

THE BRASS RING

FADE IN

EXT. BROOKLYN - NIGHT

A quiet street runs between quintessential Brooklyn brownstones. A few windows flicker the blue light of late night TV.

PETE ANTHONY, 23, blonde, tough white boy, stomps loud FOOTSTEPS in his combat boots. A giant eagle tattoo over his heart, a scar across his unshaven face, and two gold teeth say 'trouble.'

He carries a backpack over his bare shoulder, his T-shirt removed and stuffed through a loop in his shorts. He struts his toned body to the BLONDE he escorts, and anyone else who will look.

Her short Catholic school girl skirt and sassy walk shows this barely legal girl can make trouble of her own.

They approach an apartment building and proceed up the stoop.

BLONDE

Thanks for the concert.

Pete speaks fluent gangster wannabe.

PETE

It's all good.

BLONDE

Well...

She unlocks the security entry way and steps inside. A long pause says "That's it, cowboy."

PETE

What? You're not gonna invite me in?

BLONDE

(gasps)

On the first date?

Pete cocks his head to the side.

PETE

(playful)

I just gonna walk you to your door, that's all.

BLONDE

MmmHmm.

She smiles and lets him in.

Pete moves inside, half hurried walk, half dance move. He stops to lag behind.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pete and the Blonde take the stairs to the second floor.

BLONDE

Don't you be lookin' up my skirt.

Pete covers his eyes and stumbles up the stairs.

The blonde giggles, takes him by the hand. She leads him down the hallway to her door.

Pete uncovers his eyes and stares at her.

PETE

It was hard for me to look away.

She grins, unlocks her door.

BLONDE

You're sweet.

She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

BLONDE (CONT'D)

Good night.

PETE

Hows about I just walk ya to your bed?

She works her way inside, gives him the kiss off.

BLONDE

Good night, James.

Pete smiles broadly.

The door CLICKS shut.

Pete's expression drops.

Serious and calculated, he jogs down the hallway and up the stairs.

INT. ONE ROOM APARTMENT - NIGHT

The dirty room reeks of drugs and wasted life.

BEN, the poster boy for "Just Say No," barely holds a lighter steady under the fluid-filled spoon.

A KNOCK at the door.

Ben's head whips around, spills his liquid gold. Jitters set in.

BEN
(whisper)
Shit!

Pete's fake ghetto accent disappears.

PETE (O.S.)
(loud whisper)
Hey. Ben!

Ben bites at the nubs of his chewed-off fingernails.

He stumbles his way to the door, opens it the length the chain will allow.

Pete appears in the doorway.

BEN
I... I don't know you.

PETE
I heard you got great shit. Why don't you let me in?

Ben looks Pete up and down.

BEN
How did you get in the building?

Pete shoves his foot in the door.

Ben panics. He tries to close the door on Pete's foot, but falls to the floor. He scrambles for the window.

Pete kicks the door in, busts the chain. He picks up a syringe from the floor, pulls the plunger back on his way to the window.

Ben jumps onto the fire escape, but Pete grabs his arm, spins Ben around.

He slams the syringe into Ben's heart and depresses the hammer.

Ben cries out, gasps and convulses.

Pete releases his arm and Ben runs down the fire escape stairs.

Ben chokes, grabs at his chest and falls down the metal steps and sends echoes through the alley.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pete enters the hallway from Ben's room and jogs toward the stairs.

A woman cracks open her doorway and eyes him.

Pete turns to her, smiles his gold teeth and proudly displays his tattoo.

EXT. EMPTY STREET, THE BRONX - NIGHT

Pete descends the stoop, jogs a couple blocks, glances around to make sure nobody watches... the corner into an alley.

EXT. ALLEY, THE BRONX - NIGHT

Behind a dumpster, Pete sets his backpack on the street and pulls out a cell phone.

Dials and waits.

PETE
Ben has been.

LUFT (O.S.)
(on phone)
Good kid.

The phone CLICKS dead.

Pete smiles, proud.

He pulls off his blond wig to reveal black hair, and removes his fake gold teeth. He throws everything in his bag.

He pulls out a rag and a bottle of rubbing alcohol. He scrubs his face and chest, removes the facial scar and eagle tattoo.

He removes his boots and pulls out dress shoes.

EXT. EMPTY STREET, THE BRONX - NIGHT

Pete walks from the alley, looking like an upcoming stock broker that missed the left turn for Wall Street.

EXT. PETE'S APARTMENT, RED HOOK BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Every surface a canvas for graffiti artists.

Pete pulls up to the building in his black MUSCLE CAR. He jumps out and heads to a condemned building's fire door. He unlocks the padlock and rolls the gate open to reveal his garage.

INT. PETE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Modestly decorated, minimalist thinking. More dirt on the walls than wallpaper.

Pete drags himself in.

He tosses his cell phone on the night stand beside his gun, a picture of middle-aged woman (revealed later as Linda, his mother) and a picture of an elderly black man (revealed later as Luft Brass).

He strips to boxers on his way to the bed. Collapses onto it, sprawls his limbs over the sides.

He tosses and turns, unable to relax.

INT. 5TH AVENUE SHOE STORE - DAY

A SALESGIRL, 20s, displays two pairs of woman's shoes to Pete, holding them near her chest.

SALESGIRL

These are my favorite Gucci high heeled sandals.

Pete looks them over.

PETE

I prefer the black suede sling back.

SALESGIRL

It's a very good choice.

The sales girl smiles at him, more than congenial.

INT. 5TH AVENUE CASH REGISTER - DAY

Pete pulls out seven hundred dollar bills.

SALESGIRL
I've seen you before...

PETE
I've been here a half dozen times.

She puts the receipt in the bag.

SALESGIRL
In case the shoes don't fit your...

PETE
Mother.

SALESGIRL
That's cute. I like that.

The salesgirl writes her number on a business card and drops it in the bag.

SALESGIRL (CONT'D)
I'm a nine and a half as well.

PETE
So am I, sugar.

Pete grabs the bag and leaves her awe-struck.

INT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - DAY

Pete reads a newspaper, shoebox on lap.

A MOTHER and CHILD watch the Statue of Liberty pass by.

MOTHER
Look how close she is!

CHILD
Wooooow! Pretty.

The child kicks Pete without knowing it.

Pete bothers to look at Lady Liberty.

The child turns to Pete, grins ear to ear.

PETE
It's supposed to be brown.

Pete returns to his paper.

The smile disappears.

Pete peers from around the paper.

PETE (CONT'D)
Like poop.

The child giggles.

The mother pulls the child away.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE, NEW BRIGHTON STATEN ISLAND, NY - DAY

A lovely colonial. Neighborhood kids ride their bikes in the streets.

A CABBIE drives Pete to the curb.

Pete pays and tips the driver with a fifty.

PETE
I'll need a car to pick me up here in
three hours.

The cabbie looks at the tip.

CABBIE
I'll be here myself.

Pete smiles at the neighborhood kids and walks to the porch.
Presses the doorbell.

INT. LINDA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

A well kept mixture of furniture varying between antiques and plain old junk.

Pete's shadow appears in the front door's window, shifts from one foot to the other, peers in.

He welcomes himself inside.

PETE
Mom?

Pete goes to the kitchen.

INT. LINDA'S KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen could double as a Williams-Sonoma. Every pot and pan imaginable hangs over the kitchen island.

LINDA, a beautiful Latina, 40, sifts flour into a mixing bowl. She doesn't bother to use measuring cups.

She smiles, lost in her own world.

Pete catches the corner of her eye and she jumps, drops the sifter.

The sifter catches the edge of the counter before it spins its way to the hardwood floor. Flour sprays and plumes everywhere.

PETE

Hey mom.

LINDA

Jesus, Pete, you scared me half to death!

Linda grabs a dish towel and smacks him with it.

Pete snatches the towel from her.

PETE

Hey! I rang the doorbell.

LINDA

Well, it stopped working again.

Linda bends to pick up the sift, winces in pain and grabs at her side.

Pete rushes to her, raises her up to her feet.

PETE

Jesus, mom!

LINDA

I'm okay.

PETE

That bastard! If he does this again...

LINDA

Don't go thinking you know things you don't.

Pete shakes his head, angry. He grabs a broom from beside the refrigerator and sweeps.

Linda grabs the broom from him.

LINDA (CONT'D)

Maybe you can fix the bell while you're here.

PETE
Dad break that, too?

Pete exits.

Linda cleans up, fights through any pain.

EXT. LINDA'S HOUSE, NEW BRIGHTON STATEN ISLAND, NY - DAY

Pete screws the doorbell back in place. He opens the front door and leans in half way. Pushes the button and listens to it CHIME.

INT. LINDA'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Linda meticulously sets the large dining room table for two. Her blouse sleeve raises a little, showing a bruise around her wrist. She pulls it down quickly.

Pete enters with his shoebox.

PETE
Got you something.

Linda 'oohs' and opens her gift.

LINDA
(gasps)
You need to stop spending so much money on me.

PETE
I told you, I get them at cost. It's the only perk to selling shoes.

LINDA
You had a big night last night, huh?

PETE
Made a killing.

LINDA
You always spoil me after a good night.
(looks at her son)
You look frazzled.

PETE
I didn't sleep well last night.

LINDA
When you going to quit that job and do something you enjoy? You could do anything you wanted.

Pete's cell RINGS. He checks it and walks out of the room.

INT. LINDA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pete positions himself where Linda can't see.

PETE
(answering)
Anthony.

His jaw drops.

PETE (CONT'D)
Fuck me!
(beat)
I'll be there as soon as I can.

INT. LINDA'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Pete rushes in and pecks Linda on the cheek.

PETE
I've got to go. Sorry. I'll see you next
week.

Linda frowns, watches her son flip open his cell phone and flee the scene.

INT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY - DAY

The sun sets as the ferry chugs away from Staten Island.

EXT. TWILIGHT AND MOONLIGHT - NIGHT

Across from Central Park, Twilight and Moonlight provides the finest of dining. The wealthy and entitled wait impatiently.

Pete drives his car up to Central Park, pulls up on the sidewalk and parks.

He opens the trunk and pulls out a parking enforcement tire lock boot. He places it on the tire and places a citation under the windshield wiper.

Pete crosses the street and walks around the side of the building to Twilight and Moonlight's side entrance.

INT. TWILIGHT AND MOONLIGHT BACK LOUNGE - NIGHT

A private lounge, quiet and secluded from the dining area by a curtain. Gun-toting BODYGUARDS of varied race gather around a self-serve bar, talking quietly.

At the RATTLE from the door in the back, the thugs grab their weapons.

Pete enters and they lower their guns, cursing him.

Ian, the largest of all, approaches Pete.

PETE

Hey, Ian...

IAN

What the fuck are you doing? I gave you a side door key for emergencies.

PETE

What the fuck, man? What's the big deal?

IAN

The big deal is that you almost got your ass shot. We're a little on edge here, you know.

PETE

I knocked.

IAN

Well then you learn to knock louder.

PETE

Maybe I need to buy you some Q-tips.

IAN

Save your money for the crutches.

PETE

Oh really?

The two wrestle a bit, like brothers would, but awkwardness sets in.

PETE (CONT'D)

How is he?

Ian shakes a solemn look.

IAN

He's cooking.

PETE

Oh God.

Pete heads to a windowed door that leads to the kitchen. He peers in.

PETE (CONT'D)

(beat)

I can't believe it... Jimmy Flats...
James Raw Flats, man.

IAN

I know! Shit, quit saying his name,
you're creeping me out.

PETE

How did it happen?

IAN

He was coming out of the Talisha's play
last night, you know she in an off
Broadway play?

PETE

I've seen it, yeah.

IAN

She's really good.

PETE

What the fuck happened?

IAN

Flats went every Monday, ya know? On his
way out last night, a shot came from the
upper level of a passing New York City
tour bus. Got him right between the eyes.

PETE

Jesus!

LUFT

Within a crowd of people, on a moving
vehicle... We've got the bus driver, if
he knows anything, he'll talk.

Pete laughs nervously.

He takes a deep breath before he swings the kitchen door
open.

INT. TWILIGHT AND MOONLIGHT KITCHEN - DAY

A spotless kitchen.

The HEAD CHEF buzzes in and out of the walk-in freezer, paces
through the kitchen, mumbles to himself as he makes a list.

LUFT BRASS, an aging black man in nineteen forties attire, skillfully slices a carrot to garnish a pot of soup.

Pete enters and stands beside him.

PETE

Mr. Brass. I'm very sorry. Is there anything that I can do?

Luft takes out a second bowl, and fills them with soup. He slides one to Pete along with a spoon.

LUFT

Try this.

Pete grabs the spoon and slurps. His lips pucker slightly, gives away its bad taste.

LUFT (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Takes a second sample.

PETE

It's... It's a little spicy.

LUFT

Too much paprika?

PETE

And salt... and pepper.

Amused by his candor, Luft can't help but smile. He takes a taste himself. Shrugs.

LUFT

Seems bland.

Eats his soup while he talks.

LUFT (CONT'D)

I'm getting old. I can't taste anything. I can't smell anything. Did you know that something like seventy-five percent of your taste is through smell?

PETE

No sir, I didn't.

LUFT

It's true. I think that when you get to be my age and you start making the smells that old guys make, your nose decides it's had enough. Quits on ya'.

Pete chuckles.

PETE

Yes sir.

Pete slides the soup back.

LUFT

Well, I appreciate your honesty. Not too many people to trust these days.

PETE

You could trust Flats.

Luft nods, tears up.

LUFT

I still can't believe it... I know, everyone says that, and I'm not supposed to be like everyone else...

PETE

I can't believe it, either.

LUFT

He and I went way back, kid. Those were the times. Back before killing became commonplace. Before everyone had a gun and killed a man over a few dollars. We did it because we had to, and we did it with purpose and with style. You know I've never shot a man?

Shocked, Pete's eyebrow raise.

PETE

Really?

LUFT

Guns make everything... impersonal. Let me tell you something I've never told anybody. You know why Flats gave me the nickname Freezer Burn?

PETE

'cause you locked people in your freezer till they froze to death.

Luft drops his spoon.

LUFT
How did you know that?

PETE
Everyone knows that.

LUFT
Well, that's not all of it. You want to know the rest or are you too busy to listen to an old man?

Pete listens intently.

LUFT (CONT'D)
Yes, Raw and I would throw a man in the freezer and lock the door. But then we would always light up a victory cigar. Freezer Burn. Cigars are never as good as right at that victorious moment. You kids today ... I mean, you're good....

PETE
I'm the best.

LUFT
...but you have no style.

PETE
But, last night I...

Ian leans in through the double doors.

IAN
Mr. Brass. They're here.

Luft dismisses him with a nod.

Ian exits.

Luft and Pete follow.

INT. TWILIGHT AND MOONLIGHT BACK LOUNGE - NIGHT

Luft and Pete enter from the kitchen and stop at the open door to Luft's large, opulent office. A computer sits on the corner of the mahogany desk.

Inside, FIFTEEN MEN in expensive suits chatter.