

Toy's House

Written by
Chris Galletta

Current Draft 9/9/09

STATEN ISLAND, 1997

EXT. JOE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Hammer strikes nail. It hits off-center, driving the nail in crooked.

Reveal the carpenter: JOE TOY (14), Our Hero. A scrawny, skater-type kid with greasy brown hair parted in the center.

EXT. JOE'S BACKYARD - DAY

On a magazine photo of an extreme biker taking off from a wooden ramp. The biker, and the ramp, look awesome. Joe lowers the magazine to reveal:

His ramp. Not awesome. Low quality, warped wood. Odd angles. Nailheads protrude dangerously from different points across the surface. A valiant effort, but no.

Joe grabs his TOOLBOX and walks inside.

INT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Joe sits in a middle row, doodling. The science teacher, DR. FERRARA (40s) fires questions at the class.

FERRARA

In any ecosystem we have indigenous flora and...? Robert?

KID (ROBERT)

Shale?

FERRARA

No, not shale...I like where you're head's at though...

Ferrara hears Joe doodling in the otherwise silent class. Joe doesn't notice Ferrara approaching. We see the drawing:

Joe, on horseback, riding into the FOREST. A girl rides with him, clutching him around the waist. He colors her dress in with a YELLOW HIGHLIGHTER.

Ferrara STOMPS HIS FOOT once loudly next to Joe, snapping him out of his artistic trance.

FERRARA (CONT'D)

Joe Toy. Flora and?

JOE
 (turning page)
 Fauna.

FERRARA
 Very good. An allamanda cathartica
 would be an example of which?
 (off Joe's silence)
 And an allamanda cathartica would
 be an example of which?

JOE
 I've never heard those words before
 in my life.

FERRARA
 That was my hope. No drawing in
 class, please. Allamanda
 cathartica. Allamanda cathartica.
 (noticing a raised hand)
 Kelly.

We land on KELLY (15), a pretty girl...in a YELLOW DRESS.

KELLY
 Flora.

When Ferrara turns his back, Joe and Kelly make eye contact.
 Joe rolls his eyes at her ass-kissing. She sticks her tongue
 out. They're clearly buddies.

EXT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - 2 P.M.

School's out. Students crowd the sidewalk. Joe walks his
 bicycle alongside him, keeping pace with Kelly.

KELLY
 What were you drawing in there? It
 was obviously top secret.

JOE
 Oh. Just some...blueprints.
 Patrick and me are working on this
 bike ramp thing.

KELLY
 Blueprints? Huh. That's funny.

JOE
 Funny?

KELLY

You just don't strike me as like a
"man's man," y'know? Construction
and all. That's not an insult.

Beat on Joe. Smiling, but insulted.

KELLY (CONT'D)

How's Patrick doing, by the way?

JOE

He's fine. I think he's supposed
to come back next week.

KELLY

I was gonna say, if you guys want,
you should come to Thirsty
Thursdays tomorrow night.

JOE

"Thirsty Thursdays." I have no
idea what that is.

KELLY

It's a keg. At Wolf's Pond.
Paul's friends throw it every week
once it starts getting warm out and
ohmygod--

The boyfriend approaches, PAUL: 17, could be 36. Goatee,
earring. He's bleeding noticeably from the shoulder.

KELLY (CONT'D)

What happened??

PAUL

Hm? Some dog bit me. I'm fine.

He kisses her 'hello' on the mouth.

KELLY

What? For no reason??

PAUL

Well I was hitting him and shit.
(to Joe)
What's up man.

KELLY

Oh -- Paul, you know Joe. We have
Bio together.

PAUL
 (handshake)
 Yow.

KELLY
 (inspecting the wound)
 Should we go to the hospital?

PAUL
 No. You want a bagel? C'mon. I
 want an egg bagel.

KELLY
 Ugh!
 (to Joe)
 He always gets hurt, and he never
 goes to the doctor.

Joe raises his eyebrows in false fascination.

PAUL
 Starving, babe.

KELLY
 Okay, okay. See you tomorrow, Joe!

Joe waves, watching as Paul leads her away, shoving his hand
 into Kelly's back pocket as they walk.

Off his misery:

EXT. TOWN OF HUGENOT - DAY

Joe rides his bike home from school. We get an impression of
 the town: a bank, a church, a barbershop. Quaint.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe steers through a narrow "trail" in the woods. It's dense
 with trees and brush.

Craning up above the trees, we see that the woods are
 bordered on all sides by tracts of suburban houses. In the
 deep distance, factory pipes.

Off the sound of a DOORBELL:

EXT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Joe waits on the stoop. The door opens to reveal MRS. MCGUIRE, 42. Patrick's mom.

JOE
Patrick home?

MRS. MCGUIRE
Come in, Joseph.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE, GROUND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

A modest country-theme home. Thomas Kinkadee and Precious Moments abound.

MRS. MCGUIRE
(calling upstairs)
Patrick! Joseph's here.

PATRICK'S VOICE
I'm coming down.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Stay where you are! He will come
to you!

PATRICK'S VOICE
I'm fine, ma!

At the top of the stairs, PATRICK MCGUIRE comes into view. Though also 14, he's a brick shithouse, a man by any physical standard. There's an AIR CAST on his left foot. He hops down one step at a time.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Mother Cabrini, protect my son.

PATRICK
Stop praying, ma.

Another few steps. Painstaking.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Look at you! You're sweating.
You're sweating from the pain!

PATRICK
I'm sweating from you, ma.

Two more stairs. He's winded now.

MRS. MCGUIRE
I'm getting you a cold washcloth.

PATRICK
I don't want one.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Well it's happening. How about you, Joseph? Would you like a cold washcloth?

JOE
I would take one, yeah.

PATRICK
No one is getting a cold washcloth.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

On TV: "STREET FIGHTER 2" for Super Nintendo. The boys sit in spitting distance of the screen, concentrating.

PATRICK
My mom reminds me of Blanka.

JOE
Because she wears cutoff jeans?

PATRICK
No, because everything she says, in my head, sounds like Blanka's crazy victory roar. Listen.

On TV: After a knockout, BLANKA stands on his hind legs and roars three times.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
That's the sound I hear whenever she speaks. Just the jibberish of an undisciplined animal.

JOE
You hear that all day?

PATRICK
All day.

He pauses the game.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I have to get out of this house, man.

JOE
What do you mean?

PATRICK
I mean I can't stand another minute
of it. Of them. They're down my
throat all day. They don't stop.

JOE
Well, you'll be back at school
Monday, right? You can tough it
out.

PATRICK
No, you don't get it. They're
killing me. Like, I'm getting
hives.

JOE
No you're not.

Patrick lifts his shirt: a few small hives are scattered on
his torso.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit.

PATRICK
Yeah, shit is right.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Family dinner. Joe sits with his father, FRANK (51), and his
sister LISA (19), who wears a college-team hoodie.

LISA
Daddy, can Colin come tomorrow? He
really wants to meet you guys.

FRANK
Can I get some sweet potato
casserole?
(then)
Who's Colin?

LISA
He's my boyfriend of seven months.

FRANK
Hm. What are his prospects? How
does he plan to support you?

LISA
He's Sri Lankan.

FRANK
Right, right. Aren't we all.
(passing food)
Put that back over by you. Move
the water.

JOE
Speaking of tomorrow -- can you
drive me to Wolf's Pond at like 8?

Joe notices Frank staring at him in mild shock.

JOE (CONT'D)
What?

FRANK
Tomorrow. Thursday night, Joe.
What do you think we're sitting
here talking about?

JOE
What are we talking about?

FRANK
Is this a joke? Carol is coming
over Thursday. We're having Game
Night. I told you about this weeks
ago.

JOE
You never told me about that!

FRANK
That's horseshit, Joe. I told you
at least twice, and I watched you
write it on your forearm in
permanent marker.

Joe glances at his forearm. There is some faded text.

JOE
Well what if I don't want to meet
"Carol"? I don't make you meet all
the girls I bang out.

Lisa snickers.

FRANK
This is not a debate, Joe! The
plans are made.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Just be there, and be pleasant.
 She's making lamb stew for us.
 She's going out of her way.

JOE
 Lamb stew? What is this, Beowulf?
 I'm not touching it.

FRANK
 Believe me, you're touching it.

LISA
 It'll be fun, Joe. You'll get to
 meet Colin.

FRANK
 (to Lisa)
 I think I'm done hearing that name
 tonight, okay?

Joe simmers at Frank, livid.

FRANK (CONT'D)
What, Joe.

Joe rises silently and moves to the wall phone.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 What are you doing?

Joe picks up the receiver and shoots Frank a threatening
 look.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 We're supposed to be past this,
 Joseph! For Christ's sake!
 Remember what we talked about.
 Think of people who really need to
 call 911!

A moment of tension. Then, Joe opens the dishwasher, shoves
 the phone in, and leaves.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 (after him) I don't know who that's
 supposed to be hurting!

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Joe watches as his friend ANGELO, 14, sticks a large
 FIRECRACKER into a mailbox. Angelo turns to flee.

ANGELO

Come on come on come on!

They run across the street and hide behind some shrubs. A nebbishy kid, AARON (also 14), waits for them there.

They stare at the mailbox. Nothing happens.

JOE

Did it light?

The mailbox EXPLODES.

ANGELO / AARON

Ha! Got you. / Remarkable.

An INDIAN GUY, 30s, comes out and immediately spots the boys.

INDIAN GUY

We tired of this game yet?

ANGELO

Not till you learn English, dot-head!

INDIAN GUY

Huh?? I have a double masters from Georgetown. Your father cleans pools.

ANGELO

Go home!

In the background, a storm door opens on one of the houses. A little old Italian lady pokes her head out. Angelo'S MOM.

ANGELO'S MOM

Angelo! Venire all'interno e spostare vestiti!

ANGELO

Essere di destra là!

She retreats inside.

ANGELO (CONT'D)

Shit. I gotta go shift the wash.
(to Indian guy)
Fuck you, Mola Ram!!

INDIAN GUY

What?!

AARON

I'm out too. Thirsty Thursdays.

JOE

Oh God. You're going to that?

AARON

Of course. Everyone's going.

JOE

Not me. My goddam shit-eating father won't let me.

(then)

And Kelly invited me too.

AARON

So what, Kelly invited you. She's got a boyfriend. Who's twice your size.

JOE

Right. The cave troll. What's his name again? Ju'tuun?

AARON

Paul. I can't believe that guy is seventeen years old. He looks like he works for Con Ed.

JOE

Yeah.

(frustrated)

Shit.

AARON

Well no big deal, man. There will be other...best times of your life.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Game night. Lisa, Frank and Joe sit around a monopoly board, joined by COLIN, 19, bookish; and CAROL, 40, far too good for this situation.

Joe sits slumped, miserable.

COLIN

Carol, the lamb was delicious. Very tender. It felt like I was chewing avocado meat.

CAROL
Thanks Colin. I boil it first.

COLIN
I thought you might have. I didn't
want to presume.

FRANK
Colin, no one knows what you're
talking about.

Carol ROLLS. Marvin Gardens.

CAROL
Meh. Pass.

FRANK
Passing on Marvin Gardens? Ballsy.

CAROL
Well look at this. I'm broke.

FRANK
You pissed it all away on purples.
(going through her cards)
What the hell is this, Virginia?
If you're gonna rely on colors, go
red, orange, yellow. Strong
colors. They attract the eye.
People want to land there. They
will themselves to.

COLIN
Royal blue. Also a fierce color.

FRANK
Colin, again, we're unclear as to
what you're saying.

Joe sits up.

JOE
Don't listen to this clown. His
whole game is railroads. He's got
blinders on to the world.

FRANK
Who's "he"? I'm right here.

JOE
Blinders.

FRANK

People need transportation, Joe.
They need to get from A to B.

Joe points his hands out from his temples: Blinders.

CAROL

Just roll, Frank.

He does.

JOE

Lisa, do you remember when you
bought B&O and wouldn't trade him,
and he quit?

FRANK

I didn't "quit." I just wasn't
having fun anymore. Why would I
play if I'm not having fun? What's
the point of a game? People play
games to heighten life, to forget
themselves.

COLIN

That's beautiful.

FRANK

Shut the fuck up, Colin.

CAROL

(laughing)

Is that true, Frank? You actually
quit Monopoly? How old are you?

Frank tenses up, uncomfortable.

JOE

Oh yeah, he always quits. He once
quit because Lisa hit free parking
six times.

FRANK

Any sane person would have walked
away from that game. Something
wasn't right and you goddam know
it.

Carol laughs, and Joe joins her. Frank shoots Joe a look.
Joe shoots one back, relishing the moment of comeuppance.

Frank moves his gamepiece.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I will absolutely buy that...
(counting out money)
Hello Colin.

COLIN
Hello.

FRANK
Do you want to be my friend?

COLIN
Very badly, sir.

Joe watches this exchange, not trusting it.

FRANK
Okay then. Right now -- Tennessee
and St. James. I'll give you Park
Place and Indiana.

JOE
Whoa whoa whoa whoa--

FRANK
Let the men talk, Joseph.

On Joe: fuming.

COLIN
Yes. Clearly, yes I would do that.

CAROL
Frank, that makes no sense. He'll
kill us all.

FRANK
There will be collateral damage,
yes. But war is hell.

Joe looks at the board -- he sees what's happening. His
piece is in jail. Frank's building on orange. It's a setup.

JOE
(to himself)
He's pricing me out...

CAROL
What's that?

FRANK
(big smile)
Your roll, Joey Joe-Joe.

JOE
This is bullshit, Dad! You're
pricing me out of the goddam game!

LISA
(eyeing board) Oh man...he is.

CAROL
Oh come on Frank. He's your son.

JOE
You can't do that Dad! It's
collusion.

FRANK
I can do whatever I want, Joe. My
house, my rules.

Frank lights a cigar and leans back. A suburban Bugsy. He smiles at Joe, rubbing it in. Joe's lip quivers, but he tries not to break, tries not to give Frank the satisfaction.

CAROL
Let's just have a fun game. No?

FRANK
Hey, I'm not the one who started
telling fun little, funny little
stories. He's just mad because he
doesn't want to be here, so he's
being a shit.
(then)
Roll the die, Joe. Let's see what
happens. If you need a loan, maybe
we can work something out at a fair
interest rate.

A tense, miserable beat of silence. Then Joe rises, heads for the kitchen.

CAROL
That was a cruel thing to do,
Frank.

LISA
Is he quitting?

INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Joe, red-faced, picks up the wall phone.

INSERT - A switchboard operator picks up.

OPERATOR
911, what is your emergency?

BACK IN JOE'S HOUSE:

Frank knows what's happening.

FRANK
Ah shit -- he's doing it!

Frank darts at Joe, but Joe runs into the bathroom and locks the door.

INT. JOE'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe sits on the toilet, covering his ear.

JOE
(into phone)
I want to report a theft...yes
...up to one thousand dollars in
cash and assets...

FRANK'S VOICE
Hang it up Joe!

JOE
(into phone)
28 Rye Avenue. No, he's actually
in the house right now...

Loud BANGING as Frank attempts to break the door down. Joe moves toward the corner of the room.

JOE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
His name is Frank Toy, brown
hair...height unknown...He's
obsessed with railroads...

The door SPLINTERS.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Through Joe's window, we see Frank talking to two police officers. He holds the Monopoly board and makes desperate, animated gestures. The officers nod.

Move back to reveal Joe, watching, holding a flashlight. The room is dark.

He shines the flashlight in short spurts out the window. Dot-dot-dot, dash-dash-dash, dot-dot-dot...

After a few beats, we hear THUMPING from outside. Feet climbing stairs.

Frank opens the door.

FRANK
Stop signaling.

Joe shines the flashlight beam into Franks's eyes. Frank squints and shuts the door.

Joe lies on the bed, miserable. He spins something around between his thumb and forefinger. Flashlight on: a small green MONOPOLY HOUSE. He looks at it, then past it, and freezes...something caught his eye.

The wall across from him: Though we notice an "Excalibur" poster and other assorted nerd items, Joe's focus is on the huge SHADOW being cast by the monopoly house. Joe regards this "house" shape...

Then shines the flashlight across the room, illuminating the TOOLBOX sitting atop his dresser.

Beat on Joe, thinking...

INT. SPANISH CLASS - DAY

Patrick enters on his boot, carrying a team duffel bag. The teacher conducts the class to recite the words on the board:

ENTIRE CLASS
Recepción detrás, Patrick!

They applaud. Patrick smiles through the awkwardness.

INT. SPANISH CLASS - LATER

Patrick recites translations, sitting by the window.

TEACHER'S VOICE
¿Qué color es perros?

PATRICK
(with the class)
Algunos perros son marrón, algunos
perros son negro, algunos --

The sound of KNOCKING breaks his concentration -- Joe's outside, at the window. Behind him, a scrawny, olive-skinned kid sits on a bicycle: BIAGGIO, 14, quiet but dedicated.

Joe makes a "come here" motion. Patrick turns his palms upward in a gesture of powerlessness.

EXT. SPANISH CLASS WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

JOE
(mouthing the words) Come outside
for a second.

A stern Patrick points to his desk, then points to the front of the classroom.

JOE (CONT'D)
(mouthing) Come on. One second.

Patrick writes something on loose leaf and presses it against the window. It says "I am in school right now"

INT. SPANISH CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Biaggio sit on the window ledge. Patrick sees from the corner of his eye, then shakes his head. Joe takes a sandwich out of his bag, prepared to wait it out.

TEACHER'S VOICE
Patrick, ¿Cómo viejo es tu perro?

PATRICK
(caught off guard) Um, no tengo un
perro, profesor.

TEACHER'S VOICE
Who are those boys outside? Does
anyone know those boys? Are they
your friends, Dudley?

A black kid behind Patrick picks his head up.

DUDLEY
Patrick's been talking to them for
five minutes, man! Why do I get
blamed?

TEACHER'S VOICE
Because of what you are!

EXT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Patrick walks across the street with Joe.

PATRICK

Don't do that shit anymore. You're gonna get me in trouble.

JOE

I would get detention, not you. You did nothing wrong.

A car full of students drives by. A kid hanging out the window hollers "McGuire!" Patrick absently waves.

PATRICK

How do you never get caught? What about the truant officer?

JOE

Yeah, the truant officer. He's fucking 19. I'll shit in his mouth.

Cutaway to a baby faced Cop-in-a-Box idling on the curb.

JOE (CONT'D)

(hopping on his bike) Get on.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Biaggio hacks through brush with a MACHETE. Joe and Patrick walk the dirt path behind him.

PATRICK

Come on man. I can't walk all day like this.

JOE

We're almost there. Fifty more yards, about.

PATRICK

Almost where? What's happening right now??

EXT. WOODS, CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

The come to a large, treeless area. No civilization in sight. Joe walks to the epicenter, the about-faces and stretched his arms, like "welcome."

JOE

Do you want your room facing sunrise, or the sunset?

PATRICK

What are you talking about?

JOE

Our new house. No, "home." We're building a home on this very spot.

PATRICK

What, like a tree-house?

JOE

No, like a living-house -- I'm moving out. And I want you to come with me.

Biaggio thrusts a shovel toward Patrick.

PATRICK

Who is this kid?
(to Biaggio)
Who the fuck are you?

JOE

It's Biaggio.

PATRICK

Biaggio? What are you, an exchange student?

JOE

He's been in our class since the 4th grade. (beat) We'll get to him later man - are you in?

Patrick rubs his eyes. Joe isn't kidding.

PATRICK

You're serious about this.

JOE

Of course I'm serious. Look, you can't live with your parents, I certainly can't live with Shit-Ass Frank any more. If we do this we can make our own rules, make our own choices! Live and die by our wits, like men! What do we need? A few 2x10s and a foundation?

PATRICK

It's not that simple, Joe.

JOE

It is, man. With my mind, and your hands, we can pull this off. We're preternaturally skilled craftsmen.

PATRICK

Joe, we *almost* built a ramp, and I got a 92 in Shop. That doesn't mean we can build a house!

JOE

Come on man. Break ground with me. You're my best friend.

Biaggio looks at Joe, crestfallen.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to Biaggio)

Don't take that to heart Biaggio. Who knows what the future holds.

(to Patrick)

Well?

Patrick takes a deep breath.

PATRICK

Look, I won't tell anyone what you're doing, I promise. But this is insane. You know that, right?

Joe's last resort:

JOE

It's this or the hives, man.

Silence.

PATRICK

I'll see you later.

Patrick boots off into the forest.

INT. PATRICK'S KITCHEN TABLE - NIGHT

Patrick jams his palm into a Heinz bottle, drizzling ketchup on a burger. Mom and Dad sit on either side.

MRS. MCGUIRE

I got the chop chuck from DeMonte's instead of King Kullen. So the hamburgers might taste a little different. But they might taste the same. It's fun to try new things, though.

MR. MCGUIRE

(to Patrick)

What did Coach Locke say when he saw you?

PATRICK

Nothing. He just said he was glad to have me back.

MR. MCGUIRE

I saw your sub play last Thursday. "Moscato," they called him.

PATRICK

Yes. That's his last name.

MR. MCGUIRE

I didn't like him. He had a weak chin.

(looking at Patrick's plate)

You do that often? You eat the hamburger, then the fries? You don't mix it up?

PATRICK

I don't know. Sometimes.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Patrick, have you heard about this Die Hard movie? Die Hard 5? It's set in outer space.

PATRICK

Huh?

MR. MCGUIRE

Mmm...It's not a Die Hard movie. I think it's called Festival something.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Yes, that's the one -- Festival. Bruce Die Hard is in it, though. Are you gonna go see Festival with your friends?

MR. MCGUIRE

"Festival."

PATRICK

Are you talking about "The Fifth Element"??

MRS. MCGUIRE

Right! The Elements. It looks very impressive. Tell us how it is.

PATRICK

Did I say I was seeing it? I have no interest in it.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Yes, it's with Bruce Element, and the other one, who's the bad guy? He's been in a lot, he's very good. "Samuel Clemens."

PATRICK

His name is not Samuel Clemens.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Well the actor, not the character.

PATRICK

(rubs his eyes)

I know what you mean. Samuel Clemens is Mark Twain's pen name. The actor is Gary Oldman.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Mm...no, that doesn't sound right.

PATRICK

Well maybe you guys should go see it! Treat yourselves. Get out of the house for a night.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Maybe we will.

MR. MCGUIRE
(re: Patrick's food)
The flavors compliment each other,
if you wanted to do some of one,
then some of the other.

PATRICK
(agitated)
I know, Dad.

MRS. MCGUIRE
Your Aunt Janette is coming Friday
afternoon, Patrick. I told her
you'll be around. I'm going to put
some cashews out.

PATRICK
I don't have to call her 'aunt'
anymore, right? I'm fourteen.
She's of no blood relation. You
went to camp with her.

MRS. MCGUIRE
She loves you like an aunt, she
showers you with gifts.

MR. MCGUIRE
She loves you, Patrick.

PATRICK
She gets me weird things that I
don't want. She got me a wood-
burning kit.

MRS. MCGUIRE
I know she did. And now it just
sits there. Too much goes to waste
in this world.

Patrick just shakes his head. He bites into his burger. Mr.
McGuire can't stop staring at Patrick's plate.

MR. MCGUIRE
Is that a usual thing for you,
though?
(to wife)
He eats all of one food, and then
moves onto all of another food.

PATRICK

So what?!

MR. MCGUIRE

Come on. That's how the blind eat.
We didn't raise you to do that. To
be blind.

PATRICK

(losing it)

But how does it affect you?? Why
comment on it??

Out of nowhere, Mom starts WHISTLING.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Can you whistle? Can you whistle,
Patrick? I have to breath in to do
it.

MR. MCGUIRE

No no no. You're supposed to breath
out. Let the diaphragm support it.

They both whistle out of key with one another. Patrick loses
some color in his face and starts breathing erratically.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM/PATRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone RINGS. Joe answers right away.

JOE

Hello?

Cut to Patrick's (intercut between rooms as needed). He's
standing in front of a full length mirror, covered in HIVES.

PATRICK

I'm in.

JOE'S VOICE

What? Huh?

PATRICK

I'm in, I said. The house. I'll
do it.

JOE

(grinning) Fuckin...yes! Awesome
man...okay, we break ground
tomorrow at 5AM. Good shit!

PATRICK
How about eleven?

JOE'S VOICE
Eleven's fine.

INT. KELLY'S ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Kelly sits on her bed listening to a CD. A KNOCK on her door, then a Mom-type opens it.

KELLY'S MOM
Kel -- Vicki's coming up.

KELLY
Okay.

The best friend, VICKI (15) enters. Dark hair, dark soul.

VICKI
You're not gonna believe this.

She hands Kelly a magazine.

KELLY
'Architectural Digest.' So?

VICKI
Turn to page 23.

Kelly turns. We see a feature on JOE, standing before his pristine new House in the Woods.

KELLY
Oh my God! Joe Toy??

VICKI
He built that house with his bare hands.

KELLY
Wait -- he built this??

VICKI
Well, Patrick and Biaggio helped with parts and labor, but the whole thing was Joe's baby. God, a guy who can work with his hands... that's the ultimate.

KELLY
 (reading) It's got a game room...
 and a botanical garden...and a lazy
 river!

VICKI
 Ugh. He must be rich.

KELLY
 Rich, or just brilliant. And
 crafty as hell.

Tight on Kelly, lost in the article.

KELLY (CONT'D)
 I can't believe a man like this has
 been under my nose for a whole
 year.

We hear more KNOCKING. It seems to come from far away...

SOUNDBRIDGE TO:

INT. JOE'S SHOWER - REAL LIFE, 10AM

The knocking snaps Joe out of his DAYDREAM. He's showering.
 His hair is sculpted into a shampoo mohawk.

FRANK'S VOICE
 Joe! You've been in there for
 fifty-five minutes!

INT. JOE'S HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Frank waits outside the door, messy and unshaven. The water
 turns off. He knocks again.

INT. JOE'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe brushes his teeth. He shoots a contemptuous glance at
 the door.

FRANK'S VOICE
 Let's go. I have a tee time.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE, UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Frank knocks again.

FRANK

You have to talk to me eventually,
Joe.

Silence. After a beat, Joe runs out, naked and still soaked. His hands are cupped over his genitals.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(averting his eyes) Jesus.

As Joe scampers into his room:

FRANK (CONT'D)

You've gotta bring underwear in
with you, Joe! You're 14 years
old! It's not cute anymore!

EXT. JOE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Bird's eye of Joe bursting out of his side gate on his bike.

We move up and over the rooftops, heading past subdivisions, strip malls, until the woods appear in the distance. We move in until treetops fill the frame. We linger on the dense green tableau. It could be anywhere in the world.

EXT. WOODS, SITE OF HOUSE - MUCH LATER

Patrick, Joe and Biaggio stand in a large rectangular hole in the earth, DIGGING. Judging by the stains and general demeanor, the fun part is over. We hear grunts, wheezing.

JOE

(to Biaggio) Did you talk to your
father about concrete?

BIAGGIO

He says it's impossible, and he
says if I ask again he's going to
throw my binder in the garbage.

PATRICK

(stops shoveling) Well shit man,
where does that leave us?

JOE

Relax, we'll think of a substitute.
We could use sod, we could use
clay, we--

PATRICK
 This isn't the fucking French Open,
 Joe! We need a concrete
 foundation. That's like rule one.

BIAGGIO
 We could use dirt. Pack it hard.

PATRICK
 You want to fill this hole with
 dirt?

Biaggio shrugs. Patrick throws his shovel and climbs out of
 the hole.

JOE
 Where are you going? Relax man!
 This is a flawed process.

PATRICK
 (climbing) No shit. Call me when
 you have some idea what's going on.

JOE
 C'mon, keep your eye on the prize
 here! We need you, Tum Tum!

PATRICK
 And we're not using nicknames from
 "Three Ninjas," either.

Patrick is gone. Biaggio starts after him, but Joe stops
 him.

JOE
 Let him go, Colt.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - LATER

Joe walks in, utterly filthy. The door chimes. Guy behind
 the counter:

ATTENDANT
 Not cool, guys. I just had the
 floors buffed yesterday.

By the refrigerators, Patrick, also very filthy, browses soft
 drinks. Joe approaches.

JOE
 How can I make you happy here?

PATRICK

(hands Joe a Snapple) First, you're gonna buy me a Guava Mania. Second, I want you to make a fucking plan! Read a book!

JOE

Hey man, I never said it would be easy, I just said it would be worth it. Good things come to those who wait. Friends are the best therapy.

PATRICK

I've been to your house, asshole! Those are your refrigerator magnets.

Patrick moves up an aisle. Joe follows.

JOE

Fine. I'll do some research, okay? We both will.

Patrick hands Joe a box of frozen waffles.

PATRICK

These are coming too. (back on subject) I've done the research, Joe! Did you know that pine cones are a legitimate source of fiber? That the red baneberry is edible, but the white one is deadly? That skunk spray can blind you? No, you didn't.

JOE

(sigh) Yes, fine, you know things. But no one learns as much from books as they do from actual real life, okay? You can bring a fucking meat thermometer and your Cub Scout manual if you want, but at some point we're gonna have to dick up and trust our instincts..

ATTENDANT'S VOICE

Yo! Out of the store! Not gonna say it again!

PATRICK

(ignoring attendant) Joe, all I'm saying is, let's do this right.

(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I'm not in the mood for another Joe Toy disaster.

JOE

Fine, yes, agreed. That's all I'm saying too. (beat) So you're still on board?

PATRICK

Look at me. I'm on board.

Joe exhales, relieved. Patrick throws a bag of pork rinds on Joe's pile.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

These too.

JOE

Wow. You're a class act.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE. MUSIC CUE: "WHITE WINTER HYMNAL" by FLEET FOXES

Joe plucks books from LIBRARY SHELVES. He stacks them on the checkout counter: "WALDEN." "105 OUTDOOR RECIPES." "SO, YOU WANT TO BUILD A CABIN."

Blueprints unroll. Reveal Joe, Patrick and Biaggio reviewing them in an empty classroom. It feels like a war room.

In the woods, Joe and Biaggio dump piles of timber next to Patrick, who ties them together with small vines. They are a symphony of sweat and grime.

Joe and Biaggio watch as Patrick confidently bites into an herb. There's an open reference book in Patrick's hand.

Joe stacks more books at the library counter: "SELF RELIANCE AND OTHER ESSAYS." Then, the following comic books: "SPAWN," "BATMAN VS. PREDATOR," "SUPERMAN: CAMELOT FALLS." Then another reference book, "I'D RATHER BE HUNTING."

Patrick messes around with some dry twigs and flint, trying to get a spark. Once he does, he blows on it - FIRE.

On a suburban street, Biaggio halts his bike, seeing something. Swoosh pan to a sofa left on the curb as trash.

Biaggio and Joe set the sofa on a lumpy wood floor -- the house in the woods. One wall has been erected.

On his stoop, Patrick picks leaves, twigs off his jeans and scatters them in the garden. He keeps an eye on the door.

Joe sits on the toilet, reading his Superman comic.

Biaggio rides his bike through an affluent neighborhood. He stops and looks off camera, in awe of something...

Joe and Biaggio, guided by Patrick, carry an enormous POOL SLIDE, ladder included. As the inch closer to the "house," we see that three walls have been erected, and there is more garbage furniture than before. It's getting there.

Joe emerges from a thick bit of trees and finds himself atop a decent sized cliff, maybe seventy feet high. Out in front of him, treetops stretch for miles. He inhales.

END MONTAGE.

INT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Joe and Patrick sit at an empty lunch table, drinking plastic quarter drinks.

PATRICK

What are we gonna do about parents?

JOE

Well I'm not leaving a note or anything. I'm gonna let him stew in it for a while.

Patrick makes a face, reacting to Joe's harshness.

PATRICK

What happened in your house the other night anyway, man?

JOE

Nothing. He's just...it's like the chicken or the egg with my Dad. I don't know if he's alone because he's a dick, or if he's a dick because he's alone. But either way he's a dick. And he's alone.

He sighs.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's scary.

PATRICK

Yeah it is...what if I wound up like my Dad. Jesus -- what if I wound up like my Mom??

JOE
She's a strange bird.

PATRICK
I had a dream like maybe two days ago that she took a Polaroid of me on the toilet, and then ate it before it could develop.

JOE
Oof. I feel like that's dense with meaning.

PATRICK
Yeah.

Patrick chugs a purple quarter drink.

JOE
I had a dream that I could talk to reef sharks.

PATRICK
What did the sharks say?

JOE
They didn't speak so much as rap.

Joe drinks. Patrick gazes across the lunchroom.

PATRICK
(sentimental)
I'll miss this stuff a little.

JOE
Yeah, a little.

Joe's POV:

A table across the room. A bunch of girls in matching T-shirts, part of the Spring Musical Committee. He's focused on one glittered face, laughing with her friends: Kelly.

EXT. PATRICK'S STREET - NIGHT

To establish.

INT. PATRICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Patrick sits awake on his bed. On edge.

Then, his BEEPER goes off. He picks up a cordless phone.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Joe's beeper goes off. He silences it, then moves to his closet. He takes out two overstuffed DUFFEL BAGS.

INT. PATRICK'S PARENTS' ROOM - NIGHT

Patrick watches his folks sleep. The house feels like a warm, safe place right now -- now that he's leaving.

He kisses his hand, and touches the door, but remains composed. His parents don't stir.

INT. JOE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank sleeps on the sofa, lit by blue light from the TV.

Joe observes with narrow eyes.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - NIGHT

Joe rides, weighed down by duffels and equipment. Patrick rides on the pegs, holding his own luggage.

WIDE. They take in the 'burbs for a final time. The streets are dimly lit, desolate.

EXT. MOUTH OF THE WOODS - NIGHT

Joe walks his bike into the woods, but Patrick stares back in the direction they came, hesitant.

JOE
You coming?

PATRICK
Yeah...This is happening, huh?

JOE
Yeah. It is.

Patrick tries to articulate things.

PATRICK
I've never done anything like this
in my entire life, man.

JOE

(walks to his side)

Sometimes when I'm about to make a big decision, I say "I will go through with this unless God gives me a very definite omen within the next 30 seconds." We could do that.

PATRICK

Okay. Let's do that.

They stand silent for the agreed interval, each in his own thoughts. Then, a clap of THUNDER. Patrick furrows a brow.

JOE

Okay, time. Let's go.

PATRICK

That's thunder, Joe.

JOE

Yes, that's thunder.

(points at shit)

That's a tree, that's a rock. It's nature. It's not an omen.

He walks into the woods.

JOE (CONT'D)

C'mon.

Patrick steels himself.

PATRICK

Jesus. This is happening.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

TORRENTIAL RAIN. The boys are soaked. The trees overhead can only do so much.

They negotiate the path in silence. Patrick is not smiling.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

They walk in. Snippets of the house are revealed in FLASHLIGHT BEAMS. A piece of junky furniture...a portion of makeshift wall...the water-slide in the room's center...

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, "UPSTAIRS" - NIGHT

Darkness. Joe throws Patrick his used towel, then unrolls a sleeping bag.

PATRICK
(drying off)
Where's Biaggio?

JOE
I haven't heard from him in 3 days.
But every instinct in my body tells
me he's already up here.

PATRICK
Get the fuck out of here. Gimme
the flashlight.

JOE
You're not gonna like the outcome
of this.

Patrick shines the flashlight around the room.

JOE (CONT'D)
I feel like he'd be right next to
you.

Patrick turns the beam to his immediate left and, sure
enough, Biaggio stares back at him, a ghastly figure.

Patrick SCREAMS. Soundbridge to:

EXT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

The MORNING BELL, over an establishing shot.

INT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Series of shots in various classrooms:

A) Spanish class. The teacher reads from an attendance book.

SPANISH TEACHER
Lacertosa? (check) Laffin? (check)
McGuire?

Nothing. We see an empty seat.

SPANISH TEACHER (CONT'D)
McGuire?

B) History class.

HISTORY TEACHER
Toy? Joe Toy?

C) English.

ENGLISH TEACHER
Anyone hear from Joseph Toy?

D) Concert Band.

BAND TEACHER
Patrick McGuire here? McGuire?

The teacher looks to an empty seat in the trombone section.

BAND TEACHER (CONT'D)
Think you can handle first trombone
today?

A young trombonist slides into Patrick's chair.

TROMBONIST
I think so, John.

BAND TEACHER
Once again people, we do not call
teachers by their first names.

E) Health class.

HEALTH TEACHER
Toy?

H) Gym.

GYM TEACHER
McGuire? (silence) Okay...Miller?
(check) Moscato?

Cut to Moscato raising his hand. He does have a weak chin.

A phone RINGS...

INT. MCGUIRE HOUSE, BEDROOM -- DAY

A hand shoots into frame; Mrs. McGuire's.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Hello?

AUTOMATED VOICE

Hello, parent of (human voice) --
 "Patrick McGuire" -- this is
 Tottenville High School calling to
 inform that your child was absent
 from one or more scheduled classes,
 and will require a written note --

She hangs up. Reveal her laying in bed. It seems as though she's been there a bit.

The door opens. Mr. McGuire peeks in.

MRS. MCGUIRE

It was just the school.

MR. MCGUIRE

Okay. If you want to come
 down...the police seem optimistic.

She nods and rolls over, despondent.

INT. MCGUIRE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Mr. McGuire at the table, sifting through photos of Patrick with a PLAIN CLOTHES detective. Behind them, CAPTAIN ARTY DAVIS (50s) looks around.

PLAIN CLOTHES

Wrestler, huh?

MR. MCGUIRE

Yes. A good one.

CAPT. DAVIS

(delicate)

Did you notice if Patrick had been
 running with any new friends? A
 different group than usual? Anyone
 give you a bad feeling?

MR. MCGUIRE

No. He had good friends. He was
 popular, people liked him...

He stares into space.

MR. MCGUIRE (CONT'D)

My wife would know more about that.
I don't know if she...it's just the
shock of it.

CAPT. DAVIS

Honestly, I see a lot of these, and
you guys are doing great. You're a
tough bunch.

Mr. McGuire tries to smile.

MR. MCGUIRE

Thank you...it's...

(pause)

He's our only son, is the thing.
He's our only child, so...you'll
get him back?

CAPT. DAVIS

We'll get him back.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frank, alone at the table. He rubs his finger around the
edge of his glass of scotch, making a whistling sound.

LISA'S VOICE

Daddy?

Frank moves to the doorway; Lisa and Colin walk through the
storm door with some bags packed. She hugs him.

FRANK

Shhh. It's okay. I'm sure he's
fine.

Colin awkwardly rubs her back.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - LATER

Frank & Lisa search Joe's room, go through doors, check the
closets.

FRANK

We don't know much. The thing
is...(pause) Some things are
missing. Things Joe might have
planned to take. All his clothes.
The Monopoly. The spare from the
Avalon.

LISA
So...he ran away?

FRANK
It's still mostly guesswork, Li...
But yes, it looks that way.

Colin comes to the doorway.

COLIN
The Chinese food is here, Mr. Toy.
It's fifty-one dollars.

FRANK
(digging into pocket) Fifty-one
dollars? What did you order Lisa!?

LISA
Nothing. I got dumplings. I'm not
hungry.

COLIN
I got us a big order of shrimp with
lobster sauce. I figured it's
neutral.

FRANK
Neutral? Shrimp with lobster
sauce? I can't think of a more
marginal dish in any culture.

COLIN
I don't know. I thought it was
neutral. I thought we could all
enjoy it.

FRANK
Come on Colin, no one's gonna eat
that! Now there's gonna be a pint
of hot cum in my refrigerator for a
week. Use your head next time.

Colin takes the money and walks off.

LISA
Be nice to him, Dad. Please. He
wants to help.

FRANK
Colin's feelings are not a priority
right now. Sorry.

LISA
 I know...but you don't have to be
mean, Daddy You just...

Lisa assigns blame as gently as possible.

LISA (CONT'D)
 You don't have to always be so
 mean. You know?

FRANK
 Am I mean to you?

LISA
 No. But I'm like the only one,
 Dad.

Frank contemplates this.

EXT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, COURTYARD - DAY

A few students pause to acknowledge...

A MISSING CHILD poster. It's a collage of three pictures:
 Patrick in his wrestling gear; Patrick posing with his
 parents in front of the globe at EPCOT; Patrick's tasteful
 class photo.

Off an image of Patrick's INNOCENT FACE:

EXT. WOODS, WATERING HOLE - DAY

Patrick pulls his new, BEARDED face out of the fresh water.
 Reveal him sitting at the edge of a pond.

JOE'S VOICE
 Patrick!

He looks -- Joe and Biaggio stand on a high rock, holding a
 tire attached to a rope. Joe has also grown wispy facial
 hair. Biaggio wears a swimming cap and underwear.

Joe swings. He lets go at the top of his arc and cannonballs
 into the water. As he emerges:

PATRICK
 Ehhh...six.

JOE
 (genuine disappointment)
 Six...Godammit.

Joe swings the tire back up to Biaggio.

PATRICK

Why does he have a swimming cap,
but no bathing suit?

Biaggio clutches the tire and surveys the stream, nervous.

JOE

(cups hands to mouth)
Biaggio, just let go when you get
to the top! It's not even deep!

PATRICK

Look at this. He's terrified.

JOE

I know. He once told me he's only
afraid of two things -- drowning,
werewolves, very old music, and
homeless women who can run or jump.

PATRICK

That's four things.

JOE

I'm telling you exactly what he
told me.

Biaggio swings, all four limbs wrapped around the tire. At
the top of his swing, he does nothing, paralyzed with fear.
He swings back and forth, losing momentum.

PATRICK

What are you, a cat? Let go!

JOE

We're here Biaggio! We won't let
the river claim you!

Biaggio drops his legs. They enter the water at the knee.
His hands are still fused to the tire. He hangs there.

JOE (CONT'D)

Okay...we're sort of in no man's
land here, Biaggio! Just make a
decision! We want to use the tire!

PATRICK

Just untie it.

JOE
Did you hear that, Biaggio? I'm
giving you one more chance to do
this on your terms!

Biaggio lets go and falls awkwardly into the stream.

PATRICK
Six.

JOE
Bullshit!

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, UPSTAIRS - LATER

Patrick stands in front of a beat-up mirror, shirtless...

His hives are gone.

He breathes deep, flexes, grins. He feels like himself.
Then, ending his moment of serenity:

JOE
Yo. We have a food situation.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Joe gets downstairs via the WATER SLIDE from earlier. As he
walks through the house, we reveal it in its entirety:

The water slide leads up to a "loft" area (just a huge ledge)
where the guys sleep. Downstairs, we recognize some garbage
furniture from earlier scenes -- a sofa, a lamp. There's now
a dining room: an AIR HOCKEY TABLE.

As Patrick and Joe approach this corner, Biaggio leans over
the table counting grains of rice.

JOE
(to Patrick) No more rice. And no
more pasta. It's time.

Joe starts rummaging through a pile of supplies, emerging
with a souvenir SWORD.

JOE (CONT'D)
What kind of game are we dealing
with?

PATRICK
Deer, pheasant, rabbit. You might
run into a lynx.

JOE
Any bison? Cougar? Anything real?

PATRICK
You're gonna kill a buffalo with a
sword you got from a gift shop in
Colonial Williamsburg?

JOE
It's not the size of the blade, but
the will of the swordsman.

PATRICK
(rolls eyes)
You gotta stop with that elf shit,
man.

Joe re-sheathes his weapon.

JOE
Okay. Biaggio and I will hunt.
You gather.

PATRICK
Then...here, take these.

Patrick hands Joe and Biaggio small cardboard MASKS with
crude FACES drawn on them in magic marker.

Patrick wears his, but on the BACK OF HIS HEAD.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
(pointing to it)
It's so animals don't pounce on you
from behind.

JOE
(regarding masks)
This one's supposed to be me?

PATRICK
Whatever man. I wasn't going for
accuracy.

Joe puts his on.

JOE

So an animal will see this and think I'm looking at him, and walking backwards, and that all my joints are backwards.

PATRICK

It works, Joe. Nigerian bushmen have been doing it for centuries.

JOE

Right, Nigerian bushmen. And we all know how great they turned out.

PATRICK

What does that mean?

Joe turns around with his mask on. Then he sticks his hand out behind him, toward Patrick, as if offering a handshake.

JOE

Hey, nice to meet you. I'm Joe.

PATRICK

Fuck yourself.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Wide shot, to establish.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Patrick holds open a field guide, checking the bunch of red berries before him against an illustration.

He plucks them, bites into one for confirmation...then tosses the bunch into a bucket with other berries, roots, herbs.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Joe carries his sword, Biaggio his machete. They look like little murderers.

JOE

I want to thank you for helping us, Biaggio. A lot of people would have just stayed in the comfort of their homes.

BIAGGIO

This is life experience. Both my grandfathers went to war. My father lived among the bees. This is what I'll have done.

JOE

Exactly! It's our rite of passage, goddamit.

(deep, satisfied breath)

I mean have you ever felt this at one with the natural world, with your instincts? This masculine?

BIAGGIO

I don't know. I don't really see myself as "having a gender."

(then)

Is that bad?

JOE

I mean, it's not great.

The boys duck through a thick, gnarly patch of brush...

To find CIVILIZATION. The woods have ended. They stare at a strip mall across the street. A BOSTON MARKET looms, the crown jewel of the shopping center.

BIAGGIO

(staring)

Is it real?

JOE

Yes, it is...

(then)

Let's go. We're moving on.

Biaggio is still entranced.

BIAGGIO

The 1/4 dark is very good, though.

JOE

Sure it is. You don't think I know that? It falls off the goddam bone. But Boston Market, that's not roughing it, that's not living by our wits. That's not the man's code, the code of the forest.

BIAGGIO

One day, maybe.

JOE
 Yes, sure, one day. C'mon man,
 this was a test, and we passed.

JOE'S POV: a B.M. employee throws garbage in a side dumpster.

Close on Joe as he gets an idea.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Hmm...hold my weapon, Biaggio...

Joe darts across the street. A moving car WIPES THE FRAME:

EXT. WOODS - LATER

A nearly-clean chicken skeleton falls to the ground.

JOE'S VOICE
 Cut it right here.

Reveal Joe and Biaggio rigging a TRAP:

The chicken is tied to a stick, which props up an overturned
 WHEELBARROW. In theory, it should work.

JOE
 Look at this bait, man.

Biaggio looks at the chicken carcass. Flies buzz around it.

BIAGGIO
 Are there bears in these woods?

JOE
 I hope to God there are. A bear
 would feed us for a month...

Joe looks at the wheelbarrow.

JOE (CONT'D)
 He'd be too big for the trap...but
 I think we could at least
 disillusion him. A bear who
 doesn't believe in anything is
 easier to bring down.

BIAGGIO
 Have you ever eaten a bear steak?

JOE
 (fiddling with the trap)
 No. You?

BIAGGIO
Once. At my sister's communion.

Joe flicks the line.

JOE
Well it's just a waiting game now,
my friend.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Patrick shakes the shit out of an APPLE TREE. Granny smiths
rain down. He bends to pick one up, and something catches
his eye...

He grabs a twig and pokes at the ground, finally lifting a
very long, very appalling

SNAKESKIN

He regards it with fear and revulsion. Then chucks it into
the trees.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe and Biaggio play RUMMY, cards fanned out before them.

BIAGGIO
Sometimes I wonder, we bury fruit
seeds, and new fruit grows. We
bury what is left, and it's reborn.

JOE
Right.

BIAGGIO
Could that not work with people?
Bury the remains, the vital organs,
and a new one might grow?

JOE
I don't think it's a bad theory,
but we've been burying the dead for
thousands of years, and that has
never happened.

BIAGGIO
Hm; valid point.
(then)
Rummy.

JOE
 (inspecting)
 You only have five cards here.

Sudden SOUNDS OF A STRUGGLE from the woods behind them. The trap is sprung.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Shit! Yes! Come on!

EXT. WOODS, TRAP - CONTINUOUS

We hear awful SCRATCHING and SQUEALING from inside. They approach, sick with fear.

JOE
 (sword at the ready)
 Okay, turn the thing.

BIAGGIO
 Turn the thing...

JOE
 Yeah just turn the wheelbarrow.
 Just, you know..flip it, and I, uh,
 will take its life.

BIAGGIO
 Okay.
 (moves to wheelbarrow)
 Strike at the neck. Don't
 compromise the meat.

JOE
 I know...I know...

Biaggio puts his hands on the wheelbarrow.

BIAGGIO
 You want this on your hands?

JOE
 What choice do we have?! We need
 to eat goddammit...

BIAGGIO
 It may plead. Don't listen. Be
 cold, clinical with the blade.

JOE
 Okay, okay.

BIAGGIO

It may try to bargain. This is natural. You must--

JOE

Turn the fucking thing over!

He does: A huge pink and white POSSUM, likely rabid, hisses at Joe. The boys SCREAM.

INSERT: Wide above the forest. Their screams echo.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - EVENING

Three whole roasted chickens sizzle on a SPIT, pulled over a crackling fire.

PATRICK

I guess I'm surprised you found live chicken in these woods.

JOE

Why should that be surprising? Chicken outnumber people in this world. You're an educated guy, I don't need to tell you that.

PATRICK

Yeah, I just had never seen one in Staten Island, New York before.

JOE

Well that's crazy. There was a time when you hadn't seen me yet, right? Did that mean I didn't exist?

PATRICK

I don't even know what the fuck we're talking about any more.

JOE

It doesn't matter. Biaggio, your creamed spinach is to die for.

Biaggio nods.

PATRICK

You guys should know I found a copperhead skin by the creek. It definitely belonged to a mature adult. In the event--

JOE

C'mon man. We're having a nice meal.

PATRICK

This is important Joe!

JOE

There's always something with you. Some doom and gloom.

PATRICK

It's not doom and gloom, Joe, it's the reality of living in the goddam forest, which was your idea to begin with.

BIAGGIO

The thing...it has venom?

PATRICK

Yes. Listen --

(to both)

If you see it, stay calm. They respond to fear.

BIAGGIO

I read once that animals see fear as a color.

JOE

I thought you couldn't read?

BIAGGIO

I can read. I can't cry.

EXT. WOODS, SCENIC OVERLOOK - SUNDOWN

Joe and Patrick sit on rocks, looking out.

JOE

Doesn't suck, does it.

PATRICK

No. No it doesn't.

Reverse to their POV: Trees. Stars. Peaceful. (We might remember this view from the earlier montage)

Joe flips his BACKPACK around and unzips it.

JOE
I was saving these...

He removes a SIX PACK.

JOE (CONT'D)
For the right moment.

PATRICK
(happily accepting)
No shit.

JOE
Yes shit.

They clank bottles and drink. Their first beer together.

JOE (CONT'D)
Ah...Do you feel it?

PATRICK
Feel what.

JOE
We're doing it, man. We have
shelter, water, the means to put
food on the table. We're totally
self-reliant. We just grew up.
(then)
We're men now. Men.

PATRICK
Just now? It just happened?

JOE
It happened man. Cheers.

Joe takes another pull. Patrick shakes his head, bemused.

JOE (CONT'D)
Now all we need is the Ham.

PATRICK
What's the 'ham?'

JOE
The Ham. You know, the Ham -- the
pussy.

PATRICK
No, I don't know "the ham, the
pussy." Where the fuck did you get
that from?

JOE
It's in the culture.

PATRICK
We're in the same culture. I've never heard that.

JOE
The Ham! We takin' a ride in the HAMBulance, to HAMsterdam! Uh!

PATRICK
Are you done?

JOE
I am.
(swig)
I'm just saying, if something were missing from this, that would be it.
(then)
A woman's touch.

He drinks, suddenly distant. We know who he's thinking about...

He hears a squeak, and notices a SQUIRREL peering at him. He reaches into his coat and tosses it a NUT, or some tasty morsel. It grabs the nut and takes off.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

The squirrel runs with its prize, over rocks and roots. It pauses at the base of a tree and begins to nibble.

Suddenly, we hear HISSING, and the rustling of leaves. It freezes...and turns to look.

EXT. AFFLUENT LONG ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A half-million dollar home. Chrysler New Yorker in the driveway. Basketball hoop out front.

Frank stares at it, chewing gum nervously. He's shaven, pressed, more put together than we've ever seen.

He takes a deep breath, and goes halfway up the walk...then doubles back toward his car.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He starts the engine. Then kills it.

FRANK
(to himself)
Fuck you! Pussy.

EXT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

He rings the bell. Waits.

An attractive, middle-aged brunette answers. She's taken aback to see Frank there.

FRANK
Clarissa.

INT. CLARISSA'S KITCHEN - DAY

They sit over coffee. Opposite sides of the table.

CLARISSA
Had you guys been fighting?

FRANK
He called 911 over a Monopoly game.

CLARISSA
See, I don't like that. That's a regression.

Twin 19 year-olds, JOSH and JAKE, enter and raid the fridge.

JOSH
Ma, Denise is coming over later.

CLARISSA
Fine. Just clean the basement.

Without provocation, Jake backhands his brother in the crotch. Josh doubles over, mostly in shock.

JAKE
Dick'd ya!

JOSH
Oh! Dick'd ya!

Josh chases Jake into the living room. Clarissa sighs.

FRANK

I guess they don't know.

CLARISSA

No, they know.

(then)

So, what? The police came?

FRANK

Yeah, but it doesn't...I mean, all we do is fight, Clarissa.

CLARISSA

Boys and their fathers clash, Frank. It's normal.

(then)

You didn't get along with your father for decades, right? And now you love and respect him dearly.

FRANK

Yeah, because he's dead.

(takes a sip)

Joe wasn't always like this. This angry, this moody.

Frank stirs his drink. Uncomfortable silence.

CLARISSA

If you try to put this on me, the conversation is over.

FRANK

I'm not putting anything on you. I'm just saying. He's difficult.

CLARISSA

Every teenager is moody.

FRANK

Yeah. One time we had a fight over his grades. He told me my mother "sucked cocks in hell."

CLARISSA

He did not say that.

FRANK

Verbatim.

CLARISSA

Hm...it's from The Exorcist though. It's not his original thought.

FRANK

I think we can agree it's not the number one thing to say about your grandmother.

Silence. She can't argue that.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna say something, because it has to be said. And you have to hear it.

(then)

I think if you came back, Joe would too. There it is.

Clarissa nods.

EXT. MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Frank stands facing the door, as it slams. He stands there for a beat.

EXT. TOTTEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

School's out. AARON waves goodbye to some friends, and breaks away. He walks alone down the a street behind the school bleachers.

The other side of the street is woods.

INT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe's POV: Aaron, through trees.

JOE

Psst!

No response.

JOE (CONT'D)

Psssst!

Aaron keeps walking, content in whatever he's thinking about.

Joe picks up a rock and chucks it without aiming. It hits Aaron just above the eye and ricochets out of frame.

Aaron moans and drops to one knee. He looks around, confused and in pain, putting up a desperate hand to ward off further attacks.

JOE (CONT'D)

Shit.

He checks the street -- empty. Then runs toward Aaron.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Aaron, staring at it, awed. Joe smiles, pleased.

AARON

No fucking way.

Patrick emerges from the house, big grin.

AARON (CONT'D)

Ha!

Aaron and Patrick exchange a huggy, slappy, greeting.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Aaron pokes and prods at the housewares, fascinated. Biaggio sits at a barrel, sorting berries by color. Patrick watches over his shoulder.

JOE

Make yourself at home, man. You thirsty? Hungry?

Joe reaches for the apple bowl, tosses one to Aaron.

AARON

Joe...how did you do this? How long did it take?

JOE

About ten days. It's a pretty simple structure. The roof is plywood, it just rests there...you could flap it open if you wanted to...I handled schematics...Patrick bound most of the walls together...

Joe looks around. A moment of pride for the accomplishment.

JOE (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's a start. Eventually we'll add to it. We're just still getting used to the family dynamic. But we have ideas for the place. We've talked about a garden.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

I know Biaggio desperately wants a dog.

BIAGGIO

It's all I dream about.

JOE

Yes, but why do you want a dog?

Biaggio looks down.

JOE (CONT'D)

See, he can't answer that. That's what troubles us.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Aaron follows Joe down a path.

JOE

I need a ride to Thirsty Thursdays tonight. Can you take me?

AARON

My brother's driving. But yeah.

JOE

Your brother? I thought he was like nineteen.

AARON

He was when you met him, yes.

JOE

He won't make me out, will he?

AARON

Please. My brother's a fucking idiot. He couldn't find his asshole with his finger.

(then)

Not that he'd want to. Not that anyone would.

JOE

Whatever. I'll be there. I have to talk to Kelly.

AARON

Shit man -- she came up to me last week asking if I had heard anything about you guys. It honestly looked like she was crying.

(MORE)

AARON (CONT'D)

Like she had just finished. She was flush about the cheeks. And her very tasteful mascara was a little runny.

Joe processes the information. This shit is on.

JOE

I'll be outside the Greenville Boston Market. Do not forget.

INT. AARON'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Aaron sits at dinner with his brother ERIC, 23, a young man with no sideburns.

Aaron's MOM is at the stove.

AARON

Eric, can you give one of my friends a ride to Wolf's?

ERIC

If he got gas money.
(to their mother)
Where's meat?

AARON'S MOM

This is beef stew. It's a specific type of meat. What have I said about speaking in generalities?

ERIC

Fine.
(looking around)
When's man coming home?

AARON'S MOM

Your father is in Atlantic City. He is also a very specific type of man, he is your Fa-Ther.

Aaron's mom brings over a cauldron of beef stew.

AARON'S MOM (CONT'D)

Now this is piping, piping hot, alright? Don't touch it for a good ten minutes.

Eric immediately ladles a heaping portion into his plate.

AARON'S MOM (CONT'D)
 I'm not kidding, Eric. I know
 you're hungry, but look at it.
 It's still boiling.

Eric takes a bite and instantly spits it back into his plate with a wet THUD. He exhales, and then lifts the food to his mouth again.

AARON'S MOM (CONT'D)
 Fine. Burn your mouth for Easter.

EXT. BOSTON MARKET - NIGHT

Joe wears a hooded sweatshirt, a hat, shades. He paces, fidgets. Like a wanted man.

Then, the sound of speakers rattling with too much bass. Joe turns to see an ancient two-door CAMARO pull into the parking lot. This is Eric's princess.

INT. CAMARO - NIGHT

Joe and Aaron in back, Eric and some guido friend up front. Obnoxious TECHNO music plays. Deafening.

EXT. WOLFE'S POND PARK - NIGHT

They walk down a path, walled in by tall grass. Distant sounds of a party, and faint orange firelight. Joe and Aaron lag behind the older guys.

AARON
 What if someone recognizes you?

JOE
 If anyone makes eye contact with
 me, I'm gone. If they ask you, deny
 everything.

EXT. WOLFE'S POND PARK, BEACH - NIGHT

They're at "Thirsty Thursdays," a raging, lively keg. Music, a bonfire, a huge keg line, teenagers grinding up on each other. Fun.

Joe walks along the outer edge of the general party area, keeping his head low, but taking it in. Shit, if his life had been anything like this...

ANGLE - KEG

Kelly's goth pal VICKI comes down from a keg-stand. The guys holding her legs turn out to be Eric and his friend.

Vicki looks at Eric, who smiles like a creep.

VICKI

Jesus.

ANGLE - JOE

Joe hides behind someone's pickup, scanning the scene...still no sign of Kelly.

Suddenly he hears a SCREAM from behind him:

And there she is, by the water. She's surrounded by dudes with backwards hats. One of the guys has her around the waist. They toss her, screaming, into the bay. Laughter. She emerges, yelling and splashing at them.

Tight on Joe.

Suddenly, two hands land on Joe's shoulders and whip him around. A BLONDE KID is staring him in the face.

BLONDE KID

Dude! Where you been??

He pulls the hood down, revealing Joe's face. Joe's eyes dart around, but he's trying to keep it cool.

BLONDE KID (CONT'D)

Oh, you're not Doug. Sorry bro.

JOE

Uh, it's okay. All good.

The kid stumbles away, wasted.

BLONDE KID

Yeah man. My fault. Nice face though...

Joe turns to look at himself in the car window, and winces. Unkempt, wispy beard. General filthiness.

JOE

Shit.

A hand reaches for the car door he's standing in front of. He turns to see a dripping-wet Kelly.

KELLY

Excuse me.

(eyes widen, realizing)

OhmyGod!!

Joe covers her mouth.

EXT. WOLFE'S POND PARK, PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Joe and Kelly alone, on a SEESAW. We hear party sounds in the distance, and lapping waves.

KELLY

But why not like, run away to California?

JOE

This was the only way to start fresh on our own terms. We answer to no one. We don't need a larger social structure to be happy.

KELLY

(laughing)

Oh my God! You went insane!

JOE

Or we're the only sane ones.

KELLY

Well either way. I wouldn't have the guts to do it.

Joe beams at the compliment. Kelly takes a drink from her big red solo cup.

KELLY (CONT'D)

So, um...can I see it?

JOE

I mean, that's funny. The reason I'm out here, risking the entire enterprise, was to invite you over for dinner. If you want.

KELLY

Obviously "I want." How do I get there? Do I have to be blindfolded?

JOE

I'm not sure yet. And it is of absolute vital importance that you not tell anyone, not bring anyone, not breathe a word of this conversation or any ensuing events, to anyone, no best friends, no family. No one.

KELLY

Okay. Can I bring Vicki?

JOE

(beat)

Fine. Just Vicki.

KELLY

Oh my God. So much fun. Does Patrick have a big crazy beard too?

JOE

Yeah, a little more serious than this one. I have thin hair. A gift and a curse.

KELLY

Facial hair is very sexy. You just gotta, you know, groom it.

JOE

Right, like Paul.

She makes a face.

JOE (CONT'D)

What?

KELLY

I guess you wouldn't have heard... Paul and I broke up.

JOE

No, I didn't get wind of it. It's not big news among the badgers.

(then)

I'm sorry, though. Are you okay?

KELLY

(bemused)

Yes, I'm very okay. Thank you.

A silhouetted figure calls to them, backlit by headlights.

KID'S VOICE
Yo Kel! We're leaving!

KELLY
Shit. Okay. When am I coming?

JOE
Saturday.

KID'S VOICE
(walking toward them)
Who is that?!

JOE
(panic) I'm out of here.

KELLY
Go! I'll see you Saturday.

JOE
Bring your appetite. And some
insect repellent.
(running off)
Oh, hey -- yellow is your favorite
color, right?

KELLY
Yes...why?

But he's gone.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - MORNING

Patrick walks outside, groggy.

PATRICK
Joe?

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick brushes his teeth with boiled water from the pot,
over the fire. He looks up, and notices Biaggio, about
twenty yards away, clinging to a tree, perfectly still.

He stares at Patrick. He is covered with mud, leaves and
branches, trying to be camouflaged.

PATRICK
Biaggio.

No response. Patrick moves toward him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Yo. I see you man.

He's now a foot from Biaggio's face. Biaggio won't break.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Hello! I fucking see you! I'm
looking in your eyes!

Biaggio stares back unfazed, at one with the tree.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Dickhead!

Fed up, he pushes Biaggio off the tree..

BIAGGIO
Oh, hey. What's up?

PATRICK
(rolls eyes)
Yeah, "hey." Where's Joe?

PREPARATION MONTAGE:

Joe picks yellow flowers in a vast meadow.

Joe, half submerged in a stream, trims his facial hair.

Joe lays out clothing options. There are three shorts-and-a-T-shirt combinations. All are stained and grimy.

"Upstairs," Joe unrolls a blanket, revealing small safe deposit box. He unlocks it and removes a wad of PETTY CASH.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Joe, and his new MOUSTACHE, sets the table with hot Boston Market Chicken.

PATRICK'S VOICE
(from doorway)
Such hypocrisy.

JOE
What? This is a special occasion.

PATRICK

Bullshit man. How much chicken have you bought since we got here??

JOE

Huh? I mean, maybe one or two along the way. Biaggio and I have been pretty goddam dangerous out there.

PATRICK

(sigh)

I can live with the chicken being store-bought, but I'm disappointed in the loaded potato. I thought that was really Biaggio's recipe.

JOE

That actually really is. I have no idea where he's getting chives.

Patrick looks at Joe's moustache.

PATRICK

And I'd lose that thing as well.

JOE

What? (realizing) Nope. This is who I am now.

PATRICK

You look fucking weird, man. You look like one of those kids who works in the student Shop Rite.

JOE

You don't know what you're talking about. The moustache is the real man's choice. It's a companion.

PATRICK

It's not a real moustache. It's all stringy and pervy.

JOE

Give it some time.

PATRICK

(staring at it)

You look like that kid Mike Mancuso.

JOE
Mancuso? He's a good guy.

PATRICK
He brought a flare gun to school in
January. Remember that?

JOE
What do you want me to tell you?
January's tough on some people.

PATRICK
Seriously, shave the moustache.

JOE
No.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - EVENING

Joe staring into the fire. The wavy heat lines gliss to:

EXT. WOODS, OVERLOOK - FANTASY

Crane down from an immaculate sunset. Joe and Kelly watch,
wearing huge, flowing, Arthurian robes. Flower pedals fall
from the sky. A land of kings and wizards.

JOE
How do you like it here?

KELLY
This is the happiest I've ever
been, Joe. But...
(looks at him)
Are we too young to know what love
is?

JOE
I know. I'm afraid of that too.
But we can be afraid together.

He leans in to kiss her, when:

PAUL'S VOICE
Kelly.

They turn - Paul waits by edge of the trees. He looks
haggard, crazed.

PAUL
Time to come home.

KELLY

I am home.

PAUL

Cut the shit, babe! You're fifteen,
I'm seventeen. Time to settle down.

KELLY

Not with you, Ju'tuun. Never with
you.

She clutches Joe's arm.

PAUL

Don't tell me. This? This...boy??

KELLY

He's more man than you'll ever be.
End this, Joe.

JOE

"End this"...are you sure you know
what you're asking?

She nods.

Then, Paul unsheathes two large, wrought-iron hookswords and CHARGES. In one fluid motion, Joe jumpkicks Kelly out of the way, and slices a ROPE running along the floor. Joe then rolls, as we see a huge LOG, hanging by a thick rope, swing out from the trees behind them.

Paul turns -- it hits him in the chest, obliterating him over the cliff. He bounces a few times along the rocky face, and then slides to a halt, dead.

Joe and Kelly peer down at him. She begins to cry gently.

JOE (CONT'D)

You would weep for him?

KELLY

Only for youth...only for youth.

Some weasels approach the corpse and begin to pick at it.

JOE

The animals will take his
eyes...denying his entry into
Paradise...

He kisses her forehead, then stares across the treetops, reflecting on the fragile nature of life.

PATRICK'S VOICE

Joe!

As Joe turns around:

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - REALITY

Joe snaps out of it, turning to face Patrick.

PATRICK

We have company.

Aaron, Vicki and Kelly emerge from the trail behind him.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - LATER

Kelly in the doorway, seeing everything for the first time.

KELLY

Are you kidding me right now?

From Kelly's POV: The slide, the hockey table, the loft. Joe waits nervously for her judgment. Then:

KELLY (CONT'D)

This is great, Joe!

On Joe's face. Life is good.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, DINNER TABLE - EVENING

A Boston Market feast. The sunflowers Joe picked sit in the center of the table.

VICKI

I like your beard, Patrick! You look like a werewolf.

BIAGGIO

(quick, to Vicki)
Watch your mouth.

AARON

What did you guys do with this chicken? Garlic? Oil? Rosemary?

JOE

Biaggio?

BIAGGIO
Thyme. Garlic and oil. Lotta
pepper.

Patrick rolls his eyes.

AARON
It melts. You don't need a knife.

KELLY
What do you guys eat most of the
time? This?

PATRICK
Yeah. There are a lot of chicken
in these woods, apparently.

JOE
Patrick takes care of berries,
grains, herbs.

AARON
Ha. You're like an Australopithecus
woman.

PATRICK
Sure.

JOE
I handle meats, proteins. I usually
do the hunting.

PATRICK
(quiet)
And the shopping.

Joe glares at him. Patrick smiles, mouth full, loving it.

VICKI
What do you do, Biaggio?

JOE
Biaggio's a renaissance man. He
belongs out here. And such quick
hands. He can snatch trout right
out of the creek.

AARON
Bullshit.

PATRICK
It's true man. I've seen it.

Biaggio slides something across the table to Aaron: a wallet. Aaron checks the inside; it's his.

AARON

Did you take anything out?

PATRICK

He doesn't want your money. He does it for sport.

Joe notices Kelly eyeing the flowers. Good. She points at them.

KELLY

Aaron, can you pass me the corn?

Aaron complies, handing them to her over the flowers. Joe registers the slightest disappointment.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Joe and Kelly. She points at a wall: half a rotten fish skeleton nailed above a calendar. Beneath that, an old wire-legged stool.

KELLY

What's this supposed to be?

JOE

This is the den.

KELLY

Ha. How stupid of me. Did you catch this fish yourself?

JOE

We found it whole, floating in the swamp. I bet Biaggio he couldn't eat the whole thing, and it turns out I was right.

KELLY

Sexy.

(points upstairs)

And that's the master bedroom?

JOE

Yeah. We need the slide because of shit-leg over there.

At the table, Patrick inspects the chicken skeleton for more meat.

Joe uses this lull to gather the necessary courage.

JOE (CONT'D)

There's also a pretty cool sort of lookout you might like. I dunno. It's sort of splendid. Did I just say "splendid"?

KELLY

(laughs)
Yes, you did. A lookout?

JOE

Yeah...we could go check it out of your want. It's like a fifteen minute hike, maybe.

KELLY

Oh, yeah I want to see everything. But look at this -- I can't leave Vicki alone with these jackals.

JOE

Oh, yeah, no. Of course not.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, 'LIVING ROOM' - NIGHT

Everyone sits on couch cushions that have been tossed on the floor. Beers are out. A joint makes the rounds. Some of them wear Patrick's ridiculous Nigerian bushmen MASKS.

They're watching Biaggio, who break dances in the middle of the room to "Breathe," by Prodigy. Biaggio is killing it -- he's actually a brilliant dancer. He too wears a mask.

Applause. Kelly passes the joint to Patrick.

PATRICK

I'm good.

KELLY

Gotcha.
(all smiles)
No weed, but you'll run away from home. Very contradictory.

PATRICK

Well, I go back twice a week to do laundry.

She smiles.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
 (holding arm up)
 I have a beer, see? I'm dangerous.

KELLY
 A full beer.

She clanks bottles with him and starts chugging. He does the same, catching Joe's glance across the floor. Patrick rolls his eyes, like "women." Joe fakes a smile.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

One side of the fire, Aaron and Vicki. On another, Patrick and Kelly. Joe and Biaggio are off to the side, speaking in private.

JOE
 Vicki is making eyes at you. You should go talk to her.

BIAGGIO
 No. I think she likes Aaron.

JOE
 I doubt it. Aaron's bizarre. I feel like he has no asshole or something. Like a Conehead.

BIAGGIO
 Well, there's no point in me talking to her anyway.

Biaggio looks down.

JOE
 What's wrong?

BIAGGIO
 (a struggle for him)
 Joe...I'm gay.

Joe is taken aback.

JOE
 Jesus...are you sure, man?

BIAGGIO
 Yes. My lungs fill up with fluid every time the seasons change.

Joe thinks about how to put this.

JOE
That's not being gay...I think that
means you have cystic fibrosis.

BIAGGIO
Really?
(relief)
Thank you.

JOE
Yeah.
(then)
Cystic fibrosis is no walk in the
park, Biaggio.

Biaggio waves him off, unworried.

BIAGGIO
What about her?

Joe's POV: Kelly and Patrick, firelit, talking and laughing.

JOE
She's doing what girls do. Acting
like she doesn't care. It's fine.
I can wait.

Biaggio leaves to talk to Vicki. Joe watches Kelly, who
never looks in his direction.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Downstairs, a tangle of limbs on the floor. And the couch.
In the dark, we can't really tell who's sleeping where.

UPSTAIRS:

Joe lies on his side, covers pulled high. The light is dim,
but we see he's awake.

Creaking from downstairs. The top of the ladder shakes. He
stares at it...hands, then arms come into view. Then the
face. It's Kelly.

She walks toward Joe. His eyes widen as...

She carefully steps over him, and shakes Patrick awake. We
don't leave Joe's face during this next exchange.

KELLY
(whisper) Hey...can you sleep?

PATRICK

Um, yes.

We hear her hushed laughter.

KELLY

Do you want to take a walk or something? I can't sleep.

PATRICK

(pause)

Sure.

We hear rustling; Patrick rises. Tight on Joe. Unblinking.

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Wide, expansive. Establish a new day.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, UPSTAIRS - MORNING

Beams of light slice through the loft. Joe lies in the same position, wearing the same expression.

We hear voices from downstairs.

VICKI'S VOICE

Is he still sleeping?

PATRICK'S VOICE

Joe!

Joe doesn't respond. The ladder rattles; Kelly peeks over the landing. Joe quickly shuts his eyes.

KELLY

(whisper) Joe. We're leaving.
Are you awake?

Joe keeps his eyes closed.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FRONT - MORNING

Kelly stands at the edge of the clearing, where the trail begins. Patrick hands her a girlish duffel bag.

PATRICK

So did Biaggio tell you about
"Omerta"?

KELLY

Omerta, yes. The Sicilian code of silence. Don't worry, we all swore. He made Aaron cut his palm.

PATRICK

Good. Well, you know the way so ...you can come back anytime.

KELLY

Thanks. So can you.

They both smile.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A car pulls into the driveway...illuminating FRANK on the stoop. Mr. McGuire gets out of the car.

MR. MCGUIRE

(emotionless)

Frank.

FRANK

Daniel. Listen, I --

Mr. McGuire punches Frank in the face. Frank goes down.

MR. MCGUIRE

Nice parenting, you cooze!

They roll around on the lawn, fighting. Mrs. McGuire comes to the door.

MRS. MCGUIRE

No no no! Nooooo--

Off her howls of protest:

INT. MCGUIRE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The McGuires sit on their couch, opposite Frank. Frank holds an ice pack to his eye. Mr. McGuire has a scratch mark on his cheek, and a fat lip.

FRANK

I'm not here to apologize for my son.

MRS. MCGUIRE

And you shouldn't. We don't even know - for sure - that they ran away. We do not know. All anyone can do is suspect things. Suspect suspect suspect.

MR. MCGUIRE

The police have presented a lot of evidence, honey. They're certain. We have to trust them.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Well what do the police know! With their pig Irish agenda. The Irish are the blacks of Europe! The blacks of Europe!

MR. MCGUIRE

(rubbing her back)

Shhhhh...come on. I'm Irish, sweetheart.

(then)

This has been hard on her, Frank.

FRANK

And I don't want to take up more of your time. Trust me. I know this is awkward. I just...

(pause)

I noticed you put some fliers of Patrick around school, around the neighborhood. I asked the police if I should do that with Joe, if that would be helpful, and they said it couldn't hurt. So I was just going to ask you if you had some pictures of Joseph. If there were shots of him and Patrick together, whatever. Some recent stuff. You'd be doing me a favor.

Silence for a moment.

MRS. MCGUIRE

Oh. I'll look. We have...hold on.

INT. MCGUIRE HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

She hands Frank about five pictures. Frank thumbs through them.

Joe and Patrick on a back porch, drying off, a pool in the background. At Medieval Times, wearing hats. Covered in shaving cream on Halloween.

Frank is transfixed by them.

FRANK

Thank you.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

The SUN. We're looking straight up at it.

Joe lies, squinting, in the same meadow where he picked the flowers for dinner.

Utter silence. He twirls a dandelion in his hand...

Then grinds the flowerhead between the meaty parts of his thumb and forefinger.

Joe sits up. We see that the meadow is expansive, beautiful. Tall yellow flowers stretch far into the distance. He shades his brow with his hand, looking around.

JOE

(shouts loudly)

Biaggio!?

Nothing. He shades his brow, looking for any sign of Biaggio.

Then, less than five feet from him, Biaggio emerges, making Joe jump.

JOE (CONT'D)

Jesus. Biaggio, when you're here, keep your head above the surface where I can see you.

(rises)

I'm going for a walk. Don't wait up.

BIAGGIO

You should try not to think about them so much.

Joe hangs his head.

JOE

I'm sorry I'm not more fun to be around right now.

BIAGGIO

Let's do something fun. You need it. Let's make fresh jam.

JOE

I don't want to make fresh jam, Biaggio. I just want to be alone. Sorry.

BIAGGIO

Or we could even do that other thing. The thing we talked about.

JOE

I'm not letting you give me a haircut.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Joe hikes uphill, holding a brown bottle. A ring of sweat around his collar. He pushes through brush, accessing...

EXT. WOODS, OVERLOOK - CONTINUOUS

But finds Patrick and Kelly there. Awkward. Joe fakes a friendly smile.

KELLY

Oh, hey Joe, I--

JOE

Whoops. No no no no no. Stay here. Do your thing. I'm gonna head back by the house.

PATRICK

What is that? Are you drunk?

JOE

(waving his hands)
Do your thing. Do your thing.
I'll see you kids later.

Joe leaves. Kelly gets up, but Patrick stops her.

PATRICK

I got it...

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe walks off, no longer smiling, his face red and flush.
From behind him:

PATRICK

Joe. Joe, wait up.

JOE

(smiling again)

What's up? Why'd you leave her?
Go back.

PATRICK

Joe...look man. Nothing's going
on, okay?

JOE

It's fine. You win. The best man
won.

PATRICK

What does that mean? She just
likes me. We get along.

JOE

Cool. I guess she likes everyone
though. So I mean, if she likes
everyone, she likes no one. You
know?

Patrick snatches the bottle from Joe.

PATRICK

What the fuck is this shit...
Arizona Iced Tea? You're sober,
Joe. Why are you acting like a
weird lawyer or something?

JOE

You're so young.

(then)

Listen, if you and your girlfriend
want, come over later for dinner
and a board game. Okay?

PATRICK

"Come over"?

JOE

If you want. Biaggio will be there
too. Good times, good times.

Joe stumbles off. Patrick stares after him, bewildered.

EXT. WOODS, SCENIC OVERLOOK - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick and Kelly sit, facing each other.

KELLY

We're not doing anything wrong.

PATRICK

I know.

Patrick looks down, futzing around with a twig, thinking.

KELLY

Do you want to...do something wrong?

PATRICK

Very much so.

He chucks the twig over the cliff. She approaches and sits in his lap. He puts his arms around her. He's easily twice her size. They look in the same direction, over the trees.

KELLY

So did it work?

PATRICK

Did what work?

KELLY

This. The house. Are you happier out here?

PATRICK

I mean...I'm just happy to be where my parents are not.

KELLY

They can't be that bad. I mean what did they do, anyway? Everyone at school thinks they were like molesting the shit out of you.

PATRICK

(laughs)

"Molesting the shit out of me"? No no. I would have stayed for that.

(she laughs)

No...it was nothing that sinister.

He thinks about it.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

They weren't bad people, they were just always...there. Down my throat, all day, every day. Constant and unyielding. I was getting hives. The top of my head would tingle. I thought I was gonna have a heart attack.

KELLY

So, they were down your throat... like everybody else's parents.

PATRICK

No, "not like everybody else's." I do not accept that.

KELLY

(laughing)
Everybody else's.

PATRICK

I'm fourteen. My mom offered to cut my nails six months ago.

She sits up, facing him.

KELLY

Every single morning, my parents set out three dollars and twenty-five cents. The three dollars is for lunch. The twenty five cents is so I can call and tell them I got to school okay.

(beat)

And I'm fifteen.

PATRICK

They watch me eat. Sometimes they don't say anything. They get pleasure out of it.

KELLY

They watch me sleep. Like serial killers. I wake up, and they'll be standing at the doorway.

Patrick laughs.

KELLY (CONT'D)

That's just parents, Patrick. All of them. You have to, like, humor them and get on with your day.

PATRICK

Maybe.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Colin packs luggage into his trunk while Frank and Lisa say goodbye. The car idles.

LISA

Call me with anything, Dad. Even if it's bad.

FRANK

I will. Go to school, get drunk with your friends, do whatever. And you can call me too, you know.

They hug. Colin turns and approaches for a goodbye. Frank waves coolly.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Take it easy, Colin.

Colin goes in for a handshake, but Frank has already waved. Colin quickly retracts, waving, but by then Frank has leaned in for a handshake. After a few missed signals, Frank sighs, grabs Colin's hand and shakes it.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Jesus. It never ends with you.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Frank waves as the car pulls away. The car hits the corner, and a group of teens, around Joe's age, ride bikes down the street. Whipping past Frank's house. Frank watches them go.

INT. JOE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

He clicks on the TV, the stereo. Noise fills the atmosphere.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Moonlit. An OWL leaves its perch, gliding over the trees. Bringing us to a wide shot of the HOUSE.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

A small thimble lands on CHANCE. Kelly reads a card. She and Patrick face Joe and Biaggio. They all sit on the floor.

KELLY

Ooh -- advance to Indiana. I'll buy that.

Biaggio smashes the floor in anger. He and Joe smoke CIGARS.

JOE

Easy does it. (to them) He likes the red.

BIAGGIO

The color of blood. The color of passion.

PATRICK

(to Kelly)

I'll give you B&O for both your utilities.

KELLY

Really? Okay.

PATRICK

And your Get Out of Jail Free card.

KELLY

Yeah...but if I need it, can I have it back?

PATRICK

Yes, you can have it back.

JOE

That's a smart trade.

PATRICK

Huh?

JOE

All four railroads for the utilities. Saavy.

KELLY

And a Get Out of Jail Free card.

Joe rolls his eyes.

PATRICK

Just play your game. Don't worry
about us.

Tense beat between Joe and Patrick. Kelly's eyes shift
between the friends.

KELLY

...Are you two alright?

JOE

(polite smile)
We're golden.
(rolls die)
Monkey.

Joe moves his piece to FREE PARKING. Biaggio claps.

KELLY

Good job, Joe.

PATRICK

He didn't do anything. It's dice.

JOE

I'm gonna put one more house on...

Joe stops and looks at the board.

JOE (CONT'D)

Actually...Biaggio, I will give you
Park Place and Baltic, and both my
railroads, for both your oranges.

Biaggio thinks about it.

BIAGGIO

I want a thousand dollars.

JOE

I will give you...a hundred fifty.

BIAGGIO

Yahtzee.

They trade. Patrick shakes his head. This is catastrophic.

JOE
 (to Patrick) Property manager, can
 I get hotels on orange?

PATRICK
 You just gave him the corner,
 dickhead. What's the matter with
 you?

Patrick puts the hotel on orange...then pauses. He looks at
 his own piece. He's in jail. A roll away from the oranges.

Patrick looks at Joe.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
 What's up, Joe?

JOE
 Nothing's up.
 (big smile)
 It's your roll, Tum Tum.

PATRICK
 Joe, if I roll a six, eight or nine
 it's gonna get very bad in here.

KELLY
 (looking at board)
 Oh...yeah.

JOE
 Well, I don't know what to tell
 you. Think of all the other
 numbers in the world.

Joe leans back and exhales cigar smoke. A woodland Buggy.

KELLY
 Well let's just take a minute and
 relax. It's a game, right?

JOE
 I'm relaxed. Biaggio?

Biaggio nods, gagging on cigar smoke.

PATRICK
 What's your fucking problem, man??

KELLY
 Just roll, Patrick. Don't let it
 get to you. You'll be fine.

A tense moment of silence. Patrick rolls.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Wide. A beat of nothing...then, the monopoly board flies out the window.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe retreats to the corner. Patrick is trying to move toward him, as Kelly tugs his arm.

JOE
I have a cigar! Be careful! This whole place is dry wood!

PATRICK
Give a fuck, man! What was that play!?

KELLY
Jesus! It. Is. A. Game!

JOE
What I did was completely legal!

Patrick takes a step at Joe, but Kelly steps between them.

KELLY
You guys, stop! Biaggio's having some sort of episode!

Biaggio sits rocking in the corner.

JOE
Leave him. He's rationalizing.

PATRICK
(to Joe)
That was the lowest, shittiest, dickhead move I've ever seen.

JOE
Eh -- second lowest.

Patrick pauses, marveling at Joe's pettiness.

PATRICK
Fuck. You. No one was trying to hurt you, man. It had nothing to do with you. Get over it!

JOE

I'm fucking over it! I don't care!
If the bitch wants you, she's not
good enough for me anyway.

PATRICK

What? Huh?? Who the fuck are you,
Mary J. Blige??

KELLY

Joe, I didn't--

JOE

No, Kelly! Everything was fine
until you got here. Jesus! You're
like a fucking cancer.

Kelly is completely stunned. Hurt. Her eyes well up.

KELLY

Okay. Um, I guess I'll see you
guys later...

And just like that...she leaves. Patrick watches.

PATRICK

(hurt, confused)
What are you doing, Joe?

JOE

Go ahead. Go be with her.

PATRICK

I don't want to go, Joe.

Joe pushes him. Patrick doesn't budge.

JOE

Get out of here! Go hang out with
Kelly and your goddam mother!

Joe keeps pushing him. Patrick stands his ground.

PATRICK

(heartbroken)
What...Why are you doing this, man?

Then, rage and frustration at their peak, Joe KICKS Patrick's
bad foot. This gets a reaction.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Ah! Fuck!

Patrick's face darkens. Joe comes to his senses - he just poked the bear.

JOE

Shit.

Patrick raises his hand to punch Joe, but resists the urge -- he'd kill him. He turns, channeling his rage toward the AIR HOCKEY TABLE. He chucks it, roaring, in Joe's general direction. It hits the WEST WALL and topples it. Leaves and dirt kick up, blowing into the house.

Joe watches, his chest heaving with anger, panic. Then he turns to Patrick. They look at each other.

Silence. There has never been such darkness between them.

Finally, inevitably...Patrick moves to the door. Joe watches him leave. It's over.

Biaggio approaches Joe, meek.

JOE (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone, please.

BIAGGIO

What do you mean?

JOE

I'm saying leave. Get out of the house.

BIAGGIO

Be straight with me, Joe. Tell me what's on your mind Joe.

JOE

I want to be alone, Biaggio. Get the fuck out.

BIAGGIO

Don't mince words with me, Joe. We've been through too much.

Joe looks him in the eye.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Biaggio walks out in a wide shot. His head hangs.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Joe sits on the sofa, back to the downed wall, taking in the ruin of his house.

EXT. WOODS, PATH - NIGHT

Various shots of Patrick, struggling on his bad foot, through brush and over huge, gangly roots. He uses a large branch as a WALKING STICK.

He sits on a rock, massaging his lower leg. Angry. Sad. It's all hitting him.

PATRICK
Fucking Joe. Asshole.

Suddenly, we hear a RUSTLE. Patrick looks up.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Hello?

Nothing.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Is someone there? Kelly?

A shadowy figure wipes across the foreground. We can't make it out.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Biaggio, you're smarter than this.

We hear a GRUNT. It's not Biaggio. Patrick rises, moving down the path as quickly as his bum foot will allow.

Then, a TUFT OF ORANGE HAIR catches his eye. What is happening?

Patrick limps faster now, panicking, out of breath. A snarling ROAR.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Oh fuck. God. Jesus.

FOOTSTEPS. Whatever it is, it's getting closer.

Patrick STUMBLES on a root, and falls against a tree. He turns, hiding behind it.

Patrick takes his sneaker off, jamming the walking stick inside it to simulate a leg. He sticks it out into the path as bait. Nothing bites.

Silence.

He turns to look at the path. It's empty. As he doubles back behind the tree:

We reveal a huge, green 2-D computer-animated monster -- it's BLANKA from "Street Fighter."

Standing on hind legs, it ROARS 3 TIMES in Patrick's face.

Patrick SCREAMS and, instinctively, SMASHES BLANKA IN THE FACE with his walking stick.

Upon impact, Blanka transforms into what he actually is -- a small tree with a shock of red-orange leaves at the top. Patrick has cracked it in half.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Huh.

He stares at it, his head cocked. He blinks. Just a tree. Nothing scary about it.

EXT. MOUTH OF THE WOODS - NIGHT

Kelly, walking on a dark street. Alone. Unhappy. We hear the clacking of her shoes.

Then from behind her:

PATRICK'S VOICE

Kelly!

She stops. He limps/runs toward her, catching up. They stand face to face for a beat.

KELLY

(blurting)

I didn't want any of this to happen
I don't want to come between
friends I've just liked you for
months and I figured if I came out
here and we got to--

He kisses her. She returns it.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Joe tries to lift the fallen wall. He's not strong enough. He gives up, looks at it, rubs his shoulder.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, TABLE - NIGHT

Joe picks bits of meat from a clean chicken skeleton.

INT. TOY KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Frank opens the refrigerator door. The only option: leftover shrimp with lobster sauce. Christ knows how old it is.

Quick cuts:

He picks the shrimp out and places them over some white rice.

Pops the bowl in the microwave.

Eats in front of the television.

INT. FRANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Frank, alone in a king-size bed, staring at the ceiling.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

Joe pulls the sheets up to his chin. He rolls over, trying to get comfortable. Sounds of the forest occasionally startle him.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Extreme wide. The house, a small and vulnerable structure in the huge, dark forest.

INT. PATRICK'S ROOM - MORNING

Patrick wakes up. In his own bed. He rolls over:

His parents are watching from the doorway. Disbelieving. Overcome.

MRS. MCGUIRE
We didn't want to wake you.

PATRICK
 You were watching me sleep.

He smiles to himself.

EXT. TOTTEVILLE, MAIN STREET - DAY

Tilt down from the sky to a festive SMALL TOWN PARADE.
 Families, teenagers, the elderly, all line the curb.
 Marching down the street: attractive women in red, white &
 blue leotards. Members of the local Chamber of Commerce inch
 behind the twirlers in a vintage Cadillac.

Banners read "HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY."

ANGLE:

A group of college-age kids, set back from the crowd, sit
 around an SUV, drinking, grilling.

An adorable, long-legged girl in sparkle-y FACE PAINT (21)
 makes eyes at...

A dangerous looking guy in a VISOR (26), standing way in the
 corner, with his back to the WOODS. He takes a sip of beer.

She looks away. Then looks back.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They make out against a tree. The parade isn't too far away,
 we can still hear faint music, applause.

VISOR
 (takes her hand)
 Come on.

FACE PAINT
 Where are we going?

He leads her deeper into the woods. They pause every few
 trees to kiss some more.

EXT. WOODS, WATERING HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Shoes, flip-flops come off. Unzipping; they are both
 stepping on their shorts, prying them off their ankles.

Breaking the kiss, he takes her shirt off, chucks it.

VISOR

Let's go.

FACE PAINT

Wait wait wait. Hold on.

She dips her toe in, testing. He grabs her, pulls her close, more kissing, kinda sloppy. As they pull apart, a shape emerges drifts on the water behind them trees behind them:

JOE. Asleep in the tire. Looking like shit, sun-blasted, filthy and too thin.

They see him.

FACE PAINT (CONT'D)

Ohmigod!

Joe wakes up.

JOE

(groggy)

Wha...? Pat--oh, Jesus--

Joe averts his eyes. The girl grabs her shirt, looking to cover up quickly.

VISOR

Kid! What the fuck man!

He and her dart off into the woods.

JOE

(to himself)

Sorry...

They're gone. Joe looks at the empty spot where they disappeared into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Joe wanders, tossing twigs around, aimless. Stumbling about, like a man who's been in the desert for days.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - DAY

Joe jams flint against a twig, into a pile of dry sticks and leaves. He's awkward, sometimes missing the twig entirely. It's not working.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

He opens the cooler. Scraps of odd, unidentifiable meat. Four berries in the bottom of a basket. A rotten apple.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Overcome by hunger, he closes his eyes and eats a bunch of PURPLE BERRIES.

EXT. WOODS, STREAM - LATER

Wide. Joe VOMITS some purple stuff into the stream.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Joe looks in the petty cash box. Just some change. Not even quarters.

JOE

Shit.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Frenetic camera. Joe searches the pockets of his shorts, pants, everything he brought with him. He pulls the pockets inside out. Two nickels in one. The rest are empty.

His expression grows dire.

In one of the pockets, we hear the crisp rustle of money -- he pulls something from a pocket, but it's not cash: it's an old Boston Market order, scribbled onto a torn sheet of paper. Shit. He chucks it aside.

He dumps out the contents of his DUFFEL BAG. Rummages through the pile. Beneath some junky housewares, he unexpectedly finds...

The library books. Still unopened. "WALDEN"... "105 OUTDOOR RECIPES"... "SO YOU WANT TO BUILD A CABIN"...

And most appropriately: "I'D RATHER BE HUNTING."

Joe regards it with curiosity...

CAPT. DAVIS'S VOICE
 From a statement given by Patrick
 McGuire...

INT. POLICE STATION, CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank sits across from CAPTAIN ARTY DAVIS (45). Frank leans against the wall behind them, watching. The Captain reads from a file.

CAPT. DAVIS
 "May 12th. We had a fight. Over something stupid, but...you know. It got out of hand. I came home; there was no point in going on if we were fighting.

(then)

The destination was Tallahassee. It was Joe's choice, he told me he liked the word, liked that it had three double-letters."

FRANK
 Hm. Seems arbitrary.

CAPT. DAVIS
 (nodding)
 Patrick continues: "I don't pretend to understand the guy. I just want him to be okay. Let me know what you find out."

Davis closes the file. Frank frowns.

CAPT. DAVIS (CONT'D)
 I know. But I looked in his eyes, Mr. Toy. He was telling the truth.

FRANK
 And the other kid?

INT. POLICE STATION, OBSERVATION ROOM - DAY

Frank and the Captain look through a two-way mirror: Biaggio stands next to a chair, across from two seated COPS.

CAPT. DAVIS
 Biaggio Verga. McGuire says he was with them the whole time.
 (MORE)

CAPT. DAVIS (CONT'D)
 I'm afraid he's given us nothing so far...he has a contempt for the law I've never seen in a minor.

The captain presses a speaker button on a console. We hear the conversation in the interrogation room.

COP 1
 Why don't you sit down so we can have a nice discussion. We're all pals, right? No reason not to be.

CAPT. DAVIS
 (to Frank)
 He won't sit. Won't deflate the room. It's actually very sophisticated.

Biaggio walks to the two-way mirror and stares through it. He knows he's being watched.

CAPT. DAVIS (CONT'D)
 This kid is in my head.

Biaggio returns to the chair, picks it up and walks calmly toward the glass. The two cops quickly move toward him.

COP 1
 Whoa whoa whoa. None of that.

They wrestle the chair from him.

CAPT. DAVIS
 He knows something. Maybe a lot.

Frank stares at Biaggio.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Wide. To establish.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

A EUROPEAN STARLING steps gingerly toward a pile of appetizing berries.

Reaching down to PECK, the ground suddenly collapses beneath it. It disappears into a hole. We hear sounds of distress.

Joe jumps out from behind a tree, holding his SWORD. He charges the hole, upon it in less than a second.

JOE
Bah! Murder! Murder! Murder!

He stabs downward until we hear no more sounds of distress.
Joe pants, falls to his knees, rattled.

JOE (CONT'D)
You were just hungry...we're all
hungry....
(then)
I'm sorry I yelled at you.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - DAY

Joe, referring to an open book, rhythmically moves the flint
downward against the dry wood until he gets a spark. He
stares at it, shocked...then remembers to BLOW.

FIRE. On Joe: amazed at the fire, and at himself.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - DAY

Joe stands over a pot of steaming water, holding the starling
out in front of him. He's full of grime and bird blood.

JOE
Goddam it...

He drops the bird in, averting his eyes. The water bubbles,
sizzles, hisses.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, FIRE PIT - DAY

Joe yanks feathers from the bird. Wings, then neck. We can
tell he's not happy about it, but it has to be done.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

The carcass is laid out on a rock, next to a reference book.
Joe holds a machete.

JOE
(reading)
"Gut bird, slicing vertically from
rectum to collar. Save the heart,
liver and gizzard if you wish."
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
 (to book)
 Go fuck yourself.

He scrunches up his face and makes an incision.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, TABLE - NIGHT

Joe wipes his hands with a rag looking down at something:

A nicely cooked STARLING, still whole, on a platter. Soot marks and stab wounds aside, it's an appetizing sight.

Joe scatters some berries into the plate beside the bird, for the sake of aesthetics...

Then places a single green HERB on top.

He sits down, stares at his preparation. He does not smile; instead, he looks at the empty chairs around the table.

He sighs...

Then looks past the chairs, squinting.

Joe's POV: Patrick's BUSHMAN MASK hangs by the door. Staring at him.

Off Joe's face...

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS, TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Joe pulls his chair up again, nodding across the table.
 Reverse to:

The MASK, a lousy rendition of Patrick, hangs from the top of the chair. It stares back at Joe.

Joe starts eating. He opens his mouth to speak...then closes it...then opens it.

JOE
 Wha...I...Um...
 (comes to his senses)
 Yeah.

Joe stares at the mask for a sad beat, then returns to his meal.

Suddenly - oddly - the mask chair SHIFTS. Joe stops chewing, and smiles. A fleeting moment of delusion.

JOE (CONT'D)

...Hello?

The chair shifts again. Not much, an inch or two. But the movement is obvious. Joe's smile disappears -- something isn't right.

He pushes his chair back, slowly ducking under the table... and finds

THE COPPERHEAD

Moving quickly toward his legs.

Joe collapses out of his chair, terrified. The snake BITES - but is still too far away to connect with Joe.

Joe regains his footing and runs to the center of the room. It moves toward him, sizing him up, HISSING...

Joe takes two steps back, and the snake quickly covers the ground.

A beat on Joe, looking around, gaging his distance to the door, versus where the snake is. He will lose that race.

The snake is only a few feet away, approaching tentatively. Joe is cornered. Last option:

Joe takes a deep breath, and STANDS HIS GROUND. The snake pauses.

Joe closes his eyes, and puts his hand on his chest. He exhales slowly. Tries to relax. When he opens his eyes...

The snake has re-coiled. It, too, is relaxed. Its tongue flicks out every two seconds. Rhythmic. In sync with Joe's breathing.

Totally calm, Joe sits Indian-style across from the snake. His eyes never leave it.

EXT. BIAGGIO'S STREET - DAY

To establish.

INT. BIAGGIO'S ROOM - DAY

Biaggio kneels by his bed, head bowed. He holds ROSARY BEADS.

INT. BIAGGIO'S KITCHEN - DAY

Biaggio enters. His FATHER sits at the table, shucking clams. The following dialogue is in Italian, subtitled.

BIAGGIO
Dad?

FATHER
Sit.

He pushes a bowl of closed clams toward Biaggio, and hands him a shucking knife. Biaggio goes to work.

BIAGGIO
Have you ever quit at anything?

FATHER
Of course.

BIAGGIO
...and did it hurt?

FATHER
Well, there's good quitting and bad quitting. I quit drinking soda: good quitting. I quit law school: bad quitting. Do you see?

BIAGGIO
Yes.
(then)
Did you ever quit on a friend?

FATHER
You should never quit on a friend, Biaggio.

BIAGGIO
But say you did. Say you abandoned him, left him alone even after you swore your allegiance...would you go to hell for that?

FATHER
Of course.

Biaggio nods. He already knew this.

EXT. BIAGGIO'S HOUSE - DAY

Long lens. Biaggio walks outside, and into his yard. Pull back to reveal a REARVIEW MIRROR in the foreground...

We're watching from Frank's car. Biaggio blasts out of his backyard on a bicycle. Frank shifts into gear.

EXT. MOUTH OF THE WOODS - DAY

Biaggio parks dismounts, and walks it into the woods. Once Biaggio has wiped frame, reveal Frank's car PULLING UP in the background...

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

Biaggio emerges from the path, sighs with relief at the sight of the house. Biaggio's POV: The house looks better than ever. Refinished. Fire burning. The colors seem more vibrant, the angles of incident more square.

FRANK'S VOICE

Kid, what the fuck is this.

Biaggio turns around; his eyes could not be wider.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - SAME TIME

On Joe's face: Asleep, slumped against the wall. In the same clothes as the last time we saw him.

FRANK'S VOICE

How long? The whole time??

Joe startles AWAKE.

BIAGGIO'S VOICE

Omerta. The Sicilian code of silence.

FRANK'S VOICE

No! No Omerta!

Widen out: He's sitting on the floor, as he was when the snake was there...but there's no snake.

FRANK'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Joe?!

JOE
Dad! Don't come in! Seriously!

FRANK'S VOICE
It's over Joe! It's the end of the
world!

Frank barges through the door, holding Biaggio.

<p>JOE Dad, I mean it! There's a snake in here--</p> <p>Then:</p>	<p>FRANK Bullshit, Joe! Start explaining. From the beginning.</p>
---	---

BIAGGIO
Infamata.

The serpent is COILED AT BIAGGIO'S FEET. Staring at him.

FRANK
Whoa...

JOE
(hushed)
Biaggio. Be still. Be calm.

BIAGGIO
I'm going to run. I feel that I
have to.

JOE
Biaggio, do not run.

A beat of tension. WE hear hissing. Then...Biaggio runs.

JOE (CONT'D)
Shit--

The snake is upon him instantly. Biaggio trips over himself
and falls into the corner.

Biaggio's POV: the copperhead, coming straight for him.

He SCREAMS. It bites him in the CHEEK.

On Joe: horror.

FRANK
(nauseous)
Oh. Oh my fucking Christ.

Biaggio faints.

The snake turns toward Frank, and Frank immediately breaks into a run.

JOE

Dad! No--

Frank throws furniture and debris, trying to deter it.

FRANK

The fuck is wrong with this thing?!

The snake is upon him. Frank braces himself...

Suddenly, JOE'S SHOE pins the snake to the floor, landing just beneath its head. It can't move, can't bite. A machete enters frame, decapitating it. Snake blood everywhere.

Joe drops the machete, panting. A shaken hero.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Joe...

They stare at each other, overwhelmed. Then:

BIAGGIO'S VOICE

Hello.

Of course, Biaggio. They rush to him; he's flush, breathing heavy. Bleeding from the puncture wounds in his cheek.

BIAGGIO

Did it get me?

JOE

A little bit.

(to Frank)

Dad, bury the head and body outside in two separate holes. The loose venom can attract other ones.

But Frank doesn't move. He still has so many questions.

JOE (CONT'D)

Now, Dad.

Joe moves to the cooler.

JOE (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

BIAGGIO

Very different.

Joe hands him a plastic bag holding a bloody cut of raw meat.

JOE
Here. You need protein.

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Frank scoops dirt over the snake's body. He emits various sounds of disgust. Joe and Biaggio appear in the doorway.

JOE
(to Frank)
We've got fifteen minutes. Did you drive here?

FRANK
Yeah..(seeing something) Whoa...hey hey hey--

He points to a dark stain growing on Biaggio's pants.

JOE
Biaggio!

BIAGGIO
Hm?

FRANK
You're pissing yourself, kid!

Biaggio looks down - it's true.

BIAGGIO
I can't feel it. I can't feel anything down there...

Biaggio's knees buckle. He VOMITS.

JOE
Shit.

Systems are failing. Biaggio's nose begin to run.

BIAGGIO
(out of it)
I'm open. I'm open now, Joe. The snake opened me...

Sweat, pooling at Biaggio's collar bone. His eyes tear up. Everything's leaving him.

INT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Biaggio crawls to the sofa. Joe helps him over, rubs his back.

JOE
 Okay, okay. Let it all out.
 (to Frank)
 Can you pull the car up to here??

FRANK
 Impossible...

JOE`
 (to Biaggio) Hey -- do you feel up
 to a little walk, buddy?

Biaggio closes his eyes and pisses himself again.

FRANK
 He's really...he can't hold it,
 huh.

JOE
 You've gotta carry him, Dad.

Frank grimaces at Biaggio, who is soaked in himself.

JOE (CONT'D)
 Dad, he will die.

FRANK
 Joe, come over here. Come here.

Joe walks over.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 Yes, we could carry him. We could
 drive him to the hospital and hope
 for the best. We could put him
 through all that. Or we could just
 choose to remember him as he was.

JOE
 Dad!

JUMP CUT TO:

Frank lifts Biaggio off the sofa, across his shoulders. He flares his nostrils, nauseated.

FRANK
Ah fuck. He smells like vinegar.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Frank carries Biaggio through the woods. Joe runs just ahead of them. Biaggio bumps around, moaning. It's not a happy time in his life.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Joe and Biaggio in the backseat. Frank speeds, slaloming through traffic. The windows are open.

FRANK
Keep him awake, Joe! Keep him talking!

BIAGGIO
(weak)
Wash me...

JOE
He keeps asking me to wash him!

FRANK
Godammit Biaggio! We can't wash you! We don't have the tools!

BIAGGIO
Clean my skin. Make my skin clean.

Frank's POV - he blows through a yellow that just turned red. The camera flashes. He will get a ticket.

FRANK
Fuck.

In the backseat:

BIAGGIO
I'm open, Joe.

JOE
I know buddy. I know you're open.

BIAGGIO
Joe...what if I start to do other things, Joe?

JOE
What are "other things"?

BIAGGIO
Other things. Ass things.

JOE
Ass things...

FRANK
What's he saying? He gonna shit
the car??

BIAGGIO
I don't want to shit the car.

JOE
None of us want that. We're all on
the same team here.

FRANK
You gotta fight this thing, buddy.

JOE
Just don't think about it. Keep
talking to me. Just talk. We're
almost there and then you'll get
medicine and the pain will stop.

BIAGGIO
(at death's door)
Joe...I'm sorry...I'm sorry I led
him here...

JOE
It's okay man. You didn't know.

BIAGGIO
I didn't know...I'm not...I would
never betray you...I'm not like
Patrick...

JOE
Yeah...

Joe looks out the window. A beat of sadness.

JOE (CONT'D)
Biaggio, do you--

But something's wrong. Biaggio's eyes are CLOSED, his mouth
foaming.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh God. Oh Jesus. His mouth, Dad!
He's foaming at the mouth!

FRANK

Uh...That's good! That means his
body's fighting it.

JOE

Biaggio! Fuck! Dad, he's dead!

FRANK

(truly worried)

Okay, we're here. We're here Joe.
It's out of our hands. Just, I
don't know. Pray for him.

They SWERVE into the hospital parking lot.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank rushes Biaggio in. Joe waves at a nurse for attention.

She takes Biaggio. Doctors arrive. A stretcher. Medical
chaos ensues.

Joe and Frank watch, concerned, helpless.

We FADE TO WHITE.

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Joe washes his face. A knock on the door. Joe opens it;
Frank in the hallway.

FRANK

Try these.

Frank hands him a bag from the hospital gift shop. Quick
cuts:

Joe brushes his teeth

He puts on deodorant.

He looks at himself in the mirror, shirtless, slaps his
exposed rib cage once.

Joe puts on a fresh \$4 T-shirt. It says "NYC."

Joe regards a razor...looks at his moustache...puts the razor back in the bag. He owns the moustache now.

INT. HOSPITAL, BIAGGIO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Biaggio sits up in bed. He eats from a small plastic container of apple sauce.

JOE
You honestly believe you saw
heaven?

Biaggio nods.

BIAGGIO
Yes. Joe...I saw your mother.

JOE
My mother's still alive.

BIAGGIO
Oh. Then maybe it was my mother.

Suddenly, VICKI enters.

VICKI
Oh my God. Look at you!

Then, right behind her...KELLY.

And PATRICK.

Joe tenses up. This is the first time we've seen Patrick 'back.' He looks good, put some weight back on. Haircut. Pressed shirt.

Joe and Patrick see each other, then look away.

KELLY
Are you okay, Biaggio?

BIAGGIO
I am. My body is healing. Some
have suggested it wasn't my time.

PATRICK
Yeah -- you're fourteen man.

KELLY
Joe, are you hurt?

Joe shakes his head "no." Awkwardness in the room.

VICKI
 (at Biaggio's bandage)
 Is that where it bit you?

BIAGGIO
 It is.

KELLY
 My God...what did it feel like?

BIAGGIO
 It felt like, when you're expecting
 great pain, and then it happens.

As the girls question Biaggio, Joe and Patrick make, then retract, eye contact. They have no idea how to be around each other.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Joe eats a slice of pizza. Two more pizza crusts litter his plate. There's also an empty bowl of nachos.

We see the cafeteria is virtually empty except for Joe and Frank watches his son eat. As Joe finishes, Frank pushes his own plate of spaghetti toward Joe.

FRANK
 How long was Biaggio dead?

JOE
 Six minutes.

FRANK
 (unimpressed)
 Six minutes? Oh.

JOE
 That's a long time to be dead, Dad.

FRANK
 Not in the scheme of things.
 (then)
 You...uh...you did a good job, Joe.
 You did a good job back there.

JOE
 A good job?

FRANK
 You saved my life. You saved
 Biaggio's life. I dunno. A lesser
 man would have panicked.

JOE
 Oh. Thanks.

A beat between father and son.

FRANK
 Are you still hungry? What do you
 want. Anything.

JOE
 Honestly? I would love seafood.

FRANK
 Hm.

Frank looks around at the shitty hospital food court.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 I don't know if this is the best
 place for that.
 (then)
 They have churros.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Joe eats a churro.

FRANK
 Not bad, right?

Joe shakes his head. Not bad.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 (carefully)
 We can do seafood tomorrow. If you
 plan on being around.

JOE
 Yeah. I should be.

Frank nods. Relief.

FRANK
 So who's that girl Patrick was
 with? He's got a girlfriend, huh?

JOE
Looks that way.

FRANK
Good for him. What are you guys,
fourteen?
(then)
If you think parents and school and
all this shit is stressful, wait
until you start carving the Ham.

JOE
The Ham. Like, the Ham?

FRANK
Yeah, like HAMphibian. HAMBush.

JOE
You know about the Ham?

FRANK
Yeah, I mean...I thought it was
common. Isn't it?

JOE
No, I guess it must be. Huh.
(then)
I thought I was alone.

INT. HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Joe and Frank wait by the elevator. The down arrow DINGS.
The doors open.

Patrick, his parents, and Kelly are inside. Joe and Frank
enter. A nurse wheels an elderly patient in with them.
Doors close on the packed elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Everyone stands in silence. We hear only the wet, rattling
breath of the elderly patient.

INT/EXT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Frank and Joe drive. Joe looks out the window at his
neighborhood.

Then the McGuire family car pulls up alongside them, passing
them. Patrick and Kelly in the backseat.

They stop at a red light. Joe glances over; he's in line with Patrick, who isn't looking.

Then, Patrick looks. Joe immediately turns away. He turns back; now Patrick turns away.

Joe leans back. Staring ahead. He glances over, subtly, trying not to move his head, and sees Patrick smiling and shaking his head.

Joe looks over. Finally, he smiles too.

Joe shoots Patrick the finger. Patrick nods and returns it.

Joe gestures behind Patrick toward Kelly. He inserts his pointer finger into the end of his fist, then raises his eyebrows inquisitively.

Patrick laughs, shakes his head no.

Joe then places his hands on his chest. A new question.

Patrick shrugs and smiles coyly.

Joe's eyes widen. Really?

Patrick shrugs again, with a big shit-eating grin.

Joe laughs.

The light changes. Joe's car starts to inch up. They're losing sight of each other. Frank senses the activity.

FRANK

What's going on over there?

JOE

(facing forward again)

Nothing. Patrick's being an idiot.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Wide, looking down at the intersection. Patrick's car takes a right, while Joe's continues straight. As the cars disappear, we tilt up, over the rooftops, toward the sky.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAWN

END CREDITS ROLL over a wide shot of the house. The forest teems around it. Animals wander in and out, confused. Light shifts as hours pass.

In time, the sun sets on the empty house, though the fire still burns.

THE END.