

NOTHING EXISTS

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

A caterpillar lies stoic on a green leaf. The incessant sound of crickets and insects reverberate around the forest.

WARREN (V.O.)

The age old argument of nature versus nurture doesn't actually exist. They have never opposed each other. They have always been on the same team.

JACOB CAIN, a shirtless 11 year old boy with blonde hair and blue eyes, kneels down and studies the caterpillar. Dirt covers his body.

WARREN (V.O.)

We all have free will, so to speak. But if the freedom of choice itself is confined within the parameters of, let's say, the previous generations rules and guidelines, do we really have freedom? Do we really have a choice?

Jacob reaches out and gently takes the caterpillar off the leaf. He studies it closely.

WARREN (V.O.)

Or are we being controlled without really knowing it?

Jacob eats the caterpillar; Chewing it without so much as a facial twitch.

EXT. FOREST (LATER) - NIGHT

Jacob treks through the forest, pushing aside various tree branches and plants that impede his way. He looks up at the full moon in the black sky.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Jacob is looking down at his reflection in the still water of a large pond. He throws a small rock at his reflected self, causing a splash that breaks up his reflection in the water.

WARREN (V.O.)

There is this hairworm, a parasite really, that grows inside of a grasshopper and slowly disrupts its hosts nervous system.

Jacob pulls out a long, semi-frayed rope from his pocket. One end has been poorly tied into a noose. He stretches it out, examining it.

Jacob gives it a quick tug-- the rope snaps in half. He tosses it aside. The portion of the rope that was tied into a noose lands beside a large rock.

WARREN (V.O.)

This parasite will eventually completely control the grasshopper and cause it to commit suicide in a body of water. Allowing it to leave the host and continue its life cycle.

Jacob eyes the large rock. He heads toward it and picks it up with a grunt. Holding the large rock low, almost at his knees, his arms drooping from the weight, he heads into the pond, taking slow, lumbering steps.

WARREN (V.O.)

The infected grasshopper that jumps into the water does not do it willingly...

Jacob is half submerged in the water, the large rock well below the surface. He is hunched down, straining from the weight of the rock.

WARREN (V.O.)

Rather, it is the parasite's genes that are being expressed in the behavioral phenotype of the infected host that *instruct* it to jump. And that's really where this idea all started...

The water is up to Jacob's neck. He shivers. His lips tremble.

Exhaling all the air out of his lungs, Jacob wraps his legs around the large rock and immediately sinks into the depths of the pond.

The ripples made by Jacob eventually become still. The water reflects the full moon above on its surface.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

Surrounding the road are various dead trees, brown grass, a pinyon-juniper desert environment.

A sign reads: "Gold Point Estab. 1884 Pop. 50". The '50' has a line through it in dark marker. A '0' is written beside it.

On either side of the road leading into town, various old, broken down buildings are seen. Power lines run along the road, creating a constant HUMMING NOISE.

A sheet of paper is stapled to one of the power line poles, the word "Missing" printed at the top. Below it, A PICTURE of Jacob.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

A run down, two-story building looms in front of us. A sign above the door reads: "Town Hall".

We hear the COMMOTION of many people within.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

About 45 TOWNSFOLK, varying ages and sexes (no children), have all gathered on the floor. They sit in chairs and face a stage that has been partially raised off the floor. There are only a few empty seats.

WARREN PEECE, early 20's, a cocky look about him, is standing in front of his chair.

LIONEL HUTCHINSON, late 40's, wearing a dress shirt and slacks, stands on center stage. There is a FADED SCAR on his forehead.

LIONEL

That is certainly a fascinating concept, Warren.

WARREN

It's just the origin of the idea. Where it ends up will be far from where it began.

MCCAFFERY, a husky Man with a beard, stands off to the side atop the stage. He stands with perfect posture, his hands clasped in front of him, like a bodyguard.

LIONEL

Well I think I speak for everyone in saying we all enjoy your stories immensely. And we appreciate the time you put into them.

Several people CLAP sporadically.

Warren tries not to smile. He fails.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

You do have a talent. But I am curious, as I always have been, about where these ideas of yours come from.

Warren's smile fades.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I mean that sincerely. Surely inspiration must come from some source, am I right? Do you mind sharing that source with the rest of us? Perhaps it could breed some friendly competition from aspiring writer's within our midst.

WARREN

Well you know what they say, when you have nothing to write about, write about nothing. Seems to work for me. But perhaps my hand is guided in some manner. It's an entirely plausible possibility given our... situation

LIONEL

Our "situation"?

WARREN

Whatever you want to call it...

Lionel stares a hole through Warren.

LIONEL

Suppose you *had* to guess... What would you say your hand is guided by exactly?

Warren looks around at all the Townsfolk staring at him. He looks up at Lionel, shrugs.

WARREN
Brain parasites.

LAUGHTER fills the room.

Warren smiles proudly.

Warren's Mother MARY, late 40's, a bit overweight, is seated beside Warren. She shakes her head disapprovingly.

Lionel keeps his eyes locked on Warren. The laughter dies down.

LIONEL
So you're essentially saying that you are the grasshopper?

WARREN
I would dare to think we are all the grasshopper. Metaphorically.

LIONEL
Then, if that is the case, what is the parasite?

Warren ponders for a moment.

WARREN
Life.

Lionel nods and turns his attention to the rest of the room.

LIONEL
I notice some new empty chairs in this meeting today. Who is missing?

The Townsfolk look around at one another.

Warren slowly takes his seat, ignored.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Aside from the usual suspects, of course. Speak freely.

Mary raises her hand.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Yes, Mary. Go ahead.

Mary stands, straightening out her dress self-consciously.

MARY

Nora couldn't make it today. She sends her apologies for her absence.

LIONEL

Nora... Did she give a reason?

MARY

She did not.

Lionel nods, mulling something over.

LIONEL

Thank you, Mary.

Mary locks eyes with McCaffery for a brief moment before sitting down.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

So, back to the business at hand. I have noticed several posters placed about our town. You probably all have seen them as well. This missing boy...

McCaffery shifts his weight.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Surely I don't have to tell you that whoever is putting these up needs to stop immediately. This is a recent happening, and we do not promote anything recent within our boundary. Everyone should know and respect this. I have had these posters taken down and disposed of. If I have missed any, and one of you should stumble upon one, I ask you do the same. If anyone is not in agreement with this please speak now or I will consider your silence as a binding contract.

Various Townsfolk shift uncomfortably in their seats. Someone COUGHS.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Then it is agreed upon. Remember, we have been blessed with a kind of one-way ticket here. We can effect the physical world but it cannot effect us. Not anymore.

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)
 But just because you *can* do
 something doesn't mean you should.

Lionel wipes some perspiration off of his forehead, his fingers tracing along the outline of his scar.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
 Now, if there is anything else
 anyone would like to discuss,
 please stand and do so.

Everyone remains seated. Seconds pass.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
 Then that is that. Thank you for
 your time everyone.

The Townsfolk stand from their chairs and begin filing out of the Town Hall, talking amongst themselves.

Warren leans in close to Mary.

WARREN
 He's always so, what's the word...
political, during these meetings.

MARY
 Who?

WARREN
 Lionel.

MARY
 Shush.

WARREN
 He never talks like that when he's
 not on stage.

MARY
 It's how you're supposed to speak
 in public, Warren. And he *is* Mayor,
 after all.

WARREN
 Was Mayor. And I'm just saying,
 people change when they know they
 are being watched. It's intriguing.

Mary and Warren join the line of People waiting to filter outside. Mary spots her friend JANET, thin, pale, plain, they exchange smiles.

On stage, McCaffery approaches behind Lionel.

MCCAFFERY

How long are we going to pretend that the boy's whereabouts is a secret, Lionel? Everyone knows the truth.

Lionel watches the last of the Townsfolk leave.

LIONEL

The truth is no match for what people believe. I heard there's another missing poster near the sign into town. Take care of that for me, would you?

Lionel walks off stage.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

The sun is low in the sky, casting an orange glow on the horizon. The surroundings are void of any life.

A black car with tinted windows speeds passed on the empty road.

INT. NORA'S HOME - EVENING

NORA, young looking for her 40 years, blonde hair and blue eyes, shuts a door behind her and locks it with a key on a necklace.

WARREN (V.O.)

There are two characteristics of a ghost town. One, the town's reason for being must no longer exist.

Nora heads to a nearby mirror and studies her reflection. She rubs her stomach and closes her eyes, smiling.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EVENING

We scan passed several rows of tombstones. We see the date of deaths are all the same date: "June 6, 2006".

WARREN (V.O.)

And two, there must be tangible remains of the town for visitors to see.

There is a single hole dug in the ground. Dried up leaves surround it. A large mound of dirt with a shovel sticking out of it is beside the hole.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - EVENING

The "Gold Point" road sign is seen.

McCaffery removes the "Missing" poster from the power line pole, studying it.

WARREN (V.O.)

Although we do not like gazing eyes upon us, so "visitors" is considered a sinful word around here.

McCaffery folds the piece of paper carefully in his hands and looks down the road. His eyes widen at something approaching...

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - EVENING

Warren is seated at his desk writing on a stack of paper. There is a photocopier beside the desk. Black drapes cover the window. A fire burns in the fire place.

WARREN (V.O.)

We currently have a population, and I use that term loosely, of fifty people. This is what is defined as a "skeleton population". It classifies us as a ghost town, in the broadest sense of the term.

Warren places the page he just wrote upside down under the photocopier's cover and closes it. He turns to the new page before him and continues writing...

EXT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

EARL, an old Man with a full head of white hair, hammers a nail into one of the wooden planks on the stairs.

WARREN (V.O.)

We strive, slowly but surely, towards the betterment of our place of existence.

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

PRIEST PARRISH, a plump faced Man wearing a clerical collar and black glasses, lights some candles that surround a Holy Cross.

WARREN (V.O.)

What makes us unique, however, is the same thing that makes us similar to any other ghost town you may have encountered.

EXT. TAVERN - EVENING

SIMON, a disheveled Man with curly black hair, is asleep on the porch. There is a liquor bottle in his limp hand.

WARREN (V.O.)

If you were to wander into this place, you would see only emptiness.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - EVENING

CLYDE SKINNER, thin and bony, almost emaciated, sits in a fetal position in a bathtub full of ice cubes. He shivers uncontrollably.

WARREN (V.O.)

You would feel the wind sending a chill down your spine as you passed through, but you wouldn't bat an eye at any of us.

There is a stack of papers on a chair next to the tub. The papers are filled with writing that has been photocopied.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - EVENING

We look into the Town from the "Gold Point" sign's location. Still. Perfect. Like a photograph.

WARREN (V.O.)

You wouldn't even know we were here...

The black car with tinted windows slowly drives passed the "Gold Point" sign.

INT. TAVERN - EVENING

Lionel is leaning against the bar, chatting away with various TOWNSFOLK that surround him. MUSIC plays. He motions behind the bar while eyeing the many liquor bottles.

The BARTENDER, slicked back hair, emotionless, typical, grabs a beer bottle, twists off the cap, and slides it across the counter. The label on the bottle reads, "Non-Alcoholic".

Lionel takes a sip and gazes down at the wedding ring on his finger.

McCaffery walks at a brisk pace into the Tavern. He approaches from behind Lionel and whispers something into his ear.

Lionel puts the bottle down on the bar and gazes out at the road.

LIONEL
Kill the music.

The Bartender reaches underneath the bar. The music stops. The various Townsfolk in the bar all stare at Lionel.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
We have visitors.

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

The black car with tinted windows comes to a stop at the edge of town. Two doors open.

Stepping out of the driver's side door is RAY, 31, clearly strong and in good shape. Stepping out of the passenger side door is MARLA, 29, slim and athletic. The picturesque couple. They both have cameras swinging from lanyards around their necks.

Ray and Marla look over the town with interest. Staring up at the buildings and taking in the scenery.

Lionel and the Townsfolk from the Tavern filter out into the road. Several more Townsfolk emerge from their homes or stop their evening chores to watch.

Ray and Marla begin snapping pictures. A DIABETIC ALERT BRACELET is seen on Ray's wrist.

MARLA

Just look at this place... Over a century old and filled with history.

RAY

You looking to go down in it? I heard they used to mine gold here.

MARLA

What gave you that idea? The name "Gold Point" on the sign coming in?

RAY

Possibly.

McCaffery leans toward Lionel.

MCCAFFERY

They're just tourists...

Several Townsfolk begin whispering amongst themselves.

Lionel holds up a hand.

LIONEL

Quiet. Let's watch what they do.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - EVENING

Nora opens her front door. She carefully looks around before stepping onto her porch to watch the commotion.

Transparent white drapes in the front window of her home flutter behind the glass.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - EVENING

Clyde, wrapped in a towel and shivering, stares out his second story window at the scene unfolding below.

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

Warren is now amongst the group, watching the visitors with interest. He holds his stack of paper under his arm.

The Townsfolk, now on both sides of the road, stand merely a few feet from Ray and Marla.

RAY
I'd say these buildings are early
colonial in design.

Marla stifles a laugh.

MARLA
Oh yeah? Your knowledge of
architecture *totally* astounds me.
P.S. That was sarcasm.

RAY
Sure makes these pictures scrapbook
worthy. P.S. I hadn't noticed.

MARLA
Nerd. P.S. Stop stealing my P.S.'s

Ray and Marla slowly make their way down the street, snapping
pictures of the buildings around them. Ray is HUMMING a song
to himself.

The Townsfolk slowly follow beside Ray and Marla, staring.
Silent.

RAY
Hey, you know what would be fun?

MARLA
Skydiving?

RAY
Even better. Ghost town sex.

Marla scoffs at this.

MARLA
Yeah good luck, buddy. You don't
have a snowball's chance in Hell on
that one.

RAY
What if Hell freezes over? I'd like
my snowball's chances...

KINSEY, a middle-aged Woman with a RASH on her face and dirty
clothes, glares at Ray and Marla from a few feet away.

MARLA
You'd really want to have sex in an
abandoned ghost town? Does your
depravity know no limits?

RAY
 Hey, one man's garbage is another
 man's treasure.

MARLA
 I'm going to be pretend you didn't
 just say that.

RAY
 Yeah, I was going for clever but it
 came out... wrong.

MARLA
 Well, I was considering it up to
 that point.

RAY
 Lies.

MARLA
 Guess you'll never know...

Ray smiles and takes a photograph. He stumbles slightly and
 rubs his eyes.

Marla gives Ray a worried glance.

MARLA (CONT'D)
 You didn't take your shot, did you?

RAY
 Depends. Are we talking about today
 or... ?

Marla sighs.

RAY (CONT'D)
 I'll be fine. Don't worry.

MARLA
 It's just irresponsible. Especially
 now- -

Kinsey steps forward just inches away from Marla, leaning in
 close to her ear.

KINSEY
 (Seething)
 Get... out!

Marla tenses up and stops walking. She looks in the direction
 of where Kinsey stands.

Lionel grabs Kinsey's arm and pulls her back into the group.

RAY
What's wrong?

MARLA
Nothing. Just... felt a chill or something.

RAY
A chill? Maybe Hell *is* freezing over...

MARLA
I'm serious, Ray. That was beyond creepy.

RAY
Well they are called ghost town's for a reason. Could be haunted.

Marla looks around at where all the Townsfolk are standing, oblivious.

MARLA
Yeah, I guess.

Ray leans in close to Marla.

RAY
(Whispers; Imitating The Sixth Sense line)
I see dead people.

MARLA
Okay, that's it. Just a few more pictures then we're heading back to the car. I feel like I'm being watched and I *don't* like it.

RAY
Oh, I was just *kidding*. Don't tell me you really believe that crap? I thought we could go inside a couple of these buildings and take a few- -

MARLA
Ray... *Enough*. We have our pictures for your damn scrapbook. It's enough.

Ray sighs and looks at the sun setting in the distance.

RAY
Alright. You're right.

MARLA

I'm always right. Assume it.

Ray and Marla begin walking back to the car. The Townsfolk follow slowly behind.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - EVENING

Nora notices the transparent white drapes fluttering in the window beside her front door. She heads back inside and closes the door behind her. The door is heard locking.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - EVENING

Clyde continues to watch through the window.

Ray and Marla walk by below. Ray snaps a picture up at where Clyde is standing. Clyde quickly retreats from view.

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

The black car with tinted windows drives away in the distance.

All the Townsfolk are now in the middle of the road, watching the car get smaller and smaller.

LIONEL (O.S.)

Okay, everyone. Back to what you were doing.

Lionel steps out from within the crowd and turns to face the Townsfolk.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

You heard me. Nothing more to see here.

The Townsfolk slowly begin to disperse, talking amongst themselves. Warren is writing furiously on his note pad as he walks away.

Lionel notices this and clenches his jaw. He turns his attention to Kinsey.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Kinsey, can I have a word?

Kinsey stops and slouches. She approaches Lionel.

McCaffery takes position behind Lionel, watching.

Lionel places both hands on Kinsey's arms.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Next time I say "be quiet"...
Listen. Don't speak.

Kinsey stares at the ground.

KINSEY
I'm sorry. It's just these...
people. They have no right being
here.

LIONEL
I know. But without rules and
order, everything falls apart.
Everything. You know this.

Kinsey nods.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Don't let it happen again. Off you
go.

Kinsey walks away shamefully.

McCaffery steps up beside Lionel.

MCCAFFERY
One day, if we're not careful,
somebody is going to get hurt.

Lionel watches everyone return to their chores and disappear
inside of various buildings.

LIONEL
So be it. Whatever kills us makes
us stronger. We are living proof of
that.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Ray is driving. He takes a sip from a water bottle.

Marla stares out the passenger side window. There is a long
silence.

Ray fidgets with the air conditioning dial.

RAY
You find it cold in here or is it
just me?

Marla reaches into the glove compartment and pulls out a small portable diabetic kit.

MARLA
This is fine here. Pull over.

RAY
Now?

MARLA
You're lucky I'm even letting you drive, considering.

Ray takes one look at Marla's face.

RAY
Yeah okay, now.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

The black car with tinted windows pulls over onto the side of the road.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Marla gathers an insulin dose into a syringe from a small bottle.

Ray takes another sip from the water bottle and places it in a cup holder.

MARLA
Where was your last injection?

RAY
I can do it.

MARLA
Let me. I'll need to know how to do this if you suddenly pass out on me.

Ray stares at Marla for a moment.

RAY
In the thigh.

MARLA
Lift up your shirt.

Ray lifts his shirt up.

Marla pinches the skin over his bellybutton and injects the contents of the syringe into it.

RAY

Like a pro.

Marla places the diabetic kit back into the glove compartment and settles back in her seat, staring out the windshield.

RAY (CONT'D)

What are you thinking?

MARLA

I don't know...

RAY

That usually means you *do* know but just won't say.

MARLA

You know me that well, huh?

RAY

I'm supposed to.

Marla exhales a deep breath. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a folded piece of paper.

RAY (CONT'D)

You know, we're gonna need to go back there eventually...

Marla flattens out the "Missing" poster on her lap with the picture of Jacob on it.

MARLA

We will go back tomorrow and search the buildings. I didn't want to be there at night. Gives me the creeps just thinking about it. Besides, there's probably squatters sleeping in those buildings at night anyway.

RAY

So you're scared of homeless people *and* ghosts?

MARLA

What's the difference?

Ray chuckles. He starts the car and pulls onto the road.

Marla smiles to herself and looks at Ray.

MARLA (CONT'D)
 Ghost town sex, Ray? Really?

Ray smiles, blushing slightly.

RAY
 I was hoping you'd go along with
 it. After all, you're kind of my
 dream girl.

MARLA
 Well, keep dreaming.

Marla looks down at the "Missing" poster again.

MARLA (CONT'D)
 God, this is so strange, isn't it?

RAY
 I'd call it original. You want the
 radio on?

MARLA
 Either way.

RAY
 Rule of thumb; When you don't want
 to face the music... listen to it.

Ray clicks the radio dial with his thumb and turns up the
 volume...

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Several LIGHTS on the buildings cast a dim glow. The dull HUM
 of the power lines is heard.

A bird starts CHIRPING.

INT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

The CHIRPING is heard outside Nora's window.

Nora sits upright in bed. She reaches toward the bedside
 table and turns on a lamp. She checks the digital clock. It
 reads, "3:40am".

NORA
 Like clockwork.

After a moment, a couple DULL THUDS are heard in a nearby
 room, followed by a floorboard CREAKING.

Nora instantly gets out of bed, puts on a housecoat, ties it tight, and leaves the room.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Lionel enters the Tavern. He looks around, it is dark and empty. He heads to the bar.

Lionel reaches over the bar and grabs a liquor bottle. He twists off the cap and begins to drink.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Priest Parrish looks over the many candles by the Holy Cross. All the candles are unlit. He lights one candle and watches the flame grow. He snuffs out the flame with his index finger and his thumb; No emotion. No pain.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - NIGHT

Clyde is asleep in the bathtub. He shivers.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Several tombstones nearby read: "Ian McCaffery", "Simon Page", "Lionel Hutchinson", "Nora Gable Hutchinson"...

Something is heard RUSTLING within the hole in the ground.

In the hole, right under a tombstone engraved "Esther Kinsey", is Kinsey herself. She is lying in the hole on top of a wooden coffin. She scratches at the rash on her face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Marla is driving. The scenery whips by outside the window.

Ray is slumped back in the passenger seat, his eyes closed. The white glare of the sun reflects off the windshield, passing across Ray's face...

FLASHCUT:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

SAM LAPIERRE, 50, the county Sheriff dressed in full uniform, is filling up his coffee mug.

Ray stands nearby in a suit and tie.

SAM
Caffeine is like a religion, except
it keeps you awake on Sundays. You
want one?

RAY
No thank you sir, had one earlier.
I'm wide awake.

SAM
Are you?

RAY
Last I checked.

SAM
That's good to know. You can drop
the "sir" by the way. Sam is fine.

Ray nods.

Sam pours some cream into his coffee and stirs.

SAM (CONT'D)
So how do you like our town? It's a
far stretch from the city, I
realize.
(Winks)
Just don't pull a muscle.

RAY
I go where I'm needed.

Sam sips his coffee and nods.

SAM
Well you are definitely needed here
for this one. I read your file
pretty thoroughly. Heard you
crawled halfway into a drainpipe
and found that Andrews kid up in
Boston that everyone was looking
for.

RAY
I wouldn't call that one of my
success story's, personally.
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)

He was already decomposing when I found him.

SAM

But you found him. Gave the family closure. Don't discredit the importance of that.

Marla, dressed in business attire, enters the station and approaches Sam and Ray.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here she is. Marla, Ray. Ray, Marla.

Ray and Marla shake each other's hand.

MARLA

Nice to meet you.

RAY

Likewise.

SAM

Marla is one of our finest investigators. You two will work well together. Maybe she can learn something about punctuality working with you.

MARLA

Good morning to you too, Sam.

Sam looks at Marla and raises his coffee mug.

SAM

Coffee?

MARLA

No thank you.

Sam nudges Ray with his elbow.

SAM

Agnostic...

MARLA

What?

Sam waves it off.

SAM

Nothing. Follow me.

Sam heads off down the hall.

Ray and Marla follow close behind, exchanging glances.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam is seated behind the desk. There is a laptop, a plastic plant and various papers strewn about the desktop.

Ray and Marla sit on two chairs at the opposite side of the desk. Ray eyes the plastic plant.

SAM

So, let's get down to brass tacks,
shall we?

Sam opens a file and pulls out two "Missing" posters with Jacob's face on it. He hands a copy to Ray and Marla, who both study it.

SAM (CONT'D)

The boy's name is Jacob Cain,
eleven years old. Last known
location, a forest several
kilometers from here. He was
spotted by a local running into
said forest, shirtless. As you can
see, he has blonde hair, blue eyes.
Height, four foot eleven. Weight,
one hundred and fifteen pounds. He
has been missing for three days if
you include this one.

Ray looks up from the paper in his hands.

RAY

Three days?

SAM

The rule of the first forty eight
doesn't apply in my book. I want
this boy found. One way or another.

RAY

Understood.

SAM

No, not yet. You certainly don't.

BACK TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Ray shifts in the passenger seat, his eyes closed. He mumbles something incoherent.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DAY

A small Diner is seen.

An unmarked blue car pulls up behind the black car with tinted windows. There is a white truck parked nearby.

INT. CAR - DAY

Marla puts the car in park and unbuckles her seat belt. She nudges Ray with her elbow.

MARLA
Wake up. We're here.

Ray blinks his eyes open.

RAY
I'm up, I'm up. I wasn't sleeping.

MARLA
Oh so you were faking sleep to avoid a conversation with me? Nice.

RAY
I wasn't "faking". I was just resting my eyes.

MARLA
It's all the same from my perspective.

Sam, casually dressed, appears at the tinted window beside Ray. He looks in the car and KNOCKS on the window twice.

RAY
(Quietly)
We don't hear him...

Marla nods slightly.

Ray unhooks his seat belt.

RAY (CONT'D)
You should've seen things from my perspective then.

MARLA

No thanks. I don't like being kept
in the dark.

RAY

Meaning?

MARLA

Your eyes were closed.

RAY

My eyes *never* close. I just
sometimes put eyelids over them.

Marla fakes a laugh.

Sam KNOCKS on the window again.

Ray acts surprised and rolls down the passenger side window.

Sam rests his arms on the windowsill.

SAM

You two practising your ignoring
skills, or you just didn't hear me?

RAY

I guess you'll never know. It's all
the same from your perspective.

SAM

Very true. I like that. You got
those pictures for me?

RAY

Uh, yeah. Sure do.

Ray searches around the car.

Marla reaches across Ray, envelope in hand, and gives Sam the
envelope.

Ray nonchalantly points to Marla.

Sam opens the envelope and removes several photographs. He
looks them over, nodding his head.

SAM

I'll see what I can dig up.

Sam puts the photos back into the envelope.

SAM (CONT'D)
Just out of curiosity... You happen
to find any gold?

MARLA
If we did, you think we'd tell you?

Sam smirks.

SAM
"Gold Point" my ass. Seems like
false advertising. I'll be in
touch.

Sam slaps the car door with his hand and walks away.

Ray and Marla look at each other. Marla shrugs.

MARLA
I guess he'll be in touch...

RAY
Like fingerprints.

Marla sighs and looks out the front windshield.

MARLA
It's gonna be one of those days.

INT. DINER - DAY

Ray and Marla are seated in a small booth by a large window. The parking lot and forest in the distance are visible outside the window.

A WAITRESS pours some coffee into Ray's mug, gathers up the menus from the table, and leaves.

Ray opens a sugar packet and dumps the sugar into the coffee. He stirs it around with a spoon and yawns tiredly.

MARLA
Didn't get much sleep last night?

RAY
I hate motels. I always think there
is some hidden camera filming me.

MARLA
Well you're just so filmable. They
probably couldn't help themselves.

RAY
"They"?. I was picturing more of a
modern day Norman Bates.

MARLA
Psychooooo.

RAY
Exactly.

Ray sips his coffee.

MARLA
God forbid you went without your
morning fix.

RAY
Hey, caffeine is like a religion,
except it keeps me awake on
Sundays. Pass the cream?

Marla slides the cream across the table.

MARLA
I think I've heard that one before.

Ray pours some cream in and stirs.

RAY
I doubt it. I just made it up.
"Filmable" huh? Is that even a
word?

MARLA
It is now. I just said it.

Marla sips some orange juice from a glass.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Technically, *you* should be drinking
the orange juice and *I* should be
drinking the coffee. I heard coffee
is terrible for diabetics.

Ray takes a sip of coffee. He smack his lips.

RAY
I should've just got water. Mouth
is dry.

Marla looks around at the Diner. A middle-aged COWBOY wearing
a cowboy hat is seated on a stool at the front. He is reading
a newspaper.

MARLA
Business is slow.

RAY
This whole town is slow.

MARLA
Well we *are* in the middle of
nowhere.

RAY
Like the letter 'H'.

Marla ponders for a moment.

MARLA
I'm afraid that one went over my
head.

RAY
Things are looking up...

The Waitress returns with two plates of food.

WAITRESS
Will that be all?

MARLA
That's great, thanks.

RAY
Actually, can I get a glass of
water?

WAITRESS
Sure thing.

The Waitress leaves.

Marla looks at her food.

MARLA
That was quick.

RAY
Slow town. Fast waitresses.

MARLA
Sounds like a sitcom.

Ray and Marla begin to eat.

After a moment, Marla reaches into her pocket and pulls out the "Missing" poster. She flattens it out over the table beside her.

RAY

Not while we're eating...

Marla studies the picture of Jacob.

RAY (CONT'D)

He still looks the same.
Photographs don't age.

MARLA

But the people in them do. It's just weird. Sitting here, eating. Acting like normal when...

(Sighs)

Poor kid.

RAY

Right now he's just missing. No more, no less. Who knows, he could be living happily ever after with some police captain and his wife in a beautiful home out in the country right now.

MARLA

Yeah, I saw that movie too. It's a nice fiction.

Marla continues to study the poster.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Jacob Cain... where are you?

The Cowboy turns and looks over at Ray and Marla. He closes his newspaper.

RAY

Did he answer you?

MARLA

Not yet.

RAY

Leave a message.

The Cowboy gets off his stool and approaches Ray and Marla's booth.

COWBOY
I'm sorry to bother you, but I
couldn't help overhearing.

Ray and Marla look up at the Cowboy in unison.

COWBOY (CONT'D)
It's quiet in here. I wasn't
eavesdropping.

RAY
Okay...

COWBOY
Did you mention Jacob Cain?

Ray and Marla both look at each other then back to the
Cowboy.

MARLA
Yes. Do you know him?

COWBOY
No, not personally. But I
recognized his face from the
picture in the newspaper.

The Cowboy locks eyes with the "Missing" poster on the table.

COWBOY (CONT'D)
Yeah, that one right there.

RAY
So what can you tell us, mister...

COWBOY
My name is not important. I've
always preferred the power of
anonymity. I saw you drive in here.
Black car. Tinted windows. I'm sure
you can relate.

RAY
That's fine. I can respect that.
Any information you can provide
would be greatly appreciated.

COWBOY
I thought as much.

RAY
So... what do you got?

COWBOY

Right. So it was about a week ago when I saw him. I come to this Diner every Sunday. Kind of an old routine of mine. Great food, quick service...

FLASHCUT:

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DAY

The Cowboy, wearing different clothes, opens the door to his white truck. He takes off his cowboy hat, places it on the roof, and puts on a pair of sunglasses.

COWBOY (V.O.)

Anyway, as I was about to leave, I noticed this boy. He wasn't wearing a shirt and he was running toward the forest in the distance. I mean a full out sprint towards it. Like he was running away from something.

The Cowboy gazes off into the distance toward the trees.

EXT. TREELINE - DAY

Jacob comes to a stop at the treeline of the forest.

COWBOY (V.O.)

Then suddenly, he stopped. Right at the treeline. And he looked back at me...

Jacob stands there, breathing heavily. He slowly looks back over his shoulder.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DAY

The Cowboy removes his sunglasses and squints at the trees.

COWBOY (V.O.)

I mean, even from that distance I could've sworn he looked me dead in the eye. I have better than twenty-twenty vision. There was no mistaking it.

Jacob disappears into the trees in the distance.

COWBOY (V.O.)
And then he was gone.

BACK TO:

INT. DINER - DAY

Ray and Marla are staring at the Cowboy.

COWBOY
I admit, it's nothing that will
break the case. But I thought it
couldn't do any harm sharing this.

MARLA
Did you tell the police this?

COWBOY
I did. But everyone and their uncle
was calling in providing "leads"
and whatnot. Maybe my statement
just got lost in the shuffle. Or
perhaps it was tossed aside, like
the joker cards in the deck.

RAY
Well, I personally use the joker
cards as bookmarks. So I assure
you, what you just said will not be
tossed aside.

COWBOY
I assume you're a detective?

RAY
I also prefer the power of
anonymity...

The Cowboy smiles.

COWBOY
I guess that's my cue. I'll let you
get back to your meal. But can I
just say, I hope you find the boy
safe and sound. I really do. You
have yourself a good day.

The Cowboy tips his cap and leaves the Diner.

Ray and Marla lock eyes after a moment.

RAY
You think he was telling the truth?

MARLA

I mean, maybe. Although that whole anonymous thing kind of peaked my interest. But the bottom line is we are in the dark here. If we feel a light switch we should probably see if it turns on a light.

Ray and Marla sit in silence. They both look out the window at the Cowboy heading toward his truck.

RAY

What if we are in some kind of time continuum and that Cowboy is actually Jacob thirty years later?

MARLA

I think you watch too many movies. Let's keep things realistic for the time being.

The Cowboy is seen getting into his truck.

Ray and Marla gaze at the forest in the distance; Their reflections suddenly appear in the window amidst the trees.

RAY

So I guess we should detour off the path a bit and have a look?

MARLA

Why not. I've always thought I could find that needle in a haystack.

Ray and Marla watch as the Cowboy's white truck pulls out of the parking lot and drives away.

Ray looks around the Diner.

RAY

I never got my water. Sitcom cancelled.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

McCaffery follows Lionel through town.

Lionel doesn't look himself. He is pale, his hair disheveled, tired looking.

MCCAFFERY

You look a little worse for wear today.

There is a long silence.

LIONEL

Just didn't get much shut eye last night.

Simon emerges from the Tavern, bottle in hand. Stumbling. He is clearly drunk.

MCCAFFERY

You ever wonder why we still feel tired and whatnot?

LIONEL

No, I haven't. Have you?

MCCAFFERY

No I... Just a passing thought.

Simon stumbles onto the road up ahead.

LIONEL

Next time a thought like that passes through your head, just let it go out the other ear and not out through your mouth.

McCaffery subtly shakes his head.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I don't care about the 'why'. The who, what, where, and when is all I'm concerned with now. Speaking of which...

Lionel and McCaffery approach Simon as he trips over his own feet. McCaffery quickly catches him before he falls down.

MCCAFFERY

Whoa, there.

Lionel snatches the bottle from Simon's hands.

LIONEL

Getting an early start, are we Simon?

SIMON

Gimme ma bottle back.

LIONEL
I will once you can walk and talk
correctly.

SIMON
Fuck off.

Lionel freezes.

Simon sways on his feet.

LIONEL
What did you say to me?

SIMON
Who da fuck do you think you are?
You think you runnin' shit here in
this fucking place? Huh? There
ain't no rules. You ain't no Mayor
ny'more. Who died n' made you boss?

Simon laughs.

LIONEL
Simon... I suggest you choose your
next words quite carefully.

SIMON
Or what? Huh? Or what, Lionel? What
could ya pos'bly do to me?

Lionel throws Simon's bottle down on the ground. It smashes
into pieces.

Simon winds up and takes a clumsy swing at Lionel. McCaffery
steps in front of the punch and catches it. He twists the arm
behind Simon's back and pushes him to the ground.

MCCAFFERY
Just relax, Simon.

Simon grimaces in pain.

SIMON
Not so tough wiff'out ya bodyguard
around huh, Lionel? Ow. Fuck. Kiss
ma ass, Mc'Caffeine.

Lionel bends down so that he is face to face with Simon.

LIONEL
You go home and sober up now. This
is not your time and place to be
seen.

(MORE)

LIONEL (CONT'D)

If you step out of line again, I'll
have McCaffery here break that arm
of yours.

Lionel nods at McCaffery. McCaffery releases his grip.

Simon falls to the ground holding his arm.

SIMON

(To McCaffery)

You just his lackey, huh? His mutt.
That's all you are. All you ever
was.

McCaffery stares at Simon, pondering.

Lionel smacks McCaffery on the arm.

LIONEL

Come on, let's go.

Lionel walks on ahead.

McCaffery takes his eyes off of Simon and follows after.

Simon grimaces and sits up, still holding his arm.

SIMON

(Calling after)

And for what? Huh? Moneys? Is it
that it? Ain't no more moneys to be
had. Why you still protecting him?

Kinsey emerges out of nowhere, approaching Simon and helping
him to his feet.

KINSEY

Come on, Simon. On your feet. Let's
go.

Simon steadies himself and gives Kinsey a surprised look.

SIMON

Esther... this is outta character
for you.

KINSEY

Don't call me that.

SIMON

So outta character. But ya know,
'spite popular 'pinion, no one
actually listens to what Simon
says.

KINSEY

Really? I hadn't noticed.

Simon looks back over his shoulder at McCaffery.

SIMON

Look at 'em. He dunno what to do
with himself. Just a lost puppy
dog.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Mary steps onto Nora's porch holding a full bag. She knocks
on the door and straightens out her dress self-consciously.

After a moment, Nora opens the door halfway, peering out.

MARY

Hello, Nora.

Nora smiles and opens the door all the way.

NORA

Mary, isn't this a pleasant
surprise.

Mary offers the bag to Nora.

MARY

Just thought I'd bring you some
extra food. It's not much, just
some vegetables and meat and
whatnot. Figured you could use the
help.

Nora takes the bag from Mary and smiles warmly.

NORA

What a nice gesture. Thanks so
much.

MARY

It's nothing. It really isn't.

NORA

It's a big help. We are running low
in the meat department.

MARY

I know. Ian said he is going
hunting today with Earl. They
usually don't come back empty
handed.

NORA
How is McCaffery? Or Ian, I
apologize.

MARY
He's... hanging in there. Like the
rest of us.

Nora nods, smiles politely.

NORA
Did you send my apologies for not
attending the meeting the other
day?

MARY
I did.

NORA
What did Lionel say?

MARY
He... didn't say much.

Nora nods slowly.

NORA
How did he look?

MARY
Concerned. He tries to hide it, but
he still cares for you.

Nora lowers her eyes and nods.

NORA
Some things never change.

MARY
Perhaps some things just refuse to
be hidden.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

The black car with tinted windows is parked on a dirt road
surrounded by trees.

INT. CAR - DAY

Marla injects the insulin needle into the back of Ray's upper
arm.

MARLA

Good as new.

RAY

I'm like a car that constantly
needs an oil change.

Marla places the needle back into the portable diabetic kit.

MARLA

Nothing wrong with that. Just don't
let a small problem become a big
one by ignoring it, and you won't
break down.

RAY

It's good to know I have a spare
tire like you.

Marla chuckles to herself and places the diabetic kit in the
glove compartment.

MARLA

You have the uncanny ability of
being complimentary and insulting
all at the same time.

RAY

Guess that makes me a living
breathing oxymoron.

MARLA

I rest my case.

Ray and Marla laugh.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Ray and Marla trek through the forest, scanning the area.
They push through several trees.

RAY

Keep an eye out for a wild goose,
apparently we are the type of
people that chase those things.

MARLA

A lead's a lead.

RAY

I don't even know what I'm
expecting to find here, quite
honestly.

MARLA
Anything. Start with anything then
work your way down to specifics.

Ray kicks at something on the ground.

RAY
Found a pinecone.

MARLA
That's a start.

EXT. FOREST (LATER) - DAY

Ray and Marla have spread further apart, stretching their
search.

RAY
We should have brought a tent...

MARLA
Stay the night in the forest? No
thanks.

RAY
You should've said you wouldn't be
a happy camper. I set it up
perfectly for you.

MARLA
Some things are better left unsaid.
You should take notes.

RAY
You got some paper?

MARLA
I have plenty of trees...

Ray grins and pushes aside some branches. He looks toward
Marla and waves her over.

RAY
Over here. Look at this.

Marla quickly follows after.

MARLA
What do you got?

RAY
Dead deer.

Ray approaches the DEAD DEER lying on its side. As he gets closer, we can now see the deer is just a plastic replica.

Marla approaches behind Ray.

RAY (CONT'D)

Never mind. It's just one of those decoys hunters use.

MARLA

That's a relief.

Ray looks around the forest.

RAY

They usually pick it up after using it though. Strange they just left it out here. These things aren't cheap.

MARLA

Well, we're not out here looking for deer killers, are we?

RAY

No, but we are looking for a missing boy who was last seen running into this very forest where there are obviously men with guns hunting. Starting to see where I'm going with this?

MARLA

I see where you're going, and I have no problem following you. But at the same time I'm not going to drown myself in circumstantial evidence and theories until we find something solid to grasp on to.

RAY

You know, if we came to a fork in the road, you'd go straight.

MARLA

I'll take that as a compliment.

Marla makes her way through the trees.

Ray takes another look at the plastic deer and follows after.

EXT. TREES - DAY

From amidst the trees, we watch Ray and Marla emerge into the clearing ahead.

Ray glances toward us. We move behind a tree trunk, hiding. After a moment, we peer out from behind the tree trunk.

Ray and Marla are walking toward a pond.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Ray and Marla stand on the edge of the pond. The still water reflects the sun above.

RAY

This could be used as a water source. Probably plenty of animals to eat. Real ones, I mean.

MARLA

We are looking for an eleven year old boy, Ray. Not Bear Grylls from Man versus Wild.

RAY

So you're officially ruling this out as a possible location?

MARLA

I didn't say that.

RAY

I'm just trying to tie up all the loose ends is all.

Ray scans the area. His eyes fall on something. He heads toward it.

Ray kneels down and picks up a piece of semi-frayed rope that has been tied into a noose.

RAY (CONT'D)

Speaking of tying up loose ends...

Marla approaches from behind and looks over Ray's shoulder at the rope.

MARLA

Is that a noose?

RAY

A poorly tied one.

Ray stands up. He scans the area and looks at the pond.

RAY (CONT'D)
How deep is that pond you think?

MARLA
I have no idea.

Marla gazes out at the water.

MARLA (CONT'D)
You don't think...

Marla looks at Ray.

MARLA (CONT'D)
What are you thinking?

RAY
I don't know.

MARLA
That usually means you *do* know but
just won't say.

RAY
You know me that well, huh?

MARLA
I'm supposed to. Does that scare
you?

Ray motions to the knot in the semi-frayed rope.

RAY
I'm a-frayed-knot.

MARLA
Okay, that one was pretty clever.

Ray studies the rope closely, he looks up at the pond.

RAY
What did you say again about
drowning yourself in circumstantial
evidence? I want to get some people
out here...

Ray pulls out his cell phone from his pocket.

MARLA
I'll be surprised if you get a
signal.

Ray flips the phone open. The screen reads: "No Signal". Ray holds the cell phone high over his head.

RAY
Yeah, nothing.

MARLA
I'll try mine.

Marla reaches into her pocket and pulls out her cell phone.

RAY
You know, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result... Just saying.

MARLA
Funny, I thought that was the definition of persistence.

RAY
Only if it pays off.

Ray pockets his cell phone. He gazes out at the trees and shivers.

EXT. TREES - DAY

We watch Ray and Marla leave the clearing. Slowly, we push forward through the trees and follow after.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - EVENING

A copy of the "Missing" poster is blown into town by the wind.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - EVENING

Clyde, wearing a bathrobe, opens his freezer and places an ice cube tray inside. The entire freezer is stacked with various ice cube trays and one slab of frozen meat.

There is a pill bottle on the table nearby. The label reads: "Acyclovir."

Clyde grabs three trays and closes the freezer.

WARREN (O.S.)

I've always believed that life imitates art and art imitates death. And therefore, death must imitate life. It is truly the sincerest form of flattery.

Clyde shivers and makes his way toward the bathtub.

Warren is seated in a chair beside the bathtub. He has the stack of papers on his lap.

CLYDE

That's a twisted logic but it somehow makes sense. Pertinent, to this place.

WARREN

Well you write about what you know best, right?

CLYDE

You clearly do. But we're just talking right now. You're not writing.

Warren stifles a smirk.

WARREN

How far did you get into it?

WARREN (CONT'D)

About forty five pages... or so.

Clyde cracks the first ice tray and dumps the ice cubes into the bathtub.

WARREN (CONT'D)

What do you think of the title?

CLYDE

It's vague.

WARREN

(Points at Clyde)
Yet pertinent.

CLYDE

(Points at Warren)
Touché.

Clyde cracks the second ice tray and dumps in the ice cubes.

WARREN

It's a work in progress.

CLYDE

Aren't we all.

WARREN

Exactly. First drafts are never fully developed. The characters are merely a plot device with no background stories. A kind of deus ex machina. But at some point, the story starts to tell you what it wants to be. The writer just has to listen.

CLYDE

Deus ex machina?

WARREN

It means God out of the machine.

CLYDE

What machine? There *is* no machine.

WARREN

Than there is no God.

CLYDE

Shocker. But turn around, I'm getting in the tub. That is, unless you want to watch...

Warren shakes his head.

WARREN

Always the pervert.

Clyde grins and shrugs.

CLYDE

Hey, it's my background story.

Clyde cracks the third ice tray and dumps in the ice cubes. He begins to remove his bathrobe.

Warren heads to the window, stack of paper in hand, he gazes out at the town.

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

McCaffery and Earl are walking down the road with HUNTING RIFLES slung over their shoulders.

McCaffery is dragging a long green bag behind him. A deer's hoof is sticking out of the bag, sliding lifelessly across the ground.

WARREN (V.O.)

I really believe people are voyeuristic by nature. We love to watch.

CLYDE (V.O.)

Depends on what we are watching.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - EVENING

Warren shakes his head, still looking out the window.

WARREN

Not really. We are fascinated by people no matter what the situation. Catastrophic or mundane, we watch and compare ourselves to others. That is, until someone catches you looking for the first time. And that experience can scar you. It stays with you. It shapes how you interact with others. It manufactures something in the mind that may never actually occur again. It creates paranoia.

Warren looks down at the first page on the stack of paper. It reads, "'The Existence of Nothing' written by Warren Peece."

CLYDE (O.S.)

Maybe you're just projecting your insecurities onto others.

WARREN

What I'm *projecting*, is everyone onto a canvass. A screen. See, the goal is, I want people not to know they are part of the story until the very end. If they think they are on the outside looking in, they will let their guard down. It's all about perspective. Truth is perception.

The sound of WATER SPLASHING.

CLYDE (O.S.)

Okay, I'm in. F-fuck. Freezing.

Warren turns around.

Clyde is seated in the tub full of ice. He has his eyes closed tight, his fists are clenched. His breaths are rapid as he adjusts to the temperature of the water.

Warren saunters back to the chair and sits down.

WARREN

You're crazy for putting yourself through that.

CLYDE

Do I h-have a choice?

WARREN

I don't know. Maybe you should stop doing it and see what happens.

CLYDE

Can't.

WARREN

What's going to happen if you do?

CLYDE

Don't ask q-questions you know the answer to.

WARREN

Why not?

CLYDE

Because I know you're just ignoring my words and s-studying my reaction.

Warren smiles and flips through some of the pages.

Clyde's breathing begins to slow down a little.

CLYDE (CONT'D)

Tell me more about your story. Keep me distracted.

WARREN

Alright well, I want people to be able to see themselves as they truly are. No bias. This story I'm writing will seem like a two-way mirror until the end, and then they will realize they were looking at themselves the entire time.

(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)

The only way to judge yourself objectively and without bias is to not know you are being judged.

Clyde takes a deep breath, relaxing.

CLYDE

So with that said, you need to fix my character. I *can't* be that creepy in real life...

WARREN

Hey, I just write what I see. If you think you seem creepy then maybe you are. That's the entire point.

CLYDE

Gee thanks. Not that my public persona matters much anymore. But say we get more visitors, and suppose one of them stumbled upon this story of yours, do you think they would be able to read it? Or would the pages be blank?

WARREN

I don't know... But that's a good question.

CLYDE

Having an audience of the same fifty people has got to irk you a bit I would think.

WARREN

Maybe I should hire a living, breathing ghostwriter to spread my tales to the masses...

CLYDE

You are a ghostwriter. Quite literally.

WARREN

Touché.

CLYDE

So how do you plan on executing this larger-than-life ending of yours? Enlighten me.

WARREN

I know how I'm going to do it, most definitely. I just don't know how people here will react to it. But if I execute it correctly, it's going to leave them... perplexed. Enlightened, as you so aptly put it. It's going to rip them out of their safe little cocoons and bring them right into the fire.

Clyde shivers uncontrollably.

CLYDE

Fire... That would feel good right now.

WARREN

Only for awhile.

INT. MARY'S HOME - EVENING

McCaffery removes a padlock from a closet door and opens it. He places the hunting rifle inside the closet. A zipped-up black duffel bag is seen.

MARY (O.S.)

How did it go?

McCaffery turns around and spots Mary. He flashes a practised smile.

MCCAFFERY

It went.

Mary kisses him. McCaffery looks distant.

MARY

Everything okay?

MCCAFFERY

Yeah, I'm just tired.

Mary takes McCaffery's hand.

MARY

Well, come relax then. Warren's not home...

MCCAFFERY

Did you deliver the food to Nora today?

MARY

I did. She was very appreciative.
I'm sure they both are.

McCaffery nods and closes the closet door behind him.

MCCAFFERY

I hope it was enough.

Mary smiles and touches his chest.

MARY

Beneath your strong chest lies a
heart of gold, Ian. It's what I
love about you.

MCCAFFERY

Can you feel my heart beating?

MARY

(Confused)
I... can.

MCCAFFERY

Ever wonder why that is?

Mary looks into McCaffery's eyes, studying him. She looks away.

MARY

I try not to think about it.

MCCAFFERY

Well, you should start.
(Pause)
I'm going for a walk.

McCaffery kisses Mary on the cheek and walks away.

MARY

But you just got back...?

Mary watches McCaffery leave. She turns and notices the padlock still unlocked on the closet door.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EVENING

Simon wanders through the graveyard.

Kinsey is in the hole dug out in the ground. She wipes some dirt off of the wooden coffin, cleaning it.

Simon leans down by the edge of the hole and peers down at Kinsey. He picks up a dry leaf from the ground and drops it into the hole.

Kinsey watches the leaf flutter down onto her coffin. She looks up.

SIMON
Hello, Esther.

Kinsey looks back down to the coffin and scratches the rash on her face.

KINSEY
I told you not to call me that.

SIMON
I guess history repeats itself. But I'll still never understand why you always clean your own coffin.

KINSEY
Dirt irritates my rash. What are you doing out here?

SIMON
Just wandering around aimlessly. Ended up here. Seems to be where the action is. And dirt is probably *causing* your rash.

KINSEY
You sound sober.

Simon looks around the graveyard.

SIMON
Maybe I am. For now. Christ, I forget where my own grave is.

KINSEY
You're beside Lionel and Nora.

SIMON
Buried beside Lionel for all of eternity... No wonder I can't stand him.

Simon looks back down into the hole.

SIMON (CONT'D)
You didn't get a bad place.

Kinsey sighs.

KINSEY

I wanted to be cremated, Simon.
Those were my wishes. They weren't
honoured.

SIMON

Well, that's the problem with being
dead. You don't get much say in
anything anymore. Everything you
owned and ever wanted now belongs
to the living. We're now just a
story that people tell. Nothing
more.

KINSEY

All stories are burned after
reading. In one way or another...

SIMON

The only thing we need to remember
is that we can drink to forget.

Simon looks up at the darkening sky.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, it's time to
raise the bar. Care to join?

KINSEY

I'm good, thanks. You go ahead.

SIMON

Suit yourself. If you change your
mind you know where to find me.

Simon walks away from the hole, he laughs.

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

Suit yourself... Change your mind..

Kinsey reaches into her pocket and pulls out a lighter. She
flicks it, trying to produce a spark...

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

Various POLICE OFFICERS search the area around the pond with
flashlights. The BEAMS OF LIGHT lighting up the trees.

A POLICE DIVER slowly submerges himself under the water.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - NIGHT

The "Gold Point" road sign is seen.

The power lines HUM. Artificial LIGHT lights up the town in the distance.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Lionel is seated at a table off to the side of the stage. He drinks some liquor from the glass bottle he took from the bar. He places the bottle down and pushes it away.

He eyes a framed picture on the table.

After a moment, Lionel's eyes begin to close. His head slumps down onto his chest.

FLASHCUT:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lionel, younger and clean cut, is driving. Nora, younger, noticeably pregnant, sits in the passenger seat. Rain pours down on the front windshield. The windshield wipers move back and forth quickly.

NORA

Slow down a little please, Lionel.

LIONEL

I'm barely over the speed limit.

NORA

I don't care. You know you had a few drinks at dinner. And this weather certainly isn't helping matters.

Lionel checks the rearview mirror.

LIONEL

I think we lost McCaffery.

NORA

Well we don't need him following us *everywhere*, do we?

Lionel burps.

LIONEL

Makes me feel safe.

NORA

There's a thin line between wanting to feel safe and paranoia. Please keep your eyes on the road.

LIONEL

Every man in a position of power has a target on his back, Nora. With him around at least the target is in front of me. I can handle that.

Nora shakes her head.

Lionel squints into the rearview mirror. Two HEADLIGHTS appear through the blackness.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

There he is. He's catching up.

Lionel refocuses on the road.

Nora rubs her stomach.

NORA

So have you given any more thought about what we talked about?

LIONEL

I have.

NORA

And?

LIONEL

And I still don't see the point of moving for the sake of moving. There's nothing wrong with where we live.

NORA

I know there isn't. But there's nothing wrong with expanding our horizons either, right? If not for ourselves, then for the baby.

LIONEL

The problem with wanting to give your children more than you had is that you might not fully understand the things you're giving them. And when it finally dawns on you, it's too late to- -

A LOUD POPPING SOUND. The car JOLTS and swerves to the side.

NORA

Lionel...?

Suddenly a BRIGHT LIGHT engulfs both Lionel and Nora. They look ahead in fright and GASP. A CAR HORN BLARES.

INT. CAR (LATER) - NIGHT

Silence except for rain falling on the hood of the car.

Lionel lifts his head off the steering wheel. He groans. There is a GASH on his forehead, blood is pouring out of the wound.

The rain pelts the interior of the car through the broken windshield.

Lionel slowly looks over at Nora. Nora is staring at him, in shock. Blood is in her hair and running down her face. She is holding her pregnant stomach protectively.

LIONEL

Nora...

Suddenly the driver side door rips open. McCaffery, no beard, leans into the car, a panicked look spread across his face.

MCCAFFERY

Jesus Christ... I thought you two were gonners. What happened?

Lionel doesn't take his eyes off of Nora.

LIONEL

I think a tire blew. Help her, Ian.

Nora looks at McCaffery, desperation in her eyes.

NORA

Did we... hit anybody?

McCaffery locks eyes with Nora. He nods slightly.

MCCAFFERY

I called 911. Ambulances are on their way.

Nora begins to cry.

NORA

My baby, Lionel. My baby...

Lionel stares at Nora's pregnant stomach.

BACK TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Lionel's eyes flutter open. He shakes his head slowly and takes another sip from the liquor bottle.

Slumping over, he grabs the framed PICTURE. The picture is of Nora and himself hugging each other and smiling for the camera.

Lionel lightly touches his wedding ring on his finger.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Priest Parrish blows out a candle. He places his lighter beside a Bible on a nearby podium.

McCaffery approaches from behind Priest Parrish.

MCCAFFERY

Father?

Priest Parrish turns around.

PRIEST PARRISH

Ian... Strange time to suddenly show up at church. I haven't seen you in awhile.

MCCAFFERY

I apologize for the disturbance.

Priest Parrish begins to flip through the Bible on the podium.

PRIEST PARRISH

You're not a disturbance. How's Mary?

MCCAFFERY

She's well.

PRIEST PARRISH

(Nodding)

I assume you are in search of guidance, of some sort?

MCCAFFERY

I have questions.

PRIEST PARRISH

I can tell you right now that I don't have all the answers.

MCCAFFERY

I just need a few.

Priest Parrish motions to a nearby bench.

PRIEST PARRISH

I'll do my best. Please, have a seat.

McCaffery sits down on the bench.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)

What's troubling you, my son?

McCaffery looks to the floor. He leans forward in his seat, clasping his hands together.

MCCAFFERY

I'm questioning things a lot lately. Our whole... existence. And everything it involves.

PRIEST PARRISH

That sounds rather broad. Perhaps if you came to my sermons once a week you're meandering's might be a little narrowed down.

MCCAFFERY

I know. It's just hard to be religious when you are already within the realm that religion preaches about. Religion is people's way of dealing with the fact that one day they will die. But when you are already dead, religion basically becomes a prediction that never came true.

PRIEST PARRISH

I'm sorry you feel that way, Ian. These words you say... they cry out from a lost soul.

MCCAFFERY

That's exactly my point...

PRIEST PARRISH

Well, you have come to the right place.

(MORE)

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)

You have taken the first few steps in the right direction. That's important. And so begins the journey...

MCCAFFERY

But where does this journey end, Father? Sometimes I feel like we are walking in circles. And do you ever wonder why we can still *feel*? Whether it's pain or love, we still can feel it. We still need sleep, food and water like we did when we were alive. We can still strike each other. Hurt each other. I killed a living, breathing deer today. How is it I was able to do that? It's almost as if nothing has changed.

Priest Parrish closes the Bible and looks at McCaffery.

PRIEST PARRISH

Let me answer a question with a question. Where do you believe you are right now? This town... what does it represent to you?

MCCAFFERY

This town? It's... our home. It represents the place we all lived and died in.

PRIEST PARRISH

Would you call this place Heaven?

MCCAFFERY

Absolutely not.

PRIEST PARRISH

Would you call it Hell?

MCCAFFERY

No.

PRIEST PARRISH

So is it fair to say that this place is somewhere in between those two?

MCCAFFERY

That's fair.

PRIEST PARRISH

Would I be wrong in assuming that you have heard of the term, "purgatory"?

McCaffery shakes his head, thinking for a moment.

MCCAFFERY

No, you wouldn't be wrong.

Priest Parrish walks out from behind the podium and takes a seat on the bench beside McCaffery.

PRIEST PARRISH

I have covered this topic over numerous weeks in my sermons. I've introduced the idea slowly to people, not all at once. There is a reason for that.

MCCAFFERY

We're not ready to hear it?

PRIEST PARRISH

No. Because, as you have just displayed, patience is a virtue that few of us have. And these lessons need to be taught to purify our souls and prepare them for the journey to Heaven. These virtues must be instilled within us.

MCCAFFERY

It's been six years, Father. I have little faith that things are going to change.

PRIEST PARRISH

And that lack of faith is exactly why we are all still here. You asked why we still feel pain? Why we are still victims to all the torments of a living body? The answer is because we are not yet in God's embrace, we are just closer to it. I believe this is an intermediate state between death and the final judgement. Think of it like a trial, so when we state our case, we must be prepared.

MCCAFFERY

And if we're not?

Priest Parrish exhales a deep breath.

PRIEST PARRISH

Then I'm afraid it will be trial by fire, if you get my meaning...

MCCAFFERY

Then what's the point of life if we have to endure these trials *now*, after we've died?

PRIEST PARRISH

You're asking me the purpose of life, Ian? I'm afraid that is one of the answers I do not have. Now, especially.

McCaffery sighs.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)

I can, however, assure you that there is a reason for everything. Nothing is random happenstance. Perhaps death is not as final as we all thought during life. Perhaps death happens in stages... And here you are, moving onto the next one. Why else would you be questioning these things *now* after so many years? We are becoming enlightened. Slowly but surely.

MCCAFFERY

But what about aging? I've noticed people here growing older over the years. Myself included. Shouldn't we have stopped aging the moment we died?

PRIEST PARRISH

Please don't misconstrue my theories with answers, but I venture to guess that as long as we are amongst the living in this planet, we will continue to appear to grow older. I believe that our souls do not age, but rather it is the planet that eats away at our body's like a parasite, until there is nothing left.

MCCAFFERY

Have you been reading Warren's stories again, Father?

Priest Parrish smiles.

PRIEST PARRISH

Perhaps *he* has been attending my sermons. I have been known to inspire...

MCCAFFERY

One thing I *have* noticed, is that we have not created life here in six years. Not one woman in this town has gotten pregnant. To me, this is the only thing that has not remained a constant.

PRIEST PARRISH

Ah yes, I have heard many private confessions on this matter. And again, I don't have all the answers. But, it is my belief that creating life is a miracle left to those who possess it. Two deceased souls creating life would be the ultimate paradox, wouldn't you say?

McCaffery looks up at the Holy Cross on the wall behind the candles.

MCCAFFERY

A religious man such as yourself has probably lived a clean life. Does it trouble you that your fate is tied to others that may drag you down with them?

PRIEST PARRISH

I am not without sin, Ian. No one is. Everyone must prove their worth before entering God's kingdom. If I am worthy, I will walk through those gates. That, I have no doubt.

MCCAFFERY

I just hope I'm there to join you.

Priest Parrish pats McCaffery on the shoulder and smiles.

PRIEST PARRISH

Then start coming to church more often. That could help.

McCaffery smiles halfheartedly.

MCCAFFERY

I feel I have much to make amends
for.

PRIEST PARRISH

Being dead isn't a sin, Ian...

MCCAFFERY

No, it's just a repercussion. But
my mind wanders, Father. And it
wonders. Something just doesn't add
up.

PRIEST PARRISH

Well, if things don't add up, start
subtracting. You may find the
answers you seek buried right
beneath your feet.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

Lionel stumbles slightly on Nora's porch. He burps.

INT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

Nora is cleaning vegetables off in a sink. Three loud KNOCKS
are heard. She wipes her hands off on a towel and heads to
the front door. Another two loud KNOCKS.

NORA

I'm coming. I'm coming.

Nora opens the front door.

Lionel is standing there, smiling.

LIONEL

I've heard that before...

NORA

(Surprised)

Lionel. What are you doing here?

LIONEL

What, I can't come and say hello?

NORA

I can count on one hand the time's
you've stood on this porch and said
hello over the years.

LIONEL

Perhaps that's because of our history, Nora. Maybe I feel you're beyond a conventional common courtesy.

NORA

It's just kind of a strange time for a visit is all...

Nora stares at Lionel for a moment.

NORA (CONT'D)

Have you been drinking?

Lionel waves it off.

LIONEL

I had a couple drinks out at the Tavern. I'm fine.

Nora crosses her arms, she doesn't believe him.

NORA

Mmm-Hmm.

Lionel burps.

NORA (CONT'D)

Jesus. Just come in. I'll get you some water.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

A fire burns bright in the fireplace.

Warren reads over a written page and places it under the photocopier's cover before closing it. He flips to a new page, it is blank. He grabs a pen and starts writing...

INT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

Lionel is seated at a table. Nora places a glass of water down in front of him.

NORA

Here, drink up.

Lionel takes a sip.

Nora heads back to the counter and begins chopping up carrots and celery with a knife.

LIONEL
You keep any pictures around?

NORA
What do you mean?

LIONEL
I mean, pictures that may be
important to you. From a past life.

NORA
No. I don't see the point of it.

Lionel turns in his chair to face Nora.

LIONEL
No?

NORA
No, Lionel.

LIONEL
Do you ever think of me? Of us?

NORA
That life is over now. I'm living a
new life. I've moved on.

LIONEL
A new life?

Nora begins to chop up the vegetables a little faster.

NORA
You should drink more water.

Lionel shakes his head and closes his eyes for a moment.

LIONEL
I think of us a lot.

NORA
Sometimes you just have to let go.

LIONEL
We were married, Nora.

NORA
I know...

LIONEL
I didn't think that whole "'til
death do us part" thing was meant
to be literal.

NORA

Neither did I. But that's how it
turned out, didn't it?

Lionel takes another sip of water and stands up. He goes to
Nora's side.

LIONEL

Do you blame me for losing the
baby?

Nora slams the knife down on the counter. She closes her
eyes. Her body trembles.

NORA

I *knew* you would do this. I just
knew it. I *don't* want to talk about
this. Not *ever*.

LIONEL

I need to know, Nora.

Nora takes a deep breath, trying to calm herself.

NORA

It wasn't anybody's fault. It was
an accident. If you want to blame
someone... blame God.

LIONEL

I often wonder what things would've
been like if we had our baby... Our
son.

Nora shakes her head, angered.

NORA

Don't...

LIONEL

Do you wonder that, Nora? Do you
wonder what our son would have
grown up to be?

Lionel lightly strokes her hair.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Who he would've looked like...

Nora shoves his hand away. She picks up the knife and spins
to face Lionel.

NORA

Don't fucking touch me!

Lionel's eyes widen. He backs up a few steps.

LIONEL

Alright, Nora. Alright. Just relax.

NORA

Don't tell me to relax! Get the fuck out of my home you drunk!

LIONEL

Okay... I'm leaving. I'm leaving.

Nora shakes her head.

NORA

You shouldn't have come here...

Lionel swallows the lump in his throat.

LIONEL

You can't recreate a life, Nora.

Nora's eyes widen slightly. The anger is replaced by a look of guilt.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

He's not our son.

A tear falls from Nora's eye.

Lionel points to the locked door across the room.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Yet you keep him locked in there,
like a womb.

Lionel looks at Nora's necklace around her neck.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

And now he holds the key to your
heart. Something that I once
possessed.

NORA

(Whispers)

Get out. Just get out. Please.

Lionel slowly makes his way towards the front door. He looks back at Nora and opens his mouth to say something. He stops himself, opens the door, and leaves.

Nora cries and puts the knife back on the counter. She grabs her necklace and stares down at the key.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

McCaffery is kneeling down in front of the Holy Cross, hands clasped, eyes closed in prayer.

Priest Parrish lights a candle with his lighter.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Lionel stumbles down the road near the Tavern. He yanks off his wedding ring and throws it away. He notices a piece of paper being blown by the wind across the ground.

WARREN (V.O.)

What is the opposite of time?

Lionel heads over and picks up the paper. It is the "Missing" poster. He crumples it up angrily.

INT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

Nora makes her way toward the locked door, gripping the key tight.

WARREN (V.O.)

Time is change. Therefore the opposite of time is a constant.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Warren is busy writing at his desk. The only light in the room comes from the flickering light of the fire in the fireplace. The black drapes are open.

WARREN (V.O.)

We are confined within our freedom. Only when our time is limited do we truly enjoy it. Hope is a burden to us all. Let me tell you something, now that I'm dead... I've never felt so alive. I've never felt- -

Two soft KNOCKS on the bedroom door.

Warren sighs and drops his pen on the paper. He heads over to the door and pulls it open.

Warren freezes.

Lionel is standing in the doorway.

WARREN

Lionel? What are you doing here?

Lionel walks into Warren's room and closes the door. Warren backs up.

LIONEL

I didn't think it was necessary to wake your Mother.

Lionel tosses Warren the crumpled piece of paper.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Explain.

Warren smooths out the paper and stares at the "Missing" poster.

WARREN

Explain what?

LIONEL

Explain why you have been putting these up around town.

WARREN

I haven't been- -

LIONEL

Are you trying to make people feel guilty about it? Or do you just want to see their reactions so you can write it down?

WARREN

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

LIONEL

Don't lie to me.

Lionel points to the photocopier in the corner of the room.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I don't know anybody else with a photocopier in this town, do you?

WARREN

That's for my stories, you know that.

LIONEL

Don't talk down to me you cocky little bastard.

Warren's eyes widen.

WARREN
Look, I didn't mean to offend
you...

Lionel looks at the stack of paper on Warren's desk. He heads toward it.

Warren takes a few steps toward the desk.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Um, yeah... That's not done yet.

Lionel picks up the stack of paper and looks at the title page.

LIONEL
"The Existence of Nothing" by
Warren Peece. War and peace, very
clever.

Warren attempts to grab the stack of papers.

Lionel pulls it away and glares at Warren.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Don't grab from me. Don't you dare
grab *anything* from me.

WARREN
I'm sorry. But can I have it back?

Lionel motions to the chair at the desk.

LIONEL
Sit.

WARREN
Lionel, please...

LIONEL
I won't ask again.

Warren hesitantly sits down.

Lionel flips to the first page.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Reading)
There are two characteristics of a
ghost town.

Lionel eyes Warren then looks back down to the page.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

(Reading)

One, the town's reason for being must no longer exist. And two, there must be tangible remains of the town for visitors to see. Although, we do not like gazing eyes upon us, so "visitors" is considered a sinful word around here.

Lionel shakes his head slowly.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

My God...

Warren exhales a deep, nervous breath and looks at the floor.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

(Reading)

We currently have a population, and I use that term loosely, of fifty people. This is what is defined as a "skeleton population". It classifies us as a ghost town, in the broadest sense of the term.

(Stops reading)

Now I see where you get your inspiration...

Lionel rubs his eyes with his fingers.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

What have you done here, Warren?

WARREN

(Quietly)

It's just a story...

LIONEL

No, it's not "just a story"...

Lionel holds up the stack of papers.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

You know what this is? This is treason. Treason to our way of existence that we've worked so hard to maintain.

WARREN

It's a story about us and only *for* us. I don't see any treasonous intent at all.

(MORE)

WARREN (CONT'D)
No one will see it but us. How
could they? And it's not even
finished yet.

LIONEL
No?

Lionel quickly walks over to the fireplace and tosses the
stack of paper into the flames.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
I'd say it is.

Warren shoots up from his seat.

WARREN
No!!

Lionel grabs Warren and clamps a hand over his mouth. Warren
struggles in Lionel's grasp.

LIONEL
(Strained)
Be... *quiet*.

Warren flails wildly. He kicks the chair over.

Lionel throws Warren to the ground and wraps both hands
around his throat.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
Shut up.

Warren struggles amplify as his face reddens. His eyes widen
as he tries to breath.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
Stop struggling. Be quiet and I
will let go...

Warren's face turns to a deeper shade of red. He gasps for
air desperately.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
What, you think I'm going to kill
you? I'm no killer. You're already
dead...

Warren's struggling begins to die down. A gurgling sound
emits from his throat.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Quietly)
You can't die again. That's not how
this works...

Lionel tightens his grip and bears down with full force.

Warren's leg spasms.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
(Strained)
Not... how... this... works.

Warren stops struggling and is still.

Lionel stares down at Warren. He releases his grip and sits back, breathing heavily. He gazes into the fire as the last remnants of Warren's story burns away.

INT. NORA'S HOME - NIGHT

Nora removes her necklace and unlocks the locked door with the key. She attempts to compose herself, wiping at her eyes.

She slowly opens the door...

FLASHCUT:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

The ripples made by Jacob eventually become still. The water reflects the full moon above on its surface.

Seconds pass.

Jacob comes thrashing to the surface, gasping for breath. He coughs some water out of his lungs.

Jacob swims for shore and collapses onto the land, exhausted. He looks back at the shattered stillness of the pond.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Jacob, soaking wet, stumbles down the road. Several LIGHTS on various buildings light up the darkness.

Various Townsfolk slowly exit the buildings. They stare at Jacob.

Lionel approaches Jacob. McCaffery follows behind.

McCaffery looks in both directions as more Townsfolk emerge from the buildings.

MCCAFFERY

Stay back everyone. It's just a boy. Let him breathe.

Jacob coughs and stops in his tracks.

Nora heads out onto the road, curious.

Lionel stops in front of Jacob and studies him. Jacob turns away. He gently touches Jacob's shoulder.

LIONEL

He's soaking wet...

Jacob gasps and recoils away.

JACOB

Don't touch me.

Lionel's eyes widen. He kneels down in front of Jacob.

LIONEL

You can see me, boy?

Jacob turns away, terrified.

JACOB

Don't touch me...

Nora approaches behind Lionel.

NORA

Let me see him.

LIONEL

Nora... Let me handle this.

NORA

You don't know how, Lionel. *Move.*

A hurt look spreads across Lionel's face as he backs away.

Nora kneels down in front of Jacob and wipes his wet hair out of his face.

NORA (CONT'D)

My God. Look at you.

JACOB

Am I... dead?

Lionel and McCaffery glance at each other.

NORA
Shhh, it's okay. Everything's going
to be okay.

Jacob takes a deep breath.

JACOB
Are you an angel?

Nora smiles.

NORA
No, baby... But you may be mine.

Jacob falls into Nora's embrace, exhausted.

BACK TO:

INT. LOCKED ROOM - NIGHT

Inside the small room is Jacob Cain. Fully dressed. He is seated on a chair facing the window covered in transparent white drapes. There are empty plates of food and glasses of water scattered around the room.

Nora steps toward Jacob. A floorboard CREAKS.

JACOB
(Whispers)
Is he gone now?

Nora kneels down and lightly strokes Jacob's hair.

NORA
He's gone now.

Jacob exhales a nervous breath.

NORA (CONT'D)
You're safe here. You'll always be
safe here. With me.

Nora kisses him on the cheek.

NORA (CONT'D)
It's getting late. Time for bed,
okay?

JACOB
I want to stay up to see the night
bird. I always hear her at night.

Nora kneels down so she is eye-level with Jacob. She turns his head softly so that he is looking at her.

NORA

Do you know why the bird chirps at night, Jacob?

Jacob shakes his head.

NORA (CONT'D)

She is claiming her territory. She does this to let all the other birds know to stay away. You see all those lights outside?

Jacob looks out the window through the transparent drapes at the many small lights. He nods.

NORA (CONT'D)

All those lights make the bird believe the sun has come out before it actually has. If we turned all the lights off, she wouldn't chirp anymore. So you see, whether it is the real sun or not, it doesn't matter to the bird. All she needs is a light in the darkness. Do you understand?

Jacob nods.

Nora smiles and hugs him.

NORA (CONT'D)

Just a light in the darkness...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray is seated in a chair.

DOCTOR EVERETT, 50's, is shining a light in Ray's eyes. He clicks it off.

DOCTOR EVERETT

Hold out your arm please, Ray.

Ray extends his arm out.

Doctor Everett places the diabetes alert bracelet on Ray's wrist.

RAY
So this stays on me all the time,
right?

DOCTOR EVERETT
All the time.

Doctor Everett takes a seat across from Ray at the desk.

DOCTOR EVERETT (CONT'D)
Have you been following the plan I
laid out for you? Eating right?
Taking your insulin doses as
instructed?

RAY
I have. To all three.

Doctor Everett takes Ray's file off the desk and flips it open. He removes a pen from his jacket pocket and writes something down.

Ray looks around the room, as if he is searching for something in particular.

Doctor Everett shuts the file and looks at Ray.

DOCTOR EVERETT
So I told you last time that I
would have an answer for the
question you asked me. About your
hallucinations.

RAY
I wouldn't exactly call them
"hallucinations".

DOCTOR EVERETT
You said you were seeing things and
hearing music coming from the
sky...

RAY
Point taken.

DOCTOR EVERETT
Have you heard of HHNS?

RAY
(sarcastic)
Totally. Who hasn't?

Doctor Everett smiles politely.

DOCTOR EVERETT
It stands for Hyperosmolar
Hyperglycemic Nonketotic Syndrome.
It usually appears in type two
diabetics but can also cause
diabetic hallucinations in type
ones, such as yourself.

RAY
And you think I have this... HHNS?

DOCTOR EVERETT
It's possible.

RAY
Should I be worried?

DOCTOR EVERETT
No no, it just means you have to
follow a strict plan and check your
blood sugar regularly. It can be
controlled and even eliminated with
the right diet and care. Have you
noticed any intense thirst lately?
Have you been dehydrated at all?

RAY
Sometimes.

DOCTOR EVERETT
That will go away when we get this
under control.

RAY
Is this condition rare? Normal?

DOCTOR EVERETT
It's a little rare, but nothing
abnormal really. I actually had a
kid in here about a month ago, type
one diabetic such as yourself, who
claimed he saw creatures that were
never there.

RAY
Creatures?

DOCTOR EVERETT
That's how he described them.

RAY
Scary stuff.

Doctor Everett nods.

DOCTOR EVERETT

Just make sure you stay focused on this. Type one diabetes needs to be cared for year round, there are no off days. I understand your job is demanding of your time, but this is important.

RAY

I understand.

A DULL KNOCKING is heard.

DOCTOR EVERETT

Alright, that's it for now. Keep me up to date.

RAY

Will do.

Ray stands up and shakes Doctor Everett's hand.

DOCTOR EVERETT

Oh and Ray?

Ray locks eyes with Doctor Everett.

DOCTOR EVERETT (CONT'D)

When you hear music in the sky... probably a good idea not to drive.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ray opens his eyes. He is seated behind the steering wheel. He blinks several times and smacks his lips, his mouth dry.

Marla is checking her cell phone.

There's a loud KNOCKING on the window.

Sam, in full uniform, is waiting at the window. Several POLICE OFFICERS walk passed behind him.

Ray rolls down the window.

SAM

Morning.

Ray squints from the sunlight.

RAY

Is it?

Sam stares at Ray for a moment, unflinching.

SAM
I really need you to stay alert
today, Ray.

RAY
I'm always alert.

Sam glances at Ray's diabetic alert bracelet. Ray notices this and hides his wrist.

RAY (CONT'D)
So I assume you're guys didn't find
anything or else you would've told
us by now.

SAM
You assume correct. All that's in
the pond is a baseball and some
rocks. We found some blood spatter
on the ground but it was determined
to be animal blood. Probably a deer
that got shot, or attacked.

Ray looks at Marla, who glances up from her cell phone and shrugs.

SAM (CONT'D)
Looks like you're heading back into
Gold Point today for another look.

Marla puts down her cell phone.

MARLA
Awesome.

SAM
In and out, like we talked about.
But be thorough. Here.

Sam hands Ray an envelope.

SAM (CONT'D)
My team is going to keep searching
the forest. I'll be in contact with
you if we find anything. I expect
the same in return.

RAY
Absolutely.

Sam rests his arms on the window sill.

SAM
We won't be far. Keep in touch, I
mean it.

MARLA
Will do.

Sam slaps the car door with his hand and walks away.

MARLA (CONT'D)
I wish he'd stop doing that.

Ray begins to open the envelope...

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

The black car with tinted windows drives passed the "Gold Point" sign.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ray parks the car and takes off his seat belt. He pockets the car keys.

Marla takes off her seat belt and pockets her cell phone. She adjusts her pant leg down by her ankles.

Ray reaches into the backseat and grabs the two camera's attached to lanyards. He passes one to Marla. They both put them around their necks.

RAY
You gonna be okay?

Marla flashes a confused look.

MARLA
Why wouldn't I be?

Ray studies Marla for a moment and fidgets with the camera around his neck. He nods to himself.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mary is tending to a garden with Janet. They pull carrots up from the soil.

JANET
Mass must have started by now...

MARY

Yeah well, eating comes before worshipping, unfortunately.

Janet pours some water on the soil.

JANET

What's Warren up to today?

MARY

Probably still sleeping. You know him, always up late burning the midnight oil.

Mary looks up and notices Ray and Marla heading into Town.

MARY (CONT'D)

Jesus... They're back.

JANET

Who?

MARY

The tourists.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Ray and Marla walk slowly passed several tombstones, observing them. They snap pictures.

MARLA

June 6th, 2006. Six-six-six. Oh this just keeps getting better and better, doesn't it?

Kinsey slowly climbs out of her hole, methodical, like a predator about to strike, her eyes locked on Ray and Marla.

Ray looks toward the hole.

RAY

Look at this.

MARLA

I heard looking at a grave for too long is bad luck, Ray...

RAY

Only if you don't hold your breath.

Ray and Marla make their way to the hole. They lean down over it, staring down at the wooden coffin.

Kinsey slowly rises to her feet beside them, staring.

RAY (CONT'D)
You think this was dug recently?

MARLA
I... don't know. I hope not.

Ray turns and looks at the tombstone nearest to the hole.

RAY
Esther Kinsey.

Ray snaps a photograph of the wooden coffin.

Kinsey's eyes widen with anger. She kicks some dirt on the ground toward Ray.

Ray immediately places a hand over his eye.

RAY (CONT'D)
Ow, fuck!

MARLA
What? Are you okay?

RAY
Just got something in my eye. I'm fine. I'll live.

KINSEY
You fucking people... No respect.

Ray stands up, rubbing his eye.

RAY
Let's check the rest of this place out. I think I just pissed off Esther. Not a good start.

Marla follows Ray out of the graveyard, brushing passed Kinsey. Kinsey glares at her.

Marla shivers, looks behind her, and walks faster.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Lionel is lying on the stage with a wet towel on his forehead. McCaffery is seated beside him.

MCCAFFERY
I think you should cut back on your drinking.

LIONEL

I think you should cut back on your
thinking.

Lionel takes the wet towel off of his forehead and sits up with a groan.

Mary and Janet run into the room.

MARY

Lionel!

Lionel freezes.

LIONEL

(Under his breath)

Shit...

McCaffery gives Lionel a curious look.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Mary... Keep it down a bit, will
you? What are you all wound up
about?

MARY

The tourists... they're back.

Lionel stares at Mary, somewhat relieved. *She doesn't know.*

LIONEL

You're kidding me. Same ones as
last time?

MARY

I believe so, yes.

Lionel looks at McCaffery.

LIONEL

What are we, a God damn theme park?

Mary and Janet glance at each other.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Ray and Marla head toward the Tavern, snapping pictures.
Kinsey follows a few feet behind.

Lionel and McCaffery stand close by, watching. Mary and Janet
are behind them.

Ray blinks his eye several times and rubs it. His good eye locks on something. He heads off the road to the side of the Tavern.

MARLA
Where are you going?

RAY
Hold on a sec'.

Ray bends down and picks up Lionel's wedding ring. He studies it for a moment and heads back toward Marla.

RAY (CONT'D)
Guess it wasn't false
advertisement...

MARLA
What do you got?

RAY
Wedding ring.

Marla's eyes quickly dart back and forth.

MARLA
You can't keep that, Ray. Put it
back.

RAY
Yeah, like it belongs to anybody
around here.

MARLA
Just seems like bad karma to me...

Ray pockets the ring.

Lionel stares at Ray, stone-faced.

McCaffery glances down at Lionel's left hand.

Kinsey sidles up beside Lionel and McCaffery. Lionel holds up his index finger to his lips. Kinsey nods begrudgingly.

Ray and Marla snap pictures of the Tavern.

RAY
So where to first?

Marla looks around Town.

MARLA
I have no idea.

RAY

Well let's just start anywhere and work our way down to specifics. Operation pinecone.

MARLA

Wise words.

RAY

If we split up we can cover more ground... Just saying.

Marla itches at her pant leg and sighs.

RAY (CONT'D)

Or we could just stand here in the middle of town and yell and see what happens...

MARLA

And why would we do that?

RAY

Exactly. This is what I'd call 'the fork in the road'...

Marla nods, mulling things over.

MARLA

You know what? You're right.

Ray drops the camera around his neck.

RAY

I am?

MARLA

Yeah, and I'm left. I can't keep going straight all the time. I have to choose eventually.

RAY

I'm so proud of you.

MARLA

Shut up. Just make sure you keep your phone on, smart ass.

RAY

Will do. I'll call you if I find any more gold.

MARLA

I won't hold my breath then.

Marla starts walking down the road.

RAY
If you do and end up passing out, I
know mouth-to-mouth.

Marla flips Ray the finger as she walks away.

Ray grins and heads off down the road in the opposite
direction.

McCaffery leans in toward Lionel.

MCCAFFERY
So what do you want to do?

LIONEL
Let them stay.

McCaffery studies Lionel.

Kinsey kicks at something on the ground with frustration.

KINSEY
What do you mean "let them stay"!?

LIONEL
Quiet. I have a headache that you
are *not* helping.

KINSEY
But you can't- -

Lionel holds up a hand, silencing Kinsey.

Frustrated, Kinsey stomps off down the road after Ray.

Mary steps forward.

MARY
I have to echo Kinsey's concerns,
Lionel.

Lionel turns to face Mary. He takes hold of her arms.

LIONEL
Mary... I need something from you.
And I need you not to question it.

MARY
Of course.

LIONEL

I need you and Janet to go around town and spread the word that these visitors are not to be scared away.

MARY

I don't understand?

LIONEL

I asked you not to question it.

Mary sighs and glances at McCaffery.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

What are you looking at *him* for?

MARY

(To Lionel)

Just let me go warn Warren first.

LIONEL

That can wait. I assume he's still asleep at this time?

MARY

Probably.

LIONEL

Well then he's fine for now. Notify the others first.

Mary glances at McCaffery once more. McCaffery subtly nods.

MARY

Very well.

Mary and Janet scurry away, arm-in-arm.

MCCAFFERY

You sure about this?

LIONEL

You heard what I said. Let them do what they need to do. No sense getting everyone into a panic.

MCCAFFERY

You may be playing with fire here, Lionel.

LIONEL

So be it. Keep an eye on Kinsey for me, will you? Make sure she doesn't do anything... rash.

McCaffery nods and walks away.

Lionel eyes the black car with tinted windows parked in the distance.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Bad karma indeed...

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Ray enters and looks around the Chapel.

Priest Parrish is at the front standing behind the podium.

About 20 Townsfolk, including Simon, Earl, and the Bartender, are seated on the benches.

PRIEST PARRISH
Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our- -

Priest Parrish looks up and spots Ray.

After a few seconds, the various Townsfolk turn and look at Ray.

Ray walks up the aisle. He looks at the Holy Cross on the back wall and the many candles lit below it.

The Townsfolk begin to whisper amongst themselves.

Priest Parrish holds up his arms.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)
Let us all be quiet now.

The Townsfolk quiet down after a moment.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)
We really have been blessed with something here.

Kinsey enters the Chapel.

Ray pulls out his cell phone and checks it.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)

Let us marvel at this living,
breathing soul within our midst.
But lest we not be jealous of the
life inside him anymore then we can
be jealous of our own children. Let
us look at him through the same
lens.

Ray heads to the back wall and stares up at the Holy Cross,
adjusting the lanyard on his neck.

Kinsey walks up the aisle toward the podium.

Priest Parrish begins to walk circles around Ray, blessing
him.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)

God watches us and yet does not
interfere. We will follow in His
divine path. Thus, in this place,
we are all Gods.

Kinsey reaches the podium and stops. She snatches the lighter
off of the podium and quickly pockets it. She heads down the
aisle, locking eyes with Simon, and motions for him to
follow.

Ray does the blessing; Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Simon meets up with Kinsey outside the Chapel.

SIMON

Can you believe this?

KINSEY

I don't believe in anything
anymore. Even church.

SIMON

So what's up?

KINSEY

Are you able to get me a
transparent tube of some sort? The
longer the better.

SIMON

A transparent... tube? For what?

Kinsey looks away, distant. She scratches her rash instinctively.

KINSEY
Can you help me or not, Simon?

SIMON
I'll see what I can do. You looking to guzzle down some of the hard stuff?

KINSEY
Not exactly.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

Lionel is kneeling down beside the black car with tinted windows. He begins loosening the lug nuts with a tire iron.

INT. CLYDE'S HOME - DAY

Clyde is asleep in the bath tub, shivering. His lips are blue. Only a few ice cubes remain visible in the water.

A door opens. Marla enters and closes the door behind her.

MARLA
Hello?

Clyde's eyes flutter open. He blinks several times, disoriented.

CLYDE
Hello? Who's there?

Marla pulls out her cell phone and presses a button. She brings it to her ear.

RAY (V.O.)
Hey. Everything okay?

MARLA
Yeah, just checking in. You find anything?

Clyde's eyes widen and the sound of Marla's voice. He licks his blue lips.

RAY (V.O.)
Not yet. You?

MARLA
I'm looking.

Marla spots the bottle of "Aciclovir". She picks it up and reads the label.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Where are you?

RAY (V.O.)
Just leaving the Chapel.

Marla mimes the word "Chapel?" with a confused expression.

MARLA
Okay.

Marla spots a light switch on the wall. She places the Aciclovir bottle down and flicks the light switch. A LIGHT comes on overhead.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Power's on.

RAY (V.O.)
Where are you?

MARLA
Top floor of one of the buildings.
Looks like it used to be someone's
home.

Marla fidgets with the sink levers. Water shoots out of the faucet.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Water works too.

Marla opens the fridge, it is empty. She opens the freezer and stares at the many ice cube trays and the slab of frozen meat.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Weird.

RAY (V.O.)
What?

MARLA
Ice. Lots of ice.

RAY (V.O.)
Tell me where you are.

Marla walks toward Clyde in the bath tub. She glances down at the tub where Clyde sits and heads to the window.

Clyde looks her up and down eagerly. He slowly gets out of the bath tub.

Marla gazes out the window.

MARLA

I see the Town Hall. It's about...
forty or fifty feet to my left.

Clyde sneaks up behind Marla.

RAY (V.O.)

Okay.

Clyde leans in close to Marla and smells her hair.

Marla tenses up.

MARLA

Ray...

RAY (V.O.)

What?

Clyde gently presses the ice cube onto the back of Marla's neck and licks the wet spot on her skin.

Marla GASPS and spins around. Her eyes dart around the room.

Clyde smiles right at her.

MARLA

Fuck me...

CLYDE

Careful what you wish for.

RAY (V.O.)

What's wrong?

Marla rubs the back of her neck.

MARLA

Nothing. It's... nothing. Just felt
a chill again. Or something.

CLYDE

Welcome to my neck of the woods...

RAY (V.O.)

You need me there?

Marla scratches at her pant leg.

MARLA
No, no... I'm fine.

Marla walks passed a smiling Clyde and heads into the kitchen.

Clyde follows after, his naked body dripping wet and shivering.

RAY (V.O.)
You sure?

MARLA
Yeah. Just another dead end.
Leaving now.

CLYDE
Come back anytime, beautiful.

Marla quickly opens the door and leaves.

Clyde looks at the bottle of "Aciclovir".

EXT. MARY'S HOME - DAY

Ray steps onto Mary's porch and looks over his shoulder. Various Townsfolk have followed him.

Ray opens the front door and heads inside.

INT. MARY'S HOME - DAY

Ray looks around the quaint kitchen. He heads over to the counter and stumbles slightly, bracing himself against the kitchen table to maintain balance.

Ray closes his eyes tight and rubs his forehead. He takes a deep breath and rights himself.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Kinsey is seated near her hole, her legs dangling down inside it. There is a bucket beside her.

Simon approaches her holding a long transparent tube. He kneels down beside Kinsey and hands her the tube.

SIMON
Here you go. Best I could do.

KINSEY
 You found one! You're a life saver.
 Where did you get it?

SIMON
 At the bar.

KINSEY
 Why am I not surprised?

SIMON
 I used to funnel with it. But I
 cleaned it off, don't worry.

Kinsey studies the tube.

KINSEY
 Good to know.

SIMON
 What are you using it for?

KINSEY
 Can you keep a secret?

SIMON
 If I can, I know the cure for
 amnesia *and* hangovers...

KINSEY
 What?

Simon grins.

SIMON
 Nothing.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

All four tires have been removed from the black car with tinted windows. They have been piled up on top of each other beside the car.

The passenger side window is broken and the door is open. Lionel is seated in the passenger seat, searching the interior.

INT. CAR - DAY

Lionel opens the glove compartment and spots the portable diabetic kit. He grabs it.

MCCAFFERY (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Lionel looks out at McCaffery who is standing by the car.

LIONEL
Here, catch.

Lionel tosses the kit out the door to McCaffery, who catches it and looks it over.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

Lionel gets out of the car and heads to the stacked tires.

LIONEL
Help me get these out of here.

MCCAFFERY
Not until you tell me what the point of this is.

LIONEL
Don't think, okay McCaffery? Just follow directions and maybe you'll get somewhere. Speaking of which, aren't you supposed to be shadowing Kinsey? I know that's not your strong suit, but it should be fairly simple since she's, you know, on *foot*.

Lionel pushes the top tire to the ground.

MCCAFFERY
You know, I've been questioning a lot of things lately...

LIONEL
Oh yeah? Like what?

MCCAFFERY
Like who the fuck left you in charge for one.

Lionel stops and stares at McCaffery.

MCCAFFERY (CONT'D)
I want answers, Lionel. What is this?

Lionel steps toward McCaffery, glaring at him.

LIONEL

They took something from me. I'm returning the favor. You don't want to lend an old friend a hand, then fine. I'll do it myself. Like always.

MCCAFFERY

A friend, huh? Is that what you are?

LIONEL

I don't know, am I?

Lionel picks up the tire from the ground and begins rolling it towards Town.

McCaffery pockets the diabetic kit and watches Lionel for a moment. He shakes his head and grabs a tire.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Ray opens the door and looks around the room.

Warren's body is lying on the floor. A crumpled piece of paper is beside his body. The Townsfolk gaze in at Ray from between the black drapes outside the bedroom window.

Ray spots the piece of paper on the floor beside the body. He picks it up and stares at the "Missing" poster. He rubs his eyes.

Ray looks over at the fireplace; The last burning embers sizzle out. He glances out the window.

Ray reaches into his pocket and pulls out his cell phone. He presses a button and brings the phone to his ear.

MARLA (V.O.)

Yeah.

RAY

I'm gonna head back to the car for a second. You wanna meet me there?

MARLA (V.O.)

Yeah sure. Everything okay?

RAY

Yeah, I just... need my shot... I think.

MARLA (V.O.)
 Fuck, not again. What's the
 definition of insanity, Ray?

RAY
 I know, I know.
 (Looks at missing poster)
 But I think this is gonna pay off.

MARLA
 You find anything?

Ray eyes the photocopier in the corner of the room.
 The Townsfolk press their faces against the window.

RAY
 We'll talk there.

MARLA (V.O.)
 Okay. See you soon.

Ray hangs up. He pockets the "Missing" poster and heads out
 of the room on wobbly legs.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

The black car with tinted windows is in shambles. All four
 tires are gone.

Kinsey kneels down beside the gas tank. She sticks the
 transparent tube down into the tank and begins to suck.

Simon is standing over her, watching.

SIMON
 I have to admit... I'm getting
 ideas.

After a moment, the gas comes pouring out of the tube and
 into the bucket below.

Kinsey coughs and spits.

SIMON (CONT'D)
 Although, that wasn't how I
 pictured it ending...

Kinsey wipes off her mouth.

KINSEY
 Shut up, Simon.

EXT. MARY'S HOME - DAY

Ray steps off Mary's porch, the Townsfolk gawking at him.

Mary approaches and watches as Ray leaves. She slowly looks at her home, concerned.

MARY
(Whispers)
Warren...

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Lionel tosses the last tire onto the floor.

McCaffery, his eyes sad and tired, stands in the doorway and removes the portable diabetic kit from his pocket. He holds up the kit.

MCCAFFERY
What do you want me to do with
this?

Lionel shrugs.

LIONEL
I don't know. Get rid of it. Bury
it. I don't care.

McCaffery sighs.

MCCAFFERY
I think you've finally lost your
mind, old friend.

Lionel begins stacking the tires.

LIONEL
I lost it years ago. You only
noticed now?

McCaffery watches Lionel stack for a moment then quietly leaves.

Lionel stops stacking and stares at the tires.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Our baby, Nora. Ours. Not yours.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

Ray stumbles toward the car, sweating. He stops and looks at the crippled car in dismay.

RAY
(Whispers)
Fuck.

Several Townsfolk surround the car. They stare at Ray.

Ray snaps a picture of the car. He approaches the passenger side window and looks through the shattered glass.

INT. CAR - DAY

Ray collapses into the passenger seat, exhausted.

The Townsfolk get closer to the car.

Ray opens the glove compartment. His eyes widen.

RAY
(Whispers)
No...

Ray frantically searches around the car. He picks up an empty water bottle and tosses it aside.

Ray presses the dial on the radio with his thumb. He rolls his eyes at himself and pulls the car keys from his pocket.

Ray places the keys in the ignition and turns them. The engine sputters and doesn't start. He checks the gas gauge; It is empty. He groans and gets out of the car.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

The Townsfolk back up as Ray exits the car.

Ray stumbles away and starts toward Town.

Marla jogs up the road toward Ray, holding the camera around her neck.

MARLA
Ray! What happened?

Marla reaches Ray and places his arm around her shoulders, supporting his weight.

Ray's breathing is heavy and laboured.

RAY
I don't know. Tires are gone. No
gas.

MARLA
Didn't you take your shot?

Ray shakes his head.

RAY
Kit's gone too.

MARLA
Shit.

Marla reaches into her pocket with her free hand and pulls
out her cell phone.

MARLA (CONT'D)
I'm calling Sam.

Ray places his hand over Marla's hand holding the cell phone.

RAY
No...

MARLA
What? Why?

Ray pulls out the "Missing" poster from his pocket. He hands
it to Marla.

RAY
We need to stay. I have a feeling
he's here.

Ray glances behind him at the car, then looks back into
Marla's eyes.

RAY (CONT'D)
You need to trust me.

Marla looks back at the car. The Townsfolk are closer now.

MARLA
I don't know. Clearly he's not the
only one here, Ray. And you're not
looking so good.

RAY
You said the water works in town,
right? I just need some water and
I'll be okay. Just get me to the
water.

Marla groans.

MARLA

Okay.

Marla strains supporting Ray's weight, walking slowly towards Town.

Ray looks at Marla and chuckles to himself.

MARLA (CONT'D)

Why are you laughing?

RAY

You really are my spare tire,
aren't you?

EXT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Lionel stacks a third tire onto the two tires already stacked on Nora's porch. He walks back toward the Town Hall.

The transparent white drapes flutter in the window.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Two soft KNOCKS on the door.

MARY (O.S.)

Warren? Are you awake?

After a moment, Mary opens the door. She looks down at Warren's body on the floor, her eyes widen, a look of shock slowly spreading across her face...

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Ray is slumped over, one arm draped over Marla's shoulders as they slowly approach the Tavern.

Several Townsfolk are staring at them.

MARLA

Almost there.

Ray blinks his eyes several times and begins HUMMING a song.

RAY

Do you hear that?

MARLA
Hear what? You humming?

Ray looks up into the sky.

RAY
Music...

Marla studies Ray, confused.

Ray spasms and collapses into a heap on the ground.

MARLA
Ray!

Ray convulses for a few seconds and then is still.

Marla kneels down and begins to shake him.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Come on, Ray. Don't do this.
Please. Wake up.

She checks his pulse.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Don't you leave me here alone. Not
now.

Marla shakes Ray some more. No response.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Marla pulls out her cell phone and dials a number.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Kinsey dumps the bucket of gasoline into the hole and onto her coffin. She and Simon stare down into the hole.

SIMON
This is going to draw a lot of
attention...

KINSEY
From who exactly?

Kinsey pulls out Priest Parrish's lighter from her pocket.

SIMON
What if it hurts?

Kinsey sparks the lighter and stares at the flame.

KINSEY
Pain is temporary. Death is
forever.

Simon shakes his head.

SIMON
Cremating yourself... Now I've seen
everything.

Kinsey picks up a dry leaf from the ground.

KINSEY
We are all just leaves on a tree,
Simon. Eventually, we all fall. I'd
stand back if I were you.

Simon backs up a few steps.

SIMON
That's deep.

Kinsey sparks the flame and lights the leaf. The leaf begins to burn up. She drops it into the hole.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Marla hangs up her cell phone. She wipes some sweat off of Ray's forehead.

MARLA
Come on, Ray. *Wake up.*

Several Townsfolk have emerged from the Tavern and are staring down at Ray and Marla.

Marla gazes off into the distance. She see's something. She looks down at Ray and begins texting on her cell phone.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Lionel kicks the tire the rest of the way. It hits into side of the porch and tumbles over.

The door opens and Nora steps out onto the porch.

NORA
(Quietly)
What are you *doing??*

Lionel bends down and picks up the tire. He heads toward the porch.

Nora steps in front of Lionel and holds out a hand.

NORA (CONT'D)

No, no, no, no, no... you're taking these tires *off* my porch. Not putting them on like some crazy person.

LIONEL

Move, Nora.

NORA

No. Don't tell me to "move".

Lionel drops the tire to the ground.

LIONEL

Doesn't feel good to be told to move, does it? To be shoved aside like you're nothing.

NORA

What are you talking about?

Lionel sighs. Defeated.

LIONEL

It doesn't matter anymore. Nothing matters.

Nora glances back at the window with transparent white drapes. She turns back to face Lionel.

NORA

You need to leave. You're scaring him.

Lionel shakes his head.

LIONEL

This fucking kid...

NORA

Don't call him that.

LIONEL

You know what? I should have never let him into this town to begin with. He's been a God damn parasite ever since he's been here. Leeching off of you and- -

Nora steps off the porch and slaps Lionel across the face.

NORA
You watch your fucking mouth.

Lionel stares at Nora, stone-faced.

LIONEL
Do I have to keep reminding you,
Nora? Our son is dead.

Tears fill Nora's eyes almost instantly.

NORA
(Whispers)
So are we.

Marla walks passed Lionel and Nora.

Lionel and Nora glance at Marla then look back into each other's eyes, searching...

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A torrent of FLAMES rise from within the hole. Kinsey stares at the flames. For the first time, she smiles. Simon watches off to the side.

McCaffery runs into the Graveyard, pushing passed Simon.

Kinsey steps in front of McCaffery, smiling.

KINSEY
It's okay. Everything's under
control.

MCCAFFERY
No, it's not. Things are spiraling
out of it. What have you done?

McCaffery steps passed Kinsey and grabs the shovel out of the mound of dirt. He begins shovelling the dirt onto the flames.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Mary is cradling Warren's body in her arms, crying hysterically.

EXT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Marla studies the three tires stacked on the porch.

MARLA
What... the hell.

Lionel and Nora study Marla.

NORA
I thought you would've learned to
stay away from cars by now, Lionel.
That combination clearly doesn't
mix.

LIONEL
That's low.

NORA
No, it's truth. Get off your high
horse and it won't seem so low.
What is she doing?

Marla steps toward the open doorway, peering in.

MARLA
Hello?

Lionel and Nora step up behind Marla on the porch.

NORA
Get away from my door...

Marla looks at the window with the transparent white drapes.
The drapes suddenly flutter and move. She takes a deep breath
and slowly steps inside.

Nora lurches forward. Lionel takes hold of her by the arm and
snatches her back.

NORA (CONT'D)
Let go of me! She went inside!

LIONEL
I'll handle this.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

The flames have been snuffed out by the dirt.

McCaffery is leaning on the shovel, breathing heavily. Half
the mound of dirt remains above ground.

MCCAFFERY
What were you thinking? Or were
you?

SIMON
(To Kinsey)
Do you feel different?

Kinsey glances at Simon and jumps in the hole, pushing away the soil and exposing the burnt coffin.

KINSEY
I need to open it.

Kinsey touches the coffin lid and recoils her hand back.

MCCAFFERY
Be careful, it's hot. Rub some soil on your hand if you're going to touch it.

SIMON
You know, if I may say, this is really all very morbid. Even for us.

Kinsey pancakes some soil onto her hand and rubs it in.

KINSEY
I'm opening it.

McCaffery and Simon peer down into the hole.

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Marla looks around the kitchen. Various fresh cut vegetables are on the counter next to the knife.

MARLA
Hello?

The front door makes a SQUEAKING noise as Lionel and Nora enter the home behind her.

Marla spins around and looks at the front door as Lionel closes it. Her eyes widen, frightened.

Marla rushes back to the door, passed Lionel and Nora, and reaches for the doorknob.

Nora heads to the other side of the room.

Lionel presses his hand against the front door and pushes.

Marla tries opening the front door, it won't budge. She stares at the door in fright and slowly backs away.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Mary is lying down beside Warren, stroking his hair. Her eyes are red and puffy from crying.

Janet enters the room. She looks down at Mary holding Warren's body.

JANET

Mary, my God... what happened?

Mary looks up at Janet.

MARY

Get Father Parrish. Please, hurry.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Kinsey tries to open the coffin lid. It won't budge. She looks up at McCaffery.

KINSEY

It's stuck. Help me get it open.

MCCAFFERY

You don't need to do this.

KINSEY

Look, I'm getting this open one way or another. If you're going to just stand up there and watch me burn off my hand doing it, then fine.

McCaffery sighs and jumps in the hole beside Kinsey.

Simon kneels down beside the hole.

SIMON

Such a softy you are, McCaffery. I'd help too, but you know, doesn't seem to be much room down there...

Kinsey rolls her eyes.

McCaffery rubs soil into both of his hands.

MCCAFFERY

Let's just get this over with.

McCaffery places both hands on the coffin lid and grimaces. Kinsey places her hand on it. They both pull up with a grunt. The wooden coffin lid snaps off.

McCaffery and Kinsey pull back their hands and shake them out.

The coffin is empty and burnt on the inside.

A confused look crosses Kinsey's face.

KINSEY

Where am I? Where's my ashes?

Simon peers down from above.

SIMON

Maybe you were so badly decomposed
you just kinda melted away.

McCaffery shakes his head, pondering.

MCCAFFERY

There would be ashes left.

KINSEY

I... don't understand.

McCaffery pulls himself out of the hole and heads toward the mound of dirt. He grabs the shovel.

MCCAFFERY

If things don't add up, start
subtracting...

SIMON

What?

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Marla backs away from the front door, gripping the lanyard around her neck nervously. Lionel stands guard in front of the front door. Nora stands guard by the locked door.

Marla turns around tentatively and looks at the locked door where Nora is standing.

LIONEL

Open the door.

NORA

Are you crazy? She's not getting in
here.

LIONEL

I meant for yourself. Go in there
with the boy and wait. I'll deal
with you two later.

NORA

What are you going to do?

LIONEL

Just go.

Nora takes off her necklace and places the key in the lock.
She unlocks the door and opens it.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

McCaffery begins digging a hole in front of the tombstone
that reads, "Ian McCaffery".

Kinsey and Simon watch.

SIMON

I'd help, but you know, doesn't
seem to be another shovel around...

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Nora enters the locked room.

Lionel quickly walks passed Marla and shoves his way into the
locked room before Nora can close the door.

NORA (O.S.)

What are you doing?! Get out!

Marla watches the open door in fright. A floorboard CREAKS
several times from within the room.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Priest Parrish enters the room, Janet follows closely behind.

Mary sits up. She bursts into tears. Janet rushes to her side
to comfort her.

MARY

Father... help us.

Priest Parrish kneels down beside Warren's body and examines
him.

PRIEST PARRISH
Is he not responding at all?

Mary shakes her head.

Priest Parrish smiles.

PRIEST PARRISH (CONT'D)
He is the first then.

MARY
The... first?

PRIEST PARRISH
To be accepted into God's Kingdom.
It is time. It has begun. Finally.

Mary cries and buries her face into Janet's shirt.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

McCaffery has dug out enough dirt to expose his own wooden coffin lid.

Kinsey and Simon watch intently from above.

McCaffery places both hands on the lid and grunts as he pulls up on it. The lid breaks off.

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Marla approaches the open door cautiously.

NORA (O.S.)
Get away from him!

Marla tentatively looks into the room...

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Jacob is seated by the window. Nora is clutching him tight.

Lionel grabs Jacob by the shoulders and shakes him.

LIONEL
You don't belong here! You got
that, boy!? You're not wanted!

Jacob has his eyes shut as he recoils away from Lionel.

NORA
Don't touch him!

LIONEL
You go back to where you came from,
you hear me!? Leave!

Marla steps into the room and GASPS.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Kinsey and Simon are standing by the hole near McCaffery's tombstone. The shovel is lying near them.

They gaze down into the hole, not moving. Simon slowly extends his hand out towards Kinsey. After a moment, she takes his hand.

Simon leads Kinsey out of the graveyard.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Ray is lying unconscious on the ground.

Several Townsfolk have gathered around him, staring down at him.

A SHADOW engulfs Ray's body.

McCaffery, looking distraught, leans down over Ray holding the portable diabetic kit. He looks at the diabetic alert bracelet on Ray's wrist.

McCaffery looks around at all the Townsfolk.

MCCAFFERY
Back up. Let him breath.

The Townsfolk slowly back up.

McCaffery removes the insulin needle from the kit and takes a deep breath.

MCCAFFERY (CONT'D)
Here goes nothing...

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Mary holds hands with Janet.

Priest Parrish is kneeling beside Warren's body, eyes closed in prayer.

PRIEST PARRISH

God of hope, we come to you in shock and grief and confusion of heart. Help us to find peace in the knowledge of your loving mercy to all your children, and give us light to guide us out of our darkness into the assurance of your love.

Mary let's go of Janet's hand.

MARY

I can't do this. I can't.

Janet hugs Mary.

JANET

Shhh, it's okay. It's okay.

PRIEST PARRISH

In the name of the Lord Jesus, as Your servant, I come before You right now in behalf of these, Your people. Father, these are the people you have taken out of the prison of darkness...

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Nora attempts to shove away Lionel as she clings onto Jacob.

NORA

Get out! Both of you! Leave us alone!

Marla is staring directly in Jacob's direction, in disbelief.

MARLA

Jacob... ?

Lionel and Nora freeze. Seconds pass in silence.

Jacob slowly opens his eyes.

LIONEL

She... can see him?

NORA

No...

LIONEL
He's alive.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Ray groans and sits up. He looks around wearily.

The Townsfolk all back away.

RAY
Marla?

Ray spots his portable diabetic kit beside him.

Ray reaches into his pocket and pulls out his cell phone. He clicks a button. The SCREEN reads, "If ur reading this Im 30 ft down the road on ur rite. Look for tires."

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

Mary pulls away from Janet and storms out of the room, sobbing.

Priest Parrish locks eyes with Janet. They both look down at Warren's body in unison.

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Nora grips Jacob tight.

NORA
No... He's mine.

Marla frantically reaches down to her pant leg.

Lionel stands up and rushes toward Marla.

Marla backs up into the door as Lionel grabs her by the throat.

Marla's eyes widen as she gasps for breath. Lionel's grasp is holding her upright against the door. She claws at her throat desperately. Her face turns a deep shade of red, then purple.

Lionel bares down on Marla's throat with full force, grimacing.

Suddenly Ray bursts into the room. He grabs Lionel and rips him off of Marla.

Marla collapses onto the ground, gasping for breath.

Ray pins Lionel up against the door with his forearm and stares into his eyes.

RAY
I can see you.

Lionel's face drains of all color. He looks in utter shock.

Ray grabs the camera around his neck and smashes it against the side of Lionel's skull.

Lionel drops to the floor in a crumpled heap. Unconscious.

Nora SCREAMS.

Ray's camera makes a WHIRRING sound as it swings from the lanyard on Ray's neck.

Marla catches her breath. She reaches into her pant leg and pulls out a pistol. She points it directly at Nora.

MARLA
Back away from the boy!

Nora is shaking. Tears fall from her eyes. She clutches Jacob tight.

NORA
I.. What... I don't...

Marla cocks the hammer back.

MARLA
Let go of him! Now!

Nora let's go of Jacob, confused.

Marla rushes in toward Nora, pistol pointed at her face. She grabs Nora and throws her on the ground, face down.

Nora SHRIEKS and cries.

Jacob goes into a fetal position, crying.

Marla places a knee in the small of Nora's back and pulls out a set of handcuffs from her back pocket. She handcuffs Nora's hands behind her back.

Ray takes the lanyard off of his neck and drops the camera to the floor beside Lionel's unconscious body. He handcuffs Lionel's hand to the doorknob.

RAY
You got her?

MARLA

Yeah.

Ray approaches Jacob and leans down.

RAY

Jacob?

Jacob recoils away from Ray.

RAY (CONT'D)

It's okay. I'm with the police. I'm here to help you.

Jacob buries his face into his arms.

JACOB

Don't touch me... Don't touch me...

Ray shows Jacob both of his hands.

RAY

Okay. I won't touch you. Don't worry.

Marla stands up off of Nora.

MARLA

Ray, I'll handle it. Just get her out of here so I can talk to him.

Ray nods and trades places with Marla.

RAY

I'll give Sam a call.

MARLA

Already did. They're on their way.

RAY

He knows you found him?

MARLA

Well, no. Not yet anyway. I called him after you passed out. I didn't know what else to do with the car broken down.

Ray looks at Jacob.

RAY

That could've been risky...

Nora CRIES OUT loudly. Ray presses his knee into her back.

RAY (CONT'D)

Quiet.

Nora's cries get quieter.

RAY (CONT'D)

Thanks for leaving me alone out there by the way.

MARLA

Hey, I'm sure you would've done the same if the roles were reversed. Plus you obviously got my text.

Ray glances at Lionel's unconscious body.

RAY

Yeah, just in time apparently. At least you gave me my shot before you abandoned me. Courteous.

MARLA

I didn't give you your shot...

Ray stares at Marla.

RAY

What do you mean?

MARLA

How would I do that without your kit, Ray?

RAY

I found it right beside me when I woke up...

A puzzled look crosses Ray and Marla's faces.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

McCaffery's wooden coffin is empty inside.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY

McCaffery walks up to the "Gold Point" road sign. He has the black duffel bag slung over one shoulder, He grabs a towel from within the duffel bag. Underneath the towel are many photocopies of the missing poster with Jacob's picture on them.

McCaffery spits on the towel and wipes away the '0' written on the sign in black marker. He pulls a black marker out of the duffel bag and writes the number '49' over the '50'.

McCaffery looks back over his shoulder at the Town and walks away.

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Ray stands by the door, holding Nora upright as she sobs. He looks down at Jacob.

RAY
How'd you know he was here?

MARLA
I didn't. You did. I just trusted
you.

Ray and Marla smile at each other.

RAY
I'll call Sam.

Ray looks at the transparent drapes covering the window.

RAY (CONT'D)
Keep away from the window though.
You never know who's watching...

Ray takes Nora out of the room.

Marla leans down to face Jacob.

MARLA
Jacob?

Jacob slowly looks up at Marla.

MARLA (CONT'D)
It's okay. I'm here to help you.

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Ray sits Nora down at the table. He takes out his cell phone and dials a number, bringing the phone to his ear.

Nora begins rocking back and forth in her chair.

NORA
Don't take him from me again. Not
again. Not again...

Ray stares at her.

SAM (V.O.)
Ray?

RAY
Yeah, it's me.

SAM (V.O.)
I heard what happened. Is everything okay?

RAY
We found him, Sam.

There is a moment of silence on the other end of the line.

SAM (V.O.)
We're in route. We will be there shortly.

RAY
I found a body in one of the homes. Civilians may be hostile.

SAM (V.O.)
Just stay put until we get there.

RAY
Will do.

Ray hangs up the phone and studies Nora.

NORA
A light in the darkness. A light in the darkness...

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Jacob stares at Marla.

JACOB
You can... see me, right?

MARLA
Of course I can see you, hun'. We both can.

JACOB
I don't want him to see me. He can't touch me if he can't see me.

Marla gives Jacob a quizzical look.

MARLA

Okay.

JACOB

And I don't want them looking at me anymore.

MARLA

Who?

Jacob lowers his eyes to the floor.

JACOB

Them. I can feel their eyes on me.

Marla studies Jacob. She holds out her hand.

MARLA

Then come with me. I know a safe place.

Jacob looks up at Marla's outstretched hand. He gently places his hand in hers.

INT. NORA'S HOME - DAY

Ray is leaning on a chair, staring at Nora. Nora glances at him then looks away.

NORA

Please... take your eyes off of me.

Ray adverts his gaze.

NORA (CONT'D)

Tell your... people. Tell them, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to harm the boy.

Ray looks at Nora, confused. Nora looks away.

RAY

What do you mean- -

The sound of the front door CREAKING open is heard. Ray looks at the front door.

Mary is aiming the hunting rifle directly at Ray's chest. Her eyes are red and moist, a look of desperation filling them.

MARY

What did you do to my son?

Ray jerks upright and raises his hands.

RAY
Whoa, wait. I didn't... do
anything.

Mary's eyes widen.

MARY
You... can hear me?

Nora turns to face Mary.

NORA
Mary... He see's you.

Mary glances at Nora then looks back to Ray, astonished.

MARY
What do you mean?

NORA
We're alive...

Marla emerges from the locked room, pistol pointed at Mary.

MARLA
Drop the gun!

Mary looks at Marla in disbelief and drops to her knees. A far away look creeping into her gaze.

MARY
If we are alive, then my baby is
dead...

NORA
What? Mary...?

Marla takes a few cautious steps toward Mary.

MARLA
No sudden movements!

Mary instantly points the barrel of the rifle up under her jaw.

MARLA (CONT'D)
Don't!

Ray takes a step toward Mary.

RAY
Wait!

NORA

Mary!

A BOOMING GUNSHOT. Ray and Marla recoil away.

Nora SHRIEKS.

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Jacob is seated against the wall, hands pressed tight over his ears.

Ray's camera makes WHIRRING noises on the floor near Lionel's unconscious body.

Jacob tentatively crawls toward the WHIRRING camera, keeping his eyes locked on Lionel. He reaches out and grabs the lanyard, pulling the camera toward him.

Jacob inspects the camera. He turns it around and looks into the lens. The camera makes a CLICKING sound. The FLASH goes off.

WHITENESS.

Silence.

Nothing.

FLASHCUT:

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam opens a file and pulls out two "Missing" posters with Jacob's face on it. He hands a copy to both Ray and Marla, who both study it.

SAM

The boy's name is Jacob Cain, eleven years old. Last known location, a forest several kilometers from here. He was spotted by a local running into said forest, shirtless. As you can see, he has blonde hair, blue eyes. Height, four foot eleven. Weight, one hundred and fifteen pounds. He has been missing for three days if you include this one.

Ray looks up from the paper in his hands.

RAY
Three days?

SAM
The rule of the first forty eight
doesn't apply in my book. I want
this boy found. One way or another.

RAY
Understood.

SAM
No, not yet. You certainly don't.

Sam leans forward in his seat.

SAM (CONT'D)
There's a town in the general area
where Jacob disappeared. It's
called "Gold Point". Have you heard
of it?

RAY
No.

Marla shakes her head.

SAM
Didn't think so. It's a small town.
Population of about fifty people.
We currently have no evidence
saying Jacob is in fact there, but
it's definitely a possibility. And
it's one I need to scratch off the
list before I can move on.

RAY
Okay, so you want us to start
there?

SAM
Just hold on a second. There's some
things you need to know first. One
of them is that you will be going
undercover on this. Well, kind of.

Ray and Marla glance at each other.

Sam holds up a hand.

SAM (CONT'D)
Just hear me out. About six years
ago now there was an outbreak in
the town. Nothing major.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

A strain of the varicella zoster virus spread amongst the people there. Chickenpox, in layman's terms.

RAY

Chickenpox? Really?

SAM

Really. You want me to make up something "cooler" or tell you the reality of the situation?

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

We see various CLOSE UPS of People's arms as they are sterilized and injected with a needle.

SAM (V.O.)

A few doctor's and nurses were brought in to administer the vaccinations. They set up shop in the Town Hall. It only took a few hours to treat everybody and then they were gone. Quick and easy. Or so they thought.

INT. TOWN HALL - EVENING

Lionel, his scar on his forehead dark and noticeable, is seated on the stage. He checks his pulse.

SAM (V.O.)

But the next day, strange events starting occurring...

EXT. GRAVEYARD - EVENING

Kinsey and various Townsfolk are digging holes in the ground.

SAM (V.O.)

We received various reports from passerby's detailing "erratic" behavior by the townsfolk.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Various Townsfolk stumble around Town, confused, crying.

SAM (V.O.)

It was said they were acting a lot like, quote, "the walking dead". Stumbling around town, moaning, crying even.

Lionel is attempting to gather People together. Talking to them. Comforting them.

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

The Chapel is full of Townsfolk. Priest Parrish is delivering His message atop the podium.

Mary is hugging Warren, both six years younger.

SAM (V.O.)

No one knew what was really going on with these people. Whatever it was, the Townsfolk had become convinced of it almost overnight it seemed.

Clyde slumps forward in his seat, holding his stomach.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Earl hammers nails into a wooden coffin lid, sealing the coffin shut.

Sam (V.O.)

But it all culminated when an employee from a monument company reported that they were hired to make tombstones for people who were still alive. And then eye browse were raised.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sam notices Marla has her eye browse raised.

SAM

Yeah, like that.

RAY

So what are you saying exactly? You have a living, breathing real life zombie town? Do we have to pay to enter? How much do they charge?

Sam smiles patiently.

SAM

What we *have*, Ray, is a town full of people who actually believe they are dead.

Marla leans forward in her seat.

MARLA

Wait, wait, wait... And you *knew* about this? And you just let it go on? How is this legal? Isn't buying your own tombstone tantamount to faking your own death? We have laws against that you know. People have been institutionalized for far less than that, Sam.

SAM

Look, I'm explaining the best I can.

MARLA

Try harder.

Sam sighs.

SAM

Have you ever heard of Cotard Delusion?

RAY

(sarcastic)

Totally. Who hasn't?

SAM

I've done my fair share of research on it. It's a rare, but very real mental disorder in which people hold a delusional belief that they are dead or don't exist at all. In some cases, people even grow to believe that they have lost all their blood or internal organs. Delusional beliefs about immortality are also associated with this condition.

Ray looks around the room.

RAY

Sorry, I'm just looking for the hidden camera in the room. Are you being serious right now?

Sam glances at his laptop screen.

SAM

Dead serious. I don't joke about missing children, Ray.

RAY

Okay, I'll bite. So how did this all happen exactly? Isn't the fact that this delusion is being shared by a group of people counter-productive to the term "delusion"?

SAM

Not necessarily. There is a term for that called "Folie à deux", which is French for "a madness shared by two". But in this case it would be "folie à plusieurs", or...

MARLA

A madness of many.

Sam points at Marla.

SAM

Exactly. Bilingual too, eh? You left that off your résumé... Anyway, it's basically a psychotic syndrome in which symptoms of a delusional belief are transmitted from one individual to another.

MARLA

So I'm assuming this was all brought on by the injections for chickenpox that were administered?

SAM

That's the general consensus. Everybody in the town was injected with the standard dose of a drug called "Aciclovir". It's a commonly used antiviral drug used for treatment of chickenpox... amongst other things. Cotard Delusion can be a result of adverse drug reactions to Aciclovir. Which is what we believed happened.

Ray exhales a deep breath.

SAM (CONT'D)

It's a lot to take in all at once.
I know.

RAY

I have tons of questions.

MARLA

Tons.

SAM

And you will have your answers.

RAY

So we will be working undercover
you said?

SAM

Correct.

MARLA

Elaborate.

Ray nonchalantly points to Marla.

SAM

You will be working under the guise
of boyfriend and girlfriend.
Husband and wife. Tourists, if you
will. You will head into Gold Point
and take photographs of the layout
and the people there. Under no
circumstances will you acknowledge
their presence in any shape or
form. They all believe they are
dead... you will treat them as
such. Once you have your pictures
you will return them to me and I
will gather the necessary
information on the townsfolk.
Obviously, they are to be
considered unstable and possibly
dangerous, so I want to pinpoint
who, exactly, we are dealing with
here. But for all intents and
purposes, this delusion of theirs
will most likely act as a self-
imposed barrier of sorts, keeping
you from harm.

MARLA

"Most likely"?

Sam shrugs.

SAM

Nothing is guaranteed. You risk your life eating a pretzel nowadays...

RAY

And where does the boy fit into this exactly?

SAM

I believe he may be hiding out in the town somewhere. Or he may have been taken in by someone in the town possibly. I'm not sure. But I have a hunch this may be the case.

RAY

So if you have a hunch that this missing boy is there, why not just send the entire force in, detain everybody and send them all to the loony bin? Would sure make finding the boy easier. A needle is easy to spot without the haystack...

SAM

Obviously that was my first reaction as well. But, I gave it some thought, and I believe this warrants a more... tactical approach. Because really, what crime had they committed?

MARLA

I could name a few...

Sam sighs and adjusts the plastic plant on his desk. He gazes into the laptop screen.

SAM

I read this story the other day. It was about these people who are flocking to a mountain in France believing that the mountain is home to a race of alien beings that will emerge to rescue them and transport them to a new civilization on December 21st, 2012. Should we go arrest all those lunatics just because their perception of reality is different than ours? You need to draw a line in the sand somewhere.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

And basically, I was willing to let sleeping dogs lie on this one.

MARLA

"Was"...

Sam nods.

SAM

But then this boy went missing within the general area of the town and I got to thinking... If we send in all our men to detain everyone, we may be putting Jacob at risk. Given the fragile mental state of the townsfolk, this is a very real possibility. And I'm not willing to do that. So, I've decided to treat this a lot like a hostage situation.

RAY

Without reliable intelligence that there *is* in fact, a hostage...

Sam looks as if he's about to say something, but stops. Considers something.

SAM

It's easy to be a skeptic of everything and a believer of nothing, Ray. Don't be the critic in the movie of life. That's a breeding ground for regret.

Ray looks as if he is about to say something, but stops and shakes his head. Too easy.

MARLA

So why did you choose us for this?

SAM

Textbook answer? Because you both are young and ambitious and could handle it better than most. But speaking frankly? Because you are the most solipsistic people I know. Marla, I know you personally. Ray is proceeded by his reputation. I figured you both were perfect for this.

RAY

Solipsistic?

Marla gives Ray a sidelong glance.

MARLA

It means only being aware of your own reality. That your thoughts are the only conscious thoughts and everyone else is merely a projection of your own mind.

SAM

Basically.

RAY

Oh, so you're saying we're both arrogant pricks?

Sam grins.

SAM

Basically.

Ray shrugs and looks at Marla.

RAY

That seems about right. Although I can't speak for you...

SAM

I realize this is an unorthodox way of going about things. But I think playing along in their little world is the best chance we have to get Jacob back safe and sound, if he is in fact there. Just think of this like a movie. You are the actors. I'm the director. And they are the audience... Understand?

RAY

Yeah well, give me the name of the writer. I need to have a *serious* talk with him...

BACK TO:

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

Police vehicles line the outskirts of Town.

Various Townsfolk are handcuffed and being lead to the cruisers by several POLICE OFFICERS. The Townsfolk look disoriented, sad, defeated. Some struggle.

Sam stands beside a blue unmarked car with Ray and Marla near the edge of Town.

CABLE WORKERS are being harnessed to the many power line poles.

SAM
They really did a number on your car, didn't they?

RAY
Like a Nascar. It's certainly scrap metal worthy now.

SAM
I'll send you a check. Find any gold?

RAY
Actually...

Ray reaches into his pocket and fumbles around.

RAY (CONT'D)
No. No, I didn't.

Marla gives Ray an accusing look.

SAM
Shame.

RAY
What's with all the cable workers?

SAM
Just a safety precaution. We have reason to be concerned with the electromagnetic field strength in the area. EMF's with this high of frequency in such a small area can cause some serious health problems if we are here for an extended period of time. Which, we believe we will be.

MARLA
What kind of serious problems?

SAM
Typically? Mostly behavioral changes, memory loss, Alzheimer's disease. Sterility.

RAY
Sterility? Thanks for the heads
up...

Sam shrugs.

SAM
The population of this place hasn't
changed in years... That's as good
a reason as any.

Clyde, wrapped in a bathrobe and in handcuffs, is being escorted by a POLICE OFFICER toward a cruiser. He gives Marla a quick glance then looks away.

MARLA
Some of these people belong in a
mental hospital more than they
belong in prison, Sam.

SAM
We will sort everything out later.
But with the dead bodies, this
whole town is now officially a
crime scene. Right now we are just
going to talk to everybody. See
what they have to say. Speaking of
which, there's one more person we
need to discuss. One second.

Sam heads to the driver's side door of his car and opens it. He leans into the car and searches around.

Ray looks over at Marla.

RAY
One more person?

Marla shrugs and glances back at Clyde being taken away.

MARLA
Who knows at this point.

Ray follows Marla's gaze towards Clyde.

RAY
What's with him?

MARLA
I almost shot that creepy bastard.
He touched me.

RAY
You should have.

MARLA

He was just sitting in a bath tub
full of ice cubes when I came in...

RAY

Didn't Sam say something about
people believing they had lost all
their internal organs?

Marla considers this.

MARLA

I suppose. By the way you need to
hand over that wedding ring.

Ray reaches into his pocket and pulls out Lionel's wedding
ring. He hands it to Marla.

RAY

Here you go. But I'm not getting on
one knee.

MARLA

Not to me, nerd. And I'd say no
anyway.

Ray smiles and places the ring back in his pocket.

MARLA (CONT'D)

P.S. You really should've told me
about the dead boy you found.

RAY

How? I was constantly surrounded by
these people. I didn't have the
chance to react to it much less
tell you. It wasn't safe to break
character.

Sam shuts the car door and approaches Ray and Marla, holding
an envelope.

Ray looks at the envelope in Sam's hands.

FLASHCUT:

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - DAY

Sam KNOCKS on the window again.

Ray acts surprised and rolls down the passenger side window.

Sam rests his arms on the windowsill.

SAM
You two practising your ignoring
skills, or you just didn't hear me?

RAY
I guess you'll never know. It's all
the same from your perspective.

SAM
Very true. I like that. You got
those pictures for me?

RAY
Uh, yeah. Sure do.

Ray looks around the car.

Marla reaches across Ray, envelope in hand, and gives Sam the envelope.

Ray nonchalantly points to Marla.

Sam opens the envelope and removes several photographs. The PHOTOS are of the various Townsfolk. We see close up PICTURES of Lionel, McCaffery, and Kinsey.

Sam shuffles through some more PHOTOS. We see Clyde staring down from a second story window. We see Nora on her porch.

Sam nods and puts the photos back into the envelope.

SAM
I'll see what I can dig up.

FLASHCUT:

INT. CAR - DAY

Sam hands Ray an envelope.

SAM
My team is going to keep searching
the forest. I'll be in contact with
you two if we find anything. I
expect the same in return.

RAY
Absolutely.

Sam rests his arms on the window sill.

SAM

We won't be far. Keep in touch, I mean it.

MARLA

Will do.

Sam slaps the car door with his hand and walks away.

MARLA (CONT'D)

I wish he'd stop doing that.

Ray begins to open the envelope. He pulls out several photographs and rap sheets. We see PICTURES of Lionel, Nora, and Clyde.

Ray studies Lionel's rap sheet.

RAY

I saw this guy the first time we went. Lionel Hutchinson. Paranoid schizophrenic. A history of violence. Overrated movie, FYI. Served time for vehicular manslaughter. Remind me to lock up the car...

Marla grabs Nora's rap sheet and looks it over.

MARLA

Nora Gable Hutchinson. Manic depressive. Charged with the kidnapping of a nine year old boy in 2002. Says here she lost her unborn child in the car accident that her husband Lionel was charged for. Lovely.

Ray looks at Clyde's rap sheet.

RAY

Clyde Skinner. Jailed for sexual assault. Petty theft.

MARLA

Sheesh. Is this a town or a prison?

RAY

The smaller the town the bigger the secrets.

MARLA

Apparently. I'd say that's pretty inconvenient for us.

RAY
 Sure makes things a little more
 exciting though.

Marla looks at Ray.

MARLA
 For who, exactly?

BACK TO:

EXT. TOWN - EVENING

Ray takes the envelope from Sam.

Priest Parrish, being escorted by a POLICE OFFICER, passes by
 in handcuffs. He gazes up into the sky, smiling.

SAM
 What's he so happy about?

Ray watches Priest Parrish as he passes by.

RAY
 Delusions of immortality... Trust
 me.

MARLA
 Or maybe he just hears music in the
 sky...

Ray gives Marla a look.

Marla snatches the envelope out of Ray's hands and opens it.
 She stares at a photograph in disbelief.

MARLA (CONT'D)
 Oh my God. Ray, look.

Marla shows Ray the PHOTO. It's a mug shot of the Cowboy from
 the Diner.

SAM
 You know him?

RAY
 We ran into him. Who is he?

SAM
 Harold Cain. Jacob's step Father.
 Turns out he was the one who
 originally reported Jacob missing.
 (MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

He has been Jacob's sole guardian since Jacob's Mother died when he was six years old. He was charged for sexually abusing Jacob. Jacob was removed from his custody and placed into a foster home. We believe Harold may have abducted Jacob from said foster home and has been holding the boy captive ever since. The kid must have escaped somehow and ended up here.

MARLA

Why are we just learning about this now? Jesus Sam, he was right in front of us. We *talked* to him.

SAM

We knew about the abuse. I just didn't put a face to a name until now. He's a hard man to pin down. But I take full responsibility. I messed up.

Marla shakes her head.

MARLA

This explains Jacob's lack of trust in men...

SAM

Yeah, I'd say so. But he's safe now. We'll find him a good home.

Janet passes by in handcuffs. She is crying.

MARLA

You know, they're not all bad people here, Sam. They can't be.

SAM

I know. But sometimes you got to dig through the garden to find the weeds.

RAY

Speaking of which, I think I know where we can find Harold...

SAM

Good. I'd like to have a little chat with him. We'll go over the details back at the station. But for now...

Sam places a hand on Ray's shoulder.

SAM (CONT'D)
Consider yourself officially off
duty. Go get some sleep. You did a
good thing here. It's well
deserved.

Sam hands Ray a set of car keys.

SAM (CONT'D)
Take my car. I can get a ride back
later.

Sam pats Ray's shoulder and walks toward the Town.

Marla elbows Ray in the side.

Ray reaches into his pocket and pulls out the wedding ring.

RAY
Sam...

Sam turns around.

RAY (CONT'D)
Catch.

Ray tosses Sam the ring.

Sam catches it and looks at the ring in his palm.

SAM
Where did you get this?

RAY
In town.

SAM
This should be evidence then...

Sam pockets the ring and smirks.

SAM (CONT'D)
But... with our fingerprints all
over it. It's probably worthless.

RAY
Not completely worthless, I would
think...

SAM
Depends on your perspective.

Sam winks and heads into Town.

INT. SAM'S CAR - EVENING

Ray places the keys in the ignition and starts the car.

Marla reaches into her pant leg and removes the pistol. She places it on the dashboard, sits back in her seat, and exhales a deep breath.

MARLA

God damn thing was itching me like crazy.

RAY

Made you grow some balls though.

MARLA

So *that's* what was itching me...

Ray chuckles and stares out the window at Gold Point.

RAY

You think Jacob saw that woman kill herself?

MARLA

I don't think so. At least I hope not.

RAY

Yeah. You know, some things you see... end up seeing you.

MARLA

What the hell does that mean?

RAY

I don't know. It's freezing in here, isn't it?

Ray adjusts the air conditioning dial.

Marla sniffs.

MARLA

New car smell.

RAY

Radio?

MARLA

I think you've heard enough music
for awhile.

RAY

You're probably right.

MARLA

I'm always right. Haven't you
noticed by now?

Ray grins and shifts the car into reverse.

INT. WARREN'S ROOM - DAY

A POLICE OFFICER with a shaved head covers up Warren's body
with a sheet.

He scans the room and heads over to the photocopier in the
corner. Placing a latex glove over one hand, he opens the
photocopier's cover. There is a stack of papers inside.

The Police Officer picks up the stack of papers and flips it
over. The title page reads, "The Existence of Nothing - First
Draft (Backup Copy)". He begins to thumb through the various
pages...

INT. LOCKED ROOM - DAY

Lionel, now conscious, is sitting up against the door, his
hand still handcuffed to the doorknob. He is stone-faced,
emotionless.

Various POLICE OFFICERS walk in and out of the room. A
floorboard CREAKS.

An OVERWEIGHT POLICE OFFICER bends down and feels the edges
of the floorboard.

Sam kneels down in front of Lionel.

SAM

You know, the sooner you start
accepting your new reality, the
easier it will be for you.

LIONEL

Stop looking at me.

SAM

How about you stop looking at me.
Works the same.

Lionel looks off to the side.

LIONEL
What do you know...

SAM
What I *want* to know, Lionel, is how you kept yourself and a whole town of people convinced that they were dead for so long.

LIONEL
What *I* want to know...

Lionel slowly looks at Sam.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
... is how you keep yourself convinced that you're alive.

OVERWEIGHT POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
Sir... you're gonna want to take a look at this.

Sam heads over to the floorboard and kneels down beside the Overweight Police Officer. He peers into the small hole in the floor.

A CHILD'S SKULL is seen, half buried in dirt.

SAM
Oh Lord...

Sam turns around to face Lionel.

SAM (CONT'D)
Did you know about this?

Lionel exhales a breath.

SAM (CONT'D)
Who is buried here, Lionel?

LIONEL
I don't know. I really don't.

Sam heads back to Lionel and kneels down in front of him.

SAM
You expect me to believe that?

Lionel looks down to the floor.

LIONEL

She's a good woman, deep down. Save your judgments for people you know.

SAM

I won't be the one judging her...

LIONEL

It's all the same in the end. People need a leader in this life. It's why we invented God. We need a voice to guide us through the nothingness.

Lionel looks into Sam's eyes then quickly looks away.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

And to answer your earlier question, we all knew the truth. But we buried it so deep it became foreign to us. People do it everyday. They suspend belief and rational thought in order to be fully absorbed by something. It might as well be a religion. We knew this wasn't real, but it didn't matter. When you're lost and looking for a light in the darkness, what was once a leap of faith becomes a step in the right direction.

Lionel looks up at Sam.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

But you can't see the light, can you, Sheriff?

Sam shakes his head, stands up, and leaves the room.

Lionel looks at the hole in the floor, his gaze distant.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, you will one day. One day it will dawn on you...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DINER - DAY

An unmarked blue car pulls into the parking lot next to a white truck.

INT. DINER - DAY

Sam enters the Diner. He is dressed in civilian clothes. He looks around until his eyes settle on something.

The Cowboy is seated on a stool at the counter. He is reading a newspaper held up in front of his face.

Sam sits on a stool near the Cowboy, leaving one stool empty between them.

The Waitress approaches Sam.

WAITRESS
What can I get ya?

SAM
Just a coffee please, dear. Cream
and sugar.

WAITRESS
You got it.

The Waitress walks toward the coffee maker.

Sam glances at the Cowboy.

SAM
Anything good in the paper today?

The Cowboy looks over at Sam then back to his paper.

COWBOY
There's good news and bad news. As
always.

SAM
Ain't that the truth.

Sam extends his hand.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'm Sam. Nice to meet you.

The Cowboy places the newspaper down on the counter and shakes Sam's hand.

COWBOY
Nice to meet you.

SAM
You got a name?

COWBOY
I've always preferred the power of
anonymity. No offense.

SAM
None taken. Come here often?

COWBOY
Every week.

SAM
Good food, I'm assuming?

COWBOY
You'd assume correct.

SAM
I usually do...

The Waitress places Sam's coffee down in front of him and walks away. Sam takes a sip.

The Cowboy turns his attention back down at the newspaper on the counter. We see the newspaper HEADLINE, it reads, "Police Dig Deeper For Missing Children."

After a moment, Sam's hand pushes his police badge across the counter and onto the newspaper headline.

SAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm afraid it's not all good news
for you today, Harold.

The Cowboy slowly looks up at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
You mind coming with me? We have
some things we need to talk about.

A look of disbelief slowly spreads across the Cowboy's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jacob, with a new haircut, looking confident and happy, is playing catch with another BOY his age.

The two Boys toss a baseball back and forth. A nice suburban home is seen in the background. There is a pool in the backyard.

BOY
Do you know how to throw a curve
ball?

JACOB
Nope. How?

BOY
It's all about your grip on it.
Toss it here.

Jacob tosses the Boy the baseball. The Boy catches it and manipulates his fingers around the ball.

BOY (CONT'D)
It takes practise, but I'll show
you.

The Boy grips the ball awkwardly and throws it toward Jacob. The ball hits the ground a few feet in front of Jacob and bounces into a nearby garden.

Jacob laughs.

JACOB
Nice throw.

The Boy shrugs.

BOY
You can't hit what you can't see.

JACOB
Yeah you can...

BOY
Oh yeah? Prove it. I'll go get my
bat.

The Boy runs toward the house.

Jacob jogs over to the pool. He stops by the edge and briefly glances down at his reflection in the light blue water. He heads to the garden and searches for the baseball.

Jacob pushes aside various plants. He spots the baseball near a flower. There is a butterfly on the flower.

Jacob ignores the ball and stares at the butterfly. The butterfly flutters away into the sky. Jacob watches it and smiles.

A middle aged WOMAN opens a screen door as the Boy runs inside the house.

WOMAN
 (Calling out)
 Jacob, it's dinner time.

Jacob looks toward the Woman.

JACOB
 Okay.

The Woman smiles and closes the screen door.

Jacob looks up into the sky, searching for the butterfly, but it is gone. He grabs the baseball and runs toward the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ray walks down the hallway toward Sam's office door. He is dressed in a suit and tie.

Various POLICE OFFICERS sit at their cubicles doing paperwork. Phones RING. Computer keys CLICK.

Ray looks down at the diabetic alert bracelet on his wrist. He tucks it inside his sleeve, hiding it.

WARREN (V.O.)
 There is this hairworm, a parasite really, that grows inside of a grasshopper and slowly disrupts its hosts nervous system.

Ray comes to a stop at a desk. A young female SECRETARY looks up at him and smiles.

SECRETARY
 How can I help you?

RAY
 I'm here to see Sam.

SECRETARY
 Certainly. And you are?

RAY
 Ray.

The Secretary nods.

SECRETARY
 Last name?

Ray stares at the Secretary, unsure.

RAY

Does he have an appointment with
another 'Ray' today?

The Secretary gives Ray a confused look.

SECRETARY

I'm going to need your last name
regardless, sir.

RAY

It's not important. It can't be,
really.

The Secretary looks at something off to the side, confused.

Ray rubs his hands together.

RAY (CONT'D)

It's kinda cold in here. You guys
blasting the A/C or something?

The Secretary returns her gaze to Ray and smiles. She has
been convinced of something.

SECRETARY

Go right ahead, sir. It's the door
at the end of the hall.

RAY

Thank you.

Ray begins walking down the hallway toward the door.

WARREN (V.O.)

What I'm *projecting*, is everyone
onto a canvass. A screen. See, the
goal is, I want people not to know
they are part of the story until
the very end. If they think they
are on the outside looking in, they
will let their guard down. It's all
about perspective. Truth is
perception.

Ray reaches the door at the end of the hall. Sam is seen at
his desk through the glass window in the door. He is staring
into his laptop screen.

Ray stares through the glass window at Sam. Slowly, we see
Ray is really just looking at his own REFLECTION in the
glass.

WARREN (V.O.)

This story I'm writing will seem like a two-way mirror until the end, and then they will realize they were looking at themselves the entire time. The only way to judge yourself objectively and without bias is to not know you are being judged.

Ray knocks on the door.

INT. SAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Ray enters and shuts the door behind him.

The plastic plant on the desk is now a REAL plant. A handheld camera sits beside it.

SAM

Have a seat, Ray. You're uncharacteristically late.

RAY

Yeah, I had to go over a few things with your secretary.

Sam nods.

SAM

She's new.

Ray takes a seat and shivers.

RAY

Is there a draft in this place or is it just me?

Sam smiles.

SAM

Yeah that first draft is always a bugger eh? We're getting the place redone soon. I don't even feel the cold anymore. You get desensitized to it after awhile.

Ray nods, unsure.

SAM (CONT'D)

So what have you been up to lately?

RAY

Nothing.

SAM

Nothing? So you've been staring at a wall the past couple weeks? Watching paint dry?

RAY

No, I meant literally nothing. I don't exist outside this job. I have no background story.

Sam chuckles.

SAM

My kind of detective.

Ray smiles.

Sam sorts through some papers on his desk.

SAM (CONT'D)

So then, brass tacks and all that. I have another case I want to put you on. This one is a little more... conventional, than the last one. And you'll be working alone on this.

RAY

I didn't mind working with a partner.

SAM

Well, that's never stopped you before, has it?

Ray considers this.

Sam organizes some papers, shuffling them into three clean, neat stacks.

SAM (CONT'D)

And I meant *alone*, alone. This will give you something to do in your spare time.

Sam motions to the camera on the desk.

SAM (CONT'D)

There's your new camera by the way. To replace the one you... broke.

Ray takes the camera and motions to the plant on the desk.

RAY

I could've sworn that plant was
fake last time I saw it.

Sam pauses, studying Ray. He sighs.

SAM

I've been meaning to show you
something.

Sam turns his laptop around to face Ray. A media player is on
screen; a paused image of Gold Point is seen.

RAY

What is this?

SAM

Just watch.

Sam clicks the play button.

*The VIDEO shows Ray walking around Gold Point snapping
pictures with his camera. The Townsfolk stare at him.*

Ray shifts in his seat. A confused look overtaking his face.

RAY

Where did this come from? Who is
filming me? I didn't see anybody
with a camera...

SAM

You're not supposed to see the
camera. It's not there. It doesn't
exist.

Ray stares into the laptop screen.

RAY

I... don't understand. Where's
Marla in this? I don't see her.

SAM

The only thing you need to
understand is 'why'. The who, what,
when and where are not important. I
told you that I had read your file
thoroughly, Ray. In that file is
everything that I needed to know
about you. Your educational
background, career highs and lows,
medical history...

Ray takes his eyes off the laptop screen and stares at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

I mean, there's a reason why I requested you for this. Your diabetic hallucinations? HHNS? It's all right there in your file. And so I thought to myself, if this guy can see and hear things that aren't there, could he *un-see* things that are there? Or at least pretend to? Turns out you could. It's what made you perfect for this.

RAY

So you... used my condition for- -

Sam holds up a hand.

SAM

Don't start. I simply did what I had to do to find the boy. This isn't some conspiracy against you. We are on the same team here. Nature and nurture.

Sam turns the laptop around and clicks a key. He stands up from his seat.

SAM (CONT'D)

Now if you'll excuse me, nature calls.

RAY

Funny, I didn't hear any ringing...

Sam grins.

SAM

No? I did.

Sam makes his way around the desk and heads to the door. He opens it. The many ambient sounds of the police station filter into the room.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll be back shortly. If the phone rings... just ignore it.

Ray looks as if he's about to say something. Sam leaves and shuts the door behind him. The office is quiet again.

Ray looks around the room. A clock on the wall reads, "3:40". He places the camera back on the desk and touches the plant.

Ray pulls out his cell phone. He presses a few buttons on his phone. The cell phone SCREEN shows a text message Ray just sent to Marla. It reads, "U still alive?"

Ray pockets his cell phone. He fidgets with his diabetic alert bracelet and begins HUMMING a song...

Ray glances back at the closed door and turns the laptop around. He stops humming.

On SCREEN is a real-time video of Ray sitting in Sam's office, but from a different angle, off to the side.

Ray lifts a hand up in the air.

On SCREEN, his hand lifts up in the air.

Ray looks around the office, as if he's searching for something in particular.

After a moment, Ray's eyes lock on something. He's looking right at US. He grabs the camera off of the desk.

Ray slowly gets out of his chair and walks toward us. He kneels down and stares right at us. Seconds pass.

RAY
I can see you.

Ray lifts the camera over one eye and snaps a picture of us... The FLASH goes off.

WHITENESS.

Silence.

Nothing.

FADE OUT.