

Bender

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. A JUNGLE - DUSK

THE CAMERA glides through a dense, foggy, PLASTIC JUNGLE. An ornate MATTE BACKDROP, giant fake TREES, rubber VINES. Pre-recorded background noise of jungle creatures. Then A VOICE with gravitas...

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Nowadays, we think the heart of civilization is where innovation happens. Technology is what drives our species forward. Progress is the pulse that feeds our momentum.

We crawl slowly in to a romantically lit CLEARING in the "jungle."

CHARLIE (V.O.)

From what I've learned. From what I've discovered. The heart of civilization lies in one of those lost, empty recesses once populated by the brutal collision of innovation and man's primal instinct.

A VIETNAM-ERA AMERICAN SOLDIER (25, handsome, strong) carrying a RIFLE pushes through the jungle brush, stops abruptly, and stares directly into THE CAMERA.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

In such a place, value can only be measured by a citizen's willingness to let go of his past and allow his natural tendencies to take over.

The soldier jerks his rifle up to his shoulder and aims it at the camera. He trembles uncontrollably.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

This man - no, this beast - I have found...

Another voice interrupts.

JANET (V.O.)

Oh my god.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
I have found him to be one of the  
purest...

JANET (V.O.)  
Charlie.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
I have found him to be...

JANET (V.O.)  
...you're kidding me.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
the purest specimen of a dead....

Charlie's voice trails off into silence.

The soldier drops his rifle and shrugs at the camera.

JANET (V.O.)  
Charlie!

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
What?!

CUT TO:

INT. A CAFE - DAY

CHARLIE (30s, handsome, rested) sits across from JANET (30s, sharp, African-American) at a cafe. Next to Charlie and Janet is a large glass window looking out onto the sidewalk.

Charlie holds a thin stack of papers. He throws it down on the table.

CHARLIE  
Can I finish?

JANET  
What are you doing?

CHARLIE  
It's the beginning.

JANET  
But why are you reading it?

CHARLIE  
I rewrote it. What do you think?

JANET  
You know what I think, Charlie?

Janet downs the rest of her espresso.

CHARLIE  
Do you get a sense of the scene?  
Like is the jungle, jungle-y  
enough?

Janet deeply massages her temples.

JANET  
Listen, I have to get back to the  
office.

CHARLIE  
Can I at least finish?

JANET  
No.

CHARLIE  
Excuse me?

JANET  
No.

CHARLIE  
I thought we were going to stay  
amicable. We said amicable.

JANET  
Well, you're part time.

CHARLIE  
What are you saying?

JANET  
I have case work to do. That's what  
I'm saying. I don't have time for  
this is ALSO what I'm saying. And,  
in closing, I have to be in  
litigation next week and  
you...don't.

CHARLIE  
I'm lost. Did you like it?

JANET  
I'll see you later. Much to my  
chagrin.

CHARLIE  
Hey, we said amicable.

JANET  
When was the last time you were in  
litigation, Charlie?

CHARLIE  
Um.

Charlie squints at tilts his head. He's really digging  
through his memory. He begins smacking his lips and making  
an unbearable humming sound.

JANET  
Oh Jesus Christ.

CHARLIE  
Last April. I think.

JANET  
A year. OVER a year. Do you see why  
I don't have time for you?

Charlies eyes drop towards his manuscript.

CHARLIE  
Does it at least sound different?

Janet, with her middle finger, begins slowly but forcefully  
tapping her forehead.

JANET  
You've had over a year of what is,  
essentially, vacation. Surely this  
has been enough time to meet one  
other person more qualified than  
myself to judge your shitty novel.

CHARLIE  
I feel like this is about something  
else.

Janet's eyes nearly bulge out of her head.

JANET  
What?

CHARLIE  
Is this about Harper Collins?

Janet stands up and removes the purse from the back of her chair. She slings the purse over he shoulder while shaking her head.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Because it's not like we were up  
against each other. It wasn't -  
like - you or me.

JANET  
CRACKER!

CHARLIE  
Cracker?

Janet leans over a table and spits the following right into Charlie's face.

JANET  
Yes! Cracker. I don't know what  
else to call you because they  
haven't come up with a better word  
to hurt white people with yet.

CHARLIE  
Can we rewind?

JANET  
TO WHEN?! To a time when I could  
STAND you?

CHARLIE  
(Chiming)  
Amicable.

JANET  
Listen you amicable cracker, you  
want to play hooky from your job,  
please do it AWAY from my FACE.

CHARLIE  
But we work together.

JANET  
And I'm trying so hard to get over  
that fact. Just please keep your  
dumb novel out of the office.

Janet turns around, pauses, and begins walking away.

CHARLIE  
Janet! Wait!

Janet turns back towards Charlie.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
I really do want to talk. About us.

Janet blinks, unmoved. She storms off. Charlie watches her.

Through the glass window next to Charlie, we see Janet giving him the finger.

Charlie gasps and runs his hands through his hair. He leans back in his seat. He gazes at his manuscript. Charlie's hand cautiously floats through the air and flips the first page as JUNGLE NOISES fade in again.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
(Reading)  
The purest specimen of a dead breed  
that knows what it means to fight  
for one's life.

FADE TO:

EXT. A JUNGLE - DUSK

Charlie's voice continues narrating as we fade back to the jungle. This time the camera follows the soldier as he creeps through the treacherous landscape, waving his rifle methodically from side to side.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
War is his natural habitat. Death  
is the promise that ushers him to  
sleep each night. Fear is the  
chemical that hardens his flesh to  
stone.

The soldier comes to a small stream. He kneels beside it. He pulls a flask from his utility belt and begins emptying it into the stream.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
He has no friends or even allies.  
He can be judged by no moral  
categories as he exists in his own  
world of understanding. He is an  
empty bottle floating in an endless  
sea of strange tides.

The soldier stands up, crosses over the stream, and advances further into the jungle.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
He is no one. A forgotten ghost. A  
fading echo...

As Charlie reads these final lines, the jungle MELTS into BLACKNESS, engulfing the soldier.

CUT TO:

INT. A CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie closes the manuscript. He stares at it. Taps it, nervously.

Charlie produces a flask. He sips from it. He flips the manuscript open. Holds. Tears out the first page, crumples it, and throws it against the window next to him.

Charlie stares out the window at the street and takes along drink from his flask.

CHARLIE  
Shit.

HOLD ON CHARLIE

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATER

Charlie strolls down a bright BEVERLY HILLS sidewalk. He sticks his hand out to the side and grazes his finger against the side of the building. He looks up at the sun.

Charlie skips on. He begins to slow. Stops.

Charlie reaches into his breast pocket and pulls out a JOINT. He pops it in his mouth. He pauses. He takes it back out. He tilts his head from side to side. He pops the joint back in his mouth. He lights it.

SUDDENLY, everything is brighter.

Charlie smiles at TWO ELDERLY WOMEN passing by. They smile back.

Charlie notices a HOMELESS MAN some fifty feet in front of him. The man is having violent anger spasms, walking in a small circle, muttering to himself.



Charlie actively tries not to make eye contact. He slows a little bit and his steps become more controlled.

As Charlie approaches the homeless man, Charlie conspicuously turns away and sidesteps the homeless man.

Charlie sighs with relief. Charlie takes another large hit from his joint.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Charlie is standing in an ELEVATOR staring at the NUMBERED LIGHTS as they illuminate one by one. He squints at them, amused. He smiles like an idiot.

SEVERAL MEN IN SUITS stand around Charlie. The men stare at him with disdain and confusion.

The elevator stops.

Charlie chuckles and hops out of the elevator.

The suited men judge him as he exits into the hallway.

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A modern, busy, Ikea-clad law office.

Charlie struts up to CLAIRE (late 20s, cute, mousy) sitting at her desk typing.

CLAIRE  
Hey Charlie!

Charlie grabs a stack of mail from Claire's desk.

CLAIRE  
Oh!

Claire snatches the mail away from Charlie.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
I was going to bring you that later.

CHARLIE  
Can't I just have it now.

Claire looks at the mail, then up at Charlie. She is beginning to sweat.

CLAIRE

Uh, OK.

Claire's arm juts out at Charlie. He grabs the mail and begins opening a letter.

CHARLIE

Claire, am I a dick?

CLAIRE

Don't make me answer that.

CHARLIE

Alright! Message received.

Charlie folds open a letter and begins scanning its contents.

CLAIRE

You just maybe don't care as much as you maybe should.

CHARLIE

I said message received.

CLAIRE

And maybe you don't work as hard as anyone else in this office or even come close to putting in the work that...

CHARLIE

(Interrupting)

Alright, good talk Claire.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, Charlie. I'm just repeating what everyone says.

CHARLIE

Great. Great talk. Good, good talk.

Charlie taps Claire's desk.

Claire rifles through some papers and then hands one to Charlie.

CLAIRE

Here's your boarding pass. And your luggage is in your office.

CHARLIE

Perfect.

CLAIRE

I really don't think you're a dick.

CHARLIE

Thanks Claire.

CLAIRE

It's just the general consensus.

CHARLIE

Alright.

Charlie nods and then walks off.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie enters his office. He walks over to his desk and looks down at the disorganized pile of papers cover it's surface.

Charlie looks around for a second and spots his suitcase. Charlie grabs it and flings it on to his desk chair. He unzips the bag and briefly peruses its contents.

Charlie turns back around to his desk and slowly pulls open a drawer. He reaches way into the back of the drawer and carefully removes a HAND GRENADE. Charlie examines it for a second and then buries it amongst the clothes in his suitcase. He zips the suitcase closed and sets it next to his desk.

Charlie stares at the papers for a moment and then claps his hands together. He smashes all the papers into one massive clump and, hands full, fumbles open another desk drawer. Charlie begins forcefully stuffing the papers into the drawer and then dusts his desk off with his hand.

Charlie's eyes drop back to the open drawer of papers. He squats down to examine it. He grabs a single sheet from the top of the drawer and holds it up to his face, reading it closely as his brow furrows.

CUT TO:

INT. LAW OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlie marches up to Claire's desk holding out the piece of paper.

CHARLIE

Do you know what this is?

Charlie hands Claire a letter. She squints, reading it.

CLAIRE

Oh yeah! That's your final notice  
from Harper Collins.

CHARLIE

Final what?

Charlie looks up around the office as Claire begins talking.

CLAIRE

Yeah, remember the letters from  
their legal team saying if you  
don't start meeting draft  
deadlines, they would start seeking  
legal repossession of your  
advances.

Charlie, scanning the floor, locks eyes with a very stern Janet. They have a momentary staring contest. Janet is determined and pissed. Charlie admits defeat and swings his focus back to Claire.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry what? Repossession of my  
advances?

CLAIRE

They're going to start taking their  
money back if you don't finish the  
book. The other three notices have  
been on your desk for weeks.

CHARLIE

(Whining)

I haven't looked at my desk in  
weeks!

Charlie gets dizzy and sinks to the floor. He leans on Claire's desk.

Claire scoots her chair up behind Charlie and begins giving him a scalp massage.

CLAIRE

Hey! Don't worry. The trial's this week and you get to see Michael and you get to go to Knoxville! Yay!

CHARLIE

You're right. I need a break.

CLAIRE

That's not what I said.

Claire stops massaging Charlie.

CHARLIE

Ugh, but can't I relax just a little?

CLAIRE

It's your trip, Charlie. It's your book. I don't care as long as you keep paying me.

CHARLIE

I can't wait till it's over.

CLAIRE

The trial or the book?

CHARLIE

Both. Either. My sensibilities are just too fragile for all this.

Charlie slides around on the floor to face Claire.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Do you know what its like to write about murder all day? I'm sick constantly. I have night terrors. I haven't had sex in days. And now I have to go stare at that MONSTER in the flesh all week. Maybe all month. I can't -- I just can't. I'm all out of energy.

Claire sinks off of her chair onto the floor and takes Charlie's hands.

CLAIRE

Hey. So this isn't your thing. So it turns out writing sucks. So maybe you're not a good lawyer - like - at all...I don't know where I'm going with this.

Charlie lets out a whimper.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
It'll be okay. We get to see  
Michael! Yay!

Charlie leans his head on Claire's shoulder

CHARLIE  
Thanks Claire.

They sit in silence for a moment. Then, Claire begins  
sliding away from Charlie.

CLAIRE  
I have to finish a bunch of work.  
But I'll see you in Knoxville.

CHARLIE  
Right. See you then.

FADE TO:

INT. AIRPORT - LATER

Charlie stands in the SECURITY LINE at the airport. Step by  
step, he advances forward. Charlie glances to the side to  
the large window facing the exterior SIDEWALK.

OUTSIDE, three WORKERS are violently ripping dead branches  
off of a palm tree. One of the workers throws a rope up into  
the tree, around a branch. They all tug at the rope till a  
branch tears from the tree. Each branch hits the ground with  
a CRACK. The laborers then grab MACHETES and begin HACKING  
the dead branch into pieces.

INT. AIRPLANE - EVENING

Charlie sits in his airplane seat glancing around the cabin.  
He looks down at his TRAY-TABLE upon which sits his  
manuscript. He flips through it for a moment. He picks a  
page. He takes out a red pen and makes some small  
corrections on the page.

Then, an electronic click over the airplane PA.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Ladies and gentlemen, we'll be  
touching down in Nashville in about  
forty-five minutes. Please use this  
time to take one final trip to the  
(MORE)

CAPTAIN (O.S.) (cont'd)  
restroom, turn of your electronics,  
and finish your novel.

Charlie glances up. He shakes it off.

Charlie clicks off his seat belt and stands from his seat.  
He walks up the aisle.

Charlie gets to the airplane BATHROOM. He jiggles the door.  
It is locked. He waits.

After a second of waiting, A SOLDIER walks up behind  
Charlie. Charlie turns around and silently gestures towards  
the door. The soldier cocks his head, confused.

CHARLIE  
Someone's in there.

The soldier nods. Charlie sighs and flashes a lipless smile  
at the soldier. Charlie bobs his head awkwardly for a  
moment. The soldier simply stands at attention, staring  
intently at Charlie.

THE BATHROOM DOOR clicks open. There's a rustling then BANG!  
The door slams open. An old man hobbles past Charlie and the  
soldier.

Charlie enters the bathroom and slides the door shut behind  
him.

INT. AIRPLANE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie unbuckles his belt. He removes his WALLET from his  
back pocket and throws it on the SINK COUNTER. He starts to  
pull down his pants when...

BANG! The bathroom door slides open. The soldier quickly  
slips into the bathroom. Charlie jumps back, pinning himself  
to the opposite wall from the soldier. The soldier slams the  
door shut behind him.

The soldier chuckles for a second, breathing heavily. He  
looks around nervously. Charlie is shaking.

The soldier unbuckles his belt and then puts his hand around  
Charlie's waist. Charlie grabs the soldier's hand tightly  
and forces it away.

CHARLIE  
Um, I'm sorry. I...

The looking of shock and embarrassment washes over the soldier's face.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
I'm not. It's okay. But - yeah.

SOLDIER  
No. No. I just...

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry if I...

SOLDIER  
Nope. Totally my bad.

CHARLIE  
It's okay. I mean - it's...no worries.

SOLDIER  
Um.

The soldier buckles his belt and then clumsily stumbles backwards out of the bathroom.

Charlie remains frozen against the wall for a moment. He slowly pushes himself up. He stares into the mirror and then gets a violent shiver down his spine. As Charlie stares at his reflection.

Charlie removes his phone from his pocket and begins recording a memo.

FADE TO:

EXT. A PLASTIC JUNGLE - DUSK

We are back in the jungle. Jungle sounds fade in. The camera spins revealing FOUR YOUNG SOLDIERS (two African-American and two white) smoking cigarettes and shaking with fear.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
In the jungles, death is just a job  
to these men.

The camera spins more to reveal THE HANDSOME SOLDIER from the opening. He scans his fellow troops then RIPS his DOG TAGS off his neck. He clenches them in his hand for a moment and then throws them into the mud.



CHARLIE (V.O.)

It is a muscular reflex they rely on in order to survive...But for infantry division two-forty-eight, death would not look them in the face.

The camera spins back to the four soldiers. Three of them extinguish their cigarettes and rip their dog tags off. The final African-American soldier continues smoking.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Rather, it would sneak up on them, like a snake hiding amidst the vines.

The handsome soldier walks right up to the African-American soldier and they lock eyes. The African-American soldier grips his gun tight. They continue staring each other down.

HOLD then...

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie stops the recording on his phone. He looks down at the screen. He holds for a second and then deletes the file.

INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - EVENING

Charlie waits at the LUGGAGE CAROUSEL watching each bag go by. He looks to his left and locks eyes with the soldier from the bathroom. They awkwardly nod at each other.

Charlie looks back at the carousel. He sees his suitcase and grabs it. He begins wheeling it towards the exit. He stops. A row of LIMO DRIVERS stand before him holding signs with various names.

Charlie scans each driver than spots one holding a sign that reads "Kilpatrick." He points at THE DRIVER and then waves. The driver nods back. Charlie advances towards him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

A TOWN CAR pulls up outside of the fanciest Knoxville hotel. Waiting at the curb is MICHAEL (late 30s, tall, put-together).

Charlie emerges from the back of the limo and yanks his suitcase out after him. He slams the door and then gives it a knock, signaling the driver. The limo pulls away. Charlie turns and faces Michael.

MICHAEL  
Welcome to Knoxville!

Charlie walks over to Michael and they briefly embrace. Michael pats Charlie on the back.

MICHAEL  
How was the flight?

CHARLIE  
Weird.

MICHAEL  
And the drive?

CHARLIE  
LESS weird.

They walk towards the hotel entrance.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Charlie tosses his suitcase and shoulder bag onto his bed.

Charlie unzips the shoulder bag and removes his laptop. He places the laptop on the room desk and sits down.

Charlie opens the laptop and begins typing. He narrates out loud.

CHARLIE  
(Mumbling)  
It was 1967 and chaos ruled over  
the jungle terrain.

Charlie immediately deletes this line.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
It would be incorrect to call this  
platoon brothers in arms, for their  
relationship would become much more  
complicated than that of kin.

Charlie deletes this line.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
The jungles of Vietnam had one  
goal, to eat up every soldier that  
entered and spit them back out a  
broken man.

Charlie looks at this line.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.

Charlie deletes it. He slams his laptop shut and sighs.

Charlie pulls out his cellphone and texts Michael, "Drinks?"

Charlie waits a moment and then a reply appears on the  
screen, "Sure."

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Michael and Charlie sit across from each other sipping  
whiskeys, reclined in trendy leather lounge chairs.

MICHAEL  
How's LA?

CHARLIE  
It's a nightmare. A really warm  
nightmare.

MICHAEL  
How so?

CHARLIE  
I don't know. It just feel like I  
shouldn't be sad - like I'm not  
ALLOWED to be sad.

MICHAEL  
But you are?

CHARLIE  
I don't know. I feel like I've been  
digging some kind of whole and now  
I'm too deep to know where I'm  
going. And all the while Janet is  
looking down at me, hating my guts.

MICHAEL  
She's a smart girl, Charlie.

Charlie nods and takes a sip.

CHARLIE  
How's the case?

MICHAEL  
I can't even begin. If he gets off  
again...I don't know. That's it.

CHARLIE  
You need to relax.

Michael takes a swig of his whiskey, emptying the glass. He  
shakes the glass at Charlie: a challenge.

Charlie smirks.

CHARLIE  
You sure?

Michael shakes the glass again. Then, slams the glass down  
on the table with a CLINK.

Charlie also slams his glass down with a CLINK.

Then another CLINK and another. Glass after glass gets  
slammed down on the table. Faster and faster. Whiskey  
glasses, cocktail glasses. Shot glasses. Clink, clink,  
clink.

Eventually the table is filled with empty glasses.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Charlie and Michael stumble down the hallway drunk off their  
asses. They are almost dancing as Charlie sings:

CHARLIE  
*Why do I say, "Don't walk away"?  
You'll be the way you were before  
When you don't want me anymore.  
Don't turn around, don't ever leave  
A lonely room where empty days. Are  
gathering to meet me when you're  
gone, gone. How in the world will I  
go on?*

Michael chimes in:

MICHAEL  
*Don't walk away!*

CHARLIE  
*When all you gotta do is stay.*

MICHAEL  
*Don't walk away.*

CHARLIE  
*All you gotta do is stay.*

Michael stops walking. Charlie continues on down the hallway. Michael calls out.

MICHAEL  
This is me!

CHARLIE  
No!

MICHAEL  
Yes. We gotta sleep, boy.

CHARLIE  
No! The night is not old yet. It's  
- um - you know. Not. Old.

MICHAEL  
I'm already going to be hungover  
tomorrow.

CHARLIE  
Or you could be drunk tomorrow.

MICHAEL  
Nope! No. The judge will kill me.  
I'll get fired. What are you doing  
to me?!

CHARLIE  
Michael.

Charlie begins advancing towards Michael one step at a time.

MICHAEL  
Nope.

Step.

CHARLIE  
Michael?

MICHAEL

Nope.

Step.

CHARLIE

Michael.

MICHAEL

Charlie?

Step.

CHARLIE

Michael!

Charlie CHARGES Michael...

MICHAEL

No.

....but Michael dodges. Charlie hits the wall, grabs Michael, and they both FALL flat on their backs.

Michael and Charlie stare up at the ceiling. They groan in pain.

CHARLIE

Come to my room. I have something for you.

MICHAEL

Fine. But then I'm going to sleep.

Charlie flips over on his side and faces Michael.

CHARLIE

We'll see.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Charlie unzips his SUITCASE, on his hotel bed. Michael stands behind him, rocking back and forth, trying to maintain consciousness.

MICHAEL

What is it?

CHARLIE

Hold on.

MICHAEL  
But what is it?

CHARLIE  
Hold! On!

Charlie digs around under his clothes and then produces the HAND GRENADE.

MICHAEL  
What?

CHARLIE  
Here.

Charlie tosses the hand grenade up in the air. Michael gasps and then fumbles to catch it. It bounces around in Michael's hands and then he gets a solid grip.

MICHAEL  
Charlie!

CHARLIE  
It's dead or whatever.

Charlie sits on the bed.

MICHAEL  
Why?

CHARLIE  
It's Mario's. He wanted you to have it.

MICHAEL  
Oh.

CHARLIE  
He didn't want you to forget about him. Said it might give you good luck.

Michael holds the grenade to his chest and looks up at the ceiling.

MICHAEL  
Thanks buddy.

Michael punches Charlie in the arm.

CHARLIE  
One more drink? For Mario?

Michael bites his lip, squints at Charlie, and then shakes his head.

MICHAEL  
I hate you.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

Charlie and Michael step off the hotel elevators. They walk towards the bar then abruptly STOP in their tracks.

Walking across the lobby is JONAS (70s, stocky, ornery). He hobbles along with a gold-crested CANE.

Charlie and Michael grimace at the sight.

CHARLIE  
What is he doing here?

MICHAEL  
He's staying here.

CHARLIE  
He lives in Knoxville.

MICHAEL  
I know.

CHARLIE  
So why does he need a hotel?

No response from Michael.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
We should ask him.

MICHAEL  
No! We absolutely should NOT.

CHARLIE  
Come on.

MICHAEL  
The judge'll toss me in a second.  
(Pointing at Jonas)  
He knows that.

CHARLIE  
But I can go talk to him.



MICHAEL  
But you shouldn't.

Charlie shoots Michael a look and then walks up to Jonas.

JONAS  
Hello Charlie.

Charlie is caught off guard.

CHARLIE  
Jonas.

JONAS  
How's the book?

CHARLIE  
Almost done.

JONAS  
Well I hope you didn't work too hard on it. You know if it ever comes out, I'll end you. I will tear you apart sliver by sliver.

CHARLIE  
You'll try.

JONAS  
You lawyers. How do you stay so cocky when I beat you at every turn?

CHARLIE  
I guess we just know.

JONAS  
Know what?

CHARLIE  
Justice will find a way.

Jonas bursts out laughing.

JONAS  
That's good. Oh, that's good. Thank you, Charlie.

Michael watches Charlie and Jonas converse from across the lobby. He cannot hear their conversation. He nervously fidgets with his sleeve.

Jonas hands something to Charlie and then walks off. Charlie walks back to Michael.

MICHAEL  
What was that? What did he give  
you?

CHARLIE  
(Deflecting)  
Oh, nothing.

MICHAEL  
Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Just don't let it get to you.

MICHAEL  
What is it?

Charlie pulls an old photograph out of his pocket.

CHARLIE  
He said it was for you. It's  
nothing but...

Michael snatches the photo out of Charlie's hand. He takes a look. It is a picture of the FIVE VIETNAM SOLDIERS from the jungle. The handsome soldier center, flanked by the white soldiers on the left and African-American soldiers on the right.

Michael shakes his head at the photo and then watches Jonas exit the lobby.

After Jonas is gone, Michael turns to Charlie.

MICHAEL  
Alright. What's next?

CHARLIE  
Barbecue?

INT. BBQ RESTAURANT - LATER

Charlie and Michael sit hunched over a plate of RIBS, picking at meatless bones.

CHARLIE  
Mm, the best.

MICHAEL  
Oh yeah. Memphis got nothing on  
this.

CHARLIE  
LA got nothing on this.

A WAITRESS approaches carrying two PINTS of beer.

WAITRESS  
Your drinks.

CHARLIE  
Thank you, m'lady.

Charlie and Michael each grab a drink. They hold their drinks up for a moment and then slam them together.

Camera PUNCHES in as they CLINK.

SMASH CUT TO:

C/U of Two slender COCKTAIL glasses clinking together.

PULL BACK to reveal.

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

Charlie and Michael sit at a bar sipping Long Island Ice Teas.

Michael's CELLPHONE sits on the bar RINGING on speaker.

A groggy Janet answers:

JANET (O.S.)  
Hello.

MICHAEL  
Janet! It's Michael. Guess who I have with me?

JANET  
Do you know what time it is?

CHARLIE  
Janet! We're in Knoxville. Having a blast. Join us.

JANET  
Michael, you have to be in court in the morning.

MICHAEL  
No - no, see, it's already morning.

JANET  
Michael!

CHARLIE  
(To Michael)  
Oh shit, she's mad.

MICHAEL  
Michael has to go. Love ya Janet.

CHARLIE  
I love you too Janet. But actually.

JANET  
I'm turning my phone off.

CHARLIE  
Love you!

JANET  
Jesus Christ.

The phone beeps.

CHARLIE  
She hung up. She didn't even say I  
love you.

MICHAEL  
Nah, she said it. Just not out  
loud.

CHARLIE  
Oh.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY WAY - LATER

Charlie and Michael stumble down the alley way carrying  
BOTTLES covered in BROWN PAPER BAGS. They take occasional  
sips.

MICHAEL  
How long have we been out?

CHARLIE  
I don't know.

Michael leans up against a brick wall.

MICHAEL  
I gotta stop.

CHARLIE  
No, you gotta keep going.

Michael pushes himself off the wall and grabs Charlie's shoulder.

MICHAEL  
You're not a bad guy.

CHARLIE  
I know.

MICHAEL  
You're not. Just some people think you are. And sometimes you are.

CHARLIE  
Why do people keep saying things like that?

MICHAEL  
Cause you're not a bad guy.

EXT. STREET - LATER - DAWN

Michael and Charlie watch as TWO HOMELESS MEN in a full on brawl across the street. With each punch, Michael and Charlie give audible reactions.

One of the homeless men gets in a square punch to the others jaw.

CHARLIE  
No! Come on.

The first homeless man gets in another solid gut punch, causing the other homeless man to stumble backwards eventually falling on his back. The felled homeless man struggles to get up.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Aw! No!

Charlie reaches into his pocket and pulls out his wallet. He thumbs out a few twenty-dollar bills. He extends the wad of cash out to his side.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
 Alright, sixty bucks.

Charlie looks over to see that Michael has VANISHED.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
 Michael?

Charlie spins around.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
 Ugh!

Charlie screams into the night.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
 Fine!

Charlie looks around the city block. He spots a NEON SIGN in the distance. He stumbles towards it.

The light calls out to Charlie, a hypnotic beacon.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. CIGAR LOUNGE - LATER

Charlie enters a smoky, old school cigar lounge filled with lavish furniture and populated by a few regulars spread out over the dimly lit room.

A PUDGY, BALDING MAN (Pavel) watches Charlie enter from behind. The man's WIFE (Nina), an almost twin of the man, cuts the ends of two cigars with a giant HUNTING KNIFE.

PAVEL  
 (At Charlie, Russian Accent)  
 You're new in town.

Charlie shoots around, a bit startled.

CHARLIE  
 Hm?

NINA  
 (At Charlie, Russian Accent)  
 We know everyone.

PAVEL  
 Sit! Sit!

Charlie sits across from them. Nina hands Charlie one of the cigars and then produces another one from her pocket.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

PAVEL

So what are you doing here?

CHARLIE

It was the only place open.

Nina slams the hunting knife into the table. Charlie jumps a bit.

NINA

It's okay. Relax. He means what are you doing in Knoxville?

CHARLIE

Um, work I guess. You guys aren't from here either.

PAVEL

What you mean?

NINA

We live here thirty years. Like hell we're not from here.

CHARLIE

Sorry. I shouldn't have assumed.

PAVEL

You like whores?

Charlie coughs up some cigar smoke.

CHARLIE

I don't know.

NINA

We have many whores.

CHARLIE

Is that legal?

NINA

What are you, a cop?

CHARLIE

No, I just - I guess I consider myself law abiding.

NINA

You're very freaky. We can tell.

PAVEL

So you want whore or not?

CHARLIE

It's a really nice offer, don't get me wrong.

NINA

Say no more. We get it. You want something else. What do you want tonight?

CHARLIE

I don't need anything. I'm good. Just relaxing I guess.

PAVEL

Come on! If you could have anything right now, what would it be?

CHARLIE

What are you guys?

PAVEL

I'm Pavel and this is my partner Nina.

CHARLIE

What do you guys do?

PAVEL

We make people happy. We let them indulge in what, in the daytime, might be considered immoral. Frowned upon, you know.

CHARLIE

I guess I'm just a liquor man.

Charlie laughs. Pavel and Nina stare back silently.

NINA

There has to be something we can get you.

PAVEL

We like to treat new friends.



CHARLIE

I'm sorry. I don't know what to tell you. It's been a long night. A long day, really.

PAVEL

So you want to relax?

CHARLIE

Sure.

NINA

Then why not stay in?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I was with a friend. Letting off steam I guess.

NINA

No, you were getting drunk. You were suppressing the pain. Trying to ignore your true feelings. But that's the wrong way to go.

PAVEL

Nina is very smart.

NINA

You shouldn't try to dull the pain. You need to grab a hold of it. You know what the really problem is?

CHARLIE

What?

NINA

You forget what it means to be alive. You forget how to really feel.

PAVEL

You're dead basically.

NINA

On the inside, yes. You need to remember what it feels like to feel.

Nina pulls a revolver out of her pocket and slaps it down on the table. Charlie jumps back.

CHARLIE  
Whoa! Um, look I didn't mean to  
bother or upset you...

NINA  
Calm down. Pick it up.

CHARLIE  
I shouldn't.

PAVEL  
Nina says pick it up, you pick it  
up.

CHARLIE  
Fine.

Charlie reaches his hand out and carefully wraps his hand  
around the gun.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
What now?

PAVEL  
Pick it up.

NINA  
Feel the weight of it in your hand.

Charlie does.

NINA (cont'd)  
Feels good.

CHARLIE  
Can I please put it down?

PAVEL  
You're uncomfortable. Embrace it.  
You're scared the gun will go off.  
Feel scared.

CHARLIE  
Please. I don't want to.

NINA  
Point it at Pavel.

CHARLIE  
What?

PAVEL  
Point it at my chest!

CHARLIE  
No!

PAVEL AND NINA  
DO IT!

CHARLIE  
Fine.

Charlie points the gun at Pavel's chest.

PAVEL  
Pull the trigger.

CHARLIE  
Come on, man.

NINA  
Pull it you rat-scum!

Charlie pulls the trigger. The gun clicks. Charlie sighs with relief.

NINA (cont'd)  
Now me.

CHARLIE  
Jesus Christ.

NINA  
Quick!

Charlie immediately points the gun at Nina and pulls the trigger. Click. Sigh.

CHARLIE  
Is it loaded?

PAVEL  
Who knows?

NINA  
You feel alive yet?

CHARLIE  
I have to go.

Charlie sets the gun on the table.

NINA

Sit down!

Charlie sits down.

NINA (cont'd)

Do you FEEL alive?

CHARLIE

Yes!

NINA

Liar! Pick it up!

Charlie slowly reaches his hand towards the gun.

NINA (cont'd)

Faster!

CHARLIE

Okay!

Charlie grabs the gun.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

What do you want me to do?

NINA

Yourself now.

CHARLIE

No!

NINA

You worthless, sniveling baby.

CHARLIE

I'm not doing it!

NINA

Me then!

Charlie points the gun at Nina and pulls the trigger. Click.

NINA (cont'd)

NOW PAVEL!

Charlie points the gun at Pavel. Click.

NINA (cont'd)

Now you!

CHARLIE  
NO!

NINA  
DO IT!

Charlie points the gun at his head. He is sweating profusely, nearly crying.

CHARLIE  
I can't.

NINA  
Pull the trigger.

CHARLIE  
No!

NINA  
Feel it! Feel the gun!

CHARLIE  
I am!

NINA  
Do you feel how fragile your worthless life is?!

CHARLIE  
Yes! YES I DO!

NINA  
LIAR!

PAVEL  
PULL THE TRIGGER YOU WORM!

CHARLIE  
I'LL DO IT!

NINA  
NO TALK! JUST DO!

CHARLIE  
AAAAAH!

NINA AND PAVEL  
DO IT!

Charlie screams and presses the gun further into his head and then...

SMASH CUT TO:

## INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Charlie jerks awake in his hotel bed. He clenches his eyes shut and rubs his temple. He pushes himself up, sitting against a pillow. His head jerks to the side. He starts breathing slow quick breaths. He carefully pulls the comforter off his body. He slowly pulls up his shirt revealing a BLOODY BANDAGE over his lower left ABDOMEN with a melted bag of ice taped to it. He dabs the bandage with his finger. He winces in pain and looks at his finger.

Charlie pulls the rest of the blanket off his legs, trying not to disturb his wound. He inches his legs off the side of the bed and slowly rises to a sitting position. He pulls the bag of ice off of his bandage.

Charlie looks over at the CLOCK on his NIGHTSTAND. It reads "9:08." Charlie looks down again at his wound and then carefully stands up. He inches, step by step, to the bathroom.

## INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Charlie stares down at his phone waiting for the elevator.

Over Charlie's shoulder we can see his text: "You alive?"

The elevator dings. The doors slide open.

Charlie, still texting, walks half way through the elevator door when...

BANG! Charlie slams his hands around the side of the elevator door and FALLS several feet into the OPEN ELEVATOR SHAFT. He dangles for a moment, squirming, and then fights his way back up onto the floor.

Charlie flops down on the carpet floor. He digs his fingers into the ground and carefully pushes his body away from the elevator shaft.

Charlie hits the wall opposite the elevators and leans up against it. He pants heavily and stares wide-eyed at the dark metal cavern.

Charlie crawls towards the elevator shaft on his stomach and cautiously sticks his head in. He looks up and down, inside the shaft.

Charlie squints trying to make out the top of the elevator in the darkness.

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

Charlie stiffly walks through the hotel lobby. He puts his hand on his side, trying to maneuver around the pain.

Charlie sees Michael anxiously waiting by the lobby entrance. Charlie approaches.

CHARLIE

Hey, sorry. Something happened with the elevator.

MICHAEL

You're fine. The car's not here yet.

CHARLIE

Are you feeling okay?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Not even hungover. You?

CHARLIE

I don't know. I think - I think a Russian couple stole my organs.

MICHAEL

Haha, glad I went home. Let's go.

Michael and Charlie begin walking out the exit.

CHARLIE

I'm serious. I'm in a lot of pain.

MICHAEL

Tell me about it on the way.

CHARLIE

Should I see a doctor? Can they check for missing organs?

Michael laughs.

INT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

Charlie and Michael walk down a courthouse hallway. Charlie is limping trying to keep pace with Michael. As they walk, they are approached by MR. EDWARDS (50s, stern, silver fox).

MICHAEL

Mr. Edwards.

MR. EDWARDS  
Hello, Michael. Big day.

MICHAEL  
Yes, sir.

MR. EDWARDS  
(To Charlie)  
You're with Voorhees-McCrall.

CHARLIE  
Yes. Charlie Kilpatrick.

MR. EDWARDS  
I've heard. You're writing the book.

CHARLIE  
That's me.

MR. EDWARDS  
Well, if it ever gets published,  
feel free to reach out to the firm.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry, what for?

MR. EDWARDS  
Oh you know. People are always  
jealous of success. Accusations get  
thrown around. And when they do,  
don't hesitate to call on us. We  
owe you after everything you've  
done for Michael, here.

CHARLIE  
I don't know about that.

Mr. Edwards pats Michael on the back.

MR. EDWARDS  
He's a rising star, this one, and  
this case has everything to do with  
it.

MICHAEL  
It's true. Charlie laid a lot of  
the ground work for me.

MR. EDWARDS  
He sure did. Anyways, like I said,  
if this book turns out to be a huge  
disaster, we've got you.



CHARLIE  
Thank you, Mr. Edwards.

MR. EDWARDS  
(To Michael)  
Now, let's talk briefs.

MICHAEL  
As long as you make it brief, sir.

MR. EDWARDS  
Aha yes. Quite funny, Michael. I am  
a fan of word play.  
(To Charlie)  
If you wouldn't mind.

CHARLIE  
Of course.  
(To Michael)  
See you in there, buddy.

Charlie turns around and walks down the hallway. Over his  
shoulder he hears...

MR. EDWARDS  
Buddy. You let him call you that?

Charlie shakes it off.

Charlie winces and stops in his tracks. He looks to his  
right and sees a MEN'S BATHROOM. He enters.

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie unbuttons his shirt at the bathroom's sink. He  
cautiously pulls his shirt open to look at the bandage. He  
softly patting it with his fingers.

ECU of Charlie's fingers tugging up the corner of his  
bandage. He peels up the gauze to reveal a cleanly  
stitched-up medical INCISION about six inches long. The  
edges of the incision are crusted with dried blood.

Charlie gently rubs his finger along the edge of the wound,  
wincing slightly. He cocks his head and then...

A LOUD SNORT comes from one of the bathroom stalls. The  
faint sound of stifled crying. Charlie looks over his  
shoulder and then casually turns to face the stall.

CLICK! The stall lock opens and the door jiggles.

Charlie rapidly turns around and flips the sink faucet on. He begins vigorously washing his hands.

Jonas walks out of the stall and approaches the sink next to Charlie. Jonas begins washing his hands. Without looking at Charlie, Jonas begins talking.

JONAS

Are you spying on me, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Psh, what?

JONAS

I just don't want you to misread what's going on here.

CHARLIE

You mean how you were crying.

JONAS

I wasn't crying.

CHARLIE

It sounded so much like crying.

Jonas slams his hands down on the sink.

JONAS

YOU WEREN'T THERE!

Jonas grabs his cane and turns to leave.

JONAS

(Over His Shoulder)

You don't know what's coming. I'm going to unravel your life right before your eyes. And then, I'm going to teach you about pain and what it means to truly suffer. This I promise you.

Jonas walks to the door and begins to push it open. He pauses and adds:

JONAS

You will REGRET ever putting pen to paper, you WEAK, CODDLED SOW.

Jonas exits.

Charlie looks down and realizes the sink is still running. He turns it off.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Charlie sits just behind the prosecution desk.

Michael sits at attention waiting for THE JUDGE (60s) to read a document.

The judge looks up.

JUDGE

Mr. La Mer. Do you understand the potential repercussions of this motion?

Jonas stands up.

JONAS

I do, your honor.

JUDGE

And yet you wish to proceed without counsel.

JONAS

I am fully confident in my own ability to defend myself against these outrageous accusations.

JUDGE

Then let's proceed.

The judge bangs his gavel and then shuffles some papers.

JUDGE (cont'd)

Now, considering the scope and profile of this trial I must warn both the defense and prosecution against any intentional delays. It is inequitable to this jury and moreover this country's legal system to spend any extraneous time trying this case. Does the defense understand?

JONAS

Yes, your honor.

JUDGE

And more importantly does the prosecution?

MICHAEL  
Yes, your honor.

JUDGE  
Then the floor is yours, Mr.  
Christiansen.

MICHAEL  
Thank you your honor.

Michael stands up and walks to the center of the courtroom.

Charlie watches Michael. He takes out a notebook and begins rapidly scribbling notes.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Your honor. Ladies and gentlemen of  
the jury...

As Michael begins talking, the sound of his voice fades out and JUNGLE NOISES rapidly fade in.

Charlie watches Michael walks to the other side of the courtroom which TRANSFORMS into the PLASTIC JUNGLE.

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Michael speaks silently towards the camera, gesticulating passionately, then disappears into a thicket of tropical bushes.

The camera begins to glide through the jungle. Eventually, we come up on the handsome soldier (YOUNG JONAS), scanning the jungle with his gun.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
On the 27th of May 1967, Jonas La  
Mer realized that he, along with  
four other members of the US Armed  
Forces, had been abandoned by their  
platoon in the remote jungles of  
Northern Vietnam.

Young Jonas makes his way into a clearing, where the four soldiers wait, smoking.

The camera spins back towards Young Jonas who lowers his rifle and wipes the sweat from his brow.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Realizing the hopeless cruelty of  
their situation, La Mer renounced  
his allegiance to the army.

Young Jonas rips off his dog tag and throws it in the mud.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
And convinced his fellow troops to  
do the same...

The camera spins to the four soldiers. Three soldiers rip off their dog tags. One African-American (PATRICE) soldier does not move. The camera pushes in on Patrice.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
All except for Patrice Miller, the  
highest ranking soldier amongst  
them. Patrice convinced his  
brothers in arms to continue on -  
to fight their great odds and cling  
to what hope they could muster to  
make it out of the jungle alive.

The camera spins to Young Jonas, grimacing inches away from Patrice's face.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
This did not please Jonas.

Young Jonas turns away from the camera and begins wandering off into the jungle. The camera follows.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Alone and relying purely on a  
reservoir of hatred and  
abandonment, Jonas resorted to the  
unthinkable.

Young Jonas comes to a stream and kneels down, emptying a flask into it.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
He attempted to punish Patrice for  
his quote, "uppity" behavior. Later  
sighting that race had no factor in  
his disdain for Corporal Miller.

Young Jonas stands up, hops over the stream, and continues into the jungle. He turns towards the camera and the two white soldiers come in to a huddle with Young Jonas. Young Jonas begins silently explaining to the men.

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Warning only his two compatriots,  
Jonas La Mer effectively poisoned  
the only water supply using  
excessive amounts of agent orange.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
Leaving Corporal Miller and Private  
Mario Delgado to an untimely fate.

The camera spins away from Young Jonas and the white soldiers and lands on...

Mario cradling Patrice, who is violently convulsing and coughing up huge gushes of blood.

The camera spins away and continues into the jungle as Michael returns, still speaking and gesturing silently.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
To this day, Jonas maintains that he never renounced his military status and that his relationship with Miller and Delgado was one of respect and admiration to which I say...bullshit!

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie finishes writing in his notebook. We see the word, "BULLSHIT!" written across an entire page, underlined with several exclamation points. He looks up at Michael ending his opening statement.

Michael approaches the jury.

MICHAEL  
In summation, the prosecution must prove two things. One, that Jonas La Mer was no longer acting as a member of the US Army during the events on May 27th 1967. And two, that Jonas did intentionally expose Corporal Patrice Miller and Private Michael Delgado to known toxic elements.

Jonas jumps up from his chair.

JONAS  
Objection!

JUDGE  
On what grounds, Mr. La Mer?

JONAS

He's changing the case. I was in the army.

MICHAEL

I'm here to prove otherwise, Jonas.

Jonas turns to Michael.

JONAS

I served my country, you lying sack of shit!

The judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Order! Mr. La Mer, it is not the prosecution's duty to explain their strategy to you. Furthermore, another outburst like that will land you in contempt of court. Do you understand?

Jonas nods and slowly sits down, sneering at Michael.

Michael adjusts his collar and then coughs. He looks down at his notes. His vision has gone blurry. He looks back up.

MICHAEL

Sorry, I lost my place.

JUDGE

Please find it and proceed Mr. Christiansen.

MICHAEL

Right, um - through a string of documents, recorded testimony from Mario Delgado, and...um...

JUDGE

Mr. Christiansen?

MICHAEL

I'm sorry your honor I...

Michael brings his hand to his nose. He dabs his nostril and realizes his nose is dripping blood.

JUDGE

Everything alright?

MICHAEL  
Yes, just a light nosebleed.

Michael whips out a handkerchief and wipes his nose quickly.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
With testimony from...I'm sorry.

BLOOD begins pouring from Michael's nose. He tries to stop it with his fingers but it begins gushing from both nostrils like a faucet.

Charlie looks on in horror.

Jonas begins cackling and slapping his knee.

VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE COURT gasp as they watch Michael try to stop the bleeding.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Oh god. I'm so sorry.

JUDGE  
Mr. Christiansen?!

Michael leans his head back and then his eyes closes. He drops to the floor.

Several members of the crowd and jury scream.

Jonas' laughing echos out through the courtroom as the judge bangs his gavel.

INT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

Michael and Charlie sit on a bench in the courthouse. Michael has a blood-covered handkerchief stuffed up both nostrils.

CHARLIE  
What was that?

MICHAEL  
(Nasally)  
I hate you.

CHARLIE  
What? Why?

Michael rolls his eyes.



MICHAEL  
I shouldn't have gone out.

CHARLIE  
But you had a good time, right?

Michael squints at Charlie.

Michael pulls the handkerchief from his nose. More blood pours out. He quickly shoves it back in.

MICHAEL  
Oh god.

Mr. Edwards walks up to the bench and stares down at Michael.

Michael jumps up from the bunch.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Mr. Edwards. I'll be back in, in just a second.

MR. EDWARDS  
No need Michael. The judge has recessed the trial till tomorrow.

MICHAEL  
But I'm good.

MR. EDWARDS  
No Michael. You're not good. THIS is not good.

MICHAEL  
I'm so sorry.

MR. EDWARDS  
If anything REMOTELY similar happens tomorrow, you're done. I'll drag you through the mud. Remember the mud, Michael?

MICHAEL  
No sir. What mud?

MR. EDWARDS  
Are you being funny?

MICHAEL  
No Mr. Edwards.

MR. EDWARDS  
Do I look like a clown with make up  
and a nose?

MICHAEL  
No Mr. Edwards.

MR. EDWARDS  
No more screw ups. You can't handle  
it.

Mr. Edwards walks off.

Michael looks down at Charlie.

CHARLIE  
What?

Michael punches Charlie in the arm.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Ow! Hey!

Michael punches Charlie again. Charlie curls up in defense.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Hey! Stop!

Michael begins wailing on Charlie who starts screaming  
and trying to protect his stomach wound.

INT. HOTEL BAR - EVENING

Charlie sips a whiskey alone in the hotel bar.

Jonas walks up and sits down across from him. Charlie scoffs  
and rolls his eyes.

JONAS  
I'm not here to gloat.

CHARLIE  
Really?

JONAS  
It was humiliating for your friend,  
sure. But why be petty. The trial  
will be over tomorrow and we'll  
never have to see each other again.

CHARLIE  
Tomorrow?

JONAS  
That's how much time I plan on  
devoting to this little game.

Charlie chuckles and sips his whiskey.

JONAS (cont'd)  
I must say, I am curious to see how  
your book turns out. Something  
tells me the whole thing reads like  
a love letter.

Charlie throws his glass against the wall, shattering it. He  
stands up eye to eye with Jonas.

JONAS (cont'd)  
You're so spirited, sometimes.  
Other times not so much. Have you  
ever tried to kill yourself  
Charlie?

Suddenly, Claire hits Jonas in the arm.

JONAS (cont'd)  
What the -

CLAIRE  
Get out of here!

JONAS  
I'm sorry, miss.

CLAIRE  
Leave you big dumb jerk!

JONAS  
(To Charlie)  
Is she with you?

CHARLIE  
Hey Claire.

CLAIRE  
Charlie.  
(To Jonas)  
I said leave!

JONAS  
(To Charlie)  
I like her. See ya tomorrow,  
Charlie.

Jonas walks off.

Claire sits down across from Charlie. Charlie sits to. Claire reaches her hands across the table and links them with Charlie's hands.

CLAIRE  
Hey, you're alright.

CHARLIE  
I hate him. I hope he gets hit by a car or eaten by a horse.

CLAIRE  
I'm sure he will. But until then, it's up to Michael to teach that piece of shit a lesson. How is he?

CHARLIE  
Michael? Stressed. Scared.

CLAIRE  
I'm sure. What did you do to him?

CHARLIE  
ME?!

CLAIRE  
This has Charlie written all over it. You can't screw this up for him.

CHARLIE  
I didn't!

Claire gives him extreme side-eye.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
We went out drinking last night!

CLAIRE  
CHARLIE!

CHARLIE  
I know. I'm terrible. And I haven't written a single thing since I got here.

CLAIRE  
CHARLIE! They called the office today!

CHARLIE

Who?

CLAIRE

Harper Collins.

CHARLIE

They called.

CLAIRE

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Oh god.

CLAIRE

I know. This is not good Charlie.  
They never call..

CHARLIE

I can't believe they called.

CLAIRE

It was weird. The guy kept wheezing  
and spitting and saying breach of  
contract. It was gross. Don't make  
me go through that again.

CHARLIE

Alright! I'll send them a draft,  
tonight.

CLAIRE

I swear Charlie.

Claire leans her head back and runs her hands through her  
hair. She then snaps her head back up at Charlie.

CLAIRE (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be so hard  
on you. I'm just stressed...God, I  
hope there's some good dick in this  
Podunk town. For both our sakes.

CHARLIE

I'll drink to that.

Claire points at Charlie.

CLAIRE

Don't let Michael drink again. He  
can't handle it.

Charlie nods.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. BAR - LATER

Charlie and Michael sit in a local bar drinking. Michael still has pieces of gauze stuffed up his nose.

A melancholy country tune plays on the jukebox.

Michael takes a hard sip.

MICHAEL  
Racist bastard.

CHARLIE  
Jonas?

MICHAEL  
Mr. Edwards. He doesn't give a shit about this case.

CHARLIE  
It's like no one does.

MICHAEL  
What if it doesn't matter?

CHARLIE  
What?

MICHAEL  
All of it.

They both take a sip.

CHARLIE  
Wanna get high?

MICHAEL  
I don't know.

CHARLIE  
Right. How's your nose?

MICHAEL  
I think it's still bleeding. I must have lost a gallon of blood.

CHARLIE  
That can't be good.

MICHAEL  
How's your thing?

CHARLIE  
What thing?

Charlie points to his abdomen.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Oh, the thing...No clue. I should  
probably get x-rays or something.  
But whose to say.

Silence. Jukebox.

MICHAEL  
Racist bastard.

CHARLIE  
Edwards?

MICHAEL  
No. Everyone. This whole town.

CHARLIE  
That's not fair.

MICHAEL  
Look at us. Does anything seem  
fair? There's nothing good coming  
to us.

Charlie looks down at his stomach. He lifts up his shirt to  
see the bandage. He chuckles.

CHARLIE  
Just thought of something.

MICHAEL  
Hm?

CHARLIE  
Follow me.

Charlie gets up. Michael follows.

INT. CIGAR LOUNGE - LATER

Charlie and Michael enter the cigar lounge.

Charlie has a look of determination as he scans the crowd of  
deadbeats. He spots Pavel and Nina and makes a b-line.

CHARLIE  
What did you guys do to me?

PAVEL  
No idea what you're talking about.

Michael steps up beside Charlie.

MICHAEL  
Hey! He's a lawyer.

CHARLIE  
(Pointing at Michael)  
So is he.

MICHAEL  
You don't want the police involved.

PAVEL  
So what you're lawyers. Everyone's  
a lawyer.

NINA  
In Russia, I'm lawyer.

PAVEL  
That guy with the vomit on his  
shirt is lawyer. Call cops, I don't  
care.

CHARLIE  
What is this?

Charlie lifts up his shirt and points at the bandage.

PAVEL  
You did that to yourself.

NINA  
I have no knowledge of this.

Charlie throws his hands up in frustration.

CHARLIE  
(To Michael)  
Let's get out of here. They're not  
gonna budge.

MICHAEL  
No! These people owe you an answer.  
Don't let them push you around.

Nina casually walks right up to Michael, who stands a half  
foot taller.



NINA  
(To Michael)  
What you like big boy? You like  
circus girls?

MICHAEL  
What?

CHARLIE  
(To Michael)  
Don't let them.

PAVEL  
(To Michael)  
My wife can get you anything. You  
want tattoo half priced.

CHARLIE  
Michael, just say no. I'm not doing  
this again.

PAVEL  
Come on. What you want?

NINA  
You want to go fishing at night,  
get a blow job same time. We work  
this out.

Charlie pulls Michael aside.

CHARLIE  
What are you doing? Let's go.

MICHAEL  
I kind of want to hear what they  
have. Is that crazy?

CHARLIE  
Yes! It's not worth it.

MICHAEL  
Come on!

CHARLIE  
I can't keep you out again. Claire  
will kill me.

MICHAEL  
I've had one drink. It's not even  
midnight.

Charlie gives up. He gestures for Michael to approach Nina  
and Pavel.

MICHAEL (cont'd)  
Alright, what's next?

SMASH CUT TO:

Michael is sitting in a chair holding Nina's revolver to his head screaming. Nina and Pavel sit across from him.

Charlie watches from behind, hands on his forehead, eyes wide.

NINA  
Do it you giant pussy?

PAVEL  
COME ON!

MICHAEL  
OH MY GOD!

Michael gives one more hardy scream and then pulls the trigger. Click.

Michael and Charlie both sigh with relief.

NINA AND PAVEL  
Gah!

Nina and Pavel slap their knees and curse in Russian.

Michael throws the gun down on the table and stands up.

MICHAEL  
That's how it's done. Let's go,  
Charlie.

Michael heads for the exit.

Charlie leans over the table towards Nina and Pavel and points to his stomach.

CHARLIE  
I haven't forgotten about this.

NINA  
I maintain my ignorance.

PAVEL  
See you down the road.

Charlie squints at Nina and Pavel. He purses his lips and then marches out after Michael.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - LATER

Michael walks several steps ahead of Charlie. Charlie, in pain, has trouble keeping up.

CHARLIE  
Michael! Where are you going?!

MICHAEL  
I don't know.

CHARLIE  
I need to get you back to the hotel.

MICHAEL  
No! That goddamn troll is there.  
You can't make me.

CHARLIE  
I promised Claire!

MICHAEL  
NO!

CHARLIE  
Michael slow down.

Michael spins around. He faces Charlie in showdown-mode. Charlie keeps his distance.

MICHAEL  
Today was humiliating. I can't do it again.

CHARLIE  
I know. I'm sorry. It's my fault.

MICHAEL  
No. You showed me, Charlie. You showed me a good time.

CHARLIE  
That's not true.

MICHAEL  
I've never felt more alive. You can't take this away from me.

CHARLIE  
It's not real Michael. You've got to win this. For Mario.

MICHAEL

Don't you dare bring Mario into this. I don't owe him anything. Why am I here? To dance around a courtroom for Edwards' spare change. Screw Mr. Edwards! And screw the trial. And screw your book!

CHARLIE

Dude!

MICHAEL

I'm done, Charlie! This is a vacation, right.

CHARLIE

It's not.

MICHAEL

Are you sure?

CHARLIE

Yes! I'm sorry about last night. I shouldn't have dragged you in. Can we go back now?

MICHAEL

Sorry Charlie. I'm here to party.

Michael winks at Charlie and then spins around with a jolly hop.

CHARLIE

Michael! Wait!

Michael begins a steady pace down the alley.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Michael!

Michael begins running.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Oh god.

Charlie begins chasing Michael.

Charlie reaches the end of the alley. He looks around a corner and sees Michael at the end of another dark, steamy alley way.

Charlie runs towards Michael but by the time he reaches the next intersection, Michael is but a shadow. Charlie spins around looking down four possible paths. He chooses one.

Charlie slows down a bit. He grips his side in pain. He breaths heavily for a moment looking around the alley.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Michael!

An echo returns:

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Buddy!

Charlie shakes his head and then picks another direction.

Alley after alley, Charlie chases after disappearing SHADOWS and ECHOES of Michael's laughter. Charlie snaps his head left and right as he continuously misses Michael by a hair.

FINALLY, Charlie turns a corner and sees Michael, in silhouette, waiting at the other end of the alley. Charlie doubles over in exhaustion.

CHARLIE

Please Michael! Stop! I'm going to literally rip my stitches.

MICHAEL

I love you, buddy. But I can't go back.

CHARLIE

Tell Edwards it was my fault.

MICHAEL

The case is done.

CHARLIE

No it's not! You can still knock it out of the park.

MICHAEL

HAHA. Sure.

Michael darts to his left down another alley. Charlie immediately follows, wheezing and limping.

Charlie turns the corner and sees Michael at the other end, leaning on a brick wall. Michael jerks around for a moment and then sinks down against the wall.

Charlie approaches Michael step by step down the alley. He can barely see Michael. He squints through the alley steam.

CHARLIE

Michael?

Charlie finally reaches Michael. He can hear Michael wheezing. He extends his hand towards Michael's shoulder. He grasps Michael's arm and spins him around quickly.

BLOOD IS SPRAYING from a wound in Michael's neck, drenching Charlie's face. Michael gurgles and spasms. Charlie immediately sticks his hand over the giant gash over Michael's neck. Blood gushes from the sides of Charlie's hand. Michael falls on top of Charlie who continues whimpering and trying to stop the bleeding.

Charlie looks up and catches a glimpse of a DARK FIGURE running away from the scene.

Michael continues to choke on his own blood.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Michael lays, mouth and eyes wide open, on a coroner's slab.

Charlie stares horrified at Michael's corpse, tears welling in his eyes.

After a few seconds of silence, THE CORONER enters with a clipboard.

THE CORONER

And you can confirm that this is  
Michael Christiansen.

CHARLIE

Yes. It's him.

THE CORONER

I regret to inform you, Mr.  
Kilpatrick, that your friend died  
of extreme blood loss due to a man  
made incision in his neck. Right  
there.

The coroner points at Michael's neck with his pen. Charlie turns to the coroner but says nothing.

THE CORONER

Anyways, we have to hold his body here until murder is ruled out.

CHARLIE

Why would you rule out murder? It's clearly murder.

THE CORONER

Well you can never be to sure. Regardless, until a thorough investigation is held, your friend will remain here. But don't worry. We'll take good care of him.

The coroner snorts.

Charlie looks back at Michael.

CHARLIE

This is my fault.

THE CORONER

You killed him?!

CHARLIE

No, he was out tonight because of me.

THE CORONER

Oh. Whew. I thought for a second you were a murder.

CHARLIE

I didn't do this.

THE CORONER

Well that's certainly a relief. Can I interest you in some hot cocoa? My wife makes it. It's very good.

CHARLIE

When will the police be here?

THE CORONER

An hour...two hours...three hours? Who knows really.

CHARLIE

I'll be outside.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Charlie waits outside the hospital sipping hot cocoa from a foam cup. He looks around. The parking lot and entrance area are empty. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a joint. He lights it, takes a deep puff, and exhales slowly. He leans back against a wall and continues puffing, with a grim gaze.

Out of the darkness, TWO POLICE OFFICERS (Johnson and Chesterton) walk up to Charlie. Johnson (70s, portly, calm) takes big cowboy steps up to Charlie followed by Chesterton (20s, hot-head, fresh).

Charlie is startled. He quickly flicks his joint into the bushes.

Johnson and Chesterton sniff the air, suspiciously.

Charlie coughs.

JOHNSON  
Mr. Christiansen?

CHARLIE  
'scuse me?

JOHNSON  
Are you Michael Christiansen?

CHARLIE  
He's dead.

CHESTERTON  
Aw shit, we're too late.

JOHNSON  
Sorry to bother you.

The officers turn around and start walking away.

Charlie calls after them.

CHARLIE  
Wait!

The officers turn back around.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Michael's dead. I called it in.

Johnson whips out a notebooks from his utility belt. He flips through it then nods at Chesterton.



JOHNSON  
Oooooooh! My mistake. Mr.  
Kilpatrick?

Charlie nods.

CHESTERTON  
Yeah, see we thought YOU died.

JOHNSON  
What a misunderstanding. Mr.  
Kilpatrick. I'm Officer Johnson and  
this is Chesterton.

CHESTERTON  
Evening. Very sorry for your loss.

JOHNSON  
You say you were with him when he  
was ALLEGEDLY stabbed in the neck.

CHARLIE  
Yes, officer.

JOHNSON  
We're going to need you to come  
down to the station. Answer some  
questions.

CHESTERTON  
Yeah.

Chesterton steps towards Charlie and slaps his cup of hot  
cocoa to the ground.

JOHNSON  
Whoa, Chesterton not yet.

CHESTERTON  
Sorry, Johnson.

JOHNSON  
It's okay. Normally it's fine but  
this here's a lawyer. We gotta play  
nice. Isn't that right, Mr.  
Kilpatrick?

Charlie stares back, visibly shaken.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Charlie sits at a table in an interrogation room, twiddling his thumb.

Johnson and Chesterton lean on the opposite wall, silent and motionless.

CHARLIE

So I'm not under arrest.

CHESTERTON

I don't know. You tell us, Lawyer.

JOHNSON

He's not Chesterton.

CHESTERTON

I know but - like - we gotta turn up the heat.

JOHNSON

There's no evidence.

CHARLIE

He's right. My being there is purely circumstantial.

CHESTERTON

Come on! His DNA is probably all over the body.

JOHNSON

I'm sure of it too but there's something called due process in this country, Chesterton.

CHESTERTON

Gosh darn it.

JOHNSON

I know. One of these days though.

CHESTERTON

I'm gonna do it. I'm gonna say, "you're hereby arrested for murder."

JOHNSON

And I'll be so proud.

CHESTERTON

Really?

JOHNSON

Of course. I'm already so proud of you.

CHESTERTON

Aw thanks Johnson.

CHARLIE

Are you going to question me?

JOHNSON

Don't tell me how to do my job!

CHESTERTON

Yeah! Lawyer.

CHARLIE

I'm the only witness.

CHESTERTON

Well, alright. He's gotta point.

JOHNSON

Chesterton! He is not in control.

Johnson's cellphone begins ringing. He grabs his phone off his belt and flips it open.

CHARLIE

I'm going to leave.

Johnson sticks his finger out at Charlie.

JOHNSON

(Into Phone)

Yup...this is he...nope...okay I'll be there in a jiffy.

Johnson shuts his phone and whispers something into Chesterton's ear. Johnson crosses the room and grabs Charlie by the shoulders.

JOHNSON (cont'd)

(To Charlie)

Wait here.

Johnson exits the room.

CHARLIE  
He knows I don't have to wait,  
right?

Chesterton bursts into a tantrum: he slams his fist against the table several times right in front of Charlie and then KNOCKS a CHAIR to the ground.

CHARLIE  
Fine, I'll wait.

Chesterton leans up against the opposite wall again, grunting.

Charlie waits patiently.

Janet BURSTS into the room with Johnson in tow.

JANET  
Charlie, stand up. We're leaving.

CHARLIE  
Janet?

JANET  
I'm here because of Michael, not  
you. Get up.

CHARLIE  
They haven't taken my statement.

Janet turns towards a flustered Johnson. She gives him an evil stare.

JOHNSON  
Hey! He was being very  
uncooperative.

CHARLIE  
I was not!

JANET  
Doesn't matter now. Charlie, for  
the last time stand up. I'm taking  
you back to the hotel.

CHARLIE  
How did you get here so quickly?

JANET  
Five. Four.

CHARLIE  
Are you counting?

JANET  
Three.

CHARLIE  
Janet.

JANET  
Two.

Charlie scoffs and crosses his arms. He plants himself in his chair.

JANET (cont'd)  
One.

Janet bursts into rage, grabbing Charlie's chair, shaking it violently back and forth.

JANET (cont'd)  
Stand up and get in the god damn car.

CHARLIE  
Okay!

Charlie stands up. He nods at the officers.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Gentlemen.

Janet yanks Charlie's arm, pulling him out of the room.

Johnson and Chesterton linger.

CHESTERTON  
So rude.

JOHNSON  
Hey, ya did good, son.

CHESTERTON  
Thanks Johnson.

Johnson pats Chesterton on the back.

INT. CAR - LATER

Janet drives Charlie back to the hotel in silence.

Eventually, Charlie turns to Janet.

CHARLIE

I didn't...

JANET

I know, Charlie.

CHARLIE

It was Jonas. I know it was.

JANET

You need to sleep. And sober up,  
for crissake.

Charlie leans his head against the window and watches the buildings go by.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

Charlie enters the hotel lobby with Janet steps behind him. He is keeping his eyes locked on the floor.

Claire, out of nowhere, GRABS Charlie in a deep embrace. She is bawling her eyes out.

Janet watches the scene from behind with her stern, tired look.

Charlie pats Claire on the back and then tries to pry her from his body. Claire digs in deep and gives Charlie one more squeeze. While locked in embrace, Charlie wipes a tear from his eye.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Charlie enters his hotel room and flops down on the bed. As soon as he hits the comforter, he CURLS UP and SCREAMS in pain. He flips over on his back. He puts pressure on his stomach wound. He looks up at the ceiling.

Charlie rubs his eyes. He unbuckle his belt and struggles to get it off. After a moment of jerking back and forth, Charlie WHIPS the belt across the room. Charlie slams his hands into the bed. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

Some silence.

Charlie's eyes shoot OPEN.

Charlie goes to the mini bar and opens it. The mini bar light casts a beautiful glow on the several rows of mini alcohol bottles. Charlie grabs a bottle and twists the top off. He looks up at the ceiling and then downs the bottle.

Charlie closes the fridge door. He waits a moment. Taps the door. Then, he swings the door back open and grabs as many bottles as he can carry.

Charlie sits on the bed and twists the top off a bottle. He downs it. He repeats twisting and drinking until all dozen bottles are empty. Charlie sweeps all the empty bottles on to the floor and then falls back onto the bed.

Charlie looks over at the window. The sun is coming up.

Charlie slowly loses consciousness.

FADE TO BLACK

In the darkness, JUNGLE NOISES fade in.

FADE TO

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Charlie walks through the plastic jungle. He scans the territory in fear as he proceeds further and further into mist and vines.

Charlie comes to a small POND OF BLOOD. He stops and looks at his reflection.

Then, some bubbles come up from the blood pond. After a moment a few more.

Charlie's eyes widen.

Something begins to stir in the blood pond. Some light splashes then...

FINGERS emerge slowly from the pond, covered completely in blood. Then a hand and eventually a whole arm. The bloody arm reaches up at Charlie.

Charlie remains frozen.

The hand twists towards Charlie.

Charlie cocks his head then kneels down beside the pond. He sticks his head out towards the bloody arm to get a better look. He feels a chill. He looks to his side.

Young Jonas is kneeling next to Charlie, also staring at the bloody arm.

Young Jonas stands up and begins walking into the brush. Charlie watches and the follows.

Young Jonas picks up the pace. Charlie attempts to catch up but he begins to lose sight of Young Jonas.

Young Jonas disappears into the trees.

Charlie looks around and sees no one.

A PHONE rings, causing Charlie to jump. Charlie carefully turns around.

Young Jonas is standing right behind Charlie holding out a phone on a chord.

The phone continues to ring.

Young Jonas stares blankly at Charlie.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Charlie's eyes open. He is lying in bed, still completely dressed.

Charlie rolls onto his side and looks at the bedside table. The hotel phone is ringing.

Charlie scoots over to the edge of his bed and answers the phone.

CHARLIE  
(Groggy)  
Hello.

The high but serious voice of Harper Collins responds:

HARPER COLLINS (O.S.)  
(Over Phone)  
Charles?



CHARLIE  
Yes, hello.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AN OFFICE - SIMULTANEOUS

HARPER COLLINS (late 50s, thin, pale) sits at his mahogany desk in his dimly lit office. He is almost completely obscured by shadows.

HARPER COLLINS  
Greetings Mr. Kilpatrick, this is  
Harper Collins.

CHARLIE  
Who?

HARPER COLLINS  
Harper Collins.

No response.

HARPER COLLINS (cont'd)  
Your publisher.

Charlie rubs his eyes but gives no response.

HARPER COLLINS (cont'd)  
You are writing a book, Mr.  
Kilpatrick?

CHARLIE  
Oh yeah the book.

Charlie sits up in bed. He grabs the phone receiver and sets it on his lap.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
I forgot to send you the draft. I  
can do it right now.

HARPER COLLINS  
A draft? We need the finished  
manuscript as soon as possible.  
Your tardiness is unacceptable.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, I'm super sorry about that.  
It's - um - it's been quite the  
week.

HARPER COLLINS  
I don't care.

CHARLIE  
Excuse me?

HARPER COLLINS  
I frankly don't care. We need the book.

CHARLIE  
Um, I don't know what to tell you.

HARPER COLLINS  
If we do not receive a digital copy of a finished manuscript in the next hour, we are prepared to find you and take what you have.

CHARLIE  
Find me?

HARPER COLLINS  
We will get something out of this Mr. Kilpatrick. Believe you me.

CHARLIE  
You're going to find me?

HARPER COLLINS  
Do you know how hard it is to publish a novel?

CHARLIE  
Uh -

HARPER COLLINS  
It's extremely difficult especially in this day and age. We are prepared to do what it takes to ensure we do not waste another investment. Do you understand Mr. Kilpatrick?

CHARLIE  
I guess.

HARPER COLLINS  
I don't think you do. This is not a matter of business anymore. You have escalated our deal into the territory of human survival. This is life or death.

CHARLIE  
Speaking of which...

Charlie trails off into a whimper. He gets chokes up.

HARPER COLLINS  
(Interrupting)  
Hm?

CHARLIE  
I said speaking of which...

Again, Charlie's voice goes shrill and the words stop.

HARPER COLLINS  
Speaking of what? What are you  
saying, Charles? Spit it out!

CHARLIE  
My friend is dead!

There is a long silence over the phone. Then, Harper Collins sighs.

HARPER COLLINS  
Mr. Kilpatrick, this is no time for  
pathos. You have an hour. Your  
notice is up. Goodbye.

The phone clicks and then tones out.

Charlie sets the phone back on his nightstand. He grabs the bed comforter and pulls it completely over his body like a cocoon.

FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Charlie is still in his cocoon, now bathed in sunlight.

A KNOCK at the DOOR.

The cocoon stirs.

Another knock.

Charlie bursts from beneath his comforter.

CHARLIE  
Agh! Go away!

Janet calls through the door:

JANET (O.S.)  
Charlie.

CHARLIE  
I said go away.

JANET (O.S.)  
The judge called a session.

Charlie looks at the door and grunts. He begrudgingly stands up and shuffles to the door. He lets Janet in.

CHARLIE  
What? How?

JANET  
The judge wants to know how the prosecution intends to proceed.

CHARLIE  
Are you kidding? Does no one care about murder anymore? He's a freaking judge!

JANET  
Edwards is going to put someone on the case.

Charlie walks to the bed and sits down. He tries to kick some of the mini alcohol bottles under the bed. He looks up at Janet.

CHARLIE  
You have to do it.

JANET  
No, I don't.

CHARLIE  
For Michael.

JANET  
Don't you DARE do that. Michael was my friend too. So don't you sit there in your FILTH and look up at me and say its MY job. I'm hurting too, you little bitch.

Charlie looks down into his lap.

Janet rolls her eyes and then sits down next to Charlie.

JANET (cont'd)  
I'm sorry but neither of us are in  
a place to do this. Edwards will  
put someone great up there, who  
knows Michael's case.

Charlie looks at Janet. Janet looks at Michael.

Charlie leans in for a kiss.

Janet forcefully pushes him away. He falls off the bed.

JANET (cont'd)  
UGH!

CHARLIE  
I thought I felt something.

JANET  
Our friend just died!

CHARLIE  
You're right it was inappropriate.

JANET  
Enough of this man-child stuff.  
It's time to get serious.

Janet walks out of the room.

INT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

Charlie sits on a bench in the courthouse next to Claire,  
who is still weeping.

CHARLIE  
Claire, you don't need to be here.

Claire looks up from her handkerchief. Her mascara is  
dripping down her face.

CLAIRE  
Michael, would have wanted me to  
be. For you.

Charlie pats Claire on the shoulder.

Jonas walks passed Charlie and smirks.

Claire looks up at Jonas.

Claire and Charlie sneer at Jonas.

Jonas waves.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
I want to kill him.

CHARLIE  
He'll lose.

CLAIRE  
But what if he doesn't.

Charlie pulls his attention away from Jonas and turns to Claire. Charlie grabs Claire's hand.

CHARLIE  
I don't have a lot of beliefs. But justice is universal. I feel it everywhere. The universe will find justice for Michael.

CLAIRE  
That's so hot.

CHARLIE  
Um, thank you.

Charlie pulls his hand away from Claire.

CLAIRE  
God, I hope you're right, Charlie.  
That snake deserves to suffer.

Claire spits at Jonas.

Janet walks up to the bench.

JANET  
The judge is ready.

CHARLIE  
Alright.

Charlie nods at Claire.

INT. COURTROOM - LATER

Mr. Edwards stands in the middle of the courtroom.

Charlie, Janet, and Claire sit perched in the visitor's gallery.

Jonas reclines at the defense table.

MR. EDWARDS

In light of the recent tragedy,  
your honor, Goodwin, Baldwin, and  
Firth would like to postpone the  
trial indefinitely until we recover  
from the loss of our most esteemed  
colleague.

Charlie jumps up from his chair.

CHARLIE

What?

The judge bangs his gavel.

JUDGE

Order!

Charlie sits down.

JUDGE

I'm inclined to agree with the  
prosecution and offer my sincerest  
condolences to Goodwin, Baldwin,  
and Firth. May god heal your broken  
firm.

The judge bangs his gavel.

INT. COURTHOUSE - LATER

MEMBERS OF THE COURT mill about outside the courtroom.

Charlie storms up to Mr. Edwards and yanks him away from a  
conversation.

MR. EDWARDS

Charlie!

CHARLIE

How dare you?!

Claire runs up behind Charlie and points at Mr. Edwards.

CLAIRE

Yeah, how dare you?! You traitor!

MR. EDWARDS

Please!

CHARLIE

No! That was Michael's case. He gave years to it and you're going to let that monster go! Just like that!

MR. EDWARDS

What was I to do?

CLAIRE

Let Charlie do it.

Charlie and Mr. Edwards turn to Claire.

MR. EDWARDS

Really?

CHARLIE

Oh no.

MR. EDWARDS

You need some rest Charlie. This must be unbelievably stressful. Maybe take some time. Let justice take its course.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

Charlie repeatedly kicks the tire of a car in the parking lot. He bangs his hand on the car hood. He squirms in anger.

CHARLIE

God Damn It!

Charlie hits the car several more times.

The car HONKS twice and the lights flash.

Charlie stumbles away from the car.

Claire is standing next to the car, holding a pair of keys.

CLAIRE

Charlie.

CHARLIE

I - uh - is this your car?

Claire nods.

CLAIRE

Uh-huh.



CHARLIE

Well - um...

Charlie swallows deeply.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Maybe I do need to relax.

Claire nods again.

CLAIRE

Uh-huh.

CHARLIE

See you at the hotel.

Charlie stiffly walks off.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Charlie sets his laptop down on his hotel desk and pulls up a chair. He sits down and begins typing.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

As the crash of the judge's gavel rang out through the courtroom, so did the sound of justice tearing at the seams. Mario Delgado, Patrice Miller, and my good friend Michael Christiansen would never find peace.

Charlie hits the space bar several times and stares at this sentence.

Charlie pushes the computer away and rubs his eyes.

Charlie twists his head from side to side. TWO LOUD POPS come from his neck.

Charlie rubs his hands over his neck. He digs his fingers into his shoulders and massages himself.

Charlie slides open the desk drawer and pulls out the hotel guide. He flips through it, scanning each page. He stops and sets the guide down and stands up from the desk. The guide page title reads, "POOL OPEN 24/7."

Charlie begins taking off his clothes.

INT. HOTEL POOL - LATER

Charlie stands at the edge of the pool in his bathing suit. The glow of the blue water reflects against Charlie's face. Charlie takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

Charlie hears the sound of flip flops enter the pool area. He opens his eyes and turns around.

Jonas stands at the entrance of the pool area wearing a tight Speedo. Charlie stares back in shock. Both men are silent. The glass door squeaks shut behind Jonas.

CHARLIE  
I don't believe this.

Jonas walks over to a pool chair and throws down his towel.

Charlie continues staring Jonas down.

JONAS  
What? I paid through Friday.

CHARLIE  
You psychopath.

JONAS  
Hey, I didn't kill your friend.

Charlie scoffs.

JONAS (cont'd)  
So there's no reason we shouldn't  
be able to swim together.  
Civil-like. As adults.

Charlie puts his fingers on his brow and shakes his head.

Charlie turns around and begins walking towards the exit.

JONAS (cont'd)  
What?

INT. CAR - LATER

Charlie drives Janet's car down a rural freeway with his wet hair slicked back. Janet sits in the passenger's seat.

CHARLIE  
I can't believe it's over.

JANET  
It's not over. Just postponed.

CHARLIE  
It's over. They're never going to  
get a conviction.

JANET  
I don't know, Charlie. What do you  
want me to say?

Charlie speeds up.

Janet looks at Charlie and then out the window.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL POOL - EARLIER

Charlie is about to exit the pool area when he turns back  
around and faces Jonas.

CHARLIE  
You know what? You don't get to  
play this one off. You don't get to  
manipulate around my frustration.

JONAS  
Whoa Charlie! I thought we were  
friends.

Charlie walks right up to Jonas and pokes him in the chest.

CHARLIE  
That! You don't get to do that.

Jonas chuckles and then leans close to Charlie's face.

JONAS  
Who's going to stop me?

INT. CAR - LATER

Charlie growls and then bangs on the steering wheel a couple  
times. Janet plants her hands on her arm rests in fear.

JANET  
Charlie!

CHARLIE  
What am I, Janet?

JANET  
What do you mean?

CHARLIE  
Do you believe in me?

JANET  
Yes. Of course.

Charlie points at Janet. He twists his head back and forth, splitting his focus between the road and Janet.

CHARLIE  
Don't lie!

JANET  
I don't know.

Charlie yells and bangs the steering wheel again.

INT. HOTEL POOL - EARLIER

Charlie and Jonas are practically nose to nose.

CHAR LIE  
I'm going to tell everyone what you  
are.

JONAS  
In your book? Let's not be  
ridiculous.

CHARLIE  
AGH!

Charlie doubles over, screaming, suppressing his anger. Charlie takes a couple steps away from Jonas. Charlie begins pacing back and forth.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Just say it.

JONAS  
Say what?

CHARLIE  
YOU KILLED THEM! YOU KILLED THEM  
ALL!

Jonas laughs.

INT. CAR - LATER

Charlie is almost in tears.

JANET  
Charlie stop the car.

CHARLIE  
My book is a joke. I'm never going  
to finish.

JANET  
It's okay.

CHARLIE  
No, it isn't. People need to know.

JANET  
Charlie please.

CHARLIE  
Harper Collins is going to destroy  
me.

JANET  
What? Charlie, what is going on?

They pull into a MOTEL PARKING LOT.

JANET (cont'd)  
What are we doing here?

Charlie silently stares back at Janet.

Janet SLAMS her hand against the dashboard.

JANET (cont'd)  
DAMN IT CHARLIE!

INT. HOTEL POOL - EARLIER

Charlie continues pacing back and forth.

CHARLIE  
You can't stop lying.

JONAS  
Charlie, we could be friends.

Charlie spits at Jonas.

CHARLIE  
Screw you!

Jonas laughs.

JONAS  
My god it's fun watching you  
unravel.

CHARLIE  
SHUT UP!

Charlie stops pacing and faces Jonas dead on.

Jonas stops laughing and looks up at Charlie.

Charlie CHARGES at Jonas, screaming.

Their bodies SLAP together.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Charlie opens the trunk of the car. Janet jumps back and gasps.

Jonas is taped up with packing tape, still in his Spedo.

JANET  
Please tell me I'm dreaming.

CHARLIE  
Help me get him out.

Charlie reaches into the trunk. Jonas thrashes about.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

Jonas lays on one of the two beds in the motel room, still bound up.

Janet leans on a wall outside the bathroom with her fingers pressed into her temples.

Charlie sits on the dresser.

Jonas makes eye contact with Janet. His eyes are filled with fear. He is sweating profusely. Janet shakes her head in disgust and looks at Charlie.

JANET  
What are we doing?

CHARLIE  
Just wait a minute.

Janet walks up to Charlie and speak in a hushed but angry tone.

JANET  
This is not a time for playing  
mystery. You've roped me into a  
kidnapping.

CHARLIE  
Wait one second. I'll explain  
everything.

Janet turns away from Charlie and faces a wall. She puts her hand out on the wall.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR.

Janet jumps and then spins around, looking at Charlie.

Jonas begins thrashing around on the bed, screaming through the tape.

JANET  
Charlie! What the fuck?!

CHARLIE  
It's fine.

Charlie goes to the door and cracks it open.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
(Hushed)  
Hey. Come in. Come in.

Charlie grabs someone from outside the door and pulls them into the room. Claire stumbles into the room. Charlie slams the door shut behind her.

Claire brushes herself off and then looks around the room. She sees Jonas and then Janet. She double-takes back to Jonas.

CLAIRE  
Charlie! What the fuck?!

CHARLIE  
Everyone calm down.

JANET  
Calm down?! You've made us  
accessories.

Jonas nods his head and mumbles "mmhm" through the tape.

JANET (cont'd)  
Shut up.

Janet walks over and punches Jonas in the side.

CLAIRE  
Charlie, what is going on?

CHARLIE  
I'm going to explain.

Charlie walks over to the empty bed.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
(To Claire)  
Can you sit him up?

Claire nods.

Charlie reaches next to the bed and grabs his suitcase. He  
throws it on the bed. He unzips it.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
After I threw him in the track, I  
went back to Michael's room.

Charlie digs around in the suitcase.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
I had to borrow something.

JANET  
What are you talking about?

Charlie produces the grenade from the suitcase.

Janet and Claire jump back. Jonas scoots away from Charlie  
as best he can.

CLAIRE  
WHOA!



CHARLIE  
It's fine. I've got this.

JANET  
Charlie, is it okay if Claire and I  
leave?

CLAIRE  
Yeah, I'd be totally fine not being  
here for this.

CHARLIE  
No, I need you guys as witnesses.

JANET  
For what?

CHARLIE  
He's going to confess.

Charlie goes over to the bed and kneels down to eye level  
with Jonas. Charlie holds the grenade against Jonas' face.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Do you know what this is?

Jonas nods and mumbles through the tape.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Good.

Charlie grabs the pin of the grenade and jingles it.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
And you know what this does?

Jonas nods.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Very good.

Charlie rips the pin out of the grenade, holding down the  
handle.

Claire and Janet scream. Charlie turns towards them.

JANET  
CHARLIE!

CHARLIE  
IT'S FINE! I'm holding down the  
handle. It won't go off...

Charlie turns back to Jonas.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Unless, Mr. La Mer is  
uncooperative.

Charlie turns back towards Janet and Claire.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Get over by the door. If I let go,  
we have about ten seconds to get  
out of here.

Charlie winks at them both. Claire smiles.

Janet and Claire nod.

Charlie turns back to Jonas and begins petting Jonas' face  
with the grenade.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Now, I'm going to take the tape off  
your mouth and we're going to have  
a little chat. If you scream, I let  
go. If you try anything, I let go.  
If you don't follow my rules.  
I...let...go. Understand?

Jonas nods.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Well then...

Charlie rips the tape off of Jonas' mouth.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Did you kill Patrice Miller?

JONAS  
No.

CHARLIE  
Are you sure?

JONAS  
Yes, I swear.

CHARLIE  
Wrong answer.

Charlie lifts up the grenade.

JONAS  
FINE! I DID IT! I poisoned him. In  
the jungle like you said.

Charlie lowers the grenade.

CHARLIE

Very good...now how about Mario Delgado?

JONAS

Please.

CHARLIE

Did you or did you not kill Mario Delgado?

JONAS

Mario was my friend.

CHARLIE

THAT'S NOT WHAT I ASKED? DID YOU KILL HIM?

JONAS

YES! I killed him. I poisoned him like I poisoned Patrice. I'm sorry.

Jonas looks up at the ceiling, tears streaming down his face.

JONAS (cont'd)

I'm so sorry, Mario! I didn't mean to. Please! Please!

CHARLIE

Oh give it a rest you ancient piece of shit.

Jonas tries to stifle his whimpering.

Charlie wipes the sweat from his brow and then leans in close to Jonas.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

Now, Michael Christiansen.

JANET

Charlie, what's this gonna do? We can't use this.

CHARLIE

I just need to know. I just do.

JANET

What are you going to do with him?

CHARLIE  
That's up to him.

JANET  
Charlie, you're better than this.

Claire shrugs to say, "not really."

CHARLIE  
(To Janet)  
No, I'm not. I'm nothing...just  
like him. He loves that he can walk  
around and play the bad guy and  
never take responsibility for what  
he did. I get it.

(To Jonas)  
I get it. You like feeling special.  
You like that people are thinking  
about you. And all you have to do  
is screw with them a little. I'm  
like that too. We push buttons you  
and I.

JONAS  
(Hopeful)  
Yes. Exactly.

CHARLIE  
Well...sometimes the buttons push  
back.

Charlie jams the grenade into Jonas' head again.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Did you kill Michael Christiansens?

BLOOD begins dripping from Jonas' head, where Charlie is  
pressing the grenade.

JONAS  
I...I...

CHARLIE  
Janet, Claire, get ready.

JONAS  
I don't know...I didn't

CHARLIE  
Three!

JONAS  
Please.

CHARLIE  
Two!

JONAS  
I swear, I didn't do anything.

CHARLIE  
ONE!

JONAS  
NO PLEASE! I SWEAR I DIDN'T DO IT!

CHARLIE  
AAAAAAH!

Charlie screams into Jonas' face. Charlie slams his fists into the other bed.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
GOD DAMN IT!

Charlie grabs the pin for the grenade and places it back in its hole.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
COME ON!

JANET  
Charlie!

CHARLIE  
(To Janet)  
IT'S DEAD! OKAY!

JANET  
What?

CHARLIE  
The grenade! It doesn't work. It's dead. I just wanted him to confess. For me. So I'd know.

Charlie sits down on the empty bed, breathing heavily.

Claire goes up to Charlie and sits next to him. She leans on his shoulder.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
He wouldn't do it. He just wouldn't do it.

Jonas leans his head back. He laughs.

JONAS

Oh Charlie. I'm sorry to disappoint you.

Janet walks up to Jonas and punches him square in the nose.

Jonas yells.

Janet grabs the packing tape and raps it back around Jonas' mouth and then slams Jonas against the bed.

JANET

You sick son of a bitch.

Janet punches Jonas in the face again and then goes back to leaning on the wall.

CLAIRE

What do we do with him now?

CHARLIE

I don't know. Let him go.

CLAIRE

But he just confessed to murder.

CHARLIE

I forced him. It'd never hold up. Shit.

CLAIRE

It's okay. At least you tried.

CHARLIE

If he tells anyone, I'll vouch for you guys. Say I forced you.

JANET

He's not going to tell anyone.

Jonas rapidly shakes his head, "no."

CHARLIE

I'll get some ice for his nose.  
Then I guess we'll just leave him  
here and call room service.

Jonas' eyes widen. He mumbles through the tape.

Charlie gets up and bats his hand at lazily at Jonas.

Charlie sadly trudges out of the motel room.

EXT. MOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Charlie is scooping ice out of the ice machine into a plastic bag.

A TALL DARK FIGURE approaches Charlie from the side.

Charlie continues scooping ice. After a couple scoops Charlie looks over and jumps back.

Harper Collins is pointing a gun at Charlie.

HARPER COLLINS

Hello.

Charlie back into the hallway corner.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Claire is lying on the bed.

Janet is fiddling with the air conditioning unit.

CLAIRE

Is it weird we never talk?

JANET

What?

CLAIRE

Like - we work together but never talk to each other.

JANET

Oh. I guess.

CLAIRE

I just think it's weird.

JANET

I can't get the air to work.

CLAIRE

Maybe it's broken.

Janet bangs on the unit.

CLAIRE

Do you read?

JANET  
Yes, Claire. I read.

CLAIRE  
What do you read?

JANET  
I don't know.

CLAIRE  
I like comic books. And graphic novels.

JANET  
Hm, that is surprising.

CLAIRE  
I know, right.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - SIMULTANEOUS

A PICKUP TRUCK, with TWO MASKED MEN in the flatbed, pulls into the parking lot.

The masked men look around. They hold up handguns and cock them.

EXT. MOTEL HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Charlie holds his hands in the air.

Harper Collins approaches Charlie, cautiously.

CHARLIE  
I don't have my wallet on me.

HARPER COLLINS  
I don't want your wallet.

CHARLIE  
I could call someone. Get you some money.

HARPER COLLINS  
I'm here for the manuscript, Mr. Kilpatrick.

CHARLIE  
You're from -



HARPER COLLINS  
(Interrupting)  
Harper Collins. Yes.

CHARLIE  
I don't have it. It's not finished.

HARPER COLLINS  
I specifically told you over the  
phone that we NEEDED that  
manuscript.

CHARLIE  
You can't rush art like that.

HARPER COLLINS  
Oh don't get cute, Mr. Kilpatrick.

CHARLIE  
Please. I'll get my laptop, we can  
find a Starbucks, I'll knock it out  
right now.

HARPER COLLINS  
I'm not here for coffee. I'm here  
for blood.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Janet and Claire are standing over the air conditioning  
unit. Janet turns a knob and it begins humming.

JANET  
Yes!

CLAIRE  
Wooh!

Claire and Janet high-five.

CLAIRE (cont'd)  
Hey, where's Charlie?

Janet shrugs.

EXT. MOTEL HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Harper Collins continues advancing towards Charlie.

HARPER COLLINS

Can you imagine a world without books? Because that's where we'll be, if people like you keep walking all over timeless institutions like Harper Collins. I don't want to live in that world.

CHARLIE

You don't have to do this.

HARPER COLLINS

Clichés, Charlie? Maybe it's best we never got that book.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Claire is sitting on the nightstand with the motel phone on her lap.

Janet is tossing the grenade up and down in her hand.

CLAIRE

Hey, I'm ordering a pizza. What's your topping?

JANET

Mushrooms.

BANG! The two masked men kick the DOOR in.

Claire SCREAMS.

The masked men keep their guns aimed at Janet and Claire as they go to the bed and grab Jonas and carry him out of the room.

Claire continues screaming.

EXT. MOTEL HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

Charlie hears Claire scream. He looks into the parking lot and sees Jonas and the two masked men getting in the back of the truck.

Charlie looks back at Harper Collins and then heads in a steady pace towards the parking lot.

HARPER COLLINS

Hey! Stop! I'm going to shoot you.

Charlie keeps going.

Harper Collins begins chasing Charlie.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The truck begins pulling out of the parking lot.

Charlie runs after the pickup truck.

One of the masked men bangs on the truck's roof.

The truck comes to an immediate halt.

One of the masked men jumps out of the flatbed and walks up to Charlie. The masked man presses a gun into Charlie's forehead.

Charlie's eyes widen and then he DUCKS.

BANG!

BLOOD bursts from Harper Collins CHEST. Harper Collins falls to the ground.

MASKED MAN

Oh shit!

The masked man jumps back in the truck and hits the roof.

The truck speeds off.

Charlie is crouching on the ground. He hears the truck speed off and gets up. He looks around the parking lot and spots Harper Collins on the ground, jerking and spitting up blood.

Charlie runs over to Harper Collins and kneels beside him.

Charlie picks up Harper Collins, cradling his head.

CHARLIE

You're going to be okay. I'll call an ambulance.

HARPER COLLINS

(Weak, Breathless)

Why? I was going to kill you.

CHARLIE

No you weren't.

HARPER COLLINS

Maybe so.

Harper Collins coughs up a loogie of blood on Charlie.

Harper Collins grabs Charlie by the collar and pulls him close.

Harper Collins whispers his dying words in Charlie's ear.

HARPER COLLINS (cont'd)  
Here. The printed word...is dead.

Harper Collins gasps and then goes lifeless.

A GROWL of a CAR ENGINE behind Charlie.

Charlie spins around. He's blinded by headlights.

Claire pulls up next to Charlie in her car, with Janet riding passenger.

CLAIRE  
Who's that?

CHARLIE  
He wanted my book.

CLAIRE  
Oh. Get in.

CHARLIE  
But -

CLAIRE  
(Interrupting)  
You want to go after them, don't you?

Charlie nods, grabs Harper Collins' gun, and then jumps in the car.

The car speeds off.

INT. CAR - LATER

Charlie stares out the window of Claire's car scanning the landscape intently.

CLAIRE  
Are you sure they went back into town?

CHARLIE  
Where else would they go?

JANET  
Maybe they're heading for the  
airport.

CHARLIE  
With all those guns?

JANET  
You got a hand grenade on the  
plane.

CLAIRE  
Oh! Speaking of which.

Claire grabs the grenade from the front cup holder and  
tosses it into the back seat.

Charlie clumsily catches it.

CHARLIE  
Thanks!

Charlie continues looking out the window, now clutching the  
grenade.

FADE TO:

INT. CAR - LATER

Janet is now driving.

Claire is asleep in the back seat.

Charlie is still scanning the street from the passenger  
window. He watches each house, lamppost, and building that  
goes by. He shakes his head then...

Charlie PERKS UP.

CHARLIE  
There!

Claire jolts awake.

JANET  
No.

CHARLIE  
Yes, that's it. That's the truck.

JANET  
Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Come on.

CLAIRE  
Oh Charlie. This is not good.

EXT. COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Claire's car pulls into the courthouse parking lot.

Charlie, Claire, and Janet get out.

Charlie crouches behind the car. Claire and Janet quickly join.

JANET  
(Whispering)  
What's the game plan?

CHARLIE  
I don't know. Go inside, I guess.

JANET  
Go inside?

CHARLIE  
I don't know.

Charlie runs around the side of the car, still crouching. He advances towards the courthouse entrance.

Janet and Claire follow.

JANET  
A man is dead.

CHARLIE  
Two men.

JANET  
Shit. Michael. Right.

CHARLIE  
I mean four if we really want to get into it.

JANET  
Well, right now. Right now there is one dead man in a motel parking lot.

CHARLIE  
Don't worry about him. He's in publishing.

JANET  
What about the men with guns?

CHARLIE  
I've got this.

Charlie holds up Harper's gun then the grenade in his other hand. Charlie jiggles the grenade.

JANET  
Charlie!

Charlie begins running towards the courthouse.

Janet rolls her eyes and follows.

CLAIRE  
Wait! Guys!

They enter the courthouse.

INT. COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

Charlie, Janet, and Claire quietly sneak down a dark hallway in the courthouse.

CHARLIE  
Why was it open? What goes on here at night?

CLAIRE  
(Excited)  
Cult. Definitely a cult.

JANET  
Charlie, please just shoot me.

CHARLIE  
Oh come on. This is fun.

Charlie, Janet, and Claire approach the main courtroom. Light pours from under the double-doors.

Charlie silently points at his eyes and then at the door.

Claire and Janet nod.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Wait here.

JANET  
No.

CHARLIE  
Fine.

CLAIRE  
If it's okay, I'll stay here.

CHARLIE  
Sure.

CLAIRE  
I'll keep watch.

CHARLIE  
Great.

CLAIRE  
Good luck, Charlie. You're not a  
dick.

CHARLIE  
Thanks Claire. Um - we have to...

Charlie gestures to the courtroom with his gun.

CLAIRE  
Right.

Claire grabs Charlie's shoulders and kisses him on the  
cheek.

Janet is not amused.

Charlie turns to Janet.

CHARLIE  
Alright, here goes nothing.

Charlie holds up three fingers. He lowers one. Then the  
next. Then the last finger.

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlie swings the door open to the courtroom.

Charlie and Janet step into the courtroom and see...



Jonas is sitting on the defense table, still covered in some tape. The two masked men are pulling the tape off his body, facing away from Charlie and Janet.

One of the masked men rips a large piece of tape of Jonas' thigh.

JONAS  
Jesus Christ!

MASKED MAN  
Sorry Jonas. It's the mask. It's hard to breathe.

JONAS  
Well take them off.

Charlie and Janet look at each other.

The masked men PULL OFF their MASKS revealing their identities: JOHNSON and CHESTERTON.

Charlie takes a step forward.

CHARLIE  
Are you kidding me?!

Johnson and Chesterton spin around.

Jonas sits up on the table looking over Johnson's shoulder.

Charlie raises his gun and begins advancing towards Jonas.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
You two?

JOHNSON  
Well, duh.

CHARLIE  
What'd you mean, "duh?"

JOHNSON  
Don't tell me you don't recognize me. Have my looks faded so drastically.

CHARLIE  
The picture. You were in the picture.

JANET  
Charlie, what's he talking about?

CHARLIE  
They're military buddies. He was there. In the jungle.

JOHNSON  
Yes ma'am.

JANET  
And the kid?

Charlie points the gun at Chesterton.

CHARLIE  
Oh yeah. What about him?

JOHNSON  
He just wanted to come along.  
Listen, Charlie. Why don't you put down the gun?

CHARLIE  
No.

JOHNSON  
Okay.

Johnson nods at Chesterton. They both grab their guns and put them at Charlie.

JANET  
What's the plan here, Charlie?

CHARLIE  
I don't know. Still figuring it out.

Johnson begins walking towards Charlie.

JOHNSON  
Nothing to figure out. You're going give us your gun. And then we're going to beat the living shit out of you.

Charlie gestures towards Janet with his head.

CHARLIE  
Can she go?

JOHNSON  
I should see why not. I am a  
gentleman.

CHARLIE  
Janet, go check on Claire.

JANET  
Don't bark orders at me, Pig!

CHARLIE  
Janet!

JANET  
Fine.

Janet backs out of the courtroom.

JOHNSON  
Chesterton.

Chesterton walks up to Charlie and grabs his gun.

Charlie reaches into his pocket and grabs the grenade and  
holds it up.

Chesterton jumps back.

CHARLIE  
Don't make another move!

CHESTERTON  
He's got a grenade!

JONAS  
Oh hell, it doesn't work. He  
already pulled this on me.

JOHNSON  
Really?

CHARLIE  
Hey, it worked last time. Didn't  
it, Jonas?

Chesterton reaches his hand out towards Charlie.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
Alright.

Charlie hands Chesterton the grenade.

Johnson walks up to Charlie.

JOHNSON  
That's everything?

CHARLIE  
Yes.

Johnson briefly pats Charlie down and then points his gun at Charlie's forehead.

JOHNSON  
(To Chesterton)  
Go after the girls. Make sure they  
don't get help.

Chesterton nods and exists.

CHARLIE  
You said...

JOHNSON  
(Interrupting)  
Well, I lied.

INT. COURTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Chesterton exits the courtroom into the hallway.

Claire and Janet are waiting.

CHESTERTON  
Evening ladies.

Chesterton raises his gun at them.

CLAIRE  
Oh boy.

CHESTERTON  
Oh boy, indeed.

INT. COURTROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Johnson hits Charlie across the face with his gun.

Charlie falls to the ground.

Johnson hits Charlie again in the back of the head and then  
kicks his back.

Charlie begins crawling towards Jonas.

Jonas rips the last piece of tape off his body and walks over to Charlie.

Charlie flips over and looks up at Jonas.

JONAS  
Aren't you tired?

CHARLIE  
Oh what?

JONAS  
Fighting over something that  
happened decades ago.

CHARLIE  
No.

JONAS  
(To Johnson)  
Hit him again.

Johnson punches Charlie in the face.

INT. COURTHOUSE - SIMULTANEOUS

Janet and Claire sit on a bench.

Across the hall, Chesterton aims his gun at them, sitting on his own bench. In his other hand, he holds the grenade.

Chesterton flips grenade pin around with his thumb. He stops abruptly. He looks down at his stomach, then back at the women.

CHESTERTON  
I've gotta shit.

JANET  
And?

CHESTERTON  
And I can't leave you alone.

Chesterton stands up and walks up to Janet and Claire.

Claire grabs Janet's arm.

Chesterton tosses Janet a set of handcuffs from his belt.

INT. COURTROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Charlie grabs his face in pain.

Jonas grabs his cane and forces it into Charlie's chest, pinning him to the ground.

JONAS

You could have just let it go. You could have let it die with Mario. But you kept pushing and pushing. Why?

CHARLIE

Remember when I said we were the same because we both like to feel special.

JONAS

Was that when you had a grenade to my head?

CHARLIE

I believe so.

JONAS

Then I'm sure I don't remember.

CHARLIE

Well, we're not the same. We both like to feel special, but you're fine just embalming yourself in that delusion. Never changing.

JONAS

Maybe you're right. But it sure feels good.

Jonas jabs Charlie in the face with cane three times.

INT. BATHROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Janet and Claire are on the floor, handcuffed to each other around a pipe under the bathroom sink. Janet looks under one of the stalls at Chesterton's legs.

Chesterton sits on a toilet in one of the stalls, still flicking the grenade pin with his thumb.

Janet locks eyes with Claire and then gestures at the sink pipe with her head. Claire nods.

Janet grabs the pipe and begins tugging on it.

INT. COURTROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Charlie lies on his back in defeat, smiling slightly, breathing slowly.

JONAS

You're done, Charlie. The case.  
Your book. It ends here.

Charlie chuckles.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but doesn't it haunt you.  
Just a little.

JONAS

For the last time, I did not kill  
your friend.

CHARLIE

Whatever helps you sleep.

Jonas smacks Charlie in the face with his cane.

Jonas grabs a gun from Johnson and cocks it. He points it at Charlie's head.

INT. BATHROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Chesterton nods uncomfortably. He continues messing with the grenade pin.

Janet and Claire are both tugging on the pipe as hard as the can.

Chesterton hooks his thumb through the grenade pin and accidentally pulls it out. The pin falls on the floor.

CHESTERTON

Oh.

Chesterton bends down and grabs the pin. He looks under the stall door and sees...

Janet and Claire pull the pipe off of the sink, freeing them.

CHESTERTON (cont'd)

The fuck!

Janet and Claire look up at Chesterton. Then...

BANG!

INT. COURTROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Jonas and Johnson jump back, hearing an explosion.

JOHNSON  
What was that?

They wait in silence for a moment and then.

BANG!

Janet and Claire burst into the courtroom, with Chesterton's gun. They are drenched in blood.

JANET  
Drop it!

Janet aims her gun at Jonas.

JOHNSON  
What the hell was that?

CLAIRE  
He exploded. The grenade.

JOHNSON  
(To Jonas)  
You said it was dead.

Johnson points his gun at Jonas.

JONAS  
I thought it was dead.

JOHNSON  
A good kid exploded because of you.

JONAS  
Richard. I didn't know.

JOHNSON  
But here we are!

JONAS  
Don't be so dramatic.

Johnson hits Jonas in the face with his gun. Jonas drops his gun next to Charlie.

Charlie grabs Jonas' gun and crawls toward Janet and Claire.



JONAS (cont'd)  
What the hell?!

JOHNSON  
How dare you make light of that  
boys death! You selfish sap! I'm  
done, Jonas. I'm out.

JONAS  
What?

JOHNSON  
Good luck.

Johnson marches out of the courtroom.

JONAS  
WHAT THE FUCK?!

Charlie stands up. He turns to Janet and Claire.

CHARLIE  
Let's go.

JONAS  
Where are you going?!

CHARLIE  
I'm tired, Jonas. And you don't  
have a gun.

Charlie waves the gun at Jonas.

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
It's over. Like you said, why keep  
fighting over something that  
happened so long ago.

JONAS  
No! This is it! This is where we  
settle this.

CHARLIE  
Not tonight, Jonas. Tell you what,  
if you ever want to confess to  
murder or need a parking ticket  
dismissed, give me a call.

Charlie, Janet, and Claire limp out of the courtroom as  
Jonas yells after them.

JONAS  
 Don't you dare leave this  
 courthouse! Or go to the police!  
 Coward! COWARD!

FADE TO:

INT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Charlie stands at the bloody pool in the jungle.

The hand is still sticking up from the blood.

The hand lowers back into the pool.

Charlie looks up and watches Young Jonas disappear into the brush.

INT. CAR - LATER

Janet drives the car. Charlie sits passenger, sleeping.  
 Claire in the back seat.

Charlie wakes up.

CHARLIE  
 That poor kid.

JANET  
 Hm?

CHARLIE  
 At the courthouse. I feel like it  
 was my fault.

CLAIRE  
 Well, you did say the grenade was  
 dead.

CHARLIE  
 Mario told me it was dead.

CLAIRE  
 Who?

CHARLIE  
 Never mind. What's the total body  
 count for the evening?

JANET

Two.

CHARLIE

That's not bad.

JANET

People are going to want answers.

CHARLIE

Good thing we're lawyers.

Janet smiles. Her smile turns into a hearty laugh.

JANET

I thought you were a writer.

CHARLIE

I'm not. I'm really not.

SLOW FADE TO:

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MORNING

Charlie walks down the hallway with his suitcase. His face is covered in band aids. He smiles.

Charlie approaches the elevator and presses the button. The elevator dings and immediately opens revealing Jonas.

Jonas steps off the elevator right up to Charlie. The elevator door closes behind Jonas.

JONAS

I admire you.

CHARLIE

What?

JONAS

I admire you for what you did in the motel. You were willing to do whatever it takes. All except actually killing me.

CHARLIE

That's not my job.

JONAS

Anyways, I just thought it was fair to...

CHARLIE

To what?

JONAS

I did try to poison Mario and Patrice.

Charlie cocks his head.

JONAS

But it's not what you think. Mario and I were close friends. Some would say closer than that even.

CHARLIE

What are you saying? Where is this going?

JONAS

I didn't do it out of fury or racial arrogance as you would have people believe. I did it out of passion. Because Mario broke my heart and Patrice helped. I only meant to hurt them. But I went too far.

CHARLIE

And Michael?

JONAS

I don't know. I wish I could say I did it. I know that's what you need to hear. But I don't know.

CHARLIE

I don't believe you.

JONAS

Well, I'm sorry about that. May you eventually find peace over it.

CHARLIE

What did you think?

JONAS

I don't know.

CHARLIE

Did you think I'd believe you? That I'd lap up this lame story and feel so much better. That we'd just be friends and skip out of the hotel holding hands.

JONAS

No, I -

CHARLIE

(Interrupting)

You're a liar, Jonas. A dirty,  
putrid liar. Your story doesn't  
matter. I'm done with it.

Charlie reaches past Jonas and presses the elevator button.

The elevator dings and the doors slide open behind Jonas.

JONAS

I just wanted to tell the truth.

CHARLIE

Maybe someday you will.

Jonas puts his head down and nods.

Charlie stares at Jonas.

Jonas looks up at Charlie with a tear in his eye.

Jonas takes a step backwards and...

BANG!

Jonas falls down the empty ELEVATOR SHAFT.

Charlie jumps back and then peaks into the elevator shaft.

Charlie steps back as the elevator doors close.

FADE TO:

INT. A CAFE - DAY

Charlie and Janet sit in the same cafe from the opening at  
the same table.

Charlie takes a sip of coffee.

CHARLIE

There's an elevator shaft waiting  
for me somewhere.

JANET

(Sternly)

What?

CHARLIE

That elevator shaft, I feel like it wasn't meant for Jonas. That's not justice, what he got.

JANET

It wasn't FOR anyone. It was a malfunction.

CHARLIE

I don't know.

JANET

You don't know? You think the universe is concocting some grand poetic end for you and it just happened to screw up and get the other guy. Do you hear the arrogance?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I guess I do.

JANET

And by the way, stop inviting me out to "talk about our relationship." We're not dating and I'm not your therapist.

CHARLIE

No. You're right.

JANET

Damn right, I'm right. It's selfish. And rude. And a waste of my time.

Charlie grabs Janet's hands. His voice cracks.

CHARLIE

Janet, what do I do?

JANET

What do you mean?

CHARLIE

What do I do now? I'm not a writer. I'm not a lawyer. I'm just an asshole.

JANET

Yeah but...you're rich. And white. You can do whatever you want.

Janet pulls her hands away. She stands up and pats Charlie on the shoulder.

JANET (cont'd)  
Maybe start by making someone  
happy. Anyone. Even a little bit.  
Go from there.

CHARLIE  
Thanks.

Janet nods and walks to the exit. Just before she leaves she mutters:

JANET  
(Under Her Breath)  
Fuckin' cracker.

And then exits.

Charlie pulls out his wallet and sets down some cash. He puts his wallet back in his pocket. He sits for a moment and sips his coffee.

Charlie stands up and looks down at the table. He stares at the money on the table. He pulls out his wallet and grabs a stack of twenty dollar bills. He almost returns his wallet to his pocket but stops. He grabs another twenty and adds it to the stack.

Charlie walks to the door. He pulls the door open and allows an OLD LADY to exit before him. The old lady turns back and smiles. Charlie smiles back and nods.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Charlie walks out onto the sidewalk. He squints in the brightness. After a moment, he begins walking down the street.

Through the cafe window, we see A WAITRESS holding the stack of twenties from Charlie's table. She tries to watch him walk down the street with a big grin on her face.

Charlie continues walking with a smile on his face. The smile turns into a blank expression.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.