

THE BALLAD OF MR. X V2

Written by

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FADE IN:

**INSERT: CHICAGO, 1952**

INT/EXT. POLICE CAR (MOVING) - DUSK

A police car patrols the streets of Chicago. Inside are officers FREDDIE SMITH and DONALD MCMANUS, both 20s, fresh out of the police academy with nothing to lose. Freddie is clean shaven and Donald has a SCAR across his face. They both wear police uniforms. Donald drives.

DONALD

What's your opinion on the law?

FREDDIE

Well, I'm not sure. But I really thought people had more respect for it.

Donald smiles.

DONALD

Fascinating.

FREDDIE

Jokes on me I guess.

DONALD

I think law is a bunch of horse shit, if I'm being honest.

FREDDIE

But, you're a cop!

DONALD

People are going to do what they want. Law doesn't really stop it. Look at prohibition for instance.

FREDDIE

Well, that was just a bad law.

DONALD

Whose to say which laws are bad and which are good? What it all comes down to, I think, is FAMILY.

FREDDIE

I thought your parents had died.

Donald glances at Freddie.

DONALD

That don't change the principle. A noble man should find some sort of loyalty to live by, the best being for the family.

Donald and Freddie stare at each other.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I would do anything for my family.

Freddie grills Donald. Donald notices.

DONALD (CONT'D)

If I had one.

FREDDIE

So you don't believe in law, why did you become a cop anyway?

Donald smiles.

DONALD

Let's just say forces outside my control lead me to this life. Destiny.

FREDDIE

Destiny?

DONALD

That's right. Anyways, what about your family? What does your dad do?

FREDDIE

He was a farmer, I grew up on a farm just outside the city.

DONALD

Was?

FREDDIE

Yeah, my dad passed. So did my mom.

DONALD

What happened?

FREDDIE

If you must know, my mom died when I was really little, she had a cancer of some sort. And my Pop.

Freddie hesitates. Donald eyes him.

DONALD

Yeah?

FREDDIE

My Pop killed himself, tragic stuff.

They sit in silence.

DONALD

(Jovially)

Heavy Freddie. Maybe one day I'll tell you about my parents.

Donald and Freddie stare at each other.

DONALD (CONT'D)

(Winking)

If you're lucky.

DISPATCH stirs to life.

DISPATCH O.S.

Report of domestic disturbance over on 27 Richardson street, apartment 4D. Closest vehicles please respond.

Donald picks up the device.

DONALD

This is patrol car 57, we are about a block from the location, heading over.

DISPATCH O.S.

Copy, that.

DONALD

Let's get our hands dirty.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DUSK

A police car parks next to the building. The street is empty. Freddie and Donald step out of the car. They approach the building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DUSK

It is dark. Freddie and Donald pull out flashlights. Two beams of LIGHT illuminate their surroundings. Elevator is out of order. Freddie and Donald creep up the stairs.

At the fourth floor an elderly woman pops from the corner. Freddie jumps. Donald laughs.

DONALD  
Did you call 911?

WOMAN  
(Frantically)  
I heard a scream, and then a thud.  
And silence ever since. It's got to  
be something awfully dreadful.

FREDDIE  
Mam, don't worry about a thing. Why  
don't you go back to your apartment  
and let us handle it?

WOMAN  
Yeah, sure.

Freddie and Donald proceed to apartment 4D. The woman follows. They stop in front of door '4D'.

Freddie and Donald pull out GUNS. They both hold flashlight and gun towards door. Donald turns the door knob. The door creaks open.

INT. APARTMENT 4D - DUSK

Room is dark. Faint light shines through a window. Two beams of light scan the room. Freddie's beam reveals a RED spiral on the wall.

All three pay attention to spiral. Donald does not hold up flashlight. Freddie moves beam downwards. The word 'FREEDOM' appears, in red.

Beam continues downward. It reveals a DEAD woman, early 30s, lying on the floor. Stomach is cut open. Puddle of BLOOD surrounds body. Donald stares at the spiral.

WOMAN  
(Hysterically)  
Jesus!

A NOISE from the window. Freddie glances towards it. The SILHOUETTE of a MAN wearing a FEDORA and TRENCH COAT stands in the frame.

The silhouette darts away. Freddie runs towards the window. He puts away his gun and glances back. Donald continues to stare at the spiral.

FREDDIE  
Donnie! Come on!

Donald falls to his knees. He continues to stare. Freddie climbs out the window.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - SUNDOWN

Freddie scampers down the fire escape, stumbling twice.

Freddie hits the ground. The shadow runs around the corner. Freddie pursues.

Freddie reaches the end of the alleyway. He turns the corner.

The shadow is at the other end. Freddie chases. He fires gun. The shadow turns the corner.

Freddie turns the corner. The shadow is close. Freddie picks up speed. He fires at shadow. The shadow turns into the next corner.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Freddie turns onto a main street. Many pedestrians walk on both sides of the road. The car traffic is substantial.

Freddie stands still and looks back and forth. The shadow is gone. Freddie sulks.

**INSERT: 40 YEARS LATER**

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - DAWN

Freddie, now in his 60s, loads crates of corn, flowers, and other various vegetables into the bed of an ancient green truck.

There is a broken down 4 door sedan parked next to the truck. A small house is 100 feet to the side of Freddie.

2 acres of farmland surrounds the house and vehicles. Corn and other various vegetables grow in the fields.

The front door of the house SLAMS open. NOAH, 41 yrs, steps outside. He sits down by the house. He LIGHTS a cigarette.

Freddie looks at Noah.

FREDDIE

(Shouting)

Hey Noah! I told ya I wanted to  
start packing up at first light.  
It's already been a half hour.

Noah waves. He turns towards the house and sits on the front  
stoop. Freddie puts a crate into the truck bed. He walks  
towards Noah.

Noah sits and smokes. Freddie stands next to him.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

How's Danny this morning?

NOAH

(Avoiding eye contact)

He's still asleep.

FREDDIE

How are you this morning?

Noah looks at Freddie.

NOAH

(Sarcastically)

Peachy!

Noah takes a long drag from cigarette.

FREDDIE

You can confide in me son. No  
reason to keep things bottled up.

Noah tosses the cigarette. He stands up.

NOAH

(Hurrying towards truck)

Everything is great Pop. Let's load  
up the truck.

Freddie stands still and watches Noah work. He smiles.

Freddie glances towards the house. He sees MARTHA, 60s,  
standing in front of the kitchen window. She clutches a  
coffee mug.

Freddie smiles and waves at her. Martha glares at him.  
Freddie turns and walks towards the truck. Martha continues  
to glare at him.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

The green truck travels on a one lane road surrounded by farmland. A decrepit BARN is in the distance.

The truck passes a SIGN that reads 'SOLD 25 ACRES'.

INT. GREEN TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Noah smokes a cigarette. Freddie notices the sign. He winces.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The green truck is parked across from a bank. A white canopy covers a display of corn and various vegetables.

Freddie sets up a table under the canopy. Noah smokes a cigarette.

Freddie pulls a fold out chair from the truck bed and sets it up. He walks towards the drivers seat. A money box lies on the floor. He grabs it. He places it on the table. He sits on the chair and leans back.

A police vehicle approaches. It parks next to them. RICK, 60s, childhood friend of Freddie, steps out of the vehicle.

Rick wears a police uniform. He approaches Freddie. Noah sits on the truck bed and smokes a cigarette. Noah hardly notices Rick.

RICK

What did I tell you about posting  
up here? It's a zoning issue  
Freddie.

FREDDIE

(Jovially)  
And a good morning to you too Rick.

RICK

Why don't you get a spot with the  
weekly farmers market? Better  
business anyway.

Noah tosses cigarette.

NOAH

(Approaching them, holding  
a chair)  
(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

Because there's too many damn farmers in this town and we can never get a spot.

Rick shrugs. Freddie fiddles with the money box. Noah sets up chair next to Freddie and sits.

FREDDIE

Say Rick. You know anything about the folks that purchased my daddy's old farm land?

RICK

Not much. Seems to be a group of mysterious foreigners. I hear they are going to start a community of the future.

NOAH

What the hell does that mean?

RICK

I'm not sure. I suppose they are going to grow their own food and not rely on anyone besides themselves.

Freddie grins.

FREDDIE

Sounds like a bunch of farmers to me.

RICK

Well, it is what it is. Anyway, Freddie, did you know your old partner is giving a talk at the University of Chicago this Thursday?

Freddie trembles and avoids eye contact. Noah notices. Rick does not seem to notice.

RICK (CONT'D)

Interested in going with me? Supposed to have new information on Mr. X.

Freddie looks up and glares at Rick.

FREDDIE

Why do you always ask if I'm interested in that shit? You know I'm not.

RICK

Oh come on Freddie, you should be.  
The whole damn country is  
interested in this mystery. And I  
would think that the man who first  
discovered the killer would care  
the most. Look at your old partner,  
his entire life is dedicated to it.

FREDDIE

He's a scoundrel.

RICK

(Angrily)  
Jesus Freddie, detective McManus is  
a GAWD DAMN American hero.

FREDDIE

You don't know him like I do.

RICK

Haven't you read his book?

FREDDIE

I've glanced through it.

NOAH

I've read it. He's done alot.  
Brought the notorious O'Doyle  
brothers to justice. Caught three  
Mr. X copy cats.

RICK

(Admiringly)  
He's one of the finest detectives  
this country has ever seen.

Freddie spits on the ground.

FREDDIE

Speaking of detective work, don't  
you have some laws to uphold?

Rick nods.

RICK

Good luck today, I hope you make a  
killing.

Rick gets into his vehicle. The police car drives off.

NOAH

Maybe you should check out that talk. I'm sure detective McManus would be glad to see you.

FREDDIE

Not interested.

NOAH

Come on Pop. It will be good for ya to take a break. Plus, it gives you an excuse to see Joel.

Freddie's eyes light up.

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's been a while since you've seen him, hasn't it?

FREDDIE

How would I get there? I never got your car fixed and we need the truck to make money.

NOAH

There is plenty I can do around the farm. We can still harvest and there is a huge mess I can start to organize.

Freddie seems lost in thought.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Besides, Rick is right. Screw the zoning law, but the fact is we don't get good business on off days. We should really push for a spot in the farmers market. Plus we can try to apply for the CSA again.

FREDDIE

We don't need their help.

NOAH

Such a shitty attitude Pop. This is a farming community, why shouldn't we work together?

Freddie ignores Noah.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 I'm trying really hard to care Dad.  
 I hope you know that.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Many people walk by the food display. Freddie and Noah sit in their chairs. Noah smokes a cigarette.

A blue collar looking MAN and two companions, 40s, walk by. They snicker.

MAN  
 (Walking by Freddie and  
 Noah)  
 Hey look, it's detective Smith, on  
 the case of the missing petunia.

The three men shriek with laughter. Freddie does not react. Noah shakes his head and takes a drag from cigarette.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DUSK

An elderly WOMAN browses the food stand. Freddie stands by her and smiles. Noah takes down the canopy.

She picks up 4 pieces of corn. She hands the corn to Freddie.

Freddie smiles as he wraps the corn in plastic.

WOMAN  
 (Hands Freddie money)  
 I would buy more but I already  
 stocked up the house last Saturday.  
 You guys should really be at those  
 weekly markets, it's always a zoo.

FREDDIE  
 Sure thing.

WOMAN  
 My son just had a baby. Cutest  
 thing! How's your Daniel doing?

FREDDIE  
(Hands the woman the  
wrapped corn)  
Much better than anyone expected.

Freddie smiles.

WOMAN  
Wonderful to here. Well, good  
night.

The woman exits. Noah approaches Freddie.

NOAH  
Why did you tell her Daniel was  
doing better?

FREDDIE  
He is, isn't he?

Noah turns away from Freddie. He lights a cigarette.

NOAH  
I'm taking him to the doctor next  
week. They want to run more tests.

FREDDIE  
Want me to go with you?

NOAH  
Nah, Mom said she would. Besides,  
you got some money to make. How did  
we do today anyway?

FREDDIE  
(Triumphantly)  
Just about 80 dollars.

Noah rolls his eyes.

NOAH  
Quite the accomplishment.

FREDDIE  
It's damn well better than nothing  
at all.

NOAH  
(Sarcastically)  
That's for sure.

FREDDIE  
What's with the attitude Noah?

NOAH

If you just made nice with the other farmers in town, we could be doing much better. Maybe even get my car fixed.

FREDDIE

Damn it Noah, how many times do I have to tell you; we are fine on our own.

NOAH

Pop, for a smart guy, you can sure play the fool real nicely.

Noah grunts. He takes out a cigarette and exits. Freddie packs up the truck.

Freddie lifts a crate of corn and places it in the truck. He lifts a crate of flowers and places it in the truck. He tries to organize the crates.

A NOISE startles Freddie. He looks towards the source. He sees a silhouette of a man wearing a FEDORA and TRENCH COAT (SAME AS OPENING). Freddie is attentive.

FREDDIE

(Shouting)  
Hey, you!

The silhouette moves behind a building. Freddie prances towards it.

EXT. BUILDING - SUNDOWN

Freddie goes behind the building. The silhouette flees around another corner.

Freddie hustles towards it. Freddie turns the corner. The silhouette is gone. Freddie looks all around him. He sulks.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Noah packs the last of their things into the truck. Freddie approaches. Freddie is in shock.

NOAH

Where did you go?

FREDDIE

(Monotonously)  
I went for a walk.

NOAH  
 You alright Pop? You look like you  
 saw a ghost.

Freddie stares into nothing.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Pop?

FREDDIE  
 (Abruptly)  
 Yes, I'm fine. Let's head home, I'm  
 starving.

EXT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - NIGHT

The truck glides down the one lane road. It passes the same  
 location as the morning.

INT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Noah smokes a cigarette. Freddie focuses on driving.

FREDDIE  
 Hey, Noah. You sure you can keep  
 your self busy on Thursday?

NOAH  
 Definitely. Why, what's up?

FREDDIE  
 I'm thinking I might check out  
 Donnie's talk after all.

Noah grins. Freddie focuses on driving.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

John stares at a dusty stack of boxes. He pulls out the box  
 from the bottom of the stack. It is labeled 'Chicago'.

John looks through the box. He pulls out a dusty police  
 uniform. John holds the uniform up and stares at it.

He puts down the uniform. He lifts up a case. He opens the  
 case, revealing a GUN. John stares at it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha sits in a chair. She reads a magazine. Freddie enters and sits on the couch. Martha ignores him.

FREDDIE  
How was Danny today?

Martha does not look up from magazine.

MARTHA  
He slept alot.

FREDDIE  
That's it? You guys didn't do anything?

MARTHA  
We went for a walk. I think the sun was too much for him.

FREDDIE  
I see.

Silence. Martha reads. Freddie fiddles his thumbs.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
I'm thinking about going into the city this Thursday.

Martha ignores.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
Donnie is giving some lecture.

MARTHA  
I thought you were pretending you were never a cop.

FREDDIE  
I'm a little curious. I want to hear what Donnie has to say.

Martha ignores.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
I know that guy is full of shit.

Martha ignores.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
Besides, I was thinking I could surprise Joel. I haven't seen him in ages.

Martha puts down the magazine. She stands up.

MARTHA  
I'm going to bed.

Martha exits. Freddie fiddles his thumbs.

INT. BEDROOM - SUNRISE

Freddie and Martha sleep in a bed. Freddie gets out of bed. He urinates in the bathroom. Martha wakes up.

MARTHA  
(Awestruck)  
I had the strangest dream.

Freddie performs his daily routine. He ignores Martha.

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
Daniel had passed. And I saw him through heaven. It had layers, not unlike Dante, but, obviously in dream state. I did not feel sorrow, or anger. In fact, I don't feel sad about it at all. It's almost beautiful. No fear, only bliss. I envy Daniel in a way. I have been here for so long, it almost seems torturous. No, Daniel will not suffer long, that is a blessing.

Freddie is ready for the day. He looks at Martha.

FREDDIE  
Alright honey. I'm going to hit the road. Gotta beat that traffic.

Freddie exits. Tears roll down Martha's cheeks.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - SUNRISE

Freddie approaches the green truck. He gets in. He is about to start the engine but pauses. He stares into nothingness.

He gets out of the truck.

INT. BASEMENT - SUNRISE

John opens a case. He takes a gun from the case.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A green truck drives in mist. Clouds surround the horizon. Chicago is faintly seen. John is anxious as he drives.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - CONTINUOUS

John walks through campus.

INT. LECTURE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Lecture Hall seats over 100. It is nearly packed. JOEL YOUNG, 60s, has a cane and paces back and forth as he speaks.

JOEL

As we all know, the poet is a creator. Not unlike the builder of ships or the designer of buildings.

Freddie enters. Everyone in room notices. Joel and Freddie share a smile.

Freddie finds a seat as Joel continues his lecture.

JOEL (CONT'D)

But, as the ends of these arts are easily definable, what is the end for the poet? What is the poet building exactly? In order to determine this, one must ponder on the purposes of poetry. This is, of course, a heated debate. Some might say poetry serves to shower young maidens with praise and worship.

Class snickers.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Other's might suggest that poetry serves to bring us closer to Gawd. I however, have my own views on the matter. I see any act of expression as an act of poetry, and any attempt the human race makes to create and bring forth new forms into this world serves the purpose of relieving this world of its suffering. Suffering, and its relief, is for me, what gives our lives true meaning.

INT. LECTURE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Students shuffle out of the lecture hall. Joel stands by the teachers desk. Some student pay their respects as they exit. Freddie appears from the crowd.

FREDDIE

(Affably)

Man, it's too bad I'm the only one who realizes how full of shit you are.

JOEL

Hello my friend.

Freddie and Joel hug.

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's always a pleasure to have you in the classroom.

FREDDIE

I've done this before?

Joel laughs.

JOEL

I'm only guessing so. My memory has grown foggy over the years.

FREDDIE

Old age takes its toll on everyone I suppose.

They both smile.

JOEL

To be honest, I'm a bit surprised to see you here. I thought you put away those dark times for good.

FREDDIE

What are you talking about? Can't a guy visit his best friend?

JOEL

So this has nothing to do with the event this afternoon?

FREDDIE

What event?

JOEL

You can't fool me Freddie. I've known you for too long.

FREDDIE

Alright, maybe I was going to check out Donnie's little talk. But I'm really using it as an excuse to see you.

JOEL

I'm flattered.

DR. SAMUEL LIVINGSTON, 60s, enters lecture hall. He has white hair and a full white beard. He is from England.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Good morning Sam. Freddie, you remember Samuel Livingston? You two met when I was awarded the Pulitzer.

Freddie and Samuel shake hands.

FREDDIE

Philosophy professor right?

SAMUEL

Chair of the department now. It's a pleasure, although I was not expecting to see you..

FREDDIE

Why would you be?

SAMUEL

(Stumbling)

Oh, I wouldn't. It's just, Joel and I were planning on meeting this morning to discuss some important matters.

FREDDIE

I don't mean to interrupt. I only came to say hello.

SAMUEL

Nonsense, you two catch up. I feel as though these matters will solve themselves anyway. Matters of great importance tend to do that you know?

FREDDIE

Great, another academic full of  
shit.

Samuel smiles.

SAMUEL

Will chat later then.

JOEL

Come by my office around noon, I  
plan on leaving no later than 2  
this afternoon.

SAMUEL

Cheers.

Samuel exits.

FREDDIE

Nice guy. Where are you heading?

JOEL

Home.

FREDDIE

Oh yeah, for how long?

JOEL

Until the end of my days.

FREDDIE

What the hell does that mean?

JOEL

It means I've decided to retire.

FREDDIE

No shit, about time Joel. You ain't  
getting any younger.

JOEL

This class was actually my final  
one.

Joel looks around the room.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I'm going to miss this.

FREDDIE

Well you can come by and teach all  
your bullshit to Danny. I'll allow  
it.

Joel smiles.

JOEL  
How is the boy?

FREDDIE  
(Avoiding eye contact)  
I think he's doing great.

JOEL  
(Soothingly)  
Glad to hear. Follow me Freddie,  
let's talk in my office. It's just  
down the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Freddie and Joel saunter down the hall.

JOEL  
I'm actually glad to see you today  
because there is something I have  
been meaning to tell you.

FREDDIE  
Oh yeah?

JOEL  
I was going to wait until I settled  
into town, but now that you're here  
I suppose I can tell you now.

FREDDIE  
So what's this news?

Joel and Freddie stop in front of a door. Joel unlocks the door. The door swings open.

INT. JOEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Joel moves towards a chair behind a desk. He sits. Freddie sits on a chair across from Joel.

Joel grins at Freddie.

FREDDIE  
Tell me already!

JOEL  
I'm dying.

FREDDIE

Great, more poetic bullshit. You going to tell me the news or what?

JOEL

I have a very serious brain tumour.

Freddie despairs.

FREDDIE

Brain tumour?

JOEL

You and my doctor are the only ones that know and I intend on keeping it that way. I don't want to hear gossip about me on the tabloids.

FREDDIE

Jesus Joel. Brain tumour?

JOEL

Don't be so sad, we all have to go sometime.

FREDDIE

I know, but Joel. You can't leave me alone.

JOEL

In the end, we are always alone.

FREDDIE

I don't feel so when I'm with you.

Joel leans back. He smiles. Freddie tries to smile.

JOEL

Let me ask you something. Why exactly have you grown interest in what your old partner has to say?

FREDDIE

He's a scumbag, that's why. I want to hear all the lies he has to say.

JOEL

What about your detective spirit? Are you still no longer interested in solving this mystery?

FREDDIE

What, about the guy I chased down an alley 40 years ago?

(MORE)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Listen, Joel. I've long decided that this bastard is one clever son of a bitch. And whether or not he's alive or dead today, I really don't think he will ever be caught.

JOEL

From my understanding, Detective McManus strongly disagrees with your conclusions.

FREDDIE

Well, like I said, he's full of shit. Something dark. I've told you how he reacted to the murder. The blood symbols on the wall.

JOEL

Listen Fred. For my sake, for the love you have for me, do me a favor and solve this mystery.

FREDDIE

Why do you care?

JOEL

Because I know deep inside of you is an excellent detective. If you only were to try, you would reach a state very few people ever reach.

FREDDIE

What are you getting at?

JOEL

I want you to find fulfillment. And because we are truly best friends, we share a single soul. Your pursuit of fulfillment is just as much my own.

Freddie stares towards Joel.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Maybe you're right, and this mystery will never be solved. But fulfillment does not care about the ends, only the activity. So, Freddie. As my dying request, try to solve this mystery once and for all.

Freddie ponders.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

The hall is packed. Various news outlets cover the event. The hall is noisy with chatter.

Freddie stands next to Samuel.

SAMUEL  
(Leaning towards Freddie)  
You must be excited?

Freddie shrugs.

Rick approaches Freddie. He is distraught.

RICK  
(Shouting over crowds  
chatter)  
What the hell Freddie. You decided  
to show up?

FREDDIE  
Yeah. Last minute, sorry for not  
letting you know.

RICK  
We could of carpooled!

Freddie smiles. He pats Rick on the back.

The DEAN of the university enters. He approaches the front of the room. The chatter fades away. Everyone stares at the Dean.

DEAN  
Decades ago, this city was  
terrorized by a crazed killer. Many  
have tried to find the identity of  
this maniac, but none have been as  
successful as Donald McManus.  
Detective McManus is more than a  
solver of crimes. He is a national  
hero. A man that single handily  
brought down criminal after  
criminal, cleaned these fine  
Chicago streets, and brought true  
justice upon the world. It is my  
esteemed privilege, and honor, on  
behalf of this fine university, to  
welcome Detective Donald McManus.

Donald, 60s, strolls in. He is dressed as a diabolical Sherlock Holmes. The scar outshines the rest of his facial features.

The room explodes in applause. Freddie claps at a much slower tempo than the rest of the room.

The Dean shakes Donald's hand. Donald replaces the Dean at the podium. Donald raises his arms. The uproar of applause fades away.

DONALD

Ladies and gentleman. It is such an honor to be speaking with you all today. Remember, that everything I do, I do for the great citizens of this city and nation. Do not think for a single second that there is some unholy agenda behind my actions. There is no need for one. Fame means nothing compared to law and justice.

Donald steps away from the podium. His voice is loud enough to not need the microphone. He begins to pace back and forth, looking at all the faces of the crowd as he speaks. Freddie grows bitter.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I know you all are eager to hear what I have to say, and you all have trusted my detective skills for many years. But, what I have to say this evening is not for the faint of heart. It is troubling news. Something that I should of realized decades ago.

Donald stands still. He smiles at the crowd.

DONALD (CONT'D)

The killer that we have all come to know as Mr. X, is dead!

Gasps from the crowd. Donald paces back and forth. He scans the crowd as he speaks.

DONALD (CONT'D)

That is right. He has been dead many years. You see, back when I was with the Chicago police, I realized something about the case. And that was, the killer had been caught with out anyone knowing it was the killer. I didn't have any evidence at the time, so I let my realization slip away. But now, there is no doubt of the truth.

(MORE)

## DONALD (CONT'D)

The man who became known as Mr. X was truly known as David Mullen. He was an insurance salesman who went door to door for a living. A bleak, lonely existence. It is no wonder why such a man would be driven to such madness. David Mullen was arrested over 30 years ago, he was found in the home of one of his prospects, a bloody knife in his hand. A young housewife lying on the floor. Her stomach mutilated. Even then, I suspected. But there was nothing truly connecting the cases. Mr. Mullen was sentenced to live the rest of his days in an Asylum for the criminally insane, where he had stayed and died. Mr. Mullen was caught in 1955, the same year the Mr. X murders ceased. But as we all know, the troubles were just beginning. Year after year, psychos inspired by Mr. Mullen, began their own works of death. I of course, have caught many of these losers, but the copy cats were many. In fact, recent events suggest that a copy cat has come from one of the students at this university. I'm sure many of you are familiar with Eric Singer. He was a young man studying writing, in fact the blessed Dr. Young was one of his professors. But, unfortunately, Mr. Singer has been missing for over 8 months. And the other week, his parents were found brutally murdered. Mr. Singer is still nowhere to be found. My detective skills tell me that this boy, inspired by Chicago's dark past, has become another figure amidst the shadow of Mr. Mullen's dark works. And I'm afraid to inform you all that bloodshed will most certainly be spilled again.

The crowd murmurs. Donald stands still. He scans the faces of the crowd. He grins. Donald notices Freddie. His grin becomes a tender smile.

## DONALD (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentleman. I can't believe what my eyes are seeing.

Donald approaches Freddie.

DONALD (CONT'D)

We all have the honor of a truly great man being present in this room. It has been such a long time since I've seen him.

Donald stands in front of Freddie. He grabs Freddie's shoulders. Donald brings him in for a hug.

DONALD (CONT'D)

My old partner. Oh, have I missed you.

Donald cries into Freddie's shoulder. The crowd grows warm towards the reunion.

FREDDIE

(Whispering)  
You don't fool me.

Donald grins.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The bar is crowded. Donald, Freddie, and Rick sit in a booth. All three have beers. Freddie's beer is just about full. Donald's beer is half way full.

Donald picks up his glass and finishes the beer.

DONALD

How about another round fellas?

Rick finishes his beer. He nods as he puts down his glass. Freddie stares at Donald. He taps his finger on the table.

RICK

I still can't believe you found out who Mr. X was.

DONALD

It was fairly simple really. After all, the Mr. X murders stopped occurring the same year Mr. Mullen got put away. In fact, Freddie, wasn't that the same year you quit the force?

FREDDIE

Sounds about right Donnie.

DONALD

It's such a shame you left me. I could of used a partner like you over the years.

FREDDIE

I don't remember you trying to stop me.

DONALD

How could I? You seemed pretty shook up. Say Rick, how about that second round?

RICK

Sure thing, anything for you Detective McManus.

Rick gets up and approaches the bar.

DONALD

It always amazes me how people can devote their lives to admiring a celebrity.

FREDDIE

That's all you are then?

DONALD

You said it yourself Freddie, you don't fool me. I won't pretend in front of you. I tell the people what they want to hear, and that's about it.

FREDDIE

Are you even a detective?

DONALD

That's for you to figure out on your own.

Donald smiles.

DONALD (CONT'D)

So you stepped into your father's footsteps and became a farmer. Say Freddie, tell me, are you planning on ending it like your old man?

Freddie clenches his fist. Donald laughs.

FREDDIE

If only the world knew how much of  
a coward you are.

DONALD

Is that what you think of me?

FREDDIE

That night. You fell to your knees.  
I went chasing that maniac while  
you just remained staring.

Donald leans forward.

DONALD

Oh Freddie. I'm know coward.

FREDDIE

What else would you be?

?DONALD

I found religion that night Freddie  
my boy. I was awakening.

Donald grins at Freddie. Freddie trembles. Rick returns with  
two beers. He sits next to Donald.

RICK

Figured you were still nursing your  
first beer Freddie. Besides, two  
hands.

Donald grabs the beer and takes a large gulp.

RICK (CONT'D)

Tell us more how you figured out  
David Mullen was Mr. X all along.

DONALD

About a year ago, I went to visit  
him at St. Judes Asylum. It was  
there that he practically  
confessed.

RICK

Fascinating. And this is the same  
facility where Nathan Stevenson has  
been, correct?

DONALD

I'm sorry, who?

RICK

You know. The reporter that coined the name Mr. X. He famously wrote an article with the headline, 'MR. X STRIKES AGAIN!'

DONALD

Ah, of course. I was still an officer at the time. Remind me again who the victim was.

RICK

Dr. Alan Schultz. He was a big time professor at the University of Chicago.

Rick looks at Freddie.

RICK (CONT'D)

(Grimacing)

He was actually Joel's dissertation adviser.

Freddie drinks his beer. Donald's eyes light up.

DONALD

Professor Young, he is the wisest being I have ever known. An angel really. To think he would have anything to do with this darkness.

RICK

You know Joel?

DONALD

Of course I do. We are both fellow authors. Our friendship has grown quite nicely over the years. Of course...

Donald touches Freddie's hand. Freddie recoils. He grills Donald.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Not as close as you two. Your friendship with Dr. Young is a true testament of friendship everywhere. I envy what you have.

FREDDIE

Try not to envy, it's a deadly sin.

DONALD

There are worse things in this world.

Donald smiles. Freddie stares at Donald. Rick looks between the two. Nobody speaks.

An associate of Donald, ROGER, 30s, enters the bar. He hurries towards Donald.

ROGER

(Frantically)

Detective McManus! There has been an incident. A murder. You better come with me.

DONALD

Where has it happened?

ROGER

Uptown. Two bodies, a married couple. And there 8 year old daughter is missing.

DONALD

A missing girl? Wow we have some work to do.

Donald stands up. He motions towards Freddie. He ignores Rick.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Come Freddie. I will not let this moment of fate go to waste. You will assist me in this investigation. Just like old times.

Donald laughs.

DONALD (CONT'D)

I have a feeling this is the start of something truly great. Come, be Watson to my Sherlock!

Freddie stands up.

FREDDIE

I'll follow you. Good night Rick.

Freddie leaves with Roger and Donald. Rick finishes his beer.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Police investigate the scene. Two bodies are on the ground. Stomachs mutilated. Pools of blood surround them.

On the wall is a gigantic blood red spiral. Also written in blood red are the words, 'THE WEAK SHALL BE SET FREE'.

Donald and Freddie enter. Freddie is aghast. He can't look away from the spiral. Donald wanders the room and examines everything.

Donald stands still and clears his throat. The police stop their movements and wait for Donald to speak.

DONALD

It is obvious to me what this is. A copy cat! A very clever one at that. Replicated the same style as our famed killer. This is a truly sad evening, for I'm afraid these copy cats will not go away. People seem to be inspired by this darkness. And inspiration is not an easy thing to quench.

Donald motions towards Freddie.

DONALD (CONT'D)

What do you think partner?

Freddie does not look away from the spiral. He walks towards it.

FREDDIE

It's him. It's Mr. X.

Donald laughs. This prompts the police in the room to laugh.

DONALD

It seems my partner is a little rusty at the job. Come on Freddie, do you have a real assessment of the crime?

FREDDIE

I'm telling you. It's the same son of a bitch I almost caught 40 years ago.

DONALD

But Freddie, you are forgetting. I have proven that the man we both chased down those alleyways was David Mullen, and Mr. Mullen is most certainly dead.

FREDDIE

Well, I'm saying you're dead wrong! This killer known as Mr. X has just struck again.

DONALD

Freddie, try to relax. You're working yourself up into a frenzy.

Donald laughs. Police laugh.

FREDDIE

I'm telling you, it's got to be him.

DONALD

(Smugly)  
What about the missing girl? Mr. X doesn't have any history of kidnapping people. Only murder.

FREDDIE

All I know is that those symbols on the wall are unmistakably the same work of Mr. X.

DONALD

How do you know this?

Freddie hesitates. The police grow eager to hear his answer.

FREDDIE

I just know! I feel it in my bones.

Donald erupts with laughter. The police laugh.

DONALD

You are forgetting basic principles we all learned at the academy. Never pursue a crime on a feeling. You must use hard evidence. Feelings lead to rash decisions and horrible mistakes.

The police in the room nod and murmur in agreement.

DONALD (CONT'D)

Besides Freddie. There are more pressing matters than the identity of this villain. Their poor daughter is missing. What do you think has happened to her?

FREDDIE

I don't know.

DONALD

Let us just say that Mr. X has indeed done this act. What would he do with an 8 year old girl?

FREDDIE

I don't know.

DONALD

It seems I am also stumped over this question. For, I am afraid the worst has happened. These copy cats spurring up are inspired by the terrible darkness that has overwhelmed this city for far too long. And with no evidence of ransom being the intention, I'm afraid the girl is already dead.

Freddie runs up to Donald and gets in his face.

FREDDIE

(Angrily)

I bet you know exactly where that little girl is, you son of a bitch.

The police in the room are on edge. Donald smiles.

DONALD

Oh Freddie, it seems to have been a mistake bringing you here. Can someone please escort him out.

Freddie grabs Donald's arms.

FREDDIE

(Whispering)

You're a damn fraud. And I'm going to have fun bringing you down.

Donald smiles. Freddie grins. He lets go of Donald.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. JUDES ASYLUM - CONTINUOUS

LIGHTENING FLASHES, THUNDER RESONATES. RAIN pours down upon the parking lot of St. Judes Asylum. The Chicago SHIPYARD is to the right of the building. A green truck pulls in and parks.

INT. ST. JUDES ASYLUM - CONTINUOUS

Front lobby of building. Front desk CLERK, 30s, sits behind a counter. Freddie enters, drenched in water. He approaches the counter.

FREDDIE

I need to speak to the doctor who treated David Mullen.

CLERK

A little late to be making inquiries on patients, don't you think?

FREDDIE

I apologize, but it is very urgent.

CLERK

You a cop?

FREDDIE

(Dithering)  
No I'm. I'm a detective.

CLERK

Aright mister detective, one moment.

IN THE DOCTORS OFFICE.

Freddie sits with the DOCTOR who treated David Mullen.

DOCTOR

David's madness came on very abruptly. Before he snapped, he was a fairly successful insurance salesman. In fact, he wasn't at the victims house that day to make a sale.

FREDDIE

He wasn't?

DOCTOR

No. He was there for a renewal. He seemed to have a very lovely relationship with the victim. He would always talk about her with utmost delight. It was as though he hadn't even realized he killed her.

FREDDIE

What can you tell me about Detective McManus's interactions with Mr. Mullen?

DOCTOR

It's standard procedure here for law enforcement to come in and interview these criminals. I never paid too much attention to Detective McManus and his interviews.

FREDDIE

Do you remember anything about them?

DOCTOR

Yes, as a matter of fact. I remember a lot of yelling. You could hear it from down the hall. That McManus sure has a temper. But of course, he always gets the job done, and that confession was extracted just before David's mysterious death.

FREDDIE

Mysterious, how did he die?

DOCTOR

In his sleep. We found him dead the morning after Detective McManus got the confession. Perhaps the weight off his shoulders allowed him to pass peacefully.

FREDDIE

So I take it you agree with McManus, and Mr. Mullen was indeed the infamous killer Mr. X.

DOCTOR

I have no reason to go against the opinions of experts. Besides, there was a confession.

FREDDIE

But you have been treating Mr. Mullen for a very long time. Did he really seem capable of all those murders?

DOCTOR

Well no, not really. But the psyche is a tricky thing. No single man could hope to understand its mysteries. Anyway, if your so interested in Mr. X, maybe you should have a chat with old Nat. It's not too late.

FREDDIE

Who?

DOCTOR

Nathan Stevenson, he was a reporter during those times. He became obsessed with the killer, and eventually lost his mind.

FREDDIE

What did he do to wind up here?

DOCTOR

Murdered his wife, and two children. Bloody mess.

IN THE COMMON ROOM.

Many patients at various activities. Elevator music HEARD. A NURSE leads Freddie to NATHAN STEVENSON, late 60s. Nathan wears a RED SWEATER. He sits in a rocking chair near a window.

NURSE

Hello, Nat. How are you this evening?

NATHAN

I am quite lovely. How are you my dear?

NURSE

Great. Nat, this here is Freddie. He would like to talk with you, is that alright?

NATHAN

Oh yes. Speaking with another is  
such a pleasure.

The nurse smiles and then walks away. Freddie pulls up a  
chair and sits.

FREDDIE

We've actually met before.

NATHAN

We have?

FREDDIE

40 years ago. You interviewed me.

NATHAN

I did?

FREDDIE

You don't remember?

NATHAN

I can't imagine myself interviewing  
anyone.

FREDDIE

You were a reporter.

NATHAN

I was?

FREDDIE

(Angrily)  
Yes! You interviewed me, and I told  
you how I almost caught that son of  
a bitch!

NATHAN

What son of a bitch was that?

FREDDIE

(Angrily)  
MR. X! You practically named the  
bastard!

Nathan's eyes light up.

NATHAN

Oh Mr. X. Such a wonderful man.

FREDDIE

What?

NATHAN

Such a lovely soul. He taught me so many wonderful things.

Freddie is speechless.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

He was my best friend.

FREDDIE

Friend? You were friends with Mr. X?

NATHAN

Oh yes. More than a friend really. He was my liberator.

Nathan rolls up his sweater. A spiral is carved into his arm. Freddie looks at it. He cringes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

The mark of freedom. Mr. X is such a great man.

Freddie trembles.

FREDDIE

Why do you say that?

NATHAN

You don't understand? Mr. X is generous enough to reveal freedom upon this suffering world.

FREDDIE

Mr. X is a fucking killer.

Nathan leans forward.

NATHAN

(Passionately)  
He is a blessing. An angel sent down from heaven to relieve the suffering of this world. How dare you call him a killer!

FREDDIE

You're Nuts.

NATHAN

No, you are simply ignorant. Mr. X has freed many of us though. We will no longer live in suffering.

FREDDIE

More? He has followers?

NATHAN

Naturally, quite a few. We are all over the world. Devoted to relieving the torments of daily life. We free people from slavery, and thrust them into the real world. It is the gift Mr. X has given to us.

EXT. ST. JUDES ASYLUM - CONTINUOUS

Still rains. Freddie walks to his car.

INT/EXT. GREEN TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Freddie enters the truck. A man wearing a fedora and trench coat stares at Freddie from across the street. Freddie notices.

The man sinks into the shadows. Freddie opens his glove compartment. He takes the gun.

Freddie gets out of the car. He walks across the street.

EXT. SHIPYARD - CONTINUOUS

Still rains. Freddie chases a silhouette of the man around stacks of freight boxes. Freddie loses the man. He stands still and looks around.

The man jumps from the corner and attacks Freddie with a knife. Freddie falls to the ground. He drops the gun. Freddie resists and pushes back on the Man.

The knife gets closer and closer to Freddie. GUNSHOT. The Man jumps off of Freddie and dashes away. GUNSHOT. The man stumbles. He recovers and continues to dash away, now with a limp.

Freddie stands up. He panics. He looks around and sees nothing.

RICK O.S.

It's a good thing I followed you.

Rick comes out of the shadows.

RICK  
Did you really think I was just  
going to head home?

FREDDIE  
It's a good thing you didn't. Thank  
you Rick.

RICK  
Who do you think that guy was?

FREDDIE  
He was far too young to be Mr. X.  
But he was wearing the same exact  
outfit.

RICK  
From that night you almost caught  
him. How can you be so sure?

FREDDIE  
I just am. No doubt about it.

RICK  
We should both get out of this  
rain. You going to be OK driving  
home?

Freddie nods.

RICK (CONT'D)  
I will come by tomorrow to check up  
on you.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

The green truck parks next to the broken down sedan. Freddie  
jumps out of the car.

Freddie approaches a stack of hay. He sits on the hay. He  
falls asleep.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - DAWN

Freddie lies on the hay stack. He is fast asleep.

Footsteps are HEARD. Noah rushes towards Freddie.

NOAH  
Jesus Dad. What happened to you?

Freddie stirs awake.

FREDDIE  
Oh, my head.

NOAH  
Are you hurt?

FREDDIE  
No, I will be alright.

NOAH  
So what the hell happened?

FREDDIE  
Somebody tried to kill me.

NOAH  
That doesn't make sense.

FREDDIE  
And he was wearing the same outfit  
Mr. X wore when I chased him.

NOAH  
(Nervously)  
How can you be sure it was the  
exact same outfit?

FREDDIE  
Because it was!

NOAH  
What about the other incident. I  
went into town for a drink last  
night and everyone was talking  
about it. The media is saying it's  
a Mr. X copy cat.

Freddie spits on the ground.

FREDDIE  
That's because McManus is feeding  
the world his lies. The bastard  
must be in on it himself.

NOAH  
You mean McManus is the copy cat?

Freddie is awestruck.

FREDDIE  
It's no copy cat Noah. I feel the  
truth looming inside of me. It is  
most definitely Mr. X.

NOAH  
 So you're saying Donald is working  
 with Mr. X?

Freddie smiles. He then guffaws.

FREDDIE  
 Of course, he has followers.

NOAH  
 What?

FREDDIE  
 Mr. X. He has many followers, and  
 they are all over the world.

NOAH  
 Where did you learn that?

FREDDIE  
 From this crazy old reporter.  
 Listen, Noah. I'm going to need  
 your help.

NOAH  
 Anything Pop, what do you need?

FREDDIE  
 I'm not quite sure yet.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAWN

Martha cooks eggs and pancakes. Daniel assists her. Freddie  
 enters.

DANIEL  
 Morning Grandpa!

Freddie smiles.

FREDDIE  
 Good morning Daniel. Smells good  
 Martha.

DANIEL  
 Can you take me to the park today,  
 Grandpa?

FREDDIE  
 I don't know Daniel. I have a lot  
 on my plate today. Will see.

MARTHA

Daniel, why don't you grab more eggs from the chicken coop.

DANIEL

OK!

Daniel grabs a tray. He runs out of the room. Martha does not stop preparing breakfast.

MARTHA

You've been gone all night.

FREDDIE

I'm sorry to keep you worried.

Martha sneers as she works.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Listen, Martha. Noah and I are going to be busy with a special project the next few days. So we won't be able to attend with the farm as much.

Martha snorts.

MARTHA

I understand Freddie. Not that it really matters anyway.

FREDDIE

What do you mean by that?

Martha stops preparing food. She turns towards him.

MARTHA

I can't believe, even after all these years, you still think your supporting this family.

FREDDIE

Now Martha, listen here. I know your niece helps out time and again, but I work really hard out there. I love this family, I will continue to support all of you, do you understand?

MARTHA

(Shrewdly)

Of course I understand sweetheart. But like I said, it really doesn't matter what you do with the farm.

Martha smiles at Freddie. Daniel comes in. He carries a tray full of eggs. Martha turns towards him. She laughs.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

Oh honey, that's way too many eggs.  
You're going to have to return some  
of those.

Martha grabs some of the eggs. She places them on the counter. Daniel exits.

FREDDIE

I don't understand why you have to  
give me such a hard time right now.  
I had a very tough evening.

Martha cooks.

MARTHA

I'm sure you did. Have fun on your  
special project.

Freddie exits the kitchen.

IN THE LIVING ROOM.

Noah sits on a chair. His legs shake. Freddie enters. Noah looks at Freddie. He stands up.

NOAH

Listen dad, I think we should have  
a chat with Joel about this. He's a  
wise man, he can help us.

Freddie sits on the couch.

FREDDIE

I don't disagree.

Noah sits back in his chair. His legs still shake.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Are you nervous, son?

NOAH

A bit. Are you going to give Joel a  
call?

Freddie smiles.

FREDDIE

This is his first day back in town.  
I think I know where we can find  
him.

NOISE of door by kitchen opening.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(Shouting)

Hey Danny, come on in the living  
room.

Daniel rushes in.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Still want to go to the park today?

Daniel smiles.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Freddie, Noah, and Daniel stroll through the park. They notice, at a distance, Joel comforts adults and children. They stroll towards the small crowd.

JOEL

Let us not dwell on the agonies of  
the flesh, but find comfort in the  
pleasures of the mind. For there  
lies true life, this give and take  
of pain is only an illusion.  
Eternal life is close to our  
hearts, and fear prevents us from  
realizing this precious truth.

Tears flow from faces in the crowd. The crowd disperses. John and Daniel approach Joel.

FREDDIE

Always comforting. People really do  
love you.

JOEL

I hope they love my words more than  
myself. Tragic how people can  
confuse their affections. How are  
you Daniel?

DANIEL

I'm great professor! Can I go play  
by the pond Daddy?

NOAH  
Sure thing.

Daniel runs off.

JOEL  
Such a lovely boy.

FREDDIE  
He's a good kid.

Freddie and Joel stare at each other.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
You won't believe what happened to  
me.

NOAH  
I'm going to watch Daniel.

Noah takes out a cigarette. He walks towards Daniel.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Freddie and Joel stroll through the park. Daniel and Noah can be seen in the background.

JOEL  
So a man dressed in the same outfit  
Mr. X wore all those years ago  
tried to kill you, and you also  
suspect Detective McManus is not  
who he says he is.

FREDDIE  
It's quite the situation. I don't  
really know what to do now.

JOEL  
What do your instincts tell you to  
do?

FREDDIE  
I think Donald is the key to  
finding this missing girl. Ever  
since I discovered Mr. X has  
followers, I realized immediately  
that Donald must be one of them.

JOEL  
I think you might be correct.

FREDDIE

If I could just find the evidence that proves he's a fraud. I just know he's the key to this entire ordeal.

JOEL

What about the man who tried to kill you?

FREDDIE

They must be working together. If I uncover the truth about McManus, the other man will fall into place.

JOEL

You must follow your instincts. The gawds speak to us in mysterious ways.

FREDDIE

Don't start with that shit right now.

Joel smiles.

JOEL

The turn of events is most strange. So your plan is to find the truth about Donald McManus, and this you think will lead you to the missing girl and the identity of Mr. X?

FREDDIE

I wasn't even thinking about finding him. I don't even care about that. This little girl is in danger.

JOEL

How can you not care about solving this mystery?

FREDDIE

I choose not to care! If I end up facing him, then so be it. I'll be ready.

JOEL

You must care Freddie, for all of this stems back to this great mystery.

JOHN  
Seems a hell of a lot easier not to  
care.

JOEL  
Well, nobody said life was easy.

Daniel runs towards them.

DANIEL  
Look what I found.

Daniel holds up a smooth rock.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Neat, right?

FREDDIE  
Very neat.

JOEL  
Fascinating.

Daniel runs off.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
Those types of rocks were used by  
natives as spear heads. Daniels  
instincts are quite impressive.

FREDDIE  
He has a very active imagination.

Joel stares at Daniel.

JOEL  
I sense greatness in him.

FREDDIE  
Well, it's a shame will never see  
it.

Joel looks at Freddie.

JOEL  
He is a special boy Freddie. Don't  
ever forget that.

INT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Freddie drives. Noah smokes a cigarette. Daniel sits between  
them. He sleeps.

FREDDIE  
You really shouldn't smoke with the  
kid right here.

NOAH  
Does it really matter?

FREDDIE  
It's not healthy.

NOAH  
Listen Dad, I need to confess  
something. Last night, I went into  
town to meet with some other  
farmers. I chatted with them, and I  
got us a spot at the Saturday  
farmer's market.

FREDDIE  
I understand.

NOAH  
You OK?

FREDDIE  
Sounds good Noah. I was being  
stubborn anyway.

NOAH  
I also talked about potentially  
joining the CSA.

FREDDIE  
They don't want us.

NOAH  
They said it might work out. Let's  
wait to hear back.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

The green truck parks next to the broken down sedan. A black  
sedan with tinted windows is parked alongside the house.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Martha and Donald sit in the living room. They drink tea.  
Noah walks in. He carries Daniel. Daniel is asleep. Freddie  
walks in after Noah.

FREDDIE  
(Angrily)  
What is he doing here?

MARTHA  
Noah, is Daniel alright?

NOAH  
He's just tired from the park. I'm  
going to bring him to his room.

Noah glares at Donald. Donald smiles. Noah exits with Daniel.

MARTHA  
Freddie, Detective McManus is here  
to check up on you.

DONALD  
Yes. I felt horrible about our  
previous encounter. I know you were  
only trying to help.

Freddie sits next to Martha.

FREDDIE  
I appreciate your concern.

Donald smiles. He takes a sip of tea. He turns to Martha.

DONALD  
This is really some wonderful tea.  
Do you grow it yourself?

MARTHA  
(Blushing)  
Oh no. It's from the market in  
town.

DONALD  
I see. Actually Freddie, I didn't  
come here just to check up on you.  
I have some very exciting news. The  
copy cat killer has been caught.

MARTHA  
What a relief. And so quickly too.  
You truly are a remarkable  
detective.

DONALD  
Yes, things really did work out  
nicely. I better be off though, I  
have a press conference to attend  
back in the city.

Donald stands up.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
I wish you both the best.

FREDDIE  
What about the missing girl?

Donald looks at Freddie.

DONALD  
(Solemnly)  
I'm afraid to inform the both of  
you that the little girl's body was  
found in the killer's den. As I  
said last night, this darkness is  
not going away anytime soon.

MARTHA  
How horrible.

DONALD  
I must be off now. Good day.

Donald exits.

FREDDIE  
Hold on, I had a question for him,  
I'll be right back.

Freddie rushes out of the house.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie rushes after Donald. Donald turns towards Freddie. He smiles.

FREDDIE  
What the hell do you think you're  
doing?

DONALD  
You mean you haven't figured it out  
yet?

Donald cackles.

FREDDIE  
(Roaring)  
Roll up your sleeves.

DONALD  
 (Slyly)  
 Excuse me?

FREDDIE  
 (Roaring)  
 Do it! Let me see your arms.

Donald rolls up his sleeves. Freddie examines the arms. His arms have no marks on them. Freddie sighs.

DONALD  
 (Rolling sleeves down)  
 No worries Freddie. The curtain has risen. The show shall begin soon enough.

Donald enters the passenger seat of the black sedan. Car drives off. Freddie stands alone in the dusty driveway.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie enters the house. Martha sits in the living room.

MARTHA  
 Why won't you be honest with me?

Freddie approaches. He sits next to Martha.

FREDDIE  
 I'm scared.

MARTHA  
 Of what?

FREDDIE  
 The truth.

MARTHA  
 You should be more concerned with this family, instead of playing detective.

FREDDIE  
 Mind your own. I really got nothing to say to you.

MARTHA  
 Well, I got a lot I want to say to you.

FREDDIE  
 Oh yeah? Like what?

MARTHA

Our entire marriage you have been treating me like a housewife.

FREDDIE

You are a housewife, ain't yeah?

MARTHA

You are not the man I fell in love with.

FREDDIE

(Standing up)  
I can't deal with this.

Freddie exits.

EXT. FREDDIE'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie organizes crates. Noah enters.

NOAH

Need help?

FREDDIE

No, I'm fine. Trying to keep my mind busy.

NOAH

You haven't given up have you?

FREDDIE

(Irritated)  
I'm just organizing these crates Noah.

NOAH

Organize! Organize! You are obsessed with useless activities Dad! When are you going to grow a pair?

FREDDIE

I don't appreciate your attitude right now.

NOAH

Yeah well, I don't appreciate your fucking attitude.

Noah sits on a haystack. He cries. Freddie sits next to him. He tries to comfort him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I miss Ellen so much. Something horribly dark grew inside of me when she passed. That's why I broke down, I couldn't handle it anymore.

FREDDIE

Just think of all the good you still have.

NOAH

Like what?

FREDDIE

You have your family, Daniel...

NOAH

(Disgustingly)  
Daniel? He won't be around for much longer.

JOHN

How could you say that?

NOAH

That boy stole my wife from me!

Noah stands up.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Remember Pop, we have a spot on Saturday. Are you going to be around or will you be too busy playing detective?

Freddie stares at Noah. Noah exits.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie read's Donald's book. He has a pen and paper next to him. He reads about the neighborhood Donald grew up in. He scribbles notes.

Freddie flips through the book. He comes across the section about the O'Doyle brothers and associates. Freddie reads that Donald put them all away early in his career. Freddie makes a note of it.

KNOCK on the door. Freddie gets up. He approaches the door.

Freddie opens the door. Rick enters. He wears a police uniform.

FREDDIE  
Rick, I'm glad to see you.

RICK  
I can't stay long I'm on duty.

Freddie rushes to the living room. He sits down. Freddie picks up Donald's book. Rick follows. He sits in a chair.

RICK (CONT'D)  
I just wanted to see how you were doing.

FREDDIE  
(Staring at book)  
Say Rick, how do you think your hero McManus single handedly caught the O'Doyle brothers and their criminal associates?

RICK  
He's a brilliant detective. Nobody really understands how he did it.

FREDDIE  
Well I don't think it makes much sense at all.

RICK  
Why do you hate the guy? Is it jealousy?

Freddie looks up. He grills Rick.

FREDDIE  
No Rick, the guy is a liar. And I know for certain he's lying about this recent mess.

RICK  
Freddie.

FREDDIE  
I also think he is connected with the man who tried to kill me.

RICK  
You have no proof of any of this. You're simply accusing an American Hero of being a phony.

FREDDIE  
(Shouting)  
I've known you for decades Rick.  
(MORE)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Why can't you believe the word of  
an old friend?

Rick stands up.

RICK

You need to get some rest. You've  
been through quite the ordeal. I  
have to get back to my patrol.

FREDDIE

But Rick. What about the man who  
tried to kill me?

RICK

I have informed the authorities.  
Actually, I hear Detective McManus  
is hot on his trail. You need to  
trust the guy, he only has the best  
of intentions for all of us.

Rick smiles. He walks out of the house. Freddie glares at  
Rick as he exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Freddie reads Donald's book. He has pages of notes. Noah  
enters. He sits near Freddie.

FREDDIE

(Staring at book)  
How's Daniel doing?

NOAH

He ate a little something, but  
couldn't keep his eyes open. He's  
asleep now. Mom thinks we should  
bring him to the doctor earlier in  
the week.

FREDDIE

(Staring at book)  
Good, do that.

NOAH

You seem distracted.

FREDDIE

It doesn't make sense.

NOAH

What?

FREDDIE

How McManus accomplished all of the things he describes in this book. How the hell can one man bring down an entire crime syndicate?

NOAH

Sounds to me like you're still playing detective.

Freddie looks at Noah.

FREDDIE

It doesn't make any sense.

KNOCK on the front door. Noah gets up. He opens the door. Joel walks in.

JOEL

Good evening Noah. Where is your father?

NOAH

Right here.

Noah enters living room. Joel follows him. He seems very weak. Freddie looks at him.

FREDDIE

Joel, what a surprise. Everything OK?

Joel stands by Freddie.

JOEL

Yes my friend. I came for a visit.

NOAH

I'm going upstairs. Good night.

Noah exits.

JOEL

Do you mind moving to the front porch? It is a lovely evening and I want to enjoy it while I can.

Freddie nods. He puts down the book. He stands.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Joel and Freddie sit on a bench against the wall. Joel pulls out tobacco and a pipe. He prepares the pipe.

FREDDIE  
How could you smoke that stuff?

JOEL  
You've smoked Freddie.

FREDDIE  
Yeah, but now.

JOEL  
Now what? Now that I'm dying? Well  
if I'm dying what difference does  
it make?

Joel smiles.

FREDDIE  
I guess it doesn't matter.

Joel lights up the pipe and smokes.

JOEL  
I'm afraid my condition is much  
worse then my doctor assessed.

FREDDIE  
Don't even talk about it.

JOEL  
I must Freddie. I'm not sure how  
much longer I can last. I feel my  
life slipping away every moment.

Freddie sighs.

FREDDIE  
It's not fair. On top of all this  
bullshit happening, you have to be  
dying.

JOEL  
Let's not dwell on my condition.  
Tell me, have you decided your next  
course of action?

FREDDIE  
I've been reading Donald's book.  
There's something not quite right  
about his rise to fame.

JOEL  
What are you thinking?

Joel puffs his pipe. Freddie fiddles his thumbs.

FREDDIE

I don't know yet, I need evidence.  
Listen Joel. I know this is random.  
But I want to bring up the war.

JOEL

What about it?

FREDDIE

It's just. I don't think I ever  
really showed my gratitude to you.  
For saving my life.

JOEL

Don't think about it. You have a  
mission to do. You should stay  
focused.

FREDDIE

But really, Joel. I love you, with  
all my heart. More than my wife and  
child. Our friendship is the only  
meaningful thing I have.

JOEL

I agree Fred. Our friendship is  
something truly special.

Joel touches Freddie's arm. They sit in silence. Joel puffs  
his pipe.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie examines his notes. Donald's book is on the table. He  
lifts the book. He examines the book. He examines his notes.

FREDDIE

(Rapturously)  
Bingo!

EXT. RICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Freddie pounds on the front door. Rick opens the door. He  
wears pajamas. Freddie storms into the house.

INT. RICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rick shuts the front door.

RICK  
(Sluggishly)  
What the hell Freddie, it's 1 in  
the gawd damn morning.

Freddie paces as he speaks.

FREDDIE  
(Exhilaratingly)  
I have it! I found the connections.

Rick yawns.

RICK  
(Sleepily)  
The what?

FREDDIE  
I can prove that McManus is a  
fraud.

RICK  
(Solemnly)  
Oh Freddie.

FREDDIE  
You're my friend, and I need your  
help. Now just listen to me.

Rick sits on the couch.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
You remember in his book he talks  
about growing up in a poor Irish  
neighborhood, right?

RICK  
Yeah.

FREDDIE  
Well, he mentions in the book that  
the O'Doyle brothers and their  
criminal associates also grew up in  
that same neighborhood.

RICK  
So what?

FREDDIE  
Do you really think they never  
crossed paths? He even says how  
these guys would give back and help  
the poor.

RICK

I don't see the significance.

FREDDIE

OK, well do you remember how he became an orphan at the age of eight? He doesn't go into much detail about who raised him. I think he was taken in by the O'Doyle's.

RICK

That's ridiculous. Why did he become a cop then?

FREDDIE

That's the best part. It was all a show. He was groomed by them. He was there to help those criminals avoid the law.

RICK

I think you need some sleep Freddie. You are obsessing over this.

FREDDIE

He was a corrupt cop Rick. I knew when we were partners that he was no good. But now I understand. He had a family, a crime family.

RICK

What?

Freddie rushes towards Rick.

FREDDIE

You have to see it Rick. You got to understand. The truth about Donald is the key to finding this girl and solving the Mr. X mystery once and for all.

Rick grins.

RICK

Truth. You want to talk about truth?

Freddie steps back.

FREDDIE

What does that mean?

Rick stands up.

RICK  
Nothing. Listen, you have a theory,  
and it's not so terrible. Maybe  
Detective McManus is not the hero  
we all believe him to be. But it's  
late. Let's talk about this in the  
morning.

FREDDIE  
You have something to say, say it.

RICK  
Freddie, I'm tired. Go home and get  
some rest.

FREDDIE  
What truth are you talking about?

Rick sighs.

RICK  
I have a theory of my own. Follow  
me.

Rick saunters towards the basement. Freddie follows.

IN THE BASEMENT. - CONTINUOUS

Rick steps down the stairs. Freddie follows. Rick approaches  
a door. It is a closet. He opens the door. He flicks on a  
light. Inside is a collage of newspaper clippings and sticky  
notes.

**INSERT: HEADLINE** 'WOMAN BRUTALLY MURDERED IN APARTMENT'

**INSERT: IMAGE** OF CRIME SCENE (SAME AS OPENING)

**INSERT: NOTE** VICTIM WAS A STUDENT SAME TIME AS JOEL

**INSERT: HEADLINE** 'MR. X STRIKES AGAIN!'

**INSERT: NOTE** VICTIM WAS JOEL'S TEACHER

Freddie beams towards the collage.

RICK  
I've been pretty obsessed with Mr.  
X over the years. I've dug quite  
deep into it.

Freddie glares at Rick.

FREDDIE

What the hell is this?

RICK

I've been dreading this moment for a long time. I've pondered it over and over, and I can't get it behind me.

FREDDIE

What are you trying to say?

RICK

(Resolutely)

It's Joel! Fred, it's Joel. Our friend Joel is Mr. X. It all makes sense. I've been putting the pieces together for years.

Freddie glares at Rick.

RICK (CONT'D)

Now, your theory about Donald is sound as well. And maybe they are connected in some way. But I'm telling you, Joel...

Freddie POUNCES on Rick. Rick falls to the ground. Freddie falls on top of him.

Freddie clutches Rick's shirt.

FREDDIE

(Furiously)

How could you say this! Accusing our friend! You bastard!

Freddie punches Rick in the face.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You fucking bastard!

Freddie stands up. Rick stays on the ground. His nose bleeds. Rick touches his face.

Freddie approaches the stairs. Rick looks at him.

RICK

I'm sorry Fred, it's the truth. Search your feelings, you have the same information I do. Put the pieces together yourself.

Freddie steps up the stairs. He exits.

INT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Freddie drives. He is lost in thought. Tears roll down his cheek.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie enters. He sits on the couch. He stares into nothingness.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAWN

Freddie is asleep on the couch. Daniel runs into the room. He jumps on Freddie.

DANIEL  
Grandpa! Wake up!

Freddie stirs. Daniel sits next to Freddie.

DANIEL (CONT'D)  
Why did you sleep down here?

FREDDIE  
(Groggily)  
Grandpa came home very late. How  
are you feeling this morning?

DANIEL  
Just great! Want some scrambled  
eggs? Grandma said I can do it all  
by myself.

Freddie smiles.

FREDDIE  
(Patting Daniel's  
shoulder)  
OK Danny boy. Just be careful.

Daniel hugs Freddie. He exits. Freddie's smile disappears.

IN THE KITCHEN.

Daniel cooks eggs. Freddie sits at the kitchen table. He stares into nothingness. Daniel looks at him. He giggles.

DANIEL  
Grandpa, what are you looking at?

FREDDIE  
Oh, nothing.

Martha walks in. She wears a night gown.

DANIEL  
Morning grandma!

MARTHA  
Good morning sweetheart.

She kisses Daniel on the head.

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
Great job with those eggs. You're becoming a real chef.

DANIEL  
They are for grandpa, want some?

Martha nods. Daniel focuses on the stove.

Martha glares at Freddie. Freddie does not notice her.

MARTHA  
You've been gone all night.

Freddie does not respond.

MARTHA (CONT'D)  
(Shrieking)  
Fred!

Freddie jumps.

FREDDIE  
What!?

MARTHA  
Daniel, why don't you get ready, I can finish cooking breakfast.

DANIEL  
(Moping)  
OK.

Daniel coughs. He sulks out of the room. Martha cooks.

MARTHA

(Focusing on stove)  
Noah and I are bringing Daniel to  
the doctor this morning. So we need  
the truck.

FREDDIE

(Absentmindedly)  
OK, sounds good.

Freddie stands up.

MARTHA

(Focusing on stove)  
Don't expect good news.

Freddie exits.

IN THE BEDROOM. - DAY

Freddie is asleep in the bed. NOISE, front door swings open.  
Coughing is HEARD. Freddie stirs awake. He stares at the  
ceiling.

IN THE LIVING ROOM. - CONTINUOUS

Noah sits on the couch. Freddie enters. He sits next to Noah.

FREDDIE

How is he?

NOAH

His heart is very weak.

They sit in silence. Noah cries.

NOAH (CONT'D)

I got nothing left to live for dad.

Freddie puts his arm around Noah.

FREDDIE

Don't talk like that.

NOAH

My wife and baby will be gone.

FREDDIE

Be strong Noah. You still have us.

NOAH  
 How much longer until you croak  
 dad? You're an old man.

Freddie looks at Noah.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 There is one thing we can both  
 agree upon.

FREDDIE  
 What's that.

NOAH  
 Your friend Joel. He is a light  
 unto something far greater than  
 this world can offer.

Noah stands up. Freddie looks up towards Noah.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 (Looking at Freddie)  
 Never forget how wise that man is.

Noah exits. Freddie stares into nothingness.

IN THE LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Freddie sits alone. He looks through a yearbook. Freddie  
 smiles at every page.

He comes across a message written by a young Joel.

**INSERT: MESSAGE** 'Fred, words cannot describe the joy you  
 bring to my life. May our adventures never end. - Joel'

Freddie RECOGNIZES the handwriting as the same handwriting  
 that has been haunting him for 40 years.

Freddie closes the book.

EXT/INT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - DUSK

Freddie drives. He looks as though his heart has been torn  
 out of his soul.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DUSK

A small crowd is gathered around an ambulance. Joel lies on a  
 stretcher. The paramedics push him towards the ambulance.

Freddie parks next to the crowd. He rushes towards Joel.

FREDDIE  
(Hysterically)  
Joel, you bastard!

A PARAMEDIC approaches Freddie.

PARAMEDIC  
Sir, Dr. Young has suffered a  
severe stroke. I'm going to have to  
ask you to step back.

The paramedic restrains Freddie. A police officer appears and helps the paramedic restrain him.

FREDDIE  
(Hysterically)  
How could you!

Joel is unconscious. He is pushed into the ambulance. The paramedic lets go of Freddie and enters the ambulance.

The sirens come alive. The ambulance drives off. Crowd disperses. Freddie sulks in the street.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Joel lies in a hospital bed. Freddie enters.

JOEL  
(Softly)  
Hello my friend. It seems my time  
has come.

Freddie stares at Joel with frightened eyes.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
(Softly)  
I can tell by your face that the  
truth has finally revealed itself.  
I am proud of you.

FREDDIE  
How could this be the truth? How  
could you do this to me?

JOEL  
How could I not? I wanted you to  
truly live.

FREDDIE

I don't understand. You're a murderer.

JOEL

I might be. But I'm not an evil man. You know this.

FREDDIE

Then what are you?

JOEL

Merciful.

Freddie grows in anger.

FREDDIE

Where is the girl? Is she dead.

JOEL

(Softly)  
On the contrary, she is quite well.

FREDDIE

Where is she?

JOEL

But you already know where she is.

Freddie stares at Joel.

JOEL (CONT'D)

(Softly)  
I want to tell you Freddie. My love for you is the greatest force I have ever known. Everything I do is because of you.

FREDDIE

(Resolutely)  
Tell me where she is!

JOEL

Trust your instincts. The muses speak directly to you.

FREDDIE

(Shouting)  
Enough with your crap!

JOEL

(Faintly)  
Where we first met.  
(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)  
You will find what you are looking  
for. Thank you Freddie.

Freddie tears up.

JOEL (CONT'D)  
Thank you for making my life  
extraordinary.

Joel fades away. The heart monitor flat lines.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Freddie enters. Martha sits in a chair.

FREDDIE  
(Frantically)  
Where is Noah?

MARTHA  
Haven't seen him all night. What's  
the matter?

FREDDIE  
Joel just died.

MARTHA  
Oh my, what happened?

FREDDIE  
He had a stroke.

Freddie picks up the phone and dials. He gets the answering  
machine.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)  
Rick, listen you were right. I'm  
sorry for hitting you. But I now  
know where the girl is. She's at my  
fathers farm, by the barn house.  
Bring the police, and don't let  
McManus find out. I'm heading there  
now.

Freddie slams the phone on the receiver.

MARTHA  
Where are you going?

FREDDIE  
Don't worry about it.

MARTHA

Stop treating me like garbage and  
tell me the truth!

FREDDIE

Martha! My best friend just died  
and there is something I must do.

MARTHA

If only you felt as passionately  
about your family as you do a  
fucking killer and your best  
friend.

FREDDIE

I loved that man!

MARTHA

Well, I don't love you!

EXT. OLD BARN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Green truck parks next to old barn house. Freddie, holding  
gun and flashlight, gets out and approaches the barn.

INT. OLD BARN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Freddie enters. He turns on flashlight. Holds flashlight and  
gun out.

He creeps the flashlight through the barn. The barn is  
renovated.

Flashlight BEAM reveals a long table with a model city on top  
of it. The model city contains greenhouses and spherical  
buildings.

Light reveals a large banner above Freddie. It says 'The  
Future is Now'.

Freddie notices a light coming from a outside. He  
investigates and discovers the light comes from a house in  
the distance.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Freddie, gun out, approaches the house.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Freddie sneaks towards the illuminated window. He crouches.

Freddie sees KATIE, 8, and ERIC SINGER, male late 20s, play chess. They both smile.

Freddie creeps towards the front porch. He walks towards the front door. He opens the door. It CREAKS. The light goes off.

Freddie goes into the darkness. He reaches the living room. The light comes on. Dr. Samuel Livingston stands behind him.

SAMUEL

Hello Freddie, it is a pleasure to see you again.

FREDDIE

You?

ANTHONY

We have been anticipating this day from the very beginning.

Freddie falls into a chair. He looks around.

FREDDIE

It looks the same. Everything.

SAMUEL

Yes, Freddie. Joel orchestrated it all with a single aim.

FREDDIE

I don't understand.

ANTHONY

You, my friend. Everything Joel has done. All the work we have accomplished. It is all because of you.

FREDDIE

Me?

SAMUEL

That night you chased Joel in the alleyways. That, my friend, was a fateful night. Joel has informed me that his intention was to never become a serial killer. What you uncovered was an isolated incident, a crime of passion.

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

The brutal treatment and symbols written in blood were done in a state of trance. Joel had not even been aware of them until later that same evening.

FREDDIE

What the hell are you talking about?

SAMUEL

When Joel took a peak through the window at the police officers that had just entered. He had never thought, in all his wildest dreams, that one of those police officers would be you. You see, Freddie, it was fate. All of this was brought together because of you.

FREDDIE

Enough of this shit. My friend Joel was a gawd damn serial killer. And you are a fucking accomplice!

Samuel sits on a chair near Freddie.

SAMUEL

He wanted you to catch him. He wanted you to feel the satisfaction of solving such heinous crimes. He wanted you to find fulfilment, if only for a single moment. Everything he did was out of the love he felt for his best friend.

FREDDIE

Shut your fucking mouth!

SAMUEL

And look now what good is being brought into this world because of Joel's acts of terror.

FREDDIE

How can there be any good?

SAMUEL

We who have gained the freedom Joel has so mercifully given to us will do all we can to relieve all the suffering that torments this fractured world. Is that not the ultimate good?

FREDDIE

You thinking building a little town  
for your cult is going to be good  
for the world?

SAMUEL

A community that grows its own  
food, produces its own energy. That  
is self sufficient in every  
possible way one can think of. We  
will be the model for the future.  
How is that not a good thing?

FREDDIE

You're all evil!

SAMUEL

Of course. That pesky morality  
always gets in the way of good  
people.

FREDDIE

You're a psycho!

SAMUEL

Am I? Good people are always  
drawing conclusions so quickly. In  
order for you to understand  
Freddie, you must be willing to  
entertain a thought without  
accepting it. Can you do that?

FREDDIE

Fuck you! I should shoot you right  
now.

SAMUEL

As you have done before. You  
certainly know what it feels like  
to kill a man.

FREDDIE

I know what it feels like to kill  
evil men.

SAMUEL

Who are you to judge if a man is  
evil? Are you a divine being.

FREDDIE

I will not tolerate this airy  
bullshit anymore.

(MORE)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

You're a murderer, Joel was a fucking murderer, and all of this will be brought to justice!

SAMUEL

Ah, good. You have brought up a very important point. Justice! The natural law of order given to us by the gawds themselves.

FREDDIE

I'm warning you.

SAMUEL

What? Let's face it Freddie, if you were going to kill me, you would have done it already. But besides, due process of law constitutes the just action. You killing me would only add to the injustice you perceive.

Freddie drops the gun. He covers his face with his hands.

FREDDIE

Oh Jesus, I'm so confused.

SAMUEL

(Shouting)

Katie, can you come in here for a moment.

Katie walks into the room. She stands in front of Freddie.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Say hello to Mr. Smith.

KATIE

Hello.

Freddie touches her face.

FREDDIE

Are you all right? Have they hurt you in anyway?

Katie laughs.

KATIE

No. I've never been better.

FREDDIE

These people are holding you hostage, don't you understand.

Katie stares at Freddie.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

They murdered your parents! Aren't you upset about this?

Katie smiles.

KATIE

Why would I be upset? My mommy and daddy were suffering. The wise man freed them.

Freddie stares at her. Katie looks towards Samuel. Samuel nods. Katie exits.

SAMUEL

You see Freddie, things are not as evil as you initially thought. Let me provide you with a simple argument. The cycle of life and death is apparent. They are two sides of the same coin. Things come into this world, and they pass out of it. It is as simple as that.

FREDDIE

What's your damn point?

SAMUEL

My point is even more simple Freddie. On accepting this simple reality one must then ask themselves, is death an evil in this world? For if one were to consider something so inevitable and natural to life as an evil, wouldn't that make life itself an evil?

FREDDIE

There is nothing wrong with death. Everybody dies.

SAMUEL

Very good Freddie. You are beginning to shed your illusions.

FREDDIE

Illusions? It's murder! Murder is the evil, and you are a gawd damn murderer.

SAMUEL

Perhaps you are right, but what makes murder an evil is not the act itself, but the intention behind it.

FREDDIE

All murder is evil. I have no doubts about it.

SAMUEL

You are most definitely entitled to your beliefs, and I respect you for it. But let me give you an alternative perspective. Let us imagine a man completely overwhelmed with anger. The source of the anger, let us say, a cheating spouse.

FREDDIE

I'm really not interested in these word games.

SAMUEL

You should be, was Joel not the most meaningful thing in your entire life?

Freddie stares at the ground.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Well?

Freddie lifts his head. He stares at Samuel, fire in his eyes.

FREDDIE

Yes!

SAMUEL

Then, despite the harsh reality so hastily presented to you, the least you can do is show some respect and try to understand what your friend has done.

FREDDIE

You have alot of nerve!

SAMUEL

Yes John, I do. And it is because I am frustrated.

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Despite what ever evils you can sense in this situation, you refuse to let your senses uncover the profound good that is being done.

Freddie sulks into the chair.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Anyways, where was I? Oh, of course, the angry man has just discovered that his wife has been cheating on him. So the man murders the wife and her lover. Now Freddie, what were the intentions underlying this act of murder?

Freddie hesitates.

FREDDIE

Revenge.

SAMUEL

Precisely! Now this type of murder, being of base origin, is something that even I would consider an evil act.

FREDDIE

You're saying murdering someone due to base origins is evil?

SAMUEL

Naturally, that is my conclusion.

FREDDIE

But Joel's murders are not?

SAMUEL

Aside from the initial incident, let us now examine the intention behind Joel's acts of mercy. Have you ever known Joel to be a mean spirited individual?

FREDDIE

He was a fucking saint.

SAMUEL

You knew him better then anyone. So what do you think his intentions were behind his acts of murder?

FREDDIE

A saint committing murder. Sounds like garbage.

SAMUEL

Are you suggesting that despite Joel's appearance, he was a mean spirited and evil man deep inside?

Freddie stares at Samuel.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Answer the question truthfully. You grew up with the man, you played and nurtured your wonderful friendship here, on this very farm. The farm that was your fathers. Could you see Joel as being any other person then he was.

Freddie stares at Samuel.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Your silence is quite wonderful. I'm going to go ahead and assume that the answer is no. That indeed, Joel is the very saint you have known for over 60 years.

Freddie stares at Samuel.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

The very same saint that lead your platoon to victory after victory in the desolate German countryside. The very saint that, on more then one occasion, saved your very life from being extinguished. Am I correct?

FREDDIE

Get to the point already!

SAMUEL

Simply put, his intentions were those of a saint.

Freddie covers his face.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Freddie, how would you define suffering?

FREDDIE

Pain. Sadness. Loss of love.

SAMUEL

I fine, noble answer. But let me tell you exactly what suffering is.

Samuel stands up. He paces back and forth.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

The human being is not like any other animal. Other animals function in accordance with natural law. But human beings function in accordance with something far more extraordinary. The human being functions in accordance with reason.

Freddie leans forward.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

Now, do not misunderstand. Many of the movements that occur in a human life are exactly the same as that of animals. Eating, bodily functions, emotions, desires, all of this humans have in common with the animals. The difference is the means in which all of these movements are stirred. Do you understand?

FREDDIE

Animals move in accordance with natural law, and human beings in accordance with reason. Yeah, I fucking get it.

SAMUEL

Good!

FREDDIE

So then, what is suffering?

SAMUEL

Suffering is, simply put, a human being not functioning properly. And, I am afraid to say, this is the case for most in this world.

FREDDIE

That's quite a claim. It sounds to me like you bastards are killing people you believe are inferior.

Samuel collapses in a chair.

SAMUEL

Oh no, Freddie. Do not believe for one moment that I feel anything but sorrow. This is a simple reality about the world. You can see it everywhere you go. Countless souls stuck in a mundane existence. Going through the motions of a life that never fulfills itself.

Freddie looks at the floor.

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

One of Joel's victims was Professor Alan Schultz. Do you recall his name?

FREDDIE

Sure.

SAMUEL

Well, Professor Schultz was a prime example of someone who was not functioning properly.

FREDDIE

Bullshit! Dr. Schultz was the chair of an academic department at a prestigious university in the United States of America. If anyone is functioning properly, it would be him.

SAMUEL

You're still holding such ideal standards about the world we live in. Remember, the world is filled with suffering. A world that is filled with suffering must also be suffering itself.

FREDDIE

Aright. Well, enlighten me. Why was Dr. Schultz suffering?

SAMUEL

Schultz was lacking in something essential to proper human functioning. The gawds did not speak through him.

FREDDIE

The gawds? I don't understand.

SAMUEL

What I mean is inspiration. The unity of reason with the origin of all being. The source en which all the world springs from.

FREDDIE

Origin of being?

SAMUEL

Yes John. The transcendent. You see, Professor Schultz saw poetry with a scientific mind. He analyzed its meter and rhyme, held objective ends true for each piece. Yes, this way of thinking is the reasoning faculty, but, without inspiration, life is simply meaningless. The poor professor could never fathom the importance poetry served to the human experience. For him, it served two functions. A means of survival, and nothing more then entertainment.

FREDDIE

But Dr. Schultz was functioning correct?

SAMUEL

Yes, he was functioning. And properly for that matter. But he could not live a truly fulfilling life because of what he lacked.

FREDDIE

So how does one attain inspiration.

Samuel smiles.

SAMUEL

It's know easy feat. In fact, before Joel showed me the path towards freedom, I was very similar to Professor Schultz.

(MORE)

SAMUEL (CONT'D)

I was an airy academic only concerned with ends that did not directly serve fulfillment.

FREDDIE

So I suppose you are telling me that by awakening all of you on this path towards freedom, Joel provided inspiration.

SAMUEL

Precisely.

Freddie laughs.

FREDDIE

You know what, this is all a bunch of horse shit. I've discovered such a flaw in your little argument.

SAMUEL

What is that?

FREDDIE

If Joel provides all of you assholes with inspiration, how did Joel become inspired, thus freeing himself.

Samuel smiles.

SAMUEL

You mean to tell me you haven't figured it all out.

Eric and Katie enter. Eric limps.

ERIC

Katie wanted to say good night.

Freddie notices the limp.

FREDDIE

You! You tried to kill me!

Katie looks up towards Eric. Samuel nods.

ERIC

Go upstairs Katie. Try to get some sleep.

Katie exits.

SAMUEL

Eric here did try to kill you. For that I sincerely apologize.

ERIC

I only wanted to look at you. You chased me and I got scared.

FREDDIE

Scared! You people can be afraid?

John laughs.

SAMUEL

It seems young Eric here is jealous of your relationship with Joel.

Eric approaches Freddie. Freddie stands up. Eric stands next to Freddie. Faces inches apart. Eric smiles.

ERIC

Joel loved me in ways you could never understand.

FREDDIE

Guess what? I don't give a shit.

Freddie and Eric stare at each other. Eric turns toward Samuel.

ERIC

If it wasn't for his cop friend, I would of cut this man.

SAMUEL

Eric. You should not think of our friends in such a matter.

Eric turns towards Freddie.

ERIC

This man is not my friend. I don't give a fuck if Joel loved him. This man is a pathetic soul who should be freed the old fashion way.

Eric smiles. Freddie punches Eric in the face. Eric falls.

SAMUEL

Please, Gentleman. No violence.

Freddie turns towards Samuel.

FREDDIE

No violence? You know Dr. Livingston, for a smart guy, you're a fucking dumbass. Your living on a cloud. An ideology twisted by evil.

SAMUEL

It seems you still don't understand.

FREDDIE

I understand that this is all twisted. Sure, the world is filled with suffering, but you guys don't seem to understand what the cure is.

SAMUEL

And what is the cure?

FREDDIE

I don't know. Nobody knows. That's the point. All of you think you have the cure. But all you have is madness, and mad people don't quite understand the extent of their own madness.

SAMUEL

How disappointing.

FREDDIE

Listen, professor. Did you really think I would come here without a plan? It's over. The authorities are on their way. Just give up this bullshit, you're a smart guy, come on already.

SAMUEL

We anticipated this, of course. We are not idiots. Detective McManus is on our side. He knows of our plan, and has known of this location all along.

FREDDIE

Oh you fool. Such a fool. Your own madness is clouding your judgement. You don't seem to understand Donnie at all.

SAMUEL

He is a little eccentric, I admit.  
But he is with us 100%. He loved  
Joel as much as we all did.

Freddie laughs.

FREDDIE

He's a mad dog. It's a damn shame  
you don't see it.

SAMUEL

You don't know him like we do.

ERIC

Maybe he is right.

SAMUEL

If anyone is a mad dog, it would be  
you Eric.

ERIC

I've always felt something off  
about the guy.

FREDDIE

You're all mad, don't get me wrong.  
But people like McManus, they just  
want to see the world burn.

Samuel sighs.

SAMUEL

So what are you suggesting?

FREDDIE

I'm saying that you are all in  
danger. We have to get out of here,  
now!

SAMUEL

Perhaps you are right. Eric, go  
wake up Katie and bring her down  
here. We shall escape right away.

Eric exits.

FREDDIE

We can't go by the road, they will  
be coming from there.

SAMUEL

Of course, we have a boat over by  
the lake.

FREDDIE  
So prepared.

SAMUEL  
Naturally.

FREDDIE  
Why can't you see that you're a  
maniac?

SAMUEL  
Because we are all maniacs. It's  
just some of us choose to ignore it  
for all their lives.

FREDDIE  
Are all you academic types so full  
of shit?

SAMUEL  
Of course John. How else do you  
expect an academic type to behave?

Freddie smiles.

FREDDIE  
Joel always loved to spit out his  
wisdom. I guess he was always a  
wack job.

SAMUEL  
Joel was never a wack job. I  
already explained to you, he was a  
saint.

FREDDIE  
Whatever you say.

Eric enters.

ERIC  
Katie is up and getting ready. I  
told her we are leaving and it is  
urgent.

SAMUEL  
Very good. As always, good will  
triumph in the end.

The front door SLAMS open. Donald McManus appears. He holds a  
gun. Dr. Livingston is shot in the head. Eric is shot in the  
head.

Donald looks at Freddie and smiles. Donald goes upstairs.

Katie screams. Donald appears carrying Katie. She struggles and cries. They exit house. Freddie is alone.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Emergency vehicle lights surround the front of the house. Freddie sits on an ambulance bed. He clutches a blanket.

Donald speaks with reporters. Many cameras surround him.

DONALD

Once again, the forces of good this great country represents triumphs over evil.

Donald winks at Freddie. Freddie sulks. Rick approaches Freddie.

FREDDIE

Hey Rick. What will happen to Katie?

RICK

I don't know.

FREDDIE

Maybe I can do something.

RICK

Listen, Freddie.

Freddie gazes at him.

RICK (CONT'D)

I know this is horrible timing, but, Noah is dead.

FREDDIE

What?

RICK

His body was found by the train tracks. Looks like a suicide.

INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

The mortician pulls out a body covered by a sheet. He lifts the sheet. Freddie looks at the body. Freddie cries.

FREDDIE

That's my boy.

Freddie notices a spiral carved onto Noah's arm.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Small crowd is present as Noah's body is put into the ground. A priest speaks a eulogy. Freddie stands on the opposite side of Martha and Daniel.

Daniel clutches Martha's hand as he coughs uncontrollably. His coughing grows more intense as the priest speaks.

Freddie gazes at Martha and Daniel. Martha stares at her son being lowered into the ground.

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

The crowd disperses. Daniel stands alone by a tree. Martha approaches Freddie. They look at each other.

MARTHA

I'm bringing Daniel to see a specialist in the city. We are going to stay with my niece.

FREDDIE

I can't spend time with my own grandchild?

MARTHA

It's the way things are.

FREDDIE

I've lost everything, don't you care?

MARTHA

It doesn't matter if I care or not.

FREDDIE

I'm going to say goodbye then.

MARTHA

I'm just going to take him now. You heard him coughing, he's in really horrible shape.

FREDDIE

I can't even say goodbye?

MARTHA

Goodbye Fred.

Martha walks away. She smiles.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

John enters. He sits on the couch. He stares at nothing. A NOISE. John gets up and investigates. He is KNOCKED on the head.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Same house where Eric and Dr. Livingston were killed. Freddie is unconscious and bound to a chair.

He stirs. He looks around. Everything is covered in gasoline.

DONALD  
Hello friend.

Donald appears. He wears a trench coat and fedora (SAME AS MR. X).

DONALD (CONT'D)  
It is a pleasure to see you again.

Donald grins.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
It is an honor to end your suffering.

Donald takes off the trench coat. He is naked. A large spiral is carved into the front of his body.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
Magic is in the air. Can you smell it?

Donald grabs a can of gasoline. He pours it over his body.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
How fitting. To end your miserable life where it all started. Joel would be so proud of my poetic expression. He was a lovely man, and hopefully by now you understand why.

Donald takes out a match.

DONALD (CONT'D)  
Here's to you Freddie.



FREDDIE

Well, believe it or not I was just chasing some killer.

JOEL

How exciting.

FREDDIE

Exciting? I'm a wreck. I don't know how much longer I can do this.

JOEL

Don't you feel alive, chasing a killer?

FREDDIE

No way. I think I want a quiet life.

JOEL

Well I think it sounds thrilling.

FREDDIE

Yeah, well why don't you try being a cop.

JOEL

I would rather see you thrive at it.

FREDDIE

I'm going to quit.

JOEL

No Freddie, you can't.

FREDDIE

Don't tell me how to live my life.

JOEL

You inspire me Freddie. That's what I wanted to tell you. I believe it was fate that we saw each other on the street.

FREDDIE

You got some more bullshit brewing?

JOEL

I've decided to dedicate my life's work to our friendship. Everything that I will do from this point on will be out of the love I have for you.

FREDDIE

How sweet, too bad we ain't fags.

JOEL

I'm serious. This is not some romantic love. This is real love. We have been friends almost our entire lives. It means alot.

FREDDIE

Same here buddy.

JOEL

You are my muse. And I hope one day I can inspire you to find true fulfilment.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BURNING HOUSE - NIGHT

Freddie can't keep his eyes open. He no longer struggles in chair. The flames surround him. All hope is lost.

Two people come of nowhere and save Freddie from the flames.

EXT. BURNING HOUSE - NIGHT

Freddie is thrown unto the grass. He looks at the house burning away. He glances towards the men who saved him. He sees lots of cars. Men get out of the cars. The two men that saved him smile.

INT. FREDDIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

Freddie sleeps in the bed. He is alone. He wakes up. He exits bedroom.

IN THE KITCHEN.

Freddie enters the kitchen. He starts to prepare breakfast.

Katie enters. Freddie smiles at her.

FREDDIE

You ready to work today?

KATIE

You bet Freddie.

INT/EXT. GREEN TRUCK (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

The truck drives on the rural road. The land that was Freddie's father's farm is now filled with greenhouses and spherical buildings. Many people work on the land.

Freddie smiles at Katie. Katie smiles at Freddie.

The truck pulls into the newly established community.

FADE OUT.

(CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

