

Henry Porter

By

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INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Small CHOIR sings in traditional tone. Voices echo into vaulted ceiling.

A mix of solemn statues and bright icons. Behind the altar a crucifix with a bleeding Christ. Its sorrowful face looks down onto a sparse CONGREGATION gathered for noon Mass.

HENRY PORTER, 40, stares at the Christ's face. He wears all black. Lean and sturdy. Medium length tousled hair, gray at the temples. Salt-and-pepper stubbled beard.

The Choir's song ends. A priest, FATHER GREGORY, 65, stands at the podium.

FATHER GREGORY

Today's gospel asks us to trust
God. To walk with God. But how can
we walk with God when we act like
we're our own gods? We are made
for community, for communion.
Communion with one another.
Communion with our deepest self.
And most importantly communion with
God. In fact, those realities are
not so separate as they seem.

Porter glares at Father Gregory, unmoved.

VESTIBULE

Father Gregory stands at the door shaking hands.

Porter, at just over 6 feet, towers over Father Gregory. They shake. Porter holds onto Father Gregory's hand for too long. Father Gregory looks up to Porter's eyes, which bore into his.

FATHER GREGORY

Thank you for coming. God bless.

Porter finally relents.

PORTER

Father.

Porter strides out the door. Father Gregory follows him with his eyes.

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

At the bottom of the steps, Porter stands for a moment as he puts on black Ray-Ban sunglasses.

He looks back over his shoulder. His eyes follow the church structure all the way to the top where he sees a cross.

He walks away.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Traffic buzzes on the street below an early-20th century mid-rise apartment building.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

LIVING SPACE

Porter, in sweatpants and a sleeveless shirt, does push-ups. Sweat darkens his clothes.

Dissonant jazz music.

The studio apartment is sparsely furnished. Various artifacts mounted to the walls and on shelves. An African tribal mask, a Picasso print, a framed picture of Bob Dylan, and a poster of Nietzsche with the line "God is dead."

On shelves are numerous trinkets: a bracelet, a billfold, a ring, a pair of glasses with a lens shattered, a Chinese yen, and varied other things.

TIME CUT TO:

Soulful folk music.

Porter does sit-ups.

TIME CUT TO:

Porter sits on the couch reading a book. The only sound is cars droning outside.

BATHROOM

Porter leans shirtless over a sink brushing his teeth. He has numerous scars on his lean, muscular torso. A particularly large scar runs from his upper trapezius all the way down to his hip. It's nasty looking, deep and long.

He rinses, straightens up, and puts on a black shirt.

INT. DONNA'S CAFE - DAY

The brightly-decorated restaurant is half full.

Porter sits at a table with JAMES, 60. James has his thin gray dreadlocks pulled back into a loose ponytail. A few stray locks escape and fall to the side of his face. He wipes coffee from his medium length white-gray beard. He peers at Porter and smiles, accentuating the severe bags under his eyes.

PORTER

Scones here are good. Homemade.

JAMES

Trying to lose a few pounds. Doc said I had to.

James pats his belly.

PORTER

Good luck with that, sir.

James slides a plain manila envelope across the table.

After a moment looking at it, Porter reaches into the pocket of his black blazer. He produces a pen with which he quickly scribbles a line across the envelope, like a compulsion.

James looks from the envelope to Porter and sighs.

JAMES

You're a strange man, Henry Porter.

PORTER

Am I?

JAMES

All these years. I still don't...nevermind.

Porter opens the envelope and peers in. A stack of \$100s and a note. Porter pulls out the note: "Tom Carroll. 762 Providence Lane. Berlin, MD. (Within the Week)."

JAMES (CONT'D)

That's half. Half now, half when it's done, as usual.

PORTER

Mm-hm.

Porter turns his head and looks out onto the street.

James sips coffee.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Tom Carroll...

A moment passes.

JAMES
 How about them Orioles?

PORTER
 Yeah, yeah. Looking good.

JAMES
 Might win the East this year.

PORTER
 Well, here's hoping.

Porter drains the rest of his coffee, sets the mug down, and stands up in almost the same motion.

James follows him with his eyes and then points to the envelope.

JAMES
 So...we're good?

Porter smiles cryptically and walks away. James sips his coffee and watches as Porter passes outside by the window. He squints and stares into his coffee.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

A HOMELESS MAN, 50s, panhandles on the corner.

HOMELESS MAN
 Any change? Any little bit helps.
 For somethin' to eat.

A few PEOPLE pass, ignoring.

A hand bearing a five dollar bill hovers above the man's can. He looks from the money up to the bearer's face. It's Porter.

HOMELESS MAN
 Oh, thanks, man---

PORTER
 For conversation.

HOMELESS MAN

Huh?

PORTER

The money. It's for conversation.

HOMELESS MAN

Oh? Oh, okay.

He reaches for the bill, but Porter pulls it back.

PORTER

I want to talk. Do you want the money or not? I'm trying to help you.

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah, yeah. Okay.

Porter holds up the bill.

PORTER

After.

Homeless Man nods and looks around.

HOMELESS MAN

So, uh, okay. We can go...down the alley there.

ALLEY

Porter stands in the middle of a darkening alley looking at the Homeless Man, who is backed all the way up to a brick wall. Trash cans overflow.

Porter picks up a bucket, wipes off the top, and places it in front of the Homeless Man.

HOMELESS MAN

Alright, man. So let's make this quick, okay?

Porter shakes his head.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)

C'mon man. It's just five bucks. I'm not---

PORTER

---I don't want you to blow me.

HOMELESS MAN
 For five bucks, man, I ain't gonna
 do nothin'---

PORTER
 ---I'm not looking to fuck. I told
 you. I want to talk. I want to help
 you. Sit.

The Homeless Man looks at Porter with suspicion.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 Don't tell me you're afraid of
 getting dirty.

HOMELESS MAN
 Look, what are---

Porter's gaze overpowers. He sits.

PORTER
 There you go.

Porter squats opposite him.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 What's your name?

HOMELESS MAN
 Uh, it's Jerry. Jerry.

PORTER
 Jerry. I'm probably not going to
 remember that.

HOMELESS MAN
 Wh- What's yours?

Porter peers down both ends of the alley.

PORTER
 How long have you been out here? On
 the street.

HOMELESS MAN
 Oh, five, six years.

PORTER
 Huh.

HOMELESS MAN
 (with a little pep)
 Used to be a stock broker.

PORTER
A stock broker, huh?

HOMELESS MAN
Yep. Trading shares. Making
money. Yep. Jus' fell on hard times,
is all. Been out here a while. Too
long.

PORTER
"Trading shares."

Porter chuckles quietly.

HOMELESS MAN
So, so what do you do, buddy?

PORTER
I help people.

HOMELESS MAN
Help people? Like how?

PORTER
It's complicated. You wouldn't
understand.

HOMELESS MAN
Oh...

PORTER
Okay, look. Why are you out here?

HOMELESS MAN
I said. I used to be a---

PORTER
---And don't tell me about "trading
shares." *Why* are you out here?

Homeless Man rubs his hands together and looks at the
ground.

HOMELESS MAN
C'mon man. C'mon. You know what it
is.

PORTER
Say it.

HOMELESS MAN
Man, what's up with you? You need
to watch---

PORTER

You asked how I help people. I'm helping you. *Say it.* Why are you out here?

HOMELESS MAN

(bursting)

It, it's the needle. The needle, man! Shit!

PORTER

There. Thank you for saying that. Honesty.

Porter closes his eyes. A slight smile.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Don't you understand that this is something to celebrate? You really did something for yourself just then.

Porter claps his hands.

HOMELESS MAN

(coming down)

Yeah? Yeah, yeah. I did. You know what? I'm, I'm gonna get straightened out here soon. I am. I really am. That was a, a, what do they call it? A breakthrough. I'm gonna beat this.

Porter looks at him and shakes his head.

PORTER

No. No, you won't. Let's not kid ourselves. *That* moment, just now, is your pinnacle. From here, it would be back down into the abyss. You'll *never again* be as free as you are right now. You should savor it.

HOMELESS MAN

Hey, fuck you!

PORTER

Savor it. You're just a man.

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah, yeah. I'm just a man. And what are you? Who do you think you are?

PORTER

I think I'm...in transition.

Homeless Man looks on, confused.

PORTER (CONT'D)

And I'm helping you.

Porter looks around, then holds forth the five bucks just out of reach.

Homeless Man leans forward, tipping the bucket on its rim as he reaches out.

HOMELESS MAN

Gimme that, you assho---

With blinding speed, Porter grabs the man's wrist and pulls him up and forward. His right hand dashes forward crushing Homeless Man's windpipe. A violent wheezing sound.

Homeless Man stumbles back to the wall. Porter still has his wrist.

Porter puts his left hand on the side of Homeless Man's head and looks him square in the eyes.

PORTER

Just a man.

Porter draws a long, thin trench knife from his jacket pocket and sinks it in the man's temple and withdraws it, all in a mere second. Homeless Man slumps to the ground.

Porter checks both ends of the alley for witnesses. He wipes the knife on the Homeless Man's shirt and replaces it.

He removes Homeless Man's shoes and throws them on the roof of the building, then turns the man's pockets out. He scans the scene - looks appropriately like a robbery - and finally removes a dingy ring from the Homeless Man's finger.

He stands looking at the body.

EXT. MAJOR PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY - NIGHT

Porter walks against the flow of busy PEDESTRIAN traffic. He does not sway or waver. Instead, some Pedestrians bump him and walk past. Most of them move around him like parting water.

He stands there for a long time. He closes his eyes.

INT. CANDLELIGHT SALOON - NIGHT

Porter sits at a table in a dimly lit hipster bar. The decor is deliberately old-timey. Candle sticks burn for light, oil paintings on the wall. He reads a tattered copy of Moby-Dick. The pages are marked up obsessively. At closer glance, every mention of Ahab is highlighted.

A male BARTENDER, early 30s, approaches.

BARTENDER

The usual?

PORTER

You got it.

BARTENDER

Hey Henry, we're gonna start making our own bitters in-house soon. Gonna see how your Old Fashioned tastes with that.

PORTER

I trust you.

Bartender laughs as he heads off.

Porter goes back to his book.

A drunk TWENTY-SOMETHING stumbles into his table, laughing, and continues past. No apology. Porter looks up from his book and follows Twenty-Something with his eyes to the other end of the room where he plops down with some friends.

His gaze is broken when Bartender brings the drink.

BARTENDER

There ya go.

Porter looks up and flashes a smile. He glances back one more time to the oblivious Twenty-Something and finally relents, picking up the drink.

PORTER

Thanks.

He sips and continues reading. Takes one more look back at Twenty-Something.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - MIDNIGHT

LIVING SPACE

Nearly pitch black except for the light pushing in from the street. Porter sleeps.

CUT TO:

He stands at the base of a rickety dock that thrusts out into a dark, tumultuous sea. Waves pitch and white-cap.

One-hundred yards off, a white whale's back breaches the surface. Lightning strikes. Porter jumps, but gathers his wits.

PORTER (V.O.)
(distorted)
Where lies the final harbor, whence
we unmoor no more?

He toes the dock boards and finally creaks his way to the end. His scans the surface for the whale.

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In what rapt ether sails the world,
of which the weariest will never
weary?

The whale breaches surprisingly close, spraying water, and startles Porter.

He takes a deep breathe and leaps into the sea.

Porter submerges, reemerges. White caps crash over him. He recovers. Fanatical eyes as he searches the surface for the beast. Lightning flashes, followed by a clap of thunder that rips across the sky.

Plunging down a final time, Porter is face to face with the eye of the whale. The big pale eye glares at him.

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Where is the foundling's father
hidden?

Porter's wide eyes stare back in utter terror.

PORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Our souls are like those orphans
whose unwedded mothers die in
bearing them: the secret of our
paternity lies in their grave, and
we must there to learn it.

In the next moment, Porter's eyes have been replaced by the whale's eyes.

CUT TO:

His eyes pop open. He breathes heavily.

EXT. BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

PEDESTRIANS walk on the sidewalk outside. A banner reads "Baltimore Museum of Art."

Porter enters.

INT. BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

Porter seeks out his favorite works in the museum, sitting and standing before them.

First, Masson's foreboding and demonic "There is no Unfinished World." Second, the gigantic Warhol's "Last Supper." Third, Guignet's "Afterglow on the Banks of the Nile."

Finally, Porter stands mesmerized by Preault's sculpture "Le Silence." He is transfixed by the mysterious, shrouded figure with its index finger over its lips calling for silence.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Few PEOPLE are scattered throughout a dim library. Bookshelves and tables are interspersed throughout.

Porter sits at a bank of computers. He brings up a Google search bar and types "762 Providence Lane Berlin MD." The Map result pops up. Porter clicks. He studies it and then prints.

He restarts the computer. He picks up the print, then walks to a different bank of computers across the library.

He Googles "Tom Carroll" and scrolls through the results.

LinkedIn profile: The most recent "Experience" entry reads: "High School English Teacher. Shore Point High School. August 1999-Present." Porter gleans what he can and jots a few notes into a notebook.

Back to the Google results. Facebook page. He studies it. Scrolls through pictures and prints one of Tom. He stops on a picture of Tom and his family: a wife and a 13 year old son. Clicks "print." He prints a few others.

He continues to scroll through status updates. He hovers over the most recent one: "Teaching 9th graders about Elizabethan England = is it time for beer yet?"

Porter chuckles. He reaches out and touches the status update on the screen.

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Cars pass. The sound of the small Congregation praying the Lord's Prayer can be heard inside.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)
 ...Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be
 done, on Earth as...

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Father Gregory stands at the altar and breaks the host. He shows it to the Congregation.

FATHER GREGORY
 Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him
 who takes away the sins of the
 world. Blessed are those called to
 the supper of the Lamb.

All kneel, except for Porter who sits. They all bow their heads, except for Porter who looks straight ahead.

CONGREGATION
 Lord, I am not worthy that you
 should enter under my roof, but
 only say the word and my soul shall
 be healed.

Porter stares at the bread and wine.

Father Gregory and a DEACON, 40s, descend from the altar to administer the sacraments. The Choir sings a song as the Congregation shuffles from their pews into the aisle.

Porter looks to the crucifix. He looks at the face of Jesus.

PORTER
 I'm going to eat you.

Porter enters the line and makes his way to Father Gregory. He still looks at the crucifix.

FATHER GREGORY
 The Body of Christ.

Porter receives the host and chews slowly. The Deacon hands him the chalice.

DEACON
The Blood of Christ.

The Deacon looks on as Porter gulps the wine until the chalice is empty. He glares at the Deacon and walks away.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

LIVING SPACE

Porter, drenched in sweat, does his exercises.

Jazz music plays.

On one of his shelves of artifacts is an addition: the Homeless Man's ring.

TIME CUT TO:

Porter sits on his bed. Print outs from the library lay in front of him. He looks at them, making notes.

TIME CUT TO:

EVENING

Porter sets a black suitcase on the edge of the bed and packs it lightly. He puts it by the door.

He slides a compact leather messenger case from under the bed and sets it on top. Inside he places his tattered copy of Moby-Dick. He turns and kneels in front of his bookshelf. He scans the books. Removes one, looks at the cover, and closes his eyes. This is an important decision.

PORTER
No.

He replaces that book and removes another. It's Cormac McCarthy's Blood Meridian. It goes in the bag.

Reaching under the bed again, Porter retrieves a long, thin safe resembling a safe-deposit box. He dials the combination.

Inside is an AMT Hardballer handgun and a silencer. He gets his trench knife.

He looks at the items laid on the bed, along with the pictures of Tom.

His eyes move to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

Porter opens a medicine cabinet. He moves aside clutter. In the corner is a small dark glass jar with a medicine dropper screwed onto it. He takes it.

LIVING SPACE

The jar goes on the bed. He wraps the gun, knife, and medicine bottle in a black towel and gently places the bundle in the messenger bag. Then the pictures and books.

He zips and buckles the bag and sets it next to the suitcase by the door.

TIME CUT TO:

NIGHT

Porter sleeps.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Porter drives a black sedan on a busy highway just outside the city.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

Porter drives in silence.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

MONTAGE

-Porter's car travels down a busy stretch of road.

-Over a huge bridge spanning a bay.

-Razor straight, long highway. Getting more rural.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

A long straight, flat country road stretches some distance on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. On both sides of the road, stalks of corn sway in the breeze.

A flock of crows makes patterns in the sky.

Porter's car pulls onto the dirt shoulder.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

Porter peers down the road, squinting in the sun. He looks in the rear view mirror. He looks at his smartphone and studies the directions.

PORTER
Providence Lane....

RURAL ROAD

The car slowly eases back onto the road and takes off.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The picturesque street of a rural small town: 1880s-era brick buildings, old-fashioned street lamps, and iron and wood benches.

A dozen parked vehicles line the street: pickups new and old, cars, a few bicycles.

A few PEOPLE walk on the sidewalk.

Porter's car passes.

INT./EXT. PORTER'S CAR

Porter takes in the street signs, houses, and physical markers.

He leans to makes notes on a black and white marble notebook on the passenger's seat.

Drives down neighborhood streets. They are lined with various housing stock: charming Victorians, single story ranchers, Cape Cods, etc.

An OLD MAN, 80s, dressed in blue jeans and a white tank top that accentuates his ample gut, stands at the edge of his lawn watering flowers from a hose.

A BOY, 11, skateboards. His hair pushes out from under a trucker cap.

A dog barks.

Porter turns the wheel with one hand while peering out of the side window. He squints against the setting sun.

A sign reads "Providence Lane."

EXT. PROVIDENCE LANE - DAY

Porter's parks a couple hundred feet from his target's house.

INT. PORTER'S CAR

Porter stares out the window, taking in the property: single story rancher home, well kept front yard, a short gravel driveway sits empty.

Peering around the corner of the house, Porter sees a fenced in dog house in the back.

PORTER

Hm.

He checks out the immediate surroundings. An elementary school sits far back on a huge green sports field framed by a wooded area. There is a playground.

Porter looks in the rear view mirror. A pick up rumbles past. His eyes follow it all the way down.

He gives the house another glance and heads off.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - EVENING

The sun sets over a cornfield. Porter's car is pulled onto a dirt shoulder.

He stands behind the car with Google Maps printouts of the town: one satellite view and the other road map. His notebook is out. He compares all three. Old school.

His finger finds the target's house. Draws a star over the spot. He follows a route on the map from there down a long road to a major highway. He marks that point on the map "A." He taps the map.

PORTER

Hm.

He compares all three documents and then traces another route. He nods his head and draws a "B."

He scans the map and sighs. Lifts his head towards the purple sky. His eyes move to the cornfield.

Returning to the map, he runs his finger along the map and identifies his current location. He draws a "C."

Just then, a work truck comes clanking down the road and pulls over just behind Porter. The engine grinds to a stop. The headlights stay on, beaming in the space between the two vehicles. MIKE, 50, steps out. He's hard, worn, but with warmth in his voice. He waves.

MIKE

Hey, there.

Porter holds up a hand.

MIKE

You alright out here? Somethin' wrong with the vehicle?

Mike wipes his hands with a rag and extends one hand to Porter. Porter hesitates for a moment, then shakes it.

PORTER

Nothing wrong with the car, no. Thank you for stopping.

MIKE

Ain't no problem. Just headed home and saw you there.

Porter looks on with no response.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Well, I just thought I'd see if you needed somethin'.

PORTER

How friendly.

MIKE

Well, like I said, it ain't no problem.

An uncertain few moments.

Just then, a small flock of nearby birds bursts out of the cornfield and into the darkening sky. Mike jumps.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Aw, shit! Damn birds just about made me shit my pants. Dammit!

Porter watches the birds in the sky.

PORTER

"The freedom of birds is an insult to me."

MIKE

Huh? What's that?

PORTER

"The freedom of birds in an insult to me."

MIKE

The freedom of birds is a...?

PORTER

(voice raising)

"Whatever exists, the Judge said. Whatever in creation exists without my *knowledge* exists without my *consent*."

Mike removes his hat and wipes his forehead, confused.

MIKE

Well, I'll be honest. I don't know what the fuck that even means, mister. Or what that has to do with me. I'll tell ya, I thought maybe if you said it again, that'd help. But nope.

Porter looks back down at Mike. His eyes narrow.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So, that's a "no" on needin' some help here, then?

Porter looks down the road in both directions.

PORTER

(voice kicks into a lower gear)

Well, I was actually just sitting here trying to find the Tru-Valu Motel. I think I might've made a wrong turn. Think you can steer me the right way?

MIKE

What? You don't got one of those fancy ass smart phones things? My little grand-kids got em. All they do is sit on them little screens all day.

Porter points back to the papers on his trunk.

PORTER

No, sir. I guess I'm a bit old fashioned. I like things on paper. But then, I'm a bit of a bibliophile.

MIKE

Hey, what did you call me?

Beat.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I know what it means. I'm just fuckin' with ya.

Porter grins and stares.

PORTER

So, what about Tru-Value Motel?

MIKE

Well, shit, son. You are a little out of the way here. Tru-Valu's bit further out of town. Look, here, I'll put it on paper for ya.

EXT. TRU-VALU MOTEL - NIGHT

Porter's car pulls up into the parking lot of a squat motel sitting at the edge of a cornfield.

The sign reads "Tru-Value Motel" and "Vacancy."

INT. TRU-VALU MOTEL - NIGHT

LOBBY

Porter, suitcase in hand, walks to the front desk.

DOROTHY, 45, reads a magazine behind the desk. She stands smiling when she notices Porter.

DOROTHY

Oh, hey there. How ya doin' this evenin'?

PORTER

Just fine. Yourself?

DOROTHY

If I was any happier I'd be twins. How can I help ya?

PORTER

Well, I'm visiting from out of town. Needed a bit of peace and quiet for a couple of days. If ya know what I mean.

DOROTHY

Of course---

PORTER

And I heard some good things about this here town.

DOROTHY

Oh, you did, did you? Well, it's alright. Kinda borin' though.

Porter laughs.

PORTER

Truth is...that's what I wanted to hear!

DOROTHY

Well, in that case, you're in the right place. We're about a 20 minute drive from civilization here. And by civilization, I mean you're 20 minutes even from our little town!

PORTER

Being a 20 minute drive from anywhere sounds pretty good to me. As long as we're not too far from the nearest police station. I don't want to do without *all* civilization!

They laugh.

DOROTHY

Oh no, not too far.

PORTER

Oh, okay. Well thank God! It's just, I'm used to seeing so many police cars around where I'm from. Thought it was interesting when I didn't see too many on the road on the way down here. I thought to myself "Oh, no, what am I gettin' myself into?"

DOROTHY

Bless your heart. Well, we don't got too many police around here. Just a handful. And half the patrol cars are in the shop. Don't matter anyway. Not too much need for policing around here. Some drunks, is all.

PORTER

And I guess there's always the state police, right?

DOROTHY

Oh yeah. They're out there, too. But like I said, they don't usually have much need to be comin' around.

PORTER

Well, alright then.

DOROTHY

(with a chuckle)

Ain't no need to be scared of our little town out here in the sticks.

PORTER

Oh, no. I don't get scared.

Porter walks to the wall near the desk and begins looking around. Cheesy art decorates the place. He looks at a display containing pamphlets and information.

DOROTHY

So where ya from, now? If ya don't mind me askin'.

PORTER

Chicago. But I've been in DC for business lately.

DOROTHY

DC, huh? I bet you do need an escape. Been there once. Not goin' back.

PORTER

Thought you said you were bored here.

DOROTHY

Yeah, I guess I don't know what I want, you know?

PORTER

Can't say I ever had that problem.

DOROTHY

Well. You can take any of those pamphlets, if ya want.

PORTER

Thanks. I'd like to see what I'm getting into here.

She laughs a bit and walks around to the display and picks a few up.

DOROTHY

Here you go. That's some information on Berlin - that's the small little town about 20 minutes from here. And here's one on Ocean City. That's a little bit further down the road, half hour or so, give or take.

PORTER

They got an ocean there?

She searches his face, confused. She begins laughing and Porter joins in.

DOROTHY

Is there an ocean? Very funny, mister. Yes, there's an ocean.

PORTER

Never been before.

DOROTHY

To Ocean City?

PORTER

To the ocean.

DOROTHY

No way! Well, then you should definitely check it out while you're here.

PORTER

I just might do that. I wonder what the sunrise is like over the ocean.

DOROTHY
Seen it a bunch of times. It's real pretty.

PORTER
I bet. And the storms.

DOROTHY
The storms?

PORTER
A big, powerful, violent storm churning over the ocean, about to come ashore. I bet that's beautiful, too.

DOROTHY
Yeah, I guess.

Porter stares at her and then looks out the window at his parked car. She looks at him.

PORTER
Well, how about we get me a room?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Porter exercises.

TIME CUT TO:

Porter sleeps sitting up, leaning on the headboard. It's dark except for the glow of the television. The sound of women bickering on a reality show.

Porter stirs and notices the programming. He watches for just a moment, aghast.

PORTER
(sleepily)
What...?

He gropes around in the dark for the remote. He finds it and turns off the television.

INT. LOBBY -DAY

Porter walks to the front desk. DEBBIE, 60, is on shift.

DEBBIE
Good morning, sir. Sleep alright?

PORTER
Like a dead man.

DEBBIE
Well, alright. Can I help ya?

PORTER
Looking for some good breakfast.
Can you recommend someplace?

DEBBIE
Well, we do have a complimentary
breakfast here, if you like.

She points to a table nearby. A couple cartons of orange juice and an opened plastic sleeve of plain bagels.

Porter looks at it, then back at her.

INT. BLUE DOLPHIN CAFE - DAY

Porter sits in the busy cafe eating an omelette. He scans the room and sips his coffee. Fox News plays on a television mounted to the wall.

He checks out the eclectic clothing on display: surf brand t-shirts and shorts, work denim and flannel, a BUSINESSMAN in the corner in a business suit.

He looks down at his outfit: all black. Stands out.

EXT. OCEAN RIDER SURF SHOP - DAY

The shack-like surf shop sits right on the boardwalk just off the beach. A SURFER, 28, passes on a bicycle. Numerous PEOPLE walk the boardwalk, laughing, pointing at the ocean, eating.

Porter leaves Ocean Rider Surf Shop wearing his black pants with a new shirt: short sleeves, light green, two big surfboards on it with flowers interspersed. He stops at the boardwalk, looks around, and tries to adjust the shirt.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

Porter drinks from a water bottle as he peers down the road at the target's house. He looks back down at his book.

TIME CUT TO:

TOM, 52, leaves the house and gets in his car and pulls off. Waiting a safe distance, Porter follows.

EXT. SHORE POINT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tom's pulls up to a small high school building. The lot is empty. The sign reads "Shore Point High School. Home of the Wild Ponies" and in removable lettering below: "Have a safe and fun Summer Break!"

Tom rushes past the sign into the building.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

Porter, parked a distance off, struggles to read a bumper sticker on the back of Tom's car that reads "Go Ponies!"

EXT. SHORE POINT HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tom exits the school with a crate full of papers. He fumbles to lock the door.

He walks back to the car, loads it, and drives off.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

Porter follows Tom back to his house. When Tom pulls into his driveway, Porter keeps driving past.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Porter sits at the desk, reading.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - DAY

The next morning. Porter's watches Tom's house and reads.

After a moment, WHIT, 40s, Tom's wife, bounds from the front door. Porter looks up. She looks late for work. Giant purse in one hand and a coffee in the other. She gets in her car and speeds off.

Porter looks back to the house. Nothing.

TIME CUT TO:

A WHILE LATER

A stir at the house draws Porter's attention.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tom stumbles out of the front door carrying a long baseball bat bag. Looks heavy.

Behind him is his son, NATE, 13. He carries a couple gloves and a jug of water.

Tom gestures for Nate to close the door.

They hop in the car and head down the road.

PORTER'S CAR

Porter gives the area one last survey. He grabs a cardboard box from the passenger's seat. He gets out.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE

Porter brazenly strides across Tom's lawn to the side of the house. He checks the doghouse. The dog lay on its side sleeping.

He tip toes up the back deck to the door. Puts the box down. He fumbles in his pocket as he looks through the glass for signs of an alarm. Nothing.

He produces a thin plastic card and goes to slip the lock.

Stops. Looks back to the dog, which pays him no mind.

Instead, he tries the knob. Unlocked. He smiles. Small town folks. He enters.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Porter walks around the house. The refrigerator hums.

He wanders the house looking at everything: family pictures, mail, books, the crate full of papers, etc. He opens the refrigerator.

BEDROOM

He stands at the foot of a queen size bed. To his right, he catches his reflection in a mirror.

Lies down on the bed and looks up at the ceiling.

LIVING ROOM

He puts a small surveillance microphone in a nook in one of Tom's bookshelves. Inspects it from several angles. Clean.

EXT. SPORTS FIELD - NIGHT

Porter sits cross-legged on the large open sports field directly across from Tom's house. It's nearly pitch black.

He uses binoculars to look into Tom's large living room window and observes the family. Like watching television.

He pulls out a smartphone. Tinkers with a level. Reaching up to his ear, Porter adjusts a Bluetooth earpiece and begins listening.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

Tom enters the living room cracking a can of beer. He plops down on the couch, sips the beer, and watches the news.

TOM

(to the television)

Let's see what these thieving
sonsofbitches are saying now...

In a chair nearby, Whit reads something on an iPad. She looks up to the television, then at Tom.

WHIT

Your blood pressure, Tom.

TOM

I just...they keep going after us.
Like the unions crashed the
economy! And we just take it. No
backbone...

He takes a big gulp of his beer.

WHIT

Your liver, Tom.

Tom tries to swallow, but Whit's joke hits hard. He sprays the beer out in a mist.

They both laugh.

TOM
My liver, huh?

Their son, NATE, 13, comes in the room. Phone in hand.

NATE
(re: the laughing)
You guys okay?

TOM
Your mother is worried about my
liver.

NATE
You guys are weird.

He goes back to swiping on his phone.

SPORTS FIELD

Porter smiles at the scene. The smile fades. Crickets chirp.

About fifty feet behind Porter, a MAN, late 20s, trudges across the field. He notices Porter and slows down. On closer inspection, he sees the binoculars. Man begins approaching.

Porter is unaware of the Man who's about 30 feet behind.

MAN
Hey!

The Man stops. Porter cocks his head to the side.

MAN
The hell are you doin' man?

Porter stands up and turns. He looks the Man in the eyes and sizes him up. The field and the distant road are desolate.

A standoff.

MAN (CONT'D)
Hey! Fuck you doin'?

PORTER
Looking into that house there.

MAN
Yeah, I can see that. Why you
lookin' into Mr. Carroll's house
all creepy and shit?

PORTER

Mr. Carroll. You know him well?

MAN

Yeah, bro. Was my favorite teacher
in high---

PORTER

Tom, right? His first name.

MAN

What is this, a joke? Are you
kidding me? It's time for you to
take your shit outta here.

PORTER

Who are you?

MAN

Fuck you mean who am I? Who the
fuck are you?

PORTER

Why are you *here*?

MAN

Hold on, man. Why am I---? You're
really starting to piss me off.

PORTER

---This is my space. You're in *my*
space.

MAN

You know what? I was thinkin' about
just calling the cops, but now I
think I'm gonna kick your fuckin'
ass, *then* call the cops.

Man struts up to Porter and takes a swing. Porter ducks it and lands a punch in the Man's ribs. Man recovers and tackles Porter to the ground. They roll around.

Man ends up on top and lands several punches to Porter's head. Porter reaches his arm up to block the raining blows. Man grabs Porter's hand and bends it back. Snaps one of the fingers. Porter gasps in pain.

Regaining his poise, with the other hand he seizes one of Man's forearms, throws his weight, and spins Man away from him.

Both men get back on their feet and square up.

As Man rushes in swinging, Porter ducks left. In the same motion, Porter side kicks Man's ankle, breaking it instantly.

Man collapses on the ground.

MAN (CONT'D)

Ahh, fuck. You sonofabitch, you broke my ankle!

PORTER

You broke my finger.

As Man groans, Porter pulls a roll of duct tape from his bag.

Man's eyes widen. What kind of person is this?

MAN

What the hell is that for?

Still in obvious pain, Man punches and flails. With two quick blows to Man, Porter is able to buy time to get his wrists wrapped up.

MAN (CONT'D)

(attempting to shout)

Help!

Porter wraps his head, covering his mouth. Screams muffled.

Porter pants.

PORTER

Shit.

He looks around: at his car down the street, into Tom's distant living room, around the field. So far so good.

Meanwhile, Man struggles to his feet and limps away toward the woods a few hundred feet away. Porter, in no hurry, turns and watches. He removes a knife from his jacket, half cocks it back to throw, but decides not to.

He follows Man at a distance, who is moving clumsily. Porter puts on a pair of black gloves.

WOODS

Leaning on a tree, Man is finally able to pull the tape down over his top lip. He gulps air. Peeks around the tree. Sees Porter faintly in the darkness.

He limps on, trying unsuccessfully to go faster. Falls. Tries to get back up. His ankle prevents him from getting going on his feet. His taped hands further hinder. Instead, he crawls behind a rotted and fallen tree. He flattens himself on his back. Slowing his breathing, he strains to listen.

A cracking twig somewhere, the wisp of brushed leaves. Not much. Hard to zero in on location.

Crickets chirp.

Suddenly, Porter appears at Man's head. He's already got his hands around Man's neck, choking him. Man squirms and makes panicked noises. He kicks and tries to swing his bound hands backwards to Porter.

It's no use. Porter's too strong and has the leverage. He's too tired and injured.

Gradually he goes limp.

Porter cuts off the tape from his wrists and head.

LIVING ROOM

Tom turns the channel.

TOM
Screw it. I'm turning this damn
nonsense off.

WHIT
Your language, Tom.

They chuckle.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Porter jogs on the shoreline.

TIME CUT TO:

Sitting on the sand, he looks out onto the ocean. Way out, he sees a whale's back breach the surface. He blinks, strains to see it better. Nothing.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Porter sits on a bench near an elementary school playground. He watches birds.

LINDSAY, 30s, approaches with her daughter SARA, 5, who makes a mad dash for the sliding board.

LINDSAY
I'll be right over here, Sara. Be safe!

SARA
M'kay, ma!

Lindsay smiles and shakes her head as Sara is already trying, somewhat unsuccessfully, to climb up the slide.

Porter watches them. Sara acknowledges him, smiles and waves. He returns the gesture.

LINDSAY
Do you have a little one around here someplace?

PORTER
Oh, no. I was just watching some birds.

LINDSAY
Well, it's a nice day for that.

He nods and watches Sara swing on her stomach from the swing set.

SARA
Look, ma! I'm Supergirl!

LINDSAY
Yes, you are!

PORTER
I've always wondered: Children. Are they just *not-yet-grown* adults or are adults just *grown children*?

LINDSAY
(being polite)
What an interesting question...
Well, I mean, what's the difference? I sure know some adults who are just big kids!

She laughs.

PORTER

And wouldn't that mean that kids
are just the seed of who they will
be?

LINDSAY

(*still trying...*)
Well, someone's sure feeling
philosophical today.

Porter's phone rings. He looks at the screen and walks away
to take it.

PORTER

Sir? ... I'm well, thank you. And
you?

He turns back around and watches Sara play.

PORTER (CONT'D)

No, sir, not yet... Of course,
everything is going well... Just
wanted to give him a little more
time... No reason in particular,
sir. Just wanted to... The plan is
tomorrow afternoon... It's straight
forward. I should be back in town
in two days time... Alright.

He hangs up. Looks back to Sara who's getting into
something.

SARA (O.S.)

Mommy! Watch! I'm walking down
the slide! Look!

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Porter sleeps.

Whispered VOICE invades his mind. The voice seems to be
singular and plural at the same time.

VOICE (V.O.)

Henry...Porter...

Porter stirs in his sleep.

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

Henry...Isaac...Ma hu aismuk
alhaqiqi, abn Allah?

Porter's eyes shoot open. He stands at the edge of a dock on a rough sea. He can't see anything. His eyes are covered over with a flaky, crusty membrane.

He reaches up to feel his eyes, but the sound of something huge moving through the water startles him. He gets on all fours for better balance on the dock, feels around for the edges.

The whooshing and groaning of the beast in the water gets louder and closer.

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

Open them.

PORTER

I can't, I---

Closer! Louder! The dock boards begin to rattle. Water laps up over the edge.

VOICE (V.O.)

Open them. Fathuha, alttifl Allah!

PORTER

I can't! I can't!

The sound is unbearably intense now. The laps of water become like waves.

He reaches up to his eyes and tries to peel off the membrane. Some flakes come off in his hand. He's terrified.

INT. BLUE DOLPHIN CAFE - DAY

Porter eats breakfast, distracted. He writes in his notebook, talking to himself:

PORTER

Ma hu aismuk alhaqiqi, abn Allah...

He writes the translation beneath: "What is your name, child of God."

He taps his pen on the paper, lost in thought.

A WAITRESS, 60s, approaches.

WAITRESS

Coffee?

Porter flinches, shocked from his stupor.

PORTER
Sure, sure. Thanks.

As she pours, Porter reaches up to his eye.

EXT. THE GROVE BAR - DAY

The sun is beginning to fade. A semi-upscale bar sits a half block off Main Street. The exterior is maroon and black. Atop the entrance is the name: THE GROVE.

A pickup truck lurches past.

Tom slouches to the entrance and enters. He wears a Little League coach's uniform jersey and jeans.

A half block down the road Porter's car pulls to the curb. It runs for a few moments, then shuts off.

INT. PORTER'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Porter leans over to the glove compartment and retrieves a small vial. He puts it in the inside pocket of his blazer, which is tossed on over his spiffy surfing shirt.

He opens the door.

INT. THE GROVE BAR - AFTERNOON

The interior is tastefully decorated. Just like the exterior, the interior brick is painted maroon and black.

Stringed white Christmas lights adorn the wall behind the bar and are draped over a large mirror that sits behind the cash register.

There is one other patron, a MAN, early 70s, already inebriated, at the far end of the bar. His head is down. Two drinks in front of him.

Tom sidles up at the opposite end, near the corner of the bar.

ABBY, early 30s, looks to Tom.

TOM
Dogfish Head. Thanks.

She pulls the draft and sets it in front of Tom.

ABBY
Start a tab, Tom?

TOM
Sure. Been a long day. Baseball.

ABBY
I can see that. You leave any dirt
on the field?

Tom smiles and looks down at his jersey, which has some dirt from the diamond on it, and shrugs.

Abby scoots to the register and then back to the kitchen.

Tom takes a long draw from his beer and looks down to the other end of the bar. He nods to the Man at the end of the bar. Man barely registers a blink in response.

EXT. THE GROVE BAR

At the entrance, Porter checks his watch, waits a beat, and opens the door.

INT. THE GROVE BAR

Now inside the doorway, Porter, backlit by the light pouring in through the windowed door, cuts an imposing figure.

He lingers for a moment assessing the setting: the whos, whats, and wheres. He makes his way to the bar. Sits two stools away from Tom.

Abby walks up smiling.

PORTER
Old Fashioned. Brandy. Make it
sweet.

ABBY
Old Fashioned? Heh. Didn't expect
that! I thought only old people
drank those.

She flashes a smile. He returns it.

PORTER
Is that right?

ABBY
Yep!

PORTER
I'm an old soul. What can I say?

ABBY

"Old soul." Well, alright, then.
One Old Fashioned coming right up.

She shoots away. The sounds of the room emerge: the kitchen, ceiling fan, a dragging chair, Abby clinking glasses, muddling fruit, bourbon pouring.

Porter pulls out the tattered copy of Moby-Dick from his jacket pocket. He thumbs it, settles on a page, and begins reading.

Abby sets the drink down.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Old Fashioned. Look, if it's real bad, you just let me know and it'll be on the house alright? It's been a while, so I can't promise nothin'.

She chuckles. Half embarrassed, half flirt.

PORTER

Thanks. That's very kind of you.

Porter holds the glass up in salute and sips.

ABBY

Well...? Wanna start a tab?

PORTER

Not too shabby. Yes, a tab. Please.

ABBY

Great, what do ya go by?

PORTER

Henry.

She turns to the register and records the name.

ABBY

Henry...

She returns.

ABBY (CONT'D)

What ya readin' there?

PORTER

Moby-Dick.

He slides the book across the bar, simultaneously stealing a look at Tom.

Abby flips the book up and studies the cover.

ABBY

Moby-Dick? I heard of this book.
Never read it though. Sure is some
heavy readin' for bar readin',
though, idn't it?

PORTER

Probably so. But it's my favorite
book.

ABBY

Yeah? You read it a bunch of times?

PORTER

I'd say so.

ABBY

How many, do ya think?

Tom glances sidelong at the two of them, wants to hear this.

PORTER

Oh, I'd say about thirty times.

ABBY

Thirty? Sure is a lot of times.
Are you a teacher or somethin'?

PORTER

Nope. Like I said, it's my favorite
book, is all.

ABBY

Must be! Thirty times...wow. You
must be real smart. Well, just give
me a holler if ya need anything
else, ya hear?

(to Tom)

How ya doing over there?

TOM

Just fine, thanks. I'm alright.

Long silence. Porter drinks his Old Fashioned and reads.

Tom sips from his pint glass.

He glances over at Porter and then back at his beer. He
draws another large drink.

TOM (CONT'D)
Moby-Dick. That *is* some serious bar material. She's right.

PORTER
(playfully)
Yeah, yeah.

They share a cordial laugh.

TOM
Yeah... Is it good?

PORTER
Is it? The book?

TOM
The drink.

PORTER
Ah, not so bad. Yeah.... Problem is, I love the drink, but it's been forever ruined for me. Totally.

TOM
How's that?

Porter turns and smiles.

PORTER
Okay. Well, there's this place in Wisconsin, right? And they've got-- Well, first of all, I've never been much for cocktails myself, I'm more of a beer fella. I like a good beer.

TOM
Is that right? I got a pretty good one right here. Local.

PORTER
Oh yeah?

TOM
Dogfish Head.

PORTER
You said "Dogfish Head"? Hm. Funny name, isn't it?

TOM
Well, yeah.

PORTER
Good?

TOM
I like it. You can try it. Have a sip?

PORTER
(Holding up a hand)
Oh no, thank you. I'm not so good drinking after people. No offense.

TOM
None taken. I understand. The old lady's the same way.

They both drink.

TOM (CONT'D)
So, you were sayin'---

PORTER
---Wisconsin! Right, Wisconsin. Well, there's this place in Wisconsin, in...La Crosse. Called Ebenezer's. Right about downtown. Great pizza! In fact, if memory serves, the full name of the place was actually Ebenezer's Woodfire Grille, or Woodfire Pizza, or something like that---

TOM
---or something like that---

PORTER
Right. Well, they apparently put all kinds of crazy shit -- I'm sorry for my language, do you mind?

Tom shakes his head.

PORTER (CONT'D)
---All kinds of crazy shit on their pizzas. In a good way. Anyway. I'm in town for sales business and lookin' for a drink, naturally. I go in, because it's close to my hotel downtown, ya know? So---

TOM

Right.

PORTER

---I head for the bar. Classy joint, real classy. Heavy finished wood bar, brass finishing on the metal pieces. And, get this, in Wisconsin you can still smoke in bars. Or at least you *could*, I don't know about now.

Tom's eyes widen and he shakes his head in wonder.

PORTER (CONT'D)

So the atmosphere is just, well shit, it might as well be the 1960s, you know? It's great. So I'm at this bar and the bartender, a good lookin' woman, says, she says "What will you have?"

Tom chuckles at the cliched line.

TOM

"What will you have"?

PORTER

Hey, I know. Maybe that's not exactly what she said, but I'm the one tellin' the story. In my story, the bartender says, "What'll you have."

TOM

Fair enough.

PORTER

So, I say "Well, I've never been here before. What do you pride yourself in?" She says, "Well, we make a mean Old Fashioned here. It's a Wisconsin specialty," she says. Well, I'd heard of an Old Fashioned before, but just in the movies. Or maybe---

TOM

---Wait, is that true? That's a Wisconsin drink?

PORTER

Well, shit I don't know if they invented it or what. I'm just sayin' what she said. Google it. Anyway, so I told her I trusted her judgement. Now...

Porter stops and takes a drink. He draws out the moment...

PORTER (CONT'D)

Now, I watched her intently. In a whiskey glass she threw in some simple syrup, bitters, a little water. And an orange slice and a cherry. Then, she muddles it all up, throws in some ice, right? Now, I'm fascinated. I mean, I'm watching her pretty close. I'm real engaged. Then, she tells me, the key is to use *Brandy*, not Bourbon. "Brandy is the Wisconsin touch," she said.

Tom waits for more.

TOM

And...?

PORTER

And...it was magnificent! Smoothest cocktail I have ever had. The balance of the drink, the balance of sweet and bitter, was stunning. Little sugar, little bite. Brilliant.

TOM

You said it ruined the drink for you. You mean no Old Fashioned has reached that level?

PORTER

Well, yes. I can't know for sure. Maybe that's the case. But maybe after that first surprising glass, it's gone. Like, you can't have that first one back. Like a first love, or the first time you saw "Chinatown" or something. Maybe it was the bartender - maybe she was that damn good. Maybe it was the fact that people were smoking cigarettes. Or the wood finish. I

PORTER
 don't know. Maybe all of that. But
 none has been that good since. *That*
 I can tell you.

TOM
 Wow. I'm sorry to hear that.

PORTER
 Me too.

They both begin a laugh that builds.

TOM
 I'm Tom. Did I hear you say your
 name's Henry?

They shake hands.

PORTER
 Yeah, it's Henry. Henry Porter.
 Nice to meet you, Tom.

TOM
 Same.

They drink. Beat.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Henry Porter, huh? Have we met
 before? Name sounds familiar.

PORTER
 Nope. Can't say I've had the
 pleasure. Maybe it's just one of
 those names.

TOM
 No, it definitely rings a bell...

Tom closes his eyes, shaking his head.

PORTER
 Is this about to be a Harry Potter
 joke, because---

TOM
 Dylan!

PORTER
 Dylan?

TOM

Bob Dylan. "Brownsville Girl." I
knew I recognized that name.

PORTER

I don't follow.

TOM

Henry Porter's a character in a
Dylan song. "Brownsville Girl." You
know it? Oh man, how does it go?

He begins to sing to himself.

TOM (CONT'D)

"Brownsville girl, show me all
around the world, teeth like
pearls, shining like the moon
above..."

PORTER

And there's a character with my
name?

TOM

Yeah, yeah. The song is
basically... just a story. What's
the line? Oh! "The only thing we
knew for sure about Henry Porter is
that his name wasn't Henry Porter."
That's it! He was only mentioned
maybe once. Minor character.

PORTER

Wow. Isn't that something?

TOM

Yeah. Really is.

(smiles)

Well? Is your real name Henry
Porter?

Beat.

PORTER

(chuckling)

Yes, I assure you, it is.

TOM

What are the odds?

PORTER

What are the odds.

TOM

But hold on. That album came out in '85, maybe '86. So there's no way you're named after the song. You weren't born yet, I'm assuming. I mean, no offense.

PORTER

You assumed right.

TOM

Just pure coincidence, huh?

PORTER

I guess so. Or...maybe the character is named after me?

Tom laughs.

TOM

Now that would *really* be something!

PORTER

Indeed it would.

A beat. Tom looks down at his beer, which is nearly empty. He sighs and slaps his hands on the bar.

TOM

Well, I think I'll have another. But first, gotta piss!

Tom pushes off the bar and walks away. Porter smiles as he watches him off. His smile fades. He ruminates, then gestures towards Abby.

ABBY

Can I get ya somethin', Henry?

PORTER

Yeah. I'd like to get another one of those Old Fashioneds.

INT. RESTROOM

Tom stands at the urinal. He zips up, turns around, heads to the sink.

As he dries his hands, his cellphone buzzes. He pulls it out. Text message from Whit: "Hey baby. Will be home a lil late 2nite."

He replies: "Okay. Be safe" and sends.

He exits the restroom.

THE GROVE BAR

Tom returns. Porter, smiling, slides an Old Fashioned in his direction.

TOM
What'd I miss?

PORTER
Hope you don't mind, I got you a drink. Try one of these Old Fashioneds. On me.

TOM
Oh! Well, I won't refuse.

PORTER
That's the spirit.

Tom, now sitting, takes a sip.

TOM
It's good. Hey, Abby! Nice drink.

ABBY
(from the other end of the bar)
Thanks! Ya'll okay?

TOM
Yep!

Tom takes another, longer drink. Porter watches. A long silence ensues.

TOM (CONT'D)
(pointing Porter's book)
Moby-Dick...

PORTER
Moby-Dick.

TOM
I *have* read it.

PORTER
Really?

Porter is genuinely surprised.

TOM
So, I don't think I mentioned
earlier, but I'm a teacher. I teach
at Shore Point High.

PORTER
What do you teach?

TOM
English.

PORTER
Really? Well, I'll be damned. So
you've read the book?

TOM
Once. Not *thirty* times! And it's
been some time.

PORTER
But you've read it. That's great.

TOM
My favorite is Huckleberry Finn.

PORTER
Wait---

TOM
---Yeah, yeah---

PORTER
---Your name!

TOM
I know, I know...

PORTER
I guess it was destined to be your
favorite book! You're named after
Tom Sawyer!

A beat. Tom's getting loose awfully *fast*.

TOM

So. I gotta ask: what is it about Moby-Dick, for you? I, I mean, it's not the most exciting book, ya know?

PORTER

You want to know?

TOM

Yeah, I wanna know.

PORTER

Ahab.

(beat)

It's Ahab.

TOM

Okay. He's an iconic character, sure...

Tom rubs his eyes. Porter notices.

PORTER

He is that. But he's more. He's a man, but in a way he's more than a man. You know? He's a... a Nietzschean... "overman." The Übermensch. Ahab is bigger than normal humans. He's cut from a different cloth. Doesn't have to answer to other men, because he's, he's above them. Above their morals, their ethics, their...lives.

TOM

So, they're like...so other people are...sub-human, to him?

PORTER

No. They're not *sub*-human. It's just that he's... *super*-human. Above them. Evolved beyond them.

TOM

Okay... Then what's that make the whale?

PORTER

The whale? The whale is God.

Tom shows signs of on-setting inebriation already, but throws another gulp back. Porter turns fully to him. Something in his voice changed. A bit deeper, less inflected. Insidiousness at the edges.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Moby-Dick is the manifestation of the Gnostic God. An evil, careless God. A violent God. The Old Testament God. To this God, we're just...playthings. Objects. Meat.

(On a roll)

Why does the whale bite off Ahab's leg?

Tom shrugs.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Because he *can*. Why does Ahab want to kill the whale?

Tom, head bobbing, looks on.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Because he wants to *kill God*.

Tom's head drops again.

TOM

Oh, oh man. I'm sorry. This drink is...strong. I don't know what...

Porter gestures for the check. Abbie comes.

PORTER

Hi, Abby is it?, do you think I can get the bill? For me and Tom here.

ABBY

Sure, thing. He alright?

PORTER

Yeah. I just don't think he was prepared for that Old Fashioned.

ABBIE

Lightweight.

She laughs off to the register. Porter puts his hand on Tom's back.

PORTER
 We'll get you out of here, buddy.
 I'll get you home.

TOM
 Oh...thanks Hen-, Henry. Sorry,
 this is weird...embarrassing...

PORTER
 No problem at all.

Abby returns with the bill. Porter settles with cash.

ABBY
 Alright, then. See y'all later.
 Nice to meet ya, Henry! See ya,
 Tom!

PORTER
 Great drink, Abbie.

She blushes. Porter leaves, helping Tom along the way.

EXT. THE GROVE BAR - EVENING

The blue-orange glow of dusk bathes the street and building.

Porter swings open the door. Tom leans on Porter's forearm.
 Porter guides them to the right down the sidewalk.

TOM
 Hey. I live...my house is---

PORTER
 Come on. Here we go. We'll get you
 right.

SIDEWALK

Porter leads Tom. He keeps his head on a swivel.

PORTER
 You just need to rest. Shake it
 off.

They approach a nearby bench.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 Here.

WOODEN BENCH

Tom plops down, sighing. Porter descends onto the bench very close to Tom.

They sit staring out onto the street. A WOMAN walks a dog. They watch.

PORTER
(exhaling)
Tom. Tom Carroll.

TOM
Henry. Henry Porter.

PORTER
My name isn't Henry Porter.

Tom turns his head to Porter. He chuckles. A long stare. When Porter doesn't confirm that it's a joke, he furrows his brow.

TOM
Who...are you, then?

PORTER
What does it matter? Isn't the more important question: "What are you here for?"

TOM
...my head...

His breathing becomes labored.

TOM (CONT'D)
...what are you here for?

PORTER
You know what I'm here for.

TOM
I don't... Wait...

A flicker of panic in Tom's eyes.

PORTER
I work for some people you know. Or knew. You're out of rope, Tom. You've been out of rope for years. New management wants to balance the books.

TOM

Hold on. I'm...I can handle this.
This isn't...huh, my breathing...
Look, I needed an extension, that's
all. There were salary cuts at
work. That's why it took---

PORTER

Tom, Tom. Don't. It's too late.

TOM

Too late? For wh...wait, wait.
Hold on. I can make this right. I
can...I know it's been a while, but
I have the money in the bank. It's
there. Not all of it, but...a
payment. I can take you now, right
now. The bank is---

He pauses. Reaches up to his chest and feels his breathing,
his heartbeat.

TOM (CONT'D)

No... Am I-? Am I dying?

PORTER

Yes. You're going to die very soon.

Tom puts his head in his hands and begins trembling.

TOM

Oh, no. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

Porter looks at him, then away. A car ambles past with its
headlights on.

Tom pulls his head out of his hands. He looks around,
anxiously rubs his hands on his legs.

Porter puts his hand on Tom's shoulder. Firm.

PORTER

You're thinking about taking
action. I can see it. Thinking
about running. Even if you *could*,
because you can't, where would you
go? To the police? The hospital?
Why? There is no antidote for
what's inside you. You'll drop dead
in the street. Will you run through
the streets shouting "I'm poisoned!
I'm poisoned!"? For what? You just
came out of a bar. You'd just look

PORTER
like a crazy drunk. Let's take a
moment and be logical, Tom. Be
logical.

Tom looks at Porter. He shakes his head.

TOM
No. No, I...

PORTER
Tom, I'm going to be brutally
honest about your options here.
First, none of your options leaves
you alive. That's just reality.
Even if I wanted to save you now, I
couldn't. It's done. You're dead.
The question becomes *how* you die.
If you run away from here. To the
police. To the hospital. To your
family...at 762 Providence Lane.
The pretty ranch house with the
large front yard and the blue
shutters. If you do any of those
things, you will jeopardize your
legacy with your family. Tom, does
your family know about your
involvements with these people?
Does your family know that you've
put their lives in danger, even
unintentionally? Do they?

TOM
No...

PORTER
No. How do you think they think of
you?

TOM
I don't...I think...as good.

PORTER
As good?

TOM
I don't know.

PORTER
I think you're good. But that
doesn't enter the equation for me,
Tom. But for your wife and your son
Nate...that is the *whole* equation.

PORTER
 When your family buries you in a few days, how will they carry you with them? As a good man who died tragically of heart failure? Or as...a man who lied to them, betrayed them, put them at risk? Will they smile when they think of you in ten years? Or will they say "I don't want to talk about him?"

Tom's face sinks.

TOM
 This is really happening? I can't believe... You did this.

PORTER
 I did this to you, yes. But not only me. *Everything* did this to you.

A long pause. Tom turns to Porter.

TOM
 My family?

PORTER
 They'll be fine. They won't be touched. You're debt is collected. Is *being* collected.

Tom sighs and looks across the street. His face progresses through a range of emotions from relief to despair. His eyes well with tears and he shakes his head.

TOM
 And...it'll look natural?

PORTER
 Yes. It will look natural. They will have no idea. They will mourn you. And they will heal. No stinging sense of betrayal or injustice. No fear for themselves. They will be fine, eventually.

TOM
 Okay.

PORTER
 Okay.

They sit in silence.

Tom's head bobs once. Porter puts his hand on Tom's shoulder.

TOM

Soon...?

PORTER

Soon.

Tom's eyes well up again as he looks to the sky. He pulls out his phone. He looks at a picture of him with his wife and son. He touches the screen. His weakening hand drops the phone.

Porter picks it up and places it on Tom's lap. Tom looks down. Tom's hand lumbers up to his neck where he finds a cross necklace. He grips it, but the weight of his arms pulls it off his neck with a snap. Porter looks away.

TOM

(quietly)

Our Father...Who art in
heaven...Hallowed be...Hallowed be
Thy name...

Porter turns his head to watch Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

Thy Kingdom come....will be
done...on Earth as it is in...in
heaven...

Tom's head rolls at the neck. He's mumbling practically under his breath. Finally his head settles with his chin on his chest, his eyes facing down to his phone.

TOM (CONT'D)

Give us this day...our daily
bread...forgive us our trespasses
as we...forgive those...

He crooks his head and looks directly at Porter.

TOM (CONT'D)

...who have tres...trespassed
against us...and lead us not...
but...deliver...us...

Tom goes limp and is silent.

Porter's eyes scan the street. There is no one near. A car passes. He glances at his watch.

After a moment, Porter looks back to Tom and examines him. He squints his eyes as he notices one of his hairs resting on Tom's shoulder. He plucks the hair off. He reaches down to the ground and snatches up the cross that had fallen.

Behind him a WHISPERED VOICE...

WHISPERED VOICE (O.S.)
What is your name...?

Porter spins in the bench immediately. He sees nothing, no one. Looks around. Nothing. He shakes it out of mind.

After giving Tom one last look, Porter strides away down the street. Eventually he disappears out of sight.

Tom's slumped body sits on the bench alone. The coming sunset casts a deep orange glow on the street. A jogging WOMAN passes. After a moment, Porter's car zooms past and down the road and out of sight.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Porter exercises. Music plays. Tom's cross necklace sits on the dresser.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Porter jolts awake from a nightmare. He looks around.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Porter listens to Father Gregory's homily.

FATHER GREGORY
...in this sense, since we are all created in the image of God, we are all, how can we say it, *imprinted*, with divinity. St. Athanasios said that "God became man so that man might become god." The implications of this are staggering...

TIME CUT TO:

Porter is in the line to receive communion.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
(up ahead)
The Body of Christ...The Body of Christ...

Porter leaves the line and walks out of the church. Father Gregory notices.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Sitting at a table, Porter drinks a cocktail, lost in thought. The Bartender approaches.

BARTENDER

You good, Henry?

PORTER

Yeah, yeah.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Porter sits at the edge of his bed with Tom's cross necklace in the palm of his hand.

He looks at it. After a moment, he stands up and places it back on one of his shelves with the other artifacts.

BATHROOM

Porter looks at himself in the mirror, touches the bags developing under his eyes. He swishes his mouth out and spits.

He leans down to the sink and splashes his face with water.

Leaning back up, he looks in the mirror to see Tom - pale and emotionless - standing behind him.

Porter gasps and turns immediately. Nothing. He looks at his arms, which are covered in goosebumps, the hairs standing up.

BEDROOM

Porter sits cross-legged on the bed. He rubs his eyes and shakes his head. He breathes out a quick chuckle.

Clicks on the television.

INT. KABUL CAFE - DAY

Porter and James sit at a lunch counter looking out onto the street. Porter eats a kabob, somewhat dazed. James scarfs down a falafel.

James puts a white envelope in front of Porter. Porter stuffs it into his blazer and nods.

JAMES

You know, this is the only place in town that makes a falafel that even

JAMES
comes close to what you could get
in Helmand.

PORTER
Or Haditha.

JAMES
Only thing I miss about that sandy
shit hole. The food.

PORTER
I miss more than the food.

JAMES
I'm sure. You were in your element.
That chaos. Gave you cover. Hell, I
don't even know what all you did
over there. Me? I just miss the
food.

They eat. James looks at Porter's weary face. Then:

JAMES (CONT'D)
(with probing concern)
You been to the V.A. recently?

PORTER
No. For what? I haven't been there
since right after I got back. Why?

JAMES
Nothin'. Just asking.
(beat)
When you gonna be ready to work
again?

PORTER
Soon. Few weeks. I'll let you know.

EXT. SMALL PARK OUTSIDE GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Porter sits on a bench. Several HOMELESS PEOPLE are about.
Porter watches them with interest.

Father Gregory exits the building. He turns, locks the door,
and walks down the sidewalk. Porter watches him. They catch
each other's eye.

After a brief hesitation, Father Gregory turns to Porter and
walks his way. Is this what Porter hoped would happen?

A homeless man, TED, 60s, calls out from across the park.

TED
Hey Father!

 FATHER GREGORY
How's it today, Teddy?

 TED
Oh, okay.

 FATHER GREGORY
See you tomorrow night for dinner!
Take care of yourself now!

Ted waves.

Father Gregory stands near Porter.

 FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
You come to noon mass most days,
right?

 PORTER
When I can.

 FATHER GREGORY
Yeah. Didn't see ya today.

 PORTER
That's right.

 FATHER GREGORY
Hm. I'm Father Gregory.

He extends his hand. Porter looks at it, then shakes it.

 PORTER
Henry.

 FATHER GREGORY
Well Henry, I'm heading out for
some lunch and probably an early
beer. Wouldn't mind some company.

 PORTER
Thanks, but no.

 FATHER GREGORY
Wouldn't be good for your image to
be seen around town with a priest?

 PORTER
What'd you say?

FATHER GREGORY
Your image. As a hard ass.

Porter stands and looks him in the eye.

PORTER
Now, Father, that's awful forward
of you.

FATHER GREGORY
Didn't mean any offense.

PORTER
Understand...there's a difference
between an image and the real
thing. Be careful you don't mistake
the two.

Father Gregory looks at the ground for a moment. Then back
up to Porter.

FATHER GREGORY
You're carrying a heavy load,
Henry. I can see it.

Gregory pats Porter on the shoulder, turns on his heel and
heads off.

Calling back:

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
Come talk to me, Henry!

Porter watches him off, then sits back down.

Meanwhile, behind Porter from a distance across the street,
another man watches the scene, snapping pictures.

ACROSS THE STREET

GRUNGY JOE, 20s, wears cut-off jean shorts and a sleeveless
t-shirt. He has has tattoos all over his arms, legs, and
neck. His trendy haircut and thick horn-rimmed glasses make
him look like a hipster.

He snaps pictures of Porter with his phone.

EXT. LIGHT RAIL STATION - DAY

Grungy Joe waits for the train. He scrolls through his Twitter feed.

The train arrives. He looks into the windows and gets on.

INT. LIGHT RAIL CAR

Grungy Joe scans the car and sees James sitting in the back row. He wades back and sits.

GRUNGY JOE

The light rail? This is a little much, isn't it?

JAMES

You don't know him.

GRUNGY JOE

I know. He's a big deal. I've heard.

JAMES

You don't know him *well enough*. He has a way of being everywhere.

GRUNGY JOE

I'll take your word for it.

JAMES

Well?

Grungy Joe shows James the pictures he took on his phone: Porter alone on the bench outside the church and Porter with Father Gregory.

GRUNGY JOE

Here.

JAMES

What am I looking at? He's talking to a priest?

GRUNGY JOE

Looks like it.

JAMES

Well, he has always had a somewhat *unique* interest in religion. This isn't all that---

GRUNGY JOE

Look, you're the one who told me just to follow him a bit. "Gently" you said. There's no guarantee he's up to *anything*.

JAMES

Mind yourself.

GRUNGY JOE

Yes, sir.

The train lurches to a stop. PEOPLE shuffle.

JAMES

And you're right. I'm hoping there's nothing. Just have a feeling. Keep following. Report back. Be careful.

GRUNGY JOE

Heh, okay, I---

JAMES

Be careful.

GRUNGY JOE

Okay.

Grungy Joe gets off at the station.

As the train rumbles off, James rubs his face and looks out the window, thoughtful.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Porter jogs through a vast urban park. Earbuds in his ears. Coming down a hill, in the distance, he sees an AFGHANI WOMAN, 40s, and her SON, 12. They watch. She wears a black *khimar*. Her face is emotionless, but she stares unflinchingly at Porter. The Son, too, follows with his eyes.

Porter slows when he sees them, but persists in jogging. He tries not to stare as he passes. A hundred feet past, Porter looks back over his shoulder. They're gone.

He stops, looks in all directions. Nothing.

BENCH

Porter stops for a breather.

JOGGERS pass. PEOPLE loaf in the grass. Porter watches all. Then...

Fifty yards off and barely distinguishable, Porter sees the Afghani Woman and her Son. They don't move. They just hold hands and stare across the park at him.

Porter strains his eyes. Is he really seeing this? A JOGGER obscures his vision for one second. When Jogger passes, the Afghani Woman and her Son are gone.

Porter stands up and holds his hand over his eyes to shield the sun. He makes a beeline for the area where he saw them.

PARK LAWN

Porter bounds across the hill, his head on a swivel. He scans 360-degrees around the park. Nothing. He pants.

A DUDE, 20s, playing guitar on the grass with a dog by his side, yells over to Porter, concerned.

DUDE

You okay, bro?

PORTER

The woman and her son. Which way did they go?

DUDE

I didn't see---

PORTER

She's wearing a black headscarf...young boy...They were right here!

DUDE

Sorry man, no one...

He scans the park once more and dashes off.

EXT. BUSY SIDEWALK - DAY

Porter walks. Keeps looking around, agitated.

On the corner, he spots something amiss: a JAPANESE MAN standing still amidst moving PEDESTRIANS. He watches Porter in the same blank, persistent way as the others.

Hesitant, Porter approaches Japanese Man. Pulling up close, he looks at Japanese Man's face, whose eyes coldly look at Porter's face.

PORTER
 (whispering forcefully)
 Listen to me very carefully. I know
 you aren't the real you. You *can't*
 be. I know that for a fact.

Japanese Man doesn't react. Porter grabs his arm.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 Start talking! Who is doing this to
 me? What is this? Speak. Speak! *Do*
you know who I am?

As his voice raises, Porter catches glimpses of a few
 PASSERSBY. They look only at him, concerned and confused.

Porter looks from the Passersby to Japanese Man. He shakes
 his head. He lets go of his arm. Japanese Man tilts his head
 slightly, still watching.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 (shaking his head, uncertain)
 You...

He walks away. After a few feet he looks back. Japanese Man
 is gone.

EXT. PORTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Porter swings the front door open.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY

Porter walks across the open space. He rubs his face.

He reaches an old elevator door and presses up.

From a number of floors above, he hears the rickety machine
 moving down. He waits, looks behind him.

The elevator arrives. He steps in.

INT. ELEVATOR/HALLWAY

Doors close. It's quiet. The elevator lurches to
 movement. The ride seems long.

It grinds to a halt.

Porter steps out of the elevator and into the hallway. It is very quiet. He walks down the hallway to his apartment door.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Porter swings the door open. Sensing something off, he reaches into his pocket and pulls a knife. He flicks it open, inches his way along the wall.

Quieting his breathing he slowly peers around the corner into the living room space.

There, sitting on a chair, is Tom. He looks right at Porter.

Porter stops in his tracks, unnerved. After a while:

PORTER
How are you here?

A very long pause.

TOM
(without much inflection)
Because I am.

PORTER
And the others?

TOM
Do they look familiar?

Porter's eyes look up, searching. His voice breaks a bit.

PORTER
Yes. Yes.
(shaky)
Is this...am I finally losing it?

Suddenly, the door slowly *closes itself*.

INT. BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

James sits in front of Guignet's "Afterglow on the Banks of the Nile." Grungy Joe comes up behind him.

GRUNGY JOE
Boring.

JAMES
(without turning back)
You know, that's the problem with your generation.

GRUNGY JOE

Please, *do* tell me what's wrong
with my generation.

JAMES

You want to act like you have no
roots, no lineage. Like there's no
past.

Grungy Joe sits next to James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Look at this painting. Here's an
artist painting a scene set in
ancient Egypt - one of the greatest
civilizations known to human
history - and he's painting it in
1840s. This man had respect for the
past.

GRUNGY JOE

Fine line between respecting the
past and romanticizing it.

James turns to Grungy Joe.

JAMES

Hm. Either way, we're dragging it
around.

James turns back to the painting.

JAMES (CONT'D)

This is one of Henry's favorite
paintings.

GRUNGY JOE

I'm sure it is.

James stands up.

JAMES

Let's walk.

They walk, stopping and pausing in front of displays as they
talk.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's been almost three weeks.

GRUNGY JOE

He's left his apartment only twice.
For basic stuff. He hasn't even
been jogging.

JAMES

Has he been to see that priest again?

GRUNGY JOE

Nope. Just holed up in his apartment. Got a few pics, if you want to see.

JAMES

Yeah.

Grungy Joe shows James some pictures on his phone. Porter's beard has started growing in, hair a bit unkempt. James sighs deeply and walks for a while without a word.

GRUNGY JOE

There's something else.

JAMES

Yeah?

GRUNGY JOE

It's a little strange.

JAMES

Spit it out.

GRUNGY JOE

I went up to his apartment a few days ago. Just stood outside his door. Listening. He was talking to somebody. Or more than one person. I don't know.

JAMES

What do you mean you don't know? Was someone else there or not?

GRUNGY JOE

I know this sounds crazy. I didn't hear any other voices, but the way he was talking... He was, like, *responding* to people.

JAMES

He was talking to himself?

GRUNGY JOE

I mean yes, of course. But, he was...he was pausing while he was talking. Boss, it was like he was listening to other people in the room.

JAMES

For how long?

GRUNGY JOE

I listened for about 20 minutes
before I left.

JAMES

That is disconcerting. Did you hear
him say any names?

GRUNGY JOE

I heard two names. One was Japanese
sounding. I didn't hear that one
well. He also kept saying the name
Tom.

JAMES

Tom?

GRUNGY JOE

Yep.

James rubs the bridge of his nose and looks at the ground.
They keep walking until they come around a corner and meet
face to face with Preault's "Le Silence." They both look at
it.

JAMES

I want you to keep following
him. Any change at all, report
back. I'm going to try to contact
him.

GRUNGY JOE

You're giving an awfully long leash
to someone who is acting
erratically. I don't think you'd
give me the same courtesy.

JAMES

You're damn right I wouldn't.
Besides, I'm treading carefully for
all three of us.

James walks off. Grungy Joe looks back to "Le Silence" and
stares at it.

EXT. BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

James stands in the middle of a vast marble staircase. He pulls his phone out and texts Porter: "Ready to work?"

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Porter's phone buzzes. James's text pops up.

Porter doesn't notice. He sits on a chair with his face in his hands. He looks up and scans the room. A dozen or more SPIRITS stand around. It's crowded. The Afghani Woman and Son, several other AFGHANIS, the Japanese Man, several HOMELESS MEN, the Homeless Man, and a few MEN IN SUITS.

Tom sits in a chair.

AFGHANI WOMAN

Ma hu aismuk alhaqiqi, abn Allah?

AFGHANI SON

Ma hu aismuk alhaqiqi?

Porter shakes his head. Locked in a mental battle.

PORTER

Stop asking---

HOMELESS MAN

What is your name, child of God?

Porter looks to Tom.

PORTER

Tell them to stop asking me that.

TOM

Is it a hard question?

PORTER

No. But they've been asking it for over a week now.

TOM

Yet you haven't answered it.

PORTER

I haven't answered to anyone for years, unless I've chosen to, and I'm sure as hell not going to start now. And certainly not to some random, weak voices in my head. My body is mine. My mind is mine.

TOM
Voices in your head...

PORTER
I've beaten my brain into
submission before...many times.

Tom looks at the faces in the room.

TOM
These faces you see here. Do you
remember their names?

Porter nods.

PORTER
The faces. I remember the faces.

TOM
But the ones they left behind, the
ones you stole them from? When they
think of them, how do *they* think
of them?

Porter looks down.

PORTER
I can't believe this...this makes
no sense.

TOM
How do they remember them?

PORTER
By...by their names.

TOM
By their names. Here you are. But
you have papered over your real
name with so many fictions and
constructs, and so many carefully
built callouses, I wonder if you
are even capable of reaching your
own self. How long...

(he air quotes)
"Henry Porter," has it been since
you met *you*?

MAN IN SUIT
What is your name, child of God?

JAPANESE MAN

What is your name, Kami no ko?

Porter sighs deeply and looks up to the ceiling. He squints his eyes hard.

TOM

You're still rationalizing. Trying to work your way through this mentally. Weighing your options. Are we real or not real?

PORTER

No. Why would I even consider that?

TOM

If we aren't real, we must be one of three things: a mental break resulting from the accumulation of the moral strains of your occupation...

PORTER

Impossible. Morality is an illusion.

TOM

Or a consequence of your PTSD, which you've swept under the rug...

PORTER

No.

TOM

Or perhaps we're the manifestation of what's been lurking in your brain chemistry since you were a boy...

Porter shakes his head, breaking.

TOM (CONT'D)

And if we're real...

PORTER

I don't see how that's possible.

HOMELESS MAN

Why?

TOM

Because there's no way to prove it?

PORTER

Well, yes, yes. There's no way to prove that ghosts...spirits...are real. It's not logical. How do you know you are real?

TOM

(slightly smiling)

I'm not the one surrounded by a mystery. Seems to me that there being no way to prove that something's possible is an indictment of the insufficiency of our science, not on the possibility.

PORTER

You're trying to trap me. My mind is trying to trap me.

TOM

"Whatever in creation exists without my knowledge exists without my consent."

PORTER

How do you---

TOM

Isn't that what this conversation is all about? You cannot accept that you don't understand the nature of me. Of them. Therefore, we can't exist. It's silly isn't it?

PORTER

What's silly?

TOM

To behave as if you're a god. Creating an identity out of fictions. Cloaking yourself in philosophies that declare man all there is. Defining things. Crushing things. Giving yourself permission to kill. To choke the sacred breath out of other human beings.

Tom stands up. His voice rises.

TOM (CONT'D)

Human beings with faces! Names!
Breath! With divinity in them! You
have attempted to usurp so much
power and have masked your illness
with cruelty and arrogance. And you
sit there now trying to explain
that I, we, cannot exist because
"there's no way to prove it"?

Porter's eyes are wide.

TOM (CONT'D)

How, when you can't even bear to
look deeply into yourself for just
a moment without looking to escape?

Tom looks into Porter's eyes more deeply than before. The others all stare, too. Porter begins to tremble.

He suddenly stands and paces. He shakes his head.

Without a word, he trashes the room. He overturns a table. Sends books flying. Pounds a desk. Face to face with the emblems of his previous killings, he pauses, then smashes them.

Out of breath, he stops. He looks back to the Spirits and sees them looking on passionless.

Porter looks around at the destruction. He pants. Tears well up. He shakes his head and rubs his temples.

He leans on his palms against the wall and presses his forehead against it. He taps his forehead. The tapping becomes pounding. He dents the wall. He keeps pounding. Opening up a cut on his head, blood begins spotting.

Stopping, he mumbles to himself. He begins punching the wall and kicking it. Like an undisciplined boxer he wails on the wall. Blood from his knuckles spot the wall. A fist goes through, then the other. Again and again.

He decimates a section of the wall. Porter leans on the remains, sweating, panting. It's dead silent. Tears stand in his eyes. He turns to look over his shoulder. The spirits are still there, looking on.

He puts his head back on the wall.

TOM (CONT'D)

Are you done?

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

The church bell rings out. Porter climbs the steps.

Grungy Joe stands off at a distance.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Father Gregory walks to the podium. He looks out onto a handful of Congregants.

FATHER GREGORY

In light of the Gospel reading
today, I thought I'd read excerpts
from a poem about the Mystery that
is...us. Humans. It's called
"People" by Yevtushenko.

Father Gregory shuffles some papers.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

"No people are uninteresting.

Their fate is like the chronicle of
planets.

Nothing in them is not particular,

and planet is dissimilar from
planet.

In any man who dies there dies with
him

his first snow and kiss and
fight...

Porter looks around the congregation. All of the Spirits are there. He looks at each face.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

It goes with him...

Grungy Joe sneaks quietly into the vestibule. He peaks around a wall.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

But what has gone is also not
nothing:

by the rule of the game something
has gone.

FATHER GREGORY
It's not people who die but worlds
die in them...

Porter's eyes well up.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
We who knew our fathers
in everything, we know in nothing.
They perish. They cannot be brought
back.
The secret worlds are not
regenerated.
And every time again and again
I make my lament against
destruction."

Father Gregory clears his throat. He nods at Porter.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
I don't think I need to add much
those words. Beautiful aren't they?
Yet tragic. It's "not people who
die, but worlds die inside." You
know, it's interesting. I am a
mystery to myself. I can barely
understand my own motivations,
reasons, tendencies...My ways are
inscrutable to me. I look around
this room and see how many of you?
5? 6?

Porter looks around and sees many more than that.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
And I realize instantly how
glorious you all are. And
mysterious. Full of sacredness.
Thomas Merton once said that if we
could all truly see one another as
we really are there would be no
war, violence, or hatred. He said
the only problem he could think of
is that we would fall down and
worship each other. If only we, as
individuals and a society, could
recover even just a fraction of
that reverence for one another. Let
us pray.

The congregants stand.

INT. KABUL CAFE - DAY

James drinks tea. He unlocks his phone and finds his texts to Porter. There are four: "Ready to work?," "Got some work for you.," "Henry?," and finally "We need to talk."

He sighs and looks out the window and sips his tea.

He begins a new text.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

The short line to receive Communion is forming, but Porter doesn't move. Instead he kneels and puts his face in his hands.

The Spirits, all in different parts of the church, look at him.

Father Gregory takes notice.

Porter's phone, sitting on the pew, vibrates. Hearing it, he cocks his head slightly. He turns back around. Just then, in the distance behind him towards the vestibule, he hears the very faint vibration of phone text.

He turns and looks to his phone and then, eyes narrowing, back to the vestibule. He sees no one. He lingers for a moment, then returns to his position. He sighs.

VESTIBULE

Grungy Joe reads a text from James. It reads "Kabul Cafe. One hour." He puts the phone back in his pocket, turns to watch Porter. The service is ending with final prayers.

GOTHIC CHURCH

As the closing hymn begins, Father Gregory begins walking down the center aisle towards the vestibule.

GRUNGY JOE

Oh, shit.

His eyes dart around. Finally, he slides into a closet nearby and shuts the door.

CLOSET

Grungy Joe strains to listen through the door as congregants shake hands with Father Gregory and exchange pleasantries.

VESTIBULE

Porter walks up to Father Gregory and shakes his hand.

FATHER GREGORY

Henry.

PORTER

Father.

FATHER GREGORY

You okay, Henry? You don't look well. And you didn't receive Eucharist today. Not even in your usual, um, forgive me, *creepy* way.

PORTER

No.

FATHER GREGORY

Well, you must admit, you are kind of *creepy* when---

PORTER

No, I mean I'm not okay. I'm *really* not okay.

FATHER GREGORY

Okay...

PORTER

Father...

Porter steps around the priest and looks around just outside the door, then scans the room.

PORTER (CONT'D)

(leaning in)

Can you take my confession?

FATHER GREGORY

Yes, of course. When would you like to do it?

PORTER

Now. And...it's going to take a while.

Father Gregory looks deeply into Porter's eyes. He nods.

FATHER GREGORY

This way.

They walk back into the church.

GOTHIC CHURCH

There is a bank of confessionals lining the wall. Father Gregory points to the last one. Porter steps in.

CONFESSIONAL

Father Gregory coughs. Porter looks around. He fidgets. He takes a deep breath.

FATHER GREGORY

Seems like a great weight is about to come off you, Henry. Don't fear it.

Porter looks up. A tear streams down his face. A long pause follows.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Do you remember how to start?

PORTER

No.

FATHER GREGORY

Okay. I'll help. You say "Bless me Father, for I have---"

PORTER

---Bless me Father, for I have sinned. My last confession was...16 years ago.

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Grungy Joe hurries down the steps. He texts James "Must talk now. Meet in 15."

INT. KABUL CAFE - DAY

James sits reading a newspaper at the window counter. Grungy Joe bounds in. He's a bit out of breath.

JAMES

Sit. Catch your breath.

Grungy Joe sits. James gestures for a water. A SERVER brings it and James nods to him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There you go.

Grungy Joe gulps.

GRUNGY JOE

He's talking to the priest.

JAMES

Well, we already knew that.

GRUNGY JOE

No, I mean. He's *talking*, like where they go in the room with the, with the curtain thing.

JAMES

Confession?

GRUNGY JOE

Yeah, yeah, that's it. And he looks really fucked up. I didn't get to see his face real well, but there was somethin' not right.

JAMES

He went into the booth with the priest?

GRUNGY JOE

Yeah. They were still in there when I left.

James looks out onto the street.

JAMES

Come back here.

James gets up and walks towards the back of the restaurant to a curtain leading to the kitchen area. He waves to the manager, AAMIR, 65, who nods in acknowledgement.

BACK ROOM

James shows Grungy Joe to a small round table with chairs. The room is small and cluttered with stock and cardboard boxes.

James gestures to a seat. Grungy Joe sits.

GRUNGY JOE

Whoa. Does this mean I just arrived at some next level of trust...or rank...or something?

JAMES
Shut the fuck up.

GRUNGY JOE
Okay.

JAMES
So let's think logically here.
Henry came back from that last job
down on the Shore and has
essentially been holed up in his
room since then. Right?

GRUNGY JOE
Yeah.

JAMES
And you can confirm that you have
heard him yourself, in his room,
seemingly talking to himself?

GRUNGY JOE
Like a schizo. For hours on end.

JAMES
And he appears physically and
mentally unstable? Irregular?

GRUNGY JOE
Dude's flipped his lid. He's fried.

JAMES
And you've just seen him go into a
confessional with a priest?

GRUNGY JOE
Just now.

James leans back and folds his arms, looking at the ceiling.
He does this for an extraordinarily long amount of time.

JAMES
Fuck.

Grungy Joe looks on.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Okay. We'll load the gun and pull
the hammer back now. But we don't
pull the trigger until I get final
confirmation of something myself.

GRUNGY JOE

Okay?

JAMES

I'm going up to his apartment tonight. I need to be sure.

GRUNGY JOE

Again with the long leash. Boss, this guy is getting more and more out of pocket. We should---

JAMES

You should tread carefully right now. You don't know who you're talking about and you've clearly forgotten who you're talking to.

GRUNGY JOE

No, I haven't. I'm just---

JAMES

If you utter one more word in defiance of me, I'm going to put a bullet in your stomach with the .380 I have fastened to the bottom of this table. I'll let you bleed out here on the floor and then have Aamir clean up. It's not a problem for me. It's just a help wanted sign.

GRUNGY JOE

Yes, sir.

JAMES

But before you feel sore about it, know that I'm giving you an opportunity here to make good.

GRUNGY JOE

Yes, sir.

JAMES

Keep your phone charged. Tonight I'm going up to Henry's place. If I get a gut feeling myself, I'm gonna text you to pull the trigger and do your thing.

GRUNGY JOE

I got you, sir.

He rubs his beard and shakes his head.

JAMES

When a dog you love gets
rabies...you have to put it down.
And that doesn't lessen your love
for the dog.

Grundy Joe looks on and nods confusedly.

GRUNGY JOE

I see.

JAMES

Leave.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - DAY

Porter steps out of the confessional. Father Gregory
follows. He walks right to a pew and sits heavily.

Porter says nothing. Father Gregory leans forward on his
knees looking ahead to the crucifix.

After silence:

FATHER GREGORY

I need a drink.

INT. IRISH PUB - DAY

Father Gregory plunks a small whisky glass on the bar.

The bartender, AGNES, 60s, speaks with a strong Baltimore
accent.

AGNES

Another one, Father?

FATHER GREGORY

Yeah, I think I better, Agnes.

AGNES

Alright, Father.

(to Porter)

What about you, hon?

PORTER

Can you do an Old Fashioned?

AGNES

Well, we'll find out won't we? How
about I get as close as I can to it
and we'll call it an Old Fashioned
either way?

FATHER GREGORY
She's feisty isn't she?

PORTER
That'll work.

She scuttles off.

Porter looks behind him. A few Spirits, including Tom sit in seats around the bar area.

FATHER GREGORY
They're here right now?

PORTER
Yeah.

FATHER GREGORY
How many? Where?

PORTER
A few of them. Scattered around the room.

Father Gregory turns around and looks.

FATHER GREGORY
Are there any patterns in how it works? When? Where?

PORTER
No. Mostly there's one, sometimes a dozen; sometimes close, sometimes in the distance; sometimes they talk, mostly they don't.

FATHER GREGORY
Hm.

PORTER
Do you actually believe me?

FATHER GREGORY
Sure, why not?

PORTER
Is that a joke?

FATHER GREGORY
I'll let you know later. I'm going to need a little time to discern what I perceive to be really happening.

Agnes returns with the drinks.

AGNES

Father. Hon.

FATHER GREGORY

Thanks, sweetie.

Agnes blushes and heads off.

Father Gregory takes a sip and turns to Porter.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

I also have to discern what my responsibility is with regard to you.

PORTER

Father, I'm at the point where I'm willing to accept whatever you choose to do.

FATHER GREGORY

That's good, because that might be the case.

PORTER

Why are you even hesitating?

FATHER GREGORY

I don't know for sure. But there's something giving me pause. Ever since you started coming to Mass, I've felt a strong sense of...something...in you. I don't know yet what that is. But I feel an obligation to, at the very least, protect it. To the extent that I can, or should.

PORTER

I see. Why are you here with me right now?

FATHER GREGORY

Come again?

PORTER

I mean. You just took my confession. Aren't you afraid of me?

FATHER GREGORY

No, Henry. First of all, I'm not afraid of death anymore. And on top of that, to be honest, I feel sorry for you more than anything.

PORTER

Why?

FATHER GREGORY

It's obvious you've been on the run from yourself for, I'm guessing, your entire life. Mental illness. War. Loneliness. Your whole identity has been mask on top of mask on top of mask. Even your name is a mask.

Porter furrows his brow. He turns around and finds Tom who watches and nods.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Did one of your ghosts tell you something similar?

PORTER

Actually, yes.

FATHER GREGORY

Hm.

PORTER

How did you know about my name?

FATHER GREGORY

I didn't need a ghost to tell me that one. I'm a Dylan aficionado. The minute you told me your name was Henry Porter, I knew you were a slippery one.

PORTER

I don't know what's going on. Or what I'm doing.

FATHER GREGORY

Good. You're a human being.

Porter nods.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

So, here's what I'm going to do. I need a day or two to pray and contemplate my next steps.

PORTER

I'm fairly certain my boss is having me followed. I'm not sure I have a lot of time.

FATHER GREGORY

Alright. I'll make it one day. Come see me tomorrow night.

Porter takes a big gulp of his drink. He grimaces.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Well?

PORTER

I'm pretty sure this is just rum and some fruit.

FATHER GREGORY

You gonna finish it?

He holds his hand out to take it. Porter stares at him.

PORTER

Yes.

FATHER GREGORY

Oh. Well, look. About your ghosts. We're well into mystery there. I could give you some standard boilerplate about purgatory, but I won't. It's all theoretical. But I will say this: they wouldn't be there for no reason. Maybe you should listen to them. Pray for them. Something. Maybe they'll go away, maybe they won't. Whatever your response to them is it has to be rooted in compassion. After all, you are the reason they're there.

PORTER

I know.

FATHER GREGORY

Speaking of compassion. You mustn't kill again. As a rule.

PORTER

That's going to be difficult considering what's coming my way.

FATHER GREGORY
No doubt. But there it is.

PORTER
I'll do my best.

Father Gregory turns around on his bar stool and looks at the room. Porter does the same, but he sees the Spirits.

FATHER GREGORY
Lord have mercy.

He shoots the rest of his whisky.

PORTER
Yeah. I guess so.

They keep looking out to the room.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Porter enters the building. Behind him, in the distance, James watches.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT

LIVING SPACE

Porter sits and rubs his hands together. He looks around at the Spirits.

PORTER
I think I'm done trying to figure this out.

The Spirits stir and look at one another.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Whether you're real. Not real.

TOM
What's the difference?

PORTER
Yeah, well.

TOM
What now, then?

PORTER
I think I'm supposed to...I don't know...listen to you? Learn from you? And...I can't believe

PORTER
 this...pray...for you? I don't
 know. That's what Father Gregory
 said.

TOM
 We know. We were there.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY

James enters the building and casually scopes it out.

He walks for elevator and reaches out to push the button. He
 pauses, rubs his fingers together. He heads for the stairs.

STAIRWELL

James begins climbing the stairs.

PORTER'S APARTMENT

Late afternoon light pours into the room.

PORTER
 I don't know how...

Porter chuckles awkwardly.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 I... I'm...

He looks at all the faces in the room. His face loosens, his
 eyes begin to well up. He shakes his head. He struggles for
 a moment to hold back the emotion, but it bursts through. He
 cries.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.
 I'm so sorry. I'm...

As he cries, Tom places a hand on his shoulder. The other
 Spirits gradually do the same.

STAIRWELL/HALLWAY

James steps onto the landing of the stairs.

He peeks around the corner to look down the hall. Empty.

He walks softly and stops outside Porter's apartment. He
 leans in and presses his ear against the door. He hears the
 faint sound of Porter whispering:

PORTER (O.S)

Sorry...

James moves back from the door. He looks down both ends of the hallway. He moves closer again.

PORTER'S APARTMENT

The Spirits walk away from Porter. They watch him.

TOM

You've begun to understand the depth of your crime.

JAPANESE MAN

You've not just killed us, for whatever reason that was.

HOMELESS MAN

But you have, each time, done something far more. You have killed a god.

TOM

But then again, in a way, you knew that already.

PORTER

Yes.

TOM

What was it you told me when you were killing me? About Ahab and Moby-Dick?

PORTER

That Ahab was trying to kill God...

TOM

Correct. And you have. You have killed God. Many times. And what have you discovered?

PORTER

That you can't. And I don't want to.

HALLWAY

James furrows his brow as he hears Porter's one-sided conversation.

PORTER (O.S)

...Yes... No, I am going to try to make it right...Nem 'aetaqid 'annak tamm 'iirsaluha min qibal Alllah...Yes, Tom...What can I do to help?

James walks backwards across the hallway and leans on the wall opposite Porter's door. His face sinks. He crosses his arms and stands there.

PORTER (O.S) (CONT'D)

I don't know how to pray anymore...Yes, I'll learn...But first I have to find my way out of this jackpot...

James puts his head down and shakes it.

He pulls out his phone and, after pausing over the keyboard, texts Grungy Joe "Go." He puts the phone away, looks at Porter's door, and walks back down the hall.

PORTER'S APARTMENT

Tom looks to Porter.

TOM

Yes. And we cannot help you. We don't work like that.

PORTER

I don't know how any of this works. I still don't understand the nature of you.

Tom cranes his head to gesture to the door.

TOM

Do you suspect someone's been outside that door?

PORTER

I've suspected it was going to happen.

TOM

What does that mean for you?

PORTER

That time's running out, I need to think about how to proceed.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Porter strides out the door. All black outfit. Orioles cap on. He walks quickly. Turns left down the sidewalk of a major street. Turns his head slightly and shoots his eyes behind him.

Just as he expected: Grungy Joe had been standing at the corner of the building waiting for him. Porter sees him start to casually follow at a distance.

SIDEWALK/MAJOR STREET

Some PEDESTRIANS saunter on the sidewalk. Porter continues, Grungy Joe far behind.

After a couple blocks, Porter makes a left onto a smaller neighborhood street.

SIDEWALK/NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

Only a couple Pedestrians scattered about. Porter picks up his speed a bit. He's certain Grungy Joe is still on his trail. He's counting on it.

Grungy Joe takes the corner. Watches Porter, looking uncertain, making calculations. With less Pedestrian cover, he lets Porter take a much larger lead.

He keeps going, on the opposite sidewalk, clocking Porter the whole time.

This tense dance goes on for another two blocks...

Police sirens somewhere off in the distance.

Suddenly, Porter takes a sharp right into a narrow alley street. Once ducked in the alley he sprints. He's out of the other end of the alley in a matter of seconds.

Meanwhile, Grungy Joe, upon seeing Porter go into the alley, looks concerned. He takes it as a sure sign that Porter has been leading him on.

He steps cautiously across the street, his hand on the pistol in his waistband.

CITY BLOCK

Porter full-on sprints all the way around the block, doubling back to the head of the Neighborhood Street where he left Grungy Joe.

ALLEY

Grungy Joe peeks around the corner down the alley. He sees no sign of Porter. He registers all the possible hiding places: metal dumpster, trash cans, a shadowy spot where a light's been broken...

He finally withdraws his weapon and works his way down the alley along the wall.

SIDEWALK/NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

Porter's back at the top of the street. Cautious, he creeps back down the sidewalk to the head of the alley.

He grabs a quick look around the corner. Sees Grungy Joe along the wall.

He reaches into his jacket and produces his hardballer.

ALLEY

Grungy Joe is about halfway down the alley. He comes to the metal dumpster and crouches down, looking under it. No sign of Porter. He looks over it. Nothing.

He creeps around the dumpster.

SIDEWALK/NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

Seeing that Grungy Joe is on the other side of the dumpster, Porter removes his shoes...

ALLEY

In socks, Porter patters down the wall to the dumpster, just 20 feet from Grungy Joe.

He lowers himself to see under the dumpster. Grungy Joe's feet about 25 feet away.

Porter picks up a bottle cap from the ground. His right hand holds the gun. With his left he tosses the bottle cap down the alley opposite where Grungy Joe is.

In a flash, Grungy Joe spins around and ducks to his knee, gun pointed in the direction of the sound.

Using Grungy Joe's movement as cover, Porter lowers himself to his belly and takes a sniper position, aiming the gun below the dumpster at Grungy Joe's ankle...

Grungy Joe's feverish eyes scan the edges of the alley. Nothing...

He looks to the dumpster. His gun follows his eyes...

Porter hears the silence, the shuffling of pivoting feet. This is it.

He fires a silenced round at Grungy Joe's ankle, which shatters and tears violently. He collapses with a yelp, accidentally shooting a bullet into the brick wall.

Porter darts from behind the dumpster, reaching into his pockets as he does. He produces a small canister.

GRUNGY JOE
(dazed with pain)
You fuck!

Porter answers by spraying him in the face with half a can of mace. Grungy Joe spits and gasps. Wild, he looks like he's going to try to aim a shot.

Porter stomps Grungy Joe's forearm until he hears a crunch, then kicks the gun from his hand.

Grungy Joe is dazed. He's a pitiful sight. Temporarily blinded, bleeding, with a broken arm.

GRUNGY JOE (CONT'D)
Alright, man. Alright.

PORTER
I have a gun on you.

GRUNGY JOE
What the fuck am I going to do?

PORTER
Grungy Joe, right? That's your name?

GRUNGY JOE
Yeah, yeah.

PORTER
James thinks I'm out of pocket?

GRUNGY JOE

Look, look, I'll do whatever man.
How can I get out of this?

PORTER

James thinks I'm going to flip him?

GRUNGY JOE

I don't know man. Yeah, I guess.
You disappeared and shit.

PORTER

I've been thinking.

GRUNGY JOE

How can I get out of this man? I
don't have any loyalty to James,
really, man. Just tell me what to
do...

Porter sees a shadow at the other end of the alley. He turns quickly, gun drawn.

It's Tom.

Porter looks back to Grungy Joe, lowers his weapon.

PORTER

Tell James my loyalties have
changed. My only loyalty now is to
the dead.

As Porter walks past Grungy Joe, he sprays him again with the mace. He walks out of the alley to the sound of Grungy Joe cursing and gasping.

INT. FATHER GREGORY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Father Gregory sits across from Porter. Porter taps on his legs.

PORTER

You've thought about it?

FATHER GREGORY

Yes.

After a moment...

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Have you ever been this vulnerable
before?

PORTER
In what way?

FATHER GREGORY
Physically unsafe.
Internally...lacking control.

Porter looks away.

PORTER
If I have, I don't remember.

FATHER GREGORY
Must be strange for someone who's
made every effort to preserve total
control over his very
existence...and the existence of
others.

PORTER
I haven't really ever seen the two
as so different.

FATHER GREGORY
No?

PORTER
Isn't that human? Isn't that the
story of modern man? To be in
control by asserting control? By
dominating? Isn't that---

FATHER GREGORY
America?

PORTER
Yes. And the world.

FATHER GREGORY
Can't really argue with that.

PORTER
Father, do you know why Ahab is so
intent on killing Moby-Dick?

FATHER GREGORY
Control?

PORTER
Hm. I used to think it was because
he wanted to kill God.

FATHER GREGORY
And what do you think now?

PORTER
I think it's more simple than that.
The whale is just one big thing
Ahab can't contain, can't
understand. And that one big thing
nearly killed him. So he tried to
eliminate it. But in the end, it
kills him. The whale isn't God. The
whale is the thing Man can't
dominate.

Father Gregory leans forward.

FATHER GREGORY
What's the difference between the
two? Besides, here you are. You
love to talk. But your
philosophies, your fictional
constructions be damned. Here you
are.

A long pause. The chiming of a clock echoes.

PORTER
I know I can't get rid of the
spirits...

FATHER GREGORY
We don't *know* anything. Perhaps
you can. Perhaps you can't. If it's
the cross you must bear, then
you've certainly earned it.

PORTER
I know. I've made some peace with
that. I just want to know---

FATHER GREGORY
What I'm going to do?

PORTER
Yes.

FATHER GREGORY
Justice or mercy...

PORTER
Neither of those words has had much
meaning to me.

FATHER GREGORY

Hm.

Father Gregory stands up and walks across the room to a wall full of religious art. His finger runs over a few pictures and crucifixes. He stops on a colorful Byzantine style icon.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Saint Dionysius of Zakynthos. One of the Greek saints. In case you couldn't tell from the name. His real name was Draganigos Sigouros. Brilliant guy. Became a monk somewhere in the middle of the 16th century. Anyway.

He walks to a coffee pot and pours a cup.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Coffee?

PORTER

No, thanks.

FATHER GREGORY

So, this guy's been called the "Saint of Forgiveness." The story goes that in his day there was a huge feud between two prominent families. It was leading to a lot of death, back and forth, back and forth. All sorts of ugly business.

PORTER

Montagues and Capulets.

FATHER GREGORY

Similar. Eventually, the violence led to the death of one particular man, named Constantine. Desperate and on the run, Constantine's murderer escaped to Dioysius's monastery. He hoped to flee retribution and find some refuge there. After some time, we don't really know how, the saint was able to get the man to admit his crime. To come clean about why he was there.

Father Gregory eases back down in his chair and sips his coffee.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
 Here's the kicker: it turns out
 that Constantine, the man who was
 murdered, was the saint's very own
 brother. His own blood.

Porter's eyes widen.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
 So there's Dionysius with his
 brother's killer right in front of
 him. What does he do? He mourned
 deeply. He cried. He despaired.

PORTER
 And then?

FATHER GREGORY
 He tried to lead the man to
 repentance. He gave him food,
 water, provisions. He led him to
 the seashore, put him on a boat,
 and let him escape. He never told
 the man that Constantine was his
 brother. His only brother.

Porter looks down. Father Gregory searches his face.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)
 How does that story make you feel?

PORTER
 I...don't know. Something. Is it a
 story of...mercy? Or justice?

FATHER GREGORY
 I don't know.

A long silence as the weight of the moment hangs.

PORTER
 What are you saying?

FATHER GREGORY
 I think you know.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

James walks to the nurse station. NURSE, 30s, greets him.

NURSE
 Hi. Can I help you?

JAMES

Yes ma'am. Visiting my friend Joe.
I believe he was admitted last
night.

NURSE

Last name?

JAMES

MacDaniel.

Searching the computer.

NURSE

In 538. Down the hall to the right.

JAMES

Thanks so much.

James continues down the hall.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Grungy Joe sleeps. Monitors hooked up to him. A drip. His
leg hangs from a sling. Arm in a caste. Face burned and red.

James shut the door behind him.

He walks up to the bedside.

JAMES

(whispering)

Joe.

He looks back to the door. Raises his voice to normal
volume.

JAMES

Joe.

There's no response. James takes a seat and waits.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

LIVING SPACE

Porter lightly packs his essentials in a suitcase.

He pauses when he gets to the mementos from his previous
victims. Gently, almost reverently, he packs them.

He zips the suitcase and then places his gun and trench
knife on top.

He sits on the edge of the bed and sighs. Looks off to the corner of the room. Tom sits watching.

PORTER

You've not been around.

TOM

We're watching. Waiting. You're going in the right direction.

PORTER

I'm not sure what direction I'm going in.

TOM

Keep going.

PORTER

I'm sorry, Tom. And to the rest.

TOM

We know.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

James flips through a worn copy of Good Housekeeping magazine.

Grungy Joe stirs. James looks up to him.

Grungy Joe's eyes slowly open. Groggy, he sees James at the foot of his bed. He mumbles something. Tries to clear his throat.

James closes the magazine, stands with a cup of water, and walks to him. James holds out the cup of water.

Grungy Joe looks at it suspiciously, then looks at James.

JAMES

If I was going to, I would have already.

Grungy Joe takes the cup and sips. Tries to clear his throat again. Another sip. He exhales.

GRUNGY JOE

Thanks...

JAMES

So things...they didn't work out.

GRUNGY JOE

I don't know what happened. He just...

JAMES

I know.

Grungy Joe's eyes are bloodshot. They look uneasy at James.

JAMES

Did he say anything?

GRUNGY JOE

Something about his loyalty being to the dead. I don't know...fuck this hurts!

JAMES

"Loyalty to the dead."

After a moment, James reaches for Grungy Joe's shattered ankle where his Achilles tendon used to be, and squeezes gently.

Grungy Joe begins to screech, but James puts his finger to his own lips.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Shh. If you raise your heart rate too high, the nurse will come.

Grungy Joe tries to suppress the sounds. Tries breathing normally. James lets up a little.

GRUNGY JOE

I'm not gonna say anything.

JAMES

I know you won't. Funny thing with police is, you might not say anything, but they figure it out anyway.

Grungy Joe nods, still feeling the pain of James' hand.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Make your story perfect or take whatever charge yourself. I have contingencies in place in case you don't. If I'm willing to kill a man who's been like a son to me, what do you think I'd do to a little dipshit I barely tolerate?

Grungy Joe keeps nodding.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't be another fucker with a sudden fragile conscience I have to add to my to-do list.

EXT. PORTER'S APARTMENT BUILDING/ROOF - NIGHT

The city lights glitter against the night sky. The sound of cars honking, sirens far away elsewhere in the city echo.

Porter is on his stomach right at the edge of the building. Binoculars in hand, he peers over the edge, trained on the building's entrance. He's shoe-less.

The Spirits are on the roof with him one moment. Just Tom the next moment.

TOM

Are you hiding?

PORTER

No. Not hiding. Waiting.

Porter keeps watching.

PORTER (CONT'D)

James and I need to reach an understanding.

He looks back to Tom, who stares at him.

Porter goes back to his binoculars. He follows each person who enters. It's late. Not too many people.

From under a bus stop Porter sees a familiar walk. He blinks his eyes and tries to focus the binoculars. In an instant he realizes it's James. James enters the building.

In a flash Porter hops up and runs into the roof entrance.

INT. PORTER APARTMENT/20TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Crashing through the door, Porter runs to the far end of the hallway where the stairs are located. He bursts down the stairs.

INT. PORTER'S APARTMENT/LOBBY

James strolls through the lobby. He scans every corner as he walks. Heads for the stairwell.

STAIRWELL/HALLWAY/ELEVATOR

INTERCUT:

At every floor, Porter opens the door and peers down the end of the hallway, looking for James. 19...18...17...16...

James comes up the stairs. 7...8...9...10...

Porter anticipates James' timing. He darts out onto the 14th floor and pulls the fire alarm. The siren blares. Sleepy and irritated TENANTS begin to pour from their apartments into the stairwells.

James, working his way up the stairs, is inundated by evacuating Tenants. He looks up the stairwell. He nods.

JAMES
(mumbles)
Porter.

Porter bolts down the hallway to the elevator. Hopping in, he presses the button to the 8th floor, just a few below James. A sign on the door reads "In case of fire emergency, please do not use elevator."

James, still beset by Tenants is turning his wheels. He looks to the upper floors, then down, trying to discern Porter's play.

Porter bounds from the elevator on the 8th floor, gun drawn.

The floor is cleared. Everyone evacuated. He sprints down the hall to the stairwell, seizing the opportunity to sneak up on James from below.

STAIRWELL

He begins climbing, padding quietly on the stairs. Points the gun ahead and above.

9th floor...10th floor...Nothing but the silent red alarm light flashing.

He keeps climbing.

He reaches the 11th floor landing, double checks behind him and above. Pivots to ascend the next flight.

Suddenly, James bursts from the hallway door leading with his gun firing.

Porter is hit twice in the hip. Without missing a beat he throws himself against the door, trapping James' arms. James frees his left arm, but Porter slams his right arm back until it snaps. Broken: James' shooting arm.

JAMES

(from the other side of the door)

Fuck!

James withdraws the arm.

Porter bolts up the stairs, limping and bleeding from his hip.

INTERCUT:

A chase up the stairwell ensues. The two injured men with about a floor and a half between them.

Porter stops quickly to try to take aim at James. The angle is too sharp. He keeps running.

James' arm is dead weight. He can't grasp the railing for better leverage. He leans over the railing, attempts to track Porter with the gun in his broken arm. He can barely lift it. He switches to his left hand. He doesn't have a clear shot, can't aim properly, but shoots anyway.

The bullet whizzes past Porter. He keeps on.

Both men heave, out of breath.

Porter bursts out of a door and onto the roof.

ROOF

Porter makes a limping beeline for a large air conditioning unit. He gets behind it. Waiting for him is a black sheet that was stashed there.

Grimacing from the pain he lies on his stomach, covering himself up with the blanket, assuming a sniper position, gun pointed at the door.

STAIRWELL

James stands on the other side of the door. He sees blood on the floor. He adjusts his arm, tests it. He sucks in pained air.

He readies his pistol.

He slowly pries the door open.

ROOF

The door open, James is fully exposed, his eyes scanning the roof.

The city lights glisten. Below, the sound of fire engines and gathered Tenants.

Suddenly, precisely, in a matter of one second, 3 shots are fired. James is hit in both knees and once in the shoulder

He collapses before he knows what hit him, but he doesn't make a sound. He sucks in oxygen. He still scans the roof, but not so much seeking to destroy as to find his better.

JAMES

(pained)

Henry! Henry, you sonofabitch!

Porter says nothing. Watches from cover.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I knew it would come to this.

Long beat.

JAMES (CONT'D)

The minute I saw what you were, *how* you were, over there in that fucking sand pit. Killing for sport! You needed direction!

Porter looks down.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I looked the other way. Gave you some fucking purpose when you got home!

He starts to laugh to himself.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 And you, of all people, to get a
 conscience! I have to say, I didn't
 see that coming.

A long silence. Both men check their wounds.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 Fuck...

PORTER (O.S)
 Toss the gun, James!

JAMES
 (Trying to crane his neck)
 Oh...over there! I see you. Nice.
 Smart.

PORTER
 Toss the gun! I don't want to kill
 you.

James deliberates.

JAMES
 Fuck it.

He lobs the gun far away.

Porter throws the sheet off. He struggles to his feet, but
 stays a safe distance, keeping his gun trained on James.

PORTER
 This isn't about a deal, James. I'm
 not going to the law. I promise.
 Maybe one day I can explain. But
 you wouldn't believe me right now.

JAMES
 Something about loyalty to the
 dead...?

PORTER
 Something about that.

James snickers.

PORTER (CONT'D)
 You have to let me disappear. And
 you can't touch the priest. He
 won't know where I am. But I'll
 know where you are. And if you
 touch him this will go very
 differently next time.

James groans. He's bleeding a lot.

PORTER (CONT'D)
You're a human being, James. We forgot that. We all are. We don't have the right to do what we've been doing.

JAMES
Funny coming from you...

PORTER
Got a new perspective.

A long pause. Years of history weigh between them.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Did you hear what I said? Me and the priest. Don't come around.

JAMES
I heard you. But you know I'm not the only one who's nervous about a loose end like you. There's people above me---

PORTER
They can try for me. Don't give them the priest.

James weighs it.

JAMES
Understood.

Porter emerges from darkness near James, steps over him to the door. He enters.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Henry...

PORTER
Yeah?

JAMES
You know...I think I'm probably the only person alive who knows your name...

PORTER
(with some compassion)
Probably.

Porter disappears down the steps, leaving James on the roof.

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Porter sits on a bench, watching the church door intently. Suitcase next to him.

After a moment, Father Gregory emerges carrying a bag. He gets into his car.

Porter limps his way toward the car.

EXT./INT. CAR

Porter knocks on the window. Father Gregory jumps. Unlocks the door.

Porter tosses his bag in the back. Lowers himself into the passenger's seat. Groans.

Father Gregory takes note of dried blood on Porter's pants and shirt.

FATHER GREGORY

I'd ask if you want a ride to the hospital, but...

PORTER

I'll take care of it myself.

FATHER GREGORY

I got two new books for you.

Father Gregory reaches around to the back seat. He produces two books.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

These were very important to me. They're an antidote. And they'll help you in the years ahead.

He gives Porter "The Cloud of Unknowing" and Thomas Merton's "No Man is an Island."

Porter nods in thanks.

FATHER GREGORY (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here.

Father Gregory's car eases off, making a right into the city.

EXT. RURAL DESERT TOWN - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "2 Years Later."

MONTAGE

- A small, dusty rural town in the desert West.
- Cactus spot large hills, mountains loom in the distance.
- Couple of oil rigs dip and rock on the outskirts.
- Rickety buildings.
- A gas station.

EXT. WORN ROAD - DAY

A hobbled 80s Ford pickup goes down a cracked road, spitting up dust behind it. The truck's metal front bumper is dented in and hanging. It goes slow, rattling.

EXT. WRECKING LOT - DAY

Outside of town about a mile, the pickup pulls up to a fortress-like vehicle graveyard.

A grizzled laborer, ROBIN, 50s, steps out of the pickup. She's got grease on her hands and black dust lining the edges of her overalls. She wears a cowboy hat.

She takes another look at his bumper.

ROBIN

Sumbitch.

She walks up to the jury-rigged plywood garage door at the entrance. She rings the bell.

A long while passes. Robin turns and looks at the vast horizon, squinting against the sun and spitting on the ground.

Then, the sound of several locks being undone. The door swings on its hinges.

It's hard to see who's standing there from the overwhelming sunlight. Robin holds her hands up to her eyes.

It's Porter. He wears all black. A black knitted stocking cap on his head, shocks of his now fully gray hair nearly shoulder length and coarse, beard long and tangled.

ROBIN
Hey Henry.

PORTER
What's the problem, Robin?

ROBIN
One of the new guys.

She points to the bumper.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Got somethin' for that?

Porter gives it a good look. He nods.

PORTER
I think so. Let me go back and
check for you. Stay here.

Porter walks back into the lot.

TIME CUT TO:

Porter and Robin finish loading a bumper into the bed of the truck. They exchange some cash.

ROBIN
Thanks, Henry. See ya soon.

She hops in the truck and rattles off, waving from the window.

Porter waves back, then turns for the door.

INT. WRECKING LOT - DAY

Porter locks the door. He turns, grabs a cane leaning just inside the door, and limps off.

PATIO

Porter lowers himself into a sun worn chair.

PORTER
Was just looking for a bumper...

Tom sits in a deck chair nearby.

TOM
She's nice. I think she wants to be
your friend.

Other Spirits agree among themselves.

Porter smiles at the absurdity. He looks around. He doesn't see the Afghani Woman and Son.

PORTER
Did we lose more?

TOM
Yes. Her and her son. They were led together. Further. You helped them.

Porter looks down. His eyes well up. A small smile. After a moment, he reaches to a side table where Tom's cross necklace sits next to Father Gregory's now tattered and dogeared copies of the books he gave him.

He grasps the necklace and holds it tight. He looks to Tom and the others, begins praying quietly.

PORTER
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom
come, Thy will be done...

It now appears as if Porter is all alone, praying by himself. No Spirit in sight.

PORTER (CONT'D)
...on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who've trespassed
against us...

EXT. WRECKING LOT - DAY

A gentle breeze blows some dust up. The sun beams down.

PORTER (O.S)
...and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil...

After a few beats, he begins all over again.

PORTER (O.S) (CONT'D)
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom
come...

FADE OUT