

Way of the Stray

by
Matt Waters

Cell: 718-640-7528
E-Mail: Mw2828@aol.com

FADE IN

EXT. WOODS-DAWN

TROY RIVERS, a 19 year old Irish-American, stumbles through the thicket, tripping over fallen branches, dirtying a simple outfit consisting of blue jeans and a tee shirt. He borders on incoherence, sweating in the summer heat, a depleted bottle of Jack Daniels slipping gradually from grasp.

TROY

River run, past Eve and Adam's...
run River, bleed into me...

Peeling away a thin veil of shrubbery, he enters a clearing.

EXT. CLEARING-DAWN

Troy, swaying erratically, arrives upon a small pond, shining amid the mud and grime. He kneels, head in hands, emitting a resigned sigh, before profusely vomiting, turning the previously clear water murky. Coughing, he arises.

An impoverished figure, raggedly clothed, accompanied by a push cart filled to the brim with various household amenities, approaches Troy. This is HARRY, a well travelled street urchin.

HARRY

Oh them purifying waters boy, a
slice of heaven on earth.

Troy groans.

TROY

Got the time?

HARRY

Don't hardly have any left...

TROY

In literal terms.

Troy shoots an amused glance.

HARRY

Name's Harry. Want some shampoo?
Could spare a discount for such an
honest face.

Troy runs his left hand through his hair, bemused.

TROY

Never mind.

HARRY

Never mind?

TROY

The time.

Troy wanders back into the woods.

HARRY

Never mind the time...

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET-DAWN

Troy continues his wobbly trek. The street is silent, empty,
sun barely risen.

He proceeds in seeming aimlessness, before making a sharp
left, toward a modest house, resting on the block's furthest
edge.

Kicking over an active lawn sprinkler, Troy walks toward the
front door, which he knocks with obnoxious pleasure.

TROY

(Film Noir staccato)

The gig is up, see? This is the
coppers, and we got the whole place
surrounded!

The door, paint peeling and framework flimsy, swings open,
courtesy of TONY LENTI. Tony is Italian, 19, oversized gold
cross hanging from his neck, hair spiked, sloppy wife-beater
accentuating muscular arms. Fiercely proud of his heritage, a
tattoo of Italy's flag is visible over his heart. His dark,
tanned complexion, blue eyes, juxtapose Troy's faded, ghostly
paleness.

TONY

What do you hear, what do you say?
No G-man takin' me alive!

Tony produces an umbrella from behind the door, taking aim at Troy, firing pretend shots into his abdomen, with accompanying sound effects.

Troy flops onto the grass. Tony stands over him, pressing the parasol to his forehead.

TONY (CONT'D)
Any last words, badge?

TROY
Your mom... she... never... called back.

Tony explodes into laughter. He offers his hand to Troy, effortlessly lifting him to a standing position.

TONY
Nightcap?

TROY
Breakfast.

They start in.

TONY
Bro, why you got to mess with the sprinkler?

INT. LIVING ROOM, TONY'S HOUSE-DAWN

Troy, sitting on a filthy brown couch, stares into the empty screen filling Tony's inactive television, before being hit in the face by a flying pop tart. Tony approaches, from another room.

TONY
Enjoy, compliments of the chef.
Finest in Whitestone.

TROY
I'm honored. Oh, no frosting? What kind of welfare tart is this?

TONY
On the house. So shut up, eat, and be merry.

TROY
Fuck is up with your phone? Tried calling, runs straight to voice mail. Didn't pay your bill?

TONY
Tough living in these inflammatory
times.

TROY
Inflationary...

TONY
What?

TROY
Never mind.

Tony flips on his set, comes across a Viagra styled advertisement. It features a beautiful middle-aged woman running carefree across a sandy beach, man dressed as a cowboy in steady pursuit.

TONY
Now you see that Troy, that's the
kind of girl I'd really enjoy
fucking.

TROY
Noticed she had a pulse.

TONY
Look at her. Weathered, yet
refined. Mature. Free from
insecurity.

TROY
Been brushing up on that thesaurus
big guy? Excellent.

Tony flops down on the ratty, stained couch, next to Troy. Troy nibbles on the plain, dry pop tart, in a humoring manner.

TONY
Tell me something. When's the last
time you got laid?

Troy bristles, firing the half-eaten tart at Tony's face, missing his mark at point blank range.

TONY (CONT'D)
That long, huh? No one since
Evelyn?

TROY
Ever read Finnegans Wake? Wait a
second, don't bother answering.
(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

That book crossed my mind last night.

TONY

Fuck is Finnegans Wake?

TROY

James Joyce. All about cycles.

TONY

Cycles?

TROY

The 360 degree circle of life.

TONY

You lost me. God, look at those tits.

Tony licks his lips.

TROY

The work argues that all of life is an unbreakable line, repeating ad infinitum.

TONY

Would like to just stick my face in 'em.

TROY

Last night, I hit on Jamie O'Brien. Drunk, one shot too many, kicked my best game. End up... just fawning over her hair, fascinated. The smell alone... she turned me down. Same way she did back when we was 15, remember? Clarified everything...Chasing my tail, wondering through the wilderness.

TONY

Ain't such a thing as love. Just an excuse for banging. Same way religion's an excuse for suffering, hell, living.

TROY

Bleak outlook. What about your family? Friends?

TONY

Loyalty. Something different. And let's avoid the topic of Britt, before that son of a Fredo's name even enters the discussion.

TROY

Too late. Your last sighting?

TONY

Been a year. At least. Walks away from the only people who give a damn.

TROY

He's the one, told me 'bout Joyce.

TONY

Figures. Shouldn't you be getting to work?

TROY

Snort any blow last night?

TONY

Here we go... with the big exposition... Officially warn out that welcome, Troy my boy. Time to go.

TROY

Hate to see you dead, T. No religion, could wind up in hell.

Tony nervously twitches, rubbing his nose, face reddening.

TONY

Call me later, or something.

Troy heads to the front door. He cracks it open, one foot out, before Tony clears his throat.

TONY (CONT'D)

Hey, the shit with Evelyn... that wasn't your fault. A man has to stand up.

Troy nods.

EXT. CORNER STORE-DAY

Troy smokes a cigarette outside a quaint shop, identified by a sign on it's roof as "THE CORNER STORE". The establishment is nestled within a packed front, sharing space with a cafe, deli, and video store.

Troy's placidity, amplified by the pleasant din of morning, is interrupted when DAVE O'MALLEY, sole proprietor of the "Corner Store", grabs him by the right arm. O'MALLEY is short and stout, slight of stature with a slumping posture. His disposition is of constant disgust.

O'MALLEY

Get your lazy slacker ass inside
this instant! Customers equal cash,
can't count it without a cashier,
let's go!

O'Malley releases Troy, clapping his hands together. Troy ignores. O'Malley, exasperated, leans in close, nearly nose to nose with Troy.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

You are stomping on paper thin ice.
I only offered this opportunity
because me and your daddy go way
back, old school, understand? But
that sentimental bullshit becomes
worthless the second you cost me
money. Nobody else is going to hire
you, not after cracking that Foster
kid with a baseball bat. A few
months at Riker's, a permanent blot
on your record, yeah, who doesn't
have problems? And I don't give a
rat's ass, quite honestly. The
miserable fuck probably had it
coming. But you should never, ever,
shit on second chances. Now, what
do you say?

TROY

Him and his crew, they jumped me.
Almost broke my jaw. Clean
conscience.

O'MALLEY

How was that, the beating they
gave?

TROY

Very... impersonal.

O'Malley hitches his pants.

O'MALLEY

Well, if you don't get yourself behind that counter in about two seconds, it'll be a fond remembrance, compared--

TROY

Spare me any ultimatums.

O'Malley rips the cigarette from Troy's mouth, flipping it aside.

O'MALLEY

Real thin...

Troy heads inside.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

And get some more sleep. You look like shit ran over twice.

INT. CORNER STORE-DAY

Troy stands behind the counter, barely keeping his eyes open, leaning on the register. His hair has degenerated into a clump, melded by day old gel, whitening.

O'Malley surveys the scene, as Troy drops pieces of change, curses under his breath, and nearly falls over while servicing a customer buying a stick of gum.

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE-DAY

Troy sits in a tiny plastic seat, facing O'Malley, who hunches over his desk, leaning forward in a high leather chair.

O'Malley, lips pursed, slides forward a framed picture, gesturing for Troy to examine it. Troy turns it over, a snapshot of three little kids in front of the corner store, striking a stoic pose. The date is visible in the bottom left corner: 9/21/97.

Troy can't help but smile.

(CONT'D)

TROY

Me, Britt, Tony. Long time ago.

O'MALLEY

Ages. A slight of hand, a twist of fate, and life scatters out of place, am I right? Divorce changes everything...

Troy's hands squeeze the frame, tightening.

TROY

You should go ahead and keep your fucking mouth shut about my parents. Think you know something, play cards with my dad once in a blue? Never knew shit about my life, never wanted to.

O'MALLEY

Am I supposed to care?

TROY

I never asked.

O'MALLEY

Tell me, what do you see in that picture? One from the wall of fame...

Troy shifts his weight uncomfortably.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

Kids. You were young and dumb.

TROY

We had heart.

O'MALLEY

Don't mean dick in the real world. You aren't a child anymore, Troy. Life doesn't spin on your whims, my customers aren't altering their routines to accommodate your fucking hangovers! I advise you reverse course, quick, before the sidewalk swallows you whole. I've seen it happen. Tough guys. Hard cases. They come and go, maybe even haunt the boulevard. But nobody remembers. Your friend Tony Blue Eyes fits the description, to a fucking tee.

TROY
Firing me, that it?

O'Malley lets the question linger. Troy launches the picture at a nearby wall.

O'MALLEY
Well, now I definitely am.

Troy springs up, slams the door shut behind him. O'Malley leans back in his chair, exhales.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)
Heart...

He laughs bitterly.

EXT. COURTYARD, SHEFFIELD MANOR-DAY

Troy strolls leisurely through the decaying grassland encircling his apartment complex.

He stops in his tracks to talk with MIKE WILLIAMS, a fellow tenant in his early twenties, wearing a postal uniform, mail sack slung over his shoulder.

TROY
Morning, money Mike.

MIKE
Clear running Rivers, could have sworn you had a shift in them coal mines today.

TROY
Permanent vacation, know what I mean?

MIKE
Ouch. What happened? Thought you gave a damn.

TROY
I had a rough night spill over.

MIKE
Remember that conversation we had, about separating business and pleasure?

TROY

Caring can wear a person out.
Fucking guy wouldn't give me a
second to clear my mind.

MIKE

So, what now?

TROY

Don't ask. Maybe we could partner
up, sling some mail, represent the
Sheffield Manor correct, dog.

They exchange a hand pound, nervous laughter.

MIKE

(Concerned)

Get some shuteye, young blood.

INT. APARTMENT 28, SHEFFIELD MANOR-DAY

WILL RIVERS eats a bowl of corn flakes, seated at his dining
room table. He's an even 50, graying, with a scholarly
appearance. Deeply imbedded bags sag under his eyes.

His living quarters are cramped, practically claustrophobic.
A radio plays classic rock in the tiny kitchen, mere steps
away.

There is a knock at the door. Will doesn't budge. The door
then rattles, kicked from the outside. Will grudgingly
stands.

WILL

The prodigal son has returned...

Will twists the door open, and Troy stomps in, heading
straight for his room, directly down the hall.

WILL (CONT'D)

You interrupt my breakfast for
that? No shocking announcement? No
sweeping proclamation? Just another
sojourn to the bat cave? At least
share your exploits from last
evening. I'm expecting something
epic.

Troy halts, turning.

TROY

I got stinking drunk and struck out
with some chick. Impressed?

WILL

Sure. Even the best only hit .300... Stepping up to the plate, now that's commendable. What would really be fascinating, however, is a legitimate excuse explaining your absence from work. You should be sorting through receipts, bagging groceries, taking orders from my close personal friend, Dave O'Malley. Instead, you stand before me, beleaguered, guilt in your eyes. And this is disconcerting. Extremely so.

TROY

Big fucking words, making my head hurt even more...

WILL

Than why do you always use them?

TROY

Maybe I don't realize. I don't feel the fucking need to impress everybody.

WILL

What did you do? Troy?

Will analyzes Troy.

WILL (CONT'D)

Christ on the cross... you smell like a distillery. Trying to give you advice... like bargaining with a brick. So you live this vagrant existence, sing a little bohemian rhapsody, whatever passes the time. Christ Troy, you're a man. 19 years old... the choice is yours. My father raised me the same. And I'm an honest man. Not a great man. But an honest one. I expect nothing less.

TROY

Listen--

WILL

Did the best I could, truly... Alright, lay it on me straight.

Troy backs into the wall behind him. His eyes moisten.

TROY

Didn't mean to let you down. Just can't take it anymore. Losing my grip... I've lost it.

WILL

So you sabotage yourself? This isn't you, the kid I knew. So bright, sharp. On point.

TROY

Don't do this to me, say that shit. Know how much it hurts? God only knows.

WILL

God? Allow me a moment, Troy. Listening? God has a plan, you just can't stray from a righteous path.

TROY

What's the difference?

Will slams his son into the wall, exasperated.

WILL

Don't you know who you are? Your my son, my son!

Troy tries fighting his father off, and they engage in a shoving match.

TROY

Get off me! Get the fuck off me!
I'm getting away! I'm getting away,
get the fuck off me!

Troy gives Will one more push. Will crumbles to the floorboards, convulsing.

Troy stands over him in shock.

TROY (CONT'D)

Dad?

He rushes to knell beside him. Will's eyes are closed.

TROY (CONT'D)

What's wrong? What's wrong? Say something to me, say something!

Troy panics. He gets up, almost heading for the phone, located in the kitchen, before begging his father to awake again.

He repeats the process, unable to comprehend the situation. Finally, after frantically checking for a pulse in Will's neck, hands, and heart, he dashes into the kitchen, dropping the phone twice before finally dialing 9-1-1.

TROY (CONT'D)

Yes, there's an emergency. My dad... he's not breathing. Just help me, help me!

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM-DAY

Troy sits among a solemn, silent gathering.

Just as he begins involuntarily dozing off, a young doctor named JEFF PARKER gently taps him awake.

DR. PARKER

Mr. Rivers?

Troy's eyes scan upward, toward Parker.

TROY

A doctor... good news doc. For everything holy...

DR. PARKER

Are you the only family member present?

TROY

My mother's on the way...

DR. PARKER

Mr. Rivers-- your father has suffered a stroke.

TROY

Is he alive?

DR. PARKER

He's lost consciousness. We aren't yet prepared to offer a complete prognosis, but preliminary exams indicate--

TROY

What?

DR. PARKER

Your father has suffered severe trauma, and is currently functioning on our life support system.

TROY

A vegetable?

DR. PARKER

We will keep you updated on his condition. He's currently being transferred to the third floor, ICU. You may... want to investigate the rules and regulations governing visiting hours as it pertains to our particular policies.

Dr. Parker wanders off, nearly accosted by other visitors seeking information on their kin.

Troy is at a loss.

INT. ROOM 101, HOSPITAL-NIGHT

Troy and his mother, ELIZA PAIGE, are seated next to each other, squeezing the limp right hand of Will, his prone body hooked into a machine, emitting a synthetic wheeze upon his every breath.

Eliza is 44, resplendent, a stunning redhead. The makeup on her face is smeared, eyes bloodshot.

TROY

Rick?

ELIZA

A broker's meeting. In Chicago.

TROY

What an occasion.

ELIZA

Now isn't the time Troy.

TROY

Sense something in my tone? Purely incidental. Feel nothing for the guy.

ELIZA

Turned apathy into an art form.

TROY

Abstract, at least. When's the last time we actually discussed anything? Disregarding our conversations since the divorce, where we, what, basically confirm our existences and move on?

ELIZA

Never going to forget. The situation...couldn't control it. At some point, your father and I became incompatible.

TROY

Obviously.

ELIZA

We tried.

They sit silent.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Where are your friends?

TROY

My friends? Same place as Rick. Not here. I've dialed Tony, he isn't answering. Chances are he went on a solo binge, unreachable by civilization. Only guy I know worth calling, besides Britt, who I'm not.

ELIZA

Rick's on a plane.

TROY

Well, that solves everything. Saves my day, fuck it, week.

ELIZA

He was a great writer, William. Did you know that?

TROY

He hinted. Wasn't something he wanted to delve into. Could tell.

ELIZA

He would construct these amazing, complex stories, send them to fiction magazines, even tried piecing a novel together.

(MORE)

ELIZA (CONT'D)

It ate up a ton of time,
encapsulated our hopes, dreams. We
wanted to escape this place. You
were born, reality struck. We made
sacrifices Troy. Never thought
twice. When you...went away... it
broke his heart Troy. Almost killed
him.

TROY

Guess I finished the job this
morning. Sorry for ruining your
lives.

ELIZA

Would have never wished anything
different. Had each other. Family.

TROY

Until we didn't.

A sadness permeates Troy's expression.

TROY (CONT'D)

I need some air.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL-NIGHT

Standing at the midpoint of a winding industrial staircase is
BRITT MCNABB, a slight 19 year old, blonde headed, possessing
delicate features, narrow cheekbones, tiny jaw, passive eyes.
He is of British and German ancestry. A cigarette dangles
from his mouth. He appears deep in thought, motioning with
his hands.

TROY (O.S.)

Where have I seen that face before?
No... can't be. Is it?

Troy walks down the steps, toward Britt, who isn't sure how
to react.

TROY (CONT'D)

Britt McNabb?

They come face to face.

BRITT

Wish we could have reconnected
under better circumstances.

TROY

Britt McNabb...

Troy pulls him in for an awkward hug.

TROY (CONT'D)

Where have you been man? Where the fuck have you been?

BRITT

Floating in space, brother.

They take stock.

TROY

Not a word in months. What's the deal?

BRITT

Isn't important right now. Your dad, Troy?

TROY

A stroke. We were fighting this morning, O'Malley canned me.

BRITT

Sure that wasn't the cause.

TROY

Become a doctor since you dipped out?

BRITT

Amazing. Can't let that nonsense go, even with your father, your fucking father, laid up. Good perspective.

TROY

You lecturing me on perspective? You?

BRITT

I gained some, yeah, enlightening, liberating. Should investigate. Might not feel so confined. We shouldn't be arguing. Got here soon as possible, news filtered through my channels. Where the fuck is Tony?

TROY

No clue.

BRITT

That candy... Turning his mind to
mush. What's his status these days?

TROY

Try showing your face once in a
while. Humor us. Be up to date
quick.

Britt gives Troy a look, unsatisfied with the answer.

TROY (CONT'D)

The situation is shit, Britt.
Really fucking bad. He's stepped up
his illegal enterprise, feeding the
addiction. Climbing in league with
an entire cast of unsavory
characters. It won't end well,
because he doesn't listen. Can't
criticize, because neither do I. So
goes the circle.

BRITT

I ran into some mutual
acquaintances, well, maybe not
mutual anymore. But Joey, Nick, all
the guys, they wanted to be here.
Weren't sure it was their place...

TROY

But they offer alms, I suspect?

BRITT

For oblivion, sure. Anything less
couldn't qualify. But your dad...
he's loved, Troy.

TROY

Don't have to stay, Britt. But I
appreciate the sentiment.

BRITT

Been standing here for about an
hour, contemplating what I should
say... to explain--

TROY

Explanations aren't necessary.
You're my friend, always will be.
Just doesn't seem all that
important to you.

BRITT
 Couldn't breathe, Troy. The
 lifestyle... Violence, vengeance,
 all so... futile. What can I say?

TROY
 Think you were the only one? Put my
 head down, kept walking. We done
 some terrible things. No denying.
 But at least we had our loyalty.

BRITT
 Dogs are loyal Troy. Nobody's my
 master.

TROY
 The fucking philosopher...

Britt abruptly heads down the stairs. He turns back, for a second.

BRITT
 Read any Joyce?

TROY
 Fuck no. Pretend, though. Steal all
 your material.

Britt laughs.

BRITT
 He'll make it Troy.

EXT. ROOFTOP, SHEFFIELD MANOR-DAY

Troy gazes, out toward the horizon, sharing the roof's narrow ledge with a flock of birds. They seem at ease in his presence.

Unbeknownst to Troy, EVELYN GREEN, 18, a petit beauty, raven hair dipping beneath her shoulders, approaches timidly.

EVELYN
 You and the birds...

Troy spasms, a sudden shudder. He quickly regains his composure, doesn't miss a beat.

TROY
 In simplicity, therein lies the
 beauty.

EVELYN
Who said that?

TROY
Britt visited the hospital last night. Now you, stopping by, at our old spot. Flashback FM. Bet you didn't even bother checking Apartment 28. Had to know I was up here...

EVELYN
How are you, Troy?

TROY
I want to wake up. Hasn't happened yet.

EVELYN
Sorry I wasn't there, yesterday. Hadn't heard--

TROY
Don't owe me anything, least of all sympathy.

EVELYN
Is he going to be alright?

TROY
My father? No. Life support. My mother, she cried... Sad. Who can blame her? She stayed there overnight, wanted me to go home, sleep. I couldn't, haven't been able for awhile.

Evelyn, in quick paces, strides over to James, throws her arms around him.

EVELYN
After everything you've been through...

TROY
People cry when they feel sorry for themselves. It becomes sensible, a pity party. I need to be a rock, for my mom. I need to be strong for her...

EVELYN
You can let it go now. Nobody here but me.

Troy lowers his head.

He pulls Evelyn closer.

TROY

I just can't believe this happened.
Why? Why my dad? Never hurt a soul.
He suffered, when I went to jail.
But, more than anything, he was
confused. Couldn't understand my
anger. It was alien to him. He
hoped I was infected. By the world,
my environment... whatever. He was
a hippie, know that? Believed in
peace. Love. I mean, he actually
believed it, God bless him. Me?

A tear escapes Troy.

TROY (CONT'D)

Me...

They hold each other.

TROY (CONT'D)

I miss you. I miss you very much.

EVELYN

Isn't easy, being alone...

TROY

We shouldn't be.

Troy is breathing heavily, straining to keep his emotions in check, on the verge of breaking.

TROY (CONT'D)

Should have listened to you, about
everything. Let it go.

EVELYN

We can't go back.

TROY

I still love you.

EVELYN

You never told me.

TROY

Understand the choices you made.
Didn't want your name associated
with a felon. Cut me off. But I'm
not mad, couldn't be.

(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

See, I'm thinking now, Britt,
before he stopped coming around,
made me realize there's a different
way.

EVELYN

You hurt me Troy. Reap what you
sow. Were you thinking about me,
when you swung that bat?

Evelyn tries pulling herself away. Troy won't let go.

TROY

My dad's going to die. He's going
to die.

EVELYN

You don't--

TROY

He's in that room, lifeless, a
brilliant man, can't think, can't
talk. What did he ever get, for
trying to raise me right? What was
his reward? Trapped.

EVELYN

Troy... please let me go. Just calm
down, let's go inside.

TROY

You knew me. You were the only
person who knew me.

EVELYN

I know this isn't you.

TROY

You know who I am! You know I'm
not... I'm not...

EVELYN

I was crying in your arms once,
Troy.

TROY

I'm not crying.

EVELYN

I was holding on for dear life.
Begging and pleading, praying you
wouldn't walk out that door.

She finally breaks away from his grasp.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

This isn't what I came here for.
I've started my life over. You
can't wallow in what was. This is
about your dad, Troy.

TROY

We can go inside. We can do that.

EVELYN

OK... just relax for me. OK? I'm
here, I'm here.

Troy reaches out, grabs Evelyn's waist, presses his head
against her chest, exhausted. The birds fly away.

INT. LIVING ROOM, APARTMENT 28- DAY

Troy and Evelyn sit at opposite corners of a small couch.
Troy leans backwards, eyes closed, still awake. Evelyn
fidgets, obviously uncomfortable, clawing at the cushions.

TROY

Ignorance is powerful. Toxic. Makes
you carry the weight of other
people's sins. These prices we pay
for each other... Britt has it
figured out. Hate how he rubs my
face in it.

EVELYN

You can't sell instant
enlightenment. I'm not buying.

TROY

Know your smarter than that. Than
again, I know you. Period.

EVELYN

Know me?

TROY

Know you. Rare thing.

EVELYN

Prove it.

TROY

Relieved right now.

EVELYN

That right?

TROY

Yeah. Sense I remember, like you.
Gave yourself up, right away,
mentioning the birds. Me? I
remember how much you love Sinatra,
would listen to his old albums
before going to sleep. I remember
us talking about escaping, some
island in the sun where we could
spend the rest of our days. I
remember your favorite song--

EVELYN

OK... stop.

Troy edges toward her.

TROY

I don't get it Evelyn. Why do I do,
just as you say, why must I just,
give you your way? Why do I sigh,
why don't I try to forget...? Can
you tell me?

Evelyn laughs. She blushes, brightly. Troy smiles.

EVELYN

Could at least try singing the
lyrics.

TROY

Wouldn't want Frank rolling in his
grave... among many others.

Troy gets closer, and closer, until they draw eye to eye.

TROY (CONT'D)

It must have been, that something
lovers call fate...Kept me saying I
have to wait...I saw them all, just
couldn't fall... 'til we met...It
had to be you, sorry Evelyn, it had
to be you. Nothing I could do.

Troy caresses her face.

EVELYN

Neither could I.

They passionately kiss.

Evelyn, abruptly, distances herself from Troy, retreating.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
We need to stop.

TROY
Who said?

EVELYN
I said.

TROY
Why? Feels perfect.

Evelyn begins walking out of the room.

TROY (CONT'D)
Evelyn, what the fuck?

EVELYN
What are you looking for, Troy? A sympathy lay?

TROY
How could you say that to me? How could you fucking say that to me?

EVELYN
I need to go. I need to be home. This can't happen, not now.

TROY
What are you, afraid of me? Of being happy? Thrive on loneliness, make you feel special? Aren't supposed to be isolated. That's why it hurts, because life shouldn't be that way!

Evelyn sighs.

EVELYN
I never said I was lonely. Only alone.

Evelyn leaves the apartment.

Troy emits a frustrated growl, slams fist into forehead.

INT. BEDROOM, TONY'S HOUSE-DAY

Tony sleeps soundly on his bedroom floor, blanketed by a small, football shaped carpet.

His nose runs with blood and mucus. White powder, crystallized, is caked on the outer edges of his nostrils.

Britt McNabb encircles him in a stealthy manner, carrying a glass of water.

He spills the contents onto Tony's face, awakening him from hibernation. Tony leaps up, confused, before calibrating his sight on Britt.

TONY

Who the fuck let you in my house?

BRITT

Your brother, stopped over on his way to work. The water was his idea, not mine. A paralegal... mom and dad must be proud.

TONY

They never get tired telling me. Or anyone else.

BRITT

But especially you, right?

TONY

Of course. But you know this already.

BRITT

I do. Been so long, almost have to get reacquainted.

TONY

And whose fault is that?

BRITT

Rusty pipes?

Britt taps his right nostril. Tony discovers the blood.

TONY

Allergy season.

BRITT

Everyone's worried, Tony.

TONY
Should save their concern for
someone who needs it.

BRITT
Getting in debt?

Tony wipes his nose on the linens of his bed.

TONY
Who'd be spreading that nasty
rumor?

BRITT
In the wind.

TONY
Ton of people, would love seeing me
fall.

BRITT
What about you?

TONY
No. I walk in the sunset.

BRITT
Sure you wouldn't turn to dust?

TONY
Got a ton of nerve, you cock
sucker. Do the Houdini, but still
got the balls to run that mouth.
Flaky fuck...

BRITT
Came with a message from the
outside world.

TONY
So spit it out!

Britt fiddles with Tony's cross, hanging from his bed post.

BRITT
Heard you been hurting bad for
cash. Would sell your soul, if it
weren't nailed down.

TONY
Look around. See anything missing?

Tony motions to the possessions filling his room.

BRITT

Sold your X-BOX and rims. Sold your stereo and CD's. And, the latest, sold your phone. But, why worry? You'll have that sunset, right? Will Rivers had a stroke.

TONY

Troy's dad? What the hell are you talking about? I just saw Troy, this morning... no... yesterday morning... fucking shit!

Tony tosses his bed over.

BRITT

Things didn't have to be this way. I've heard what you been saying, behind my back, never to Troy of course.

TONY

If you have any instinct for self-preservation, you'll run. Three blocks, at least.

BRITT

Why do you hate me so much, Tony? Told Aaron Gray I was a spineless pussy. Were those your exact words, T? Spineless pussy?

TONY

What hospital?

BRITT

Maybe because, deep down, you know I never feared you.

TONY

What fucking hospital?

BRITT

All I fear is the inevitable, been trying to avoid it...

TONY

Give me the name of the fucking hospital, you stupid fuck! Me and you doesn't matter right now!

BRITT

But it does. I'm attempting to bypass the formalities which could curtail our evening. Because, whether you relish it or not, the three kings are painting the town tonight. Because Troy would appreciate that, and we're going to entertain the poor bastard.

TONY

I'm not hanging out with you. Not after wrenching a knife in my back. It was supposed to mean something.

BRITT

What?

TONY

The park! How we held shit down!

BRITT

I know, T. A man must have somewhere to go. Columbia Presbyterian. ICU. Room 101.

TONY

How old is Will? People aren't supposed to have strokes, not at his age.

BRITT

We're going to get Troy out of dodge, at least for a little while. That place... it'll suck the life from your veins.

TONY

Still always mentions your name in passing. Yeah, it mattered. Cold son of a bitch.

Britt, who'd been staring directly into Tony's eyes the entire conversation, has his drop for a moment.

BRITT

It'll make him happy, us three together again...

Britt leaves.

TONY

Knock next time, fucking redcoat!

Tony's nose begins to trickle.

INT. ROOM 101, HOSPITAL-DAY

Eliza nestles herself into the shoulder of RICK MORRIS, 40, tall and skinny, face partially shrouded by a full, black beard. He wears a business suit, bleary eyed.

Will Rivers' position remains unchanged, comatose.

ELIZA

How we going to do this, Rick?

RICK

An impossible question to answer.
Hoped for a better diagnosis.
Prayed.

ELIZA

Going to lose it again...be a real mess.

RICK

Should of just waited before receiving the news... would have been all together.

ELIZA

I hope he slept.

RICK

Poor kid.

ELIZA

Has his father's backbone. And temper. As a child he was calm, hardly ever cried, completely self-sufficient. Me and Will used to really have it out, marathon screaming matches. And he'd just sit there, maintaining such a placid demeanor, like nothing in the world could hurt him. That was before he grew up.

RICK

Does he hate me, Eliza?

ELIZA

Claims he's indifferent. Didn't turn your back when it would've been easy. He appreciates that.

RICK

Something to build on. What worries me, about Troy, is the way he views the world.

ELIZA

You've talked about it?

RICK

No. Will and I did, in confidence, at the block party last summer. He couldn't pierce that wall, was hoping I had a shot.

ELIZA

All in perspective, isn't it? Evelyn, that was his last bit of happiness. He cared for her so deeply.

RICK

Evelyn... right. Sweet girl. Headed for the hills after his sentencing, correct?

ELIZA

Couldn't have expected her to shoulder that burden. Troy should have realized, before--

Troy enters, Eliza cuts her thought short.

TROY

What? Did I plug the grapevine? Oh, Rick... you made it. I'm thrilled.

RICK

How you holding up?

TROY

Getting sick of people asking me.

RICK

My apologies.

TROY

No need. I'm a little irritable at the moment. Had an interesting morning. Again. How is he?

ELIZA

Dr. Parker came by earlier.

TROY

And?

ELIZA

Please sit down, Troy.

TROY

What did he say?

ELIZA

Troy... please sweetie, just sit down.

TROY

Give me a straight answer! Can you do that, even if I'm standing? Am I fucking with gravitational forces here, am I screwing with your equilibrium? Help me out here, Rick!

RICK

Easy Troy, easy.

Rick slides a chair toward Troy.

RICK (CONT'D)

Do me this favor. Put your mom at ease.

TROY

Well, fuck. Anything for Rick.

Troy sits down, facing Rick and Eliza.

TROY (CONT'D)

Now, do either of you want to volunteer a response to my simple inquiry? Because this whole... situation, is fucking nightmarish enough, without lapses... of... communication...

Troy nearly trails off, as he begins to cry. Rick pulls Troy in for an embrace.

RICK

I know it hurts. I know it hurts...

Troy jerks backward, rising and kicking his chair clear across the room.

TROY

Get the fuck off me! What are you trying to do, huh? What the fuck you trying to do? Soothe me? Ease my pain? I don't need that, I don't fucking need it, I didn't ask for it! I only need you to tell me, in plain English, what the fuck Dr. Parker said this morning! That's it, Rick!

Troy's tears have ceased, devoured by the rage.

Rick is stunned, hesitant to say anything.

ELIZA

(Hardly a whisper)
He's not going to make it, Troy.

TROY

What?

Eliza strains, holding back her emotion.

RICK

The doctor...Told us... he recommended that we... give our blessing. To... to... remove--

Troy crumbles into a crouching position, knocked down by an invisible weight.

Rick tries getting up, but Eliza won't let him go.

RICK (CONT'D)

There isn't anything, can be done.

TROY

So, the decision's made? We aren't going to fight? Hear me mom? We're just going to lay down?

ELIZA

Troy... there's nothing left to fight for.

Troy whirls around, hammering his fist into the adjacent wall, eventually slumping into it.

He tries collecting himself, backing up, toward the center of the room.

TROY

OK... know what? Know what? Fuck the both of you. Just pulling the plug? Fuck that!

He exits the room.

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL-DAY

Rick pursues Troy, rapidly proceeding down a corridor leading to an elevator.

RICK

Troy! Troy! Stop, Troy!

Troy does, reluctantly. Rick catches up.

RICK (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

TROY

What am I doing? I'm getting the fuck out of here.

RICK

Nothing's final. But you have to understand, the probability of your father pulling out of the coma is miniscule. This is the hand we've been dealt--

TROY

We? We? Are you serious, Rick? Who is Will Rivers, to you? Father? Friend? He's nothing to you, buddy. The husband of a girl you had to have. You attend the wake, frown through the funeral, and it's over. But he's my father. My father. So pass on telling me how to react. I need to be alone, right now. My mom understands. I can think, when I'm alone. I'm walking away, Rick. And you will let me go. Because just like my dad's nothing to you, you're nothing to me. And that's the hand you've been dealt.

Troy escapes into the elevator. He and Rick make eye contact before the doors close.

RICK

I'm sorry.

INT. CORRIDOR, SHEFFIELD MANOR-NIGHT

Tony and Britt walk through an elongated hallway within the apartment complex.

TONY

Alright, here we go, ready? I'm putting you to the test... Troy's apartment number.

BRITT

Serious?

TONY

Deadly. Check that memory.

BRITT

Functioning fine, Tony. I could find room 28 in this fucking maze with my eyes closed.

TONY

What have you been doing with yourself, anyway?

Britt places his left hand over his eyes, continues walking in a casual manner.

BRITT

Some soul searching. A little introspection, maybe.

TONY

Head's shoved so far up your ass that you can't see daylight. Know this. Would never assassinate your character, Britt. We fought side by side, too many times. That slices through any present day bull shit. Trust my word, not some fucking junkie, trying to score points with me by insulting you.

They pass a water fountain.

BRITT

There's the water fountain. You were always a highly skilled liar. A strength.

TONY

Believe whatever you please. I can't jump inside your mind, God knows, would never want to. In the end, I can always be comforted by a simple thought: Never betrayed myself.

They turn left, the blinded Britt leading, laughing.

BRITT

Deception...

TONY

Whatever. Too much shit rattling through your mind. It's like a faucet, learn to turn it off.

BRITT

Why wasn't Troy at the hospital?

TONY

Fuck if I know. Could be things turned for worse.

BRITT

Could be. But he wouldn't flee.

TONY

Choice might not have been his.

BRITT

Troy Rivers doesn't run.

They arrive at room 28, Britt instinctively stopping.

TONY

I know.

He shoots an icy stare at Britt, who knocks on the door. It opens, unlocked. The two enter.

INT. APARTMENT 28, SHEFFIELD MANOR-NIGHT

Britt and Tony arrive to find Troy swigging Jack straight from the bottle, slumped into his couch. He barely acknowledges their presence, with a flippant wave.

BRITT

What are you doing, Troy?

Troy presses finger to temple.

TROY

Thinking.

He indulges in a large gulp.

TONY

Now isn't the time to get annihilated, brother.

TROY

And what was the plan for tonight, then?

TONY

Shouldn't drink alone.

TROY

Shouldn't talk out of turn T. Don't make me mention anything else.

BRITT

Tough times require a sober mind.

TROY

Hey Mr. Quote Book, do me a solid. Sit down and shut the fuck up.

Britt and Tony take their place on the couch.

TROY (CONT'D)

Life's a joke. Not a particularly funny one either.

BRITT

Was thinking along the lines of cheap beer in the old lot. Nothing requiring a stomach pump.

TROY

So be flexible.

TONY

Remember the sign?

BRITT

At the old hangout?

TROY

Dead end. Sometimes the punch line is right in front of you. That obvious.

TONY

Actually stopped over there recently, slow night, reminiscing on better days. It was gone. All that tagging for nothing.

BRITT

No respect, these fucking animals today.

TONY

Preaching to the choir. Probably hanging in some scum bag's room, next to a framed 50 album--

BRITT

And Scarface poster--

TROY

Hell, some stolen rims if he's really hard core--

TONY

Our sign.

BRITT

Dead end.

They share a silence.

TROY

Life feels important. And yet... it's so fucking fragile. Like death's mocking us.

BRITT

Should head out. If you're up to it Troy.

TROY

Don't hesitate. After all, I'm down to the bone, loyal to the game.

TONY

Hell fucking yeah. No matter what, this is us.

Troy and Tony pause, waiting out of habit for Britt to follow up. He says nothing, getting up from the couch, heading for the door.

EXT. VACANT LOT-NIGHT

Britt's car, a '97 Saturn, is parked in the middle of a dark, abandoned lot, the three sitting on the hood, drinking local brew. Troy sits between Tony and Britt, a buffer. Hefty cases of beverage are placed atop the Saturn's roof.

The car's dim headlights illuminate the scene.

BRITT

You'd mentioned that to me, Troy, got to admit, almost slipped my mind. As it probably did yours.

TROY

Hasn't slipped in the slightest. Couldn't wait to can me. Show up hung over one morning, screw up with one customer, and I'm out the fucking door? Where's the logic?

TONY

Best let it slide, Troy. More pressing issues on your plate. In all sincerity, you are a smart little fuck. You'll find another job, quickly.

TROY

Is that a fact?

BRITT

The Neanderthal makes a solid point. These cashier deals are a dime a dozen.

TONY

Watch it.

BRITT

I insult face to face. Be nice to be afforded the same courtesy.

Britt tosses his empty can into an enormous pile, before reaching up and cracking open another.

TONY

Keep pushing Britt. I'll break your fucking face, pick my spot.

TROY

Can we chill? Remember the good times...

Troy hops off the hood, stepping into the white stream formed by the headlights.

TROY (CONT'D)

...The time I fucking whacked Drew Foster with a Louisville slugger. Bang! Or when we first tried coke? I know Tony cherishes that one. When Britt got assaulted? We went to the mattresses that summer, for real!

BRITT

Alright Troy... Me and Tony are fine, right T?

TONY

No doubt. Just settle yourself, have another drink.

But Troy is visibly growing more upset, upon every recollection.

TROY

Have anything to add, Britt? Never had the chance to ask... what kind of technique they use on you? Stick you in a trunk? My, my, what a bumpy ride...karma's a killer. Ask Foster, one of these days. Cause deep down, I don't regret it. Never have, never will. What was I supposed to do?

TONY

What you did.

BRITT

No trunk, for me Troy. We should of never took it to that level, with those psychos. No value for human life.

TONY

Fuck that! We're still alive. Don't know about either you, but I couldn't walk another step or draw another breath had we backed down. We won. Don't forget that shit. We fucking won.

TROY

Is that all there is?

TONY
How should I know?

BRITT
No, there's more. So much more.

TROY
My father's dying, without wealth,
legacy. Nothing beside me. He set
pride aside, not sure why. Maybe it
gets easier.

TONY
What are you telling me, all that
fighting was for--

BRITT
Nothing. Did say he was thinking.

TONY
Thinking... what does it get you?

BRITT
Breaks the cycle.

Troy's eyes widen. He considers something, rubbing his chin.

TROY
The money...

TONY
Money? What money?

TROY
The dirty money O'Malley launders.
Keeps it in a safe.

BRITT
What are you rambling about?

TROY
90 grand, weekly. Gets a cut. My
father used to complain when he was
drunk. Than he'd pretend never
mentioning it by morning. But I
know.

TONY
Wait a second. Think we can take
that place down?

TROY

It drove him fucking crazy. A working man, had to watch his friend from the neighborhood get rich cutting corners. There's that illusion again, the American dream.

BRITT

Insane. We'd need guns, first off.

TONY

I have a connect.

BRITT

Oh, really?

TONY

Really. Called networking, dick.

TROY

No more... no more... I'm getting mine.

Troy pounds his chest.

TROY (CONT'D)

I'm getting mine. I'm getting mine!

TONY

(bordering on euphoria)

No... wait... wait... just... this is good. This is really fucking good. In and out, clean.

BRITT

Too easy.

TROY

Not if we don't fuck it up. Not if we do it right, handle it like we can!

Spit flies out of Troy's mouth as he rants.

TONY

Yeah... yeah... tell him Troy. Tell him! This could work. This could fucking work. Big time!

TROY

Take those dirty dollars and start a new life. Carve out a fresh existence. This is it, Britt.

(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

What we always talked about, when me and you would be the last ones left at the park.

BRITT

Don't make it right.

TROY

I'm done rationalizing. Tired of waking up in the middle of the night, screaming.

BRITT

Think a robbery's setting you free?

TONY

Don't listen to him. He doesn't have the heart.

BRITT

The old fallback, right? You reveal your ignorance.

TONY

You reveal your cowardice.

TROY

90 grand. Split it three ways. And we're home free. I fly the fucking coop, find a shady spot in Mexico.

BRITT

With thirty thousand fucking dollars? Troy, I understand, this situation, the emotional trauma...

TROY

You in?

BRITT

What?

TROY

Down with us?

Britt slumps his shoulders.

BRITT

Not going to fucking jail.

TONY

Fuck him Troy, take 50, consider it a finder's fee.

TROY

Know something, Britt? You sit in your fucking house, on weekends, looking down on everyone from your high moral perch, and for what? What are you ever going to do? The Britt I know, the kid I respect, the friend I'd give my fucking life for, my fucking life, wouldn't accept purgatory. We have a right to do this, can't you see that? We have a fucking right. Nobody gives a fuck. So, we're going to decide what's ours. Exercise free will.

Britt contemplates.

BRITT

Troy... this shit sounds good in theory, but in reality--

TONY

Here we go, with the fucking reality again! I'm changing mine! You can keep yours, if you fucking like it!

Britt glares at Tony.

BRITT

OK.

TONY

What's that?

BRITT

...I said fine. Somebody's got to watch your back.

TONY

'Cause I'm sure you don't want a piece of the pie, right? Slimy mother--

TROY

Enough of this shit, between the two of you. What happened to the fucking brotherhood? What are you even fighting about? Forget the past... let it rest. Come on. We're down to the bone, loyal to the game...

TONY

This is us, no matter what. No
matter fucking what!

They look to Britt, to finish. He hesitates.

BRITT

....And can't nobody stop it. Can't
nobody stop it...

TROY

Nobody.

TONY

Amen. A-fucking-men.

Tony tosses his beer can, it clangs in the distance.

INT. BEDROOM, EVELYN'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Evelyn sleeps soundly in a spacious bed, the centerpiece of
her luxurious private quarters, wearing a long undershirt.

Awaken by a rustling outside her window, she investigates,
discovering Troy slipping and sliding on the verandah
directly underneath her bedroom. She opens the window, poking
her head out.

EVELYN

Troy, what the fuck?

He continues to struggle, seeking but failing to find
footing.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

This has got to be a fucking joke,
right? It's the middle of the
night, both my parents are home,
and the neighbors probably called
the cops.

TROY

What the hell happened to the
shingles?

EVELYN

They were replaced.

TROY

(Stumbling)
Why? What's the point?

EVELYN
The new arrangement doesn't suit
you?

Troy finally begins scaling upward, reaching Evelyn, grabbing
hold of her.

TROY
I'll manage.

Suddenly, he falters backward, Evelyn letting out a scream,
grabbing his hand, keeping him from a deadly fall.

TROY (CONT'D)
There you go... saving my life
again.

EVELYN
Do me a favor... pull...
yourself... up!

Troy leaps through her window, sending them both sprawling,
and laughing.

INT. BEDROOM, EVELYN'S HOUSE-NIGHT

The two share the bed, Evelyn resting her head on Troy's
shoulder.

Troy, with his free hand, sips a cup of coffee. He finishes,
setting it down on the night table.

EVELYN
Sober?

TROY
Not even close.

EVELYN
Shouldn't have asked.

TROY
But you always did.

EVELYN
And still do. Why did you come
here?

TROY
Repaying your visit.

EVELYN
How generous.

TROY
I have my moments.

EVELYN
Anything new... with your dad?

Troy shrugs his shoulders.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
What?

TROY
Status quo.

They share a silence.

EVELYN
Did you get my letters?

TROY
Couldn't see any. Not at the time.

EVELYN
Why?

TROY
Would've cried. No crying at
Riker's Island.

EVELYN
Ever read them?

TROY
Hoping I didn't?

EVELYN
I was a kid, Troy.

TROY
Hindsight. Might have reconsidered
saying you never wanted to see me
again. Thumbed through a few when I
got home, yeah.

EVELYN
What I felt at the time.

TROY
No undoing it. You won't poison my
life anymore. That line... that
hurt the most.

Troy places his hand on her shoulder.

EVELYN

What would you have me say?

TROY

Tell me. Did you find the peace you were looking for? A taste of salvation? Did anything change without me? Because, half my days are spent wondering why we're apart. I can't find a reason.

EVELYN

It was more complicated than you can imagine.

TROY

What else could there be? Never would have cheated on me. I could've sensed that, even before everything went to shit. And your parents, they tolerated my presence. I wasn't an adopted sibling by any means, but no one, not even Brad, would force your hand. Isn't their way.

EVELYN

No... no... there was something else... I swore to myself you would never know. What good could it possibly do?

TROY

Good? Fuck good. Fuck evil. Just give me the truth.

EVELYN

You can't know.

TROY

Why?

EVELYN

Isn't your burden.

TROY

Yours are mine.

EVELYN

Not anymore. Please go, Troy.

Evelyn climbs out of the bed. Troy follows her.

TROY
Sending me back out the window in
this suspense? Not happening.

EVELYN
I'll dial 911.

TROY
Nobody else bothered, apparently.

EVELYN
Unlawful entry. Is it a parole
violation?

TROY
That leash is off. And you helped
me in. I can't go, Evelyn. Not
until I know. Refuse to live in a
world where you weren't there for
me at my weakest. Not without a
damn good reason.

EVELYN
Too much for you to deal with right
now. Please, don't make me--

Troy places his hands on Evelyn's head, looking into her
eyes.

TROY
There's no time left for lies.

EVELYN
There was a reason, Troy. There was
a damn good reason. Why I
compromised myself that day, acting
like you were the only fucking
thing in my life.

TROY
It was for me, wasn't it? You were
worried about me.

EVELYN
I was pregnant.

TROY
Pregnant? Pregnant... that's crazy.
There's no way, you were on the
pill. I wrapped up, didn't take any
chances.

EVELYN
A miracle, maybe.

TROY
Impossible... impossible.

EVELYN
After the trial, choices were made.
We decided you should never know.

TROY
You were carrying, when...

EVELYN
You couldn't hear me.

TROY
Why didn't you tell me, Evelyn? Why
didn't you tell me?

EVELYN
Maybe afraid you'd run.

TROY
Never ran from nothing. Ask anyone
in this neighborhood.

EVELYN
Maybe afraid you wouldn't...

TROY
An abortion?

Evelyn doesn't answer.

Troy begins to pace. He snaps.

TROY (CONT'D)
Everything would have been
different! I wouldn't have put so
much on the line, if I knew you
were having a kid! Our lives--

EVELYN
Spare me, Troy. You would have
panicked. It would have ruined--

TROY
Ruined? That would have kept us
together!

EVELYN
It would have confined us together.

TROY

Well, is that so bad? Is that so fucking bad? Compared to what, this?

EVELYN

I can't take how you make me feel!

TROY

Hated me for a choice you made? Is that right?

EVELYN

No. Wouldn't have ended up any different, otherwise. I've convinced myself.

TROY

How long that take? Long enough for me to become a memory? Long enough to pretend what we had wasn't real? I know it was real... it was the only real thing in my life.

Evelyn can't stop now. She cries.

EVELYN

Just get the fuck out of here! I never asked for any of this!

TROY

Why such contempt, Evelyn? I only have love for you.

EVELYN

Your love suffocates me! I don't want to be your salvation, I just want to be me. You won't let me be me!

Troy presses Evelyn against the wall next to her bed. He kisses her, all over.

TROY

I need to know... will you come away with me?

EVELYN

Troy...

TROY

Would you leave this all behind?

EVELYN
Still dreaming...

TROY
No. We can try again...how it was
meant to be...God owes me another
miracle...

Evelyn gives Troy a forceful shove backwards.

EVELYN
Still delusional...

TROY
I'm escaping Whitestone, going to
find our island. But it wouldn't
feel like freedom without you.

Evelyn pushes Troy onto the bed, laying on top of him.

EVELYN
Why can't I let us go?

TROY
Our love's stronger than either us
combined. Can't fight this tide...

They kiss.

TROY (CONT'D)
There's a plan in place. We're
going to have what we need...

EVELYN
Don't do anything crazy...

TROY
Just taking back my sanity...

EXT. BRITT'S BACKYARD-DAY

Britt lounges in a lawn chair, reading "Crime and Punishment". Troy arrives, pulling up a chair across him. Britt doesn't look up, not until finishing the particular page he was reading. He marks his place with a crease and closes the book.

BRITT
There he is... the man with the
plan.

(MORE)

BRITT (CONT'D)

Have to admit, my outlook isn't usually this shallow, but after that wild ride we took to Melba, your drunken ass better have wrangled a hummer, at the least.

TROY

Don't kiss and tell.

BRITT

Crawling into her bedroom... just creepy enough to pass for romantic, I suppose.

TROY

Remember last night?

BRITT

Hardly.

TROY

What we discussed?

Britt laughs.

BRITT

Of course, of course. Aren't actually going through with it?

Britt flashes an inquisitive stare at Troy.

TROY

Made sense at the time.

BRITT

At the time.

TROY

It could be done. All I'm saying.

BRITT

Anything can be done. The question's of will.

TROY

My father... it isn't looking good. Hard for me to think of death as anything but darkness. Terrifying. Pray for a day when I'm not afraid. Fuck, a second. Could meet it with calm. Hope he is. Or was.

BRITT

Calm is good.

TROY

Thinking if I avoid the hospital,
nothing will happen.

BRITT

Interesting theory.

TROY

Wanted to test the waters. Feel you
out.

BRITT

What?

TROY

Tony, no question he'll still be
down for it. And if this were years
ago, wouldn't have even had to make
this visit.

BRITT

Good Lord... wasn't just beer
muscles. Think your father was lied
to?

TROY

By who?

BRITT

The world.

TROY

I think he deserved more.

BRITT

World doesn't owe you shit. Time
and chance happens to us all. Who
is your father, to you? A symbol
for everything unfair about life?

TROY

Of course not. Should knock you out
for even suggesting that.

BRITT

And you'd be right. But listen to
me...robbing from the rich and
giving to yourself, that isn't
justifying Will Rivers' life. It
justifies garbage like O'Malley and
Rudy Romero.

Troy considers.

BRITT (CONT'D)
Am I right? Best laid plans are
often made inebriated...

TROY
(smiling)
Fuck you. Just some idle scheming
between friends, right?

BRITT
Troy... don't want to go back.
Should be reason enough.

Troy starts out. Britt returns to his book.

BRITT (CONT'D)
Wait.

Troy turns around.

BRITT (CONT'D)
Call me later. We'll go to the
hospital together.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND-DAY

Tony holds court on a park bench, entertaining a gathering of
young teenaged hoodlums.

His audience stands at complete attention, captivated.

TONY
So Britt, he's really flying off
the fucking handle. Now, I seen my
boy mad before, I seen him enraged,
but never at this level. He goes
straight up to this fucking faggot,
probably driving his daddy's car,
and, right in the middle of the
damn Boulevard, rips him out the
driver's side, starts hammering
away. Talking haymakers, here. And
this fucking dipshit's friend, he's
in the backseat, making out with
some bitch. He doesn't have a clue
what the fuck is going on, and,
honestly, neither do we. Me, Troy,
oh... who else was it? Trevor?
Lance? Whatever, it doesn't fucking
matter... fuck, where was I? Oh,
right, so the faggot's friend
finally hops off his bitch long
enough to see wing man getting lit.
(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

What a fucking sight... he's out there, we're out there, traffic is whizzing by, and there's Britt, still firing. This faggot's whore mother wouldn't have recognized him.

One of the group, MATT SIMMS, clears his throat. Matt appears the youngest of his peers, rail thin, wearing a hooded sweatshirt despite the sweltering heat.

TONY (CONT'D)

Something to add, Matt? A little color commentary, maybe, you albino fuck?

MATT

I was just going to ask... why? Why did it have to happen?

TONY

Have to happen? Shit... we made it happen. Britt, actually. Going on some tangent about human decency...

MATT

Britt McNabb? I thought he was a first class pussy. Who started calling him Brittany? Now everyone does. Household name, for real.

Tony blushes.

TONY

Watch your mouth, young gun. Britt never needed reasons. Not then, anyway...

MATT

What changed?

TONY

(Sighs wistfully)

Time had it, a little punk calling him Brittany held a first class ticket to the infirmary, bed reserved next to the Boulevard faggot.

MATT

So? Forgotten today, probably never real in the first place.

TONY

Watch yourself, Simms. A backhand could serve as a lesson learned.

MATT

Whatever, old school...

TONY

Hey, thought I told you pricks to cut that old school shit. I'm imparting wisdom here, fucking pearls. Teaching you how to be down.

The kids share wary glances, quick and spontaneous. Tony doesn't notice.

From a ramp leading into the park enter two men in their late twenties, sporting identical leather jackets and similar, slicked hairstyles. Expressions empty, they walk with menacing purpose, brandishing wooden baseball bats. They are VINCENT CARMAZZI and JOE ANGELO.

Tony panics, catching sight of them.

TONY (CONT'D)

Not here guys! Not fucking here!

VINCENT

Funny, thought you said anywhere, anytime, tough guy! Look at him Joey, he's scared, can't even fucking move! Running, or what?

Vincent and Joe stop, waiting to pounce.

Tony's eyes dart around the circle, formed by the future caretakers of his park.

TONY

Fuck it.

He makes a sudden, desperate dash, toward the ramp leading out, opposite the entrance.

He doesn't get very far, as Joe throws his bat, hitting Tony in the back.

Tony eats asphalt, unable to get up.

JOE

Son of a bitch, I got him! Has to be a first! Ever seen that before, Vinny?

They stand over Tony, who writhes in pain.

VINCENT
Not recently, no.

Joe recovers his bat. The next generation holds in place, terrified, Matt Simms at the forefront.

JOE
Would you look at this merry cast of degenerates? Every four years, a fresh crop oozes in. Uncanny.

VINCENT
The kids aren't alright.

JOE
Hey class, today, we present a moral lesson. This is what happens when you don't pay your debts.

VINCENT
Also why you shouldn't become a sniveling coke head.

JOE
Well said.

Joe and Vincent flip their bats, the knobs now pointing downward, toward Tony's face.

TONY
(to the kids)
What are you standing there for? You've got them outnumbered, take 'em now!

They remain at standstill.

JOE
Sorry, Tony. Appears the calvary can't count.

VINCENT
Rudy is very disappointed. It saddens him. Only had the highest hopes for you.

TONY
Isn't my fault he never lowered expectations.

VINCENT

We want the money, Tony. Consider this your final warning.

TONY

(Relieved)

So, them bats just props?

JOE

No. Supposed to leave a reminder. For every time you happen upon a mirror.

Joe and Vinny, with vicious efficiency, bludgeon Tony's face with the bat handles. They finish, other spectators watching, shocked, disgusted.

JOE (CONT'D)

(sweating)

Is the tough guy crying, Vinny?

VINCENT

Crying? Fuck that. Want to see him piss his pants. Can you turn that trick, douche bag?

TONY

Please... stop... please... I'll get the money. I'll get the money.

JOE

This time tomorrow, fuck head. Or they find you floating.

VINCENT

Shouldn't have ran. A real man never does.

TONY

What would you know... about being a man? I'll take you right now, you piece of shit. You piece of shit.

Tony, beaten and battered, slowly rises to his feet. Barely able to maintain his balance, both eyes swollen, he motions for Vincent to step forward.

He raises his hands.

VINCENT

Look at this fucking guy, Joey.

JOE

Reminds me of Irish Pete, couple weeks ago. Than again, Irish Pete was on crack. This, this is impressive.

TONY

Come on... let's see... what you...

Vinny lightly shoves Tony, who collapses in a heap.

VINCENT

TKO. Couldn't last the standing eight count. Tomorrow Tony. Or the judges turn executioner.

Tony groans.

Vincent and Joe walk back to their car, parked across the street from the entrance. Joe bumps into Matt, before they reach the ramp.

JOE

Hope you took notes, kid.

After watching Joe and Vinny drive off, Matt races toward Tony, still prone, the others following suit.

They help Tony upright, carrying his weight on their slender shoulders, placing him on the bench.

MATT

We need to call an ambulance.

Matt reaches into his pocket. Tony, face caked in crimson, grabs his arm.

TONY

No. I'm walking out of here.

He takes out a cigarette, giving a condescending glance.

TONY (CONT'D)

Can't any of you brats see I need a light?

Matt lights his cigarette.

TONY (CONT'D)

There's the little creeper. Always stays sharp. Reminds me of me.

MATT

Tony, who the fuck were those guys?

TONY

Was I finished telling the fucking story? Let's see... right at the part where the faggot's friend makes his hero turn. Exactly. Well, to cut the whole fucking deal short, for the sake of your tiny fucking attention spans, this seemingly minor flare up results in the Brown Park Beef. All aware of that, aren't we?

MATT

Of course, T. Troy Rivers got sent away. Never getting forgotten.

TONY

Guess it was real, then.

Tony spits out blood.

INT. LIVING ROOM, APARTMENT 28 - DAY

Troy Rivers sits on his couch and stares contemplatively at a photo. The image features his father and mother aboard a fishing boat, all smiles. He thumbs the frame, noticing his reflection within it.

There is an urgent knocking at his door.

TROY

Evelyn?

More knocking, harder.

Troy opens the door, Tony falling through, into his arms. His face is horribly bruised and swollen.

TROY (CONT'D)

Now what?

Troy sets Tony down, onto the couch.

TROY (CONT'D)

An explanation, maybe?

TONY

How about some Aspirin?

TROY

Aspirin... OK, the man wants Aspirin, better get him some fucking Aspirin.

Troy walks off, toward the bathroom.

TONY

Pounding, like a jackhammer in my
fucking skull. Bring the whole
fucking bottle, don't bother with a
couple of tablets!

Troy reemerges, tossing Tony the bottle. He cracks it open,
almost swallowing the pill box whole, chewing the medicine.

TROY

Look at your fucking face...
Actually convenient. Meeting Britt
at the hospital. You can ride
shotgun. Maybe catch afternoon
surgery.

TONY

Think this if fucking funny?

TROY

No... just slightly... absurd.
Sitting here, stabilizing, before
you bust in, back from a meeting on
the waterfront with Johnny fucking
Friendly.

TONY

We don't got the time...

TROY

For what?

TONY

We just don't have it.

TROY

Time for what? Time for what? What
the fuck are we talking about here?

TONY

We don't have fucking time to go to
the hospital!

TROY

Really? Going to come into my house
and tell me when I can see my
father? That the schedule we're
operating on?

TONY

I didn't mean you... fuck... I'm
fucked up, man. I'm fucked.

TROY

Ice. How could you not ask me for ice?

TONY

See your dad, Troy. Take care of family. But... it has to be tonight.

TROY

What?

TONY

The robbery.

TROY

Jesus Christ, T. There isn't going to be any robbery. I already talked with Britt, and something clicked, because the idea, it don't seem so brilliant anymore.

Tony stands.

TONY

Britt! Fucking Britt! What does he know, he's watching his own ass! He's scared!

TROY

It isn't worth the risk.

TONY

Risk? Risk? What the fuck are you risking, Troy? You risking this fucking Pent House? Huh? You risking your future? What fucking future? There is none!

TROY

There's Evelyn.

TONY

Evelyn... wasn't there. I was. In the flesh. Who always protected you? Me, that's who!

TROY

What was the first thing I told you, after I was freed from that hellhole?

TONY

Said you wasn't going back.

TROY
Right, never.

TONY
But can't you see it? Can't you see
it? You are still in prison. Minus
the bars.

Troy turns his back.

TONY (CONT'D)
Forget about Jamie O'Brien? What
about Finny's fucking Wake?

TROY
My father wouldn't approve.

TONY
Troy... they'll kill me.

TROY
Who?

TONY
The people who did this to my
fucking face. My life is on the
line, here. And I could try doing
it alone. But I know how you really
feel. I want you there, so you can
collect the debt. Get back what
they took from you. What they take
from all us.

TROY
T...I just don't fucking know.

TONY
You said it yourself. We can't get
sloppy. Otherwise, what could go
wrong? Really, consider that
question. What could possibly go
wrong?

Troy extends his hand to Tony. They embrace.

TROY
Won't do it without Britt. He has
to be there. I trust him.

TONY
What about me?

TROY

Feels untouchable, the three of us.
We're invincible together. Stood up
to Brown Park. Could tear the
devil's horns from his head.

TONY

I'll get in touch with Britt, meet
him somewhere. Then, us three link
up.

TROY

Assuming he says yes.

TONY

Deep down, he can't resist the
payoff. Rides along on your
blessing. And we'll make it.
Through loyalty.

TROY

Always wondered if were just
stupidity.

Tony thinks.

TONY

Better than nothing.

EXT. PUBLIC POOL-DAY

Tony and Britt stand beside a shimmering pool, overflowing
with occupants, ages wide ranging. Tony is wearing
sunglasses, partially hiding his damaged face.

BRITT

What's with the cloak and dagger?
Needed to see me in person?

TONY

Circumstances have changed.

BRITT

Regarding?

Tony removes his sunglasses.

BRITT (CONT'D)

We warned you Tony. Should have
never gotten involved. In
quicksand?

TONY

Ever wonder, what you could have done with a second chance at life? Keeping the knowledge, but starting over?

BRITT

Hit reset?

TONY

Exactly.

BRITT

I wouldn't want another life. This one's mine. Own that much.

Tony laughs.

TONY

That little... listen, the fucking Corner Store... Tonight's the night. I've already made certain arrangements. Something important as this, should be us three, together. Almost has to be. It's a slam dunk, shoplifting with a better prize. Used to do it all the time...

BRITT

Funny. Can't recall ever carrying a hand cannon on Air Head heists.

TONY

Scooping Troy at ten. O'Malley sends the cashier home and counts the drawer at closing time. Alone.

BRITT

Practically asking for it, right?

TONY

Know what, Britt? You can take this holier than art thou attitude and shove it up your fucking ass. This is the world we live in. Violence is universal. People understand.

BRITT

What was today's translation?

TONY

You forgot who you were. We were warriors, once.

BRITT

I know who I am. Don't rely on you to tell me anymore.

TONY

Gutless. Used to be part of something. Now, a fucking fraud, a shell. Hope the memory stings, burns so bad you can't help but weep. Because, when it really counted, you didn't stand up. A fool for not claiming easy money, a coward for not having our back. The worst kind of disgrace.

BRITT

I am coming along, Tony. For Troy. And my lack of faith in you.

TONY

Not convinced.

BRITT

You are an Al fuck up, dumb enough to get high on your own supply. I'll see that you don't mangle a plain simple as this.

TONY

Troy doesn't need a fucking baby sitter. We both know the real reason.

BRITT

Don't get it twisted Tony, just my brother's keeper.

TONY

Admit it. Wouldn't last night, can't now. Haven't changed. Can read all the fucking books in creation, never satisfying that greed.

BRITT

Looking for a fresh shiner?

TONY

Really split my sides, Britt, lying to yourself. If it were in my hands, you'd be left out entirely. Only Troy, keeping you in play.

BRITT

Don't insult me. Please. Would take one phone call to destroy your world. Consider that leverage.

TONY

How do I know you aren't setting me up anyway?

BRITT

I'm not a fucking rat. This course is set in motion. Why not protect a friend and take something from myself? Seems reasonable.

TONY

Would you look at this, folks? The accidental tourist happened upon a score. Who the fuck you kidding?

BRITT

We snatch, run, coexist for our best interests. After that, you and I can be free from each other. And that's priceless.

TONY

Always a snake.

Britt raises his right hand. Tony flinches.

BRITT

Would have had you, T.

Britt begins walking away.

BRITT (CONT'D)

Would have had you...

INT. ROOM 101, HOSPITAL-NIGHT

Troy stands beside Will's bed. He is without company.

TROY

Dark. You'd help me see. Talk me out of this. The rational, dad... has become unreasonable. I'm tired of getting shit shovelled down my throat. Finally feel I'm heading somewhere. First time in forever. Wouldn't be surprised, if it were demise. That count as destination?

Troy kisses his right hand, places it on his father's forehead. He doesn't notice Evelyn, behind him, entering the room.

TROY (CONT'D)

Thirty grand to start with. Than, I find something. Get a house, near the water. Me, Evelyn, and the waves. Never need anything else. I'll do some good. And you'll smile. Proud. Maybe understand the pain I've felt. Because it hurts. It fucking hurts so bad.

EVELYN

Where you taking me, Troy?

Troy is startled.

TROY

How long?

EVELYN

Not very. Enough to be privy. Hold grand plans for our future.

TROY

No lies this time.

EVELYN

Everybody lies. All the time.

TROY

Consider this an exception.

EVELYN

Saying goodbye?

TROY

I was.

EVELYN

Am I supposed to be next? Bid adieu to family and friends, my home?

TROY

I'm in hell.

EVELYN

And I'm heaven?

TROY

Somewhere close.

EVELYN

Hiding behind our love, while hurting other people, is despicable, Troy. Perverse. Are you hurting somebody tonight?

TROY

Look at him.

Troy nods toward Will.

TROY (CONT'D)

He thought, my father. Ruminated, procrastinated, until the day he couldn't anymore....We're going to stick up O'Malley. He's in bed with our local chapter of La Cosa Nostra. Going to part with a generous donation. They'll live, the parasites. But if I don't act... well. Just look.

EVELYN

Didn't learn a thing.

TROY

No. Haven't forgotten enough.

EVELYN

I'm not even someone you knew. Just an idea you had. If you really cared, you'd listen. At least once. But, my opinions don't matter in the dream collage, right?

TROY

You got it wrong. I swear. See you as so much more. Let me tell you a story.

EVELYN

Focus, Troy.

TROY

I am. Need you to hear this. You said something, last night. 'Bout my love suffocating you. Well, there was this girl, lived in London, locked in a marriage she didn't want. She meets this guy, an American tourist, real random encounter, and they run away together. This gal, Melanie, felt love.

(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

Could never deny, or go without it again. So, her and Derek find a home here, she gets pregnant. Now, Derek, he lives clean. Only drinks on holidays, rarely, if ever, gets drunk. Couple weeks before his son's birth, he decides to kick back after work, at a bar. He hit the sauce heavily, got in his car, and crashed into a tree. Dies. Nobody could figure it out, how such a rock could crack at the first hint of pressure. He was derided, quietly. Whispers. Ask Britt, says his dad couldn't hack life. Never met him, but he's sure of this. Certain. Is it in our nature to destroy ourselves? Hate to think that. We just get... lost along the way. Britt and his mother are in permanent turmoil. She blames him. Wouldn't have your problems, saying goodbye. But know what he told me, one time? Said his mother doesn't regret leaving London. Claims it was the only good decision she ever made, because the love was worth the pain. We have that, don't we?

EVELYN

No.

TROY

No?

EVELYN

No. We did. But there just isn't a way for us.

Evelyn is resolved.

TROY

Isn't a way...

Troy smiles, sadly.

TROY (CONT'D)

Isn't a way... was there ever a way?

EVELYN

If there was, we didn't follow it.

Troy is visibly crushed. Evelyn kisses him on the cheek.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
 Maybe in another life, Troy
 Rivers... we can find our island.

TROY
 You can't leave me twice. Please,
 you can't leave me twice.

EVELYN
 (whispering)
 You left me first.

Evelyn turns to walk away. Troy grabs her hand, gently. He holds on to it, for a few seconds, before letting her go.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY-NIGHT

Eliza, Rick, and Troy stand together, outside room 101.

ELIZA
 Did you talk to him?

TROY
 Wasn't much of a conversation.

ELIZA
 Make peace?

TROY
 That wasn't a priority. For me,
 anyway.

RICK
 Your mother loved Will. We're all
 here for each other.

Troy laughs.

RICK (CONT'D)
 Something funny?

TROY
 No... nope. Just that... man, such
 a fucked up thing... you really
 aren't a bad guy, Rick.

RICK
 I appreciate that.

ELIZA
 Tomorrow...is when the doctors--

TROY

This guy, he's solid, mom. I never would have admitted, before this second. But... He's going to be there for you. No matter what. Isn't that right, Rick?

RICK

Of course. Bet my life.

TROY

Yeah. You'll take good care of my mom. Leaving her in good hands.

ELIZA

Leaving me? What are you talking--

Troy interrupts Eliza, hugging her.

TROY

I love you. I don't want you to remember anything else about me, besides the fact I love you, with all my heart.

ELIZA

Remember you, Troy? You aren't making any sense...

Troy gives Rick a pat on the shoulder.

TROY

Words can hurt, Rick. But, they're just an extension of the illusion. Feelings count. I hope we part company in the midst of good feeling.

Troy nods.

TROY (CONT'D)

Yeah... that sounds right.

RICK

Troy, you should sit down, relax for a minute. When's the last time you slept?

TROY

Miles to go, Rick. Miles to go.

ELIZA

Troy, honey. Go home. Rest. We'll talk in the morning.

TROY
Excellent idea... But you stay,
Rick. Long as my mom does.

RICK
You got it, kid.

TROY
Great.

Troy steps back.

TROY (CONT'D)
You'll be fine. Everything will be
fine.

He hugs them both, quickly, before proceeding down the hall
toward the elevator.

Rick and Eliza re-enter room 101, together.

INT. PARKING GARAGE, HOSPITAL PREMISES-NIGHT

Tony and Britt lean against a Ford Explorer, aren't talking.
Troy emerges from an elevator, entering the garage. He greets
them both with a hand pound.

TONY
Stuff's in the trunk. Nothing more
to discuss.

TROY
We paid a price. For the power.
Something died in us.

TONY
Life we lead... end up behind bars
or in a pine box.

BRITT
Why didn't you change?

TONY
Why didn't you?

A silence.

The three enter Tony's car. It peels off, down a ramp.

INT. FORD EXPLORER-NIGHT

Tony drives, Troy in the passenger seat. Britt stares out the window, backseat. Tupac's song "Better Days" blares quietly on the radio.

TROY

When we get there, pull around,
into the alley.

TONY

Right.

BRITT

Don't go straight for the safe. Too
obvious. Make it seem far from an
inside job as possible.

TROY

O'Malley doesn't think I have the
guts for this.

BRITT

Do you?

TROY

Any doubts, Britt?

BRITT

Britt...

TROY

What?

BRITT

Nothing... I was just thinking, my
name's Bobby. Who started calling
me Britt?

TROY

It was the accent. When we were
younger. That's who you were.

BRITT

Right... who I was...

EXT. ALLEYWAY-NIGHT

The Explorer, lights off, creeps into a crevice behind the store front. They exit the vehicle. Tony opens the trunk. There lay three handguns, three ski masks, three black hooded sweatshirts, three pairs of dark sunglasses.

TONY
This is really happening.

TROY
Push a man to the edge, see the
unreal.

TONY
We all ready?

BRITT
Take a deep breath. Collect
yourselves. Isn't heroic. Far from
epic. Keep it uncomplicated.

TROY
Impersonal.

BRITT
Exactly.

TONY
Be over quick.

BRITT
Enter through the front, catch him
completely unsuspecting. Me and
Tony, we point the guns in his
face. Safeties stay on. Troy, hang
for a minute, than hit the back
room, the tape and safe. Return
here together. Drive away.

A silence again.

BRITT (CONT'D)
And that's that.

Troy reaches into the trunk. He slips on the hooded
sweatshirt and ski mask, the shades to cover his eyes. He
pulls the hood up.

Britt and Tony can't help but laugh.

TROY
Damn, it feels good to be a
gangster.

Troy does the crypt walk. More laughter.

Britt and Tony follow suit, putting on the garments.

Troy picks up one of the guns.

TONY
Heavy, right?

TROY
Not the first time.

Tony and Britt snatch up the two remaining firearms.

TONY
Is this destiny?

TROY
Wouldn't be here if it existed.

INT. CORNER STORE-NIGHT

Dave O'Malley stands behind the counter, over the register, counting the night's profit. The store is empty, front door unlocked. He smiles, satisfied.

O'MALLEY
Knew that bastard was skimming.

Britt, Tony, and Troy burst in. Tony and Britt immediately flash the guns. Troy, head down, recedes into an aisle.

TONY
Don't move, don't talk. Or your head gets filled with lead.

O'MALLEY
Even know how to use a piece, kid?

TONY
Want to find out?

O'MALLEY
If you're obliged.

TONY
Just shut the fuck up.

BRITT
(whispering)
Tell him to empty the register.

TONY
What?

BRITT
The money from the register.

TONY

Right. Empty the fucking register!

O'MALLEY

Some big fucking score, here. Might last you schmucks the weekend.

TONY

Want to die for it?

O'MALLEY

Where did your other accomplice disappear to?

TONY

Did I say you could ask questions?

O'MALLEY

Hope you realize who exactly you're fucking with.

TONY

Think we're scared of some washed up, spaghetti slurping mother fuckers?

BRITT

Yeah, we roll with the I.R.A. bitch.

O'Malley empties the register, flippantly piles the money on the counter.

O'MALLEY

There. A rich man.

TONY

Keep talking. Be a dead man.

TROY (O.S.)

Ask him where the fucking safe is!

TONY

Where's the safe?

O'MALLEY

Bad idea... boys. Bad idea.

TONY

I didn't ask for your fucking opinion! I asked for the fucking safe! Now tell me, before I splatter your brains all over this fucking place!

Tony snaps his safety off.

O'MALLEY
That isn't my money. Can't let you
have it.

BRITT
Shoot him in the face.

O'MALLEY
Try me, cowboy.

TONY
How about a popped kneecap? Got
insurance?

Tony aims downward.

BRITT
How about blasted balls? Got a good
surgeon?

O'Malley turns pale.

O'MALLEY
Bottom left drawer. My office.

TONY
Go tell Ronnie.

BRITT
You go.

TONY
No. You. Have this under control.

Britt takes a long look at Tony.

TONY (CONT'D)
Stop wasting time. Stop fucking
this up.

Britt shakes his head. He heads toward the office.

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE-NIGHT

The safe is out on O'Malley's desk. Troy is securing the
security tape, when Britt walks into the room.

TROY
Fuck you doing in here?

BRITT

Sharing something you already knew.
In the interest of avoiding
suspicion.

TROY

I'll be gone, anyway. Left Tony
alone?

BRITT

He insisted. Anyway, guy's unarmed.
Went off without a hitch. Try
opening the safe?

TROY

Sure, called a fucking locksmith.

BRITT

Any tools, in the drawers?

TROY

Why?

BRITT

I want to make sure the amount fits
expectation.

TROY

Told you I was positive.

BRITT

(sharp tone)

I need to see. For myself.

INT. CORNER STORE-NIGHT

Tony points the gun at O'Malley, slightly leaning back.

O'MALLEY

Make residence around here?

TONY

Go fuck yourself.

O'MALLEY

Better be the best score of your
life. Probably the last.

TONY

Not exactly in a position to issue
threats.

O'MALLEY
But my friends are.

TONY
Who? The people that use you? Think they give a fuck if you turn up on an autopsy table tonight? They'll find a new corner store, hell, this one.

O'MALLEY
Let me see your eyes.

TONY
Not seeing shit.

O'MALLEY
You a coward? Going to threaten my life without even looking at me? What kind of man are you?

TONY
I'm looking.

O'MALLEY
Maybe scared I'll see fear.

Tony removes the glasses. His eyes are stone cold. A loud banging can be heard from the office.

TONY
Satisfied?

O'Malley notices something.

O'MALLEY
Of course. Of course. Had to be sure.

TONY
Fuck you talking 'bout?

O'MALLEY
I'll take my chances you aren't a killer, Blue Eyes. Tell Troy it was a bad idea.

TONY
What?

O'Malley lunges at the gun, from across the counter. They struggle.

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE-NIGHT

Britt is trying to crack the safe with a hammer, as Troy looks on.

TROY

Thought you said we should break the safe somewhere else. Don't have all fucking night, here.

BRITT

What if there's only 50, 60? Who do you think gets fucked?

TROY

Even if it comes to that, you have my word. Nobody gets screwed.

BRITT

If you can stand up to Tony.

TROY

Fuck does that mean?

Britt hammers harder.

BRITT

Did I stutter? Figure it out.

TROY

Wait. You hear that?

O'Malley and Tony are cursing at each other, wrangling, the rustling audible.

BRITT

(putting down the hammer)
What is that idiot doing?

A gunshot goes off.

TROY

Fuck!

INT. CORNER STORE-NIGHT

Tony stands stunned, gun smoking. Troy and Britt scurry from the office, to his side.

BRITT

What happened?

Troy leans over the counter.

TROY

No. No!

O'Malley is dead, a hole in his head.

TROY (CONT'D)

You shot him. You shot him in the fucking head.

TONY

I... I... didn't mean to. It wasn't intentional.

BRITT

A shot to the dome? How is that unintentional? Tell that to a fucking jury!

TONY

I mean... he knew. Knew it was us. Called me Blue Eyes, ain't been called that in years. Went for the gun. And I... I...

TROY

You're lying! He didn't know! Admit the truth! He was mouthing off and you fucking whacked him! You fucking whacked him!

TONY

No... no... I swear. He knew somehow. Told me to tell you something.

BRITT

You fucked up. You really fucked up! We're going to fucking hang, because you fucked up!

TONY

Troy... he said it was a bad idea.

BRITT

A bad idea? A bad idea? You know what was a bad idea? Blowing his fucking brains out! That was a bad idea!

TONY

Fuck you Britt! He was trying to get my gun! Kill me! Self-defense! You wouldn't have done any different!

BRITT
I would have. Because I'm not
fucking stupid!

TONY
Fuck you, bitch!

Tony points his gun at Britt. Britt responds in kind. Troy watches.

TONY (CONT'D)
Let's settle it right now. End you.
I'll fucking end you.

BRITT
I'll do it, Tony, take you to
fucking hell!

TONY
Send me a postcard...

Tony is shot in the shoulder by Troy before squeezing the trigger. He yelps in pain, staggers over to a stacked pile of Lucky Charms Cereal Boxes, falls in.

BRITT
Nothing you could do, Troy. Nothing
you could fucking do.

Troy lowers the gun. He takes a few deep breaths.

TROY
I shot Tony. What the fuck?

BRITT
We got to get the fuck out of here.

Troy nods.

TONY
Troy! Troy! You shot me, man, how
could you fucking shoot me?

Troy and Britt head up the isle, toward O'Malley's office. Tony crawls toward them, trailing blood, as sirens sound in the distance.

TONY (CONT'D)
Troy! Don't leave me! Don't leave
me! Please, don't fucking leave me
here! Please! I'm sorry, OK, Britt,
I'm fucking sorry, just don't leave
me here!

Troy looks back, though Britt tries to stop him. Tony rips off his mask.

TONY (CONT'D)
Down to the bone! Loyal to the
game!

Troy and Britt continue on. Tony unleashes a horrible wail, wounded.

INT. O'MALLEY'S OFFICE-NIGHT

Troy bolts for the exit. Britt lingers.

BRITT
Wait! What about the money?

TROY
Fuck the money!

BRITT
Fuck the money? Fuck the money?
Than what was the fucking point of
all this shit?

Britt shoots the damaged safe. A ricochet sends he and Troy sprawling for cover.

TROY
What in the fuck are you thinking?

BRITT
Look! It's fucking open!

Britt grabs a tattered plastic bag from the floor, shoving cash inside, much as he can fit from the charred safe.

TROY
The fucking cops!

BRITT
Need to leave, now!

TROY
What are you telling me for?

BRITT
Not leaving empty handed. We still
control that!

Britt, minding the money, exits, Troy following.

TONY

Yes... yes.

JASON

Good. Because after this, I never want to speak again. Better understand. Savor every word.

TONY

Jason... why....

JASON

The pain you've bought our family... Tony, we've had it. This is it. We're finished with you. Washing our hands.

TONY

My family... I love my family...

JASON

You love us? What about your friends? Love them too?

TONY

Troy... where's Troy?

JASON

Troy's wanted. He'll be caught. Maybe you two can share a cell.

TONY

The spiral... kept spinning...

JASON

A disgrace to our name. Our people.

Tony starts crying.

JASON (CONT'D)

So you can comprehend. Good. Should be crying, if you have half a heart left.

TONY

We were kings once...

JASON

What?

TONY

Real royalty.

Tony's tears stop, immediately. He smiles widely.

TONY (CONT'D)
We held it down.

Jason rises, walks, pauses in the doorway.

JASON
How could you be my brother?

TONY
Wait...

JASON
What?

TONY
Will you take me to rehab? I might
have... a problem...

Jason shakes his head, takes one last look.

EXT. WOODS-NIGHT

Troy and Britt lean against a mammoth, fern covered tree,
cash bag nestled under the latter's arm.

TROY
Forgot the tape.

BRITT
Does it matter?

TROY
You tell me.

BRITT
We still need to divvy. Not sure
how much there is to split.

TROY
Figure that out later.

BRITT
Suppose Tony won't be receiving a
cut.

TROY
All we left behind.

BRITT
When I met him today, I lied. Said
I needed to watch your back
tonight. Really though, I wanted
the money. Bottom line.
(MORE)

BRITT (CONT'D)

He was right. Was imagining what I could do... still a little voice inside pleading, had to appease it. Knowledge runs so deep...get confused enough to ache for simplicity again. Get paid, get laid, catch beef. I was respected, once. Just couldn't be meek, Troy. Couldn't kill this beast in me.

TROY

Thought we'd ride again, victorious. Were we ever?

BRITT

Who's keeping score?

TROY

I misplaced my soul long ago. Isn't something you can steal back.

BRITT

We're going to make it out of here. The second you stop believing, we're both fucked.

TROY

Believe in a higher power?

BRITT

When push comes to shove.

TROY

Before his stroke, my father said God has a plan for all us, so long we don't stray from a righteous path. It sounded comforting. Than I couldn't help but think, starving kids die everyday, six, seven years old. Never hurt anyone. What was the plan for them, Britt? Where did they stray? And what makes us any different?

BRITT

Maybe we're on our own. Under the sun, anyway.

TROY

Time and chance.

Lights flash, footsteps suddenly advancing toward them. Britt springs up, ready to flee. Troy doesn't move.

BRITT

Come on, Troy! We're about to get
pinched!

TROY

Stand still, until you hear a shot.
Then, take off, opposite from where
it sounded. Hopefully I can draw
them all.

BRITT

Can't end like this.

Troy stands.

TROY

Consider it a beginning.

Britt grabs Troy, as he turns to run.

BRITT

Wait...

TROY

Why?

BRITT

We fall together.

TROY

No. Not this time.

BRITT

But... you're my friend.

Troy smiles.

TROY

Good to know.

Troy runs off, before Britt can make any further protest.

EXT. WOODS-NIGHT

Troy races, dodging branches and leaping over logs, a
cavalcade of cops in pursuit.

TROY

Follow me, boys! Heading to Dunkin'
fucking Donuts!

He fires his gun toward the sky. The officers respond, missing, as Troy bobs and weaves in mid-sprint, actually enjoying himself.

TROY (CONT'D)
 Fuck, those weren't aimed at my
 legs! Brutality!

EXT. ROADWAY-NIGHT

Britt emerges from a bushel of weeds, onto a bike trail next to a service road. The bag is noticeably lighter, ripped. He searches for signs of the law, finding none, continuing along.

EXT. WOODS-NIGHT

Troy has distanced himself. He continues flying along, before falling, down a steep hill. The plummet sends him sliding through a veil of thin, sharp branches, the entrance of a clearing. He holds tight to the gun.

EXT. CLEARING-NIGHT

Troy, on his back, attempts collecting himself. He stands, recognizes the familiar setting. Amused, he allows for a respite, sauntering over to the pond, kneeling. He washes his dirty face with water.

The officers find the clearing, sneaking in, readying their weapons behind Troy. They kneel into a crouched combat stance, indistinguishable from each other.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Drop the weapon, place your hands
 on your head, and turn around
 slowly!

TROY
 That you, Harry?

VOICE (O.S.)
 Drop the weapon, place your hands
 on your head, and turn around
 slowly, or we will fire!

Troy sets the gun on the grass.

VOICE (CONT'D) (O.S.)
 Hands on your head!

Troy notices his reflection in the water. He stares into himself.

VOICE (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Hands on your head, now!

He touches his reflection. It splinters. He nods.

TROY (V.O.)
May the blessings of the great
rains be on you, my friend. May
they wash your spirit clean.

Troy grabs the gun. He stands, facing his fate. He is cut down in a hail of bullets, falling into the pond.

FADE TO:

EXT. BEACH-DAY

It is a quintessential snapshot, young people frolicking in the sun, families eating and laughing together.

Britt McNabb, appearing older, fully bearded, draws circles in the golden, sparkling sand, joined by a young child.

Suddenly, he wipes the circles away, forming a new surface.

BRITT
No more circles, Troy. No more.

The child laughs, clapping his hands.

Britt grabs a handful of sand, allows it to run through his fingers.

BRITT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
When they asked Eliza Morris how she overcame the tragedy of losing so much in the span of one day, she credited the man by her side through the ordeal. Rick Morris learned, from the terrible time, about family, the joy and pain we can so easily bring our blood. The lesson helped him raise his two sons. When Evelyn Green found out her former boyfriend had been killed, she cried, for her utter lack of surprise.
(MORE)

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

When Tony Lenti discovered his best friend had died, he made a silent vow, to spread the legend of a great man, never mentioning once, through his entire incarceration, that Troy Rivers had shot him. Realizing Troy had perished saving my life, I folded, unable to carry the weight of that sacrifice. On another continent, I waited, terrified, anticipating the seizure of my squandered freedom. Then, one day, I met a girl, and everything changed. We ran away together, on a whirlwind whim. I've repented, but remain haunted by a state of mind. How could I be so blind... all that wasted time... Why couldn't I see the beauty?

Britt picks up the child, and they walk in union toward a beautiful woman, waiting in the water, arms outstretched.

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

It wasn't life I left behind in Whitestone.

EXT. BOULEVARD-NIGHT

It's Winter, snow covering the street. Frost dangles from a stoplight in the distance, which flashes from red, to yellow, to green, and back again, without a soul in sight.

FADE TO BLACK.