

"THE VERSES"

Written by

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"THE VERSES"

FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHERN ONTARIO HOUSE - NIGHT

TITLE - "1966 - NORTHERN ONTARIO, CANADA"

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A MOTHER is tucking her young DAUGHTER (8) into bed and sits down on the bed caressing her daughter's hair.

DAUGHTER

Mommy?

MOTHER

Yes, sweetie...

DAUGHTER

Can Daddy read me a story?

MOTHER

I think Daddy's busy working, honey.
Can't I read Bumpy Bunny to you?

DAUGHTER

No, Mommy I really want Daddy to
read me one of his stories.

MOTHER

Ok, well let's ask him.

When the mother goes to get up from the bed, she sees that the FATHER is standing in the doorway to the room. The father has an old book in his hands.

FATHER

I think I might just have the story
you want. Should we all read it
together?

DAUGHTER

Let me see it Daddy!

The father moves toward the bed and sits down so that his daughter can see the pages of the book. The mother shuffles down to the foot of the bed. The daughter reaches for the pages and starts flipping them.

DAUGHTER

Daddy, that's not a book! It's all pictures. That one looks like a dog (giggles). And that one's a boat.

MOTHER

What's that book, Charlie?

The father ignores his wife's question.

FATHER

That's alright pumpkin. Why don't you let Mommy read you something and I'll find a better book for us for tomorrow night.

MOTHER

How does that sound, hun?

DAUGHTER

Ok, Daddy.

The father gets up from the bed and leaves the bedroom.

DAUGHTER

Good night, Daddy.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The father has gone downstairs to his den. He puts the book back on a shelf in the den. He calmly moves over to his desk and opens the top drawer. There are fabric scissors in the drawer which he pulls out. He untucks his buttoned shirt and then unbuttons the bottom buttons on the shirt thus exposing his navel and stomach.

The father takes the scissors and calmly begins cutting open his belly. The scissors drop to the floor with blood on them. The father pulls out some of his intestines and begins wrapping them around his throat.

CUT.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The mother has drawn a bath. She undresses and enters the bathtub.

INT. DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The daughter wakes up and gets out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The daughter calmly makes her way downstairs and to the door of her father's den.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

The daughter pushes open the door to the den. Her father is hanging from the ceiling fan having used his intestines as a noose. The daughter seems utterly unphased by the ghastly sight. She walks over to the bookshelf and pulls out the old book. She puts the book on the ground and reads one of the pages with her finger. On the pages are "calligrammes" - poems written in a style so as to appear as familiar objects. The daughter then turns as if she heard someone calling out from upstairs.

The daughter picks up the bloody scissors and exits the den. The book lies open on the ground suggesting its insidious nature.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The daughter walks down the hallway toward the bathroom. She pushes open the door quietly and enters the room.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The daughter approaches the bathtub but her mother cannot see her because she has a washcloth over her face as she relaxes in the tub.

MOTHER

(coyly)

Charlie... are you spying on me? You
dirty old man.

The daughter approaches her mother in the tub. The daughter

approaches her mother's nipple with the scissors and then cuts the nipple off. Her mother screams and stabbing can be heard offscreen as blood splatters the mirror.

ECU - BLOODY MIRROR

The daughter is leaving the bathroom which is now covered in blood including the bathtub which appears to be filled with blood. The mother is slashed and stabbed across her upper body.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. ACADEMY BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

TITLE - "PRESENT DAY - DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA"

ECU - SCISSORS CUTTING CELLOPHANE COVER OF CHEESE PLATTER

A store clerk is setting up a table with snacks during a Q&A session at the back of a large indie bookstore, located in the posh Chevy Chase neighborhood of Washington D.C.

Academy Bookstore hosts different community events for bookworms and intellectuals. A woman in a white blouse and black skirt, CINDY GALE (late 30s), enters the bookstore and moves to the back of the store where the talk is being given by a visiting author.

Cindy waits in the back. The area has around thirty seats and there is standing room in the back which has also become full. There are two empty seats on the end of the front row.

JAMES WULFFHART (late 30s) is an attractive man with a charming manner. The event is a book introduction and interview with James. He sits at the front of the room framed by a large vertical banner situated behind him, which hails him as a celebrated and award-winning newspaper columnist and media critic. The owner of the bookstore, MONICA (late 40s), is standing beside James's table at the front, trying to help moderate the discussion.

James is already engaged in a discussion with the guests.

JAMES
(O.S.)

Those are the kind of stories that I review. The weird stuff. The books that my colleagues choose not to look at. Perhaps, this is because these books are considered lowbrow or maybe simply because the stories can get in your head and become kind of disturbing.

The crowd chuckles. A SMITTEN WOMAN (mid 20s) in the middle seat of the second row seems pleased to be called on to ask a question.

MONICA
(pointing out)

Yes, young lady at the front in the middle there.

SMITTEN WOMAN

Well, first of all, thank you so much for coming to D.C. to visit us.

JAMES

It's my pleasure. That's what Washington needs right... more press?

The crowd titters and a VOICE FROM THE BACK calls out.

VOICE FROM THE BACK
(O.S.)

We need plenty of extra eyes when the president is so blind.

JAMES

Well put.

James takes a sip from his glass of water and then makes hard eye contact with the smitten woman to encourage her to continue with her question. The young woman blushes and shuffles on her seat.

SMITTEN WOMAN

After all of the amazing book reviews that you have done for the Post here in D.C. or the New York Times, now your own book...

JAMES

(humble interruption)

Just to be clear... it's an anthology of essays and memoirs mostly.

SMITTEN WOMAN

Well, as an aspiring novelist, I've always thought about the forewords and acknowledgements that authors have to write. For me, that seems the toughest task... to make sure everyone who helps gets credit.

James is nodding approvingly.

SMITTEN WOMAN

How do you approach that?

James takes a moment to collect his thoughts.

JAMES

Well, that's a very good question actually...

James launches into his response. Cindy is now moving forward from the standing room at the back and takes the empty seat at the front. There was a baseball cap on the seat to hold it, which Cindy now picks up and places in her lap.

JAMES

... I will usually save giving credit until just before sending the work off to the editors for final revisions. There is a never-ending process of discovery with the types of books that I am reviewing. These are unexplored worlds, but they are always revealing their secrets... if you know where to look.

There are some more people eager to ask questions, but James takes a minute because he still has thoughts about what the young woman asked him.

JAMES

The books I review have a kind of life essence - a spirit. They are aggressively original works, so the first acknowledgement I give is always to the authors.

Monica signals for someone else in the crowd to ask a question.

JAMES

(pointing out)

Yes, in the black shirt near the back.

An EAGER WOMAN in the standing room at the back begins to ask a question and the seated crowd half-turns to acknowledge her. Beside her are three individuals who look unpleasant and not happy to be in attendance.

EAGER WOMAN

We think of you as a book reviewer and book critic, but it almost sounds like you are more of an investigative journalist. Where do you think those two roles cross-over the most?

James starts into his response. Cindy is running her fingers across the brim of the baseball cap that is still in her lap.

JAMES

Well, I think being a critic is a form of journalism..

MONICA

(politely interrupting)

(O.S.)

James, I believe you got your start in journalism as a foreign editor for the New York Times.

James winks at Cindy and she smiles back. Cindy has her gaze locked on James. James can be heard continuing with his answer.

JAMES

(O.S.)

Yes... that's right. I was in Lagos,
Nigeria and Monrovia, Liberia for
most of the early...

ECU - CINDY'S EYE BLINKS

CUT.

The group of guests have broken-up and thinned-out a bit. The chairs have been moved over against the wall in small stacks and there are snacks on the long table where James had been doing his Q&A. Everyone who has stayed is standing around chatting, holding little paper plates with cheese and crackers, and little plastic cups filled with soft drinks or wine.

James and Cindy are speaking quietly to each other. James is now wearing the baseball cap. Cindy is whispering something to James.

The bookstore owner, Monica, comes over to James and Cindy with a friend, JEAN, in tow.

MONICA

I was saying to Jean here that I
had to introduce you two given
Jean's research this past year.

JAMES

Are you a journalist?

JEAN

University professor at Georgetown.
In the English department but I
dabble in new media.

James and Cindy seem impressed.

JEAN

I'll be teaching a course this fall
on "marginalized authorship". So,
some of the units touch on books
you have reviewed. I put your
"I, Hoarder" review as the first
course reading actually.

JAMES

Well, I'm truly flattered.
(directed to Monica)
The "I, Hoarder" book was an
autobiography by a man who had
collected over one million decks of
playing cards. Actually, I traveled
down south to Australia to see the
collection firsthand.

CINDY

I remember that.

The group finds the collector's feat incredible. At that moment, the unpleasant trio that had always been standing at the back (and during the Q&A) now move forward toward James with provocative intent.

The trio consists of a SURLY WOMAN (late 40s), a SNEERING WOMAN (mid-30s) and a STERN man (mid-30s). The surly woman has let her hair go prematurely grey and the grey streaks over black hair lends the woman an air of severity.

SURLY WOMAN

How can you justify publishing the
review of Arnold Tasmin's book?

The surly woman shows great hostility with her accusation while her partners look threatening as they stand behind her in support. James, Cindy, Monica, and Jean are apprehensive and a little shocked by the rude and unexpected confrontation.

SURLY WOMAN

You have no integrity as a
journalist and shouldn't be allowed
to publish at all.

James takes off his cap and scratches his head.

JAMES

Well, I'm sorry to differ with you
madam but I believe that I do have
journalistic integrity. The role of
the media and critics is to provide
new thoughts about difficult topics.

SURLY WOMAN

That autobiography enabled Arnold
Tasmin - a man who brutally murdered
his wife and children with an axe.

The sneering woman and stern man thrust their arms forward holding out autopsy and crime scene photographs of Tasmin's victims. James doesn't seem shocked, but the rest of his group are quite disturbed by the display.

SNEERING WOMAN

A cold-blooded butcher. You gave him
a voice in the public. You gave him
a fan club.

James and his entourage look very uncomfortable. All around, other guests are starting to listen-in.

SURLY WOMAN

You allowed him to tell his side -
an abusive side got to represent
itself on its own terms even after
his victims were silenced.

SNEERING WOMAN

His victims are now remembered in
Arnold Tasmin's words.

James seems prepared for the accusation.

JAMES

You seem irate at the fact that I
am a critic and journalist who
covered that story, but you do
realize that it was a journalist
digging into the Tasmin murders
when it was just a missing persons
case. The work of that journalist
is what uncovered Arnold's crimes.

The angry trio are shifting about and rolling their eyes. They are agitated by James's smug retort. They try their best to ignore the value and truth of what James is saying.

STERN MAN

How dare you...

The stern man clenches his fist. Cindy speaks up.

CINDY

Did you see the packed room tonight?
This is why James is so popular -
people want his work and support it.
They find his reviews productive
and helpful. What he does is about
learning (laughs) and he's popular.

SURLY WOMAN

The Nazis were also popular. And
the KKK. Would you support them?

Cindy and James look at each other baffled by the nonsensical question. At this point, Monica steps in while James, Cindy and Jean are now simply embarrassed by the altercation. Monica steps between James and the surly woman. James turns his back on the trio.

MONICA

I'm not putting up with that kind
of rudeness in my bookstore. And
I'm going to have to ask the three
of you to leave... now.

Monica is persuasive with her body language and the trio accepts that they are being kicked out. The other guests had heard the argument and are muttering to each other about the angry trio, all while the trio is escorted out.

James, Cindy, and Jean collectively sigh relief and share an awkward laugh while shaking their heads.

JAMES

You should have seen how the
Scientologists reacted to me
publishing a review of their new
history book without having paid
a membership fee to the church.
I thought they were going to beam
me up to their mothership and do
some ardent probing.

Cindy and Jean chuckle.

JAMES

I slept with one eye open the rest
of the week

Monica returns to their group.

MONICA

I'm really sorry about that James.
It's just outrageous.

JAMES

Everyone should be able to voice
their thoughts and feelings.

MONICA

You certainly seem prepared for
this kind of thing. I'm not sure
that I would be able to handle it
with such poise.

JAMES

Well, I think that Cindy and I will
excuse ourselves if it's all the
same to you.

Everyone does polite hugs and handshakes. James and Cindy head
toward the entrance to the bookstore and exit the store.

EXT. CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT

On a warm late Spring evening people are milling about the posh
Chevy Chase neighborhood in Washington D.C.. Up and down the main
commercial strip friends and family enjoy some drinks on the
outdoor patios of upscale bars and restaurants.

James and Cindy cross the road and enter a coffee shop on the
corner.

INT. CHEAP TRILLS CAFÉ - NIGHT

James and Cindy grab a table at the Cheap Trills coffee shop. The
coffee shop has a little stage with a microphone stand and drum
set. The walls are adorned with portraits of famous musicians.

James stays at the table while Cindy orders drinks for them.

James is seated at the table looking around the coffee shop. He is holding a large flyer for the event at Academy Bookstore. He flips the flyer and on the other side is promotion for a book signing for another author. He folds the flyer and puts it in his jacket pocket.

James notices a bulletin board on a far wall. He gets up and moves over to it. There is a missing persons poster but the photo looks very dated. The juxtaposition of a contemporary missing persons sign with such an old photo is bizarre and uncanny. James scans the photo of a young girl (the DAUGHTER from the scissor murder scene in fact). It seems that the band's name is "Missing Persons" and the poster design is a tasteless gimmick. James verifies this by noticing another poster that says the opening act is the band, Missing Persons. Cindy has the drinks and beckons James back to the table.

JAMES

So, I think you know what I've been up to, but what about you? The last time we were together would have been Donny and Lynn's wedding..

CINDY

...four years ago. Well, where do I start?...

JAMES

You could start with that strapless green dress.

CINDY

(surprised)

You remember that?

JAMES

I called you Tinkerbell that whole night

CINDY

I recall your wife was starting to look like Captain Hook by the end.

JAMES

More like the croc that took his
hand.

James and Cindy chuckle and take sips from their mugs.

CUT.

The coffee and tea have been drunk. There are now crumbs on small white plates, and James and Cindy must have decided to have some pastries.

CINDY

Well, you always knew how to charm
the pants off editors.

JAMES

(laughing)

Not literally. I don't want that
rep getting around - most of them
are married men in their fifties.

CINDY

By the way, did you want to talk
about that 'thing' we mentioned on
the phone last week? About Jill?

James scratches his hands uncomfortably. His ring finger on his left hand has indents in the skin and a noticeable tan line. There is no wedding ring.

JAMES

Another time perhaps.

James looks at his watch.

CINDY

When is your flight?

JAMES

A couple of hours still.

CINDY

I should let you go then.

Cindy and James get up from the table and exit the coffee shop.

EXT. CHEVY CHASE - NIGHT

CINDY

When do you think your anthology
book will be ready to publish?

James seems a little frustrated and sighs.

JAMES

I had hoped that tonight's Q&A
would help. I just need to pick one
more essay, but I don't have
anything else that fits in neatly.

CINDY

Write something new then?

JAMES

I've been trying. Just a bit of a
block at the moment. Frustrating.

CINDY

I'm sure something will pop up.
Strange people and their weird
stories seem to be attracted to you.

James nods and they chuckle. The two friends have a long warm
embrace. Cindy even gives James a peck on the lips, suggesting
that they may have a romantic past.

CINDY

Keep in touch now.

James nods and walks off toward the corner to get in his cab. Cindy
continues walking through Chevy Chase.

CUT.

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

James is in his seat on the airplane with a corpulent, sweaty,
somewhat obnoxious man, JACOB WALSH (40s), beside him. The New
York City skyline lights up the night even when seen through the
off-white oval of plastic that frames the tiny plane window. James
is looking out the window and Jacob is watching him.

Jacob has picked up James's flyer that was sitting on James's folded-out tray table. Jacob laboriously reads aloud the blurb printed on the flyer.

JACOB WALSH
(O.S.)

James Wulffhart writes acclaimed book reviews for the literary world's most bizarre and intriguing content. His work can be found in a variety of leading publications, ranging from the New York Times and Huffington Post, to GQ and Playboy magazines.

James sighs and nods in recognition of the facts.

JACOB WALSH
Playboy huh... nice.

Jacob nods and winks at James. James has a cheeky quizzical look in exchange and is clearly amused by the candor of Jacob.

JACOB WALSH
Did you go to the, uh, Mansion? With the bunnies, and movies theater, and hot tubs, and all that?

JAMES
Yes, actually.

JACOB WALSH
That is Da...

Jacob then uses hand gestures to signify an atomic bomb explosion. He accompanies his gestures with typical sounds people make for bombs dropping and exploding. A flight attendant looks over at Jacob and seems concerned. At the end he mouths the word "bomb" silently.

James turns to look out the window again. Jacob keeps reading the flyer.

JACOB WALSH

So this is all your work huh...
I, Hoarder - an autobiography of
obsession. Dimensions of
Conspiracy - the history of flat-
earthing. Turning My Cheek - diary
of a pornstar. You know I think I
might have read that one..

Jacob hands the flyer back to James. James folds it and files it away inside his stylish leather satchel that is under the seat in front of him.

JAMES

Well, Jake... Jacob, I don't write the books. I review them and usually just focus on my take. Most of my readers don't actually read the books that I review... unless I give a strong recommendation. Which in all honesty... is pretty rare.

Jacob nods and reflects on the information. James passes Jacob a business card and Jacob seems impressed and grateful.

The flight attendant comes down the aisles and has everyone putting their seats back to the upright position. The plane is about to land.

EXT. KENNEDY AIRPORT - NIGHT

James is getting in a cab.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

James gets in the cab, and the CABBIE has left some magazines in the flap on the back of the driver's seat. James reaches over and pulls some of the magazines out. He flips through them and finds a tabloid publication. He flips the pages to see the cover of the magazine and then scoffs at some of the outrageous headlines and images.

The cabbie can see James perusing the magazine from his rearview mirror.

CABBIE

There's a good one about the First
Lady's sex change operation.

Most of the stories are standard fare for a tabloid, and deal with alien abductions, government conspiracies, and the like. There are some minor stories titled in the bottom corner of the cover page about sex and monsters. James turns to the table of contents and scans the issue. There is a "book review" section, but it seems that the title of the article is set up to be ironic. James turns to that page. Indeed, it is not a book review per se but instead is an "investigative report" about a supposedly haunted book.

The haunted book is reported as having been responsible for almost a hundred deaths for the people who read the book and those closest to them. The author of the article appears to find the threat of the book credible. The article ends with the author stating, "and I issue this warning to readers - some books shouldn't be read, and some stories shouldn't be written... and maybe some reviews shouldn't be published."

The article piques James's interest and he pulls out his cellphone and decides to copy the name of the haunted book review into his email drafts folder as a reminder note for later.

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The cab has arrived outside James's place. He lives in an impressive mid-rise condo building on the Upper West Side, close to Central Park.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James arrives at his apartment which is spacious, open-concept, with high ceilings, and decorated with chic, expensive furnishings. He takes off his shirt and throws himself face first onto the couch. He reaches across to the coffee table, picks up the TV remote, and turns on the news. He then promptly falls asleep.

CUT.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James wakes on the couch the next day and his condo seems half empty.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

James is doing his morning routine. He notices a woman's razor underneath an old newspaper near the toilet. He sighs and tosses the razor and newspaper in the garbage can beside the sink. It seems that James has recently gone through a breakup.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James is in his bedroom getting dressed and then walks past the living room and enters the kitchen. He goes to the fridge and there are items to throw out for being past their expiry date.

START MONTAGE - FRITTERED TIME

James fritters away his day until it is night again. He never leaves the condo but he does take some time to set up new plants that were on the window sills and puts them in pots on the balcony. And he remembers to feed the fish. Throughout the day, James is trying to start writing. He is supposed to be finishing his anthology which requires one more article or new chapter. He watches TV for a bit but tries writing again. He moves his laptop to the couch but still can't seem to work on his writing. He does some push-ups, crunches and some light weightlifting. He puts the laptop back at his desk but still can't seem to write.

END MONTAGE - FRITTERED TIME

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James turns on the news again while he is reading an email from the editor of his anthology, A.C. SEGAL. He gets a phone call. It is Cindy.

JAMES

Hey, Cindy!... (pause) no just finding out about this press junket for my book on Thursday (pause) yeah it is exciting (pause) it was really great (pause) yes, I will come back, D.C. is beautiful, (pause) sure ok. (pause) No I promise. (pause) No, I really did like seeing you. (pause) That didn't bother me. (pause) I (MORE)

JAMES

(continuing)

mean it! (pause) Well, you can visit,
just let me know the dates you're
thinking. (pause) Oh? well alright.
(pause) Sure, let's do that. (pause)
I will. Just email me the deets.
(pause) Yup, I'll gather the old
gang. (pause) Even Kevin (laughs).

As James is listening to Cindy, he notices the draft email he created the night before in the cab ride home from the airport. He opens the email and sees the title of the haunted book.

JAMES

By the way, I might have found the
topic for my final chapter. (pause)
No, it's a "haunted" book up in
Canada. (pause) No, no nothing like
that. The thing though is that the
legend has a patina of authenticity.
I don't know... something about it
tells me it's worth investigating.
(pause) Yes, alright. (laughs)
Thanks for the call. Goodnight.

He hangs up with Cindy and continues to investigate the story of the haunted book through general searches on his internet browser. The book is supposedly located in Northern Ontario, Canada. On one of the websites, he can even link through to a folder of police photographs of murder and suicide scenes associated with the haunting of the book (included are photos of the scissors murders in 1966). Some of the oldest photos have James recalling the missing persons poster at the coffee shop in D.C.. One of the victims in the old police photos looks just like the girl in the vintage photo from the band poster.

CUT.

TRANSITION - DECAY TO DIRT

The decay around the edges of the old photos on the website transition to the cracked dirt along a path through the forest.

EXT. TOP OF WATERFALL - DAY

James is now in Northern Ontario and an elderly couple is escorting him along a path through a forest. They arrive at an opening and break in the trees where they are now at the top of a waterfall. The old woman, MRS CROFT (70s), is pointing things out to James and showing him areas around the waterfall.

MRS CROFT

The old path down to the bottom was closed off several years ago.

JAMES

Why is that? Flooding?

MRS CROFT

No, no. Some of the local teens were coming here at night to hack butts or whatever they do. One of them fell down and broke their fool neck on some rocks at the bottom of the path. Park authority just closed off the path to keep things simple and straightforward and cheap for the town.

JAMES

Was it the book?

The old man, MR CROFT (70s) pipes up after clearing his throat.

MR CROFT

It was dumb horny drunk kids.

JAMES

So, do I take it then that you don't believe that this book is haunted?

MR CROFT

I believe it, but you have to read the cursed thing first off, you know... (mumbling) it makes you kill everyone you love, you damn fool.

Mrs Croft is nodding approvingly and won't stop nodding in fact. James looks around.

JAMES

So, I can't go down there and see where the book was found?

MRS CROFT

You can try. I wouldn't recommend it though. Brush grew back with a vengeance.

MR CROFT

There's nothing special to see. Just a small alcove behind the falls. It kept the book dry whenever they brought it back here.

JAMES

Who is "they"?

MR CROFT

(irritated)

Whoever.

JAMES

Is the story in the book about this place?

MRS CROFT

We don't know. We aren't going to read it.

MR CROFT

Certainly not!

At this point, James realizes that the mystery is worthy of his time and that the waterfall may have something more to offer. The elderly couple are ready to turn back but James has more to explore.

JAMES

If you don't mind waiting up here I'm going to go down there and check out the alcove.

MR CROFT

Suit yourself. We'll make our way
back to the car. I'm sure you can
catch up when you're done.

Mr and Mrs Croft make their way back while James starts to climb down the covered path that leads to the bottom of the waterfall. The descent isn't straightforward and James has running shoes instead of hiking boots.

EXT. BOTTOM OF WATERFALL - DAY

James makes it to the bottom of the waterfall. He cuts his hand on some brambles in the overgrowth. James makes his way across the rocks at the base of the waterfall. He finds a rock path that can get him in behind the waterfall.

EXT. BEHIND THE WATERFALL - DAY

James is behind the waterfall and there isn't much of interest. He turns on the flashlight for his cellphone and searches for the alcove where the haunted book was found. He finds the alcove and explores it. It seems as if kids have put messages in graffiti on the rocks of the alcove. The alcove is dry but dark. James shines the light on the messages. The writing appears to be verses but they are written much like Apollinaire's Calligrammes (poems written in the shape of familiar objects like wheels or birds). One of the calligramme messages is in the shape of an axe and reads "drink her blood; eat her flesh; but never let her take your breath"

James finds the poetry disturbing. He takes some photographs with his cellphone. When he turns around there is a woman in front of him. James is startled but surprised because he knows the woman - it is his estranged wife, JILL.

JAMES

Jill! What the hell are you doing
here? Did you follow me all this
way? What is this?! Hey!

Jill doesn't respond but instead extends her arm toward James. She has something in her hand that she wants him to take. James opens his hand and Jill drops his wedding ring into James's palm. James looks at the ring.

Jill then disrobes but James just goes with it. They make love in the alcove using the rock bench for leverage during the act. They don't say anything to each other but when the lovemaking has ended, Jill stands up and walks closer to the waterfall. She turns to James and smirks slyly. She dives backward into the waterfall as if pulled by an invisible force. She can no longer be seen.

James can't understand what just happened. He zips up his pants and races across the rock path that leads behind the waterfall. He investigates the area. There is no sign of Jill. James goes back to the alcove but her clothes are gone. James is confused.

He begins reading other calligrammes on the walls of the alcove. The poems sprawl across the walls and soon he finds that he has done a three-sixty turn but is faced with four walls. Surreally and terrifyingly, the alcove has shut him in.

The calligrammes begin lighting up with an unexplainable eerie dark orange glow. James is frightened. He uses his cellphone light to search for an exit from the alcove. There is a passage at the top that seems big enough for him to crawl through. James hoists himself up into the hole and starts crawling through.

INT. ALCOVE PASSAGE - DAY

The space of the cave passage is incredibly claustrophobic. James sees some natural light at the end of the passage. He works his way closer to the exit, but then Jill appears. She moves her head closer to the opening effectively eclipsing the light around the exit. She takes a deep breath and then blows into the passage. Surreally, the breath transforms into a gust that blows loose rocks and dirt from the passage. James gets hit with the rocks while dirt falls into his eyes and mouth. James is coughing and calling out for help but he is choking.

James tries to reverse his direction and slither his way back down the passage, but the passage walls begin closing in on him. James is being crushed to death. He screams.

EXT. BEHIND THE WATERFALL - DAY

James wakes up as if from a horrible nightmare. He is sitting in the alcove with his cellphone in his hand. His access to the waterfall has been restored. James looks at his fingers which had been pressed against the calligrammes on the walls. There is a dark orange residue on his fingertips. James can't explain the

experience but is ready to leave the area promptly.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

James ascends the path to the top of the waterfall once more. He never looks back.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

James emerges from the hiking trail and is at a small parking lot with two cars. Mr. and Mrs. Croft are eating lunch inside their Cadillac sedan. James approaches the car and knocks on the window to get their attention. Mr. Croft takes his time finishing his food and then exits the car. Mr. Croft goes to the trunk of his car, opens it and pulls out an old manuscript box that presumably has the haunted book inside. Mr. Croft brings the box over to James.

JAMES

Do they know who hid the book behind the waterfall? Is it the same person who wrote the verses on the walls of that cave? The poems...

MR CROFT

Poems?

JAMES

Nevermind. What can you tell me about the book?

MR CROFT

Well, once the townspeople became fixed on blaming the book for generations of murders and suicides one night they agreed to burn it in the town square.

JAMES

(abruptly)

I'm about to pay you a lot of cold, hard cash right now. I'm not interested in a copy. I want the real deal. I want the original.

MR CROFT

If you'd have let me finish the goddamn story, you'd know that the mayor's son jumped into the fire, pulled the book out, and ran into the woods with it.

James seems horrified.

MR CROFT

The boy turned up the next day, looking like he ran a marathon through the pits of Hell. Burnt to a crisp although he was only in the fire for but a second. He died in the hospital that night but refused to tell anyone what he had done with the book.

Mrs. Croft unrolls her window fully on the passenger's side.

MRS CROFT

That was 1958...

MR CROFT

No, it was '56 because Ike was re-elected and the town was trying to claim that the book was pinko propaganda. The Red Scare was as popular to you Yanks as it was to us Canucks.

James raises his eyebrows.

MR CROFT

Doris and I found the book behind the falls in 1975, but a few years later we had a break-in at the cottage and the only thing they stole was the blasted book.

MRS CROFT

And then the killing started again.

MR CROFT

When I became the town's mayor in '95, the sheriff returned the book to us for safekeeping. The Mounties had always thought the stories of the supernatural curses was horseshit and they never did acknowledge the book as having been direct cause of any crime in town.

JAMES

Well, I appreciate the history lesson, sir. It will help with my review.

MR CROFT

Well, I don't know nothing about that. I was giving you a warning, son. There are eighty-nine of the grizzliest most diabolical deaths associated with that book.

MRS CROFT

It's clear to us that when Henry and I pass on, the book will not be safe in this town. It will destroy our town, our family, and our friends.

JAMES

So, you allowed that tabloid journalist to write the article in hopes that someone would offer to buy the book?

The old woman nods approvingly.

JAMES

Why not just destroy it though? Burn it like before... or bury it?

MR CROFT

That book would probably find a way to survive... and at our expense. Plenty have tried to destroy it.

James understands that the elderly couple legitimately fear the book. Mr Croft pats the top of the manuscript box which he then hands over to James.

MRS CROFT

Now, realize that you agree to take full responsibility for this book. This is yours now.

MR CROFT

We don't want to see it or you ever again.

Mr Croft walks back to his car and seems tired and fed up. James puts the box on the hood of his car which is next to the Cadillac. He pulls out an envelope from the inside of his jacket pocket. He hands the envelope to Mr Croft. Mr Croft flips some of the bills in the envelope. There is fifty thousand dollars in the envelope.

MRS CROFT

Now, here is the most important part - we don't ever want to hear from you or see you again.

MR CROFT

(dismissive)

I already told him that, daft woman!

Mr Croft seems annoyed by the whole meeting. He gets in his car and they pull out from their spot. Before leaving, Mr. Croft beckons James over as if he needs to whisper something important to him. James obliges and leans in.

MR CROFT

Don't... read... a damned word of that book.

Mrs Croft pats her husband on the shoulder and has a look of concern for his emotional state. James watches as the elderly couple drive off.

CUT.

EXT. CANADIAN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

James had driven into Northern Ontario during the day and on the

way back home it becomes nighttime. He finds a Holiday Inn and pulls into the hotel's parking lot.

INT. HOLIDAY INN ROOM - NIGHT

James is in the bathroom of his hotel room attempting to wash the residue from the cave calligrammes off his fingertips.

He crashes on the bed, but after a few minutes of lying still, he gets up and sets up his computer at the desk. There is an email from Jill claiming that she is on a business trip in Los Angeles and will be back in New York in a few days and that she needs to come by James's apartment to pick up some things she forgot.

James realizes that he must have imagined Jill at the waterfall. He goes to the haunted book and almost opens the manuscript box but decides to wait. He stares at the box and is unnerved by its presence on the desk. He lays on the bed and this time dozes off.

The top of the manuscript box begins moving on its own. It is as if something in the box is trying to get out. James wakes up and sees what is happening with the box. Blood starts to pour from the box and is dripping onto the floor. James gets up and backs up toward the bathroom.

Suddenly, the bathroom door swings open. The dead MOTHER from 1966 can be seen in a bathtub full of blood. Her DAUGHTER is standing in the doorway with scissors in her hand. She moves forward slowly and then charges at James. James screams and covers his eyes.

James wakes up in bed and realizes that it was just another vivid nightmare. James quickly packs up all his stuff and heads out on the road even though it's still dark out.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James's car is peeling out of the parking lot.

CUT.

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James is arriving back home at dawn and parks in the underground parking at his building.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING - DAY

James looks exhausted and he is hauling his things through the underground parking lot when the front desk concierge comes around the corner and startles James.

CONCIERGE

Something was dropped off for you
last night, sir.

James is irritated at being startled but doesn't say anything about it. He follows the concierge to the elevator and they go up to the lobby.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

CONCIERGE

Been traveling, Mr. Wulffhart?

JAMES

Yes, to Canada.

CONCIERGE

Researching for a book review?

INT. MAIN LOBBY - NIGHT

James and the concierge move toward the front desk and James tries to ignore the question. The concierge fishes around in a drawer at his station. He pulls out an envelope and hands it to James who takes it.

CONCIERGE

There you go, sir.

JAMES

Who dropped this off?

CONCIERGE

I'm sorry, but it wasn't my shift.
I could find out if you'd like.

JAMES

No, it's fine. I'll just open it.

James takes the envelope and puts it under his arm while heading back to the elevator.

CUT.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James finishes a workout in his home gym. He takes a shower and dries off. James is ready to open the box with the haunted book inside.

James goes to his couch in the living room and lifts the lid off the manuscript box. The haunted book is inside the box. The book cover and bindings are very old and worn. The book looks readable and probably dates back less than one hundred and fifty years. James picks up the book and examines the outside of it.

START MONTAGE - READING HAUNTED BOOK

James starts reading the book and cannot put it down. He is deciphering the calligrammes and drawing the pictures on separate sheets of paper. He gets cover to cover and puts the book down.

END MONTAGE - READING HAUNTED BOOK

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James wakes up the next morning and approaches his desk. James has his anthology document open on the laptop. It seems that he has already written the final chapter about the haunted book. James emails the finished document to his editor, A.C. SEGAL.

James goes to the kitchen to make breakfast and he has trouble with a clogged sink. When he unplugs the sink there is a gold ring that he pulls out. It is a wedding band and he quickly checks the pockets of the pants he was wearing during his trip which are still slung over the couch. It isn't his wedding band which was still in his pocket. He compares the rings and they look almost identical. He puts the found ring aside on the edge of the counter.

CUT.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

James is with Cindy walking through Central Park. Cindy has one of the trendy new Polaroid cameras and while they are walking in the park, she is snapping photos. Sometimes, she shows the photos to James.

CINDY

Have you read it?

JAMES

Yes, cover to cover.

CINDY

So, it was a good read?

JAMES

It's really abstract. Ergodic. Like a maze. A labyrinth It's not a story. More like a set of diaries. Written by dozens of different authors.

CINDY

Really?

JAMES

Well, it's made to look that way.

CINDY

What's it all about though?

JAMES

It's sort of disturbing. The diary entries are kind of like confessions of murders and suicide notes.

CINDY

That sounds awful. Are they real?

JAMES

I mean they might be.

CINDY

So, it's not fiction?

JAMES

Well that's just it - there is a story interwoven with the confessions. Each author mentions this young woman and they tell her story through these picture poems.

CINDY
You're making it up!

JAMES
No, I'm serious! And the story of
this young woman is quite...
unsettling.

CINDY
How so?

JAMES
It's just a story about a young
woman who sits up on this empty hill.
And she's seated on a rocking chair.
She just rocks back and forth... for
years as she ages.

CINDY
Nothing else happens?

JAMES
As the woman is aging and just
thinking through life, the wood of
the rocking chair is growing into a
tree behind her. And then at the
point where the tree is full grown,
the woman who is now elderly,
climbs the tree and jumps off the
highest branch she can reach,
falling to her death.

Cindy has nothing to say at first and she seems mesmerized by the
story.

CINDY
That's really dark, James. But I
guess so was Kafka's Metamorphosis,
or Poe's Tell-Tale Heart. Goethe's
Faust. Macabre stories that maybe
at the time they were written
people even thought were stories
that had a capacity to haunt or
curse. But, it is just a story...
a product of creative imagination.

James and Cindy sit down on a park bench.

JAMES

Yes, I realize that. But I've been doing some research and there really are some troubling events that have happened around the owners of this book. Grizzly murders and suicides. More than a couple, so it can't really be just a coincidence.

Cindy looks concerned now.

CINDY

Well, I think you should be careful then.

JAMES

I have a theory. But I'm not sure it would be safe to publish it.

CINDY

What do you think is going on?

CUT.

INT. A.C. SEGAL OFFICE - DAY

James is in a heated discussion with his editor. A.C. Segal isn't happy with the final chapter that James added to the anthology.

JAMES

Obviously, curses are fantasy, they're not real. It just gets in your head and you make it reality.

A.C.

Make a point here, Jim.

JAMES

But, these murders are real so, there might be a person or persons that want it to seem that the book
(MORE)

JAMES

(continuing)

is truly cursed. They might be behind all the murders... like a cult or something.

A.C.

A cult?

JAMES

Yeah, remember when I investigated that autobiography of the English farmer in Essex?

A.C.

(ponders)

The crop circles?

JAMES

Yes. And it turned out that at the start of the Industrial Revolution when everyone moved into cities and became urbanized, farmers formed a cult and made the circles as hoaxes to mock city slickers.

A.C.

(sarcastic)

Maybe this woman in the tree was the original cult leader that got the whole thing started then. Like Canada's Charlie Manson.

JAMES

I'm not ruling out explanations at this point.

A.C.

Well I am! This chapter about this "haunted book" doesn't fit with the rest of your anthology. It has to be cut.

JAMES

You're kidding right? This is an
(MORE)

JAMES

(continuing)

opportunity to tell a story that has never been known to the world. To give these victims a voice.

A.C.

Jim, the magic of your writing is how fair and objective you are. You are a skeptic, not a zealot. And if these murders are real then it's something for the police to deal with. End of discussion.

CUT.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

James and Cindy are back at Central Park sitting on the bench.

CINDY

A.C. is probably right you know.

JAMES

Well, I don't know about that.

CINDY

I'm telling you. If you review this book and go back into that town where you found it... in a couple of years that old couple that sold it to you will probably be charging top dollar for entrance to the rocking-chair-tree-lady museum. Take the suicide ride, get a free pound of poutine at the gift shop afterward. It's Zamboni baloney - a scam.

James laughs.

CINDY

It's true! You should know this already. All these conspiracy theories, stories about spooks and monsters is about **selling fear to**
(MORE)

CINDY
(continuing)
**those that feel comfort from being
scared.** It's perverse.

JAMES
I'm going to quote you on that.

James pulls out his cellphone and begins writing down what Cindy said into an email draft. Cindy chuckles about it.

TRANSITION - PHONE DRAFT TO LAPTOP DRAFT

James has written the Cindy quote in the draft through his phone, but he is now closing that draft on his computer at home.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James is at his desk and opens the anthology manuscript document. James is checking that the Foreword and Acknowledgements are placed in the document properly. He then deletes the final chapter about the haunted book and replaces it with Cindy's quote to be both pithy for his readers and snarky toward A.C. Segal.

He is sending an email to the publisher confirming that the manuscript is ready with a copy attached. James goes to the kitchen and pours himself a shot of expensive bourbon. He raises the glass as if to celebrate and he catches himself performing through the reflection of the glass window of the oven. He throws back the shot.

James then receives a phone call which he answers on speakerphone. It is his estranged wife, JILL calling while driving (INTERCUT).

JILL
Jamie...

James says nothing. He knows it is his wife.

JILL
Are you going to talk to me?

James is still silent. He pours himself another glass of bourbon.

JILL

I just wanted to know that you are alright. I heard that you're ready to publish the anthology.

James clears his throat.

JAMES

There was a press thingy the other day.

JILL

That's really great. I'm happy for you. How are Stan and Kyle?

James walks over to the fish tank and taps on the glass to rouse the fish.

JAMES

I fed them earlier.

JILL

Don't forget to clean the tank.

James shifts tone.

JAMES

Well, maybe you should just take them to your new place... wherever that is.

There is awkward silence.

JILL

I mean I could, if that's what you want. I thought you liked their company.

JAMES

You were the one that was supposed to keep me company. You're my wife.

JILL

Please don't start. I can pick up more of my stuff on the weekend if
(MORE)

JILL

(continuing)

you are around... or if you are ok
with me being there on my own...

JAMES

Are you sure you'd be here on your
own anyway?

JILL

What are you talking about?

James goes over to the kitchen counter and picks up the wedding
band.

JAMES

I found a man's wedding ring stuck
in the sink. It looks just like the
one you gave me.

JILL

Oh...

JAMES

Yeah... "oh".

JILL

Well, just leave it with the fish
food and I'll grab it all Sunday.

James hangs up without saying goodbye. Jill sounds like she has
moved on.

James goes to his desk and opens the haunted book again. As James
starts reading some of the pages, he notices a hidden pattern on
the pages. He pulls out the loose pages he had with his drawings
of the calligrammes from the book.

He grabs scissors from his desk drawer and begins cutting out the
separate pictures. He assembles them into a configuration. There
is a boat, a bird, a wheel, a house, a dog, a tree, an axe, and
other objects. When arranged on the page they come together to
form a scene.

Suddenly, some of the objects come to life. The boat's sail seems
to be blowing as if there were a breeze. The bird begins flapping

its wings. The paper bird then comes off the desk and flutters in front of James. James is astounded and goes to reach out for the bird.

The bird teases James and then leads him to the closet door in his study. He opens the door and the setting from the arranged objects has come to life through the closet door. James is looking out onto a daytime pastoral setting. It is eerily calm.

He keeps following the paper bird as he steps through the surreal portal. The paper bird transforms into a real bird and James now realizes that he can't return to his apartment.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James is mesmerized by the journey into the fantastic space. He can see the sailboat on the water and the house up on a hill. The tree is there on another hill along with a wooden wheel propped against a wooden box that is closer to him on the way to the house. All of the objects from the calligrammes appear to be represented.

James approaches the house on the hill. He enters the house and explores the space.

INT. PASTORAL WORLD HOUSE - DAY

The house seems old, perhaps going back to the early Industrial Revolution era. There isn't much of interest inside the house and so James exits and heads toward the tree on the other hill.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James reaches the tree and sees the rocking chair fused with the tree just as in the haunted legend. James examines the rocking chair. He looks up into the tree as if he were looking for the woman from the story. He then hears a door slam behind him. It sounds like it came from the house.

He walks back over to the house and then spots the wooden wheel once more. The wheel is propped up against a wooden box and he can now see that the box is a simple wood coffin. James walks over to the coffin and slowly lifts the lid.

Inside the coffin is a young woman, JANUS. Janus appears dead. James can start to hear something scraping inside the coffin. It sounds like it might be coming from inside Janus's mouth. James

opens Janus's mouth and it is now clear that she is a corpse.

The scraping noise is coming from a folded-up piece of paper inside Janus's mouth. James carefully extracts the paper from Janus's mouth and begins unfolding the paper. On the paper is written a message.

The message is a calligramme and it is a skull image but the words are only "James Wulffhart" repeated to construct the image epitaph.

At that moment, Janus rises from her coffin and grabs James. She forces a kiss on James and she is strong enough to overpower him. She is sucking the life out of him. His ears and nose are bleeding as the death kiss persists. James is choking to death. His bones are snapping and his skin is bruising and welting.

Janus pulls James into the coffin with her as if he was a rag doll. Their bodies sink into the coffin as if it was bottomless. James reaches out to be saved. The bodies continue sinking into a deep black void until they can no longer be seen.

CUT.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James wakes at his desk. He is terrified by what he assumes was a nightmare, but which seemed far more real. James looks at the sheets of paper on his desk and the calligrammes are gone. Only the message from the paper inside Janus's mouth remains and it is written on all the loose pages repeatedly (the skull with his name).

James scrambles for the old haunted book and starts flipping through pages. All of the calligrammes and unique stories are gone and the pages are completely blank except for gunky dark orange residue stains much like what James encountered in the cave.

James is utterly spooked by the skull message and the transformation of the book. He takes the haunted book and puts it back in the manuscript box. He goes over to the closet door afraid to open it. He slowly opens the door but the closet is normal. He throws the manuscript box into the closet and slams the door closed. He backs away from the closet still terrified by his nightmarish experience.

He goes to the bathroom to wash his face but also decides to shave.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

It is nighttime again and it took James several hours to experience the pastoral world. He takes his clothes off and begins shaving with shaving cream and a straight razor. Near the end, he cuts himself and blood drops into the sink. He washes up around the sink and then runs the shower.

James stands in front of the mirror and repeats aloud the Cindy quote. He then gets closer to his reflection as if inspecting his face for some sort of anomaly. There is an abrupt knock at his front door.

James wraps a towel around his waist and leaves the bathroom to answer the door.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James looks through the peephole of his door but there is no one in the hallway. James opens the door and looks out into the hallway. The elevator door down the hall is closing but there is no one outside James's apartment. James closes the door and turns around.

James sees wet footprints leading back to the bathroom, but he also notices that his feet are not wet. He's unnerved by the mystery. He re-enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

James drops his towel and enters the shower. He is trying to relax under the water. More blood drops from the shaving cut on his neck and falls into the drain. Then a female hand begins caressing his body. Then both of her hands are on his body. He is turned by the hands but his eyes stay closed under the water.

The hands move up his chest and around his neck. The movement is seductive but could be threatening. Then the hands move down and past his stomach. He opens his eyes. There is a beautiful young woman in the shower with him. It is Janus and she is naked as well.

They begin kissing passionately and she is still feeling his body. Suddenly, the tiles in the bathroom grow mildew and fungus rapidly and some tiles begin to crack as if they were wearing down quickly. There is mold on the bottom of the shower curtain that is crawling

up the curtains rapidly. James hasn't noticed and has closed his eyes again while he kisses the woman. Then he opens his eyes and quickly sees the changing environment. He looks around and when he looks back at the young woman she ages rapidly before his eyes, transforming into a hideous decrepit old woman.

The shower is becoming arboreal and is growing up around James.

Frantically, he pushes away from Janus and then punches her. Upon being punched she turns to an explosion of orange dust. James chokes on the dust and now the tree-like growth is surrounding him.

James has passed out from the altercation and from choking on the dust. When he wakes it is as if he is on the inside of a tree. James begins peeling away layers of the tree. He works harder to break through the surface. Soon, he has created a small opening. He looks through the opening and can see that it is the pastoral world on the other side.

He keeps working on the tree until he can finally break through the bark.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James climbs out of the opening he created in the tree. James walks over to the coffin and picks up a hammer that is sitting next to the wooden wheel. He holds the hammer ready to strike if Janus is inside the coffin. He lifts the coffin lid but instead of Janus being in the coffin, he is looking from a canted bird's eye view at himself sleeping in the shower. The vision is surreal and unnerving.

Suddenly, there is a rattling at the front door of the pastoral world house. James approaches the front door of the house. The door keeps rattling and the rattling gets stronger. It is as if someone is trying to break out of the house but the door won't budge. Then the rattling stops. James waits. The door starts to open slowly. James considers confronting whoever is on the other side of the door but instead turns and runs down the hill toward the water.

James jumps in the water and begins swimming toward the sailboat that is a few hundred meters out in the lake. James is a strong swimmer and finally reaches the sailboat where he finds a dangling rope that allows him to climb aboard.

James sets the sails and begins steering the boat away from the house. Eventually, he can no longer see the land.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD OCEAN - NIGHT

The lake has become a vast ocean and the waters are much rougher. There is no more daylight and a lightning storm dominates the skies. The waves are mounting and crashing against the sailboat.

James tries what he can but must succumb to the storm. The sailboat is crushed by waves and James drowns in the cold dark waters.

CUT.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

James is in the shower with the water falling on his legs but not his face. The curtain is pulled back and a woman's hand begins splashing water on James's face. James opens his eyes, gasping for breath, and sees that it is Jill splashing him.

JILL

I tried calling out to you from
the living room but you didn't
answer. I need your help moving
the fish tank to my car.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The fish tank is now empty. Jill is taking away some of her things in boxes. James emerges from the bathroom frazzled.

JILL

Well, can you get dressed?
(mutters) For fuck sake...

Jill moves over to the fridge. Stuck to the fridge door are a bunch of the new trendy Polaroid photos taken by Cindy. It seems that Cindy took a lot of photos from their night out with old friends.

James approaches the fridge in his towel. The photos suggest Cindy and James hooked up.

JAMES

It was the other night.

JILL

Yeah. She's cute.

Jill points to Cindy in the photo.

JILL

That's your ex right? From just
before we met? College buddy..
Tinkerbelle.

Jill put jealous stank on the name. James says nothing and just stares at Jill coldly. Jill then points at another woman in the photo that shows the group of friends smiling together.

JILL

Who is she? Looks kinda young.

James is puzzled and pulls the photo off the fridge door to examine it closely. The other woman is Janus and she fits into the scene naturally as if she had been there hanging out with James and his old college buddies. James is spacing out.

JILL

Jesus fuck, dude. I'll just come
back for the fish tank next time.
Or just throw it out, it's too
big anyway.

Jill charges out of the apartment with her boxes. James isn't going to let Jill off that easy.

JAMES

(yelling)

You forgot your ring!

He quickly gets ready and then leaves his apartment to follow her.

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

James is in his car and it seems as if he is planning on tailing Jill. It is early evening. He catches up to her and then follows her carefully without her ever noticing.

EXT. LONG ISLAND HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Jill has driven all the way out to Long Island.

EXT. THE HAMPTONS - NIGHT

James has spotted Jill parking at a beach house in the Hamptons. He stays parked a few houses away and takes a nap.

CUT.

INT. JAMES'S CAR - NIGHT

James wakes and sees that Jill's car is still parked at the beach house. James looks in the rearview mirror and sees the naked young Janus from the shower in his backseat. She lunges forward in the mirror with a straight razor. The murder of James is happening but only in the reflection of the mirror and nothing actually happens to James in the car. He watches himself die and feels like he must be losing his mind.

James starts his engine and it might seem that he is heading home, but instead he drives down to a public parking lot that provides entrance to the beach. He parks and exits the car.

EXT. HAMPTONS' BEACH - NIGHT

James gets out of his car and walks to a public gazebo that looks out onto the water. He takes a deep breath, perhaps wanting to cool down and let his anger subside. However, after a few minutes, Jill walks past him on the beach and she is with her new man - the new man is James's employer and editor, A.C. Segal. The couple is laughing and then A.C. squeezes Jill's bum. They stop and kiss basically right in front of James, but without noticing him.

James decides to follow behind Jill and A.C.. Once the couple gets back to their house, it is unclear where James is.

INT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

A.C. is in the kitchen making some drinks. Jill is calling down from upstairs about what she wants to drink.

JILL
(O.S.)

Make me a Cosmo hun. And after
I wash off I've got a sexy present
to show you.

James is lurking in the shadows and he must have entered through the back door just after the couple. James looks ready to pounce but then he slouches and leaves the house quietly without A.C. noticing.

EXT. HAMPTONS' BEACH - NIGHT

James walks across the beach and down to the water. He crouches at the edge of the water. He looks out into the darkness and sees naked Janus in the water up to her waist - but she is the old woman now. She reaches out to James as if to ask to be rescued. James seems angered by the apparition.

James turns around and marches back to the house. He picks up a large rock that was sitting on top of the gate post between A.C.'s back deck and the beach. James quickly enters the house again.

INT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

James moves into the kitchen where A.C. is preparing the cocktails. James hesitates and puts the rock down on the counter. A.C. hears James and turns to see who it is. There is a look of happiness at first and then A.C. understands what is about to happen.

JAMES

This your idea of a professional
courtesy, A.C.? Shtupping my wife
before the divorce papers are even
signed?

James takes a swing at A.C. and although A.C. is several years older than James he is in good shape. A.C. dodges the punch and the two men end up in a physical struggle. They are wrestling on the ground between the island counter and the kitchen counter. Every time they kick against the island counter the rock skips a few inches toward the edge of the counter. James finally gets on top of A.C. and gives him a few shots, but the rock falls off the counter and knocks A.C. in the temple of his head. He's knocked out cold.

James seems terrified and remorseful about what has happened. He picks up the rock and examines it.

Jill comes downstairs in lingerie and a negligee. She begins screaming when she sees the bloody scene. She charges at James

angrily. Jill is pounding on James's chest and trying to hit him in the head. James is attempting to block her hits.

JILL

(weeping)

I loved him... I loved him... I loved him.

JAMES

You loved him?!

JILL

Yes! You jealous piece of shit!

JAMES

Don't pretend!

JILL

What are you talking about?!

JAMES

I know who you are! You were there in the cave! You're her! You're the one doing this to me.

Jill is confused. James is considering smashing Jill with the rock but he can't bring himself to do it.

Suddenly, Jill turns and attacks James once more. She is trying to choke James. He is allowing it at first and it seems like he will let Jill kill him or at least injure him badly.

Approaching from behind Jill, is the naked old Janus, covered in seaweed. James looks paralyzed at first as the apparition gets closer to them. He is still allowing Jill to strike him over and over, pounding on his chest with fists and punching him in the head. As Janus moves closer to him, she blends in with Jill, and James can no longer distinguish Jill from the Janus apparition.

He smashes Jill in the head with the rock having been confused about who was attacking him. She is woozy and falls backward. The hit of the back of her head on the kitchen floor fractures Jill's skull.

James is looking around for the old woman but can't see her anywhere in the room. Jill gets up but is woozy. She stumbles

backwards mumbling gibberish. Jill falls to the ground with a thud. Jill is lying still on the floor. James bends over and checks her pulse and gasps.

JAMES

What have I done?

James starts backing away from Jill's body and drops the rock. James is shocked but A.C. has regained consciousness. He sees what James has done and runs at James. A.C. trips on the rock and hits his head on the marble coffee table in the sunroom beside the kitchen. The impact snaps his neck.

James drops to his knees realizing that he has just caused the death of both his ex-wife and her new lover, who happens to be his boss.

After a moment, James shakes himself out of his stupor. He looks to be thinking rationally once more. He grabs a cordless phone from the kitchen counter and begins dialing out to the police but stops and hangs up when he notices wet footprints leading to the back door. This suggests to James that Janus was indeed there with them.

James considers that the deaths have been caused by the haunting of Janus so he decides to figure out how to dispose of the bodies instead of calling the authorities. James steps over the bodies and makes his way to the den.

INT. A.C. DEN - NIGHT

James immediately goes to the laptop computer in the den. He roots around the desk drawers and finds a piece of paper with passwords written down. He has the log-in password and opens the email on the computer. James looks in the drafts folder to discover an apology letter drafted by A.C. regarding the affair with James's wife. There is also a draft that James doesn't open but it is addressed to a "Trish Segal" and has the same message line as the apology letter draft to James.

After reading the apology letter that A.C. was considering sending to James, James seems relatively unsympathetic about A.C. and Jill's fate. James then drafts a letter addressed to the publishing house listserv. In the letter, James impersonates A.C. while announcing that A.C. is planning a last-minute boat trip with old friends who just showed up in New York.

James reads out the letter as he composes it: "Hey Folks, Delta Kappa crew swung by unexpectedly. Gone fishin'. Back in action before the end of the month. Toodles, A.C."

JAMES

I won't let you get me like this.
Their blood is on your hands, not
mine.

INT. A.C. GARAGE - NIGHT

James doesn't send the email just yet. Instead, he goes into the garage. He seems to know his way around the house. There is a home gym in the renovated garage which was converted into a man-cave. James takes free weights from the gym.

INT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

James is carrying the weights to the back door.

START MONTAGE - HIDING BODIES

EXT. HAMPTONS' BEACH - NIGHT

James is garbage-bagging the bodies. There are two rowboats attached to the back deck of the house. James hauls the bodies into one of the rowboats and then drags the boat down to the edge of the water. He carries the weights and a bundle of ropes and dumps them in the boat. He begins paddling out into the water. Once he is far enough out in the water, he attaches the gym weights to the bodies with the ropes and tosses the bodies over the edge. He paddles back to the shore. The bodies are less than a mile out from the beach and just beyond the line of buoys which mark the increased depth beyond the bay. James makes a visual reference of the location based on the position of the buoys.

END MONTAGE - HIDING BODIES

INT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

James has cleaned up the house and is putting the finishing touches on removing any signs of struggle or an attack inside. He goes to the guest washroom on the main floor to wash blood and dirt off his hands.

INT. A.C. WASHROOM - NIGHT

James is scrubbing his hands and then looks up in the mirror. He is terrified at what he sees in the reflection. The reflection is himself, but he looks to be a very old man. He tests the reflection but it is him, only it is an old version of himself. He is freaked out. He ducks down and then slowly rises to his feet as if playing peek-a-boo with the mirror reflection. The reflection is back to normal.

JAMES

I'm sure you find that very amusing.
You can't have your way with me. I
won't end up like you. My life is
worth something. You hear me!?

James is yelling at his reflection like a crazy person. He realizes it and is somewhat sobered. James is spooked but he finishes cleaning up and leaves.

INT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

James grabs different sets of keys from a side table at the entrance, and he has Jill's purse and finds A.C.'s wallet in the den. He already has two suitcases packed to make it look like A.C. and Jill went away. He then locks the back door and front door. He sends the mass email and then changes the apology letters to include a sentence at the end which suggests A.C. ran away on an extended vacation with Jill, but he keeps those emails as drafts. He leaves the house through opening the garage door automatically.

EXT. A.C. HOUSE - NIGHT

James makes his way down the side of the house and back to the beach.

EXT. HAMPTONS' BEACH - NIGHT

James covers up the tracks of having dragged everything down the beach. James returns to his car.

EXT. BEACH PARKING LOT - NIGHT

James loads his trunk with the suitcases and gets in his car. He heads out to his apartment.

EXT. LONG BEACH - NIGHT

James is driving fast to get back home.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

James enters his apartment and sits on the couch. He is motionless from shock and exhaustion.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James is still sitting on the couch but the Sun has come up. It seems that he hasn't slept and maybe hasn't even budged from his seat.

START MONTAGE - ROUTINE

James decides to shake himself out of his stupor. He goes to his bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

He looks in the mirror and everything is normal. He starts to wash up and get ready for the day.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James does another workout using his weight set. He showers. He eats. James uses his routine to quell his anxieties

END MONTAGE - ROUTINE

James goes to his computer and opens the mass email that he sent from A.C.'s account. He replies to the email. That email reads: "A.C. All the best. Catch up when you return. J.W."

James then gets a text from Cindy. The text reads: "busy? Can I come over? ;)". James replies: "sure. I'm just eating breakfast." Cindy messages back almost immediately: "kk. omw"

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BALCONY - DAY

James sits out on his balcony. He slowly pushes one of the potted plants closer and closer to the edge of the balcony between the metal bars. Finally, he lets the pot drop. It crashes on the ground and he looks over the edge. There was no one around. He just stares at the plant, dirt and broken pot on the pavement below. He is lost in his thoughts.

James doesn't notice but the other plants on his balcony start to grow rapidly and they are coiling their vines around the lower part of his legs. One stem is working its way up and threatens to go around his neck either choking him or throwing him off the balcony.

Then Cindy comes by at street level and looks up at him.

CINDY
(yelling)
Hey you! Coming up.

James snaps out of his daze. The plants are back to normal.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James goes to the front door and paces around. Then he goes for the bottle of bourbon and takes a few swigs. He tries sitting on the couch and looking casual with his legs crossed. He seems somewhat capable of pretending to be relaxed now. There is a knock at the door. He stands up and goes over to the door to let Cindy in. She gives him a quick kiss.

CINDY
Oh, you reek! Are you drinking?
It's not even noon.

James moves over to the couch and sits down.

JAMES
I was out of mouthwash.

Cindy laughs.

CINDY
You weird weird boy.

Cindy is acting giddy and pokes James in the chest affectionately. James goes back to the couch and sits down. She sits down beside

James. She is looking at him lovingly. He is relatively emotionless.

CINDY

I wasn't sure if I'd see you again
before I go back to D.C.

James seems despondent.

CINDY

What's wrong?

James figures he should try to act normal. He leans in and gives Cindy a kiss.

JAMES

Just don't want to see you go.

She kisses him back. They fool around for a bit and it gets hotter and heavier. Soon, they are starting to undress each other. He picks her up and carries her into his bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

James and Cindy have sex and it seems like James is genuinely passionate and connected to the moment.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

James and Cindy are relaxing. James hesitates in looking at Cindy perhaps sensing that the guilt in his eyes will betray him. Cindy turns away to be spooned by James.

CINDY

Do you think this is wrong?

JAMES

Why would it be wrong?

CINDY

Well, you and Jill are only
separated. Technically, you are
still a married man.

James shows his finger that has no ring.

CINDY

Ok, well still. A lot goes into marriage and a lot of separated couples get back together.

JAMES

Name one.

James turns to Cindy and strokes her hair.

JAMES

Maybe we're the separated couple that got back together.

Cindy thinks it was a romantic thing for James to say and she leans around to kiss him.

CINDY

So, fresh start for us?

JAMES

Poppin' fresh.

James playfully pokes Cindy in the belly and she giggles. He sits up and starts putting on his underwear and jeans. He then turns to Cindy.

JAMES

Things have been really messed up for me recently.

CINDY

I know, but this is a fresh start now, right? Jill was bad for you.

JAMES

I need you to listen.

CINDY

Ok.

JAMES

Last night I followed Jill home.

CINDY

Jill was here?

JAMES

Yes, but only to pick up some of her stuff. We didn't even speak. I just watched and she left.

Cindy is sitting up now and is putting on her bra. It seems like the mention of Jill has put her out of a romantic mood.

JAMES

I followed her home.

CINDY

What? Why?

JAMES

Did you know that she was living with A.C.?

CINDY

Your editor? I didn't know.

James nods without showing any real emotion.

CINDY

No. I'm so sorry, James. I had no idea. The only other person I know at that publisher is Greg and he never talks to me about you. None of the old crew have said anything. Maybe no one knew.

Cindy tries to reach out for James to comfort him, but he stands up and faces her.

JAMES

Maybe. It doesn't matter. But, I confronted them last night.

CINDY

Oh God.

JAMES

There was a fight. And bad things happened. Very bad things.

CINDY

What are you talking about? You're really scaring me.

JAMES

I... uh... well I lost control... only for a minute. And then there was an accident. Everything happened so fast.

Cindy looks shocked.

JAMES

I hurt both of them really bad.

CINDY

I think I need to go home now.

Cindy tries to get up but James reaches over and grabs her arm to regain her attention.

JAMES

I bashed their brains in with a rock.

CINDY

Please stop! This isn't funny.

JAMES

(screaming)

Listen to me!!!

Cindy now realizes the gravity of the situation she is in.

CINDY

You're not kidding are you? Where are they? Are they in the hospital?

James can't bring himself to answer at first. Cindy has gotten up off the bed and has put her clothes back on.

JAMES

No, they're at the bottom of Round
Rock Bay?

CINDY

What?!

James can see the hurt and confusion in Cindy's eyes.

JAMES

I... it's a joke. I'm sorry.

CINDY

What?! What is this?

JAMES

I don't know why I said it. I did
see A.C. and Jill together last
night and I really wanted to do
something about it... but I didn't.

CINDY

James, you really scared me.

Cindy embraces James. James is crying.

CINDY

Oh James. You act so cool sometimes
that it's hard to tell how you
really feel. This separation has
hurt you deeply. I'm so sorry.

James gently pushes away from the embrace and wipes his eyes. Cindy
takes his hand.

CINDY

Jill is a bitch. Forget about her.
And obviously you should look for
a new editor. But you have time.
You can get through this.

JAMES

I want to wash my face.

INT. JAMES'S BATHROOM - DAY

James goes to the bathroom and closes the door. He washes his face.

He looks in the mirror and it is the older version of himself again only a decade or so younger than before. He tests the reflection and this time the reflection reveals itself as a sinister doppelganger. The doppelganger signals for James to follow him. The mirror reflection becomes like a camera lens for someone following the doppelganger through the apartment. The doppelganger leads James's gaze through the mirror toward the kitchen where the doppelganger picks up a corkscrew. The doppelganger keeps beckoning to be followed and is smirking slyly back at James.

James is mesmerized by the surreal reflection. The doppelganger comes back to James's bedroom and pushes open the door. Inside the bedroom, Cindy is tied to the bed by vines at her hands and feet. The bedroom seems to have fungus and gnarly overgrowth all around.

James understands the threat being presented. He tries to get out of the bathroom but the door will not open. James is pounding on the door and trying to find a way to get it open. He keeps looking at the mirror to see what is happening in his bedroom.

The doppelganger is putting on a sadistic show. Cindy struggles to escape and begins screaming. James can hear the screams on the other side of the door. Another vine grows across her body to gag her. The doppelganger runs his corkscrew across Cindy's body seductively. He then starts slashing her with the corkscrew. James is pounding on the door once more but to no avail.

James has an idea. He reaches into the mirror and his arm is able to extend through the glass. He thinks that he can climb through the mirror to save Cindy.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - DAY

James is through the mirror and has emerged in his bedroom. Cindy is dead but the doppelganger is leaving the room. James chases after the doppelganger.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

James runs out of his apartment and sees the doppelganger entering the elevator. He runs to make it to the elevator and jumps inside just as the doors are closing.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The elevator is empty. James is looking around but the doppelganger isn't there. James looks down at his hand and he is holding the bloody corkscrew. James tries to push a button to get the elevator's doors to open.

The elevator power shorts out and the lights flicker. The elevator's cable breaks and the elevator car plummets. James is panicked. The elevator crashes at the bottom and James is able to pry the doors open.

INT. PASTORAL WORLD HOUSE CELLAR - DAY

James emerges in the cellar of an old house. It is dark and he feels his way around. He finds the cellar door on the ceiling and opens it. He emerges from the cellar and realizes that he is back in the old house in the pastoral world.

INT. PASTORAL WORLD HOUSE - DAY

James investigates the house more carefully this time. The inside of the house is different this time. It is moldy with fungus and giant mushrooms growing inside.

Suddenly, he hears growling and it is coming from the cellar. He runs to the cellar door to shut it. He catches a glimpse of a terrifying beast just as he slams the cellar door shut. He sits on the door because the massive beast is trying to smash through. James can't maintain his position on top of the door.

The beast smashes through and James is sent flying against a wall. The beast emerges from the cellar. It is a giant dog with a black rotting body but with a skull head. The dog snaps its teeth at James.

James realizes his only chance of survival is to jump through the window.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James jumps through the window and brushes himself off. The beast is probably too large to make it through the window opening. James slowly walks over to the window to see if he can locate the dog beast. Suddenly, the dog lunges through the opening but his body is too large to make it through the space. The skeleton jaws snap at James.

James starts running down the hill toward the water. The beast smashes through the front door of the house and charges after James. The beast is gaining on James. Finally, the beast is on top of James and takes him down.

James attempts to fight the dog but is being mauled. The corkscrew does nothing against the hard bone of the dog's skull. The dog is swallowing James whole.

James struggles and screams as he becomes completely consumed by the dog beast.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM - DAY

James wakes in his bed and looks beside him to see Cindy. It seems that Cindy is sleeping but when he tries to wake her and then turn her over her head falls off the bed and onto the floor. The bloody corkscrew is on the side table. James panics and jumps to his feet.

He runs out of his bedroom and he starts vomiting in the hallway.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James is pacing around trying to think about what to do. He catches a glimpse of his reflection in different surfaces around the apartment (but no mirrors). His reflection is normal. James then goes to his computer and starts accessing old file folders. He finds a book review for a book uncreatively titled, "My Time as a Mafia Cleaner". James follows the file back to a folder with notes and in a document is a name and phone number for "Sano".

James finds his cellphone and calls the number.

INT. SANO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

Sano picks up his phone. He is in the office of his warehouse. Sano has strapping, young thugs sitting on a cramped couch in his office while he sits at his desk. A TV set is on and is playing American Psycho's naked chainsaw scene. The thugs are laughing uproariously at the carnage.

SANO

Sano here.

Sano sits up and signals for the thugs to turn down the volume on the TV.

SANO

Jimmy my boy! How's tricks? (pause)
Well, business had to slow down
after my book, but... you know.
(pause) Yes, I reinvented myself.
(pause) sure... sure. Well, what do
you need? (long pause) Oh, Jimmy.
I didn't think you had it in you.

Sano pulls a pen out to jot down James's address.

SANO

We will sort this out. Don't you
worry. Now where are you? (pause)
Yup, got it. You just stay there.
And Jimmy... try to keep out of
trouble for the next half hour.

Sano hangs up the phone.

SANO

Jose, bring the truck around front.
And turn that fucking thing off.
Fucking chainsaws... you gotta be
kidding me.

The thugs are all standing and ready to head out.

JOSE

What's wrong with chainsaws, *jefe*?

SANO

Pigs in shit are cleaner, *pendejo*.

Sano just kisses his teeth and raises his fist as if he wants to smack Jose for asking a dumb question. The thugs all leave the room following Jose out. Sano leaves the office last and locks up.

CUT.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sano and James are standing outside the bedroom watching through the doorway as two thugs in the bedroom finish up with their cleanup job of Cindy's mangled corpse. It is evident that her body was chopped up into parts and those parts were put in black garbage bags. The thugs are cleaning up the clear plastic sheets they had put down to avoid leaving DNA evidence.

SANO

(soberly)

Jimmy, you've got a big problem,
cabron.

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BALCONY - DAY

Sano's nephew, Jose, is standing out on the balcony having a smoke. He can see Sano and James talking through the window but he can't hear them. James must be explaining to Sano everything that happened. James is getting increasingly stressed out as he tells the story. Sano looks more and more concerned as James keeps talking, yelling and is generally breaking down mentally.

Jose comes back inside.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

JOSE

So what's up? We done?

SANO

Not even close, *cabron*. Load up the truck with the girl and we have to head out to Long Island.

JOSE

Long Island? What the fuck is in Long Island?

Jose rolls his eyes and leaves with the other thugs.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Jose and the thugs drop the body parts down the garbage chute. Then they all get in the elevator. Sano and James are on their way to the elevator as well. James has the manuscript box in his hands.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Everyone is packed in tight.

SANO

Give that book to my nephew, Jose.
He can't read anyway.

The thugs start laughing. Jose is offended.

JOSE

(muttering)

Chinga guey... I can read.

Sano takes the manuscript box out of James's hands and pushes it toward Jose.

SANO

That's not doing you any good,
Jimmy. You are using what you
believe about it as a crutch. It
gave you an excuse to do these
terrible things that you've done.

James looks at Sano and maybe is starting to believe in the wisdom of his words. Sano pats James on the back.

SANO

We'll get you sorted out. Don't
worry, my boy. Uncle Sano will sort
you out.

The elevator doors open at the underground parking lot.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

Sano is giving instructions to his goons.

SANO

Go pick up the girl and get her
in the truck. Then follow us out.
I'll phone you with the directions
if we get split up.

Jose and the thugs head off to do what they were told. Sano and

James head over to his car.

SANO

Get that bitch's purse. Your
ex-wife. We need those keys.

James goes to the trunk of his car and brings along the suitcases and other personal effects for A.C. and Jill. Sano puts his hand on James's shoulder.

SANO

You're very very lucky that I owe
you one Jimmy, but this is the
last time. The only time. No more
get out of jail free cards... we see
eye to eye?

JAMES

I appreciate everything you're doing
for me, Sano.

James nods. Sano takes his finger and pulls at the skin under one of his eyes and then points the finger at James to show that he is serious.

SANO

Good. Let's hit the road.

Sano and James get in Sano's car and they exit the parking lot with the truck following behind them.

EXT. NYC STREETS - DAY

As the car and truck are seen driving off Manhattan Island and along the Long Island highway, Sano is talking James's ear off in the car.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - DAY

SANO

(O.S.)

You know they had me on The View.
Can you fucking believe that?
Those bitches are *loca*, especially
(MORE)

SANO

(continuing - O.S.)

that *perra judia*. Oh yeah, I had plenty of appearances after your book review, Jimmy. I was a celebrity. I mean it hurt the cleaning business for a few years, but it gave me a legitimate source of revenue to work off of. And now it's business as usual. Better than usual.

Johnny Law takes me for some celebrated author. And I gave my family legitimate positions in the company. You see my dumbass nephew Jose? He's my publicist. Can you believe that shit, Jimmy? That *cabron* can't even read. I'm telling you.

Those other two in the truck... they're my editors. Admittedly, they do get rid of what I don't need. The IRS doesn't bat an eye at any of it.

And you know what we publish now? Let me tell you Jimmy. We publish sexy comic books. All sorts of twisted shit... I've got a warehouse full of it - tentacles, animal people... I think they call them "fuzzies". No "furries". That's a popular one. What else? Well, chicks with dicks and all sorts of other fucked up shit that guys want to jerk off to.

And people buy that shit. You can even sell it at those conventions. Those shows are getting bigger and bigger each year. And we're printing copies by the thousands these days.

INT. SANO'S CAR - DAY

James is listening but pretty zoned-out.

SANO

And these fifteen-year olds who write and draw this shit, well they're making a killing. They sell out at these shows and on their websites. The regular printing houses won't touch this shit. Their loss. I'm cleaning up. Jimmy... let me tell you. It all started with you and your review of my book.

You were my guardian angel, so now I will be your angel of death.

CUT.

EXT. THE HAMPTONS - DAY

James, Sano and the others have arrived at A.C.'s beach house in the Hamptons.

INT. SANO'S CAR - DAY

Sano is going through Jill's purse pulling out keys.

SANO

These are the keys for the cars in the driveway?

JAMES

Yes, I'm pretty sure.

SANO

Ok, let's hope so. If we have to tow it, it's going to get the neighbors' attention.

Sano and James have pulled up just outside A.C.'s house. The truck parks in behind them. Everyone exits the vehicles.

EXT. A.C.'S HOUSE - DAY

Sano tosses the car keys over to Jose. Jose gives the keys to the thugs and signals that the cars in the driveway must be moved so the truck can back in.

Sano and James enter through the garage again. They close the door behind them.

INT. A.C.'S GARAGE - DAY

SANO

I need you to head back out in that boat and fish out those bodies you left out there.

JAMES

You can't possibly be serious?

SANO

This is the Hamptons, Jimmy my boy. You think those bodies are safe in a bay with this much traffic? *Coño!* Fuck no. We have to get those bodies out to a pig farm upstate. When you walk away from this Jimmy, you walk away forever. You understand? Untraceable.

James understands that Sano is in charge although he is still having a hard time figuring out how he will retrieve the bodies in the bay.

INT. A.C.'S KITCHEN - DAY

James is marching to the back door when he catches a glimpse of his reflection in the glass windows at the back of A.C.'s kitchen. James is spooked by his reflection once more. Again, his reflection is older than his present age, but it is less old and decrepit than the previous reflection. He carefully examines his reflection and can't believe his eyes. He doesn't understand why he is seeing himself as older. The first time, he was a man in his eighties with a long white beard and white hair. This time he looks to be in his sixties with a shorter salt and pepper beard and thinning grey hair.

Sano comes toward the kitchen.

SANO
(O.S.)

Jimmy, get the lead out, ese.

James turns to Sano and when he looks back in the glass his reflection is normal. Sano steps towards James and puts his arm around him. Sano is looking out onto the bay not paying attention to the reflective surface of the glass windows.

SANO
Fuck me, your boss did pretty good
for himself.

James notes that the reflections in the mirror of Sano and himself are normal.

CUT.

INT. A.C. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

The sun is setting, and Jose and the two thugs are in the living room watching television. Sano is in the kitchen watching James in the rowboat. James is now far enough away that he is close to the bodies.

Suddenly, there is a loud knock at the front door. Jose and the thugs stand up and pull out handguns. Sano is moving toward the front.

Sano looks through the keyhole. There is a redheaded woman outside yelling and banging loudly on the door while ringing the bell incessantly.

JOSE
We've got to shut her up, jefe.

SANO
Who is this bitch?

They all listen for a minute to make out what Trish is screaming about.

JOSE
I think it's this guy's old lady.

Sano just signals with a head movement and Jose and the thugs know to move into the garage.

Sano draws his gun which has a suppressor and then he opens the door.

TRISH
(stops yelling)
Who the fuck are you, greaseball?
Where's A.C.? Is he here with you?

Sano is somewhat shocked by the woman's gall.

TRISH
I'm coming in.

Trish pushes past Sano and is looking around the main floor. She yells upstairs with the tone of a mother scolding naughty children.

TRISH
(yelling)
If I find you, I'm cutting your
fucking balls off, A.C.!

SANO
He's not here bitch, so please
shut the fuck up.

Trish keeps storming around the house looking for A.C. while she gripes at Sano.

TRISH
Four years... four, fucking years!
Years! That asshole has dragged his
feet and dragged me with him
through court. And what now? He
thinks he can run off with one of
his little whores and cut me out
from what I'm owed? Oh fuck no.
Two week boat trip?... my dirty ass.
I phoned his frat fuck buddies and
none of them knew anything about a
trip. I know what he's up to..

Trish is one of the most frantic annoying people you could encounter. She isn't quiet for a moment and has no sense of

courtesy or etiquette. She is the epitome of a gold-digger and shamelessly embraces that persona. This obnoxious diva is still storming around the house and Sano is quietly following behind her apprehensively at times trying to shut her up with occasional insults. She completely ignores him.

Trish comes back to the main floor and opens the door to the garage. She sees the three thugs with guns drawn and she freaks out. When she turns around Sano also has his gun brandished.

Trish is looking at the guns. Everything seems to be happening in slow motion. Just as Trish is about to scream Sano swings at her with a closed fist and knocks her flat on her ass with a solid punch to the side of the head. They think she is knocked out and they start arguing about how Sano shouldn't have let her look in the garage.

Trish is a tough cookie and isn't easily knocked out. She is scrambling for the front door.

EXT. A.C. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Trish is on her feet and out the front door. She runs outside and starts screaming for help but she's woozy from the punch. The automatic garage door opens and Jose and the thugs charge at her. Trish stumbles and falls. Jose picks her up, slams her into the back of the van. One of the thugs opens the van doors and Jose tosses Trish in the back like a rag doll. Jose and the thugs get in the van to deal with Trish. The back doors of the van slam shut. Sano stays outside. There is a raucous thumping in the van but it is unclear what is happening inside.

Sano goes back inside the house.

INT. A.C. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Sano goes back to the kitchen to see how James's task is progressing.

EXT. HAMPTONS BAY - NIGHT

James feels confident that he found the location where he dropped the bodies into the bay. James prepares to dive in.

JAMES

Here goes nothing.

James is submerged for a time and then comes up for air. He takes some deep breaths. He reaches into the boat and grabs the end of a thick rope that is attached to the boat. He dives again.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

James is diving to the bottom of the bay. He spots the bodies and it seems that some variety of sea creatures have been pecking at the bags. There is a leg hanging out of one bag and an arm hanging out of the other. James brought the rope down with him. James unfastens the weight from the original rope around the body and he then connects both ropes.

James has to go up for air once more. The bodies are still. The first body is being pulled up. Some time passes and then James is in the water again. He attempts to unfasten the second weight and attach the rope from the boat. Suddenly, the hand of the body grabs James.

James is struggling to break free from the animated corpse. The body won't let go and it seems that James has drowned.

Some time passes but then miraculously James opens his eyes. Air doesn't seem to be an issue. James swims to the surface of the water.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James is not far from shore and he can see that he has arrived yet again in the creepy and surreal pastoral world.

JAMES

No, no, no, no. I can't be dead.
This can't be where I go! Just wake
up, James. You're in the motel in
Canada. You never left. The old
couple drugged you to make their
fucking book seem authentic. I'm
hepped up on some white fluff LSD.
I'm tripping balls but I'll come
down. That's all it is. I'm not
budging until I wake up from this
bullshit.

A moment later, James is roused from his indignation when the

corpse of A.C. is crawling out of the water and creeping up on James from behind.

James realizes that he must start running. He runs up to the house and opens the door and enters.

INT. JAMES'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE - NIGHT

Instead of finding himself inside the old pastoral house he is in his childhood home from the mid-1980s. His father is in the living room watching the six o'clock news. James cautiously approaches his father.

JAMES

Dad?

James's father seems completely uninterested in James and is totally absorbed by the TV set. He answers James but never breaks contact with the television.

JAMES'S FATHER

Your mother is waiting for you upstairs. You shouldn't have been late coming home from school.

JAMES

I wasn't at school, Dad.

James's father continues to ignore his son. The father is trying to change the channel but the remote isn't working. He is banging the remote.

JAMES'S FATHER

Goddamn thing's batteries are dead again.

The father keeps smacking the TV remote. James finds the simulation all too real. He slowly makes his way upstairs.

INT. JAMES'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

James seems reluctant to walk down the hallway to see his mother but it's as if he is moving forward based on behavioral conditioning. James gets to his parent's bedroom. His mother is lying on the bed, almost seductively. She is wearing a silk nightgown that rides rather high up with the way she is laying.

JAMES'S MOTHER
Jamie, you're late.

JAMES
I'm sorry.

JAMES'S MOTHER
That's alright. Mommy isn't mad.
Come here.

INT. JAMES'S PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

James steps forward into the room and seems powerless to reason through the situation. He stops, but just as he is about to move forward to his mother's side, a child version of himself also seems to have been standing in the doorway. The child version of James moves over to the side of the bed.

JAMES'S MOTHER
Jamie, you smell funny. I think it's
that dirty shirt you have on. Take
that shirt off and come lie beside
Mommy.

The child version of James does as instructed as if this was a routine. James is watching but is angered.

JAMES
(anguished)
He doesn't want to do that, Mom.

The child James lies on the bed still with his shirt off. His mother turns her body to focus on him. She is touching her son and it is clearly inappropriate.

CHILD JAMES
(quietly)
I... don't want to.

James's mother is angered by her son's reluctance. She turns back to the other side and gulps a shot of bourbon from a glass on the side table. She then reaches in the drawer of her side table and pulls out a straight razor. She turns back to the child James.

She opens the razor and gently runs it across his belly and up

toward his neck. She then violently thrusts her other arm under the child James's neck to get a hold on the boy. She has the razor pressed against the child's bottom lip.

JAMES'S MOTHER

Mommy doesn't like when her little boy is pouting.

The child James is breathing heavily and is clearly very scared.

JAMES'S MOTHER

You're going to make me happy, Jamie. And you're not ever going to say anything about it. Because you know I would cut out that little tongue of yours.

The mother is menacingly evil in her drunken madness. The threat of being silenced explains James's career choices and yet here as an adult he is still paralyzed by the experience and must now flee the room.

James backs away from the bedroom and starts running down the hallway.

INT. JAMES'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

James is moving quickly down the hallway and then down the stairs, however, on the floor below there is just another hallway the same as the previous one. He runs down that one as well trying to escape. This happens again and on the third hallway there are apparitions - all the victims of the haunted book fill the hallway.

James pushes past them and the apparitions press against him and try to hold him but he can still get through the crowd. At the end of the crowd and the hallway, he encounters his doppelganger. This time it looks to be almost the same age as James. James turns around quickly and fights his way past the apparitions once more. The apparitions are trying harder to hold him there. The doppelganger pursues James.

He faces the parents from the 1966 murder-suicide as well as A.C. and Jill. James is panicked. The doppelganger is closing in. James keeps fighting to get to the end of the hallway and go back upstairs. The doppelganger is stalking him.

At the next hallway upstairs, a headless Cindy appears at the end holding her decapitated head.

CINDY

How bout a fresh start, James?

James has no choice but to enter his mother's bedroom again.

INT. JAMES'S CHILDHOOD HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

James enters the bedroom and slams the door shut. He seems to be safe for the time being. He goes over to the side table and takes a swig of the bourbon. But, then he is enraged and throws the bottle at the wall.

ECU - SMASHED BOTTLE STAIN ON WALL

The stain on the wall forms the skull calligramme composed of new words - the names of James's victims and other victims of the haunted book.

James approaches the wall to examine the stain and feel the calligramme when suddenly he is slammed against the wall. Someone has him pressed up against the wall - it is his mother who appears supernaturally strong.

MOTHER

Jamie, you've grown into such a big strapping boy. Do you want to show your Mommy how big you are?

James is crying out panicked. He wants to be able to fight back but he's pinned against the wall. His mother seems to be grabbing his crotch. She turns him around and plants a kiss on him.

MOTHER

Do you still know how to use that sweet little tongue of yours?

James's mother then begins sucking the air out of James's lungs much the way young Janus did in the coffin. James is gasping for breath and choking.

CUT.

EXT. HAMPTON'S BEACH - NIGHT

Jose is giving James CPR. It seems that Sano sensed James wasn't doing well retrieving the bodies and his goons went out to save James and finish the job. James has been resuscitated and is conscious once more. He's coughing up water from his lungs but he will be alright.

SANO

Ey, Jose looks like you saved a life, *cabron*. That has got to be a first, *chavo loco*.

The two thugs have a laugh at Jose's expense, yet Jose seems quite proud of himself.

James is slowly getting up.

JAMES

What happened?

JOSE

We saved your ass, *pendejo*... again.

James is being helped to his feet by Sano. The thugs are putting the two boats back and moving the garbage bagged bodies of A.C. and Jill down the side of the house back to the front to put them in the van.

SANO

You alright, Jimmy?

JAMES

No, I am so fucking far from "alright".

SANO

Here follow me, I want to show you something.

Sano leads James down the side of the house.

SANO

Everything's clean inside.

JAMES
(hopeful)

Really?

Sano ignores the question. They get to the front of the house and the thugs have the back of the van open. Beside A.C. and Jill's corpses is Trish. Trish also appears dead and her panties are at her ankles suggesting that she was gangraped and beaten to death.

SANO
Who's this lady?

James looks at the body for only a second and then has turn to vomit.

SANO
Jimmy, Jesus fuck... that's the Mount
St Helens of DNA. I told you we just
cleaned this place up. C'mon help me
out here.

The thugs don't even need to be told what to do. One of them grabs some paper towel and bleach from the van and starts cleaning up the vomit.

JAMES
It's A.C. - my boss - it's his wife.

SANO
Hey, that's great news then.

JAMES
Great news?!

SANO
Well sure. I mean, the police will
have no evidence to go on, and no
bodies... but look at who is missing
- a man and his mistress and his
jealous gold-digging cunt of a wife.
That's real simple - open and shut
for the cops... because we know that
the man did it - he killed his wife
and then ran off with the mistress.

James sort of sighs and sees the logic of what Sano is suggesting.

He's too exhausted to think about it or to argue.

JAMES

But what about Cindy?

SANO

Cindy?

JAMES

My friend who was visiting from
D.C.. The girl at my apartment...
The one without the fucking head!

SANO

Yeah, well that wasn't too smart,
Jimmy. That's not easy to explain,
all things considered. But, New
York City is a dangerous place. If
you get questioned by the police
then tell them the last you saw her
she was walking home drunk through
the park at night.

James thinks that the excuse isn't very believable and is shaking his head.

JAMES

I'm directly connected to all of it.
It's not going to take Sherlock
fucking Holmes to connect the dots
of a straight fucking line.

SANO

Hey, Jimmy... watch your tone alright?
I'm trying to help you out here.
We're doing our best.

JAMES

I'm sorry. I know you are. It's just
this isn't my world. I don't know
what to do. And Cindy... and the cops...

SANO

Jimmy, it doesn't matter. If there
is no body, it isn't a murder. They
(MORE)

SANO

(continuing)

have to treat it as a missing persons case, and those cases go cold real quick. Sure, you'll be the top suspect for a year or so and they will keep tabs on you. They might even be up your ass and into your shit. You keep your nose clean and then in eighteen months whoosh... flushed. When they stop looking for the bodies then you move out of New York. Go wherever... Miami, Atlanta, Dallas, L.A.. It doesn't matter. Just don't come back here.

JAMES

So what now?

SANO

You go home. You sleep. We've got the rest. Your place is clean. This place is clean. And we have that book of yours. Go home, rest, and act normal. Be normal.

James looks exhausted and he can't truly wrap his head around what he has done. Sano is looking at him worried.

JAMES

This is so wrong. What I've done.
What we've done.

SANO

Wrong is what I do best.

James seems defeated.

SANO

What happened to you?

JAMES

It's that book.

SANO

You say that, but I didn't see a book smashing in that woman's skull or chopping off that other bitch's head. No, Jimmy... it's not the book it's you.

James takes a long, deep breath. Sano is just looking at him sort of shaking his head. The goons shut the van doors. Jose drives off in the van while the goons drive away in Jill's car. Sano puts his arm around James and leads him toward Sano's car. They stop at the car.

JAMES

Can you get me fake ID? Like passports, a social security number, library card, the works?

Sano exhales loudly.

JAMES

I can pay anything.

SANO

Can't handle the heat, Jimmy?

JAMES

Just want out of the kitchen either way. I'll take some cash and rebuild somewhere in Wyoming or Nebraska or something. It's the right thing to do after all of this. It's the only way to make up for what has been taken from Cindy and the others.

SANO

Let me see what I can do. It will probably take a couple of weeks.

They get in Sano's car and drive off.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

TITLE - "THREE WEEKS LATER"

INT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

James is walking through Central Park on his way home. He phones his psychiatrist.

JAMES

Hello, Dr. Stang, this is James Wulffhart. (pause) Yes, well I'm going to cancel the next session. (pause) Yes, I'm feeling much better now. (pause) No, I haven't had any of those nightmares since. (pause) Yes, I think the pills are working. And I will reschedule if anything creeps up. (pause) Will do. (pause) Great. Thanks, bye.

James hangs up the phone but he gets a call almost immediately.

JAMES

Wulffhart here.

INT. SANO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

Sano is crouched in a dark corner of his warehouse. He seems scared.

SANO

Jimmy, I need your help?

JAMES

(O.S.)

Sano?

SANO

Jose, he read your book. He's gone loco Jimmy. Like never before.

Sano covers the phone and backs up a bit so that he can't be seen as easily. Jose walks by and appears naked. He has a chainsaw with blood dripping off the chain. He doesn't spot his uncle, Sano, and decides to move on.

SANO

What's in that book, Jimmy? I need help. You have to come figure this out.

INT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

James looks shocked by the call. He isn't sure how to respond.

JAMES

Sano, you need to get out of there.

SANO

(O.S. - loud whispers)

No shit, Sherlock! Get your fucking ass down here and fix my fucking nephew. I don't care what you tell him but snap him out of this. I'm not going to kill my own flesh and blood.

The phone hangs up and James is left standing around stunned. James leaves the park and hails a cab.

CUT.

EXT. SANO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

James is dropped off outside Sano's warehouse.

INT. SANO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

James enters the warehouse carefully. He climbs a staircase up to Sano's office. Suddenly, he sees Jose in the distance stalking the aisles of the warehouse in search of his uncle.

James sees the two thugs chopped up on the warehouse floor. James ducks into Sano's office.

INT. SANO'S OFFICE - DAY

James looks around for some weapons. He opens the desk drawer and finds an envelope with "JIMMY THE WRITER" written on it. James opens the envelopes and slides out its contents. The envelope has the new IDs that Jimmy bought from Sano. There is a passport, social security card and other pieces of identification. James's

new name for the identification is "Jack Grady".

James pockets the IDs and then hears someone yelling from outside the office. James ducks behind the desk and hides.

Sano comes running into the office and Jose is behind him.

SANO

Jose, *mi sangre, mi familia*. You are sick my boy. Jimmy must have had some kind of virus. You caught it too. We can fix this. You need to come with me to a doctor. I'll pay for the best doctor for you my boy.

Sano is slowly backing up as he tries to talk down Jose. Jose has an insane glare in his eyes and it would seem he is largely ignoring Sano's words.

JOSE

You're with her *tio*. That *vieja perra*. She keeps finding me but only you know where I am. Well, that old bitch isn't going to find me again, *cabron*.

Sano tries to stop Jose, but Jose is larger and stronger than his uncle. He comes down on Sano's chest with the chainsaw and blood begins splattering all over the office. When Jose is finished, he wipes off blood from his hands onto Sano's sleeve. Jose hasn't spotted James who has been watching silently from behind the desk.

Jose moves forward and James is looking for a weapon or escape route. But, Jose then turns around and leaves the office while dropping his chainsaw.

James carefully follows behind Jose.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Jose is naked and as he emerges outside and begins walking away from the warehouse, several police cars arrive at the scene. Cops get out of their cruisers and draw their weapons on Jose demanding that the naked bloody man get on the ground.

While the police are distracted, James attempts to leave the

warehouse and walk in the other direction. A police cruiser drives past James and then stops. He looks back and sees the cruiser driving in reverse and coming his way.

James starts running down an alley. One of the cops gets out of the cruiser to chase after James.

EXT. WAREHOUSE ALLEYS - DAY

James turns a corner and finds a place behind a dumpster to stash his new IDs. He keeps running from the cops. The cruiser has come around the corner and cuts James off. The officer on foot has caught up to James. James has nowhere to run. James throws up his hands in defeat but still gets tackled by the officer on foot.

ARRESTING OFFICER

Got any weapons on you?

JAMES

No.

James is frisked, handcuffed, and then thrown in the back of the cruiser.

DRIVING OFFICER

You're under arrest and you have
the right to remain silent..

CUT.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

James has been processed and is escorted to a holding cell.

PROCESSING OFFICER

You are under arrest for
obstruction and will be held for
up to seventy-two hours while
detectives sort out what you were
doing outside a murder scene. Your
lawyer has been contacted and you
will be able to speak with them
after they check in at the station.

The processing officer opens the door to the holding cell and pushes James through. DETECTIVE CHASE comes up behind the

processing officer and puts his hand on the processing officer's shoulder.

DETECTIVE CHASE

Actually, we need you upstairs, Mr. Wulffhart... for questioning.

JAMES

I don't have anything to say until I speak with my lawyer.

DETECTIVE CHASE

(patronizing)

Why don't you come upstairs all the same. We have something interesting to show you. I think you'll want to see it.

CUT.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

James is pushed into the interrogation room and made to sit down. He is handcuffed to the chair by Detective Chase.

JAMES

Is that really necessary?

DETECTIVE CHASE

I don't know, you tell me.

Another detective, DETECTIVE LANG, enters the interrogation room. Lang has the manuscript box in his hands. He puts it on the table in front of James.

DETECTIVE CHASE

Can you tell me what that is, James?

JAMES

A box?

DETECTIVE CHASE

Don't get wise. You're no hard-ass.

DETECTIVE LANG

We just finished with Jose Ordonez.
He sang to us like a pretty little
bird. You know how that song went?

James begins whistling "Entry of the Gladiators".

DETECTIVE CHASE

Triple homicide is a joke to you?

JAMES

No, but I have rights. If you want
my cooperation you have to respect
them.

Lang moves toward James and lifts the cover of the manuscript box. He pulls the book out and flips to a random page. At first the pages just have the dark orange residue stains but then the calligrammes begin appearing supernaturally. James freaks out and tries to push his chair back to get away from the book. The detectives look at each other a little surprised as they hold James in place.

DETECTIVE LANG

Apparently, you gave Jose this book.
And he tells us that this book is
why he took a chainsaw and carved up
three men like a Thanksgiving
turkey.

James is trying not to look at the book. Lang backs off but Chase forces James's head so that he must look at the book.

DETECTIVE LANG

What is this book, Mr. Wulffhart?
Did you write it? You are a writer,
aren't you?

James is still struggling to push his head away from the book.

JAMES

I didn't write it.

DETECTIVE LANG

Fair enough. It looks pretty old
(MORE)

DETECTIVE LANG

(continuing)

anyway. But, not as old as you're going to look when you get out of here if you don't start talking.

JAMES

I don't need to say anything.

DETECTIVE CHASE

That's where you're wrong, pal. Right now, we have you as an accessory to a triple homicide.

JAMES

I was running for my fucking life inside that warehouse!

DETECTIVE CHASE

Did the book tell you to run? Tell you to hide? What exactly did it tell you?

Chase shoves James's face into the pages of the book. James struggles but can't push away.

DETECTIVE LANG

Alright, cool it Chase.

Detective Chase steps away from James. Lang grabs a chair and pulls it around so that he is sitting right beside James looking directly at him.

DETECTIVE LANG

James, this is your time now. You can confess and start putting this all behind you. Tell us about the book. Why is Jose blaming the book for his insane rampage? Why did you give him this book in the first place? A lot of people have been hurt. You can free them with your confession. Isn't that the right thing to do? We need to understand what really happened here. And you know what really happened.

James sits silently for several minutes. He catches a glimpse of his reflection in the surface of the metal table in front of him. James isn't willing to talk about what happened. Lang sighs and moves over to the door to the interrogation room. He opens the door and the processing officer is waiting outside.

DETECTIVE LANG

Take him back to the holding cell.

CUT.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

James is put back in the holding cell. The cell has traditional metal bars. James paces around the cell. Then he sits on the concrete bench and looks through the bars. Between two of the bars is a surreal setting.

The pastoral world is framed in the gap between the two bars. James gets up from the bench and walks over to the bars. He squeezes his body through the bars in order to enter the pastoral world. The bars flex to accommodate him.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

James has returned to the pastoral world. He is near the edge of the water and begins walking up the hill toward the house. He pushes open the door and enters the house.

INT. PASTORAL WORLD HOUSE - DAY

There is someone in the house. The PASTOR sits at the dining table. James walks over to examine what the pastor is doing. The pastor doesn't seem to notice James.

The pastor is finishing the binding of the haunted book. It seems that this is where the book was created. The pastor has two wooden bowls beside him. In one bowl are mushrooms and in the other is powder and residue from crushing the mushrooms. He takes his threading needle used for the book binding and cuts his wrist. The blood trickles into the bowl with crushed mushrooms and he begins mixing the bowl until it is an inky paste.

The pastor creates a calligramme in the book using the mushroom blood ink and a quill pen - it is the figure of a girl. The verses

of the calligramme read, "when the living fall silent, the dead shall speak".

The pastor gets up from the table and begins setting up a booby trap. He fixes an axe to the ceiling of the room. The axe is attached by rope to the front door handle. The rope is taut and presumably when the door opens the axe will swing down striking the table. It is unclear what the pastor intends.

The pastor then lays on the table looking up at the axe. A moment later his daughter, JANUS, enters the house with her dog beside her. She doesn't realize there is a trap. As she opens the door, the axe falls and chops the pastor in the heart.

Janus is shocked and runs over to her father to help him.

PASTOR

I'm sorry Janus. She looked just like you, my daughter. And I couldn't let her have you.

The pastor is dead. Janus realizes that her father has committed suicide by her hand and she turns to the book. She sees the calligramme. She calmly and quietly leaves the house.

EXT. PASTORAL WORLD - DAY

Janus takes a rocking chair from outside the house and carries it up to the top of the other hill. She places the chair down and sits on it. Her dog has been following her. The dog lays down looking anxious and sad about its master's condition.

Janus sits on her rocking chair looking out onto the waters of the pastoral world. James witnesses this event and must conclude that it explains something of the origins of the haunted book. James walks over to Janus and looks in her eyes. In her eyes is the reflection of James in the holding cell.

TRANSITION - EYE REFLECTION TO CELL

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

James is back in his cell. He is contemplating the events from the pastoral world. He lies down on the bench.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

It is two days later and James will soon be brought before a judge for arraignment or he will be released. Detective Chase is already in the room standing against the wall with his arms crossed. Detective Lang enters the room with some reports in his hand along with the haunted book which is no longer in its manuscript box.

CHASE

Good news, James.

James is surprised by the announcement.

CHASE

We did some digging. And you are fucked buddy boy.

JAMES

How is that good news?

CHASE

Good news for us. I didn't say good for you.

Chase smirks. Lang puts photos of Cindy, Trish, A.C. and Jill on the table in front of James.

CHASE

Remember when we mentioned Jose was singing to us about what went down at the warehouse two days ago?

James looks worried.

CHASE

He knew a lot more than that.

Lang is moving the pictures around on the table to get James's attention.

LANG

Cindy Gale, 36, missing for the last few days. And a mysterious disappearance of your estranged wife, her new lover, that happens to be your boss and then his estranged wife to boot.

CHASE

Sounds like an episode of Bold and the Beautiful.

LANG

Except, according to Jose, they ain't so beautiful anymore?

CHASE

No they're just a bunch of bones in a pile of pig slop... courtesy your old mafia cleaner buddy, Santiago "Sano" Ordonez.

James can't say anything.

CHASE

And the book... we have to blame the book, right James? I would have guessed that crazy fuck Jose was illiterate. So, what's up here? He's trying to avoid life behind bars by convincing everyone he's nuts? Tell us what's really going on here? Straighten this out.

JAMES

I told Sano I was having problems at work and he took things too far. I wanted my boss and ex-wife scared, that's all. I didn't know what would happen.

Chase slams his fist on the table.

CHASE

Bullshit! What about this Cindy Gale?

Lang puts the book down on the table.

LANG

And the book...

Chase uncuffs James from the chair and he tries to force James to hold the book.

CHASE

I want you to read this fucking book. I want to know what it says.

LANG

We had our lab analyze the book. Interestingly, the stains on the pages are some wild concoction of cathinones and psilocybin. Our guys had never seen it before but believe that it's naturally occurring. A powerful psychedelic. But, we're waiting on more test results.

Chase is the unhinged "bad cop" and seems agitated by James looking surprised about the news of the book being written in ink that is a powerful psychedelic drug. Lang appears more rational and is trying to understand the link between the book and the murders.

CHASE

Start reading, asshole.

JAMES

Haven't you already read it?

Chase looks at Lang. Lang is looking at the two-way mirror somewhat mesmerized by his reflection.

CHASE

I haven't.

LANG

I have.

Suddenly, Lang lunges at Chase and attacks him. They are in a struggle to the death. They both have their guns out and are using

their other hand to hold their opponent's gun away from them. Shots begin getting fired. Lang gets the advantage and has Chase down. James has backed up to the mirror scared for his life. Chase is on the ground. Lang starts unloading into Chase and it is a brutal execution. Chase is riddled with bullets and a swarm of officers charge into the interrogation room to disable Lang.

Everyone is distracted and they fail to notice James in the room. James quickly grabs the haunted book and then sneaks out of the interrogation room.

INT. POLICE STATION HALLWAYS - DAY

James makes his way down the hallway and more officers are running past him to get to the interrogation room.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

James has made it out of the station safely.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - DAY

James is walking away from the police station and enters the subway station.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

James is sitting on the subway, holding the book close to his chest. He looks paranoid but people on the subway don't seem to notice.

James sees someone walking between the subway cars about to enter his car. He's paranoid although he can't see who it is. When the train stops he rushes off.

EXT. SANO'S WAREHOUSE - DAY

James retraces his steps at the warehouse.

EXT. WAREHOUSE ALLEYS - DAY

James find his IDs where he tucked them away behind the dumpster. He sighs relief.

CUT.

EXT. JAMES'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

James is rushing into his building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

James rushes past the concierge who notes that James looks panicked.

INT. JAMES'S APARTMENT - DAY

James enters his apartment. He quickly packs a suitcase and grabs a wad of cash from behind his TV set. He puts the book in his suitcase and looks ready to leave the apartment.

He feels his face and he can tell there is the haunted book's ink residue still on him. He goes to the bathroom to wash up.

INT. JAMES'S BATHROOM - DAY

James is washing his face. He pats his face dry and looks in the mirror. The reflection seems normal. He pops some of the antipsychotics the psychiatrist prescribed him.

CUT.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Two uniformed police officers have arrived at James's apartment building and approach the concierge.

OFFICER #1

Do you have a resident by the name
of James Wulffhart?

The concierge acts cool.

CONCIERGE

Yes.

OFFICER #1

Have you seen Mr. Wulffhart this
afternoon?

CONCIERGE

Can't say that I have.

The concierge taps on the computer screen that shows a series of security monitors for the parking lot and other parts of the building.

CONCIERGE

His car isn't in its usual spot, so most likely he left earlier today.

OFFICER #1

(to his partner)

He already left.

OFFICER #2

(into her shoulder radio)

Dispatch, we need an APB on the registered Wulffhart vehicle. Looks like he's EDP and on the run.

DISPATCHER

(O.S.)

Copy that.

The concierge is overly curious.

CONCIERGE

What's "EDP"?

OFFICER #1

Emotionally Disturbed Person.

Meanwhile, the doors to the elevator have opened and James can see the officers in the lobby. One of the officers spots James as James has the elevator doors closing. The officers run to catch the door before it closes but just miss the chance.

James is able to get to the underground parking safely.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING LOT - DAY

James gets in his car and races off. One cop is coming out of the elevator and chasing after James with his gun drawn. The other officer tries to come around to the front, but James is able to get past her.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - DAY

The cops storm back into the lobby to confront the concierge.

OFFICER #1

I thought you said his car wasn't here.

The concierge acts innocent.

CONCIERGE

Well, it wasn't in the usual spot.

The officer is frustrated but his partner pulls him away without any more trouble.

The concierge is chuffed. He picks up his book leans back and keeps reading. The book cover features a hotel concierge with his arms out in a welcoming gesture. The book is titled, "Welcome Home - Memoirs of a New York City Concierge". On the back cover, there is a recommendation blurb by James Wulffhart.

CUT.

EXT. NEW JERSEY PIER - DAY

James has pushed his car off a pier at an isolated industrial area of New Jersey.

James watches as the car sinks into the water and disappears.

CUT.

INT. NEW JERSEY BUS DEPOT - DAY

James is using his new IDs to buy a bus ticket to New Orleans.

TICKET AGENT

There you go Mr. Grady. Gate 4 is straight through the double doors and to the left. Enjoy your trip and I hope it's a safe one.

James almost misses his bus. The driver stops just before pulling out and lets James on.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

TITLE - "FOUR YEARS LATER"

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - DAY

James is sitting at the front of a kindergarten classroom. Children are seated with their legs crossed listening to him narrate a children's book.

We can see the cover of the children's book which is titled "The Old Red Book" and is authored by "Jack Grady". James is reading the book while showing the kids some of the cute cartoony artwork on the pages.

James seems to be living well and the female teacher, JOY, is at the back of the room and charmed by James as he entertains the kids. Joy makes eye contact with James and she winks at him.

James finishes the book and closes it softly. The children sigh that the story is finished and it is clear they want to hear more.

JOY

Let's all give a big thank you to
Jack for coming in and reading his
wonderful story for us.

The children say "thank you" somewhat in unison. Then a bell rings throughout the halls of the school. Another female teacher opens the door to the classroom and enters. She is the other kindergarten teacher who spends the other part of the school day with the kids and teaches in Spanish. There are two posters of flags over the doorway - one for the USA and the other for New Mexico.

JOY

*Todos listos para ir con la Sra.
Díaz.*

CHILDREN

Si, Senora.

The children get ready to be escorted out with the other teacher. Once the fuss is over, Joy approaches James who has been leaning against her desk. She leans in and kisses him.

One of the children runs back in the room because he forgot his crayons. Joy and James stop kissing for a moment and then laugh once the boy leaves. Joy spins James around so that she is sitting on her desk and he is between her legs.

JOY

They really love your books.

JAMES

They're a great bunch of kids.

JOY

So, are we still doing dinner tonight?

JAMES

Yup. Just gotta head back to the store for a few hours.

JOY

Ok, babe. I'm gonna wear that red dress you bought me.

Joy holds onto James and kisses his neck.

JAMES

And underneath...?

JOY

You'll have to guess...

JAMES

Oh, I like a good mystery...

Joy bites her bottom lip and then pushes James off to avoid her doing something that could get her in trouble.

JOY

Well, you can solve the mystery tonight. Now get out of here before I do something I could get arrested for.

James and Joy have one final kiss and then James leaves the class.

CUT.

EXT. ROSWELL - DAY

James has moved to Roswell, New Mexico. From one of his book reviews on alien conspiracy, James had a contact that helped him get set-up and vouched for him in the community. He is using his new name "Jack Grady" and he started writing and publishing children's books. James opened a bookstore downtown. The bookstore is called "Under Cover".

James is driving toward the store and then parks outside. He unlocks the door and flips the closed sign over to open. He goes inside the store.

INT. UNDER COVER BOOKSTORE - DAY

James gets set up at the front desk of his store. His store looks to be a mix of second-hand and new copies. Some older women enter the store and quickly greet James. The women are shy and simply move toward the racks to look for books. James picks up a book on the front counter that he had been reading - it's the alien conspiracy book he had reviewed. The author's picture is on the back cover.

Time passes and customers come and go. The author of the conspiracy book walks past the window of the store and smiles and waves at James. James waves back.

CUT.

It is getting close to the time where James will go meet Joy for dinner. The last customer of the day enters the store and approaches the front counter.

LONER

Do you have any old first editions?

James hesitates in answering as he sizes up the customer. The customer is a man in his early twenties but looks like a loner.

JAMES

I don't usually carry stuff like that. There might be some antiquarian first editions in the bibliophile section. It's in the far aisle at the end.

The customer heads over to the area James mentioned. James then gets a text from Joy. The text reads: "Is my Big Bad Wolf hungry?" She then sends a picture of her posing in the tight-fitting red dress. James simply texts back the wolf emoji and a peach emoji. Joy texts back a hot dog emoji and a pink donut emoji. James just shakes his head endeared by how playful Joy is.

The customer has returned and dropped a book on the counter. It is the haunted book.

James is just staring at the book silently.

JAMES

Where did you find that?

LONER

Where you said. So, how much is this book? I'm going to take it.

James pauses. He picks up the book and examines it one last time.

LONER

Dude, I don't have all day.

JAMES

I didn't realize this was still here.

The loner is thinking that he might have gotten lucky with a valuable book that was overlooked.

LONER

Look, jerk. If it's on the racks then you have to sell it. That's the law. You're a registered business.

James thinks about it.

JAMES

No... this isn't for sale. You don't want this.

LONER

It's that valuable huh?

JAMES

This book is dangerous. I must have
forgot it was here.

LONER

Bullshit!

The loner grabs the book out of James's hands and runs out of the store with it. The loner is down the street and out of sight before James can do anything about it.

James is shocked and doesn't notice the dark orange residue that has ended up on his fingertips from the loner snatching the book from his hands.

As James is locking up and leaving the store, he spots in the convex security mirror young Janus watching him. James turns around but Janus isn't there.

CUT.

EXT. ROSWELL - NIGHT

James has locked up the bookstore. He gets in his car and drives off to meet Joy at the restaurant.

INT. CHEZ VERSEAU RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Joy and James are having a romantic dining experience and James doesn't seem too rattled by having seen the haunted book earlier. In fact, he might feel that the curse has lifted now that he has gotten rid of the book. James and Joy are feeding food directly to each other with their fingers. Joy is licking James's fingers clean.

CUT.

INT. JOY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joy is in bed sleeping. Her red dress is lying on the ground. James goes into the bathroom.

INT. JOY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

James begins shaving with his straight razor. He is looking in the mirror. He thinks that he hears a strange sound outside the room.

He stops shaving for a moment and turns his head.

He resumes shaving and then washes off the last of the shaving cream on his face. He looks in the mirror to check for nicks but then notices the dark orange residue on his fingers from having handled the haunted book earlier.

James fumbles trying to get to his antipsychotic medication. He's having trouble getting the bottle open. Suddenly, the reflection reaches through the mirror and grabs James by the throat. It is the doppelganger except now James and the doppelganger appear the same age and are identical.

The doppelganger crawls through the mirror and ends up wrestling with James in the bathroom. A hand grabs the straight razor. James and the doppelganger struggle and the razor is cutting and flaying flesh. They end up in the tub wrapped up in the shower curtain. It is impossible to tell which is the real James.

Then, one of them gets the upper hand and starts strangling the other. The struggle continues and the one with the upper hand starts running the water and sets up the plug with his free hand.

The tub is filling with water and one of them is being forced under the water and drowned. The blood from the cuts is turning the bath water red. The writhing ceases and one of them is dead. But, all that can be seen is the defeated James dead in the tub.

Joy is calling out to James and she begins screaming when she enters the bathroom and sees what has happened. James is in the bathroom alone, cut up and drowned as if it were a bizarre violent suicide. He is still holding onto the straight razor.

JAMES
(O.S.)

What's the matter?

Joy is shocked and turns to see James alive and healthy in front of her at the entrance to the bathroom. She grabs onto him and holds him tightly.

She looks at the tub, but everything is back to normal. Perhaps, Joy had been poisoned by the ink residue when she was sucking James's fingers at the restaurant. Therefore, the struggle may have only existed in her mind as she heard it playing out from the bedroom, or instead, James did battle his doppelganger and who is

to say what the true outcome was.

JAMES

It's alright. It's all over. I'm
here now. And I'm not going to
leave.

ECU - JAMES'S EYE

An extreme close-up on James's eye transitions to the Pastoral World. There is a fast tracking from across the water, and up the hill toward the front door of the pastoral house. The tracking slows progressively and there is a thumping and banging against the door from the inside of the house. The door opens and the yawning blackness on the inside consumes the frame.

FADE OUT.

THE END