

GROOMED

Written by

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EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Various KIDS playing joyfully with their various PARENTS.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Most kids first memory is a happy
thing.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

KIDS getting sprayed with a hose by FATHER.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Running around the house getting
sprayed.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

KID getting pushed on a swing by a MOTHER.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Getting pushed on a swing on a
sunny day.

EXT. BASEBALL PARK - DAY

KIDS and PARENTS sitting, watching the game, eating hot dogs.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
But I'd bet most kids first memory
revolves around baseball.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

An eleven year old JIM is standing in a postage stamp sized
backyard at bat with a broomstick in his hands.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
It was no different for me.

Jim jumps when Fred speaks.

FRED (V.O.)
You're crowding the plate.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Okay, it was a little different.

Jim looks down and doesn't see anything but ground. He takes
a step back anyway.

FRED (V.O.)
You're still on top of the plate.

We see the entire yard, what there is of it. It's surrounded on all sides by broken and scratched mismatching wooden fencing, some of it's eight feet high, others aren't so lucky.

In what's considered the field FRED pitching, CHARLES catching and two kids, twelve year old SCOTT and ten year old WALTER, are in the outfield.

CHARLES
Just pitch the fucking ball.

Charles picks a beer can off the ground and takes a hit. He finishes it off and tosses the can into a barrel behind him.

FRED
You called for it.

Fred goes into a much larger wind-up than is necessary. He also throws the rubber pimple ball much faster than needed. The ball hits Jim on the side of the face and bounces to the back fence. He goes down crying. Charles stands up and looks over Jim then addresses Fred.

CHARLES
Jesus, Fred! You didn't have to bean him.

Fred calmly picks up the beer can that's at his feet and sips.

FRED
He was crowding the plate. A pitchers got to protect the plate.

CHARLES
What fucking plate? Do you see a fucking plate.

FRED
Yes, how else would I have known he was crowding it?

Charles picks Jim up with one hand.

CHARLES
Get up.

Jim has trouble steadying himself.

FRED
Stand the fuck up, ya baby.

CHARLES
Cut him some slack. You hit him in
the face.

FRED
It's only a fucking pimple ball!
What the fucks he crying for?

Jim is rubbing his reddened face. His face has little indentations from the pimples on the ball. He's trying valiantly to stop crying. He rubs his eyes with his hands. Fred walks off the mound.

FRED (CONT'D)
Fuck it. He's going to be a cry
baby the fucking games over.

Fred walks past Jim and Charles tossing the beer can into the barrel. He walks to a cooler, grabs two more, tosses one to Charles who follows his brother out of the yard.

Scott and Walter scurry to catch up to their fathers.

SCOTT
Thanks for ruining the game, ya
baby.

Scott shoves Jim.

WALTER
Yeah, ya baby.

Walter attempts to shove Jim but Jim swings his shoulder out of the way. Scott and Walter exit the yard.

Jim stands there for a beat. He leans over and picks up the broomstick. A piano softly plays the song "Take Me Out To The Ball Game" as Jim walks to retrieve the ball. He picks it up.

JIM
I don't care if I never get back.

Jim puts the broomstick over his shoulder and, squeezing the pimple ball, exits the yard.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
See? Just a little different.

EXT. FRONT STOOP - DAY

Jim is sitting to the left side of the stairs on the bottom stair reading a dictionary. Fred and Charles are sitting at the top drinking beer.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Those are my uncles, Fred and Charles, never call him Charlie. Because my father was killed in the war they said it's their responsibility to make sure I don't turn out a sissy.

CHARLES
What the fuck is it with you and all that reading?

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
As you might gather, it wasn't a very scholarly way to keep me from sissifying.

FRED
I tell ya, our work is cut for us with this one.

CHARLES
Put down that damn book and get us another beer.

Jim puts the book down and begins to stand up.

FRED
Bring that book to me, boy.

Jim picks up the book and carries it up with him. He holds the dictionary trying not to let Fred have it. But Fred snatches it from Jim's arms. He takes a look at it.

FRED (CONT'D)
A dictionary?

Fred looks at Jim then at Charles.

FRED (CONT'D)
Can you believe this shit, Charles?
This idiots reading the dictionary.

Charles just shakes his head sadly.

CHARLES
What you reading a dictionary for, boy?

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Because it was the only book in the
house.

JIM
I dunno.

Fred hits Jim with the book then holds it out to him.

FRED
Take this book upstairs with you
and these cans and get us another
couple of beers.

Jim takes the book and cans and starts entering the building.

CHARLES
And be quick about it. Don't be
lolly gagging like some pansy.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jim starts walking up the stairs. He's going up three
flights.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
They were always batting me around
and making me run errands. They
always said it's what my father
would have wanted them to do.
(pause)
I didn't know my father but I doubt
he would have wanted me to be an
errand boy.

Jim stops on the second floor and looks into the apartment.
He sees Scott and Walter sitting on the floor watching TV.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Especially when they each had a son
of their own.

Jim turns and heads up the stairs.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
It's funny how their sons were
never in danger of being a pussy.
It was just me that had to be
taught. I think it's because if
either of their wives saw them lay
a hand on Scott or Walter there'd
be hell to pay.

Jim arrives on the third floor and enters the apartment.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Jim walks into the kitchen, puts the dictionary on the table and the cans in a barrel then heads to the refrigerator. He opens it and takes out three beers. He places them on the side of the sink. He opens them.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I didn't like that my mother didn't
stuck up for me. But I really
didn't need her. I had my own ways
of getting back at them.

Jim picks up two cans and drops a long line of saliva into each of them. He puts them back on the counter then picks up the other one. He looks at it for a second before dumping it into the sink.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Every other day or so I'd dump out
one can. Later, after I was long in
bed, there'd only be one can left
so they'd accuse each other of
drinking an extra beer. I enjoyed
laying in bed listening to them
scream at each other.

Jim tosses the empty can into the barrel, picks up the other two and exits the kitchen.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
But I'd always spit in their beer.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim is sitting at a table in the adult section reading a book. A formidable looking guy, RALPH, is sitting at the next table reading the paper.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
It wasn't too difficult to get
away. There's no way in hell anyone
from my family would find me here.
Hell, no one from the neighborhood
would. Most days it was just me and
that guy.
(pause)
Who I would soon enough come to
know as Ralph.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jim is standing in a boxing position with Fred on his knees in front of him. Charles, Walter and Scott surround the two at a comfortable distance.

FRED
Put up your dukes.

JIM
I don't want to.

Fred throws a punch at Jim who runs backwards away from it. He backs into the arms of Charles who pushes him back into the make shift ring.

CHARLES
Don't be a pussy.

Walter and Scott cheer the scene on.

JIM
This isn't fair.

FRED
Life's not fair you little faggot.
I'm on my knees for Christ sake.
How bad can it be?

Jim stands there for a beat before looking around. Walter and Scott are almost pissing their pants in anticipation. Charles is semi paying attention while sipping his beer. Jim grins just a little.

Knowing he has no escape Jim steadies himself for battle. At first he stays a safe distance away from Charles who throws wild punches that cause him to lose balance.

CHARLES
Holy shit damn fuck. Stop running
away you little baby.

Charles steps forward and grabs Jim. He puts Jim's hands into a boxing position.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Stay in there and battle. That's
what a man does.

SCOTT
Yeah, be a man.

WALTER
Yeah, a man.

Jim looks at these people. He's amazed he's related. He resigns himself to the fact he has no way out. He girds himself and steps closer to Fred.

Feed smiles and picks up the beer at his feet. He takes a sip before tossing the can behind him. He puts his hands up in preparation.

Jim steps within reaching distance and easily backs away from Fred's punch.

FRED
God damn! Why don't you stay and fight?

Jim steps back in and again backs away from Fred's errant swing. But this time he steps back during Fred's follow through and punches Fred directly in the nose.

FRED (CONT'D)
Holy fuck shit.

Fred swings his hands to his now bleeding nose.

FRED (CONT'D)
You little fuck stick.

Fred leans over reaching out he grabs Jim. He pulls Jim to his face and head butts him. Jim grabs his eye and tries to pull away. Fred begins to stand up carrying Jim with him.

FRED (CONT'D)
Here I am just trying to teach you something and you have to fuck it up.

Fred rears back and slaps Jim in the face as he slams him onto the ground. Fred storms out of the yard quickly followed by Charles.

Jim is curled up on the ground holding his face. Scott and Walter walk up to him.

SCOTT
Why do you have to ruin everything?

Scott kicks him then quickly exits. Walter steps toward him.

WALTER
Yeah, you ruin everything.

Walter kicks him then quickly runs out of the yard. Jim turns and begins to sit up. His eye is already red and beginning to swell. He rubs at it.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I told my mother I got hit with a
pitch during a baseball game. I
don't know what my uncle's story
was.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jim is standing around a corner. Every few seconds he looks
down the street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I did get them all back for that.

Walter comes bounding down the street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I knew every night after they'd eat
Charles would give Walter some
money to get him smokes and Walter
some candy.

Walter gets closer to the corner.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
And I also knew Walter never paid
much attention.

Walter arrives at the corner. Jim swings a but piece of wood
and hits Walter across the face. Walter goes down in a heap.
Jim quickly drags the moaning Walter down the alley way and
goes through his pockets taking the money. Jim leaves Walter
holding his face and rolling on the ground.

EXT. FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

Jim, with a nice black eye, is sitting on the stairs reading
the dictionary. Fred and Charles at in their position
drinking.

CHARLES
Where the fuck is that dumb ass kid
of mine?

FRED
He probably got lost. Kid ain't too
bright, you know.

Charles swings at Fred almost knocking him off the chair.
Fred grabs the walls and steadies himself.

CHARLES
Like you kids a fucking rocket
scientist.

FRED
At least my kid gets his ass right
back from the store.

Fred notices something and points across the street.

FRED (CONT'D)
Hey look.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Walter is staggering around the corner.

CHARLES (O.C.)
What's the matter with you boy? You
better not have lost my smokes.

Walter runs across the street and right up the stairs. Jim barely looks up. The breathless and crying Walter is sobbing which makes it difficult for him to tell his tale. His face is swollen and his nose is bleeding.

WALTER
I. . .I. . .I. . .

CHARLES
. . .spit it out you little fuck.
Where's my smokes?

WALTER
I got jumped.

CHARLES
Jumped? Where?

WALTER
Down the street. Six kids came at
me. I fought them but there were
too many of them.

Charles stands up.

CHARLES
Who where they? Did you see them?

Charles lifts Walter's face to get a good look.

WALTER

They jumped me from behind. I
didn't see nothing.

Charles lets go of Walter's face.

CHARLES

Who would jump an innocent kid?

Charles looks at Fred who's calmly sipping a beer.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Let's go. We'll get to the bottom
of this.

Fred slowly gets up and follows Charles down the stairs.
Charles turns around from the street and calls to Walter.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Come on, you little idiot, you've
got to help us find them.

WALTER

I don't want to go back there. My
nose is bleeding. I've got to go to
Mom.

CHARLES

Pussy.

Charles turns and begins running across the street. Fred
slowly takes up the rear.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Charles and Fred are swiftly walking down the street looking
on every stairway, searching up and down the street looking
for a roaming gang of muggers. All they see is a group of
BIKERS laughing on stairs. Charles starts staring at them.

CHARLES

That must be them.

FRED

Are you out of your mind?

CHARLES

What?

FRED

You think they're going to jump a
kid for what? A couple of dollars?

CHARLES

Do you see any other likely suspects?

FRED

Have you ever thought that they've fled the scene of the crime? Come on, Charles, think about it. You're kids an idiot.

CHARLES

Watch what you say about my kid.

FRED

Big deal. My kids an idiot. This entire neighborhood is crawling with idiots. My point is he probably was showing off the money, like he's done in the past, and some kid whacked him in the face and took it.

CHARLES

Are you calling my son a liar?

FRED

Pretty fucking much. Let's just go to the store and write it off as an error in judgement.

The Bikers have noticed Fred and Charles. Five Bikers make their way across the street. Fred is none to happy with this event.

FRED (CONT'D)

Aww great.

BIKER 1

Anything I can do for you fellows?

FRED

No, we were. . .

CHARLES

. . .yeah. . .

FRED

Ah, great.

CHARLES

I was wondering if you fellows saw a kid just a while ago?

BIKER 1

We see lots of kids.

CHARLES
Yeah, but his kid got jumped. You
wouldn't know anything about that
now, would you?

The Bikers look at Charles as if he's lost his mind.

BIKER 1
Are you accusing us of jumping some
kid and taking his five bucks?

FRED
It was more like two.

CHARLES
Shut the fuck up.

BIKER 1
Are you telling me to shut up?

CHARLES
No, I was talking to my dumb ass
brother.

BIKER 1
What's your point, friend?

CHARLES
Now I'm not saying you did it or
anything but I was wondering if you
saw anything.

BIKER 1
You should move along.

The Bikers start to move away from the scene.

CHARLES
I was just asking some neighborly
questions, neighbor.

The Bikers stop and turn around.

BIKER 1
And I'm saying, neighbor, we don't
know shit so you'd better take your
asses back home.

CHARLES
I don't like the way your talking
to me.

BIKER 1
Would you like us to stop talking?

CHARLES
I'm just saying you talk like a man
who's hiding something.

The Bikers are done. They start to surround Charles and Fred.
Fred's none to happy with this turn of events. Charles is too
into being the man to register the requisite fear.

SND FX: Police siren blasts out one warning.

POLICE OFFICER
What seems to be the trouble here?

BIKER 1
Nothing at all, officer. We're just
having a neighborly discussion.

POLICE OFFICER
What's up, Charles?

CHARLES
We were just trying to get to the
bottom of a little crime, that's
all.

POLICE OFFICER
What crime?

CHARLES
My kid was mugged.

POLICE OFFICER
And you think these guys did it?

The Police Officer laughs.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
You really haven't gotten any
brighter since school, have you? Go
the fuck home before I take you in
for felony stupidity.

The Bikers laugh. Fred starts to laugh but quickly stops when
Charles looks at him.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
If you want me to take a report
I'll meet you back at your house.

CHARLES
That won't be necessary, Tony. It
was probably just my dumb ass kid
being his dumb ass self.

POLICE OFFICER
Good, now get home.

The Bikers turn and head back to their house. Charles and Fred stand there for a beat as the police car pulls away.

CHARLES
I still think they know something.

FRED
Let it go, Charles.

Fred starts to walk away while Charles continues to stare. The Bikers notice this and begin to talk amongst themselves. Finally Fred pulls Charles away.

Two Bikers follow Charles and Fred down the street. This fact makes Fred very nervous. But Charles is angrily unaware of the tail.

CHARLES
I'm telling you, they know something.

FRED
Let it go, will you? It's fucking a couple of bucks.

Fred reaches into his pocket, pulls out his wallet and gives Charles a five. Charles takes it without question and waves it at Fred.

CHARLES
But this doesn't solve anything, Fred. Someone mugged my kid and someone knows who did it.

Charles and Fred arrive at the front of the house. Charles begins to get into one of the two cars parked in front.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
You gonna come?

FRED
No, I'm going to grab another beer.

Fred walks up to Jim and kicks him.

FRED (CONT'D)
Get me another beer.

Jim gets up and heads up the stairs.

CHARLES
Don't drink an extra one like you
always do.

Charles drives away. Fred watches him. After a beat he gives him the finger.

FRED
Fuck you. You're the one who's
always grabbing the extra beer.

Fred sits down. The Bikers watch as Charles drives down the street. One take out a note pad and jots something down. The Bikers turn and head back to their house.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Charles is walking down the stairs. It takes a few seconds for him to adjust to the bright light. He blinks a few times as he looks up and down the street becoming more agitated by the second.

CHARLES
What the fuck?

We see parked in front of the house only one car. And it's not the one he drive away in.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Where the fucks my car?

SND FX Motorcycles

A few Bikers turn the corner and slowly drive down the street.

BIKER 1
What seems to be the problem,
neighbor?

CHARLES
Some fucktard stole my car.

BIKER 1
It's a sad world when a man can't
park his car in front of his own
house. What kind of car is it,
friend? We'll keep an eye out for
it.

Charles does a slow burn as the Bikers continue down the street. Fred ambles down the stairs. It takes him a few seconds to register a problem.

FRED
Where's your car?

CHARLES
Shut the fuck up and get it your
car. You're giving me a ride to
work.

FRED
But what happened to your car?

Charles gets into the passenger side and Fred follows into
the drivers.

FRED (CONT'D)
Are you going to tell me where your
car is?

He's not. Charles sits there in a burn. The car pulls away
and we reveal Jim looking out the third floor window.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I later learned the concept of
karma. That was my first lesson in
it.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim is sitting at a table reading. Ralph is at his regular
spot reading the paper. They are the only two in the room.
Ralph keeps looking over at Jim. He has a concerned
expression.

Ralph stands up and slowly walks over to Jim. Jim notices the
shadow and looks up. Ralph motions to the chair.

RALPH
Mind?

Jim shakes his head no. He closes his book as Ralph sits
down.

RALPH (CONT'D)
My name is Ralph.

Ralph extends his hand. Jim reaches out to shake it.

JIM
Jim.

RALPH
Nice to finally meet you, Jim. How
come you come here every day
instead of enjoying school
vacation.

JIM
Why doesn't being here mean I'm not
enjoying myself.

RALPH
Point taken. There is so much to do
in here.

Ralph pauses for a second. He's hesitant to ask what he wants
to ask.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something, Jim?

Jim nods his head yes.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You didn't have that black eye
yesterday, how did you get it?

Jim hesitates to answer. He's not sure if he should tell him
the truth.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Did your father hit you?

JIM
My father is dead.

RALPH
I'm sorry to hear that. Then you
just had a little scrap with
another boy?

Ralph doesn't believe that. The bruise is too large to be
made by a peer of Jim's.

JIM
Not exactly.

Jim relates the story quickly and breathlessly.

JIM (CONT'D)
My uncle was showing me how to box.
Actually he was just punching me. I
got in a lucky punch and he head
butted me. Then he slapped me and
threw me to the ground.

Ralph sits there still and silent.

JIM (CONT'D)
Then my cousins kicked me.

RALPH
I see.

Ralph leans back looking at Jim who is wide eyed and excited but a little afraid. What if this is a friend of his uncles and he tells? He'd never told anyone what goes on before.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Has this happened before?

JIM
Yes, but not this bad. Usually when they're teaching me to box they just slap me or belt me in the stomach.

RALPH
They?

JIM
My two uncles, Charles and Fred.

RALPH
I see. What does your mother say?

JIM
She's told them to knock it off but she's always working. So they wait until she leaves. And if they think I told on them they smack me around harder. I figured they'd never come here so for awhile I'm out of their way.

RALPH
Good thinking, Jim.

Ralph leans forward.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Do you really want to learn to box, Jim? With gloves and a ring and all that?

JIM
I would.

RALPH

Then let's see if I can find you a coach.

Ralph stands up and Jim quickly follows. This unlikely pair exit the library.

EXT. FRONT OF MCCAN'S GYM - DAY

Ralph and Jim walk down the street and enter the gym.

INT. MCCAN'S GYM - MOMENTS LATER

The gym is filled with your prototypical GYM RATS. A couple are in a ring; some are working out on speed and heavy bags; others shadow box and jump rope.

One by one they see Ralph enter with Jim and each person they pass stops working out. No one can take their eyes off Ralph. The duo walks up to the ring and wait. Only the pair in the ring is moving. Everyone else is watching.

An older man, MARK, standing at the ring takes his eyes from the action and sees Ralph. He immediately rings the bell stopping the round. Mark extends his hand to Ralph.

MARK

To what do I owe this pleasure?

Mark seems a little nervous. Who is this guy? Ralph places his immense hand on Jim's shoulder.

RALPH

I'd like you to teach this boy how to fight.

MARK

By the looks of it he's already started training.

RALPH

An unfortunate accident in the home.

Mark nods knowingly. He grabs Jim's face.

MARK

I'd say we'll have to wait until he has both eyes to do anything but bag work and get some footwork going.

RALPH
Thanks. I appreciate it.

Ralph shakes Mark's hand then turns to Jim.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You listen to this guy. He'll make
a boxer out of you.

Ralph leans closer to Jim's face. His expression says that what he's about to say must be followed or there will be dire consequences.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Don't pretend you know anything.
Don't ever show off. Don't even
tell anyone you're doing this. Do
you understand me? You're here to
learn.

Jim nods slightly.

RALPH (CONT'D)
After you get good never be a
bully. Wether I'm here or not
you're now representing me. You
understand me?

Jim nods slightly. Ralph stands back up. He pats Jim on the shoulder.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Good. See you tomorrow morning.
Same place.

Ralph turns then half turns back.

RALPH (CONT'D)
And you don't tell anyone about
that either.

Ralph turns and leaves. Slowly the gym starts to become active again. Mark starts to walk and Jim follows behind.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mark and Jim are walking around the locker room. It's as grimy as you'd expect. Towels and discarded equipment litter the space. Mark finds Jim an empty locker.

MARK

This'll be your locker but don't put nothing in it until you get a lock. These guys will steal anything. Even if you do know Ralph.

Mark and Jim walk toward a closet. Mark takes out some keys and opens it. He starts pulling out shorts and gloves and headgear and tossing them on the floor.

MARK (CONT'D)

Put this stuff in your locker. I'll lend you a lock until tomorrow.

Jim squats down to pick up his gear. He's having trouble holding it all. Mark pulls out a lock then locks the closet door.

JIM

I can't afford this. How much does all this cost?

Mark walks past Jim and puts the lock on the locker. Without looking around he keeps walking out of the locker room.

MARK

Don't worry about it. Ralph's got it.

Jim stands there as Mark reaches the door.

MARK (CONT'D)

Come back tomorrow. By then maybe the swelling would have gone down some. In the mean time, straighten up the locker room a bit. That's lesson number one. Don't leave shit around cause some poor bastards going to have to clean it up.

Mark exits as Jim slowly walks toward his locker. He looks it up and down before gently placing his gear inside.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim hurries in to the library. He wants to thank Ralph and tell him how excited he was. But Ralph's not there. On the table where he sits is a book and a piece of paper.

Jim dejectedly walks over to the table. He picks up the piece of paper. It reads:

You've got to start reading something more substantial than those kiddie novels. Start with this. I read it when I was about your age. I'll be back in a few months. There will be a test.

Jim holds the note in one hand while he picks up the book. It's a big book. Larger than the dictionary at his house. The title reads: The Complete Works Of Edgar Allen Poe.

Jim looks around the room and no one is anywhere to be seen. He places the book back on the desk and sits down. He runs his hand over the cover then opens the book.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Charles is leaning on Fred's car. Fred comes bounding down the stairs heading toward the car. They get in and drive off during their conversation.

CHARLES

Three fucking months of this shit but today I finally get my own car back. All that OT was killing me.

FRED

You think it's going to break my heart not to have to drive your dumb ass to and from work every day?

CHARLES

It's much worse for me with the way you drive.

FRED

What's wrong with the way I drive?

CHARLES

You watch the road like Ray Charles and accelerate and break like an amputee.

FRED

Oh, like you're the model passenger. Three months and not once have you chipped in for gas.

CHARLES

I'm your brother! Besides, it's on your fucking way.

FRED
That besides the point. It would
have been nice.

CHARLES
You want money for gas? I'll give
you fucking money for gas.

FRED
I don't want your fucking money.
You give me money for gas then you
tell your wife who tells my wife
who busts my balls about it.

CHARLES
So just shut the fuck up and drive.

FRED
You shit the fuck up and drive.

CHARLES
Good one, Fred, you really got me
there.

INT. MCCAN'S GYM - DAY

Jim is working out on a speed bag and is doing pretty good.
He's not the fastest person in the gym but he's obviously
been putting his time in.

MARK
Jim. It's time.

Jim stops and jogs over to the ring. Mark is standing next to
PETER inside the ring.

MARK (CONT'D)
Jim, this is your opponent, Peter.

Jim starts to climb into the ring.

MARK (CONT'D)
Don't try anything funny. Peter's
more experienced. Just stick to the
basics.

PETER
And get ready to have your ass
handed to you.

Peter is trying to psyche Jim out but it seems to be having
no affect. It's as if he's in his own little world. Mark puts
Jim's gloves on and his face is total concentration.

Mark sticks in the mouthpiece, sticks the headgear on and starts to climb out of the ring.

MARK
Come out of your corners at the bell.

Mark rings the bell and Peter races out of his corner. He tries to pin Jim there but Jim's too fast for him. Now in the center of the ring we can see Peter may have more experience but Jim is much faster.

Jim slips Peter's punches and gets in a few jabs of his own. Peter lands a few as Jim tries to get away. Peter misses and wraps his arm around Jim's neck.

MARK (CONT'D)
Break.

Jim starts to pull away and Peter head butts him.

MARK (CONT'D)
None of that shit, Peter.

Although it hit his headgear there's a change in Jim's expression. He is controlled rage. They begin boxing again, Jim slips a punch, moves to Peter's left and lands a perfect shot to Peter's face.

Peter hits the ground and Jim stands over him. Jim's not saying anything but he's just waiting for Peter to stand up to knock him down again.

Mark gets in the ring.

MARK (CONT'D)
Go to your corner.

Jim looks around not remembering what corner was his.

MARK (CONT'D)
Take any fucking corner. Just get the fuck out of my way.

Jim bounds over to a corner and leans against the ropes. Peter wasn't knocked out but his bell was rung pretty good. Mark sits him up. Peter's isn't totally focused. Mark turns around and looks at Jim.

MARK (CONT'D)
That's it for today. Hit the showers.

Without hesitation Jim climbs out of the ring. One of the men who was watching, TONY, starts taking Jim's gloves off.

TONY
Good job, kid. Ralph'll be plenty
proud of you.

Jim looks up at Tony.

JIM
You know Ralph? I haven't seen him
in a long time.

Tony hands Jim his gloves.

TONY
He's away. Got some business out of
town. Don't worry about it, kid.
I'm sure he's heard about how good
you're doing. Now get the fuck out
of here.

Tony swats at Jim who walks to the locker room.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Jim's dressed but his hair is still wet. He's locking his locker. He sees Peter still in his shorts sitting on a bench. Jim goes over to Peter and extends his hand.

JIM
Nice bout. That was fun.

Peter slaps Jim's hand away.

PETER
Go fuck yourself. One lucky punch
and you think you're king of the
fucking world.

Jim shrugs his shoulders.

JIM
If that's what you have to tell
yourself.

Jim turns to exit. Peter stands up and pushes Jim.

PETER
You want to see how lucky you'd get
now?

Jim looks at him. For such a young kid he's amazingly calm.

JIM

Let's go.

Jim and Peter square off. Their movements are limited due to the benches. Peter throws the first punch which Jim slips while landing a left to Peter's jaw which sends him toppling over the bench.

Before Peter can right himself Mark and a few of the older BOXERS descend upon the locker room.

MARK

What have I said a thousand fucking times to you guys?

Mark grabs Jim. A couple of the Boxers help Peter stand up. Blood is coming out of Peter's mouth.

JIM

Only fight in the ring. But he started it.

MARK

I don't give a fuck who started it.

Mark looks from Jim to Peter.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're both suspended for a week.

JIM

Oh, Mark, don't. . .

MARK

. . .don't say another fucking word or I'll make it two weeks.

PETER

This is bullshit.

Mark points at him.

PETER (CONT'D)

Two weeks. Clean the fuck up and get out of here.

A Boxer puts his hand on Peter's shoulder. Peter shrugs it off as they head over to the sink. Mark turns to look at Jim and he's already half way out of the locker room.

INT. MCCAN'S GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Jim walks out of the gym as Mark runs to catch up to him.

MARK
Hey, Jim. Hold up.

Jim stops but doesn't turn around. Mark reaches him and spins him around.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, man, but rules are rules.

Jim nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
Peter's just a hot head. Don't let him get under your skin.

Jim nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
It's just a week. You can keep working out on your own. Hit the roads, do a little running.

Jim nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
What the fuck is it with you and the damn nodding?

JIM
You said one more word and it'd be two weeks.

Mark laughs. He gives Jim a playful shove.

MARK
Get the fuck out of here, Mr. Literal. See you in a week.

Jim nods then turns around.

MARK (CONT'D)
Ball busting prick.

Jim exits the gym. Mark stands there watching him. Tony comes up behind him.

TONY
Kids got a sledgehammer of a left.

Mark nods.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Charles and Fred are ripping down the crappy fence. Jim is hauling them to the front of the house to a pick-up truck. Scott and Walter are nowhere to be found.

CHARLES

How come we always have to give in to your wife's idiotic demands?

FRED

Because I don't want to hear from her.

CHARLES

Every one of her fucking ideas ends up costing all of us money. If it's her fucking idea why don't you pay for it?

FRED

Because my fucking wife convinced your fucking wife it was a good idea to put up a new fence. So it all gets split three ways.

The fence has one more section left. Charles knocks it down and pulls out the rotted post.

CHARLES

Fucking done. When's the new fence get delivered?

FRED

We pick it up tomorrow when we drop off the old shit.

CHARLES

Oh yeah, that's right. Guess that only leaves one more thing to do.

Charles and Fred raise up their hands triumphantly.

FRED

Go to the beach.

CHARLES

Go to the beach.

Jim stops in front of them.

JIM

We're going to the beach?

Fred and Charles look at each other.

CHARLES

We're going to the beach with our family. You're staying here to clean up the yard.

Jim begins to protest but it quickly shut off.

FRED

It's just that we don't feel we could watch you and our boys too.

CHARLES

Yeah, wouldn't want you to get too far out there and drown.

Jim looks at them and wants to cry. He doesn't. He turns his back to them to get another section of fence. He semi-whispers,

JIM

Fucking assholes.

Charles hears him.

CHARLES

What the fuck did that snotty little fuck say to us?

FRED

I think he called us fucking assholes.

Charles picks up a post hole digger and swings it at Jim. It connects with his head sending him sprawling into the wood. A trickle of blood rolls out of Jim's hair down his neck.

CHARLES

No little fucker is going to call me a fucking asshole. You fucking asshole.

Charles tosses the post hole digger at Jim. He's rubbing his head as the post hole digger bounces off him. Charles and Fred begin to exit the yard.

FRED

You'd better have this all cleaned up when we get back.

Jim fights to stand up. He's rubbing his head. He takes a deep breath and leans over to pick up another section of fence.

EXT. FRONT OF THE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Jim arrives at the front of the house in time to see Scott and Walter slide into the backseat of Charles' new to him car.

Scott and Walter wave as they pull away from the curb. Jim tosses the section into the truck and turns just in time to see Scott and Walter give him the finger.

JIM

I hope they get sunstroke and die.

Jim turns and goes back to finish cleaning up the yard. There is more blood on the collar of his shirt.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jim is sitting in a clean and fenceless yard. His head has stopped bleeding but his shirt is stained with blood and a portion of his hair is matted.

Charles, Fred, Scott and Walter turn the corner and enter the yard.

CHARLES

Look at this place.

FRED

We did a good job.

CHARLES

That new fence is going to look great.

Jim stands up and is trying to leave.

SCOTT

Where you going?

WALTER

Yeah. Don't you want to hear about all the fun we had at the beach.

JIM

Not really.

Jim walks past Scott who hits him in the head where the post hole digger contacted. Jim grabs his head and doubles over.

FRED

Look at that baby. Can't even take a little shot to the head.

Jim stands straight up and steps to Scott. Scott backs up next to his father.

CHARLES

What do we got a tough guy here?

Charles swings at Jim's head but he backs away from it.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Looks like someone's a little feisty today.

Charles goes into a boxing pose.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Maybe someone wants to go a few rounds?

SCOTT

Yeah, Dad, I think Jim does.

JIM

Why don't you let me and Scott go at it?

SCOTT

What?

JIM

What's the problem? Chicken?

CHARLES

What are you talking about? My kid'll kick your ass.

Scott doesn't look as confident about that.

SCOTT

I don't know, Dad, I don't want to fight. Why don't you and Jim fight?

WALTER

Yeah. You and Jim fight.

JIM

You always going to fight your sons battles? What's the problem? He's bigger than me, you've always said he's tougher.

FRED

Why not?

CHARLES
Shut up, Fred.

SCOTT
I don't want to fight.

JIM
Oh, but it's okay for your father
to fight your battles?

SCOTT
I'm not having a battle.

CHARLES
Shut the fuck up, the both of you.

Everyone stands there silently for a second. After a beat Jim
laughs.

JIM
Just what I thought.

Jim turns to leave.

CHARLES
Where the fuck do you think you're
going?

Jim stops and turns around.

SCOTT
Dad!

CHARLES
Shut the fuck up. What's your
problem? I've taught you to fight.

SCOTT
Yeah, but. . .

CHARLES
. . .you're bigger than him, older.
You're my son, for Christ sake. He
doesn't even have a father to show
him things.

Scott stands there not wanting any part of this. Walter is
glad his name hasn't been brought up. Fred doesn't care
either way. He's going to have a beer and see a fight. What's
wrong with that? Charles thinks for a second.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
Let's do it.

SCOTT

Dad?!?

Jim walks to the middle of the yard while Charles drags Scott to where the fence was. Fred and Walter sit on the back step.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

I don't want to do this. I'm tired from the beach.

CHARLES

Shut up. This'll be a breeze. You're bigger, stronger. You're my son, for Christ sake.

Charles turns and looks at Jim standing in the middle of the yard staring at Scott with his hands by his side. He looks back to Scott.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

All you have to do is keep hitting him in the head. He's already cut there so when he starts bleeding I'll have to stop the fight.

Scott hears his father but doesn't seem all that confident. Charles pushes him toward the center of the yard. Scott stumble forward.

Charles guides Scott toward Jim. He puts a hand on each of their shoulders.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I want a nice clean fight.

Charles slaps Jim in the head. Jim grimaces but makes as few moves as necessary.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

No kicking or excessive grabbing.

FRED

Come on! Let's fight.

CHARLES

Shut up. No shoving and make sure to protect yourself. Do you understand.

Jim nods.

SCOTT

But Dad.

Charles steps back.

CHARLES

Fight.

Scott keeps moving to stay out of the way or punching or being punched. Jim watches him waiting.

FRED

Come on, mix it up.

WALTER

Yeah, mix it up.

Scott throws a wild flurry that Jim harmlessly absorbs with his body.

CHARLES

That's it. Stick him, son.

Feeling a little confident, Scott stands up and takes a step toward Jim. Scott throws an awkward series of punches which Jim easily blocks.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Good job. Get in there and finish him.

Although he said it to Scott Jim took it as a sign. He steps into Scott with a couple of body shots. Scott reacts as if they're the most painful things he's ever encountered. And, who knows, they might have been.

With Scott bent over slightly Jim goes to work on Scott's face with a flurry. Three, four quick punches to his face and Scott falls to the ground.

Jim take a couple of steps back and for a few seconds no one moves. Suddenly Charles jumps forward and slaps Jim hard across the head. Jim staggers and falls as Charles leans over to comfort Scott.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You okay, Scott?

Scott's no badly hurt but he's playing it up.

SCOTT

It was a lucky punch, Dad.

CHARLES

I know. He suckered you.

Jim stands up and blood is rolling down his hand. He puts his hand to it and it comes back full of blood. Without looking at anyone he walks out of the yard.

CHARLES (CONT'D)
That's right, you baby, run away
you chicken shit cheater.

Jim ignores them and exits the yard.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Jim is walking down a main street with his hand on his head. It's stemming the blood somewhat but it's still glistening on the back of his hand.

RALPH
Hey, Jim.

Jim stops and looks around. He finally sees Ralph in a black, ominous looking car.

RALPH (CONT'D)
What happened to you?

Jim leans over to look into the car. He doesn't get near it for fear of bleeding on it.

JIM
Hi Ralph. How've you been?

RALPH
I asked you a question.

JIM
Got a cut on my head.

RALPH
I can see that. The question is
how?

JIM
Oh, well, you know how it gets
sometimes.

Ralph leans over and opens his glove compartment. He pull out a handkerchief and hands it to Jim.

RALPH
Here.

Jim looks at the handkerchief as if it's the first linen handkerchief he's ever seen. Probably because it is.

JIM
This is too nice.

RALPH
Just put it on your damn head.

Jim does as he's told.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Get in.

Jim is also hesitant to do that.

RALPH (CONT'D)
What did I say?

Jim gets in and Ralph pulls the vehicle away.

EXT. FRONT OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Ralph's car is driving down the street. Charles and Fred are sitting in their usual locations. They exchange looks when the car stops in front of their house. Jim gets out of the car with his newly stitched head.

Jim walks up the stairs. He stops where they're sitting. Charles and Fred stare at him. Charles is about to say something but Jim raises his hand with one finger upward.

JIM
The guy in the car wants to speak
to you.

Jim enters the house. Charles and Fred exchange looks again. Although they can't see through the tinted windows they know who's in the car.

FRED
What do you think he wants?

CHARLES
I don't know.

SND FX Engine revving

Charles and Fred jump. Slowly they get up and just as ploddingly walk to the car. As they get closer the window goes down.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I don't know what Ralph said to
them but my life around the house
was a whole lot easier after that.

INT. MCCAN'S GYM - DAY

A 21 year old Jim is sparing. Mark is on the sidelines.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Although I was at the gym almost every day I never had a public fight in the ring. Ralph said he wanted to have the element of surprise.

Jim steps in and pounds his OPPONENT until Mark rings the bell.

MARK

All right, all right, back off. That's it for today. Good work, both of you.

Jim and his Opponent touch gloves and begin exiting the ring. Jim walks directly to Tony who takes off his gloves.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I didn't like the stealing part so they kept me out of that. My worth to them was beating people up. It's a job I'd been groomed for for ten years.

Jim looks ominously into the camera.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jim is walking down the street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Not that I knew it was happening. I was just living my little kid life boxing and hanging out. Then one day Ralph asked me to deliver a package and then another and then another.

Jim walks up stairs. It's a library.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Then I started beating people up. Ralph always said he loved their disbelief just before I knocked them out.

Jim enters the library.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
It wasn't long after that when I
killed my first man. I wasn't even
eighteen.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ralph is picking a lock while a 17 year old Jim watches. They're both wearing gloves. Jim is fascinated. The door easily opens. Ralph and Jim enter.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Ralph leads Jim down the hallway. All you can hear is loud snoring. Ralph stops and looks into a room. A MAN is sleeping. Ralph leads Jim back a few steps.

RALPH
Remember, when you wrap the rope
around his neck make sure you get
it just under his jaw.

JIM
I know. We've gone over this a
million times.

RALPH
And we'll go over it a million and
one. Never be unprepared. Never
gloss over a single aspect. I'm not
sure if you're ready for this.

JIM
I'm ready.

RALPH
Then don't be cocky. We're dealing
with your life here. One mistake
and you're fucked for life. Is that
what you want?

JIM
No.

RALPH
Good. Then pay attention to
everything you're doing.

Ralph takes a rope with a noose out from inside his jacket.

JIM

This is the one thing that bugs me.
You think he's going to just let me
slip a noose around his throat.

RALPH

He's dead drunk. We could cut his
cock off and he wouldn't wake up.

Ralph and Jim carefully walk into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ralph and Jim enter the bedroom. The snoring gets louder. Jim approaches the MAN. He hesitates to touch him so Ralph walks up and lifts the guys head by his hair. He doesn't wake up. Ralph drops his head.

RALPH

See? Dead drunk. Pick him up.

Jim picks the guy up. He's having a tough time due to the Man's size and dead weight. While Jim's struggling with the Man Ralph throws the noose over the bedroom door. He throws the noose over and moves a chair in front of the door.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Sit him here.

Jim struggles but gets the Man seated.

RALPH (CONT'D)

I wanted this one to be your first
because it was going to be easy.

JIM

If this is easy I'm not looking
forward to a tough one.

Ralph puts the noose around the Man's neck.

RALPH

Get behind the door and start
pulling the rope. When I tell you,
wrap it around the doornob.

Jim does as he's told. The Man starts to get lifted. When he starts chocking he starts to sputter and wake up. The Man starts struggling. Ralph kicks the chair out from under him. The Man kicks but it's not helping him. Jim keeps pulling until the Man is inches off the ground.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Warp it.

Jim wraps the rope a few times around the doornob. He holds it taut.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Tie it.

Jim ties the rope into a knot. He starts to come out from behind the door.

RALPH (CONT'D)

No, stay.

Ralph walks up to the Man. His hands are clawing at the rope.

RALPH (CONT'D)

How ya doing?

Ralph chuckles.

RALPH (CONT'D)

That's a stupid question. You've obviously been better.

Ralph rights the chair and sits in it.

RALPH (CONT'D)

You know why I'm here, right?

The Man nods.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Good. At least we know why we're all here.

Ralph stands up and gets close to the Man's face.

RALPH (CONT'D)

We could have worked this out, you know. Maybe we could have even worked together. But you got greedy. Wanted to be the big shot.

Under intense duress the Man pleads.

MAN

We can still work it out.

RALPH

No, you see, if we could work it out we wouldn't have had to go to all this trouble now, would we?

The man starts kicking again but all it does is weaken him.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Come out from behind there.

Jim steps from behind the door. The Man kicks furiously. Jim stops and holds the door and rope.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Don't worry. He's not going anywhere. Come and see what you've done. See your handiwork.

Jim looks at the Man. His face is red and bloated.

RALPH (CONT'D)
This is what happens to people who rat on me. You see, Jim, this man here was a trusted employee of mine for many years. But then he started thinking that he should be a bigger man. So he started skimming more than he should have. Now I can live with that, to a point. But then he'd get hammered and start talking trash.

Ralph steps to the barely alive Man.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Talking about me. Running his mouth off when he should have shut the fuck up.

Ralph steps back.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Word got to me. I had to close down an operation because it had eyes on it and that cost me money.

Ralph looks at Jim.

RALPH (CONT'D)
And I really hate things that cost me money.

Ralph gently places the chair beneath the Man. He takes Jim's shoulder and pulls him closer to the Man.

RALPH (CONT'D)
I hate losing money almost as much as I like seeing people die.

Ralph and Jim stare at the man as he takes his last breath. Ralph pats Jim on the shoulder.

RALPH (CONT'D)
A work of art, isn't it?

Ralph is happy. Jim is lost in the moment.

RALPH (CONT'D)
And it's your first! I'm so proud
of you.

Ralph exits the room. Jim looks at the Man.

RALPH (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Come on, let's go celebrate. You're
a man now.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Jim walks into an empty room. On the table is a book.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
But Ralph made it seem like the
most normal thing. Like it's just
what we do. We go to the library
every day, go to the gym every day,
beat someone up, probably not every
day but often enough. Then once in
a while someone's gotta get gone.

Jim sits at the table and opens the book. He takes out the piece of paper and puts it on the table. The page is blank. He looks at the books cover it reads: The Adventures Of Augie March then opens it and begins reading.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
As time went on I'd see less and
less of Ralph. But when we met he'd
make sure I was doing my reading
and catch me up on everything that
was going on. He didn't name names
but it wasn't too difficult to
figure out who did what.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

RICK, a sadistic giant of a man, is waving a blow torch around a MAN's face and body. The Man is waving and dancing to try and avoid it. Rick is truly enjoying his work.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
 If it was something psycho it had
 to be Rick. He was a talented
 psycho on his own but when he and
 Ralph got together they were like
 the Lennon and McCartney of torture
 and murder.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

EARL driving at a high rate of speed in his car.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
 Any type of transportation,
 highjacking or stolen vehicles it
 was Earl.

INT. BANK - DAY

BOB and three THUGS robbing a bank. All CUSTOMERS hands are
 up. All TELLERS are pulling money out of drawers.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
 Robbery, from banks to an old lady
 on the street, it was Bob and his
 crew.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

EARL is at his computer typing frantically.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
 Anything high tech, extortion,
 money laundering, Vince was always
 heading that part of it up.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER

Jim closes the book, stands up and begins to leave.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
 Anything else, bookmaking, loan
 shark, whatever crime you could
 name, that could be anyone. But
 those things, the nuts and bolts of
 the business, were less glamorous
 to Ralph so we didn't talk about
 them for fun. Too boring I guess.

EXT. MERCY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Jim is working the door at Mercy. He's not the biggest bouncer at the door but you can tell he's running the show. People are being processed and waiting in line. One GUY is noticeably unhappy.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I had to have a legitimate job so I'd work doors at Ralph's clubs. I hated it. Music and crowds aren't my thing. But you do what you can to survive.

The Guy starts complaining louder.

GUY

What the fucks the hold up? I've been in this line for a fucking hour.

JIM

We haven't been open an hour, sir.

GUY

Oh, Mr. Smart Mouth.

JIM

Sir, one of the reasons it takes so long to process our guests is every once in a while we have to stop everything to deal with someone who has an unrealistic complaint.

GUY

What the fuck are you saying?

JIM

I'm saying if you do not like the security measures we have in place there are many establishments within walking distance that are much more lax regarding your safety.

GUY

Are you for real?

The Guy looks around the line.

GUY (CONT'D)

Is this guy for fucking real? Give some dickweed a clipboard and they think they're in charge.

The Guy looks back at Jim who's calmly standing in front of the Guy.

GUY (CONT'D)
Listen, meathead, why don't you
just open that door and let us in.

JIM
Oh! Is that it? All you want to do
is go into the club?

GUY
Finally, you're starting to
understand.

Guy looks at his DATE and FRIENDS.

GUY (CONT'D)
See? You just have to let these
guys know who's in charge.

Guy looks back and Jim and smiles. Jim smiles back, reaches up and rips Guy's shirt off him.

JIM
I'm sorry, sir, it seems you do not
comply with our dress code. So if
you'd please step out of line so
other more appropriately dressed
patrons can entre.

Guy is livid. People don't like to go from king of the world to chump in two seconds. Guy looks up from his ripped shirt, takes one angry look at Jim before throwing a wild punch.

Jim steps out of the way of the punch, grabs Guy's wrist with his right hand, puts his left hand on Guy's shoulder and yanks Guy's arm. Guy bellows in pain. Jim uses that arm to pull Guy out of line.

GUY
You broke my fucking arm.

JIM
Nah, probably separated your
shoulder though.

Jim looks at Guy's friends.

JIM (CONT'D)
You should take him to have that
looked at.

GUY
I'm going to fucking sue you.

JIM
You threw the first punch, I
defended myself and have thirty
witnesses who'll back me up.

People in the line nod and voice their agreement. Jim walks slowly back to the door and begins processing the next people in line.

GUY
You haven't heard the last of me.

Jim ignores him and lets in the next people.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
If I had a dollar for every time I
heard that.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jim is walking down a street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I stayed mostly to myself, I wasn't
a recluse, I just had no empathy
for my fellow man.

Two MEN come rolling out of a bar door. They crash against a parked car and tumble onto the street. They're really going at each other as PATRONS spill out of the bar to watch. As Jim approaches them they're pretty much blocking the entire sidewalk. When he reaches them he barely breaks stride as he steps over them and keeps going.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I really admired Ralph and listened
carefully when he spoke. He made me
the man I am today.

A neighborhood drunk, BILLY, jogs up to Jim.

BILLY
What the fucks wrong with you?

Jim looks at Billy almost as if he's not even there.

JIM
What do you mean?

BILLY

The Butler brothers they were fighting again and you walked over them like they weren't there.

JIM

They weren't mad at me.

Jim begins to walk a little faster. Billy stops trying to keep up.

BILLY

You're a weird one, Jim. Just an odd bird.

(pause)

Hey, you got ten bucks I can borrow? I'll pay you back next week when my check comes in.

Jim stops, turns around and reaches into his pocket. Billy quick steps up to him. Jim hands Billy a twenty. The moment Billy takes it Jim turns and walks away.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Thanks, Jim, thanks a lot. I owe you. I really do.

Billy watches for a second before hightailing it back to the bar. Jim just keeps walking down the street then turns a corner.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

He'd be dead in two weeks. Stabbed in a fight over baseball statistics by both Butler brothers. Guess they settled their difference beforehand.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Jim walking down the street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

It got to be where outside of rare visits at the library the only time I'd see Ralph was when a job was going to be a murder.

(pause)

As refined as he seemed he just loved to see people kill. No matter who was doing it.

Jim enters an apartment building.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
That should have told me something.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - DAY

Jim is sitting on a picnic table talking to DAN. Dan seems nervous. Only Dan's car is parked in the rest stop.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
As a matter of fact, I never knew a
guy was going to get killed until
Ralph showed up.

Ralph's car pulls into the rest stop.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Like this poor sap. I thought he
was just going to get a beat down.

Ralph pulls up to them. His window rolls down.

RALPH
Follow me.

Jim and Dan head to Dan's car. They enter the car and follow Ralph.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
But the moment I saw Ralph I knew
it wasn't going to be a long night
for this guy.

Both cars pull out of the rest stop and enter the highway.

EXT. TREE LINED STREET - LATER

Ralph's car pulls into a garage. Dan's car stops in front of the house. Ralph comes out of the garage and approaches the car.

RALPH
Pull around the corner. There
should be plenty of parking down
there. Then come in for a couple of
beers. We'll talk this out.

Ralph walks back toward the garage. The car pulls down the street.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Ralph, Jim and Dan are sitting around a kitchen table. Everyone has a full beer in their hands and an empty one in the middle of the table. Everyone is laughing and getting along.

RALPH
All right, enough with the joking around.

Ralph puts his elbows on the table.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You know what you did.

DAN
It wasn't me. I didn't do anything.

Ralph leans back and laughs. Then he slams his hands onto the table.

RALPH
I said enough with the joking around. You were fucking there. You planned it out. Do you know how I know? I had him beat it out of Georgie.

Dan looks at Jim who only stares at him.

RALPH (CONT'D)
He gave you up and everyone else. Now Dan, you know me, I don't mind a little larceny. But not at my expense.

DAN
I didn't know they were your. . .

RALPH
. . .bullshit, bullshit, bullshit.

DAN
I'll get it back for you. All of it. The entire load.

RALPH
I gave you that option last week. I got word to you that it was my load you stole. And what was that you told my man?

Ralph pretends not to know exactly what he said. He looks at Jim.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Do you remember what he said, Jim?

JIM
He said you could go fuck yourself.

Ralph leans back happy to know.

RALPH
That's right I could personally go fuck myself.

Ralph slams his arms on the table and bellows.

RALPH (CONT'D)
And I've never enjoyed that one fucking bit.

DAN
That's not what I meant. You know me. I was just talking out of my ass. You know how it is.

RALPH
No, I don't know how it is. I tend not to say things I don't mean.

Ralph quickly stands up sending the chair skittering backwards. Dan jumps. Jim doesn't move.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Now how are we going to handle this?

Ralph walks toward a counter and picks up a file folder. He brings it back to the table and places it in front of him. He sits down and looks at Dan.

RALPH (CONT'D)
I have an idea. You're going to shoot yourself.

Dan scoffs at him.

DAN
I'm not going to fucking shoot myself. Why the fuck would I do that?

Ralph opens the folder and slides it to Dan. Dan takes one look at the picture and turns white.

DAN (CONT'D)

What is this?

RALPH

It's obvious, isn't it? Or have you been on the streets so long you haven't been home to see your lovely family. And they really are a lovely family. Take a look for yourself, Jim.

Jim leans over and checks out the pictures then leans back.

JIM

Lovely.

RALPH

See? Even Jim thinks they're lovely and he's got tremendous taste.

DAN

What's the deal with this?

Ralph tries to slide the folder back to him but Dan's holding it down. Ralph looks at him for a second before he lets go.

RALPH

The deal is you're going to shoot yourself or we'll go visit your family and let you watch us kill each one in front of you.

Dan freaks out.

DAN

What the fuck are you talking about? Why would you do that?

RALPH

Because you fucking stole from me.

DAN

I'll make it up to you.

RALPH

Too fucking late. Tick tock Danny boy, what's it going to be?

Ralph picks up a picture of Dan's wife, two daughters, a son and a dog. He smiles.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Might just kill the dog first. I'm sure that'll bust up your kids.

DAN
You wouldn't.

RALPH
You have no idea what I'll do. But
I'm sure you can think of some of
the things.

Ralph leans back with the picture in his hand.

RALPH (CONT'D)
But you'll never think of all of
them.

Ralph looks at Dan.

RALPH (CONT'D)
But you'll get to see it first
hand. How'd you like that? Watching
your daughter get raped?

DAN
You can't do that. You wouldn't.

RALPH
Why do you keep telling me the
things I can't or won't do?

Ralph leans closer to Dan.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Are you implying that you know me
well?

DAN
No, I don't. . .

RALPH
. . .then shut the fuck up and
decide. You're entire family
tortured and tormented for a day or
so because we kill them, and after
they're all gone, you. Or just you.

Ralph slowly sits back. Dan's going over his slim options.

DAN
Can't there be another way?

With no emotion whatsoever Ralph answers.

RALPH
No.

Dan sits there calculating. He looks at Jim. Maybe Jim will stand up for him.

DAN
What do you think of all this, Jim?
We've known each other for years.
You gonna let him do this to me.

JIM
The way I see it, Dan, you're doing
it to yourself.

DAN
Fuck you!

Dan starts to get up but Jim's on him in a heartbeat. Dan struggles for a moment. But it's no use.

JIM
Don't make this worse for yourself,
Dan. Sit the fuck down.

Dan stands there. Figuring out how he can escape.

RALPH
I'm going to show you something.

Ralph dials his phone. After a beat someone answers it.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You where you're supposed to be?
(pause)
Good. Take one and send it to me.

Ralph takes the phone away from his head and waits.

RALPH (CONT'D)
You're going to love this.
Technology is amazing. Years ago we
had to go other, let's just say,
unpleasant, ways. Ah, good.

Ralph holds out the phone to Dan.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Take a look at this.

Dan leans over and sees a picture of his daughter and wife at a soccer game. Dan slumps.

RALPH (CONT'D)
If you try anything they'll be
killed before they get home.
(MORE)

RALPH (CONT'D)

You might not get the pleasure of seeing it but you'll be living with the guilt.

Dan sits. He picks up his beer and finishes it. He holds the empty bottle up.

DAN

One last beer for a dying man?

RALPH

Hell, we can have a few more.

Jim goes to the refrigerator and gets three beers. He puts them on the table.

RALPH (CONT'D)

We're going to have to take about how you're going to do it.

Ralph opens his beer.

RALPH (CONT'D)

I was thinking autoerotic asphyxiation. What do you think of that? That'd be interesting to watch. We might really let you toss one last one off. What do you think of that?

DAN

No fucking way.

Dan mimes putting a gun to his head and pulling the trigger.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm not going out like some weird pervert. No way I'd want my wife to think I was hiding something from her.

RALPH

You are. She thinks you're a store owner but you're a thief. And you fuck anything that comes in there. I'm sure she doesn't know either of those things.

DAN

I mean bad shit. Like that shit. What makes you think of things like that?

Ralph takes a slow sip of beer.

RALPH

I told you, Dan, you couldn't even imagine the things I can come up with.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dan's car is following Ralph's down the highway.

INT. DAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jim's driving with Dan in the passenger seat. The front and rear passenger windows are down. There's a chain around the door frame. Jim is wearing gloves. Jim is buckled in. Dan is trying to convince Jim to let him go.

DAN

Remember the time I cut you in on that load of meat I boosted?

JIM

You owed me five grand.

DAN

I paid you back.

JIM

Without interest. And it took over a year.

DAN

But you gotta say, that was nice of me.

JIM

Just drive, Dan. It's a done deal.

DAN

What the fuck, man? Don't you have a mind of your own? You gotta follow everything that bastard says?

JIM

He's my boss and my friend.

DAN

He's not your friend. He has no friends. Just people he hasn't offed yet. You mark my words, one day he'll turn on you.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

We used to be tight, him and me.
But he thought I was skimming.

JIM

Were you?

DAN

Not so he could notice.

JIM

Obviously he could.

DAN

That's not the point.

JIM

Of course not.

DAN

I'm just saying, and you mark my words here, one day he'll think you did something or took something that he thinks belongs to him, that fucker thinks everything belongs to him.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - NIGHT

Ralph pulls in with Jim pulling in close behind. Ralph parks near the opening. Jim pulls further down the rest stop. In a place that's a little darker. Jim looks at Dan.

JIM

Don't make this any worse for yourself.

DAN

How could I make it worse for myself? I'm about to get killed.

JIM

It could be worse because I could beat you until you're about dead, drag your ass into the woods, chain you to a tree and let the animals tear at you.

Dan nods his head.

DAN

Yeah, I guess it could be worse.

Dan unbuckles himself and slides over to the drivers seat. Jim walks to the passenger side and unlocks the lock and pulls the chain off. Jim sticks his head in just as Ralph arrives.

JIM
Remember, nice and clean. It's be
better for your family that way.

Jim tosses a gun onto Dan's lap. He has another one pointed at him.

JIM (CONT'D)
Point that anywhere other than your
head and I'll fucking shoot you and
feed you to the fucking animals.

Dan nods his head.

DAN
I'll be good.

RALPH
Let's get this over. I got other
appointments tonight.

Dan looks at Ralph.

DAN
You suck. I'll see you in hell.

Dan looks at Jim.

DAN (CONT'D)
Mark my words.

Dan face front, takes a deep breath, puts the gun in and mouth and pulls the trigger.

The shot can be right in the car or a long shot that shows the flash of light. In the long shot neither Ralph or Jim flinch.

When it's over Ralph leans in and checks it out closely.

RALPH
It's amazing how much damage such a
little bullet can do.

Ralph pulls his head out of the car and gleefully speaks to Jim.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Let's go eat. I'm starving.

Ralph and Jim walk away from the crime scene.

RALPH (CONT'D)
I'm feeling like a steak. What about you?

JIM
Steak is just fine, Ralph.

RALPH
What was that last thing he said to you? The thing about marking his words.

JIM
He said you and he were once friends.

RALPH
I wouldn't say friends, exactly. Business associates. We never broke bread, if that's what you mean.

JIM
And that you turned on him.

RALPH
He fucking embezzled from me! He's lucky I didn't kill him then.

JIM
And that you'll turn on me.

Ralph stops. Jim stutter stops a couple of steps later. Ralph stares directly into Jim's face.

RALPH
You remember how we first met?

Jim nods.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Reading. At the library. Weeks and weeks I watched you come in every day without fail. I was thinking, that kids got some initiative. He really sees things through. Then remember the day you came in all banged up.

Jim nods.

RALPH (CONT'D)

That's when I knew why you were coming to the library. I'm sure you did it to learn. You'd go through book after book. But I knew things couldn't have been too good at home. So what did I do?

JIM

Sent me to the gym.

RALPH

Sent you to the gym. Make it impossible for anyone to knock you around anymore. And it is, isn't it?

Jim nods.

RALPH (CONT'D)

You've become like a son to me. That piece of shit wasn't even a third cousin twice removed whatever the fuck that means.

Jim laughs. Ralph steps close to Jim.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Do you think I could abandon you? Ever?

JIM

No.

RALPH

Damn straight. That piece of shit was just trying to cloud your mind. Make you give in to him. Doubt me.

Ralph pokes a finger into Jim's forehead.

RALPH (CONT'D)

But he could never cloud your mind. It's too sharp. It's too smart. Especially for the piece of shit idiots around here.

Ralph puts his arm around Jim's shoulder.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Now let's go eat.

Ralph and Jim finish walking to the car.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jim is sitting in his apartment watching TV and cleaning his guns.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I never even thought about what I
was doing. It was all around me.
Natural.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Jim is beating a MAN.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I got my list and went about with
my deliveries. Very nine to five.
Very matter of would you like fries
with that?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jim walks down the street towards a DEALER on the corner.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I never even thought about it. I
never asked the reason I just did
what Ralph told me.

Jim arrives at the Dealer who turns around and has a moment of panic when he sees who it is. But it's too late. Jim has a gun out, shoots the Dealer and keeps walking down the street.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim walks into the library and is surprised to see Ralph there.

JIM
Hey.

Ralph keeps reading the paper. Jim sits down. A book and paper are waiting.

RALPH
I wanted to see you when you got
this.

Jim picks up the paper then turns to look at Ralph.

RALPH (CONT'D)

If you have a problem with it I'll get someone else. But, because of your history, I thought I'd offer it to you first.

Jim reads the paper then slowly turns his head towards Ralph. They look at each other.

RALPH (CONT'D)

You pass, no hard feelings. But I thought you might like it as a gift.

Jim looks at Ralph for a beat. He slowly folds the paper and puts it into his pocket.

JIM

I got this.

RALPH

I knew you would. You know where he'll be?

JIM

Yeah.

RALPH

Seven.

Jim gets up and exits. Ralph turns the page of the newspaper.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jim is walking down the street.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I never gave it a second thought.

Jim enters a bar.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Jim walks into a Bar populated with six people. Two MEN at the far end, Ralph and DON near the door, Charles in the middle and the BARTENDER watching TV behind the bar.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Not even when he wanted me to kill my uncle.

Jim walks up and sits next to Charles. Charles looks up and scoffs at Jim. Jim looks ahead.

CHARLES

Well look what the cat dragged in.

Jim sits next to Charles.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

To what do we owe this honor? What brings you back to here from the big city?

JIM

Can't a guy just go back to the old neighborhood?

CHARLES

Buy me a drink.

The Bartender turns around. Jim nods his head toward Charles.

JIM

And a Heineken.

CHARLES

Ooo, classy.

Jim puts a twenty on the bar as the Bartender pours Charles' shot. The Bartender then gets Jim's beer, brings it back and takes the money.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Ya gonna ask about the family?

JIM

No.

CHARLES

And why the fuck not?

JIM

Because I don't want to hear about your noisy desperation.

CHARLES

Noisy desperation? What the fuck is that? Since you were a kid you always thought you were better than everyone else. Well, you know what? You're just a fuck stick like the rest of them. What do you think about that?

Jim sips his beer. Charles downs his shot and calls for another. He taps Jim's money so he knows to take it from there. The Bartender pours another shot and takes the cash. Jim looks at Charles in the face for the first time.

JIM
I'll be right back.

Jim gets up and goes to the bathroom. Charles watches him. He shakes his head then downs the shot. He taps on the bar for another. The Bartender pours it and, once again, drains Jim's money.

Charles looks toward Ralph and Don. He wants someone to hear him out.

CHARLES
Fucking kid. Thinks he's too good
for his family. All he is is a
fucking doorman. A fucking goon.
That's all he is.

Ralph and Don who nod.

RALPH
Kids these days.

CHARLES
Ain't that the truth.

Charles taps on the bar again. The Bartender pours then takes what's left of Jim's money. There's nothing left for the tip.

Jim enters the bar and walks toward Charles.

RALPH
Dicky Black says hi.

CHARLES
Dicky Black? I don't know no Dickey
Black.

RALPH
He knows you. As a matter of fact,
he has a message.

CHARLES
Oh yeah? What's the fucking
message?

Jim is directly behind Charles when he holds a gun to his head and pulls the trigger. Charles' face hits the bar with a thud. Jim continues walking toward the door.

Don stands up and takes the gun. Jim exits and Don locks the door. He walks to the other end of the bar and hands the gun to one of the Men who were sitting there. They exit and Don locks the door behind him.

The Bartender is watching TV while Don walks to where he was sitting and pulls out a large plastic bag and a case. He walks over to Charles, puts the case on the bar then lifts Charles' head off the bar. He puts the bag over him, chair and all.

Don pushes Charles over and he falls over with a thud. He drags the bag to the back of the bar. He opens the door and a DRIVER is standing there with his trunk opened. Don pulls Charles out of the bar, reenters and locks the door.

Don walks to where Charles' was. He catches the bartenders eye in the mirror. Don smiles and opens up the case and takes out cleaning materials.

DON

I'll be done in a few minutes and
you can go about your day.

BARTENDER

Take your time. I'm in no hurry.

Because the blood was mostly contained to the bar top Don has an easy time cleaning it up. The bar is cleaner than it's probably been in decades. Don puts his cleaning materials away. Walks to the door, opens it and exits.

The Bartender keeps his eyes glued to the TV. Ralph hasn't moved from his seat.

RALPH

Sorry for any inconvenience.

BARTENDER

Not a problem. Charles was an
asshole.

Ralph pulls a stack of money from his pockets and puts it on the bar.

RALPH

This should cover the cost of a new
chair.

Ralph stands up.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Tell my sister to call me. We've
got ma's birthday to plan.

BARTENDER
Will do, Ralph. Have a good day.

Ralph exits. It's not until the door is closed that the Bartender looks away from the TV. He looks at the stack of cash. He walks over to it, looks at it then puts it into his pocket. He picks up the bar phone and dials.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Hey, your brother was here. He
wants to you call him. Something
about your mother's birthday.
(pause)
No, it's slow. Nothing's happened.
Probably haven't made two hundred.

Light pours in as someone opens the door.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Gotta go, looks like the rush is
here.

Bartender hangs up the phone and tends to his lone CUSTOMER.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Jim is sitting at the bar alone. A few people are watching TV, a couple is in a heated discussion.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
They never found Charles. They
looked but everyone figured he did
what he said he would, leave them
all behind.
(pause)
With him gone the family went even
crazier.

EXT. FRONT STOOP - NIGHT

Fred sitting in his chair. Charles' empty chair right beside him.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Without anyone to follow Fred
didn't. He went to work then drank
all night. He barely spoke to
anyone. He died when a fork life he
was driving fell off a loading
dock. Insurance wouldn't pay out
because he was drunk at the time of
the accident.

INT. DRUG STORE - NIGHT

Scott and a GIRL in an obviously closed drug store. He's in the pharmacy smashing windows and grabbing whatever he can.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Scott got deeper into drugs so
started doing stupid B and E's.

Flood lights fill the building. Scott and the Girl stop. They look at each other with crazed expressions. They both pull out guns.

POLICE (V.O.)
This is the police. Come out with
your hands up.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
One night the shit head pressed his
luck. Decided getting into a shoot
out with half the police force was
a fine idea.

Scott and the Girl start running down the aisle both firing guns. They start dropping bottles so stop to pick them up. That's when the police began shooting. They both fall surrounded by pill bottles.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Walter is walking down the street laughing with a group of FRIENDS.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Turns out they should have worried
less about me turning out gay and
spent a little time checking out
Walter.
(pause)
He straightened himself out, no pun
intended, and is the most well
adjusted of all of them. Because he
got away from them.

INT. BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Jim sitting in the bar with the same things going on.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
After they sold the house and the
aunts went their separate ways, I
made my mother move. I'd rather not
say where.

Jim gets up and exits the bar.

EXT. MERCY NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Jim is the only person outside the club. He's leaning against
the wall reading. A car pulls up and two DETECTIVES get out.
They walk up to Jim. He doesn't stop reading.

DETECTIVE
The owner around?

JIM
Don't know who the owner is. The
manager's inside.

DETECTIVE
You don't know who the owner is?

JIM
My check has some corporation
listed. I've never seen a
stockholders report so I don't know
the corporate break down.

The other Detective slaps the book out of Jim's hand. He
looks up at them.

JIM (CONT'D)
You're lucky that was a paperback.
I'd be pissed if it was one of my
first editions.

DETECTIVE
Oh, we have a real scholar at the
door tonight. He collects first
editions.

JIM
I just like to read. I obviously
can't help you with the owners name
so is there anything else I can do
for you this evening?

The Detective who slapped the book out of Jim's hand holds
out a picture. It's of Ralph.

DETECTIVE
Know this guy?

JIM
When I was a kid I knew him a little. He got me interested in boxing. Don't see him much around the gym anymore.

DETECTIVE
We're pretty sure he's the money behind this place.

JIM
Well, if that's true he's on cheap fucker. Do you know how much I get paid for this shit?

DETECTIVE
Do you know how little I care?

JIM
Probably not much, huh?

DETECTIVE
Let me ask you a few more questions.

JIM
Shoot.

Jim holds up his hands.

JIM (CONT'D)
Not literally, of course.

The Detectives ignore Jim's attempt at humor.

DETECTIVE
Do you ever see him around here?

JIM
Never.

DETECTIVE
How can you be so sure? All you do is stand out here all night.

JIM
Don't be so quick to judge. Some nights they let me go inside to piss.

DETECTIVE

But you could miss seeing him?

JIM

It's possible. Listen, I run security. I do the background checks on everyone who works here. That includes management. I'm sure if he's the boss he might have wanted to see the results first hand, wouldn't you think?

Detective takes out a card.

DETECTIVE

Could you do us a favor?

JIM

Of course, you've been so courteous to me this evening.

DETECTIVE

Just take the fucking card and if you see him call us.

JIM

Will do, officer.

Jim squats down to retrieve his book. He places the card between the pages. The Detectives turn and head back to their car. Jim leans against the wall and begins reading. As the car pulls away his phone rings. He answers it.

JIM (CONT'D)

Were you watching the whole time?

(pause)

Nothing, they wanted to know if you're ever here and if you were the owner.

(pause)

Come on! What do you think I told them? You have a private office upstairs and you're there right now? Give me some credit.

(pause)

Okay, talk to you later.

Jim hangs up the phone, puts it away and goes back to his book.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jim is sitting in a living room. It's pretty beat up. There's some noise from the kitchen so he turns the TV up.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

It only took one fuck up for Ralph
to start treating me differently.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The kitchen is in worse shape than the living room. NICKY, DOUG, BEN and STEVE are arguing. One the table between them is a bag.

NICKY

I'm fucking telling you, we gotta
get the fuck outta here.

DOUG

Why the fuck did you bring the
money here? What were you thinking?

NICKY

I'm thinking we gotta divvy this
shit up and go our separate ways.

BEN

We don't go anywhere. We don't do
anything.

Ben reaches for the bag. The other three react by also reaching for the bag. Ben sits back.

BEN (CONT'D)

Chill the fuck out. We've got to
get this money to a safe place and
leave it there.

STEVE

Fuck that, I need my money now. I
got some shit to buy.

Ben leans back exasperated.

BEN

Did you learn nothing from
Goodfellas?

They all start arguing at the same time.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I was hanging with the knuckleheads from the club. I didn't know what they were up to. I figured they were dealing. I came over because we were going to the fights.

(pause)

So they're a couple of rooms away. I can hear loud voices but I can't hear what they're saying. None of my fucking business.

The front door to the apartment gets kicked in. Police in riot gear storm in.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

All of a sudden the door is busted off the hinges and a fucking transformer has his rifle in my face. He's screaming at me not to move. Like I could go fucking anywhere.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The Police overtake the kitchen. It's so small and there are so many of them most of them have to wait in the hall.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Turns out they'd robbed a bank. They'd been planning it for months. So that night was there celebration. They'd invited everyone they knew to the fights. I was the only dumb ass to show up early.

The Police take Nicky, Doug, Ben and Steve out of the kitchen.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

It was nice of the mall to tell the police I had nothing to do with it. Like they ever care about the truth. They'd find something and for me they found accessory after the fact.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Jim's sitting in a cell alone.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
And let me tell you, I didn't like prison at all. Some guys are made for it. But I'm a creature of habit. The library, the gym, work. The one day I deviated from it, the one day I didn't go to work I get busted.

EXT. POLICE STATION STAIRS - DAY

Jim exits the police station.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I got out on bail. It ended up being a suspended sentence. It was proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I had no clue what was going on in the kitchen. I'd never even been in that room.

EXT. CLUB - EVENING

Jim walks down an empty street to the club. He puts his key in the lock but it doesn't work. He bangs on the door for a few seconds before it opens.

A MANAGER stops Jim from entering and closes the door behind him. Although it's difficult, Jim maintains his composure.

MANAGER
Hey, Jim, yeah, I'm sorry and all but with the arrest and all the press it's been getting you can understand that we can't be associated with you.

JIM
But it was found that I had nothing to do with it. Even that's been in the news.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I knew there was no use getting pissed off at him. He was just doing what he was told. And, not directly, but he heard it from the top, Ralph.

Jim shakes the Manager's hand, turns and walks down the street.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim walks into the library and notices there is no book waiting for him. Nonplussed, he walks into the stacks and gets a book. He sits down and begins reading.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

Work dried up. I heard some guys say Ralph didn't like all the attention I was getting. A few of them said once it died down it'd go back to normal.

(pause)

But I wasn't sure.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Jim is holding a GUY against the wall.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I still had some money on the street so I started to collect.

The Guy reaches into his pocket and pulls out money. He hands it to Jim who releases him. Jim looks at it and walks away. The Guy straightens out his shirt then gives Jim's back the finger.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

But there was only so long that would last. I tried to get permission to put more money on the street but I never heard back. So I took the first real job of my life.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY

Jim sitting between two rotund MOVERS.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

But that didn't last long. The boss shorted me hours so I broke his jaw. I guess legit companies frown upon behavior like that.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jim is creeping through a house going through drawers. He sticks valuables into a small bag he's carrying.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

So I resorted to doing the one thing I hated. Breaking and entering. It seems so tawdry to me. What I was doing was only to people who deserved it. They did something to get it. B and E was based on fucking with innocents. But it was the one thing I could do that didn't need permission.

Jim fills the bag and exits the room.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

But my heart just wasn't in it. So after a few months I stopped that and got another straight job. One I actually liked.

INT. STOCKROOM - DAY

Jim is in the stockroom of a book store. He's opening boxes and is happy.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

It was probably the happiest I'd ever been in my life.

CATHY walks into the stockroom.

CATHY

Hi Jim. Has the new John Irving come in?

JIM

I think it's in one of the boxes I haven't got to yet.

CATHY

Can you get one copy for me. Please! I have a customer who's been on my ass for it for weeks.

JIM

I will if you go out with me.

CATHY

How many times are we going to go over this?

JIM

As many as it takes for you to say yes.

CATHY
This could be considered sexual harassment in the workplace, you know. Besides, I have a boyfriend.

JIM
Yeah, but can he get you the new Irving?

Cathy laughs.

CATHY
Okay, just one drink.

JIM
That's what you say now but when I start laying my smooth self on you you'll be begging for two.

Cathy laughs as Jim leans over, opens a box and hands her a book.

CATHY
You're a doll. See you after my shift.

Cathy exits. Jim smiles and goes back to opening boxes.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I even got a regular girlfriend. It was a quiet, normal life.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Jim walks into the library and is a little surprised to see a book on the table.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
So I was a little surprised to see a book.

Jim picks up the book. It's The Complete Works Of Edgar Allen Poe. He opens it up and takes out a piece of paper.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Poe. The first book Ralph gave me. The whole thing was weird. But the thing that bothered me most was this was the first typewritten letter he'd left.

Jim puts the note back in the book and exits the library.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
So I left it. I didn't hear from
Ralph or anyone else for years.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jim (now the adult who's been doing the voice overs, let's say 35 years old) and Cathy are playing baseball in their spacious backyard with their two kids, two boys, JERRY and DAVID, three and four and a five year old girl, NANCY. Everyone's running and catching and having a blast.

Jim sees them first. The two Detectives from years earlier. He tosses the ball to Cathy and he walks over to greet them.

DETECTIVE
Do you remember us?

JIM
Yeah, you asked me some questions
when I was a doorman. That was a
long time ago.

DETECTIVE
We now know you were full of shit
then.

JIM
I think you've got the wrong guy.

DETECTIVE
No. Ralph ratted you out.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Ralph is sitting in his office. Through his window he can see into the warehouse area. GUYS are out there loading trucks. Suddenly multiple police cars are surrounding the warehouse.

Ralph sees this and begins to escape through his private back door. The moment he opens the door he's see the two Detectives from the last scene.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
It turns out a few years ago Ralph
got busted but instead of manning
up, like he always preached to me,
he started ratting on everyone.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

A police wagon pulls up to the curb. A gang of POLICE get out and enter the building.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Police bring CRIMINALS out of the building and put them in the wagon.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
Most of the time it was very self-serving. He'd point the cops everywhere but at him and his crew.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Jim and the Detectives are standing in the backyard.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
The last book left for me was a trap. I guess he figured if I wasn't in with him I must be against him.

The Detective begins to turn Jim around. He resists.

ADULT JIM
I'll just walk to the car. Don't cuff me in front of my family.

Jim calls to Cathy.

ADULT JIM (CONT'D)
Cathy, I've got to go with these guys. I'll be back soon.

Cathy starts to protest but thinks better of it. She gathers the kids and starts bringing them into the house. The Detectives and Jim walk out of the yard.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
What I found odd was it was a relatively light charge. An assault I don't even remember. But I knew what else he had on me.
(pause)
So I thought I'd beat him to the punch.

The Detectives are placing Jim into the car. He turns to them.

ADULT JIM
How'd you like to take Ralph down?

The detectives stop.

DETECTIVE
What do you know?

Jim leans on the car and smiles.

ADULT JIM
Everything.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
And that's how I got involved in
taking down what was called in the
press the most vicious crime boss
in American history.

(pause)
But it's simpler than that for me.
It came down to him or me.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

Jim is sitting in the witness box smiling. Ralph's LAWYER is questioning him. Ralph is glaring at Jim. The JUDGE is passive. The Court Room is full.

LAWYER
But you were one of his most
vicious killers.

JIM
I wouldn't say most vicious. Ralph
had other guys who'd do the real
sick shit.

LAWYER
Oh, so murder isn't sick shit?

JIM
Murders bad. But there are
different degrees. For the real
sick shit, shit he knew I wouldn't
touch, he'd use this crazy fuck,
Rick.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ralph and Rick are standing in front of a naked MAN tied to a tree in the middle of the woods. Ralph begins taking pictures of the Man.

With each flash it reveals the Man has hundreds of cuts up his legs up to his chest. There are a few deep cuts on his stomach.

RALPH

Before. And tomorrow we'll come
back for the after.

RICK punches the guy hard in the face. He mouth becomes a river of blood.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)

I saw the before and after
pictures. I don't know what got him
but all that was left tied up were
a few bones.

Ralph and Rick leave the woods. The Man struggles but can't break free.

INT. COURT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jim is sitting in the witness box smiling. Ralph's LAWYER is questioning him. Ralph is glaring at Jim. The JUDGE is passive. The Court Room is full.

ADULT JIM

About five or so years ago Ralph
got the bright idea to take
pictures of his victims. It was
like porn to him.

RALPH

Fuck you it was. It's wasn't a sick
thing like that.

JUDGE

Counselor, advise your client not
to interrupt the court.

RALPH

He's making it sound like I'd do
perverted things with the pictures.
He's slandering me.

JIM

I never said you whacked off to
them. But your over reaction has me
wondering.

RALPH

Fuck you!

JIM

Fuck you. You destroyed my life and the lives of anyone who met you. Then you turned us all in to save your own life.

RALPH

I gave you a life. I don't see a halo around your head.

JUDGE

I'll have order in my court room. Sit down or I'll hold you in contempt.

Ralph slowly sits down.

RALPH

Sorry, your honor. I just can't stand it when a man tells lies about me.

JIM

What lies have I told, Ralph? That you killed anyone you saw fit? Many times only because they were inconvenient to you? And then when you couldn't do that you tossed anyone who'd ever worked for you under the bus? Where are the lies, Ralph?

LAWYER

Your honor, could you tell the witness to stop badgering my client?

Jim looks at the Judge.

JIM

Sorry, Judge.

Jim looks at the Lawyer.

JIM (CONT'D)

Next question, douche.

LAWYER

Your honor?

Jim turns to the Judge.

JIM

That one I'm not sorry for.

LAWYER

Is it true that you got a lesser sentence for the brutal murders you've committed than some people?

JIM

I know more than some people. Everything's got a value. The state thinks that what I have to say has the highest value.

LAWYER

Do you feel any remorse for your heinous actions? The beatings and the tortures and the brutal and senseless murders.

JIM

I didn't at the time. It never occurred to me. I was a soldier.

LAWYER

Please do not sully the word soldier with the crimes you committed.

JIM

Fair enough. I apologize. I was an employee. As an employee, to maintain my job, it was my duty to perform the tasks required of me.

LAWYER

And that includes killing?

JIM

On occasion.

LAWYER

How many occasions did you have?

JIM

I don't know. I'm not a stats guy. I'm sure Ralph knows.

RALPH

Fuck you.

Jim laughs.

JUDGE

One more outburst and I'll have you taken from the court room.

Ralph sulks in his seat.

LAWYER

But if you were to guess, what would it be? Ten thousand, one thousand?

JIM

Nothing like that. Those are genocide numbers. Even Ralph wasn't a despot.

LAWYER

I'm sure you have some idea?

JIM

More than your average citizen less than your average criminal.

LAWYER

But it was your job. You've stated yourself that you were good at it.

JIM

I'm good at fucking too but I don't do that every day.

LAWYER

Your honor, the witness is being argumentative and evasive.

JIM

I'm just answering the question. I don't fucking know. There'd be months when I wouldn't even have to hit somebody. I'd just show up and they'd pay off. That was the biggest aspect of my job. Helping people.

LAWYER

Helping people? Are you going to sit here and have anyone believe you were helping people?

JIM

Trust me, just my showing up convinced many that paying up was in their best interest. If Ralph got his way there'd be more cripples roaming the streets and many more underground.

LAWYER

You're saying your not a monster
but my client is?

JIM

I did bad things, no doubt. But I
was the perfect storm to breed me.
Ralph saw something so groomed me
so everything seemed normal. It was
just the way of life.

LAWYER

Why didn't you say no or leave?

JIM

Because I was veal. I was pampered
and coddled all the while waiting
for my slaughter.

(pause)

I'd have to say the best thing that
ever happened was getting pulled
into that bank robbery. It made me
too hot for Ralph so he had to let
me go. But instead of a severance
package he tries to put me in jail.

Ralph jumps up and begins to run toward Jim. The Lawyer gets
out of the way. BAILIFFS and COURT OFFICERS race toward
Ralph.

RALPH

You fucking asshole. If you didn't
fuck up none of this would have
happened.

JIM

Sooner or later we were all going
down.

Ralph reaches the witness box and starts to swing at Jim. But
he must have forgotten who he was making a run at. Jim stood
up knocked him out cold with one shot.

Jim sat calmly back down as people tend to Ralph.

LAWYER

Your honor! I demand a mistrial.

JUDGE

Clear the court room. Clear the
court room immediately.

People who weren't already exiting begin in haste. The JURY
is quickly ushered out and Jim calmly sits there.

JIM
Just another day in the office.

EXT. BASEBALL PARK - DAY

Jim is sitting in stands with other PEOPLE. David is now eleven and at bat. Cathy is next to Jim with Jerry and Nancy sitting next to her.

ADULT JIM (V.O.)
I had to do some time. The biggest regret in my life is losing the time with my family. I couldn't believe that Cathy stayed with me.

SND FX Ball hitting bat.

Everyone in the stands stands and cheers. After a beat they all sit down.

ADULT JIM
Ralph was murdered in prison. He got iced by the brother of one of the guys he ratted on. It's funny but with all the shitty things he did in his life, and I'm talking years before I got on board, the thing that angered people most was him ratting everyone out.

SND FX Ball hitting bat.

Everyone in the stands stands and cheers. After a beat they all sit down.

ADULT JIM (CONT'D)
Murder, robbery, smuggling, ah, we're fine with that. But snitch and you get murdered in prison. People are weird.

SND FX Ball hitting bat.

Everyone in the stands stands and cheers. After a beat they all sit down.

ADULT JIM (CONT'D)
Let's go, David! You can make it!

David is running hard down the third base line. He goes into a slide.

UMPIRE

Safe.

ADULT JIM

Yeah!

David picks himself off the ground. He looks into the stands as he jogs to the dugout and wiping off the dirt. Cathy waves at him. Jim, Jerry and Nancy applaud.

ADULT JIM (CONT'D)

I've done a lot of things I'm not proud of. But now I'm proud of my life for the first time.

FADE TO BLACK.