

Hidden Sparks

Genre: Drama

Logline: A hotheaded but compassionate Jewish doctor gambles his career to uncover the horrifying reason for the collapse of a comatose teenage neo-Nazi, as the boy's closest friend risks violent retribution to stay by his side.

INT. ALAN'S MOTHER'S CONDO - NIGHT

Friday, April 21, 1989 / 16 Nisan 5749

A very Florida condo in Tampa. Hard rain pelts the windows.

RIVKA (70) sleeps in a recliner. Behind her, between her chair and the dinner table, is a wall of pictures of her husband and two sons - none of her and her husband before their early twenties, and none of grandparents. One of the pictures of her husband EZRA shows him in a Magen David Adom medic's uniform, wearing a crocheted kippah.

ALAN (40), a compact man with round glasses, a trim black beard, and Ezra's crocheted kippah clipped to his feral black curls, carries a wine glass and mugs to the kitchen.

BEN (51), bigger and harder than Alan, clean-shaven, with a nose that's been broken at least once, puts leftovers away. Alan "helps" - Ben stops him from putting meat into a round tub and gives him a square one. Alan's sheepish - Ben reassures him. They share warm smiles.

A pager vibrates. They both check their belts: it's Alan's.

Alan's smile falls. Ben points to the phone: *need to call?* Alan shakes his head, already moving to the door.

INT. ALAN'S CAR - NIGHT

A late 40s-early 50s project car on a Tampa city street.

Ben drives like hell through a pounding rainstorm as Alan changes into scrubs in the back.

RADIO ANNOUNCER

... tornado watch for Pasco and
Hillsborough County ...

An ambulance screams by in the opposite direction, siren wailing; water batters the side of the car. A moment later, another follows, and then a few police cars.

Ben and Alan exchange looks of dread in the mirror.

INT. ER - NIGHT

A crowded, chaotic emergency room in a shabby hospital. Alan interrupts the ER MANAGER (50) mid-phone-call.

ER MANAGER

You're the on call?

ALAN

It's fine. What have we got?

ER MANAGER

Alan, I'm sorry.

ALAN

It's okay. What's the situation?

ER MANAGER

No, I'm really sorry -

Annoyed, he waves off her apology.

ALAN

Why am I here?

The doors to the ambulance bay open onto a hard rain. ROBERT (25) ducks his shaved head as he passes under the doorframe. Polished boots, black combat trousers, Thor's hammer at his neck, silver white power cross pinned to his bomber jacket. His belt buckle reading *Meine Ehre Heißt Treue* is worn - it's the real thing, and so is he.

He is also soaked. Watered-down blood runs from his right ear and the side of his face. His bluish lips are swollen, and the knuckles on his massive hands drip red.

He fixes Alan with a steady gaze. *You.*

ALAN

Oh.

Robert steps aside and stands like a sentry. A crew rushes past manually ventilating their unconscious patient - JAMES (17), pale, athletic, head shaved. One arm with a prison-quality swastika tattoo lies outside the blankets with an IV in it. An X drawn in Sharpie marks his hand.

SAM (30), an ER nurse, meets James and continues with the paramedic to a bay. Alan stops staring at Robert and joins them. Robert watches, straining to hear with his good ear.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

A curtained bay. James has been transferred to the bed. He wears only a Thor's hammer and black briefs. His right shoulder is dislocated, his right knee swollen and heavily

bruised. He has been intubated and is on a ventilator.

Alan checks James's pupillary response with a small flashlight, one eye, the other, back and forth.

ALAN

This kid's seventeen? Have we got a parent? Guardian?

PARAMEDIC

Just the guys he came in with.

ALAN

There's *more*?

PARAMEDIC

Might be a lot more.

ALAN

Who was with him last?

PATRICK (22) is dragged into the next bay, not seen but very much heard although he breathes with obvious pain.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Where is he?!

SAM (O.S.)

Sir. Calm down.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Where's Jim?

An instrument tray clatters to the floor. Alan flinches and looks through a gap in the curtain.

PARAMEDIC

Him.

Patrick is tall, wiry, with ginger brows and a shaved head, wearing a hammer identical to James's. He has been severely beaten, is filthy, his shirt in shreds.

Alan refocuses. The paramedic exits, closing the curtain.

MOMENTS LATER

Alan exits James's bay, shaking his head and muttering. He starts for the desk and spots Robert still standing there.

ALAN
 (to the ER manager)
 He can't be here. Get him out!

As she gets up, DUSTIN (22), a skinhead with a broken nose, bursts in from the waiting room. NATE (25), with a fat lip and swollen eye, tumbles in behind him, clearly drunk.

Alan dodges as Dustin charges toward Patrick's bay.

DUSTIN
 I'm gonna kill that faggot!

ER MANAGER
 Security!!

Robert surges to take Dustin down, swiftly but safely.

EDDIE (22) enters, a skin with a baby face and a well-padded frame, roughed up and somewhat drunk. Eddie pitches Nate toward the door, then helps Robert drag Dustin out.

The doors close slowly. Before they close completely, Robert stops them, then looks to Alan for instructions.

Alan holds his gaze, deeply disturbed.

ALAN
 (to the ER manager)
 Nevermind.

INT. ER - PATRICK'S BAY - NIGHT

Alan enters, reading a chart.

Patrick is strapped to the bed. He's holding a SAGE GREEN BOMBER JACKET with a re-stitched seam in the lower left sleeve and watching James through the gap in the curtain.

ALAN
 You're Patrick Connolly?

Patrick ignores him. Alan pulls the curtain fully closed.

ALAN
 I need to take a look at you, OK?

PATRICK
 Whatever.

Alan checks his bracelet and frowns at the restraints.

ALAN
James is pretty important to you.

No response.

ALAN
I need you to help me help him, ok?
But I also need you to stay in this
bed, can you do that?

Patrick stares silently at the curtain while Alan examines his arm. Blood, bruises, dirt. A drying gob of dip spit.

ALAN
Who did this to you?

Patrick looks back at Alan, mistrustful, fearful.

ALAN
I need to know what happened. So I can
help you. So we can help him.

EXT. HOF DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The gravel driveway of a former 1920s hotel.

Patrick follows the paramedics bringing James to an ambulance. Eddie and Robert clear a path through a crowd of mostly skinheads. Eddie's Maglite sweeps the crowd.

VOICE #1
Is he *naked*?

NATE
What the fuck did you do to him?

DUSTIN
I knew it. Faggot!

Dustin tackles Patrick. Patrick fights, but curls up to protect his head when the mob closes in. His ribs crack under steel-toed boots.

Eddie and Robert fight their way to him. The kicks stop. Eddie helps him up while Robert defends Eddie's back.

INT. ER - PATRICK'S BAY

PATRICK
I cleaned him up and I thought if he
just rested, I could take him -

Patrick stops himself.

PATRICK
Somewhere safe.

And he's gone again, staring at the curtain separating him from James.

ALAN
I'll be back.

INT. ER - NIGHT

Alan puts a chart down. The ER manager is on the phone.

ER MANAGER
Come on. Give me somebody...

He looks at Robert with dread, disgust, and determination. The ER manager notices and covers the phone.

ER MANAGER
You ok?

Alan gives her a look. No. Definitely no.

ER MANAGER
(to the phone)
Yeah? You there?

Alan approaches Robert, a fixed point in the chaos. Robert reads Alan, then raises a brow, questioning. Alan looks Robert in the eye, asserting authority.

Robert tilts his head in a stiffly formal gesture of temporary acquiescence. Alan nods, uneasy, unsure of what has just been agreed between them.

ROBERT
Status?

ALAN
Excuse me?

ROBERT
James.

ALAN
Ah... He's in shock. We're running tests to help us understand why, but I also need to know what happened to

him before he came here.

ROBERT

Hmm.

Alan waits, annoyed, until he sees that Robert struggles to speak. His attention is drawn to the wound on the side of Robert's head from being hit hard with a Maglite. He tries to make eye contact, but Robert avoids it.

ALAN

You took a good blow to the head. Sure you don't want to be seen?

ROBERT

I am not a priority.

ALAN

Your men before yourself?

Now he's got that eye contact, if only for an instant.

ROBERT

I was on watch, outside.

EXT. HOF DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Robert stands watch in the rain. A party rages in the house behind him. A band plays Oi! music.

Eddie runs out of the house, breathless, somewhat drunk.

EDDIE

Lisa needs you upstairs. It's Jim.

INT. HOF - MAIN ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A cavernous, once-elegant room, now filled with a crowd of mostly skinheads partying to a live band. Stairs lead to an open hallway overlooking the space.

Robert and Eddie run upstairs.

INT. HOF - LISA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A sad apartment that looks as if it would reek of smoke.

James lies unconscious in underwear on a folded-out sofa bed, chest and belly fluttering with rapid, shallow breaths. Patrick, clothed, distraught, holds him.

PATRICK

He won't wake up. He fell asleep and
he won't wake up.

LISA (50) is on the phone. A short, stout, formidable woman with spiky bleached hair, too much jewelry, and a Thor's hammer the size of a door knocker, she radiates authority.

LISA

Mueller! I told you to send this boy
home.

Robert bows slightly in submission and apology.

LISA

Clear the way for the ambulance.
Eddie, keep the stairs open.

He hesitates, noticing James's bruised and swollen shoulder, and Patrick holding him.

LISA

GO!

INT. ER - NIGHT

Robert stands at parade rest.

ROBERT

We had half an hour before the permit
expired, so approximately 2230.

ALAN

Before that? Drinking, drugs -

Robert sours.

ALAN

Look. I'm not a cop. I'm just trying
to figure out what happened.

Robert's attention shifts to Patrick as he is wheeled out by two transporters, protesting loudly.

PATRICK

I can't leave!

TRANSPORTER #1

You gotta go to x-ray.

Dustin, being escorted by Nate, sees Patrick.

DUSTIN
Fucking pedo bitch!

And Nate sees Robert's stern warning and closing fists.

NATE
Fuck 'm. Tom'll take care of him when
he gets here.

Robert's mask slips, revealing dread that settles into Alan's
guts. If this man is afraid...

ROBERT
(privately)
I suggest you ask Patrick. Soon.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Sam exits. Patrick sneaks in with the jacket. The sight of
James on the vent hits him hard, another kick to the chest.

He sits by the bed and checks his six before leaning close.

PATRICK
Hey. It's me.

He hesitantly touches James's arm. A memory intrudes.

JAMES (V.O.)
(joyfully)
Paddy! You're here.

EXT. JAMES'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

James's fuzzy hair glows in the sun against a clear sky. He's
wearing his bomber despite the heat - he's sweating, flushed,
and needs a haircut.

They're sitting on the hood of a beat up car at a gas station
across from a high school. Patrick's in his grocery store
uniform. James is wolfing down a grocery store sub.

JAMES
This is gonna be great.

Patrick gestures evasively, about to say something.

JAMES
Can you pick me up? Early maybe. We
could go somewhere first -

PATRICK
Maybe it's better if we don't go.

JAMES
My mom said she didn't care.

PATRICK
What did Tom say?

JAMES
He's got work, he's not even gonna be there.

PATRICK
His friends will be. And Robert.

James wilts, losing interest in his lunch.

PATRICK
His problem's with me anyway. Maybe I'll just stay home and you go with Eddie.

JAMES
Fuck Tom.

PATRICK
Maybe just keep your head down for a while. Try not to piss him off.

JAMES
It doesn't matter what I do, he'll find something to be pissed off about. He always does.

James folds his arms and buries his nose in his sleeve.

PATRICK
Just a couple more months, then we can both get out of this shithole.

James looks up at him guardedly. Maybe a little petulant.

PATRICK
All right, fine...

James's smile slowly returns. Patrick shoves him playfully. He grins and punches Patrick in the arm, laughing.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Patrick snaps back to the present, holding a hand over his shoulder where James had punched him.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Nate and a few others hang around the vending machines. A pair of white security guards watch, more amused than concerned. Eddie is with them.

Alan waits for an answer from sneering, uncooperative Dustin, visibly disgusted and losing his patience.

EDDIE

Quit being a dick.

DUSTIN

I don't collaborate with the enemy.

ALAN

I don't have time for this.

Alan turns to leave. The outside doors open: the guards and Eddie tense up.

GUARD #1

Awww shit...

Eddie grabs Dustin by the shirt.

EDDIE

Shut up and answer him.

DUSTIN

OK. OK.

Alan stops. Eddie lets go. Dustin recovers his dignity.

DUSTIN

I saw him . He didn't look too good.
Looked like he lost a fight -

Dustin sees THOMAS (23) walk in - a bald beast in a security guard's uniform, nightstick and handcuffs rattling on his belt. He looks enough like Robert to be mistaken for him, but if Robert's an Alsatian police dog, he's a hyena.

His uniform is of the same company as the hospital guards.

THOMAS

Nate. Eddie. Scott. Dean. Dustin.

DUSTIN

Hey, Tom. I was just telling the doctor what happened to your brother.

THOMAS

Don't let me interrupt.

Dustin nervously checks with Thomas before continuing.

DUSTIN

Yeah, so, um. there was a fight. I couldn't see everything...

XT. HOF DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Robert's pristine white pickup idles in the driveway. Dustin exits a porta-potty standing in the street.

DUSTIN (V.O)

Jim and Patrick were gonna leave in Mueller's truck. Patrick's got a car, but I guess he didn't take it.

Across the bougainvillea-covered courtyard wall, Dustin sees Patrick exit the house with James leaning on him.

DUSTIN (V.O)

Saw 'em comin' out. Jim looked bad, man. Patrick was practically dragging his ass.

Dustin comes closer. Robert exits the truck and stands in front of the headlights as Patrick approaches with James.

DUSTIN (V.O)

And then Jim just freaked out. Started hitting him. Looked like he wanted to fuckin' kill him.

James shoves Patrick away. Patrick reaches for him, and James punches him hard. Patrick falls back as James comes at him screaming and swinging wildly.

Robert rushes to grab James's right arm. James smacks Robert in the mouth with his head; they both go down.

DUSTIN (V.O)

Whatever he was on, he was an animal.

Clocked Mueller in the face and they both went down. You've seen the guy.

Dustin peers through the bougainvillea. Robert holds James down. Patrick tugs at Robert, but Robert won't be moved.

DUSTIN (V.O)

Lisa came out. She was pissed.

Lisa yells at Robert and Patrick. She kneels and feels James's forehead, scolds them both again, and points at the truck. Robert shakes his head.

DUSTIN (V.O)

Jim puked. Mueller wouldn't let them in his truck after that.

Lisa gives Patrick her keys and points toward the house. Patrick and Robert scrape James up: James is subdued, cradling his right arm, and can't stand on his right leg.

DUSTIN (V.O)

I guess she told Patrick to take him inside and clean him up. That's the last I saw till the ambulance came.

INT. ER WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Alan watches Dustin's face - thuggish, brutal, but also genuinely concerned. Dustin checks again with Thomas; Thomas nods his approval, then starts for the ER.

Alan follows, hustling to keep up. Dustin calls after him.

DUSTIN

Is he gonna be okay?

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Patrick sits by James's bed.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Which one is he in?

PATRICK

Shit...

ALAN (O.S.)

This one -

Through a gap in the curtain, Patrick sees Robert greeting

Thomas - and standing in his way.

PATRICK
Shit shit shit!

He staggers away from the bed, jacket in hand.

ROBERT
Tom, if I might have a word -

ALAN (O.S.)
Excuse us -

BETTINA (O.S.)
Tommy?

BETTINA (43) comes up to Thomas. A petite blonde in pink scrubs and a fluffy pink cardigan, swallowed up by Thomas's black bomber. A badge identifies her as a CNA at a hospice.

Thomas gives Robert a hard 'we will speak later' look, and takes Bettina into James's bay.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

BETTINA
My baby!

Alan reaches for the stool, and seeing it still spinning, looks into the corner to see Patrick waving him off.

Thomas helps Bettina sit on the stool.

BETTINA
He was fine this morning.

ALAN
What time this morning?

BETTINA
Five? Six? Before school.

PATRICK
Eleven. I saw him at eleven. He was fine.

She glares at him. Alan's not too happy with him, either.

THOMAS
What is he doing here?

ALAN

I'm not sure. I told him to stay in bed.

Patrick emerges from the corner.

THOMAS

You... What did you do?

Robert enters. Alan shrinks in the overcrowded bay.

ROBERT

This is not the place, either of you.

ALAN

(muttering)

Oh, fuck this.

THOMAS

(at Alan)

That man has NO right to be here. I want him out of this room and out of this hospital.

And fuck this guy, too.

ALAN

He's a patient here and hasn't been discharged. But he does need to go back to his bed and stay there.

THOMAS

He is a danger to my family.

PATRICK

You're a danger to your family -

Robert reaches past Alan to grab Patrick and pull him out.

PATRICK

Get off me!

ROBERT

(to Thomas)

I'll take care of this.

Robert pulls Patrick out of the room.

ALAN

He's still under observation!

And they're gone. Alan pinches the bridge of his nose: this is going to be a very long night.

INT. ER LOBBY - NIGHT

Robert hustles Patrick through the lobby. Eddie meets him there and helps. The skins by the vending machine elbow each other, straightening up, ready to rumble. Robert gives them a stern warning glare.

ROBERT
(to Patrick)
Move.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Still pouring rain. Robert and Eddie hurry Patrick around the corner to a service area. Patrick struggles.

EDDIE
Paddy? Just... Be cool.

PATRICK
Motherfucker!

ROBERT
Contain yourself!

PATRICK
Get off me!

Robert jerks Patrick's arm. He gasps in pain.

ROBERT
If you do not play along, you will be ejected, possibly arrested - and then you will be of no use to anyone. So stay quiet and stay out of sight!

EDDIE
Rob. C'mon, man. Ease up.

Robert relents. Spying a few staff smoking in a doorway, he motions for Eddie to take off his jacket and go.

Eddie strips off his bomber, hands it to Patrick, and lopes to the door while tucking his hammer in. He bums a smoke.

The smokers go in. Eddie catches the door and signals to Robert; Robert takes Patrick inside.

INT. HOSPITAL SERVICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Robert and Eddie bring Patrick through a service corridor.

EDDIE

Where we going?

PATRICK

ICU. That's where they'll take him.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Thomas stands, arms folded, feet apart, boot heel tapping, cuffs jingling. Bettina sits on the stool holding James's foot. Alan warms his stethoscope in his hands.

ALAN

I want to call his GP to admit him.
Can you get me that number?

BETTINA

He doesn't have one.

ALAN

He doesn't have a doctor?

Thomas watches Bettina closely. She glances up at him.

BETTINA

He hasn't needed one. We go to the
walk-in clinic for the usual bumps and
bruises. He's a healthy boy.

Thomas approves. Alan listens to James's chest and abdomen.

BETTINA

So you're pushing fluids. Raising
blood volume. Vasopressors?

Alan pulls his stethoscope out of his ears.

ALAN

Not yet - how he reacts to the
increase in blood volume is itself
diagnostic.

Alan puts the stethoscope back and listens again.

THOMAS

Any chance it's drugs?

BETTINA

Tommy!

Hard to listen to the patient when they won't shut up.

THOMAS

Patrick sells on the side. Could have got it from him - he gets Jim to steal Valium from her.

ALAN

Valium wouldn't do this. Any chance -

BETTINA

Jimmy doesn't do drugs.

THOMAS

He hangs out with a dealer, Mom.

Alan keeps examining James while they talk.

BETTINA

I know he's a problem. But I don't think he'd hurt Jimmy deliberately.

He frowns, listening to James's right lower abdomen.

THOMAS

Just saying, something's not right. Patrick tried to take him home, and he fought back. He didn't want to go.

Alan motions for quiet. Thomas sniffs and gazes sadly at James, ensuring all eyes are on him before he continues.

THOMAS

But then Lisa let Patrick take him up to her apartment, and nobody knows what happened up there but him.

MONTAGE - MEDICAL TESTS

ER, JAMES'S BAY: Sam puts a vial of James's blood into a tray of many.

LAB: A gloved hand slides a bottle of James's blood into an incubator.

ER, JAMES'S BAY: A radiographer exits James's bay with a portable X-ray machine.

ER, JAMES'S BAY: Bettina leans on Thomas. He checks his watch.

ER, JAMES'S BAY: Sam checks James's blood pressure and frowns.

ER: A courier hands Alan a folder. Alan looks in it and frowns.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A less-crowded corner. Alan, holding the folder, confers with Sam and a younger ER DOCTOR (32).

ALAN

BP's not responding to the increase in blood volume. Get a PICC line in, start norepinephrine.

SAM

Got it.

ALAN

Any urine output?

SAM

Four, maybe five CC's.

ALAN

Get a dip test. No sign of pneumonia but white cell count, CRP, lactate all suggest infection.

SAM

Understood.

ALAN

I want eGFR, serum creatinine and blood urea nitrogen. Get blood for cultures, then start broad-spectrum antibiotics.

ER DOCTOR

You're thinking sepsis? From what?

ALAN

In a young, healthy kid? No idea.

He taps his pen, thinking, then points at the ER doctor.

ALAN

But I think I know how to find out.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Thomas stands outside James's bay with Robert, tapping a cigarette out of a pack. Behind them, in the bay, the ER doctor assisted by Sam and an ultrasound tech insert a PICC line while Bettina watches and worries.

Robert nods to Thomas, acknowledging an update. Thomas leaves. Robert watches him go past the ER manager's desk.

Alan is on the phone, angry. Robert strains to hear him.

ALAN

What do you mean, no?

He struggles to read Alan's face.

ALAN

Well, I have to do something!

Alan starts to slam the phone down, catches himself, sets it gently in the receiver and slaps the desk instead. He looks across the room to see Robert staring back.

For an instant, they are open. Both worried. Both weighed down with responsibility.

Robert turns crisply and walks away. The moment is gone.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office of an OB-GYN and obsessive baseball fan. Rain splatters its narrow window, as hard as a car wash.

Ben gets up as Alan enters.

BEN

You look like shit. Sit.

Alan flumps into the guest chair. Ben holds up a thermos.

BEN

Coffee?

ALAN

Got any booze?

Ben snorts and pours a cup for Alan.

ALAN

I thought you went home.

BEN

I have paperwork to catch up on.
Besides, you forgot your lunch.

Ben reaches under the desk and sets the bag of leftovers by Alan. Alan smiles a little, not buying any of this.

Ben indicates that Alan's wearing his kippah.

BEN

You picked a hell of a night to get religious.

Alan touches his kippah and blows out a laugh.

BEN

It suits you. He was a brave man.

He takes it off, holding it in his hands.

BEN

It makes Mom happy.

ALAN

I don't know. I feel like I'm pretending to be something I'm not.

Ben slides him a box of coconut macaroons, taking one for himself. Alan takes one and picks at it.

BEN

All right. What's bothering you?

ALAN

Admin denied my request to transfer the kid to the university hospital.

BEN

Shit.

ALAN

Says the transport's too risky.
Keeping him here is risky! They've got MRI and CT. Their radiology lab's better equipped to handle a patient on a vent. Their ICU looks like Star Trek compared to ours -

BEN

And it would get him out of your hair.

Alan hangs his head. Yeah, that too.

ALAN

He'll be admitted here.

BEN

Okay... and...

ALAN

He hasn't got a primary. If I admit him...

BEN

That makes you the attending.

ALAN

Yeah

BEN

Shit.

Alan contemplates the kippah. Ben studies Alan.

BEN

You can ask for a GP to be appointed.

ALAN

I could.

BEN

You've done your job.

ALAN

I know, but... Information gets lost on handover. Misread, misinterpreted.

BEN

True.

ALAN

Without the imaging, every scrap of information matters. And it's not just information, it's rapport, trust.

BEN

Trust? With *them*?

ALAN
Whoever they'd appoint would have to
start all over.

BEN
Whoever they'd appoint would be
starting out with more trust than
you'll ever get.

ALAN
Maybe.

BEN
"Maybe"?

Ben throws up his hands, then points at Alan.

BEN
You might think you can put aside who
you are, but they won't. Not now,
and sure as shit not if this kid dies
on your watch.

Alan shakes his head, staying silent.

BEN
You've got an out. Take it.

Alan feels one of a few spots on the kippah that have been
repaired with not-quite-matching yarn. It's been through the
wars. Actual wars.

ALAN
I'm not going to let them win.

BEN
I said he was brave, not stupid.

ALAN
You really can be an asshole, you know
that?

Alan gets up and heads for the door. Ben follows.

BEN
Alan, wait.

ALAN
They might believe my life is worth
nothing, but they don't get to choose
for me what I believe about their

lives. So no. If there's an out, I'm not taking it.

BEN

Alan -

Alan turns in the doorway, gesturing angrily at Ben.

ALAN

The hospital might be fine with me dumping this kid, but in the end?

Alan pauses, looking small and scared despite his bluster.

ALAN

It's not them I have to answer to.

INT. ER - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

A gloved hand folds up the rail on James's bed. Through its bars, James's swollen shoulder, his tattooed arm with the IV in it. His body. A urine bag, by his leg, nearly empty.

Bettina stands at the foot of the bed, frozen. Thomas pulls her out of the way as the bed is rolled out.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

A hallway into an ICU. To one side, a nurse's station. Opposite, doors into a waiting room and a family room. Further down, glass-walled bays.

Eddie leans on the wall, watching Patrick: Patrick stands outside James's bay. James can hardly be seen past the team settling him in.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SIX YEARS EARLIER

The living room of a small Florida tract house, tile-floored, inadequately furnished, a poor family's home.

PATRICK (17) sits on a lawn chair with an open textbook and notebook on a TV tray. Fuzzy red crewcut, the same sage green bomber James now has but without the stitched-up seam, cheap undershirt, Thor's hammer, boots and braces.

THOMAS (17), exits. The screen door slams behind him.

Patrick labels a paper THOMAS BEST and starts copying math

problems from a book bookmarked with a five-dollar bill.

JAMES (12), scrawny, barefoot, messy-haired, creeps out of his bedroom reading Gods of the Ancient Northmen. He sees Patrick and gasps, retreating backward.

PATRICK

Hey. It's okay.

James freezes; Patrick sees that he's not shy, but scared. He looks for a way to put him at ease. The book?

PATRICK

Dumézil, huh?

James nods, surprised that Patrick knows it.

PATRICK

So. What do you think so far?

James smiles cautiously, and Patrick returns the smile.

EDDIE (V.O.)

C'mon. Let's go.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Patrick thumps his head on the glass, hand spread, thumb stroking nothing. Eddie stands behind him.

Down by the elevators, Robert has just dropped a magazine.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Mueller?

Eddie hurries Patrick into the family room, shuts the door, and leans casually on it whistling "Springtime for Hitler".

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Thomas exits the elevator with Bettina on his arm.

THOMAS

I thought you left.

ROBERT

I returned.

BETTINA

Tommy?

THOMAS

You go ahead.

Bettina fixes herself and walks to the nurse's station. Once she's gone, Thomas and Robert speak in hushed tones.

THOMAS

You lied to me.

ROBERT

It was necessary.

THOMAS

Necessary?

ROBERT

What would have happened had I told you James was there with Patrick?

THOMAS

I would have come up there and beat both their asses.

ROBERT

Which would have resulted in -

THOMAS

Exactly the situation you got?

ROBERT

No. In the situation I have, Patrick *walked* into the emergency room.

Thomas smirks. Robert's all right. He touches his own ear.

THOMAS

You get that sticking up for that pervert?

ROBERT

I got that preventing a noise complaint from escalating into a murder investigation.

Down the hall, Bettina thanks MARCIE (45), the head nurse at the station, then totters toward James's room. Outside, she hesitates, and looks to Thomas for reassurance.

THOMAS

You watching the door?

Robert nods. Thomas claps his shoulder and casually walks to James's room, nightstick slapping against his thigh.

INT. ICU - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

A cramped beige box with a table and chairs. On the table, a box of tissues and a brochure.

Patrick sits at the table, head in one hand, the other arm around his ribs. He starts to nod off, then shakes himself awake and looks at the brochure on the table:

GUIDELINES FOR END OF LIFE DECISIONS

He shoves it away and looks at the jacket. His face crumples as his finger follows the mended seam.

JAMES, 14 (V.O.)
I can keep it?

PATRICK, 19 (V.O.)
Yeah, it's a little small for me.
Might want to wash it, it stinks.

JAMES, 14 (V.O.)
I don't mind.

Patrick puts the jacket on. It's a little small, sleeves a little short, a bit tight in the shoulders. He curls up, caressing his own arms, and starts to shake.

PATRICK
FUCK!

Patrick slams his hands on the table and storms out.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Infusion pumps, a heart monitor, a ventilator, and a continuous renal replacement machine crowd the bay.

James lies in bed in a web of wires and tubes. Bettina reads a Bible, holding his hand. Thomas paces, duty belt jingling, swishing the last few drops in a can of soda.

thump clink thump clink

squeak

thump clink thump clink

BETTINA
Tommy, please.

THOMAS
What?

thump clink thump clink

swish swish

She strokes James's knuckles, toughened from fighting. His palms, calloused from work. His wrist, bruised from..?

THOMAS
When are we gonna hear something?

BETTINA
It takes time, honey. We have to wait.

THOMAS
Hmph.

Clink. Thump clink thump clink.

Tap tap tap tap tap

THOMAS
I don't trust that doctor.

BETTINA
There'll be a different one up here -
no, don't put your Coke there.

Thomas takes his can off the ventilator. He stares down at James, then turns on his heel and starts pacing again. Bettina leafs through her Bible -

Stomp clink stomp clink stomp

BETTINA
You're worried.

He shrugs.

BETTINA
Honey. I know it's not your belief any more, but maybe if you'd come pray with me -

Thomas keeps pacing, adding the ding of his thumb on the

can tab to his annoying noises. Bettina holds James's hand and tries to pray:

BETTINA
Our father -

thump clink thump clink

BETTINA
Who art in heaven -

ding

BETTINA
Hallowed be thy -

dingy dingy dingy dingy

She slaps her Bible shut and stands up.

BETTINA
I'm going to go get a drink. Can I get you anything?

THOMAS
Another Coke?

She smiles tightly at him, pats his arm, and leaves.

INT. ICU - WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

KATIE (18) , a punkish, proto-rockabilly girl, embroiders a Sailor Jerry tattoo on a hoop. Next to her, a BABY sleeps in a carrier. She eyes Eddie warily: she knows what he is.

Eddie's on the phone, twisting the cord around his finger.

EDDIE
Yeah. I'm at the hospital.

EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.)
The hospital? You been fightin' again?

He looks toward the door and sees Patrick storming by, and starts to go get him - but nah. Let Robert deal with him.

EDDIE
It's not me. It's Jim.

EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.)
Bettina's boy?

EDDIE
He passed out and he won't wake up.
Tom's here acting like an asshole.

EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.)
He is an asshole.

EDDIE
Yeah, well...

EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.)
His friends are assholes.

<p>EDDIE (imitating Spaceballs) I'm surrounded by assholes.</p>	<p>EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.) (imitating Spaceballs) I'm surrounded by assholes.</p>
---	--

Eddie smiles a little, but looks around as if he's just done something wrong. Katie looks back quizzically. Their eyes meet; her face hardens, and Eddie's embarrassed.

EDDIE'S DAD (V.O.)
(gently)
You want me to come get you?

Eddie looks out the door again, seeing Patrick and Robert. Robert tries to stop Patrick from leaving. Patrick escapes Robert's grasp: Robert lets him go, then gazes toward James's room, tired and worried and sorry.

EDDIE
Nah. I gotta stay here. Maybe they are
assholes, but they're my friends.

Robert looks back, his expression once again impenetrable.

INT. HOSPITAL VENDING AREA - NIGHT

A room with vending machines and tables.

Patrick stands at a snack machine, holding the button, watching the carousel of crap spin around and around.

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN taps Patrick on the shoulder.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Hey, buddy. You gonna pick something?

Patrick jumps. Something falls. He's bought... what?

He grabs the roll of pink donuts from the slot and digs in his pocket. Coins. A cigarette filter. A small ziploc bag with a few Valium and three Ritalin in it.

He buys a coffee. As the machine snots it out, he considers the pills, separating a Ritalin with his thumb.

BETTINA (O.S.)

(annoyed)

Yes, I am, but I don't work here!

PATRICK

Oh, Christ.

He stuffs the baggie in his pocket as she enters the room.

PATRICK

Mrs. Best?

She freezes, stranded, clutching her purse.

BETTINA

You should leave.

PATRICK

How you holding up?

BETTINA

How do you think? My son is dying.

She storms over and points a finger in his face.

BETTINA

Because of you!

She whacks him with her handbag. It *hurts*.

BETTINA

Stay away from my boy!

The coffee's slopping out. She's beating his chest with her hard little fists and he can't push her away because she's so small and the coffee is hot and oh God he's dying -

PATRICK

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

BETTINA

My beautiful boy...

She crumples into sobs. He embraces her awkwardly, still holding the coffee cup and a pack of pink mini donuts.

PATRICK

Stop. Stop stop stop. Please stop.

She calms and picks at a stray string on his jacket.

BETTINA

Ratty. Nasty. Ugly old thing.

She looks up at him meaningfully.

BETTINA

But he loves it.

Whatever she means, he doesn't want to hear it.

PATRICK

I didn't hurt him. I wouldn't. Ever.

She takes the cup, disapproving as he wipes his eyes.

PATRICK

He wasn't okay when I picked him up, but he wouldn't let me leave without him. And he got worse at Lisa's... I thought if he rested, he might feel better. But I fell asleep. When I woke up. I tried to wake him but he wouldn't wake up.

BETTINA

So that's how this happened. You were in bed with my son.

PATRICK

No. We were in "a" bed. Not "in bed".

BETTINA

In that place? You have got more balls than brains.

Bettina searches her purse while Patrick gets over the shock of those words coming out of Bettina's mouth.

BETTINA

I only came down here for a coffee and a Coke for Tommy.

PATRICK

You can have that one.

She takes the coffee. It's half gone, the other half on the floor or down the back of her sweater, but it's coffee.

Patrick pulls out a chair; she sits and gets out her compact. He joins her at the table as she fixes her face.

BETTINA

I just couldn't be in that room for one more minute. Tommy's coming apart at the seams. Pacing. Fiddling with things. I hate when he gets like this.

PATRICK

Like there's a blowout coming?

The mirror catches her look of dread.

BETTINA

He has a temper, but he does his best. Jimmy needs a strong hand -

PATRICK

A strong hand? He broke Jim's arm. Again.

Pat pat pat. Not enough foundation to cover this up.

BETTINA

Don't be ridiculous. Tommy worked back to back shifts.

PATRICK

That's why he didn't want to go home, he was terrified.

PATRICK

This wasn't just a fight -

BETTINA

Do you know when they fight, what they fight about?

She snaps the compact shut.

BETTINA

You. The worst ones are always about you.

He cringes; having landed a blow, she relents.

BETTINA

I know you mean well, but he's too attached to you. He dresses like you. Cuts his hair like you.

PATRICK

We all kind of look the same.

BETTINA

Patrick.

Bettina looks at him as if he's a moron.

BETTINA

I'm his mother. I know things. And I know that however much he pretends, he's too soft to be where he is. And he wouldn't be there without you.

She's not wrong, and he knows it.

BETTINA

His attachment to you is unhealthy, and you need to stop it, because I couldn't, Tommy can't, and he won't.

Patrick holds his broken ribs, and his tongue.

BETTINA

So for his sake. You need to leave him alone.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Patrick leans against a light pole a short distance away from the smoking door. The rain has slowed to a drizzle.

A CATERING WORKER crosses with multiple bags of trash. She puts them down to light her smoke and continues.

A LITTLE BOY (5), messy, curly red hair, thin, stands alone by the bag in flip flops and shorts. He picks it up. From the shape and mass, it's not trash, but clothing. He stares back at Patrick, scared, confused.

Trash clatters into a Dumpster.

The CATERING WORKER passes by again, blocking Patrick's view of the boy for an instant.

A PRETEEN BOY (10), red hair, still thin, holds a trash bag

of clothes and a 1970s skateboard. This one's angry.

A couple of LAUNDRY WORKERS pass on their way in, chatting.

A TEENAGE BOY (15), buzzed red hair, tall, wiry, holds the bag. More poor kid than skinhead, but he's nearly there. He's defeated. Unwanted. With all his shit in a bag, again.

Patrick thumps the back of his head on the light pole, sucking on a rollie.

JAMES (V.O.)

Paddy, you're here!

The joy in James's remembered voice - joy just because he's there, because he exists - crushes him.

Where his former selves had stood, there's only trash.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Robert leans by the elevators, shivering, exhausted, watching Thomas pace the hall. Eddie stands by James's bay.

Thomas juts his chin up at Robert; he returns a nod.

ROBERT

Any news?

THOMAS

Nothing yet.

Thomas puts a hand on Robert's shoulder.

ROBERT

Thomas. I'm sorry.

THOMAS

Hey. You did what you had to do.

ROBERT

I never intended to hurt him.

THOMAS

I get carried away too sometimes.

Robert looks questioningly at Thomas, then grows faintly alarmed as Thomas slowly moves his arm into a rear arm bar, mimicking what Robert did to James in the driveway.

THOMAS

The trick is not to push things too far. Otherwise, something gets broken.

Thomas's breath floods his neck: he stays in that position a little too long, but Robert holds. Barely.

The elevator doors open: Thomas lets go. Bettina steps out and tries to smile at Thomas. Mirroring her worry, he envelops her in his arm and escorts her down the hall.

Robert watches them go, then studiously repeats the motions of the restraint and takedown, as if performing a kata.

EXT. HOF DRIVEWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The driveway. Oi music. Pelting rain. Patrick is almost carrying James, who is holding his gut. James looks straight at Robert, petrified, betrayed.

JAMES

No... No!

James shoves Patrick away, throwing himself off balance. Patrick reaches to catch him, and James punches him with his left fist. His right arm stays at his side. Patrick falls back as James lurches toward him, screaming.

JAMES

Get away from me, fucking pervert!

Robert rushes forward and takes James's right wrist in one hand, placing his left high on James's arm. James whips his head back, hitting Robert in the mouth.

Robert's shined boot toe presses the back of James's knee, and he begins to move James's arm behind his back. James grimaces in pain - too much pain - and collapses easily.

Robert holds himself up over James's prone body. Strings of vomit stretch from James's lips and nose. He is terrified.

JAMES

Please, Tom. Please don't. Please. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Robert stands by the elevators, holding air.

He looks at his hands, then to James's room. Outside it, Thomas talks casually to Eddie. Eddie looks back, worried.

Robert avoids his eyes, masking his confusion.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Robert checks that Thomas has gone back into James's room, and opens the family room door. Patrick's not there.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Eddie stands outside the door, watching. Robert enters, holding Patrick by the arm. Patrick gasps, holding his chest. They speak in whispers through clenched teeth.

PATRICK

Let go of me!

ROBERT

Stop wandering off.

PATRICK

I said let go!

He pulls again: Robert lets go. Eddie sighs and goes in.

EDDIE

C'mon, guys. Put your dicks away.

ROBERT

(to Patrick)

I put my ass on the line for you.

PATRICK

You put your ass on the line for Lisa.
You don't give a fuck about me. None
of you do.

EDDIE

That's not true.

ROBERT

I need to talk to you.

ALAN (O.S.)

So do I.

Alan stands at the door with Marcie - he's wearing his kippah again. Robert snaps to attention: Patrick snarls like a feral dog in a trap. Eddie just stands there like a

mangy circus bear who's tired of the whole show.

Patrick's eyes fall to the brochure, and he deflates.

MARCIE

Dr. Green? Should I leave this open?

ALAN

No. Thank you.

Robert pulls out a chair for Alan. Uneasy, Alan sits in it, flinching as the door shuts.

PATRICK

How is he?

ALAN

The family has told me that I'm not allowed to talk to you, but there's no rule saying you can't talk to me.

Patrick looks at Eddie and Robert, mistrustful. He tries to hint that they should leave, but Robert refuses.

ALAN

I need to know what happened upstairs.

Reluctantly, Patrick starts to talk.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

James huddles on the sofa bed, cradling his right arm. Vomit and mud splatter his clothes; his crotch is soaked.

JAMES

I'm sorry. Paddy, I'm sorry.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Just - Stay there.

Patrick brings some warm water and a towel.

PATRICK

Get out of those clothes and get cleaned up.

James tries to reach for his boots, but grimaces in pain. Irritated, impatient, Patrick kneels down to untie them.

JAMES
No. Just leave me alone.

PATRICK
Jim, you've pissed yourself.

James curls even further into himself, ashamed. He tries to take off his jacket, but can't move his right arm much.

Patrick slips off James's boots while James resists weakly.

PATRICK
(gently)
Will you let me help you?

James grits through Patrick taking off his jacket and shirt. While Patrick soaks the towel, he tries to get up and take off his jeans, but his knee buckles.

JAMES
Fuck! fuck...

PATRICK
Easy. Easy. Just sit.

He helps James back down to the bed.

JAMES
Don't look at me.

Patrick looks away. James tries to undress with one useless arm and one buckling knee and a belly that hurts like hell.

PATRICK
C'mon. Lay back.

James tries, but stifles a cry of pain, holding his gut.

JAMES
Please don't make me move.

PATRICK
It'll just take a second. I won't look.

James goes limp as Patrick strips him.

PATRICK
I'll get some clothes from Robert -

James clutches his jacket, tears pooling, hardly breathing.

Patrick covers him in the sheet and sits beside him. His eyes flicker to the door, then to James's terrified face.

PATRICK
Jim. What happened?

JAMES
Tom came home.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Robert stands in the corner, head bowed, wounded, regretful. Eddie waits at the door, ready for war.

ALAN
This wasn't the first time.

PATRICK
No. But this was the worst.

ROBERT
Why didn't he tell me? I could have -

PATRICK
He doesn't trust you, Mueller.

EDDIE
I coulda done somethin'.

ROBERT
Not alone, you couldn't have.

Robert turns to Patrick.

ROBERT
Why didn't you report this?

PATRICK
What exactly do you think would have happened if I did, huh? You think the system would've saved him?

ROBERT
You could have tried.

PATRICK
You don't know shit.

Alan seeks Patrick's eyes and attention. Words pour out of Patrick like pus from a long-festering wound.

PATRICK

Tom doesn't just hurt him. He has to control him like he owns him. Those tattoos? Tom made him do that. Had him branded like an animal so everybody would know exactly who he belonged to. He was fourteen. Fourteen!

Eddie's face goes from pale to green. Robert stares at the ground in shame. No one will look at Patrick but Alan.

PATRICK

Only time Tom ever said he was proud of him. Because he was brave. Because he didn't make a sound. You know how long it takes to do tattoos like that with a machine made out of a shaver motor and a ballpoint pen?

Alan's jaw clenches. His temples pulse in rage.

PATRICK

I don't know what he did this time. He wouldn't tell me. He said if he did, Tom would kill us both.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Alan stalks down the hall like a gunslinger. His hands twitch, itching for something that isn't gentle care.

He stops. Stretches his hands. Straightens his body. Turns his face upward and closes his eyes, breathing in peace.

As calm as he's going to get, Alan walks to James's bay. Marcie leaves her station and follows.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

A TV plays an action movie, cars zooming, exciting music. James lies under blankets and Bettina's pink cardigan, a folded washcloth covering his eyes.

Bettina looks over the edge of her Bible as Alan enters.

ALAN

Good morning, Mrs. Best. Thomas.

BETTINA

Doctor.

Thomas grunts in acknowledgment. Alan moves the washcloth.

BETTINA
It's so bright in here.

THOMAS
(sneering)
He can't see.

He puts the cloth aside and reaches for the small flashlight in his pocket: his elbow bumps Thomas's leg.

ALAN
Would you -

Thomas steps back a bit. Alan touches James's hand.

ALAN
James. I'm your doctor. I'm gonna -

THOMAS
He can't hear, either.

BETTINA
Tommy...

Thomas returns his attention to the TV. Alan shines his flashlight into James's eyes, then presses his thumb into James's brow. James's hand twitches faintly; he grimaces.

THOMAS
What was that?

BETTINA
It's just a reflex.

ALAN
I'm sorry. I know that's not pleasant.

He returns the cloth to James's eyes.

ALAN
I'm going to look you over again, so
I'm going to have to touch your body.
Your mom's right here.

THOMAS
What are you talking to him for?

ALAN

People are often aware of more than
you'd think.

Alan folds down the blanket halfway and hands the sweater to Bettina, making sure he keeps her attention. He inspects James's obvious injuries, making sure she sees them, too.

BETTINA

He was in a fight.

THOMAS

At Lisa's.

ALAN

(to Bettina)

See the bluish color forming here?

Bettina notes it, a sign of the bruise's age, and glances at Thomas. Alan listens to James's lungs.

Gunshots pop. A siren wails.

ALAN

Would you mind turning that down?

Thomas reaches under Alan's arm to the remote on the bed rail. Under his nails, Alan notices dried blood.

Alan exposes James's lower torso. He presses James's abdomen; James's eyes open briefly when he releases.

BETTINA

Is he in pain?

ALAN

(quietly)

Probably a lot of it.

Alan palpates James's taut, slightly swollen abdomen, and listens again. Thomas flicks the tab on the soda can:

Dingy dingy dingy

BETTINA

Tommy?

Tap tap jingle tap squeak

BETTINA

Tommy!

ALAN

Mrs. Best? A word outside?

She starts to stand.

THOMAS

Whatever you've got to say, you can say it in here.

And sits right back down again. Alan lowers his voice.

ALAN

We may need to do exploratory abdominal surgery. It's risky in his condition and I would have liked to have done imaging first, but the bigger risk is doing nothing.

Alan gets up. Thomas stands in his way.

THOMAS

What the hell's going on? I thought our problem was, he's in a coma, not that he's got a bellyache.

Alan slips by and starts washing his hands.

ALAN

He has a dislocated shoulder. Torn medial collateral ligament in the right knee. Dislocated patella. Multiple contusions over the thoracic and lumbar spine that could point to internal injury from blunt trauma, and now, signs of acute abdomen.

THOMAS

What's that?

ALAN

A bellyache.

He dries his hands, then opens a drawer and stares into it.

ALAN

In the meantime, I'll do a manual exam. It can't rule out a GI bleed, but it may confirm one, and could tell me something about where it's coming from. Marcie?

MARCIE (O.S.)

Yes?

ALAN

Can you get Amber to come in here? I need to get him in lithotomy.

MARCIE (O.S.)

Sure.

ALAN

(to Thomas)

I would prefer you wait outside.

Thomas peers over Alan's shoulder.

THOMAS

I'm not leaving him.

Alan picks out sterile gloves and a few packets of lube.

THOMAS

Not with that one still around. He said something to you, didn't he?

He struggles to put gloves on his shaking hands.

THOMAS

He's covering for something.

Thomas's breath stirs the hairs on Alan's neck. Alan freezes: his gloved hand curls into a fist.

THOMAS

He was up there alone with Jimmy for a long time...

Thomas lays a massive paw on Alan's shoulder.

ALAN

Get your fucking hand off me!

Alan rams an elbow into Thomas's gut, knocks his arm away, and spins to face him. He looks up - and up - at Thomas's cruel smile, more shocked than Thomas is.

ALAN

Get out. Get out of this room. Now.

THOMAS

You can't throw me out.

ALAN
Oh yes I can.

Bettina's up, trembling, terrified.

THOMAS
I need to be here, to make the hard
choices she can't make.

ALAN
Both of you get out.

THOMAS
No. I don't think so.

Robert runs to the room, outpacing Marcie.

ROBERT
Tom. Let's go.

Thomas backs up. Robert pursues. Alan backs away, standing
between them and James with his arms out to protect him.

MARCIE
Dr. Green?

THOMAS
I have a right! He's my
brother!

Alan?

PA SYSTEM
Doctor White to ICU bay seven

ROBERT
Security is on the way.

ALAN
Get out!

Robert puts his arm around Thomas. Thomas resists.

THOMAS
I want another doctor! This fuckin'
kike wants him dead!

Eddie comes in and takes Thomas's arm.

EDDIE
C'mon. Let's go have a smoke. Relax.
You're upset about Jim, we all are.

ROBERT
Before security arrives, please?

Robert's eyes dart to Alan's.

ROBERT

It would be unwise for you to lose the support of their faction.

Faction? Alan's jaw drops: he's worse than on his own.

BETTINA

You should listen to them, honey.

Thomas relents. Eddie and Robert take him out, arms around him like brothers. Bettina slinks out as Marcie enters. Alan falls back against the bed, a quivering mess.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

Robert and Eddie bring Thomas out. Staff watch in alarm.

THOMAS

He can't do this to me!

ROBERT

Technically? I believe he can.

EDDIE

Take it easy, man.

They near the elevators. Thomas stalls.

THOMAS

Where is that cocksucker?

PATRICK (O.S.)

Jesus, Tom. I'm right here.

Patrick stands up. Robert gives Patrick a suffering look.

THOMAS

This is your fault!

PATRICK

Just cut the shit, would you?

Eddie gets between them.

EDDIE

C'mon, guys...

THOMAS

What the fuck did you do to him?

PATRICK
Me? What the fuck did you do?

THOMAS
Protected him from your pedo ass.

Patrick lurches toward Thomas. Eddie holds him back while Robert holds Thomas's shirt and repeatedly taps the button.

THOMAS
He was twelve, Paddy.

Patrick struggles against Eddie to get at Thomas.

PATRICK
Let's go. I got nothin' to lose.

BETTINA
Would you all just please...

She puts her hand on Thomas's back.

BETTINA
I don't want to see both my boys hurt
in the same night.

Thomas looks at her, at Robert, at Eddie. Finally, Patrick.

THOMAS
I'm sorry. I'm just... On edge.

BETTINA
I know, honey.

THOMAS
He's just. It's bad, Mom, it's bad.

BETTINA
I know.

He catches Patrick's eye.

THOMAS
(to Patrick)
He's dying.

Patrick flinches. Thomas twists the knife.

THOMAS
They're gonna cut him open and they
don't even know what's wrong. I don't

know if it's worth putting him through that.

BETTINA

We have to try, don't we?

Bettina sniffles. Thomas comforts her, kisses her head.

THOMAS

Maybe. But we also have to face the fact that he got here too late. If he'd been here sooner ...

He rests his cheek on Bettina's head and watches the elevator display. Almost here.

THOMAS

Even if he survives. He might never get out of that bed.

His eyes turn to Robert.

THOMAS

Might never have a life worthy of life.

Robert's eyes fall at that last turn of phrase. Thomas takes a deep, shuddery breath, and sniffs.

THOMAS

No. Enough's enough. If they don't find out what's wrong soon?

Thomas's eyes bore into Patrick's.

THOMAS

We're just gonna have to let him go.

Bettina sobs. Thomas surveys his audience. Patrick's helpless and knows it. Eddie's frightened and looking to Robert for what to do. Robert is, again, a stone.

The doors open. Two white security guards exchange a nod with Thomas, then stroll out in no particular hurry.

His scene done, Thomas steps into the elevator with Robert. Eddie follows. The doors close over Thomas's smug face and Robert and Eddie making eye contact behind his back.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - NIGHT

Alan is there with Marcie and AMBER (29), a petite nurse.

ALAN

I need to - ah, I was going to - What was I going to do?

MARCIE

Calm down, before you end up a guest in my hotel.

Amber moves briskly about the room, shutting off the TV, silencing the machines. In the quiet, Alan looks at James, the faint grimace on his face, the curling in of his arms.

ALAN

I'm so sorry.

Marcie helps Alan up. They go; Amber shuts off the lights and follows them out, leaving the room quiet and dark.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAWN

The sun isn't quite up yet. Thick mist glows around the parking lot lights. Crows and seagulls argue over garbage.

Robert walks beside Thomas with a hand on his back. Eddie follows close behind, fists in his pockets.

THOMAS

Keep your eye on that doctor. I don't trust him.

ROBERT

I shall.

THOMAS

And when this is over? Something's got to be done about Patrick.

A cluster of catering and nursing staff watch. Thomas stops and pats down his pockets for his smokes.

Robert leans in a little closer, dropping his voice.

ROBERT

I'd rather discuss internal matters without an audience. Shall we?

They keep walking, Eddie following, away from the building.

Their shapes flatten to grey silhouettes.

THOMAS

I know you were just trying to keep the peace, but people don't see that. People think you're on his side, and given what he is, that makes the whole organization look corrupt.

Robert nods, glancing at the increasingly deserted lot.

THOMAS

Lisa loses credibility, and hers has always been a little shaky. She's a woman, people think she's soft. And maybe she has gone soft. She's not well. She's aged ten years in the last two. It does things to people when they know the end's coming.

Robert's brow tenses; Thomas has his hooks in.

THOMAS

I make the tough calls for my mom. You need to do the same for her.

Robert nods gravely.

THOMAS

You don't have to do it alone. I can help you. We can fix this. Fix it for her. Just you and me.

They walk further out, past the Dumpsters. After a few tries, Thomas gets his smoke lit, and sucks in a deep drag.

THOMAS

God, you were right. I needed this.

ROBERT

Mmm. I thought you might.

Thomas blows out smoke, relaxing.

THOMAS

(yawning)

I'm tired. Where's the fucking Pervitin when you need it, eh?

Robert snorts. He glances back toward the building, little more than rows of glowing windows suspended in space. One

yellow rectangle on an upper floor goes dim.

Robert hangs an arm over Thomas's shoulder. Thomas blows smoke to the sky; a moment of peace.

Robert glances to Eddie behind Thomas's back. Eddie nicks his chin, and Robert locks his arm around Thomas's neck.

THOMAS
(strangled)
FUCK!

Eddie comes at Thomas, weighted fists hammering Thomas's stomach. Robert and Thomas's legs entwine. Thomas slams a heel on Robert's foot. He falters, but does not let go.

Thomas and Robert are an even match and both well-trained, but Robert is injured. Eddie's berserker rage tips the balance back, and the fight ends swiftly on the ground.

Thomas lies face down in a puddle, gasping. Eddie kicks him in the gut; he pukes. Robert straddles his back, holding his arm, panting down his neck.

ROBERT
The trick is, Thomas. Not to push things too far. Otherwise.

He wrenches Thomas's arm from its socket with a gristly crack. Thomas howls, breath bubbling in mud and vomit.

ROBERT
Something gets broken.

INT. ICU - DAWN

By the elevators. Bettina cries quietly on the couch. Alan passes by; he takes the stairs.

Patrick sneaks to James's bay, then steps in.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The living room, in the early evening. Real furniture now, modestly decorated. It's dark, curtains drawn, no lights.

A knock on the door. A pause. Patrick enters.

PATRICK
Jim? It's me. Paddy. I'm here.

No smiling greeting. No James, as far as Patrick can see.

PATRICK

You ready to go?

Nothing. Patrick takes a few more steps. He hears breathing, short, sharp, shallow, and looks for the source.

PATRICK

Jim?

Still nothing.

PATRICK

We're late. Everybody's waiting.

The bathroom door's open, nobody in there.

PATRICK

You know what? Fine. I'm going.

He turns to leave, and James grabs his arm.

PATRICK

Fuck!

James stands a foot away, holding Patrick's arm in a white-knuckled grip. His face is ghostly, his eyes huge.

JAMES

Don't leave me.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - DAWN

Patrick stands just inside, frozen. He sees James in fragments - the line of his jaw, the curve of his neck, blue veins under translucent skin. His hand on the blanket.

He strides to the bed and presses James's hand to his face.

PATRICK

Jim, it's me. Paddy. I'm here. I'm here. I'm right here.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAWN

Thomas's nightstick lies on the ground where it was thrown. A few feet away, Thomas himself lies face-down and cursing.

Robert straddles Thomas, forcing his dislocated arm further across his back. Eddie watches, fists ready.

ROBERT
Hurts, doesn't it?

THOMAS
I didn't do shit -

Eddie kicks Thomas hard in the ribs.

EDDIE
That one's for Paddy. Next one's in
your goddamn balls.

ROBERT
James had already been injured before
he went after Patrick. And do you know
why he went after Patrick?

THOMAS
Because Patrick's a faggot?

ROBERT
Because. Patrick was going to take him
home in my truck. He thought it was
yours. And he thought I was you.

Thomas throws himself back against Robert's hold. Eddie finds
an opening and makes good on his promise.

EDDIE
That one's for Jim.

Robert cuffs Thomas with his own handcuffs.

THOMAS
The fuck? The fuck are you doing?

Robert closes a hand around Thomas's finger and, without
warning, breaks it. Eddie stomps his face into the puddle.

Robert calmly takes hold of the next finger.

ROBERT
Thomas, what did you do?

THOMAS
None of your goddamn business!

ROBERT
The sooner you tell me, the sooner I
can tell the doctor, and the sooner
the doctor can help James. So tell

me. What did you do?

Thomas holds his breath; Robert breaks that finger, too.

THOMAS

Stop! Stop. All I did was shake him up a little. I didn't mean to hurt him. But he just. Wouldn't. Listen.

Robert grabs a third finger.

ROBERT

What. Did. You. Do?

THOMAS

Dammit! I got three months to get his head on straight. Then, he's gone.

Robert listens, bending the finger slowly.

ROBERT

Thomas...

THOMAS

He's not queer, OK? He just gets attached to people, and it gets him all confused. If only he'd gotten attached to you and not Patrick, I wouldn't have this problem.

Robert flinches, still holding that finger.

THOMAS

(laughing)

Not that he would, but Jesus, can you imagine? He'd make those goo goo eyes at you and you'd fucking flatten him-

Snap. Thomas howls, then pants from pain and fear.

THOMAS

Stop, stop, stop! Okay. Okay. Listen.

ROBERT

I'm listening.

THOMAS

I had to do something. Nothing else worked. I had to make him understand where this road ends.

Robert stills. Thomas catches his breath.

THOMAS

Just a little. What do you call it?
Aversion therapy. Like when you catch
a kid smoking and make him smoke the
whole pack.

Robert stands up, quiet, processing.

EDDIE

What did he - what does he mean?

Anger builds in Robert. Rage. Red-eyed trembling fury.

THOMAS

Are you gonna let me go, or what?

He steps back -

EDDIE

Rob, stop!

then kicks Thomas in the head, hard.

Thomas convulses. He stares up at Robert, afraid for his
life. Robert tees up like a place kicker, aiming at Thomas's
skull. Eddie grabs him, fighting to hold him back.

EDDIE

Stop! You're gonna kill him!

Robert struggles, wild-eyed. Eddie holds him tightly.

EDDIE

Lisa needs you. Jim needs you.

A flicker of understanding. Robert stops fighting.

EDDIE

Come on. Let's go. Let's just go.

They both step back, Eddie gripping Robert's arms, Robert
torn between going with Eddie and finishing the job.
Reluctantly, Robert turns to leave with Eddie.

Thomas shouts after them.

THOMAS

I'm gonna find you, Mueller!

The moment's fury fades: Robert starts to feel his pain.

THOMAS

You're gonna be alone and I'm gonna
find you!

Robert looks back, sickened and off-balance.

THOMAS

I'm gonna do things to you that'll
make you wish you'd never been born!

He holds Thomas's stare, accepting the consequences of his actions. Leaning on Eddie, he limps away into the mist.

EXT. HOSPITAL MAIN ENTRANCE - MORNING

The main entrance. Parking lot lights illuminate the mist. Bettina holds her cardigan closed and peers into the gloom.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

A small office decorated with Alan's degrees, awards, framed thank-you's. Models and pictures of classic cars, a goofy photo of Alan and Ben in scrubs working on a hot rod.

In the middle of what has been his life, Alan sits at his desk, fingers in his hair, remembering how to breathe.

EXT. GAS STATION - MORNING

A gas station across the road from the hospital.

Leaning on a phone booth, Robert digs a wad of keys from his pocket - handcuff keys among them - and stares at them in confusion.

EDDIE

Here.

Eddie opens a roll of nickels from his jacket pocket and gives Robert a handful.

EDDIE

I still don't understand.

ROBERT

Better if you don't.

Robert scans the fog for trouble. A shape - a security guard? Thomas? A cop, walking to his car with coffee.

ROBERT

Better that we never speak of this.

Eddie nods, scared, needing Robert to tell him what to do. Robert composes himself, pushing away a deeper fear.

ROBERT

If - When - James comes out of this. Don't ask. He may prefer not to be reminded.

EDDIE

Okay.

ROBERT

Good. Watch my back?

EDDIE

Always.

Robert goes into the phone booth. Eddie draws himself up tall and watches for shadows in the mist.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - MORNING

Alan, on the phone. Horror spreads across his face.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I have no further details.

ALAN

Thank you.

A knock on the door can be heard over the line, and Eddie:

EDDIE (V.O.)

Rob? We gotta go.

The off-hook tone drones as Alan processes, stunned. Then, he shakes it off. Hangs up. Pushes up his glasses, and stands, his horror replaced by determination.

INT. ICU - DAY

Alan strides down the hall with DR. MORETTI (45), a radiologist in an elegant skirt suit who is still pinning her badge onto her doctor's coat.

DR. MORETTI

I could have had results in an hour.

ALAN

I don't have an hour.

Behind them, the two white security guards share a smirk and chuckle, watching Alan.

TALA (25), a sonographer, pushing a mobile unit, meets them by the nurse's station. Marcie confers with Amber and HECTOR (30), another nurse twice her size.

MARCIE

It's not your skills -

AMBER

I understand, ma'am.

MARCIE

Alan! The incident report.

ALAN

Not now.

MARCIE

The director already knows.

Alan looks to the guards, who grin like wolves.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - DAY

Patrick, wearing the jacket, holds James's hand.

Footsteps approach, sneakers and heels. Patrick jumps, throwing an arm over James, clenching his fist.

ALAN (O.S.)

Start the aztreonam and metronidazole.

HECTOR (O.S.)

Got it.

Alan steps in.

PATRICK

I had to see him.

ALAN

I know.

Hector, Dr. Moretti, and Tala follow. While everyone talks, Hector injects two syringes of fluid into James's IV and

Tala sets up her machine.

ALAN
Patrick, this is Dr. Moretti from
radiology. This is -

TALA
Tala. I'm a sonographer.

ALAN
And Hector, his new nurse.

PATRICK
Do I have to leave?

ALAN
I'd prefer if you stayed.

TALA
I can work around him.

Alan confers with Dr. Moretti. Hector squeezes by. Tala folds back the blankets. Alan touches James's leg.

ALAN
James? I'm Alan, your doctor. Tala is
here.

TALA
(loudly and clearly)
Hi, James.

ALAN
Tala's going to do an ultrasound on
your belly. It's going to feel cold,
and it might hurt when she pushes
down. If it hurts too much, you try to
let us know, okay?

Patrick watches, eyes huge.

ALAN
Patrick is here. You're safe.

PATRICK
I'm right here, Jim.

Patrick holds James's hand, watching Tala and the screen.

ALAN
Start with the lower left quadrant.

The transducer slides over James's skin in Tala's gloved hand. Grayscale images of tissues go by, unintelligible.

DR. MORETTI

There. Wait, go back. Get that.

TALA

Got it.

Tala moves the transducer and spots fingernail marks.

TALA

He's got some lacerations here.

Patrick peers at the marks and the bruises beneath them.

ALAN

Move closer to the midline, down?

DR. MORETTI

Are you seeing that?

ALAN

I see it.

DR. MORETTI

Wait a minute, whoa, whoa.

TALA

Sorry. I don't usually do this with an audience.

DR. MORETTI

Looks like we've got some blood.

Patrick's fingers tighten around James's hand.

DR. MORETTI

That bright spot. Hold it?

TALA

Yes ma'am.

DR. MORETTI

That's free air. We've got a puncture in the lower sigmoid.

ALAN

Damn! I should've seen it on the chest x-ray.

DR. MORETTI

Not if he'd been lying down for the last several hours. The air wouldn't have risen up to the diaphragm.

What pieces Patrick understands begin to click.

TALA

Doctors? I've got something else here. There. And there. This one's maybe... one mill by four mill?

On screen, a bright streak, jarringly linear.

DR. MORETTI

I see them.

TALA

Doesn't look like ingested bone...

DR. MORETTI

No. More like plastic or wood. Can you get a clearer image?

TALA

Sorry, doctors. It's too low. I can't get a better image without the internal probe.

Patrick jerks and stares up at Alan, trembling in horror.

ALAN

(quietly)

No. I'm not doing that to him.

All eyes turn to Alan.

ALAN

If you'll excuse me. I need to assemble a team and get a room. Where the hell did his mother go?

HECTOR (O.S.)

You threw her out.

ALAN

Shit. Shit. Shit!

Alan turns on his heel and storms out.

INT. ICU - DAY

Patrick watches Tala's hand as she cleans gel from James's skin with a wet wipe. She offers him the wipes, then packs up her machine and trundles out.

Patrick scoots in.

PATRICK

Jim, it's me. I'm just going to clean you up a little, okay?

Gently, gingerly, he wipes away the slime.

PATRICK

Better?

James's face, slack. Gooseflesh on his belly and chest.

PATRICK

You're right. It is cold in here.

Patrick covers James in the blanket. Wincing from his ribs, Patrick works off the jacket and drapes it over him, arranging his hand to lie over the repaired seam.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The living room. Early afternoon. A dryer runs noisily.

James sits on the couch, shirtless, in socks and sweatpants, stitching the seam of his jacket. He listens to music on over-ear headphones plugged into a portable cassette player with a radio and speaker.

His boots and a boot kit sit on the coffee table along with a stick of deodorant and a bottle of aftershave.

Job done. James bites off the thread, then smells the sleeve and smiles, toes curling in his socks.

A new song comes on. He looks around and, as if he's getting away with something, turns up the volume.

Bouncing to music we can't hear, boot on his left hand, sock on his right, James polishes his boots. He doesn't see the door from the garage opening. Doesn't hear Thomas's footsteps coming closer. Doesn't notice he's being watched.

Thomas kicks the couch. James startles and tries to turn off the player with the sock still on his hand.

THOMAS
I said. What are you doing?

JAMES
Shining my boots?

THOMAS
Why? Hot date?

JAMES
No?

James hurries to gather his things while Thomas picks through them.

THOMAS
Aftershave? You do have a date.

JAMES
I'm going to Lisa's.

THOMAS
With Patrick.

JAMES
Mom said I could go -

THOMAS
And I told you to stay away from that
cocksucker.

James starts for their bedroom. Thomas grabs his arm to stop him. The tape player falls, unplugging the headphones; synth-pop music plays out loud, upbeat and exuberantly gay.

James stares up at Thomas, frozen in dread.

THOMAS
You...

James shakes the boot off his hand. Thomas reaches for the nightstick; James breaks away and bolts for the front door.

THOMAS
Get back here!

Thomas grabs him from behind. James rolls Thomas over his shoulder and onto the floor in front of him. For a second, Thomas is stunned - but his body is blocking the exit.

James pivots. Garage door! Thomas lunges, tackling him at

the knees. He falls hard, knee bending sideways.

THOMAS

You gonna run? Bitch?

JAMES

Leave me alone!

James fights hard and dirty. He's quick and tough, but smaller than Thomas, and can't match his brute strength.

Thomas pins James's arm behind his back. James twists to free himself, but Thomas shoves back, throwing his mass to wrench James's arm from the socket. James screams through his teeth.

Thomas snaps his cuffs around one of James's wrists; James scrabbles to keep Thomas from taking the other, but can't.

Thomas sits back. Still struggling, James tries to get up.

THOMAS

Oh no, you don't.

James's body thumps like a drum under Thomas's nightstick, until the wind is out of him and he lies still and gasping.

Thomas stomps on the cassette player; the music stops. He returns to James, thumb hung in his belt.

JAMES

Tom. I'm sorry. I won't go -

Thomas jerks down James's sweatpants, baring his backside.

JAMES

You can't do this to me!

THOMAS

Yeah?

Thomas drops the nightstick and whips off his trouser belt.

JAMES

I'm not a kid anymore!

THOMAS

You act like a stupid kid. I treat you like a stupid kid.

James braces himself: he knows what's coming.

THOMAS

Or... You act like a faggot. And I
treat you like a faggot.

He drops the belt and unzips his trousers. James's eyes fly open. What the fuck? He struggles: Thomas shoves him down.

JAMES

What are you doing?

THOMAS

I warned you. I tried to tell you.

Thomas breathes heavily. His hand flaps against his open trousers as he gets himself hard.

THOMAS

But you just wouldn't listen.

Thomas spits in his hand and kneels. James freezes in panic as he realizes what Thomas is about to do.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - DAY

James grimaces. His eyes open, but nobody's home. Patrick pushes the call button and strokes his forehead.

Over the sounds of the hospital, the sounds of James's memories intrude. His ragged breath. His choked cries. Thomas's grunts. The squeak of skin on tile. A phone ringing.

THOMAS (V.O.)

This is what he wants, Jimmy.

James's arm flexes up toward his chin. He grimaces in pain.

THOMAS (V.O.)

You think he gives a shit about you?

Patrick wipes James's tears. Hector hurries in: Patrick pleads for something for the pain, but we don't hear him.

THOMAS (V.O.)

He just wants to fuck you.

In James's memories, we hear an answering machine beep.

INT. JAMES'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A tile floor at eye level. A boot. A tin of polish.

Thomas's heavy breath. James's whimpering. Bodies moving.

PATRICK (V.O.)
 (over an answering machine)
 Hey. It's me. Paddy. I'm just around
 the corner. If you're there, pick up.

James's jacket. The stitched up seam.

JAMES
 PADDY!

PATRICK (V.O.)
 I was gonna stop by.

Tom's belt. James's headphones.

Thomas groans loudly. The sound of movement stops.

PATRICK (V.O.)
 I guess I'll just see you later.

The nightstick, dented, paint cracked.

The machine clicks.

JAMES
 (sobbing)
 No...

THOMAS
 You still think he's gonna save you?

James, senseless, staring toward the answering machine.

Thomas laughs, breathless.

THOMAS
 You'll learn.

Thomas drags his nightstick toward himself.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alan confers with HUGH MORRISON (65), a bearlike surgeon who's still wearing a windbreaker and golf clothes. They study the ultrasound printouts.

HUGH
 (muttering)
 Sweet Jesus...

The phone rings. Alan startles, then pushes the speaker button. It's the DIRECTOR (65), a man with the peculiar diction and affect of a U.S. Army veteran.

OPERATOR

I've got the director on the line -

ALAN

Hi, yeah, can it wait?

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

No it cannot.

ALAN

I'm in a surgical consult -

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Doctor Green!

Alan mouths a silent "fuck!" to Hugh. Hugh shakes his head.

ALAN

Yes, sir?

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

What the hell is wrong with you?

ALAN

I just need a few minutes -

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Disregard for confidentiality.

Alan circles a spot on one of the ultrasounds. Hugh nods.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Elopement of your patient from the ER
and you've known right where he is.

He draws another circle, the line shaky now.

ALAN

I can't do this right now.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)

Now I hear from security that you've
assaulted a family member?

ALAN

Security? No. Listen. You can't trust
them -

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Doctor Green -

ALAN
They're in on it -

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Have you lost your mind?

Alan flattens his hands on the desk. Maybe he has.

ALAN
I'm trying to save a kid's life.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
And I'm trying to run a hospital.

Hugh looks from him to the phone: Alan nods.

HUGH
Hank, we're planning for a high risk
and extremely urgent surgery. I need
him. You can not do this now.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Hugh?

HUGH
Yes.

Alan talks silently, fervently, to himself.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
That's your professional medical
opinion?

HUGH
Yes.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Fine.

He lets out his breath, eyes closing in gratitude.

DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Green, you're on administrative leave
starting as soon as the patient leaves
ICU for surgery. Understood?

ALAN
Understood.

The phone goes silent. Hugh and Alan continue to plan.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - DAY

An above ground parking lot. The mist is thinning.

Bettina searches the rows. Her steps quicken as she sees a white pickup, identical to Robert's, but dented and dirty.

Thomas sits on the ground behind it. He has managed to get his hands in front of him and is attempting to pick the lock on the handcuffs with the clip from a pen.

BETTINA

Tommy?

Thomas staggers to his feet, squinting at the sunlight.

BETTINA

Tommy!

THOMAS

He took my fucking keys!

She assesses the damage to his face and head.

BETTINA

What happened to you? Why are you -

THOMAS

Mueller. And Eddie, the fucking retard. They jumped me.

BETTINA

Why? Why would they do that?

He thrusts his mangled fingers at her, wobbling drunkenly.

THOMAS

Mueller did this to me!

BETTINA

Tommy, you need a doctor.

She tries to clean his bloodied face with her sleeve.

THOMAS

Stop. Stop. Mom. Stop it.

He pulls his head away.

THOMAS

I need you to go get my spare keys.

BETTINA

Honey, I can't. I have to stay here.

Thomas grabs her wrists and bends down to look in her face.

THOMAS

Go. Get. My keys.

Bettina frees her hands and searches her bag for the keys.

BETTINA

Take my extra set.

THOMAS

I need the ones at home. They have my damn handcuff keys on 'em!

BETTINA

They'll have tools in the ER. Or they can call a policeman -

THOMAS

No! No fucking cops.

BETTINA

Are you in some kind of trouble?

THOMAS

Just go get them.

BETTINA

I can't leave. Jimmy needs me.

THOMAS

I need you!

Bettina holds up a pair of keys. He swipes at them, but misses; the movement throws him off balance.

She reaches out to steady him. His eyes meet hers, one iris only a thin rim of color around a blue-black pupil. She wipes a streak of blood from his face.

THOMAS

I need you.

INT. ICU - JAMES'S BAY - DAY

Hector records vitals while Patrick sits with James.

Alan leans in the doorway, exhausted, holding a clipboard. Hugh stands behind him in the hallway along with SAHEER (40), an anesthesiologist in a surgical cap with sheep.

ALAN

Any sign of his mother?

PATRICK

No.

ALAN

Shit. Is there a father we can call?

Patrick shakes his head. Alan nods, having expected that.

PATRICK

Why? What's going on?

Hugh and Saheer enter. Alan can't answer. He shouldn't answer. He's not allowed. He glances at Hugh, who's looking for an explanation, then back to Patrick.

ALAN

Step out of the room.

PATRICK

What - why?

Alan comes closer and sets the clipboard down. Patrick makes room for him. He motions for Patrick to leave.

PATRICK

Please don't make me leave him.

Alan touches James's hand and speaks loudly and clearly.

ALAN

James? It's me. Alan. Your doctor.
Patrick's going to be right outside.

He looks meaningfully to Patrick.

ALAN

You're safe.

Reluctantly, Patrick withdraws. Alan motions for Hector to draw the curtain.

PATRICK

No. Please -

Hector slides the curtain shut behind the glass and across the doorway, leaving Patrick alone in the corridor.

ALAN (O.S.)

You need surgery, but your mom's not here to say it's okay.

Patrick presses his hand to the glass.

ALAN (O.S.)

That was my fault. I'm so sorry.

PATRICK

She was only supposed to leave the room.

ALAN (O.S.)

If we can't find her, we'll have to get a judge to decide. So just hang on for me, okay?

And then his cheek and ear, eyes crushed shut.

HUGH (O.S.)

(quiet)

How long is that going to take?

ALAN (O.S.)

(quiet)

Could be this afternoon, or tonight.

HUGH (O.S.)

(quiet)

Can we wait that long?

Legs trembling, Patrick leans his whole body against the partition, arm over his ribs, fighting to breathe.

Saheer and Hugh exit, both troubled, followed by Hector and Alan. Alan stops and waits as they walk away. Patrick looks up at him, pleading.

At the end of the hall, Hugh and Saheer wait for the elevator. The two security guards watch Patrick and Alan, joking and smiling with each other. Unable to look Patrick in the eye, Alan pats his shoulder and trudges away.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alan pulls a page out of a typewriter and signs it, then passes it to Hugh. Hugh signs it.

There's a knock at the door. Two Tampa cops. For a moment, Alan freezes, not sure if they're there for him.

COP #1

You wanted to file a report?

Alan sighs in relief and motions for the door to be shut.

INT. ICU - CORRIDOR - DAY

Patrick sits on the floor outside James's bay. Eddie approaches, ragged and filthy. Patrick looks at Eddie's boots, not caring any more whose they are.

Eddie squats down.

EDDIE

Hey.

PATRICK

Have you seen his mom?

EDDIE

She ain't up here anywhere.

PATRICK

What about... him?

EDDIE

I um...

Eddie wipes his hand over his face, showing off his freshly bashed knuckles.

EDDIE

No. Nope. Think he musta left.

PATRICK

Mueller?

EDDIE

He's um. He's goin' home for a while.
Lisa's comin' up. I'll be here.

Patrick nods numbly. Eddie crouches there awkwardly, not knowing what to say or do.

EDDIE

How come you ain't in there?

PATRICK

They won't let me be with him.

His eyes fill: he withdraws, failing to hide his agony.

Eddie's awkwardness rises. His hands move uselessly: he wants to do something with them to help, but can't figure out what. Finally, he claps one on Patrick's shoulder, sniffing in a manly way, nodding stoically.

EDDIE

Yup.

Patrick doesn't react. Eddie stands and slides his meat hook back in his pocket, watching Patrick, unable to help.

EDDIE

I'll just leave you be.

INT. ICU - NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Patrick watches from the floor outside James's room as Alan goes to the nurse's station. Nobody's there.

Alan goes behind the counter and checks the fax. The phone messages. Interoffice mail. His pager. Nothing.

He takes James's chart from a folder rack on the wall. What he sees isn't good. Not at all.

Frustrated, he slaps the chart down and goes through the routine again. Fax, pager. Message light on the phone. The ceiling, as if there's an answer from the judge up there.

PA SYSTEM

Bettina Best, please report to the ICU
nurse's station

He closes his eyes. It's all gotten too damned complicated.

He picks up the chart and still looking in it, steps into the hall and into the path of a crash team running full-on.

He flattens himself against the desk, following them with his eyes as they rush toward James's bay - and past it.

When Alan's caught his breath, he looks back to James's bay again. Patrick's still there on the floor, folded in on

himself to stay out of the way, shaking, desperate.

Alan nods, understanding: it's all really very simple. He motions to Patrick to go inside. Patrick scrambles to go to James while Alan picks up the phone.

INT. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Alan packs some things from his office into a duffel bag. Papers, some cassettes. No personal effects - yet.

BEN
You did what?

ALAN
In my professional opinion, that kid's going to die if we don't.

BEN
He's probably going to die if you do. In the state he's in, I'd give him maybe a one in four shot of not dying on the table, and that's only because it's Hugh.

He shoves a folder into the bag and glares at Ben.

ALAN
Follow the certainty, not the doubt. His death is imminent if I do nothing - I have to take the risk. And even if I could find the mother, what right would she have to refuse?

BEN
With those odds? Every right.

Ben realizes he's gotten loud, and tones it down.

BEN
It's one thing to exceed what's required because of your personal ethics. It's another thing entirely to violate the ethics of the system you operate under because you decided you don't agree.

Alan zips the bag, done arguing.

BEN
So you're done now?

ALAN
Director put me on leave.

BEN
For this?

ALAN
He doesn't know about this yet.

He throws away a few soda cans and paper cups from his desk, then picks up a coffee mug reading:

Trust Me, I'm A Doctor

He stops, suddenly overwhelmed. The cup dangles from his fingers, cold coffee dribbling out. Ben catches the mug and sits it on the desk.

BEN
Come here, you idiot.

Ben pulls him into a hug. Alan hugs him back tightly.

ALAN
I'm so sorry for all the times I
called you an asshole.

BEN
I am an asshole.

ALAN
His brother, Ben. His own brother.

BEN
Shh...

ALAN
Him and his mother and their friends
and the system ...

Ben kisses Alan's head, tidies his hair, straightens his glasses, holds his face in his hands.

BEN
You can't fix the world.

ALAN
No. But I can't stop trying.

MONTAGE - JAMES GOES INTO SURGERY

ICU, JAMES'S BAY: Patrick, at James's bedside, looks up at Alan. Alan tells him it's time.

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR: Alan, Saheer, Hector, and two other nurses walk James to surgery. Patrick walks with them, hand on James's foot, carrying his jacket and Thor's hammer.

SURGERY ENTRANCE: Alan gently holds Patrick back from following as the rest of the team take James in.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

A waiting area. Rows of seats, sparsely populated, mainly by elderly people and their adult children. Katie, her mother, and her baby brother are here.

Alan sits beside Patrick, badge and coat in the next chair.

PATRICK

Who's gonna take care of him?

ALAN

Dr. Kerrigan's been assigned. You can trust her - she's very good.

But she's not Alan. Patrick shuts down: abandoned, again.

ALAN

Hey. Who's going to take care of you?

Patrick shrugs. Nobody, as usual.

ALAN

Is there anybody? Family? Friends?

He scoffs. Alan writes on the back of a business card.

ALAN

I can't do anything more as his doctor. But if he loves you half as much as you love him?

Patrick tenses. Love? Who said anything about love?

ALAN

He wants you to be cared for, too.

With some urging, Patrick takes the card and hides it away.

PATRICK

I can't help him. I'm useless.

ALAN

Oh, no. No, Patrick. Who do you think brought him this far? It wasn't me.

Patrick frowns, puzzled by that. Alan reflects, glances over his shoulder and around, and speaks privately.

ALAN

I'm not going to tell you that love works miracles. All that does is hurt people. Make them feel like they failed, like they didn't love hard enough, didn't believe enough.

Alan stops, hearing his own words as if someone else has said them. A long-buried guilt lets go.

ALAN

But it can guide you. Show you a path when it looks like there is none. when the time comes for you to help him, it'll show you what to do.

Patrick listens, holding James's jacket close.

WHITE SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

That's him.

OTHER SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

Doctor Green?

Patrick looks past him, and his eyes widen. Two security guards - one white, one not - approach.

OTHER SECURITY GUARD

Sir, you need to exit the premises.

The white one throws Patrick an evil smirk and a kiss. Patrick gets up to stop them.

PATRICK

Get your hands off him!

ALAN

Stay out of trouble, he needs you.

Patrick watches helplessly as the guards escort Alan out, then sits to wait alone.

INT. HOSPITAL MAIN LOBBY - DAY

Lisa crosses the lobby to the reception desk. She shows her clergy badge to the RECEPTIONIST and points to the parking lot. The receptionist nods. She heads for the elevators.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

A cafeteria. Bad lighting, ugly furniture, lousy buffet.

Eddie sits with Lisa, picking at his breakfast.

LISA

Eddie. You're allowed to eat. It won't do him any good for you to not take care of yourself.

Eddie pokes listlessly at a dollop of egg.

LISA

I know it doesn't look very good.

He takes a bite, watching her.

LISA

I could get you pie. Pie's pretty good here.

He scowls. Lisa puts a hand on his.

LISA

You want to go back to my house and sleep for a while?

Eddie pulls his hand away.

EDDIE

I don't want. Pie.

LISA

Eddie. Are you all right?

EDDIE

No. I'm not all right. And I don't - I don't wanna go back to your house.

She watches while he broods, mildly offended.

EDDIE

People there? They're assholes. Robert's okay. Paddy's okay. And Jim

was -

Eddie chokes on that one little verb. Was.

EDDIE

I didn't mean to say it.

LISA

I know.

EDDIE

Paddy got beat up for nothin'. He didn't do nothin' to Jim or nobody else, and those sons a bitches -

LISA

What happened to him isn't our fault.

EDDIE

You sure about that?

LISA

Eddie...

EDDIE

It was our guys who did it. Dustin started it. And Nate. Everybody either stood around laughing with their thumbs up their asses or joined in. Because of what?

Lisa puts her hand on his again. He's not having it.

LISA

Honey... A lot of people there don't know Patrick like you do. They only know what they hear. You and I both know none of it's true.

EDDIE

Well, what if it was?

LISA

That would be different.

EDDIE

Why?

LISA

It just would be, Eddie.

EDDIE

But why?

LISA

I like Patrick, but -

EDDIE

But fuck him, right? Hey, Paddy. Sorry you're getting your goddamn heart ripped out, don't let the door hit you in the ass. Faggot.

LISA

Calm down!

Lisa glances back to the door and then leans closer.

LISA

Stop being ridiculous.

EDDIE

I'm being ridiculous?

Eddie throws his napkin on his plate and stands.

EDDIE

I'm gonna go find Paddy. I can't do nothing for Jim, but I can help him. He's up there pretending like he's not dying inside, but he is. And whatever that means? I just don't give a damn.

Eddie tosses cash on the table. Lisa is over his shit.

EDDIE

So no. Thanks for everything. But I don't wanna go back to your house.

Having said his bit, Eddie waits, as if expecting Lisa to say something: she won't even look at him.

LISA

Goodbye, Eddie.

He stomps away, leaving her alone. She counts out five on her fingers, then folds each one in until only one is left.

INT. HOF - ROBERT'S ROOM - DAY

A bedroom with a sink and single barred window. The

furnishings are spartan, institutional, and old. By the sink, a razor and strap, neatly stored. A barracks-style single bed. On a bookcase, a drinking horn and a photo of Lisa, Robert, Thomas, Patrick, and Eddie in better days, and one of James, unguarded, smiling, and beautiful.

Robert limps in. He shoves the door shut and locks it. When he's caught his breath, he staggers to the desk and takes a pistol safe out of a drawer.

It won't unlock. It's a gun safe key, but not his: he pitches Tom's keys across the room as if they were on fire.

ROBERT

FUCK!

With his own keys, he unlocks it. He slides a magazine into a Luger P08 and watches the door, one hand to his chest, pistol shaking in the other.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Eddie leans on the wall, rehearsing what he'll say.

EDDIE

I don't care.

No, that's not right.

EDDIE

I told Lisa. I'm out -

He screws up his face and smirks. No, that's wrong, too.

EDDIE

If you do. If you love him. You know, like that. I'll be right behind you -

He snort-laughs. The elevator stops; he sobers.

EDDIE

Paddy. You're my friend.

The doors open to the waiting area.

EDDIE

No matter what.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Eddie sits with Patrick, looking out over the room.

Patrick looks up at the clock. The doors to surgery open and he tenses: a nurse walks out and keeps going.

Patrick grips the jacket and turns his face away. Eddie puts an arm around him and keeps watch.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Patrick sleeps leaning on Eddie. Eddie picks at the badge on his jacket, trying to pull the stitches with his fingernails.

Bettina enters, dazed, afraid, dirty, damp. She sees him and Patrick and stops, shaking her head reproachfully at Eddie. Eddie stands and looks for Thomas.

EDDIE

Tom with you?

BETTINA

No.

She looks down at Patrick, his pain evident even in sleep. A pang of compassion pinches her face. She blinks it away, then sits several seats away to wait.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Bettina and Patrick are both asleep now. Eddie's picking at the patch with his house key.

Katie watches him as she stitches, noticing what he's doing. She sets her hoop aside, and walks over to him. Eddie looks up, confused. She glances at the patch, confirming what he's up to. Her eyes meet Eddie's for a moment, and he hangs his head, ashamed.

Over the patch appears Katie's hand offering tiny bird-shaped scissors. He takes them and looks up with the tiny scissors in his giant hand, as if to ask her why. Her mouth twitches in what might, under other circumstances, have been a smile.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Eddie sits on the desk. He listens to the phone, contemplating the patch in his hand.

INT. HOF - ROBERT'S ROOM - DAY

Robert sits at his desk, pistol in reach, cutting his boot

laces with bandage scissors.

The phone rings. Robert startles, drops the scissors, and reaches toward the gun before realizing what the noise was.

Shrunken, he answers the phone.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

EDDIE

Nah, he's still in there. It's been a really long time.

Eddie looks out across the room, still keeping watch.

EDDIE

Listen. I gotta tell you something. You're gonna hear it from Lisa anyway, but I wanna tell you myself.

INT. HOF - ROBERT'S ROOM - DAY

Robert shifts the phone to his good ear.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I just can't anymore.

He contemplates the barred window and the locked door.

EDDIE (V.O.)

But this doesn't mean I ain't your friend. If you still wanna be.

And the pictures.

EDDIE (V.O.)

You. When we were in school. With all those fuckin' rich kids. You were the only person who didn't treat me like just another piece of white trash and didn't talk to me like I was an idiot.

Robert listens, very still, to this alien language.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

EDDIE

And I know things are different between you and Lisa. I get it. And I don't wanna make your life any harder

than it already is.

Nothing at the other end but Robert's breath.

EDDIE

So if this is it, this is it. I understand. But you'll always be my brother.

INT. HOF - ROBERT'S ROOM - DAY

Robert listens, brow deeply furrowed.

EDDIE (V.O.)

I gotta go, chief. Stay safe.

Robert hangs up and sits still and silent in his cell.

EXT. HOF COURTYARD - DAY

Lisa storms through the courtyard and trips on a beer can.

LISA

Seriously?

She picks it up, then another, then another, wheezing and puffing. One dribbles tobacco spit down her shirt.

LISA

Pigs!

She throws the cans in the bin and unlocks the door, but it doesn't open. Panting, she thumps the door with her palm.

LISA

Mueller!!

Nothing. She rings the bell repeatedly.

A deadbolt slides back. Robert opens the door, wearing one boot. He has something to say but the words won't come.

She pushes past him into the shadows. Her steps pound up the stairs. Silent, Robert shuts the door.

INT. SURGICAL WAITING AREA - DAY

Eddie watches over Patrick and Bettina, standing to keep himself awake, imitating Robert's stance and stoic mask.

The doors to surgery open. Hugh walks out, spots Patrick,

and heads toward him slowly: Eddie's mask drops, and he bends down to wake Patrick.

EDDIE

Paddy?

Patrick startles awake. Seeing Hugh, he wakes Bettina. She follows his eyes to Hugh and grabs Patrick's arm.

HUGH

Mr. Connolly...

PATRICK

Mrs. Best? This is Dr. Morrison. The surgeon.

HUGH

You're James's mother?

Bettina nods. They both hold their breath.

HUGH

We had to do more work than we thought. But he's in recovery now.

Bettina collapses in relief. Patrick sags. Eddie holds his Thor's hammer, eyes shut, making a prayer of thanks.

HUGH

We're not out of the woods yet. The damage was fairly extensive. But we've given him a fighting chance, and that's the best we can do.

PATRICK

Can I see him?

Hugh nods, and Patrick silently pleads with Bettina. She reluctantly agrees.

BETTINA

Go while I talk to the doctor.

Patrick is up and moving after 'go'. Hugh sits beside Bettina and begins to explain.

INT. RECOVERY VESTIBULE - DAY

Patrick stands in a small anteroom, gloved and masked. A NURSING ASSISTANT helps him into a paper gown.

He sees himself reflected in the safety glass of the door, someone different from who he was, someone he might become. He calms himself, imitating Alan's manner and demeanor.

The nursing assistant reaches past him and opens the door.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Patrick steps in wearing his grocery store uniform and carrying a backpack, with a two week growth of hair.

PATRICK

Hey. Jim. It's me. Paddy.

James lies unconscious on a thick blue air mattress, ventilated through a tracheostomy. Liquids feed into a catheter in his chest. He's thinner, muscles beginning to atrophy, face becoming hollow. One arm rests on the jacket.

Bettina checks the nurse's watch pinned to her scrubs.

BETTINA

I've got to go.

PATRICK

Anything new?

BETTINA

No.

PATRICK

Have you heard from...

BETTINA

No.

Her footsteps fade down the hall.

Patrick rubs sanitizer on his hands while approaching the bed. He touches James's arm. Seeing a red spot on James's elbow, he balls up the jacket to keep his elbow up.

PATRICK

So, work was work. Truck day again.

He feels the downy fluff of James's hair.

PATRICK

You gonna leave this, or..?

And moves James's hand over his own red fuzz.

PATRICK

Yeah, I'm gonna leave mine, too.

He holds James's hand there until he can't stand how much it hurts, then picks up a book from the bedside table.

PATRICK

Okay. So where were we?

He finds his spot and takes James's hand.

PATRICK

Hödr stood outside the ring of men, because he was blind. Then spake Loki to him: 'Why dost thou not shoot at Baldr?' He answered: 'Because I see not where Baldr is; and for this also, that I am weaponless.'

DAY. A nurse changes out a full urine collection bag. A man mops the floor. Eddie reads, halting, with difficulty.

EDDIE

Then said Loki. 'Do thou also after the manner of other men, and show Baldr honor as the other men do. I will direct thee where he stands; shoot at him with this wand.'

EVENING. Robert reads while a nurse changes James's pouch. The continuous renal replacement machine is gone. Robert's voice is steady, resonant, a narrator's voice.

ROBERT

Hödr took Mistletoe and shot at Baldr, being guided by Loki: the shaft flew through Baldr, and he fell dead to the earth.

DAY. Bettina reads as if to a small child. James is off the ventilator, but still unconscious.

BETTINA

And that was the greatest mischance that has ever befallen among gods and men... These stories are awful!

Lisa sits in another chair, visibly unwell. A bit of mascara and lipstick brighten her fragile skin.

LISA

You haven't got to the good part.

BETTINA

How could there be a good part?

LISA

Everything has to fall apart first. An axe-age, a sword-age. Brother against brother.

BETTINA

That doesn't sound like a good part.

Lisa touches Bettina's arm. Bettina pulls away at first, then lets Lisa comfort her. Lisa speaks warmly from memory.

LISA

The gods meet together in Ithavoll,
and talk of the serpent that once
encircled the world, and remember the
mighty past. Then fields unsowed bear
ripened fruit. All ills grow better...

Lisa smiles, trying to reach Bettina.

LISA

And Baldr comes back.

BETTINA

But he still dies.

Lisa nods sadly. Bettina nods with her, beginning to accept what must come.

EXT. HOF - DAY

Lisa walks across the driveway past Robert's truck. Plastic covers a smashed window. The smeared remains of a swastika mark the side and graffiti reading:

FAGGET LOVER

The gate's locked, the doorknob new. She sighs and unlocks it, then crosses the courtyard to the front door.

INT. HOF - DAY

Beams of sunlight from the barred front windows sparkle in a room dominated by shadows and empty space.

Lisa walks through, looking for Robert.

INT. HOF - OFFICE

A small, windowless office. Shelves hold inventory for a mail order business of neo-Nazi and heathen merchandise.

Robert types listlessly into a spreadsheet. He wears a walking boot and carries his gun in a discreet holster.

Lisa steps into the doorway and leans in it.

LISA
There you are.

ROBERT
How is he?

Lisa shakes her head. His eyes close briefly.

LISA
You get the orders shipped?

ROBERT
Yes. We are out of... Turner Diaries,
"Odin's Law" on cassette, and...

LISA
What?

ROBERT
(muttering)
14 Words baby onesies.

LISA
I told you those would sell.

He hands her a printout.

ROBERT
I have put together a list of items
for a fundraiser for James. For
medical expenses, and... other...
contingencies.

Lisa takes it and looks it over.

ROBERT
I've found alternate suppliers for the
hammers and the Valknut pendants. The
Man - ah, *Algiz* runes ...

LISA
How about a percentage on the book
catalog?

ROBERT
(quietly)
No.

LISA
They ship print rate. And he liked to
read, always had a book in his hand.

ROBERT
No. Not our books. Not for him.

LISA
Mueller?

Robert gestures at the shelves in the office.

ROBERT
These books. The ideas in them. They
put him where he is.

LISA
No, Tom put him where he is.

ROBERT
And who put Tom where he is?

Lisa's taken aback.

ROBERT
I did.

LISA
Mueller -

ROBERT
He was alone. The new kid in school,
no friends. Always out of step.
Patrick was alone, too. Angry at the
world. No family, no real home.
Thought he had no value to anyone
beyond what they could use him for.

She waits while he talks, unmoved.

ROBERT
And James -

Robert pauses to compose himself.

ROBERT

No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't measure up. He couldn't fit in and he couldn't leave. And he was so ashamed of what was being done to him that he couldn't ask for help from the people who were supposed to be his brothers.

Robert lowers his gaze in shame while Lisa stands there judging him - or maybe thinking about next month's catalogue, or if the port-a-potty invoice got paid, or maybe just waiting to see if he's finally shut up.

ROBERT

I led them here. All of them.

The printer screeches. The computer fans hum.

LISA

They knew what we were when they came.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - EVENING

The light is golden, shadows long, its beauty wasted on Dumpsters and dirty puddles.

Patrick tries to roll one cigarette with another behind his ear. He's shaky. Gaunt. Hasn't slept or shaved in days. His hair is long enough now to ripple with what will be curls.

Bettina looks out over the lot, still searching for Thomas.

PATRICK

No.

BETTINA

Patrick...

PATRICK

No!

He drops the unfinished rollie; paper flutters to the wet ground. She takes the one from his ear and hands it to him.

BETTINA

You need to let go. So he can let go.

PATRICK
No. He just needs more time.

BETTINA
Patrick...

PATRICK
No!

BETTINA
Give me that.

She takes the cigarette from him, lighter too, lights it, and blows out smoke before giving it back.

BETTINA
Sometimes. They wait for someone to get there, for someone to leave. Mothers want to know their children are going to be okay. Husbands, their wives, and wives, their husbands. Sometimes there's something they need to hear. And sometimes, they just need to be left alone.

Patrick resists, refusing to understand.

BETTINA
He's trapped, Patrick. You have to let him go.

The ember on his rollie dims and goes out.

BETTINA
Stay with him tonight. Say what you need to. After that, no more overnights. Go sleep at home. Give him the space to do what he needs to do.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark, as quiet as a hospital room can be.

Patrick holds James's hand.

PATRICK
Today was. Pretty good I guess.

He sniffs and shrugs, trying to stay cheerful.

PATRICK

I saw Eddie. He told me about this girl, Katie. He met her here. Can you believe that?

A pause, a smile, as if listening to James's reply.

PATRICK

Yeah. She came into the store the other day while he was working to get some thread or something.

He caresses James's thumb with his own.

PATRICK

I think he really likes her.

A longer pause. A deep breath, and another. A brave face.

PATRICK

Your mom said. She said she thought that maybe you were worried about me. That maybe you thought I wouldn't be okay, if you... If you decided you didn't want to hang around.

Patrick fights to keep that brave face and calm voice.

PATRICK

I'll be all right. When I'm done at school. I'll go to California. It's beautiful there. Beaches with rocks and tide pools and big, big waves. Deserts. Mountains. Trees that go all the way up to the clouds.

He dares to stroke James's brow, his cheek, his soft hair.

PATRICK

I don't want you to be stuck in this place if you don't want to be. So don't. Don't be worried about me. I'll be okay. I'll be. I'll be okay.

His words dissolve into silent sobs, his thinning shoulders and the shallow rise and fall of James's chest all that moves in the darkened room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Patrick sleeps with his head and arms in the bed, as close

to James as he can get without climbing in with him. James's hand covers the side of his face.

Patrick twitches, whimpering softly in his sleep. James's thumb strokes his ear; his sticky lips click, forming a shape as if he's trying to say *shhhh*. Patrick calms, comforted by James's gentle touch.

Then, wide awake, he snaps his eyes to James's face. James struggles to focus on Patrick for long enough to Patrick to see he's in there. The effort uses all the strength he has, and he fades quickly into sleep.

Patrick gazes at him in awe, tears rolling down his face.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

From the hall:

NURSE #1 (O.S.)

It's very important that he rest -

BETTINA (O.S.)

Move it!

Bettina rushes in, then stops with her hand on her heart to just look at him. James sleeps: Patrick smiles at her in drowsy wonder, still holding James's hand.

BETTINA

Jimmy!

PATRICK

It's only been a few seconds at a time. I don't think he knows what's going on, but he knows I'm here.

Bettina covers her mouth, laughing and crying at once.

BETTINA

Jimmy. Sweetheart. Momma's here.

James's eyes open slowly. He tries to focus on her. Then, he startles, and jerks his hand away from Patrick's.

BETTINA

It's okay, baby...

Bettina reaches out to touch his face; he cringes. Patrick bristles, and she backs off.

PATRICK

(to James)

It's okay. It's okay. You're safe.

James has worn himself out. Once he's asleep again, Patrick glares at her in warning, pushes past her, and stalks out.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Bettina catches Patrick at the elevators rolling a smoke.

BETTINA

We need to talk.

PATRICK

The hell we do.

Patrick sticks the cigarette in his mouth and waits. The doors open; he steps in and pushes the door close button, but she squeezes in.

BETTINA

We have a problem.

PATRICK

You have a problem.

The door opens. A couple more people enter.

BETTINA

I am his mother. You're his -

She looks to the strangers, occupied with their own things.

BETTINA

Whatever.

He rolls his eyes, disgusted.

INT. HOSPITAL SERVICE CORRIDOR - DAY

Patrick strides down the hall. Bettina hustles to keep up.

BETTINA

Patrick, you wait!

He bursts through the door and out into the lot.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Patrick lights his smoke, fuming. Bettina catches up.

BETTINA
Patrick -

PATRICK
(shouting)
What?!

BETTINA
Patrick Connolly, don't you dare raise
your voice to me -

PATRICK
Or what?

Patrick looks pointedly at her hand, raised as if she's about
to backhand him out of reflex.

PATRICK
He doesn't know where he is. Might not
know who he is. But what he did know
as soon as he opened his eyes was that
he was afraid.

BETTINA
Afraid?

PATRICK
Of you.

Bettina folds her arms and looks away from him.

PATRICK
He was afraid because I was holding
his hand.

BETTINA
Well, he didn't exactly ask you to do
that, did he?

Patrick sucks on his cigarette hard enough to leave an inch
of cherry and snorts the smoke out of his nose.

BETTINA
It's not natural, between you two.

PATRICK
Oh, give it a rest.

BETTINA
I am his mother. I changed his
diapers. Kissed his little scraped

knees.

PATRICK
Covered up his little black eyes.

BETTINA
He should be turning to me, not you!

PATRICK
Why the fuck would he?

Bettina steps up to him with the confidence of a tiny woman accustomed to being backed by a trained hyena.

BETTINA
You listen to me. I have spent the last six weeks thinking my son was going to die. Going from here to work to an empty house knowing that every time I left, it could be the last time I saw him alive.

PATRICK
And I've been here with him every minute that I can be. I was here when he woke up. When they took him into surgery, I was the one who was here - Where the hell were you?

BETTINA
That's enough!

PATRICK
You went to find Tom, didn't you?

Bettina seethes, face clenched like a fist.

PATRICK
You know where he is.

BETTINA
If I did, I wouldn't tell you.

PATRICK
You're protecting him.

BETTINA
He's my son, too.

PATRICK
You know what he did!

BETTINA

I know what I've been told.

Patrick stares at her in disbelief.

BETTINA

When I thought I was going to lose him. I didn't mind you being around. It was better than him being alone. But now?

PATRICK

No. No no no.

BETTINA

He has a chance. We have a chance. I can be his mom again. We can start over, as a family. Just me. And him.

PATRICK

You can't do this.

BETTINA

He needs me. He doesn't need you.

PATRICK

You can't just pretend like you weren't a part of this!

BETTINA

Go. Go get on with your life, and stay out of ours.

Bettina turns on her heel and marches toward the hospital.

PATRICK

Mrs. Best!

BETTINA

Go home, Patrick.

PATRICK

Mrs. Best, wait!

She keeps marching, chin up.

PATRICK

(shouting)

I'm not letting him go!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

WEEKS LATER

James sits in a chair, wearing his bomber over pajamas. His hair is over an inch long; his face is filling out, but he's still thin. A worn old book sits on his lap: Tales of the Hasidim by Martin Buber.

Bettina talks to him like a kindergarten teacher.

BETTINA

You have to walk. At least a little,
every day.

JAMES

No.

BETTINA

Don't you want to go outside?

He scowls and buries his face in his sleeve.

BETTINA

I won't always be there. You need to
be able to get around by yourself if
you're going to go home.

JAMES

I'm not going home.

BETTINA

You can't stay here forever.

JAMES

I'm not going back to that house!

INT. PATRICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Patrick talks on the phone in a run-down studio. There's a kitchenette, a futon, and not much else.

JAMES (V.O.)

I can't go back there.

PATRICK

I know.

JAMES (V.O.)

What if he comes back?

PATRICK

I don't know...

Patrick slumps, looking at what thirty hours a week gets him. Mangy carpet. Mysterious stains. There might be a coffee table under those textbooks and beer cans.

JAMES (V.O.)

Just come get me. Please.

PATRICK

I can't, Jim.

He bounces his heels, feet wanting to go, yes go yes go -

JAMES (V.O.)

Please.

Patrick goes outside, phone cord stretching out the door.

EXT. PATRICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A crummy motel, converted to apartments. Orange lights illuminate a potholed parking lot bordered by US 19.

Patrick sits on the doorstep, drinking the cooler air.

Over the phone, James breathes noisily as panic sets in.

PATRICK

You can't leave yet. You need to get a little stronger.

JAMES (V.O.)

Please don't leave me alone here.

PATRICK

You're safe there.

JAMES (V.O.)

What if he comes and nobody's here?

PATRICK

Shh... Breathe with me.

Patrick lets James hear his deliberate, slow breaths. James's breathing calms, following his.

PATRICK

Tell me three things you see.

JAMES (V.O.)

A tv. A table. (pause) Your jacket.

A drug deal. A bail bondsman's sign. A man pushing a shopping cart, arguing with himself.

PATRICK

Two things you can hear.

A siren.

JAMES (V.O.)

Something beeping.

An argument, in one of the apartments.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

You better have my money tomorrow!

JAMES (V.O.)

You.

Patrick smiles.

PATRICK

One thing you can feel.

JAMES (V.O.)

Umm...

PATRICK

Something good.

James sniffs, but doesn't answer.

PATRICK

Tomorrow, I wanna hear how far you walked. Ten feet. Five feet. Two.

JAMES (V.O.)

Okay.

Patrick looks out at the parking lot and the weedy sidewalks, then down at the step he sits on.

PATRICK

By your birthday. Think you'll be able to get up steps?

JAMES (V.O.)

How many?

PATRICK
Just one. But it's a big one.

INT. EDDIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A small bedroom in a single wide trailer. Inked drawings of Norse gods and knotwork hang on the walls with a print of Bugs Bunny from "What's Opera, Doc?", posters of Buccaneers cheerleaders, and a suspicious flag-sized gap. There is also a framed, embroidered patch of a Sailor Jerry tattoo.

Eddie sits on the bed. Patrick, on the desk chair, fidgets nervously with a professional-grade drawing marker.

EDDIE
He can stay at my place when you're at work. Mom and Dad don't mind.

PATRICK
It's too close to his house. And Tom knows where you live.

EDDIE
What about Lisa's?

Patrick looks up skeptically.

EDDIE
She ain't mad at *him*.

PATRICK
Tom has a key.

EDDIE
Not anymore. Robert changed every lock in the house. Even on the bathroom.

Patrick shakes his head.

EDDIE
Speaking of Robert. He got something for you.

Eddie hands him a case from under the bed.

PATRICK
Jesus. What is this?

EDDIE
Mossberg 500 bullpup.

He stares at the shotgun in the case, afraid to touch it.

EDDIE

We'll teach you. Me and you and
Robert, we'll go to the fish camp. Jim
too, when he's ready.

Patrick agrees, cautiously hopeful of Robert's support.

EDDIE

He also said to give you this.

Eddie tosses a box at Patrick's feet: it's an air mattress.
Patrick's face falls - message received.

INT. PATRICK'S APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is as clean as it can get. On the coffee table
by textbooks on biology and chemistry are booklets on ostomy
care, coma recovery, and physiotherapy.

Alan sits on the futon in jeans stained with grease from
working on the car. He's wearing a kippah, but not Ezra's.
Patrick stands before him, hands out, ready to help him up.

ALAN

Okay. Feet shoulder width apart. Arms
around his back, let him lean into
you. Don't be afraid to get in there.

Patrick does as he says and raises Alan safely to his feet.

ALAN

Good. You're getting more confident.

PATRICK

I'm scared I'm going to hurt him.

ALAN

You won't. And if you ever have a
question. You call me. Unless it's an
emergency, call 911 and then call me.

Patrick nods, still unsteady, still uncertain.

PATRICK

I will. I will, I just...

ALAN

Hmm?

PATRICK

I don't know how to thank you. For everything you did, everything you're doing for Jim. I ...

Patrick sniffs and fans his face, and noticing his own hands fluttering in a distinctly non-tough-guy way, crosses his arms. Alan smiles warmly - it is a little bit funny.

Patrick wipes his eye with the back of his hand.

PATRICK

God, what is wrong with me?

Alan rubs Patrick's back, utterly pleased.

ALAN

Absolutely nothing.

INT. HOSPITAL MAIN LOBBY - NIGHT

Patrick taps his heels, checks his watch, checks his six. An elevator pings, and a wheelchair squeaks nearer.

JAMES (O.S.)

Paddy?

James is stopped several yards away, in street clothes and his bomber jacket, crutches over the arms of his chair.

PATRICK

Jim!

Patrick starts toward him, but stops when James raises a hand. With great effort, James walks to him on his own.

They embrace. Patrick holds him tightly: James inhales his scent. His legs shake, and Patrick helps him sit.

JAMES

I can't go very far yet.

PATRICK

It's okay. My apartment's not that big.

PATRICK

It's not very nice and the neighborhood's shit.

JAMES

Paddy...

PATRICK
 There's only one bed. I'll
 sleep on the floor.

JAMES
 I don't care if it's a tent.
 I get to be with you-

James stops. Has he said too much?

JAMES
 Are you going to be comfortable?

PATRICK
 On the floor?

JAMES
 No, I meant... With me.

PATRICK
 Why wouldn't I be?

JAMES
 Paddy...

James gives Patrick a look that says "stop pretending you don't understand" while Patrick pretends not to understand.

He makes sure Patrick is watching, then smells the sleeve of his jacket where the seam is and holds out his arm. After some encouragement, Patrick cautiously sniffs the spot. The smell is familiar, but from where?

Patrick strains to place it. James laughs softly when Patrick sniffs his shirt, and then his armpit, and then the jacket again. Realization dawns. It's his own scent.

JAMES
 It didn't smell like you anymore.

A conversation in glances. *Me? Yes. Are you sure? Of course. Really? Paddy, don't be an idiot.*

Awed by knowing he is loved, Patrick struggles to speak.

PATRICK
 I just want to keep you safe... I want
 to see you smile. Like that.

Patrick caresses the seam and follows it to James's hand.

PATRICK
 And I want to be there when you can't.

James's smile fades. He has so far to go, but not alone.

PATRICK

I want to see you strong again. Help you when you're not. Whatever you're going through I want to be there with you. I don't ever want to lose you again... And I don't know what any of that means. I don't know what that makes me to you. I just don't.

He takes a deep breath and collects himself.

PATRICK

But what I do know is. You are everything to me.

He looks at James, as scared and doubtful as James was.

PATRICK

So if you're okay with that. I'm okay?

Patrick holds his breath. James smiles. Proud, somehow.

JAMES

Yeah. I'm okay.

Patrick exhales, relieved. James leans against him, just an arm at first, then head on his shoulder, allowing himself to be held and protected again. Patrick gazes into the shadows that cling to the ceiling, into the unknown.

A clock above reception reads 11:59. The second hand sweeps around. The minute hand clunks into place.

PATRICK

Hey, Jim?

JAMES

Mmm?

PATRICK

Happy Birthday.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

James's room. As a nurse leaves, Bettina enters in civilian clothes with 18th birthday balloons. James waits in the chair, watching the door, discharge papers in his lap.

BETTINA
Happy Birthday, baby!

She hurries over and kisses his cheek; he pulls away.

BETTINA
I have a special surprise for you!

James waits, tense, silent, as ready for this as he can be.

BETTINA
The doctor said you'll need weekly
physical therapy, but she thinks
you're ready. So once the nurse brings
the discharge papers, I'll sign them
and we'll -

JAMES
I signed them.

She shakes her head, blinking rapidly.

BETTINA
No, honey, you can't. I have to -

JAMES
I signed them already.

BETTINA
Oh. Oh, I - I guess you can do that
now, can't you?

He stares at her in silence.

BETTINA
Looks like you're all set to go home.

JAMES
I'm not going home.

BETTINA
Of course you are.

JAMES
No. I'm not going.

Bettina extends her hands to help him pull himself up.

BETTINA
Well, you can't stay here. C'mon.

James folds his arms. She straightens, disapproving.

BETTINA

James.

JAMES

(mumbling)

I'm going home with Paddy.

BETTINA

Speak up.

JAMES

I'm going home with Paddy!

BETTINA

You know that's not going to happen.

JAMES

Yes, it is. He said -

BETTINA

Jimmy -

She raises her hand, as if to say 'wait'. He shrinks back.

BETTINA

I don't want you talking to him, let
alone -

JAMES

What about what I want?

BETTINA

You don't know what you want.

JAMES

Yes I do! I want to go with him.

She fumes, starting and stopping a few times and checking the door before continuing in a hushed, angry tone.

BETTINA

Do you think he wants that?

JAMES

Yes! He said so.

BETTINA

Do you think. That a twenty-something-
year-old kid is going to

want to listen to you scream at night?

James's gaze falls. Doubt creeps in.

BETTINA

Do you think. He's going to want to wash your clothes? Cook your food? Help you in and out of the bathtub? You think he's going to want to clean up your shit when you spring a leak?

PATRICK (O.S.)

Oh fuck...

Patrick strides into the room and hurries to James.

PATRICK

Mrs. Best. Please stop.

BETTINA

Well. Would you?

PATRICK

Yeah. Yeah, I would.

Patrick kneels before James as panic sets in.

PATRICK

It's okay. It's okay. Just breathe.

BETTINA

You think this is going to be easy?
You think this is going to be fun?

PATRICK

Jesus, would you just stop?

James clutches Patrick's arms. Patrick readies to lift him.

PATRICK

(softly, to James)
Come on. Let's get you up.

James tries, but he's shaking too hard to stand.

PATRICK

I got you. I got you. You can do this.

James steadies enough for Patrick to get him into the

wheelchair.

BETTINA

He's not going to do this for nothing,
James. He's a man after all.

James looks up at her then back to Patrick, petrified that she might be right.

PATRICK

(to James)

No. No, that's not true.

Patrick grabs James's bag.

PATRICK

You want me to push, or you want to?

James puts his hands to the wheels and focuses on the door.

BETTINA

Jimmy. Jimmy, you're making a mistake.

He glances at her, deeply sad that it has to be this way.

BETTINA

Whose insurance do you think is going
to pay for therapy? Surgery? It won't
be mine.

PATRICK

(to James)

We'll figure it out.

They keep going. Bettina follows them into the hallway.

BETTINA

If you do this, James. Don't come
crying to me when he gets sick of you.

In the hallway, James gains strength. Patrick walks tall beside him, chin up, one hand on James's shoulder.

Bettina calls after them, blinking away tears.

BETTINA

You're on your own, you hear me?

She stands on her toes to watch them. James looks back as

they reach the corner and stops. Maybe there's a chance?

BETTINA

You wouldn't do this if Tommy was
still here!

But no. There is no chance, and never was. They disappear
around the corner. Bettina collapses sobbing into the wall.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

James wipes his face with a wet paper towel and hands it to
Patrick.

PATRICK

Better?

He nods and breathes deeply, then locks his wheels and gets
up on the crutches. Patrick offers his arms, letting James
decide how much help he needs.

PATRICK

You ready for this?

JAMES

No?

PATRICK

Me neither. Wanna do it anyway?

They share a long look, drawing strength from each other.
When he's ready, James turns to the door. Patrick puts his
hand on his back.

PATRICK

Come on. Let's go home.

EXT. HOSPITAL MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

Alan, wearing a visitor's badge, peers through the glass into
the lobby. Ben is with him. Eddie and Robert wait by a
station wagon with a camouflage wheelchair on the back.

Eddie's almost unrecognizable in a baseball cap and shorts.
Robert's changes are subtle: his SS belt buckle and pin are
gone, and under his jacket, he carries his pistol.

Alan studies Robert's reflection until Robert looks right at
him. Robert tilts his head in acknowledgment, and Alan lifts
his chin in an awkward 'hey'.

Robert straightens, alert. Alan's face brightens. Patrick walks out with James: James squints at the sunlight.

ALAN
So? Everything go okay?

PATRICK
(silently)
Noooooo...

James turns to Alan's voice.

ALAN
Hi. James. I'm Alan.

JAMES
I know you.

ALAN
Yeah. Yeah, I was your doctor.

James studies his face, as if from deep in another world.

ALAN
It's good to finally meet you.

James nods distantly. Alan backs off: this isn't his moment. Eddie grins and comes at James with open arms.

EDDIE
C'mere, you.

He reaches for a hug, and James stiffens. Patrick shakes his head: Eddie stops, not understanding, but trusting.

EDDIE
Happy Birthday, man.

JAMES
Thank you.

Overwhelmed, he looks to Patrick for help. Patrick settles him into the car: Alan shows him how to wear the seat belt.

ALAN
That feel ok?

JAMES
Yes, sir.

ALAN
You see where this goes?

JAMES
Yes, sir.

Eddie and Patrick load James's things. Alan waits next to Robert. Robert frowns, deep in thought.

ROBERT
Doctor Green?

Alan doesn't respond at first, not sure Robert means him.

ALAN
Hm?

ROBERT
May I ask a question?

ALAN
Of course.

ROBERT
Why?

ALAN
Why?

ROBERT
Duty, I understand. Oaths.

Alan nods. Yep, still creepy.

ROBERT
But you have so far exceeded your duty as a physician that you have lost your ability to practice as one. Correct?

ALAN
Correct. For now.

ROBERT
Why? Why would you go so far to help him, given who he was?

Alan thinks, studying Robert.

ALAN
Well... It's got nothing to do with

who he was, or who any of you were.

Robert listens intently with his better ear.

ALAN

I do what I do because of who I am.

Robert lowers his head in a show of respect. Alan shivers as something otherworldly passes through him, a shift in possible futures. Questions bubble up as he realizes he may have misunderstood who he was saving.

EDDIE

Saddle up!

Robert turns crisply and gets in the car. Eddie waves out the window. Alan watches them go, shaking his head at the strangeness of it all.

Ben walks up behind him and puts an arm around him.

BEN

Think they'll be okay?

ALAN

With a little help...

BEN

You know you're an idiot.

Alan laughs. Maybe he is.

ALAN

(fondly)
Asshole.

With Ben's arm over Alan's shoulders, they walk inside.