

MOTHERLESS CHILDREN BY MICHAEL LISK

PROLOGUE

INT. A LOUD, CROWDED, SMOKY BAR - NIGHT

TOM HANKLE (early thirties, slightly overweight, shaggy hair) is drinking at the bar. His face brightens as he delivers the punch line to a dirty joke.

TOM

Not that hole, stupid, the other one.

Tom laughs at his own joke, observing his face in the mirror behind the bar. A thick cloud of smoke can be seen in the mirror moving over Tom's left shoulder. A longneck Budweiser bottle appears out of the cloud, ascending, perhaps empty, being returned to the bar. The bottle reaches a maximum height above the heads of the crowd and then suddenly crashes down upon Tom at the bar. Tom watches the action in the mirror, shaking his head in disbelief. When the bottle crashes with his skull in slow motion it becomes apparent that the bottle isn't empty. As Tom slumps backwards, falling off the stool, the crowd instinctively makes room for the falling body. A woman screams. The body sprawls on the floor, an ever-widening pool of blood expanding around the head. A hush falls over the crowd. The camera zooms in on the blood until it fills the screen and darkens to black.

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD (SEMI-RURAL CENTRAL NEW JERSEY) - NIGHT

CLOSE - PATROLMAN JOE ROBERTS

Patrolman JOE ROBERTS (twenty-nine years old, wearing a police officer's uniform, his hat barely concealing a thick scar above his right eye) is sitting behind the wheel of a parked police car, listening attentively to a call coming in over the radio.

VOICE OVER THE RADIO

Joe, are you out there?

JOE

(into the radio)

Yeah, Bill, I'm out on Lanes Mill.  
What's up?

BILL

(over the radio)

There's been some trouble downtown over at Rudy's. Someone busted up Tom Hankle. He's all over the place in there, lookin' bad.  
Someone got him with a beer bottle from what I could tell. I've got his wife,

Maria, down here and she says she saw it happen, says she can't be sure, but she thinks that it was Frank.

(Long pause)

Did you hear me, Joe? She thinks it was Frank.

JOE

(Pause)

Frank who?

BILL

(over the radio)

Your brother, Joe. Frank.

JOE

It's been eleven years since I've seen my brother. You know the story, Bill. What makes you think he'd come back here after all this time?

BILL

(over the radio)

I don't know, Joe. I really don't. I'm just telling you what Maria said. Christ, she's hysterical, maybe she don't know what she's saying.

JOE

Did anyone see him leave?

BILL

(over the radio)

A guy in the parking lot saw a white Thunderbird pull out in a hurry. Didn't catch the plates. It was headed in your direction, due east on West Farm Road. I want you to keep your eyes open.

JOE

White Thunderbird. Got it.

BILL

(over the radio)

Joe, I know what you've been through and all, but I don't want you doing anything rash or unprofessional out there. Don't do anything you're going to regret later.

JOE

Bill, just between you and me, I don't think it's him. It couldn't be. He'd never take the risk of coming back here where he could be recognized. It doesn't make any sense.

BILL

(over the radio)  
Yeah. Well. I don't know. Be careful is  
all I'm saying.

JOE  
Don't worry about me, Bill. Everything's  
under control.

Joe starts the car and pulls out, headed in the direction of  
West Farm Road.

LONG SHOT OF THE TAILLIGHTS OF THE POLICE CAR DRIVING DOWN  
THE ROAD

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - SUMMER NIGHT

CARD: "ELEVEN YEARS EARLIER"

CLOSE SHOT - THE TAILLIGHTS OF LINDA ROBERTS' CAR

LINDA ROBERTS (mid-forties), alone in her car, is driving to  
the local American Legion hall to retrieve her husband,  
Frank. Obviously angry, she curses Frank for staying out too  
late and for being a lazy drunken bastard. At an  
intersection, a speeding car makes a wide right-hand turn and  
swerves into her lane. The car sideswipes Linda's car,  
causing her to lose control and drive off the road. Her car  
collides head-on with a telephone pole. Linda strikes her  
head against the windshield and collapses behind the wheel in  
the broken bucket seat, bleeding from a fractured skull  
wound. The car that caused the accident doesn't stop. No  
other cars pass on the road for a long while. The only sounds  
heard at the scene are the hissing radiator, Linda's low  
moaning, and a dog barking off in the distance. The scene  
ends with a close shot of Linda as her ragged breathing  
subsides into silence.

INT. BETTY CARLIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

BETTY CARLIN (late thirties) is sitting at the kitchen table,  
a newspaper spread out before her, drinking coffee.

CLOSE UP - A LARGE NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPH OF LINDA ROBERTS' CAR  
CRUSHED UP AGAINST THE TELEPHONE POLE (BESIDE IT A HEADLINE  
READS: TALKS BREAK OFF IN GARBAGE STRIKE)

BETTY  
(bursting out in tears,  
upsetting her coffee)  
Oh, my God! No! Linda! It can't be true!  
No! Please, God, don't let it be.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - DAY

ARTHUR KING SR. (late forties, wearing a full-length

protective apron) and his son ARTHUR JR. (early twenties, similarly attired) are preparing the body of Linda Roberts (covered to the neck by a white sheet) for the wake service to be held the following evening. Arthur cradles Linda's head in one hand as he brushes her hair back with the other. Arthur Jr. leafs through assorted women's magazines (Glamour, Women's Home Journal, etc.) looking for a photograph that his father could use as a model for his make-up application. A deceased elderly black man in a suit can be seen in the background, lying upon a table. The top button of his shirt is open and his necktie hangs loose, untied. His jacket is unbuttoned, hanging slack, and his shoes haven't been put on yet. It appears as if he is kicking back, relaxing a little before going out on display. A body at rest.

ARTHUR SR.

You did a great job dressing the wound, son. If her hair was darker you wouldn't even be able to see it. Let's just make sure that we keep the lighting low and turn her so that the left side of her head faces the wall.

(lowering the head back onto the table)

I'm really glad you talked me into the open casket. It was more work, but it was worth it. I'm proud of you, son, you did a good job.

ARTHUR JR.

(bowing his head sheepishly)

You know I only want what's best for the home, Dad.

Arthur beams at his son over Linda Roberts' body, nodding contentedly to himself, cherishing this warm and tender moment with his son. Unable to resist the urge, he reaches over and tousles his son's hair.

INT. BETTY CARLIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Betty is hysterical. She rushes around the kitchen, still in tears, opening cabinets in search of baking materials. Gradually she assembles what she needs to make a lemon chiffon cake: flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, eggs, lemons, vanilla, butter. She becomes even more frantic as it becomes apparent that she is lacking one important ingredient: vegetable oil. At one point her four-year-old son, BOBBY, enters the kitchen, pushing a toy truck. Silently, in fearful awe, he observes his mother's erratic behavior.

BETTY

(desperate)

Hi, Bobby, do you know where Mommy's vegetable oil is?

BOBBY

(shaking his head)  
Why are you sad, Mommy?

BETTY

Mommy's not sad, honey. I'm just trying to make a cake and I can't find one of the ingredients.

(moving her son out of the kitchen)

Now do Mommy a favor and play in the living room for a while. Mommy needs to be alone in the kitchen. I'll be right in here if you need me.

(finally collapsing in a chair, covering her face with her hands as she cries)

I'm sorry, Linda. I wanted to make the lemon chiffon, but I'm out of vegetable oil. I'm so sorry.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Arthur King Sr. is applying make-up to Linda Roberts' corpse. Arthur Jr. is holding open a Glamour magazine for his father to study as he attempts to copy the make-up application of a model in an advertisement.

ARTHUR SR.

Were you able to contact the family about the clothes?

ARTHUR JR.

I tried a couple times and got no answer. When I finally got through, I got one of the sons. He was very rude with me.

ARTHUR SR.

What do you mean?

ARTHUR JR.

He hung up on me. I had hardly got two words out of my mouth when he hung up. I was very professional, as always, so there was no excuse for him...

ARTHUR SR.

He's obviously very upset.

ARTHUR JR.

Upset is one thing, being rude to a professional is another. It was uncalled for.

ARTHUR SR.

Unfortunately, it's part of the business, son. You can't always expect people to

treat you with the respect you deserve during a personal crisis. This is why our profession is such a noble one. We perform a necessary social function and yet are looked down upon by the society we serve. Let's face it, if it weren't for tax collectors and insurance representatives, we'd be at the bottom of the barrel. It takes real courage to do what we do. Remember that the next time someone is disrespectful toward you.

(finishing the make-up job and holding the magazine next to Linda's head for a comparison)  
So, what do you think? Pretty as a picture, or what?

ARTHUR JR.  
Looks great. How 'bout lunch?

ARTHUR SR.  
(beaming)  
Burgers? My treat?

ARTHUR JR.  
Excellent! I'm starved.

INT. BETTY CARLIN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Dejected and despondent, tears still streaming down her cheeks, Betty sits staring forlornly into the open cupboards of her kitchen. She rises slowly from her chair when she spots a bundt cake mix in back of one of the cupboards. She crosses the kitchen floor as if held in awe by some divine vision. Solemnly, she lifts the box off of the shelf.

BETTY  
(sobbing)  
I'm sorry, Linda. I really am, but it's all I've got. Forgive me.

The scene ends as Betty begins to make preparations to bake the bundt cake.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOUSE (PARENTS' BEDROOM) - DAY

FRANK ROBERTS SR. (mid-forties, work clothes) is sitting on the edge of the bed clutching one of his deceased wife's dresses. Occasionally he uses it to stem the steady stream of tears flowing down his cheeks.

FRANK SR.  
(sobbing)  
I picked the blue one, honey. I know it was one of your favorites. You always looked so pretty in it. I hope it still fits; it's been so long since I've seen

you wear it.

(suddenly, in an outburst,  
pounding the bed with his  
fists)

Oh God! Why?! Why?! Why?!

(sliding off the bed onto the  
floor, crawling toward the  
closet opposite)

I'm not so sure about the shoes, though.  
There's so many to choose from here.  
Blue, black, white. I can't remember  
which ones you wore. I wish to God I  
could remember, but I can't.

(suddenly)

Oh, Linda, forgive me!

(picking up a blue pair of  
shoes)

These look like they'll match. I hope  
I'm right. I'll ask Joe to make sure.  
He'll know.

Frank Sr. gathers up the dress and shoes and a few other things and walks down the hall into the living room. His youngest son, Joe Roberts (eighteen years old, jeans and a t-shirt), is sitting on a couch, his head buried in his hands. He looks up, teary-eyed, as his father enters the room.

FRANK SR.

Where's your brother?

JOE

I don't know. He took off a while ago. He didn't say where he was going.

FRANK SR.

If you see him, let him know I'm looking for him. I have to take care of a few things at the funeral home. I want you to stay here while I'm gone. There might be people calling to find out about the service. Tell them it'll be at King's Funeral Home tomorrow night at 7:30. I'm gonna borrow your truck for now, if you don't mind.

JOE

(handing his father the keys)

No. Sure. I don't mind.

FRANK SR.

(embracing his son as he takes  
the keys, breaking down)

Help me, Joe! I don't know if I can make it. I don't know if I'm strong enough.

JOE

(crying)

No one is. That's why we've got to help each other out. That's all we can do.

FRANK SR.

(trying hard to control himself)

I know. You're right. We've got to stick together. I'd be lost without you, Joe. I really would. As long as I know you're there for me, I'll be OK. We'll make it through this. We've got to.

JOE

I'll be there. Don't worry. I'm not going anywhere.

FRANK SR.

Thanks. You don't know how much that means to me. I better be going now.

(turning to leave and suddenly remembering)

Oh, Joe. One other thing. Do these shoes go with this dress?

The shoes don't match, but Joe nods his head anyway. He watches his father as he continues walking toward his truck (a white Ford pick-up) parked on the driveway in front of the house. They wave to each other as the truck pulls away. Joe closes the door. The sequence that follows is a montage of scenes of Joe home alone. Overcome with grief, it is clear he doesn't know what to do with himself. He stares out of windows in the living room and kitchen, not looking at anything in particular. He turns the console television in the living room on and immediately turns it off. He studies framed photographs with his mother in them. He sits down at the table with a can of beer. Occasionally he is interrupted by a phone call or the arrival of flowers or fruit baskets at the front door. A close shot reveals what one card attached to a fruit basket reads: "Deepest sympathy, Love Maria." Joe breaks down when he reads this card. He places the fruit basket in the living room with the others and then walks out onto the driveway to retrieve the newspaper. He returns to the kitchen table to read the newspaper and finish his beer. He browses through the paper until he discovers the large photograph of his mother's damaged car on the front page of the local section (the same photograph Betty Carlin had seen earlier). His face becomes twisted with grief as he reads the caption under the photo. A close shot reveals the large black and white photo and an article to the right that reads: "Talks Break Off in Garbage Strike." Carefully, he tears the photo out of the newspaper, folds it up, and places it inside the back cover of an old Bible he finds on a bookshelf in the living room. When he returns the Bible to the shelf he continues to stare at it as if confused by what he has just



done. This reverie is interrupted by the sound of the front doorbell. As Joe signs for the delivery of another fruit basket, Patrolman KEN WICKS can be seen in the background, walking up the driveway. He shakes Joe's hand when they meet on the porch. The following conversation between them is very formal and unemotional.

PATROLMAN WICKS

Hi, Joe. Is your father in?

JOE

He just left.

PATROLMAN WICKS

I just wanted to let you know that the investigation into the accident was continuing. We're hoping a witness might come forward after seeing the article in the paper ...

Joe looks away at the mention of the newspaper article he has just seen.

PATROLMAN WICKS

I'm sorry you had to see that, Joe. You're probably thinking that the photo was unnecessary, but we find that people are more likely to respond if there's a photo. It gets their attention quicker. And don't take this the wrong way, Joe, but it also serves a purpose for the victim's family. This way you see what it was like and don't have to keep wondering.

(pause)

When you're feeling up to it, we want you or your father to take a ride out to the wrecker's to look at your mother's car. Here's where it's at.

(he hands Joe a slip of paper)

You'll have to go out there anyway to pick up any personal belongings. Take a good look at the car. We want you to tell us if you see anything unusual. There's a scrape near the rear of the car that we're particularly concerned with. We want you to confirm whether or not it was there before the accident.

JOE

I don't think there was a scrape on the car before...

PATROLMAN WICKS

We suspect your mother swerved to avoid hitting another car. That might explain the scrape. There weren't any skid marks

indicating that she was trying to stop to avoid hitting something in the road. The problem will be finding witnesses. It was late and it isn't a very busy road. There's a chance, Joe, that we might not ever find out what happened that night.

As Joe nods his head at that possibility, FRANK (20 years old, wearing a t-shirt), can be seen driving slowly by the house in his truck. Joe's waves to him to stop.

CLOSE SHOT - FRANK IN HIS TRUCK

PATROLMAN WICKS

Isn't that your brother?

Frank doesn't stop, he continues driving by the house until he is out of sight.

JOE

Yeah. I guess he's not ready to talk about it yet.

PATROLMAN WICKS

Well, that's understandable. It's a difficult time for all of you.

(turning to leave)

We'll be in touch as the investigation continues.

As Patrolman Wicks walks down the driveway toward his car, Betty Carlin can be seen walking up the driveway carrying a large Tupperware object containing the bundt cake she has just baked for the Roberts family. She explodes in a fit of tears as she makes her first step onto the porch. This in turn sets off Joe. He loses it completely. He crumples into Betty's arms as she enters the door. Betty's quick hands prevent the near catastrophe of the cake being crushed between them as they embrace.

BETTY

She's gone, Joe! I've lost the best friend I had in the world! I'm so sorry.

JOE

I know.

BETTY

I didn't know what to do, so I baked this cake. Isn't that stupid?

(Joe shakes his head)

I was out of vegetable oil and ended up using a mix, but it's one of the better ones. Your mother always baked from scratch. She used to say it tasted better. She was right. I wanted to make the lemon chiffon, it was your mother's

favorite, but, like I said, I was out of vegetable oil. You can't make a lemon chiffon proper without vegetable oil. Besides, I couldn't concentrate. I wouldn't have made it right. Suddenly everything seemed so unimportant. You can't bake a cake when you're thinking like that because the unimportant things are the most important. Like the vegetable oil, for instance. I'm rambling, Joe, I know, but I mean well. I've been a wreck since I found out...

(self-consciously)

Oh my, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...  
Let's just put this cake down.

JOE

I appreciate everything you're doing,  
Mrs. Carlin.

BETTY

Is your father here?

JOE

No. He's at the funeral home taking care  
of the arrangements.

BETTY

How's he doing?

JOE

Not too good.

BETTY

He's in shock like the rest of us. He's got something to keep him preoccupied now, but afterwards is the rough part. I want you to know that if there's anything I can do to help, just give me a ring. And I mean anything. Don't be ashamed to ask. I'd be glad to help out. It's the least I could do for my best friend.

(breaking down)

Oh God, Linda. I'm going to miss you so much.

Betty and Joe embrace again while Betty struggles once again to compose herself.

BETTY

Will you look at me, Joe? Coming apart at the seams. Your mother would have laughed herself silly if she could see me now. I'd better run along before I become completely undone. I'll fix something up later and bring it over for dinner. Is that all right? I really want to help.

JOE

Sure.

BETTY

(leaving)

You probably haven't been thinking about meals, but sooner or later you'll have to. Life goes on, Joe, and we have to go on with it. Am I right?

JOE

I guess.

(embracing Betty at the front door as she departs)

We appreciate everything you're doing, Mrs. Carlin.

BETTY

It's all for your mother, Joe. I know she would have done the same for me. I'll be by later with dinner. Tell your father.

Joe nods as Betty walks away. He closes the door, returns to the kitchen, helps himself to a piece of cake, and sits down to eat it with his beer. The afternoon light seeping through the kitchen window gradually darkens. Fade to black.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOME - NIGHT

Joe has fallen asleep on the couch in the living room. The room is dark except for the light of the television, which has the sound turned down. Mrs. Carlin's half-eaten cake and several empty beer cans can be seen on the coffee table opposite the couch. Gradually Joe awakens to the voices of his father and older brother, Frank, arguing loudly in the backyard. Obviously drunk, Joe pulls himself up out of the couch. He staggers into the kitchen to look out the backdoor to see what the commotion is all about.

EXT. THE ROBERTS' BACKYARD - NIGHT

Frank Sr. and his oldest son, Frank (jeans, t-shirt, workboots), are drunkenly arguing about something; what, exactly, isn't clear. What is clear is that the son has gained the upper hand in the argument. The father can be seen cowering helplessly against his car (parked behind a shed in the backyard), weeping as his son stands over him, berating him. When they become aware of Joe's presence at the backdoor (the porch light has been turned on) they immediately stop arguing. Young Frank turns and storms toward the house. He just about pushes Joe out of the way as he bursts into the kitchen.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOME (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

Frank immediately heads for the refrigerator to get himself a

beer. When he finds there are none left, he turns on Joe.

FRANK

You drank all the fucking beer?

JOE

I didn't know...

FRANK

Christ, you could've been a little more considerate. Now I'll have to run back out for some more. Shit, it's late too. I better hurry. Is there any food in the house?

JOE

Mrs. Carlin brought some stew over.

FRANK

Great. Now I'll have to stop at the Wa-Wa for a burrito.

Frank exits as his father enters through the kitchen door.

FRANK SR.

(to Frank)

Where are you going?

FRANK

I'm gonna pick up some more beer. What difference does it make to you?

Frank Sr. is too drunk to reply satisfactorily. Frank abruptly moves his father out of the way and turns toward his truck parked on the driveway. Joe helps his father into the house. Propping each other up, they shuffle down the hall to the parents' bedroom. Frank Sr. is half-asleep as Joe finally lays him out on the bed.

FRANK SR.

(mumbling)

I loved your mother, Joe. She loved me.

JOE

OK, Dad. Try to get some rest.

Joe turns to leave.

FRANK SR.

(sitting up abruptly in bed)

You believe me, Joe, don't you?

JOE

Yeah, Dad. I believe you. Now get some rest. I'll see you in the morning.

EXT. ROBERTS' HOUSE (DRIVEWAY) - NIGHT

Frank is sitting in his truck, trying to get it started. The engine won't turn over due to a bad starter. He curses the truck as he beats the dash and punches the roof of the cab.

FRANK

Motherfucker! Son of a bitch! Piece of  
shit bastard!

Finally the engine turns over and he calms down. He puts the truck into reverse and drives off.

EXT. BLEWITT'S JUNKYARD - DAY

Joe drives his truck into the lot in front of the junkyard and parks near the small, dilapidated building that serves as an office. He is there to pick up personal items left in his mother's damaged car. He enters the shacklike building slowly, tentatively, as if a heavy weight were pressing down upon him.

INT. BLEWITT'S JUNKYARD OFFICE - DAY

Although it is the middle of the day, the office is as dark as a dimly lit cave. Behind a desk almost completely obscured by the piles of car parts catalogs heaped upon it, ED BLEWITT (18 years old, greasy jump suit) sits, idly thumbing through a skin magazine. The exposed surfaces of Ed's body are so thick with grime that he is barely visible in the dark office. As Joe enters, Ed quickly dispatches the magazine to an open drawer in the desk.

ED

(standing up nervously)

Oh, Joe. You came. Your father told me you'd be down, but I didn't expect to see you until after... I'm sorry about your mother, Joe. It must be a terrible time for your family.

JOE

It's pretty bad.

ED

I bet it is. I won't hold you up, then. Let me just show you where the car is. I'm sure you just want to get this over with.

Joe nods solemnly to himself as Ed leads him out of the office.

EXT. BLEWITT'S JUNKYARD - DAY

Joe follows Ed down a dirt road that leads to the fenced-in junkyard behind the office. The two proceed silently,

seriously, past the rows of junked cars until they reach Linda's car near the back of the lot. Joe stumbles and almost falls when he sees it.

ED

(turning to leave)

I'll be up at the office if you need me,  
Joe. Again, I'm really sorry...

Joe, crying openly now, falls toward the car, finally grabbing the roof for support. He slumps against the car, his head hanging low, looking in on the driver's side. He fumbles with the door handle, manages to open the door, and then collapses inside behind the steering wheel.

CLOSE - ED BLEWITT

Ed, nearly at the top of the hill walking toward the office, turns to see Joe climbing into his mother's car, winces at the sight, turns away, and trots the rest of the way to the office, not once looking back.

CLOSE - JOE INSIDE THE CAR

Joe is in tears as he rummages inside the car's glove compartment and collects personal items belonging to his mother. He climbs back out when he is finished. As he turns to leave, Joe notices a scrape on the driver's side of the car toward the rear. He bends to examine it, touching the peeling paint with his fingers. It is clear that another car had caused the damage (the color of the paint in the scrape doesn't match the color of the car). After he has examined it thoroughly, Joe walks back up the dirt road toward the office.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOME - DAY

It is late in the afternoon as Joe enters the house to find his father sprawled out on the couch, drunk and asleep. There are several empty beer cans on the coffee table in front of the couch. Joe attempts to rouse his father. In the background a chainsaw can be heard stopping and starting, over and over.

JOE

Wake up, Dad. We've got to get ready.  
It's getting late. Come on.

FRANK SR.

(drunkenly)

I can't do it, Joe. I can't go.

JOE

What do you mean? You've got to. Frank  
and I will be there with you.

FRANK SR.

(upset at the mention of  
Frank's name)  
No! No! I can't.

JOE  
C'mon, Dad. This isn't going to be easy  
for any of us. We've got to help each  
other out. This'll be the last time we'll  
be together as a family. We've got to be  
strong for her. You know that's how she  
would've wanted it. C'mon, let me help  
you.

FRANK SR.  
(getting up, moving slowly  
across the room)  
I know...I know. You're right. I can't  
run away from it anymore.

As Frank Sr. shuffles off down the hall toward the bedroom,  
Frank enters through the backdoor in the kitchen. Stepping  
into the living room, he watches his father disappear down  
the hall.

FRANK  
Oh, you got him up. Thank God for small  
miracles. For a minute there I thought we  
were gonna have to carry...

JOE  
What the hell is wrong with you? Why do  
you have to be such a bastard? Don't you  
see what he's going through?

FRANK  
I see everything...

JOE  
Then why don't you let up on him. Show  
him some respect for a change. Just this  
once. If you can't do it for him, do it  
for Mom. There's no reason this has to be  
any harder on him than it already is.

FRANK  
Take it easy, Pops. Don't go getting  
yourself worked up over it. What time is  
it anyway?

JOE  
A quarter to. We better get ready.

Frank nods and they move off down the hall.

EXT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME (PARKING LOT) - EVENING

GALLAGHER (20 years old, ill-fitting sports jacket and pants



that don't match, an old pair of his father's shoes) is sitting in his white pick-up truck listening to heavy metal music, drinking a beer concealed in a paper bag. Having arrived too early for Linda Roberts' wake, he is killing time. Close shots show him fumbling with price tags still attached to his sports jacket, trying unsuccessfully to conceal them up his sleeve. While he is preoccupied with these activities, a beat up Camaro full of young men (late teens, early twenties) pulls up alongside. The young men are dressed awkwardly, as if unaccustomed to dressing formally. A couple of them, lacking a sports jacket, have improvised with black leather jackets.

GALLAGHER

What's up, guys?

Gallagher delivers the line with absolutely no expectation of eliciting a response and receives none in reply. A long awkward pause follows. One of the young men, almost as if by accident, finally acknowledges Gallagher.

YOUNG MAN 1

Oh, Gallagher! How are you? We didn't notice you sitting there. You have a way of blending in with the scenery, you know, like a lizard or a reptile or something. Maybe it's that new sports jacket you're wearing. Is it new?

Self-consciously, Gallagher conceals the price tags in his sleeves.

GALLAGHER

(reluctantly)

Yeah.

YOUNG MAN 1

Are you going to keep this one or is it going back to K-Mart with the rest of your wardrobe after you're through with it?

GALLAGHER

I don't know. I haven't made up my mind yet.

YOUNG MAN 1

Well, take your time. We wouldn't want you to make a decision too quickly. You might bust a blood vessel or something.

The other young men in the Camaro begin to laugh as the Roberts family can be seen arriving in the background. All of a sudden their expressions turn solemn. Joe pulls up first with his father sitting in the passenger seat of his truck. Frank follows alone in his truck. They park and Joe has to help his father out of the truck. It is clear that he has

already broken down. Slowly they proceed into the funeral home.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - EVENING

Arthur King and his son greet the Roberts family at the entrance to the funeral home. Joe is still supporting his father, who is almost doubled over in misery. Frank lurks behind them, ill-at-ease, angry and bitter that he must play a part in this sad spectacle. Innocuous solemn organ muzak oozes over the funeral parlor's p.a. as the Kings escort the Roberts family down a hallway to the viewing room. Along the way, they pass another viewing room where a small service is already in progress. This is the wake for the elderly black man seen earlier. When they reach the viewing room, Joe helps his father down the aisle and kneels with him at the open casket, both openly crying. Frank remains standing off to the side, only rarely acknowledging the body of his mother with bowed head. When the Kings begin to professionally drift off into the background, Frank follows after them, confronting them in the back of the room.

FRANK

Hey, Mac. Could you kill the mood music?  
It's not helping things here any.

ARTHUR JR.

(affronted)

But many people appreciate the soothing,  
comforting qualities...

FRANK

(cutting him off)

Save the speeches, Junior. Just turn the  
shit off.

ARTHUR SR.

(stepping between the two young  
men)

Of course. We'd be pleased to honor your  
request. If there's anything else we can  
do, just let us know.

The Kings exit the room smoothly, unruffled by the incident, their professional dignity still intact. The music is turned off shortly thereafter.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME (ENTRANCE) - EVENING

Gallagher and the young men from the Camaro have just entered the funeral home. The young men follow Gallagher down the hall toward the viewing room, carefully distancing themselves from Gallagher in the event that someone they know might see them and make the wrong assumption. Gallagher, however, mistakenly turns into the wrong viewing room. He has entered the room where the wake for the elderly black man is being held. With his head severely bowed, Gallagher moves up the

aisle toward the open casket, completely unaware of the mistake he has made. The young men, realizing his error, pause to witness the spectacle Gallagher is about to make of himself.

YOUNG MAN 1

Check it out, guys. This ought to be memorable.

YOUNG MAN 2

Damn, I wish I had a camcorder. It could be America's funniest home video.

The young men watch from the entrance of the viewing room as Gallagher approaches the open casket. When he reaches the casket, Gallagher attempts to make the sign of the cross, but he ends up making the sign of the baseball diamond. Finally settled, he looks up in shock to behold the corpse of the elderly black man. His eyes bug as he rises and turns abruptly to leave the room, more out of fear than embarrassment.

The small group of people assembled in the room, not knowing who he is, stare at him curiously as he exits. The young men in the back of the room, clutching their sides, are barely able to contain themselves. For a moment, it's almost as if they had forgotten where they were. When the pale-faced Gallagher returns to the back of the room, the young men cannot resist having some fun with him.

YOUNG MAN 1

What's the matter, Gallagher? You look like you've just seen a ghost. Didn't you know? We all turn black when we die.

GALLAGHER

(still shaken)

I knew. I just didn't know how soon.

YOUNG MAN 1

(walking down the hall toward the Roberts' viewing room with the others, Gallagher trailing behind)

Just when I think there is still hope for mankind, Gallagher comes along to set me straight. If it wasn't so sad, it would be comical.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

The viewing room is gradually filling with friends and relatives of the deceased. They file down the center aisle, pause to kneel or stand at the open casket, then turn to their left to express their condolences to grief stricken Frank Sr., seated on a couch beside Joe. Frank is standing on the other side of the room, alone, casting disapproving looks on the proceedings. When the visitors are through comforting

the immediate family, they circle around to the log book in the back to sign in. Afterwards, they take a seat or remain standing in small groups in the back of the room, affecting an attitude of deep mourning, which generally means that the women abandon their husbands and seek out female friends they can speak to in urgent hushed tones and the men stand around awkwardly, alone or in silent groups, their heads bowed and their hands folded in front of their crotches (the traditional mourning stance). Betty Carlin is holding court among a group of women seated near the front of the room. They appear to be mentally taking attendance as they turn in their seats to carefully examine each new arrival. Two elderly aunts of the deceased are held up to this scrutiny as they approach the casket.

TWO-SHOT - ELDERLY AUNTS KNEELING AT THE CASKET

AUNT 1

Doesn't she look nice?

AUNT 2

Yes. And very restful.

(pause)

Her hair is different, I think. I've never seen it brushed that way. I wonder if it's a wig. They have to use them sometimes to hide the...

AUNT 1

(cutting her off)

I don't think it's a wig. They never get the hair right. I remember Momma put up a fuss when they parted Daddy's hair on the wrong side. I remember she combed it correctly herself in front of everyone. Dear Momma, God rest her soul. No, they never get the hair right, you can count on that. I've already told Harry, I want to wear a hat when I go. This way I won't have to worry about it.

AUNT 2

The make-up isn't very good either, is it?

AUNT 1

No. You can tell a man did it. They always put too much on. Linda never wore that much make-up. She didn't need it.

AUNT 2

No, you're right. She's barely recognizable all tarted up like that. A woman wouldn't have made such a bad job of it.

AUNT 1

It's hideous. I feel sorry for the family  
to have to see such a thing.

The two aunts cross themselves and rise to take a seat with  
the others.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

TWO-SHOT - HANK AND HAL

HANK and HAL (poorly dressed, middle-aged men) stand in a  
corner at the back of the room at a remove from the majority  
of the people at the wake. They grimly survey the proceedings  
around the casket, both staring straight ahead, not making  
eye-contact with each other as they speak.

HANK

What a tragedy...

HAL

Terrible...

HANK

Did you see it?

HAL

I saw...

HANK

(shaking his head)

Unbelievable...

HAL

You ask yourself how it could happen.  
You try to make heads or tails out of it  
and you draw a blank.

HANK

Zip.

HAL

Zero.

HANK

Nada.

HAL

It don't make any sense.

HANK

None of it does.

A long silent pause.

HANK

How can you blow a four run lead in the

ninth inning? It's beyond comprehension.

HAL

They should have fired Johnson on the spot.

HANK

I don't care what anyone says. You don't pull your starter in the ninth inning with a four run lead.

HAL

Especially when there's no one in the bullpen worth a damn.

HANK

Exactly.

HAL

We could do a better job for half the money this bum's getting paid.

HANK

It's a crime.

HAL

It's worse than a crime.

HANK

It's a sin.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Three roofers (co-workers of Joe and Gallagher, in their thirties, wearing ill-fitting suits, as if they might have put on some weight since they last wore them) are standing at the back of the room.

THREE-SHOT - THREE ROOFERS

ROOFER 1

Did you see the paper?

ROOFER 2

I saw it.

ROOFER 1

A horrible scene. Al told me they had to go in through the roof to get her out. I drove by there the other day. You couldn't even tell there'd been an accident. A few scratches on the pole and that was it.

ROOFER 2

Those fucking poles don't move for nothing.

ROOFER 1

Goddamn electric company. Sons of bitches make you pay for the damage too. Private property or some shit. Can you believe that?

ROOFER 2

I believe it. Those bastards can do anything they want. Shit. They've got the power.

ROOFER 3

Fucking bastards.

ROOFER 1

Hey, check out Gallagher. Is he clueless, or what?

The three watch as Gallagher awkwardly approaches Joe toward the front of the room and then, just as clumsily, avoids a direct confrontation with him. Eventually, he seeks refuge with the roofers in the back of the room. He is still very fidgety, obviously upset by the experience.

ROOFER 1

What's the matter, Gallagher, got a rash?

GALLAGHER

I don't know how to act...I don't know what to do...it's all so...

ROOFER 1

Tragic?

GALLAGHER

(dreamily)

Yeah, it's all so damn tragic.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME (MEN'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Arthur Jr. enters the men's room whistling "Zip-A-Dee Doo Dah." He continues whistling as he positions himself in front of one of the urinals. Adjacent to the urinals, in one of the stalls, Frank's feet can be seen (he's been sneaking a cigarette which he quickly extinguishes in the toilet). He emerges abruptly from the stall as if angered by the whistling, observes Arthur Jr. standing at the urinal, and taking advantage of his disadvantage, cold cocks him from behind, causing Arthur's face to slam into the wall in front of him. Knocked out, Arthur slumps to the floor. Frank turns and exits the men's room holding his right hand, slightly injured by the sucker punch he has just delivered.

INT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Joe is standing in the back of the room among some well

wishers. He observes his brother exiting the men's room with suspicion. Like the hyper-sensitive relative of a drunk at a party, he thinks that if he watches his brother closely enough, he will be able to prevent him from doing something incredibly stupid. He excuses himself to follow his brother, but he is immediately intercepted by BILL (mid-forties, dark suit), a family friend. As Bill launches into his monologue, Joe's three-year-old cousin, KEVIN, can be seen on the other side of Bill, clinging to his mother's hand. As Bill rattles on, Joe engages his cousin in a game of peek-a-boo, alternately hiding in front of and behind Bill. Bill remains oblivious to these shenanigans. He speaks in a low, almost inaudible, monotone, avoiding direct eye-contact with Joe.

BILL

Well, Joe, now you know how the world goes. Now you see where it all ends. They put you in a box and in a few days the worms have you. Someone might cry for a day or two and after that they forget all about you. It's a shame you had to find this out at such a young age. Most people don't have their teeth kicked in until they're a little older. When you've lived long enough to see what a sham life is these kind of things don't affect you as much. I know what you're going through because I was there once myself. When my brother was killed, I was a little older than you are now. That was when I lost my balance in the world. Nothing was ever the same after that. The way I saw it then, I could either deny the pain I was feeling or I could accept it. Naturally, I chose to deny it and consequently turned to the usual remedies every other damned fool turns to when they're looking for a quick fix. Drugs, booze, sex, religion, psychology—you name it, I tried it. As much as I would've liked to forget the pain, to kill it, I discovered over time that it just wasn't possible. After many wasted years, I finally realized that the problem wasn't me, the problem was life itself. And, of course, death. Ironic as it may sound, until I accepted the grim, painful reality of death, I couldn't truly experience life. Your trial is just beginning, but your choices are the same. As much as you'd like to forget the pain you're feeling now, sooner or later it catches up with you. You can't get away from it.

JOE



(as if he were really  
listening)  
Well, I'll certainly keep that in mind,  
Bill. Thanks.

Frank interrupts Joe and Bill.

FRANK  
(to Bill)  
Giving the kid a little pep talk, Bill?  
(turning to Joe without waiting  
for a reply from Bill)  
I think you'd better get back to the old  
man. He's in pretty rough shape.

Joe shoots him a hard look and turns to walk toward the front  
of the room where a group of people have huddled around his  
father as if to enact some primal ritual.

FRANK  
(to Bill)  
So, they let you out for a couple days,  
huh, Bill? How much time do you have  
before you're due back on the farm?

Before Bill has a chance to respond, Frank spots Arthur Jr.  
emerging shakily from the men's room, a balled-up paper towel  
held to his nose. To avoid further confrontation, he beats a  
hasty retreat to the front of the room. At this time, Arthur  
Sr. introduces FATHER O'NEAL (early forties, wearing dark  
sunglasses to hide a black eye and a bandage wrapped around  
his head). The people rise to their feet. Father O'Neal leads  
them in prayer (Psalm 23).

THREE-SHOT - THREE YOUNG MEN

The young men seen earlier are standing in the back of the  
room with their heads bowed as if praying, but not praying  
themselves. One of them directs the others' attention to  
Gallagher, standing fifteen feet away.

YOUNG MAN 1  
Check it out.

FULL-SHOT - GALLAGHER STANDING WITH HIS RIGHT HAND OVER HIS  
HEART

THREE-SHOT - THREE YOUNG MEN

YOUNG MAN 2  
(smiling to himself)  
Gallagher thinks he's at a ballgame.

YOUNG MAN 3  
The fucking idiot thinks it's the  
National Anthem.

YOUNG MAN 1

It is, in a way. It's the National Anthem  
of Death.

Father O'Neal finishes the prayer and the people sit down. Joe is sitting beside his father, comforting him on the sofa to the left of the casket. On the other side of the room, Frank is standing by himself, glowering, occasionally rubbing his injured hand. Between them, standing at a podium a few feet to the right of the casket, Father O'Neal begins his eulogy.

FATHER O'NEAL

One of the most difficult tasks I must perform, as a priest, is that of consoling a grieving family after the death of a loved one. It is an especially arduous task when the death is of a tragic nature and when it occurs to someone still in the prime of life. It was particularly painful for me to have to inform Linda's son, Joe, the night of the accident at the hospital. It was an experience I won't soon forget.

SUBLIMINAL FLASHBACK - FATHER O'NEAL RECEIVING A PUNCH TO HIS EYE

CLOSE - JOE BOWS HIS HEAD OUT OF EMBARRASSMENT (HE HAD THROWN THE PUNCH AT THE HOSPITAL WHEN FATHER O'NEAL HAD INFORMED HIM THAT HIS MOTHER HAD DIED)

CLOSE - FATHER O'NEAL

FATHER O'NEAL

I didn't know Linda personally, but from what people have been telling me here tonight, she was a warm and loving person. Whether it was as wife, mother, sister, or friend, it is clear that she touched the hearts of many during her lifetime. Of course I realize that anything I say now will be of little immediate comfort to those who knew her best.

CLOSE - FRANK

FRANK

(mumbling beneath his breath)  
Then why don't you save your breath.

CLOSE - FATHER O'NEAL

FATHER O'NEAL

All I can do now is offer my condolences

on behalf of the church and assure them that, although events like this might lead us to believe otherwise, God still cares about every one of us.

CLOSE - FRANK

FRANK  
(mumbling)  
Mopping up as usual.

CLOSE - FATHER O'NEAL

FATHER O'NEAL  
I realize this will be difficult for many of you to accept considering the circumstances. Where is God's love in a world of pain and suffering? This is the profound mystery every Christian must come to terms with over the course of their life.

CLOSE - FRANK

FRANK  
(mumbling)  
Mystery, my ass.

CLOSE - FATHER O'NEAL

FATHER O'NEAL  
Ultimately it is our faith in Jesus Christ that sustains us and enables us to live in this troubled world. Without faith, life would be hopeless.

CLOSE - FRANK

FRANK  
(mumbling)  
Yeah, and vice versa. And you'd be out of a job.

CLOSE - FATHER O'NEAL

FATHER O'NEAL  
Although we mourn Linda's loss, it is important to remember that her suffering is over. She's finally at peace with our Lord God in heaven. And although she is no longer with us, her memory will continue to live in the hearts of all of us.

CLOSE - FRANK

FRANK

(mumbling)  
Another PR man for the Lord.

As Father O'Neal begins "The Lord's Prayer," a thoroughly disgusted-looking Frank turns to leave through a side exit. Joe, seeing his brother leave and sensing some immediate disaster, crosses the room quickly in an effort to catch up with him.

EXT. KING'S FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Joe rushes out of the funeral home, but he is too late. Frank's truck can be seen pulling out of the parking lot. He curses him and returns to the wake.

EXT. A DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Frank pulls his truck over to the shoulder of the road, throws it in park, and with the engine still running, hops out of the cab. He reaches into the tool box behind the cab and pulls out a chain saw. He yanks on the starter rope as he approaches a telephone pole in front of the truck and the chainsaw roars into action. He lowers the saw to the base of the telephone pole. As he is cutting, the chain snaps and he abruptly backs away, startled. Pissed off, he kills the motor and stands away from the telephone pole, cursing it.

FRANK  
(shouting up at the pole)  
Fuck you! Fuck you! Fuck you!

Defeated, he returns to the truck, throws the chainsaw in back, and drives off.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The burial ceremony for Linda Roberts is breaking up. Frank leads the pack of people walking to their cars. He moves quickly, as if he is late for an appointment. Behind him, Gallagher approaches the group of young men seen at the wake the night before.

GALLAGHER  
(to the group in general)  
Wasn't it cool of the priest to read the lyrics to that old Byrds song?

O.S.  
What an asshole!

Joe is walking with his uncle, JOHN (early fifties, dark suit). Joe is teary-eyed. John has his arm around his nephew's shoulders.

JOHN  
Maybe it was better that your father didn't come. It might've been too much

for him. It's been too much for him as it is.

JOE

I wish I knew where he went. I'm worried that something might happen to him.

JOHN

Your father's not thinking very clearly right now. He's going to need some time to sort things out. I'll be straight with you, Joe, things aren't going to be easy from here on out. I'm telling you this because you're the most level-headed one here. It's going to be up to you to hold things together. If you don't help your father through this, I'm afraid it's going to break him. Frank, well, we all know Frank.

Joe has gotten into his truck. Frank drives by in the background, pausing to look at his brother and uncle. They look back at him incredulously, amazed somewhat at his inability to express any emotion during the entire ordeal.

JOHN

It's up to you, Joe. If you're not strong through this, the whole thing's going to come apart. If you need anything, just let me know. I'll do what I can to help.

Joe nods and starts the engine. John pats him on the arm and backs away. Joe drives off.

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

CLOSE - THE TAILLIGHTS OF FRANK'S PICK-UP TRUCK

Frank (wearing jeans, a T-shirt, and untied workboots) swings his beat-up Chevy to the edge of the road. He cuts the lights, but leaves the engine running. He cranks the volume up full blast as a tape of the live, chaotic version of "Adam Raised a Cain" by Bruce Springsteen begins to play over the car stereo. An empty beer can rattles out after him as he slumps out of the cab, stumbles around front, trips, and falls to his knees in the dirt.

FRANK

Son of a bitch!

Slowly, he regathers himself. He brushes himself off and staggers toward the woods, muttering to himself and fumbling with his zipper. As he relieves himself behind a tree, he pumps his leg, Elvislike, to the rhythm, exploding intermittently with outbursts of the only lyric he can remember.

FRANK

Adam raised a Cain! Adam raised a Cain!

He repeats the verse over and over, even during the inappropriate parts of the song, until he grows hoarse and starts coughing. As he continues to bellow, he neglects to notice that he is peeing all over himself. When it begins to soak through his socks at the tops of his unlaced workboots, he realizes his error, quits singing, and concentrates on what's at hand.

FRANK

Goddamnit!

Hastily, he shakes, zips up, and walks back to the truck. He opens the passenger side door and some more empty beer cans rattle out into the dirt. He kicks them under the truck. He reaches inside the cab and grabs a can of Budweiser.

FRANK

(raising the can admiringly)

The king of beers!

He cracks it open and takes a long draw. He grimaces. The beer is beginning to get warm. He takes another hard swallow to confirm his suspicions. He puts the can down on the roof of the cab and pops the lid of the toolbox directly behind the cab. He reaches inside for a chainsaw wrapped in canvas tied up with a piece of rope. He lifts it out of the toolbox and unwraps it. He examines the tension of the chain with his fingers as he walks down the road in the direction of the telephone pole he intends to fall. Careful to avoid the hooklike blades, he pulls lightly here and there along the chain. As he continues to walk, he notices something dripping from his fingers. Concerned that the saw might be leaking gas or oil, he tastes with the tip of his tongue the dark, wet patch in the palm of his hand.

FRANK

(indifferent to the fact that  
he has just ripped open his  
hand)

Blood.

(then in a Southern drawl)

Shit.

He approaches the telephone pole in a darkened area beyond the light of a streetlamp some 100 yards up the road. Standing beside the pole, he tugs hard on the starter rope of the saw and the motor catches. Slowly, carefully, he lowers the saw to the base of the pole. A thin, steady rain of dust falls from the pole as he cuts, sticking in blotches to his urine-soaked workboots. The chainsaw wails loudly with each thrust that he makes, occasionally choking on the tar-knotted wood. Halfway through the first cut, he jerks the saw out and begins lower, cutting upwards at an angle to meet the first cut. When the wedge falls away and the pole remains

standing, he holds the saw level and cuts straight through to bring it down. The saw catches and sticks as the pole creaks and groans and lurches forward. The wires connected to the two adjoining poles hold fast at first, preventing the pole from toppling. A shower of sparks falls from a transformer as the wires strain under the pressure. Frank watches, waiting below, wide-eyed with drunken awe and wonder, still straining to release the saw. Down the road, the streetlights sputter and flicker off, dead. A loud crack erupts as the main cables break away and Frank yanks the saw free. He falls away from the pole, falling, stumbling backwards, the way one side of a tug-of-war contest does when the other side suddenly lets go of the rope. He releases the saw and falls crashing on his ass, his momentum carrying him backwards into a somersault. He watches, lying on his stomach in the dirt, as the burning pole falls across the road. Almost leisurely, he rises to his feet, knocks off the dirt, and retrieves the saw. He laughs aloud to himself as he walks back to the truck, careful to avoid the still-smoldering fallen wires. He grabs the can of beer off the roof of the cab where he had left it and throws it back, chugging. Wincing as he fights it down, he crushes the empty can in his hand, tosses it in back with the saw, and gets into the cab. Springsteen is still howling over the car stereo.

FRANK

Now, I guess you could say, there's a  
darkness on the edge of town.

He turns the truck around and floors the accelerator.

CLOSE - FRANK FROM BEHIND THROUGH THE CAB WINDOW

Frank is shaking violently in the front seat. It is not clear whether he is laughing or crying.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE OF UPPER-CLASS HOMES - LATE AFTERNOON

Parked behind one of the houses, Joe's pick-up truck is flung wide open, the stereo cranked full blast playing George Strait's "Haven't You Heard." Joe (wearing jeans, workboots, stripped to the waist, t-shirt tied around his middle) is on all fours on the roof of the house, nailing shingles into place, when a beer bottle hurled at him from across the street shatters just below his feet, sending shards of broken glass rattling into the gutter.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

Jesus Christ!

Directly across the street, Gallagher (similarly attired), straddles the chimney of a 4 bedroom, 2 bath, bi-level, pissing into it. His back is turned to Joe.

GALLAGHER

(over his shoulder)  
Let's get the fuck out of here!

Joe, disgusted by Gallagher, continues working as if he hadn't noticed the broken beer bottle.

CLOSE-UP - "SHIT HAPPENS" BUMPER STICKER ON GALLAGHER'S TRUCK

Gallagher barrels his truck around the corner of the house Joe is working on and skids to a halt. He steps out of his truck into the cloud of dust he has just kicked up and walks over to Joe's truck to turn the car stereo down.

GALLAGHER  
(calling up to the roof)  
Hey, Joe! Let's go! We're knocking off early! The supervisors have already left for the day!

Reluctantly, Joe gathers his tools, crawls across the roof, and climbs down the scaffolding erected on the side of the house.

GALLAGHER  
(tossing Joe a beer)  
Hey, Joe, what's with this country bullshit? Are you turning redneck or what?

JOE  
My father always liked it. I guess, sooner or later, I would get into it too.

Gallagher appears uncomfortable, squirming slightly, as he considers how he will approach the following inevitable subject of conversation. For an awkwardly long time he and Joe stare off into the middle distance (a wooded area being leveled for more houses), not talking, not making eye contact, not knowing how to proceed.

GALLAGHER  
You really didn't have to come in today, Joe. Didn't Richie tell you, you could take the day off?

JOE  
He told me. I thought maybe the work would take my mind off things. I was going crazy sitting around that empty house.

GALLAGHER  
Where's your father? Where's Frank? Aren't they home with you?

JOE



No. I don't know where they are. My father took off yesterday before the service and Frank took off after. I haven't seen either of them since. It's been like that all week. They put in an appearance every once in a while and then disappear again.

GALLAGHER

Jesus. It must be rough.

JOE

It's worse than you could ever imagine.

GALLAGHER

I don't know what to say that could help, Joe. I've never been through what you're going through. The only person I ever knew who died was my grandfather and he lived in California. The last time I saw him, I must've been like six years old or something. When my mother told me he died, it was like, "Oh yeah. That's too bad." I mean, I wanted to feel sad and all, but it wasn't there. I didn't even know the guy.

Joe turns away as Gallagher rambles, overcome suddenly with grief. He doesn't want Gallagher to see him break down.

GALLAGHER

(talking to himself)

Our dog died and my pet hamster years ago, but that was different. I mean...

Joe walks away as Gallagher continues to ramble. Gallagher, continuing to stare off into the distance, doesn't notice that Joe is gone until he hears Joe slam the door to his truck. Startled, he rushes up to Joe, who is sitting in his truck putting his shirt on.

GALLAGHER

Hey, Joe. Wait up. Man, I hate to see you this way. Listen, Lisa's throwing another IV Party tonight. Her folks are away and Doc gave her permission to use the equipment for the weekend. I know you're probably not feeling up to it, but maybe it would be good for you to, you know, get back into the swing of things. The party isn't until later. I figured we could grab a bite, have a few beers, and head over there. What do you say?

JOE

(hesitating)

I guess so. Yeah, I'll go.

GALLAGHER

Great. Do you want to change first, or what?

JOE

I'm all right. I'd rather just go from here.

GALLAGHER

Yeah, you're right. There ain't gonna be anyone there that you're gonna want to impress anyway. I'll tell you what, though, there's gonna be a shitload of beer and that's all that matters, right?

JOE

Yeah, I guess.

GALLAGHER

All right then, let's go. If it's all right with you, I thought we'd stop over at "Spirits" for a while. I've got my eye on that new bartender that just started working there.

JOE

Fine.

GALLAGHER

I'll meet you over there, then.

Gallagher gets into his truck and Joe follows in his truck as they both drive out of the unpaved construction site. The sun looms heavy in the background as Gallagher does a burnout onto the blacktop. Joe's truck trails after Gallagher's.

INT. "SPIRITS" BAR - EVENING

Joe and Gallagher enter the bar. Gallagher steers Joe to a spot at the bar under a TV that is burning bright with the "Wheel of Fortune" game show. As they take their place at the bar, Joe and Gallagher acknowledge the three roofers (wearing work clothes) sitting at the opposite end of the bar.

THREE-SHOT - THE THREE ROOFERS

The three roofers, drinking at the bar, talk openly about Joe, knowing that he cannot hear what they are saying. Every once in a while they smile awkwardly in his direction.

ROOFER 3

(shaking his head)

Poor bastard.

ROOFER 2

You know it.

ROOFER 1

I've been avoiding him all day. What can I say to the guy? A fucking tragedy is all there is to it.

ROOFER 3

Poor bastard.

ROOFER 2

Shit bad luck.

ROOFER 1

You know it.

Roofer 1 flags down a bartender and orders a round for Joe and Gallagher. Somberly, he and the other roofers raise their glasses in unison as a sort of toast.

ROOFER 1

Here's to you buddy. If I were you, I'd get stinking drunk too. How else can you bear up under the unbearable?

ROOFER 3

Poor bastard.

TWO-SHOT - JOE AND GALLAGHER

Joe and Gallagher gratefully acknowledge the drinks, Gallagher more so than Joe.

GALLAGHER

That Bill's a decent guy, ain't he? So thoughtful.

JOE

Yeah, I guess.

As SHIRLEY the bartender (early twenties, tight-fitting uniform) fixes the drinks in front of Joe and Gallagher, she and Gallagher engage in some heavy eye contact. She continues to cast longing looks toward him over her shoulder as she crosses over to the other side of the bar to clean glasses. Joe, looking up at the TV, is oblivious to anything happening between Shirley and Gallagher throughout the conversation.

GALLAGHER

So, you say you don't know where your father or Frank are?

JOE

No. I'm pretty sure they're not together, though. It's almost as if they've been avoiding each other since Monday night.

GALLAGHER

You don't have any idea where they might be?

As Gallagher asks this question, he momentarily turns his attention to Shirley, who is casting seductive glances over her shoulder as she cleans glasses across the bar. Thrusting a brush vigorously in and out, splashing water all over her lap as she brushes up against the sink, she wags her ass slightly to and fro. Gallagher, thinking that it might be perceived as sexy, begins to lick the rim of his beer glass like a dog licking his bowl. These actions continue, unbeknownst to Joe, throughout the conversation.

JOE

They're probably out somewhere getting drunk. That's pretty much what we've been doing all week. It don't make it any better, really, but it helps, if that makes any sense. It gives you something to do when you're feeling like shit.

GALLAGHER

What about the police? Have they given you any more news about the accident? The newspaper said they were looking for eyewitnesses. Have they found any yet?

JOE

No. They're pretty sure someone ran her off the road. Probably drunk. There's paint on the side of the car where it was sideswiped. I saw it the other day when I went out to the wrecker's to pick up a few things from the car.

GALLAGHER

That must've been rough.

JOE

This whole week has been a fucking nightmare. I keep thinking that it'll be over soon, that things will get back to being normal, but I know it never will. It's always there in the back of my mind. I can't get away from it. From morning till night, it's ringing in my head. "My mother is dead." "She's dead." It's as if I still don't believe it and have to keep reminding myself.

GALLAGHER

I still can't believe it, either.

JOE

Everything's changed. It's like time stopped. I answered the telephone and the whole world fell apart. I feel like a part of my life suddenly ended and another just began.

GALLAGHER

You shouldn't let it depress you too much, Joe. Your mother wouldn't have wanted it that way.

JOE

I know. That's what I keep telling myself. It's the only thing that keeps me going. It's hard, though. Sometimes I fall so deep in despair, it's not funny. I don't know how long I'll be able to hold out.

Long pause.

GALLAGHER

So, you were the first one to get the news?

Gallagher turns his attention to Shirley again, who is busy snacking on a mozzarella stick, poking it deep into her mouth and stretching it back out. Gallagher, eyes popping slightly out of his head, drains his beer and returns the empty glass to the bar with his tongue. Joe doesn't observe any of these actions during the following conversation. Flashbacks of the events are intercut as Joe relates them.

JOE

Yeah. It was late. I had been out with Maria. When I got in, the place was dark. Frank and my father were out. Running around as usual. My mother must've went out looking for my father (it wouldn't have been the first time she had to haul his ass in). I guess she was on her way out to the Legion when she...

(struggles not to break down)

The phone was ringing when I got in. As late as it was, I knew it had to be bad news.

As I ran through the house, I kept hoping it would stop, that it was a wrong number or something. I even waited a while for it to stop. It never stopped.

(pause)

It's still ringing.

GALLAGHER

When did Frank and your father find out?

JOE

The next morning.

GALLAGHER

They were out all night?

JOE

Yeah. I spent the night at the hospital, calling the house. I didn't reach Frank until early the next morning. By then it was too late. He found my father in his car, sleeping it off. He was still hung over when they finally showed up at the hospital.

GALLAGHER

Jesus, you must've been pissed.

JOE

At the time, I was just relieved that I found them. I wasn't thinking of myself.

THREE-SHOT - ROOFERS

ROOFER 2

How does he do it?

BILL (ROOFER 1)

What?

ROOFER 2

Go on.

BILL

There ain't nothing to do really. Life goes on. It fucks you over and you try to buy a little time before it fucks you again. Sooner or later it fucks you over permanently and completely like it did Joe's mom. Some people are luckier than others. It don't fuck with them as much.

(pause)

Life goes on all right. It goes on fucking forever.

ROOFER 2

In other words, what you're saying is...

ROOFER 3

(excited, as if by a major revelation)

We're all fucked!

Immediately the whole bar turns its attention to Roofer 3

BILL

(draining his beer, nodding)

More or less. Christ, that reminds me.

I've got to get going. The wife's putting on another demonstration tonight and I've got to get the kids over to her mother's. I don't know why I put up with this nonsense, I really don't.

ROOFER 2

(startled)

Damn. My wife's going to that thing too. I was supposed to be home an hour ago.

Roofer 3 finishes his beer, throws money on the bar, and gets up to leave with the others.

ROOFER 3

Now I remember what I was forgetting.

BILL

(nodding toward Joe)

Better pay our respects.

As the three roofers turn to approach Joe and Gallagher, a bartender places an upside down shot glass in front of Roofer 3 indicating that someone has just bought him a drink.

ROOFER 3

What's that for?

BARTENDER

A guy at the end there said he wanted to buy a drink for the poet.

ROOFER 3

(still walking toward Joe)

Take it off my tab.

The three roofers approach Joe, their hands extended for shaking well in advance of their arrival. As they finally shake hands with Joe and mumble their condolences, they bow their heads, avoiding eye contact, so that Joe ends up staring at the tops of their heads. Gallagher, mimicking the others, bows his head too. The roofers exit through the rear door. Gallagher immediately turns around on his stool to order hamburgers for Joe and himself.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. "SPIRITS" BAR - NIGHT

Gallagher and Joe have finished eating, the remains of their food scattered on the plates in front of them. Gallagher is turned on his stool away from Joe, facing the television, laughing to himself at a rerun of "Three's Company." Joe stares straight ahead, almost catatonic, peeling the label off a beer bottle.

GALLAGHER

(turning suddenly, during a  
commercial)

I think she likes me.

JOE

Who?

GALLAGHER

Shirley.

Across the bar, Shirley, a smile frozen on her face, turns toward Gallagher at the mention of her name and winks.

JOE

What makes you think that?

GALLAGHER

I don't know. I got a hunch.

JOE

Why don't you ask her out, then?

GALLAGHER

That would only spoil it.

JOE

Spoil what?

GALLAGHER

The suspense. The tension. That state of heightened anxiety. As strange as it may sound, I actually prefer not knowing, you know, whether or not a girl wants me. As soon as I know, you know, that I can, you know, sleep with her, it's all over. They don't call it "the little death" for nothing. You must know what I mean?

JOE

Not exactly.

GALLAGHER

It's hard to put into words. All I know is, it is only during rare moments such as these that I feel truly alive.

Joe shoots Gallagher a bewildered look that goes completely unnoticed. Gallagher is too enthralled by the beatific vision of the lumbering Shirley cleaning the grill.

GALLAGHER

Well, we better get on over to that party. Are you ready?



JOE  
(getting up, reaching for his  
wallet)  
Yeah.

GALLAGHER  
(pushing Joe's wallet away)  
I've got it.

JOE  
(surprised)  
Wow! Somebody call Ripley's.

GALLAGHER  
It's the least I can do.

Gallagher and Joe walk toward the rear entrance. As they pass Shirley, she casts one last come hither look in Gallagher's direction. She beckons him to come closer with her index finger. Joe exits as Shirley sprawls across the bar to whisper in Gallagher's ear.

EXT. "SPIRITS" BAR PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Joe is already sitting in his truck when Gallagher emerges from the bar wearing a long hang dog expression.

JOE  
(as Gallagher passes)  
Why so glum?

GALLAGHER  
(stunned)  
She made reservations for the Moon later.

JOE  
The Moon Motel?

GALLAGHER  
Can you believe it?

JOE  
I didn't know they took reservations.

GALLAGHER  
They called back to make sure it wasn't a  
joke.

JOE  
(laughing)  
I hope she got the Honeymoon Room.

GALLAGHER  
It's all over. I should've known it  
wouldn't last. It never does. Damn.

Still disgusted, Gallagher climbs into his truck and starts

the engine. Shaking his head solemnly, Gallagher pulls out of the parking lot with Joe following behind.

EXT. IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

A small one-story house set back in some woods, with cars parked haphazardly in the open areas around it. Groups of people (late teens and early twenties) wearing hospital gowns over their clothes gather here and there among the cars, drinking beer out of plastic cups and smoking pot. Gallagher and Joe park along the shoulder of the road and walk up the unpaved driveway. The sounds of a party in progress increase as they near the house. At the top of the driveway, they meet a group of young men (the same group seen at the wake) standing around the front end of a beat-up Camaro set up on car ramps. A bright shielded illumination lamp dangles from an extension chord attached to the open hood, casting eery shadows on the faces of those gathered around the car. Occasionally someone will bend over the engine and speak almost inaudibly into it, talking to whoever is working underneath. They all turn simultaneously to the left to acknowledge Joe and Gallagher with solemn head nods.

GALLAGHER

What's up, guys?

Gallagher delivers the line with absolutely no expectations of eliciting a response and receives none in reply. A long awkward pause follows.

YOUNG MAN 1

I'm sorry about your mother, Joe...

YOUNG MAN 2

A terrible thing...

YOUNG MAN 3

A tragedy...

YOUNG MAN 4

So sorry...

Each in turn leans across the car's engine to shake hands with Joe. It's an awkward moment in that it may be the first time they've ever shaken hands with each other. It's almost as if they're congratulating Joe for something.

VOICE UNDERNEATH CAR

Is that you, Joe?

JOE

Yeah.

Rattling sounds are heard underneath the car. Gallagher nudges Joe with his elbow, pointing at the ground, where a creeper has partially crept out from under the car. The young man on the creeper is only partially revealed, his greasy

hand extended forward into the air. His head is still completely under the car.

GALLAGHER  
(pointing)  
Joe.

VOICE UNDERNEATH CAR  
(shaking Joe's hand)  
My deepest sympathy to you and your family.

JOE  
Thanks.

GALLAGHER  
(hardly skipping a beat)  
I hope you guys haven't been drinking all the beer.

YOUNG MAN 1  
(lowering a plastic cup full of beer)  
Hell no, Gallagher! Haven't you heard? We all got saved the other night and went on the wagon. We're born again and shit.

GALLAGHER  
Very funny. I think we'd better see for ourselves. Let's check it out, Joe.

Joe and Gallagher walk away toward the house. After they are out of earshot, Young Man 1 bends over the engine.

YOUNG MAN 1  
(speaking into the engine)  
Hey, Bobby, how long you been working for Hallmark, man?

The others laugh uneasily at the joke.

INT. A LOUD, SMOKY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is crowded with party people wearing hospital gowns over their clothes and surgical masks dangling around their necks, drinking beer, smoking, etc. Lynyrd Skynyrd's "That Smell" (Ooh, ooh that smell. The smell of death surrounds you) blares in the background. Joe and Gallagher enter through a door centered in the frame. A reverse angle shows Joe's perspective as he enters the room ahead of Gallagher. As a path clears before him in slow motion, Joe is met with somber, serious stares from everyone he passes. A few people openly whisper "What's he doing here," or "Jesus, what's he doing here." In general, the crowd appears disconcerted by Joe's arrival. Joe and Gallagher gradually make their way across the room to the kitchen. In the kitchen, a keg set up in a garbage bag packed with ice sits in a corner. People

gather around it like pups around a lounging bitch, ready to suckle, pumping the tap occasionally. Across from the keg, hospital gowns and surgical masks are piled high on a table. Two young women in nurse uniforms distribute these items to the partyers as they wander into the kitchen. A number of IV bottles filled with beer and attached to upright portable stands occupy the corner adjacent to the table. Occasionally a thirsty customer, too impatient to wait on line at the keg, will grab one of these IV bottles and wheel it out of the room, pausing long enough to fill his cup by opening the valve at the end of the long dangling tube. Gallagher, helping himself, enthusiastically dons a hospital gown and surgical mask; Joe does the same, but more reluctantly. When Gallagher approaches the hostess, one of the nurses, he pauses to lower his mask and introduce himself. When LISA, the hostess, (early twenties) perceives who it is, she immediately pulls the mask back up over Gallagher's face. Gallagher takes the hint, grabs a plastic cup, and cues up at the keg. Lisa registers a slightly surprised look as she notices Joe standing behind Gallagher.

LISA

(beaming falsely)

Joe, I'm glad you could make it!

JOE

(nods, forces a smile)

Hi, Lisa.

LISA

I'm sorry about your mother, Joe.

Joe lowers his head and looks away.

LISA

I still can't believe it. I didn't work the night shift this week so I didn't hear about it until the next morning when I came on. Jesus, it must be rough. I don't know what I would have done if I was working that night. I mean, people die all the time at the hospital, but I don't know them. It's part of the job. You get used to it, sort of. But your mother...

(shakes her head)

...that's too close to home for me.

JOE

I didn't know you knew my mother.

LISA

(off balance)

No. Well. No, we never actually met before. It's just that I know you and Frank from school and knowing the two of

you, you know, well, it's different. You know what I mean? How's Frank doing?

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Frank, chainsaw in hand, is about to fell another telephone pole. Husker Du's "Dead Set on Destruction" blasts over the stereo in his pick-up. The chainsaw wails loudly. The telephone pole falls. Frank picks up a can of beer at his feet and walks back to the truck. In the light of a full moon above the road, a long shot reveals that Frank has cut down three telephone poles along the same road. Frank drives off in the opposite direction of the destruction.

INT. KITCHEN-IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE - JOE ROBERTS

JOE

(answering Lisa's question)

I guess he's doing all right. I really don't know. We haven't talked much.

(pause)

Listen, Lisa, how's the priest doing?

LISA

Father O'Neal?

JOE

(embarrassed)

Yeah.

Intercut here are silent scenes of Joe being informed of his mother's death by Father O'Neal at the hospital the night of the accident. Joe reacts with a vicious right hook to Father O'Neal's head. Father O'Neal drops like a rock to the floor.

LISA

He's all right. A slight concussion from the fall. They released him the next day.

JOE

I felt so bad...I guess I lost it when he told me...I mean, I didn't mean to hit him like that...It's just that...

LISA

He understands. He told me it's a common reaction. It's happened to him before.

JOE

I know, but still. I feel bad about it.

LISA

He thinks you should take up boxing.

JOE

Get out!

LISA

He said you had a pretty good right hook.

JOE

Jesus.

LISA

So where's Maria? Did she come with you?

JOE

No. I haven't seen her much this week.

LISA

Of course, I'm sorry, stupid me.

Joe and Lisa are interrupted here by HENRY (late teens, wearing a hospital gown).

HENRY

(shaking his head)

I don't know what to say, Joe.

Joe and Lisa lower their heads, and after a long awkward pause, finally look up at Henry, who is still shaking his head.

HENRY

I don't know what to say.

Joe and Lisa exchange befuddled looks. It dawns on them simultaneously that they have reached a sort of stalemate that could potentially last forever. Finally Lisa grabs Henry by the shoulders and steers him away from Joe.

LISA

(over her shoulder to Joe)

He doesn't know what to say.

Joe grabs a plastic cup and wheels one of the IV stands out of the kitchen and into the living room. He positions himself in a corner of the room beside a sofa and pours himself a beer out of the IV tube, getting on his knees to do this. Alone in the corner, he surveys the party. His attention gradually fixes on a young couple sharing a Tic Tac on the sofa beside him. At one point, the Tic Tac slips out of their mouths and becomes enmeshed in the girl's sweater. She immediately plucks it out, pops it back into her mouth, and locks lips again with the young man. Their tongues dart wildly in and out as they continue to chase the tiny breath mint from mouth to mouth. Bored a little by this display of unmitigated lust, Joe moves across the room to the opposite corner and takes up a position between the stereo and a chair where two young women are seated. Gradually he begins to

eavesdrop on their conversation. As the conversation develops, Joe's interest increases, until finally he realizes that the events they are discussing aren't real.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Does Jack know?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

Not yet. He's been seeing Carol behind Barbara's back the whole time.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Carol? Are you serious? That little mutt. How did they get together?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

Jack went to school with her brother, Rick. They've known each other for years.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Which one's Rick?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

You know Rick. Tall, blonde, real good looking. He used to go with Sue before she was in that car accident last summer.

(pause)

He works for Bill.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Bill?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

Bill Harris.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

Do I know him? The name sounds familiar...

YOUNG WOMAN 2

You know Bill. The ex-priest who adopted that little Korean boy.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

The one who divorced Ann Skyler when she ran off with that cute-looking pipe fitter half her age?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

(in utter disbelief)

That's another show.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

What?

YOUNG WOMAN 2

That's "Another World." We were talking

about "The Young and the Restless.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

I get them confused sometimes.

Joe registers a look of stunned amazement unseen by the young women and moves off past them toward the bathroom. As he passes the kitchen door, someone attempting a Strother Martin impression can be heard.

O.S.

What we've got here is...

With Joe out of earshot, the two young women continue talking.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

It's too bad about his mother.

YOUNG WOMAN 2

Yeah. He's such a decent guy too.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

A real shame.

YOUNG WOMAN 2

I heard Maria just dumped him. She and Tom are together again. It's too bad about Joe. I would have gone out with him before, but now, Jesus, it's too creepy, you know. Not so soon anyway. I never dated a guy whose mother was dead.

YOUNG WOMAN 1

I know what you mean. What a waste.

YOUNG WOMAN 2

That's it exactly—a waste. You hit the nail on your head.

INT. BATHROOM - IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe enters the bathroom and locks the door behind him. Alone in his grief, he lowers the lid of the toilet, sits down, and starts to cry, covering his face with his hands.

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP - TEARS SPLASHING INTO A GLASS OF BEER

George Jones plays in the background ("Still Doin' Time")

LONG - TWO MEN AT ONE END OF THE BAR AND ONE MAN AT THE OTHER END IN FRONT OF THE JUKEBOX

A bartender, cleaning glasses toward the middle of the bar, is framed by a large crocheted American flag hanging on the



wall behind him. In the foreground is an unoccupied pool table.

CLOSE - FRANK ROBERTS SR.

Frank Sr. (wearing work clothes), sitting alone at one end of the bar, is crying in his beer in utter misery.

TWO-SHOT - HANK AND HAL

Hank and Hal (similar clothing) sit at the opposite end of the bar drinking.

HANK

Do you think we should do something?

HAL

What could we do? There's nothing we can do.

Long pause as they contemplate Frank Sr.'s despair.

HANK

We could buy him another drink.

HAL

Good idea. Bartender, another round for our friend.

The bartender sets up another round at the other end of the bar. Frank Sr. moans in extreme agony as he acknowledges Hank and Hal, both of whom are now waving their arms at the opposite end to indicate that they just bought the drink.

CLOSE - FRANK SR.

With tears streaming down his twisted face, Frank Sr. is the picture of a drowning man.

EXT. BEHIND THE IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

A drunken partyer is taking a leak behind the house, beside the bathroom window. When he hears Joe crying inside, he calls out to a group of drinking buddies standing off to the side making wisecracks.

PISSING PARTYER

Hey guys, check it out!

A small group of young men gather around the bathroom window, listening intently to the sounds coming from within.

PISSING PARTYER

Somebody's getting a nut.

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN

Yeah. It sounds like she's getting

pounded.

INT. BATHROOM-IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe is trying hard to control his crying. As he prepares to leave the bathroom, he checks himself in the mirror and wipes his reddened eyes. As he is exiting, he passes a young couple eager to get in the bathroom to do some coke.

MALE COKE SNORTER

Did you see his eyes? He must be smoking the good shit.

FEMALE COKE SNORTER

I'll say. Now where's that blow you said you had?

The couple snort a couple lines of coke and then peer into the bathroom mirror at each other until, unable to contain themselves, they burst out laughing for no apparent reason.

INT. IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe wanders around the house looking for Gallagher. Eric Clapton's "Motherless Children" plays on the stereo in the background. When Joe exits through the kitchen door to check outside, Gallagher calls out to him from the driveway.

EXT. DRIVEWAY OUTSIDE THE IV PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

GALLAGHER

Hey, Joe, where've you been? Harry's gonna do his Strother Martin impression.

Joe tries to speak privately to Gallagher as HARRY (late teens, skinny) attempts to get the exact tone of the whiney voiced actor in the background

HARRY (O.S.)

What we've got here...

Harry clears his throat and continues repeating the phrase over and over at different levels of pitch.

JOE

I gotta get going. My father or Frank might be back at the house. They might be looking for me.

GALLAGHER

All right. Whatever. I'm gonna be heading over to the Moon soon anyway.

JOE

(over his shoulder to the others,  
gathered around the Camaro)

Take it easy, guys!

OTHERS

So long, Joe.

YOUNG MAN 1

(when Joe is out of earshot, in  
reference to the song playing  
in the background)

Did you put this on, Gallagher?

GALLAGHER

(oblivious to the fact that it  
may have been offensive to  
Joe)

Yeah. You got something against Clapton,  
man?

YOUNG MAN 1

(to the others)

What an idiot.

GALLAGHER

What?

YOUNG MAN 1

You know what they're gonna put on your  
headstone, Gallagher, when they put you  
under ground?

GALLAGHER

(defiantly)

What?

YOUNG MAN 1

"Shit Happened."

The others laugh in the background.

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

Frank Sr. is still crying in his beer as Dwight Yoakam's "It Won't Hurt" plays on the jukebox. Scenes of Frank Sr. twisting in misery on his barstool are intercut as the song plays. Four seconds after the song ends, Frank Sr. falls down from his barstool. He hits the jukebox hard with his head as he falls, causing George Jones to come back on with "If Drinking Don't Kill Me (Her Memory Will)." Hank and Hal jump to their feet and gasp loudly when they see him fall, but make no effort to help.

HANK

(calling across the bar)

Are you OK, Frank?

HAL

How ya doin' down there, buddy?

FRANK SR.  
(under the bar)  
Ouch! That hurt!

Holding his head in pain, he crawls across the floor toward the men's room. Hank and Hal monitor his actions from afar, making no effort whatsoever to assist him.

TWO-SHOT - HANK AND HAL

HANK  
Do you think he's all right?

HAL  
He made it to the bathroom OK, didn't he?

HANK  
I think we should do something. He's in pretty rough shape.

HAL  
What can we do?

HANK  
We can call his boys and get them down here to pick him up.

HAL  
Good idea. Where'd you get it?

HANK  
Don't know for sure. It just sort of came to me somehow. Out of the blue like.

HAL  
Do you got a dime?

HANK  
I thought I paid you back...

HAL  
No, you idiot! For the phone call!

HANK  
Oh, yeah. I lost the train of my thought for a second. Here.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is laid out on the couch in the living room, traces of sawdust still visible on his clothing. He is surrounded by flowers and unopened fruit baskets. A multitude of mass cards is neatly arranged on the top of the console television in the middle of the room. He is sleeping on the couch with a can of Budweiser beer between his legs when the phone in the

kitchen begins to ring. Startled, he bolts upright, tipping the beer between his legs. As the beer begins to soak his crotch, he grabs frantically for the can. He lifts the can to his lips, but he has grabbed the wrong end and the rest of the beer pours out onto his stomach.

FRANK  
(hurling the empty can across  
the kitchen)  
Fuck!

He pulls himself out of the couch and answers the phone.

FRANK  
Hello.

SPLIT SCREEN SHOT - FRANK ON THE LEFT, HANK AND HAL ON THE  
RIGHT

Hank and Hal, the telephone between their faces, are holding handkerchiefs across their mouths in order to disguise their voices. To add to the confusion, they speak in garbled tones and alternate sentences from one to the other.

HANK  
(almost choking on his own  
phlegm)  
Is this the Roberts' residence?

FRANK  
What the hell is this?

HAL  
(in a slightly Oriental twang)  
Your father is at the American Legion.  
He's drunk and needs someone to drive him  
home.

FRANK  
My father what?! I can't understand a  
goddamn thing you're saying!

HANK  
(pinching his nose)  
Pick up your father at the American  
Legion.

FRANK  
Is that you, Hank? Listen, you son of a  
bitch, if this is some sort of sick  
joke...

Hank shudders at the recognition and shoves the receiver at Hal.

HAL  
(in a castrated soprano)

Your father needs you. He's at the American Legion.

FRANK

Hal! Are you in on this too! That figures. The two of you are like fucking bookends. What the hell is going on up there?! Put the old man on.

HANK

(in his best Elvis Presley)  
He can't talk, ma'am. If he could he would tell you to come quick.

Hank and Hal hang up.

EXT. FRONT OF THE ROBERTS' HOME - NIGHT

Joe is parking his truck in the driveway. Frank can be heard ranting and raving inside the house. "Fuck this" and "fuck that," etc.

INT. KITCHEN-THE ROBERTS' HOME - NIGHT

As Joe enters the kitchen door, Frank is standing in the middle of the room shouting into the phone.

FRANK

Listen, you fucking bastards! When I get my hands on you, I'm gonna kick both your sorry asses! Do you hear me!

Frank takes the phone in one hand and hurls it at the wall. The phone collides with a decorative plate featuring a pastoral scene from Ireland. As the plate falls from the wall in slow motion and smashes on the floor, it is intercut with a brief close-up of Joe's reaction to this event, followed by the first of Joe's Nostalgic Flashbacks.

NOSTALGIC FLASHBACK 1

EXT. JERSEY SHORE BOARDWALK - AFTERNOON

A young Frank Roberts Sr. is throwing baseballs at plates at a boardwalk game. His pretty young wife cheers him on, over his shoulder. When he wins a prize, he asks his wife what she wants. She points to a decorative plate featuring a pastoral scene from Ireland. Beside the happy couple, obscured by clouds of pink cotton candy, stand Joe (age 10) and Frank (age 11). A picture postcard of a happy family.

INT. KITCHEN-ROBERTS' HOME - NIGHT

FRANK

(referring to the plate)  
Who the hell hung that up there?

JOE

Mom did.

The reference to their dead mother turns Frank sour. He fishes inside the refrigerator for another beer.

JOE

What's going on? What was that phone call all about?

FRANK

It's the old man.

The two of them move out to the living room. Frank returns to the couch, grabs a remote to the television, and begins flipping through the stations. At one point, he pauses to watch a fire raging in a tenement building on the news. In the footage, a family is stranded on a fire escape. Just before the firemen are able to reach them, the whole thing collapses and the family is lost in the blaze. Frank flips to other stations until he finally settles on a rerun of "Family Affair."

JOE

Where is he?

FRANK

He's at the Legion. Where else?  
(pointing at the television  
with his beer hand, suddenly  
animated)

Check this shit out, Joe! Did you ever catch this fucked up show before? "Family Affair." I can't remember the exact angle, but I think it had something to do with this guy who married his fat, bearded butler and tried to raise these three spoiled foster brats or something. I never did figure out what the exact set up was.

JOE

I think it was more complicated than that.

FRANK

Yeah, I guess. Anyway, the thing is, somebody told me that one of the brats O.D.'d or something in real life. I'm not sure which one it was, though. Was it Cissy? Which one was Cissy?

JOE

The older girl.

FRANK

Are you sure? I thought the boy was

Cissy.

(laughs at his own joke)

JOE

Jody was the boy.

FRANK

Are you sure? What the hell kind of name is that for a boy? Some upper-class bullshit name, no doubt. No wonder I could never get their names straight. It must've been Buffy, then, the little girl. The one with the doll. Mrs. Beasley. Jesus, I can remember the damn doll's name better than I can the kids. Anyway, she died. Took an overdose or something. I guess it just goes to show that things aren't always as sweet and nice as they make it out to be.

JOE

Yeah, I guess.

(pause)

Is he drunk?

FRANK

What?

JOE

Dad. Did you talk to him?

FRANK

No. I spoke to those useless idiots, Hank and Hal. Great friends they are. Can't even give a guy a lift when he's down.

JOE

What happened?

FRANK

The old man must be ripped. They want us to pick him up.

JOE

Shouldn't we get going, then?

FRANK

I guess. Let me finish this beer first. He's not going anywhere.

Frank drains his beer and stands up. He pats his pockets and then begins looking for his keys. He looks underneath the numerous floral arrangements sitting on the coffee table and then begins looking on top of the television between the mass cards. Accidentally, he knocks over a card, causing a sort of domino effect. A few cards tumble off of the television onto



the floor. He stoops down to pick them up and, as best as he can, considering he's drunk, he places them back on top of the television. Just as he's replacing the last card, he knocks over another card that sets off an even greater chain reaction, with even more cards tumbling off of the television. He suddenly explodes.

FRANK

(violently sweeping the remainder of the cards off of the television with his arm)  
Fuck it! Goddamn mass cards! Christ, when's the last time we went to church?!

(sweeping his arm over all the fruit baskets and flowers)  
Can you believe this shit? Did you ever see so much fucking fruit in your life? We can open up a goddamn stand if we wanted to, for Christ's sake! It's fucking pitiful, if you ask me.

(opening one of the fruit baskets)  
Are we really supposed to eat all this crap?

(offering Joe a piece of fruit)  
Kiwi? And these goddamn flowers. Whose idea was it to bring them back here? They're just going to die and go to rot like everything else. Years ago, at least, they served a purpose. When they laid you out in your own home, they helped drown out the smell when you began to go ripe. Now. Christ. What a fucking waste. It makes you wonder, though, doesn't it? Why they do it in the first place?

JOE

(visibly upset by what Frank has said)  
What?

FRANK

Any of this nonsense. All of it.

JOE

I don't know. I guess people don't know what they're doing. They do what everyone else does and that way they don't have to think about why they're doing it.

FRANK

I never thought about it like that. You know, you're probably right. And that's the sad fucking thing about it.

(finding his keys in the

kitchen)  
Here they are.

Frank pockets his keys and grabs a six-pack out of the refrigerator. On his way out to his truck, he stops to rummage through the fruit baskets, looking for the one sent by Hank and Hal.

FRANK  
(picking up a basket and  
reading the card)  
"Our deepest sympathy to you and your family, Hank and Hal." How nice. The cheap bastards saved themselves some money by going in on it together.

JOE  
(as Frank passes with the fruit basket in his arms)  
What are you going to do with that?

FRANK  
I still have a pretty good arm; I'm gonna give it back.

JOE  
Hold on, I'll be right with you.

Joe walks down the hall to relieve himself.

EXT. DRIVEWAY-ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is in his truck, trying to get it started. Since his truck has a bad starter, he is having some difficulty. When the engine refuses to turn over, he begins to pound on the steering wheel and dash.

FRANK  
Goddamn it! Fucking piece of shit!

INT. BATHROOM-ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE - JOE

Joe is taking a leak. He smiles slightly to himself as he listens to Frank cursing at his truck out on the driveway. When he is finished, he flushes the toilet and passes through the house, turning off the lights as he goes.

EXT. DRIVEWAY-ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is already out of his truck and waiting on the driver's side of Joe's truck.

JOE  
When are you going to get that starter fixed?

FRANK

Goddamn thing. It only starts when it wants to. Give me the keys, I'll drive.

Joe throws him the keys and they both climb into the truck. Frank puts the six-pack and the fruit basket down on the seat beside him and starts the engine. He cracks open a beer and pulls out. Automatically, he pushes in the tape in the cassette deck and George Strait's "Haven't You Heard" begins to play. After George sings the lines "Haven't you heard, Daddy's gone crazy. Haven't you heard, Mama is gone," Frank punches the tape out of the deck in disgust.

FRANK

What's with this country bullshit?

Frank fiddles with the radio dial until he tunes in the Replacements' "Bastards of Young." He screams along with the song as they pull onto the main highway. As they are driving along, a car pulls up in the fast lane, with Gallagher in the passenger seat. He doesn't look too good. Shirley, the bartender, is driving. The expression on her face is remarkably determined and serious. Frank points them out to Joe.

FRANK

Isn't that Gallagher?

JOE

(looking into the car)  
Yeah.

FRANK

What's the matter with him? He looks like he's about to be executed.

JOE

He is.

Further up the road, in the middle of nowhere, they pass a huge, almost Vegas-like sign for the Moon Motel. Joe looks at it grimly as they pass. They drive on, not talking, staring straight ahead, letting the music overwhelm them.

EXT. PARKING LOT-AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

Frank pulls the truck into the lot.

JOE

(pointing at his father's car,  
an old Chevy Chevelle)  
There's his car. He must be here.

Frank parks the truck alongside his father's car and they get out. Frank has the fruit basket in one hand and a beer in the other. As Joe is walking past his father's car, he sees a

barely noticeable scrape in the rear above the wheel, on the driver's side.

JOE  
(pointing at the damage)  
When did that happen?

FRANK  
(approaching the car)  
What? Where?

JOE  
That.

FRANK  
I don't know. Wasn't it there before?

JOE  
I don't remember it being there.

FRANK  
(ignoring it, walking ahead)  
Let's get the old man and see what he has  
to say.

As they cross the parking lot, Frank points out a brand new Trans Am.

FRANK  
Isn't that Tom Hankle's car?

JOE  
Yeah.

FRANK  
I wonder what he's doing here?

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

Frank and Joe enter. Tom Hankle (early twenties, flannel shirt and jeans) and MARIA (18 years old, print blouse and jeans), Joe's ex-girlfriend, are shooting pool off to the right.

FRANK  
What a surprise! Look who's here, Joe.  
You've got to hand it to her, she doesn't  
waste any time.

Joe shoots Frank a hard look and then stares at Tom and Maria. Maria acknowledges Joe with half a smile and a tilt of the head, no direct eye contact. Tom smiles mockingly to himself. Frank rushes to the bar in the back of the room, sets his beer down briefly, and rips into the fruit basket. He grabs a couple of oranges and apples out of it. Joe trails behind him slowly.

FRANK  
(to the bartender)  
Where are those bastards!

INT. INSIDE A CLOSET IN THE KITCHEN DIRECTLY BEHIND THE BAR  
AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

Hank and Hal are packed in tight. They put their fingers to their lips and "Ssssh!" each other.

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

FRANK  
Hank and Hal! Where are they?!

BARTENDER  
(lying)  
I don't know. Your father is in the head.  
He don't look too good.

FRANK  
Check out the old man, Joe. I'm gonna  
have a look around.

Frank rounds the bar and peeks into the kitchen behind it.  
Joe enters the men's room to the right.

INT. MEN'S ROOM-AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

Inside the dimly lit bathroom, low groaning sounds can be heard coming from the rear stall. Joe tries to push the stall door open, but his father's body blocks it. His father continues to groan.

JOE  
Open up, Dad, it's me, Joe. We're going  
to take you home.

Frank Sr. continues to groan, but manages to roll away from the door.

JOE  
(observing that his father has  
gotten sick all over the front  
of his shirt)  
Jesus, you're a mess. Let me help you up.  
Are you OK? Can you stand? Put your arm  
around me.

Frank enters the bathroom.

FRANK  
What's going on in here?

JOE  
He's in pretty rough shape. Give us a  
hand.

Frank and Joe struggle to get their father on his feet.

FRANK SR.

(shaking his head, feigning  
sobriety)

I'm OK. Get your hands off me!

Frank and Joe back off for a moment and their father immediately falls onto the toilet.

FRANK

That was swift and graceful.

JOE

Get him up.

They lift him out of the toilet and walk him toward the door.

FRANK

Let's take him out the back way through  
the kitchen. It'll be a shorter haul.

JOE

All right.

They walk him out of the men's room and around the bar to the kitchen entrance. Frank pauses at the bar to pick up his beer. They continue on into the kitchen, unseen by the bartender. As Frank backs through the door, he bumps into an overloaded dumpster just outside the door, causing an avalanche of garbage to fall onto his father. Joe falls back away from the bulk of it, landing on his butt. Frank remains standing to the side, out of harm's way. Their father is nowhere to be seen. He is under the garbage. Hank and Hal, afraid of dying in a closet together, are flushed from their hiding spot by the sound of the crash. They bolt for the front door, with Frank in hot pursuit, throwing oranges and apples at them.

FRANK

(chasing Hank and Hal through  
the bar)

Sons of bitches! Have a fucking apple!

The bartender rushes into the kitchen, shouting.

BARTENDER

What have you done?!

JOE

(on his knees, sifting through  
the garbage for his father)

We opened the door. Where did all this  
shit come from?

BARTENDER

Haven't you heard? Don't you read the newspapers? There's a strike on. It's piling up all over town.

JOE

I didn't know.

Frank returns to the kitchen while the bartender, mumbling to himself, begins sorting through the garbage, throwing it away from the door.

FRANK

Where's the old man?

JOE

I haven't found him yet.

The mound of garbage on the ground suddenly shifts as their father pokes his head up out of the heap. His head is stuck inside a large plastic container.

FRANK

Thar she blows!

JOE

Help him up.

Frank and Joe struggle to get their father to his feet, but he is more wobbly than before and the slimy garbage has made him as hard to handle as a wet noodle.

FRANK

(spotting a folded lawn chair)

Here, lay him out on this.

Frank opens up the chair and Joe helps lower his father into it.

JOE

Grab the other end and we'll carry him out.

Frank moves around to the foot of the chair and raises it in unison with Joe. They carry their father out of the kitchen and around the bar. As they are passing Maria and Tom on their left at the pool table, Tom smiles mockingly at the strange entourage. He tries to whistle the Funeral March, but he confuses it with the Wedding March and whistles that instead. Frank charges Tom, pinning him up against the pool stick case on the wall. The sticks clatter onto their heads. They fight. Joe lowers his end of the chair and regathers his father into it. His father moans slightly, squirms a little, but remains in the chair. Joe moves off to the side to join Maria at the table where she is sitting watching the fight. Sounds of the fight continue in the background.

TWO-SHOT - MARIA AND JOE

MARIA

Hi, Joe.

JOE

How are you?

MARIA

I'm sorry about your mother. I really liked her. She was very nice to me. I'm sorry I couldn't make the service. Something came up.

JOE

We got your fruit basket.

TWO-SHOT - FRANK AND TOM FIGHTING

Frank and Tom are scrambling around the pool table, throwing punches and hurling pool balls. They break a few pool sticks that they swing at each other during the fight. At one point, a pair of steer's horns mounted to the wall becomes dislodged and falls to the floor. After Frank sends Tom reeling with a roundhouse to the kisser, he picks up the horns and carries them over to where Joe and Maria are sitting.

FRANK

(barely able to contain a smile  
breaking out across his bloody  
mouth)

Excuse me, I hope I'm not interrupting anything. Would you mind holding these, Joe?

(hands Joe the horns)

We wouldn't want anyone here getting seriously hurt, would we?

Frank winks slyly at Maria and rushes back to kicking Tom's ass. Joe and Maria, disgustingly polite to one another, continue to talk.

JOE

I guess you and Tom are back together.

MARIA

Yeah.

(pause)

He wants to get married. I don't know yet.

JOE

(shocked and hurt)

Oh.

(turning in his chair, seeing that Frank has just about wrapped things up with Tom, standing to leave)



I guess I better be going, then. Maybe  
I'll see you around. Goodbye.

Frank is on top of Tom, about to crash a fire extinguisher  
down on him.

JOE  
Let's go, Frank.

Frank drops the fire extinguisher and he and Joe resume  
carrying their father out to the parking lot while Maria  
attends to her semi-conscious boyfriend.

EXT. PARKING LOT-AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

Frank and Joe carry their father in the lawn chair across the  
lot. Their father continues to moan and squirm in the chair,  
fumbling at times with his zipper.

FRANK  
That Hankle is such a fucking idiot. He  
doesn't even know the difference between  
the Wedding March and the Funeral March.

Frank unhitches the gate and they slide the chair into the  
truck bed.

FRANK  
We better put him back here, in case he  
gets sick again.

JOE  
Do you want me to drive his car back  
home?

FRANK  
(simultaneously with his  
father)  
Leave it. We'll get it in the morning.

FRANK SR.  
(sitting up, almost sober)  
Don't touch that car!

The oddness of their father's suddenly sober remark surprises  
Frank and Joe. They look at him with confused expressions as  
they get into the truck. As Frank pulls out, Joe once again  
examines the damage done to his father's car from the  
passenger side window. Frank, observing Joe looking at the  
car, grabs another beer and cracks it open as he drives out  
of the lot.

EXT. THE BACK OF JOE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

The father is squirming in the lawn chair, trying to get his  
zipper open. In his effort, he topples out of the chair.

EXT. THE CAB OF JOE'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Frank and Joe react to the noise their father is making in the back of the truck.

FRANK

What's he doing back there?

JOE

(looking over his shoulder  
through the cab window)

He fell out of the chair.

They drive on in silence for a while. Joe is pensive, thinking about his father's car. He is worried, and it shows on his face. Frank drinks his beer in silence. The noise in the back of the truck has died down. It is very quiet in the cab.

JOE

(making conversation)

Did it get darker out or what? Where'd  
the moon go?

FRANK

It went behind the clouds.

Frank and Joe stare straight ahead at the road. In the cab window behind them, unbeknownst to either of them, their father has risen to his feet to take a piss. With his back against the cab window to steady himself, their father drops his pants. His hairy ass can be seen pressing up against the cab window between Frank and Joe, who continue to stare straight ahead, unaware of what is going on. After a while, Frank sees his father's ass in the rear view mirror and slams on the brakes so hard that his father falls crashing in the truck bed and Joe hits his head against the dashboard.

FRANK

Jesus Christ!

JOE

(moaning, holding his head in  
his hands)

What happened?

As Joe shakes the cobwebs loose, Frank jumps out of the truck, disappears for a few moments, and then hops back into the cab. They continue driving.

EXT. DRIVEWAY-THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank is parking the truck as Joe finally comes to his senses. They get out of the truck. As Joe stumbles toward the back, he notices that his father is gone.

JOE

What happened? Where's Dad?

FRANK

(crossing in front of the  
truck)

I left him.

JOE

You left him! What, are you crazy?!  
Where'd you leave him?

FRANK

On the road.

JOE

Are you insane?! What's wrong with you?!  
He's drunk! He'll get killed! Give me  
the damn keys!

FRANK

(throwing Joe the keys)

What are you going to do?

JOE

What do you think I'm going to do? I'm  
going back to pick him up.

Joe walks around to the driver's side and gets in the truck. Frank, six-pack in hand, walks toward the house as if he is unconcerned. At the last moment, as Joe is pulling out, Frank dashes across the front yard and jumps into the truck bed. Joe looks at him in the rear view mirror, shaking his head in disgust.

EXT. THE MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Joe is driving north along the highway, looking across the south-bound lanes for his father. After a while Frank taps on the cab window behind him and points across the highway.

FRANK

(shouting so Joe can hear him)

Turn it around, Joe! I saw something back  
there!

Joe makes a U-turn at the next light and drives back slowly, hugging the shoulder of the road.

JOE

(shouting)

Where?!

FRANK

Up ahead a little!

A few moments later, alongside a wooded area some fifty yards short of a patriotic Old Grand Dad billboard proclaiming,

"The Spirit of America," Frank points off into the woods.

FRANK

Over there!

Joe parks the truck along the shoulder of the road and gets out. Frank points to a shirt hung up in the lower branches of a tree at the edge of the woods.

FRANK

Check it out, Joe. Is that his shirt?

Joe isn't talking to Frank. He's still pissed off. Without comment, he approaches the tree and pulls down his father's puke-covered shirt.

FRANK

(examining the shirt over Joe's  
shoulder)

Still fresh, huh?

Frank and Joe enter the woods and begin looking for their father. Joe calls out "Dad!" for a while, but, when there is no response, gives up and listens for sounds in the woods.

FRANK

So, what was that all about back there?

JOE

(reluctantly)

What?

FRANK

You and Maria.

JOE

Just talking.

FRANK

That's great. I'm in the middle of a battle royal, pool balls whizzing past my head, while you two have a tete-a-tete. You should've gotten in a few shots while you had the chance. What are you two, in love or something?

JOE

What difference does it make to you?

FRANK

Just looking after my little brother, that's all. I'd hate to see you get burned again like the last time.

JOE

What do you mean?

FRANK

Well, it's obvious, isn't it? She's not as devoted as you thought she was. What's she doing with a lowlife like Hankle?

JOE

(lying)

I knew she was seeing him tonight. She's having a hard time dumping him. She's trying to let him off easy.

FRANK

I thought they broke up last summer.

JOE

They did. He won't accept it, though. He keeps calling her.

FRANK

Why don't you tell him to fuck off, then? Better yet, why don't you kick his ass?

JOE

It's none of my business. I trust her. She knows what she's doing.

FRANK

None of your business! Jesus Christ, I don't believe you! You're so fucking naive, it's incredible. Don't you see what's going on? She's playing you for a fool.

JOE

What do you mean?

FRANK

You trust her, Joe. You just said so. A big mistake. You poor bastard, you must be in love. Why does everything have to be so serious with you? Didn't you learn anything from the last one? I hope you didn't tell her.

JOE

What?

FRANK

That you love her.

JOE

No. Not in so many words. I think she knows how I feel.

FRANK

There's still hope, then.

JOE

I don't get it. What are you saying? I shouldn't trust her?

FRANK

There you go.

JOE

If I didn't trust her there'd be nothing there.

FRANK

Bingo. There's nothing there. Absolutely nothing. She's just jerking you around. You're just too blind to see it.

JOE

I don't believe you. It's not that way at all. She still cares about me. She told me.

FRANK

When?

JOE

The other night. Monday.

FRANK

The night...

JOE

Yeah.

Frank and Joe continue to walk through the woods, pausing at the reference to the night of the accident. Intercut with scenes of the two of them walking on in silence is a flashback of Frank's to events of Monday night.

FRANK'S FLASHBACK

INT. RUDY'S BAR - NIGHT

Frank is sitting at the bar with his arm around Maria, sharing a drink with her.

MARIA

I've got to get going.

FRANK

Where are you going?

MARIA

I'm meeting someone.

FRANK

Anyone I know?

MARIA

No.

(kissing Frank and getting up  
to leave)

I'll talk to you tomorrow.

FRANK

(following her to the door)

Wait...Maria.

MARIA

(pushing him back into the bar)

Let me go. I said I'll talk to you  
tomorrow.

Behind Maria, waiting to enter the bar as she leaves, is BOB  
JENKINSON (early twenties, work clothes).

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Frank and Joe continue to look for their father in the woods.

FRANK

(jealous)

So, I guess you'll be getting married  
soon.

Intercut with close shots of Joe during his next two  
responses is a flashback of his to Monday night.

JOE'S FLASHBACK

EXT. IN FRONT OF MARIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe and Maria are sitting in his truck. He is dropping her  
off. They have been fighting. There's a long awkward pause as  
they sit and stew, looking off in opposite directions.

MARIA

I'm not for you. It's over; it's as  
simple as that. I don't want to see you  
anymore.

Maria jumps out of the truck. Joe feebly reaches out for her  
as she slams the door behind her.

JOE

(breaking down)

No! Maria! Don't go!

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

JOE

(responding to Frank)

Maybe one day.

FRANK

You've talked about it with her?

JOE

Yes.

FRANK

Hmm. I don't know what to say. I feel sorry for you. She's taking you for a ride and you don't even know it.

JOE

How can you say that? You don't know her the way I do. Since when did you become the authority? The girls you see never last longer than the weekend. That's about how long it takes them to see through that phony charm of yours.

FRANK

(laughing because he knows it's true)

Yeah, that's right. But look who's getting all the pussy.

JOE

Animal.

FRANK

(still laughing)

That's right. See, the difference between you and me, Joe, is that I'm not living in some dream world. I see things the way they are. I don't need your horseshit fantasies of love and marriage and "they lived happily ever after." Only a damn fool would believe those tired lies. The way I look at it, men and women are here for a purpose.

JOE

And what's that?

FRANK

(finishing a beer and cracking open another)

To fuck each other, plain and simple, as often and as furiously as possible, literally and figuratively. That's all we're good for. The rest is just talk.

JOE

That's very beautiful, Frank. Thanks for sharing that wonderful insight with me. If I had a pen or pencil, I'd write it down somewhere.



FRANK

(mumbling)

What would you know about insight? You can't even see what's right in front of your face.

JOE

What? Quit mumbling.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Frank Sr., suffering from delirium tremens, is following an hallucination of his deceased wife. The closer he gets to the hallucination, the further it recedes.

FRANK SR.

(rambling drunkenly to himself)

Linda...Is that you?...No...Don't go...Please tell me it's not true...I've got to know...Only you can tell me...I can't remember...I was too drunk...I'm sorry...I let you down...You deserved better...I couldn't...I wouldn't...You know I wouldn't...Never...No!...No!...No!... This isn't happening...It can't be...I love you, Linda...More than anything in the world...Now you'll never know how much I loved you...What am I gonna do?...How can I live without you?...No, Linda, don't go...Don't leave me here alone...I can't make it on my own...Come back, honey...There's nothing left for me here...Everything's gone to hell...Please come back...Please...

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Frank and Joe are still looking for their father.

FRANK

You don't see what's going on here, do you?

I thought I could keep it between me and the old man, but the way he's acting, I see that's going to be impossible now.

JOE

What are you talking about?

FRANK

I'm talking about what happened Monday night and what the old man is going through now.

JOE

What do you mean? Our mother was killed.  
He's grieving.

FRANK

There's more to it than that.

JOE

What do you mean?

FRANK

You saw his car tonight and the way he  
reacted when you asked to drive it home.  
Didn't you think that was a little  
strange?

JOE

He's drunk. He's not himself.

FRANK

(shaking his head)

Have you had a chance to ask him where he  
was the night of the accident?

JOE

He said he'd been at the Legion.

FRANK

And he told you that the next morning in  
the hospital when we drove down?

JOE

Yeah. I couldn't reach either one of you  
all night. He said he had too much to  
drink and passed out in his car.

FRANK

And you never gave that a second thought?

JOE

What are you trying to say?

FRANK

Let me ask you this. You saw Mom's car  
and now you've seen the old man's. The  
cops said Mom's car had been sideswiped.  
Did the paint on Mom's car match the  
color of the old man's car?

JOE

Wait a second, if you're trying to...

FRANK

Did it?

JOE

Yeah. But that's just a coincidence...

FRANK

It's more than a coincidence.

JOE

How could you say that! He's our father.

FRANK

I could say it because I was there. I saw it.

JOE

You said you were at Rudy's that night.

Intercut with the following description of what happened on Monday night according to Frank are flashback scenes depicting the events as they are related. When Frank gets to the point in the story where he says he followed his father and the other woman into the parking lot, the flashbacks end and the story continues as a monologue.

FRANK

I was. Early on. Then I ran into Bob Jenkinson. He told me the old man was at the Legion, making a scene with some woman. Not Mom. I called him "a fucking liar" and almost got into a fight with him over it. I decided to drive on out to see for myself. When I got there, the place was already jumping. There was some sort of charity thing going on or something. I went inside. There was a band making a racket and the place was wall to wall. Sure enough, I found the old man kicking it up on the dance floor with some nasty-looking bleach blonde affair. It was sickening.

JOE

(visibly upset)

You're lying! How can you say these things...

FRANK

Let me finish, and then you can judge for yourself.

(pause)

Naturally, I wanted to kill him, but for some reason, I held back. I guess I was hoping things weren't as bad as they appeared. That the broad would turn out to be an old friend or an acquaintance or something. They were both pretty drunk and after a while they left the club together. Without them knowing it, I followed them into the parking lot.

(flashbacks end here)

The blonde had a car and she drove him

out to her place. I followed them.

JOE

You followed them! What are you, sick?  
What the hell did you want to see?!

FRANK

Like I said, I kept hoping for the best. I was hoping that they were just going for a cup of coffee or something or, at least, that the old man would come to his senses and pull out. It didn't turn out that way. They were all over each other before they even got in the door. Judging by the time it took before they came back out, it was fast work or no work at all, if you catch my drift.

JOE

You didn't stop him! Why didn't you stop him!

FRANK

(regrettably)

I don't know.

(pause)

After it was all over, I just wanted him alone, you know, to have it out with him. The woman dropped him off back at the Legion and he took off in his car. That's when the accident happened. He was all over the road.

As he made the turn onto Oak Glen, he swung wide and sideswiped Mom's car. I saw the accident, but I didn't realize it was Mom. It was too dark. He drove around after that for what seemed like hours. I don't know where he thought he was going. Maybe he was too drunk to find his way back home. I don't know. I remember, as I followed him, that I kept hoping that he would drive off the road and kill himself. He didn't, though. He finally found his way back home and passed out on the driveway. He didn't even make it out of the car. I could've woke him up to kick his ass, but in the back of my mind I was thinking of making an anonymous tip to the cops about the accident. I thought that would be revenge enough. Of course, at the time, I had no idea what really happened.

JOE

(breaking down)

No! I don't believe you!

FRANK

It hurts, I know. Ask him yourself, if you're not sure. Ask him how he got home that night.

Joe runs off screaming for his father. Frank continues walking slowly behind, sipping his beer.

EXT. DEEPER IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Frank Sr. is sitting in a tree in his boxer shorts, fashioning a noose out of his pants, tying it to a limb above him.

FRANK SR.

(tightening the noose around his neck)  
What's it all for? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

At this point the tree limb he is sitting on breaks. In turn, the tree limb he has tied the noose to breaks. He falls to the ground unharmed, crying.

EXT. IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

Joe is running through the woods. He hears the sounds of the tree limbs breaking and rushes off in that direction. He comes upon his father still lying on the ground, crying. He lifts his father to his feet and pins him up against the tree trunk.

JOE

Tell me it's not true! What Frank told me—tell me it's not true!

FRANK SR.

(crying)  
That dirty liar. Of course, it's not true.

JOE

He told me you were with another woman.

FRANK SR.

I'm sorry, Joe. Forgive me. I never meant anything against your mother. It was stupid...

JOE

(startled by the admission of guilt)  
You admit it! How could you...

FRANK SR.

I was drunk. I didn't know what I was doing. I was weak.

JOE

He said you caused the accident. How did you get home that night?

FRANK SR.

(breaking down)

I don't know. I must've blacked out. I don't remember driving home. I wish to God I could.

JOE

Then it's true!

FRANK SR.

No! It can't be! I can't believe it. He's lying. He's trying to turn you against me. He's getting back at me for this woman. He wants revenge. As if my suffering isn't enough. He can't be trusted.

JOE

I want to believe you, but I can't.

FRANK SR.

He's no good, Joe. He doesn't care about anyone but himself. Nothing's too low for him.

(pause)

Did you know he's been seeing Maria behind your back?

Frank comes upon the scene, but remains out of sight. Listening in on the conversation, he relieves himself against a tree.

JOE

What?

FRANK SR.

It's true. She showed up one day looking for a handout for an abortion she had to get. She said Frank wouldn't go dutch with her on it.

JOE

(humiliated)

How did you know I wasn't responsible?

FRANK SR.

(embarrassed for his son)

Your name never came up.

Frank reveals himself to Joe and his father.

FRANK

You're not going to fall for that one,

are you, Joe? It's obvious he doesn't want you to know the truth.

FRANK SR.

Liar!

JOE

I don't know who to believe.

FRANK

He's trying to distract you.

JOE

(to Frank)

Is it true?

FRANK

What?

JOE

About Maria?

Frank doesn't answer right away.

FRANK SR.

See what I mean! Nothing's too low. I was shocked myself when she named Frank.

JOE

(to Frank)

Why would she name you, Frank?

FRANK

Because it couldn't be you.

JOE

What do you mean?

FRANK

It couldn't be your abortion, Joe, because you never fucked her.

JOE

How would you know?

FRANK

She told me.

JOE

Bullshit! When?

FRANK

I don't know. One night. After I fucked her.

JOE

(anger building)

What did you just say?

FRANK

Are you drunk, or what? I said I fucked your girlfriend. So what. The old man killed Mom. Now, aren't you glad we got everything out in the open? Is there anything else you'd like to know about this wonderful world we live in?

JOE

(screaming as he attacks Frank)

No!

Joe and Frank wrestle on the ground.

CLOSE-UP - THE KEYS TO JOE'S TRUCK FALL OUT OF HIS POCKET AS HE WRESTLES WITH FRANK

FRANK SR.

Boys! Boys! Don't fight.

Their father tries to separate them and gets caught up in the fight. It's a free-for-all, every man for himself, all-out war. During the fight, each participant at some point chokes the other two. With eyes bulging, they hiss and scowl at one another. Eventually, the father slips away from the action while Frank and Joe go at it one-on-one again. He discovers the keys to Joe's truck on the ground, picks them up, and takes off through the woods for the highway. Frank and Joe continue to fight while their father makes his getaway. At a pause in the action, the brothers realize their father is missing.

FRANK

Where's the old man?

JOE

(rearranging himself, patting his pockets for his keys and discovering they're gone)

He's got the keys.

FRANK

Jesus Christ!

Frank and Joe run through the woods after their father. When they get to the highway, their father is just pulling out in the truck. They both manage to jump in the back.

CLOSE - FRANK SR. IN THE CAB OF JOE'S TRUCK

Frank Sr. is driving the truck, blasting "On The Road Again" by Willie Nelson, smiling to himself when he notices his two sons in the back through the rear view mirror. When Frank begins to make threatening gestures, he begins to swerve the truck wildly down the road, tapping the brakes occasionally



to send the two boys reeling. Frank struggles to hold onto his beer as he flops around the truck bed. Joe has another Nostalgic flashback which is intercut with scenes of him and Frank falling in the back of the truck.

NOSTALGIC FLASHBACK 2

INT. A FUNHOUSE ON THE JERSEY SHORE BOARDWALK - DAY

Joe (age 10) and Frank (age 11) are caught inside a giant rolling barrel. Both of the boys are having trouble standing up.

As they struggle to raise themselves, the rolling barrel knocks their feet out from under them. They roll around the floor of the barrel amid four teenage girls smoking cigarettes. Framed at the end of the barrel in bright sunlight are the boys' parents. Both of them are laughing hysterically.

EXT. THE MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Frank is in the back of the truck trying to get to his father in the cab.

FRANK

He's going to kill us all!

The truck continues to careen out of control down the highway. Frank finally makes it to the cab. He begins kicking in the cab window on the passenger side. After he has kicked out a large enough hole, he throws himself into the cab with his father and struggles with him for control of the truck. Eventually, the truck is brought under control and halted. Afraid of what Frank is going to do to him, the father jumps out of the truck and starts running across the highway. Frank charges after him. The father is running across the fast lane when he is hit by a white Lincoln Continental limousine.

JOE

(leaping out of the truck in pursuit)

Dad!

FRANK

(as his father is struck by the limousine)

Fuck!

JOE

(as his father is struck by the limousine)

Jesus!

FRANK

(as his father crumples to the ground)

Man!

The limousine stops briefly, but when Frank starts to run after it, it speeds off. Frank returns to where his father is lying in the road.

JOE

Dad! Are you all right!

Their father is moaning low, rolling on the ground, when the boys reach him. He is still conscious as they kneel over him.

JOE

Dad, are you OK?

Frank helps Joe turn him over.

FRANK SR.

(his eyes rolling dreamily,  
looking up at his two sons)  
I must be in hell.

FRANK

There you go. He's alright. Let's get him up.

JOE

Shouldn't we check to see if anything's broken first?

FRANK

We'll know when we get him home.

JOE

Shouldn't we take him to the hospital?  
He could have internal injuries or something.

FRANK

We'll check him out at the house first.  
Let's go.

Frank and Joe manage to get their father to his feet and back to the truck. Their father is quiet, out of it, as he stumbles along, supported by his two sons.

FRANK

You drive, Joe.

They all get into the cab of the truck. The father is between Frank and Joe.

JOE

I still think we should take him to the hospital...

FRANK

We'll take him to the hospital. Let's

just clean him up a little and get some clothes on him.  
I don't feel like explaining why he was running down the middle of the highway in his underwear, do you?

Joe doesn't respond. He puts the truck into gear and drives off. Frank cracks open a beer. As he is driving, Joe has another Nostalgic flashback. This flashback is intercut with close shots of Joe driving.

NOSTALGIC FLASHBACK 3

EXT. A MAIN HIGHWAY - DAY

Joe (age 10) and Frank (age 11) are in the front seat of a truck with their father. All three of them, it appears, have just gotten haircuts. Frank Sr. is drinking a beer at the wheel.

FRANK SR.  
(pulling Frank up onto his lap)  
Get up here, Frank. I need a hand driving.  
(pause)  
How 'bout a little taste?

Frank Sr. hands the beer around to little Frank as they steer the truck together. Little Frank takes a sip and seems to enjoy it.

FRANK SR.  
(to Joe)  
Would you like a sip too?

Little Joe is more reluctant as he takes the can of beer that is handed to him. He takes a sip of beer and immediately spits it up at the windshield. Little Frank responds by flipping on the windshield wipers.

FRANK SR.  
(exploding)  
What the hell!

In the last scene of the flashback, the father has parked the truck along the shoulder of the road. In the heat of the afternoon sun, he is yelling at his two boys, smacking them behind their heads at the appropriate moments to bring home a particular point. Small clouds of talcum rise up off of their heads with each smack that is received.

EXT. DRIVEWAY-THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe parks the truck and Frank helps his father out of the cab. He props his father up against the truck as he gets the lawn chair out of the back.

FRANK

Give me a hand, Joe. We'll put him out  
back, where he can get some air.

Frank and Joe help their father into the lawn chair and carry him around the side of the house. Their father isn't moving, he continues to moan in pain.

FRANK

Run in and get some clothes and something  
to help clean him up. I'll keep an eye on  
him.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe runs into the house, grabs a shirt and a pair of pants out of his parents' bedroom, and then opens a closet in the hall looking for towels. When Joe picks up a loud beach towel with a huge cartoon bear on it, he has another Nostalgic flashback. This flashback is intercut with shots of Joe staring at the bear as he holds the towel in front of him at full length, lost in a sort of reverie.

NOSTALGIC FLASHBACK 4

EXT. A BEACH ON THE JERSEY SHORE - DAY

The Roberts family is enjoying a day at the beach. Frank (age 11) is burying his father in the sand. The young, pretty mother is working on her tan. Joe (age 10) is sitting in a chair behind his mother thumbing through a Hi-Lites magazine, reading the Goofus and Gallant cartoon. Something happens off to his left and his mother squeals in delight as she rolls over on her side, away from Joe, revealing a wonderful view of her wide, shapely ass. Embarrassed by the pleasure this view is affording him, Joe casts his eyes down on the towel his mother was lying on and sees the huge cartoon bear staring up at him.

INT. THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe puts the towel with the bear on it back in the closet and takes another one, which he moistens at the kitchen sink on his way out to the backyard.

EXT. BACKYARD-THE ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

As Joe exits the back door, he sees Frank on top of his father. It is not clear whether Frank is giving him CPR or strangling him. Joe assumes the latter and tackles Frank.

JOE

Get off him!

FRANK

What are you doing?! He's dying!

They stop wrestling and Frank feels for his father's pulse.

FRANK

He's dead.

JOE

(breaking down)

No! I don't believe you!

Joe listens to his father's chest and begins giving him CPR. When he realizes that it is doing no good, he breaks down crying across his father's chest.

JOE

No! Dad!

Frank enters a shed in the back of the yard, rummages around inside for a while, and emerges carrying a can of gasoline.

JOE

(as Frank passes by him)

Where do you think you're going?

FRANK

I'm gonna pick up some more beer.

Joe looks at him with disgust.

EXT. DRIVEWAY-ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank gets in his truck and tries to start it, but he has the same difficulty with the starter as before. The truck won't start.

EXT. BACKYARD-ROBERTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Joe closes his father's eyes and covers his face. As he continues to cry over his father, he listens to the sounds of Frank trying to get his truck started out front. He pulls the keys to his truck out of his pocket and seems relieved that Frank won't be going anywhere. Suddenly he hears the sound of Frank's truck turning over out front.

JOE

Damn him!

Joe rushes around to the front of the house to see Frank pulling away in his truck. He gets in his truck and follows after him.

EXT. THE MAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

CLOSE - FRANK

Frank drives along the highway in the direction of the American Legion hall. Intercut with shots of Frank driving are flashback scenes of what really happened Monday night,

the night of his mother's accident.

FRANK'S FLASHBACK

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

The bar is crowded as seen in flashbacks seen earlier during Frank's description of what happened. Frank is following his father and the other woman through the crowd as they exit the bar.

EXT. PARKING LOT-AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

In the parking lot, Frank sees his father and the woman getting into her car. He hurries to his truck, but he can't get it started. The bum starter again. He curses and bangs on the wheel, but it won't start. He sees his father's car parked across the lot, jumps out of his truck, and races over to it. He jumps in his father's car, gets it started, and roars out of the lot in the direction in which the woman's car was last seen traveling. Speeding to make up lost ground, he makes a wide turn onto Oak Glen and sideswipes the car traveling in the other lane. He watches the other car lose control and run into a telephone pole in his rear view mirror. He doesn't realize it was his mother's car. He doesn't stop. Eventually he catches up with the other woman's car. He follows them to her place and parks his father's car. When he gets out, he checks and sees that the damage from the accident is minimal, barely noticeable in the dark. He then proceeds up to the house to have a look. Peeping through a crack in the living room curtains, he watches his father and the woman drunkenly fooling around. When they move upstairs to the bedroom, Frank leaves the house and drives back to the American Legion hall to return his father's car and wait. Later, the woman returns to the parking lot to drop his father off. His father, still drunk, gets into his car and immediately passes out behind the wheel. Frank gets in behind his father, shoves him over in the seat, and drives him home, hoping that he'll be able to tip the cops off to his father in the morning as the cause of the accident earlier on. Frank parks his father's car in the driveway at their house and pulls his father back behind the steering wheel, where Frank Sr. continues to sleep it off. Frank is last seen walking along the road in the direction of the American Legion hall to pick up his truck.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. PARKING LOT-AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

The bar is closed and the parking lot is empty. Frank parks his truck and leaves the engine running as he grabs the can of gasoline out of the back. He runs around to the back of the building to the kitchen entrance, climbs up the pile of garbage there, kicks in the transom window above the door, and drops into the kitchen. In the parking lot, Joe pulls up in his truck, gets out, and walks around to Frank's truck to

turn the engine off. He gets back into his truck and waits for Frank.

INT. AMERICAN LEGION HALL BAR - NIGHT

Frank is splashing gasoline all over the place, on the bar, the pool table, everywhere. When he is out of gas, he picks up a book of matches from the bar and sets the place on fire. As he runs through the kitchen, he pauses to grab a six-pack of beer out of the refrigerator. He jumps on top of a table near the door and hoists himself back out through the transom.

EXT. PARKING LOT- AMERICAN LEGION HALL - NIGHT

Frank runs in the direction of the two trucks, carrying his six-pack, flames flickering in the bar behind him. He jumps into his truck and soon realizes that Joe has turned the engine off. He glares at him through the window. He tries to get the truck started, but it is futile. He abandons the truck and walks over to the driver's side of Joe's truck.

FRANK

(menacing)

Move over, I'm driving.

JOE

(moving over)

Where are we going?

FRANK

Anywhere but home.

Frank tunes in Warren Zevon's "Ain't That Pretty at All" on the radio and blasts it as they pull out. He cracks open a beer and sings along with the song on the line "I'd rather feel bad than feel nothing at all." They drive out onto the main highway.

CLOSE - JOE

JOE

(looking off into the woods,  
yawning)

Will this night ever end?

As they continue to drive, Joe, exhausted, begins to fall asleep. Suddenly, he is awakened by the sound of the truck door slamming on the driver's side. He looks up and discovers that Frank is gone; so is the beer. No one is driving. The truck veers off the road and plows into some trees. Joe hits his head hard against the windshield, opening a nasty looking gash on the right side of his forehead above his eye. The scene ends with a close shot of Joe, knocked unconscious, bleeding heavily from this wound.

DISSOLVE TO EPILOGUE:

EPILOGUE - ELEVEN YEARS LATER

EXT. DESERTED BACK ROAD - NIGHT

CLOSE - PATROLMAN JOE ROBERTS

The scar from the accident is seen clearly above Joe's right eye as he drives in the police car. As he comes to an intersection, the white Thunderbird Bill described in the Prologue goes speeding by. Joe flashes the lights and follows in pursuit down a long, straight deserted back road. The cars travel at high speeds for a while and then the Thunderbird slows down as if to stop. Joe pulls out into the left lane to pass and get ahead of the Thunderbird, but then the Thunderbird speeds up again so that Joe can't get back into the right lane. The cars travel at high speeds side by side. Joe looks over into the Thunderbird and sees that his brother Frank is driving. They haven't seen each other since the night their father died. Frank (thirty-one years old, raggedy and crazed-looking) drinking a beer, smiles broadly at Joe and then begins smashing his car up against the police car. Joe, almost in shock at seeing his brother again, doesn't know how to respond at first. He tries speeding up again to block the Thunderbird, but Frank increases his speed as well. Frank continues to slam his car against the police car. Frustrated and shaking, Joe draws his revolver and points it between the cars at Frank.

FRANK

(shouting through the car  
windows)

Go ahead! What are you waiting for, Joe?!  
What do you think I came back for?!  
Shoot! Get it over with! You can't kill  
me because I'm already dead! Did you hear  
me, Joe! I'm dead! Don't you  
understand?! Your brother's dead!

Joe looks at the gun in his hand with horror and disbelief and puts it back down. He hits the brakes and Frank goes driving on up ahead. Joe makes a U-turn and drives off in the opposite direction.

LONG-SHOT - THE TWO CARS DRIVING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS

FADE TO BLACK

MERLE HAGGARD'S "I CAN'T GET AWAY" PLAYS OVER THE CREDITS.