REGRET

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WGA registered U.S. Pending

BLACK SCREEN

Erratic breathing and footsteps sprinting across pavement...... Quickening in pace and frequency....

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

(THE SOUNDS OF SPRINTING CONTINUE.... LUNGS BECOME WINDED...)

Someone's feet stick out of a back alley phone booth, blood smears its' glass and is beginning to pool out onto the asphalt.

BLACK SCREEN

Winded lungs struggle to maintain....

PHONE BOOTH

(WINDED LUNGS STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN... TRANSFORMING INTO PANICKED GASPS FOR AIR)

CLOSE UP

The right foot twitches as a thick red surrounds.

BLACK SCREEN

Spent lungs gasp for air in a panic... Three heavy knocks are delivered to hard wood.

THE TITLE <u>REGRET</u> FLASHES IN BOLD WHITE LETTERS OVER THE BLACK SCREEN FOR ONLY A COUPLE FRAMES

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-

INT. CHRIS' BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE-UP

From the onslaught at his door, Chris' irritated eyes casually open with a tinge of melancholy, he blinks, bringing them to focus...

A second volley at his door fully pulls him from sleep into reality. Irritated, he collects himself, climbs out of bed and checks the time on his phone. He has a missed text.

Two more heavy knocks sound from the door.

LIVING ROOM

Chris answers the door to find the knocking belonging to one of his customers'.

CHRIS

What?

POT CUSTOMER

Morning, sorry, I know its early I just needed a quick twenty before work.

CHRIS

Twenty?

POT CUSTOMER

Yep.

STEADY CAM TRACKING

With his irritation furthered chris shuts the door, and walks into his kitchen where he opens a cupboard and removes a well stuffed jar.

From a drawer he retrieves a scale and begins the weigh two grams worth.

He puts the product in a sandwich bag and walks back to the door where he receives twenty dollars for it.

POT CUSTOMER (CONT'D)

Appreciated.

You can't just be showing up here like this.

POT CUSTOMER

I know, sorry, I just needed to get straight before work.

CHRIS

This early, for a fucking twenty sack?

POT CUSTOMER

I sent you a text.

CHRIS

I don't give a fuck.

Chris shuts the door and walks back into the kitchen where he lights a cigarette taking a long slow drag.

BATHROOM

He pulls the shower curtain shut.

CLOSE UP

Water is released from the shower head.

KITCHEN

Sitting at his kitchen table wearing his work uniform, Chris has some coffee and toast before leaving with a duffle bag around his shoulder.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - DAY

Chris drives to work with windows open to the sounds of traffic and circulating wind.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

STEADY CAM TRACKING

Chris enters the back door of his restaurant and walks into the server station where he finds his coworker making salads.

Hey.

CO WORKER

Hey, how's it goin'?

CHRIS

Not bad...Busy?

CO WORKER

Eh, steady.

COOK

Order up!

CO WORKER

Would you mind dropping that at table six for me? I have to finish prepping this station.

CHRIS

Sure.

Chris grabs two dishes from the slide and brings them to a table where an old couple waits.

OLD LADY

I thought maybe you guys forgot about us.

CHRIS

I have a steak sandwich and a tuna melt?

OLD LADY

The steak here.

Chris places the steak in front of the woman and the tuna in front of the man.

CHRIS

Anything else I can get for you two?

OLD LADY

This is medium rare? (poking the steak with her finger)

CHRIS

I'm sure it is.

OLD LADY

Yeah I'm sure. Stay close.

Okay, anything else?

The old man solemnly shakes his head.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Okay, enjoy.

He leaves the couple to their meals.

NIGHT

Chris delivers a family their check.

CHRIS

Alright guys, thanks for coming in, have a great night.

LATER

With business winding down Chris clears and cleans dirty tables.

LATER

Now at the end of his shift Chris counts money and organizes receipts at an empty table... His boss approaches.

BOSS

Did you close out all your tables?

CHRIS

Yep. (without looking up)

BOSS

Finish your side work?

CHRIS

Yep.

BOSS

... Empty the trash?

CHRIS

Yep. (looks up annoyed)

BOSS

K, you're off the clock.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

He releases himself from the stresses of work with a cigarette behind the restaurant...

His phone vibrates.

CHRIS

Sean... Yeah, I'm out back

He ends the call and a few seconds later an SUV arrives.

He walks up to the drivers side window. Sean sits at the wheel with Tyler riding shotgun.

SEAN

Yo.

He and Sean slap hands.

CHRIS

Tyler.

TYLER

Dude.

SEAN

We're running a little late. You wanna follow us up?

CHRIS

Sure.

SEAN

Alright, then lets get the fuck out of here.

CHRIS

Cool...I just have one
 more table.(sarcasm)

SEAN

Yeah, change your cloths.(sarcasm)

INT. CHRIS' HOME - NIGHT

A worn out Chris enters his home wearing something resembling exercise clothing. He drops his duffle bag by the door, enters the kitchen, pulls a beer from the fridge and lights a cigarette.

He enters the living room and drops himself on the couch with a sigh. His mind begins to wander...

After a moment his spacing is interrupted with an incoming text from his mom.

MOM TEXT

Its been too long. Stop by tomorrow morning for breakfast if you're not too busy. I could also use a little something. Miss you

Chris sets the phone on the coffee table in front of the couch and leans his head back, eyes to the ceiling. He begins to drift off...

A pair of knocks come from the door. His eyes pop open.

He answers the door to greet a slightly nervous looking Emily.

CHRIS

Emily.

EMTLY

Am I too late?

CHRIS

Of course not, come in.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Chris wakes next to Emily in the morning. He slips out of bed and checks the time on his phone. Emily stirs with a quiet whimper and he places a soft kiss on her cheek.

CHRIS

I have to go. (whisper)

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Chris arrives at his moms to find her waiting to greet him at the front door.

CHRIS

Morning.

MOM

Hey, good to see you. Its been awhile, come inside.

INT. MOM'S KITCHEN

They enter the house and settle in the kitchen.

MOM

Something to eat?

CHRIS

I'm not really hungry.

MOM

I'll make some toast.

Chris has a seat at the kitchen table where he pulls from his pocket a sandwich bag while his Mom finds some bread and puts two slices in a toaster.

MOM (CONT'D)

So...What's new? How's work?

CHRIS

Work's work

MOM

Making enough?

CHRIS

Getting by.

MOM

...You ever think about going back to school?

Chris doesn't answer. The toast pops. His mom prepares it with butter and jam then brings it to the table.

MOM (CONT'D)

Here.

Chris only looks at it.

CHRIS

.. You don't always have to be my $\mbox{mom.}$

MOM

Yes I do.... I was going to make some coffee would you care for some?

Okay.

His Mom begins the process of brewing coffee.

MOM

I had a dream last night. You and Ryan were in it. You guys were kids...

EXT. SCHOOL - FLASHBACK

NO AUDIO

Ryan sits on a table sporting a beanie and a backpack. He's just rolled and licked a joint when he looks up to the camera and slides it behind an ear.

MOM'S KITCHEN

MOM

and you were putting the chain back on one of your bikes. Ryan got his finger caught in the chain wheel and was trying to pull it free with his other hand but couldn't. He wouldn't stop screaming .. and you .. wouldn't say anything. You just stood there, pointing at him, I remember having this aching feeling that I was just...too old.

EXT. ROAD - DAWN - FLASHBACK - TEENAGERS

CAMERA FOLLOWS FROM BEHIND. NO AUDIO

Chris and Ryan race their bikes up a large incline in the road as fast as they can. When they reach the top they begin coasting down the other side, the wind pulling at their cloths.

MOM (CONT'D)

You two used to be so close...I wish he would call.

MOM'S KITCHEN

MOM

Have you heard from him lately?

CHRIS

Not since he lost his job.

MOM

To think I raised a thief...

CHRIS

Would've been different if he was clean.

MOM

Yeah... I should've left that duplex when I had the chance.

INT. DUPLEX - FLASHBACK

A 1990's stand up vacuum roars across dark brown polyester carpets in an old, poorly lit cluttered duplex, the vacuums' head lamp lighting the way.

MOM'S KITCHEN

CHRIS

Not like you had options.

MOM

Yeah.... Coffee's ready.

She brings him a cup.

MOM (CONT'D)

...So, what happened to your eye?

CHRIS

What?

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A punch lands on Chris' eye, the smack created echoing throughout the warehouse.

MOMS' KITCHEN

MOM

Your eye is swollen.

Chris' eye is puffy.

CHRIS

...Oh, yeah, work. Someone opened a door in my face.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Chris moonlights at an underground fight club contained inside an old warehouse. Spectators and gamblers watch intently as Chris and his opponent throw down. The air thick with tension, excitement and misted sweat. Punches are thrown and taken, bodies are slammed to the ground, money exchanges hands.

MOM'S KITCHEN

MOM'S POV

Now, both his eye and lip show bruising.

MOM

Looks like it got your lip too.

She reaches out to touch his face but he blocks her hand with his in defense.

CHRIS

It's fine.

MOM

You should really be more careful.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Chris performs the numbingly routine motions of clearing and cleaning the tables at the end of his shift. A man begins to exit.

MAN

Money's on the table.

CHRIS

Thanks for coming in.

LATER

Chris counts money and sorts receipts. He notices an attractive woman sitting alone with a cup of tea. She's been watching him. Curious, he smiles and she smiles back...

She points to her lower shirt indicating: look down. Confused, he does so and finds a large food stain on his shirt and pants that he has been wearing for an unknown period of time. His Co worker approaches, interrupting the moment.

CO WORKER

So, what happened to the other guy?

CHRIS

It's not as bad as it looks.

CO WORKER

Really? It kinda looks like shit.

Their boss walks up unnoticed.

BOSS

I'm sure the customers are thinking the same thing.

The Co worker slips away.

CHRIS

Look, I...

BOSS

Hey, I don't need to know. Just, whatever happened, try to avoid it next time.

Chris nods.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Alright, you're off the clock...

He starts to walk away but stops short.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Oh, I almost forgot. We've had some complaints about a lack of enthusiasm from certain members of our staff. I'm not pointing any fingers and I'm gonna talk to the others too, but lets just try to improve the atmosphere around here a little. K?

Okay.

BOSS

If anything you'll notice the difference in your tips.

Chris' boss walks away.

Sean' SUV parks out front. He exits and proceeds to sarcastically peep through the front window of the restaurant looking for Chris. Chris holds up a finger indicating one minute.

EXT. RESTAURANT

Chris exits the restaurant to greet Sean.

SEAN

Yo.

Chris holds two fingers to his mouth indicating that he would like a cigarette.

Sean obliges.

SEAN (CONT'D)

How you feelin tonight?

CHRIS

Fine.

SEAN

Yeah?

CHRIS

Yeah.

SEAN

Cuz they're throwing you against Curtis.

CHRIS

Who?

SEAN

Yeah, right. So we're kinda low on gas, cool if we ride with you?

CHRIS

No worries.

SEAN

Cool, we brought a couple extra people

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' CAR

Chris enters the drivers side with Sean sitting passenger. Tyler Emily and Trish enter the backseat with Tyler in the middle.

TYLER

Scoot over.

TRISH

Hey Chris.

CHRIS

Trish.

EMILY

Is this your first time?

TRISH

No, I've been once or twice.

CHRIS

K, ready?

They drive away.

INT. WAREHOUSE

CLOSE UP ON HANDS - CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK

In a backroom of the warehouse Sean slowly and methodically tapes Chris' hands. During which Chris' knee maintains a steady bounce as he regulates his nerves with slow deep breaths..... After a few moments Sean finishes.

SEAN

Alright, how does that feel?

Chris slowly stretches out his fingers, balls them into a fist and then stretches them back out.

CUT TO:

Chris warms up and concentrates his headspace with some light shadow boxing. After a short while a staff member enters the backroom and breaks his concentration.

STAFF

Chris, it's time.

Chris proceeds to the ring and at once is consumed by the eager and thirsty stares of its' audience.

Just before he enters Emily leans in and whispers in his ear

EMILY

Good luck.

CUT TO:

Chris fights his tall dense opponent while the audience either shouts demands or watches intently. Money exchanges hands.

EXT. WARHOUSE

Tyler waits alone with a cigarette just outside the entrance...

Sean and Chris exit the warehouse, as they do so Chris spits blood.

SEAN

Fuck he was strong.

CHRIS

I know, feels like I cracked a rib.

SEAN

Pussy.

TYLER

We got happy wallets.

SEAN

Where are the girls?

TYLER

Don't know.

The start walking back to the car.

Emily and Trish walk up from behind and Emily taps Chris' shoulder.

EMILY

Leaving without us?

TYLER

Never.

EMILY

I'm kidding, we were actually going to catch a ride with some friends but umm .. You guys know Aaron right?

CHRIS

Yeah.

EMILY

Well, he's throwing a little bash at his place to celebrate his W. A bunch of people are headed there now.

CHRIS

These guys might be down, but I'm kinda worn out.

TYLER

Lame. (under his breath)

TRISH

You guys should really come.

CHRIS

I don't know, we'll see.

EMILY

K, well hopefully we see you guys there but if not, umm, maybe I could stop by and pick up another eighth some time?

CHRIS

Of course, give me a call.

EMILY

K, bye guys.

Trish waves and they walk off in another direction.

SEAN

You were just flirting with my sister?

Never.

SEAN

If you touch her I gotta hurt you, you know that?

Chris opts not to respond but instead quietly calls his bluff with eye contact and a smirk.

TYLER

...So, are we gonna go or not?

CHRIS

Probably not.

TYLER

Like a bitch.

SEAN

That's what I'm saying. Someone sent me a message about it earlier. I think we should at least check it out.

CHRIS

Hey, you're both big boys, you don't need.

TYLER

Don't be a bitch.

SEAN

Yeah, what he said.

CHRIS

Fuck off.

TYLER

Dude... you're goin'.

SEAN

Yeah... You're goin'.

CHRIS

....Okay.

TYLER

See, that's what's up... Pregame?

SEAN

I don't see why not.

Tyler passes something to Sean then looks to Chris. Sean then turns to Chris and hands him a small pill.

SEAN (CONT'D)

This'll wake you up.

Tyler tosses back his pill. Chris holds his in the palm of his hand analyzing, deciding.

CHRIS

... Fuck it.

Chris takes his pill.

TYLER

That a boy.

He gives Chris a solid pat on the back. Sean looks at his pill.

SEAN

Bottoms up.

Sean takes his pill while Chris lights a cigarette.

SLOW MOTION

Chris takes a long slow drag, disconnecting himself from the world.

He exhales...

EXT./INT. CHRIS' CAR - NIGHT

SLOW MOTION/ NORMAL SPEED

As the three friends travel to the party they begin to peak on their experience. Chris drives with a cigarette in his hand. Sean lays stretched across the backseat and Tyler sits shotgun smoking a joint. He reclines his seat all the way back, passes the joint to Sean then returns upright. He then unbuckles himself, rolls down the window and climbs out, sitting on its' frame while holding the safety handle. Chris flicks his cigarette, its' sparks tracing the paint. He begins to accelerate....

Tyler taps the roof indicating he wants more. 65 mph. Tyler lets out a shout. Sean lies in the back with a smirk on his lips. Chris is only focused on the road, his face absent as if he is the only member occupying the vehicle.

NORMAL SPEED

He continues to accelerate. 75 closing on 85 mph...

Tyler' hand squeezes tight around the safety handle. The wind beats his face. Sean' expression changes from amusement to concern and he sits up reaching out to the two seats in front of him. The speed continues to climb, closing 90 mph. Tyler climbs back in the car and gives Chris a questioning stare. He doesn't seem to notice. 95 mph. Tyler' look of question transforms to that of concern and he buckles his belt. Chris continues to only focus on the road, hands tight around the wheel, knuckles white. 100 mph....

Suddenly the vehicle begins to slow and as if waking from a dream, Chris returns to reality. He blinks and looks to his passengers, seeing the concern on both their faces. The car continues to slow. Sean passes Chris the joint.

INT. PARTY

OPEN SLOW MOTION - PROGRESS INTO REAL TIME

The three friends enter the party; a congested mix of normals, fight groupies and Bro's. The friends synthetic experience collides with the overly masculine atmosphere providing them with a vibe both intense and ridiculous. As they scope out the situation Trish and some friends spot and greet them.

TRISH

Hey, Good to see you!

SEAN

How is it?

TRISH

It's okay. It's kinda hot in here.

Tyler motions at Trish, pretending to drink from an invisible cup. A question as to where the booze is hidden.

TRISH (CONT'D)

In the kitchen.

They enter the kitchen and open beers. Chris spots Emily watching him from a short distance. He smiles and she smiles back.

SEAN

How much did we come up?

TYLER

Like seven fifty all together.

Chris begins in Emily' direction but is stopped by a fight fan sporting a tight T-shirt.

Fight fan

Hey man, good job tonight.

CHRIS

What? Oh, yeah, thanks. He uh .. made me work for it.

FIGHT FAN

I can tell... Don't you work at that cafe?

CHRTS

That's me.

FIGHT FAN

Yeah, I've seen you there. What does your boss say about the...

He points to his own face referring to the damage on Chris'.

CHRIS

Don't know, haven't gotten that far. Will you excuse me?

He continues past the fight fan and up to Emily.

EMILY

Looks like you made it.

CHRIS

Figured I'd stop by.

BLACK SCREEN

Chris' phone makes three long vibrations.

It pauses then quickly vibrates two more times.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - EXT. PARTY - MORNING

Chris wakes in his backseat with the sun cooking his face, some women's underwear wrung around a foot, a head like a chopping block and a mouth pasted with stale beer.

He checks his phone and finds he has a missed call and text from his mom.

MOM TEXT

You need to call me right away. Seriously

He lets out a sigh, collects himself and climbs out of the car. The underwear keeps to his foot as he exits forcing him to bend over and throw it back. As he shuts the door he notices Sean watching him with a cigarette sitting on the steps a short distance away.

SEAN

Good morning. (sarcasm)

CHRIS

Hey... uh, I gotta be some place. You gonna ride back with me?

SEAN

Probably not.

CHRIS

K, umm... catch you later?

SEAN

Probably not.

Chris turns back to his car. Sean throws up a sarcastic half wave.

INT. MOM'S KITCHEN

MEDIUM OF CHRIS SITTING AT THE TABLE. THE CAMERA SLOWLY PUSHES IN. CUTS TO MOTHER ONCE

Chris sits quietly at the kitchen table listening to his sobbing mother while she wipes her eyes and explains to him the ill fate of his Brother.

MOM (0.S.)

.....Police Said he was shot at a rest stop off the five, everything taken from his wallet.

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

LOW ANGLE - CAMERA PULLS IN TOWARDS CAR

Ryan' car sits at a rest stop with it's driver door open and window shattered. His left leg hangs out. The trunk is open...

CUT TO:

Ryan sits slumped to the right of his drivers seat with his temple and cheek showing entry wounds. The passenger door and seat wear his head matter.

INT. MOM'S KITCHEN

MOM (O.S.)

They think he had been living up north. I think he was coming home. (Somber)

EXT. LAWN - FLASHBACK - KIDS

MEDIUM - LOW ANGLE

Working together on a bike, Chris and Ryan finish putting a chain back on its' wheel...

They spin the pedal to be sure it works.

EXT. CEMETERY - OVERCAST

Ryan' small congregation stands solemn and quiet listening to the service.

PASTOR

Let us pray now for the soul of the fallen. We pray that he may reach Heavens' gates timely and in peace. We pray, that when kneeling before judgment, he needn't justification, nor the need to measure his decent... Please bow...

All except for chris bow their heads. He can hear the coffin descending into its' grave. He shuts his eyes, pictures his brother's corpse and lowers his head

EXT. REST STOP

Ryan' lifeless body lies slumped over in the drivers seat.

CEMETERY

The coffin finds bottom.

He raises his head and clenches his jaw.

INT. DUPLEX - FLASHBACK - TODDLERS

MEDIUM - LOW ANGLE - DAD VISIBLE FROM CHEST DOWN

Chris and Ryan entertain themselves with toys on the dark carpets of the duplex. Their father keeps watch from the sofa with a glass of whiskey and a cigarette. Chris organizes toy soldiers while Ryan puts together a small puzzle.

CEMETERY

Chris notices his uncle standing amongst the others.

He's been watching him...

Following the pastors lead the funeral party raises their heads.

PASTOR

Amen.

CONGREGATION

Amen. (Except for Chris and Uncle)

CUT TO:

Chris leans against a tree away from the congregation and lights a cigarette...

His uncle approaches from behind.

UNCLE

Spare one?

Chris hands him a smoke.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Remember me? (sarcasm)

CHRIS

You're my uncle. (Humorless)

UNCLE

How are things otherwise?

CUT TO:

The first of the earth is shoveled onto the coffin.

BACK TO:

CHRIS

Wasn't complaining .

UNCLE

Yeah, who'd listen anyway. We should catch up, if you can stomach it. Meet me at the cafe around the corner in an hour. I have something you might want to consider.

EXT. CAFE - NIGHT

Chris parks outside the cafe

CHRIS

Apologies?

UNCLE

No, nothing like that

INT. CAFE

Chris enters the cafe and joins his uncle at a booth. As he sits his uncle slides him a cup of coffee.

UNCLE

Wasn't sure how you took it.

CHRTS

Black's fine.

UNCLE

.... So really, how are things? Did you ever go back to school?

CHRIS

No (impatient)

UNCLE

Look, I've been meaning to come clean with you. I never meant for shit to get so complicated.

(MORE)

UNCLE (CONT'D)

I certainly didn't intend to implicate

CHRIS

I'm gonna cut you off right there, k. I most certainly didn't come here to burry the hatchet over your snitch business. I'm here because you said you had something for me. So what's up?

UNCLE

....When was the last time you spoke with Ryan?

CHRIS

A while back he was... short on funds.

UNCLE

He mention what he was up to?

CHRIS

No, just said he was close to square, and that all he needed was a little breathing room... I told him to fuck off.

UNCLE

Yeah... Well, he got hold of me up north. Asked if he could crash my couch for a bit

CHRIS

Still growing?

UNCLE

Some. Still pushing?

CHRIS

Meeting ends.

UNCLE

...Yeah, well, anyway, I told him it was fine. He didn't stay long. When he left I gave him a little cash for food... Not sure if he was still using but... you could tell he had been at some point.

CHRIS

Where's this going?

UNCLE

....When He left I asked him if things were stable. He told me, "better than". I said "yeah", he said "yeah". A girl he'd been seeing was fixing him with a couple acres to start a crop. "Gonna test my thumb", he said.

CHRIS

Who's the girl?

UNCLE

I asked. All he said was that he'd been seeing her for a couple weeks and that she was "cool."

CHRTS

And?

UNCLE

.....And... this is for you

He takes a large envelope from the seat next to him and places it on the table.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

If you want it

CHRIS

This is?

UNCLE

The names of the people involved and their information.

CHRIS

... How?

UNCLE

After he left, something seemed off. When he turned up dead a month later, I had a pretty good idea.. You hear about these things every so often... I still know a lot of people and... I did some serious poking around.

CHRIS

Cops?

UNCLE

Don't know shit. I'd have heard something.

....What Makes you think that's what I want?

UNCLE

Honestly... not really sure. The way he spoke of you, I don't know.. Thought maybe... because he was your brother. You know?

CHRIS

Yeah....

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Who are they?

INT. CHRIS' CAR - NIGHT

Chris drives home chewing on the consequences of possible actions.

UNCLE

There's three of them. I'm fairly certain of where you can find two.

CHRIS

And the other?

CAFE

CLOSE UP

Chris' arm rests on the table. He lifts his hand to receive the envelope. His uncle notes the gesture and slides the envelope over but when he tries to pull it away his Uncle keeps a grip.

CHRIS' CAR

Chris continues home in deep thought...

UNCLE

You sure about this?

CAFE

CHRIS

Nope.

He pulls the envelope free and begins to get up from the booth.

UNCLE

Wait...

Chris stops short.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

. . . .

CHRIS

What? (impatient)

UNCLE

... I don't want to regret this.

CHRIS

Then don't. (sarcasm)

Chris gets up from the booth and starts for the exit.

UNCLE

Were you two close?

CHRIS' CAR

Driving home.

CHRIS

Used to be.

INT. CHRIS' HOME

He enters his house exhausted. The days events a gnaw on his stability. The envelope heavy in his hand. He pauses for a moment, takes a deep breath and lets his shoulders relax...

Shaking off the surreal atmosphere, he opens a beer and proceeds to the couch, dropping the envelope on the coffee table on his way down. He lights a cigarette and plays with the envelope for awhile, tempting his curiosity.....

His phone vibrates with a text from his Emily.

EMILY TEXT

How are you?

He ignores it....

Takes the last couple drags from his cigarette.....

Finishes his beer.....

Gets up for his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Chris wakes, his eyes opening with a usual absent melancholy now blended with a touch of anger.

He rolls over to his phone resting on a nightstand and checks its time.

BATHROOM

Showering

KITCHEN

He sits at the kitchen table with the same coffee and toast. The envelope accompanies him at the center...

He takes a drink of coffee without taking his eyes from it. His phone vibrates.

TEXT

Sorry to hear bout ur bro. You around, I needs a quarter, if you could?

He tosses the phone back onto the table and returns his focus to the envelope

He takes a bite of toast, chewing slowly....

BATHROOM

Brushing his teeth in the bathroom

KITCHEN

Back at the table, he's calmly opening the envelope....

INT. SEAN' APARTMENT

Chris enters Sean and Tyler' apartment quickly and without knocking. This catching Sean and Tyler off guard while they play video games.

SEAN

Chris, hey man.

CHRIS

Hey, sorry.

SEAN

What's goin' on?

Sean tries to balance both the video game and the conversation simultaneously.

CHRIS

I need a favor.

SEAN

Of course, anything.

CHRIS

I need you to help me find something.

SEAN

For sure. What's up?

CHRIS

I need a gun.

Sean puts down his controller forcing Tyler to pause the game and do the same. They now give Chris their full attention.

SEAN

Yeah?

Chris shrugs.

TYLER

Who you gonna shoot?

SEAN

A gun?

CHRIS

Yup.

SEAN

You already own one.

CHRIS

A different gun.

SEAN

A different gun? I can't help you with that.

You still got that cousin right? He's come through in the past.

SEAN

What? .. No .. after what happened last time, no, you should know better.

CHRIS

That was fuckin years ago.

SEAN

Yeah, well, he's done having any sort of attention brought his way. I don't know what to tell you, I'm not the guy... Sorry.

CHRIS

Alright, well, thanks anyway's

TYLER

Who you gonna shoot?

Chris turns toward the door.

SEAN

Chris hold up.

Chris turns back to Sean.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Sit down, you don't have to run off.

He gives Sean a look that says he would rather be leaving.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Come on, sit the fuck down.

He sits with an impatient sigh.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Look man, you know how sorry I am to hear about Ryan. How are you holding up?

CHRIS

Things are fine.

SEAN

... Things are fine?

CHRTS

The fuck do you want me to say?

SEAN

I don't know. Something's gotta be on your mind if your looking for my cousins help.

CHRIS

....no... no, I gotta go.

He starts to leave again.

SEAN

Really, just like that.

Chris again stops short. He checks his pockets for cigarettes eventually finding an empty pack...

SEAN (CONT'D)

I just wanna know what's up.

CHRIS

You got any smokes?

SEAN

What?

CHRIS

Smokes, got any?

SEAN

No.

CHRIS

No?

TYLER

Dude, who you gonna shoot?

Chris walks out the door.

INT. CHRIS' BEDROOM - DAY

Sitting on his bed he considers his options. He lifts his mattress, withdraws his pistol and sets it on the pillow. The weapons registration voids it's illegal usage. He thinks about this...

He takes the small knife clipped to his pocket and unfolds it. It's three inch blade disappoints him...

INT. GUN STORE - DAY

Chris enters a local sporting goods store. Behind a display case running the length of a wall sits the heavy set owner on a stool. He eats his red apple with a knife letting the juices form tiny streams down his chin.

OWNER

Howdy... Somethin' I can help you with?

CHRIS

Just lookin'.

OWNER

Any questions.. holler.

The case displays its vast assortment of hand guns, knives, and other weapons.

Chris keeps to the center of the store and begins browsing...

Two appropriately dressed hunters enter the store and begin chatting with the owner whom they seem to know well.

OWNER (CONT'D)

Back already?

HUNTER 2

Yup.

OWNER

You guys couldn't have left more than four hours ago.

HUNTER 1

I know, so get this.. Dipshit here...

He pats hunter 2 on the back

HUNTER 2

Fuck you.

HUNTER 1

forgot to buy ammo. I was asking him all morning. "Now, you sure you got them two seventy shells", each time it's, "yeah yeah, in the ammo box". And so, of course, he loads the box in the truck without ever making sure and we drive out there...

Chris, who's now kneeling in front of the display case, can't help but eavesdrop.

HUNTER 1 (CONT'D)

An hour or so later, we're there, at the spot, loadin the guns. I find myself diggin through the ammo box and sure enough those two seventy shells are no where to be found. He starts off on his, "I could've sworn I put some in there". Now I'm bitching at him bout how we just wasted half a day to throw stones.. and it was at that time that I casually looked to the ridge just beyond us...

HUNTER 2

Couldn't believe it.

OWNER

Buck?

Hunter 2 nods.

HUNTER 1

Fiver points, lookin right at us.

HUNTER 2

Just lookin'.

HUNTER 1

Luckily, I always keep a lucky round in my pocket, so I slowly pull it out, load it in the chamber, I drew down...

He forms a rifle with his arms and looks down the sights.

HUNTER 1 (CONT'D)

and...'PLOOP', down he went.

HUNTER 2

Must've been two hundred yards.

OWNER

Is he here?

HUNTER 1

Wrapped up in the bed.

OWNER

Let's check him out.

Chris eyes the owner, an indication he would like to be helped.

OWNER (CONT'D)

Wait, gimme a minute, I gotta help this kid.

He walks down the counter to where Chris kneels.

OWNER (CONT'D)

What can I do you for?

CHRIS

Um... I'll take that medium sized knife there.

Chris points to the knife in the case. The owner opens the case and reaches his arm inside.

OWNER

The hunting knife?

CHRIS

Yeah, the one in the middle.

The owner takes the knife and places it on the top of the case.

OWNER

That it?

CHRIS

 ${\tt Umm...}$ no.. Let me have a look at that stun gun.

EXT. GUN STORE

Chris exits the store with his purchase in a brown bag.

The Owner and Hunters follow him out and proceed to the truck parked directly in front where they reveal their five points by removing the tarp covering its' corpse.

INT. RESTAURANT

Chris and his Boss sit in the Boss' office.

CHRIS

I'm gonna need some time off.

BOSS

Of course, whatever you need.

Might be a couple weeks.

BOSS

Take your time. You call me when you're ready.

INT. CHRIS' HOME

Sitting on his sofa testing the edge of his new knife, Chris slices printer paper into thin strips that fall on and around the coffee table. On the coffee table sits the envelope, and the directions.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE

Chris and his Mother sit at her kitchen table while he burdens her fragile state with the news that he will be leaving.

MOM

How long will you be gone?

CHRIS

Not sure.

MOM

...You're not going to tell me where you're going?

CHRIS

.

MOM

Is this really necessary? Your brothers' death has been hard on all of us

CHRIS

All of us?

MOM

Do you honestly think I deserve the stress of having the only son I have left disappear at a time like this?

CHRIS

I'll call you when I'm back.

He gets up from the table.

INT. CHRIS' HOME

CLOSE UP

A loud printer slowly prints directions from the internet.

INT. BEDROOM

Chris removes his duffle bag from the closet and opens it on the bed.

BACK TO:

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

CHRIS

And the other?

UNCLE

I know the guy who handles some of his management. If anyone knows where he is it would be him, but umm... you'll probably have to ask him, if you catch me.

CHRIS

I understand. Not like I'm a beginner.

UNCLE

That's good. Your brother let a story slip here and there...

UNCLE (CONT'D)

...just listen, your capabilities aside... you gotta understand, no party is clean in all this... no easy road home when its done.

INT. BEDROOM

Chris packs some cloths, the knife, and the stun gun into the bag.

He exits his house with the bag around his shoulder

EXT. CHRIS' CAR - DAY

He heads north on the I-5 leaving the valley behind.

EXT. I-5

CAMERA FOLLOWS CAR

Passing cars, he heads for open farmlands bordered by mountains to his left.

EXT. HWY 20

Rock faces tower on either side of his car, eventually fading into open grasslands spotted with oaks and manzanita.

EXT. HWY 101

He travels through a small lakeside town.

CUT TO:

He approaches the redwood curtain

CUT TO:

Surrounded by the giants he travels in the murky shade below their canopy

CUT TO:

He winds along a narrow mountain pass. The rainforest endless

INT. CHRIS' CAR - AFTERNOON

As Chris continues north on the 101 a potent combination of anger and anxiety crawls under his skin. The cigarette in his hand is down to filter and he attempts a final drag before he notices. He flicks it to the street and immediately lights another...

A couple drags later he flicks the new smoke out as well, finding it no longer satisfying. He switches the radio on but after a quick scan of its' selection he switches it back off. His hand tightens around the wheel. The wind circulating through the open window becoming louder and louder...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

He enters a hotel lobby and checks in at the front desk.

CLERK

Hi.

CHRTS

Hi, I'd like a room.

CLERK

How many nights?

CHRIS

Not sure.

CLERK

K. Smoking?

CHRIS

Please.

CLERK

Okay, it's gonna be sixty five a night. I'll need your ID and credit card please.

Chris hands her both items. She enters some data on her computer, hands the items back and gives him a room key.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Alright, checkout is at eleven. Anything else?

CHRIS

Yeah. Is there a bar called The Hole somewhere around here?

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

He removes a photo of his brother from his bag and tacks it to the wall facing the foot of the bed.

CUT TO:

He sits at the rooms small table and looks at both his directions and a map. A cigarette hangs from his lips.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - NIGHT

Driving slowly through a neighborhood, Chris eyes each address and cross street...

As he nears his destination he finds a place to park. He opens the glove box, removes the envelope and pulls from it a sheet of paper. Printed on this paper is a photo, a name: Ronnie, and an address. Written below all this: Manager for Paul.

EXT. RONNIE'S HOUSE

STEADY CAM FOLLOWING

Chris exits his vehicle and proceeds towards Ronnies' house. Entering the property quietly he walks around the side of the house and into the backyard. Through a window he can see that Ronnie is alone on his sofa smoking his bong and watching the film Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance.

INT.

POV TV

Ronnie pulls the bong from his face and blows smoke.

EXT.

Chris taps the glass getting Ronnies' attention and then hurries back around the side of the house to wait. After a few seconds Ronnie exits out the back door and looks around. Chris removes the stun gun tucked in his belt and turns it on.

He takes a couple of deep breaths to prepare himself.

Just as Ronnie turns back to the door Chris comes walking around the corner with steady assertion, pressing the weapon firmly into Ronnie' neck, sending him unconscious.

INT. RONNIE'S HOUSE

Ronnie sits unconscious, tied to a chair in his kitchen. Chris sits a short distance away smoking, searching through the pictures on Ronnie's phone. He skips past a couple pictures of plants and stops on one of He and Paul outside a cabin. His knee maintains a steady nervous bounce...

As Ronnie starts to come to Chris puts on a ski mask and stands with his chair, moving directly in front him. Ronnie blinks eyes unable to focus. He tries to move but finds himself restricted, his head swimming.

RONNIEWhat is this?

CHRIS

Relax, give yourself a minute to collect.

Ronnie struggles in his bindings.

RONNIE

....What the fuck?

CHRIS

Try to stay calm.

RONNIE

What the fuck is this, who are you?

CHRIS

I'm looking for a friend of yours. You're going to help me find him.

RONNIE

The fuck... untie me.

CHRIS

Can't do that.

RONNIE

Why not, who are you?

CHRIS

Calm down, please. I have only one question you need to answer.

RONNIE

The fuck is going on, why am I tied up?

CHRIS

You need to lower your voice.

RONNIE

HELP! HELP!

Chris quickly covers Ronnie' mouth and presses the knife firmly against his neck. The shouting stops.

CHRIS

We're done yelling... okay?

Ronnie gives a nod and Chris releases him.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Are we cool? Because I just have the one question and I want to get this over with.

RONNIE

• • • •

CHRTS

Your friend Paul, where's he at?

RONNIE

• • • •

CHRIS

I know you work for him, just tell me where he is and we can get this over with.

RONNTE

.

CHRIS

Dude, I'm gonna run out of patience real quick.

RONNIE

What the fuck is happening?

Chris kicks his chair.

CHRIS

Mother fucker wake up. Where's your friend?

RONNIE

Please just until me and let me go. Whatever this is, it's got nothing to do with me.

CHRIS

It's too late for that. Answer the question.

RONNIE

• • • •

CHRIS

Are you not hearing me? Answer the fucking question.

RONNIE

....I don't want to.

Chris' knee starts to bounce again.

CHRIS

Obviously that's not a fucking option. I'm going to hurt you. Don't make me ask again.

RONNIE

. . . .

CHRIS

Where's Paul?

RONNIE

. . . .

CHRIS

I said where is!...

RONNIE

Who me?

CHRIS

...what?

RONNIE

You're going to hurt... me?

CHRIS

. . . .

RONNIE

Is that what this is all about?

CHRIS

Where the fuck is Paul!?

RONNIE

Well I don't like the sound of that.

CHRIS

Where!?

RONNIE

Something's not right here. Tell me what's bothering you.

Acting on instinct, Chris throws a punch into Ronnie' face without a process of thought.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Ronnie spits blood as Chris stands up.

CHRIS

PAUL!?

RONNIE

You're fuckin trippin'.

Chris hits him hard this time. Ronnie' eyes lose focus as his head is knocked back.

All instinct.

Another brick blasts against soft dough. A deep internal grunt is worked loose from Ronnie' jaw just before another punch is landed. Chris hit him again and again. As he does so, he stares not at Ronnie, but somewhere behind him. A grimace is seen through the mask...

The punches stop. Knuckles drip.

Chris catches his breath in a state of confusion. If asked how many punches were thrown he would be without an answer. Ronnie' face is pulp. Nearly unconscious, he moans with a mouth full of blood. His words practically inaudible through a broken jaw.

RONNIE (CONT'D)

Stop.... Please.... No more

CHRTS

Where?

RONNIE

I'll tell you...

CHRIS

Tell me.

RONNIE

North... a cabin in hayfork

CHRIS

In Trinity?

RONNIE

...please.

Chris kneels down by Ronnie and lets him whisper something in his ear. Chris stands back up.

CHRIS

How do I know you're not lying?

RONNIE

Just go.... I won't tell.

CHRIS

Promise?

Ronnie nods.

RONNTE

What did he do? (muttering)

CHRIS

What's that?

RONNTE

What did he do?

CHRIS

I wouldn't worry about it.

Chris walks behind Ronnie who begins to panic with deep, heavy breaths as he is certain he is going to die. Lost hope and desperation form his expression. Instead Chris stuns him and cuts his ties.

CUT TO:

Chris washes his hands under the kitchen sink

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

Chris waits at the register while the cashier scans a bottle of antiseptic. The cashier quietly noticing damaged knuckles as he receives Chris' cash.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT

Chris sits in his drivers' seat with the door open and his feet on the pavement. He opens the bottle and pours the antiseptic on his knuckles, wincing from the sting.

INT. THE HOLE - NIGHT

At the end of the bar Chris sips a whiskey trying his best to relax. At the other end some rowdy group celebrates some young mans' twenty first.

The female bartender pours a long line of shots while money is tossed in her direction.

They bring their glasses together, cheer in unison and empty their shots.

Chris finds the celebrating unsettling. He finishes his drink and the bartender takes notice.

LINDSEY

Another?

CHRIS

Please.

She adds to his glass.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Back at the hotel Chris experiences a mild onset of insomnia. With the remote in one hand and a pipe in the other he sits completely still on the bed zoning out to static on the television.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Smoking a breakfast cigarette and studying a map, Chris acquires the location for his next encounter.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Chris exits the mini-store with a pack of cigarettes and a coffee. Sitting on the curb by the entrance is a young vagrant girl feeding her lab puppy beef jerky.

While filling his tank Chris notices the girl watching him. She waves and he waves back.

She approaches with the little dog at her side...

The pump stops.

REBECCA

Hello.

CHRIS

Hi.

REBECCA

Nice day isn't it.

CHRIS

It is.

She seems unsure of what to say.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

... Something I can help you with?

REBECCA

No... well, actually... yeah. We were hoping we could hitch a ride, maybe, if it wasn't too much trouble?

CHRIS

I uh...

REBECCA

Never mind, sorry to intrude. We can find someone else.

CHRIS

No, sorry, umm... hop in.

REBECCA

Really?

CHRIS

Yeah.

REBECCA

Wow, you're awesome. Thanks.

CHRIS

North okay?

REBECCA

Perfect... I'm Rebecca.

CHRIS

Chris.

They shake hands.

REBECCA

Pleasure to meet you Chris. Cool if I sit up front?

CHRIS

Be my guest.

INT. CHRIS' CAR

They share an awkward silence as they drive.....

Rebecca breaks the ice.

REBECCA

Thanks again for the ride.

Yeah, no problem.

REBECCA

... Sometimes I'll wait hours... I don't know, living on the street... people kinda treat you like you're a piece of shit.

CHRIS

Yeah, I can imagine... and you never know who's going to be picking you up either.

REBECCA

Yeah, definitely.

CHRIS

Sorry, that sounded creepy.

REBECCA

It's okay, I know what you mean. You kinda just have to trust people

CHRIS

Yeah, I guess so... To be honest I could see myself turning down some rides based on first impressions.

REBECCA

Really?

CHRIS

Probably. I almost said no to you.

REBECCA

But, you didn't.

CHRIS

Nope. But in your case, especially being as young as you are

REBECCA

You've heard the expression beggars can't be choosers?

CHRIS

Once or twice.

REBECCA

Well

CHRIS

I'm just saying

REBECCA

It's okay, so am I. Mind if I smoke?

CHRIS

No.

REBECCA

Can I bum one

CHRIS

Go for it. Light me one too

.... She passes him a lit cigarette

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Can I ask where you're going?

REBECCA

Not sure actually

CHRIS

Where are you from?

REBECCA

Uh, the east coast.

CHRIS

Been out here long?

REBECCA

Couple days... spent a few weeks in Oregon.

CHRIS

You hitch the hole way?

REBECCA

Yep.

CHRIS

That's crazy. You can't be much older than what, eighteen? You got family?

REBECCA

...Yeah... but we don't really talk.

CHRTS

No.... Are you running away?

REBECCA

Not running, but yeah, I left.

Uh oh. What happened? (sarcasm)

REBECCA

Stuff.

CHRIS

Yeah, what kind of stuff?

REBECCA

Just.. stuff

CHRIS

It's cool, you don't have to tell

REBECCA

I know...

REBECCA (CONT'D)

...What's North?

CHRIS

I'm guessing more trees.

REBECCA

....Where are you headed?

CHRIS

North.

REBECCA

.....Why?

CHRIS

Because.

REBECCA

Because why?

CHRIS

Just because.

REBECCA

....Show me yours I'll show you mine.

CHRIS

.....That's probably not a good idea.

REBECCA

No... why?

Because it's probably best that you don't know much about me

REBECCA

Really, why not?

CHRIS

Because I said so.

REBECCA

....Are you... a drug dealer?

CHRIS

No.

REBECCA

You're a felon?

CHRIS

Nope.

REBECCA

You're... a spy?

CHRIS

That's enough, and no.

REBECCA

It's okay, you don't have to tell me

CHRIS

Stop.

REBECCA

....k.... Sorry...

REBECCA (CONT'D)

...Do you like my dog? I saved him from the pound

CUT TO:

INT. POUND

NO AUDIO

Caged dogs bark frantically,

While others look defeated.

BACK TO:

INT. CHRIS' CAR

CHRIS

What's his name?

REBECCA

Fortunate. I call him fortune for short.

LATER

Chris makes an exit off the freeway and heads toward another gas station.

CHRIS

Sorry but I have to drop you here. I hope that's okay.

REBECCA

No worries.

.... He parks and she gets out.

REBECCA (CONT'D)

Thanks again.

CHRIS

Yeah, anytime.

She smiles and shuts the door. He watches her walk away feeling a bit of admiration and maybe even guilt.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Alone amongst the foliage of a dense green forest a doe stands alert...

BACK TO:

Chris is back on the road. Outside his windows the towering redwoods sprint against his coming.....

He passes a sign for the town of Hayfork...

He makes another exit.

INT. CHRIS' CAR - DAY

Parked a short walk away from the entrance to Paul's access road, Chris procrastinates with a cigarette to aid him. Fear and anxiety getting the better of him as he stalls...

He opens the envelope and looks at the photo of Paul. He checks his map again, comparing it to his directions written on the back of a business card.

EXT. / INT. PAUL' CABIN

Finally pulling himself together Chris exits his car and opens the trunk.

Inside is the duffle bag containing the knife and the stun gun. After some consideration he decides to leave the stun gun behind. He tucks the knife inside his waist band and begins the long walk down the access road...

He's cautious, remaining close to the tree line in preparation for some unexpected surprise.....

At the end of the road he comes into view of a secluded cabin at the center of a small clearing. He notes only one vehicle is parked. Fear and anxiety begin to resurface and he must again adjust his focus before continuing his approach...

As he crosses the yard leading to the front door his body becomes tense, rigid, assertive. The crunching of his footsteps becoming louder and louder until it is all that can be heard...

Before Chris knows it, he's opening the door to find a startled Paul sitting on his couch mouthing the words "what the fuck" as they make eye contact.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAUL' CABIN

Chris exits the cabin shutting the door behind himself. He struggles to stifle his rapid, heavy breathing... Blood covers his shaking hands. He tries to clean them on his pants, but only succeeds in spreading the stain... He wipes a handprint off the door handle with his shirt

BACK TO:

FRANTIC STEADY CAM

Paul scrambles for a gun in a drawer but Chris is able to prevent him...

EXT.

Chris begins the walk back to his car with the effects of adrenaline overwhelming him. Nausea and panic cause him to tremble in a state of disorientation...

INT.

FRANTIC STEADY CAM

Their fight heated, both men understanding stakes. Chris tries for his knife, but it's knocked to the floor. The two slam each other around with Chris getting the upper hand.

EXT.

Chris continues towards his car.

CHRIS'S POV

He looks down at his feet. Both are disproportionate in size.

TNT.

He makes a move for the knife, which is now on the floor, but Paul dives on top of him.

EXT.

The nausea begins to consume Chris. Walking becomes an effort and he stumbles.

INT.

Chris is on top of Paul and has him pinned in a corner. Paul' arms are outstretched, one hand pushing against Chris' face and the other preventing the arm with the blade. In one quick motion Chris brings the blade across Paul' wrist and drives it into his chest causing the release of a deep agonizing groan.

EXT. CABIN

Chris sprays the ground with vomit and falls to his knees.

INT. CABIN

IN THE FOREGROUND A TRAIL OF BLOODY FOOTPRINTS LEAD TO THE DOOR. IN THE BACKGROUND PAUL' BODY IS IN A CORNER WITH BLOOD POOLING AROUND HIM.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN AFTERNOON

Back at the car Chris opens the trunk and the duffle bag; placing inside the knife and Paul's gun. He then exchanges his stained shirt for a clean one and closes the trunk with a slam

BLACK SCREEN......

INT. CHRIS' CAR - NIGHT

NO AUDIO - AMBIENT TONES?

His disorientation and surreal atmosphere haven't yet been shaken as he drives back to the hotel. For him this is all new

The forest thick around his headlights

On the side of the road ahead is a wrecked car next to a tree and a dying buck on the pavement. Chris slows to get a better look. The driver of the vehicle is waving chris down. He pulls off the road.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

NO AUDIO

He exits his vehicle. The driver is calling for his help in a panic. He instead focuses his attention on the suffering animal, slowly approaching and kneeling over it's broken body. The buck takes each breath in deep, knowing it only has time for so many more.

The driver has stopped calling and now watches in a state of confusion.

Chris glides his knife across the animal's throat. He rests his hand on it's chest, feeling it's heartbeat slowly diminish as it passes. Through all this, his saddened eyes upward and elsewhere.

Walking back to his car, he leaves behind yet another set of footprints.

WITH AUDIO

The driver, still speechless, watches him get in his car and drive away in disbelief.

BACK TO:

INT. CABIN

NO AUDIO

Chris kneels over Paul watching him fade as the last of his breath escapes his wounded chest. Chris' face drips with sweat. Muscles tense, pupils wide open, adrenaline courses through his veins. His face wearing a rigid, thousand yard grimace, his body shaking... Paul goes limp and he removes the blade. Blood pools around the body.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Back at the hotel Chris steps under the rain and steam of his shower. He lets his head fall back under the water allowing it to envelope his ears and create a sort of jet engine roar that forms his head space. A mixture of blood and water swirl into the drain

CUT TO:

POV CHRIS

Static on the television

EXT. RIVER - AFTERNOON

The rivers current pushes, pulls and melts with itself, rocks beneath slowly erode...

Chris sits on its' bank watching its' movement, allowing his thoughts to flow alike, finding peace in the constant motion....

After some time, the fisherman finally speaks...

FISHERMAN

Been here long?

Chris, only just now becoming aware of this mans presence, opts not to answer. The man stands not far from him, casting his line, standing as if he's been there since sun up.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

....I Remember coming here as a young boy. We used to try and swim across... never could make it.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER 2 - DAY - FLASHBACK - KIDS

CHASING THE CAMERA

Chris and Ryan race across a river.

CAMERA FOLLOWING

Now tired and at its' center they stop racing and float downstream with its' current.

FISHERMAN

Current's too strong.

BACK TO:

EXT. RIVER

FISHERMAN

Though when your small most things are too deep....

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

You like to fish?

CHRIS

. . . .

FISHERMAN

Me, been doing it since I could walk. Back then, probably spent more time untangling my line than reeling em in....

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Yeah, I'll tell ya, soon as I could
drive, I was out here every chance
I could get... Funny... those
days.. I was a bit more selective,
only keeping a catch if I thought
it was worth a photograph. Now
days, seems I'll take whatever I
can get.

CHRIS

You gotta somewhere.

FISHERMAN

Yeah, suppose so.... but first you gotta start.

CHRIS

Haven't given it the time.

FISHERMAN

Oh, so no luxuries then?

CHRIS

Can't afford it.

FISHERMAN

Can't afford or wont allow?

CHRIS

• • • •

FISHERMAN

A masochist

CHRIS

• • • •

FISHERMAN

It's okay. You can take a raincheck.

Chris shoots a cold look at the man aged somewhere in his fifties. Their eyes meet. Chris finds an inner knowledge behind the mans' eyes, almost condescending. Unsettled, he breaks the stare.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I suppose you're right. Best to just say fuck it. Couldn't possibly make the best out of something you don't have.

CHRIS

Are you able to sleep once you're done dreaming?

The fisherman seems unable to answer...

FISHERMAN

...Sun's setting. I think it's time to change my bait.

INT. THE HOLE - NIGHT

Chris keeps to himself with a whiskey.

At the other end of the bar a rough looking, bearded drunk sways on his bar stool arguing with himself at low volume. He attempts to take a shot but lacks a steady hand. The precious liquid is spilled furthering his frustration with himself. He opens his wallet but finds it empty...

The drunks inability to perform the simple actions necessary to sustain his addiction annoys Chris.

LINDSEY

How's the hand?

CHRTS

Huh?

LINDSEY

I said how's the hand? The other night you came in with chewed up knuckles.

CHRIS

Oh... yeah.

LINDSEY

They look a little better... Were you in a fight?

CHRIS

...Maybe.

LINDSEY

Nice. Did you win?

I don't think anybody won.

With a thud the drunk hits the ground while attempting to dismount his bar stool. He struggles off the floor...

LINDSEY

Sorry Chuck but I gotta cut you off.

The drunk now off the floor is making his way to the exit.

DRUNK

Yeah, yeah

The drunk pushes himself through the exit.

LINDSEY

He's in here every night.

CHRIS

I can tell.

LINDSEY

So where are you from? I haven't seen you around before.

CHRIS

So-Cal.

LINDSEY

Long drive. LA?

CHRIS

San Diego

LINDSEY

Never been.

CHRIS

Too hot, too crowded.

LINDSEY

I've heard that. So what brings you up here, seeing friends, here for the harvest?

CHRIS

I wish, but no, actually my mom lived out here, she uh... she just passed away. I came up for the funeral. LINDSEY

Oh... I'm so sorry I didn't mean to.

CHRIS

No, it's okay... she had been sick for a while. It was one of those things where it was only a matter of time.

LINDSEY

Cancer?

Chris nods.

CHRIS

....I think she was ready.

CUT TO:

INT. CHRIS' CAR - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

NO AUDIO

Ryan exits a customers house and enters chris's car. Chris pulls away from the curb and Ryan puts eighty dollars in his wallet.

INT. THE HOLE

LINDSEY

Was she in pain?

CHRIS

Yeah, she was.

LINDSEY

Well, maybe it was for the best then.

CHRIS

Yeah, maybe... Anyway that's how I got the knuckles. Left the funeral, found a dive.

LINDSEY

Nice.

Yep, got smashed and picked a fight with the first guy I called a faggot.

LINDSEY

Did you feel better?

CHRIS

Not really.

LINDSEY

... How long are you in town?

CHRIS

I don't know, can't be too much longer. The funeral was over a week ago.

LINDSEY

Really.

CHRIS

Two weeks. I don't know, but yeah I've just kinda been hanging out. I stopped here for a bit... it's nice.. quiet, you know?

LINDSEY

Yeah... these things take time. I've been there. I lost my boyfriend about a year ago.

CHRIS

Really, how'd he go?

LINDSEY

He drowned.... It took months for me to pull myself together, but after enough time... it'll start to hurt a little less.

CHRIS

I'm just not ready to go back home and.. start everything, you know? ...I can see why she liked it up here. I could live with it.

LINDSEY

Just start trimming, you'll be fine.

Yeah... it would be cool, but I've got too much going on back home.

LINDSEY

Do you have any other family in the area?

CHRIS

She was all the family I had left.

LINDSEY

Wow, I'm so sorry. We should change the subject.

CHRIS

Let's.

LINDSEY

.....I've read that in these types of situations it helps to umm, to be spontaneous.

CHRIS

Spontaneous.

LINDSEY

Yeah.

CHRIS

Like, go to Paris or something?

LINDSEY

Yeah, sorta. If you could do whatever you wanted to do tomorrow, what would it be?

CHRIS

Whatever I wanted?

LINDSEY

Yep, what would you do?

CHRIS

.....Fishing

LINDSEY

Fishing?

CHRTS

Yep, I'd go fishing. Want to come?

LINDSEY

Me?

Yeah. Wanna go fishing with me?

LINDSEY

Umm.... Okay.

CHRIS

Do you work tomorrow?

LINDSEY

Nope.

CHRIS

Perfect.

They share a silence...

LINDSEY

.....Want another drink? It's on the house.

CHRIS

Yeah, but... I better not. I still have to drive,

LINDSEY

Better safe than sorry.

CHRIS

That's right. So umm... what time should I pick you up?

LINDSEY

Do you know how to get to the river?

CHRIS

Course.

LINDSEY

K... well, pick me up out front at five.

CHRIS

Five it is. I'm Sean by the way.

LINDSEY

Lindsey.

He gets off the stool.

CHRIS

Alright Lindsey.

LINDSEY

Alright Sean.

CHRIS

I'll see you tomorrow.

He starts to leave.

LINDSEY

Wait, I don't have a fishing pole.

CHRIS

No biggie, we can share.

He exits.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

He parks outside a steak house.

INT. STEAK HOUSE

He enters the steak house and is greeted by the hostess.

HOSTESS

Hi, how many?

CHRIS

Just one

HOSTESS

Okay, right this way

A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Chris is siting at a large corner booth, swirling the ice in his whiskey....

The waiter arrives with the food, steak and mashed potatoes...

WAITER

Would you care for anything else?

CHRIS

No thanks.

WAITER

Perhaps a side of garlic butter for your steak?

I'm fine.

WAITER

Enjoy.

His eyes follow the waiter away from his table before he delicately cuts into his steak.

He takes a bite, chewing slowly.....

He sips his drink.

INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE - DAY

Chris mulls over a selection of fishing poles. He decides on one with a low price tag and removes it from the rack.

EXT. THE HOLE - AFTERNOON

Chris waits for Lindsey inside his car. He checks the time. Almost 5:00. Nervous, he checks himself in the mirror. He pulls up the back of his pants and adjusts his shirt.

He checks the back seat. The fishing poles lies across still wearing the price tag and he removes it.

Lindsey arrives, exits her car and enters his. She carries a small tote bag.

LINDSEY

Hey.

CHRIS

How goes it?

LINDSEY

It's goin. I brought food.

She lifts her bag

INT. CHRIS' CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Chris and Lindsey drive to the river sharing a silence. Lindsey sets her gaze out the window...

LINDSEY

I'm gonna miss the sun. Things always feel different when the seasons change.

CHRTS

I know what you mean.

EXT. RIVER - BEFORE SUNSET

They walk a trail along the river bank.

LINDSEY

...Been so long since I was here at sunset, I'd forgotten how beautiful it was.

CHRIS

It is, isn't it.

LINDSEY

....were you and your mom close?

CHRIS

She was my mom.

LINDSEY

Right ...sorry, stupid question.

CHRIS

It's okay, don't worry about it.
How long have you been tending bar?

LINDSEY

About a year. It's only part time but between that and garden work I get by.

CHRIS

I'm guessing there's never a shortage for that.

LINDSEY

Definitely not, especially if you know somebody. I'm actually going to be partnering with some people next season. Gonna have my own little spot, hopefully start making some real money.

CHRIS

Ready to be your own boss?

LINDSEY

I won't necessarily be my own boss, but it'll be better than what I got going now.

She fishes a joint from her bag.

LINDSEY (CONT'D)

Do you smoke?

CHRIS

Pot? I've been known to.

She lights it, takes a drag and passes. He drags, coughs and passes back...

LINDSEY

Not bad?

CHRIS

Not at all.

LINDSEY

You should know, you've caught me at a strange time.

CHRIS

What do you mean?

LINDSEY

I mean me coming out here like this. I'm usually more reserved

She takes another hit...

POV CHRIS - SLOW MOTION - NO AUDIO

She continues talking but he hears none of it, instead only analyzing her body language and eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER

They arrive at a suitable location and Chris sets down the fishing pole.

CHRIS

I think this spot should work.

LYNDSEY

Hungry?

CHRIS

Sure.

She kneels down and starts digging through her bag. Chris walks behind her.

LYNDSEY

I hope you like sushi. It's from the supermarket but it's not bad

BANG!

LYNDSEY'S POV

Chris shoots Lindsey in the head. The immediacy of the moment causes him to flinch, his face wearing a slight grimace.

CHRIS' POV

Frozen, he watches her mouth open and close a few times, resembling a fish out of water sucking its' last bit of air.

FLASHBACK

CHRIS' POV - NO AUDIO

The gun kicks in his hand. Pink mist. Her body collapses.

BACK TO:

Chris drops the gun and starts walking back to the car with the fishing pole......

EXT. RYAN'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Chris looks for an open spot to park. He eyes two thugs exiting his brothers building and leaving the complex on foot. He parks.

INT. RYAN'S APARTMENT

He enters his brothers apartment, its' door open and contents scattered about. Ryan is busy pulling himself off the floor and onto his couch. His face has taken punishment. He lights a cigarette.

Chris grabs his wrist and turns it over to examine his needle marks. Ryan can only avoid eye contact.

RYAN'S POV

Chris exits, leaving behind a wad of cash on the spider glass of the coffee table.

RYAN

Don't tell mom.

EXT. RIVER

Inside his car chris suffers a panic / anxiety attack. He explodes in a fit of emotional rage, screaming out,

CHRIS

FUCK! FUCK!

attacking the cars interior including the steering wheel, windshield and mirror.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
STUPID MOTHER FUCKER! FUCK! FUCK!

He locks both hands tight around the wheel, squeezing with all his strength...

BLACK SCREEN.....

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Shower

CUT TO:

Sitting on his bed smoking the last of a cigarette, Chris stares at the photo tacked to the wall.

The cherry finds filter and he snuffs the cigarette in an ashtray on the nightstand. He checks his pack for another... empty. With a sigh he lets his head fall back against the wall.

CUT TO:

He exits the room in a hurry slamming the door behind himself

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

He exits a gas station with a pack of cigarettes and a forty ounce discreetly hidden in it's brown bag. He sets the beer on the concrete and packs his smokes.

EXT. CITY NIGHT

Chris walks aimlessly down a random street smoking and drinking...

As a car passes by he lets the bottle drop and hide behind his leq.

Buzzed and almost dry he smokes alone on a bench.

Self pity the theme of the evening.

He finishes the bottle with a burp.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Pissing in an alley with a cigarette in his hand...

EXT. LIQUOR STORE

Now exiting a liquor store with a fifth of cheap whiskey, he walks around the side of the building where he kneels down and rolls a joint...

He finishes, slides the joint behind his ear, takes a pull off the bottle and proceeds down the street.

EXT. CITY NIGHT

Back to his self pity session, Chris leans on a tree in a park...

He takes a final drag from the joint and snuffs it. He follows with a heavy pull from the bottle. He gags and covers his mouth out of reflex.

EXT. ALLEY 2

In another alley he takes another piss, emptying both his bladder and the bottle of liquor simultaneously...

After zipping himself he sends the bottle to a violent shatter against the side of a building. He stumbles backward laughing to himself.

CUT TO:

Vomiting, with his back to the camera.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Chris wakes up sprawled sideways across the bed with his cloths still on, his head pounding. He reaches for his cigarettes on the nightstand but finds the pack empty.

CUT TO:

Another shower

INT. STORE - DAY

Chris waits at the register while the cashier scans a bottle of super glue.

EXT. STORE PARKING

Inside his car he applies the glue to the fallen rearview mirror and attaches it back to his windshield

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

He exits with a coffee and pastry and proceeds to his car a short walk away

CUT TO:

Inside his car he opens the envelope and removes a sheet of paper with Lindsey's photo. He discards it, removes the last sheet of paper and examines it. Name: Tim. Last known address:___. After a bite of pastry he stuffs everything back into the envelope and drives away.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

Chris walks through a neighborhood.....

He eventually arrives at a cross street. Now not far from his destination he continues on this new street comparing each address to the one written on his palm....

He finds the right house, an old two bedroom that's been neglected over the years. In the overgrown front yard a young boy and girl burry a dead cat wrapped in newspaper, filling the small grave with earth.....

When they finish they each say a prayer

BOY

Dear God, please take care of Tiger. He got the flu and now he needs a new home.

GIRL

If he scratches on the furniture it means he needs to be let outside.

KIDS

Amen.

The kids turn to notice Chris watching them. Curious, they stare back at him.

Their mom steps out the front door.

LAUREN

Kids, time for food.

As the kids run for the house she addresses Chris.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Ηi

CHRIS

Hi.

LAUREN

Can I help you?

CHRIS

Sorry, I didn't mean to loiter. I'm looking for an old friend. I was told he lived around here, but I think I've got the wrong place.

LAUREN

Who's your friend?

CHRIS

A guy named Tim.

LAUREN

Well, unfortunately you're on the right track, but I haven't seen him for a few months now.

CHRIS

Know where he might be?

Lauren appears hesitant.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Look, I can see that I'm intruding and I'm sorry, but I had to travel a ways to get here... Any info would be a huge help.

LAUREN

... Umm... I have to fix the kids' food. Come inside.

INT. LAUREN'S HOME

Chris sits at the kitchen table next to a baby boy in a highchair, playing with his food, while Lauren microwaves leftover macaroni and cheese and serves it to the kids, who are now playing a board game in the living room.

LAUREN

K, here you guys go. Blow on it if it's too hot okay.

BOY

I don't want any peas.

LAUREN

I know but they're good for you, eat a couple.

GIRL

Mom, we had this last night.

LAUREN

Sorry honey, that's all we have.

BOY

How come she gets less peas than $\operatorname{me}_{\:\raisebox{1pt}{\text{\circle*{1.5}}}}$

LAUREN

Eat.

She walks back into the kitchen.

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Sorry, I forget my manners when I'm dealing with the kids. I'm Lauren.

CHRIS

Mark.

LAUREN

Nice to meet you.

CHRIS

You too.

LAUREN

Would you care for some tea?

CHRIS

Oh, no thanks.

LAUREN

It's no trouble I was going to have a cup myself.

CHRIS

In that case, please.

LAUREN

I have all different kinds, cinnamon, green, earl, black

CHRIS

Black's fine.

She puts a kettle on the stove, some cups and tea bags on the counter, and then joins Chris at the table.

LAUREN

So how do you know Tim?

CHRIS

We worked together years ago.

LAUREN

Where at? Not here.

CHRIS

I don't know if I should say.

LAUREN

Colorado?

CHRIS

Yeah. He told you about that?

LAUREN

Some.

CHRIS

Well, he sent me an e-mail about a month ago, saying he had some work for me, and that I could find him here.

As their board game builds in competition the kids begin to raise their voices.

GIRL

I wanna go first, you went first last time.

BOY

The winner gets to go first that's how it always is.

The baby begins to whimper.

LAUREN

He did? Someone like yourself, would've thought he'd toss you in Lindsey's direction.

CHRIS

How do you two know each other?

LAUREN

He gave me that boy in there, but like I said I haven't seen him... well, hardly.

CHRIS

Hardly?

LAUREN

.... Every now and then he'll come around with a little money when he needs a bed, but that's about it.

The kids begin to argue.

GIRL

That's not the rules.

She takes a his piece off the board.

BOY

Yes it is. Give it back.

He takes the piece from her hand.

The babies whimper begins the transformation into a fit.

LAUREN

Last time that happened was a few months ago.

CHRIS

Any idea where he might be?

The argument between the kids escalates into shouts.

GTRT.

You only get two turns when you roll five!

BOY

You don't even know the rules! Your just mad cuz I'm beating you.

GIRL

Shut up cheater!

BOY

It's my turn!

The baby starts to cry and Lauren scoops him up to calm him.

The kettle starts to steam.

LAUREN

Kids, settle down!

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Not really, never really tells me where he's going. I can't even be sure he's still in the area.

CHRIS

Yeah. No, I understand. But at this point I'm thinking anything might help. I gotta at least try, seeing as I came all this way. You know?

LAUREN

...If he's this far north... I don't know... to be honest, I think your best bet would be to visit the strip club a couple of nights.

CHRIS

Where?

LAUREN

It's only twenty minutes from here. Yeah, he was always sort of a regular... Sorry, I know that's not much help.

The phone rings.

She puts the baby back in the highchair causing him to scream. She walks to the phone.

The boy rolls the dice and begins moving his piece on the board.

GIRL

That's not fair!

BOY

See you just get mad when I'm beating you, Shut up!

RING - RING

LAUREN

Kids, that's enough!

She answers the phone

LAUREN (CONT'D)

Hello... Hi, yes I know... well... well You're just going to have to wait aren't you

The shouting between the kids continues. The girl takes his piece off the board.

BOY

Stop taking my pieces!

GIRL

Stop cheating!

The boy starts counting his advancement of spaces.

BOY

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.

GIRL

No, No! You only get six!

BOY

Shut up!

She takes his piece again.

GIRL

Six spaces! It's six spaces! You only get six! Cheater, cheater, cheater!

The girl sends the board and it's pieces flying.

The baby continues to scream.

LAUREN

I know, you already said that....
But like I told you.... I've got a
family to run.

Steam begins bellowing from the kettle. Its' high pitch whistle steadily increasing in volume over the chaos of the house....

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Inside the strip club, Tim sits at the main stag with a martini. He is most entertained by the performance. The dancer comes close and he stuffs some dollars into her g - string.

Chris observes this from a back table taking his time with a whiskey. The clubs exploitation falling short of his amusement. A dancer struts toward him for solicitation but he waves her on before she can practice her sales pitch. She continues past irritated.

Some patrons at a table across the room stare at chris, observing his lack of participation.

On the main stage, the song finishes and the dancer walks her lap. Tim throws more money, claps and flags down a waitress to fill his martini. A new song begins and the corresponding dancer enters the stage.

Tim places a coaster over his new drink and gets up for the restroom. Chris follows, entering the restroom a few seconds behind him, just in time to see him enter a stall. Chris walks to a urinal. He can hear Tim sniffing coke of the toilet...

FANTASY

Chris kicks in the door to Tim's stall.

Grabbing the back of his head, Chris smashes his face into the holding tank.

BACK TO:

The door opens and closes bit a bit of a slam.

Another patron enters the restroom pulling Chris from his fantasy. The patron begins to use a urinal as Chris finishes his business, washes his hands and exits.

INT. CLUB

CAMERA FOLLOWS CHRIS

Tim stumbles out the entrance with Chris following from a short distance.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

From his car, Chris watches Tim make arrangements with a prostitute.

They hop into Tim's car and leave with Chris following.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Hidden in his car, Chris watches a motel room....

The prostitute exits the room. A few seconds later Tim follows her out and lights a cigarette. The prostitute walks off. Tim takes a few more drags from his smoke, checks the time and starts in his vehicles' direction.

Chris starts his ignition.

EXT. YOGURT SHOP

Still inside his car Chris watches Tim enjoy a frozen yogurt through a large store front window....

EXT. THEATRE

Chris follows Tim into a movie theatre parking lot.

CUT TO:

EXT. THEATRE

CAMERA FOLLOWS CHRIS

In the ticket line, Chris waits a few people behind Tim who is approaching the window.

TIM

Hi, one for Extreme Prejudice.

TIM'S POV

EMPLOYEE

Ten dollars.

INT. THEATRE

Chris enters the Theatre and is instantly greeted by the usher. He can see Tim walking towards his movie. Chris hands his ticket to the employee.

USHER

Alright, theater four on your left. Enjoy your movie.

INT. THEATER

Tim sits toward the top of a mostly empty theater. Just as the movie begins Chris enters and quietly sits directly behind Tim...

As the movie gets underway Chris slowly takes off his shoe using the toe of his other foot. He bends over, picks it up and begins carefully removing its' lace. Once removed, he quietly puts the shoe back on his foot and begins wrapping each end of lace around both hands leaving some slack in between. He sits patiently for a moment waiting....

Before too long the movie provides him with an opening when a loud action sequence consumes the room. Now, with enough distraction, Chris movies in. With one fluid motion he pulls the lace tight across Tim's neck and at the same time braces himself by extending his foot into the back of Tim's chair. Tim struggles but can do nothing, his fingers unable to separate the string from his neck, his strangled choking silent beneath speakers.

Another patron turns in his seat to see Chris attacking Tim but finds the scene uninteresting and instead turns his attention back to the movie.After about Twenty seconds Tim goes limp. Urine runs down his pant legs and onto the decline of the floor.

Chris unwraps the lace from his hands, stuffs it into his pocket and calmly walks out.

INT. THEATRE

He walks past the concession counter calmly and quickly, his shoe missing a lace. An employee making popcorn is distracted by his leaving and Chris gives him a smile and nod and he walks past.

He walks past the usher who's looking down only to look up and see Chris just as he exits the building.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Back at the room, Chris sits on the bed smoking, staring at the photo, his latest incident seeming to have had little effect....

FLASHBACK - THEATER

CLOSE UP

The lace goes tight around Tim's neck...

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

He continues smoking and gazing at the photo, his concentration on blocking the memories from entering his head.

FLASHBACK

His foot extends against Tim's chair.

HOTEL ROOM

Becoming lost in his thoughts, a nervous twitch steals his face.

FLASHBACK

CHRIS' POV

The muscles in his forearms strain to keep the lace tight.

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

At the foot of the bed stands a tall mirror, his zombie like gaze lost inside.

BLACK SCREEN.....

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

On the nightstand is a still smoking cigarette in an ashtray and a pipe which is also smoking. The morning sun illuminates through a divide in the window curtains.

INT. DINER - MORNING

An egg is cracked into a frying pan...

Chris sits alone at a diner bar with a coffee in front of him, head down. A child's menu containing traces of zoo animals rests between his elbows. He appears absent, in a fog, lack of sleep furthering the surreal disorientation.

The only employee is a cook busy flipping pancakes, scrambling eggs and hustling about, all the while whistling the tune, Bear Necessities.

CHRIS' POV - CLOSE UP

His coffee cup is refilled.

The cook is back to working and whistling.

Chris looks back to the menu confused, his head swimming. Some of the animals have been colored black with disregard for the borders.

POV CHRIS - CLOSE UP

A small whiskey bottle clinks against his mug.

Chris looks up. The cook is standing directly in front of him.

ROB

Hair of the dog?

Chris shakes his head.

The cook is back to his duties with a whistle.

ROB (CONT'D)

Mornin' Ed.

-RING-

The diner door opens disturbing a little bell at the top.

An old man enters and approaches the bar.

ED

Mornin' rob.

Chris looks up in time to see the man sit next to him.

ED (CONT'D)

I'll take the usual.

ROB

Coming up.

While Rob Brings Ed his coffee Chris reads his features. A rough looking sixty something, missing a handful of teeth, smelling of booze, denying his ugly divorce from life.

ED

(sighs) ... Uh, shit... Hell of a night, hell of a night.

ROE

(calling from his kitchen) Been at it again? ED

Oh, you know... I can't seem to help myself. I was on my best behavior.

ROB

Never less than a gentleman.

ED

You said it...

ED (CONT'D)

....I'll tell you right now, after taking one look at this boy I can see he had a little of the same.

ROB

(laughing) You got that right.

Ed studies Chris who continues focusing on the bar.

ED

....yeah, I knew it.... You buy yourself a little glitter?

CHRIS

....Me?

ED

Pretty sure.

CHRIS

What?

ED

I saw you.

CHRIS

.

ED

At the titty bar, sitting by yourself.

Chris' face reveals the slightest hint of admission.

ED (CONT'D)

...yeah, I knew it was you, pouting in the back all by your lonesome. Did you think no one would notice?

CHRIS

You have me mistaken.

ED

.....no... no it was you, I'm sure of it. You were that lonely boy ignoring all the girls.

CHRIS

Excuse me.

ED

Oh, I can see we have a temper.

Chris decides to ignore the man and return his focus to the bar....

ED (CONT'D)

...You know, it's okay, I wouldn't worry about it. You're still young, You'll learn the ropes. Besides, ain't like you gotta buy em' dinner. Though if you felt inclined, Rob is one hell of a griddle man.

ED (CONT'D)

Ain't that right Rob?

ROB

Born and bred.

CHRIS

You need to mind your own business.

ED

Hey now, no need to get salty, I can sense your frustration... Sounds to me like you should spend a little time with yourself before you go dipping in the honey's anyhow.

Rob and Ed Chuckle.

CHRIS

Excuse me!?

ED

No excuse me, I think I've got you pegged all wrong. I'm sure one day you'll find yourself some nice young man to dig a cave and snuggle with.

CHRIS

The fuck!

ROB

Easy now, okay here it comes.

Rob delivers Chris his food, banana pancakes with a whipped cream smiley.

ROB (CONT'D)

Careful, it's hot.

CHRIS

Keep it!

Chris throws money on the bar and dismounts his stool.

ROB

... now he's angry.

ED

Yeah, after a bubble bath he'll be right as rain.

Chris exits the diner slamming the door, the bell gives a loud jingle.

EXT. CITY - DAY

STEADY CAM - THE CITY SLOWLY GOES OUT OF FOCUS

Chris exits the diner and hurries down the street with no particular direction in mind...

Anger slowly overcomes him. He falls into his head with thoughts of his awful accomplishments, the world around him slowly fading.....

After a couple blocks he stops and returns to reality. He's taking stock of his surroundings when his phone rings. It's his mom. Emotionally overwhelmed and extremely unstable, he hesitates on answering...

CHRIS

...hello?

MOM

...Chris?

CHRIS

Mom

MOM

(holding back tears) ...Where are you? Are you okay?

He doesn't know what to say. Tears fill his eyes.

MOM (CONT'D)

Chris.... Chris talk to me. Where are you?

EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Ryan's lifeless body slumped over in the drivers seat.

BACK TO:

EXT. CITY

MOM

Chris please.... Say something.

EXT. RIVER 2 - DAY - FLASHBACK

STEADY CAM FOLLOWS FROM BEHIND

Chris leads Ryan by the hand as they wade into the river.

INT. DUPLEX - FLASHBACK

CHRIS' POV

Ryan blows into a Nintendo cartridge to free it of dust.

EXT. CITY

MOM

Please... please say something, anything.

CHRIS

(crying, holding back tears)
Mom.... Mom I

The call is dropped. Chris checks the phone to find the battery has died

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He sends the phone against the concrete. Wiping his eyes, he tries to bottle his emotions.

He checks his pack of cigarettes... empty. He balls the pack into his fist and squeezes with all his strength, jaw clenched.

A cocky looking boy with a ball and glove stands next to Chris observing his frustration with amusement. Chris turns his attention to the boy.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Pay phone? (irritated)

The boy smacks his hand into his glove a couple times the way ball players do... He then points toward an alley across the street with a smirk, reaches into his pocket and pulls out some coins which he gives to Chris. Chris makes his way across the street and into the alley....

In the alley he comes into view of a phone booth, already in use by some homeless crack addict muttering to himself. The man feeds the phone a variety of coins, and presses buttons frantically. Chris approaches the booth cautiously at first.

BUM

(muttering) Mother fucking phone... piece of shit, what the fuck?

BUM (CONT'D)

Four zero four, five six eight, nine two.

BUM (CONT'D)

Hello? Jess... Hello, baby... hold on baby I can almost hear you.

BUM (CONT'D)

....Four eight six, five one two, two four.

BUM (CONT'D)

Hey, it's me... Baby? ...Baby where are you?

Chris can only watch for so long before he loses patience. With his anger and disassociation uncontrollable, he jerks the bum from the phone by the shoulder.

BUM (CONT'D)

What the fuck?!

CHRIS

Time's up, get the fuck out of here.

BUM

Mother fucker wait your turn.

They struggle for a second before Chris yanks him from the booth and fights his way inside

BUM (CONT'D)

Mother fucker, don't make me whoop your ass.

CHRIS

Get the fuck out of here!

Chris shuts the booth door, the bum pounds on its' glass. He feeds the phone quarters with shaky hands as panic sets in.

BUM

You gotta let me call my girl man! She needs my help!

Chris dials his mother's number

BUM (CONT'D)

You don't understand, I have to talk to her. Give me back the fucking phone!

The phone rings twice, then gets a busy signal.

CHRTS

God damn it.

He feeds more quarters and tries again.

RIIM

Asshole you're done, it's my turn! Don't make me fuck you up!

The bum tries to open the door but Chris braces with his back keeping it closed. The phone rings twice more and gets another busy signal. He smashes the phone against the receiver and opens the booth.

BUM (CONT'D)

About time mother fucker.

Chris tries to walk by but the bum grabs his arm.

BUM (CONT'D)
Uh, uh, not without handing over some of them quarters.

BEEP!

Chris snaps. In an instant he wheels around, hits the man in the face, throws him into the booth and stabs him to death.

Blood smears the glass.

Chris steps backward out of the booth and stumbles as he turns around. His fists clenched, each breath deep and uncontrolled. Panic ridden, he tries to walk but can only run.

BLACK SCREEN....

EXT. CITY - DAY

He sprints down an empty street with his mouth open and fear in his eyes. The sounds of his lungs and soles the only available.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Chris charges through his hotel door and hurries into the bathroom. He tries to wash the blood off his hands with little luck.

He stops, now staring at himself in the mirror.

CUT TO:

EXT. PHONE BOOTH

The bum's feet hang out of the blood soaked booth.

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Staring into the mirror, he can't stand the sight of himself...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM

He sends the TV across the room to a violent crash against the wall.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - FLASHBACK

Chris stumbles out of the booth, a horrible realization forming on his face.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

SLOW MOTION

A punch into the tall mirror at the foot of the bed, shatters glass into stained shards.

He repeatedly attacks the mattress with the knife.

NORMAL SPEED

Something solid and determined throws itself against the locked door.

INT. CABIN - FLASHBACK

Chris drives the blade into Paul's chest... that deep internal groan. Hatred owns his face.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

He flips the mattress off the bed frame.

EXT. RIVER - FLASHBACK

CHRIS' POV

The gun kicks in his hand. Pink mist. Her body collapses

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The pounding against the door continues to build in intensity and frequency

He forces his fingers down his throat and induces blood red vomit against the wall and carpet

INT. THEATER - FLASHBACK

CHRIS' POV

The muscles in his hands and forearms strain to keep the lace tight around Tim's neck.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

SLOW MOTION - NO AUDIO

Chris holds his face with soaked hands as a silent scream finds its' way out of him.

NORMAL SPEED - AUDIO

The pounding at the door has the frame giving way. Whoever's outside is almost through.

Chris takes the knife to his stomach, pulling it across and separating the skin. His face all shame and guilt.

SLOW MOTION - NO AUDIO

He cradles his face, silently screaming.

NORMAL

He continues with the blade against his stomach, thick red begins to flow from the massive divide.

The door is kicked open with wooden fragments sent in all directions. Three masked intruders calmly walk through and surround Chris.

Like a child caught in the cookie jar, Chris stares back at his company. Shock, innocence, guilt, and blood smear his face.

BLACK SCREEN.....

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Chris exits the hotel with bags packed. The camera is able to get a glimpse of the rooms' interior and it appears undisturbed.

EXT. HWY 101

He's headed home, the last of the redwoods falling behind.

INT. CHRIS' HOME

He enters his house and drops his bags at the door with a sigh.

He opens the fridge and pops a beer...

BATHROOM

Shower...

KITCHEN

He sits at the kitchen table with the usual coffee and toast...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Following the end of the shift routine, Chris is clearing and cleaning dirty tables...

In his peripheral, he thinks he sees Sean peeking through the front window but at second glance it's nothing. He continues going through the motions pretending nothing has happened or changed, but nothing can mask his absence....

CHRIS' POV

Out of nowhere a female customer abruptly approaches

WOMAN Can you break a twenty?

CUT TO:

Sitting at an empty table, Chris sorts receipts and counts money. He doesn't notice his boss approaching from behind.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

CLOSE UP

Behind the restaurant...

A match is struck.

A cigarette is lit.

With a heavy drag, the cherry is pulled down the crackling paper.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Alone amongst the foliage of a dense green forest a doe stands alert... It's ear twitches.

THE END