

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

JOSEPH MAZZIANO (50s). Fit for his age. Clean-shaven. Dressed in jeans and red flannel. Deep pain in his EYES, but no one is permitted to know.

He clutches a DEAD RACCOON by its tail. After seeing no traffic, he sprawls the carcass in the center of an INTERSECTION like a sacrifice on an altar.

INT. TABITHA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

SUPER: "ONE WEEK EARLIER."

TABITHA MAZZIANO (20s) drives. Wears thin strips of eye black and a football jersey. Her hair pulled back into a ponytail. She bears a white smile, bright like the future before her.

DANIELLE REED (20s) passenger. Wears football team face paint, also in a football jersey. A cell phone glued to one hand, a knotted AUX cord in the other.

TABITHA
You're a sucky DJ.

DANIELLE
Nobody uses these anymore. There's a thing called *Bluetooth*.

TABITHA
Are you making fun of *Miss Sara*?

Tabitha pets her dashboard as if consoling her car.

DANIELLE
I offered to take *Miss Pearl*.

TABITHA
Yeah, and make it there at halftime? No thanks.

Danielle continues to struggle with the AUX cord. Tabitha grows impatient. Snatches it from her hands.

Danielle takes the wheel, given little choice.

DANIELLE
Stop sign!

TABITHA
I'm not blind!

Tabitha smacks Danielle's hand off the wheel. Tosses the untangled cord back into her lap. She brakes hard at the stop, and then guns it.

DANIELLE
What the heck, Tabs? I'd like to make it in one piece.

TABITHA
How did an all-star become such a wuss?

Danielle shoves a middle finger into Tabitha's face. Tabitha retaliates with one of her own. They finger swordfight until one of them hurts a knuckle.

DANIELLE
You're lucky my life's in your hands.

Danielle plugs in the AUX cord. Their favorite song fills the car. They share identical glances and sing on cue.

INT. DEEGAN'S LIFTED TRUCK - MOVING - SAME

DEEGAN (30s), a handsome and self-absorbed man, speeds down the road, texting erratically. A scowl evident on his face. He corrects the wheel, barely evading a head on collision.

The DRIVER in the passing vehicle lays on their horn.

INT. TABITHA'S CAR - MOVING - SAME

Tabitha and Danielle continue to sing. Their voices belt out excessively. The song ends.

DANIELLE
So, what'd your folks say about your transfer?

TABITHA
(coyly)
I guess, they're cool...

DANIELLE
I knew it! Ha! Who's the wuss now?

TABITHA

My dad hates long drives. How's that my fault?

DANIELLE

Could you possibly be more lame?

TABITHA

You have no idea how bad it is.

DANIELLE

We're talking about your education here, girly girl. He should be proud, not worried about having to drive a few miles just to visit.

TABITHA

A few miles, my ass!

DANIELLE

It's right across state line.

TABITHA

Listen. I was thirteen when we went on our first family trip. *Thirteen!* And that was after months of begging. It was five hours away, and he was the biggest grump.

DANIELLE

What's his deal, anyway?

TABITHA

Wish I knew.

DANIELLE

Well, you're not a little girl anymore. It's time to grow up.

Tabitha halts at a four-way stop, and then continues out into the intersection.

DANIELLE

At some point, your dad needs to let you go --

Danielle SCREAMS, seeing the oncoming vehicle before Tabitha does.

BOOOOOOOOOM!

Deegan's truck SMASHES into the side of Tabitha's car, sending it spinning violently off the road.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD/INTERSECTION - DAY (PRESENT)

Two memorial crosses on the side of the road. One reads: "TABITHA MAZZIANO." The other: "DANIELLE REED."

A car is parked on the side of the road.

Joseph stares stoically at his daughter's cross from his vehicle. His eyes travel to the vultures gathered around the dead raccoon he planted earlier.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
I got scarlet hands. A thousand
confessions could never clean them.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. FUNERAL HOME/POND - DAY

HARRY REED (40s), heavy set and clean-cut, skips pebbles across a small pond. His cheeks are wet with tears.

Joseph approaches him.

JOSEPH
They're gettin' read to start.

Harry acknowledges him with a nod.

HARRY
We were out camping. Danielle saw me skipping rocks down by the river. She was seven or eight. Her first throw shot all the way across. I couldn't believe it. A natural. At just about everything. I knew sports was her calling. I just knew...

Harry does his best to hold back his tears. Grabs a handful of pebbles. Angrily launches them across the pond.

HARRY
I wish I was strong as you, Joe. Look at me. I'm a wreck. Deb needs me, and I just can't...

He can no longer hold back. Tears flow.

JOSEPH
It's not strength, Harry. I'm just outta tears. Empty. That's all.

HARRY

That bastard. He's out on bail. You believe that? His folks are in with the mayor. He'll get off easy. That's what happens to people like him.

Harry turns and faces the funeral home.

HARRY

There's no bailout for us, Joe. No recompense for our pain. We just have to stand here and take it. That's what happens to people like us.

JOSEPH

Yeah.

HARRY

I need to know what it said. It'll eat at me. If I go to jail to find out, so be it.

Harry doesn't believe his own words. Chortles mirthlessly.

HARRY

You hear that? Hell, I sound like every patient that steps foot in my office. I'm thinking like a madman.

(beat)

But I wish for one day, just one day... I could be a madman.

Harry clenches his fists. Joseph notes his knuckles turning white.

JOSEPH

I know a few cops. Might have access to phone records. I'll give them a call. See what I can find out.

HARRY

That means a lot to me.

They head toward the funeral home.

INT. DEEGAN'S WOODSHOP - DAY

A sign reads: "CLOSED."

Joseph enters.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
 I don't know any cops, but I did
 make a call.
 (beat)
 A house call.

He glances around, seemingly impressed with the custom
 cabinetry.

Deegan catches sight of Joseph and pauses from his work.

DEEGAN
 We're not open on Sundays.

JOSEPH
 The door was unlocked.

DEEGAN
 There's a sign.

JOSEPH
 That's sendin' mixed signals to the
 public.

DEEGAN
 You're welcome to come back Monday.

JOSEPH
 But I'm here now.

Joseph walks toward Deegan.

DEEGAN
 We're not open.

JOSEPH
 You sayin' you can't help me?

DEEGAN
 I'm saying you need to leave and
 come back tomorrow.

Deegan suspects trouble. He urgently removes his cell phone
 from his pocket as Joseph draws closer.

JOSEPH
 Relax. I just wanna talk.

DEEGAN
 About what?

WITHOUT WARNING --

Joseph shoves Deegan into a tool cabinet.

DEEGAN
What the hell, man?!

JOSEPH
I'm Italian. I talk with my hands.

Deegan takes a swing. Joseph parries and grabs a nearby mallet. It connects with Deegan's head, knocking him out cold.

INT. DEEGAN'S WOODSHOP - LATER

Deegan is bound to a custom-made chair, still unconscious. Joseph wakes him with a few taps to his cheek.

DEEGAN
(groggily)
W-w-what are you doing?

JOSEPH
I used to do a bit of carvin'
myself. Never on wood.

Joseph regards the machinery.

DEEGAN
What do you want?

JOSEPH
I want my daughter back, Deegan. Is
that somethin' you can help me
with?

DEEGAN
Look, man. I'm sorry about --

JOSEPH
Shut up, you! I don't want your
apologies! *Sorry* is not comin' here
and playin' with your toys like
nuthin' ever happened! This isn't
being *sorry*! You're not *sorry*! I
know what *sorry* looks like! And
this ain't it!

Joseph pauses, convicted by his own words. His eyes fixate on the floor in deep thought. WE HEAR, voices of his past victims and the sound of their demise:

-- "Please, Joe! Don't kill me!" Suppressed GUNSHOTS. Bullet casings CLING on the floor. The thud of a body.

-- "I can't die like this! I have a family!" GUNSHOTS from a high caliber pistol.

-- "Give me one more day! I'll get the money! I just need more time! Tell Gus I'm sorry!" A SHOTGUN blast.

Joseph lifts his eyes, burdened.

DEEGAN
Are you going to kill me?

Deegan's voice reminds Joseph what brought him there.

JOSEPH
You were textin'.

DEEGAN
What?

JOSEPH
Before the crash, you were textin' somebody.

DEEGAN
(stammers)
M-m-my girlfriend.

JOSEPH
Your last text, what'd it say?

DEEGAN
I dunno. I don't remember.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Years ago, I did jobs for Gus The Gallow in Chicago. Sometimes, it was my job to make people *remember things*.

Joseph flips the on switch to a large router. The motor roars to life -- it drowns out the sounds of what's to come. Joseph sees a hatchet on a peg wall. He takes it down.

DEEGAN
What are you doing?!

Joseph slides a small table over. Places Deegan's arm on it.

JOSEPH
What did it say?!

DEEGAN
I told you! I don't remember!

Joseph brings up the hatchet. It comes down on Deegan's thumb. Deegan screams in pain.

DEEGAN

Fuck you!

Joseph slides the table to the other side.

JOSEPH

Fuck me?!

DEEGAN

Noooooo! I didn't mean --

Joseph hacks off the other thumb.

DEEGAN

THAT'S WHAT I SENT!!!

JOSEPH

Fuck you?! That's what you sent to your girlfriend?!

DEEGAN

Yes!

JOSEPH

Why?!

DEEGAN

I'm bleeding to death, man!

Joseph lifts the hatchet.

JOSEPH

You got eight more!

DEEGAN

She was cheating on me! I wasn't thinkin' straight! I'm sorry about your daughter! I made a mistake! I can't take it back!

Joseph steadily brings the hatchet to his side. Kills the power to the router. The whir of the motor gradually dies. WE HEAR, Deegan groaning with agony.

Joseph collects both thumbs. Stuffs them in a plastic bag. Holds them in front of Deegan.

JOSEPH

I get paid to make roadkill disappear. It's what I do. I can make you disappear. Understand?

Deegan stiffly nods.

JOSEPH
Now, I think, you're sorry.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD/INTERSECTION - DAY

Joseph drives through the intersection. Stops next to what's left of the raccoon. Dumps out the plastic bag.

As he drives away, vultures quickly gather and fight over Deegan's thumbs.

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/HALLWAY - DAY

Joseph stands at the threshold of Tabitha's bedroom. His eyes pivot to the achievement awards and trophies, and then drift to the corner of the room...

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/TABITHA'S BEDROOM - (DAYDREAM)

A small hand tugs on Joseph's shirt.

YOUNG TABITHA (O.C.)
Daddy?

Joseph looks down at an angelic little face. YOUNG TABITHA takes him by the hand.

YOUNG TABITHA
Want some pie? I made our favorite.

JOSEPH
Peanut butter?

YOUNG TABITHA
Uh-huh.

Young Tabitha leads Joseph to a small table in the corner where stuffed animals await. They sit on the floor. Tabitha hands him an empty plate. Joseph pretends to eat. Wipes his mouth clean. Pats his belly, content.

YOUNG TABITHA
Do you like it?

JOSEPH
I love it.

He pulls her into his arms and holds her with no intentions of ever letting go.

A WOMAN'S VOICE breaks his thoughts.

GRETA (O.C.)
Peanut butter?

END DAYDREAM

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/HALLWAY - DAY

Joseph's wife GRETA (50s), shoulder-length black hair, stands behind him, glancing over his shoulder. Her sullen expression matches his.

JOSEPH
Huh?

GRETA
You said *peanut butter*.

JOSEPH
I, uhh, was just...

His voice trails off, no need to explain himself. He shuts Tabitha's bedroom door.

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/DINING ROOM - LATER

Joseph stares across the table at Tabitha's empty chair.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Tabitha always said grace before dinner. It was nice knowin' that someone in our house actually prayed. I'm not even sure where she learned.

Joseph glances at Greta. Reaches over and grabs her hand. A moment of silence.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Since Greta's Jewish and I'm Catholic, we agreed with Tabitha to meet in the middle with: *Dear Lord* and *amen*. That was our part. That's where we came in.
(beat)
I prayed once. Meant every word. Greta was in labor, and there was some complications.

The next thing I knew, I had a
 healthy baby girl in my arms.
 (beat)
 Now, she's gone. The Lord gives,
 the Lord takes away, I guess.

No prayer. Just a soft "amen" from both of them before they
 begin to eat.

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/DEN - NIGHT

Joseph sits in the dark. A computer screen illuminates his
 face. He plays TEXAS HOLD 'EM online.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
 I normally played poker with the
 fellas. But after the funeral, I
 found myself just wantin' to be
 alone. They understood. Harry
 understood the most. He needed the
 company. I didn't.

A POKER PLAYER enters the game. The name below their profile
 pic reads: "TABBY." It quickly catches Joseph's attention.

After the flop, Tabby raises. Joseph matches her bet. The
 other players fold. After the turn, Joseph has two pairs. He
 calls. Tabby raises.

JOSEPH
 Let's see what you got.

He re-raises. Tabby quickly calls.

After the river card, she goes all in. Joseph folds. In the
 poker chat box, Tabby writes: "*Bluff. Haha.*"

Joseph reads her message, scoffs.

He sends Tabby a poker buddy request. In the poker chat box,
 he responds to her message: "*3 of kind beats 2 pair. Work on
 your...*"

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - SAME

A first floor apartment. Small but cozy for someone single.

TABBY HINES (30s), long black hair tucked behind her ears,
 stares at her laptop screen. Her canine SADIE, dog show
 material, leaps onto the bed.

TABBY
 (reads Joseph's message)
...work on your traps.
 (to Sadie)
 He knew what I had, girl. We got a
 poker shark. What do you think?
 Accept his request?

Sadie licks Tabby's face.

TABBY
 Is that a *yeah*?

She slides the cursor over accept buddy request. Clicks it.

INT. ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY/REC ROOM - DAY

RESIDENTS fill the room. Most of them eye the television.
 Some have VISITORS. Others stare off into nowhere.

CHARLIE (90s), a resident, sits in a wheelchair. His arms are
 withered and immobile. Tabby feeds him.

CHARLIE
 My father's a policeman. My
 brother, too. Yup.
 (smacks his chops)
 They like to pull kids over. Get a
 good laugh.

TABBY
 Oh, *yeah*?

CHARLIE
 Yup. My father's a policeman. My
 brother, too --

TABBY
 Open up, Charlie.

She puts a spoonful of cherry pie into his mouth. He chews
 for a minute. Smacks his chops.

TABBY
 How ya feeling today? Your side
 still bothering you?

CHARLIE
 A little.

TABBY
 Want me to say something?

CHARLIE

My father's a policeman. My
brother, too.

(smacks his chops)

They like to pull kids over. Get a
good laugh.

LATER

Tabby sits across from ERNEST (70s), livelier than most of
the other residents. They're playing five-card draw poker.
Pretzels in place of chips. His stack is larger than hers.

Ernest holds a hand with no sequence. Ace high. It's enough
for him to bank on. He raises her two pretzels.

Tabby holds a full house.

TABBY

Not leaving me much to snack on,
Ernest. Not very nice.

Ernest chuckles.

ERNEST

Life is impartial. Get used to it.
You're young yet.

He awaits her decision. She folds her winning hand.

TABBY

Why do I even try? You're just too
good for me.

ERNEST

Remember this. Every once in a
while, when your chips are down,
life tends to grow a heart. Not a
very big one, but big enough to
yield what's been long overdue.

He slides half his stack over to her side.

Tabby winks at his kind gesture and words of wisdom.

INT. GROCERY STORE/AISLE - LATER

Tabby pushes a shopping cart, adding health food items.
Across the aisle, A YOUNG GIRL struggles to reach a food item
from a high shelf. Tabby notices.

TABBY

Let me get it for you, hun.

Tabby grabs the item and hands it to the girl with a smile.

YOUNG GIRL

Thank you.

TABBY

You're welcome.

Tabby gets a better look of the girl's face. Her smile fades. She's shocked to see that the girl bears a resemblance to herself. She watches the girl run off.

A WOMAN, a bit annoyed, stands behind Tabby, waiting to get through.

WOMAN

Excuse me.

TABBY

Sorry.

Tabby heads back to her shopping cart. She continues to add health food items, but is unable to focus.

EXT. TABBY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX/PARKING LOT - LATER

Tabby climbs out of her car with a grocery bag. A soccer ball rolls over and hits her foot.

She sees several KIDS waiting for their ball. With a quick swoop, she sends the ball upward. Juggles the ball on her thighs.

The kids look on in amazement, mouths agape.

After a toe bounce, Tabby kicks the ball over their heads. As they fetch after it, she develops a coughing fit that won't let up. She drops her groceries. They spill out.

INT. HOSPITAL/DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A concerned DOCTOR sits across from Tabby with paper work in their hands. The news they deliver brings Tabby to tears. She buries her face in her hands.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - DAY

SUPER: "TWO MONTHS LATER."

Tabby stands in front of her medicine cabinet mirror. She can hardly take in what she sees. Sunken cheeks, pale skin, patchy hair, and thinning eyebrows.

She opens her medicine cabinet. Grabs any pill bottle she can find. Empties them all out onto the counter. She scoops them into her hand and shoves them into her mouth. Swallows. Grabs another handful. Swallows.

A scratch on her door, startles her. It's Sadie. She wants in. Her snout sniffs at the bottom of the door.

Tabby sits on the edge of her tub, waiting for the pills to take her away from this life.

Sadie barks. Her master is not listening. She barks again.

A neighboring TENANT pounds on the wall.

TENANT (O.C.)

Hey, can you get your dog to be quiet!

Tabby opens the bathroom door. Sadie barges inside, begins licking her master's face. Tabby rushes to the toilet. Sticks her fingers down her throat. Gags herself. After several heaves, the pills finally come up.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

We were poker buddies online, but that was the bulk of it. Our chats were vague. I knew a few things about her, she knew a few about me. Then one day, she needed something.

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/DEN - DAY

Joseph sits at his computer, viewing stunning images of Tuscany, Italy.

He slides open a drawer stock piled with candy. Before he has a chance to indulge, a chat box pops up with a message from Tabby: *"Can we talk on the phone?"*

Greta enters with a cup of coffee. Joseph slides the drawer shut as if hiding contraband from a prison guard.

She sets the coffee on his desk.

Joseph exits the chat box before Greta has a chance to read the message.

GRETA
Had to use milk. We're out of
creamer.

JOSEPH
I'll pick some up.

A chat box appears with a phone number. Greta glances at it.

GRETA
(jokingly)
Girlfriend?

Joseph minimizes the chat box.

JOSEPH
Harry put me in touch with his
travel agent. She's waitin' on my
call.

GRETA
Travel agent? You hate to travel.

JOSEPH
I don't mind travelin'. I just
prefer not to drive, that's all. We
can't drive to Tuscany, Italy.

GRETA
Italy?

JOSEPH
They say this is the best time to
go. Fewer crowds. Comfortable
weather.

Greta skims the scenic landscaping on the screen.

JOSEPH
Beautiful, am I right?

GRETA
A plane?

JOSEPH
I know how you feel about flying,
but --

GRETA
What about the Grand Canyon?

JOSEPH

Nah, I'm not dishin' out a couple grand just so we can hear echoes. It's too dusty for me.

GRETA

We're absolutely pathetic.

JOSEPH

I'll figure somethin' out.

Greta gives him a peck on his cheek.

GRETA

(in Yiddish)

I love you.

JOSEPH

(in Italian)

Love you more.

She exits the den.

Joseph takes a sip of his coffee. Pulls out his cell phone. Maximizes the chat box. Dials the number on the screen.

EXT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Joseph brings the cell phone to his ear. After a few rings, Tabby answers.

TABBY (O.S.)

Hello?

JOSEPH

Hi, Tabby.

TABBY (O.S.)

Hey, I hope this isn't too much of a bother.

JOSEPH

Not at all. What can I help you with?

IN PANTOMIME, Joseph and Tabby continue to converse.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

It was uncanny how much she sounded like my daughter. For a few minutes, I didn't even hear a word she said. I couldn't get over her voice. It was music. A happy song.

A song I could've listened to all day. All night. And then, something snagged me.

(beat)

She was dying, and didn't have long. Poor thing. A few years ago, she had breast cancer. It was back. But this time, it was in her lungs. The first time she went through treatment, she had a boyfriend to help out, but he was gone now. Things were not good between her and her folks, and I didn't ask why.

END PANTOMIME

TABBY (O.S.)

My dog Sadie. She's a really good dog. Very friendly. Smart --

JOSEPH

You want me to take your dog?

TABBY (O.S.)

I know we don't know each other very well, but I don't have anyone else to look after her, and you seem like a nice man. From what I know.

JOSEPH

Chicago, is it?

TABBY

I can put her on a flight.

JOSEPH

I know some really good people in Chicago. I'm sure, they'd be more than willing to help out, I mean --

TABBY (O.S.)

You know what? This is a ridiculous idea. Don't even worry about it. I'm being dumb. I don't even know why this popped in my head. Stupid of me. I'm really sorry...

She continues to ramble on with apologies.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/BABY ROOM - DAY

TODDLER TABITHA reaches out from her crib and touches a dog's snout.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I enjoyed dogs. Turns out, Tabitha was highly allergic. It was heart-breakin'.

Tabitha wails. A rash covers her skin.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I had to get rid of Duke. He was a good dog. The best.

(beat)

When Tabitha learned to talk, she kept askin' for a puppy. It broke my heart, tellin' her *no* all the time. I wanted her to have everything under the sun, but dogs: a no-go.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/FRONT PORCH - DAY

Joseph runs nervous fingers through his hair. After a moment to contemplate, he finally gives in...

JOSEPH

Okay. I'll do it.

TABBY (O.S.)

Really, it's no problem.

JOSEPH

I wanna do it.

TABBY (O.S.)

Are you sure?

JOSEPH

I'm beggin' now. Please, lemme do this for ya.

A long moment of silence.

JOSEPH

Hello? You still there?

TABBY (O.S.)
(chokes up)
I really appreciate this.

JOSEPH
The thing is, I have a soft spot
for dogs. And I don't want it
cooped up in some plane. I'm gonna
come get it.

TABBY (O.S.)
No. I couldn't let you do that.
Trust me, she'll be fine.

JOSEPH
My wife and I, we've been wantin'
to take a trip before winter hits,
ya know. And Chicago sounds
perfect. We used to live there.
There's some friends I haven't seen
in a while. On our way back, we can
swing by and pick up your dog.

TABBY (O.S.)
I don't know what to say.

JOSEPH
It's nuthin'.

TABBY (O.S.)
But it is something. It's
everything. You have no idea how
much this means to me. Thank you.

JOSEPH
Forget about it.

EXT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/DRIVEWAY - DAY

A mid-sized motorhome pulls into the driveway. Joseph climbs out. Greta steps out the house, already discontent with what she sees.

GRETA
What did you do, Joseph Mazziano?

JOSEPH
I thought about what you said.
You're right. We're pathetic. The
truth is, we gotta get outta here.
If we don't do it now, it's never
gonna happen. It's just not. I know
us.

GRETA

You went out and bought an RV?

Joseph steps around the motorhome. Greta follows.

JOSEPH

Rented.

GRETA

How much is this costing us?

Joseph enters the motorhome through the side door. He waves her inside to give her the tour. She refuses.

JOSEPH

Why do you worry so much? You're always worryin' about stuff that doesn't matter. Who cares?

GRETA

I care.

JOSEPH

Well, don't.

GRETA

You're gone all morning. You don't tell me where you're going. I call your cell, you don't answer. You finally show up with this in our driveway. What do you want me to say?

JOSEPH

Say nothing.

GRETA

Last time we went on a roadtrip, do you remember what happened?

JOSEPH

No.

GRETA

You became an asshole.

JOSEPH

If the drive gets to me, I can pull over and relax a little. That's the beauty of this thing. You can't do that in a car.

Joseph disappears inside the motorhome. He returns with a bottle of wine.

JOSEPH
(enticingly)
I stocked the fridge with your
favorite.

Greta massages her temples. Her anxiety is building. She
heads toward the house.

JOSEPH
Where ya going?

GRETA
Why do you do this to me?

JOSEPH
Do what?

Joseph sets the wine bottle aside and follows after her.

GRETA
Spring things on me.

JOSEPH
I knew you were gonna act like
this. That's why I gotta keep
everythin' a secret from you.

GRETA
You keeping secrets from me, Joe?
What kind of secrets you keeping
from me?

JOSEPH
No secrets. Just surprises, dear.

GRETA
What's the surprise?

Before she reaches the porch steps, Joseph grabs her arm.
Greta yields, listening.

JOSEPH
Chicago.

GRETA
Chicago?! What's in Chicago?!

JOSEPH
Our friends.

GRETA
Your friends!

JOSEPH
Don't get carried away.

GRETA
Your friends are womanizers.
Drunks. Half of them can't even
remember my name.

JOSEPH
You were hardly around.

GRETA
I was around enough.

JOSEPH
What about Simona? You haven't seen
her in years. And your aunt Loraine
in Northbrook just had hip surgery.
She could use your company.

Greta glances at the motorhome as if finally giving in.

GRETA
Why can't we go to the Grand
Canyon? It grew on me. Remember
when the Brady Bunch went there?

JOSEPH
Yeah. They almost died.

GRETA
It's a TV show. Nobody almost died.
But you know where people actually
die? *Chicago*.

JOSEPH
Some people deserve it.

GRETA
Did you -- Did you just say that?
What's the matter with you?

JOSEPH
I'm joking.

GRETA
Hilarious, Joe.

JOSEPH
You used to like it when I was
spontaneous.

GRETA

Pressuring me to travel halfway
across the country on a whim?

JOSEPH

No pressure.

GRETA

I'm not going to Chicago!

She pulls away from Joseph and retreats up the porch steps.

EXT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Joseph flies up the steps, beating her to the front door.

JOSEPH

I could go for some of your aunt
Lorraine's shakshuka. Am I sayin'
that right?

GRETA

You're not listening to me.

Joseph holds his peace. Motions her to lay it on him.

GRETA

My aunt Loraine calls almost every
day. She's doing fine. Her hip is
healing. My cousin Edna's been
staying with her. And as for
Simona, I don't want to see her
face. Ever. She didn't even come to
Tabitha's funeral. She said she'd
fly in. Canceled last minute. You
remember that?

JOSEPH

I remember.

GRETA

Now, she won't answer any of my
calls. Straight to voicemail.

JOSEPH

There you go. A perfect opportunity
to confront her face-to-face.

GRETA

You'd like to see that, wouldn't
you?

JOSEPH
With popcorn.

GRETA
My heart's still set on Grand
Canyon.

JOSEPH
Mine's stuck on Tuscany, Italy.
Welcome to the boohoo club.

GRETA
Thanks for the headache, Joe! I'm
done here! If Chicago means that
much to you, go by yourself!

She steps around Joseph. Marches through the front door.
SLAMS it shut behind her.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Tabitha never let our arguments get
this far. Now, it was up to us, and
we were already failin'.

Joseph turns and faces the motorhome. Lets out a long
frustrated sigh.

INT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/BEDROOM - DAY

Joseph sleeps. Greta pulls back the curtains. The morning
sunlight stirs him.

JOSEPH
What are you doin'?

GRETA
I thought we were going to Chicago.

JOSEPH
What the hell, Greta? Why do you
always do that? And you wonder why
I got high blood pressure.

GRETA
We can bicker or hit the road.

Joseph sits on the edge of the bed.

JOSEPH
If I knew you were gonna come
around, I could've packed.

GRETA

For your information, I didn't *come around*. Edna told me she would like a break from her mother. That's why I'm going. Our bags are packed. You're welcome.

JOSEPH

My pills?

GRETA

Done.

JOSEPH

All of them?

Greta shoots him a murderous look. Joseph makes the sign of the cross in hopes it will protect him.

GRETA

You owe me, Joseph Carmichael Mazziano. You hear me?

JOSEPH

(crosses his heart)
Grand Canyon.

She grabs a pillow and bashes him over the head.

JOSEPH

What was that for?

GRETA

For being a jerk to me yesterday,
and not kissing me goodnight.

JOSEPH

It goes both ways.

GRETA

(mutters)
Shithead.

EXT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/FRONT PORCH - LATER

Greta climbs inside the motorhome. Joseph locks up to leave.

As he steps off the porch, he catches sight of his neighbor Harry grabbing the morning paper.

They meet eyes. Greet with simple gestures.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

It's strange that Harry never asked me about the text. Maybe he knows it would just torture him, because whatever it said wouldn't be that much important. Maybe he didn't care in the first place.

They wave goodbye. Joseph climbs into his motorhome.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Maybe it was just his way of sending a madman.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - LATER

Joseph steers onto the highway. Greta sits on the passenger side. Her face is buried in a book.

JOSEPH

What ya readin'?

GRETA

This woman lost her husband and both children less than a month apart. Debra gave it to me. She said it helped her.

JOSEPH

So, you keepin' me company? Or just gonna read the whole time?

GRETA

I'm here.

JOSEPH

You're here, but you're not. It'd be nice if I heard a voice.

GRETA

Buy a parrot.

JOSEPH

It's a little too late for that.

Joseph turns on the radio.

GRETA

I can't read with noise.

JOSEPH

Buy earplugs.

GRETA

Is this how you're going to be the whole time?

JOSEPH

Now you wanna talk?

GRETA

This is a really good book so far. I'm trying to learn something. And you're being a jerkoff.

JOSEPH

I'm being a jerkoff? I just wanna converse with my wife. How's that a problem?

A familiar song begins to play on the radio: Tabitha's favorite. The same one she duetted with Danielle just before the crash.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

In a lot of ways, I felt Tabitha was with us. She didn't want us to fight. That's how I took it.

GRETA

Change it.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Greta didn't see it that way.

Joseph turns it up.

GRETA

I said change it.

Joseph won't budge.

Greta reaches over. Turns the radio off. She turns toward the window. Wipes tears from her eyes.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - DAY

Tabby, in a nightgown and robe, brews some tea. Pours a cup. Sits at the kitchen table where bills are piled up. She rummages through a few of them to see what's owed.

Sadie eats from her bowl in a corner.

Tabby hears a loud engine outside and the whir of a crane.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tabby glances out a window. Her eyes widen.

TABBY

No!

She rushes out the front door.

EXT. TABBY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX/PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Tabby approaches the REPO GUY. By the time she reaches him, her car is hoisted up.

TABBY

Listen. I have cash. Not on me. I can get it. But not without my car.

REPO GUY

Sorry, ma'am. I can't help you.

He climbs into his truck. Tabby blocks the door.

TABBY

Will you hold up a minute? Please. Just... hold on --

REPO GUY

There's nothing I can do.

TABBY

Yes, you can. You can put my car down. Tell them I wasn't home. It's that simple. Please...

REPO GUY

It's not that simple.

TABBY

My ex, he used to repo, and he would cut people breaks. It was no big deal.

REPO GUY

Who's your ex?

TABBY

Mike French.

REPO GUY

Really? You were Frenchy's girl? You tortured soul.

TABBY
You have no idea.

The repo guy glances at the paperwork.

REPO GUY
Tabitha is it?

TABBY
Tabby.

REPO GUY
Look, Tabby. I'd really like to help you --

Tabby removes her wig, revealing a chemo-induced bald head.

TABBY
I'm not that far long from finding out if there's Heaven or Hell... or nothing at all. But if you put my car down, I'll believe there's something greater waiting for me beyond here. That it's not just nothing. That angels exists.

She wipes her tears away. After a minute of contemplation, the repo guy climbs down from his truck. Lowers her car.

Tabby embraces him. He's unsure how to respond.

REPO GUY
My grandma. She died of cancer.

TABBY
I'm sorry.

REPO GUY
She believed in Heaven. She was right about a lot of things. Might even be looking down on me right now. Who knows?

TABBY
I'll tell her you said hello.

The repo guy manages a slight grin and nods.

TABBY
What's your name?

REPO GUY
Just mention *Nickle Pickle*. She'll know who it is.

They share mirthless smiles. He reenters his truck and pulls away.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - DAY

Joseph notes the highway road signs. He glances over at his wife. She's fast asleep, cradling her book. He nudges her arm.

JOSEPH
Honey, wake up.

Josephs pulls off the highway onto an exit ramp. Greta wakes up to a strip of various stores and restaurants.

JOSEPH
My stomach's growlin'.

GRETA
We eating inside or taking it on the road?

JOSEPH
I need to stretch my legs.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT/FRONT COUNTER - LATER

Joseph and Greta stand in line behind other PATRONS.

An ELDERLY MAN with a veteran hat walks toward the restroom in a bent-over position, stabilizing himself with a cane.

Joseph sees two HOODLUMS cut in front of the veteran.

JOSEPH
(whispers to Greta)
Goin' to the men's room.

GRETA
Now?

JOSEPH
Yes, drill sergeant.

GRETA
Can you order first?

Joseph takes a quick glance at the wall menu.

JOSEPH
A number one with a coffee. Three creams, three sugars.

GRETA

If they mess up your order, don't
blame me.

JOSEPH

Why is everythin' a bother with
you? Just order my food.

He rushes away.

GRETA

(under her breath)
I swear. Every time.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT/MEN'S RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Joseph enters. He immediately notices the veteran's soiled
pants.

The hoodlums, with their cell phones drawn, record the
veteran pounding on the door of an occupied stall, the only
stall available. The other stall displays a hand-written
note: "OUT OF ORDER."

HOODLUM #1

This shit goin' viral.

JOSEPH

All right! That's enough! Get out!

The hoodlums make their way out, laughing and jeering.

A toilet flushes. The stall door opens.

A restaurant WORKER steps out. Heads toward a sink. Washes
their hands. Leaves without a word.

Joseph coaxes the elderly man in the stall.

JOSEPH

Come on. Let's get you cleaned up.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT/DINING AREA - LATER

Joseph finds his wife and takes a seat.

GRETA

What took you so long?

JOSEPH

Had to grab somethin' from my
suitcase.

GRETA
Like what?

JOSEPH
Some trousers.

GRETA
What for?

JOSEPH
And underwear.

GRETA
Underwear?

JOSEPH
Forget about it.

GRETA
For Pete's sake, Joe. Everything's
a mystery with you.

JOSEPH
It's for your own protection.

GRETA
Don't start with me.

Joseph searches the table.

JOSEPH
Where's my coffee?

GRETA
It got cold, so I threw it away.

JOSEPH
You threw the whole cup away?

GRETA
That's what it looks like.

JOSEPH
Who throws a whole cup away?

GRETA
Why you making such a fuss? It's
just a cup.

JOSEPH
I could've dumped it out and
refilled it myself, now I gotta go
ask for a whole new cup.

GRETA
You went outside to the RV, for who
knows what, to change your
clothes...

JOSEPH
Didn't change.

GRETA (CONT'D)
...And now you're bothered by
having to walk to the counter?

A long moment of silence, and then --

JOSEPH
Yeah.

GRETA
Well, you know what, Joe? Kiss my
Jewish ass. How 'bout that?

Joseph, taken aback, crosses his arms.

GRETA
(gets her last digs in)
Welcome to the boohoo club.

She takes a bite of her meal, paying him no mind.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Tabitha would've sided with her
mother on this one.

Joseph drags himself to the front counter.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - SAME

The shower faucet turns off. Tabby steps out of the shower
and wraps herself in a towel.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tabby stares into a body-length mirror. Sadie leaps onto the
bed, studies her master's every move.

Tabby opens the closet. Three differently styled wigs hang on
hooks. She situates one on her head. Closes the door.

She gazes into the mirror. WE HEAR, music. It's in her head.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We got a real treat for you! Making her debut tonight, guys, and ladies, give a warm welcome to this local beauty! The luscious Queenie Tabbarella!

A CROWD CHEER fills the bedroom.

MONTAGE

-- GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - Tabby, in a skimpy outfit, comes out from behind a fringe string curtain. She quickly works the admirers.

-- IN BEDROOM - Tabby attempts to sashay and winces in pain.

-- GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - Tabby dances across the stage.

-- IN BEDROOM - Tabby slowly and carefully twirls.

-- GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - Tabby gyrates her hips and grinds against the dance pole.

-- IN BEDROOM - Tabby wearily leans against the bed post.

-- GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - Tabby prances over the dollar bills toward the front of the stage. She drops her top.

-- IN BEDROOM - Tabby drops her towel, revealing two large scars instead of breasts.

END MONTAGE

Tabby yanks the wig off and heaves it at the mirror. She balls up on the floor and sobs uncontrollably. Sadie curls up beside her.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. GENTLEMEN'S CLUB/PARKING LOT (NIGHT)

It's dimly lit. A few cars remain.

The club owner, GEORGE RUBY (40s), wears a white t-shirt and black khakis. He locks the back door. His eyes travel with Tabby as she staggers across the parking lot. She's dressed in a shoulder crop top and tight miniskirt. The club's main bouncer, BEN HUNTLEY (20s), muscular build, eyes Tabby from afar. He can see that she's tipsy, and it amuses him.

Tabby reaches her car, fumbles with her keys and drops them.

AARON ZIGOVITZ (30s), a club regular with greasy hair, seems to appear out of nowhere. He picks up her keys.

AARON

Here you go, cutie pie.

He dangles the keys in front of her.

TABBY

Thanks.

She reaches for them. He takes hold of her wrist. Before Tabby can scream, Ben comes from behind and cups his large hand over her mouth.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - NIGHT

Joseph drives with weary eyes. Greta sleeps on the sofa behind the driver seat.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

They say just before you die, your life flashes before your eyes. I wouldn't know about that. I'm usually on the other end. But here's what I do know: ugly pasts bubble to the surface durin' long drives.

(beat)

I was built to conceal the ugly, but when Tabitha was born, she turned a switch inside of me. I could feel again. I had a heart. It was pumpin'. I was human after all, but that's when guilt followed. The longer the drive, the bigger that guilt gets. I never wanted my baby girl to see the ugly written on my face.

(beat)

I don't have to worry about that anymore.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. CITY BUILDING/GUS'S OFFICE - DAY

GUS (40s), in a black business suit, sits behind a large desk. His HENCHMEN stand nearby, guns tucked at their waist.

A younger-looking Joseph enters.

GUS
Never early. Never late.

Gus holds a thick envelope. Slides it across the desk to Joseph.

GUS
I heard you're leaving us.

JOSEPH
Your birdies are good.

Joseph tucks the envelope away.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Gus The Gallow had eyes and ears
all over Chicago. It was like he
was a weather man, who knew
everything before anyone else did.

GUS
I got one more job for you.

Joseph furrows his brow, stiffly wags his head.

JOSEPH
I'm done.

GUS
Is that so?

JOSEPH
I leave tonight.

GUS
Then you better get a head start.

JOSEPH
Who is it?

GUS
Billy Green.

JOSEPH
You're gonna need an army.

GUS
That's why I'm sending you.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
I had just found out the day before
that Greta was expectin'.

Joseph licks his lips nervously.

JOSEPH

You're sendin' me to die.

GUS

Let me tell you something, Joe. There's very few people I like. I liked you since day one. I've never seen so much ambition from anyone. But no one, and I mean no one, ever gets off cheap. Leaving me is costly. No layaway plans.

Gus motions one of his henchmen. The henchman fetches a silver tray with two shot glasses and places them on the desk.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Gus had this sayin' that was shared to him by his father: *In order to trust a man, you must first drink with him.* It was as good as a contract, or shakin' hands.

Joseph hesitates before drawing up a shot glass. He holds it close to his chin.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

If you're ever in front of Gus, there better be some drinks waitin'. Otherwise, you found out real quick why they called him The Gallow.

(beat)

If I rejected his offer, Tabitha would've grew up without a father.

Joseph finally takes the shot.

GUS

If lady luck lets you leave, don't ever come back.

Gus takes his shot.

WE HEAR, OVER BLACK a barrage of GUNSHOTS and SCREAMS as Joseph carries out his mission...

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - NIGHT

Joseph struggles to keep his eyes open.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

His radar must've been off one summer. Gus was gunned down durin' a firework show. That was the last thing I heard.

Joseph pulls off into a REST AREA.

JOSEPH

Hey, Greta, it's gonna be a long stretch to the next rest stop. I say, we call it quits, huh?

Greta lightly snores.

JOSEPH

Greta? You awake?

GRETA

(groggily)
What?

JOSEPH

You abandoned your post.

GRETA

(in Yiddish)
Don't be an ass.

JOSEPH

What?

GRETA

You got secrets, I got secrets, too.

JOSEPH

Secrets?

GRETA

I meant *surprises*, Joe. They're called *surprises*. I'm tired. If I can't stay up, I can't stay up. I don't know what you want me to do about it.

JOSEPH

Do me a favor. Go back to sleep.

Joseph parks the motorhome.

GRETA
 (in Yiddish)
How can I with all your blabbing?

EXT. REST AREA/INFORMATION CENTER - LATER

Joseph sits on a bench, eating a candy bar.

Greta walks out of the women's restroom, lathering her hands with lotion. She glares at him.

GRETA
 Sugar, Joe.

JOSEPH
 My first one today, dear.

GRETA
 Don't get smart with me.

She continues toward the motorhome.

GRETA
 You coming?

JOSEPH
 Be there in a minute.

GRETA
 Don't be too long. It's freezing out here. The last thing I need is for you to get sick.

JOSEPH
 Nobody's gettin' sick.

He watches her walk away. His cell phone vibrates. He checks it. It's a text from Tabby. It reads in all caps: "U UP? OK 2 TALK?"

Joseph waits for Greta to enter the motorhome, and then he dials Tabby's number. Tabby picks up on the first ring.

TABBY (O.S.)
 (carries it forever)
 Helloooooo...

JOSEPH
 Hey.

TABBY (O.S.)
 I know it's... uhhhhh...

JOSEPH

Late?

TABBY (O.S.)

Yeah, *late*. That's it. You're a genius, Joey. You should be an engineer for NASA. If you go to the moon, can I come visit?

She giggles.

JOSEPH

You drinking?

TABBY (O.S.)

Yup. And enjoying a smoke, too. Haven't had one of these lil suckers in... Oh, three years. I figure, what's the point in quitting now, you know?

JOSEPH

Greta gave me an ultimatum. It was her or the cigarettes. She's sort of a health guru. Looking back, I shoulda kept smokin'.

Tabby chuckles.

TABBY (O.S.)

You don't mean that.

JOSEPH

Nah. She's a lifesaver. More ways than one. I don't know where I'd be without her.

Joseph takes a bite of his candy bar.

TABBY (O.S.)

Oh-no.

JOSEPH

You okay?

TABBY (O.S.)

Sadie's being a poophead. She took off with my shoe, darn her.

JOSEPH

I really like my shoes.

TABBY (O.S.)
 You don't have to worry unless you
 step in peanut butter.

JOSEPH
 Peanut butter?

TABBY (O.S.)
 Yeah, I tried to make a sandwich
 without bread. It doesn't work very
 well.

JOSEPH
 I love peanut butter. My daughter
 made the best peanut butter pie.

TABBY (O.S.)
 The best, huh?

JOSEPH
 We're talkin' blue ribbon.

Joseph hears her burp and giggle.

TABBY (O.S.)
 Whoops. That wasn't very lady-like
 of me. I'm so very sorry, folks.
 (beat)
 So, where are you, anyway?

JOSEPH
 A rest area.

He takes another bite of his candy.

TABBY (O.S.)
 You done driving for the night?

JOSEPH
 It appears so.

TABBY (O.S.)
 What're you having? I bet you're a
 scotch guy. Am I right?

JOSEPH
 Liquor hits a little too hard
 nowadays. I'm more of a domestic
 beer kinda guy.

TABBY (O.S.)
 I don't drink much, but tonight was
 just one of those nights.

(beat)
 You ever have one of them nights?

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- IN DARK ALLEY - Joseph shoots a MAN dead. Unloads the clip. Overkill.

-- "L" TRAIN PLATFORM - Joseph stabs a MAN a dozen times. Slices his throat just before pushing him on the tracks.

-- IN PARKING GARAGE - Joseph bludgeons a MAN with a crowbar. Blood splatters on Joseph's face with each blow.

BACK TO SCENE

JOSEPH

In my younger years, liquor didn't hit hard enough for my nights. My Russian friend, Dimitri, made this death in a bottle. Three shots put anyone in a coma. I'd put down four of those just so I could hold a smile.

TABBY (O.S.)

I could use a smile.

JOSEPH

I hear ya.

Joseph stares off into the night sky.

TABBY (O.S.)

Joe?

JOSEPH

Yeah?

TABBY (O.S.)

You're a saint.

JOSEPH

Don't mix meds with alcohol. You'll hallucinate.

He takes another bite of his candy bar.

TABBY (O.S.)

I'm being serious. You're coming all this way to pick up a dog.

Who does that? Only a real life saint.

(beat)

How does your wife feel about it?

JOSEPH

I don't know yet.

TABBY (O.S.)

You haven't told her? That's something you shouldn't keep secret.

JOSEPH

She's no Mother Teresa.

Tabby chuckles and snorts.

JOSEPH

Sometimes it's best to keep things from her. I know that sounds awful, but she's the hardest person to convince. Her anxiety is through the roof. A lot of times, I just have to drop things on her lap and suffer the consequences. All she's got are words, and they don't hurt much.

TABBY (O.S.)

Well, for what it's worth, thanks for going out of your way. You have no idea how hard it was to get my ex to go across the street for milk.

(beat)

He was an easy goodbye.

Joseph takes the last bite of his candy bar. Crumples up the wrapper. Glances around for a trash bin. Spots one.

JOSEPH

Can I ask you somethin'? If it's too personal, I understand.

He gets up from the bench. Heads toward the trash bin.

TABBY (O.S.)

G'head. Shoot.

JOSEPH

Your parents, do they know what you're dealin' with?

A long moment before Tabby answers.

TABBY (O.S.)
No.

JOSEPH
Why not?

TABBY (O.S.)
They wouldn't care. They'd probably
say I brought it on myself. Karma,
that sorta thing.

Joseph tosses the candy wrapper in the trash bin.

JOSEPH
Karma?

TABBY (O.S.)
I don't know. Maybe, they're right.
Maybe, I did bring this on
myself... for what I did.

A car with blinding headlights pulls into a HANDICAPPED parking space. The hoodlums from earlier climb out.

Joseph thinks he recognizes them. Squints his eyes to make sure. He's positive now.

They head toward the men's restroom.

JOSEPH
I think, I should get some sleep.

TABBY (O.S.)
Sorry for keeping you up.

JOSEPH
Forget about it.

TABBY (O.S.)
(with Italian accent)
Forget about it.

JOSEPH
Good night, Tabby.

TABBY (O.S.)
Nighty-night, Saint Joe.

Joseph hangs up. He glances at the car parked in the handicapped space. Looks toward the sky as if receiving instructions.

He decides to head toward the motorhome. Halts midway.

JOSEPH
(low to self)
Don't do it, Joe.

He turns and makes his way toward the men's restroom.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
They owed me a pair of trousers.

INT. INFORMATION CENTER/MEN'S RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Joseph casually enters. One hoodlum uses a urinal, the other is in one of the stalls.

JOSEPH
We gotta stop meeting like this.

HOODLUM #1
Da fuck are you?

JOSEPH
You don't remember me, do ya? Yeah,
I guess, I'd be easy to forget.
Don't really stick out in a crowd.
That's what makes me so dangerous.

HOODLUM #1
Senile old man. Get outta here.

The hoodlum zips up. Flushes. A toilet flushes almost simultaneously. The other hoodlum steps out of the stall.

HOODLUM #2
What's wrong, gramps? Your hearing
aids don't work? He said leave.

JOSEPH
My ears work just fine.

The hoodlums share glances.

HOODLUM #1
This geezer crazy.

JOSEPH
I'll leave in just a minute, but
I'm a bit confused. I couldn't help
but notice that you fellas parked
in a handicapped spot.

HOODLUM #1

So?

JOSEPH

Is it a mental situation? I don't want to discriminate or nuthin'. But which one of you is handicapped?

HOODLUM #2

You 'bout to be!

The hoodlums lunge at him.

Joseph traps the arm of the first hoodlum, swiftly dislocates his elbow and shoulder. Joseph finishes him off with a headbutt, dropping him to the floor.

The second hoodlum grabs Joseph from behind. Joseph quickly kicks out his kneecap and finishes him off with a hard elbow to his face, breaking his nose. Joseph throws him off his feet. The hoodlum slams hard against the floor.

Joseph is spent from the scuffle. He leans against the nearest wall. Takes a breather. Glances at the blood on his coat. This agitates him. He takes off his coat and stuffs it in the trash.

JOSEPH

Don't forget to wash your hands.

He steps out.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MINUTES LATER

Joseph throws the motorhome in drive. Greta is asleep. The sway of the motorhome tips a half-filled wine glass from a small table. It spills on Greta, waking her.

GRETA

Joe, what're you doing?

JOSEPH

I got a second wind.

Greta incredulously wags her head.

GRETA

A little warning would've been nice.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry, honey.

GRETA

Yeah, sure.

Greta grabs a dish towel from the kitchenette. Pats herself dry.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY (TABBY'S DREAM)

A DEFENSE ATTORNEY sits alongside three defendants: George Ruby, Ben Huntley, Aaron Zigovitz.

A JURY FOREMAN delivers a verdict...

JURY FOREMAN

...we find the defendants not guilty, your honor.

The defendants celebrate with their attorney.

In the back of the courtroom, Tabby looks on in disbelief.

END DREAM

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Tabby jerks out of her sleep. Her wig is lopsided. An empty liquor bottle is tucked under her arm. A SCRAP BOOK is tucked under the other. Sadie lies at her feet.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - LATER

Tabby, without a wig, stares at herself in the mirror. She draws on her eyebrows. When she's finished, she throws on a wig, different from what she had on before.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tabby curls up on the couch, seemingly winded. She turns on the television. A sitcom audience in mid laughter. She sets the remote down.

There's a knock on the front door.

She opens it, finding her ex boyfriend MIKE FRENCH (40s), handsome and scruffy, holding a bouquet of roses.

MIKE

Hi.

Tabby immediately shows uneasiness.

TABBY
Mike.

MIKE
It's been a bit.

TABBY
What do you want?

Sadie jumps on him, happily wagging her tail. Mike stoops and shows Sadie affection.

MIKE
Somebody misses me.

TABBY
Just her.

MIKE
These are for you. For your
birthday.

He holds out the bouquet. Tabby ignores the gesture.

TABBY
It's not for another week.

MIKE
I just wanted to be the first to
wish you a happy birthday.

TABBY
It won't be.

Mike withdraws the bouquet.

MIKE
Can I come in?

Tabby steps aside. He enters and sets the bouquet down on a nearby table.

MIKE
I heard about --

TABBY
About what? That I'm dying? What's
it to you?

MIKE
I'm really sorry, Tabby.

TABBY
Are you, though?

She crosses her arms.

MIKE

Angie and I, we're done.

TABBY

Why are you telling me?

MIKE

It was a mistake. A huge one. I should have never --

TABBY

You're wasting your time, Mike. Actually, you're wasting *my* time. What little I have left.

Mike draws in. Caresses her face.

MIKE

I was with you the first time. We faced it together. It was hell, but we got through it.

Tabby pulls away.

TABBY

Looking back, I think you just needed a place to stay.

MIKE

That's not fair. I did everything for you. Everything.

TABBY

You refused to touch me after my surgery. There's more to women than tits. You were supposed to love me for me, Mike. Instead, you made me feel worthless.

A long awkward silence between them.

MIKE

You're not gonna accept anything I say. Are you?

TABBY

I don't need you this time.

Sadie brushes against him.

MIKE

What's gonna happen to Sadie?

TABBY
I'm sending her away with a friend.

MIKE
What friend?

TABBY
A friend. That's all you need to know.

MIKE
She's a purebred, Tabby. Do you know what that means? She wasn't cheap. I worked really hard to get her for you.

TABBY
What are you saying?

MIKE
I want her.

Tabby begins having a coughing fit. Mike grimaces, bothered by her cough. He backs away to avoid her germs.

TABBY
I'm not contagious.

MIKE
I know that.

TABBY
You're not taking Sadie from me.

MIKE
Your stripper friends can't give her a good home.

TABBY
You and your cokehead girlfriend will?

MIKE
We're not together. See? You weren't even listening.

TABBY
Get out.

MIKE
I have all of Sadie's papers. Everything that proves she's mine. You're not gonna hand her off to just someone --

TABBY

Get out!

She snatches the bouquet from the table and bats him with it. Rose petals fling off in every direction and flutter to the floor.

TABBY

You're such an asshole! Get out of here! I hate you! I hate you!

Mike heads out the door. Tabby tosses what's left of the bouquet at him. She SLAMS the door in his face. Deadbolts it.

MIKE (O.C.)

She's mine! I'll be back!

TABBY

Leave before I call the cops!

She watches him leave through the peephole.

After he's gone, she sits on the floor, surrounded by rose petals.

Sadie approaches and rests her head on Tabby.

TABBY

I won't let him take you.

She embraces Sadie.

TABBY

I promise.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - LATER

Joseph pulls onto the highway. Greta sits in the passenger seat. She notices Joseph is without his coat.

GRETA

Where's your coat?

JOSEPH

I'm warm. What's it matter?

GRETA

What'd you do with it?

JOSEPH

It's not laying back there?

GRETA

No.

JOSEPH

I didn't wanna have to tell ya.

GRETA

Tell me what?

JOSEPH

There was a homeless guy back at the rest stop. He looked like he needed it more than me.

Greta is beside herself, agitated.

GRETA

Really, Joe? What was the point in packing? You're giving all your clothes away like some mobile garage sale.

JOSEPH

It was an old coat. Forget about it. I'll grab a new one.

He reaches into the center console and pulls out a candy bar.

Greta fumes as he rips open the wrapper. Joseph notices her nostrils flaring.

JOSEPH

What? You want half?

GRETA

Throw it out the window. That's what I want.

JOSEPH

I'm not litterin'.

GRETA

You're turning me into a widow.

JOSEPH

I'm not diabetic.

GRETA

It's around the corner.

JOSEPH

If I don't have it by now, I'm not gettin' it. That's how it works.

GRETA
That's the stupidest thing I ever
heard.

Greta transfers from the passenger seat to the couch. She
picks up her book, noting the bookmark.

JOSEPH
You act like I eat candy all the
time.

GRETA
I know about the drawer.

JOSEPH
What are you talkin' about?

No use trying to continue where she left off. She sets the
book aside.

GRETA
The drawer in your office.

JOSEPH
You been snoopin' around my office?

GRETA
It's our office. And it's my job to
keep you healthy. You should be
happy I care about your well being.
I'm a good wife. Am I not?

Nothing from Joseph.

GRETA
Am I not?!

Still nothing.

GRETA
Joseph! Answer me!

JOSEPH
Good wife. Bad manners.

GRETA
Excuse me?!

JOSEPH
You're nosin' around the office
like I got somethin' to hide. Do I
go through your things?

GRETA

I don't hide anything from you.

JOSEPH

Are you listenin' to yourself? We could be arguin' over finances, bad communication, no intimacy. Normal people stuff. But here we are fightin' over candy! It's chocolate, Greta! Chocolate!

He's had enough. He rolls down the window. Throws the candy bar out.

JOSEPH

You happy now?!

GRETA

No, I'm not happy, Joe! I'm not happy, at all! I lost my baby girl! She's never coming back! Are you happy?! Huh?! Can you say that you're happy?!

She lets out a gut-wrenching SCREAM, resembling someone caged up, pleading for help. AHHHHHHHHHHH!!! The loud screech startles Joseph. He briefly swerves the motorhome.

GRETA

Pull over!

JOSEPH

Right here?

GRETA

PULL OVER!!!

Joseph pulls off the highway onto the shoulder.

Greta jumps out before the motorhome comes to a complete stop.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE MOTORHOME - CONTINUOUS

Greta runs as fast as she can. Nowhere in particular. She cries out toward the sky.

Joseph runs after her.

Greta tumbles over. Joseph falls to his knees and pulls her into his arms.

GRETA

My baby, Joe! My baby! My baby! I'm never gonna hold her again! Never gonna hear her voice!

She sobs and groans. Joseph tightens his embrace.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - LATER

Joseph regards the scenery. Minutes pass before Greta finally sits in the passenger seat. She places a comforting hand on his arm.

GRETA

Can I ask you something? I want you to be honest with me.

JOSEPH

I'm always honest with you, honey.

GRETA

I mean, really, really honest.

JOSEPH

Okay.

GRETA

At first, I thought it was a macho thing, that you didn't cry. But I've never seen you once shed a tear. Not once. Happy moments, sad moments. It's all the same to you. When Tabitha died, I thought you'd break, but you didn't. How does it work?

Joseph takes a moment before answering her.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I read somewhere that honesty is an expensive gift, so don't expect it from cheap friends. Here's the thing about being honest. Everyone has a secret safe. Some safes are easy to open. The right key, right combination. In no means, am I a cheap friend. Or a cheap husband. It's just, my safe is meant for thieves. That's just how it is.

Joseph shrugs.

JOSEPH
Never really thought about it.

GRETA
It's not normal.

JOSEPH
I suppose, you're right.

GRETA
Maybe you should see someone.

JOSEPH
Like a shrink?

GRETA
A counselor. Someone like Harry.

JOSEPH
Harry?

GRETA
Yeah. I mean, it couldn't hurt.

JOSEPH
I'll think about it.

Greta leaves it at that. She plants a kiss on the side of his head, not to disturb his driving.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Greta is no thief.

She returns to the back of the motorhome.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - SUNSET

Joseph drives toward the sunset. He regards how beautiful it is at the moment, soaking it in for what it's worth.

He hears his daughter's voice...

TEENAGE TABITHA (V.O.)
Pick up the pace, old man.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE/DRIVEWAY - SUNSET

Joseph and TEENAGE TABITHA play one-on-one. A basketball hoop is mounted above the garage door.

Tabitha impressively maneuvers around Joseph and takes her shot. Swish. Nothing but net.

TEENAGE TABITHA

I feel like I'm playing against a jar of molasses.

Tabitha smiles ear-to-ear, showing off her full set of braces. She tosses him the ball.

JOSEPH

It's called playin' opossum.

Joseph tries to sneak around her.

Tabitha cleverly steals the ball before he has a chance to lay it up. She shoots. Swish again.

TEENAGE TABITHA

And what was that called?

JOSEPH

That's called an assist.

Tabitha smirks. Passes the ball.

JOSEPH

My dad jokes need work, I know.

TEENAGE TABITHA

That was more of a grandpa joke.

Joseph ceases from bouncing the ball. Tucks it under his arm.

JOSEPH

Grandpa? Is there somethin' you wanna tell me, young lady?

TEENAGE TABITHA

You can chill, daddy-o. I got too much riding on my academics to have to be worrying about --

Joseph takes advantage of her banter, sneaking past her with the ball. Takes it to the hoop. Makes the layup.

TEENAGE TABITHA (CONT'D)

(realizes she's been had)
...becoming a young single mother working two jobs.

She throws up her hands in protest.

TEENAGE TABITHA
 Hey, wait a minute. What do you
 call that?

JOSEPH
 That's called *tied up*.

He passes the ball.

JOSEPH
 Game point.

TEENAGE TABITHA
 Oh, look, mom's home with our
 pizza!

Joseph turns to look. Sees nothing. He hears the swish of the
 net.

TEENAGE TABITHA
 And that, my dear friends, is how
 it's done.

JOSEPH
 Do you know what that's called?

TEENAGE TABITHA
 It's called *Kicking your butt* three
 nights in a row.

JOSEPH
 Homecourt advantage.

TEENAGE TABITHA
 Now that's a dad joke.

Joseph throws his arm around her shoulders. They walk toward
 the house. The basketball, still in momentum, rolls onto the
 grass and stops.

END FLASHBACK

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - NIGHT

Joseph sips on a gas station coffee. Greta swipes through her
 cell phone, viewing photos of her and Tabitha together. Some
 with Joseph photobombing them.

GRETA
 How much longer?

JOSEPH
 'Bout another four hours.

GRETA

I don't wanna have to wake up my aunt. I saw a hotel sign back there. Next exit, okay?

JOSEPH

Hotel?

GRETA

I wanna stay in a hotel tonight. The bed in here is too stiff.

JOSEPH

You can stay in a hotel, I'm sleepin' in here. It's already paid for.

GRETA

You're gonna make me sleep alone?

JOSEPH

That's your choice.

GRETA

(in Yiddish)

You're a stubborn mule. You know that? You wouldn't budge with a gun to your head. You're never going to change.

JOSEPH

Oh, you wanna talk in code now?

(in Italian)

For once, my heart had blood. Now, it's all pretend. When our baby died, my heart went black. And it gets darker every day. I'm gone, and I don't know how to get back.

GRETA

Stop it already, will ya? All I said was you're being stubborn.

JOSEPH

And all I'm saying is that I'm not sleepin' in a hotel.

GRETA

It sounded like you said a little more than that.

JOSEPH

You got the short version.

GRETA

You're okay with my back hurting?

JOSEPH

Know what? I'm gettin' tired of us fightin' all the time. We're splittin' off when we get to Chicago. You go do your thing, I do mine. I'm better off alone anyway.

GRETA

You're better off alone?

JOSEPH

You know what I mean.

GRETA

Obviously, I don't.

JOSEPH

Let's not do this.

GRETA

Too late, Joe.

JOSEPH

Then, yeah, maybe I would be.

GRETA

Better off?

Joseph lets the question linger...

Greta glares at him with pursed lips. Clenches her fist. She'd hit him if he wasn't driving.

GRETA

You scare me sometimes.

She heads to the back of the motorhome.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry!

He watches her walk away in the rear-view.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I wish I was sorry. Wish I meant half the stuff I said. I'd be an okay guy, I think. Halfway decent, at least.

INT. HOTEL/LOBBY - NIGHT

Greta pulls her suitcase along, heading toward an elevator. At the front desk, Joseph finishes checking in.

Joseph watches as Greta enters the elevator. Her cold stare remains on Joseph as the doors slide shut.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I could stop this at any minute. A few apologies, a hug, a kiss. Boom pow, done. But I don't want it to be done. Tonight, alone works for me.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - LATER

Joseph grabs a beer from the minifridge. Plops down on the couch. Takes a quick swig. Spots Greta's book. Flits through the chapters. Chapter 6 is titled: "*SCREAM! LET IT ALL OUT!*"

Joseph shakes his head, realizing this is the chapter that costed him a candy bar.

He begins to read this particular chapter...

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - LATER

Empty beer bottles begin to gather around Joseph. He eventually talks to himself --

JOSEPH

Why the hell did you even marry me? Your mother warned you. Your father hated me. They knew I was no good. They could see it. Why couldn't you? I even told you to stay away. When the man you want says *stay away*, there's no more clearer sign than that. You stay away.

(beat)

But what do you do? You bear him a child.

He drops his head.

JOSEPH

A beautiful child.

He staggers to the minifridge. Peers inside.

JOSEPH

Who's drinkin' all my beers? Who's
drinkin' all my freakin' beers?!
Come out and show yourself!

He heads back to the couch. Plops down on Greta's book. Yanks it from underneath. Stares at the cover for a minute, and then --

JOSEPH

Time to scream, Mr. Mazziano. Let
it all out. It'll do you some good.
Come on. Let's see what you got.

He prepares what he expects to be a great howl. Opens his mouth and barely manages a groan.

JOSEPH

What was that? A queef?

Just as he's about to give it another go --

A knock on the door. Joseph opens it. It's Greta.

JOSEPH

What're you doing up?

GRETA

I couldn't sleep.

JOSEPH

So, it's not the bed?

GRETA

Shut up.

Joseph coaxes her inside. She enters. He steps aside and catches himself before taking a spill.

JOSEPH

I know what it is. You forgot to
tell me you loved me.

GRETA

Trust me. I didn't forget.

Joseph gently takes her hand.

JOSEPH

I'm sorry for what I said. I don't
wanna be alone.

GRETA

That's all I needed from you.

Greta kisses him.

GRETA
 (roll plays)
 You look like you could use some
 company.

Joseph indicates his wedding band, an attempt to dissuade her.

JOSEPH
 I'm taken, darlin'.

GRETA
 Aren't they all?

JOSEPH
 You wanna bite of this forbidden
 fruit?

GRETA
 I wouldn't mind a taste.

She reveals a hidden candy bar.

Joseph takes her by the hand. Leads her to the back of the motorhome.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
 I'm too old for make up sex, so I
 just laid there. She did her
 business and went straight to
 sleep.
 (beat)
 And I ate my candy bar.

INT. AUNT LORAINÉ'S HOUSE/FOYER - DAY

EDNA (60's), a large woman, hugs Greta. Joseph offers a wave, knowing his limits with his wife's family. Edna half smiles.

EDNA
 Come on in. How was the drive?

GRETA
 Good.

Edna hangs Greta's coat. She leads them to the next room.

INT. AUNT LORAINÉ'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Greta's aunt LORAINÉ (80s) sits on a recliner. An old sitcom plays on the television.

Greta rushes toward her aunt. Joseph stands at the threshold.

GRETA
(in Yiddish)
My favorite aunt.

Greta greets her aunt with a warm hug and kiss. Her aunt refuses to let her go.

LORAINÉ
(in Yiddish)
My favorite niece.

They finally release each other.

LORAINÉ
Always so beautiful.

GRETA
Runs in our family.

Lorraine glances at Joseph. Her smile fades.

LORAINÉ
(to Joseph)
Why did you have to take her so far away? Family should always be close.

JOSEPH
It was both our idea.

GRETA
More so, yours.

Joseph bears a grin, holding back what he really wants to say.

JOSEPH
Okay. More so, mine. Thanks for putting me on the choppin' block, dear.

Lorraine faces Greta.

LORAINÉ
(in Yiddish)
You're not a very good trainer.

Lorraine motions for Edna to take her hand. She wants up.

LORAINNE
I bet you're starving.

GRETA
No, no. You don't have to get up.

LORAINNE
My doctor says I need to move
around. I can't sit all day.

Edna helps Lorraine to her feet.

GRETA
(sheepishly)
In that case, shakshuka?

LORAINNE
(nods)
Shakshuka.

They follow Lorraine to the kitchen.

Greta glances at Joseph, awaiting praise. He kisses her.

EXT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/COMMUNAL BACKYARD - SAME

Tabby lets Sadie out the back door. Sadie heads to the center of the yard to do her business.

Mike comes out of hiding and snatches Sadie.

TABBY
Put her down!

Tabby rushes inside and returns with a baseball bat. Her weak legs give way. She tumbles down the back steps.

MIKE
You're making this way too easy!

He laughs.

TABBY
Let her go!

She watches Mike head to a running car parked in the alley. Mike tosses Sadie inside the car.

TABBY
Stop!

Tabby struggles to her feet. She flings the bat, missing his car by a mile.

Mike speeds away.

INT. AUNT LORAINES HOUSE/KITCHEN - LATER

Joseph and the others eat shakshuka. Joseph's cell phone vibrates. It's Tabby.

GRETA
Who is it?

JOSEPH
(off top of head)
Pete.

GRETA
Pete?

JOSEPH
Yeah. You know Pete.

GRETA
What's he want?

JOSEPH
I forgot my crystal ball at home.

GRETA
We're having dinner right now. Call him back later.

Joseph gets up from the table.

JOSEPH
It could be important.

GRETA
Joseph Mazziano, do I have to explain myself?

Greta's glare says it all.

LORAINES
(intervenes)
Easy, sheifale.

GRETA
Auntie.

LORAINÉ
 (in Yiddish)
Let your puppy go. It's all right.

Joseph takes his cue. He exits the kitchen.

Lorraine waits for the front door to shut, and then --

LORAINÉ
 Why, my little *sheifale*? Help me understand. Why did you run off with him?
 (beat)
 You know, Dr. Haddad still asks about you. Even after all these years. Such a nice man. And he's Jewish.

Edna disproves of her mother's comments.

EDNA
 (in Yiddish)
Stop it, Mother.

EXT. LORAINÉ'S HOME/DRIVEWAY - SAME

Joseph walks to the end of the driveway with his cell phone to his ear.

TABBY (O.S.)
 (answers)
 Hi.

Tabby snuffles. Joseph can tell she's crying.

JOSEPH
 Everythin' all right?

TABBY (O.S.)
 No.

JOSEPH
 What's wrong?

TABBY (O.S.)
 He got Sadie.

JOSEPH
 What? Who got her?

TABBY (O.S.)

My ex. He came and took her. The cops won't do anything, because *technically* it's his dog. You believe that? He hasn't seen her in, like, months. And now all of a sudden --

JOSEPH

Hey, listen to me. I'm gonna take care of it. Okay?

TABBY (O.S.)

How?

JOSEPH

Where's he stay?

TABBY (O.S.)

He jumps around a lot.

JOSEPH

Sounds like a flea.

TABBY (O.S.)

That's a compliment.

JOSEPH

Where will I find him?

INT. AUNT LORAINЕ'S HOME/KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Joseph kisses Greta on the cheek.

JOSEPH

I gotta run. I won't be long.

GRETA

Where you going?

JOSEPH

I need to do this thing.

GRETA

What thing? What are you doing? You're leaving me?

JOSEPH

Pete needs help with somethin'.

GRETA

Who the hell is Pete?

JOSEPH
Everybody knows Pete.

LORAININE
I don't know Pete.

GRETA
How long you gonna be?

JOSEPH
Not long. I promise.

GRETA
Swear?

JOSEPH
Yes.

GRETA
I already know you're lying.

Joseph rushes out the kitchen.

GRETA
And buy a coat before you come down
with something!
(to Loraine and Edna)
He gave his coat away to some
homeless man. I don't know. He
thinks it's Christmas.

Loraine opens her mouth to say something perhaps derogatory.
Edna shoots her mother a look that says: "*Don't you dare.*"
Loraine closes her mouth, retracting the thought.

INT. ANGIE'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - LATER

A small mirror with cocaine residue and a razor blade lies on
a coffee table.

ANGIE (30s), attractive, apparently sleeping. Her slender
legs are sprawled across Mike's lap.

Mike lights a joint. After a few puffs, he begins caressing
her thighs, and then slides his hands up her shirt -- he's in
the mood. She's not. She shoves his hand away.

MIKE
I swear, I'm better off with a nun.

ANGIE
Don't be like that.

MIKE
There's cobwebs on my balls, Angie.

ANGIE
My head hurts.

MIKE
Don't give me that shit.

He shoves her legs off him.

ANGIE
(mutters)
Asshole.

Mike heads to the kitchen. Returns with a beer --

An urgent KNOCK on the front door alarms him. He bails on the joint. Reaches for a hidden revolver underneath a couch cushion.

ANGIE
Who the hell is that?

MIKE
(low but forceful)
Shut up, Angie.

He peeks through his window blinds.

ANGIE
Is that Bobby? Tell him he can't stay. He stunk up the couch last time. It still smells.

MIKE
It's not Bobby.

He opens the door, chain lock on. Peers out. Joseph stands outside, sporting a new coat.

MIKE
Yeah?

JOSEPH
Michael?

MIKE
Who are you?

ANGIE (O.C.)
Who is it? Who's out there?

Mike continues to ignore her.

JOSEPH
I just wanna talk.

ANGIE (O.C.)
Mike?! Who's at the door?!

She tosses an empty beer can at him.

MIKE
(turns to Angie)
Shut the fuck up!
(back to Joseph)
What do you want?

JOSEPH
You have somethin' that belongs to
me.

MIKE
That bitch sent you, huh?

Joseph remains quiet.

MIKE
Yeah. She did, didn't she? Figures.
What'd she give you? A blowy?

JOSEPH
I just want my dog back.

MIKE
Your dog?

JOSEPH
My dog.

MIKE
Your dog, my dog, her dog. Nobody
knows what's going on. Am I right?

Mike laughs hysterically.

MIKE
Get the fuck outta here.

He shuts the door. Turns toward Angie. Before he takes a step
--

A knock.

Mike loses his patience. He unlatches the chain lock, opens
the door.

Joseph stares down the barrel of Mike's revolver.

MIKE

I'm not gonna tell you --

Before he can finish his threat, Joseph swipes the revolver from his hand. Points it back.

Angie screams and darts to her bedroom.

MIKE

It's not even loaded.

JOSEPH

(cocks the hammer)

I raise.

Mike fidgets nervously.

JOSEPH

Call? Or fold?

Mike's hands come up in surrender.

JOSEPH

The dog.

MIKE

She's not here.

JOSEPH

Where is she?

MIKE

I, uhh, sold her.

JOSEPH

Sold her.

MIKE

Yeah.

ANGIE (O.C.)

(from behind bedroom door)

I'm calling the police!

MIKE

I'm hard up on cash.

JOSEPH

You did a very bad thing, Mikey.

MIKE

I see that now.

JOSEPH

You remind me of this guy named Quincy. A bum. He tried robbin' me about once a week. He wasn't all there, you know. He never had bullets in his gun. And I got tired of beatin' the shit outta him. I felt sorry for the guy, so I thought to myself: how do I make this guy remember me, so we don't have to go through all this again?

ANGIE (O.C.)

The cops are on their way!

JOSEPH

So, I waited for him to mug me...

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- AN ALLEY - a homeless man, QUINCY, points a gun at Joseph. Joseph swipes it and pistol whips him in return.

-- FAR END OF ALLEY - Joseph hauls him out of sight with a chokehold.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

...and I took his eyes.

-- BEHIND A DUMPSTER - Quincy writhes in a water puddle, groaning with pain. His hands cup his bleeding eye sockets.

BACK TO SCENE

JOSEPH

About six months later, we crossed paths. And you know what? He remembered me. My footsteps. My voice. Kept tellin' me *sorry*.

(beat)

Listen very carefully, Mikey. I'm not driving all over town, lookin' for this dog. You're goin' to go buy it back and return it to Tabby.

MIKE

I can't buy it back.

JOSEPH

Why not?

MIKE

I spent it all.

Joseph glances at the mirror on the coffee table.

JOSEPH
You sniffed it all.

MIKE
Nah, that's my girl.

JOSEPH
Classy.

Joseph pulls out his wallet.

JOSEPH
How much did it go for?

MIKE
Four hundred.

Joseph hands the wallet to Mike.

JOSEPH
Count it out.

Mike's eyes light up as he fingers through large bills -- there's a lot more than four hundred.

MIKE
Five hundred, actually.

JOSEPH
You flodgin' me, Mikey?

MIKE
It was five hundred, I swear.

JOSEPH
I don't believe you, but you know what? I don't care. I need the dog.

Mike pulls out five crisp one hundred dollar bills. Hands the wallet back to Joseph.

Police SIRENS blare in the distance.

JOSEPH
If you don't return Sadie to Tabby before the day is over, I'm coming back here. You'll see me come, you won't see me go. Understand?

Mike nods.

MIKE

Do I get my gun back?

JOSEPH

Worry about the dog.

Joseph steps out with the gun still pointing. He uncocks the hammer. Stuffs it inside his coat. Walks away.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - NEIGHBORHOOD - MOVING - LATER

Joseph drives, regarding various buildings. Passes a church. Respectfully makes the sign of the cross. He approaches a store front in particular. A meat market. It's abandoned.

He pulls alongside the curb. Glances over the building. Reads a faded sign: "JIMMY'S FINEST MEATS."

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Tears did me no favors.

He removes Mike's pistol from his coat. Handles it loosely.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

That's why I traded mine in for
bullets.

He stuffs the pistol into the center console, between candy bars. His cell phone vibrates. It's Greta. He doesn't answer. He stuffs his phone back into his coat pocket. It continues to vibrate.

Joseph regards the store front one last time before he pulls away.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - LATER

A knock. Tabby weakly approaches the door. Taking breathers between steps. She finally answers. Her eyes immediately travel to Sadie. She barely manages a smile. Struggles to embrace her dog.

MIKE

Some psycho showed up at Angie's!
He threatened to pop my eyes out!
He has my fucking gun!

TABBY

(struggles to speak)
I have nothing... to do with that --

MIKE

The fuck you don't! You're the one
who sent him!

TABBY

Don't forget... what you did.

MIKE

Yeah, well, now you got her back! I
want my gun!

TABBY

I don't... have your... stupid gun.

MIKE

No shit! I know you don't got it!
Your fucking friend has it! I want
it back! Call him! Tell him you got
your dog back!

Tabby watches Mike jet back to his car. Just before he slams
his door, his last words to her are --

MIKE

Die soon, bitch!

He flips her off.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - LATER

Joseph's cell phone vibrates. It's Tabby.

JOSEPH

(answers)

Hey.

TABBY (O.S.)

(wheezes)

What do... I owe you?

JOSEPH

Forget about it.

TABBY (O.S.)

What'd you... do to him?

JOSEPH

We just chatted.

TABBY (O.S.)

He said... you have... his gun.

JOSEPH
I don't know the first thing about
guns. I'm a saint, remember?

TABBY (O.S.)
No one... could've talked... my ex
into doing... what he did --

She's unable to finish her sentence. Begins having a horrible
coughing fit.

JOSEPH
You all right?

TABBY (O.S.)
I'm fine...
(coughs)
I think... I just need --

Joseph hears Tabby's cell phone smack the floor, and then a
loud thud follows.

JOSEPH
Tabby?

No answer.

JOSEPH
Tabby? You there? Hello?

He hears Sadie whimpering.

JOSEPH
Shit.

EXT. TABBY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX/PARKING LOT - LATER

Joseph quickly climbs out of the motorhome with Tabby's
address written on a note. He quickly surveys the doors.
Finds Tabby's apartment number. Peeks through her window.
Sees her lying motionless on the kitchen floor. He attempts
the door. It opens.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie hovers over Tabby's body whimpering, attempting to wake
her with licks to her face.

Joseph checks her pulse. He immediately dials 911.

EXT. TABBY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX/PARKING LOT - LATER

Joseph watches as an ambulance pulls away, SIRENS blaring.

He looks back at Tabby's apartment. Sadie peers out a window with sad eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL/TABBY'S ROOM - LATER

Tabby, a pitiful sight, lies on a hospital bed, connected to tubes and wires. No wig, no eyebrows.

Joseph sits at her bedside. Her voice is barely audible during their conversation.

TABBY
I expected... a halo.

JOSEPH
It's being polished.

Tabby smiles faintly.

TABBY
Your wings?

JOSEPH
Earnin' them.

TABBY
Sadie?

JOSEPH
I brought her. She's good. I just fed her before I came up. She loves chicken.

TABBY
Table food?

JOSEPH
Chicken nuggets.

TABBY
You're... spoiling her.

JOSEPH
It's what I do.

Tabby twitches her fingers, a plea for his hand. Joseph notices. He gently takes hold of it.

TABBY
I need... a favor.

JOSEPH
Anything.

TABBY
My bedroom... dresser.
(pushes through pain)
Top drawer. There's... an envelope.
Addressed to... my parents.

JOSEPH
Want me to mail it?

TABBY
Please.

JOSEPH
Sure thing.

Tears stream down Tabby's cheek. Joseph wipes them away.

TABBY
I never... thought about...
Heaven... until you... came along.

JOSEPH
I'm as guilty as they come.

TABBY
We're... all guilty... of
something.

JOSEPH
Fair enough.

TABBY
Any regrets?

JOSEPH
I lost count.

TABBY
I had... a baby girl... I gave...
her up.
(long beat)
Do you think... I'm being...
punished?

JOSEPH
No, not at all. Life, it's the luck
of the draw. Some people get pocket
aces.

Others gotta bluff their way
through and hope the river card
saves them in the end.

A NURSE enters. Examines the monitors. Scribbles notes on a chart and then leaves.

TABBY
Thanks, Joe.

JOSEPH
For what?

TABBY
I don't... have to... bluff
anymore.

INT. TABBY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - LATER

Joseph enters. He sees the dresser. Opens the top drawer. Inspects the contents. He finds the envelope lying on a scrapbook. He tucks the envelope into his coat pocket and sits on the edge of the bed with the scrapbook.

Sadie leaps onto the bed beside him.

Before he has a chance to open the scrapbook, his cell phone vibrates. It's Greta.

JOSEPH
(answers)
Hello?

GRETA (O.S.)
Why aren't you answering my calls?!
I left about ten messages! Where
the hell are you?!

JOSEPH
I'm sorry. I got caught up.

GRETA (O.S.)
Have you lost your mind?

JOSEPH
Pete and I --

GRETA (O.S.)
Screw Pete! Get here now! You're
being rude to my family!

She hangs up. Joseph turns and pets Sadie.

JOSEPH

I bet you're dying to meet her,
huh? Well, don't be too anxious.

He opens the scrapbook. It begins with happy moments, spanning from childhood to adulthood, and then a few newspaper clippings catch his eye. They're tucked in the back. The first clipping indicates: three men arrested for sexually assaulting Tabby.

We hear a THUMPING HEARTBEAT, quiet and slow at first...

Joseph glances over the second clipping. It's a photo of the three men celebrating after being acquitted. Their names appear at the bottom: George Ruby, Ben Huntley, Aaron Zigovitz.

The THUMPING HEARTBEAT grows louder and faster...

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - LATER

The engine runs.

Joseph sits behind the wheel, his thoughts getting the best of him. Sadie stares at him as still as a front lawn statue.

A HENCHMAN knocks on the driver side window.

THUMPING HEARTBEAT ends abruptly.

Joseph rolls down his window.

HENCHMAN

You Joe?

JOSEPH

Yeah.

HENCHMAN

Turn it off.

Joseph remains still, questioning the situation.

HENCHMAN

(low but forceful)

Turn it off.

Joseph kills the engine. He glances at the console containing Mike's pistol.

HENCHMAN

Someone wants to see you.

Joseph's eyes pivot between the henchman and the console.

Another henchman approaches the passenger side. He taps the window with a pistol.

Sadie growls.

Joseph forgets grabbing the gun. He gently strokes Sadie to calm her down.

JOSEPH

It's okay, girl. It's okay.

INT. CITY BUILDING/GUS'S OFFICE - LATER

Joe enters, escorted by the henchmen.

Gus sits at his desk. He's blind in one eye, the damage left behind by a gunshot is evident.

Joe is shocked to see Gus still alive. He quickly eyes the room for a silver tray. Finds it. No shot glasses. This worries him.

GUS

Sit down.

Joseph takes a seat in front of Gus.

GUS

How long's it been?

JOSEPH

A while.

GUS

A number.

JOSEPH

Twenty plus.

GUS

In that time, did I ever send anyone to disturb you?

Joseph expresses curiosity. Gus picks up on it.

GUS

Oh, yeah, I know where you went. I heard it's beautiful this time of year. Why even bother coming this direction?

JOSEPH
I'm just passing through.

GUS
What were my exact words?

Joseph opens his mouth, shows hesitation to speak.

GUS
My exact words?!

JOSEPH
Don't come back.

GUS
That's right. And not only did you slap my face, but you kicked me in the gut. I will go as far as to say, you twisted a knife in my heart. Is there a word that's worse than *betrayal*? If there is, that's the word to best describe what you did.

JOSEPH
I meant no disrespect --

GUS
This isn't disrespect, Joe. This is dishonor. You thought you could slide by, because word got out that I was ashes.

(gestures his blind eye)
Otherwise, you wouldn't just be *passing through*. Now would you?

Joseph remains quiet. Gus notions for an answer.

JOSEPH
That's what it looks like.

Gus glances at one of his henchmen, motioning him.

The henchman heads to another room and retrieves TONY (40s) and jostles him forward. Tony, bruised and guilt-faced, doesn't bother to lift his head.

GUS
Ever read the bible, Joe?

JOSEPH
Not since catechism.

Gus opens a desk drawer. Pulls out a rope. He begins to tie a noose during the conversation.

GUS

Time for a Sunday school lesson. During Passover, there was this rebel named Barabbas. Ever heard of him?

JOSEPH

No.

GUS

He was set to be executed. But there was a custom at the time called the paschal pardon. Did they teach you that in catechism?

JOSEPH

If they did, I wasn't listening.

GUS

They'd present two prisoners and a blood-thirsty crowd would choose who would go free and who would be executed. Crucified.

(beat)

There's some new faces in here, and a few others you've seen before. I wouldn't necessarily call it a crowd, but I do call it fair.

Gus draws up his finger and points directly at Tony.

GUS

Who thinks I should let Tony go?

Some hands go up. Gus glances around the room.

GUS

And Barabbas here?

Hands go up -- one less short than Tony.

Tony expresses a look of relief. He can breath now.

Gus finishes the noose.

GUS

You're damn lucky, Barabbas. My vote counts as two.

TONY

That's bullshit!

Gus's men grab Tony and force him on his knees.

TONY

How you gonna do me like this?!
Gus, listen to me! We're like
brothers! I've known you all my
life!

Gus dangles the noose in front of Joseph.

GUS

Pontius Pilate washed his hands.

Joseph refuses to take it.

Gus looks intently into Joseph's eyes as if searching for something to surface.

GUS

Still dry as ever.

TONY

Gus, listen to me! Your momma took
me in! Loved me like a son! They
find me dead somewhere, then what?!
Then what?!

GUS

(to Tony)

You moved away, and forgot to tell
her goodbye. That wasn't very nice
of you. After my momma treated you
like a son, and you do her like
that? Shame on you.

Gus turns his attention back to Joe and tosses the noose into his lap.

GUS

We both know there's no U-turns for
the wicked.

Gus lights a cigarette.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Sometimes, survival is about
letting kings feel like gods.

Joe finally picks up the noose.

TONY

You sons of bitches! Go to hell!
All of you!

GUS
 Barabbas and I have already been
 there. Devil kicked us out. Afraid
 we'd steal his job.

Tony spits on the closest henchmen. The same henchmen begins
 to pistol whip Tony to the point of death.

GUS
 That's enough!

Joe walks over to Tony. Throws the noose around his neck and
 tightens it. Plants his knee on his back. Tugs the rope with
 all his might.

Gus and his men begin laughing, enjoying their morbid
 entertainment.

Tony's eyes bulge from their sockets. His arms and legs flail
 for a minute, then go limp. He's gone.

Joseph tries to compose himself, breathing heavily with
 exhaustion. He climbs off Tony.

GUS
 This is the last time you'll see my
 face. Don't ever *pass through*
 again.
 (snaps his fingers)
 Or you're dead on sight.

Gus motions Joseph to leave.

EXT. CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOOD/SIDEWALK - LATER

Joseph walks toward the wind. He spots a street corner
 mailbox. Reaches in his coat pocket. Pulls out Tabby's
 envelope. Mails it.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - LATER

Joseph wearily climbs inside the motorhome. Sadie greets him
 with licks to the face.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - MOVING - LATER

Joseph brings his cell phone to his ear. A man with a deep
 voice answers.

POTSY (O.S.)
 Who is this?

JOSEPH
Hey, Potsy.

POTSY (O.S.)
Joe?

JOSEPH
How ya been?

POTSY (O.S.)
I don't believe this. You in town?

JOSEPH
Just passing through.

POTSY (O.S.)
Me and the boys are having a
kickback at Regato's. You should
come.

JOSEPH
Not tonight.

POTSY (O.S.)
I'm buying.

JOSEPH
Maybe next time.

POTSY (O.S.)
Come on. Who turns down free beers?

JOSEPH
I need a favor.

POTSY (O.S.)
A favor?

JOSEPH
Just need to find a few friends.

POTSY (O.S.)
Swimming buddies?

JOSEPH
Huntin'.

POTSY (O.S.)
Serious shit, bro.

JOSEPH
You got me?

POTSY (O.S.)
I'm down the street.

JOSEPH
Grazie, Patsy.

POTSY (O.S.)
Call back in fifteen.

They hang up.

Joseph reaches into the center console and pulls out a candy bar. Sadie stares at him and whines. She wants a bite.

JOSEPH
Sorry, girl. Chocolate's a no-no for doggies. I'll pick you up a burger or something. How's that sound?

EXT. AUNT LORAINIE'S HOME - NIGHT

Joseph approaches the front door. Greta steps out.

GRETA
Where were you? And don't give me this *Pete* bullcrap! I mean, what the hell, Joe? What's going on?

Sadie barks from the motorhome.

GRETA
What is that?

JOSEPH
We have a dog now.

GRETA
Unbelievable.

JOSEPH
She was out wanderin' around, starvin'.

GRETA
Really, Joe?

JOSEPH
What do you want me to do? I wasn't gonna leave her out there. I got a soft heart for dogs.

GRETA

Where's your soft heart for me?
Huh? You're okay with leaving me
here all day, while you're out
playing dog warden?

JOSEPH

You came to take care of your aunt,
remember?

Sadie barks.

GRETA

Is that thing gonna bark all night?

Joseph steps around her.

JOSEPH

Her name's Sadie.

GRETA

You named a stray dog?

JOSEPH

She's not stray anymore.

GRETA

We're not keeping her.

Joseph steps inside. Holds the door open.

JOSEPH

(mockingly)

It's cold out. Can't have you
catchin' a fever.

GRETA

I don't even know why I bother.

JOSEPH

Gotta good deal on my coat. You
like it?

She gives it a quick glance.

GRETA

How long you plan on keeping that
one, Santa Claus?

She enters. Joseph shuts the door behind her.

INT. AUNT LORAINIE'S HOME/GUEST BEDROOM - LATER

The moonlight illuminates the room.

Greta opens her eyes. She turns to face Joseph. He's not there.

GRETA
(whispers)
Joe?

Nothing.

She climbs out of bed and throws on her robe.

INT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - SAME

No lights except the glow of Joseph's phone. No sounds except the ones coming from a video.

Joseph sits on the couch. His face illuminated. Sadie is curled next to him, her face on his lap.

The cell phone video shows Tabitha and Danielle acting like a couple of goofballs just before they climb into Tabitha's car. They're vibrant and carefree. Judging by their wardrobe and painted faces, this is the day of the crash.

WE HEAR, them conversing in the video. Joseph remains stoic, expressionless. Impossible to make out what he's thinking.

TABITHA (O.C.)
Love you, daddy-o!

JOSEPH (O.C.)
(in Italian)
Love you more.

DANIELLE (O.C.)
Bye, Mr. Mazziano.

JOSEPH (O.C.)
Bye, girls. Have fun.

TABITHA (O.C.)
Don't wait up!

Sadie lifts her head. Her ears perk. She hears something.

The door handle turns. Joseph, calm and collective, continues to view the vid.

Greta enters. She feels around for the light switch. Flips it on. Joseph winces as his eyes adjust to the light.

GRETA
What are you doing out here?

JOSEPH
Sadie had to potty.

Joseph exits the video. Stuffs his phone in his coat.

GRETA
She's getting fur everywhere.

JOSEPH
It'll come up.

Sadie jumps down from the couch and happily greets her new visitor.

GRETA
Get off me.
(wags her finger)
That's a no! Down, girl!

Greta wipes the fur off her robe. Sadie drops in a play bow. Her tail wags.

GRETA
This is not play time!

She points toward the back of the motorhome.

GRETA
Go!

Surprisingly, Sadie listens. She leaps onto the bed and curls up. Whimpers.

JOSEPH
She's sad.

GRETA
I don't care about her.
(beat)
You comin' to bed?

JOSEPH
I won't be sleepin' tonight.

Greta studies him for a moment. She sits next to him.

GRETA
You okay?

JOSEPH
I haven't been okay... in a long,
long time.

A long moment silence between them.

GRETA
(remorsefully)
I thought I could save you.

JOSEPH
From what?

GRETA
From what my father thought you
were. I didn't believe him, of
course, but it didn't take long
until you convinced me with that
look. The same one you have now.
Like, you're about to do something
really bad, or already did. I got
sick of seeing it every night. And
here we are again.

JOSEPH
(shrugs)
Chicago.

Greta wags her head.

GRETA
I stopped taking my birth control
pills. I figured a baby was the
only way you were going to leave
Chicago. To get you away from
whatever it was that you were
doing. It worked.

JOSEPH
For a season.

Joseph sits up.

JOSEPH
I'm not good. I was never good.

Greta turns his face toward her.

GRETA
I don't believe that. Not for one
second. You're good, Joe. We're not
perfect, but I still love you with
all my heart. And you were a great
father. You were Tabitha's world.

She loved you so much, she never wanted to disappoint you in any way. Her decisions were always based around what you thought. You raised her to be caring and loving. Try to understand that you were a part of that. That wasn't all me.

(beat)

You're good to everyone except yourself. And I don't know why.

Joseph faces away from Greta.

JOSEPH

My father went off to war. His friends ran a meat shop. Said they'd take care of his wife and child while he was away. He trusted the wrong men.

(beat)

Once they found out he was never coming back, that was all it took for them to show their colors. I found myself pinned to the floor while they took turns with my mother. They shamed her really bad.

Greta gently grabs his hand.

JOSEPH

I promised her I'd get them one day. But that day never came. They got away with it. I failed her.

GRETA

What did you expect to do?

JOSEPH

Put them under.

GRETA

That's not justice.

JOSEPH

(confesses)

It's the only kind I know.

Greta releases his hand.

GRETA

Have you ever...

She's unable to ask, worried that it might be true. Joseph finishes for her --

JOSEPH
Killed somebody?

Joseph looks intently into her eyes.

JOSEPH
You asked me how it works. Sons of
perdition don't cry.

He hears a car pull up and stands to his feet.

JOSEPH
My ride's here.

Greta's mind races.

GRETA
Where are you going?

JOSEPH
Chicago's not done with me.

He steps out.

EXT. JOSEPH'S MOTORHOME - CONTINUOUS

Joseph walks to a black car with Greta on his heels.

GRETA
Look at me!

Joseph turns and faces her.

GRETA
Whatever you plan on doing, please
don't.

JOSEPH
It's already done.

Joseph turns his back and enters the car.

INT. POTSY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

POTSY (50s), an obese man with his belly pressed against the steering wheel, throws the car in drive.

POTSY
(sings)
*A hunting we will go, a hunting we
will go...*

MONTAGE

-- A GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - Joseph and Potsy walk into a back office. Joseph yanks out Mike's pistol. Points it at George Ruby. Ben Huntley enters being caught off-guard by the situation. Potsy points a gun at him.

-- A GARAGE - Aaron Zigovitz performs maintenance underneath a sports car. He reaches for a tool from a toolbox. Grabs the barrel of a gun instead.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOSPITAL/TABBY'S ROOM - DAY

Tabby remains in her weakened condition. Joseph sits at her bedside.

JOSEPH
I mailed your letter.

TABBY
(wheezes)
Thanks.

JOSEPH
There's something else. I got you a gift. But it's not here. That's the thing.

TABBY
What... do you... mean?

JOSEPH
I have to take you there.

TABBY
I can't... leave.

JOSEPH
Yes, you can. I'm an angel, remember? Trust me.

TABBY
Okay.

INSERT - FIRE ALARM

Joseph nonchalantly pulls it.

INT. HOSPITAL/TABBY'S ROOM - MINUTE LATER

Joseph removes all the tubes and wires connected to Tabby.

While the entire hospital staff is in chaotic mode, Joseph wheels Tabby out of her room.

INT./EXT. POTSY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Joseph loads Tabby into the back seat. Tosses the wheelchair inside the trunk.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

A small warehouse surrounded by dense trees.

Joseph helps Tabby out of the car and onto the wheelchair.

Potsy stays behind. Keeps the car running. Joseph wheels Tabby toward the warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Joseph wheels Tabby inside.

Tabby, even in her weak state, is visibly shocked and unnerved to see her rapists stripped to their underwear and strung up by ropes. Their mouths duct taped.

Tabby refuses to look at them. The sight of them floods her mind with horrible memories.

A table is nearby with all sorts of torturing devices: a scalpel, a rusty ice pick, a blood-stained machete, etc.

TABBY

What... is this?

JOSEPH

A silver platter.

TABBY

I don't... understand.

JOSEPH

They hurt you.

TABBY

I can't... do this.

Joseph places Mike's revolver in Tabby's hand. Helps her aim. She's too weak to fight against him.

JOSEPH
Take your pick.

TABBY
No. Stop. It's... all wrong.

JOSEPH
I'm giving you what I wish someone gave me.

TABBY
I never... asked... for this.

JOSEPH
Let their blood be on my hands.

He takes the pistol from her frail hand. Points it at George, who winces with fear, anticipating the blast. Urine runs down his leg. Pools below him.

TABBY
Please, stop. I'm... not God.
Not... their judge.

Tabby's wheezing intensifies. She gasps for air that doesn't seem to come.

TABBY
Free them.

JOSEPH
Why?

TABBY
I... forgave... them...

Joseph struggles within himself. He wants to put a bullet in them.

JOSEPH
Dammit! Noooooooo! You forgave them?! I can't let you do that!

TABBY
Please. I. Beg. You.
(strains to breath)
Let. Them. Go.

Joseph drops his head. Lowers the pistol.

JOSEPH

(low)

They can't go free. They can't...

After a minute, Joseph makes up his mind. He grabs a machete from the table. Approaches George. Presses the blade against his neck.

JOSEPH

All three of you fuckin' pigs
deserve to be gutted!

He brings up the machete. It comes down, cutting George loose. Joseph cuts the others loose. George, Ben, and Aaron untie themselves. They remove the duct tape from their mouths.

JOSEPH

Kiss her feet.

They don't quite understand his request. The pistol comes back up.

JOSEPH

I said kiss her feet! I swear, I'll
splatter your brains!

They quickly approach Tabby. Drop to their knees and begin kissing her feet.

JOSEPH

Now get outta here!

They spring to their feet and rush out the door.

INT./EXT. POTSY'S CAR - SAME

Potsy scrolls through his cell phone, glancing at naked babes. He looks up. Watches three men cautiously exit the warehouse.

POTSY

What the fuck is this shit?

The three men bolt for the woods.

POTSY

Fuck!

His large frame makes it difficult to exit the car. He waddles after them with his gun pulled.

INT. WAREHOUSE - SAME

Joseph draws closer to Tabby. Drops the machete. It CLANGS on the floor.

TABBY
(almost inaudible)
Joe?

Her head struggles to stay up. She persists to look intently into Joe's eyes.

TABBY
I... recognize... the pain... in
your... eyes.
(gasps for air)
You... must... forgive...
(with last breath)
yourself...

Her head tilts, eyes remain open. Joseph gently glides his hand over her eyes, closing them.

Three GUNSHOTS ring out in the distance. Joseph doesn't flinch.

Joseph looks down at Mike's revolver. He opens the cartridge cylinder. Fully loaded. He empties the cylinder onto the floor. The bullets seem to roll away from him.

He hears his daughter's voice...

TABITHA (V.O.)
Love you, daddy-o!

A single TEAR drops from Joseph's eye. It CRASHES at his feet.

JOSEPH
(in Italian)
Love you more.

SUDDENLY --

Joseph SCREAMS with all his might. AHHHHHHHHHHHHH! He lets it all out. Everything bottled inside him. Released.

He tosses the gun, tossing his old life away for good.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - LATER

Joseph carries Tabby toward Potsy's car. TEARS stream down his cheeks.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Greta and I never spoke of my past.
She didn't want to know anymore
than she already did.

(beat)

It would be the last time we
stepped foot in Chicago. It was
finally done with me.

EXT. GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK - DAY

SUPER: "ONE YEAR LATER."

A motorhome pulls up to a viewpoint. Greta climbs out. Takes
in the majestic view. Joseph joins her. Throws his arm around
her waist. He seems genuinely happy. Sadie comes between
them. Barks. It echoes back from the canyon.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I never thought I would owe so much
to someone I barely knew. But
because of Tabby Hines of Chicago,
Illinois, I don't have to bluff
anymore.

(beat)

She was my river card.

FADE OUT.

THE END