

EN PASSANT

Written by

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1 EXT. EAST RIVER ESPLANADE - DUSK (FLASHBACK SEQUENCE)

1

JOHN (V.O.)

When your wise best friend asks you to NOT FUCKING DO IT, I think you should oblige. But we live in a dumb world, where we make dumb decisions. I guess we should just live with it and hope we get a second chance to right our wrongs. Why the fuck doesn't the system teach us about failure and loss and how to cope up with it?

The night is calm. The pier is airy, so much that the two lovers, **John**, mid 20s, lean, and **Grace**, both charming and well dressed, almost own the pier for that night. They walk towards the end of the pier, hand in hand under the warm street lights.

JOHN

Mrs Hendricks, there is no way I am letting you drive.

GRACE

Mr. Reese, Who said I was asking?

JOHN

You were not. But you were hoping I would give you the keys.

GRACE

Oh I know you will give me the keys.

JOHN

how so?

GRACE

Because that is the only way you are getting lucky tonight.

JOHN

Well, you ran out of luck. Unless you cast a magic spell and make the keys come flying to you, you are not having them.

GRACE

I do know a spell or two.

The two reach the end of the pier and turn towards each other.

JOHN
(With a hint of smile)
Sure, you made me fall crazy for
you.

GRACE
See!

She walks closer to him.

GRACE
(whispers)
**Let me take the wheel now and you
can decide our next adventure
later.**

JOHN
**You win. But speaking of
adventures, there is something I
need to ask you first.**

Grace's eyes shine like a pup.

GRACE
What is it?

John pauses for a second while maintaining the eye contact.

JOHN
What do you want to have for
dinner?

Grace pouts - upset and hits him with her handbag - jokingly.

GRACE
(Laughing)
I am going to kill you

John stops her from hitting and the two share a laugh. Grace gets carried away and walks towards the railing. He doesn't come with her. As she turns back, John gets on his knee and pulls out a little something that doesn't look like a ring. That's right, it's a chess piece, precisely, a queen made of wood. Grace is surprised and is out of words. This is the moment she was waiting for. This is the most beautiful day of her life.

JOHN

Grace Hendricks, you're the most beautiful soul I've ever encountered, inside and out. I can't go another moment wondering why I haven't asked you sooner. You are the most precious part of my life and I can't picture a single day forward without you as my wife. With every beat of my heart, Grace, will you play chess with me?

Happiness fades to "I cant believe it" face :|

GRACE

I give you one more chance, ask again.

JOHN

What! Do you wanna play chess? Look at what I am holding! What did you think I was going to ask?!

Grace is wrinkles her eyes and lips. Romantic anger.

JOHN

Oh theres one more thing.

Grace turns away - not interested.

JOHN

Thank you for always letting me tease you.

Grace is still turning away.

JOHN CONT'D

Grace. For real this time. Do you want to marry me?

Grace's excitement comes back as she turns around. Her eyes water up as she bursts into happy tears.

GRACE

(as she comes down to his level)

Yes! Yes! Yes a million times
Yes!... To play chess with you.

Now John doesnt like it. But grace doesnt tease him for long.

GRACE

And sure, I can marry you.

She acts as if its ok and that she can adjust. He clearly doesn't know how to respond to that. Then, both of them crack and laugh, hug and kiss in the middle of the esplanade. They are the happiest people in the world.

GRACE
(with happy tears)
People normally propose with a ring, you know?

JOHN
What do they know, this queen is more valuable than a stone.

GRACE
But I can't wear this on my finger.

JOHN
I thought you would say that.

John reaches to his coat pocket and takes out a ring. Grace is surprised again. He puts the ring on her finger.

GRACE
I love you so much.

JOHN
I love you too.

The two of them hug.

JOHN CONT'D
Do you want to get up?

GRACE
Yes!

Both of them get up, walk towards the edge of the pier, staring at the beautiful skyline in front of them. Grace looks at her ring and then at the pawn.

GRACE
I know how much this means to you.
Are you sure you want me to have it?

JOHN
I know you love it. It is perfect for your collection. And more than anything, you're all I have that's not just a memory.

GRACE
But, John, this-

JOHN
Grace.

John stops her from overthinking and gives her an affirming look. She understands he means it and keeps it close to her heart.

JOHN
You have that puppy look on your face right now.

GRACE
I dont have a puppy look (she becomes cuter)

JOHN
Stay here. I should capture this moment.

GRACE
Wait where are you going?

John start to jog away from the esplanade to get a camera.

JOHN
stay right there.

We stay with grace. She turns away towards the river to enjoy her moment. Her heart filled with happiness. The man of her dreams is going to be her husband. This is the greatest night of her life.

JOHN (V.O.)
There I go. Like a fucking idiot.

STRANGER (O.C.)
Hello Grace. Congratulations!

Grace turns towards him. She doesnt recognise him.

GRACE
Thank you.

STRANGER
Now. I must say you are advised to give me that chess piece and forget this has ever happened and live happily ever after with your husband.

GRACE
What?!

STRANGER

Oh Grace, don't make me take it
from you.

Grace starts to walk away from him.

2 EXT. EAST RIVER ESPLANADE - DUSK

2

John is walking towards the walkway with a camera in his hands. He is shocked to look at someone trying to snatch something from grace from a distance. Just as he begin to run towards them, bam. A loud gunshot. his vision get blurry. his breath get heavier. his mind, out of control. THE SCREEN TURNS BLACK AND WHITE. he freezes there as he watches his fiancée get shot and fall dead. The stranger snatches the pawn from his dead fiancee and begin to run towards him. His unstable mind gives him subconscious instructions to stop him on his tracks while his eyes are fixed on his dead wife.

JOHN (V.O.)

Imagine, you are peeled like a carrot, beaten to death and left to hang dry upside down, your senses frozen, but you see the man who has done it all to you. Second chance?

Nah.

The shooter pulls his gun out and shoots at John too. but the gun has no bullets left. In desperation, the shooter bangs over John's head with the gun and john falls on the ground unconscious. The shooter escapes from the scene. John is left staring at his dead wife as his heads start to bleed from under his face.

JOHN (V.O.)

Well. I told myself at that moment "If I die, that'll be it. But god forbid I make it alive, I am going to burn that man and make his sorry body float in the east river, unidentified.

CUT TO:

3 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (A FEW DAYS LATER)

3

John has **bandage** around his head. He is clearly having trouble sleeping. He wakes up with a heavy head. His room is as quiet as quiet can get. his breath, muffling sounds of the blankets, even the sound of his eyelids flapping is audible. He feels like someone is screeching metals and hammering loud thuds - sees visuals of these while they are non existent.

JOHN (V.O.)

And yes, I survived. I know I was going to kill him. But I am a Data Analyst who loves to play Chess, not someone who goes around killing people for a living. But first (dramatic pause) I need to clear my head.

He quietly lights up a joint. He takes two deep puffs with his eyes closed. His headache doesn't stop. He feels like the metal screeching sound along with loud thuds all at once happening to him. His body starts to shiver. He haphazardly searches for something but wouldn't find it. He then quickly searches for his phone and calls someone.

4 EXT. FORT TILDEN - DAWN

4

It is a quiet park. Sun is not out yet and no sight of people. John is waiting for someone. He looks calm though. His mind is not, it is screaming, but he is calm outside. Just then, his friend, Carl, tall, composed but pissed off, comes there hurriedly.

CARL

Man what the hell! It's 5 o'clock.
What was the hurry?

JOHN

Did you get it?

CARL

I did.

Carl hands over weed to John. John checks it but he finds something missing.

JOHN

Where is it?

CARL

What's wrong with you, man?

JOHN

Goddammit, Carl. I came all the way for this?

CARL

Why do you need heroin?

JOHN

You know what, I'll find someone else.

John starts to walk out but carl stops him.

CARL

John, wait. What are you doing? You
are better than this man!

John remains silent. He meets Carl's eyes, but is silent for
a while. Carl looks concerned.

JOHN

(pointing at his face)

Do I look calm?

CARL

What do you mean? You are calm.

JOHN

(slow taps his forehead,
eyes closed)

Live in here. You'll know why i
need it.

The sounds. The scary screams. The barking dogs. The honking
traffic. The thumping footsteps. The screeching metals. It is
not calm in John's head.

CARL

Look man. I get it alright. What
happened to grace was wrong. But I
can't see you go down like this!
You were supposed to be the next
Bobby Fischer or something.

John shrugs it away.

JOHN

I want to- I want to live, Carl. I
want to live. Live long enough to
find and kill that motherfucker.

CARL

Kill!? Man, what the fuck?

JOHN

I will kill him Carl. I WILL Kill
him. But not with all these demons
in my head. I need them gone. Keep
me calm, Carl. Keep me calm.

He begins to cry but controls it.

CARL

Look man. I understand but I can't help you. I don't do that stuff no more. I can't reach those people like before. Cops are looking into me man! Fucking FBI is looking into my past.

JOHN
What the fuck did you do?

CARL
Whatever I did, the moral of the story was to not fucking do it.

JOHN
Well in that case, as I said, I'll find SOMEONE ELSE.

John starts to walk away but stops and turns back.

JOHN
Stay low, Carl.

John starts to walk. Carl hates what he is about to do.

CARL
I can get YOU in touch with them.

John stops walking and turns back.

JOHN
What?

CARL
I can't reach them. But who's stopping you.

John walks towards Carl. He is interested. Carl continues hesitantly.

CARL
There is this "digital marketplace". It's called the silk snake. The Mexican Cartel runs it. You can find whatever you want there man, no questions asked.

JOHN
(confused)
What?

CARL (O.C.)

It's like taking a walk in a dark forest there, John. No rules, no oversight. If you're really 'bout it, you gotta get your setup tight.

JOHN
What setup?

CARL
But listen. Once you do this, once you get involved with these drugs, these people, these ideas, it will never be the same again. Be careful John. (nods sideways) This is not you. And it can never be you.

JOHN
We'll see about that.

John walks away, with purpose.

CARL
(shouts)
You know what i shouldn't have told you all this. Don't do it john.

John stops walking.

JOHN
Don't you see it carl? This is my fight. nothing else matters to me.
This will save me

CARL
Guns and drugs dont save people,
John.

JOHN
I'm different.

John walks away and carl has nothing to say.

CARL
(to himself)
Fuck!

5 **EXT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DUSK**

5

John connects ethernet to his laptop and a pendrive.

CARL (V.O.)

But listen. Once you do this, once you get involved with these drugs, these people, these ideas, it will never be the same again.

6 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

6

John is seen hitting on refresh button multiple times to see if he can establish a connection, having trouble sleeping and curling on his bed, smoking a joint, and staring at oblivion with his pale eyes.

Finally, his seemingly futile attempt to hit the refresh button works. He is connected to the dark net. How? no one knows. The net welcomes him with graphic images. Gore, nudity, substance. Thats the welcome page.

JOHN
(to himself)
Oh internet. please save me.

7 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DUSK

7

John sits quiet on a bench while the rest of the park is electric. He slowly starts to get restless as we waits there. A stranger sits beside him, places his mcd bag on the bench, ties his shoe.

STRANGER
beautiful day huh!

John doesn't bother to reply. He doesnt even know what this guy was up to. The strager pushes the bag a little forward. John then understands it is for him. He takes a roll of money out and passes to him. The stranger takes it and smells it.

STRANGER
Pleasure doing business with you
sir.

He gets up and leaves. John notices the bag and looks into it.

8 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

8

JOHN (V.O.)
As a matter of fact, it did.
Comfortably numb?

John is doing drugs. Crawl up to the bed and sleeps unconsciously.

JOHN (V.O.)

But Carl wasn't exactly happy with me. He thinks I should get my shit together. What I needed was a kick in the balls to remind me that I had a purpose in my life.

John's laptop screen which is on the dark net refreshes and shows the latest post - An antique chess piece for \$10000.

JOHN (V.O.)

Yep. That's mine. That's how much he wants for it. That's it? I should've immediately bid for it. But look at me. Sleeping like a baby. Fucking idiot wake up! It's your guy. Fucking drugs! **Never touch the hard drugs, guys. You miss out on so much.**

9 EXT. STREETS OF BROOKLYN - DAY (MONTAGE)

9

John is high, he puts on his earphones and, sunglasses and plays his favourite song on max volume and walks past shops opening up early in the morning, crosses roads, waits for signals. He walks like he is onto something. He stops at a bench where a stack of early morning newspapers. He picks the one that is facing upside down. A particular image of a phone booth in the articles catches his eye. He tears that page and leaves the area.

JOHN (V.O.)

In the following days, I did what any other revenge seeker would do.

10 INT. CHAMBERS STREET SUBWAY - MORNING (MONTAGE)

10

Arriving at the Chamber's Street Subway station, John walks up passing by most passengers during the rush hour in the opposite direction. Walks down the stairs to a scarcely populated platform. He reaches the platform end. There are barely anyone there and the platform seemed unused for years. At the end of the platform, he notices a keypad. He looks around for the key and there is a phone number hiding in the plain sight. He enters the number and hears a quite thud. He walks up to the thud, reaches out with his hand under that box from where the sound originated and searches for what's inside. He pulls out a gun!

JOHN (V.O.)

I got a gun.

11 EXT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY (MONTAGE)

11

John is seated against a window in a subway car. as he looks out, it is the early day view of the Brooklyn bridge and the manhattan skyline.

JOHN (V.O.)
 And the date is set: Tuesday
 afternoon, at XXX place. That's
**where he's supposed to trade my
 chess piece for his last breath.**

12 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - DAY

12

John is struggling to keep himself from the drugs. His will is fighting against his wishes. As he struggles to keep himself together, he hears someone knock the door.

SAM (O.S.)
 John?.. John are you there?

JOHN
 Who is it?

SAM (O.S.)
 It's me. Sam.

JOHN
 Go away.

SAM (O.S.)
 John how are you doing? I heard
 what happened with Grace.

JOHN
 Get the fuck out of here Sam. I
 don't need help.

He needs help. He falls off the bed and can't get a glass of water from the table. He definitely needs help

SAM (O.S.)
 Let me just come in john.

JOHN
 I don't want to meet anybody. Go!

SAM (O.S.)
 There is a life outside, John.

JOHN
 Ahhh I know! Get the fuck out of
 here now!

SAM (O.S.)
We have a tournament next Saturday.
We would love to have you back. You
are not alone in this.

John throws something (that breaks) at his door.

JOHN
Now fuck off.

John hears sam walk away and breaks down.

13 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DUSK

13

John and Carl walk amongst a noisy crowd at a brisk pace. There is absolute silence between them. Carl is shaking his head sideways and is not on board with John about something. John is anxiously waiting for Carl's response.

CARL
No!

JOHN
Carl, we got this guy. We hit him before he gets a sniff of what we are doing.

CARL
There is so much that could go wrong.

JOHN
That's why I want you to back me up, man.

CARL
Man you are way above your head.

JOHN
Carl. Carl, Listen to me. We have the gun. He has no reason to believe that we are going to hurt him. This is the one chance I get. I don't want to miss this.

CARL
John. You're high af.

JOHN
I- I am in control, Carl.

CARL

Look, John. You don't have a plan man. You don't know what the repercussions would be. What if he's cartel? What if he is a huge dude who-

14 EXT. DUMBO - NIGHT

14

JOHN (V.O.)

Long story short, I convinced him to come with me by promising that I wouldn't kill him, and he told me he was done with this business for good after this.

John and Carl wait anxiously for the man at the decided spot. John, the man in suit, is the more anxious of the two, his legs not standing still, his hands constantly rubbing together, and his eyes ready to pop out. Meanwhile, Carl, dressed casual, is just worried about what John might do.

CARL

John. We discussed. We are taking the Queen and give him the bugged suitcase.

JOHN

Yeah I know.

CARL

Why are you nervous then. Nothing is going to happen here, right?

JOHN

Nothing is going to happen.

Carl is still not convinced, John wouldn't do anything stupid.

CARL

I ran a background check on this guy.

John is listening.

CARL

I dont know where he lives or what he does. Do you know what that's supposed to mean?

JOHN

What?

CARL

He is a ghost. He goes by the name Kevin. But no one knows what he is into. Some say he is a terrorist sympathiser and Some say he is just a cranky junkie impulsive in his decisions.

JOHN

How do you know all this? And why are you telling me this now?

CARL

My work IS to know who my clients are in bed with, john.

JOHN

You keep talking about these people, clients. Who are they?

CARL

It could be anybody. You can say I'm some sort of freelancer. You talked about demons in your head. You have no idea what they become when they are actually real.

JOHN

(takes off his coat)

Carl. I am happy you are trying to start a new life. But all I see is someone running away and can't face shit.

CARL

Watch your mouth.

JOHN

I face my demons, carl.

CARL

Then why did you need me here?

JOHN

You didn't learn to walk without someone guiding you.

CARL

Is that what this is? You think you get a gun and you are on track to become a gangster?

JOHN

I dont think the gun makes me a gangster.

CARL

You are right. Its your brain. You are not thinking straight. You have no IDEA how TERRIBLE life gets with these people. You think its cool to have the power to kill someone? You think you can get away with something like that?

JOHN

What now, cops are going to find me?

CARL

No. His men are going to find you. The cops will put you on trial. But these men... Its not cool to be a thug.

JOHN

(arrogantly)

Alright. I am not going to kill him.

CARL

I can't trust you.

JOHN

... Yeah I cant trust myself either. I dont think I can hold myself when I see him.

CARL

You dont even know if he's the one.

JOHN

I will know if he's the one once I see him. But I didnt call you to babysit me. If I pull out the gun, I need you to back me up. That is all i expect from you.

CARL

JOHN! I was in your position once. The first time I did it, I thought that was it. Felt good, like it made me strong. So I did it again, and again, justifying myself until the man in me died. You don't know half my story John. You don't have to, you shouldn't. But know this, once you do it once, there will always be justification.

John doesn't seem to care. The second john turns his back he sees a gun tucked to his back.

JOHN
I am not you, Carl, alright?

They see a car approaching.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Now, don't blow this. He's coming.

CARL
YOU DONT EVEN KNOW IF HE IS THE ONE
BUT YOU'RE READY TO TAKE A LIFE?

JOHN
I know he's the one.

CARL
YOU DON'T KNOW HIM. IT'S TOO RISKY!

JOHN
CARL! FOCUS. HE IS HERE. I'M NOT A
CRIMINAL!

CARL
You keep telling me you are not a
criminal but you are no different
than him or me!

JOHN
(Angryly) Maybe! What if I am a
criminal, huh? What about it? (John
controls himself) (Calmer) I'm
telling you he is all I want?

CARL
And what if he's not the one?

JOHN
Then I'll keep looking till I find
the one.

CARL

See! John, you need help, just not mine. I am done with you. I am leaving this city. I'll have a new name, new life... The past stays here.

JOHN

(murmurs) motherfucker (out loud)
Shhhh!

Carl is stunned looking at John like this. Just then, a car comes in. Tension in both their faces. **Kevin** walks to the place slowly. John anticipates Kevin's arrival.

CARL

Don't. Do. Anything. Stupid.
Please.

A skinny, hippie looking dude stands on one side with the chess piece. John and Carl on the other with the suitcase of cash. John gets a mild panic attack as he looks at the man who has caused so much tragedy to him. He is raging. There is tension in Carl's eyes because he was about to do something big. Carl and John exchange looks.

KEVIN

This has to be the most beautiful spot in the New York City!

Flashes of the night of killing of his wife flashes in front of him

CARL

Yeah.

KEVIN

Your friend here doesn't seem to be very chatty.

JOHN

Chess piece?

KEVIN

Show me the money.

John rises the suitcase. The suitcase with the bug.

JOHN

It's all in here.

Kevin takes a good look at the two of them.

KEVIN

Alright.

John and Carl exchange looks again. Carl senses John is about to act. John reaches to the on his back. Carl trips John over. John falls down. Kevin finds it strange. Carl extends his hands to pick John up. John realises Carl has done it on purpose as he picks himself up. The two parties walk towards each other.

KEVIN

Pieces of shit, what are you doing?
Get the money here.

John cannot hold it in him anymore. He gives a death stare to Carl.

JOHN

Did we meet before?

Carl is not ok with John directly confronting Kevin.

KEVIN

Who the fuck are you?

JOHN

Where did you get the queen?

KEVIN

It's none of your business. Do we have a trade or not, bitch?

JOHN

How do I know the piece is not a duplicate?

KEVIN

How do I know if you ask one more question I don't put my gun on your head?

JOHN

Do you really want to go that way?

John suggests pulling his gun out from behind him. Kevin suggests the same too. Carl just puts his hands in the air indicating he doesn't want any unwanted scene to be created here. Standoff amongst the three of them, Kevin and John meaning business about pulling out the gun if need be and Carl gauging the situation.

CARL

We don- We don't have to do anything unnecessary here.

KEVIN

Why don't you tell that to your friend.

CARL

John.

John slowly loosens up. Kevin follows.

KEVIN

Girls, you have 10 seconds before I decide to put a bullet in two heads.

John is unwavering.

JOHN

Answer the question. Where did you get the piece?

KEVIN

Goddamnit, Who cares?

JOHN

I do.

KEVIN

Some bitch owned it, I guess. Now, if you ask me one more question, I am out of here. And cunts, I have a reputation to leave bodies behind wherever I go.

JOHN

The bitch. What did you do with her?

KEVIN

She is taken care of and paid well to not claim it back again.

Carl gets into his position silently, sensing action. John give Kevin a death stare. Kevin is unwavering as well. Anything could happen at that moment. Kevin raises the chess piece indicating to trade. John holds himself for a moment and throws the suitcase towards Kevin. That clearly didn't sit well with Kevin's ego. Kevin smiles in himself about it. He is pissed. But he calmly tosses the piece to John. John looks at the piece and gets slightly emotional but doesn't express it. Kevin bends, takes and checks the suitcase.

KEVIN

(leaving)

Ladies.

JOHN (O.S.)
Kevin.

Carl is surprised he said the name out!

KEVIN
What did you say?

JOHN
Enjoy the views. It's my favourite spot too.

John and Carl turn around and starts to walk away. Kevin is boiling within himself. Kevin starts to shout and walk away in the other direction. John and Carl try not to care about it and walk away faster. Kevin turns back and starts to walk to his car. His alter ego burns.

KEVIN
(Spannish)
WHAT DID YOU SAY? YOU KNOW MY NAME,
HUH? YOU LOOKED INTO ME, HUH? VERY
GOOD. YOU SHOULD DO YOUR HOMEWORK.
I DIDN'T DO MINE. I AM SORRY!!!

Kevin sees a small narrow path to the other side.

CARL
You had to do it, huh? You had to piss him off.

JOHN
Just walk away, Carl. I didn't shoot him, be happy.

CARL
Look at you! Advocate of peace.

JOHN
Relax. It's over.

John walks faster and slightly ahead of Carl. Just then, bam, Kevin sneaks behind them and knocks out Carl. John walks a few more steps before he turns back to check for Carl. He sees Carl's legs dragged into the narrow path. John immediately puts one hand on his gun tucked behind him and starts to walk towards that path. Just as he enters that path area, Kevin pounces on to him and punches him in his face. Kevin then holds John from the back and drags him to into the path.

KEVIN

You had to throw the suitcase, know my name and try to pull the gun out huh? You have balls, huh? Let me show you who is incharge. [speaks in spanish] You motherfucker. You little cunt you think you can pull the gun out on me and walk away? Now I will teach you manners. I will teach you how to respect people. Your father should've taught you not to fuck with everyone.

Kevin drags John further into the narrow gap. John fights back, punches Kevin in the face hard runs away towards Carl when Kevin is hurting. He takes his gun out and points it at Kevin, trembling.

KEVIN

You little cunt. You lost your chance to walk away alive. You must think you have a big dick to do something like this. I thought I will take your finger, and let you live. But you disappointed me. Now I have to take your life.

John freezes for a second or two. he has the gun pointed and loaded, but his brain fade moment is not helping him.

JOHN (V.O.)

Well, there I was. Holding the gun against the man I wanted to kill. But my brain stopped functioning. I could barely see him running towards me. All my hatred towards him was not enough to pull that trigger even in the moment when it was either him or me. I just couldn't kill a person.

Kevin jumps in the air to punch John in the face. Just then, GUN SHOTS. Kevin is shot 2 times, once in the knee and next in the neck up to the skull, killing him instantly. John is surprised to see Kevin get shot. Carl has actually pulled his gun out and shot Kevin from under him (ground up). Nothing went according to their plan. There is absolute silence between them for a while. John is still processing what just happened and Carl is stunned and holds back his tears. After 10 seconds, Carl breaks the silence.

CARL

Jonathan... I am leaving.

JOHN
(surprised)

Carl... we got him! We aren't going to jail, it was self-defence! He was attacking us. It's over, it's over.

CARL

John... I didn't kill him in defence. I killed him because **I could.**

JOHN

Thanks for having my back, man, I don't know why I froze I just couldn't think of anything, I-I-... I wanted him dead. He deserved it, I'm no criminal.

CARL

What do you think I told myself?

The two exchange a stare for a second. Carl picks himself up and slowly starts walk away.

CARL (CONT'D)

You are a criminal, John. Matter of time before you realise it!

He stops after a few steps and turns back. He takes out a chess piece from his pocket, a different one from what they traded and tosses it to John.

CARL (CONT'D)

You gave this to me when we were civil and in senses. (This doesn't belong to me anymore. You shouldn't have it either. But its yours.)

JOHN

DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS.

CARL

John... If you get a second chance, don't get a gun.

JOHN (V.O.)

What he really meant was, you fucked up and it is your mess now. Yeah. I knew he always wanted to leave this place. I don't blame him for leaving me here. I guess this was the kick in the balls I needed. He left, to never return, and I fled the scene leaving to trace.

Carl leaves. John picks himself up, goes to the car and searches for any evidence. He finds the insurance papers with the address of the man they killed.

15 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

15

He throws away all the drugs and cleans the place. He is sober but scared to sleep. He hates how his life has become. John has trouble sleeping, panic attacks and nightmares of someone knocking the door and shooting him.

JOHN (V.O.)

But that was not it. What followed was a nightmare. The first night was the hardest. I don't know what pandora's box I had opened by killing Kevin. I didn't know who George worked for. The anxiety was killing me. So I decided to end it once for all.

16 EXT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

16

John clicks his gun and enters into Kevin's apartment. He saw Kevin's address from his vehicle's papers. He stealthy walks into the apartment and makes sure no one is in there. He then goes through Kevin's stuff - his laptops, documents, cupboards. He notices pictures of Kevin with his friend, unpaid utility bills envelopes, nude magazines, drugs and a gun. He further opens a door and sees there were a lot of Pressure cookers, unfinished semiconductors, wires and a soldering gun. He doesn't understand what those are and looks deeply into his activities.

JOHN (V.O.)

Kevin was a loner, but the dangerous type. The fucker wanted to build pressure cooker bombs or something. I guess I am some sort of a hero to take him down! But the relieving part is, he works for no one. He is just one brainwashed idiot, acting on his own. He has one friend, he goes to one bar every now and then and he has no known associations or affiliations. I guess he and I are similar in that way.

17 EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - NEXT DAY

17

John sits at a public chess place in the park in broad daylight. He is lost in thoughts.

JOHN (V.O.)

So after making sure there would be no one who would come after me, I started to go out again. I got my revenge but something didn't sit well with me. When Kevin held me from the back, it didn't feel like the killer of my wife. But either way, I at least didn't kill an innocent person for sure. I am not a criminal after all.

Just then, **David**, well built, well dressed, middle aged FBI agent walks up to John and sits beside him quietly. John doesn't seem to care and carries on with his contemplation.

DAVID

I believe you are John.

JOHN (V.O.)

There was my repercussion.

JOHN

Yeah?

DAVID

I am David. I knew Carl.

JOHN (V.O.)

Oh no.

DAVID

He was your friend, wasn't he?

JOHN

Yes.

DAVID

He's MIA

John slightly squints his eyes.

DAVID

He was with you the night before he disappeared.

JOHN (V.O.)

Is he fucking with me? What is he expecting me to say here?

JOHN

Disappeared?

DAVID

Look (He pulls the chair and sits down). Let me be real with you. He was involved with a few unpleasant people... He wanted out. He worked with me but now he's missing.

JOHN

Carl was a rat? Who was he working for?

DAVID

The Gonzalez Cartel. Now, would you know what he was up to the night when he met you?

JOHN

I don't know what you are talking about, Officer.

DAVID

It's weird you say that. Your name came up multiple times in his conversations. He always talked about protecting you and keeping you away from making the same mistakes he did.

JOHN (V.O.)

Motherfucker talked about me with the FBI?!

JOHN

I have no idea what he meant by any of that.

David hesitates but passes a picture.

DAVID

Do you recognise this man? His name is Kevin. He was at Carl's the night he disappeared

John looks at the picture. HOLY SHIT. It is the friend of the Kevin he killed.

JOHN (V.O.)

WHAT!?! THAT'S KEVIN? WE KILLED KEVIN! THIS GUY IS KEVIN'S ONLY FRIEND. IS HIS NAME KEVIN TOO?

DAVID

We suspect he has something to do with Carl's disappearance. Did you happen to ever see him or hear Carl talking about him?

JOHN (V.O.)
WHAT THE FUCK DID I DO?

DAVID
John?

JOHN
(calmly)
No. Never heard of him.

DAVID
He's MIA. But, he can be dangerous.
If you know anything, it would be very helpful.

JOHN
How would I know anything officer?
I barely even knew Carl or what he was up to.

DAVID
When we traced Carl's location before he disappeared, he was at DUMBO on the night of the Tuesday. What is troubling is that a known convict known as George was also there with Carl, who is now dead. Where were you that night?

JOHN
... Home

DAVID
Huh? Carl was on course to start a new life and now he is in the middle of all this.

John doesn't respond. David suspects something's wrong.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Kevin is involved with George. With his lover gone, he might be looking for Carl. If he doesn't find him, he could come after you, if he know's you, that is...

JOHN
Why the hell would he come after me? What did I do?

DAVID

Emotions are difficult to explain.
Here's my card. If you know
anything at all, let me know. It is
not abnormal to go after someone's
knows acquaintances, so watch out.

JOHN (V.O.)

Ofcourse it is not abnormal to go
after someone's known
acquaintances. How did I miss this
guy?

David leaves the scene. John waits calmly till David goes away. Once he is out of sight, he hurriedly checks the car insurance papers form where he initially got the address to check the name. It was George. Not Kevin. John realises he fucked up.

18 INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - NEXT DAY

18

Clean Shaven. John is dressing up, looking at himself in the mirror. He is emotionless but really calm not hiding ny ghosts. He wears the same dress he wore on the day he proposed Grace. He is a man who is about to do something big, he has that in his eyes - sharp and clear with little tension in them.

JOHN (V.O.)

So I guess, when your best friend tells you, DONT FUCKING DO IT, you should oblige. But yeah, we live in a dumb world, where we make dumb decisions. I guess we should just live with it and hope we get a second chance to right our wrongs. My wrong was not to pull the gun on George. But it was way before that, when I got addicted to drugs. Dealing with grief is not getting addicted to narcotics. It is about getting yourself feel normal again. But yeah. This time, I am going to do something different. Something better.

19 EXT. BUS STOP - MIDNIGHT

19

ON SCREEN: 12 years ago

John cleans the door, Sam pays \$50 to the driver and the car leaves. Carl is slumped on the wooden bench at the bus stop, barely conscious. His shirt is drenched in vomit and the remains of vomit stain his pants and shoes. His breathing is shallow. The three are back to square one. John doesn't meet eyes with Sam and is furious and lost in thought.

JOHN
(muttering)
Fucking Uber kicked us out...

SAM
You didn't have to argue with him.
It's his car after all... What if
he called the police?

JOHN
What, do you think I am afraid of
cops? I wont leave my friend in
this state here.

SAM
It's his car man. You cant talk to
him like that.

JOHN
Oh fuck you.

There is a pause. Sam is trying to reason. John is still furious.

SAM
Ok calm down. It is 3 in the night.
Big boy is unresponsive. We need to
get him home.

John thinks for a second.

JOHN
no one is going to let us into
their cars at this time.

SAM
Be polite, maybe they will.

JOHN
Oh fuck you. look at him. He
stinks. No one's letting him in. We
need to take the subway.

SAM
Yeah. We can't carry him with all
that stink on him too for long
either.

John doesn't answer.

SAM (CONT'D)
John. What do we do?

John rushes towards Carl and starts to strip him.

SAM
Yo what are you doing?

JOHN
taking his shirt off. (removes
buttons and instructs Sam) Give
your Jacket.

Sam doesn't ask questions. He just hands over his jacket to John, confused and starting to get nervous, clearly unsure what's coming next.

SAM
(hopelessly) What the fuck are we
doing Reese (face palm).

JOHN
If you want to panic, go to the
corner over there. I could use some
silence.

Sam walks to the corner hurriedly, panicking.

He comes back in the same speed. John rolls his eyes.

SAM
You know, we could be arrested for
10 different reasons right now.

JOHN
(Finishing clothing Carl and taking
off his shoe covered in puke) I
told you I am not worried about the
cops. What can they do.

SAM
We're underage, man. We took like
three things we definitely
shouldn't have. One of them's
straight-up illegal. That's drug
use. And now we just stripped a
dude naked on the street at 3AM —
that's public indecency!

Carl is getting cold as they argue but is unable to
communicate. too passed out but he is in pain.

SAM

Look at all the mess we made -
public nuisance.

JOHN

Like I said, Corner (points there),
Samuel.

Sam is out of words and walks there hurriedly again.

Carl starts to murmur - inaudible, meaningless words. He is clearly in pain. His voice intensifies. John goes to carefully lift him up. Sam slowly walks toward them.

Carl suddenly lurches to his feet - cold, wobbly, clearly in pain, and still half-unconscious. He shoves John and Sam away like a sleep-deprived caveman and lets out a long, guttural scream to no one in particular, loud enough to wake ghosts. A vein on his forehead nearly explodes.

Sam freezes, eyes wide.

John braces himself, steadyng Carl like he's defusing a bomb.

Without warning, Carl turns to the bus stop sign and punches it.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

FOUR. TIMES.

Each hit more dramatic and unnecessary than the last.

Then he turns to John, clutching his now-throbbing hand like he's just realised metal is, in fact, hard.

John gently grabs Carl's injured hand mid-flail, calming him.

JOHN

(soft, like a dog
trainer)

Easy... Easy, buddy. You're okay.
That's enough now.

John helps Carl him sit back on the bench, shaking his head.

JOHN

(to Sam)

It's freezing out here and he's about to go twelve rounds with a trash can if we don't move soon.

SAM
(Whispers to John)
That's public property damage.

20 EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

20

ON SCREEN: Present day

John and Sam laugh, caught up in the memory from 12 years ago.

JOHN
(still laughing)
Honestly, we were walking public-service announcements: *Don't drink like these guys.*

SAM
(also laughing)
Young, dumb, and tragically hydrated. Remember the poor girl trapped next to us?

JOHN
(with a groan)
And how we kept calling Carl "Big Boy." He loved that, for the first two minutes.

SAM
And you, my friend, were "the man with the plan." "*We go when we go.*" (*John mouths the words, grinning.*) Truly... visionary leadership.

JOHN
(jokingly defensive) Hey, that "plan" got Carl home and kept you from blowing into a paper bag.

SAM
Uh Yeah... not my proudest night.

They both fall into a warm silence, just sitting with the memory.

JOHN
This is the sanest I felt in a long time. Thanks, Samuel.

SAM

Come on man. (leans in) You
remember the *real* best part of that
night?

John looks into Sam's eyes and grins as we cut to FLASHBACK.

21 INT. SUBWAY STATION - MIDNIGHT

21

Carl is asleep on the bench. Sam is shivering – no jacket, still visibly anxious. John, on the other hand, is oddly calm, clearly done arguing.

SAM

We got kicked out of the pub, the Uber, now we're freezing—and Carl's out cold like nothing happened. And all you got to say is "We go when we go"? That's it? That's your big plan? We just sit here till god knows when?

John takes a breath – no frustration this time, just quiet certainty.

JOHN

Samuel. Sam. Listen to me. It's ok.
Big boy needs rest. Give him an
hour tops. We wait. (beat)
In the meantime, lets play chess.

SAM

Chess?!

JOHN

You got something better? Helps
take your mind off things.

SAM

Okay (still confused) We can play
chess i guess.

JOHN

Remember – Don't be a blind horse.
Calm down and play. You go first.

SAM

I'm calm. I'm calm. ahhh... Pawn to
e4

JOHN

Pawn to e5

SAM
 (knits his brows,
 focusing)
 Alright... knight to f3.

JOHN
 Bishop to c5

SAM
 (still tense but starting
 to relax)
 Pawn to b4

*Their voices gradually fade as the camera slowly pulls back.
 The harsh subway noise softens to a low hum. Muted audio
 takes over as a gentle score begins to play.*

MONTAGE (NO DIALOGUE):

Sam pulls his knees up, huddled but visibly calmer.

Carl shifts slightly on the bench but stays asleep.

A subway train rumbles in the distance, but they don't move.

John stretches his arms out, yawns, still playing the "game."

- A final shot: Sam now steady, no longer panicking. Just two friends passing time.

End of montage.

John looks at Sam being so calm. Proud of himself and more so of Sam. a smirk on his face.

He reaches into the inner pocket of his coat and pulls out a single chess piece – a knight. He turns it between his fingers, thoughtful.

JOHN
 Samuel. Keep it.

Sam takes the piece, puzzled.

SAM
 What is it?

He looks closely.

SAM (CONT'D)
 Wait... is this your dad's?

JOHN
 Yeah (beat)

Whenever you look at it, remember --
there's always a best move. And
don't be a blind horse.

SAM

Dude. Wasn't this, like, super rare
or something? He wouldn't even let
us breathe near it unless we
qualified for nationals.

JOHN

Yeah. Now... it's all I have of
him. I want you to keep it.

Sam holds it gently, understanding the weight of the gesture.

SAM

Means a lot, man. (*beat*)
Hey—your dad would be proud of you.

John looks away.

SAM (CONT'D)

So... this Grace girl. The new one?

JOHN

She's great. Maybe she's the one.
Who knows?

Just then, Carl stirs on the bench. The two quickly help him sit up. He squints at the piece in Sam's hand.

CARL

He gave you one too?

SAM

you ok?

CARL

Why am I half naked? What the fuck?

John and Sam just burst into laughter.

22 EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - PRESENT DAY

22

Traffic hums. People pass. But here, on the sidewalk, time slows. They both reach a bus stop bench, just like 8 years ago.

Sam sits beside John, holding something carefully in his palm — the old knight chess piece.

Sam is carefully holding the knight John gave him 8 yrs ago.

SAM

I think you need this more than I do.

He gently hands it to John. John stares at it – a flood of memory washing over him.

SAM

You were always the best of us, Reese. You always seemed to find a right move – the best possible one.

John doesn't respond. Just stares at the knight in his hand.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know where Carl is – damn guy vanished. But you meant the world to both of us. He'd be proud to see you now. Hell, I'm proud...

Sam tries to keep it light, starts talking about Grace, about how things will get better... but John isn't listening anymore. His hands begin to shake. His breath shortens. John has a panic attack.

The panic attack intensifies.

Quick flashes of Grace's death, Carl leaving him and calling him a criminal surrounds him. He is not finding the best possible move. He collapses. Sam tries to calm him and picks him up.

JOHN

(staggering)

I think I am having an heart attack.

SAM

(muffled)

(grabbing his shoulders, steady)

No, no – you're having a panic attack. It's okay. I'm here. Deep breaths, Reese. You're safe. You're not under attack.

John struggles, but slowly his breath starts to even out. The city noise returns, faint in the distance. His hands stop trembling.

SAM

(softly)

I know just the trick to calm you down.

John gulps and looks at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)
Lets play chess.

John can't control it anymore. He's been a bad friend. He starts to cry out like a baby. *He clutches the knight to his chest, like a lifeline. Sam doesn't fully understand everything that's breaking inside John, but he doesn't need to. He steps forward and pulls him into a tight hug.*

John cries like a child in the middle of a busy Manhattan street. And for the first time in years, he lets it all out.

SAM
It's ok buddy. You're safe. It's
all going to be ok.

JOHN
Sam (beat)

John wipes his tears and looks up to Sam hoping he would listen to him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
There's something I want to talk
about.

SAM
What is it?

John picks himself up and sits on the bench. Sam follows, still clueless.

JOHN
Sam... if I told you the truth
about me... would you walk away?

SAM
What do you mean?

JOHN
If I said I'm not who you think I
am... would you be afraid of me?

Sam goes quiet, eyes fixed on John. The silence says more than words.

John stares at the ground, the knight piece cradled in his palm.

JOHN
I've done things, Sam. Things I
can't undo. I'm a monster.

SAM

Why would you say that?

JOHN

After Grace died, I started using
heroin.

Sam's eyes widen. He starts to speak—

SAM

John, that—

JOHN

—and I killed someone.

A heavy pause. The weight of it sinks in. Sam is frozen, searching John's face for what comes next. John doesn't look up.

Sam is frozen — wide-eyed, breath shallow. He's stunned, angry, scared. No words come.

JOHN

I get it. If you want to walk away...
I'd understand.(beat) You probably
have a thousand questions. I'll
answer every one of them.

Sam stares ahead, motionless. His jaw tightens. He looks away, breathes in sharply — like he might walk. But then he exhales... and slowly leans back on the bench beside John. He doesn't look at him. He doesn't have to. He's staying.

John sees it. He nods, barely — a flicker of relief in his eyes.

JOHN

I should've talked to Carl first.
Before I dragged him into
everything.(beat)
Whatever happened to him... that's on
me.

Sam turns his head quickly. A tear drop in his eye waiting to roll down Sam's cheek. He nods slowly, with bitter disbelief — like saying, "Really? Now you say it." But still, no words.

SAM

What. did. you. do?

JOHN

I didn't ask for any of this. I
didn't want it. But it found me...
and it stayed. I tried to run from
it – but it's in me now. This...
thing. I've turned into something I
don't recognize. And the worst
part?(beat) Maybe it was always
there.

*Sam sits still, his face unreadable – but his eyes are
burning. His breath sharpens, chest rising quicker now. A
long pause. Then:*

SAM
Every saint has a past. Every
sinner... a future. So go on. Say it.
Get it off your chest.

John hesitates, tense.

SAM (CONT'D)
What's the point if I walk now?
This'll just chase me too. And
let's be honest – do we ever really
escape any of this?

23 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

23

John at GRACE'S grave. Hand flat on the stone.

24 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

24

John buzzes his hair off in the mirror. Clippers chew. He
stares at the stranger left behind.

INSERT – GUN / MAGAZINE

John ejects a FULL MAG. Bullets gleam.

25 EXT. PAYPHONE - DAY

25

Phone to ear, John is finishing his confession.

26 EXT. KEVIN'S BUILDING - DAY

26

Walk-up in a scrubbed, no-name Queens block. John checks a
crumpled scrap – **same address** as the email. He looks up,
confirms buzzer panel. It's Kevin.

27 INT. KEVIN'S BUILDING - DAY

27

Narrow. Brown paper bag clenched. AT **APT 3R** (KEVIN'S DOOR)
 He pockets the scrap, **squares his shoulders, then knocks.**
 Silence.

He waits. Locks CLACK. Chain slides. Door cracks. Kevin peeps
 though the gap, eyes like knives.

KEVIN

Yeah?

JOHN

Harold. Harold Finch.

Kevin says nothing. Just watches. Long. we see the **BASEBALL BAT** hanging low at his side, grip whitening. John lifts the brown paper bag a little – nonthreatening.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You got nothing to worry about.
 (checks sideways and steps forward
 - whispers) I'm a friend of George.

Kevin's eyes flick to the bag, then back to John. His jaw works. He opens the door wider – He doesn't stand aside yet.

KEVIN

George who?

JOHN

From the art bar. Art all over his place? Said you might help me out.

Something changes behind Kevin's stare. Not trust. Possibility. Kevin sets the bat within reach by the door, never taking his eyes off John. He shifts, giving John just enough space to pass.

KEVIN

Inside.

28 INT. KEVIN'S APT - DAY

28

John enters. Kevin shuts the door hard, the chain, the knob lock. No exit. Walls cluttered with pinned prints – **street portraits, drag night candids, George laughing.** John clocks it all.

KEVIN

You said George. What's that mean,
"friend"?

JOHN

We hit the Palette sometimes. He
draws (beat) You shoot. That was...
your thing, right? You with the
camera, him with the mess.

John drifts the room, studying photos. Kevin tracks him,
tense. John barely remembers another bystander with the
camera that day.

KEVIN

Palette's closed three months.

JOHN

(lifts the print)

He still saw color. You still shoot
people.

Kevin absorbs this. Not buying, not letting go.

KEVIN

He *was* color. (beat) You bring me
somethin' or you just here to smell
my walls?

JOHN

I-yeah. (Points the bag)

John hasn't opened the bag. Keeps circling. Too nosy. Kevin's
paranoia spikes.

He eases back toward the door... fingers ghost the **BASEBALL BAT**
propped there. Lifts it slow, silent.

John studies a photo.

JOHN

I can only imagine how you are
feeliing.

Behind him, Kevin test-swing the bat *once* – whisper-air.

John doesn't turn.

Second test swing – closer.

John starts to turn–

JOHN (CONT'D)

But there is something more
important I need to talk to you
abo-

WHACK!

Bat crowns the back of his head. He drops, bag thudding.

SOUND SUCKS OUT.

FLASHES — STROBE, UNORDERED:

— George being shot — GRACE laughing. — GRACE Dead. — JOHN'S HAND SHAKING W/ GUN. — John looking at himself in them mirror — CARL calling him a criminal. — JOHN: *I'm a monster.*

BACK TO:

JOHN'S POV — BLUR. Floor tilt. Blood in his eye. KEVIN looms, smeared shape, bat raised again.

JOHN (V.O., FRACTURED)
Kevin? ...Is that you?
Did I find you... or just another
grave...

Black pulses at the edges. John is unconscious.

Kevin paces, breathing like a boiler. He wipes the bat on his jeans, glares at the limp body.

KEVIN
Okay, pretty... who the fuck sends
you?
Jersey mob? 14th-Street Vatos?
Arianna, Grace, Tanya-nah, Tanya's
done.
WHO THE FUCK SENT YOU!

He digs a burner from his pocket, dials.

KEVIN (INTO PHONE)
Rico, it's Lobo. You boys puttin' a
tail on me?
—No?—
Then who's the cue-ball creep?
Alright, stay ready.

He hangs up. Frustrated growl.

He crouches, drags a camera flash wand over John's eyelids—
strobe POP to check pupil reflex.

KEVIN

Still alive. Good—needs to hurt.

Kevin hauls John upright, drags him to a rickety chair. No cuffs—just drops him there, slaps his cheeks.

KEVIN
Rise and shine, homo detective.

Kevin grabs a **spray bottle**, MISTS John's face.

John sputters awake, head lolling.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Let's play twenty questions, shall we?
One: how'd you find my door?

John blinks, sees the bat, the blood. Stammers.

JOHN
G-George. Sent me.

KEVIN
Try a fresh lie, choir boy.

John's eyes flick to the exit—Kevin clocks it. Kevin frisks him.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Two: Why you here really?

John clutches his side, tries another angle.

As Kevin hauls him, John's cheek brushes Kevin's SHOULDER
FLASH — MEMORY SHARD: GRACE'S KILLER turning, same shoulder
BACK.

John's eyes flare. A hunch. Buried. KEVIN clocks the look.

KEVIN
You copping a feel? Didn't know you
swung dick-to-dick, cueball. You
hard for me or you just concussed?

John looks at his hands, he's not tied up.

JOHN
Why am I not tied?

KEVIN smacks him across the face with the BACK OF HIS HAND.
The same feel from the day of the killing. John's hunch back
alive.

KEVIN

Because cripples don't sprint,
Bambi.
(beat)
Now, I don't like to repeat myself.
What the fuck are we doing here?

JOHN

I'm... I'm looking for the man who
killed my wife. Grace.

Kevin freezes a micro-second-then masks it.

KEVIN

Grace? Never fucked a Grace.
(leans in, sniff)
She wear cherry lotion?

John swallows-starts to crumble.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Three: you got five seconds before
I open you.

He steps to a workbench, palms a **fillet knife**.

JOHN

I... I know who shot George. I can
trade.
I swear

Kevin's eyes sharpen-curiosity beating bloodlust.

KEVIN

No shit, Pinocchio. You DEA? Fed?
You know that giant that popped
George? (beat) You with him? You
lie, I redecorate your skull.

He cocks his fist-drives one into John's ribs.

JOHN

Alright, I'll tell you everything.
Been confessing a lot lately
anyway. Grace, my wife, like George
was shot.

KEVIN paces, restless frustration boiling.

KEVIN

You drag your sob story into my
house-

JOHN

Listen—

KEVIN's done.

KEVIN
No more listen. Talk.

He test-swings once-blade whispering by John's ear—then stops, smiling.

JOHN
Carl!

A beat.

Kevin's expression darkens—then he PLUNGES the knife shallow into John's side anyway.

KEVIN
Insurance.

John screams.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Talk location or I finish organ harvest.

He twists the dull blade, grinding cloth and flesh.

JOHN
(gasping)
The guy you are hunting, Tall,
shaved head? I know him. I know
where he is right now.

KEVIN leans in, knife still sunk.

KEVIN
Hire the killer for a two-for-one?
That's some snow-white brass,
preacher.

JOHN
Just—pull the blade and I'll tell
you.

KEVIN studies him — John's not bluffing; he's pale, shaking, serious. Kevin considers—yanks the knife out, blood spreads, wipes it on John's shirt. He stalks backward to the kitchen counter, grabbing a half-bottle of whiskey, swigs.

That retreat is all John needs.

Kevin snags the **BASEBALL BAT** back into his other hand, keeps it ready, glances at it-twice. John clocks the glances.

JOHN

Why you so scared of a guy already
bleeding on your floor?

KEVIN

'Cause bleeders bite, pretty. Rabid
dogs still got teeth. Ask my thigh.

He opens the freezer drawer of the fridge, grabs an **ICE PACK**, and flings it at John.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

For your *head*, princess.

It bounces off John's chest, slides bloody across the floor. John looks like "really? when I bleeding?"

He stands, blood soaking his shirt.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Look at you shuffle - like my uncle
with his sugar-feet.
Now, Carl?

JOHN

There were two people.

Kevin's smile dies.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Shooter ran one side - Carl. Other
one split the back. Prime witness
never saw number two. That's why no
sketch. That's why you're still
guessin'.

Kevin's eyes narrow - that tracks.

KEVIN

Which. fuckin'. side.

(yelling)

WHICH SIDE, PRETTY?

John forces himself upright, sways, levels a stare.

JOHN

You commit to kill the guy who took
Grace... I'll give you Carl.

BEAT.

KEVIN
are we besties now?

John doesn't flinch,

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I'm smellin' last-night Thai shit
blowin' out your mouth, bestie.

JOHN
Carl was my friend. (beat) And he
killed your George. Do you know
why?

Kevin moves slowly, eyes sharp, trying to understand.

KEVIN
(staring with eyes fully
wide)
You are the other one! (rushes
towards) Imma sew your tongue to
your dick- (stops, scared)

John's hand slips into the brown paper bag and **WHIPS OUT THE PISTOL-POINT-BLANK** at Kevin's face.

Kevin **flinches. Whiskey sloshes**; he's frozen five feet away,
the knife dangling

JOHN
Easy.

Kevin actually flinches back.

KEVIN
Ohhh, we cowboy now. Okay, sweet.
Okay. Easy—

He lowers himself into a chair, palms out, eyes glued to the muzzle. John yanks **SHACKLES** (zip cuffs + short chain) from inside his coat. Tosses them at Kevin.

KEVIN
You're a naughty boy huh, sweet? I
see you came prepared. (licks his
lips)

JOHN
Strap in.

KEVIN
BDSM? Buy me dinner first.

JOHN

Do it or I ventilate your face.

Kevin believes the muzzle. He threads one cuff through a side rail, clicks it on his left wrist. Starts to fake the second-

JOHN (CONT'D)
Don't even

Kevin clicks the second cuff. Tug test – he's anchored.

John backs off a step, gun steady. Bleeding, shaking. He sets up his phone to record the confession.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Confess. You killed Grace.

KEVIN
What! No!

JOHN explodes, slamming the table.

JOHN
FUCKING TELL ME YOU KILLED HER!

KEVIN
I don't– please, please– I don't even know–

JOHN
(controlling and calming down)
You pulled that trigger, robbed that chess piece you piece of shit.

Kevin flinches, eyes wet, snotty breath panic.

KEVIN
I don't even remember your name– Harold? Harry? Sweet Pretty Harry sir don't kill me please–

JOHN circles him, wild.

JOHN
Why won't you tell me? Tell me it's you. Confess it's you. I can feel it when I stand behind you. I can smell your stupid sweat. I know it's you.

Kevin's eyes go wide, helpless.

John pulls a **WORN WOODEN CHESS PIECE**. Beat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You see this? You sold this on the dark net. I bought it back. *Ours.*
Mine and Grace's.

Kevin acts like he can barely breathe. He drops his gaze, shakes his head, sniff-laughs through tears.

KEVIN

Man... man, I wasn't even in the city last year. My moms was dyin'. I was upstate, whole fuckin' summer. June to August. Sleepin' on linoleum, changin' piss pads.

JOHN

YOU TRIED TO KILL ME TOO BUT YOUR GUN JAMMED.
TELL ME NOW AND I'LL LET YOU LIVE.
LAST CHANCE, KEVIN.

Kevin snorts, phlegmy.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

She never liked me. I'm the one went to prison. Golden kids sent flowers; I wiped her ass. Ten minutes before she croaks she tells me "leave." Didn't want me touchin' her. Not even then.

He stares at the chess piece. Doesn't claim it. Doesn't look away, either.

JOHN

Shut up.

KEVIN

Everybody's got bullshit, Harry.
Not just you. I eat mine. I don't spray it on strangers and call it justice.

He rattles the cuffs.

JOHN

Stop Talking! (mixed with Kevin next dialogue) I said stop talking!

JOHN (V.O.)

Did I get the wrong guy again? It can't be. Why am I here then? Who sent me here? Is this a trap?

John gets restless listening to the bullshit.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
(chokes, almost pleading)
Pawn shop in Ohio's got my thumb-
print on her ring box—three states
away.
Wrong house, choir boy. But God, I
wish someone would kick my door for
the **real** shit I've done.

JOHN
Shut the fuck UP!

He FIRES the gun.

CLICK.

Beat.

FLASH — MIRROR: the full mag on the counter. Slide snapped shut empty.

BACK.

Kevin flinches, SCREAMS — then realizes he's alive. He sobs, half-laughs.

KEVIN
Oh my God— you fuckin' *tried*. But
you *couldn't*. See. You're— you're a
good man, sir. Holy-shit choir boy—

John looks at his gun, his finger, he pulled it finally. He is scared of himself now.

JOHN
(to himself)
I'm not good.

KEVIN
(crying)
You never wanted to kill me.

He lunges. Smashes the gun muzzle into Kevin's face. Then fists.

One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. TEN.

JOHN
I. AM. A. MONSTER!

Blood spatters across John's cheeks. Kevin's head snaps, nose broken. He slumps, woozy, slack in cuffs, but breathing.

John staggers back, panting. Blood from his side. He looks around the walls – photos everywhere.

A candid print: **JOHN ON HIS KNEE PROPOSING GRACE**

John RIPS it off the wall.

He stalks back, shoves the photo in Kevin's face.

JOHN
How did you know it was June,
Kevin?

Kevin blinks through blood. Plays dumb.

KEVIN
I'm dizzy, Harry.

John's hand TREMBLES inches from Kevin's throat.

Kevin stares at the photo twenty long seconds. Breathing steadies. Something slides back into place behind his eyes – the *real* Kevin. He knows he needn't act no more.

He grins showing his bloody teeth – the performance is over.

KEVIN
Ahhh! That's where I remember you from. And *Her*. Yeah... Chess piece-ring girl. Mouth like a Yelp review. Almost made me switch teams, you know? Almost. So I took the shiny and shut her up. World's cleaner.

He chuckles wet.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
You know what, pretty, give that girl a dick and I'd STILL be filming her.

John's face breaks – grief, rage, horror.

Sounds fade

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Hell, I'd've kept her breathing if she came with a handle. Wrong plumbing.

BLACK.

FADE IN:

SLO-MO CLOSE ON JOHN'S EYES – wide, wet, terrified. Sweat beads.

Pull back: the PISTOL pressed to Kevin's bloody forehead.

JOHN (V.O.)
There... I found him.
(beat)
That's it?
(beat)
what now?

Silence, broken by KEVIN's rasping laugh.

KEVIN
Go on, Detective Do-Right.
Pull the fuckin' trigger.
Be Sherlock Hemlock, Judge Dredd,
whatever
Saturday-cartoon killer you think
you are.

John's breathing shortens – *panic attack aura.*

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Forgot the ammo, genius?
Empty-chamber Finch.
Man, you're the only hitman who
BYO's blanks.
(Beat. Looks at John, challenging)
Choke me out with those choirboy
hands, I dare you.

John's vision BLURS, tinnitus WHINES.

JOHN (V.O.)
I pulled.
I'm the monster.

Kevin, cuffed, shifts through the pain, eyes scanning –
a **TRIPOD LEG** on the floor, a **SHARD of glass** from a
smashed frame.

KEVIN
No daylight between us now,
pretty.
Your halo's in the dirt with my
teeth.
Grace, George – same ledger.
You. Me. Two bullets that never
landed.

John staggers, catches his REFLECTION in a cracked **WALL MIRROR**:

blood-splattered, gun shaking, tears streaking.

JOHN (V.O.)
Look at you...
no different from that animal.

He clutches his chest, hyper-ventilating.

Kevin keeps needling, voice a knife:

KEVIN
C'mon, Executioner Gadget –
squeeze 'til it clicks again.
Or untie me, and I'll finish the
set:
you, Carl, happy fuckin' family.

John backs toward the mirror, eyes locked on his own horror.
Breathing ragged, keeps staring at his own bloody reflection.

Kevin's fingers inch toward the tripod leg...

JOHN (HALF-MUTTER)
get you arrested. All of it-on
record.

Kevin tilts his head, strains to hear.

KEVIN
Arrest?

He barks a cracked laugh that ends in a cough.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What are you, Officer Friendly
now?
Badge-less Barbie gonna cuff me
with your Sunday guilt?
Fight like a man, pretty.
Or did Grace suck all the balls
outta you?

John's eyes flick—he registers Kevin's quivering voice, the speed of the taunts: **fear**.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Come on—one swing.
Prove to your dead wife you still
got a dick.

John turns from the mirror, gun drooping but steady.

JOHN (REALISING)
Death's easy for you.
Cage isn't.

Kevin's grin falters.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I've got your face, your voice, the
photo, the confession.
(beat)
Needs one more sacrifice.

Kevin's brow knots—hope? confusion?

JOHN (SOFT, RESOLUTE)
I turn you in...
and I go with you.

Kevin's eyes go feral.

KEVIN
You'd march yourself to lock-up?
For what, pulling a fuckin'
click?

JOHN
For everything before the click.
If it were up to me, you'd be dead.
You dying is justice, me killing
isn't.

Kevin yanks at the cuffs, bloodied teeth bared.

KEVIN
You sanctimonious piece of—

John lifts the gun again—just enough silence.

JOHN
Talking time's over.

He pockets the chess piece, checks the red REC light still
blinking. Kevin seethes, chained, the tripod leg just out of
reach.

John fishes out his phone, thumbs a quick text:

ON SCREEN — “**Found killer. Come to 3R. I'm done hiding.**”

He hits SEND.

Behind him, Kevin folds his left thumb under, CRACK—
dislocates it. Bite-screams through clenched teeth. Slides
the cuff over the joint, hand free.

John's reflection stares back at him in the mirror, hollow-eyed.

JOHN (V.O.)
Only way left to pay.
Monster signs his own warrant.

He turns— Kevin sits there, one hand still cuffed but John doesn't know yet, blood dripping, eyes locked on John. A predator's grin.

JOHN
Matter of time now,
(sarcastically)Pretty

Kevin doesn't blink, doesn't speak. Just pulls—slow—until the second cuff chain *creeeeaks* against metal.

John, uneasy, glances to the peephole—no movement in the hall. Quick look out the window—empty street.

SNAP. The cuff chain gives. John wheels around—**Kevin is gone.** Empty floor, blood trail.

Heart pounding, John drops the empty pistol, snatches the **BASEBALL BAT** from the doorway.

He edges into the living room, bat raised. House dead quiet.

JOHN
Kevin...?

No answer.

John edges past the table where Kevin was tied up, bat up.

Silence.

Behind him—**KEVIN SPAWNS**, ten feet back. Cat-quiet, one hand dangling, the other clutching John's dropped pistol.

CLACK-CLACK. He slaps a round into the mag.

John whirls—too late.

CLACK. Second round.

John's eyes widen.

CLACK. Third.

KEVIN
Miss me, Sherlock?

BLAM!

Kevin drills John's knee. Bone shatters. John SCREAMS, collapses.

Sweat and blood pooling, John suddenly LAUGHS—pain-high, manic.

JOHN

No fear left, Kev. Do it. End the chapter.

Kevin strides in, furious, smacks John across the mouth with the pistol barrel.

KEVIN

Still flappin'. Christ, you're a cockroach with sermons.

John spits blood but keeps his gaze steady—daring.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Should've finished me when the chamber clicked, preacher. Now—

He racks the slide, sights in from five feet.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

—now you graduate (beat) to corpse.

John shuts his eyes. Accepts it.

DOOR EXPLODES IN — **DAVID** and **TWO FBI AGENTS** flood the room, guns up. (Flash: the peephole, John opening the door while checking the hallways it earlier.)

Kevin fires—tags an agent.

David double-taps center-mass. Partner follows with a tight three-round burst. Kevin folds. Silence. He hits the floor in a wet thud.

John blinks through blood. Kevin is... meat. John doesn't feel victorious.

David asks his team mate if he was ok, staggers to John.

FBI AGENT #2 pinches a field dressing to John's ruined knee; John HOWLS.

DAVID

Hold still—pressure, Joe, pressure!
Stay with me, John. Hey—look at me.

John's breath stutters—oncoming panic. He stares at David—FLASH: his text sending.

David's phone VIBRATES in his vest pocket. The screen lights:

"CARL - 4 MISSED CALLS"

David ignores the phone, focuses on the wound.

DAVID (CONT'D)
How the hell'd you track him down?

JOHN
(hoarse)
I got an anonymous email.

David's eyes click. Under his breath—

DAVID
Carl.

John's eyes flicker—the name is a rope.

JOHN
Where... is he?

DAVID
Surrendered last night. Sat in my
office 'til dawn.

The phone buzzes again. David finally checks it, thumb smeared with John's blood.

INSERT - PHONE: A single text pops from CARL

"Tell him I'm sorry."

David's eyes flick up—meets John's.

DAVID
For George. For... everything.

David and an agent haul John up—John screams, knee useless.

JOHN
When?

DAVID
10:30. Said he was done.

JOHN (V.O., FAINT)
Carl... sacrificed himself.

They shuffle toward the hall.

DAVID
Watch your step—okay? Just a few
more—

John sags—color draining. He tries to speak—

JOHN
(whisper-mud)
Carl is inno—

DAVID
What?

JOHN
Carl is—

But his body gives. It dies in his throat. His legs give.
SLOW MOTION - He blacks out mid-sentence eyes rolling back.

CUT TO BLACK.

29 INT. CHURCH - EVENING

29

A dusty **cross** hangs crooked on the wall. A coffee table at the center holds lukewarm coffee in Styrofoam cups and a crumpled box of tissues.

A wall-mounted clock ticks loudly.

Seven people sit in a circle. These are people used to silence, and weight. **FAITH (40s)**, calm and grounded, sits at the head of the circle. She's the kind of woman whose eyes tell you she's heard worse than what you're about to say.

SARAH (30s), jittery, holds a chipped ceramic mug like it's a lifeline. Her eyes keep darting to the exit, then back to the floor. JOHN sits hunched, a deep scar across his brow. Bandages peek out from his shirt collar. He doesn't speak. He barely breathes. But he's here.

A man, **MARCUS (50s)**, finishes speaking.

MARCUS
(voice trembling)
...and it's been... two months
since I held a blade to my arm. I
don't know how long I'll last, but
today—today I didn't do it.

Silence. John looks up.

FAITH

Thank you, Marcus. That was honest.
And brave.

The group claps. Soft. Sparse. Just enough. John joins in.
One slow clap. Then another. Feels mechanical. Empty.

FAITH

Max, would you like to share your
journey?

Max - 24, ex child star, hoodie half zipped.

MAX

Hey, I'm Max (whispers of 'hey Max' from others in the room) - three weeks sober. Real talk: the drugs were just side quests, the final boss was feeling like a washed up nobody after my kid-star era bricked (beat). I grabbed pills to mute that emptiness, and they nearly deleted me (beat). I'm still shaky, but I'm done chasing highs to feel seen. I'm here to hit reset -start as a nobody, course-correct one sober day at a time, and build someone better.

FAITH

Proud of you, Max.

Everyone clap heartily. John is lost in thoughts. He is relating.

Faith's eyes land on him.

FAITH (CONT'D)

John. You haven't shared yet.

A beat. John shifts in his seat. All eyes turn. He breathes in.

JOHN

Hi. My name is John (whispers of 'hey john' from the room)... and I was an addict (gestures towards Max).

He says it flat. Dry. No shame. No pride. Just a fact. A few automatic claps. John flinches slightly—he *hates* this part. The applause. Faith watches him. The room waits. He doesn't say more. He's not ready. But something has cracked.

FAITH

Thank you, John.

She turns to the next person, but—

JOHN (QUIETLY)

I believe I'm responsible for the
death of my wife. (beat)

Everyone freezes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

My best friend is in prison because
of me (beat). And I am capable of
taking a life (beat). I am a
monster.

Silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I don't deserve to live.
All I do is hurt people who are
close to me.
I am sick.
I am pathetic.
I am a patient who should be locked
up so I don't destroy this world.
(beat)
Will you clap for me, now?

The room goes dead quiet. Sarah lowers her mug. Marcus looks at the floor. John stares ahead, unblinking. No one claps. No one dares.

Just then, SARAH speaks—soft, but clear.

SARAH

Patients don't come here, John.
Their victims do.

A beat.

SARAH (CONT'D)

All of us here have a past we're
ashamed of.
Some of us tried to kill ourselves.
And some... others.
And some of us, both.

She looks at him. Steady.

SARAH (CONT'D)

But we're here not because we
couldn't.

We're here because we *don't want to*
anymore.

FAITH

Thank you, Sarah.

She means it.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Sarah's been here the longest and
I've seen her come a long way.

John looks up—just a little. Something flickers in his eyes.
Not hope. But the first breath of not drowning.

FAITH

There is hope, John. Everyday is an
opportunity to right our wrongs and
be a better person.

SARAH smiles softly

John meets her eyes. Briefly.

FAITH (CONT'D)

I've read your file, John.
You don't scare me. Not even a
little. Your wife's death *wasn't*
your fault. Your friend—he had a
choice. And you pulled that trigger
because you knew the chamber was
empty. Don't believe for a second
you are a monster. You are not
broken. You are not chaos. You are
misguided love. Scared, misguided,
love.

A long, charged silence. Then—the man beside John gently pats
his knee. No words. Just a gesture.

Another person nods.

Then, softly, the group begins to clap. Not automatic this
time—*earned*. John doesn't flinch this time, tears roll down
his cheek. He lets it happen. Lets it wash over him. Not
forgiveness. But something close. John and Sarah locking eyes
across the circle. John attempting a smile. She nods—
approving.

A long beat.

Then—Sam exhales. Shoulders drop. A sigh that says, *I still don't forgive you... but I don't hate you.*

John offers the smallest of smiles. Sam doesn't smile back—but his lips twitch.

From the side, Sarah joins John, carrying a paper bag of fruit. She gently nudges him.

Sam notices. Sees *her*. A trace of surprise on Sam's face. Then... a quiet, knowing smile.

He crosses the street towards John.

CAMERA PANS UP TO THE SKY.

FADE TO WHITE.

THE END.