

HIPPOCRATIC OATH

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"Too much sanity may be madness - and maddest of all: to see life as it is, and not as it should be."
- Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions."
- Ancient proverb, origin unknown

FADE IN:

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT (NIGHT 4)

A modern home in the affluent suburbs of Pittsburgh, PA.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

We're CLOSE on ROBERT ZORIC (early 40s) sleeping soundly; mildly graying hair rests upon well defined grooves set in his skin, the hallmarks of a lifetime of brow-furrowing. After a beat, Robert's phone VIBRATES softly with an alarm. He switches it off and looks at his phone: 1:01AM.

Robert slips quietly out of bed.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

The lamest man cave you've ever seen. Neat beyond reason, perfectly placed BOOKS and MEDICAL JOURNALS on shelves, and a compulsively clean desk.

Robert enters, dressed in jeans and a faded sweater from a 2007 Boulder, Colorado medical convention.

Robert places on the desk a smooth, worn WALLET, first taking the cash.

Then his phone, watch, and some other loose items from his pocket, slightly obscured from view.

Finally Robert takes a CROSS from his pockets and places it next to the other items.

Robert sits at the desk and opens the bottom drawer, revealing an old PHOTOGRAPH of three figures: FATHER, SON, and DAUGHTER. Robert KISSES the photograph and lays it on his desk.

Robert opens the second-bottom drawer to reveal --

A SYRINGE. Robert grabs it.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Robert sits in the back, surveying the dirty taxi. The DRIVER lets out a PHLEGMY COUGH. Robert doesn't flinch.

CAB DRIVER

Sorry. Damn cold, everyone's gettin' it. They say it's a three-weeker.

He COUGHS again; SNOT flies onto the DASH.

CAB DRIVER (CONT'D)

I got two weeks left, I guess.

Robert cracks a window.

EXT. SKETCHY STREET - NIGHT

Robert hands cash to the driver.

He walks past a DIVE BAR called "The Bunker", and disappears down the alley next to it.

EXT. BACK ALLEY ENTRANCE - THE BUNKER - NIGHT

Robert crouches behind a TRASH SKIP, a stone's throw from an SUV parked at the back entrance to The Bunker. Robert's nervous, sweaty. His HEART thunders in his chest.

He watches as two figures emerge: ALENA ROMANKO (40s), Ukranian; she sports weathered features, the battle scars of a trying life; and GRIGORY BUDOV (30s), Russian, well-built and wearing a perpetually thuggish demeanor -- exactly the kind of guy you wouldn't want to meet in an alley like this.

Alena gives Budov a GYM BAG, which he takes to his car; Alena disappears back inside the bar.

Budov opens the trunk to his SUV and loads the bag, then leaves the trunk open to make a return trip to the bar.

As Budov returns to the bar, Robert gets into the BACK SEAT and quietly closes the door.

He peers out from the back window. Alena takes her aging English Bulldog SASHA for a pee.

Budov returns to the car with a stack of LARGE ENVELOPES. He CLOSES the trunk.

Alena returns to the bar, locks the door from inside.

Budov gets into the front of the SUV, starts it up, and begins his journey home, unaware of Robert, crouched in the back.

INT. BUDOV'S CAR - NIGHT

Budov turns on the car's music. "Don't Turn Around" by Ace of Base plays. The butch Budov grooves unexpectedly to the 90s Euro Pop.

In the back, Robert's HANDS SHAKE as he delicately UNCAPS THE SYRINGE. He FUMBLES -- almost drops it. But recovers.

Robert positions himself behind Budov, moves closer... angling the syringe right behind the unsuspecting driver's neck --

BUMP. The car drives over a POTHOLE in the road. Robert GRIPS the syringe to avoid dropping it.

EXT. PITTSBURGH STREETS - NIGHT

Budov's car JOSTLES over the shitty, uneven roads.

INT. BUDOV'S CAR - NIGHT

Robert tries to steady his hand with the syringe.

Suddenly, the car STOPS.

Robert holds his breath. His PULSE QUICKENS further.

He raises the syringe to the back of Budov's neck --

-- but Budov puts the car in park and EXITS.

Robert peers through the window: Budov has pulled up at an all-night convenience store. Panicking, Robert looks through the other windows, considering an exit strategy.

Budov starts walking back towards the car.

Robert DUCKS down in the back. The driver's door opens and the car ROCKS GENTLY as Budov gets back in.

Budov places a pack of CIGARETTES on the DASH, starts the car. Robert EYES the cigarettes as the ride resumes.

As the car continues to rumble along the cracked roads, Budov LIGHTS UP. Smoke begins to fill the car.

Desperately, Robert BURIES his head into the car seat, trying not to cough. He manages it with short, controlled breaths.

After a few moments, the car once again comes to a halt.

BAM! Robert STRIKES OUT with the SYRINGE at the stupefied Budov. But Budov moves quickly and Robert MISSES.

Budov LUNGES into the back seat --

-- the SYRINGE goes FLYING as Robert and Budov engage in awkward, claustrophobic combat.

Budov WRESTLES Robert down, wraps his HANDS around his THROAT.

Robert GASPS, the air draining out of his windpipe...

Robert's HEART POUNDS in our ears... his eyes BULGE...

He looks up at the monster on top of him, staring into his eyes... holding onto his fury as the life drains out of him--

CUT TO BLACK.

Fade up title:

HIPPOCRATIC OATH

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING (DAY 1)

The same house, very early morning, a few days earlier.

SUPER: THREE DAYS AGO.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Close on Robert again. He TOSSES and TURNS violently.

SWEAT rides down the grooves of Robert's skin, pooling in the wrinkles of his tightly shut eyes.

Robert's eyes open. His breathing begins to slow down.

He looks at the ALARM CLOCK next to his bed: 4:16AM.

Robert hesitates, but gets up. Defeated.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DEN - MORNING

Robert, wearing MEDICAL SCRUBS, sits at the pristine desk.

He switches on his LAPTOP and looks through his EMAILS:

From: ELLEN KING Subject: April Shift rotation

From: TheGasCompany Subject: Your bill is now available

From: BBC Europe Subject: Vukovar Massacre: 25 Years On

Robert pauses on that email. He clicks the LINK.

Robert stares at the article. A beat. He DELETES It.

Then -- SLAP. Robert swats himself across the face. Hard.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY

We FOLLOW ROBERT as he walks into the operating room --

ROBERT

Where are we?

Robert's assisted by young doctors TEDDY CLARFIELD and AMANDA KIM (both late 20s), as well as various NURSES.

CLARFIELD

Male, mid-20s, multiple stab wounds to the chest and upper abdomen.

KIM

This one and another guy were brought
in from a gang fight.

ROBERT

What happened to the other man?

CLARFIELD

Dead. Brought a knife to our guy's
gun fight.

KIM

(sardonic)

Nice, huh?

Robert reflects on that for the briefest of moments.

The PATIENT'S VITALS start going CRAZY.

CLARFIELD

Jesus Christ.

Dr. Kim rushes to Robert's side with an ULTRASOUND.

Cool as a cucumber, Robert assesses, then --

ROBERT

Emergency thoracotomy.

The room SPRINGS into action. This all happens fast --

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(to Joel)

Intubate the right mainstem, collapse
the left lung.

(to the nurses)

More blood.

A nurse hands Robert a SCALPEL.

Kim performs CHEST COMPRESSIONS.

Robert CUTS into the patient's chest, from RIB to STERNUM.
He HACKS AWAY, cutting through LAYERS OF MUSCLE.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(to nurse)

Heavy scissors.

The nurse hands him some THICK SURGICAL SCISSORS.

Robert CUTS into a muscle above the rib. Blood everywhere.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Spreaders.

The nurse hands Robert a CRANK.

Robert spreads open the patient's chest, exposing his PERICARDIUM (heart sac). There's a huge buildup of blood.

KIM

There's too much pressure.

The MONITORS start beeping wildly.

ROBERT

Scalpel, cardioverter defib. We'll cut into the pericardium and shock the heart.

The others look at Robert like he's mad, but there aren't any other options. They comply. OFF Robert, steady--

CUT TO:

LATER.

The surgery's over. Dr. Kim monitors the patient's vitals: a slow, but steady heartbeat.

KIM

We've got activity. Weak, but steady.

Robert nods, removes his surgical gear, heads for the door.

CLARFIELD

(ribbing)

Zoric, I'm gonna take back some of the shit I've said about you, alright? You saved this motherfucker's life.

Robert looks back at his patient --

ROBERT

He didn't deserve it.

Robert walks out quietly.

EXT. THE BUNKER - DAY

The shitty dive bar looks shittier in daylight.

INT. THE BUNKER - DAY

Alena enters from the back with Sasha. She unleashes the dog and sends her upstairs to the master apartment.

We see the full glory of the bar's decay as Alena walks in. Tacky, wood-panelled wall paper peels on the walls.

The bar hosts 12 different types of vodka and a host of Eastern European spirits, all sitting under the cheerful gaze of a framed photo of Boris Yeltsin laughing with Bill Clinton.

At a table near the stair case, a trio of YOUNG HOOKERS in clichéd mini-skirts and FM boots. One disappears through a connecting door with a customer.

Standing near the kitchen, Budov watches over the place, an intense look on his face more for himself than anyone else.

Alena walks the floor, greeting customers affectionately.

She looks over at a corner booth, where we find ROBERT, who pays absolutely no mind to the illegal transactions taking place a few feet from him.

Robert's keeping to himself, nursing a glass of clear spirits and filling out CROSSWORD PUZZLES. Robert's precision is immaculate: his pencil markings stay within the boxes; when he makes a mistake, he erases it, then sweeps the graphite shavings into a cocktail napkin rather than onto the floor.

Alena grabs a bottle of *SLIVOVICA RAKIJA* (a plum-flavored Croatian brandy) and a glass from the bar and joins Robert.

She fills her glass, tops off his. She tries it, grimaces.

ALENA

Don't know how you drink this. Yuch.

ROBERT

It's the aftertaste. You have to sip it.

Alena sips again, waits for the aftertaste.

ALENA

(the earth doesn't
move)

Eh...

Alena looks at Robert for a beat. She FLICKS his ear.

ROBERT

What are you doing?

Alena says nothing. She FLICKS him again. And again.

Finally, a small SMILE escapes Robert's face as he swats Alena's hand away. Alena grins.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That makes you happy?

ALENA

Everything makes me happy.

Robert surveys deteriorating establishment: grimy floors; peeling wallpaper; hookers in the corner. OFF his look--

ALENA (CONT'D)

How's your family? Your son still a piece of shit?

Robert nods -- *yep!*

ALENA (CONT'D)

You're the father. Make him a good man.

ROBERT

How many kids do you have again?

Alena chuckles, but indicates some of her young staff, cleaning tables, shuttling glasses around.

ALENA

These are my "kids". Like wild horses when I took them in, some of them. But they learn. I give them responsibility.

Robert indicates the hookers.

ROBERT

Like them?

ALENA

I don't judge how someone wants to make money. Do you?

Robert doesn't answer that.

ROBERT

Scott's irresponsible, he doesn't care. When I was a kid--

ALENA

You're not the kid. He's the kid. things are different today. *So what?*

ROBERT

It matters. Otherwise, what was the point?

ALENA

Of surviving?

Robert goes quiet. Alena's hit this nerve before.

ALENA (CONT'D)

They'll never understand what people like us went through. That's our burden.

Alena looks at the cross around Robert's neck.

ALENA (CONT'D)

No one can help you get over your past. God won't help you, being mad at the world won't help you. Only you can help you.

She FLICKS his ear again.

ALENA (CONT'D)

(cheery)

Then you can be happy like me.

The front door opens. Robert glances, almost does a double take. It's SCOTT (17), his son. Scott drinks the place in, gives the hookers a thorough look up-and-down, then walks over to his father.

ROBERT

What are you doing here?

SCOTT

Um, what are you doing here? You were supposed to pick up Mary from piano.

ROBERT

(remembering)

Shit.

He grabs his keys, gets up--

SCOTT

Relax. I got her already; Mom let me take her car.

ALENA

(cheerily)

You're Scott! I'm Alena, your father's friend. Welcome to my place.

SCOTT

You own this place? This is dope.

Scott clocks the Clinton/Yeltsin picture, looks at Bill.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Man, he should'a been First Dude.

ROBERT
Scott, this is a bar. You're 17.

ALENA
(enjoying this)
No, he's family. It's great.

SCOTT
We all know you drink here. Mom
doesn't give a shit.
(to Alena, indicates
the hookers)
He doesn't... *you know*, right?

ROBERT
Scott!

SCOTT
Relax. Jesus, I was kidding.
(beat, slightly pointed)
But shit, what do I know?

Alena laughs. She loves this. Robert doesn't.

ALENA
(to Scott)
It was wonderful to meet you.

She heads back to the bar.

SCOTT
So can you take Mary home? I wanna
drive Mom's car around a bit.

OFF Robert, wants to object, but knows he's in the wrong--

INT. ROBERT'S CAR - DAY

Robert drives; daughter Mary (14) sits in the back, glued to her phone, like a passenger ignoring her chauffeur.

ROBERT
I'm sorry I forgot to pick you up.
How was piano?

MARY
It was okay.

A beat. Robert tries again.

ROBERT
How was school?

MARY
School's school, Dad.

OFF Robert, defeated--

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING (NIGHT 1)

We find NICOLE ZORIC (late 30s), standing by the open kitchen window, smoking a CIGARETTE a tad nervously. She's got EAR PHONES plugged into her iPhone, on which she's half-listening to an audiobook entitled *Be A Better You: Strategies for Success in Business and Life*.

Robert starts COUGHING as he enters the room.

Hearing Robert just above the audiobook, Nicole hastily puts the cigarette out in a nearby ASHTRAY and removes her earbuds.

ROBERT
Please, Nicole. I've asked before.

NICOLE
I'm right next to the window.

Robert coughs again, involuntarily.

ROBERT
The breeze blows smoke particles
into the house and into my lungs.
I'm not making it up.

Robert picks up the ashtray and opens a nearby stainless steel foot-operated TRASH CAN. He tosses the butts in.

He takes the ashtray to the SINK and rinses it.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Scott's out for a drive.

NICOLE
He told me.

Robert rolls his eyes. Nicole catches it.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Wait a second, you're pissed?

ROBERT
What were you doing sending our son
to a bar?

NICOLE
I didn't send him to a bar. I told
him to pick up his sister when you
forgot. He went to the bar because
you're an asshole.

Nicole pauses, softens a bit. That was harsh.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Just... don't forget next time.

Robert nods, apologetically. He retrieves a wrapper paper of FISH from the fridge. His surgeon hands make quick, precise work of de-boning it.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Okay. I know you hate this sort of thing, but one of the partners are hosting a benefit tomorrow night. It's at seven o'clock.

Robert pauses, stops working on the fish.

ROBERT
I might be on call.

NICOLE
You might be on call or you don't want to go...?

ROBERT
(admits it)
I don't want to go.

NICOLE
My parents will be there.

That hits Robert, changes things a little. He softens.

ROBERT
(sympathetic)
You don't have anything to prove to your parents. Do you want to go?

Nicole looks at Robert. He's trying to be helpful, but he doesn't get it.

NICOLE
It doesn't matter if I want to go. I have to go. And you have to come with me.

ROBERT
It does matter. No one's forcing you to--

NICOLE
Just please do this for me. Show up, look nice, smile and nod.

ROBERT

Basically turn my brain off and pretend to like the stuffy jerks you work with.

NICOLE

(end of her tether)
We're going. End of story.

Nicole walks out of the room.

Robert looks down at the fish he's been skillfully preparing.

He DECAPITATES it.

INT. THE BUNKER - KITCHEN - EVENING

Budov speaks to Alena; in the background, LUKA (20) and his sister ISABEL (16) unload supplies.

BUDOV

Monika's out sick. Again.

Luka leans in, eavesdropping on Alena's conversation.

ISABEL

Luka, don't. It's none of our business.

LUKA

Shh!

ALENA

Who else do we have for this?

Luka pipes up.

LUKA

I can help.

Budov fixes him with a glare, but Luka joins them, bravely.

LUKA (CONT'D)

Sorry, I overheard. I can do a drop.

ALENA

We use girls. Less suspicion.

BUDOV

He kind of looks like a girl, no?

Budov giggles to himself. Luka holds his ground.

LUKA

I'll bring Isabel. She can do it.

Alena's eyes find Isabel, who looks away, nervously.

Alena and Budov exchange a glance. OFF Alena, considering--

INT. BUS - EVENING

Luka and Isabel ride the bus. Isabel fidgets nervously with a SMALL HANDBAG. Luka stops her with his hand.

ISABEL

Why do we have to do this?

LUKA

Everything's gonna be fine.

Isabel looks out the window to see where they are. She goes to push the CALL BUTTON, but Luka stops her.

ISABEL

This is the stop.

LUKA

We're going to a different stop.

Isabel stares in confusion as the bus continues.

LUKA (CONT'D)

Someone's gonna buy the package.

ISABEL

What? Why? Alena's been good to us--

LUKA

Shut the fuck up. I know what I'm doing.

(hushed)

They've had problems with drops like this before. Sometimes the cops show up. So that's what we're gonna say happened. The cops showed up, we dumped the shit, and got the fuck out of there.

ISABEL

Luka, no. We can't.

LUKA

I will do anything to protect us. Stick to the story, they'll believe you. We need this. Okay?!

OFF Isabel, too scared to argue--

INT. BODY SHOP - BACK OFFICE - EVENING

Luka and Isabel meet with RICKY (40s), a heavily tattooed, intense dude wearing a Criss Angel t-shirt and drinking HALF-n-HALF from a carton with a CRAZY STRAW.

Luka acts cool. Isabel eyes the two HEAVIES near the door.

Ricky looks at the package on the table.

RICKY
How'd you get this?

LUKA
Why does that matter?

Ricky moves closer to Luka, gets in his face.

RICKY
Because, skullfuck, how do I know you're not cops? How do I know you didn't steal this shit from people I don't wanna fuck with? You copy?

Luka stands his ground.

LUKA
It's cool, man. I promise.

Ricky turns to his Heavies.

RICKY
Oh, he promises.
(to Luka)
Fuck you.

Ricky looks Isabel up and down.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Sister?

LUKA
Friend.

RICKY
(to Heavy #1)
They look pretty similar to me, don't you think?

Heavy #1 nods. Ricky returns to his desk.

RICKY (CONT'D)
10k.

LUKA
It's worth 15, easy.

RICKY
You got another buyer?

Luka says nothing. Ricky's called his bluff.

LUKA
12.

Ricky considers, looks closely at Luka.

RICKY
Okay, 12. But I want something else.
(beat, grins)
A nice, slurpy blowjob.

Luka looks at Isabel, who averts his gaze angrily.

RICKY (CONT'D)
Not her.

Ricky unbuckles his belt.

One of the HEAVIES opens a STRONG BOX, starts counting cash.

RICKY (CONT'D)
(to Luka)
Come on, faggot!

Luka looks at Isabel, and the HEAVY next to her at the door.

He reluctantly walks towards Ricky. Isabel turns away--

RICKY (CONT'D)
No. She watches.

LUKA
Come on, man--

RICKY
Or you fuck her and we watch.

Luka, out of options, drops to his knees in front of Ricky.

OFF Isabel, frightened and terrified--

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicole sleeps. Robert can't. He looks at his wife, then silently maneuvers himself out of bed.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT

SPEED METAL plays on an Mp3 speaker as DR. HARRIS examines the naked, dead BODY of a middle aged man. The man's hands are CLENCHED in fists, and his neck shows deep RED MARKS around his neck. This guy died violently.

Harris's eyes drift to the cadaver's COCK, permanently hard from *rigor mortis*.

He slips a hand around it, pretends to jerk him off. Then--
The corpse's RIGHT HAND TWITCHES. Harris JUMPS BACK.

HARRIS
Fuck me. *Cadaveric spasm.*

He writes in a NOTEBOOK.

Someone POUNDS on the door. Harris turns off his music.

He walks over and opens the door, revealing Robert, wearing plain brown slacks and a crisp white cotton tee.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
Can't sleep?

Robert nods. Harris peeks out into the hallway; it's empty.

HARRIS (CONT'D)
I can give you some time in room 4.

Robert slips two \$100 bills into Harris's palm.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY

ANGLE ROBERT -- he opens an APP on his PHONE called "SLEEP TIMER". He sets the clock for 3 HOURS, places his phone on the ground.

Robert calmly LIES DOWN on the cold, sterile floor of the morgue room; he closes his eyes, peaceful.

We PULL BACK to REVEAL --

-- that Robert is *sleeping in a pile of dead bodies*. Like an infant surrounded by his favorite stuffed animals, he lies happily among the cadavers.

OFF this creepy tableau--

INT. THE BUNKER - DAY (DAY 2)

Luka unloads BEERS into the fridge behind the bar, then heads back into the kitchen for more cases.

Isabel picks up empty glasses from tables.

A distance away, Alena and Budov watch both of them.

BUDOV

You believe them? About the cops?

ALENA

(maybe)

Why would they have come back? It's either very honest or very clever.

(a half smile)

Just don't know which.

A beat as Alena ponders. But Budov speaks next --

BUDOV

Do you want to take the chance?

Alena considers, looks at Budov. A teachable moment.

ALENA

People do things for a reason, Grigory. Desperation, fear. You know that.

BUDOV

Doing nothing is weakness.

ALENA

Understanding is everything.

Alena exits to the stairwell.

Isabel makes her way over to a corner booth, where Robert, once again in civilian clothing, does his crosswords and drinks his rakija.

Isabel leans over to grab an empty glass. Robert spots a TATTOO on her arm. It reads *labud*.

ROBERT

Labud...

(beat)

Croat? Herzeg?

Isabel looks at Robert, pleasantly surprised.

ISABEL

Croat.

Robert smiles to the young girl. He puts down his pencil.

ROBERT
(Croatian)
Were you born here?

ISABEL
(Croatian, nods)
My family was from Zagreb. You?

ROBERT
(Croatian)
Vukovar.

A beat as that registers with Isabel.

She eyes his drink, changes the subject --

ISABEL
Rakija. The best.

ROBERT
You've had it before?

ISABEL
(flirty)
I like the way it tastes.

Robert, a little under her spell, nods a "go for it".

Isabel looks around, then finishes Robert's drink.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Mmmm.

Isabel grins coquettishly, puts a hand on Robert's shoulder.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
You want some more?

Robert nods. He puts a \$10 bill on Isabel's tray.

As Isabel is about to go, Robert puts a \$20 in her hand. Isabel smiles playfully and walks away. Robert watches her.

As Isabel leaves, Robert goes back to his crossword puzzle, but notices he's swept some pencil shavings into his lap.

He catches the lapse and tidies it all up into a napkin.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - EVENING (NIGHT 2)

Nicole stands in front of the bathroom mirror, naked. She smokes a CIGARETTE, while finishing her makeup.

She pauses, turns side on, looking at her figure, picking out each and every even minutely perceptible flaw.

Nicole takes a last drag, washes the cigarette down the sink.

She sprays AIR FRESHENER in the bathroom, then puts the cigarettes and lighter in the bottom drawer.

A beat. Robert enters. He subtly sniffs the air; he can smell what's left of the tobacco, but he manages to stifle a cough. He shakes it off, doesn't want to let it ruin the energy he's bringing home from his moment with Isabel.

Robert caresses Nicole from behind. She enjoys the attention for a moment, closing her eyes. But she tenses up as Robert begins kissing her neck --

NICOLE
I just moisturized.

Robert stops. Nicole walks out of the bathroom. Robert follows her into --

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole begins dressing. She's laid out clothes on the bed -- for each of them.

ROBERT
That's it?

NICOLE
I'm sorry. But we're gonna be late.

ROBERT
Barely. Come on.

He tries to start in again with the romance.

NICOLE
Robert, no. I'm not doing my hair again. Here --

She hands him a blue shirt.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Wear this. It's less formal.

Nicole continues dressing. Robert looks at the blue shirt in his hands, frustrated.

ROBERT
I'm not going.

NICOLE
I don't have time for this, Robert.

ROBERT

Go without me. I'm not doing it.

Nicole stops dressing, stares at Robert in disbelief.

NICOLE

I just wanted to get through this night in one piece. Why do you fight me on shit like this?

ROBERT

I don't want to go to a stuffy benefit so your parents can look down their noses at me. At us.

NICOLE

Fuck my parents. I asked you to do this. That should be enough.

Robert pauses. She's right.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I knew this was going to be hard. I did. My mother, my cunt of a mother -- who's wrong about everything -- said you were "dark". And I knew that, I got it -- you went through a bunch of shit before we met.

ROBERT

Then why did you marry me?

Nicole looks at Robert sadly.

NICOLE

I thought you'd change. I thought you'd get better. Happier.

(beat, earnest)

And you wanted a family. I loved that about you. But you're so hard on the kids. You're getting worse.

Robert looks at Nicole, can barely get these words out --

ROBERT

It's the anniversary.

Nicole nods; she understands instantly.

NICOLE

Did you talk to your sister?

Robert says nothing.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

You have to talk to someone.

Subtly, Robert maneuvers his fingers across his PHONE, selects a pre-written TEXT TEMPLATE. He sends it. His PAGER beeps.

ROBERT

They need me at the hospital.

Robert walks out. OFF Nicole, stunned--

EXT. THE BUNKER - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Robert drives into the parking lot at the back of the bar.

He walks towards the bar. He HEARS something -- CRYING. Robert follows the sound.

He finds Isabel, sitting on the ground behind a parked car.

She hears him coming and seizes up.

ROBERT

It's okay. It's Robert.

(beat)

Can I sit?

The girl nods. Robert takes a seat next on the cold asphalt.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What happened?

ISABEL

I think I'm in trouble.

She looks at Robert, wondering if she can trust him. A beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

My brother and I. They gave us drugs to deliver, but Luka sold them. We pretended the cops chased us and we had to get rid of everything. I thought they believed us...

ROBERT

Why do you think they don't?

ISABEL

Budov -- the mean guy -- he's been watching me all night. I don't know where Luka is. I called him but he's not picking up. I'm scared.

Robert stands up and offers her a hand.

ROBERT

There are better places to talk about
this. You hungry?

Robert looks down at the frightened girl. He looks down her
top, but then averts his eyes, feeling like a perv.

Isabel takes Robert's hand. She smiles at him.

INT. ALL NIGHT DINER - NIGHT

Robert and Isabel sit in a booth of the brightly-lit neon
eatery. Isabel eats like she hasn't had a real meal in years.

ISABEL

You think I'm such a pig.

ROBERT

No, of course not.

ISABEL

(laughs)

You so do. I can see it.

Robert notices a dab of mayonnaise at the corner of Isabel's
lip. He indicates it to her.

Isabel laughs, embarrassed, and licks it off.

ROBERT

Your tattoo... *labud*. Swan.

ISABEL

Mmm-hmm. From *The Swan Maiden*.

Robert looks at her, not understanding.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

You don't know the story? My mother
used to read it to me all the time.

ROBERT

Tell me.

ISABEL

The Swan Maiden was this young woman,
with a magical robe, made of swan
feathers. When she wore it, she
could soar up to the heavens, away
from all sadness. One day, a man
stole her robe; she couldn't fly,
and was forced to marry the man and
have his children.

(MORE)

ISABEL (CONT'D)

(beat)

The children grow older and curious,
and one day they find the robe, hidden
for years by the evil husband. They
steal it back and give it to the
mother. She puts it on, sweeps them
up in her feathers, and carries them
all away to a better life.

Isabel sighs, taken out of her troubles for just a moment.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Sort of what happened to my mother.
She ran away, took me and Luka with
her to America... but, you know,
life's not a fairytale. She went
from one abusive drunk to another.

ROBERT

What happened to her?

ISABEL

She died two years ago. Luka and I
have been on our own ever since.
I've done what I've had to...
(she rubs her tattoo)
But I'll always have her.
(wistful)
Maybe one day I'll fly away.

Isabel crams some fries in her mouth, feeling more at ease.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

(with a full mouth)

What about you?

ROBERT

Well, I'm a doctor. I work at--

ISABEL

Not that shit; how you got out, what
you saw. You're from Vukovar, dude...

Robert tenses up. Isabel clocks it.

ROBERT

Yeah, uh, you know. My sister and
I, we came here after the war.

ISABEL

Uh-huh. My story was better, huh?

Robert smiles, grateful Isabel is letting him off the hook.

Isabel flags a waiter's attention --

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Hey, where's the restroom?

The waiter points towards the back of the diner.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
(to Robert)
Don't steal my fries.

Isabel walks to the bathroom.

A beat. Isabel's PHONE lights up with a TEXT. Robert sees the phone's BACKGROUND, which is a SELFIE of Isabel smiling.

And then this is one of those moments where you *know so well* you shouldn't do something, and you do it anyway: Robert picks up Isabel's phone.

Robert unlocks the phone screen, dismisses the text (thus marking it as read). He stares at Isabel's beautiful face.

Robert finds the phone's GALLERY and thumbs through different photos. After a few, they start to get *explicit*:

- A mirror selfie of Isabel in a thong, slapping her ass
- Topless photos
- Pics of Isabel touching herself, making slutty faces

Robert puts the phone back sheepishly.

After a moment, Isabel returns from the bathroom.

Robert looks at her, watches her put food in her mouth.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Dessert?

Isabel looks at the menu. OFF Robert, watching her, dazed--

INT. ROBERT'S CAR - NIGHT

Robert drives Isabel home.

ISABEL
Hey, thanks for tonight. Sorry I got all *blah* on you.

ROBERT
Are you sure you're going to be okay at work? With Budov and everything?

ISABEL
I'm just paranoid. I'll find Luka
tomorrow, make sure he's okay.

Isabel turns on her phone. She looks through her texts; her brow furrows slightly as she reads a text she doesn't remember opening (because Robert opened it).

She pauses, thinks for a moment, then opens the GALLERY --

-- which Robert never closed, so it opens right on the racy pics he was looking at.

Isabel looks at Robert, but he's oblivious, eyes on the road. She looks him up and down, pondering, considering.

Robert checks his GPS, pulls over at the destination.

Isabel turns to Robert, looks him in the eye suggestively. He's a little confused, but without saying a word, Isabel starts RUBBING Robert's crotch.

Robert FLINCHES--

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Shh.

She unbuckles his belt. Robert looks around nervously. What the fuck is going on?

Isabel's head moves down.

Robert looks out the windows -- trying to keep his eyes off the teenage girl who's just taken him in her mouth.

Robert squints his eyes shut, conflicted. But he gives in.

Isabel's movements get faster. The pleasure is overwhelming, and Robert soon finishes in her mouth.

Isabel flashes a big smile at Robert.

OFF Robert, in quiet disbelief--

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT'S CAR - NIGHT

LATER. Robert sits in his idling car, dazed, a red light casting a crimson shadow over his forehead.

ROBERT
(to himself)
What the fuck is wrong with me?

The light turns GREEN. A beat. Then--

HONK. Robert snaps to attention, resumes driving.

EXT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Robert pulls up outside his house.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Robert stares at the mirror, looks over every wrinkle, every pore, every spec in the iris of his eyes.

He SLAPS himself. A really hard hit. He swallows.

His reflection grows angrier. He stares at it. SLAP.

INT. HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S LOUNGE - DAY (DAY 3)

The bland, beige-on-beige walled room where doctors come to escape shit, vomit, blood and death.

Robert keeps to himself, eating a simple bowl of brown RICE AND TUNA, methodically scraping away every last bit of food.

Dr. Kim enters, eating a pudding cup. She throws the 2/3rds full cup into a nearby trash can; Robert notices, twitches.

KIM

Cops found a girl in McKees Rocks.
Beaten up pretty bad. No I.D.,
nothin'.

Robert looks at Kim like *why are you telling me this?*

KIM (CONT'D)

She had a tattoo on her arm. It's
Croatian, apparently; thought you'd
find that interesting.

Oh shit.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - DAY

Amanda shows Robert in to see Isabel.

The young girl's been through hell: smashed cheekbone, broken nose; bruises are now the defining feature of her previously beautiful face.

KIM

She's stable, but we don't know when
she'll wake up. Fuckin' sucks, huh?
How old you think she is?

(MORE)

KIM (CONT'D)

(beat)

Anyway.

Dr. Kim exits.

Robert looks down at Isabel, devastated--

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - DAY

LATER. Robert looks at Isabel, her delicate, battered face. He brushes her cheek, then puts a hand on her bruised hand.

ROBERT

I, uh...

A beat. He doesn't know what to say, or if she can even hear him. Or if this is even appropriate.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. You sweet, innocent girl...

Robert stops, he's creeping himself out.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You wanted to know how I got out...

(beat)

I was 15.

EXT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Vukovar, 1991.

SCREAMS and SHRIEKS pepper the night as gangs of JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) and *Scorpions* (a Serb paramilitary group) roam from house to house, plundering and looting.

MIHAEL ZORIC (41), Robert's father, stands pleadingly in front of a gang of menacing JNA WARLORDS, standing threateningly with Kalashnikovs and a FLAME-THROWER.

Mihail hands over money, jewels, everything of value he has.

INT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Robert (15) and his sister LANA (11) watch their father from behind an old, torn curtain, trembling with fear.

Suddenly, a warlord PISTOL WHIPS Mihail.

Robert PULLS Lana into his chest, smothering her cries.

EXT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mihail pleads with the warlords.

WARLORD LEADER
(Serbo-Croatian)
Bring us your children.

MIHAIL
(Croatian)
No! Please! Take me. I can work.
I'm strong.

They warlord PISTOL WHIPS Mihail again.

MIHAIL (CONT'D)
(Serbo-Croatian)
Go back inside and bring them to me.
You have two minutes, pig!

He SPITS in Mihail's face.

A subordinate fires up the FLAME THROWER.

He TORCHES some nearby bushes, a hostile gesture.

Mihail backs away from the flames, terrified.

INT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Beaten and bloody, Mihail drags himself back into the house.

Robert and Lana run to their father and embrace him.

MIHAIL
(to Robert, Croatian)
Take Lana. Go. Now.

LANA
(Croatian)
No, father. No, please!

Lana clutches onto her father.

Then, in a moment of calm, Mihail gently holds Lana's head in his hands. He looks at her, kisses her forehead. Then--

MIHAIL
(Croatian)
Go! Both of you!

Mihail opens a strategically hidden LOOSE FLOORBOARD, where a small ladder leads down into a dark, dank passage.

YOUNG ROBERT
(Croatian)
Let me stay. We'll fight them.

Mihail shakes his head. Calmly, he puts his CROSS around Robert's neck. A passing of responsibility from one man to the next.

Robert nods through tears. He DRAGS Lana through the makeshift trapdoor and down into the passageway.

Mihail CLOSES IT UP behind them.

He turns back to the front door, takes a deep breath.

EXT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mihail emerges, alone. He stares down the warlords.

MIHAIL
(Croatian)
You will never take my children!

The Warlord Leader laughs. He nods to the man with the flame thrower, who immediately SETS MIHAIL AND THE HOUSE ABLAZE.

The blaze ENGULFS the house in a fiery orange inferno.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

EXT. ROBERT'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Robert and Lana RUN from their burning house.

EXT. STREETS OF VUKOVAR - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Crouching in the darkness, Robert and his sister evade warlords and pillaging thugs.

EXT. STREETS OF VUKOVAR - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Robert and Lana eat out of garbage cans, scraping *every last morsel of food they can find*.

EXT. MASS GRAVE - CROATIA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Once again evading warlords, Robert and Lana hide in a mass grave, surrounded by bodies. They lie completely still, mostly obscured by the surrounding corpses.

A SOLDIER walks by... he shines a FLASHLIGHT into the grave and takes a DRAG from a cigarette --

Robert starts to have trouble breathing. Lana looks at him, terrified beyond words --

The soldier THROWS the LIT CIGARETTE down into the grave and walks away. It lands right next to Robert's face. Unable to avoid inhaling it, he STIFLES a COUGH --

The warlord STOPS. He looks back --

Lana stares at Robert, petrified.

The warlord WALKS BACK towards the grave --

WARLORD #2

Yoohooooo...

A comrade of his calls out from nearby.

WARLORD #3

(Serbo-Croatian)

What are you doing?

WARLORD #2

(Serbo-Croatian)

I think the ghosts are making noises.

The Warlord stares closely at the mass grave again... listening, watching for movement. A long beat...

WARLORD #3

(Serbo-Croatian)

You're a fucking idiot. Come on.

WARLORD #2

(Serbo-Croatian)

Fuck you.

WARLORD #3

(Serbo-Croatian)

Fuck you.

But Warlord #2 does move on.

After a beat, the footsteps grow fainter.

Robert COUGHS VIOLENTLY. He muffles his cries *by burying his head into the chest of a DEAD BODY lying next to him...*

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - DAY

We're back in the present. Robert's finished telling the story, and now there's silence, punctuated only by the soft WHIRRING of medical instruments and READ-OUT MONITORS to which Isabel is attached.

A tear falls down Robert's cheek.

He clutches the CROSS around his neck. Robert stares at Isabel, gripping the cross tighter, a looking of burning resolve spreading across his face like a growing flame. He's found an outlet for his rage, and he doesn't want to hold back anymore --

Robert RIPS the cross from his neck, stares down at it.

OFF Robert, a call to arms in his eyes--

INT. THE BUNKER - NIGHT (NIGHT 3)

Robert sits in the corner with his drink and crosswords. He stares at Alena and Budov, watching their movements.

ALENA
(cheerfully)
Last call, you beautiful scumbags.

Alena chats with her patrons as they order final drinks.

Robert looks at his 1980s Casio digital watch. It's 1:40AM.

INT. ROBERT'S CAR / EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Robert watches from his car as the final stragglers leave.

Moments later, Alena and Budov emerge and begin their nightly routine of closing up shop.

Alena gives Budov a GYM BAG, which he takes to his SUV.

Budov opens the trunk and throws the bag in, leaving the car unlocked briefly as he goes back to the bar.

Alena emerges with Sasha, takes her for a potty.

Budov returns to his SUV with a stack of LARGE ENVELOPES. He puts them in the trunk and drives away.

Alena goes back into the bar and locks it from the inside.

Robert looks down at his watch: 2:09AM.

INT. HOSPITAL - SUPPLY ROOM - DAY (DAY 4)

Robert mixes a cocktail of DRUGS and makes up a SYRINGE.

Uncharacteristically, he spills a little.

He wipes it up, then CAPS the syringe.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING (NIGHT 4)

Nicole smokes by the window again. Robert enters. He coughs lightly; he can't help it, but tries to muffle it. Nicole puts the cigarette out, but with no particular urgency.

NICOLE
You didn't come home.

ROBERT
(lies flawlessly)
They needed me all night. I caught
a nap in the on-call room.
(beat, truthfully)
I'm sorry.

Nicole nods. It's more than she expected. She softens.

NICOLE
I'm sorry, too. I know it's a hard
time for you.

A beat. Nicole looks at Robert, who seems more peaceful.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
You look... lighter. You finally
see a therapist about, you know...?

ROBERT
I talked to someone at the hospital.

Nicole nods, pleasantly surprised.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
How was the benefit?

NICOLE
I blew it off.

ROBERT
Really?
(beat)
Won't your mother be mad?

NICOLE
I really hope so.

A smile breaks out across Nicole's face. Robert's, too.

OFF this détente between spouses--

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - LIVING/DINING ROOM - EVENING

Robert eats with his family. The kids are mostly buried in their phones, but Robert, his plate unfinished, puts his cutlery down and tries to grab their attention.

ROBERT
Somebody tell me something interesting.

SCOTT
The fuck?

NICOLE
Language, Scott.

ROBERT
(to Scott, sarcastic)
Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. Fuckety fuck fuck. See, I know bad words, too.

Scott looks at Robert. He wasn't expecting that.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Talk to me. Scott, Mary. I'm asking you. Tell me something interesting. Anything fun happen at school? Get real with me.

SCOTT
(mild disdain)
You want us to get real with you?

MARY
(weirded out)
What are you doing?

ROBERT
Most people don't have this -- sitting here as a family.

He glances at Nicole, warmly. She feels it.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
So let's be a family. I know someone's got something interesting to say.

SCOTT
Pass.

ROBERT
Give me your phones. Hand them over.

Mary reluctantly hands Robert her phone.

Scott keeps using his.

Nicole looks at Robert, curiously. She makes a loud FAKE COUGH at Scott. Scott doesn't budge. Nicole thinks, then --

She TICKLES Scott. He loses control of his phone and Nicole GRABS it. She passes it up to Robert.

SCOTT

Are you serious?!

Nicole says nothing, but she and Robert exchange a wry smile. It's a small, but thrillingly spontaneous moment for them.

NICOLE

Well if you kids have nothing to say, I'll just talk about my day. There was this motion we filed. Well, we *thought* we filed it--

Scott rolls his eyes, looks at Robert, who's grinning.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Actually, you know I might have to check on it first thing tomorrow. But the early train is so crowded. Guess I'll take my car.

This finally grabs Scott's attention --

SCOTT

You told me I could drive to school.

NICOLE

(enjoying this)
Oh, did I?

Nicole lets that hang in the air.

SCOTT

Okay, okay. Something *interesting*... then I get the car?

Nicole nods. Scott thinks for a moment, then --

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Mr. Weston had a boner in math class.

NICOLE

What?

MARY

Gross!

Robert LAUGHS. Scott can't help but also laugh.

NICOLE

Scott, what do you mean your teacher
had a *boner*?

Scott continues with the story --

SCOTT

Okay, it wasn't really a boner, but
he got up to write something on the
board, and his pants had, like,
shifted or something, and they were
way too tight for him. He put the
marker in his pocket and it was
totally like he had a boner.

ROBERT

(still laughing)
That is amazing.

Now all four of them are laughing.

Nicole looks at her family, like they're a group of completely
new people. In the best possible way.

OFF Nicole, smiling to herself--

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Robert walks in. Nicole sits in bed, *WEEPING* quietly.

Robert sits down next to Nicole and takes her hand. She
turns to him. She smiles through the tears, then *HUGS* him.

NICOLE

That was great. That was really
great.

Nicole *KISSES* Robert. It's a sweet, lingering kiss. More
affection than sexual. Nicole rolls over and goes to sleep.

Robert slides into bed; he looks at his alarm clock. 11:01PM.

Robert opens the *SLEEP-TIMER APP* on his phone; he sets it
for 2 hours, turns his phone to *VIBRATE MODE*, then closes
his eyes and slowly falls asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later. Nicole sleeps soundly. Robert's phone *VIBRATES*
gently. He wakes, leans over and switches it off.

This is where our story opened. Only this time, we see Nicole in bed next to Robert.

Robert checks to see if Nicole is still asleep. She is. Quietly, Robert slips out of bed.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Robert enters his lame man cave, dressed in jeans and the faded sweater we saw him in at the top of our the story.

Robert puts his PERSONAL EFFECTS on the desk. One of them, which we didn't see before, is his WEDDING RING. The last item he places is the CROSS, with its broken chain.

Robert sits at the desk and opens the bottom drawer, revealing the OLD PHOTOGRAPH of him with his sister and father. He KISSES the photograph, lays it on the desk, then opens the second-bottom drawer --

The SYRINGE. He takes it.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Robert sits in the back. The DRIVER lets out a PHLEGMY COUGH.

EXT. SKETCHY STREET - NIGHT

Robert pays cash and walks down the alley towards.

EXT. BACK ALLEY ENTRANCE - THE BUNKER - NIGHT

Robert crouches behind the SKIP, looks at his watch: 2:06AM.

Alena and Budov emerge and go about their nightly routine. Budov puts a GYM bag in his trunk; Alena potties Sasha.

As Budov heads back to the bar, Robert CREEPS over to Budov's car and lets himself into the back seat. Sweaty, nervous.

INT. BUDOV'S CAR - NIGHT

Robert peers out the back window as Alena potties Sasha and Budov returns to the car with the ENVELOPES.

Budov puts the envelopes in the trunk, gets in the front.

Alena returns inside with Sasha and locks up.

Budov starts up the car, driving away with Robert crouched in the back seat. Budov blasts ACE OF BASE and grooves.

In the back, Robert FUMBLES as he UNCAPS THE SYRINGE. He grips the syringe, lining it up behind Budov's heck --

BUMP. The car drives over a POTHOLE. Robert barely maintains control of the syringe.

EXT. PITTSBURGH STREETS - NIGHT

Budov's car JOSTLES over the shitty, uneven roads.

INT. BUDOV'S CAR - NIGHT

The car STOPS.

Robert holds his breath. His PULSE QUICKENS.

Budov puts the car in park and EXITS.

Robert watches as Budov heads into the convenience store. He looks around for a potential exit strategy.

Budov walks back to the car, gets in, and drives. He places a pack of CIGARETTES on the DASH. Robert eyes the cigarettes.

Budov LIGHTS UP. Smoke begins to fill the car.

Desperately, Robert BURIES his head into the car seat, trying not to cough. He takes short, controlled breaths.

After a few moments, the car once again comes to a halt.

BAM! Robert STRIKES OUT with the SYRINGE at the stupefied Budov. But Budov moves quickly and Robert MISSES.

Budov LUNGES into the back seat --

-- the SYRINGE goes FLYING as Robert and Budov engage in awkward, claustrophobic combat.

Budov WRESTLES Robert down, wraps his HANDS around his THROAT.

Robert GASPS, the air draining out of his windpipe...

His HEART POUNDS in our ears... his eyes BULGE...

He looks up at the monster on top of him, staring into his eyes... holding onto his fury as the life drains out of him--

Robert tries in vain to reach the syringe. He FUMBLES around, in life-or-death desperation --

-- he finds a SHARD of GLASS --

In a split second moment of clarity, Robert eyes the bulging CAROTID ARTERY on the ride side of Budov's neck and --

SLASH! He RIPS into Budov's throat!

The beefy man sits back, gasping at the geyser coming from under his chin, trying frantically to put pressure on the wound. But it's too much.

Robert watches as Budov bleeds out in front of him.

Robert STAGGERS out of the car, leaving the back door open -- and the syringe lying on the car seat.

There's an agonizing beat... and then...

Robert's hand comes back into frame and grabs the syringe.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Robert stumbles into his house, high on adrenaline and fear.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - HALL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Robert puts the still-full SYRINGE down on the counter. It's smeared with BLOOD, as are his HANDS.

Robert turns on the FAUCET in a panic, his hands shaking as he washes the blood off them. Finally, the steady rhythm of the water on his hands and the diluted blood disappearing down the drain starts to bring some calm to his face.

Suddenly, Robert feels a TWINGE of pain.

He pulls up his shirt -- there's a huge SHARD OF GLASS EMBEDDED in his side.

Robert runs his fingers over the shard; it's a deep wound.

A LIGHT clicks on in the hall.

Robert lets his shirt drop. He turns to see --

SCOTT, bleary eyed, holding a late night snack.

Robert GRABS the BLOODY SYRINGE off the counter, holds it behind his back. Did Scott see it? Robert edges cautiously out of the bathroom.

SCOTT

(tired)

Yo. What's up?

ROBERT

What are you doing up so late?

SCOTT

What are you doing up so late?

ROBERT
Work. Late shift.

Robert's trying to be casual, but from Scott's face, it's not clear his son believes him.

Robert's PULSE QUICKENS... subconsciously, *his hand tightens around the syringe...*

SCOTT
If you say so.

Scott starts walking up the stairs. He turns back to Robert.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You know what? Fuck that. Just tell me. You bangin' another chick?

Robert tries to quiet his son--

ROBERT
No, shh. What are you talking about?

SCOTT
I'm a light sleeper. I hear things. You didn't come home last night, you're sneaking around tonight. It's suspicious as fuck.

He comes back down the stairs. Robert backs slightly towards the bathroom again.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(beat, exasperated)
You know what I did last night? I took mom's car out for a joyride. She took an ambien, you were out, so I just fucking went for it. I don't care that you know. Ground me or whatever. At least I'm honest.

Finally, Robert speaks. But all he can manage is --

ROBERT
I just had a late shift.

SCOTT
(sighs, not convinced)
Whatever, man.

Scott disappears up the stairs, disappointed.

OFF Robert, conflicted, but temporarily relieved--

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - SHOWER - NIGHT

The bathroom is filled with steam. We slowly PUSH CLOSER towards Robert in the shower. We hear a GROAN. We PUSH IN closer and Robert comes into frame...

But this time, he's not masturbating. He's actually slowly PULLING THE GLASS OUT of his side. It's at least a couple of inches long, and thick.

Delicately, Robert PULLS the shard out and DROPS it on the shower floor. The blood from the glass starts to wash away.

Robert looks at his wound.

He grabs the HAND SHOWER and SPRAYS the wound with HOT WATER.

He GRIMACES as he cleans the wound. That shit stings.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Robert finishes pat-drying himself.

He opens the BOTTOM DRAWER of the bathroom cabinet, searching under a series of women's beauty products, finally revealing a pack of NICOLE'S CIGARETTES and a LIGHTER.

Robert sits down on the edge of the toilet.

He LIGHTS UP the cigarette. Initially Robert COUGHS, but then almost instantly his cough fades. He clocks it, amused.

He looks at the fiery end of the cigarette, slightly mesmerized by its orange glow.

He PLUNGES the cigarette into his side, CAUTERIZING the wound.

The wound closes up, and Robert picks up some SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS. Slowly and methodically, he begins to STITCH UP the gash in his side.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Later. Robert crawls gently into bed. Nicole feels his presence and drapes an arm over him. Robert closes his eyes... but after a beat, he opens them. There's no sleeping off this night.

INT. THE BUNKER - DAY (DAY 5)

Robert sits in his corner booth. Alena joins him with a drink of her own. She's drained, devoid of her usual cheer.

ALENA

We have a problem.

Robert tenses slightly at that. He tries to be casual--

ROBERT

We?

ALENA

My business.

ROBERT

(nods)

You look a little light-staffed.

Alena tries to hold back some tears.

ALENA

It's Budov...

ROBERT

Guy who works here?

ALENA

(nods)

He was murdered.

ROBERT

Oh my god. What happened?

Alena pauses, looks at Robert for a beat. It feels like forever. She drinks. *Does she know??* Robert watches her, trying to keep his poker face intact.

ALENA

Two of my kids here, they stole from us. I told Budov wait, we will see what happened, understand *why*. He didn't listen. The girl, he beat her. The boy, Luka, he ran away.

ROBERT

(quietly hoping)

You think Luka killed him?

ALENA

No.

(beat)

Every night, Budov keeps some things safe for me. He had \$40,000 of cocaine and \$20,000 of cash with him. No one touched it. My people found it in his car. Luka -- he and his sister needed money.

(chuckles)

I'm sure he wanted to kill Budov, but someone got there first.

(MORE)

ALENA (CONT'D)
(beat, more serious)
I'll find out who it was. Soon.

Robert sits uncomfortably with that. Alena drinks again.

There's a bit of a commotion near the bar. Robert and Alena look over -- ILYA (40s), and two HEAVIES, are getting into it with a KITCHEN HAND. The argument seems to be over one of the hookers.

ALENA (CONT'D)
My brother, Ilya. He says he has to take over. With his *friends*.
(sighs)
Budov I could control, but Ilya...?

Suddenly, the Kitchen Hand SHOVES Ilya --

Ilya SMASHES a glass over his head --

Alena sculls the remainder of her drink, gets up.

ALENA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's not your problem.

Alena hastens over to Ilya, tries to smooth everything out. Ilya argues with her, then GRABS one of the hookers by the wrist and disappears through a connecting door. The two Heavies shove the Kitchen hand again and exit to the kitchen.

Alena tends to the Kitchen Hand.

Robert sits quietly, watching, trying to process all of this. His phone rings. It's Nicole.

ROBERT
Hi.

NICOLE (V.O.)
Meet me at the school. It's Scott.

OFF Robert, no idea what's in store--

INT. PRIVATE SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Robert, Scott, and Nicole sit opposite PRINCIPAL SANDRA CARTER (60s) in her opulent office. At first glance, she looks like Dolores Umbridge, but she's actually more understanding than we'd expect.

CARTER
I don't need to tell you how seriously the school takes this.

SCOTT

No one got hurt.

Nicole gives Scott a stern look.

CARTER

Be that as it may, school property was damaged...

(to Robert and Nicole)

And there were three other students in the car with your son, which is a violation of school and state laws for a driver under the age of 18.

(beat)

In light of Scott's *mostly* clean record here, we're prepared to *not* expel your son. But we are suspending him for a week.

Scott isn't exactly unhappy at that news, but he's smart enough not to let it show.

NICOLE

Thank you, Principal Carter. I promise you, we're going to discipline Scott as well.

(to Scott)

You can forget about driving for a while. You're grounded for a month.

Carter leans forward.

CARTER

In situations like these, we've found in the past that a lighter hand is helpful.

(she addresses Scott)

Scott, I don't think you're some kind of *rebel*. I think you need structure.

(to Robert and Nicole)

Maybe an after-school job might help? A bit of responsibility.

NICOLE

(to Robert)

Something at the hospital, maybe?

ROBERT

I don't really think that's...

He stops. He can't even look at his son, can barely think about any of this.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(to Carter)
I'm very sorry about this. Thank
you for your time.

Robert walks out. OFF Scott, visibly irritated--

INT. ROBERT'S CAR - DAY

Robert drives. Nicole in the passenger seat, Scott in the back. Scott goes to put in his earbuds--

ROBERT
No. Leave it.

SCOTT
But no one's saying anything.

Robert fixes Scott with a glare. Scott doesn't fight it. OFF Robert, eyes on the road, trying to hold it together--

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

The three of them enter. Scott heads straight upstairs. Nicole watches him go, turns to Robert.

NICOLE
That's it? We're not gonna talk to
him?

Robert shakes his head back and forth nervously, dazed.

ROBERT
I just... I don't know...

He leans against a wall, closes his eyes.

NICOLE
Don't shut down on me, Robert. What
are you going to do?

ROBERT
(with effort)
I'll talk to him.

Robert begins climbing the stairs. It feels like Everest.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - SCOTT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Robert knocks on the door.

SCOTT (O.S.)
Yeah.

Robert enters. He closes the door behind him. Scott looks up, his armor on, ready for confrontation.

There's a beat... but Robert doesn't yell. Unexpectedly, he sits on Scott's bed with him.

ROBERT
Dinner was nice, right? The other
night?

Scott looks at his father. Not sure what game he's playing.

SCOTT
I guess.

Robert pauses, tries to find the right words.

ROBERT
Can we just put aside the car thing
for a second?

SCOTT
Why?

ROBERT
Just... just go with me on this.

Scott nods, wary.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
You and me, we don't talk. Do you
have a girlfriend? Do you know what
you want to study at college?

Scott gives Robert a look.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I'm not being an asshole. Really.
I want to know.

SCOTT
You're fuckin' hard to talk to, man.
(beat)
You remember our rule when I was a
kid? Just for us. The *man-to-man*
rule.

ROBERT
I remember. "No lies."

SCOTT
We told each other *everything*. When
you side-swiped a guy's car and didn't
leave a note?

(MORE)

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You told me, then you went back to see if you could find the guy. When I was 13, and I fell asleep in class and had my first fucking *wet dream*, I told you. Who tells their father shit like that?

ROBERT

You pretended you--

SCOTT

--pissed my pants, I know. I thought I was a fucking genius. *What a save.*

(beat)

It's tough to hear you tell me we don't talk. 'Cause that's your fault.

Robert has trouble meeting Scott's eyes.

ROBERT

You're upset, I get that, but--

SCOTT

Stop. Don't blow me off. *No lies.*

(beat)

When I turned 15, you quit on me.

Robert looks at Scott. He wasn't expecting that.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

You think I didn't notice? You became a ghost, man.

(beat)

I know your dad died at that age. I didn't miss that detail either. We both lost our fathers at 15.

ROBERT

(under his breath)

I didn't know how...

SCOTT

Come again?

ROBERT

(honest)

I didn't know how. To be a father.

(trying to get it out)

Everything I learned from him stopped. I had to become a man.

SCOTT

This isn't Croatia. There's no war going on.

ROBERT

I tried to let you grow up. Without me coddling you.

SCOTT

Coddling? What about *no lies*? If you thought I was turning into an asshole, why not say something?

ROBERT

You'd really want me to say that?

SCOTT

Better than this shit.

Robert sits with that. Scott looks at his father. He takes a breath, lets him off the hook a bit.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I haven't been perfect either. I could have said something earlier.

Robert takes all of that in. A beat. Scott grins--

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And I've, you know... I've been with a few girls.

ROBERT

That's great.

SCOTT

Yeah, man. I *love* the ladies.

Robert laughs.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

See? That's what I want.

(beat)

Look, I'll try. I'll try to be *responsible*. I'll do the part-time job thing. I'll pay off the damage to the car. Just, like, be a guy with me sometimes. Man-to-man.

ROBERT

I'll try.

SCOTT

Great.

(immediately, blunt)

So where were you the other night?

Robert stops dead in his tracks.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
I'm not gonna "tattle".

Robert bites his lip. He looks at Scott, whose face is more earnest than we've ever seen.

ROBERT
Fuck, I can't tell you, Scott -- I want to. Jesus, I want to tell someone what's been going on. God knows I need more of that in my life.

SCOTT
Tell me.

But Scott can see from his father's anguished face that that's not going to happen. Not tonight.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
(sincere)
Okay, okay.

OFF Robert, wishing he could say more--

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (NIGHT 5)

Nicole sleeps. Robert doesn't. He stares at the ceiling.

INT. HOSPITAL - PATIENT'S ROOM - DAY (DAY 6)

Robert sits with Isabel. He holds her hand.

ROBERT
Everything I did was for you. I just wanted to make it right. Make *something* right. You didn't deserve what he did to you.

Robert looks around the room, listening to the whirring of medical devices, looking at the bland walls. And on one of the walls is a painting of the *Rod of Asclepius*, recognizable as the staff with a snake around it -- a symbol of healing.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
I made it worse...
(beat)
And I... I think I have to... *fix it*. I have to try.

Robert looks again at the symbol. It's like the snake is staring at him, burning his eyes with its gaze. OFF Robert--

INT. THE BUNKER - LATE AFTERNOON

Robert enters. The place feels darker, grim. Robert sees Alena at the bar, doing some paperwork.

A few feet away is Ilya, who laughs with his Heavies. The hookers are nearby, creeped out.

Robert moves to his booth. He eyes everyone and their positions, making plans... he checks his watch -- 8:42pm.

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Can I get you anything?

ROBERT

No I'm good--

Robert looks up. It's SCOTT.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing?

SCOTT

Working.

Before Robert can reply, Alena joins them. Seeing Scott and Robert brings a small smile to her face.

ALENA

I see you've met my newest employee.

SCOTT

After school, couple days a week.
Cleaning, helping out. It'll be
sweet.

(with a grin)

She's paying me in cash.

Scott's eye wanders to some of the hookers.

ALENA

Uh-uh. Look, but no touching.

(beat, laughs)

Not without your father's permission.

Alena chuckles to Robert. His mind races. *Does she know what he did?* Is this an insurance policy? Is she keeping his son close in case he comes after her? Or is this genuine?

Alena puts her hand on Robert's arm.

ALENA (CONT'D)

This is good for him; he can learn responsibility, and you can spend time with him.

(to Scott)

Right?

SCOTT

Totes.

ALENA

You see? *Totes.*

Alena smiles at both of them, then heads back to the bar.

Robert turns to his son --

ROBERT

You have to leave.

SCOTT

Carter told me to get an after-school job. I thought this is what you wanted.

ROBERT

Not *here*. Jesus Christ. Scott, go home right now and I won't tell your mother you're here.

SCOTT

What about the other night? You want her to know about that?

Robert looks at Scott, barely keeping a lid on his panic.

ROBERT

This is you being a man?

SCOTT

This is you being a *father*? Go on. Try me.

Robert looks at Scott. He's not joking.

OFF Robert's face, trying to stay calm--

EXT. THE BUNKER - LATE AFTERNOON

Moments later. Robert walks out angrily with Scott. They get some distance from the entrance and continue --

ROBERT

Okay, smart guy.

Robert's about to start. He pauses.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Okay... here's what happened. Okay...

He pauses again. Can't get across that line.

SCOTT
(earnest)
"No lies", Dad.

Robert looks at his son. He can't remember the last time his son actually called him "Dad". A beat.

ROBERT
Alena had a guy working for her.
Budov. Tough guy, attitude problem.
Someone killed him.

SCOTT
Shit.

Robert looks agonizingly at his son. Scott registers what his father is telling him. But he has to hear it.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You gotta say it, man.

There's a long beat. Robert nods to his son.

ROBERT
I killed him.

Robert's face changes ever so slightly. He's *relieved*.

SCOTT
Fuck! *Why?*

But suddenly, even having gone this far, Robert hesitates. Relief turns to fear. What can of worms has he just opened for his teenage son? Finally --

ROBERT
He hurt someone I knew.
(beat)
Scott, every day, I go to that hospital and I tell myself I'm doing good things. But all I'm doing is treating symptoms. I thought, I don't know, I had to try to cut out the cancer.
(beat)
If Alena finds out, I'm dead. So you can't be here.

SCOTT

I can't be here? Why are you here?

ROBERT

Because I didn't kill the cancer. I just made it stronger.

Suddenly, the back door to The Bunker opens in the alley. A VAN pulls up. Ilya and two of his HEAVIES greet it.

Scott tiptoes closer to the alley. Robert tries to stop him, but Scott's gone. Robert hurries after him, desperately ducking behind a car with his son.

Robert and Scott peer around the corner, watching. It's eerily reminiscent of Robert's earlier escapades that led to him killing Budov.

The door to the van opens, and the DRIVER pushes THREE YOUNG GIRLS out. They're teenagers for sure. Eastern European. Ilya looks them up and down. They're terrified.

Ilya touches one of their faces.

ILYA

How old are you?

YOUNG GIRL #1

(hesitantly)

15...

Ilya GRABS the Young Girl by the crotch.

ILYA

No. You're 18. *Understand?*

The girl nods, fearful.

Ilya turns to Driver.

ILYA (CONT'D)

Very good.

He signals to another HEAVY, who pays off the driver.

Ilya and his Heavies usher the girls inside. The van leaves.

SCOTT

Shit.

ROBERT

It's my fault.

SCOTT

So what're you gonna do? "Take 'em out"? This is fuckin' scary.

ROBERT

(at a loss)

I know, Scott!

(beat)

You've gotta quit this job.

SCOTT

How's that gonna look?

ROBERT

Like your father didn't want you working here.

SCOTT

Which will make Alena more suspicious of you.

(beat, an idea)

If I'm working here, I'm gonna hear things. I'm gonna see things. I can help you.

ROBERT

This isn't a game.

SCOTT

Someone should tell *you* that. Why are you doing this?

ROBERT

(impassioned)

'Cause otherwise what's the point? Why did I survive? Why did I go through everything if I can't even...

A long beat. Scott tries to meet his father's gaze.

SCOTT

I'll be careful. The minute anything gets even *slightly* dicey, I'm gone.

(beat)

I'm with you. Let me be with you.

Robert still can't quite put all of this together.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

We'd better get back in there. Just like everything's normal.

Robert steels himself. He and Scott head back towards the bar. CAMERA PULLS BACK. We're not going back in there with them. Not tonight, anyway.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (NIGHT 6)

Nicole sleeps in bed, next to the all-too-familiar sight of a restless, sleepless Robert. His head POUNDS.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - DAY (DAY 7)

Robert finishes up another surgery. We SEE his colleagues applauding his work, but WE HEAR NOTHING. Just numbness.

INT. THE BUNKER - LATE AFTERNOON

Roberts sits in his booth, barely regarding his crossword puzzles. They're error-ridden, with corrections in pencil, no erasing. Messy.

Robert looks over at the bar. Ilya gives orders to Alena.

A few feet away, Scott clears away glassware. Robert watches. Paralyzed, but clocking every movement, every single moment.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - NIGHT (NIGHT 7)

Robert hands Dr. Harris cash for their transaction.

INT. HOSPITAL - MORGUE - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

We PAN across the floor. Robert's SLEEP TIMER APP is nearby and active. We find Robert, once again nestled in a pile of dead bodies...

But there are no longer any tranquil moments. There are no safe spaces. Robert lies on the floor... *eyes wide open.*

SMASH TO BLACK.