

THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. RETIREMENT HOME CAFETERIA - DAY

The atmosphere is drab and the smell of old age lingers.

ZAK (22), a young man with high-functioning Down syndrome, sits in the lunchroom pushing food around on his plate.

He shares a glance with **ROSEMARY (92)**, who sits across the table. She looks down at a piece of paper in her hands, folds it, places it in her pocket, and nods at Zak.

Zak nods back and slowly pushes his pudding across the table.

Rosemary eats the pudding, enjoying every bite.

Zak looks around and sees senior citizens moving slowly. Wheelchairs and walkers surround him.

ELEANOR (26), a kind brunette with understated beauty is dressed in business casual. She helps **CARL (82)** into his chair. Carl is gray all over and carries a cane; he flirts with the confidence of a man in his prime.

CARL

I like the cut of your jib darling.

ELEANOR

Thanks Carl.

CARL

Can I have those earrings? If I give them to Rosemary I think she might finally let me see what's under that muumuu.

Carl is pleased with his joke. Eleanor shakes her head and smiles.

Eleanor moves around the room with the grace of a Kennedy as she passes by Zak and Rosemary's table. She adores Zak and love is palpable in her demeanor.

ELEANOR

That's sweet that you gave Rosemary your pudding Zak.

ZAK

Uh, yeah. She likes snacks a lot.

Zak follows Eleanor with his eyes as she exits the room and then looks to the exit sign above a door.

ZAK (CONT'D)
(whispers)

Now.

Rosemary places her hand on her heart and starts breathing loudly as nurses come rushing to her aid.

CUT TO:

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME CAFETERIA - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

The door flings open and Zak comes sprinting out! He is followed by Eleanor and two male nurses dressed in white.

Zak moves fast but awkwardly across the lawn; he stumbles over his own feet but keeps going. A smile creeps across his face.

BOOM! He is violently blind-sided by another nurse. He never saw the tackle coming. He lies face down in the dirt.

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - DAY

The two male nurses screw small gauge aluminum bars onto Zak's window then shake them to make sure they are attached securely.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - DAY

Zak, still with remnants of dirt on his face, inspects an old VHS tape carefully. He lifts the cover flap, and blows on the magnetic strip.

Zak places the tape into the player; it is labeled: "THE SALT WATER REDNECK."

Sitting at attention on the edge of his bed, Zak watches old footage of his favorite wrestler.

THE SALT WATER REDNECK(34) wears blue camouflage briefs and matching face paint. His hair is long, luscious, blonde, and held back by a rolled bandana that matches his briefs.

Carl sits close by, with an afghan blanket draped over him.

CARL

Lord knows if I had a nickel for every time you watched that video tape I would be a rich man.

The video has high production value from the '80s, complete with star wipes and laser noises.

Fans cheer as The Redneck roars like a lion and flexes in slow motion.

The camera is close up on his sweaty face as he throws a full grown man from the ring and a title flashes on the screen: "ATOMIC THROW!"

Zak opens and closes his hands in excitement.

ZAK

Oh yeah.

Carl nods approvingly.

CARL

I bet we watch this old recording at least ten times a day.

INTERVIEWER ON TAPE

Some people claim the move is impossible.

SALT WATER REDNECK

I challenge those people to define what possible is? I believe in myself. I know I'm the best, that's why I'm the only wrestler that can do it. Simple as that.

Zak looks pleased.

ZAK

I love the Salt Water Redneck so much. I love him, he is the badass.

SALT WATER REDNECK

(Directly to camera)

Come to my wrestling school and you can learn the skills that it takes to be like The Salt Water Redneck!

ZAK

(To Carl)

I want to have the skills.

Carl nods.

On screen The Salt Water Redneck does a flip from the top rope and lands elbow first into the chest of his opponent.

CARL
You've been here two years?

ZAK
Two and a half.

CARL
That's a long time for a young man.

Eleanor enters heated, carrying a clipboard.

She turns the TV off and sits, balancing frustration and love in her demeanor. Although her words seem cutting they are delivered tenderly. She loves Zak wholeheartedly.

ELEANOR
You and Rosemary both lost all your privileges for the week.

CARL
Move Rosemary in here and I'll keep an eye on both of them.

Carl winks at Zak.

ELEANOR
This isn't a joke Zak, I'm labeling you a flight risk.

Eleanor makes a note on her clipboard.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
That's twice now, two times. And you're getting other people in trouble with you.
(beat)
It's my job to keep you safe Zak, and you're making my job hard.

Eleanor places a drawing in front of Zak. It's an energetic and colorful self-portrait that depicts Zak with rippling muscles busting through a brick wall like the Kool-Aid man. On the bottom it says, "pudding?"

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Is this what you gave to Rosemary?

ZAK
Umm...Yeah.

ELEANOR

You convinced a 92-year-old woman
to fake a heart attack for a cup of
pudding...

Zak nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Impressive.

(easing a bit)

You're a dreamer Zak, and I admire
that, but the reality is--

ZAK

Eleanor, I'm not old. This is a
place for old people like Carl and
Rosemary. I'm young. Look at how
old Carl is. I am young. We are
very different.

Carl responds with a look to the jab from Zak about his age.

ELEANOR

You don't have family that can care
for you Zak, or a guardian that can
provide adequate supervision. The
state has to put you somewhere.
This is that place right now.

(beat)

I wish I knew of better options.

Zak deflates.

CARL

Eleanor, did you get me that soap I
asked for?

Eleanor hands Carl a container of liquid soap.

ELEANOR

(To Zak)

Stay on your best behavior for the
next week, and you can get your
special request privilege back too.

Zak sticks his tongue out playfully at Eleanor and she does
the same back.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are off and Zak sits on the edge of his bed once
again watching his Salt Water Redneck VHS.

Flickering light from the TV illuminates his face and highlights the edges of the bars freshly installed outside his window. He is a prisoner now.

One of the male nurses from earlier pokes his head through the door.

MALE NURSE #1
Lights out, retard.

The nurse flicks the lights off.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Zak lies on his bed, staring at the ceiling. The clock reads 3:21 AM. A hand reaches out to wake him, it's Carl.

CARL
(whispering)
Hey son, get up. I want to show you something.

MOMENTS LATER

Carl stands in front of the bars on the window. He tears off pieces of bed sheet and wraps them around two of the bars.

CARL
Did you know I was an engineer in another life? I was.

Zak watches Carl, amazed.

Carl places his cane between the strips of sheets. He begins to rotate the cane, reeling in the slack in the fabric.

CARL (CONT'D)
Here, you're strong, you do this.

Zak takes his place. He spins the cane and the fabric pulls harder on the bars.

CARL (CONT'D)
Good, that's it there.

The bars slowly begin to bend together.

Zak strains as he turns the cane another rotation.

CARL (CONT'D)
Now move down and do it again.
(beat)
(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

A bird in a cage ain't really even a bird. God gave you a gift. It's a shame people don't know how to let an animal as beautiful as you fly.

Zak continues his work and the gap between the bars grows.

Carl smiles and hands Zak the bottle of liquid soap that Eleanor gave him earlier. He holds Zak's hands between his.

Zak smiles and looks down at the gift.

ZAK

Are we best friends?

CARL

Zak, I'm your family. Friends are the family we choose, son. Friends are the family we choose.

ZAK

Carl, You are invited to my birthday party.

Carl kisses Zak gently on the forehead; they hug goodbye.

Zak, takes his pajamas off.

Carl slips into his bed and closes his eyes.

The poster of the Salt Water Redneck that hangs above Zak's bed looks down approvingly.

Zak stands only in his tighty-whities illuminated by moonlight.

He looks at the compromised prison bars on his window, intent on doing it right this time.

He begins stretching like a weekend jogger. He touches his toes and stretches his torso from side to side.

He takes a few deep breaths, nostrils flare.

He cracks his neck and hits his chest with a closed fist.

He picks up the bottle of Carl's liquid soap and squirts it into his hands. Zak lathers up his stomach, his back, and his arms. Finally, he puts it all over his face.

He reaches out and grabs the bars...

...puts one leg through easily...

...his torso hits the bars and stops.

Zak groans and forces his body through the opening.

His face, still not through the gap, smashes together making his lips purse. He breathes harder.

His skin bunches up, glistening from the soap; as it gives way, he slides through the bars.

Zak grins, and takes off across the lawn.

Carl smiles and waves goodbye from behind the bent bars.

Zak is running across the lawn in slow motion. He glistens in the moonlight.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLINGTON HARBOR - MORNING - TRAVELING

TYLER (30), an adult Huckleberry Finn, wears a rubber apron made for fishing, and a dirty white T-shirt. He drives a crab boat through the Colington Harbor marina.

He passes large commercial fishing boats, rusty cranes, and weathered fish packing houses.

EXT. OPEN WATER NEAR MARSH - MORNING

Tyler pulls up crab pots with Carolina blue buoys.

Taped above his steering column is a sun-bleached photo of him and his big brother, **MARK (38)**, standing next to an old pickup truck. Mark has his arm over Tyler's shoulder.

Tyler eyes a red buoy bobbing almost directly on top his blue one and checks the area to see if anyone is watching.

With the coast clear he reaches down, flicks open a buck knife and cuts the line to the red one.

EXT. CHANNEL THROUGH MARSH - MORNING - TRAVELING

Tyler slows his boat upon seeing a North Carolina Fisheries Warden who has stopped to check another fisherman's catch.

Tyler then turns his boat and speeds away in the opposite direction.

INT. WINKIE'S FISH HOUSE - DAY

Tyler guts and cleans fish.

A knife powerfully enters the fish's soft fleshy underbelly.

Blood and scales fly.

He is working hard while listening to music coming from a crank radio.

WINKIE (64), a kind-faced family man enters. He is sturdy from a life spent fishing crab pots and pulling nets, yet soft around the eyes and quick to smile.

WINKIE

Tyler.

Tyler is listening to music and doesn't hear.

WINKIE (CONT'D)

Tyler!

Tyler turns down the music on the crank radio.

WINKIE (CONT'D)

Hey bud, Duncan and Ratboy are looking for you, you know what that's about?

Tyler goes back to cleaning. He tears the spine out of the red drum (a meaty game fish found in the Atlantic).

TYLER

I could speculate a guess.

WINKIE

Them boys are pit bulls, don't mess with them.

TYLER

(to himself)

Maybe they messed with me.

Tyler is focused on the task at hand. His knife removes the head and tail of the fish with two confident chops.

Winkie looks on, saddened by Tyler's demeanor.

WINKIE

That's it for the day, bud.

TYLER

You said I could clean all the fish
you were gonna send to market?

WINKIE

That's it, that's all of 'em.

TYLER

Winkie, I barely cleaned one bucket
of drum. You gotta have some
snapper or sheep's head for me?

WINKIE

Not biting right now, bud.

Winkie starts to leave then remembers.

WINKIE (CONT'D)

Hey, Dillon's doing that Girl Scout
cookie thing again. You want your
same order as usual?

Tyler loses himself in thought.

TYLER

Nah, I'm good.

WINKIE

It's three dollars a box, I'll
cover you.

(beat)

I know it's been tight since the
Mark thing--

TYLER

Hey, Wink.

(beat)

I said I'm good.

EXT. BOAT DOCK OUTSIDE WINKIE'S FISH HOUSE - DAY

Zak, still in his underwear from the night before, enters the
boat yard timidly.

He hears a door open and dives behind a large stack of crab
pots.

Tyler exits the fish house, wearing cut off jean shorts and a
white T-shirt. Fish blood and scales cover his hands and
torso.

DUNCAN (49), a wiry fisherman with sure blue eyes and the strength of a man twice his size immediately shoves Tyler into the stack of crab pots that Zak is hiding behind.

Duncan's hands are callused from honest work, and leave grease marks on Tyler's shirt upon impact.

RATBOY (27) and **CRAIG (39)** round out Duncan's posse, they sit nearby on open tailgate of his camouflage diesel truck watching as the scene develops.

Ratboy is rail thin, covered in tattoos, and looks sickly with graying teeth. Craig is unforgettably obese and laughs with a high pitch chuckle that cuts above the noise.

DUNCAN

You cut the buoys off my pots?

Duncan grabs Tyler violently by the collar. Tyler's fists are by his side, ready to be used if needed.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

You cut them buoys?!

TYLER

We've been laying our pots on the Powell's Point for years, Duncan.

CRAIG

Fuck him up, Dunc!

DUNCAN

Powell's Point WAS Mark's, but Mark is gone. It was his fishing licence too, remember?

RATBOY

You cain't fish there no more!

DUNCAN

Bring back so much as a minnow and I'll have the Game Warden cart your ass to prison. You're done crabbing in Colington.

This ignites Tyler's anger and the two start to fight.

Zak crawls along the pots trying to get away from the melee. He squeezes into a small space at the stern of Tyler's boat and pulls a canvas tarp over himself.

Duncan, much better with his hands, hits Tyler with one powerful punch to the gut and drops him to the ground.

Winkie comes running out of the fish house.

WINKIE
HEY! HEY! HEY! Enough of that shit.

Duncan lays off.

Ratboy leers at Winkie.

WINKIE (CONT'D)
(as he walks back in)
Bunch of God-damned children!

DUNCAN
(to Tyler)
There's 80 fishing licences to go
around in Currituck County.

Duncan pulls out a piece of paper from his pocket.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
This one used to be Mark's, but it
says Duncan Silver now.
(beat)
That's just business.

Ratboy gets off the truck and walks towards Tyler.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
You owe me 40 pots.

Duncan walks towards his truck and points to a large stack of crab pots adorned with red buoys.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Touch my rigs again and you better
grow eyes in the back of your head.
I ain't jokin' either. I'll bash
your skull in with a tire iron.
(beat)
Let's go Rat.

Ratboy drops down and puts his hand on Tyler's throat who is still laid out in the dirt.

RATBOY
(almost whispering)
You cain't fish, sure as shit
cain't fight, whatcha you still
doing in Colington?

Ratboy hawks up a loogy and spits it on Tyler's face.

RATBOY (CONT'D)
 (as he walks away)
 That's right, someone gotta clean
 all those crabs we gonna be
 bringing in.

Ratboy gets in Duncan's truck and they take off.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - DAY

Eleanor, in a state of complete shock, looks at the
 compromised bars on Zak's window.

She breathes deep

ELEANOR
 Shit.

Carl is lying in bed watching; Eleanor turns to address him.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Well where did he go?

Carl looks guilty and shrugs sheepishly.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 You've got answers and you're going
 to give them to me one way or
 another.

JANICE, (42) a strong and vibrant African-American nurse in
 middle management pops her head into the room. She wears her
 hair in long braids featuring colorful beads that touch the
 small of her back.

JANICE
 E, Glen wants to see you in his
 office.
 (as she walks away)
 We are so fucked.

ELEANOR
 Thanks Janice.

EXT. WINKIE'S BOAT DOCK - DAY

Tyler sits in silence next to his boat slip, dirt and blood
 still on his face. Winkie approaches and hands him a beer.

TYLER
 Thanks, Wink.

WINKIE

There's only so many commercial tags to go around. You can't help it that Dunc and Ratboy scooped up Mark's tags as soon as he passed.

(beat)

I can't have you bringing me fish caught without a licence bud. I get caught and it's my ass, not yours.

(beat)

It's over, Tyler.

Winkie starts to walk away leaving Tyler alone.

WINKIE (CONT'D)

I'll call you if I need something cleaned.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - GLEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

GLEN (57) sits across from Eleanor. He is small in stature, oily, and balding. He has the look of an unkempt man and clicks his pen angrily over and over while looking at Eleanor's clipboard. His office is filthy.

He reads for a few moments, then flips a page over.

GLEN

A flight risk?

Eleanor nods her head yes.

GLEN (CONT'D)

Looks like all that family money of yours bought you a degree but didn't get you no common sense.

Eleanor shifts nervously and subtly moves her hair to cover her diamond earrings.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry, but my family history has nothing to do--

GLEN

Don't speak.

Eleanor bites her tongue.

GLEN (CONT'D)

You let a half naked boy with Down syndrome who has no money, no family, and no idea how to get along in this world just slip out from under your nose into thin air.

Eleanor remains silent.

GLEN (CONT'D)

And you have no idea where he is, where he's going or who he might be with?

ELEANOR

Well I have--

GLEN

The nurses tell me you two are close.

ELEANOR

We are.

GLEN

Then you'll figure out where he's at and bring him back before I have to report this to the state.

ELEANOR

We have to report this.

GLEN

I'm six months from my retirement and I won't have my pension blown because some girl with a bleeding heart decided to come work at a retirement home.

He takes out a sheet of paper and a pen.

GLEN (CONT'D)

How many hours do you need to finish that PhD?

Eleanor sees where this is going.

ELEANOR

Two thousand residency hours.

Glen writes 2,000 on the piece of paper so she can see it.

GLEN

And how many hours do you have now?

ELEANOR
One thousand eight hundred and
forty-seven.

Glen writes 1847 underneath the 2000.

He starts to do the math in his head, and counts numbers on his fingers.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
It's one hundred and--

GLEN
I know what it is girly, I don't
need you to tell me.

Glen writes the number 136 down under the other two numbers.

His math is wrong but she chooses not to correct him.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Well damn, you're pretty close to
done then aren't you?

Eleanor nods.

GLEN (CONT'D)
If you don't bring him back here in
one piece I won't sign off on your
hours.

ELEANOR
I can do the remaining hours
somewhere else if you don't want--

GLEN
Not your future hours, all your
hours. It'll be like you never
walked through these doors.
(beat)
I don't care whose kid you are.
(beat)
Find him.

EXT. WINKIE'S BOAT DOCK - DUSK

Tyler sits leaned against a wooden piling and takes the last swig of beer in his bottle; he brushes off his denim shorts to begin his daily ritual.

From the pocket of his shorts he pulls out an old plastic bag filled with dirty cigarette butts and rolling papers.

After placing a rolling paper on his lap he harvests tobacco from five cigarette butts; hand rolls, licks, and lights with a match.

As he smokes Tyler eyes Duncan and Ratboy's crab pots with their red buoys.

He goes to his boat and fumbles around looking for something.

He almost pulls the tarp off Zak, but at the last second, grabs a large red canister of gasoline.

Tyler pours the gas all over Duncan & Ratboy's buoys.

He contemplates for a moment, then tosses his cigarette down immediately setting the gasoline soaked pile ablaze.

His eyes widen as the fire starts to take over more than just the buoys.

Every crab pot Duncan owns is now on fire.

Tyler, nervous, gets in his boat, puts the key in the ignition and turns it. Nothing.

TYLER

Shit.

Tyler turns the key again, nothing.

Men yell in the distance as the light from the fire flickers and highlights the concern on Tyler's face.

Tyler turns the key again and the engine, a single 90 horse power Yamaha, spins but doesn't start.

Duncan and Ratboy approach fast.

Tyler turns the engine again, it chokes and sputters.

Once more he turns the key and it starts reluctantly.

The running lights on the boat all come to life.

Tyler punches hard on the throttle and spins the wheel just as Ratboy and Duncan are getting out of their pickup.

Duncan and Ratboy run towards their boat to chase.

EXT. OPEN WATER - DUSK - TRAVELING

INTERCUT BETWEEN DUNCAN'S BOAT & TYLER'S BOAT.

Tyler is far out in front, but Duncan and Ratboy are gaining ground.

Duncan and Ratboy's boat has two 200 horsepower motors, and they run clean and fast.

Tyler takes a hard turn into a maze of tall marshy grass in an attempt to lose the larger boat.

Zak, still hidden under the tarp, is getting tossed around like a rag doll.

Tyler weaves through the reeds like an old pro.

He stops and throws the engine abruptly in reverse. He backs into a concealed spot in the grass barely wide enough for his boat.

Quickly, he shuts the engine off. The motor goes silent and the running lights go dark.

Tyler looks anxious but remains quiet.

Ratboy and Duncan look around, they've lost Tyler in the reeds.

DUNCAN

He's here somewhere.

Zak, seasick from the chaos of the boat ride, starts to grumble. Tyler, startled by the sound, tears the tarp off of the stowaway just as Zak starts to dry heave and then vomit, loudly.

Ratboy tilts his head like a hunting dog.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Shhhh...

Duncan shuts off his boat, and they sit in silence for a few moments... They hear Zak's vomiting.

RATBOY

There!

Tyler, furious and scared, covers Zak's mouth but the retching isn't finished. Vomit oozes above and below Tyler's hand and between the fingers pressed hard against Zak's face.

TYLER

Who are you?!

Zak pulls Tyler's hand down from his mouth to speak.

ZAK

I'm Zak.

Duncan's boat approaches.

Tyler quickly and confidently starts the engine and gasses it, pulling his boat out 100 feet in front of Duncan's.

Duncan and Ratboy gain on Tyler as they both hit open water.

The lights on Tyler's boat are becoming noticeably closer.

DUNCAN

You got nowhere to hide now.

Tyler is driving fast, water slaps loudly at the hull. Night is approaching.

He looks over his shoulder, Duncan and Ratboy are getting closer.

Tyler tears his shirt off and uses it like a rope to affix the steering wheel to the compass so the boat doesn't turn.

He then grabs a hammer and smashes out the running lights one by one.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Fucker.

Tyler's lights disappear completely.

Duncan slows his boat and stares into the darkness.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - ZAK & CARL'S ROOM - DUSK

Eleanor watches Zak's wrestling VHS intently, putting together clues and connecting the dots.

The "ATOMIC THROW" title card flashes.

SALT WATER REDNECK

*If you come to my wrestling school
in Ayden North Carolina I will
teach you the skills--*

Eleanor writes "Ayden" with permanent marker on the palm of her hand.

Her face shows worry about where Zak might be, how she can find him, and if he's safe.

EXT. OPEN WATER - TYLER'S BOAT - NIGHT - TRAVELING

Tyler presses on fast, he looks down and locks eyes with Zak and eases off the throttle.

The boat slows to a stop in open water and idles.

Tyler looks to the twinkling lights of Colington, not too far off and then back to Zak.

Tyler takes a deep breath.

TYLER

Fuck it.

He hits the gas, leaving his hometown behind him, eyes on the horizon.

EXT. SAND ISLAND - MORNING

Tyler's boat is beached a few feet away from where he sits on the sand with Zak, the two silently study each other.

Zak is still in his tighty-whities and looks filthy.

Tyler is still covered in dirt and blood.

TYLER

Why were you on my boat?

Zak does not answer.

Tyler continues to stare.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Cat got your tongue?

Zak still does not answer.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You running from something?

Zak stirs a little at this comment.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You got something to hide?

Zak looks uncomfortable.

TYLER (CONT'D)

That's it, isn't it?

(beat)

Well, that's your business.

EXT. TYLER'S BOAT BEACHED ON THE SAND ISLAND - DAY

Tyler turns the engine, it screeches and whines, metal bites metal. Smoke plumes from the vents. The pistons have seized.

Tyler, a true water cowboy, isn't phased. On to the next.

He moves fast and starts throwing things from the boat onto the beach. A backpack, some fishing line, duct tape, a old pair of white rubber fishing boots, his crank radio, an extra pair of clothes, some prepackaged food you might find at a gas station, a long cord of rope, and a canteen.

These things land close to Zak, almost hitting him.

Tyler pauses a moment to look at the photo of Mark and carefully puts it in his pocket. He grabs a 12 gauge shotgun and a box of shells.

Zak looks worried.

Tyler loads the gun and unleashes three blasts into the floorboards of the boat.

Zak flinches and covers his ears.

The boat begins to sink.

Tyler begins to pack up his gear.

TYLER

You got thirty minutes 'till the
tide comes up and this whole place
is under water.

He walks past Zack along the sand bar.

Zak follows, fumbling to catch up, tripping over his feet.

ZAK

Umm... Why did you do that?

TYLER

Covering my tracks.

ZAK

Oh, OK.

(beat)

Ummm... Where are we?

Tyler doesn't answer.

ZAK (CONT'D)

(beat)

See... Um... I don't know where I am, so I don't know how to get where I'm going.

EXT. SAND ISLAND - DAY (MOMENTS LATER)

Tyler reaches the shallows and starts to wade through the knee-high water. Zak stops timidly at the water's edge and looks out at Tyler who is still moving.

ZAK (CONT'D)

Oh no.

(to Tyler)

Umm... Excuse me... Excuse me?

Tyler turns and looks at Zak.

ZAK (CONT'D)

Yeah, umm... See, umm... I can't swim. Will you please help me? Will you please be my friend?

Tyler watches.

Zak slowly begins wading through the water towards Tyler.

ZAK (CONT'D)

(upon reaching Tyler)

OK, I'm OK now.

Zak gives Tyler a thumbs up.

TYLER

You following me?

Zak shrugs and sighs, then nods his head yeah.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Do you know where Manteo is?

Zak shakes his head no.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Do you have any clean water?

Zak shakes his head no.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Can you fend for yourself at all?

Zak looks ashamed.

Tyler hands Zak a canteen of water, Zak chugs it, then hands it back.

Tyler starts to walk away and Zak follows.

TYLER (CONT'D)
When I can leave you, I will.

EXT. WOODS - DAY - TRACKING

Tyler walks in front of Zak, who hangs on his heels like a puppy.

ZAK
...and then The Salt Water Redneck
throws people, it's called The
"Atomic Throw"!

Zak mimics the Salt Water Redneck's signature move as he lets out a feeble attempt at a roar.

Tyler continues walking; he doesn't engage in the conversation.

ZAK (CONT'D)
I'm going to Ayden, North Carolina
learn the moves...
(beat)

Zak pumps his arms in the air and makes a cheering noise.

ZAK (CONT'D)
And they might say, "Zak you are so
awesome. You are a bird. You are
the most free bird ever."

Zak squeezes his hands excitedly.

ZAK (CONT'D)
Oh yeah!

Tyler stops and faces Zak, which abruptly shuts him up.

TYLER
You're walking real close to me.

Zak takes two small steps backwards. He looks at Tyler as if to say "OK, is this enough?" The two start walking again.

It is quiet for just a moment.

ZAK

And I am going to live in a big house with lots of snacks and drinks and I'll have an airplane--

TYLER

Does your family know where you are?

ZAK

My friends know where I am.

Tyler takes out a granola bar from his backpack and takes a big bite.

Zak watches, almost drooling.

Tyler glances over his shoulder and notices Zak watching on but keeps eating.

Zak's pale skin is turning pink from the sun.

TYLER

(mouth full)

Not worried about a sunburn, huh?

EXT. MANTEO WATERFRONT - DAY

Children are playing at a redneck water park. The structure is a huge mess of scrap wood rising sixty feet above the water. It has a hand-made "Water World" vibe.

A tattered confederate flag flies from the top.

A boy of 14 does a back flip from the top platform.

TYLER

End of the road.

Zak watches another boy do a gainer off the top.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You know my name?

ZAK

No.

TYLER

Good. You never saw me, OK?

ZAK

OK.

TYLER

Squared up then, this never happened. I don't know your name, and you don't know mine.

ZAK

Ummm... I told you my name was Zak. Remember?

Zak holds his hands up, mimicking Tyler from the night before.

ZAK (CONT'D)

"WHO ARE YOU?!" And I, umm...

Zak makes a vomiting noise like the one he made the night previous, and smiles from ear to ear.

ZAK (CONT'D)

Do you remember that?

This causes Tyler to grin.

Tyler reaches into his bag and takes out an old black Grave Digger monster truck T-shirt that looks like it was used to clean engines and throws it to Zak.

TYLER

Here, it'll keep the sun off your shoulders.

Tyler pulls out a granola bar and tosses it to Zak.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Try not to starve to death.

Zak tears open the bar and begins to eat.

ZAK

Maybe I could just come with you?

TYLER

Why would I need you to come with me?

ZAK

What if you get lonely or sad and just need a friend to talk to?

TYLER

(over his shoulder)
Don't go getting yourself killed.

A brief but warm moment is shared here. Zak waves as Tyler walks away.

Zak walks toward the group of boys on the dock.

ZAK
Do you guys like birthday parties?

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Tyler walks alone beside a cornfield and picks a cigarette butt off the ground.

He hears the sound of an engine approaching and puts his thumb out.

A truck pulls over just in front of him and Tyler picks up his pace to get in.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

Tyler rides along side of a **TRUCKER (54)** in an older model Chevy pickup truck. There is a happy, beat-up, mangy, one-eyed dog sitting in between them.

The two men sit in silence for a while.

The mangy dog pants comically close to Tyler's face.

TYLER
He a good dog?

TRUCKER
She's good enough.
(beat)
She doesn't run away, so I guess
that makes her my mine. Wife's long
gone, and my kids are grown.
(beat)
We look out for each other.

TYLER
What's her name?

TRUCKER
She ain't got one. I just...

The trucker whistles three short notes.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)
...and say, "Come here dog!" And,
she comes.

TYLER
Seems like a good dog.

TRUCKER
She's good enough.

The trucker rubs the dog's head.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)
Crazy ain't it? That fire down at
the docks?

Tyler takes notice but tries to hide his concern.

TYLER
I didn't hear much about it.
(beat)
What are people saying?

TRUCKER
Started off small, got out of hand
pretty fast.
(beat)
Some of them boys are out right now
looking for the guy that lit it.
They set up a road block on 158.

Tyler soaks this in.

Red lights flash below the railroad crossing sign ahead and
the gate lowers.

The truck comes to a stop.

Tyler plots his next move as the train passes by.

After a moment he opens the door and exits the truck.

TRUCKER (CONT'D)
Sure you don't want a ride all the
way into town? I'm going right
there.

The dog licks towards Tyler's face through the window.

TYLER
(beat)
Nah, I left something down the
road.

Tyler watches the truck drive away. He then turns and ducks
into the cornfield.

EXT. MANTEO WATERFRONT - DAY

Tyler walks towards the docks where the boys were playing earlier; he hears taunting.

Zak has climbed up to the tallest platform and the older boys are causing a scene.

A **FAT BULLY (12)** stands next to Zak on the platform fifty feet above the water.

FAT BULLY
Jump retard. Jump!

Zak peers over the edge.

Tyler climbs up the platform hand-over-hand.

FAT BULLY (CONT'D)
Durr durr durr! I thought you were
a retard not a pussy! Jump, you
retard!

Zak looks over the edge, hesitates, and timidly steps off.

His body hits the water hard, and immediately sinks.

Tyler makes it to the top and walks to the edge of the platform. He stares down waiting for Zak to reappear.

Only bubbles rise to the surface.

FAT BULLY (CONT'D)
Shit man, that dummy sank like a
rock.

TYLER
(to himself)
Come on...

Tyler starts taking his shirt off.

Begin flashback music.

TYLER (CONT'D)
What's that, 20 feet deep??

FAT BULLY
Twenty five at least.

TYLER
How strong's that current?

FAT BULLY
Running 'bout four knots south.

Tyler takes that in and cracks his knuckles.

FAT BULLY (CONT'D)
Hey... you're the guy that cleans
fish over at--

The boy's words become inaudible under the music.

Everything is moving in slow motion.

Tyler punches the boy in the face, then jumps in after Zak.

Beneath the surface Tyler swims downward into the darkness of the murky water wraps his right arm around Zak's limp body and begins his ascent towards the light.

EXT. BOAT DOCK - FLASHBACK - SUNSET

Tyler and his big brother **MARK** scrub barnacles off the bottom of their boat raised up in dry dock.

Mark is fit and tan and his clothes are faded by years of exposure to sun and salt water. He is clearly the alpha of the two and smiles as he playfully sprays Tyler with a hose.

MARK
We gonna ignore it all day?

Tyler flings barnacles back at Mark.

TYLER
Yep.

MARK
You give me no choice then.

Mark cracks a beer goes to his pickup truck and pulls out a wrapped gift that is shaped like a baseball bat.

TYLER
Oh come on Mark--

MARK
Shut it.
(beat)
I told her not to, but Alyson
wanted to wrap it.

Mark hands the present to Tyler.

MARK (CONT'D)
It's from the two of us.

Tyler looks at Mark with admiration and takes it.

TYLER
You didn't need to do this.

MARK
Just open it.

Tyler unwraps up an older, used, but beautiful, shotgun.

MARK (CONT'D)
Don't shoot your eye out, little
brother.

Mark ruffles Tyler's hair as he looks the gun over.

MARK (CONT'D)
Look at what I branded on it.

Mark runs his fingers over the wood that is branded "Family
First."

TYLER
It's too much. I can't take this.
You've gotta return it.

MARK
Return it? I'll just keep it if you
don't want it.
(beat)
Besides, I already shot it, and I
scarred that wood all up.

TYLER
You shot it?

MARK
Damn right! Kicks like a mule.

Tyler smiles.

MARK (CONT'D)
Let's go tie one on. It's only your
birthday once a year.

He throws the keys to Tyler.

MARK (CONT'D)
You're driving.

The two walk towards the truck.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get all gussied for
Alyson; got myself a new shirt.

TYLER

You got yourself a new shirt for my
birthday?

MARK

Yep.

End flashback music.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. BANK BY THE RIVER - DAY

Zak coughs up water as Tyler sits next to him soaking wet.

TYLER

So there's a wrestling school in
Ayden, North Carolina?

ZAK

Yeah.

TYLER

And they teach you full-on, legit,
WWF moves?

ZAK

What does legit mean?

Tyler takes out a map from his bag and unfolds it on the
beach so Zak can see; he tracks his finger with his words.

TYLER

This is where we are.

(beat)

This is Ayden, 70 miles from here.

The map shows Ayden at the end of a long narrow barrier
island with only one road running its entire length.

(beat)

And then this is Florida.

(beat)

That's where I'm going, I'll be
going right past Ayden.

Tyler stands and puts the map in his bag.

He starts to walk away but turns back.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You coming?

ZAK
What is your name?

Tyler turns to face Zak.

TYLER
Tyler.

ZAK
That is a very cool name.

EXT. CORNFIELD BY THE ROAD - DAY - TRACKING

Tyler and Zak walk hidden from the road through cornfields.

Zak gets hit in the face by leaves as they move.

ZAK
Tyler, do you have a car?

Tyler does not answer.

ZAK (CONT'D)
Tyler, can we please walk on the road?

Tyler, frustrated, turns to face Zak.

TYLER
When I was a kid, my brother and I were camping off of Caffey's inlet, and there was this big ol' hornet's nest right by the water. I just strolled over to it and boom, hit it with a stick like a baseball bat, home run. I got stung bad and my eyes swole shut. Mark was pissed. He said, "Keep stirring up shit, get yourself killed."

(beat)

A little older. Little wiser. Not much. I'm still whacking hornet's nests.

(beat)

You ever kick a hornet's nest?

ZAK
Yeah, yesterday.

Tyler is surprised by Zak's answer.

TYLER
Well, then you understand why I
can't walk on that road right now.

Tyler turns around again and leads Zak through the corn.

ZAK
Tyler...

Silence and walking.

ZAK (CONT'D)
Tyler...

Tyler's frustration boils over; he turns to face Zak again.

TYLER
Tyler! Tyler! Tyler! Tyler, What?!

Zak's tone turns serious.

ZAK
There is something you should know
about me before we go any farther.
(beat)
I am a Down syndrome kind of
person.
(beat)
Tyler, I have Down syndrome.

Tyler takes this in.

TYLER
I don't really give a shit. You
got supplies?

ZAK
No.

The two set off again through the corn.

TYLER
We're gonna need some supplies.

EXT: BANK BY THE RIVER AT THE REDNECK WATER PARK - DAY

Duncan leans against his truck and watches Ratboy in the distance slapping the Fat Bully in the face.

RATBOY
Which way did he go?

FAT BULLY
I told you I don't know!

EXT. CORN FIELD ACROSS FROM THE CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Zak and Tyler, peer through corn stalks at a dilapidated country store / gas station surrounded by farm land.

TYLER
How much money you got?

ZAK
Oh, I didn't bring any money,
because I don't have any pockets.

Zak still wears tighty-whities and the shirt Tyler gave him.

Tyler gives Zak a pair of camo pants from his bag.

TYLER
I'm gonna go and grab some
essentials.

ZAK
Can I come?

TYLER
No.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

A brass bell above the door rings.

The **CASHIER (77)**, an old, gray and frail man wearing coke bottle glasses, watches Tyler enter.

Tyler has his backpack on with the shotgun slung over his shoulder and dried blood on his shirt.

The Cashier looks on nervously from behind the register.

Tyler walks around the store filling up a basket with peanut butter, fish hooks, fruit by the foot, ding dongs, a pre-made sandwich, and Spam.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

The Cashier slowly adds up the items by hand with a pencil.

He is the embodiment of a turtle and speaks with a cadence to match.

CASHIER

That'll be twenty-two dollars, and sixty-seven cents.

TYLER

What?

CASHIER

Son, them Ding Dongs are a dollar each, and the fruit snacks are almost two-fifty.

Tyler separates the fruit snacks and the Ding Dongs.

The cashier begins to add it up again.

His pencil moving slowly.

A truck approaches, the engine sounds similar to Duncan's.

Tyler looks relieved as the truck passes. It's not Duncan's.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Nine dollars and eleven cents.

Tyler looks defeated.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Son, forgive me if I seem alarmed but I don't normally negotiate on my prices with fellas that have shotguns laid across their backs. Most folks just leave the guns in their gun rack before they come in here. Now I get a sense that you're in a bit of a financial bind. That, compounded with the fact that you're packing, gives me quite a fright.

Tyler is listening.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

So how's about you try this here proposition on for size. I fancy a good dove hunt, and could use me a 12 gauge like you've got there. It look's like you could use you some groceries.

(beat)

(MORE)

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Hunger can make a man do crazy things, and I don't like to be on the ass end of crazy if you know what I mean.

(beat)

What do you say you and I work out a trade? That there weapon you're brandishing for all the groceries you can carry out of here.

Tyler slides all the groceries away leaving only the peanut butter and the fish hooks.

TYLER

How much for just that?

CASHIER

Three dollars even.

TYLER

Here's five.

The cashier presses the sale button to open the register.

CASHIER

Thank ya kindly.

TYLER

You got any airplane bottles of whiskey back there for two dollars?

The cashier grabs a large unlabeled dirty jug of liquor from under the counter.

CASHIER

This bottle's on me, son. Looks like you might need it more than I do. I'll just have me a splash first to calm my nerves.

The cashier's hands are shaking as he takes a swig.

He hands it to Tyler who does the same.

The bell above the door sounds again and Eleanor walks in.

Both men take notice.

ELEANOR

Gentlemen.

CASHIER

Ma'am.

TYLER

Ma'am.

They all stare at each other for a moment.

Tyler lifts the bottle to offer her a drink.

ELEANOR

No thank you, I'm working.

Tyler and Eleanor stare at each other.

CASHIER

Missy, I'll have to ask you to
forgive my elongated stare. I
haven't seen a woman as pretty as
you since I cain't remember when.

(beat)

Please don't tell the misses I said
that.

TYLER

(to Eleanor)

Where are you from?

ELEANOR

Richmond.

TYLER

You graduate JMU or GW?

ELEANOR

GW.

TYLER

Yeah, you've got that kind of look
about you.

ELEANOR

What kind of look is that?

TYLER

(beat)

What are you doing this far from
Richmond.

ELEANOR

You're quite nosy.

TYLER

I like to think I'm inquisitive
with a side on interested.

ELEANOR
Interested huh?

TYLER
Yeah... Interested.

ELEANOR
Well, maybe we have different
interests.

They look at each other.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I told you, I'm working.

TYLER
You work crab boats?

ELEANOR
No.

TYLER
See it's funny because you don't
look like you would work on--

ELEANOR
I know why you think it's funny.

TYLER
Oh, you're trouble.

CASHIER
Watch yourself missy, this one
seems sweet on trouble.

ELEANOR
I'm looking for a missing person.
Have either of you gentlemen--
(To Tyler)
--assuming I can use the word
gentleman--
(To both of them)
--seen this young man?

Eleanor takes out a photo from her purse.

The cashier takes the photo and looks closely.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
His name is Zak, he has Down
syndrome.

CASHIER
No, I'm afraid I ain't seen him.

TYLER
(almost proud)
No shit.

ELEANOR
I'm sorry?

TYLER
What did he do?

ELEANOR
He ran away from the nursing home
where I work yesterday.

Over Eleanor's shoulder, Tyler notices Zak tumble out of the
corn like a baby bear with the camo pants half way on.

TYLER
(to himself)
He's a damn little outlaw.

Eleanor is unaware that Zak is right behind her.

ELEANOR
Have you seen him?

Tyler's eyes dart from Eleanor to Zak and then back to
Eleanor as Zak continues the struggle to get dressed.

TYLER
Is there a reward?

ELEANOR
No. I'm not a police officer.

TYLER
You a bounty hunter?

ELEANOR
Why would I be a bounty hunter if I
just said there's no bounty.

TYLER
Did he kill someone?

ELEANOR
No.

TYLER
What are you then, his friend?

ELEANOR

Not that's it's any of your
business, but I care about him and
he's alone--

Zak finished with the pants, disappears back into the corn.

TYLER

Maybe.

ELEANOR

Maybe what?

TYLER

Maybe he's alone, or maybe he's
joined a powerful band of
undomesticated miscreants that at
this very moment are having a wild
adventure? Like something out of a
Mark Twain novel.

(beat)

Or at least something more fun than
sitting in an old persons' home.

Eleanor looks at Tyler as if he is the craziest person on
earth.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Can I have your phone number?

Eleanor looks Tyler up and down, gun on his back, covered in
dirt and blood, as he holds the bottle of whiskey.

ELEANOR

No. You cannot have my phone
number.

CASHIER

I sympathise with your reservation
ma'am.

TYLER

OK, well what if I see your friend
there, should I just yell out real
loud for you then?

ELEANOR

Yeah, just do that.

TYLER

What name do you want me to yell?

ELEANOR
 (hesitates)
 Eleanor.

Tyler lets out a wry smile and lifts the bottle in a cheers motion.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Tyler struts out, smile still on his face and passes a white van labeled "Britthaven Retirement". He hops across the ditch and disappears into the cornfield where Zak is waiting.

TYLER
 Let's go, you little fugitive.

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY - TRACKING

Tyler walks fast as Zak tries to keep pace.

TYLER
 So you're a man on the lam?

ZAK
 What?

TYLER
 I met your girlfriend Eleanor in there, the one from the old folks' home. She's hunting you.

Zak looks nervous.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 That's a good thing as far as I'm concerned.
 (beat)
 If we're gonna make it 70 miles down river we need to have a tie that binds. The fact we are both wanted men is just the kind of tie we need. Two bandits on the run.

ZAK
 Oh yeah! OK!

TYLER
 You do right by me, and I'll do right by you. I said I'll get you to The Salt Water Redneck's place and I plan to deliver on my word.
 (MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)
I've been called a lot of bad things in my life, but a liar isn't one of them.

ZAK
Th-that is so very nice of you.

TYLER
I wouldn't call it nice. I'm going that way so you can tag along.

They step out onto a dirt road.

TYLER (CONT'D)
I've got two rules though.

ZAK
OK.

TYLER
One, don't slow me down.

ZAK
OK, and the other rule?

Tyler stops to look at Zak.

TYLER
I'm in charge. I say "jump" you say "how high?"

ZAK
Got it!

TYLER
Jump.

Zak jumps awkwardly a few inches off the ground.

TYLER (CONT'D)
No. So I say "jump" and then you...

Zak jumps again.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Just... I'm in charge. You got it?

Zak nods, reaches his hand out, and Tyler shakes it.

Tyler slips his backpack off and hands it to Zak.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You carry your own weight.

ZAK

Uhhh... Tyler maybe we should make up a secret handshake just in case we need it for something. What if we need to signal, you know because we have to be quiet. COO COO!

TYLER

I don't think we're gonna need that.

ZAK

OK Tyler... But what if something really cool happens and we want to celebrate? You know like--

Zak starts to mimic giving a unique high five.

ZAK (CONT'D)

Woo hoo ha ha yeah! And then I could spin like this.

Zak lifts Tyler's hand up, hits it and spins around waving his hand like a fish tail.

Tyler starts walking again.

TYLER

OK, but you can't be doing that all the time.

ZAK

Deal. You are in charge.

(beat)

Only when something really cool happens.

EXT. BEACH AT THE END OF THE ROAD - DAY

Tyler and Zak approach the waters edge where the road ends.

Zak looks nervous.

ZAK

That's really far to the other side.

TYLER

Yeah, well our options are limited. We can't spend two days scraping through brier bushes and we can't go back the way we came. You got any better ideas?

ZAK
We could find a plane and then--

TYLER
Take your pants off.

ZAK
I can't--

TYLER
I know you can't swim.

Tyler takes the pair of pants and ties knots in the knees. He creates a crude floatation device for Zak.

Tyler ties one end of his rope to Zak, feeds 30 feet through his hands and ties the other end to himself.

TYLER (CONT'D)
That water is almost 25 feet deep. Those pants should hold air just fine, but on the off chance you sink again I don't want to go down with you, and I sure as hell don't want to dredge for your body.
(beat)
This way I can pull you across without being scared of you drowning me.

Tyler begins to put the backpack in a large trash bag to protect it from the water.

ZAK
Do you think I could die?

TYLER
Oh, you're gonna die. Just a matter of time.
(beat)
The real question isn't whether you'll die or not, it's will you die with a bunch of good stories for people to tell about you when you're gone.

Zak swallows hard.

MOMENTS LATER

Tyler swims out first while Zak waits on the shore, he gets out 25 feet and then yells to Zak.

TYLER

OK.

Zak timidly gets in the water and starts gently kicking. Tyler is pulling him while swimming breast stroke.

Zak looks like he might sink at any moment if he lost the pants filled with air. This goes on for some time.

Tyler's view is slightly blocked by the waves and water.

He hears the low deep rumble of an engine.

Tyler pops his head up and sees a barge 250 meters away barreling towards them.

TYLER (CONT'D)

ZAK!!! SWIM!!!

Zak begins kicking his legs faster but isn't making much progress. He submerges in the water and resurfaces.

Tyler attempts to swim in full sprint but Zak is dead weight.

Tyler clears the path of the barge but it continues to bear down towards Zak.

TYLER (CONT'D)

USE YOUR LEGS ZAK!! USE YOUR LEGS!!

Zak begins to kick a bit harder but still moves slowly.

Tyler hits the shore and starts pulling the rope as fast as he can, hand-over-hand.

TYLER (CONT'D)

KICK YOUR LEGS DAMN IT!!!

Zak kicks while Tyler frantically muscles in the rope while falling backward, he is red and looks like he is going to pass out from exhaustion.

The boat barely misses Zak.

Tyler falls back onto the ground as Zak, now safe, kicks into shore. Tyler breathes hard and looks spent.

Zak walks up to him, grabs his hand, and pulls him to his feet fast and hard, demonstrating his great strength.

Zak does the secret spinning handshake.

ZAK

Woo woo! That right there is a good story we can tell.

Zak starts to walk away but then turns to address Tyler.

ZAK (CONT'D)

You coming?

EXT: DIRT PATH THROUGH WOODS - DAY

Tyler walks, lost in thought, not nearly as fast as before.

After a moment he stops and looks behind him.

He sees Zak, who has stopped to watch ants marching in a line. They carry loads ten times their size.

ZAK

Hey little ants. Hey there.

Zak waves and smiles at the ants.

Tyler's softens.

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - DUSK

Eleanor looks at a road map with a highlighted line that ends in Ayden.

She marks an X directly on the line where the convenience store was located.

EXT. ABANDONED / BEACHED SAIL BOAT - DUSK

Zak splashes Tyler while he washes off the mud from earlier.

EXT. ABANDONED / BEACHED SAIL BOAT - NIGHT

Tyler and Zak lay underneath a shipwrecked boat lit by the moon that has made it's home among the sand dunes and grass.

The two stare up at the stars.

ZAK

MUAH HUAH HUAH HUAH!!

Zak lets out an evil cackle that sounds like a cartoon Dracula. He looks to Tyler for approval, who shakes his head "no"

ZAK (CONT'D)
 Wait... Let me try again.
 (beat)
 MUAH HUAH HUAH HUAH!!

TYLER
 I ain't even the slightest bit
 scared.

ZAK
 A little bit?
 (Zak holds up fingers in a
 wide pinching fashion)

TYLER
 (holds up fingers like
 Zak's but smaller)
 This much.

Zak smiles.

TYLER (CONT'D)
 Wait, wait, no... this much.
 (Tyler makes the gap
 between his fingers
 disappear)

Zak gives a "really" look.

ZAK
 When I'm a professional wrestler
 I'm going to be a bad guy, and I'll
 wear all black.

TYLER
 Why the bad guy?

Zak searches for the words.

ZAK
 Because my family left me.
 (beat)
 People don't leave the good guy.

This hits Tyler hard.

TYLER
 You're not a bad guy because
 someone leaves you. It's not about
 an evil laugh or wearing black.
 It's about what's in here.

Tyler taps his chest with his finger.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You're the good guy. The hero.

Zak thinks on this.

ZAK
A hero.

Silence as both ponder.

ZAK (CONT'D)
No, I can't be a hero. Down syndrome kind of people are not heroes. Everyone calls me a retard. They said it in school. Retard. The football coach said I had "retard strength" but I was too slow.

TYLER
Fuck that guy.

Zak looks at Tyler.

TYLER (CONT'D)
There's lots of stuff you probably won't do. Like slam dunk a basketball or be an Olympic swimmer.
(beat)
You sink like a stone, know why?

Zak shakes his head no.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Because you're all muscle, and muscle sinks.
(beat)
Today when you pulled me up by the river... the most grown-ass men I know aren't that strong. You almost took my arm off.

ZAK
I guess I am strong, huh?
(beat)
What is one thing someone like me, someone who is very strong do?

TYLER
(thinks)
You could throw a man like a God-damn rag doll.

Zak smiles.

ZAK

Tyler, who were the people that
chased us in the boat?

TYLER

Duncan and Ratboy.

ZAK

Are they good guys or bad guys?

TYLER

Bad guys.

ZAK

Tyler?

TYLER

Yeah?

ZAK

Are you a good guy or a bad guy?

Long silence.

TYLER

I don't know, what you think?

ZAK

You are a good guy.

LATER

Zak lies quietly and twitches in his sleep.

EXT. BEACH - ZAK'S DREAM - NIGHT

Horse hooves Rhythmically splash through inches deep water.

Atop the horse a man rides through the dark wearing carrying
a torch. He wears blue camouflage wrestling briefs and a
matching bandana.

He swings the torch down to the surface of the water and it
catches fire.

The man on the horse is The Salt Water Redneck and yells
wildly like a triumphant warrior.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABANDONED / BEACHED SAIL BOAT - MORNING

Tyler wakes to find Zak doing push-ups.

Zak is grunting and straining to keep form.

ZAK

If I am going to be the hero then
I'll have to learn how to do the
"Atomic Heave" like The Salt Water
Redneck!

Tyler sits up, still sleepy.

TYLER

OK.

ZAK

Tyler, will you puh-puh-puh-lease
help me? Please?

TYLER

Help you what?

ZAK

Train to be a hero.

TYLER

You want me to train you?

ZAK

Yeah.

TYLER

I had big plans for today. I'm not
sure I'll have time for that.

Zak stares at him waiting for the "yes."

TYLER (CONT'D)

I... Uh... Sure... I guess, sure.
(beat)
You know I don't know shit about
wrestling.

Zak shakes his head yes.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Ok. I'll just like... life train
you.

EXT. VARIOUS HOUSES - DAY

Eleanor knocks on a series of doors.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL DOORWAY - DAY

A SUBURBAN HOUSE WIFE (52) stands at her door.

SUBURBAN HOUSE WIFE

He's just a boy, what's he doing in
an old persons home?

ELEANOR

It's pretty common for people with
disabilities like Zak to be placed
in a nursing home, no matter what
their age is.

SUBURBAN HOUSE WIFE

That seems odd.

ELEANOR

Yeah, I guess it is a little odd
isn't it?

(beat)

If you see him can you give me a
call?

Eleanor passes a piece of paper with her phone number through
the crack in the door.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Thank you.

BEGIN MONTAGE - ZAK AND TYLER - TRAINING

--Zak does push-ups and sit-ups and shoulder presses a large
branch.

--Tyler throws dry crackers into the water, fish start to eat
at them and Tyler blasts shotgun rounds into the school.

--Tyler and Zak eat their catch off of sticks over a fire.

--Tyler puts four beer bottles on sticks 30 yards from where
Zak stands holding the shotgun.

TYLER

Just point and pull the trigger.

ZAK

Yeah, got it.

TYLER
Open your stance up a bit.

--Zak opens his legs wider.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Good, now you look like an athlete.

--Zak takes aim and shoots, all the bottles explode into glass shards.

--Zak cheers and Tyler smiles.

ZAK
I hit all of them!

TYLER
It's called buckshot.

--Tyler and Zak walk the train tracks while Zak bobs and weaves.

--Tyler hits rocks at Zak with a stick. Zak has couch cushions duct taped to him like a hockey goalie.

--They play wrestle in a field.

--Tyler times Zak as he does wind sprints.

TYLER (CONT'D)
...Eleanor, huh?

Zak nods.

TYLER (CONT'D)
What's she like?

ZAK
She's my friend. She looks out for me, but different. She gives me snacks, and she's really sweet.

TYLER
Not so sweet that you wanted to stick around.

ZAK
No, not that sweet.

EXT. PIGGLY WIGGLY - DAY

Eleanor shows people the photo of Zak and asks if anyone has seen him. They shake their heads "no".

She puts another X on her highlighted map. The map is littered with X's now.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Tyler picks up a beer bottle.

TYLER

Just keep your eye on the prize.
Aim, and pull the trigger.

Zak changes his foot position while Tyler isn't looking and places one foot directly next to the other one.

Tyler throws the bottle in the air.

Zak tracks the bottle through the air, pulls the trigger, and hits his target. The kick sends him flying backwards.

Tyler runs to see if Zak is OK.

Zak stands up, hobbles, and winces in pain.

TYLER (CONT'D)

You alright bud?

Tyler lifts Zak and begins to carry him across his shoulders.

END MONTAGE - ZAK AND TYLER - TRAINING

EXT. JUNK YARD - DAY

Tyler and Zak slide under a barbed-wire fence and stand amongst old ovens, broken-down cars, and metal barrels.

Zak walks with difficulty, keeping weight off his ankle.

Tyler quietly approaches an old 12 foot tin boat and starts to pull scrap wood off of it.

TYLER

This should work just fine.

Zak looks nervous but starts to help Tyler.

The distinct sound of a pistol cocks.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

FREEZE MUH FUCKAS!

Tyler and Zak spin around to see BLIND JASPER JOHN (74), an African American man, who has a six-shooter pointed directly at them. His head swivels back and forth like Stevie Wonder. His eyes have no pigment.

They put their hands in the air.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

One gat damn move from either of
y'all and I will lay yo asses down.
Ya'll trifling muh fuckas think
cause ol' Jasper is blind that you
can come robbin' his ass? Think
again!

Tyler and Zak are silent.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

Y'all boys black or white?

Tyler and Zak look at each other not knowing how to respond.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

OK then.

Blind Jasper John blasts a slug past their heads!

Tyler and Zak fall to the ground.

TYLER

Jesus!

ZAK

Wuh wuh wuh, we are white!

BLIND JASPER JOHN

I knowd y'all was white! I could
smell y'all from a mile away!

(beat)

Y'all God fearing?

Tyler and Zak think for a moment.

TYLER

Does it matter?

BLIND JASPER JOHN

(Cocks pistol)

Matters to me.

TYLER

Then yes, we are.

Blind Jasper John lowers his gun.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

(Sweetens)

A friend of Jesus is a friend of
Jasper John's as far as I'm
concerned! Lucky for y'all muh
fuckas it's Sunday, and what a
blessed day it is to confess some
sins.

ZAK

What sins are you talking about?

BLIND JASPER JOHN

Attempted robbery of a blind man
seems like a nice place to start.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFRONT BEHIND BLIND JASPER'S JUNK YARD - DAY

Begin "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" <Jasper's Family Choir>

Blind Jasper John is dressed in all white and stands waist
deep in water holding a bible; he has the pistol tucked into
his pants.

Zak and Tyler sit on an old tire and watch on. Jasper's
family is in attendance. Three small Africa American children
all under the age of 5, with their Mother (32) and Grand
Mother (64).

Tyler looks slightly uncomfortable, but bears with it.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

There are wolves in this world and
there are sheep. I might not has my
eyes, but I know the difference.
And I knows that both you boys are
just two weary fleece wearing
travelers who have lost y'all's way.
Neither of y'all is wolves. Y'all
just sheep who have strayed from
His flock.

Jasper looks to the sky, Tyler swallows hard.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm donatin' supplies from my junk
yard for your pilgrimage, anything
but that tin boat you can has it.
Cause I sees it as my duty to get
both you sheep back to your
Shepard.

Tyler and Zak look slightly relieved.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

I cain't has you boys runnin off
from here with dirt on y'all's
hands. A wolf can hunt you down
just by the smell of the sins of
yo' past. I don't want no wolves
getting a'hold of you now, cause
that would be a frightful bloody
mess.

(beat)

So we gonna clean you up right.

(beat)

With a baptism.

ZAK

(to Tyler)

What is that?

TYLER

It's like swimming.

Zak looks intrigued.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

Both y'all come down here and bathe
in the warm waters of forgiveness.

Zak limps to the water's edge; he cautiously steps in.

BLIND JASPER JOHN (CONT'D)

(to Zak)

Today marks the first day of the
rest of your life. Nothing can
touch you with the good grace of
the Lord.

(to Tyler)

Stand up son, accept His blessing.

(beat)

Put the wolves of yo' past to rest.

Blind Jasper John's family all watch in silence.

TYLER

I'm more of a baptism by fire kind
of guy.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

Well, unfortunately I don't perform
those kinds of baptisms.

Begin flashback music.

CUT TO:

Zak, arms spread wide, falls backwards in the brown murky river. Blind Jasper John is there to catch him, and holds his nose as he slips under the water.

INT. BAR - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Mark wears a cowboy hat and a crisp new purple brush popper (western shirt). He and **ALYSON(41)** slow dance, he spins her in circles and whispers in her ear. She laughs and buries her face into his shirt. He winks at Tyler, who is watching them with admiration.

INT. BAR - FLASHBACK - LATER

Mark holds a shot in the air.

MARK

May the sun always be at your back...the wind on your face. I mean, the sun on your face and wind...well...shit...I don't know...

ALYSON

Rain fall on your fields babe, that's the next part.

MARK

Happy birthday little brother.

They all take shots.

Mark smiles at Tyler.

MARK (CONT'D)

OK, another one, and pour it big!

TYLER

No, I'm done! We got pots to pull in the morning.

Mark places his hand on the back of Tyler's neck intimately.

MARK

Hey, who takes care of you?

(beat)

Those pots aren't going anywhere, you can have another drink with your big brother.

LATER

Mark and Tyler sit alone at the bar surrounded by empty glasses.

MARK

Remember when Dad used to take us Tarpon fishing down south every winter?

(beat)

I'm telling you. Florida. We need to go back there. We get rigged up, get Alyson running bait in that little yellow bikini of hers. We muscle up some sport fish, take a few photos, drink cold beers and get paid.

Mark raises his glass and Tyler smiles at the thought of their future. Cheers.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT - LATER

Tyler and Mark get in Mark's pickup. Tyler is driving.

The truck eats up miles on the dark and lonely road.

Inside, Mark sleeps while Tyler's eyes get heavy.

The Truck crosses over the center line, continues off the road, and hits an embankment.

It flips into a ditch filled with water and lands upside down with a heavy splash. Bubbles and steam.

Water rushes in and engulfs Tyler's shotgun. The branding "Family First" disappears into the darkness.

BACK TO PRESENT**BEGIN MONTAGE****EXT. JUNK YARD - DAY**

--Tyler aggressively collects things around the junk yard as Zak helps. Barrels / rope / wood pallets / old bed sheets.

Tyler's shotgun is peacefully framed in the foreground.

--Tyler ties the barrels to scraps of wood and then starts hammering nails.

Close up on the shotgun where "FAMILY FIRST" is branded.

--He takes a dirty sheet and makes a crude sail out of it.

--Tyler and Zak are building a raft.

--They throw extra wood on the platform and then push the raft into the water.

Tyler carefully pins the photo of Mark and himself to the crude steering mechanism at the back of the raft.

EXT. WATERFRONT BEHIND BLIND JASPER'S JUNK YARD - DAY

--Tyler and Zak push the raft along two small pine trees, with their bark shaved off, into the water with a splash.

--It looks like trash, but it floats and they look pleased.

--Blind Jasper John shakes Tyler's hand.

BLIND JASPER JOHN
OK then, Moses.

Fade out flashback music.

END MONTAGE

EXT. RAFT FLOATING DOWN A CREEK WITH CEDARS - MAGIC HOUR

Tyler sits on the back of the raft with his feet hanging over the edge. His shotgun is resting in his lap.

Zak sits next to him, noticing his somber mood.

The sail that Tyler built sits motionless. There is no wind.

Tyler stares into the silky almost black water.

The two sit in silence for a long time.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT (MOS)

Mark's body floats lifelessly among debris from the overturned pickup.

The lightning bolts and mustangs on his shirt are recognizable and the fringe on his chaps is silhouetted by the moon.

BACK TO PRESENT**EXT. RAFT FLOATING DOWN A CREEK WITH CEDARS - MAGIC HOUR**

ZAK

Is a baptism more than swimming?

Tyler watches the water pass beneath his feet.

TYLER

I don't know.

Long pause.

Zak puts his arm around Tyler.

ZAK

Tyler, when I can take care of you,
I will.

Tyler lets this settle in.

ZAK (CONT'D)

I will give you all the wishes I
get at my birthday party.

They sit in silence listening to the sound of cicadas.

Wind ruffles and fills the sheet / sail on the raft.

EXT. JUNK YARD - DUSK

Eleanor holds up a photo of Zak.

ELEANOR

Excuse me sir, I was wondering if
you've seen--

BLIND JASPER JOHN

I ain't seen shit, girl!

Eleanor notices the cataracts in Jasper's eyes.

ELEANOR

Well, maybe you might have heard...

Eleanor is searching for the words.

BLIND JASPER JOHN

You God fearing?

Eleanor looks confused.

EXT. SAND PENINSULA - DUSK

Tyler hops off the raft followed by Zak, who winces in pain when he steps down and puts weight on his sprained ankle.

Tyler takes a sip of whiskey from the dirty brown jug then hands it to Zak.

TYLER

Here, this'll numb it down.

Zak takes the liquor and chugs.

Tyler watches and nods his head in approval.

Zak smiles at Tyler and hands him back the whiskey.

TYLER (CONT'D)

OK.

Tyler matches Zak's chug, gulp for gulp.

EXT. SANT PENINSULA - BONFIRE - NIGHT

Zak has his shirt off, he is grunting out pushups in the sand beside a bonfire. The jug of whiskey, noticeably lighter than before, rests near by.

Tyler counts reps from a reclined position across the fire.

TYLER

18. 19. 20. 21.

Zak stops doing push ups, tired now from the effort.

ZAK

I don't feel my ankle anymore! Or
my legs! Or my hands!

Zak raises his hands in the air.

ZAK (CONT'D)

I CAN'T FEEL MY HANDS!

Tyler laughs.

Zak swigs the whiskey, then stands and tries to lift a large piece of drift wood laying nearby. He can't do it.

ZAK (CONT'D)

I'm not strong enough.

TYLER

Who is strong enough?

Zak looks confused.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Don't you need, like another name.
An alter ego? The Salt Water
Redneck wasn't born with that name.

ZAK

Are you sure that wasn't his name
when he was born?

TYLER

Nah, I bet his name was Frank or
Beau or something.

(beat)

If you can't do it, then who can?

Zak thinks on this.

ZAK

THE FALCON CAN DO IT!

Tyler gets up and walks into the darkness.

He comes back with two large branches filled with leaves.

He attaches the branches with duct tape to the back of Zak's
body like wings.

TYLER

OK. Let's see it Falcon.

Zak tries to lift the drift wood and gets it a little higher
but fails again. He drops the wood.

TYLER (CONT'D)

War paint.

Zak nods in approval.

Tyler grabs some charcoal from around the fire and rubs it on
Zak's face in four even lines like a warrior football player.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Zak, I shouldn't have called you
helpless.

(beat)

Everyone needs a friend sometimes.

Zak smiles.

Zak dips his hand in the jar of peanut butter and smears a handful on his face to complement the charcoal lines.

ZAK

The Peanut Butter Falcon.

Tyler smiles.

TYLER

The Peanut Butter Falcon.

MOMENTS LATER

Tyler and Zak both have war paint on their faces.

Zak stands only in his underwear and Peanut Butter Falcon regalia, struggling to get the drift wood lifted.

His face is veiny, red, and sweaty, reflecting the firelight. Zak yells like a warrior in the throws of battle.

Tyler looks on excited and nervous at the same time.

SERIES OF SHOTS - SLOW MOTION

--Zak flips the drift wood into the air and onto the fire sending sparks high into the night sky.

--Tyler rips his shirt off and starts screaming at the top of his lungs.

--Zak flexes his muscles and starts jumping up and down.

--They run around the inferno yelling like wild savages.

--Zak moves his arms like falcon wings and howls at the moon.

--They do a tribal dance as they spin around the blaze.

--The flames rage high into the night sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PENINSULA - MORNING

Zak and Tyler are both passed out on the sand.

The fire from the night before smolders.

Zak snores soundly, his mouth agape.

INT. VAN - MORNING

A van drives down a dirt road towards the thick black trail of smoke in the distance.

EXT. SAND PENINSULA - MORNING

A van arrives, tires on gravel; a door opens and closes, followed by the chirping sound of a car lock engaging.

Footsteps approach, a purse drops onto the ground beside Zak, keys on a "Britthaven Retirement" keychain jingle inside.

A hand wipes peanut butter off of Zak's face.

Eleanor is crouching over him, she looks relieved.

ELEANOR

Oh Zak, thank God you're ok.

Zak and Tyler begin to stir. Zak sits up, hungover.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to Tyler)

Haven't seen him, huh?

Tyler smiles wryly and yells in a low, mocking voice.

TYLER

ELEANOR! I FOUND HIM, HE'S RIGHT
HERE! ELEANOR!

ELEANOR

Is that funny to you? You think
this is a game?

(to Zak)

Get up Zak; we are leaving.

TYLER

He's not going anywhere. Zak, stay
put.

ELEANOR

I had to drive for twelve miles
down a dirt road to find you,
twelve miles and my cell phone
battery is dead now! What if there
was an emergency? What if he got
hurt?

TYLER

He did get hurt.

ELEANOR
(to Zak)
Are you hurt?!

ZAK
My ankle hurts.

ELEANOR
Exactly my point!
(to Tyler)
You've got a boy with Down syndrome
out here in the middle of nowhere,
doing God knows what!

TYLER
He's not a child, he's damn near
twenty-two years old!

ELEANOR
He needs someone to take care of
him! Who are you anyway!?

TYLER
I'm the guy taking care of him
because you can't do it without
keeping him in a cage.

ELEANOR
That's cute. So you two are in some
sort of primitive gang?! This isn't
Lord of The Flies! There are rules
and regulations and red tape and
paperwork--

TYLER
While you were talking about
eventually doing some paperwork we
were doing a little thing called
living.

ELEANOR
Living?! You call this living!? You
two look like cave men!

Tyler and Zak look at each other and take in their bodies;
unkempt, stinky, dirty, half naked, covered in peanut butter
and soot. They both grin.

TYLER
I know. It's awesome.

ZAK
It really is awesome, Eleanor.

ELEANOR
Get up, Zak!

Zak starts to stand up.

TYLER
Stay where you're at, Zak!

Zak sits down.

TYLER (CONT'D)
(to Eleanor)
Can I talk to you in private for a
moment?

Tyler grabs Eleanor's arm and walks her away from where Zak
is sitting.

ELEANOR
I should have you arrested for
kidnapping!

TYLER
You can't kidnap someone who ran
away, genius.

ELEANOR
This isn't some--

TYLER
What do you want for Zak?

ELEANOR
I'm not going to sell him to you!

TYLER
No, what do you WANT FOR Zak? For
his life.

ELEANOR
I'm taking Zak with me.

TYLER
No you're not.
(beat)
Do you know about the wrestling
thing?

ELEANOR
How do you think I found you?

TYLER

I made him a promise to get him to that wrestling school, and I don't break my promises. I see you care about Zak, so I'll do you a favor. You can ride on the raft with us, that way you can watch out for him. I'm getting him to that wrestling school with or without you. What happens after that... well, that's your business.

ELEANOR

No. I have to go back to work. I've got my hours to account for, I can't just get on your little raft and disappear.

TYLER

I'm not asking you.

At the campfire, Zak takes the keys out of Eleanor's purse.

ZAK

Hey, Eleanor!

Eleanor and Tyler both turn towards Zak as he throws her keys far into the deep murky water.

There is a comically long pause as Tyler and Eleanor watch Zak in disbelief.

ZAK (CONT'D)

I don't want to go back.

(beat)

I'm going to meet the Salt Water Redneck!

Eleanor turns back to Tyler and continues to negotiate even though she has no other options.

ELEANOR

That's it. That's all you get. The wrestling school and that's the end for you.

TYLER

It's not for me.

Eleanor looks to Zak who is doing a celebratory dance, and softens.

ELEANOR

After that I take him back with me
and this becomes a memory.

TYLER

Whatever, but till then, you give
me all of him.

ELEANOR

(hesitant)

OK.

(beat)

He goes home with me in the end.

They shake hands.

EXT. RAFT ON OPEN WATER - DAY - LATER

Eleanor sits on the raft, arms crossed, looking unhappy. It's quiet and tense and the sheet they use for a sail is not catching any wind.

Zak stands up and starts blowing into the sail.

ELEANOR

How far is it on the raft?

TYLER

On the map, it's about this far.
(pinches his fingers)

ELEANOR

Is that one day?

TYLER

Well... tide and wind matter, a day
or, you know, two.

ELEANOR

Zak, why don't you sit down, you'll
get dizzy breathing that hard, and
slip and hurt yourself.

Tyler shakes his head, frustrated by Eleanor.

Zak sits.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Are you hungry, Zak? Did you have
breakfast?

ZAK
I'm not really hungry.

ELEANOR
OK, well, maybe you should just
have a bite of something--

TYLER
Don't do that.

ELEANOR
I'm sorry?

Tyler thinks.

TYLER
(to Zak)
Eleanor's right, we should work on
your breath control. Just cause
we're on a raft doesn't mean we
can't train, right?

ZAK
Oh Tyler, that is very smart.

TYLER
Lean over the edge of the raft and
put your head under water. I'll
time you.

ELEANOR
NO! HE CAN'T!

TYLER
(to Eleanor)
He CAN stand up on a raft, he CAN
feed himself, and he CAN hold his
breath while he's training to be a
wrestler.

ZAK
Yes I can!

Tyler nods to Zak and Zak nods back.

Zak places his head underwater, unable to hear the
conversation that continues above.

TYLER
Stop calling Zak a retard.

ELEANOR

I have never used that word in my life.

TYLER

Might as well have, they way you treat him. You--

EXT. UNDERWATER - UNDER THE RAFT - DAY

Zak's head is underwater, his eyes are open wide and his cheeks are puffed as he holds his breath.

The voices above on the raft are muted by the sound of bubbles and chop lapping against the makeshift boat's hull.

EXT. RAFT ON OPEN WATER - CONTINUOUS

ELEANOR

The nerve you must have to even think--

TYLER

People that call Zak a retard are only saying that he can't do something they can. So you might not be saying the word retard but you're sure as shit making him feel retarded.

ELEANOR

Are you kidding me?

TYLER

No. I'm not kidding you. You're just as bad as they are. You make him think he is completely incapable of doing anything on his own.

Zak comes up, gasps for air and interrupts them.

ZAK

Time!

TYLER

Nice work dude!

ZAK

How long was that?

TYLER
Pretty long.

ELEANOR
Not long enough. Do it again, Zak.

ZAK
OK!!

Zak slams his face back into the water.

ELEANOR
Do you even know what I do? I've spent the last two years of my life volunteering to hold widows hands as they slip from this world to the next. I'm the one they look at when they take their last breath--

EXT. UNDERWATER - UNDER THE RAFT - DAY

Zak's holds his breath and surveys the water below.

His eyes open wider as a large fish swims close.

EXT. RAFT ON OPEN WATER - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor speaks with more conviction, her and Tyler are polar opposites but share a common goal, Zak's best interests.

ELEANOR
Don't pretend because you took Zak on a camping trip for a night or two that you know anything about my life. I didn't ask for Zak to be placed in a retirement community. I didn't choose that for him. But that's what happened, and now I'm doing what needs to be done.

Tyler's frustration turns to admiration for Eleanor's passion. He is beginning to understand her point of view.

Zak explodes out of the water holding large fish by the gills.

ZAK
YEEEEEEAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!

EXT. RAFT ON OPEN WATER - AFTERNOON

Tyler, Eleanor, and Zak all sit in a circle around the fish roasting on a ramshackle spit over a small burn barrel.

TYLER

Three options today for lunch.

ZAK

Three options! Yeah!

Eleanor, warmer than before, looks like she is enjoying this because Zak is so happy.

TYLER

Option one. Hot water we boil from the sound.

ZAK

BLECK! I don't want to drink more sound water, Tyler!

TYLER

Option two is plain fish.

ZAK

You know what I want, Tyler.

Eleanor smiles at how much fun Zak is having.

TYLER

Option three is...FISH with PEANUT BUTTER!

ZAK

FISH and peanut butter!! I want to eat the fish with the peanut butter!

TYLER

(to Eleanor)

We gotta give the guy what he wants!

ZAK

Yes you do!

Tyler tears the fish apart with his bare hands and passes a chunk to Zak who already had a handful of peanut butter ready. He rubs the peanut butter all over the flaky white meat and immediately starts eating. Tyler then rips off another piece and hands it to Eleanor.

TYLER

Try to eat around the bones.

Tyler digs in.

Eleanor looks at her handful of hot fish scrap and eats.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Good, huh?

ELEANOR

I wouldn't say it's gourmet...

Tyler and Zak look at her, slightly offended.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

But you boys did great.

Eleanor smiles at Tyler, acknowledging his efforts.

Zak does his secret handshake with Tyler as Eleanor watches.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What is that?

ZAK

It's a secret handshake we do when stuff is really awesome.

TYLER

It's what we do to celebrate.

ZAK

Yeah, we did it when I almost got ran over by that big boat.

TYLER

That boat was a close one.

Eleanor swallows hard.

ZAK

And we did it when someone shot a gun at us but we didn't get any bullet holes in our bodies.

ELEANOR

(under her breath)

Oh God.

Tyler winks at Eleanor, and gives a warm smile.

EXT. ROPE SWING HANGING FROM A CRANE ON A BARGE - AFTERNOON

Tyler turns the crank on his radio. A bluegrass song about summer comes on.

Tyler and Zak take turns jumping off of a rope swing that hangs from the hook of a crane stored temporarily in the reeds.

Tyler teaches Zak to hold on to the rope tight and Eleanor watches, impressed with how much Zak is learning and by how much fun they are having.

Tyler flips through the air followed by Zak doing a karate kick.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROPE SWING HANGING FROM A CRANE ON A BARGE - AFTERNOON - LATER

Tyler and Zak sit on a barge, playfully calling to Eleanor as she stands on a stack of pallets getting ready to go off the rope swing.

ZAK

It's so easy, you just jump, and hold on, and then you let go.

(beat)

Hold on. Let go.

TYLER

The rope does all the work, you just enjoy the ride.

ELEANOR

OK! OK! I'm going. Stop rushing me.

TYLER

On the count of three, OK?

TYLER (CONT'D)

One! Two! Three--

ZAK

One! Two! Three--

ELEANOR

I'm going!

Eleanor takes a deep breath, lets go and swings.

She releases the rope and hoots joyfully as she falls into the water.

Tyler and Zak match her energy, throwing their arms in the air to celebrate.

EXT. RAFT OPEN WATER - LATE AFTERNOON

Tyler, Eleanor, and Zak sail their raft through open water. Light from the late afternoon sun reflects off the surface.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAND PENINSULA - DAY

Duncan and Ratboy stand at the camp fire Zak and Tyler danced around the night before.

Ratboy is trying on Zak's makeshift falcon wings.

Duncan picks up the empty peanut butter jar and smells it.

EXT. RAFT FLOATING THROUGH SWAMPY CREEK - NIGHT

Eleanor and Zak slow dance on the raft as it floats slowly down a glassy creek lined with 1,000 year old cedars.

The fire in the small burn barrel beside them casts flickering light on the knotted stumps and twisted branches of the trees that surround them.

Tyler watches happily, using a 12 foot push-pole to guide them forward through the water. His movements are fluid and smooth, and the raft glides along almost effortlessly.

The energy between the three of them has fully shifted, Eleanor is now a part of the team. For the first time she is doing what she thinks is right and not what she's been told to do.

Eleanor places Zak's hand on her hip as they move.

ELEANOR

Good. That's it.

(beat)

How does your ankle feel?

ZAK

Ummm...it is really great now
Eleanor, thank you.

Zak looks down at his feet. He counts with her.

EXT. ABANDONED DUCK HUNTING CABIN - NIGHT

Tyler looks at the burning raft in disbelief, powerless.

Duncan enters the frame.

DUNCAN

We've been looking for you.

A gun cocks.

Ratboy stands 10 feet to the side of Tyler, holding a pistol aimed in his direction.

Tyler puts his hands in the air.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Get on your knees.

Tyler lowers to his knees.

Zak peeks out fearfully from the hunting cabin window, the burning raft illuminates his face. Eleanor is still asleep behind him.

Duncan stares at Tyler; and then leans in closer.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

That's twelve thousand dollars of gear that's burnt up. You know how many hours I'm gonna spend braiding wire. I got mouths to feed.

(beat)

What's gonna stop people from thinking they can cut the buoys off our pots now that you've done it? Or burn our gear up?

(beat)

Them Vietnamese are looking for an excuse to start pulling pots again, and you know how that got handled.

Tyler listens.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

I'm glad it wasn't me that had to put that hammer down, but someone did. And it's better now.

Ratboy squirms with pride and discomfort.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Cops aren't gonna do anything and you know it.

(MORE)

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

A few months probation and that's it? Nah, you gotta get what's coming to you; not revenge for revenge sake, but for the rest of us, for our livelihood.

(beat)

If no one else is gonna do this then I see it as my job to get done.

Duncan nods at Ratboy who nods back.

TYLER

Duncan--

BANG! A gun shot goes off.

Duncan looks startled as Zak, holding Tyler's shotgun, steps out from the cabin door.

Zak points the weapon directly at Ratboy who is still pointing his pistol at Tyler.

Eleanor, emerges behind Zak. She looks startled, not knowing what is going on or who these men are.

DUNCAN

(to Tyler)

I didn't know you were traveling with friends.

(to Zak)

You the brains of this outfit?

Zak's shotgun wobbles a bit, but he stands firm.

RATBOY

(to Zak)

You can pull that trigger, but can you aim that thing?

Duncan starts to make a move towards Zak.

Zak widens his stance.

ZAK

(to Ratboy)

It's buckshot.

This stops Duncan's forward momentum. Ratboy looks to Duncan. Duncan motions for him to put the pistol on the ground.

Tyler stands and backs up a few paces.

DUNCAN
(to Zak)
What's the play then bud?

Zak pumps his shotgun.

Eleanor takes control and places her hand on Zak's shoulder.

ELEANOR
You don't want to spend the rest of
your life in a jail cell.

TYLER
(to Duncan)
You're going to get in your boat
and you're gonna leave. I won't
come back to Colington, you'll
never see me again, and we call it
even on the crab pots. The fishing
license is yours.

DUNCAN
It already is mine.

Tyler makes eye contact with Zak.

TYLER
(to Duncan)
Then we do it different.

Zak ignores Eleanor's pleas and raises the shotgun higher
with bravado.

DUNCAN
(to Zak)
I guess you're the boss.

ZAK
I guess I am.

Duncan and Ratboy slowly retreat towards their boat as Zak
keeps them in his crosshairs.

They start the engines and drive off.

Once the boat is out of sight, Eleanor runs over and throws
Ratboy's handgun into the water.

EXT. BEACH BEFORE FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Tyler, Zak, and Eleanor walk silently down the beach three
abreast still shaken from the standoff with Duncan and
Ratboy.

EXT. FERRIS WHEEL - DAWN

The Ayden pier sits dormant, the town is still asleep. Tyler reaches under a control panel and rubs two wires together, sparks fly and the Ferris wheel comes to life.

All three are illuminated by the colorful lights.

ELEANOR

(to Tyler)

Is that why you're out here? Were you running from them?

Tyler nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Do you think they'll come back for you?

Tyler thinks as he activates the motor. The wheel starts rotating.

TYLER

No...I think it's over.

MOMENTS LATER

All three sit close in the car at the top of the Ferris wheel and watch the sun climb out from behind the ocean.

The first light of the day breaks on their faces.

Eleanor rests her head on Zak.

ELEANOR

When I was a kid, my mom used to let me keep all of her change. She got me a piggy bank that looked like a soccer ball. I kept a record of how much I had in there. I had this little notebook in my bedside drawer so I could record it, with the date next to it and everything.

ZAK

What were you saving up for?

ELEANOR

No idea, nothing, just saving. I just did it to make her happy.

TYLER

How much did you have?

ELEANOR
Almost four hundred dollars.

TYLER
(smiles)
That's more than I have right now.

ELEANOR
Yeah...our house burned down.

TYLER
No!

ELEANOR
Yeah. Everything was fine; we got
the dogs out, thank God. But we
lost all our family photos and
keepsakes.

ZAK
Did you get the piggy bank?

ELEANOR
Nope.

TYLER
Shoulda spent that money.

ELEANOR
Yeah.
(beat)
I'm not used to this, just living
in this moment right now. Not
planning, not worried about the
past or the future. Just right now.
It feels really nice.

The horizon turns from pale pink to a bright orange.

MOMENTS LATER

All three exit the Ferris wheel.

TYLER
Give me just a minute.

EXT: WATER BY THE FERRIS WHEEL - EARLY MORNING

Tyler stands alone knee deep in the water. Eleanor and Zak
chat softly in the distance. Tyler gently lays the Shotgun
into the water with both hands; he is content.

He turns back to join them.

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - MORNING

Eleanor, sitting in a booth by the window, plugs her cell phone into a wall charger.

The phone turns on.

MOMENTS LATER

ELEANOR

Yes Glen, I've got him with me right now.

She looks through the glass at Zak and Tyler, who practice Tai Chi in the parking lot.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

No, he's OK. Some sunburn and a couple scrapes but nothing's broken.

She watches Tyler as he and Zak do their secret handshake.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

No, he was completely alone.

(beat)

No don't send anyone, I can handle it.

(beat)

I'm thinking tomorrow some time later in the day, I've got to call a locksmith, and I've got some loose ends to tie up, so can you transfer me to Janice, we need to have clean sheets put on Zak's bed.

(beat)

What? No. Yeah I labeled him a flight risk but--

(beat)

Glen, I can handle him from here on, I just--

(beat)

Cherry Hill is a mental health facility with drug addicts and prostitutes, you can't just put Zak in a place like that and expect--

(beat)

No, you're right, that's not my job. I just think Zak would be better suited--

(under her breath)

Why are you doing this?

(beat)

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Nothing...OK, schedule his
 processing for later tomorrow then.

Eleanor hangs the phone up and gently hits her head against
 the glass window.

A WAITRESS (62), approaches the table.

WAITRESS
 Is there anything I can get for you
 hunny?

Eleanor looks defeated, but recomposes.

ELEANOR
 Have you heard of the Salt Water
 Redneck?

WAITRESS
 Everybody knows Salt Water, he used
 to be a celebrity.

ELEANOR
 I need his address.

EXT. PARKING LOT.

ZAK
 I am going to walk right up to him
 and say "I am here to learn the
 wrestling moves! SO TEACH ME!
 BOOYAH!"

CUT TO:

EXT. SALT WATER REDNECK'S TRAILER - DAY

Tyler knocks on the door of a dilapidated trailer.

Thirty feet behind Tyler, Zak stands hidden behind Eleanor,
 just out of earshot; he is unexpectedly shy.

Long pause.

Tyler knocks again.

ELEANOR
 Maybe this is the wrong house.

Tyler looks at a piece of paper with the address on it and
 Eleanor's hand writing.

TYLER
No. This is it.

Tyler bangs on the door in frustration.

SALT WATER REDNECK
(from inside)
I'm not buying anything you're
selling, the census was last year,
and no I don't need any magazine
subscriptions to help drug addicts
or retards!

Zak tucks further behind Eleanor.

TYLER
Let's go. This is the wrong place.

The door opens and a much older and tired looking Salt Water Redneck, without makeup or long hair, steps into the light.

He is a shadow of what he once was, almost unrecognizable.

SALT WATER REDNECK
It's 9:30 in the morning, what
don't you understand by...

He notices Zak.

SALT WATER REDNECK (CONT'D)
Oh, I...I uh, didn't realize you
brought them out with you. I don't
read a lot of magazines--

Tyler swallows and balls his fists; he holds back tears.

TYLER
Are you The Salt Water Redneck?

SALT WATER REDNECK
You IRS?

TYLER
This is the wrestling school?

SALT WATER REDNECK
There was a wrestling school here--

TYLER
(exasperated)
Look over my shoulder.

Salt Water is confused at Tyler's request.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Do you see that young man?

Salt Water looks beyond Tyler to Zak hiding behind Eleanor.

SALT WATER REDNECK

Yeah.

TYLER

(tears starting to well)

Wave to him.

SALT WATER REDNECK

What?

TYLER

(jaw clenched with rage)

Wave to him!

The Salt Water Redneck awkwardly lifts his hand and waves.

Zak waves back.

SALT WATER REDNECK

Hey.

TYLER

I told him he could do this one thing. Just this one thing.

(beat)

I just broke his heart.

(beat)

You have no idea what he's gone through to be here.

(beat)

You're his hero.

(beat)

I know you didn't do this on purpose, but... He just had a lot riding on this. He believed in you. It's hard to believe in something. Look at you though, you're just a man. Just like me, or him.

Zak watches on. He can't hear what they are saying.

TYLER (CONT'D)

What am I going to tell him?

SALT WATER REDNECK

Oh...

(realizes)

Is he a fan--

TYLER
What's your name?

SALT WATER REDNECK
Clint.

Long pause.

TYLER
(calling to Zak)
Zak.

Zak pokes his head out from behind Eleanor.

TYLER (CONT'D)
This is Clint, and Clint is just a
man like you or me.
(beat)
Clint told me that The Salt Water
Redneck doesn't stay here anymore.

Clint begins to speak but Tyler interrupts.

TYLER (CONT'D)
And he's sorry, and he never meant
to waste your time.

Zak tucks back behind Eleanor.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY (LATER) - TRACKING

Tyler, Zak, and Eleanor all walk in silence.

ZAK
Tyler?

Tyler just listens, somber.

ZAK (CONT'D)
I bet we could find him, if we all
go look for him together on a raft.
(beat)
The three of us could find him,
Tyler. You, me and Eleanor can find
him. I bet he's hiding out in a
swamp.

TYLER
(softly)
Zak, The Salt Water Redneck isn't
real; he doesn't exist.

ZAK

Yes he does. I have the video tape.
I have seen him.

ELEANOR

Zak, It's over now, you're coming
back with me.

ZAK

But you told me I could do it,
Tyler. You promised me that a
strong person like me could do it.

(beat)

Let's not go back. We can take care
of each other. We can be a family.
I can catch the fish. I'll be the
hero always for you guys.

(beat)

I can take care of you.

ELEANOR

We have lives we have to get back
to.

ZAK

Is your life better than this?

Eleanor truly considers this question.

ZAK (CONT'D)

Is your life better than this right
now? Is your life better than the
raft we made? It's not and you know
it! We love each other! You love
each other, and I love you!

(beat)

It's simple.

ELEANOR

It's not simple.

Zak lets this sink in.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Zak, I can't--

ZAK

You won't. You can. You just won't.

Long pause.

An old, beat-up and rusty Pontiac Firebird complete with a
flame engulfed phoenix decal on the hood comes speeding up
the road from behind them.

The horn plays Dixie and the engine roars as it comes to a screeching halt, spraying dust.

Zak looks at the fiery bird on the hood as the dust settles.

The Salt Water Redneck adjusts his blonde wig and bandana as he gets out of the driver's seat. His makeup job looks rushed, he wears blue camouflage briefs and knee-high wrestling boots.

ZAK (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 I knew it.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 I heard that there was a Salt Water Redneck fan here that came to enroll in the wrestling school.

Zak smiles from ear to ear.

ZAK
 Yeah.

The Salt Water Redneck walks over to Zak and extends his hand.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 My name is Clint, but my friends call me The Salt Water Redneck.
 (beat)
 I would like it if you called me The Salt Water Redneck.

ZAK
 Redneck...

Zak takes a deep breath and kneels before Salt Water.

ZAK (CONT'D)
 I am here to learn the wrestling moves! Please teach me your ways, oh powerful one! I will do the best I can for you. I will make you proud, Salt Water Redneck.

Salt Water looks pleased with his redemption.

ZAK (CONT'D)
 Teach me to heave.

EXT. WRESTLING RING - SALT WATER'S FRONT YARD - DUSK

Salt Water enthusiastically teaches Zak wrestling moves in a homemade ring comprised of ropes strung between a few shovels stuck in the ground and a lawn mower handle.

Salt Water briefly introduces Zak to his roommate, **SAM (51)**, an intimidatingly large man who sports a mullet haircut and wears a faded work issued pest control shirt.

Sam watches intently beside the ring with his arms crossed. He enjoys watching the two wrestle, but for different reasons.

Salt Water feels good to be back in the makeshift setup.

He has fun with Zak as he shows off.

Salt Water teaches Zak to stomp his foot when he pretends to hit someone.

Sam watches with focus but doesn't say much.

Salt Water rolls on the ground showing Zak how to properly take a fall.

ZAK

Ummm... What about the "Atomic Heave?"

SALT WATER REDNECK

Oh.

(beat)

We made that move up just for the videos. It was smoke and mirrors, you know, it was just a camera on my face so it looked like I was holding someone over my head. It's not possible. See, try to pick me up.

Zak tries to pick up Salt Water, but his weight is too much.

He stops and sighs.

Salt Water notices Zak getting upset.

SALT WATER REDNECK (CONT'D)

My manager thought a gimmick might sell more merch. The "Atomic Heave" was just a publicity stunt.

Zak looks disappointed.

Salt Water takes a deep breath. Back to reality.

SALT WATER REDNECK (CONT'D)
 Now grab the back of my neck like
 this and pull me towards you.

Tyler and Eleanor watch Zak and Salt Water from an old couch
 that looks as if it has been sitting outside for years.

ELEANOR
 Where are you going?

TYLER
 Huh?

ELEANOR
 After today, after all this, where
 are you headed?

Tyler smiles at the thought of the future prospect.

TYLER
 Florida.
 (beat)
 A fresh start. I'm gonna get my own
 boat and run charters. Take people
 sport fishing. Make a few bucks
 while living the good life. It's
 gonna be great.
 (playfully)
 If you don't have any plans you can
 come with me.

Eleanor flashes Tyler a look: "Yeah right."

EXT. SALT WATER REDNECK'S TRAILER - NIGHT - LATER

Salt Water, Zak, Eleanor, Tyler, and Sam all sit at a picnic
 table, eating boiled corn and hamburger helper off paper
 plates. Christmas lights, casually strung, help set the mood.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 It takes years to learn certain
 things, like how to take a fall.
 You get better with time. If you
 just apply that stuff in a match,
 change it up here and there, try
 not to do the same move twice or
 whatever, you're pretty good to go.

ZAK
 OK, yeah? OK.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 Alright, let's try it for real.

Sam takes notice of what Salt Water is saying.

ZAK
 Try it for real?

SALT WATER REDNECK
 Yeah, let's get you in a ring. Not
 just practicing moves here with me.
 I'm talking about a backyard brawl,
 a real match with real moves.

SAM
 I don't know if he's ready--

ELEANOR
 Yeah, that seems a bit fast--

TYLER
 (to Eleanor)
 It's not like he's got all the time
 in the world.

ZAK
 I want to do the wrestling match.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 Sink or swim as far as I see it.
 Let's do it tomorrow in Jacob's
 backyard.
 (to Sam)
 You're on the bill, right?

SAM
 (begrudgingly)
 Yeah.

SALT WATER REDNECK
 Great, you two can fight.

INT. FIREBIRD - DAY - TRAVELING

Salt Water drives; Zak rides shotgun. Eleanor and Tyler are squeezed into the back with Sam uncomfortably wedged between them. Salt Water wears normal clothing, his hair blows in the wind; Zak doesn't look nearly as confident. Pink fuzzy handcuffs dangle from the rear view mirror.

Everything is quiet.

Salt Water stiffens his grip on the steering wheel and abruptly starts screaming at the top of his lungs.

Zak is taken by surprise.

Salt Water starts slapping Zak's chest with the back of his hand like a football coach might do to hype up his star quarter back.

Eleanor and Tyler lean forward and share confused glances around Sam's gigantic body.

Finally, Zak joins in with the screaming.

Tyler is next to follow suit, he reaches across Sam, and grabs Eleanor's hand, and she joins in as well.

All except Sam ride in the Firebird screaming at the top of their lungs like wild animals. Sam sits stoic and silent, unaffected by the energy of the others.

CUT TO:

EXT. JACOBS INFERNO / BACKYARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY

Samson(Sam's wrestling alter ego) stands on top of an eight foot ladder in the center of the wrestling ring. He is covered in blood holding a bat wrapped with barb wire.

A small crowd of people drink beer and hoot for the show.

The words "JACOB'S INFERNO" sit above a barn door that is painted entirely in red, orange, and yellow flames.

An broken down school bus separates the tattered bleachers from the parking lot.

Samson howls into the air and does a front flip landing eight feet below onto a table where his opponent lies.

The table splits in half.

Both men hit the ground with a thud.

Ribs crack and Zak's eyes widen.

Samson digs his fingers into the eyes of his opponent, who writhes in pain dramatically.

Samson is circling the ring holding a gold belt above his head.

In the crowd, Craig (The unforgettably obese character from the fish docks), laughs obnoxiously at the violence.

Tyler stiffens at the unmistakable sound of Craig's laugh and the two lock eyes.

Zak looks nervous as he watches Samson; he is not prepared for this.

Salt Water stands on the other side of the ring being greeted warmly by **JACOB(48)**, the events emcee and referee who holds a bullhorn. Jacob is a gruff showman who is missing a tooth and started The Inferno just for the love of wrestling.

Salt Water points towards Zak, and Jacob looks across the chaos to size him up.

Jacob shakes his head no.

Zak swallows nervously.

Salt Water looks like he is pleading his case. Finally, Jacob nods, then shakes hands with Salt Water.

Salt Water hands him a small piece of paper.

Craig pushes through the crowd and opens a phone as he exits.

JACOB

(into the bullhorn)

We are going to have a special exhibition here for you shortly folks. The Tidewater's very own Salt Water Redneck has brought with him a wrestling protégé.

Salt Water comes back over to where Zak, Eleanor, and Tyler are standing.

SALT WATER REDNECK

Alright! We're good to go! Had to do a little convincing but I greased the wheels. You'll fight Sam after this.

Sam hits his opponent in the face with a metal chair.

Teeth fly.

The small crowd cheers wildly.

Zak is shaken.

Eleanor takes it all in.

INT. SALT WATER REDNECK'S FIREBIRD - DAY

In the parking lot, Tyler and Eleanor speak in private inside of Salt Water's Firebird. The sounds of Samson's wild howls, grunts, and yells punctuate their conversation.

ELEANOR

No.

TYLER

Clint said Sam is going to go on easy on him. It'll be simple, a couple moves and he will lay down and let Zak win.

ELEANOR

No. No, this is different Tyler--

TYLER

You said I could have all of him.

A savage howl followed by a shriek causes Eleanor to pause.

ELEANOR

Not this much.

TYLER

(beat)

OK.

Eleanor takes the 'OK' as a win, and that Tyler has agreed to her terms.

Tyler moves Eleanor's hair softly with his hand.

(Alternate) Tyler kisses Eleanor.

ELEANOR

What are you doing?

With the fuzzy pink handcuffs that were dangling from the mirror, Tyler uses slight of hand to lock Eleanor to the Firebird's steering wheel.

As he exits, he looks back and smiles.

TYLER

No one is going to die today.

INT. BARN - BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE MATCH - DAY

Zak sits in a metal folding chair paying close attention as Salt Water coaches.

SALT WATER REDNECK

You have to be aggressive, steer the match where you want it to go.

Zak nods his head, not confident.

SALT WATER REDNECK (CONT'D)

You can talk to Sam, but just keep it small and quiet. Don't let the audience in too much. Just remember to roll with it, take the punches and then come back harder. As far as your smack talk goes, the moment you get in the ring say the meanest most evil thing you can think of to get in his head and rile the audience up good.

(beat)

You gotta say the most MANIACAL thing you can possibly think of.

Zak looks scared.

Tyler approaches, having left Eleanor in the car.

SALT WATER REDNECK (CONT'D)

If you start to bleed use it to your advantage, play it up. Maybe wipe it all over your face.

(beat)

OK, I'll be in the stands watching.

Salt Water pats Zak on the shoulder and walks away.

As he is leaving, he slaps Tyler on the chest once and excitedly screams in his face.

Tyler salutes.

Zak sits, still shaken by Salt Water's words.

ZAK

Tyler?

TYLER

No. Don't you do that. Not now.

ZAK

I'm scared.

TYLER

You know you can do this, you've got this.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Say "I've got this."

ZAK

What?

TYLER

Say "I've got this!" Say it to me.

ZAK

I've got this?

TYLER

No. Not like you're asking me if you've got it, say it like you know it's true.

Zak doesn't respond.

Tyler grabs him by the collar.

TYLER (CONT'D)

Say it! Say it to me! Make me believe it!

(beat)

Make me believe.

Long pause as they look at each other.

ZAK

I've got this.

TYLER

I don't believe you.

ZAK

I'VE GOT THIS!

Tyler smiles.

TYLER

Good. I knew you did. I just needed you to know.

(beat)

Let's find something to dress you in.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH - CONTINUOUS

Craig speaks into his flip phone.

CRAIG

Nah, man I'm telling you he's here.

(beat)

Yeah, I saw him plain as day!

EXT. BOAT DOCK - DAY

Ratboy watches Duncan who is lost in thought.

RATBOY

Whatcha gonna do?

Duncan takes off his hat and tosses it aside with purpose.

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY

Jacob stands in the middle of the ring on top of a chair speaking into his bullhorn.

He is being circled by Samson, sweaty, still holding the barbwire bat and wearing the gold belt.

Zak stands in the darkness, just beyond the stage.

JACOB

We were going to pack it up and head home having already crowned a champion for today.

The crowd cheers fueling Samson's rage.

JACOB (CONT'D)

But then, at the very last second, an old friend showed up.

Salt Water stands up amongst the crowd and raises his arms. The crowd claps.

JACOB (CONT'D)

The Salt Water Redneck has with him today a protégé. Someone new to the world of backyard brawling. Someone who was groomed in a different kind of wrestling mentality.

INT. SALT WATER REDNECK'S FIREBIRD - DAY

Eleanor rifles through the glove box.

JACOB (O.S.)
 Someone who maybe isn't cut out for
 this kind of thing!? Not cut out
 for this kind of grit!

Eleanor finds an old screw driver and tries to jam it into
 the keyhole of the handcuffs.

The crowd boos, and Eleanor moves with more urgency.

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY

JACOB
 A different kind of hero perhaps? I
 asked Samson, I asked him if he
 would take this last minute fight
 and he didn't want to. He said it
 wasn't worth his time.

Samson hits his chest hard like a wild animal.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 But then I told Samson that not
 only did this newcomer call him a
 coward...but he called him weak,
 and a liar!

The crowd boos.

Zak looks on from the darkness.

ZAK
 (to himself)
 I did not say that.

SAMSON
 I'm going to eat him alive!

JACOB
 He said that Samson is a liar and
 doesn't deserve that belt because
 he's not the best. He said that
 Samson deserves nothing but to lick
 the dirt off his boots!

The crowd boos.

JACOB (CONT'D)
 Lets hear it for...

He takes out the scrap piece of paper Salt Water gave him
 earlier and reads it aloud.

JACOB (CONT'D)
THE PEANUT BUTTER FALCON!

The fiery painted doors to the barn slide open to reveal Zak; he steps out wearing a handmade Falcon costume made of card board, duct tape, sticks, and strips of fabric. He looks magnificent.

The roaring crowd goes silent, as Zak stands looking around at everyone.

Salt Water looks on from the stands with pride.

Tyler, already in Zak's corner, watches Zak from the side of the ring with a towel draped over his shoulder.

Zak waves to everyone and smiles.

People, not knowing what to do, stiffly wave back.

Zak breaks the tension and goes into a flexing routine.

He roars loudly.

The crowd loses it and starts cheering for Zak as he makes his way into the ring with a splendid display of dance moves and flexing poses.

The crowd is going ape shit.

Everyone is on Zak's side.

EXT. BACKYARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY

Zak's body flies through the air. He hits the mat hard.

The crowd winces in pain.

Samson roars.

Zak tries to get up.

Samson grabs Zak's leg just as he is about to stand, flips him over, then leg drops on top of Zak, making the ring shake violently.

Tyler is starting to show worry on his face.

TYLER
Get up, Zak! Get up!

Zak looks to Tyler.

Samson grabs Zak's face and pulls it close to his so no one but Zak can hear his angry whisper.

SAM

I've been doing this twenty five years. I've made this my life. I love this, you can't just step in the ring and expect me to lay down for you.

Sam shoves Zak hard, then pulls him in again, face to face.

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't care who you are, or what Clint wants. I'm not running a Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Sam slides his arm under Zak's torso and body slams him hard into the mat.

EXT. OPEN ROAD - DAY

Duncan and Ratboy speed down the road in their camouflage truck, intent on retribution.

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY

Samson throws Zak towards the ropes, and then plants himself in the center of the ring.

Zak bounces off the ropes and is slingshotted back towards Samson.

Samson dodges Zak's attempt at a clothesline and laughs.

SAMSON

(so the crowd can hear)
You think you can come here and challenge me!? IN MY HOUSE!?

Zak lays a slap across Samson's chest.

The crowd musters up a halfhearted cheer. It appears Zak might be making a come back.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

AGAIN!

Zak slaps Samson as hard as he can.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

AGAIN!

Zak winds up and slaps him as hard as possible.

Samson isn't phased, he grabs a florescent light bulb from the sidelines and smashes himself in the head with it.

Blood pours from cuts on his forehead as he laughs like a maniac and a true villain.

SAMSON (CONT'D)
HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH PARKING LOT - DAY

Tires come to a stop.

Ratboy and Duncan get out of their truck.

Duncan grabs a tire iron from behind his seat.

The two walk through the parking lot past all the empty cars.

Eleanor, still handcuffed inside the Firebird sees them and her eyes widen. She starts to kick the steering wheel violently, nothing will keep her from warning Tyler and Zak.

EXT. BACK YARD WRESTLING MATCH - DAY - LATER

Samson does a flying kick and sends Zak across the ring.

Tyler looks on, saddened by what's happening.

SAMSON
(yelling for the crowd)
You come in my house with that kind
of disrespect and you get served. I
don't give a shit who you are!
(he points to Zak)
I'll eat you like a flank steak!

Zak lies in the corner where Tyler is, exhausted.

SAMSON (CONT'D)
This is my belt...

He lifts his huge gold belt high in the air for Zak to see.

The crowd quiets.

Samson points at Zak.

SAMSON (CONT'D)
...and if someone is going to try
to take it from me they better not
be as WEAK as this little turd
right here. You're weak. You're
sad. And you're pathetic. YOU WEAK,
WEAK LITTLE BITCH!

Long pause.

SAMSON (CONT'D)
(so only Zak can hear)
You know you're just a retard.

The crowd gets quiet.

Tyler and Zak share a long look.

SALT WATER REDNECK
(to himself)
Say something.

Duncan and Ratboy make their way through the crowd. Duncan
holds the tire iron tight in his right hand.

Zak slowly gets to his feet.

He looks at Samson and starts breathing heavily.

Zak raises one hand and points his index finger at Samson.

He means business.

The crowd sits silently on the edge of their seats.

Tyler watches Zak intently.

ZAK
You are not invited...
TO MY BIRTHDAY PARTY!!!!

Samson looks confused and scared.

Everything begins moving in slow motion.

Zak takes off running across the ring.

He grabs Samson and begins to lift him off the ground.

The crowd watches in disbelief.

Salt Water begins to stand up.

Tyler, his body framed perfectly by the wall of fire behind him, stands; wide eyed and amazed.

Duncan approaches Tyler from behind.

Tyler watches Zak, unaware of the danger behind him, fully enthralled with the moment.

Eleanor has gotten free and is recklessly shoving her body through the crowd like a rugby player.

Duncan begins to raise the tire iron.

Zak fights to lift Samson fully over his head, but he gets it done.

Tyler is welling with tears watching Zak, as Duncan swings the tire iron from above.

Zak releases Samson's body into the air on a trajectory out of the ring that is almost unbelievable.

Duncan's tire iron is now inches from landing across the back of Tyler's skull.

Tyler looks content as Zak realizes his dream.

The tire iron finds its resting place, metal crack bone.

Everything goes black.

Baptism by fire.

BLACKNESS

BEGIN MONTAGE of closing imagery MOS under Mark's voice.

MARK (V.O.)
 OK, little brother, I got it.
 (beat)
 May the road rise up to meet you.

--Duncan and Ratboy being placed in the back of a cop car.

MARK (V.O.)
 May the wind always be at your
 back.

--Salt Water sits quietly on the steps of his trailer, drinking a beer and looking towards his makeshift ring.

MARK (V.O.)
 May the sun shine warm upon your
 face..

--Eleanor and Zak sitting somberly in a hospital waiting area as a doctor approaches. Eleanor wipes tears from her eyes as Zak get up and walks away.

MARK (V.O.)
 ..and rains fall soft upon your
 fields.

Eleanor takes her diamond earrings out and trades them with an orderly in the hospital parking lot for the keys to a blue 1984 Monte Carlo.

MARK (V.O.)
 And until we meet again, may God
 hold you in the palm of His hand.

--Zak sits in front of a birthday cake with three lit candles. He closes his eyes tight, mumbles a few inaudible words, and blows out the candles.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. ELEANOR'S MONTE CARLO - DAY - TRAVELING

Eleanor drives with a quiet confidence. More than ever in her life she is in control of her own destiny. She holds her cell phone to her ear and is wearing sunglasses, eyes on the road ahead. Pink fuzzy handcuffs dangle from the rear view mirror.

Zak sits in the passenger seat, looking out the window at trees passing by.

He sighs deep.

ELEANOR
 (into phone)
 ...Thanks Janice, yeah the
 paperwork for Zak is done, the
 judge said it shouldn't be an
 issue, he agrees this is for the
 best.
 (beat)
 I know, I'll tell him Carl says hi,
 and they can still write each
 other.
 (beat)
 Hey, I'm gonna have to call you
 back, OK?
 (beat)
 (MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Yeah...we'll take care of each
other.

Eleanor hangs up the phone and nudges Zak.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Here it comes.

Zak perks up and looks forward out the window.

He squeezes his hands with excitement.

The car passes a "Welcome to Florida" sign.

ZAK
Now?!

Eleanor nods.

Zak turns around to the backseat.

There, asleep in a hospital gown, is Tyler. The right side of his head is shaved, staples and dried blood cover the skin where his hair used to be.

Eleanor smiles to herself, she is taking care of the people she loves. Zak and Tyler are the family she chooses.

Tyler looks peaceful in his slumber, even though his eyes are blackened and dried blood lines his nostrils.

Zak smiles at Tyler, he reaches back and gently does their secret handshake to Tyler's limp hands.

Eleanor reaches back and puts her hand on top of theirs.

Tyler's eyes open the slightest amount. He lets out a soft moan and a smile cracks across his lips.

TYLER
Hey, buddy.

FADE TO BLACK.