

B R I C K

by

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SUPER MAIN TITLES

over a grimy concrete wall creeping by. We emerge from...

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL - EARLY MORNING

A gaping hole in the concrete side of a freeway. On the embankment beside the hole BRENDAN FRYE squats, shoulders hunched. His dark eyes behind thin glasses watch the shallow stream of water which flows into the tunnel.

THE WATER

not more than six inches deep. Just beneath the surface a young woman's pale blue arm in gaudy bracelets bats against the edge of her body like a docked boat. A pebble plinks into the water beside it.

TITLE CARD OVER BLACK: "TWO DAYS PREVIOUS"

INT. LOCKER CAGE - DAY

A single locker. That same arm, bracelets and all, slips a note through the slats, then leaves quickly.

As the cage empties a lone figure slumps to the locker. Opens it. The note falls to his feet.

The figure is Brendan. He unfolds the note (folded in a triangle) -- "12:30 PICO & ALEXANDER".

A STREET SIGN

Pico and Alexander.

A WRIST WATCH

12:43. Brendan looks up from the watch.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

He sits on the curb of a wide suburban street, eats lunch from a brown bag and watches a phone booth on the corner. He shows no surprise when it begins to ring. Brendan goes to the phone and puts the receiver to his ear. Silence for a moment, then a thin female voice from the phone.

VOICE

(over phone)

Brendan?

BRENDAN

Emily?

EMILY
(weakly)
Yeah. How's things?

BRENDAN
(slow, deliberate)
Status quo.

EMILY
Yeah?

BRENDAN
Uh huh.

EMILY
That's good.

Her voice thins to a high, strained breath. She is crying.

BRENDAN
What's going on, Em?

EMILY
(through strained crying)
It's good to see you, Brendan.

Brendan's eyes glance around the surrounding street. Emily is crying again.

EMILY (CONT'D)
It's been some time.

BRENDAN
Two months.

EMILY
Yeah. I didn't even know your locker. I had to ask Brain.

More crying noises.

BRENDAN
Em, why don't we meet somewhere?

EMILY
I can't.

BRENDAN
Why not?

EMILY
I screwed up real bad. I really screwed up.

BRENDAN
Screwed up how?

EMILY
(blubbing, fast and
incoherent)
I did what she said with the brick, I
didn't know it was bad, but the pin's on
it now for poor Frisco and they're
playing it all on me-

BRENDAN
Slow down now, what?

EMILY
You gotta help me Brendan I think tug-
Oh!

With a sharp breath the line clicks dead just as a black
mustang roars by. Brendan drops the receiver and spins out of
the booth.

There, another pay phone up the hill -- empty.

Brendan turns to the black mustang, far down the street. A
man's hand drops a cigarette butt from the driver side
window.

The mustang turns the corner, gone.

Brendan walks after it, finds the cigarette butt on the
street. Still smoking.

A pale blue arrow is printed on the filter.

In the distance the class bell rings.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The high school is open air - the hallways are alleyways
between buildings. A short kid with eyeglasses the size of
Volkswagen headlights sits against the wall. Brendan enters,
leans on the wall beside him.

BRENDAN
Brain.

THE BRAIN
Hey Brendan. It's been awhile. Where you
been eating?

BRENDAN
Back of school.

THE BRAIN

Huh. Yeah, no one's seen you. What's it been, a couple months?

BRENDAN

Yeah, it's been awhile. You gave Emily my locker number?

THE BRAIN

A few days ago. Was I wrong?

BRENDAN

What?

THE BRAIN

To give it?

BRENDAN

No.

THE BRAIN

It's been so long, I don't know you two's stats.

BRENDAN

It has been awhile. Who's she been eating with?

THE BRAIN

(uncomfortable)

I dunno. It's hard to keep track.

BRENDAN

Is it?

THE BRAIN

(shrugs)

Can be.

The Brain avoids Brendan's gaze.

BRENDAN

Uh huh.

A beat.

THE BRAIN

She hasn't been doing too good.

BRENDAN

Yeah well. I'm not looking for a patch up. Em's life is her own. But she asked for my help.

THE BRAIN

Help with what?

BRENDAN

I don't know. I don't even care, it's not my business. I just want to know she's ok, so I've got to find her. That's all this is.

THE BRAIN

Well. I know she was poking in with the Ivy-bound cheerleading elite. Laura Dannon's crowd.

Across the parking lot a beautiful girl with dark long hair kisses an football player.

BRENDAN

Laura Dannon there with the Rabbit?

THE BRAIN

Yeah. Brad Bramish with her. Cream on the upper crust.

Brad laughs heartily.

BRENDAN

(softly)

He's a sap.

THE BRAIN

Know him?

BRENDAN

By sight.

THE BRAIN

I won't argue then. Anyway Em tagged after them for a bit, but it didn't work. So she picked her way down the food chain. Last I seen she was with whasshername, that drama vamp. Small time dealer, augh, the evil one, the one you dated-

BRENDAN

Kara.

THE BRAIN

That's my bus.

BRENDAN

You know her locker number?

THE BRAIN

Kara's?

BRENDAN

Em's.

THE BRAIN

239.

BRENDAN

Thanks Brain. Keep your specs on, find me if she shows.

THE BRAIN

Sure.

The Brain trots off. In the distance Brad and Laura laugh, and he kisses her. Her hair blows in the wind.

EXT. LOCKER CAGE - DAY

Empty. Locker 239 is open, its door swinging gently in the wind.

EXT. BACK OF GYM - DAY

Brendan sits against the massive building, flipping through loose papers. He finds two photographs, one of Emily hugging him, the other of Emily with a beautiful sharp-eyed girl at a party, drinks in hand.

Sorting more papers, he finds a red card with a sequined mask on the front. The bottom edge has been torn off.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Sixth period has broke. Masses of students pile into busses.

EXT. SCHOOL THEATER - DAY

A huge chunk of brown building. Brendan strides towards it.

INT. SCHOOL THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Drama people sit on the floor facing the stage. Brendan steps behind one, the sharp-eyed girl from the picture. She holds a freshman boy's head in her lap. Pets it like a dog.

She looks back at Brendan, her face in shadow.

GIRL

(through a mocking smile)
Hello, Brendan.

BRENDAN

Kara.

KARA

Come to see the show?

Kisses the freshman's forehead, purring.

BRENDAN

No, I didn't.

(nudges the freshman with his
toe)

Lapdog, blow.

The freshman sits up, looks to Kara like a spooked puppy.

KARA

(to the lapdog)

Stay.

(to Brendan)

Don't be mean.

BRENDAN

I'm all friendly.

(to the lapdog)

Watch your head, kid - that thing bites.

The dog pops up again. Kara pulls him down and nuzzles his ear.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I need words.

KARA

I'm listening.

BRENDAN

About Emily Kostich.

She stops nuzzling a little too quickly.

KARA

(to the dog)

Get me my purse.

(he goes)

Hurry!

He breaks into a trot. Kara smiles at Brendan.

BRENDAN

Still picking your teeth with freshmen?

KARA

You were a freshman once.

She slides her fingers up his arm. He growls and pushes them away.

BRENDAN

Way once, sister. You and Em were tight for a bit. Who's she eating with now?

KARA

Eating with?

BRENDAN

Eating with. Lunch. Who.

KARA

You're a cutie.

BRENDAN

You gonna tell me?

KARA

Guess you're up from the underneath then. The whole Jerr thing blown over. Lucky strikes, you and your partner get bullied, you come up clean. But I guess you were always the brains of the outfit.

BRENDAN

Where's Emily?

KARA

Sometimes I wonder why I dumped you.

BRENDAN

(standing to go)
God.

KARA

I don't know where she's at, Brendan.

BRENDAN

I know you do, so why don't you want me to find her?

KARA

Maybe I'm looking out for you.

BRENDAN

(going)
Well I appreciate that.

KARA

Brendan... you looking to get back into things? I could use you.

He is gone. Behind Kara, the play goes on.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF THEATER - CONTINUOUS

The play is seen in shadow-play through the backdrop.

Brendan slips in through an exit door, crosses the backstage area and enters the dressing rooms.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cramped and empty. Pictures of Kara with friends are stuck in the mirror. Brendan roughly searches drawers, bags, pockets... nothing. He stops. A red edge behind one of the photos - the same red card with a mask on it, but whole. Across the bottom in small print: "Halloween in January - Call for DETAILS - 495-2394"

INT. BRENDAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brendan pulls a phone across his desk and dials the number on the flyer.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(over phone)

Hello?

Brendan hesitates.

BRENDAN

Hello, ma'am, this is Tom, I'm a friend from school. Could I speak to...

He trails off.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(over phone)

Oh, hi Tom. Laura's here, hold on.

LAURA'S VOICE

(over phone)

Yes?

BRENDAN

I'm calling for details.

LAURA'S VOICE

For what?

BRENDAN

Details about the party.

LAURA'S VOICE

Who is this?

BRENDAN

I don't think we've met.

LAURA'S VOICE

Well then I don't think you're invited to my party. It's a rather exclusive gathering.

BRENDAN

I can imagine.

(she starts to speak, he cuts
her off)

You should really work on your invite management. That might be a personal 'room for improvement' area in your life. But discretion of your invite sending aside, I have procured a certain someone's invitation, and would like details.

A beat of silence.

LAURA'S VOICE

You think you're cute, whoever you are.

BRENDAN

Wait'll you get a load of my felt fedora and spats.

LAURA'S VOICE

Who are you? Or I'll hang up.

BRENDAN

You don't know me - I'll save you some time.

LAURA'S VOICE

I know everyone and I've got all the time in the world.

BRENDAN

Folly of youth. Ask whose invitation I've got.

LAURA'S VOICE

(slightly)
What you said.

BRENDAN
Emily Kostich.

A beat.

LAURA'S VOICE
15 Bush street, up in Stockton Cove. Buzz
42 at the gate. Nine o'clock. But who-

Brendan hangs up. He folds his hands under his chin and stares at the phone, perfectly still. The clock on his desk says 4:53.

DISSOLVE TO:

7:37

Brendan at his desk, tapping away at Tetris.

DISSOLVE TO:

8:30

The desk is empty, Tetris paused. A shower runs behind an ajar door in the background.

EXT. STOCKTON COVE GATE - NIGHT

An imposing private community gate. Brendan coasts up on his bike and ditches it in the bushes. He checks the call box directory: "42 -- DANNON"

Using the call box as a hand hold he hops the gate and walks briskly up the street.

EXT. STOCKTON COVE STREET - NIGHT

Shiny cars line the curb. Party noises come from an upscale two story house. Brendan takes a short breath, then strides up to the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Large and clean, with a two story ceiling and a railed staircase at one end. Fifteen or twenty clean people, some in costumes, mill about in cliques. Brendan comes in as if he doesn't mind who sees him coming in. He gets a couple odd stares, but no one stops him.

With non obtrusive confidence he cuts through the crowd to the beer keg in back and draws half a cup.

INT. PARLOUR - SAME

Richly adorned, crowded, lit with bright pools of light. Brendan drifts in and stands in the back, deep in shadow.

The music comes from a baby grand piano set against one wall. Laura Dannon leans against it. She wears a red kimono, and is striking against the velvet black piano. Laura's kid sister, 11 years old with glasses, sits at the piano playing an old tune "All I do is Dream of You".

Laura sings, lovely and soft but with strength.

Brendan watches from the back, his face obscured in shadow, but his eyes gleam. Through the darkened window behind him a match flares up, and someone standing outside lights a cigarette.

Laura finishes the song. The room applauds, and she ruffles her kid sister's hair.

Brendan ducks out, and into

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Brad Bramish, the jock who was kissing Laura in the parking lot, sits slouched on the couch in a dense crowd. He holds a cup and speaks much too loudly to a guy named Biff at his elbow.

BRAD

If the coach wants to play me I'll play, but I can't put my best game in if I've got to worry about whether I'm going to be in there. Halftime last game, coach is pissed I ran it on a pass play, out on the field he says to me 'you gotta think about the team and you gotta' you know and 'if you run that ball again you're out', and I said to him you gotta let me play! I'm out there, let me play, and he's saying 'no you're out' and I kept saying 'Let me play! Let me play! Let me play!', just right in his face-

BIFF

He was!

BRAD

Just 'Let me play! Let me play! Let me play!' 'No you gotta' 'No, let me play! Let me play! Let me play!'

Brad hunches forward, his face swollen purple, yelling that over and over. Tom steps in front of Brendan, blocking his line of sight.

Brendan scans the rest of the room. His eyes catch on Laura, leaning against a divan. Her bright, sharp eyes cut through the room, straight into Brendan.

He wags his eyebrows at her.

She looks away quickly. Brendan turns back to Brad, still shouting 'let me play'. Tom stands between them.

BRENDAN

Tom!

Brad falls silent. Most of the room follows suit. Tom turns around. Brendan smiles good naturedly.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Could you step aside, please? I'm trying to follow Brad's story, and it's difficult when I can't see his face.

The room watches Brendan. Tom mumbles something and steps aside. Brad stares at Brendan stupidly. Brendan flashes a dopey grin and tips his glass.

BRAD

(stumbles)

He doesn't give me a play to make, what can I do, you know?

He falls into awkward silence. Biff starts babbling.

Brendan looks at Brad, who is staring back at him.

Brendan then slowly drags his gaze over to Laura, staring at him too, her eyes slightly amused. Brendan cocks an eyebrow. The slightest hint of a smile takes the corner of her mouth, and she wags her eyebrows once at him.

Brendan glances back at Brad, looking at Laura now, not amused at all.

Brendan stands to go. Biff chatters on. Brad cuts him off.

BRAD (cont'd)

Hey. Hey! What are you doing here?

BRENDAN

Leaving.

BRAD

Oh yeah?

BRENDAN

Uh huh. Unless your anecdote's got a 2nd act.

BRAD

Why don't you leave?

BRENDAN

(leaving)

That's what I was doing.

INT. DARK ROOM

With a lit wet bar at one end, Brendan goes to the bar, puts ice in a glass and cracks it with liquor.

LAURA

(O.S.)

Whiskey?

Brendan pauses, glass touching his lips.

BRENDAN

Jameson.

He downs half of it.

LAURA

I like a man who knows what he's drinking.

BRENDAN

That's a pretty sick thing to be attracted to.

LAURA

Brad's not a good guy to get on the wrong side of.

BRENDAN

Uh huh.

They stare at each other in silence. She studies his face. The broken light of the bar makes her features seem liquid.

LAURA

Fearless flyer. Quit your yappin and fix me one.

and slips out a sliding glass door.

He fills another glass with whiskey and cuts his with water.

EXT. BACK PATIO - NIGHT

Brendan joins Laura, hands her a drink. Suburban lights fill the valley below. Laura sips her drink.

LAURA

I'll never get through all this.

BRENDAN

Uh huh.

She sips more.

LAURA

I knew your old partner Jerr since grade school. Tough break. How long were you two joined up before your operation got the sting?

BRENDAN

A few months. Could have helped himself out by turning me in, but he took the heat. He was a good guy. Solid.

LAURA

Was he?

BRENDAN

You knew him.

LAURA

Yeah I did. So why are you here tonight?

BRENDAN

I'm looking for Emily.

LAURA

She wasn't invited.

BRENDAN

She had an invitation.

LAURA

Well like you said, I've got to work on that. Em's been awol for a good month, nobody's seen her.

BRENDAN

I saw her yesterday.

LAURA

Nearly nobody's seen her. So what did she tell you?

BRENDAN

(winces)

Score 0 for finesse.

LAURA

Listen, you're scratching at the wrong door. I wasn't with Emily enough to know details of what she was in, I just got wind of the downfall, and I didn't get any details of that, except that it was bad. So now that we're showing some cards...

BRENDAN

If you haven't got a finger in Em's troubles, why'd her name get me into your rather exclusive party?

LAURA

Keep up with me now. I don't know, but it sounded like you did, and a body's got a right to be curious. Now I'm not so sure.

BRENDAN

Well I'll put that body to bed. I don't know a damn thing about whatever troubles, and that works for me. I just want to find her.

A long beat. Laura studies Brendan's face, then seems to come to a decision.

LAURA

Coffee and pie.

The words hang in the air a moment. A look of recognition from Brendan.

BRENDAN

Coffee and pie oh my?

LAURA

And you didn't hear it from me.

He sips his drink. A voice calls from the glass door. Another girl. Laura flashes Brendan a look and goes to her. They have quick, quiet words and the girl leaves. Laura turns back to Brendan.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Will you wait here for me?

BRENDAN

Sure.

LAURA

You'll stay right here and wait -- I'll be five minutes.

BRENDAN

Yes.

The moment she leaves Brendan runs across the lawn and hops the fence, into the neighbor's yard.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE

Brendan runs to the edge of the neighboring house and peeks around. Laura comes out the front door, cuts across the lawn and sidewalk and trots out into the street. Brendan begins to follow, but a noise from behind the fence stops him - a match being struck.

Brendan creeps towards the fence and peers through a splintered hole.

BRENDAN'S POV - THROUGH THE FENCE

A brightly lit window in the side of Brad's house, and through the window the party.

A dark figure wearing a long coat and broad rimmed hat, all inky black. The figure smokes a cigarette and watches the party, absently stroking his cheek.

Brendan steps back - SNAP! A twig.

The figure freezes. Then, making no noise at all, it spins to face Brendan, a towering black form against the window.

The glowing cigarette falls to the grass.

A metallic glint, and a clicking sound not unlike a gun.

Brendan throws himself backwards onto the grass. A beat.

Through the hole the black of the figure's cloak whips away.

Brendan hesitates, then hops the fence.

EXT. SIDE OF BRAD'S HOUSE - SAME

Brendan lands on his feet. No black figure to be found.

The cigarette still smolders on the ground. Hand rolled, plain paper.

Brendan gazes through the window, catching his breath. Then he breaks the trance and creeps towards the street.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - NIGHT

Peeking around the house, Brendan sees Laura cut across the lawn and trot into the street. Using parked cars as cover, Brendan follows.

EXT. STREET

Between cars, Brendan sees a lanky kid in baggy jeans and engineer boots with a clean shaven head leaning against a black Mustang. Laura goes to him and speaks quickly.

The dark figure in the hat emerges from the shadows. Laura says something to him. Grunting something angrily, he gets in the car with the bald kid and peels off.

Laura turns and slowly walks towards the house.

When she is gone Brendan stands, throws a look back at the house and walks off down the street, towards the guard gate.

EXT. BACK PATIO

The two drinks, where Brendan left them. Laura takes hers and drains it. The suburban lights twinkle like stars.

EXT. CARROWS PARKING LOT - DAY

The sun rises over Carrows family restaurant, a squat structure backed against the weedy edge of the runoff tunnel ravine.

A banner from 1973 in the window - "Coffee and Pie oh my!"

A pack of six pale stoners slump against the rear dumpster. Their beady eyes follow Brendan in sync as he approaches.

He goes to the nearest one.

BRENDAN
Where's Dode?

STONER 1

Dunno, bra.

Silence and blank stares. Brendan calmly moves to the next stoner.

BRENDAN

Dode?

STONER 2

Uh uh.

Brendan moves to the next one.

A thin head pokes from around the dumpster.

DODE

Hey Brendan. Maybe you shouldn't be here.

Brendan steps around the dumpster. Dode slumps against the wall, thin and delicate in dusty black. Slivery eyes, pale lips, muffled intelligence.

BRENDAN

Kara told me you know where Em's at.

DODE

Uh huh. And why are you looking for Em?

BRENDAN

She asked for my help.

DODE

Uh huh. Listen man, I've got plenty on my plate without dealing with some jilted ex.

BRENDAN

It's not about that.

DODE

Whatever it's about, act smarter than you look and drop it.

BRENDAN

Where is she?

DODE

She's with me, and right now that's the best place for her. Leave the low life to the low lifers and dangle.

BRENDAN

You're on the bright side of dim, Dode,
but if I thought you had this half-
handled I'd be eating lunch. Where's she
at?

DODE

Better get while it's good.

Brendan doesn't.

DODE (cont'd)

Heel it now, dig?

The 5 big stoners appear behind Brendan, threatening. Dode
turns his head away to light a joint.

Brendan's fist slams into his face, sending the joint
spinning. Brendan slams Dode's frail frame against the
dumpster.

The 5 stoners stand in the exact same position, deer in the
headlights. One makes a half hearted motion to intervene.

BIG STONER

Back off.

BRENDAN

Throw one at me if you want, hash head.
I've got all five senses and I slept last
night, that puts me six up on the lot of
you.

BIG STONER

Just easy-

Brendan slams Dode into the wall.

BRENDAN

(to Dode)

Where's Em?

DODE

(deliberate)

She's with me. She was tight when she
called you, man. Came to and freaked. She
told me to shake you if you came by. Said
you'd only make things worse.

Brendan covers how shaken he is by this statement fairly
well. He drops Dode.

STONER 1 (O.S.)
Put him down, man!

DODE
Deal with whatever this ain't about and drop it.

BIG STONER
(to Brendan)
Nothing more here, bra.

BRENDAN
Tell Emily I want to see her. Tell her if she still wants my help or not that's her business, but I want to hear it straight from her.

DODE
She don't -

Brendan walks away.

BRENDAN
Today. She knows where I eat lunch.
When Brendan is a safe distance away the biggest stoner shouts with conviction

BIG STONER
And stay out, punk!

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Brendan hides behind a tall clump of bushes.

A moment later Dode hustles away from Carrows. Brendan follows.

EXT. STREET - EARLY MORNING

The sun is rising as Brendan tails Dode through the twisty suburban streets.

Brendan takes cover as Dode stops by a white hatchback.

A girl gets out of the car and embraces Dode. Her wrist is adorned with the same cheap plastic bracelets as the dead girl's arm. Dode speaks quickly to her, she nods and speaks back. He hands her a slip of paper, which she tucks into a brightly colored address book and slips in her jacket pocket. They embrace again, Dode walks off and the girl gets in her car.

Brendan stumbles after the car, but it is quickly gone. He watches it go, then follows Dode back towards school.

EXT. SCHOOL THEATER - MORNING

Dode slumps into the front door of the brown building. Brendan watches him from a distance, eyes thoughtful. After a beat he turns and walks off into the thickening crowds of students.

FADE OUT:

FADE UP

EXT. BACK OF SCHOOL - MIDDAY

Brendan eats lunch alone on a concrete wall beside a long, empty utility road behind the school.

LATER

Reclining on the wall, reading "Lord of the Flies". He raises his eyes, and sits up suddenly.

Off in the distance on the utility road a tiny figure approaches, stumbling. Brendan jumps and hits the ground running towards the figure.

Meet the girl with cheap bracelets, the girl Dode spoke to, the dead girl, Emily. He catches her just as she stumbles and falls and carries her into the shade of a covered hallway.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emily and Brendan sit in silence. She is very pretty, but she looks bad. Too much makeup, not enough sleep. She sniffles, speaks to her shoes.

EMILY

I must have sounded pretty crazy on the phone. Yesterday.

She taps her shoes together lightly, eyes fixed on them.

EMILY (CONT'D)

It was dumb, I got paranoid over a really stupid thing. I was high, I went crazy for a little bit, but now you have to forget about it. Please. That's how you can help me now, forget about it.

She turns her weak eyes to Brendan for the first time. His stare is unwavering, searching. She pushes on.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Brendan, I know you're mad at all these people, cause you think I went away from you and went to them. But you've got to start seeing it as my decision, stop being angry because where I want to be at's different from where you wanna be at.

BRENDAN

(angry)

Who fed you that line, Em?

She looks back at her shoes.

EMILY

And stop picking on Dode. He's a good guy.

BRENDAN

The Carrows rat?

EMILY

He's a good friend.

BRENDAN

So what am I?

EMILY

(strained anger)

Yeah, what are you? Eating back here, not liking anybody, how are you judging anyone? I loved you alot but I couldn't stand it, I had to get with people. I couldn't heckle life with you, I had to see what was what.

A beat. She taps her clogs. One has a hole worn through the sole. Her face contorts, seizes up, and she is sobbing.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Brendan.

She buries her face in his shoulder. He has a hard time speaking.

BRENDAN

You've got to come back to me, Em.

EMILY

No. No. Never. I'm sorry. Never. I can't love on your terms, Brendan. I can't do that, I'm not like you.

BRENDAN

You're in a spot, I can get you out of it. Come back to me, and whatever heat follows you I'll deal with.

EMILY

No. You're not hearing me, no. I don't want to be put away and protected. No.

EMILY (cont'd)

No.

BRENDAN

Tell me about the trouble, the brick and the pin -

EMILY

You gonna fix things like you did with Jerr? No. I came to say goodbye, for good. Whatever you have to do to let me go, do it. I'm gonna let you go, I've decided that. Make sure that, you've got to, promise you won't torture yourself, that you'll let me go.

She embraces him, enveloping him in her jacket. His face is a frozen mask.

EMILY (cont'd)

Let me go.

As she pulls away he mechanically slips an address book from her jacket pocket.

He watches her as she walks away.

INT. CLASSROOM

Brendan sits in the back, flipping through the address book. The teacher drones on about the significance of the pig's head in "Lord of the Flies".

THE ADDRESS BOOK

Illegible scribbles, names, numbers, nothing that stops his search - then the note Dode gave her, a corner of loose-leaf paper which looks like this:



Brendan studies the paper intently.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The Brain studies the paper. Busses pull into the parking lot behind them. Brendan is distant, lost in thought.

THE BRAIN

Hm. Do you know anything else about this?

BRENDAN

(shakes his head)

Mm.

THE BRAIN

Slim pickings. Why'd you let Dode fly when he came back to whose-her-name, at the theater?

BRENDAN

(shrugs dismissively)

Kara. It's their turf, I couldn't hear them without being seen, and that would only biff their play. Best to know it's there, let it ride and see what comes of it.

(touches the paper)

But anyway.

THE BRAIN

Hm. Well, if this is what I think it is, it didn't come straight from Dode, less he's playing out of his league.

(beat)

I can only give you my best guess.

BRENDAN

Yeah.

THE BRAIN

When the upper crust does shady deeds they do them in different spots around town. I know under the pier's one, down by the bike trails in the state park's another. There's alot of them. The pitch is they've got little symbols for each one, and that's how they tell each other the place, so word won't get around. So this might be that.

BRENDAN

But Dode wouldn't know it?

THE BRAIN

This is upper crust. Dode's pie pan grease.

Brendan studies the symbol.

BRENDAN

Call anything up?

THE BRAIN

How many places start with 'A'? Or if it's a shape, or just a random symbol. Anyway, even if you figured it out, what good could you do? She's smart, she knows the play, she's gunning to square things.

BRENDAN

Yeah.

THE BRAIN

You said her business was none of yours, so she's alright, forget it now. Go home, sleep.

INT. BRENDAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sparsely furnished. Brendan plays Tetris on his computer, staring off into space. His mom's voice calls "Good night" and the hallway light turns off.

LATER

10:30 by the clock radio on Brendan's nightstand. The slip of paper rests beside it. Brendan lies in bed, staring at the symbol on the paper. His eyes tense.

THE SYMBOL

Growing larger, burning with a searing intensity, then folding into darkness. Water rushes overhead, over concrete, concrete with a hole in it -- the runoff tunnel, just for an instant, then back underwater, screaming. Brendan choking, screaming, plunging upwards. A woman with no face falls from the darkness and kisses him, her long hair sweeping around him then pulling away. As the last strands slide off his face he wakes up with a start.

The clock says 3:46. Brendan drips with sweat, breathing raggedly. He takes the paper and a pencil from the nightstand and shades the symbol to look like this:



FLASH CUT - The runoff tunnel, lining up perfectly with the now shaded symbol.

BACK TO BRENDAN

His eyes turn uneasy as he removes his glasses and clicks off the light.

EXT. BRENDAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

Brendan walks off into the hazy pre-dawn light.

EXT. EDGE OF RAVINE

Brendan stops at a high wall of weeds, listening to the low gurgle of moving water. Slowly, robotically he pushes through.

EMILY'S BODY

Face down, bobbing gently in shallow water. Bluish white. Red foam clings to her.

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL

Silently, as if lowered by a string Brendan sinks down, squatting in the mud. His lungs empty in one choppy breath. He pulls his glasses off sluggishly.

EMILY'S ARM

Lifeless, pale.

BRENDAN'S FACE

A contorted, frozen mask, eyes wet.

EMILY'S HAIR

Stringy, flowing gently in the water.

BRENDAN'S EYES

Dazed, drifting... then suddenly snapping to attention.

A noise. From the tunnel.

Brendan freezes. The inky blackness of the tunnel mouth opens like a vacuum... silent, but then -

The scrape of a shoe against concrete, then echoing footsteps running away.

Brendan springs like a cat, sprinting into the tunnel.

INT. TUNNEL

Nearly pitch black. 2 sets of running footfalls. Brendan is chasing, running full speed into the blackness, heart pounding - we almost don't notice that Brendan's are now the only footfalls.

Brendan notices. He stops. Silence in the darkness, except for Brendan's breath... and someone near...

SLAM! Brendan takes a fist in the cheek and goes down. An inky black figure steps from the shadows and kicks him in the stomach. Brendan curls on the ground, the figure over him.

FIGURE
(low whisper)
Your little Em.

The figure runs off. Brendan raises his head painfully - the figure is silouetted briefly against the distant bright end of the tunnel, then is gone.

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL - EARLY MORNING

Emily's body is still there. Brendan crawls out of the tunnel and collapses in the shallow water, beside the body. He rests his head on his arm, eyes on Em's hair.

EXT. CAMPUS - EARLY MORNING

Cold and barren, nearly empty. Brendan limps across the barren lawns.

EXT. PHONE BOOTHS

A line of phone booths on campus. Brendan nearly collapses against one. He dials, still in a stupor.

VOICE ON PHONE
Saint Clement police.

Brendan stares into space, eyes burning

VOICE ON PHONE (CONT'D)
Saint Clement police, hello? Hello?

Brendan hangs up.

EXT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Early morning mist below a squat brick building.

INT. LIBRARY

Warmly lit, sheltering the few souls scattered here and there at tables. The Brain sits at one of them reading an impossibly large book. He watches curiously as Brendan approaches him.

THE BRAIN

Hey, Brendan.

Brendan falls into a chair. The Brain looks him over.

THE BRAIN (CONT'D)

You're up early.

BRENDAN

(thick, distant)

I couldn't sleep.

THE BRAIN

(nods, back to his book)

Find Emily?

Brendan breathes out softly.

THE BRAIN (CONT'D)

You alright?

BRENDAN

Yeah. What, are you here for zero?

THE BRAIN

Nah, I gotta take the early bus, cause the others don't run by my street.

BRENDAN

Bad break.

THE BRAIN

Eh. Time to read's nice. So what's the word with Em?

BRENDAN

She's gone.

THE BRAIN

Can't raise her?

BRENDAN

No, I can't.

THE BRAIN

So what now?

BRENDAN

Now. I don't know. I guess it's... I don't know.

Brendan takes a long moment. He stares down at his glasses, wet with condensation.

BRENDAN (cont'd)

Brain, I can't let her go. I was set to but I can't. I don't think I can.

THE BRAIN

You think you can help her?

BRENDAN

No.

THE BRAIN

You think you can get the straight, maybe break some deserving teeth?

BRENDAN

Yeah. I think I could.

THE BRAIN

Well.

Brendan rubs his forehead.

BRENDAN

Kara tried to rope me. She came right out and asked. She was scared. Tell me to walk from this, Brain. Tell me to drop it.

THE BRAIN

Walk from it. Drop it.

(grins)

You're thick as what-all, Brendan.

BRENDAN

Yes I am.

Brendan cleans his glasses. He looks Brain in the eye, and his mannerisms come back into focus.

BRENDAN (cont'd)

I'd need you to Op. Like on Jerr, but that was cake to this. And unlike Jerr, there's not much chance we'll come out clean. Twenty four seven on this one. You okay to op for me again?

The Brain barely smiles.

THE BRAIN

What first, tip the bulls?

Brendan puts on his glasses, stands to go.

BRENDAN

No, bulls would gum it. They'd flash their dusty standards at the wide-eyes and probably find some yegg to pin, probably even the right one. But they'd trample the real tracks and scare the real players back into their holes, and if we're doing this I want the whole story. No cops, not for a bit.

THE BRAIN

So what first?

BRENDAN

I don't know. Your mom still have the cell?

THE BRAIN

In her car.

BRENDAN

Borrow it for a few days, get me the number.

(stands to go)

Wait for my word, and cover for me first period. I'm going to be a little late.

EXT. BASKETBALL FIELD - DAY

A vast field of asphalt segmented by a dozen basketball courts outlined in cracked paint. Brendan trudges across it, his steps heavy. He stops and stands very still, staring at the ground for a beat then raising his eyes to

THE HORIZON

Flat, gray, pin straight. Brendan's voice starts speaking rapidly, confident and clear.

BRENDAN (O.S.)

Yeah it was personal. Jerr spooked some decent gees and ran around some what was straight with him, but I'm nobody's bull runner. This wasn't a business sit. But yeah. I bulled him. Got in tight, partnered up and sent him over.

PAN AROUND to reveal BRENDAN. He looks different, edgier, more alive, wearing different clothes and a thin goatee. He keeps talking directly at us.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I'd burn the lot of them, Em, I'd burn down the whole party if they tried to play you again. Jerr and whoever's next. I want to keep you safe.

An ARM swings into frame, wearing cheap plastic bracelets and pale blue fingernail polish. It slaps Brendan hard in the face. He catches it. Emily wrenches her arm away and stumbles backwards onto the pavement.

Brendan grabs her sleeve. She twists away. He grabs her shoulder, grabs her waist, she resists, and suddenly they are struggling with violent pent up intensity until with a shout she breaks away and falls to the ground.

A beat. Gulls cry in the distance.

EMILY

You can't keep me safe, Brendan. I'm in a bigger world now, and you can't hide me from it, and you can't beat it. Not if I don't want you to.

Brendan's face looks lumpish, while Emily's is strong. She stands and walks off into the distance across the barren field.

BRENDAN'S FACE

Watching her go. It is back to present day, pale, clean shaven, sullen. His eyes are cold with resolve.

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL - EARLY MORNING

Brendan sloshes down into the water. Without delicacy he lifts Emily's body and pulls her back into the tunnel.

INT. RUNOFF TUNNEL

Pitch back. Brendan lays the body down. Two beady eyes peer at him from the darkness - he freezes. The eyes hop forward - a gull. The two watch each other for a moment, then the gull squawks and flutters out the bright mouth of the tunnel. Brendan follows it without looking back at the body.

EXT. CROWDED HALLWAY - DAY

Brendan and the Brain lean against a wall. The Brain slips him a piece of paper.

THE BRAIN
There's the cell number.

BRENDAN
Keep it on vibrate.

THE BRAIN
(pats his jacket pocket)
Yeah.

BRENDAN
Better stop meeting me in the open too.
I'm going to start getting visible, and I
need you on the underneath. I'll call.

THE BRAIN
Trueman asked for you. Wants words in his
office.

BRENDAN
I bet. Keep him off me - stonewall him,
he won't bite, just keep him away from
me.

THE BRAIN
I'll try. So what's first?

BRENDAN
Make Em's troubles mine. I'm going to
throw a few words at you, tell me if they
catch. Brick.

THE BRAIN
No.

BRENDAN
Or bad brick.

THE BRAIN
No.

BRENDAN
Tug.

THE BRAIN
Tug... that might be a drink.

BRENDAN

Drink?

THE BRAIN

Vodka and milk or something, or maybe not.

BRENDAN

Poor Frisco.

THE BRAIN

Frisco. Frisco Farr was a sophomore last year, I think. Real trash, maybe hit a class a week. Didn't know him then, and haven't seen him around.

BRENDAN

Pin.

THE BRAIN

Pin... the Pin?

BRENDAN

The Pin, yeah.

THE BRAIN

The Pin's kind of a local spook story. You know the Kingpin?

BRENDAN

I've heard it.

THE BRAIN

Same thing. Supposed to be old, like 26, lives in town.

BRENDAN

Jake runner, right?

THE BRAIN

Big time... maybe. Ask any dope rat where their junk sprang they'll say they scraped it from that who scored it from this who bought it off so, and after four or five connections the list'll always end with the Pin. But I'll becha you got every rat in town together and said 'show your hands' if any of them've actually seen the Pin, you'd get a crowd of full pockets.

BRENDAN
You think the Pin's just a tale to take
whatever heat?

THE BRAIN
(shrugs. Beat)
But what's first?

BRENDAN
A show of hands.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF THEATER

Brendan strides past forest scenery and drama geeks, through
another door and into sunlight.

EXT. BACK OF THEATER - DAY

Kara smokes a cigarette. Brendan leans beside her.

KARA
(annoyed)
Hey Brendan. Here for the show?

BRENDAN
No.

KARA
Would you go then, honey, cause I've got
this headache.

BRENDAN
Try smoking like a chimney, I've heard
that helps.

Brendan grabs the pack of cigarettes.

BRENDAN (cont'd)
Isn't this Dode's brand?

Kara snaps her head towards him, a flash of anger. She
catches herself and smiles coolly.

KARA
You don't know Dode's brand.

BRENDAN
Oh I do now.

Angry again, Kara snatches the pack from him.

BRENDAN (cont'd)
I'm going to start shaking things up.
Give me the story and you might miss the
bite.

KARA
The story about what?

BRENDAN
Alright.

He turns and walks away.

KARA
The story about what?

BRENDAN
I don't want to play games if you've got
a headache. Get me if you want to spill
it, but I can't guarantee safe passage
after tonight.

KARA
I don't know what-

At the stage door, not slowing.

BRENDAN
Tell the Pin that Brad was my calling
card, and I need words.

KARA
Brad Bramish?

Through the door and into the theater.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF THEATER - CONTINUOUS

He spins to see Kara's face just before the door closes.
She's worried.

EXT. CROWDED SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

The Brain walks out of a classroom and Brendan swings behind
him.

BRENDAN
(fast and low)
Tail Kara through lunch. She's got
rehearsal but she'll blow early. She goes
home, drop her, else wait for my call.

The Brain turns and Brendan's gone.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LUNCH

Brendan wanders through the thick lunchtime crowd towards a cluster of 3 or 4 flashy luxury cars set aside at the far end of the lot.

Brad Bramish sits slouched in the front seat of his convertible, front door open. A small crowd hangs about Brad, his cronie Biff at his elbow.

BRAD

That's all I'm saying, is put me in the game and I'll do what needs to be done, but they don't put me in, what needs doing don't get done and don't come crying to me, man. Get off my grill man, you didn't put me in, don't come to me if you didn't let me play.

BIFF

They didn't!

Brendan scans the rest of the cars. His eyes catch on Laura Dannon sitting in another convertible, off to the side. Her bright eyes cut through the crowd, straight into Brendan.

He wags his eyebrows at her. She looks away. Brendan walks into Brad's direct line of view and obviously leans against one of the cars.

BRAD

Hey! What are you doing here?

BRENDAN

Listening.

BRAD

Uh huh.

BRENDAN

Alright, you got me. I'm a scout for the Gophers.

BRAD

(not amused)

Oh yeah?

BRENDAN

Of all things, yeah. Been watching your game for a month, but that story just now clenched it. You've got heart, kid. How soon can you move to Minneapolis?

A few snickers around the crowd, but nowhere near Brad.

BRAD

(flat with anger)

Yeah?

BRENDAN

Cold winters, but they've got a great public transit system.

BRAD

Yeah?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

BRAD

Oh yeah?

BRENDAN

There's a thesaurus in the library.
'Yeah's under 'Y'. Go ahead, I'll wait.

BRAD

Who invited you?

BRENDAN

To the parking lot? Well gee I kind of invited myself.

BRAD

I think you'd better leave then.

BRENDAN

No, I'm having too good a time.

BRAD

Just the same.

Brendan smiles slightly, and very deliberately crosses his legs. Brad's face tenses.

BRAD (CONT'D)

Maybe you want to go someplace more private.

BRENDAN

With you?

Brad says 'who else?' by lifting his arms.

BERENDAN (CONT'D)
(as if he's been asked to the
movies)

Sure.

Brendan stands and walks off. Brad follows and the rest of the crowd trails after him.

He leads them behind a parked VW van and turns to face Brad. People gather around in a wide circle.

Brendan pulls his jacket off as Brad hangs back, mumbling.

BRAD
You know what's good for you you'll just
beat it. Beating a small frye won't win
me anything and it's not going to do you
any good-

Laura pulls up in her convertible, behind Brad, watching.

In the next moment Brendan cuts Brad off by putting his fist in his face.

Brad grunts but doesn't lose ground. Brendan throws his short stocky frame into Brad's larger one and tenderizes his midsection with jabs.

Brad tags Brendan in the ribs, then smacks the palm of his hand into Brendan's face, shoving him back onto the pavement.

He comes at Brendan with his big fists clenched.

Brendan kicks Brad full force in the shins.

Brad tumbles, and Brendan comes up fast, connecting hard with the point of Brad's chin. Brad gets his balance fast, and before Brendan can throw another he throws one himself, then another, both into Brendan's stomach. Brendan pulls back and kicks Brad's shin where he had kicked it before. Brad roars and hits Brendan very hard in the face.

Brendan bounces back like a rubber ball and throws his weight into a square punch right into Brad's nose.

The sound of eggs breaking, and Brad falls backwards like a board.

He stays down, holding his face.

Brendan staggers back, breathing hard, and looks up at the small crowd. Some stare at Brendan, some at Brad, but nobody seems about to do anything.

Brendan runs his sleeve over his face and walks unsteadily off, pushing past the last few people rushing over.

STRAGGLER

Hey, is there a fight?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

He throws a last look at Laura, who meets his gaze and drives off.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Brendan walks away from the lot, towards the school. Laura pulls up beside him in her car.

LAURA

Hey.

Brendan ignores her and b-lines for the school. Laura brakes hard, parking by the curb.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Brendan limps down the hallway. Laura appears behind him, trotting to catch up.

LAURA

You're quite a pill.

BRENDAN

Uh huh.

LAURA

Where are you going?

BRENDAN

Home.

LAURA

Why did you take a powder the other night?

BRENDAN

Same reason I'm taking one now.

LAURA

Hold it.

(he keeps walking)

I don't get you. That's a chilly heel to be giving a girl who's where you want to know about.

BRENDAN

I'll get where I'm going just fine.

LAURA

I want to help you.

BRENDAN

Go away.

Silence behind him. He stops, turns wearily. She looks genuinely hurt.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Look, I can't trust you. You ought to be smart enough to know that. I didn't shake the party up to get your attention, and I'm not heeling you to hook you. Your connections could help me, but the bad baggage they bring could make it zero sum gain or even hurt me, so I'm better off coming at it clean.

LAURA

I wouldn't have to lead you in by the hand-

BRENDAN

I can't trust you. Brad was a sap, you weren't, you were with him and so you were playing him, so you're a player. With you behind me I'd have to tie one eye up watching both your hands, and I can't spare it.

LAURA

You're not Brad.

BRENDAN

No, I'm not.

He turns and walks away. She doesn't follow.

EXT. SCHOOL PAYPHONE - AFTERNOON

Brendan slumps against it, receiver to his ear, licking a bruised lip. He wears dark glasses.

THE BRAIN

(on the phone)

You didn't call.

BRENDAN

Sorry. Kara went home though, didn't she?

THE BRAIN

Yeah, but she stopped at a payphone and made two calls that she didn't want on her phone bill.

BRENDAN

Get the numbers?

THE BRAIN

No. Sorry.

BRENDAN

S'alright. Are me and Brad front page news?

THE BRAIN

All the buzz. You really do that?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

THE BRAIN

Why? Is Brad the Pin?

BRENDAN

Brad's a sap. I downed him on his field and his crew didn't bite. So now I know he's a sap and anyone who acts like he isn't is profiting by it. That's not why I roughed him, though.

BRAIN

For kicks?

BRENDAN

Economics. Brad's the school's biggest fake buyer, so if this Pin is behind all the selling, I just got his attention. Anyway, now's just shaking things out. Look, you know a kid around the burgh, lanky, short, shaved head, turns a black tang?

THE BRAIN

I told you before I don't know the car. Those types are a nickel a pound, but nobody I know that you don't. And Trueman again-

BRENDAN

Keep him off. And keep your specs on - I need to find that kid.

THE BRAIN

Okay.

Brendan hangs up and turns sluggishly.

A lanky kid with a short shaved head and engineer boots punches him in the face.

Brendan hits the pavement. The lanky kid is over him in a split second, beating his face and body with short, heavy blows.

Flashes of the lanky kid - a shiny scar shaped like a thin triangle runs down the side of his face.

After a brief silent thrashing the kid walks off with several other blurry figures. A car peels out and roars off O.S.

Brendan lies still. The class bell rings, very distant. Legs criss cross before his eyes, each blurring the world a bit more until it is completely smeared.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE

Brendan sits with an ice pack against his head in a tiny office. A man in his early thirties behind a wood colored desk and name plate, "GARY TRUEMAN, ASSISTANT VICE PRINCIPAL" plays with a pencil.

TRUEMAN

You didn't know this boy?

BRENDAN

No sir, never seen him.

TRUEMAN

And he just hit you?

BRENDAN

Like I said, he asked for my lunch money first. Good thing I brown bagged it.

Trueman trains a good natured dubious eye on Brendan.

TRUEMAN

Alright Brendan. I've been looking to talk to you.

Brendan doesn't react.

TRUEMAN (CONT'D)

You've helped this office out before.

BRENDAN

No. I gave you Jerr to see him eaten, not to see you fed.

TRUEMAN

Fine, and well put.

BRENDAN

Accelerated English, Mrs. Kasprzyk.

TRUEMAN

Tough teacher?

BRENDAN

Tough but fair.

TRUEMAN

Mm. Anyway then, we know you're clean, and you've, despite your motives, you've been an asset to us. I think you're a good kid.

BRENDAN

Uh huh.

TRUEMAN

I want to run a couple names by you.

Brendan stands to go.

TRUEMAN (cont'd)

We're not done here.

BRENDAN

(angry)

I was done here three months ago. I told you then I'd give you Jerr and that was that, I'm not your inside line and I'm not your boy.

TRUEMAN

That's not a very helpful-

BRENDAN

(anger builds)

You know what I'm in if the wrong yeg saw me pulled in here?

TRUEMAN
What are you in?

BRENDAN
No. And no more of these informal chats - if you've got a discipline issue with me write me up or suspend me and I'll see you at the parent conference.

TRUEMAN
Hold it, I could - hold it - could write you up for talking back to a VP. For looking at me in a threatening way. I'd exercise a little more tact, Mr. Frye. You can't pull a play like that unless I need you for something. So do I?

BRENDAN
Maybe.

TRUEMAN
So maybe you're gonna need me too.

BRENDAN
Maybe. Alright, I need you off my back completely for a few weeks. There might be some heat soon.

TRUEMAN
(interested)
If it's something I can't cover, I won't go to bat for you.

BRENDAN
If I get caught like that it's curtains anyway - I couldn't have brass cutting me favors in public. I'm just saying now so you don't come kicking in my homeroom door once trouble starts.

Trueman bites a thumbnail.

TRUEMAN
Okay, here's what I can do. I won't pin you for anything you aren't caught at. I'll ride it a little while, as long as it doesn't get too rough. But if anything comes up with your fingerprints on it, I can't help you. Also, if I get to the end of whatever this is and it gets hot and you don't deliver, The Veep will need someone to hand over, police-wise. And I'll have you.

(MORE)

TRUEMAN (cont'd)

There better be some meat at the end of this like you say, or at least a fall guy, or you're it.

BRENDAN

Sure I am. Got one more favor to ask.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Gary Trueman throws Brendan out.

TRUEMAN

Get the hell off my campus, punk!

Brendan glances around, and limps off.

EXT. CARROWS PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

No stoners, no Dode. Brendan breathes uneasily.

EXT. PAYPHONE BY CARROWS - AFTERNOON

Brendan leans against it.

THE BRAIN

No, Dode's MIA all around.

BRENDAN

I'm 9 of 10 that Kara's got him, but who knows where. I shook but she's not spilling.

THE BRAIN

No more job offers? So she's got a play.

BRENDAN

And I know enough about Kara to let that worry me. Alright, keep your specs on for him. Any other news?

THE BRAIN

Some. Laura Dannon came to me looking for you.

BRENDAN

(considers this)
She did, huh?

THE BRAIN

Fourth period, nearly shook me upside down. Can't say I didn't enjoy it, but why'd she come to me?

BRENDAN

She's tapping Kara, and Kara knows you know me.

THE BRAIN

Yeah, well. She's some piece of work. If I had known where you were I might have told her.

BRENDAN

That's the spirit. Ask around for Dode, tail Kara again at lunch. I got knives in my eyes, I'm going home sick. I'll call you tonight.

EXT. SIDEWALK - LATE AFTERNOON

Bordering a supermarket. Brendan trudges along. Suddenly he stops. Parked in the supermarket parking lot is a black mustang.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun hangs low. Brendan approaches the car and walks around it slowly. He peers inside. A tuft of paper pokes out from under the seat. He pulls the door handle, locked.

Brendan picks up a broken chunk of concrete from the ground, waddles over to the car and holds the chunk above his head, ready to drop it through the window.

He stops. His eyes catch something in the distance.

The lanky shaved-head kid, whose name is Tugger. Coming towards him fast.

Brendan stands there for a moment, then lets the chunk fall to the ground. He casually leans against the car, removes his glasses, puts them in a hard case and puts the hard case in his pocket.

Tugger hits him like a train and throws him across the pavement. Tug turns back to the car and takes out his keys.

Brendan gets up and comes towards Tug, his face stiff. Tug turns and pops him once squarely in the mouth. Brendan falls to his knees.

While Tug unlocks the door Brendan stands up woozily. Grunting, Tug spins and grabs Brendan's jacket, pushing him back while he slaps him hard in the face, back and forth, three times. When Tug lets go Brendan drops like a stone, catching himself on his hands and knees. The car door slams.

The mustang drives about a hundred yards out into the parking lot, spins around and stops, facing Brendan. It's motor purrs deeply. Brendan begins to limp towards it doggedly, head up, eyes fixed.

A crackling roar and short squeal of tires spit the mustang forward. It comes straight at Brendan, rumbling like a tank.

Brendan stops walking and stands very still, eyes steady. The gap between him and the car closes in no time at all.

It speeds past him not six inches to his left, brushing the edge of his jacket. Brakes squeal behind him. Brendan turns and lopes towards the mustang, idling about fifty feet away.

He stops at the window. Tugger eyes him curiously, with some respect.

BRENDAN

I want to see the Pin.

TUGGER

(nods slightly)

Yeah, I guess you do.

EXT. STREETS

Twisty and narrow. The black mustang flies through them at impossible speeds, roaring past like a bullet.

DARKNESS

Loud engine noise, jostling, grunting. Then a metallic jangle, some scraping, and a CLINK!

EXT. REAR OF FAST MOVING MUSTANG - LATE AFTERNOON

The trunk pops open, revealing Brendan holding a jack rod.

INT. MOVING MUSTANG - CONTINUOUS

Tug is putting a tape in the deck, eyes down. Behind him the trunk pops open, then pulls down out of sight just as he looks back up.

INT. TRUNK OF MOVING MUSTANG

Brendan holds the trunk about three inches open, just enough to see which street signs pass by. Loud music plays from the car -- "Sweet Baby James" by James Taylor.

The car zooms on.

BRENDAN'S POV

Through the ajar trunk. The mustang slides to a stop beside an elaborate wooden mailbox carved as an eagle's head. Brendan closes the trunk.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

A small one story house, slightly run down. Tugger opens the trunk and drags Brendan out, covering his eyes with a palm, slams the trunk and goes inside.

When they are gone the broken trunk drifts open.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

A very dim narrow hall with a steep stairway at one end, dark doors down the length of it and a lit door at the other end. Tugger drags Brendan down the stairway, drops him and goes into the lit room.

Brendan lifts his head painfully. Surrounding him in the darkened doorways are dozens of boys, some dressed like Tugger, others dressed in black.

Tug pokes his head out.

TUGGER

Alright.

Arms pop out of the darkness and drag Brendan towards the lit room.

INT. KINGPIN'S DEN

A small room, amazingly messy. Clothes strewn about, groves of empty bottles, precarious piles of books. The overall impression though is not of jumbled chaos, but of a nest, comfortably woven and very worn in.

A slim figure with wispy hair sits facing the wall at a small desk, writing under a green bookkeeper's lamp.

Brendan is shoved into the center of the room. Tug and his clones slump against the surrounding walls. Brendan watches the thin figure's back. For a beat the only noise is the scratching of the thin man's pencil. Then he sighs and swivels around.

Mid to late twenties. Sallow features, tired eyes. His clothes are so richly black it is difficult to make out specific items -- he is just one inky black mass from the neck down and eyebrows up.

BRENDAN
You the Pin?

PIN
Yeah.
(beat of silence)
So now I'm very very curious what you're going to say next.

BRENDAN
Maybe I'll just sit and bleed at you.

The Pin shifts in his seat, bored.

PIN
Helled if you're gonna go breaking my best clients' noses and expect me to play sandbag. Anyway you've been sniffing me out before then, sniffing for me like a vampire bat for a horse with a nick on it's ear he can suck on. They do that.
(Brendan blinks)
So now you got Tugger to bring you here, which he never does, and you got me listening, so I'm curious what you've got to say that better be really, really good.

BRENDAN
Call Ms. Dannon in from the hall first: she oughta hear this.

PIN
(amused)
No dice, soldier. Would have been a neat trick, though.

BRENDAN
(shrugs, then slowly)
I was going to make up some bit of information or set up some phony deal, anything so you'd let me walk. Then I was going to go to the vice principal and spill him the street address of the biggest dope port in the burgh.

The Pin's eyes shoot to Tugger, who doesn't flinch.

TUGGER
He knows zippe.

BRENDAN

1250 Vista Blanca, the ink blotter at the desk in the den in the basement of the house with the tacky mailbox.

The world turns on it's side as Tugger pushes Brendan's head down into the carpet.

TUGGER

You gonna do what now?!

The Pin walks towards them. One of his shoes is twice the size of the other.

PIN

No good, soldier.

The cronies around the room begin cackling. Tug's face is a mask of rage. Brendan can't breath. His face swells.

PIN (CONT'D)

Alright, let up.

But Tug doesn't let up. Brendan's world grows hazy, the cackling laughter reverberates, then a clean voice pierces the din.

LAURA

(OS)

Tug, stop.

Tug's face breaks for a moment, and he lets go. Brendan's head lolls to the side. Laura stands in the dark doorway.

Brendan sees Tug's knuckles and a flash of white for a split moment as Tug hits him in the face. The Pin's black body spills out across the frame, leaving us in black.

FADE UP

SMALL DARK ROOM

Brendan wakes up curled on a mattress on the floor. A bare light bulb hangs from the ceiling. Tugger sits five feet away, watching him like a hungry dog. Brendan stares back at him through thick, glazed eyes.

BRENDAN

Where are my glasses?

{Tugger grins}

Hell with ya then. Which wall's the door in?

Tug points, amused. Brendan heaves himself up, and Tug shoves him back down.

Brendan winks at him, stands and lurches towards the door again.

Tugger grabs his shirt and slams him into the wall, but freezes when he hears a door latch click. Sneering, he drops Brendan back onto the mattress and sits against the opposite wall.

Sounds of a door opening and closing come from the darkness. Light footsteps clack on the cement floor. Suddenly Tug vanishes -- the room's darkness just seems to swallow him.

The thin whispery voice of the Pin speaks softly.

PIN

Sorry about this kid, but what the hell with what you said before.

His disembodied face appears a few feet about where Tug had sat.

PIN (CONT'D)

Where you were at, with all of us and the Tug a fist away, you've got to use your nut. Allay the situation. So yeah, you're not scared of me, I got it, but I'm also thinking you're a little nuts now, so you've got that trade off with your standing. But nuts isn't all bad, so maybe it was a good play. I don't know.

He is standing in front of Tug. His black clothes and broad rimmed black hat blend perfectly with the dark room, such that his face seems to bob about in space. Brendan stifles a cough.

PIN (CONT'D)

So, Laura talked me down. Let's get you upstairs, back with the living.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Brendan sits at a breakfast table eating cornflakes. The kitchen is on the first floor of the Pin's house, or rather the Pin's mother's house. She is a soft old lady in a pastel cotton dress, currently bent over the fridge mumbling.

MOTHER

I thought we had orange juice, Brendan, I'm sorry.

(MORE)

MOTHER (cont'd)

How about Tang, or that's more like soda isn't it, or not soda but it hasn't got any juice in it, it can't be very fortifying.

BRENDAN

Water's fine, ma'am, thanks.

MOTHER

Now just a moment, we have apple juice here, if you'd like that, or milk, though you've got that in your cornflakes, I don't know if drinking it as well might be too much.

BRENDAN

Apple juice sounds terrific.

MOTHER

It's country style.

BRENDAN

That's perfect.

She shuts the fridge. Tugger and the Pin sit behind her, looking comfortably bored. The Pin, a sharp black hole against the soft yellow kitchen, eats oatmeal cookies with small delicate bites.

MOTHER

I'll even give it to you in a country glass, how'd that be? Boys?

TUGGER

I'm fine, Mrs. M.

PIN

Thanks, mom.

The Pin kisses her on the cheek.

MOTHER

Okay, well I'm going to go, um, do something in the other room now...

She shuffles out.

PIN

(to Brendan)

So hows bout we take another snap at hearing your tale?

BRENDAN

I don't know. It starts out same as before, and this floor ain't carpeted.

PIN

We're cooled off.

BRENDAN

Yeah well, your muscle seemed plenty cool putting his fist in my head. I want him out.

The Pin grins thinly, uncomfortable.

PIN

Looky, soldier-

BRENDAN

The ape blows or I clam.

TUGGER

(stands violently)

So clam! What've you got I can't beat out of you back in the basement?

The Pin and Brendan are perfectly still, watching each other.

PIN

Give us a few minutes, Tug.

Tug turns to him, but Pin keeps his eyes on Brendan.

PIN (CONT'D)

I'll call you if whatever.

Beat. Tug stomps off, slamming the narrow door hard behind him. The Pin goes back to gnawing his cookie.

PIN (CONT'D)

So?

Brendan sets down his spoon.

BRENDAN

About a year ago I had a small time dealing partnership with Jerr Madison. Know him?

PIN

Till he took the fall for you.

BRENDAN

Yeah well. I didn't ask him to, but he was a straight player. I got out clean - almost. Nothing on my official record, but the VPs play it like I owe them one. When I made it clear I wasn't playing their hound dog, well they didn't like it. They keep calling me in, badgering me.

PIN

Gee that's tough.

BRENDAN

I don't like being told whose side I'm on. So now they think I'm on your trail, I'm in a nice spot to know their movements and feed them yours.

PIN

I gotcha.

BRENDAN

You haven't got me yet.

PIN

What, price?

BRENDAN

Considering the benefits my services could yield, I don't think that's unreasonable.

PIN

And what are your services exactly, just so I can be specific on the invoice?

BRENDAN

(shrugs)

Whatever serves your interests.

The Pin stands.

PIN

Fair enough. I'll have my boys check your tale, and seeing how it stretches we'll either rub or hire you. You'll know which by end of the day tomorrow.

Brendan stands but doesn't follow as the Pin opens the narrow door Tugger went through and descends the dark stairs behind.

PIN (CONT'D)

We're done.

The moment the Pin vanishes into the basement's murk Laura comes up out of it. She takes Brendan's hand.

LAURA

I'll drive you back.

INT. LAURA'S CONVERTIBLE MOVING - SUNSET

They zig zag though the twisty suburban streets. Brendan stares sullenly into space.

BRENDAN

Just drop me at school.

(they take a hard turn)

How long was I out?

LAURA

Half an hour. It took all of it for me to cool the Pin down.

BRENDAN

(flatly, but sincerely)

Thanks.

They drive on in silence.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DUSK

Laura's convertible stops, and Brendan climbs out painfully. He studies her face for a moment.

LAURA

You trust me now?

BRENDAN

Less than when I didn't trust you before.

If you can tell me your angle in this, maybe I can.

LAURA

Come here.

Brendan leans on the car, his face close to hers.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm on the in, top level of the tower and I know everyone, but I don't know all what goes on. I knew Em when she tried to get with me and Brad, and I liked her. She was smart.

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

But she wasn't us, and it didn't work. When she left she took some souvenirs, dirty habits she wasn't strong enough to control and a connection to the Pin to keep them going. With me?

BRENDAN

So far.

LAURA

A few months go by, and the next I hear the Pin's raging over a situation with some certain junk Em was partial to, and the downfall's coming on Em's head.

BRENDAN

You think Em scraped the junk off the Pin?

LAURA

I don't know, but whether she scraped or copped or just ran her tab around the world and into her own back, it must have been grand. I've never seen the Pin so hot.

BRENDAN

This all helps but it's not what I asked. What's your angle in all this?

LAURA

I don't know. I'm usually pretty sharp, but... maybe I see what you're doing for Emily, trying to help her. And I don't know anyone who would do that for me.

BRENDAN

Now you are dangerous.

Throwing the car in gear, she peels out and leaves him standing alone in the fading evening light.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Brendan pushes through the gloom, past forest scenery, deeper and deeper until he comes to a door.

INT. WOMAN'S DRESSING ROOM

Hazy and cramped. Everything blends into the color of flesh. No walls are visible; it is all billowy piles of costumes. Brendan pushes in. Kara sits at the mirror, putting on eyeliner.

KARA
(sing song)
Brendan Brendan Brendan!

BRENDAN
Where's Dode flopped?
(she makes a face)
I know you two are cozed up, so you'll
tell me or you won't.

KARA
Oooh, getting feisty.
(giggles)
Last time we talked you were giving
ultimate-tims.

BRENDAN
It worked. You went to Laura, didn't you?
Told her my tale.

KARA
All part of your plan?

BRENDAN
Turned out to be.

KARA
I feel so cheap and used.

BRENDAN
Gol, I must seem a real cad. Sometimes I
just hate myself.

Kara grins dreamily.

KARA
Whatever happened to us, Brendan?

BRENDAN
Where's Dode flopped?

She turns to face him.

KARA
We were a pair and a half for a few
months, weren't we? Sometimes I miss
having someone I can talk to. You ever
miss having someone? I guess you must.

Brendan's face is a mask.

BRENDAN

I need to hear Dode's tale about Emily.
It's important.

KARA

(darkly)

You better be sure you wanna know whatcha
wanna know.

Brendan stands, coughing.

BRENDAN

Uh huh. Laura's working with me now, and
I'll have the Pin and Tug in my corner
soon. The sooner I get the truth from
Dode or the truth about Dode from you,
the safer you'll both be. No? Pass it on
to Dode anyway. Maybe he'll have the
sense to get out from under you before he
gets hurt.

KARA

You didn't, did you?

Brendan leaves without looking back.

INT. BRENDAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Brendan's at his desk, on the phone.

THE BRAIN

(on the phone)

So what happens now?

BRENDAN

Now we wait for the Pin's answer. Unless
his crew spotted VP Truman's social call
this morning, it'll be yes. I'd give us
70/30. If we're in I get under his skin
and see what's what. You stick to Kara,
keep your specs peeled for Dode and stay
away from Laura.

The Brain is quiet for a beat.

THE BRAIN

I think she's with us, Brendan.

BRENDAN

(too sharp)

I'll let you know when she is.

A beat of silence.

THE BRAIN

Okay.

Brendan gently replaces the receiver and sits for a moment in silence.

EXT. LOCKER CAGE - MORNING

The class bell rings, and the cage quickly empties. Brendan limps in, opens his locker. A note falls to his feet. It is folded into a star. He pulls it open. "TWELVE THIRTY PICO & ALEXANDER".

He fishes the old note out and compares them - different handwriting.

The locker cage is now empty and silent, except for the steady sound of heavy footfalls. Brendan looks up from the notes.

A lug with a lumpish face is coming towards him. He wears a black trenchcoat over bulbous shoulders, and his black hair comes down over his eyes like a sheepdog's.

BRENDAN

You the Pin's?

No answer. The lug keeps coming.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

So what's his answer?

Closer, not slowing. Brendan tightens his hand into a fist. Then CLICK! and a long slender switchblade gleams in the lug's right paw.

Brendan jumps back as the lug swipes the blade at his torso. Before the lug winds up for another slash Brendan is running.

EXT. CAMPUS SQUARE - DAY

Brendan runs through the empty campus square, the lug follows.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Wind rushing, sweating, the lug very close. Their footsteps clatter on the cement. Brendan swings around a corner, doubles back and stops with his back to a wall - he's lost sight of him.

Brendan sweats, listening. The lug's footsteps echo through the hallways, coming from all directions at once. Then it seems clear - he's down the hall on Brendan's right.

Brendan dashes left. Wrong. The lug looms over him, his knife hand flashing. Brendan's jacket shoulder tears open, and the white filling inside turns red. He stumbles back blindly, gets his footing and scrambles out of reach.

Brendan sprints away, down the hall, gaining about thirty feet on the lug before turning the corner.

Brendan drops to a sitting position.

THE LUG AROUND THE CORNER

Running fast.

BRENDAN

Kicks his shoes off and clambers to his feet. The lug's footsteps are impossibly loud.

THE LUG

Just about to round the corner.

BRENDAN

On his socked feet running silently back towards the corner. The lug's footsteps crash like symbols as they both come around the same corner in opposite directions at full speed.

Brendan slides like a baseball player, tangling his legs into the lug's. The lug pitches forward with frightening momentum. He hits the hall's metal handrail with his arms and head. A hollow gong reverberates through the hallway, and the lug falls like a puppet with his strings cut.

A wallet with a couple of twenties and a student ID (CHUCK BURNS), three hash pipes, fifteen joints, a baggie of weed and a large brownie in another baggie.

Brendan leaves it all on him and staggers off.

EXT. CAMPUS PAYPHONE - DAY

Brendan breathes heavily into the phone.

BRENDAN

Chuck Burns, big lug with hair like a sheepdog.

THE BRAIN

(on the phone)

Yeah I know him, I just can't pin him to any crowd. He's definitely not muscle for anyone. He taps the Carrows crowd but doesn't hang with them. If you've got a guess I could check it out-

BRENDAN

The Pin. If he's with the Pin everything's kablooie and I gotta blow the burgh.

THE BRAIN

I'll check it. I'm in third now-

Brendan spots the Pin's Cady pulling into the parking lot.

BRENDAN

Never mind. If I don't call by three call in the bulls.

Brendan hangs up and begins walking at a normal pace along the sidewalk.

The cady pulls up beside him, and he stops walking. The door swings open and a voice comes from inside.

VOICE

Get in.

With no perceivable hesitation, he does.

INT. CADILAC - DAY

Brendan sits beside the Pin. The windows are tinted and the car is very dark. The seats are pink vinyl. The car lurches forward.

Brendan and the Pin are silent for a beat, not looking at each other.

BRENDAN

So?

PIN

So. Tangles.

A stocky kid in the front seat turns, and reaches into his jacket. For a moment he stays like that, hand in his jacket, eyes on Brendan. Brendan's face is placid.

Tangles pulls out an envelope and drops it in Brendan's lap.

PIN (CONT'D)

That's what you'll get every week for your services. Less of course there's a specific job involved, in where you get sliced in with my crew. Square?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

Silence. The Pin holds his hat in his hands, fingering the rim.

PIN

We're doing a thing down at the Hole tonight. Know it?

BRENDAN

South of T Street, yeah.

PIN

It's sort of a welcome you in thing. Eight o'clock.

The car stops.

EXT. CAMPUS PAYPHONE - DAY

Brendan climbs out of the car on the exact spot they picked him up. The Cady drives off. Brendan checks his watch.

BRENDAN'S WATCH

12:32. A phone begins to ring.

EXT. PICO & ALEXANDER - DAY

Brendan looks up from his watch and answers the payphone, holding the receiver to his ear in silence.

VOICE

(on the phone)

I know what you did. I saw what you did.

The voice is low and garbled, filtered through something.

BRENDAN

So?

VOICE

Anyone I tell, it would ruin you some way. And I'm going to tell someone.

BRENDAN
Are you making an offer?

VOICE
Maybe. Or maybe I'll just do you in.

BRENDAN
Hire another hash head to blade me?

VOICE
Don't need no blades, shamus. I just
gotta squawk.

BRENDAN
What do you want?

VOICE
Just to see you sweat.

CLICK. Brendan replaces the receiver and stands still for a moment. Then he inserts a coin and dials.

THE BRAIN
(on the phone)
Brendan?

BRENDAN
Yeah.

THE BRAIN
You alright?

BRENDAN
Yeah, I'm fine. Keep digging on the Burns
lug, but the main thing is to find Dode.
He set up whatever Emily walked into,
it's getting more and more urgent we
talk.

THE BRAIN
Alright. Trueman was looking for you.

BRENDAN
Trueman and the VP?

THE BRAIN
No, just Trueman.

BRENDAN
Asked for me?

THE BRAIN
No, but looked.

BRENDAN

That's not good. Alright, keep me posted.

Brendan hangs up.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

A bonfire burns about a hundred feet off. Figures jump through the blaze to thrash music. The Pin and Brendan wander towards us on the dark beach.

PIN

So I'm going to start you on the dope circles, cleaning up the Turkish dues, pulling in the strags.

BRENDAN

Small fries.

PIN

Yeah, well. Just to see how you handle. Anyway there isn't much else doing. I'm tailing out this big deal, but that's almost done.

BRENDAN

Oh yeah? What was it?

PIN

Big time. Biggest I ever done, and there was a snag in it, but it's almost done now.

BRENDAN

What was it?

PIN

It's over.

BRENDAN

Almost, you said.

PIN

It's over enough. You're gonna make me curious, being so curious.

They sit in the sand, facing the breakers.

PIN (CONT'D)

I gotta lay something out. You're coming into a certain situation, and I'm bringing you in sort of because of it.

{beat}

(MORE)

PIN (CONT'D)

I didn't tell Tugger to hit you for the Brad Bramish thing. Laura and I, I decided I oughta hear what you were gunning for before I made an enemy. Tug just did it, though. He was hot, and he just hit you. He's been doing that.

BRENDAN

Yeah?

PIN

He's got my best interests, I know, he's loyal, he just gets hot.

BRENDAN

Muscle you can't control's no good at that.

PIN

You're working for me, not Tug, that's all.

BRENDAN

Alright.

A moment of silence. The breakers crash.

PIN

Things can get, you know, it's tough sometimes. Twisted, complicated, watching all the, I don't know. Everyone's got their thing.

(silence)

You read Tolkien?

BRENDAN

What?

PIN

Tolkien, the Hobbit books?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

PIN

His descriptions of things are really good.

BRENDAN

Oh yeah?

PIN

He makes you want to be there.

The waves crash. Behind them, with no warning at all, a train shoots by. Tug stands with his hands jammed in his pockets, flashing lights and gleaming metal streaking and squealing behind him.

INT. BRENDAN'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The clock radio blinks 5:34. The phone is ringing. Brendan half wakes and puts it to his ear.

THE BRAIN
(on the phone)
Don't go to class.

BRENDAN
What?

THE BRAIN
Fifth period Trueman and the VP come in asking for you.

BRENDAN
Agh.

THE BRAIN
Did they call your mom?

BRENDAN
Probably. I got home late.

THE BRAIN
Get out of there too, then. Meet me behind the library. I've got some stuff.

EXT. BACK OF LIBRARY - EARLY MORNING

A cold gray morning. The Brain hands Brendan a photocopy of a newspaper clipping, "LOCAL YOUTH HOSPITALIZED"

THE BRAIN
Frisco Farr was found on a sidewalk outside Pinkerton's Deli three weeks ago. He was in a coma, his stomach contained a sausage sandwich, a horse dose of Heroin and traces of Choleric Tricemate, a poisonous chemical found in laundry detergent. Frisco's still under and nobody's talking, so nothing's come of it.

BRENDAN
OD?

THE BRAIN

No, the chem the junk must have been cut with put him down.

BRENDAN

Huh. Bad junk. Bad brick... could that form of Heroin be called 'Brick'?

THE BRAIN

No -- it was a concentrated powder, it's street handle's 'whip' or 'rock' or 'brock'.

(fishes a note from his pocket)
Here. From Laura.

BRENDAN

I told you to stay clear of Laura.

THE BRAIN

You tell her to stay clear of me?

He gives the note to Brendan, who unfolds it roughly.

BRENDAN

(mutters)

I gotta get voicemail.

The note reads "Meet me at the southeast corner of the school at 9:30." Brendan crumples it into a ball.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No. Tell her I'll be at the Pin's at one.
Any luck with the lug?

THE BRAIN

No.

The Brain lays out a local newspaper with Emily's picture - "LOCAL GIRL MISSING". Uncomfortable silence.

BRENDAN

This isn't good.

The Brain looks hard at him. Brendan stares off into space for a beat, then takes the Brain's cell phone and dials.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Mr. Trueman please.

Brendan compares the two notes from his pocket with Laura's - distinct handwriting on each.

TRUEMAN
(on the phone)
This is Trueman.

BRENDAN
What the hell are you doing asking for me
in class?

TRUEMAN
What the hell are you doing out of class?

BRENDAN
What?

TRUEMAN
(very deliberate)
The VP and I needed to ask you a few
questions about Emily Kostich, who you
might have heard is missing. It's a very
serious thing. The police are involved.
The VP and I knew you two were close, so
the VP and I came to ask you questions,
but you were truant. If you don't have a
valid excuse-

Brendan hangs up.

THE BRAIN
What?

BRENDAN
I've been cut loose. I'm not safe here.
We shouldn't have met in the open.
Alright, lay low, but ask on the
underneath for Dode. That's all that
matters now, find Dode, but do it on the
underneath, got it?

THE BRAIN
What are you going to do?

BRENDAN
I'd like to have played it safe, but
there's no time. The Pin's not letting
anything drop, so I gotta push things a
bit.

THE BRAIN
How?

BRENDAN
I don't know. Just find Dode.

EXT. THE PIN'S HOUSE - DAY

The bird of prey mailbox looms ominously. Brendan knocks on the front door. No answer. He presses lightly on the screen door, and it gives.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Empty. Brendan crosses the warped linoleum and gently opens the narrow basement door. He descends into inky gloom.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - SAME

Deathly still and silent. Barely breathing, Brendan goes to the lit doorway at the end of the hall.

INT. PIN'S DEN - SAME

Empty. Brendan floats through the room like a ghost, to the Pin's desk.

Slowly, then with greater confidence he rifles through it - papers and trinkets, meaningless.

He reaches beneath the desk, knocking it gently with his knuckles. Quickly he removes the top drawer and reaches down into the desk frame.

Brendan draws out a stack of hundred dollar bills two inches thick. He pulls out another. Another. Another. Thumbing the stacks -- pure hundreds.

Something creaks in the hallway.

Brendan freezes. Silently he replaces the money and drawer, his eyes on the doorway. He creeps towards the door on the balls of his feet.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - SAME

Still empty. Brendan creeps towards the stairs, passing other doorways, all open but for one. He stops for a moment, listening - silence.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - SAME

Brendan enters the room - pitch black but for a small high window. Brendan pulls the curtains aside. A beam of sunlight spills just enough light to reveal a figure in the dark. Brendan jumps back, and his reflection in the large mirror jumps as well.

A white bird nesting in the window flutters into the dark room.

Brendan walks the large mirror into the beam of light, reflecting it around the room like a flashlight. More junk, a mattress, then a strangely bare corner with a single white lump in it. The white bird stands behind the lump, it's dark eyes caught in the bare light.

The bird flies out the window.

Brendan goes to the white lump, a small brick of white powder. White chalky residue patterns the floor -- there were other bricks there before.

Behind Brendan, in the mirror, something moves. Someone else, in the room.

Tugger. He throws Brendan across the room, then heaves him into a wall.

TUGGER

What with the poking, genius?! Maybe you're poking for your bull friends!

BRENDAN

Don't be a sap. I can't even face up at school, the VP's so hot for me.

TUGGER

Yeah well. Maybe you're looking to make good.

BRENDAN

I'm looking to find this big game the Pin's played, not to gum it, but just so when it's tail jams in my back I'll know who to bill for the embalming.

TUGGER

You oughta ask him what you wanna know.

BRENDAN

I did. He didn't tell me.

Tug loosens his grip. Brendan gasps for air.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

When a gee I'm paid to side with won't give me the straight that makes me nervous. Makes me angry.

Tug draws back a bit.

TUGGER
Yeah, well. That's understandable.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tug sets a country glass of orange juice in front of Brendan.
He paces.

TUGGER
There was ten of them. I don't know where
he picked them, he didn't tell me.

BRENDAN
(sympathetic)
Huh.

TUGGER
So we get ten kils of brock, there ain't
enough marks in the whole burgh to eat
that. So he unloads eight of em up way
north, even up to the docks. I don't know
who.

BRENDAN
Didn't tell you.

TUGGER
Yeah. That was eight. So that's the tenth
in there. We gotta break it into doses,
sell em off round the high, maybe some by
Shorecliffs.

BRENDAN
What about the ninth brick?

TUGGER
Ah yeah. There were problems with that.

BRENDAN
Yeah?

TUGGER
It, uh...

He stops, thinking harder than he's used to. His scar reddens
slightly, then he jerks out of his trance.

TUGGER (CONT'D)
(quickly)
It disappeared. Someone skimmed it. We
started raising hell with all the likely
suspects, and whatayaknow, it came back.
(MORE)

TUGGER (CONT'D)

But it came back bad. One of ours took a dose off the top, and it laid him out.

BRENDAN

Frisco.

TUGGER

Yeah, poor Frisco. You heard about that. We'll track down the rat. Just takes time.

BRENDAN

I heard something fell with Emily Kostich.

TUGGER

Emily who?

BRENDAN

Kostich.

TUGGER

Don't know her.

BRENDAN

Huh.

A quiet pause. Tug's scar reddens a bit more.

TUGGER

Has the Pin talked about her?

BRENDAN

Not to me.

TUGGER

Yeah, he might know something. Ask him. Tell me what he says, cause if you heard something, you know, I wanna check.

BRENDAN

Sure.

The screen door swings open -- enter the Pin. If he's surprised he doesn't show it.

PIN

Pow wowing?

BRENDAN

Just shooting the shat.

TUGGER

Yeah, just shooting it.

PIN

Good.

His big foot clunks on the linoleum. He eyes a very sick looking Brendan.

PIN (CONT'D)

You alright, soldier?

Brendan moves a hand dismissively, sniffing.

PIN (CONT'D)

So, Tug, I got a call. Someone who says they know something about Emily.

TUGGER

Emily?

PIN

Emily Kostich. Where she's at now. Says we'd want to know. Wants to meet.

TUGGER

(uncomfortable)

Yeah?

PIN

So we'll meet him. Four o'clock.

(to Brendan)

Emily was Tug's girl for awhile. You know Emily, didn't you?

BRENDAN

A while back.

PIN

You've heard she's missing?

BRENDAN

Yeah, I heard that.

PIN

So maybe you want to come along too.

BRENDAN

What has Emily got to do with you?

PIN

(looks at Tugger)

Show, maybe we'll find out.

He gives a slip of paper to Tugger.

PIN (CONT'D)
Four o'clock.

Tugger glances at the slip, then slides it to Brendan. It has the symbol drawn in pencil:



A horn honks outside.

BRENDAN
That's my ride.

The Pin calls after him as he leaves.

PIN
Four o'clock.

EXT. FRONT OF PIN'S HOUSE - SAME

Brendan falls into Laura's idling car.

BRENDAN
(roughly)
A payphone, anywhere.

LAURA
What-

Brendan throws the car into drive, and they jerk forward.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

PAYPHONE
The mobile customer you have called is
away from the phone-

Brendan slams the phone down violently and walks back towards the car. His legs quiver, and a coughing fit hits.

Hacking and spluttering he falls to his knees. Laura's arms wrap around him, except it isn't Laura, it's Emily. Brendan spins backwards into

DARKNESS

Emily kissing his mouth, her hair around him, but it isn't her hair, it's Laura's. Brendan shoots upwards

INT. LAURA'S CAR STATIONARY - DAY

and sits up with a jolt. Laid out in the back seat, Laura dabbing his head with a wet napkin.

BRENDAN
(barks shakily)
What time is it?

LAURA
Lie down, Brendan-

BRENDAN
What time-

LAURA
You've got a fever, you've got to go to the hospital or-

BRENDAN
What time is it?

LAURA
Three forty. You've got to rest, you're feverish.

He throws himself out of the car.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - SAME

Brendan falls to his knees, coughing. Laura follows.

LAURA
Get back in the car, I'm taking you home, you're sick, you need-

BRENDAN
Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

He keeps yelling that until she does. His head spins.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
Okay, you've got to, what you've got to do is drive around to the Carrows lot. I'll be up on the, the blacktop, the basketball field. So you've got to go by you or me to get down there. If you see anyone but the Pin or Tugger or their crew go down into the ravine, honk four times, long short long short. But don't be seen.

LAURA

Get back in the car.

BRENDAN

Do it! Will you do it? I need you to do this. I need you, here. Please.

He holds her shoulders. A beat, then her face registers resignation.

EXT. BASKETBALL FIELD - DAY

A flat plane of pebbly asphalt with a dozen basketball courts faintly outlined across it's surface. Brendan stands crooked, watching the barren horizon. The wind blows bitterly, and the sky is dark.

Then, a speck. Coming towards Brendan, across the field. Brendan slumps towards it. Closer. Still a dark dot. Closer.

Brendan's face snaps into recognition.

BRENDAN

What are you doing, Dode?

Dode grins. He holds a newspaper.

DODE

You gonna stop me?

BRENDAN

What do you think you're doing, Dode?

DODE

I saw you. I saw what you did.

BRENDAN

What'd you see?

DODE

I saw you.

BRENDAN

What'd you see me?

DODE

You were with her, dead, and you took the body.

BRENDAN

Yeah, I did. That's all you saw? What about before?

DODE

Before what?

BRENDAN

Did you see who killed her before I got there?

DODE

(face ashen)

You killed her.

BRENDAN

I found the body, Dode.

DODE

You, I thought you didn't, but we figured out, I got the news on ya, cause you hid the body, why wouldn't-

BRENDAN

Who's 'we'?

DODE

Shut up! You're always talking, always this and that smartso, you're gonna shut up now!

BRENDAN

I didn't kill her, Dode.

DODE

You're not going to talk this!

BRENDAN

Dode, I know you're thinking of Em, I know you tried to help her-

DODE

Shut up! You're gonna shut your

Brendan staggers, the world blurs out for a moment, then snaps back.

DODE (CONT.) (CONT'D)

put it over real nice-

BRENDAN

-so I'm telling you now you're in over your head, you don't want to put your hand in this-

Dode shakes the newspaper at him.

DODE

Shut up! She's dead, you-

BRENDAN

Why was she scared, Dode? She came to me,
who was she scared of? I think I know
why, I just gotta know who!

Dode throws the paper, which scatters in the wind.

DODE

You're trying to confuse me.

BRENDAN

Dode.

DODE

You couldn't stand it. Your little Em.
She was gonna keep it, it was mine, and
you couldn't stand that.

BRENDAN

What was yours?

DODE

I had you pegged.

BRENDAN

What was yours?

DODE

I loved her. And I woulda loved the kid.
I'm gonna bury you.

Brendan's face is empty. Dode walks stiffly away. Brendan
puts a hand on his shoulder, but shrinks back in a coughing
spasm. Dode grabs Brendan's wrist and hits him in the face.

Brendan hits the pavement.

EXT. HEAVEN - DAY

Bright clouds, sharp light. Emily flies towards us, glowing,
then dimmer, her wings splutter out, the clouds turn gray,
and we are looking at Emily's picture in the newspaper
article.

EXT. BASKETBALL FIELD - DAY

Brendan pulls the newspaper off his face, lying in a fetal
position. Dode is nowhere to be seen.

Slowly, painfully, Brendan hoists himself up. He coughs and splutters, barely able to keep his footing.

He limps across the field. Every step is agony. The wind blows against him. The black field seems impossibly long, still he keeps limping forward, towards the ravine.

EXT. RUNOFF TUNNEL - DAY

Brendan slides down the embankment, landing on his feet.

Gathered around the drain tunnel entrance are Tugger, the Pin, five of Tugger's flunkies and Dode in the middle. Everyone looks at Brendan.

A long silence. Brendan clears his throat.

BRENDAN

What'd I miss?

More silence.

PIN

Dode here says Emily Kostich is dead.

Nobody reacts to that. Brendan's face is placid.

BRENDAN

Oh yeah?

PIN

Yeah. He says he knows who did it. He says he knows where the body's at.

(beat of silence)

And he says he wants more money than I think the information's worth.

BRENDAN

That so, Dode?

(to the Pin)

So walk. What's the info have to do with you anyways?

DODE

Plenty.

PIN

Plenty, he says.

BRENDAN

Uh huh. And he wants cash on the nail.
He's a pot skulled reef worm with more
hop in his head than blood. Why pay for
dirt you can't believe?

DODE

You'll believe this.

BRENDAN

(shrugs)

Maybe you will.

DODE

You'll believe it, cause it's someone
close to you. Real close.

The Pin looks up at Brendan, whose face is loose and
nonchalant.

BRENDAN

Maybe it's hot, but it's Dode, you can't
trust it.

DODE

Real close.

Tugger's eyes are locked on Dode, his scar the color of raw
liver. Brendan laughs and turns away.

BRENDAN

I'm getting my shoes wet for this. Let
him milk you if you want.

PIN

(to Brendan)

Stay.

(to Dode)

It's still too much.

DODE

No it's not. You won't complain when you
hear it.

Tugger twists a stick in his hands. Brendan watches him,
curious.

BRENDAN

(murmurs)

So maybe you should.

DODE

You had her against the wall with the brick -

PIN

I know my business. It's still too much.

DODE

(with growing confidence)

It's not, cause that's not why she was killed, and it's real important to you, cause the person who killed her's real close, and cause he's got a lot to lose, and he knows if I don't bury him by spilling to you I spill to the bulls and bury him for real, and he's really really scared - she had a kid in her and he couldn't stand -

Tugger springs like a cat. He grabs Dode's hair and knees his face.

Brendan stumbles towards them.

BRENDAN

Tug, it's alright!

Tug has Dode on the ground, kicking his stomach and chest.

PIN

Tug, stop.

Tug backs off. Dode raises his head.

Tug pulls the gun from his jacket.

Brendan yells, slips and falls into the shallow water.

Tug levels the gun at Dode's head and fires one shot. The back of Dode's skull comes off.

The rapport reverberates through the black tunnel behind them, and birds fly out. Dode remains upright for a moment, then falls limp into the water.

The Pin's face is stupid, lifeless. Tug turns to him, gun in hand.

PIN (CONT'D)

(thickly)

Tug...

Tugger fires - dirt kicks up, and the Pin scrambles back. Brendan crawls towards Tug, yelling for him to stop.

Tug fires twice more, both misses, and the Pin is away.

Distant sirens.

Brendan's vision blurs. He stumbles and falls into the shallow water.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

A CEILING FAN

Spinning gently. Brendan's eyes open, watch it sleepily, then sharpen.

INT. TUGGER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brendan sits up in the bed. Tugger sits in a chair bedside, smoking. Brendan watches him for a long moment in the room's dim light.

TUGGER

She sprung it on me, just. That's a hell of a thing to spring on a guy. I don't remember much. Laura talked me down after, said whatever, she knew her, said it wasn't true, but I still think sometimes. I think bout it being true. Bout it being mine. And maybe I did it cause I thought it was true. A hell of a thing.

Brendan stares at him through cold, empty eyes.

TUGGER (cont'd)

You up? You weren't doing too good there for awhile. Laura said take you, you know, hospital, but I couldn't.

BRENDAN

What's the stats?

TUGGER

Everyone's just laying low. You're here with us, at my folks place. They're gone. The bulls got Dode fore the tide took his body.

BRENDAN

Tide?

TUGGER

Yeah, strong tide, would've taken the body, like out to sea. It can do that. But the fuzz got there first.

Brendan nods.

TUGGER (CONT'D)

So everyone's assuming it's war, but no one's said it yet. Everyone's lying low.

BRENDAN

War?

TUGGER

You're with us.

BRENDAN

The hell I am.

Brendan swings his legs over the bed. Tug steps in front of him, staring him down.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Alright, I'm with you.

TUGGER

So just lie low. Sleep some more. Laura, she said you should sleep.

Tugger exits. Brendan runs his fingers through his hair, steps into his shoes and hobbles out of the room.

INT. TUGGER'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

About ten more kids dressed like Tug are cleaning guns. Brendan nods to them.

BRENDAN

Hey.

They nod back, not paying much attention as he goes out the front door.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

On a lamplit street corner Brendan leans against a payphone.

THE BRAIN
(on phone)
Brendan?

BRENDAN
Yeah.

THE BRAIN
Are you - what, man, have you heard about
Dode-

BRENDAN
I was there.

THE BRAIN
You-

BRENDAN
Where were you yesterday? I called.

THE BRAIN
Kasprzyk took my phone, turned it off. I
just now got it back.

BRENDAN
Alright, listen-

THE BRAIN
Are you okay?

BRENDAN
Just listen. Is my name in the papers
with the story?

THE BRAIN
No.

BRENDAN
Alright. Is it just Dode in the papers?

THE BRAIN
Yeah. What do you mean?

BRENDAN
Listen, I'm going to be calling you
tonight, probably late. Sleep with your
phone on. Could you get a car if you
needed to?

THE BRAIN
If it's late enough I could take my mom's-

BRENDAN
Be ready then. I'll call.

THE BRAIN
Alright.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Brendan kicks in the door. Kara sits in front of the mirror in a soft pink robe, a boy on the floor beside her. She gasps.

KARA
Brendan. Did you hear about Dode?

BRENDAN
You scheming tramp. You set that poor kid up, you hid him, fed him your tale. You got info from Laura and held Dode like a card till you could play him. For money!

Brendan throws a chair. The boy stands.

KARA
I don't know what you're talking about.

BRENDAN
You'd bury me at the same time, but it was mostly for the money. You got Dode thinking Em had his kid, thinking I did it, and that was enough for him, but he stuck to the money cause you had your claws in him, cause he couldn't come away from the deal without it and make you happy.

KARA
Sit down, you're a mess. Russ, go get my shoes from the wardrobe locker, would you sweetie?

He goes, trying to look mean at Brendan. Brendan and Kara watch each other like caged rats.

KARA (CONT'D)
Still wish you knew what you wanted to know? If it's any consolation, it probably wasn't Dode's kid. It might have been Tug's, but frankly I wouldn't bet a horse - it was a crowded field there at the end.

Brendan grabs a clock and throws it. Kara's mirror shatters, revealing a grimy dark wall behind.

KARA (cont'd)
Meany. You want my tale, Brendan? I still know what Dode was selling, but I'd play it smart. A quick call from a payphone to copland, they drag the tunnel and you're through.

She comes very close to him. Her robe falls open slightly.

KARA (CONT'D)
Five thousand. Cash. I know you can get it from the Pin, but even if you can't I want it by first period tomorrow, or I play my hand and bury you.

She turns away, lets her robe fall.

KARA (CONT'D)
Now get out.

Brendan's eyes burn. He lunges at her.

EXT. BACKSTAGE - SAME

Drama geeks sit in groups. The dressing room door flies open and Kara flies out, stark naked. Brendan flies out after her.

KARA
What are you doing?

BRENDAN
Showing your ace.

Brendan storms out.

EXT. PIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brendan walks past the bird of prey mailbox. A voice from the screen door -

VOICE
Far enough.

The Pin.

PIN
Everyone's paying social calls.

BRENDAN
Laura here?

Beat of silence.

PIN

So?

BRENDAN

So what are the stats?

PIN

The stats are war, soon as the press heat dies. And if you're with him, you're with him.

BRENDAN

Tug got hot. He panicked.

PIN

Tug's been after my digs from the get go.

BRENDAN

No. He's been anxious cause he thought if you found out he killed Emily you'd turn him over.

PIN

He was right.

BRENDAN

Yeah, well.

PIN

I told him to get the straight, no roughing. I wasn't even there.

BRENDAN

Alright. So he's a hot head. So you don't want him on your side, at least let's have a pow wow fore we start digging trenches. Maybe we can all walk away amiable enemies. What would it take?

PIN

I don't know. We'd have to square everything between us. He owes me some money.

BRENDAN

Alright, but we can talk.

PIN

Yeah, alright.

BRENDAN
Four o'clock.

PIN
Tomorrow?

BRENDAN
Tonight. Let's clear it all before it
boils up again.

PIN
Four tonight. You'll be here?

BRENDAN
Yeah.

Brendan turns away.

LAURA (OS)
Wait!

She comes out of the house with her purse.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I'll drive you back.

INT. LAURA'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Laura drives, Brendan stares at the passing lights.

LAURA
What's going to happen?
Brendan coughs.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Do you feel better?

BRENDAN
(weak)
I don't know.

INT. TUGGER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Brendan stumbles in. Tug's hands grab him roughly.

TUGGER
For a smart guy you ain't too smart. I
said lay low.

Laura enters.

LAURA

Tug.

He drops Brendan. Laura kneels beside Brendan, feeling his forehead.

BRENDAN

She was at the Pin's.

TUGGER

Yeah, she's our go-between.

BRENDAN

Uh huh. So here's the sit. You and the Pin are going to pow wow, four o'clock tonight, his place. Take all the muscle you want, you won't need it. He wants to talk straight, and you're going to work with him for whatever he needs, cause you don't want war.

TUGGER

Hell I don't.

BRENDAN

The Pin's sitting on the brick profits - hitting him now would be post. Make peace and wait for your chance.

LAURA

He's right, Tug. Smooth it out.

BRENDAN

(between coughs)

Besides, he's got you on the Dode thing. War'll mean you vs. him and every bull in the burgh.

Tugger turns away, thinking.

TUGGER

Yeah, we'll talk.

LAURA

(to Brendan)

You going?

BRENDAN

Yeah.

She nods. Brendan stumbles into the bedroom.

INT. TUGGER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brendan lies on his back. Sweat stands on his forehead.

THE FAN

Spinning dizzily from Brendan's POV. Then the fan is still and the room is spinning, then the fan, then the room. Brendan clamps his eyes shut. A door creaks open.

BRENDAN
(croaks)
Go away.

Laura floats across the room to him. Her hair falls around him. Brendan shrinks back. She puts a pale hand on his clammy forehead. Brendan tries to speak, but cannot.

He fingers slide over his face. She pulls off his glasses.

Her hands all over his face. Brendan's throat contorts in a hard swallow. His eyes are wet.

Her hair, her hands all warm and gentle, touching him.

LAURA
I'm sorry Brendan.

Brendan breaks. In silent sobs first, then shivering with an almighty release he cries like a baby in her arms.

THE FAN

Spinning above them.

Laura lights a cigarette. They lie beside each other.

LAURA
Don't go tonight.

BRENDAN
I've got to make sure it plays out smooth.

LAURA
It'll play however it plays without you there.

BRENDAN
I've got to make sure.

LAURA
Why?

BRENDAN

Cause if there's war, I'm in it too.

LAURA

Well let's just, I mean why not just run away. Go somewhere. I've got a car.

(Brendan gives a wry look)

I've got an aunt in New Orleans, she wouldn't care.

(Brendan grins)

Yeah, it's a stupid thing, but think about it, why not? What, school? C'mon. Family?

BRENDAN

Alright, stop.

Her smoke drifts into the fan.

LAURA

I wasn't serious, but we could go for awhile. Just until everything clears.

Brendan watches the smoke. She stubs the butt out in an ash tray on the table and curls against his chest.

Stretching his arm across the table, he nonchalantly spins the ash tray around with his finger.

His glasses lay on the table. Through the left lens the cigarette is magnified. Pale blue arrow on the filter.

Laura's arm stretches across his chest. He looks at it, then up at the fan, spinning.

LATER

Brendan slips out of bed. A glowing clock radio reads "3:16".

INT. TUGGER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A swarm of silent activity. Tug's flunkies prepare various weapons. Brendan goes to Tug.

BRENDAN

Tell your boys no knuckle business.

TUGGER

They're just ready.

BRENDAN

Your folks left a car here?

TUGGER

Yeah.

BRENDAN

Take it and Laura's.

(Brendan tosses Tug the keys)

I'll go first in yours.

TUGGER

The hell-

BRENDAN

I'll take the scenic route to draw off any tailers. They'll think it's you, they might even radio back that you're alone. Get it?

TUGGER

Mr. Smarts.

He tosses Brendan his keys.

BRENDAN

Alright. Got a cigarette?

TUGGER

No. I don't smoke.

BRENDAN

I've seen you smoke.

TUGGER

I don't smoke cigarettes.

BRENDAN

Give me fifteen minutes, then go.

EXT. TUGGER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brendan slides into the black mustang and gutters off into the night.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Overlooking a twinkling valley of suburban lights. Brendan talks at a payphone beside the curbed mustang.

THE BRAIN

(on phone)

Yeah.

BRENDAN

Alright, I warned you. Can you get the car?

THE BRAIN

Yeah.

BRENDAN

Go to 2014 Clancy, off Pico west of La Grange. Park outside and wait. Laura's inside. She hasn't got a car, but if she blows on foot or gets a pick, tail her. Alright?

(silence)

Alright?

THE BRAIN

Okay.

BRENDAN

I'll call you when it gets light.

(silence)

Thanks, Brain.

CLICK, Brain hangs up.

EXT. FRONT OF PIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brendan pulls the mustang into the driveway, limps up to the front door and knocks. One of the Pin's boys lets him in.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Crowded with tense looking punks, half dressed like the Pin and half like Tugger. The Pin's mom is shuffling about, pouring them milk.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - SAME

Several more punks from both camps crowd the hall, and more lean in the darkened doorways. Brendan passes through quickly.

INT. PIN'S DEN - SAME

The Pin at his desk, flanked by two of his boys. Tug sits in the center of the room, two of his punks beside him. Brendan saunters between them and leans against the dresser.

BRENDAN

Talk.

PIN

I want full assurance that any heat from Emily and Dode is gonna be on just you. I don't even want my name pulled in the shindig. Second, you owe me six Cs, no rush, but I want your shake that it'll come home in not too much time.

Tug's eyes burn, his scar reddens.

BRENDAN

(to Tug)

That's square. You did them after all. Lay low it'll blow over. Stick on this, one of you'll dish it to bury the other and you'll both get the rap. As to the six, did you borrow it?

TUGGER

Yeah.

BRENDAN

Then you owe it. Shouldn't need a shake on that.

Tug looks at the Pin.

TUGGER

Alright to both.

BRENDAN

Good. Let's seal it up and blow for keeps.

PIN

Third thing. The last brick.

Brendan looks up sharply, taken off guard.

BRENDAN

It's yours.

PIN

That ain't the point. I'm gonna start selling it. How do I know it ain't bad?

BRENDAN

Why would it be?

PIN

Why was the last one? Cause someone got greedy. Tug here's had the means to swipe half and cut it bad for a long time.

(MORE)

PIN (cont'd)

Now we're splits my loss of trust's
retroactive.

BRENDAN

Did you, Tug?

TUGGER

(eyes hot on the Pin)

No.

BRENDAN

Alright, so let's shake and blow.

PIN

Not good enough.

Tug shoots to his feet, kicking away his chair.

BRENDAN

What would be good enough?

PIN

I wanna see him dose it. Just to prove
it. Then we're square.

TUGGER

Hell for that! I didn't touch your junk,
that's it.

PIN

I wanna see it.

TUGGER

To hell!

PIN

Your not wanting to dose it's telling me
something right here.

TUGGER

Yeah, it better be! It's telling that I'm
out from your thumb, that I ain't playing
lapdog to no gothed up cripple no more!

Everyone in the room is on their feet. Brendan steps
forward.

BRENDAN

I'll dose it.

All eyes to him, unbelieving.

PIN

What?

BRENDAN

If it'll shut you two apes up I'll take the dose, and if I don't die we're all right as rain, and if I do die you two have your war, so long as you keep it off my grave. Deal?

PIN

Fine. Tangles.

BRENDAN

Johnny, go with him.

They go.

Tug just stares at Brendan, then tosses his hands up slightly and turns away.

They all wait.

CRASH! from the next room. Everyone freezes. More breaking, then scuffling and shouting.

The two punks look at their bosses, then run out. Tug starts to follow, but Brendan holds him back.

The noise through the wall grows tremendous, a full brawl. The ceiling pounds and shudders with footfalls and bodies hitting the ground.

Then, from not too far away, a gunshot.

The Pin stands and goes towards the door, but Brendan shouts

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No!

and slams it shut. A few tense seconds.

Another gunshot. Footfalls, then Tangles falls through the door, his chest red. The Pin bends over him.

TANGLES

(gasping)

The brick, it's gone. The brick's gone.

Tangles stops gasping.

The Pin stands, eyes blazing at Tug.

PIN

Make peace, huh? Talk it out? Get your boys in my den soes you could snag it under my nose?

Tug's scar is fiery red. He coils his body, snarling.

TUGGER

Alright!

BRENDAN

No, that's not-

PIN

Was it bad, Tug? Snag it so I don't know, or sell it off to flat the war odds?

BRENDAN

(shouts)

Pin, think about it-

TUGGER

Alright, I did all that!

Tug blows past Brendan like a train and slams the Pin into the ground with his fist. He punctuates his words with hard straight blows into the Pin's face.

TUGGER (CONT'D)

I cut the brick, I stole the money, I faked a peace, I snagged your junk, I did it all!

He pulls the gun.

Brendan shouts and throws himself on Tug's arm, wrenching it sideways. The gun clunks onto the carpet.

The Pin flips Tug over and for a moment Brendan is caught between them, hit and torn, rolling over the gun. Tug grabs it, Brendan grabs his wrist and the gun goes off, firing into the ceiling. Plaster sprays.

Brendan screams, thrashing wildly, and manages to slip out of his bloodied jacket and out from between the two.

The Pin is on top, pinning Tug's gun hand to the carpet, straining to keep it there.

Brendan leaps to his feet, staggers, then winds up and kicks Tug in the wrist with all his strength.

A terrible crunching popping sound. Tug roars. Brendan takes the gun from his limp hand.

PIN

Do him!

Brendan backs off a few steps. The Pin strains to keep Tug down.

PIN (CONT'D)

Do him now!

Brendan stumbles back. Tug roars, flips the Pin over and beats his face mercilessly.

Brendan stumbles out into the hall.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - SAME

Empty. From the darkened doorways and the thin ceiling relentless sounds of fighting.

Brendan walks backwards as if in a trance, eyes glued to the Pin's door. Inside wild shadows splay across the walls, and the Pin shouts Brendan's name.

Light flashes from another darkened doorway and the wall beside Brendan splinters. Brendan spins on his heel and fires three shots into the darkness, which falls silent.

He turns the gun back on the Pin's doorway.

With a spray of sparks the doorway turns dark. They broke the lamp.

The dark doorway looms up before Brendan, inky black. Horrible sounds come from it, blows, breaking bone, screams. The Pin screams Brendan's name over and over, calling for help. Pleading. Brendan steps back.

Time slows down. Brendan drops the gun.

It thunks on the carpet.

In one motion Brendan kicks the gun down the hall into the Pin's doorway, turns and runs into the room where he found the brick.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Dark. Brendan runs through, clawing past dark fighting shapes, running like a man possessed. He breaks through the darkness and heaves himself up through the small window.

EXT. FRONT OF PIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Brendan scrambles out, slips on the grass and hits the ground hard.

Two sharp gunshots come from the house.

Everything is suddenly still. Brendan stands slowly.

He notices a light from the Mustang - the trunk has drifted open.

Inside, a pale blue arm lies tangled in black plastic. Blue fingernails. Cheap plastic bracelets.

Brendan shuts the trunk solidly, then walks off down the street and vanishes into the inky night.

A moment later police cars pull up, sirens blaring, lights turning the dark streets bright as day.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOL PAYPHONE - EARLY MORNING

The morning is cold and clammy. Brendan slumps against the payphone.

BRENDAN

Hey. Where are you?

THE BRAIN

(on phone)

Library. Where are you?

BRENDAN

Did she blow last night?

THE BRAIN

No. Stayed there till six thirty, then walked to school.

BRENDAN

You didn't give her a ride, did you?

THE BRAIN

No.

BRENDAN

But she came straight to school from Tug's?

THE BRAIN

Yeah.

BRENDAN

She there now?

THE BRAIN

Yeah. Not with me, but here.

BRENDAN

Alright. Tell her I wanna meet up on the basketball field in half an hour, then go home and get some sleep.

THE BRAIN

Alright.

Brendan hangs up, then pauses, lost in thought.

EXT. SIDE OF GYM - LATER

Brendan sits against the massive gym building, writing on a piece of looseleaf paper.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - LATER

Brendan slips the paper under a door stenciled "VP Offices".

EXT. BASKETBALL FIELD - LATER

Cold, barren. Wind whistles softly and jangles the metal mesh basketball nets like windchimes.

Brendan stands crookedly, hands in pockets, eyes trained on the cold black horizon. A speck appears. Brendan waits for it, bracing himself against the wind.

Laura. She puts her arms around him, a warm embrace. Brendan draws back.

LAURA

(softly)

Did you see it all? With Tug and the Pin?

Brendan looks at her a moment.

BRENDAN

No. I took your advice and didn't go.

LAURA

(confused)

No?

BRENDAN
What happened?

Laura looks at him strangely, a little uneasy.

LAURA
The papers say six dead, three around the house, one girl in the trunk of Tug's car, and the Pin and Tug.

Brendan's face is frozen in an ambiguous frown.

BRENDAN
Yeah?

LAURA
Tug tried to shoot his way out when the police got there. They tied him to Dode, too. Same gun. And the girl.

BRENDAN
Huh.

LAURA
Well good thing you weren't there.

BRENDAN
Yeah.

Laura's face softens a bit.

LAURA
You think the girl was Emily?

BRENDAN
Probably.

Laura embraces him again, and doesn't let go.

LAURA
You loved her.

BRENDAN
(distant)
Yeah I did.

LAURA
You did all this cause you loved her. And now it's finished.
(tightens her embrace)
I love you.

BRENDAN

No.

Laura pulls back, looks at his face. It is a mask.

LAURA

What?

BRENDAN

No, it's not finished. Tug pulled the trigger on Em and he got the fall, but the bulls coulda found that out without me.

Laura pulls back more.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I set out to know who put her in the spot, who put her in front of the gun. That was you, angel.

LAURA

(drifting back further)

What are you talking about?

BRENDAN

It was you. What, you want the whole tale? You want me to tell it to you?

LAURA

(bewildered)

Tell it to me.

BRENDAN

Alright, from the top. You had your fingers in Brad Bramish for appearances and to keep him buying from the Pin, who you were hooked with. Emily came to you and Brad, you saw her for what she was, an insecure little girl trying to get in. She goes on the backburner. Meanwhile maybe you're getting bored, maybe just greedy, so when the Pin scores big with the bricks you take your shot. You hook one, take half, and cut it back to size, but you cut it bad. Maybe accidentally, maybe to down the Pin's operation, doesn't matter. You put it back, but poor Frisco doses off it and lands in a coma.

(voice strengthening)

(MORE)

BRENDAN (cont'd)

So now the Pin's fuming, maybe he's jealous of Brad, so he comes to Brad's crowd looking for blood, or at least a scape. You know trouble. There's going to be a war over this. And there's Emily. She trusts you. She wants in. It's duck soup.

LAURA

(murmurs)

No.

BRENDAN

You frame her for the bad brick, then you cut her loose. You turn on your heel and bite her in the throat. Last week on the payphone, Pico and Alexander, she saw something she was scared of. Tug's car driving by, the Pin driving, but she wouldn't have seen the Pin. No, she was across the street, angel. She saw the passenger side. She saw you. She saw you and ran like she saw some devil.

Laura's face is very still, quivering.

LAURA

Brendan, why are you-

BRENDAN

And she took the hit. Dode hid her away, but the Pin was on to her, tracked her down, told her to meet him, that they would make good. Gave her a time, and a place. And sent Tug. Just to get the straight. But maybe you had talked Tug up, or maybe he just blew a fuse, but Em sprung it on him that she had her kid, and he did what anyone could count on Tug doing - he hit her. She took the hit for you. You let her take it.

LAURA

Stop it!

BRENDAN

That's the tale.

LAURA

Stop it!

BRENDAN

You're going to tell me it's not?

LAURA

It's not!

BRENDAN

Look at me.

She crumples against him, looking him straight in the eye.

LAURA

You know me. I've only helped you. How
can you - It isn't true!

She sobs through a tensed, straight face. Brendan holds her
stare, but his eyes are distant.

BRENDAN

I hope it isn't. I want you to have been
on my side all along, not just trying to
get me under your thumb like Brad and the
Pin and Tug.

LAURA

No--

BRENDAN

But I think you knew that meeting was
going to blow up. I think that was your
final play. But I hope I'm wrong. I hope
everything I wrote in the note I dropped
at Gary Trueman's office this morning is
wrong. About your and Brad's involvement
in the Pin's runnings. I hope you didn't
steal the brick last night. In your
purse.

LAURA

(breathes)

I didn't.

BRENDAN

That's good. That means you didn't let me
walk into a slaughterhouse. You didn't
lead Tug and the Pin and their crews to
the slaughter. And when Trueman reads the
note, takes my cue and searches your
locker, he won't find a damn thing.

Something changes in Laura's eyes.

EXT. LOCKER CAGE - INSERT

Trueman and several other men force Laura's locker open. From it's dark interior the chalky white brick falls out, spins through the air, and shatters silently on the locker cage floor.

EXT. BASKETBALL FIELD - SAME

A moment of silence between them. The basketball nets jangle.

Laura steps back. She looks as if she has been punched in the face.

LAURA

(murmurs)

Brendan... don't...

BRENDAN

(gently)

It's done.

Her face does strange things, subtle contortions.

She watches his eyes. He doesn't look at her. Her voice shakes.

LAURA

Done. Well. That's most of it. 9 out of 10. I told Em to tell Tug it was his. Told her it would soften him up. She said she wished she could keep it, but she didn't love the father. I was going to drive her down the next day, we'd found a doctor. Most wouldn't. She was starting to show. 3 months. You know whose kid that makes it, or have you known all along?

Slowly, steadily, she straightens up. Her figure takes back some dignity. She steps towards him deliberately. Closer. Right up against him.

She brings her head to his, puts her lips to his ear, breathes warm breath, and says two words. The first is

LAURA (CONT'D)

Mother-

the second is low, guttural and lost to the whistling wind.

She turns and walks briskly away.

Brendan watches her go across the dark, barren field of asphalt.

Metal jangles. Brendan turns to see the Brain hopping a chain link fence. Brendan turns his eyes back on Laura.

BRENDAN

You get your straight?

THE BRAIN

Yeah. I wouldn't have-

BRENDAN

S'alright.

THE BRAIN

Yeah, well. Chuck Burns came to. The knife guy. Spilled it all to the bulls, guess Brad Bramish hired him. On his own, just a grudge thing.

BRENDAN

(nods slightly)

Fits. You did good, Brain. Go sleep.

THE BRAIN

Yeah, you too.

The Brain starts to walk away, but turns back.

THE BRAIN (CONT'D)

What'd she whisper to you?

BRENDAN

She called me a dirty word.

THE BRAIN

(chuckles, going)

Alright, you don't have to tell me. Thick.

BRENDAN

As what-all.

Brendan stands alone on the asphalt field, watching Laura until she reaches the end of the field and walks off behind a twisted chain linked fence.

The first period bell rings, and Brendan walks back towards campus.

FADE OUT.