

CRYSTALLINE FIGURINES

By

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INT. WALWART

Much congestion. The store is big but people crowd the aisles and counters. They are dressed informally - ripped jackets, hoodies, maternity wear.

JOHN stands at the end of the fragrance aisle. He is Hispanic, mid to late twenties, clean cut, wears a dress shirt and a long wool coat. He has very defined features and is good looking except for the healing cuts and bruises on his face. He is lost in thought and stares at the aisle of people as if looking through them.

JOHN (V.O.)

What am I doing?...How did I get here?

The women are smelling the different scents of air fresheners. Some cannot get a good smell through the airtight containers so they mentally brace themselves and sniff harder. Some people spray the air. Others judge the weight of different cans on the floor.

JOHN (V.O.)

Look at these people...Assimilation isn't a problem in a place like this.

(A woman's ass crack shows)

I guess underwear is overrated around here..Do they live vicariously through the hygiene of their homes?

A black girl mutters something about customer assistance on the overhead speaker and continues talking about something personal before she puts the phone down.

JOHN (V.O.)

We're all trying to live through someone else. Through someone else's life. To surpass their goals, their achievements.

(MORE)

JOHN(cont'd)

To acquire the unattainable...what kind of goals could these people be striving to attain?

John walks toward the front of the store with his little basket of items. He tries to get past the hordes of people creating blockades with their carts and gigantic spandex clad asses.

JOHN (V.O.) (cont'd)

This place is evil incarnate. It's like a third world country was dropped in the middle of Eden. Maybe these people really do have all they want...maybe...maybe I've made my life too complicated.

John looks down a walkway and from behind an isle emerges a naked baby awkwardly running across the walkway and disappears behind another isle. John furrows his brow. The large mother appears and waddles in the same fashion as the baby, trying to catch up. John's reaction turns to disbelief.

JOHN

(under his breath)

What am I doing?...I've gotta get the hell outta here.

John stands in a checkout line. He tightly shuts his eyes, reopens them, looks up, and sighs as a man behind him lets his gut push against his back. He looks at the automated checkout line, which is longer than the regular checkout line.

JOHN (V.O.)

Automatic checkout. The latest in antisocial technology. Why would people willfully decide to stand in line longer just to avoid human interaction...The machine is short. It can't speak, can't judge. Maybe it takes away from self-consciousness, insecurity.

John looks around one last time.

JOHN (V.O.)

People can sense my uneasiness, my
maladjusted malaise.

John speaks under his breath.

JOHN

I've gotta get the hell outta here.

EXT. WALMART - CONTINUOUS

John momentarily stands in front of the auto body shop connected to the Walmart and then walks to his car. It is early winter. Medium amounts of snow fall to the ground. His car is old, beat up, and rusted. As he drives, John sees large houses with Christmas lights that still have cardboard turkeys on the lawn and old pumpkins on the porch.

JOHN (V.O.)

What are people trying to hold
onto? Seasonal snapshots of their
past? You see people you don't like
and you hate it but you still hold
onto these things to torture
yourself. Just to convince yourself
you're a good person...so does that
make me a bad person?

John continues to drive past these large suburban houses. The closer to home he drives the smaller the houses get and the area becomes more urban. John makes it to his neighborhood. As he drives down one street he sees nothing but bars: gay bar, gay bar, midget bar, trendy bar, dive bar, gay bar. John makes it to his apartment. John stares at his apartment door from inside the car.

JOHN

I hope he's not here.

John walks to his porch and sees a mountain of salt sitting on the landing. He walks in.

INT. APARTMENT

First floor apartment, mostly tidy. Living room walls have posters of Che Guevara, Al Pacino from *Dog Day Afternoon*, *Serial Killer* with George W. Bush, *Marijuana*, etc. Shelves around to room hold electronic equipment and books. But one shelf stands out as it holds small carved crystal figures. Not one looks mistreated. All are polished, smooth, and shiny. These things belong to his roommate, NEIL, who is sitting on the couch carefully cradling a three foot bong and watching Hardball with Chris Matthews. Neil's outward appearance and personality are in stark contrast to John's. He has long unwashed brown hair showing vague remnants of freshly removed dreadlocks and has a long goatee. He seems either stoned or focused on the T.V. He wears a black Pantera hoodie and baggy jeans. John takes off his coat and throws it over a chair as Neil yells at the T.V.

NEIL

What the fu-- play hardball
godfuckindammit! Jesus!

Neil Shakes his head, looks at John, quickly turns back to the TV, and sharply points an index finger straight up and without taking his eyes off the TV and gives John a salute type motion as a greeting.

NEIL

What up.

JOHN

Hey.

Neil turns back and takes a massive hit from the bong.

JOHN

So...you know the salt only works
if you spread it around a little.

NEIL

Yeah, well ya know that's what they
want you do to so...no.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM

John walks in. It is a drastic change from the living room. It is very messy and the walls are bare. He sets his bags down. They contain office supplies, poster boards, and random household goods. His phone rings. John lazily answers it.

JOHN

Hello? Hey Erik, what's up?

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Large oak furnished office. ERIK, mid twenties, gangly and thin yet with a booming resonance talks on speakerphone.

ERIK

Johnny boy. What is going on?

JOHN

Shit...just got home.

(yawns)

What's up with you?

ERIK

Not much. Things are looking real good. Just closed on the Cohen-Randal account, finally.

Erik vigorously rolls a piece of paper into a ball.

ERIK

I can't believe I got those sons a bitches to increase my deadline as I collect on the interest. They're paying me to help them lose money. I love this shit.

He overacts as he shoots the paper toward the garbage can hoop in the corner. He grimaces as it misses the hoop.

ERIK

But yeah some people from the firm
(MORE)
and I are going to the Paragon Bar.

ERIK(cont'd)

Sounds like you could use a pick-me-up.

(enticingly)

Thursday night. Sophisticated drink specials. Come on, I'll get you a mocha martini.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John is sitting in his desk chair. He is leaning back with his head tilted upward with his arm covering his face as he talks.

JOHN

It's nothing...yeah, I have that meeting tomorrow...no...I don't know. I'm just really pissed about the whole thing.

John caresses the scar on his forehead.

JOHN

Well, I just don't want to have to deal with the whole thing...Uh-huh, well let me call you in a little but...alright, see ya.

John hangs up, stretches, rubs his face, and heads into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN

Neil is now laying on the couch with a bowl.

NEIL

So what's goin' on with you tonight?

John pulls a carton of orange juice out of the fridge.

JOHN

Don't know. Erik called but I don't know.

John holds the carton up over his mouth and lets the juice waterfall in.

NEIL

To do what? Have you hold his cock
while he pours fruity-ass drinks in
your mouth?

Neil picks up a crystal figure on the table, blows dust off of it, places it on the shelf, and sits back down. John walks to the living room and sits in a chair next to the couch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

Alright just calm down there, Tokey
Roberts. I don't understand why he
bugs your ass so much.

NEIL

He's a yuppie suit prick. All the
rest of them are phony-ass
douchebags, too. Why don't they all
just move to cilantro-ville and get
it over with.

Neil looks at John.

NEIL

L.A.

JOHN

(in compliance)
Right.

Neil takes a hit from the bowl, stares at it, stares at John, and holds it up.

NEIL

Ganj?

John slyly grabs the bowl and turns towards the T.V.

NEIL

Rock it.

John takes a hit and lets the smoke linger in his mouth as he struggles to find the oxygen to talk.

JOHN

Well...I'll admit...some of them
are...pretentious bastards.

(exhales)

But Erik is OK. I mean I've known
him for as long as I've known you,
since Jr. High so--

Neil shoots into a sitting position and cuts John off.

NEIL

Oh shit. Speaking of happier times,
I forgot to tell you. Ya remember
Matt McGregor?

JOHN

Greasy McGregor?

NEIL

Yeah.

JOHN

Kid always looked like he had a
layer of Teflon on his face...Yeah,
good times. I haven't seen him in
years.

NEIL

Awesome! Well, you'll see him
tomorrow. He's coming to town.

Neil goes to the fridge and gets a drink.

JOHN

Oh really? Sweet!

NEIL

Yeah, he's gonna stay with us.

JOHN

Ye--wait...what? When were you gonna tell me?

NEIL

I just did. Don't worry. It's only for the weekend. Think I should take him to a transvestite bar?

JOHN

Right, he'd flip his shit. So why is he coming back? For the hell of it?

NEIL

You remember Mrs. Lepinski?

Neil cups his hands out in front of his chest like he's holding gigantic imaginary breasts.

JOHN

Oh yeah. Best science class ever. What was that, seventh grade?

NEIL

Yeah, well anyway. He knocked her up.

JOHN

What?

NEIL

Yep, like four months ago.

JOHN

Shit!

NEIL

Mr. Lepinski is none too pleased, neither.

JOHN

Wait, she got married? Hold on, hold on...why is *his* last name Lepinski?

NEIL

Um, he's one of those new age guys. Believes that men should be directly involved with female empowerment. Wattaya call 'em?

(snaps fingers)

Oh yeah, fags. So he took her last name...I don't know. So Matt's coming up here cause the guy wants to bribe him so he won't tell anybody. Doesn't want to compromise the small amount of integrity he has left I guess.

JOHN

But...you know.

NEIL

Everybody knows...except Mr. Lepinski. What's worse? Knowing your old lady got clam-baked by some punk or not knowing that everyone else knows...who knows? All's *I* know is we're all gonna celebrate tomorrow night at the Olde Rusty Pub.

JOHN

Sweet, I'm down.

John laughs and looks at his watch.

JOHN

Ah, fuck this. I'm not goin' nowhere.

CUT TO:

INT. - KITCHEN

John is sitting at the counter in his shoes and coat, stares at his keys, and raps his fingers.

CUT TO:

EXT. - PORCH

John stands on the porch staring at his car. He takes a step toward the car, hesitates, and walks back inside.

CUT TO:

INT. - CAR

John sits in the car with the ignition off. He is fidgeting a lot as he contemplates what to do. He bounces his head off of the headrest as he thinks.

JOHN
(to himself)
I'm not going.

John gets out of the car and walks away.

INT. - PARAGON BAR

A post-modern bar. The room is filled with bright colors and techno trance music. Erik sits on a bar stool facing away from the counter resting his left elbow behind him while his right maintains his classy drink. He speaks loudly to a group of people in order to sustain their full attention. John sits in a daze by himself nursing his drink at a table right next to the group.

ERIK
HEY BRAD! BR-AD.

Erik grabs BRAD by the neck almost putting him in a headlock and pulls him closer.

Erik has his head a few inches away from Brad's but as Erik speaks, Brad manages to get out of his grip.

ERIK

Hey, tell them... 'bout ta time we
had the meeding... an' you got up to
show them yur shit AN'... IN THE
MIDDLE YOU GOT A FUCKIN' BONER!
REMBER!

Erik pokes at Brad with his finger and laughs hysterically thinking Brad will too but instead gives Erik an extremely uncomfortable look.

BRAD

What?

Brad turns to the crowd of people.

BRAD

(uncomfortably joking)
No more for this guy right here.
Wwwwasted.

Brad manages to slip away as Erik reaches and calls out for him.

ERIK

HEY, BR--

Erik turns back to the people, who are uncomfortable listening to the story but they decide to humor him anyway.

ERIK

Anyways you had ta see it. I was
watchin' an'...

BENJAMIN and CLAUDE come back with their martinis and have a seat by John. Benjamin is tall and stocky. He is wearing a blue dress shirt and tie. He is easily excitable and vocal but trys too hard to fit in. Claude is wearing various imported silks, a gaudy gold watch, and several rings. He glows with pride and comes off as arrogant.

BENJAMIN

Hey Jonathan.

John snaps out of his daze.

JOHN

Oh, hey Ben. What's up?

BENJAMIN

So whataya drinking there?

JOHN

Huh? Um...rum and coke.

BENJAMIN

Alright. Got myself a sour apple.
You should try it.

Benjamin shoves the drink in John's face.

JOHN

(defensive)

I'm good.

BENJAMIN

Oh, so Jonathan. This is Claude.

John sticks out his hand and halfheartedly shakes Claude's.

CLAUDE

Ah, come on. Let's try that again.

Claude latches onto John's hand giving it a few hard shakes.
John grips harder.

CLAUDE

There, a little better. I like a
man with a nice firm handshake.
Something to grab onto.

Claude shoots John a condescending shit-eating grin. John
furrows his brow.

JOHN

Why's that?

CLAUDE

(matter-of-factly)

It shows a man's character. A strong hand shows strong leadership. It--

JOHN

Or maybe it just shows how much a man masturbates.

John smirks and Claude stares at him with perplexity. Claude nudges Benjamin and points at John.

CLAUDE

Hey, look at this guy. He's quick. That's good...to be able to think on your feet.

BENJAMIN

Claude's a good guy. We met him at the spa over in Lincoln Park. Yeah, don't step on the quash court against this guy!

JOHN

So, Claude huh? That's French, right?

CLAUDE

I don't know...maybe.

John is confused. Benjamin slaps Claude on the back.

BENJAMIN

He's is the moneymaking biz, too.

CLAUDE

Yeah, money-taking. So, what do you do John?

JOHN

I work in advertising and I do freelance journalism for some mag-- but I-- I'm looking for a new job.

Claude gets the arrogant air back under him.

CLAUDE

Wow, sucks huh. Yeah, I'm over at Bernard Jones Investment Firm. The one in the city.

(explains condescendingly)

It's a brokerage house. Anyway, we landed ourselves a sweetheart deal, too.

(faces Benjamin and pokes him in the chest)

And you bastards pissed away the opportunity. I'm telling you in a few years, money...it won't be a problem. We're helping out the pro-privatization alliance and--

(Claude turns to John)

For social security.

JOHN

(annoyed)

Yeah, got it.

CLAUDE

And we get people to sign on and then--

JOHN

So, what...like a pyramid scheme or something? Are you scamming people into pushing for private social security?

CLAUDE

What scam? Listen Johnny, social security is drying up faster 'an a dyke at a sausage party. It's gonna happen-- and my company is better suited for private accounts so what the fuck? We either move forward and make money or we don't 'cause it's inevitable.

Claude confidently stares at John as Ben looks back and forth between them. John stares at his empty glass on the table and fingers the rim.

JOHN

Well, I'm gonna get another.
 (throws Benjamin a napkin)
 You got some shit on your nose.
 Have fun with your
 martinis...ladies.

John, annoyed, goes to the bar for a drink.

JOHN

(to bartender)
 Patron, double.

The barkeep pours two shots and John quickly downs them ignoring the salt and the lime wedges in front of him.

The night accelerates. John sits at the bar ordering drinks. His mood has soured. Erik talks to him and orders a drink. A girl from the group sits by John, drinks a shot, and puts her arm around him and talks to him. She practically falls in John's lap as she talks with her mouth inches away from his ear. Other people come by, order drinks, and talk to John. John acknowledges nobody. He faces forward with a blank stare on his face as things seem to move faster and faster and as the lime wedges pile up in front of him. Between the loud music we HEAR bits and pieces of conversations which progressively decline in coherence and uniformity as John continues to drink.

ERIK'S COWORKER 1

...all That time in St. Croix.
 White beaches, clear waters, loose
 women.

ERIK'S COWORKER 2

Shit. Must have been--

BAR PATRON 1

...nice goin' man. She's a slut!

BAR PATRON 2

Hell yeah. That bitch don't cost a--

ERIK'S COWORKER 3

...centrino Mobile tech, fifteen
point one TFT, airbag system--

ERIK'S COWORKER 4

Fingerprint log, Nvid geforce sixty-
eight hundred, touch display...

John continues to drink and finds everyone and everything around him becoming less and less audible as the LOUD MUSIC pulsates. John just stares ahead as all of the colors become hazy and fade away as they drain from the scene.

FADE OUT.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

John violently jerks awake and grabs his shirt on the left side of his chest in pain. He is sweaty and tries to regain consciousness and comprehend where he is. He is in a average looking hotel room. There are two queen beds and John is in one of them. There are several people in the other bed and four in his. A girl is lying next to him, another girl is passed out halfway across his lap, and a guy is lying face down in the mattress with his arm around John's waist. He looks around trying to remember what happened. John gets up without waking anyone and sits on the edge of the bed.

JOHN

What the fuck?

He gets up. He is wearing his undershirt and his boxers as he looks for his clothes. He finds his pants strewn across the back of a chair which holds a sleeping guy. He finds one shoe and the other across the room. He frantically searches for his shirt but cannot find it. He looks under the bed he was sleeping in and as he looks back up he realizes that the girl he was sleeping next to is wearing it.

JOHN

Ah shit!

He contemplates taking it off of her but decides not to. He leaves it and grabs his coat. He checks himself in the mirror and examines the healing cuts and bruises on his face. They are scaring up. He turns around and fully opens the half-opened door to the bathroom and suddenly stops in the doorway. A guy is passed out in the tub and another is passed out on the floor in front of the toilet with his pants around his ankles. John stares blankly.

JOHN

I've gotta get the hell outta here.

John moves quickly toward the door, opens it, and lets it SLAM hard behind him as a LOUD WHOOSH of air comes up from behind. He looks down both sides of the long empty hallway trying to find his way out.

FADE TO:

INT. TRAIN - LATER

John is sitting with his coat next to him and stares out the window. He has on the same clothes as he had on at the bar except his dress shirt. John is soaking wet.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

All tickets.

John looks away from the window, reaches in his pocket, and opens up a crumpled ripped photo. It is large but only half of the picture remains. The remaining portion is of Cher and before it was ripped she was not alone in the picture. John stares at it and subtly smirks as the conductor interrupts his moment.

CONDUCTOR

Ticket plea-- Jesus!

John Looks up at the conductor who is examining his bruises and cuts.

CONDUCTOR

And you're drenched too. What the hell happened?

John glances at the photo, smirks, looks back at the conductor and hands him his ticket.

JOHN

Alligator mishap.

The conductor gives John a perplexed look and moves on. John turns and continues staring out the window.

EXT. VAGUE OUTDOOR SPACE - 19 HOURS & 6 MINUTES EARLIER

John is huddled in a ball on the cement ground as he is being kicked in the face and chest.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - ONE HOUR EARLIER

John steps out of the elevator and walks down the hall past the receptionist. He is rigid and forceful with an unforgiving look on his face. The walls are covered with blown-up copies of magazine covers which have been framed. The trendy art magazine is entitled *The Underground*. He continues past a room with cubicles and into his boss DALE'S office.

INT. DALE'S OFFICE

Dale is sitting at his desk going over writing samples with two employees. Dale is tall, skinny, and very tidy as can be seen by the condition of his office and appearance. He wears square black hipster glasses and has a flamboyant eye for fashion. Dale stares in horror at John's face.

DALE

Jon-Jon, what the hell happened to you?

JOHN

I got my fucking ass kicked. That's what happened.

Dale raises a long spindly hand to his mouth, gasps, and slaps his hand against the side of his face.

DALE

Oh my Gawd! How?

JOHN

(in disbelief)

Wh--How? How the hell do you think? Why do you think I'd be here right now?

DALE

(deep in thought)

...Oh. The interview.

EXT. UNDEVELOPED SUBDIVISION - 19 HOURS & 43 MINUTES EARLIER

John, unbruised, exits his car and walks toward a medium sized ranch house that has empty dirt lots for neighbors on each side.

INT. DALE'S OFFICE

JOHN

Yeah, the interview you set me up with.

EXT. UNDEVELOPED SUBDIVISION - 19 HOURS & 42 MINUTES EARLIER

John waits at the door until MICKEY opens it. He is fat, hairy, and greasy. He has on an unbuttoned Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants. A cigarette is clamped in his gaudy ring-laden hand as he adjusts his comb-over with his pinky.

MICKEY

Interview, right?

JOHN

Right.

MICKEY

OK, come on in.

John looks around as he walks through. The house is unfurnished except for lighting and sound equipment, a small bed, a couple of couches, and an empty kiddie pool located in the living room area. Mickey leads John past this area to a hallway.

MICKEY

Step into my office real quick-like.

John slowly enters the small half-bathroom and looks around inquisitively. Mickey checks his hair in the mirror and bends over the sink so he can lap up a few lines of cocaine with the short straw he just shoved up his nose. He quickly jerks his head up, forcefully sniffs, and loudly claps his hands together.

MICKEY

WooWee!

Mickey tries to hand the straw to John.

MICKEY

Yay? It get's the blood flowin'.

JOHN

Um...no thanks.

Mickey instantly becomes all business.

MICKEY

Ok then. We're done in here.

Mickey walks out of the bathroom and knocks on a door at the end of the hallway.

MICKEY

Come on guys. Move's your ass.
Deadline! Deadline!

The door opens and an old woman comes out holding a chain that connects to a collar around the neck of a fat man following behind her. He has on a leather speedo and wears a black leather mask with no eye holes which simply covers the top of his face and head leaving his nose and mouth exposed. After them, strides out an older man whose hands are bound with black tape and is silenced by a red rubber ball gag. They all walk into the living room. John hesitates to follow but Mickey puts an arm around his shoulder and leads him.

MICKEY

I suggest you's get right in dere
and fully absorb da sights, da
sounds, da smells. Now, when da
real fuckin' starts you's wanna
give yourself a little buffer
zone...

Mickey loses his train of thought.

MICKEY

Buffer?

Mickey looks at his watch.

MICKEY

Motherfucker! I don't think one of
our guys is gonna show.

(to John)

You ever used astroglide before?

John is barely listening as he stares at the leather-clad freaks.

JOHN

Huh?

MICKEY

Ah, nevermind...so anyway, the adult situations tend to get a little out of control and violent. It's a little rough but it builds character. Also--

Mickey is cut short as a gargantuan black guy with assless chaps and a blonde midget with a cigarette dangling from her mouth dressed as a nun walk out of another bedroom in the hallway.

MICKEY

'Bout damn time. Come on. We'll be ready for you's in a bit. Start prepping.

John has seen enough and turns to Mickey.

JOHN

Actually Mickey...I really just wanted to interview you all and get into the psychology and mind set of each character and the approach you take to direct them.

MICKEY

So...no fuckin'?

John begins to confidently rattle off his intentions.

JOHN

Well, I wanted to try and view this medium as a form of art. Like...for example, in this scene what is the plot, the conflict...sub-plot...not sure how often that would come up.

Mickey scratches his head and slicks his combover.

MICKEY

What the fu--what story? Ball gag man watches while blindfold man bangs old lady mistress.
(MORE)

MICKEY(cont'd)

They fuck, they cum, everybody goes home a lot less horny.

John suddenly has a great thought and his eyes light up.

JOHN

Well, actually one *could* perceive this scene as having an Oedipal complex theme. The older man with the gag being the father figure, not dead but subdued and helpless while the blindfolded man, being the Oedipus figure, has sex with the older mistress...woman who portrays the mother figure.

John smiles as if he just hit a proverbial homerun. Mickey is now sitting with his crew and they all stare at John as if he just spoke a different language.

MICKEY

Epi what? Look, goddammit, I make underground films. I'm just trying to make a profit from this fuck flick, Ok.

JOHN

Oh, don't get me wrong. I won't construe your words or paint a false picture of what you're trying to accomplish here. Even though it's an art mag, I won't make it seem like this is a *big* legitimate business.

Mickey's eyes widen. He leans forward and almost whispers.

MICKEY

You...don't think...my business is legit?

JOHN

(defensively)
(MORE)
No, no.

JOHN(cont'd)

I mean it won't look like a big
film company with real actors, you
know, undergrou--

MICKEY

You don't think my crew can act?
You come in here, use your big
fancy words, insult my crew, insult
me and my business, and on top of
that YOU DON'T EVEN WANNA SEE ANY
FUCKIN'?!

John tries to correct himself but only manages to mutter a
few nonsensical syllables as Mickey points to the black man.

MICKEY

Rocco here is a great actor. How
'bout I film him snapping off your
cock and shoving it up your ass.
That oughta win some awards.

INT. DALE'S OFFICE

Dale listens intently to the story as the two employees try
to hide their amusement.

DALE

My Gawd. How awful. Then what
happened?

JOHN

I already told you. I got my ass
kicked.

EXT. VAGUE OUTDOOR SPACE - 19 HOURS & 20 MINUTES EARLIER

John is on the ground kicked in the face and chest. We can
now see that it is the result of Mickey, Rocco, and the
midget.

INT. DALE'S OFFICE

JOHN

I got my fucking ass kicked by a fat toothless smut peddler, a chain smoking midget bitch, and a huge black guy, and I mean fucking huge.

DALE

Wow...so just how huge was he?

Dale smiles slightly. John is not in the mood.

JOHN

Are you fucking seriou-- would you stop thinking about cock for just one fuckin' second.

DALE

(shocked)

How dare you...how FUCKING DARE YOU! GET THE HELL OUT OF MY OFFICE! IT'S NOT MY FAULT YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE! YOU THINK IT'S ALL GONNA GO YOUR WAY AND IF NOT, YOU MAKE PEOPLE FEEL STUPID! LIKE THEY OWE YOU SOMETHING!

Dale reaches in his desk, opens a metal box inside, pulls out a few hundred dollar bills, and slams them on the desk.

DALE

HERE! NOW GET THE HELL OUT, YOU SELFISH LITTLE PRICK!

John storms out of the office as people in the hall look on. He rounds the corner toward the elevator and stops. He turns around and calmly heads the opposite way down the hall. He spots a fire alarm and without stopping he pulls it down. The sprinklers go off and everybody in the office either rushes to save themselves or to save their electronic equipment.

John continues calmly walking as droplets of water parade off of his hair, until he gets to a collage of photos on the wall. Some are autographed head shots and some are group shots. John stops at the middle of the collage while people are rushing past him and spots a photo of Dale which is bigger than all the others. He has an overly-excited and flushed look on his face as he smiles with his hand on Cher's shoulder. John, with a blank expression, calmly rips the photo in half removing Cher and part of Dale's arm. Now, completely dripping, he rounds the corner with photo in hand and walks through the fire exit door labeled Level 8. He calmly walks down with a sheepish grin on his face as others continue to rush past him. John begins to crumple up the photo.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION

John is finishing crumpling the photo and throws it in the trash as the train begins to move away behind him. John walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. OL' RUSTY PUB - NIGHT

John and Neil go into the bar. John is dressed in a dress shirt and jeans. Neil is wearing the same Pantera hoodie he usually wears. It is a medium sized sports bar with sports paraphernalia on the walls. One side is packed because it is close to the bar and the games. The other side is more relaxed with booths and tables.

JOHN

I just not feelin' it today man. I wish we could do this tomorrow or something.

NEIL

Come on man. It's December 8th man. We've got a tradition to uphold.

JOHN

Oh yeah, that's right.

John and Neil spot their friends in the corner of the crowded section playing darts. They have several bottles just sitting on the table and John and Neil grab one each. Neil loudly makes his presence known.

NEIL

Fuck yeah! Let's do this shit!
McGregor!!!

Neil and John spot Matt McGregor and shake his hand.

NEIL

Congratulations you lucky bastard.
All the fun and none of the
responsibility. How'd you do it
man?

MATT

It was easy man...because
coincidentally so is Mrs. Lepinsky.

NEIL

Unbelievable. Hey, let's get some
Wild Turkey. John, you in?

JOHN

No, not just yet man.

The shots of Wild Turkey arrive and they all crowd around the table as John takes a step back and watches on. They all pick up the shots and hold them together over the table.

NEIL

OK, HERE WE GO! LET'S DO IT! FOR
DIME!

They all start cheering, "Dime, Dime, Dime" over and over again and then take the shots. They don't ingest all of the alcohol but pour half on their face. John just laughs at them and drinks his beer.

They all hold their empty glasses together high over the middle of the table like knights brandishing their excaliburs in a ceremonial fashion. John laughs and spots a table of four girls. They all seem to be laughing in confusion at what they are witnessing. One of the girls laughs but is not looking in the direction of John's friends but rather is looking at John.

The girl staring at John is cute in an innocent 'girl next door' way but exudes a distinct sexiness. She has brown hair going to her shoulders. One of the girl's friends distracts her.

FRIEND #1

Now there's the perfect man for ya.

The cute girl looks at her as if she read her mind.

CUTE GIRL

Wh-What?

Friend #1 points to Neil.

FRIEND #1

Greasy hair, scruffy, belligerant, the baggy clothes leave much to the imagination and I don't *think* he likes dudes.

The cute girl nudges her friend.

CUTE GIRL

Shut up!

FRIEND #1

Looks like he has interesting hygiene skills. I bet he washes himself with a ferret.

They both laugh. John begins talking to his friends. The cute girl gets up.

CUTE GIRL

OK, I'd love to sit around here and discuss what mammals we think scuzzy guys scrub their balls with but I gotta go to the ladies room.

FRIEND #1

Me too.

The cute girl and her friend begin to walk to the bathroom.

FRIEND #1

It's getting fucking hot in here.

CUTE GIRL

Thermal bear sweater.

FRIEND #1

How you feeling?

CUTE GIRL

Alright. I'm getting there. Ah
Shit!

The cute girl grabs her eye and holds her hand cupped underneath it.

FRIEND #1

What?

CUTE GIRL

My contact. My eye has been irritated all day.

FRIEND #1

Stop getting jizz in it.

CUTE GIRL

Yeah, that's it. I'm surprised you can still see at all considering the various proteins you get lodged in there.

FRIEND #1

Oh, whatever! Wait, hey!

Friend #1 calls out to the cute girl as she turns and walks into the bathroom with her head down with her hand cupped under her eye. She turns from the conversation so fast she does not realize she has walked into men's washroom. Her friend can only watch as the door closes to reveal the word "Men."

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM

The cute girl stands at the sink and adjusts her contact.

CUTE GIRL

There! Jizz my ass.

She looks to her right and makes eye contact with a guy at the urinal right next to the sink. The guy just looks at her with a sly smile.

GUY

Hey.

Cute girl looks back to the mirror with a defeated look, finishes looking herself over and sighs.

CUTE GIRL

Goddammit.

As she is about to walk out she runs into John who is walking into the bathroom. They make eye contact and she gives him a "whatever" look and shrugs her shoulders. He just laughs and shakes his head as he walks in.

INT. PUB BAR

The cute girl and orders a drink at the bar and John come sup next to her.

JOHN

(to bartender)

Can I get a Sam Adams?

The cute girl realizes John is there but is too embarrassed to look up as she waits for her drink. John notices this and decides to break the ice.

JOHN

So...come to the men's room often?

The cute girl smiles and turns to look at John.

CUTE GIRL

Well, I'm looking for a husband so...I figure what better place to start than a bar bathroom. There's no shame in it. Just cut out the middle man. Why do all the legwork.

John laughs and nods his head.

JOHN

Wow, if I didn't know any better I'd say that was you plan.

CUTE GIRL

Well, you don't know any better so you don't know, do you?

JOHN

(laughs and speaks in
cockney)

Alright, Alright. Keep your alans
on.

CUTE GIRL

Um...doesn't that mean balls?

John laughs.

JOHN

Maybe.

John looks over at his friends who have continued playing darts. Neil throws his last dart, points at the dartboard, turns around, moons it and slaps his ass.

NEIL
YEA, EAT IT BITCH!

John stares dumbfounded and speaks to himself.

JOHN
But why?

The cute girl smiles.

CUTE GIRL
(nervously)
I think you could use a little
break. Um...you wanna go sit over
there or something? For a minute,
or something.

She points to the less crowded side of the bar.

JOHN
Yes...yes I do.

John and the cute girl go to a table on the other side. They
sit down and both awkwardly fondle their beers and look
around for something to say.

JOHN
Oh, so by the way. I'm John.

CUTE GIRL
Oh my God. Sorry, Katie.

JOHN
Awesome. Nice to meet you,
officially.

KATIE
Yeah.

Katie looks over to John's friends.

KATIE
So those are your friends?

John looks over at them.

JOHN

Yep, my friends.

John's friends notice him, point, and give him thumbs up. Neil looks at them and begins to hump a chair and bitchslap the air in a sexually provocative way. Then they flip him off.

JOHN

That dirty long hair is my roomie.

KATIE

Seriously? How the hell do you get along? He's a maniac. How does he function in normal society?

JOHN

(laughs)

Yeah, he's a looney bitch but he's a real good guy. He doesn't care about much but he a genius when it comes to politics.

KATIE

(dumbfounded)

Really?

JOHN

Yeah, I've never seen him lose an argument. He has a way of talking to people. Sometimes it works and sometimes it gets his ass kicked. He's kind of an idiot-savant...while the rest of 'em are just idiots.

KATIE

(smiles)

I see. Well, that's cool...It's just you just seem so different from them.

JOHN

You mean 'cause I'm brown.

KATIE

Really? Ya know, I didn't notice.

JOHN

It happens. Every bar needs a token black guy...but he called in sick so that's why I'm here.

KATIE

Right, of course. The Brown Bar Clause of 1883.

JOHN

(laughing)

Yes, that's it.

A waitress walks over and asks them if they want drinks. She is wearing a shirt way too small for her chest size and her cleavage is well exposed. She bends over to wipe down the table pushing her breasts between John and Katie. John tries not to look but Katie seems fixated on them. The waitress leaves.

KATIE

God, bring enough cleavage for everyone else? Now those were some tits!

Katie is shocked at John's lack of enthusiasm.

KATIE

You didn't seem very phased. Did you go blind? Because most guys would have immediately started checking real estate values to set up a summer home in those fun bags.

JOHN

Well, yeah. Most guys.

KATIE

Are you not fond of tits?

JOHN

No, tits are cool. But I'm as ass man myself. I likes the ass.

Katie looks at him inquisitively. John elaborates.

JOHN

Not man ass. Girl ass...lady ass. OK, I'm gonna just not talk for a while.

KATIE

(laughs)

Well, that's a relief...that you don't prefer men.

JOHN

Why, do I look like the man ass type?

KATIE

Well, let's just say I seem to have a tendency to pick up--

Katie covers her mouth realizing she just embarrassed herself.

KATIE

--talk to gay men without realizing it. But they tend to be very nice and humor my bumbling sexually misguided idiocy. It's a running joke between my friends. They find it hysterical. They tell me I have reverse gay-dar and call me their little fag hag.

JOHN

Oh, how adorable!

KATIE

Yeah, it's just sooo cute.

JOHN

Well, hey. You gotta start somewhere. So what the hell compelled you to come to this rectum of a bar anyway?

KATIE

Don't know. Just a change. Plus, trying to keep low key, I guess.

JOHN

Oh yeah. Why is that--

Neil walks up taking a swig out of his beer, interrupts John, and puts his arm around his neck.

NEIL

Yo, we out dude.

JOHN

Already? Are you fuckin' kidding me?

NEIL

We gotta get down to the T.V. Bar before Matt starts asking questions. Come on, he's just drunk enough that he might not be able to tell the difference.

Neil looks at Katie and points to John.

NEIL

You *do* know that he likes a chocolate drip on his long john, don't you?

JOHN

What?

NEIL

(looks at John)
Rusty trombone?

Neil imitates the rusty trombone maneuver and makes squishing and farting noises. Katie just looks on somewhat confused.

JOHN

Dude, come on. I still have half
goin' here.

John holds his beer up toward Neil. Neil taps the mouth of John's beer with the bottom of his. John's beer quickly overflows and spills out over his hand.

JOHN

Motherfucker!

Neil hits John on the back and begins to walk away.

NEIL

There you go. Hurry up pole smoker.

As Neil walks out of John's view, he looks at Katie, points to John and moves his fist back and forth in front of his mouth while pushing his tongue against his cheek.

John is slightly annoyed yet nervous about the poor timing of the conversation that just took place. The music has gotten louder and John has to speak up.

JOHN

Well, anyway. Now that dickhead is gone...well, I guess I have to say goodbye now. But I would definitely like to continue this conversation if you're gonna be out around here at some point.

KATIE

Sure.

John pulls out his phone. A piece of paper falls out onto the table but John takes no notice.

JOHN

OK, go for it.

Katie rattles off her number over the loud music and John frantically enters it into his phone. He smiles.

JOHN

Got it. K-A-T-I-E?

KATIE

Got it.

NEIL (O.S.)

Hey pretty boy, move your ass!

JOHN

Well, I guess I have to go.

John gets up.

JOHN

We'll talk.

John heads toward the door and Neil excitedly starts grabbing onto him and looks at Katie. John puts his arm around Neil's neck to settle him down or to just lead him into the wooden pole that is around the corner. John, laughing, continues moving toward to door. Katie also begins to laugh as she and John make eye contact before he moves out of sight. Neil follows soon after, rubbing his head.

FADE OUT.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

John is wearing a white dress shirt and his coat. The wounds on his face are more healed. The bus comes and John gets on.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Neil is on the bus and John sits next to him. They do not make eye contact. Neil is wearing a janitorial shirt with his name on it. He has drawn band names on his shirt and a pot leaf. Neil stares forward.

NEIL

Dude, I fuckin' hate Tuesdays.
Worst day of the week. I never
understand why people bitch about
Mondays. You're starting new but on
Tuesdays you know what you're in
store for and it sucks ass.

Neil turns his head toward John.

NEIL

Ah, damn it.
(shakes head in disgust)
I keep forgetting how much of an
ugly bitch you are.

JOHN

(jokingly)
Hey. Fuck you.

NEIL

Or maybe I just hate Tuesdays cause
that's the day we have our "team
meeting" to do our dirty weekly
report on the condition of the
school. Stupid fat bitch. She tries
to make it like we're some sort of
marketing or advertising team...you
know the gay stuff you do.

JOHN

Right.

John pulls out his phone and thumbs through his phone book
while Neil talks.

NEIL

And why on Tuesday? Why not Monday?
Is there actually some sort of
bureaucratic method involved with
this? But I do sell to half the
staff and school so.
(MORE)
(shrugs)

NEIL(cont'd)

I'm an entrepreneur. That's about as white collar as I get.

JOHN

Dude, I'm telling you. You need your own website.
AngryRantingStoner.com.

(laughs)

I don't understand how someone who smokes so damn much is so angry all the time.

NEIL

OK. One, I'm angry because I pay attention. Deus, it would have to be a podcast. No website could capture the essence of the moment.

JOHN

Well, at *this* moment you need to get your crazy bastard ass up cause this is it.

John gets up and points to the bus stop coming up. As Neil gets up he pats down his clothes to make sure nothing may have fallen out. They walk down the block toward the unemployment office.

NEIL

I still don't understand why you even need to go through his shit.

JOHN

Cause I do.

NEIL

But it doesn't make any fuckin' sense. How the hell are you not compensated for this shit?

JOHN

It wasn't part of the benefits I guess.

NEIL

Don't you think that's a little fucked, considering all the shit you went through. All your service. All the fuckin' time you wasted over there.

John seems jaded by the situation.

JOHN

Yeah, well ain't shit I can do 'bout it now.

INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE

John and Neil are sitting in the waiting area. John is thumbing through his phone. They are in silence until Neil snaps up in his seat and backhands John on the arm.

NEIL

Oh, so what's goin' on for your B-day? We should get some dirty strippers!

JOHN

Any event that comes up, you'll find some way to try and incorporate strippers.

NEIL

Hey, it's one of this country's most profitable institutions. It helps this economy float. Trust me, just ask any politician.

JOHN

So, we're abound with elite stripper moguls huh?

NEIL

Sex is history's oldest profession.

A man walks over to the television in the waiting area and switches it to the Fox News Channel and sits back down.

NEIL

Oh yeah, that's real good. So the guy without a job sits around all day and watches "Faux News" which could have very well been a catalyst to his unemployment.

(to John)

Hey just like your situation.

John nonchalantly flips him off.

NEIL

(back toward man)

Yeah, that's real good. Stupid fuck.

Neil says this loudly and some people take offense.

JOHN

God man! You always do this shit. You always try to provoke people into some sort of fight. Always.

INT. BAR

Neil is lecturing a guy by the pool table. They are both holding pool cues. John looks on, embarrassed.

NEIL

--And what he hell does that even mean? It's just like saying you like one piece of dirt better than you like another piece of dirt even though they both look the same. It's just an idea, a theory. And believe it or not people like to have to same ideas and they can turn these into theories.
(MORE)

NEIL(cont'd)

And that's why we have free will
and it's the same free will that
let's me tell you to fuck off. And
besides that--

INT. CAB

Neil is hanging over the divider as John is hunched down in
the back.

NEIL

--you have to think of this
logically. If you're gonna want to
think about this country as a
business, let's break down the
investments we've made. So the
investors, the US citizens, let the
CEO's talk them into paying more
trust money 'cause of a sweetheart
deal. So they went to meet with the
people at Crude Saudi Go-Go Juice
Inc, downsized a lot, and became a
conglomerate, ya know cause
freedom's on the march. So time
goes on--

EXT. CARNIVAL

Neil is talking to a couple of little kids who look on
confused.

NEIL

--we all go to our jobs, cradling
our investment - hearing good news
but then we stop hearing about it
for awhile and all of a sudden the
stock drops to zero, investors
start asking questions because the
CEO's and the board of directors
are gone - their desks cleaned out,
(MORE)
and now you're broke.

NEIL(cont'd)

The result: millions are jobless -
their lives ruined. Word gets out
that they lied and have been
banking off their monopoly on the
energy policy and now there's an
investigation--

The kids' Mom rushes over and grabs them. John walks up and
gives Neil a menacing look. Neil talks louder as the Mom
pulls them away.

NEIL

--YOU THINK YOU'RE GONNA GET SWEET
JUSTICE BUT NO ONE IS HELD
ACCOUNTABLE. SO NOW--

INT. CLUB/BAR

Neil is getting escorted out by the bouncer and so is another
guy, whom Neil is speaking loudly too. Both of their faces
are swollen and bloody.

NEIL

--ALL WE NEED IS A NAME FOR OUR
LITTLE CORPORATION. HEY HOW ABOUT
ENRON? OH WAIT, THAT ONE'S TAKEN.
BUT IT SEEMS ABOUT RIGHT DOESN'T
IT, YOU FUCKIN' HILLBILLY PIECE OF
SHIT.

INT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE

NEIL

First of all, I *never* start a
fight. If the only way insecure
pricks can combat logic is with
aggression then that's their own
damn problem.

JOHN

Yeah, but you throw people into a
corner and you push them over the
edge. (MORE)

JOHN(cont'd)

Aggressive logic will breed an aggressive reaction. Sometimes, you just need to shut-up.

NEIL

Ppfff, whatever you say O'Reilly. I don't think making people think for their damn selves all the time is a bad thing.

The woman at the counter calls John and he gets up. She hands him a large stack of forms and directs John to a room across the hall. John displays the stack of forms to Neil as he walks to the room.

INT. STERILE ROOM

John opens the door to the room. It is a sterile white room with a metal table in the middle and a few metal chairs surrounding it. John sits down, holds the forms a foot above the table, lets go and lets them slam down making an echo through the empty room. John just stares at the forms.

CUT TO:

EXT. STERILE ROOM

John exits the room. He looks very disheveled. His shirt is unbuttoned slightly, he is sweaty, hair is askew, face is red, and there is a tiny bit of blood on his dress shirt. He sucks and blows on the side of his index finger and fans it in the air. He walks back to the counter and places the forms down.

JOHN

OK, here. You guys don't have some sort of on site medical benefits for all the paper cuts you get from the forms do you?

She looks at John like he is a smart-ass then looks down at his forms and flips through them.

WOMAN

If you are receiving severance benefits your forms will be processed after they run out. If you are not, just wait for our call. You will have to come back in and speak to a unemployment professional.

John taps the side of his index finger against his forehead and then points it at the woman giving her a "goodbye" gesture. He walks over to the waiting area but Neil is gone.

JOHN

Son of a bitch.

John goes to the bathroom and looks for him but the only finds a shirtless man bathing himself in the sink. John slowly turns and exits the bathroom letting the door close slowly behind him. John gathers himself and heads into the elevator.

EXT. UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICE

John walks outside toward the edge of the building. He is thumbing through his phone book. John hears Neil calling him from his left. He is behind the building in the alley. He is talking to a middle-aged woman. A former hippie with pale complexion, shows signs of aging, but retains her former beauty. They are sitting on the steps next to the loading dock smoking a joint.

NEIL

Hey man. How'd it go? Win anything good? This is ROXANNE. She works up in the office. Decided to come have a smoke. Puff?

Neil hold up the joint toward John.

JOHN

No thanks.

NEIL

Yeah, she says that she can take care of your stuff.

ROXANNE

I can just expedite the process a little and I'll make sure everything goes fine. And I'll let you know about how to answer their questions.

NEIL

Yeah, like always say you've been looking for work. And don't tell them you have a working car and shit. And don't tell them you quit. Tell 'em you were fired.

ROXANNE

Well, in your situation you have a legitimate excuse for quitting so it's fine.

(looks at Neil)

But we'll discuss all of this later.

NEIL

You bet your ass.

Neil gives the rest of the joint to her and gets up.

NEIL

Alright, we out. Later.

ROXANNE

Bye.

(to John)

Nice to meet you.

JOHN

Bye.

John and Neil walk away.

JOHN

One thing I don't understand is how the hell you *always* manage to meet people no matter where you go, no matter what the circumstances.

NEIL

I've got the meds baby. And plus, I could con a product reliability tester into buying American. I'm good.

(excitedly)

I gave her my number. Dude, isn't she sooo hot.

JOHN

Are you sure you thought she was that hot before you gave her your number? What else do you know about her? What if she has kids or something.

NEIL

Great. I *could* always use my *own* product reliability testers, if you know what I mean.

Neil pats the pocket of his jacket that the weed is in.

JOHN

Great, the premeditated corruption and drugging of some strange hippie lady's kids. And all before 5 o'clock. A new benchmark of moral virtuosity for you to surpass.

NEIL

Hell yeah! And I told her about the party we're having this weekend for your dirty birthday.

JOHN

Yeah, I'm not surprised you told her before me. I told you, I don't care about a party. I don't wanna deal with it, man.

NEIL

Come on, I think once a year you have the right to say, 'fuck you all, this day is about me.' And plus, your actual birthday is on a Saturday this year. Saturday! Do you know how rare that is? Stop being so damn modest all the time about your ego. Let it out man.

(Neil puts one arm around John, holds the other out front and mock sings)

Let the ego soar! Like it's never soared before!

John takes Neil's arm off of him.

JOHN

OK, that's enough show tunes for one day, Rogers and/or Hammerstein.

NEIL

Hey, and you could call that little hottie you were trying to fuck at the bar. Tell her to come by. It's perfect. How could you have a better opening? So, come on man. Let's do this.

John, more approvingly, looks at Neil and shakes his head.

JOHN

Ya know, I don't know how the hell you always win!

NEIL

Skills dude--

JOHN

Yeah. You're a real prick of all trades.

NEIL

And speaking of skills, when Roxanne comes by I might not even need to get a dirty stripper, you know what I'm sayin'?

Neil playfully pushes on John and laughs excitedly.

JOHN

Unfortunately, I do.

As they walk, Neil places his hands on John's shoulders from behind him and excitedly jumps up and down.

NEIL

WooooHooHooHoo! There's too many things happening in my pants to describe! Ha! Ha! I'll meetcha up later at the place. I gotta take care of some business right now.

JOHN

Yeah me too. I'll see ya.

Neil gives a 2-finger salute as a goodbye gesture and heads away. John waits until he is gone and pulls out his phone. He thumbs through it and stops on Katie's name. He holds it out in front of him for a moment rubbing his finger over the call button.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

John is on the couch with his elbow resting on his knee and his fist supporting his chin, thumbing through his phone. Neil walks into the apartment.

NEIL

Hot damn, it's gettin' cold as shit out there.

He sees John playing with his phone.

NEIL

Alright, I know what you're doin.'
you've been doin' it all week. You
gonna call her or what?

JOHN

(defeated)
I just did.

NEIL

...Anndddd

John turns and stares at Neil.

INT. APARTMENT - TEN MINUTES EARLIER

John is standing at the counter in the kitchen with the phone in his hand. Takes his coat off with a confident look on his face. He raises the phone to his ear as it rings. He places the phone between his ear and his shoulder as he gets a beer out of the fridge. As he closes the fridge the phone slips out and he grabs it with his hand before it falls. He pulls it back to his ear. It has stopped ringing because someone has picked up. John quickly reacts.

JOHN

Hello? Katie?

GUY

Do I sound like Katie asshole?

JOHN

Oh sorry...is...Katie there?

GUY

Who the hell is Katie? You're all
hung up on this Katie. There's no
Katie.

JOHN

Wait, so is this the wrong number
or what? Does Katie not live there?

GUY

Nope, no Katie. But I bet you wish
I was Katie, ass-jammer.

The guy hangs up and John just stares at the phone in
perplexity.

INT. APARTMENT - TWELVE MINUTES LATER

Neil is doubled over the counter in laughter.

NEIL

Ass-jammer! Oh god, that's sweet!
I'm stealin' that one.

JOHN

Yeah well, now I don't know what
the hell's goin' on. I don't know
if I put in the wrong number or if
she gave me a fake one.

NEIL

Why the hell would she do that?

JOHN

I don't know. Might have something
to do with the fact that you came
up to us and basically insinuated
that we were The Village People
right after she had just gotten
done telling me she has a problem
with picking up gay guys.

NEIL

(jokingly)

Well, it's good to see she's not
breaking tradition.

JOHN

This isn't funny man. I meet this awesome chick and now it's all fucked! And I don't even know why!

(gestures toward Neil)

Well, I *might* know.

NEIL

You can't tell me you think that *she* thinks you're gay. Don't you think she would have expected you to tell her if you were.

JOHN

Maybe. But I don't have any way of ever knowing now, do I? FUCK! WHY, FUCKING WHY?

NEIL

Calm down, man. Trust me. Everything will work out eventually. The collective unconscious always prevails...if you're meant to meet again. Now, let's just chill D, pull some tubes, and see how many times Blitzer misinterprets the meaning of a legal procedure.

Neil walks out of the room.

JOHN

I've known you for years and I never know what the hell you're gonna say. You just come out of left field with shit. I really think you're bipolar man.

Neil walks back into the room holding a silver platter with something on it covered by a small sheet.

NEIL

I never said I wasn't. Most geniuses are. That's how it's always been.

Neil places the platter on the table and pulls the sheet off. It reveals a hookah with 4 tubes coming off or it. Neil turns on the TV and packs the bowl piece.

NEIL

I've never steered you wrong man. Believe me, just bide your time. Everything will work out if you want it to.

Neil and John take a pull off of the hookah. John relaxes.

JOHN

Confucius, my roommate.

Neil leans back and exhales a large amount of smoke.

NEIL

You bet your ass.

John and Neil stare at the TV while an El train rumbles by.

MATCH SOUND TO:

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - LATE MORNING

John is asleep. A rumbling noise can be heard. As it gets louder a harmonized, "ohhhh" is heard. The sounds builds until John's door busts open and Neil and some of John's friend's run in with a tub full of water. They dump all of the water on John and begin cheering. John jumps awake with frightened look on his face. They all start cheering, "B-day" over and over.

NEIL

Wake up bitch. Time to start drinkin'.

John grabs his shoulder and shakes his head. He tries to hide his anger and shock.

JOHN

You motherfuckers! Get the fuck out!

They are still laughing as they leave.

NEIL

Whatever, doesn't mean you're not drinkin.' You're sure as hell not goin' back to bed.

After they leave and close the door John holds his shoulder and grimaces slightly in pain. He holds his arms out in front of him and lets water drip from his fingers. He gives them a shake.

JOHN

Assholes.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Neil has a joint dangling from his mouth and is manning the keg in the kitchen. He has on a novelty beer hat with straws feeding into his mouth and on top of that a cone party hat.

NEIL

Come on ladies. Step up. Let's get this shit inside you.

GIRL

Oh please.

NEIL

Hey baby. Just makin' conversation. Here.

Neil grabs her cup.

NEIL

This is on me. You need any more
though I'll expect you to be on me.

GIRL

(scoffs)

Whatever.

After Neil fills her beer she smiles at him and takes the
joint out of his mouth, puffs on it, and begins to walk away.

NEIL

Mmmmmmm, I love foreplay.

The girl walks toward John who is on the other side of the
room talking to some people. She hugs him and gives him a
kiss on the cheek.

GIRL

Hey sweetheart. Happy birthday.

She gives John the joint.

JOHN

(laughs)

Thanks.

John takes a hit and passes it along to the guys he is
talking to. The doorbell rings. John looks over at Neil who
is doing a keg stand. John goes to answer the door. He opens
the door and sees Katie standing there. John is in such utter
shock as he walks outside he forgets to close the door.

EXT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

What?!

KATIE

Oh, nice greeting. Happy birthday.

John instantly begins smiling.

JOHN

Ok...what...how did you...maybe you should just tell me. I'm very confused right now.

KATIE

You didn't know I was coming?

JOHN

No.

KATIE

You never called me so I figured maybe you got the wrong number cause it was so damn loud in there--

JOHN

Yes, oh thank god. I was goin' crazy.

KATIE

But you *did* manage to drop your business card so I called your cell but it went straight to your voice so I called your apartment. Your roommate didn't tell you?

JOHN

You called?

At that moment Neil walks outside.

NEIL

Oh dude, dude. That chick with the hot rack from the bar called.

John points to Katie.

JOHN

Yeah thanks for telling me, dick.

John gives Neil a menacing look.

NEIL

Hey, don't hate dude.

(points at John)

Collective unconscious! Love it!

John busts out laughing.

JOHN

Alright...unbelievable.

Neil smiles and heads back inside. John looks at Katie and points toward the door.

JOHN

Well, shall we?

KATIE

Sure, let me just make sure my door is locked.

Katie hits the lock button on her remote. John observes her car. It is a blue compact sports car with a license plate that reads CARBLUE.

JOHN

Car blue, huh? You sure don't pull any punches do you?

KATIE

Sure don't.

She smiles and heads inside with John. People begin to cheer and yell, "b-day bitch" over and over.

INT. APARTMENT - JOHN'S BEDROOM

John sits on the bed as Katie looks around the mostly bare white room.

KATIE

So, I'm surprised how much contraband the warden lets you have in your cell.

JOHN

I just haven't gotten around to stylizing my room.

Katie spots a poster board in the corner. She picks it up.

KATIE

What's this?

JOHN

Oh, it's a board from this ad campaign I had to work on. It was about the immaculate images of the Virgin Mary that people said they kept seeing at different locations and the impact that they had. And this was one that had something red oozing from the cracks of the wall where the eyes were supposed to be.

Katie looks the Virgin Mary wall stain. Stenciled on top of the board is the headline *THE BLEEDING TEARS OF MARY*.

KATIE

But shouldn't it be tearing blood?

JOHN

What?

KATIE

You know, she wouldn't be bleeding tears. She would be tearing blood. It's not like someone knifed her and clear salt-ass liquid came out.

JOHN

Well, I'm glad you're not my boss hardass.

Someone EXCLAIMS, "OH FUCK!" outside the room and the party gets livelier. John walks up a few inches behind Katie.

KATIE

You got any more?

JOHN

We can check 'em out later if you
wanna head back out there.

Katie turns her head inches from John's face.

KATIE

Why, what's the rush?

She slowly lowers the poster board and turns slightly to let her shoulder rub against him. He moves his lips toward hers. She closes her eyes and tilts her head up slightly. John moves in as the door busts open. John's friend pokes his head in as others carry Neil past the room.

FRIEND #1

Dude, he's fuckin' at it again!

John walks to the bathroom where Neil is sitting on the floor. He is dazed and wheezing loudly. People are wetting towels and wiping the blood from his face. Neil has a broken nose, several cuts, and a fat lip. Someone tries to put a towel on his nose but Neil groans in pain and pushes them away. He grabs the bridge of his nose and sets it back into place with a loud SNAP. He groans lowly as strings of blood and saliva slowly hang from his mouth. John goes down to his eye level.

JOHN

What the fuck did you do?

Neil Mumbles as blood bubbles form out of his nose.

NEIL

Fuckin' Bitch. She played me man.

JOHN

Who?

INT. APARTMENT - FIVE MINUTES EARLIER

Neil stands by the door with Roxanne, who has just arrived.

NEIL

Dude, that's so awesome you came.
I'm fuckin' stoked.

ROXANNE

Yeah, but we can't stay long. I
just wanted to know how supply is.
I'm lookin' for a Q, if possible.

NEIL

You're not stayin'? Wait, we? *Do*
you have kids?

ROXANNE

Yeah, why?
(laughs)
I didn't *bring* them.

A tall SCRUFFY MAN with a time-tested face wearing a leather
biker's jacket walks in. He is slightly younger than Roxanne.

SCRUFFY MAN

Hey hon.

NEIL

Who the fuck is this?

Roxanne glares at Neil becoming defensive.

ROXANNE

This is my boyfriend.

NEIL

You didn't say shit about this!
What the fuck is wrong with you?

ROXANNE

What the fuck is wrong with you?
You told me to come by whenever I
needed any supply.

NEIL

Yeah, so I could supply that ass!

Her boyfriend gets in between them.

SCRUFFY MAN

Hey motherfucker! Watch your mouth!
What makes you think she would even
want anything to do with a stupid-
ass, long-hair, hippie lookin'
faggot like you any--

Neils eyes widen, he cocks his arm back, and swings it into
the scruffy man's face. Scruffy man falls to the floor.

PARTYGOER

OH FUCK!

Neil grabs Roxanne's boyfriend as she screams at him to stop.

NEIL

WHAT? WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU SAY?
HIPPIE? YOU CALLED ME A FUCKIN'
HIPPIE?

Neil cocks his arm back again.

INT. BATHROOM

NEIL

That motherfucker fights dirty man.
I had 'im. I fuckin' had 'im.

Neil coughs and begins to tear up.

JOHN

OK, everyone out. It's over. I'll
deal with this. Go back to the
party.

Everyone leaves and they close the door. Neil breaks down.

NEIL

It's fucked. It's all fucked. I'm
so sick of this shit. I can't do
this anymore. I can't make anything
work.

JOHN

What are you talking about? You always have the best advice and an uncanny way of knowing the best outcome for anybody's situation. You don't--

NEIL

Preaching the greater good is fine when it works for other people but what about me? When the fuck has my own advice ever worked out for me? When? Never! I can't...I can't.

Neil drops his head and tries to cover his tears.

JOHN

You need me to do anything?

NEIL

No! Leave please. Please, get the fuck out.

John, worried, slowly and carefully eyes Neil as he leaves the bathroom. Neil slowly regains his composure, stands up, and looks in the mirror. He looks disgusted as tears slowly stream down his face. He opens the medicine cabinet and grabs a large pair of scissors. He stares at himself in the mirror pointing the scissors close to his face. He grips them tightly as his hands begin to tremble.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN

The party has died down some. A couple of people leave and say bye to John.

KATIE

Are you sure your roommate's OK?

JOHN

I trust him. He'll be fine.

KATIE

So anyway I have a question. I don't really want to drive all the way home. Is it OK if I stay?

JOHN

Yeah um, you gonna need something to wear...or not?

John smiles and Katie laughs.

KATIE

Actually I have clothes in my car.

JOHN

You even brought clothes huh?

KATIE

I live out of my car sometimes. For my job I need to be a the move a lot. I'm a sales rep. for the number one company that distributes wholesale medical supplies to hospitals. Lately they've been having me travel around a lot because they want to promote me to sales coordinator. I have to start going through off-site training for the place they want to send me. They said they might need to send me in maybe a month. But the only thing is it's in California so...

John loses his smile briefly but hides his disappointment.

JOHN

Well, that kinda sucks. But you know...if it's a good opportunity. You gonna go for it?

KATIE

Yeah, I may have to. It's more money so I don't think I can afford to pass it up.
(MORE)

KATIE(cont'd)

And they need to know soon so my
life is kinda hectic right now.

JOHN

Well, thanks for finding some time
for me.

Katie smiles wide.

KATIE

Of course.

John sees a guy with a buzz cut walk into Neil's room and
close the door.

JOHN

Hey, Hold on a sec OK.

KATIE

Sure.

John walks toward Neil's room and quickly opens the door.

INT. NEIL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

Hey, dude. You lost or--

John sees Neil sitting on his bed. His head is completely
buzzed and his goatee is gone. He is smoothing a crystal
figure with a piece of sand paper.

JOHN

Holy fuck! What the hell did you
do?

Neil puts down the figure, gets up, stares out his window.

NEIL

You know what man. It's really time
for a fuckin' change. I can feel
it, you know. I can feel like
things are gonna change soon. And I
feel like I'm part of that change.
I'm a big part.

Neil lights a cigarette and continues to look out.

JOHN

OK...sooo...what the hell happened to your head? You look like a fuckin' Scrotum.

NEIL

(laughs and turns to John)
You son of a bitch.
(turns back to window)
I'm telling you man. I know...I know.

JOHN

Well, I'm goin back out there. You comin'?

NEIL

No, I'm good. I got a stig-mama goin'.
(holds up cigarette)
I'm just gonna chill D for a little while.

Neil sits back down on the bed and pulls out an acoustic guitar from underneath it.

JOHN

Alright, let me know if you need anything.

John leaves. Neil strums out a few chords.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

The place is a mess. John is dressed, standing at the kitchen counter drinking coffee. Katie walks out of his bedroom in a t-shirt and shorts.

KATIE

Wow, you're up early.

JOHN

(smiles)

Yep, you sleep alright?

KATIE

(stretches and smiles)

Yep. So would you want to go get breakfast or something?

JOHN

Yeah, we can. But I need to take care of something first.

Katie playfully hops over toward John.

KATIE

Oh yeah, like what?

JOHN

I made a promise to my Mom that I would visit her on my birthday but I couldn't make it yesterday. So I'm goin' today.

KATIE

Ohhh, that's sweet. Can I go with you? I've got nothing else to do and I wanna hang out with you. Then we can go get food.

JOHN

(nervously)

Katie, it's really not--

KATIE

Oh, come on. Don't shut me out. I'd like to meet your Mom. Pleeeeeease. I won't take no for an answer. I'm gonna get dressed.

Katie disappears into the bedroom before John can say anything else. With a worried look John hangs his head, sighs, and sips his coffee.

EXT. OUTDOOR AREA

Katie is standing with an uncomfortable look on her face with her eyes quickly darting around in between long glances at the ground. John is several feet in front of her, kneeling in front of his Mom's grave holding a bouquet of flowers. Snow is lightly falling.

JOHN

(emotionless)

Hi, Mom. Sorry I'm a day late. I had some stuff to take care of and stupid Neil decided to throw me a party. I guess he was just trying to make me have a good time. A lot of stuff has been goin' on since I've been back. I'm doin' a little better now. Oh, and I met someone.

(turns head toward Katie
then back to the grave)

Her name is Katie. I think you'd really like her. She's a good girl. She's got an unbelievable personality. She makes me feel really good.

John quickly shows a slight smile and then it's gone. He clears some dirt out of the embossed letters on the headstone and clears some debris off the top. He carefully places the flowers in front of the grave.

JOHN

Well, I don't want to keep her here too long. But I'll be back soon, I promise.

John kisses the headstone, slowly gets up, gently caresses the top of it, and walks away. He walks past Katie who is looking at the grave. She stands there for a moment and then follows John to his car.

INT. DINER

They are sitting in a booth at a family style diner. Katie is staring down as she mixes her coffee. John just looks around. Katie puts her spoon down and looks at John.

KATIE

I'm so sorry. I didn't know. I shouldn't have forced you to take me. I feel like a complete--

JOHN

Don't worry. It's fine. Trust me... Are you OK?

KATIE

Yeah, I'm fine...are you?

JOHN

Of course. I'm fine with it.

KATIE

Do you remember her well?...I'm sorry. I keep talking about this. I'm going to shut the hell up.

JOHN

(smiles)

No, it's fine. I...actually never met her. She died during birth.

Katie softly gasps and raises her hand to her mouth.

KATIE

God, I'm so sorry. How the hell could something like that happen? Wasn't there anything the hospital could do?

JOHN

(emotionless)

(MORE)
Well, she knew something was wrong.

JOHN(cont'd)

Um, she had developed parathyroid disease during the pregnancy. The doctors didn't catch it in time for anything to be done. She knew what was most likely going to happen. And the thing is that I was at equal risk. Odds are there should have been a miscarriage but there wasn't. I was born slightly premature but nothing happened to me. Not during birth...not after.

KATIE

So, she knew that there wasn't much chance and she waited and did it anyway? That's amazing.

JOHN

...So I've gone every year on my birthday to see her, well except this time of course. Not everyone gets to celebrate their birthday that way. I lived with my grandparents most of my life. The car I have was hers. No one ever used it. The body was fine. It just sat there and all we had to do was put in a battery, fluids, and stuff like that. And amazingly it runs fine. It's just old. Every time I go get it tuned up they tell me I should just get a new car but it's never failed me yet.

(perks up attitude)

But yeah, you know...So anyway, tell me more about that California job thi--

KATIE

You don't have to change the subject if you don't want.

JOHN

Huh?

KATIE

Sorry. I'm just saying that it's fine if you want to talk about it. I don't care.

JOHN

Not much else to say.

KATIE

You don't like to talk much about yourself do you? If you're not comfortable about personal stuff, tell me.

JOHN

There's just not really much to know.

KATIE

That can't be true. I'd like to know more about you and vice versa, you know, while we still have the time.

JOHN

We will...I know I like being with you. And I feel like I know all I ever need to know about you.

They stop talking momentarily as their food comes.

KATIE

But you don't know *anything* about me.

John points to her plate while she opens a mayonnaise packet.

JOHN

I know you like baked potatoes.

Katie smiles and shakes her head.

JOHN

Oh, and you like to
put...mayonnaise?...on your
burgers.

John looks at her perplexed. Katie begins to laugh.

KATIE

Shut up.

They both laugh.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

John emerges from a train tunnel and walks down the block.
His cell phone rings.

JOHN

Yo.

NEIL

Happy shit day!

JOHN

Ah yes. Tuesday. Shitty day today?

NEIL

Actually wasn't bad. I decided to
say fuck it and I told them some
serious shit that needed to be
changed with procedures and trying
to maximize efficiency so I can get
my ass out earlier. I kinda went
apeshit toward the end. Some of the
shit they do is so fuckin' dumb. I
thought I was fucked but they loved
the ideas dude. They said no one
ever brought up such well prepared
and articulated shit before. And I
was just goin' on the fly!

JOHN

Hell yeah, dude. That's badass.
Nice goin'.

NEIL

Yep, so to celebrate I'm headin'
over to Sarah's to chill D.

JOHN

Shit, that's a hike.

NEIL

Yeah, that's why I'm leavin' soon.
You wanna go?

JOHN

Can't. Me and Katie are doin'
something tonight.

NEIL

Damn, you guys aren't squandering
any time, are you.

JOHN

That's right. We hung out almost
every day last week, too.

NEIL

Sounds good. Alright man. I'll
catch ya later.

JOHN

Alright, see ya bro.

John hangs up and stops in front of a building and enters it.
On the window next to the door is a black placard with
several doctor's names on it.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE

John sits on a couch sipping a bottle of water. The room is
finished with oak wallboards and an oriental rug.

There is a glass cabinet on the one side of the room filled with certificates, pictures, and knickknacks and an oak desk on the other side with a marble nameplate that says, Dr. Reed. The doctor is slowly pacing back and forth on the rug in front of the couch. He stares at his shoes with the back of his thumb resting on his lips as it rhythmical clicks his pen, like a human metronome. There is a noticeable strip of wear on the rug where the doctor walks.

DR. REED

So, how about the dreams? Are they still occurring?

JOHN

Yeah.

DR. REED

More frequently or less?

JOHN

More. And I wake up drenched in sweat no matter what.

DR. REED

Hyperthermia is a side effect of the Zoloft. We'll try cutting it a little and counterbalance that with some more Ambien and see if that will help you sleep more restfully.

JOHN

I really don't think that the pills are helping. I've been on and off with them cause they make me feel really hazy.

DR. REED

Well, they won't help if you stop taking them. And we've talked about this, if you stop for too long it could make you sick and could lead to memory loss.

JOHN

What, that's a bad thing?

The doctor stops, turns toward John, and lowers his pen.

DR. REED

This is serious. If you're erratic with your medications you won't be able to maintain proper serotonin levels and in rare cases mania can occur. You need this for your health. You can't change anything that's happened but trying to block this from your memory is not healthy either. With P.T.S.D. It's not like a faucet. You can't just turn it on and off. There are serious repercussions for misuses of the treatment. We can't start having negative effects now that we're making progress, right?

Dr. Reed reverts to pacing and clicking. John turns his head and looks out the window.

JOHN

(sighs)

Right.

DR. REED

So we've covered all previous issues. Tell me the main points in your life over the last six months in reverse chronology. Then, we can see if we can continue past that and break some ground here. As usual, just take it slow. Don't let anything stop you from being comfortable about recounting certain things and--

Dr. Reed's voice trails off as John's attention goes from him to the window.

We slowly drift out the window into the sky and over the city as time quickly passes by. We drift faster as the sun sets and we end in front of John's apartment where he and Katie are returning from their night out.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

They walk in and Katie tosses her coat over a chair.

KATIE

So *did* you like the movie? It seems like you didn't.

JOHN

No no, I did. It's just when you said there was a movie you really wanted to see I expected some type of Runaway Bride piece of shit. I've never met a girl who was so into sadistic horror movies.

KATIE

Come on. They're fun! It's funny! They're not real. You got a problem with blood and dismembered flying limbs?

John is facing away from her at this point as he places his coat down. The last words affect him and he lifts his head and looks straight forward with a stern look on his face.

JOHN

(mumbles)
Sometimes.

KATIE

Huh?

John walks toward her and wipes off the serious look.

JOHN

Well, I guess it just depends on the situation.

KATIE

(laughs)

Obviously.

They both sit down on the couch and as soon as they do, Katie jumps back up.

KATIE

I'm gonna make a drink.

She goes over to the kitchen and starts looking through every cabinet.

JOHN

Um...do you need help with that?

KATIE

Nope.

JOHN

Well, do you at least want to know where everything is?

KATIE

I got it.

Katie concocts some drinks. She comes back and hands him a tall glass full of coke and some type of alcohol.

KATIE

Here.

JOHN

Alright. Let's see.

Katie sits next to him on the couch and anticipates his reaction. John takes a good sip and grimaces at the taste.

JOHN

Oh god. What the hell did you mix this with, ass?

KATIE

The Jameson that was in your fridge.

JOHN

Some bastard must have left it here from the party.

KATIE

Come on now, aren't you tired of the same old mediocre drinks? Have you ever had this before?

JOHN

No.

KATIE

So there you go. You never like to try anything. Did you even live before you met me?

JOHN

Apparently not.

KATIE

Seriously, that's really how it feels.

JOHN

What?

KATIE

Every time we do anything it seems to be the first time you've ever heard of it. You're just not open with me at all. It seems like I need to describe what emotion you should be feeling whenever something happens.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

KATIE

It's just like I have to help you read yourself and that makes it really hard on me. You're like a stem cell.
(MORE)

KATIE(cont'd)

You have no real identity. You take on the identity of those around you.

JOHN

You're not making any sense right now. So let's talk about something else for--

KATIE

No! You see, this is what I mean. You don't have to do this with me. Please don't change the subject. It's like your personality is this composite of everyone around you.

Katie becomes upset as her words come out in a rush.

KATIE

I don't even know if you have real emotions at all. Do you? Do you feel anything?

John is taken aback by the sudden change in atmosphere but he still remains emotionally void.

JOHN

Of course, I--

Katie springs up from the couch and interrupts him.

KATIE

No, you don't. You always maintain this act of blank defiance. You're so far away, and I try...but you keep pulling away and I'm scared. I'm scared that I may lose sight of you and I won't be able to find you again. And I swear I can't handle--

JOHN

I love you.

John says these words in his same monotone but the look in his eyes is sincere. Katie's face fills with disbelief.

KATIE

Oh, fuck you.

(tearing up)

You're so full of shit. How-- you have nothing-- you can't say things you have no proof of. These aren't words you just sa--

JOHN

Every night...when I go to bed and I'm just laying there in silence...I think about you and how you're going to leave...and it kills me. These thoughts consume me to my last waking moment and I'm restless...I can't sleep. The one time of day I get to choose peace and solace...I choose anguish. I've trapped myself in my own visceral prison...and I have the key and I can escape anytime... but I don't.

John is staring downward and has now begun to show great emotion and begins to tear up. Katie's face is streaming with tears. John's voice breaks as he talks.

JOHN

When you get so use to something...it becomes so hard to let it go...and when it's the best thing that's ever happened...it becomes impossible. And when you really...really love something you love it til it hurts...until it causes you pain, voluntary pain. Something you can control but you keep it there to remind yourself...

John finally looks up at Katie with tears in his eyes.

JOHN

You remind yourself because you're scared you might lose sight of it and you won't be able to find it again.

Katie gets a look of rude self-realization on her face.

JOHN

That's why. And I don't know what to do. I can't breathe. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO FUCKING DO. I feel like I'm shrinking. Everyday I'm getting smaller and smaller...and maybe you're right. And if you are, and I really never did live before you then what makes you think that after you, I won't cease to exist. Don't you understand? I lose everything. Everyone I know goes away...but not this time. Not with you. I know this is what I want. I know that I can't lose you. I know no matter where you are I always want to be there somehow, if not physically then some other way. I've never felt so strongly committed before with another person. And because of that, please believe you will never be lost and if you are I *will* find you...I will protect you...no matter what...because *I* love you. And yes, you've given me more life in these last few weeks than I've had in years and I *never* want to forget that.

Katie has a serene look on her face as she walks toward John and sits on his lap facing him. She wipes some tears from his face and talks softly.

KATIE

Everything is going to be fine. I would never hurt you and I would never abandon you.

She softly kisses his forehead a few times and moves her fingers through the sides of his hair. John looks up at her and they both stare at each other for a moment. They slowly move closer and begin to kiss. Softly and slowly at first and then faster as they embrace each other more tightly. Katie seems more in control as she presses John back against the couch as they embrace.

FADE OUT.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Katie and John lay under the sheet. John is on his back and Katie is next to him laying partially on her side with her head resting on his chest. She slowly caresses his arm with her fingertips. John slowly opens his eyes and looks at her.

JOHN

Hey you.

KATIE

Hey...I've been listening to your heartbeat. I love it. So peaceful. There's a feeling of security, of innocence you know. Just so lucid. A beautiful transcendent feeling. Sometimes at work when I get stressed I just like to dim the lights, take a stethoscope, and just listen to my own heartbeat. Very cathartic...like regressing into the womb.

JOHN

Wow, I slept with a crazy woman. Great, my life's aspirations are now all fulfilled.

KATIE

Oh! You Bastard!

Katie playfully pinches John's nipple through the sheet causing it to slide a little off of John's chest and expose a scar on the upper part of his left pectoral. Katie rubs his chest underneath the scar.

KATIE

What's that from?

John looks at it and there is a pause before he answers.

JOHN

An accident. Something that should have never happened.

KATIE

Someone else's fault?

JOHN

Yeah...but my mistake. Just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

John pulls the sheet back over the scar. Katie looks up at him with a worried look. John kisses her on the forehead. She puts her head back down and listens to his heartbeat.

FADE OUT.

INT. WILD OLIVE BAR - NIGHT

John is at the bar ordering a drink. It is a toned down martini bar. Katie walks up behind him and slaps his ass.

JOHN

Hey!

KATIE

Hey, happy Friday.

JOHN

Yep, getting better.

(to bartender)

And whatever she's having.

Katie orders a drink and they walk to the table Neil and his friends are at.

NEIL

Hey, lovebirds! What's up, Kate?

KATIE

Not much. This doesn't seem like your normal kind of hangout.

NEIL

Yeah well. It's a change so...why not. You only live once. Unless of course you're Hindu or Buddhist.

(to John)

Oh speaking of which, remind me convert to Hinduism and/or Buddhism.

JOHN

(laughs)

Yeah right.

KATIE

So it's seems like your week is going better then? You're face is lookin' a little better now.

NEIL

Yeah, it sucks. But I'm still better looking than this motherfucker.

(points to John)

KATIE

I like your hair now.

NEIL

Really?

KATIE

Yeah, very phallic looking.

John begins to laugh hysterically.

NEIL

(laughs)

Oh shit! You're *both* dicks!

Neil playfully slaps John on the back. Neil and his friends act belligerent and John seems more lively and begins to get into the action, as does Katie. They all listen as Neil tells a story. John has his arm around Katie and rests his chin on her shoulder.

KATIE

Hey, I'm gonna go to the bathroom
and then get a drink. You want one?

JOHN

Sure, same.

Katie leaves and John turns back to the conversations. A few moments later an arm goes around John's shoulder.

ERIK

What's up, sweetheart!

John is shocked to see him.

JOHN

Oh shit! What the hell are you
doin' here?

ERIK

I'm hanging out. We just got here.
What are you doin' here?

JOHN

Same. Just hangin' out with Neil.

Neil turns around, sees Erik, and shakes his hand.

NEIL

Hey man. What's goin' on?

ERIK

Oh Neil! Didn't even recognize ya.
Liking the hair man. You look so
different. I've never seen you with
no hair. This is crazy.

NEIL

That's what life's all about,
surprises.

ERIK

You got that straight! Well, I'm
gonna go find my crew and I'll hit
you guys up in a bit.

JOHN

Hey, there's this chick I met. I
want you to meet her when she gets
back.

ERIK

Cool, bring her by.

Erik leaves. Neil looks at John.

NEIL

You owe me punkass.

JOHN

(laughs)

Yeah, yeah.

Katie waits for a drink in front of the bar. Claude can be
seen in the distance behind Katie. He has his eye on her and
moves toward her. He stands next to her, turns to look at
her, and shows her his shit-eating grin.

CLAUDE

Hey.

Katie turns her head slightly to look at him then turns back toward the bar. She seems surprised and slightly annoyed.

KATIE

Hey.

Claude stares at her as she looks straight ahead.

CLAUDE

Don't feel like saying much do you?

KATIE

(defensive)

No, I'm fine.

CLAUDE

Let me get this drink. Then maybe we can talk. I think I deserve at least that.

Neil sees Claude talking to Katie. At this point he has his hand on her shoulder. Neil grabs John and points out the situation.

NEIL

Yo, fight or flight. Time to enact the human condition.

John grows infuriated as soon as he sees Claude.

JOHN

That greedy motherfucker!

John speeds off.

NEIL

(confused)

Huh?

John has a relentless look in his eyes as he heads over. Katie begins to walk away as Claude grabs her arm.

CLAUDE

You can't just ignore me, you know.

John gets in between them.

JOHN

So, done harassing old people for
the day?

CLAUDE

What?

JOHN

Look, you scheming prick. She
doesn't want what you're sellin'.
She's an innocent. Just find
someone else.

KATIE

No, John--

CLAUDE

What? Innocent?

(to Katie)

Who the fuck is this?

(to John)

Wait, you're the guy with the weak
lady handshake.

(to Katie)

Katie, what the fuck is goin' on?

KATIE

Nothing. Look Ellis, it's none of
your business.

JOHN

(to Katie)

You know him?

(to Claude)

Wait...Ellis? I thought it was
Claude?

CLAUDE

Claude's my professional name.

JOHN

Do you go one moment in the day
where you're *not* lying your ass
off?

CLAUDE

Fuck you, pretty boy. I have
business with her.

JOHN

Like what?

CLAUDE

(to Katie)

You haven't told him, have you?

JOHN

What?

(to Katie)

Told me what?

Claude marvels in the moment and he shows a shit-eating grin.

CLAUDE

You poor naive bastard. Well, it
seems you two have some shit to
take care of. I'll leave you to it.

Claude walks off. Katie glares at him with an unforgiving
look through watery eyes. He leans toward her as he walks
past her.

CLAUDE

This conversation is far from over.

Katie stares at the floor as John stares at her.

EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

John storms out and Katie follows.

KATIE

John! John please! Stop!

JOHN

(stops and turns)

Ok, Katie. What the fuck is going on? Obviously you two know each other.

KATIE

Yeah, I--

JOHN

Please, you have to tell me. When you knew him, were you fucking him?

A tear runs down Katie's face.

KATIE

He used to work with me. He did our business investments. Then he left and went to a brokerage house...We had a small thing, OK. It was a long time ago.

John grimaces at the thought.

JOHN

Oh God! Him? With him? Are you fuckin' kidding me? He's a piece of shit!

KATIE

Look, I didn't say I was happy abo--

JOHN

And what? *What* haven't you told me? What the hell was he talking about?

Katie becomes more upset and covers her face.

JOHN

Please, tell me now. Don't fuckin' hide this shit from me anym--

KATIE

OK! OK! Fine!

Katie wipes her face and takes a deep breath.

KATIE

We dated for a short while. We started to get serious right before he left. At that point he started getting more obnoxious about his *big* move. He became controlling and jealous. Always trying to keep tabs on me. And...it didn't help...when I got pregnant.

John squints as if he is in physical pain.

JOHN

What?! You have a kid?

Katie becomes even more upset.

KATIE

When he found out, he stopped calling me. I couldn't get a hold of him. I WAS ALL ALONE.

KATIE

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO! I HATED HIM FOR IT! I DIDN'T WANT HIS BABY! IT WAS A MISTAKE! I COULDN'T KEEP HIS BABY!

John clenches his teeth and speaks through them.

JOHN

What are you saying?

Katie breaks down completely.

KATIE

I couldn't do it...I couldn't be a mom...I couldn't keep his...

JOHN

(angrily)

You killed the baby...out of spite
for him?

KATIE

NO! I DIDN'T KILL ANYTHING! I GOT
AN ABORTION, OK! I WAS ALONE! I HAD
NO ONE! I WAS SCARED!

JOHN

(shakes his head)

That's so fucking selfish.

KATIE

NO! You can't say that! What about
me? What about the circumstances
that had befallen me? Don't you
think that was selfish?

JOHN

Selfishness does not beget
selfishness.

KATIE

I know that! But I had no choice!
Maybe I wasn't as strong as someone
else would have been, OK!

(tears stream down her
face)

I don't know what else you want me
to say.

JOHN

Nothing...nothing. I knew
everything I wanted to know about
you...and now this! And now this.

KATIE

You didn't know shit about me! You
wanted to invent your own
perception of me.
(MORE)

KATIE(cont'd)

For some reason you want to think I'm some perfect angel. Why? Why are you trying to hold me up on this pedestal without even trying to know me, truly know me. *I* consider *that* selfish!

John begins to cry and begins to talk almost to himself with his head toward the ground.

JOHN

No, not like this. Please, not like this.

KATIE

(sobbing)

What? John...please...talk to me.

JOHN

(softly)

I can't...can't. I have to go... have to go.

John begins to walk away very quickly.

KATIE

NO! JOHN! WAIT!

John doesn't slow down. Katie covers her mouth and begins to sob leaning against the wall and slides down it.

FADE OUT.

INT. APT. BUILDING - NIGHT

The building is rustic and semi-rundown. John and Neil walk into a hallway.

NEIL

So when did they say they're gonna know what's up with your car?

JOHN

They said to go back to the shop tomorrow and they'll let me know. This place is a shit hole. But I guess it's fitting for the week I've been having.

NEIL

(rolls eyes)

Pfft. Whatever, I don't wanna hear you bitch. You're the dumbshit that fucked it all away.

JOHN

Yeah, well hopefully when this is--

Neil spots a guy walk out of his apartment on his cell phone. As the guy passes, Neil turns around and slaps John on the arm.

NEIL

Hey, did you see that?

JOHN

What? No I was talking to--

NEIL

Was that a coincidence?

JOHN

(annoyed)

What?

NEIL

He walked out of his place on his cell phone.

JOHN

...Uh-huh.

NEIL

What are the odds that someone called him just as he was walking out the door.

JOHN

Maybe *he* called someone. So what?

NEIL

Look around. Next time you see someone walk out of the apartment or anywhere chances are they're on the damn phone. Whenever you see someone walk out into public they're on the goddamn phone. It's not all a big coincidence that every conversation takes place on your way to Starbucks!

Neil is shouting at this point.

JOHN

Jesus fuck -- calm down, man. You need to relax. What's wrong?

NEIL

(matter of factly)

Nothin' I'm fine.

JOHN

Look, you need to calm your ass down before we do this, OK.

NEIL

(irritated)

Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine dude. Act like I've never done this before. I have, you haven't. You sure you wanna come in for this? I don't even know why you decided to come this time.

JOHN

(defeated)

I got nothing better goin' on. Trust me, I'm fine.

They make it to an apartment door.

NEIL

Alright then.

Neil knocks on the door. A skinny Mexican guy answers, buzz cut, wearing a wife beater, dockers, and a black belt. Tattoos on his arms have religious themes - a cross with *La Santisima Cruz* written underneath and the Madonna. He furrows a brow and waves them in with his head.

INT. APARTMENT

Small and littered with drug paraphernalia. It is slightly cloudy as cigarette and marijuana smoke slowly waft and hang in the air. One side has a shelf that houses a picture of the Virgin Mary with a rosary hanging off and several candles surrounding it. The man who answered the door walks over to the kitchen table where a larger Mexican guy sits and separates pot into different bags.

NEIL

Dude, I'm gonna need a full lid of flame. Separated into QP's.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Man, I ain't separating shit. I'm weighing it all at once. And that's what you're gonna get.

He kicks out a chair from under the table.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Mida, siéntese. Makin' me nervous an' shit.

Neil sits in the chair and John leans against the couch behind him. The bigger Mexican guy looks up at John and stares at him. Then turns to the other guy.

LARGE MEXICAN

Quién es esta pinche mamon?
(Who is this fucking
cocksucker?)

SKINNY MEXICAN

Él se parece como unos de esos
maricons del norte.

(He looks like one of
those faggots from up
north.)

They both smile.

NEIL

What?

SKINNY MEXICAN

Look, cornflake. We told you we
don't want you bringing no one
here.

NEIL

No man. It's cool. He's one of us.
Don't worry.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Speak for yourself, cabron. You're
not one of us. He's not one of us.
Pinche wedo motherfuckers.

John takes offense.

JOHN

Wedo? I'm not white.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Then what are you, Greek?

JOHN

What? No, I'm Mexican.

The skinny guy looks back down, shakes his head, finishes
bagging the weed and throws it to Neil.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Don't look like no self-respecting
Mexican I've ever seen.

John stands straight up and becomes defensive.

JOHN

Why? Cause I don't look like your stereotypical banana boat fuckin' beaner.

The skinny Mexican guy jumps out of his chair and begins to walk toward John.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Pieza de mierda! Qué usted dice?
(Piece of shit! What did you say?)

JOHN

What? Speak English.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Exactly. You don't know shit about being Mexican. You're just a phony ass white-wannabe bitch.

JOHN

Why? Cause I don't dress like a hoodrat and cause I'm raising the IQ of our collective racial gene pool.

The skinny guy tries to grab John but John knocks his hand out of the way and pushes him against the wall.

JOHN

What the fuck?

The large guy quickly gets up, knocks over the table along with Neil, rushes toward John, pulls a 9mm from his waistband, shoves John hard up against the wall, and sticks the gun against his neck. The skinny guy slowly walks back over to John. Neil rushes over to them and sticks the money in between John and the two guys.

NEIL

OK, OK! Here! Look! Here's the money. It's all there. We got everything in order, OK. Let's just be on our way, alright. Everything's cool, OK.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Get you're fuckin' hand outta my face, white boy.

Neil backs away. The skinny guy looks back at John.

SKINNY MEXICAN

The only reason you're not fuckin' dead is cause of him.

(points to Neil)

You're in the wrong place to be playing hero, holmes...Fake ass little puto...You might look Mexican, but you're not. You don't know what it's like to be Mexican at all. You're whiter than this piece of shit.

He points to Neil. A slight tremble can be heard in John's voice.

JOHN

Oh yeah. The drug dealer with the Virgin Mary shrine is gonna lecture me on contradictions.

A young woman walks out of the bedroom and into the hall carrying a baby girl who is whimpering and crying softly. She speaks to the skinny guy.

WOMAN

Que demonios esta pasando? La despertaste.

(What's going on out here?)

SKINNY MEXICAN

Todo está bien. Vete a dormir.
(Everything is fine. Go
back to bed.)

He looks at her until she goes back into the bedroom. Then, he looks at John. As he begins to speak he pushes the gun down away from John.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Get one thing straight, cabron. Everything I do, I do it for my little girl. I don't give a shit about anything else. And I don't give a shit what someone like you thinks about me. I will do anything to give her what she needs, no matter what. Family is always first. But I guess someone forgot to teach your fake Mexican ass that.

The skinny guy backs away from John and grabs the money from Neil.

SKINNY MEXICAN

Get the fuck out.

Neil gets up, swings John around, and pushes him toward the door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

John barges out of the door with a pissed off look and walks toward the car. Neil follows behind with a look of shock and disbelief.

NEIL

(mocking John)

Yeah, I'll go. I got nothing better to do. I'm fine. I'm ok. Trust me. What the fuck was that all about
(MORE)
dude?

NEIL(cont'd)

You tell me to calm down and your stupid fuckin' ass flies off the handle...just cause you can't swallow some pride and keep your fuckin' mouth sh--

John grabs Neil and shoves him against the jeep.

NEIL

What the fuck are you--

JOHN

Don't ever fucking ever bring up what just happened, OK. Don't say a word to anybody.

NEIL

Why the hell--

JOHN

Please, OK. I'm asking you not to say anything. Can you just do that?

John has an apologetically sincere look on his face.

NEIL

Yeah...yeah man. It's fine. Whatever you want.

John lets go of Neil.

JOHN

Thanks.

INT. JEEP - NIGHT

Neil is holding a lit joint as he drives. He takes a hit and passes it to John in the passenger seat.

NEIL

Shit man. It's already 1:00 and we still got a ways to go.

John passes back the joint.

JOHN

Here man. It's all you. I feel like
I'm gonna pass out.

NEIL

Do what you gotta do man. I'll see
ya on the other side.

Neil salutes him with the joint.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY

The jeep jets down the expressway.

INT. JEEP (JOHN POV)

John struggles to stay awake. He tries to pick his head up every time it dips down. The noise of the jeep's engine and the road get louder. Other loud sharp noises and rumbles can be heard getting louder. John loses consciousness and his head dips down.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HUMVEE - DAY (JOHN POV. DREAM FLASHBACK)

John's head bobs upward in the passenger seat from the bouncing motion of the humvee as it speeds across the desert road. Crumbling buildings quickly zip by the vehicle. Bullets ricochet off of the exterior and one pierces the shell of the cab and whizzes past John's head.

DRIVER

Fuck! Bullshit armor! KEEP FIRING!
WE GOTTA GET OUTTA THIS AMBUSH!

The young officer manning the M60 through the roof slot fires a continuous stream of rounds. An explosion rocks one side of the vehicle and it swerves. John fires a few rounds out of his window.

JOHN

SHIT! SIX! ON YOUR SIX!

The roof gunner turns around and fires behind the humvee. A barrage of bullets cascade off of the back of the vehicle. The gunner lets out a yell which is quickly abbreviated by low gurgling sounds. He falls dead into the back of the vehicle, blood gushing from an large hole in the side of his neck. The driver looks back.

DRIVER

MOTHERFUCKERS!

(looks at John)

GET ON THAT SAW. LAY DOWN SOME
SUPPRESSING OVER THE TOPS OF THOSE
BUILDINGS. THEY'RE GONNA TRY AND
FLANK US. I'M GONNA--

A bullet flies through the driver's helmet. His head slams down on the steering wheel with a gaping mouth and with his eyes still staring at John as blood flows down his face. The steering wheel veers to the right and the humvee sharply turns. It runs hard into something on the ground. The vehicle's front section is rocked upward causing John's vision to double. The moment it is focused again he sees the driver's body fly out of the driver's side window as the vehicle begins to roll end over end through the street.

EXT. BAGHDAD ROAD - DAY (END POV)

The humvee continues to roll and comes to a halt on its roof. John, face covered in blood sand and dirt, kicks open the door and slides out over broken glass cradling his M16. He takes cover on the side of the vehicle and scans the area. HEAR gunfire from all directions. A militant runs across the street from behind a building. John tries to fire but his gun is jammed. The militant doesn't notice John and disappears behind the next building. John panics and scrounges around for anything he can find. A militant with an RPG appears on the roof of the building across the street. He aims it straight at John and the humvee. John goes into shock and cannot move.

JOHN

Nnnn--

Suddenly the militant's head explodes as the M60 Saw gunner fires from the humvee turning the corner. The driver comes to a halt in front of John's humvee and begins to shout out orders.

DRIVER

(to gunner)

STAY ON POINT!

(to passengers)

CASEVAC NOW! MOVE!

The soldiers jump out and grab the dead troops and John.

SOLDIER

WE GOT A LIVE ONE!

They quickly pull the bodies into the humvee. Letting the dead rest across their laps. They barely get the doors closed as the driver floors it.

DRIVER

(to gunner)

BARRAGE FIRE! SIX O'CLOCK! DON'T

STOP FOR ANY FUCKIN' REASON!

The gunner sprays bullets in every direction behind the humvee until they clear the kill zone.

INT. BOMBED OUT PALACE - DAY (VIDEO CAMERA POV)

Pitch black until a flicker of video frequency lines appear. The image focuses from inside the video camera shakes around a bit and then points at the floor. LOUD NOISES, music, and voices can be heard. A red circle with REC next to it appears and the camera swings around to frame John in the center as he sits on the floor with remnants of dirt and blood on his face. He is still wearing his fatigues. US ARMY is stitched to the left and DUNNE is stitched on the right. A man with a British accent speaks.

CAMERA MAN

So, private Dunne. Can you just tell me a little about what has happened to you today?

John does not answer and stares at the ground.

CAMERA MAN

Private?

John looks up menacingly.

JOHN

Well, I got to watch as my gunner got an improvised tracheotomy, I saw my first lieutenant's head get blown off and I got to ride back with their bodies on top of me.

(angrily sarcastic)

Why, what did you do today?

John gets up and walks away. The camera turns to keep him in frame but a black soldier turns the camera toward himself.

BLACK SOLDIER

Yo, I got one. Check it.

(begins to freestyle)

INT. BOMBED OUT PALACE (END POV)

John walks down the hall of the large palace. There is rubble all over the ground. John walks past a large hole in the ceiling. Something crashed through the roof and hit the first level causing holes through every floor. One of the large side rooms is completely destroyed with no roof and rubble is piled in the middle. Music and talking gets louder as John opens the large doors to the back courtyard. There is a large pool filled with soldiers in inner tubes, splashing around, playing chicken, and smoking cigars. Food cooks on a grill and rap music blares from a stereo next to a few lounge chairs as a few soldiers tan. A soldier with a football runs past John and yells at a soldier on the diving board.

SOLDIER WITH FOOTBALL

You better catch it this time
asshole! I didn't make all-state
just to see you drop every ball.

John walks past the grill and a soldier calls to him.

SOLDIER AT GRILL

Yo, psuedo-mex. You want in on some
of this shit.

He holds up a large piece of meat. John just flips him off.

SOLDIER AT GRILL

Alright then. Fuck you bitch.

The men begin to get pelted with rocks flying over the walls
from outside the palace. Kids voices can be heard yelling,
"kafir khinzeer" (infidel pig) over and over.

SOLDIER WITH FOOTBALL

Hey! You little ungrateful Ali Baba
fucks!

Some throw rocks back over the wall. John walks through
another double door back inside the palace. Some play
guitars.

SOLDIER 1 WITH GUITAR

Fuckin' A, man. We need to find
some dosha.

SOLDIER 2 WITH GUITAR

Yeah, right after we find some
beer.

Christmas ornaments hang from different structures and tinsel
is draped around the rooms. Christmas cards from school
children cover a wall. The next wall he passes is full of
graffiti. Parts of the wall have artwork and others have
crude phrases. One reads, "back in the sandbox again" under a
drawing of a sandbox with a US soldier shooting an Arab.
Another reads, "help clean up our planet, kill a sand-
nigger."

INT. BOMBED OUT PALACE MESSHALL - NIGHT

Several half demolished marble statues stand on platforms. Some have spray painted facial features and sex organs. The soldiers begin to crowd the room playfully pushing each other as they all find seats at the large tables. The large doors open up and several Pakistani and Filipino men in white uniforms come in carrying large metal trays. A few soldiers come in from behind them. One gets everyone's attention.

SOLDIER

Grub! Fresh from Victory. Get it
while you're still breathing.

The soldiers talk and wait for their food to be served to them. Most of the white troops sit together at the tables in the middle of the room. Some of the blacks sit together but a lot are peppered throughout the room. The Hispanics, on the other hand, all sit together at one of the corner tables. John slides in between a couple of soldiers in the middle section of tables. The men in the white uniforms start unveiling the trays to reveal hamburgers, fried chicken, onion rings, and fries.

SOLDIER 1

Shit, we got the Flips and Pakis
serving us food. How the fuck is
this different from back home?

SOLDIER 2

We don't gotta pay 'em shit and we
can beat their ass if our food is
cold.

SOLDIER 1

Nice!

The servers come around to John's table and set down a tray of each type of food. The soldiers start grabbing food before the trays are completely flat on the table.

SOLDIER 2

Whoppers! Hell yeah. Christmas came early this month! Baghdad Burger King, man! Woowee, freedom is on fuckin' march!

They all begin to eat loudly. A black soldier gets up and reaches over the trays.

SOLDIER 3

(to soldier 4)

Look, here we go.

The black soldier reaches over the tray of hamburgers and grabs a piece of chicken.

SOLDIER 3

Yes! Pay up motherfucker!

SOLDIER 4

Ah Williams, you fucked me!

WILLIAMS

Wha?

Soldier 4 hands over a wad of cash to soldier 3.

SOLDIER 3

I knew you'd go straight for the chicken! You magnificent bastard!

WILLIAMS

Man, you muthafuckin' crackas!

All of the soldiers laugh. Some Mexican soldiers walk by.

SOLDIER 3

Hey Luis. When you gonna lay down some sod around this joint? It's like we live in the fuckin' desert.

The Mexican soldiers say something to him in Spanish and keep on moving.

SOLDIER 3

What? Speak English!

(to John)

Dunne, what the fuck did he say?

JOHN

Shit if I know.

SOLDIER 3

And you call yourself a fuckin' beaner. What wrong with you?

JOHN

Fuck you.

WILLIAMS

(to John)

Yo, Dunne you Mexican or some shit like that right?

JOHN

Well, some shit *exactly* like that.

WILLIAMS

So, how do you not know Spanish?

SOLDIER 4

Yeah, and why the fuck is your last name Dunne?

JOHN

I had some Irish ancestry a few generations ago. But it's basically all burned off. And my Mom's last name was Dunne so I took her name since I didn't know my father and--

SOLDIER 3

(to Williams)

Hey just like you man! Small world!

Williams gets up and sticks his finger in his face.

WILLIAMS

Man, why you always gotta act like
bitch, bitch!

Soldier 3 stands up.

SOLDIER 3

You better get your fuckin' darky
finger outta my face!

WILLIAMS

How 'bout I stick my muthafuckin'
steel toes up yer narrow honky ass!

Before things escalate, a few soldiers get up and separate them. Some of soldier 3's white buddies try and pull him back and a few black soldiers come over and stand behind Williams. John gets up and backs away. A few other soldiers are standing back from the table witnessing what is going on. A sergeant walks over and reprimands them.

SERGEANT

HEY, KNOCK THIS SHIT OFF OR YOU'RE
YOU'RE GONNA BE PULLIN' EOD DUTY!

Williams dismisses soldier 3 with his hand and walks away. John sees a few Mexican soldiers, shakes his head, looks at the table, and speaks to them.

JOHN

Cabrons, man!

John smiles at them. A Mexican soldiers speaks to another one to translate.

JOHN

What did he say?

MEXICAN SOLDIER

He said, "fuck you white boy."

JOHN

What? White?

MEXICAN SOLDIER

He doesn't want you talking to him.
And neither do the rest of us. Go
back to your little white pride
parade.

They smirk and walk away. John stares at them speechless.

EXT. PALACE - DUSK

Two soldiers walk out of the palace with bags of garbage. They pass a pole with several pieces of plywood on them. In black ink, they display soldier's home towns with the distance in miles and arrows pointing west. On the lawn there are two M198 Towed Howitzers and one 155mm Paladin howitzer.

SOLDIER 1

Why the fuck are we hauling this
shit out?

SOLDIER 2

Giving something back to society, I
guess.

SOLDIER 1

(scoffs)

Yeah, like we're not doin' more
than enough shit already.

SOLDIER 2

Shit could be worse man.

They get to the pile of garbage outside the front gate and soldier one throws his bag into the pile. As soon as it hits the pile, an EXPLOSION goes off from under the trash pile sending shrapnel through his body ripping off parts of his limbs, killing him instantly. Soldier 2 is blown back against the wall. The shrapnel severs the lower part of his left leg. He SCREAMS in pain as other soldiers and a sergeant frantically run to him.

SERGEANT
HIT THE FUCKIN' LIGHTS! GET THAT
HOWITZER OUT THERE. YOU, GET OUT
THERE AND CIRCLE THE PERIMETER. TWO
BY TWO PATTERN. GO NOW!

The sergeant makes it to the gate.

SERGEANT
WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?

SOLDIER
Looks like an IED in the trash.
Proximity trigger.

The sergeant violently throws his hat on the ground.

SERGEANT
SON OF A BITCH!
(turns to howitzer guards)
HOW THE FUCK DID YOU NOT SEE
ANYTHING? GODDAMIT!

The perimeter soldiers come back in.

SOLDIER
Nothin' sir. Not a goddamn thing.
Area's clear.

More soldiers begin to stream outside. The sergeant turns to them and raises his hands motioning them to stop.

SERGEANT
Alright men! We'll take care of
this! You need to gear up for
patrol raids. Get some coffee, some
smokes, and get your shit together!

One of the soldiers keeps on running toward the gate, his eyes frantic and watery.

SOLDIER
BRIGGS! BRIGGS!

The sergeant grabs him.

SERGEANT

Goddamit, son. You have to get back inside. I'm sorry, there's nothing you can do.

Another soldier puts his arm around the grieving soldier and leads him inside. The sergeant stares in agonizing anger.

EXT. BAGHDAD ROAD - NIGHT

John is sitting in the bed of one of the two military trucks as they head down the road. They come to a roadblock with two stryker armored vehicles. The trucks stop. One of the commanders next to the stryker walks in between the trucks.

COMMANDER 1

Alright men. Let's go. You're gonna walk the rest. Sand storm's comin' up. Let's get goin.

The men pile out of the trucks.

COMMANDER 1

Your sergeants will detail you. We'll rendezvous after eagle eyes set up point on the opposing structures. Alright, let's go.

EXT. SMALL DIRT ROAD

The troops march two by two down the road through swirling sand, cradling their M16s. A few small poorly illuminated lights line the way. Loudspeakers can be heard in the distance blaring Christmas songs. The soldier next to John begins to nervously hum softly along with the songs. Two soldiers up ahead look at each other in perplexity. One talks over the music.

SOLDIER
(bewildered)
Fucked up!

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD WITH HOUSES

The troops sit on the ground next to a small brick wall. On the other side are a couple of small houses. John stares blankly until his sergeant begins to fill them in.

SERGEANT
Ok, let's go over this again before stryker is in position. Our source says that this is the house of a financier of a Mosul cell. There may or may not be bodyguards stationed here. He says there is an old man who lives in the house to the right. He is an acquaintance of the source and he lives with his grandson. The houses are connected so you have to make sure you do not harm the old man or his grandson. But if there are *more* people in the right side of the house, presume them hostile. Intelligence on the house to the left is limited.

The sergeant gets word over the walkie that the strykers are inbound.

SERGEANT
Here they come. Watch for hostiles, separate the men, use your judgment when zip-cuffing kids. If they're old enough to tie their shoes they're old enough to pick up a gun. Watch ~~everyone's~~ ^(MORE) ass and eliminate all threats, if any.

SERGEANT(cont'd)

Oh, and of course DO NOT detain and cuff the women and DO NOT damage the inside of the houses. This raid is more complicated than usual folks so let's keep our shit together.

Dim hazy lights can be seen in the distance as music can be heard getting louder.

SERGEANT

Alright men. Let's show these motherfuckers what the sixth squadron's all about. Alpha company, breach hard on the left, Bravo, conduct a passive approach on the right, Zulu will set up eagle eyes across the way. Strykers will set up cover for the second floor.

The lights from the strykers get brighter and music is getting louder. The lead stryker rumbles down the small road blaring Wagner's *Flight of the Valkyries*. The troops creep along the front walls. John moves with Alpha. He takes long deep breaths. The first stryker moves past the left gate while the second one positions itself next to it. A soldier grabs the tow chain from the back of the vehicle and hooks it to the iron gate. The stryker peels out and rips the gate out dragging it on the ground. At the same time, soldiers breach the other side by hoisting up a ladder and climbing over the wall.

Alpha runs through the fallen gate. The breach man runs up to the door with the handheld battering ram. He bashes the door until it breaks open. He quickly steps back as the first soldier moves in.

INT. HOUSE

It is dark in the house and a silhouette runs toward the soldier. He swings the butt of his gun at it. A YELL of pain is heard, then a THUMP on the floor.

OUTSIDE SOLDIER

What the fuck was that?

FIRST SOLDIER

We got hostiles!

The rest of Alpha, including John, run into the house. SHOUTING in English and Arabic can be heard.

SOLDIER 1

GET DOWN! GET DOWN!

SOLDIER 2

MOVE! MOVE! NOW!

They move through the first floor detaining an old man. They sit him up on a chair. The sergeant moves toward the house. His walkie crackles.

SOLDIER

Sir, this is Bravo. We've got nothin' over here. We checked both floors. No old man, no kid. No one at all.

SERGEANT

Are you fuckin' kidding me?

SOLDIER

No sir. We'll keep lookin' around.

The sergeant enters. Two soldiers are picking up a teenage boy with a large bloody bruise on the side of his face. He is dazed and whimpering in pain. They take him by the old man.

SERGEANT

What happened?

FIRST SOLDIER

He came at me. I couldn't see anything but a shadow.

The old man speaks in English.

OLD MAN

He was running to me. He heard noise so I called him to me, then you broke door and hit him. He does nothing wrong! Nothing!

The old man begins to wheeze and cough.

SOLDIER

Sarge, there's no weapons around down here or anything.

SERGEANT

Goddamit!

(to walkie)

Sixth squad to base. Check the intel report. Make sure the source's story is straight. I think the fuckin' houses are switched.

He puts the walkie down. He walks up to the kid and looks at his face.

SERGEANT

Godammit! Someone get in here with a fuckin' kit, now.

A soldier comes in with a med kit and kneels in front of the kid. The first soldier becomes nervous.

FIRST SOLDIER

S-sir, I-I--

The Sergeant silences him with a pointing finger as he answers his walkie.

ZULU

Sir, we've got movement upstairs on the left side.

SERGEANT

(eyes widen)

Get upstairs! We're presuming them
(MORE)
all hostile!

SERGEANT(cont'd)
(points to old man and
kid)

Get them on the ground!

The old man and kid are thrown on the ground. John leads part of the Alpha team upstairs. There are three rooms. Two men cover each room. John breaches a door and his partner runs in. The room is empty. They search under the bed and around the room. A SOFT NOISE is heard in the closet. John points to the closet motioning that he will open it and for his partner to breach it. John and his partner set up. John swings the door open. His partner points his weapon into the closet at a woman and three children. They all SCREAM and John's partner panics and also SCREAMS. John quickly pushes his partner's gun down and glares at him.

JOHN

Jesus Christ! What the fuck is
wrong with you? Go watch the
fuckin' door!

John quickly changes his demeanor as he turns to the women and children.

JOHN

Hey it's ok. Look, good guys.
(points to his US ARMY
emblem)
Here look.

He pulls candy from his pocket and holds it out.

JOHN

Look, candy. It's good. Here, it's
for you.

The children slowly reach out and take the candy. John reaches out his hand to the woman and motions for them to follow him with his other.

JOHN

Please, come with me. It's ok. I
promise.

John walks down the stairs with the woman and children followed by the other soldiers.

JOHN

This is it. There's no one else here. These are our fuckin' terrorists.

The door that connects the two parts of the house busts open. Alpha team raise their weapons. Bravo team's sergeant is first through the door.

BRAVO SERGEANT

Friendlylies! Hold fire! Fuck!
(to Alpha sergeant)
Look at *this* shit.

He grabs a large paper bag from a soldier behind him. He dumps it out onto the rug. Rubber-banded bundles of money fall out. They are large bills in dollars and dinars.

ALPHA SERGEANT

Holy shit! What the fuck is this?

BRAVO SERGEANT

We also found AK clips and an RPG on the roof.

ALPHA SERGEANT

Fuck!

Alpha sergeant walks outside and Bravo sergeant follows.

EXT. HOUSE

They stop a few feet into the yard.

ALPHA SERGEANT

So, the source's old man was the financier.

BRAVO SERGEANT

Maybe...maybe he's *more* of an influence in the cell. Or maybe our source was lying, confused... maybe *that's* the old man and his grandson in there and there are more people living there with them. I don't know. Just don't fuckin' know. All I know is that no one's in there.

ALPHA SERGEANT

GODAMMIT! STORY OF MY LIFE IN THIS BULLSHIT FUCKIN' DESERT!

Alpha sergeant walks back into the house.

INT. HOUSE

John walks up to Alpha sergeant.

JOHN

Sir, I think we need to take this kid to a hospital. He's really fucked up. His eyes keep rolling back into his head.

The alpha sergeant lowers his head and rubs it hard through a black glove.

ALPHA SERGEANT

(to himself)

Oh fuck. Oh fuck...

(to old man)

Sir, we need to take him to the hospital.

OLD MAN

No, I don't trust you. We come with.

ALPHA SERGEANT

I can't be held responsible for all of you. (MORE)

ALPHA SERGEANT(cont'd)

You can come but *they* have to stay.

(points to woman and
children)

Please, we want to help him.

OLD MAN

Yes, you help by beating him then
you fix. This I know you do. You
Americans break so you can fix.

ALPHA SERGEANT

Please sir, forgive us for our
mistake. But we don't have much
time.

John intervenes and softly talks to the sergeant.

JOHN

Sir, we can't just leave the women
and children here.

The sergeant pulls John aside.

ALPHA SERGEANT

We don't have a choice. We don't
have control of this situation
anymore. Today there's 5,000 people
killing our soldiers. Cause of shit
like this, tomorrow there's 10,000.
You got that?

John is furious. He looks at the family as he complies.

JOHN

Yes sir.

EXT. HOUSE

The squad moves out with the old man and the teenage boy. The woman and the small children crowd the door and yell to the old man in Arabic. The old man stops and yells back, beginning to tear up as he gets into the truck. The commander in a stryker yells for them all to hurry up.

They all pile in the trucks and roll away in the hazy darkness as the woman and children look on from the doorway of the house. John sits and stares blankly ahead with a mercilessly unforgiving look on his face.

FADE OUT.

EXT. BAGHDAD ROAD - DAY

Fade in to brick wall on side of road with black spray painted graffiti. On the left side is a crucifix and on the right is the Muslim symbol "X-ed" out. In the middle it reads, "My God is better than your God."

John and a few soldiers walk past the graffiti wall. They come to a halt in front of a road block. There are a bunch of soldiers standing on the outskirts of it. The roadblock stretches a few blocks and within it are several empty cars and discarded carts. John walks up to a lieutenant.

JOHN

Sir, what's the situation up ahead?

LIEUTENANT

We've got a large IED up ahead. EOD is workin' on it right now. Where are you men heading?

JOHN

Green Zone. Over to Provisional Authority.

LIEUTENANT

Not today. There's increased activity in that area. Including this little hiccup right here. Just sit tight and we'll get this taken care of.

A soldier with the lieutenant speaks.

SOLDIER

They said it wasn't there just a little while ago.
(MORE)

SOLDIER(cont'd)

And I know I didn't see anything on patrol through here earlier. This one's fresh.

LIEUTENANT

Yeah, I know. I don't know how the hell it got in. We've been combing this area. Just gotta deal with it now.

John and his squad move back a few feet along the road. He walks up to SPECIALIST HERRERA. Herrera is a skinny Mexican about John's height. He has the slight lingering of a Spanish accent.

JOHN

IED, down the road. They're takin' care of it.

HERRERA

Shit...now I know why a lot of these motherfuckers are jumpin' ship to get contractor work. You know how much them scabs get paid? Fuckin' pussies...You know they want us to start doin' EOD training right?

JOHN

Yeah, I heard. My tour is almost up and I get to go back and start that shit eventually.

HERRERA

So, like a week right?

JOHN

Yep. Then it's off to Germany and then how ever many connecting flights I got from there.

HERRERA

Shit, first you'll be sittin' at Baghdad Air for God knows how long til a flight goes out. I tell ya even prisoners know when their time's up and even then it's usually an early release. And then they expect us to realize we're appreciated. Slap us on the back. Tell us we're doin' great when I see the morale of my brothers fading fast. It's like, chingate man.

JOHN

Hey, your from LA. Let me ask you something. You don't ever have a problem assimilating, do you?

HERRERA

What's that mean?

JOHN

Like...culturally. You know, with other Hispanic people. Do you get along with them well?

HERRERA

Man, I can get along with anyone. I don't care what you look like. If you're cool, cool. If not then fuck you, ya know. A lot of them are just straight up barrio vatos. Sometimes they piss me off but whatever. Keeping the friends you have is more important than feeling obligated to fit in with something you don't know.

JOHN

But they respect you though, right?

HERRERA

I've seen how they treat you here.
They tell me they don't get you.
They say you're a coconut.

JOHN

A what?

HERRERA

Brown on the outside white on the
in--

JOHN

Alright, I get it.

HERRERA

(laughs slightly)

But *I* ain't no hater man. Some
people are just products of their
environment.

JOHN

Yes, exactly.

HERRERA

Xenophobia is huge. People just
fear what they don't understand.
Shit, that's why we're here right?
I ain't stupid. They use our
heritage

(points to John and
himself)

and preach family values to sway
our loyalty and then they break up
families by doing this shit...*I* do
this for my wife and my little
girl. I'd do anything to give them
a better life, even if it means
giving up my own. I know this place
has no strategic value. These
people don't have shit while we
bide our time living in a mansion,
stealing their power, their water.

(MORE)

HERRERA(cont'd)

And I know these motherfuckers
never did shit to us.

A couple of kids walk across the street.

HERRERA

They're just like me. They're poor
people trying to stay out of a
conflict of opposing factions.
Trying to survive something they
never wanted. It's not their fault
they were born here...empathy is a
powerful tool. Unfortunately,
apathy usually wins the battle. In
a hellhole like this though...
people should learn real quick that
we're all brothers...but that ain't
how shit works. But me, I'm real
bro. I don't leave no one hangin'
ever.

Herrera holds out his fist toward John. John obliges him and
taps his knuckles against Herrera's.

JOHN

Right on, man.

SPC SIMONS calls out from outside a small abandoned room of a
building. He is looking through a crack in the boarded up
doorway.

SIMONS

Oh shit! Yes!

He runs back down the gentle hill to the squad.

SIMONS

Hey, I saw a Coke machine in there.
The light's on and it's making
noise. I'm gonna check it out.
Anybody got some change?

John walks up and pushes him aside.

JOHN

Hold up. Simons, you can't even
work the damn coffee machine
without settin' your balls on fire.
I'll go.

John heads up the hill.

SIMONS

Hey, see if they have Sprite.
(to Squad)
Sprite is Coke right?

SOLDIER

Sprite? Dude, you're so gay.

The door is boarded up on top but some of the boards on the bottom are pulled away forming a hole too small for John. He kicks away some of the surrounding board pieces and ducks into the building.

INT. ABANDONED STORE

There are a few short dusty shelves. John walks to the whirring machine. He inserts some change but the machine refuses to drop the soda. John bangs on it and then kicks at it and the soda drops. He bends down to get it and hears a soft noise behind him. He swings around and points his M16 toward the noise which came from behind a shelf on the other side of the room. He takes one step toward it, hears low breathing, and takes full aim.

JOHN

Hey! Come out! Come out now! You
have three seconds then I shoot
through the wood!...1--

John begins to shake. A small hand comes out and pushes against the ground. A small boy lifts himself up and walks into the isle. John sighs deeply and lowers his gun.

JOHN

Hey, it's OK. I'm here to help.
You're safe. Here, look.

John pulls out a piece of candy.

JOHN

Here, it's for you. It's candy.

John takes a step toward him. The boy takes a step backward and quickly glances toward the back of the shelf he emerged from. John becomes confused but before he can react, another boy, slightly older, runs out from behind the same shelf and pushes the small boy aside. With both hands he quickly lifts a pistol at John. John arches back as he lifts his M16 but before he can finish he is shot in the upper left side of his chest. He falls back against the machine and is quickly shot again in the same area. John grabs his chest with his free hand and uncontrollably begins to spray bullets toward the boys as he slowly slides down the bloodstained machine. John hits the floor hard in a sitting position and stops firing. Hazy smoke begins to fill the air. John lets his gun drop to his side. He is wide eyed and in shock as he sweats profusely and sharply hyperventilates. Soldiers can be heard shouting and running toward him. John sits and stares unblinkingly as tears slowly fall down his face.

CUT TO:

INT. JEEP

John violently wakes up, jerks forward and is halted by his seatbelt. Neil jumps and looks at John. John grabs his chest.

NEIL

Jesus fuck man! I thought this
bullshit was getting better?

A lone pair of headlights can be seen on the opposite side of the highway about 100 yards in front of Neil's jeep. The lights suddenly disappear.

JOHN

Shit, sorry man.

NEIL

Damn dude. You trying to kill me?

The headlights reappear as the car they belong to careens into the air out of the recessed half-pipe shaped grass median and strikes Neil's jeep directly in the front driver's side. A white flash is followed by silence.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

John is laying in a bed in a white sterile room. He has a large bruise and some cuts on his forehead but otherwise he is fine. The only sounds are the whirring of the vents. John is unconscious and is fixed with an IV in his arm as a heart monitor pulses out a steady frequency.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPRESSWAY - NIGHT (JOHN POV)

John's eyes are barely open. His vision is matted with a hazy white glow. Several red and blue flashing lights fill the scene. Everything is blurred as John is being moved from out of the car. John hears people talking but it seems far away and very muted and tinny as if coming from a blown speaker.

MEDIC

(vague speech)

He's breathing. Let's get him in.

John is lifted onto a cart. He can see flames being put out in the distance. John is lifted into the ambulance. As this happens the bed is angled slightly for a second, enough for John to see Neil's totaled jeep and some Medics frantically moving around on the driver's side. The ambulance begins moving and the sirens can be heard. A light shines in John's eyes.

MEDIC

(vague speech)

Let's get him hooked up. Hello, can you hear me? Everything is OK. Check it again. I'm not gettin' shit. Can you hear me...

The voices and the sirens begin to fade out. The hazy white glow envelopes the scene. As the voice fades out another fades in.

VOICE

...Can you hear me? John, can you hear me? Please John, wake up.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

John slowly begins to open his eyes. Katie is standing by John's side calling his name. A nurse comes over and tries to intervene and Katie's attention is removed from John as he awakens.

NURSE

Please, let us do our job.

KATIE

(sarcastic)

Yeah, you're doin' great at this point.

NURSE

You have to wait out--

JOHN

--Katie...

Katie quickly turns to John as he lays there looking at her through slits in his glazed over eyes. She reaches in and caresses his face. John begins to cry.

JOHN

Katie...K-Katie...God, I'm so
sorry. You came...after I--

John sits slightly forward to hug Katie with one arm.

KATIE

Shhh, It's OK. Just relax. I told
you, didn't I. I'd never abandon
you. You're going to be fine.
You're fine.

Katie speaks these words hesitantly and in a dead tone. John
senses something is wrong.

JOHN

Where's Neil?

Katie begins to tear up. John becomes anxious and frantic.

JOHN

Tell me he's OK! Where is he?
Goddammit, tell me he's OK!

John's eyes are wide with fear as he stares unblinkingly at
Katie. Katie continues to cry. John now speaks in an almost
muted tone and is barely able to squeak the words out.

JOHN

Tell me. Please, tell me.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOM

John stumbles out of the room still connected to the IV.
Katie and the nurse try to stop him but John continues into
the hall. The IV stand falls over and gets wedged in the
doorway. The tape connecting the IV to John's arm rips off
and the needle violently pulls out. Blood begins to spurt and
drip onto the walls and the floor. John wearily walks down
the hall toward the reception area.

NURSE

Stop him!

An orderly comes from behind him, places gauze over the needle hole, wraps his arm around John's chest, and pulls him back toward the room. John falls out of his grip and collapses to the ground.

KATIE

Here, I'll do it.

Katie takes the place of the orderly. She sits behind John on the tile floor as he loses control.

JOHN

I want to see him. I WANT TO SEE
HIM NOW!

Katie holds onto him tightly as he hyperventilates.

KATIE

You can't John. No one can. The
crash made...you wouldn't recognize
him. I'm so sorry. There's nothing
you can do. He's gone, John.

John begins to sob uncontrollably. Some staff and patients have stopped and are looking on from a distance. Katie continues to hold John as he wails on the floor of the hall in front of the reception area.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION AREA

John and Katie sit in the reception area and speak to a doctor. A police officer sits next to the doctor. Katie looks at the doctor as he speaks but John stares downward with a dead look in his eyes.

DOCTOR

They did everything they could for
him at the scene.
(MORE)

DOCTOR(cont'd)

One of his ribs punctured his lung and blood filled the cavity. I'm sorry. There was nothing we could do. I can--

JOHN

What about the other guy?

DOCTOR

Well, amazingly he's fine even though he wasn't wearing a seat belt and--

JOHN

I don't give a shit how he's doing! Was he drunk?

OFFICER

Well, we are waiting for the toxicology report but judging from evidence at the scene he was most likely inebriated.

John speaks through gritting teeth.

JOHN

So...when do I get to testify and send this motherfucker to prison?

The doctor looks at the officer with a defeated expression. Then turns back to John.

DOCTOR

That may be a problem. When it comes to matters such as reckless homicide there is much more circumstantial evidence involved.

JOHN

So what the fuck's the problem?

OFFICER

We found marijuana in the Jeep you were in.

JOHN

...Yeah, And?

OFFICER

Well, it's going to be harder to prosecute. Especially if the driver in your car had it in his system.

JOHN

ARE YOU FUCKIN' KIDDING ME? HE'S DEAD! HE'S FUCKIN' DEAD! AND THAT PIECE OF SHIT KILLED HIM! AND YOU KNOW ALCOHOL WAS THE REASON!

OFFICER

It's not that simple. If there's evidence that there was a controlled substance in both vehicles involved it will be harder to prosecute--

JOHN

POT NEVER KILLED--

OFFICER

--No matter what the statistics are...And there is another factor. We cannot prove all that easily that he was driving the car.

JOHN

What the hell are you talking about?

OFFICER

He was not wearing a seat belt, which in fact saved his life since his car was engulfed in flames. He flew through the windshield and landed about 30 yards away from the car.
(MORE)

OFFICER(cont'd)

Since there was no one in the driver seat when emergency personnel arrived and no witnesses, he can claim that he wasn't operating the vehicle at the time.

JOHN

That doesn't make any goddamn sense! He was the only one there! WHO THE FUCK ELSE COULD IT HAVE BEEN?

OFFICER

It doesn't matter. And he doesn't remember anything that happened which can also be used in his favor.

John can see the tension in the officer's face as he explains this.

OFFICER

Believe me, I've seen this happen time and time again. It's a bullshit loophole in the law which will never be resolved. It's just something we have to deal with.

JOHN

So you're telling me if I wanted to kill someone I could just get drunk, get in my car, kill them... and as long as there are no witnesses, I'm not in the car, and I can't remember anything I can technically get away with premeditated murder?

OFFICER

(sighs deeply)

Technically...yes.

John stares toward the ground and slowly nods his head in sheer perplexed amazement.

OFFICER

Look, just so you know I'm going to have to ask some questions. Whenever you're ready. I just need to do it before you check out.

The doctor pulls Katie aside as the officer talks to John.

DOCTOR

Is he going to be in your care?

KATIE

Yes.

DOCTOR

Well then you must speak to his therapist, Dr. Reed.

KATIE

Therapist?

DOCTOR

Yes, I will give you his information. I was in contact with him and from what he told me about John's history and his extensive weapon training I believe he could be a threat to himself or to others. This event will only add to his emotional instability and could result in a volatile reaction without proper support and supervision.

KATIE

Weapon training...

Katie is confused and phrases her question as a statement.

DOCTOR

Yes, It is imperative you reach Dr. Reed. He can tell you more about post-traumatic stress and John's specific condition.
(MORE)

DOCTOR(cont'd)

I will also be in direct contact with him so here is my card if you have any information or questions.

The doctor leaves. Katie holds the card in her hand and turns to look at John with concern and confusion as he continues to sit and stare at the floor as the officer talks to him.

CUT TO:

INT. KATIE'S CAR

Katie and John are silent as she drives. She finally breaks the silence.

KATIE

Why didn't you tell me?

JOHN

What?

John is void of emotion as he speaks.

KATIE

About your past. About what happened to you.

JOHN

I don't wanna talk about--

KATIE

I never even knew a thing about you. You hid everything from me and in the process you shut me out. Now I understand you. Now I understand.

It begins to rain softly at first then builds up to a steady shower. John's eyes watch the rain drops as they hit the passenger window and drip down.

KATIE

I'm sorry I had to find everything out this way, but you can't hide anything from me anymore.

KATIE(cont'd)

You can't help what happened.
You're *here* now. There's no use
doing all of this to yourself. You
made a decision to be there. It
wasn't right, it wasn't wrong. It
just was. No one blames you for
going. You chose to do something a
lot of people would never do. You
did what you had to do and your
instincts kept you alive. You
should just be proud that--

JOHN

Neil hated me for going, at first.
He obviously had plenty of good
reasons which, of course, he shared
with me. Everyone else didn't
really think anything of it at all.
He seemed to be the only one who
cared. He hated me for going but he
was the only one who wrote to me,
sent me e-mails, pictures,
whatever. He's the one who really
kept me alive. He hated the whole
blanket hero association that comes
stamped on every soldier when they
get back without even knowing
anything about them. But when I
came back he treated me that way
anyway...because he never knew
anything about what happened over
there. He never asked. He just
treated me like a hero...like
someone who had done... something,
you know.

John pauses for a moment and swallows hard.

JOHN

I just hope...I showed him how much
I appreciated it.

KATIE

I know he did. And whatever his perspective on life was and what he wanted from it, I'm sure he found it.

JOHN

(pauses and envisions
Neil's figurine
collection)
Crystalline figurines.

KATIE

What?

JOHN

He told me once that we are all just meant to be figurines on a world shelf. All connected by an unseen fiber of consciousness. Moving toward and away from each other by fate and man. He believed we could do anything we could possibly conceive as long as we did not hinder the right to life of anyone in the process...that life did not have a singular purpose. So I asked him what was his purpose and he said...'I just don't want to be another crystalline figurine broken and discarded collecting dust on a shelf.' So yeah, I think he got everything he wanted.

(smirks)

Confucius, my roommate.

John becomes distracted.

JOHN

Wait, here! Turn here!

John points to the entrance of the auto body shop connected to the Walmart.

KATIE

What? Why?

JOHN

Just turn, please.

EXT. AUTO BODY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Katie complies and pulls into the body shop. John gets out and walks through the rain to the garage. Katie slowly gets out and follows him. John finds his car on the lift and speaks to the mechanic. Katie slowly walks in and listens in on the conversation.

INT. AUTO BODY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

MECHANIC

--are shot. Your engine mount is dangerously loose. The housing is completely rusted out as is the undercarriage here.

The mechanic points to the frame underneath the car. He hits the switch to lower the car from the lift.

MECHANIC

The copper wires running to your fuses were replaced with aluminum ones which have corroded due to the humid air. Your cooling system failed and the pistons have seized. And I don't even wanna go into what's up with your carburetor.

JOHN

Just tell me what I need to do to get this fixed.

MECHANIC

Look...just be glad it's been running this long. But there's no point trying to save it.

JOHN

I have to. You don't understand.

MECHANIC

You don't understand. I *could* sit here and tell you that I can fix it and charge you more than the car is worth. And besides all of that, there's so much mileage on the car who knows what could happen in a year...a month.

The mechanic hands John the keys.

MECHANIC

I'm gonna go print out the diagnosis.

The mechanic goes into the office. John stares at the car. He walks towards it. He opens the door, sits inside, and looks around. He stares at the key and then slowly inserts it into the ignition. He pauses and then turns the key. It clicks a couple of times but nothing happens. He tries it again with the same result but he keeps the key turned for a few extra seconds. He takes the key out and lets his hand fall heavily on his lap. His head falls onto the steering wheel and he softly cries momentarily. He bangs his head against it a couple of times and a tear fall onto the steering column. John closes his eyes and sits motionless for a minute. Katie rubs her hand on his neck.

JOHN

Ok...Ok. It's time to go...time for me to go.

John gets out of the car as the mechanic comes back and hands him the paperwork.

MECHANIC

Here ya go. We can either scrap it for you or we can arrange for a tow truck to send the car to your place so you can do whatever you want.

John looks over the car one more time.

JOHN

No. Leave it. It's fine.

EXT. AUTO BODY SHOP - CONTINUOUS

John and Katie walk to her car and get in. The rain begins to slow down. John sits in solemn silence and takes a deep breath. Katie looks at him, leans toward him, softly caresses the side of his face, and kisses him on the cheek.

KATIE

I love you.

John nods, looks at her, and momentarily smiles.

JOHN

Ok, I'm ready.

Katie is about to drive away when she notices a large oak tree across the street in a large field of other smaller trees.

KATIE

What the hell is that?

JOHN

What?

KATIE

That.

(points to tree)

Are those leaves? How can a tree have full green leaves this time of year? They look strange...like they are moving independent of the wind.

JOHN

Holy shit.

KATIE

Huh?

JOHN

I know what those are. Those aren't leaves.

John gets out of the car and Katie calls after him. John crosses the street without checking for traffic. Katie follows shortly after, looking both ways before crossing. John and Katie stop in front of the tree and a multitude of chirping can be heard getting louder. The tree is blanketed with small green parakeets.

KATIE

Oh my god! They're parrots!

JOHN

Monk parakeets. They're Argentinian. They were popular in the pet bird trade and now they've flourished in great numbers.

KATIE

They're beautiful.

JOHN

They're the only species of parrot that build their nests completely from scratch as opposed to using pre-existing cavities. They're considered pests in South America and some think that they may have migrated here all the way through Panama and Mexico. It could be true. They are known as survivors. That's why they can adapt in this weather. But the thing is they hardly ever migrate...only when threatened or when they cannot handle their environment any longer.

(John smirks slightly)

Huh...it seems we share the same affliction.

KATIE

What?

JOHN

Being unable to adjust or cope with a vague unfocused mental or physical uneasiness toward one's own environment...I call it my maladjusted malaise.

KATIE

That's strangely poetic...in a dark sense.

JOHN

Yeah...I...I want to go with you.

Katie is perplexed by the statement.

KATIE

Go where?

JOHN

With you, away, to California.

KATIE

Just like that? What about everything that you have here?

JOHN

What do I have here? I lose everything, I told you that. I have nothing here anymore. I need to let it go or I will never develop. And I find the fact that I still have you after everything that's happened to us in this short amount of time amazing...you're amazing.

(looks at parrots)

I thought I knew happiness before you but I was wrong. But Neil...he was right. He told me things were gonna change...he was right.

(MORE)

JOHN(cont'd)
(looks back at Katie)
Would you want me to...to go with
you?

Katie begins to tear up and smiles.

KATIE
Yes!

She jumps up and hugs John wrapping her legs around him.

KATIE
Yes!

JOHN
OK, OK. I get it.

She kisses John, lets go, and holds his hand.

KATIE
But you *will* have to share the bed
with me...and the three other guys
who asked first.

JOHN
Wow, a smart-ass till the end huh?

KATIE
(smiles wide)
You bet.

They both laugh and stare at each other momentarily. John
looks around the large field one more time then pulls her by
the hand back toward the street.

KATIE
Time to go?

JOHN
Time to go.

John and Katie both walk back toward her car hand in hand. The parrots bolt from the tree in unison and cascade through the sky like one large green wafting blanket past Katie and John toward the sunset and disappear in the distance.

END