

COUNTERFACTUAL

by

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SHOOTING SCRIPT
Enlightenment Studios - 2009

A white rag scrubs the smooth grey dashboard of a Honda Prelude.

A tan, clean-cut young man stares out the passenger window. His thumb taps to the beat of a Christian rock song on the radio.

In the driver's seat, a chunky blond kid polishes the immaculate interior of the car. *

JONAH

Keep obsessing. I'm sure it'll get cleaner.

Cody stops wiping and punches a button on the console. The music stops. *

CODY

Just come to the freakin party. I mean, it's... probably not even going to be a kegger. *

JONAH

I told you. I have to watch Genevieve.

CODY

You're an eighteen-year-old man. That's too old to be in the Babysitter's Club. *

Jonah stares at a pink butterfly net on the grass. Winces in realization.

JONAH

Shit! I was supposed to pick her up today... like two hours ago. *

CODY

From school?

Jonah grits his teeth and nods gravely.

CODY (CONT'D)

She probably just got a ride from one of her friends' hot soccer moms. Relax.

JONAH

My dad's gonna saw my hands off.

CODY

So you got some ice cream between classes. Big deal. Only women go to hell for stuff like that.

Jonah scoffs.

CODY (CONT'D)

Genevieve's what, five, six years old? You have your whole life to watch her. Girls like Nora, who, coincidentally, will be there tonight? You only get one chance.

JONAH

What are you, reading Cosmo now? *

CODY

(smiling)

Gotta know thine enemy...

Jonah smiles. Grabs a bottle of water from the cup holder. Steps out of the car.

2 CARPENTER DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS 2

Jonah waves with his water as Cody backs out.

JONAH

Seven thirty.

Jonah pads up the walkway sipping his water. Stops.

Jonah cranes his neck to listen. We HEAR a WOMAN SCREAMING from inside the house. *

*

Jonah sprints up the steps, through the front door into-

3 THE CARPENTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 3

Where he bounds up several stairs and freezes. He backs down the stairs, bending to peer down the hallway. Pieces of a cordless phone litter the kitchen floor. Beside the mess, two high-heeled feet writhe in agony.

Jonah moves slowly down the hallway to the

KITCHEN

Where a massive man has his huge arms wrapped tightly around a hysterical woman. Neither notice Jonah.

JONAH

What...?!

The man looks up at Jonah with tears streaming down his face. He tries to speak but only a short sob escapes. He tries again, angrily forcing control of his voice.

RON

Veevie's dead, Jonah. She's dead!
Where were you today?

An ALARM CLOCK SCREECHES obnoxiously.

*

4

INT. BEN'S DORM ROOM - LATE MORNING

4

A shaggy-haired adolescent is passed out on the floor. His feet are propped up on the seat of an old futon. He's shirtless, wearing only one shoe, and lying amidst a maelstrom of beer bottles, clothes, books and papers. His face rests awkwardly on a copy of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

He opens one eye and winces. Rolling over, his lanky legs flop lifelessly to the floor. He stares up at the ceiling listening to the alarm.

*

The door bursts open. Harsh fluorescent light floods the room.

*

A bony kid with short dreadlocks strides in.

ELVIS

Bricks, get up man.

Elvis slaps the snooze button on the alarm. Spots Ben on the floor.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

Shit.

Ben just lays there.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

I thought you were at the library last night.

BEN

Got lost on the way home. Needed some tequila to regain my sense of direction.

Ben lets out a yawn.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well, you got me up. Tell me you at least brought some Folgers.

ELVIS

Yeah, but we gotta make it happen quick. I already got like three parking tickets this week.

Ben pulls himself into a leather desk chair. Elvis removes a glass jar from his backpack, sits at the desk and loads pot into a huge glass bong.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

Those parking people, they're like, the ninjas among us, man. All they do is drop outta the trees and ruin people's day.

Elvis takes a long pull from the bong, lets it out with a coughing fit. Still coughing, he hands it to Ben.

BEN

Well maybe it's time for all you poor, oppressed parking felons to fight the system.

ELVIS

I already had breakfast. Don't feed me your-

BEN

I'm serious. Get organized. You know, start a website. Make some anti-parking ninja bumper stickers.

*

*

Ben raises a "down with the man" fist and rips the bong.

Elvis waves off the sarcasm. Ben closes his eyes in satisfaction. Exhales with a sigh. After a moment of Zen, Ben opens his eyes.

*

BEN (CONT'D)

So what's this all about?

ELVIS

Just a small favor.

BEN

I'm busy.

ELVIS

It's a test. Actually, a philosophy exam.

BEN
Philosophy, huh?

*

Ben sets the bong down on the desk.

BEN (CONT'D)
And what, you want me to drive you
there?

*

ELVIS
No. You're gonna take it.

BEN
Didn't you study?

*

ELVIS
It's not for me.

Ben stares skeptically.

BEN
I'm going back to bed.

ELVIS
Don't be an asshole. I was gonna
take it myself, but when I went to
the class to do some recon the prof
had me believin I was asleep, and
when I dream, or, when I THINK I'm
dreamin, that THAT'S when I'm
actually awake. I have no idea how
to even argue with that shit.

BEN
You close your eyes and go to
sleep.

Ben lunges over a pile of paperwork and flops on the futon.

BEN (CONT'D)
Watch me, you'll see how.

ELVIS
See? That's why you should be the
one takin this test.

Ben pulls a blanket from the lofted bed above him and lays
down.

Elvis turns in frustration and examines a tattered travel map
on the wall.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

What's that thing you were sayin
your brother goes to in Amsterdam
every year?

BEN

The Cannabis Cup. Best shit from
all over the world in one city.

ELVIS

Damn, that sounds good. You gonna
go this year?

Ben sits up. Skeptically studies Elvis. Thinking hard,
Elvis fiddles with the lid to a large fish tank. *

BEN *

You're getting money for this test
deal, aren't you? *

Two fat guarami swim lazily around a skull and a spooky fish
castle. Suppressing a smile, Elvis gazes through the glass
into the tank. *

ELVIS

You fed them lately?

BEN

Yeah, but go ahead. Those guys are
always hungry. Who is this for?

ELVIS

Won't they die if you feed em too
much, though?

BEN

They're fuckin fish El, let em eat
themselves to death. It's all they
have to hope for. What would I
get?

ELVIS

You mean what would WE get?

BEN

If I'm the one stepping into the
fire, I'm not splitting shit with
you.

(off Elvis's look)

You had to pawn your guitar again,
didn't you?

ELVIS

Just put a fuckin shirt on.

Ben shakes his head and grabs the bong.

5 EXT. BLAZER - LATER 5

Ben and Elvis cross a crowded parking lot. They approach a green, rusted out Blazer. It's parked at an angle in a clearly marked handicapped spot.

Elvis scans the windshield for tickets.

ELVIS
Thank God.

They get into-

6 INT. ELVIS' BLAZER - CONTINUOUS 6

BEN
Yeah, I mean, considering God's
impeccable record of protecting
druggies, guitarists and black
people, I'm sure that's exactly who
you should thank.

Ben ignores Elvis' glare. Finds a notebook on the dashboard.
Thumbs through it.

ELVIS
So dude's name is Dmitry Alexander
Bergman. Goes by Dax.

BEN
He the guy you've been getting all
this shannon from?

ELVIS
Yeah, and he gets it from some
mystery man named Lou.

BEN
Louis St. Pierre?

ELVIS
No. I don't know. Just Lou... but
Lou's partner is Dominick
Vitalivich.

BEN
You mean Saint Nick?

ELVIS

Yeah man. Dax offs so much weight for him, Dom pays people to do all his papers and tests and shit.

BEN

And that's where I come in.

ELVIS

I already wrote his birthday, student ID and social in that notebook for you. All you gotta do is go in, take the test, do that genius shit you do and walk away.

Elvis offers Ben a smoke, Ben lights up, takes a drag and hands Elvis the lighter.

BEN

What if I can't do any 'genius shit?'

ELVIS

That's not even a possibility, Bricks. You're about to turn in something so mind bending they'll wanna kill your ass for corrupting the youth.

BEN

What about handwriting? This is an essay test, right? Won't they be able to tell it's not his?

ELVIS

Come on, Bricks, I'm smarter than that. Everything this kid's ever turned in's been typed. All they know is he's one smart mother fucker. When you're done, meet me at the address on the notebook. I'll be waiting with a thousand bucks.

Elvis reaches into his pocket.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

And here. You might need to show em this when you turn it in.

Elvis hands Ben a driver's licence. Ben takes one look at it and glares at Elvis.

BEN

He might as well be Chinese. I
don't look anything like-

*

ELVIS

You'll just have to figure
something out, then, won't you?

*

*

INSERT TITLE CARD:

COUNTERFACTUAL

*

7 INT. PHILLIPS HALL - ROOM 100 - NOON

7

*

Ben finds a seat in the back of a huge lecture hall alive with the nervous energy of about three hundred college students.

Ben taps his pen on the wooden desk as a stack of papers is passed down the row.

The students around Ben immediately tear open their exam booklets. Ben closes his eyes and takes a slow deep breath.

A stunning brunette in a smart pant suit writes on a massive white board. It reads: 180 MINUTES.

*

An embarrassed student approaches her with his exam booklet. Without looking up, she points to a large wire basket on the desk. The student approaches the basket. Holds out his exam. After a long hesitation, he drops it in.

*

*

The students around Ben are writing frantically. Ben just stares at his desk intensely. His pen flips autonomously around his fingers.

CLOSE SHOT - WIRE BASKET

Half full of exam booklets. Three more drop in.

The crowd has thinned out. Only a handful of students left. The white board now reads: 60 Minutes.

*

Ben is still just staring at the blank page but the intensity remains in his face and his pen is still flipping quickly around his fingers.

*

*

8 CLOSE SHOT - WIRE BASKET - LATER

8

Overflowing with exam booklets. Another is stacked on the pile.

*

*

The TA erases "30 minutes" from the white board. Writes "5 minutes" as a student exits out the side door.

Alone in the lecture hall, Ben is slumped back in his chair, angrily glaring at the exam booklet - the pen now hangs out the corner of his mouth.

Ben's lips slowly curl into a fatalistic smile - he's going with his gut.

Sitting up, he pulls the pen from his mouth. Jots something onto the page.

Ben walks down the aisle towards the desk with his exam in hand. The teachers's assistant looks up from an exam booklet. Her cold stare almost stops him in his tracks. She studies him as he approaches. *

ANA-LOUISE
So what did you think?

BEN
I think in a week I might be sitting in jail with a glass of hemlock in my hand.

ANA-LOUISE
(incredulous)
Really. I was worried you were having an aneurism back there. *

BEN
(grinning)
Yeah. It, uh, definitely was harder than I thought it would be. *

ANA-LOUISE
Didn't know what you were getting yourself into?

BEN
Wouldn't have been any fun if it did, would it? *

Ben hands her the booklet. Thinking he's home free, he turns to walk out.

Ana-Louise opens the test and suppresses a smile.

ANA-LOUISE
Before you go, I just need to see your ID...
(MORE)

ANA-LOUISE (CONT'D)

I have to check everybody since I'm not a TA for this class... But I'm sure you knew that.

Fumbling with his wallet, Ben hands her the ID.

BEN

I was wondering who you were. What are you doing here?

ANA-LOUISE

Professor Pilton wasn't feeling well today. I'm helping out.

BEN

So what do you actually teach? *

Ana-Louise studies the ID.

BEN (CONT'D)

Let me guess, Ethics?

Ana-Louise looks up from the ID. No amusement left in her face.

9 EXT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON 9 *

A massive white monument to God. A few dozen cars in the expansive parking lot.

A large sign reads:

Church of the Living Word
Serving Christ Daily

10 INT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - FOYER - SAME TIME 10

Sixty college kids mill around a conference room scattered with burgundy chairs, Bibles, notebooks and fliers. Amateur paintings and Bible verses cover the beige walls.

In a corner of the room, Jonah stands with a fidgety young man.

ZAC

I just want to say how sorry I am to hear about your sister. Sometimes it's hard to understand why God-

JONAH

Thanks.

Jonah scans the nearby buffet table for something edible.

ZAC

Well, I couldn't be happier your mom told you about us, Jonah. We're all really glad you came today.

Jonah finds some pizza, holds a slice up for examination.

ZAC (CONT'D)

You know, God is really starting to work on this campus.

Jonah chokes down a bite, tosses the slice back in the box.

ZAC (CONT'D)

And Daniel has a true vision for how we can really start to reach people.

JONAH

I bet he does.

Jonah finds some baby carrots. Chomps on one.

ZAC

Absolutely. The Lord has really blessed us. He's started C.O.C.'s at six different schools. Can you believe that?

In a daze, Jonah just stares at the carrot stub in his hand.

ZAC (CONT'D)

Speak of the devil. Here he is.

11

JONAH'S POV - THROUGH WINDOW

11

A black Benz pulls into the parking lot. The license plate reads:

LIV4JC

Impeccably dressed in a custom Italian suit, a stubby man emerges from the Benz. His short legs move with a commanding stride.

He bursts through the door to a chorus of excited welcomes, hugs, and handshakes.

DANIEL

I apologize for my untimely arrival.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I was giving a lecture downtown and they just had so many great questions.

ZAC

(awkwardly loud)

Don't worry about it! We're glad you're here!

DANIEL

(to everyone)

Well I appreciate your patience and grace. I always enjoy our time of fellowship.

The group members gravitate toward their seats. Jonah follows suit in the back. At a podium up front, Daniel opens a black leather bible case. A massive white banner behind him reads:

Christ on Campus
Believe - Commit - Sacrifice - Worship

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Let's pray.

Jonah folds his hands, bows his head.

12 INT. HONDA PRELUDE - THREE MONTHS AGO 12 *

In the driver's seat, Jonah watches Cody walk into an ice cream store with two girls. One of the girls sweetly waves goodbye to Jonah. He smiles through the pain.

13 EXT. ALEXANDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - LATER 13

Jonah pulls up to the curb. Spots Genevieve talking to a rough looking guy in hooded sweatshirt. We can't see his face.

Jonah jumps out of the car and rushes to Genevieve. Spotting him, her face lights up. She runs to him and jumps in his arms.

The guy turns away. After a kiss on the cheek, Jonah sets Genevieve down and watches the guy stride off inconspicuously.

Genevieve slips her arm around Jonah's waist, chattering away about her day.

Jonah opens the door for Genevieve. She jumps in playfully. He turns back. The guy is gone.

14 INT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - CONFERENCE ROOM - PRESENT 14

Jonah jerks his head up from his hands. A pained look on his face.

DANIEL (O.S)

And we all know the answer to that.
Satan's great lake of fire.

Jonah rubs an eye to revive a contact lens.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But this isn't breaking news,
brothers and sisters. We've just
become so spiritually numb that it
feels normal. All around us,
millions of God's children are
living lives plagued by more forms
of wickedness than I can even
stomach.

Jonah glances at the students around him. They're completely riveted.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

And the scope of this moral myopia
is worsening by the day.
(pointing to the windows)
Outside these doors, right now,
there are twenty thousand lost
souls living in sorrow because they
don't know the joy... they don't
know the PEACE that is found in a
relationship with Christ.

Daniel picks up his Bible, holds it high, shaking it to emphasize each syllable.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

But we, inside the house of God,
know the truth. We know His truth
from His word, and what are we
doing? To whom are we reaching
out? Look at the disciples God has
brought here today. How are we so
apathetic?

Jonah eases out of his seat and sneaks toward the door. Seeing him, Zac follows quickly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 Satan has invaded this city like an
 insidious virus. I think it's
 about time for the almighty doctor
 to go to work.

Almost breathless, Daniel pauses to bask in the cheers and
 applause.

15

INT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - FOYER - LATER

15

Daniel stands by the door, shaking hands with some excited
 students as they leave. Zac and Jonah approach.

ZAC
 Daniel, hi. This is, uh, this is
 the guy I was telling you about.

DANIEL
 Jonah, yes, God's messenger to
 Nineveh.
 (quoting, to Jonah)
 To the roots of the mountains I
 sank down. The earth beneath
 barred me in forever. But you
 brought my life up from the pit, O
 Lord my God.
 (proudly)
 That's Jonah-

JONAH
 Two verse six. Yeah.
 (beat)
 I've heard a lot about you.

DANIEL
 Good! That's good, I've heard a
 lot about you as well.
 Unfortunately, I'm already running
 late, as usual. But it was
 certainly great meeting you.

Daniel hands Jonah a business card.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 If you ever have any questions or
 problems at all, feel free to e-
 mail me any time. And of course,
 it was good to see you, Zac. God
 Bless.

After a strange smile, Daniel rushes off.

ZAC
 (off Jonah's look)
 Well, he's a very busy guy.

Jonah eyes the card. Flips it over casually.

In small, precise handwriting it reads:

7:00 p.m. - 2300 Columbus Ave. #6
 God has chosen you

16 EXT. DAX'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 16

Ben looks up from a notebook. Before him is a dilapidated Victorian house. Peeling brown paint, overgrown weeds, raggedy couch on the porch.

Ben checks the notebook again. Evidently, this is the right place. He steps toward the stone walkway.

Elvis storms out the front door, looking over his shoulder warily.

BEN
 There he is! The man with a
 thousand bucks!

Elvis grabs Ben's arm as he walks by, spinning him away from the house.

BEN (CONT'D)
 You ARE the man with a thousand
 bucks, aren't you? *

ELVIS
 We gotta go. *

Begrudgingly, Ben rushes to keep up with Elvis. *

17 EXT. PEDESTRIAN MALL - LATER 17 *

Ben and Elvis stroll down the sidewalk. Elvis smokes a cigarette. *

BEN
 What is he, a Mormon?

ELVIS
DEFINITELY not. But who the hell
expects someone to have two
girlfriends at the same time in the
same place?

Elvis tosses his smoke and takes a deep breath.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
But as long as you dominated that
test, everything should be fine.

Elvis stops walking.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Tell me you dominated that test.

BEN
I dominated that test. But I don't
think everything's going to be
fine.

ELVIS
What the fuck does that mean?

BEN
The TA knew I wasn't Dax.

ELVIS
Say that again?

BEN
She made me show the ID.

ELVIS
Shit.
(beat)
So that's it. I'm fucked and
you're a fuckin dead man.

BEN
What? I wrote a badass essay. He
can't do shit to us. Wasn't my
fault I don't look like Dax.

Ben pulls out a smoke. Pats pockets for a lighter.

ELVIS
You're right. It wasn't your
fault. It was mine.

Elvis hands Ben the lighter.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

This is a bad situation, Bricks. I don't know how else to illustrate this shit for you.

BEN

She did say she wasn't a TA for that class, though. So, I don't know, maybe she won't even care.

ELVIS

Bricks, the only reason TA's sit in there is to make sure nobody is doin what you were doin. If she doesn't even teach the class she's probably even more hard-core than normal.

They stop in front of a small pub where a few people sit around a wrought iron patio table littered with the remains of an afternoon feast.

Ben and Elvis share a look.

18

INT. STILLWELLS BAR & GRILL - LATER

18

A HAND douses a massive burger with barbecue sauce.

Elvis gulps a beer. Slams down his empty glass. Ben points to the plate of wings in front of Elvis.

ELVIS

My last meal and I'm not hungry.

BEN

That's what you get for doin all that blow at three in the afternoon.

ELVIS

Maybe I wouldn't have done so much if it hadn't taken you three hours to write a little essay.

Ben takes a huge bite.

BEN

If this is my last meal, so be it. Just let it be known, I wanna be buried in maple bacon and cheddar cheese... Fuck dirt.

Elvis steals a few fries from Ben's plate. Stuffs them in his mouth.

ELVIS

Well, one way or the other we're gonna find out tonight. Dom's havin a party. If we wanna get paid, we gotta be there.

Ben tosses the last chunk of burger into his basket, licks a finger clean.

BEN

Fuck the money, dude. Let's be smart.

ELVIS

No! Not fuck the money. That's the whole reason we did this.

BEN

There's no way I'm going over to some guy's place just so he can kick the shit out of me.

ELVIS

He's gonna kick the shit out of me too.

(leaning in)

I'm still goin.

Glaring at Elvis, Ben picks up the rest of his burger. Crams it in. Shakes his head in frustration.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

See? I knew you weren't a pussy.

(re: the beer)

Hey, you can cover this, right?

19

INT. DANIEL'S LOFT - EVENING

19

Jonah raises his hand to knock on a tall steel door. Before he makes contact, Daniel opens it.

DANIEL

Jonah! Welcome! Come in, please.

Jonah enters an elegant loft apartment.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm glad you made it.

Behind Daniel, Mel Redding, 50, counts cash on a cherry-maple coffee table. Daniel shoots a disapproving look at Mel.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Please, be seated.

Stares at the stacks of cash on the table, Jonah sits uncomfortably on the edge of the large leather couch. Mel quickly scoops the cash into a gym bag.

JONAH

What a great place.

DANIEL

Well I apologize for the secretive nature of my invitation. You must understand, though, not everything I do is conducive to public knowledge.

JONAH

On you card... what did you mean?

Mel grabs the bag. Stands to leave. Daniel motions for him to wait. Mel drops the bag. It hits the hardwood floor with a heavy metallic clunk. Jonah stares warily at the bag.

DANIEL

I understand you and your family have been through a lot in the last three months.

Jonah goes deadpan.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

And I also understand that the police have failed to apprehend your sister's killer.

JONAH

Are you saying you can?

DANIEL

I'm saying the Lord answers the prayers of the faithful.

JONAH

What happens if you catch him?

DANIEL

Just as God's love works through us, so does God's sword. So I'd pose that question to you.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

If the government cannot serve as
God's sword of justice, what must
be done?

Jonah's foot taps the hardwood.

JONAH

We must allow God to work through
US.

DANIEL

(smiling at Mel)

That's right.

(back to Jonah)

You asked me earlier how I knew
that you've been chosen by God.
The answer is opportunity. God
works in our lives by providing us
with opportunities to serve Him and
grow closer to Him.

JONAH

So what should I do?

DANIEL

Pray that God will show you His
will. Soon you may have an
opportunity. What will you do with
it?

20

EXT. DOMINICK'S DRIVEWAY - EVENING

20

Ben and Elvis hike up a long, winding driveway through a
thick forest. White Christmas lights line the trees on
either side. Live music can be heard as they reach the
gigantic house.

BEN

How old is this guy? This is
bigger than one of my grandpa's
houses.

ELVIS

I think he's like twenty-five.

Awed, Ben stares up at the impressive house.

BEN

Must be a real go-getter.

A huge islander opens one of the front doors.

MOA

Yeah?

ELVIS

I'm Elvis. He's Ben.

Moa stares at Ben, motions for him to enter. Elvis tries to follow. Moa holds up a hand to Elvis. Pushes him to the wall, pats him down for weapons.

MOA

Get the fuck inside.

21 INT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 21

The house is amazing. Dark hardwood floors, fifteen foot ceilings, dark brown walls. The walls are covered with photographs of presidents and historical figures. Moa lumbers through the foyer to the

22 LIVING ROOM 22

Where several chic young women are doing coke off a marble coffee table. Behind them in the far corner of the room, an artist brushes paint onto the back of a beautiful brunette model.

Gawking at the girls, Ben and Elvis follow Moa through the living room.

Moa opens a door to the basement. Holds it for Ben and Elvis. They just stare at him.

MOA

He's waiting.

They reluctantly comply. The door slams and locks behind them.

ELVIS

What the fuck were we thinkin coming here?

BEN

This escapade came from your head. Not mine.

ELVIS

You could've just said no and gone back to sleep.

BEN

Just don't piss anybody off tonight. See how it feels. You might like it.

23

INT. DOMINICK'S BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

23

It is a veritable jungle. A variety of plants and vines hang from the ceiling and occupy all corners of the room. Beautiful tropical fish swim in a gigantic fish tank in the center of the room. Beyond it is an impressive entertainment center.

At a long granite bar in the far corner of the room, a stiff man holds a drink. He stares intently at a TV on the wall.

A newscaster reports from the sidewalk in front of an abortion clinic.

BEN

You have beautiful fish.

Ignoring his visitors, the man finishes his drink in one gulp.

DOMINICK

(to himself)

This is going to get ugly.

Dominick pushes a button on the remote. The TV goes black.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

The philosopher arrives. Tell me, what's the brilliant son of THE premier hedge fund guru doing smoking pot and hanging out with Hendrix impersonators all day?

Ben fires a look at Elvis.

BEN

Isn't that what everyone does in college?

Dominick holds up the exam booklet.

DOMINICK

Guess what I have?

BEN

How'd you get it so fast?

DOMINICK

The TA's graded most of the exams today. This one was singled out and photocopied.

ELVIS

(panicking)

You should've seen the ID Dax gave us. There was no way he could've-

DOMINICK

It was photocopied so it can be passed out as an example for the class.

BEN

All I had to do was write two words.

DOMINICK

Well those two words set the curve, Ben. There was only one other student that had the guts to turn in your answer.

Elvis sits on the arm of the couch, holds his head in his hands and laughs maniacally.

BEN

But, the TA. She knew I wasn't Dax.

Dominick sets the exam booklet on an end table and points toward a sliding glass door.

DOMINICK

You know who all those people are out there?

Ben shrugs.

Dominick points to the arm of the couch. Elvis slides off and settles in.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

They're walking, talking piggie banks just waiting to be busted open.

BEN

(sitting on the couch)

So business is good...

DOMINICK

Not as good as it should be.

BEN

What's the problem?

DOMINICK

The malevolent misconceptions about drugs are so widespread that in most places, it would be political suicide for politicians to pass the legislation I need to really expand.

BEN

Why would they? What drugs are you talking about?

DOMINICK

Twenty years ago athletes weren't taking amino acids, calibrated protein shakes or creatine-infused vitamin bars.

ELVIS

That stuff doesn't have the bad effects of drugs, though.

DOMINICK

Not true. Excessive amounts of creatine and protein can severely damage the liver and kidneys. Now, psychiatrists are prescribing MDMA to soldiers with PTSD, medicinal marijuana to people with fibromyalgia and back pain, and the public perception pendulum is beginning to swing toward science.

BEN

So you want legalization...

DOMINICK

I want far more than that. Today, parents of football players give their kids protein and creatine. In ten years, parents of musicians and artists will be giving their kids blueberry sativa and grapes of paradise.

BEN

Grapes of what?

DOMINICK
You guys wanna try something new?

Ben and Elvis share a look.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
Follow me. You've earned it.

Dominick stands up and motions for them to follow him through a door beside the bar. They follow him into-

INT. DOMINICK'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

A chemist's wet dream. It is fully equipped with beakers, tubes, flasks, and containers of chemicals all set up on several large worktables.

Bright light suddenly shines through a glass door on the far side of the lab. The door opens and Ana-Louise walks out.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
Ben, you remember Lou, right?
Elvis, let me introduce you to my
girlfriend. This is Ana-Louise
Solange. Soon to be DOCTOR
Solange.

ELVIS
Wait, what? This is Lou? I though
Lou was-

BEN
You scared the shit out of me
today, you know that, right?

LOU
Because of you I had to sit in a
lecture hall for three and a half
hours. You deserved it.

Dominick points to one of the work tables. Lou walks over to it, opens a drawer and removes a jar of green pills.

LOU (CONT'D)
We're calling them grapes of
paradise.

She drops two of the pills on the table in front of Ben and Elvis. Next to the pills is a stack of \$100 bills.

DOMINICK
We'll talk tomorrow.
(a reptilian smile)
Stay off the ground.

24

INT. JONAH'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

24

Jonah lays in bed watching an infomercial on TV. The cordless dorm phone rings. He just stares at it. The answering machine kicks in. He turns down the volume.

JONAH (ON MACHINE)

(apathetic)

This is Jonah. Leave a message.

CORA (ON MACHINE)

Hey Jonah, it's Mom. It's been a long time since we've heard from you and you know how I worry... I'm just calling to hear your voice... and, well, the police called today...

(beat)

They still haven't found any real leads in the investigation...

(long beat)

I know how you're feeling, honey. If something new comes up I'm sure they'll pursue it. You know we miss you sweetie. Your Father, too. We're praying for you. Please call us soon. Good night honey.

Jumping up, Jonah rips the answering machine out of the wall and throws it across the room.

Oblivious to the mess, Jonah curls over in rage, perching himself on the edge of the bed.

Cody busts through the door.

CODY

You coming, Jay?

JONAH

No. Get out.

CODY

What?

JONAH

I said get out.

Cody laughs.

CODY

Come on, they're waiting for us downstairs.

Jonah grabs the back of his desk chair and slams it to the ground. Cody just stands there. Stunned.

CODY (CONT'D)
That's fine. Go back to Bible
time.

Cody slams the door.

Jonah turns off the TV, sits back down on the edge of the bed and bows his head in prayer.

25 EXT. DOMINICK'S ACREAGE - NIGHT

25

An ornately painted nude woman dances to the live music of a jam band. A party is in full force.

Three other women dance on a torch-lit stage with the band. About a hundred people party on the lawn in front of the stage.

Elvis dances drunkenly through the crowd. Reaching the outskirts of the crowd, he stops dancing and heads toward a large bonfire pit. Several gnarly old trees surround the pit - organic seating for the fire-gazers.

Elvis trips and falls over. Beside him, Ben lays on the ground in snow-angel position. His cell phone rests on his chest and a joint hangs out of his grinning mouth.

ELVIS
How you feelin man?

BEN
I think it might be starting to
kick in. You should've taken one.
He said it was for musicians.

ELVIS
You know I don't do pills... I
still can't believe you took both
of those.

BEN
You know there's topless chicks
walkin around here with tequila
shots?

ELVIS
Yeah man, this is crazy. Let me
hit that jay though.
(MORE)

ELVIS (CONT'D)
 I gotta talk this dude into letting
 me play his Dimebag on stage during
 their break.

Ben hands him the joint.

BEN
 You gonna play the Brava?

ELVIS
 (puffing)
 Fuck the Brava. I'm gonna pick it.

This doesn't register with Ben. Elvis looks annoyed.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
 The Cajun KP.

BEN
 (shocked, amused)
 What? Is that the one with the-

Elvis nods.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (impressed)
 You can actually play that?

Ben reaches for the joint. Elvis holds up a finger. Hits
 the joint again.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (patronizing)
 So can I, like, be your agent when
 you make it big?

Ben reaches for the joint again. Elvis smiles wide, puts it
 back in his mouth and walks back toward the stage.

Ben's cell phone vibrates on his chest. He reads the
 display.

26 INT. JONAH'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

26

It is pitch black except for the glow of a muted television
 featuring an infomercial.

A loud, booming knock shatters the silence. Jonah quickly
 switches on the bedside lamp and throws off the covers,
 knocking his alarm clock to the floor.

Poised on the edge of the bed, he listens intently for a
 moment.

Hearing nothing, he picks up his clock. It's 2:12.

Another booming knock shakes the door. Jonah jumps to his feet. Freezes. Scans the room for a weapon.

Realizing absurdity of his paranoia, Jonah relaxes. Steps sheepishly over to the door.

JONAH'S POV - THROUGH PEEP HOLE - the hallway is empty

Stepping back, Jonah unlocks the door and swings it open. An envelope scrapes across the floor.

Jonah sits at his desk and stares at the envelope. After a moment, Jonah tears the envelope open and pulls out a white card.

In small, precise handwriting, it reads:

Be outside in 15 minutes.

27 EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT 27

Ben wanders in the darkness around the rear of Dominick's house. The smooth, intoxicating sounds of an electric guitar can be heard in the distance.

Seeing a glow coming from the side of the house, Ben stumbles around the corner.

Hidden by large bushes and foliage is a four season porch. Several golden flames flicker in the windows.

28 THE SECRET PORCH 28

Steam fills the room. Ben walks blindly through the clouds toward a blue glow.

BEN

Hello? Is anybody in here? I
can't see shit.

LOU (O.S.)

Keep walking. You're almost here.

Ben takes a few more steps. Nearing the edge of the blue glow, he stops.

LOU (CONT'D)

Are you getting in or not?

BEN
I don't have a suit.

LOU
Just take off your clothes and get
in.

Ben just stands there.

LOU (CONT'D)
Dominick's upstairs banging two
coke sluts. Get in.

Ben starts taking off his clothes.

BEN
I thought you two were together.

LOU
We are.

BEN
But you just said-

LOU
Dominick sees monogamy as a choice
of the old fashioned and insecure.
The fact is, sex is one weakness
he'll never get away from no matter
how much twisted logic he tries to
bury it with.

BEN
Doesn't that piss you off?

LOU
Why fight someone who's willing to
put the noose around his own neck?

BEN
That's so romantic.

Ben steps into the tub and sinks down with a sigh.

LOU
Not a bad day for you, is it? You
walk blindly into an
extraordinarily difficult
collegiate exam, commit serious
academic misconduct, and instead of
getting kicked out of college, you
get a thousand dollars and an
(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)
 amazing new dopamine agonist that
 basically no one has even tried
 before. Sometimes naivete pays
 off, doesn't it?

BEN
 So does a summer internship with
 the Stanford University Philosophy
 Department.

LOU
 You don't even see it yet, do you?
 You may have had everything handed
 to you in the past, and been able
 to skate your way through the rest,
 but this is no game you're playing.
 Now you have to earn it.

With a small smile, Ben just closes his eyes and sinks down deeper.

BEN
 Maybe that's why I feel so alive.

LOU
 (reading his face)
 So you're enjoying my new product.
 I'm glad.

She floats across the tub until she hovers above his lap. Reaching under water between his legs, she finds what she's looking for.

LOU (CONT'D)
 (in Ben's ear)
 Mmmm, just like I thought.

Lou steps back and stands up in front of Ben. Water drips down the curves of her naked body. Ben can only stare as she steps out of the hot tub and disappears into the steam. As the door shuts, a gust of air blows out the candles.

Relaxing his head on the edge of the hot tub, Ben grins.

29

EXT. SLATER HALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

29

Jonah stands on the sidewalk outside a tall brick dormitory. As he lets out a yawn, the streetlight blinks above him. Looking around, he sees that the others have already burned out.

A cab pulls up. Two drunk guys stumble out.

DRUNK GUY 1
 What the hell was that? A new
 reality show or some shit? Were we
 just on Bible Cab?

DRUNK GUY 2
 (laughing obnoxiously)
 Preach it, cabbie! Amen brother!
 Keep picking up us lost sheep!
 Praise the Lawd!

Drunk Guy 1 starts singing O' Come All Ye Faithful, while
 Drunk Guy 2 throws his hands in the air and dances to the
 song.

After a few more "Hallelujahs" they stagger past Jonah and up
 the steps.

Moving towards the curb, Jonah lowers his head to look inside
 the cab. Daniel sits in the driver's seat.

DANIEL
 Get in.

30 INT. TAXI CAB - LATER

30

Jonah rides in the back seat of the beat-up taxi. He can see
 Daniel's bitter eyes in the rear view mirror.

DANIEL
 Even though their hardened hearts
 have deafened them to my words,
 God's truth still burns in their
 souls. Do you see?

JONAH
 Is that why you drive this cab? To-

DANIEL
 No. This is Mel's cab.

JONAH
 Oh. So-

DANIEL
 What I meant was I can spread God's
 message to thousands with my voice,
 but those that are truly lost
 require more than words to believe.

JONAH
 The spirit of truth. The world
 cannot accept him, because it
 (MORE)

JONAH (CONT'D)
 neither sees him nor knows him.
 But you know him, for he lives with
 you and will be in you.

Daniel smiles in the mirror.

DANIEL
 God must have some important things
 in store for you. Your prayers
 have been answered, already.

31 EXT. ABANDONED TRAIN YARD - NIGHT

31

The taxi pulls to the side of a dirt road next to an old
 train yard littered with rail cars.

Getting out of the cab, Jonah follows Daniel across several
 sets of train tracks toward a clearing amidst the trains.

As they reach the clearing, we see Mel standing casually with
 a gun in his hand. Beside Mel, a man lays on the ground.
 His arms and legs are zip-tied and his mouth is sealed with
 duct tape.

DANIEL
 Jonah, I'd like to introduce you to
 Charles. If he had friends, they'd
 call him Chuck.

Daniel motions to Mel. With obvious satisfaction, Mel rips
 off the duct tape.

CHUCK
 It wasn't my fault! I didn't-

Mel silences him with a kick to the stomach.

DANIEL
 Chuck, this is Jonah Carpenter.
 Genevieve's older brother.

Doubled over on the ground, Chuck gasps for air.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 This is the part where you confess
 your sins, Chuck. Speak up. So he
 can hear you.

Chuck coughs hard.

CHUCK
 I got a great tip on a cash game
 and I jumped all over it.
 (MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I cleared out well over fifteen grand, which I tripled when I took Syracuse and the over that night. But, that was all I had to my name, and I needed all of it as-

*

Mel kicks him in the stomach again. Chuck curls into a ball and coughs violently.

DANIEL

He doesn't need a biography, Chuck. Cut to the chase.

CHUCK

(still coughing)

I lost a bet and needed another fifty grand to cover the debt and I only had two days to get it, so I was going to try to get a ransom from this really rich doctor by picking his daughter up from school and just... keeping her for a little while.

Moving closer, Jonah stands directly over Chuck.

JONAH

But you kidnapped my sister instead, didn't you?

CHUCK

When I realized I had the wrong girl, I was going to just drop her off somewhere-

JONAH

But you just can't seem to get anything right.

CHUCK

When I went to get her out of the trunk she'd already stopped breathing.

Chuck breaks into tears. Jonah looks on dispassionately.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

If only I wouldn't have made that fucking bet... we would all be at home sleeping right now.

DANIEL

He's a degenerate murderer and the police have done nothing, Jonah.

Mel cocks the gun.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Mel holds the gun out to Jonah. Jonah gladly takes it.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account

Jonah presses the gun to Chuck's forehead.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Follow God's will.

Paralyzed by fear, Chuck stares up at Jonah's hateful eyes. After a long stare, the hatred drains from Jonah's face. All that's left is pain.

Dejected, Jonah pulls the gun from Chuck's forehead.

JONAH

I can't. I can't do it. *

Jonah hands the gun to Daniel. *

JONAH (CONT'D)

(in shock)

I almost did it. I almost killed someone.

Daniel points the gun at Jonah.

DANIEL

It's okay, Jonah.

Daniel fires the gun twice. Jonah recoils in fear. Freezes. *
He hasn't been hit.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

They were blanks.

Confused, Jonah just stares at the gun for a beat. Daniel throws his arm around Jonah and they march back toward the car.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What's important is that you
listened to God and this was not
his will. *

As they walk away, Mel re-tapes Chuck's mouth, muffling his
screams.

32 TAXI CAB

32 *

Sitting in the front seat, Jonah is on the verge of tears.
Daniel puts his hand on Jonah's shoulder and looks him in the
eye.

DANIEL

You did a great thing tonight. You
were tempted by vengeance but you
stayed strong. *

Jonah forces a smile and looks out toward the train yard.
The moon shines brightly on the abandoned rail cars. *

DANIEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Get some rest. You won't get much
tomorrow.

After a deep breath, Jonah leans back in the seat and closes
his eyes.

Through the window, we see two sharp flashes of light
illuminate the side of a rail car by the clearing.

33 INT. ELVIS' APARTMENT - WEDNESDAY MORNING

33

An egg is cracked open and emptied onto a skillet already
overfilled with eggs and bacon. Ben searches through the
cupboards and drawers. Finally finding a spatula, he stirs
his breakfast concoction.

Ben stops stirring. Listens. Something thumps loudly in the
other room.

Elvis barrels out of the bedroom - t-shirt clearly inside out
- frantically fumbling with a button on his pants as he
searches the room.

ELVIS

(to himself)

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Where did I
put those fucking shoes?

He finally stops to focus on his pants.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Stupid fucking button fly, fucking
try something on before you buy it
for once in your life, dumbshit-

Once he gets it buttoned, he stops and sniffs.

BEN (O.S.)
You want some breakfast?

Elvis jumps.

ELVIS
Jesus! You scared the hell out of
me. Where'd you come from? What
the fuck are you doing?

Ben holds up the spatula.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Oh. Right. I'm late for my
fucking music theory midterm.

He starts looking for his shoes again. He finds one shoe,
slips it on his bare foot and continues the search for its
match.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
What happened to you last night? I
was killin em up there and you
disappeared. I haven't EVER played
like that. EVER... Aren't you
hungover?

Elvis finds the other shoe and slips it on. Ben just stands
there enjoying his friend's struggle.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
Alright, cool man, I think there's
still half a blunt left on the
coffee table. Just lock the door
before you go.

With that, he's out the door. Chuckling to himself, Ben
returns to his breakfast skillet.

CARLI (O.S.)
Is that bacon?

Ben turns to see Carli stroll out of Elvis' room wearing
nothing but panties.

Ben drops the spatula.

Elvis bursts back through the door and stops.

ELVIS
Those parking assholes towed-
(seeing Carli)
What the fuck? Close your eyes
Bricks!

Ben covers his eyes mockingly.

ELVIS (CONT'D)
I gotta take your whip, okay baby?

Carli throws her arms around Elvis.

CARLI
Keys are on the counter.

Carli smooches him and disappears into the bedroom.

ELVIS
Okay, we're clear.

Ben opens his eyes.

BEN
What. A. Hottie. How'd you-

ELVIS
Shut up and get your shoes on.
You're drivin me.

BEN
I would, but-

Ben nods to his skillet.

ELVIS
It's ten twenty, Bricks. You're
not skipping your ten thirty again.

BEN
Is it Wednesday?

ELVIS
I'll be in the car.

Ben glances at his watch, turns back to his breakfast skillet and angrily twists a knob on the stove.

Jonah takes notes in the third row of a modern lecture room. Standing in the front of the room, a burly, bearded professor booms away at a class of about fifty.

PROFESSOR WATSON

Essentially, politics is conflict over scarcity. Whether it involves territory, power, money or liberties, politics is a fight over who gets what or who keeps what. Today we will focus on one of the primary moral questions that results from this conflict. Do the ends justify the means?

Professor Watson walks behind the podium and turns to the LCD projector.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

In 1513, Niccolo Machiavelli penned *The Prince*. This famous treatise outlines the ways in which men seized, maintained, and lost political power. As some of you hopefully read last night, Machiavelli permits very little ambiguity in our choice of which set of ethical principles to follow in the political arena.

He clicks to the first slide. It reads:

The Politics of Niccolo Machiavelli
Do the ends justify the means?

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

On page fifty-three, Machiavelli says that a prince will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction. Can anyone tell me what he means by this?

The room is silent.

The door at the rear entrance slams, shattering the silence. The students turn in their seats. Ben stands in the doorway, scanning the room for an open seat.

BEN

For what it's worth, I didn't realize it would slam like that.

Arms crossed, Professor Watson glares at Ben.

PROFESSOR WATSON

Is there a reason that you find it
so difficult to get here any time
before class actually starts?

*

BEN

Well... uh, as Machiavelli said, a
man who wishes to be good at all
times will come to ruin among so
many who are not good... So, it's
necessary to learn how not to be
good.

After a few scattered laughs from the crowd, Professor Watson
allows a conciliatory smile.

Ben spots a seat on the left and strides across the room.

PROFESSOR WATSON

How is it that the only person
capable of answering my question
was the one who didn't even hear
it? Anyway, yes, thank you, Ben.

Ben nods to Professor Watson and shuffles down the third row
of seats.

As Ben moves toward his seat, Jonah clears his backpack out
of the way.

*

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

Now this notion of a distinction
between pragmatic political action
and private morality may have
originated in the sixteenth
century, but it is still an
extremely controversial subject
today. So, I'd like to know what
you all think. Do any of you young
politicians of the future believe
in hardball?

Professor Watson pauses to scan the class. The students just
look around at each other. No one moves.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

Okay, well, I guess I'm just going
to have to pick randomly and we'll
find out who has an opinion and who
doesn't.

Jonah raises his hand.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)
Thank you, your name?

JONAH
Jonah. I think it's okay. The idea is that the protection of the society or principality or whatever is what's most important. If what you're fighting for is best for everyone, no matter what sin must be done, God will forgive you.

*

PROFESSOR WATSON
Anyone disagree?

BEN
(without raising his hand)
First of all, there is no sin but ignorance. Second, Machiavelli does say something to that effect but he limits it to only certain situations. Christ, look-
(flipping through his book)
Here. Page thirty, he says, "to kill one's fellow citizens, to betray friends, et cetera, one can acquire power but not glory.

JONAH
So you don't believe that honorable ends justify-

BEN
People love to condense the Prince down to the whole ends justify the means idea, especially when that end involves some magical calling from above, but that's a gross mistranslation of the text that just gives lazy, ignorant people an excuse to mangle a complex political philosophy.

Jonah stares down at his notebook, hiding the embarrassment in his face.

PROFESSOR WATSON
That's enough, Ben. I don't know if other professors allow you to show up late, disrupt class and then denigrate the ideas of other students, but I certainly do not.

BEN

What? Come on, we were just debating.

PROFESSOR WATSON

I'll expect to see you in my office at noon. You're excused.

Realizing his defeat, Ben drops his book into his backpack. Shuffles down the row. As Ben nears him, Jonah restrains a smile.

BEN

Don't forget to pray for me.

As Ben exits, he slams the door violently.

PROFESSOR WATSON

Okay, I must concede that Ben was correct in noting that the famous ends justify the means quote is a mistranslation. However, it is an important theoretical concept for us to discuss. So, since it will be covered on the midterm next week, I'd like to continue our exploration by utilizing a tool known as the counterfactual.

Jonah starts scribbling notes.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

A counterfactual is essentially an answer to the question, "what would have happened if?" In answering the question, or, creating a counterfactual, we construct a hypothetical outcome with the goal of determining whether the decision that led up to it was right or wrong.

Two students in front raise their hands.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, not the clearest explanation. Let me give you an example. What would have happened if I had allowed Ben to say in class today? I think it's safe to presume that he would have verbally abused everyone that opened their mouth until no one was willing to contribute.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)
 Thus, in the eyes of Machiavelli,
 it was a good decision.

Jonah scribbles notes feverishly in his notebook.

35 INT. JEFFERSON HALL - MINUTES LATER

35

Zac excitedly maneuvers through a crowded hallway. Seeing Jonah outside the lecture room, he bulldozes through a group of girls.

ZAC
 Jonah! Jonah, you'll never believe
 it.

JONAH
 What? What is it?

Zac thrusts a burgundy folder into Jonah's chest.

ZAC
 I just talked to Daniel Masters.
 He wants you to read this speech at
 the Pro-Life rally this afternoon!

JONAH
 What Pro-Life rally?

Zac throws his arm around Jonah. Pulls him down the hallway.

ZAC
 I guess the city is going to give
 money to an abortion clinic so
 Daniel is having a rally at the
 church and then we're all going to
 march to the murder house.

JONAH
 Wait. The city is going to give
 money to an abortion clinic?

Jonah opens the folder and begins scanning through the pages.

ZAC
 Yeah, but if they don't, the clinic
 is going to have to shut down. I
 guess the baby killing industry
 doesn't pay as much money as they
 thought.

JONAH
 (re: the speech)
 Holy crap.

ZAC
 Yeah, it's good isn't it?
 (releasing Jonah)
 He said to be at the church at
 three.

A look of panic on his face, Jonah stares down at the folder.

36

INT. PROFESSOR WATSON'S OFFICE - NOON

36

Ben slouches in a leather chair crammed into a small, disorganized basement office. He flips a pen around his fingers mindlessly while Professor Watson scans through the pages of a small folder.

PROFESSOR WATSON
 What is it with you, Ben? You graduated with honors from one of the most prestigious private schools in America. You're a member of a half dozen elite academic organizations, you've studied in five-

BEN
 Actually, it's six countries. Your little dossier is outdated.

PROFESSOR WATSON
 Well-

BEN
 This summer I went to a global trade summit in Prague for a month with my Dad.

PROFESSOR WATSON
 Fine. Okay. But you still haven't even chosen a major.

BEN
 Right now I'm leaning toward interpretive dance. *

PROFESSOR WATSON
 What I'm saying is that I'd hate to see your academic career tarnished before you ever even decide what you want to do. *

Ben stops flipping the pen.

BEN

What are you talking about? I haven't missed a point in this class.

Professor Watson closes the folder.

PROFESSOR WATSON

You know I have a son?

BEN

Great.

PROFESSOR WATSON

He's a senior. A lot like you, actually. Reckless, irresponsible-

BEN

Just not as bright. *

PROFESSOR WATSON

He has a paper due in two days in his Western Civilizations class, and if he doesn't get an A, he won't graduate on time.

Ben sits up.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)

You do great work in this class and I'm told your talents extend far beyond political science.

BEN

I don't know what you're talking about.

Professor Watson folds his hands. Leans in.

PROFESSOR WATSON

If you don't write this paper, and write it well, I'm not only going to fail you in my class, I'll be sure to see that you're expelled for your other little cheating scam.

BEN

What makes you think I wouldn't just tell everyone about your little indecent proposal, here?

PROFESSOR WATSON
 Someone who thinks very highly of
 you assured me there would be
 nothing to worry about.

Grinning wide, Professor Watson slides a manila envelope
 across the desk.

PROFESSOR WATSON (CONT'D)
 Get it to you know who by nine
 tomorrow morning. Thanks for
 stopping by.

Ben snatches the envelope and storms toward the door.

BEN
 (turning back)
 By the way, thanks for letting me
 out of class today. I was bored as
 hell.

PROFESSOR WATSON
 Ben, if you write this paper as
 well as I'm told you will, you
 won't have to worry about wasting
 either of our time at class
 anymore.

37 INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

37

A hand tries to twist the cover off a smoke detector. The
 cover doesn't budge.

Ben stands awkwardly on a pile of books stacked on a secluded
 study table. A cigarette hangs out of his mouth.

Stepping down, he rearranges the books and steps back up.
 Balancing precariously, the cigarette falls out of his mouth.
 He watches it ricochet to the floor.

He finally pops off the cover to the detector. Pulls out the
 battery and drops it in his shirt pocket.

BEN
 Problem solved.

Hearing footsteps, he tries to step down from the table,
 slips on a book and goes crashing to the floor.

DOMINICK (O.S.)
 So how's it going?

Ben pulls himself off the floor. Does a quick injury inventory and begins a search for the fallen cigarette.

BEN

(looking under the table)
I'm... just finishing up some research I needed for one of the sections, but it's goin good.

DOMINICK

(pointing)
It's right there.

Gratefully, Ben retrieves the smoke. Dominick nods toward the closed laptop on the table. *

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

You haven't started yet, have you?

Sitting at the table, Ben rubs one of his elbows tenderly. *

BEN

Just getting my head cleared out a bit. *

Ben lights the cigarette. *

Dominick pulls a prescription bottle out of his pocket and drops a few pills on the table. Finding a note card, he starts crushing the pills.

DOMINICK

I'm sorry if this project came as a shock to you. I know how graceful Watson is with situations like these, so I'm sorry he had to be the one to talk to you first. But, as you've probably figured out, these things usually come on pretty short notice.

BEN

(staring at the pills)
So I see.

Dominick keeps chopping at the pills, scooping the powder into a fresh pile and chopping some more.

DOMINICK

Anyway, I just want you to fully understand the importance of this project. Your professor's son happens to be a very valuable asset to me in a number of ways.

As he talks, Dominick divides the pile of powder into several long lines.

BEN

Really? I got the impression he was basically worthless.

DOMINICK

As soon as he graduates, he'll be taking on a major role at his uncle's pharmaceutical company. He'll have a lot of influence... that's putting it mildly. A number of people, myself included, are taking steps to prepare for that move, so, needless to say, if the timetable is obstructed, no one will be happy.

Dominick pulls out a hundred dollar bill and rolls it up.

BEN

Glad to know there's no pressure or anything.

Dominick stops rolling the bill and stares at Ben.

DOMINICK

Listen, if yesterday was a fluke or you're not ready for this, now's your chance to tell me. Watson won't be happy but I'll handle it and you'll never see or hear from me again.

*
*
*

Dominick stares hard at Ben.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

But I can't have you pissing this paper down your leg because the magnitude of its significance impedes your ability to perform. Until now I've had you pegged as a guy who not only loves a good challenge, but may even be insulted by the ease of this topic.

*
*
*

Dominick leans over and snorts a line of powder.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

But if I've misjudged you somehow, tell me and I'll let you get back to your bong.

*
*

Ben looks down at his cigarette. All that's left is a long ash. He looks to Dominick. *

BEN
(confidently)
No. I'm ready. *

Standing up, Dominick tosses the bill to Ben. *

DOMINICK
Good. Bump those. They'll help you concentrate. Call me when you're ready to drop it off.

Dominick walks off.

Ben eyes the bill on the table. *

He picks up the bill and snorts a line. Snapping his head up, he brushes his nose. *

Ben opens the laptop. A new look of determination on his face. *

38

EXT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - AFTERNOON

38

Jonah walks down the sidewalk toward a large group of protestors assembled in front of the building. A stage has been erected and a sound crew is busily setting up microphones, monitors and other equipment.

Beside the stage, Daniel confers with a few excited older women. Seeing Jonah approach, Daniel quickly dismisses himself from the women.

DANIEL
So, Zac was able to find you in time. I was beginning to doubt him, but he delivered.

JONAH
Yes, but I'm not sure-

DANIEL
Jonah, after what God showed you last night, what could be more perfect than this?

Jonah opens the folder and removes the speech.

JONAH

I just haven't ever really done something like this before. I'm not used to speaking in front of large groups of people.

DANIEL

You have the strength and you have the motivation. Our governmental leaders want to help these so-called doctors murder children before they even have a chance to live. This is a way for you to stop other children from being killed before they even have a chance... children like Genevieve.

Jonah stares down at the speech. Looks up and smiles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Well I should probably rehearse it a bit first, huh?

39 INT. LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

39

There is only one line of powder left on the table. Ben's fingers fly on the keyboard of a laptop. Squinting at the laptop, he stops typing and begins rifling through a notebook. Finding what he was looking for, he sets the notebook down and spots the rolled up bill.

Snatching the bill, he snorts the line and returns his focus to the computer. His eyes suddenly widen, and after a few short sniffs, he resumes his typing.

*

40 EXT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - AFTERNOON

40

Jonah paces nervously behind the stage as he listens to the rumblings of a large crowd.

Daniel strides around the stage to meet Jonah.

DANIEL

So the plan is this. I'm going to speak first. I'll get everybody warmed up and then I'll introduce you. Are you ready?

JONAH

I'm a little nervous... but, yeah, I'm good.

DANIEL
Okay. Let's pray.

They bow their heads.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Dear Lord, we stand before you on this beautiful afternoon humbled by your benevolence and your power. We want to thank you wholeheartedly for giving us this opportunity to serve you, and ask that you give us the strength and wisdom to serve you and grow closer to you. May your will be done. In Jesus' name, amen.

JONAH
Amen.

Daniel slaps Jonah on the shoulder and heads to the front of the stage.

Reaching the microphone stand, Daniel gazes out at a massive crowd. Various pro-life signs are held high by excited protestors wearing "abortion is murder" t-shirts. Daniel smiles wide and revels in the energy and attention of the crowd. He motions to the sound guy and removes the microphone from the stand.

The crowd cheers wildly and begins clapping as they chant "Clap your hands, raise your voice, I'm a human, not a choice!"

Daniel claps along with the crowd for a moment and then holds up his hands to silence them.

DANIEL
Thank you! Thank you so much! Brothers and sisters, members of this community, I want to thank you for coming out this afternoon. Please, look around at your fellow citizens. Look and see how many of us have gathered on such short notice to fight the injustice that is about to be perpetrated on this city. We are many. And we are NOT SATISFIED!

*

The crowd goes wild. Daniel lets them start the chant again. After a moment, he raises his hands and the crowd begins to settle down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

As I'm sure you all know, our city council, in its infinite wisdom, has been working on a resolution that will help save a building-
 (pointing to the right)
 Right over there, two blocks away from this holy house of worship, that exists for the sole purpose of terminating the miracles of God.

Several protesters yell angrily. Daniel raises a hand to silence them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I know, I know, it hasn't happened yet, but that's why we stand here today. We're here to stand up for those who don't even get the chance to stand up for themselves. We're here to defend the rights of unborn children before our government pays people to trample on them.

*

The crowd goes wild again. Daniel waves his fist and starts the chant back up.

Jonah walks confidently around the side of the stage and waits at the bottom of the steps.

*

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(yelling over the cheers)
 Now, I know what the secular world is saying...

*

*

The crowd quiets down.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

The SECULAR world says that all the junkies and whores out there have the RIGHT to kill their babies.

This gets several jeers from the crowd.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

No, it's true! It sounds crazy, I know!

*

More jeers from the crowd. Daniel glances back at Jonah - nervously standing by the stage - then to the rowdy crowd.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Well I say I have the RIGHT not to PAY for it!

The crowd goes nuts. Over the noise:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I can't say whether or not the city council can actually go through with this. Maybe they can, but before they do, I'm going to go over to that building and let them know what I think!

*

The crowd erupts. Daniel storms across the stage and down the stairs, grabbing Jonah's arm as he passes.

JONAH

(yelling over the chant)
What happened? I was ready-

The crowd roars and follows Jonah and Daniel to the street.

DANIEL

The crowd was more ready!

As they march, Jonah looks over his shoulder at the massive angry mob behind him. A loud AIR HORN BLARES.

41 EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON 41

Ben pulls his hand away from the buzzer at Dominick's front door.

He shifts his weight from foot to foot, scratches his head, and then tries to look through the window above the doors.

The window is just barely too high, so he steps onto the base of the door frame to get a few more inches.

Peering through the window, the place looks vacant.

Ben pushes the buzzer again and listens carefully. Not hearing anything, he presses his ear to the door. It cracks open.

Ben glances over his shoulder and steps cautiously into the house.

42 DOMINICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 42

Standing in the foyer, Ben looks up the stairs. The place is surprisingly dark. We can hear the ROAR of a BLOW DRIER.

BEN

Hello? Dominick? Lou?

The blow drier shuts off. Ben walks toward the stairs and cranes his neck to see in one of the rooms.

BEN (CONT'D)

Hello?

Light suddenly floods the hallway. Lou walks out of a room at the other end of the hall.

LOU

Yes?

BEN

Hi, I just talked to Dominick like twenty minutes ago. He said to come by and drop off this paper.

LOU

Right, for John Watson, he told me. Apparently, Dom had to take care of something at the law library.

BEN

Oh, well-

LOU

He won't be back for a few hours.

BEN

Okay, uh, where should I leave this?

LOU

You can bring it up here.

Lou walks back into the room. Ben sets his bag down, removes a manila envelope and jogs up the stairs to-

43

DOMINICK'S BEDROOM

43

Where Lou sits at a vanity with a bottle of lotion.

LOU

You can put it on the table here.

Ben hesitantly walks over to Lou. Sets the paper on the vanity.

LOU (CONT'D)

(nodding toward the bed)

Have a seat.

Ben sits on the bed.

LOU (CONT'D)
So, how'd it go?

BEN
It was great. Dominick gave me
like four lines of aderall and I
pounded out seven pages of gold in
less than two hours.

Lou squeezes some lotion into one of her palms, pulls up the
sleeves of her robe and starts moisturizing her arms.

LOU
You liked it?

BEN
Hell yeah. I've never been so
focused in my life.

LOU
It's wasn't aderall. That was the
first drug I ever designed. Well,
the first one that worked without
any major side effects. It's a
kind of alloy of amphetamines that
basically acts like an ultra-
enhanced form of cocaine... with a
lesser probability of dependence.

Lou leans over to get some lotion on her lower calves, Ben
stares at the view down her robe.

BEN
(staring down her robe)
Well, hats off to you... How'd you
get into psychopharmacology?

LOU
It's hereditary. My father founded
a pharmaceutical research company
and my mother got her P.H.D. in
Floriculture from Cornell.

Lou pulls up the bottom of her robe and starts rubbing lotion
on her thighs.

BEN
And you're going to go work for
them when you finish?

LOU
They died when I was nine.

BEN

Oh.

(beat)

So you're going to pick up where they left off?

Lou stops moisturizing.

LOU

I never asked you the other night. Why did you do it?

BEN

Do what?

LOU

Why did you take Dax's exam?

BEN

Well, there were five hundred reasons to do it.

LOU

Bull shit. I know who your dad is. I saw him in Forbes a few months ago.

BEN

So what?

LOU

Your trust fund is probably even bigger than mine. What's five hundred bucks?

Lou sets her glasses on the vanity and sits on the bed.

LOU (CONT'D)

I've seen your records. Not only are your grades almost perfect, you have more prestigious internships than most grad students. You expect me to believe you risked all that when you could have just loaned your best friend a few bucks?

Ben gets off the bed.

BEN

That's not exactly-

Lou stands up and looks him in the eye.

LOU
 Feels pretty good to get away with
 something like that, though,
 doesn't it?

Lou puts her hands on Ben's chest delicately.

BEN
 Actually, yeah. It does.

Lou digs her fingernails into Ben's chest and scratches them
 down his body sharply. Ben pushes her back onto the bed.
 Recoils in pain.

BEN (CONT'D)
 What the hell was that?

Lou stands back up confidently and smiles.

LOU
 Did that hurt?

BEN
 Yeah it-

Lou kisses him delicately on the lips.

LOU
 That feel better?

Lou drops her robe, grabs Ben by the belt and pulls him onto
 the bed. She gets his shirt off and kisses him hungrily.
 While she kisses his chest and stomach, she unzips his pants.
 Standing up, Lou rips his pants down violently and slips them
 past his feet. Ben sits up.

BEN
 Wait, I don't have any-

Climbing onto the bed, Lou straddles him and takes one of his
 earlobes between her lips.

LOU
 It's okay. You won't get me
 pregnant.

Ben quickly flips her over and kisses her passionately.

A mob of protestors congregates on the front lawn of the
 abortion clinic. Several chant and yell at a passing car
 while a few others preach to a pedestrian.

A red pick-up truck pulls up to the curb.

Daniel waves at Jonah and they both jog over to the truck.

Mel steps out of the cab, jumps into the bed and starts passing signs to Daniel and Jonah.

Jonah holds one up and grimaces. It is a picture of an aborted fetus.

DANIEL

I know. It isn't pretty, is it?
That's what we're trying to stop.

JONAH

Do we really have to put this on a
sign, though?

DANIEL

It's harder to hide from the truth
when there's a picture of it right
in your face.

Jonah nods in admission. Grabbing a pile of signs, he heads back toward the group.

Behind him, a black BMW pulls up to the curb. A petrified young woman steps out and freezes on the sidewalk. Several protestors immediately bee-line at her. As she turns to get back in the car, Moa steps out.

Taking the young woman's hand gently, Moa leads her toward the clinic.

HELEN

Honey, don't you know what you're
doing? Don't you know about
adoption?

Moa tries to keep them moving, but there are too many protestors.

An angry bald man comes up behind the young woman.

GARY

Murderer! That's a person inside
you!

Moa pushes him back. *

MOA

It's a cluster of pluripotent cells
that haven't even fuckin
differentiated yet. *

Gary is speechless.

HELEN

Let us take you to a REAL doctor!

ASHLEY

I'm not even getting an abortion yet! This is just a preliminary examination.

An obese, middle-aged man suddenly tries to grab Ashley's arm. Moa pivots and knocks the man out.

Pulling Ashley by the elbow, Moa busts through the angry crowd of protesters to the front entrance.

After watching the scene, Daniel and Jonah turn back toward the black BMW.

Through the windshield, Daniel locks hateful eyes with Dominick.

With a small, savage smile, Dominick rolls up the window. *

Daniel watches ominously as the car speeds around the corner. *

DANIEL

Jonah, why don't you get things going this time?

Jonah's face lights up. He quickly grabs a megaphone from the bed of Mel's truck.

JONAH

Alright people, what do we want?

45 EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - EVENING

45

Several large buds of marijuana are dropped onto a counter.

BEN (O.S.)

Good Lord. I thought yesterday was a good day.

Lou puts the lid on a jar filled with marijuana. Ben sits on the counter staring at the weed. *

LOU

What I have here is called Sherpa Slayer. It's... well, it's quite a rarity. *

Ben holds up the jar. Stares at the label. It just reads:
"I dare you."

Lou puts the jar in a drawer and removes a stack of cash.

LOU (CONT'D)
And this is a thousand dollars. I
don't know what you and Dom
negotiated. Is this fair?

Ben holds up one of the buds and examines it in awe.

BEN
(mindlessly)
Sure. Sounds good.

Lou hands him a sandwich bag and drops the cash on the
counter.

LOU
You can do your little inspection
later. It's time for you to go.

Ben hops off the counter and collects his treasure. Lou
starts digging through the refrigerator.

BEN
Is he coming home soon or are you
just booting me?

Lou grabs a bag of lettuce and turns to face Ben.

LOU
If you go running your mouth to any
of your little college buddies, you
won't even have time to worry. *

Ben holds his hands up in defense.

BEN
Aww, come on, I'm not that-

LOU
Stupid? Yes, I know you're a smart
guy, but Dominick has more ears
than I even know about. One
drunken word and your mom will be
burying her baby boy.

BEN
Got it.

Ben stuffs the weed in his pocket and moves toward Lou for a kiss goodbye. She laughs and opens a cupboard to retrieve a salad bowl. Ben scoffs. Pads toward the hallway.

LOU

I was right about you, though.
Just try not to think about the
fact that this can't ever happen
again.

Lou rips open the bag of lettuce and dumps it into her bowl.

Ben stares at her back for a moment, grabs his bag and disappears down the hallway.

46 EXT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - EVENING

46

Ben ambles down the front steps and stops. A black BMW speeds up the driveway and stops abruptly. Dominick gets out, slams the car door and storms up the walkway.

BEN

I just left the paper on the
counter. Thanks for-

DOMINICK

You'd better hope it's good.

Dominick walks right past him, rips open the front door and slams it behind him.

BEN

It IS good. And guess what? I
just had sex with your girlfriend.
Twice. And she LOVED it!

Several heavy raindrops splatter on the walkway. Ben smiles maniacally up at the sky. *

47 INT. CARPENTER HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING

47

Cora lovingly watches Jonah dump steak sauce on a beautiful slab of beef. Ron shovels mashed potatoes into his mouth.

CORA

So, Jonah, Cody's mom told me he
hasn't seen you in a while.

JONAH

Yeah, we haven't hung out since...
it's been a while. He goes out
drinking and partying now.

Jonah chomps on a chunk of steak.

JONAH (CONT'D)

This is so good, Mom. I've missed you guys.

Ron stops eating. Cora chokes back tears.

RON

We've missed you too, Jonah. Your mom's about lost her mind worrying about you.

(beat)

What have you been doing?

JONAH

I know. I'm sorry it's been so long. I guess it just took a while for me to understand things. Recently, though, I've been doing a lot of outreach with Christ on Campus. You know, God is really beginning to work in this community.

A tear streams down Cora's face.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Mom?

RON

It's okay, Jonah, she's happy.

Ron puts his hand on top of Cora's.

CORA

I'm sorry. I'm just so glad you're doing so well. You seem so much more mature all of a sudden. And you being here reminds me of when Veevie would-

Cora chokes back a sob. Jonah reaches over and rubs her back.

CORA (CONT'D)

I just hope whoever did that to her has a chance to be saved before he dies.

Jonah stops rubbing her back and looks down at his plate.

JONAH

Right mom. I'm sure he will.

RON
She's in a better place now, Cor.
I miss her too.

JONAH
I've been praying, Mom, and I've
realized that not only is Veevie in
heaven, but her death was God's way
of revealing his plan for me.

RON
Which is what?

Ron squeezes Cora's hand gently. She stops crying.

JONAH
I'm going to be an outreach
minister and political activist.

Ron resumes his assault on the mashed potatoes. Cora wipes
the remaining tears from her eyes.

CORA
Oh, my, really? I bet you could
really help a lot of people doing
that.

RON
A religious politician? Is that
even possible?

Cora slaps Ron on the arm playfully.

CORA
Stop it, Ron. Of course it is.

Cora piles several scoops of green beans on Ron's plate. Ron
scowls at her and covers them with gravy. Jonah holds up his
plate and nods at her. She suppresses a look of surprise and
obliges.

JONAH
Actually, yeah, the guy who founded
Christ on Campus has basically
taken me under his wing. He's
started outreach organizations at
six different schools.

CORA
Oh, wow.

Choking down a bite of green beans, Ron sets his fork down.

RON

That's great, Jonah, I'm glad you're getting involved, but let me say this. There are a lot of whack jobs out there that seem like they have all the answers when, in reality, they're even more selfish and ignorant than anyone.

Jonah takes a bite of the beans. Chews thoughtfully.

CORA

Honey, I'm sure Jonah can tell the difference between-

RON

I'm just saying-

JONAH

No, Dad, I know what you're saying, but trust me. Today we set up a Pro-Life rally that hundreds of people showed up to on short notice. And Daniel and I were the ones that led the whole thing.

*

CORA

See? That's great sweetie. Movin up in the world.

JONAH

Yeah, the guy is only in town for two or three months out of the year and he accomplishes more than all the rest of us combined.

Ron holds up his glass of milk.

RON

See this, Jonah? Don't forget. You have to have a real cow to get this. Nothing worth drinking comes from bull shit.

Cora slaps Ron's arm again.

CORA

Ron Carpenter, you watch your mouth at this table.

RON

Honey, I'm just telling our son to be careful. That's all.

JONAH

I appreciate it, Dad. But it's
okay. I'm a part of something now.

48 EXT. ELVIS' APARTMENT - NIGHT

48

Drenched to the bone, Ben pushes on the door to Elvis' apartment. It doesn't budge. He pushes again. Something is jammed behind it. Listening closely, he hears HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER coming from inside.

Ben twists the knob, steps back, lowers his shoulder and barrels through the door. This time there is no resistance. He flies into-

49 ELVIS' KITCHEN

49

And slams into the opposite wall. This brings even more laughter.

Ben looks down at his arm. It's covered in ketchup.

He looks around the kitchen and into the living room. Everything is splattered with pizza sauce, condiments, applesauce, what appears to be pudding, and a smorgasbord of other foods.

Covered in food products, Elvis rolls on the floor behind the door. He is laughing so hard he can't even breathe.

In the living room, Carli, a wiry tattooed guy and two other girls also splattered with remains of a food fight laugh uncontrollably. Ben looks at the tattooed guy.

BEN

Dax? I thought you-

An egg explodes on Ben's neck.

ELVIS

Gotcha, bitch!

This gets several more shrieks of laughter from the living room.

Snatching a piece of pizza off a nearby chair, Ben smiles. Stuffs the pizza in his mouth.

BEN

You guys ever heard of Sherpa
Slayer?

50 ELVIS' LIVING ROOM - LATER

50

Dax, Elvis and the girls all sit around a coffee table watching Ben roll a blunt.

BEN

Your place has been pretty fucked up before, but damn man... You know I'm not helping you clean this shit up, right?

ELVIS

Who cares? Just listen. I'd just finished my theory midterm, and they almost didn't even let me take it cuz I was so late, but as I'm walkin out I get this call. It was an unknown number so I didn't even answer at first, but, when I heard the voicemail I almost shit.

Dax ashes a cigarette on an open pizza box and settles into the couch between his two girlfriends.

BEN

I don't get it. Who called?

Ben inspects the finished blunt and sticks it in his mouth.

DAX

That little jam session he did last night paid off. Your boy just signed a five figure record deal and a six month performance contract. As soon as the producer left, the kid went bananas, and...
(looking around the room)
THIS happened.

Ben stares at Elvis. Carli plays happily with one of Elvis' dreads.

BEN

Don't do this to me, El.

ELVIS

Fifteen thousand dollars, man. And that's not even including the loot I'll get from shows every week.

Ben jumps up and points his finger at Elvis.

BEN

HA! I told you, you pessimistic asshole! I told you it would happen! You did it! You fucking did it! You're a killer, man. I knew it!

ELVIS

It never would have happened it if you hadn't-

Leaning to see around Ben, Elvis's face drops. He points to the TV.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

That's your brother, man.

Ben turns to the TV.

ELVIS (CONT'D)

It is! Look! Your bro's on the news!

On TV, a photo of Chuck Brickston appears beside the head of a young anchor. Ben turns up the volume.

LINDSEY

An accomplished computer science graduate student turned professional gambler, Charles John Brickston was found dead today in the West River. Authorities say the twenty seven year-old was bound with zip ties and shot twice in head. No suspects have been identified, but a full investigation is underway.

(turning to other camera)

Speaking of investigations, let's go to John Walters for an investigation of the weather with your Channel 8 storm update. John?

Ben turns off the TV and sits on the coffee table. He puts the blunt back in his mouth and lights up.

51

INT. WAKEFIELD FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON

51

Ben glares at a huge golden crucifix. Below it, a gold trimmed, mahogany casket is nestled into a jungle of exotic flowers.

Elvis sits in a front row folding chair.

Ben thumbs through some of the cards attached to the flowers. Stopping on one, he looks closer.

Letting it go, Ben steps toward Elvis. We now see the card. It reads:

As the Lord giveth, so he shall
taketh away. *

God Bless,
Daniel Masters

Ben sits beside Elvis.

ELVIS
So when was the last time you saw
him?

BEN
He called me about three months
ago. Sounded strung out. Like
he'd been smoking a carton a day. *

ELVIS
What'd he say?

BEN
He needed money. *

ELVIS
How much did he need?

BEN
Fifty grand.

ELVIS
Fifty THOUSAND dollars?! That's
insane! There's no-

BEN
When I was fifteen, my dad took us
scuba-diving in Fiji. Chuck and I
went off on our own. For whatever
reason, my oxygen stopped working.
I couldn't breathe and I panicked.
Chuck gave me his mouthpiece and
held his breath for almost five
minutes so I could get to the
surface slow enough to not get the
bends.

ELVIS
Damn.
(beat)
(MORE)

ELVIS (CONT'D)

I'm sure you would have helped him if you could, but, I mean, who has fifty grand lyin around?

BEN

I have well over three million dollars, El, and since I wasn't willing to spare fifty of it, my brother's dead.

*

*

Elvis jumps up.

ELVIS

What the FUCK?!

*

Heeding the blanket of disapproving glares, he sits back down.

*

ELVIS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

You have how much?

BEN

Four months ago my trust matured. I have three point four million dollars, give or take.

ELVIS

Well, alright, shit. But so what, man? It's not your fault he got into the mess he did. God lets these things happen so we can appreciate what we have in life.

Ben sneers.

BEN

Don't give me that shit, man. God is something people created thousands of years ago, before science and technology, to explain what they didn't understand. It's a way for weak people to feel like everything is going to be okay even when-

Elvis stands up.

ELVIS

You're such a pussy, Bricks. You're so scared of the possibility there's something out there you don't understand that you're just gonna chalk faith up as a weakness you don't want anyway.

*

BEN

Yes. You're exactly right. I refuse to accept it's a virtue to believe in something when every shred of factual, logical evidence stands in direct opposition. Faith is just a convenient, comfortable label for self-delusion. Open your eyes.

ELVIS

(shaking his head)

I was just tryin to raise your spirits, Bricks. I'm sorry about Chuck, but fuck you.

Elvis turns and storms away. Frustrated, Ben watches Elvis leave and runs his hands through his hair, stopping to squeeze away a headache.

DOMINICK (O.S.)

That's a beautiful casket.

Ben looks up to Dominick.

BEN

You didn't have to come here.

DOMNINICK

I wanted to see how you were doing... And put to rest any anxiety you may have about the paper you wrote. It was flawless... So good it raised some eyebrows, actually, but it's all taken care of now, so, thank you.

BEN

Oh. Good. No problem.

Ben stands and points to a tall, sharply dressed man talking on a cell phone.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's my dad. Senior VP at-

DOMINICK

I know.

BEN

You know what he told me? He said,
Ben, this was only a matter of
time.

(beat)

Then he got a phone call.

Ben looks over Dominick's shoulder. An elegant, silvered woman converses with several elderly people.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's my mom. She was an English
Lit professor at 22.

Dominick turns to look at her. She forces a tragic smile in their direction.

DOMINICK

She's beautiful.

BEN

She's bipolar... And she thinks
Chuck's going to heaven.

DOMINICK

What do YOU think?

Ben searches the pockets of his suit.

BEN

I think I need a cigarette.

52

EXT. WAKEFIELD FUNERAL HOME - LATER

52

Ben and Dominick stand outside the opaque double doors of the funeral home. Ben aggressively pulls on a cigarette.

DOMINICK

Let me first say that I'm sorry for
your loss. My father and
stepmother died in a plane crash
when I was ten, so I know what it's
like to lose family.

BEN

So you and Lou both-

DOMINICK

That's how we met. Her parents
were on the plane, too.

Ben tosses his cigarette. Removes another from the pack.

BEN

Listen, I hope you're not about to feed me the whole he's in a better place speech. I just wish he wasn't in that box.

Dominick listens intently. Ben lights the cigarette.

BEN (CONT'D)

I hate how people think God is telling them this, or showing them that, when all they're doing is making up whatever bull shit makes them feel better.

Someone knocks on the window behind Ben. He turns and holds up a finger for them to wait.

DOMINICK

Why don't you come out with me and Lou later tonight. We'll go see Elvis' show, relax a little and talk about your next project.

BEN

Really?

DOMINICK

I've got some things brewing you could really help me with.

BEN

Sounds great.

Dominick tosses Ben a small silver flask and strides off. Smiling, Ben slips it into his suit pocket, tosses his cigarette and disappears through the doors.

53

INT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - EARLY EVENING

53

Head bowed, Daniel stands on stage in an impressive sanctuary. He is joined in prayer by hundreds of college students. They occupy every seat and fill most of the aisles. Jonah sits in a lone chair behind Daniel on stage.

DANIEL

Amen.

They all raise their heads.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Our speaker today is an
impressively bright young leader.
God's light is shining through this
young man in an amazing way.
Brothers and sisters, please give a
warm welcome to Jonah Carpenter.

The crowd applauds. Daniel turns from the microphone and
embraces Jonah.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(in Jonah's ear)

This is it. You're ready.

Jonah strides up to the microphone confidently.

JONAH

Thank you. Thank you, brothers and
sisters in Christ. My name is
Jonah and I am so blessed to be
here.

Daniel sits in Jonah's seat.

JONAH (CONT'D)

The truth is, my presence is
nothing but a testament to the
Lord's love and grace. About three
months ago, my sister was kidnapped
and murdered.

(emotional beat)

Without Daniel's guidance, and the
Lord's strength, I would still be
bitter, hateful and blind. Bitter
that God's plan was not the same as
my plan. Hateful toward the people
in our country that don't enjoy a
relationship with Christ. And
blind to the plan that God has for
me and this country. But, because
of His grace, I am humbled more
every day. And now, I don't just
feel inspired to serve, I feel
grateful for every opportunity the
Lord gives me.

The audience applauds.

JONAH (CONT'D)

You see, the secular world has
tried to reduce us Jesus freaks-

Someone from the audience cheers.

JONAH (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 Yeah, that's right, we are Jesus
 freaks, aren't we?

Jonah lets the audience laugh for a moment.

JONAH (CONT'D)
 The secularists have done their
 best to reduce us to a voting
 demographic they can pander to
 around election time and then
 forget once we get them elected.
 And, for a long time, we've let it
 slide with impunity. Brothers and
 sisters, let's open our ears.
 Let's vow, together, NOW, to never
 again be taken by their lies!

The audience goes wild.

54

INT. CHURCH OF THE LIVING WORD - LATER

54

Jonah shakes hands with a young woman inside the main door of the church. A small line of excited students wait for a chance to speak with him. Behind Jonah, Daniel talks on a cell phone.

JONAH
 Thank you so much. It was very
 nice to meet you, Sarah.

Blushing, Sarah shakes his hand again and floats away.

A young man steps up to Jonah and shakes his hand.

YOUNG MAN
 I just want to thank you for your
 words today. I can't tell you how
 inspiring your story was to me.

JONAH
 Wow, that's great. I'm glad the
 Lord spoke to you today.

YOUNG MAN
 Is there any way that I can reach
 you? I'm chairman of our campus
 chapter and I'd love it if we could
 get you to come speak at some point
 before the end of the semester.

Jonah feels his pockets. Looks around awkwardly.

JONAH
Do you have a pen?

Daniel end a call on his phone and steps beside Jonah.

DANIEL
Jonah is now our national outreach director. You'll be able to find all of his contact information on the web site.

Jonah shoots a look at Daniel. Daniel smiles and puts his hand on Jonah's shoulder.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(to the group)
I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Jonah and I still have a lot of work to do yet tonight. Thank you so much for coming. God bless!

After a chorus of "goodbyes" and "thank you's," Jonah follows Daniel into-

55

DANIEL'S OFFICE

55

Daniel sits down behind a long glass desk. He points to a black leather chair.

DANIEL
Please.

Jonah sits. Daniel removes two pieces of paper from an accordion file and runs them through the shredder.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You were incredible up there, Jonah. If I didn't know otherwise, I would have thought you were a seasoned minister. I still almost can't believe what you just did.

Jonah smiles wide. Daniel pulls a spray bottle and a rag from a drawer and starts cleaning the desk.

JONAH
I loved every second of it. I could really feel the Holy Spirit working through me. For the first time, I know what it feels like.

DANIEL
It's an amazing feeling, isn't it?

Daniel hides the spray bottle in the drawer and folds the rag neatly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Jonah, I hope you know how extraordinarily fortunate you are. You have heard God's call, you've seen the swiftness of his justice and you have felt the spirit work through you.

JONAH
(solemnly)
I am blessed.

DANIEL
Those words that I wrote on my business card... you wanted to believe them before, but you didn't. Do you believe now?

Jonah nods formally.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(with subtly pride)
Good. Now go home. Get changed and be ready by 8:45.

JONAH
Ready for what?

DANIEL
Today we spoke to brothers and sisters who were willing and able to hear. Tonight, we speak to the deaf.

*
*
*
*
*
*

56 EXT. SLATER HALL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

56

Sitting on the curb, Ben lights a cigarette. He squints at his watch and looks up at the burned out street light above him.

A yellow taxi pulls up to the curb. The passenger window rolls down.

MEL
You waiting for a cab?

BEN
Not yours. I called Tony's Taxi.

MEL
Going downtown?

Ben nods.

MEL (CONT'D)
So are we.

Ben stubs out his cigarette and stands in time to see Jonah hurry down the front steps.

Ben opens the door and waves his hand majestically.

They both slide into-

57 MEL'S TAXI

57

Ben smirks as he watches Jonah buckle his seat belt carefully.

BEN
You know Tony's gonna be pissed I'm not here when he shows up.

Mel shifts sharply and the cab jerks away from the curb.

BEN (CONT'D)
I mean, isn't this against the sacred oath you cabbies have to swear to before you're allowed to rattle around in a rolling pile of shit like this?

Mel jerks the wheel into a squealing left turn. Ben slams against the door.

MEL
Sorry, where did you say you were going?

Ben reads Mel's chauffeur ID.

BEN
Melvin Styx. Styx? What is that, your pen name? Can you take me to see Hades?

MEL
Where's that?

BEN
Hades. The underworld?

MEL
What?

BEN
Sorry. I forgot. The Pope said we
have to call it hell now.
(to Jonah)
What about you, Jesus? Where are
you headed?

Mel slams his foot down on the accelerator.

JONAH
Easy Mel. He's just havin fun with
us. No big deal.

Mel stares menacingly in the rear view mirror.

BEN
(eyeing Mel warily)
Just take me to the ped mall.
(to Jonah)
So Jonah, you wanna come have a
beer with me? Or are you fishing
for men tonight?

JONAH
Why don't you come with me? I'm
doing an interview you might be
interested in. *
*
*

Mel slams on the breaks to stop at a red light.

BEN
Jesus, Mel, are you from fucking
Calcutta?

Ben shoots a look out the window. *

BEN (CONT'D)
(pleading)
This is good right here. Just
stop. Shit!
(sarcastically to Jonah)
To be continued...

JONAH
Wait a sec, Ben.

Mel locks the doors. Ben eyes Mel. Jonah pulls a pen out of *
his pocket and scribbles something on a napkin.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Give me a call when you're ready to
hear God's truth. *

Ben stuffs the napkin in his pocket. Tosses Mel a crumpled
bill. Mel unlocks the door. *

BEN

There's only one way to find out
what's really true...

(maniacally)

And the suspense is killing me. *

Ben slams the door and jogs down the sidewalk. Mel pulls
away from the curb.

JONAH

He's in my international relations
class. He's just bitter and lost.

MEL

He should be. His older brother
was shot twice in the head the
other night.

Jonah studies Mel's stoic face in the mirror. Jonah's eyes
widen in realization.

58

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

58

A bottle pours liquor into two shot glasses.

Dominick raises one.

DOMINICK

To the memory of Charles Brickston.

Ben raises his glass.

BEN

To Chuck.

They clink, tap and down the shots.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to Lou)

You don't do shots?

LOU

I'm defending my dissertation
tomorrow.

BEN

Well good luck with that.

Ben turns away from the bar and scopes out the crowd of drinkers. Dominick points to a large circular booth toward the front. In the center of the table is a gold "RESERVED" sign.

DOMINICK

We're up there.

Dominick leads the way through the crowd with Lou in tow. Ben follows behind Lou. *

Lou looks back to see Ben staring directly at her ass. Lou smiles devilishly and keeps walking.

59

VIP BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

59

Ben, Dom and Lou sit around the table. Lou drops two white pills in front of Ben.

LOU

Since you liked them so much the other day...

(looking at Dominick)

They're better when you don't bump them.

A sexy cocktail waitress sets a bucket of champagne on the center of the table and hands Dominick a cocktail.

The waitress sits down next to Ben and runs her hand up the inside of his leg.

WAITRESS

And what can I get for you, sweetie?

BEN

Surprise me. *

The waitress keeps rubbing. *

WAITRESS

Are you sure that's it?

BEN

No. Yes. For now.

The waitress saunters away. Dominick smiles.

The lights on the stage go up and a band starts playing.

DOMINICK
Listen, Ben, there's something I
need to tell you.

BEN
Lay it on me.

DOMINICK
When I heard about Chuck, I checked
around with some people I know. He
owed a lot of people money, and
there were a lot of people looking
for him.

BEN
Yeah.

DOMINICK
The thing is, none of them found
him. None of the people he owed
killed him.

BEN
Well how do you know they-

DOMINICK
Trust me. They didn't.

The waitress leans across Ben to hand Lou a drink, giving Ben
a nice view.

She hands Ben a drink. As he takes a sip, she whispers
something in his ear. Ben chokes and starts coughing. The
waitress winks at Dom and saunters off.

BEN
So who DID do it. *

DOMINICK
I don't know, but I have people
looking into it.

BEN
He's gone. There's nothing else we
can do. *
*

DOMINICK
You sure?

Ben nods, finishes his drink and waves to the waitress. Lou
punches a text on her phone.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Anyway, before you get too fucked up, there's one more thing I want to talk to you about.

Ben looks down at his pocket. Looking back at Dominick, Ben pulls out his cell phone.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

As you know, I have some serious interests in several pharmaceutical companies.

Ben reads the text and immediately slips the phone back into his pocket. Suppressing a reaction, he glances at Lou and quickly returns his attention to Dominick. Lou smiles.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Two of those companies have invested a substantial amount of capital in preparation for intensive research programs on alternative medicines, recreational drugs and extensive cancer studies. But, the time and money will be wasted without additional support from the government.

*

Lou punches another text on her phone.

BEN

So how can you make that happen?

DOMINICK

There's a bill on the floor of the Senate right now that will essentially provide everything we need. Not just comprehensive research grants, either. It'll finally open up the door for medical marijuana dispensaries, too. Problem is, all eyes are on the little abortion clinic controversy we have here. It's going to function as a litmus test for the whole state... whatever happens here will dictate how the Senate handles our bill... and nothing's definite.

*

*

BEN

How do you mean?

DOMINICK

The religious right is as strong as ever now, Ben. People of faith are swarming to stem the advancement of science because they know it'll eventually prove their theories wrong. Shit, they even believe schools should teach fucking creationism!

Ben looks down at his pocket. Glares at Lou.

BEN

That doesn't make any sense, though. It's not like learning about evolution and Earth's history means they can't believe in God.

DOMINICK

No one wants to consider the possibility that the god they've been praying to for the last thirty years isn't there and never was to begin with. Shit, in a way, I feel for them. If they win this one, though. If they come out ahead here, any moderate Senator looking to keep his job is going to side with them on our bill.

*

*

*

BEN

Fuck that. They're not winning shit. What can I do to help?

Dominick holds up a finger and pulls his phone out of his pocket.

*

DOMINICK

Yeah, what is it?

*

Ben checks his phone. Quickly slips it back in his pocket and reaches for the bottle of champagne. Lou pulls the bucket out of his reach and stares him in the eye.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

(angrily)

What the fuck are you telling me?

Lou pops the cork and pours the champagne into their glasses.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Okay, I'll be at your place in twenty.

He hangs up.

DOMINICK (CONT'D) *
 I'm sorry. *
 (to Lou)
 I'll be back tomorrow afternoon. *

Lou slides out so Dominick can leave. *

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
 (to Lou)
 Will you keep an eye on this one *
 for me tonight?

Feigning annoyance, Lou nods. Dominick pecks her on the cheek.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)
 (to Ben)
 Don't get too wasted tonight. I'll
 need you tomorrow. As of just now,
 we're playing hardball.

Ben holds up a glass of champagne. Downs it. *

60 EXT. MEL'S FARM - NIGHT

60

Jonah shuts the door to the taxi. He stands in front of a rotting old barn, miles from anything but corn.

Mel ambles around to the rear of the taxi and pops the trunk.

Mel beckons Jonah.

Jonah joins Mel and looks into the trunk.

Inside, an unconscious middle-aged woman in a smart blue suit is gagged and zip-tied.

JONAH
 She's been in here the whole time?!
 Who is-

MEL
 She's your interview. Grab her
 legs.

61 THE BARN

61

Jonah and Mel bang through the thin, wooden door of the barn. *
 The old structure is littered with rusted farm equipment,
 tools, shingles and broken pieces of wood.

Daniel paces by a work bench that extends along the entire left side of the barn. Seeing Jonah and Mel, Daniel smiles brightly and points to an old rocking chair in the corner.

Jonah and Mel carry the woman to the corner and ease her limp body into the chair.

DANIEL

Thank you, gentlemen.

MEL

She'll be awake in a minute.

*
*

Mel zip-ties her hands to the armrests of the chair. Dried blood covers her nose and the strip of duct tape over her mouth.

Mel slaps her across the face. Hard. Her eyes flutter.

JONAH

Daniel, who is this? I thought I was interviewing someone for the website.

DANIEL

On Monday, the City Council will hold a vote on their little murder bill. This is Judy Watkins, a crucial swing vote for the murderers. Without her, they won't be able to get their majority.

After a brief look at her surroundings, Judy's eyes widen and she struggles to rip her hands from the armrests.

JUDY

Help! Someone help me! Please!
Help!

DANIEL

There is no one within five miles of us, Judy. Save your breath.

Judy's pale face twists with fear. Her legs shake uncontrollably. After a moment, the fear in her face turns to anger.

JUDY

You're Daniel Masters... I don't know what you think you're going to do to me-

*

At the workbench, Mel picks up a pair of limb-loppers and a 44. Magnum. Judy's wide eyes follow him. Daniel turns to Jonah. Jonah nods.

JONAH

I think you know why you're here.
What you need to do now is convince us that the government is going to start protecting the unborn life created by God rather than killing it and experimenting on it.

Judy's lips curl into a condescending smile.

JUDY

UNBORN LIFE? Your ignorance really is astounding.

JONAH

Excuse me?

Judy leans forward in her seat to look Jonah in the eyes.

JUDY

Your IGNORANCE.

Jonah looks confused.

JUDY (CONT'D)

You think you're on the right side of this one, but what do you really know for sure? *

JONAH

What do you mean? *

JUDY

You and everyone else thinks this issue can be reduced to the question of whether an embryo is a human or when it becomes a life. Of course it's human and of course it's a life. *

Mel moves toward Judy with the limb-loppers. Jonah holds up his hand. Mel stops.

JONAH

So what are you saying?

JUDY

The question before the government has nothing to do with that.

(MORE)

JUDY (CONT'D)

It's a question of when a gamete or embryo or fetus deserves rights that trump those of the woman carrying it. And on that particular delineation, the BIBLE is conspicuously silent.

Mel slaps Judy in the face. Judy takes the pain in silence. *

JONAH

Mel!

Jonah holds up his hand.

Judy smiles sarcastically at Mel.

Daniel's phone vibrates on the work bench. He flips it open. Wanders away from the others.

JUDY

Thank you, MEL. *

JONAH

I'm sorry about that. So how are you going to vote?

Daniel spikes his phone on the cement floor. It shatters in an explosion of tiny plastic shards. Jonah spins around. *

JUDY *

Ask him. He just found out.

Daniel storms over to Mel and takes the gun.

JONAH

(to Daniel)

What is she talking about?

JUDY

We voted early. The clinic is getting its funding. You stupid zealots kidnapped me for no reason.

Daniel cocks the gun and hands it to Jonah. Jonah gladly takes the gun. Judy panics.

JUDY (CONT'D)

I'm a Christian! I read the Bible!

Jonah faces Judy.

JONAH

Then you should know. The word of God is living and active. *

(MORE)

JONAH (CONT'D)
 Sharper than any double-edged
 sword. It penetrates even to
 dividing soul and spirit, joints
 and marrow. It judges the thoughts
 and attitudes of the heart.

Judy thrashes her arms and legs, but she can't wrench free.

Jonah raises the gun.

JONAH (CONT'D)
 Everything is uncovered and laid
 bare before the eyes of him to whom
 we must give account.

JUDY
 No!

Jonah shoots Judy three times in the chest. Blood bubbles
 out of her navy blue blazer. Her body slumps forward.

Jonah stares in horror at Judy's dead body. Snapping out of
 it, he suddenly flashes a perfunctory smile at Daniel. Hands
 the gun to Mel.

JONAH
 I'm going to step outside and get
 some air.

Daniel pats him on the back and watches him shuffle toward
 the door.

DANIEL
 I knew he could do it. I told you
 about this kid.

Jonah walks out the door to-

MEL'S PROPERTY

Where he quickly turns the corner and vomits in the grass.

Wiping his mouth. He slumps down against the barn. Through
 the thin wall, Jonah can still hear Daniel and Mel talking.

DANIEL
 So can I assume you've already-

MEL
 Yes. It's done.

DANIEL
 And the truck? It's all set?

*

MEL

That was the first thing I did when
you came to town.

*

Jonah takes a long, deep breath. Peers through a hole in the
muddy window screen.

DANIEL

How many do you have ready?

Mel slides a long storage bin out from under the work bench.
He pulls off the lid and removes a football-sized bomb.

MEL

Twenty three. Ready to blow.

*

Daniel holds the bomb up for inspection

DANIEL

How many will I need?

MEL

One could do it.

DANIEL

Then I'll take all of them.

*

Jonah slides back down to the ground and suddenly winces in
pain. Lifting up the back of his shirt, he pulls a long
splinter out of his back and tosses it away.

63

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATE NIGHT

63

Blue lights illuminate billows of stage smoke. The
silhouette of a lone guitarist is visible through the smoke.
The guitarist begins a slow, sultry solo. The crowd goes
nuts.

Elvis steps to the front of the stage. The music explodes
and the lights go up. His fingers fly on the guitar. The
crowd goes wild.

Happily bobbing his head to the music, Ben waits behind three
massive guys at the bar.

*

*

Ben tries to move around one of them but the guy bends over
to find something.

MEAT HEAD 1

It's here, it's just too dark.
Just give me a second.

He searches the floor in the dark for his money.

Ben pulls a hundred dollar bill out of his pocket, flicks a lighter and lights it on fire. Bending over, he lets the flame shed light on the floor. Meat Head 1 finds his five, looks at the flame and stands up abruptly.

Ben stomps out the fiery bill.

BEN

Can I get a drink now? Is that cool? *

MEAT HEAD 2 *

What the hell is your problem?

BEN *

(dismissive)

Just pay for your hefeweizen and get out of the fuckin way.

Meat Head 1 rocks Ben in the face with a right hook. Ben hits the floor hard.

The surrounding crowd clears the area quickly. Ben staggers back to his feet. Blood pours from a cut on his forehead. He smiles defiantly. *

BEN (CONT'D)

Fuck you!

Meat Head 1 pounds Ben with another shot. Ben doubles over and gasps for air as he wobbles on his feet. Groping for a table, he steadies himself. *

BEN (CONT'D)

I can whisper, too! *

Grabbing a stein from the table, Ben spins and shatters the glass on Meat Head 1's face.

Meat Head 2 throws Ben into the table, spilling a half dozen drinks and beers on bystanders.

Two guys from the table throw Ben to the floor and kick the shit out of him. *

Two bouncers jump into the mix and take out the kickers while another two pull Ben off the floor.

Elvis stops playing on stage.

Ben struggles with the bouncer but only manages to rip his own shirt.

BEN (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Is this how it's supposed to be?
 IS IT?!

*

The bouncers drag Ben toward the door.

BEN (CONT'D)
 Enjoy the show! Enjoy your fucking
 show!

Elvis glares through the lights at Ben.

ELVIS
 Give him a hand, everybody. He
 just got his ass kicked.

After a cold beat, Elvis starts another song.

*

The bouncer busts open an exit door and wrestles Ben to the-

64 PEDESTRIAN MALL

64

Lou follows them out. Grabs Ben around the waist. The
 bouncer slams the door.

BEN
 I got some good ones in, trust me.

Lou looks back toward the door of the bar. Spots several of
 the fighters storming toward them.

LOU
 Why the hell'd you do that?

Spotting the fighters, Ben smiles maniacally. Blows a kiss
 to the group.

Lou drags him to the curb. Flags a cab. Pulls Ben into the
 back seat as the fighters arrive. As the cab pulls away, Ben
 taunts them through the window.

*

LOU (CONT'D)
 What the hell is wrong with you?

65 INT. DOMINICK'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

65

Ben lays on the bed in Dominick's room. Lou cleans blood off
 his face with a washcloth.

*

BEN
How does it feel to know you've
banged a prizefighter?

*

Lou is not amused.

LOU
Those guys were huge, Ben.

She dabs at a long gash over Ben's eyebrow.

LOU (CONT'D)
You need to see a doctor in the
morning.

BEN
I've been hurt before, this isn't
shit.

LOU
This is definitely going to scar
without stitches.

Lou pulls the paper off a butterfly strip. Applies it to
Ben's forehead.

BEN
Have you ever died in your dreams?

LOU
No. I always wake up before it
actually happens.

BEN
Oh.

LOU
Why? Have you?

BEN
Almost every night.

LOU
Are you serious?

BEN
You know what it feels like?

Ben grabs Lou's hand. Lou stops playing doctor.

BEN (CONT'D)
It's fucking terrifying. After it
happens, everything just goes black
and I can't move.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

I can't even scream. I'm just
alone. In the dark. And I know
it's forever.

Lou studies Ben's tormented face, snaps out of it then goes
back to work.

LOU

You'll be fine. You're just-

Ben grabs the white first-aid kit and throws it away from the
bed.

BEN

No. I won't. And neither will
you. Not like this.

LOU

Don't even-

Lou starts to stand up, but Ben pulls her back to him and
kisses her.

After a long beat, Lou pushes him away.

LOU (CONT'D)

Stop it.

BEN

I still kiss pretty good though...
even when I'm busted up, don't I?

Lou scoots back on the bed.

LOU

This can't happen. *

Lou starts collecting the scattered first-aid supplies. *

BEN

Quit pretending, Solange. You're
not happy and I know it.

Lou drops the first-aid kit and walks to the door.

LOU

I'm going to bed.

Lou shuts off the light and closes the door.

BEN

Go ahead, then. Go to sleep! Go
to sleep like a little pretender!

Ben rolls over and pukes off the side of the bed.

66

INT. MEL'S FARM - LATE NIGHT

66

Two shovels scrape into a pile of dry, rocky dirt and toss it into a small grave.

Jonah and Daniel dig back into the pile of dirt. Daniel lifts a scoop and tosses it into the grave. Jonah just leaves his shovel stuck in the pile.

JONAH

That's probably good, isn't it?

Daniel stops shoveling.

DANIEL

I'll have Mel get the rest in the morning.

Daniel spikes his shovel into the dirt pile.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You were impressive tonight. I'm proud of you.

JONAH

I'm willing to do whatever the Lord asks.

DANIEL

Good. That's good to hear.

JONAH

I can handle more... Don't you need help with-

DANIEL

Yes. Absolutely. So let's get some rest.

Daniel pats Jonah on the shoulder and plods toward Mel's taxi.

As Daniel walks off, Jonah warily tosses his shovel and stares ominously into the grave.

We HEAR the AGONIZING SCREAMS of a young man.

67 INT. DOMINICK'S HOSUE - EARLY MORNING 67

Ben's eyes open. One is badly bruised and almost swollen shut.

He sits up in Dominick's bed and hears a man screaming from downstairs.

Ben jumps out of bed and immediately doubles over to clutch his ribs. He limps over to the-

68 BATHROOM 68

And coughs blood into one of the sinks.

Ben blows his nose. Tosses the tissue into the waste basket under the counter. He double-takes at the trash.

He reaches in and pulls out an empty white box. It's a pregnancy test. He pulls out another. And another.

The young man screams again downstairs. A gunshot rings out. The screams stop.

Ben drops the boxes and limps out of the bathroom to the-

69 HALLWAY 69

Down the stairs to the-

70 FOYER 70

And into the

71 LIVING ROOM 71

Where Dominick busts through a door from the garage with a gun in his hand.

Dominick quickly pivots. Cocks the gun. Aims it at Ben.

Ben throws his hands up. Dominick lowers the gun.

DOMINICK

(re: Ben's face)

What the fuck happened to you last night? Didn't I tell you not to get too hammered?

BEN

I-

Dominick waves him off.

DOMINICK

Some Christian vigilantes kidnapped a member of the City Council last night and left her right hand in a mock ballot box on the steps of City Hall.

Dominick sets the gun down.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Apparently, they didn't realize she had already used that hand to fist fuck their extremist cause.

BEN

What?

Dominick walks to the-

72

KITCHEN

72

And sets the gun on the counter.

DOMINICK

You know who Judy Watkins was?

Dominick grabs a glass from the cabinet, fills it with tap water and chugs it down.

BEN

Sorry, I don't really follow local politics.

DOMINICK

Judy Watkins was my aunt. After my parents died, she basically raised me.

BEN

Oh my God, I'm so-

Dominick shatters the glass in the sink. Ben jumps.

DOMINICK

Save your sympathy for the little asshole who just spilled his guts in my garage.

BEN

You just-

DOMINICK

(restrained rage)

It's this goddamned group. Christ
on Campus. They all follow this...
GURU named Daniel Masters.

Dominick storms past Ben.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Here. I'll introduce you to one of
his faithful followers.

*

*

Ben follows Dominick into the-

73

GARAGE

73

Where Moa is wiping blood off the wall. Behind Moa, Zac lays
dead on the smooth cement floor. Blood still flows freely
from his head and his left hand is missing two fingers and a
thumb.

*

DOMINICK

This one was just full of pertinent
information.

*

Moa stops wiping and tosses Ben a mop. Ben coughs and gags
as he stares in fear at Zac's body. Moa nods at him. He
starts mopping.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Legend has it, Daniel Masters was
the son of a prostitute who became
a Christian the day that she was
going to have an abortion. I don't
buy it, but I gotta give it to him.
It's poetic.

*

Dominick watches Ben struggle with the mop. Swiftly,
Dominick grabs the mop out of Ben's hands and tosses it
against the wall.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

For the last eight years, the guy's
been brainwashing impressionable
college students all over the
country. He's got thousands of
student followers, but only a small
handful really know what he is
doing... and they're ready and
willing to do anything he says.

*

*

Ben sits down on the steps and hunches forward.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

Point is, the guy has a vendetta and virtually unlimited resources - financial and human - and he's going to hard-line us out of our funding.

*

BEN

But didn't the council-

DOMINICK

What matters isn't how the council acts, it's how the public reacts. We need - and I do mean need - to cut his legs out from under him before he can turn this town against us.

Moa turns to Ben and wrings out his rag. Bloody water drips from the rag into Moa's bucket.

BEN

So how-

DOMINICK

Here's what's going to happen. I'm going to take care of this situation while you write the paper I have due at five o'clock.

BEN

Con Law? As in Constitutional Law?

DOMINICK

Is that a problem?

BEN

Why should it be?

DOMINICK

All the information's on my desk downstairs. Just get it to Dean Blackmun's mailbox in the Law Building by five.

Dominick looks at his watch. Grabs a hack saw from the wall.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

You have eight hours.

74 INT. DOMINICK'S LAB - AFTERNOON

74

Ben's fingers fly on a laptop set up at one of the long workstations. On the table, beside a thick textbook is a huge pile of white powder.

Ben stops typing and touches his battered face tenderly. Grimacing, he scrapes some of the powder away from the pile and snorts it with a rolled-up bill. He shakes his head.

Reaching across the table, Ben finds a small Bunsen burner. He sticks a cigarette in his mouth, twists on the flame, leans in and freezes.

Dressed in a sharp, grey suit, Lou strides in. Seeing Ben, she stops.

BEN
How'd it go?

LOU
What are you doing in my lab?
(re: the powder)
Other than my drugs.

*

BEN
The Politics of Psychopharmacology.
It'll be my masterpiece.

LOU
You mean Dom's masterpiece.

BEN
Well, yeah, but-

LOU
Have you ever considered the possibility that you should start thinking for yourself at some point? Or are you just going to do other people's work for the rest of your life?

Ben coughs violently and stands up from his stool.

BEN
Not everyone knows what they want to do with their life at age nine.

LOU
Most people have the audacity to pick something and try it for a while, though. But not you.

(MORE)

LOU (CONT'D)

No, in five years you'll still be undeclared, plagiarizing intro papers for nickels.

With a spite-filled smile, Ben lights his cigarette off the Bunson Burner. *

BEN

Does Dominick know you're pregnant?

LOU

What?

BEN

You must be if you used so many. Shit, I bet you even tested it here in your lab. Just to be sure. *

Lou angrily twists off the flame.

BEN (CONT'D) *

That's why you didn't care if I wore a condom, isn't it?

LOU *

I'm taking care of it tonight. *

Lou pulls the door open.

LOU (CONT'D)

Do your dirty laundry somewhere else.

Lou snatches her briefcase off the counter and storms out. *

Ben grabs the rolled up bill and snorts the rest of the pile.

Standing up abruptly, Ben sniffs sharply a few times and glares at the laptop angrily.

Ben closes the textbook. Picks it up. Raises it over his head and brings it down with a vengeance, obliterating the laptop with several chopping blows. *

75 EXT. DANIEL'S LOFT - AFTERNOON

75

CLOSE ON TV - a newscast is in progress.

LINDSEY

But the controversial execution has managed to spark a wave of virulent responses from Pro-Life groups across America.

(MORE)

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

Officials say they believe the kidnapping and mutilation of councilwoman Judy Watkins to be a form of retaliation to the decision. An act that also has sparked strong condemnation from both sides of the debate.

Daniel turns off the TV and tosses the remote onto the coffee table.

JONAH

It's too late.
(watching Daniel)
There's nothing we can do.

DANIEL

Hebrews chapter six, verse eight. Land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and in danger of being cursed. In the end, it must be burned.

Jonah sits on the arm of the couch.

JONAH

You mean-

The door opens. Mel ambles in. Looks at Jonah. Leans over the couch and whispers something in Daniel's ear.

Mel steps back. Daniel twists to see Mel.

DANIEL

Zac Halloway?

Mel stares at Daniel solemnly.

JONAH

What? What happened?

Standing, Daniel pulls out his wallet and hands Jonah a bill.

DANIEL

I think it's time for lunch. Would you grab some sandwiches for all of us?

Jonah stares at the bill.

JONAH

Uh, sure. Then when I get back we can figure out-

MEL

Roast beef. Wheat. No mayo. *

Jonah stuffs the money in his pocket.

76 INT. STILLWELL'S BAR & GRILL - LATE AFTERNOON 76

Wobbling on a stool at a long wooden bar, Ben polishes off a beer and sets it down on a wet napkin. Several other wet napkins are strewn in front of him. *

A skinny, tattooed bartender sets two shot glasses on the bar in front of Ben and fills them both with vodka.

BEN

You're slippin, Spicer. You forgot my lemons.

BARTENDER

That's vodka. Not a fucking fruit cocktail.

Ben glares at the bartender.

The bartender leans forward on the bar.

Ben picks up both shots. Pounds them back to back. Slams them on the bar. The bartender smiles.

Ben stares at the bar for a long beat. Takes a deep breath.

BEN

You got a pen?

The bartender nods. Slides over a pen and a stack of clean napkins. Ben pulls a napkin off the pile and starts writing.

77 INT. LAW BUILDING - LATE AFTERNOON 77

Ben staggers into a beautiful oak-trimmed office. He spots a young secretary and plops down on the corner of her desk.

The secretary gets one whiff of him and stands up.

RHONDA

Please, get off my desk right now.

Ben hops off the desk, knocking a ceramic pen-holder and a name plate to the floor. The pen holder breaks into several pieces.

BEN
My apologies...
(picking up the plate)
Rhonda.

Rhonda runs around the desk and stares at the broken pen holder.

Ben scoops up several pens and sets them on the desk.

RHONDA
Stop it. Just, stop. Why are you here?

Ben stands back up and pulls a wad of napkins out of his pocket.

BEN
I need to speak to Dean Blackmun.

RHONDA
He's in a meeting. Are you a student?

BEN
I... I'm just a guy who needs to speak with him.

Rhonda studies him.

RHONDA
I'm sorry, but you'll have to make an appointment for that.

BEN
No. I won't. Listen to me. It's ABOUT one of his students, Rhonda. There's an intricate web of illegal activity at this school and in the middle of it is a guy named Dominick Vitalivich.

Rhonda picks up the phone.

Ben waves his wad of napkins.

BEN (CONT'D)
I wrote everything you need to know right here. Just, please, let me talk to the Dean.

RHONDA
Okay, okay, enough. Sit down over there.

Rhonda points to a few chairs in the corner and whispers something into the phone.

Wincing in pain, Ben coughs. Slumps into a chair with a grunt.

Ben shuffles through his napkins and clears his throat.

BEN

Hey, Rhonda, is there any water in here?

Rhonda looks at him nervously.

BEN (CONT'D)

That's fine. Don't stress out about it. I'll just hit the fountain.

Ben stands and opens the door.

RHONDA

No, you can-

Ben waves her off and limps out to the

78

HALLWAY

78

Where he sees three campus police officers turn the corner.

Ben hobbles quickly down the hallway.

OFFICER 1

Hey! Stay right there!

Ben turns a corner and busts through a door to the-

79

STAIRWELL

79

Where he grabs the railing and pulls himself down two flights of stairs. At the bottom, he stops to clutch his ribs.

Above him, the officers bust through the door to the stairwell.

Sucking wind, Ben drags himself out the door to the-

*

STREET

Where he spots a campus bus pulling up to the other side of the street. Still clutching his ribs, Ben hobbles to the bus, catches one of the closing doors and steps on board.

As the bus pulls away, he stares through the window at the campus police officers rushing out the door from the stairwell. One of them talks into his radio. *

80 EXT. MAYA GOLDBLOOM CLINIC - LATE AFTERNOON 80 *

Jonah walks down the sidewalk opposite the clinic. It is now a total zoo. Ropes line the front walkway of the clinic, dividing the front lawn into two angry sides. Press trucks and reporters everywhere. Several police cars parked at the curb.

One of the protesters hops the dividers, sparking a fight in the walkway. Jonah stops walking.

A fight breaks out on the walkway. A group of police officers jump into the scuffle.

A large officer drags an older man out of the mix to one of the police cars. Blood drips from the man's nose onto his pro-life shirt.

Jonah starts towards the man, but stops suddenly.

A little girl stands alone on the sidewalk in front of the clinic. Seeing the bloody man, the girl starts crying. She looks around frantically but doesn't see who she's looking for.

Jonah runs across the street and kneels in front of the girl.

JONAH

It's okay, honey. What's your name?

The girl stops crying.

AMANDA

Amanda.

Jonah is hit over the back by a picket sign. He stands quickly and turns in time to get whacked again in the chest by an angry woman.

Amanda bursts into tears and runs away from them.

ANGRY WOMAN

Stay away from my daughter, you
murderer!

*

Jonah holds up his hands apologetically, stunned by the scene. He quickly treads back across the street.

From the sidewalk, Jonah watches Amanda cry alone while her mother rejoins the fighting protesters.

Jonah turns sadly and ambles down the sidewalk.

81

INT. THE HUNGRY HOBO - LATE AFTERNOON

81

Ben stumbles through the door of a humble sandwich shop. Spotting a corner booth, he crosses the room and lays down on the worn vinyl seat. He grimaces with each heavy breath.

Ben sits up and scans the parking lot through the window. A Mexican cashier hands Jonah a bag of sandwiches. Thanking him, Jonah heads to the door and spots Ben.

Ben lays back down in a sorry attempt at hiding. Reaching the booth, Jonah stares at Ben's battered face.

JONAH

Jesus. Are you okay?

Ben coughs hard.

BEN

My wife beats me. I know she
doesn't mean it... it's my fault
for pro-

JONAH

I think you need to get to a
doctor.

BEN

Told you. I'm ship shape.

*

Ben rattles a vial of pills in his pocket.

*

BEN (CONT'D)

Wanna race?

JONAH

You're a smart guy. Why do you do
that stuff?

*

*

BEN
Your addiction is far worse than
mine.

*
*

Ben pulls the vial of pills out of his pocket and twists off
the cap.

*

JONAH
MY addiction?

*

BEN
God is worse than any drug ever
invented.

Ben pops a few pills.

JONAH
How's that?

BEN
At least I know my limits... or
where I left them behind. You
don't even see who you're really
working for.

JONAH
I'm-

BEN
Don't even say it. I know about
your little guru. The guy's an
extremist MURDERER.

*

Ben coughs and doubles over in the booth.

JONAH
You don't even know him.

*

Ben sits back up and points his finger at Jonah.

BEN
I don't know him. That's true.
But I've seen his look-what-I-did-
for-God mentality and the fuckin
havoc it causes so before you
preach another word to me, I want
to hear you say it. Say who you're
really working for.

*

*

Jonah stares at the bag of sandwiches in his hand.

BEN (CONT'D)
Go ahead, Jesus. You're a smart kid. I know you're thinking it. Say it out loud.

JONAH *
I'm sorry about what happened to Chuck.

Ben's whole body tightens.

JONAH (CONT'D)
I know how hard it is to-

BEN *
What the fuck do you think you know about my brother?

JONAH
I know why he was killed... and I know who did it.

Ben looks stunned. He studies Jonah. Jonah's telling the truth. *

JONAH (CONT'D)
He kidnapped and killed my little sister.

Ben's face twists in denial.

BEN
No. Chuck would never-

JONAH
It was an accident, but he did.

BEN *
How can you-

JONAH
He told me everything... while I...
I had a gun.
(painful beat)
And I was going to kill him with it.

Ben lunges at Jonah, tackling him to the ground. Jonah struggles to fend off Ben's attack. *

JONAH (CONT'D)
I couldn't do it! I didn't do it!

The cashier jumps into the mix. Locked on to Jonah's throat, Ben kicks at the attacking cashier.

The cashier drags the fight to the door.

Ben grabs Jonah by the shirt and throws him out onto the-

HUNGRY HOBO PARKING LOT

*

Where they both tumble to the pavement. Ben's phone skitters to the curb.

Jonah stands up - keeping his distance while he catches his breath. Hunched over on the ground, Jonah and Ben share a long, hateful stare.

JONAH

Why don't you ask yourself what you asked me? Who are YOU working for?

Ben holds Jonah's gaze. Stares down at the ground for a beat.

BEN

So it was Daniel Masters? He really IS a murderer?

*

Jonah nods gravely.

*

JONAH

And so am I.

Ben is stunned at this admission. His phone vibrates on the ground. He ignores it. A look of compassion in his eye.

BEN

(genuinely)
I'm sorry about your sister.

Jonah nods compassionately.

*

Finally, Ben picks up the phone. Checks the display. Scowls.

The phone vibrates again. Ben walks to the door of the Hungry Hobo. Tosses the phone into a trash can.

JONAH

He's planning something.

Ben turns back to Jonah.

*

BEN
Who's planning something?

JONAH
(shocked at his own words)
Daniel Masters. He's going to blow
up the Maya Goldbloom Clinic.

BEN
What? When? TONIGHT?!

*

Jonah nods.

JONAH
There are two procedures tonight
and the place is already a madhouse
so-

BEN
Wait! Shit! Lou!

Ben rushes to the trash can. Rips open the lid. Grimaces as
he peers inside.

*

Jonah strides to the trash can. Thrusts his hand down into
the garbage. Yanks his hand out. Hands Ben a ketchup coated
cell-phone.

JONAH
I think I know what to do.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

*

Clutching a phone to his ear, Ben jogs down the sidewalk.
Wheezing as he frantically yells into the phone.

*

BEN
Come on, come on, come on!

Ben stops. Squints at the phone. Tries dialing. Squints at
it again.

The phone lights up and lets out strange, muted ring.

Hitting a button, Ben holds the phone to his ear hopefully.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hello?

ELVIS (O.S.)
Ben! Listen to me, man! I'm-

BEN
Elvis?! Thank God! I'm on my way
to your place!

ELVIS (O.S.)
No! Don't come here! There are-

BEN
Relax! I just need to use your
phone.

ELVIS (O.S.)
No! Listen to-

BEN
And maybe your car. But that's it.
I'm sorry about what happened at
your show. I was being an-

Ben squints at the phone.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hello?

He squints at it again. The phone's dead.

Ben looks up. Several squad cars cruise towards him... each
slowing as it passes by.

As soon as they turn the corner, Ben takes off jogging. A
look of determination on his face.

83 INT. DANIEL'S LOFT - EARLY EVENING

83 *

Jonah watches Mel and Daniel eat their sandwiches at the
table.

DANIEL
They're so ashamed of what they've
done that they're only holding
preliminary appointments during the
day. All the actual procedures are
being done at night after the
protestors go to dinner.

(to Jonah)

We're going to shed some light on
this deceit.

(to Mel)

How many are there tonight?

MEL

A sorority girl and a grad student.
Plus there will be two doctors, a
full staff and about a hundred
protestors outside.

(to Jonah)

You're not eating your sandwich.

Maintaining eye contact with Mel, Jonah takes a casual bite of his sandwich.

DANIEL

You know what's the worst part
about all of this? After it's
over, you'll have to watch all the
liberals cry over a couple of
whores and a team of government
ordained murderers.

JONAH

What do you mean, 'you'll?' Where
are you going? What's going to
happen to-

DANIEL

I'm leaving you in charge of Christ
on Campus.

JONAH

That's great, but why? Where are
you going?

DANIEL

To finish what we started.
Personally.

MEL

We'll give you a ride back to your
dorm.

Jonah busies himself by gathering their sandwich bags and
wrappers.

JONAH

Oh. Okay, uh, just give me one
second and I'm ready to go.

Jonah takes the sandwich garbage around the corner to the-

Where he tosses the trash on the counter and twists on the
water. Gasping for panicked breaths, Splashes his face.

As he towels dry, he stares into the mirror. It's a long, hard stare. His face drawn with fear.

Hanging the towel back on the rack, Jonah hears Daniel's voice.

DANIEL (O.S.)
 (quietly, to Mel)
 I left the storage bin in the
 closet by the hallway.

Jonah tip toes out the door to the-

HALLWAY

Where he creeps unnoticed to the back door. Twists the silver lock open. Checks the handle. It's unlocked.

He sneaks back down the hall and into the-

BATHROOM

Where he presses his ear against the door. Listens carefully.

MEL
 I am willing to do this for you.
 You don't have to do it yourself.

DANIEL (O.S.)
 It's my choice... my
 responsibility.

*

Jonah flushes the toilet. Runs the water. Shuts it off. Stares in the mirror. Forces control over his face.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
 I'll drop the two of you off, load
 up and hit 'em.

MEL
 And I'll take care of the rest.

Jonah grasps the door handle. Pulls it open.

Ben storms through the door of Elvis' apartment. The kitchen table is on its side and there are two softball sized holes in the wall.

On the living room floor, Elvis' guitar is in pieces. Ben bolts into the-

86

LIVING ROOM

86

Where Elvis is slumped on the floor with his head resting back on the seat of the couch. Blood drips from his wrists onto the carpet. Ben rushes to his side.

BEN

No! No! El, what'd you do?

Elvis opens his eyes and tries to lift his head.

ELVIS

He smashed my guitar, Bricks... he smashed it... on my hand.

Ben reaches over a bloody carving knife and grabs a roll of paper towels from the coffee table. He rips off several towels and tries to wrap Elvis' wrist. Elvis screams in pain.

Holding Elvis' left wrist, Ben turns it slightly. Winces at the sight of Elvis' swollen, disfigured left hand. It's been completely crushed. Ben chokes back a sob.

BEN

It's okay, buddy. I'm gonna get you to the hospital. They'll fix your hand and then we can go to Amsterdam. I'll take care of everything. Nothing to worry about.

Ben wraps his arms around Elvis' chest and lifts him onto the couch. Elvis screams again.

ELVIS

Hey Bricks.

Ben fumbles with his phone.

BEN

Yeah, buddy?

Elvis touches Ben's hand. Looks him in the eye.

ELVIS

I'm sorry I made you take Dax's test.

Ben holds back tears.

BEN

You're gonna be fine, El. Just hang on.

Ben runs into the kitchen, shuffles through some drawers and returns with a roll of tape. Elvis's eyes are closed.

Ben quickly straps a bandage onto Elvis's wrist.

BEN (CONT'D)

Elvis? Hey El, can you hear me, killer?

Elvis' body goes limp. Ben immediately checks his pulse. Chokes back a sob. His shaky hands quickly strap a splint onto Elvis' wrist.

87 INT. MERCY HOSPITAL - EARLY EVENING

87

Ghostly pale, Ben stares at closed double doors. A partial handprint smeared in blood beneath the words: Emergency Care.

Eyeing him compassionately, a motherly woman approaches and points toward a bathroom.

88 MEN'S ROOM - LATER

88

Ben stares at his pale, tear-stained face in the mirror. His arms and shirt are covered with blood.

Dazed, He twists on the faucet and slowly washes his arms. Red water splashes on the mirror and white counter. He scrubs harder. The bloody water splashes on his shirt.

Ben stops washing. Stares at the bloody mess. At his bloody reflection in the mirror. The strength in his legs gives out. He sits down indian-style on the tile floor. Slumps against the wall in a daze. *

*
*

Ben fumbles in his pocket and removes a small vial of pills. His wet, soapy hands shake as he opens the cap. He quickly dumps a pill out into his hand. Frantically looks back into the vial. It's empty. He stares at the wet pill in his hand.

INT. U.S. BANK - THREE WEEKS AGO

Ben stands at a counter watching a banker count out cash. The banker looks up at him with a strong note of suspicion.

The banker carefully places several large bundles of cash into a bag. Zips it up. Folds his hands.

BANKER
(perturbed)
Will that be all?

A spite-filled smile grows on Ben's face.

EXT. U.S. BANK - LATER

Ben strides out of the bank with two bags of cash. One in each hand.

At the curb, he drops both bags through the window of an old, beat-up Malibu. Looks in. Chuck is in the front seat.

BEN
There it is. Take it.

Chuck opens the bag. His eyes go wide.

BEN (CONT'D)
That's two hundred thousand dollars.

Chuck zips the bag back up. Stares at Ben with infinite gratitude.

BEN (CONT'D)
So what are you going to do?

Chuck slips the bags behind the passenger seat. Flashes a wry smile.

CHUCK
Bet it on black.

Not amused, Ben shakes his head.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
See you soon, brother.

Chuck shifts into gear. Ben turns away. As he strides down the sidewalk, a smile of relief emerges.

The SOUND of a DOOR BANGING shut.

*

INT. MERCY HOSPITAL - BATHROOM - PRESENT

Ben looks up to see Dominick standing in the doorway.

DOMINICK

Five days. It only took you five fucking days to bitch out.

Ben eyes him angrily.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

And for what? Was it because you have a moral issue with my academic outsourcing methods?

Dominick takes a step closer.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

No... that wouldn't be an issue for a guy with a conscience pliable enough to rationalize away the guilt of his brother's death.

Using the counter, Ben wrenches himself to his feet.

Dominick smiles hatefully.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

So was it because of that little Bible-thumper? Were you scared by a little blood?

Ben just stares at him in odium. Dominick steps closer.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

It rattled the shit out of you. I know. But that's exactly why you WOULDN'T have done it. You tried to fuck me over because you realized you couldn't fuck my girlfriend anymore.

Suddenly gripping Ben's shoulders, Dominick slams him against the wall.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

I'm fucking untouchable. Don't you understand? And even if you could get to me, it wouldn't matter anyway. Your academic career is over, you've ruined your only friend's life, your brother is dead - because of you - and the woman of your dreams has already forgotten you.

Tears stream down Ben's face. Dominick leans in close. Controlled rage in his voice.

DOMINICK (CONT'D)

You thought you could take her from me? You thought she'd go for a piece of shit like you?

BEN

You gonna fucking kill me already? Go ahead.

DOMINICK

Why don't you save me the trouble?

Dominick slams a vial of pills on the counter of the bathroom. Storms out the door.

Ben stares at the pills, then at his sad reflection in the mirror. He snatches the vial off the counter. Twists off the cap and downs them all.

92 EXT. SLATER HALL PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON 92 *

Jonah waves goodbye to Mel and Daniel as their taxi pulls away. As soon as it disappears, he runs up the steps into-

93 SLATER HALL PARKING LOT 93

Through the main lobby, down some steps and out the entrance.

94 SLATER BUS STOP 94

Jonah rushes to a sign by the sidewalk. Using his finger, he scans the sign. Checks his watch. After another quick scan of the sign, he turns away and finds a seat on a bench.

Jonah stands up, looks around impatiently and sits back down. After a second thought, he jumps up and takes off jogging down the sidewalk.

95 INT. DANIEL'S LOFT - EVENING 95

Jonah bursts through the back door and immediately drops down onto a chair. Sweat drips from his face as he gasps for oxygen.

Slipping off one of his black dress shoes, he peels off his black sock. His ankle is swollen and two of his toes are bleeding from massive blisters.

After a moment, he stands warily and limps across the room to a closet. Opening the closet, he finds a storage bin and drags it over to the couch.

Removing the lid, his eyes go wide. Jonah reaches into the bin and removes a football-sized bomb and places it on the coffee table. He reaches in and grabs another. And another.

Jonah stares in awe at more than two dozen bombs organized neatly on the coffee table.

He picks one up and examines it delicately. He sets it down carefully, folds his hands and bows his head.

JONAH

Dear Lord-

Jonah hears a metallic click and looks up.

On the other side of the table, clutching a 44 Magnum, stands Daniel Masters.

DANIEL

I'm severely disappointed in you, Jonah. You've turned your back on me, on your community, and worst of all, you've betrayed your one and only savior.

JONAH

This isn't right, Daniel.

*

Daniel cocks the gun.

DANIEL

No one can stop God's will.

*

JONAH

Please-

Daniel swiftly raises the gun and shoots Jonah in the head.

*

An obese medical assistant tries to ignore Lou as she passes by the door. Lou grabs the nurse's arm.

LOU

I need to check the status of a patient.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT
Name, please?

LOU
Elvis Jackson.

MEDICAL ASSISTANT
(looking behind Lou)
Doctor Templeton can answer any
questions you may have.

Lou turns to see Doctor Templeton - thin, silvered hair.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
Doctor Solange. Congratulations.
I just heard the news.

LOU
(anxious)
Thank you. I'm sorry, I don't have
much time. I have an appointment
in a few minutes. I, uh, I need a
status. Elvis Jackson. How is he?

DOCTOR TEMPLETON *
Well, he lost a considerable amount
of blood, and I've never seen bones
more pulverized than those in his
left hand.

Lou's face twists sadly.

LOU *
(realizing)
He'll never play guitar again.

Templeton motions for Lou to follow him through the
"Emergency Care" double doors. She follows into the-

EMERGENCY ROOM

Where they turn the corner and pass down a row of hospital
rooms.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
Unfortunately, he may not do much
of anything with that hand again.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON (CONT'D)
But, he will live. It's his friend
that we're worried about.

LOU
What?! What friend?!

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
The one that saved his life and
brought him here.

He turns to a hospital room where Ben is laid up in a hospital bed, hooked up to an IV drip and vital monitors. He's unconscious. Lou looks on in shock.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON (CONT'D)
We were able to extract about a dozen partially ingested opiates from his stomach. However, it appears that he had already been severely intoxicated by a number of highly complex substances before ingesting the opiates.

Lou turns away from the room toward Doctor Templeton.

LOU
So, he's comatose?

In the background, Ben's eyes open sharply.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
Not exactly.

Clearly disoriented, he sits up and looks around the room.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON (CONT'D)
The chemical interactions going on in his body right now are completely unpredictable since we don't know what exactly it is that he's taken...

Spotting Lou, Ben pulls the IV out of his arm and reaches for a clipboard next to his bed.

LOU
Didn't you run a tox screen?

Ben starts to write on the clipboard but abruptly stops to grasp his head tightly with his hands. His face twists in pain.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
Doctor Solange, he didn't overdose on cocaine, meth or heroine.

Ben lets go of his head. His face is still twisted, but he picks up the pen and begins writing.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON (CONT'D)

In fact, we've never seen anything like the drugs acting on his system right now.

Templeton waits for Lou to chime in.

LOU

And you think I-

DOCTOR TEMPLETON

If you know what he's taken, if you can tell me what's interacting in his body, I may be able to save his life.

Lou stares at her feet for a beat. Gazes into the room. Ben is still struggling to write something on the clipboard. *

Several nurses immediately rush into the room past Lou. Templeton stops Lou from following.

Ben falls back on the bed. The clipboard rattles to the floor. *

Ben stretches his neck to see the hallway where Lou was standing. The nurses block his view.

One of the nurses picks up the clipboard. Sets it on a table beside the bed. In shaky handwriting it reads:

DON'T LET HER GO

Ben tries to move his head again. His efforts now frantic to see Lou. A nurse holds it down against the bed.

Another nurse reconnects his IV and injects a syringe into the bag.

After a moment, Ben's body stops seizing. *

NURSE 2

BP's dropping. *

NURSE 1

Heart rate's stabilizing.

Templeton stands up. Breathes deep. Scans the readout on several machines. A strange look on his face.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
He's in deep, but-

*

NURSE 1
(looking up at the doctor)
Do you think he'll ever wake up?

*

*

Ben's eyes flash open. Ben struggles to sit up. A nurse holds him down.

DOCTOR TEMPLETON
He already has.

In a last ditch effort to see past Templeton, Ben cranes his neck. Smiling wide, Templeton follows Ben's gaze to where Lou was standing. She's gone. His eyes go wide.

The beeping heart monitor turns to a solid tone. Ben's eyes roll back in his head.

*

*

DOCTOR TEMPLETON (CONT'D)
Damn it! He's crashing! I'm gonna need a cart!

The SOUND of a BOOMING EXPLOSION reverberates through the room. A picture falls off the wall and shatters on the floor.

EXT. U.S. BANK - THREE WEEKS AGO - DAY

With both hands carefully wrapped around a tall, vanilla ice cream cone, Genevieve pads down the sidewalk.

EXT. MAYA GOLDBLOOM CLINIC - PRESENT - SUNSET

Lou walks through billows of smoke illuminated by the fiery remains of the clinic.

The ground is littered with charred debris still smoldering from the explosion.

EXT. U.S. BANK - THREE WEEKS AGO - DAY

Walking beside Genevieve, Jonah enjoys an even bigger ice cream cone. He smiles ironically at Genevieve's serious efforts to walk carefully with her precious treat.

EXT. MAYA GOLDBLOOM CLINIC - PRESENT - SUNSET

A young man rests on his knees with his head in his hands. Blood drips through his fingers.

A woman runs frantically with a screaming child under one arm. Blood runs down her other arm as it swings lifelessly by her side.

EXT. U.S. BANK - THREE WEEKS AGO - DAY

Looking up, Jonah sees Ben - slipping two large bags of money * into a beat-up, black Malibu.

EXT. MAYA GOLDBLOOM CLINIC - PRESENT - SUNSET

Walking in horror, consumed by the tragedy around her, Lou stops at a decimated black BMW. Inside the car, Dominick is slumped over the top of Ashley. They're both dead.

EXT. U.S. BANK - THREE WEEKS AGO - DAY

Ben turns away from the black Malibu. Strides toward Jonah and Genevieve.

Spotting Genevieve, Ben locks eyes with Jonah. They both smile knowingly as they pass and continue in their opposite directions.

EXT. MAYA GOLDBLOOM CLINIC - PRESENT - SUNSET

Tears well in Lou's eyes. Behind her, we see Mel's truck - now obliterated by the explosion.

Looking down, Lou's hands move to her abdomen. Her arms slowly wrap around the baby inside her. A smile emerges through her tears.

98

EXT. WAKEFIELD CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

98

A church choir sings a beautiful hymn. Ron holds Cora tightly as they watch Jonah's casket lower into the grave. About one hundred students, friends, and family members stand in attendance.

Cody stands across from Ron and Cora. He stares off at nothing.

Ron looks across the cemetery. A large group of people walk to the parking lot.

99 BEN'S GRAVE - SAME TIME

99

Lou and Elvis stand before a gravestone. The stone reads:

EVEN IN TORMENT, THERE IS BEAUTY

BENJAMIN THOMAS BRICKSTON

2/14/90 - 10/21/10

Lou wipes a tear from her face. Removes a small picture from her purse. Slips it underneath some flowers. She turns toward Elvis. Smiles sadly. Walks toward the parking lot.

Elvis steps up to the grave. Tucks Ben's exam booklet under the edge of the flowers. Beside it, we see the picture. It's an ultra-sound.

After a long beat, Elvis clenches his jaw and follows Lou.

CLOSE ON EXAM BOOKLET - a breeze blows the cover page open. Typed on the first page, we see the essay question. It reads: "Why?" Below it, we see Ben's answer: "Why Not?"

100 PARKING LOT

100

Nearing the lot, Lou spots Dax waiting in a white sedan. Seeing her, he hops out and pops the trunk.

Taking the guitar from Dax, Lou thanks him with a small smile. Dax just nods solemnly. Steps back into the car. Drives off.

Turning to Elvis, Lou holds up the guitar case. Elvis holds up his left hand. It's in a cast.

Lou opens the guitar case and removes a beautiful electric guitar. She lifts the strap over Elvis' shoulder and lets it hang. It's a lefty.

LOU

It's not too late.

Elvis looks down and raises his right hand to the neck of the guitar. A bright smile appears on his face.

101 INT. AIRPORT BAR - DAY

101

CLOSE ON TV - Lindsey reports the news. Beside her is a picture of the demolished Maya Goldbloom Clinic. The tag line on the bottom reads:

Florida Campus Bombing Sets record
For abortion-related attacks in one year (six).

A hand sets an empty bottle of water on a grey end table.

Daniel Masters smiles at the TV, picks up his carry-on bag and strides confidently toward the gate.

At the gate, Daniel hands his ticket to a perky airline worker. Her name tag says "Julie."

Julie tears off part of the ticket. Replaces the remaining stub in an envelope and hands it back.

JULIE

Thank you, Mr. Williams. Enjoy
your trip.

Daniel smiles devilishly and disappears through the gate.

FADE OUT