

TV
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BVG
BLACKSTAR VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

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TEASER

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

EXT. WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

A bad neighborhood in a worse part of town. Or so we are told by...

RORAN (V.O.)
Bad neighborhood. Worse town.

ELLEN, a Georgetown freshman barely off the bus from some hayseed town, steps out of a cab.

She pulls her purse close to her shoulder as she realizes the cab has made her lost.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The girl. She was lost. Didn't know where to look. Mom's milk-and-cookies-and-calico lessons taught her nothin' at all about this city.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ellen hustles down the empty block, glancing every which way.

RORAN (V.O.)
She just wanted to go home. More nervous than before. As if she knew.

Ellen's glances scan past the boarded-up storefronts.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He. He was watching.

Ellen's pace quickens.

ANGLE ON:

ELLEN'S SHOES

Run. Run, Ellen, run!

RORAN (V.O.)
She ran. Fast. Her feet hit the pavement. Clap clap clap.

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ellen's running now, full on, for her life. Running.

She whips her head back--

There's no one there.

RORAN (V.O.)

She hit the streets like a bad
sixties motorcycle tune -- the
kind parents played to warn their
kids about the wrong side of the
tracks.

Ellen continues running.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She was on the wrong side of the
tracks.

Ellen rushes by a shadowy storefront and--

WHAM!

A figure, dressed in a blue-green tracksuit, tears out of
the shadows and slams Ellen to the pavement.

We don't see much, but we see a knife.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She spent so much time looking
behind her she didn't think to
look around her. He had her.

The knife tears into Ellen's clothes, shredding them,
exposing her flesh.

RORAN (CONT'D)

He had her. He was at her.

The shadow covers Ellen, and we see bits and pieces of her
clothes going as he envelops her.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was bad. Real sicko rape-o
stuff.

The shards of fabric turn to pieces of flesh and blood.

They spatter the street and the storefront.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Her blood spilled out onto the
pavement like a Jackson Pollock
painting.

Roran's voice tells us all we need to know. There's no
sound, no screams. Just the terrified look on Ellen's face
as the life leaves her eyes.

The figure disappears, leaves Ellen. Half naked. Dead.

RORAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He left. She lay there. Cold.

Ellen's body is pale white against the dark streets as the rain starts to fall.

RORAN (CONT'D)
Wet. Alone.

We PULL BACK from above her lifeless body, ascending higher into the night to look down on the rain-soaked scene and

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

GO TO MAIN
TITLES

MILLENNIUM

"WORD FOR WORD"

starring
Lance Henriksen

James Badge Dale

created by
Chris Carter

Also Starring
Brittany Tiplady

Guest Starring
Daniel Benzali

Jay Harrington

Richard McGonagle

Theme by
Mark Snow

Art Director
JT Vaughn

Co-Producer
Angelo Shrine

Producer
Brendan M. Leonard

Producer
Jeremy Daniels

Written by
Brendan M. Leonard

ACT ONE

BLACK

OVER which we superimpose:

"They dig my demonic dramas...
They'll radically revise it.
They'll pass it along."

--James Ellroy

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. GENERIC SUPER BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Call it Borders, call it Barnes and Noble, call it whatever you want. One of those places that all look the same.

Middle class patrons and their middle class kids mill about the rows and rows of mass market paperbacks and Oprah book club selections. LAUGHTER and MURMURS cascade across it all.

On one floor, a crowd of readers -- the source of the laughter -- gather to hear a couple of authors talk about their latest books.

A smarty-pants, bespectacled college freshman stands in the center of the crowd, waiting on an answer from RUSSELL LANGFORD (30s), a young Harrison Ford wanna-be in Harris Tweed.

Langford is there to promote his novel 'The Michelangelo Mysteries'.

His tone is condescending, more than a little nervous, as if he's heard this question too many times and he hasn't quite figured out the answer to it.

LANGFORD

Well, to tell you the truth, I came up with the idea -- I started researching 'Focault's Famous Fraud' almost a decade and a half ago. And I just... I just... I don't know how to assure you that I don't know the writer of 'Ave Mundi', I never read 'Ave Mundi', and frankly I'm a little tired of folks like you calling me a plagiarist after my years of hard work.

The college kid just smirks and sits back down.

TRACI, a sallow, long-haired graduate student, stands up.

TRACI

Mr. Roran.

Author JAMES "JIMMY" RORAN (50s) stands up to help promote his own book, 'Mr. Bad Example'.

A New Yorker by birth and trade, Jimmy has a face cut like a hunk of beef -- worn and leathered -- and he backs it up with a growling voice and swagger reminiscent of a scarred pit bull.

Still, there's a gentleness about him, as if he's never been confronted with the violence he writes about in his diamond-hard tales of bad men and worse women.

TRACI (CONT'D)

What's the single greatest sentence you've read?

We recognise Roran's voice as the same as the man who described a young woman's slaughter on a empty D.C. street in the teaser.

RORAN

The single greatest sentence I've read? Wow, cupcake, that's... that's kind of a ridiculous question. What are they teachin' you there at G.W.?

More laughter.

Amongst the crowd, FRANK BLACK, a long time fan, stands in the back, staying inconspicuous but not out of sight.

RORAN (CONT'D)

The answer, cats and kittens, midgets and musketeers, is "it was easy" from 'Kiss Me Deadly'. Micky Spillane. Without him, I don't know if I'd be standing here in front of you. Without it, I'd be dead. Thank you.

The crowd applauds. ABIGAIL, a store clerk, steps up to the podium.

Frank watches Roran wave to the audience. He smiles.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

Mr. Roran's gonna take a short break and then he'll sign some books.

INT. GENERIC SUPER BOOKSTORE - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy Roran shakes hands and signs inside book covers, making small talk from behind a table.

Frank, the next in line, steps up to Jimmy. The author, distracted, takes Frank's book without really looking up.

FRANK

Mr. Roran, I'm quite an admirer of your books.

RORAN

Oh. Well, thank you. Thank you very much...

He notices the post-it note on top of the book with Frank's name on it.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Frank. Frank Black...

He looks up at Frank and recognizes him.

RORAN (CONT'D)

From the FBI? BSU?

FRANK

Formerly.

Pete stands up and extends his hand.

RORAN

I was able to study some of your work on Leonard Lake and Chuck Ng when researching 'Empty-Handed Heart'. And the Chris Wilder case for 'Seminole Bingo'.

They shake. Frank smiles.

FRANK

I figured you'd gotten your hands on something from the Bureau. Didn't know it was mine.

RORAN

Yeah. It was intense. Messed me up for a while. Can't imagine what it did to you. It's an honor to meet ya.

Frank frowns, but they shake hands again. Pete sits down to sign Frank's book.

RORAN (CONT'D)

I got to say, though, Frank, your reports -- you're quite the writer.

FRANK

Ah, well, thank you. You're not too bad yourself.

They chuckle. JORDAN, carrying a couple of paperbacks under her arm, comes up to Frank.

JORDAN

Ready to go, Dad?

Frank nods. Roran shuts the hardcover, spins it around, pushing it towards Frank.

Roran grins.

Frank and Jordan head out, they pass by Russell Langford's signing table, who is entertaining far fewer customers than Roran, hardly any, in fact.

Langford argues with the smarmy college kid from earlier.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Frank drives through the commercial district of Georgetown, all mega-marts and super chains.

Jordan looks at the cover of 'Mr. Bad Example' and a few other of Jimmy Roran's novels with titles like 'Gridlock' and 'Bed of Coals'.

The cover art on all of the books are suitably grim, with lots of dark colors and faux bloodstains across the titles.

Frank looks over at Jordan.

FRANK

What did you pick up?

JORDAN

Mmm? Oh, just a couple of Dickens novels. We're doing a unit on him in English.

FRANK

Charles Dickens. Now there's a writer.

JORDAN

I didn't know you were into him.

FRANK

Yeah. He was your mom's favorite author, so I started reading him when we met, trying to impress her.

Jordan laughs, smiles.

JORDAN

You did, huh?

FRANK

I did.

She looks down at the Jimmy Roran novels again.

JORDAN

And Mom, was she... was she a fan of this guy, too? The guy you met tonight?

Frank looks over at his daughter.

FRANK

No, I'm afraid that one's all me.

JORDAN

His books look pretty grim, Dad.

FRANK

They are.

INT. FRANK'S STUDY - NIGHT

Frank sits in an armchair, reading 'Mr. Bad Example'.

The cellular phone on the side table rings. Frank closes the book and picks it up.

LOCKE (O.C.)

Frank. It's me.

FRANK

What's up, Brad?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

BRAD LOCKE stands away from the crime scene, as uniform police and CSI nerds investigate in the background.

It's the same bad part of D.C. we saw in the teaser and yes, it's still raining.

LOCKE

Look, I know it's late--

INT. FRANK'S STUDY - NIGHT

He checks his watch. It reads 12:30 am.

FRANK

It is.

LOCKE (O.C.)

But there's something I want you
to take a look at.

FRANK

Want, or need, Brad?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Brad stands over a body. A familiar pair of sneakers pokes
out from under it.

They're Ellen's.

LOCKE

Need, I guess.

FRANK (O.C.)

You're unsure?

LOCKE

You gonna give me grief or you
gonna come down here before the
rain kills all the evidence?

INT. FRANK'S STUDY - NIGHT

Frank has to smile at this.

FRANK

Sure.

INT. BLACK HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank ambles down the hall, sliding into his coat, when he
notices that Jordan's light is still on.

INT. JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jordan sits up in bed with a cup of tea, reading Charles
Dickens's 'Oliver Twist'.

Frank comes to the door.

FRANK

You're still up.

JORDAN

So are you. And the book is
really good.

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK

I've got to go out for a while--

JORDAN

On a case?

FRANK

You shouldn't worry about what I do, Jordan.

JORDAN

Yeah, well--

The implication there remains unspoken. Finally:

FRANK

Don't stay up too late. You have school in the morning.

JORDAN

Okay, Dad.

She smiles at him. He leaves.

JORDAN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Stay safe.

CUT TO:

INT. GENERIC SUPER BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

The store clerk begins flicking lights off, straightening stacks of books on shelves and getting ready to lock-up.

Roran stands up from behind the table where he's been signing books, stretches out, and takes his coat to leave when he's approached by a rather over-enthusiastic Langford.

LANGFORD

Tough day, huh? All those fans? Takes it out of me too.

Roran wrinkles his face slightly at Langford's attempt to portray himself as a success when they both know the crowds were only there for Roran.

RORAN

(dismissive)

Whatever you say, Russ.

LANGFORD

(eager)

So, did you have a chance to read it?

RORAN

Read what?

LANGFORD

My manuscript, of course.

RORAN

Oh that, yeah. I gave it the once over in the car.

LANGFORD

And?

Roran begins moving toward the exit, more than ready to leave Langford behind for the evening.

RORAN

And it passed the time in the traffic.

LANGFORD

Come on, Jimmy. Don't make me wait. What did you think?

RORAN

(fatigued)

Er... well to be honest, Russ, it could use a little work.

LANGFORD

Sure, what first draft doesn't, but you got all the stuff about playing with protagonist-antagonist stereotypes, right? I mean, it wasn't on too many subtle layers?

RORAN

(scoffs)

Trust me, buddy, that ain't your problem.

LANGFORD

(disappointed)

I knew you'd be like this. No one else ever quite matches up, do they Jimmy.

RORAN

Look, you need experience. Refinement. Not everyone's cut out to write their own thriller. You gotta get right down into it, really feel it in your head, that's what I do.

(beat)

Don't look so cut up.

(MORE)

RORAN (CONT'D)

Give it a rewrite and mail it to me last week, when I had time to read it.

LANGFORD

(slightly bitter)

You know, sometimes I think you're too caught up in your own books.

Roran gets out of the door and makes sure to keep up the pace without looking back.

RORAN

(with finality)

Goodnight, Russ.

Langford is left to stare after Roran as we CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Frank's car pulls up to the crime scene. Still a bad neighborhood in a worse part of town with cold, nasty rain.

He gets out of the car, starts walking towards the lights from the black-and-whites, but doesn't get far before a uniform COP stops him. Call the cop CARVER.

CARVER

I'm sorry, sir, this is a crime scene, you can't--

LOCKE (O.S.)

It's okay.

Locke steps out, flashlight in hand. His raincoat's expensive for a cop's salary.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

He works for the FBI.

CARVER

Sir?

LOCKE

Don't worry about it, Officer.

The cop goes back to doing his job, and Brad leads Frank towards the scene.

FRANK

You know it's been almost ten years since I worked for the Bureau, right?

LOCKE

Frank, I know that, and you know that, but these uniforms -- they don't know that. Easier for us all if they think you're here in an official capacity.

FRANK

From what I remember, D.C. police doesn't usually like the FBI sniffing around their crime scenes.

LOCKE

With most of the feds off fighting the war on terror, we're grateful for whatever help they can give us.

FRANK

So you figured lying to your superiors was a way to get ahead.

LOCKE

Not lying. Just left out certain pertinent details.

Frank's face lies somewhere between a smile and an exasperated frown -- the kid's got talent and cojones, but he's reckless, arrogant.

They've arrived at the crime scene and most of the noise, the excess patrol cars and the like, has quieted down some. Nobody wants to be out here in this awful weather.

FRANK

All right. So what did you need "federal" consultation for?

Still, nobody's arrived to take the body away and they stand right beside it.

Brad kneels down and lifts the sheet to show Frank.

FRANK'S INTERNAL P.O.V.

- Ellen looking up, scared, as the killer slams into her and knocks her to the pavement.
- The knife swinging through the air.
- Clothes tearing, flying, shredding.
- Ellen, bleeding, crying, maybe praying.

RESUME SCENE

As before. Frank nods and Brad lowers the sheet.

LOCKE

Ellen Addison-Fyfe, eighteen years old. Georgetown freshman. English major, not that that matters.

Frank sort of looks at him, again with that amused concern.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Well, I guess everything matters.

FRANK

Yes. It does.

Frank starts to move around the crime scene, considering.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She was found naked?

LOCKE

Except for the shoes. But the rest of the clothes were all over.

Brad indicates the storefront next to the body.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Skirt, panties, over there.

He sweeps his flashlight into the storefront doorway.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Shirt in there.

Brad points to a nearby telephone pole and wire.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Hell, we even found her bra and purse dangling from up there. All of it shredded. Except the purse.

This all gives Frank pause as he considers the scene.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

And there was blood everywhere before the rain washed most of it away. CSIs got what they could, but...

Frank can't quite place what Brad's describing, but it seems too familiar, like he's seen it somewhere before.

FRANK

You said her purse was found intact?

LOCKE

Yeah, all the personal items are over here.

He walks with Frank towards a police van.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

So, what do you know?

FRANK

I don't know anything yet.

LOCKE

I thought you were, you know, the guy.

FRANK

I don't work that way. I can't tell you what I can't see, Brad. Right now, I haven't seen enough. Okay?

Locke, put in his place a little bit, nods. They stand by the police van, fluorescent lights spilling onto the pavement.

Frank looks at the carefully compiled evidence bags, the torn bloodstained clothes, the purse.

Something black and maroon sticking out of the purse catches his eye.

He snaps on a pair of gloves and opens the bag.

Locke watches, a little unsure as Frank pulls out Ellen's purse and reaches into it. He grabs the corner of something and takes it out.

It's a damp, worn, paperback. Frank recognizes the title:

'Bed of Coals' by Jimmy Roran.

On the cover, a nude young woman covered in a sheet, alone on a wet city street. Her sneakers poking out from under the sheet. Alone.

Frank and Locke REACT, and OFF the hauntingly familiar image of the cover we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. DOWD, a grim, angular coroner in his sixties, fills the screen.

DR. DOWD
She wasn't the first.

Dr. Dowd, in his white lab coat and scrubs, stands on one side of the autopsy table in the empty coroner's office.

Unlike the grey shadows of your typical coroner's lab, this one is done in shades of green and yellow.

It's supposed to be soothing, but it just makes Frank and Brad look out of place.

Dr. Dowd lifts the sheet off the metal table. We don't see the body, but Frank and Brad look down at it.

DR. DOWD (CONT'D)
Victim is an eighteen year old female who died of blood loss resulting from numerous stab wounds to the torso and lower extremities.

LOCKE
Yeah.

Dr. Dowd recovers the top of the body and moves down to the feet.

DR. DOWD
In addition to the stab wounds which killed her, victim has several -- several -- symbols and numbers carved into her flesh, including this one...

ANGLE ON:

ELLEN'S BARE FOOT

The rain and grime have blurred the edges some, but the carving is still recognizable:

The number 116.

DR. DOWD
...of the digits one-one-six on
the left foot.

BACK TO:

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

As before. Frank looks down at Ellen's foot.

LOCKE
Wait a second. She was found
wearing her sneakers. That means--

DR. DOWD
I'm not a detective, but--

Frank stares at the foot and--

FRANK'S INTERNAL P.O.V.

- The killer, almost lovingly, removing the sneaker from the dead girl, peeling off her sock.
- Using a different knife, this one a thin Exacto, the killer touches it to Ellen's foot.
- He cuts into the flesh, drawing blood that mixes with the rain.
- Finished with his work, the killer puts Ellen's sock and shoe back on with a parent's touch.

RESUME SCENE

FRANK
The killer put her shoes back on
after he did this.

Frank looks over at Dr. Dowd.

FRANK (CONT'D)
You said that she wasn't the
first. How did you...?

DR. DOWD
So glad you asked.

He leads them over to another table, where another victim lies underneath a sheet.

DR. DOWD (CONT'D)
Victim is a twenty-one year old
female found dead of an apparent
heroin overdose in her bathtub
one week ago. Initial autopsy
findings confirm this, but--

He lifts the sheet.

ANGLE ON:

FIRST VICTIM'S BODY

Carved into the hip is the number 219.

A small, upside down 'v' surrounds the top two sides of it.

BACK TO:

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

As before. Dr. Dowd recovers the victim and looks over at Frank and Brad.

LOCKE

You said you thought she was an overdose, though, right, Doctor?

DR. DOWD

That's what I thought, yes. But, given the similarities between this first victim and the most recent one, I thought you ought to know that these two are, in all likelihood, connected.

He sees Frank writing something down onto a small notepad.

DR. DOWD (CONT'D)

What do you think? Is this the work of a serial murderer?

Frank looks up at him.

FRANK

No. Not yet.

DR. DOWD

No. Why not, pray tell?

FRANK

Brad?

Locke almost sneers.

LOCKE

You need at least three victims for a serial.

DR. DOWD

But more always turn up, correct? Once you investigate?

Frank barely sighs.

FRANK

Yeah. There's almost always more.

EXT. CORONER'S OFFICE - DAY

Brad and Frank push through the double doors. The younger detective slips on a pair of shades -- very David Caruso -- as they head toward their cars.

LOCKE

So what do you think, Frank? Are there more victims?

Frank looks down at his notes.

FRANK

I don't know.

LOCKE

The great Frank Black stumped by a case? Alert the media.

Frank frowns.

FRANK

Both these cases, though, they are connected. This book--

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out another battered copy of the paperback of Jimmy Roran's 'Bed of Coals'.

He notices Brad's concern and chuckles.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Relax. It's my copy from home. And it describes, in detail, killings similar to these last two victims. One a college student on an empty street in a depressed part of town, the other an upscale art trader killed by an overdose of heroin.

LOCKE

So. We got ourselves a copycat.

FRANK

Maybe. See, this author, Jimmy Roran, his previous novels featuring this detective character--

Locke peers at the cover.

LOCKE

Matthew Parkinson--

FRANK

Yeah. The books with Parkinson before this one took place in Boston.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

So if you want to find out if this really was a serial murder, what would you do?

LOCKE

What would I do?

FRANK

Yes.

LOCKE

I'd check to see if this author had an alibi for the time frames of the last two deaths.

FRANK

You could do that, too, but I'd also talk to Boston P.D. and see if there have been any deaths recently where the victims had numbers carved into their skin. Right?

LOCKE

Right. There's almost always more.

FRANK

Unfortunately.

Frank shoves the book into his pocket and starts towards his car.

LOCKE

Hey, this detective, Parkinson. He ever catch the guy?

Frank looks grim, concerned, determined. There's something here but he can't really put his finger on it yet.

FRANK

No.

INT. STEAKHOUSE - AFTERNOON

It's a place where the Washington bigwigs go to broker deals over cholesterol and beer, or chicken and wine if that's their thing. Very high-end, and very high-profile.

Jimmy, in a faded polo shirt and leather jacket, couldn't give a damn about his fellow clientele, digging into a steak sandwich.

Frank, looking uncomfortable by the clientele and the dress code, approaches Jimmy in a corner booth when he sees--

Russell Langford, who comes up to the table.

LANGFORD

Jimmy!

Jimmy, surprised, stands up, shakes his hand.

Frank overhears.

RORAN

(slightly insincere)

Russ. Sorry to hear about your rejection.

LANGFORD

(falsely cool)

Ah, well, that's what we have to deal with. Part of the job. Doesn't matter. It's all about the words.

RORAN

Yeah, but it still stings. I know.

LANGFORD

Where were you last night, I tried to call you?

RORAN

Ah, I took myself off the hook. Needed some sleep, ya know?

Langford nods.

LANGFORD

Listen, I can't stop. Thanks, anyway, Jimmy.

RORAN

No problem.

Langford walks away. He passes by Frank without giving him a second thought.

Jimmy stays standing as he sees Frank walk towards him. The two shake hand and sit back down.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Russ Langford -- he was at the signing the other night -- and we share a publisher. Shared a publisher.

Frank doesn't say anything, but looks surprised at this.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Oh, you know, the latest book, 'Michelangelo Mysteries'?

(MORE)

RORAN (CONT'D)

The follow-up to his other art-themed "controversial" best seller? Well he was working on making it a trilogy, but his manuscript got dropped like a stone. I guess those lawsuits were too much for the top dogs to take.

He chuckles.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Sorry. You know I like to talk.

FRANK

Thank you for meeting me, Mr. Roran.

Jimmy alternates smirks with mouthfuls of food as he talks.

RORAN

Call me Jimmy, okay? The honor's all mine. Not very often I get to share a steak with a crime-fightin' legend.

FRANK

I wouldn't go that far.

RORAN

You're being modest. I bet I can tell you what you wanted to meet about -- that girl that got killed down in the projects, right?

He sees the mixture of shock and surprise on Frank's face and laughs, loud, heartily.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Relax, Frank. I know my books well enough to recognize when somebody's taking plagiarism to the next level.

He looks down at his food, his face darkening.

RORAN (CONT'D)

And, really, it's... well, it's not the first time that this has happened.

Frank raises his eyebrows.

FRANK

This happened before? In Boston?

Jimmy chomps another bite of his sandwich.

RORAN

Yeah. You should know, though, that I have an alibi for this most recent rip-off and Boston P.D. already questioned me about the...

He gets sick just thinking about it.

RORAN (CONT'D)

...murders that took place up there about two years ago. Three of them, all from my first three books.

He shakes his head.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Jesus.

FRANK

Jimmy, did they ever catch the killer?

RORAN

Well, no. He didn't... I don't know. You've read my stuff, you know that in the first three books, Matt Parkinson caught the bad guy.

Jimmy looks pale. He reaches over and chugs his beer.

RORAN (CONT'D)

And now he's back. How poetic. How freakin' poetic. This victim, she had a number carved on her?

FRANK

Both of the connected--

RORAN

He got the first girl from 'Bed of Coals', too?! Must have been before I got to town.

FRANK

I take it this was something that happened in Boston, too.

RORAN

Yeah. No one could make sense of it up there, either.

He glances back at Frank, the color starting to return to his face and almost -- almost -- smiles.

RORAN (CONT'D)

I think I know someone who can, though. Want some help?

FRANK

Jimmy, I'm just helping out on this case for an old student of mine. I don't know if--

Jimmy nods. He finishes his beer.

RORAN

It's okay. I tell you what, on account of I wanted to talk to you about this, anyway. See, I'm working on my next book. In it, Matt Parkinson teams up with a grizzled former FBI agent -- you see where I'm going with this?

FRANK

You want to shadow me?

RORAN

Call it what you will, but you let me help out on this, and we'll chalk it up to the great field of literary research. Dig?

Frank studies Jimmy for a few moments. Although they're from the same generation, their lives could not be more different.

Frank looks down at the table, then back up at Jimmy.

FRANK

Sure. Just for a few days, though.

RORAN

Great! Let me just finish this sandwich and we'll roll out, right, partner?

Frank shakes his head again and we--

INT. COLLEGE DORM - NIGHT

Dozens of college students in their late teens and early twenties rock out to a hastily composed remix of the themes to "Law & Order" and "Hill Street Blues". It's a "TV Detective" theme party.

Moving through the sea of beer-filled red-and-blue plastic cups is HALLEIGH, twenty-one, wearing a leather jacket and jeans, her hair cut short and the ends dyed blonde.

A drunken FRATBOY bumps into her.

FRATBOY

Hey, who are you supposed to be?

HALLEIGH

I'm TV's Olivia Benson.

He glances down at her chest.

FRATBOY

Nice! You even got the matchin'--

She gives him a look. Her eyes say everything.

Halleigh shakes her head, heads down the hall, the mash-up echoing behind her.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

It's dimly lit, but Halleigh can still hear the noises from the party as she looks around for a fire detector.

When she doesn't see one, she sighs, reaches into her pocket, and leans against the wall to smoke a cigarette.

From above her, someone looks down at her smoking. A SHAPE moves up the stairs, but they stumble, and it ECHOES.

Halleigh, startled, looks up.

INT. COLLEGE DORM - NIGHT

Halleigh pushes back through the door. The mash-up is more ominous, darker, full of pulsating beats.

Halleigh pulls her jacket close and stumbles down the hall.

The further she gets away from the party, the quieter it becomes, although the song still persists.

Wall posters offer welcome slogans but little comfort to her.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Halleigh slams her door shut, locks it, and throws her jacket onto the bed. Light streams in from the street's open blinds.

Halleigh sees that the bathroom light is still on as she shuts the blinds.

HALLEIGH

Hey, Dee, you really should have come to this thing tonight.

She can still hear that "Hill Street & Order" mix thumping...

HALLEIGH (CONT'D)
Seriously, how long is this
song?!

The fact that there's no knowing laughter and no one in the
bedroom causes her face to darken.

HALLEIGH (CONT'D)
Diana?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Halleigh pushes the bathroom door open and sees...

A young woman's naked feet suspended in midair, part of a
dangling body, blood running down them over...

Two numbers, 22 and 89 carved into each foot.

The blood continues to drip down onto the white linoleum
floor.

Halleigh gets ready to scream and the remix ends with a
final signature "Law & Order" CHUNG-CHUNG as we:

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. COLLEGE DORM - NIGHT

DING! The rickety elevator opens on Frank and Jimmy, the author standing behind the profiler.

Diana's murder ended the party, and typical fluorescent lights flood the halls instead, turning everything into sharp, hard angles.

As they walk down the hall, Frank sees a couple of female uniform OFFICERS questioning and comforting Halleigh, still dressed in her costume.

Frank and Jimmy turn a corner and see Detective Locke standing at the end of the hall.

Diana and Halleigh's door lies open behind Locke, tied off with crime scene tape.

Frank takes a few steps further ahead of Jimmy. Brad takes a few steps forward.

LOCKE
Who's the civilian?

FRANK
He's helping me with this case. A consultant.

LOCKE
The consultant has a consultant?

Frank gives him a look. He doesn't find that funny.

FRANK
Trust me.

Locke gives in.

LOCKE
All right. I don't know if he's gonna want to see this, though.

Frank turns and sees that Jimmy has stopped about halfway down the hall, hanging back.

Jimmy's not sure if he wants to see this himself, either.

FRANK
Jimmy?

He tilts his head slightly, indicating the crime scene.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Frank and Jimmy stand outside the bathroom next to Brad.

Police tape also marks the door, but the door -- covered with photos and postcards from the girls' college lives -- remains closed.

Locke looks over at Frank, but he seems more concerned about Jimmy.

LOCKE

You sure about this?

JIMMY

(almost snarling)

The more you ask me, the less sure I'm gonna be. Open the damn door.

Locke rolls his eyes -- okay -- and pushes it open.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The scene remains the same, except now it's more clear.

The murdered girl, Diana, hangs nude, with her arms tied above her head, from the bathroom ceiling. We only see her from behind, however.

Hundreds of cuts, ranging from tiny and painful to deep and excruciating, run up and down her back -- and by implication, her front as well.

Blood streaks her body, staining her skin when it dries and continuing to trickle down onto the floor.

Frank looks at the scene and

FRANK'S INTERNAL P.O.V.

- Someone watching Diana enter her dorm room.
- Diana, dressed in a bathrobe, opening the bathroom door. Fear, maybe realization hits her.
- A passed-out Diana lying sprawled in the tub, half-in, half out, her bare feet exposed.
- Out comes the knife and
- In go the numbers: 22, 89.
- The killer hoisting Diana up in the air with a length of cord, tying her to the ceiling.
- Diana starting to come around just as the knife flies high and...

RESUME SCENE

Locke shuts the door again, knowing that both Frank and Jimmy have seen enough.

Frank looks over at Jimmy. The writer looks sick.

FRANK

Is it--

RORAN

Yeah. It's one of mine.

Locke, surprised, reacts to this, and Jimmy sees his reaction.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Relax, man. I didn't do this. But one of my fans did. Heh.

INT. BLACK HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

Frank, his keys jangling, opens the door, pauses for a second, and then lets Jimmy Roran follow him inside.

Both men have returned from the most recent crime scene and both are still collecting their thoughts about what they saw.

RORAN

You got a beer, Frank?

FRANK

In here.

Frank and Jimmy move into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Frank sets his keys down on the counter and opens the fridge, where he hands Jimmy a beer.

He doesn't take one for himself, because, even at this hour, he's noticed the mail.

On top of the piles of bills and flyers asking for money is a letter from Jordan's school. It is not the good kind of note.

Frank opens the letter and glances at the contents.

He looks over at Jimmy, sitting at the kitchen table, nursing the beer and trying to hide from his thoughts.

FRANK

Excuse me a second, okay, Jimmy?

Jimmy gives him the "go ahead" wave standard to alcoholic writers in full-on brooding mode.

INT. JORDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jordan is up at her desk, studying.

Frank comes to the door and knocks, startling her.
She turns around and smiles.

JORDAN

Hey, Dad.

Her smile, however, falls when she sees the letter in Frank's hand -- and the disappointment on his face.

FRANK

I wish you had told me you weren't doing so hot in some of your classes, Jordan.

JORDAN

Look, Dad, I know you're probably mad, but I've improved a lot. You can talk to my teachers, even.

FRANK

I will.

JORDAN

Good. And you'll see that I'm doing better. I have a tutor now. I'm doing better.

Frank shakes his head and comes into the bedroom. He sits down on the covers.

FRANK

I'm not mad at you.

Jordan cocks her head at him, slightly, confused.

JORDAN

You're not?

FRANK

No. I just wish you'd told me about this sooner. I wish there was something I could have done. To help.

JORDAN

Dad. That's what I love about you. But you got to understand -- you gotta -- that I'm not a little girl anymore.

FRANK

I know that. I'm not blind.

JORDAN

Right. So I wanted to show you that I was capable of fixing it myself.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

There was a problem, and I identified it, and I'm taking steps to correct it. Isn't that what you always taught me?

Frank has to smile at this.

FRANK

Yeah. But Jordan?

JORDAN

Yeah?

FRANK

I'm your father.

She smiles back at him. They sit there a moment.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I have some work still left to do. You should get to bed.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frank comes back down the stairs to see Jimmy still at the kitchen table. He's finished one beer and is almost through another.

RORAN

Hey. I got another one. Hope you don't mind, killer.

FRANK

I don't.

He sits down at the table next to Jimmy.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Jimmy?

RORAN

Yeah?

FRANK

Was that the first time you'd been to a crime scene? Tonight?

Jimmy sips his beer, thinking.

RORAN

Frank, I've -- I've read a lot about police work, about men who do what you did, do. I've seen the photos and I've listened to the tapes.

He taps his temple with two fingers.

RORAN (CONT'D)

And it's always gone in here--

His other hand strokes the table. His movements are deft, graceful, almost like a piano player or a magician.

RORAN (CONT'D)

--and come out here with a little spit and polish to make it flow, make it entertaining. Make it readable. Bearable.

He takes another swig of his beer and looks at Frank.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Never before did I think somebody'd make it real. Not in a billion years.

Jimmy sighs.

RORAN (CONT'D)

Did I do that?

Frank doesn't quite know what to say.

FRANK

Well, Jimmy, you may have written the murders, but you also created Matthew Parkinson.

RORAN

And?

FRANK

Doesn't he always come out on top? No matter who throws what at him, right?

Jimmy chuckles at this. He shakes his head again.

RORAN

Yeah.

(beat)

Maybe we could use a little more help on this. God knows I haven't been much use.

INT. FRANK'S STUDY - NIGHT - LATER

Jimmy lies passed out, snoring on the couch in a corner, sleeping it off, trying not to dream.

Despite the late hour, Frank sits at his desk, lit only by a single lamp, poring over his notes and papers from the crime scenes.

Beyond the three young women from the D.C. area, four other photos of women in their late teens to early thirties lie scattered across the desk.

These are the victims of the Boston copycat murders, and underneath the "before" photos are the "after" ones.

Pretty girls, all in a row, blondes, brunettes, redheads...

And the pale corpses of those same girls.

Clothes torn off. Skin torn off.

Blood. Too much.

Frank rubs his eyes, tired, and studies the photos again.

LANGFORD (V.O.)
Everything has meaning.
Everything.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Russell Langford addresses a crowd of college students.

LANGFORD
Cartoons. Songs. Literature.
Encoded within these are symbols,
often hidden but desperately,
demandingly important to our
culture, to... our... very...
humanity.

He looks down at his notes, then up again, amused and entertained by his own pretentiousness.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)
See you all next week. Dismissed.

The class gets up and shuffles towards the exits. We then see Frank and Jimmy push through them towards the desk.

By the time they get there, the classroom has emptied.

Langford looks up, sees them and smirks.

RORAN
Frank, this is Russ Langford.
Russ, Frank Black.

They shake hands.

RORAN (CONT'D)
He's one of the best
anthropologists out there, and--

LANGFORD

A brilliant writer in his own
right, I may say.

Langford and Roran chuckle. Langford looks at Frank.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

James told me you had a case you
could use some insight on.

Frank nods.

He hands Langford a manila folder. Langford opens it and
studies the crime scene photos.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Hmmm. Hmmm. Yes. Oh, yes.

He looks back up at Frank.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Well, I can certainly tell you
whoever did this, whoever carved
these markings into the bodies
knew what they were doing.

FRANK

So they do have meaning?

LANGFORD

Yes, of course. Some of these
I've seen in documents thousands
of years old.

He glances up at the clock on the wall. He closes the
folder.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, I've got to run to
my next class. James, why don't
you and Mr Black stop by tonight
around seven? I'll be able to
give you a better analysis if
I've got my books to work from.

RORAN

Frank?

FRANK

Sure.

Langford smirks.

LANGFORD

Excellent. See you then.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

A brief shot to establish, looking down on the large building with traffic and pedestrians passing by on the street.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Frank is sitting at Locke's desk, crime scene documents in front of him beside a short stack of Jimmy Roran novels. A bespectacled Frank inspects them in all in detail.

LOCKE

Making any progress?

FRANK

I'm just trying to get a handle on these numbers marked into the flesh. I've seen victim desecrations before, but these don't speak to a specific profile.

LOCKE

I was thinking about that. Could these maybe be verses from the Bible or something?

FRANK

No. There's no religious signature or extraneous stressor to any of these murders. The numbers likely have meaning for the killer, but they also acts as a taunt to investigators. To us.

LOCKE

Right. Do you have any other impressions of this guy to work from?

FRANK

He's a white male. Eighteen to forty-five. Single. But you knew that.

LOCKE

What about this novelist guy? Is he being any help at all?

FRANK

Some. It's useful to have his insight, given the nature of the murders.

LOCKE

You know, I'm still not ruling him out as a suspect.

FRANK

I've spent time with him. I'm not sure he's capable.

LOCKE

I seem to remember you once saying we're all capable.

Frank doesn't have an answer for this, so finishes up with the documents before rising for the desk and taking off his reading glasses.

LOCKE (CONT'D)

Where you off to?

FRANK

Roran's taking me to meet with another writer who's also an academic anthropologist. A guy called Langford. I think it might be useful, for you as well.

LOCKE

Okay. Keep me posted.

Frank takes his coat from the back of the chair and begins to put it on as he walks toward the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANGFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank and Jimmy walk up towards Langford's home. It's a Victorian-style house kind of like Frank's old home in Seattle. As they approach the house, they can see that it is unlit and there is no car in the driveway.

Roran glances at his wrist-watch.

RORAN

We're a little early.

They step onto the porch and Jimmy knocks on the door, which promptly swings open.

Frank and Jimmy look at each other. This can't be good.

INT. LANGFORD HOUSE - NIGHT

The duo step inside. It's dark, save the fireplace with embers burning low.

RORAN

Russ?

No response.

They start to look around, walking through the living room and kitchen.

Frank glances around the kitchen, notices the knife rack, and sees that one is missing. He grimaces.

FRANK

Roran.
(correcting himself)
Jimmy.

Roran stops climbing the staircase and turns. Frank points to the gap where the knife would be.

RORAN

Oh, God.

FRANK

We don't know anything yet.

Frank does a quick visual survey of the house and locates the staircase with his eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Upstairs.

INT. LANGFORD HOUSE - STUDY

The lights are on in this maroon and butternut room filled with shelves and shelves of books.

A big desk with papers and texts scattered across it sits at one end.

Frank and Jimmy walk into the study and begin to look around.

Frank studies the books on the shelf -- their topics range from popular culture to the cosmos to the study of human anatomy.

RORAN (O.S.)

Frank.

Frank walks over towards the desk. Jimmy is looking down at it. He's shaking, as if he's just come out of a freezing lake.

Frank looks at the desk as well.

All of Roran's crime novels are there in hardcover. Many of them lie open, with passages highlighted and news columns detailing the murders that match them next to the books.

FRANK'S INTERNAL P.O.V.

- Diana opening her bathroom door.
- The killer pulling her down, throwing her to the

ground.

- Her bathrobe falling to the floor.

RESUME SCENE

As before.

FRANK

It's him.

JIMMY

Are you sure?

FRANK

I'm sure.

Jimmy points to something on the desk.

In the center of the desk, an as of yet unpublished novel sits in galleys -- sheet after sheet of white paper.

RORAN

That's my latest book. The one I'm writing. I... I let him read some of my drafts.

He looks over at Frank, scared now.

RORAN (CONT'D)

You know how I told you it involves Matthew Parkinson and an FBI agent? I knew I wanted to base it on you, and I heard you were teaching these days, so I gave that character a--

FRANK

A what?

RORAN

Kind of a protégé. A cop.

Jimmy looks at Frank, totally scared out his mind now.

RORAN (CONT'D)

In it, in the climax, the killer traps the agent's cop buddy at home. As, uh, bait for the two detectives. Us.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Locke opens the door and finds Russ Langford, charming and smirking.

LANGFORD

Hi. I'm a friend of Frank Black's. Russel Langford. Frank wanted to meet with the three of us -- you, me, Jimmy Roran -- about this case. The murdered girls? He asked me to swing by and fill you in on our progress first.

LOCKE

He mentioned it, but I thought he was heading over to your place?

LANGFORD

No, I just spoke with Frank and he asked me to come to you, if that's okay.

Locke studies him, a little concerned, maybe a little skeptical.

LOCKE

Well, I guess you better come in.

LANGFORD

Sure thing.

As Langford enters, we see that he's changed out of his Harris tweed and ties and into...

...a blue-green track suit.

The door shuts behind Langford.

We hear it lock.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

POLAROID FLASH and come up on:

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Russell Langford follows Locke through, quietly closing doors behind him as he does so.

LOCKE (O.S.)
Can I get you a beer or something?

LANGFORD
Sure.

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Locke stands with the fridge open, his face obscured.

LOCKE
Bottle okay?

LANGFORD
That's fine.

He pulls out a couple of bottles of cold beer and walks over to the counter, back still to Langford.

Langford inches closer. Locke sees him doing so in the glass above the sink.

LOCKE
Why don't I get us a couple of glasses after all.

Using his peripheral vision, he sees that his gun lies on the kitchen table next to his keys behind Langford.

Too far away.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Frank and Roran race down the D.C. streets. Frank's driving is defensive, but he's clearly breaking the speed limit.

He talks into a cell phone as he drives.

FRANK
Yes, Officer, that's Lang-ford, f-o-r-d. Suspect is approximately five feet, eleven inches, cropped brown hair and brown eyes. A hundred... a hundred and seventy pounds.

RORAN

The tracksuit.

FRANK

Yeah, suspect may be wearing a blue-green tracksuit.

(beat)

No, I don't know the brand.

(beat)

Okay... Okay.... Yes, as soon as you can.

He hangs up and glances over at Roran, whose eyes are fading in and out with shell-shock.

FRANK (CONT'D)

They'll meet us there.

RORAN

Okay.

FRANK

Jimmy, I need you to tell me what happens in your new book. The novel. What happens to the agent's buddy? The cop?

Roran chuckles, low and rasping. The edge of insanity.

Frank glances over at him.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Jimmy. This isn't your fault. You didn't do this--

RORAN

I gave him the damn manuscript, Frank! We've been friends for years.

FRANK

Jimmy. Jimmy. You couldn't have known. You know that. It's how they can do what they do. You know that.

(beat)

Now, I need you to tell me what happens in the book.

Roran laughs again.

RORAN

What do you think, Frank? He kills him. He kills him in front of the agent. And Parkinson. What do you think?

Frank considers this and glances over at Jimmy again.

FRANK

He'll stick to his M.O. He'll
follow the books. We've got time.
He'll wait until we get there.

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Locke stands over the sink, running water over a pile of dishes. His brow furrows as he ponders the situation.

The longer Langford stands behind him, the more Brad realizes that he's in a tight spot.

LOCKE

I'm sorry. It'll just be another
minute. I need to wash a fresh
glass. Me and germs, ya know?

LANGFORD

Take your time. Please.

Locke looks up again to check Langford's reflection in the window.

He watches him as he reaches inside his suit jacket...

His eyes go wide. His hand clenches around the first object in the sink, which happens to be

A FRYING PAN

He looks back up to see

LANGFORD

behind him, knife in hand.

Locke REACTS as Langford lunges, stepping out of the way. It's not heroic or superhuman, but it's smart.

Langford stumbles and hits the sink.

Locke just hauls back and WAILS on him with the frying pan, putting years of amateur baseball into it.

But it's not enough to knock him out, and as Brad runs out of the kitchen, Langford regains his balance.

Langford looks at the door swinging shut and touches the side of his head.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Revision to the text. Cliche,
but, nevertheless...

And he follows after Locke.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Locke, not thinking, races down the hall and slams the door shut. He locks it, pulls the chair from a desk over before realizing--

He's just locked himself into a room with no windows. He scans the room for his weapon, but there's no sign.

He runs his hands over the back of his head panting.

From outside the room, he hears a TAP TAP TAP.

It's the sound of metal on wood.

LANGFORD

You forgot your gun, pal.

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank and Jimmy come barrelling into the building.

They stop at Locke's front door, listening, waiting, hearing only silence. Not even breathing.

Frank looks at Jimmy, curious, even skeptical. Is this really a trap or what?

FRANK

Brad? Brad?!

He decides to go ahead and KICKS IN the door.

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Jimmy inside, looking around.

Frank sees that the bedroom door is closed.

FRANK

Hey, Brad?

LANGFORD'S P.O.V.

Much like his position from behind the dorm room door, Langford watches Frank and Jimmy approach the bedroom.

Like the ancient beasts of yore, he waits--

INT. LOCKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Locke stands to the side of the door, now with an actual baseball bat in hand.

Frank's voice is almost distant, but getting clearer.

He steadies himself.

FRANK (O.S.)

It's Frank

BACK ON FRANK

Frank, ten, maybe fifteen feet away from the bedroom door, on the other side still, watches the door open a crack.

He sees Locke peek out. The two meet eyes and he opens the door fully, stepping out into the hall, when...

WHAM!

Langford SLAMS out of the opposite corner and darts forward.

Locke tries to dodge, but he's too quick, and before Frank or Jimmy can do anything, Langford has Locke around the chest.

Locke's gun at his throat.

LANGFORD

Better move away, Frank. We wouldn't want to, you know, end things before they're supposed to end.

Frank doesn't move.

He and Langford face off.

Frank's eyes go from Langford, his face cold and brutal, to Locke, scared at last, but trying -- trying -- to stay calm.

BACK TO Langford and the gun at Brad's neck.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Move. Back.

Frank still doesn't move for several seconds.

He notices Langford's shaking hand.

As Frank takes one step back, then another, his eyes meet again with Brad's.

LOCKE'S P.O.V.

He watches his mentor take another step back. Notices his eyes going down and to the left, indicating something.

Indicating Langford's shaking hand.

RESUME SCENE

As before.

Langford waits for Frank to keep backing up.

Langford sees Jimmy hanging back, in the shadows, a mixture of betrayal, anger, fear, all playing across his face.

Confronted with this unpredictable killer -- although one would stop short of calling him evil -- the writer has no words.

And somehow, this amuses Langford. He chuckles.

LANGFORD

Scared, Jimmy? Well. Isn't this -- isn't this always how it happens in your books? In the stories?

He chuckles again.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Isn't it? The one least likely? The one who comes out of nowhere and totally mucks everything up? Who just, oh, I don't know, manages to ruin everything?

RORAN

And the symbols? What was that all about?

LANGFORD

Don't you get it, Jimmy? Don't you know your own work? Don't you recognise a page reference when you see it?

Roran looks even more sickened.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

I guess you never did read that paper I wrote on visual horror tableaux in crime fiction. I used the same references. Page one-sixteen in 'Bed of Coals', page two-nineteen in 'Mr Bad Example'?

(beat)

No. You never did have time to read my work, did you Jimmy.

RORAN

Is that what all this is really about? Your crappy purple prose? You being jealous of me actually having a bit of talent? Or are you just sick in the head?

Langford gives a little crazed laugh, more angry than anything.

LANGFORD

Jeez, who writes your dialogue
Jimmy?

(beat)

But maybe you're right. How
would Jung or Lacan put it?
Perhaps I did want a mentor, or a
father figure. Just like this
guy...

He indicates Locke by JABBING the barrel of the gun in
closer to his neck.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

...the cop protégé. So now I'm
taking him out.

(beat)

More importantly though, it's all
on the page. It's all your
words, Jimmy.

His eyes go cold and dark. He looks at his watch, then up
at Frank.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

Well. Better head outside, Frank.
We want to try to stick to the
text after all.

Frank is standing right beside Jimmy.

LANGFORD (CONT'D)

You should ask your partner,
there. I hear it's one helluvan
ending.

(beat)

Outside.

Frank guides his hand along the wall to help himself
backward, his eyes never leaving Locke's.

FRANK

Brad.

LANGFORD

Ah, ah, ah. No talking. Not in
the book, after all.

Frank and Jimmy continuing reversing, Locke and Langford
about to disappear from their line of sight.

Frank's eyes, once again, go down and to the left.

Down, and to the left.

Back to Locke, whose eyes say all we need to know:

"I trust you."

INT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Jimmy reach the general hallway.

Langford edges forward with Locke, about to hook the front door shut to keep Frank and Roran out when...

Locke jerks his head to one side, down and to the left, throwing his weight against Langford's weaker, shaking hand.

Frank and Roran spring into action, charging forward again to get back through the doorway

Locke wrestles himself free of Langford's grip, with some help from Frank rushing forward.

The three of them fall to the ground in a heap, and Locke's weapon falls free of Langford's grip and SPINS across the floor.

Langford throws a PUNCH at Frank, keeping him down, and leaps up toward the kitchen, grasping for one of Locke's household knives.

He grabs hold of one, but Locke is hot on his tail. He TACKLES him to the ground, the two of them now rolling on the floor, the knife could be anywhere, when...

BLAM!

A gunshot hits Langford in the shoulder, causing him to stagger back and fall flat out, incapacitated but just about alive.

We WHIP PAN AROUND to find...

RORAN

Gripping Locke's weapon with intensity, still aiming it steady, his face shaking and drenched with sweat.

Frank, now back on his feet, edges slowly up to Roran, careful not to startle him. He wordlessly places a calming hand over Roran's grip, bringing the gun down and out of danger.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOCKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - SOME TIME LATER

It's your standard, run of the mill, post-shootout, to catch a predator melee. Cop cars, flashing lights, et cetera, et cetera.

PARAMEDICS wheel Langford, handcuffed to the gurney at the wrists and ankles, into the back of an ambulance.

Frank watches the crew close the door from the inside, but before he does, Langford meets eyes with him.

Langford smirks.

His eyes look over Frank's shoulder as the doors slam shut.

Frank turns to see what the killer was looking at:

Jimmy. Standing away from the chaos, smoking a cigarette, observing it all.

Frank walks over to him. Jimmy sees him coming. A sad smile starts to cross his face, wistful, maybe a little rueful.

RORAN

Hey.

FRANK

Hey.

He takes a last drag on his cigarette, and tosses it over.

He looks at Frank, sadness, maybe defeat in his eyes.

RORAN

All I ever wanted was to be a
writer, Frank.

They continue watching the chaos, there, for a moment or two.

RORAN (CONT'D)

I knew we could do that, but I
didn't know we could do that.

He lights another cigarette.

Frank looks at him, trying to think of something to say, but he's already offered the man all the comfort he has to give.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BLACK RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

Frank sits at the kitchen table, reading the newspaper.

The headline above the fold reads:

"SYMBOLIST SENTENCED -- RECEIVES LIFE IN PRISON"

Jordan enters, carrying the mail, and with it, a package.

She sets the mail down on the table and hands Frank the top letter, from her school.

Frank opens it, reads it.

He looks up at Jordan, who smiles. "Told you."

Frank smiles back. "I know."

Jordan bounds out of the room. Frank stands up to study the package.

ANGLE ON:

THE PACKAGE

Frank's hands cut open the box and pull it open to reveal:

A stack of hardcover novels. First editions.

The complete works of James Roran, including the latest, 'I'll Sleep When I'm Dead'.

The cover, illustrated with a silhouette girl hanging from a bathroom ceiling, bills itself as "The Final Matthew Parkinson Crime Novel."

BACK TO FRANK

as he opens the book, looks down on it and smiles, but his smile now is sad, almost disappointed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROOF - EVENING

A purple-orange hazy sun sets over the horizon, reflecting off the river.

Smoke mixes with the haze, its source becoming clear.

A METAL BARREL

the fire eating through papers and books, the complete works of James 'Jimmy' Roran.

Jimmy tosses the last copy of 'I'll Sleep When I'm Dead' on the blaze and watches it burn, consuming the silhouetted girl of the cover.

FADE TO BLACK.

Executive Producer
James Jordan

Executive Producer
Anthony J. Black

TRIPLE FIVE
P R O D U C T I O N S