

# **A CINEMATIC END**

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FADE IN:

**INT. BUILDING STAIRWELL - NIGHT**

Light throbs on graffiti-ridden walls, a bulb flickers. Footsteps ECHO from squealing steps.

An apartment door opens... casting light on WESLEY (24). Tall, black, moving up the stairs with a casualness that radiates attitude as his unbuttoned shirt flails.

He carries takeout in a plastic bag.

**INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

WESLEY enters, and... hastily turns a set of deadbolt locks.

Sealed inside, he moves through the drab apartment. All lights remain unlit as the takeout finds a home on the kitchen counter.

WESLEY

(to anyone that'd hear)

I got all those locks for a reason.

They ain't no help if you  
motherfuckers don't use them.

(unpacks the food)

Shit's not there for aesthetics.

He whiffs a cardboard container, before mining it with a fork.

WESLEY

(eating)

You fuckers blow a fuse? I ain't  
a fucking bat, hit a light.

RHYTHMIC BREATHING. Wesley picks up on it, focuses...

**AT THE DINING TABLE**

Sits EDDIE (22). Skinny, black, wearing a wife-beater, doing a very believable statue impersonation. Both of his hands rested on the table, fingers spread. His stare is trancelike, going through Wesley several feet ahead.

WESLEY

Yo, Eddie, whatcha doin' back there?

(no answer)

Man, say something.

RON (O.S.)

He can't. He's in shock.

Wesley looks over to the far corner, where... RON sits on a chair, hidden in shadows.

The takeout slips from Wesley's hands. He halfway reaches for the gun at his belt line --

RON

Now, now. Why would you even consider a silly thing like that?

Wesley fixates on the contour that is RON.

WESLEY

I can't tell if you have a piece. Gotta try.

RON

You can. Only he who dares to try, succeeds. Give it some thought though. You locked us in, time, we have. Ed, over there, now, he ain't got that luxury.

WESLEY

What's wrong with Eddie?

RON

Woke up being twice the man he is now. Cut one of his nuts off. Nigga's gushing under that table there.

WESLEY

Eddie, man, that shit true?  
(Eddie blinks, YES)  
Where's Michael?

RON

Uhh, left that tub of lard on the bathroom floor. He was bleeding too. Was a fighter that one, made quite the puddle.

(checks his watch)

Must have bled out... oh, 6-7 mins ago. Had spirit in him, will to live. Not like this submissive bitch here.

WESLEY

Eddie ain't no bitch! He just shy --

RON

And dead, if you don't make up your damn mind. Tick, tick, drip. Time's running, so's Eddie's life juice.

WESLEY  
I'm thinkin' --

RON  
Think faster, youngblood.  
(Wesley sweats)  
Man's true character's defined --

Wesley reaches - in a flash the GUN is out and pointed --

RON  
WHOOAH, STOP! Stop.

Wesley freezes, gun drawn on the shadowy character.

RON  
You win. Damn! Called my bluff. Must  
be quite the poker player. Well played  
young man. You one fast hombre --

WESLEY  
Shut up!

RON  
That was some "man with no name"  
shit right there.

WESLEY  
What?! I'll blow your fucking head  
off. Fuck you doing here?

RON  
Came to visit.

WESLEY  
Visit?! Fuck do you want?!

RON  
I already got two thirds of what I  
want, beautiful. You were the  
missing link, but, praise the lord --

BAM! Wesley eats a slug to the shoulder. BAM! Another to the knee.

Wesley falls to the floor. His gun slides off under the dining  
room table, hitting Eddie's foot.

RON  
You have... arrived!

Wesley GRUNTS in pain.

RON  
Why do I appear so untrustworthy to  
strangers? It's the voice isn't it?

Smoke rises from a barrel of a gun in the shadows.

WESLEY

Fuck, you motherfucker, you fucking shot me. Who the fuck are you?

A match lights up the dark corner. Sulfur burns as it moves to a cigar placed in RON's mouth.

RON

I... am retribution in human form.

His face illuminated - RON "DA BOMB". Late 30s, black, built like a fire hydrant in a tacky purple suit. Match extinguishes.

WESLEY

This is about that bitch isn't it? Did you know the whore or are you her pimp? I did her in good, bloody.

RON

I saw. Seem pretty proud of yourself. Me? I don't socialize with no whores. I just fuck'em. Which is a course you shouldn't have strayed from. You invest in a whore for a good time, she fucks you good, it's good night, good return. Happy. But, someone invested in your particular whore in a different way. Her skinny ass laid up in a hospital for three months hinders their return... and business model. Enter, moi.

WESLEY

EDDIE, FOR CHIRST SAKE DO SOMETHING! --

RON

Don't be rude! I'm explaining economics! Besides, me and Eddie got ourselves an arrangement. He does his bronze man routine, controlling his breathing, limiting the blood flow to his abdomen. Being an all-round good boy. Just might let him live. Isn't much of a life. One ball Eddie doesn't have a good ring to it, no matter how you say it.

WESLEY

Eddieeee!!!

RON

Push comes to shove, youngblood,  
everyone is out to save their own  
hide. One of life's many lessons.

WESLEY

You traitorous pieces of shit. Fuck  
you Eddie, and fuck you, you uncle  
Tom, motherfucker. You kill three of  
your own for one stupid, white whore?

Ron rises from his chair.

RON

Let's not get racial now. I'm a  
business man. My client isn't  
exclusive to the cum business,  
they're branching out, expanding to  
your neighbourhood. Messages must be  
sent to protect the product. You get  
to be in the front page ad.

Ron walks over to Wesley, gun in hand.

RON

I don't even know why I am explaining  
this shit. Guess it inflates my ego if  
I tell you your sins before you meet  
the horned Mac Daddy. Makes me feel  
more righteous.

WESLEY

Fuck... you.

RON

Nahh, naaahh boy, fuck YOU!

BAM, BAM! Wesley takes two to the head. Smoke dances up Ron's gun.

RON

How we holdin' up, Ed?

Eddie's breathing quickens as he fights back fear. Sweat coming out  
of every pore.

Ron picks up the telephone on the wall. Dials 911.

RON

It'd be a sec, Ed.  
(into the receiver)  
Why yes, I will state the nature of  
my medical emergency. Could you  
please send an ambulance to 775 New  
York Ave, Brooklyn, apartment 2B.  
(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)

We have a man clinging on for dear life... and two that quit.

Ron hangs up the phone.

RON

They're comin'. Figuratively Ed, you showed no balls today, but that's why factually you get to keep one.

(Ron winks at him)

Ta-ta.

Ron unlocks the many deadbolts and exits the apartment with swag.

Cheesy 70's disco music starts to play...

ZOOM OUT... A TV SCREEN - (*it was all a 70's blaxploitation movie*) - ZOOM FURTHER OUT...

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ MODERN APARTMENT - NIGHT**

...A flat 70 inch TV screen's mounted on a empty white wall inside a sterile apartment with minimalist decor.

ON THE TV

Ron drives around NEW YORK CITY. Night, hardly a sign of life, sans hookers and pimps on street corners, filth of society is out. Street lights bounce off Ron's beige cadillac.

IN THE APARTMENT

VHS tapes lay on a dresser. Titles read: "RON "DA BOMB" 3: TURF WARS", "RON "DA BOMB": IT'S ON!"

PAUL WINELAND (39) white, clean shaven, wearing a wool tailored suit is asleep on his recliner. A pizza slice rests on his chest, cigarette butts and beer cans grace the floor around him.

The phone RINGS... RING, RING... machine picks it up.

MACHINE/ PAUL (V.O.)

Are you talking to me? Are you talking to me? Hi, this is Paul. I assume you are, or want to talk to me, in some fashion. You know the drill. Beep comes in three.

1,2,3... BEEP.

MACHINE/ MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Double WOW, Paul. I can't remember the last time I called a friend's landline, let alone when I heard that glorious but ohh so forgotten sound. You have voice mail on your cell, I'm sure you know. You could answer that or your email. Got to let go. Anyway, it's Thomas's birthday this weekend, Saturday. Me and Merian want to invite you over, we're throwing a "gran fiesta". It'll be grown up friendly, so, don't worry. A plus one's expected. We also want to talk to you in private.

(exhales, proudly)

We decided on buying that summer home we talked about last year. It's on the market at a good price and with my promotion this year and the stock market going in our favor this quarter, I think we're ready. Hope you can make it, Paul. We'd love to have you. Stay safe, and please, get with the times.

Machine BEEPS as... PAUL awakes... groggy, hungover.

He lazily brushes the pizza off his chest and struggles to get up, but... is unsuccessful, he slides onto the floor, where... a half full bottle of Jameson comes into view. A companion.

**INT. WALKING CLOSET #1/ APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Armani, Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren suits and iron pressed shirts hang from end to end. Paul rips through them with one hand, holding onto the Jameson in the other. Clothes fly.

He stops... quest over - a baseball bat.

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Paul treads, bat scraping the hardwood floor. He empties the bottle down his throat, throws a glance through...

THE LARGE WINDOW

The city skyline. Scarce, scattered lights. Civilization sleeps.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Eyes go back to the bottle.



Paul meets his reflection in the green glass. Not liking what he sees... it takes flight. CRASH! - glass penetrates glass. The bottle goes through the window frame.

A fury of emotions is unleashed. Paul lands a home run swing on the answering machine. It's repeated until the machine is crushed to pieces. Dead, flatlined. He turns... other electronic devices meet their doom: TV, VCR, DVD player, music system. Plastic disintegrates as technology goes extinct.

Wrath subsides, exhales, done -- KNOCK, KNOCK!

Paul, still transfixed. A voice comes through wood...

NEIGHBOUR (O.S.)

Paul, Paul, are you Okay? We heard noises. Susan says she thinks she heard glass breaking. We rushed over.

He looks at his front door.

NEIGHBOUR #2 (O.S.)

Paul, Paul, are you alright?

The bat leaves his grip. He sits on the floor, crestfallen.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

The city is luminous, yet peaceful as... night turns to day.

**INT. BATHROOM/ APARTMENT - MORNING**

Water dribbles down a naked body. Eyes closed, head down.

A hand wipes steam off a fogged up mirror, wrist watch still on.

IN THE MIRROR

Paul, naked, wet hair, thousand-yard stare.

**INT. KITCHEN/ APARTMENT - LATER**

DING! Microwave pops open. A steamy bowl is taken out.

Jeans and checkered shirt, Paul eats, standing.

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ APARTMENT - LATER**

Cabinet doors open - a turn table is removed. Dust is wiped off it and it gets plugged in. Paul wiggles through a collection of records. "Nocturnes" by Chopin is chosen.

**INT. WALKING CLOSET #2/ APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Overcrowded shelves harbor VHS tapes and DVDs which are labeled: *exploitation, 50's sci-fi, soviet & ex-yu comedies, giallo...* a movie archive. CHOPIN audible in the background.

Paul holds a cardboard box against his chest. His eyes wander, child in a toy store look.

**INT. BEDROOM/ APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

A lock dial turns, six left, two right... A CLICK. The safe door is pulled open, a hand extends inside.

**INT. BUILDING ELEVATOR - LATER**

Paul, holding his cardboard box, stands next to an attractive girl in her 20s. The awkward silence is broken with...

GIRL  
(looking ahead)  
It's supposed to be sunny out  
today. Everywhere, whole state.

PAUL  
How did you come across this info?

GIRL  
I read it, online.

PAUL  
Haven't you heard?

GIRL  
What?

PAUL  
You can't believe everything you  
read on the internet.

**INT. UNDERGROUND BUILDING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Paul walks into a section of four parking spots.

*PAUL WINELAND* is written on the ground before: A black BMW; A Red Corvette; A blue Land Rover jeep; A white 1970s Dodge Challenger.

He heads toward the black BMW -- stops halfway... drawn to the Challenger, two cars down. He changes course.

**INT. DODGE CHALLENGER - DAY**

Paul turns a corner, windows rolled down. Music blasts out of the car as he stops at a light.

A HOMELESS MAN walks over to the car window. He carries a sign: "*Hard times, spare a few dimes?*". Paul turns the volume down.

PAUL  
Need some help?

BUM  
I'd appreciate it.

PAUL  
A leg up?

BUM  
Yes, sir. I've fallen. Need to learn  
how to stand up... and stay up.

The light turns green - HONK! HONK!

Paul looks in the review mirror then back at the BUM. He reaches for his wallet... emptying it out... a few grand.

The BUM's eyes widen as... Paul extends him the money - HONK! HONK!

PAUL  
Back on track. No excuses now.

Teary-eyed, the BUM nods.

**EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY**

A pin number is entered... ATM replies: CARD IS BLOCKED!!! Paul taps it twice, smiles.

**INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY**

The OWNER(62) examines Paul's wrist watch. Bars between the two.

PAUL  
Sapphire crystal, all the markings  
are there.

PAWNSHOP OWNER  
I can read. It's a damn fine watch.  
The engraving I have to get rid of.  
Unless, I find another Paul that's  
interested.

PAUL

It's a common name, I think you have a shot. Hasn't lost a second.

PAWNSHOP OWNER

You seem pretty composed. Why you wanna sell this? At least pawn it, it was still a present for a happy occasion.

PAUL

Bit down and out lately.

PAWNSHOP OWNER

Six thousand.

PAUL

(hits the counter)

Sold!

**INT. WALMART/ ELECTRONIC SECTION - DAY**

Paul stands before a 42 inch, super thin TV. A Walmart employee approaches from behind.

EMPLOYEE

It's a new model. We got it last week. Plasma, 600 Hz, motion blur's basically nonexistent. Are you considering it?

PAUL

I'm considering if it would fit in the front seat of my car.

EMPLOYEE

Sir?

PAUL

It will. Will you load it up for me if I buy it?

EMPLOYEE

I think that could be arranged.

PAUL

Is there a VCR section?

EMPLOYEE

(chuckles)

Sorry, only VCR I've seen lately is the one in my closet.

PAUL  
How far away do you live?

**EXT. HIGHWAY/ MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN - DAY**

The DODGE drives through a sloped, wooded area with many curves.

INSIDE THE DODGE

80's new wave music. Paul taps a cigarette on the steering wheel. New TV is riding shotgun. Passenger seat pulled all the way back.

Cell phone RINGS... Paul screens it... doesn't answer.

He makes a sharp turn - an out of place billboard up ahead.

*"STOP! THINK... before you buy. LAKESIDE REAL ESTATE: 555 - 7688".*

Phone RINGS again... Paul screens it... doesn't answer.

Another irrationally placed billboard in the middle of nowhere.

*"DON'T DO IT! Buy secondhand. Used is proven. Tom's Cruise - Car dealership. 555 - 3421".*

**EXT. GAS STATION - LATER**

The DODGE pulls into a desolate gas station. A pinewood forest surrounds the lone, simple architectural structure.

Paul kills the engine, music and gets out.

Refueling in progress. Paul dials a number. Eyes wander to the wilderness, waiting for the person to pick up.

PAUL  
(into the receiver)  
John?

JOHN (V.O.)  
Not a good time, Paul. Trying to  
keep it together. How about yourself?

PAUL  
I'm out for a drive.

JOHN (V.O.)  
Great, you're driving your car and  
Jane's driving me nuts. No justice  
in this world.

PAUL  
What'd she do?

JOHN (V.O.)

She... bought a painting. I can't even make out what it is. Some new age BS. Twenty grand, French.

PAUL

They are pretty sophisticated.

The GAS STATION ATTENDANT (28) walks out. Paul waves "Hi" while on the phone.

JOHN (V.O.)

She left me with the stupid thing. I'm sitting by the window, two guys are supposed to show up. They are going to frame it and hang it. Believe that? That's a business now.

The ATTENDANT nods back.

PAUL

John, you remember when we were six, elementary? I got jumped in the bathroom by two third graders. You jumped in for the save. We only spoke like once before.

JOHN (V.O.)

Vaguely. Why?

PAUL

No real reason. I just thought of it and wanted to thank you.

JOHN (V.O.)

It's not Thanksgiving, Paul.

PAUL

Still, you've always been a friend.

JOHN (V.O.)

Why, thank you for the "thank you" out of left field. I'll take it. Everything, Okay?

(no answer)

Paul?

PAUL

Yeah, good.

JOHN (V.O.)

Shit, Paul, frame dudes are here. I'll call you tomorrow, see what else you can thank me for, alright?

PAUL

Sure.

JOHN (V.O.)

Don't text and drive.

Paul hangs up. He diverts his eyes at the GAS STATION ATTENDANT.

PAUL

Fine looking day.

ATTENDANT

Fine looking automobile. Vintage.

PAUL

Thanks. I don't take care of her as much as I should.

ATTENDANT

That's a shame. You need me to check the oil?

PAUL

I'm fine. I just need the gas and I'll be on my way.

ATTENDANT

Truthfully, I just want to look under the hood. I see the same twelve trucks week in and week out. Don't have too much excitement around here.

Paul, done pumping, puts the hose back.

PAUL

Who am I to deny you this pleasure?

FROM UNDER THE HOOD

The ATTENDANT leans in, marveling at mechanical engineering.

ATTENDANT

5.7L HEMI V8 engine, six speed transition. I think this is only the second one of these I've seen. Job here doesn't afford me much opportunities for real world practise. I mostly read up on theory.

PAUL

I'm giving you two more minutes, make them count.

The ATTENDANT raises his head from under the hood... shuts it.

ATTENDANT

Don't wanna keep you. She's a sight though. How long have you had her?

PAUL

I got her at an auction, six years back. Needed a lot of work. She was a stunt car, pretty banged up. How much do I owe you?

ATTENDANT

I ripped up the bill, when you said yes to my curiosity. Sorry I kept you.

Paul gets into the car.

PAUL

Appreciate it. Nice talking to you.

ATTENDANT

Same.

Car engine starts. Paul looks at the ATTENDANT.

PAUL

Listen, I have a cabin, about 20 miles up, behind this big pointy ridge. You can see it of the highway. If you're free tomorrow, stop by. You can look at her all you want. I'm... Paul.

ATTENDANT

Well, Paul, I'm Joe. I think I know the ridge you're talking about. I just might take you up on that.

PAUL

What's your last name?

ATTENDANT

Paulson.

PAUL

I hope you do, Joe Paulson.

Paul waves "BYE" and drives off.

**EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER**

The CHALLENGER continues to make turns on the curved highway. Hairpin turns are common as the car climbs the mountain.



**EXT. PATH THROUGH THE WOODS - DUSK**

The Challenger cuts through on a dirt road, branches hit the car as night falls. Screech Owl, howls. On the horizon... A CABIN.

Paul pulls up to the cabin, parks, exits.

He strolls to the front door. Car headlights ON. Paul unlocks the door. Specks of dust begin to whirl in the yellow light as the door opens. Standing in the doorway... he hits a switch.

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ CABIN - NIGHT**

PINS enter a connector. Untangled cables find their place. TV and VCR are hooked up. Last set of connections are made.

The cabin is simple and nice. A fireplace, few cabinets, few rugs. Warm, made to look old-timey but comes off fake.

Electricity, digital and analog signals flow - TV comes ON.

Paul HITS play on his phone... music comes through...

**INT. KITCHEN/ CABIN - LATER**

...70s disco. Paul flips vegetables in a pan, cheflike. Apron on, he cooks with passion.

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ CABIN - LATER**

Music still ON. Paul at his desk. A sheet of paper in front, pen in hand, lamp in his face.

SHEET READS: *"Dear everyone..."*

Lost in thought, Paul taps the pen. He crumples up the sheet and throws it away. Begins to write something new.

**EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

The Challenger's door opens. A hand slaps a sheet on the inside of the windshield. Paul walks back to the house.

IN THE WINDSHIELD

SHEET: "FOR JOE PAULSON. LOOK AFTER HER BETTER THAN I DID."

Paul's signature and the date are written below it.

**INT. LIVING ROOM/ CABIN - LATER**

Paul sits in his comfy lazy chair. A western on the TV.

COWBOY (O.S.)  
Injuns, there, on the horizon.

COWBOY #2 (O.S.)  
Fall back men, we're riding back to town.

Paul mutes the volume. He picks up his phone. Dials MOM.

PAUL  
(into the receiver)  
Mommy dearest.

MOM (V.O.)  
Paul?

PAUL  
Hey, Mom, what you up to?

MOM (V.O.)  
Ohh, "The Road called Life" is about  
to come on. This is a bad time, Paul.

PAUL  
Didn't they cancel that soap, like  
years ago?

MOM (V.O.)  
No. It's gonna start any minute now.  
I've got the popcorn ready, heated  
slippers are on. If it's not an  
emergency, can you call back tomorrow?

PAUL  
Mom?

MOM (V.O.)  
Yes, dear.

PAUL  
I've never told you... how grateful  
I'm that --

MOM (V.O.)  
Honey, the show just came on. I've  
really got to go. I think this episode  
Laura is going to tell Eric that she's  
pregnant. We'll talk tomorrow, Okay?

PAUL  
Alright. Take care... mom.

MOM (V.O.)  
 Alright, honey. Bye bye.

PAUL  
 I love --  
     (MOM hangs up)  
 you.  
     (to himself)  
 I remember a time... when people had  
 time.

NOISE - water comes down the rain gutter. Paul turns to a window. Raindrops meet the see-through surface in full force. It's raining.

PAUL  
 Internet's full of shit.

A GUN, .38 revolver rests on a dresser next to Paul's chair.

Paul turns UP the TV volume. Cowboys and Indians shoot it out. BANG!  
 BANG!

He THROWS his phone at the wall, viciously - it SMASHES on impact.

**LATER**

Paul has dozed off in his chair when... THUNDER ROARS. The power goes out. TV shuts OFF. Paul asleep, doesn't notice a thing. Droll hangs of his chin.

**LATER**

A KNOCK... ANOTHER - Paul's eyes open - KNOCK, KNOCK... turning in his chair the front door comes into view - KNOCK, KNOCK!

Bewildered, in one motion he snatches up the gun and gets up. He notices the power's out as he goes to the door and looks...

THROUGH THE PEEPHOLE

A man (WILLIAM) stands on the front porch. He holds a jacket over his head, soaked from the rain, a bag hangs from his shoulder.

Paul contemplates opening the door -- KNOCK, KNOCK!

He puts the revolver to the side of the door, out of sight. Opens the door to...

WILLIAM  
 ...Howdy.

WILLIAM (22) wears a khaki uniform, resembling 40s army attire.

PAUL  
 Hello.

WILLIAM

Was worried no one would be home.  
Quite the drizzle happened upon on  
us this evening, huh?

PAUL

The rain?  
(looks up)  
Bit more than a drizzle I'd say.

WILLIAM

Thunder damn near blew my ears off,  
God must be hella upset about  
something tonight. Pardon my manners,  
introductions are in order. Name's  
William Hackney.

WILLIAM offers up his right hand for a shake... Paul grips the gun  
behind the door, not able to comply with the custom.

PAUL

Paul. Wineland.

WILLIAM

(withdraws his hand)  
Pleasure, Mr. Wineland. I'll tell  
you, I'm damn glad you were home. I  
ain't never been no good at no small  
talk, and I don't think I risk much  
about sounding too forward as you  
probably know what's comin'. Seems  
like circumstances have put me in a  
position where I've to inquire about  
acquiring shelter in your...  
(looks at the cabin)  
cozy abode. Sure you've noticed, I'm  
low on other viable options.

PAUL

I'd say that would be an understatement.

WILLIAM

And I'd tend to agree.

PAUL

Highway is about 400 yards out, I  
speculate you came from there?

WILLIAM

That I did.

PAUL

Nearest cabin is two miles down.  
Between here and there is about as  
dense a forest as there is.

WILLIAM

I ain't from these parts, but from  
what I've seen, I believe it.  
That's why I would be most grateful  
if you'd oblige.

PAUL

Yeah, about letting you in?

WILLIAM

That's what I'm referring too, yes.

PAUL

William, though we may be strangers,  
you and I, we might not be so  
different. I too have this self-image  
of a straight shooter. So, I'm gonna  
give it to you the only way I can.  
(short beat)  
I'm a bit apprehensive about that.

WILLIAM

I appreciate the candor, but I can  
assure you that --

PAUL

Ohh, I'm sure you can try, but  
realistically what can someone I've  
never met before assure me of?  
You're just someone at the door.

WILLIAM

I understand. I'm not a begging man  
Paul, but I do also fancy myself a  
bit of a gambler. Some folks go so  
far to even call me lucky. Heck,  
finding your cabin was a stroke, I'm  
up already. Right now, I'd rather  
take my chances betting on your  
kindness than out here with this  
weather. I'd wager it'll still be  
raining pitchforks and hammerheads  
couple of hours from now and  
pneumonia's something I don't look  
forward to. I've put my chips down.  
Would you wager a bet on me being  
good folk?

.PAUL

You just evened out, Bill. Cause we've come across another issue. I'm going through a bit of a rough patch. If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have none at all. If we go by that, I should shut this door right now.

WILLIAM

This is turning into a much longer conversation than I expected. I am sorry about your misfortune. Can you tell me how I can convince you to take a leap of faith? It's rather uncomfortable here and I'm wetter than a girl on prom night.

PAUL

What time do you have? I've misplaced my watch.

WILLIAM

It's...

(looks at his watch)

Oh, jeez, would you look at that. It stopped working. Weird.

William's wrist in Paul's face, a simple leather strap watch.

WILLIAM

Stopped at 2 PM, on the dot. Guess we're both out of time.

PAUL

What time would you say it is?

WILLIAM

I dunno, does it matter? I said I was lucky, that doesn't always equate to being good at guessing.

PAUL

Kinda does.

WILLIAM

Past ten?

PAUL

Around eleven, give or take.

WILLIAM

Maybe.

PAUL

Lets settle on eleven.

WILLIAM

Look, I get how this whole situation comes off as a bit suspicious. I don't control the weather. I'm not glad about asking you --

PAUL

Can I give you my point of view?

Thunder CRACKS the air.

WILLIAM

(frustrated)

Alright. Feel free.

PAUL

Thank you. My father gave me this place. I inherited it by blood more than he gave it to me. I guess there's a distinction, one specifies choice. He use to call it, his "fortress of solitude". Not much of a fortress but he was right about the solitude. Miles of woods whichever way you look. Never in my life has once someone...

(knocks on the door)

knocked on this door. There is that dirt road leading up and nothing of note or anything at all near by. I've never seen hunters passing through, birdwatchers, campers. Yet, here you are, near midnight, right when my power went out, asking to come in. Can you fully comprehend my reservation?

WILLIAM

Yes, sir. But what are my alternatives?

PAUL

I don't want to overstep my bounds but it's entirely reasonable I ask: "what were you exactly doing out here at this hour, William?".

WILLIAM

I don't think it matters what kind of story I tell. It will still end with me here, at your door. You've made it clear that you're not a fan of that ending.

PAUL

I'm not, but some stories are more believable than others. Let's see what you come up with. It's not like we have better things to do.

WILLIAM

Coming up implies effort. Telling the truth should be very undemanding, Paul!

PAUL

Who talks the way you do?! Why are we on a first name basis?!

WILLIAM

Can we at least continue this conversation inside, I'm soaked and shivering. You said both of us aren't going anywhere, I don't see how it would make much of a difference.

PAUL

No. We're having a conversation about why I should let you inside. Me, letting you inside, defies the point of this very conversation.

WILLIAM

Your tone has become hostile. You don't even really know what time it is, Paul --

BOOOOM! Lighting hits a tree... Paul and William instantly turn toward the occurrence. The tree splits in half. The noise is deafening, ECHOING.

PAUL

Shiiiiit!

Both stare on in awe. Paul looks back at William, sizing him up.

WILLIAM

Did you see that?

PAUL

I'm an asshole, I'm not blind.

(beat)

Nature has succeeded where you have failed. Give me a second.

WILLIAM

What?!

Paul closes the door.



PAUL  
I'm lettin' you in.

WILLIAM (O.S.)  
Just like that!

PAUL  
It's not "just like that". We went  
through a whole thing. Maybe you  
are lucky.

Paul tucks the gun inside his pants, covering it with his shirt. Checks to see if it's showing. Quick look through the peephole, and... he reopens.

PAUL  
Come in.

WILLIAM  
Bit hesitant to enter, now.

PAUL  
After all we've been through?

WILLIAM  
What pushed you over the fence?

PAUL  
You saw the fate that tree suffered.  
Much to my dismay, I do have a  
conscience.

William ENTERS. Paul closes the door behind him.

WILLIAM  
In... I am in... it was a journey  
though, only took an act of God,  
feel truly blessed.

PAUL  
Don't believe in the big man but  
you can feel however you like in  
my house.

WILLIAM  
An atheist. Won't hold it against you.

PAUL  
Wouldn't lose sleep if you did.

William takes a few more steps inside.

WILLIAM

I apologize if I am an inconvenience.  
I do appreciate you finally deciding  
on letting me in, keeping common  
decency among ordinary folk alive.

PAUL

Don't flatter me, it's not like I  
had much of a choice. Grab a seat,  
I'll go grab some towels.

Paul EXITS the room. William takes a seat near the front door.

WILLIAM

I'd welcome a towel. I do regret  
havin' to drip all over your floor  
and... furniture.

(looks around)

Jeez, this is a nice place. Funny  
looking to, kind of snazzy. Oh, and  
you did have a choice. We both did.  
There's always a choice. You could  
have left me out there, that was an  
option. A very unfavorable one for me.

PAUL (O.S.)

Don't prove me wrong then.

WILLIAM

I'll apply myself, best I can.

PAUL (O.S.)

Are you a cowboy, William?

WILLIAM

Excuse me?

PAUL (O.S.)

Do you ride a horse, tend to cattle?  
At the door you opened with "Howdy".

WILLIAM

Oh, no. I was just anxious, wanted to  
sound friendly. Must've slipped out.

Paul WALKS IN. He tosses William a towel.

WILLIAM

I'm from Pennsylvania.

The towel lands on the armrest of William's chair.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

PAUL  
 (looks at the fireplace)  
 I should start this thing up.

William towels his head dry.

WILLIAM  
 I was itching to suggest it but  
 seeing as you're already doing me  
 one favor, this being your home,  
 it seemed a bit out of line.

PAUL  
 No worries. I have common sense.

Paul chucks a log into the fireplace, then another. He picks up  
 an IRON POKER.

PAUL  
 Power must have gone out on account  
 of the weather. I have a generator  
 but didn't think to bring gas. If  
 things get hairy, I'll siphon  
 what's left in the car.

WILLIAM  
 The one up front? Damn, she's a  
 beauty, even in that monsoon out  
 there. Is that one of them fancy  
 sports cars?

Paul crouches parallel to the fireplace. He works on the fire,  
 not losing sight of William.

PAUL  
 You can say that.

WILLIAM  
 I've never seen one like that. It  
 exudes confidence.

PAUL  
 It's a muscle car, it'd better.

The fire ignites. The glowing ember leaps and twirls.

WILLIAM  
 I'm surprised you have electricity  
 all the way up here.

PAUL  
 Always have.  
 (beat)  
 (MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

I don't mean to sound inhospitable but I'd like to continue my line of questioning from the door. Curiosity is a weakness of mine and you never did answer, how exactly you came upon my "abode" to awake me from my slumber.

The flames rise. Paul prods the fire, it grows, dances.

WILLIAM

Oh my, look at that beautiful blaze. Never have I been more happy to see fire. This must be how arsonists feel.

PAUL

Why don't you sit over here, closer to it, get warm and dry.

WILLIAM

I'll take you up on that, Paul.

Paul walks to another chair, POKER still in hand. William occupies a chair next to the fireplace.

PAUL

So?

WILLIAM

I wasn't aware that I woke you. I apologize.

(short beat)

Not avoiding the question.

PAUL

Good, cause I'm expecting an answer.

WILLIAM

Trying to buy time, so I formulate it best I can.

PAUL

As you said at the door, the truth should be effortless.

WILLIAM

That is correct. No matter how strange. Well... truth it is. It might not sound very plausible but I hope my honesty shines through and makes you a believer. I was gonna lie before. You see... Chuck turned twenty-one today. We were out celebrating.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Chucky's a docile, timid individual, never had much, how you'd call it, life experience. Just coming out of his shell. Tonight was his first night out on the town, don't know if he'd ever even tasted hard liquor before. But he didn't just come out, he rushed out. Went from rookie to veteran in three hours. Even I got a bit tipsy. On the way back, I was relieving myself when... they ditched me, right there on the side of the road. Must have thought it was pretty funny. Me, pecker in hand, middle of nowhere. I didn't think it was clever, really. Probably expected me to hitch a ride. No cars passed, I felt the first drop and wandered off hoping a dirt road will lead me somewhere. Stupid. I felt another, it started pouring when...

(beat)

That was what I came up with on your porch. Not very original.

PAUL

Highway ain't 400 yards out.

WILLIAM

I figured as much, halfway through our conversation at the door. I kind of feel we're both too far in to lie now and you'd see through it, anyway.

(looks at the fire)

Truth is, I don't really know what I was doing in the woods. Somehow, I just was. Last thing I recall was me sitting on a stool at "Barney's East Side Tavern", looking at this lonely dame, share crop. My mouth watered like a bulldog's. Uh, uh, she was a looker. Red hair, flames, like in this here fire. Legs as tall as the Eifel tower, skirt barely covered a quarter. Whole place must've had eyes on her and their minds on what to say when they got their chance. I was ready to go up to bat. I remember looking down, waiting for the courage to sink in and... next thing I knew... I was wet, dirt was under my feet and it was raining.

PAUL

What was it?

WILLIAM

What?

PAUL

The pick up line.

WILLIAM

You really wanna know?

PAUL

Yes.

WILLIAM

I was gonna walk up, take the stool next to her. I've always been confident. I guess that's why I never stutter. "I changed seats because even though I liked the view, why just look at perfection, when I can smell it, touch it". That's when I was gonna run my fingers up her arm, slowly. You see the leg is more private, I ain't that confident. It may sound corny, but I get it to work... never got my chance. I don't think I blacked out, but I must have... never have before. Must got amnesia or something. I saw a shape, your cabin from far out. It's like it beckoned me. I must sound so strange.

PAUL

I wouldn't even point it out. Sounds like a Twilight zone episode. But, I kind of want to believe you. You have a certain endearing quality. No denying everything you've said so far is beyond strange. Even your choice of words. Beckon, beckon.

WILLIAM

Summon, to call.

PAUL

I know what it means. Beckon, dame, share crop. You're quite the wordsmith with that vocabulary. It's funny, kind of make me adapt to your way of speaking.

WILLIAM

I gotta thank good ole miss Rose, my English teacher for what you rate as my linguistic prowess. Great lady, bit of a yuck.

PAUL

I'm sure she was wonderful.  
Pennsylvania is a long way from Oregon.

WILLIAM

Oregon. That it is. All the way  
across. You wanna see a photo of  
the farm I grew up on?

PAUL

Why the hell not.

William grabs his bag and goes through it. Paul grips the POKER.

WILLIAM

I have one here, somewhere. It shows  
all the orchards, we grow fruits,  
pumpkins, vegetables. I like to keep  
it, so I am reminded of home. Keeps  
the memories vivid. Sometimes you  
need something to look at.

William starts emptying the bag, placing items on his lap: a tin box,  
notebook, pack of smokes... a holstered HUNTING KNIFE.

WILLIAM

Darn it, can't seem to find it. It  
was a beauty, even had the barn in  
the background. Hope I haven't lost  
it. I'd be hella upset.

Paul looks at the knife.

PAUL

There's no photo, is there?

WILLIAM

(holds the bag open)  
Not here, no sir.

PAUL

Now that I've seen your knife, what  
are you going to follow that up with?

WILLIAM

I dunno, I figured since you won't  
leave that poker alone, I'd tie things  
up. I noticed how you never turned  
your back to me. Like I said before, I  
understand your concerns but lets hear  
mine. I'm...

(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I don't know where, I have nowhere to go and the person sitting in front of me, probably the only one for miles has a piece of iron in his hand. It's spiked and you seem to be in love with it. Don't seem keen on leaving it alone any time soon.

PAUL

I don't. So, are we going to sit like this till the rain stops and then you leave?

WILLIAM

Sounds like a plan. I hope we make it that far.

PAUL

Is that something you'd bet on?

WILLIAM

I'd like to think it's a safe bet. What's your opinion on the matter?

PAUL

Not sure.

WILLIAM

I know how you feel, when it comes to people you just never know. We're such an unpredictable bunch.

PAUL

You'll hear no arguments here. Pennsylvania's a long way from Oregon.

WILLIAM

You already said that.

PAUL

You twitched before, at Oregon.

WILLIAM

I said I was from Pennsylvania, I didn't say I was in Pennsylvania before I wound up here.

PAUL

Where were you?

WILLIAM

New York.

PAUL

That's closer.



WILLIAM

How do I even know this is Oregon?

PAUL

Did you see those trees out there.  
Ponderosa pine. Won't find that in  
New York.

WILLIAM

I ain't no botanist, Paul. I can't tell  
my pines apart. Only pine I know, has  
the word apple stuck to the end of it.

PAUL

Well, I'm out of other evidence to  
offer at this time.

(beat)

Would you care for a drink while we  
wait on the weather? All this talking  
has made my mouth dry.

WILLIAM

You're on the hostile side but damn  
if you're not a fine host, hats off.  
I haven't said no to anything yet and  
I'm sad to say booze is not where I'm  
gonna start. What you got?

PAUL

I take pride in my assortment. Ready  
to part with the usual: whiskey,  
bourbon, scotch and brandy. All aged,  
like Chuck, twenty-one and over,  
mature and ready.

WILLIAM

I'm most experienced with bourbon. I  
think, I'll stick with what I know.

Paul stands up... eyes the cabinet, few feet away.

PAUL

Guess bartending duties fall on the  
host.

WILLIAM

You'll look funny walking backwards.

PAUL

Guess, leaps of faith also fall on  
the host.

WILLIAM

You're a burdened man, I salute you.

Paul smirks... begins his stroll to the cabinet.

PAUL

Don't get too comfortable now, I got eyes on you. The mirror on the wall over there.

(points to the knife in the mirror)  
That thing looks a bit heavy to throw and I don't think you can cover this much distance, unless you've been to the Olympics.

WILLIAM

No sir, I have not. And I promise I won't try, for what that's worth.

PAUL

It's better than nothing.

Paul reaches the cabinet, opens it. Out of the corner of his eye - William's reflection in the mirror... he is still.

Paul takes out two glasses and a bottle.

WILLIAM

It's safe to say you don't live here?

PAUL

I don't. I come up, once, twice a year. It's calm, relaxing.

WILLIAM

No people, no traffic --

PAUL

No nothing...

(pours)

except little things, like the encounter you are about to have with 25 year old bourbon, held in fine white oak barrels.

WILLIAM

I can taste the corn already.

Bourbon fills a glass. Paul glances over at the mirror - William still, true to his word.

PAUL

Heaven in a glass --

KA-SHHH - Faint SOUND of something breaking. Paul's eye widen --

WILLIAM  
Careful there, don't cut yourself.  
Can't fool me that you mixed in  
raspberry.

Paul's look shifts in the mirror - focusing in on the door leading to the kitchen... he stares.

WILLIAM  
What you crack?

PAUL  
Nothing.

WILLIAM  
Gutter?

Paul slowly turns... looks at the door... than at William.

PAUL  
Kitchen. Wasn't glass.

WILLIAM  
What do you mean?

Paul leaves the bottle, glasses half full, hands free. He looks at William with suspicion... thinking.

WILLIAM  
How can you tell where it came  
from... and that it wasn't glass?

PAUL  
I can hear and... I can hear.  
Glass doesn't sound like that.

WILLIAM  
How does glass sound?

Paul's eyes go back to the kitchen door as -- another SOUND is heard. William's head perks up. Paul gives him another look.

WILLIAM  
I dunno, I ain't --

Finger to mouth, Paul does the "Shhh" signal. He carefully moves across the living room, poker in hand.

William stands up clutching his knife. Paul looks back at him... not knowing where to focus, door or William.

Another SOUND.

William now aware that it indeed is coming from the kitchen.

PAUL  
 (points)  
 There. In sight.

Paul's hand hovers over the area where his GUN is tucked in.

They both step forward to the door... slowly... at a distance from one another. William clutching the knife, harder --

Another SOUND.

They STOP. Paul gestures to William to "check it out". William shakes his head... then reluctantly agrees. Paul stands to the side of the door keeping a reasonable distance - William and the doorway in view.

William approaches the door head on... darkness, nothing is visible. He shrugs at Paul. At a lost for words...

WILLIAM  
 (into the kitchen)  
 Hmm... hello?

GRACE (O.S.)  
 Hello.

Paul's jaw drops. William takes a step back in shock --

GRACE (O.S.)  
 Klutz...

WILLIAM  
 What?

GRACE (O.S.)  
 Clumsy, always been so darn clumsy.  
 It slipped... I didn't mean for it  
 to break.

WILLIAM  
 Ah, what? What broke?

GRACE (O.S.)  
 The dish.

Paul drops the poker - reaches for his gun - drawn and pointed at William.

PAUL  
 Who the fuck is that?!

WILLIAM  
 (looking at the door)  
 I can't tell, it's dar --  
 (turns to Paul, sees the gun)  
 (MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Wohh! Hold it, stop! You have a gun?!  
You've had a gun this whole time?

PAUL

Who the fuck is in there, William?

WILLIAM

How the hell do I know? I can't see.  
A voice? I can't believe you've had  
a gun this whole time. Is it loaded?

PAUL

Yes, I will pull out a gun, point  
it at you with the intention of  
intimidating you and then admit to  
it not being loaded. What kind of a  
question is that?!

WILLIAM

Sorry if I insulted your intelligence.

PAUL

(through his teeth)  
Who - is - in - there?

WILLIAM

(looks back)  
All I see is a shape... sitting on  
the floor. We're a bit short on  
light. Why don't we ask?  
(to the woman)  
Mhhh... who are you?

GRACE (O.S.)

Don't have a graceful bone in my  
body. Graceless - Grace. Even God  
makes fun of me. Stupid, unhandily,  
ham-handed Grace.

WILLIAM

So, your name is Grace?

GRACE (O.S.)

I don't want it to be, but it is.

WILLIAM

(to Paul)  
Seems, we have a Grace here.  
(to Grace)  
Why are you on the floor, crying?

PAUL

How did you get inside?

GRACE (O.S.)  
Are you asking me?

PAUL  
Yes.

GRACE (O.S.)  
I dunno. I can't even do the dishes  
right. I can't do anything right.

William gestures to his pocket, looking for Paul's approval... who  
nods. A lighter comes out. Flame on, William nears the kitchen --

PAUL  
Whoa, whoa, where do you think  
you're going?

WILLIAM  
I wanna get her out here. Try to  
console her.

PAUL  
What?!

WILLIAM  
That's what a gentleman should do  
when he sees a woman weeping on the  
floor. That's how I was raised.

PAUL  
You're not going in there! That's  
the kitchen, the silverware's in  
there, knives and shit.

WILLIAM  
(lifts up his knife)  
I already have a knife.

PAUL  
You two could be working together.  
You can come out throwing knives,  
forks, she could have a gun, you  
could have a gun. I'm not sure of  
anything.

(thinking)  
Grace?

GRACE (O.S.)  
Yes?

PAUL  
I don't mean to make William here  
come of any less a gentleman than  
he is, but would you care to walk  
out, here in the living room.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

It's warmer, I have the fireplace  
going, comfy chairs.

GRACE (O.S.)

It is chilly in here.

William extends his lighter toward the doorway... it illuminates  
Grace (30). Her hair is tied in a bun, wearing an old fashioned  
flowered dress, she is reminiscent of Progressive Insurance Flo.

WILLIAM

(comforting)

It's alright.

Grace stands up.

Paul points the gun at the doorway. It trembles in his hand.

WILLIAM

Paul, lower it, you'll scare her to  
death.

PAUL

Maybe that's not such a bad thing.

WILLIAM

Please.

PAUL

I ain't lowering anything.

(to Grace)

Grace?

GRACE (O.S.)

Yes.

PAUL

In good faith I'm telling you right  
now that I have a gun pointed at  
the doorway. That's one of the  
first things you'll see when you  
walk out. Alright?

GRACE (O.S.)

How can that be alright?! Why would  
you have a gun pointed at me? Why  
do you even have a gun?

PAUL

This is my house, you're  
trespassing. I don't think you're  
in a position to ask that question!  
I don't know who you are and how  
you got here. The back door is  
locked, I checked.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

I had this place redone a couple a years ago. Pretty sure you couldn't have picked that lock unless you are a career burglar. Are you?

GRACE (O.S.)

What?

PAUL

A professional burglar?

GRACE (O.S.)

No! I'm a housewife!

PAUL

(to himself)

What the hell is a housewife doing in my kitchen?

WILLIAM

That's where they spend most of their time.

PAUL

(to William)

Ohh, funny, good.

(to Grace)

Grace, walk out, slowly. Don't be afraid, it's just a gun. If I don't pull the trigger nothing happens. So, don't give me a reason, please. Both of you.

GRACE (O.S.)

I don't like the dark, and the cold. Those are the only reasons I'm coming out.

PAUL

Cool.

GRACE (O.S.)

I don't like cool either. Mild is best.

PAUL

Just walk out.

GRACE (O.S.)

Alright, I'm walking out, slowly.

William, steps back as... Grace walks into the living room. The fireplace lights her better. We see her in all her beauty.

The lighter dies off. William and Paul stand, looking on in wonder, much like they did before with the lightning.



PAUL  
Hello, Grace.

GRACE  
Hello, again.

PAUL  
I'm Paul. That's William over there.  
It might not be his real name. I'm not  
sure. We have to call him something.

GRACE  
William, Paul. Good evening.

PAUL  
I promised to get you warm. We're  
building this relationship on trust,  
why don't you grab a seat near the  
fireplace.

GRACE  
Thank you.

WILLIAM  
But that's my seat. I'm still wet.

PAUL  
I'm sure you can give it up, being  
the gentleman that you are.

Grace sits down in the chair near the fireplace.

GRACE  
This is better. Thank you. Are you  
two old friends?

PAUL  
We met earlier, in a similar incident.

Williams finds a chair a little further down from Grace.

WILLIAM  
Can I throw another piece of wood  
in the fire?

PAUL  
No, it's fine. I feel it from here.

WILLIAM  
Can I at least have the poker, to  
stir it up a bit.

PAUL  
No.

WILLIAM

You have a gun now. The poker is devoid of all meaning.

PAUL

Why risk it?

GRACE

Don't fight. I can't stand fighting.

PAUL

We're not fighting. It's just the way we address each other. With a touch of hostility in our voices.

GRACE

Why do you have a gun?

PAUL

This is the wilderness, haven't you seen Deliverance?

(short beat)

Now, Grace, are you comfortable?

GRACE

Much more so then before.

PAUL

Me and William were just about to have a drink, would you care for one?

GRACE

I don't drink. Water's fine.

PAUL

Water is off the menu right now, maybe later.

GRACE

Why?

PAUL

Cause someone would have to go back to the kitchen and I don't think that's such a good idea.

WILLIAM

I'll do it.

PAUL

No, you won't.

(to Grace)

Now do you think you can answer some questions I have for you?

GRACE

I can try.

PAUL

That's all I ask.

GRACE

Would you lower your gun first?

PAUL

It gives me a sense of control, but as an act of good faith, it'll go down a few inches.

(lowers it a bit)

What were you doing in my kitchen?

GRACE

I didn't know it was your kitchen. I'm sorry about the plate. It just slipped out. It looked like an expensive piece of china. I'll reimburse you. Unless it was a family item, then I hope a sincere apology is enough.

PAUL

I don't care about the plate. Don't worry about the stupid plate.

GRACE

(starts weeping)

Don't yell at me!

PAUL

I'm not yelling. No yelling. William, did I yell?

WILLIAM

Slightly higher tone, definitely not a yell.

PAUL

See? I just want to know how you wound up in my kitchen. I locked the back door. The windows are double Plexiglas. You couldn't have broken in, and you're dry. How did you get in?

GRACE

I walked in the kitchen and saw the plates in the sink. I just wanted to wash them, they were dirty.

PAUL

I understand that, but how did you enter my house?

GRACE

I don't know. I just walked into the kitchen.

PAUL

From where?! From where did you walk in? What entrance, when, how?

GRACE

I was home. Richard was asleep, he came early for work. He had a long day, it's the end of the month, they get busy. I was cleaning up around the house before getting ready for bed. I walked into the kitchen and saw the plates.

PAUL

You walked into my kitchen?

GRACE

No, mine! But then... it turned out it wasn't mine. It was dark. Who are you? Besides Paul.

PAUL

What do you want me to say? I'm Paul and this is my cabin. William here, he is from Pennsylvania.

GRACE

Oh, really! I have family there.

WILLIAM

Where from exactly?

PAUL

What the fuck is happening!!!

WILLIAM

Paul, watch your tongue, we have a lady present.

PAUL

FUCK YO000U! FUCK YOU, BILL! And FUCK your fucking plan, if you think she's gonna let you FUCK her, with your whole white knight act.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

This is my fucking house and this situation calls for fucking profanity. Einstein couldn't make sense out of this shit.

Grace gets teary eyed.

PAUL

Ohhh, don't cry.

GRACE

I won't. You sound like a brute, primitive. That kind of language puts girls off. Are you single?

PAUL

Yes, yes I am, Grace. I'm single.

GRACE

Figures.

PAUL

Yeah, insult me in my own house. Where do you live Grace?

GRACE

Live?

PAUL

Your address, what is it?

GRACE

We live on 27th, on the neighborhood intersection. The house with the orchids up front and roses by the door. Number 89.

PAUL

City, state?

GRACE

Sacramento, of course.

WILLIAM

Los Angeles?! Is the weather as nice as they say it is?

PAUL

Who cares about the stupid weather?!

WILLIAM

I do, or I wouldn't have asked.

PAUL

You claim you went from a bar to a forest on the other side of the country and she walked out of her living room in Sacramento into my kitchen, and you care about the stupid weather in Los Angeles? I have a loaded gun pointed at you, Bill! Do you not grasp the severity of the situation?

WILLIAM

You're not going to use that thing. I don't sweat you.

PAUL

(exhales in frustration)  
I would think someone would be fucking with me, but no one knows I'm here and no actors are this good. No insane asylum close by where you two maniacs could have escaped from. I dunno... what... I can't even --

GRACE

(starts crying)  
I'm not crazy.

WILLIAM

Look what you did.

PAUL

Yes, I did that.

Paul turns as... THUDS are heard through the front door. Someone's ran up the porch - THUD! The door knob starts rattling, someone's trying to get in.

They all watch the knob violently turning.

PAUL

Friend?

William and Grace shrug.

BANG, BANG, BANG! Fists meet the door. Door knob turns again!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Help. OPEN THE DOOR! OPEN ITTTT!  
(crying)  
Open it, pleaseeee!

Paul signals William to get up and go to the door. William grips the knife handle and does so, ready. Paul circles to the other side and aims the gun at the door.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Please, please, open uuup!

Paul gestures William to look through the peephole... he does.

WILLIAM  
It's a girl. Young one.

Paul hesitates.

PAUL  
Circle over, I'll open.

William obeys. Paul goes to the door, wary of William and Grace. He turns the lock and... OPENS the door --

SALLY bursts inside, her momentum carries her to the floor.

She's barely 20, HOOTERS hot, in a tank top and shorts.

Paul immediately shuts and locks the door.

He points the gun at SALLY on the floor... then at WILLIAM... then at Grace... then back at SALLY.

SALLY  
(crying hysterically)  
He's coming! Lock the door, lock  
iiit! Call the police!

William kneels down besides her, trying to comfort her.

WILLIAM  
It's okay, you're safe.

SALLY  
You don't understand, he was behind  
me, he's coming!

WILLIAM  
Who's coming?

SALLY  
Call the police, please, call them!  
Lock the door, lock it now! He's  
gonna come in. I know he is.

GRACE  
She's scaring me.

PAUL  
Someone chasing you?

WILLIAM  
Of course someone's chasing her.

SALLY

(realizing)

He killed Josh, oh my god, he killed him. He killed hiimmm! He's gonna find a way in, he's gonna break the door down.

PAUL

No one's coming in. Calm down.

WILLIAM

What's your name?

PAUL

You look familiar.

WILLIAM

Would you like a glass of water?

SALLY

Why aren't you listenin'?! He's gonna come in. Nancy and Josh are dead, I saw him, he was behind me. Why don't you believe me?!

PAUL

Listen, young lady, no one's coming in unless I open this here door. There is no way inside.

(knocks on the wall)

This is not timber. Concrete logs, custom, dense. Door's lined with steel, windows are bulletproof. No one's getting in. We're basically in a bunker. Try to calm down.

GRACE

Why do you live in a bunker?

PAUL

I don't live here. I'm a paranoid man. I am not gonna come up here in the boonies. What if someone tries to break in? Where am I gonna run of to? I rebuild the whole thing from scratch. Which is why I still don't understand how you got in.

SALLY

Who are you people?



GRACE

Try to cup your hands over your mouth, honey. Breathe slowly, it helps with anxiety.

WILLIAM

Paul, can I get her a glass of water, please?

PAUL

(thinks)

Yeah. Bring Grace one too.

Sally cups her hands over her mouth as suggested.

WILLIAM

Thank you.

(to Sally)

I'll be right back, you try to settle down. Grace help her, please.

Grace sits on the floor and puts her hand on the Sally's back.

PAUL

William, we've got a good rapport going. Don't mess up.

William nods and heads to the kitchen.

Paul looks at the two women.

PAUL

You both look familiar. Now that I look at you, Grace, I think I've seen you somewhere. Maybe on TV.

SALLY

(uncups her mouth)

Check to see if he's there. Check!

Paul looks through the peephole.

SALLY

Is he? Is he there?

PAUL

Don't see anyone. Even if there was someone there, I can't see in this rain. If he's out there he is either gonna drown soon or get stuck in mud, die and get fossilized.

William REENTERS the living room, carrying two glasses of water. Paul angles the gun in his direction, still not sure.

WILLIAM  
Here you go girls.

They grab their glasses.

GRACE  
Thank you, William.

The girls quickly drink up.

WILLIAM  
Better?

SALLY  
Yes.

WILLIAM  
Could you tell us your name?

SALLY  
It's Sally.

WILLIAM  
What were you doing out there, Sally?

SALLY  
I was running, he was gonna catch me.

GRACE  
Who was going to catch you?

SALLY  
I don't know. He had a mask. My  
heart's beating sooo fast.

WILLIAM  
What kind of mask?

SALLY  
A pig mask... and an axe. Me and Josh  
were in his car on Willow's ridge.  
We were kissing. I turned, I thought  
I saw something in the woods. Josh  
went to check if it was some creep or  
kids peeping on us.  
(starts crying)  
He was gone for a minute... then, his  
head came flying out at the windshield.

PAUL  
His head?!

SALLY  
He, came out of the woods. I got out  
and started to run.

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

I saw Nancy's car, I opened the door, her body fell out, dead! I ran and ran... I turned, he was there, behind me. It started to rain, my legs got heavy. I saw this cabin. I prayed that there would be someone inside. He knows I'm here. He must have seen me come in.

Paul looks at Sally... thinks... he's on to something.

PAUL

You have a tank top on. What month is it?

GRACE

How does that even matter? Two people are dead.

PAUL

Answer please.

SALLY

(hesitates)

July.

WILLIAM

It's actually June.

PAUL

Grace?

GRACE

(shyly)

May.

PAUL

It's October.

GRACE

No, it isn't.

Paul takes a good look at all three. He focuses on William.

PAUL

You're Billy, they call you Billy. Not William, not Bill.

WILLIAM

Some do.

PAUL

You have a girlfriend back home, Anne. You have her photo with you. Not in your bag, left breast pocket.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 You're gonna propose when you get  
 back from the war.

The look on William's face changes. His features spell: SHOCK!

GRACE  
 What war?

WILLIAM  
 What's in the photo besides Anne?

PAUL  
 (not missing a beat)  
 A swing hangs from a fat tree  
 branch. Thick lumber, fat ropes.

William, eyes fixed on Paul, reaches inside his left breast pocket...  
 a black and white photo emerges. A young woman stands by a swing.  
 Anne (19), radiant, almost angelic, dress caught mid-flap in the wind.

WILLIAM  
 How did you know?

GRACE  
 There is no war.

PAUL  
 Billy, what year is it?

WILLIAM  
 43.

GRACE  
 No, no it isn't.

PAUL  
 So, what is it?

GRACE  
 It's 1959.

PAUL  
 How about you Sally, what year do  
 you think it is?

SALLY  
 (shyly)  
 1982.

Paul starts unlocking the front door --

SALLY  
 NO! Doon't! Don't go out there.  
 He's gonna come in. He's waiting.  
 (MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)  
(starts crying)  
He's gonna kill us all.

WILLIAM  
Paaaul!

Paul twists the lock. Looks back at the three of them and... pulls OPEN the door - NO ONE THERE. Rain's pouring out.

He steps out onto the porch, then of it into the rain. Arms spread, he stands in the open, getting wet.

He moves back in the cabin. Locks the door.

PAUL  
Well, at least the rain is real.

GRACE  
What did you expect? Someone hosing down your house. And what do you mean by, at least? What are you implying isn't?

PAUL  
For starters... all of you.

Beat.

WILLIAM  
What's that supposed to mean?

PAUL  
I've gone insane.

GRACE  
Gone? Maybe you already were?

PAUL  
No, pretty sure this is recent.

WILLIAM  
You seem awful calm about it.

PAUL  
Ehh, what are you gonna do? Go crazy about going crazy?

Paul moves and sits down in his comfy chair.

PAUL  
At least I don't have to stress about all of you, and a crazy axe murderer coming in.

WILLIAM

Could you please clarify, what do you mean exactly by "real"?

GRACE

I'm real.

PAUL

I never thought things could get so vivid, hallucinations. Then again, why would you think they were real if they didn't look it.

WILLIAM

You think we're hallucinations?

PAUL

Caught a glimpse of my grandmother, bit by the end there, dementia. Always thought she was exaggerating. Live and learn. You're all so lifelike.

WILLIAM

How did you know about the photo?

PAUL

I've seen it.

WILLIAM

We've met before? At the bar?

PAUL

You know, it's a bit redundant to explain myself to a figment of my imagination. In essence I am explaining things to myself. Technically you can't explain something to yourself because that implies that you already understand it... I'm babbling.

WILLIAM

It's good that you understand, because I don't.

PAUL

I accept that am a conscious, delusional schizophrenic.

GRACE

So, you are crazy, you admit it!

PAUL

Shut up, Grace. You shut your whore mouth. I don't have to answer you.

Grace covers her mouth in disbelief. Paul leans back in the chair.

SALLY  
Ah, mister... Paul.

PAUL  
Yes, Sally.

SALLY  
If you think we're not real and that there's no one out there. Why did you lock the door?

PAUL  
Force of habit. Don't like open doors.

Paul closes his eyes, takes a breath. A silence in the room --

WILLIAM  
Paul.  
(no answer)  
Paul... PAUL!  
(Paul opens his eyes)  
Paul, I think I've been a fair sport so far. I answered your questions, could you please answer one of mine?

PAUL  
Audible and visual, hallucinations. So real.

WILLIAM  
I'm as real as the rain. Now answer my question, please.

PAUL  
(looks around the room)  
I never touched anyone, any of you.  
(to William)  
You stopped using your slang, pitchforks and hammerheads, Billy.

WILLIAM  
(frustrated)  
Paul. Please.

PAUL  
You're even so polite.  
(beat)  
The heck, this is a new experience, my shrink said to be open to them, this is one not many have. Exciting. What do you want to know?

WILLIAM

How did you know about the photo,  
and that most call me, Billy?

PAUL

I've seen your future.

WILLIAM

(playing along)  
And? What is it?

Paul leans towards William, like he is about to tell a story.

PAUL

You'll take a trip to Holland, mid-September, by plane. Won't be for holiday, work related. On this particular flight there will be turbulence. Light flashes will come through the windows. It'll be day time. This nauseating feeling will kick-in. Your intestines will sink down to your testicles, like someone's pressing them down, hard. You won't be alone, on the plane and in your state. The craft will shake - more flashes. A man, older than yourself will sit across, calm, composed, no fear. John Tallius. He'll ask: "You Okay, Kid?". You'll reply: "Bit queasy". John: "These rides will do it". You'll reach in and show him your photo of Anne. Say that you keep it in that pocket so it's close to your heart. You're gonna propose when you get back home. John will smirk and say: "Be careful out there kid, leave the hero stuff to the likes of me, who have no one waiting back home". Plane doors open, all the passengers start jumping, not suicide... you're paratroopers. You go first, Tallius follows. You take fire in the air. Bullets fly up as you go down. Most land in empty fields. Tallius isn't so lucky. He misses a tree, lands, rolls, takes cover. Fire comes in, reshaping the trees. His best friend, Anthony bellies down, shot in the gut. "Go John, GO". Tallius cuts through the fire, a plane flies too close to the ground, it crashes, ignites in flames. Tallius ducks for cover, bullets won't leave him alone.

(MORE)



PAUL (CONT'D)

He puts his head down to the ground, lifts it up and sees.... you, Billy. Hanging from a tree. You never reached the ground, they shot you in the air... like a duck in hunting season. Tangled in branches, dead you hang. Tallius looks at you, his anger builds. He stands up and charges. Then they fight for like 30 min more.

(beat)

You are a movie character Billy. "Descent of Honor". It came out in 1949, a propaganda film, portraying what it took to win the second World War. Our boys didn't win every battle, but they sacrificed everything and we won the war. Fucking three hour epic.

SALLY

A movie?!

PAUL

The reason I didn't remember you is because you only appear for like ninety seconds in it. You're a device, to enlist sympathy and establish danger, so the audience fears for the lead's life.

William looks on in astoundment. On some level he believes it.

WILLIAM

We won?

PAUL

Yeah, we won.

GRACE

That's nonsense, the war ended fourteen years ago. I was in high school. My father came into the backyard to tell me and my mother that it was over. It was on the radio. Don't listen to him, William. You are not a device!

WILLIAM

I was trained at Fort Bragg. They were going to ship me off to Italy on Tuesday, then England.

PAUL

That's why you were in New York. That was a major spot for Army Deployment.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

You really weren't anywhere. I took a ninety second character and subconsciously built him a whole story, way of speaking, attitude... everything.

SALLY

You never said, what year you thought it was.

PAUL

It doesn't matter. It's today.

SALLY

Maybe it does. We told you.

WILLIAM

(sad)

I don't get to kill any Nazis? I just hang from a tree, dead?

PAUL

'fraid so.

Beat.

SALLY

If he's in a movie, then so am I? What's mine about?

GRACE

Why are you encouraging this behavior? He's obviously playing games with you or is mentally unstable. Don't play along young lady, don't feed his ego by letting him deceive you.

SALLY

I kind of wanna hear what he says.

PAUL

"Pig Slaughter". Like you said, 1982. Typical low grade 80s slasher.

WILLIAM

What evidence do you have?

SALLY

Yeah, what can you tell me about me?

PAUL

Not a lot, not in it much. The time you are, they paint you as a girl that's easy.

SALLY  
Easy, easy how?

PAUL  
Lay, you're an easy lay.

SALLY  
Maybe. What is it about, the movie?

GRACE  
Why are asking that?! Do you two actually believe him? He's saying you're not real! Don't you understand! If you ask these things you're as crazy as he is. He's taking you for a ride.

Grace sits on a chair, agitated.

PAUL  
Former cop, goes crazy, puts on a pig mask and kills a bunch of teens that do drugs and have sex in public. Cop - pig mask, bit of irony there. You know irony, Grace.

GRACE  
(gets teary eyed)  
You're horrible. Stop listening. Why am I the only voice of reason here?

SALLY  
Does he catch me?

PAUL  
Yeah, he cuts your tits off. You're in the opening five minutes. Everything happens pretty much as you described it. Make out session in the car, boyfriend dies, you run...

WILLIAM  
She dies by having her breasts cut off?

PAUL  
No. He chops her head off, later.

Grace stands up.

GRACE  
Enough! STOP IT! Stop this nonsense. You're scaring the poor girl. You are a sad, sad man. Telling nasty stories about people dying in horrible ways.  
(to Sally and William)  
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

Shame on you for entertaining such ideas, letting him go off. I suppose, I'm next, are you going to tell me how I die?

PAUL

You don't.

GRACE

What, I live forever?!

SALLY

I get my tits and head chopped off and she lives?! I'm younger than she is, I get good grades in school.

WILLIAM

Yeah, I'm twenty-two and get machine-gunned into swiss cheese. Grace is at least, what... thirty-three?

GRACE

How dare you! I'm thirty!

PAUL

I'm talking to fictional characters in my living room and you, one of them is asking me to make sense out of things? Do you not pick up on the blatant paradox here?

WILLIAM

I don't care. What's her deal?

PAUL

Grace? I dunno. I think it was some daytime drama from the 50s.

GRACE

If you wanna know something about me, why don't you ask me? I'm here!

WILLIAM

Cause I want to hear what he has to say?

PAUL

I don't remember the title or specifics. I saw it on TV. I think she's only in like three-four scenes. Peeking through curtains, looking over the fence. She's the curious neighbor. Looking in on the family next door.

WILLIAM

She's spying on someone?

PAUL

The lead's this cute blonde. She gets married to a well-off, handsome man with a shady past. They work out typical bullshit, until the husband's past catches up to him.

SALLY

So, what does Grace do?

GRACE

I don't do anything. I'm a housewife. I take care of the house.

PAUL

She's of no real value to the plot. Just a noisy neighbor.

GRACE

I'm not noisy. I don't spy on the Samuel's. I have no interest in them. I could care less. This is all such drivel.

Paul reclines in the chair.

PAUL

Maybe if I close my eyes real hard and clear my mind, when I open'em, you'll all be gone.

Paul closes his eyes. Everyone looks on in anticipation. The eyes squeeze shut, harder and harder... tension builds... suspense...

HE OPENS... they're all still there... everyone sighs.

PAUL

Nothing. Maybe I should take a nap.

GRACE

Just because he said all those things, doesn't make'em true. He just spweed off some baloney and you ate it up. Think for yourselves.

WILLIAM

I am.

GRACE

Maybe he noticed the photo peeking out of your pocket, maybe he saw through the material? It was wet.

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

The rest, he told you what was going to happen, I can tell you what is going to happen. It's the future, psychics don't exist!

SALLY

I don't wanna get my tits chopped off.

WILLIAM

Who's to say, that the axe murder chasing Sally can't burst through the door right now? Maybe he's in the house already?

PAUL

Maybe. If he is, I don't think I can wish him away. We'll just have to see how it plays out. But somehow I don't think he's joining us.

WILLIAM

What makes you so sure?

PAUL

You're all minor, non-essential characters, he's a pretty major one. Without him there is no "Pig slaughter". Going by what's happened, I don't think he's coming. Time being, it's just the five of us.

SALLY

Five?

PAUL

You, me, Billy, Grace... and Yoshi over there.

(to Yoshi in the corner)

Hi, Yoshi.

Paul waves to YOSHI (31). A Japanese man in a white coat, wearing a helmet with an atom logo on it.

William, Sally and Grace see him... they all yell out in alarm.

William drops his knife. He and Grace stop screaming, but Sally... Sally...

SALLY

(screaming)

AAAAAAAAAAHHHH, AAAAAAAAAAHHHH!!!!

Yoshi panics, he leans against the wall, frightened, deer in headlights, a scared bunny.

SALLY  
 AAAAAAHH! AAAAAHHHH! AHHHHHHHHH!

Paul starts clapping, theatrically.

PAUL  
 Bravo! Bra - fuckin - VO!

SALLY  
 AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 Help, help, help me!

Paul starts whistling.

SALLY  
 AAAAAAAHHH! AHHhhhhhhhhhhhh!  
 (slows down)  
 Ahhhhhhhhhhh....

PAUL  
 Enough Sally, you've made your  
 point. Jamie Lee Curtis eat your  
 heart out. There's a new scream  
 queen in town. My, my, the size of  
 your lungs must match those  
 breasts. Quite the pipes you have.

Sally calms, her chest moves up and down, a beautiful sight.

WILLIAM  
 When did he show up?!

PAUL  
 About two-three minutes ago. Been  
 standing there, looking terrified.  
 (to Yoshi)  
 I guess this must be all so confusing,  
 Yoshi? Believe me, I get it.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 Who are you? Who are you people?  
 Where am I? How did I get here?

WILLIAM  
 How come none of us noticed him?

PAUL  
 Japanese people are very polite,  
 unintrosive.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 Why have you brought me here?

SALLY  
 What's he saying?

PAUL  
 I don't know.

WILLIAM  
 What do you mean you don't know?!

PAUL  
 I don't know Japanese, it's most likely gibberish, I think sounds Japanese. Like your slang, who knows if people really talked like that in the 40s.

SALLY  
 Why doesn't he speak English?

PAUL  
 It was a Japanese movie, I guess, I think he should speak Japanese. I've never heard him speak any other language, wouldn't even know how that would sound. Imagine if I tried to make him speak with a British accent.

GRACE  
 Go ahead.

Paul looks at Grace, then back at Yoshi.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 Answer me! How did I get here? Why are you people keeping me here?  
 (points to Sally)  
 Why is this woman so inappropriately dressed?

Paul looks at Yoshi, leans forward...

PAUL  
 Speak British.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 British? Who's British?



PAUL  
I command you!

YOSHI  
(in Japanese)  
What are you saying? Speak Japanese  
damn it! I don't understand!

PAUL  
(turns to William)  
Speak Spanish. I command you!

William frowns, shakes his head "NO".

WILLIAM  
Sorry.

PAUL  
Shit.

Paul reclines in his chair.

SALLY  
Where did he come from?

PAUL  
Japan.

SALLY  
Ha-ha, figured. Why does he have  
the white coat on?

PAUL  
See that logo on his helmet? FUKAIDO  
power plant. Nuclear technician, an  
engineer.

YOSHI  
(in Japanese, excited)  
Yes, yes, FUKAIDO! What about Fukaido?

PAUL  
Fukaido, number one!

YOSHI  
(in Japanese)  
Producing power for 37% of north Japan.

WILLIAM  
What happens to him, does he die  
like me and Sally? Or is he a noisy  
engineer who gets to live?

PAUL  
 He dies. But, a hero's death.  
 (to Yoshi)  
 Yoshi hero, Yoshi save Japan.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 Hero?

PAUL  
 Yes, Yoshi, big hero. Save all of  
 Japan.

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 I'm Yoshi, me, yes.

Paul gives Yoshi a thumbs up. Yoshi looks on confused... returning a thumbs up of his own.

WILLIAM  
 So, how does he go?

PAUL  
 Exposes himself to radiation in order  
 to stop a nuclear core from melting.

SALLY  
 He's kind of cute. Hi, Yoshi.

Sally waves to Yoshi... who timidly waves back.

WILLIAM  
 If he's a hero, he must be pretty  
 important to his movie.

PAUL  
 Ah, not really. An instrument to show  
 patriotic symbolism. Even in monster  
 movies they often added in some  
 propaganda. Glorify self-sacrifice for  
 a greater good. It's Japan, it's a  
 death culture.

WILLIAM  
 Yoshi, can you understand me?

YOSHI  
 (in Japanese)  
 I am Yoshi, yes. I have no idea  
 what you are saying or who any of  
 you are. None at all.  
 (points to Sally)  
 This floozy is kind of attractive  
 though.

SALLY  
He pointed at me!

PAUL  
What if I shoot one of you?

GRACE  
What?!

SALLY  
Why would you do that?!

PAUL  
(shrugs)  
See what happens. Maybe you'll disappear. I'll put one between the eyes. Quick and painless.

WILLIAM  
I don't think that's such a good idea.

Paul raises his gun.

YOSHI  
(in Japanese)  
Hey, hey, you have a gun! Why do you have a gun?  
(to William)  
He has a gun, do you see that?

PAUL  
I pop one of you. But... who?  
(looks around)  
Grace has been giving me a lot of lip lately.

GRACE  
I have not!

PAUL  
You've been very vocal. How about it Grace? You wanna snack on a bullet or two? Lead sandwich.

WILLIAM  
Take a moment Paul, you're threatening a woman?

PAUL  
(points the gun at Grace)  
She's not a woman, it's been established.

SALLY

I see a woman.

PAUL

(aims at Grace)

I see what someone thought a stereotypical, bitchy, 50s housewife should be like. I filled in some gaps and all in all, she's a job well-done. Don't lie William, I noticed she got to you too, on occasion.

GRACE

I did not! William, tell him.

William looks down.

PAUL

There you go.

GRACE

What is the matter with all of you? A godless, immoral bunch, the lot of you. I won't beg. I wouldn't even think of giving you the satisfaction. If you want to shoot me, shoot me.

PAUL

No rush, lets look over my options.  
 (points the gut at Sally)  
 Sally's pretty to look at.  
 (points it at Billy)  
 Billy is cooperative and accepting of his fate and...  
 (points it at Yoshi)  
 Yoshi, well, Yoshi has got an innocent charm going for him. He's ignorant.

YOSHI

(in Japanese)

Put the gun down. Violence is not the answer.

Paul closes one eye and lines Yoshi at the end of his barrel.

PAUL

Look at him, lovable.

YOSHI

(in Japanese)

Point the gun back at the snarky woman, please, don't point it at me. I have not wronged you.

PAUL  
What do you think, Billy?

WILLIAM  
I dunno. I don't think you'll  
listen even if I do say something.  
(shrugs)  
Shoot --

PAUL  
ARIGATO!

BAM! Gun goes OFF - it RICOCHETS - everyone's frozen still, jaws on the floor - the bullet RICOCHETS again. Paul, instinctively ducks his head... he lifts it to...

EVERYONE looking at Yoshi... who stands still with a hole in his forehead. A drop of blood cascades down from it to his nose, his eyes crossed, try to follow it as it moves off his face. They close... he drops like a sack of potatoes, face first. THUD!

SALLY SCREAMS!!! - GRACE SCREAMS!!! Grace the louder of the two.

WILLIAM  
YOU SHOT HIM! You --

GRACE  
AHHHHHHhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh...

SALLY  
AAAHHHHHHhhhhAAAAahhhh....

The SCREAMING subsides.

PAUL  
I did. You encouraged me. I did not think that was going to play out the way that it did.

William moves over to the body. Blood starts spreading on the wooden floor. The puddle grows, rapidly.

PAUL  
Check his pulse.

WILLIAM  
What good's that gonna do? If it's faint are we gonna drive him to the hospital so he can get better? Nurse him back to health ourselves?

Paul gets up from his chair.

PAUL  
Still. Ah, I'll check.

He walks over, kneels over the body, putting his fingers on Yoshi's neck...

PAUL

Nothing.

GRACE

(in disbelief)

You killed him.

PAUL

Maybe he never had a pulse to begin with. Do feel skin though.

SALLY

So?

PAUL

The big three: tactile, audible and visual hallucinations. I've gone mad in style. Hoooah!

GRACE

Stop trying to condone what you did! You shot him, in cold blood, a defenseless, adorable, Japanese man. Dead for your entertainment.

(realizing)

Oh God, you were going to kill me.

PAUL

(to William)

Can I check your pulse?

WILLIAM

No.

(touches his own neck)

I have one, don't worry.

PAUL

Still want to check.

WILLIAM

If I am what you say I am, even if I have one, how do you know you're not just imagining it?

PAUL

Ahh, you're no fun.

Paul goes to the wall. He looks back at the chair and measures the angle. Inspecting the wall with his eyes, he finds a dent.

PAUL

Bullet must have ricocheted here. If he was there, standing, a real person. The bullet would've most likely gotten stuck in his skull... or at least the trajectory would've changed. It wouldn't have gone clean through and hit the wall in a straight line like that.

GRACE

Stop justifying it to yourself!  
MURDERER!

WILLIAM

(studies the dent)  
Actually, he's right.

GRACE

Why are you agreeing with him? Why are you on his side? Don't you understand? It's us against him. He has the gun! It could have been you, it still could be you.

WILLIAM

(to Paul)  
Why him and not Grace?

GRACE

Don't ignore me! Why not you? Why am I discussed as the only other viable candidate?

PAUL

I wasn't going to understand a thing he said. What use was he? Just gonna stand there mubbling nonsense. Plus, he saved Japan, got his five minutes. Comes from a death culture, I gave him death.

Paul moves around the living room.

SALLY

The blood looks very real?

PAUL

He, looked very real.  
(looks at the body)  
Still does. You all do. I thought he would disappear. You know, as soon as the bullet hit him, puff, like a ghost, gone.

He pops the cylinder of his gun OPEN. A round has been fired.

PAUL

The shot was real... probably.

Paul touches the dent on the wall.

SALLY

Is he going to stay like that,  
bleeding away?

PAUL

What did I say about asking me for  
answers? I have to say though  
Sally, Grace "creamed you" in that  
screamathon you had, a moment ago.  
(looks at Grace)  
Must be all that pent-up suburban  
housewife frustration. PED. Unfair  
advantage.

GRACE

You don't know anything! If I'm  
imaginary than it's your frustration.

WILLIAM

(kneels next to Yoshi)  
I wonder if the blood's gonna start  
to smell?

PAUL

It's funny, never actually smelled  
blood. Thirty-nine and I've never  
smelled blood. Does it even smell?

Paul falls into his chair. Again he leans back closing his eyes.

William pulls a chair over, sits next to him.

SALLY

Are we just going to sit around?

PAUL

I have a deck somewhere. Play some  
cards.

GRACE

I want to leave, now.

PAUL

(opens his eyes)  
That's not a bad idea. We should try  
that. I have an umbrella in the closet.  
Not that you'd need one.



WILLIAM  
You said, "what purpose was he?" --

GRACE  
What closet?

PAUL  
The one behind me.

GRACE  
Open the door.

PAUL  
Open it yourself.

GRACE  
Open the door, please!

PAUL  
I'm not your manservant, do it  
yourself.

(beat)  
Can't open it, can you?

GRACE  
I can.

PAUL  
We're waitin'.  
(short beat)  
Where are the glasses? The water  
you brought the girls, William?

WILLIAM  
They're on the ta --

William turns and sees... no glasses on the table.

WILLIAM  
They were there.

PAUL  
None of you touched anything. Look  
at the towel, Billy.

William's eyes redirect to the chair he previously sat in. A CLEAN  
TOWEL hangs on the armrest. Just like it landed, before.

WILLIAM  
If we are what you say we are, what  
are we doing here? There must be a  
reason. What purpose do we serve?  
I know you don't know. But try!  
(MORE)

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Think, something, somewhere in your subconscious. Think about it. Why do you think we're here?

PAUL

I'm putting in an effort, Billy.

SALLY

Is there something wrong, Paul?

GRACE

He's deeply disturbed. He just killed a man in front of you and you're asking him if there's something wrong?! What's wrong with you?!

PAUL

Door's there Grace. No one with a gun out there.

SALLY

There could be someone with an axe. He looked pretty disturbed.

GRACE

I don't even know where I am?!

PAUL

Then be confused and be quiet.

(short beat)

Better question would be... what's right, Sally?

WILLIAM

Did something happen these past few days? Some kind of trauma, shock, someone die, leave? Was there an accident of some sort?

PAUL

I dunno. I came up here, I was gonna watch a few movies, make a nice dinner, eat it... and, kill myself.

(smiles)

That last part most likely has something to do with it.

SALLY

Why would kill yourself?! Why?

PAUL

Again, it's stupid, redundant to explain myself, to myself.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

I sounded stupid even saying that last sentence. It feels stupid!

WILLIAM

Maybe it'll work like a form of self-analysis. Maybe, that's why you should talk to us, why we're here. To help you see things through conversation.

PAUL

That actually makes sense.

SALLY

Are things really that bad?

GRACE

Why don't you hurry up and do it? You've obviously made up your mind. You came up here, alone, brought a gun. You said it yourself, you're crazy. Why are you postponing it? Put that thing in your mouth and pull the trigger! It's what you want.

SALLY

Shut up, Grace!

Grace sulks up, turns her back.

WILLIAM

You say we're all movie characters, right?

PAUL

Yeah.

WILLIAM

Why movies?

PAUL

What?

WILLIAM

Why do you think we came from movies? Why not a book, painting, a story you once heard? Why not conjure up Snow White and the seven dwarfs, someone from your past?

PAUL

I dunno. I don't read books.

SALLY

You should, there are a few good ones.

PAUL

Too late now. Always partial to movies. You go on an adventure, it lasts ninety minutes, yet, you see so much. Things come full circle. Didn't have many friends growing up, but, the movies where there.

GRACE

(back turned to them)

I believe that.

Sally turns toward Grace, about to say something, passionately --

PAUL

(to Sally)

No, it's fine. That's her character, that's how she's supposed to act. I'm sure she had some function in whatever I saw her in. That's why I like 'em. They're concise. Everything, everyone has a part, a reason. In your five minutes the whole story is established going forward. Crazy guy in a mask is gonna kill young people for no good reason. In Billy's minute and a half, he's used to demonstrate the cruelty of war. War doesn't care if you've made plans. If it's a good movie, things are set-up, paid off, things get interwoven, characters get brought in, others die-off for emotional impact, so on.

SALLY

Why didn't you have friends?

PAUL

I... don't play well with others. I was a shy kid. Is this like a session, are you charging me by the hour?

WILLIAM

Yes. Sally will bill you when we're through. Go on.

PAUL

Sounds fair.

(playfully)

I guess, it all started with The Mercury theater... that was where I saw my first picture. Not on TV, in a real movie theater.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

Father took me, I was six. I remember, there was a pretty big tear in the top left corner of the screen, tiny starlike lights on the ceiling, red chairs and the place smelled of popcorn. We saw "The San Diego Kid". He used to take me every Tuesday after work. I got to pick the movie. When I was eleven, he left. But he wrote, every week, until I turned nineteen. I would get letters in the mail. An envelope with ticket stubs from movies he'd seen. He'd write grades on the back, C+, A-. There would be no letter inside, only stubs. I'd see the movies regardless the grade.

SALLY

Are you in the industry?

PAUL

I'm an investment banker. Do you know what that is, Sally?

SALLY

You invest the bank's money?

PAUL

I gamble, I gamble with other people's money. I put educated, thought-out bets with people's pensions, savings. The people put it in the bank, if they want high risk, I put it on the table... fate rolls the dice.

WILLIAM

At the door you said you were out of luck.

PAUL

I did, and I am. Got... over confident. With success comes confidence, confidence breeds arrogance, and with arrogance - failure.

WILLIAM

You backed the wrong horse?

PAUL

Horses, horses. Bust.

WILLIAM

How much?

PAUL

Ohh, how about you guess?

WILLIAM

About... 80%.

PAUL

Oh, gee-whiz William, I wonder how you could have known that?

GRACE

So you feel guilty?

PAUL

I am guilty. You don't just lose that much money and blame it on circumstances. Someone has to be accountable.

SALLY

They invested. They knew the risk. You didn't lose it on purpose, did you?

PAUL

No. But there were signs.

WILLIAM

So, it is your fault?

PAUL

It's always someone's fault! Every chain of events has a starting point. It's just how much responsibility people claim. Accountability's what's missing in the world today. It's always someone's fault, only the percentage of involvement differs.

WILLIAM

How exactly did you lose it?

PAUL

You know how I lost it, because you're me. Why do you make me repeat all this shit. I have the gun here. You know I'm gonna use it, you know why I'm gonna use it. What do I have left?! I can't look those people in the eye, I can't live with myself.

SALLY

But you didn't do it on purpose, it wasn't all your fault.

PAUL

I don't just invest money. I sell stories. I lie to them, so they give it to me, so I can play it, and we can all win. To them "high risk" doesn't mean anything. Loss of capital, volatility, dividend-paying stock. They are just phrases, they don't understand, they don't want to understand! They just want to win the future I sell them.

(beat)

"He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have."  
You live with a sense of false security. One day, the check comes, you dig in your pocket, and there's nothing there. Who do you blame? You always could have done something more.

WILLIAM

And you think your way out is that gun?

PAUL

I think it's pretty obvious that it's the path I've chosen. I choose not to face the music but your God.

Grace turns around.

GRACE

As long as you have air in your lungs, long as you have your health, you have the potential to do anything. You can get that money back.

PAUL

I'm already fired, they just don't know it yet. I'm too far in.

GRACE

So you're just gonna quit?

PAUL

Yes. If you haven't been following, it's on the agenda, quitting life.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(lifts the gun)  
Ready and everything.

GRACE  
Coward.

PAUL  
I am a coward. Cowards commit suicide.

GRACE  
No, no they don't. Not everyone that commits suicide is a coward. Sometimes people have just had enough, they don't want to go on. That's not being a coward, only you have the right to decide if you want to live. You're a coward because you won't even try to make-up for your mistake. It's easier to quit than to put forward an effort and try to win back what you've lost.

PAUL  
That's great, but how am I gonna do that? I lost most of my own money, no job, no reputation. I can't bear to see 90% of the people I know.

GRACE  
If you explain your intents and plan, maybe they'll understand. Maybe some will understand.

PAUL  
Three years ago, Eric Solomon referred Jack Slone to me. He was 63 at the time, just found out he had cancer. Gave me everything, so I could eventually get enough money to send his three granddaughters to Ivy League schools. Ellen, Marry and Simone. Angela Long, wanted to buy her retired mother a home. She'd never owned one, it was a lifelong dream. Maggie Smart, my college friend wanted to see Europe, hasn't gone on a vacation in nine years.

(beat)  
I could have warned them in time, I could have played it safer. Hundreds of dreams gone, because I got cocky and I didn't pay enough fucking attention!



GRACE

What's done is done. You control what's going to happen next. Do you think I have it easy? Do you think anyone has it easy?

PAUL

You exist for ten mins, that's the span of your life. Ten minutes in a movie and then this. You only exist in my head!

GRACE

Maybe I've existed there for a long, long time. Maybe I have my whole world inside your head.

(beat)

I'm not nosey, Paul. I don't look over at the Samuel's house. Could care less. They're just a couple on the block. Young people that don't know anything about life, hopefully in love. I stare over at the Miller kids, every day. How they play. I watch their innocence. I've always wanted kids... but I'll never get to have any.

SALLY

Why?

GRACE

I may exist in your head, but there, my ovaries don't work. I'm thirty and will be childless my whole life. Whether three minutes on your TV screen or sixty years in my life. My husband resents me for it. After two years of marriage I found out that if he knew I was infertile, he would have never married me. He won't divorce me. So, he comes home every day, barely talks, eats what I cook him and sleeps in another room. The highlight of my day is watching those kids across the street, watching the zest in their eyes. I know guilt and I know pain.

Grace pulls up her dress and pulls down her panty-hose. It reveals her thigh... it's all scarred from straight cuts - self-inflicted.

GRACE

Wrists and arms are in plain sight,  
no one looks over here.

She lowers her dress. Everyone's quiet.

PAUL

I'm sorry, Grace.

GRACE

I don't want your pity, sympathy.

PAUL

No, you have that. But I'm not  
sorry for it. I'm sorry for this.

BAM! - Paul shoots Grace, clean to the head. She drops from her  
chair to the floor, DEAD. Blood leaks out, it spreads.

Sally and William jump up in excitement.

SALLY

AAAAHHHh --

GUN pointed at Sally -- who stops mid-scream.

PAUL

We're all well aware of your  
talents.

Sally closes her mouth. Paul lowers the gun... groans.

WILLIAM

(in shock)

Why'd you do it?

PAUL

I can't listen to any more sappy  
shit. I'm depressed enough. She  
didn't enjoy being here, she's gone  
to a better place. I'm gonna go  
have that drink now.

Paul gets up and approaches the cabinet. Sally and William's stares  
follow him, quiet. He takes a sip from his long overdue bourbon.

PAUL

She really killed the mood with her  
little speech, huh? Infertile bitch.  
I don't have kids and I'm gonna die,  
you don't see me whining.

SALLY

You'll shoot the both of us at some  
point, aren't you?

PAUL  
(looks at Sally)  
I can't predict the future.

Paul chugs the glass and allows himself a refill.

WILLIAM  
You a drinker, Paul?

PAUL  
I used to be, picked it back up these past few days. Normally, I barely touch the stuff, barely have time.

WILLIAM  
You sure have a lot in stock.

PAUL  
It was here to prove my resolve. Now, it's available for consumption.

Paul chugs another glass and turns.

SALLY  
It's not our fault Grace got you mad.

PAUL  
You feel a sense of danger in the air, Sally?

SALLY  
I think you've already done things you regret and you might do more.

PAUL  
Ohh, I know all about that. What do you plan on doing about it?

WILLIAM  
You have the gun.

PAUL  
You have a knife. It's not an equivalent, but it gives you a shot.

SALLY  
Why did you get so mean?

PAUL  
(agitated)  
I'm not mean! I'm just exploring options in the situation I've found myself in. You are a part of me, why don't you have a better understanding about all of this?

BAM! - Paul shoots William in the stomach, who... doubles over onto the couch, wincing in pain, bleeding up the piece of furniture.

SALLY

Ahh --

Paul and Sally share a look... she wouldn't dare.

Sally looks at William then turns in fear at Paul.

PAUL

Sally, there's a knife over there,  
behind the chair, would you be a  
sweetheart and get it.

Sally, terrified, frozen still.

PAUL

Sally.

WILLIAM

(grunting)

Do it, Sally.

Sally goes to get the knife.

PAUL

Does it hurt?

WILLIAM

There's a tingle.

PAUL

Sorry.

WILLIAM

(holding his bleeding stomach)  
Copper.

PAUL

What's that?

WILLIAM

Smells like copper.

PAUL

Thanks. Must've read it somewhere.

Sally stands over William, knife in hand.

PAUL

Remove it from its holster.

She does, slowly... the blade comes out... shining.

**INT. GAME SHOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS**

Suddenly, the cabin has transformed into a jeopardy-type soundstage. A shiny, colorful studio, complete with a crowd made up of cardboard cutouts that stand in for real people.

Powerful, bright lights scald skin below them. Cutouts of beautiful, vibrantly-dressed models are also in place around the set.

Paul is now in a nice dark suit. His hair is slicked back.

PAUL

Good. Game show time. Welcome, both of you to... "Decision of the day". Now, contestant Sally, you are faced with two choices. Option A: you ram that thing in Billy's neck and we see what happens. For which you'll get a prize consisting solely of my promise not to shoot you in the head. Tempting. Option B: which I think William will find more appealing. Is you running up and putting that blade in my stomach. The prize remains undefined, pending the outcome.

SALLY

What?!

PAUL

We're covering new ground here, Sally. These are exciting times! Can you kill him, can you hurt me? What's gonna happen next? We'll find out after the commercial break. I'm the bad guy here, the obvious option is me. But, you got to figure William here is done for, one way or another. Be selfish, think about your future.

WILLIAM

(holding his stomach)

He's right, do it Sally... kill me.

SALLY

No.

PAUL

I'm giving him a new reason for existing. He can sacrifice himself for the good of another. He can be like Yoshi.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

That's got to have more meaning than being potshotted and dangled from a tree.

WILLIAM

Do it... Sally. I want you to do it.

PAUL

See, he wants a bigger sense of purpose.

SALLY

I'm not playing.

Sally throws the knife on the floor. CLANG. It lands.

**INT. CABIN/ LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Everything is back to what it was like before.

SALLY

(to Paul)

I really liked you, twenty minutes ago.

PAUL

I still like you.  
(lowers his gun)  
William, pain growing?

WILLIAM

I'm hurting.

PAUL

You want a drink to manage the suffering?

WILLIAM

I'm dying for one.

William chuckles... Paul does too. They start laughing... it grows.

Paul STOPS --

PAUL

How about you just die.

BAM! - Paul shoots William in the head.

SALLY's face strains, holding back the urge, itching to, badly.

PAUL

I know you want to. It's allowed.

SALLY  
 (relieved)  
 Thank you.  
 (screaming)  
 AAAAAAAAAAHHHHH! AAAAaahhhhh!

Paul pours himself another drink.

SALLY  
 AHHHHHHH! AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

He downs the glass, standing, looking at the ceiling, enjoying the show. His eyes are watery, glazed.

SALLY  
 AAAAAAAAAA! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh....

PAUL  
 (to himself)  
 Sing... sing.

SALLY  
 AAAAAHHHHH... Ahhh... Ahhhhh...

The screaming dies down. Paul turns. Sally's finished.

PAUL  
 Run out of breath?

SALLY  
 My throat hurts.  
 (beat)  
 Do it... quickly.

PAUL  
 No, Sally, no, why would I? You're  
 all I have left.

SALLY  
 Promise?

PAUL  
 Scout's honor. Now, be of some use  
 and take your top off, please.

SALLY  
 What?!

PAUL  
 Your shirt, remove it, please.

SALLY  
 Why?

PAUL

I think I'll like you better without it. You're a fantasy, why not make it a better fantasy and have you naked. I want you to be the best that you can be, Sally. For you and me.

SALLY

I don't wanna take my top off.

PAUL

You're suppose to be an easy girl. Why are you resisting? I asked nicely.

SALLY

You're scaring me, more then before.

PAUL

You have good reason.  
(looks on at the bodies)  
Evidence speaks for itself.

SALLY

I don't want to. Please don't make me.

PAUL

You've got it, flaunt it. Sally, let's not argue. I am in no mood. What good can come of it?

Sally stares on at Paul, frighten as she... slowly and shyly begins taking her top off. It's seductive in a way. Breathing excitedly, chest pulsating, body glistening from sweat. Quite the image.

Tank top and bra find their way onto the floor. Paul ogles her perfect breasts.

PAUL

Oh, my.

Sally stands uncomfortable, nude, somewhat fidgeting.

SALLY

It's cold, I'm cold. What do you want me to do now?

PAUL

Nothing, stand there and look beautiful. You are a marvel to behold.

(sits)

If I shoot you, you die.

(points the gun at himself)

I shoot me... you die. In theory, this doesn't work out for you no matter how you slice it.

(MORE)



PAUL (CONT'D)

I'd say, your best bet is to persuade me from doing what I intend to do. Present your case, Sally.

SALLY

How do I do that?

PAUL

Think of this as a court room. I'm the judge, jury is William, Grace, the Jap is the opposition. Opening statement. You're the attorney for my life. Defend it! A female, Johnnie Cochran.

SALLY

Who?

PAUL

Let's start with, why should I live? What do I have to look forward to? How do I make things all better? GO!

Sally looks on in confusion, not knowing what to say.

SALLY

You have your health.

PAUL

You need to come up with something better or I won't have it at all.

SALLY

(frustrated)

I dunnooooo.

(beat)

Do you have a girlfriend, a wife?

PAUL

No.

SALLY

Think about all the people that'll mourn you, they'll be devastated.

PAUL

Not many of those. Even if they were around, it's selfish of them to want me to go on suffering, just because they don't want to mourn me. Fuck them. Come on, do better, you said you did good in school, use your college education.

SALLY

I lied. I dropped out this semester, didn't pass a single class. Got a job at Wendy's, start on Tuesday.

PAUL

Oh, my. I see Playboy in your future. Come on, apply yourself, how are you going to earn that centerfold spread?

SALLY

I'm trying. I am. You're not going to shoot me now are you?

PAUL

No. I promised. It's not your fault you're dumb, it's mine. I made you.

SALLY

I'm sorry.

PAUL

Don't be.

Paul walks to the door. He starts unlocking it.

SALLY

What are you doing?

PAUL

It's late Sally, time to go home.

SALLY

What?

PAUL

I'm going to have to ask you to leave. I'm running low on firewood and I want get some shut-eye.

SALLY

I can't go out there.

Paul OPENS the door.

PAUL

Perfectly safe.

SALLY

No, no, he still might be out there.

PAUL

No one's out there but mother nature taking a shower.

SALLY

Please, please, don't make me go out.  
I'll be quiet. I'll get naked. I'll  
take my panties off, you'll like that.

Sally starts to undress, slipping out of her underwear.

PAUL

No, don't do that. I'm not some  
pervert.

(yells)

Sally, STOP!

SALLY

There.

Panties descent to the central rug, Sally stands over them. Nude,  
full frontal.

SALLY

I'll do anything you want. Please,  
Paul. I'll do anything. I'm easy.

PAUL

(points the gun at her)

I'm tired.

(through his teeth)

You have to leave.

Sally starts crying.

PAUL

Tears won't get you sympathy. You  
know what happened last time it was  
discussed.

Sally plods to the door.

SALLY

Don't make me go --

PAUL

Stop crying! Those tears aren't  
real, you don't exist!

She stops in front of the door. Puppy-dog stare, glossy eyes,  
tears rolling down.

SALLY

Pleaseee...

Paul shakes his head - NO.

Sally walks onto the porch. Few steps in, she turns, facing Paul on  
the other side of the doorway. Naked. Still raining outside.

Paul peers on at the young girl. CLOSES the door in her face. LOCKS IT!

Beat. Her voice through the door...

SALLY (O.S.)  
It's so cold, I'm shaking. I can't stop shaking. Let me in, please. I'll be good, quiet. I won't bother you. I'll sit in the corner and wait.

Paul grabs his glass, sits down in his chair, groping his drink.

SALLY (O.S.)  
Paul, you're a good person, you have to let me in. I know you will. I'll get sick. After I come back in, we'll make love. I want to. Don't leave me out here. He'll get me, I know he will. I may be dumb and naive but I don't deserve to die. I've never hurt anyone. I never hurt you.

He takes a sip as he looks on at the fire.

PAUL  
(softly)  
Be quiet.

SALLY (O.S.)  
Oh my god! Something just moved near the trees. Something's moving. He coming Paul, I know he is.

(beat)  
I SEE HIM! IT'S HIM! HE'S COMING!  
OPEN THE DOOR!  
(she bangs on the door)  
OPEN THE DAMN DOOOOOR. PAUUUL!  
(crying)  
HE'S WALKING TOWARD THE HOUSE...  
OPEN IT! PAUL, HELP MEEEE, PLEASE,  
HELP MEEEEEEEE!!!

FOOTSTEPS are audible. They sink and raise from the muddy ground then move onto the porch. Step... step... step.

SALLY (O.S.)  
Please. I don't deserve this. Don't kill me. No, no, no... I beg you.  
(beat)  
AAAAAAAhhhh... aaaaahhhh! Ahhhh!

Sally SCREAMS -- CRACK... something HITS the porch.

A THUMP - then a SCREAM; THUMP - SCREAM; THUMP - a fainter SCREAM;  
THUMP - no scream - THUMP... silence.

Paul enthralled by the fire.

FOOTSTEPS are made out through the door, they grow vaguer, gone.

The firewood cracks. The flames dance.

Paul seems distant, tired... a defeated man.

PAUL

(silently, singing)

You fought hard and you saved and  
earned. But all of it's going to  
burn. And your mind, your tiny mind,  
you know you've been so blind. Now's  
your time, burn your mind. You're  
falling far too far behind. Oh...  
you're gonna burn.

THE FIRE - yellow, red and orange fight each other.

PAUL

One more...  
(looks at his gun)  
for the road.

Paul stands up and saunters over to the cabinet, again. Refills his  
drink, catching his faint reflection in the light brown bourbon...  
it angers him. Face tenses up.

He grabs the bottle and hurls it at the fireplace. It goes inside  
it - BREAKS - the flames grow, momentarily --

RON (O.S.)

A man shouldn't treat good liquor  
like that. It's a waste.

Paul turns to a shadowy figure seated in the corner.

RON

I look around. You've been busy.

PAUL

It's... been entertaining.

Paul takes a slug.

RON

Must have worn yourself out, look  
like shit. What's that you got there?

PAUL

Kentucky's finest, straight.

RON

Well, aren't you gonna offer?

(no answer)

This is your home? I am a guest.

PAUL

A guest is invited. Don't remember extending you that courtesy.

RON

I'm sorry. Must've invited myself. This is a nice little spree you've been on, piling up bodies. One, two, three. Made quite the mess.

PAUL

(takes a drink)

Is that what beckoned you over?

RON

It is, and honestly, I feel unwelcome already. I see that this might be a bad time, I see you looking as fucked up as you do and the circumstance being what they are, it's still no excuse for being this discourteous. Letting me drool over your fine collection, not allowing a taste. That's some sadistic shit.

PAUL

(puts a hand on his chest)

Soul's hurting, hence the exterior, Ron.

RON

Oh, so you know who I am. That's good. I assume you've figured out that finding my black ass in this here raggedy chair is a sign that you probably haven't made all the right choices, especially those made lately.

PAUL

No one's perfect. You know, I use to look up to you... then again, I was twelve at the time. You gonna explode on me Ron? Is the "Da BOMB" gonna go off?!

RON

No point in me being here otherwise.

PAUL

Exploding on motherfuckers since 1972. It would be a privilege to be on the receiving end. I'll give you your due though. Oozed machismo, confidence, plus, you banged every half-decent broad you shared the screen with. What was there not to love?

RON

Ron does love to get his freak on. Do love flattery too and while what you just said makes Ron feel all fuzzy inside, it don't make any bit of difference as to why I'm here. You give me my due, but I'm here to do, the work I was paid to do.

PAUL

(takes another drink)  
You're too big a player for my table.

Paul guaffs his thirst and throws the glass into the fire.

RON

I don't discriminate.

PAUL

Why did you show up last then?

RON

Got to save the best for last, baby. If you're important enough, people will wait, anticipation will grow. I'm the cherry on your cake. I'm ain't no fat lady... but, I'm here to sing.

PAUL

What's that you got rested on your knee? .357?

RON

(smiles)

Word gets around, huh? You're dead on. I got it aimed at that fat melon of yours, can't miss. Was a pretty good shot in the army. Could probably give your eyebrows a little trim.

PAUL

I got me a plain old .38.

RON  
You any good with it?

PAUL  
3-0 today. You don't think there's  
a possibility we can talk this out?

RON  
I ain't hosting no debate. Don't  
negotiate.

PAUL  
Everything in life's a negotiation.

RON  
Even when someone has a gun pointed  
at your head?

PAUL  
Just means you got to make your  
counterargument quicker and more  
convincing.  
(beat)  
You like westerns, Ron?

RON  
Love'em.

PAUL  
High Noon, Rio Bravo, Rio Grande,  
Stagecoach...

RON  
I'm into that Italian shit myself.  
All due respect to our own, I am a  
patriot, but, it's a question of taste.

PAUL  
I understand. Do you hear it?

RON  
Hear what?

Faint drums are beginning to be heard.

PAUL  
The music...

tan... tan-tan... tan... tan-tan... tan...

RON  
It's starting to come in.

Enio Mariocnone type music. A tune is whistled calmly, downtempo.



PAUL  
Mood's getting set... showdown.

Paul pivots - now, standing opposite Ron - facing him.  
Guitar strings are pulled... tum -tum -tum...

RON  
Mano-a-mano. Gun vs Gun. Dust's  
settled, street's empty. I love the  
purity of it all. One on One, with  
one leaving.

A TRUMPET takes over.

PAUL  
I got to lift, point and pull. You  
just gotta pull.

RON  
Life ain't fair, amigo. But, since  
you're a fan, I'll give you a lift.

PAUL  
I'm grateful for the opportunity.

Drums - guitars - tan-tan-tan - vocals: AAAAAAA - violins...

RON  
It's gonna go through your brain,  
won't feel shit, be grateful for that.

CU on Paul's eyes.

PAUL  
You think I'm at a disadvantage,  
you being in the dark?

CU on Ron's eyes.

RON  
Darkness is there to be illuminated,  
light me up partner.

Tension grows, music builds, louder... faster.

PAUL  
This ain't no movie. No one's gonna  
write your triumph for you.

RON  
It's still gonna be perfect, baby.

The music kicks into final gear... TRUMPET!

PAUL  
I don't even have to hit you, I  
just have to believe hard enough  
that I did.

RON  
Stop stalling and draw.

PAUL  
No matter what happens, I win,  
either way. I get what I want. What  
do you want, Ron?

CU on Ron's eyes.

RON  
For you, to draw.

Music gets louder - trumpets get louder - marching drum keeps pace.

PAUL  
And then?

RON  
You hit the floor and I go home.

CU on Paul.

PAUL  
You know, Ron --

FREEZE FRAME... Paul LIFTS his gun - MUSIC STOPS - Ron shoots - BAM!  
FREEZE FRAME... Paul shoots - BAM!

Paul drops to the floor. Ron falls from his chair, out of the shadow,  
into the light - FREEZE... both lay still... until...

RON  
You motherfucker! You shot me. You  
shot me in the leg. Ahh... fuck you.

Ron holds his leg, flapping around on the floor like a fish out of  
water. The gun has left his hand.

Paul lifts himself up... fine... no bullet wounds.

PAUL  
(confused)  
You shot. You shot at me?!

RON  
I missed! I missed?! I never miss.  
You lucky fucker you got me, got me  
in the shin. Damn, this shit hurts  
like a mother!

Paul looks at the wall behind him... sees a bullet mark where the bullet ricocheted.

PAUL  
(bewildered)  
You shot at me, how did you shoot  
at me?

RON  
I pulled the trigger! How the fuck  
did I miss?!

PAUL  
You're not supposed to be able to shoot.  
You're not real, how could you shoot?!

Paul looks on at the wall.

RON  
Call 911. We need to get the bullet  
out. It's stuck in the bone. Oh  
Jesus, I've never been shot before.

PAUL  
I can't remember if you've ever  
been punched before.

RON  
Man, call 911 and get me some towels,  
I'm bleeding like a stuck pig, shit's  
pouring out. Do it for your floor, if  
not for me, I'm painting it red.

Paul walks over and studies the trajectory of the bullet.

He contemplates something. Pops open the cylinder of his revolver...  
all six shots have been fired.

PAUL  
(smiles)  
Fired at myself.

RON  
What?!

PAUL  
I fired at you, then I must've  
turned the gun and fired in my  
direction.  
(points the gun at the chair)  
Bam. Turn.  
(turns the gun on himself)  
Bam. I wasn't even aware while  
doing it, nor do I remember.

RON

Man, I fired at your ass. You're crazy.

PAUL

Very much so, apparently.  
 (looks at the gun)  
 I don't have any more bullets.

RON

Good! Now, call an ambulance.

PAUL

I only needed the one.

RON

(looks at his wound)  
 This shit's deep! I can see white, I see the bone. Oh god, it's so pearly fucking white, why is it so white? I'm gonna pass out.  
 (looks at the floor)  
 Look at all this blood.  
 (he starts to puke)  
 Ahhhh. Ahhhh.

PAUL

Get a grip.

Ron wipes his mouth, wincing in pain.

RON

What grip?! I'm dying here. This shit's gonna get infected. I'm gonna lose the leg. Oh, sweet Jesus help me, help meee. I call upon thee.

PAUL

(to himself)  
 I'm too big of a pussy to use a knife.

RON

What?! Knife?! You win, man. I give up. Don't carve my ass up like no Thanksgiving turkey. You're the better man. Showdown's over, towel is in, down goes Ron, down goes Roooon...

PAUL

Rope.

Paul EXITS the room. Ron starts to cry --

RON  
Oh shit, he's gonna strangle my  
black ass.

NOISE from the kitchen, Paul fumbles through drawers and cabinets.

RON  
Don't do it, man. Don't make me go  
out like a bitch.

Paul REENTERS, carrying a rope. He looks to the ceiling. Ron sobs on the floor.

PAUL  
Be quiet.

Paul grabs a chair, pulling it under a hanging ceiling beam. He throws the rope over... tying a noose as soon as it comes down.

RON  
You gonna hang me up in your living  
room, like a fucking Christmas  
ornament?! You're one twisted fuck.

PAUL  
(finishes up the noose)  
It's for me.

RON  
You?!

PAUL  
Yeah.

RON  
Man, at least call 911 before you do  
that shit. Help a brother out. Least  
tell me where the phone is at.

PAUL  
There is no phone.

RON  
NO PHONE! How the fuck am I gonna  
get help?!

Paul gets up on the chair, stands, holding the noose in hand.

RON  
Hey man, listen to me. Don't you put  
that rope around your neck. Think  
about it. There are better ways. You  
can work through whatever shit it is  
you're going through.

PAUL

No. This is pretty much it.

Paul ties the rope to the beam, making a knot.

RON

If you go, I might die too. You wanna go out with the thought, that you just killed...

(looks around the room)

sheiiit... another human being.

Three's enough. You can help me out. I can be your redemption, your last saving grace before you leave this world. Then, kill yourself, but buy your ticket to heaven first.

Paul pulls down on the rope. It's tied firmly.

PAUL

The ever possible path to my redemption is something I will not be embarking on today. Don't possess the strength to go on that journey --

DRUMMM! The chair wobbles. The whole house is rattled. DRUMMM!

RON

The fuck is that?!

DRUMM!!! A rumble, everything shakes. Paul grips the rope, chary.

RON

Fuckin' earthquake.

DRUMMMMM!!! - the chair tips from under Paul's feet. He clenches the rope with his right hand... his body weight's too much... it slips - he falls - landing badly.

Paul, YELLS OUT... collar bone, broken.

He screams in agony on the floor. The ground RUMBLES, again.

RON

You hurt yourself? Ha-ha, now we're square. Screaming like a little bitch, who's the bitch now? Both of us rolling around like little princesses.

DRUMMM! Ground shakes, stronger.

RON

The fuck kind of earthquake is this?

PAUL  
 It's not --  
 (ground shakes)  
 ...an earthquake.

RON  
 Fuck is it then? On, off, on off.

The ground shakes, again.

PAUL  
 Yoshi.

RON  
 Who?

Another wobble, a stronger one. They intensify with each one.

PAUL  
 Whale gorilla of the ocean.

Another wobble.

RON  
 The what?! Fuck you yapping about?

PAUL  
 Yoshi's friend.

Wobble.

RON  
 Who the fuck's Yoshi?

PAUL  
 I've got to see this.

Wobble, strongest one yet. Paul stands up, hurting.

RON  
 Where do you think you're going?

PAUL  
 Window.

Wobble. Ground shakes as Paul trudges to the window.

He grabs the curtain... waits... the ground remains still. Hesitates about pulling it.

Silence, stillness. Ron anticipates something. Paul slowly pulls the curtain over revealing...

A HUGE REPTILIAN EYE.

Paul stares at it in awe. THE EYE BLINKS.

PAUL  
Awe-someeee.

The pupil moves. Ron sees it... SCREAMS!

Paul pulls back the curtain.

RON  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!  
What in God's name was that?

PAUL  
He's gone now.

RON  
The fuck you mean he's gone?

PAUL  
Gone. No longer present.

Paul leans on the fireplace.

RON  
I saw it. I saw that fucking eye.  
That motherfucker must have been  
Empire State Building big. Shit that  
huge doesn't just disappear! He didn't  
look like no Houdini. He looked liked  
he could eat 300 Houdinies. You know  
he's gonna step on the house, turn us  
into pancakes or some shit, right?  
Motherfucker ain't gone!

PAUL  
My collar bone's broken. I can't  
lift my shoulder, arm's limp.  
(to himself)  
It keeps growing, bigger, bigger.

RON  
What's getting bigger and bigger? You  
ain't getting no bigger than that.

PAUL  
(smirks)  
Think, I get it. I wanna live.

RON  
Hey, I wanna live too, but you ain't  
helping.

PAUL  
No, I'm trying to stop myself.



RON  
From what?

PAUL  
Death.

RON  
I ain't stopping you. I was here to help you, but now I need a little help. Help me, then go on your date with the Reaper.

PAUL  
Where's your gun?

RON  
What?

PAUL  
The gun, your gun. Where did it go?

RON  
It slid of somewhere.

Paul looks around... finds it... kicks it over to Ron.

PAUL  
Grab it.

Ron picks it up, bit timorously.

PAUL  
Shoot me.

RON  
Man, how the fuck am I going to live if I shoot you?

PAUL  
Do it.

RON  
I don't want to. I need you to drive me to a hospital.

PAUL  
I ain't driving you nowhere, shoot.

RON  
No.

Paul throws his house keys on the floor.

PAUL

My car keys, drive yourself to the hospital after you're finished.

RON

Man, those are your house keys. You don't think I know that?!

PAUL

It's not cause you won't, it's cause you can't.

RON

I can.

PAUL

Do it then, pull the trigger.

RON

You ain't gonna bait me with this reverse psychology bullshit. I ain't a fucking child.

PAUL

Then do it! Shoot! Bitch! Fag!

RON

Oh, you didn't just call me a BITCH AND A FAG?!

PAUL

You faggy, lazy ass, gay, nigger bitch.

Ron looks at Paul. Fire in his eyes.

PAUL

Watermelon's on ice, booooooy.

Flames rise, Ron bites down on his lip and squeezes the trigger... nothing, the gun doesn't go off.

PAUL

See.

Ron squeezes the trigger again... nothing... again... nothing... again... nothing.

RON

It's jammed.

PAUL

Revolvers don't jam.

Ron tries to fire again... no dice.

RON  
Shit ain't working.

PAUL  
Survival instinct, Ron. I've gone insane to keep from killing myself. You can't kill me. I can't kill me, that's the point of all this. That's your reason for being, why you're here.

RON  
Motherfucker, I came here to kill you. I wanna kill you. Believe you me, I want to. My shit's jammed!

PAUL  
I don't think that's the case.

Ron points the gun at himself.

RON  
Shit's not working.  
(looks down the barrel)  
It's jamm --

Ron squeezes the trigger - BAM! - gun fires, blows his head off.

PAUL  
Told you so.

Ron's body lays on the floor, the room enriched with brain decor, a bloody mess.

Paul WALKS OUT of the living room.

IN THE KITCHEN

Opens a drawer and looks at a knife.

He starts humming a disco tune... D - I - S - C - O. The humming turns into real music, the beat picks up...

Paul grabs the knife.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Paul REENTERS. The blade's held between the bite of his teeth. He rolls up the sleeve of his injured arm, grimacing in the process. It hurts like hell.

D - I - S - C - O..... D - I - S - C - O...

He hovers the sharp blade over his wrist... contemplating.

PAUL

Pussy.

Throws the knife away and lifts his head - ALL THE BODIES ARE GONE!

No Yoshi, Grace, William, Ron... no blood, no sign that they were there at all.

PAUL

Puff... magic.

A DISCO BALL descends from the ceiling. A checkered pattern lights up, forming a dynamic dance floor. D - I - S - C - O.

Paul unlocks the front door with his good hand. He pulls it OPEN. The rain has stopped. Dodge Challenger parked outside.

It's grey, dawn has began and it's making way for morning.

**EXT. CABIN - DAWN**

Paul steps into the muddy ground, his feet sink in the wet earth.

He looks over at the TOOLSHED, 50 feet away. Reaches it - LOCKED. Key padlock.

AN ARROW comes flying out of nowhere from behind, penetrating the toolshed door. It halfway goes through it. Another follows.

Paul KICKS OPEN the door - SPLINTERS FLY. He pays no attention to the arrows that keep flying in his direction. Not one hitting him, all barely missing.

He exits the toolshed holding a ladder, looking down.

More arrows fall near his feet and soar by his head. Native American WAR CRIES begin to be audible.

Paul walks over to the cabin, carrying the ladder --

SPEARS fly by. Some get stuck in the ground before his feet. ZULU WARRIORS make noise.

British muskets are fired. POW! POW!

Paul zoned out... looks up for a moment to see - THE GRIM REAPER

GRIM REAPER

Paul, can we reschedule? I've got a racquetball match in 30 minutes.

Paul looks down again, head kept down until he arrives at the cabin.

He adjusts the ladder so he can climb the roof. He positions it, sticking it in the mud, so it won't budge.

More arrows, spears, bullets and WAR CRIES of all different cultures are heard.

Paul puts one foot on the ladder -- and all the noises stop.

Everything is silent... calm. He climbs a step, then another and another. Almost halfway, when -- WRRAAAAAAAAAA!!! A MONSTER'S ROAR!

Paul's hair blows and his body rattles by the deafening sound.

He climbs two more steps when -- WRRAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!!

An even stronger ROAR! It ECHOES. He loses balance... the ladder moves... Paul grabs the rain gutter with his good hand.

The ladder falls to the ground while Paul dangles holding his whole body with the strength of his left arm.

He tries to push up... can't.

More WAR CRIES, arrows, spears and ROARS!!!

He tries to lift his body and get his leg onto the gutter.

The SOUNDS grow LOUDER, unbearable levels.

He lifts up and tries to swing his leg over... almost there --

ANOTHER ROAR!

The leg finds its way onto the roof gutter. One hand and leg on it, Paul pulls himself up and rolls his body over on the roof. Breathing heavy, exhausted... THE NOISES ABRUPTLY STOP.

ON THE ROOF

Paul lays still on his back, looking up at the sky. Dawn is coming to an end.

PAUL  
It's so peaceful.

He looks on in wonder, birds chirp, the air is clear. He looks over and sees... SALLY, sitting nude on the roof. Knees below her chin, arms wrapped around them.

PAUL  
(looks back up)  
Thought you left?

SALLY  
Nope.

PAUL  
 It's such a pale shade. Calming.  
 (to Sally)  
 He come?

SALLY  
 No, I faked it.

PAUL  
 Damn fine acting Sally, too bad I  
 was your only audience.

SALLY  
 It served its purpose.

Paul stands up.

PAUL  
 The sun's going to rise in a bit.  
 Wanna watch it with me?

SALLY  
 Okay.

PAUL  
 I love how it smells after rain.

Paul closes his eyes, takes a wiff of air. His eyebrows raise and a smile forms. A look of satisfaction overcomes his face.

PAUL  
 Got to appreciate the little  
 things. Sometimes you just need to  
 close your eyes and say: I'm alive  
 and able to this. Savor the moment,  
 tomorrow isn't guaranteed.  
 (looks back at Sally)  
 I do love this smell.

SALLY  
 It's bacteria in the soil.

Paul sits next to Sally, eyes on the horizon.

PAUL  
 I know, everything you know, I know.

SALLY  
 When are you gonna jump?

PAUL  
 I wanna see the sunrise first.

SALLY  
 What if you make it?

PAUL

Lets be a little optimistic. There's a patch of concrete over there. If me jumping on my head doesn't work. I should just kill myself.

(Sally grins)

I think I've earned a bit of luck, even if a part of me doesn't want to go.

SALLY

I don't want to go.

PAUL

(looks at Sally)

I'm sorry... it's time.

The rim of sun starts to slowly rise from below a mountain peek. It sticks out behind it, spreading light, pinkish glow.

PAUL

Always wanted to come up here when I was little. Dunno why I never did later on, guess I forgot.

SALLY

I like how it isn't that tall, yet, you can see the trees stretch out, like a long carpet.

PAUL

(smiles)

Ha-ha... Yeah.

SALLY

It's beautiful, don't quit.

PAUL

You're a fighter, Sally. You're that part of me.

(short beat)

No one writes happy endings anymore. Everyone's so damn sophisticated, happy's cheap. Bleak endings are in. Deal with "the realities of life". Hard to do a happy ending now. People just don't appreciate it.

SALLY

You're going out on a downer.

PAUL

Billy was right, there's always a choice. I am taking the easy way out.

SALLY  
 (looks at the sun)  
 I don't judge.

Paul turns towards Sally...

PAUL  
 Thank --

She isn't there anymore.

PAUL  
 (to himself)  
 Thank you.

The sun rises... it hits Paul's eyes, he squints.

Sunrays start to crawl over his face, it lights him up, as does the smiles he puts on.

He lifts himself off the roof. The sun grows stronger, more and more. He approaches the ledge, looking on at the wilderness that surrounds him... then up at the sky.

His eyes closes for a final time.

PAUL  
 Camera pulls back...

The CAMERA pulls back.

PAUL  
 As music comes in...

Soft, instrumental music starts to play.

PAUL  
 Wide shot. Me in the foreground,  
 sun in the distance.

Everything is as Paul describes it.

PAUL  
 I am a silhouette, outlined by light.  
 (he is)  
 Music grows.  
 (it does)  
 Thum... thum... thum... the end.

He falls off the ledge. WHITE LIGHT ENGULFS THE SCREEN.

**THE END**