

PRESCRIPTION

by

Thomas Harbert

A mechanical chugging, building to a monstrous volume...

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

A clothes dryer that's been repurposed as a centrifuge slows its spinning. It stops and a man enters, reaches inside, and removes something.

We TILT UP to reveal: JAKE, late 20s/early 30s. His body seems strained, aged beyond its years. An intense intelligence. A focus in his being.

A clamp lamp is flicked on. A vial enters frame. Its contents have separated into two halves. The bottom is milky substance, the top is clear liquid.

Jake scrutinizes the vial.

He takes a seat at his kitchen table. On the center of the table is a cylindrical glass tank that emits a purple/blue glow. Inside is a JELLYFISH. It floats and pulsates in hypnotic rhythm.

Jake hits record on a VOICE RECORDER and sets it on the table in front of him. As he speaks he goes through the well practiced procedure of injecting himself.

JAKE

November 16th, 2023. Attempt one thousand two hundred and twenty four. Aphexia. Hypothesis: It will block neural pathways into the hypothalamus and prevent the onset of attacks.

He fills the syringe with the clear liquid then flicks it.

The needle finds a vein in his arm. He injects himself. He checks his wristwatch-

JAKE (CONT'D)

Time is thirteen forty six. Aphexia is in my system. Next entry will contain results.

For a moment he sits without moving. His GARAGE APARTMENT is both home lab and living space. One of the walls is covered with papers, notes on his search. It has begun to expand onto the adjacent walls. A small window is all that he sees of the outside world.

He looks to the window. Leaves sway against the light of day, creating infinitely complex fractal-like shapes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I'm entering the doldrums. Limbo.

He looks away from the window, breaking the trance.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I restate my purpose:

EXT. CONGRESS AVENUE -- DAY, LATER

We follow Jake as he walks past people in suits, on vacation, going for lunch. He enters a bodega.

JAKE (V.O.)
*My condition is physical, not
psychological.*

INT. BODEGA -- CONTINUOUS

Jake moves along aisles of prepackaged food.

JAKE (V.O.)
*I don't have to accept my it as a
permanent aspect of my reality.*

Jake picks up a package of ramen. He turns it over and reads the ingredients list- a mess of chemical names.

He turns another package over. A frozen meal- more chemical names.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Somewhere out there in that
infinite physiochemical tangle is
my cure.*

We RAPIDLY FLASH through different items: toothpaste, shampoo, food, etc. Their ingredients listed in black on white, impossible names. Increasing speed. Now MICROSCOPIC VIEWS of their FORMULAS, BLOOD, BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS, enter the barrage of images-

JAKE (V.O.)
My procedure combats the chaos.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Items are slid past a scanner as Jake checks out.

JAKE (V.O.)
Stopping is out of the question.

The 'TOTAL' increases with each beep.

JAKE (V.O.)
I choose the hard path.

EXT. STREET OFF CONGRESS -- LATER

Jake walks in the shade of large glass eco-rises.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Because it's better to die a martyr
than live as a sinner-*

Jake is ENGULFED IN A POOL OF LIGHT as powerful as the sun.

He stops, shades his eyes, looks for the source.

The sun reflects off the glass of a building above.

He blinks, then continues on his way.

As he continues, the world begins to smear slightly.

Concern. Dread. Uneasy droning builds as he walks the sidewalk.

The blurring and smearing grow more extreme by the moment.
The sound of the outside world begins to fall away.
Everything sounds as if it's underwater. Nauseating.

EXT. LAVACA AND 15TH STREET -- CONTINUOUS

We can hardly make out where we are through the blurring.
Jake needs to cross the street. He cannot tell if the crosswalk is open. He takes a step-

A distorted, extended- HONK! A large shape flies by.

He falls backward and spills his groceries onto the sidewalk behind him. He cannot get up. Through the blurring, a pair of feet rush toward him.

Jake puzzles at the shape of the person above him. A voice garbled beyond recognition speaks to him.

Through gritted teeth-

JAKE
Please... do- no... k- 91... 1...

The world is an impressionistic blur of light.

Then nothing.

BLACK.

A convenience store DING.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. DAVID'S MEDICAL CENTER -- EVENING

Sliding doors part and Jake exits the hospital. He carries a plastic bag with his belongings.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The door unlocks and Jake enters. He sets his hospital bag on the ground and slaps a piece of paper onto his kitchen table-

The hospital bill. ECU: **"TOTAL: \$443.24"**.

Jake lifts his voice recorder-

JAKE
November 17th, 2023. Time is
nineteen twenty seven. Attempt one
thousand two hundred and twenty
four, Aphexia, is a failure. I move
on-

CUT TO:

TITLE CARD:

PRESCRIPTION

A phone rings...

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jake feeds his jellyfish brine shrimp as he listens to the phone. Eventually, a woman answers. AURELIA.

AURELIA (V.O.)
Jake.

JAKE
Were you able to make it?

AURELIA (V.O.)
Hello to you too.

JAKE

Hi...

AURELIA (V.O.)

*Don't worry, synthesized it
yesterday.*

JAKE

Can I get it from you tonight?

AURELIA (V.O.)

(sighs)

*Thursday. That's the soonest I can
do.*

JAKE

Please? If I miss an attack-

AURELIA (V.O.)

*-I had to order ingredients out of
pocket. Three hundred dollars
worth. You already owe me-*

JAKE

-Yeah, I know you need the money.

...

JAKE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I know how much I owe. I'll
get it to you tonight.

Silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Hello?

AURELIA (V.O.)

*Fine. Tonight. Last car. After you
transfer the money.*

JAKE

Um, how about we make it Star
Diner? For old times' sake.

AURELIA (V.O.)

*I don't have time for that. Last
car, midnight.*

JAKE

Okay.

...

JAKE (CONT'D)
Thanks. I appreciate it.

She hangs up.

Jake lowers the phone and watches the jellyfish pulse.

CUT TO:

INT. MICROSCOPIC WORLD -- CONTINUOUS

INSULIN IS BEING GROWN IN JAKE'S LAB:

Muffled, warm sounds. Womb-like. Through the heavy grain:

An abstraction of shape. Prismatic view of INSULIN being excreted from a bacterium.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- DAY, LATER

Jake stands in front of flasks filled with yellowish liquid covered in tin foil. He transfers the liquid into clear vials.

When finished, he puts them in a small cardboard box.

Jake stands in front of a large WHITE BOARD. A chart of people's NAMES, CONDITIONS, and TREATMENTS. At the top is written "INSULIN."

He slides his finger across the table. While over a NAME-

CUT TO:

**EACH ACTION OCCURS AT A DIFFERENT LOCATION FOR EACH
'PATIENT'**

EXT. FRONT DOOR, LOWER INCOME HOUSE **MONTAGE** -- LATER/DAY

Jake knocks on the door-

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT **MONTAGE** -- DAY

His finger slides to a VOLUME AMOUNT-

EXT. FRONT DOOR, LOWER INCOME HOUSE **MONTAGE** -- LATER/DAY

The door swings open and Jake lifts one of the small cardboard boxes from his black duffel-

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT **MONTAGE** -- DAY

His finger slides across the name to a DOLLAR AMOUNT-

EXT. FRONT DOOR, LOWER INCOME HOUSE **MONTAGE** -- LATER/DAY

Jake hands over the cardboard box of insulin and receives CASH in return.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT **MONTAGE** -- DAY

This process continues until he gets to the name "**MS. JENKINS.**"

EXT. MS. JENKIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Jake knocks on the door as he did with the previous three. Except now we stay in the moment.

Jake examines her house. It verges on dereliction.

The door swings open on an older woman in a wheelchair, MS. JENKINS.

JAKE

Hi, Ms. Jenkins. I saw that you were low on your insulin supply so I thought I'd swing by.

MS. JENKINS

I don't know if I am.

JAKE

Well, I haven't been by in over a month.

MS. JENKINS

Okay.

JAKE

I just don't want you to run out of insulin. That could be very bad. Very dangerous. Has your care giver mentioned anything?

MS. JENKINS

How much?

JAKE

Well, I brought enough for two months worth-

MS. JENKINS

How much money?

JAKE

Well, it's usually one hundred for a month's supply. So two months would be two hundred.

MS. JENKINS

Okay.

An awkward moment. She watches Jake.

JAKE

Do you have two hundred dollars?

MS. JENKINS

Let me check.

She wheels backward into the house.

Jake looks at the unkempt yard.

She returns.

MS. JENKINS (CONT'D)

I don't have two hundred.

JAKE

How much do you have?

MS. JENKINS

Eighty.

Jake thinks. Sighs. Looks at her house again.

JAKE

Okay. How about I give you two months worth and you just pay me the rest when you can. How's that work?

She studies him, thinks. Jake tries to put on his warmest face, 'salesman' doesn't suit him.

The CASH hits Jake's hand.

He adds it to a larger WAD and counts as he leaves her porch.

INT. METRORAIL -- NIGHT

Through the window, the east side of Austin glides by.

Jake watches the city blur past. A whine from the wheels as the rail begins to slow to a stop.

The rail stops and the doors open.

A woman gets on. She's slightly older than Jake. This is AURELIA. Something stern and professional in her manner. Distant.

As the rail begins to move again she takes a seat further up the train from Jake.

We watch the back of her head.

More than physical space between them.

OUT THE FRONT OF THE RAIL: we glide through the city's night toward the final station downtown. The rail slows to a stop.

Aurelia stands and walks to the exit. The doors open and she leaves, never having acknowledged Jake.

Once again, the rail begins to pull away from the station. TONES, then-

ANNOUNCEMENT (V.O.)

This will be our final stop for the night. Please exit and take all personal belongings. A metrorail official will be by to clear the cars. Thank you for traveling with us.

Jake stands and walks to the seat Aurelia has just vacated.

In her place is a tabloid newspaper. Jake takes a seat.

He lifts the newspaper to reveal- AN ORANGE PILL CONTAINER.

JAKE (V.O.)

November 18th-

(pauses to check the time)
19th, 2023. Attempt one thousand two hundred and twenty five, Erenumab. Hypothesis: compound will stay the attack after onset. It's to be taken during an episode.

He squeezes the container tightly in hopeful embrace....

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT, LATER

Jake is sitting on the edge of his bed and speaking into his voice recorder.

JAKE
No further treatment of the
compound is required.

Tight on the jellyfish's tentacles. As they move they create infinite, complex shapes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I restate my purpose: I don't have
to accept my condition as a
permanent aspect of my reality.

Details of his apartment: Glasses, chemicals, wires, tubes, shelves, the jellyfish. Darkness. Emptiness. Sadness.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I know that it's out there,
somewhere in that infinitely
complex physiochemical tangle. My
procedure combats the chaos... I'm
so fucking tired.

He turns out his bedside lamp-

CUT TO:

INT. METRORAIL -- NIGHT

Jake's half-light reflection in the window. Beyond, spectral images of Austin smear by.

Further up the car, the back of Aurelia's head.

Jake watches her.

As we watch the back of her head, there's a JUMP CUT, and for an instant she is looking right at us-

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake's eyes pop open. He sits up.

He's covered in a film of sweat and breathes heavily.

The image blurs and smears with increasing intensity. The familiar, uneasy DRONE begins to build...

He stands and begins to stumble to the bathroom. On the way, he bumps something and glass breaks.

INT. BATHROOM, JAKE'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Jake looks at himself in the mirror.

He runs cold water from the faucet and splashes it on his face.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

He balances himself on the wall as he walks.

HIS POV: We lurch forward, the image is unintelligible. In a brief moment of semi-clarity we see what he goes for: The PILL CONTAINER.

He snatches it off the counter.

Struggles with the cap.

The attack crescendos.

He manages to open the container and slams his palm to his mouth. Swallows.

He moves for his bed. Only makes it a few steps before falling to the ground.

SMACK.

The image twists into pure fractal abstraction. Then-

He loses consciousness. BLACK.

CUT TO:

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK...

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- AFTERNOON

Jake's eyes flutter open. His face is pressed against the floor. Afternoon light wafts in through his window

He opens the door to reveal:

Standing on the other side, at the top of the stairs, is an older woman, ex-hippie. MRS. SCHIESARI. Part of an Austin that is being swallowed.

MRS. SCHIESARI

Hi, Jake. Is this a good time?

Jake takes a moment, still dull from the attack. As he processes, she peers under his arm into the apartment behind him.

Jake realizes and closes the door slightly.

JAKE

Hi, Mrs. Schiesari. Sure, I have a minute.

MRS. SCHIESARI

Are you okay?

JAKE

I'm fine. Just had one of my attacks last night.

MRS. SCHIESARI

Oh. I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do?

JAKE

No, unfortunately.

MRS. SCHIESARI

Did you try the Belladonna I gave you?

JAKE

(obviously lying)
Yeah... It was... sweet.

MRS. SCHIESARI

Well, I'm here about the rent.

JAKE

Oh, I forgot. I'll have to run to the bank today-

He looks at his watch.

JAKE (CONT'D)
-first thing tomorrow morning.

He begins to close the door-

MRS. SCHIESARI
-That's fine, but-

-Opens it again.

JAKE
But?

MRS. SCHIESARI
Just remember. It's for the last
three months.

JAKE
Oh. With my work and everything-
I'll get that to you tomorrow.

She looks deeply into his eyes.

It makes Jake uncomfortable.

MRS. SCHIESARI
Are you okay?

JAKE
Yeah. You know, my attacks.

MRS. SCHIESARI
I mean, generally?

JAKE
...I'm fine. Thank you, Mrs.
Schiesari. And thank you for
reminding me about the rent.

He closes the door on her.

INT. KITCHEN, JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Jake stands in front of his fridge. Looking at its contents.
He reaches inside.

Oil is poured into a saucepan. It shimmers with heat.

Medium, Jake watches.

MICRO: small bubbles dance violently in yellow-green liquid-

Finely diced GARLIC, GINGER, MUSHROOMS, and ONION are dropped in. They sweat.

Now tighter, Jake's eyes peer into the microscopic world.

MICRO: EXPLOSIONS around large solid shapes. Clear liquid is emitted into the oil-

Two cups of WATER are poured into the pan. It boils. A block of INSTANT RAMEN is dropped into the mixture-

His eyes focus intently. Imagining.

MICRO: now more VIOLENCE, CHAOS. Three dimensional.

A seasoning packet is poured in. Flicked empty. The heat is turned off.

He closes his eyes. Calmer.

MICRO: the packet dissolves. The violence slows.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Jake slurps his ramen as he sits at his computer. On his monitor are a couple of spreadsheets.

He picks up his recorder, hits record-

JAKE

I lose on insulin this month. Means
Epi-Pens will have to cover and
then some... A big ask.

He hits STOP, lifts the bowl, and drinks the remaining broth.

KNOCKING at his door.

He sets his bowl on his desk, stands and goes to the door-

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Mrs. Schiesari, the bank
was closed-

He opens the door, revealing Aurelia. She stands in the half-shadow as if from a dream.

Time slows. Jake doesn't know what to say.

She breaks the spell-

AURELIA

Can I come in?

He moves aside.

She enters and floats through his apartment, taking it in.
The exposed details of his search, his life.

She stops at the wall of notes.

JAKE
Is something wrong?

AURELIA
I want this as little as you do.

JAKE
Want what?

She turns and sees his jellyfish on the kitchen table. She
walks to it and watches it pulse in the purple/blue glow.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I was experimenting with its toxin.

AURELIA
Bribe a zookeeper or something?

JAKE
Internet. Totally legal.

AURELIA
Dangerous?

JAKE
The toxin is deadly in a large
enough dose. Don't stick your hand
in there or anything...
(he tries to read her)
Why are you here?
(no answer)
Aurelia?

AURELIA
I'm here because I need your help.

JAKE
My help?

AURELIA
Somebody I work with found out what
I've been doing for you.

The wind is knocked out of him.

JAKE
Okay... I assume the company knows?

AURELIA

No.

JAKE

No?

AURELIA

This person hasn't reported it to anybody. Only they know.

He blinks. Trying to understand.

JAKE

What's that mean?

AURELIA

They want me to do something for them.

JAKE

Do something? Something...
romantic?-

AURELIA

-Stop. Don't think I'm their type anyway.

She reaches into her pocket and produces a small VIAL OF CLEAR LIQUID. She puts it on the table.

AURELIA (CONT'D)

They want us to pour this into our CEO's wine at a dinner tomorrow.

JAKE

Us?

AURELIA

I told them about you.
(before he can speak)
Because I had to. Said they'd report me to the company, the police. One explanation led to another.

A thick silence in the room. The whirl of the jellyfish tank.

JAKE

This is real?

AURELIA

Very.

JAKE
What is that?

AURELIA
Wouldn't tell me. All I know is
that it won't kill him.

JAKE
Says who?

AURELIA
Can't say.

JAKE
Can't say or won't say?

AURELIA
Won't say.

JAKE
So you're protecting them?

AURELIA
I'm protecting me. You go to them,
they go to the police. I lose my
career. Probably go to jail.

JAKE
So you want me to do it, poison his
drink?

AURELIA
Want is a strong word.

JAKE
You think we should though?

AURELIA
I'm thinking a lot of things.

JAKE
You don't know what that is. Say
you pour it into- what's his name?

AURELIA
Macintosh. Dr. Jonas Macintosh.

JAKE
Pour it into CEO, Dr. Jonas
Macintosh's drink tomorrow, he
drinks it, and drops dead at the
table. But somebody's noticed what
you've done.

AURELIA
That's why I'm here. Nobody would
recognize you at this dinner.

JAKE
Fuck.

AURELIA
You can say that again... I don't
like it either, but I need your
help.

Jake is speechless... He picks up the vial, studies it.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
Will you do it?

JAKE
No. Of course not.

He tosses the vial to her. Aurelia shakes her head.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You came here hoping that I would.
Unbelievable.

AURELIA
(pocketing the vial)
This *is* all because of you.

JAKE
Nobody forces you to help me.

AURELIA
That's your answer then?

JAKE
I won't poison somebody.

AURELIA
You don't know that it's a poison.

JAKE
And you don't know that it isn't.

She heads for the door.

AURELIA
This doesn't end up in his drink
tomorrow. We both get reported to
the company, then the police. That
happens, you can forget about your
search, the cure, all that shit.
(MORE)

AURELIA (CONT'D)
(turns to him)
Then what will you have left?

JAKE
You expect that to change my mind?

She stops at the door, turns.

AURELIA
I don't expect anything from you
anymore.

She exits.

Jake is alone.

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Jake is reclined on his couch and reading a medical journal.

INSERT CUT: Aurelia looks at us, expectant, hopeful.

His eyes drift from the page. He folds the book onto his chest.

Later:

Jake paces his apartment in circles...

...As he paces, we move with him, entering and exiting his POV. He look at various implements of his search- THE WHITE BOARD, HIS COMPUTER, VIALS, COBBLED TOGETHER LAB EQUIPMENT, INSERT OF A DRESS SHIRT BEING BUTTONED- somewhere else... His cobbled together life in increasing speed swirls around him.

INSERT CUT: Aurelia asking-

AURELIA
Then what will you have left?

Jake stops. Solitary amidst the tools of his search...

JAKE
Sisyphus without a boulder...

A PIXELATED PHOTO of an OLDER MAN leaving a courthouse, reporters being held at bay.

He scrolls down the screen.

The headline: **"MACINTOSH PHARMACEUTICALS SETTLES OUT OF COURT"**

Another headline: "JONAS MACINTOSH REFUSES TO TESTIFY BEFORE EU"

Another: "3 BIOTECH STOCKS TO BUY AND ONE TO AVOID"

Another: "EXPERIMENTAL ALZHEIMERS DRUG PRESSUES RESTRUCTURE AT MACINTOSH PHARMACEUTICALS"

We PUSH IN on a headshot of JONAS MACINTOSH. Older, beard trimmed short. He smiles confidently. Warm, intelligent, bright eyes....

Jake has his phone pressed to his ear, looks at the vial in his other hand:

JAKE (CONT'D)
Let's talk in the morning.

CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN CAFE -- MORNING

Jake is seated in a booth against some windows. Outside, the world moves by. Professionals, tourists, homeless, etc.

Aurelia takes a seat opposite him. She doesn't take off her sunglasses.

JAKE
You look tired.

AURELIA
And you've lost none of your charm.

JAKE
Get any sleep?

AURELIA
No sleep. Just nightmares.

...

JAKE
This guy, Macintosh, what do you know about him?

AURELIA
He's our CEO and founder. Never met him, he lives in San Francisco where we're headquartered.

JAKE
He's not exactly a good guy, is he?

AURELIA
He's a pharmaceutical CEO.

Jake thinks.

JAKE
What's this dinner for tomorrow?
Some special occasion?

AURELIA
Likely an announcement. Just my
team. Like ten people.

JAKE
The mystery person will be there?
The one blackmailing you?

She's silent.

JAKE (CONT'D)
...This is the end then. We can't
go back to how it was, can we?

AURELIA
Nope.

JAKE
Maybe we-

AURELIA
-I won't go back to how it was.

Jake retreats.

JAKE
There's got to be another way out
of this. Something else we can do.

AURELIA
There isn't.

JAKE
Maybe we switch the vials or
something.

AURELIA
They told me they'd know if we did
that.

JAKE
Okay, then we switch the contents.

AURELIA

Said they'd know that too. We pour it in the drink, then give the vial back so they know we did it.

JAKE

What about the police?

AURELIA

You want to involve the police?

JAKE

Well, shit Aurelia at least I'm trying. How can you just accept it?

AURELIA

What?

JAKE

Anything, everything. No matter how fucked up it is.

AURELIA

Because that's how it is.

JAKE

It's as easy as that?

AURELIA

I didn't say it's easy.

A beat.

Jake looks out the window.

The world moves silently, in SLOW MOTION, like fish in an aquarium.

JAKE

Do you hate people?

AURELIA

Is that the impression I give?

JAKE

Do you?

AURELIA

Some people, sometimes.

JAKE

(ignoring the dig)
Sometimes I think I do.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

Then I think that maybe I just hate what they do. But I hate what they do because they hurt other people. But if I hate people, what do I care if they get hurt? Maybe I only like the idea of people. Or hate the idea of people.

AURELIA

You have too much free time on your hands.

JAKE

Probably... Thought about cooking meth. You can do it small and cheap. Called a "shake and bake." Just some household poisons treated correctly and boom- you've got gold. Alchemy. Always in demand.

AURELIA

So why don't you?

JAKE

To encourage other peoples' sickness just to cure my own. Can't bring myself to do it.

AURELIA

Is that why you wanted to see me? For career advice?

JAKE

You never think about that stuff?

AURELIA

Whether I should cook meth?

JAKE

About working at a pharma, profiting from people's illness.

AURELIA

I guess I don't.

JAKE

Why not?

AURELIA

Because I'm a bad person for wanting to take care of myself. Is that what you want me to say?

JAKE

...

AURELIA

If that's it, I'll be heading to work now.

JAKE

Wait, I'm sorry... You're scared?

AURELIA

Of course.

JAKE

Because if it doesn't happen, you lose everything?

AURELIA

Yeah.

JAKE

It won't kill him?

AURELIA

That's what I've been told.

JAKE

So you're going to doing it?

AURELIA

...I am. I have to.

Jake considers his words carefully...

JAKE

No you don't. I'll do it. Dose him.

AURELIA

You changed your mind?

JAKE

You've always helped me, now I need to help you.

She gives a small smile, knowing.

AURELIA

You'll do it so you can keep out of jail and continue your search.

(before Jake can respond)

-Not that it makes any difference.

JAKE
(trying to move on)
When and where is this dinner?

AURELIA
Three Forks, eight pm.

JAKE
Three Forks, eight. Okay.

She reaches into her bag produces the vial. Sets it on the table.

JAKE (CONT'D)
How did you know to bring it?

AURELIA
I'll see you tonight. Thanks, Jake.

She stands and leaves.

INT./EXT. DOWNTOWN CAFE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake watches her go out the window as she becomes just another person in the crowd.

JAKE (V.O.)
Something's happened. A disruption.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Jake studies a GLASS OF WATER, swirls it in the light. He speaks into his voice recorder-

JAKE
Sisyphus without his boulder.
People think that Sisyphus' task is
a curse. In truth, it's a blessing.
It gives him purpose.

Over his speaking into the recorder, we see the actions that led to this moment:

Jake puts together the place settings for a meal, emulating the dinner to occur that night. The final piece is the EMPTY water glass-

JAKE (V.O.)
*I have chosen to live my life as an
 idea, an abstraction. But can you
 live an idea?*

He measures water into one of his insulin vials then compares it to the vial that Aurelia gave him. They are roughly similar.

JAKE (V.O.)
*A heightened existence, elevated
 above base desires- adulation, sex,
 money.*

Jake walks across the room, toward his setup.

As he walks by he pours the vial into the cup, it mostly spills over the rim.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Are we slave to our primal brain?
 Doomed to merely conceive something
 higher while remaining trapped by
 the gravity of our base desires. By
 our biochemical makeup.*

He repeats the action. This time less spills over the rim.

He repeats it again. None spills.

He repeats it again. The water hits the bottom of the cup.

Repeats. Again, perfect.

Caught up to the opening of the scene: Jake is studying his work on the last attempt.

JAKE
 Without his boulder, who is
 Sisyphus? Is he worth remembering?

He quickly downs the water-

JAKE (CONT'D)
 No. He's just some Greek guy.

KNOCKING at the door-

Jake hits stop on the recorder. He goes to the door and answers.

On the other side: A MAN, around Jake's age. He's wearing a polo, flip-flops, shorts.

YOUNG MAN
Hey, you got a second?

JAKE
I'm not interested, thanks.

He begins to close the door.

YOUNG MAN
I'm here because you're not paying
my mom rent.

Jake opens the door again. He notices Mrs. Schiesari standing
at the base of the steps behind her son, nervously watching.
This is PETER SCHIESARI.

JAKE
Oh, sorry it's just been-

PETER SCHIESARI
What're you paying- well, being
asked to pay?

JAKE
Four hundred a month?

Mrs. Schiesari's Son sighs, shakes his head in frustration.

PETER SCHIESARI
Shit.
(to his mother)
Mom, what are you doing?

MRS. SCHIESARI
I like to have somebody around,
it's hard to be a student.

PETER SCHIESARI
(back to Jake)
What do you study?

JAKE
Actually, I'm taking some time off
at the moment.

PETER SCHIESARI
(to her)
Mom.

JAKE
Look, I'll pay what I owe.

PETER SCHIESARI

No, you gotta go. This place, what it is, this neighborhood, it's worth at least a thousand a month.

JAKE

Well, we have an agreement.

PETER SCHIESARI

Dude, there's no paperwork on that. You're taking advantage of a nice person. You want to be evicted?

MRS. SCHIESARI

Peter, wait.

JAKE

I'm not trying to take advantage,
(to Mrs. Schiesari)
You know that, I'm not a bad person
Nancy.

PETER SCHIESARI

It's not about whether you're a bad person. You owe her money, she needs that shit dude. Just pay, and get out by the end of the month.

JAKE

I'll have to-

PETER SCHIESARI

Right now. I'm not going to leave without the rent you owe.

JAKE

I... I don't have it.

PETER SCHIESARI

I'll drive you to the bank if I have to.

JAKE

I don't have it there either.

Peter shakes his head. He scoffs, surprised it's come to this-

PETER SCHIESARI

Okay. I'm going to have to evict you.

JAKE

Well... Okay then.

Jake shuts the door in his face. Peter yells through the door, slightly muffled-

PETER SCHIESARI
You sure you're not a "bad
person!?"

The words linger with Jake...

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- LATER

Through the purple/blue glow of the jellyfish tank, Jake gets ready in front of a mirror.

From the mirror's perspective: Jake finishes making himself presentable. His jacket over a flannel, black jeans, boots.

He looks at his reflection and exhales, trying to stay his nervousness.

Looks down into his hand-

CUT TO:

INT. THREE FORKS RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

-the vial of clear liquid, nervously fingered under the bar.

AT THE BAR: Jake looks over his shoulder around the restaurant. The clanking of silverware, drone of conversation, servers call to one another.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Can I get you anything?

He turns back, A BARTENDER approaches-

JAKE
Just a water for now.

BARTENDER
Water. You got it.

The Bartender retreats. Jake looks over his shoulder again:

AT THE OTHER END OF THE RESTAURANT: A large table lined with people. Aurelia among them. At the head of the table, recognizable from his headshot, DR. JONAS MACINTOSH.

A SERVER places WINE GLASSES in front of each diner.

We're tight on Macintosh's wine glass as it fills with red wine.

Jake's eyes shift slightly-

We tilt up: A middle-aged man watches Jake. Exceptionally unexceptional. An American Salaryman.

Jake's gaze shifts to Aurelia, who makes brief eye contact mid conversation.

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

Water.

Jake turns to the bar. A glass of water now in front of him.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything else?

JAKE

Actually... I'll take a whiskey.

BARTENDER

Bourbon?

JAKE

Sure.

BARTENDER

Turkey okay? Ice?

JAKE

Turkey's fine. Neat.

The Bartender goes about pouring Jake's drink and his attention returns to the vial.

The Bartender sets Jake's bourbon down in front of him.

LATER: Jake downs the last of his bourbon, places the empty glass on the bar. His leg bounces with nervous energy.

Macintosh and company are in the midst of their meal now. Macintosh's wine glass is empty, then starts to be refilled by Aurelia. Her eyes flick to Jake as she does it.

Jake shakes his head and turns back to the bar.

BARTENDER

Another?

JAKE

Huh?

BARTENDER

Bourbon?

JAKE

Oh. No, thanks.

AURELIA (O.S.)

Give it to me.

She stands next to him.

Jake looks up at her. She has a cold determination.

He hands her the vial, ashamed. She leaves.

Jake watches as she approaches the table. She says something to the table and everybody looks to a woman, her CO-WORKER, sitting at the further end. The Co-Worker holds up her hand to show off an engagement ring.

While everybody is distracted, Aurelia pours the contents of the vial into Macintosh's wine.

The table congratulates the Co-Worker on her engagement.

Aurelia takes her seat again.

Jake stares at Macintosh's wine glass...

He slaps a crumpled wad of bills onto the bar then stands.

He walks toward their table.

Aurelia notices. So does the middle-aged man. Jake approaches, passing a myriad of tables.

SLOW MOTION:

15 feet away: Macintosh is mid conversation, he says something and lifts his glass in toast...

10 feet away: Aurelia faces Macintosh, wine glass raised, her eyes firmly on Jake...

7 feet away: Macintosh's wine glass floats like a beacon...

5 feet away: The middle-aged man watches, mouth agape...

SNAP TO REAL TIME:

Jake feigns a trip. Stumbles and bumps into their table. His right hand knocks Macintosh's wine glass, spilling the wine all over Macintosh's suit.

The table erupts in motion. Surrounding tables all look on.
People stand-

Jake is on all fours, profusely apologizing to Macintosh, who works to contain his annoyance-

JAKE
I'm so sorry, shit I-

MACINTOSH
It's okay, it's okay.

A SERVER approaches.

SERVER
We can get some club soda.

They depart again-

MACINTOSH
I think we're a little beyond club
soda here.

JAKE
I'm so sorry.

MACINTOSH
I suppose these things happen.

Macintosh stands.

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
(to his table)
It's true what Fielding said: "Wine
is a turncoat; first a friend then
then an enemy." Don't let this ruin
the evening, enjoy yourselves. I'm
going to try and work this out in
the bathroom.

Macintosh heads for the bathroom as the Server returns with a large glass of club soda.

Jake takes the glass from them and follows after Macintosh.

As he follows, he turns back to the table-

Aurelia watches, dumbfounded...

INT. BATHROOM, THREE FORKS RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Jake enters.

Macintosh is standing in front of the mirror, dabbing himself futilely with wet napkins.

JAKE

I brought some club soda.

MACINTOSH

Thank you but I think I've got it.

JAKE

I just want to apologize again.
I've ruined your dinner.

MACINTOSH

It's alright... Actually, you might
have done me a small favor.

JAKE

How's that?

MACINTOSH

Let's just say that being in charge
means that sometimes you have to
make unpopular decisions.

JAKE

Well. The reason that-

-The bathroom door opens and the middle-aged man from
Macintosh's table enters.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Hi, Jonas. Anything I can do to
help?

MACINTOSH

No, thank you, Fredas. You can go
back to the table. I'll be right
out.

FREDAS

Are you sure?

MACINTOSH

Yes, yes. Don't let this ruin the
evening. Thank you both, but I've
got this under control.

Jake and Fredas stand awkwardly for a moment. Neither wants
to leave the other alone with Macintosh.

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Please.

Jake realizes that Fredas won't leave him alone with Macintosh any longer. He leaves the bathroom and Fredas follows.

INT. THREE FORKS RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Jake walks back toward Aurelia's table.

Fredas glares at him.

Jake passes Aurelia at the table, heads for the exit. She watches, furious.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Infinite, fractal complexity of the jellyfish's tentacles in the strange light of its tank...

Jake sits on the edge of his bed and watches the jellyfish, his mind elsewhere.

A buzz and light on his phone.

He picks it up, reads a text from Aurelia.

"WE MEET TOMORROW. 1PM 1120 S LAMAR"

Jake types:

"FINE"

He lowers his phone and looks at the tank-

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- DAWN

-The jellyfish floats mindlessly, now in the morning light.

Jake watches, his head rests on the table. He hasn't slept at all.

LATER:

Dressed for the day, Jake walks out his front door.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY, HIGHBALL KARAOKE -- DAY

Near total blackness. Only the occasional pool of light tells us that we are being led down a hallway by a HOSTESS.

She stops in front of a door, opens it-

Jake steps into:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM, HIGHBALL KARAOKE -- CONTINUOUS

The private room is bathed in hyper-saturated colors. A leather couch curves around a table. On the couch are Aurelia and Fredas. Both are stoney-faced, in stark contrast with their surroundings.

A projection on the opposite wall displays images for lyrics to be imposed over- a field, space, a forest, aerials of cityscapes. The color of the room constantly shifts...

HOSTESS

If you need anything, order from
the screen and we'll bring it right
up! You guys all set?

FREDAS

Yes. Thank you.

HOSTESS

Okay, have fun!

She closes the door behind Jake. Silence...

JAKE

What are we doing here?

FREDAS

We need to talk. For safety's sake,
I chose somewhere public and
private.

Jake sits on the couch opposite Fredas. Aurelia between them.

JAKE

So what's there to talk about?

FREDAS

Last night.

JAKE

Refresh my memory.

FREDAS
Why did you stop it?

JAKE
I couldn't just let you kill him.

FREDAS
(to Aurelia)
I told you. It wouldn't kill him.

AURELIA
And I told him.

JAKE
Okay, I couldn't poison him.
Better?

FREDAS
You know who that man is?

JAKE
I do.

FREDAS
And you'd sacrifice yourself for
him?

JAKE
Not to be pedantic, but you're the
one sacrificing us.

FREDAS
If you'd just done what I told you,
none of this would be a problem.

JAKE
Well I've never been good at doing
what I'm supposed to.
(gestures to Aurelia)
Just ask her.

Aurelia glares.

FREDAS
You think this is a joke.

JAKE
Who's laughing?

FREDAS
She told me about you.

JAKE
Good things, I'm sure.

FREDAS
About your sickness.

This cuts Jake.

FREDAS (CONT'D)
About how you look for a cure and
fund it by risking the lives of
diabetics with shit you make in a
Home Depot, junkyard lab.

JAKE
You don't know me.

FREDAS
I do know you. You hide and you
blame everybody else for all the
world's problems without ever
stepping out and trying to make a
real difference.

JAKE
She told you that?

FREDAS
I can infer.

JAKE
...What kind of car do you drive?

FREDAS
What?

JAKE
What kind of car?

FREDAS
Lexus.

JAKE
What model?

FREDAS
...LS?

Jake pulls out his phone, types something in. An expression
of surprise at what he sees.

JAKE
Not bad. Starts at seventy five
thousand dollars.

FREDAS
So? What are-

JAKE

-Your car is worth, at best, two years of insulin for somebody whose insurance doesn't cover it. *Only* two years. I charge people one tenth of what they'd otherwise pay. Typically, the other nine tenths pays for people like you to drive cars like yours. So don't get sanctimonious with me. If you're upset, why don't you just call the police and get this shit over with?

Jake stands to leave.

AURELIA

Because I begged him not to!
(to Jake)
Sit.

He takes his seat again.

She turns to Fredas.

AURELIA (CONT'D)

You need to tell us what this is about.

FREDAS

...Surely you've figured some of it out by now. The dinner should've made it clear.

AURELIA

...The sale?

Fredas nods. She leans back and mulls this new information...

JAKE

In case you've forgotten, I wasn't formally invited to the dinner so it's not clear to me.

AURELIA

Macintosh sold our work to keep the company afloat.

JAKE

Okay?

AURELIA

We were working on something to compete with TAF. You know what that is?

JAKE
An HIV treatment?

AURELIA
Well the rights were sold to
Galaod, who owns TAF. Now there's
no competition in the marketplace.

FREDAS
All that work, years of it, is
dead. They bought it to kill it,
and retain their monopoly.

JAKE
So you're upset about losing a
little bit of legacy?

FREDAS
I'm upset that my work won't be
helping the people who need it.

JAKE
Just to remind you: you work for a
pharma. Helping people, fucking
them over, that's just incidental.
Profit is your purpose. It's how
you afford that car.

FREDAS
You can't do HIV research from a
garage. Are you familiar with AIDS?
It's horrible. A person becomes a
shell, sickness incarnate. They lay
there dying and everybody knows it.
You look into their eyes and...

He stops- drifts back into the moment.

Fredas reaches into his pocket and pulls out another,
identical vial to the one Jake had previously.

JAKE
Deja vu. So what is it?

FREDAS
(sighs)
CRISPR delivery that would destroy
his immune system.

AURELIA
God dammit.

JAKE
Shit.

The room is still. Jake leans back and thinks.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So this is revenge for the sale? I mean I applaud the symmetry, poetry, whatever the fuck.

FREDAS

Petty as it may be, I wanted him to be sick. And to know that he's sick for the rest of his life. He can escape consequences due to his wealth, but he can't escape knowing his condition.

Jake thinks. Nods.

JAKE

Well... good luck with that.

He stands.

AURELIA

Jake, wait.

FREDAS

You still won't do it?

JAKE

Why don't you?

A shameful silence.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You say that you know me, well I know you too. You're one of those "hopeful" sad fucks. You *hope* that other people will get their hands dirty. You *hope* they'll make the world a better place while you live in high rise luxury apartments, drive your seventy thousand dollar car, eat organically farmed foods, fly business class to resort vacations. I know you. You're the pathetic fuck that does what they're supposed to. Then, when the world ends you look around and wonder why nobody else did anything about it.

FREDAS

...I'll still report you if you don't do it.

JAKE
There it is again: you're *hoping*
that I'll do it.

Jake leaves.

Aurelia says something to Fredas, grabs the second vial from the table and hurries after Jake.

EXT. HIGHBALL -- DAY

Jake exits the building.

Aurelia follows him. They stop on the sidewalk-

AURELIA
Hey! What the fuck?!

JAKE
What?

AURELIA
If you wanna just totally destroy
yourself, fine. But don't take me
with you.

JAKE
Sorry I stopped you giving your CEO
HIV.

AURELIA
You want me to just throw my life
away? What do you expect?

JAKE
I don't expect anything from you
anymore.

AURELIA
Fuck you.

She turns to leave.

JAKE
Where are you going?

AURELIA
This has been real fun but I've
gotta go back to work.

JAKE
Wait.

She stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)
...Can I get a ride?

CUT TO:

INT. AURELIA'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Jake sits in the passenger seat. They ride in silence.
Uncomfortable.

Jake studies Aurelia's face. She's stewing.

JAKE
Your boss seems nice.

She continues to drive.

JAKE (CONT'D)
How's work otherwise?

AURELIA
It's fine.

Another beat. Jake looks out the window.

JAKE
I don't know how you do it. Get up,
go to work, get home, eat dinner,
go to bed, repeat. Weekend comes
and you just try to forget about
it. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

AURELIA
Maybe I like being able to drive
myself around town. That way I can
be an asshole to people and not
rely on them at the same time. Or
is your system better?

JAKE
Maybe. At least my conscience is
clean.

AURELIA
Able to pay the bills with that
nobility? Because it won't keep you
out of jail.

He turns from her.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
 Besides, I don't know if you've
 considered it but you get your
 medicine wrong and people get hurt.
 People that are already sick. You
 ever wonder if you're doing what
 you do to help them or yourself?

JAKE
 I don't get it wrong.

AURELIA
 How many times have you gotten it
 wrong for you?

Now Jake is angry.

They drive in silence for a moment.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
 You talk to Allen anymore?

JAKE
 No. Not in a long time.

AURELIA
 He didn't pass away did he?

JAKE
 No. Just cut me off.

AURELIA
 Well, he's smarter than I am.

JAKE
 Take a left here-

CUT TO:

INT. AURELIA'S CAR, MRS. SCHIESARI'S STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Through the windshield of the car we see that Jake's
 possessions are being piled on the curb.

JAKE
 Fuck!

AURELIA
 You having a yard sale?

She slows to a stop.

JAKE

Fuck!

He bursts from the car-

EXT. MRS. SCHIESARI'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Peter and another man, dressed in the same manner, PETER'S FRIEND, are hauling boxes to the curb.

JAKE

What are you doing?!

PETER SCHIESARI

Evicting you.

(to his friend in passing)

Just put it on the curb.

Jake follows Peter back to his apartment above the garage.

In the background, Aurelia drives off-

JAKE

You can't just go into my apartment
and take my things!

PETER SCHIESARI

You wanna talk about the meth lab
you have back there?

Peter enters Jake's apartment. The world SMEARS a little,
barely detectable. Jake yells in after him-

JAKE

Meth?! I'm not making meth!

PETER SCHIESARI

I'm not my mom. She told me about
how you're sick. She buys that shit
because she's nice. I don't buy it
'cause I'm not nice.

JAKE

Yeah, I can fucking see that! Stop!
I'll get you the money.

Peter emerges with the JELLYFISH TANK. He struggles with the
weight of it. It sloshes with each step.

Jake follows him down the steps, through the lawn, and to the
curb-

JAKE (CONT'D)
Please, you'll kill it-

He grabs Peter by the shoulder. Peter wheels on him-

PETER SCHIESARI
You listening to me?

JAKE
I'm working on my research. You're destroying my lab! My work! You wanna evict me, fine. But you didn't give notice, you have to give notice!

PETER SCHIESARI
I told you yesterday.

JAKE
You have to go to the court. I get a few weeks.

PETER SCHIESARI
(stops)
You wanna do this? Take us to court. Pay for a lawyer, all the fees? I just know you can afford it. Besides, you'll just lose when I show them a picture of what you've got going on in there.

JAKE
That's not illegal!

Jake looks to the front house where Mrs. Schiesari lives-

In a window on the second floor Mrs. Schiesari watches on, distressed. The occasional smearing returns. Grows stronger.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Please, Nancy!

She retreats into the house, out of view.

Peter has set the jellyfish tank on the ground and heads back to Jake's apartment.

PETER SCHIESARI
Leave her out of it. She's been through enough.

They pass the Friend, who carries a box. Jake looks at it with concern-

JAKE

But I can get you the money.

PETER SCHIESARI

It's too late. You're three months behind.

Jake wobbles. The blurring is strong now. Jake fights through it and makes it back to the steps leading up to his garage apartment.

JAKE

Wait- Just. *Please.*

He climbs the steps as Peter rummages inside. Jake holds onto the handrail for support. The world has become BLURRING, SWIRLING CHAOS. Nauseating sounds grow.

Peter emerges carrying the insulin for Jake's "patients."

Jake stands in his way.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Wait. Please. Don't mess with...
That's.. Delicate- People need-

PETER SCHIESARI

What the fuck? Are you overdosing
or something-

He tries to push past Jake, but Jake holds firm.

JAKE

...No...

Jake loses his balance and falls backwards down the stairs.

He tumbles to the bottom and lands on the ground with a CRACK-
BLACK.

A familiar DING...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. DAVID'S MEDICAL CENTER -- NIGHT

Jake exits through the sliding doors much as before. He now wears a CAST on his left arm.

EXT. BUS STOP -- CONTINUOUS

Jake walks with his latest hospital goody bag over his left shoulder. In his right hand he holds a piece of paper.

As he approaches the glass wall of a bus stop, he SPITS on the back of the paper and SLAPS it onto the glass-

INSERT: the hospital bill. The total is **\$543.24**.

KNOCKING....

INT. HIGHEND APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Jake knocks on a door, waits for an answer. He looks around the hallway:

An eerie liminal space lined with identical doors. Nice. Boring.

Movement on the other side.

Aurelia opens the door, surprised.

AURELIA
How'd you find out where I live?

JAKE
Internet.

She looks down at his arm.

AURELIA
What happened there?

JAKE
Had an attack. Fell down and
fractured my wrist. Can I come in?

She looks back into her apartment, unsure.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I just wanted to talk to somebody.
This was a bad idea.

AURELIA
Let's go somewhere. Give me a
minute.

She retreats back into her apartment.

Jake examines his cast.

The door opens again, Aurelia emerges with a hand bag.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
(into the apartment)
I'll be back in a few hours. Don't
stay up.

Jake peers into the space beyond her- typical downtown Austin apartment.

JAKE
Boyfriend?

AURELIA
Yeah. Let's go.

She pushes past Jake, leads the way to the exit. Her footsteps echo in the hallway as Jake looks at her closed door, anonymous in the hallway of identical doors.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAHOLM AREA -- LATER

A large, blank concrete wall.

JAKE (O.S.)
It was early. Maybe the first
semester. We were working late in
the lab. I had an attack, fell
down. You remember?

AURELIA (O.S.)
I do.

JAKE (O.S.)
You called an ambulance. They came
and took me to the hospital-
released me the next day.
(he chuckles)
I was so pissed at you for that.

Aurelia and Jake enter. We track with them as they walk and talk.

AURELIA
You were already a bit of a freak.
20 and in our grad program. You
were so bitchy to me after that. I
was like, "What the fuck is wrong
with this guy?"

JAKE

Little did you know the depths of that question.

AURELIA

How would I have known, though?

JAKE

You wouldn't have. Back then. That still happens by the way. People calling 911.

AURELIA

You don't have a card or something to show people?

JAKE

I tried. Explaining my condition takes a few minutes. Nobody pays attention when they see me going through it. I guess their conscience gets the better of them and they can't not call for help.

AURELIA

That's got to make you feel good I guess. About people.

JAKE

Well that warm fuzzy feeling is usually comes with a huge hospital bill.

AURELIA

I never called an ambulance after that first time.

JAKE

Do you remember when I first explained my condition to you? I hadn't explained it to many people at that point, but you seemed to understand.

AURELIA

Wow. Haven't thought about that in a while.

JAKE

I think about it. At first you were annoyed.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

But there was something else when I told you about the whole thing, about being misdiagnosed with Somatic Symptom Disorder.

AURELIA

What?

JAKE

You sat there for a while. Quiet. Finally, you said, "what have you tried?"

AURELIA

You remember that?

JAKE

Of course.

AURELIA

It was interesting. You were a living, breathing puzzle. What we usually do is so removed. There's no human element.

JAKE

I certainly bring that.

AURELIA

Does your arm hurt?

JAKE

A bit.

He holds it up and looks at the cast. Wiggles his fingers and grimaces. She moves closer, takes his arm and turns it, examining.

He takes in a sharp breath of pain-

AURELIA

Sorry.

JAKE

I've had concussions, sprains, gotten colds. Left wrist is a new one.

AURELIA

Colds?

JAKE

Yeah, lost it outside in the winter.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)
People think you're homeless, they
don't call. Just leave you there to
freeze.

She touches his fingers.

AURELIA
You could dress better.

He smiles.

AURELIA (CONT'D)
There was something else about you,
your condition, that drew me in.

JAKE
What's that?

AURELIA
The impossibility.

JAKE
What's impossible?

AURELIA
Everything with you.

She lets go of his hand and begins walking again. He watches
her for a moment before following.

EXT. PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE -- CONTINUOUS

They walk the bridge over Town Lake. Aimless.

JAKE
What's your boyfriend do?

AURELIA
He's in tech. Data analyst.

JAKE
What's that mean?

AURELIA
I don't really know, actually.
Computers and numbers.

JAKE
How long's it been going on?

AURELIA
He's been doing since he graduated.

JAKE
I mean you two.

AURELIA
(thinks)
About a year and a half.

JAKE
Does he know about me?

AURELIA
Knows you're a friend from school.
That's all.
(changing the subject)
So you're evicted now?

JAKE
I guess so.

AURELIA
There's no way you could've made
more money?

JAKE
You know what a liability my
condition is. Not that I'm
scrolling Linked-In right now.

AURELIA
There's got to be something you can
do.

JAKE
I'm considering some things.

AURELIA
Like what?

JAKE
I told you. Meth.

AURELIA
Seriously.

JAKE
There are open source insulin
projects, collectives like that.

AURELIA
Well, why not join them?

JAKE
They don't pay enough to cover my
expenses. Part of my theory.

AURELIA
Theory?

JAKE
There's an inverse relationship
between compensation and altruism.

They walk in silence for a moment.

AURELIA
I could track your search from your
orders.

JAKE
Yeah?

AURELIA
Inhibitors were never going to
work.

JAKE
Could've saved me some time with
that.

AURELIA
What if I was wrong?

JAKE
When was the last time you were
wrong?

She smiles, remembering. He does too.

The mood shifts. The past is gone.

Jake looks up at the city, glittering in the night. Modern
eco-rises branded with the logos of large tech corporations.

JAKE (CONT'D)
When you told Jacoby about me, what
did you say?

AURELIA
You mean about your condition?

JAKE
Yeah.

AURELIA
I told him that you're sick. That
it's impossible to diagnose.

JAKE
What else?

AURELIA

Told him that you're looking for a cure. That you're a biohacker. The epi-pens, insulin, all that... What do you really want to ask me?

JAKE

...Do you believe me? That my condition isn't just in my head?

She thinks.

AURELIA

I believe that you're sick. And I hope you get better.

Jake looks into her eyes. Nods. The moment extends...

JAKE

I should let you get back to your life.

AURELIA

Where will you go now?

JAKE

I don't know. I'll figure something out. Send me Fredas's number. You're right, this is all because of me. So I'll get us out of it.

He slowly walks away from her.

Behind him: Aurelia recedes, alone in the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREETCORNER -- MINUTES LATER

Jake stands on the corner. A car pulls to a stop in front of him and he climbs into the backseat.

INT. RIDESHARE, DOWNTOWN -- CONTINUOUS

Jake watches the Austin nightscape glide by out the window.

Outside the car: Aurelia's large, ghostly visage encompasses the car and blends back into the night.

He looks down to his opened phone. He's received Fredas's contact from Aurelia.

He texts Fredas:

"IT'S JAKE. WHAT'S MACINTOSH'S ADDRESS?"

Three small dots...

"25 STARLIGHT COVE"

Jake deliberates.

JAKE

Hey, can I change the address?

DRIVER

Just put it in the app.

Jake types on his phone-

CUT TO:

EXT. MACINTOSH'S STREET, WESTLAKE HILLS -- LATER

The street is empty, half wilderness.

The car glides to a stop outside of a modern mansion. It's perched on the top of a large hill. In the distance, downtown Austin glitters in the atmosphere.

Jake exits the backseat of the car, leans back in-

JAKE

I'm just dropping something off if you could just wait for a second.

DRIVER

Sure.

Jake walks up the long driveway of the beautiful, modern house...

EXT. DRIVEWAY, MAINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The night is silent. Jake walks the long driveway. Lights inside the house glow faintly. He's pulled forward by something outside himself.

Jake arrives at the end of the driveway. A LARGE BLACK SUV is parked there. Jake runs his good hand along it's perfect surface.

He enters the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

He slowly walks across the manicured back lawn. As if it were some alien landscape.

He looks at the glittering skyline underneath a large blotch of light pollution.

A large pool, unnaturally blue.

Jake turns from the city and faces the house- glass, angular, beautiful. It's like an art installation. An exhibit of how the one percent of the one percent live.

The house is clean, bare. The finest materials in the most perfect shapes. Jake approaches the glass and examines the interior...

CUT TO:

EXT. MACINTOSH'S STREET, WESTLAKE HILLS -- MOMENTS LATER

Jake approaches the car again, gets into the backseat.

A moment, then the car pulls away.

CUT TO:

EXT. MRS. SCHIESARI'S STREET -- NIGHT

The car pulls to a stop outside Mrs. Schiesari's house. Jake's belongings are still on the curb.

Jake exits the car.

JAKE (V.O.)
*November 20th, 2023. The search is
broken. The means of procurement,
my records, my lab, all destroyed.*

His jellyfish is poured into a plastic bag. He ties the top of the bag and puts it in a BLACK DUFFEL that he's salvaged from the pile.

He rummages through the items on the curb. He puts the most valuable things into his duffel: equipment, hard drives, insulin boxes.

He finds his recorder, examines it-

JAKE (V.O.)
*Can you live an idea? Evidence says
no. Necessity always rears its ugly
head.*

Moments later: We follow Jake as he walks to his garage apartment. His duffel and arms filled with possessions. He makes his way up the stairs.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Sisyphus's punishment was to push
the boulder for eternity.*

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Jake's door creaks open. It's extremely dark inside.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Was the method dictated to him? Or
could he adjust, develop tools?*

FLICK. A bare overhead bulb is flicked on, revealing-
Jake's gutted apartment. Only a few of his belongings remain.

JAKE (V.O.)
His task was impossible.

He sets his retrieved items on the floor in the middle of the room.

JAKE (V.O.)
*Did he choose to suffer because he
thought it was more noble?*

The search wall has been mostly torn down, a few pieces of it remain. Jake moves toward it.

We hold tight on him as he studies the tatters of his search.

JAKE (V.O.)
*I have made it a point to fight
sickness. In doing so, I've denied
the truth:*

Later: the jellyfish lazily pulses in its aquarium bag. Jake's finger swirls in the water above its crown. After a few orbits, he retrieves his finger and closes the bag.

Jake has his recorder raised-

JAKE

The world *is* sickness. I need to
find a way to continue my search.
Necessity is the mother of
invention.

Small in the empty apartment, Jake watches his jellyfish.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE, TRAVIS HEIGHTS -- MORNING

INSERT CUT: BUTTONS ON SHIRT CUFFS ARE FASTENED.

Tight: Jake leans against a car, half asleep.

A door shuts somewhere. It brings Jake into the moment, his
eyes snap open.

He is sitting on the ground, leaned against a LEXUS LS. His
duffel is next to him.

Footsteps approach the car from the other side.

It's unlocked and a driver enters.

Jake quickly scrambles from the ground and enters the
passenger side-

INT. FREDAS'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Jake falls into the seat next to Fredas. Terrified, Fredas
nearly spills his thermos.

FREDAS

Woah!

JAKE

Morning.

FREDAS

What- what are you doing here?

JAKE

Wanted to talk to you.

FREDAS

How'd you find out where I-

JAKE

Internet.

Jake looks around the interior.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Seventy thousand dollars does feel nice. I get it.

FREDAS
What do you want?

JAKE
To talk.

FREDAS
We have nothing to talk about.

JAKE
Sure we do. We need to talk about what I get after you and I go to Macintosh's tonight.

FREDAS
..."You and I?"

JAKE
You're going to help me get close to him.

FREDAS
No, I won't?

JAKE
You will. Because if you don't, you're going to worry about what's in your food, drinks, toothpaste, (indicates the thermos) Coffee the rest of your life.

FREDAS
Tea.

JAKE
Okay. Tea. All I need from you is to get me into his house. You go there to talk about the sale, promotion, I don't care. Let me in the back door when he isn't looking. I dose his drink, I leave. He never knows it's happened.

Fredas looks at Jake like he's deranged. His gaze shifts and he waves. Jake turns.

Fredas's neighbor, an OLDER WOMAN, suspiciously eyes them.

Jake waves.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So?

FREDAS

So I do this or you poison me?

JAKE

(back to Fredas)

That's pretty much it.

Fredas runs through the idea...

JAKE (CONT'D)

Think about what he did. What the patients will go through. For money... I know you've seen what AIDS does.

FREDAS

(angry, cutting)

-Yes. I'm aware.

(nods, calms himself)

I'll help you. I suppose it's fair.

JAKE

Great. One more thing: I want a line from your labs. You just do what Aurelia was doing. Get me small volumes of whatever I specify. Nothing crazy.

FREDAS

You know I could still turn you over to the police?

JAKE

Sure. Then Macintosh gets to live his best life, immune system intact.

FREDAS

...I hesitate to say this, but at this point I might as well do it alone.

JAKE

True. But now, I want to do it.

Fredas looks Jake over, trying to understand what has changed within him.

FREDAS
Okay. Is that it?

JAKE
Yeah.

A beat. Their business concluded, Jake leans back in the seat.

FREDAS
I have to go to work now.

JAKE
Pick me up tonight, we'll go there together.

FREDAS
Pick you up where?

JAKE
I'll send an address.

He moves to leave, then stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Actually, you mind if I ride with you? I need to get to the east side-
(off Fredas's glare)
Never mind, I'll figure something out.

He leaves the car. The door shuts-

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTH CONGRESS (MATCHING TRACK) -- DAY

We track alongside Jake as he walks South Congress in profile. Amongst tourists.

EXT. DOWNTOWN (MATCHING TRACK) -- DAY

We track alongside Jake as he walks downtown Austin. Amongst business people and the occasional homeless.

EXT. CAESAR CHAVEZ (MATCHING TRACK) -- DAY

We track alongside Jake as he heads down Caesar Chavez. Newish bars and restaurants interspersed amongst older, smaller hispanic businesses.

EXT. MS. JENKIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

We track alongside Jake as he moves through an old east side neighborhood. Old houses beyond repair are being outnumbered by larger, more recent McMansions. Jake turns off the sidewalk and approaches Ms. Jenkin's house.

INSERT: Jake knocks on the door.

He studies the overgrown lawn. Details of the house.

The door opens, revealing Ms. Jenkins-

MS. JENKINS
You came the other day.

JAKE
I know. I'm here to tell you that I
can't sell you insulin anymore, Ms.
Jenkins.

MS. JENKINS
Why not?

JAKE
I can't afford it.

MS. JENKINS
I'm sorry that I don't have money-

JAKE
It's not that. I'm not making
enough to support myself, so I've
decided to make some changes.

She looks at him. Impossible to say whether she understands.

JAKE (CONT'D)
I can recommend some collectives
that help people like you.

MS. JENKINS
Okay then.

He hands her a piece of paper.

JAKE
In the meantime, I'm giving you
what insulin I have left.

He reaches into his duffel and hands her a few vials of insulin.

JAKE (CONT'D)

That, combined with what I sold you the other day, should last about three months. You need to find somebody else to supply you before then, okay?

(points to the paper)

Call the people there, they can help you.

MS. JENKINS

...Times are tough, huh?

JAKE

Yeah. They are.

MS. JENKINS

I'm not sure where I went wrong. To have these problems.

JAKE

I don't think you did anything wrong... Call those people, okay? They run a good project.

MS. JENKINS

Okay.

JAKE

Good luck Ms. Jenkins.

MS. JENKINS

You too.

-The door shuts.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP FLOOR, 401 CONGRESS PARKING GARAGE -- SUNSET

We're in the middle of downtown, about seven stories up. Perfect glass and steel reflect the sunset.

Jake stands against the edge of the concrete barrier. He studies the jellyfish in its aquarium bag.

He carefully places the jellyfish into the duffel at his feet and retrieves his voice recorder.

He looks out at the city, takes a deep breath, and hits record-

JAKE

My name is Jacob Hughes. I'm thirty years old. To whoever finds this; know that I tried to live a life that was...

He lowers the recorder and thinks, unsure of what to say.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm selfish. Definitely. But I've always tried to help the people that nobody else would. Because I'm one of them.

As he speaks he looks down at the city. Cars and pedestrians move through the street.

Jake's gaze shifts lower, to the back of his hand. We PUSH IN on his skin. We get tighter and tighter... until his skin fills the frame. We continue to push... Move through the skin and into his BLOOD...

MICROSCOPIC SHOT of VEINS. Like city streets. RED BLOOD CELLS move like people. FLOWING, OOZING...

JAKE (V.O.)

I know that it's out there in the tangle. I've decided that if my principles don't take me closer to the cure, then of what use are they? My life is a failed experiment.

Back with Jake on the edge of the garage:

JAKE

But I can't stop.

He lowers the recorder, unsatisfied.

He raises it again.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I guess- I guess that's all there is.

Alone, framed against the city.

Tears well in his eyes.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

He looks at the buildings, people, cars laid out before him.
He sets the recorder on the ledge.

The moment is broken by the sound of a car approaching from behind.

He watches Aurelia's car pull into a parking space.

Aurelia exits.

She walks toward him. The world is silent save her footsteps echoing off the concrete as she approaches.

She stands next to Jake and looks out at the city, aglow in the light of the setting sun.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Didn't think you'd come.

AURELIA
Sorry to disappoint.

He smiles.

She tosses him Fredas's vial-

AURELIA (CONT'D)
So. You're really going to do it?

JAKE
Yeah.

AURELIA
Thanks I guess.

JAKE
It's not for you- *just* for you...
Don't suppose you're in the market
for a jellyfish?

AURELIA
There's a policy at our apartment:
no deadly pets.

JAKE
Thought I'd ask.

...

JAKE (CONT'D)
Look. I just wanted to say that I'm
sorry.

AURELIA

For what?

JAKE

Everything. I made you help me.
Dragged you into my fucked up
world. It's why we're here now.

AURELIA

You're a smart guy, but you never
got it. Jake...

The words don't come. Her eyes drift to Jake's recorder on the ledge.

She extends her arm.

Jake hands her the recorder.

She backs away a few steps and, while looking at Jake, speaks into the recorder. She covers her mouth. Her eyes well as she whispers something into the device. Only the sounds of the city.

The moment is over and she collects herself, approaches Jake again.

She sets the recorder back on the ledge.

AURELIA (CONT'D)

Well.

JAKE

Well.

AURELIA

I should go home.
(she smiles, begins to
back away)
Gotta eat dinner, go to bed, go to
work, get home, eat dinner, go to
bed, and do it all again. Goodbye
Jake. Good luck.

She turns and walks to her car. Gets in.

Jake watches her drive away.

He looks back to the city, now darker.

He picks up the recorder. His finger hovers over the "PLAY" button, considers...

The recorder is set back on the ledge. He walks away from it.

As the sound of his footsteps recedes, we hold on the recorder, framed against the city...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, BELOW 401 CONGRESS PARKING GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake exits the garage building and walks to Fredas's Lexus, waiting on the street.

Jake enters the passenger seat.

A moment, then the car pulls away.

INT. FREDAS'S CAR, LEAVING AUSTIN -- CONTINUOUS

Jake and Fredas ride together in silence, both looking at the road ahead.

Jake looks in the back seat, reaches for something, comes up with a small RECTANGULAR BOX with a silver bow.

JAKE

This it?

FREDAS

Silver Oak Cab, 2012. The year I started on the project.

JAKE

You're a poet, Dr. Fredas Jacoby.

FREDAS

He likes wine.

JAKE

You're sure nobody will be home?

FREDAS

No. He just stays here when he's in town for business.

JAKE

(scoffs)

Just one of his houses, huh?

FREDAS

Go through it one more time.

JAKE

Park out front on the street. Wait a minute while I go around to the back of the house. Then, you ring the doorbell and get inside. Do whatever you can to get to the back and let me in. I get in and pour this in his drink-

(he holds up the vial)

I leave and wait by the car. You make sure he drinks it. We drive away into the sunset.

FREDAS

...Jesus. We're doing it.

EXT. FREDAS'S CAR, HILLS WEST OF AUSTIN -- CONTINUOUS

Headlights cut through the darkness on a winding road. Wild. Empty.

JAKE (O.S.)

Are you having doubts?

FREDAS (O.S.)

No. Fuck him.

JAKE (O.S.)

Just checking.

The headlights slow and pull to the side of the road.

INT. FREDAS'S CAR, MACINTOSH'S STREET -- CONTINUOUS

Fredas turns the car off. Jake pockets the vial. They sit in silence for a moment...

JAKE

Okay. Here we go.

He opens the door-

EXT. FREDAS'S CAR, MACINTOSH'S STREET -- CONTINUOUS

-exits the car and begins to walk toward Macintosh's house. The car creeps forward, passing him.

Jake turns, walks up Macintosh's driveway much like before.

EXT. DRIVEWAY, MAINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake walks up the driveway.

He ducks behind the SUV and glides along its black reflective surface opposite the house. He passes the garage and the gate that leads to the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake quickly moves along the pool, further from the house. He keeps his eyes on the interior, visible through the large glass windows.

He kneels on the ground beside some shrub on the far side of the pool.

IN THE HOUSE: Nothing.

Jake looks around the brush. Then back to the house.

IN THE HOUSE: Macintosh enters and approaches the front door. He opens it and beckons Fredas in. They exchange greetings and Fredas holds up the box of wine. More conversation.

In the brush, Jake turns and looks at the lights of downtown, wavering in the atmosphere. The only sounds are his breathing and the wind.

IN THE HOUSE: Fredas opens the box and displays the wine bottle. He asks Macintosh something. Macintosh thinks a moment, then leaves the room and our sight.

As soon as he does, Fredas sets the wine down and rushes to the doors that lead to the pool and unlocks them, he retreats further into the house after Macintosh.

Jake stands.

He quickly jogs alongside the pool toward the house.

Jake silently opens the doors and enters-

INT. KITCHEN, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

He shuts the doors behind him.

He listens. Fredas speaks to Macintosh. Their voices growing louder as they approach.

Jake looks to the empty wineglasses.

The voices continue their approach.

Jake rushes to a nearby door, silently enters and closes it behind him.

INT. BATHROOM, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake leans against the bathroom door and listens to the voices on the other side-

FREDAS (O.S.)

Look, Jonas. I think there's good evidence that if we took it further along-

MACINTOSH (O.S.)

-I hear what you're saying. I do. I don't want it to happen either. But right now I have to do what's best for the company.

FREDAS (O.S.)

We could keep costs down. Partner on trials-

MACINTOSH (O.S.)

-Come on, Fredas. It's done. You didn't really come here thinking you could change the course, did you?

Jake looks around the bathroom. Clean and large.

FREDAS (O.S.)

-What about the people we could help?! Think of them!

MACINTOSH (O.S.)

I'm the CEO of the company. It bears my name. I have a responsibility to the shareholders. We take this further, it doesn't pan out, we're done for. No, we sell and live to fight another day.

FREDAS (O.S.)

Jonas. I'm begging you, do the right thing.

MACINTOSH (O.S.)

I am doing the right thing. Just a different right thing.

Jake retreats further into the bathroom and the voices become muffled and indistinct.

He enters the shower, pulls out his phone and texts Fredas:

"Didn't have time. I'm in the bathroom. Get him out of the room."

He lowers the phone, exhales deeply.

He shuts the shower curtain. The plastic liner waves a strange pattern, hypnotic... BLURRING SLIGHTLY...

Jake blinks.

The pattern persists. A strange hallucinatory aura.

He backs into the wall opposite, horrified. The slow tidal pull of dread. He whispers-

JAKE

Fuck...

The bathroom door opens, closes, locks.

Jake is silent. He listens as somebody moves on the other side of the shower curtain. Feet shuffle, turn. A shadowy silhouette moves.

Jake holds his breath...

The curtain is slid backwards- Macintosh. Startled, he almost falls backward.

An awkward stillness...

Macintosh breaks the moment by rushing for the bathroom door. Jake springs from the shower and grabs Macintosh from behind.

Macintosh clumsily falls to the ground. The bathroom door shakes as Fredas tries to enter.

Jake and Macintosh scramble on the ground awkwardly.

MACINTOSH

Help! Fredas!

A twisting of limbs. The world BLURS slightly. Eventually, Jake pins Macintosh on the ground and sits on his chest. His legs pin Macintosh's arms to the floor. Both men pant desperately.

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Help! Call the police! Help!

Jake is panicked. The bathroom door still shakes. As he leans to the door, Macintosh almost struggles free. Jake unlocks it and stabilizes on top of Macintosh again.

The door flies open-

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Fredas!

Fredas stands above Jake and Macintosh.

FREDAS

Shit!

MACINTOSH

Help me!

Fredas is frozen to the spot. He looks at Macintosh.

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Fredas?

The energy slowly dies as revelation dawns on Macintosh. He cranes his neck upward to look at Fredas, who still stands in the doorframe, motionless.

As the realization of Fredas's involvement dawns on him, horror is written on his face...

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

What's- What's going on?

FREDAS

...Would you patent the sun?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- LATER

Macintosh is clumsily tied to a chair with neckties.

Jake and Fredas sit on a couch opposite. Jake has his head in his hands.

MACINTOSH

Have you lost your mind Fredas?

FREDAS

(to Jake)

What now?

Nothing.

FREDAS (CONT'D)

Hey.

JAKE

I'm thinking.

MACINTOSH

You can't think your way out of this.

Macintosh studies Jake.

MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

I know you...

JAKE

Yeah, the restaurant.

MACINTOSH

You spilled wine on me.

(to Fredas)

Something was happening then too.

FREDAS

Something is always happening, whether you see it or not.

JAKE

Fredas.

MACINTOSH

Oh your poor bleeding heart.

JAKE

Let's talk.

Jake stands and heads to the kitchen. Fredas follows.

INT. KITCHEN, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake picks up one of the still full wine glasses, noses it. He's impressed with the quality.

Fredas enters the kitchen after him-

FREDAS

What are we going to do?

Jake looks around the kitchen, absentminded.

He glides his hand over the marble countertop.

JAKE
I'm going to do whatever it takes
to walk out of here.

FREDAS
So... what?

JAKE
If something happens to him,
there's no reason for people to
suspect you of anything, right?

FREDAS
Don't joke. We need to figure this
out.

JAKE
I'm not joking.

Fredas doesn't respond.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Right now, it's him or us... I'll
be the one to do it. I just want
one thing from you.

FREDAS
What?

JAKE
I want you to hire me. I want a
position in your lab. You give me
that, we live to fight another day.

...

JAKE (CONT'D)
There's no other way out of here
without us losing everything.

Fredas collapses into a nearby chair. He cradles his head in
his hands, desperate to wake up from the nightmare.

FREDAS
That can't be right.

JAKE
Doesn't matter what's right. This
is about survival. You wanna
survive?

Fredas nods.

FREDAS

...How?

JAKE

Get my bag from the car-

MOMENTS LATER: Fredas enters with Jake's duffel. He hands it to Jake, who sets it on the countertop.

Jake unzips the bag and pulls the aquarium bag from inside. He holds it aloft.

JAKE (CONT'D)

An autopsy in central Texas won't check for jellyfish venom. It's going to look like cardiac arrest, because it will be.

The jellyfish pulses, ignorant...

FREDAS

Will it hurt?

JAKE

Who fucking cares?

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake and Fredas enter. Jake holds the aquarium bag. They stop, surprised. We WHIP to the the chair that held Macintosh. It's EMPTY.

Jake sets the jellyfish on the couch and runs from the room-

JAKE

Does he have a gun?

FREDAS

Shit! I don't know!

JAKE

Make sure he didn't go outside!

Fredas and Jake rush out of the room in different directions.

INT. HALLWAY, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Jake runs down the hallway. He listens for Macintosh as he approaches a closed door on his right.

He throws the door open and flicks on the lights. An empty guest bedroom.

He continues down the hall, checking doors along the way.

NOISE from above- a door closing, faint. He stops. Listens.

Jake runs up the stairs-

INT. SECOND FLOOR, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

-and into and upstairs living room. The image begins to BLUR and SMEAR slightly. It becomes progressively more noticeable.

Jake surveys the space. Nothing reveals Macintosh's presence. He slowly moves forward, senses heightened. Closed doors.

He creeps forward. Nothing.

Jake throws open the nearest door- a storage closet.

He moves to the next door, tries it- LOCKED.

Jake pounds on the door.

JAKE

Fredas! I'm up here! Bring the
jellyfish!

He kicks it. Nothing. Kicks it again and falls into:

INT. MACINTOSH'S BEDROOM, MACINTOSH'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

The momentum from his kick carries him to the ground. The BLURRING is more distinct now.

WHACK!

He's hit over the back of the head with a LAMP.

The blurring increases with the hit. Jake grabs Macintosh's legs and forces him to the ground. Macintosh swings the lamp wildly and catches Jake on the shoulder, causing Jake's grip to loosen.

Macintosh scrambles away, he grabs his phone, raises it to his ear-

MACINTOSH

Hello? Yes there's-

Jake lands on Macintosh, pinning his right arm to the ground. He hits the end call button-

JAKE

Fredas-

The blurring is intense. The room becomes harder and harder to distinguish. Macintosh squirms and fights under Jake. He screams and yells but the words aren't clear.

Abstractions of color vibrate and pulse. The worst attack Jake has had.

Through the BLURRING, SWIRLING CHAOS: Fredas holds THE JELLYFISH in Jake's face.

Jake is wrapped around Macintosh's left arm, forcing it to extend into the air, while sitting on his chest.

Macintosh pounds desperately on Jake's back. Fighting like an animal.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Untie...

Fredas fumbles with the bag, untying it.

He finally manages and hands the bag to Jake.

Macintosh SCREAMS as his arm is forced toward the open bag-

Macintosh's hand shakes water from the bag as the jellyfish is forced closer. A beautiful abstraction of color. Macintosh's balled fist moves lower into the bag and comes in contact with the TENTACLES.

Macintosh winces with a burning pain. His scream becomes an EXTENDED, DISTORTED TONE, lasting throughout the scene.

We're tight inside the bag. Orange and red transparent tentacles, chaotic in the swirling water. Macintosh's muscles tighten involuntarily. Jake does whatever he can to keep him in contact with the jellyfish.

Fredas is hunched over both of them, speaking into the phone, returning the 911 call that Macintosh started. His desperate, horrified face is barely visible through the blurring.

FLASHES:

MICROSCOPIC VIEW of POISON ENTERING MACINTOSH'S BLOODSTREAM. AURELIA'S FACE. A HOSPITAL BILL. MICROSCOPIC INSULIN. An EMPTY WHEELCHAIR. CONCRETE. JELLYFISH. MICROSCOPIC BLOOD. UNFOCUSED CHAOS-

The flashes stop. Barely perceptible, Macintosh stops struggling and Jake falls from on top of him. Fredas hangs up and tosses the phone aside. He looks down at Jake, into his eyes.

The world fades to...

...BLACK.

The chaotic rhythm of his attack morphs into a different, familiar sound...

A mechanical chugging, building to a monstrous volume...

CUT TO:

INT. AURELIA'S APARTMENT -- WEEKS LATER

A perfectly intact WASHING MACHINE finishes its cycle, slowing to a stop. A man enters and reaches inside, removes something.

We TILT UP to reveal: JAKE. Cleaner, healthier looking. His posture even seems improved. The opening guitar of *The Equatics' Merry Go Round* begins to play...

He reaches in and moves the washed clothes to a dryer, tosses in a dryer sheet.

From the mirror's perspective: He completes the finishing touches on a business casual outfit. He buttons the top of his dress shirt then slips on a jacket. The apartment behind him is clean, clinical. Boring. A typical downtown Austin apartment.

He moves to a new, larger AQUARIUM for his jellyfish and feeds it brine shrimp. He watches the jellyfish pulse and float lazily as the brine shrimp cloud the water above it. The purple/blue light washes onto Jake's face. He smiles.

A hand rests on his shoulder. He looks up-

AURELIA (O.S.)

Ready?

He stands, puts on a shoulder bag, grabs his things from the counter and follows Aurelia out the front door. The door closes-

BLACK.

THE END.