

Interior: Supermarket

by

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INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Harsh florescent light drains the life out of everyone in the store including our hero, JOE. He stands behind the checkout lane in a short-sleeved white shirt and narrow black tie.

JOE (V.O.)
Interior: supermarket.

He is in his mid-40s, with paunchy cheeks and a black mustache stretched thinly between them. His dark hair recedes from a narrow point high on his forehead.

JOE (V.O.)
Harsh florescent light drains the life out of everything in the store.

The automatic door of the supermarket opens.

A YOUNG KID enters wearing headphones.

JOE (V.O.)
Our hero enters carrying a sawed-off shotgun, looking badass.

Young Kid walks past the guard, CHARLIE, who hardly notices.

JOE (V.O.)
The security guard rushes him.
WHAM! Our hero knocks him in the gut with the shotgun stock.

Joe's eyes are dark and absent, his hands methodically sliding groceries in front of the bleeper as if on their own.

JOE (V.O.)
The guard falls to his knees. He starts crying. "Please," he begs, "Don't." But our hero just smiles. "Have a nice day."

WOMAN
You all right?

A middle-aged WOMAN waits for him to ring her up.

When he speaks, Joe is animated and friendly, with absolutely no hint of this dark fantasy world.

JOE
You caught me! Sorry, I zoned out.
Did you find everything okay?

WOMAN

Yes, thanks.

Joe notices a YOUNG BOY beside her.

JOE

Hey little man! Are you helping your sister do some shopping?

WOMAN

Oh, please! He's my grandson!

JOE

Was he a good boy?

WOMAN

Oh, yes. He's very helpful.

JOE

Maybe he deserves one of these?

He holds up a lollipop.

WOMAN

God. His mother will kill me.

JOE

Our little secret. Here you go.

He hands the lollipop to the young boy.

WOMAN

What do you say?

But the boy just buries his head in her dress.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh, well. Thank you very much.

JOE

You're welcome. You need help out?

WOMAN

No, I think we've got it.

JOE

All right, then. Have a nice day!

As he waves, his face melts slowly into a mysterious expression: impermeable, enigmatic-- perhaps suspicious. Push in on this look before

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SUPERMARKET - MONTAGE

MUSIC UP: Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A."

Joe performs various managerial duties:

- He counts out his register.
- He tallies receipts in his OFFICE, overlooking the floor.
- He pops a videotape out of an old security system, then pushes it back in and presses record -- resetting the tape.
- He carries a clipboard through the BACK OF THE STORE and ticks pallets off on an inventory sheet.
- He bags up garbage from the registers.
- He takes the garbage behind the store to a TRASH INCINERATOR -- a rusted metal contraption with a huge, mouth-like gate covering an opening roughly two feet square.
- He opens the gate with a lever on the side, then feeds the bags one at a time through the opening. Then he slides the grate back down and twists a lock over it.
- He dons a pair of plastic safety goggles. Stands to one side, pushes and holds a green button marked "IGNITE." The incinerator sparks, sputters and roars to life.
- He stares through the grate into the all-consuming fire.

MATCH CUT:

EXT. QUEENS/GRAND CENTRAL PARKWAY - DUSK

The grinning grille of Joe's Mustang, stuck behind a sea of cars on the Grand Central Parkway.

INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - DAY

Joe's fingers tap lightly on the steering wheel.

JOE
(mumbling along)
...sent me off to a foreign land...

Joe's cell phone RINGS. He looks at the screen: **MORTGAGE**

Silences his phone, sets it aside.

TIME JUMP:

INT. MUSTANG/EXT. QUEENS - NIGHT

MUSIC jumps to "Glory Days," from later in the same album.

Joe crawls along the busy Austin Street in Forest Hills, Queens -- still in bumper-to-bumper traffic.

JOE
(with the music again)
Pass you by, glory days...

Outside his window, he hears a young girl (VIOLET) giggling.

JOE (CONT'D)
Who do we have here?

She smiles and waves at him. She's fifteen, going on twenty. Goth-ed out: pale white skin and dark red lips.

He smiles at her.

Waves.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hello, friendly.

She giggles again, points to an off-screen friend.

He follows her gesture, still grinning.

Another goth girl sees him smiling.

She is chubbier, with braces and bad skin.

This is JOSIE, Joe's stepdaughter.

Joe's grin fades immediately.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit.

A CAR HORN -- green light.

Joe guns it through the intersection.

In his rearview, he sees Josie shaking her head.

Violet waves after him, laughing. Josie rolls her eyes.

Joe's cell phone RINGS again: **MARY ANN**

He turns off the radio, answers his phone.

JOE (CONT'D)
Honey I'm in the car, so I can't--

MARY ANN
I'm calling to remind you to pick up some soy milk before you leave the store.

JOE
I already left the store. And we have a brand new gallon at home.

MARY ANN
SOY milk. Jo doesn't support the dairy industry anymore, remember?

She hangs up.

He slams his hand on the steering wheel.

JOE
Dammit!

EXT. ALL-NIGHT SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Joe emerges from a corner grocer with a box of rice milk.

A METER MAN writes a ticket out for his car.

JOE
Hey! Wait a minute, I was only in there a second, I wasn't even--

The meter man just shakes his head.

METER MAN
One second too long.

Hands the ticket to Joe.

METER MAN (CONT'D)
Have a nice day.

INT. MODEST HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Joe's wife, MARY ANN, absently twirls pasta on her plate.

Joe stares at her from across the table. Finally:

MARY ANN
Did you hear me?

JOE

Hmm?

MARY ANN

I asked you a question.

JOE

Oh. Oh, I don't know.

MARY ANN

What do you mean, you don't know? I said I want a divorce. You have no feelings about that? You're just gonna stare at me like a goddamn... psychopath?

JOE

No honey, I just. I don't have the energy for this tonight. I'm sorry.

She sighs, gets up from the table and sits on the couch.

Joe seems lost in thought.

A moment later the TV COMES ON.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey. Are you okay? Honey?

His only reply is the sound of his wife's distinctive laugh.

CONTINUOUS

Joe carries his and his wife's plate into the KITCHEN.

Turns on the water to begin handwashing dishes.

Holds his wife's plate over the garbage and starts to scrape.

Pauses suddenly in mid-scrape.

JOE

Slug line.

Mary Ann turns the VOLUME down.

MARY ANN (O.S.)

Did you say something?

JOE

I was trying to remember a word, today: slug line. It's when--

But she has already turned the volume back up. Another laugh.

JOE (CONT'D)

Slug line.

GARAGE - LATER

Joe's Mustang fills the screen. On the back wall: tools and shelves with Christmas decorations. There's a small writing nook in one corner, where Joe goes now.

A corkboard filled with note cards under pushpins. An old desktop computer on the desk, an old printer underneath it, and an ashtray with a pack of cigarettes beside it.

On the desk is a three-ring binder with a brightly-colored logo: "THE SCREENWRITING BIBLE: WRITE YOUR SCREENPLAY."

Joe opens it and holds it delicately, as if it were an ancient manuscript.

He flips to a section marked GLOSSARY, which is maybe fifty words long. Some of the words have checkmarks next to them.

He finds the words "slug line."

Puts a small check next to them.

Satisfied, he settles into his chair and launches Final Draft on the old computer.

He mutters as he types, slowly:

JOE

"Interior supermarket. The harsh florescent light--"

A phone begins to RING.

JOE (CONT'D)

Honey? Can you get that? Honey?

Her distinctive laugh.

JOE (CONT'D)

Chrissake.

FOLLOW Joe back inside, down the HALL and into JOSIE'S ROOM as he searches for the ringing phone.

It's on her bed.

JOE (CONT'D)
 (to cordless phone)
 Hello?

AUTOMATED RECORDING
 Please do not hang up. This is an
 important call from your bank. If
 this is-- Peterson, Joseph --press
 "one" now. If this is not--
 Peterson, Joseph --please press
 "two" now.

Joe hangs up. Goes back to the GARAGE.

Sits down at his screen, excited.

JOE
 All right. Interior supermarket.
 Harsh florescent light.

He begins typing rapidly, catching a good groove.

The sound of his keys rises for a few moments, then:

JOSIE (O.S.)
 Dad!

JOE
 I'm working.

JOSIE (O.S.)
 Mom said she called you.

JOE
 Josie, I'm in the middle--

Josie stands in the doorway of the garage.

She's got a bowl, a box of cereal and the box of rice milk.

JOSIE
 This is RICE milk. I need SOY milk.

JOE
 Is there a difference?

She shakes her head at his limitless stupidity and exits.

JOE (CONT'D)
 I'm not washing those dishes, young
 lady. Josie? Do you hear me?

He turns back to the screen and gradually resumes typing.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - SCREENWRITING CLASS

Joe and five other students awkwardly crammed into high school desks, which are gathered in a semi-circle.

In the center of the circle is CHARLOTTE, mid-30s, slender. She is attractive, but not immediately so. Friendly, but fragile.

She reads from Joe's script:

CHARLOTTE
"'Please don't kill me.' Our hero
just smiles. 'Have a nice day.'"

Joe seems pleased to hear his words aloud.

The other students (AARON: college-age stoner, GREG: Aaron's best friend, SAMANTHA: middle-aged mom, GORDON: retired accountant, and VICKI: ambitious, mid-30s) appear bored.

Charlotte makes sure there's nothing more.

JOE
There is more to it. I finished the
whole thing tonight, actually. But
you said to bring ten pages, so.

CHARLOTTE
Okay. Well. What do we think?

Joe looks eagerly to his fellow students.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Joe's laid out a-- a very
straightforward plot here.
Thoughts?

AARON
I liked it.

CHARLOTTE
Okay. What did you like about it?

AARON
The part where he was shooting
everyone.

GREG
Yeah.

JOE
Thanks.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. Anyone else? Well, from my point of view it seems the killing is unmotivated. Remember we talked about giving our characters motivations? And objectives?

SAMANTHA

I agree: it was like he started killing people for no reason.

JOE

It's not for no reason. It's the atmosphere of the place. That's why I put it in the slug line: "The harsh florescent light drains the-"

SAMANTHA

That's not a reason to kill people.

JOE

Isn't it?

VICKI

Why does he get away with it?

Joe regards her icily.

JOE

Because. He's the hero.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. Just making him the central character doesn't make him the hero. We need to identify with him.

VICKI

And where are the police? Why doesn't anybody try to stop him?

JOE

Because they're on his side!

SAMANTHA

The police are on his side?

JOE

Of course!

VICKI

Why?

JOE

You have to visualize it. This
light beating down, every day--

CHARLOTTE

Joe, remember-- your script has to
do that for us. Your script has to
put that image in our mind.

JOE

No, I know.

CHARLOTTE

When you send your script out, you
won't be there to explain it. So if
someone doesn't get what you're
writing, if you have to explain it--

JOE

Of course I have to explain it to
her.

VICKI

You shouldn't have to, though.

JOE

But...

Joe looks around. No one makes eye contact with him.

CHARLOTTE

Okay. Thank you for sharing Joe.
Before we move on to Samantha's
pages, I do want to clarify what
the slug line is...

Charlotte's voice trails off as Joe looks out the window.

JOE (V.O.)

Interior public school.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAYDREAM

The images are dream-like, jumpy, shot in silky smooth 120fps
slow motion.

Joe's voice-over is perfectly calm and even. But the diegetic
sounds are distant, out of sync with the image.

JOE (V.O.)

The hero walks down the hallway
with his semi-automatic rifle slung
beneath his arm, unloading hot lead
into everything around him.

Wide shot: the FACELESS HERO in the hallway. In wide shots he
is perpetually out of focus, a blurry avatar of imagination.
Close ups are always too close, never showing the full face.

Screams and the sound of a gun discharging in the distance.

Rifle cartridges eject and arc through the air-- balletic.

JOE (V.O.)

A cigarette hangs from his mouth.

Close on Faceless Hero's perfect, square jaw.

Between the lips, teeth bite the end of a cigarette.

Above the lips-- a thin black mustache.

JOE (V.O.)

He kills without mercy, his eyes as
cold and hard as his biceps.

Glass and metal explode from gunfire, all in slow motion.

Wide shot again: the hero wears the same thin tie as Joe,
moving down the hallway with confidence and a machine gun.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - LATER

Joe exits the building but lingers near the door.

He pops a cigarette into his mouth and lights it.

SAMANTHA

'Night, Joe.

She comes out the door behind him. Joe waves her off.

The other students trail out. Joe mumbles goodnight.

Smokes alone for a while.

Finally Charlotte exits.

CHARLOTTE

Oh! You're still here.

JOE

Yeah. I was hoping we could talk.
About my script.

CHARLOTTE

We talked about it in class.

JOE

I know but those people in there--
no offense, but they don't
understand. They're not even
reading the slug lines! You know?

CHARLOTTE

Well. Everyone has different taste.

JOE

I just want to get your honest
opinion on something. My third act.
Can we go somewhere?

CHARLOTTE

You want to go somewhere.

JOE

Yeah. I'll buy you a coffee. Or
soup? There's a soup place next
door. Can I buy you a cup of soup?

Charlotte looks unsure.

INT. SOUP PLACE - NIGHT

Joe sets a cup of hot soup in front of Charlotte.

JOE

I came here after class last week.
You'll like it. It's good soup.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks.

Joe takes a seat across from her.

JOE

You wanna know something? I've
taken a lot of classes in my life:
woodworking, pottery. Calligraphy.
Lithography. I've had a lot of
teachers, Charlotte, but you're the
real deal. You're very good. And I
mean that. Very good.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

The way you talk about putting things-- what do you say? 'Put your inner life on the page.' That's incredible. I mean...

Joe laughs loudly. Charlotte looks uncomfortable.

CHARLOTTE

So. Your third act?

JOE

What did you think of it. Really.

CHARLOTTE

I only know what you've shared in class. But. It's operatic. In a way. It's dark, and violent. Which isn't my taste necessarily. But it's-- what do you want to know?

JOE

I want you to read the whole thing.

He places a manila file folder filled with a hundred loose pages of his screenplay on the table between them.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Joe--

JOE

I'll pay you. Lemme know how much, I'll make it worth your time.

CHARLOTTE

I don't really do coverage.

JOE

What's coverage.

CHARLOTTE

Feedback. Written feedback, on a script.

JOE

I don't need anything written out. I just want your opinion. It's not coming through right in class, but I think I got something here. I sit down to write and it just, it pours out of me.

Charlotte looks down at the manila folder.

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Joe's Mustang pulls up out front.

Charlotte gets out. She's carrying his script.

She goes up to her building, unlocks the door.

Waves back at Joe, who smiles at her from the car.

Once she's fully inside the building, Joe drives away.

INT. MODEST HOME - CONTINUOUS

Joe enters to find Mary Ann asleep on the couch. TV BLARING.

He moves quickly into the living room, picks up the remote and turns off the TV. A familiar routine.

He picks up a pill bottle from the side table. Casually places the palm of his hand near her mouth to check for breathing. It's a gesture he's done many times before.

Takes a blanket off the couch, tucks it around her.

We hear MUFFLED MUSIC as Joe moves

DOWN THE HALL

toward the Master Bedroom, removing his clip-on tie.

He pauses at the doorway to JOSIE'S ROOM.

Light emanates under the door.

He sniffs the air.

Walks slowly toward her door, pushes it open and

MATCH CUT:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - NIGHT

Charlotte enters her apartment. It is small, tidy, and decorated thrift-store chic. She sets her bag on the couch.

CHARLOTTE

Hello?

She moves toward the kitchen.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello? More?

A flushing sound. MORGAN, her handsome and square-jawed boyfriend, exits from a bathroom door near the entrance.

MORGAN
Hey! Out here.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, there you are.

They embrace.

MORGAN
How was class?

CHARLOTTE
Fine. Exhausting.

MORGAN
What's this?

He gestures at the folder of loose pages in her hand.

CHARLOTTE
Oh. Joe's script.

MORGAN
Joe, Joe?

CHARLOTTE
Yeah.

MORGAN
Wonder if it's any good.

CHARLOTTE
I can't imagine it is. But I promised him I'd read it.

MORGAN
Of course you did.

He kisses her tenderly.

Then he goes off toward the KITCHEN, singing --

MORGAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
"If it hadn't been for cotton-eyed Joe, I'd-a been married, long time ago... where did you come from, where did you go? Where did you come from, cotton-eyed Joe..."

Charlotte opens a window and sits beside it. She brings a cigarette to her lips and on the sound of the lighter

MATCH CUT:

INT. MODEST HOME - JOSIE'S BEDROOM

The end of a vape pen glows red as Josie takes a drag.

Joe turns on the light suddenly.

He stands in her doorway with his shirt half-unbuttoned.

JOE

What the hell are you doing?

JOSIE

Jesus. Don't you knock?

JOE

I told you no smoking in here.

JOSIE

It's a vape pen!

JOE

It's the same damn thing. What are you doing up so late? Are you high?

JOSIE

No! God. I've been staring at the stupid... computer screen-

She shows him her laptop, sitting closed beside her. Stifles a giggle.

JOE

You're high.

JOSIE

Who cares? It's basically legal.

JOE

That's not the point, Jo. It's not good for your brain. And you lied!

JOSIE

You and my Mom smoked.

JOE

Yeah, I did. I told you I did, because I was being honest with you. But I waited for college.

JOSIE

Well. I can't afford to go to college, so.

JOE

Where is it.

He searches through her desk, finds nothing.

He starts tearing her room apart: yanks open her dresser drawers, throws open her closet door and searches shelves, knocking things off as Josie protests. It's a little scary.

JOSIE

Dad! What are you doing?

JOE

Where is it!? Josie, goddamnit you tell me right now or I swear-

JOSIE

Oh my god I don't have any!! Okay? I had half a joint but I finished it, you can check the stupid ashtray if you don't believe me.

Joe checks the ashtray, finds a stubbed out joint.

JOE

Where'd you get it. WHERE DID YOU GET IT?

She opens and closes her mouth but makes no sound.

Impulsively, he snatches the laptop off her bed.

JOE (CONT'D)

Tell me where you got it. Or I'll drop this on the floor.

A weird, tense moment.

JOSIE

Just- a friend.

Joe holds the laptop above his head.

JOE

Dammit Jo! I am not fucking around!

JOSIE

All right fine. Violet got some from her Mom. She gave me that joint. That's all of it. God!

JOE

You listen to me now, Jo: you are not to see her again. All right?

JOSIE

I thought you wanted me to have friends.

JOE

All right?

JOSIE

All right! God!!

He tosses the laptop onto her bed.

Yanks the vape pen from her hand and turns the light off.

JOE

All right. Good night.

CONTINUOUS

MUSIC UP: Looming, ominous.

Joe pads through the house in his socks. He enters the

KITCHEN

And pours himself a whiskey.

Carries his drink down the HALL and out the BACK ENTRANCE to

EXT. MODEST HOME - BACK YARD - NIGHT

Next door, his neighbor's window flickers blue from the TV.

Joe stares with dead eyes at the blue light.

He lifts the vape pen to his mouth and takes a drag.

He has no grand view: just the low houses of his neighbors.

No starlight fills the darkening sky.

On the horizon, a full moon.

JOE

Transition.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE - DAY

Joe's office is at the back of the store, one floor up, with three large windows. Two look down at the registers below, and a third faces out toward the parking lot.

It's a large office, but brown and shabby. Remodeled sometime in the late sixties or early seventies, the carpet and some pieces of furniture haven't been replaced since.

Joe sits at a sleek new laptop computer - anachronistically placed beside a black-and-white TV monitor displaying feeds from the security cameras.

He cradles a cell phone in his hand, his finger hovering over the dial button a moment before pressing it.

JOE (TO PHONE)

Hey, Charlotte. Joe here. Joe Peterson, from class. I was wondering if you had a chance to read my script yet? Anyway, no hurry. It's been a week. So. I'll see you tonight. Maybe we can talk about it after class? Over soup. You're buying, this time. All right? So I'll see you tonight. All right. It's Joe. Bye.

He feels pretty good about that. Glances out the back window.

JOE (CONT'D)

What the--

He springs to his feet and runs out the office door.

FOLLOW down the stairs, through the BACK OF THE STORE where the pallets are stacked and into the PARKING LOT.

TIME JUMP:

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - DAY

Joe's Mustang attached to a tow truck.

The impassive TOW TRUCK DRIVER shakes his head when he speaks - a kind of professional tick.

TOW TRUCK DRIVER

I hear you. I do.

JOE
I mean, this is ridiculous. Isn't it?

DRIVER
I don't make the rules.

JOE
No I know but I mean all this for one unpaid parking ticket--

Driver consults his notes.

DRIVER
Says here you got fifteen.

JOE
Fifteen! That's-- how is that even possible? I don't know how that's--

DRIVER
Gotta talk to City Hall.

Joe takes out his wallet.

JOE
No I understand, but listen: what if I gave you fifty bucks right now, cash. And we just forget this--

DRIVER
City Hall. Call City Hall.

Joe pulls out all the bills in his wallet, desperate now. Driver continues shaking his head.

JOE
Okay here's... I got eighty, almost ninety bucks here. You're gonna turn down, I mean this is almost a hundred bucks!

DRIVER
I don't make the rules.

JOE
How much do they pay you to pick up a car? It can't be more than a hundred bucks! I mean I'm in the wrong line of business if--

JOSIE (O.S.)
Dad? What's going on?

Joe turns around to find his stepdaughter standing there.

JOE

Jo! What are you doing here?

JOSIE

You told me to come do work.

JOE

No, I asked you to come by for an interview.

JOSIE

Yeah, well. So that's why I'm here. God.

JOE

This is how you come by for an interview? Dressed like that?

JOSIE

I had school today. Not like I have time to go home and change. I don't have a car, remember?

DRIVER

Sign here please?

JOE

Hang on. Just give me a minute here.

The driver rips a yellow carbon copy off, hands it to Joe.

DRIVER

You can pick up your car at the address up top there. After you pay any outstanding fines.

JOE

But I didn't sign it!

DRIVER

Doesn't matter. Have a nice day.

The driver jumps in his truck and drives off with Joe's car.

Something drains from Joe's eyes as he watches his Mustang drift through the lot. He winces as he hears the bumper scrape on its way out of the driveway.

JOSIE

Why did they take your car?

JOE
I don't want to talk about it.

JOSIE
Can you even afford to pick it up?

JOE
I don't want to talk about it!

He walks toward the office and she follows.

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE - DAY

Josie slouches in a chair.

He stands at the filing cabinet, riffling through papers in an effort to convey the solemnity of the occasion.

Finally he sits down across from her.

JOE
Now, then. Do you have a resume?

JOSIE
Ugh. Seriously, Dad?

JOE
Josie, now-- I'm not your stepfather right now, all right? I'm your potential future employer. You can't call me "Dad."

JOSIE
Okay, so. What do I call you then?

JOE
You call me Mr. Peterson, just like it says on the name tag. All right?

JOSIE
Whatever.

JOE
Do you have a resume?

JOSIE
Ugh.

She makes a big show of searching through her backpack. Obviously this whole thing is an inconvenience for her.

Finally she produces a folded, dirty page.

She offers it to Joe, who eyes it suspiciously.

JOE

This is your resume.

JOSIE

Yes, Mr. Peterson. This is my resume. Sorry I had it in my stupid bag all day, but I had to go to stupid high school. God!

Joe unfolds it, smoothing it out.

JOE

Okayyyy... Josie? Am I saying that right?

She just rolls her eyeballs at him.

Joe's phone rings. He checks the screen: **MUSTANG**

Silences it, re-focuses on Josie's resume.

JOE (CONT'D)

I see here you played some intramural basketball.

JOSIE

Yes.

JOE

Now what would you say you learned from that experience?

JOSIE

Um, like, teamwork? And... uh... cooperation? And... leadership.

JOE

Good. Very good. What else? Looks like you did some babysitting a few years back. But I don't see anything recently. Why is that?

JOSIE

DAD!

JOE

Josie, now. These are the kinds of questions people ask, all right? I can't just give you a job. There are rules. There are formalities--

JOSIE

God! Fine. I don't babysit anymore cause my stupid neighbor thought I took beer out of his fridge even though I totally didn't, I don't even like beer, but then I found out like a month later that my stupid ex-boyfriend did, who was Josh's older brother and should have been babysitting in the first place--

JOE

Okay, that's-- okay. Good. So-- just a little tip, here: try to keep your answers short. All right?

JOSIE

Do I get the job or not.

Joe sets her resume aside. Considers.

Finally, he opens a desk drawer and hands her a RED APRON.

JOE

You get here five minutes before your shift. You wear pants, or you bring pants to change into. You work hard, and you don't mouth off to me, and especially you don't mouth off to the cashiers out there. When someone asks you to do something, you do it. All right?

JOSIE

YES.

He stands, extends his hand.

JOE

Congratulations, Miss Peterson.

She shakes his hand.

JOSIE

Thanks.

She picks up her backpack and starts out the door.

JOSIE (CONT'D)

How much do I get paid?

JOE (V.O.)

Intercut.

RAPID-FIRE MONTAGE

Loud, chaotic, horrific. A visual assault, set to the RATTLE of a machine gun which gets louder and louder:

- Faceless Hero's glistening body
- Supermarket door opens and the young kid enters, as before
- Joe hangs himself with his belt in the supermarket office
- A chainsaw rips through the bodies of the cashiers below
- Blood splatters everything in the store-- fruits, vegetables, cereal boxes, displays of holiday candy
- Shotgun butt in the belly of the security guard
- Close on Faceless Hero's lips saying "Have a nice day"
- Charlotte peels her clothes off at gunpoint. She is terrified.
- Joe walks through the front of the supermarket with a pistol. He places it against the temples of one of his employees and casually pulls the trigger. They wilt.

Joe moves on to the next cashier to do the same thing. No one reacts, they just continue working mindlessly. It's an emotionless act, as if he's slaughtering animals.

END MONTAGE/JUMP TO:

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT

Charlotte reclines on a small couch in her Bohemian LIVING ROOM.

Her feet are up and she has a cup of tea nearby.

She reads Joe's script, the folder open beside her.

JOE (V.O.)

Interior supermarket. The harsh florescent light drains the life out of everything in the store. Our hero, Joe, stands at the counter. He's in his mid-forties. Handsome, but not in that Hollywood way.

She flips a page.

JOE (V.O.)
Interior Joe's house. His wife Ann
asleep on the couch. The TV is on.
She's totally out of it. Wasted on
pills.

She flips a page.

JOE (V.O.)
Interior classroom. The teacher is
a beautiful young woman. Her name
is Charlotte.

She flips a page. PUSH IN ON HER FACE

JOE (V.O.)
Interior.

Flip.

JOE (V.O.)
Interior.

Flip.

JOE (V.O.)
Interior. Slug line. Interior.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - IMAGINATION SEQUENCE

Charlotte in the same position as before, but Joe is on the
couch beside her and her feet are in his lap.

As Joe speaks, he performs the actions he describes.

JOE
Interior Charlotte's apartment.
Charlotte lies on the couch reading
a script. Joe lifts her feet.
Tenderly, sweetly, he removes one
of her socks. His hands are warm
and gentle. He cradles her foot in
his large, warm hands. Flesh on
flesh.

MORGAN (O.S.)
Charlotte?

END IMAGINATION SEQUENCE.

Charlotte is on the couch, tucked into a ball and sobbing.

MORGAN

Are you all right?

He sits beside her.

She folds into him, and he squeezes her tightly.

MARY ANN (PRELAP)

I'm serious, Joe. I want to die.

INT. MODEST HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary Ann sits on the bed. Wet-cheeked, tired.

Joe emerges from the MASTER BATHROOM. Upbeat and edgy.

He's holding two different clip-on ties in his hand.

JOE

Which one do you like?

MARY ANN

I'm talking to you, you're not even listening.

JOE

Yes, I am.

MARY ANN

Then what did I just say?

JOE

You asked me what you just said.

MARY ANN

Oh, very funny. Ha-ha.

JOE

I got a lot on my mind right now, hon. I might get optioned tonight.

MARY ANN

Optioned?

JOE

Yeah, for a movie. That's how these things go you know. You give your script to the right person, they make a call... next thing you know.

MARY ANN

Next thing you know, what?

JOE

Hollywood.

MARY ANN

Hollywood? What the hell are you talking about?

JOE

I'm saying-- look, you don't know the way things are done in this business. Things happen very fast. Good script comes along--

MARY ANN

I said I want to die.

Joe ignores her, goes back into the bathroom.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? I want to die.

JOE (O.S.)

I heard you.

MARY ANN

I'm not happy. You see it. Josie sees it. I can't keep on like this.

JOE

I'm going with this tie.

MARY ANN

I don't know where you go, you're out till all hours, up late--

JOE

Sorry, honey. I'm gonna be late.

MARY ANN

I can't live like this Joe!

JOE

Hey. Hey what about we invite Doc and Suzie down this weekend, huh? We haven't seen them in a while.

MARY ANN

What do you do at night? Where do you go? Why can't you tell me the truth for once?

JOE

I write honey. That's all.

MARY ANN

Fuck you!

She spits at him. He sits down calmly beside her.

JOE

All right, okay. How bout this.
Let's call your sister. That always
cheers you up. I'm gonna call her--

He picks up the phone and she knocks it out of his hand.

MARY ANN

You're not listening to me! I don't
want to live anymore!!

She lunges for him.

He grabs her, wrestles her onto the bed easily and flattens
his body against her. Another familiar ritual.

She spits in his face.

He doesn't react, but asks calmly:

JOE

Where are your pills.

MARY ANN

You just want my sister to come
down so you can stick your nasty
dick in her again. Admit it!

JOE

Where are your pills, hon.

MARY ANN

Who cares! I know all about you and
Violet.

JOE

Violet?

She takes advantage of Joe's surprise to wriggle free.

He circles around the bed after her.

MARY ANN

You've been sticking your dick in
that little tramp too, haven't you?
Picking her up after school--

JOE

Stop! All right? Stop. I'm--
Goddammit!! I gotta leave. All
right? So-- We'll talk about this
tomorrow. Take a sleeping pill. And
call your sister.

He picks up the phone and offers her the bottle from the
bedside stand.

MARY ANN

I'm not taking any goddamn pills
anymore! I want a goddamn divorce!!

JOE

No, you don't.

MARY ANN

Yes I do! I don't want to be with a
man that sticks his nasty dick in
every tramp that comes along--

JOE

That never happened! Look. You got
delusions. All right? You get
something in your head, you can't
put it out. That's what they said.

MARY ANN

Who said it.

He tells her the story he's told her a dozen times or more--
forcing patience even though he's running late.

JOE

We took you to the hospital. You
remember? Me and Suzie and Doc took
you. Two years ago. You remember
the hospital? Doctor Buchwald?

She sits on the bed slowly.

MARY ANN

I remember.

JOE

When you don't take the pills you
make up stories. The other night I
told you Josie got some pot from
Violet. And I made a comment on how
she was dressed, and then-- and now
you made this other thing up.

MARY ANN

I saw you pick her up after school.
I saw you take her to a hotel.

JOE

When. When did you leave the house?

She has no response.

He strokes her hair gently.

JOE (CONT'D)

Honey, I'm sorry. I know you feel--
I don't know. This is what happens
when you don't take your pills. So
you gotta take em. All right? Now
where are they.

He searches through their night stand.

She starts to cry.

JOE (CONT'D)

Did you throw em away?

He goes into the bathroom, digs through the wastebasket.

Mary Ann whispers through her tears.

MARY ANN

I flushed em.

JOE

You what?

MARY ANN

I'm sorry.

JOE

Chrissake, Mary Ann those are
fifteen bucks a pop!

He breathes deeply.

JOE (CONT'D)

All right. All right. We'll figure
something out tomorrow. All right?
I'm sorry. I gotta go. Things
happen very fast in this business.

Joe gets up. Puts on a Members Only windbreaker -- the
original line with the collar strap and narrow epaulets.

She remains on the bed sobbing.

He opens the bottle of sleeping pills, shakes out two and sets them on the bedside table.

JOE (CONT'D)

Take these. At least you'll sleep.

He looks at her back, shaking with her silent sobs.

Slips the pill bottle into his pocket.

FOLLOW

Joe into the HALL.

Josie's room and the rest of the house is dark.

Joe moves through the darkness to the KITCHEN.

Flicks the light on.

Takes a step stool out.

Climbs onto it to retrieve a box from the top of the refrigerator.

In the box is a .22 double-action snubnosed revolver.

Joe looks back toward his bedroom.

He slips the revolver into the pocket of his windbreaker and the SCREECH OF A SUBWAY TRAIN carries us to

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Joe hurries down the hallway with his hands in his jacket.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - SCREENWRITING CLASS

Joe pushes open the door. The same group is gathered.

Sitting outside the circle, sketching on a pad, is Morgan.

A hush falls on the class as Joe enters.

JOE

Sorry I'm late. My car was towed.

He finds his seat.

Charlotte looks uncomfortable. She nods, subtly, to Morgan.

Morgan studies Joe with interest.

CHARLOTTE

Okay: who has something to say
about Samantha's script?

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - NIGHT

Joe lingers outside.

Samantha and Vicki exit together, their AD LIB conversation
ceasing as soon as they see him.

SAMANTHA

Good night, Joe.

He waves after her.

Next comes Morgan, followed by Charlotte.

Joe lights up when he sees her.

JOE

Hey! Did you read the script?

CHARLOTTE

Yes. I did.

She takes the folder of pages out of her bag.

JOE

Do you want to get some soup?

CHARLOTTE

Umm...

JOE

When I said before, that it was
your turn to pay-- I didn't mean
that. I was just joking around.
I'll buy again, I don't mind.

CHARLOTTE

I can't get soup with you.

JOE

Oh. Yeah. I understand. You got
plans. Next week, then. Or
tomorrow? You free tomorrow?

CHARLOTTE

Joe.

She hands him his script.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I don't want you to come to class anymore.

Joe opens the folder.

Clipped to the top page is a personal check from Charlotte.

JOE

What's this?

CHARLOTTE

That's a refund. For the whole course. I'm not charging you, okay?

JOE

I don't understand.

CHARLOTTE

I'm asking you, I'd like it if you didn't come to class anymore. Okay?

Joe forces a laugh.

JOE

You think I'm that good? I told you it was good, didn't I? Didn't I?

Morgan shifts slightly.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry. Your script made me-- uncomfortable. So I'm asking you, very politely, not to come to class anymore. And I'm not charging you.

Joe slips his hand into his pocket, unconsciously wrapping it around the revolver.

JOE

Charlotte. Seriously? You're serious about this? It's just a screenplay. It's not me, it's characters. So I named a character Charlotte, so what? It's not based on you. Come on! It's just a screenplay!

MORGAN

I think it's time for you to go.

JOE

What are you, the muscle?

MORGAN
I read your script, too.

JOE
What'd you think?

MORGAN
I think it's a piece of garbage.

JOE
And what the fuck do you know?

CHARLOTTE
Morgan. Come on.

She tugs Morgan away from Joe and towards the parking lot.

Joe calls after them.

JOE
Ohhh! Oh, I get it. You want it for
yourself! Is that it? Well too bad,
cause it's registered with the
WGA!! Hey. Hey! This better not
turn up on Netflix! All right??

Another SUBWAY SCREECH takes us to

INT. LIRR TRAIN - NIGHT

Joe sits on a nearly-deserted train.

His script in its folder beside him.

Joe picks it up, removes the check.

Folds it neatly and tucks it in his shirt pocket.

Beneath the script is his Screenwriting Bible.

He opens it to the glossary.

Runs his fingers over the page. All the meticulous
checkboxes, done by different pens on different days --
including a new mark next to "intercut."

He closes it.

His phone rings: **MORTGAGE**

Silences it, sets it aside.

On the back of the binder is a flyer: **Screenwriter's Retreat - Pitch your script to over 200 agents! Just \$500!**

The train slows to a stop.

EXT. LIRR STATION - NIGHT

Joe disembarks at the LIRR station in Queens.

As the train pulls away, it reveals a much different place than the grimy Manhattan subway.

Here there are autumn trees and crickets chirping.

Joe, alone on the platform, walks toward the stairs to exit.

He pauses at a garbage can halfway toward his destination.

Holds the Screenwriting Bible over it, undecided.

A wind blows, sending a whirl of leaves past him.

He looks up and down the long stretch of track: the receding train. The passengers waiting opposite. His phone RINGS.

Push in on his face, the same enigmatic expression as before. He closes his eyes.

RING. RING. RING.

JOE (PRELAP)

I don't know why you're making such a big deal about it, it's two days!

CUT TO:

INT. MODEST HOME - KITCHEN

Joe searches through a junk drawer.

MARY ANN

Because I told Suzie and Doc to come down.

JOE

Wait. What?

MARY ANN

We talked about it the other night. Then Suzie called me today, and--

JOE

Fuck!

He slams the junk drawer closed.

JOE (CONT'D)

Tell em to come next weekend then.

Mary Ann follows him down the hall to the

GARAGE

There's no car here now, so we can see the walls lined with clean orderly shelves. Joe pulls a box off one of these and starts to dig through it.

Mary Ann barks at him from the doorway.

MARY ANN

Anything you want to tell me, Joe?

JOE

No. What?

He looks up from his search. She stands in the doorway, arms folded across her chest.

Suddenly it hits him.

JOE (CONT'D)

The car was towed. I told you that.

She gives him a look.

JOE (CONT'D)

I told you! I did! I'm picking it up this afternoon.

MARY ANN

You and that damn car.

She turns to go inside.

JOE

What's that supposed to mean, huh? Me and that damn gun.

MARY ANN

Who said anything about a gun.

JOE

Car. I meant: car.

MARY ANN
I want a divorce.

He says nothing, just closes the box and puts it away. Moves on to the next one. Finally she goes inside.

A few moments later the TV clicks on.

FOLLOW him back into the house and down the HALL to the

MASTER BEDROOM

Joe lies down on his belly, reaches under their bed and finally finds what he's looking for: a box of bullets.

He takes a handful out of the box and pushes the box back.

MARY ANN (O.C.)
What about Josie?

Joe jumps. She's standing in the doorway.

JOE
She's staying with Violet.

MARY ANN
I thought Violet was off-limits.

JOE
You should have the place to yourself. You deserve it.

MARY ANN
Will you call Suzie and Doc?

JOE
Yeah, of course. Of course.

She starts to leave, but turns back.

MARY ANN
What did she say.

JOE
Who.

MARY ANN
Your teacher. About your script.

JOE
Oh, she said she liked the story.
And she thought I should go to this
retreat.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

She said she thought there would be a lot of good people there, and I should meet with some and shop my script around. Maybe try to get it greenlighted.

MARY ANN

Oh. Do you want to get your script greenlighted?

JOE

Yeah. That's what happens when your script gets made into a movie. If it doesn't get made into a movie it's called turnaround.

Mary Ann seems suddenly frail, and vulnerable.

MARY ANN

You're making a movie, Joe? Is that what you're doing?

JOE

Yeah, honey. I'm making a movie.

He stuffs the handful of bullets into his pocket.

Crosses to her and embraces her.

Over her shoulder: Joe's cryptic expression.

FADES TO:

EXT. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Joe, parked outside Josie's high school in his car. Springsteen plays in the background.

His phone rings: **MUSTANG**

He picks it up.

JOE

Hello?

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

Please do not hang up. This is an important call from your bank. If this is-- Joseph, Peterson --press "one" now. If this is not-- Joseph, Peterson --please press "two" now.

Joe jams the number one, annoyed.

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)
 Thank you. You are being
 transferred to a customer service
 agent who can further assist you.
 Please do not hang up. Your call
 will be answered shortly.

HOLD MUSIC begins to play.

JOE
 Chrissake.

He sees Josie exiting the school across the street.
 He gets out of the car, waves and calls for her.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Jo! Josie! JOSIE!!

Violet, who is walking with her, sees him first.
 She points him out to Josie, who shouts at Joe:

JOSIE
 We're just walking, we're not
 hanging out! God.

JOE
 What?

Joe makes a gesture like he can't hear.
 Josie repeats it to him, somewhat mockingly.

OPERATOR (ON PHONE)
 Mister Peterson?

He motions angrily for her to come to the car.
 Josie and Violet run across the street toward him.

INSERT:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Violet's skirt swishing against her bare legs in SLOW MOTION.

INT. MUSTANG / EXT. STREET

Joe staring out his window.

OPERATOR

Mister Peterson. Hello? Are you there?

JOE

Oh, yes. Yes, hello, hi, sorry I forgot I was on hold for a sec.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

Mr. Peterson it appears you are over 90 days past due on your car payment. Are you experiencing some financial difficulty, sir?

JOE

You know what? I'll call you back.

He hangs up.

JOSIE

What are you doing here.

JOE

Your Mom didn't call you?

JOSIE

No.

JOE

Okay, well. I'm going to a retreat this weekend. To a screenwriting retreat. So that's where I'll be. All weekend.

JOSIE

What retreat.

JOE

Just-- it's a retreat. And so, and your Mom and I decided that she might want some time alone, in the house. Without anyone around.

JOSIE

Mom said that?

JOE

Yes.

JOSIE

When.

JOE

This morning. So. So I thought you might want to stay with Violet.

Josie looks at Violet like: is this a trap?

JOSIE

Okayyyy.

JOE

Look, it's: your Mom needs a little space this weekend. Okay? So we're all gonna give her a little space. All right?

VIOLET

I mean you can totally stay with me this weekend if you want. My Mom's super cool about that kinda thing.

JOE

Great! So I'll take you home to get your stuff. All right? And don't forget anything. Take everything you need for the weekend. Because your Mom really needs this time.

The girls start to climb in the back of the car.

JOSIE

(to Violet)

She needs a shotgun.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP

Violet's skirt rising up her legs in SLOW MOTION, as she squeezes behind the leaned-forward driver's seat.

When they're both seated in back, Joe nods at them as if they were customers in his store.

JOE

Great! All right then.

He sits in the front seat.

His phone RINGS again: **MUSTANG**

He silences it as he drives away.

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A crappy posterboard sign in the lobby declares **WELCOME SCREENWRITERS! YOUR DREAM AWAITS!!** Beside this is a check-in table, where a couple dozen name badges are laid out.

An officious REGISTRAR behind the table smiles at Joe as he approaches.

REGISTRAR

Your name, sir?

JOE

Peterson. Joe.

REGISTRAR

Annnnd... here you are. There's a welcome reception right through there with a cash bar, feel free to meet and mingle with your fellow screenwriters. Tomorrow before class there will be a light continental breakfast in the lobby, and that starts right at eight a.m.

He makes a mark on a sheet of paper and hands Joe a badge with his name on it.

JOE

Is this the only check-in?

REGISTRAR

I'm sorry?

JOE

I mean this is the only check-in, for the whole weekend?

REGISTRAR

Yep, you're all checked in for the weekend. Just hang onto that badge.

JOE

Great. I'm gonna go move my car.

Joe exits the hotel.

EXT. QUEENS (FOREST HILLS) - NIGHT

Several hours later, on a street near his house.

The sidewalks are empty, the neighborhood quiet save for the dull rush of the nearby Grand Central Parkway.

Joe checks the clock on his phone: **10:07pm**

He pops the trunk and gets out.

Looks around nervously as he reaches into a bag in back.

Takes out a brand-new pair of gloves.

Rips the tags off and pulls them on.

He takes out a big puffy ski jacket, puts this on.

Grabs an empty duffel bag and slams the trunk closed.

EXT. QUEENS (FOREST HILLS) - NIGHT

FOLLOW Joe down the street.

His footsteps, his breathing. The Parkway's quiet roar.

Some houses are dark.

Most are lit blue by their televisions.

Joe sees another PEDESTRIAN approaching.

He looks down and away as they pass each other.

A few steps further, Joe comes to a complete stop.

He pretends to be tying his shoe. But it is a ruse so he can glance back and ensure the pedestrian does not turn around.

EXT. MODEST HOME - NIGHT

Joe approaches the familiar facade of his home.

He searches the block for any activity.

No one on the street.

He lifts the lock on his gate, eases it open slowly, quietly.

He is in his backyard now.

Slinks along the side of his house.

Looks up at his neighbor's window. The lights are off.

He reaches into his pocket and takes out his keys.

Approaches the back door.

INT. MODEST HOME - BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Joe enters and lingers in the HALLWAY, listening.

HOST (ON TV)
 --never saw it coming. Did you see
 that coming? Cause I didn't. He
 just walked right into it!

Laughter. Push in on Joe, breathing intensely as the sound of
 the monologue RISES...

JUMP TO:

INT. STUDIO - LATE SHOW

The late night HOST addresses the camera.

HOST
 Oh this one was interesting.
 Recently a team of scientists
 proved, beyond a doubt, that sex is
 an effective cure for headaches.
 Yeah. And--
 (cheers gradually erupt)
 That's right, it's a good thing!
 And, apparently-- when they spoke
 with the lead researcher, he said
 his next project was going to be
 proving that size doesn't matter.
 So...
 (laughter)
 Big news out of New Zealand today,
 did you hear this?

BANG!

Swing from the TV to reveal Joe, revolver in his hand.

BANG! BANG!

Blood splatters his new jacket.

Mary Ann lies dead on the couch.

Next door the dogs start to BARK.

Joe turns off the TV and peers through the blinds.

POV JOE

The light comes on in his neighbor's bedroom.

His NEIGHBOR lifts his window.

NEIGHBOR

Hey! Calm down now. Shh! You wanna
wake the whole neighborhood?

The dogs protest a bit, but eventually quiet down.

His neighbor closes his window. Lights go out.

Joe closes the blinds and turns on the light.

He stands silent and still for a moment.

That enigmatic expression.

Then he goes into the

KITCHEN

And pours himself a glass of whiskey, no ice.

Downs it quickly.

Adds a bit more.

Downs that.

He sighs.

Goes back into the

LIVING ROOM

And stares at his wife's body, slowly leaking blood.

He goes into the

BEDROOM

Opens his wife's jewelry box.

Empties it into the duffel bag.

Pulls all the drawers out of his dresser.

Tosses some clothes around.

Goes into

JOSIE'S ROOM

And begins emptying her drawers in a similar way.

He finds a bag of pot in one of them.

Stuffs it into his pocket, shaking his head.

He goes at last to the

BATHROOM

And stares at himself in the mirror.

His gaze still dead, his eyes impervious.

And finally, suddenly, he speaks:

JOE

Oh god, oh my god my wife's been
shot. My wife's been shot! I think
my wife's been shot!

Pause.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh god something's happened to her,
something terrible has happened to
her! Send help as quick as you can!

Pause.

Just as he's about to start again, sound of a DOOR OPENING.

JOSIE (O.S.)

Hey Mom, super super sorry to bug
you but I forgot my--

She begins to scream.

Joe runs into the LIVING ROOM.

JOE

Josie! What are you doing here?

She screams even louder when she sees him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Stop that right now, young lady! Do
you hear me? Stop that right now!!

She continues screaming. His blood-spattered jacket.

BANG! BANG!

She collapses on the floor.

Joe looks out the half-open front door.

No one on the street.

He closes it.

Josie lies on her back bleeding into the area rug.

She tries to speak and blood pours out of her mouth.

JOE (CONT'D)

Josie? Dammit, now. I told you to stay with Violet. You should've stayed with Violet. Do you know what you've done here? Josie...

(he almost starts to cry)

You shouldn't have come back here.

CLICK. Joe fires the gun again.

CLICK.

CLICK. CLICK.

JOE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

He tosses the gun aside.

Kneels beside her.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Jo.

He puts his gloved hands around her throat.

Closes his eyes.

Blood sputters out of her mouth. Her gurgling intensifies.

Her body jerks. Her hands flail.

Then all at once she stops moving.

Joe buries his head in his hands.

For a moment it seems he is praying.

TIME JUMP:

INT. MODEST HOME - KITCHEN

Joe leans against the counter. He's got the whiskey out and a glass in his hand.

The bottle is nearly empty.

He sighs, gulps down the glass in his hand.

He's about to pour another one when--

CELL PHONE RING. RING.

Joe goes into the living room.

He reaches into Josie's pocket, takes out her cell phone.

The screen says **BITCH CALLING**

He answers it, but doesn't speak.

VIOLET (ON PHONE)

Hey bitch what the fuck? Did you get lost?

JOE

Violet. Hi.

VIOLET (ON PHONE)

Oh, hi Mister Peterson. I thought you were on a retreat?

JOE

Yeah. No, I was.

VIOLET

Is Josie all right?

JOE

She's not gonna come back tonight.

VIOLET (ON PHONE)

Oh. Okay.

JOE

Her mother is-- her mother's sick. Very suddenly sick. And we just-- we need Josie here tonight. So. I'm sorry, she just left for the hospital. Otherwise I'd put her on. Sorry.

VIOLET (ON PHONE)
No, that's okay. Oh God! I hope
Mrs. Peterson feels better.

Joe's dead eyes, staring down at his wife's body.

JOE
Yeah me too.

VIOLET (ON PHONE)
Okay. Bye!

JOE
Have a nice night now.

He hangs up.

Looks down at his shoes. He's standing in blood.

JOE (CONT'D)
Chrissake.

Joe lurches toward the HALLWAY.

MUSIC UP: Bruce Springsteen's "Workin on the Highway."

INT. MODEST HOME - MONTAGE

Joe yanks several towels out of a hall closet.

In the BATHROOM, he rips the shower curtain from its rings.

LIVING ROOM

Both bodies wrapped in towels. Blood soaks through in spots.

Joe arranges the shower curtain carefully beside the couch.

He maneuvers, with effort, Mary Ann's body off the couch and onto the waiting shower curtain.

Next he lifts Josie's body on top of her mother's.

The effect should be pedestrian: two bodies without humanity, dragged and manipulated as any awkward, heavy object.

He folds the plastic of the curtain over the bodies, then uses strapping tape to secure it in place.

Next he drags the plastic bundle through the HALL toward the

GARAGE

But when he tries to drag the wrapped bodies through the door, they get stuck. The arms all out of place.

He jerks hard on the plastic, trying to maneuver it through.

Climbs over the plastic and pushes, twisting it, trying to find the right angle.

Suddenly the sound of BREAKING BONE: Josie's arm snaps backward and the bodies glide through.

He leaves the bloody plastic bundle in the center of the garage, goes back inside.

Moments later he tosses the blood-soaked area rug into the garage too, all taped up with strapping tape.

Then finally out come his shoes, tied together and tumbling through the air in 120fps SLOW MOTION.

KITCHEN - LATER

Joe pours himself the last of the whiskey.

Gulps it down and wipes his mouth.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

He sits on the couch with Josie's laptop.

Searches "how to remove blood from hardwood floor."

Starts jotting down a shopping list.

CUT TO:

INT. ALL-NIGHT SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Springsteen becomes the soundtrack in the supermarket, where Joe pushes a small shopping cart down narrow aisles.

His basket is full of cleaning supplies.

He pauses occasionally to look at the prices and make notes.

A GUARD eyes him suspiciously.

Joe pauses in front of a huge shelf full of soups.

Suddenly bursts out in eerie laughter.

A SHOPPER passing by gives him an odd look.

JOE
Look at these beans!

SHOPPER
Are you talking to me?

JOE
Look how many beans there are!

SHOPPER
Uh-huh.

The shopper moves down the aisle.

Joe makes further notes, shaking his head.

CHECKOUT

Joe waits in line with every imaginable cleaning supply in his basket: from Scrubbin Bubbles to Borax and Febreze.

The CHECKOUT PERSON sees him waiting.

CHECKOUT PERSON
We got a self-check over there.

JOE
No thanks.

He watches two YOUNG MEN chatting at the self-checkout.

YOUNG MAN #1
I'm telling you. He's the killer.

YOUNG MAN #2
No way.

Joe's eyes shift nervously.

YOUNG MAN #1
He is. That's why they after him.

CHECKOUT PERSON
Next?

Joe snaps out of it.

He starts to place items on the conveyor belt.

CHECKOUT PERSON (CONT'D)
Find everything all right?

He sees a "Manager" pin on the Checkout Person's apron.

JOE
You're the manager?

CHECKOUT PERSON
Night manager.

JOE
You got five different kinds of
black beans in the soup section.

CHECKOUT PERSON
So?

JOE
You should put some in ethnic.

CHECKOUT PERSON
Uh-huh.

He is mindlessly swiping the supplies through the register.

JOE
Did you hear me? I said you should
put some in the ethnic section.
You'll sell more.

CHECKOUT PERSON
I heard you. Fifty-four nineteen.

Joe looks down the aisle and sees the Security Guard there.

He digs in his pocket.

JOE
You know what? I don't have cash.

CHECKOUT PERSON
No problem, sir. We take card.

Joe looks up at the Guard again.

JOE
Nah, that's okay. Thanks. Sorry.

He walks quickly out of the store.

MUSIC back up as--

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE

ON the black-and-white security screen-- we see Joe pick out cleaning supplies and place them in a cart.

He makes a note of each item's UPC on a clipboard.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Joe crosses the parking lot with his bag full of supplies.

Pauses at the door to his car and turns around suddenly.

The iron maw of the trash incinerator yawns back at him.

INT. MUSTANG - MOVING - NIGHT

Joe drums his fingers on the steering wheel.

JOE
(mumbling along)
"Layin down the blacktop...
blasting through the bedrock..."

Sirens approach in his rearview mirror.

He grips the steering wheel tightly and changes lanes.

The squad car squeals past him.

He grins, giddily.

EXT. MODEST HOME - DAWN

Joe's car parked out front of his house.

Light escapes below his garage door.

The SOUND OF A CHAINSAW starting.

FADE TO BLACK.

After a beat of blackness, A RINGING SOUND carries us to

INT. MODEST HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Joe's eyes pop open.

He is fast asleep on top of his bed, in his underwear.

RING, RING, RING.

He fumbles his phone out of his pocket.

JOE

Hello?

COMPUTER VOICE (V.O.)

Please do not hang up. This is an important call from your bank.

Joe hangs up.

He rises uneasily.

Begins to walk through the house.

CONTINUOUS

JOE

Mary Ann? Josie?

He calls down the hall.

JOE (CONT'D)

Jo? Josie?

He opens the door to Josie's room.

Her bed is made. Her laptop closed in the center of it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey. Is anyone here?

He goes into the kitchen.

Looks mournfully at the empty whiskey bottle.

Walks back out to the living room.

There's a large black stain on the floor.

SLOW PUSH IN on Joe, staring at it emotionlessly.

WOMAN (PRELAP)

Caught you!

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY (RESET)

Joe behind the counter, as in the beginning.

The store is very busy, and he looks exhausted.

The same middle-aged Woman and Young Boy as before.

JOE
You- what?

WOMAN
I caught you! Zoning out again. Ha.

JOE
Oh. Yeah. Yep, you sure did. And-
oh- hello there, little man.

Joe is like an actor who's forgotten his lines.

JOE (CONT'D)
You're being a good kid, right?
You're not-- doing anything wrong?

The Young Boy ogles him, strangely.

WOMAN
He's been very good. Haven't you?

JOE
Good. Be good. That's important.

WOMAN
(hoping for a lollipop)
I think he might...

JOE
Oh. Sure, right. Here you go.

He hands a lollipop to the Young Boy.

JOE (CONT'D)
All right, little man.

Then, spontaneously, he musses the kid's hair.

The Young Boy begins to cry almost instantly.

JOE (CONT'D)
Oh, geez, I'm sorry--

WOMAN
It's not your fault. He's very
sensitive about his head being
touched- aren't you? You're a
little sensitive, aren't you? But
you're all right. Right?

The Woman continues to AD LIB reassurances at the Young Boy.

Joe watches, feeling helpless and out of it-- finally:

JOE
Need some help out today?

The Woman gives him a dirty look; he's rushing them out.

Joe doesn't care. He needs these two out of his store.

He turns to the next register, which is also slammed.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hey, would you give these folks--

A TEENAGE BAGGER sighs and picks up her bags grudgingly.

The CHECKOUT LADY from the next register says, loudly:

CHECKOUT LADY
I thought we supposed to have two
baggers in the afternoons?

JOE
Josie's sick. She'll be out for a
while. I'll get someone new.

Joe puts the CHECKSTAND CLOSED sign on his register.

The NEXT CUSTOMER has already unloaded his basket.

NEXT CUSTOMER
What the hell!?

JOE
Sorry. Next register.

Joe pops his cash drawer out, and ON THE SOUND

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

The supermarket is empty.

Joe bags garbage and mops the floors, as in the beginning.

Charlie, the security guard, lingers near the entrance.

JOE
Hey, Charlie. You don't need to
stick around. I'll lock up.

CHARLIE
You sure?

JOE
Absolutely. You go on home.

CHARLIE
All right then. Have a good night.

JOE
You too. Oh, hey Charlie?

CHARLIE
Yeah?

JOE
We got two cameras, right? One in
the front and one in the back?

Charlie is suspicious for a brief moment, then grins.

CHARLIE
You nervous about being here alone?

JOE
Ha. Well, maybe a little.

CHARLIE
You'll be fine, white boy. Just
don't let anyone in once I'm gone.

JOE
Ha-ha. Okay, it's a deal.

CHARLIE
Have a good night, now.

JOE
Thanks. Yeah. You too.

Charlie exits.

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE

On the black-and-white SCREEN we see Joe counting the register and mopping the floor.

Suddenly he looks up at us. Sets his mop down.

Panning to the SECOND SCREEN we see him go out to his car.

He pops his trunk. We can just barely make out the black garbage bag he lifts out of the back.

PUSH IN on grainy footage to:

EXT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

Joe stares into the all-consuming flame.

He smokes Josie's vape pen.

Looks up at the moon. It is waning gibbous.

SECRETARY (PRELAP)

Where did you say your daughter is?

INT. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Joe stands in the front office, talking with the school
SECRETARY.

JOE

Minnesota.

SECRETARY

And for how long?

JOE

Uh. What's the maximum.

SECRETARY

She has to be present for at least
a hundred days of the year in order
to pass the grade, Mr. Peterson.

JOE

Okay, so when does that put us.

SECRETARY

Assuming she attends the rest of
the school year after she returns?

JOE

Yeah, right.

SECRETARY

That takes you to January twelfth.

JOE

Okay, great. Put it in for then.

SECRETARY

You want to excuse your daughter
through January twelfth.

JOE

Yeah.

SECRETARY

You understand, Mr. Peterson,
she'll have a lot of make-up work--

JOE

Josie's smart. Trust me. She'll be
fine. This trip with her Mom, it's
very important. So. Let's do the
maximum. All right?

The secretary taps at her keys for a moment.

The sound of a GIRL GIGGLING.

Joe looks down the hall and sees Violet.

He gestures for her to come over.

VIOLET

Hi, Mr. Peterson. Is Mrs. Peterson
okay?

JOE

Yeah. Yeah, everyone's fine. She
and Jo decided to take a trip. To
Minnesota. So that's where they
are.

VIOLET

Cause I tried texting her like a
million times.

JOE

Oh, yeah, well. They took a train.
So. Probably no coverage, or
something.

VIOLET

Oh.

The secretary slides a piece of paper toward Joe.

SECRETARY

Okay, she's been excused until
January twelfth.

VIOLET

January twelfth?

SECRETARY

Now when she gets back, just make
sure she...

Joe grabs the paper and walks away, taking Violet by the arm.

JOE

Actually Violet, now that you're here, actually I've been thinking that we might have an opening for you down at the store. If you want to stop by this week sometime, if that's something you think you might be interested in, at all. After school. Or weekends.

VIOLET

Really? That'd be great Mr. Peterson. Could me an Jo work together? Like, the same shift?

JOE

I mean, sure! I think I don't see why that isn't a real possibility.

VIOLET

Is she really gonna be gone until January?

JOE

Nah, she'll be fine. I think we're all gonna be fine.

OFF her reaction and the sound of an IRON DOOR SWINGING OPEN--

EXT. SUPERMARKET - INCINERATOR

Joe and Violet stand by the mouth of the incinerator, the door of which Joe has just opened.

JOE

So, then you just throw the trash in here like this--

He throws a few bags in to demonstrate.

JOE (CONT'D)

--and then you push this button. Now it's very important that the level of the trash is not above this line, here. You see that? And if you don't close this lever--
(closing the lever)
--to seal it, then pushing this button does nothing. All right?

Violet nods.

JOE (CONT'D)

But you don't want to push that button without your safety glasses on. Always remember that. Safety first!

Joe raises the lever again.

JOE (CONT'D)

Okay. You try.

He hands her a couple bags of garbage, which she awkwardly stuffs inside. AD LIB some coaching.

He hands her the folder with his screenplay in it.

VIOLET

What's this?

JOE

It's nothing.

But she opens it and sees the title page: "Interior Supermarket, by Joe Peterson"

VIOLET

Oh yeah! Jo told me you're a screenwriter.

JOE

Not anymore.

VIOLET

Not anymore?

JOE

No.

VIOLET

That's too bad. I always thought you were kinda cool for doing that.

She flips through the script idly.

JOE

Thing is, it's a pretty tough business to break into, especially if you don't have connections--

VIOLET

Can I have this?

JOE

No. It's garbage.

VIOLET
 I'm sure it's not that bad!
 (reading aloud)
 "Interior supermarket. The harsh
 florescent light--"

Suddenly he steps toward her and snatches it away.

JOE
 It's garbage. Not worth your time.

He tosses it into the incinerator.

VIOLET
 Isn't that what rewriting is for?
 To make it better?

JOE
 Let's close it up.

Violet struggles to close the lever. He helps her.

An awkward moment of proximity.

She goes for the button but he grabs her hand, looks at her intensely.

JOE (CONT'D)
 SAFETY. FIRST.

He hands her a pair of goggles and puts on a pair himself.

Fire dances in the goggles as they watch the trash burn.

DOC (PRELAP)
 And you said it's like, a retreat
 or something they went on?

INT. MODEST HOME - LIVING ROOM

There's a new carpet on the floor. A blanket looks hastily tucked into the couch cushions.

Joe sits in the recliner with an empty glass of whiskey in his hand. He has a three day old beard.

DOC (glasses, balding, probably a dentist) and SUZIE (round, apologetic, plays it safe) sit on the couch.

JOE
 That's right, yeah. Yoga. Retreat.
 Something.

There's a sad-looking bowl of Doritos on the coffee table:
Joe's version of hosting.

He stands suddenly.

JOE (CONT'D)

Well. I need a refill. Can I get
you anything? Doc? 'nother beer?

DOC

Oh, no. Still working on this one.

JOE

Suze, sure I can't get you a drink?

SUZIE

I'm fine. Thank you.

Follow Joe to the

KITCHEN

which is a real mess: dirty dishes fill the sink. A couple
pizza boxes half-stacked on the counter, slices left inside.

Joe takes ice from a bag in the freezer and refills his
whiskey from a fresh bottle. He continues talking:

JOE

Mary Ann will sure be sorry she
missed you. She and Jo just decided
to take this trip, you know, and it
was a very last minute thing. I'm
surprised she didn't call you.

SUZIE (O.S.)

So am I. I mean, she didn't say
anything to me about it at all. And
I haven't heard from her in--

JOE

She's on a train.

LIVING ROOM

Joe comes back from the kitchen, smiling genially.

JOE

No reception.

Suzie looks uncomfortable.

SUZIE

Oh.

JOE

All right, then.

DOC

Hey is that your car, Joe?

EXT. MODEST HOME - DAY

Joe's car is on the back of a tow truck again.

We hear his scream from inside his house.

JOE (O.S.)

Fuuuuuuck!!

The scream blends to a SUBWAY SCREECH.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

Joe stares blankly at a religious ad: "Christ sees all, knows all, forgives all... give yourself to CHRIST!"

In the same car, a HOMELESS MAN asleep on the bench.

Across from him, YOUNG KIDS flick coins at him and laugh.

Joe smiles.

JOE (V.O.)

Transition.

INT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - HALLWAY

Outside Charlotte's screenwriting class.

Joe leans against the wall. He's been there a while.

He sucks on the vape pen.

Aaron and Greg exit first. Joe steps into their path.

AARON

Oh hey Joe! Where you been, man?

JOE

She didn't tell you?

GREG
Tell me what.

JOE
Nothing. How's class.

GREG
Same. More Hallmark Channel
bullshit from Samantha.

AARON
Totally.

Gordon passes them on his way out the door, says nothing.

JOE
Hey, Gordon.

AARON
(explaining Gordon)
Charlotte didn't like his script.

Down the hall: Kyle, Charlotte and Samantha exit the
classroom.

None of them see Joe yet, but Joe watches them intently.

JOE
What was it about?

AARON
I don't know. This guy's like- he's
running a business illegally?

GREG
Some shit like that. It was all
about tax codes and what-not.

Joe sees Charlotte seeing him.

JOE
All right. See you later, guys.

AARON
Totally.

GREG
Peace out.

Greg and Aaron exit as Joe walks slowly toward Charlotte.

He passes Samantha, who scurries toward the exit without
making eye contact.

KYLE

Hey, Joe.

It's clear that Charlotte has asked Kyle to stick around.

JOE

Kyle. Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Joe! What are you doing here?

JOE

I just wanted to tell you-

He looks at Kyle for a moment.

JOE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to tell you, that when I said you were the best teacher I ever had? That was bullshit. You are by far the worst teacher I ever had. By far.

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry you feel that way.

JOE

You told us to write what we feel! And that's what I did. You never said it was okay to feel certain things, and not other things. You were NOT very CLEAR in your INSTRUCTIONS!!!

Charlotte turns and tries to go back in the room, but the door is locked.

KYLE

Joe, hey. Hey come on now.

Kyle stands awkwardly between them, not sure what to do.

CHARLOTTE

Everyone has different tastes, Joe. Maybe your script wasn't for me.

She fumbles for her keys. Her hands are quivering.

JOE

I feel like killing people sometimes! Okay? I do. Everybody does. I guarantee you.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

But I had the fucking balls to write about it, and nobody else did. And now I'm not allowed in class anymore?

KYLE

I think: maybe you should leave.

CHARLOTTE

It wasn't the killing, Joe. That's not what disturbed me about it.

JOE

Then what.

She turns to face him.

CHARLOTTE

It was the way you wrote about people. Like they were-- I don't know how to describe it. Like they were obstacles.

JOE

But that's what you said! Put obstacles in the way of your hero. Give him something to overcome. Isn't that what you said?

CHARLOTTE

That's not what I meant. I didn't mean: people.

Charlotte has the door open at last.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Kyle.

She slips inside, closes the door behind her.

Joe shouts at the blank door.

JOE

So that's it? You're giving up? You can't teach me?

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

I can't teach you empathy!

JOE

Well who can?

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

I don't know!

Joe stares at the closed door.
He sees that Kyle looks scared.
Puts his hand on his shoulder.

JOE
Hey. You all right?

KYLE
I'm all right.

JOE
All right then. All right.

The two men stand awkwardly for a moment.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hey you know that screenwriting
retreat they advertise?

KYLE
Yeah?

JOE
Don't bother with it. Waste of
fuckin time and money.

KYLE
Okay. Thanks.

JOE
All right.

Joe claps him on the shoulder once more.
Then turns and starts to walk down the long empty hallway.
Suddenly he pivots and walks back.

KYLE
Did you forget someth--

BANG!

Joe shoots him in the chest. Kyle's body drops to the floor.

BANG! BANG!

Joe turns and starts kicking at the door near the handle,
easily working his way through the hollow-core as Charlotte
screams in terror.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

No one around. Charlotte's screams can barely be heard.

JOE (V.O.)
Transition.

EXT. QUEENS (FOREST HILLS) - NIGHT

Joe walks down the sidewalk to his house.

There's a man on his porch trying to peek through the front windows. This is DETECTIVE BRYANT - mid-thirties, handsome, world-weary but good at his job.

Joe's hand slips into his jacket pocket, around the gun.

JOE
Hey. Hey! Can I help you?

DETECTIVE BRYANT
This your house?

JOE
Yes it is and I'd like you off my porch now please.

DETECTIVE BRYANT
Detective Bryant, NYPD. Following up on a report of a missing person.

JOE
Missing person? Who might that be?

BRYANT
You are Mr. Joseph Peterson of 70-29 Manse Street, is that correct?

JOE
Yes.

BRYANT
Your wife is Mary Ann Peterson?

JOE
Yes. What's this all about officer?

BRYANT
I'm not a police officer sir, I'm a detective. You mind if I ask you a few questions?

Joe laughs, eerily and for a bit too long.

JOE

I know what this is. Did Suzie call you? Mary Ann's sister?

BRYANT

Your wife's been reported missing, sir.

JOE

No I know, but-- that's Suzie. She's a worrier, see. Mary Ann's in Minnesota. With Josie. Her daughter.

BRYANT

I see. And when's the last time you spoke with your wife?

JOE

Uh... last night?

BRYANT

And you spoke with your daughter then too?

JOE

My stepdaughter actually. And I can't remember if she put her on. Sorry, been a long day.

BRYANT

You mind coming down to the station to make a statement?

JOE

Am I under arrest?

BRYANT

No.

JOE

Well then, officer--

BRYANT

Detective.

JOE

Sorry, detective. I really have a lot of work to do tonight.

BRYANT

It shouldn't take too long, save me coming back here with a warrant--

JOE

Yeah, but. I'm a screenwriter. And I'm kinda in the zone right now. I don't want to lose it.

BRYANT

Would you mind calling your wife for me?

JOE

Right now? I mean, what time is it there?

BRYANT

Should be about nine o'clock.

JOE

Oh, yeah. She's got a, she's out with her friends tonight. Not friends, I mean- part of the retreat. She's at a retreat. In Minnesota. It's like a yoga, you know. Silent retreat. Kinda thing.

BRYANT

Uh-huh. You mind showing me your cell phone call history?

JOE

It's dead. Listen, appreciate you following up on this. But you can tell Suzie everything's fine. Mary Ann's fine. I just talked to her yesterday.

BRYANT

And when will she be back?

JOE

I'm sorry?

BRYANT

When is your wife coming back?

JOE

January twelfth. On the train.

BRYANT

Well thank you for your time sir. Oh and... this was on your door. Sorry.

He hands Joe a yellow paper labeled **NOTICE OF EVICTION.**

Joe stares at it in his hand.

Bryant walks down the street.

The crescent moon low on the horizon.

JOE (V.O.)
Transition.

INT. MODEST HOME - LIVING ROOM

Joe sits on the couch with Josie's laptop on his legs, staring at his script on the old computer. A bottle of whiskey beside him. The big dark stain on the floor.

He puffs idly on the vape pen as he reads.

INT. MANSION (JOE'S IMAGINATION)

A huge anteroom in a fantastically-appointed mansion.

Everything is elevated here, and perspectives are all wrong: a huge chandelier drips crystal down hundreds of spidery tendrils. The gold floor sparkles incessantly.

A sweeping staircase bends up to a second floor where several recognizable masterpieces hang: the Mona Lisa, van Gogh's Starry Night, a close-up of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling.

Charlotte stands near the foot of these stairs in a draping silver gown that runs past her feet and pools onto the floor below. A slit up the side goes almost to her waist.

When she speaks, we hear Joe's VOICEOVER at the same time:

CHARLOTTE	JOE (V.O.)
You shouldn't be here.	You shouldn't be here.

CLOSE ON Faceless Hero's lips and mustache when he speaks.

HERO
You asked me to come.

Sweat twinkles on Hero's arms. Charlotte touches them.

CHARLOTTE	JOE (V.O.)
You don't understand.	You don't understand.

HERO
Maybe I understand all too well.

Hero pulls on a vape pen that wasn't there before, lets the smoke escape his lips.

The smoke envelops Charlotte, surrounding her until at last she's barely visible.

CHARLOTTE
I have one last shot for you.

JOE (V.O.)
I have one last shot for you.

CUT TO:

BACK TO THE LIVING ROOM

Joe takes a pull from the bottle. Mutters as he types.

JOE
Job. I have one last job for you.

He starts to make the correction when a notification pops up on the screen -- a Facebook message from Violet.

Violet: yo bitch where the fuck are you?

Joe clicks on it, which takes him to Facebook Messenger.

He drinks whiskey. Stares at the blinking cursor.

He types: hi there. im fine.

But then he deletes it.

When he does, Violet's avatar shows "typing..."

He waits.

Violet: hello? u there?

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit.

He types a reply: hey.

Violet: omg you are alive!!!! Wtf???

Joe stares at this for a long moment.

Violet: r u there?

Violet: helllooooooo???

Joe: im fine. with my mom.

Violet: when r u coming back? i miss u!!

Joe considers.

Joe: january.

Then he adds: i miss you too.

Violet: guess whose dick i sucked last week???

Joe chokes on his drink.

When he recovers, he manages to type: who

ON Joe's blue-lit face, the SOUND OF TYPING carries us to--

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE

Joe works on his script at his desk, typing rapidly.

His phone rings: **DETECTIVE**

He silences it.

Continues to type.

TYPING carries us again to--

INT. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM

A classroom of disinterested students. On the board are some notes about Madame Bovary.

TEACHER

What is it that motivates her?
Anyone? She draws us into her
world, but what is it that
motivates her?

Violet sits toward the back. Her phone chimes.

Again. And again.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Okay whose is that.

VIOLET

Sorry.

She digs for her phone. On the screen: "31 messages from JOSIE"

JOE (V.O.)

Montage.

MONTAGE

INTERCUT close-ups of Facebook Messages with soft-focus shots of Minnesota and footage of Joe being evicted. TYPING throughout.

- message: everything is so beautiful here

A wide shot of snow-capped mountains.

A rustic little farmhouse in the middle of a valley.

Joe opens the door to the eviction company-- three tough guys carrying blue plastic bags.

- message: the air is so clean

Josie's eyes closed in meditation, mountains behind her.

Joe stands beside a police officer. He watches the guys roam through his house, shoving his belongings in those blue bags.

- message: feel so free

A pack of horses running across a field.

Josie smells a cup of tea on a rustic farmhouse porch.

Sunrise over the snow-capped mountains.

A line of blue plastic bags on the sidewalk in front of the house. Joe watches the police officer change the locks.

- message: beautiful here. u would love it!!

Joe walks down the street with a blue bag over his shoulder.

END MONTAGE

The TYPING becomes a RATTLING SOUND, slow and low at first but rising to--

EXT. SUPERMARKET - INCINERATOR

Joe stands by the incinerator holding the button down.

This is the source of the RATTLING NOISE.

Violet stands beside him holding her ears. They both wear safety goggles.

Suddenly the incinerator grinds to a stop.

VIOLET
That's exactly what it did to me.

Joe pushes the button again.

It starts briefly but stops again.

He kneels down.

Reaches up, under the sooty iron grin.

JOE
Ow!

VIOLET
Oh my God! Are you all right?

JOE
I'm fine. There's something stuck--

Joe withdraws his arm. His sleeve is black with char.

A curved, burnt object in his hand.

JOE (CONT'D)
There you go.

Joe wipes it off, just a little--

--and they realize simultaneously that it's a human jawbone.

VIOLET
Oh!

Melted across the teeth is a band of metal; Josie's braces.

Joe tosses it quickly back into the incinerator.

He pushes the button, and the INCINERATOR STARTS.

He shouts, over the sound:

JOE
Looks like an animal got in there.
Probably a rat!

EXT. IMPOUND LOT - DAY

Detective Bryant follows a greasy tow yard worker across a field of impounded cars.

He arrives at Joe's car.

Takes the keys, sits in the front seat and pops the trunk.
The tow yard worker recoils immediately from the smell.
Detective Bryant dials his phone.

INT. BROWNSTONE APARTMENT (BROOKLYN)

Morgan opens the door to his apartment.

Two police officers stand out front with grave faces.

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe sits at his desk with Josie's laptop open in front of him, working on the script. It's late.

CHARLIE

Hey Joe? You gonna stick around
here for a while?

He doesn't turn around; he's engrossed.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Joe? Did you hear what I said?

JOE

Huh? Oh yeah, yeah I'll lock up
Charlie, don't worry about it.

In a corner of the office Charlie notices a couple of those blue bags and a rolled up sleeping bag.

CHARLIE

Okay. Well I'm gonna lock you in
here just in case. White boy.

JOE

Uh-huh. Fine.

Charlie closes the door.

On the screen, Joe selects a block of text-- "The harsh florescent light..." --and deletes it. SOUNDS OF TYPING to:

INT. MANSION (JOE'S IMAGINATION)

As before-- the giant chandelier, Charlotte on the stairs.

The chandelier starts to shrink, then disappears completely.

Charlotte's dress rises up her legs and becomes a schoolgirl's skirt.

The golden floor morphs into worn-out carpet. The winding staircase becomes the steps of a porch on a home in Queens.

Finally Charlotte transforms into Violet - or a heightened version of her, with bright red lipstick and heavy eyeshadow.

VIOLET

You shouldn't be here.

Reveal Joe standing at the foot of the steps.

JOE

I've done something terrible.

VIOLET

Tell me.

JOE

I can't.

VIOLET

Why not?

JOE

You wouldn't want to be my friend anymore.

VIOLET

I just want you to come back. I miss you.

BACK TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe sits in front of the computer. Facebook Messenger is on the screen, with the last few sentences of this exchange.

Violet's message: i just want you to come back. i miss you.

Joe starts to cry.

FADE TO:

EXT. VIOLET'S HOME - DAY

Detective Bryant stands on the porch of her house.

Violet opens the door. They converse wordlessly.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPERMARKET - OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe asleep on the floor in a sleeping bag.

His phone rings nearby.

JOE

Hello?

VIOLET (ON PHONE)

Mister Peterson?

JOE

Violet?

VIOLET

I'm sorry to call so late. I didn't know who else to talk to.

Joe sits up.

JOE

That's all right. You can talk to me. Of course you can talk to me. What's going on?

VIOLET

I heard these guys in school. They were bragging about...

The line goes silent for a moment.

JOE

What? What did they say?

VIOLET

Something awful.

JOE

What was it? You can tell me.

VIOLET

One of them said...

The line goes silent.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

One of them said he killed Josie. Raped her and killed her.

Joe chuckles. He seems confused, disoriented.

JOE

That's. Violet that's not possible.
Didn't you say you talked to her?

VIOLET

I messaged her. But I'm worried.
She doesn't sound like herself.

Joe looks over at the black-and-white security screen.
Sees a police officer moving into position outside the store.
He glances out the back window and sees another officer.

JOE

Well. Who does she sound like.

VIOLET

I don't know. I'm scared.

JOE

What are you scared of honey.

Joe reaches into his blue bag. Takes out the revolver.
Checks the rounds: all full.

VIOLET

I guess... what could have happened
to her?

JOE

She's fine, Vie. Totally fine.

VIOLET

But. Aren't you worried?

JOE

About what?

Joe crawls out the door of his office.
He slowly makes his way down the back stairs.

VIOLET

What if she's not okay?

JOE

Everything's okay baby. Just take
your pills. You'll feel better
after you take your pills.

VIOLET

What?

JOE

All right, gotta go. Love you!

He hangs up the phone.

INT. SUPERMARKET - BACK OF STORE

Joe's in the warehouse area. It's almost pitch black here.

Stacks of palletized goods stretch high above him.

He uses the light from his cell phone screen to look around.

INT. SQUAD CAR/EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Violet sits in the front seat beside a police OFFICER. Her phone is attached to a recording device.

Detective Bryant stands in the open door.

OFFICER #1

Is that enough?

BRYANT

It's gonna have to be.

The officer reaches for his CB radio to give the command.

But just then a forklift comes crashing out of the warehouse, headed straight toward them!

MUSIC UP: Springsteen's "No Surrender."

INT. FORKLIFT - MOVING

Staccato gunfire all around.

Joe looks down - there's a heavy brick on the accelerator.

He jerks the steering wheel toward the row of police cars.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT

Police officers pepper the approaching forklift with gunfire.

INT. FORKLIFT - MOVING

Joe leaps from the forklift in 120fps SLOW MOTION.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - PARKING LOT

It plows into one of the police vehicles, sending everyone scattering.

A moment later it explodes in a tremendous fireball.

WITH JOE

He sees the officers trying to deal with this distraction.

Runs away from them and toward the darkness.

WITH BRYANT

He grabs his gun from the car and runs after Joe.

The officer reaches across Violet, slams his door shut and peels out as he and other cars tear across the parking lot.

AD LIB shouts of chaos: "What happened?" "Got a runner!"
"Where the fuck did he go?" "He's Northbound on foot!"
"Negative no sign of him here." "Who has eyes on him?"

WITH JOE

Running across the parking lot.

He sees a subway entrance ahead.

WITH BRYANT

He stops to shoot.

Misses.

BRYANT

Damn it!

EXT./INT. SUBWAY STATION - WITH JOE

Joe races down the stairs, elbowing past emerging commuters.

When he gets to the bottom he walks quickly along the platform, hiding his gun in his jacket pocket.

He stands at the end of the platform breathing heavily.

Music fades, and it's a prosaic moment: everyone going about their regular business.

Some people sit, others stand or lean cautiously over the tracks to spy the next train.

Some read newspapers, most mess around on their phones.

Joe sees Bryant come rushing down the stairs followed by a couple police officers. They haven't seen him yet.

When they do, Bryant calls

BRYANT
Everyone down!

And draws his gun at Joe.

Joe puts his hands up.

Then suddenly he turns and leaps onto the subway tracks.

The officers fire after him.

But he's keeping low, picking his way across the tracks, and they miss.

WITH JOE

He's breathing hard.

The light of an oncoming train.

He jumps over the third rail to the middle subway track, and keeps running as the train passes by.

BACK ON THE PLATFORM

The officers shout commands into their radios:

OFFICER #1
He's on the tracks! Repeat, suspect
is Northbound on the tracks!

OFFICER #2
-- squad cars at every station, we
need to SHUT THIS LINE down!

WITH JOE

He jogs on through the tunnel, sweating in eerie blackness.

Lighting his way with his cell phone screen.

Muttering Springsteen to himself:

JOE
 ... the street tonight the lights
 grow dim,
 walls of my room are closing in...

INT. NEXT SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Police pour down the stairs on both sides of the subway station, bewildering the few people waiting on the platform.

The train arrives.

EXT. SUBWAY STAIRCASE/SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Bryant pushes past the disembarking passengers.

He arrives at the platform just as the train departs.

One of the policemen shrugs at him, shaking his head.

BRYANT
 Damn it!

He waves his badge at the MTA EMPLOYEE in their booth.

BRYANT (CONT'D)
 We're shutting this train down.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Joe's cell phone helps him pick his way through the darkness.

Rats scurry alongside him.

Ahead of him, a fork in the track bends to the right.

He hops nimbly over the third rail and follows the fork, still singing softly to himself.

JOE
 I wanna sleep beneath peaceful
 skies in my lover's bed... wide-
 open country in my eyes... romantic
 dreams in my head.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - WITH BRYANT

Bryant stands in the booth with the MTA employee, shouting into the phone:

BRYANT
The whole thing! We need to shut
the whole thing down!

WITH JOE

He presses into one of those safety nooks as another train passes.

Watches the tail lights recede, then reverses direction.

JOE
No retreat, baby, no... surrender.

He's working his way toward the middle track again when suddenly, white light fills the screen along with the SOUND OF A SUBWAY TRAIN APPROACHING--

FADE TO WHITE.

JOE (V.O.)
The end.