

# Katrina

by

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(Based on true events)

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INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Close, on JOEL KRAMMER, mid 30's, shirtless and bearded. Semi-muscular build. He is the Hero archetype of man, who can convey a range of emotions. He observes himself in the mirror. Flexing muscles, hairy chest and all.

KATRINA (V.O.)

What I like about Joel is he's a man's man. Won't shave his chest 'cause he believes its too metro.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Wearing a flannel shirt and Levi's jeans, Joel chops wood with an AXE.

KATRINA (V.O.)

He does manly stuff like chopping the wood. Going to the gun range. And even boxes with our son...

Their son, BILLY, typical busy-body five year old, runs over and punches Joel in the leg. Joel, caught by surprise but joyful, drops the ax and gifts his son with playful jabs with laughs.

KATRINA, mid 30's Maiden-Archetype who desires to be more than, Sha carries a deep pain in her eyes as spies on them from afar. Be gentle.

KATRINA (V.O.)

...though sometimes he's a bit too rough.

KATRINA

'Ey be careful.

Sound of a child's cry.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Joel, hovering the stove, tastes various dishes on the boil.

KATRINA (V.O.)

He's doesn't mind owning the kitchen. He's a marvelous cook. He'll clean. Wash dishes. Even on nights when it's not his turn. He's very helpful in that way. Even on nights when I'm just lazy and out of it, he never complains.

(MORE)

KATRINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Not sure sometimes if it's because  
he's gotten used to my laziness or  
that he wants things in precise  
order. I think it's both.

EXT. THEME PARK - DAY

Joel and Billy, look up in awe at a big-bad roller coaster.

KATRINA (V.O.)  
He's deafly afraid of heights. But  
he's brave. He'll do anything to  
impress our son.

Moments later, they both are riding the coaster. Billy is  
happy. Joel looks as if he's ready to throw in the towel.

KATRINA (V.O.)  
Even it is means he'll pay the  
price later.

Joel is hunched over a trash can. Vomiting as Billy and  
Katrina laugh and point.

Like waking from a deep sleep he looks to them. It isn't  
funny.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Joel, in rocking chair, admires the afternoon over the birds'  
chorus and leaves busheling in the trees.

KATRINA (V.O.)  
He's simple. He can find the beauty  
in simple things that others miss.  
Feels accomplishment through hard  
work. No need for accolades and  
recognition. And he doesn't  
drink...

He has a cup of coffee in hand. He pours Tennessee Whiskey  
into his mug.

KATRINA (V.O.)  
I think it has to do with his  
upbringing. His mother was an  
alcoholic who beat and stomped him  
whenever she was in one of her  
drunken moods. She knocked a tooth  
into his tongue one night. That's  
why he has a mild speech  
impediment.

(MORE)

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

His father and mother never married. But they separated. And then his father disappeared too. So he joined the military at a young age and became incredibly self-reliant and big on family. Or in search of one. That's why he married me so young. But all in all...

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joel's mother and Joel sit opposite of another at a table. They play chess.

KATRINA (V.O.)

...He's forgiving. He reconciled with his mother. Runs errands for her like the past never happened. Oh, and he hates chicken skin. He said he ate so much of it as a kid that he now hates it. He peels it off every time he eats.

EXT. POOL - DAY

Thirteen years ago. Panic at the pool. People make way for a lifeguard and a few men as they carry a helpless body away from the pool.

The victim. Joel. Early 20's as well.

The lifeguard. An early 20's, Katrina. The crowd encases them both as Katrina gives mouth to mouth.

Joel has a gritty Cajun drawl as he narrates. It's his vernacular throughout the film.

JOEL (V.O.)

I don't remember how we first met. The folks said she brought me back to life cause I drowned. But I reckon I ain't drown. I'm a damn good swimmer.

Katrina's voice over laughs.

Coughing up a lung Joel comes back to life.

Katrina bathing in the sun's silhouette is gorgeous. Soaking wet. It is love at first sight.

EXT. WASHINGTON DC - U STREET - DAY

Her coming out of a subway. A young solicitor stops her.

SOLICITOR

Do you know PETA stands for?

KATRINA

Yes. People Eating Tasty Animals.

JOEL (V.O.)

She's funny. And loves everything.  
And has an open mind for other  
ideas.

The kid launches into his pitch. She listens intently.

JOEL (V.O.)

Other ideas except for mines I  
suppose. Wait let me rephrase  
that...She always knows how to get  
me to do the right thing. Her  
thing.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Katrina, Joel, and Billy are at the dinner table. Katrina eats her salad like a hog. Billy plays with a piece of FAKE BACON.

Joel just stares at the rabbit food.

Peeping his disgust, Katrina stops eating mid-bite.

	KATRINA		JOEL
Eat.		No.	

	KATRINA (CONT'D)		JOEL (CONT'D)
Eat it.		Tastes like	play dough.

KATRINA (CONT'D)

How and why does a grown as man  
know what play-dough taste like?

JOEL

You've never had Billy's double-  
decker egg with pineapple hamburger  
have you?

KATRINA

I'm afraid I have not.

JOEL

It comes with bacon.

Billy plays with play-dough bacon at the table.

BILLY

It comes with bacon mom.

Katrina playfully snatches the fake bacon away from Billy.

Joel smirks.

JOEL (V.O.)

She's a vegetarian. Health-conscious for me and our son.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katrina and Joel sit in front of the television playing STREET FIGHTER.

JOEL (V.O.)

She's very competitive. Knows a thing or two about video games.

Ryu does an uppercut to Ken. You win!

KATRINA

In your face, bitch!

INT. ART STUDIO - DAY

Katrina sits in front of a canvas, painting a beautiful abstract portrait.

JOEL (V.O.)

She's incredibly artistic and sacrificial. She could've finished college but she dropped out when she had our son...Oh and she's double-jointed. It comes in handy when we--ya know.

INT. RAY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A group of eight people sitting in chairs in a formed circle. Together in two's. Spouses. They all laugh. Except for Katrina. Joel beside her.

DAVID, 50's, in a sweater vest, tightly cross-legged, facing them.

DAVID

No, we don't know we can only  
imagine.

The group chuckles again. Again Katrina doesn't. She's agitated.

David notices. His smile evaporates.

Joey nudges elbows with his buddies. Laughing because he's getting that good-good.

KATRINA

I'm not double-jointed.

The fizz of room settles.

Joel dejects.

JOEL

Yes, you are.

KATRINA

Since when Joel?

Off guard. The embarrassment sinks into Joel's soul.

Katrina snatches her purse and storms out the room in one move. Joel watches her.

Why is she leaving? Various expressions of confusion decorates everyone's faces.

Joel looks back to the group.

JOEL

Anybody want to trade wives.

The men laugh. Some even jokingly agree, much to the light begrudging slap of their wives.

David takes a deep breath. Damn Joel, you should know better. MONNA, rises and makes a mad hurry to the foyer.

By the door and in complete darkness Monna stops Katrina before she exits.

MONNA

I got a number.

KATRINA

To whom?

INT. OFFICE - CONSTRUCTION AGENCY - MIDTOWN - EVENING

A small and very comfortable office over-looking the busy city streets. At the moment the office is bursting with men in flannel shirts, dirty jeans, and work boots, all of them very tense. Among the crowd of people we note:

BRITTANY FISHER, a young, sexy, and very ambitious junior executive and Joel's good friend. She sits back in his chair with her feet propped on the desk and a drink in one hand.

At the moment, Joel, paces back and forth. His tie is loosened. He checks his watch every fifteen seconds. He is distraught.

JOEL

They're not gonna call... I tell you they're not gonna call. I blew it. I don't know what I did wrong, but I--

BRITTANY

Joel, will you take it easy? The city won't about to drop us when we're the nearest contractors, so just relax, okay? Everything's gonna be fine. They're just making us sweat.

JOEL

I don't think so. Maybe I shouldn't have--

Sound-effect: The phone rings. Everyone freezes. As Brittany reaches for the phone.

INT. CHILD'S ROOM - KRAMER HOUSE - EVENING

The room is dark, the only light coming from a small nightlight.

We see a beautiful three-year-old boy, BILLY KRAMER, in bed, half-asleep. HOLD FOR A BEAT as a beautiful woman, Katrina, leans over, kisses the child, and hugs him tightly to her.

KATRINA

I love you.

BILLY

(drowsy)

I love you too, mommy... Goodnight.

Katrina turns off the lamp, gets up from the bed and starts toward the door of the child's room in one move.

KATRINA

Sleep tight.

BILLY

Don't let the bedbugs bite.

Katrina stops in the doorway, silhouetted against the hall light. She turns, takes a last look at her son, and then steps outside.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Now that the light is brighter, we can SEE her more clearly. In her mid-thirties, she is a lot less beautiful. Tired and stressed while dressed in a style that can best be described as Macys. HOLD FOR A BEAT as she leans against the door. It is clear from her expression that she is upset. Then, making up her mind, she crosses to a closet and takes out a suitcase.

She carries it into the bedroom, lays it out on the bed and opens it.

PAN WITH HER as she crosses to a closet, grabs an armload of clothes and dumps them helter-skelter style into the suitcase.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - EVENING

It is a few minutes later, the news has been good because there is a general celebration in progress. David, now standing, raises one hand for silence, then making a toast.

DAVID

He went out there and sold the crap  
out of this company and that's why  
we got the contract. Here's to Joel  
Kramer.

Cheers and good-natured jokes. David puts an arm around Joel squeezing him tight. More hoots and cheers. People start to yell "Speech."

INT. BATHROOM - KRAMER HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Katrina stands at the medicine cabinet, going through it, packing things in a travel kit: Pristiq, deodorant, makeup, birth control pills.

She takes a small bottle of vodka that has only an eighth of an inch of fluid left inside, hesitates, then puts it back. Visible slicing scars are on her wrist. She's a cutter.

INT. DAVID'S OFFICE - EVENING

Now some time has passed, most of the crowd has gone and only the regulars are left.

JOEL

So anyway I want to thank you all for your support. At first, I was nervous about this. I had been jobless for a while and I didn't know where my next payment for my mortgage was coming from. But this is a big break. A really needed break for my family and I. So thank you, thank you.

Brittany Fisher leans over, shakes Joel's hand.

BRITTANY

Congratulations, Joel. That was a hell of a job.

JOEL

(surprised)

Where are you going?

BRITTANY

Got to get home.

JOEL

(glancing at his watch)

Oh, Christ, I'm late... I gotta get out of here.

Joel snatches up his jacket from behind the chair and heads toward the exit.

INT. KITCHEN - KRAMER HOME - EVENING

Katrina puts the finishing touches on the list and carefully arranges it on top of the kitchen counter next to a box of unsweetened, whole-grain cereal and a jar of honey.

It is a long and meticulous list that consists of the phone numbers and addresses of doctors and hospitals, of what the various medicines are for, and of the foods that Billy is and isn't permitted to eat.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - MIDTOWN - NIGHT

Joel and Brittany exiting from the building. Joel hails a cab. Brittany stops him.

BRITTANY

Hey, what's the rush? C'mon, walk me a couple of blocks.

JOEL

I've got to go. I'm already late.

BRITTANY

(gushing)

I just want to tell you that they were impressed that you served in the military for years. That's why they liked you.

JOEL

I installed satellite towers in the field. Not exactly rocket science.

BRITTANY

But it is science, listen, Joel... I just want to tell you when old man Schmidt retires next year I've got a pretty good feeling they'll kick me upstairs.

JOEL

Yeah you always liked being on top.

Brittany dives into Joel's arms for a tight passionate, but quick kiss. Joel enters the cab. The cab pulls off.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Katrina carries the suitcase, sets it by the front door, then crosses to the living room and sits down at the dining table.

She takes out a list made on the back of an old envelope. As she begins to review it, checking off some items:

OFF SCREEN Sound: A key turning in the lock.

As Katrina looks up...

The door swings open to reveal Joel, an enormous grin on his face, a bottle of wine in his hand. He is so full of himself that he doesn't notice there is anything wrong.

JOEL

Honey, I just thought I'd let you know I got the job. I closed the contract with the government. I'll start up again Monday.

KATRINA

(takes a deep breath)  
Joel, I'm leavin' you.

JOEL

That represents a gross billing in excess of two million  
(hearing her)  
What!

Katrina opens her purse, takes out her keys and wallet.

KATRINA

I won't be needing these anymore.

Joel does not for a moment believe that she will leave. All he can think of right now is that he will have to spend the rest of the evening coping with one of her moods.

JOEL

(sardonic)  
I'm sorry I'm late, all right? I'm sorry I didn't call - I was busy making a living.

Katrina doesn't even bother to look up at him. She opens her purse, takes out her wallet, and begins removing credit cards.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(the martyr)  
Okay okay--What is it this time?

KATRINA

I borrowed a few hundred out of the savings account. It's what I had in the bank when we got married.

JOEL

You took what?

KATRINA

I've paid the rent, the cable and the phone bill so you don't have to worry about them.

JOEL

Okay, okay, okay Katrina stop this,  
whatever it is, believe me, I'm  
sorry.

KATRINA

(still not looking up)  
There. All done.

She checks off the last item on her list as her husband  
watches, dumbfounded. She gets to her feet and starts toward  
the front door. In an instant, Joel is after her.

JOEL

(panic)  
Would you preach to me, like you  
always do, tell me what I did!

KATRINA

I've been telling you for years  
you've gone deaf.

JOEL

Not on purpose.

KATRINA

So it's just by accident?

JOEL

Yes!

KATRINA

So it's just by accident you don't  
listen to your wife.

JOEL

No--yes--wait! No, it's on purpose  
I listen to you, by accident I  
forget.

KATRINA

Because I'm not priority.

JOEL

You're always priority. Just always  
a new problem.

KATRINA

Because there's always new dumb  
shit that mixes with old dumb shit  
that makes the new shit stink even  
worst.

JOEL

You don't let problems breathe  
woman.

KATRINA

Problems aren't supposed to  
breathe. They're supposed to die  
like our marriage.

JOEL

And that's what I'm talking about.  
Your smothering god-like attention  
to detail and perfection. In the  
bible it says a nagging wife is  
like a leaking faucet--Stop being a  
leaky faucet.

KATRINA

Can't be a leaky faucet when you  
can't keep things wet.

Katrina is at the door, when Joel grabs her by the wrist. He  
stares at the scars on her forearm as if he's introduced to  
them for first time. Eyes wide shocked.

KATRINA (CONT'D)

It's not your fault, okay?  
They're six months old.

Snatches herself away, marching to the door in one move.

JOEL

So we've got problems everybody's  
got normal problems that's normal-

Katrina opens the door. They step outside.

EXT. KRAMER FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Katrina marches out to the driveway as Joel stands in the  
doorway.

JOEL

After twelve years! Really?

Stopping and turning around with force.

KATRINA

Twelve years of loneliness. Twelve  
years of selflessness. Twelve years  
of being your doormat.

JOEL  
You're looking through the wrong  
lenses.

KATRINA  
Who needs lenses when I've come to  
my senses. You didn't even ask  
about Billy.

JOEL  
What about 'em?

KATRINA  
He's not with me.

Joel is stunned. Katrina cries.

JOEL  
(growing concerned)  
Where. Is. He?

KATRINA  
I can't I tried. I tried but I just  
can't hack it anymore.

JOEL  
Where's our son!?

KATRINA  
I yell at him constantly I have no  
patience--no no--He's better off.

JOEL  
Better off where!

KATRINA  
With you! He is in bed. Don't ask  
me to stay cause if you do sooner  
or later maybe tomorrow maybe next  
week you'll find me in the bottom  
of a river somewhere.

JOEL  
That's a relief.

KATRINA  
A relief? Sorry, I'm not God Joel.  
Sorry, I'm not you.

A black newer model Lexus pulls up to the curb. There is a  
handsome driver in the driver seat named MICHAEL, the  
handsome corporate archetype.

Katrina turns, walking away.

JOEL  
(desperate and charging)  
Wait wait--who is that, who is  
that!

Katrina stops and holds him at bay.

KATRINA  
Stop. I already know about her.

He stands for a moment, stunned, unable to move. We SEE  
Katrina step off the curb and open the passenger side of the  
car.

JOEL  
We never did anything. We just  
talked.

She gets into the car, closes the door behind her and it  
drives away.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
We haven't had sex in a year.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Joel is sitting in a chair thinking hard.

GRANDMA, is an older woman in her mid-seventies. She's in her  
nightgown. She is generous with her advice, sharing the  
wealth so to speak. With all of this she is kind, loyal, and  
a loving friend. At the moment, however, she is all business.

GRANDMA  
Oh, God oh my God. What are you  
going to do?

JOEL  
I don't know, ma. This whole thing  
happened so--Pow, like that.

GRANDMA  
What are you gonna do about your  
son?

JOEL  
It's too late to abort'em.

GRANDMA  
Look, this is nothing personal but  
he's not a dog you just lock up in  
a cage when he's pissed all over.

JOEL  
Timeouts exist without cages ma.

GRANDMA  
That's not the end of it.

Joel sighs.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)  
I don't think you have the right shoes for parenting.

JOEL  
And this is coming from you?

She's about to go berserk but checks herself.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
I've been the perfect fit father for five years. How fit can it get?

GRANDMA  
All right okay let's get something straight. I'm sorry bout what happened between you two but--

JOEL  
--But what?

GRANDMA  
(coughing)  
I got my own problems. I'm not going to have you calling every fifteen minutes just because you can't find a hot water bottle, understand?

JOEL  
He's five.

GRANDMA  
(stern and loud)  
Got it?

JOEL  
(reluctantly)  
Got it.

A long pause, she looks at him with all the warmth of a top sergeant facing a raw recruit. Then:

GRANDMA  
All right. Who's his pediatrician?

Joel doesn't have the slightest idea.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Walline Davies. 555-8227. Fifty bucks a house call thirty for an office visit. Write this down I'm not telling you twice. What's the nearest hospital?

He grabs a piece of paper and starts writing frantically.

JOEL

Charity.

GRANDMA

No, Riverside.

JOEL

I just got a new contract.

Grandma catches his drift. She sits back in her chair. She surrenders.

GRANDMA

Let'em stay with me for three weeks till you think this through.

Joel can't speak. Closing his eyes, there's an internal struggle he fights off.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

I'll take that as a yes.

LISA (V.O.)

Girl, they said this hurricane is coming this way. I was looking to show off these red bottoms at the concert.

INT. LISA FEINSTEIN'S OFFICE - DAY

MORGAN FEINSTEIN, 40's, looks amazing and elegant. She is the The Boss-Diva Archetype through and through and she wears it flawlessly. Today she is in tight designer jeans, a YSL blazer, red pumps, and full make-up.

Katrina, in old jeans and a baggy sweater, sits on a comfortable, stylish couch, a modern expensive office with a city view.

KATRINA

I never could afford a pair of red bottoms.

MORGAN

Me either. My ex-husband paid for them.

KATRINA

How long ago was the divorce?

MORGAN

About a glorious year ago.

KATRINA

So your wound is still fresh?

MORGAN

Baby that shit is healed. He was a narcissistic and emotionally abusive to the point where I felt like everything was my fault-- whether that be my career, missing our child's games or even being too tired to have sex with him. It somehow fell back on me.

Katrina likes the sound of this as if Morgan already knows her story.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

I used to be a criminal lawyer. Got tired of getting people off that I knew did the crime. Reminded me too much of my ex. So I transitioned after my own divorce to help women like you get through normal problems. But don't tell the men. I don't want the world to know that I don't like them.

Morgan laughs. Katrina smirks, but doesn't know if she shares her sentiment.

KATRINA

I don't want to hurt him.

MORGAN

And neither do I.

(leans forward)

But here's how I see it: If we get bogged down in who did this and that and "I don't want to pay the two dollars" it'll just cost you more money and time and emotional stress, and you'll probably end up with the same result anyway.

KATRINA

Maybe this is a stupid question,  
but, uh, is there any way to do  
this on a budget?

MORGAN

This is the budget version.

Looking at Katrina's depressed demeanor it's clear she's  
broke.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Let me guess, financial issues.

KATRINA

I kinda just left. I was a stay at  
home mom.

Morgan kicks off her shoes and tucks them under her feet. She  
rises, grabs a box of tissues, and curls up next to Katrina  
on the couch.

Katrina takes a tissue and she and Morgan meet eyes. It feels  
intimate and safe.

MORGAN

You're more than just a  
transaction. You are a person.

KATRINA

Oh. Ok. Good.

Tears run down Katrina's cheeks.

MORGAN

Can you tell me a little bit more  
about what's going on? Because part  
of what we're going to do together  
is tell your STORY.

KATRINA

For the record, I don't want to  
hurt Joel. He has our son at the  
moment while I plant my feet.

MORGAN

You left your son?

KATRINA

Yes.

She notices the cut-mark scars on Katrina's arms. A beat of  
concern. Morgan places her hand on Katrina's leg. She talks  
to her like a good girlfriend.

MORGAN

Did he--?

Slightly embarrassed.

KATRINA

No--I'm sorry.

Katrina breaks down.

LISA

No don't be. I've been through this myself. I know how it feels.

(to the door)

Leslie.

LESLIE, her assistant peeps into the office.

MORGAN

Cancel my two o'clock. We have a new sister I'd like to introduce to the family.

(to Katrina)

If you're feeling suicidal it'll be very hard to prove mental stability for custody of your son however, we could spin it around to make husband abusive.

KATRINA

It's difficult to articulate.

MORGAN

Start anywhere you like.

And Katrina begins. As she talks she finds her voice and gains momentum and she starts to feel better, the tears start to dry up and she becomes more powerful, but this is a song. It flows with ebbs of confidence, then tears, and anger until it crashes again until a crescendo of tears.

KATRINA

We met while I was in college. He was in the military and I was a lifeguard at a pool where he lived. One day he drowned and I brought him back to life. He said when I revived him it was love at first sight and he knew we'd get married. We ended up going to the same church and we became friends. A few months later, he got sent on deployment and we lost touch.

(MORE)

KATRINA (CONT'D)

About a year later we reconnected and rekindled our friendship. We spoke every day. A few weeks to my birthday, he called and asked whether we could meet and talk, to which I readily agreed. When we met, he asked whether we could be in a relationship and I nodded in consent. He is a church-going man, remember?

MORGAN

Mmmhmmm.

KATRINA

I thought that men who go to church are inherently nice people. I loved him and he reciprocated the love. Six months later, he proposed with a beautiful ring. We both loved God and were in the ministry together and our families and friends supported us. I liked everything about us. We were perfect together. Two years later, he came home for the formal introduction and paid my bride price in June. We were given the go-ahead to have our wedding in August, the same year. I was still in college. Then tragedy struck. My mother, who had been ailing for some time, died a day after the bride price ceremony. I dropped out of school, became numb and lost interest in everything, including the wedding. I was so much out of touch with the wedding preparations that I attended it like any other guest. I didn't choose the color theme, décor, the cake. However, everything was planned to perfection. We said the wedding vows, signed the certificates, and danced in the rain. I became someone's wife. We had been in a long-distance relationship because of his deployments, and I was still grieving. To be honest, I expected more love than I could offer. Then I got pregnant. With twins. One died during birth. And I went into depression. He kinda was supportive at first. Then he wasn't.

(MORE)

## KATRINA (CONT'D)

I don't know if he didn't care or was just trying to be strong for our son. But he wasn't emotionally there. He told me to stay home and do the mother thing while he worked. Said I should mourn. Before I knew it my life had become about being a mother and wife. I had lost friends from college cause they didn't like him. And then when I wanted to go back to college, he basically threw a big fuss about it. Said we couldn't afford it. Who's going to watch our son. Like I didn't have a choice. He chose the house, the car--sometimes my friends. The arguments were endless. "Why did you take long to pick up my call?", "Why did you get home late last evening?", "Whom were you talking to on the phone?" It was crazy. I don't know what exactly happened to us, but I was blinded by the fact that we both served in church. I had to shift from the church where I used to fellowship because of the persistent backbiting. So I started cutting myself. But it hurt too much. He didn't notice the scars until yesterday. I tried to commit suicide four months ago!

Morgan wipes an ink-stained tear from Katrina's cheek and hugs her. Katrina falls into her arms.

## RAY NAGIN (V.O.)

I wish I had better news, but we're facing the storm most of us feared.

## INT. OFFICE - CONSTRUCTION AGENCY - MIDTOWN - DAY

Men in flannel plaid shirts, blue jeans and tan work boots stand around room and lean against the cubicles and chairs as they watch Mayor RAY NAGIN delivering a speech on television.

## RAY NAGIN

This is very serious, an unprecedented event. I want to emphasize, the first choice of every citizen should be to leave the city. If you can't, make your way to the Superdome.

Nagin's words are on an all-out assault to David's ears.

DAVID

Why is he telling folks that the Superdome is a shelter for last resort instead of shipping them out the city?

JOEL

Give him a chance. His plan sounds feasible.

DAVID

Oh Nagin doesn't have a disaster plan he is the disaster.  
(noticing Joel is not paying attention)  
Hey buddy what's wrong?

A beat. Joel drifts off into space.

DAVID (CONT'D)

She left you?

Joel nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(not surprised)

I always figured you guys had it made like cake and ice cream.

JOEL

Whelp, she melted.

DAVID

And left you soggy.

David nods sympathetically. He prays that Joel won't start to cry.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Listen, don't let it get you down.  
(doesn't believe it for a second)

I'm the oldest whore on the beat, okay. Three marriages, two divorces. You're gonna be okay.

JOEL

The way I see it, she'll come scooting on home.

DAVID

There's a hurricane that's about to strike--she called?

JOEL

What do you think!

DAVID

Okay. But in the meantime take this.

David holds out a card. Joel takes it. Looks at it.

Joel's POV:

The law office of Shaunessy and Nelson.

JOEL

She's crazy, but not that crazy.

THE BOSS enters the room causing everyone to sit-up and stand up straight at his entrance. He stands in front of the room.

THE BOSS

I just received a call from the city of New Orleans. They need a cellphone tower repaired near city hall in case the phone lines go down due to the hurricane.

DAVID

We'll be there all night.

THE BOSS

That's why you'll leave now--quadruple pay.

JOEL

I'll go.

THE BOSS

Suit up. You don't have much time.

The party splits. David and Joel gather their jackets and make their way to the exit.

DAVID

Go get your son, go back home where it's safe.

JOEL

I need the money.

DAVID  
For what? Your funeral?

JOEL  
We got a better chance at getting  
hit by Mike Tyson than getting hit  
by Katrina.

DAVID  
She hasn't hit you already.

JOEL  
What is that supposed to mean?

David throwing his hands up in disbelief and surrender.  
They exit and enter into...

EXT. OFFICE - CONSTRUCTION AGENCY - MIDTOWN - CONTINUOUS

JOEL  
What signs?

David stops. There's a long silence between the two as David  
looks at the surrounding trees and interstate in the  
distance.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
What's wrong?

DAVID  
You want to know something weird.  
When I was in Vietnam I found  
solace in the green parrots the  
jungle used to have. Everyday on  
our trails I would always be on the  
lookout for them blending in the  
trees and singing their songs.  
They were the only peace I had. But  
one day something strange happened.  
They disappeared. I didn't know why  
but all the animals instinctively  
disappeared--particularly the  
birds. Then war broke out and man I  
tell ya, this pattern went on for  
months.

JOEL  
I don't know what to make of it.

DAVID

I'm a veteran of numerous hurricanes and this is the first time pre-storm silence has unnerved me.

JOEL

Silence is golden.

DAVID

Not when the birds are gone.

JOEL

You think we should panic?

DAVID

No, I think we should celebrate. You don't see the signs--no wonder she left.

This sets off bomb of frustration.

JOEL

Katrina got a goddamn good life. She's had a great husband that loves her, a great kid and a wonderful home.

DAVID

What do you know about how Katrina felt?

JOEL

I'm her husband.

DAVID

Doesn't mean you were good at it.

JOEL

She's not the easiest person in the world to deal with!

DAVID

And you think you are?

JOEL

Who the hell side are you on man>

DAVID

Oh for shit's sake you are the most selfish human being I've ever met.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

No wonder she said you came first  
then the baby then if there was  
anything left over she got the  
scraps.

JOEL

She said that?

DAVID

She didn't have to.

Joel settles at this revelation.

BOOM! The sound of thunder. An eerie darkness forms over the  
interstate.

INT/EXT. COMPANY TRUCK/I-10 INTERSTATE - MOMENTS LATER

The rain showers down like pins and daggers, a deafening  
spectacle.

From inside the car, Joel looks over the bridge into the city  
below: Traffic lights swing back and forth like pendulums.

Fast food signs spin around and crash to the pavement. Palm  
trees shake like pom-poms.

A green metal sign suddenly blows in front of David's car-a  
close call.

Joel is already on the phone. The phone rings.

JOEL

(he listens to the phone  
ring)

Mom!

INT/EXT. CITY BUS/NEW ORLEANS - DAY (INTERCUT SCENES)

Grandma, along with Billy, ALLIE, and ALLIE'S HUSBAND (both  
mid-seventies) are on a bus. Grandma is on the phone.

GRANDMA

Yes.

JOEL

Do you and Billy have a friend you  
can stay with?

GRANDMA

Why?

JOEL  
For the storm why else.

GRANDMA  
We're headed to the stadium now.

JOEL  
How, you got no legs?

GRANDMA  
On the bus, you idiot.

JOEL  
Ma!

GRANDMA  
I don't think it's that serious.

JOEL  
It is. We just hit a bad patch of  
the storm.

GRANDMA  
That's just an anomaly. Susie told  
me that she heard the storm ain't  
got no legs and moving east.

JOEL  
Ain't got no legs? First Ms. Susie  
has no sense let alone any legs.

GRANDMA  
Don't concern ya'self with grown  
folks business boy. I rode out  
Betsy years before and came out  
alright.

JOEL  
I know ma, but-

GRANDMA  
Boy I can handle myself. I got  
Allie and her husband with me and  
her grandkids, Marquis and Dewayne--  
member them?

JOEL  
Yeah I do.  
(a bit relieved)  
So do you feel safe?

The bus pulls up to the Superdome. A two-mile line of people  
in front of it.

Grandma sinks in disbelief seeing that line.

GRANDMA  
We'll be in good company.

JOEL  
(a beat)  
Okay. I trust you.

GRANDMA  
You shouldn't.

Joel second-guesses her last words while he questions the phone.

Grandma hangs up. Worried.

EXT. METAIRIE CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Violent pouring rain pounds a section of the Metairie Central Business District as we edge closer between the buildings.

The city is damn near deserted with the exception of a telecommunications truck and two police cars parked in front of a building.

A few men, on a rooftop building, work on a small tower.

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
Um, please verify that you are done installing the telecommunications antenna?

JOEL  
(over radio)  
Diagnostics are green. Link to the communications card is ready for data reception. If this works, you guys owe me a round.

David stands in the background watching as Joel does his work.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
(over radio)  
Booting com-link card now.  
Confirm link.

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
We're not seeing any data.

DAVID  
(over radio)  
It's the weather. I got a bad  
feeling about this.

JOEL  
(over radio)  
Hold on. I'm going to reboot the  
system, stand by.

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
Please expand on why this is a bad  
idea again.

DAVID  
(over radio)  
The storms picking up.

JOEL  
You're making me nervous.

David looks to the far reach of the city to the tall levees.  
Water splashes over them like rough surf.

DAVID  
(over radio)  
Shouldn't we be evacuating like the  
rest that did?

JOEL  
(over radio)  
Com-link is uploading.

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
You're the only two who have prior  
communications with satellites.

DAVID  
(over radio)  
I hate to be the one to break it  
to you but...

The water jumps in leaps and bounds over the levees.

POLICE HQ  
(over the radio)  
But...

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 I just hate to be the one who  
 breaks it to you. Where's the  
 city's drainage operators?

POLICE HQ  
 (over radio)  
 They evacuated yesterday.

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 Sure they did.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 Relax the storm isn't even a direct  
 hit. Damage will be small. Link is  
 up--you got a connection?

POLICE HQ  
 (over radio)  
 Negative we're receiving nothing on  
 this end.

Joel fidgets with the controls.

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 That's God telling us to get the  
 hell out.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 What about now?

'BRABOOM!' A loud explosion is heard some miles away.

NEAR THE LEVEE

Water sweeps houses near the levee away in one sweep, 100  
 miles per hour.

BACK AT THE TOWER

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 The hell was that?

POLICE HQ  
 (over radio)  
 Hold on...we got something.

Static over the radio.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 HQ? HQ do you copy?

The static is up and out.

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 We may've crossed frequencies  
 during the upload. Give it time.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 HQ? HQ do you copy?

POLICE HQ  
 (over radio)  
 Mission abort repeat mission abort.  
 Initiate emergency disconnect from  
 the antenna. Begin emergency evac.

Confused, he slides down the ladder. David packs up their equipment in a mass hurry.

TRUCK DRIVER (V.O.)  
 (over radio)  
 Copy all, HQ and Overwatch.  
 Joel, immediate return to the  
 communications truck.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 HQ help me understand.

POLICE HQ  
 (over radio)  
 A tsunami has swept through.  
 It's heading to your direction.

David and Joel exit the rooftop and into...

INT. STAIRWELL OF BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

...where they rush down the flight of steps as if the building was on fire.

JOEL  
 (over radio)  
 A tsunami?

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 Was that the explosion?

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
We're not sure.

JOEL  
(over radio)  
How far away from the breakdown of  
are we?

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
Approximately a half of mile.

JOEL  
(over radio)  
What's the blowback HQ?

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
Not good. Most of our systems are  
gone. Debris chain reaction is out  
of control and antennas and homes  
are collapsing.

DAVID  
(over radio)  
Define multiple homes and antennas  
collapsing.

POLICE HQ  
(over radio)  
Telecommunication systems are dead.  
Expect a communication blackout at  
any moment.

JOEL  
(over radio)  
And what about the houses?

Joel and David exit into...

EXT. METAIRIE CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

...Where a five-foot wave of water, carrying the demolished  
face of a home and other debris, rushes toward them. Both  
simply stare. Transfixed.

JOEL  
Shit!

DAVID  
Get in the van, get in the van!

Joel and David hasten into the driver and passenger seats respectively as the water sprints like a bat out of hell.

David presses the ignition switch on the truck. The engine turns over. Doesn't start.

Joel observes the tidal wave edging closer to them in the rearview passenger mirror.

JOEL

Shit!

David turns the ignition. The engine coughs.

Up at the rooftop, the antenna that the two recently abandoned is shaken from the foundation and topples onto the street below.

The truck starts. David smashes the pedal to the floor.

Then WHAAAAAAAAAAM!!! The wave strikes the back of the police car with the force of a hydrogen bomb pushing it into the rear of the truck just as the truck pulls off.

DAVID

(over radio)

HQ! HQ! Do you copy?

As the truck takes off, the antenna crashes down on the passenger side of the truck, thrusting Joel outside into the wave.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Joel!

The truck jackknifes.

David fights for the wheel.

Horrified he looks as the devastation as the wave sweeps everything in its path.

Bodies bobbing helplessly in the water. People screaming. Buildings crumble.

Joel is swarmed by the wave, sucked underwater, along with bits of market stalls, street signs, cars, and other PEOPLE.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(over the radio)

You gotta grab onto something.  
You're going to get carried too  
far.

JOEL  
 (crying out)  
 No I ca-

Joel thrashes underwater, his eyes bulging, desperate for air. His mouth open, his thrashing becoming more frantic.

"HURRRRGH!" he sticks his head above water gasping for air.

DAVID  
 (over radio)  
 Listen to my voice, listen to me.  
 Focus! I need you to focus.

Joel reaches out onto a passing street pole.

He misses and is pulled underwater again.

'Hurrargh!' He sticks his head above water again, gasping desperately, but it's critical now...

As David fights for the wheel, a sudden rush of water and debris from the west smashes into the truck. The truck over-corrects and tips over.

Joel's POV:

Joel, pushed into glass double doors of a lobby, observes a MYSTERIOUS WOMAN fleeing just before he smashes his head on the wall. Knocked unconscious.

INT. HOTEL RESTURAUNT - NIGHT

Katrina & Michael are sitting at a table having a nice candle lit dinner. Both are dressed as if it's some sort of anniversary dinner, but this isn't. The sound of wind rattles the window seat they sit in front of it. However, her attention is on a beige envelope on the table.

Mid bite, Michael stops chewing, noticing her eyes being glued to the envelope.

MICHAEL  
 What's on your mind?

KATRINA  
 You're going to have to hand him  
 the envelope.

MICHAEL  
 You must want to attend my funeral?

KATRINA

No. His. I know it'll kill him if  
the man I'm screwing serves him.

Mike is deeply impressed, but afraid of her bite.

MICHAEL

Woah! Let's, uh, marinate on this  
for a second. There's other ways to  
skin a pig.

KATRINA

Like?

He stumbles to find an answer.

MICHAEL

Let's, try to take half of what he  
has.

KATRINA

Not enough.

MICHAEL

Uh, we can possibly deliver it to  
him and hope he doesn't respond in  
thirty days.

KATRINA

What happens if he doesn't?

MICHAEL

File a request for default  
judgement against him.

KATRINA

What does that mean?

MICHAEL

You can lay claim to whatever you  
want. House, cars, alimony, child  
support. You can even get full  
custody of your son.

Her eyes perk up, but then settle in disappointment.

Michael, eating steak, stops mid-chew.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

KATRINA

He won't go for that.

MICHAEL  
You never know.

KATRINA  
I feel like the Jesus Christ of  
marriage.

MICHAEL  
Then rise again. Have your earthly  
kingdom on earth, as it is in  
heaven.

She kinda smirks. She knows she deserves it.

Wiping his mouth with a napkin and throwing it on a table.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Should I bring my gun when I serve  
him?

KATRINA  
Let's do it now.

MICHAEL  
In the middle of a hurricane?

KATRINA  
And afterwards, I want you to tie  
my up and drill the living day  
lights outta me.

MICHAEL  
Oh! Wow! Better yet, meet me in the  
rest--

BOOM! The power in the entire restaurant goes out. The  
howling and rain intensifies.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
--or not.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

As the sunlight bathes his face, Joel sleeps on a couch. He  
opens his eyes slightly.

He sits upright in the chair, confused as he studies the  
pictures of beautiful flowers decorating the walls.

JOEL  
The hell am I?

LISA WILLIAMSON, mid-30s, a hybrid of The Boss/Mother Archetype, stern, charitable and emotionally walks in her finest pants suit, enters with a tray of cookies and tea.

LISA  
Hello.

JOEL  
Who are you--where am I?

Lisa sets the table of food down in front of him.

LISA  
My name is Lisa and you're in my office. I found you floating in the office lobby last night.

JOEL  
Floating!

Joel rises and storms to the window that overlooks the city. Shocked and bewildered.

Homes and cars are submerged underwater. Rooftops and homes crest under the water. Street signs, telephone poles lean and are bent and twisted in water.

LISA  
The levees broke.

JOEL  
My son!

He leaves to exit. But is stopped by Lisa.

LISA  
Where you going?

JOEL  
My family. They're at the Superdome.

LISA  
(very dramatic)  
Oh dear God.

JOEL  
(stopping at the door)  
Wait...what's that about--what's the ol'dear God about?



He spots the communications truck turned over in the water some yards away.

He sloths to the truck in waist-deep water.

David's decomposing body floats by. His skin is blistered and greenish-blue. His abdomen is swollen, his tongue protrudes and blood from his lungs flushes out of his mouth, nostrils, and eyes. Joel covers his nose the rotten-egg stench that permeates David's dead skin.

Lisa stands some feet behind him. Mortified over the body.

Joel puts his hand up to hush her. He uses this time to mourn. And then think. He can't look at her.

JOEL

Judging by the damage. Everything can and will go wrong. Here are the rules. We got no food, no car, no boat, no protection. That's not just us, that's everyone so we don't offer help, we take it, ya understand?

LISA

(settling down)

Okay, okay. You're the driver. I'm the navigator.

JOEL

Time is against us. How far is the dome from here?

LISA

Other side of town. Ten miles maybe.

JOEL

That's a day trip at worst.

LISA

We don't have a day.

JOEL

Exactly. We're going to have to stay tight. And mind your emotions.

LISA

Meaning?

JOEL

I'm not a patient person. You got a phone?

Lisa digs into her pocket. Tosses it to him.

Joel dials a number. Places it to his ear. SOUND OF A BUSY LINE. He hangs up, tossing the phone back.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
Towers are down. Landlines might  
not be. Let's go.

LISA (V.O.)  
You seem hardened for this.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Joel leads Lisa through the knee-deep water in the middle of the street.

JOEL  
I did a tour in Afghanistan and one  
in Iraq.

LISA  
My ex-husband was in the military.

JOEL  
Where is now?

LISA  
Hopefully somewhere safe in the  
city with our daughter.

JOEL  
And you were in the office on the  
eve of a big storm?

LISA  
Figure I would ride it out for one  
night. Didn't think it'd be this  
bad.

JOEL  
We both failed to use our  
imagination I see.

LISA  
Didn't have the city. Where's your  
wife and kids?

JOEL  
My wife ran off with another man.  
Left me with our son.

LISA  
What type of mother leaves her son?

JOEL  
A mother with no motherly instinct  
at all.

LISA  
And she hasn't called to check on  
you or him? Made arrangements to  
get the kid?

JOEL  
Nope and nada.

LISA  
She's got issues. Issues that can  
give you full custody and child  
support. If you need a lawyer after  
this, I got you.

JOEL  
Thanks. Solves one problem. How far  
is the Superdome from here?

LISA  
Another two miles. But there's a  
strip mall nearby, why?

JOEL  
Supplies. Food. And a gun.

LISA  
What do you need a gun for?

JOEL  
You think a boat is really gonna be  
easy to come by.

EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Trash everywhere. Cars with windows smashed. Handicapped  
signs bent. A few store windows are boarded up. Others  
windows are smashed as if looters raided the place.

On the second story balcony of the Strip Mall, OFFICER  
NERRAW, white, husky, tired and distraught, stands with a  
rifle on guard. OFFICER HAMPTON, black woman, with braids and  
a militant look stands by his side. They guard a makeshift  
police outpost as they argue with a group of five African-  
Americans, one being DONALD GLOVER, a common mid 30's man.

Lisa and Joel are about a block away from the shouting. Upon noticing the arguing Joel stops in his place. He studies it from afar.

Tempers are clearly flaring between the cops and crowd.

JOEL

Wait. We should make it somewhere else.

LISA

There isn't one for a couple miles.

JOEL

You tellin' me you feel safe going over there with that commotion. You're lying.

LISA

A wise man once said you gotta be aware of danger and recognize the opportunity.

JOEL

I call bull.

LISA

Fear of danger is ten times more deadly than danger itself.

Joel studies the crowd arguing once more. It's still hell in the cell.

JOEL

I'll watch from behind and stand witness.

Lisa departs.

LISA

Don't let your thoughts foreshadow negativity.

JOEL

Too late for that.

PARKING LOT

She walks up behind the crows. Neither the crowd or cops notices her.

DONALD GLOVER

No, fuck you, you pig ass nigga.

OFFICER HAMPTON

Sir go the hell home all of you!

DONALD GLOVER (CONT'D)  
You think we gotta fuckin'  
home to go.

ANGRY BLACK WOMAN  
We just want to get some  
supplies and food. We ain't  
stealin to tv.

DONALD GLOVER  
It looks like a freakin'  
store to me.

DONALD GLOVER (CONT'D)  
What the hell we goin' do wit  
a tv huh?

DONALD GLOVER (CONT'D)  
And I said it before we gots  
no motherfuckin' home to go  
you stupid bitch. We got  
babies to feed.

DONALD GLOVER (CONT'D)  
This bitch!

OFFICER NERRAW  
And we don't!

OFFICER NERRAW (CONT'D)  
I don't care. This is now a  
police station.

OFFICER NERRAW (CONT'D)  
Go home.

OFFICER HAMPTON  
He said go home and calm  
down.

OFFICER HAMPTON (CONT'D)  
Where's the baby?

ANGRY BLACK WOMAN  
What I gotta do. Bring a baby  
out in this shit, just to  
show you and get some  
pampers.

OFFICER HAMPTON  
If the shoe fits!

Some feet away. A CAR OWNER is spotted by Officer Nerraw  
shuffling through a passenger side of a car. Officer Nerraw  
fires a shot a shot at the car. The rear tire deflates. The  
owner takes off.

Lisa stepping forward.

LISA  
What the hell was that for?

From afar, Joel seeing her bravery knows its stupid. He  
sprints like a bat out of hell to the crowd.

OFFICER NERRAW  
There will be no stealin' or  
looting from this property.  
Go home or find the national  
guard to help you.

LISA (CONT'D)  
I don't care I'm a lawyer.  
That man could've been  
retrieving items from his  
car.

Joel running up to her side. Yanking her by the arm, damn  
near dragging her like a child to depart.

JOEL  
We're leaving.

LISA  
What the hell man.

She hits him in the arm. They stop in place. Like a husband and wife stand off. The crowd's arguing continues in the background.

JOEL  
This is getting out of hand.

LISA  
I can reason with him.

JOEL  
We're trying to retrieve a gun  
while the cops have one, that  
doesn't sound ridiculous to you?

LISA  
It's ridiculous to feel ridiculous  
when I'm not.

JOEL  
You didn't think this through.

LISA  
There's witnesses. Five against  
two. We go in there. We take--

JOEL  
--Stop, stop, stop. You got any  
other bad ideas in your head cause  
if you do tell them to get the hell  
out.

LISA  
There's beauty in a bad idea. It's  
desperation either way.

JOEL  
We're not that desperate to not  
think about you daughter.

A beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
C'mon think.

She can't think of anything else at this point. Joel knows this and departs. She follows suit. Arms folded.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
I know you're stressed. That's why  
I need you to follow my lead.

LISA  
You don't trust my decision making  
skills.

JOEL  
The only weapon against bad ideas  
is a good idea and you have yet to  
serve up one.

SOUND OF A GUNSHOT. Terrifying screams behind the two.  
Startled the two look back.

ANGRY BLACK WOMAN  
You shot my brother! You shot my  
brother!

Donald is on the ground. The small crowd gathers around him.  
Lifts him and puts him a CAR.

LISA  
They need help.

JOEL  
What are you going to do. Argue a  
case. They are the judge and jury.

Looking back at him she knows he's right. A depressing  
realization.

The car speeds past them, splashing water on our heroes.

BANG! BANG! SOUDS OF MORE GUNSHOTS.

The two dart off down the street. Joel leaving her in the  
dust.

LISA  
Joel! Joel!

As she sprints the waters get deeper and deeper very quickly.  
Lisa has stopped in knee deep water.

The water is up to his chest.

LISA (CONT'D)  
Joel stop!

He stops in his tracks. Looking back he sees her terrified to  
enter.

He now knows her fear.

JOEL  
Got damnit!

INT. NEW ORLEANS SUPERDOME - STANDS - DAY

Muffled screams are heard from one end of the center to the next. Billy, hearing the noise, slowly awakens from his sleep.

Half asleep, he looks up, seeing 93-year-old ALLIE sitting beside him, slowly eating crackers unaware of the tragedy around her. Her dead husband sits next to her with his eyes wide open and fixed.

BILLY

AHHHH!

He falls out of his chair and stumbles backward.

ALLIE

Stay here young man, ya grad-mammy  
be back soon.

Billy shakes his head no, gets up, and runs away.

ALLIE (CONT'D)

Billy! Billy!!!

Billy runs up the steps past a bunch of sleeping and dead folks who are in the stands. He enters into...

INT. NEW ORLEANS SUPERDOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

...Where he is instantly met with the smell of vomit, cigarette smoke and urine.

Bathrooms overflow with feces. Bloodstained stairs and muddy, wet clothes are everywhere on the ground. Flies buzz around babies. Dogs eat dirty diapers. Dead cats are kicked into a pile of debris by kids trying to play.

Billy is so overwhelmed that he throws up. He cries.

Grandma comes from out of nowhere, grabbing him by the shoulders.

GRANDMA

You okay baby?

BILLY

(crying)

Yeah.

GRANDMA

Allie failed out watching you. Come  
with me.

EXT. SUPERDOME - DAY

Thousands. So hungry. So ravaged. So angry and lost.

A navy convoy truck in the middle of the street. Soldiers hand out sandwiches and water. But it is complete chaos.

SOLDIER  
(on bullhorn)  
Women and children first. Women and  
children first.

The crowd though still rowdy replies. Grandma and Billy make their way to the truck.

The soldier hands Grandma two sandwiches and bottles of water. Hastily they make their way back.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)  
That's it. We're out of food!

The crowd is an uncontrolled fire.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)  
We have more coming. Just stay  
patient.

Grandma and Billy are suffocated by chaos. SOMEONE snatches the food from her hands.

GRANDMA  
Hey! The hell!!

The crowd reaches a rowdy height no one in history has reached. A brawl breaks loose. Punches. And shoves galore.

Grandma is pushed in the face. Losing her glasses she falls to the ground. She slowly comes to her feet and escorts her and Billy out of the chaos.

Just a few feet beyond them news reporter ANITA COLLINS, broadcasts live. A HYSTERICAL LADY besides her awaits to be interviewed. She's torn and distressed.

ANITA COLLINS  
We are live here outside the  
superdome where there have been  
reports of rape, stealing, murder  
and even a sniper on the roof.  
(turning to the  
distressed lady)  
Ma'am could you confirm or deny  
those reports. What is your  
experience so far?

## HYSTERICAL LADY

It's terrible out here. I just got punched in the face. They stole my food. We are about to die. The government needs to send more help out here. If anyone is listening, please, please get us outta here. We won't make it another hour...

## INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katrina is sitting in the bed watching the horrors of Hurricane Katrina unfold on the television. Her face and body are in absolute shock. A shirtless and unbothered Michael is beside her.

## HYSTERICAL LADY (O.C.)

...momma, if you're out here and you're watching come find us. This is bullshit.

Katrina snatches the phone and dials frantically. Placing her phone to the ear, we hear the phone go straight to voicemail.

## MICHAEL

Still no answer?

## KATRINA

Keeps going to voicemail.

## MICHAEL

Cell phone service could be down.

## KATRINA

No. He or his mother would've called me on a landline by now.

Katrina jumps from her bed. Immediately gets dressed.

He's confused.

## MICHAEL

What are you doing?

## KATRINA

Hoping you'll come with me.

## MICHAEL

To where?

## KATRINA

What do you think!

MICHAEL

We don't know where to begin to find them.

KATRINA

Our home, her home, superdome. I don't care.

She grows impatient buttoning up her blouse.

MICHAEL

The city's flooded--

KATRINA (CONT'D)

--Does it look like I give a damn!

Michael settles. Reluctantly, he agrees. He gets up and puts on his pants.

EXT. SUPERDOME - DAY

Thousands of people huddle outside, afraid to go into the building, a formless, irresolute mob. Many were fanning themselves from the sweating heat.

People sleep in the street. People lie dead in the gutter.

People chanting 'Help! Help! Help!' Kids crying. Dogs running around and trash all over the place.

There were about forty seniors and special needs individuals on the side of the sidewalk in wheelchairs. They have empty canisters of air, plastic tubes hooked into their noses. They haven't gotten out of their wheelchair for days, sitting in their shit.

EXT. FLOODED NEW ORLEANS STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Flooded neighborhood. Lisa is on a floating mattress. Joel pushes her along as he swims. The water is about six feet deep.

JOEL

How long were you going to refrain from telling me you couldn't swim?

LISA

As long as it benefited me.

JOEL

Kinda selfish don't you think?

LISA  
Would you have let me come with you  
if you knew sooner?

JOEL  
Maybe. It would've helped with my  
decision making.

LISA  
And that's the my drift.

Treading in place Joel allows her to float along. Startled  
she rattles the bed, frightened.

LISA (CONT'D)  
Woah! Woah, I'm sorry okay.

JOEL  
You're sorry for inconveniencing me  
cause that's what you're doing?

LISA  
I have a daughter too--

JOEL  
--An inconvenience is an adventure  
wrongly considered.

The bed bumps into a submerged car. This heightens her fear.

LISA  
Please don't do this.

JOEL  
That's not the magic word.

LISA  
Okay I'm sorry. I'm sorry for  
getting in the way.

A very long beat. Joel watches as she keeps floating away.

She teeters trying to keep her balance.

He smiles. Swims to her. Then arrives.

LISA (CONT'D)  
I was desperate okay.

JOEL  
Never ruin an apology with an  
excuse. Apologize through your  
actions.

LISA  
How will I do that?

JOEL  
A freebie say's I'm sorry much more  
better than words.

LISA  
You want me to represent you  
without a fee?

He doesn't answer. Clearly he does.

LISA (CONT'D)  
I'm negotiating out of fear.

JOEL  
Negotiating is a technique. You use  
it when it's to your advantage. You  
don't use it when it's not to your  
advantage.

She comes to a realization of sorts.

LISA  
You're quite the arguer and  
manipulator. I'll do it.

SOUND OF WHISTLING IN THE DISTANCE

Joel takes a quick in the direction and looks away.

HENRY (O.S.)  
Help! Help me!

Joel steadfast and determined. Lisa keeps looking.

JOEL  
Don't look. It'll only slow us  
down.

HENRY, black, early 20's, fit, nerdy, is on top of a roof  
with his brother SAM, late-teens, cerebral palsy with legs  
deformed.

HENRY  
(shouting and crying)  
Please! Please help us!

LISA  
We should do something.

JOEL  
Are you crazy?

LISA  
The more manpower the better.

JOEL  
I'm talking about his brother!

LISA  
And?

JOEL  
What do you mean *and*, Look at'em.

Sam's visible impairment.

LISA  
You've got to be kidding!

JOEL  
He'll slow us down.

HENRY  
My parents are dead. My brother is  
ill. We need medicine. Please!  
Please don't go.

JOEL  
Why do you want to help everyone?

LISA  
By helping others, you help  
yourself.

Joel keeps pushing along. He notices body parts floating in  
the water.

JOEL  
The hell is this!

HENRY (O.S.)  
I can find you a boat.

LISA  
You heard what he said!

The bed stalls onto something.

JOEL  
I hear, but if that's the case he  
would've found one by now. We can't  
move. What's blocking us?

Lisa huffs. She can't believe his shit.

She turns around on the floating mattress. Reaching out her hand, pushes and turns whatever it is over. It's a dead man, mouth open, face all puffed up, something bad. He bobs into the mattress.

She screams, pointing and falls off.

JOEL (CONT'D)

The hell?

Henry on the roof, spots an alligator charging towards them. Just some feet away.

HENRY

Watch out!

A SUDDEN FEAR FILLS JOEL'S EYES...he spins, his arms out in defensive mode. The GATOR takes Joel's whole arm into its mouth. Drags him underwater. Like a rag doll it flings him back and forth. A cloud of blood encompasses them.

Coming up for air, a flailing of arms and splashes.

JOEL

Help!

GUUURRGHHH! He's snatched back under. The Gator does the death roll. Joel rolls with him. Joel snatch a pocket KNIFE from his pocket.

Joel is fighting for his life now... flailing with the knife... slicing it across the Gator's neck as it whips him.

But the Gator doesn't give him the chance...It slams him against the car.

Joel drives his knife into the gator again... deep... trying to tear through the layers of flesh to something more vital.

The wound slows the gator enough for Joel to come up for air.

Lisa is on top the car. Screaming.

JOEL AND THE GATOR - FIGHTING THIS EPIC BATTLE...

...locked in a death grip... tumbling along the ground... trading violent blows... spinning over and over... Joel pounding the knife into the gator again and again... neither willing to surrender.

Joel and the Gator come up for air once more--BOW! BOW! BOW!  
The sound of the quick rifle shots and the fighting stops.

Joel kicks the gator away. It floats away in a pool of blood. Henry grabs Joel by his good arm.

Henry stands on top of the car with a smoking rifle in hand.

HENRY

Calm down. I got you.

Joel is fricking mortified and out of breath.

INT. ATTIC - MOMENTS LATER

Henry climbs into the attic enters. Once on top he helps Lisa.

There's a gaping hole in the attic. Sunlight peeping through. Sam looks down upon Henry helping Joel enter. Joel is sluggish.

Henry guides him to the middle of the floor. His arms is covered with blood. A first aid kit is next to him. Henry begins to 'operate' on him.

A smell permeates the room. Lisa can barely take it.

HENRY

I'll get you patched up. We got more supplies and a boat.

LISA

What's the smell?

Henry looks to her, somewhat embarrassed. He looks to the corner.

Three bodies covered in blankets. The bare and rusted feet exposed.

LISA (CONT'D)

Good Lord. My condolences.

HENRY

Mom, Grandma and grandpa. It's just us two left. Say hi Sam.

From the roof, peeping in Sam waves hello. He can barely speak it.

LISA

How can we help?

HENRY

Just need a boat to get us outta here. I have family in Texas. Once we reach dry land, I'll call my cousins and they're on their way.

LISA

We can help. We're on our way to the Superdome.

JOEL

You say there's a boat depot nearby?

HENRY

Bout three-quarters of a mile away.

JOEL

If they're still any boats left.

LISA

(snapping her fingers)  
Optimism!

HENRY

You two are husband and wife I assume.

LISA &amp; JOEL

(offended)  
No!

HENRY

My apologies for asking.

JOEL

I'm her client.

LISA

His mother.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm a grown ass--

LISA

--He's right I am his lawyer, but at times I feel like his mother.

JOEL

(rising figuratively and literally)  
My mother is still alive goddamnit who do you think you are--

LISA

(stepping to)  
--who do I--

HENRY  
 (interrupting)  
 Enough!

A period of silence.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 My brother cannot deal with that  
 loud noise.

Henry points to the hole in the ceiling. Sam is peeping through with tears flooding his eyes.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 Now look I'm sorry for asking what  
 you two are, okay, I'm sorry. I was  
 just trying to lighten the mood,  
 have some sense of connection  
 before I start to trust you, ya  
 know. Is that cool?

Lisa and Joel settle. Joel gives her a you know better stare. Lisa gives him a 'he better know his place stare'. It's almost comical.

Joel sits back down. Henry continues patchwork.

JOEL  
 We're sorry. It's been a little  
 rough between us on how we should  
 go about the day.

HENRY  
 Let me guess. You didn't want to  
 save me right.

LISA  
 (stepping forward.)  
 Well I--

Without looking, Joel holds his finger up to hush her.

JOEL  
 --We both have kids, our own kids  
 that we're trying to reach in the  
 superdome. We weren't trying to  
 leave you on pur--

HENRY  
 --I would've made the trip myself,  
 but kinda hard to move a guy in a  
 wheelchair through the water ya  
 know.

LISA  
We understand.

HENRY  
I tried yelling out for other  
passerby's in a boat, but they kept  
sayin' they'd come back. Never did.

LISA  
We don't believe in passing up  
opportunities to save a life. Isn't  
that right? Joel.

Joel's silence and shifting of his body is his answer.

HENRY  
You reap what you sow, more what  
you sow, later than what you sow  
it. My grandpops over there used to  
tell me.

His grandfather is buried under the blankets.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
So I get it if you were going to  
move on. I would've to. But if you  
pay it forward--

LISA  
--it comes back to you. Joel will  
learn that one day.

JOEL  
Just like someone needs to learn  
that no good deed goes unpunished.

Henry tightens the tourniquet on Joel. Ahhh!

HENRY  
Trust me. That's what I'm trying to  
learn too. We're done here. What's  
the plan?

Joel getting his arm lose again. He still hurts like bloody  
hell.

JOEL  
Lisa will stay here and keep watch  
over your brother, uh--

HENRY  
--Sam.

JOEL  
Sam. Me and you, uh--

HENRY  
--Henry--

JOEL  
--will go get the boat. Or steal  
one if we can.

HENRY  
And we can get food too, while we  
are out there.

JOEL  
I'm not hungry.

HENRY  
(pointing up)  
'He' is. He's also diabetic. His  
blood sugar drops and we'll have  
another problem on our hand.

Joel takes a deep breath.

JOEL  
Let's just head out before all the  
boats are gone and nightfall hits.

Joel departs. Headed down the ladder out of the attic. Lisa  
and Henry wait until he's down.

HENRY  
What's his beef?

JOEL  
Divorce. He only knows survival. He  
doesn't know love.

HENRY  
Should I be worried.

LISA  
Honestly, I don't know. You're the  
one with the gun.

Henry looks at the gun over in the corner next to ammo.

EXT. ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Henry links up with Joel outside.

Lisa enters from the attic onto the rooftop. Sam is pain.

Lisa observes as the two men dive into the water and swim away.

EXT. BOAT DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER

Henry and Sam stand on the outskirts of the chaos. The exit the deep water drenching soak and wet. On dry ground they observe to much awe.

Dozens, of people loot the store. Food. Boats. Fishing rods you name it.

JOEL

You loaded that gun all the way to the max?

HENRY

Did before I left.

JOEL

You feel comfortable killing someone?

Henry hands him then gun the rifle, quickly snatching it back. It hits him.

HENRY

Wait, you've killed someone before?

JOEL

I was a Marine kid.

HENRY

That doesn't answer the question.

JOEL

I'm afraid it did.

HENRY

I'll hold onto it.

Joel doesn't care either way. The two proceed to the chaos.

EXT. FLOODED NEW ORLEANS STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Joel and Henry, gasping for air. Joel steering.

The boat races past the half-sunken cars.

HENRY'S FLOOD HOME

Lisa and Sam are baking in the sun. The ROAR OF A BOAT ENGINE. Lisa sits up the good news.

Seconds later, Joel and Henry arrive to the destroyed home. The boat comes to a halt from full speed. Sam hopping from the boat. The STRESS builds from here.

LISA  
Why you moving so fast?

HENRY  
Joel shot a girl!

LISA  
What?

JOEL  
That's not what happen.

Henry climbing the house on ladder.

HENRY  
That is what happen.

JOEL  
It was by accident damnit. Just load Sam up and we're outta here now.

Joel looks around paranoid.

LISA  
You killed someone?

Henry helps Sam down. Lisa helping him.

JOEL  
I don't know.

LISA  
Joel!

JOEL  
It was by accident damnit, the hell you want me to say. I was trying to scare them off, we had the last boat left. We made off with it, a crowd came. A shot, Bang! The bullet ricocheted I assume--

LISA  
--You assumed.

JOEL

Yes I assumed! I wasn't even aiming  
the gun at him or her or whoever  
the hell it was.

Joel looks down the street. Paranoid. Expecting.

Lisa climbing down. Henry loads Sam into the boat.

LISA

I agreed to represent you in your  
divorce trial. Not an attempted  
murder trial!

JOEL

Oh shut the hell up. You're so got  
damn dramatic wanting to help  
everybody.

Lisa in his face.

LISA

Joel this is simple. What part  
don't you understand. You don't  
have to be so rough with everyone.

JOEL

It was a fricking accident. You  
getting in the boat or not!

LISA

You have no remorse for human life.

JOEL

You don't think I feel f'ed up from  
what happened?

LISA

No you don't because you're  
selfish.

JOEL

You know what your problem is.  
You're too damn nice and helpful.  
You're a magnet for manipulative  
people and predators. People count  
on you too heavily, you're a  
sounding board for everyone's  
problem, but who meets you. Who  
helps you when your needs are met?  
Huh? Huh?

Lisa stunned can't say anything. Joel looks over his shoulder  
once more.

LISA

Why are you rushing us?

JOEL

Because they're coming after us.  
They're hunting us.

HENRY

I kept them off at gunpoint though.

SOUND OF A SPEEDING BOAT. TWO THUGS and The Teenage Girl are in it speeding towards the three. One of the thugs aim a gun. BANG! BANG!

Henry speeds off with the boat. Leaving Joel and Lisa.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sorry!

Joel snatches Lisa underwater.

He covers her mouth. He puts his finger over his to shush her.

Two more Thugs and the girl arrive. They're lost. Can't find the treasure. One thug hands the girl the gun.

THUG ONE

Load it.

He hops out the boat. She loads the revolver. Dropping bullets as she tries.

TEENAGE GIRL

They're wet.

THUG ONE

Find the dry ones.

Joel sees their feet moving closer. He nudges Lisa away.

The two goons continue searching. Like Batman, Joel leaps from the water and with a shiv stabs the first one in the shoulder. Then knocks him out.

Another goon kicks Joel in the weak leg. He falls. The goon on top strangles him underwater.

Joel is about to die. He isn't going to make.

THUMP! Lisa slaps the goon over the back. He isn't phased. He smacks her backward. BLOOM! He's run over by a speeding boat. Henry and his brother. A grand return.

Lisa and Joel stagger to their feet. Joel charges to him with a shiv.

HENRY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Joel takes a swipe. Henry dodges, falling back into the boat. Lisa steps in between, doing her best referee impersonation.

JOEL

You left us!

HENRY

I was scared. Coming back for you two meant putting him at risk.

LISA

He saved us just focus on that.

A very long beat. The heat settles. Joel comes to.

HENRY

If it was the other way around would you have come back for--

BANG! Sam falls.

A few feet away, the Teenage girl stands aiming her gun. She pulls the trigger a few times. All clicks. No blow.

JOEL

Dear no.

Henry moves Sam's hand out the way. There's a large hole protruding through his neck.

HENRY

I know, brother. I know...

He presses on his wound.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Listen to me, I know this hurts, bro. You're gonna be okay, bro. Stay with me. Alright, I'm gonna pick you up. I know, bro. I know it hurts. Come on, bro, please. I know, bro. I know.

He dies in his arms.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sam... Bro... Don't do this to me, bro. Don't do this to me, bro.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 Come on... No, no... Oh no,  
 no, no... Please. Oh, God. Please,  
 please, don't do this. Please.

A moment of silence. Lisa and Joel quietly mourn. Could it be their pending disaster too.

HENRY (CONT'D)  
 Go around, the 9th Ward. Not  
 through it.

Joel nods. A signal they should go.

Lisa quietly declines.

LISA  
 (to Henry)  
 We're not leaving you.

HENRY  
 Everything I had was here.

Joel gently nudges Lisa as he steps away. She's hesitant.

LISA  
 Come with us. You can build a new--

JOEL  
 --Let'em go. He'll be fine.

Joel nods in assurance of his safety. Lisa helplessly is frozen with the urge to speak, but can't. Joel wraps his arm around her, guiding her away.

Henry whips out the gun. BANG! A hero's way out.

LISA  
 Oh my God!

EXT. NEW ORLEANS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Michael driving. Katrina in the passenger seat. The car comes to a stop in front of a body of water that extends to affinity and beyond.

MICHAEL  
 We won't get through this.

KATRINA  
 We gotta park the car. Set out on  
 foot.

DEXTER, a country black male, drives his 4x4 past them, heading into the neighborhood.

MICHAEL  
We could ask them.

KATRINA  
No. Not them. Not the thugs.

Michael notices, DILL, an older white hillbilly rocking back & forth under a blanket in his rocking chair.

MICHAEL  
How bout him. He looks stable.

KATRINA  
Yeah, sure!

The car spins into Dill's front yard. Michael gets out. Lisa too. They both approach.

MICHAEL  
Excuse us, sir. Hi. We need your help. We're, uh, trying to get to the Superdome.

DILL  
Ya trying to git killed?

No--	MICHAEL	KATRINA --We're trying to rescue my son. And we need a way to get there.
------	---------	---

DILL  
First of all, if I had a boat I'd say its suicide and I'd understand.

KATRINA  
You know anybody with a boat?

DILL  
No round here's yonder.

KATRINA  
Guess we'll travel by foot.

MICHAEL  
Can we leave the car here? We don't want anyone to steal it--we'll pay you.

DILL  
Sure.

Dill cocks his shotgun. Take it from under his blanket. This is a stickup.

DILL (CONT'D)  
Don't near neither one of yall  
move.

KATRINA  
Wait what?

Dill whistles to his family.

DILL  
Yall we gotta ride. We outta here.

His wife and two kids burst from out of the home and right into Michael's BMW.

Dill keeps the shotgun and his eyes aiming as he moves past and beyond the two. He gets into the car. Starts it. Throws it in reverse. Katrina gives chase as it speeds backward. The car swerves and speeds off. Katrina in the middle of the street.

KATRINA  
I can't believe this!

The frustration rises. Michael runs to his side.

The roar of a 4x4. Dexter pulls up beside him. Stops.

DEXTER  
I saw what that rat bastard did to  
yall. Can I help?

Katrina and Michael are stunned.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS CITY STREETS - DAY

Joel and Lisa are in the boat. Cruising past the houses, cars, and bodies that float. It's a very somber mode.

Lisa is looking off in deep thought.

JOEL  
You okay back there?

A very long beat.

LISA  
(uncertain)  
Yeah.

Joel looks back her. Her mind drifts in the distance

JOEL  
No you're not.

He stops the boat dead in the middle of the flooded street.

LISA  
Why'd you stop? Aren't we going to  
your son?

Joel gathers up the strength to say something brave. But it's hard for him.

JOEL  
Someone once said I was too  
selfish...well.

LISA  
No. I don't fault you--

JOEL  
I didn't on purposely shoot that person--

LISA (CONT'D)  
--I know.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
I shot them with my weak arm because I was carrying the boat.

LISA (CONT'D)  
I know, I know, I know.  
Listen to me.

Joel folds him arms. Resting on the dashboard of the boat.

LISA (CONT'D)  
You ever look at life and realize sometimes, things happens and you find yourself lost, and suddenly you're standing in a place we don't recognize and can't remember walking-or falling-there, and we're unsure how to get back?

JOEL  
I'm living in it now.

LISA  
I don't mean the obvious, I meant...I've never seen the world so cruel until now. The cop shooting someone trying to eat, the people wanting to fight over a boat, you just...everyone is out for themselves. Where's the spirit and humanity in my city? How do you to find peace in the midst of your storm?

JOEL

Every storm runs out of rain, just like every night runs out of dark.

LISA

Though that's poetic. That's not enough. What you said back there about me being too nice--

JOEL

--I--

LISA

--You meant it. Don't take it back, don't say it was the slip of the tongue, because it's true.

JOEL

You just have a big heart, there's nothing wrong with that.

LISA

That's not true.

JOEL

You just don't know the timing of when to have a big heart and be selfish.

LISA

And a time like this isn't a time to have one?

JOEL

I, I don't know to be honest. I just know what I know.

LISA

And I know what I know.

JOEL

Okay so let's just put this aside and move forward. Let's not overthink this.

She's defeated. Joel sense its.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You're an over thinker aren't you?

LISA

My husband used to read me like you do.

(MORE)

LISA (CONT'D)

He just knew to be the yin to my yang, but God knows I didn't see it that way. I always dedicated myself to my career and law because I always wanted to free those wrongly imprisoned. I put that passion above my family all the time. All I knew was to help out others, all while neglecting my husband and daughter at home. Until I couldn't. And then he left with my daughter. I would give anything just to be back with him. And her.

JOEL

So then we move on.

Insensitive? Joel turns around starts the boat up. And continues going. Lisa shakes her head.

They speed pass a sign that read: SUPERDOME NEXT RIGHT

LISA

Make a right. The Dome should be straight ahead on the next turn.

The boat turn the corner. In the distance. The Superdome.

JOEL

There it is. Few blocks and we're there.

LISA

Stop the boat.

JOEL

Why?

The boat comes to a crawl before it sits.

LISA

Look at the neighborhood.

A few blocks down, hundreds of people are stranded on top of their rooftops and apartment buildings. They wave white flags at a helicopter that's passes by high in the air.

JOEL

Look at how close we are.

LISA

We should go around.

JOEL  
And by around you mean going  
straight through.

Lisa is dejected.

Joel is reassuring.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
If we speed straight through and  
ignore the people, we'll get there  
quicker.

LISA  
Yeah, sure.

She clearly doesn't believe him.

Turning his back to her.

JOEL  
Now which part is the ninth ward?

LISA  
The one that isn't the eighth.

JOEL  
Funny. Looks like we go ahead.

LISA  
And ignore everything.

JOEL  
Everything don't need help.

Lisa sits in the seat. Straps herself in. In one crank, the boat speeds off. Joel steering the way.

MOMENTS LATER

The two in the boat speed through the neighborhood. Hundreds of black survivors scream and demand they stop. Joel is steadfast. Lisa is terrified.

Then, a TEENAGE GIRL #2, runs in the path of the boat with a baby bundled in her arm.

TEENAGE GIRL #2  
Help! Help me!

Joel forces the boat to a stop.

He studies her. Bathed the sunlight, she's sweaty. Dirty and desperate.

Joel looks to the roofs of the homes. People are clamoring for him for help. Give'em a ride. All attention seeking.

JOEL  
Shit, we're sitting ducks.

LISA  
We should help her.

He looks at her closely. Something just ain't right.

JOEL  
That's no damn baby. Buckle down.

He shifts gears.

LISA  
What!

Joel floors it. The boat roars towards the teenage girl.

She whips out a gun, that we thought was a baby, and fires. BANG! BANG!

Joel dodges the shot. She dives out of the way.

Dozens come out from behind the submerged cars.

He swerves the boat around them. Dodging bricks and glass bottles.

Oh snap! A car in front. BOOM! The boat crashes into the parked car.

INSTANT BLACKNESS

A very long beat.

Up again. Our heroes come to.

JP, Gucci clothes wearing alpha male approaches with FETTY, a steely-eyed, heavysset black guy. PETEY and NEIL are rough-cut black guys. They form a circle with guns aiming, around Lisa and Joel.

JP  
Hands up hot shot!

The two slowly raise their hands.

PETEY  
New guy! His hands move, blast him.

Neil aims his shotgun at Joel's head.

JOEL

You know what you're doing, kid?

Neil nods: yes. The truth is; he doesn't.

LISA

What's going down Alonzo?

FETTY

Woah she knows ya government JP.

JOEL

You know him?

LISA

I got him off on conspiracy to murder. He did the shit though.

JP

I still had to do time.

LISA (CONT'D)

For a lesser charge.

JP (CONT'D)

Doesn't matter.

LISA (CONT'D)

What do you vampires want?

JP (CONT'D)

You're getting taxed your husband's shit.

LISA

Tax my dick, he's not my husband.

PETTEY

These the people that stole our boat and shot Peanut's ear off at the depot.

JP

Oh this the nigga. You got some motherfucking balls coming through the hood you stole from.

(to Fetty and Petey)

Load grams up.

Fetty and Pettey lift Grandma from her wheelchair and put her in the boat.

LISA

And we're supposed to stand still and let you horse fuck me?

JP

If the hole fits.

(to Neil)

Lemme tell you a secret. If you kill a lawyer, they have to be your slave in the afterlife.

(MORE)

JP (CONT'D)  
(points to Lisa)  
There you go. Start an entourage.

NEIL  
You want me to kill her?

Pettey, Fetty, JP snicker, crack smiles.

JP  
No, I want you to make love to her.  
Part of the initiation kid.

Neil thinks on it. Lowers the gun.

JP smiles. Whips a pistol out his pocket.

JP (CONT'D)  
Can't get shit done unless you do  
it yourself.

JOEL  
Lisa, Run!

Lisa hops out and makes a mad dash for it.

JP approaches the Joel.

JP  
Let' er go. It's the sniper here  
that's attractive.

Joel strikes -- twists back JP's gun sharply -- sweeps away his legs with a kick. JP finds himself on his back, Joel's knee on his neck, staring down the maw of his own pistol.

JOEL  
It ends here.

Lisa runs. Quickly hides behind a trash can and steals a show at what's going on in hell between Joel and crew.

JP  
That's what I'm talking about.  
You guys see this! That's it, man!

Fetty presses his gun against Joel's temple.

JP (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
You even used your Batman voice on  
me. Man was I scared.

Joel's free hand inches to his gun tucked into his pants -

JOEL  
 (super-calm)  
 Hey, sorry, man. Relax, okay?

-- and snatches it -- He swings on Pettey -- who swings his .45 on Joel. A three-way standoff.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 Wanna shoot, go ahead. You'll be wiping my ass in hell.

PETTY  
 JP. This is bad.

JP  
 I hear you. I know you're angry!--  
 Both yall niggas put down your  
 guns.

FETTY  
 Hell naw I ain't doing shit.

JP  
 Ey, let me engineer this shit my  
 nigga. Both of you: guns down. Now.

Fetty and Pettey reluctantly lower their weapons.

Joel lifts his knee off JP's neck, stands and backs away, aiming both pistols at JP, who climbs to his feet. He laughs.

JP (CONT'D)  
 (lighting a cigarette)  
 My grandma needs this boat to get  
 to the hospital and we got twelve  
 kids that need food. Twelve. Your  
 girlfriend is alone out there and  
 you're here alone with us. No  
 protection. Catch my drift.

Joel and JP trade a look.

JP (CONT'D)  
 I hope you die tomorrow rather than  
 today.

Joel pulls the trigger on both guns. Click! They're both empty.

JP (CONT'D)  
 Oh you done fucked up now. Get'em!

A crowd immediately swarms Joel and they beat his ass to the white meat.

Lisa cowers in agony.

Loud kicks. And yelps from Joel.

A black burly man, The HULK, shoves his way through the crowd. He picks up Joel. Throws him over his shoulder.

A 24-inch steel rebar attached to a broken concrete on a car. The Hulk slams Joel on it. AHHHHHHH! The rebar protrudes through his belly.

LISA

Joel!

Lisa runs over to her friend.

JP

Let'er go. We got what we came for.

Lisa shoves herself through the angry crowd.

JP (CONT'D)

Let's get grandma and anyone else to the hospital. We don't need no more blood on our hands.

As others jump in the boat, Lisa drags Joel off of the car to the alley.

His POV: Everything is blurry.

LISA

Joel, Joel. Stay with me. Stay with me. Joel! Joel!

Fade out.

INT. WALMART - MOMENTS LATER

The store is gushing with people as if it was Black Friday.

Every man for themselves. Clothing racks are empty. Shampoo bottles, footballs, toys, and paper and mud streaks litter the floor. Some fluorescent lights flicker.

A white woman carts out with a fifty-inch flat screen and a middle-aged man runs out with a \$600 power washer.

Lisa limps through the aisles with a rifle in hand. She's searching for something, but what?

Lisa finds a shirt, thread, and needle. Snatches it and runs away.

## PHARMACY AREA

Looters shuffle through the medications as a PHARMACIST pushes and pulls people away. A few others make it past her and run out with bags of medicine.

She rushes into the pharmacy where there are at least a dozen people going bananas looting medicine. THREE PHARMACIST sit together bunched up side-by-side, terrified, unsure what to do.

She searches through the medicine shelves. Nothing there.

Looks behind herself in another shelf. Bandages. She takes it.

## PHARMACY BACKROOM

Joel lies on the floor. His gaping hole in his stomach is sewed up, but blood is still everywhere. He's barely conscious. A COLLEGE NURSE kneels over him. Her attire reeks of surgery.

Lisa enters. Handful of stuff. She sprints to and slides to Joel. He's no good. Blue lips, blue fingernails.

LISA

Help me out.

Lisa takes Joel by the legs and pulls him closer, putting his wounded leg on her shoulder. She wraps it with a towel. Tightly.

LISA (CONT'D)

(pointing to bag)

Grab that. Unwrap it. Put it over your mom's mouth. Squeeze every three seconds.

The College Nurse grabs a bag. Tears it open. It's an AMBU bag. She places it over Joel's mouth and squeezes.

With the leg still on his shoulder, Lisa finds a syringe and a vile of dopamine. Places the needle in the bottle, pulls liquid into the syringe and sticks it a vein in her arm.

After a few seconds, he comes to.

COLLEGE NURSE

Where'd you learn all this?

LISA  
 Ex-husband was a nurse himself.  
 (noticing someone)  
 Hey, hey!

A COP rushing past backtracks to the aisle she's on. He spots something.

The cop rushes into the room.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 Thank you, thank you I need you to  
 transport--

The cop reaches on the shelf above her, grabs some baby food, and departs.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 The hell.  
 (to the Nurse)  
 Listen stay here. I gotta find  
 someone with a car to get us to the  
 hospital.

Lisa departs.

WALMART AISLES

A white kid rides past Lisa on a bike. A few kids in front of her throw a football back and forth between them.

Lisa navigates her way through the crowd of people who walk past with clothes, car tires, more televisions, and household items.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 (to the people that pass)  
 You gotta ride? I needa car?

But then, she notices something. Yet someone too familiar.

As she moves down the picked-over aisles, HARRY and APRIL swipe items off the shelves into the basket -- toilet paper, can food, a bag of chips.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 Harry! April!

APRIL  
 Mom!

April, 10-years-old, runs to Lisa. Hugs her ever so tightly.

APRIL (CONT'D)  
We thought you were dead.

LISA  
No. Thought you two would've left  
the city by now.

HARRY  
We would've, but she--we didn't  
want to leave without you.

APRIL  
Now that we found you can we leave.

LISA  
It's not that simple.

APRIL  
Yes it is.

HARRY LISA  
What do you mean--Lisa let's go! Cut it Harry!

The flame is doused before it takes off.

LISA (CONT'D)  
A have a friend. He needs help.

HARRY  
(firm and demanding)  
Who is he?

LISA  
He's the reason I'm alive.

HARRY  
Then he can handle himself.

LISA  
He's injured. We need to get him to  
the hospital.

HARRY  
Not possible.

LISA  
Why?

HARRY  
Because the nearest hospital is  
floored with victims. Not to  
mention the powers out.

LISA  
Then we go outside the city.

HARRY  
He'll be dead by then.

LISA  
You don't even know how bad he's  
hurt!

Harry pushes the cart to leave. Lisa is a pole who stands right in front of him.

LISA (CONT'D)  
We're not leaving him.

Stepping to Lisa and invading her face.

HARRY	LISA (CONT'D)
WE, are leaving. Do you know what I've seen?	Do you know what I've been through.

HARRY (CONT'D)	LISA (CONT'D)
I don't care.	You've never cared.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
I care to get my daughter to  
safety. Don't you!

April's bright innocent eyes are a thing to consider.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
You're only taking him there to  
die.

A very long beat.

HARRY (CONT'D)  
I'm not asking you.

Lisa steps back. She looks toward the pharmacy area.

Poor chaos behind the counters. And with that, they're off.

The College Nurse standing at the door observes Lisa,  
following Harry and April out of the door. Joel groans.

EXT. WALMART PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Doors slamming shut. Harry, Lisa, and April get into the car.

They are tired. Breathing between all three is heavy. You can  
cut the tension with a hot butter knife

Harry starts the car. Pulls away.

INT. WALMART - NIGHT

Joel is sleep. Alone in the room. Darkness surrounds him, except that of a small flashlight that's lit next to him. And a note.

THE RATTLE OF OIL DRUM OUTSIDE. He awakes. It sounds like someone is dragging a barrel.

Confused. He sits up. Wipes his face. Notice the note against the flashlight. He picks it up. Read it in one move. It reads: I'M SORRY.

His drops it. Grabs the flashlight, rises in so much pain sloths himself out of the room into...

AN EMPTY AND DARK WALLMART

His light waves in the darkness. Aisles are empty. The entire store is ransacked like a tornado that has swept through.

THE SOUND OF THE DRAGGING DRUM.

Joel is like a crippled soldier dragging himself to freedom. His stitched wound still bleeds. Leaving a trail.

Towards the entrance strange light begins to flicker against the floors. A flare that slowly grows, brightening the darkness.

WALMART PARKING LOT

Suddenly the CRY OF A WOMAN... or maybe an animal. His eyes shoot open...he looks up in time to see a GLOWING fire in the parking lot.

Joel focuses on the shape... realizes it's a FIGURE... dragging a brush along the ground, tossing it into the makeshift fire... a barbecue around a adult alligator.

Joel, hidden, stares through the dancing flames... to the Figure on the other side... still isn't sure if what he's seeing is real or not. So he... starts toward the flames.

He sees DEAD POSSUMS on the ground, arrows sticking out of their bodies.

The Figure becomes clear...a HOMELESS MAN... braided hair, missing teeth, dirty skin... cutting at the alligator carcass with a SHARPENED knife.

Silence. Joel looks at him from the distance. His head filled with the noises of his empty stomach.

CLOSE ON The Homeless Man putting small pieces of flesh in his mouth and chewing calmly.

Suddenly, he hears the sound of something approaching and in one graceful move, the Homeless is standing... has a makeshift bow aiming a HAND-CUT ARROW at Joel.

Joel freezes. He and the Homeless eye each other...

Joel spreads his arms... supplicant. The Homeless man can see the desperation. Joel slowly points toward the opposite side of the alligator, then motions to his mouth.

The Homeless Man stares back... Joel not sure if he's about to release that arrow or not. But instead, the Man just lowers the bow... crouches back down... uses the blade on his meal...

...so Joel walks into the ring of flame, kneels down...tears a strip of meat from the carcass... shoves it into his mouth.

And without a word, the two men crouch across from each other... tearing away bloody chunks of flesh from the remains, and shoving them into their mouths...

EXT. WALMART PARKING LOT - DAWN

From high above... Joel, the Homeless Man, and the alligator at the center of that glowing ring of fire.

EXT. WALMART PARKING LOT - LATER

The charred grass forms a smoldering circle around the alligator.

Joel and the Homeless Man are still on opposite sides of the circle... both now just sitting... watching each other...wondering if they can trust the other...

...as they each battle exhaustion... eyes blinking... fighting to stay open.

Joel... as his eyes open again... He is terribly pale and clammy, beads of sweat across his head.

His POV, the Homeless Man rising, walks over and stands over him.

Joel scrambles back...

...as the Homeless Man just stands there... then points to Joel's wounds.

HOMELESS MAN  
(signs and talks)  
You hurt. They abandoned you.

Joel realizing the man is deaf. Does his best sign language. It's all gibberish.

JOEL  
I don't know sign language.

Joel looks away in more disbelief.

HOMELESS MAN  
That's okay. Look at me when you talk. I read lips.

That's a relief.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)  
Let's find a hospital for you.

Joel feverishly shaking his head no. His gestures dome, throwing a football. His gestures carrying a baby. Points in a specific direction.

JOEL  
No. I need to go to the Superdome.  
My son is there.

HOMELESS MAN  
Your baby is at the Superdome. We shall go there.

Joel removes the wedding ring. Takes some spare dollars from his pocket... holds it out to The Homeless Man.

The Homeless Man shakes his head. Showing his a cheap necklace with a crucifix.

THE HOMELESS MAN  
God will pay me back. He always does.

The Homeless Man walks away.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Joel and the Homeless Man walk into some nearby trees. Tied to a stump, is a blow up raft. The Homeless Man unties the boat.

EXT. BAYOU - LATER

The Homeless Man and Joel ride in the boat. RAIN begins to fall down over them.

EXT. WILDERNESS/STREAM - DAY

It is pouring down raining. Joel beside the stream, filling his hands with water. His hands tremble as he tries to sip from it. He spits it out. Water is disgusting.

Joel throws a glance back to the Homeless Man who, on his hands and knees, praises God. Looking towards.

Joel admires the man's faith, only so slightly.

The Homeless Man praise settles. A roar of thunder. He moves through the trees... motions for Joel to follow.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The Homeless Man, dragging the boat, and Glass walk through the forest. Huge RAINDROPS falling all around them.

Joel leans his head back, looks like he is about to fall backwards. But instead he opens his mouth to catch the rain. Then, like a child, another and another.

The Homeless Man sees this. Smiles. Begins to do the same. But while he does so, hands Joel a canteen.

Joel takes it and drinks it. It's good. The Homeless Man continues catching raindrops with his mouth open like a child.

It dawns on Joel that the man was praising his way through. Not looking for water from the sky.

Joel can't help it, he begins to laugh at his own absurdity. The Homeless Man hears this and starts laughing as well. They walk on like this...

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS - DAY

Joel lies on the ground in a fetal position, shivering, teeth chattering. Alone. Fever and infection taking hold.

EXT. TENT CITY GROUND - SIMULTANEOUS

The Homeless Man whistles. People homeless, young and old alike emerge from their tents. The Homeless Man signs and speaks, in audible to us. Then he walks off. Some follow him. Others hurry back to their tents.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

The Homeless Man leads a few other people to Joel.

The HELP runs over to Joel, drops it onto the ground. Then lifts a weak Joel up to a sitting position. Glass is trembling even worse than before, barely conscious. One removes his shirt exposing his HORRIBLY INFECTED ARM... the wounds oozing and swollen.

A volunteer turns her face away from the smell.

The rest hurry up and get to work on him.

Joel moans in pain, unable to move.

Someone pours alcohol over his wounds

Joel jolts from the pain and passes out. Finally, darkness...

EXT. FLOODED STREETS - EVENING

ANGLE ON JOEL'S FACE eyes closed. PULL BACK to reveal that he is being carried on a stretcher. The movement... gently awakening him.

For a moment he is disoriented. He looks around. TWO MEN AND TWO WOMEN carry him as they walk through knee high water.

A QUICK MONTAGE

People all around dozens are making their trek through the water. All normal citizens of the city.

TWO WHITE MAN carry and elderly lady off the porch.

A BREASTFEEDING MOM breastfeed her six year old child.

A NEWS HELICOPTER above captures. Angry people on the roof, screams for help.

Another shot of people on the roof, waves white sheets to surrender.

Another shot of bodies just floating in the water.

A shot of a NATIONAL GUARD helicopter hovering over a house, as a guardsmen helps load a poor citizen into a rescue buoy.

INSIDE A HOUSE. Two children hunker in the corner. Their MOTHER is dead on the floor.

ON A BRIDGE family plays MONOPOLY. A smile on their faces, as prisoners' in orange jumpsuits are passed out on the pavement.

People rescue people from homes, trapped cars.

A group of people in front of church, hold hands. They pray to GOD. Moments later, with tambourines and jazz instruments they play. It's joyous.

END MONTAGE

Joel closes his eyes again. This time with hope.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS CITY STREETS - DAY

Dexter drives the truck. Michael and Katrina are in the back. This is a short montage Dexter loading up kids, the elderly, the handicapped, and putting them in the bed of the pickup. They're all black. Their spirits are high. And grateful.

Michael and Katrina countenance is apologetic.

INT. SUPERDOME - MOMENTS LATER

The truck pulls up to the Superdome. Hoards of people.

Michael and Katrina hop out. The Driver blows a horn and says goodbye. Katrina waves them goodbye.

The truck pulls off and away from the dilapidated dome.

Katrina observes the trauma. A daunting task ahead?

INT. SUPERDOME - MOMENTS LATER

Katrina takes slow methodical steps in the hallway of terror.

Michael walks beside her. Dirty kids huddle up next to a concession stand. A man defecates right beside them.

She looks into the bathroom. Her POV:

Toilets boil with brown water spilling onto the floor.

Katrina covers her mouth from the foul odor.

More atrocities occur. A two-year-old girl sleeps in a pool of urine. Crack vials litter a restroom. Blood stains the walls next to vending machines smashed by teenagers.

TIFFANY, teen, cradling her three-week-old runs up to Katrina.

TIFFANY

(panicky and crying)

You got diapers? You got diapers.  
We pee on the floor. We like  
animals. They gaven me two diapers  
and told to scrap dem off when dey  
git dirty and use dem again.

Katrina can't take it anymore, shrugs the woman off, and runs down the hallway. Michael follows.

KATRINA

(screaming and searching)

Billy! Billy! Joel! Mrs. Kramer!

EXT. DOWN THE STREET FROM THE SUPERDOME - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE OF JOEL. We pull back and he wakes up. For a moment he is disoriented. He looks around. The Homeless Man sitting Indian style beside him, smile.

He stretches his arm out, holding the shoulder with the opposite hand, surprised at the absence of pain.

The Homeless Man points to the skyline. The Superdome is down the street.

Joel's eyes widen with hope. He lunges in for a hug to the Homeless Man.

Joel shoots to his feet, immediately the pain is felt in his side.

THE HOMELESS MAN

(signing & talking)

Luck runs out, but safety is good  
for life.

A long beat. The pain takes a moment to subside.

JOEL

What do I owe you?

THE HOMELESS MAN  
 (signing & talking)  
 I had nothing before the storm, I  
 lost nothing after it. But I always  
 had someone...Go!

Joel nods. A praying hands of thank you. Joel limps down the street towards the Dome.

INT. SUPERDOME - MOMENTS LATER

Joel limps running through the crowd of people. The odors and sights haven't slowed him down.

JOEL  
 Mom! Billy! Billy!

He's captured the attention of those he passes by.

BILLY (O.S.)  
 (screaming)  
 Dad! Dad! Daddy!

He stops seeing the light from inside the football arena.

That's where he thinks the voice of Billy is coming from. He runs into the...

INT. SUPERDOME STANDS - CONTINUOUS

...Overlooking the football field, Joel stands at the top section.

JOEL  
 (searching)  
 Billy! Mom! Billy!

BILLY (O.S.)  
 Over here dad!

JOEL  
 (searching and yelling)  
 Where are you?

BILLY  
 (waving)  
 Over here!

Joel spots Billy waving a few feet down. Joel sprints down the steps to Billy who wears a big smile.

Little Billy crawls up the steps to him as he is too short to take adult steps.

Like a sailor home from deployment, Joel reaches him, picks him up and gives him the biggest hug a father could give a son. Victory at last. Joel cries.

JOEL

(crying)

Oh, I missed you. I'm glad you're safe. I love you, I love you, I love you!

BILLY

I miss you too dad. Mom is here. I found her.

Joel stops hugging him.

JOEL

(concerned)

Where?

Billy points a few rows down. Katrina, Grandma, and Michael are sitting down, all stare in relief at Joel.

Joel picks up his son. The trot down the stairs is slow. Tension perhaps.

Katrina stands to greet him. She is dressed simply and no longer has a tan. Nevertheless, she is still stunningly beautiful.

Joel stands watching her, his knees weak. It is impossible not to fall in love with her all over again.

GRANDMA

Hi son.

JOEL

Hi mom. I'm sorry. You okay?

GRANDMA

I'm making it. But I don't have my insulin.

Joel puts Billy down. Rushes to his mother's side.

JOEL

We'll get you some help. I promise.

GRANDMA  
 (coughing)  
 Promises are like pie crust, thin  
 and easily broken.

Joel whistles for help.

JOEL  
 Hey! We need some help over here.

The guards, attending to someone else, notice his call. One guard holds up his finger, letting him know to wait and they'll be there.

Joel snaps back around to Katrina, who stands watching him.

He takes a step forward. He nods hello to Michael, not realizing he's the same guy who drove off with Katrina the last time they saw another.

Katrina holds out her hand, for a handshake. Taken back from this unloving gesture, Joel now realizes something isn't right.

KATRINA  
 Joel can we talk.

The two walk away towards some empty seats some yards away.

They sit.

KATRINA (CONT'D)  
 You look, well. All things  
 considering.

JOEL  
 So do you.

There is a self-conscious pause. Neither knows what to say.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
 (still can't believe it)  
 So...you're here?

KATRINA  
 Yeah. I saw it on the news how bad  
 it got. I came down from  
 Shreveport, after spending a week  
 in New York.

JOEL  
 Where?

Joel looks back at Michael. He's placed two and two together.

Flabbergasted.

KATRINA

Yeah. Those places. I woulda thought that you would be back at our home, outta the way. Not running to danger, let alone dragging our son with you.

JOEL

Whoa wait. You couldn't possibly think-

KATRINA (CONT'D)

--I don't know what to think.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I didn't run to danger and drag my son here on pur-  
(correcting and changing his tone)  
Do you really think I would think it would get this bad?

KATRINA

I don't know.

JOEL

You left my son with me because you felt he wouldn't be safe around you!

KATRINA

(apologetic)  
I know, what I said.

JOEL

You got some nerve.

KATRINA

Just! Okay. We lived a hundred miles away. Just why is our son here?

JOEL

You want to do this now? No, no, no no, we're not. Our first priority is to get the hell outta here, then we'll talk.

KATRINA

You know what. You're right. You're right. I want my son back.

JOEL

(as if he heard wrongly)  
You want what?!

KATRINA

I want my son. I want my son.  
I make safer decisions.

JOEL

Are out of your cotton-picking  
mind?

KATRINA

Cut the theatrics acting was never  
your thing.

(trying to explain)

Listen to me... You and I, had a  
horse shit of a marriage

(hastily)

Look, don't get so defensive, okay?  
It was probably as much my fault as  
it was yours... Anyway when I left  
I was really screwed up-

JOEL

--Katrina, I don't give a-

KATRINA

(she will be heard)

All my life I'd either been  
somebody's daughter or somebody's  
wife, or somebody else's mother.  
Then all of a sudden, I was a  
thirty-two-year-old, highly  
neurotic woman who had just walked  
out on her husband and child. I  
went to New York because that was  
about as far away as I could get.  
Only... I guess it wasn't far  
enough. So I started going to a  
shrink.

(leaning forward, very  
sincere)

I've had time to think. I've been  
through some changes. I've learned  
a lot about myself.

JOEL

Such as?

Silence.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Come on, Katrina, what did you  
learn?

There is a long beat of silence, then:

KATRINA  
(quiet, determined)  
I learned that I want my son.

He reacts as though he has been slapped.

JOEL  
Katrina, go be a mother. Get married, have kids. Don't get married, have kids. Do whatever you want. I don't give a damn. Just leave me out of it - and leave my son out of it.

KATRINA  
Do you understand why I left?

JOEL  
I don't give a damn!

KATRINA  
You don't remember us talking about moving to Florida.

JOEL  
We discussed things. A lot of things. We talked about having a second child, buying a new couch. It never happened.

KATRINA  
You turned down the job in Florida.

JOEL  
Because I didn't like Florida and the pay was horrible. It was great here.

KATRINA  
You think it was great?

JOEL  
You know what the hell I meant!

KATRINA  
I don't. And that's the problem. You never considered me.

JOEL  
Come on! I always considered you. You WERE happy, until you decided you weren't.

KATRINA

You think happiness is a switch I can just turn on!

JOEL

We agreed before we married that we are responsible for our own happiness. We agreed to not place that burden on each other.

KATRINA

Have some emotional intelligence. A simple consideration would've went miles.

JOEL

We had a home here. Stability here. Why leave it?

KATRINA

The only reason we didn't move is because you can't imagine desires other than your own unless they're forced on you.

JOEL

Okay fine, I was a selfish husband. I was probably selfish boyfriend too, but guess what, you married me.

KATRINA

And it was the worst decision of my life.

JOEL

You really think I went ou--Good grief, yeah you're right. We need a divorce.

KATRINA

You put me through hell in our marriage.

JOEL

I gave you a great marriage.

KATRINA

You cheated!

JOEL

After you stopped having sex with me first.

KATRINA

And now you'll going to put our son through hell just like you did me.

JOEL

You walked out on *US*. I have to do what's best for me and him, since you left.

KATRINA

How about you ask what he wants.

JOEL

Go to hell.

KATRINA

No seriously, ask him what he wants. A boy needs his mother.

JOEL

And how would you know!

KATRINA

Because he told me.

JOEL

He's Five! He's going to tell you what you want to hear.

KATRINA

He told me he lives with his grandma, cause you couldn't cut it.

A child's cry is heard in the background.

JOEL

He didn't say that!

KATRINA

Not the last part, but I know you. I know why you did it. I know why we're here. You're fighting for something you don't even WANT, let alone take care of.

JOEL

I'm here now.

KATRINA

You weren't there before!  
(doesn't take the bait)  
You know what. You're just like your father.

Stepping to her and in her face.

JOEL

I swear to God, I've never slapped the shit out of you, but there's a FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING, HOW DARE YOU COMPARE ME TO HIM.

Not intimidated.

KATRINA

Easy, he wasn't there.

A silent rage.

KATRINA (CONT'D)

Go on. Hit me!

Charlies steps back. Kicking multiple stadium chairs.

JOEL

Why do you hate me! I just wanted you to love me.

KATRINA

That's the thing Joel. I did. I loved you so much that I didn't love myself. You just don't know the sacrifices a woman makes to be a mother and wife.

JOEL

I never ask you to sacrifice anything. *YOU* gave it up willingly.

Katrina stamps her feet and shakes her fists like a child having a tantrum.

KATRINA

See that's what I'm talking about you. Selfish here. Selfish in the bedroom. Your penis is small. You don't drink water.

JOEL

You have a smell to you.

KATRINA

You're Godless. And arrogant.

JOEL

So are you.

KATRINA

Your average at best. Nothing is great about you.

JOEL

And you cut yourself. You're suicidal. You have mental issues galore that even a God himself, if he existed, couldn't fix. Screw you. I hope you die in a plane crash, car crash. I hope you get raped by a serial killer and murdered afterwards.

Wow. She's tearful.

KATRINA

If you can't discuss this rationally-

JOEL (CONT'D)

(getting to his feet)  
Go screw yourself you dumb selfish b--.

Michael, suddenly appearing, has extends the "envelope" to Joel, much to his confusion.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(snatching the envelope)  
What the hell is this?

He opens it, but is interrupted by the coughing and gagging of his mother as she's being loaded onto the stretcher by the guards.

Joel, dropping the envelope rushes over to Grandma just as Katrina, stumbles upon the child that cries child crying.

Its Billy. And he's been observing them the entire time.

Katrina is immediately let down.

JOEL (CONT'D)

What's happening? What's happening?

Grandma's eyes roll to the back of her head. She seizures. The tremors are violent.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(shocked)  
No! No!

GUARD

We gotta get her outta here now!

Let's move.

The five guards each grab a side of the stretcher and together they carry it up the steps. Joel goes with them.

Joel looks back to Katrina. She's picking up Billy's belongings.

JOEL  
(screaming)  
Come with me. Come with me don't do  
this.

Katrina ignores him. With Billy and Michael in hand, they dash up the steps. Far away from Joel.

GUARD  
And we're up let's move.

The men keep moving. Joel has a choice. Go after his dying mother or go after his son and wife.

JOEL  
Don't do this to me!

Joel follows the guards with the stretcher into...

INT. SUPERDOME HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Guards rush down the hallways. Joel is right behind them.

Katrina runs in the opposite direction.

The crowd grows angry as Grandma is being carried away.

RANDOM WOMAN  
What about my son, he's bleeding  
from the mouth.

RANDOM WOMAN#2 (O.S.)  
It's because we're black isn't it.  
Fuck you!

The guardsmen ignore the cries for help as they exit into...

EXT. SUPERDOME TO CONVENTION CENTER BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

...the bright sunny humid day where cries for help loiter the air. The screams and pleas are deafening.

Joel feels the tightness in his shoulder blades, arm, chest, jaw, left arm, and upper abdomen.

Joel's POV:

He hears himself breathing heavily over the heavy screams as if he's fatigued. His vision spins like a drunken man.

For some odd reason, he's very sweaty, however he continues to tag along as they enter...

INT. CONVENTION CENTER FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Guardsmen steadily rush through the hallways until they find an open spot in the room filled with hundreds of sick and elderly. Joel trails behind them dragging along. He vomits.

Some distance away Lisa and April, now patched up, spot Joel struggling to stand on his two feet.

Lisa sprints to Joel. He is damn near crawling to the stretcher where doctors have come to work on Grandma.

JOEL  
(weak but determined)  
I'm coming. Don't die.

Joel reaches his mother's side just as Lisa reaches his.

DOCTOR  
She has no pulse. We're losing her.  
Get the defibrillator.

Lisa cradles Joel in her arms.

JOEL  
Save her.

LISA  
Someone please for the life of God  
help us.

A doctor rushes over to Joel's side as the sound of the heart monitor goes flat.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A new day. Joel lies in the bed quietly and peacefully asleep as the sun rays shine through the window. The birds are chirping outside.

Hold for a beat as we take in the serenity, hearing the fountain splash outside.

Lisa knocks on the already opened door.

Joel wakes.

Lisa stands over him.

LISA

You know they say you know you've found a good person when you two can fight well and survive with one another.

JOEL

Where the hell am I?

LISA

You're at Charity hospital. You had a heart attack and they brought you here.

Waving flashlights fill the hallway. Nurses and doctors run down the hall to the next emergency.

JOEL

Why here?

LISA

The morgue was packed.

A beat.

Joel takes some time to gather his thoughts.

JOEL

Where's mom?

LISA

Your mother...

Lisa sees the anxiousness in Joel's eyes. She looks away as she can't answer him. Joel's reaction says it all.

LISA (CONT'D)

They put her in the freezer at the Superdome. Their focus is preserving the living.

JOEL

The dead can wait.

Joel looks away in disbelief. Tears flood his eyes and his throat tightens.

LISA

Did you find him?

JOEL

Yeah.

LISA  
Is he safe?

A very long beat. He's processing his mother's death.

JOEL  
Maybe.

Joel jumps out of bed, but he clutches his chest hunched over, kneeling to the floor. Lisa is up to her feet, and by his side in one move. He's still weak.

LISA  
What are you doing where are you going?

Lisa helps him to his feet.

JOEL  
I need to be alone. I need to be with my son.

LISA  
No Joel you need rest.

Joel shoves her away.

JOEL  
For what! To sit hear and die alone like my mother.

Joel flops to the bed. Slowly putting himself under the covers.

Tears flood her eyes. She just stands there.

After what seems like an eternity of getting under the sheets, he's finally snug. He slams on the pillow.

A beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
If you're going to sit there and look stupid and cry, just leave.

A beat.

Lisa rushes to the chair, grabs her purse and heads to the door all in one swift move.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
I don't know why you brought ya ass in here anyways.

In the doorway she stops. The frustration within her wants out.

LISA  
(calming the bull)  
Look, I'm sorry I left.

JOEL  
Just go!

LISA  
I left because I learned a lesson  
from you.

JOEL  
--Oh bullshit.

Lisa turns to Joel.

LISA  
I learned I to put my family first  
before I put others. Isn't that  
what you tried to do.

JOEL  
Emphasis on tried. But someone got  
in my motherfuckin' way.

LISA  
You're really blaming me for not  
having your family.

Joel's nose is in the air.

JOEL  
If I got there earlier. I'd have my  
son and we'd be gone and my mother  
would still be alive.

Lisa rushes to him. Like chastising a toddler.

LISA  
You need to realize that you have a  
fucked up way about doing things.

JOEL  
Oh really how?

LISA  
You chose survival over love.

JOEL  
What else was I supposed to do.

LISA

There are people we could've helped today instead of just fighting for to get to your family, you shot the girl--

JOEL

--By accident.

LISA

You were bent on ignoring the people in the ninth ward.

JOEL

It was shorter.

LISA

You lost your wife twice already...You lost your home. You lost your mom and you lost your son and for what reason...To work on some stupid cell phone tower that snapped in half anyways, you could've just took your son, mother and you and just left. No... you ignored all the signs and put money first. You, the president, the mayor, all of you, me included. That's some messed up shit.

JOEL

You wouldn't know a damn thing about survival.

LISA

I know today! I may not know shit else, but I know today.... I know what I know. I don't know what I don't know. And I don't know what I need to know. But when I know it. I knows it. And the one thing I do know...Is when a man only knows survival, and never love, his girl will leave him every time.

JOEL

I still gotta get at my wife and son.

LISA

You don't know where they are.

JOEL

They returned home goddamn it.

LISA  
And how do you know that?

JOEL  
Because I have hope bitch!

A very long beat.

Lisa edges back. Calm. Hurt. Tears in her gentle voice.

LISA  
I like your tenacity. I'm sorry for  
your lost...I not only came back  
here as a favor to still be your  
lawyer...I came back here as...as  
ah...as a friend....you want your  
family back, the car is downstairs.

A very long beat.

JOEL  
You came back here for solely me?

LISA  
You're a friend, who has potential  
to be family.

Joel has to swallow his pride. And it's hard. Closing his eyes.

JOEL  
Sorry for calling you a bitch.

LISA  
Its...It's okay. I know I can be at  
times.

Joel hugs Lisa tightly. Lisa has a mixture of a cry and laugh. Joel smiles, rubbing her back. They pull away.

JOEL  
Thank you. Cause I really didn't  
know how I was going to get home.

LISA  
You could always take those big  
dumbo ears and fly.

They both laugh.

JOEL  
Yeah...I could.

A beat. Shifting gears.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
So the car is outside right?

INT. CHARITY HOSPITAL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lisa leads Joel through the dark hallways. It's filled with sweaty and overworked nurses and doctors who help with the victims on the floor.

EXT. CHARITY HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Outside of Charity hospital is flooded with five feet of water. Boats are pulled up in the front entrance. Nurses, EMT and volunteers help onload and lift people into wheelchairs and gurneys.

Lisa with Joel in arm enter outside from the hospital.

LISA  
Excuse me. We need a boat going two miles north side.

A OLD VOLUNTEER in the boat awaits.

OLD VOLUNTEER  
I'm picking up people that way to drop them off here. I'll take ya.

Lisa leads Joel to the boat.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS FLOODED STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Bright Sunny day. The boat, being driven by the Volunteer speeds through the flooded streets. The destruction is same as before. No change.

JOEL  
So I decided to go with a different lawyer?

LISA  
Why?

JOEL  
If you think the ocean isn't important, imagine Earth without it. Mars comes to mind. No ocean, no life support system.

LISA  
What does that mean?

Reaching into his back pocket for his wallet

JOEL

I don't believe in robbing my  
support system. I have another  
lawyer I'll use.

He takes out the card.

FLASHBACK TO THE OFFICE AGENCY: David holding out a card.  
Joel takes it. Looks at it.

Joel's POV:

The law office of Shaunessy and Nelson.

BACK TO PRESENT

Joel nods. Silently thanking David.

He looks in front of him: a dry street approaching. A car  
awaits. Henry and April emerge from the car. Eagerly  
expecting

They arrive at the edge of the flood, hop out and run to the  
to the car.

APRIL

Mom, that was quick.

LISA

I know, get in the back seat. Joel  
you're in the front. We're going to  
Joel's home.

HENRY

Hey, sorry about leaving you back  
there man.

JOEL

You came back that's all that  
matters.

Joel and Henry give one another the man's handshake/hug. They  
get in car and pull off.

EXT. INTERSTATE - MOMENTS LATER

The lone car drives alone over the interstate. The flood  
waters are still high.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Tree leaves and branches flood the suburban neighborhood street. Most of the houses are damaged, but not beyond repair. A few are gone forever. Homeowners are outside cleaning up their yards.

EXT. KRAMER FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Joel pulls up to the Kramer family home. The second floor has a tree that crashed on top of it. The windows are blown out.

JOEL  
(astounded)  
Dear God.

Joel pulls into the driveway. He steps out the car and surveys the damage to the home. Terry and April step out of the car. They are astounded by the damage too.

Joel approaches the steps. Walks up them. The door is slightly ajar. He's curious about someone being inside. Taking a step further he nudges the door open...

INT. KRAMER - CONTINUOUS

...the foyer. Joel and Katrina's things are strewn across the floor, a mess from the storm.

Joel rights Katrina's chair, sets a lamp upright, and slides the table into position. He pushes the two chairs back into place and then looks around.

JOEL  
She got his chair.

APRIL  
Mom, I have to go to the restroom.

JOEL  
(defeated)  
It's down the hall. Straight ahead.

April walks away.

LISA  
(concerned)  
What did they take again?

JOEL  
My son's chair. We used to always sit together to watch TV.

Joel takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and sits.

Quiet.

Nothing save for the toilet flushing and creaking of the bathroom door. The patter of footsteps running comes to Lisa.

LISA

Sweetie. Let's go outside and wait  
in the car okay.

APRIL

Okay.

Lisa and April exit. The sound of the door closes shut.

Joel surveys the room.

A photo album rests near him. He opens it.

He looks through the photos, remembering Katrina's pregnancy, the old house, and memories of Allison, their deceased daughter.

Joel sighs. He fought so hard to have it all and now, nothing.

He closes the book but as he does he notices something that he hasn't before.

There's a picture of a picnic with a very pregnant Katrina and Joel. Katrina isn't smiling, but Joel smiles.

Then there's a birthday picture, a theme park picture.

Another and another, each with Katrina looking sadder than before.

Joel looks as if this is all new to him.

On the last page there is a note. A note addressed to him.

Joel reads to himself.

KATRINA (V.O.)

We think of the storms in our life  
as something that just happened,  
when in reality it's been brewing  
with warning for a while. And when  
it takes us by surprise it's  
usually too late to run, too late  
to fix. At those times, you have to  
start over and rebuild. I'm sorry.

(MORE)

KATRINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But your new life awaits. Run to it  
without reserve.

JOEL  
You were my hurricane, before the  
hurricane hit.

Joel turns the page.

A picture of him and Billy. Smiling happily together.

Joel cries. It's all too much for him. He tosses the book.  
Buries his head in his hand.

Outside the front window where Lisa and April put leaves and  
trash into the garbage can.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

It is a bleak January morning; the streets around the  
courthouse are mobbed with people on their way to work. We  
see Joel Kramer, a tiny figure among hundreds, walking down  
the street. He crosses the street and starts up the steps of  
the large and forbidding courthouse.

INT. COURTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Joel gets off the elevator and starts down the corridor,  
toward the courtroom. In the f.g., - standing by the door of  
the courtroom itself is, SHAUNESSY he greets Joel, they shake  
hands and talk together for a moment. They enter the court  
room.

INT. COURTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Joel is at the defendants table with Shaunessy waits. The two  
whisper their plans for the case.

ON THE DOORS AT THE BACK OF THE COURTROOM

As they swing open and Katrina, along with her lawyer, Morgan  
Feinstein. THE CAMERA PANS WITH THEM as they walk to the  
front of the room and take their seats at the table opposite  
Joel and his lawyer.

CLERK  
Oyez, oyez... The third Circuit  
Court of the State of New York,  
Judge Atkins presiding is now in  
session. All rise...

The judge enters, takes his seat. Opening business of the court as Gressen (Katrina's lawyer) gets to his feet.

MORGAN

Your honor. As our first witness I would like to call Katrina Kramer.

TWO SHOT - JOEL AND SHAUNESSY

The lawyer leans across to Joel.

SHAUNESSY

(stage whisper)

Real direct. Motherhood... They're going right for the throat.

As Katrina gets to her feet, crosses to the witness stand and is sworn in.

Note: Throughout the following, we continually CROSS-CUT to Joel, leaning forward, listening intently. It becomes evident that, in spite of himself, there are moments he feels great compassion for Katrina.

MORGAN

Now then, Mrs. Kramer, would you tell the court how long you were married.

KATRINA

Twelve years.

MORGAN

And would you describe those years as happy?

KATRINA

The first couple, yes, but after that it became increasingly difficult.

MORGAN

Mrs. Kramer, did you have a child that died while in your marriage to Joel?

KATRINA

Yes.

MORGAN

Did you ever try to talk to him about it?

KATRINA

Yes. I tried to talk to Joel - my ex-husband - about it, but he wouldn't listen. He refuses to discuss it in any serious way.

MORGAN

Tell me, Mrs. Kramer, are you employed at the present time?

KATRINA

Yes, I work for Sentara Hospital as a registered nurse.

MORGAN

And what is your present salary?

KATRINA

I make seventy-five thousand dollars a year.

REACTION - Joel stunned.

MORGAN

(switching tactics)

Mrs. Kramer, do you love your child?

KATRINA

(emphatically)

Yes. Very much.

MORGAN

And yet you chose to leave him?

There is a long pause, then:

KATRINA

(speaking carefully, with great thought)

Yes...During the last five years we were married, I had... I was getting more and more... unhappy, more and more frustrated. He was an excellent provider. I never lacked. He knows how to survive. But...I needed to talk to somebody. With the death of our daughter, the loss of our house, having to move in a area I hate, I needed to find out if it was me, if I was going crazy or what. But every time I turned to Joel - my ex-husband, he couldn't handle it.

(MORE)

KATRINA (CONT'D)

He became very... I don't know, very threatened. I mean, whenever I would bring up anything he would act like it was some kind of personal attack. Anyway, we became more and more separate... more and more isolated from one another. Finally, I had no other choice, I had to leave. And because of my ex-husband's attitude -his unwillingness to deal with my desires, his unfaithfulness I had come to have almost no identity, no self-esteem...

(with feeling)

At the time I left, I sincerely believed that there was something wrong with me - that my son would be better off without me. It was only when I got to Virginia and started into therapy I began to realize I wasn't a terrible person. I was just a woman who married too young. A woman who hadn't taken her time to live life, make mistakes and come into the fullness of who I am. I just I needed some creative and emotional outlet other than my child and husband. That doesn't make me unfit to be a mother.

MORGAN

(to the judge)

Your honor, I would like to place in evidence a report on Mrs. Kramer's therapy by her therapist, Dr. Nakia Spivey of Richmond, Virginia.

And with that, he hands both the judge and Shaunessy a thick sheaf of papers. Then, turning his attention back to Katrina:

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Kramer, why did you set up residence in Shreveport, Louisiana?

KATRINA

Because my son is here. And his father is here, well, a few miles away. As a mother, I don't want my child to be separated from his father.

MORGAN

Mrs. Kramer, can you tell the court why you are asking for custody?

There is a pause, then:

KATRINA

Because he's my child... Because I love him. I know I left my son. That's a terrible thing to do. But just because I'm a woman, can I not have the same hopes and dreams as a man? Don't I have a right to a life of my own? Is that so awful to have the same freedoms as a man? I left my child - I know there is no excuse for that. But since then, I have gotten help. I have worked hard to become the woman I've meant to be. I don't think I should be punished for that. I don't think my son should be punished for that. He needs me. I'm not saying he doesn't need his father, but he needs me more as I've had more time with him since birth. Not by the fault of his father, Joel, but he worked. I know my son more. I'm his mother.

There is a beat of silence, then:

MORGAN

Thank you, Mrs. Kramer. I have no further questions.

Shaunessy, as he stands, collects his papers from the table and, taking his own sweet time, crosses to Katrina.

SHAUNESSY

Now then, Mrs. Kramer, you said you were married twelve years. Is that correct?

KATRINA

Yes.

SHAUNESSY

In all that time did your husband ever strike you or abuse you physical in any way.

KATRINA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Did your husband strike or physically abuse his child in any way?

KATRINA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Would you describe your husband as an alcoholic?

KATRINA

No.

SHAUNESSY

A heavy drinker?

KATRINA

No.

SHAUNESSY

Did he ever fail to provide for you?

KATRINA

No.

SHAUNESSY

(wry smile)

I can certainly understand why you left him.

MORGAN

Objection.

SHAUNESSY

(switching his line of questioning)

How long do you plan to live in Shreveport, Mrs. Kramer?

KATRINA

Permanently.

During the early part of Shaunessy's cross-examination, Katrina has been very forthright, very sure of herself. Now, as he starts getting tougher, she begins to falter.

SHAUNESSY

Permanently?

(smiles, like a shark smiles)

Mrs. Kramer, how do you feel now?

(MORE)

SHAUNESSY (CONT'D)  
Happy, frustrated, suicidal -  
permanently?

ON KATRINA

Her head snaps back as though she's been hit.

KATRINA  
I don't recall.

SHAUNESSY  
(boring in)  
Did you not cut yourself when you  
were in your marriage?

KATRINA  
(looks toward Gressen for  
help)  
I don't recall.

SHAUNESSY  
How many times did you cut  
yourself? Less than three, more  
than thirty-three?

Morgan is again on her feet, outraged.

MORGAN  
Objection!

JUDGE  
Overruled. The witness will answer,  
please.

KATRINA  
(almost a whisper)  
Somewhere in between.

SHAUNESSY  
So you admit you don't value your  
own life?

MORGAN  
(furious)  
Objection!

SHAUNESSY  
(to the judge)  
Your honor, I would request a  
direct answer to a direct question.  
Does she value her own life?

JUDGE

I'll allow that. The witness will answer please.

KATRINA

(in a whisper)

Yes.

SHAUNESSY

Is that... permanent?

KATRINA

(by now she is becoming thoroughly rattled)

I... I don't know...Yes.

SHAUNESSY

Then just like your marriage vows, we don't really know, do we, when you say "you do" if you're planning to stay in Louisiana, or even to keep the child for that matter, or protect your own life since you've never really done anything in your life that was continuing, stable, or sane that could be regarded as safe and permanent.

Morgan jumps to her feet.

MORGAN

Objection! I must ask that the counsel be prevented from harassing the witness.

JUDGE

Sustained.

SHAUNESSY

(a new attack)

Mrs. Kramer, how can you consider yourself a fit mother when you tried to kill yourself?

MORGAN

(red in the face)

Objection!

JUDGE

Sustained.

SHAUNESSY

I'll ask it another way. What was the longest personal relationship you have had in your life - other than parents and girlfriends?

KATRINA

(rattled)

Ah... I guess I'd have to say... with my child.

SHAUNESSY

(wonder, irony)

Whom you walked out on and then took him without your husband's consent.

MORGAN

Objection your honor. My client was gone for two weeks. There is and was no judgment order to say who had full custody of the child.

JUDGE

Sustained.

SHAUNESSY

Mrs. Kramer, your ex-husband, wasn't he the longest personal relationship in your life?

KATRINA

(reluctantly)

I suppose...

SHAUNESSY

Would you speak up, Mrs. Kramer? I couldn't hear you.

KATRINA

(louder)

Yes.

SHAUNESSY

How long was that?

KATRINA

We were married six years before Billy. And then six very difficult years.

SHAUNESSY  
 So, you were a failure at the  
 longest, most important  
 relationship in your life.

MORGAN  
 Objection!

JUDGE  
 Overruled.

KATRINA  
 I was not a failure.

SHAUNESSY  
 (sarcastic)  
 Oh? What do you call it then - a  
 success? The marriage ended in  
 divorce. You tried to commit  
 suicide.

KATRINA  
 (so angry she forgets her  
 cool)  
 I consider it less my failure than  
 his.

SHAUNESSY  
 (seizes on this)  
 Congratulations, Mrs. Kramer. You  
 have just rewritten matrimonial  
 law.

MORGAN  
 (on her feet)  
 Objection!

SHAUNESSY  
 (to the judge)  
 Your honor, I'd like to ask what  
 this model of stability and  
 respectability has ever succeeded  
 at?  
 (to Katrina)  
 Mrs. Kramer, were you a failure at  
 the longest, most important  
 personal relationship in your life  
 so much that you tried to kill  
 yourself?

Katrina sits silently.

JUDGE

Please answer the question, Mrs.  
Kramer.

KATRINA

(whisper)

It did not succeed.

SHAUNESSY

(suddenly fierce)

Not it... Not it, Mrs. Kramer -  
you. Were you a failure at the most  
important personal relationship of  
your life?

Silence.

SHAUNESSY (CONT'D)

Were you?

KATRINA

(barely audible)

Yes.

Shaunessy smiles, turns his back on Katrina, and walks back  
toward the respondent's table.

SHAUNESSY

No further questions.

KATRINA

(fierce)

I didn't succeed at killing myself.  
I succeeded in living I'm here now.

JUDGE

(to Katrina)

You will refrain from speaking  
until addressed.

Shaunessy sits down next to Joel.

JOEL

(leaning over, in a  
whisper)

Jesus Christ. Did you have to be so  
rough on her?

SHAUNESSY

(tough)

Do you want the kid or don't you?

Shaken, Katrina gets down from the witness stand, crosses to  
the petitioner's table without looking at Joel.

She sits, leans across to her lawyer, and whispers something in her ear. As he nods...

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Joel sitting in the witness stand.

SHAUNESSY

Mr. Kramer, would you tell the court exactly why you want to retain custody of your child.

JOEL

(speaking quietly)

When Katrina when she was talking before about how unhappy she was during our marriage... Well, I guess most of what she said was probably true. There were a lot of things I didn't understand - a lot of things I would do different if I could. Some things, once they are done, can't be undone. Katrina says she loves our son. I believe she does. So do I. But the way it was explained to me, that's not the issue. The only thing that's supposed to matter here is what's best for Billy... When Katrina said why shouldn't a woman have the same ambitions as a man, I suppose she's right. But by the same token what law is it that says a woman is a better parent simply by virtue of her sex? I guess I've had to think a lot about whatever it is that makes somebody a good parent: constancy, patience, understanding... love. Where is it written that a man has any less of those qualities than a woman? Billy did have a home with me, I've tried to make it the best I could. It's not perfect. I'm not a perfect parent. But I love him... More than anything in this world I love him.

SHAUNESSY

Thank you, Mr. Kramer. No further questions.

Morgan gets up from the petitioner's table and crosses to the witness stand.

MORGAN  
(hard-lining it)  
Mr. Kramer, by any chance do you  
have a job now.

JOEL  
No.

MORGAN  
(pointedly)  
Where do you live?

JOEL  
In Louisiana. In a FEMA trailer.

MORGAN  
(switching to another  
line  
of attack)  
Mr. Kramer, isn't it true that you  
asked your son to stay with your  
sickly mother when you knew the  
hurricane was about to strike.

SHAUNESSY  
Objection. He's leading the  
witness.

JUDGE  
Sustained.

JOEL  
(not losing his cool)  
I knew about my mother's sickness.  
She was diabetic and had it under  
control for thirty years. I didn't  
know about the seriousness of the  
hurricane until it was... too late.

MORGAN  
(snotty)  
Did you try to rescue him?

JOEL  
Yes, when I realized how bad the  
storm was.

MORGAN  
(snide)  
Why didn't you check the weather  
report before you dropped him off?  
They've been blaring how dangerous  
it was for a while before it hit.

SHAUNESSY

Objection, your honor! Counsel is harassing the witness.

MORGAN

(to the judge, pettish)

Your honor, I'm only examining the man's sense of danger and disaster.

She pretends to fitness when he does not heed warnings.

JUDGE

Sustained.

Morgan is thoughtful for a moment, like a man trying to decide whether or not to drop the bomb. Then, turning back to Joel:

MORGAN

(very tough)

Mr. Kramer, did your child nearly die in the Superdome.

Joel is stunned. He looks across at Katrina.

Katrina looks away.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

(boring in)

Mr. Kramer, are you not responsible for the mentally scarring of your child?

Shaunessy is on his feet racing toward the bench.

SHAUNESSY

(vehement)

Objection! Your honor, counsel is raising a question that is not germane to these proceedings.

MORGAN

(to the judge)

While the child was placed in care of a woman who couldn't take care of her own health. He saw the horrors of the Superdome and is now scarred.

JUDGE

(to Gressen)

Are you introducing the question of negligence here, counselor?

MORGAN  
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE  
I see. Well, you'll have to do  
better than that. Do you have any  
affidavits to support negligence?

MORGAN	JUDGE (CONT'D)
I do not, your honor, however-	--This is an isolated
-	incident,
	counselor, unless you can
	prove otherwise.

MORGAN (CONT'D)  
(back to Joel)  
Does the witness deny any injury  
took place?

JUDGE  
(before Joel can say  
anything)  
No counselor, I'm going to  
overrule, you on this line of  
questioning.

MORGAN  
Then I have concluded my questions.

Katrina sits, still not looking at Joel. She holds her face,  
one hand shielding her eyes.

Moments later the judge makes a closing statement.

INT. MAIN LOBBY, COURTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Shaunessy and Joel stand talking, reviewing the case. Then  
the two men shake hands, the lawyer waves goodbye, turns and  
starts back into the building. THE CAMERA PANS WITH Joel as  
he walks toward the main exit.

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE - COURTHOUSE

As he comes out of the building, starts down the steps.

KATRINA (O.S.)  
Joel.

Joel stops. Turns. There, standing waiting for him is  
Katrina.

His face is a mask of cold anger. She crosses to him.

KATRINA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry... I just mentioned it in passing. I never thought he'd use it.

JOEL

And people say I look like George Clooney.

KATRINA

Please, Joel. I never would have brought it up if I thought-

Joel walks away from her, leaving her standing, watching him as he disappears.

INT. FEMA TRAILER - DAY

Joel sits in the recliner pouring over law books, writing copious notes on a legal pad. April sits across from him drawing in a pad with magic markers.

Lisa cooks dinner on the stove while April plays with toys in the middle of the floor.

LISA

You're going to study your brains out. Give your mind a rest.

JOEL

(deeply reading his notes)

There's no power while you're on your back while someone screws you over. There's only power at top.

LISA

You really love your son. I can't fault you.

JOEL

Tell me. What did you do to get custody of your daughter?

LISA

Easy. He went to jail.

A light bulb goes off in Joel's mind.

JOEL

I got it!

LISA

Got what.

JOEL

When Katrina left she said and I quote, maybe tomorrow, maybe next week... maybe a year from now...You'll find us in the bottom of a river somewhere.

LISA

Dear God.

Joel rises from the chair, heading to the phone.

JOEL

(grabbing the phone)

Yeah, I'm going to call the lawyer and use that against her.

LISA

Haven't you learned anything? I went through postpartum too.

Joel sets the phone back down on the receiver slowly.

LISA (CONT'D)

Trust me. It's a terrible thing to go through. And she was dealing with the death of your daughter. Find another way to get son back but don't destroy her.

The phone rings to the surprise of both of them.

Joel answers.

INT. LAWYERS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - INTERCUT BETWEEN SCENES

Shaunessy sits alone at a desk cluttered with papers

SHAUNESSY

Joel.

JOEL

(anxious)

Yes.

There's a long silence. Shaunessy exhales a sigh of disappointment.

He realizes that they have lost.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Oh, Christ!

SHAUNESSY

They went for motherhood straight  
down the line.

JOEL

Wait, how? How?

SHAUNESSY

Well for starters you're living in  
a FEMA trailer with a part-time  
job. Your estranged spouse is  
living in a house in a well to do  
neighborhood with steady income.

JOEL

(stuttering at a loss of  
words)

I, I mean, Shit! Look I fought  
cops, battled gangs, saved lives,  
had a heart attack, lost friends  
and my mother and you're telling me  
(tearing up)

You're telling me, I lost him. I  
lost him.

SHAUNESSY

I can't tell you how sorry I am.

JOEL

(tearing more)

Oh, no...

SHAUNESSY

(reading from a piece of  
paper)

Ordered, adjudged, and decreed that  
the petitioner be awarded custody  
of the minor child, effective  
Monday the 23rd of January. That  
the respondent pays for the  
maintenance and support of said  
child, four hundred dollars each  
month. That the father shall have  
the following rights of visitation:  
every other weekend, one night each  
week to be mutually agreed upon and  
one half of the child's vacation  
period.

JOEL

Shit. Shit, shit, shit!

SHAUNESSY

You can pick your child up today  
for the weekend if you want at 211  
Mercy Place. That's it.

JOEL

What if I fight it?

SHAUNESSY

We can appeal, but I can't  
guarantee anything.

JOEL

(determined)

I'll take my chances.

SHAUNESSY

It's going to cost you.

JOEL

I'll get the money.

SHAUNESSY

(like calming a raging  
bull)

Joel. This time it'll be Billy that  
pays. This time I'll have to put  
him on the stand.

As his last hope goes to the ground.

JOEL

Oh, Christ no... I can't do that. I  
just... can't... Just...text me her  
address.

Joel slams down the phone. That is all Joel can manage to  
say. He gets to his feet and rushes for the door.

Lisa's eyes are red from crying.

LISA

(calling out)

Joel...Joel.

JOEL

(putting on his jacket in  
a hurry)

I just have to be by myself for a  
little while.

LISA

Joel I know...

JOEL (CONT'D)

(exiting the door)  
Please just let it go.

Lisa runs to the door and stands there as Joel makes his way down the rocky road between trailer homes.

LISA (CONT'D)  
 (sobbing)  
 I'm so... sorry...I'm so  
 sorry...

EXT. KATRINA'S HOME - DAY

Joel walks down the sidewalk. He's dressed in the same clothes as the scene before. He looks tired, agitated, and dirty. His hair is uncombed and sweaty.

He stops in front of a very elegant modern home. Katrina's home.

He observes as he can't believe it's her house. He walks up to the door and rings the doorbell.

Ding! Dong!

The bell echoes over the sound of birds chirping.

The sound of footsteps and the crack of the door.

Billy opens the door. He's a healthy little smiling boy.

BILLY  
 Hi dad!

It's the first time Joel has seen his son since the Superdome. Joel smiles a very tired smile.

The door opens wider. Katrina stands dressed in the latest clothes from Bloomingdales. Joel's smile damn near disappears.

KATRINA  
 (surprised by how he  
 looks)  
 Joel. How are you?

JOEL  
 Fine. All things considering.

KATRINA  
 (thinking what to say  
 next)  
 I see. Um. Where's your car?

JOEL  
 I didn't drive one.

Katrina looks past him. No car in sight.

KATRINA  
That's ten miles away.

JOEL  
Didn't feel like it.

Katrina knows the judgment has hurt him dearly.

There's a long awkward pause. Billy looks up between to parents before finally resting on Joel.

BILLY  
Will you and mommy get remarried?

Joel and Katrina trade a look, not sure what to say. Joel kneels down to Billy's level.

JOEL  
No, son. Daddy and mommy will never get remarried.

Katrina feels hurt to hear this.

BILLY  
Why?

JOEL  
Billy, sometimes when a mother and a father are divorced, there's a discussion about who the child should live with, the mother or the father. Now there is a person who is very smart. They're called a judge and they have a lot of experience with divorces and he decides who it would be best for the child to live with.

BILLY  
Why does she decide?

Katrina kneels eye level to Billy.

KATRINA  
Because... Well, that's what he does. He's a very powerful person.

BILLY  
Like a principal?

JOEL

Bigger than a principal. The judge sits in robes in a big chair... The judge has thought about you and me and your mom, and he has decided...

(a deep breath)

...he has decided that it would be best for you to live with your mom in her, house.

(fake cheerful)

And I'm very lucky. Because even though you'll live with your mom I'll get to see you once a week for dinner and a couple of weekends a month.

BILLY

I don't understand, daddy.

JOEL

(trying very hard not to cry)

What don't you understand, pal?

BILLY

Where will my bed be, where will I sleep?

KATRINA

At your mom's. She'll have a bed for you in your own room.

BILLY

Where will my PlayStation be?

KATRINA

I'll send your toys there and I'm sure you'll get some new ones.

BILLY

Who will read me my stories?

KATRINA

(looking to Joel)

We both will. Just on different nights. When he has you. And when I have you.

BILLY

(to Joel)

Will you come and say good-night to me every night?

Suddenly Joel can't stand it any longer.

KATRINA

Look, it's getting cold. Why don't you go inside where it's warm. I'll be along in a minute.

Billy hangs back, watching Joel.

JOEL

Go on, scoot.

Billy runs back into the house. Then, he stops, turns back to look once more at his father.

Joel nods.

Billy closes the door.

KATRINA

Joel, when we got married it was because I was young and I thought I-

JOEL

Katrina, what the hell is-

KATRINA

(urgent)

Please... Please don't stop me. This is the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

There is a long pause as she looks at Joel, unable to speak.

He nods.

KATRINA (CONT'D)

I was young and I thought I should get married and...when I had Billy it was because I thought I should have a baby...and I guess all I did was mess up my life and your life and after I left... when I was in New York, I began to think, I couldn't tell anybody about Billy - I couldn't stand that look in their faces when I said he wasn't living with me. It seemed like the most important thing in the world to come back here and prove to the world how much I loved him... And I did...And I won. Only... it was just...

(she begins to breakdown)

... Sitting in that courtroom.

(MORE)

KATRINA (CONT'D)  
 Hearing everything you did,  
 everything you went through...  
 Something happened. I guess it  
 doesn't matter how much I love him,  
 or how much you love him. I guess  
 it's like you said, the only thing  
 that counts is what's best for  
 him....Joel, I think he should stay  
 with you...

Joel snaps up.

JOEL  
 (stunned)  
 What?

KATRINA  
 We can do joint custody, ya know.  
 He's already got one mother, he  
 doesn't need two.

Katrina's last ounce of reserve crumbles, she sobs.

Joel throws his arms around her and holds her. They do not  
 kiss. Then, after a few moments, she steps back.

KATRINA (CONT'D)  
 (chin-high)  
 I'm sorry Joel, I really am,  
 okay.

He wipes her eyes.

KATRINA (CONT'D)  
 How do I look?

JOEL  
 Vain as usual.

She giggles wiping tears.

KATRINA  
 (looking Joel up and  
 down)  
 And you don't look so--

JOEL  
 --I look like shit I know.

The two share a small laugh. Like old times.

KATRINA  
 I think I'll go get my son, excuse  
 me, our son now.

Katrina enters into the house, but is stopped.

JOEL

Trina, I just want to say I'm  
sorry. I never had my parents there  
to teach me love. I just knew how  
to survive.

KATRINA

I know. You'll make a better  
husband come round two.

Katrina enters the house. Closes the door.

Joel stands at the door, overwhelmed with the sheer joy of  
being alive, of being together.

TRACKING JUST BEHIND JOEL THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND UP AND WE

SEE the whole house in full. It's in a beautiful upscale  
neighborhood much larger than we suspected. THE CAMERA  
CONTINUES TO PULL BACK until they are lost from view and it  
is...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END