

WOODWORK

by

Abiel Bruhn

The gentle WHISTLE of wind grows closer...

LOUDER and LOUDER... TOO loud...

SCREAMING like a missile ripping through the sky...

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

A FIST whistles through the air --

Directly into some poor bastard's nose. Cartilage crunches with a pop of blood as he timbers to the sticky floor.

Lands with a THUD. Doesn't move.

CLYDE (20s) lords over his victim. Muscles bursting from a regrettably tight v-neck. Eyes crackling with excitement.

A rowdy CROWD CHEERS madly, absolutely losing it.

No one remembers how the fight started. Everyone remembers how it ended.

Clyde smiles wide as two BOUNCERS hook his arms and drag him through the crowd...

EXT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

... politely placing him on the curb outside.

He shadow-boxes, dancing back and forth on his chicken legs.

CLYDE
Fuckin' dropped him.

Bobbing and weaving, jabbing at the Bouncers --

CLYDE (CONT'D)
Like BAM! Bam-bam-bam!

They roll their eyes. Head back inside. The door swings shut. The music muffles.

Clyde's energy wanes without an audience. He looks around. The street is empty. The city is silent.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Clyde puts a little Travolta in each step, strutting down the sidewalk. Head high. Still buzzing. *Fuckin' dropped him.*

He rounds a corner, disappearing down another street.

Lingering on the empty corner...

Until a black-clad FIGURE drifts through the deep shadows of the night, trailing after him in the distance.

The moonlight catches an eerie WOODEN MASK covering the Figure's face: a rough, misshapen slab of wood with crude holes carved out for the eyes and mouth.

CLYDE

Scuffs his feet on the sidewalk. Giggles to himself.

His foot SPLASHES through a PUDDLE and carries on...

Lingering on the puddle...

The rippling REFLECTION of the FIGURE passes by.

A glint of METAL in his hand.

CLYDE

Trudges on. Left... right... left... right...

He hears a SOUND. Faint... somewhere behind him...

Schk... schk... schk... schk...

Sharp but rough. Gritty.

He STOPS. The sound STOPS with him.

He looks around... the street is empty. He walks on...

Schk... schk... schk... schk...

SOMEWHERE CLOSE

A razor-sharp CHISEL scrapes against a brick wall.

Clutched in a black-gloved hand.

Schk... schk... schk... schk...

CLYDE

Swivels on the sidewalk, face white in the moonlight...

He squints into the darkness... just barely making out...

A hint of BLACK LOAFER in the beam of a STREETLIGHT. The rest of the FIGURE hidden in the shadow of an awning.

Clyde steps forward, chest puffing out --

But a SIREN WHOOPS as a POLICE CRUISER crawls around the corner behind him.

Light bar flashing. SEARCHLIGHT scouring.

He stares down at his blood-stained knuckles.

Looks back to the awning -- the black loafer is gone.

The cruiser rolls CLOSER...

Clyde darts to his left... disappearing into an ALLEYWAY...

Just as the SEARCHLIGHT passes by.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

He backs down the alley, cloaked in shadow as he inches away from the street.

The CRUISER pulls to a stop at the end of the alley.

Clyde freezes. *If he's still enough, maybe he'll disappear.*

A radio SQUAWKS inside the cruiser. The SEARCHLIGHT licks across the murk of the alley.

A moment of uncertainty...

The cruiser continues on its way.

Clyde exhales. Shivers from the surge of adrenaline.

He heads back towards the street --

Schk.

THE SOUND IS RIGHT NEXT TO HIM.

He looks over --

The gleaming flat edge of a CHISEL flashes through the moonlight!

The blade SLICES through his throat --

He tumbles back, hands clutching uselessly at the wound. Blood bubbling between his fingers.

The WOODEN MASK emerges from the shadows. White eyeballs gleam with delight as the Figure wipes the chisel clean.

Clyde collapses against the wall... consciousness fading...

CLYDE'S POV: the FIGURE stalks away... dragging the CHISEL against the brick wall of the alley...

Schk... schk... schk... schk...

His vision FADES TO BLACK.

The BURST OF A CAMERA FLASH!

CREDITS ROLL

CLYDE'S CORPSE is photographed as POLICE swarm around the crime scene.

DETECTIVE CAROL ELLSWORTH (50s) presides over the chaos. Lips curling in disgust as she stares at the body.

OFF the gaping split in Clyde's neck --

-- a CHISEL slices through a CHUNK OF WOOD.

Steady hands guide the tool. Assured. Artistic. Masterful.

THE FIGURE hunches over a WORK BENCH, toiling in a DARK WOODWORKING STUDIO.

A cavernous space, lined with shelves and stacks of wood.

RHYMING IMAGES track a MURDEROUS RAMPAGE across the city:

A WOMAN lies across the back seat of a car, the back of her head CRATERED with blunt force --

-- a MALLET smashes a joint into place.

A MAN is dragged out of a dumpster, his chest riddled with STAB WOUNDS --

-- a CARVING KNIFE shapes a wooden statuette.

Ellsworth approaches a DECAPITATED HEAD on the sidewalk --

-- a TABLE-SAW screams and tears into a 2x4.

A MORGUE WORKER lifts a victim's head off the slab, showing Ellsworth a SMALL HOLE in the temple --

-- an old-fashioned HAND-CRANK DRILL chews through wood.

Victims pile up. The stress of failure eats at Ellsworth.

Hands work tirelessly in the woodworking studio.

The Figure walks away from his work bench...

Leaving an elegant, finely-crafted CHAIR in his wake.

Footsteps recede. The lights are switched off.

BLACK.

FADING IN on a grey morning, somewhere miles away...

EXT. LAKEWOOD - DAY

Suburban sprawl at its finest. Too big for small town culture, too small for actual culture.

Strip malls. Sports complexes. General Practitioners.

A place to watch the days go by.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

JAMES (early 30s) tidies the room, moving around a notably empty bed.

Bundling flowers into trash bags. Stacking sympathy cards together. Folding and packing WOMEN'S CLOTHES.

A fundamentally decent, gentle and curious man. Think Dale Cooper, only with a high school education and zero ambition.

He grabs a FRAMED PHOTO of him with his AGING MOTHER. Big smiles. Awkward body language. Just perfect.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

THROUGH THE GLASS DOORS: James walks down a line of NURSES. Hugs each one. Tender, pitying looks on their faces.

James hefts a box of his mother's belongings and walks out.

INT. JAMES' MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

James has lived there for most of his life, but it's always been his mother's house.

Magazines. Tchotchkes. Throw blankets. The works.

An OVERSTUFFED CHAIR looms in the living room like a monolith. A matching OTTOMAN bows at its feet.

JAMES (O.S.)

Hi, this message is for Toby
Glatton. Hopefully this is still
the right number.

A MYSTERY NOVEL lays open on a side table, face-down to save her place. CROCHET NEEDLES beside it, threading some unfinished masterpiece.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey Uncle Toby, it's Susan's son
James. I'm just calling to...

James enters, earbuds in. Stares down at the chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
To let you know that she passed.
Away. She's dead.
(beat)
So my number is --

CUT TO James on ANOTHER CALL. Slumped on the couch.

Still staring at the chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I need to close the account. Yeah,
I'm Susan's son, and I'm handling
her affairs. No, she can't. She's
dead.
(beat)
So I need to close the account.

ANOTHER CALL. Stress-eating chips at the dining room table.

Still staring at the chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
That's your best price for the half-
couch lidded? Mmm-hmm. And remind
me what cremation costs?

ANOTHER CALL. Day turns to night.

Still staring at the chair.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I do have the death certificate,
yes. Okay. Is there an email I can
send it to?
(beat)
No, of course. Right. I can come in
tomorrow if that's okay?

LATER

James tosses his phone aside.

Plods towards the stairwell... but stops. Turns back.

He sits down in the overstuffed chair. Puts his feet on the ottoman. Pulls a throw blanket over his body.

Snuggles into the worn fabric. Breathes in deeply.

And drifts to sleep.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

CONDENSATION sweats down the side of a GLASS OF WATER.

James and his date IZZIE sit in silence as a WAITER refills their glasses.

Izzie's settling for James. James is settling for Izzie. They're both settling for this restaurant.

The Waiter carries on to the next table...

JAMES	IZZIE
So what do --	You said you're --
(beat)	(beat)
Oh sorry I --	Go ahead --
(beat)	(beat)
Go --	So I --

They each give up. Share an awkward smile.

IZZIE (CONT'D)
Wow. Big first date energy.

JAMES
Bear with me. Haven't been on a date in a long time.

IZZIE
Oh yeah? Getting over someone?

JAMES
(coy)
Maybe.
(beat)
Just busy, actually. Family stuff. It's a whole thing. Did you want to split an appetizer?

IZZIE
John --

JAMES
James.

IZZIE

Sorry. James. I've been on three dates this week. I've talked about my job, my apartment, my neighborhood, and most of the interesting times I did drugs. Let's talk about something real. Please. What's the whole thing?

James takes a deep breath. Steels himself.

JAMES

Hey, maybe you're right. Maybe it'll be good to talk about it.

He takes a sip of water. The words roll out urgently, masking the waver in his voice --

JAMES (CONT'D)

I've spent the last two-and-a-half years taking care of my mother during her fight with cancer, which she lost three weeks ago on April 8, just after lunch.

Izzie tries to console him, but James presses on --

JAMES (CONT'D)

I knew that her condition was terminal, so I wasn't really that upset. In a sense, I had already been mourning her for months. It was good that she passed. She was in a lot of pain and it was hard to watch her suffer like that. But now that she's gone, I'm looking around and... I've lived with her all my life. I don't really have close friends, I'm an only child. So now she's gone and I'm alone and I --

James BURSTS INTO TEARS.

Quickly tries to reel it in. Choking through muffled sobs. It hurts to watch.

Izzie flounders. Stands nervously. Grabs her purse.

Hating herself but totally unable to cope --

IZZIE

I'm gonna go. I just... I'm really sorry. I'm sorry. Good night.

She's gone in the blink of an eye.

James can't stop crying. He buries himself in the corner of the booth. Hiding from the gawking crowd.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

James walks carefully around graves in a densely-plotted small-town cemetery. Not another soul in sight.

He kneels by a FRESH GRAVE. Spritzes the HEADSTONE with a SPRAY BOTTLE and begins cleaning it gently with a RAG.

JAMES

Hey, Mom. How we doing today?

(beat)

I had a date the other night. I think you would've liked her...

LATER

James approaches ANOTHER GRAVE. The headstone older and weather-beaten.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Aunt Marie! What's new?

He kneels down. Grabs his spray bottle.

LATER

The SPRAY BOTTLE nearly empty in his hand as he approaches a small, crumbling HEADSTONE.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Great-Grandpa Gene. It's good to see you again, sir.

DRIFTING AWAY from James, surrounded by the dead.

The violent CRACK of splitting wood --

INT. JAMES' MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

CONTINUES OVER the painful and delicate process of cleaning up after a life:

CLOTHING packed in cardboard boxes in the bedroom -- *crack*.

BARE WALLS with visible outlines of missing frames -- *crack*.

TRASH BAGS piled high at the curb -- *crack*.

In a once-cluttered OFFICE, JAMES uses a CROWBAR to pry open a locked cabinet in a cheap desk -- *crack*.

The lock rips through particle board.

James pulls a BOX OF HANGING FILES out of the cabinet.

Goes through the files one-by-one. Sorting them into two piles: Keep or Toss.

Pulls out his BIRTH CERTIFICATE --

James Terrence Hanson, born March 5, 1988.

-- and sets it in the keep pile.

Goes to toss the file aside -- stops. Looks again...

A FOLDED STACK OF PAPER is crammed into the bottom of the file. Away from prying eyes.

James pries the stack open... a yellowed PHOTO tumbles out.

He picks it up: his MOTHER stares back, three decades younger. Newborn baby in her arms.

James smiles warmly... but then he notices the look on her face. She's distant. Sad. Almost haunted.

He flips the photo and sees the writing on the back:

August 1983.

He double-takes at the date. Frowning in confusion.

Takes a second look at his birth certificate -- 1988.

Quiet excitement as he slowly untangles the stack of papers... finding among them...

Another BIRTH CERTIFICATE. James' face goes slack in disbelief as he reads --

Robert Terrence Hanson, born June 25, 1983.

His fingers SHAKE as he unfolds the next sheet...

ADOPTION PAPERWORK for Robert T. Hanson, dated in 1984. There's his mother's signature. Signing him away.

James licks his bone-dry lips. Heart beating through his chest. Brain short-circuiting.

The final sheet is an old 1980s NEWSPAPER CLIPPING...

Showing wealthy titan of industry HOWARD CURTIS and his wife IRENE preparing to cut a ribbon outside a factory...

In the background, their young son ROBERT looks on.

James lowers the clipping. Fans the documents out around him. Walled-in by the evidence of his long-lost brother.

And when he finally processes it all... he smiles.

The rejoicing strains of a SYMPHONY --

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DAY

Automatic CURTAINS retract like it's opening night on Broadway, revealing massive floor-to-ceiling windows in an immaculate HIGH-RISE APARTMENT...

Beyond them, a cityscape unfurls in the rising sun.

In front of them, a MAN stands naked in silhouette. Proud. Tall. Statuesque.

Like he was sculpted from stone. Or wood.

The SYMPHONY continues to swell --

SERIES OF SHOTS

In a warm, inviting LIVING ROOM: A RECORD SPINS, the centerpiece of a custom-built retro-futuristic hi-fi setup.

In a sleek KITCHEN of steel and glass: CAREFUL HANDS measure out espresso beans -- GRIND them -- TAMP them down -- and gently pour steamed milk into a picture-perfect CAPPUCCINO.

In a fully-stocked HOME GYM: two solid LEGS shimmy through the air upside-down as the Man does a WALKING HANDSTAND.

In a steam-filled BATHROOM: a boar bristle brush slides across DAMP HAIR, separating strands just so.

In a vast WALK-IN CLOSET: a CHISELED PHYSIQUE is wrapped in luxurious clothing. Everything designer. Everything tailored.

LOOKING IN THROUGH the windows, high above the city...

A FLARE OF LIGHT reflects off the windows, obscuring the Man's face as he heads for the front door.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

FOLLOWING BEHIND the MAN as he breezes through his building's lavish entryway.

THE DOORMAN races to open the door. At his service.

A GLAMOROUS NEIGHBOR shows all her teeth as she smiles at him, trying to look her best as she wrangles a TODDLER.

The Man nods in greeting as he passes by, out into --

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

FOLLOWING as the Man walks through crowded mid-day streets.

He walks in a straight line. Never steps aside. Never slows his pace. The throng parts like the Red Sea in front of him.

WOMEN and MEN alike check him out as he walks by. Their searching eyes reveal intrigue. Envy. Desperation. Lust.

He has that effect on people.

The Man crosses the doorway into --

INT. CAFE - DAY

A vaguely Nordic-inspired CAFE. \$5 for a pour over, \$6 for an artisan croissant.

PANNING AROUND as the Man stops moving... lingering on the perfectly unfussy haircut... the preposterously square jaw dotted with designer stubble...

ROB (late 30s) is revealed in all his glory. Relaxed. Well-traveled. Vaguely mischievous. Think early-70s Redford or Newman... but with unnerving intensity in his live-wire eyes.

ROB

James?

REVERSE to JAMES, looking up from a tiny table.

JAMES

Rob?

He stands slowly. Doesn't know what to do with his hands. Searching for the right move...

Rob closes the gap between them instantly, throwing his arms around James. Enveloping him in a hug.

James smiles blissfully, sinking into his brother's embrace.

LATER

EMPTY CUPS and PLATES crowd the table.

Hours into a caffeine-addled conversation that feels like it could go on forever.

ROB

I hopped around Europe for awhile after that: Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, Rome. Spent a year and change in Tokyo, and then I stopped by Nepal to do the whole Everest thing before coming back. Now I feel like I've really put down roots here. Feels like home.

JAMES

"Everest" like Mount Everest? You just stopped by Nepal to climb Mount Everest?

ROB

With the training I was there for about a year. But yeah, basically.

He angles his phone towards James, swiping through photos --

ROB (CONT'D)

That's me on the summit.

James shakes his head. Totally awestruck.

JAMES

Wow. I just... wow.

ROB

So what about you? I mean Jesus, I feel like I'm giving you my life story here.

JAMES

Uh... you know, it's always been me and Mom. I lived with her for 18 years, spent a few years living on my own trying to get this lawn care company off the ground, then I ran into some financial issues and moved back in. Her health started to go pretty soon after that, so she needed a lot of attention. And then she died. That basically catches us up.

James chuckles, trying to hide his embarrassment.

But Rob is enthralled. Deeply moved.

ROB
What was she like? Our mom?

James perks up. Finally something he's an expert on.

JAMES
She was funny, but not silly.
Curious, but really set in her
ways. She loved mysteries. Books,
shows, movies. She would always get
to the end and say she had guessed
the ending. But she never guessed
out loud.
(beat)
She was just Mom.

They fall silent. Each sitting with a different loss.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I have some photos of her at the
hotel if you --

ROB
I'd love to see them.

Another silence. James gestures around aimlessly --

JAMES
This place is really nice. One of
your neighborhood spots?

ROB
God no. I make better coffee at
home. And I've always found
minimalism to be sort of a cop-out,
aesthetically speaking.

Taking a performative second look around --

JAMES
Mmm. Yeah. Now that you mention it,
it does --

Rob looks PAST JAMES, eyes sparking with interest --

ROB
Hey. Check out the woman at the
counter.

James turns to see...

LENA (30s) breezing towards the barista. Excellent posture.
Glamorous in business casual. Graceful. Unbothered. Cool.

Turning back, a little confused --

JAMES
She's... beautiful?

ROB
Actually look at her. What do you
think about her?

James looks again. Really searching for details.

JAMES
I guess she seems...

Lena collects her coffee and heads for the door...

Glancing up to see James staring at her.

He quickly spins away, cheeks flush with embarrassment.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She saw me.

ROB
Happens to the best of us.

JAMES
You must date women like that all
the time, huh? Big city like this.

ROB
It's smaller than it looks.

He turns his wrist. Checks the time on a \$30k watch.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hey man, I've gotta run. Gotta
pretty crazy day. You staying
nearby?

JAMES
Oh... I thought maybe we'd get
dinner together.

ROB
I know, I know. I wish I could just
bring you with me, but... tell you
what: call me in the morning, we'll
hang all day.

He pulls out a money clip. Tosses a \$100 bill on the table.

JAMES
Oh, I can --

ROB
Don't be a jerk. My treat.
(beat)
I'm treating my brother.

He chuckles. Shakes his head. Stands and spreads his arms.

ROB (CONT'D)
One more hug for the road?

INT. SUSHI BAR - NIGHT

A FILET KNIFE slices through the RED FLESH of a Bluefin tuna.

White-aproned SUSHI CHEFS patrol a crowded BAR, calling out orders as they dole out fish and rice to patrons.

JAMES dines solo at the center of the bar. He points through the glass at FILETS as a kind CHEF fields his questions --

JAMES
And what's that one?

SUSHI CHEF
Mackerel.

JAMES
Okay. And what's that one?

SUSHI CHEF
Yellowtail.

JAMES
Huh. And what's that one?

James has never had sushi before.

EXT. SUSHI BAR - LATER

THROUGH THE FRONT WINDOW: James demolishes a massive platter of sushi. The bar is mostly empty now.

The Chefs are circled near James. Chatting with him. Refilling his cup of sake.

LATER

James bows to the Chefs one-by-one.

They wave goodbye as he emerges into the cool night air.

He sets off down the street. Slightly unsteady from the sake.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

James in tourist mode: eyes up and active as he takes in every building, every buzzing neon sign, every passerby.

But doesn't see the FLYERS lining the wall next to him:

Sketches of the killer's WOODEN MASK framed by the words "STAY SAFE" and the number for a police hotline.

He slows to a stop at the mouth of an ALLEY. Pulls his phone out to double-check the directions...

A man bulldozes past him, shouldering him out of the way --

James bobbles his phone -- it clatters to the ground.

JAMES

Oh. Sorry.

Balancing carefully as he leans down to grab it...

He pauses as he stands. Something's caught his eye.

REVERSE to see a POP OF WHITE in the darkness of the alley.

James squints, looking closer...

It's a pair of pristine WHITE SNEAKERS...

Jutting out from behind a DUMPSTER.

James looks around. People everywhere.

Nobody's seen it, or nobody cares.

He tentatively steps into...

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

... switching on his phone's FLASHLIGHT to guide the way.

JAMES

Uh... excuse me?

He angles around the dumpster...

Sees two slender BARE LEGS extending from the sneakers.

James slows down, horror dawning on his face...

A RAT skitters around the dumpster, darting between his legs. Its tiny maw RED and STICKY.

James takes the slightest peek around the dumpster...

OFF his look of HORROR AND DISGUST --

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

MATCH CUT to WIDE-EYED SHELLSHOCK.

James sits in a decaying chair in an overcrowded and underfunded police station.

ELLSWORTH settles into the empty desk facing James' chair.

She slaps down a FILE FOLDER and a LABEL MAKER.

ELLSWORTH

Mr. Hanson? I'm Detective Carol
Ellsworth. I --

JAMES

Pleasure to meet you.

ELLSWORTH

I doubt that, but I appreciate the
courtesy.

She pretends she's not watching his every move as she
shuffles paperwork from her desk into the file folder.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)

So. You're from *out of town*.
Arrived today to visit your *long-*
lost brother, and while wandering
the streets alone tonight you *found*
a dead body.

(beat)

Story makes you sound so guilty, I
think you must be innocent.

Looking up at him --

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)

Just kidding.

JAMES

About which part?

Ellsworth fans through PHOTOS of the crime scene as she
organizes them in the folder with performative care.

She makes sure James sees every grisly image. Clocks his
genuine sadness and repulsion.

ELLSWORTH
Never seen a dead body before?

JAMES
Not like this. I did watch my
mother pass in the hospital. But
that was different.

ELLSWORTH
I would hope so.
(beat)
You were with your brother tonight?

JAMES
Ah, no. I had dinner alone.

ELLSWORTH
Where was that?

JAMES
A sushi restaurant.

ELLSWORTH
What was it called?

JAMES
It was...
(beat)
... something Japanese.

Ellsworth leans back, typing forcefully onto the label maker.

ELLSWORTH
Have a couple drinks at Something
Japanese?

JAMES
No, the restaurant --

ELLSWORTH
I understand. Did you drink there?

JAMES
I did, yes.

The label maker WHINES as it spits out a LABEL.

Ellsworth peels it. Places it on the tab of the file folder.

James angles his head to read --

#9 - ELIZA BARNLEY

Ellsworth snaps the folder shut and slides it away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
 #9? Like the ninth victim? Have
 eight other people gotten killed?

ELLSWORTH
 Don't watch much news, do you?

She opens a desk drawer and begins pulling out crime scene
 photos of each victim.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
 One -- two -- three -- four --

Photo after photo SLAPS onto the desk. Each one more horrific
 than the last.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
 Five -- six -- seven -- eight.
 (holds up the folder)
 Nine.

James wavers in his seat. Thoroughly disgusted.

JAMES
 Mmm. Yes. I see.

Ellsworth stops the pretense. Takes a long, hard look.

ELLSWORTH
 You kill any of these people?

JAMES
 What?! I would --

ELLSWORTH
 What do you do for a living?

JAMES
 (thrown)
 I'm a customer relations
 representative.

ELLSWORTH
 Ouch. Got any hobbies?

He shrugs. Comes up empty.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
 We called your brother, he's on his
 way down to pick you up. See the
 shift sergeant on your way out.

James rises. Begins walking away...

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
Mr. Hanson?

He turns back. Ellsworth stares flatly at him.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
The pleasure was all mine.

James smiles uneasily. Not sure what to make of that.

Eardrum-rattling SUB-BASS vibrates us into --

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

James watches from the station's front steps...

A 2023 AUDI R8 pulls up in front of him.

VIBRATING from music pumping out of the speakers inside.

The window ROLLS DOWN... the music STOPS...

ROB leans into view, grinning impishly --

ROB
What's up, killer?

INT. ROB'S AUDI - NIGHT

Rob speeds through the city, rabbiting through traffic like an F1 driver.

ROB
And it was just lying behind the dumpster?

JAMES
She. It was a her. *She* was a her.

ROB
If that cop gives you any more trouble, let me know. My lawyer's a maniac. He lives for that shit.

JAMES
She doesn't really think I did it. I think she just enjoys being a detective. It seems like an exciting job.

ROB
So what was it like? Seeing a dead body?

(MORE)

ROB (CONT'D)
(lowers his voice)
A murdered body?

James shakes his head. Willing the image away.

JAMES
I don't even want to think about
it. It was just...

He settles into the plush seat. Rubs his armrest absently.
Feels the smooth leather. Glances around...

JAMES (CONT'D)
This is a really nice car.

Rob smirks. Scans the street ahead of him.

ROB
You got your seatbelt on?

JAMES
Of course I have my --

Rob GUNS the v10 engine -- *blast-off* --

EXT. ROB'S AUDI - CONTINUOUS

The Audi ROCKETS away as the engine ROARS --

James' SCREAMS ECHO down the street...

Until they become LAUGHTER --

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The brothers enter from the hallway, LAUGHING together in
perfect harmony.

ROB
Lights.

James trails off as the VOICE-CONTROL LIGHTS flip on. He's
awestruck by the sight of the apartment:

The city sparkling through the floor-to-ceiling windows, the
tasteful but dynamic design, not a speck of dust anywhere...

JAMES
What do you do for a living?

Rob crosses the open-plan living area to the HI-FI SYSTEM.

Peruses a built-in shelf full of RECORDS...

ROB
 My parents... Howard and Irene, I
 mean... when they died, they left
 me a little money.

Makes his pick. Pulls the record from its sleeve.

ROB (CONT'D)
 I played the market a little bit.
 Got lucky. Now the money does all
 the work, and I do all the living.

JAMES
 You make it sound so easy.

ROB
 It was easy.

The record spins... the needle swings towards it...

ROB (CONT'D)
 So look, we're still basically
 strangers. You've had a traumatic
 experience. I don't really want to
 talk about depressing shit. My
 question to you is this: do you
 want to get drunk?

Groovy vintage synth-pop DROPS IN --

IN THE KITCHEN

WHISKEY POURS into a pair of crystal tumblers --

ROB (CONT'D)
 This is a Yamazaki Puncheon from
 2011. It was a gift from a
 nightclub owner in Roppongi after I
 invested in his molecular
 gastronomy concept.

James nods. None of that registered.

JAMES
 Do you have any ice?

ROB
 I'm gonna assume you're joking.
 (raises his glass)
 Cheers.

IN THE HALLWAY

They stand before a paint-splattered CANVAS. Impeccable textures and colors. Contemporary art done right.

ROB (CONT'D)
I was stumbling home in Shoreditch,
and -- you know those grey, moody
London mornings?

JAMES
(no)
Sure.

ROB
And I just came across this guy
painting in this empty storefront,
and -- you know how Shoreditch --

AT THE HI-FI SETUP

Rob flicks through more records. The volume is DEAFENING.

JAMES
Don't you have neighbors?!

ROB
I sound-proofed the whole place!
You don't spend 20k on Klipschorns
to keep them at a sensible volume!

Holding up ANOTHER RECORD --

ROB (CONT'D)
Here we go!

A funky 70s R&B record CARRIES OVER --

IN THE KITCHEN

Two picture-perfect STEAKS sizzle in a copper pan --

ROB (CONT'D)
This is bife de lomo, I get it
shipped up from this guy down in
Centenario whose family has been
raising cattle for 200 years. You
get to pick your own cow.

He displays a PHOTO OF A COW from the counter --

ROB (CONT'D)
This was Paola.

JAMES
You got any A1?

Rob's face drops. The men blink blearily at each other.
Face splitting into a sly smile --

JAMES (CONT'D)
Gotcha.

They crack up. These guys are wasted.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

They're folded into the sofa, drinks in hand. Having a booze-fueled "Meaningful Conversation":

JAMES
... and you just wake up and
realize you're alone. You know?
Nobody's waiting to hear from you,
nobody's thinking about you...

ROB
I know, I know. Fuck. Yeah. I feel
the same way.

JAMES
Come on. You must have tons of
friends. Look at you.

Rob nods. His expression unreadable.

ROB
Not really.
(beat)
When I was growing up... I always
wanted a brother.

The song FADES OUT and SILENCE FALLS just as...

JAMES
I would've killed for a brother.

A CRACKLE as a NEW SONG pours out from the speakers --

Rob drains his drink. Leaps to his feet.

Moves in front of the stereo and STARTS DANCING.

ROB
Come on!

JAMES
Oh, um... no. I'm okay. I don't
really know how to dance.

ROB
Do I look like I know how to dance?

He really does. All hips and shoulders.

JAMES
Isn't it weird for two guys to
just... dance alone together?

ROB
Isn't it weird for one guy to sit
quietly and watch another guy
dance?

James drags himself to his feet. Awkwardly shuffles.

Rob pulls James over. Lines up next to him.

ROB (CONT'D)
Here, just do what I do.

James mimics Rob's moves... loosening up... a smile...
They're laughing. Giddy. Feeling the music. Totally free.
DRIFTING AWAY from the idyllic sight...
Around the living room... into the corner...
A WOODEN IDOL looms in the shadows.
Intricate carvings of the classic COMEDY and TRAGEDY MASKS.
PUSHING closer to the TRAGEDY MASK...

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

James is blacked-out and woozy as Rob drags him into the master bedroom and deposits him on the bed.

Blue pre-dawn light peeks around the curtains.

Rob pulls off his shoes, tosses a blanket over him. Places a Fiji on the bedside table.

JAMES
Mrahb. Brahver.

ROB
Hmm? What's up?

JAMES
I wish I was like you.

James drifts off to sleep with a smile on his face.

Rob stares thoughtfully at him.

Pulls up the blanket, tucking it under James' chin.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Rob exits the bedroom. Gently closes the door.

He walks DOWN THE HALL... all the way to the end...

Arriving at ANOTHER DOOR. He enters.

HOURS PASS in a TIME LAPSE as we DRIFT BACK DOWN THE HALLWAY... the apartment FILLS WITH LIGHT...

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

James staggers out of the bedroom. Bleary-eyed. Serious bedhead. Everything hurts. Powerfully hung-over.

WHIRRRRRR!!! WHIRRRRRR!!!

Winching as he walks down the hallway towards the sound...

Rob stands in the kitchen, blending smoothies. Fruits and vegetables worthy of an impressionist laid out beside him.

He's bright. Alert. Looks great.

ROB

Morning bud. How'd you sleep?

JAMES

Good. Yeah. Thanks for letting me crash. I was pretty gone.

(beat)

Hope I didn't embarrass myself too much last night.

Rob smiles. Doesn't reassure him. Pours the smoothies.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Shouldn't we have like, bacon and eggs or something? Greasy food is good for hangovers.

ROB

Maybe for fat people. Drink your smoothie.

They knock the smoothies back. James gulps his desperately. Stares at the glass. Licks his lips.

JAMES
This is fantastic.

ROB
James, can I talk to you about something?

JAMES
Sure. I'd love that.

ROB
Last night before you fell asleep --

JAMES
Oh God, I knew it --

ROB
Just listen. You said you wished you were like me. Were you just saying that? Or is that really how you feel?

JAMES
Well yeah. I mean... the car, the clothes, this apartment...
(beat)
I just feel like you've got everything figured out.
(beat)
You're like a real man.

James shrugs, bashful. Escapes to his smoothie.

ROB
And you're not? Do you know what I see when I look at you?

JAMES
I guess maybe --

ROB
Rhetorical. I see raw material. Untapped potential.

He swoops around the counter. Grabs James by the shoulders.

ROB (CONT'D)
What if you stayed in town? Check out of the hotel. Stay here. Let me show you my world.

Excitement swells in James... but he rationalizes...

JAMES

My job --

ROB

Quit your job.

JAMES

I can't, the house isn't --

ROB

We can pay off the house today. We can keep it, we can sell it, we can turn it into a historical landmark and pay a caretaker to give tours.

James' heart beats out of his chest.

ROB (CONT'D)

I can help you find a new career. A new place to live. A whole new James Hanson. A new chapter in your life. With your family.

(beat)

Is that what you want?

James stares, entranced by Rob's crackling intensity.

Barely squeaking out, hushed and reverent --

JAMES

Yes.

Rob moves to the middle of the room, struck by inspiration --

ROB

Stand here. Close your eyes.

James eagerly rises to meet him. Rob huddles by his ear. Rough, scar-flecked hands massage James' shoulders.

ROB (CONT'D)

Last night, I had a vision of you in the future. Soon. Three or four weeks from now. You were seizing every minute of every day. You were beautiful. Confident. Like a phoenix reborn from the ashes of an average man. You had become something greater.

(beat)

All because you learned one lesson. One truth.

PUSHING IN on James' eyes flickering under his eyelids...

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Rob cuts through the crowd. A hot knife through butter.

ROB (V.O.)
*Life is not a blessing or a curse.
It's a battle. To succeed is to
dominate. To decide what you want
and take it when you want it.*

James follows, dodging people. Getting bumped aside.
Apologizing constantly.

ROB (V.O.)
*Every waking moment, you either win
or lose. Dominate or submit.*

James straightens up. Stands taller. Presses on without
ceding an inch to anyone.

ROB (V.O.)
Kill or be killed.

The crowd starts parting around him. Some animal instinct
kicking in.

INT. MASSAGE SUITE - DAY

James lays on a massage table as Rob tests pressure points on
his back.

ROB (V.O.)
*The weak view their bodies as
prisons. Nonsense. Our bodies are
manifestos. They tell the world who
we are, what we value, what we
believe.*

He lines up an adjustment...

ROB (V.O.)
*Most people have no idea what their
bodies are capable of.*

He TWISTS James' spine with an epic CRACK. James GRUNTS in
alarm... then slowly sits up, rolling his shoulders.

INT. THE GYM - DAY

A busy boutique gym. Rob puts James through the paces.
Training alongside him. Pushing him to work harder.

ROB (V.O.)
*Is a perfect body a sensible goal?
 Of course. Is muscle mass an
 evolutionary advantage? Yes.*

HEAVY BAG -- SQUATS -- BENCH PRESS -- PULL UPS -- JUMP ROPE --
 BOX JUMPS -- on and on and on --

ROB (V.O.)
*But the real reason to work out is
 to hold your head high, bolstered
 by the innate and unshakeable
 confidence that comes with control
 of your body.*

Rob jogs off to grab some dumbbells...

James sucks air, gaze roaming around the gym...

He spots LENA climbing off a treadmill across the room.

She waves to some friends, collecting her gear.

ROB (V.O.)
*Once you control yourself, then you
 can begin to control others.*

James stares. Still trying to answer the question posed to
 him earlier -- *what do you think about her?*

INT. UPSCALE SALON AND SPA - DAY

A STYLIST tugs at James' hair. Scrutinizes his skin.

ROB (V.O.)
*Control comes from trust. If you're
 ugly, inelegant, or ungainly, you
 become untrustworthy. But with the
 right hair --*

His HAIR is shaped by the razor-wielding Stylist.

ROB (V.O.)
The right smile --

His TEETH are bared as whitening gel trays slide over them.

ROB (V.O.)
And the right ineffable glow --

His FACE is scrubbed and buffed by an aesthetician.

ROB (V.O.)
*People will trust you. They'll like
 you. They will want to be near you.
 Do you know what that is?*

INT. CLOTHING DESIGNER - DAY

Rob circles around James, who stands in front of a body-length mirror as a TAILOR measures him.

ROB (V.O.)
*Power. The power to shape the lives
 of others. They are open to you.
 Guard down. Neck bared.
 (beat)
 All that's left is for you to
 choose what you want to do next.*

DRESSING ROOM

James slips into a pair of slacks and a blazer. Everything fits like a second skin.

He checks himself out in the mirror. Taken by the charming, elegant man in the reflection.

He pulls a HEAVY CURTAIN aside and magically exits into --

THE STREET

He joins a dense crowd, head held high as he walks. People twist and contort away to clear his path. Each one deferential. Submissive.

ROB walks a few steps ahead...

LENA slipstreams between them, stepping around James...

He turns to watch her walk by. She never looks back.

The tinkling of SILVERWARE. The hum of a CROWDED ROOM...

ROB (O.S.)
 See anything you like?

INT. CONCEPT RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The brothers sit at a small table in a cramped, impossibly hip restaurant. Dim lights. Loud crowd. Flashing cameras.

James peruses the MENU. Unrecognizable terms that barely seem to describe food.

JAMES
Uh... not really.

ROB
That's exactly why we're here.
Nothing that we've done -- you look
fantastic, by the way -- none of it
matters if there's still fear
hiding out somewhere inside you.

JAMES
I'm not afraid of the menu.

ROB
You are afraid of the menu. You're
afraid of what you don't know. What
you haven't experienced. You have
to open your palette to things that
seem uncomfortable, dangerous,
maybe even grotesque.

JAMES
The lard kindling seems dangerous.

Rob pushes James' menu away.

ROB
I've made it my goal to experience
every flavor that this world has to
offer. That's why I am what I am.
Do you understand? Every flavor.

JAMES
Every flavor.

EXT. CONCEPT RESTAURANT - LATER

THROUGH THE WINDOWS, James and Rob laugh and eat. Faces gold-hued by the candle flickering on the table.

The people around them fade away...

The exterior of the restaurant fades away...

DRIFTING BACK as the circle of light holding them shrinks away in the darkness until...

BLACK.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DAY

Automatic CURTAINS retract. The cityscape is revealed beyond massive floor-to-ceiling windows.

JAMES stands in front of the windows.

Robed and smiling. Cappuccino in hand.

OFF his beatific expression --

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - DAY

A WIDE PANORAMA of the city -- Rob's building one of many towering in the distance.

TILTING DOWN...

ROB and JAMES walk down a narrow ALLEYWAY between abandoned WAREHOUSES.

They arrive at a large PADLOCKED DOOR.

ROB
I've never shared this with anyone
before. It's always been my secret.
But maybe I don't need secrets
anymore.

Presenting a KEY to James --

ROB (CONT'D)
So what do you say?

The RATTLE of a chain and the GRIND of an ancient lock...

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP - DAY

A DOOR OPENS. The SILHOUETTES of James and Rob stand backlit in the doorway.

Rob flips a switch on the wall, revealing --

A cavernous WOODWORKING STUDIO.

James follows Rob as they cross seas of shadow between the bare bulbs hanging from the sky-high exposed ceilings...

Walk around free-standing SHELVES and STACKS OF LUMBER organized by color... pine, cherry, walnut, ebony, cedar...

Finally reaching A SPOT-LIT WORK AREA littered with SAWS, KNIVES, CHISELS, MALLETS, and POWER TOOLS.

ROB
Do you have any hobbies?

James pauses, struck by question. *Why does it sound familiar?*

JAMES
No. Not like this.

James peels away, perusing RACKS OF TOOLS...

ROB
Every man should have a hobby. A
real hobby, something where you
work with your hands.

Thrusting his hands forward, clawing at the air --

ROB (CONT'D)
Interact with the world around you.
Grab it. Hold it steady. Toss it
aside. Bend it to your will.

James notices DARK STAINS on the blade of a Japanese
woodworking CHISEL. Vague unease settling around him.

ROB (CONT'D)
I chose woodwork because it's
transformative.

He turns to see Rob standing under the spot-light, a CARVING
KNIFE clutched in his hand.

ROB (CONT'D)
I take a tree, a living being, one
of Mother Nature's creations... and
I use my tools to create something
new. A work of art.
(beat)
Woodworking is my favorite thing in
the world.

He walks towards James, sinking into darkness between the
light bulbs... the gleaming BLADE still in his hand...

ROB (CONT'D)
Second-favorite, anyway.

Rob flips the knife. Holds the handle out to James.

ROB (CONT'D)
Here. Just see how it feels.

James' hand closes around the handle.

JAMES
The weight's nice.

Rob stands back, admiring his knife-wielding brother.

ROB
A man's tools are an extension of
his being. I never feel complete
unless I'm using them.

James flips the knife and hands it back.

JAMES
Can I see something you've made?

ROB
You already have. The very first
night you arrived in town. You
didn't even realize it.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - EVENING

CLOSE ON the carved wooden COMEDY and TRAGEDY MASK IDOL.

REVERSE to the brothers staring down at it.

JAMES
You carved this? By hand?

ROB
From a single piece of wood.

He grabs James' shoulders, spinning him to face the room.

ROB (CONT'D)
There are nine Robert Curtis
originals in here.
(gestures to the idol)
One.

He points to the COFFEE TABLE.

ROB (CONT'D)
Two.

Lifts a WOODEN BEAR FIGURE from a SIDE TABLE.

ROB (CONT'D)
Three.

He tosses it to James.

JAMES
(squinting at it)
You can see the individual teeth!

Rob gestures to the SIDE TABLE itself -- then a CREDENZA --
then the MEDIA CONSOLE --

ROB
Four, five, six...

Nods to the impeccable matching sofas. WOODEN FRAMES buffer the upholstery.

ROB (CONT'D)
... seven, eight.

He beckons James to follow him...

ROB (CONT'D)
And one more. A special one.

DOWN THE HALLWAY... past the MASTER BEDROOM...

To the LAST DOOR, tucked away at the end of the hall.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM

They enter a SMALL, WINDOWLESS ROOM.

A SINGLE LIGHT HANGS from the ceiling, creating a spotlight that beams down onto...

A simple WOODEN CHAIR in the center of the room.

ROB
Nine.

JAMES
Oh. Yeah. Nice chair.

ROB
Purely functional. Just a place to sit and watch.

JAMES
Watch what?

Rob flips a switch -- DISPLAY LIGHTS along the wall snap on --

Illuminating an intricate, wall-sized WOODWORK MURAL.

ABSTRACT CARVED SHAPES twist and thread around each other. The work of a master. And maybe a madman.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Holy shit. Rob.

Rob responds without looking away. Eyes drawn to the woodwork like a tractor beam.

ROB

It's not mine. I was traveling in Turkey... in what was once Mesopotamia. I had taken a massive dose of LSD, and about an hour later I was jumped outside of a market. They beat me until I collapsed. Kicked me until I passed out. All I can remember is thinking -- no, knowing -- that I was about to die.

JAMES

Oh my god...

ROB

But then I woke up, and I was alive. I walked into the market, and wandered through with an incredible sense of euphoria. I found a vendor and asked him if he had anything that could feed my soul.

CLOSE ON the woodwork -- the valleys between protrusions and reliefs yawn like screaming mouths.

ROB (CONT'D)

He took me to a tent and showed this to me. The moment I saw it, it spoke to me. I bought it on the spot. Shipped it back. Started woodworking the next week. And one day, many years from now, I'll make something just as beautiful.

CLOSER STILL -- following the GRAIN as it swirls on the wood.

ROB (CONT'D)

When I look at it, I see the truth. I hear the music. And then everything starts to make sense.

Finally looking to James.

ROB (CONT'D)

Do you understand what I mean?

JAMES

Yeah. For sure.

Rob nods. He's not so sure. Then his face lights up -- a moment of inspiration --

ROB
We should get some acid.

JAMES
Oh, no. No, I don't think --

ROB
Have you ever done it? Or
mushrooms? Any hallucinogens?

JAMES
No, but I'd be too anxious --

ROB
There's nothing to be anxious
about. That's the whole thing.
There is no reality. Only what we
perceive. Everything you see, hear,
say, think... none of it's real.
Just synapses firing in our brains.
Good, bad, right, wrong, beautiful,
ugly...
(taps his forehead)
It's all just up here. And it can
all change like that.

Rob snaps his fingers on "that", startling James.

JAMES
That sounds terrible.

ROB
I think I've got some somewhere --

Rob moves to leave -- James grabs him --

JAMES
Seriously, I appreciate everything
you've done for me, but I... I've
always been afraid of that stuff.
Having a bad trip, freaking out,
you know. It's not fun for me. Even
thinking about it just makes me
panic.
(beat)
Really. Please. Maybe this is one
lesson that's just for you.

Rob looks at James for a long, inscrutable moment.

ROB
Maybe.

The gentle tinkling of solo piano carries over...

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

CLOSE ON the yellowed photo of JAMES' MOTHER holding Rob as a newborn. Her haunted eyes bore into us. Pleading for help.

REVERSE to find ROB staring intently. His gaze shifts to himself, the smiling baby in her arms. His lips slowly curl, mimicking the smile.

TWO PHOTO ALBUMS spread across the table in front of him under a TABLE LAMP. The living room otherwise dark.

Rob settles back into his chair.

ROB

Why do you think she got rid of me?

REVEAL James, lurking behind him by the hallway.

JAMES

Didn't realize you knew I was here.

Rob says nothing. Turns the page of the album.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Maybe she wasn't ready. Just hadn't grown up enough.

ROB

Maybe she thought something was wrong with me. Maybe she looked in my eyes and saw something that scared her.

James steps forward, heart bleeding --

JAMES

Don't say that. I'll bet she missed you every single --

Rob SLAMS the album closed.

ROB

Lights!

The room fills with light. Rob HURLS himself to his feet, bravado building --

ROB (CONT'D)

She chose you instead of me, so what?! It's still our blood! Our family! We're brothers! We're connected! Fact! Right?

James shrinks from his brother's intensity --

JAMES

I mean, right. It is a fact.

Rob nods. Holding back tears. He checks his Rolex.

ROB

I've got something to do tonight
and I want you to come with me.

(beat)

And I want you to have this watch.

(beat)

We're brothers.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The men walk in silence. Footsteps echo down the streets.

They round a corner, arriving at --

EXT. MID-RISE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A dozen floors of apartments. Careless architecture. Poorly kept. Decaying rapidly. Ugly even then, a tragedy now.

Rob skips up the steps. Breezes through the unlocked door and holds it open for James.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Rob bounds up the stairs two-at-a-time. James huffs and puffs a flight behind him.

JAMES

Maybe we could take the --

ROB

Doesn't work.

EXT. MID-RISE BUILDING - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Rob arrives at the edge of the rooftop. Takes a knee.

Pulls a LONG CASE out from underneath the ledge.

James approaches as Rob snaps a tripod onto a TELESCOPE.

Places the legs into three HASH MARKS carved into the roof.

Positions the lens quickly... knows just where to look...

He steps back. All smiles as he gestures towards James.

James leans over the eyepiece... his new Rolex peeking out from the cuff of his designer jacket.

TELESCOPE POV -- the CORNER APARTMENT on one floor of ANOTHER BUILDING a few blocks away. Modern. Sleek lines. Big windows.

A MIDDLE-AGED COUPLE visible through one of those big windows, cozied up in the glow of their TV.

JAMES

Do you know them?

Rob nudges the lens to the right.

POV shifts to the NEXT APARTMENT. A sparsely-decorated loft space full of abstract art and functional furniture.

There... crossing from the kitchen to the living room with a glass of wine in her hand...

... is LENA.

James pulls back from the telescope. Gut-punched.

ROB

Ah. You recognize her.

(beat)

People who live on high floors
never close their curtains. They
think they've got nothing to hide.

JAMES

What is this?

ROB

Look again.

JAMES

I'm not comfortable with this.

ROB

I'll explain. If you look again.

James swallows his objection. Leans down...

POV -- Lena looks through mail on her dining room table...

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

Watch her for long enough, you'll
know everything about her. Yet
she'll know nothing about you.

*Lena moves to a pile of PACKAGES. Clumsily slices them open.
Pulls out CLOTHES.*

ROB (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You know what type of milk she
 takes with her coffee, she doesn't
 even know you exist. That's power.

She moves away, disappearing from sight with the clothes.

ROB (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 She's yours. All that matters is
 what you choose to do.

James pulls away from the lens. His voice shaking...

JAMES
 You're not going to... hurt her?

ROB
 You're asking the wrong question.

JAMES
 But we agree that I should be
 asking questions.

ROB
 I could hurt her. Or I could help
 her. Or I could do nothing. I make
 the decision. I control her life.
 That's the point.

JAMES
 This is illegal. It's wrong.

ROB
 You've spent your whole life
 thinking that this is wrong, that
 this would get you into trouble. So
 you're afraid. But this is just...
 another flavor.

Calculations fly across James' face.

The scales tip. He hunches over the eyepiece.

ROB (CONT'D)
 So. What do you think about her?

*POV -- Lena paces through her living room. Glass of wine
 swirling in hand. Head bobbing absently to some music.*

JAMES (O.S.)
 She seems restless.

She straightens photos on a shelf. Blows away some dust.

Catches her reflection in a mirror. Pulls her hair up. Turns side to side. Lets it drop.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A little lonely.

Lena walks to her window. Stares out at the city.

Her gaze drifts... landing right ON US.

James pulls back. Unnerved.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She looked right at me.

Rob shakes his head.

ROB
She can't see you.
(beat)
They never see you.

PUSHING IN on the LENS of the telescope...

A microscopic apartment building refracted in the glass...

And there's Lena. As small as a speck of dust.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - THE NEXT MORNING

CLOSE ON a CARVING KNIFE and a small BLOCK OF WOOD.

They sit atop a handwritten NOTE.

James approaches, eyes clouded with sleep.

Pulls the note free and reads --

*Sorry if this is all overwhelming.
I just want us to be extraordinary.
Here's a little gift. See how it feels.
Be home late. R.*

James looks to the knife and wood. Considering.

Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

The blade SLICES through the wood. Whittling it down.

Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk.

James hunches over his knees on the sofa. Shavings collecting on the coffee table.

He's actually pretty good -- the block already taking the shape of a wooden blade.

He sets the knife and wood down. Crosses to his PHOTO ALBUMS.

Flips through them. Page after page: pictures of his mother, pictures of him, pictures of them together.

Years pass. He grows. She shrinks. Just the two of them against a mundane backdrop of suburban life.

LATER

James whittles, phone pinned to his ear as he peruses a DELIVERY MENU.

JAMES

I'll have the duck blood soup
and... uh... how's the pig brain?

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - EVENING

CLOSE ON empty takeout containers, speckled brown and red.

James burps as he tests the sharpness of his WOODEN KNIFE.

Sets it on the coffee table. Satisfied with his work.

He stands and approaches the HI-FI SETUP. Flicks through the record at random until he settles on a pink sleeve.

Places it on the turntable... the needle crackles...

The spare, icy synth-pop of Karen Marks' Cold Cafe slithers out of the speakers.

James nods gently to the music. Feeling it deeply.

He slowly backs away. Settles onto the sofa...

A LOW HUM as the AUTOMATIC CURTAINS glide over windows.

James shifts, pulling a REMOTE from the sofa cushions.

He points it towards the windows. His finger hovers over the "OPEN" button... he presses it.

The LOW HUM carries over...

EXT. MID-RISE BUILDING - NIGHT

James walks nervously through the unlocked door of the decaying apartment building. Nerves jangling.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

He climbs the stairs. Each step less certain than the last.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the tripod legs as they line up with the hash marks.

James leans towards the eyepiece. Searches the buildings.

TELESCOPE POV -- the NEIGHBOR COUPLE mill around in their APARTMENT, chatting with each other.

James sets his nerve. Whispers to himself...

JAMES
Duck blood soup.

POV shifts RIGHT to LENA'S APARTMENT.

There she is. Sitting at her kitchen table. Swiping absently on her phone as she picks at something vegan and gluten-free.

The image MAGNIFIES -- LENA'S FACE fills the frame.

James watches. Light dancing across his eye.

She smirks at something onscreen. Shakes her head. Laughing now. She pushes her dinner aside.

Begins typing...

BZZZZ! James startles his phone VIBRATES --

He rips it from his pocket -- fearing the impossible --

But it's a text from IZZIE, his date from weeks earlier:

*hey this is weird
but i just thought of u
and i hope ur doing ok*

James catches his breath. Calms his pounding heart.

Turns back to the telescope --

POV -- Lena paces through her apartment on FaceTime.

The magnified POV loses her. Finds her again.

Catching small details: A shy smile. A loving glance. Anxious fingers brushing through her hair.

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Restless. But not lonely.

Her eyes wander as she listens, thoughts drifting away...

JAMES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Not always.

James soaks in the intimacy of the moment.

Satisfied, he twists the barrel of the lens --

POV snaps WIDE as the magnification decreases...

Revealing a MASKED FIGURE STANDING IN THE NEXT WINDOW OVER!

Towering body clad in all-black. Face obscured behind the now-familiar WOODEN MASK with crude EYE and MOUTH HOLES.

The Masked Figure hefts a BLACK DUFFEL BAG onto a bed.

James goes stiff. Blood draining from his face...

POV MAGNIFIES -- frantically repositions --

The Masked Figure unzips the bag...

And removes a 5-INCH TRIM SAW.

POV SHIFTS RIGHT -- Lena chats away, unaware.

POV SHIFTS LEFT -- The Masked Figure turns to the window.

He crosses to it... and closes the blinds.

OFF James, tearing his wide eyes from the telescope --

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

He HURDLES down the stairs, phone to his ear --

JAMES
Hello? Yes! Yes! I'd like to report
a possible murder!

His feet churn, shoes squeaking --

JAMES (CONT'D)
It's, uh... it's... I don't know
the address, it's a --

Toe catches ankle -- he TRIPS --
Goes flying down the stairs -- HARD IMPACTS as he rolls --
Head over heels -- over head -- over heels --
His phone SMASHES against the stairs, screen SHATTERING --
He crumples into the landing.
Moans in pain. Head bloodied. Eyes hazy.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Unnnnnngggghhhh!!!

Teeth gritted as he forces himself to his feet. He limps down the stairs, cradling his arm.

Moving on pure adrenaline.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

James skip-steps down the sidewalk, waving madly at bystanders --

JAMES
Call the police! That building!
What's the address?!?!?

Nobody makes eye contact. He teeters onward...

DRIFTING UP... Lena's building looms at the end of the block.

INT. LENA'S BUILDING - LOBBY - NIGHT

James bursts through the door --

Staggers towards HELEN, a veteran security guard kicking back behind the desk.

He gasps for air, fighting through every word --

JAMES
Police -- murder -- upstairs --

Helen rises to her feet. Takes in the lunatic before her.

HELEN
Alright. Let's take it back
outside, huh?

JAMES

There's a woman upstairs! Higher floor, like sixth or seventh. Lives alone. Blonde hair. Right?

Helen answers with a pause...

JAMES (CONT'D)

There's someone up there, and he's going to kill her! We have to get up there right now!

Helen just stares. Trying to get a read.

JAMES (CONT'D)

She's dying RIGHT NOW! COME ON!

DING!

INT. LENA'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

James flies out of the ELEVATOR DOORS --

JAMES

Which one? WHICH ONE!

Jogging heavily behind him --

HELEN

609. Just up there on the left.

James lands at 609 -- HAMMERS on the door -- THROWS HIS SHOULDER into it --

JAMES

HELLO!? ARE YOU IN THERE!?

HELEN

Christ, kid. I've got the key.

Helen pulls a MASTER KEY from her pocket -- the door OPENS.

LENA stands inside. Unharmmed. Very confused.

LENA

Can I help you?

JAMES

I, uh...

James is thrown by her voice. It's commanding. Strong. Accented. Not what he envisioned.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Listen to me: there's a man with a
weapon inside your apartment.

LENA

(confused)

No. There isn't.

JAMES

I saw him through the window five
minutes ago!

LENA

And why were you looking through my
windows?

James falters. Helen and Lena share a wary look.

He pulls them aside, hissing --

JAMES

He's still in there!

Helen wrangles her arm free -- closes on James --

HELEN

(to Lena)

I'm really sorry about this, Ms.
Holland. I'll make sure he --

James RUSHES INTO LENA'S APARTMENT --

INT. LENA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

-- heading for the lone DOOR along the RIGHT WALL.

Lena nearly keeping pace -- Helen lagging behind --

LENA

Excuse me?! What the hell do you
think you're doing?!

JAMES

Stay behind me!

He flings the door open -- revealing a STORAGE CLOSET.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Wha... where's the bedroom?

LENA

Not that it's any of your fucking
business, but this is a studio!

James twists to see a BED squeezed into the corner.
He looks back at the wall -- realizing his mistake --
Just as a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM comes from behind it --
The neighbor couple's apartment.

JAMES
(to Lena)
Lock your door. Call the police.

He rushes back out the door -- yelling to Helen --

JAMES (CONT'D)
Next door! Come on!

The guard follows -- snapping open a TELESCOPING BATON --

INT. APARTMENT 610 - MOMENTS LATER

A DEADBOLT turns with a CLICK. The door drifts open...

James and Helen stalk inside. The guard's arm cocked back,
baton ready to fly.

HELEN
Mr. and Mrs. Randolph? It's --

James flaps his hand at her. Gestures to be quiet.

They tip-toe past the empty KITCHEN...

Through the LIVING ROOM, where the TV plays sitcoms to an
empty sofa...

Helen moves in front of James as they approach a CLOSED DOOR.

She pushes it open... and they step into...

THE BEDROOM

The butchered corpses of THE RANDOLPHS lay across the floor.

Hacked and slashed. Cut to ribbons. Blood soaked in the rug.

James goes stock still. Shock sets in like a lightning bolt.

Helen keeps her nerve. She hustles to the closet -- kicks it
open -- EMPTY.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Stay here.

She moves back to the living room, baton at the ready.

James doesn't respond. Still entranced by the gruesome sight.

His eyes drift to the killer's BLACK DUFFEL BAG on the corner of the bed.

HELEN

Steps cautiously through the living room. Head swiveling as she keys her radio --

HELEN (CONT'D)
Hank, we've got an emergency in
610. Call the police right now.

HANK (O.S.)
The Randolphs? They okay?

HELEN
Just call 'em. And keep this line
clear.

She spots a RED EXTENSION CORD plugged into an outlet.

The cord sits tight against the wall... leading around the corner and out of the room.

JAMES

Covers his hand with his sleeve.

Carefully unzips the DUFFEL BAG... opens it...

Revealing a rat's nest of bloody MURDER WEAPONS.

He gags from the sight. Holds himself together.

Moves to zip it back up... but something catches his eye.

HELEN

Slowly steps out of her HARD-SOLED shoes.

Her steps are whisper-quiet as she tracks the red extension cord around the corner...

Down a short hallway...

Around another corner...

JAMES

Gingerly reaches in...

Pulls a CARVING KNIFE from the bag. Feels the weight in his hand. It's familiar.

He digs through the bag: a CHISEL. The TRIM SAW. A DRILL.

HELEN

Follows the cord until it disappears under a CLOSET DOOR in the hallway.

The baton raises, firmly gripped in a white-knuckled hand...

She bends her knees... leans forward... battle-ready...

A HISS & CRACKLE from her hip --

HANK (O.S.)
Cops are on the way, Hel. Be safe
up there, huh?

She panics -- fumbles for the radio --

The closet doors burst open -- a HANDHELD CIRCULAR SAW
SCREAMS TOWARDS HER!

She gets one fleeting glimpse of the KILLER'S HAUNTING WOODEN
MASK, emerging from the darkness like a specter --

Before the saw's whirring blade slices through her face.

JAMES

Hears the saw's motor slowly die out.

He grabs the CARVING KNIFE. Clutches it to his chest like a
security blanket as he peeks through the door...

Carefully moves into the LIVING ROOM.

Frowns in confusion at Helen's SHOES on the floor.

Click... clack. Click... clack. Click... clack.

Confusion curdles into fear...

Someone's walking towards him.

He looks to the FRONT DOOR -- 30 feet away -- if he moves
quickly he might --

THE KILLER steps around the corner, blocking the path to the
door. He turns to face James...

The crude WOODEN MASK fully visible for the first time: it's a misshapen hunk of wood, riddled with splinters and divots.

Through its holes, cold eyes gleam and lips bend into a cruel smile. Something familiar about them...

James stammers. Terror eating him alive. Tears blossoming.

He extends a trembling arm... the knife bounces in the air...

JAMES

I -- I -- I --

The Killer BOLTS towards him!

Feet turn to inches in a heartbeat -- James SLASHES wildly -- stumbles backwards --

JAMES (CONT'D)

No-no-no-no-no-no-

The Killer catches his arm -- KNOCKS THE KNIFE AWAY.

He THROWS James to the ground.

Kneels on top of him, pinning his arms.

GLOVED HANDS close around James' throat...

He bucks and squirms desperately... his vision FADES...

The WOODEN MASK descends towards his face...

FADE TO BLACK.

BLACK resolves into BROWN... ODD SHAPES emerge...

A HAZY POV claws for consciousness...

The odd shapes ROTATE... the haze clears... vision focuses...

Revealing the abstract glory of Rob's WOODWORK MURAL.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM - NIGHT

James blinks sleep from his eyes. Staring at the woodwork.

He reaches for his head. No... he doesn't. He can't.

His arms, legs and chest are TIED TO THE CHAIR.

He tugs at the ropes, stammering in fear and frustration.

ROB (O.S.)
Try to stay calm.

James cocks his head -- noticing a GLASS BOTTLE and a DROPPER on a small cart next to him.

JAMES
R-Rob?

ROB (O.S.)
When we first met, you asked me
what I do for a living...

FOOTSTEPS approach from behind...

Rob steps into view. The WOODEN MASK clutched in his hands.

ROB (CONT'D)
Now you know.

James' face goes blank. The puzzle pieces fall into place...

He THRASHES in his chair, trying to get away --

JAMES
LET ME GO! Let me -- LET --

Rob kneels in front of James. Speaks calmly. Like a parent defusing a temper tantrum.

ROB
I know you have a lot of questions.
But I need you to --

JAMES
HELP!!! HELP ME!!! HELP!!!

ROB
I told you --

JAMES
HELP!!!!!!

ROB SCREAMS AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS --

ROB
HELP!!! HELP!!! SOMEONE COME HELP
JAMES!! HEEEEELLLLLLLPPPP!!!
AAAHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

Clearing his throat --

ROB (CONT'D)
It's soundproof.

Tears dribble down James' face. Jagged breaths.
He's on the verge of a full-blown panic attack.

JAMES
You tried to kill me.

ROB
No. I just needed you to feel what
I felt. The fear. The certainty.

JAMES
P-P-P-Please let me go.

ROB
I don't want you to go.

JAMES
Don't hurt me. Please don't --

ROB
I would never hurt you.
(beat)
But what's going to happen next
will be difficult for you.

James squirms, agonizing fear scrawled on his face.

Behind Rob, the woodwork begins to SWIRL and UNDULATE like a
Magic Eye poster solving itself.

JAMES
What the fuck?! WHAT --

Rob grabs his face -- James tries to twist away.

ROB
I need you stay calm. Don't make
this harder than it has to be.

James twitches and spasms, panic running amok inside him...

ROB (CONT'D)
I'm going to help you see my world.

The WHOLE WORLD RIPPLES AND VIBRATES as Rob exhales.

ROB (CONT'D)
I'm going to help you hear the
music.

ROB'S FACE drifts out of proportion. Smile too wide. Eyes too
small. Monstrous. Alien. And then it drifts back.

James stares at him. Eyes like saucers.

JAMES
What's... what's going on...

Rob nods to the GLASS BOTTLE and DROPPER.

ROB
I gave you 100 doses of LSD.

Horror dawns on James' face as he stares at the dropper.

ROB (CONT'D)
It won't hurt you. It'll just...
change you. James Hanson will burn
to ash, and then a new man will
rise like the phoenix.

James dissolves into whimpers, shaking his head in disbelief.

ROB (CONT'D)
You'll leave this fear behind. All
your fear. All your pain. You'll
see the world for what it is: a
sandbox that your mind makes so it
has somewhere to play. Everything
holding you back... gone.

JAMES
You don't have to do this. You
don't have to do this...

ROB
I've never had to do anything in my
entire life.

Rob stands, taking a large Camelback and strapping it to the chair. He positions the straw next to James' mouth.

ROB (CONT'D)
Remember to stay hydrated. This is
gonna take awhile.

The world THROBS and PULSES. The WOODWORK SWIRLS.

James shakes his head -- muttering -- willing himself out of the nightmare --

JAMES
No... no-no-no-no...

ROB
I'll see you on the other side.

REALITY UNRAVELS AROUND JAMES.

All that's left is the sound of him SCREAMING.

Throat-shredding BAWLING grows louder and louder...

Then colors-turn-to-shapes-turn-to-objects --

REALITY RAVELS ITSELF BACK INTO --

THE WOODWORK MURAL.

Time has passed. Maybe minutes. Maybe hours.

James works his jaw absently. His eyes dart obsessively across the surface of the wood. Poring over every detail.

The WOODWORK shifts and rotates in geometric patterns. Puzzle pieces interlocking and splitting apart.

Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk.

The sound of the wood shifting slowly builds into a chorus of WHISPERS and CHANTS rippling through the wood...

CLOSE ON THE WOODWORK

As pieces interlock together... and stop. The cycle complete.

The abstract shapes now rearranged to create what looks like a GAPING MOUTH at the center of the woodwork.

GUTTURAL MOANS and HOWLS echo from the makeshift mouth.

The wood STRETCHES OUT WITH A CRACK -- as though something was trying to push through the other side --

HOLD ON JAMES, terrified yet blissful...

INHUMAN SCREAMS and WAILS -- WOOD CRACKS --

A HAIL OF LARGE SPLINTERS RIDDLE HIS FACE AND BODY!

James sags. Blood streams.

He slowly raises his head.... looks to the WOODWORK...

It's gone, replaced by a HOWLING ABYSS.

WHIPPING WIND rakes his eardrums.

Creaaaaaakkkkk...

James cocks his head...

The Randolphs' BEDROOM DOOR is there again. It swings open...
Revealing their butchered corpses.

James stares at the mutilated bodies...

Face oozing blood... eyes gouged out...

And then their bodies CRUMBLE APART and collapse to the floor
with a hollow thud.

Mr. Randolph's head rolls across the ground, coming to a stop
at James' feet.

CLOSE ON the head to see it's been carved from wood. His
screaming, bloody-eyed face expertly painted onto it.

James smiles.

Soft synth pads slowly bleed onto the soundtrack...

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Warm sunlight seeps into the hallway from the living room.

James staggers out of the bedroom. A lifetime of horrors in
his distant gaze. Flecks of grey in his hair.

He's a different man than he was before. Maybe for now, maybe
forever. He lost something in the woodwork. And found
something else.

The familiar strains of Cold Cafe echo from the living room.

He turns towards the sound. Walks down the hallway, eyes wide
with curiosity as he takes in the apartment, seeing things in
a whole new light.

The space is empty.

A basket of fruit sitting next to the blender on the counter.

James rubs a hand across his face... and notices the ROPE
BURNS on his wrists.

The song ends. The record stops.

He turns and looks down the hallway... towards the door to
the DISPLAY ROOM.

Forces himself to approach... step after anxious step...

James arrives at the door. Knocks gently.

ROB (O.S.)
Come in.

JAMES
Rob? I -- I think --

James' voice is HOARSE. Worn from hours of screaming.

ROB (O.S.)
Come. In.

James swallows thickly. Reaches for the handle.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He enters, finding Rob sitting and staring at the woodwork.

A SECOND WOODEN CHAIR now sits next to him.

A pair of WOODEN FOOTRESTS in front of them.

Neither brother speaks for a moment.

ROB
When I saw you standing there in
the Randolphs' living room... I
felt so betrayed.

Rob leaps to his feet, turning to face James --

Who cowers, backing away slowly.

ROB (CONT'D)
But then I realized why you were
there. You were watching them.

Rob moves forward -- James moves back -- matching him step-for-step until --

ROB (CONT'D)
Stop it.

James freezes on the spot. Rob closes the gap between them. Puts a hand on James' neck.

James stiffens, flight-or-flight instincts rising...

Until Rob starts gently massaging his shoulders.

JAMES
You killed those people.

ROB
Mmm. And while you were asleep, I
celebrated their memory.

He nods towards the second chair and footrests.
James looks at them. Looks back at his brother.
He frowns, the puzzle pieces locking together...

JAMES
How many...

ROB
This makes a dozen. Seems like a
lot, I know.
(beat)
But you'll get there.

Rob pulls the WOODEN KNIFE out of his pocket.
James pulls back -- Rob yanks him in closer.
He flips the knife around. Presses the handle into James'
hand.

ROB (CONT'D)
I. Am not. Going. To hurt. You.

JAMES
Why?

ROB
Weak people let their minds lead
their actions. Strong people let
their actions lead their minds. You
do something... and then you decide
why you did it.

WIDE to see the WOODWORK looming behind them.

ROB (CONT'D)
Do you understand?

JAMES
You're insane.

ROB
Then why are you in here?

James frowns. Not following.

ROB (CONT'D)
You could have walked right out the
front door when you woke up.
Instead you came in here.
(beat)
You did that. Now tell me why.

James considers the knife in his hand... feels the weight...

ROB (CONT'D)
I can tell you why. Because you
want to do more than just watch.
You want to take the next step.
(beat)
This is the last flavor on the
menu. Don't tell me you're afraid
of it. We've come too far.

James shakes his head pitifully. A weak denial.

ROB (CONT'D)
Somewhere... deep inside... you're
even thinking about killing me.
Stabbing me right now with that
knife. Wouldn't it feel good?

The knife clatters to the floor as James drops it.

JAMES
No. I can't do this.
(beat)
I'm not like you.

Rob shrugs, unbothered.

ROB
If you say so. Brother.

He releases James. Returns to his seat. Faces the woodwork.

ROB (CONT'D)
You can go to the police station
right now and tell them everything
you know. This all goes away. No
one else gets hurt.

Rob kicks his feet up onto one of the footrests.

ROB (CONT'D)
And you never get to find out what
it feels like to watch the life
slowly drain out of someone's eyes.

Without looking back --

ROB (CONT'D)
Shut the door on your way out.

James stands perfectly still. His expression unreadable.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

James approaches the police station. He's showered and shaved. Effortlessly stylish in his new clothes.

His eyes open wider than before. His gaze is hungry. Restlessly scouring the sights and sounds around him.

Nothing is the way he remembers it.

He reaches the station's doors. Stares at the aged, SPLITTING WOOD around the handle.

The wood suddenly SPLITS further, snaking up the door in a stuttering staccato rhythm --

Crack-crack-cr-crack-cr-cr-crack --

DESK SERGEANT (V.O.)
Sir?

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

James blinks, getting his bearings. He's inside.

Looking into the impatient face of the SHIFT SERGEANT.

SHIFT SERGEANT
You can take a seat over there.

JAMES
I have to speak with Detective Ellsworth.

SHIFT SERGEANT
I know.

JAMES
It's about her investigation.

SHIFT SERGEANT
You just told me that.
(beat)
You can take a seat over there.

He shuffles over to a row of chairs. Sinks into one.

The din of activity all around: ringing phones, shouting cops, howls from the drunk tank...

A GLASS DOOR swings open in the hallway in front of him...

James catches a glimpse of his reflection. Ambient sound drops away instantly.

Just the sound of his breathing. The rustle of the fabric in his clothes. He sits up straighter. Squares his shoulders.

He stares at the glamorous, impressive man before him.

The man he will have to leave behind if this new life with Rob disappears.

The door eases back slowly on its hinge... the reflection disappears inch-by-inch...

James cranes his neck to get one last look as it goes.

He lowers his gaze, tormented by his decision...

His eyes settle on his hand clutching the armrest.

JAMES' POV: His hand is a rigid, unmoving hunk of wood with five digits carved into it.

CUT TO:

ELLSWORTH

Exits her office. Ambles across the bullpen...

ELLSWORTH

You got someone for me?

SHIFT SERGEANT

Yeah, he --

She gestures towards the wall... but James is gone.

SHIFT SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Guess he took off.

The Shift Sergeant snaps her fingers. Starts sorting through the clutter on her desk.

DESK SERGEANT

Something just came in for you,
though...

The Desk Sergeant keeps searching. Ellsworth takes a seat.

INT. POLICE STATION - ELLSWORTH'S OFFICE

Ellsworth tears a PADDED MANILA ENVELOPE open.

A DVD-R slides out, labeled in block letters:

LOBBY CCTV JUNE 16

CUT TO:

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN: A security camera POV of the lobby in Lena's apartment building, timestamped in the corner.

Ellsworth scrubs through... time ticks by... residents come and go...

A CRAZED, BLOODY James bursts through the doors. Helen the security guard rises from her chair.

James gestures wildly. Shouting at Helen.

Ellsworth pauses. Scrubs back a few frames. Forward. Finds the clearest look at his face.

It's a new haircut. Blood covers his face. And yet...

ELLSWORTH

I know you.

She leans back in her chair. Digs into her memory.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)

How do I know you?

CUT TO:

JAMES

Looks DIRECTLY INTO LENS. At war with himself.

Mind telling him one thing. Instincts another.

He lowers his head...

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

... to the TELESCOPE in front of him.

The city unfolds around him. Lena's building at center stage.

He puts his eye to the viewfinder...

TELESCOPE POV -- windows closed and shades drawn in the Randolphs' apartment. Sealed off like a tomb.

POV SHIFTS RIGHT -- LENA waters her plants. She's rushed, unsteady. Head swiveling at every innocuous sound.

POV MAGNIFIES -- closer now. She's spooked. Nervous. No longer safe in her own home.

She turns towards the door -- a knock?

Crosses towards it... checks the peephole...

The DOOR FLIES OPEN, sending Lena tumbling back!

JAMES ENTERS, a CARVING KNIFE clutched in his black gloves.

He stalks towards her, cruel smile splitting his face --

Lena skitters backwards, desperately trying to escape.

He pulls a WOODEN MASK over his face -- wrenches his arm back to strike --

She SCREAMS, curling into a ball.

The BLADE arcs through the air --

James pulls away from the viewfinder.

Breathing heavily as he RETURNS TO REALITY.

He shakes his head, willing the dark fantasy away.

Excitement and fear battle it out on his face.

He leans forward again...

TELESCOPE POV -- Lena mists the leaves of her plants. Safe and sound. All alone.

RESIDENT (O.S.)

Excuse me?

A RESIDENT, the self-styled Sheriff of the building, stomps towards James.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)

The rooftop is off-limits.

James just stares. The Resident cocks his head at the sight of the telescope. Smirks in disbelief.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)

Do you live in this building?

James rises to his feet. Keeps his head down. Walks steadily towards the door to the stairs.

Stepping in front of James --

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
Where do you think you're going?

James steps around him -- the Resident follows --

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
You can't just --

He swipes at James... just grazing his arm...

James SNAPS -- HURLS the Resident to the ground.

Looms over him -- holds him steady --

PUNCHES HIM again and again -- flesh splits -- teeth crack --

James FIST freezes in the air. The Resident MOANS in agony.
Tears dripping down his ruined face.

A wave of nausea rushes over James. He slowly backs towards
the door. Eyes still locked on his victim.

EXT. MID-RISE BUILDING - DAY

James exits the building, wiping blood from his hand.

He looks around. No one gives him a second look.

Takes a few more steps... and then his knees buckle.

He steadies himself against the wall. Breathing deep. Closes
his eyes, riding a wave of sensation...

An incredible, euphoric high slams into him. He collapses to
the ground. Trembling with pleasure.

Every synapse firing. Every nerve tingling.

It's the most pleasure he's ever felt.

Shaky breath gives way to a soft chuckle. He finds himself.
Rises back to his feet.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rob reclines on the sofa, paging through a book of
photography. Solo piano chimes from the speakers.

The door swings open. James walks in. Still riding his high.

He walks straight to the living room. Sits down on the coffee
table near Rob.

Rob swings himself up to a seat. He takes a closer look at his brother. Recognizes something in his expression.

ROB
I knew it. From the first moment I
saw you... I knew it.

James presents his hands. Rob grabs them. Rubs a thumb across his bruised knuckles.

ROB (CONT'D)
How did it feel?

JAMES
You know how it felt.

ROB
And that's nothing. Not compared to
the main event.

The brothers share a long look.

An understanding between them. An agreement reached.

JAMES
How does it work? How do you pick
the people you...
(beat)
Murder.

ROB
They pick me. They walk by me on
the street, and something about
them screams to me. Begs for me.
Then I wait for the right time. And
take what I want.
(beat)
But for you... for your first...
we'll find someone special.

JAMES
Someone that... deserves it?

ROB
"Deserved" is subjective. Once you
open the door, it's open.
(beat)
Either everyone deserves it or
nobody does. If you bring morals
into it, you're just playing God.

JAMES
You're not playing God?

ROB
I'm not playing anything.
(beat)
I just am. And you can be, too.

James' eyes go fuzzy.

He looks to the side and sees LENA misting plants in the corner. She keeps misting... soaking the plants in blood.

He blinks, shaking his head.

JAMES
I want that woman you showed me.
The blonde.

ROB
Oh, no. She's not for you. I've
been following her for a long time.
Saving her for a special occasion.
That's why I killed her neighbors.
Soften her up a bit. Let her know
what's coming.

JAMES
Fine. Someone else. Anyone.

Rob sits back. His eyes go glassy.

JAMES (CONT'D)
What?

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM - NIGHT

The brothers stand side-by-side.

ROB (O.S.)
I love you, James.

They stare into the WOODWORK.

JAMES (O.S.)
I love you, too.

Their hands clasp together.

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

The wall full of WOODWORKING TOOLS.

Sleek blades. Serrated teeth. Heavy blunt edges.

James stares at each one in turn. Eyes like a divining rod.

He shuffles forward... his fingers graze over the tools...

His hand closes around the handle of a HATCHET.

Rob beams in the corner like a proud parent.

The strains of a SYMPHONY carry through the following --

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAWN

THE ACCOUNTANT (40s) trots out the door of a large HOUSE in the suburbs. Perfectly even grass. Bench on the porch.

Dressed for an aspirational jog in \$500 worth of athleisure.

He weaves past his BMW in the driveway. Pops his AirPods in.

Takes off down the wide sidewalk. Jogging past...

TWO WORKERS in reflective vests huddled by a power line.

The workers turn their heads... lean back... watch The Accountant round the corner...

Then turn their attention towards the house.

INT. THE ACCOUNTANT'S OFFICE - DAY

The Accountant eats lunch. Eyes glued to his computer screen. Hard to tell where he ends and the desk begins.

It's an upscale firm. Elegant office. Massive WINDOWS reveal the city behind him.

THROUGH THE WINDOWS -- sunlight glints off a TELESCOPE LENS in the building across the street.

INT/EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP - ANOTHER DAY

The Accountant's BMW rises on a garage jack. Grease-stained MECHANICS fall into formation underneath it.

He sweeps lint off a chair in the waiting area outside.

Takes a seat. Crosses his legs. Rubs a scuff on his shoe.

His manicured nails tap away on the screen of his phone.

He glances up at the MAN sitting opposite --

The Man holds a worn copy of *How to Win Friends And Influence People* in front of his face.

BRUISED KNUCKLES on the hand gripping the book's spine.

EXT. CITY STREETS - ANOTHER DAY

The Accountant strolls down the sidewalk. Coffee in one hand, phone in the other.

Feet sweeping left and right as he dodges oncoming traffic.

A chill runs up his spine. The feeling of being watched.

He turns and looks behind him...

He has no reason to find it odd that JAMES stands among the crowd at the curb, staring in his direction.

Waiting for the signal to change.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Accountant holds court with his HUSBAND (40s) and another COUPLE. Ears half-open to conversation while his eyes drift back to his phone.

Never fully off-duty. After all, it's an upscale firm.

DRIFTING PAST their table... up to the WINDOW...

ROB'S AUDI is parked on the street outside.

INT. ROB'S AUDI - SIMULTANEOUS

The SYMPHONY rings out from the car's speakers...

James watches intently from the driver's seat.

Rob reaches over from the passenger's seat and shuts the stereo off.

JAMES

So who is he?

ROB

He's my accountant.

JAMES

Why him?

ROB

Maybe he's been skimming my money.
Maybe he assaulted his secretary.
Maybe that phone's full of child
porn.

(beat)

Maybe he's even a killer.

James turns to look at him.

ROB (CONT'D)
What would be enough?

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Rob hunches over his work area, carving away.

James sits patiently on a stack of lumber nearby.

TILTING DOWN to reveal a duplicate WOODEN MASK on Rob's work bench. He digs into the jagged eye holes.

Rob rises. Presents the mask proudly to James.

JAMES' POV -- THE MASK descends toward his face, swallowing the world around him.

The SCREAM of WHIPPING WIND rises, drowning out all noises...

The world VIBRATES and PULSES, dissolving into a swirl of colors and shapes...

Until only Rob's grinning face, framed in the eyes of the mask, remains.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Dark. Still. Silent. No streetlights. No neighbors.

The soft purr of a CAR ENGINE...

HEADLIGHTS wash across the house... the garage door OPENS...

The Accountant's BMW pulls INTO THE GARAGE. The engine dies.

Doors pop open. The couple emerge in mid-argument --

HUSBAND
-- rescheduled three times because
"you had work", and when we finally
do it you're looking at your phone
all night in case you have work.

They cross to the CONNECTING DOOR that links the garage to the house.

THE ACCOUNTANT
Don't forget when I paid for dinner
"because of work". Do you think
they thought that was rude?

His Husband shakes him off, marching inside.

The Accountant taps the GARAGE DOOR BUTTON...

The door descends...

A BLACK-CLAD FIGURE bolts from the shadows, racing towards the GARAGE!

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The garage door STOPS and begins to ASCEND.

The Accountant frowns. Walks back over to the garage door. Double-checks that nothing's in the way.

Returns to the connecting door. Taps the garage door button.

TRACKING WITH the garage door as it descends...

Down the back of the BMW... past the license plate... over the tires...

Glimpsing a WOODEN MASK under the car before the garage door closes with a shudder.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - ENTRYWAY

The Accountant trails his Husband, who's already marching up the swooping STAIRWAY to the second floor.

THE ACCOUNTANT

Come on. Is it really this serious?

His Husband turns at the top of the stairs.

HUSBAND

You know, I make almost as much money as you and I still manage to look people in the eye at dinner.

THE ACCOUNTANT

Okay, "almost" is doing you some favors there, but --

His phone CHIMES from his pocket. He immediately grabs it.

HUSBAND

You have got to be kidding me.

THE ACCOUNTANT

He's in Hong Kong, it's a time zone thing. Just give me one --

The lights FLIP OFF as his Husband stomps down the hall.

The Accountant's face hangs in the darkness, lit by the glow of his phone.

He begins shuffling forward, muscle memory carrying him through his darkened house...

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He approaches the fridge, pulls the door open...

Light spills from inside, barely illuminating a BLACK-CLAD FIGURE with a WOODEN MASK standing in the shadows.

The Accountant never sees him. He grabs a bottle of water and swings the fridge closed again.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The Accountant settles into his chair. Wakes up his computer. The office dark, save for the white glow from the monitor.

Fingers *click-clack* across the keyboard as he types an email.

The HALLWAY LIGHT flips on. Spilling around the corner from the entryway.

Fingers freeze in mid-air.

The Accountant stares into the sliver of light.

Hears the STAIRS creaking with movement.

He watches expectantly, waiting for his Husband to appear and the argument to continue.

The stairs stop creaking. The hallway light turns off.

The office plunges back into darkness. The Accountant turns back to his email. *Click-clack*.

But something about the dark now unnerves him.

He reaches for his desk lamp... gropes for the switch...

The light FLIPS ON -- the office is empty.

His phone CHIMES again. Text from HUBBY:

Come upstairs

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT - SIMULTANEOUS

FROM OUTSIDE, watching through uncovered windows as lights turn on and off in sequence...

The Accountant makes his way out of the office... into the entryway... and up the stairs to the hallway.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He enters an expansive bedroom suite. Three doors circle the room, leading to walk-in closets and an ensuite master bath.

His Husband lays on the edge of the bed, swaddled head-to-toe in blankets. Face turned away from the door.

THE ACCOUNTANT
Are we pouting?

No response.

THE ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
Look, can we get a truce?
(beat)
I left my phone downstairs.

No response. The Accountant swallows his frustration. Sits on his side of the bed. Tries out a calming tone...

THE ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry that you felt
disrespected... ah, no. Don't say
it! I remember.
(tries again)
I'm sorry that I disrespected you
by focusing on --

The SHOWER suddenly turns on in the master bathroom.

Leaping to his feet --

THE ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
What the fuck! Who --

He races to the bathroom door, rips it open --

Sees HIS HUSBAND staring back at him, head peeking around the shower curtain.

HUSBAND
Yeah, I hear you out there. I'm not
ready to talk, okay?

The Accountant goes pale -- whips his head back to the bed --

The BLACK-CLAD FIGURE with the WOODEN MASK stands just feet away from him!

The HATCHET already arching through the air --

THE ACCOUNTANT
 NoooooOOAAHHHH!!!!

He raises his arms -- the hatchet swings down --

The blade SLICES INTO HIS ARM!

The arm splits apart like it was made of wood.

No blood, no bone. Just splintering wood.

JAMES stares through his mask, blinking desperately at the sight. Willing it to make sense.

REALITY SNAPS BACK IN --

The Accountant's bisected arm is horrific. The gore freezes James on the spot.

The Accountant WAILS in pain -- throws a stiff punch --

KNOCKING JAMES back -- his mask tumbles off.

The Accountant roars, TACKLING JAMES to the ground.
 Adrenaline surging as he batters his attacker with one arm --

IN THE BATHROOM

His Husband clambers out of the shower to help --

WET FEET slip on the tile floor -- he goes down hard,
 CRACKING HIS TAILBONE on the edge of the tub.

IN THE BEDROOM

James struggles -- arms like noodles as he meekly shoves The Accountant back. Taking punch after punch to his face.

He squeezes The Accountant's wounded arm as hard as he can --

THE ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)
 AAAAHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

His Husband wobbles out of the bathroom naked, clutching his lower back in agony.

HUSBAND
 Jesus fucking --

THE ACCOUNTANT
 Help me! Help me!

His Husband spots the HATCHET laying abandoned on the ground.

He grabs it -- marches towards the scrum --

HUSBAND

Hold him! Hold him still!

Panic consumes James -- he struggles desperately -- The Accountant collapses his body across James, holding him --

The Husband holds the hatchet with two hands, lifts it high above his head --

WHAM! The closet door to his left BURSTS OPEN --

ANOTHER BLACK-CLAD FIGURE with a WOODEN MASK rushes out --

The Husband barely has time to breathe before the blade of a HAND PLANER slices through his spinal cord!

He collapses to the ground. Blood pools by his neck.

ROB pulls his mask off. Loops his arms under The Accountant's armpits, yanks him away. Tosses him in the corner.

Helping James to his feet --

ROB

Are you alright?

James nods woozily. Rob grabs the hatchet, offers the handle.

Nods to The Accountant, cowering in the corner.

JAMES

I don't think... I can't...

Rob hides his disappointment.

ROB

That's okay. It's okay. You did really good.

THE ACCOUNTANT (O.S.)

I have m-m-money.

The brothers turn to look at The Accountant. He cradles his arm. Stares at his Husband's corpse.

THE ACCOUNTANT (CONT'D)

Not just m-m-mine. I can get you m-m-millions.

Rob hefts the hand planer. Crosses to The Accountant.

Leans down -- pulls his hand back -- The Accountant SCREAMS --

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP

The HAND PLANER slices across the surface of an END TABLE. Smoothing the surface with a rhythmic *shk-shk-shk*.

Another end table sits nearby. A set of two.

James watches his brother work. Both eyes hooded black. Purplish bruising across his face.

ROB

I'm getting some Pink Ivory lumber shipped in from Zimbabwe. It's the best in the world.

(beat)

For your first piece of woodwork.

JAMES

I don't think I can do this.

ROB

Don't say that. It was my fault.

Rob finishes planing. Sweeps a few shavings off.

ROB (CONT'D)

You had no passion for him. There was no fantasy to consummate.

He hangs up the hand planer.

ROB (CONT'D)

It works best when you've already had the dream. Felt the urge.

He pauses for impact. This is a big deal for him.

ROB (CONT'D)

That's why I want you to have her.

This gets James' attention.

ROB (CONT'D)

I'll hate to lose her, but it's perfect, isn't it? Shouldn't she be your first?

Nodding slowly...

JAMES

I've had the dream. The urge.

Gesturing to the wall of TOOLS --

ROB
I might choose something a bit more
discreet this time.

James rises. Gears turning as he approaches the tools.

JAMES
I want to do it alone. No safety
net. Just me and her.

ROB
I get that.
(beat)
When?

James pulls the CARVING KNIFE from the wall.

EXT. MID-RISE BUILDING - NIGHT

Rob walks towards the familiar building...

JAMES (V.O.)
Tomorrow night.

He reaches the door -- IT'S LOCKED.

A new NO TRESPASSING sign hangs on the wall. Right next to a fundraising flyer for the Resident's medical bills.

Rob glances up -- a newly-installed SECURITY CAMERA stares back at him.

He whips out his phone... feigns checking the address...

And calmly strolls away.

EXT. LENA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

James walks past the front entry of the building... then rounds the corner to the ALLEYWAY next to it.

Finds the base of a FIRE ESCAPE that snakes up the side of the building.

He leaps up -- fingers graze the bottom rung of the ladder.

Tries again -- his fingers almost curl around the rung.

He grunts in frustration. Squares up to jump again.

Whispers to himself --

JAMES

People have no idea what their
bodies are capable of.

He explodes off the ground -- and grasps the bottom rung with both hands.

CRANING UP the fire escape as he struggles...

Moving past lower-floor apartments with the curtains drawn...

The fire escape RATTLES as James makes his way up...

CRANING HIGHER... all the way to the SIXTH FLOOR...

Settling at Lena's kitchen window.

INT/EXT. LENA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She's a wreck. Ratty pajamas. Unwashed everything. Eyes red and puffy from crying.

She paces her living room on the phone, rambling in Polish as she works through some well-earned anxiety.

ON THE FIRE ESCAPE

James climbs onto the landing outside her window.

He tests the window... gently easing it up... it's unlocked.

He pulls the WOODEN MASK out from under his jacket... goes to slip it over his face... but something stops him.

He stares at Lena. Her pain. Her mess. Her voice. Her raw, unfussy humanity. It's all so close. So real.

Tears glimmer in his eyes.

LENA

Hunches over on the couch. Head hanging as she finishes the call. Tosses the phone aside.

The SQUEAK of a shoe scuffing the hardwood floor... she raises her head...

JAMES stands in the doorway to her kitchen. Unmasked. Hands in his pockets.

Lena goes still. Shock doing its thing.

JAMES

Do you recognize me?

She nods carefully.

LENA
The other night.

JAMES
That's right. I tried to save you.

LENA
You killed them.

JAMES
No, I --

He takes a step forward -- she BOLTS for the door --

JAMES (CONT'D)
STOP! GET BACK HERE!

His voice rings through the apartment.

Lena slowly walks back, tail between her legs. Keeping her distance.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I didn't kill anyone.
(beat)
I don't want to --

He BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER. Clamps his hand over his mouth.

Tries to reset...

JAMES (CONT'D)
I don't. Want. To kill anyone.

Lena nods. Her tone is placating. Agreeable. Calming.

LENA
And you don't have to.

JAMES
You have a lovely accent. Are you from Germany?

LENA
No.

JAMES
Oh.
(beat)
There's a man. He's been watching you. He's trying to kill you.

LENA
A different man. Not you.

JAMES
What's your name?

LENA
Lena.

JAMES
Lena. I don't want to kill you. I
want to save you.

She's fighting back tears... scared out of her mind...

LENA
I don't know what that means.

JAMES
I can't stop him. He's going to
kill you. So you need to leave.
Leave the city. Go somewhere he
can't find you.
(beat)
If you don't...

Lena TREMBLES, legs failing as she collapses to the ground.
Sobs wrack her body... she holds her arms out...

LENA
Please don't do this! Don't hurt
me! Don't-don't-don't...

JAMES
You're not listening, I --

He raises his arm -- the CARVING KNIFE is in his hand.

How long has it been there?

A SEIZURE RIPPLES THROUGH HIS BODY.

He locks up. Teeth grinding. Hand clutching the knife tighter
and tighter. Veins throbbing on his neck.

His want to save battling his need to kill.

And from nowhere... swirling around him...

The spare, icy synth-pop of Karen Marks' Cold Cafe.

A soundtrack to a moment only he can understand.

He's hearing the music.

The world around him moves into HYPERFOCUS as the synth sparkles... colors PULSE... surfaces SWIRL...

An LSD FLASHBACK devours his nervous system.

Sunlight drifts impossibly through the windows, wrapping him in a hazy midday hue.

Lena's HEART BEATS loudly. SWEAT BEADS on her clammy skin.

FLASH to her dead body splayed across the sofa.

The hardwood floors stretch and contract.

The pink flesh of Lena's toes presses against them.

FLASH to a life-size wooden model of Lena, sitting just where she is on the sofa.

The music grows LOUDER -- echoing across the room -- reverberating back on itself --

James' POV -- the world starts PULSING in tune with the music, his senses overloading.

Lena's POV -- James stands perfectly still. The apartment is still and silent.

The carving knife trembles in the air...

It CLATTERS to the ground as James drops to his knees.

Grabs two handfuls of his hair, wrenching his head around --

JAMES (CONT'D)
AAAAHHHH!!!! STOP!!! STOP IT!!!

Lena seizes the opportunity -- she's out the door in the blink of an eye.

James collapses to the ground, spasming and groaning.

Moving like his limbs are encased in cement.

A SPIDER scuttles across the floor in front of him.

He forces one arm up... balls a fist... SMASHES the spider.

His body unlocks. He gasps for breath.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Lena...? Lena?

Lurching to his feet, he exits the apartment.

INT. LENA'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He slides down the hallway, leaning his weight on the wall.

JAMES

Lena!

DING!

The elevator doors open...

JAMES (CONT'D)

Lena, he'll find you! He'll --

A POLICE OFFICER exits the elevator. Taser already primed --

50,000 volts course through James' body as he tumbles to the ground.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM

FLUORESCENT TUBES flicker and hum under the smoke-stained plastic of a ceiling lamp.

TILTING DOWN to James, sitting miserably at a small table.

Decades of smoke, spit and dirt seeped into the walls.

ELLSWORTH enters. A banker's box under her arm. She slings it onto the table. Settles into the chair opposite him.

She can't hide her smile. She really does enjoy this.

ELLSWORTH

Mr. First Day in Town.

(beat)

It is truly a pleasure to see you again.

JAMES

You've got this wrong.

ELLSWORTH

Before you get into it -- and trust me, I'm dying to hear this -- let me show you what I got.

She pulls a DVD-R from the box. Tosses it on the table.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)

I got you on CCTV, entering the building 10 minutes before the Randolphins and the security guard were killed.

JAMES

I didn't kill them.

ELLSWORTH

Now I asked you nicely to wait. I got Lena Holland's eyewitness account that you were there. You entered her apartment first, then you rushed next door to the Randolphins and she heard a scream --

JAMES

No. No. The scream was first.

A CARVING KNIFE wrapped in an evidence bag slams onto the table.

ELLSWORTH

I got you back at her apartment tonight, carrying this, trying to kill her.

(beat)

You know what this knife is used for?

JAMES

It's a carving knife. For wood.

ELLSWORTH

That's right. Forensics says the Randolphins were killed with woodworking tools.

JAMES

I don't --

She lifts the WOODEN MASK from the box. Holds it up.

ELLSWORTH

You don't what? You don't know anything about woodwork?

JAMES

I didn't make that.

ELLSWORTH

Oh? You got a lead on who did?

James just stares. Unable to answer the question.

JAMES
I'm not a killer.

ELLSWORTH
So why did you go to Lena Holland's building tonight? Why did you climb up the fire escape and break into her apartment?

JAMES
It's complicated.

ELLSWORTH
Not for me.

She packs up her evidence.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
I've got you for 72 hours before I have to charge you. I'll get you on the Randolphs either way... but I got ten other bodies in the morgue. And I like you for them.

James goes silent. Desperately tries to think of a way out.

JAMES
I'd like to make my phone call.

ELLSWORTH
That's cute. We'll let your brother know about your arrest. I'm sure he'll arrange a lawyer for you. But you're not talking to anyone.

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Rob paces in the darkness. Phone to his ear.

ROB
Yes. Yes, of course. Okay.
(beat)
Thank you, officer. Bye.

He crosses to a shelf full of drawers.

Pulls one open: SCREWS and NAILS of various sizes inside.

He digs through them, sifting around...

Finally coming up with two AGED GOLD WEDDING BANDS.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Rob exits the side door of an apartment building.

He pulls off his BLACK GLOVES and BLACK SWEATER.

Stuffs them, and his WOODEN MASK, into a backpack he's stashed in a planter.

He rummages through the backpack. Pulls out a BURNER PHONE and a handheld AUTOTUNER device.

Dials. Waits. Places the device over his mouth.

ROB

I'd like to report a murder.

(beat)

Carrie Randolph is face-down in a pool of her own blood. Just like her parents.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ellsworth and other OFFICERS are huddled around a computer, listening to a RECORDING of Rob's 911 call.

ROB (V.O.)

I used a hammer this time. Tell the police that her sister's next.

The call disconnects. Ellsworth stares at the screen in disbelief.

CAPTAIN BURRY, unusually young and soft-spoken, gently twists the knife.

CAPTAIN BURRY

He made the same call to the news right after this.

(beat)

The Randolphs' wedding bands were found on Carrie's body.

ELLSWORTH

Too neat. Doesn't make any sense.

CAPTAIN BURRY

For the record, I agree with you.

ELLSWORTH

Don't say it.

CAPTAIN BURRY

Gotta let Hanson go.

ELLSWORTH

Bullshit we do. He knows something.
I still have two days to break him.
(gestures to the screen)
He doesn't even know about this.

CAPTAIN BURRY

No. But his lawyer does.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A silk-shirted LAWYER looks on as James signs himself out of police custody and collects his belongings.

Ellsworth leans on the counter next to him. Invading his space.

ELLSWORTH

I'll still get you on the B&E.
Assault with a deadly weapon.
You'll do time.

LAWYER

Don't respond to her.

ELLSWORTH

Watch yourself, James. Cause I'll
be watching, too.

LAWYER

So you'll be stalking and harassing
my client? Do you wanna put that in
writing for me?

ELLSWORTH

(to the Lawyer)
Fuck yourself.

The Lawyer grabs James, steering him towards the door.

LAWYER

Cops fuck themselves. Lawyers fuck
other people.

They exit through the front doors. Walk down the steps.

Ellsworth moves to the window.

Watches as ROB hops out of a LIMO and wraps James in a hug.

Shakes the Lawyer's hand, sending him on his way.

Ushers James into the limo. Climbs in after him.

OFF Ellsworth, curiosity piquing once again...

INT. LIMO - DAY

POP! Champagne fountains from a bottle of Dom Perignon.

Rob steers the champagne into two flutes. Hands one to James.

JAMES

What are we celebrating? I'm going
to prison.

Waving his hand dismissively --

ROB

Rich people don't go to prison.

JAMES

I'm not rich.

ROB

Tell that to the champagne you're
drinking.

James reluctantly takes a swig of the champagne.

ROB (CONT'D)

And to answer your question, we're
celebrating you.

(beat)

"Attempted Murder". One pesky verb
away from the promised land.

JAMES

I got caught. That's twice in a row
I've botched it.

ROB

Third time's the charm.

(beat)

Of course, you can't go anywhere
near The Woman.

JAMES

Lena.

Rob stares at him blankly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Her name's Lena.

ROB

I know.

He gives James a long, curious look. Appraising him.

ROB (CONT'D)

The Woman's off-limits for you. Too risky.

James nods, barely hiding his relief.

ROB (CONT'D)

So we'll set you up with an alibi, something bulletproof. Keep you in the public eye all night... while I take care of her.

JAMES

What? Why?

Rob goes cold. Cuts his brother in half with a stare.

ROB

"Why?" Are you with me here or not?

JAMES

I'm with you.
(convincing himself)
I'm with you.

ROB

Alright. Then relax. You get the easy part. All you've gotta do is sit there and enjoy her company.

JAMES

Whose company?

Rob smiles playfully. Highly pleased with himself.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A glamorous SOCIALITE leans over the table in a private booth. Everything about her shines: her teeth, her hair, her silk dress, the jewelry jangling from her neck and wrists.

SOCIALITE

They think since I'm the Governor's daughter, I should act a certain way. But I don't give a fuck about her, and I don't give a fuck about them. You know?

JAMES sits opposite. Not a hair out of place. His suit fits like a second skin. His bruising reduced to a few roguish scars.

JAMES

Not giving a fuck is hard for me.

The restaurant is impeccable. Exclusive. A place to be seen.

The Socialite adjusts her cleavage. James politely looks away... and notices other diners stealing looks at them.

Perfect.

SOCIALITE

You look so much like Rob. Ugh.
What's he been up to lately?

FLASH -- Lena SCREAMS in terror as Rob descends on her.

James blinks, shaking the vision from his head.

JAMES

Is that good? That I look like him?

SOCIALITE

It's definitely not bad. Whatever,
I'm not good at flirting. You guys
are both hot.

FLASH -- Lena's corpse lays across a slab in the morgue.

James grimaces. Smacks his head.

JAMES

Fuck. Fuck.

SOCIALITE

O-kay. So you're not good at
flirting either.

(beat)

Are you like crazy or something?

JAMES

I'm sorry, I'm... uh...

FLASH -- James holds Lena down as Rob stabs her.

James bursts into laughter. Every eye in the restaurant turns towards him.

The Socialite sits up straighter. Intrigued.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know what? I think I might be.

He leans in and whispers, conspiratorial --

JAMES (CONT'D)
I think I might be going completely
insane.

The Socialite leans in herself, matching his tone --

SOCIALITE
I like insane.

JAMES
Not this kind of insane.

SOCIALITE
Big talk.

She settles back into her seat.

James soaks in the elegance around him. Strokes the silver
and fine linens.

JAMES
I used to dream about this. Fancy
restaurant. Beautiful woman. We're
laughing. The night's young.
Endless possibilities.

SOCIALITE
See now this? This is flirting.

JAMES
My mother died in April.

The Socialite checks out. Turns to her phone.

SOCIALITE
I'm way too high for this.

JAMES
I thought she died so I could have
a fresh start. I thought she led me
to Rob so he could help me. But she
didn't. She led me to Rob so I
could...

He goes silent. A moment of revelation.

James stands. Tosses some cash on the table.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You're a very exciting person and I
wish we had met under different
circumstances.

He buttons his jacket and weaves towards the exit.

The Socialite watches him go. Smiles at the genuine compliment. Pockets the cash.

EXT. ROB'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A TAXI pulls up in front of the building. James launches out of the back seat and heads inside.

The taxi drives off...

Lingering on the empty street...

Until an unmarked POLICE CAR rolls to a stop.

ELLSWORTH peers through the open window.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James bursts through the door --

JAMES

Rob?! ROB!

James pinballs through the apartment -- scouring for any sign of his brother --

THE HALLWAY

James reaches the door to the DISPLAY ROOM.

His hand shakes as he reaches for the handle.

He forces his fingers around it... grits his teeth...

But he just can't do it.

POUNDING on the door instead --

JAMES (CONT'D)

Rob?! You in there?

No response.

He moves back down the hallway, heading for the front door.

He notices the new WOOD SIDE TABLES placed on either side of the entryway.

His WOODEN DAGGER sits atop one of them.

James' gaze rises...

An array of KEY FOBS hang from hooks above the table.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

James rockets out of the elevator towards the DOORMAN.

DOORMAN
Evening, Mr. Curtis.

JAMES
I'm not --

He stops himself. Dangles a Mercedes-Benz key fob from his fingers --

JAMES (CONT'D)
Evening. Can you swipe me into the garage?

EXT. ROB'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A MERCEDES-BENZ S-CLASS flies out of the garage --
SPARKS FLY as it bottoms out against the pavement --
Gears GRIND -- lock in -- the car explodes down the street.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - NIGHT

The Mercedes crawls down narrow alleyways.
Headlights wash across empty buildings...
They settle on Rob's Audi.
James kills the engine. Climbs out.
Heads straight for the door of the workshop...
But it's locked from the inside.
Loud, throbbing INDUSTRIAL TECHNO pours through the walls.
James stalks the perimeter of the warehouse, looking for a way in.
No back door... just a small WINDOW along the back wall.
LIGHT flickers through the dust-clouded glass.
He peers through the window, squinting through the filth --
LENA is inside, blindfolded and gagged!
Tied to the workbench. STROBING work lights surround her.
The glass VIBRATES from the music.

James cranes his neck -- no sign of Rob.

He searches the ground... finds nothing substantial.

Rips off his jacket. Ties it around his elbow.

Lines up his angle -- PLOWS HIS ELBOW THROUGH THE WINDOW!

The glass shatters -- SLICING DEEP into his triceps. Blood soaks through his shirt instantly.

James swallows a scream. Tears blossoming from the pain.

He gingerly wraps the jacket around his arm. Knocks the rest of the glass out of the frame.

INT. ROB'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

James drags himself through the window frame. Glass scrapes across his stomach as he tumbles to the ground.

The music is DEAFENING. Grinding synths and throbbing bass.

He makes his way around the SHELVES and STACKS OF LUMBER...

Stepping around a TABLE SAW...

James approaches Lena... BLINDED by the STROBING LIGHTS...

He sees the KNOTTED ROPE securing her to the bench. Moves past her to the WALL OF TOOLS.

Grabs a HANDSAW from the wall, turns back to Lena --

The lights and music SUDDENLY STOP. The workshop goes dark.

It's whisper-quiet. Only the sound of Lena moaning and struggling with her bonds.

FOOTSTEPS RACE TOWARDS JAMES --

He's TACKLED to the ground -- the handsaw skips away --

JAMES

Rob! Rob, it's me! It's me!

Rob pulls himself up. Walks to the wall. Flips on the SPOT LIGHT over the work area.

Stares at James in disbelief. His eyes drift to the handsaw.

Confusion and betrayal battling it out in his gaze.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I can't let you do this.

Rob is deathly still. A coiled snake.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Because I need to do it myself.

Rob searches his brother. Not giving an inch.

ROB
You came here to kill her.

Lena SOBS through her gag.

JAMES
I tried to knock. But... the music.

ROB
Right. Yeah.
(beat)
I'm trying something new.

James nods in understanding. Smooths his hair back.

JAMES
I know you wanted her, but... I
know I'll regret it if it's not me.

He steps behind Lena, leaning down over her shoulder...

JAMES (CONT'D)
If I'm not the one that tastes her
last breath.

Lena squirms as he caresses her hair...

JAMES (CONT'D)
Feels her blood pumping...

Strokes her tear-stained cheek...

JAMES (CONT'D)
I can't stop thinking about it.

He leans further into Lena...

Lets his fingers drift down her back...

Lena rocks away -- he pulls her back --

She suddenly goes still. Her brow furrows.

James releases her, shrugging amiably at his brother.

JAMES (CONT'D)
You understand. Don't you?

Before Rob can answer --

ELLSWORTH (O.S.)
NOBODY MOVE!

Ellsworth steps into the light. Grinning ear-to-ear. Gun drawn. Feet set in a firing stance.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
Get on the ground now.

Neither man moves.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
I don't need a good reason to shoot
both of you. Any reason will do.

JAMES
Detective, you've got to believe
me. I came here to --

ELLSWORTH
You've got three seconds.

Rob's suspicious gaze never leaves James as he slowly kneels at the edge of the table saw.

James kneels beside him, avoiding eye contact.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
Okay. Turn around. Hands behind
your back.

The men rotate on their knees. Backs facing Ellsworth.

She digs two pairs of HANDCUFFS out of her jacket.

Drops the cuffs in both men's hands. Steps back to a safe distance.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
Tight. Let's go.

She watches as they follow her order.

Satisfied, she turns to Lena. Rips off the gag and blindfold.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)
Ms. Holland? Are you alright?

Lena gasps for breath. Eyes blinking in the light.

LENA

I -- he -- he -- he --

Rob SHOULDER-CHECKS James, sending him toppling to the side.

Ellsworth spins on her heel, marching towards her prisoners --

ELLSWORTH

What the fuck did I --

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE --

Rob flips onto his back -- shoots both feet out --

CAVING ELLSWORTH'S KNEE IN!

She loses balance, lurching forward --

He rolls across the floor --

She sprawls across the TABLE SAW --

He headbutts the saw's PEDAL MOTOR --

The blade SCREAMS TO LIFE --

SLASHING THROUGH ELLSWORTH'S THROAT!

She sinks to the ground -- gravity sending the blade up through her chin as she collapses into a bloody heap.

Rob lifts his head from the pedal. The blade slows to a stop.

James cowers, watching incredulously as Rob crawls to his feet... drags Ellsworth's body onto the pedal motor...

The blade WHIRRS back to life, spitting flecks of blood across the room.

Rob nonchalantly sits on the edge of the table saw... extends his arms back...

The spinning blade CHEWS THROUGH the links of his handcuffs.

He extends his arms. Stretches his shoulders. Hauls Ellsworth off the blade.

Heavy silence as Rob surveys the scene in front of him.

Lena still tied to the bench...

But she stares at him with grim determination.

Not screaming. Not crying. Her shoulders rise and fall softly. *Is she trembling?*

He smirks. Raises a finger -- *just a minute.*

He turns to James, helpless on the floor. Hands still cuffed. Desperately searching for a next move.

ROB
I gave you the secret. Win or lose.
Watch or be watched. Kill...

Rob glances at his wall of tools.

ROB (CONT'D)
Or be killed.

He advances towards his weapons -- passing in front of Lena --

With a SCREAM OF RAGE, Lena swipes her arms towards him --

SEVERED ROPES tumble to the ground around her chair --

She thrusts James' WOODEN DAGGER into Rob's calf!

He ROARS in pain, dropping to his knees.

Lena SLASHES again, opening a GASH across his face!

She wriggles her feet loose. Takes a look at James...

Flees towards the WINDOW. YELLING for help.

James leaps to his feet -- furiously kicks Ellsworth's corpse onto the pedal motor --

The BLADE starts up again -- James hops up onto the table -- extends his arms backwards --

The handcuff chain dances towards the blade --

Rob lurches up and SWIPES JAMES OFF THE TABLE --

The blade slices through the handcuff chain -- and SEVERS JAMES' PINKY and RING FINGERS as he falls to the ground.

James SCREAMS IN AGONY as he reels away, careening into the wall of tools -- sending them tumbling to the ground.

He wobbles away into the depths of the warehouse, weaving between shelves as he disappears from sight.

Rob RIPS the WOOD KNIFE free from his leg. Chuckles wildly through the pain.

He limps forward. Body hunched. Blood streaking down his face. Finally looking like the monster he is.

He grabs the HANDSAW from the floor. Grits his teeth. Clenches his jaw.

Clicks the LIGHTS OFF as he marches after James.

JAMES

Hyperventilates as he clambers through the pitch-black warehouse. Smacking into shelves. Tripping over his feet.

He spots a beam of moonlight cutting through the darkness.

It's coming straight through the BROKEN WINDOW at the opposite side of the warehouse.

James bee-lines for the window... but then he hears ROB's feet scuffing towards him.

He freezes... backing up... searching for a way out...

Leaving a TRAIL OF BLOOD from his severed fingers.

He backtracks past a LARGE SHIPMENT OF LUMBER, stacked vertically against the wall.

A PACKING SLIP on the lumber shines in the moonlight:

Pink Ivory. Product of Zimbabwe.

ROB

Darts around a shelf. Eyes wide like a cat. Teeth shining like fangs in the moonlight.

He looks at the empty aisle in front of the window...

And the telltale trail of blood leading away from it.

One foot drags painfully on the ground as he limps down the aisle, following the drops of blood...

He presses his lips together and begins to WHISTLE.

The tune is shaky at first... then it becomes clear...

It's Cold Cafe.

The handsaw tight in his grip as he stalks forward...

Following the trail of blood...

Passing the VERTICAL STACK OF LUMBER...

He barely has time to register James' GRUNT --

The LUMBER COLLAPSES on top of him!

He's pinned beneath it... struggling against the weight...

JAMES

Emerges behind the toppled lumber. Gasping for breath.

Looks down at his brother, slowly pulling himself free.

He looks to the BROKEN WINDOW. Escape just yards away.

James has time to run. He'll make it. It's right there.

But he's frozen. His body locked in place, caught between fight and flight.

Rob frees one arm -- sweeps the lumber away -- wrestles his way upright --

A WOOD RASP FILE PLUNGES INTO HIS STOMACH!

Rob GROANS, looking up to see James kneeling in front of him.

His hand wrapped around the handle of the blade puncturing Rob's stomach.

ROB (CONT'D)

J-J-J-

James STABS MERCILESSLY -- once -- twice -- three times --

Pure, unbridled rage as he rips holes in Rob's gut. Face twisted into a vengeful grimace.

The SHRIEK OF APPROACHING SIRENS outside...

James tears himself away. Falls back.

He shivers. Licks his lips. Gasps for breath. Riding that euphoric wave. Loving and hating every moment of it.

LOUD POUNDING on the door. The SHOUTS of POLICE.

James finds himself again. Looks at Rob, still hunched over. Watching the blood pump out of his own body.

Rob raises his head... his white teeth SMILING WIDE.

He forces his mouth open, fighting for the energy to speak --

ROB (CONT'D)
You look so beautiful.

He pitches over, sprawling across the lumber.

The door BREAKS DOWN with a bang -- FLASHLIGHT BEAMS swarm through the darkness --

James raises his hands. His eyes never leave his brother's body as the flashlight beams converge on him.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL AREA - LATER

A hive of activity. Police. EMTs. Reporters crowded behind a cordon, shouting over each other.

James sits on the rear bumper of an ambulance. Two cops flanking him.

Hands cuffed in front of him, one wrapped in a HEAVY BANDAGE.

He watches across the crowd at LENA. She sits inside another ambulance, talking with Captain Burry.

The crowd parts as A BODY BAG is carried out of the workshop.

James watches it pass, crippled by guilt.

Burry squeezes Lena's shoulder and climbs out of the ambulance. He ambles towards James.

Pulls a key from his pocket and uncuffs him.

CAPTAIN BURRY
She vouches for your story. And I
got a feeling the evidence in there
points to your brother, not you.

James searches for eye contact with Lena. Finds her. Mouths "Thank you". Offers a hopeful smile.

Lena stares at him. Bursts into tears. Turns away. Begs the EMTs to close the ambulance door.

CAPTAIN BURRY (CONT'D)
She's filing a restraining order.
Wouldn't be surprised if she sues
you. Emotional trauma.

JAMES
But I didn't hurt her.

CAPTAIN BURRY

Good. Keep it up.

(beat)

I don't want you leaving the city.
You got somewhere you can stay?

Frenzied chatter from the workshop --

A STRETCHER rolls out, carrying a body covered in blood-stained white sheets. Oxygen mask strapped to its face.

EMTs shout for James and Burry to move --

EMT

Move it! He's breathing, we gotta go now!

James' heart soars as he recognizes ROB on the stretcher.

JAMES

He's alive? Is he gonna be okay?

They shove him aside, load the stretcher in and peel out.

The ambulance's strobing lights disappear down the alleyway.

JAMES (CONT'D)

He's alive. I didn't kill him.

He turns to Burry. Nearly giddy with relief.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not a killer.

EXT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Weaving through traffic, siren ECHOING against the buildings.

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

The vehicle rocks as EMTs flurry around Rob

BREATH FOGS in his oxygen mask.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - SIMULTANEOUS

James leans his forehead against the window in the backseat of a police cruiser.

He watches the city fly by. Closes his eyes.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rob's stretcher is wheeled through double doors, making a sharp turn into an OPERATING ROOM.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - SIMULTANEOUS

James walks in. Still reeling from the night behind him.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM

Scissors cut off Rob's shirt, revealing a constellation of nasty puncture wounds.

Blood bubbles weakly from them.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT

James paces. Restless. Torment on his face.

He sits on the sofa. Feels the wooden armrest. Stands again.

Spies the COMEDY and TRAGEDY MASKS laughing at him.

Crying for him.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM

Vital signs monitors BEEP weakly.

A web of latex-gloved hands fuss over Rob's wounds.

A SURGEON's shoulders sag.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT

James appears at the end of the hallway.

He gazes at the door to the DISPLAY ROOM, tucked away at the end of the hall.

Yearning in his eyes. The shameful desire of an addict.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM

The vital signs begin to dip.

Clamps and forceps rummage through Rob's insides.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM

James walks inside. Eyes soft and unfocused.

He flips on the VIEWING LIGHTS --

The WOODWORK appears against the wall.

Entranced, James moves to the chair. Sits down.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM

The vital signs monitor FLATLINES.

The SURGEONS step back.

Blood-stained instruments drop onto trays.

With one final death rattle...

Robert Curtis succumbs to his wounds... and dies.

INT. ROB'S APARTMENT - DISPLAY ROOM

James stares into the woodwork.

Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk.

His eyes grow intense. Focused.

Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk. Shk.

He leans forward. On the edge of his seat.

The sound of WOOD CRACKING and SPLITTING...

James smiles. Blissful enlightenment on his face.

REVERSE TO THE WOODWORK:

It BENDS and STRAINS -- something forcing its way out from the inside -- with a final, decisive CRACK --

A SINGLE WORD emerges slowly from the dense grain of the wood, pulsing hypnotically as it crawls forward...

W O O D W O R K