

Roaming Home

By

Brian M. O'Connor

boconnor13@gmail.com
480-370-7177

FADE IN:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Hustle and bustle. Police whistles. Tourists snap pics. Panhandlers ask for spare change.

EXT. PENN STATION - DAY

SUPER: TEN YEARS AGO

HANK MEADE, 30s, steps into the sunlight. Backpack over his shoulder, he raises his fedora to shield his eyes. Takes in the city. Feels its rhythm. Breathes deeply.

Checks his appearance in an office building window. Tries to straighten his wrinkled, slept-in clothes. Fails.

Steps between the cabs that line the curb.

A horn BLARES twice.

Startled, Hank jumps back between the cabs.

A gleaming SILVER TRACTOR-TRAILER rolls past Hank. A meaty hand emerges from the DRIVER'S open window with a quick wave.

DRIVER (O.S.)
Be careful, friend.

Hank shrugs off his close call. Picks a direction and strides away, like this is where he's supposed to be.

INT. BODEGA - DAY

Cramped, over-stocked store with something for everyone.

Hank sets a big beer on the counter. Pets the cat that saunters near the register.

The clerk slides the beer into a brown bag. Rings him up.

Hank pulls cash from his pocket, counts out some bills. A WEDDING BAND drops from his hand onto the floor.

He picks it up, looks at it longingly. His eyes moisten.

He looks to a rack with postcards. Chooses one.

The clerk adds the postcard to his total. Hank pays the man.

HANK
Much obliged, champ.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Hank steps back into the mix. Takes a big swig from his brown bag. Disappears into the crowd.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

Mismatched furniture dots the room. Dirt crusted windows give it an dingy glow. This joint has seen better days.

NATHAN EISEN, 70s, hunched over and lethargic but knows all in his building, scans the room from his "office."

Metal bars separate him from his guests.

Hardscrabble men with weathered faces take up space. Play cards. Read a newspaper. Stare at nothing in particular.

Hank stumbles on the bottom step. Bounces off a wall into the lobby. Catches himself before he tumbles.

Time has taken its toll on Hank. It's only ten years later but he looks seventy. Too much booze and street life will do that to a man.

He still wears his fedora but it's ratted and stained, as is what passes for a suit.

NATHAN
Good morning, Mr. Meade.

Hank scowls at Nathan with bloodshot eyes. Turns away.

NATHAN
Don't forget, today's your day--

The front door slams shut behind Hank.

EXT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - DAY

Hank flinches as daylight hits him. Takes a second to let his eyes adjust. Pulls a pint from his inside pocket. Takes a swig. Winces as he swallows.

ACROSS THE STREET

A heavyset man in a hoodie leans against a building. Snaps pictures of Hank.

Hank places the pint back in his pocket. Stumbles away.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

A homeless man sleeps on a corner with a sign at his feet - NEED CASH FOR WEED AND BEER.

Hank chuckles as he reads the homeless man's sign.

HANK

Champ. You awake?

Nothing from the homeless man. Hank swipes the sign.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Women in painted-on bikinis pose for pictures. Children's characters linger in dirty sneakers. People mill around.

Hank sits against a wall with the sign at his feet.

A woman and her tiny pooch wander by. Hank reaches out to pet it. It snarls, snaps at him.

The woman reaches down, reads the sign as she picks up her dog. Scoffs at Hank. He tips his hat to them.

A couple pauses in front of him. Reads his sign, snickers.

HANK

Do I get points for my honesty?

Hank doffs his hat, holds it out. The couple drops a few dollars into it.

HANK

Much obliged.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Times Square looks more festive, less desperate, all lit up. The parade of people continues.

Hank sets the empty pint bottle next to him on the sidewalk.

The heavyset man in the hoodie stops in front of him. BARNEY HUNTER, 50s, rubber-faced gent and the last person you'd expect to be a private eye, laughs out loud.

BARNEY

That's great. Classic. Can I take
your picture?

Hank nods, glassy-eyed.

BARNEY

They're gonna love it back home.
They always ask me, Barney, how in
hell do you find them?

Barney aims his camera as Hank pulls his hat over his face.

HANK

Whoa! Twenty bucks.

BARNEY

What? That's what I paid the
bikini girls.

HANK

Fine.

BARNEY

And it's cold out here, if you get
my drift.

HANK

Ten.

Barney hands Hank cash.

BARNEY

I love this town!

Hank stares blankly at the camera. Buzzed. Sad. Pathetic.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Hank swigs from a new pint bottle. Tosses a dollar bill on
the ground. Three other DICE PLAYERS huddle close together.

HANK

Watch out gents. Been a good day.

Hank flings the dice. Rolls a seven.

Muttered curses from the others as Hank scoops his winnings.

HANK

'Course I don't need this. I come
from money.

Hank tosses another dollar down.

HANK
It's just more fun this way.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Hank stumbles in, scatters a table and chairs.

Nathan watches from behind the bars.

NATHAN
It's deja vu all over again.

Hank pushes the chairs back under the table.

HANK
I don't need this--

NATHAN
Those toilets don't clean
themselves, you know.

HANK
I'm from--

NATHAN
Money? Feh! A man who shirks his
responsibilities is no man.

Hank disappears up the stairs.

NATHAN
And put some schvitz into it!

INT. HANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

More a cell than a room. Dreary and dark, a single bed fills
the space. A lone bulb hangs from a chicken wire ceiling.

Hank slides shut the shower curtain that acts as a door.

Places his fedora on a shelf above him. Lights a hand rolled
cigarette, lies down.

His wedding band, now on a cheap chain, pops out from his
shirt. He plays with it as he smokes, lost in thought.

EXT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - DAY

Barney leans against the building across from The Buckman Hotel. Phone to his ear.

BARNEY
On their way.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Top of the line appliances. Old world cabinetry meets new world design, all with a Southwestern flair.

ALICE MEADE, 40s, drawn, gaunt, in a silk head scarf, pulls the phone from her ear. Looks at it.

ON PHONE

The picture of Hank from last night in Times Square.

Alice gasps. Scrolls through more pictures. Her emotions change with each new photo. Anger. Disappointment. Pity.

She closes her eyes, takes a second to compose herself.

CHRISTOPHER MEADE, 10, a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day, bounds into the room in a private school uniform.

CHRISTOPHER
Trix are for kids!

Alice opens her eyes, beams at him. Points to his bowl.

ALICE
Good morning, monkey.
(into the phone)
One second, please.
(to Christopher)
Eat up. We don't want to be late.

Alice turns her back as Christopher digs in.

ALICE
You spoke to him? Have the packet?

CHRISTOPHER
Who Mommy?

BARNEY (V.O.)
It won't be easy.

CHRISTOPHER
Who?

BARNEY (V.O.)
He's pretty dug in.

ALICE
Just get it done.

CHRISTOPHER
Who, Mommy? Who? What package?

Alice hits end. Stares at the phone. Tense.

ALICE
Christopher!
(turns, smiles)
Sorry, monkey. Mommy has a lot
going on. You were saying?

CHRISTOPHER
(dejected)
I'm not hungry.

Alice looks at her very expensive watch.

ALICE
Just as well. Get your backpack.

Christopher races from the table.

ALICE
But give Mommy her purse first.

Christopher stops, grabs her purse. Alice hugs him tight.

ALICE
Thank you, monkey.

Christopher sprints away as Alice fills a glass with water.
Her hands shake.

She pulls a pill bottle from her purse. Pops two pills into
her mouth. All energy leaves her body as she swallows.

CHRISTOPHER (O.S.)
Ready!

Forces herself to perk up.

ALICE
That's my boy!

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - WASHROOM - DAY

Hank scrubs a bathroom sink. Puts some schvitz into it.

Sweat drips from his forehead. He dabs it with the sleeve of his dingy t-shirt. Checks his work.

A single fluorescent gives the room a hollow glow. Cracked, uneven wall tiles. A gaudy linoleum floor. Stained sinks and toilets.

Hank nods to his hazy reflection in the mirror, a job well done. Reaches for the mop and bucket when the door opens.

SKILLET, 60s, black man with a voice that booms and personality to match, enters.

SKILLET
Don't this place shine.

Hank eyes Skillet warily.

SKILLET
Good to see a white man can be a house nigga in today's America.

Skillet steps to the toilet, looks back over his shoulder.

SKILLET
What? You never seen a big, black snake before?

Sprays pee around the toilet, onto the wall and floor.

SKILLET
Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. Can't contain it. It's too strong.

Skillet finishes with a flourish. Zips and turns.

SKILLET
Well ain't that a shame. I done messed up your hard work.

Skillet slaps Hank on the shoulder as he passes. Washes his hands in the sink. Flings his wet hands at the mirror. Turns for the door with an evil grin.

SKILLET
Sorry 'bout that brother.

Hank won't let him win. Shows no emotion, wets the mop and goes to work by the toilet.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Barney stands at Nathan's counter with a manilla envelope.

NATHAN
My guests deserve privacy.

BARNEY
His family needs--

Hank enters the lobby. Nathan sees him, nods for him to go.

NATHAN
Oh, family? That's different.

Nathan pretends to look for something.

NATHAN
Those bathrooms better sparkle!

Nathan keeps looking. Hank hurries out the door.

Barney hears the door shut. Turns to it. Hank looks at him from outside. Darts away.

EXT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Barney scans the street for Hank. No luck.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Barney storms back into the lobby.

BARNEY
You win. We do it the hard way.

NATHAN
Feh! This is New York City. We invented the hard way.

BARNEY
It's not what my client wants, but so be it.

NATHAN
What makes you think he wants to be found?

BARNEY
Doesn't matter to me. It matters to her.

NATHAN
Who?

Barney dials.

NATHAN

Maybe you didn't hear my question?

BARNEY

His wife. She's--

NATHAN

Call the cops! A wife is looking
for her husband?!

BARNEY

Don't say I didn't try to warn you.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Alice lies in bed. Eyes closed, phone to her ear.

INTERCUT - TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BARNEY

Mrs. M, I've done as you asked.

ALICE

And?

BARNEY

He's old. And old school.

Alice sits up, summons all her energy.

ALICE

Put him on the phone.

BARNEY

I don't think this geezer will--

ALICE

Now. I don't have time.

(gathers herself)

It has to be Hank's decision.

Barney holds the phone between the bars.

BARNEY

Good luck to you.

(to Alice)

Mrs. M? Nathan Eisen.

ALICE

Hello? Hello? Am I on speaker?

For God's sake, take me off--

Nathan takes the phone, does as told. Puts it to his ear.

ALICE

That's better. Mister Eisen, I
appreciate your time--

NATHAN

I'm a very busy man--

ALICE

And I'm very direct. I understand
Hank has been living at your
establishment for some time.

NATHAN

And if I had a dollar from every
call I got from an angry wife--

ALICE

Have I ever contacted you?

NATHAN

I'd be retired in Miami.

ALICE

Do I sound upset in the least?

NATHAN

I don't see why--

ALICE

Circumstances have changed.

NATHAN

That's any of my business.

ALICE

God knows Hank has his faults, but
indecision isn't one of them. Once
he makes up his mind--

NATHAN

(quietly)

He puts some schvitz into it.

ALICE

You obviously know him well. I
need him home, and for you to make
it seem like it's his idea.

NATHAN

I'd help but--

ALICE

It's the only way.

(debates)

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
I didn't want to say this, but...
(she has to say it)
I have cancer.

Long quiet.

ALICE
And Hank has a son. That he
doesn't know about.

NATHAN
He doesn't know?

ALICE
He needs Hank and Hank needs him,
even if they don't know it yet.

NATHAN
(to himself)
A man who shirks his
responsibilities...

ALICE
Hank will hem and haw, show him the
packet. It contains everything you
need to convince him.

Barney slides the folder through the bars.

ALICE
Shove him, if you must. I'll make
it worth your while.

NATHAN
(Hank wasn't lying)
Son of a gun?

ALICE
Do we have a deal?

NATHAN
If I can't?

ALICE
I find it unfathomable that a man
like you, full of wisdom and grace,
cannot find a way.

Nathan's chest swells.

NATHAN
Fine.

ALICE

And you'll call me once you two
have spoken.

NATHAN

I will.

ALICE

Thank you Mr. Eisen.

Nathan hits end. Hands the phone back through the bars.

NATHAN

What just happened?

BARNEY

(shrugs)

I know, right?

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Hank stands next to a door. Scans every rider's face.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Hank mills between people. Sips from a brown bag.
Constantly looks around, over his shoulder.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Hank peeks in from the doorway. Searches for Barney.

NATHAN

He's gone.

Hank stumbles in. Looks at Nathan as if to say who was that?

NATHAN

Don't worry about him.

Hank sips from his brown bag. Scowls. It's empty.

NATHAN

Feh. Go on. Come down first thing
and we'll talk.

HANK

What's wrong with now?

Nathan looks at the brown bag, then Hank.

NATHAN
First thing.

INT. HANK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hank lies in bed. Stares at the ceiling. Concerned.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Alice looks at Hank's postcard from ten years ago. Wistful.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Nathan rises from his stool as Hank enters the lobby. Steps to his office door.

NATHAN
Not exactly first thing.

Opens his office door. Beckons Hank in.

Hank looks at him confused.

NATHAN
Come. Sit.

Hank shakes his head, backs away. Bumps into a RAGGED MAN, 70s, who reads a newspaper. Ragged Man elbows Hank.

HANK
Sorry, champ. It's just...
(nods to the open door)
You ever seen that?

Ragged Man looks to the open door. Surprised.

RAGGED MAN
Just once. Don't know what ya done
but don't want no part of it.

Ragged Man hurries from the lobby.

NATHAN
Feh! Pay him no mind.

Hank stays put.

NATHAN
Come.

HANK
What did I do?

NATHAN
Don't be a putz.

Hank reluctantly steps into the --

OFFICE

Nathan offers him a chair.

NATHAN
Not what you did, but what you're
going to do.

Hank sits.

NATHAN
Everyone gets treated the same
here. Always have, always will.

Nathan slides the manila folder in front of Hank.

NATHAN
You've been reasonable. Paid your
bills, kept to yourself. Plus,
your bathrooms shine.

HANK
Yet, you're giving me the boot?

NATHAN
More a hand up. It's time for you
to go home.

Hank's face goes flush.

HANK
Not your decision.

NATHAN
Normally? No. But this time--

Anger builds. Hank rises.

NATHAN
Circumstances are different.

Nathan points to the folder as Hank turns to leave.

NATHAN
It's all in here.

Nathan stops Hank. Presses the folder against his chest.

NATHAN
What do I always say?

Hank storms from the office.

Nathan shuts his door. Watches Hank rush away, bump into Skillet as they hit the bottom step at the same time.

Skillet steps aside as Hank hurries up the stairs.

SKILLET
'Scuse me, brother.

Nathan, back on his normal perch, calls out.

NATHAN
Skillet. Come.

Skillet steps warily to Nathan.

NATHAN
I might have a proposition for you.
Cut your rent in half.

SKILLET
I'm listening.

NATHAN
You good with a mop and broom?

INT. HANK'S ROOM - DAY

Hank sets the folder on his bed. Looks out into the hallway to be sure he's alone. Closes the shower curtain.

Stares at the folder. For a long time.

Fumbles with a cigarette. His hands shake as he lights it.

Runs his fingers over Alice's handwriting.

HANK
Perfect. Always perfect.

Opens the folder, the contents spill onto his bed. Pictures. Certificates. Ribbons. A letter. He reads.

HANK
Dear Hank. This is so unlike me, I
don't know where to begin.
(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)
In a strange way, I hoped this day
would never come.

Hank flips the letter over to see how long it is.

HANK
You had your reasons for leaving, I
never asked why. You wanted to be
forgotten, I tried. But--

Hank takes a drag.

HANK
It's overwhelming the number of
people that still ask about you,
all these years later.

Hank takes a deep breath.

HANK
Who care about you, want to help,
if only you would let them.

Hank's eyes moisten.

HANK
But that was then and this is now.
It's time for you to come home...

The cigarette drops from his mouth.

ALICE (V.O.)
...because, well... I might as well
just say it. I have cancer
(deep breath)
and my time is near.

Hank fumbles through the photos. Finds one from their
wedding day. Alice smiles brightly, a beautiful bride. Hank
looks at the camera with a half smile and sad eyes.

Hank flings the shower curtain open.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Hank stomps through the lobby.

NATHAN
Can I help with anything?

Hank bursts out the door.

Nathan dials his phone.

NATHAN

It's done.
(listens)
I'll do my best.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - SAME

Alice sits in a large, leather chair. Phone to her ear.

ALICE

I know you'll find a way for him to
leave with his dignity. Thank you
for your help, Mr. Eisen.

Alice sets her phone down. Looks off into space, briefly.
Then to a nurse, who holds a needle to draw blood.

ALICE

Thank you for your patience.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

A dice game roars in the background. Hank holds a bottle,
doesn't hear a dice player invite him to play.

ALICE (V.O.)

And you have a son.

Hank pulls the bottle to his lips but his hands shake so hard
he can't drink from it.

ALICE (V.O.)

His name is Christopher, and he's
my heart and soul. He's so alive
and funny. Adventurous to a fault.
And determined, so determined.

Hank rises as he reads but stumbles back against the wall.

ALICE (V.O.)

Where does he get that from?
(another deep breath)
So it's time for you to return.
Not for me, nor you, but for him.

FLASHBACK

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - ANTEROOM - NIGHT

Hank wears a new suit, slumps in a chair. Hat in hand.

Alice, impeccably dressed, checks her appearance in a mirror.

ALICE

How can you say that? They're
family, friends.

HANK

It's still hard for me.

ALICE

Everyone here tonight loves you.

HANK

I'll say the wrong thing. Worse
yet, something stupid.

Alice turns to Hank.

ALICE

Let me look at you.

Hank rises. Alice turns them to the mirror.

ALICE

Look at us. At the beautiful story
we've written for ourselves.
There's nothing we can't do.

He fidgets with his fedora.

ALICE

You'll take your place at your
father's firm. My business is
already off to a roaring success.

HANK

I don't want to embarrass you.

ALICE

Don't you see? It's what we
planned. You should be happy.

Hank forces a smile. Puts his fedora on his head. Alice
gives him a peck on the cheek.

ALICE

Please tell me you won't wear that
thing on our wedding day.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - NIGHT

Well dressed guests mingle.

A small crowd surrounds Alice. She smiles, chats with ease.

Casually, she glances around the room. Finds Hank alone in a corner, drink in hand. Her smile fades to concern.

Hank looks up, catches her eye.

Her smile returns. She waves him over.

He refuses. She waves again, more emphatic.

He surrenders, steps to her. Her crowd parts for him.

ALICE

There's my groom.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - LATER

PATRICK RICHMOND, 50s, square jawed and powerful without trying, clinks his glass.

LOIS RICHMOND, 50s, class personified, stands nearby.

Conversations stop. All eyes turn to him.

PATRICK

Lois and I thank you for
celebrating with us tonight.

Patrick smiles at Alice.

PATRICK

For as long as I remember, Hank and
Alice is one word.

Small chuckles from the room.

PATRICK

It's true. And we'd like to thank
the Meade's for raising such a fine
young man.

Hank's parents smile, nod appreciation.

PATRICK

We're one big, happy family.

Patrick raises his glass.

PATRICK

To my beautiful daughter Alice.

Alice smiles gracefully.

PATRICK
And her soon to be husband, Hank.

Everyone in the room follows suit. They look around for Hank. He's nowhere to be found.

Patrick looks to Alice. She smiles back apologetically.

ALICE
I'm sure he'll be... please.

Alice raises her glass.

ALICE
Thank you so much for coming.
You're too kind.

The room sips in toast.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB - PATIO - SAME

Hank stares blankly at an empty golf course. Takes a drag from a cigarette. Gulps his drink.

BACK TO SCENE

Hank slams what's left in his bottle.

HANK
At least I didn't wear my hat.

A dice player calls out again for Hank to join them. He flings the pint at them. Stumbles away.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Hank sits on the church steps.

Cracks open a new bottle. Talks to no one in particular.

HANK
You gave up on me years ago. So I
gave up on you.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Nathan sits on his perch as Hank stumbles in.

NATHAN
Stop. Come.

Hank mumbles to himself as he steps to the bars.

NATHAN
Come to a decision?

Hank gives him nothing.

NATHAN
You have a son.

HANK
Do I look like someone--

NATHAN
Who needs a dad--

HANK
Who should offer fatherly advice?

They each wait for the other to talk first.

HANK
Even if I did decide to go, I have
no way to get there.

Nathan lights up at Hank's buying signal.

NATHAN
There's where you're wrong. Get
some sleep and come back in the
morning. I might have a
proposition for you.

EXT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - NIGHT

Barney leans against the wall. Phone to his ear.

BARNEY
He definitely knows, Mrs. M. But I
can't say he's ready yet.

ALICE (V.O.)
He'll come around, I know it. But
stay close just in case.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Nathan holds his phone through the bars, on speaker. JOEY DEGREGORIO, 30s, high energy New Yorker whose voice almost jumps out of the phone, talks a mile a minute.

JOEY (V.O.)
If Mr. Eisen says you're good,
you're good.

Hank listens, noncommittal.

JOEY (V.O.)
Capisce?
(muffled, to someone else)
Hey, oh! Two hands, hammerhead!
(to Hank)
We gonna do this or what?

HANK
Yes.

JOEY (V.O.)
Gotta run. Mr. Eisen, fill him in!
(as Joey hangs up)
Shit for brains, c'mere!

Nathan pulls the phone back between the bars.

NATHAN
He's something, huh? But a good
kid doing a good thing.

Nathan waits for Hank to acknowledge it. Receives nothing.

NATHAN
You load with his local crew, day
after tomorrow.

Nathan waits again, still nothing.

NATHAN
About four hours work. Six max.
Then you ride with him to Cleveland
and unload. You pocket about four
hundred dollars.

Still no reaction.

NATHAN
Tax free.
(sigh)
He's paying you to ride with him.
(heavy sigh)
Which should be more than enough
for a bus ticket home.

Hank lights a cigarette.

NATHAN
(exasperated)
That's great Mr. Eisen! Thank you
very much Mr. Eisen! How can I
ever repay you Mr. Eisen?

Hank exhales.

HANK
Sorry. I do appreciate it. Still,
look at me--

Nathan cuts Hank off, agrees.

NATHAN
You'll pace yourself. You know
what your first step is, right?

Hank looks at his hands. They shake. Then back to Nathan.

NATHAN
They go away.

Nathan nods to a box near his office door.

NATHAN
For anything you don't want with
you on the road. I'll ship it.

Hank picks up the box.

NATHAN
Get your affairs in order and call
your wife. Let her know.

Hank freezes.

NATHAN
Feh, I'll call her. Anything else,
I can do for you, sir?

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Alice readies Christopher's breakfast, phone to her ear.

EXT. BARNEY'S CAR - SAME

Barney watches as a DEGREGORIO AND SONS truck pulls up.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ALICE
Intervene only as a last resort.

BARNEY
Yes ma'am.

ALICE
Report back each night.

BARNEY
Check.

ALICE
But make sure he comes home.

BARNEY
Will do.

ALICE
And thank you, Barney. I know this
wasn't part of the agreement when
you accepted the job.

BARNEY
It's strange, Mrs. M. I'm actually
looking forward to it. I'd like
some closure too.

INT. HANK'S ROOM - DAY

Stripped bare. Even more of a cell.

Hank's backpack sits on the stained mattress. As does the
box Nathan gave him, overflowing.

Hank pulls the backpack over his shoulder, looks around.
Grabs the box, steps into the --

HALLWAY

and carries it to the trash chute.

HANK
Bon voyage!

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Nathan in his office and Joey on the lobby side of the bars
laugh loudly. They stop as Hank arrives.

NATHAN
There he is.

Joey hurries across the room, hand extended. Shakes Hank's hand, almost shakes it off Hank's arm.

JOEY
Call me Joey.

Joey looks Hank over. Turns to Nathan with a quizzical look.

NATHAN
He'll be fine.
(to Hank)
You'll be fine. Come.

Nathan moves from his perch, opens his office door.

HANK
Twice in one week?

JOEY
Now I know he's special.

Nathan hands Hank a small bag.

NATHAN
A care package, for the road.

Hank pulls out the contents. Carton of Viceroy. Water Bottle. Toiletry kit. Burner phone.

Hank stares at the phone.

NATHAN
In case you want to check in on
your way. Alice's number is
already keyed in. Hit redial.

HANK
I don't know what to say.

NATHAN
Say nothing. Work hard for Joey
here and--

JOEY
I'll make him sweat.

NATHAN
Be there for your wife and son.

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - CAB - DAY

Joey drives and talks. Hank listens.

JOEY
Ever load a truck?

Hank shakes his head.

JOEY
You'll get the hang of it. This
crew today, ah maron'! Don't let
these gavones get in your head.

INT. THE BUCKMAN HOTEL - NATHAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Nathan on his perch, phone to his ear.

NATHAN
I'd say three days.
(listens)
My pleasure. Can I ask a favor?
Let me know when he arrives? Good
luck with your... health.

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - BACK - DAY

Half full truck. Hank sweats profusely. About to keel over.

Two movers grumble. Eye Hank with disgust. Another sets his
load on the road. Turns back to go inside.

Joey roles out a full handcart as Hank climbs from the truck.

JOEY
Ay, oh!
(grabs the mover)
What's this shit?
(before he can answer)
Who's name is on this truck? Mine.
I decide who loads, who doesn't.
(to Hank)
You, back inside.
(to the mover)
You, put it where it goes.

The mover does as told, reluctantly.

Joey pulls some cash from his pocket. Sticks it in the
mover's shirt pocket. Pushes him.

JOEY
Fuck outta here!

EXT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - BACKLIFT - LATER

Hank sits, totally drained. Motionless, except to smoke.

JOEY

I know a little place, best pasta
in the city. We hit it before we
go, capisce?

Hank smokes. Rises from the lift, walks around the truck.

JOEY

Not much of a talker, are ya?

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - CAB - NIGHT

Joey hops in, doggie bag in hand.

JOEY

Don't say I ever forgot about ya!

Hank snoozes. Joey taps his horn twice. Nothing from Hank.
Joey pops a breadstick into his mouth. Starts the truck.

JOEY

This should be an interesting ride.

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - CAB - LATER

Hank wakes with a start as Joey jumps into the truck.

JOEY

Well hello, Sleeping Beauty. I was
starting to worry about you. Want
anything before we roll?

Hank's hands shake as he pulls cigarettes from his backpack.

JOEY

Kill yourself on your own time!

HANK

Sorry, champ. Didn't think.

JOEY

My cab is my temple. But here.

Joey tosses Hank an expensive pint bottle.

Hank's hands shake as he holds it. Stares at it.

JOEY
Is there a problem?

HANK
No. I'm trying to... not much of a
top shelf guy.

JOEY
Might help with those shakes.

HANK
I hear they go away.

JOEY
You worked hard today. Don't you
deserve one drink?

Hank runs his fingers around the cap. Fights not to open it.

HANK
Never had only one.

JOEY
Get outta here!

HANK
Ever eat one potato chip?

JOEY
Not the same.

HANK
Is to me.

Hank rolls the bottle in his hand.

HANK
I'm thinking maybe I'm better at
none, than one.

JOEY
That's deep.

Joey reaches for the bottle.

Hank buries it deep in his backpack.

HANK
In case I want to move up in the
world.

Joey shrugs, pulls into traffic.

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - CAB - LATER

Joey looks at Hank, tries to read him.

JOEY
So... going home, huh?

Hank nods.

JOEY
What brought you to Manhattan in
the first place?

Hank shoots Joey a look.

JOEY
What? Making conversation here.
You a singer?

Hank shakes his head.

JOEY
You got a Rat Pack look about you.
(sings)
If I can make it there, I'll make
it, anywhere.

Joey waits for Hank to join in. Hank doesn't.

JOEY
It's up to you, New York, New York.
(sigh)
Definitely not a singer.

They ride in silence.

HANK
A clean break. Thought I could
start over.

JOEY
Help me out here. Which question
are you answering?

HANK
Leave behind the demands. The
expectations of being the next
Meade man in line.

JOEY
Okay...?

HANK
Figure things out.

Awkward quiet.

JOEY
So, how 'bout them Yanks?

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - BACK - DAY

Half empty truck. Groups of four boxes rest on the back lift, await movers.

Hank slides a file cabinet and desk onto the lift. Looks back inside to see what's next.

JOEY (O.S.)
We'll make a mover out of you yet.

Hank watches Joey slide a hand truck under some boxes.

JOEY
These assclowns can't keep up.

Hank takes a second, admires his work.

INT. DEGREGORIO AND SONS TRUCK - CAB - NIGHT

Joey peels off cash.

JOEY
Three eighty, four hundred. What we agreed on, capisce?

Hank nods, the most money he's had in his hands in forever. Slides the wad into his pocket.

JOEY
You might want to split that up?

Joey nods to the Greyhound Bus Terminal behind them.

JOEY
It can be a little sketchy.

Hank slides most of the cash into his sock.

JOEY
There you go.
(serious)
You did good. I won't lie, looked
mezzo-morto more than once. You
fought through. Be proud.

HANK

Thanks.

JOEY

This thing you're doing? It's a
good thing.

Hank looks at him surprised - he told you?

JOEY

Maybe he shouldn't but he did.
Listen, we all have our faults.
Make mistakes, why we end up where
we end up.

Hank pulls his backpack over his shoulder.

JOEY

But you have a chance to rewrite
yours. Not everyone gets that.

Hank nods in appreciation.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Hank slams the door shut. Waits for Joey to pull away.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - TICKET BOOTH - NIGHT

A bored TICKET AGENT, 30s, looks at her monitor.

TICKET AGENT

Twelve thirty or four am. After
that, two thirty in the afternoon.

Hank reaches into his sock for cash.

HANK

The two thirty one. Any motels
nearby?

TICKET AGENT

One ninety five plus a five dollar
service fee. Yeah, around the
corner, across from Moe's.

HANK

Moe's?

TICKET AGENT

Tavern?

She prints his ticket. Hands it to him.

TICKET AGENT
You board at two ten, we leave
right on time. Don't be late.

Hank pockets his ticket, turns for the exit. Walks past
Barney, who has his back to Hank.

Barney watches Hank leave. Steps to the same ticket agent.

BARNEY
When's the next bus to Phoenix?

TICKET AGENT
What's with Phoenix? You're my
second one tonight. Twelve thirty.

BARNEY
I'm supposed to meet a buddy. Did
he already get a ticket?

TICKET AGENT
Yup, two thirty tomorrow afternoon.
It's one ninety five--

Barney sprints away.

EXT. MOE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Hank lingers, looks at the bar sign. Talks to himself.

HANK
You know you want to...

Takes a few steps towards it but stops.

HANK
No. Don't even think about it.

Turns for the motel.

INT. MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Hank counts out forty dollars cash to the front desk clerk.
Receives his key.

Sees Barney enter Moe's out of the corner of his eye.

HANK
Anyone comes looking for me, you
don't know me. Right?

Hands the clerk a ten dollar bill. The clerk nods.

EXT. MOE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Hank looks through a window. Sees Barney hold a picture up to the bartender. The bartender shakes his head.

Barney turns for the door. Hank ducks out of sight.

Barney exits the bar, beelines for the hotel. Shows the clerk Hank's photo. The clerk shakes his head.

HANK

Good boy!

Barney exits the hotel, scans all directions. Chooses one.

Hank looks back in the bar window. Debates some more.

Ducks into Moe's.

INT. MOE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Hank puts a twenty on the bar.

The bartender looks at him, nods knowingly.

HANK

What do people drink, that don't drink?

The bartender sprays seltzer into a glass. Adds a lime.

Hank takes a sip. Cringes as he swallows.

HANK

What the hell was that?

Slides the glass back to the bartender.

HANK

Do me a favor, champ? Fill a glass with two fingers of whiskey. Swish it around and dump it.

The bartender raises an eyebrow.

Hank slides the bill forward.

The bartender does as requested. Hands to glass to Hank.

Hank holds the glass. Ponders it. Breathes in the smell.

LARRY (O.S.)
What a damn fool thing.

LARRY ALVIN, 60s, rough and tumble, could be the Cleveland version of Hank, sits next to Hank.

LARRY
You some kind of freak?

HANK
You ever have just one, champ?

LARRY
Gonna sniff my chair when I leave?

Hank smiles, swirls the remnants at the bottom of the glass.

HANK
Set him up.
(to Larry)
What'll it be?

LARRY
I'd like a delicate bouquet. It
should have a hint of vanilla but a
sweet sandalwood finish.

The bartender scowls. Larry points at Hank's glass.

LARRY
Or that.

The bartender pours. Larry clinks his glass on Hank's empty.

LARRY
Ain't seen you here before.

Hank watches Larry smile as the whiskey hits bottom.

HANK
Passing through.

LARRY
Ain't that the life. Just roaming.

The bartender knocks on the bar in front of Hank. Hank looks to the door as Barney enters.

HANK
Shit.

Hank bends over, pretends to tie his shoes.

Barney wades through the crowd, scans the room. Larry steps in front of Hank so Barney can't see him.

Barney turns and heads back out the door.

LARRY
All clear.

Hank retakes his seat.

HANK
Much obliged, champ.

LARRY
The boss? Your girlfriend's husband? You owe him money?

HANK
He showed up in New York and now he's here. Don't know what I did. Don't want to find out.

Larry slams his drink.

LARRY
Wanna show some gratitude?

Hank motions for the bartender.

Larry nods to Hank's empty glass.

LARRY
Am I really gonna drink alone?

Hank looks at the empty glass.

LARRY
Don't just smell it.

Hank debates.

LARRY
You know you want it. Come on!

Hank slides the glass to the bartender.

HANK
Maybe I can have just one.

INT. MOE'S TAVERN - LATER

Hank and Larry hunch close. Drunken co-conspirators. Hank didn't have just one.

HANK

I hear you. With her--

LARRY

She always said come home, play
with the kids. Hell, woman?! I
got to work. Screw the kids.

HANK

And it's damned hard to be perfect.

LARRY

Then she complains, it's hot in
this house.

HANK

The expectations. Constant.

LARRY

So I bought her a fan.

Hank smiles wide. The first time we've seen him experience
actual joy.

HANK

You're a good man, Larry.

LARRY

Damn straight!

Hank rises. Larry grabs his arm to stop him.

LARRY

What?

HANK

Got to hit it, have a bus to catch.

Larry digs out some cash.

LARRY

Come on, one more. On me.

HANK

Shouldn't you go home and play with
the kids?

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Hank pulls the expensive pint bottle from his backpack.
Still full. Tosses it on the bed.

Roots around some more, finds the burner phone.

Lies down. Fingers his wedding band. Scrolls to Alice's name. Looks at her name for a long time. Hits enter.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

Alice lies in bed. Her phone buzzes.

ALICE

Hello.

(silence)

Hello?

She glances at the number.

ALICE

Hank? Is that you?

She's indecisive for the first time.

ALICE

Does this mean you're coming home?

Hank? Say something. Please?

The line goes dead.

Alice quickly dials Barney.

ALICE

He called. He didn't say anything, but when he first left--

BARNEY (V.O.)

He's booked for the two thirty bus tomorrow afternoon.

ALICE

He'd do that sometimes. It was creepy.

BARNEY (V.O.)

I'll call when he's on it.

ALICE

Now, it's somewhat reassuring.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME

Hank stares at the pint bottle on the bed next to him.

Pulls the bottle close. Grabs the cap to twist it. Stops.

HANK
(whimpers)
I'll just let her down again.

Holds the bottle to his chest. Closes his eyes. Drifts off.
The pint bottle falls from his hand onto the floor.

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - DAY

The two thirty bus idles.

Barney stands off to the side. Watches passengers come and go. Checks his watch.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Clothes scattered. Pint bottle on the floor.

Hank slowly awakens. Glances around unfamiliar surroundings. Realizes where he is, settles back in.

Sits up with a familiar pain. Reaches for his pants, pulls cash from his pocket. Counts it. Just a few bucks.

HANK
Way to go, champ.

Reaches for his socks. Drops cash from one. Counts out five twenty's. Sighs happily.

Looks at a bedside clock - 2:15pm.

HANK
Shit!

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - DAY

The driver closes the luggage compartment. Barney scans the terminal. Looks at his watch. Scans the terminal again.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - SAME

Hank sprints inside the station, sweats profusely. Checks the departure board. Races away.

EXT. BUS TERMINAL - DAY

Barney watches the bus pull away. Takes one last look around the terminal. Walks towards the station.

Hank reaches the terminal, looks for the bus slip.

Barney's phone rings.

BARNEY
Bad news, Mrs. M.

Hank sees Barney walk toward him. Freezes. Nowhere to hide.

Barney turns, looks back at the empty slip.

BARNEY
Left without him.
(listens)
No, I'd have seen him.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - BATHROOM - DAY

Hank splashes water on his face. Looks at his reflection. Now what?

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - TICKET BOOTH - DAY

Barney stands at the bored ticket agent's window.

TICKET AGENT
There's another one at four thirty.
That ticket will get him on it.

BARNEY
Appreciate it. Thank you.

Barney turns for the door. Pulls his phone from his pocket.

Hank exits the bathroom. Steps to the ticket booth.

HANK
Missed my bus. Can I get a refund?

The bored ticket agent shakes her head.

TICKET AGENT
Use that ticket for the four thirty
bus. Did your friend find you?

HANK
My friend?

TICKET AGENT
He was looking for you?

HANK
What'd you tell him?

TICKET AGENT
That you can use that ticket for
the four thirty bus.

Hank scans the terminal.

HANK
You sure I can't get a refund?

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - DAY

Barney watches people come and go at the bus station.

Hank exits. Looks in all directions. Walks away.

BARNEY
Got you.

Barney starts his car. Looks over his shoulder to pull out.

A gleaming silver tractor-trailer rolls up next to him.

Air brakes whine. The driver parks. Blocks Barney in.

BARNEY
(impatient)
Come on. Come on.

Barney lays on his horn.

The driver reaches through his window. Gives a quick wave with a meaty hand.

DRIVER (O.S.)
Sorry friend, didn't see you there.
Be just a minute.

EXT. HIGHWAY EXIT - DAY

Hank stands roadside with his thumb out. Cars whiz by.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - DAY

The tractor-trailer slowly rolls away.

Barney scans all directions for Hank. Nothing.

He pulls into the street but can't get around the big rig.
Keeps scanning.

BARNEY
Where did you go?

The big rig turns for the highway.

Barney thinks he sees Hank in the distance.

Steps on the gas to pass the big rig. But it's gone.

Barney shakes it off. Races to a stop close enough to confirm it's Hank but far enough that Hank can't see him.

Barney watches Hank hitchhike. Confused. Dials.

BARNEY
He's hitching.

ALICE (V.O.)
Hitching?

BARNEY
Shall I pick him up?

ALICE (V.O.)
Something must have spooked him.
Not yet.

BARNEY
You sure?

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - SAME

Alice watches Christopher at bat.

ALICE
Give him time.

FLASHBACK

INT. MEADE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alice enters. Finds Hank on a couch. Drink in hand.

ALICE
Home already?

Hank sips from his drink.

ALICE
A little early for that?

HANK
Need a break.

ALICE
Won't they be looking for you?

HANK
Run here. Run there. Meet this
guy. Do this favor. Deadlines.
Meetings. More deadlines.

ALICE
Did you let them know you left?

HANK
I'm spiraling. I know what I need
to do but can't make myself do it.

ALICE
How will this be perceived?

Hank takes a big gulp.

ALICE
Your father says you're doing fine.

HANK
(under his breath)
He's lying.
(to Alice)
I can't do this.

ALICE
We don't want to disappoint him.

Hank looks at Alice. She doesn't get it.

Alice looks at Hank. He'll be fine.

ALICE
Tomorrow will be better.

BACK TO SCENE

Alice hangs up. Christopher strikes out.

Alice shows a twinge of disappointment.

Christopher sees it. He frowns, he disappointed her.

ALICE
(cheers)
It's okay, honey. You'll do better
next time.

Alice and Christopher put on a happy face for each other.

EXT. HIGHWAY EXIT - LATER

Hank sits on the ground. Slumps against his backpack.

A high end SUV slows to a stop next to Hank. The passenger window slides down.

RODNEY (O.S.)
You okay out there?

Hank stands, looks in the window. Double takes. RODNEY CLOVER, 60s, a cleaned up, well dressed Skillet look-a-like smiles at him.

RODNEY
Need a ride?
(off Hank's nod)
Then come on, son.

INT. RODNEY'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Rodney drives, Hank stares at him.

HANK
You have a brother back east?

RODNEY
Oh, I get it. Us black folk all
look alike.
(off Hank's look)
Just messing with you, brother! He
must be one fine looking fellow.
Rodney Clover.

HANK
Hank Meade.

RODNEY
Where you headed?

HANK
Phoenix.

RODNEY
Well, I can get you to Champaign.

HANK
Much obliged, champ.

RODNEY
You thirsty?

Rodney hands Hank a bottle of water.

HANK
You have anything stronger?

RODNEY
That's called open container. So no. Plus, it's been a long time.

HANK
Just as well.

Hank downs the water. Pulls cigarettes from his backpack. Rodney eyes the smokes.

RODNEY
Don't make me slap the taste out
your mouth.

Hank puts them away.

RODNEY
This is going to be a long night if
I have to scold your ass the entire
way.

HANK
No need, out of vices.

RODNEY
Damn right! So what's your story?

Hank looks out the window. No response.

RODNEY
Oh, I see. You're the strong,
silent type.

Big laugh.

RODNEY
What? Me? Well, I married young,
had kids. Their mother left once
they were grown.

Rodney waits for a reaction. Gets none.

RODNEY

After that, I made my money the right way.

Hank turns to Rodney.

RODNEY

Married into it.
(laughs loudly)
Truth be told, wasn't a good husband the first time. Got a chance to make it right.

HANK

Was it easier the second time?

RODNEY

Lord no! It's never easy, just don't make the same mistake twice.

Hank looks out the window, thinks. Fiddles with his wedding band. Drifts off to sleep.

INT. RODNEY'S SUV - NIGHT

Hank awakens to Rodney's voice.

RODNEY

End of the line, Sleeping Beauty.

HANK

Sorry, I must have--

RODNEY

No must have. Sawed so many damned logs you can build your own ark.

HANK

Sorry.

RODNEY

Stop with that. Just be glad I'm not one to roll your ass. Should know better, living the way--

Rodney bites off the put down.

RODNEY

Listen. I know nothing about your life. Your choices. But that ring tells me one thing.

Hank reaches for the ring.

RODNEY

You still want it.

HANK

I'm not--

RODNEY

So be there. It's the most
important thing. Just be there.
(another big laugh)
And that's all the preachin' you
get from me.

HANK

You sure you don't have a brother
in the city?

Hank shakes Rodney's hand. Reaches for the car door.

RODNEY

Wait. Let's find you a motel.

Hank spots a convenience store out the window.

HANK

I'll be fine. Halfway there and
it's been relatively easy.

RODNEY

Nothing easy about your snoring.

Hank shuts the car door. Waits for Rodney to pull away.

Rodney checks his mirror. Waits for a car to move past him.
Taps the horn twice. Pulls away.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Barney parks at a convenience store. Looks around.

Hank walks towards the store.

A young guy gasses up his van. Steps to the back of it.
Sways as he takes a squirt.

Inside the store window, two young guys slap a case of beer
on the counter. Roughhouse a bit. The clerk watches them.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Hank steps to the doors when the young guys with the beer
burst out.

They race to the van. Throw the beer in the back. Stand next to their friend and squirt.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Hank pulls a bottle of water from a cooler. A hot dog from a grill. Steps to the counter.

The STORE CLERK, 20s, rings him up, watches the van.

Hank drops money on the counter and walks away.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Hank sits against the wall. Eats his hot dog.

The guys climb in the van. TYLER WOLF, 20, wild-eyed and in charge, looks over. Gets back out. Walks toward Hank.

TYLER

What up old man.

Hank looks at the other two inside the van. BO DUNCAN and JAKE BATTLE, 20s, are peas in a pod with Tyler. Dirty jeans. Dusty boots. Pocket tee's. More than a bit buzzed.

HANK

I'm fine.

TYLER

Don't look fine. Need a ride?

HANK

Don't want to be a bother.

TYLER

No bother. Where you heading?

Hank doesn't answer.

TYLER

Where?

HANK

(reluctantly)

West.

TYLER

Well it's your lucky day. We're heading west. And looking for adventure.

(MORE)

TYLER (CONT'D)
(over his shoulder)
Ain't that right, boys?!

They yell in response, raise their beers.

TYLER
We'll get you where you're going,
old man. Come on.

Hank rises, turns towards the store door.

Barney pops out of his car.

BARNEY
Hey!

All eyes turn to him. Barney starts around his car.

BARNEY
Leave him be!

Tyler steps to Barney. Talks to the van.

TYLER
Look what we got here, boys. A
Good Samaritan.

Tyler's boys jump from the van. Hank looks for a way out.

TYLER
Or what?

BARNEY
I'll call the cops.

TYLER
Good luck with that.

Barney looks at his phone. A single bar.

TYLER
Last chance, old man.

Hank eyes Barney warily. Follows Tyler.

Barney follows as Hank gets in the van with Tyler.

BARNEY
Don't do it Hank. I got you.

The van peels away.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Hank watches as the boys hoot and holler. Looks back at the convenience store.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - SAME

Barney stomps inside.

BARNEY

Call the cops!

STORE CLERK

And say what?

BARNEY

That... that...

STORE CLERK

Some guy got in the van with them?

BARNEY

They're intoxicated. Driving.

STORE CLERK

(shrugs)

That's the sheriff's son driving.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Tyler tosses Hank a beer. Hank considers it.

TYLER

Go on!

HANK

No thanks.

TYLER

Drink up!

HANK

Trying not to make the same mistake twice.

Tyler gets in his face.

TYLER

Drink! Or so help me old man...

Hank takes a sip. Winces. Sets the beer aside.

TYLER
Puts hair on your chest, don't it.

Tyler slams his beer.

TYLER
Not from here, are ya.

HANK
It's that apparent?

TYLER
I know everybody in this horseshit town. And everybody knows me. But I don't know you.

HANK
Hank.

TYLER
Tyler. That's Bo driving. Say hello Bo! The turd riding shotgun is Jake.

Hank nods to them, doesn't take his eyes off Tyler.

TYLER
Where to Hank?

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Barney drives, breathes deep to calm himself. Looks at his phone. Still one bar. Searches for the van.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Tyler waits.

HANK
Phoenix, eventually--

TYLER
Phoenix it is!

HANK
But you can drop me anywhere. I sure don't expect--

TYLER
Jake? As navigator, which do you suggest. Westerly to Springfield or southerly to St. Louis.

BO
I'd like to see the Arch.

TYLER
Shut the fuck up. Jake?

JAKE
St. Louis?

TYLER
St. Louis it is.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alice listens to her phone.

BARNEY (V.O.)
Leave a message after the beep.

ALICE
Barney, it's Alice. Why haven't I
heard from you? Call me.

Alice hits end, sets the phone on her nightstand.

Unwraps the scarf from her head. Runs her hands over her
bald scalp. Flicks the light off. Lies down.

Watches the phone. Waits for it to ring.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Tyler grabs two more beers. Tosses one to Hank.

Hank sets it aside.

TYLER
Ain't we good enough to drink with?

HANK
No, it's not--

TYLER
Hear that boys? We ain't good
enough for him.

Curses fly from the front seat.

TYLER
It's a shame, bro. I was just
starting to like you.

HANK
Just want to keep my wits about me.

TYLER
What? You got a piece of ass
waiting for you?

HANK
A long ride and all.

TYLER
That why you're going there?

Tyler leans in close. Hank freezes.

TYLER
Women make me crazy. Right boys?
(hoots and hollers)
Tell me about her.

HANK
Nothing to tell.

TYLER
Oh, she must be good to come all
this way. She tall? Pretty?

Hank fights to stay calm. Sweat drips from his brow.

TYLER
What's in the bag?

Hank pulls his backpack close.

TYLER
Come on. Show me.

HANK
Nothing to show.

Tyler snatches Hank's backpack. Unzips a zipper.

TYLER
Gotta be something.

Tyler pulls out the Viceroy's.

TYLER
Didn't know they still made these.

Toss them aside. Finds the burner phone. Scoffs at it, drops it. Hank grabs it, pockets it.

Tyler finds Hank's wallet. Mostly empty, except for an old license. Tyler laughs.

TYLER
Holy shit! You're in your forties?
(to his boys)
He's in his forties!
(to Hank)
What the hell happened to you?

Rummages some more. Pulls out the manila folder. Tears it open. Everything inside flies about.

Tyler finds the wedding photo.

TYLER
Son of a bitch.

Drops the backpack. Shows the boys in front the wedding pic.

TYLER
Well, spank my monkey.
(to Hank)
How's a man like you get her?

Hank pulls the backpack close.

TYLER
I bet she'd suck the chrome off a
trailer hitch.

Hank reaches for the photo.

TYLER
This is all you got?

Tyler holds the picture out of Hank's reach.

TYLER
Then you ain't got nothing.

Hank squeezes the backpack. Looks from Tyler to Bo to Jake.
Back to Tyler.

TYLER
You make me sick!

Tyler glares at Hank, his breath calms.

TYLER
Stop the van.

BO
Huh? What?

TYLER
Stop the van!

The van rattles and shakes as it skids to a stop.

TYLER
You sure you got nothing else?

Hank pulls a couple crumpled bills from his pocket. Tyler snatches them from his hand.

TYLER
You're shitting me.

Holds the bills up for Bo and Jake to see.

TYLER
Who travels with nothing?

Tosses the bills back at Hank. Hank reaches for his money. Tyler nails him in the face.

Hank falls back. Tyler punches him again.

TYLER
Nothing!

Bo and Jake join Tyler. Punch and kick Hank.

Hank holds the backpack like a shield. It doesn't help.

TYLER
Nothing!

Hank squirms, they punch away.

Hank kicks at them. Tries to fend them off. His cash slips out of his sock. Jake sees it.

JAKE
Tyler!

Hank curls into a fetal ball.

Tyler counts the cash. Sticks it in his pocket.

TYLER
You holding out on me!

Tyler, Bo and Jake pound away on Hank.

Blood spurts from his face. Ribs crack.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Tyler flings Hank from the van. Slams the door shut.

Hank lies on the shoulder. Unresponsive.

The door flies open. His backpack flies out. The door slams shut again.

The van speeds away into the darkness.

Tires squeal. The van races back where it came from.

Hank lifts his head, tries to get his bearings. Pulls the backpack close.

Tries to rise but can't. Coughs blood.

Rolls off the shoulder into the grass.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Hank wakes with a start. Finds his fedora on the ground.

Trees and grass for miles. A quiet, country road. The sun shines bright but a large black cloud looms in the distance.

Winces as he rises. Chooses a direction and limps away.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - SAME

Barney drives and dials.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Alice sits up, grabs her phone.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ALICE

Something's happened?

BARNEY

Bad news Mrs. M. I lost him.

ALICE

I knew it.

BARNEY

He hopped in a van with a bunch of punks. I'm on my way--

ALICE
Don't tell me what you're going to
do. Just do it.

BARNEY
To the last place I saw him.

ALICE
No excuses.

Alice hits end. Lies back in bed.

Christopher lingers at the door.

CHRISTOPHER
Who was that Mommy?

Alice reaches for her scarf.

Christopher steps to the bed. Touches her bald head.

CHRISTOPHER
I like you better this way.

Alice hugs him tight. Eyes well with tears.

CHRISTOPHER
Can I have some breakfast?

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Hank hears a car approach. Turns, sticks his thumb out.

The car whizzes by.

Hank trudges on, looks at the sky. The dark cloud, now bigger, sits above him.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Barney talks. DEPUTY LITTLE, 20s, eager, overly official but wet behind the ears, takes notes.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER

Hank looks up as the first drops fall. Sky as dark as night. Thunder and lightning.

HANK
(ironic smile)
Easy so far? Dumbass...

Looks around. Spots an underpass ahead. Limps toward it.

INT. DEPUTY LITTLE'S VEHICLE - DAY

Wipers flap, can't keep up with the rain.

Deputy Little and Barney in the front seat. Tyler, Bo and Jake ride silently in the back.

EXT. UNDERPASS - DAY

Hank, drenched, steps under the bridge.

Sits on the embankment, out of breath.

The rain blows sideways. Puddles form around his shoes.

He scurries up the embankment for cover.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Barney and Deputy Little hold umbrellas. Shine flashlights where the boys dumped Hank.

Deputy Little steps into the grass. Barney to the car.

BARNEY

You sure?

TYLER

He wanted out.

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Hank sleeps high up on the embankment, backpack as a pillow.

Headlights and two spotlights glimmer in the distance.

INT. DEPUTY LITTLE'S VEHICLE - NIGHT

Deputy Little shines a spotlight on the driver side of the road. Barney beams his on the other.

DEPUTY LITTLE

I say we call it.

BARNEY

No, keep going!

DEPUTY LITTLE
Start fresh in the morning.

Deputy Little cuts his light, pulls over. Makes a U-turn.

Barney's light shines on the underpass during the U-turn.

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Hank shivers. Sits up, opens his backpack.

Uses extra clothes to cover himself. Doesn't help. Feels the burner phone in his pocket.

Stares at it for a long time. Hits power. It lights up.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Christopher and Alice, without her scarf, play a board game. Her phone rings. Alice looks at the number.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ALICE

Hank?

Silence.

ALICE

Where are you?

More silence.

HANK

I don't know.
(voice quivers)
So cold.

Her eyes glisten. Christopher touches her shoulder.

CHRISTOPHER

It's okay, Mommy.

ALICE

I have people looking for you. Can you tell me where you are?

HANK

I just wanted to tell you--

ALICE

Look around, please?

HANK
So dark. Freezing cold.

ALICE
Any landmarks? Buildings?

HANK
Under a bridge.

ALICE
A bridge? Okay, okay...

HANK
I'm not going to make it.

ALICE
Don't say that.

HANK
I want you to know--

ALICE
I'll send help!

HANK
I tried.

Silence.

ALICE
Hank? Hank?

Nothing.

ALICE
Stay on the line, let me help you!

Hank hits end.

ALICE
Hank?!

Alice hits end. Dials.

CHRISTOPHER
Who's Hank?

ALICE
(to Christopher)
Wait, monkey.
(into phone)
He's under a bridge.

CHRISTOPHER
Help him, Mommy!

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - SAME

Barney listens.

BARNEY
A bridge?

ALICE
He called. It's dark. He's
freezing. Under a bridge.

Barney thinks, lights up.

BARNEY
I know where he is.

ALICE
Oh, God! Oh God!

BARNEY
Get him back on the line.

ALICE
I'll try.

Dials Hank. Waits to merge the call. It rings and rings.

ALICE
He won't pick up.

BARNEY
Don't worry. I'm on the way.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Alice hits end. Offers Christopher a nervous smile.

CHRISTOPHER
Is Hank okay?

ALICE
He will be, monkey. He will be.

CHRISTOPHER
Pfew! Who's Hank?

ALICE
A man I used to know.

CHRISTOPHER
Why are you so worried?

ALICE
Let's get back to that game, okay?

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Hank lies on his side, shivers. Eyes closed.

UP THE ROAD

Headlights appear in the dark.

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Hank opens his eyes. Sees the headlights.

ON THE ROAD

Headlights are bigger. Closer. Shimmer on the wetness.

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Hank feels a rumble. Air brakes whine.

A gleaming silver tractor-trailer idles.

Hank pushes himself up on one arm.

The passenger door shoots open.

Hank squints in the darkness.

BIG RICK (O.S.)
Looks like you can use a hand,
friend.

Hank rises. His fedora falls from his head.

BIG RICK (O.S.)
Let me help you.

Gathers his things. Misses his fedora. Makes his way down the embankment.

Steps to the rig. Looks inside.

BIG RICK, 50s, a mountain of a man, smiles brightly. He wears the standard trucker's outfit of the last fifty years - flannel shirt, t-shirt and jeans - and rocks a faded "JAWS" ball cap atop his head.

Hank climbs in. Drops his bag and settles.

BIG RICK
I mean no offense, friend, but you
look like hell.

Hank winces as he grins, worn through and through.

HANK
You have a keen eye, champ.

BIG RICK
They call me Big Rick. This here's
The Shadow.

HANK
And are my new hero.

Big Rick puts the rig in gear.

BIG RICK
No hero. Just happen to be at the
right place for someone in need.

Drives off.

BIG RICK
And glad for the company. Where
you headed, Hank?

HANK
How far you going?

BIG RICK
We're on the road pretty constant.

Hank looks confused. Big Rick nods to the back.

BIG RICK
There's your hero. Calamity Jane.

Hank turns. A grey snouted boxer lifts her head off the bunk. Considers him. Goes back to sleep.

BIG RICK
My companion forever.

HANK
To Phoenix, if you're going that
far. If not--

BIG RICK
Here that Jane? Phoenix bound.
You watch for bears. I'll put the
pedal to the metal.

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Barney shines his flashlight on the road. Phone to his ear.

BARNEY
The only bridge between here and
Champaign.

Deputy Little walks towards Barney. Shakes his head.

ALICE (V.O.)
Keep looking.

Barney runs his light up the embankment. Passes over where
Hank camped. Stops. Goes back.

BARNEY
Wait.

Barney hurries up the embankment.

ALICE (V.O.)
What is it?

Barney reaches Hank's spot. Sees the fedora.

BARNEY
He was here.

ALICE (V.O.)
Was?

Barney takes a pic of it with his phone. Texts it.

Alice gasps on the other end of his line.

BARNEY
We're close.

ALICE (V.O.)
He practically slept in that thing.

BARNEY
We'll find him, Mrs. M.

INT. THE SHADOW - NIGHT

Big Rick looks over at Hank, who's closed his eyes.

BIG RICK
If you don't mind me asking, what's
got you in such a state?

Hank opens his eyes but doesn't say anything. Big Rick looks in his rearview mirror.

BIG RICK
Listen to me go on, Jane.
(to Hank)
Don't mean to pry, it's just ole
Jane's not much for conversation.

HANK
It's not that.

BIG RICK
And we do have about two days to
kill together. Give or take.

HANK
It hurts to breathe.

BIG RICK
Where are my manners? You hungry?
Thirsty?

Big Rick nods to a cooler between the seats.

Hank grabs a bottle of water. Guzzles it down. Settles in.

BIG RICK
Not what you're looking for?

Big Rick pounds the dash. A small compartment pops open. Holds a pint bottle of whiskey and a pack of Viceroy's.

Hank's jaw drops.

BIG RICK
Been years. But they remind me of
the good ole days.

Hank stares at the bounty.

BIG RICK
Go on!

Hank reaches for the whiskey but stops himself.

Pushes in the lighter on the dash. Opens a pack of smokes. The lighter pops. Lights his cigarette. Relaxes.

HANK
It's like you're in my head.

EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Deputy Little shows Hank's photo to a handful of deputies and other volunteers.

DEPUTY LITTLE
Moving on foot, we assume.

Barney holds Hank's fedora as a blood hound sniffs it.

DEPUTY LITTLE
Took a beating and injured. Can't be far. Spread out. Work together and let's find this son of a bitch.

The hound races off down the street. Barney follows it.

INT. THE SHADOW - NIGHT

Big Rick looks through the windshield. Squints.

Up ahead, flashers blink from the roadside.

BIG RICK
Well, I'll be...

Big Rick gears his rig down. Slows it to a crawl.

A WOMAN, 30's, works the jack on her car on the shoulder.

BIG RICK
You're not the only one having a rough time tonight.

Big Rick pulls to the side of the road. Stops.

BIG RICK
Let's give her a hand. You get it started--

HANK
Can't we call someone?

BIG RICK
And I'm right behind you.
Sometimes it takes me a while to
get this big body moving.

HANK
I'm not real handy.

Big Rick gives Hank a stern going over.

BIG RICK
I have a feeling you'll answer the
bell when it rings.

EXT. WOMAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Hank steps up as the woman struggles with the lug wrench.

HANK
Can I help?

The woman screams. Drops the wrench. Jumps away from Hank.

HANK
Didn't mean to startle you. Here.
I think if we...

Hank picks up the wrench. Lowers the car so the wheel
touches the ground. Loosens the lug nuts.

HANK
Let mother nature do the heavy
lifting.

WOMAN
Thank you, uh...

HANK
Hank.

WOMAN
I didn't mean to... it's just...

HANK
No worries.

The woman looks around.

Hank pulls the flat off, sets it aside. Puts the spare on.

HANK
(to himself)
Where is he?

The woman looks back at Hank. Confused.

Hank lowers the jack. Checks the lug nuts one more time.

HANK

He's like a blister. Comes out
after the work is done.

Hank carries the flat to the back of the car. Places it into
the trunk. Mops his brow. Something's missing.

HANK

Was I wearing... never mind.
You're good to go, ma'am.

WOMAN

Here, let me give you something.

HANK

Not necessary.

The woman leans into her car for her purse.

Hank wanders off toward The Shadow.

The woman pops back out with her purse.

WOMAN

Really. I'd feel better if...

She's alone.

WOMAN

Hello? Hank? Hank!

The woman pulls out her phone.

INT. THE SHADOW - NIGHT

Hank climbs in, looks around.

HANK

Right behind me?

BIG RICK

And you said you weren't handy.

Big Rick puts the truck in gear. Pulls away.

HANK

You seen my hat?

BIG RICK
Tell me that didn't feel good.

HANK
Kind of ratty?

BIG RICK
Seems to me you can do whatever you
put your mind to.

Big Rick nods to the compartment.

BIG RICK
Which is worthy of a celebration.

Hank reaches for the pint bottle. Holds it. Licks his lips.

HANK
The old me didn't need a reason to
party.

BIG RICK
And the new you?

HANK
Wishes he was the old me.

Hank places the bottle back in the compartment but doesn't
take his eyes off it.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - NIGHT

Barney drives. Phone to his ear.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Alice sets a bowl in front of Christopher. Phone to her ear.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

ALICE
How is that even possible?

BARNEY
All I know is, a woman claims a man
named Hank came out of nowhere and
fixed her flat.

ALICE
Over a hundred miles from the
search area.

BARNEY
Know any other Hanks?

ALICE
Excuse me?

BARNEY
Sorry, Mrs. M. Sleep deprivation.
I'll let you know.

Alice hangs up.

ALICE
(to herself)
Where are you?

CHRISTOPHER
You're talking about Hank again?

ALICE
Eat your soup before it gets cold.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

Hank slowly awakens.

BIG RICK
Good morning, Sleeping Beauty.

HANK
How long was I out?

BIG RICK
Ten hours, I'd guess.

HANK
You drove through the night?

BIG RICK
Your snoring kept me alert.
(off Hank's look)
Besides, old Jane does the sleeping
for both of us.

HANK
Still...

BIG RICK
There's a truck stop up the road a
piece. We'll gas her up, bump the
tires. All the down time I need.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - DAY

Barney drives, phone to his ear.

BARNEY
The weirdest thing.
(listens)
Like he disappeared.
(listens)
No. Don't worry.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Big Rick shuts down the rig.

BIG RICK
I'll gas up. Go get yourself a
bite and we'll hit the road.

HANK
(sheepishly)
Um, I'm a little light.

Big Rick smiles knowingly, nods to the glove box. Hank pulls out a twenty dollar bill.

BIG RICK
Help's out there, just have to ask.

INT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Hank sets a coffee, sandwich and some chips on the counter.

TEDDY MCGRAW, 50s, dented bald head and a mouthful of missing teeth, barely looks up.

TEDDY
Anything else? Say a lottery
ticket out of town?

HANK
No thanks, champ. Passing through.

TEDDY
Lucky you. Need a bag?

HANK
(nods)
Don't want to make a mess in The
Shadow.

Teddy perks up. Looks at Hank like he's crazy.

HANK
You know Big Rick?

TEDDY
Mister, anybody who's anybody in
trucking knows Big Rick. You're
riding with him?

HANK
He's gassing up.

Teddy gives a half-hearted look at the pumps.

TEDDY
Sure you are.

Hank and Teddy exchange money.

TEDDY
Tell Big Rick that Teddy says hey.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

Big Rick sits behind the wheel. Hank opens the glove box to
put in the change.

BIG RICK
Keep it.

HANK
Don't you need to hit the john?
Get a bite?

BIG RICK
We're burning daylight, son.

Hank pockets the cash.

HANK
By the way, Teddy said to say hey.

Big Rick puts the rig in gear.

BIG RICK
He get those teeth fixed yet?

Hank laughs.

BIG RICK
Some things never change.

INT. THE SHADOW - LATER

Big Rick glances at Hank.

BIG RICK
When do you plan to tell me about
your downstroke?

Hank raises an eyebrow at Big Rick.

BIG RICK
This ride ain't free, son.

HANK
Thought you were offering a hand.

BIG RICK
The cost is the truth.

Hank considers Big Rick.

HANK
Ran away a long time ago.

BIG RICK
What's brought you back?

HANK
Sick wife. And a son I didn't know
I had.

Which hits Big Rick hard.

BIG RICK
Kids...

HANK
You have a family?

BIG RICK
...turn me into mush.

They ride silently.

BIG RICK
You left because?

HANK
How much longer we got, Dr. Phil?

BIG RICK
As long as it takes.

HANK

Couldn't hack it. Nobody
understood.

BIG RICK

Understood what?

HANK

That every decision piled on the
last. Snowballed, until I was
mentally locked. You might say
frozen in the desert.

(chuckles)

It's not that I didn't want to
succeed. I couldn't. So I
disappeared before I let everyone
down. Again.

BIG RICK

To the city with the most people?

HANK

Ironic, huh?

BIG RICK

And Alice was okay with it?

HANK

Alice... always perfect. Capable
of getting whatever she wants.

Big Rick nods, agrees.

HANK

(quietly)

Better off without me.

BIG RICK

Yet she calls you back?

Hank thinks.

FLASHBACK

EXT. PIESTEWA PEAK - NIGHT

Alice stands at the summit, sips water. Watches the sun set
on the city below.

ALICE

The important part is you did it.

Hank looks near death behind her, hunched over a boulder. He wheezes between deep breaths.

ALICE

You tried something new, got out of
your comfort zone. Look what you
accomplished.

Hank forces himself up. Stands next to her.

ALICE

So beautiful.

HANK

Is this how it will always be?

ALICE

Besides, I need you looking good
when you walk down that aisle.

HANK

Me, your anchor?

Alice turns to Hank, looks deep into his eyes.

ALICE

You don't know how many people are
in your corner. Want the best for
you. Will help--

HANK

I don't want to be that.

ALICE

No questions asked.

HANK

I won't be that.

ALICE

Just put yourself out there. Open
up. Show everyone the Hank I fell
in love with.

Hank nods, noncommittal.

ALICE

I believe in you.

HANK

(smiles)

So, how do we get down?
Helicopter?

ALICE
That's more like it.

Alice takes Hank's hand. Leads him back to the trail.

ALICE
I repeat, I need you looking good.

BACK TO SCENE

HANK
She had more confidence in me than
I had in myself.

BIG RICK
She's one smart woman.

HANK
You could say that. Then, again...

BIG RICK
Never thought about going back
before this?

Hank shakes his head.

BIG RICK
What kept you there?

HANK
Would you believe pride?

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

A cashier shakes her head as Barney shows her Hank's picture.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

Hank drags from his cigarette.

HANK
Ten years.

BIG RICK
Time flies.

HANK
At first, I enjoyed the little
things. The Park. Being in the
mix but not really.

BIG RICK
In the blink of an eye.

HANK
But that city will eat you up.

BIG RICK
Changes your perspective.

HANK
It became about surviving. That
next drink.

BIG RICK
You never asked for help?

HANK
And be revealed? Humiliated? It's
not what Meade men do.

BIG RICK
Not exactly what I mean.

HANK
We muscle through. Only I
couldn't. So I dulled the pain.

BIG RICK
You have step one down already.

HANK
Until I didn't know which pain I
was dulling. And Alice...

BIG RICK
And are working on step four.

Hank's eyes glaze over.

HANK
Figured she wouldn't want me back
anyway. Just as well.

BIG RICK
And the wall goes back up.

HANK
You wanted the truth.

INT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

Barney shows Teddy Hank's photo. Teddy laughs.

TEDDY
Musta been high. Said he was
riding in The Shadow.

BARNEY
The what?

Teddy looks past Barney.

TEDDY
Next.
(to Barney)
And I sail on the Black Pearl.

Teddy rings up the next customer.

BARNEY
How long ago?

TEDDY
Early this morning, maybe.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

The sun sets in the windshield. Big Rick flicks on the interior lights.

BIG RICK
Sounds like you have two steps down.

Hank looks at Rick with a side eye.

HANK
Here we go.

BIG RICK
They seem to work. Maybe give it--

HANK
Only he can restore me to sanity?
Right? Turn my will over to him?
Ask him to remove my defects?

BIG RICK
Okay, you're familiar with it--

HANK
He gave me these defects. Then abandoned me.

BIG RICK
But don't you see?

HANK

Does this count for the one where I
admit out loud the exact nature of
my wrongs?

BIG RICK

You're working them already. It's
like you have a plan.

HANK

A plan?

Hank's eyes flash fear.

HANK

My chest gets tighter the closer we
get.

He pounds the dash like Big Rick. The compartment pops open.

HANK

I've barely kept myself above water
for years.

Grabs the pint. Cracks it open. Breathes it in. Savors it.

HANK

You know what this is? An old
friend.

BIG RICK

Run with it.

HANK

Who knows me well. Doesn't expect
things from me. Judge me.

BIG RICK

Make it your own.

HANK

Makes me feel... less overwhelmed.

Hank brings the bottle to his lips. Pauses.

BIG RICK

Look at your hands.

Hank looks at his hands. They're still.

BIG RICK

You rolled past the shakes already,
didn't even know it. You're making
amends to Alice. All good things.

HANK

And somehow, in the midst of all
this, I'm supposed to take care of
a kid?

BIG RICK

The rest will come.

Hank debates.

BIG RICK

But it has to come from you.

Tightens the cap back on the bottle. Stares out the window.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alice stares at the sunset. Phone to her ear.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - SAME

Barney slugs down coffee. Phone to his ear.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

BARNEY

Crazy good time. However he's
getting there.

ALICE

So you've found him?

BARNEY

No, but a wacko at the truck stop
confirmed they stopped there.

ALICE

They?

BARNEY

Whoever Hank's riding with.

ALICE

Any idea when he might arrive?

BARNEY

Midday tomorrow, I'd guess.

ALICE

Are you safe? Had any rest?

BARNEY

I'm fine Mrs. M. Let me know if
you hear from him.

ALICE

Thank you, Barney.

Alice clicks end. Continues to stare at the sunset.

ALICE

(loudly)

Monkey?! Come here. I have
something I need to tell you.

INT. THE SHADOW - NIGHT

Hank fights to stay awake.

BIG RICK

Thinking tires a man out.

HANK

What about driving?

BIG RICK

Seems to me you have one choice.

HANK

Should we stop?

BIG RICK

And that's how you want to be
remembered.

HANK

That shipped sailed--

BIG RICK

As a man who ran away? Or one that
came back and--

HANK

A long time ago.

BIG RICK

Did what's right?

HANK

And how will they remember you?

Big Rick looks over with a gleam in his eye.

BIG RICK
Don't worry about me. My story is told. And it's a humdinger.

Big Rick gives two long pulls on his horn.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

The air brakes whine. Big Rick puts the rig in park.

Hank awakens with a start.

BIG RICK
Well look at you, Sleeping Beauty.

Hank fights to shake off the fog.

HANK
What time is it?

BIG RICK
Time for you to make those final steps home.

HANK
We're--?

BIG RICK
Just outside of it.

Hank looks around, tries to get his bearings.

BIG RICK
Need to take a turn up ahead and this is as close as I can get you.

Big Rick points to a roadside diner.

BIG RICK
Besides, they make the best cup of joe west of the Mississippi.

Hank gathers his things.

BIG RICK
You still got that change right?

Hank nods.

BIG RICK
Tell them Big Rick set you up.

HANK
I'll do that.

Awkward silence.

HANK
I...

BIG RICK
It's been a pleasure having you
along for the ride.

HANK
Still--

BIG RICK
You're a good man, Hank. And I
know you'll do right by them.

Hank steps out of the truck. Looks back.

HANK
Much obliged, champ.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

Hank slams the door shut. Steps back as Big Rick pulls away
and blasts the horn twice.

Hank squints through the dust that rises from the wheels.

Turns, looks at the diner. Reaches into his backpack.

Looks back down the road. No sign of The Shadow.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Hank stands outside the diner. Phone to his ear.

HANK
Hi Alice.

INT. MEADE HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Relief floods over Alice.

INTERCUT TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

ALICE
That last call. You had me
worried. You made it?

HANK

Close. At the Desert Dove Diner.
You know the place?

ALICE

No, but I'll send someone who will.
You're okay?

HANK

More important, how are you?

ALICE

Better now.

HANK

Alice, I--

ALICE

Don't worry about that now. Stay
put until Barney gets there.

HANK

He'll know me?

ALICE

Trust me, he will.

INT. DINER - DAY

Hank scans the room.

The cook slides a plate to the warmer and rings a bell.

Drivers and other customers fill the booths. Waitresses move
among them.

Hank plops down at the counter.

VERA WINNY, 80s, with more speed than you'd expect from a
woman her age, sets and fills a water glass in front of Hank.

VERA

What can I get cha, hun?

HANK

I hear this joint has the best joe
West of the Mississippi.

VERA

You heard right.

HANK

Then give me a big cup. And a
slice of pie.

VERA

For breakfast?

Hank smiles.

HANK

By the way... Big Rick set me up.

Vera's jaw drops. The water picture falls from her hands.
Bounces when it hits the floor.

Coffee cups fall and scatter. Plates shatter.

Dead quiet.

Hank scans the room. Every eye stares back at him.

HANK

Did I say something wrong?

Vera snaps back to life.

VERA

Not at all, hun. It's just...

Vera looks around the room.

Customers pretend to return to their meals.

Other waitresses gather broken cups and plates but listen.

The cook goes back to his griddle but keeps his eyes on Vera.

VERA

Everyone here knows about Big Rick.

FLASHBACK

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

The Shadow thunders down the highway.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

Big Rick drives, dressed and looks the same as with Hank
except his JAWS ball cap looks brand new.

Sings along with a 70s song. Calamity Jane rides in the passenger seat. Howls along with him.

BIG RICK
Sing it, sister!

Big Rick reaches over, pets Calamity Jane.

BIG RICK
We're Home Twenty in record time if
the roller skates stay out of the
hammer lane.

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

A school bus ambles up a country road.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Kids take up every seat. Laugh. Roughhouse.

BUS DRIVER, 50s, takes his eye off the road. Glances in his rearview. Then to the CHAPERONE, 30s, in the front row.

BUS DRIVER
If you don't quiet 'em, I will.

The chaperone stands.

CHAPERONE
One, two, three. All eyes on me.

Bus Driver looks back at the road.

CHAPERONE
Dial it down so Mr. Bus Driver can
get us home safe.

The kids boo. Bronx cheer. The Bus Driver looks in the rearview. Doesn't think it's funny.

INT. THE SHADOW - DAY

Big Rick talks into his CD radio.

BIG RICK
Big Rick going ten seven. Catch
you on the flipside.

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

The Shadow rumbles up an incline.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - SAME

Bus Driver comes to a stop. Looks in all directions.

Someone SCREECHES from the back of the bus.

Bus Driver looks in his rearview.

The chaperone jumps up.

CHAPERONE

What now?

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

The bus makes a right at a crossroad.

The Shadow crests the hill.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Bus Driver glances out his window as he makes the right.

A child again screams bloody murder in back.

Bus Driver continues the turn. Looks in his rearview mirror.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

Big Rick rubs Calamity Jane's ears. Looks back to the road. Sees the school bus in the middle of its turn.

BIG RICK

Good Lord!

Pulls on his horn.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - SAME

Bus Driver hears the horn. Looks back to the road. The Shadow races toward him.

Bus Driver freezes. Slams on his brake. Stops.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

Big Rick grabs the wheel tightly. Looks for an escape route. Cranks his wheel to the left.

The rig turns sideways.

His trailer locks up. Swivels at the link. Jackknifes.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - SAME

Quiet. All eyes watch the Shadow bear down on them.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

Big Rick holds the steering wheel with all his might. Goes into a skid.

The rig shakes and shudders.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

The jackknifed Shadow misses the school bus by inches.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

Big Rick let's out a celebratory howl.

Fights to get the rig in control.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

The trailer snaps back behind The Shadow. Then whipsaws the other way across the road.

The Shadow follows it, like it was spun on its axis.

The Shadow swings wildly. Turns onto its side. Slams into a power pole.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

The Shadow crumples. Windshield shatters. Big Rick and Calamity Jane get thrown from their seats.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

The pole cracks. The power supply teeters above The Shadow.

INT. THE SHADOW - SAME

Calamity Jane whimpers. Climbs through the wreckage. Finds Big Rick. Licks his face.

Big Rick comes to.

BIG RICK
We did it, Jane.

Tries to move but can't. Pinned under debris.

BIG RICK
Go on, Jane. Git. Save yourself.

Calamity Jane bites onto his sleeve. Tries to pull him.

Big Rick hears a crack. Looks up.

BIG RICK
(louder)
Go on now!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SAME

The pole snaps. The power supply falls. Slams into The Shadow. It bursts into flames.

BACK TO SCENE

Quiet as a mouse. All eyes on Vera.

VERA
That was the end of the game for
Big Rick and Calamity Jane.

Customers go back to their meals. The workers to their jobs.

VERA
He gave his life to save those
kids.

HANK
How is it possible that he... I...

VERA
It's funny. They say every now and
then, if you're down on your luck--

HANK
I'm not the first?

VERA
Down to your last, don't think
you'll survive.

HANK
There were others?

VERA
Big Rick will give you a ride.

Hank leans back to take it all in.

VERA
Let me get you that order. On the
house.

INT. DINER - DAY

Hank holds a coffee cup. His mind races.

ALICE (V.O.)
Look what you accomplished.

JOEY (V.O.)
This thing you're doing? It's a
good thing.

NATHAN (V.O.)
You know what your first step is?

RODNEY (V.O.)
Don't make the same mistake twice.

BIG RICK (V.O.)
But it has to come from you.

NATHAN (V.O.)
And put some schvitz into it!

Hanks chuckles.

VERA
Getcha anything else, hun?

Nods to himself as he comes to a conclusion.

HANK
Vera. You like a taste of whiskey
now and then?

VERA

Two shots each morning, two at night. Never sick a day in my life.

Pulls the pint bottle from his backpack. Hands it to her.

VERA

(impressed)
The good stuff.

She looks at it. Hands it back to Hank but he won't take it.

HANK

For you.

VERA

I couldn't.

HANK

Please.

Vera takes the bottle begrudgingly.

HANK

I'm not a top shelf kind of guy.

A bell jingles at the door.

BARNEY (O.S.)

Hello, Hank.

Hank looks to the door. Barney smiles back at him.

Hank springs from his seat. Looks for a way out.

BARNEY

Whoa, easy. Alice sent me.

Hank relents. Relaxes a bit.

BARNEY

You sure made it hard on me.

Barney steps to Hank. Hank watches him warily.

BARNEY

Been looking for this?

Barney holds out Hank's fedora.

INT. BARNEY'S CAR - DAY

Hank holds his fedora in his lap. Ponders it as Barney talks in the background.

BARNEY

It's like you disappeared.

EXT. MEADE HOUSE - DAY

Hank rings the doorbell, hat in hand.

The door slides open a crack.

Alice looks out. Smiles quickly, lets out a contented sigh.

ALICE

I knew you'd make it.

The door flies open fully. Christopher looks up at Hank.

Hank stares back. Unsure.

ALICE

Christopher, this is... Hank.

Christopher looks Hank up and down.

CHRISTOPHER

So what do I call you?

Hank smiles.

HANK

Whatever you want, champ.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - NIGHT

Rain pelts the ground.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - BUS STOP - NIGHT

A young woman, 20s, sits on a bench. Knees to her chest, fetal position.

Cheeks damp from tears. Clothes drenched from rain.

The ground around her rumbles. Air brakes whine.

She looks up. The Shadow looms above her.

The passenger door pops open.

BIG RICK (O.S.)
Looks like you can use a hand,
friend.

The young woman stands. Peers inside.

Big Rick, in his faded JAWS ball cap, beams back at her.

BIG RICK
Let me help you.

The young woman looks around. Unsure.

BIG RICK
I'm Big Rick and this here's The
Shadow. I think Calamity Jane will
take kindly to you, Nora.

Nora looks back at Big Rick then Calamity Jane. Calamity Jane raises her head. Considers Nora. Goes back to sleep.

Big Rick extends his meaty hand to Nora. Helps her in.

EXT. SMALL TOWN - NIGHT

The Shadow pulls away. It's lights fade into the darkness.

FADE OUT.