings his arm back to throw his glass but stops and downs the whiskey instead.

KNOCK.

Jake goes to refill his glass. The bottle's empty.

He tries many bottles. They are all empty. He smashes one against the wall. This quiets the neighbors.

Jake opens his door. On the ground, a long flower box and pint of Jack Daniels.

Jake pours himself a drink and lifts the card attached to the flowers:

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

He glances at the picture of Jen and opens the box, lilies. He downs his drink.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You always remember.

Jake shoves the bottle into his overcoat, picks up the lilies and his bat and limps out using the bat as a cane.