

PARIAH

"Pilot"

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EXT. BANK, ATM - MORNING

JOE ABBOTT, 40s, your average American, hustles up to an ATM machine. He talks into his cell phone:

JOE

Roger, I'm moving as fast as I can. Stall him for ten minutes and I'll be there with the money.

He pops his debit card into the machine.

ON SCREEN, he selects "Withdrawal", then punches "\$500" into the keypad.

BING! The SCREEN READS "Maximum withdrawal \$400".

JOE (CONT'D)

Come on. Don't do this.

He stabs at the display like a frustrated gorilla. A father and son at the next ATM look on.

INT. BANK - 20 MINUTES LATER

Joe steps up to a FEMALE TELLER's window. A long line of CUSTOMERS wait behind him.

TELLER

Hi, how can I help you today?

JOE

Your robot won't give me my money.

TELLER

I beg your pardon?

JOE

The cash machine outside. It says I can only get \$400.

TELLER

I'm sorry about that. Our ATMs have a maximum withdrawal policy for your protection. How much did you want to take out?

JOE

Five hundred dollars, please.

TELLER

I'd be happy to assist you. I'll just need to see some I.D.

Joe hands over his driver's license. She studies it for a beat.

TELLER (CONT'D)

You look familiar. Are you on TV?

JOE

No, and I'm kinda in a rush, so...

TELLER

Certainly. Just fill out this form.

She slides some papers over to Joe. He scribbles hastily.

JOE

I feel like I'm applying for a loan.

TELLER

We appreciate your patience.

Joe hands over the completed form.

TELLER (CONT'D)

Would you sit tight a moment while I get this approved?

JOE

Actually, I'm up against the clock with this business opportunity. If I don't get that money I'm gonna miss out.

TELLER

I understand, but I need my manager to sign off.

JOE

Why? It's got nothing to do with him. It's my money. I approve.

TELLER

Again, it's for your protection.

JOE

Protection from what?

TELLER

Any number of fraudulent activities.

JOE

My money is already insured, so you're really just protecting yourself. Which is fine. I get that. But let's call it what it is.

TELLER

I understand your frustration, sir, but we take our customers' security very seriously. All of these policies are in place to ensure that you're protected.

JOE

Stop saying that. You're not protecting me. You're delaying me. Look, I get the ATM. 'What if someone stole my card?' It can't reason like a human. Not yet at least. But now I'm here. You see me. You see my I.D. You know it's my money. Give it to me.

TELLER

Sir, you'll get your money as soon as I get the manager's approval.

JOE

Approval for what? Is he scrambling to make sure there's enough in the back? How much have you loaned out that one guy taking out 500 bucks threatens to topple the whole house of cards?

A MANAGER arrives.

MANAGER

Good afternoon, sir. Is everything--
(then)
Hey, don't I know you from somewhere?

TELLER

That's what I said.

MANAGER

(realizing)
I know. You're the guy who--

JOE

I'm the guy who used to have an account here.

MANAGER

I'm sorry?

JOE

You heard me. I'm closing my account.

MANAGER

Are you unhappy with our service?

JOE
I am. Go get my money.

MANAGER
Right now?

JOE
Yes.

MANAGER
All of it?

JOE
Yes!

MANAGER
May I ask why?

JOE
Because it's mine.

MANAGER
Alright, well... We're very sorry to lose
your business. Where would you like it
transferred?

JOE
To my pockets. I want it in cash.

MANAGER
(beat)
Are you sure?

We see can see in Joe's eyes that he's not, but it's too
late to back down.

JOE
Absolutely.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK - MOMENTS LATER

Joe exits the bank clutching his life savings in a BROWN
PAPER BAG. He looks around and tightens his grasp.

JOE
Shit.

TITLE: "PARIAH"

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - LATER

A modest home in Oakland, California. Joe walks up the driveway. He notices the passenger side of his wife's Audi is scratched to shit -- broken mirror, cracked headlight, etc.

JOE

Gimme a break...

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters carrying his money bag. His wife, KAREN (30's, pretty, African American), is waiting for him.

KAREN

Don't freak out.

JOE

What happened? Are you alright?

KAREN

I'm fine. Just a little fender bender.

JOE

Another one?

KAREN

I know, I suck. I don't know what's wrong with me.

JOE

I do. You're a terrible driver. I think you should take lessons.

KAREN

I looked down for a split second to change my iPod and clipped some parked cars.

JOE

Plural? There was more than one?

KAREN

Four. But insurance will cover it. I already called Kurt and he said he'd fix it up, no problem.

JOE

The fact that you've established a relationship with the body shop guy is alarming.

KAREN

He's really sweet. And they give me great deals.

JOE

How would you even know? In fact, I'll take care of your car. I'm playing golf with your brother, but I'll swing by afterwards.

Joe heads into his bedroom. Karen calls after him:

KAREN

What's with all the golf lately? You guys must be getting pretty good.

Joe frantically looks around then stuffs the bag under the mattress.

JOE

We don't take it too seriously. It's just nice to get outside.

He throws on some preppy golf clothes. Karen enters.

KAREN

Can I borrow your car then? I'm having lunch with Tom Pollack later.

JOE

Your old boss? What for?

KAREN

I think he wants me to come back to the firm.

JOE

Really? Well, tell him no. We're doing the baby thing.

KAREN

I think I can do both.

JOE

We already tried that. The doctor said the stress of that job was shriveling your ovaries.

KAREN

I don't think those were his exact words.

JOE

It was something like that.

KAREN

It couldn't be as stressful as sitting around this house all day with nothing to do. I miss having a job.

JOE

You have the most important job in the world. You're the CEO of your own baby making corporation.

KAREN

Don't patronize me. Why can't you just get pregnant. You've been moping around the house in your jammies for the past nine months anyway.

JOE

Unfortunately, that's not the way the good Lord intended.

KAREN

Well, it's bullshit. I went to Stanford Law. I have skills. You're an out of work sports anchor who's best known for a racist tirade.

JOE

It wasn't a tirade. I raised some challenging questions that were taken out of context. And I'm not moping. The plan all along was to lay low for a year until the dust settles.

KAREN

Maybe it would settle faster if you just told people about us.

JOE

What do you want me to say? "Hi everyone, get a good look at my black wife. Man, she is black." I'm not going to cheapen what we have by using you like some trump card.

KAREN

How is that cheapening it? I am black. It's relevant information.

(then)

All I'm saying is at a certain point someone in this household needs to generate some income.

JOE

Then that someone will be me. Because that's what a man does. He rises to the occasion in the face of adversity. Like when Teddy Williams put down his bat and climbed into the cockpit of a fighter jet to blow up Japan. I will provide.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Joe steps out of Karen's banged up Audi accompanied by his best friend (and Karen's brother), ROGER--230 pounds of grown ass man rocking golf attire that has Payne Stewart smiling down from heaven.

ROGER

Oooh-weee. Beautiful day.

He cracks a tall boy and slurps the foam off the top.

JOE

Thanks for tagging along. I had to get out of the house.

ROGER

Don't sweat it. I love this shit.

Roger opens the trunk and grabs his golf bag.

JOE

Did you bring mine?

ROGER

Of course.

He casually pulls a GLOCK pistol out of the bag and hands it to Joe.

GO WIDE to reveal the guys standing in the parking lot of a SHOOTING RANGE.

ROGER (CONT'D)

And check it out. You know that gun show I called you from?

JOE

Yeah, sorry I dropped the ball on that. You wouldn't believe what happened at the bank.

ROGER

Don't even trip, it was a blessing in disguise.

(MORE)

ROGER (CONT'D)

After we missed out on that deal, I met this Russian dude in the bathroom, and he sold me this out of the trunk of his car.

Roger pulls out a gleaming .357 MAGNUM REVOLVER.

JOE

You bought it on the street? That is beyond stupid.

ROGER

Relax, he said it's clean.

JOE

If the Russian arms dealer says so then it must be.

ROGER

You know I can't buy that shit on the books. I already got a strike. The last thing I need is my name in another government database. What if I gotta take up arms against them? They'll see me coming.

JOE

Dude, your image is really confusing. You're like a gangsta redneck.

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - LATER

Joe and Roger blast away until their guns click empty. They press a button and their TERRORIST TARGETS zip back to them. Roger cut his in half. Joe's returns largely unscathed.

ROGER

(re: Joe's target)

C'mon, you're letting the terrorists win.

JOE

I'm just distracted. I feel kinda shitty for lying to Karen earlier.

ROGER

About the golf?

JOE

No, I feel good about that one. I went kinda ballistic at the bank yesterday and cleaned out our account.

ROGER

That's not ballistic. It's sensible.

JOE

I should have told her, but I was reaming her out for being all irresponsible and I didn't want to lose the upper hand.

ROGER

I didn't even know people still use banks. I thought they went out with Tower Records. I jumped ship right before Y2K.

JOE

Really? Where do you keep your money?

ROGER

Love is for keeping; not money. I cash my check every Thursday and break it all off before the next one rolls in.

(then)

Plus, I got a few K invested in precious metals.

Roger fishes a large diamond necklace from his shirt.

ROGER (CONT'D)

When society collapses, paper money won't be worth dick. People will always be about that shiny shit.

JOE

When society collapses, that's gonna get snatched off your corpse by a pack of leather-clad marauders on dune buggies.

Roger aims his gun at the target and BLASTS A HOLE through the center of its face.

ROGER

I'm not stressing.

(re: gun)

You should start keeping your guns at home now that you got all that loot to protect.

JOE

Absolutely not. The system works: I own them, you hold them.

(then)

I'm gonna grab some fresh targets.

Joe walks over to the sales counter. A LARGE MAN with a shaved head sits behind the register.

JOE (CONT'D)

Can I get some new targets, please.

LARGE MAN

Sure thing. I'll toss in a free box of ammo because I'm a fan. Joe, right?

JOE

Yeah. Wow, thanks a lot.

LARGE MAN

You ever getting back on the air?

JOE

Hopefully any day now.

LARGE MAN

It's about time. This country needs more truth tellers like yourself.

Not the compliment Joe was looking for.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

(re: Roger)

Say, that guy's not bothering you, is he?

JOE

Who, Roger? No, he's cool.

LARGE MAN

Well, let me know if he gives you any trouble.

Off Joe's uncomfortable look...

CUT TO:

INT. AUTOBODY REPAIR SHOP - LATER

A small office attached to a garage. Joe and Roger enter.

JOE

...What does that even mean, she drove her car *into* a Dairy Queen?

ROGER

I swear to God. In high school. She thought she had it in reverse and plowed right through the front window. The place was packed. It's a miracle no one got hurt.

JOE
Dude, why have I never heard this story?

ROGER
She doesn't like talking about it.

They approach a CASHIER.

JOE
Is Kurt here?

CASHIER.
Just a second.
(over intercom)
Kurt. Front desk.

A moment later a STUNNING MAN in coveralls emerges from the garage wiping grease off his hands with a rag.

STUNNING MAN
Afternoon, gentlemen.

Joe looks him up and down.

JOE
Who are you?

STUNNING MAN
I'm Kurt.

JOE
You're Kurt?

KURT
Yessir. So what can I do for you?

JOE
Okay. Wow. I'm Joe Abbott. Karen's husband. We spoke on the phone.

KURT
Oh, right. Great to finally meet you.
Your wife has been a customer for years.

JOE
Yeah, she should probably have equity in this place by now.

Kurt laughs.

KURT
We appreciate her loyalty.

JOE
Check out her latest masterpiece.

Joe leads Kurt outside to Karen's car.

EXT. AUTOBODY REPAIR SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Kurt gives the car a once over.

KURT
I'll get you an estimate before we do anything, but it doesn't look too bad. We've got all those parts in stock. In the meantime, let's set you up with a rental.

He leads them across the lot. Joe and Roger trail a few steps behind.

JOE
Something feels off about this guy.

ROGER
I don't trust anyone that good looking.

JOE
Right? How is he just a mechanic? I feel like doors fly open for you when you're that handsome.

ROGER
You think Karen is getting into accidents on purpose just so she can spend time with this guy?

Joe considers.

JOE
No. I wasn't thinking that at all. Is that what you think?

Roger shrugs.

KURT
Here we are.

Kurt hands Joe the keys to a RED DODGE NEON.

KURT (CONT'D)
She's all gassed up. Probably won't need it more than a week.

Joe looks at the car, then to Roger, who shakes his head "no".

JOE
C'mon, Kurt. This can't be right.

KURT
Is there a problem?

JOE
Yeah, I gave you an A4. I can't drive outta here in a worse car than I showed up in.

KURT
Unfortunately, that's all we have available.

Roger points to a section of the lot with all luxury vehicles -- Mercedes, Porsche, Maserati, etc.

ROGER
What's up with those ones?

KURT
Your insurance only covers our base models.

ROGER
Oh shit. Shots fired. He doesn't think you got enough cream for all that coffee.

JOE
Is that it? You don't think I can afford it?

KURT
No, no, I didn't--

JOE
Do I look like a base model guy to you, Kurt?

KURT
Absolutely not.

JOE
Then start pouring from the top shelf.

KURT
I just meant you'd have to pay out of pocket for our luxury models. It'll cost almost as much as the repairs. If I were you, I'd stick with the Neon.

JOE

And if I were you, I'd save money by doing laundry on my abs. But I'm me. And for me money is of no concern.

Joe pulls a fat wad of cash from his pocket.

JOE (CONT'D)

Bring around something with a little more giddy up.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE

We hear the GROWL of a V12 engine in the distance, followed by the sight of a LIME GREEN LAMBROGHINI recklessly drifting around the corner at 60mph. It screeches to a halt in front of the house. The suicide door opens and out steps Joe, beaming.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Joe waltzes in the front door.

JOE

Don't be alarmed. That was not a 747 landing in our driveway. It was just our new Lamborghini.

He heads into...

THE KITCHEN

Joe opens the fridge and cracks a beer.

JOE (CONT'D)

Met your pal, Kurt, by the way. Sweet kid. Not too bright, but he listens well and we were able to come to an understanding.

He turns and sees Karen sitting at the kitchen table with the stacks of money laid out in front of her.

JOE (CONT'D)

I can explain that.

KAREN

I need you to be honest with me. Are we in danger?

JOE

Of course not.

KAREN

Then what the hell is this? Did you steal it?

JOE

Of course not. I had a slight falling out with our bank and I declared free agency.

KAREN

What does that even mean?

JOE

I closed our account.

KAREN

Without talking to me?

JOE

If you'd been there you would've done the same thing. They were using our money as leverage against us. My dad used to pull the same shit with my allowance, but at least he didn't charge interest.

KAREN

And you felt our mattress was a better place for it?

JOE

That was just temporary until I came up with a better plan.

(then)

What do you know about precious metals?

Karen rubs her face in frustration.

KAREN

We can't keep doing this.

JOE

Doing what?

KAREN

The two of us, in this house, every day. Someone is bound to snap.

JOE

I'm not gonna snap.

KAREN

It's not just you. I'm losing it too. You know I stole something the other day?

JOE

What did you steal?

KAREN

A pack of cigarettes from the grocery store. I don't even know why. I paid for everything else.

JOE

You're smoking now?

KAREN

Never. I just did it for the rush.

(then)

Actually, I smoked two, but I got another rush from lying to you just now.

JOE

That's pretty dark.

KAREN

No shit. We can't keep acting on all our crazy impulses.

JOE

Well, hang on. Don't lump my stand against financial injustice in with your manic kleptomania.

KAREN

Yeah, stuffing our money in a mattress was really revolutionary.

JOE

Well, at least I didn't crash my car into a Dairy Queen.

Ouch. Karen stiffens.

KAREN

Did Roger tell you?

JOE

It doesn't matter who told me. And don't forget this country was founded by ordinary men like me who weren't afraid to buck the system. Not smug little banker cunts with their sub-prime mortgages and drones buzzing through the sky.

KAREN

What drones? What are you even saying?

JOE

That's where it's headed if we don't start pushing back. I'm sorry you can't read the writing on the wall, but I have to do what's best for my family. And our money is never going back in that slush fund.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK - LATER

Joe steps up to the same Teller he dealt with last time.

TELLER

Hi, how can I--
(recognizing)
Oh. Hello again.

JOE

(meek)
I'd like to open an account please.

TELLER

Certainly.

She presents him with a small stack of papers.

TELLER (CONT'D)

Just fill these out and we'll get you all set up.

He looks over the contract.

JOE

What happened to my interest rates? They used to be double that.

TELLER

Those rates reflected your standing in our loyalty program. These are the introductory rates for new customers.

JOE

It's only been a day. Can't I just re-open my old account?

TELLER

Unfortunately, no. There's also a \$50 new account fee.

(MORE)

TELLER (CONT'D)

(then, cheery)

But you get a free thermos.

Joe takes a deep breath, trying to keep his cool.

JOE

Why are you doing this?

TELLER

Doing what?

JOE

They're trying to convince us that we're on different sides, but we're not. When this ship hits the inevitable iceberg there won't be room on the life boats for you either. But it doesn't have to be that way. You have a choice: You can either stick around here, counting the days until those machines outside are smart enough to do your job. Or, you can take my hand right now and jump start the revolution.

Joe extends his hand.

TELLER

I don't think I want to be a part of that.

JOE

I see. Well, I don't think I want to be a part of this. You oughta be ashamed of yourself, stealing from hard working Americans.

TELLER

How am I stealing?

JOE

I'm not smart enough to know how you're doing it, but I know it's happening.

TELLER

Well, we're very sorry to lose your business. Again.

JOE

Yeah, you are sorry. At least you will be.

All the customers turn to stare, whisper, film with their phones.

JOE (CONT'D)

Open your eyes, people! Your money's not safe here. We need to take the power back!

He grabs the free thermos and storms out.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Joe enters clutching his money duffel and slides into a booth next to Roger.

ROGER

(re: money bag)

Are you out of your mind? I don't even bring my wallet in here. Got forty bones tucked into my sock.

JOE

I can't leave it in the car. That's asking for trouble.

(then)

So did you bring my guns?

ROGER

Right here.

He puts a gym bag on the table.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I thought Karen wasn't cool with you strapping up.

JOE

I think as long as she has a gun too she'll be okay with it.

(then)

And if not, she'll just have to get used to it. It's for her protection.

Joe's phone rings and he answers:

JOE (CONT'D)

Hello...Oh, hey...Yeah...What do you think?...Seriously?...You better not be screwing with me...

Joe eyes widen then he starts SILENTLY PUMPING HIS FIST IN CELEBRATION.

JOE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Dude, you are my night in shining armor!

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
I'm never going to forget this. We'll
talk tomorrow.

He hangs up and turns to Roger:

JOE (CONT'D)
I'm back, baby!

ROGER
Back where?

JOE
That was my agent. He found me a job.

ROGER
Your pasty mug is gonna be back on TV?

JOE
Shit yeah-- Well, radio, actually.

ROGER
Oh. Radio's cool, I guess.

JOE
It is cool. It's primitive. It's raw. I
got my start in radio.

ROGER
Plus, nobody can see you, so they won't
recognize you as that angry bigot.

JOE
Sure, that too.
(then)
Honestly, I'm just relieved to have
something. I'd never admit it to your
sister, but I was starting to get
nervous. I mean, I flunked outta high
school, I have zero skills, I don't even
know if Palestine is an actual place or
just a theory. Point is, I really needed
this one.

ROGER
I'm happy for you, Joe. Let's celebrate.
What are we drinking?

Roger flags down the bartender:

JOE
Two bourbons.
(then)
Actually...screw it.

Joe stands and addresses the bar:

JOE (CONT'D)

Excuse me, everybody, I'd like to say something. I haven't always been a good man, and as a result, life hasn't always been so good to me. But I've realized something--the universe gives back what you put into it. So for those of you who are down in the dumps, know that things can get better. But first, you have to be better.

He reaches into his duffel and tosses a stack of cash to the bartender.

JOE (CONT'D)

Drinks are on me, ya sonsabitches! To new beginnings!

SMASH CUT TO:

NEWS REPORT

A female ANCHOR speaks into the camera. In the top right corner of the screen is JOE'S MUG SHOT. He looks tired and bloated.

ANCHOR

In local news, former sports personality Joe Abbott was arrested last night for driving under the influence.

DASHCAM FOOTAGE

A POLICE OFFICER approaches the driver's side window of Joe's Lamborghini.

POLICE OFFICER

Evening, sir. Where you coming from tonight?

JOE

(thinking)

Uhh, fuckin' Boston.

POLICE OFFICER

Drove all the way from Boston, did you?

JOE

Er, no. I'm from Boston. Why do you ask?

ANCHOR (V.O.)

During a routine search of the vehicle police found thousands in loose cash and several fully-loaded firearms, one of which is believed to have been used in the 1994 robbery of a convenience store.

The cop SLAMS Joe onto the hood of his cruiser and cuffs him.

JOE

Don't do this! I have a black wife! I swear to God she's black as hell!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Karen switches off the television. Joe sits on the couch, ashamed.

KAREN

What is wrong with you?

JOE

I didn't mean black as hell in terms or moral, ya know, like, good and evil-- I meant--

KAREN

I'm talking about the guns, asshole.

JOE

Only one of them was illegal and it was Roger's. I had all the paperwork for mine.

KAREN

Then why'd you tell the cops they were all yours?

JOE

Roger's already got a strike. It wouldn't be fair if he had two and I had none. Now we each have one. One is manageable.

KAREN

So you're just taking strikes now? Who do you think you are, Ricky Henderson?

(then)

You know you're never getting your job back, right?

JOE

I don't know about never. We'll have to weather the storm for another year or so.

KAREN

No more years! Do you have any idea what your legal fees are going to be? A weapons charge is like ten grand.

JOE

That seems steep.

KAREN

No shit. So now what? What would a man do? What would Ted Williams do?

Joe looks at her for a beat then goes for the kiss. Karen pushes him away.

KAREN (CONT'D)

Are you goddamn joking?

JOE

Sorry, I misread-- Nevermind. I'm sorry.

Karen is speechless. He's too stupid to yell at.

KAREN

I can't even look at you right now. Go take a shower. You stink.

She retreats to the bedroom and slams the door.

Joe smells himself and turns back to the television.

ON TV

ANCHOR

Viewers may remember Abbott from his on-air tirade that led to a record number of F.C.C. complaints and his subsequent termination.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Joe, looking sharp in a suit and tie, interviews a PLAYER amidst the crush of a post-game celebration.

JOE

One of the most incredible catches we've seen all year. What's going through your mind?

PLAYER

I gotta give it up to Jesus Christ for giving me the strength to bring down that ball. We going all the way, baby!

He runs off.

JOE

(to camera)

There you have it. The greatest moment of his life, and... I'm sorry, but even if God does exist, do you really think He cares about some wildcard game when there are fly-covered babies on the streets of India? What kind of demented lunatic prioritizes like that?

An ANCHOR cuts in:

ANCHOR 1

Okay, thanks, Joe. Coming up--

JOE

All I'm saying is let's give credit where it's due. Jesus wasn't there doing two-a-days every summer. We know his father wasn't in the picture.

(backtracking)

That didn't come out right. Not all black guys are abandoned by their dads, just this guy specifically. Then again, I don't know what role genetics plays. That's a messy subject altogether with the slave breeding and the--

BACK ON LIVING ROOM

Joe switches off the TV.

JOE (CONT'D)

They never show it in the right context.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Joe turns the knob and the water cascades over his face. He lets out a long sigh...

...then BREAKS DOWN IN TEARS. It's a cruel reality: a grown man staring into the void of an uncertain future. Off his heaving sobs we...

END SHOW.