

DOLDRUMS

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## PROLOGUE

OVER BLACK:

Water rocking gently against a shoreline; the crackle of a dying fire.

FADE IN:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - DUSK

A cold spring evening. The dim light of a fire flickers over a secluded beach. A MAN lays partially buried in the sand. We can barely make out his features, caked in soot and wet sand. A halo of dry blood outlines his wounded visage. A leather dog collar is fastened around his neck; a matching leash clutched in his gloved-fingers, protrudes from the sand. Though he is awake, he is near death. His movements are stiff; eyes empty and unseeing. This is JED, thirties.

Next to the fire, the figure of a BLACK MAN (JOHN HENRY, sixties) watches Jed. John Henry looks drunk, sprawled strangely in the sand as if he's fallen over. Jed's lips quiver as a dissonant whistle forms. It sounds dry, inhuman; like something is whistling *through* him.

John Henry pulls his own stiff body from the ground, using a rusty shovel for support. The fire flickers in his eyes as he takes a haul from a near-empty bottle of dark liquor. Flecks of dirt cling to his grey stubble, illuminated by the light of his cigarette. John Henry weakly dusts off his coveralls; Jed's eyes labour to locate the noise.

The shovel is rammed clumsily into the sand. Jed's eyes follow the sound of muffled footsteps until sand is dumped on his mouth, stifling his strange whistle. Jed coughs loudly, clearing his airway. Another clump of sand falls onto his chest.

Jed eyes drift weakly to meet John Henry's, the shovel raised high over his head. The two men share a moment of silence. John Henry's arms tense up. Jed nods -- it is permissive; pleading -- before slipping back into his dissociative state. More whistling.

John Henry loosens up. After a moment of pity, he drives the shovel hard onto Jed's skull. Jed's whistle is silenced. John Henry piles sand onto Jed's lifeless body.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK:

The laboured sounds of digging.

**TITLE CARD: "DOLDRUMS"**

The digging fades into the soft sounds of distant waves and ringing ears. A dog barks in the distance. Fast, heavy breathing fade into the sound scape. It is a YOUNG GIRL.

**TITLE CARD: "ACT ONE - HAPPY BIRTHDAY"**

FADE IN:

EXT. BACK YARD - MORNING

YOUNG JACKY (seven) stands against the wooden siding of a small, urban coach house. Her head hangs close to the breast of her sullied winter coat; matted hair underneath a dollar-store party hat. Her breathing is intentionally staccato. The voice of a YOUNG BOY (this is YOUNG JED, ten) cuts through.

YOUNG JED (O.S.)

OK... now.

Young Jacky takes a deep breath and holds it in; Young Jed stacks his palms on her chest, pushing hard.

YOUNG JED (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hold it.

Young Jed pushes harder until Young Jacky collapses on the ground, unconscious. A MAN (MAURICE, twenties) chuckles. Young Jed steps back, observing. His party hat reads *birthday boy*; an unlit cigarette clutched in his barred teeth. His wool coat is too big for him; ears red from the cold. The figure of Maurice looms over Young Jed's shoulder. Maurice lights a match, Young Jed leans in to light his smoke.

Young Jed picks up a near-empty beer can from the grass. He coughs as he exhales a puff of smoke, bringing the can to his lips and taking a drink. Maurice chuckles. Young Jed pops the cigarette back into his teeth, monitoring Jacky's lifeless body. He grows concerned.

YOUNG JED (CONT'D)

Jacky?

Jacky does not respond. Young Jed turns to Maurice -- He's gone. Jed gets closer, grabbing her arm, rocking her gently.

YOUNG JED (CONT'D)

Jacky!

Young Jed kneels by her side, furiously shaking her. Finally, she smiles mischievously and yells.

YOUNG JACKY

Boo!

Young Jed is startled, fighting a smirk. He hands Young Jacky the beer can. She takes the last sip, trading it back for the cigarette. Young Jed crushes the can.

YOUNG JED

What did you see?

Jacky smiles, taking a puff.

YOUNG JACKY

I saw the King.

(exhaling)

I saw Elvis!

Young Jed giggles. A screen door slams against the wooden siding of the coach house. A WOMAN (Urma, forties) yells.

URMA (O.S.)

JED!

Young Jed's neck snaps toward the noise, Jacky rips the cigarette from her mouth.

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

What are you doing?

Young Jed turns to Jacky.

YOUNG JACKY

(whispering)

Bury it!

The two children dig vigorously, trying to hide the beer and cigarette. The grass shreds away with ease, the soil is like ground coffee. Soon, the dark earth turns to sand, their tiny hands keep digging. Urma's faint screams fade to mere muffles. The children begin to uncover a patch of hair, a bloody forehead, dead eyes. As sudden as he is revealed, JED (thirties) screams.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - MORNING

Jed bursts out of the sand; his back stiff and upright; looks more like rigor mortis than anything. He is alone; face caked in dirt and dry blood from the wound on his forehead. The wind picks up, his torso sways with the breeze. Dust and sand rise into the air like smoke.

Jed hacks some wet sand from his lungs between torpid breaths. He vomits, violently ejecting bile and bits of sand from his insides; finding his voice through loud retches.

His hollow eyes scan his environment through dust-filled eyelashes. He cups his hands around his mouth and blows hot air into his palms. This is painful.

Jed notices the leather dog leash tangled in his rigid fingers; examining it as if he's never seen it before. He searches for signs of a dog; the place is deserted. The tags on the matching-leather collar around his neck jingle with his movements. Jed unskillfully tries to remove the collar but his fingers won't cooperate. He rubs his eyes, inadvertently smacking the wound on his forehead.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - EVENING

Begin a series of fragmented, visceral images.

His feet running through the woods; a taught leash in his hand.

Jed throws a stick and caresses wet dog fur. A child's voice.

YOUNG JED  
(unclear)  
Essie!

Jed thrashing in the sand; John Henry looms over him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - MORNING - MOMENTS LATER

Jed groans in agony. YOUNG JED is standing behind him, arm extended; holding a crushed beer can. Jed stares at him for a moment, swallowing and licking his lips. He can barely speak.

JED  
(barely audible)  
What happened?

Young Jed places a cigarette into Jed's mouth and raises the crushed beer can higher. In an instant, it reconstructs itself. The boy tosses it down the beach. Jed watches the can coast over the sand as if guided by an invisible force. It stops at the mouth of a nearby storm drain. Young Jed steps inside the opening of the drain.

YOUNG JED  
(barely audible)  
Essie!

His tiny voice booms and echoes into the dark tunnel. Jed covers his ears, squeezing his eyes closed tight. The sound ceases and Jed opens his eyes; alone again. He tries to stand up, rubbing his legs in support. After a brief struggle, he stands up and stretches. Sand rolls off his oil-stained coveralls -- stiff and damp; covered by a threadbare overcoat. He tries to straighten his grotesquely-crooked back but to no avail. The collar jingles around his neck and, once again, he unsuccessfully tries to remove it. Instead, he resolves to lock the snap hook of the leash to it. Jed stands abnormally at a near-ninety-degree angle. He spits hard onto the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH STORM DRAIN

Jed hobbles toward the mouth of the storm drain. A rusty shovel leans against the cement. He gets closer to the opening, kneeling at its mouth. A strange hum, like a panting dog, echoes from within. Jed whistles. It reverberates inside the pipe, whistling back to him in a dark, haunting tone. The echoes are almost deafening; like an oncoming train.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS

Jed hobbles alongside a set of train tracks, his gait slow and burdensome; his arm extended, holding the leash as if walking himself. He looks empty; unaware.

A train rumbles slowly past him, the whistle blows; the volume is unbearable. Jed slaps his cheeks lightly; stretching his mouth, and quietly conversing with himself. The dog leash bounces against his chest as he walks.

Jed pauses; he looks around a sob forms. It's peculiar; like an emotional malfunction. After a moment, he hunches over, belching loudly. He vomits; his eyes droop as he lowers his head onto the train tracks.

A brown beer bottle protrudes from the rocks lining the tracks. The wind picks up, the mouth of the bottle hums along with it. A dog barks in the distance. Jed closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CURB

Jed sits upright on a curb; surprised to be there, he gently slaps himself in the face a few times. Maurice laughs. His timeworn clothes are dirty; his dark smile and unwieldy hair add to a menacing, yet endearing appearance.

MAURICE  
Happy birthday!

Maurice gestures to the world at large.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Beautiful, isn't it?

Maurice smiles, Jed follows suit; it hurts.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Can I offer you some wisdom?

Jed tries to speak. He hacks deeply, pushing fluid from his lungs into his mouth and spitting it hard onto the ground. A raspy lisp escapes his throat.

JED  
Yes.

MAURICE  
Sleeping on the tracks is bad for your back.

Jed painfully straightens his spine, nodding in agreement. Maurice spots a mickey bottle sticking out of the inside pocket of Jed's overcoat.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
That'll help.

Jed follows his gaze, surprised to find the bottle. He pulls it out; its label torn, all but empty. He tosses it to Maurice's outstretched hands. Maurice unscrews the cap and smells the inside; he smiles.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Home cookin! What else you got?

Jed rummages through his pockets; sluggishly laying things on the sidewalk in front of him. He extends a fistful of change to Maurice who refuses it. Jed drops it rigidly on the sidewalk. He pulls a water-logged wallet from his coveralls; there's a bit of wet cash in there but no identification. He finds a lighter and a metal cigarette case. Maurice's eyes light up as he opens it; empty.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Damn.

Jed is finally able to remove the collar from around his neck, though he can't seem to read it. He extends it to Maurice who takes it, inspecting the inscription.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Essie.

Jed perks up, there's something familiar about that name.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Lyla White.

(beat)

Someone you know.

Maurice smiles wistfully and hands the collar back. Jed blinks a few times, pondering; he shrugs. Maurice raises the empty mickey bottle.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

You want this back?

JED

No.

MAURICE

Great!

(quietly)

Here doggy doggy.

Maurice blows lightly across the mouth of the bottle. A soft musical note can be heard; he chuckles. Jed stuffs the collar into his pocket and hangs the leash around his neck, clipping the snap hook to the handle like a giant necklace.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Here doggy doggy.

He blows over the mouth of the bottle again; giggling. Jed feebly attempts to count the handful of change on the cement; he leans into it with difficulty. Maurice shouts.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Change!

This startles Jed. Maurice smiles playfully.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Something made other than what it was.

JED

(unclear)

Am I dreaming?

MAURICE

I hope not.

Maurice blows across the mouth of the bottle again; more confident this time. A dog barks in the distance; barely audible. He laughs. Jed cracks a smile as he returns his belongings to their respective pockets. His movements are cumbersome and austere, he slaps himself a few times. Maurice blows again, a rhythm is forming. His laughter intensifies, Jed massages his cheeks, he can't help but giggle. Soon, the two are laughing along to the strange bottle song. Jed grows hysterical with laughter, hugging his sides in pain. The barking dog is getting louder. Jed hacks and coughs loudly, stifling his laugh. A WOMAN'S VOICE can be heard.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Are you OK?

Jed stops abruptly. He regards the YOUNG WOMAN, twenties, standing before him; She is blonde, pretty, middle class. The quiet is broken by another musical note. A dog barks; closer this time. Jed leaps to his feet; suppressing the pain. The Woman steps away, startled.

JED

(slurry)

Did you hear that?

He turns to Maurice; nowhere to be found. The Woman takes another step back. Jed hacks some fluid from his lungs, speaking through it.

JED (CONT'D)

My dog?

Jed spits and whistles his strange whistle. The Woman jogs away. The dog sounds closer now, Jed can't seem to locate it. He moves into the street, searching frantically. A large BLACK HEARSE approaches. Jed yells to the dog.

JED (CONT'D)

Here!

He whistles again, spinning in every direction. The hearse passes by, the dog sounds extremely close. The clicking of paws running on pavement can be heard. Suddenly, the hearse rams on its breaks, stopping with a thud. The barking ceases.

Jed rushes to the hearse as fast as he can. He stumbles and falls hard onto the asphalt, onerously lifting his head to see under the hearse. A pair of legs (ALVIN, fifties) quickly emerge from the running vehicle; leaving the door wide open. Jed watches Alvin as he crouches in front of the hearse.

JED (CONT'D)

Did you hit him?

Alvin yelps, surprised to see Jed laying on the ground.

ALVIN

You weren't under there were ya?

JED

The dog?

ALVIN

What?

Jed takes another look before pulling himself off the ground. There is no dog.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

The light came on. Can't get the damn hood open.

Jed walks slowly to the hearse's open door and peeks inside. This seems strange, like Jed is on autopilot. Jed catches a glimpse of the oil light on the dash as he grabs the keys and pops the hood. Alvin, surprised, jumps to his feet.

ALVIN (CONT'D)

Got 'er!

Alvin sticks his fingers inside the hood; still stuck on the release lever. He lifts it up and down violently. Jed gently raises his hand.

JED

Hey.

Alvin tries even harder, watching Jed approach.

JED (CONT'D)

Wait.

Jed walks slowly to the hood and reaches for the release lever, lifting the hood and propping it open;

his brow furrows as he sniffs the air. Alvin pulls out a pouch of rolling tobacco and rolls himself a smoke. Jed hands the keys to Alvin who smiles. Jed watches him roll the smoke for a moment. Alvin speaks through the small cigarette filter clasped in his crooked yellow teeth; he speaks through them.

ALVIN

Smells like my ex wife.

Alvin's smiles. Jed's attention turns to the engine. He grabs the oil dip stick, cleaning the tip with his coveralls; astounded by his own actions. Alvin watches Jed like he's from another planet. Jed returns the dip stick to its holster than pulls back out, inspecting the tip. Jed clears his throat; his voice is a little clearer.

JED

Oil.

ALVIN

Yea.

JED

You need oil.

ALVIN

Got lots of oil.

JED

No. You don't.

Alvin leads Jed to the back of the hearse. Alvin reaches the back door of the hearse but stops suddenly, looking at Jed reluctantly.

ALVIN

Cover your eyes.

Jed twists his head like a confused dog. Maurice stands in the distance, hands over his eyes.

JED

Yea. I'm dreaming.

ALVIN

What?

Jed covers his eyes. Alvin tries to open the rear door but is having a hard time. Jed peeks through his fingers, he sees Alvin crouched under the hearse, wiggling his hand around. Still peeking through his fingers, Jed reaches for the handle and opens the back door.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Got it! OK. Don't look.

Jed stares at the coffin inside the hearse, there's something compelling about it. Alvin steps in front of it, drawing Jed's attention to the ten-or-so jugs of oil lining the insides of the hearse.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Boys at the shop keep givin' me oil. But I have a hard time hearin' the young fellas. Don't know what to do with it all. Is this enough?

Jed regards the impressive supply of oil.

JED  
Yea.

ALVIN  
What?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Alvin sits behind the wheel of the hearse. He fires up the ignition. Alvin yells through the rolled-down window.

ALVIN  
Light's out. Shit buddy, thanks!

Jed closes the hood. Alvin dons a stern look as he pops another cigarette into his mouth.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
What do I owe ya?

JED  
Can I get one of those?

Alvin pulls out his pouch of tobacco and hands it to Jed who takes it, leaving his arm outstretched.

ALVIN  
Really, eh? Take it. Least I can do. Normally it's an arm and a leg.

The two share a moment of silence. Alvin clears his throat nervously, gesturing to the coffin.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
Sorry you had to see that, back  
there.

He glances at his watch.

ALVIN (CONT'D)  
I gotta get goin. Hey, what's your  
name?

Jed's arm is still outstretched, holding the pouch of  
tobacco. Alvin smiles strangely.

JED  
I don't remember. I was buried in  
the sand.

Jed smiles too, though visibly unsure why.

JED (CONT'D)  
Someone tried to kill me.

Jed's smile fades as this statement dawns on him.

ALVIN  
Oh.

Alvin feverishly rolls up the window.

JED  
It's my birthday.

ALVIN  
That's great. Later bud.

Alvin rams the hearse into gear, steps on the gas and speeds  
away. Jed grabs the empty oil jug from the street, bringing  
it close to his mouth. He blows across the lid, producing a  
deep hum. A dog barks somewhere in the distance. Jed heads  
toward the sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK

Jed speaks quietly to himself as he limps down a sidewalk. He  
scans the neighbouring yards for signs of his dog; the empty  
oil jug in tote. His voice is quiet, clumsy; uttering through  
heavy breaths.

JED

Essie. Essie. Essie. Essie. Lyla.  
Lyla. Essie. Essie. Essie. Essie.  
Lyla. Essie.

Jed comes upon A MAN, thirties, sleeping face-down in a lane way. Jed limps toward him.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANE WAY - MOMENTS LATER

The lane way is lined with garage doors and modest coach houses. Jed stops above the sleeping Man. He is dressed exactly like Jed; Jacket covered in muddy paw prints. Jed clears his lungs.

JED

Mornin.

The Man is unresponsive. Jed kicks him lightly. Nothing. Jed kneels down, placing the empty oil jug on the ground. The Man groans; he sounds a lot like Jed. Jed rocks his shoulder lightly.

JED (CONT'D)

Are you OK?

Still, nothing. Jed rolls him onto his back. This man is unmistakably Jed (aka EVIL JED, thirties), though Jed does not make the connection, unaware of their likeness. Evil Jed looks dazed.

JED (CONT'D)

Hello? Sir?

The loud bangs of metal on metal echo down the lane way.

JED (CONT'D)

I'll get help.

Ungainly, Jed heads toward the noise; a large, open garage door.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROUGH JOHN'S AUTO SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Jed slows to a halt in the garage doorway; inside is a single car lift -- a makeshift auto shop. The place is a mess. A toppled stack of tires litters the floor. A tool chest lays haphazardly on the ground; tools everywhere.

SAMMY, a grizzled man in his thirties, stands near a hoisted-up car, picking up tools and random parts and returning them to their rightful places. His coveralls are similar to Jed's. He looks friendly, albeit a little slow. Sammy looks up from his work; he can't believe it.

JED

Uh...

Jed points down the lane way, smiling politely. Sammy sits frozen. He drops the wrench.

SAMMY

Jed. No.

Sammy looks around fearfully, moving quickly toward Jed; feigning a smile.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Don't ya got somewhere to be,  
buddy?

Jed takes a step away from the man barreling toward him.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Come on, let's get some air.

JED

Someone's hurt.

SAMMY

I can see that. Out. Let's go.

Sammy escorts Jed away from the garage and into the lane way. He stops for a moment, offering Jed a stern look. After a moment, he wraps his arms around Jed. Sammy holds the embrace for a moment before letting go; pulling a hip flask from his coveralls in one foul swoop. Jed watches the flask intently as Sammy unscrews the cap and takes a sip. Sammy lets out a sigh, looking harshly into Jed's tired eyes.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I forgive you.

JED

(barely audible)  
There's a man down there.

SAMMY

What?

Jed poises himself.

JED  
There's a man down there. I think  
he's hurt.

SAMMY  
Where?

Sammy follows Jed's gaze. The lane way is empty.

JED  
I don't know.

Sammy ushers him down the lane way. Jed limps along slowly.

SAMMY  
You're drinkin your brains away,  
Jed.

JED  
Jed.

SAMMY  
*Drank your brains away.*

JED  
(to himself)  
Jed.  
(to Sammy)  
I lost Essie.

Sammy stops, letting this set in; he looks up at the sky,  
then back at Jed.

SAMMY  
When it rains it pours.  
(beat)  
But at the end, there's a river.

Sammy scratches his head.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
Somethin like that?

Jed looks back down the lane way, confounded. Sammy urges Jed  
to keep moving, pulling him along.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
God. Your back looks broken. Your  
head. You gotta get that looked at.  
You really went hard last night.

JED  
A black man tried to kill me.

Sammy stops dead in his tracks, helping Jed as he turns arduously to meet his gaze. Sammy squints, visually scouring him, and takes a drink from his flask. Jed keeps his eye on it.

SAMMY

Aren't you in enough shit to be comin here? Rough John'll be back any second. He'll beat the shit out of what's left of ya.

Jed shakes his head in confusion. He burps.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

You're being creepy. Come on man. Today's a big day. Let's go home.

Sammy moves Jed along again.

JED

I don't know where I am.

SAMMY

You're in shit. And you ain't supposed to be here.

Sammy looks at his watch.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

You might have an hour to shit, shower, and sleep a bit. I suggest you use it.

Sammy is practically him.

JED

I need your help.

SAMMY

I can't help you Jed.

JED

My name? It's...Je--

SAMMY

(interrupting)  
Enough. Let's go.

Sammy gets closer, sliding his arm under Jed's shoulders in support, picking up the pace.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

Gross. I can feel your disks slipping.

Jed moans in pain. A dry heave escapes.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
OK OK. We need to calm down. I'm  
sorry but,

Jed stumbles for a few steps, painfully stretching his back.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
You gotta get that checked out.  
It's disgusting. Go see Chris after  
the service. He used to be a  
chiropractor.

Sammy pulls out a pack of cigarettes, popping one into his  
mouth. He taps his nose.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
That's on the quiet though.

After a brief silence, Jed collapses.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
JESUS!

JED  
Please help.

Sammy helps him up.

SAMMY  
I'm tryin. See Chris. Remember  
Chris? Barkeep. Chris?

JED  
Chris?

Sammy nods his head irritably.

SAMMY  
For real. Get that shit checked out  
or you'll end up like me. Remember?

JED  
(beat)  
No.

In an instant, Sammy smacks his forehead hard with his open  
palm.

SAMMY  
BAM! With the lift. BAM! Right  
there. Low fluid, man. BAM!  
Headache for 6 months.  
(MORE)

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
(points to Jed's head)  
I was there. Couldn't remember  
shit. Know what that does to a guy?

Jed reaches for his pouch of tobacco and begins to roll a cigarette, his eyes drawn to Sammy's flask as he takes a haul. Sammy looks off into the distance.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
A guy don't come back from that.

Jed puts his cigarette into his mouth; watching Sammy mournfully.

JED  
I don't know where I am.

SAMMY  
I know. You told me.  
(beat)  
You might be a little hazy now but  
trust me, you know where you are.  
You live down there, you work --  
used to work -- up here. And...

Jed is squinting, looking up and down the lane way, trying to keep up. Sammy maneuvers his way into Jed's eye line.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
Today's a huge day. You either  
gotta sleep and hope it all comes  
back or put on a smile and pretend  
you know what's what. Either way...

Sammy once again takes in Jed's appearance.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
Today ain't gonna be fun.

Sammy pats him on the shoulder then moves in for a hug.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
I'd say I'm sorry but you're  
probably sick of hearing it.

JED  
Who are you?

Sammy scratches his head in frustration.

SAMMY  
I'm...

A voice booms from inside the garage.

ROUGH JOHN (O.S.)

Sammy?

Sammy stands at attention. ROUGH JOHN, forties enters the lane way from the garage. He is a burly man, looks like the fighting type.

SAMMY

Shit!

JED

Are you Sammy? Or is he Sammy?

ROUGH JOHN

Jed?

In a heartbeat, Rough John is sprinting toward them.

SAMMY

Go. Fuckin run.

Jed raises his hands in surrender, clutching the tobacco pouch.

JED

Hold on.

SAMMY

Get out of here, Jed!

JED

I don't mean any trouble.

Rough John is almost on top of them.

JED (CONT'D)

I'm looking for someone.

Rough John socks Jed in the mouth. Tobacco flies everywhere.

CUT TO:

Like a flash bulb, an image of a YOUNG WOMAN materializes (this is LYLA, twenties). She is smiling. As quick as it appears, it fades away.

FADE TO WHITE.

FADE IN:

EXT. LANE WAY

Jed is unconscious, laying face down on the asphalt. His eyes open slowly, making brief eye contact with Evil Jed as he places an oil jug on the ground. Jed's eyes grow wide; he tries to scream but no sound is heard. He scrambles to his knees without factoring in the pain. He groans loudly. Evil Jed is gone.

A stucco wall with the word "KILLA" tagged on it frames a tiny door behind Jed. The number 13 is visible above an overflowing mailbox. Jed reaches for the dog collar in his coat. He reads the tag; finally, he can make out the inscription. It says "LYLA WHITE - 13 St. MATHIAS PL."

Jed drags himself to his feet; his tobacco pouch stuffed hastily into his breast pocket. He walks toward the door, mechanically reaching for the mail in the mailbox. He pulls out a stack of white envelopes; all addressed to Jed and Lyla.

He opens one. It is a sympathy card. A generic passage about death is inside. He opens another, it is a similar card, a small bag of hash stapled inside with a message "*Sorry for your loss, all my love. - Erica*".

He removes the pouch of hash, ditching the card and opening another. This one is addressed solely to Jed. Inside are a few hand-written sentences. "*Hope you're doing well*"; "*Sorry I can't make it home for Mom*"; "*I Have a phone set up*"; next to it is a long-distance number. Signed, "*Miss you. - your loving sister, Jacky*". Jed remembers the sound of a child's heavy breathing. He drops the rest of the mail onto the ground and enters the tiny door.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYLA'S BACK YARD

Jed walks through the tiny back yard until he reaches a set of steps. He creeps up to a screen door, slowly opening it. He hovers over the door knob before grabbing it lightly. It's locked. He knocks; excited to hear a dog barking inside. No one answers. He sits down on the steps, his back aching. A dog growls and whines on the other side of the door. Jed speaks quietly through a tiny crack.

JED

Essie?

More whining. After a moment, it stops; no more signs of life inside. There's something familiar about the withered toaster oven near the steps.

Jed opens his tobacco pouch to find a loose rolling paper tucked in with the tobacco. A message is scribbled on it. "*Go see Chris, he will fix you. 841 Bloor. - Sammy*". He puts the paper in his coat pocket and rolls with a fresh one.

Jed lights his smoke, his eyes drift back to the toaster oven. After a moment, he taps it with his foot. The door flops to the ground. Jed labours to bend and look inside, chuckling as he reaches in. Smiling, he pulls out a key and sticks it in the door. POP; It opens.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The house is dishevelled; open boxes on the floor and stacked on counters. Not thinking twice, Jed kicks off his shoes and hangs the leash on a nearby hook. He regards his hand, still lingering over the hook. This feels commonplace; routine.

Running bath water is heard from another room -- someone's home. He limps further inside but pauses before getting too far. Spotting his reflection in a mirror, he examines himself as if for the first time.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANE WAY

It is silent. Evil Jed lays on the pavement.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jed turns away from the mirror, alarmed. The place is cluttered; dishes and beer cans fill the sink. A pair of dress shoes and a shoe-shining brush rest on the table; a black suit draped over a chair.

JED

Hello?

Jed kneels next to a pair of freshly-filled dog bowls. He brings the water bowl to his lips and guzzles it.

CUT TO:

## INT. LYLA'S LIVING ROOM

Jed enters the living room eating a hand full of dog food. The room is tiny, crammed with more half-packed boxes. He sees a turn table on the floor. He is impelled to drop the needle onto a dusty 7". Enrico Caruso sings "Core'ngrato".

Overcome with a strange nostalgia, Jed warily explores the house. The photos pinned and taped to the walls, images of unfamiliar faces. A framed photo of YOUNG JED, YOUNG JACKY, and URMA sits amidst books on a cluttered shelf. He gets in close to it. The children wear birthday hats. Young Jed clenches the mouthpiece of a party noise maker in his barred teeth.

Jed limps toward the couch, a photograph on the floor catches his eye. He bends slowly to pick it up, knocking over a glass of water, it shatters, spilling water all over the photo. He grunts in frustration and grabs the photo, drying it off on his coat. Jed brings the photo close to his face. It's him and a YOUNG WOMAN (LYLA, twenties) with what appears to be a puppy hiding behind Lyla, smiling beautifully. They are in a park.

LYLA (O.S.)

What happened?

Jed is startled, dropping the photo. He bends quickly to grab it; he squeals in pain. Finally, he has it. He looks at the photo then at Lyla, in the bathroom doorway. Lyla has a sweet face despite her obvious disdain. She wears loose, ripped-up jeans and a T-shirt with cut sleeves; her hair in a pony tail. Jed offers a strange smile.

JED

Lyla.

Lyla looks at him dully.

JED (CONT'D)

I --

LYLA

You need to get ready.

She returns to the bathroom.

JED

I don't remember anything.

LYLA (O.S.)

No shit. Get ready.

INT. LYLA'S BATHROOM

The song has finished, static of the 7" slip loop hisses and pops quietly in the background. Lyla is crouched, scrubbing a black dress in the bathtub; her eyes fixed on her task. Jed stands at the mirror, cleaning his face and hands.

JED

Those pictures on the walls...

Jed opens the cabinet and immediately locates a box of band aids. He looks at them, astonished.

JED (CONT'D)

Is today my birthday?

Jed turns to Lyla, actively ignoring him. After a moment, Jed speaks.

JED (CONT'D)

I don't know where I am.

He removes the largest band aid from the box and covers his now-clean wound.

JED (CONT'D)

I don't know who I am.

He sits on the toilet, turning to Lyla.

JED (CONT'D)

Who you are. I know our names.  
Lyla. And Jed, right?

Lyla shakes her head in disapproval. Jed pulls the leather dog collar from his pocket.

JED (CONT'D)

I have a collar.

LYLA

Why do you have her collar?

Jed regards it for a moment.

LYLA (CONT'D)

Why do you have it?

He shrugs. Lyla wrings out the dress in the tub.

JED

I think a Black Man took her.

LYLA  
You are such a fucking idiot.

JED  
I'm sorry.

Lyla stands, wringing out her dress once more, and leaves the bathroom. Jed stands, catching himself in the mirror again. He speaks loudly so Lyla can hear.

JED (CONT'D)  
I'll find her.

After a moment of self-examination, Jed exits the bathroom, following Lyla to the Kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jed stops when he enters the kitchen. Lyla keeps her back to him. She hangs her dress on the knob of a cabinet and turns on a blow dryer.

JED  
(barely audible)  
Do I have a brother?

Lyla does not respond, fanning the blow dryer over her dress. Jed speaks louder.

JED (CONT'D)  
I'm afraid something is seriously wrong.

LYLA  
(barely audible)  
It's almost time to go.

Jed stares at her vacantly as she turns off the blow dryer impatiently.

LYLA (CONT'D)  
You need to change.

A dog barks outside.

JED  
What about...

Jed digs for the name.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOG PARK - EVENING

A taught leash. Essie's legs run as hard as they'll let her.

JED (V.O.)

Essie?

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN

Jed steps toward the door. Fed up, Lyla grabs the suit draped over the chair and thrusts it toward him.

LYLA

Put it on.

Jed watches her, confused.

LYLA (CONT'D)

Put it on.

Jed glances at the door; more barking.

JED

Aren't you worried about her?

LYLA

Put the fucking suit on, Jed.

Jed takes the suit and slowly removes his jacket. Lyla watches him for a moment before turning on the blow dryer. She waves it over her dress, turning away from Jed. His posture shifts and he sneakily dons his jacket, laying the suit gently on a nearby chair.

A few loose dog treats and a roll of poop bags sit on top of a small cabinet by the door. He puts them in his coat pocket before slipping on his shoes, silently grappling with the pain. He unconsciously snatches the leash off the nearby hook; taking notice of this reflex. He steps outside, closing the door quietly.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANE WAY

Jed limps briskly down the lane way, puffing on a cigarette, searching for signs of Essie. Smoke billows from his lungs with dissonant whistles. An empty beer can flops around in the wind, settling into a roll, the sound of tin on asphalt grows louder and louder. Jed stops to observe it;

approaching him quickly. Suddenly, it flips and stands upright at his feet. He stares at it for a moment. Maurice runs by and kicks the can.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOG PARK

Jed's reflection in a puddle. He drops his cigarette butt, distorting the image. He looks over a dog park, down a steep hill below. People are scattered about, watching their dogs play. Jed rolls another cigarette; keeping his eyes on the park. He lights the smoke and heads down the hill, holding the leash out from his body as if walking a dog.

Jed walks to the center of the tiny valley and closes one eye. He raises the photo of Lyla and Essie to meet his perspective, lining it up with different areas of the park. Jed recognizes a tree from the photo and heads toward it.

POP CAN, a man in his forties, stands near the tree. His long, greasy hair and coke-bottle glasses accent his unkempt appearance. Inside his coat is a small WHITE DOG (this is HEIDI) Heidi shivers inside his coat, Pop Can tickles her chin, giggling sweetly. Jed approaches him slowly. Pop Can spots his empty leash.

POP CAN

Which one's yours?

Jed scans the park.

JED

None of them by the looks of it.

POP CAN

Where is he?

Jed takes another puff of his smoke.

JED

She. And I dunno.

Jed coughs lightly as he exhales. Pop Can fans the smoke from Heidi's face.

POP CAN

She. Sorry.

(beat)

You gotta be careful.

Pop can gestures to Heidi.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
She got into some fruit here.  
Filled with thumb tacks. Didn't  
swallow anything but cut her mouth  
to shit.

JED  
That is...

Jed watches some dogs play. He turns to Heidi, inadvertently  
exhaling smoke near her face.

JED (CONT'D)  
Absolutely terrifying.

Pop can fans the smoke away from Heidi.

POP CAN  
You should stop smoking those. It's  
poison. Doesn't get you high,  
doesn't get you drunk. They tax the  
fuck out of them.

Pop Can reveals a blunt and lights it, inhaling deeply. He  
holds his breath as he speaks.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
I smoke for spiritual reasons. I'm  
not an addict.

Pop Can blows out a huge cloud of smoke, passing the blunt to  
Jed who declines; his eyes darting to every dog in the park.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
Blueberry Kush.

JED  
Blueberry Kush.

Pop Can extends it further. Jed eyes the blunt before  
reaching into his coat pocket, pulling out a dog treat. A  
loud crunch is heard as Jed takes a bite, chewing.

JED (CONT'D)  
Have you seen any dogs here. Alone?  
Or with a black guy?

POP CAN  
A lot of dogs come through here.  
And... what does she look like.

Jed hands him the photo; Pop Can squints. Jed takes another  
bite of the dog treat.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
It's hard to see. What's the breed?

Jed shrugs, a little embarrassed.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
What's her name?

JED  
It's...

Jed pulls out the collar, quickly referencing the name.

JED (CONT'D)  
Essie.

He shows the collar to Pop Can and stuffs the photo into his wallet.

POP CAN  
Are you Lyla?

JED  
I think it's Jed.

Pop Can chuckles, sticking out his hand.

POP CAN  
I'll keep my ear to the ground.

Jed squeezes hard when he sees John Henry (the Black Man) in the distance. His back is facing them, he appears to be walking a dog.

JED  
(whispers)  
That's him.

Pop Can turns around to see.

JED (CONT'D)  
He tried to kill me. Took my dog.

Jed takes a few steps and looks Pop Can in the eye.

JED (CONT'D)  
Help me.

POP CAN  
Look buddy...

Jed moves past Pop Can, walking slowly toward John Henry.

JED  
He's got her!

Unable to move quickly, Jed turns to Pop Can.

JED (CONT'D)  
Help me!

Jed winces as he turns back around, losing sight of John Henry.

JED (CONT'D)  
Where'd he go?

POP CAN  
Are you bleeding?

Jed touches the band aid on his forehead, checking his fingers.

JED  
Maybe a little.  
(beat)  
I'm sorry. I'm having a hard time today.

POP CAN  
I can see that.

Jed searches for John Henry. He turns to Pop Can and shrugs. Silence.

JED  
Do you... recognize me?

POP CAN  
No.

Jed scratches Heidi's chin. He looks around the dog park once more. Jed dry heaves; he grabs Pop Can's shoulder in support.

JED  
I'm sick.

Pop Can backs away. Jed's ears begin to ring. He covers them. Maurice puts his arm around Jed.

JED (CONT'D)  
Don't touch me.

POP CAN  
I didn't touch you.

Jed begins to vomit. Bits of sand mixed with half-digested dog food.

POP CAN (CONT'D)  
Is that dog food?

Jed gags; he speaks through spits and heaves.

JED  
I'm not crazy.

Jed begins to sob. Pop Can takes his exit. The playful toot of an empty bottle is heard.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYLA'S BACK YARD

Jed blows over the mouthpiece of a mickey bottle. Essie jumps and barks excitedly with the sound. Jed smiles warmly.

CUT TO:

EXT. MENALON BAR AND GRILL - LATER

Jed is unconscious on a sidewalk outside of a bar. After a moment, he opens his eyes. A pile of dog shit sits a few feet from his face. He sits up, leaning against the building, and removes a poop bag from the roll in his pocket. He reaches for the pile of shit but it's gone. He pulls a paper from his tobacco pouch, Sammy's message scribbled across it: "Go see Chris, He will fix you. 841 Bloor - Sammy". Jed looks up at the building behind him. The numbers 841 shine over sun-faded menus. Jed fills the paper with tobacco and lights it.

CUT TO:

INT. MENALON BAR AND GRILL

The bar looks well-worn; cluttered with bottles, glasses, mirrors, and framed photos of bar patrons and now-grown children. CHRIS (a greek man in his fifties) brings some empties to the bar. He has long dark hair; a handle-bar moustache ornaments his pale face.

SOUR JAY (sixties) sits alone at the bar, folding small paper pamphlets and placing them neatly in a stack. His shaggy grey hair rains dandruff onto his dirty leather jacket. Jed sits down on a bar stool. Sour Jay smiles, slowly raising his palm. He slaps the bar top hard.

SOUR JAY  
Happy birthday, Jed!

CHRIS  
(to Sour Jay)  
Hey! Not today, huh?

JED  
It *is* today.

Chris shakes his head and dumps some bottles into the trash then turns to Jed, impatiently. He speaks in a gravelly voice.

CHRIS  
Beer?

Jed nods reflexively. Chris places a can of beer in front of Jed, popping the lid. Jed takes the beer and holds it in the air before downing it. He slams it on the counter.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Three seventy five.

Jed nurses his back; eyeing Chris.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
OK. I say no tabs but... It's the birthday boy. You better pay, or you know what happens, huh?  
Alright.

Chris plops a note pad in front of Jed, making sure he sees it. Sour Jay reaches into his pocket and reveals a pair of glasses. He laughs as he places them onto the bar and slides them over to Jed. They stop in dead front of him.

Jed picks them up, slowly extending the arms, and places them on his face. They are round, strange; they look foreign on his face. Jed looks around the bar, slapping himself lightly on the cheek. There's a moment of silence.

JED  
I didn't know I needed glasses.

CHRIS  
(chuckling)  
No, buddy.

Chris wanders back toward the tables. Jed turns to Sour Jay, offering a 'thank you' nod.

SOUR JAY  
You're welcome.

Sour Jay straightens his spine, rocking his neck back and forth slowly. Jed takes another sip of his beer, it's empty.

Chris returns with more empties and dirty plates, dumping the lot into the sink. Jed wiggles his empty beer can, grabbing Chris' attention. Chris lays another can on the bar. Again, Jed lifts it in the air and downs it. Chris plops his note pad in front of Jed, writing.

CHRIS  
Seven fifty, buddy.

Chris is about to move the note pad but Jed swiftly grabs his hand. The two men lock eyes. Chris is taken aback but stands his ground. Jed moves in closer.

JED  
(quietly)  
Chris?

CHRIS  
(quietly)  
Yea buddy.

JED  
(barely audible)  
I heard you were a chiropractor.

Chris slides his hand from under Jed's, their eyes still locked. Chris violently throws the empty beer can under the bar.

CHRIS  
Not anymore!

Chris walks out from behind the bar, kicking a box of empties and gesturing for Sour Jay to scam. He yells something in Greek as he stomps through the restaurant, bursting through a door in the back; it slams behind him. Sour Jay downs his drink. Turning to Jed, he dons a toothless grin.

SOUR JAY  
Hey Jed,

Sour Jay gets out of his seat and stands up straight.

SOUR JAY (CONT'D)  
I ain't seen your dog.

Sour Jay turns and leaves the bar, making sure to have good posture. Chris yells from behind the door.

CHRIS (O.S.)  
Ten minutes! Fifty Dollars!

Chris bursts through the door, letting it slam behind him. He is wearing a different shirt, bee-lining toward Jed.

JED  
Sorry Chris, I'm not --

CHRIS  
Fifty dollars. No money, no funny, buddy.

JED  
I don't --

Chris doesn't let him finish. Moving in quickly, he grabs Jed's sides, spinning him around. Chris grunts in disgust. Jed howls in pain.

CHRIS  
Ugh! I can feel your disks!

Chris pulls Jed in for a reverse-bear hug, bobbing him up and down vigorously. Maurice's arms appear from behind Jed wrapping around his mouth and chest. Jed's back lets out a loud CRACK.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYLA'S HOUSE

Jed stands frozen in the lane way; Maurice restrains him, a hand over Jed's mouth and another around his chest. John Henry leaves through the tiny door to Lyla's back yard, Essie in tote. Evil Jed yells from the yard.

EVIL JED (O.S.)  
Wait!

Evil Jed jogs out the door. He has no head wound, his clothes are clean. Jed tries to yell but Maurice restrains him.

JOHN HENRY  
Go back inside, Jedrick.

EVIL JED  
She's fine here.

JOHN HENRY  
You ain't fit right now.

Evil Jed sways on his ankles; severely drunk.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
You need to focus.

EVIL JED

I am.

JOHN HENRY

(chuckling)

Go back inside. Cool off. I'll see  
ya tomorrow.

Evil Jed moves in for the leash, John Henry pulls it away.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

I'll be good to her. You know I  
will.

EVIL JED

Please. She's the only one that's  
not... completely fucked right now.

John Henry stands up straight; poised.

JOHN HENRY

*I'm not completely fucked.*

Evil Jed sways into a stumble. Almost losing his balance.  
John Henry grabs him. Essie jumps at his legs. Evil Jed can  
barely lift his head.

Jed tries to move closer; Maurice holds him in place,  
stifling his yells.

EVIL JED

Let me come.

JOHN HENRY

No. Not now.

Evil Jed gestures toward the house.

EVIL JED

She's gonna leave me. She's packin  
up.

Evil Jed straightens his arms, bracing as he lowers himself  
to the pavement. He wraps his arms around Essie; she licks  
his face.

EVIL JED (CONT'D)

I'm going to lose her.

After a moment, John Henry sighs loudly.

JOHN HENRY

Fine. Walk with us. Then you're coming back to deal with this. Without Essie.

John Henry pats Essie's head, she loves it.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

And her little paws.

They begin to walk. After a moment, the John Henry changes direction.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Let's not walk past the shop. I don't wanna be seen with your drunk ass.

The two walk out of the lane way. Evil Jed leans into John Henry who pushes him away.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

God *damn* it. Were you drinking nail polish?

Jed screams through Maurice's fingers.

JED

(muffled)

Hey!

The men do not respond. Jed whistles his strange whistle. John Henry looks back at him; he groans in pain.

CUT TO:

INT. MENALON BAR AND GRILL - MOMENTS LATER

Jed groans in pain, still in Chris' bear hug. Maurice's arms no longer constrain him. Chris lets him go and Jed steps away, turning to face him; his back much straighter now.

JED

Oh my god.

Jed wraps his arms around Chris who pulls away, half smiling; he looks clinically into Jed's eyes.

JED (CONT'D)

I think I remembered something.

CHRIS

Congratulations. Hold still.

Chris hauls off and slaps Jed hard in the face; he yelps in pain.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Better?

Jed nods, rubbing his cheek; his raspy lisp subsided.

JED

A lot better. Thank you.

CHRIS

OK.

Chris sticks out his palm, wiggling his fingers expectantly. Jed looks at his hand. Chris puts up his fists.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You trying to rip me off, buddy?

Chris goes for Jed's back pocket. Jed tries to slip away but Chris is tenacious.

JED

What're you --

Chris removes the wallet from Jed's pocket, opens it up and goes for the damp cash. As he pulls out a few bills, the photo of Essie and Lyla falls to the floor. Jed bends easily to pick it up. Chris doesn't notice, counting the money in his hand.

CHRIS

Fifty seven fifty.

JED

Chris, someone has Essie.

Chris squints at the photo, handing Jed's wallet back.

CHRIS

You can't see it. Here...

Chris stuffs the money into his breast pocket and heads behind the bar, miming the rough massage he just performed.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

You don't tell no one about what I did.

(Raising his dukes)

Cause you know what happens, huh?  
Alright.

Chris pulls a framed photo off the wall, it's of Jed, John Henry, and Essie sitting at the bar.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
It's better.

JED  
Him. He has her. Who is he?

CHRIS  
Your friend.

JED  
Where can I find him?

Chris shrugs.

JED (CONT'D)  
He tried to kill me.

CHRIS  
OK buddy, time's out.

Chris points to the exit. It bursts open. Evil Jed storms in angrily; dragging a rusty shovel across the floor.

JED  
What is this?

Evil Jed makes his way hastily toward him, the shovel clangs against metal chair legs. Evil Jed raises the shovel in the air. Jed crouches to the floor, shielding his head with the photo. Evil Jed brings the shovel down, it smashes the frame.

JED (CONT'D)  
Help me!

There is a long silence. Jed cautiously looks up. His doppelganger is gone.

CHRIS  
Buddy?

Chris leans over the bar, he sees Jed hunched over, clutching the broken frame.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
You're cut off.

FADE TO BLACK.

**TITLE CARD: "ACT TWO - A LONG WALK"**

FADE IN:

EXT. GRAVEYARD

Jed strolls down a sidewalk. His posture is better; gait vastly improved. He unknowingly turns onto a dirt path. Surprised at his mechanical change in direction, he stops and takes in this surroundings. The entrance to a grave yard. He watches as the wind pushes an empty beer can past headstones in the distance.

Alvin stands with an armful of shovels, fiddling with the back of his hearse. Urma stands at a decorated gravestone not far from Alvin. Jed approaches, trying to get a good look at her face. She keeps her back to him.

JED  
Do I know you?

Urma looks over her shoulder.

URMA  
You've been drinking again.

Jed checks his breath, blowing into his open palm and smelling the air.

URMA (CONT'D)  
Can't fool me.

Urma turns to him; Jed knows this face. She smiles, goading; squelching the tears in her eyes. Jed notices Maurice watching Alvin work.

URMA (CONT'D)  
Takes one.

JED  
I've seen you before. And your son?

Urma breaks her gaze; she stumbles a bit, shifting her attention back to the grave stone.

URMA  
Was it a good ceremony?

JED  
I just got here.

URMA  
These flowers are beautiful.

Urma turns to Jed, her smile is haunting.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - MORNING

Young Jacky and Young Jed dig through the dirt. Urma yanks the crushed, empty beer can from Young Jed's hand. She takes his cigarette and smokes it herself.

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
God Damn it, Alvin.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Urma is gone. Nearby, MICHAEL (thirties) speaks to Alvin, still struggling at the door of the hearse. Maurice has vanished. Michael is dressed decently. His black jeans, black dress shirt, and black tie feel dumpy-chic. Michael grabs the hearse's back-door handle and opens it. Alvin stands, smiling, and tosses the shovels in.

MICHAEL  
You're tearing the shit out of the back.

ALVIN  
What?

Jed rolls himself a cigarette. Michael steps toward him.

MICHAEL  
You made it.

JED  
I think I...

Jed looks around, gesturing to where Urma was standing.

JED (CONT'D)  
Where did she go?

Michael is somber; he glances at Alvin.

MICHAEL  
I dunno, depends on what you believe, I suppose.

Alvin waves to Jed, smiling.

ALVIN  
Happy Birthday!

Michael clears his throat. Jed looks back at the grave.

JED  
I knew her.

MICHAEL  
Sure did, Jed.  
(beat)  
Are you OK?

JED  
Not really.

Jed smiles. He spots a small pile of dog shit at his feet. He pulls out a poop bag and pushes it over his hand. He crouches easily; pleased as he grabs the clump of shit.

Jed is about to pull the bag off his hand but another pile of shit catches his eye. He waddles to it, adding it to the bag. Maurice points to another pile. Jed's eyes trace the dirt walkway; every few yards is a pile of dog shit. He moves toward the next pile, the bag is getting full. He continues on; then, to his surprise, the remaining dog shit is gone. The poop bag in his hand is full of dirt and rocks. He rises to his feet, tying it off anyway. Jed lifts his head to find himself deeper into the grave yard. Alvin watches him from a distance. Michael hops into a pickup truck.

John Henry passes behind Jed. He is holding a leash; though Jed can't see a dog. Jed spins quickly toward the noise.

JED (CONT'D)  
Hey.

John Henry smiles and waves amicably, not breaking stride.

JED (CONT'D)  
HEY!

John Henry moves quickly. Jed nimbly takes off after him, chasing glimpses of John Henry and Essie between trees and tombstones. Jed finds himself near the entrance to the graveyard. He's lost sight of John Henry.

JED (CONT'D)  
He has my dog!

Jed looks around frantically; the dirt-filled poop bag flops wildly in his hand.

JED (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
Give me my dog!

A truck slams to a halt on the gravelly road. Jed looks into the window as it rolls down. It is Michael.

MICHAEL  
Get in the truck.

Jed looks back into the grave yard. He can only see Alvin, closing the back of the hearse. Jed gets closer to the truck, leaning into the window.

JED  
Who are you?

MICHAEL  
Get in the fucking truck, Jed!

CUT TO:

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

It is starting to rain. Water runs down the windshield, intermittently displaced by the wipers. Michael concentrates on the road. For a while, it is silent.

MICHAEL  
I want you to know that it was tough for me, man.  
(beat)  
I'll set aside the fact that you didn't show up to something that my family went through a lot of trouble to take care of.  
(beat)  
That's extremely brutal, by the way.

Jed turns to Michael, eyebrows creased.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
What I'm getting at is,  
(beat)  
I could bury 100 bodies a day and only feel it in my back.  
(beat)  
We both know Urma was headed to the ground for a long time. But I loved her and always wished her the best. I know you did too.

JED

Urma.

Michael turns to Jed.

MICHAEL

I'm gonna go ahead and assume that hole in your head leads straight to your brain.

JED

I'm getting better. I've been to a chiropractor.

Jed taps his nose.

MICHAEL

He give you those glasses?

Michael takes a look at Jed's bloody band aid; he shakes his head in wary confusion. There is a long silence.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Why weren't you there today?

Jed shrugs. More silence.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Did you try to kill yourself, Jed?

JED

Pull over.

MICHAEL

No.

JED

My dog is out there.

MICHAEL

Essie?

JED

Yes!

Michael pulls the truck over.

MICHAEL

Where?

JED

There!

Michael squints at an OLD MAN (eighties) walking a small dog.

MICHAEL  
That's not your dog.

Jed observes the man and the old dog, taking baby steps down the sidewalk.

JED  
Someone took her.

MICHAEL  
Is that why you no showed?

JED  
I... dodn't know what you're talking about.

Michael scoffs.

JED (CONT'D)  
I don't remember anything.

MICHAEL  
How can you forget... how...  
(beat)  
Your mother's dead, Jed.

Jed's fists clench. His posture tightens.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
You're drinking again.

Jed turns to him, perplexed.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Booze. Beer. Wine. Drinking.

Michael motions the guzzling of a bottle.

JED  
No. Not really.

MICHAEL  
(surprised)  
Not really?

JED  
I don't remember.

Michael shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
Urma was proud of you, you know.  
For gettin on the wagon. Took long  
enough but ya did it.

Jed's discomfort is palpable.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Her sickness runs through your  
veins too. She knew it. We all do.  
(beat)  
Scrambled your brains good. I hope  
it wasn't with liquor.

JED  
It was a shovel.

Michael puts the truck in gear and gets back on the road.

MICHAEL  
Pretty fuckin typical. The only one  
in your family to show up today  
ain't even blood related.

JED  
Lyla?

MICHAEL  
Selective amnesia?

JED  
I met her this morning.

MICHAEL  
(chuckling)  
Met her. Oh God she must be so  
pissed.  
(beat)  
But poor Essie. What a sin. I'm  
sure you'll find her.

JED  
How did she die?  
(clears throat)  
My mother.

MICHAEL  
How do you think?

Another silence.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
You really don't remember anything?

JED  
I know some names.  
(counting on his fingers)  
Essie, Jacky, Lyla, Sammy, Chris.  
(MORE)

JED (CONT'D)

(beat)

Urma.

MICHAEL

Yet no one told you your mother was  
gettin buried today?

JED

I suppose they thought I knew. They  
don't believe me.

MICHAEL

(to himself)

Right back into it.

(beat)

So, a shovel?

JED

A black man did it. He took Essie.

MICHAEL

This doesn't sound real, Jed.

JED

I'm sorry.

MICHAEL

Don't apologize to me.

Jed visually scrutinizes dog walkers as they drive past.

JED

The woman standing at the grave, I  
knew her too.

MICHAEL

Place cleared out well before you  
got there. Except for 'ol Alvin.

(shaking head)

Fucker is losin' it.

Jed tenses up, seeing a man that could be John Henry. It's  
not. He slumps down in his seat. Michael's cell phone rings.  
He looks at the caller ID but doesn't answer.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Tell you what, I'll help ya look  
for Essie. But I gotta make a quick  
pit stop. Take the edge off the  
day.

(beat)

Think you can handle that?

Jed shrugs, eyes fixed on the outside world.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And add this to your list of shit to remember: Control yourself. Keep all that crap out of your mouth. Booze. Drugs. All of it. Don't trust yourself around anything. OK?

JED

OK.

MICHAEL

I'm Michael, by the way.

JED

I'm Jed.

MICHAEL

No shit.

(beat)

Some fuckin birthday, huh?

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY

Michael steps out of the truck and heads toward a house. Jed follows slowly, sighting Evil Jed on the steps drinking a bottle of beer. Evil Jed blows over its mouth. A low musical note. A dog barks in the distance. Jed points to the source of the barking.

JED

I think she's that way.

MICHAEL

Ten minutes, then we'll go.

Evil Jed is gone. Jed closes the car door and marches past Michael, up the stairs and into the house. ERICA, twenties, is waiting in the doorway, Jed stops close to her, extending his hand.

JED

Jed.

ERICA

I know.

Jed looks her in the eye, he concentrates hard. Erica looks at Michael. He shrugs.

CUT TO:

## INT. ERICA'S LIVING ROOM

Jed and Michael sit with Erica in her scuzzy, basement living room. She wears a dirty crew-neck sweater; cigarette burns and a faded hockey emblem. Her hair is up, tied into a lazy knot. Michael's tie is loose, a few shirt buttons undone.

A metal bucket catches a steady drip of water from the leaky ceiling. A lit cigarette dangles from Erica's lips, she holds another inside a small pop bottle, brewing a butt-toke. Small bits of hash rest on the chewed-up coffee table in front of her. Jed sits on a dirty recliner, rolling cigarettes and placing them into his metal case. They are in mid conversation.

ERICA

What about Elvis? You know who he is?

Jed thinks for a moment, smiling reluctantly.

JED

The King.

Erica explodes into laughter, almost dropping the toke bottle. She hands it to Jed. Michael, stoned, feebly tries to stop him.

MICHAEL

No. Don't.

JED

I'm good.

Jed pops a cigarette into his mouth. Erica takes the toke and quickly brews another.

ERICA

Come on. You know who Elvis is but not your own mother? How? Where does it end? What's the cut off point?

JED

I'm not sure.

ERICA

I can't believe no one told you what was up today. Holy fucking shit.

(laughing)

And the Black Man? What the hell is that?

Jed shoots her a 'welcome to my world' kind of look. More water drips into the metal bucket. It's getting louder. Erica hands the bottle to Michael, who takes the toke. Erica takes a quick swig from a dixie cup before brewing another butt toke.

JED  
Where's my sister?

Erica stands up, stunned.

ERICA  
Case in point.

She sits back down. Jed pulls out Jacky's sympathy card, displaying it.

MICHAEL  
She's in Africa.

ERICA  
Do you know where that is?

Jed nods.

JED  
Why Africa?

Michael shrugs.

ERICA  
Searching for that Black Elvis  
dick.

Erica laughs; Jed looks a little sick.

JED  
What about my brother?

MICHAEL  
No brother.

Jed leans back in his chair, mulling this over. Michael chuckles. Erica hands the bottle toke to Jed. He declines again.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Quit pushin the guy.

Erica takes the toke herself and continues to brew.

ERICA

Did you get *my* card? I left a little present in there. Guess it's no good now.

Jed reaches into his pocket and removes the small bag of hash, looking at Erica inquisitively. She nods; smiling as Jed offers it up.

MICHAEL

I'll take it.

Jed tosses it to him.

ERICA

Sure, look me right in the mouth.

(beat)

Oh! It's your birthday!

JED

I knew that.

Erica shoots him a look of disbelief.

JED (CONT'D)

You two seem to know everything. Why not enlighten me? Who am I? What do I like? Am I a good person?

ERICA

Shit's gettin' deep.

MICHAEL

Well... it's hard to say. I mean...

ERICA

You're a bit of a wild card.

JED

Wild card?

MICHAEL

A lot of a wild card.

JED

That sounds bad. Is that bad?

Erica laughs as she passes Michael the *toke* bottle. He inhales, speaking with full lungs.

MICHAEL

We love you. But it's not black and white like that it's --

JED  
(interrupting)  
You can tell me, it's fine.

Agitated; Jed focuses on rolling his smokes.

JED (CONT'D)  
I keep seeing myself.

He looks at Erica and Michael; both on edge.

JED (CONT'D)  
But I'm not...  
(beat)  
I thought it was my brother. It  
doesn't feel like me. I don't like  
him.

MICHAEL  
I feel like it's a bad idea to open  
that door any wider. You need to  
talk to a professional about this.

JED  
You said I was on the wagon again.  
That's good, right? Not drinking?

MICHAEL  
Well, yea.

JED  
I felt like he was trying to kill  
someone else -- The Black Man.  
Someone that deserved it.  
(beat)  
It was me.

Erica and Michael exchange glances. Jed looks sick; his eyes  
droop.

MICHAEL  
Jed?

Jed's eyes close. His head sags into his chest; his back  
sinks into the chair. He pants heavily. Maurice joins him on  
the arm of the recliner, placing his hand on Jed's shoulder.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

## INT. MENALON BAR AND GRILL

Jed stands, frozen, at the entrance of the bar. EVIL JED and John Henry sit at the bar. Essie is on the floor between them. John Henry holds the leash. Chris is wiping down the bar and Sour Jay sits in the deep background, folding pamphlets. A can of beer and an empty tumbler glass sit in front of Evil Jed. Evil Jed reaches inside his coat pocket and pulls out a half-empty mickey bottle. He unscrews the cap and pours some into his tumbler.

CHRIS

Eh buddy, no. No Jed don't.  
 (to the Black Man)  
 Joe Harry, come on. Tell this guy.

JOHN HENRY

Alright, alright. Give it a rest.  
 You're like a child. Can't decide  
 if I want to punch you or hug you.

Evil Jed downs his beer. Chris glares at him.

EVIL JED

Fuck you, John Henry. And fuck you  
 Chris.

JOHN HENRY

Hey!

CHRIS

Oh!

Evil Jed pulls out his wallet and drops it on the bar; Chris takes some money out. Chris reaches for Evil Jed's empty beer can; John Henry snatches it.

John Henry places the mouth of the can over his fingers. He wiggles some beer onto his hand and passes it to Chris. John Henry wrings his hands together, covering them with a thin layer of beer. He touches his face and smells his hands.

JOHN HENRY

That's nice.  
 (beat)  
 See that? Control.

Evil Jed tries to pour more from the mickey into the tumbler.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

OK, Jed. I'm out. I can't take it.  
 I can feel my heart rotting.

Evil Jed stops. Jed turns to Maurice, standing next to him and eating what looks like a furry apple. Maurice extends his index finger, shushing Jed and urging him to pay attention. John Henry stands up.

EVIL JED

Stay.

JOHN HENRY

Not sure which one of us ya mean.  
Either way, we're outta here.

Jed calls out to Essie. Nothing. Evil Jed looks John Henry in the eyes.

EVIL JED

One more.

JOHN HENRY

One more?

Evil Jed nods.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

I didn't have any! Jed, I can't be around you. Understand? Not with the dark shit. Now you gotta go home. Like you said.

EVIL JED

I'll stop.

JOHN HENRY

Like fuck.

EVIL JED

Let's go for a swim.

Chris plops a beer and pours a shot of whiskey in front of Evil Jed.

JOHN HENRY

(to Chris)

You tryin to drown him?

CHRIS

He pays, he's good.

John Henry shakes his head.

EVIL JED

Come on. Let's go to the beach.

JOHN HENRY

Tomorrow's a little important, don't ya think? You need time to sleep this shit off.

Evil Jed downs the shot of whiskey, staring sternly at John Henry. Jed's eyes well with tears, he tries to yell; Maurice places his hand on his shoulder. After a moment, John Henry caves.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

I ain't gettin in.

Evil Jed downs the beer and stands up, Essie jumps off the stool.

EVIL JED

You can build a fire.

Evil Jed returns his wallet to his pocket and walks behind the bar, examining the dark liquor bottles lining the back. He brings a near-full bottle close to his face, drunkenly attempting to read it. Chris takes Evil Jed's wallet out of his pants, grabs a bunch of cash, and returns the wallet.

JOHN HENRY

Severance package?

Evil Jed opens the liquor bottle and takes a swig, walking toward John Henry and pushing the bottle into his hands.

EVIL JED

It's my birthday.

(beat)

Drink.

John Henry regards the bottle. Evil Jed forces it toward John Henry. Rum splashes onto his lips.

EVIL JED (CONT'D)

Drink it.

CHRIS

Buddy, come on.

Evil Jed rams the bottle into John Henry's mouth, tilting it until the dark liquor pours into John Henry's mouth. John Henry spits it out. He licks his lips. His posture changes, watching Evil Jed with horror in his eyes.

EVIL JED

Born again!

John Henry sits unmoving, the taste of liquor fresh on his tongue. Evil Jed replaces the cap on the bottle and pushes it back into John Henry's hand. Evil Jed heads to the exit, disregarding Jed. John Henry follows reluctantly, pulling Essie along. As he passes Jed he looks him square in the eye.

JOHN HENRY  
Keep diggin.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. ERICA'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael and Erica loom over Jed. Michael is slapping his face. Jed's eyes open slowly.

ERICA  
There he is.

MICHAEL  
Fucking Christ, I was one minute  
away from --

JED  
I saw myself again.

Erica and Michael look worried.

JED (CONT'D)  
And Joe Harry?

MICHAEL  
What?

ERICA  
John Henry?

Jed nods.

MICHAEL  
What about him?

JED  
That's his name. The Black Man. I  
remember now.

A toilet flushes upstairs. Water pours heavily into the metal bucket. Erica walks toward it and dunks a dixie cup into the bucket.

JED (CONT'D)  
He tried to kill me.

Erica hands Jed the dixie cup.

ERICA  
Drink up. You're turning green.

Jed takes the cup. Erica dunks another one in the bucket, offering it to Michael who declines. Erica places it on the coffee table, sits down, and lights another cigarette.

MICHAEL

You two were probably just drunk  
and got out of hand.

ERICA

John Henry? No way.  
(to Jed)  
You were definitely drunk. I can  
smell you from here.

Water is practically gushing through the ceiling now. Michael and Erica don't seem to notice. Jed observes the near-overflowing bucket, taking frequent sips of the water in his hand. It tastes terrible.

JED

I'm really tired.

MICHAEL

I can imagine. Well, as soon as  
this hash tames down, we'll get on  
the hunt. Maybe swing by the ER?

Jed gingerly touches the hair around his wound, accidentally pulling out a clump. It is wet -- it doesn't look like his own. A lone droplet of blood seeps through his band aid and down his forehead, landing gracefully in the dixie cup. Jed looks ghastly. Maurice dunks his empty mickey bottle inside the metal bucket, holding it there. The others unaware of his presence.

ERICA

(to Michael)  
He looks rough.

JED

Can I lay down?

MICHAEL

Shit. Uh. Yea... Just don't fall  
asleep again.

Michael scrambles toward Jed to help. Erica stands up off the couch. Maurice takes a drink from the mickey bottle.

JED

What's in that water?

Erica points to the ceiling.

ERICA

Whatever's up there, I guess.

Maurice smiles, locking eyes with Jed.

MAURICE

When it rains, it pours!

JED

Something's wrong.

Michael helps him up, bringing him toward a filthy couch.

MICHAEL

Relax, it's fine. Here. Lay down.

JED

Oh no.

MICHAEL

What?

JED

Oh no, I can't remember her name.

MICHAEL

Whose name?

JED

Oh my god I can't remember her name.

MICHAEL

Jed, relax.

JED

Fuck. Fuck. Say some names!

ERICA

Jed, Michael, --

JED

Girl's names!

MICHAEL

Urma, Lyla, --

MAURICE

Essie!

JED

Essie!

Jed's breathing settles. Soon, he turns to Michael in dismay.

JED (CONT'D)

I can't remember.

(beat)

Ugh. Not good. Where is John Henry?  
He remembers.

Jed whistles his strange whistle over and over. Each time getting louder. Maurice covers his ears. A torrent of water flows into the bucket. Michael places his hand on Jed's shoulder.

MICHAEL

Jed, come on, let's get you to a hospital, man.

Michael's feigned smile is menacing.

JED

Please, don't touch me. I don't know you.

MICHAEL

Jed, I'm your friend.

JED

That is not me!

Erica sits stiffly on the couch. Jed's stomach growls loudly.

MICHAEL

Jed, please man, you're scaring the shit out of us.

Jed looks to Michael, then Erica; they are all petrified. Maurice blows across the mouth of the mickey bottle. A high-pitched musical note is heard, followed by a dog barking outside. Jed turns his head toward the noise.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jed bursts out of the front door and runs down the driveway. Michael is in hot pursuit.

MICHAEL

Jed!

Jed makes it to the head of the driveway before collapsing on the ground. He begins to vomit a strange, sandy liquid. Soon, the ground below him fills with sand.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH

Jed looks up to find he is back on the beach. He looks healthy; his clothes are clean, no head wound, and he's no longer wearing glasses. He sees Maurice, happily blowing on the mouth of the mickey bottle. Essie is close to him, hopping around wildly along to the noise. This strikes Jed as hilarious. Maurice catches on, the two laugh hysterically as the dog jumps and rolls around in the sand.

Jed spots Urma a few yards away. She's on her knees, head buried in a toilet. There are beer cans littered in the sand at its base. Young Jed holds her hair back as she spits and heaves. Jed approaches cautiously. Soon, Urma leans away from the toilet, locking eyes with Jed; she retches and hacks up a strange fruit. It rolls toward him and hits his foot. He picks it up. It has a peculiar look, like garlic with dark furry skin. Jed brings it to eye level, inspecting. Maurice watches him, concerned.

MAURICE

What's wrong?

JED

Sorry?

MAURICE

Never eaten an apple before?

JED

I think so...

URMA

Not since you were a baby.

Urma laughs, her lungs wet; she looks exhausted. Young Jed strokes her back.

URMA (CONT'D)

Do you remember being a baby?

Jed shakes his head, 'no'.

MAURICE

Deep down inside, everyone can remember being a baby.

They watch each other for a moment.

URMA

That's how I see you. Like a little baby.

JED  
But I'm a man.

Maurice laughs.

URMA  
You'll always be a baby to me.

JED  
Mom?

Maurice looks down at the fruit in Jed's hand, he speaks quietly.

MAURICE  
Are you gonna eat that or am I going to have to tell someone?

JED  
I --

Jed looks at the mysterious fruit again. It looks like it's rotting.

JED (CONT'D)  
I think it's rotten.

MAURICE  
What did you say?

JED  
It's rotten.

MAURICE  
I heard you.

JED  
Am I dead?

URMA  
You're not asking the right questions.

JED  
Am I alive?

Maurice grins slowly, turning to Urma and Jed's young self.

MAURICE  
You died a long time ago.

Maurice stares at him fervently. Jed flicks his fingers in a loving attempt to get Essie's attention. She lays down next to Maurice.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

It's rude not to eat the apple. I should have known. Murderers are a rude bunch. They don't like nature.

Urma stands and walks toward the water. Young Jed and Young Jacky grab handfuls of sand, throwing them at Jed.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Murderer.

Jed finds himself laying on his back in the sand. Mounds of sand fall onto his back from the clenched fists of the young children. Young Jed holds a noisemaker in his teeth like a cigarette, it squawks with his breaths, hissing through his gritted teeth.

YOUNG JED

Murderer!

Jed collects the strength to stand up and he sprints down the beach. The children chase after him.

JED

No! I'm a good person.

Jed finds himself deeper in the sand now, the children bury him ferociously.

YOUNG JED

MURDERER!

YOUNG JACKY

MURDERER!

MAURICE

Little baby murderer!

JED

No! Jed! I'm Jed! I'm nice! Please!

Jed takes a bit of the strange fruit. Suddenly he is standing upright, waist-deep in the water. The young voices are far in the distance.

YOUNG JED (O.S.)

MURDERER!

YOUNG JACKY (O.S.)

MURDERER!

Jed sees something floating on the horizon; a tuft of dark fur. Urma stands with him.

JED (CONT'D)

What is that?

Jed hears barking coming from the shore. He sees Essie, running toward the storm drain. Jed takes off after her.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH STORM DRAIN

Jed slows as he approaches the deep hum of the storm drain. Essie is no where to be seen. There is some rustling in the trees near by. Jed parts a small bush, revealing a BODY laying gracelessly near the root of a tree. It is John Henry, an empty liquor bottle lay next to him; his jacket covered in vomit. He is barely conscious.

JED

Oh my god. Thank God. Oh man.

Jed crouches next to John Henry. Waves crash against the shore. John Henry looks like he's in pain; weakly ejecting bits of chunky vomit from his mouth. His voice gurgles; oddly serene.

JOHN HENRY

Oh hey man.

JED

What is happening?

JOHN HENRY

You found me.

JED

Where are we?

JOHN HENRY

Oh this?

(chuckles)

This is paradise.

John Henry hacks loudly. John Henry turns serious; sober.

JED

What happened?

JOHN HENRY

Hey, you wanna go somewhere with me?

Jed nods; trembling.

JED

Yes. Please. Let's get out of here. Where?

John Henry struggles to speak.

JOHN HENRY

How 'bout... way up over my head?

He bursts into tears, choking hard on his vomit.

JED

No.

Jed is hysterical; his screams drown out John Henry. Jed wraps his arms around him. Water floods the ground beneath them. John Henry stops moving.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK

Jed lays reclined in the passenger seat, soaked in sweat. His wide, dry eyes look disconnected. An unlit cigarette dangles from his lips. His clothes are dirty, as they were; his band aid speckled with dry blood, glasses resting crooked on his face. Michael grips the steering wheel tightly, staring intensely out the window. The truck isn't moving. Jed snuffles loudly, startling Michael.

MICHAEL

You're alive.

Jed rubs his forehead.

JED

I saw John Henry.

Michael keeps his eyes fixed outside.

MICHAEL

(quietly)

Where did you see John Henry?

JED

On the beach. And the woman, from the grave. My mother.

MICHAEL

I think you should go to a hospital.

JED

I'm fine.

MICHAEL

You're not fine.

JED  
I need to find Essie.

MICHAEL  
You're right but,  
(beat)  
You need to check in with Lyla.  
She's gotta be worried sick.

JED  
I can't go back there without  
Essie.

Michael sighs, reaching over Jed's lap to open the passenger door.

MICHAEL  
Well, the bus stops here.

JED  
You said you'd help.

MICHAEL  
Talk to Lyla first.  
(beat)  
Maybe Essie came home...

JED  
Where are we?

MICHAEL  
Home. Meet me here in an hour or  
so. I need to get my shit together.  
God knows you do too.

Jed sits up to see they are outside Lyla's place. He gets out of the truck slowly.

JED  
You're not coming?

MICHAEL  
I'm way too stoned to deal with  
this right now. Close the door,  
you're freakin me out.  
(beat)  
Here. One hour.

Michael rams the truck in gear and drives away, causing the door to slam closed.

CUT TO:

EXT. LYLA'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Jed lights the cigarette still dangling from his lips, reorienting himself. He whistles. In the distance, a dog barks. He looks up the lane way and sees the big, open garage door of Rough John's auto shop. It's coming from inside. Jed moves toward it with purpose, growing cautious as he approaches. Jed whistles once more and the barking stops. Jed watches the door, stepping backwards slowly.

Rough John and Sammy emerge from the garage. They pause, staring at Jed; his hands raised in surrender. The men are still for a moment. Jed looks around the lane way, grabbing a budding flower, holding it up as a peace offering.

ROUGH JOHN

You don't remember nothin'?

Jed shakes his head 'no'. Rough John points into the garage.

ROUGH JOHN (CONT'D)

Come see for yourself.

Rough John disappears into the garage. Sammy waves Jed over and they enter the messy garage.

ROUGH JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll leave you to it. Make it nice  
and we'll talk next steps.

Rough John opens a door into the yard behind the garage, leaving them alone.

ROUGH JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You look like an idiot in glasses.

Sammy grabs some junk from the floor.

SAMMY

Your back looks better.

Jed tosses the flower aside, grabs some tools off the floor, and heads to the now-upright tool chest. Jed tosses them inside one by one. His movements grow angry.

JED

Where the fuck is my dog, Sammy?

SAMMY

*Shit* Jed.

JED

I heard her barking in here.

Sammy shakes his head 'no', concentrating on the cleanup.

JED (CONT'D)  
Well... where is John Henry?

SAMMY  
Did you get any sleep or have you  
been on a tear all day?

JED  
He stole Essie.

SAMMY  
That don't sound like John Henry to  
me.

Sammy pulls out his hip flask and takes a long haul.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
Today's been fucked for me too, ya  
know.  
(beat)  
You gotta suck it up, apologize and  
get back to work. If not for you,  
do it for *me*. We need you, man. We  
need clean Jed. Good Jed. Not...

JED  
I don't know what any of this  
means. I feel fine. I *am* good. I  
need to find my dog, is all.

SAMMY  
Right.

Sammy grabs a hand full of nails and dumps them into a box.

SAMMY (CONT'D)  
How do you choose what you remember  
and what you don't?

JED  
I saw him. On the beach.

SAMMY  
Well that's a good thing. I'm  
worried about him. Didn't show up  
today.  
(beat)  
Probly didn't want to clean up your  
mess.

JED  
What did I do? To Tall John?

SAMMY

*Rough John.*

Sammy nods to the mess on the floor.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

You got real dark after Urma passed. Oh yea.

(beat)

I'm sorry I didn't make it today.

JED

I didn't make it either.

Silence.

SAMMY

Fine, eh?

(beat)

I'm worried about you. You gotta lay low. Dry out. You're *still* bleeding.

JED

That's not my concern right now.

SAMMY

I'm tellin ya, as a friend. Not gonna be too many of us left if you keep smearing your shit everywhere.

(beat)

Go home. Go anywhere with a bed. Give it a few days and come pick up the pieces. I'll take care of this.

JED

Where should I look?

SAMMY

How 'bout your home?

JED

For John Henry.

Sammy sighs loudly.

SAMMY

I dunno.

JED

Please.

SAMMY

Try Sherry's.

JED

God. How many people do I know?

SAMMY

Sherry's is a bar, Jed. John Henry likes to chill there. The only bar that won't serve him anymore.

Rough John sticks his head into the garage and reaches for a coffee mug. Jed gives him a thumbs up. Rough John exits.

SAMMY (CONT'D)

I gotta get back to work. Get outta here while you can. I'll stall Rough John.

Sammy steps through the door to the yard.

JED

Sammy.

He stops, poking his head back in the door.

JED (CONT'D)

Is John Henry a good person?

SAMMY

The best.

JED

Am I?

Sammy chuckles.

SAMMY

You're a good person, Jed. You're just a shitty drunk.

Sammy closes the door. Jed looks around the garage, now completely spotless. Maurice enters the garage from the yard, popping open a cash register. Evil Jed approaches and stuffs a few handfuls of cash into his wallet.

A loud commotion behind him steals Jed's attention. There, Evil Jed knocks over the tool chest in a dissociative rage. Sammy and John Henry attempt to restrain him. Tools and tires fly everywhere.

Jed stands motionless; petrified with dread. He does not attempt to scream. Maurice calmly observes. The scuffle intensifies; Evil Jed's screams are unbearable. Jed closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. VACANT LOT

Jed opens his eyes, standing on a mound of junk and rubble. He whistles strangely; shaking Essie's empty leash rhythmically. Sour Jay approaches; he hands Jed a small pamphlet, stopping close by. It reads "I AM A DEAF MUTE, YOUR DONATION HELPS WITH MY REINTEGRATION".

JED

We had a conversation earlier. You wished me a happy birthday... Gave me these glasses.

Sour Jay stares at the pamphlet, Jed regards it once more. Now, it reads "I DON'T REMEMBER THAT". Sour Jay takes the pamphlet and walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERRY'S

Jed walks down the sidewalk, smoking. He stops by a large mural: "THIS IS PARADISE" is written upside-down in huge letters on the wall. He leans on the mural.

Alvin's hearse rolls slowly down the street, stopping near the curb. They lock eyes, sharing a moment of silence. Alvin peels away; Urma in the passenger seat.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERRY'S

A velvet curtain past the door keeps the cold air at bay. Jed steps through, revealing the house band, CORIN RAYMOND AND THE SUNDOWNERS, as they play ONE FINE DAY. The bar is deserted, save the band and BARTENDER (forties). CORIN nods to Jed as DAVID BAXTER plays a solo. Jed approaches the bar.

JED

(barely audible)  
I'm lookin for John Henry.

The bartender shrugs. The band sounds amazing. Jed sits on a stool to take it in.

EVIL JED and LYLA sit at a table, watching the band. They are sitting close together; love in their eyes. Two glasses of water sit in front of them. They are holding hands under the table, entranced by the music. After a moment, her attention drifts to Evil Jed; admiring his love for the music.

As Jed looks on, a smile appears on his face. A waiter approaches Evil Jed, he declines to order. Jed catches Lyla's eye.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN

It is silent, save the music from the bar. From Jed's perspective on the kitchen floor, Lyla sits crouched in a corner, sobbing. Essie licks her face. John Henry enters; Lyla stands. The two embrace, Lyla catches Jed's eye before burying her face in John Henry's chest. Jed closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN - LATER

It is completely silent. Jed lay on the floor still, his previous view now blocked by the mess of half-packed boxes. Jed sits up, using the lower cupboards for support. The soft sounds of sobbing creep in from another room. It's Lyla.

Jed stands and slowly kicks off his shoes, draping the dog leash on its hook automatically. He regards the suit and dress shoes, still on the chair and kitchen table. Lyla sniffles. Jed follows the noise.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S BED ROOM

Jed peeks past the door frame. Lyla packs some books into a box. Her black dress is strewn haphazardly on the bed spread.

JED

Hey.

LYLA

Where were you?

Lyla stops working; tears stream down her cheeks.

JED

I didn't know.

LYLA

I'm not buying this shit, Jed.

(beat)

What's with the glasses?

JED  
I didn't know I needed them.

Lyla crawls onto a mattress on the floor. There is a long silence.

LYLA  
What is wrong with you? How could you miss it today? And John Henry? What did you do?

JED  
I've been trying to find him.

LYLA  
Oh god.

JED  
I need you to know that I'm trying. If I had have known --

LYLA  
Stop it.

JED  
I wanted to bring Essie back.

Lyla covers her face with a pillow and screams loudly into it. Jed makes his way to the side of the bed and sits down next to her, cautiously. He leans on the wall, maintaining a comfortable distance. Silence.

JED (CONT'D)  
Is it *like* me to do something like this?

LYLA  
I wouldn't put anything past you at this point.

JED  
How long has it been?

LYLA  
Since what?

JED  
Since everything.

LYLA  
(to herself)  
Where did it start? Where did it end?

JED

That's been my whole day -- whole *life* it seems. Trying to figure that out.

Lyla kneads her forehead in frustration.

JED (CONT'D)

I can't put anything together.

LYLA

*That's* been your whole life.

Jed notices a dirty paw print on Lyla's black dress. There are others; they continue over the mattress and across the floor. He traces them with his eyes. The prints go up the wall, across the ceiling, and back down to the opposite wall. They end back where they started; they disappear.

JED

I need you to tell me everything that you know. You speak to me as if I know what's going on. I don't. I promise.

(beat)

If I was a liar in the past, you need to forget about it and trust me now. At least pretend.

LYLA

You're humiliating yourself.

Lyla stands, grabbing arm loads of her belongings and placing them in random boxes.

JED

I need to hear it from you.

LYLA

It's been a day. A single day.

(beat)

I didn't even know Urma was dead yet. The boys dragged you home; said you lost it at the shop. You were the drunkest I've ever seen you.

(beat)

And I could've made a career out of seeing you drunk.

JED

Oh god.

LYLA

I just thought it was over. Thought we got through it.

Jed stands to help her pack, putting some records in a box.

LYLA (CONT'D)

Please don't do that.

Jed stops, returning to the mattress.

LYLA (CONT'D)

John Henry took Essie for a few days till things cooled down; till we figured out our next steps.

JED

Next steps?

LYLA

I'm moving out.

JED

What about me?

Lyla scoffs, her nose runny, eyes wet with tears.

LYLA

I can't do this anymore.

JED

I'm sorry. I'll find John Henry and I'll bring her back. I'm going to make this right.

LYLA

This will never be right. I know, and you know.

JED

Yes. It will. I don't know who I was but I know who I am now. I want to help you.

LYLA

That's charming Jed. But it's just not true, is it?

Lyla dumps more belongings into a box.

JED

It is.

LYLA

You're a drunk Jed. Just like your mother. Those are all the memories I have. That's all I'll ever have. You've already clouded the good ones. If you really forget...

(beat)

Consider yourself lucky.

Jed takes a moment before speaking again.

JED

How did she die? My mother.

LYLA

Same way you did.

JED

Why won't you be straight with me? I want to help you. Essie's out there somewhere --

LYLA

(interrupting)

Essie is dead, Jed. I can feel it. If she's not with you, or John Henry -- *you've got her fucking collar* -- she's dead. And it's your god damn fault.

JED

No.

LYLA

I need you to leave. I can't do this.

JED

I understand. I do. I don't deserve to be with you but --

LYLA

(interrupting)

Please. Leave.

JED

I'm going to find her. And I'm going to bring her back to you. Then I'm going to leave. Forever.

Jed stands up and heads toward the door.

LYLA

Jed?

He stops, turning to her.

LYLA (CONT'D)  
Don't ever come back here.

CUT TO:

INT. LYLA'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jed pops his shoes on and grabs the leash from the hook, fighting tears. He catches himself in the mirror, taking notice of his glasses. He extends two fingers like a peace sign and brings them to the lenses. His fingers go right through the empty frames. He removes them, placing them on the cabinet. One last look in the mirror and he's off, closing the door quietly behind him.

FADE TO BLACK.

**TITLE CARD: "ACT THREE - PARADISE"**

FADE IN:

EXT. DOG PARK

Water shoots from a hose into a small wading pool. A dog hops in with a splash. He shakes and chugs the water happily. Jed whistles his strange whistle as he wanders through the park.

JED  
Essie!

He comes upon Pop Can who is trying to ignore him. Jed hands him the photo of him, John Henry, and Essie at the bar. Pop Can regards it but does not take it.

POP CAN  
That's unsanitary. Do they serve food there?

JED  
Have you seen her?

POP CAN  
No.

Pop Can continues to avoid eye contact. Jed moves on.

JED  
Essie!

A small pile of fruit on the ground catches his eye. Jed jogs over. There's something metallic inside. He bends down to grab a handful of the mushy fruit; he squeezes it and recoils in pain, dropping some. He opens his fist to find several thumbtacks amidst the fruit. He turns to Pop Can who shakes his head in objection.

JED (CONT'D)  
Who did this?

No one else in the park seems to notice. Jed bends over to gather up the remnants of the fruit.

JED (CONT'D)  
Who did this? Monsters!

Jed begins to march through the park. Stopping by groups of people, displaying the thumbtack-filled fruit. He approaches a YOUNG COUPLE, thirties.

JED (CONT'D)  
Look!

He rams the fruit close to their faces. They back away, plugging their noses.

JED (CONT'D)  
Someone's trying to kill the dogs!

Jed tosses the tack-laced fruit into a garbage bin as the couple scurries away. Jed looks around the park for the perpetrator. In the distance, a dog looks at him (the spitting image of Essie). She's being walked by John Henry. Jed whistles, running toward them. The dog pulls John Henry closer.

JED (CONT'D)  
Essie?

The dog pulls harder.

JED (CONT'D)  
Essie!

The dog is panting loudly, her windpipe constricted by her collar; practically dragging John Henry toward Jed. Finally, John Henry lets go of the leash, the dog gallops toward Jed who collapses onto his knees. The dog jumps on him, licking his face wildly.

JED (CONT'D)  
Essie! Baby!

The dog shoves her head into his chest, raking her paws all over him and licking his mouth.

JED (CONT'D)  
Good girl. Where were you? Oh my God.

Jed starts to cry, hugging the dog tightly. A YOUNG WOMAN'S voice pipes up. This is NICOLE, twenties.

NICOLE (O.S.)  
She loves love.

Jed looks up, startled to see Nicole in place of John Henry.

JED  
Where's John Henry?

Nicole looks around, bending to grab her dog's leash. Jed pets the dog hard and lovingly.

JED (CONT'D)  
Where did you find her?

NICOLE  
A breeder.

JED  
Near the beach?

NICOLE  
No. Can you let go of her please?  
I'm in a hurry.

Jed loosens his grip. All is silent for a moment save the panting dog.

JED  
Thank you so much for finding her.

NICOLE  
Finding her?

Jed gives the dog a treat.

JED  
She's been missing since yesterday.

NICOLE  
No she hasn't. Don't give her those. She's not your dog.

JED  
Yes she is.

Jed holds up the photo.

NICOLE  
Sir, let go of my dog.

She tugs on the leash.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Come on, Penny.

JED  
No. Essie. Where are you going?

Jed grabs Penny's collar and attempts to affix his leash to it. Nicole pulls Penny away.

NICOLE  
What are you doing?  
(to anyone)  
Help me!

Nicole starts to walk away.

JED  
What are you doing? Essie!

Penny turns back to him, standing on her hind legs, Nicole pulls her.

NICOLE  
Penny, no.

JED  
Essie!

NICOLE  
(to Jed)  
Stop calling my dog!  
(to anyone)  
Somebody!

JED  
Here!

NICOLE  
No! Stop it!

Nicole starts to run. Jed takes off after her.

JED  
ESSIE COME!

Nicole runs faster. Jed's voice is stern and commanding.

JED (CONT'D)  
HERE GIRL!

The two are running at full tilt now. Nicole is screaming and crying. Suddenly, a new voice enters the chaos.

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
Jed!

Jed stops in his tracks. It is Michael, sitting in his truck, pulled over at a nearby curb. Jed catches his breath, watching Nicole run away with her dog.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
I waited for you.

JED  
She has my dog.

Michael sees Nicole in the distance. Penny jumps happily beside her.

MICHAEL  
That's not your dog.

JED  
How do you know?

MICHAEL  
How do you know?

JED  
I remember her now.

MICHAEL  
Clearly, you don't. Look man,  
you're sick. Get in and let's go to  
the hospital. You need help.

JED  
No.

Michael gets out of the truck and walks briskly toward Jed.

MICHAEL  
I'm not asking anymore.

JED  
Get away from me.

Michael tries to grab him but Jed swings his fist hard, clipping him in the nose. Michael grabs his face in pain.

MICHAEL

Jesus Christ, Jed! I'm trying to help you.

JED

No you're not! No one is! I'm not who you think I am!

Their surroundings go silent. Pop Can stares in the distance, shocked. Blood seeps through Michael's fingers. Jed sprints away. Michael doesn't budge.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE

Jed vomits near a set of train tracks. He gathers himself, lights a smoke, and begins to walk. The wind seems to push him along. Maurice strolls down the side of the track in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Jed sits on the ground, quietly smoking, holding the photo of him, John Henry, and Essie. A WOMAN stumbles up to him; this is MARTHA, fifties. She is dirty, worn down from the streets. Her eyes float around in her head like she's huffed too much gas. She kicks an empty beer can into the alley.

MARTHA

Why so sad there, fella?

She sits down next to Jed. The beer can travels impossibly far; it picks up to a roll shooting off into the distance.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I got lots to be sad about but you don't see me sobbin. What? Did someone die?

Jed nods.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Who?

He hands her the photo.

JED

Me. My mother. Maybe my dog.

MARTHA

Your mother looks like a man.

She hands him back the photo. Anne pulls out a bottle, wrapped in a paper bag, from her jacket.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

I died once. But I'm still here.  
We're all still here.

She slaps his arm with the back of her gloved hand.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Can't let death get you down. You  
move on.

JED

I can't. Not yet.

MARTHA

Sure ya can. As far as the dog's  
concerned, my father used to tell  
me "if the dog ran away, you gotta  
hope a bear got a good meal." Hah!  
The oval of life, huh?

Anne taps his arm again playfully before taking a swig from the bottle. She offers it to Jed.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Home cookin. This'll help.

Jed shakes his head, 'no'. Martha takes another drink and smiles. Jed eyes the bottle.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Hair of the dog; er, what time'd  
you get up?

Anne spits, giggling. Jed reaches for the bottle, sniffing the mouth piece before taking a long sip. It is awfully strong.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Ha! You're like "screw the hair,  
give me the dog."

Jed starts to down the bottle.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Hey now!

Jed continues to chug, it looks painful. His eyes tear up. Martha tries to grab it but Jed moves away.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Give that back!

The two struggle for a moment but Jed manages to finish the bottle. He gives it back to her. Martha immediately puts it to her mouth.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Mother fucker. Thanks a lot. Fuck  
am I gonna do now?

Jed wipes his mouth on his coat sleeve.

JED

Move on.

Martha glares at him. Jed slaps the bottle out of her hand, sending it to the ground. Glass shatters inside the bag.

MARTHA

You owe me a new bottle.

Jed drags himself to his feet. Martha does the same.

JED

Move. On.

MARTHA

Not before we get me another  
bottle.

Jed steps closer to her. He can smell her.

JED

MOVE --

Martha lunges toward him, pulling things from his pockets. His tobacco, wallet, and sympathy card fall onto the pavement. Change spills from his pocket. Martha's flailing arms inadvertently smack Jed's wound, scraping off the band aid. Fresh blood pours from the wound; he yelps in pain. She grabs his wallet from the ground and takes off. Jed starts to run after her but is overcome with sickness. He hunches and vomits uncontrollably. Martha stops in the distance, holding up his wallet.

MARTHA

Coma's a bitch!

She turns and walks away, muttering to herself. Jed wipes his mouth. The sympathy card from his sister rests in a pile of change.

CUT TO:

## EXT. PAYPHONE

Jed approaches a payphone and pushes some quarters in; it seems like an endless amount. He opens the sympathy card, revealing a phone number; specks of vomit on his sleeve. He dials; the phone rings. Jed sees a chewed-up stick on the ground.

CUT TO:

## EXT. PARK

Jed stands alone in a park. He looks like hell. A long-distance phone call rings in the sound scape. Jed sees a chewed-up stick on the ground -- the same one by the payphone. He picks it up, regarding it with a smile. Someone picks up. There is a delay on the phone line.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Hello?

JED (V.O.)  
Hey.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Jed?

Jed looks around, holding the stick as if he's teasing a dog.

JED (V.O.)  
Jacky.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Oh my god, how are you doing? You got my card...

Jed throws the stick as far as he can, watching it fly through the air and land about twenty yards away. He stands there for a minute, thinking.

JED (V.O.)  
Mom's dead.

JACKY (V.O.)  
I know.

JED (V.O.)  
You weren't there.

JACKY (V.O.)  
No.

JED (V.O.)  
Why not?

JACKY (V.O.)  
I can't go back there, Jed. You  
know. I'm too far away now.

JED (V.O.)  
Me too.

Jed walks slowly to the stick and picks it up. He looks  
around again, getting ready to throw it.

JED (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I can't find Essie.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Who?

JED (V.O.)  
My dog.

Jed throws the stick and immediately sprints toward it,  
trying to catch it before it hits the ground.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Oh. I didn't know you had a dog.  
That's terrible.

The stick lands a few yards in front of him. He stops when he  
reaches it, picking it up again.

JED (V.O.)  
Yea.

There is a long silence on the telephone call. Jed throws the  
stick again; this time, not as far. He still can't catch it.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Hello?

JED (V.O.)  
Have you been gone a long time?

Jed throws the stick again; he misses the catch.

JACKY (V.O.)  
You're drinking again, aren't you?

JED (V.O.)  
No. Yea. I don't know. I don't know  
anything.

Jed throws the stick a few more times, chasing after it.

JACKY (V.O.)  
Where are you?

JED (V.O.)  
I'm lost.

There is another silence on the phone.

JACKY (V.O.)  
This is a hard time for you, I  
know. But you can't let yourself  
slip again. Think about mom.

Jed throws the stick until, finally, he catches it. Jed  
regards the stick again before discarding it on the ground.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAYPHONE

Jed stands, as he was before, at the payphone. His attention  
shifts from the stick to the keypad of the phone. He leans  
against the booth for support; He almost hangs up.

JED  
Do you miss me?

JACKY (V.O.)  
Of course I do. I wish I could be  
there to hug you.

There is another silence.

JACKY (CONT'D)  
Jed?

CLICK. Jed hangs up the phone; holding the receiver for a  
brief moment. He looks around once more, removing Essie's  
leather dog collar from his coat pocket. He fastens it around  
his neck, straightens it out, and clips the snap hook of the  
leash onto it. He holds his arm out and walks himself away.

FADE TO BLACK  
AND FADE UP ON:

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS

Jed is unconscious, laying face down in the rocks next to a  
set of train tracks. Slowly, his body is pulled from behind,  
away from the tracks. Maurice and John Henry speak softly.

JOHN HENRY (O.S.)  
He's gonna ruin his back.

We see the men's hands roll Jed over. Maurice grabs handle of Jed's leash.

JOHN HENRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Looks like a crazy man.

Maurice jiggles the leash.

MAURICE (O.S.)  
Here doggy doggy.

Maurice whistles a strange whistle. Jed's eyes open. He stares at the two men for a moment, unable to focus. John Henry waves to him, smiling. Jed's eyes grow wide; he lunges at John Henry's waist, taking him down. Maurice tugs on the leash.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
Aren't you happy to see him?

Jed crawls on top of John Henry, reaching for his neck. Jed squeezes tightly; it seems to have no effect. Jed squeezes harder. Maurice tugs on the leash.

MAURICE (CONT'D)  
No. Bad.

John Henry smiles. Jed uses all his strength. Still, no affect on John Henry. Maurice pulls hard on the leash, causing Jed to fall off onto the rocks. John Henry sits up.

JOHN HENRY  
Probably deserve that.

JED  
I've been looking for you.

John Henry smiles: "ta-da!".

JOHN HENRY  
You found me.

JED  
Where's Essie?

JOHN HENRY  
Right to the chase.

Jed sits up, John Henry gets a good look at the dried wound on Jed's forehead.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
Got you good, huh?

JED  
You took my memories.

JOHN HENRY  
I didn't mean to.

JED  
Well you did.

Jed spits.

JED (CONT'D)  
With a shovel.

John Henry strikes a pose.

JOHN HENRY  
You don't remember this face?

JED  
No. Other than you trying to kill  
me -- walking around with my dog  
all day.

John Henry laughs.

JED (CONT'D)  
You stole my dog.

JOHN HENRY  
I didn't steal no one. John Henry  
don't steal.  
(beat)  
We go way back. Come on.

John Henry strikes another pose, trying to jog Jed's memory.  
John Henry stands, moving closer to inspect Jed's wound.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
That's just... I don't know. I  
don't believe you.

JED  
I've seen you.

Jed looks up at a smiling Maurice.

JED (CONT'D)  
But I don't remember everything.

John Henry sticks out his hand to help Jed up.

JOHN HENRY  
Or don't wanna.

JED  
Where's Essie?

John Henry retracts his hand, backing away. He smiles at Jed; a long-lost child. Essie's dog tags jingle, catching John Henry's eye. He snickers.

JOHN HENRY  
You know what you look like?

JED  
Where is my dog?

JOHN HENRY  
You look like a man who lost his way.

JED  
(yelling)  
Where the fuck is my dog?

JOHN HENRY  
(yelling)  
You don't have a dog.  
(beat, calm)  
Not no more.

Jed grabs the leash around his neck, pulling it free from Maurice. The tags jingle against the snap hook.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
You think everything buried on that beach is yours? Go on. Go back. Do some more digging. See what else you left there.

JED  
I think it's mine.

JOHN HENRY  
Think.

JED  
It's mine.  
(beat)  
I'm getting her back. And you're going to help me.

Jed taps his wound, wincing.

JED (CONT'D)

You owe me.

John Henry Scoffs. Maurice crouches to comfort Jed.

MAURICE

That dog is long gone. Do you hear  
her little paws?

Maurice pats his chest lightly with his hands. The three  
listen for a moment.

JOHN HENRY

Long gone.

John Henry turns gravely to Jed.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

I dunno, boy. I just don't know.

John Henry pulls out a pack of smokes, tossing one to Jed  
before lighting his own; it lands on his lap. He hands the  
pack to Maurice who takes a few steps away. Young Jed and  
Young Jacky approach. Maurice gives them the pack of  
cigarettes; they run off. Jed stares intensely at John Henry  
as he kneels. He plucks the cigarette from Jed's lap, sticks  
it in Jed's mouth and lights it.

JED

You were there when I woke up.

John Henry nods sincerely. He sits down.

JED (CONT'D)

So you know what happened.

JOHN HENRY

I'm probably the only one. Lucky  
little shit.

The two smoke in silence for a while.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Honest to god, you don't remember  
nothin'?

Jed shakes his head 'no'.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Find it easier?

Jed shrugs, John Henry laughs. A train rumbles in the  
distance. The wind picks up; an empty beer bottle hums in the  
nearby rocks.

John Henry grabs it, placing his palm over the mouth of the bottle and shaking it a few times. Jed grabs the bottle and thrusts it to his mouth. It's empty. John Henry rubs his hands together, working the flat beer into his skin like moisturizer.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Think what you will but my skin is god damn smooth.

He extends his hand.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Feel that.

JED

Please. Take me to her.

JOHN HENRY

You don't see it now but you're too close to it, Jed. I couldn't be around you no more. You brought me back. That's selfish. Don't do it again.

John Henry dries his hands on his pants; adopting a more serious tone.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

Whether you realize it or not, somewhere deep in that swampy brain of yours,

(points to Jed's head)

You know where she is. And if you really, *truly*, don't, you should walk the fuck away. Right now.

JED

I can't do that.

JOHN HENRY

To be honest, I'm impressed with you. No reason you shouldn't still be in that sand.

JED

Why did you try to kill me?

JOHN HENRY

I didn't want to.

JED

Why won't you be straight with me?

JOHN HENRY

(laughing)

Ain't nothin' straight about this.  
I'm lookin' out for ya. Someone's  
gotta save ya from yourself.  
Staring down the barrel of a new  
life; lookin' for the bullet.

JED

Please! Be clear! How can I walk  
away without knowing *anything*? Who  
are you?

Jed gestures to Maurice.

JED (CONT'D)

And who is he? Those kids, are...  
is that me? I can see myself  
walking around. But it's not *me*.

(beat)

I don't know what's real, who's  
dead...

(beat)

I need your help.

John Henry spits, turning to Jed.

JOHN HENRY

If you really wanna know, I'll show  
ya. But I get to say 'I told you  
so'.

He lowers his head, speaking low.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

A falling knife has no handle, Jed.

Silence.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

I need verbal consent.

JED

I want to know.

John Henry breaks into an operatic vocal melody. It echoes  
and booms loudly. Jed closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH STORM DRAIN

John Henry is knelt at the mouth of the storm drain, singing boisterously into its depths. The echoes howl back at him. The sound is almost painful; Jed's ears ring. John Henry sings through the resulting cacophony.

John Henry stops and rises to his feet, the drain still echoing fiercely. He takes a few steps and picks up a rusty shovel from the sand, flinging it over his shoulder with a grin.

JOHN HENRY  
Happy birthday, Jed.

Jed nods with a fake smile.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
Now, where do we start?

JED  
As far back as you need to.

JOHN HENRY  
Well, ya fucked up when ya refused my help. That's good to know from here on in.

JED  
I remember that.

JOHN HENRY  
Thought ya didn't.

JED  
I saw you and me. We were talkin about it.  
(beat)  
But it wasn't me.

John Henry shoots Jed a knowing look.

JOHN HENRY  
You see him a lot?

JED  
Yea.

John Henry reaches for a nearby bush; he gestures for Jed to come closer. Jed follows cautiously. John Henry spreads its branches, revealing DEAD JOHN HENRY (John Henry's exact double) laying lifeless next to the root of a tree. His mouth is filled with dry vomit; jacket caked in yellow bile. His eyes are open; cold and unseeing.

An empty liquor bottle lay next to him in the dirt. Jed gasps. John Henry smiles somberly.

JOHN HENRY

Imagine *my* surprise. Wakin up dead!

Jed stares at the man on the ground and the man before him, tensing up.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

You don't need to be here with me, Jed. You have a choice.

Jed's eyes are locked on Dead John Henry's body. With clenched fists, he tries to control his nervous breathing.

JED

I need to know what I'm leaving and... do the opposite of that. Get Essie back to her mother.

JOHN HENRY

There's no coming back, Jed.

JED

Is she still alive?

John Henry sighs remorsefully. He bends to grab the empty liquor bottle in the dirt. He holds it up.

JOHN HENRY

Remember this?

JED

IS SHE STILL ALIVE?

John Henry calmly places the mouth of the bottle and shakes it. He rubs it on his hands.

JOHN HENRY

That's the closest I've been to the dark shit for years. Until you pulled me back over. Do you remember *that*?

Jed nods regretfully, John Henry looks down at his doppelganger's body.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)

A few hours, Jed. A *few hours!* And look!

JED

Did I kill you?

JOHN HENRY  
(laughing)  
No. Not in a physical way.

John Henry grabs the liquor bottle from the ground; more liquid appears as he swirls it gently. It's about a quarter full now. He brings it to his lips and takes a sip.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
Ya helped though.

John Henry turns to face the beach.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
Oh. There you go.

In the distance, EVIL JED is walking toward the water with Essie. Jed can't seem to make them out.

JED  
Is that?

John Henry turns to Jed; he sounds drunk.

JOHN HENRY  
Is it all coming back now?

JED  
What is he doing?

JOHN HENRY  
I dunno. Let's ask him.

John Henry keeps his eyes on Jed, stumbling a little.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Jed! What are you doing?

JED  
What is this? Where are we?

John Henry smiles as if Jed is being facetious.

JOHN HENRY  
You know where you are.

Evil Jed yells out in the distance; arms in the air.

EVIL JED  
*This is paradise!*

Evil Jed steps into the water, Jed bolts after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Jed splashes through the water, stopping up to his ankles. Evil Jed is deeper in the lake. John Henry approaches, stopping next to Jed; he offers him the bottle, now half full. Jed declines, watching Evil Jed and Essie.

JED  
What's he doing?

JOHN HENRY  
Essie loves to swim.

JED  
She's not moving.

JOHN HENRY  
If you could ever love something to death, then you're doing it.

JED  
That's not me.

Jed runs out into the water, diving in as it gets deeper.

JOHN HENRY (O.S.)  
You were afraid you'd never see her again!

Jed gets closer to Essie and Evil Jed; he treads water to catch his breath.

JED  
Let her go!  
(to John Henry)  
Tell him to stop!

JOHN HENRY (O.S.)  
Stop!

Jed lunges at Evil Jed, grabbing Essie. Suddenly, all is silent. Evil Jed is gone; Jed stands in his place, holding Essie's motionless body. Horrified, he shakes her. She is unresponsive.

JED  
No. No. No!

Jed embraces her, blowing air into her snout. He howls with sorrow. After a few desperate moments, Jed heads slowly back to the shore. He sobs hysterically.

JED (CONT'D)

Help me!

Jed hugs her tighter, reaching the shore where John Henry waits.

JED (CONT'D)

I don't know what I did!

JOHN HENRY

Either you smothered her or she drowned.

(beat)

Shoulda walked.

Jed's breathing grows heavy; he tries to reel it in.

JED

This can't be happening. This isn't real. Where did he go?

Jed searches for his Evil twin. John Henry shrugs.

JED (CONT'D)

I didn't do this. I tried to stop him.

JOHN HENRY

I know that wasn't you. I've never seen *that* Jed before. That don't change nothin, though.

Jed collapses onto his knees; he lays Essie's body onto the sand. He pets her body gently.

JED

I would never hurt anyone. Would I?

John Henry raises the rusty shovel.

JOHN HENRY

Wasn't it a lot nicer before?

After a moment, Jed turns to John Henry.

JED

Is this why I wanted to die? When I was in the sand?

John Henry grips the shovel tighter. A wet scream forms in Jed's lungs; he pushes his face into Essie's stomach. Muffling his pain in her wet fur. He stops, staring into space for a moment.

JED (CONT'D)  
Let me bury her first.

John Henry lights a smoke.

JOHN HENRY  
I'll build a fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - DUSK

Daylight fades over the lake. Lit by the crackling fire, Jed puts the last few piles of sand onto Essie's shallow grave. He takes off the leather collar and buries the strap; her dog tag now a makeshift gravestone. Jed sobs.

JED  
I thought it'd be OK. I never once doubted she was out there. Waiting. And I'd save her. Bring her back.

JOHN HENRY  
Those words sound nice coming out of your mouth. Like a guy speakin' English for the first time.

John Henry tosses Jed a smoke and takes another for himself. They both pop them in their mouths. Jed lights his at the edge of the fire.

JED  
Everyone will find out what I did.  
(beat)  
They'll never forgive me.  
(beat)  
I can't live with these memories. I can't bear that kind of weight.

JOHN HENRY  
Sound like a broken record now.

JED  
I just don't want to bother anybody any more.

JOHN HENRY  
Boy, you shoulda walked.

JED  
I made my bed.

A long silence.

JED (CONT'D)  
What now?

JOHN HENRY  
You tell me.

JED  
Are we dead?

JOHN HENRY  
(laughing)  
I dunno what the fuck this is.  
Life's all chaos, right? Maybe  
death is too.

John Henry takes a long haul on his liquor bottle and struggles to stand up. He burps, viciously drunk, gripping the shovel with both hands.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
(unintelligible)  
It's gettin' to be that time.

John Henry looks grimly at Jed who eyes the shovel.

JED  
Leave it. I'm good here.

John Henry's speech is slurry; muddied by the rum.

JOHN HENRY  
You sure you don't want me to knock  
you on the head, see if we can get  
two for two?

JED  
Get out of here. You've done  
enough.

John Henry hick-ups; it turns to a dry heave. He coughs loudly.

JOHN HENRY  
You're the boss. And uh...  
(sarcastically)  
what are friends for?

The two watch each other for a moment. John Henry takes a last look at the shovel.

JOHN HENRY (CONT'D)  
OK. OK. I get it. Well, I got  
places to be anyway.  
(beat)  
You uh... take care.

John Henry bows slightly before stumbling toward the storm drain.

JED  
John Henry. I'm sorry.  
(beat)  
Tell everyone I'm sorry.

John Henry waves his arm, brushing it off, almost falling in the process.

JOHN HENRY  
They won't believe me.

He hocks and spits loudly. Jed watches John Henry take another drink of liquor as he disappears into the trees.

Jed looks into Essie's shallow grave, wiping some sand away with his hand. A tuft of fur is exposed. He twirls her hair lovingly; eyes filled with tears.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - MORNING

Young Jed and Jacky dig through the dirt in their backyard. They come upon a patch of brown fur. Young Jacky runs away, Young Jed is startled. Urma hits the ground, crying loudly. Young Jed rushes to Urma's side; She is clearly drunk. She grabs the can from Jed, speaking through tears.

URMA  
Don't do that Jed. Don't be like  
mommy.

She drops the can on the ground. Young Jed watches it roll away as if taken by an invisible force.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECRET BEACH - TWILIGHT

The fire is dying, Jed looks like hell. He takes his last cigarette and tosses the metal case into the fire, shortly followed by his tobacco pouch. He lights a smoke. The photos and sympathy card burn quickly.

Jed watches the swell of light in the fire. MAURICE approaches. He hands Jed the mickey bottle and rests his hand on Jed's shoulder. Maurice speaks calmly.

MAURICE

At the end, there's a river.

Maurice is gone. Jed blows over the mouth of the bottle. No sound is made. He tosses it in the fire. Jed slides into the shallow grave, mere inches above Essie; curling up to fit inside. He scoops sand over his legs.

He tosses his cigarette butt and continues to bury himself until all but his face are covered. He watches the fire. The photo of Essie; her image is the last to burn.

Finally, he pushes his head inside the mound, sand falls in front of his face. His arm sticks out of the pile, he pats down the sand then slowly retracts it inside.

The pile breathes for a moment; it stops. The fire crackles softly. In the dim light, we see the make-shift grave stone "Essie".

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

The soft sounds of water rocking gently against the shore.

**THE END**