

**FICKLE**

by

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1996 - INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

We see Dereck Fickle (Fie-kel), a tall awkward man, sitting against a wall, a row of empty chairs line the wall on his right, a door behind him on his left, a stack of manuscripts hang out of the satchel on his lap. He is wearing thick black framed glasses. His white button down hangs wrinkled under his old faded sports coat.

He wipes the sweat from his palms on his slacks.

An attractive professional young woman walks in front of him and sits two chairs over along the same wall.

Dereck waits for the secretary to call him. He feigns a smile toward the young woman.

DERECK

Hi, how are...

The door next to Dereck FLINGS open and the secretary steps out holding a clipboard.

SECRETARY

Dereck Fickle?

She mispronounces his last name.

DERECK

Fickle (Fie-kel).

SECRETARY

Oh.

The secretary pauses for a moment as if wondering why he corrected her.

We see Dereck's name on the clipboard.

SECRETARY (CONT.)

Anyway, Mr. Humphrey will see you now.

The secretary leaves the doorway as Dereck stands up careful not to let the manuscripts fall out of his satchel.

He nods a gauche smile to the attractive young woman and follows the secretary into her office.

## SECRETARY'S OFFICE

She leads him past her desk, in a room larger than the waiting room, to another door. She opens the door and motions Dereck to enter.

## MR. HUMPHREY'S OFFICE

We see Mr. Humphrey, a gruff man donning a thick mustache and suspenders, stand up behind his neat and organized desk to greet Dereck as he enters the room. A large window overlooking the city is behind him. A bar glittering with clear and brown liquors is against the wall on Dereck's right.

MR. HUMPHREY

Ah, Mr. Fickle.

DERECK

Fickle (Fie-kel).

MR. HUMPHREY

Oh, I'm sorry. Please sit down.

The secretary SLAMS the door behind Dereck, startling him as he makes his way to the chair in front of Humphrey's desk.

Dereck sits down in the chair.

Humphrey sits at his desk.

MR. HUMPHREY

So, how are you today?

DERECK

(softly)

I'm fine.

Dereck clears his throat and feigns confidence.

DERECK (CONT.)

I'm fine, doing well.

MR. HUMPHREY

Good, good. So, I've read some of the things you've sent us, the **many** things you've sent. And can I ask, how long have you been writing?

DERECK

For a while now. Since college.

MR. HUMPHREY

And have you ever had any luck selling your work?

DERECK

(smiles)

Well, that's why I'm here.

MR. HUMPHREY

Exactly. Maybe you should try some smaller venues, like magazine articles or writing for a local paper.

Dereck shifts in his seat making sure the stack of manuscripts do not fall out of his satchel.

DERECK

I don't really do journalism. I've been writing novels and short fiction for a while...

MR. HUMPHREY

Well, maybe you should try something smaller.

DERECK

I don't understand. Do you not like anything I've sent you?

MR. HUMPHREY

No.

DERECK

Then why did you ask me to come in today?

MR. HUMPHREY

You've been sending us stuff for over a year now, and quite frankly we are tired of finding your name all over our mail.

DERECK

So, you called a meeting with me to tell me to stop sending you my work.

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes.

DERECK

Couldn't you have just told me this over the phone?

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes, but I thought this might be important for you.

DERECK

Important? What? A face to face rejection.

Humphrey sits back in his chair.

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes, sort of.

DERECK

Sort of? What do you mean?

MR. HUMPHREY

I think there is something you should hear.

Mr. Humphrey gets up from his desk and walks over to the window, his back to Dereck. He fits his thumbs under his suspenders and looks out at the city.

MR. HUMPHREY

I was seventeen when I was first published. It was an article about how a drought was affecting the night life of the local University students, or something like that. I really don't remember. See, I'm from a small town. We didn't have much to do, but I wrote about what was happening, what I knew, what I saw around me. So, I got the article published in the local paper before I graduated high school, got a few more jobs, realized I hated writing, but I could spot a good writer, so I became an editor, and now I run one of the largest publishing companies in the nation.

MR. HUMPHREY (CONT.)

(pauses)

How old are you Mr. Fickle?

DERECK

(softly)

Fickle (Fie-kel). Thirty-four.

MR. HUMPHREY

What was that?

DERECK

(louder)

Thirty-four.

MR. HUMPHREY

Thirty-four and you still haven't gotten your work out there. Now, why is that do you think?

DERECK

I don't know. It's a hard business to break into.

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes, it is a hard business for those with no talent, and I am afraid you are one of those people.

DERECK

Excuse me?

Mr. Humphrey turns around, walks back to his desk, sits down, and looks sternly at Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY

You have no talent. Your work is no good. You will never be a writer. Your characters are two dimensional. You have no sense of timing. You don't know how to set a scene or make your characters believable. People want to **know** your characters but they can just as easily forget yours.

DERECK

I don't understand.

MR. HUMPHREY

Reading your work gives me headaches.  
I feel embarrassed for you, putting  
this out there for everyone to make fun  
of.

Humphrey points at Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY (CONT.)

You know that everyone who works here  
thinks you are a joke?

DERECK

What?

MR. HUMPHREY

Yeah. It was funny at first. We would  
pass your manuscripts around the office  
for a laugh. Once an editor used them  
to show one of our new clients what not  
to do.

DERECK

(softly)

Why are you being so mean?

MR. HUMPHREY

You need to hear this, just to save  
yourself further embarrassment.

Dereck's knuckles are white from clutching the satchel of  
manuscripts.

Humphrey sits forward in his desk and looks at Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY

Your writing fucking sucks.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Dereck walks out of the publisher's building onto a busy street.  
He walks to the bus stop near the street curb.

A homeless man is sleeping on the bench at the bus stop. Dereck  
stands next to the bench as a crowd begins to gather.

An old woman gripping a young boy's hand walks to the opposite end of the bench. The boy GIGGLES and pokes at the homeless man. The old woman SLAPS her handbag against the boy's face. The boy looks up at the woman, then lowers his head and stands quietly as the bus arrives.

The crowd shuffles their way onto the bus. The homeless man sits up. As the crowd dissipates, Dereck makes his way onto the bus, followed by the homeless man.

#### BUS

Dereck rides out of the city sitting next to the window staring blankly as the scenery changes from city to the broken landscape of a small South Western town. We hear a man COUGH. Dereck turns to look, and we see the homeless man next to him.

#### STREET

The bus comes to a halt on the corner of a street that would have been bustling fifty years ago, but today it sits quietly full of old wood and chipped brick. Local shops line the street with few customers.

The homeless man steps off the bus followed by Dereck.

Dereck watches as the man looks up and down the street then slowly walks away from us. Dereck, still watching the man, walks toward us.

#### EXT. DERECK'S APARTMENT COMPLEX

We see Dereck walk into the courtyard of his apartment complex. As he makes his way to his apartment, he passes an elderly woman.

DERECK

Hey, Ms. Flenderman.

The woman nods a hello in Dereck's direction.

Dereck walks to his apartment door and unlocks it. As the door SQUEAKS open, a cat paws the air toward him.



DERECK

Hey, Franz.

The cat PURRS as Dereck inches into the apartment and shuts the door.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT

Dereck's apartment is small and cluttered. Stacks of books and notebooks line the walls.

Dereck tosses his satchel of manuscripts on a chair and plops onto the couch. He reaches for the TV remote, turns on the TV, and settles in. The news is on. His cat jumps on his lap.

TELEVISION

We see a female news anchor reading the news.

NEWS REPORTER

A string of robberies have swept the region. Many small banks, gas stations, and liquor stores have been robbed in the past three months. Four store clerks have been killed, and five others injured. Based on security camera footage and eye witness testimony, police suspect that only one man is responsible.

A sketch of the suspected criminal is shown next to a still image from a security camera. The man is smiling at the camera.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT.)

This man is believed to be armed and dangerous. If anyone has any information regarding these crimes, please contact the authorities.

DERECK

He drifts off to sleep as his cat curls up next to him.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - DUSK

A phone RINGS in the kitchen. Dereck and his cat stir from their sleep on the couch.

Dereck staggers to the kitchen and answers the phone.

DERECK  
(clears throat)  
Hello.

TELE-MARKETER  
Mr. Fickle?

DERECK  
Fickle (Fie-kel).

TELE-MARKETER  
Whatever. I'm calling because we have a one time only offer for you. How would you like to have over five hundred television channels for the low price of...

Dereck hangs up the phone and rests his head on the wall next to it.

DERECK  
Fucking asshole.

Dereck pulls a box of cereal from a shelf with a bowl. He opens the refrigerator, takes out a carton of milk, opens it and smells it.

He pours a bowl of cereal.

He sits down to eat at his small kitchen table and begins browsing an old newspaper.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Dereck walks down a sidewalk, his satchel over his shoulder. He sees the homeless man sitting on the curb reading Machiavelli's The Prince.

Dereck almost stops to say something, but proceeds into the coffee shop.

INT. BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP

Dereck walks to the counter where an attractive woman waits to take his order.

Her name tag reads "Rose".

ROSE

Dereck. How's it going?

DERECK

Hey, Rose. How's the world of coffee?

ROSE

Same old dark, hot, brown shit as yesterday.

DERECK

That's what my proctologist says.

ROSE

(laughs)

Oh, that's gross. Hey, how was that meeting you had today? Did it go well? I mean, did they like any of your work?

Rose turns around and pours Dereck a cup of coffee.

DERECK

Well, they're still considering. They kind of want me to rewrite some things, try approaching things from different angles.

Rose puts a plastic lid on a paper cup and sits it on the counter in front of Dereck.

ROSE

That's still good news. I'm sure they'll love it when you're done.

Dereck takes the lid off his coffee and dumps sugar into it.

DERECK

Yeah. We'll see.

ROSE

(smiling)

Come on, you've got to be positive.

DERECK

That's always been my problem, focusing  
on how everything can go wrong.

Dereck sips his coffee.

DERECK (CONT.)

How do you stay so chipper all the  
time?

ROSE

That's just the way I'm wired I guess.

DERECK

I guess. Anyway, I need to get to  
work. See you, Rose.

ROSE

Later Dereck, have a good night.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP

Dereck leaves the coffee shop and notices the homeless man has  
gone, but The Prince is lying next to a trash can on the street.

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT

We see Dereck standing behind the counter at the gas station  
scribbling in his notebook. The counter is shielded by bullet  
proof glass on either side. The glass shutter in the middle is  
unlatched and open.

A drunk, elderly man walks in with a young girl on his arm. The  
girl looks like she has not slept in weeks.

They walk back to the beer section and the man picks up a six  
pack of malt liquor. They approach the counter LAUGHING as the  
man gropes the young woman.

OLD MAN

Hey son, give me some Marlboros and  
some of them extra large rubbers ya got  
back there.

The old man LAUGHS, and pulls the girl close.

GIRL  
That's right, honey.

(to Dereck)  
You got a big dick like this old fart.

DERECK  
(to himself)  
Really?

OLD MAN  
Old fart? Be careful honey, cause this  
old fart is gonna tear you open  
tonight.

GIRL  
That's right, honey.

DERECK  
That'll be twenty-six, thirty-four.

The old man reaches into his wallet and hands Dereck thirty dollars.

OLD MAN  
Keep the change.

As they leave the station, the young girl looks back at Dereck and tries not to break eye contact with him even as she gets into the car and the door closes behind her.

Dereck watches through the window of the station as they drive away. He looks down at his notebook and scratches through what he had written.

He flips the page and begins writing again. He writes: *The young girl seemed tired as she walked through the door arm in arm with a man that could have been her grandfather...*

LATER

Dereck is restocking shelves when we hear SCREAMING outside of the station.

We see Dereck walk to the entrance of the store and peer through the glass door.

DERECK'S POV

We see a man running down the street, SCREAMING and flailing his arms as if he were on fire. As the man moves out of Dereck's sight, a car CLUNKS into view with a woman hanging out of the driver's window YELLING at the man as if he were a dog.

WOMAN

Jack! Come here, boy. Jack! Come on.

The woman in the car slowly follows the man until we can't see her anymore.

DERECK

He walks to the counter, picks up his notebook and starts writing.

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - MORNING

Dereck is making coffee when Chuck, a bearded stocky man, comes in for the morning shift.

DERECK

Sup, Chuck.

Chuck GRUMBLES under his breath, staggers to the restroom, and SLAMS the door behind him.

We hear HEAVY VOMITING muffled by the door.

Dereck puts his notebook in his satchel.

The door to the restroom opens and Chuck BURPS as he steps out.

DERECK

Ruff night?

CHUCK

Sheila left again.

DERECK

(smiles)

What did you do this time?

CHUCK  
Nothin' really.

DERECK  
Really? C'mon.

CHUCK  
Well, I maybe got a little drunk with  
the boys last night and put a dent in  
the car when I drove it home.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP

Dereck and Chuck stand looking down at Chuck's car. We see the city behind them.

DERECK  
A dent, huh?

We see Chuck's car. The front bumper is held on with duct tape, and the windshield on the passenger side has a hole in it.

CHUCK  
OK, maybe a bit more than a dent.

Dereck walks around the car to get a better look at it.

DERECK  
Yeah, I'll say. What did you hit?

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - THE NIGHT BEFORE

Chuck and four other men stand around a flaming barrel drinking beer and passing around a bottle of tequila. One man is passed out in a lawn chair.

Chuck SLAPS him on his arm.

CHUCK  
Alright Tom, time to go.

Tom GROANS and weakly tries to get up, only to slump back down in his chair.

CHUCK  
C'mon, Sheila's gonna kick my ass. Get  
up, let's go.

GUYS  
(in unison)  
Pussy-whipped!

Tom, eyes closed, GIGGLES.

Chuck helps him up, but he immediately falls over.

The guys LAUGH as Chuck and another friend help up Tom and walk him to Chuck's car, dumping him in the passenger seat.

Chuck stumbles around to the driver side, digging his keys out of his pocket, only to drop them. He bends down to pick them up.

FRIEND  
You good to drive?

CHUCK  
You good to shut the fuck up?

FRIEND  
(laughs)  
Alright, be careful.

CHUCK  
(under his breath)  
Be careful.

Chuck gets in his car as his friend walks back to the group.

NARROW ROAD

We see Chuck driving, struggling to keep his eyes focused, while Tom is passed out in the passenger seat.

The car weaves left and right.

We see a skunk run into the road.

Chuck swerves and struggles to keep his car on the road.



The car SLAMS into a mailbox post.

The mailbox CRASHES through the windshield, hitting Tom in the head and landing in his lap.

The car SCREECHES to a halt.

We see Chuck and Tom sitting wide-eyed staring forward. A plume of smoke pours from the hood of the car as the engine HISSES. Tom touches his bloody forehead and looks at his hand.

TOM

Ouch. Fuck. What the fuck, man?

CHUCK

You OK?

EXT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - MORNING AFTER THE ACCIDENT

Dereck and Chuck stare at the car.

DERECK

A skunk?

CHUCK

I think it was a skunk.

DERECK

Was Tom OK?

CHUCK

Oh, he's fine. That guy's head is shielded by a thick layer of dumb.

DERECK

What did Sheila do when she saw the car?

CUT TO:

INT. CHUCK'S HOUSE - THE PREVIOUS NIGHT AFTER THE ACCIDENT

We see Chuck in his living room standing next to the front door of his house, a window on his right. Outside of the window, we see his wrecked car. We hear his wife YELLING at him as we see bottles and plates SMASH against the wall behind him.

SHEILA (O.S.)

You stupid fuckin' drunk, what the fuck  
were you doin' you fuckin' idiot.

Glass SMASHES around Chuck as he stands still staring at the  
floor.

SHEILA (CONT.)

This is all you ever do, go out, get  
fucked up with those fuck ups you call  
friends and ruin everything I pay for.  
I work eighteen hour shifts at the  
hospital so you can just keep your  
shitty little job running that gas  
station and drink your life away you  
little fucker. Well, not anymore, you  
little shit. This is it, I'm leaving  
for good. Enjoy your stupid little  
drunk friends asshole.

A toaster oven flies past Chuck and SLAMS against the door  
behind him.

He looks up.

CHUCK

Hey!

EXT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - MORNING AFTER THE ACCIDENT

Dereck and Chuck stare at the car.

DERECK

Do you think she's coming back?

CHUCK

Yeah, she'll go to her mother's house  
for a day or two, cool down, and come  
crawling back.

DERECK

Crawling back? Crawling back to what?

Chuck motions to his pudgy torso.

CHUCK

All this, what else?

DERECK

You know her best. Good luck with that.

CHUCK

Yeah, thanks.

They both turn around and walk toward the station.

CHUCK

Oh, how did that meeting go?

Dereck GROANS and keeps walking.

CHUCK

Fine, I really don't want to know anyway. I tell you my story, and you just ignore me.

They both walk back into the station. In the distance, the city comes into focus.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Dereck is sitting at his computer with his notebook by his side. We hear the CLICKING of his keyboard as he types.

The phone RINGS in his kitchen.

Dereck keeps typing as his answering machine picks up.

DAVID (ANSWERING MACHINE)

Dereck, it's David. Just calling to remind you about the party tonight. We'll get going around ten. We've got booze and food here so just come by when you can. Bring whoever you want with you. You should invite that girl you're always talking about. I'll see you tonight.

Dereck stops typing.

DERECK

Shit. Party.

Dereck's cat Franz, laying on his bed, stretches and cleans itself.

DERECK  
(to Franz)  
If only it were that simple.

Dereck shuts off his computer and lies down on his bed. As he stares at the ceiling, his eyes begin to close and he drifts off to sleep.

LATER

We hear a loud KNOCKING at Dereck's front door. He's startled awake. The KNOCKING continues.

DERECK  
Coming!

Dereck walks to the door, as the KNOCKING persists.

DERECK (CONT.)  
Jesus Christ.  
  
(yelling)  
Coming!

Dereck opens the door revealing Ms. Flenderman. It is now dusk.

DERECK  
Hi, Ms. Flenderman.

MS. FLENDERMAN  
Dereck, did you see where that little bastard of a grandson went?

DERECK  
No, I was sleeping.

MS. FLENDERMAN  
That little son of a bitch took my wallet and left. You sure you didn't see him?

DERECK  
I'm sure. He'll be back soon, don't worry about it.

Ms. Flenderman turns toward another door.

MS. FLENDERMAN

That little bastard, stealing from me.

She starts KNOCKING on his neighbor's door.

DERECK

Bye, Ms. Flenderman.

Dereck closes the door. We hear Ms. Flenderman BANGING on the other door as he walks back into the bedroom.

INT. BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP - DUSK

We see Dereck walk into the coffee shop. Rose is behind the counter with her back turned to Dereck as he enters the shop.

Megan, a younger female coworker, sees Dereck come in as she approaches Rose.

MEGAN

Your loser boyfriend is here.

Rose looks behind her.

ROSE

He's not my boyfriend, and he's not a loser. He's a really nice guy.

MEGAN

Whatever. He looks like a serial killer. You know, those lonely types that spend all of their time inside and don't know how to act when they go into public and end up slicing up the innocent girl that's nice enough to talk to them. Some young girl feels sorry for the guy, and agrees to see a movie with him, and next thing you know, her body is found in a ditch next to the interstate with her tits cut off.

ROSE

You've really thought a lot about this haven't you?

Dereck approaches the counter as Megan leaves and Rose turns around.

MEGAN  
Just watch your back.

ROSE  
(to Dereck)  
Cup of coffee?

DERECK  
Yeah, sure.

Rose pours him a coffee.

ROSE  
You going to work?

DERECK  
No, I'm off tonight. I'm actually going to a party.

ROSE  
That sounds like fun.

DERECK  
Yeah, maybe. I never know how to act at these things. You, maybe, want to go?

ROSE  
I don't know. I mean, I gotta work late.

DERECK  
Well, the party's going to be going on late. What time do you get off?

ROSE  
About midnight.

DERECK  
Here.

Dereck pulls out a pen and a slip of paper.

DERECK (CONT.)  
I'll give you the address and if you want, just stop by after work.

Dereck scribbles on the paper and gives it to Rose.

DERECK (CONT.)

I put their number on there if you need directions.

ROSE

Ok, I'll see how I feel when I get out of here.

She hands him his coffee and he pays her.

DERECK

Alright. Maybe I'll see you later.

ROSE

Yeah, we'll see.

DERECK

OK.

Dereck turns to leave.

ROSE

Oh, wait.

DERECK

Yeah.

ROSE

If I make it out, do I need to bring anything?

DERECK

If you want, but they're gonna have plenty of stuff there.

ROSE

Alright.

DERECK

OK, see you.

ROSE

See ya, Dereck.

Dereck leaves the coffee shop.

We see Rose looking at the slip of paper.

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - NIGHT OF PARTY

The house is full of people.

Dereck is sitting in a chair, away from everyone else, sipping a beer.

Dereck checks his watch. It is 11:30.

He sips his beer again and gets up to make his way through the house.

As he awkwardly moves through the crowd, weaving out of people's way as they pay no attention to him, he bumps into Chuck.

CHUCK  
(drunk)  
Dereck!

DERECK  
Chuck, what's up? Did Sheila ever come home?

CHUCK  
Not yet.  
  
(gulps his beer)  
Fuck her.

We hear someone YELL from another room.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Fuck you Chuck!

CHUCK  
(toward voice)  
Who the fuck said that! Show yourself, you piece of shit!

DERECK  
Hey, calm down, man.

CHUCK  
I'm going outside. I can't deal with these fuckers!



EXT. BACKYARD

Dereck and Chuck make their way through the back door of the house. People mingle outside. David is talking to a few people Dereck doesn't know. Chuck and Dereck walk up to David as the other people walk away.

DAVID  
(to Dereck)  
Having fun?

DERECK  
Sure. A lot of people I don't know.

DAVID  
Mingle. Who knows, you might find yourself a woman tonight.

CHUCK  
(laughs)  
Likely.

Cheryl, David's wife, walks over to Dereck and David.

CHERYL  
Hey, Dereck. Did that girl show up?

DERECK  
Not yet.

CHUCK  
What, you mean that girl from the coffee shop? Yeah, like she's interested.

CHERYL  
Hey, Chuck.

CHUCK  
What's up, Cheryl?

CHERYL  
So where's Sheila? I haven't seen her tonight. Did she have to work?

CHUCK  
(gulps beer)  
Yeah, something like that.

DERECK  
She left him again.

DAVID  
Smart woman.

CHUCK  
I need another drink.

Chuck goes inside.

CHERYL  
I'm sure she'll come out, Dereck. I mean what else is going on tonight?

DERECK  
Yeah, we'll see.

DAVID  
Oh, how did your meeting go the other day?

DERECK  
(sighs)  
Not well. I...I really don't want to talk about it right now. How's business at the bar?

DAVID  
Good, about to get better. The community college will be back in session in a couple of weeks, which means all the drunk kids will be back in town.

The three of them stand quietly. David waves to someone in the distance.

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - LATER

Dereck is standing against a wall watching the front door. He looks at his watch. It is 12:30. Chuck walks up behind him.

CHUCK  
Give it up.

The door opens and a female walks in. She hugs a man standing in a group next to the door. Dereck sips his beer.

CHUCK  
(burps)  
See, I told you.

Chuck pats Dereck on the back, and walks away.

CHUCK (O.S.)  
Hey, that's my tequila!

Dereck looks at his watch again and finishes his beer.

LATER

Dereck is sitting on a couch looking at his watch. It is 1:45. Chuck is sleeping next to him. The party is winding down.

Dereck watches the door as people leave.

David sits down next to Dereck.

DAVID  
She probably got held up at work.

DERECK  
Yeah.

The last couple of people walk up to David.

FRIEND OF DAVID  
Good fun, but we're getting out of here.

DAVID  
Yeah, man. Be safe.

David watches as they leave.

DAVID  
(to Cheryl in kitchen)  
Hey honey?

CHERYL(O.S)  
What's up?

DAVID  
Is there anyone out back?

CHERYL(O.S.)  
I don't see anyone.

DAVID  
(to Dereck)  
I'll be right back.

David disappears into his bedroom for a moment.

We see Chuck SNORING next to Dereck.

David reappears from his bedroom with a small wooden box and sits in a chair.

DAVID  
A little nightcap.

David pulls a joint out of the box, lights it and passes it to Dereck.

DAVID (CONT.)  
Did you have a good time tonight?

DERECK  
I guess. You know I'm always awkward  
around crowds.

Cheryl comes into the room and sits on the arm of the chair next to David.

CHERYL  
You just need to learn how to loosen  
up.

Dereck passes the joint to Cheryl.

DERECK  
Well, that's just not in the cards.

Chuck sniffs the air, GROANS, and wakes up.

CHERYL  
It's alive.

CHUCK

Fuck you, Cheryl. Hey, can I pass out here?

DAVID

Really, Chuck? Why should we let you stay here?

CHUCK

Because I'm so precious.

CHERYL

Sure, just keep your clothes on tonight. I don't want to wake up to your naked fat ass in the morning like every other time you've passed out here.

DAVID

(to Dereck)

You never told us what went down at the meeting you had.

DERECK

It was awful. They called me in just to berate me and tell me how terrible of a writer I am. I've never felt worse in my life.

Chuck reaches for the joint.

CHUCK

What about when that girl you like didn't show up to the party?

DERECK

Yeah, thanks.

CHUCK

That's why I'm here.

CHERYL

No wonder Sheila keeps leaving.

CHUCK

Yeah, but she keeps coming back too.

CHERYL

Well, that's puzzling.

Chuck shrugs his shoulders.

DAVID  
(to Dereck)  
Did they say anything that was  
constructive?

DERECK  
He told me I should write what I know.  
You know, pull from my experiences.

DAVID  
Well, do that. It might help your  
work.

DERECK  
Yeah. Maybe.

DAVID  
I mean, don't get me wrong, I like what  
I've read, but it does seem a bit  
stilted. It wouldn't hurt to try  
approaching things from a different  
angle.

DERECK  
Stilted?

DAVID  
Yeah. Stilted.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT

Dereck is standing behind the counter of the station when a  
woman comes in with three small children.

The kids run up and down the aisles.

They begin opening candy bars and throwing food from the shelves  
on the floor.

The woman walks up to the counter.

WOMAN

I need ten on two and a pack of  
Newports.

We see Dereck look over the woman's shoulder at the kids as they  
stuff their faces with chocolate and potato chips.

DERECK

Is that it?

WOMAN

(frustrated)

Yes.

DERECK

I'm going to have to charge you for  
what your kids are eating over there.

WOMAN

Those ain't my kids.

DERECK

They're not? Then, where did they come  
from?

WOMAN

They were around the building when I  
came up.

DERECK

Alright.

Dereck walks around the counter to the kids and chases them out  
of the store.

DERECK

Come on. Get out of here.

The children GIGGLE as they run out, their faces covered in  
chocolate and their filthy little hands holding all the food  
they can carry.

DERECK

Little shits.

Dereck walks back around the counter to finish helping the  
woman.

DERECK  
Sorry about that.

He totals her purchase.

WOMAN  
Yeah, you should be.

She pays Dereck.

WOMAN (CONT.)  
Can't get good service nowhere.

DERECK  
Excuse me?

WOMAN  
You heard me.

The woman walks outside to her car near the gas pumps.

DERECK  
Bitch.

Dereck picks up his notebook and pen and starts writing.

LATER

Dereck YAWNS as he turns on the small television behind the counter. A pretty blonde woman is reading the news.

TELEVISION

NEWS REPORTER  
...in other news, a coffee shop was robbed last night. Police suspect the same man involved in previous thefts around the region.

We see the sketch of the suspected thief.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT.)  
No deaths have been reported in this incident. On a lighter note, local cat, Simon, was saved from a rooftop today.



We see a fireman holding a cat as he climbs down a ladder from the roof of a tall office building.

NEWS REPORTER (CONT.)

Simon was fine, but the fireman got a little clawed up.

(to her male co-anchor)

I guess that just comes with the territory.

MALE REPORTER

(laughing)

That's right.

(more serious)

We need heroes like that.

DERECK

He SIGHS while staring blankly at the small television screen. YAWNING, he makes his way to the coffee machine and makes himself a cup of coffee. While he is stirring in his nondairy powdered creamer, the door to the station SLINGS open.

Rose comes into the station, followed by the same three dirty faced, grimy fingered kids Dereck chased out of the store earlier.

Dereck peers around the corner and first looks a bit surprised to see Rose, but then sees the kids run past Rose into the candy aisle. He chases them out of the store.

DERECK

(to kids)

Hey. Get the hell out of here.

(to Rose)

Where the hell are these kids coming from?

ROSE

I saw them come from the side of the building when I walked up. I wonder where their parents are?

DERECK

Who knows? How are you? I guess you got too busy to come to the party last night.

ROSE

You didn't hear?

DERECK

Hear what?

ROSE

The shop was robbed last night.

DERECK

Oh shit. That was your shop? I just heard something about it on the news. Are you OK? They didn't hurt anyone did they?

ROSE

No, no. It was just one guy. I was there alone, closing up, when he burst through the door with a gun.

CUT TO:

INT. BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP - PREVIOUS NIGHT

Rose locks the glass door to the shop and turns her back to it when we see a foot KICK the door open.

Before Rose can turn around, the burglar grabs her from behind and holds a gun to her head.

He walks her behind the counter, to the register, and forces her to open it.

Rose, panicking, fumbles as she tries to open the register.

The thief, getting frustrated, SLAMS the gun on the counter and raises it back to her head pressing the barrel of the gun deep into her cheek.

The register CHINGS open as Rose begins to cry.

The thief pulls out a bag and motions for her to put the money in it.

Rose, gun in cheek, does so.

Once she is finished, the thief throws her to the ground and runs out of the shop.

We never get a good look at the thief's face.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT AFTER ROBBERY

Rose stands next to Dereck after telling him what happened to her last night.

DERECK

God, I'm so sorry about that. Are you OK? Can the police do anything?

ROSE

I'm fine, and they're looking for him. Well, I'm not fine really. I'm sorry I didn't make it to the party, I was going to come out...

DERECK

No, no. Are you kidding me? After that?

ROSE

Yeah, I guess. But...

(pauses)

I was wondering if I could hang out here for a bit. I don't want to go home. I couldn't sleep at all last night, and I really don't want to be alone.

DERECK

Sure, definitely. You can help me keep those kids out of here.

ROSE

I have some pepper spray.

DERECK  
That would probably work.

LATER

We see Dereck and Rose behind the counter playing poker, Rose sits in a chair as Dereck stands next to the register.

ROSE'S POV

She notices a shotgun under the counter.

DERECK AND ROSE

Rose looks up to Dereck and smiles.

ROSE  
We should bet something.

DERECK  
But you're beating me every hand.

ROSE  
I know, let's play strip poker.

DERECK  
(embarrassed)  
Uh. No. I mean, I don't want to disappoint.

ROSE  
(giggles)  
You're too modest.

DERECK  
Modesty keeps others from being let down when I can't deliver.

Rose opens a small bag of potato chips.

ROSE  
Who would you be letting down?

DERECK

I really don't know. I don't think anyone expects much from me anyway.

ROSE

Well, what do you expect from yourself?

DERECK

I really don't know.

ROSE

OK. What do you know?

DERECK

That I would have been naked an hour ago if we were playing strip poker.

ROSE

So I could've gotten a show an hour ago?

DERECK

Not much of one.

Rose CRUNCHES into a potato chip.

ROSE

You're cute.

DERECK

Um, and you shouldn't talk with your mouth full.

Rose smiles as she covers her mouth and swallows the potato chip.

ROSE

Alright, mom.

DERECK

I'm just saying that its rude.

Rose throws a chip at Dereck.

DERECK

I've gotta clean that up you know.

ROSE

Do you think I'm cute?

DERECK

Well, yeah. Of course.

Rose smiles and throws another chip.

DERECK

You're cleaning that up.

ROSE

I don't work here.

DERECK

I sometimes wonder why I do.

ROSE

Things will get better.

DERECK

How can you be so sure?

ROSE

I just know.

DERECK

Sure.

ROSE

My deal.

She takes the cards and shuffles them. Dereck watches her. Rose looks over to a crumpled notebook on the counter behind Dereck.

ROSE

You been writing?

DERECK

Yeah.

ROSE

Can I read?

DERECK

Well, that's just notes, so, no. Maybe when I get something more I'll let you be my editor.

ROSE  
(smiling)  
I'd like that.

LATER

Rose sits in a chair behind the counter eating a candy bar.  
Dereck checks inventory in the store.

ROSE  
Ugh. I've had too much junk food  
tonight.

DERECK  
Yes, you have.

Rose YAWNS and curls up in the chair.

ROSE  
I think I'm gonna take a nap for bit.

DERECK  
What's that?

Rose doesn't respond. Dereck walks through the door that leads behind the counter and watches Rose for a moment as she sleeps. He grabs his jacket off of the coat rack and drapes it over her. Rose MOANS softly as he places the jacket on her.

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - MORNING

Dereck is counting down the register while Rose is still sleeping in the chair. Dereck notices Chuck's beaten up car pull into the parking lot of the station.

Chuck stumbles out of his car, COUGHING, and rubbing his eyes under his sunglasses. He notices Dereck watching him from the window of the station. Chucks waves to Dereck and walks into the station.

As he comes through the door, the same three dirty little kids run in behind him GIGGLING.

CHUCK

What the fuck? Where the fuck did they  
come from?

DERECK

Around the building.

(yelling at kids)

Hey! Get the fuck out of here!

Dereck comes around the counter and chases the kids again. The  
commotion wakes up Rose. Chuck throws his hands in the air.

CHUCK

It's too early for this shit.

We see Rose stand up behind the counter, stretching.

CHUCK (CONT.)

Who's she?

Dereck chases the kids out of the store.

DERECK

Oh, that's Rose. She came by to keep  
me company last night.

Rose rubs her eyes and waves to Chuck.

ROSE

Hello.

CHUCK

Hello.

Chuck walks behind the counter, followed by Dereck, and sees  
empty candy wrappers, potato chip bags, and potato chips on the  
floor.

CHUCK

Have a good dinner?

ROSE

Oh, sorry. Let me clean that up.

She bends down to clean the mess.



DERECK

Sorry, man. I was gonna clean up.  
I've got the drop for the bank if you  
want me to make it.

CHUCK

Yeah, sure.

Dereck and Rose gather their things and leave the store.

ROSE

(to Chuck)

Bye, nice meeting you.

CHUCK

Yeah.

(to himself)

Fuck, I'm still drunk.

EXT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP

Rose and Dereck walk into the station parking lot.

ROSE

You want a ride home.

DERECK

Sure. Could you drop me by the bank?

ROSE

(yawning)

Yeah, that's fine.

DERECK

Thanks.

Dereck and Rose get into her car.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OF DERECK'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Rose and Dereck pull up in her car.

DERECK

Thanks for the ride.

ROSE

No problem. Do you mind if I come in for a bit?

DERECK

Uh, yeah, sure.

They get out of the car and walk to Dereck's apartment.

Ms. Flenderman is standing outside in her nightgown staring up at the sky.

DERECK

Hey, Ms. Flenderman.

She looks toward Dereck without saying anything and then back toward the sky.

Dereck opens the door to his apartment. Franz MEOWS as the door SQUEAKS opens.

DERECK

Now, this place is a bit of mess.

ROSE

I wouldn't expect anything else.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT

The two of them enter the apartment. Rose notices the cat and kneels down to pet it.

ROSE

Aw. What's its name?

DERECK

Franz.

ROSE

Franz. Like Kafka?

DERECK

Yes. I wouldn't take you for someone who likes Kafka.

ROSE

Why not?

DERECK

You just don't seem like the type. I mean, Kafka is kind of a downer, and you seem like the exact opposite.

Dereck places his satchel on the floor next to the couch and sits down. Rose picks up the cat, brings it over to the couch and sits next to Dereck.

ROSE

Sure, but he's funny too. Every dark story has some rays of light.

DERECK

Yeah, I suppose.

Rose grabs a pillow from the couch, puts it in Dereck's lap and lays her head on the pillow. Dereck is a little shocked by her familiarity.

Rose puts Franz on the couch in front of her and pets him.

ROSE

(yawning)

There are good and pleasant things that come from the darkest stories ever told. You really can't have torture and depression if you've never known ecstasy and pleasantness.

Rose begins to drift off to sleep.

DERECK

Yeah, but he tends to leave out the pleasant moments and all you're left with is agony and despair.

Rose doesn't respond. Dereck looks down to see her sleeping.

He watches her for a moment and reluctantly runs his fingers through her hair.

Rose, eyes closed, smiles.

FADE OUT:

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DERECK'S DREAM

Dereck is in the same waiting room as before, but this time the flickering, BUZZING, florescent lights tinge the now grimy room with a sickly shade of green.

He is sitting in the same spot as before.

He looks around the room to see a few elderly people, COUGHING, and wiping their noses with stained tissues.

His satchel is in his lap. He looks inside to see only blank pages.

He pulls out a blank sheet of paper and we see words appear letter by letter on the paper: *Dereck looks over to an old woman sitting across from him, is scrawled on the page.*

Dereck looks over to see an old woman staring at him. Her skin is dry and peeling.

OLD WOMAN

It's really easy, isn't it?

Dereck looks back down at the page: *"It's really easy isn't it," the woman said, is scrawled on the page.*

He slides the paper back into his satchel.

An elderly woman walks past him to the chair along the same wall as his. She sits down.

The door beside Dereck CREAKS open and Humphrey's secretary steps out.

SECRETARY

Dereck Fickle (Fie-kel)?

DERECK

Yes.

SECRETARY

(smiling)

He'll see you now.

DERECK

Oh. OK.

Dereck gathers his satchel and follows the secretary.

## HALLWAY

He is led into a long narrow hall. Papers are scattered on the floor. The walls are grimy and the lights flicker.

The secretary keeps a quick, steady pace. We hear her heels CLACKING as she walks.

Dereck begins to fall behind her.

SECRETARY

How are you Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel)?

Dereck quickens his pace to catch up to her.

DERECK

I'm um, I'm fine.

SECRETARY

That's good. I trust you had a nice trip here.

DERECK

(confused)

I really don't remember.

SECRETARY

That's alright, it will come back to you soon.

DERECK

What do you mean?

SECRETARY

That's not important. You should focus on the meeting.

DERECK

Yeah. Um, what meeting is that?

SECRETARY

Now, don't be funny Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel).

DERECK

OK.

The secretary stops at the end of the hallway, in front of a door.

Dereck almost bumps into her as she stops, not noticing they were at the end of the hallway.

She turns around to face him.

SECRETARY

Here we are. Do you need anything else  
Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel)?

DERECK

No. I guess not.

SECRETARY

Good. Enjoy the meeting.

She opens the door, moves past Dereck, and walks back down the hallway disappearing into darkness.

MR. HUMPHREY'S OFFICE

Dereck slowly walks through the door. The office is exactly the same as he remembered it.

Light sparkles through the window behind Humphrey's desk.

Mr. Humphrey sits at his desk reading Dereck's notebook. Without looking up, he motions Dereck to sit in the chair in front of his desk.

Dereck moves to the chair and sits down.

As he sits down, the door SLAMS and Humphrey SLAPS closed the notebook.

MR. HUMPHREY

How are you Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel)?

DERECK

I'm fine. Isn't that mine?

MR. HUMPHREY

It is, and may I say that this is a great piece of work. I can't wait until you finish it.

DERECK

Really? You like it?

MR. HUMPHREY

Very much. It's almost like I know the characters. Like they're real instead of manufactured.

DERECK

Well, they are.

MR. HUMPHREY

(smiling)

That's great. That's what you should have been doing all along. People need to relate to your characters. They need to be able to jump right off the page and make immediate impressions on the reader. So, that makes your job easier if they're real.

DERECK

Huh.

Dereck sniffs the air.

DERECK (CONT.)

Do you smell coffee?

MR. HUMPHREY

No, you do.

DERECK

Yeah, I do.

We hear coffee cups and silverware CLATTERING near Humphrey's office bar.

Dereck turns in his chair to look and we see Rose at the bar pouring a cup of coffee and stirring some sugar into it.

We hear the CLANG of the spoon on the rim of the coffee cup.

CUT TO:

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

Dereck wakes up on his couch. He has fallen over onto his side. The pillow Rose slept on is in his lap.

We see Rose in his kitchen making coffee. Dereck sits upright and stretches. Rose comes in with two cups.

ROSE  
I can't get away from serving you  
coffee.

Dereck, rubbing his eyes, takes the coffee from Rose.

DERECK  
Thanks.

Rose sits down in a chair next to the couch. She sips her coffee.

ROSE  
You're milk was expired, so it's only  
with sugar.

DERECK  
(sips his coffee)  
It's good.

ROSE  
Thanks for putting up with me last  
night. Sorry I passed out here.

DERECK  
No, that's fine. I had a good time.

ROSE  
Me too.

DERECK  
So, I guess I don't have to come see  
you today.

ROSE  
Nope. I'm right here. I won't be at  
work for another week anyway.

DERECK  
Oh.

ROSE  
Yeah, time off for almost getting  
killed.



DERECK

Well, at least they gave you that. So, what are you gonna do?

ROSE

I really don't know. I still don't want to go home. You know, being a girl, I get scared of being alone after someone sticks a gun in my face.

DERECK

Feel free to stay here as long as you like. I could use the company.

ROSE

Do you have to work tonight?

DERECK

Yeah.

ROSE

Too bad.

DERECK

Why?

Rose shrugs and drinks her coffee.

DERECK

I could maybe get the night off.

ROSE

(perks up)

Can you?

DERECK

Um, let me see.

Dereck gets off the couch and walks to the phone in the kitchen.

He calls Chuck.

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Chuck is waiting on a little old lady when the store phone RINGS. He answers the phone before finishing with the customer.

DERECK

Hey Chuck, it's Dereck.

CHUCK

You have fun this morning?

DERECK

Yeah, sure. Hey, can you call Larry and see if he can work for me tonight?

CHUCK

Oh, I see, you still got work to do, huh?

DERECK

C'mon, man. Will you call him for me?

CHUCK

He went to his mother's place.

DERECK

What?

CHUCK

He's out of town, remember. His mother's dying or something, some kind of cancer, or she's loosing her mind, or something.

DERECK

Fuck.

CHUCK

Yeah, that sucks.

DERECK

Can you fill in for me tonight?

CHUCK

Oh, fuck you.

DERECK

C'mon, man. I'll pull two shifts for you next week. Do this for me, please?

CHUCK

Jesus, Dereck. Fine, but you work two of my shifts next week.

DERECK  
Yeah, definitely.

CHUCK  
And one the week after.

DERECK  
Really?

CHUCK  
I'm meeting up with Sheila that week,  
so I'm gonna need a little extra time.

DERECK  
Alright, sure.

CHUCK  
We'll work out the details next time I  
see you.

DERECK  
Good. Thanks, man.

CHUCK  
Yep.

Chuck hangs up the phone and goes back to the counter where the old woman is waiting for him.

CHUCK  
(to customer)  
Sorry, just had to help a friend dip  
his stick.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dereck hangs up the phone, walks back to the couch and sits down.

DERECK  
So, what do you want to do?

ROSE  
(smiling)  
Food would be a good place to start.

DERECK

Good. Food sounds good. Let me get a quick shower and we'll get some food.

ROSE

Good, but I'll need to go to my place for a change of clothes.

DERECK

OK. I'll get cleaned up.

ROSE

I'll be here.

Dereck disappears into his bathroom.

Rose sees his notebook sticking out of his satchel on the floor. She picks it up and begins thumbing through it.

We see her name in the notebook.

LATER

Dereck comes out of the bathroom wearing a fresh set of clothes. Rose is sitting in the chair playing with Franz. Dereck glances at his satchel and we see the notebook still there.

DERECK

Ready?

ROSE

Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

Rose opens her front door and leads Dereck inside. Her apartment is quaint and looks very comfortable. Purple drapes hang over the windows, tinting the room as light beams through.

Rose closes the door.

ROSE

Alright, make yourself at home. I'll be right back.

Rose motions to a small couch covered in colorful pillows and disappears into the back of the apartment. Dereck looks around.

DERECK'S POV

On a bookshelf, he sees the bones of a bird, bleached white, bony wings spread wide. Next to it is a small rag doll missing an eye.

LATER

Rose comes back wearing fresh clothes and carrying a backpack. Dereck is on her couch.

ROSE

All ready. What do you want to eat?

DERECK

I haven't really thought about it.

ROSE

I know where we can go.

CUT TO:

INT. MONTY'S CAFE - MIDDAY

Rose and Dereck sit at a small table. The restaurant is filled with business men and women. Dereck looks a bit confused. Rose is smiling as she sips a bloody mary.

ROSE

What do you think?

DERECK

It's kinda weird.

ROSE

I know, right?

She takes the stalk of celery out of her drink and bites into it. It CRACKS as she chews.

ROSE (CONT.)

This place is right outside of the city. All of these guys come here to slum with the locals and get away from their busy lives, even if just for a few minutes. The sad thing is that most of them aren't able to do that. Take that guy over there.

She nods to a man sitting behind Dereck. Dereck turns to look at the man sitting next to a window.

DERECK'S POV

He sees a man with a beeper in one hand, his neck clasp to his shoulder as he talks on a bulky cellphone, and his other hand shoves food into his mouth.

ROSE(CONT.)

See. I bet all that guy wants to do is get away but he doesn't know how. He comes here to force himself out of the city, away from his job, but he ends up working twice as hard while he's away, like he's making up for lost time. Sad, if you think about it.

DERECK AND ROSE

Dereck looks at Rose, then around the cafe. He nods to a couple sitting at a table in the middle of the cafe.

DERECK

What about them?

Rose turns to look.

ROSE'S POV

The couple is holding hands across from each other and smiling while they talk.

DERECK AND ROSE

Rose watches the couple, then turns to Dereck.

ROSE

That's nice. That's what I like.  
Those that can get away. That's why I  
come here, to find those people. Good  
eye.

Rose sips her bloody mary.

A handsome young waiter comes over to the table carrying two plates. He places a plate with a large cheeseburger and mound of fries in front of Rose.

WAITER

(to Rose)

Here you go, Rose.

ROSE

Thanks.

WAITER

You know, eating like that is gonna  
kill you.

ROSE

Death tastes good.

The waiter places a turkey sandwich and potato chips in front of Dereck.

WAITER

And here you go.

DERECK

Thank you.

WAITER

Anything else?

Rose holds up her bloody mary as she chews on a couple of fries.

ROSE

One more of these.

WAITER

Sure thing.

The waiter leaves to get the other bloody mary. Rose MOANS as she takes a big bite of her burger.

DERECK

They know you around here, huh?

ROSE

(chewing food)

More or less, I mean I'm here a lot,  
usually don't talk much, just watch.

Dereck, about to take a bite of his sandwich, notices a man behind Rose. Dereck nods to the man.

DERECK

What about that guy?

Rose turns around in her chair to look at the man.

ROSE'S POV

An older, slightly overweight, gentleman wearing a light blue sports coat and khaki pants hiked up to reveal thin black socks, sits by himself drinking coffee.

His black toupee hangs over his grey natural hair.

DERECK AND ROSE

She watches him briefly, then turns back to Dereck.

ROSE

Yeah, he's stuck.

Dereck takes a bite of his sandwich and smiles at Rose.

CUT TO:

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dereck and Rose are lying down curled up on his couch watching TV. Rose picks up the remote and turns off the TV.



ROSE  
Can't we entertain ourselves?

DERECK  
What did you have in mind?

Rose smiles and we see her slide down to Dereck's lap and unbutton his pants.

FADE OUT:

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT

Dereck walks into the station, his satchel over his shoulder. Chuck is behind the counter sitting in a chair wearing sunglasses. Dereck walks around to the door leading behind the counter.

DERECK  
Hey, Chuck.

Chuck doesn't respond. Dereck continues behind the counter toward Chuck and notices him SNORING.

DERECK  
Chuck?

Chuck still doesn't respond, so Dereck pokes him a couple of times until he wakes up.

He jerks awake and settles in his chair.

CHUCK  
What day is it?

DERECK  
Thursday.

CHUCK  
I've been here for almost two days?

DERECK  
Yeah, almost. Where's Denise?

CHUCK  
Her son got some kinda pneumonia or something. She called in last night.

CHUCK (CONT.)

On the bright side, I might get about a week off with all this time everyone owes me.

DERECK

C'mon, go get some sleep.

CHUCK

Yeah.

Chuck stands up and stretches.

CHUCK (CONT.)

How was your date?

DERECK

It was fun. She's staying at my place for little while.

CHUCK

Good on you, man. Alright, I'll get the soggy details from you later. I'm getting out of here.

DERECK

Get some rest.

Chuck staggers out of the station, still wearing his sunglasses.

LATER

Dereck is thumbing through his notebook. When he comes to the last page of notes, he sees that Rose has scribbled "Good work, but you need a conflict" in red ink.

A man walks into the station turning away from Dereck and walking down one of the store aisles. Dereck watches the man for a moment then turns back to his notebook.

While looking down, he hears the man COUGH. He looks up to see a gun pointed at him. He jerks back, putting his hands in the air. The man smiles at Dereck.

MAN

What you writing there?

Dereck, frightened, can't talk.

MAN (CONT.)  
I get it. You're scared, and that's understandable. It is hard to have a conversation in these circumstances.

Dereck stands frozen as the man holds the gun at him.

MAN (CONT.)  
Alright, I don't want you to piss yourself. Just give me the money out of the register.

Dereck looks down at the register, still unable to move.

The man SLAMS his gun on the counter.

MAN (CONT.)  
Money!

Dereck snaps out of his frozen demeanor and opens the register. He takes out a fistful of money and tries to hand it to the man.

MAN (CONT.)  
(calmer)  
In a bag. Put it in a bag.

Dereck looks around and grabs a plastic bag. He stuffs it with money. When he has it bagged, he hands it to the man. The man snatches the bag but remains standing at the counter.

MAN (CONT.)  
I'm gonna get some other things.

Dereck grabs another bag.

MAN (CONT.)  
A couple of cartons of cigarettes.  
Some of that jerky.

Dereck turns around to bag the items.

MAN (CONT.)  
Just get me a little of everything you got back there. A couple of them porno mags, too.

The man grabs the notebook off the counter and thumbs through it. Dereck turns around with a couple of bags full of the robber's loot, and sees the man reading his notebook.

MAN (CONT.)

So, what are you, some kinda writer?  
Do you know these people?

Dereck stands quietly holding the bags.

The man thrusts his gun into Dereck's face.

MAN (CONT.)

Do you know these people?

DERECK

Yes.

MAN

Huh.

He continues reading the notebook.

MAN (CONT.)

Hey, this is about that coffee shop I  
robbed the other night. Do you know  
that girl?

DERECK

Yes.

MAN

Small world.

The man tosses the notebook on the counter and takes the bags from Dereck. He looks through them.

MAN

You got any vitamins?

Dereck points down a store aisle.

DERECK

Over there.

MAN

Thanks.

The man backs down the aisle, his gun pointed at Dereck.

He stops, raises his gun.

MAN

Bang!

He lowers his gun and starts looking through the shelves.

MAN (CONT.)

Hey, good luck with that book, or whatever it is you're writing. You might make me famous. If I'm already in the book, then I'm sure this is gonna be.

He finds the vitamins he wants and puts them in the bag.

We hear a THUD and a LATCH. The man whips around and we see that Dereck has closed and is locking the bulletproof guard between the store and the counter.

The man BLASTS two shots, deflected by the guard.

Dereck falls down to the ground and grabs the shotgun beneath the counter, looks to see if it is loaded and gets ready to fire.

The man runs around to the door leading behind the counter and SMASHES it open.

Dereck BLASTS the shotgun.

The man is flung backward against the coffee maker. The door SLAMS shut, barely on its hinges, as the man flies back.

Dereck holds the gun close to his chest, ready to fire again. Everything is quiet, except for a GURGLING coming from the other side of the door.

Dereck slowly gets up.

As Dereck walks through the door, we see the man lying on his stomach, twitching, a thick pool of blood is slowly expanding underneath him.

DERECK

Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck.

Dereck walks back to the phone behind the counter and dials 911.

DYING MAN

We see the man struggling to breath.

He stops twitching as he dies.

DERECK

The 911 operator picks up.

911 OPERATOR

911, how can I help you?

DERECK

Hello. Yes. Someone has been shot.  
He tried to rob me and I shot him. I  
think he's dead.

911 OPERATOR

Where are you, sir?

DERECK

I'm at Charlie's Stop Shop on the edge  
of town.

CUT TO:

LATER

We see Dereck step through the door to the counter, clutching  
the shotgun, looking down at the dead man.

He watches the pool of blood slowly grow around the body.

Dereck gets his footing as he jumps over the body avoiding the  
pool of blood.

He walks to the front door of the store and looks out of the  
window. There is no one outside. He begins to open the door  
when he realizes he is still holding the shotgun.

He places the shotgun on the counter and steps outside.

EXT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - LATER

Dereck is pacing back and forth in front of the station. We see a police car coming down the street, and in the opposite direction, a news van heads toward the station.

Dereck watches as the police car pulls into the parking lot, headlights shining on him, and parks near the front of the station.

The news van pulls in as the sheriff and his deputy get out of the car.

The sheriff looks back to the news van.

SHERIFF

Fucking pests.

Dereck stands in front of the store as the sheriff and deputy walk up to him.

We see, in the background, an attractive female news reporter getting out of the van and walking toward the men. A camera man is gathering his equipment from the side of the van.

SHERIFF

So, what's going on here?

DERECK

(shaken up)

Some guy came in, tries to rob me, and I shot him. He's inside.

The news reporter walks up to Dereck and the sheriff.

NEWS REPORTER

Sheriff? Could I ask you some questions?

SHERIFF

(to deputy)

Take care of that, Thomas.

Thomas walks over to the news reporter and leads her back to her van.

THOMAS

Hang tight, and we'll give you a statement as soon as we can.

SHERIFF  
(to Dereck)  
Well, let's take a look.

Dereck opens the door to the station and the sheriff walks through. Dereck follows him.

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP

We see the sheriff squatting over the body, his feet perched outside of the pool of blood.

SHERIFF  
Yeah, he's dead. I take it you shot him with that shotgun over there, did ya?

Dereck, standing next to the counter, looks at the shotgun.

DERECK  
Yeah.

The sheriff starts to look more closely at the man's face.

SHERIFF  
Wait a goddamn minute.

DERECK  
What is it?

SHERIFF  
This is that son of a bitch that's been runnin' amok all over the place.

DERECK  
He said he robbed the coffee shop the other night.

The sheriff stands up, looming over the body.

SHERIFF  
Well, shit son. I guess you're a hero.

DERECK  
Hero?

The sheriff walks over to Dereck.



SHERIFF

That's right. A hero. Now let's get you in front of the press.

DERECK

Oh no. No, I don't want to do that. I mean, c'mon. I'm a little fucked up right now.

SHERIFF

Nonsense. You just killed a thief and a killer. You're the good guy. He's the bad guy.

The sheriff points at the corpse on the floor.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

Now he was gonna kill you, right?

DERECK

I don't know. I think so.

SHERIFF

Bullshit. He was going to kill you. I see where he shot at you.

The sheriff points to the scuffs on the bulletproof glass.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

So all you did was protect yourself. Nothin' wrong with that.

Dereck doesn't respond.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

Alright, look. The ambulance will be here soon. But in the meantime, let's go make a statement to the press. I know they're assholes, but they ain't leaving until we say something.

DERECK

Can't you just say something?

SHERIFF

They're gonna want to talk to you, since you're the one involved in all of this.

SHERIFF (CONT.)

I could walk you out in handcuffs, but then you would look guilty, and I don't want to give off the impression that your the bad guy, do you?

DERECK

No.

SHERIFF

Look, they'll get you sooner or later, might as well get it out of the way. I'll help walk you through it. Just tell them what happened. They'll make you famous.

DERECK

But I don't want to be famous.

SHERIFF

Sure you do.

The sheriff puts his arm around Dereck and leads him out of the station to the news van.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We see Rose, on Dereck's couch, eating ice cream and watching TV.

ROSE

What the fuck?

TELEVISION

We see the news reporter talking to Dereck and the sheriff.

NEWS REPORTER

So Mr. Fickle, can you tell us what happened here?

The reporter sticks a microphone in Dereck's face.

DERECK

Fickle (Fie-kel).

NEWS REPORTER

Sorry, Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel).

DERECK

Um, well, this guy came in and tried to rob me. I shot him when he came at me.

NEWS REPORTER

And this is the man who is responsible for the crime spree we've seen recently, correct?

SHERIFF

We do believe so, but we can't confirm it yet.

DERECK

He did tell me he was the one who robbed that coffee shop a couple of nights ago.

ROSE

We see Rose, wide-eyed, with her open mouth full of ice cream.

INT. POLICE STATION

We see Dereck in a chair near the front desk. Rose walks through the door and rushes toward him. As he stands up to greet her, she grabs and hugs him as she almost begins crying.

DERECK

It's alright. It's alright.

ROSE

Are you OK? You're not hurt?

DERECK

I'm fine.

The sheriff walks into the room.

He holds out a business card for Dereck. Dereck takes the card as he and Rose separate.

SHERIFF

Here. Make an appointment with this guy when you get a chance.

DERECK

Who's this?

SHERIFF

He's a head shrinker. If you feel like you need to talk to someone, he's your guy.

DERECK

I can't afford a therapist.

SHERIFF

You get two visits on us. He usually works with police when they get caught up in these kinda situations.

DERECK

I don't think I need to...

SHERIFF

Now, just keep the card, if you feel you need to call him, just tell him we sent you there. He'll be informed about you. So just see how things go, and if you need to, you can call him.

(pauses)

We're going to have a hearing about all of this. Just procedure, you've got nothing to worry about. We'll contact you in about a week and let you know when you have to be in court.

DERECK

OK. Thanks.

The sheriff tips his hat to Dereck and Rose.

SHERIFF

Alright then. Try to get yourself some rest.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

We see Dereck in a bath with a washcloth over his face.

The DRIP of the faucet into the full bathtub beats like a metronome, PLUNKING slowly.

KITCHEN

Rose is making tea when Dereck comes in and sits at his small cluttered kitchen table. She places a cup of tea in front of him as she sits at the table.

DERECK

Thanks.

ROSE

Do you want to talk about it?

DERECK

I don't know.

ROSE

I'm here if you want to talk.

DERECK

I know. It's just that, I mean, I did the right thing, didn't I?

ROSE

Yes. He was a murderer.

DERECK

Right, but I still killed someone.

ROSE

You defended yourself. I wanted to kill him when he had that gun in my face, but I didn't have a chance.

DERECK

I could have just let him leave, but I panicked, and he started shooting. I could have been killed.

ROSE

But you weren't.

DERECK

I just don't know why I didn't just let him leave.

ROSE

Don't worry about that.

DERECK

I just need to get some rest.

Rose reaches out and rubs Dereck's arm as he sips his tea.

ROSE

Does Chuck know about this yet?

DERECK

No. I tried to call him when the police arrived, but no one answered. He was probably out cold. He's supposed to be there in the morning.

ROSE

He's gonna get a nice surprise.

DERECK

Yeah, a nice surprise.

EXT. ROAD NEAR CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - EARLY MORNING

We see the station, over Chuck's shoulder, through his cracked windshield as he drives up to it. Police tape surrounds the block around the station. Two police officers talk in the parking lot.

Chuck stops his car on the side of the road, gets out and walks up to the tape. He takes off his sunglasses.

The two officers stop their conversation and look over to Chuck.

Chuck lifts the tape and walks under it.

CHUCK

The fuck happened here?

OFFICER 1

Step back, sir.

CHUCK  
This is my shop.

OFFICER 2  
Sir, behind the tape.

The two officers move toward Chuck.

Chuck stops and walks back to the other side of the tape. The two officers meet him there.

CHUCK  
Alright, alright. I'm behind the tape.  
So, what happened?

OFFICER 1  
This is your place?

CHUCK  
Yes.

OFFICER 2  
Where were you last night?

CHUCK  
At home, asleep.

OFFICER 1  
There was a shooting.

Officer 2 takes out a small notebook and flips it open.

OFFICER 2  
Yes. A Mr. Fickle was here...

CHUCK  
Fickle (Fie-kel).

The officers glare at Chuck.

OFFICER 2  
Yes. He was the clerk here last night,  
a man came in and tried to rob the  
place, and Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel) shot  
and killed him.

CHUCK  
No shit?

OFFICER 1

No shit.

Chuck scratches his head and looks into the station.

CHUCK'S POV

We see two other men inside the station walking around the area where the man was killed, one of them taking pictures.

CHUCK

So, I can't go in.

CHUCK AND THE TWO OFFICERS

The two officers look at each other then back at Chuck.

OFFICER 2

No, sir.

OFFICER 1

This will be a crime scene until tomorrow.

OFFICER 2

By then it should be cleaned up.

CHUCK

Cleaned up?

OFFICER 1

Lot of blood.

OFFICER 2

Lot of blood.

CHUCK

When should I come back?

OFFICER 1

Tomorrow morning, there will be someone here until then.

CHUCK

Alright. Thanks.



OFFICER 2

Good day, sir.

Chuck walks back to his car and the officers walk back to the front of the store.

EXT. DERECK'S APARTMENT COMPLEX

We see Chuck pull in and get out of his car.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT

We see Dereck and Rose in bed sleeping. Dereck is on his back and Rose is curled up next to him on her side. We hear a KNOCKING at his front door. Dereck and Rose GROAN in unison.

DERECK

Every fucking day.

ROSE

Do you want me to get it?

DERECK

No, I'll get it.

Dereck climbs out of bed and staggers to the door.

We see the door in front of Dereck as he approaches.

CHUCK (O.S.)

Dereck!

Dereck opens the door and we see Chuck standing there in his sunglasses. Ms. Flenderman is behind him walking aimlessly in the grass.

CHUCK

Dereck. What the fuck, man? I just heard about it. Are you alright?

DERECK

I'm fine. You want to come in for a minute?

CHUCK

Yeah.

LATER

Chuck is sitting on Dereck's couch drinking coffee.

CHUCK  
Jesus, man.

Dereck sits on a chair next to the couch.

DERECK  
That's what happened.

CHUCK  
How you holding up?

DERECK  
I think I'm fine.

CHUCK  
Better than the other guy anyway.

Rose enters the room in her pajamas.

ROSE  
Hey, Chuck.

CHUCK  
Hey.

She makes her way to the kitchen.

CHUCK  
Well, the shop is closed until morning.  
I'm going to David's later to get  
drunk. You guys should come along.

DERECK  
Maybe. We'll see.

CHUCK  
I'm gonna go.

DERECK  
Yeah.

Chuck stands up.

CHUCK  
So I might see you later.

DERECK

Yeah.

CHUCK

Some crazy shit.

(to Rose)

Bye, Rose.

ROSE (O.S.)

Bye.

Chuck lets himself out. We see Rose walking to Dereck's chair. She sips a cup of coffee and rubs the back of Dereck's neck.

INT. DAVID'S BAR - NIGHT

We see Dereck, Chuck, Rose, David, and Cheryl sitting at a circular table in the middle of the bar. The bar is crowded.

DAVID

I can't believe it. You know the news won't stop talking about it. Local hero, man.

CHERYL

I'm just glad you got the guy before he tried to hit up our place.

Dereck, aloof, sips a pint of Guinness.

CHERYL

Were you scared?

Dereck, staring into a crowd of people, doesn't respond.

CHERYL

Dereck, were you scared?

DERECK

What? Yeah, it was scary.

DAVID

You know, in a way you were protecting her honor.

David motions to Rose as she drinks a margarita.

ROSE

What do you mean?

DAVID

Well, the guy robbed the coffee shop while you were there, right?

ROSE

Yeah.

DAVID

Then he tries to rob Dereck, but he takes care of the guy. The guy that put a fright in you, was put down by the guy you're seeing now. Kinda romantic.

ROSE

Well, I guess it is, when you put it that way.

(to Dereck)

Thanks.

DERECK

(smiles)

No problem.

CHUCK

(drunk)

Hey, Dereck. When will you come back to work?

CHERYL

Jesus Chuck, really?

CHUCK

What?

DERECK

I can come back tomorrow night.

CHERYL

You really should take some time off.

ROSE

Yeah. You don't need to go back so soon.

DERECK

No, it's fine. I'm fine. I mean, I can't just sit around.

ROSE

Yeah, but...

DERECK

Look, I'm fine. Really.

Rose looks at Dereck. He reaches out and holds her hand.

DAVID

Alright. I think we all need another round.

David raises his hand and gets the attention of a passing cocktail waitress. He flicks his finger in a circle over the table.

DAVID

Enough about all of this. Let's just be grateful that everyone is OK.

CHERYL

Here, here.

LATER

We see Cheryl at the bar with Rose, while the men sit and talk at the table.

The bar is all but empty. A couple of old men sit down the bar from Cheryl and Rose.

CHERYL

So, how are things with Dereck?

ROSE

Good. I've been staying at his house since I was robbed.

CHERYL

When did you guys finally hook up?

ROSE

The night after I was robbed. I didn't want to be alone, so I spent the night with him while he was at work.

CHERYL

Amazing how danger gets those juices flowing.

ROSE

Yeah, I guess. I haven't even left his apartment because I've been afraid to be alone. Though, I guess I can go home now. I don't want to be a burden.

CHERYL

Nonsense. I probably shouldn't tell you this, but he's adored you for a while now. I don't think he could ever get sick of you.

ROSE

Maybe not, but I think I should go back to my apartment soon. I mean, there's nothing to be scared of now.

CHERYL

Oh, there's always something to be scared of. You just shouldn't let it control you.

ROSE

Yeah, you're right. How long have you and David been together?

CHERYL

Too damn long.

CUT TO:

INT. DERECK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see Dereck sitting on the edge of his bed taking his shoes off.

Rose crawls up behind him on the bed wearing one of his long sleeved button downs. She gets up on her knees and rubs his shoulders.

DERECK

So, how do you like David and Cheryl?

ROSE

Their nice.

DERECK

What were you two talking about tonight?

ROSE

Oh, nothing much. Relationships and such.

DERECK

Oh, yeah?

ROSE

Yeah. She said that you've had a crush on me for a while.

DERECK

(embarrassed)

Well...I, um....just...you know...

ROSE

(laughs)

I think it's cute. I kinda had a thing for you too.

DERECK

Is that why you came to me that night?

ROSE

Yeah, now lay down.

Rose pulls Dereck over on the bed and jumps on top of him.

ROSE

I was thinking about moving back into my place tomorrow.

DERECK

Was it something I said?

ROSE

No, I just think it's time for me to,  
you know, get back to my life.

DERECK

That's good. I can stay over there for  
a change.

ROSE

Uh huh. My bed is much more  
comfortable anyway.

DERECK

I'm sure it is.

Rose bends down and kisses Dereck.

We move out of the bedroom through the door as Dereck flips Rose  
over onto her back.

FADE OUT:

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DERECK'S DREAM

We see Dereck sitting in the publisher's office, door behind him  
on his left, and a row of chairs against the wall on his right.

The flickering florescent lights tint the room a sickly green.

Dereck is alone. He holds his satchel in his lap as he looks  
around the empty room.

He stands up, moves to the door and opens it.

The wind HOWLS and FLUTTERING papers blow through the door into  
the waiting room.

Dereck walks through the door as it SLAMS shut behind him.

HALLWAY

The light continues to flicker as Dereck moves down the grimy  
hallway cluttered with papers. They FLUTTER as another gust of  
wind hits Dereck in the face.



We see the light flicker out, then on again, revealing Dereck in front of the door at the end of the hallway.

He reaches out to open the door.

The light flickers off and back on, we see the man Dereck killed peeking over his shoulder.

The man's left side of his face is covered in blood. The wound in his chest is still fresh.

He leans into Dereck's ear.

DEAD MAN

Wake up.

CUT TO:

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

We see Dereck's eyes pop open and reveal him in his bed, Rose curled up beside him still sleeping. He moves Rose's arm off his chest and crawls out of bed, careful not to wake her.

Dereck sits at his computer desk, and puts on his glasses. Blue light hits his face as he turns on his computer screen. We hear the CLICKING of the keyboard as he types.

We hear Rose from the bed.

ROSE

(groaning)

What are you doing?

DERECK

I couldn't sleep. Just go back to bed,  
I'll try to be quiet.

ROSE

Come back to bed soon.

Dereck doesn't respond and keeps typing. Rose goes quiet.

Dereck stares at his glowing screen as we hear the CLICK of the keys get louder and louder until...

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT

Dereck is standing behind the counter of the station, TAPPING his pen on his open notebook. He drops the pen and walks to the coffee machine.

The door to the counter hangs loosely on its hinges where the burglar kicked it open. Dereck picks up a paper cup and pours himself a cup of coffee. He looks down at the newly cleaned floor where the man lay as he died.

We hear the door to the station SLING open, startling Dereck.

He spills a bit of hot coffee on his hand.

DERECK

Fuck.

Dereck sucks his burned finger and walks behind the counter. An old man and woman are across the counter smiling at him.

DERECK

Can I help you?

OLD MAN

Are you Dereck Fickle?

DERECK

Fickle (Fie-kel).

OLD WOMAN

Oh. It's a pleasure to meet you.

DERECK

(confused)

OK. Can I help you with anything?

OLD MAN

We just wanted to thank you?

DERECK

Thank me?

OLD WOMAN

For taking care of that pest.

OLD MAN

That man you killed robbed our shop last month.

OLD MAN (CONT.)

We lost thousands and almost went out of business. You did a good thing, and we just wanted to say thank you. You saved others from that weasel.

DERECK

You're welcome, I guess.

The old couple smile at Dereck as he feigns a smile back at them.

LATER

We see Dereck writing in his notebook.

We hear a THUNK, like someone popping the top of a jar.

Dereck looks up for a second, then back down to his notebook.

We hear another THUNK followed by the sound of a metal lid falling to the ground with a TINK and ROLLING.

DERECK'S POV

At the end of farthest aisle in the store we see a metal lid roll from behind the aisle and fall flat on the floor.

We hear a glass jar FALL and ROLL behind the aisle.

We see a puddle of thick tomato sauce spill on the floor.

DERECK

He walks to the door of the counter by the coffee machine.

As he walks through the door, we see the man Dereck killed kneeling behind an aisle opening a jar of tomato sauce. We see him dip his finger in the jar and stick it in his mouth.

Dereck is startled back. He hunkers down behind the coffee machine and curiously watches the man.

The man is covered in blood, only the right side of his face is somewhat clean. His hair is matted from the curdled blood in it, and the shotgun wound in his chest is still fresh. His skin is pale and his lips are blue.

He drops the jar in his hand, picks up another, pops the lid, and samples it with his finger.

DEAD MAN

I like this one. Roasted garlic and onion.

He drops the jar, looks at Dereck, and casually stands up.

DEAD MAN

I can't believe you guys don't carry Prego, that's the best. This stuff is OK, but it's no Prego.

(pauses)

So you're a big hero now, huh? You don't really look like one, but that's the way the world works.

Dereck stays behind the coffee machine, not responding, just watching him.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)

Yeah, big fucking hero. But how do you feel about it? You did kill a man, that man being me, so, as you may have guessed, I've got a few problems with what you did. But I guess I was a bad guy. I mean, I've killed some people, but I'm cultivated to that lifestyle. You, on the other hand...

The man rummages through the shelves, not looking for anything in particular.

DERECK

You were going to kill me?

DEAD MAN

Was I? I was going to leave you alone, until you hid behind that glass.

DERECK

You shot at me?

DEAD MAN

Not until you hid behind that glass. I didn't know what you were doing back there. You could have called the police, or got a gun to blow me away. I couldn't just let you do whatever you wanted. It was about my survival.

(pauses)

But I guess you got the better of me in the end, didn't you?

Dereck doesn't respond.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)

Now you've got some juicy bits for that book you're writing, huh? Yeah, you killed the bad guy, but you're not quite sure how to deal with it. Moral dilemma, emotion, internal conflict; all necessary elements for an engrossing story. I guess I can't be too mad, just make sure you can sell that thing. Cause if you can't then I won't be remembered. That's the point isn't it, to be remembered?

We hear a woman by the counter.

WOMAN

Excuse me.

DEAD MAN

Looks like you've got a customer.

WOMAN

(agitated)

Excuse me!

Dereck looks to the counter then back to where the dead man was. The man is gone, there are only a couple of jars of tomato sauce spilled on the floor.

Dereck walks to the counter.

WOMAN

Bout time. Give me a pack of Camels.

Dereck turns around to get the woman's cigarettes. The woman notices the puddle of tomato sauce in the floor.

WOMAN

You know, you're a mess.

Dereck looks at the woman.

DERECK

Sorry?

WOMAN

I said, you know you got a mess over there?

She points to the tomato sauce in the floor.

DERECK

I was just about to clean that up.

Dereck runs the pack of cigarettes over the barcode scanner.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

The hallway is dark, lit mostly from sunlight shining through large windows at the end of it.

Dereck and Rose sit on a bench in the hallway.

The sheriff is walking down the hallway with another man toward Dereck and Rose. Dereck and Rose stand up as they approach.

SHERIFF

How you doin' Dereck?

DERECK

Alright.

SHERIFF

This is Ralph Newson, he'll be your lawyer for the hearing.

Dereck and Ralph shake hands.

DERECK

How do you do?

SHERIFF

He's gone over your testimony, so just stick to that and this will be a breeze.

RALPH

Sorry we couldn't have gotten together before today, but I don't think you'll have a problem with this. This is a clear case of self defense, the security tapes show that, your testimony shows that, and well, Christ, you're a hero around here.

SHERIFF

We should head in.

Dereck and Rose follow Ralph and the sheriff into the courtroom.

INT. COURTROOM

The courtroom is sparsely occupied. Dereck and the others wait for the judge. Dereck, sitting next to Ralph and in front of the sheriff, feels the sheriff tap on his shoulder. Dereck turns in his chair.

SHERIFF

See that guy over there?

The sheriff nods to a well dressed man sitting near the back of the courtroom. Dereck looks at him.

DERECK

Yeah.

SHERIFF

That's his brother. He came here to pick up the body for the funeral a few days ago.

Dereck studies the man for a moment. His suit is neatly pressed, he is clean shaven, and looks like an average business man.

DERECK

What's he doing at the hearing?

SHERIFF

I don't know. Closure I guess. Guess he wants to see how bad his brother actually was. He does pretty well for himself, owns a taxi company in Connecticut, not at all like his brother.

The man looks at Dereck and Dereck turns away and faces the front of the courtroom.

The bailiff steps out to announce the judge.

BAILIFF

All rise, for the honorable Judge Wilhelm.

An old, short, pudgy judge walks to his seat and sits down. He picks up a piece of paper, and peers over his glasses.

JUDGE

Hmm. Well, let's make this quick, I skipped lunch and I'm starving.

Ralph smiles.

RALPH

(to Dereck)

Told you this would be easy.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - LATER

We see Dereck, Rose, Ralph, and the sheriff standing in the hallway of the courthouse.

Ralph shakes Dereck's hand.

RALPH

Well, that was quick.

Ralph looks at his watch.

RALPH (CONT.)

I gotta go.



Ralph walks down the sunlit hallway.

DERECK  
I guess that's it.

SHERIFF  
That's it.

The dead man's brother walks out of the courtroom, around the group, and down the hallway.

SHERIFF  
Have you called the head shrinker yet?

Dereck watches the man.

DERECK  
What? No, not yet.

SHERIFF  
Just know he's there if you need him.  
If for any reason you need someone else  
to talk to, give him a call.

DERECK  
I'm fine sheriff.

SHERIFF  
Alright then. You kids stay out of  
trouble.

The sheriff shakes Dereck's hand and proceeds down the hallway.

Dereck and Rose hold hands as they follow the sheriff.

FADE OUT:

TWO WEEKS LATER

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

Dereck sits on Rose's couch watching television while Rose gets ready for work in the other room.

DERECK  
This is it.

Rose walks into the room as she pulls her hair back into a ponytail. She sits on the arm of the couch next to Dereck.

TELEVISION

We hear MUSIC from the daytime talk show "Sarah" as it comes back from commercial break. The host, Sarah, is standing in one of the rows of the audience.

SARAH

OK, we're back. Today we have Dereck Fickle.

Dereck is seated on stage.

DERECK

Fickle (Fie-kel).

SARAH

Oh, sorry. Dereck Fickle (Fie-kel). He has become a hero of sorts. Tell the audience what happened.

DERECK

I work at Charlie's Stop Shop right outside of the city, and one night, someone tried to rob me. When he turned his back, I locked the bulletproof glass between the store and the counter, and when he came at me, I ended up shooting and, um, killing him. As it turned out, he was wanted for robbery and murder.

SARAH

Murder. Were you scared?

DERECK

Yeah. I didn't know what to do, if he was going to kill me or what. It all seemed to happen so fast, I really didn't have time to think.

SARAH

What are your plans now?

DERECK

Well, I'm a writer, uh, well, a  
struggling writer...

SARAH

So, a book maybe?

DERECK

Yeah, I think so.

SARAH

Good luck. You shouldn't need it, I  
mean I think anyone would publish the  
book of a hero. Am I right people?

AUDIENCE

You're right!

The audience LAUGHS and APPLAUDS themselves. Sarah smiles and  
LAUGHS to herself.

SARAH

(to camera)

We'll be right back with a woman who  
has lost one hundred and fifty pounds  
in only one month. We will learn her  
secret.

We hear MUSIC as the show goes to commercial.

DERECK AND ROSE

Rose has a surprised look on her face.

Dereck turns off the television.

ROSE

I still don't know why you did that.  
What did you hope to gain?

DERECK

They paid me, and maybe it can help me  
get a book deal.

ROSE

You think that will help?

DERECK

I don't know, maybe. It's worth a shot. The exposure might help. It seems that people only pay attention to people they've seen before. I don't like it anymore than you do, but this might get someone's attention.

ROSE

We'll see, I guess. I gotta go to work.

DERECK

Drop me off?

ROSE

You bet.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MIDDAY

Dereck sits at his computer. We see the computer screen reflected in his glasses and hear the CLICK of his keyboard as he types.

KITCHEN

Dereck pours a cup of coffee.

LIVING ROOM

As he walks in, we see the dead man sitting on his couch.

DEAD MAN

Sit down, let's talk.

Dereck is startled and drops his coffee.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)

I'm not gonna hurt you. Hell, I can't.  
I'm dead.

Dereck stares at the man.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)

Sit down.

Dereck grabs a towel from his kitchen and drops to his knees to clean the coffee.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)

You just gonna ignore me? I'm here because of you. So, instead of ignoring me, just don't think about me.

Dereck, getting frustrated, rubs the towel into the stain harder.

DEAD MAN

C'mon, just sit down, and let's talk.

DERECK

I don't have anything to talk about.

DEAD MAN

There he is. If you don't have anything to talk about, why am I here?

DERECK

I don't know, why are you here?

DEAD MAN

That's your call, not mine.

Dereck throws down the towel, stands up, and looks at the dead man.

DERECK

What the fuck does that mean?

The dead man motions to the chair beside the couch.

DEAD MAN

Sit down.

Dereck walks to the chair and sits down hunched forward, not wanting to look at the dead man.

DERECK

OK, so why are you bothering me?

DEAD MAN

You must feel guilty for killing me.

DERECK

Why should I feel guilty for killing someone like you? You were going to kill me.

DEAD MAN

Look, you're an average guy, you're not a killer, so it makes sense that you would have some messed up feelings after killing someone, no matter who that person was. You can justify all you want, that's not changing anything. I'm still here. Now you tell me, why is that?

Dereck avoids eye contact with the dead man. He stares at his intertwined fingers.

DERECK

I don't know. Maybe I am still a little shaken up, but you deserved what you got.

DEAD MAN

Maybe I did, but that doesn't change anything.

DERECK

No, that changes everything. You were a bad guy. My actions were justified. You deserved it.

DEAD MAN

Look at me.

Dereck stares at his hands.

DEAD MAN

(screaming)

Look at me!

Dereck slowly turns his head to look at the dead man.

DEAD MAN

Did I deserve this?

The dead man jabs his hand into the wound in his chest, pulls out a bit of flesh, and throws it to the floor.

Dereck looks down at the bit of flesh in his floor.

DEAD MAN

Does anyone deserve **this**?

DERECK

You did.

DEAD MAN

(calmer)

I did. Sure, I did. It's funny that you believe everything you've been told. Sure I was a criminal. Sure I killed some people. But you know nothing of my circumstances except some vague knowledge of my crimes. All you know about me is what the sheriff and news reports have told you. You don't know anything about me, but you feel so confident that I deserved to have a fucking hole blown through my chest.

(pauses)

Why don't you write a book about my life? Why don't you learn what I've gone through? Maybe it's because you might find that we are a lot alike.

We see Dereck wringing his hands, his knuckles white. He is still staring at the flesh in his floor.

DERECK

You killed innocent people.

DEAD MAN

How do you know that? How do you know **they** didn't deserve it?

DERECK

I was just defending myself.

DEAD MAN

Yes. I would have killed you. But again, only because **you** acted stupidly. I could have just taken the money and gone, but you decided to jump into action and become a hero. Now you have your story.

DERECK  
 (angry)  
 You were going to kill me!

DEAD MAN  
 At least I'll be remembered, even if  
 I'm misrepresented.

Dereck jumps from his chair and lunges at the dead man, grabbing the dead man's throat and pointing his finger in his face.

DERECK  
 Fuck you. I'm not even going to put  
 your name in the book. No one will  
 ever care about you, because no one  
 will know who you are.

DEAD MAN  
 (smiling)  
 Killer.

We hear the phone RING from the kitchen.

DEAD MAN  
 Better get that. It could be  
 opportunity calling.

Dereck lets go of the dead man and walks to the phone.

DEAD MAN (CONT.)  
 Check this out.

Dereck turns to look.

The dead man pushes on the left side of his chest and blood squirts out of the wound on the right side. The man LAUGHS as Dereck walks to the phone and answers it.

DERECK  
 Hello?

Dereck looks back to his couch and we see no one sitting there.

HUMPHREY'S SECRETARY  
 Mr. Fickle?

DERECK  
 Fickle (Fie-kel). Yes?



HUMPHREY'S SECRETARY

Yes, sorry. This is Mr. Humphrey's office. He wanted me to inform you that he has heard about your ordeal and saw you on "Sarah". He would like you to come in to discuss the book you are writing. How's Friday morning at nine thirty?

DERECK

Why should I trust you after the way I was treated last time?

HUMPHREY'S SECRETARY

Mr. Fickle (Fie-kel), don't be an idiot. I'll pencil you in for Friday at nine thirty, and bring anything you've prepared for the book thus far.

We hear a CLICK and a DIAL TONE as the woman hangs up.

Dereck hangs up his phone and stares at the couch where the dead man had been sitting.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - MIDDAY

We see Dereck lying on a sofa staring at the ceiling.

Dr. Borman, a tall, gaunt, bald, soft spoken man, is sitting next to the couch, a notebook in his lap, and his teeth clamped around a pencil. The two men sit quietly for a moment until:

DR. BORMAN

So, how have you been dealing with the incident?

DERECK

Fine, I suppose. I have been feeling a little anxious lately.

DR. BORMAN

Anxious? How do you mean?

DERECK

I haven't been sleeping well. My mind has been...wondering. I think I feel a little guilty.

DR. BORMAN

Uh huh. Do you feel like you should be punished for what you did?

DERECK

No, not punished. I know I had to do what I did, I've just been debating how that night played out. I just feel like it could have been avoided.

DR. BORMAN

Right. Well, by law, you did nothing wrong.

DERECK

I know, but I still took a man's life.

DR. BORMAN

Right.

Dr. Borman looks at his watch.

DR. BORMAN (CONT.)

We don't have much time left.

DERECK

Really, but I just got here?

DR. BORMAN

The sheriff's department doesn't pay very well, so I keep these short. Let's try to end this on a positive note. Is there anything good in your life right now?

DERECK

Yes. I'm with a great girl, and I might be able to get a book deal soon.

DR. BORMAN

A book deal? About all of this?

DERECK

Yes. I've got a meeting Friday morning.

DR. BORMAN

That's good. You should try to write through your anxiety.

DERECK

Write through my anxiety?

DR. BORMAN

Yes, write through your anxiety.

Dr. Borman looks at his watch.

DR. BORMAN (CONT.)

Well, that about does it. You've got one more session covered if you think you need it. You can call my secretary to schedule an appointment.

INT. PUBLISHER'S WAITING ROOM

Dereck sits in the waiting room, a door behind him on his left.

He picks up a "Writer's Forum" magazine from the chair next to him; Mr. Humphrey is on the cover. The cover article is "The man that brought nonfiction to the mainstream".

Dereck looks at the cover for a moment and opens the magazine when Mr. Humphrey's secretary opens the door behind him.

SECRETARY

Mr., um, Fickle (Fie-keel)?

Dereck looks up at her, a little surprised that she has pronounced his name correctly.

He smiles at her.

DERECK

Yes.

SECRETARY

(smiling)

Right this way.

INT. MR. HUMPHREY'S OFFICE

We see the door to Humphrey's office open and the secretary step into his office, followed by Dereck.

Mr. Humphrey is sipping a scotch, standing before his window staring out into the city.

An open bottle of scotch sits on his otherwise uncluttered desk.

SECRETARY

Mr. Humphrey, your nine thirty is here.

MR. HUMPHREY

Dereck, please sit down. Would you like a drink?

Dereck walks into the room as the secretary gently closes the door behind him. He makes his way to a chair in front of Humphrey's desk and sits down.

DERECK

It's a little early for me.

MR. HUMPHREY

C'mon, don't be a pussy. Let's celebrate.

DERECK

OK. What are we celebrating?

Mr. Humphrey turns to face Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY

You.

Humphrey walks over to his bar and picks up a sparkling crystal rocks glass, then walks back to his desk, sits down, pours Dereck a hefty shot of scotch, and passes the glass to him.

Humphrey sits back in his chair and sips his drink, waiting for Dereck to take a swig of his.

Dereck sips the scotch and nods approval to Humphrey.

Humphrey smiles, stands up, and turns again to stare out of his window.

MR. HUMPHREY

So, as you know, I've heard about your ordeal, and I'm interested in your story.

MR. HUMPHREY (CONT.)

I know you may be a little wary since our last meeting didn't go so well, but no need to worry, I want to publish this book.

DERECK

That's great news.

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes, it is. My secretary asked you to bring anything you have so far?

DERECK

Yes, I have it here.

Dereck pulls the unfinished manuscript from his satchel and places it on the desk.

DERECK

It's not quite finished.

MR. HUMPHREY

Of course. I just want to get this to one of our editors. They will be contacting you with some notes once they've read it. Do you think you could finish it in, oh, say, a month?

DERECK

If that's what you need, sure.

MR. HUMPHREY

Good. Your editor will contact you in a few days, to let you know about any changes you have to make.

DERECK

Changes?

MR. HUMPHREY

Yes, changes.

Mr. Humphrey turns around to face Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY (CONT.)

You really didn't think that you would have the final say?

DERECK

Well...

MR. HUMPHREY

Well, you won't. Don't worry though,  
It will still be your book.

DERECK

I don't know about this.

MR. HUMPHREY

But this is what you've always wanted,  
isn't it?

DERECK

Yeah, but...

MR. HUMPHREY

But, you want more control over the  
process.

DERECK

Yes, I suppose.

MR. HUMPHREY

It's this way, or nothing.

Dereck takes a big GULP of his scotch and stares at the  
manuscript on Humphrey's desk.

We hear a cork POPPING as it is pulled from a bottle of whiskey.  
It is the dead man at the bar.

DEAD MAN

Do it. Take it. There's nothing else  
waiting for you.

Dereck looks at the dead man pouring himself a drink. The dead  
man turns to face Dereck and guzzles his whiskey.

Dereck looks back to Humphrey.

MR. HUMPHREY

Well, what's it going to be?

DERECK

I have one condition. I will write it  
the way you want, but there is one  
thing I will not change.

MR. HUMPHREY

What's that?

DERECK

I will not name the man I killed in the book.

DEAD MAN

Oh fuck you, Dereck.

MR. HUMPHREY

That seems a bit odd, why not?

DERECK

He doesn't deserve the recognition.

MR. HUMPHREY

Well, we've got to call him something. How do you feel about giving him a different name? We could note that some names have been changed in the story.

DERECK

Maybe. That would probably work.

Humphrey smiles, walks over to Dereck and holds out his hand.

MR. HUMPHREY

OK. We have a deal.

As the two men shake hands, we see the dead man pouring himself another drink.

DEAD MAN

Couple of fucking pansies.

The dead man takes another swig of whiskey and SLAMS the glass on the bar counter.

The glass SHATTERS in his hand as shards stick in his palm.

We see him smile.

FADE OUT:

INT. CHARLIE'S STOP SHOP - NIGHT

Dereck walks into the station and holds the door for a little old lady as she exits. Chuck is at the register.

CHUCK

Mr. man. Local hero.

DERECK

Give it a rest.

CHUCK

It's just since you took care of that guy, business has doubled. For some reason, people like seeing where someone died. Morbid curiosity, I guess. Everyone keeps asking, where's that hero that killed that guy?

DERECK

Seriously man, cut it with the hero shit.

CHUCK

Just sayin'. No need to get your panties in a tussle.

Dereck walks over to the coffee machine.

DERECK

How old is this coffee?

CHUCK

I don't know, I haven't made any today.

DERECK

Shit.

Dereck drops his satchel behind the counter and goes to the coffee machine, dumps the old coffee, and begins making a fresh pot.

CHUCK

Hey, I need Sunday off, can you pull a double and cover for me.

DERECK

What are you doing?



CHUCK

I promised Sheila I would take her to the lake.

DERECK

You guys all patched up?

We hear a TRICKLE of water into the coffeepot.

Dereck turns around to face Chuck who is now standing in the doorway leading behind the counter.

CHUCK

For now. I'm sure I'll piss her off soon enough.

DERECK

I bet you will.

Dereck makes his way around Chuck and walks over to the register.

It CHINGS as it opens.

DERECK

Is the count right?

CHUCK

I don't know, I haven't checked. You mind doing it?

DERECK

Yeah, sure.

CHUCK

Awesome. Well, I'm outta here, see ya later sucka.

Chuck walks to the door of the station.

DERECK

Oh, wait a second.

CHUCK

Yeah?

DERECK

I don't know anything positive yet, but I might not be here much longer.

CHUCK  
You're shitting me? Why?

DERECK  
(smiles)  
I got a book deal.

CHUCK  
Really? Well, that's great. What kind  
of book?

DERECK  
It's about what happened here.

CHUCK  
Huh. Well, good for you. I guess I  
should start looking for your  
replacement. But, that's great. Cash  
in on it. We should celebrate.

DERECK  
Yeah, let me finish it first.

CHUCK  
Sure. I'll drink a few for you  
tonight. See ya, man. Have a good  
night.

Chuck leaves the store while Dereck counts down the register.

CUT TO:

INT. ROSE'S APARTMENT - MIDDAY

We see Dereck and Rose lying on her bed. Rose is reading his  
manuscript.

When she finishes, she places the last page of it face down on  
top of the other pages.

DERECK  
Well?

ROSE  
It's good.

DERECK

Really, you think?

ROSE

Yeah. I like how I come across. You make me seem quirky and sexy.

DERECK

Yeah, I had to fudge the truth a bit.

Rose picks up the stack of paper and SLAPS it into Dereck's chest.

ROSE

Asshole.

Dereck takes the pages and puts them on the floor. He puts his arm around Rose and they settle down into the bed.

DERECK

Seriously though, you really liked it?

ROSE

Yes.

DERECK

I was afraid it would seem too bland, I mean, after the editor got his hands on it.

ROSE

No, it's good.

DERECK

I'm glad you like it.

ROSE

So, when are you going to drop it off?

DERECK

A couple of days, I want to read it over again.

ROSE

My man the writer. I'm proud of you.

Rose kisses Dereck on the cheek.

DERECK

Not yet. Let's see how this all plays out.

ROSE

Whatever. You don't have anything to worry about.

DERECK

Maybe, but tonight we celebrate.

ROSE

We can start that now.

Rose rolls over on top of Dereck and begins kissing him. She takes off her shirt then pulls off Dereck's. She MOANS as Dereck grabs her.

CUT TO:

INT. DAVID'S BAR - NIGHT

We see Chuck and David LAUGHING loudly, both drunk.

Dereck, Rose, Chuck, David, and Cheryl are sitting at a table covered in empty glasses and beer bottles.

CHUCK

Of all the people I know, I never thought Dereck would be the one to kill another man.

DAVID

Yeah, you know a lot of fucked up people.

CHUCK

Most of them crazy drunks with nothing to lose. I was sure one of those guys would off someone before this dork did.

He motions to Dereck with his full beer glass, a little beer sloshes out of the top and PLOPS on the floor.

DERECK

That's nice to know, Chuck.

CHUCK

No, I really mean it. I didn't think you had it in you, and now you're quitting and leaving me hanging.

CHERYL

(to Chuck)

Have you gotten anyone to take over when Dereck leaves?

CHUCK

Yeah, some kid Shaun, he's a little turd.

DAVID

(to Dereck)

When's your last day?

DERECK

Day after tomorrow.

DAVID

And you've finished the book?

DERECK

Yeah, I'm going to give it a once over tomorrow and send it out before work the next day.

CHERYL

That's great, Dereck. I'm so happy for you.

DERECK

Thanks.

CHUCK

So, Rose, how does it feel to be fucking a writer?

David LAUGHS and Cheryl shakes her head.

ROSE

Good, really good.

CHUCK AND DAVID

Wooooo!

CUT TO:

LATER

The bar is mostly empty.

Cheryl and Rose sit at a booth talking, Chuck is passed out in a booth next to them.

David and Dereck sit at the bar, both of them are very drunk by this point.

DAVID

Don't forget about us when you make it big?

DERECK

It's just one book. I won't even be making that much money.

DAVID

But you'll get other deals. I want you to be happy. How long have we known each other?

DERECK

Since high school.

DAVID

That's right. Do you remember Jane Hunter?

DERECK

Yeah, she was the girl that shit herself all the time. Didn't she give you a hand-job in the girl's restroom your junior year?

DAVID

(laughs)

And a blow-job my senior year.

DERECK

Was that in a toilet too?

DAVID

No, that was in the janitor's closet. Funny enough, that was time she shit herself.

DERECK

She shit herself while giving you a blow-job in the janitor's closet?

DAVID

Yeah, good times.

DERECK

What ever happened to her?

DAVID

I heard she died of dysentery a few years ago.

DERECK

No shit.

DAVID

That's what I heard.

(pauses)

Look, man, I just don't want you to forget where you came from.

DERECK

I don't see that happening. I've been here my whole life, I don't think I can forget that. You're one of the few people that has supported me. I'm not going to forget that.

DAVID

Good. I don't want to loose you, man.

They both LAUGH. David stands up, almost falls, but catches himself before he does.

DAVID

Oh shit. I'm drunk. I hope Cheryl can drive.

David walks over to Cheryl, but falls in the floor. Dereck, still sitting in his barstool, looks down at David and LAUGHS.

Cheryl and Rose walk over to David and help him up.

DAVID

I'm drunk, babe.

CHERYL

Yes, you are.

(to Rose and Dereck)

I think I should get him home.

ROSE

Alright. What about him?

Rose motions to Chuck sleeping in the booth.

CHERYL

Could you guys take him home?

DERECK

Yeah, sure. I mean, that's OK isn't it Rose, I mean, you're driving, cause I'm plastered.

ROSE

(to Cheryl)

Yeah, that's fine.

Cheryl struggles to keep David standing.

CHERYL

Alright, let's go.

(to Dereck)

Congratulations.

DERECK

Thanks guys.

DAVID

Bye.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF CHUCK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rose, Dereck, and Chuck pull up in Rose's car. Chuck is asleep in the back seat.

ROSE

Alright. I drove, you get him out.



DERECK

Shit.

Dereck gets out of the car and opens the back door. He SLAPS Chuck on his belly.

DERECK

Time for bed.

CHUCK

I don't want to. Sheila is going to be pissed.

DERECK

What else is new? C'mon, man.

Dereck drags Chuck out of the back seat, throws his arm over his shoulder, and walks him to his door.

DERECK

You got your keys?

CHUCK

Yep.

DERECK

Alright. Are you OK?

CHUCK

Yep.

Chuck, leaning against the door, yanks his keys out of his pocket and tries to unlock his door. He fumbles with the lock a couple of times.

DERECK

Give me those.

Dereck takes the keys from Chuck and unlocks his door.

DERECK

There you go.

He gives the keys back to Chuck.

CHUCK

Thanks, man. I'm gonna miss you.

DERECK  
I'm not going anywhere.

CHUCK  
But you will, and you deserve it.

DERECK  
Thanks, Chuck.

CHUCK  
Don't mention it.

Chuck stands up straight. He SLAPS his face and shakes his head.

CHUCK  
Alright. Time to face the beast.

DERECK  
Good luck.

Dereck walks back to Rose's car. Chuck opens the door and we hear Sheila SCREAMING at him.

SHEILA (O.S.)  
You drunk little fuck. Why don't you  
just get the fuck out of here? You  
useless little shit!

The door to the house closes but we can still hear the MUFFLED SCREAMING.

CHUCK (O.S.)  
Shut up!

SHEILA (O.S.)  
Don't you tell me to shut up. You  
better watch your fat fucking mouth you  
limp dick shithole. I'm sick of you,  
why don't you ever take me out? I work  
all the time and come home to an empty  
house, or you, drunk of your fat  
fucking ass!

Dereck is back at the car, he gets in and closes the door. The SCREAMING is too muffled to understand.

Dereck looks over at Rose.

DERECK

That's a loving couple.

ROSE

I hope we end up like that.

DERECK

Oh, just give it time.

Rose drives away.

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MIDDAY

Dereck sits in front of his computer reading through his book one last time, eating a bowl of cereal.

He places the bowl on his desk as he finishes.

KITCHEN

Dereck places the empty bowl into the kitchen sink and runs water into it. The dead man sits at his kitchen table, petting Franz.

DEAD MAN

So I guess you're done with the shrink.

DERECK

I would hope so. I think I'm done with you, too.

DEAD MAN

Well, you got everything you wanted.

DERECK

Except you won't leave me alone.

DEAD MAN

I'll be gone soon enough. Soon, you'll forget all about me. You'll move on with your life. What are you calling me in your book?

DERECK

Harold.

DEAD MAN

Harold? Jesus, Dereck. That's really awful.

DERECK

Well, it was approved by the editor, so it stays.

DEAD MAN

So be it.

The dead man puts the cat on the table, stands up, and walks over to Dereck.

DEAD MAN

It's been nice knowing you, Dereck.

The dead man grabs Dereck's hand and shakes it.

He pulls Dereck close, grabbing his shoulder with his free hand.

DEAD MAN

Just watch your back. No one wants you to end up like me.

Dereck struggles to break free from the man's grasp.

He pulls himself free and SLAMS against his refrigerator.

We see Dereck, alone in his kitchen, leaning against his refrigerator.

INT. LOWER LOBBY OF PUBLISHER'S BUILDING - DAY

Dereck, satchel hung over his shoulder, walks up to the desk clerk in the lobby. She looks up at him and smiles.

CLERK

Can I help you?

DERECK

Yes. I need to drop something off for Mr. Humphrey.

Dereck pulls out a manilla envelope from his satchel and hands it to the woman.

DERECK  
He's expecting this today.

CLERK  
I'll make sure he gets it.

DERECK  
Thank you.

CLERK  
You're welcome.

Dereck leaves the building and heads out onto the busy street.  
Rose is parked on the street waiting for him. He gets into her car.

DERECK  
That's that.

ROSE  
That's that. What now?

DERECK  
I guess you can take me home. I need  
to take a nap before work.

ROSE  
Home it is.

Rose and Dereck drive off.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Humphrey opens the manilla envelope Dereck left with the desk clerk. He pulls out the manuscript.

We see the title page. It reads "Fickle".

INT. DERECK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We see Dereck brushing his teeth.

He spits out a glob of toothpaste and stares at himself in his bathroom mirror.

We see Dereck get dressed, putting on his shirt, tying his shoes, and putting on his sweatshirt.

We see him pour cat food into Franz's bowl and fill up his water dish leaving it beside the bowl of cat food as Franz is eating.

He picks up his satchel, but realizes he doesn't need it tonight, so he leaves it on his couch. Dereck is about to leave his apartment when his phone RINGS.

He answers the phone.

DERECK

Hello?

INT. BROWN BREW COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Rose is in the back of the coffee shop on the phone. We hear the CHATTER of customers.

ROSE

Hey. I just called to see if you wanted some company for a bit while you're at work. I was thinking about stopping by when I get out of here.

DERECK

Yeah, that would make it a much better last night.

ROSE

Good. I'll come by after work.

We hear Rose's manager YELLING in the background.

MANAGER (O.S.)

Rose! You've got customers.

ROSE

(to manager)

Be right there.

DERECK

You busy?

ROSE

Yeah. Look, I've got to go. I'll see you in a bit.

DERECK

OK. I'll see later.

ROSE

Bye.

DERECK

Bye.

Dereck hangs up his phone, smiles, and leaves his apartment.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Dereck walks down a dark, empty street as he heads to work.

In the distance standing next to an alley, we see the homeless man who rode next to Dereck on the bus after he first met with Mr. Humphrey.

Dereck watches him.

The man sees Dereck approaching and moves into the alley.

As Dereck approaches the alley, he slows down.

He looks around the street and sees no one else around.

Dereck steps into the alley.

The homeless man is standing under a light, behind a dumpster, toward the back of the alley.

DERECK

Hey. Are you hungry? I could buy you some food if you want.

The homeless man doesn't respond, but simply looks at Dereck.

DERECK

Are you OK?

The homeless man lifts his hand and points toward Dereck.

We hear a VOICE behind Dereck.

MAN

Dereck Fickle (Fie-kel)?

Dereck turns around.

We hear a GUNSHOT.

We see Dereck's face, eyes fluttering, with a trickle of blood running down his nose from the bullet hole in his forehead.

We see the barrel of a gun, a plume of smoke trickling out of it.

We see the dead man's brother holding the gun.

Dereck falls to his knees, and then onto his back as a puddle of blood begins to form around his head.

The dead man's brother turns and quickly walks down the street and around a corner.

The homeless man walks up to Dereck's body. He looks down at him, then around the corner of the alley. The street is empty.

The homeless man kneels down beside Dereck, careful of the blood pooling around his head, and reaches into his pockets. He pulls out a few dollars and Dereck's wallet.

The homeless man stuffs his pockets with everything he finds and rushes down the street, in the opposite direction of the dead man's brother, and around the corner.

We see Dereck's body lying in the alley.

FADE OUT:

SIX MONTHS LATER

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE OF BOOKSTORE - DAY

We see a bookstore as people pass by.

We look into the window of the bookstore and see a "Bargain Bin Nonfiction" sign above a large box filled with books.



INT. BOOKSTORE

We move into the "Bargain Bin Nonfiction" box as a woman picks up a book titled Four Course Meals for Dinner for Four: A Cookbook for Couples by Jaiden Stamopopalis.

Underneath the book we see Fickle, with a forty percent off sticker covering the author's name.

FADE OUT:

THE END