

I GOT THIS!

by
Joe Rendace

Based on Ed Waller's life

INT. CHILD CARE CENTER - DAY

Bustling room of parents drop off their kids to staff. EDDIE WALLER, 42, exhausted mentally and physically, timidly walks his twin daughters, KENZIE and BELLA, 4, over to SALLY, 25. Eddie bends down and holds each of their hands.

EDDIE
Be good, girls. No stealing snacks.

SALLY
Sir, last month's bill really needs to be paid today. I'm sorry.

Eddie opens his cash bare wallet. He lifts a credit card.

SALLY
We've been instructed to not accept any further credit cards from you or your wife. I'm so sorry, sir.

EDDIE
Right. Can you give me a minute to use the bank across the street?

Sally nods. Eddie hugs his daughters and whispers to them.

EDDIE
I'll pick you up later, but, it may be your mom. Daddy loves you.

Eddie guides them to Sally's hands and quietly walks out.

EXT. CHILD CARE CENTER - DAY

Eddie looks at the bank across the street. People walk in and out of it. He crosses over and stops at the bank's front door. He removes his phone and dials.

EDDIE
It's me. You didn't pay their bill.
No, I wasn't... forget it.

Eddie hangs up. He frowns at the Child Care office. He puts on a NY Mets baseball cap from his jacket and swallows pills from his pants. As he grabs the bank door, he reveals a gun.

EDDIE
I got this.

TITLE: "LONG ISLAND NY, SEPTEMBER 13RD 2013."

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Single story structure surrounded by fake palm trees. The overcast sky produces a misty rain; the wind noticeable.

TITLE: "LONG ISLAND NY DECEMBER 18TH 2019. 7:20 PM."

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Scattered tables of patrons mind their business amid a low hum of Christmas music. Decorations toil across all corners.

JOE, 52, enters. A keen eye for human frailty, except where his flaws are evident. The waitress MELOSA, 22, perky, smiles.

MELOSA

Hi! Table for one?

JOE

No, they'll be a few coming.

Joe shakes his umbrella and follows obediently as Melosa seats him at a large high-top table. He notices her name tag.

JOE

Melosa? That's an interesting name.
I'll have an iced tea.

MELOSA

Thanks. It's Spanish for "sweet."
Ice tea? Got it. First time here?

JOE

If only. My buddies and I played
cards here from 1998 to 2010.

She giggles and saunters away. The badly decorated Christmas tree stands in a corner next to a mannequin Santa. Joe takes a deep breath as he looks around.

He removes an aged newspaper clip. It reads:

"LOCAL LONG ISLAND MAN ARRESTED FOR MULTIPLE BANK ROBBERIES."

It's a picture of Eddie.

MELOSA

Whoa! A friend of yours?

Melosa puts Joe's drink down. Joe folds the paper.

JOE

And our guest of honor tonight. But he's harmless. Don't worry about it. You may want to make sure the cash register is secure though.

Melosa loses her smile.

JOE

Kidding. Just kidding.

She briskly walks away as BATMAN, 51, a heart as large as his body with the belly to match, approaches.

BATMAN

She looks spooked. Did you tell her she can star in one of your novels that no one wants to adapt?

JOE

Funny. Did u lose that tooth biting or beating something?

Batman probes his tongue in his missing tooth slot.

BATMAN

Same difference.

Batman fist-bumps Joe and removes his jacket as he sits. Melosa appears.

MELOSA

Hi! What are you drinking?

BATMAN

Diet Coke.

JC (O.S.)

Make it two.

JC, 51, would rob a baby's diaper and then sell it back as "barely used," sits and shakes Joe and Batman's hands. His tone never rises above a whisper.

JC

Gentlemen.

BATMAN

JC! It's got to be six years?

JOE

Seven. But all I had to do was text him "Cards: 7PM Hooters" and he responded "I'm in."

JC

Oh, no one post on social media that I'm here tonight. I'm supposed to be at my bowling league.

JOE

Really? Is it still hockey and bowling all week? It must be nice to never marry or have kids. Are you still dating Dawn?

JC

She still lives in one of my homes.

BATMAN

And you still won't marry her?

JC

And lose the rent?

There's no smile from JC to indicate a punch-line. Joe and Batman burst out in laughter.

BATMAN

And you're still dying your slicked hair as black as your heart?

JC

At least I have hair.

Batman dramatically throws back and whips his bald head side to side as he pretends to run his hand through hair.

BATMAN

I'm aerodynamic.

JC

How is Amy?

JOE

Fine.

JC

And your kids?

JOE

Fine. They aren't kids anymore.
Young adults who we couldn't live
under the same roof with anymore.

BATMAN

So both kids... offspring, or
whatever term you're using, are now
living where? In that condo, right?

JOE

Yes. We couldn't coexist under one
roof anymore. When two parents
raising two kids becomes four
opinions at odds over everything,
you buy a condo and move them out.

BATMAN

What's Amy think about that?

JOE

Well...

Joe's awkward pause allows for a change in subject.

JC

So, Jesse James is not here yet?

BATMAN

Do you see any cops?

JOE

Give him time.

BATMAN

Time? He's done plenty of that.

JC picks up the article on the table.

JC

I remember emailing you this. What
do you think was Ed's first heist?

BATMAN

Probably the cradle.

JOE

It's unny you should say that.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

A plain and barely sterile hospital room surrounded by tacky Christmas garland, hosts the birth of a child.

TITLE: " LONG ISLAND NEW YORK, DECEMBER 14 1970."

JOANNE WALLER, 25, screams as she gives birth, surrounded by a DOCTOR, 35, and NURSE, 28. They coach her to breathe.

JOHN WALLER, 40, frazzled and worn, sits in a chair on the opposite side of the room. He lights up a cigarette as a baby's scream fills the room.

John looks to his left and sees ROB, 9, and TRACY, 7, stealing the wallet out of the Doctor's hanging coat and money from the Nurse's wallet.

ELAINE, 8, holds her father's hand and smiles. John yanks a flask from his jacket and swills a shot.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - DAY

Batman and JC squint at Joe. The silence speaks loud.

BATMAN

What? You're writing a book?

JOE

Maybe. I've been researching stuff.

JC

I see. Do tell, Mr. Writer.

Joe scratches his nose with his middle finger and smiles.

JOE

Sure, we have time to kill until Eddie shows. Buckle up, boys.

INT. HOSPITAL - MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

Newborn EDWARD sleeps wrapped in a blanket. His eyes pop open when the Nurse places a SCREAMING NEWBORN next to him as she readies another small bassinet.

TITLE: "MATERNITY WARD VIEWING AREA."

She puts a pacifier in the Screaming Newborn's mouth and turns away. Edward cries. Through the visitor's viewing window, Rob, and Tracy angrily stare at Screaming Newborn.

They bang on the window and point until the Nurse makes a nasty face and turns away. Rob and Tracy turn and huddle.

The Nurse hears bangs and turns horrified at Rob's naked ass up against the glass. She screams and runs toward the glass.

The Maternity Ward door is now open and Edward has the pacifier in his mouth. Tracy stands over the bassinet and nods to Edward before she places Screaming Newborn in another bassinet and rolls it away; hard.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa stands in shock holding drinks.

MELOSA

That did not happen.

BATMAN

Hon, don't bet your bra against it.

JOE

I spoke to all of Ed's siblings.
They all told the same story.

BATMAN

They told a tale or smelled a sale?

MELOSA

Should I really tell the manager to
secure the cash register?

JOE

(smiles)

Stay tuned ...

EXT. SAM GOODY MUSIC STORE - DAY

TITLE: "LONG ISLAND NY, 1974."

Joanne, 29, pushes Edward, 4, in his stroller as a bored Rob, 14, and Tracy, 12, trail behind. Elaine, 13 skips next to Joanne. Rob spots a poster for the new Queen album.

Rob nudges Tracy and points at the poster.

ROB
Ma, can we go buy the new album?

JOANNE
With what money?

Tracy has her hand in Joanne's pocketbook from behind her mother. Elaine grimaces. Tracy puts her finger on her lips and makes the cut-throat sign to Elaine.

ROB
Oh, odd jobs.

JOANNE
Fine. Hurry up.

TRACY
Can we take Eddie in?

JOANNE
Since when do you want him around?

ELAINE
Momma, don't let them.

Tracy snarls at Elaine behind Joanne's back.

JOANNE
No, I think it's nice. Go.

Elaine buries her head in her hands. Rob yanks the stroller.

INT. SAM GOODY MUSIC STORE - DAY

Rob guides the stroller through the record isle. Tracy steps to the counter. ROCKER DUDE, 22, looks down over the counter.

TRACY
Hi, is Jack here?

ROCKER DUDE
There's no Jack, little lady.

TRACY
Oh, I mean John.

ROCKER DUDE
No John either. Are you buying?

TRACY
Uh, my dad's outside and said he has the money he owes the owner.

ROCKER DUDE

Tom? He owes Tom money?

TRACY

Right, Tom. Can you get him please?

Tracy phony smiles. Rocker Dude squints and then shrugs.

ROCKER DUDE

Sure, let me go get him.

Rocker Dude exits the room. Tracy nods at Rob, who shoves record albums under Edward's blanket. Edward watches until he raises the blanket for easier access. Rob winks at Edward.

ROB

Your first caper, bro. Rock on!

Edward giggles. Rocker Dude returns with TOM, 45, just as the front door slams closed. The Waller gang are gone. Tom glares at Rocker Dude and smacks the back of his head.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - DAY

ZOE, 23, less happy and more snappy, stands holding a plate of wings. She drops it down. Melosa raises her brow.

MELOSA

A little gentler, please. Guys, this is Zoe. She's in training.

ZOE

The baby drove the getaway stroller? I don't buy that.

BATMAN

They didn't buy that stuff either.

Joe flips open a notebook. He circles the spot on the page.

JOE

I looked that one up. The closest Precinct did have a report of kids stealing records that day.

ZOE

(to Melosa)

This is why I'm not having kids.

Zoe trudges off. Joe laughs and flips the page.

JOE
Well, as funny as it sounds, it
wasn't all a barrel of laughs.

INT. WALLER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Single family home. Modest decor. Rob, 16, tries to fix the broken lights on the Christmas tree. Edward, 6, watches.

TITLE: "CHRISTMAS EVE, 1976."

EDWARD
Daddy knows how to fix it.

ROB
Yeah, well, he's not home. Again.

Tracy, 13, watches from the attached dining room.

TRACY
For weeks. As usual.

Elaine, 14, enters and sees Edward's trouble face. She grins.

ELAINE
That's because he's out getting our
Christmas presents.

Elaine spins and growls at Tracy. Edward's smile dissipates as he looks under the tree. It's void of a single present.

EDWARD
I hope Santa brings a lot, too.

Tracy sizes Elaine up as she sneers at Edward.

TRACY
There is no Santa, dumbass.

ELAINE
You little, bitch!

Tracy snarls and grabs Elaine by the hair. They roll to the ground. Joanne, 31, pregnant, hurries to the knocking door.

JOANNE
Girls! Stop! Rob, do something!

Rob sighs as the tree lights blink erratically. He jots a few steps and tries to pull the girls apart.

Joanne screams. The teenagers pay no attention. Edward focuses on Joanne crying from her knees. A COP, 34, consoles.

JOE (V.O.)

It turns out, they got the worst gift of all that Christmas.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Police cars hover around an aged station wagon. John Waller lay dead in the driver's seat. A rubber hose is taped from the exhaust pipe to his closed driver's window.

INT. WALLER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The teenagers notice Joanne crying. Rob and Tracy walk over and hug her. Elaine crawls over to Edward and puts her hand on his shoulder as she cries. Edward's face stares at the erratic tree lights blink.

A tear descends Edward's cheek. The tree lights crackle and blow. Edward and Elaine embrace in the darkness.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

PEDRO, 38, large as a barge, scratches his thinning hair.

PEDRO

Whoa. The dad committed suicide on Christmas Eve? And no presents?

JOE

No presents. Other than the vending machine at the morgue.

Pedro turns to Zoe, who shrugs. Melosa awkwardly twirls her long hair. Batman and JC stop munching on the curly fries.

PEDRO

Well, I was told we have a bank robber on his way. We good?

JOE

We're good.

Pedro pauses and nods before he leaves. Melosa frowns.

MELOSA

Sorry, I had to let my boss know.

JOE
Of course you did.

Melosa attempts a smile before she walks away.

BATMAN
Even when Eddie's not here, he's
causing trouble.

JC
That really happened?

JOE
You have a phone super computer.
Pull his death records off the web.

JC looks to Batman. Batman Shrugs. JC grabs a wing.

JC
Keep going.

Joe flips a page in his book.

JOE
And off we go. Enter MaryJo.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Joanne, 32, screams during giving birth, surrounded by the
same Doctor, 42, and Nurse, 35.

TITLE: "APRIL 21 1977."

Rob, 17, sits cranky in a chair on the opposite end of the
room next to Tracy, 15. Elaine, 16, leans against the wall as
she holds a sleeping Edward, 7, in her arms.

Rob burns a smoke as a baby's scream shrieks out.

ELAINE
Put that out! It's not healthy!

ROB
Neither was dad knocking up mom
before offing himself. But hey,
what's one more mouth to feed?

Edward's jarred awake. Elaine puts him down. He looks over at
Joanne holding NEWBORN MARYJO. Rob rises and storms out.

ELAINE
Where are you going?

ROB
I'm the man of this house now.
Someone needs to step up.

Elaine notices Edward's sorrow. She kisses his forehead.

ELAINE
Ready to see our new sister?

Edward smiles and nods. He takes her outstretched hand.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa puts two sodas down.

MELOSA
Aha! So that's a happy moment! So
Elaine was a good influence?

JOE
Well, she wasn't with Eddie 24/7.

INT. HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

View area. Newborn MaryJo sleeps wrapped in a blanket.

TITLE: MATERNITY WARD VIEWING AREA. MOMENTS LATER."

MaryJo's eyes pop open as the Nurse places a Screaming Newborn next to her. She puts a pacifier in Screaming Newborn's mouth and turns away. Baby MaryJo cries.

Through the viewing glass, Tracy eye-daggers the crying baby and Nurse. Tracy speaks silently down at Edward. He nods.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa rubs her temples. Zoe hands a soda to JC.

ZOE
So, more ass on the glass? Great.

JOE
Can I get the chicken sandwich?

MELOSA
I... They... Never mind!

Melosa walks away flustered. Batman laughs.

BATMAN

Shit. Wasn't MaryJo the one who was arrested for...

JC

Hey, hey. SPOILER ALERT!

JOE

Too funny. Hang in there. All in good time. Let's get to Middle School, when the schemes got real.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Brick and glass windows. Opened for air. Edward, 12, slumps in the back row of a class of students.

TITLE: "PETER J. BRENAN, MIDDLE SCHOOL, 1983."

An educational video plays on a TV/VCR combo in the front of the room. The bell rings; the students scurry out. The TEACHER, 48, no patience for education, waves to all.

TEACHER

Remember to write a report on this!

The students ignore her and leave. She stands alone and sighs before she lights a cigarette and shuts the TV/VCR.

TEACHER

Pain in the asses.

EDWARD

Excuse me, Ma'am.

The Teacher peers behind her. Edward innocently smiles.

EDWARD

I feel really sick.

TEACHER

You know where the nurse's office is. You spend half the day there.

EDWARD

But, I feel wobbly. Please help me.

Edward's grin morphs to a vomit attempt. She rolls her eyes.

TEACHER

I should have taken the job at the DMV. They'd fear me there.

She puts her arm on Edward's back and guides him out. He peeks back as they leave and nods toward the room window.

The TV/VCR cart slowly rolls toward the window where Rob, 23, leans in from outside and pulls the power cord toward him.

EXT. WALLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Two COPS walk a handcuffed Rob out of the house. Joanne yells and cries as Elaine, 22, hugs her. Edward's silent.

TITLE: "TWO MONTHS LATER."

Tracy, 21, spits at the feet of the Cops. Rob winks to Ed.

ROB
I got this.

Rob is placed in the police car. Edward's frown turns upward.

EDWARD (V.O.)
And that was when I first knew that
if I had to, I could do time.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Cops examine the mud outside the classroom window.

EDWARD (V.O.)
They matched Rob's boot imprint to
what they found in his school
locker. He and his friend's stole
over twenty school TVs and VCRs,
but they could only prove the one.
For that, Rob got a week in jail.
He never ratted out any of us.

EXT. WALLER HOUSE - NIGHT

Edward watches Rob put his boots up in the back of the cop car and laugh as the cop smacks his foot down.

INT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

The large, madhouse of do-it-yourself workers and shoppers.

TITLE: "HOME DEPOT, LONG ISLAND NY, 1984."

Rob, 24, walks next to Edward, 13, who pushes a large cart of wood supplies and plumbing supplies.

EDWARD (V.O.)

From there, I was off and running as an accomplice. I made my respect in Rob's eyes for the "Buy & Fly" bit. Pay for one thing, steal ninety-nine. They barely suspected.

They approach the cashier as Rob pays for one small item. Rob nods to Edward who nods back and just rolls the cart out.

MONTAGE BEGINS

- Rob and Edward Buy & Fly Home Depot as the Security guy unknowingly holds the door open.
- Rob flirts with the cashier as Edward rolls out the loot.
- Rob steals a drill off the shelf and gets a cash refund.
- Eddie fakes hurting his leg while Rob rolls stuff out.

MONTAGE ENDS

EDWARD (V.O.)

Rob taught me if you act like you believe you're right, so will the stores. The customer is always right. Well, most of the time.

EXT. HOME DEPOT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Rob and Edward load up their van with a cart full of supplies. A BURLY SECURITY GUY, 30, abruptly halts Rob.

BURLY SECURITY GUY

'Scuse me. Can I see your receipt?

Rob looks at Edward. Edward, scared, shrugs. Rob pats his pants and shirt pocket. The Burly Security Guy gets upset.

SERVICE DESK MAN (O.S.)

Excuse me! Sir! Excuse me!

SERVICE DESK MAN, 23, jogs over as he waves a piece of paper.

SERVICE DESK MAN

Sir, you forgot your receipt.

The Service Desk Man hands it to Rob. He smiles at Security.

SERVICE DESK MAN
My bad. Busy day! Thanks.

The Service Desk Man jogs away as Rob smiles and puts the paper in his pocket. The Security Guy is about to speak when Edward yells in pain.

EDWARD
Ow! My finger!

Rob rushes around to Edward and looks at his bloody finger.

ROB
Sir, can you get us a towel? These sharp tools should be covered.

The Security Guy is miffed, but he nods and jogs away. Rob and Edward jump in the van and screech away.

EDWARD (V.O.)
Rule #1 might have been "act like you're right," but Rule #2, "have someone you know working the scheme from the inside," was our backup.

INT. ROB'S VAN - DAY

Rob cruises the road and high-five's Edward's hand. Edward licks his bloody finger.

ROB
Bloody finger? Nice improvise.

Edward winks and cranks the radio.

EDWARD (V.O.)
They caught our Service Desk buddy months later, but it didn't matter. We had a guy at all six Home Depot's on Long Island. We cleared over \$75,000 in stolen goods and cash for returns. I think Rob was one of the main reasons Home Depot started giving store credit instead of cash without a receipt.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa is horrified. JC and Batman munch wings.

MELOSA

Please tell me there's something more than robberies. Can you humanize him? What about a girlfriend? Someone special?

JOE

"Special" can mean many things.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Edward, 8, plays right field. The outfield chained-link fence is three feet high with people cheering a few feet behind.

TITLE: "LITTLE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP, 1979."

EDWARD

Let's go! Tommy's no hitter!

Behind the gate, JACKIE, 7, a stocky girl, growls.

EDWARD

Throw it straight down the middle.
He couldn't hit air in a windstorm!

Jackie snarls. The batter hits a high fly towards Edward. He backs up near the fence and just as he's about to catch it, Jackie grabs a stick off the floor and shoves it through the fence into Edward's back. The ball hits him in the head.

Edward scurries and throws the ball back to the infield as the winning run scores and the other team celebrates. He runs over to the fence and gets in Jackie's face.

EDWARD

What the fuck!

Jackie punches him square in the face. He goes down. Hard.

JACKIE

That's my brother, asshole!

FREEZE THE CAMERA on Edward's dazed face.

EDWARD (V.O.)

That's when I knew I was in love.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa motions to speak. Zoe lowers her brow.

JOE
It's not all Romeo and Juliet.

BATMAN
You can say he "stole" her heart.
And other things along the way.

Zoe studies the men before she shakes her head.

ZOE
It's true, isn't it? All men suck.

MELOSA
Zoe!

JOE
There was always a "special" lady.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Joanne sits surrounded by her children in the first row.
Three people sit scattered around an empty room of chairs.

TITLE: "DEER PARK FUNERAL HOME, 1976."

Edward, 6, sits in Joanne's lap. She sobs and kisses his forehead. Edward watches her tears fall. He looks ahead at his father's casket before he clutches his mother.

EXT. WALLER HOUSE - NIGHT - 1982

Rob is placed in the police car. Edward turns to see Joanne crying. His grin dissipates.

EDWARD (V.O.)
But whether I could do the time or
not, I couldn't let my mom down.
Dad gone. Rob in jail. I needed to
be slicker. Better than him. Make
her proud while I did what needed
to be done to provide.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

A school gymnasium host wrestling matches. The stands are pulled open where parents and students sit watching.

TITLE: "HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING MATCH, 1987."

Edward, 16, wrestles OPPONENT KID, 16, and pins him with a quick cradle move. He jumps up and raises his arm in victory.

A concerned Joanne, 41, stands by the edge of the matt. Edward jogs over and they embrace. She hugs and squeezes him.

JOANNE

Edward, I hope that you're not hurting those boys out there?

Edward breaks the embrace and steps back.

EDWARD

Mom, there's rules and I'm following them. It's a little rough but everyone understands.

Joanne stares until Edward lowers his head and nods.

EDWARD

Yes, mom.

Edward yelps and falls forward on his face. He flips over.

JACKIE (O.S.)

That's my friend's brother, ass!

Jackie, 16, stands over Edward with wrestling headgear in her hand. Edward rubs his head and jumps up.

EDWARD

If you don't stop --

JOANNE

Edward.

Joanne's stern stare neutralizes Edward's anger. He sighs. Jackie smiles and sticks out her tongue. She spins and exits.

Joanne walks away. Elaine, 25, steps down from the bleachers.

ELAINE

Is she always that mean?

EDWARD

(grins)

Just when I keep saying I'll call her. And then I don't.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa smiles. Batman and JC drink and eat.

MELOSA

Aww. A momma's boy? Sweet. Better.

BATMAN

Don't get all mushy. Valentine's Day will end quick, sweetie.

JOE

I'll speed up before he arrives.

JC

IF, he arrives.

Joe glances out the window as the rain picks up. A car parks. Joe's reflection in the window glass morphs into ...

INT. EDDIE'S CAR - DAY

Eddie's reflection, 18, stares out of his car window at a SUV parking in a school lot. RICKY G, 17, crooked as a warped stick and just as smart, sits next to Eddie reading his pad.

TITLE: "DEER PARK HIGH SCHOOL, 1989."

RICKY G

89 Bronco. That's Mr. Manning's new ride. It's got a sweet Blaupunkt 20AMP Benzi removable radio.

EDDIE

Who do we have on hold for one?

Ricky reads down the names on his pad.

RICKY G

Hang on. Yeah, two requests. Billy G and also Father O'Brien. He's got a kicking Mustang.

EDDIE (V.O.)

With Rob in and out of jail for petty larceny gigs, I had to step up bringing home cash.

Eddie and Ricky watch MR. MANNING, 45, lock his car door and kisses the hood. He walks into the school. Eddie removes a gun from his jacket. Ricky yawns.

RICKY G

Ten bucks says you can't get it on the first shot.

Eddie squints and aims out his open window at the Bronco.

EDDIE

You don't want any of this.

Eddie fires the gun. The metal BB pellet shatters the back tinted window on the Bronco. Ricky tosses money at Eddie.

RICKY G

You know you're stealing money out of the mouth of my baby sister!

Eddie smiles and pinches the money in Ricky's face.

EDDIE

Your baby sister is sixteen and dating her guidance councillor. Lie better! I'm not getting caught because you can't string two thoughts together.

Ricky exhibits his middle finger as he exits the car. Eddie watches him steal the Bronco's radio.

INT. CHURCH - CONFESSION STALL - DAY

FATHER O'BRIEN, 35, a Man of God with the desires of Man, sits in his darkened stall. Someone enters the confessional.

CONFESSOR (O.S.)

Bless me father, for I have sinned.

FATHER O'BRIEN

(sighs)

I don't have that much time left on Earth to hear it all. Sum it up.

The small, wooden door opens between them and a Blaupunkt radio slides through. Father O'Brien takes it and puts a fifty dollar bill in its place. Eddie is the Confessor.

FATHER O'BRIEN

Go in peace, my son. Don't get caught or it will break your dear mother's heart.

EDDIE (O.S.)

Yes, Father.

FATHER O'BRIEN

Oh, and if you come across a six CD changer for my trunk...

EDDIE (O.S.)
You're killin me, Father.

FATHER O'BRIEN
The Lord works in mysterious ways.

INT. GYM - DAY

Dilapidated large open space with hanging boxing bags and a make-shift ring. Eddie and other teenagers punch the bags.

EDDIE (V.O.)
Between running the radios and attending just enough classes as possible to keep my mother happy, I made sure I stayed fit and ready.

Ricky enters with a box of radios. Eddie stops hitting a bag.

EDDIE
No! Moron! Not here. Old man Sal will freak. Find another spot.

RICKY G
My mother found them! Where?

Eddie slaps him in the back of the head and Ricky leaves.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe puts three full cups of soda on the table.

ZOE
He wanted to stay fit and ready?
Ready for what?

JOE
Doom.

INT. GAS STATION STORE - DAY

A small area with a snack isle and a refrigerated case. Eddie works the cash register. Patrons pay for their gas and exit.

TITLE: "LABOR DAY 1989."

EDDIE (V.O.)
One of my scams was simple to pull off.

EDDIE(cont'd)

The station charged five cents more per gallon when people paid on their credit cards. I was supposed to make the adjustment on the register. Which I didn't. By the end of a busy night, I'd make an easy extra fifty bucks.

Eddie counts two twenty dollar bills from the cash register and puts in his pocket, out of view of a security camera.

EDDIE (V.O.)

But my biggest problem was on a crazy busy Labor Day. Great weather and everyone was filling up.

Eddie reads a magazine behind the register when a MASKED GUN MAN, 17, enters the vacant store and hastily waves a gun.

MASKED MAN

GIVE ME THE FUCKIN MONEY! NOW!

Eddie drops the magazine and panics.

EDDIE

Don't shoot! Please!

The Gunman waves Eddie away from the register and empties the till. As he leaves, Eddie grabs the Gunman from behind and whispers in his ear. The Gunman flips around and punches Eddie in the face before he runs out. Eddie's nose bleeds.

INT. GAS STATION - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Two uniformed COPS inspect the gas station. DETECTIVE SAM LUCA, 40, tired of calls like this, looks at Eddie.

DETECTIVE

So, it was just you and Clyde? No Bonnie around?

EDDIE

Yes.

Eddie runs the bloody rag up each nostril. Sam looks around.

DETECTIVE

There's no cameras back here? Only the one up front and outside?

EDDIE

Yes. You can talk to the owner when he's back from vacation. It is Labor Day, you know.

DETECTIVE

Oh, I know. You took me away from grilling for this.

EDDIE

Tough life.

DETECTIVE

I watched the security footage. Looks like you had him from behind.

EDDIE

No, but I tried. That a problem?

One of the Cops walks over and whispers in Sam's ear.

DETECTIVE

No problem. Though I would think with your wrestling medals, you would have fared a little better.

Eddie drops his attitude. He looks at the Cop looking at him.

EDDIE

I've had better days. Look, I don't know you. You don't know me.

DETECTIVE

Oh, I know you. And your whole family band of criminals.

The other Cop walks in and drops a box of car radios down. Eddie looks down at the box and then back up to Sam smiling.

EDDIE (V.O.)

When I told Ricky to hide the radios anywhere other than the gym... Morons. All of them.

EXT. GAS STATION - BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Ricky opens the back door and drops the box inside. He throws a blanket over it before he puts on the Gunman mask.

TITLE: "AN HOUR EARLIER."

EDDIE (V.O.)
The moron put them where we were
pulling off a major scam.

INT. GAS STATION STORE - NIGHT

Eddie holds the Gunman (Ricky) from behind. He whispers.

EDDIE
Break free and pull your punch.
Just like we practiced.

INT. GAS STATION - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Eddie throws the bloody rag out. Sam holds out handcuffs.

DETECTIVE
Come on. You can say hi to Rob.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa stares, open mouth.

MELOSA
Oh, wow. Did he finally get busted?

JOE
He did.

JC
I don't think I knew that story.

JOE
Ah, see. You learn something new
every day.

INT. JAIL - INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Dimly lit, small square room. Ed sits cuffed to a table. Sam enters. He drops a stack of papers and sits.

DETECTIVE
Thank you for waiting til midnight.
I am stuffed. I grill the best
wienies. Do you like wienies?
Because you'll be seeing your cell-
mate's wienie in front of your face
for quite a few years.

Eddie lowers his head and sighs.

EDDIE
What do you want?

DETECTIVE
Well, a beer, to start.

EDDIE
I have nothing to say.

DETECTIVE
I know. I know the whole routine
Rob taught you. But you're not Rob.
He... just is filled with so much
anger. You? Not so much.

EDDIE
For those in the cheap seats, I'll
repeat myself. Nothing-To-Say.

Sam walks around the room. Methodically paces for effect.

DETECTIVE
OK, so in an interest of my time,
let's just go to the surprise
guest. She and I had a nice talk.

Eddie's eyes perk up. He searches past Sam.

EDDIE
My mom? Tell me you didn't call
her? I just turned 18. She doesn't
need to know! I'm an adult!

DETECTIVE
Oh, you're quite right. You're
legally an adult. And can be charged
as one. I love a plot twist!

Eddie closes his eyes. He places his head on the table.

DETECTIVE
But, I have kids. My youngest knows
you. You wouldn't know him. Bit of a
nerd. A sophomore. But he loves to
watch you wrestle. You just
graduated, eh? Did you have plans?
Besides taking classes on License
plate-making 101?

EDDIE
This isn't a fucking joke!

Sam drops the cavalier attitude. He struts toward the door and puts his hand on the doorknob.

DETECTIVE

No, it's not. So, I advise you to heed the advice of this fine woman.

Sam opens the door and Elaine, 28, enters and sits. Eddie lifts his head in surprise. Sam leaves the room.

Elaine softly sits. She releases a deep troubled breath.

EDDIE

Please tell me mom doesn't know.

ELAINE

Is this the path, Edward? Like Rob?

EDDIE

Elaine, please. I'll do your speech and the jail time, but does --

ELAINE

Mom doesn't know. Not yet.

Eddie exhales as he leans his head back and closes his eyes.

EDDIE

I can beat this. They don't...

ELAINE

They have your fingerprints on the pellet guns. They have the audio on the security camera telling your accomplice to hit you.

EDDIE

No they don't. I disabled it.

ELAINE

"Break free and pull your punch. Just like we practiced."

Eddie's astonished. He shakes his head. Total disbelief.

EDDIE

I had the nerd from my computer class show me how to do it. I'm learning I.T so that next time --

ELAINE

Next time? Edward, you need to listen to me.

ELAINE(cont'd)

I'm friends with the detective's younger sister. We went to school together. He did this as a favor.

EDDIE

Did what?

ELAINE

Not automatically throw the book at you. We discussed a better option.

Elaine opens the manila folder on the stack of papers. It shows an advertisement flyer for joining the Marines.

Eddie stares at it before his focus shifts away.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I had made sure I stayed fit and ready for one of two situations. I just didn't think I'd have to be sitting in one of them to realize the other was the better option.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Pedro reveals an eagle, globe and anchor Marine tattoo.

PEDRO

Alright, a Marine! That makes me feel a little better.

Batman de-bones three chicken wings in one gulp.

BATMAN

Yeah? You may want to hang on from polishing any war medals until you hear the rest. I remember this part.

Batman walks away from the table and enters the bathroom.

ZOE

What's his problem?

JOE

That's a whole different story.

MELOSA

And why do call him Batman? Comics?

JOE

Well, not exactly.

EXT. WATERFRONT HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Batman's SUV crawls along a graveled driveway and stops behind a weather beaten garage. Joe looks through the window.

TITLE: "WEST BABYLON NY, 1998."

INT. SUV - DAY

Batman, 28, larger, 300 pounds, but agile, puts the car in park. He turns to Joe, 29, as he exits the vehicle.

BATMAN

Wait here.

JOE

Where are we? We were going to Vincent's Clam Bar for lunch.

EXT. SUV - DAY

Batman glances around the the garage. Angered, he opens the trunk and removes a duffle bag. He taps on Joe's window.

BATMAN

Follow me. We'll be ten minutes.

EXT. WATERFRONT HOME - BARGE - DAY

Both men walk on the wooden dock towards a twenty foot speedboat tied to the pier in the water. Joe's concerned. There's no witnesses.

INT. SPEEDBOAT - DAY

JIMMY, 42, a human lie packaged under a bad toupee, enjoys a drink on the back of the boat. His eyes are closed.

Batman jumps in the boat and moves fast toward Jimmy.

JIMMY

Oh, shit! No!

Jimmy lunges up and runs in the boat cabin. The door locks.

BATMAN

Don't make this difficult.

JOE
I really need to...

The door quickly opens and TERESA, 38, if hair could speak, hers would be screaming, is shoved out. She's already frantic. The door locks closed.

BATMAN
Son of a.... Everything is fine,
Miss. Joe, watch her.

JOE
Wait, what?

Teresa's frightened stare unnerves Joe, who smiles. Badly.

Batman removes a bat from his duffle bag and splits the cabin door open with it. He enters. Jimmy's screams ring out. A thumping noise comes from inside the cabin.

Teresa screams when Jimmy is thrown out of the cabin towards their feet. Batman walks out, bat swinging.

BATMAN
Strike one.

JIMMY
Please, I swear on my kids,
I'll have the money tomorrow!

BATMAN
You don't have the money you owe,
but you've got enough for this
boat? Strike two.

JIMMY
No, no! It's not mine! I swear,
it's my mothers' boat!

Furious, Batman stands over Jimmy.

BATMAN
More lies? You think I'm screwing
around? Strike three.

Batman puts his boot on Jimmy's neck and shoves him on the boat floor. He moves the bat back and forth like a golf club.

BATMAN
Fore!

Teresa freaks. She screams and pushes past Joe, knocking him into the water. She scurries onto the barge and runs off. Batman sighs. He removes his foot off Jimmy.

BATMAN

Get up. Now.

Jimmy wobbles to his feet with his hands raised upward. Batman puts the head of the bat against Jimmy's chest.

BATMAN

You've got one day to go apologize to her for being an asshole and get the money you owe.

Batman shoves Jimmy over the side of the boat with the bat, into the bay with Joe. Joe gets another mouthful of water.

BATMAN

And to fix this leak.

JIMMY

Wha... What leak?

Batman raises and forcefully thrusts the bat head into the fiberglass bottom, repeatedly, until a leak springs. Jimmy is numb and in shock.

EXT. WATERFRONT HOME - BARGE - DAY

Batman climbs up on the barge. He reaches towards Joe in the water by extension of the bottom of the bat's barrel.

BATMAN

Let's go. I'm starving.

Teresa, her hair a mess, runs away screaming.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Pedro and Melosa are aghast. JC and Joe eat the wings. Pedro shakes his head and walks away.

PEDRO

Crazy. All of you.

ZOE

I'm calling B.S on that story.

JOE

You can. It still happened.

JC

I have to say, I remember it.

ZOE

Oh? That's how this goes? He lies and you swear to it? I'm taking Psych 101 as a minor.

JC

So, if I say "PSYCH!", we're OK?

ZOE

What? No. I mean, so OK, let's say you're making it up to make him sound tough and with a heart of gold at the same time. I mean, that's why you added in making Jimmy apologize to Teresa, right?

Joe notices Batman coming out of the bathroom. Batman sees BOYFRIEND, 28 and GIRLFRIEND, 26 as they walk out the front door. Boyfriend slightly shoves her further out the door.

BOYFRIEND

Dumb bitch. Just shut up!

Batman grits his teeth. He walks toward the front door. Joe directs Zoe's attention through the window from their seats.

JOE

Your answer is about to come.

Through the window, the rain has picked up. Just as the Boyfriend is about to open his umbrella, Batman grabs it out of his hand from behind. The Boyfriend angrily turns, but Batman gets right in his face, forcing him against the wall.

Melosa brings fries. She sees what they're watching outside.

MELOSA

Oh my God. What's happening?

JC

We're doing a school project.

JOE

Batman saw what I saw, which was her boyfriend insulting her.

MELOSA

Should I get my boss?

ZOE

Shh!

JOE

It'll be over in a minute. My hearing may be crap, but I'm good at reading lips. Watch.

The rain drenches the Girlfriend, her Boyfriend and Batman as Batman braces the umbrella handle under the Boyfriend's throat. Batman's lips move.

JOE

Right now, he's saying that was no way to treat a woman and he needs to apologize. Now.

Zoe squints to see clearer outside. The rain makes it difficult. What's clear is that the Boyfriend is listening.

MELOSA

Holy... how do you know that?

JOE

Seen it once or thrice.

Batman lessens his grip. The Boyfriend massages his throat before he meekly apologizes to his Girlfriend. Batman opens the umbrella and hands it to her. She gives him a quick hug.

ZOE

Did that really just happen?

JOE

Yes. Why? Too hard to believe?

MELOSA

I mean... if I didn't just...

JOE

-- see it? Exactly. So will anyone believe it when you tell the story?

Batman walks over as he dries his head and arms with napkins.

BATMAN

What B.S story did I miss now?

Melosa grins and hugs him quick as she walks away. Zoe still breeds skepticism.

JOE

Nothing you would believe.

Batman is surprised. He looks back at Melosa as she refills drinks. He turns back and shrugs.

BATMAN
I'll wait for the movie.

JOE
Oh, you've got to be joking.

JC and Batman turn and look at the TV behind their heads.

ON THE TV

"BREAKING NEWS: LOCAL 7-11 ROBBED AT GUNPOINT."

JC and Batman turn back to Joe, who stares past their gaze.

BATMAN
When was the last time you spoke to Ed? He is late. Later than usual.

Joe removes his Iphone and texts.

JOE
We traded texts this morning.

Batman grabs the cards and shuffles. JC grabs a wing.

BATMAN
Uh huh. Three handed again...

JC
Now I'm more interested in our convict's back story. Keep going.

Joe stares at JC and the TV. He opens his notebook.

JOE
Anyway... The military was next.

INT. AIRPLANE - ECONOMY SECTION - DAY

Eddie, 19, stares out the plane window in amazement.

TITLE: "DECEMBER 26, 1989."

EDDIE (V.O.)
It was my first plane ride.

Eddie notices a happy family, the DAD, 28, MOM, 27 and CHILD, 5. They smile and hold each other's hand. His gaze dissipates as he looks back down out the window.

EDDIE (V.O.)
I thought I knew it all, but
looking down at how insignificant
everything looked from a new
perspective, for the first time I
wondered if I knew anything at all.

INT. MILITARY BARBER SHOP - DAY

A line of recruits gawk at the next guy in the chair getting a head shave. Eddie stands and rubs his peach-fuzz top.

TITLE: "PARIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA."

EDDIE (V.O.)
The haircut wasn't so bad.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

A dozen men in Marine fatigues stand at attention in the weeds and sand as flying insects land on their faces.

EDDIE (V.O.)
But the Sand Flees, mosquitos on
steroids, were a nightmare.

FAT MARINE #1, 19, swats at the bugs on his face.

EDDIE (V.O.)
And if you swatted at them...

EXT. SAND PIT - DAY

FAT MARINE #1 sobs and struggles to do push-ups with dozens of Sand Flees swarming his face.(DS)DRILL SERGEANT DIRK, 34, growls down at him.

EDDIE (V.O.)
You got an earful from the Drill
Sergeants. We had to ignore them,
but if you tried quick reflexes...

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

Marines at attention. FAT MARINE #1 tries to swing at his face. He knocks himself unconscious. DS Dirk sneers.

EXT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

A squad of Marines lay on the ground firing rifles at dummy targets. Eddie's shots are spot on. CARL "COTTON" PAYTON, 19, a personality as large as his muscular frame, notices.

COTTON

Damn, boy! I'm staying behind your
ass if we see action!

EDDIE

You're a lefty. Aim a little more to
the left to compensate your grip.

Eddie smiles. Cotton winks at him. DS Dirk sneers.

INT. MILITARY GYMNASIUM POOL - DAY

The Marines dive in the water in full gear and struggle to swim. Eddie excels and is the first across. Cotton waddles.

COTTON

Brothers don't do water!

EDDIE

(laughs)

C'mon! You got this!

Eddie climbs out and reaches to help Cotton. DS Dirk shoves his foot on Eddie's back and sends him in the pool.

DS DIRK

YOU MAKING LOVE TO HIM, IRISH?! HE
CAN CARRY HIS OWN DICK!

Eddie and Cotton float as they try to avoid eye contact.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Eddie peels off his wet fatigues and peers at the bruise on his back. A Shamrock tattoo is on his arm. Cotton squints.

COTTON

Ouch, boy. A few more bruises on
your milky white ass and you'll be
as dark as me. You good, Irish?

EDDIE (V.O.)

The tattoo earned me the nickname,
but my skills were earning me the
scorn of one of my Drill Sergeants.
The worst part? I had no clue why.

COTTON

Why does that ass hate you?

EDDIE

Don't know, don't care. I'm just
keeping my head down.

COTTON

You got one hell of an aim, bro. I
may think twice about leaving the
Bronx to come rob your car radio.

Eddie laughs as he lays on his stomach and exhales.

EDDIE

Funny you should talk car radios...
Anyway. Cotton? From the Bronx?

COTTON

Yeah. Few of the Italian Gumbas
near my neighborhood busted my
balls when I was real young. Told
me to go back to the "South" and
pick cotton. I politely explained,
as I kicked their asses, that the
only "South" I was from was the
South Bronx. The name stuck.

EDDIE

Cool. So if I decide to go steal
car radios from their neighborhood,
I'll be hiding behind your big ass.

COTTON

Deal.

Cotton and Eddie smile and shake hands.

INT. SHOWERS - DAY

Cotton and Eddie shower among a dozen other men.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Still, despite the DS DIRK'S issues
with me, I thrived in this
structured environment.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Eddie shoots targets at an accurate pace. Cotton doesn't.
- Eddie helps Cotton learn to swim. DS Dirk glares.
- Eddie passes inspection and dresses impeccably.

END MONTAGE

BACK TO SHOWERS

MAD MARINE, 20, sneaks behind Eddie in the shower and is about to tackle him when Cotton nods. Eddie drops and secures a rear naked choke on the Mad Marine until he gives up.

EDDIE (V.O.)

It didn't take long to figure out that most issues were resolved in the bathroom and showers out of the view of the Sergeants.

Eddie holds the struggling Mad Marine in place.

EDDIE

We good, bro?

MAD MARINE

Yeah, we're good. Stop helping Cotton out and pissing DS Dirk off. He's taking it out on us!

Eddie let's him go. Everyone goes back to showering.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Eddie writes a letter on his bunk as Cotton is taking photos of the other men with a Polaroid camera.

EDDIE (V.O.)

For the first time, without my brother or other bad influences around, I took to the values we were taught. I felt pride, I felt honor. Even when others were running schemes to make money, like Cotton selling Polaroid shots to send home for a neat profit, I stayed out of it.

CORPORAL STRICKLAND, 35, walks over to Eddie, who rises.

EDDIE

Sir.

STRICKLAND

Ed, your sister Elaine called. Your mother is in the hospital.

INT. OFFICER'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Eddie hustles down the hall. He stops at DS Dirk's door.

INT. DS KIRK'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Eddie stands at attention in front of DS Dirk's desk.

DS DIRK

I see.

EDDIE

Sir, I just need to see her. I can be back in twenty-four hours.

DS DIRK

Your sister said it's cancer? Breast cancer, correct?

EDDIE

I... yes. But, I don't see --

DS DIRK

So, she's not on death's door, correct?

EDDIE

Sir, I don't --

DS DIRK

So, she'll be there after you graduate in three weeks, correct?

Eddie stares at DS Kirk. It takes all he has to remain calm.

DS DIRK

Call her. Console her. Dismissed.

Eddie hesitates, but turns to leave. DS Dirk chomps a cigar.

DS KIRK

It's a COTTON pickin shame though.

Eddie stops short of the door. He gleans a wedding photo of DS Dirk and MARY, 25, before he walks out.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Eddie lays on his bunk. Cotton sits on his bed.

COTTON

I heard. Did you talk to your mom?

EDDIE

She's sedated. Isn't handling it well. Her anxiety and depression.

COTTON

I heard Dirk is being a dick. Well, a bigger dick. It's because of me, ain't it? I hear the rumors, too. He bets on one failure in every new group. That good ol' boy likes me.

EDDIE

No, dude. It's all him.

Eddie looks at Cotton's smiling face; phony smiling face.

EDDIE

And you know who else he likes?
His wife.

Their eyes speak the words that aren't needed. They nod.

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB - NIGHT

Quiet area, encased by the saloon bar-style seating and a few tables occupied by men and women officers. MARY, 25, sits bored at the counter, downs drinks poured by the bartender.

EXT. OFFICER'S CLUB - NIGHT

Cotton straightens Eddie's officer jacket while Eddie puts on reading glasses. Cotton snorts laughter.

EDDIE

Stop. Which officer did you swipe this from? Is he a big dude?

COTTON

Bro, my Nanna is bigger than you.

EDDIE

Yeah, but I'm wirey.

Eddie play slaps Cotton's side. He peeks in the front door's glass plate and stares at Mary.

EDDIE

So, if you see anyone coming that knows me, open the door and cough.

COTTON

Yeah, Irish. Got it. That's subtle.

They fist bump and Eddie heads in.

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB - NIGHT

Eddie slow walks through the bar. He remains in the shadows before he cuts into a dark phone booth and shuts the door.

INT. ELAINE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elaine, 27, straddles a screaming infant against her chest as another sits in a high chair tossing food. She answers the rotary wall phone.

ELAINE

Hello? Eddie? Where are you? Didn't they tell you about mom?

INT. OFFICER'S CLUB - NIGHT

Eddie hunches over in the booth and whispers.

EDDIE

Give me twelve hours.

Eddie looks out at Mary and smiles. She smiles back. Drunk.

EDDIE

Give or take 15 minutes.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Quiet, but for the beep of the heart monitor machine. Joanne, 45, lay asleep in bed. Eddie, still in uniform, enters.

TITLE: "TWELVES HOURS LATER."

Eddie sits and gently holds her hand. Joanne opens her eyes.

JOANNE
Edward, you made it.

EDDIE
Of course.

JOANNE
You look thin. Your suit is big.

Eddie looks at it and laughs.

EDDIE
I'm fine. How are you?

JOANNE
Well, breast cancer. I thought one of you would eventually be the death of me.

EDDIE
(grins)
You're not going to die. You got this, mom. We got this.

Joanne tightens her grip on her son's hand.

JOANNE
I'm so proud of you. A military man! You've heard Rob is back in jail? Stay off his path, Edward.

EDDIE
(smiles)
I got...

INT. MILITARY JAIL - DAY

A jail cell door slams closed. Eddie sits inside it. DS Dirk snickers at Eddie from the outside. Eddie ignores him.

DS DIRK
...THIS, is what stupid looks like.
Are you happy? Was it worth it?
Lost pay for the next three weeks,
spent in the Brigg. For what?

Eddie stares at DS Dirk; he hesitates before speaking.

EDDIE
To be there for the woman I love.

DS DIRK
We don't desert the Core, boy.

EDDIE
I didn't desert anyone. Everyone here is in good hands. Cotton, you, your wife.

DS DIRK
What?

EDDIE
I don't want to hear anyone scream in pain. Maybe pleasure though. Have you ever heard anyone scream in pleasure? Y'now, like a seal.

DS Dirk's hands on the cell bars tighten. He inches closer.

DS DIRK
What did you say?

CORINE, 22, an inner strength that powers her external moves, steps up to DS Dirk with a folder in her hand.

CORINE
Sir, I need you to sign his papers. AND, the dumb boy should not be mentioning our private moments.

Corine eye-daggers Eddie. He's confused, but doesn't blink.

CORINE
Unless he doesn't expect to hear any of those noises again.

DS Dirk's anger morphs to confusion. He studies them.

DS DIRK
You two?

Corine nods. DS Dirk grumbles and storms off. Eddie waits until he's gone before he inches near the bars.

EDDIE
Thank you. Sometimes my mouth --

CORINE
Is not in the right place like your heart? I know. You went AWOL because of your mom.

Their eyes meet and speak. She rubs her finger against his.

CORINE

When you're out of here, maybe you
can find out what sounds I make
instead of his slutty wife.

She winks and saunters away.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe looks at Melosa and smirks. Joe smiles.

JOE

Don't believe it, huh?

ZOE

That she said that? No way.

JOE

It's right here in my notes. His
friends used to call him "The
Sleeper"; the quiet harmless guy
that sat back all night and then
ended up leaving with the girls.

ZOE

So this Corine was a one-nighter?

JOE

They got engaged.

JC

Really?

BATMAN

Just because you were married to
your work, and a case of hand
lotion, you didn't think others
were getting engaged young?

JC

I don't remember you "putting a
ring" on anyone's finger. Ever.

Batman hovers in long, silent moment. As he motions to
answer, a DEGENERATE guy, 34, walks in and sits at the bar.

The Degenerate and Batman connect eyes. Degenerate runs out
the front door. Through the window, Batman watches him get in
his car and screech off. Melosa puts drinks on the table.

MELOSA

What the heck was that?

BATMAN

Someone who knows when I get him,
they'll be a *ring* involved. My
hands and his neck.

Everyone at the table is at a loss for words. Joe moves on.

JOE

Can we stay on point here? Yes,
really. His engagement lasted for a
while. Through the incident.

MELOSA

What incident?

PATRON#1, 28, sitting across the room yells out.

PATRON#1

Miss? Miss! Can we get refills?

MELOSA

Hold on a second!

Joe laughs. Melosa fakes a smile toward Patron #1 before she
intensely focused back on Joe.

MELOSA

What incident?

INT. ENLISTED CLUB - NIGHT

Crowded bar room. Military men and women drink, dance and
party. Eddie sits at the bar eating peanuts with Cotton.

TITLE: "SPRING 1990."

EDDIE (V.O.)

After Boot Camp. I came to Force
Recon School. Wasn't by choice. I
requested Electrician School but
because of my rifle and swim qual
scores, I was a candidate for Force
Recon. This would be the toughest
12 weeks of my life.

Corine serves Eddie and Cotton drinks from behind the bar.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Luckily, I had Corine.

Corine pinches Eddie's ass as she walks over to serve a
table. A HOT BLONDE, 23 at the bar smiles at Eddie. He nods.

COTTON
The Sleeper strikes again!

EDDIE
No, no. Those days are over.

Eddie smiles at Corine. She blows him a kiss back.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Eddie at the range shooting rifle practice.
- Eddie and another recruit bursting out of a bathroom stall in a wrestling move.
- Eddie running laps in the rain in full gear.
- Corine and Eddie huddled on the couch watching TV.

END MONTAGE

INT. MALL - DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Corine holds clothes against her. Eddie half pays attention.

CORINE
What do you think?

EDDIE
Hmmm? Oh. Too big, no?

CORINE
(laughs)
Maybe.

Cotton jogs in and surprises Eddie and Corine.

COTTON
There you are! We got our orders.

Eddie and Cotton discuss as Corine frowns and tightens her grip on the clothes up against her stomach.

EXT. MILITARY PLANE - DAY

A large cargo jet lands on the dessert military base.

TITLE: "KUWAIT. FEBRUARY 1991."

EXT. MILITARY RANGE - DAY

Eddie, Cotton and other military men run shooting drills.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Our Battalion was sent over to Camp Patriot in Kuwait as Operation Desert Shield turned into Operation Desert Storm. During our time in the Sandbox, we mostly did a lot of training exercises.

EXT. MILITARY FRONT GATE - OUTSIDE PERIMETER - DAY

Eddie stands guard. He puts his gun down to take a piss. He turns to find two IRAQI SOLDIERS, 22 and 24. They toss down their guns and drop to their knees with their arms raised.

EDDIE (V.O.)

We frequently came across Iraqi soldiers happily looking to surrender to us. They wouldn't stop thanking us for rescuing them.

EXT. KUWAIT BEACH - DAY

An Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV), a tank-like vehicle, launches from a battleship and floats toward the beachhead.

TITLE: "MARCH 19TH 1991."

Cotton, Eddie, JOHN HOPPER, 24, and three other crew sit strapped in their seats in the heavily armored AAV.

COTTON

45 days! That's how we win a war, baby! Air attack till they crack!

JOHN HOPPER

The poor bastards didn't know what hit them! I'd surrender to us in droves, too.

EDDIE

Then why are we still doing drills?

JOHN HOPPER

That's above our pay grade, Irish.

COTTON

Leave that to the brass to toughen up our ass! Besides, worry about that little lady of yours.

EDDIE

It's all good, bud. She's tough. Tougher than me.

COTTON

True that. I've been thinking. You two have inspired me to ask out this special lady who lives next to me. Known her since we're kids.

EDDIE

Bro, what are you waiting for? The next life? Get on it.

JOHN HOPPER

Do or die, bud. Do or die.

COTTON

Yeah, yeah, I know. I think I was embarrassed that I couldn't treat her right. Y'know? Like legit. With honor. But now I can. I feel it. This is going to be my ye...

FREEZE the image.

EDDIE (V.O.)

To be honest, Cotton may not have said those exact words. But, the reality was...

UNFREEZE the image.

An explosion rips through the hull. The inside of the AAV is emerged in smoke and flames. Screams and sirens fill the air.

EDDIE (V.O.)

... I'd never have the chance to ask him again.

EXT. NAVAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A sterile room dressed in standard white and silver medical equipment. Eddie lays in bed with a neck and back brace on.

TITLE: "NAPLES, ITALY. TWO WEEKS LATER."

EDDIE (V.O.)

By the time I woke two days later, I had fractured two vertebrae in my C-Spine, basically breaking my neck, and fractured three vertebrae in my T-Spine. I had cuts and bruises everywhere. Both surgeries required putting two rods and thirteen pins in my spine. There would be times moving forward when I would lose feeling in my legs and arms for a period of time, but the leg issues eventually subsided.

Eddie looks around at other patients in their beds. He doesn't recognize anyone. Corine comes into the room.

CORINE

Hey, baby. You're awake.

Corine carefully hugs Eddie and softly kisses his lips.

CORINE

When you said you would someday take me to Ireland and Italy, I was thinking something different.

Eddie tries to smile. It hurts. Corine fights a tear back.

CORINE

Save your strength. I'm planning on kicking your ass for making me have to tell your family. They get a bit... excited.

Corine holds his hand. Ed's eyes stray toward the window.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The nurse would tell me that Cotton and Hopper didn't survive the blast. One of the others was in critical condition.

EXT. KUWAIT BEACH - DAY

The Amphibious Assault Vehicle floats toward the beachhead and hits a floating mine. The blast is ferocious.

EDDIE (V.O.)

A floating land mine that was on the Iraqi shore line drifted into Kuwaiti waters and we found it, the hard way. The incident was called a TRA, "Training Related Accident," the equivalent of saying *don't say anything*. We received Certificates of Commendation that listed every thing except what they were really for.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Eddie shivers. He gently pulls his hand from Corine.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I would not mention Cotton's name again for 20 years. The mental pain was far worse than physical anguish.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

Corine pushes Eddie in his wheelchair. He's dazed.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I was Medically Discharged and put on the Temporary Disability Retirement List. This is where my disability pay began.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A small, cluttered apartment with unopened boxes and bags. Eddie lays propped on the couch. He pops pills from bottles.

TITLE: OCTOBER 1991."

EDDIE (V.O.)

It was also where my drug habit began. Morphine was mostly in the hospitals, then started the Vicodin, Percocet and Oxy Contin.

Corine walks through the front door. She's exhausted. She tosses her bag and waitress name tag on the table. Eddie barely acknowledges her. She looks away and stares outside.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Eddie lays in bed. He tosses restlessly. The night stand holds multiple pill bottles. Corine cries from the door.

EDDIE (V.O.)

After she left me, all I got was a letter telling me I was a mess. How she tried but couldn't help me. That I wasn't letting her in. It would take time to get over that.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

Eddie sits and reads a letter. He holds a sonogram picture.

EDDIE (V.O.)

What I couldn't get over was her aborting our child. Our child that I didn't know she was carrying. She said my family convinced her I could not change. That we'd be better off.

Eddie drops the picture and puts his head down on the table.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe surveys the waitresses, JC and Batman. They are stunned.

JOE

That was my reaction too.

JC

I didn't know. He never --

JOE

Told us? Yes. Always quiet.

An uncomfortable silence dwells too long. Melosa quietly picks up the empty glasses.

MELOSA

So, I should...

She avoids further eye contact and leaves. Batman looks back.

BATMAN

Well, you just added another way to make women run away uncomfortably from you, besides your looks.

JC
Ed with kids back then? Not good.

BATMAN
What do you know about kids? If you're not selling them Beanie Babies online, they may as well be midgets without jobs.

JC
(mumbles)
It's Baby Yodas. Beanie Babies were 25 years ago.

BATMAN
Whatever.

JC
You should talk? I do see your occasional rants on Facebook about people. Didn't you find out your last girlfriend was also selling something of hers online?

Batman seethes. Joe diverts his eyes. Batman grabs the deck of cards, shuffles and bangs them hard on the table.

BATMAN
Hearts. A quarter a point.

Joe notices JC's smirk fade away. JC rises from the stool.

JC
Give me a minute. The hot wing sauce was effective.

JC walks toward the rest room. Zoe plops on the stool next to Batman. She zips on a sweatshirt and places her pocketbook on the table. Melosa walks over with drink refills.

MELOSA
What are you... Your shift is over?

ZOE
Yes. Now I need to meet this Ed. It's starting to snow out there anyway. I told my boyfriend to get me in a half hour. You guys mind?

Joe and Batman shrug. Zoe grins before she squints at Joe.

ZOE

And either Ed is that interesting a character or you're that good a storyteller.

Joe laughs but doesn't get a moment to soak in the adulation.

BATMAN

Or option #3: None of the above.

JC's phone vibrates on the table. Batman looks down at the incoming text on it.

BATMAN

What the fuck? He *IS* still selling Beanie Babies! Some woman is nasty texting him on shipping of a hippo!

ZOE

So what's the story with him? JC?

MELOSA

Girl, you really should...

ZOE

Shush! I'm off the clock. So, really. Spill it. Before he returns.

JOE

Well, no pressure, eh? Where to start? He's always been kind of a quiet guy. Listens more than he speaks. Kind of cerebral.

ZOE

I'm bored already.

JOE

Well, I really haven't prepped --

BATMAN

Stop talking. I'll share a few.

JOE

Uh, OK. Go for it.

Zoe turns her stool sideways toward Batman. She's ready.

BATMAN

He's a cock.

Batman grabs a pair of wings and munches as if there's no one else at the table. Zoe and Joe look at each other.

ZOE

That's it?!

JOE

Rich. You probably could re-write the Bible as a bumper sticker.

BATMAN

What? That's my summary. You want more details? Fine. Let's go all the way back to JC's origin story.

INT. HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

TITLE: "MATERNITY WARD VIEWING AREA, 1970."

NEWBORN EDWARD sleeps peacefully wrapped in a blanket. His eyes pop open when the Nurse places a SCREAMING NEWBORN next to him. It's now NEWBORN JC, with slicked back dark baby hair, holding a Beanie Baby hippo.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

TITLE: "LITTLE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP, 1979."

Edward, 8, plays right field.

EDWARD

Let's go! Johnny's no hitter!

Jackie snarls. The batter hits a high fly towards Edward. He backs up near the fence and just as he's about to catch it, Jackie grabs a stick off the floor and shoves it through the fence into Edward's back. The ball hits him in the head.

Jackie punches him square in the face. He goes down. Hard.

JACKIE

That's my brother, asshole!

Jackie gives a thumb's up to the batter after he crosses home plate and tosses his helmet in celebration. It's JC with his immovable slicked hair. He removes his Iphone and texts Jackie a "THANKS, SIS!"

EXT. MILITARY FRONT GATE - OUTSIDE PERIMETER - DAY

Eddie stands guard. He puts his gun down to take a piss. He turns to find two IRAQI SOLDIERS, 22 and 24. They toss down their guns and drop to their knees with their arms raised.

One of the Soldiers is now JC, who tosses off his helmet and waves his long flowing black hair and overgrown beard.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe squints at Batman. Her mouth wide. Joe hides a smile.

ZOE
Wait! Wait! Wait!

Batman nonchalantly eats his wings.

BATMAN
What? Boring still?

ZOE
None of that happened!

BATMAN
Is that so? Prove it.

ZOE
Well, MAYBE they were born on the same day. But there were no Beanie Babies back then.

BATMAN
A man with a vision. A hippo vision.

ZOE
MAYBE he's Jackie's brother, but there were no iPhones back then!

BATMAN
Steve Jobs or JC? You decide.

ZOE
And now an Iraqi soldier? With hair like Jesus? Really?

Batman eyes Joe as Zoe grabs her Iphone and furiously types.

BATMAN
Too much?

JOE
Lil bit. You were rolling though.

Batman shrugs and de-bones four more wings. Zoe shoves her Iphone up towards Joe and Batman.

ZOE

Here we go. Thank you, Google.
"John Cardinale arrested for
running drug smuggling operation
out of local pizza establishment!"

Batman stops in mid-chew. Joe picks his phone up and starts typing. Zoe smiles.

ZOE

Well, looks like the smartasses
aren't as smart as they think.

JC (O.S.)

Or look.

Joe, Batman and Zoe all study JC's return to the table. He gently sips and sips his soda. Zoe raises her phone.

ZOE

So... I kind of Googled your name
and Beanie Babies and... Yeah.

JOE

Any updates you'd like to share
over the last six years? I don't
get much local New York news down
in Georgia.

ZOE

Wait, you live in Georgia?

JOE

Ten years.

ZOE

You all are just full of surprises.

BATMAN

Yeah, but I think we may have a
winner. JC? Want to fill in a few
blanks or do we all bury our heads
in our phones like these Gen Zers.

ZOE

Hey.

JC

Yes. I was wondering if any of you
saw that story. Question answered.

BATMAN

I was going to make up a final story that you were cell-mates with Ed, but I may have been spot on.

JC

Anyway...

INT. JC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A house filled with all types of products; dolls, sports memorabilia, Video games, blenders, livestock.

TITLE: "TWO YEARS EARLIER."

JC (V.O.)

It's no secret I've occasionally sold a few things here and there.

JC walks through the rooms with a clipboard checking off items. Shelves stacked with items block windows. Exotic fish swim in the sink. A boa slithers on the chandelier.

JC (V.O.)

I was running into some rising costs with shipping, so I came across an opportunity to lower it.

INT. PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

A rundown kitchen area has a basement door next to the large ovens. BOBBY, 48, shady looking in the sunlight, flips dough in the air as JC walks in and nods. JC enters the basement.

JC (V.O.)

A friend was shipping a lot of stuff to similar locations, so we figured to share the load. And a little more than I knew about.

INT. PIZZA PLACE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

JC and Bobby load hundreds of Beanie Babies and merchandise into pizza dough tins and load on a backed-up truck.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Batman breaks out laughing.

BATMAN

Stop! Your buddy was also loading
up your Beanie Babies with cocaine!

Joe and Zoe don't say a word before they bust out laughing.
None of them can stop. JC flusters to speak.

JC

And fireworks. A few guns...

INT. JC'S HOUSE - NIGHT

JC sleeps on his couch in a red Japanese robe with a white
facial scrub on his face. Four FBI men kick in his doors.

JC jumps up and runs through his cluttered house. The FBI
tackle him as the exotic fish jump up and down in the sink.

INT. POLICE INTEROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

JC sits handcuffed in his robe as the FBI AGENT, 32, throws
down a Beanie Baby elephant. Its stomach is cut open and
cocaine flies out of it. JC's facial cream runs with sweat.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe, Batman and Zoe smile at JC, who maintains composure.

JC (V.O.)

The investigation proved out that I
didn't know what was going on. They
did shut the pizza place down.

JOE

Like I always say, you can't make
this stuff up. It has to happen to
be believable. Well, somewhat.

BATMAN

Speaking of which, keep going with
the hoodlum. He's obviously hung up
knocking over a bunch of gas marts.

Zoe grimaces at Batman's comment. Joe opens his notebook.

JOE

Don't... say that. So, we just had
Ed coming home from California
after his break-up with Corine.

JOE(cont'd)

In an interest of time, I'm going to skip some of the redundant stuff. Mainly, the partying, drugs, one-night stands and odd jobs.

BATMAN

Just give us the best of the heists before the banks.

JOE

Fine. So, we've all been on the Long Island Railroad. Here's a story that you'll now remember every time you ride it.

INT. LIRR STATION - LOBBY - NIGHT

Aged Marble and wood structure, dimly lit with a few passengers. Eddie, 25, stands in the back entrance shadows.

TITLE: "LIRR STATION HEWLETT NY, 1995."

EDDIE (V.O.)

The years were rough since I left California and Corine behind. I kept making money one way or another. This caper would have fallen under "another."

FRANKIE FONTANE, 28, never met a man he didn't want to rob, stands by the bathroom doors. STEVE, 26, mellow as a lazy Sunday morning because he didn't know it was a Thursday, works the ticket booth. Steve exits and walks to bathroom.

INT. LIRR STATION - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Steve enters the toilet stall. Frankie enters the bathroom and uses the sink. Eddie strolls in and uses the other sink.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Although I had a decent job at Avis and was about to get engaged to Rosa, I still had a need for greed.

Steve exits the stall moves to leave. Eddie stands in front of him. Frankie steps behind and puts a Taser to his neck.

FRANKIE

Nice and slow, ticket boy.

Steve is horrified. He gulps and nods. They all exit.

INT. LIRR STATION - TICKET BOOTH - NIGHT

Steve empties the safe into Frankie's bag. Eddie is lookout.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The gig was pretty easy. Most riders bought their new monthly ticket in cash on the last day of the month. This was well before everything went on credit cards.

They tie Steve's hands behind his back and gag his mouth.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The payout was fantastic. Thirty grand split three ways.

Steve smiles underneath his gag.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Steve was magnificent. Other than a brief inquiry, they let him off with a short mandatory suspension.

As Eddie and Frank quickly exit the station, Eddie does a double look at the poster of most wanted criminals on the bulletin board. Frankie's wanted picture is in the middle.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe notices little reaction from JC, Batman and Zoe.

JOE

Nothing? Getting boring? Normal?

BATMAN

Well, you set a bar. Now raise it.

JOE

I see. Noted.

BATMAN

Get to Swissair, when we met him.

JOE

Fine. Hang on, that's on page...

INT. SWISSAIR BUILDING - DAY

Joe, 28, walks into a basement level cubical office. Large windows show little daylight of the building on a hill.

DENISE, 38, this job the highlight of her day, grins to Joe.

DENISE

First day! Welcome to the pit. Let me show you around.

Joe follows Denise over to GERRY, 42, the living embodiment of George Costanza, and TOM C, 34, an attitude wrapped in an olive oil voice. TOM C nods. Gerry shakes Joe's hand.

GERRY

Welcome to the party! There's always room for one more.

They turn back to their computers as Denise leads Joe away.

FREEZE THE SCREEN

JOE (V.O.)

So, a little something about them.

INT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT - DELI - DAY

Joe and Gerry stand in the ordering line. AMWAY GUY, 43 and PROSPECT GUY, 32, are in front of Joe and Gerry.

AMWAY GUY

You can't lose. They make money for you. It's a sure thing. Trust me.

PROSPECT GUY

I... don't know. It sounds strange.

Gerry, brimming with a grin, leans and whispers to Joe.

GERRY

Listen close. He's one of us.

Joe is baffled. He looks at the two men and back at Gerry.

JOE (V.O.)

That's when I learned Gerry was part of the Amway cult. So, it was never officially named that, but pick a scheme name; pyramid, etc.

Gerry winks at Amway Guy, who nods back at Gerry.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Dingy, tacky Karaoke bar with a spattering of patrons. The DJ, 48, cringes and takes the microphone from a drunk singer.

DJ

Next up, Tom C. Tom C.

Tom C walks up and hands the DJ his own CD. He nods to Joe who sighs and turns a battery operated spotlight on Tom C.

JOE (V.O.)

When I travelled with Tom C, he took us to every, and I mean every, Karaoke bar in any state. He had his own music and effects.

Tom C breaks into a thunderous rendition of a Sinatra song.

JOE (V.O.)

He wasn't really trying to make it big. He just enjoyed singing. He already had a wife and kid at home and since he used to joke the only time she had sex with him was when he bought her a piece of furniture, they would eventually refurnish the entire house. Twice.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe waves her hand in Joe's face. It snaps his flow.

ZOE

Stop! Stop! Who cares about these people? Where's the bank robber?

JOE

Well, OK. I was setting the tone...

BATMAN

Tone? Her generation has the attention span of this spoon.

Joe notices Zoe about to yell at Batman. He intercedes.

JOE

So, I hated Ed when we first met.

ZOE
Really? Why?

JOE
I thought he was a total ass.

INT. SWISSAIR BUILDING - DAY

Joe sits at his cubicle desk and opens an envelope.

EDDIE (O.S.)
I make fifty cents more an hour.

Joe spins his chair around and sees Ed, 26, drop his travel bag on the next desk. Ed plops down in the seat. Joe's irked.

JOE
Excuse me?

EDDIE
An hour. Fifty cents more than you.

Ed is expressionless until he grins and puts out his hand.

EDDIE
Ed Waller. Welcome aboard.

Ed spins around and types on his computer. Joe seethes.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe smirks at his notes. Batman laughs.

JOE
Eddie was working in L.A the week I started. That was my intro to him.

BATMAN
That's funny. And ironic since he would eventually make fifty cents, a day, in prison.

JC
Do they still make license plates?

BATMAN
Why do you care? You can't sneak cocaine in them, Geisha boy.

JOE
Guys. One story at a time. So,
about a week after that intro...

INT. NASSAU COLOSSEUM - NIGHT

NY Islanders hockey game in progress. Joe sits with his wife AMY, 25, no agenda in life other than wishing puppies were people and vice versa. Amy is much pregnant.

AMY
So you don't like the job? Is it
the work or the people?

JOE
The work is OK. The people are
fine. My partner is that douche I
told you about.

AMY
Can you stop judging everyone. Give
people a chance. Is he nice at
least? What does he look like?

Joe stares upward at the Jumbotron screen.

JOE
Uh, see for yourself.

Joe points up. The Jumbotron shows Eddie proposing to ROSA, 25, on his knees handing her a ring. Amy can't believe it.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe slaps the table. JC spills his drink.

ZOE
Get out!

JC
No, that happened, I remember.

Zoe skeptically looks at JC, then at Batman.

BATMAN
Don't look at me. I never worked
with them. But I kind of remember.

ZOE
Crazy. So you liked him after that?

JOE

No. Not until he broke into my car.

Zoe tilts her head like a confused puppy. Joe smiles.

INT. SWISSAIR BUILDING - DAY

Eddie, Joe and Gerry sit at their desks. Eddie rises and powers off his computer.

EDDIE

I'm out! Rosa was so happy at the game last night and now dinner with her parents. If I don't leave now, the traffic gets insane. Her dad already thinks I'm a bum.

JOE

(mutters)

I like her dad already.

Eddie motions a fake incapacitating jab at Joe's neck.

EDDIE

What's that? I can't hear you now?

Joe glares back. Eddie laughs and grabs his backpack and heads out the door. Joe's cell phone rings. He answers.

JOE

Hey, hon. Are you home... What? Really? Great. No, I'm coming.

Joe sighs and rises. Gerry looks over from his desk.

GERRY

Is she OK?

JOE

She's upset. She locked her keys in the car. She's more upset that she's pregnant and locked her keys in the car. I'll have to go wait with her for AAA. Two hours.

Joe rubs his eyes. Eddie watches from near the door.

EXT. FACTORY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A vacant lot save for Amy's car. She leans against its door and rubs her big belly. Joe pulls up and exits his vehicle.

JOE
Did AAA call back yet?

Amy shakes her head and pouts. Joe hugs her as a car stops. Ed pops out with a metal SlimJim and a smile.

JOE
What are you doing here?

EDDIE
You called AAA, right? Well, I'm All Access Eddie.

JOE
That doesn't even make sense.

EDDIE
What are you? A writer? Geez.

Eddie puts his hand out as Amy reciprocates.

EDDIE
Hello, Miss Amy. I'm Ed. Very nice meeting you.

Amy looks at Joe, who shrugs. She smiles.

AMY
Nice to meet you. Are you sure --

EDDIE
No worries. If you don't mind?

Amy steps aside as Eddie works the SlimJim in the window frame. It doesn't pop instantly, but Eddie stays on it. Joe stares in the distance at the red tail lights on the highway.

JOE
Uh, the traffic is really building. You're going to be late for dinner.

Eddie sweats in the cold winter air.

EDDIE
You guys should wait in your car. Keep her warm, bud.

Joe looks at Eddie with a newfound respect. They each nod.

EDDIE
I got this.

INT. SWISSAIR BUILDING - OFFICE - DAY

Ed and Joe sit at their desks working as TOM "TWEETY" WIRTH, 48, brilliant Swiss-German with the communication skills of a toilet plunger, walks by inspecting his workers.

TITLE: "ONE MONTH LATER."

As soon as Tweety enters his office, Ed and Joe click their computers back to a Hearts video card game.

JOE (V.O.)

After that, Ed and I were good. We found others to torture.

EDDIE

Ready? Listen for it.

JOE

Let it rip.

Eddie clicks his mouse and the sound of glass breaking and a woman's giggle is heard. Eddie raises his hand to his ear.

EDDIE

Wait for it...

A THUMP is heard in the distance, followed by...

JC (O.S.)

Son of a bitch!

JC, 31, angrily scurries from out of the hallway. Tweety's door flies open. He's livid. Joe and Ed click their screens.

JOE (V.O.)

Our boss, nicknamed Tweety, like the bird in the Loony Tunes cartoons, hated that we played cards during work. JC hated us more for hitting him with the Queen in our Hearts game all the time, but the worst thing I remember Eddie doing to JC was around "Peace."

INT. SWISSAIR - JC'S BACK ROOM - DAY

JC frantically rummages through his desk drawers and cabinets. Eddie and Joe walk by and then turn in.

JOE
Lose something?

EDDIE
Besides your temper every time we
spank you in cards.

JC
My Peace beanie. I had it in my
drawer with the others.

EDDIE
The multi-color one?

JC
Yes! Did you see it?

EDDIE
Uhh...

QUICK FLASHBACK

EXT. SWISSAIR BUILDING - SIDE LOT - DAY

Eddie throws a colorful Beanie Peace Bear to a German
Shepard. Tweety smiles as the dog viciously rips it up.

BACK TO JC'S OFFICE

JC lunges for Eddie's throat. FREEZE the scene.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe looks at JC, who waves his finger at her.

JC
No. No, I didn't try to choke him.

JOE
Hello? I had to separate you two.

JC
IF I did that, he would have
deserved it. I told him to grab a
used one for the dog out of the
other drawer. Not the scarce one.

Zoe rolls her eyes. Joe winks at her.

ZOE

Anyway... that's where your card games started? At work?

JOE

Well, yes. Tom C was the fourth player in the office. Then at night, we took it to the Hooter's a few town over where Batman joined.

ZOE

So for the last twenty five years--

BATMAN

We put you young ladies through college while sitting in Hooters.

Melosa drops off a round of refills.

MELOSA

And we thank you for your business!

She gives Zoe the "raised eye." Zoe sighs.

ZOE

Right, we do. So, what else at Swissair? Did Ed crash a plane?

JC stops biting a wing and syncs Joe's raised eye.

JOE

Well...

EXT. SKYLINE - NIGHT

SWISSAIR Flight 111 soars at a high altitude. It explodes.

IN. SWISSAIR BUILDING - OFFICE - NIGHT

Joe bursts in the doors. Jerry, Tom C, JC, Denise, Tweety and six other workers hastily man their phones.

TITLE: "SWISSAIR, MELVILLE NY. SEPTEMBER 2ND 1998. MIDNIGHT."

JOE

What the hell happened?

Gerry slams his phone down. Denise drops paper as she passes.

GERRY

Flight 111 to Geneva went down over Nova Scotia an hour ago. There were no survivors.

Joe looks at Ed's empty chair. Gerry looks at Joe.

GERRY

Where is he? I called him. A lot.

As everyone scurries in the office, Joe stares at Ed's chair.

JOE (V.O.)

There were only two flights a day that went back and forth to Geneva. We went often for training. On this particular day, Eddie was flying stand-by. On Flight 111.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Melosa and Zoe are baffled. Batman smiles.

BATMAN

Well, obviously he didn't go down with the plane. Or did he?

The waitresses study Batman's face. They turn back to Joe.

JOE

Well, yes. Obviously he didn't. Where was he? Not so obvious.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - TERMINAL 4 GATE - NIGHT

Investigators and police talk to Swissair workers at the Gate for Flight 111. A long hallway runs next to it.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - TERMINAL 4 - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The broom closet door opens. A STEWARDESS, 26, and Eddie step out quietly as they adjust their clothes. She kisses him.

EDDIE

Sorry I made you miss your flight.

STEWARDESS

(giggles)

It's not the first time. It happens. I'm sorry you missed yours.

EDDIE

Ah, I'm standby. I'll catch the next one. No big deal.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe furiously types on her phone. Joe shuts his book.

ZOE

I can't... So the flight exploding is obviously true... But... Ugh! I can't disprove he was supposed to be on that flight!

JC

You cannot. But we were there in the office that night. We didn't see Ed till the next day.

ZOE

Yes, but he would have had to register for the flight, right?

JOE

For Standby? No, We could just go.

Zoe stops typing. She drops her phone on the table.

ZOE

I just... Whatever. Just, whatever.

Batman laughs heartily.

BATMAN

See? Stay in school!

ZOE

What? I'll graduate college in May, with honors, you dope.

JOE

Oh, really? What's your Major?

Zoe's devious grin brings it full circle.

ZOE

Journalism.

JOE

Of course it is. Well, have at it.

The restaurant lights flicker. Joe looks out the window. His visibility is hampered by the blowing snow, yet he squints to see Eddie standing in the parking lot, staring back at Joe.

Inside, Melosa stands in the middle of the crowded tables on a chair. She waves her arms to gather everyone's attention.

MELOSA

Folks. Folks! Everything is OK.
This happens with a lot of storms.

Joe glances back out the window. Eddie is not there. Pedro pulls two other chairs next to the chair Melosa's on.

MELOSA

While I have your attention, I'd like to ask the two birthday guys to join me up here.

People sporadically clap and BIRTHDAY GUY #1, 24, and BIRTHDAY GUY #2, 26, reluctantly walk over from separate tables and get on the chairs. Melosa pats both their backs.

MELOSA

Thank you, boys. And your buddies for sharing the news. If I can have the other waitresses join me.

Four Hooters waitresses come over from their tables. Melosa and the other waitresses start clapping.

BATMAN

Aren't you joining them?

ZOE

Nope. Off duty.

The waitresses all start singing a bad Happy Birthday song. As they sing and clap, Melosa takes a hot dog and shoves it in BIRTHDAY GUY #1's mouth. People laugh. Joe doesn't.

JOE

Oh, no.

BATMAN

They aren't stupid enough to start this back up, are they?

ZOE

What's wrong? We just started this bit this month.

Joe looks around at different tables. He spots a table near the door with four guys in their twenties. He nods to Batman.

JOE
Over there. By the door.

ZOE
What's going on?

JOE
Wait for it.

Birthday Guy #1 angrily pulls the hot dog out of his mouth and tries to shove it in Birthday Guy #2's mouth. Fists fly.

Melosa screams as the guys fall off the chair fighting. Customers get anxious. The table of four guys jump from their chairs and run out of the door. Pedro separates the fighters.

PEDRO
Stop! Now!

As order is restored, the tail lights of a car is seen through the window as it fishtails away in the snow.

ZOE
What just happened?!

Joe calmly eats his curly fries. Batman shuffles the cards.

Joe directs their attention to Pedro, who calmly talks to the fighters. Melosa is flustered.

JOE
The whole thing was a scam. I guarantee those two "birthday boys" know each other, as well as the table of four that just skipped out on their big bill. They'll all split the smaller checks later.

ZOE
How can you possibly know that?

BATMAN
It was an Eddie scam in '98.

Zoe studies Pedro. She returns her view to Joe and Batman.

ZOE
You're all evil, aren't you?

JOE
It's all about perspective.

ZOE
OK, can you wrap this up, before Ed shows. Or my boyfriend. Either way.

JOE
Wow. You're asking me to sum up the last twenty plus years quickly?

BATMAN
Come on, Hemingway. Make magic.

Joe flips through the next few pages and shrugs. He sighs.

JOE
Well, OK. So, I had moved on from Swissair in 2000. That didn't do anything to stop our friendship or card games. We played anywhere.

EXT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe, JC, Batman and Eddie, 30s, stand around a car hood playing cards. A HOOTERS WAITRESS walks out of Hooter's.

TITLE: " HOOTERS, EAST MEADOW NY. 2000. MIDNIGHT."

HOOTERS WAITRESS
Oh my God! Really? Four hours inside wasn't enough?

She shakes her head and walks to her car. Eddie's excited.

EDDIE
C'mon! I'm due!

Ed slams a card down as the Hooter's building lights go dark.

JOE (V.O.)
I'd say that at this point, after a string of bad relationships, Ed's drug use started to run rampant.

MONTAGE BEGINS

- Ed sits on a couch. In succession, he looks more drugged as
- Rosa slams the front door on the way out of the apartment
- Tyra slams the front door on the way out of the apartment

- Coleen slams the front door on the way out of the apartment

JOE (V.O.)
He managed to function as if he
wasn't high, but signs were there.

INT. MOHEGAN SUN ARENA - INDOOR FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Practice squads of big, football players. They line up for a play. Ed, 33, plays Cornerback against WIDE RECEIVER, 26.

TITLE: MOHEGAN SUN ARENA FOOTBALL LEAGUE PRACTICE, 2004."

Steve, 32, drunk, claps from the sidelines.

STEVE
Let's go, Waller! Take him down!

The ball is snapped. Ed is badly beaten off the line. The Wide Receiver looks back and laughs at Ed on the turf.

EDDIE (V.O.)
Even for Arena football, who knew
these 300 pound monsters ran as
quick as me. It was a mess.

EXT. MOHEGAN SUN ARENA - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Steve sits and laughs on the hood of a Jeep. Ed hobbles over.

STEVE
So I'm guessing I won't be
introducing you at the Hall
of Fame ceremony?

Ed opens an envelope of cash. He unlocks the Jeep door.

EDDIE
Let's hit the local bar. They love
players. Any players.

EXT. BAR - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Neon spectacle of lights above a wooden structure. Music booms. Cars and motorcycles fill the lot. The Jeep rocks as NATASHA, 25, wildly has sex on top of Ed. He's in pain.

EDDIE (V.O.)

One of the groupies was named
Natasha, but she pointed out that
Natasha backwards was "Ah Satan"
and I had to yell that I was
screwing Satan the whole time.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe fake gags. Batman laughs while JC types on his phone. Joe holds up his notebook to her.

JOE

I'm just relaying the story. See?

ZOE

Gross. Just gross.

JOE

We're just about at the end of his
dating spree. So, in late 2004...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Steve and Ed are sprawled out on couches. Drugs and alcohol are on the filthy table. Ed's cell-phone rings.

TITLE: "LONG ISLAND, NY. DECEMBER 12 2004."

EDDIE

Yo! What? I'm off. No, I can't...
No. OK. OK! Fine. Bye.

Ed rubs his eyes and stands up. He wobbles but makes it to the coffee pot. Steve squints at Eddie's movements.

EDDIE

I've got work. Someone called out
and they need me to cover.

STEVE

Dude, don't go. I need you to hang.

EDDIE

Bro, I've already called out
because of you twice this week. I
need this job. Elaine will kick me
out if I lose it. You good?

Steve can barely open both eyes. He's wobbles a thumb's up.

STEVE
Yeah. I got this.

Eddie sips coffee. He watches Steve drool and fall asleep.

INT. 1-800 FLOWERS - HELP DESK ROOM - NIGHT

A row of cubicles sit empty other than Ed's messy encasement. He wears a headset and guzzles coffee. His cell-phone buzzes.

INT. CEMETERY - DAY

Eddie stands in his suit with sunglasses. He's surrounded by a few older people. Some cry, others stare at their phones. Eddie touches the casket as a tear rolls down his eye.

EDDIE (V.O.)
Within two hours of my leaving,
Steve OD'ed. Whether my staying
with him would have just prolonged
the inevitable is irrelevant. I did
little to help him. Or myself.

EXT. MCDONALDS - NIGHT

MARYJO WALLER, 26, more attitude than altitude in her tiny frame, walks out of the restaurant and gets into Ed's car.

INT. ED'S CAR - NIGHT

Eddie's exhausted. MaryJo, in uniform, shuts the door and lights up a cigarette. Ed drives away.

EDDIE (V.O.)
Within days of saying goodbye to
Steve, I had to say goodbye to my
little sister, Mary-Jo. In a
different way.

EXT. MCDONALDS - NIGHT

MaryJo sits in a car and smokes a cigarette. She puts it out and pulls a mask over her head as ROBBER #1, 35, and ROBBER #2, 37, run out of McDonalds with guns and masks on.

They jump in MaryJo's car as she screeches away.

EDDIE (V.O.)
 My sister had the bright idea to
 rob the place she worked at with
 two other morons. With her own car.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Elaine, 40, and Eddie stand at the station-house counter. They talk to officers as two plainclothes detectives walk MaryJo and the Robbers by in handcuffs.

EDDIE (V.O.)
 They nailed her as the get-away
 driver. Which was ironic, because I
 had to pick her up half the time
 when her car was broke.

Elaine grips Ed's arm. MaryJo's eyes connect with Eddie. She mouths "I got this" to him. He lowers his head.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

A sterile, facility. A nurse walks over and shakes Ed's hand.

TITLE: "LONG ISLAND RECOVERY CENTER, JANUARY 2005."

EDDIE (V.O.)
 That's when I knew I had to clean
 myself up. I would be 35 and had
 little to show for it. No wife, no
 kids and a dead-end job.

Eddie looks at Rob, 44, who smiles and displays a thumb's up.

EDDIE
 After a life like mine, my brother
 Rob had turned it around with the
 love of a good woman. There was no
 reason I couldn't do the same.

Ed nods and lifts his duffle bag. He follows the nurse.

EXT. LONG ISLAND RECOVERY CENTER - DAY

Ed walks out with his duffle bag and grins. He looks healthy.

TITLE: "THREE MONTHS LATER."

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Standard java shop. Ed sips as he types on his laptop.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I was tired of the one-night hook-ups. I decided to try something different in the Yahoo Personals.

Jackie, 34, walks in and sees Ed. He looks up in surprise. They both smile and she sits down next to him. They chat.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Almost 18 years to the day of last seeing her as we graduated High School, Jackie and I were married months later in 2006.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - BACK LOT - DAY

A Gazebo sits on grass, landscaped by trees. The MAYOR, 38, marries Ed and Jackie, surrounded by Rob and their families.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Since she was divorced with two small kids, we skipped the big catered affair and the Mayor of Ashroken married us behind his office. There was a nice gazebo.

INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT - DAY

Elaine, 41, comes down the stairs and looks at Ed and Jackie each holding a baby. JT, 10 and JULIANNE, 7, sit on the floor playing video games. Elaine shakes her head.

TITLE: "OCTOBER 2007."

EDDIE (V.O.)

By the time the twins were born, I had run out of space and patience living in Elaine's basement. We appreciated her help, but this was no way for us to live.

Ed lifts up a magazine that shows Charlotte, NC on the cover.

EXT. CONDO COMPLEX - DAY

Three story apartment-style housing amid trees and a lake.

TITLE: " CHARLOTTE NORTH CAROLINA, 2008."

EDDIE (V.O.)

The Help Desk gig at IVC let me transfer to Charlotte as a remote employee. It was the right move.

INT. CONDO - DAY

Newly furnished apartment. Jackie cooks breakfast. JT and Julianne walk out holding schoolbooks. Ed wears a headset.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The place and area was great. Everything was cheaper and for once, we felt like we won lotto.

BELLA, 1, cries in her crib. Ed motions to Jackie, who points to her smoking frying pan. Ed motions to his headset as Jackie rolls her eyes and turns away. Ed angrily rises.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The problem with working remotely thought was doing double duty as sitter when Jackie tuned me out.

Ed talks on his headset as he leans over and lifts Bella out. She smacks his headset off. He tries to catch it and continue the call, but hurts his back. He drops her back in the crib.

EDDIE

Arrgh! Son of a bitch!
(in headset)
No! Not you guys!

INT. VETERAN AFFAIRS (V.A) HOSPITAL -DAY

Drab medical room. Ed wears a hospital gown as he speaks with DOC, 54, who points at a hanging X-RAY.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Unfortunately, working remotely with twin infants and a less than tolerant wife for their crying, left me re-injuring my back. The PTSD had surfaced.

The doc hands Ed two vials of drugs and pats his shoulder.

EDDIE (V.O.)
The V.A Doc prescribed some pills.
That, was the beginning of the end.

INT. CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ed and Jackie scream at each other as the twins cry in the crib. Julianne turns away and puts on headphones. JT leaves.

EDDIE (V.O.)
Being alone in another state,
without any friends and family to
give us our distance from each
other, was, well... bad.

INT. CONDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ed slams the door shut and pops a handful of pills. He washes it down with a beer can on his dresser and lays on the bed.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Batman spits out a chunk of wing bone. JC cringes and moves his soda closer to his body.

BATMAN
Hang on, now I remember this part.
This is when they came to Atlanta
to visit you, Amy and the kids?

JOE
Correct.

BATMAN
(to Zoe)
You'll love this cluster fuck.

Zoe furrows her brow. She waves the story on.

JOE
Well, we invited them over. It's
about a three and a half hour
drive. So, they're about thirty
miles away when I get a call...

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Ed and Jackie stand next to their minivan full of kids. The minivan is at a gas pump. Joe, 42, stops his car and exits.

TITLE: " ATHENS, GEORGIA 2010."

Joe kisses Jackie, fist bumps Ed. Waves to the kids.

JOE

What now?

JACKIE

It just died! Right after Ed put gas in, so it's not that.

EDDIE

Rode fine here. Battery looks good.

Joe stares at the minivan for a long minute. He flips and squints at the gas pump before he shrugs.

JOE

It's not like you put Diesel in it.

EDDIE

(scoffs)

No. You dick.

Joe pops the hood and tinkers. Ed turns and squints at the gas pump. He slowly nods his head before he parses his lips.

EDDIE

I put Diesel in.

Joe raises his head from under the hood.

JOE

No! You couldn't have. The nozzle is bigger and doesn't fit in a regular car. It's idiot-proof.

Ed remains stoic. He thrusts his shoulder forward.

EDDIE

Yeah. I know. I had to put some shoulder into it.

Jackie and Joe glance at each other. They bust out laughing.

JOE

Oh, you'll never live this down.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Batman laughs. JC grins and sips his soda.

JC
That's when he earned "Diesel."

ZOE
Even I wouldn't do that.

JOE
I did talk to him back at my house.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe and Ed sit and drink on the deck. Amy and Jackie are visible cooking in the kitchen through the window.

JOE
Are you OK?

EDDIE
Living the dream, bro.

JOE
One nightmare at a time? You OK?

EDDIE
Try driving hours with five kids.

JOE
Counting Jackie in there, huh?

EDDIE
Charlotte is nice, but she's
killing me. I've got no space. No
outs. No cards.

JOE
I hear you. The job is good? You've
got a lot of mouths now.

EDDIE
We're getting by.

JOE
That doesn't cut it. You're not
single anymore. Time to step up.

Ed stares at Joe before reaching out to clink beer bottles.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe is fixated at the falling snow through the window.

JOE

That was the last time I saw him.

JC types on his phone. Batman glances at the raised TV.

JC

Damn. My shipping orders are delayed with the storm.

BATMAN

They still haven't caught the gas station thief. And where's Diesel?

JC walks away and talks on his Iphone.

BATMAN

Coincidence? I think not.

Joe watches the TV.

JOE

Anyway, they left and went back to Charlotte. Two weeks later, the seizures started.

ZOE

Seizures?

INT. CONDO - BEDROOM - DAY

Ed lays asleep on a bed until he bursts awake. His back retches and he screams. Jackie rushes into the room.

INT. HOSPITAL - E.R HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nurses rush Ed down the hall on a gurney. Jackie runs behind.

EDDIE (V.O.)

The first seizure was bad. I snapped two ribs in my sleep and almost bit my tongue off.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

Ed sits in the driver's seat. Jackie is seated next to him. They are parked at a rest stop off the highway. Ed leans in the back and buckles Bella in her car seat. He passes out.

EXT. MINI-VAN - DAY

Ed wakes on the parking lot concrete. The EMT and State Troopers are above his face. Jackie is in panic mode.

TITLE: "2012."

EDDIE (V.O.)

After the second one, we moved back to New York. The V.A. doctors in Charlotte had no idea why I was having the seizures. Plus, I had to go on disability and Jackie needed to go back to her old New York job.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY

Elaine stands on the steps. She stares at Ed as he lays on the couch asleep. Jackie shuffles the kids out past Elaine.

EDDIE (V.O.)

That's when the wheels really fell off our bus. We were back at Elaine's and absolutely miserable.

INT. MINIVAN - NIGHT

Jackie drives. Ed sits in the passenger seat.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Like a child, I wasn't allowed to drive. I wasn't allowed to do much.

As Jackie parks and exits the vehicle, Ed pops pills.

EDDIE (V.O.)

So I drove myself to where none of them could bother me. My own head.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jackie sits at the table waving bills at Ed. He's dazed.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Disability made getting paid more difficult and time consuming. It wasn't enough anyway. Jackie wasn't bringing enough in and we still owed Elaine rent. The kids needed more and more for school. It was bad. It peaked when I was forced to go back to the office or be fired. I was put on the night shift.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Help desk room with a large wall monitor show a video conference call with dozens of faces of all nationalities. They stare at Ed's picture on the screen, which mirrors Ed asleep with his headset and his feet up on the desk.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I was so high on pills and alcohol with no one in the office, that I forgot to disconnect myself after I started a major global call.

INT. BANK - DAY

Quiet branch office. Ed waits in line with other customers.

EDDIE (V.O.)

As I stood waiting to cash my final check after they fired me, I turned my head left. Had I turned it right, I may not have lost the next five years of my life.

Ed looks at the bank's bulletin board. There's a few photos labelled "Wanted." Buried under newer photos is Frankie Fontane's old photo from the LIRR bulletin board in 1995.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I hadn't seen Frankie for over fifteen years, but we still knew the same people. They basically never caught him for anything.

Ed stares at the teller, the vault and the security camera.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jackie washes the dishes as she waves off Ed's attempt to show her his laptop. The laptop shows banks on Google Maps.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I tried to run it by Jackie, but she didn't want to hear it. She said she wasn't going to be an accomplice. Thought I was joking.

INT. BANK - DAY

Ed fills out a slip at the counter. The last customer walks out, leaving just the TELLER, 26, and MANAGER, 35.

TITLE: "TD BANK FARMINGDALE NY JULY 18th 2013."

Ed walks over to the Teller and hands her the slip. Her smile disappears as she looks up at Ed.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Y'know, when you grow up watching too many movies, you believe something like robbing a bank is some big, Hollywood action caper.

The note shows;

"Please help me. My family is being held at gunpoint. If I don't do this, they will be harmed."

Ed's sad eyes motion toward the front door. The Teller follows his eyes and looks back at him with sympathy.

EXT. BANK - PARKING LOT - DAY

Ed lowers his NY Mets cap as he briskly walk to his car. He takes a deep breath and looks back at the door. No one exits.

EDDIE (V.O.)

They say hindsight is 20/20, but when you're already high and drinking way too much, you don't live in "woulda/coulda/shouda." Yeah, I shouldn't have just wore my Mets hat. Or robbed the same bank twice. But hey, over the next three months, I went through them like a lawn mower cutting grass.

BEGIN MONTAGE

- Ed passes a note to a teller in a bank, gets bundled cash
- Ed hands a note to a teller and a canvas bag.
- Ed hands a note to an anxious teller who fidgets. He displays the shape of a gun in his pocket. He gets the cash
- Ed walks out of a bank and winks as he tosses a stack of hundreds to a cute woman with a small child.

END MONTAGE

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed sits drunk on the couch with JONATHAN, 21, groomed to be Ed's heir apparent. They watch a NY Mets baseball game.

JONATHAN

We're out of beer. I'll go.

Ed stops Jonathan and wobbles upward.

EDDIE

Hey, your uncle's got this. Relax.

Ed staggers up the stairs. Jonathan grins and gulps his beer.

EXT. BODEGA - DAY

Ed is about to enter when he stops and pats his coat pockets.

EDDIE (V.O.)

It got so crazy that I went to buy
beer for me and my nephew and
forgot my wallet.

Ed notices a bank across the street. He smiles.

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ed staggers in and drops a six-pack of beer in front of a surprised Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Where the heck did you go? You're
gone over an hour?

Ed walks across the room and removes a shoe box from under the end table. He pulls bundles of bank-wrapped cash from his pant's waistband and shoves them into the box of cash.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I was getting sloppy. I barely remember robbing this one. I also forgot to get the note back.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe puts her hand in Joe's face.

ZOE

Stop. Seriously. Are you going to tell me it was this easy? That there was little to no resistance?

JOE

What did you expect? Some big, blaze of glory gun battle? They interviewed every teller, bank manager and witness involved. I researched it. Go for it, Nancy Drew.

BATMAN

You do know most retail businesses are trained NOT to interfere with a robbery, right? Isn't that what they trained you here at Hooters?

ZOE

Well, yeah. But a bank --

JC

Is FDIC insured.

BATMAN

So why risk injury?

JOE

May I finish?

ZOE

(beat)
Go ahead.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - DAY

Jackie and Joanne, 58, follow Ed and the LANDLORD, 56, through a beautiful vacant apartment. Jackie's heels echo on the new hardwood floors.

JACKIE
This is beautiful!

EDDIE
Yup. Let's take it.

JACKIE
Are you sure? I mean, you just started working again? Is now OK?

EDDIE (V.O.)
I had started doing carpet cleaning with Jackie's brother, but that was just to cover where the money was really coming from.

Ed kisses Jackie on the forehead. Joanne beams. Her pride could light the building.

JOANNE
Edward, this place is beautiful!

EDDIE
I've always told you not to worry.

JOANNE
I know. But after everything this family has been through, I never knew where you all would wind up. With MaryJo --

EDDIE
Mom, it's all good. Trust me.

Joanne smiles and hugs Eddie. He turns to the Landlord and pulls a wad of hundreds out of his coat pocket.

EDDIE
We'll take it. I'll cover the first six months right now.

The Landlord's surprised, but takes it. Jackie turns and smiles as she taps her heel on the floor.

EDDIE (V.O)

I had it all coming together. I had it all finally going my way. I was getting everything I deserved. And that, in hindsight, was inevitable.

EXT. LIPA (LONG ISLAND POWER AUTHORITY) BUILDING - DAY

Ed walks from his car toward the building. He notices a black Chevy Tahoe van slowly following him. Ed diverts from the building and walks in the another direction. The van follows.

TITLE: "NOVEMBER 13TH 2013. 12:06 PM."

BRUTE #1, 35, exits the slow rolling van and walks behind Ed.

BRUTE #1

Hey, Ed.

Ed hurries his step. He doesn't turn around or answer.

BRUTE #1

Ed. Ed Waller.

EDDIE

Nope. Wrong guy.

Brute #1 jogs faster towards Ed. Ed runs and jumps on a chained-link fence. His back gives out and he screams, but he's yanked down anyway by BRUTE #2, 34, and BRUTE #3, 40.

Brute #2 and Brute #3 slam Ed into the hood of the Tahoe.

BRUTE #2

Don't you fucking move!

Brute #1 pulls a wad of cash out of Eddie's pocket.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Once I saw the tinted windows on the black van, I pretty much knew it was over. I wasn't mad at that.

Brute #1 fans the cash and pulls out a few bills with red dye. He holds them toward Ed and smiles. Ed closes his eyes.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I was mad at how stupid I could have been to be walking around with \$3000 in stolen cash and stained with dye from one of robberies.

EXT. BANK - PARKING LOT - DAY

TITLE: "TWO WEEKS EARLIER."

Ed walks out of the entrance with a duffle bag and sees a cop across the street. He panics and starts to run without noticing that the cop isn't looking at him.

Ed leaps over a small brick wall and smacks the duffle bag, causing the dye-pack hidden inside to explode. Red dye is everywhere; the wall, the cash, the bag and Ed's clothes.

INT. JAIL - INTEROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Ed sits handcuffed to a table. Brute #1 yells and yells.

EDDIE (V.O.)

A lot was said. Things like "you're no Marine," "this isn't Law & Order" and other stuff that were meant to intimidate me. The FBI would come in later to threaten me with a Federal crime. None of it really worked. I was already numb.

INT. COURT - DAY

Ed sits with his LAWYER, 54 at a table. The prosecutors sits at the table across. The JUDGE, 65 presides. Jackie stoically sits in the back row of benches with people.

EDDIE (V.O.)

It was a one-two punch that did it.

INT . LUXURY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jackie hugs AUNT STACY, 58, who sits and knocks over a box of newspaper clippings. She picks them up and is horrified.

TITLE: "SIX WEEKS EARLIER."

EDDIE (V.O.)

My Aunt came over to see Jackie one day and found my clippings. They were calling me the "Suffolk Serial Bank Robber", so I kept my own fan book. Real smart. She called the cops on me. But the nail in the coffin came from within.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Jackie opens the door and sees Brute #1 and Brute #2.

JACKIE

Oh my God! Is he dead? We've been looking for him all day! He's dead!

BRUTE #1

Ma'am. Please, calm down. He's alive. We've taken him in for questioning and --

JACKIE

It's up in the rafters!

Brute #1 and Brute #2 look at each other.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - CEILING AREA - NIGHT

Jackie hands the Brutes tools and coffee as they stand on a ladder to take stacks of cash out the wood ceiling.

EDDIE (V.O.)

Two hours after they caught me, Jackie cracked before they even stepped in our door. Once she testified against me in the Grand Jury, I was sunk. Her parents pressured her so she didn't lose the kids. I couldn't blame her for that.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe sits silent. Joe tilts his head in anticipation.

JOE

So no reaction? That was what you were waiting for, wasn't it?

ZOE

I don't know. After listening to his life story, that was sort of... anticlimactic.

JOE

This isn't "Die Hard." It's true.

BATMAN
More like "Cried Hard", after three
cell-mates made him their bitch.

ZOE
(sneers)
You really are some friend, huh?

Batman gathers the cards on the table and shuffles them hard.

BATMAN
So, I've sat here all night,
listening to so much shit that I
don't know what's piled higher, the
snow out there or your crap in here.

JOE
Excuse me? Are you saying I'm lying?

BATMAN
I'm saying whatever type of novel
you're writing about him is going
to have one of those "Based on"
wordings underneath it, right?

JOE
Well...

BATMAN
And that usually means the only
true thing is maybe a name or two
is real and the rest is horseshit.

JOE
No, that's horseshit. Chill, dude.

BATMAN
Oh, I'm Chilly Willy right now.

Zoe is confused. JC returns to the table.

BATMAN
Forget the reference. That's
decades to explain. But, you know
what? Let me take it from here.

JOE
You?

BATMAN

Yeah, me. I'm sure you got a story from him and his family, but let me tell you from the only one of us at this table that actually saw him when he was in jail.

All voices cease. Batman has their attention.

BATMAN

That's right. I went. You didn't.

INT. JAIL - VISITOR ROOM - DAY

Ed enters and sits on his side of the glass partition. Jackie and Batman sit on the other side. Ed won't make eye contact.

TITLE: "UPSTATE NEW YORK, 2015."

BATMAN

So, I knew you couldn't pay your cards tab, but come on!

Ed musters a grin. He peeks up at Batman's smile. Ice broken.

EDDIE

I'm due.
(beat)
Thanks for coming, bro.

BATMAN

Yeah. Of course. I waited till Jackie said you were ready.

EDDIE

I didn't tell her I was ready.

BATMAN

Yeah, well. Fuck you.

They share a heartier laugh. Jackie finally smiles.

BATMAN

You know I'm here for you. Whatever you guys need.

EDDIE

I know. I appreciate it.

JACKIE

We appreciate it.

Ed scowls at Jackie. Hard. She reciprocates.

JACKIE

Brian, can you excuse us, please?

Batman reads the contention. He rises.

BATMAN

No problem. I'll go shank the vending machine for freebees.

Batman exits. Jackie flips back to Ed and leans closer.

JACKIE

Listen, you piece of shit. We need money. Now. I can't do this!

Ed glances at the SECURITY GUARD, 28, watching from the door.

EDDIE

Whoa, whoa. Slow your roll.

JACKIE

Slow nothing! For the last year and a half, I've had to beg and borrow to keep feeding me and the kids! Because you did the "steal". Badly.

Ed's lip curls. He grits his teeth.

JACKIE

Now I'm doing what I've got to do.

Jackie glances out the glass door. Batman shakes a vending machine. She flips back to Ed. Her grin isn't friendly.

EDDIE

Don't you ask him for a fucking cent! Do you hear me?

Jackie rises. She gives Ed the middle finger and mouths the words "I got this." She turns and leaves.

EDDIE

Jackie!

The Security Guard moves his hand to his baton. Ed relaxes and raises his hands in peace. He watches Jackie hug Batman around his arm by the vending machine. Ed rubs his eyes.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Batman turn his attention on Joe, who watches the snow fall.

BATMAN

You got that in your notes, Steven King? Because what I can add in will make this a horror story.

Joe quietly turns the next few pages of his notebook.

JOE

(beat)

I did hear about it. It wasn't Jackie's finest moment.

BATMAN

Oh, you think so, doctor? That was your prognosis?

JOE

Nothing is being sugar coated here.

Batman pushes the cards together and bangs them on the table.

BATMAN

Right.

Zoe looks at the three men. Joe, lost in his vanity, JC, lost in his greed and Batman, just lost in his anger.

ZOE

Guys, we should just wrap this up. It's almost midnight and we close.

Joe looks at JC and Batman. Neither return the view.

JOE

Right. So, I'm going to skip to his last months before his jail time was done. He had been transferred a few times up and down the state, but basically kept his nose clean. Jackie had stopped coming, so family members brought the twins.

INT. JAIL - VISITOR ROOM

Ed, 48, walks in and sits on his side of the glass partition. Jonathan, 26, dazed, sits with the twins Bella/Kenzie, 11.

TITLE: "2019. SIX MONTHS UNTIL RELEASE."

EDDIE
Hello, ladies.

KENZIE/BELLA
Hi, dad.

EDDIE
I miss you. Only a few more months,
and then we are going straight to
Adventureland. Right on the swings.

The twins smile. Jonathan eyes can't focus. Ed notices.

EDDIE
Girls, can you please put on your
headphones for a minute so I can
talk some boring, grown-up stuff
with your Uncle Jonathan?

The twins shrug and comply. Once they are lost in their
music, Ed's fake smile dissipates. He keeps his voice low.

EDDIE
You're high? You drove my girls
here high?

JONATHAN
I'm fine. Seriously. Chill.

EDDIE
Chill? If I wasn't in here, I'd --

JONATHAN
Dude! It's because you're in here
that I have to make these trips!

EDDIE
Lower your voice.

JONATHAN
You should talk? You were high
robbing a bank when you went out to
get us beer. I looked up to you.
You were supposed to be an
influence on me, not under the
influence!

Ed leaps up and punches the glass. The twins coil back. The
Security Guard rushes over and grabs Ed.

EDDIE

I'm sorry. I'm good. I'm good!

The Security Guard puts Ed's hands behind him and puts handcuffs on. A GUARD, 34, opens the visitor door and guides Jonathan and the twins out.

EDDIE (V.O.)

In a lifetime of mistakes, I had reached the pinnacle of failure. While everything I had done was for my family, the people who were paying the most for my actions were the very same people.

Ed's last view is the horrified eyes of the twins.

EDDIE (V.O.)

No more.

Ed is led out of the room. The door slams shut.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Zoe wipes a tear from her eye. Batman is unfazed. Joe and JC let the silence hold for a moment.

JOE

According to everyone, he's been clean since his release. Despite the tension with Jackie, they did reconcile, if only for the sake of the twins. He now volunteers his time working with veterans that suffer from PTSD. And that's that.

Joe closes his notebook. He rests his case.

Batman, JC and Zoe remain silent. Finally, it is broken.

BATMAN

He's still a fuckin mess.

ZOE

Really? That's what you got out of his story? That he's just a "mess?"

BATMAN

What? Did you hear the stories? We lived some of them.

ZOE

I heard a man trying to do his best. Did he make mistakes? Yes. Who doesn't? You're all perfect?

BATMAN

Honey, when I get money from the bank, I use my account, not a gun.

ZOE

Oh? So then you didn't go get your money with a bat, "Batman?"

Zoe accidentally knocks over her bag. As she picks it up, her bosom is exposed through her open sweater. Batman stares. She notices and springs up.

ZOE

Really? That's classy!

Zoe slaps Batman across his face. He's completely surprised. Her loud voice draws attention. People stare.

ZOE

Your friend may be a "mess," but I'm guessing he wouldn't have been stupid and rude enough to just stare like I'm a damn porno site!

Zoe grabs her bag and kicks the stool inward.

ZOE

It's no shocker you're still single at your age. Or any age.

Her glare burns though. Batman looks away. She eyes JC.

ZOE

And you. You realize that the most valuable thing in your life is supposed to be people. Not money.

JC looks up from his phone. His lips open to respond, but there's nothing to say. He quietly places his phone down.

ZOE

Mess. All of you.

She storms off. Joe quietly eats a curly fry. JC stammers.

JC

So, do we still have to tip her?

Batman is about to yell when a ANGRY WOMAN, 38, descends on their table and tosses her soda in JC's face.

ANGRY WOMAN
You son of a bitch!

JC sputters to speaks as soda drips from his forehead into his eyes. Joe pushes the roll of paper towel into his hands.

JC
Who the hell are you?

ANGRY WOMAN
I knew I recognized you from your picture on Facebook! You sold me a torn collector's bear and when I e-mailed you, you kept ignoring me! If I meet your wife, I'm going to tell her what type of ass you are!

Angry Woman storms off. JC quietly cleans his neck and shirt. Batman grabs the napkins and dries his wet arm. Joe snickers.

BATMAN
Oh, you think this is funny?

JOE
Lil bit.

BATMAN
Really? So because you got married you think we're, what? The messes?

JOE
I didn't say that.

BATMAN
So, I texted Amy while you were sitting here babbling all night. It's been awhile.

Joe's eye's dart at Batman.

BATMAN
Anything you want to personally share? She did. That you we're more interested in telling old stories than making new stories with her.

Joe sips his soda in lieu of a response.

BATMAN

That she went to stay with a friend
last month. Figured I knew.

Joe's embarrassment turns dark. He pushes his stool back.

BATMAN

What? You better think twice about
that "pen being mightier than the
sword" crap.

JOE

Really? Who'll miss you in the end?

Batman growls and lunges his large hands over the table and
yanks Joe up, almost pulling him on top of it. JC falls over.

BATMAN

Write your way out of this!

Jackie, 49, drops a wedding ring between the men that clanks
and clatters. It spins before it eventually drops silent.

The three men are stunned. Joe sputters to speak.

JOE

Jackie? What are you doing here?

Jackie doesn't answer. Her stoic gaze focuses on a rising JC.

JACKIE

Johnny. It's been awhile. Are you
still with Dawn?

JC opens his mouth to speak three times before words exit.

JC

I am.

Jackie turn to Batman, who's scowl remains intact.

JACKIE

Brian.

Batman glares at Joe before looking back at her.

JACKIE

I'm sorry. That's all I have left
to offer you right now.

JOE

Jackie, where's Eddie?

Jackie hears Joe's words, but her only response is to pick up the ring from the table and stare at it for a long moment.

JACKIE

He's gone.

JOE

Gone? Where did he go?

JACKIE

He's dead.

Mouths agape, the men stare at each other for a hard few seconds. Batman's anger dissipates into an expressionless look away. JC slowly sips his drink.

JOE

I... When? How? I've been texting him up until this morning when he said he would come here tonight.

Jackie slips the ring on her finger with her wedding ring. She removes an Iphone and opens up the text screen.

JACKIE

These texts? Yeah...

Joe scratches his nose in reaction to not knowing how to react. He motions his head to speak before JC murmurs.

JC

How did he pass?

JACKIE

A handful of pills.

JOE

Wait, wait. This makes no sense. When did this happen? None of his siblings said anything recently.

JACKIE

It was three weeks ago. He left us a long letter. Part of it asked us to not say anything to you.

JOE

Why?

JACKIE

Because he wanted all of you to be here when I told you this.

JC
Jackie, what's this all about?

JACKIE
Everything Eddie's always done was for his family and those he loved. That included all of you as his family. He really did love you. And you all betrayed him.

Joe, JC and Batman look at each other. The confusion sets in.

JC
How did any of us betray him?

JACKIE
He understood the jokes. That's the way you guys are. I personally never understood how mean and childish you all are to each other, but that was your relationship. But at least you said it to each other's faces. Do you remember when all of you last saw Eddie together?

JOE
Together? I would think before I moved to Georgia? Eleven years?

JACKIE
Then you'd be wrong. You guys may not have seen him, but he saw you.

INT. CHANGING TIMES BAR - NIGHT

Dimly lit establishment with tables scattered around pool tables and shuffleboard. A few patrons sit at the bar nursing their drinks. Joe, 42, Batman, 41 and JC, 43, sit at a table.

TITLE: "CHANGING TIMES BAR, NY. JUNE 2012."

Batman takes a deck of cards out of its box and shuffles. Joe draws three columns on a paper with their names on top.

BATMAN
Fuckin Eddie. Let's play three-way until he shows.

JOE
You always sound surprised.

BATMAN

No, aggravated. Fuckin guy is 50-50. Like we all don't have better things to do.

JC

Do you have anything better to do?

BATMAN

Not the point. Cock.

JOE

It is what it is. When he brought Jackie and the kids down to visit us a few months ago in Georgia, I tried to tell him it was time to look for a better job. Now that he was finally married and had little kids, he had to "Man" up.

JC

And what did he say?

JOE

Gave me a bullshit nod. Kind of pissed me off. Nothing will change.

JC

What was the story with the seizures? More drugs?

JOE

Who knows. With him, it's become more and more like the song line; "Believe half of what you see and none of what you hear." He knew I planned this trip back up to NY mostly to get together. Prick.

BATMAN

Yeah, well. Once a cock...

Standing out of their sight with his back against the wall, Eddie, 40, listens to them speak. As they burst out laughing, Eddie takes a deep breath and quietly slips out the door.

INT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Jackie stares at Joe, Batman and JC as the three men look everywhere other than at her.

JACKIE

He was late with a flat tire and left his phone home. It broke his heart. A few weeks later, he robbed the first bank.

Jackie looks over at Melosa as she cleans another table ten feet away. Melosa quickly turns her head away.

JOE

I don't know what to say.

BATMAN

Are you saying the bank robberies are because of us?

JACKIE

I'm saying there were a lot of things that led to a lot of things.

JC

We weren't really being mean.

BATMAN

Yeah, we we're. But honest.

Joe is more visibly upset than the others.

JOE

I just don't understand. Why was he talking to me recently?

JACKIE

Well, he was embarrassed to speak to any of you since he got out, but when you reached out, over a year later, about telling his story, he thought you wanted to help him set his life straight. To his family. To our kids. He knew you were better than him at telling a story.

JOE

I see.

JACKIE

But you really never planned to do that, did you?

Joe looks out the window at the falling snow.

JOE

I... set out to tell his story.

BATMAN

Uh huh. Like I said earlier, to tell a tale or sell a sale?

Joe glances at Batman before losing his expression.

JOE

Jackie, I did this with the best intentions. We've been friends a long time and --

JACKIE

You never reached out to him once while he was in jail. Or to me. Did you know how hard it was to get by with four kids?

(to Batman)

Brian knew. And I made too many mistakes there to waste your time about that now, but I am sorry. Very sorry.

Batman grits his teeth as he picks up the deck of cards and shuffles them multiple times before he puts them in the box.

JACKIE

Ed and I had a lot to talk about when he came home. I had to hit rock bottom before I could work my way back up. Ed started his journey that final year behind bars. We all do time in our own prisons. Some bars are more mental than physical.

(to Joe)

You didn't even reach out and call him. Or knock on our door. You texted. How cold. How inhuman. Like all he was is material.

JOE

I... meant to call... but...

JACKIE

Once he saw some early drafts of your screenplay, what you were planning on writing about all of you, he felt like the punch-line of a bad joke.

BATMAN

Wait, screenplay? We're in it?

JOE

Well, I planned on telling--

BATMAN

You've been writing about us
without even telling us? Really?

JACKIE

The whole thing is based on you all
sitting right here. Just like this.
With stories... not so flattering.

JC

So, do you plan on paying us?

BATMAN

Easy, JC. Enough with the fuckin
fencing of goods, including your
own damn life!

Batman pushes his stool back and rises. He throws a hundred
dollar bill on the table.

BATMAN

You know, Joe, when you wrote that
book, that no one read, I figured
you must have took that hard, but I
didn't think you'd have the balls
to make us all objects in your next
failed effort. Especially without
telling us. Personally, I've had
enough of this "reunion". I'm out.
Jackie, my condolences. Merry
fuckin Christmas.

Batman storms out the front door. Melosa watches.

JC gathers his Iphone and takes a final sip of his drink. He
rises and shakes Joe's hand before he places his on Jackie.

JC

I'm sorry for your loss.

JC places cash down and nods to Melosa on his way out. Joe
stares as the front door closes behind JC. Jackie looks down
at her buzzing Iphone and puts it in her pocket.

JACKIE

I've got to go.

Jackie turns to leave before Joe reaches for her arm.

JOE
Jackie, wait.

Joe pauses before he hands her his notebook. She takes it from his fingers and squeezes his other hand. She smiles.

JACKIE
Merry Christmas.

Jackie exits. Melosa walks over. Joe stares ahead before his eyes focus on the TV. Melosa turns and looks at the TV.

MELOSA
Oh, look. They caught the robber!

The TV shows a WOMAN, 30, led away in handcuffs by cops. Joe shakes his head and runs his hands through his hair.

MELOSA
Uh, can I get you anything else?

Joe takes a deep breath and tries to smile.

JOE
No, I think I've gotten enough.

He places a handful of bills on the table and rises.

JOE
Thanks for letting us sit here all night. I hope we compensated you.

Melosa's eyes widen as she lifts all the cash.

MELOSA
Uh, yes. I'll give Zuur her share tomorrow.

JOE
Zuur?

MELOSA
Oh, sorry, her name is actually Zuur. It's Dutch. She goes by Zoe.

Joe moves to leave and Melosa puts her head against his shoulder. She gives him a side hug.

MELOSA
Have a Merry Christmas.

JOE
You too.

She walks away. Joe types on his phone.

ON PHONE: DICTIONARY: ZUUR. DUTCH FOR SOUR."

He looks back at sweet Melosa and shakes his head.

JOE
I really can't make this stuff up.

Joe walks out the front door.

EXT. HOOTERS RESTARUANT - NIGHT

Joe buttons up his long trench coat as the snow blows harder. The two closest lamp posts are off but the parking lot remains dimly visible by the distant streetlights.

Joe walks around the building. He dials his Iphone.

JOE
Amy? Can you hear me? Yes, I'm
still in NY. How did it go? Well...

Joe notices a Salvation Army SANTA, 50, who stands by the side of the building with his donation pot, ringing a bell.

JOE
Hang on, Amy.
(to Santa)
Happy Holidays, old timer. Isn't it
a little late to still be out?

Santa grins under his white beard and points to his earmuffs.

JOE
Oh, yeah, I get it. It's cold out
here and I don't hear well either.

Joe drops a hundred dollar bill in and smiles.

JOE
God bless. At least one of us did
something noble tonight.

Joe turns and walks toward his car. He raises his phone up.

JOE
Amy? Still there? Sorry, there was
a Salvation Santa out here... Yeah,
I thought it's late for...

Joe looks back as he reaches his car and sees a Salvation Army truck stop in front of Santa, which blocks Joe's view.

JOE

Amy, let me call you back.

Joe hangs up his phone and walks back to the other side of the truck. OLD DRIVER, 64, puts the donation pot and stand in the back. Joe looks both ways.

JOE

Excuse me, where did Santa go?

DRIVER

Santa? Home. Hours ago.

JOE

What? No. He was just here. I put money in the pot two minutes ago.

The Driver stares at Joe before he looks in the pot. He pulls the hundred dollar bill. A sealed envelope is clipped to it.

DRIVER

"To Joe". Are you Joe?

JOE

I am.

DRIVER

Well, there's nothing else in here since the Santa's bring the money back to the station with them and I pick the pots up after.

The Driver hands the stuff to Joe and tips his Mets cap.

DRIVER

Happy holidays.

JOE

You too.

Joe fingers the envelope. He's walks toward his car and is about to open it when he hears a voice.

BATMAN

What the hell is going on?

Joe turns. Batman walks over with a larger envelope as JC comes from the other side with a small, decorated box.

BATMAN

What's in yours, Joe? Coal?

Joe looks down at the envelope.

JOE

I don't...

BATMAN

There's three grand in mine. I mean, what the fuck?

Joe's shock moves to curiosity. He looks toward JC, who raises a multi-colored Beanie Baby Bear out of the box.

JC

It's a Peace the Bear.

Joe opens his envelope. He reads the note and grins.

JOE

"I knew you would do the right thing. Now, do the W-R-I-T-E thing. You got this. You all do."

Joe opens his car door and lifts his notebook off his seat.

The Driver falls out of the back of the truck. The donation pot clangs on the cement. They rush over to help.

JOE

Are you OK?

DRIVER

Yes. Thank you. I lost my footing along the way.

Joe, Batman and JC all take the meaning different than meant.

JOE

Yeah, haven't we all.

Batman yanks the pot and places it upright in the truck.

BATMAN

Little late to be out, no?

DRIVER

Well, I help out at the church during the day, so they let me volunteer doing this at night.

JC
You're not getting paid?

Joe and Batman scold JC with a glance.

JC
I mean... Never mind.

DRIVER
Well, have a blessed night, boys.

Old Driver tries to pull the truck door downward when Batman stops him from doing so.

BATMAN
Hang on, pops.

Batman hands his envelope to Old Driver, who looks inside it.

DRIVER
Oh my! Are you sure about this?

BATMAN
Yeah, it's only money. And was never the point of it. Besides, I know a little something about collecting myself.

Joe waves off Batman's joke. He removes his checkbook.

JOE
He doesn't need details. Here you go, sir.

Joe hands a check to the Driver, who is taken back again.

DRIVER
Oh! Are you gentlemen sure?

JOE
Positive. We're supposed to be giving back at our age.

Joe and Batman turn to JC, who doesn't take the opening.

JC
What?

Joe's raises his brow toward the Driver. Batman grunts.

BATMAN
Let's go! Before Christmas!

JC sighs and hands the box to the Old Driver.

JC
I'm glad it only comes once a year.
Let them know to look its value up.

The Driver carefully takes it. He climbs in the truck.

DRIVER
Happy holidays, fellas.

The truck drives off as the snow falls. The men take a moment to reflect on their deed. Batman turns to Joe.

BATMAN
So, when's your flight home?

JOE
Tomorrow morning.

JC
We all should probably try to figure out how to play cards remotely online by now.

JOE
Yeah.

BATMAN
Yeah.

JOE
Merry Christmas, boys.

BATMAN
Give Amy my love. And yours.

Joe nods to Batman and JC as they turn and disappear into the darkness. Joe pulls out his phone and dials.

JOE
Amy? Yes. I'm fine. I thanked Santa for his gift. Well, he gave me a light. One that I wasn't seeing.

Joe opens his car door and notices a car drive by. Jackie drives with Santa in the passenger seat.

Joe's eyes connect with Santa. As Santa winks, Joe smiles and taps his notebook against his head twice and nods.

JOE

Amy? I just wanted to say I'm
sorry. About a lot of things. Maybe
we can grab a cup of coffee when I
get back to Atlanta. It's time I
put other people's stories to rest
and focus on the important one;
ours.

Joe gets in and shuts his door.

As he drives off, the Hooters lights go dark.

FADE OUT.