

ACOLYTES

Written by
Shayne Armstrong
S.P.Krause



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FADE IN:

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

We prowl.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY

A marshy span of water. A rookery for waterbirds.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY

A white and blue muscle car - a FORD COBRA - speeds along a forestry trail. Light rain patters down.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY

We move carefully through a copse of trees. Ahead, we see the blaze of sunlight on water. Someone is standing on the bank, face to the water.

Her name is TANYA LEE.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- LATER

A MALE FIGURE moves through rain and darkness carrying a shrouded form. Redness has bloomed through thin material. The figure passes beneath a NATURAL ARCHWAY formed by interlocking trees.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY

A wind rips past us. We go with it, moving out from the trees.

Tanya Lee is young. Sixteen at most. She hasn't seen us.

We move nearer. She's still watching the birds. The wind throws up her dark hair and scrapes the water. We stop, almost within touching distance. She senses us. She starts to turn.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- LATER

Muddy hands lift a shovel high and bring it down with force. Rain belts down.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY

The rookery empties. Birds flee to the sky.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

Tanya Lee runs in the rain. Her blouse is open and trailing like broken wings. Her arms are raked with scratch marks. Blood mingles with water.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- LATER

We see frail torchlight through trees and rain and a figure immersed in a trench. The figure stares into the pit, fixated on something we can't see.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY

The Cobra rounds a corner too fast and fishtails in the softened soil. The rain gets heavier.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

Tanya looks back over her shoulder and runs into the bole of a tree. The impact sets her on her behind.

Silence. Blood seeps from one nostril, then the other. Her features relax. Eyes glaze. There's something wrong with this girl beyond fright and injury.

She slowly gets up and walks away. She looks as if she can no longer remember why she was running.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY

Tanya Lee steps out of the trees onto a dirt trail.

She looks up at a slice of stormy sky defined by the trees. The front of her body is wet with blood. Her nose is broken.

An egret flies overhead. Tanya tracks the bird with a blank gaze, blinking in the rain.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY

We ACCELERATE down a narrow forestry trail. We round a corner and there she is.

EXT. CARWASH -- NIGHT -- LATER

The Cobra passes through a carwash. We cannot see the driver.

The car completes the cycle and rumbles away. We see the damaged front-end. Then it veers around and re-enters the wash chamber. The cycle recommences.

EXT. SCHOOL OVAL/BUSHLAND -- DAY

A MALE FIGURE appears from the shadows of a school building and moves out across an oval. He wears a simple gray school uniform, bag slung over his shoulder. He's got an eyebrow and ear stud, a dribble of dye in his hair.

His name is MARK VINCENT, 17. He reaches a fence, throws his bag over, and follows it into the commercial PINE FOREST beyond. He looks around for someone and sees a curl of blue smoke spilling out from behind a tree.

Sitting on a school bag is a PRETTY GIRL. She smokes a cigarette like someone who does it often.

She's got some piercings, violet streaked hair, oversized gothic jewelry. She's reading a Sandman graphic novel.

Her name is CHASELY KEYS, 17.

MARK
Hey Chase.

CHASELY
Hi.

MARK
Where's James?

She shrugs.

CHASELY
Might be just you and me.

Mark tries not to react but looks away before he blushes, straight into the face of a TALL FORM. While Mark has been talking with Chasely somebody has stalked him.

His name is JAMES TRESSWICK, also 17. Beneath a long impractical overcoat he wears the same school uniform as Mark. He's got more piercings than the girl and his bleached hair is teased in all directions.

JAMES
Almost...

Chasely points a blue nail at James.

CHASELY
(to Mark; apologetic)
He made me.

Chasely gets up, picks up her school bag (a sort of hard PLASTIC TACKLE BOX). James puts his arm around the girl and they walk off together.

Mark follows.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

They walk in the middle of the road through a maze-like CANAL ESTATE. Green water sparkles between houses.

CHASELY
Show Mark your t-shirt.

James lifts his school shirt. There's a black t-shirt beneath with orange lettering done in a wonky gothic script.

MARK
"The old believe everything, the
middle-aged suspect everything,
the young know everything."
(to Chasely)
That's good.

CHASELY
I made it.

JAMES
You painted the words on, you
didn't make them up.

James walks away. Chasely pokes her tongue out at him.

CHASELY
(to Mark)
I'll make you one.

MARK
Yeah?

CHASELY
Bring around a t-shirt and we'll
figure out what to put on it.

JAMES
How about a target?

Mark goes quiet. He stops walking. Chasely takes a few more steps before she sees that Mark is not with them.

CHASELY
Keep up lazy legs.

JAMES
Shut up.

She turns to James. He's focused wholly on Mark. She blinks back early tears.

JAMES (CONT'D)
(to Mark)
Yeah?

Mark's gaze moves to the rooftops of the nearest houses. But he's not looking for something... he's listening.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Yeah?

Mark looks at James. He shakes his head, then turns around. A RED MUSCLE CAR roars through an intersection behind them.

A beat. They walk on.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Another street. One side is forestry.

CHASELY

It's just a stupid tiger.

JAMES

There's five different kinds of tiger.

CHASELY

A big tiger. I don't know.

JAMES

How long have you lived in this shithole? How can you not know that?

CHASELY

'Cos I don't.

JAMES

Chicks have got zero curiosity.

Mark whispers something to Chasely.

CHASELY

Siberian tiger.

She gives James a big grin and he laughs. Chasely puts her arm around both boys. She lifts herself up as they walk. She's a touchy-feely girl and Mark acts like he's used to it.

Chasely flops back to earth. She unfurls her arms from their necks and veers away from the boys. She moves toward a street corner. A breeze pushes her onwards.

We see what has drawn her: A telephone post, mantled with leaflets, notices and local ads. Some are vivid and fresh, others tattered and faded, hanging on by dirty threads of scotch tape.

They feature everything from fridges for sale, a lost Shitzu, and a crap band that played two months ago at the tavern.

Chasely stares into this crazed, accidental pastiche. She reaches her hand out.

The wind freshens. The pole's parchment skin rattles and whips, making a sound like the snapping tail of a kite.

Chasely pushes away a scrap of paper and reveals a face.

We recognize it.

Her name is TANYA LEE.

It's a black and white picture photocopied onto lurid yellow stock. Eye catching like it was meant to be.

The two girls stare at each other.

Above Tanya's picture, in a thick black font, is the word "MISSING". At the bottom of the leaflet are the contact details for police and family.

The boys come up beside Chasely. They stare into the missing girl's face.

CHASELY

I saw her dad on TV. He said
he'd keep looking even if
everyone else has stopped.

JAMES

Good luck.

CHASELY

I think it's sad.

JAMES

They shouldn't have let the spaz
wander off.

James walks away.

CHASELY

She liked to look at the birds.

MARK

Do you think he did it?

CHASELY

Her dad?

MARK

Archer.

James turns back and listens.

CHASELY

Yes.

CUT TO:

A CANAL ESTATE IN ITS INFANCY. A desolation of denuded earth.
The identical skeletons of identical houses.

A lone figure flees through this wasteland. A SCHOOLBOY,
seventh grade at most. Sweat saturates the underarms of his
school shirt. The dark patch on his groin might also be
sweat. His breath is raspy, his pupils plate-sized from
adrenaline.

He looks more than a little like a younger version of James.

CUT TO:

James blinks a splinter from his mind's eye.

JAMES

(to Mark)

What do you reckon? Don't
think he's capable?

MARK

It's not what I think. He's
still around, isn't he? They
haven't done anything to him.

CHASELY

They will.

James thinks about it. He wilts a little.

JAMES

They won't. If they haven't
charged him by now they're not
going to.

CHASELY

They'll get him.

EXT. DRIVE-IN -- DAY

James, Chasely and Mark pass through a derelict drive-in,
walking by a vandalized candy kiosk.

A sign on the front fence announces its upcoming development
as a gated community. There's an artist's impression.

They move beneath the moldy remnants of a projection screen
and into the forestry beyond.

EXT. FORESTRY/BARRIER -- DAY

James, Chasely and Mark walk beside a HIGH BARRIER - too tall
to see over.

Some kind of machine erupts into life on the other side

James halts. He looks to the top of the barrier.

JAMES

I heard them.

CHASELY

You did not. They're on the
other side.

She keeps walking. James and Mark remain.

JAMES

In the U.S you can own one if
you've got the money.

(beat)

You can buy a tiger.

EXT. FLOAT CEMETERY -- DAY

INTERCUT Chasely applying face paint to James and Mark. She's already done herself, whitening her face, turning her eyebrows into delicate arches and painting two small red bows on her lips. She looks like a Geisha or an antique doll.

Her creations take shape. A TIGER for James, a RABBIT for Mark.

Chasely holds a tiny mirror out to Mark. He looks at himself, sees the rabbit. He doesn't show his disappointment.

James grabs the mirror from Chasely and inspects himself.

He laughs. Chasely's smile is huge. She's pleased him.

James practices a savage face in the mirror, then begins to crawl towards Chasely on all fours. She acts like she's scared. He likes it.

Mark checks his watch.

MARK

Should we make a start?

CHASELY

Can we not? Can we? I got
new boots... Docs.

She looks appealingly to James and waggles her new shoes.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Can we just sit around? Have a
smoke? Talk?

She lifts a little clipseal bag of pot from the tackle box.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

We got our own, we don't
need Archer's.

MARK

His'll be better. It's free.

CHASELY

We don't really know though, do
we? There might not be any crop.
Not really. It could just be
talk. It's not like we've found
anything.

MARK
They say there is.

CHASELY
Doesn't mean it's true.

MARK
He's too stupid to make money
doing anything else.

James stops gnawing Chasely's arm. He drops it like a piece of meat.

JAMES
Do what you want.
(beat)
Thought you would have been more
into it.

CHASELY
I am. I have been. I'm just
saying, there might not be any
crop, that's—

JAMES
And I'm just saying, take Doctor
Martens boots and fuck yourself.

Chasely's shoulders droop and her posture goes to shit.

MARK
(awkwardly; to James)
Come on...

Chasely starts to throw her paints into her port.

MARK (CONT'D)
Help us look, Chasely. Three's
better than two.

JAMES
Let her go.
(beat)
We can fuck him over for once
and she's worried about her crap
boots.

She stops throwing things and looks at James. Her blackened eye sockets are leaking inky tears.

CHASELY
I hate him too.

James sits back and watches her. He gives nothing away.

JAMES
What are you bawling for?

CHASELY

You make me.

James gets down on all fours again and starts stalking her. He nuzzles her onto her back and crawls along her body until he's perched over her like she's a fresh kill. He plays with her mouth with a paw. Chasely seems mesmerized by him.

Mark looks awkward and self-conscious.

MARK

Meet back here in two hours?

CHASELY

(distracted)

Okay.

The Tiger licks her throat.

Mark climbs down off the float. We see scores of floats packed tightly together, many stacked on top of each other.

The Ghosts of Parades Past.

Mark moves off down a narrow maze-like corridor.

The decomposing floats provide the final clue as to what's beyond the barrier. A theme park. The forgotten floats, the drone of generators and transformers are the unattractive realities kept far from the tourist eye.

James digs a paw inside Chasely's school shirt. She looks in the direction Mark left. She can't see him. A hand works itself under her bra and seizes a nipple. She shuts her eyes.

We move away from the couple. Down we go, and onwards, toward a trio of floats stacked high. We move into the middle float. We see a LAUGHING MOON and STARS and a HAPPY SUN. We move closer to the moon. We see something through its smile.

A face. A Rabbit.

Mark is watching the couple. James' hand moves quickly under Chasely's skirt. One of her tits is out of her bra. Chasely's brow crinkles and she looks like she might cry.

EXT. FORESTRY/BARRIER -- DAY

The Rabbit (Mark) walks beside the theme park barrier.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY

The Rabbit picks his way through a marsh.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY

The Rabbit crosses an animal trail.

EXT. FORESTRY/ARCHWAY -- DAY

The Rabbit passes beneath an ARCHWAY created by interlocking trees.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Rabbit sits on a fire-gutted car wreck. He smokes.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Rabbit moves through a gloomy span of bushland. He checks his watch.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Rabbit pauses to light a cigarette. He sucks in a lungful of smoke and takes another look at his watch. He looks up. He peers ahead and goes very still. Then, slowly, he begins to move forward.

We hear something.

The further he goes the clearer a noise becomes. Shoveling. The sound of soil being scooped onto a shovel and thrown off.

In a searing pillar of sunlight the Rabbit sees a MALE FIGURE. He is shoveling from a mound of gritty soil, dropping each load of dirt into a trench.

The Rabbit stops coming forward. He looks around, finds he's standing in the open. If the man turns around...

All the Rabbit can do is witness.

The man works with his shirt off. Grime stripes his skin. Empty bottles of Boag's beer lie around the excavation.

The man ceases working. He looks wary.

The Rabbit glances down at his cigarette. It's still alight.

The man turns around.

There's nobody there. The Rabbit isn't anywhere we can see.

The man's full-face beard makes it hard to pinpoint his age. 35-40 maybe. He raises the shovel high and impales it next to a crowbar. He hefts a hatchet out of a tree trunk and starts moving toward the spot where the Rabbit stood.

The man sniffs the air. There's something animal-like about it. He reaches the spot where we last saw the Rabbit.

We see the Rabbit standing as still and lean as he can behind the bole of a tree. It's a meager hiding place.

The man moves toward him. He sniffs again. The Rabbit drops the cigarette, and, carefully as he can, steps on it.

The scent lingers.

The man moves nearer. He comes level with the Rabbit. The Rabbit inches further around the tree.

The man looks over. A beat. He keeps looking. He takes a step. Then a belt of wind blows through the copse, skirling leaves and puffing up dust from the excavation. The man turns into the breeze, closing his eyes in pleasure.

It doesn't last long. The breeze exhausts itself and he opens his eyes. He sniffs the air one more time. Nothing. He turns and moves back to the trench.

The Rabbit takes his first breath in a minute.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Rabbit runs through bushland. He exits the ARCHWAY.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Rabbit comes out into a marshy area, sending a flock of waterbirds SQUAWKING into the air.

EXT. FORESTRY -- LATER

The bearded man and his beer bottles are gone.

The Tiger (James), the Doll (Chasely) and the Rabbit creep toward the place where the trench was. It's been returned to a near natural state.

The Tiger paces around the tousled earth.

CHASELY
Could be anything.
(beat)
Might be an animal that died.

A VEHICLE starts up somewhere.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Doll and the Rabbit crash through bushland. Underbrush grasps at them. The Tiger is ahead, moving fast, unconcerned with them. The Rabbit could move faster but he's chosen to stay with the Doll.

The UNSEEN VEHICLE can be heard moving off.

The Tiger halts on a NARROW FORESTRY TRAIL.

The Doll and the Rabbit reach him just in time to see a RED 4-WHEEL DRIVE (4WD) swing around a corner and vanish. Apart from a spare tire covering that looks like an EYE, nothing marks it as distinctive.

The Tiger sprints off. He abruptly turns off the trail and enters thick bushland. The Doll moves to follow but the Rabbit grabs her hand.

MARK

This way's easier.

They run together, holding hands. They reach the corner and turn into a NEW TRAIL as the Tiger appears ahead of them. They halt, breathless. Beyond the Tiger, they can see the RED 4WD.

The Tiger stares at the vehicle. It's tiny, upwards of half a mile away. The trail terminates at a busy sealed road.

The 4WD's brake lights come on. It stops. It indicates and waits for a break in the traffic. One appears and it vanishes from sight.

The Tiger keeps watching.

The Doll drops the Rabbit's hand. She gives him a little smile that means nothing and starts walking toward the Tiger.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

The Tiger, the Doll and the Rabbit converge at the swathe of disturbed ground. James digs a boot into the soft soil.

We hear an UGLY SCRAPING SOUND...

EXT. STREET -- DAY

James drags a SHOVEL along a street, the steel blade GRATING across the bitumen. He's preserved his tiger face.

Chasely and Mark are also with shovels. Mark has swiped at his rabbit face. It now looks slightly demented.

An OLD DEAR watches them like a hawk from her yard. An OLD GUY, probably her husband, exits the house and eyeballs them.

Chasely starts dragging her own shovel. Mark joins in.

A FACE appears at a window on the other side of the street.

James cackles, making Chasely laugh.

MARK

Stop. Stop it!

James stops dragging his shovel. Chasely persists, but James grabs it away from her.

James stares at Mark. They look tense. Mark nods. They run, leaving Chasely where she's standing. They throw the shovels over a brick fence and clamber over.

Chasely hasn't moved off the road. It's all happened too fast.

A blue and white car roars through an intersection in front of her.

It's the Cobra. It brakes, skids loudly.

EXT. FENCE/YARD

James and Mark press against the fence.

EXT. STREET

Chasely recovers fast. She walks on toward the car, not giving it any attention. She's leading it away from the boys. It reverses suddenly and idles in a haze of blue smoke.

EXT. FENCE/YARD

Mark looks behind him and sees two SMALL KIDS watching him.

They stare at the Rabbit. One of them even smiles. Then the Tiger turns around and they run. James watches them flee. He swallows hard.

CUT TO:

The fledgling canal estate.

The young schoolboy (James) tears up and over a mound of earth. He scrambles down the other side - into a ditch deep and long enough to be a mass grave.

A cue of immense storm water pipes wait to be interred. The schoolboy flees into the black mouth of a pipe.

He hunkers down in blackness. He sucks in his raspy breath. Holds it. His face streams with cold sweat and hot tears.

He bites his pale lips. Listens.

VOICE (O.S.)
(distant)
Tresswick!

CUT TO:

James jolts with fright and glances back at Mark.

EXT. STREET

Chasely walks in front of the Cobra. A flash of sunlight on the windscreen hides the driver.

It REVS as she moves in front of it and bucks forward. She jumps but continues on, trying her best not to acknowledge it.

EXT. FENCE/YARD/STREET

Mark tightens his grip on a shovel handle.

James loses his nerve and starts crawling along the ground.

VOICE (O.S.)
(distant, echoed)
Tresswick, Less-Dick!
(beat)
Ja-ames!

Mark watches James.

There's a scream. James crawls faster.

Mark thrusts his head up.

The Cobra ROARS off squealing (the scream), staining the road black.

Mark stands. BLUE SMOKE (from the tires) drifts over him. James rolls over onto his back. The smoke passes over him like a shroud. He puts a hand to his chest. He's wheezing.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

James STABS down with the shovel blade. He RIPS up the first clod of soil and hurls it away.

He stabs down again, working the anger out of his system.

Mark and Chasely watch. The soil has dried. It looks natural.

James stops shoveling and looks at them. Mark comes forward to help. Chasely remains where she is. James keeps looking at her.

CHASELY
I don't want to see a dead
animal.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

Chasely sits on a shovel blade smoking and affecting boredom.

The two boys have carved out a trench as deep as their knees.

CHASELY

I could have this much fun at school.

She is sprayed with soil. It goes in her hair, in her eyes. She splutters and spits. It's in her mouth.

CHASELY

You fuck!

She jumps up, throws her shovel at James. He ducks down into the hole. She's crying. Mark doesn't know what to do.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Fuck!

(another kick)

FUCK!!!

She wheels around and storms off.

Mark gets out of the hole, follows her a little way.

MARK

Chase, come on. He didn't mean it.

She keeps walking.

MARK (CONT'D)

Chasely!

He loses her in the trees.

JAMES

No curiosity.

James throws out another shovel load of soil.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

James and Mark stand up to their hips in the trench.

James is using the t-shirt Chasely made for him as a sweatband. He's still going hard. Mark has slackened off. It's turned into an obligation.

MARK

How'd you get that?

JAMES

What?

Mark points to a crescent-shaped scar on James' back.

James flushes. He looks self-conscious.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Forget.

He keeps digging. And then...

JAMES (CONT'D)

(sharply)

How do you reckon?

Mark nods, working it out. Then he spits on his free arm and scratches a clean spot.

MARK

See that?

JAMES

No.

MARK

That black dot? Got it in primary school. Archer broke the tip of a lead pencil in me.

(beat)

Might have lead poisoning.

James is considering something. He makes up his mind.

JAMES

You know those lids you get on icecream containers? They're like frisbees for pov kids.

Mark nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

He threw one at me.

MARK

(unimpressed)

He hit you with a frisbee?

James hoists himself up onto the edge of the trench and pulls up his jeans.

JAMES

It was on fire when he did it.

Mark sees a scar that completely rings James' calf. It's an old burn wound. It would have been a terrible injury.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I went to hospital for half of grade six.

MARK

What happened to Archer?

JAMES

He got counselling for three weeks and some tablets.

EXT. FORESTRY -- LATER

Mark climbs from the trench and looks down on their efforts. They've gone deep.

He sees a face in the shadows - Chasely. Her eyes have leaked more black tears. Chasely puts her fingers to her lips. He nods.

Behind Mark, James stoops down into the hole.

JAMES

There's something...

Mark turns back to the trench. He looks down. He moves closer. Then he climbs back in and drops out of sight also.

Chasely waits for something to happen. Neither boy reappears.

She starts to move forward, like someone is pushing her. She walks with her arms petulantly crossed. She halts on the edge of the trench and looks down.

James and Mark are kneeling over something. She walks around the trench until she can see what they've found.

It doesn't look like anything, just a flap of dirty white material. Whatever it is most of it is still submerged.

JAMES

Shut your eyes.

James blows soil away from the object. We see a stylised maple leaf the colour of dried blood, stark against soiled white - the Canadian national flag.

MARK

That's a zip.

It's a backpack (the flag is stitched to it). James moves his hand toward a zip. He grasps it. He starts to undo the little plastic teeth.

His hand stalls. Instead, he tries to wrench the entire bag from the soil. It doesn't budge. Mark finds somewhere to grip and they strain together. It hardly moves.

Another set of hands appear on the bag.

Chasely has climbed into the trench. James sees her. He leans over and kisses her quickly.

JAMES

One... two... THREE!

They strain. The bag lifts a minuscule amount. They put their backs into it. Teeth clench. Eyes become slits.

The bag comes free, putting Chasely on her butt.

Mark makes a funny sound.

James leaps from the trench and Mark follows.

Chasely sees it last.

At the bottom of the divot left by the backpack is the white flesh of a dead woman.

She is exposed from her sternum to her knees. The rainbow wings of a neatly inked butterfly, forever frozen in mid-flight, hover above a tuft of pubic hair; tattoo antennae curl around her navel.

Chasely jumps up and CLAWS at the sides of the trench. She nearly gets all the way out but a handhold breaks up and she falls.

She hits the bottom of the trench, her hands making brief contact with the dead woman's body. It's too much for Chasely. She screams. Keeps screaming.

Eventually a word registers in her mind.

MARK

Chasely! Chasely!

She looks up. Mark is there with a hand thrust down at her. She clutches at it and nearly runs up his arm to get out.

Chasely retreats away from Mark, past James.

James doesn't comfort her. He moves forward to the trench. Mark comes with him.

Chasely moves further away, hands to her mouth, eyes huge.

James and Mark stare down.

Then James picks up a shovel and starts refilling the trench. Soil sprays over the woman's BRIGHT skin.

MARK (CONT'D)

(sluggish)

What are you doing?

James KICKS a hump of soil back into the trench.

MARK (CONT'D)

James?

(louder)

What are you doing?

JAMES

I'm not helping him.

He keeps shoveling.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We shouldn't have to do that.
You and me shouldn't.

MARK

Who we helping?

(beat)

James?

JAMES

Think!

Mark thinks.

MARK

Archer?

No answer and that's answer enough.

MARK (CONT'D)

But it wasn't him.

Another clod of soil THUDS onto the floor of the trench.

MARK (CONT'D)

He didn't do it. It's nothing to
do with him.

James keeps his back to Mark as he works.

MARK (CONT'D)

I saw the guy. It wasn't Archer.
James! You can't cover it back
up.

THUD. James is doing exactly that.

MARK (CONT'D)

James!

JAMES

Why not?!

THUD. Mark grabs at the shovel. They grapple with it.

CHASELY

It's not Tanya.

Her voice is small but loud enough.

James stops struggling but does not relinquish his hold on the shovel. The two boys stand face to face.

MARK

That's right. It's a different girl. Archer didn't do it.

JAMES

That's the point. Archer didn't do anything.

Mark screws up his face. He's not following.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Use your fucking head. Spazzo goes missing in the same bit of shit bush where we find this. Red Car did both of them. And Archer gets away with it. Like always!

James rips the shovel back from Mark.

MARK

What does filling it back in do?

THUD... THUD...

MARK (CONT'D)

'They haven't charged him so they're not going to' - that's what you said. This means shit.

James stops. A beat. He lets the shovel go.

EXT. FORESTRY -- LATER

They haven't moved. They haven't spoken. Until...

JAMES

How do we do this?

MARK

How do you think?

James gets up, brushes himself off.

JAMES

Anonymous call. No-one has to know anything. I don't need the hassles. I'm not calling either. You want to do Archer a favour, you go ahead.

MARK
I don't want to do him a favour.
We've got to do something.

JAMES
You do something.

EXT. DRIVE-IN -- LATE AFTERNOON

They walk back through the cracked ramps of the drive-in.
James and Chasely hold hands. Mark carries the shovels.

EXT. STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON

Gardens are being hosed and sprinklers moved.

Chasely looks withdrawn and depleted.

Mark is looking at each house as they walk by. TV's can be heard in some. Forms pass windows in others. Mark's rabbit face has been obliterated - no accident.

MARK
He could live in one of these.

CHASELY
Who?

MARK
Red Car.

She processes the idea.

CHASELY
He wouldn't live around here.

MARK
He turned right.

CHASELY
So.

MARK
If he'd turned left it would've taken him to the overpass and the highway. He went right... this is where he lives.

The idea lodges deeply in James. We see it happen.

A warmly illuminated PHONE BOOTH lies ahead of them.

MARK
Wouldn't be hard to find him... just find the car.

CHASELY

What? A red car? Not many of them around.

JAMES

It's not a car... it's a four-wheel drive.

CHASELY

They're everywhere.

MARK

Not with an eye.

CHASELY

What eye?

MARK

The covering on the tire. I thought it looked like an eye.

(beat)

Wonder if he's rich...

Mark enters the phone booth. James is watching him closely.

MARK (CONT'D)

Because I'd give everything I've got to stop this happening.

Mark takes a deep breath. James and Chasely remain outside. Mark looks worried. He exhales loudly.

MARK

Fuck it.

He picks up the phone. James watches him press three digits. Mark stands silent for a beat, listening. He stares up at a decaying, piss-pale yellow leaflet taped to the perspex.

Tanya Lee's face peers down at him. Someone has graffitied a huge, spurting cock over her awkward smile. A speech-balloon forces her to declare: "I LUV CUM."

MARK (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I don't want to give a name...

Outside, James is staring at Mark but his mind is somewhere else. It's wherever the Voice comes from.

VOICE (O.S.)

What's your name? Say it!

MARK

(into phone)

I still don't want to...

VOICE (O.S.)
It's Less-Dick. Say it!

James swallows something invisible and bitter.

MARK
We found a body... It is
genuine...

VOICE (O.S.)
Say it, you little cunt!

MARK
Do you know the area be—

James pushes past Mark and CUTS the call.

Mark twists around in the tight space and looks at him. James says nothing. He keeps staring at Mark. Then James turns around and walks away. He heads toward a tiny playground at the back of the booth. Chasely dutifully follows him.

MARK (CONT'D)
I was doing it!

Mark crankily hangs up the phone and leaves the booth.

The playground backs onto a broad canal. There're a FEW KIDS climbing the wrong way up a slippery dip.

James walks to one of the swings - a ROUNDABOUT. He gives it a shove and jumps on. It squeaks loudly with each revolution.

Mark walks up beside Chasely. They're both watching James.

MARK (CONT'D)
We've got to tell.

JAMES
I know.

MARK
Then—

JAMES
Why now?

Chasely and Mark are lost. Squeak... Squeak...

JAMES (CONT'D)
Today or whenever. What's the
difference?
(beat)
Does it change anything?

MARK
Then we should just get it over
and done with.

James jumps off the roundabout, landing in front of them.
Just like a tiger.

JAMES
I'm gonna find him.

He eyes them both, and then jumps back on the roundabout.

MARK
Why?

JAMES
Don't be boring.

CHASELY
Why?

James looks at Chasely.

JAMES
(pointedly)
Curiosity.

He continues to maintain eye contact with her as he revolves.
It's nearly hypnotic. Squeak... Squeak... Squeak...

JAMES (CONT'D)
(to Chasely)
Won't fuck ya boots up.

She succeeds in smiling. Chasely darts forward and hops onto
the roundabout.

Mark looks uncomfortable being by himself. Even the kids on
the slippery dip have gone.

MARK
It's not like looking for
someone's scungy dope plants.

JAMES
It's much cooler.

A beat.

MARK
How long would it be?

JAMES
Not long.

MARK
What about... how we left her?

JAMES
We fix it.

Mark looks unsure.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Don't be a weak shit all your
life.

Mark's eyes flash.

CHASELY
Three's better than two, Mark.

Mark looks from James to Chasely. He grins and steps up to the roundabout. He grasps a handrail and starts to push.

Faster he goes. Faster, until he's running.

The roundabout spins rapidly. The squeaking turns into a shriek. Then Mark pulls up, anchors himself to one spot and SHOVES the roundabout FORWARD, grabbing at handrails and SPINNING it with all his strength.

James and Chasely grasp the handrails tighter.

JAMES
Cut it out.

But Mark keeps at it - putting everything into it. Faster and FASTER it goes. Chasely laughs nervously.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Stop it, ya psycho!

Mark backs away, breathless. James and Chasely are a BLUR.

Mark stares into the STEELY GRAY SMEAR of the rails. He hunches down, stops breathing, and RUNS at them.

One set of rails grazes his right shoulder, the next set CRASH into the left side of his body.

He is CLOBBERED to a hard floor and collected by another set of rails. His head is STRUCK and his hands. He rolls and is STRUCK again.

Chasely SCREAMS from somewhere.

Mark stares upwards from the floor. The squeaking sound EXTINGUISHES. Silence. A runnel of blood seeps from his mouth, trickling down into an ear.

EXT. SCRAPPY BUSHLAND/RAILWAY PLATFORM -- MORNING

Mark LIMPS along a bush trail. Litter hangs off stunted trees. One side of his face is black with bruises.

Mark gingerly scales a stairway of railway sleepers, stepping onto a SUBURBAN RAILWAY PLATFORM.

It must be after 9 A.M. Both platforms are EMPTY.

Mark makes his slow way forward. His eye is drawn to movement on top of a PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE.

JAMES and CHASELY are arguing.

A DIESEL TRAIN thunders past, making eavesdropping impossible. He sees Chasely storm away from James. Then she is lost behind the passing train.

EXT. BRIDGE -- MID MORNING

Mark reaches the apex of the bridge. James taps his watch - 'you're late'. Mark ignores him.

MARK
She looked pissed.

JAMES
You saw that, hey? You don't miss much do you, Mark?

Mark's gaze flits away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
She thinks her mum'll find out we took her shitbox car and she'll be fucked for life.

Mark looks agitated.

MARK
We can't do anything without a car.

JAMES
She'll come round.

EXT. STATION CARPARK -- MORNING

Mark threads his way through the station carpark. It's a big carpark and it's full. These are the cars owned by the 9-5'ers.

They don't move from these spots all day.

We hear the sound of knuckles rapping glass.

JAMES (O.S.)
Chasely... open up...
(more rapping)
...there's nothing to be scared of.

Mark steps up behind James.

Chasely has locked herself inside a small car - her mum's car. She clutches the wheel and gazes ahead. James raps on the passenger side window. He tries the handle again. Still locked.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Open the door, Chasely.
(she doesn't budge)
We'll have it back way before
your mum's train. I'm not
shitting you. Chase...

Chasely turns and looks at James. She wants to believe him.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL -- DAY

The little car is parked on a narrow forestry trail. It could be the same trail where they got their first quick look at the red 4WD and its EYE.

INT/EXT. CAR/FORESTRY

On a drawing pad propped against the steering wheel, Chasely sketches a forestry trail fenced with high trees - the sight she sees beyond the windshield. The boys aren't with her. They're busy elsewhere.

The pencil lifts off the paper. She looks out the passenger side. Her eyes roam across a gloomy spell of bushland.

She looks through the back windscreen. She is checking her perimeter.

Chasely swings around to the front. Everything is so still. She leaves the car suddenly.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL

She stands rigid and alert by the side of the vehicle.

She looks up, and sees a slice of sky framed by the trees. It calms her. She takes deep breaths.

CRUNCH. Chasely WHIRLS toward the source of the sound.

She sees a heavily wooded section of forestry. She can only see a few feet in before the trees taper off to darkness. Her eyes are drawn to a dead tree leaning against a living neighbour. Its canted trunk has formed the ceiling of a covered space - a DEN. The flawless blackness inside makes it seem like it could go on forever.

Chasely stops breathing. She stops blinking. And stares. She hunches. She leans her body forward to see better.

There's something there.

A FORM. A thing. A MASSIVE HEAD, crouched low. Maybe her eyes adjusted enough to see it or maybe it moved closer.

Chasely reels. She springs back toward the car and darts into its open door.

INT. CAR

She GUNS the car to life, rips it in gear. The passenger door flies open and someone enters the vehicle.

Chasely murders a scream. It's James.

She tries to conceal her fright from him. Easy enough. He's in a place of his own. A cigarette smolders between his fingers. There's a dirt stain on the shoulder of his overcoat and muddy smears on his chin and forehead.

There's the drum of knuckles on metal. Chasely looks back.

Mark is watching her from the rear of the car. He points to the trunk. She pulls the release and looks away as he lays two dirt-scabbed shovels inside. The reason for James and Mark's absence becomes apparent: they have reburied the body of the Canadian girl.

Mark comes around to the back door and gets in. He hasn't even got the door closed when the car shoots off.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL -- DAY

The car tears around a bend in the trail. Ahead is a long stretch of dirt track, ceasing at a thickly trafficked road.

It's the same route the red 4WD took out of the forestry.

INT. CAR

Mark looks down at his soiled hands. They're quaking. He can't help it. We see the blisters, many burst and weeping. Mark closes his hands and says nothing.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

We prowl.

INT/EXT. CAR/STREET -- DAY

We slink along a residential street.

Cars are parked on the street or in driveways. No red 4WD.

INT/EXT. CAR/STREET -- DAY

Another street. More cars but not the one we're seeking.

INT/EXT. CAR/SUPERMARKET -- DAY

We rove through a supermarket carpark. There's something predatory about the way we cruise by.

EXT. STREET -- DAY

Another residential street. A ROLLER COASTER looms over homes and canals.

INT/EXT. STREET/CAR -- DAY

James and Mark twist in their seats to inspect a red 4WD passing in the opposite direction. No EYE.

INT/EXT. STREET/HOUSE -- DAY

Chasely slows the car to a crawl in front of a plain brick house. The bright yellow leaflets are everywhere. On the fence, on the windows, on the car in the drive. Some have been blown up to A1 size and pasted on a sandwich board on the easement.

Tanya Lee lived here.

A yellow dog watches them from the doorstep. A large male form moves closer to a window. Chasely crushes the accelerator.

EXT/INT. CAR/STREETS -- AFTERNOON

More streets. More canals. More houses. More driveways. No EYES.

A billboard catches James' eye. We see thick, wavy stripes of orange and black. A caption reads 'HERE THERE BE TYGERS' and beside it is the theme park logo.

INT/EXT. CANAL ESTATE -- LATE AFTERNOON

They pass through an incomplete canal estate. Black water boils around a giant dredge.

James sits up.

CUT TO:

The schoolboy (young James) thrashes about in a black pool of water on the floor of the pipe. He's gulping for air like a landed catfish, finding it impossible to even scream.

VOICE (O.S.)
Gawd, you're a sook.

The schoolboy peers through clawed fingers. The rays of the afternoon burnish everything into silhouette. The rim of the pipe looks like it's on fire. The SILHOUETTED FORM of a sinewy adolescent, all long hair and gangly limbs, eclipses the sunlit sky.

Between hitching breaths the schoolboy emits a spastic moan.

The shadow-boy slips through the flaming edge of the pipe and descends into darkness.

CUT TO:

Dust balloons up off the loose soil. It pours over the car. Chasely brakes.

CHASELY

That's it. We're out of time.

JAMES

We got a little while.

MARK (O.S.)

No, we don't.

James turns and gives Mark a look. Mark looks away. The car is cocooned in driving dust.

CHASELY

It's getting covered in shit.
Jeezus!

JAMES

We should do this on a weekend.
He might have to leave the
suburb to work.

CHASELY

I can't get the car on weekends.

INT/EXT. CAR/ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

James keeps his face to the window, hunting for the 4WD.

We see a railway line on one side of the road. We know where Chasely is taking them.

CHASELY (O.S.)

No...

Mark looks forward. Chasely's frightened eyes look back at him in the rearview.

James turns in his seat.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Don't look!

But James sees enough. He faces forward again.

Chasely's eyes flit back to the mirror.

We see an out-of-focus blob of white and blue through the rear windscreen -- the Cobra.

CHASELY

What do I do? Do I stop?

MARK

Who is it?

CHASELY

Who do you reckon?!

Mark sinks into his seat. A BLAST of noise makes him jump. We see blue and red light playing across the inside of the car.

Their tailgater is a COP CAR.

Chasely makes a despairing sound. She slows the car, moving it to the shoulder of the road.

The cop car accelerates toward them... then SCREAMS past.

They watch it speed away. A numb beat.

A SECOND POLICE CAR appears ahead of them, sirens howling.

JAMES

Keep going!

Chasely looks at him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Follow them! It could be Red Car!

It's like he's talking another language.

JAMES (CONT'D)

We got time. Just do one thing I ask!

Chasely stomps the accelerator. She's too addled to do anything but follow instructions.

She closes the distance to the second cop car. It veers off around a corner. She follows it around.

Mark sits forward.

They follow the two cop cars into another street.

MARK

Just wait a second...

No-one hears him. They turn into a new street.

MARK (CONT'D)
Wait... don't just—

The two cop cars slip around another corner. Chasely follows.

MARK (CONT'D)
Wait a second!

The sirens cut out and Mark's words ring loudly. But there's too much going on outside the car to react to Mark.

We see a street where one side features a lone house - a plain white house surrounded by empty adjustment paddocks. A grubby boxing bag hangs from a tree.

The police cars join an UNMARKED CAR, plus a VAN marked 'Pathology' on an unfenced front lawn.

James, Chasely and Mark see it at the same time. The back end of the COBRA is visible in a detached garage beside the house. The rest of it lies in darkness.

JAMES
Go! Keep going!

But Chasely brakes. Vehicles have halted in front of them. She tries reversing but that way is blocked by rubbernecking drivers.

The police cars keep their lights on, drawing people from their homes and to their windows.

James, Chasely and Mark stare at the white house like everyone else.

A PLAIN-CLOTHES DETECTIVE and TWO UNIFORMED COPS surround a MALE FIGURE on the lawn. He is waving tattooed arms.

Two WHITE PIG DOGS tied up in the back yard are going crazy.

There's a FLASH OF LIGHT in the deep darkness of the garage.

Further flashes illuminate two men in overalls - PATHOLOGY COPS - photographing the front-end of the vehicle.

One of them moves out of the garage and stands by the trunk of the Cobra. He's wearing bright orange overalls and holds a portable vacuum. The tattooed man hurls something. It glints and skids across the gravel drive. Keys.

The pathology cop fetches the keys and the three cops disperse.

We get our first look at GARY ARCHER.

He's barely in his 20s. Only a few years older than Mark and James but more than enough to have always made him the bigger fish in their school's tank. He's wearing black jeans. No shirt, no shoes. He might have just woken up. Every part of him is set at sharp angles. His bare upper body is taut with fury and clouded with cheap tattoos.

The pathology cop unlocks the trunk, switches on the vacuum and goes to work.

Archer suddenly swivels and punches the boxing bag. He looks at the mini-traffic jam in front of his house and his neighbors across the street.

ARCHER

Inside! Go back inside and watch your TV's.

Mark's gaze moves to the verandah. Someone is sitting there.

An OLD WOMAN is settled heavily in a chair. She must be Archer's mother. Even from where he is Mark can see she's crying.

A burly FEMALE COP in latex gloves walks out of the house carrying a kitchen waste bin. She upends the bin on the lawn and pokes through the rubbish with a biro.

The old woman watches it all from behind a large pair of glasses. They magnify despair.

Mark can't take his eyes off her.

Archer looks from the mound of rubbish on the lawn to an OLD NEIGHBOUR across the street loitering around his mailbox.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Bit early for the mail, Keith.

The old guy hurries indoors. Archer laughs. His gaze catches on something. The laughter stops. His eyes turn to glass.

JAMES (O.S.)

Go! Get us out!

Mark somnolently looks away from the old woman to James. The boy is terrified. Then Chasely is terrified.

Mark sees Archer. Archer sees him.

Chasely hammers the horn. They're wedged in tight.

Archer moves. One, two, three paces toward them.

Chasely reverses and bumps the car behind. A horn blurts. She tries to turn out of their slot but can't maneuver.

Archer gets nearer.

James cracks open his door. He'll run if Archer keeps coming.

A big hand falls on Archer's bare shoulder. He spins around, fists up. The plain-clothes cop drops his hand. He looks at Archer's fists and grins. Two uniformed cops run over.

The old woman on the verandah gets up as quickly as she can. She moves forward to the railing. Her legs look like they give her trouble. She puts an unsteady arm out and makes a noise that's almost animal like.

The two uniformed cops reach the plain-clothes detective. Batons are POISED to come down.

His mother's plea reaches him. Archer's eyes thaw. He smiles suddenly at the detective. Then he spins around not caring that the batons are still hovering.

He sees the tiny car with James, Chasely and Mark inside, escape their slot in the snarl and drive off.

Archer keeps watching the car. The smile goes away.
INT. CAR

James and Mark watch the road behind them. Chasely's eyes keep going to the rearview. No-one says anything.

INT/EXT. CAR/STATION CARPARK -- LATE AFTERNOON

They drive into the station carpark. Rush hour commuters are yet to return so few of the cars have left.

Chasely cuts the engine.

EXT. STATION CARPARK

James and Mark leave the car. James lights a cigarette. Mark watches the boy's hands. They're trembling.

MARK

What do you think the cops were doing?

JAMES

Trying to scare him.

(beat)

I don't think he's scared.

James' brow creases. He stares off over Mark's shoulder. A beat. Mark turns around.

INT/EXT. CAR/STATION CARPARK -- LATE AFTERNOON

Chasely hops out of her mum's car. She locks the door.

She's about to walk off but stops and looks around at the surrounding cars.

Regardless of make or model, every car is homogenised by the freshly printed, bright yellow leaflets pinned beneath windscreen wipers to each and every windshield.

Chasely looks further afield at row after row of parked cars. A flock of missing girls - tens, scores, maybe a hundred Tanya Lees - peer out from a multitude of windscreens. Mrs Keys' car is conspicuously devoid of the yellow leaflet.

Chasely snatches a leaflet off the closest car and snaps it under the wiper of her mum's vehicle.

She steps back and checks her watch. She looks over to James and Mark.

They're gone. Chasely looks around for them. And sees something.

EXT. STATION CARPARK -- LATE AFTERNOON

Chasely glides between parked cars. She looks tranquilized. She reaches Mark. He's staring off at something.

Mark looks back over his shoulder toward the station. Then he looks forward again and we see what he sees.

The EYE. They've found it.

Chasely walks from the back of the RED 4WD down the driver's side. She sees James near the front of the vehicle. She watches him put an unsteady hand out and touch the grill. At the moment of contact, Chasely sees a SMALL BRIGHT DETONATION where his finger touches chrome.

Mark moves up behind Chasely.

James sees them watching him and gives a sweet smile. Chasely smiles back. She can't help herself.

A VOICE barks behind them.

AUTOMATED VOICE (SPEAKERS)

Next train to arrive on platform one is the city to Darrington train. Please remain behind the yellow line until the train has stopped.

CHASELY

My mum's train.

James looks almost dreamy.

JAMES
That's the busy one, isn't it?

MARK
Peak hour. This'll be empty in a
minute.

James looks at the mass of parked cars. An AIR HORN sounds
somewhere down the line.

JAMES
It's this one.

CHASELY
There's trains up to midnight—

JAMES
This one.

Chasely looks to Mark for support. Not this time.

MARK
Could be.

JAMES
We'll follow him when he leaves.

CHASELY
How?

She wraps her fingers around the car keys. James looks at
her. A beat. Chasely runs. James sprints after her.

She hasn't got a hope.

James seizes her. He CLASPS her hand. The one clenched around
the keys. He DIGS his fingers into the pressure point near
her thumb. Her eyes water but she won't relinquish the keys.

Mark comes up behind them. They can all hear the train but
only Mark seems worried. He sees the way James is gripping
Chasely's hand. He sees her tears.

MARK
You're hurting her.

Mark steps forward. The keys tinkle onto the bitumen.

The train plunges into the station. Steel doors open and
commuters surge out.

INT/EXT. CAR/ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

Chasely hides her face behind her hands.

The car is stationary but the engine is turning over. They are parked about a hundred yards up from the station. Traffic from the carpark trickles by.

JAMES (O.S.)
She's got a mobile. She can call
a cab. Or your dad.

Chasely snuffles.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Cars get stolen from there all
the time. It's a fucking
shithole.

Mark gazes back through the rear windscreen. He turns to the front to give his neck a break. In the gap between seats he sees James rubbing Chasely's hand - the one he injured.

He stares at their hands. She's letting him do it.

Mark twists back around.

MARK
It's coming!

JAMES
Get ready.

Chasely puts the car in gear. She curls her hands around the wheel.

A RED FORM coasts by them - the 4WD.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Now!

The little car bucks forward. A horn blasts behind them. One car separates them from the 4WD. It indicates right, they indicate right.

INT/EXT. CAR/ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

They follow the EYE along a commercial road.

INT/EXT. CAR/ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

The 4WD turns off into a residential street.

Chasely stops the car. James looks baffled.

JAMES
What are you doing?

James looks ahead. A RED LIGHT.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Go through it!

Chasely points at something.

CHASELY
Red light camera.

James looks at a GRAY BOX bolted to the curb.

JAMES
So what? Go!

She says nothing. James shoves the door open and jumps out.

EXT. ROAD/STREET

James sprints to the corner and enters a residential street. It's a long street with side streets branching off.

There's a green F100 truck with bricklaying equipment further up but no red car.

James stops. The 4WD could have turned off into a dozen side streets that branch off into SCORES more.

The F100 turns off into a driveway revealing the red 4WD. James watches as it indicates left.

Chasely brings the car up behind James.

The red 4WD swings into a side street.

James gets back in the car without taking his eyes off the place the 4WD turned off. It's as if he's afraid that if he blinks or is distracted he'll lose it for good.

INT/EXT. CAR/STREET

Chasely digs down on the accelerator, trying to make up for what happened at the lights.

JAMES
This one.

Chasely takes them around a corner and into...

INT/EXT. CAR/SIDESTREET

...a side street.

They drift past homes. There are vehicles parked on the curb but the 4WD isn't one of them. They pass an INTERSECTION and keep going to the end of the street.

Chasely turns the car around. They drive back up, peering into yards and garages. The intersection nears.

MARK

Left. He could have gone right a
street back.

Chasely looks to James. He nods. They go left.

INT/EXT. CAR/SECOND SIDESTREET

Chasely slows the car to squeeze past a kid's cricket match.

JAMES

Slow down and stop.
(he gazes ahead)
Make it natural.

Chasely stops the car. They sit there.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Did you see?

MARK

Yes.

Chasely's eyes flick to the rearview. She sees Mark looking
off to the right. She slowly turns toward the window. She
sees a NEAT BRICK HOME with a low fence. A trellis forms an
archway over the path to the door.

The EYE looks back at her from the black mouth of a garage.
It BLAZES ORANGE, flushed by the low sun.

Something POUNDS on the car roof. They jump.

A taped-up tennis ball bounces off the hood.

Chasely stamps down on the accelerator and takes them away.
They leave the cricket game behind. Houses stream by.

They drive in silence. Their minds are still back with the
BRIGHT EYE glaring from blackness.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL -- LATE AFTERNOON

A fire has been through here recently. The car stops,
reverses and turns into a nook at the edge of the trail.

James, Chasely and Mark get out. Chasely locks her door.

MARK

It doesn't look very stolen,
Chase, if it's all locked up.

She looks at James and turns the key.

James opens the passenger door and then the glove box. He
flings the contents around. He flicks on the radio to full
volume. It's not tuned and sounds like an old prop plane.

He comes back out holding a chamois in its plastic tube and a wad of paperwork.

He goes over to Chasely's side of the car, tossing around papers and envelopes. He throws the tube at the hood.

He smiles at Chasely. Her worry evaporates.

James KICKS IN an indicator.

Chasely's face falls.

James goes over to her. He puts his forehead on hers.

Mark watches them.

Then James searches the ground for something. He finds what he's after. He rushes to the car and HURLS a blackened stone into the driver's door window.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL -- LATE AFTERNOON

The radio DRONES on. James, Chasely and Mark have departed. The windows are smashed in. The tires are flat. The doors are wide open. It's one more wreck in a place full of them.

EXT. ESPLANADE -- EARLY EVENING

The streetlights haven't come on yet.

Chasely nestles her head on her boyfriend's shoulder as she walks. Their arms are entwined.

Mark, as always, is near them but alone.

TV light flickers in windows.

MARK

I don't think the guy's rich.

James glances over at Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)

His house isn't any better than these.

(beat)

Thought we could've made some money.

He's joking.

JAMES

He'd cut his own balls off if we told him to.

MARK

Or ours. If he knew about us.

Mark sees Chasely watching him from James' shoulder.

MARK (CONT'D)

But there's no way...

It's a hopeless recovery. Mark falls behind the couple. Then he stops altogether. He turns around.

James and Chasely walk on.

Mark stares into the night. He can make out the squat form of a vehicle sitting in the middle of the esplanade. It's about half a block back and wasn't there a minute ago.

Mark looks over his shoulder to James and Chasely.

The STREETLIGHTS come on in front of the couple. Mark turns around as the streetlights illuminate the way they've just come, to reveal...

The Cobra. Mark starts running.

MARK (CONT'D)

ARCHER!

The car CHARGES ahead. It's headlights BLAZE into life.

James and Chasely start running even before they sight the car.

It ACCELERATES toward them, following them to the wrong side of the road. It THUNDERS toward their legs. They turn abruptly down a side street. The Cobra can't make the corner.

It SCREECHES to a stop and starts to reverse.

EXT. STREET

The car RAGES into the street behind them. It chews up their lead in seconds.

They try the same ploy and turn suddenly into a new street, but the driver is prepared for it and makes the corner.

EXT. STREET -- EARLY EVENING

The Cobra DEVOURS the distance to their backs. One more burst of acceleration and someone could die.

The vehicle brakes hard and fishtails. It comes to a dead stop in front of a row of STEEL BOLLARDS guarding the entrance to a canal FOOTBRIDGE.

James, Chasely and Mark are already half way across when James stops. He turns back to the car.

The Cobra revs its big engine, making it snarl.

CHASELY

Don't!

Chasely tries to pull him back but he tears from her grip.

JAMES

GOT A SURPRISE FOR YOU FUCKER!

He's breathing hard. His breath whistles.

A set of HALOGEN SPOTLIGHTS activate. James winces, but stays his ground.

JAMES (CONT'D)

WAIT AND SEE FUCKER!

The driver's door cracks open. They hear it. The furious barking of dogs coming from inside the car.

James suddenly looks anxious. Both Chasely and Mark try and drag him away.

The door opens wider. The barking gets louder.

James allows them to pull him away. They run.

The Cobra reverses rapidly down the length of the street.

EXT. INTERSECTION/INCLINE

They stop at an INTERSECTION and strain to hear.

The distinctive RUMBLE of the Cobra's engine reaches them. They turn in four different directions. It's impossible to tell where it's coming from.

MARK

This way.

He runs off. Chasely starts to follow.

JAMES

It's coming from there. It's the wrong way.

His whistling breath has become a sick wheeze.

Chasely stops. Mark halts. The engine is LOUDER.

MARK

Trust me.

Mark jogs off. This time James follows, sweeping up Chasely with him.

Mark leads them up an INCLINE.

Two strong FORKS OF LIGHT project over the rise.

James grabs Chasely. They run back the way they came. Mark lingers for a beat then follows.

James leads them back to the intersection. He takes them RIGHT as their pursuer crests the hill.

They move off the street onto the footpath.

Mark looks over his shoulder.

A car RACES through the intersection behind them and continues on. He knows right away that it isn't the Cobra.

Mark stops. James and Chasely keep running.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hey!

(they keep running)

HEY!

The Cobra ROARS into the street ahead of them. Chasely screams. They turn around and start running back toward Mark, who is standing still.

The car is three blocks away. It goes up a gear.

James and Chasely rush by Mark and only then does he start to run.

Two blocks.

They near the intersection.

Their backs are INCANDESCENT.

One block.

The Cobra's engine is the only sound in the world.

They reach the intersection. The Cobra reaches them. They jag to the left but at the final second Mark breaks away and veers right.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

James and Chasely run. They don't look back.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

They sprint around a corner. Chasely glances back. No Cobra.

She stops completely.

CHASELY

Where's Mark?

James reluctantly halts. He can't breathe. He coughs up choking phlegm and spits on the street. His eyes stream.

Chasely starts walking back.

JAMES
He'll be right.

She keeps going.

James glances in the direction he wants to go and then follows after her.

EXT. STREET/INCLINE -- NIGHT

James and Chasely crest an incline and look over. Below them, sitting on a curb, is the still form of Mark Vincent.

They start running.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

They slow to a trot then stop altogether beside Mark. He hasn't moved. His chin rests on his chest, putting his face in darkness. His shirt is ripped and pulled out of shape. He's staring at his blistered hands.

JAMES
Hey...

He doesn't react.

CHASELY
Mark?

He looks up quickly, surprised by them. There's a sluice of blood coming out of his mouth and nose and lot of blood where his eyebrow stud used to be. The stud from his ear is also missing. So is part of his earlobe.

EXT. STREET/CHASELY'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mark walks with a bundle of bloody McDonalds serviettes pressed to his ear.

The trio round a corner. They stop and then retreat a little.

A COP CAR is parked outside a TWO LEVEL HOUSE.

James looks spooked, like he could run again.

MARK
It's about your mum's car.
They're getting statements or something.

Chasely looks uncertain.

JAMES

He's right. Go in. Act normal.
We'll go the back way.

Chasely moves across the street and passes close to the police car. She can't take her eyes off it.

EXT. CHASELY'S HOUSE/BACKYARD -- NIGHT

James and Mark wait in darkness. A white cat weaves in and out of their legs. Mark glances at James. James is watching him. Mark looks away.

The canal comes in close to the back of the house. Mark watches a FISHERMAN in a small boat haul up a crab pot.

Mark looks slyly back to James. He's still being watched.

JAMES

Do you—

A glass door slides open. Chasely is there.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM/DOWNSTAIRS AREA

Chasely locks the door behind them. The room is in darkness.

CHASELY

Don't move.

She brushes past James and Mark. A beat. Lights snap on. Mark and James are stained in red light from red bulbs. Mark looks around. It's a bedroom in a large space. It might have been a downstairs rumpus room but Chasely has made it hers.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

It's alright. They think hoons
did it.

She grabs Mark and leads him to her bed. Mark lets her.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

I'll get something for your
face.

He sits down, unsure of himself. There's a cute stuffed tiger on her pillow.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Like my room?

MARK

I do.

CHASELY

It's not finished.

She's out the door, closing it behind her.

Mark sits awkwardly, feet on the ground, his knees together. The cat rubs itself against his shins. Mark scratches its back and looks up.

James stands on the other side of the room watching him. Mark looks away. His eyes move to a bookshelf near Chasely's bed that houses dozens of framed pictures.

Mark looks more closely. They're all of James. Picture after picture of the boy. It's a shrine.

JAMES (O.S.)

Hurt?

Mark looks up quickly.

MARK

Stings.

A long beat.

JAMES

Do you know I never walked or rode my bike to school until I was sixteen. My mum took me to school every morning and picked me up every afternoon. I couldn't do normal things like that. Know why?

Mark looks at him, though it's hard.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Because one time I did and I nearly died.

James crosses his arms, jarring tears loose.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I don't know if he was waiting for me or I was just lucky. We've never been sure about that have we? But he caught me on the way back from school, not far from my house actually. He didn't touch me. He just got really close and said to run - 'Run!'

Mark jumps.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I ran. He chased me. Simple game. He chased me and I was too scared to stop. I ran and I could feel the space in my throat getting smaller - and my asthma's not that bad.

He stops. His Adam's apple bobs. He cries openly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You see, he could have caught me anytime but he wanted me to keep running. He wanted me to be afraid for as long as he could make me. Archer chased me until my eight-year-old body thought dying was better than being that scared.

Mark's eyes are wet dabs also.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not running anymore.
(beat)
There's a way, Mark.

Mark doesn't react.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You said it -- if you were Red Car you'd do whatever you had to. He'd do anything for a chance to get away with it.

Mark scrapes his tears away.

MARK

He can't get away with it.

JAMES

No-one gets away with it. That's the point. They stop getting away with it.

(beat)

I'm doing this, Mark. Are you going to make me do it for both of us?

MARK

In your arse. I didn't ask for anything from—

JAMES

Rabbit or tiger?

Mark scoffs at him. James comes forward. His expression is fierce. But Mark will not flinch or look away again.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Rabbit or tiger?

Mark abruptly pulls his lips back from his teeth. He juts his jaw forward and seethes. His face darkens. His eyes turn to slits. It's ghastly.

James tries not to look unsettled. A beat. He walks away.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Usual place.

He hauls open the sliding door and slips out between the drapes.

Mark resets his face.

MARK
(remembering)
Got a surprise for ya...

A canal breeze comes inside, pinching the drapes and sifting through the room. It tugs at the posters. An A3 SKETCHBOOK flips open on the floor in front of Mark.

He sees a pencil drawing of a GIRL (Chasely?) standing on a forestry trail. The breeze shows him another page. He can't make it out. It's a DARK SPACE. A cave? A lair?

Then the wind turns another page. A dog-eared yellow leaflet, glued neatly into the scrapbook, is revealed. Chasely has made additions to the leaflet. Blooms of purple flowers encircle Tanya Lee; a flock of birds, child-like in their simplicity, soar in frozen formation above the girl's dark hair.

The door opens and Chasely bustles through. She's carrying a tray. Something on it is steaming. She looks around for James.

MARK
He had to go.

The tray dips. Her shoulders drop.

MARK (CONT'D)
He said to say goodbye.

Chasely recovers by degrees. She comes forward and puts the tray on a bedside table.

CHASELY

That'd be his dad. Likes him
anywhere else but with me. I'm a
bad influence apparently.

She stoops down and picks up the sketchbook, closing it.
Maybe it was meant to look indifferent. It didn't.

She rolls a chair over to the bed and sits down. She uncaps a
small bottle and drizzles a few yellow drops into a bowl of
hot water. The drops turn crimson when they meet the water.
She dips a cloth and swirls it.

Then Chasely takes the cloth and pushes herself in the chair
closer to Mark. He has to open his legs to allow one of her
legs a place. She starts to softly dab at his injuries.
They're face to face, inches apart. Mark doesn't know where
to look.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Close your eyes.

Mark shuts his eyes. And he's in heaven.

EXT. SCHOOL OVAL -- MORNING

Mark crosses the oval. He slows. Then stops. He looks toward
a distant line of DARK TREES.

EXT. SCHOOL OVAL/BUSHLAND -- MORNING

Mark clambers over the fence. Where his piercings used to be
there're now bits of Elastoplast. His nostrils are scabbed
and raw. His top lip is lumpy and swollen. Mark sees a twirl
of cigarette smoke corkscrewing out from behind a tree.

MARK

Chase...

James, not Chasely, looks out.

EXT. STREET -- MORNING

James sits at a bus shelter. Mark stands. They stare off in
the same direction. A panel behind them features the "Here Be
Tygers" advertisement for the theme park.

JAMES

Here we go.
(James stands)
Ready?

Mark looks at him quickly.

MARK

I'm not doing it.

JAMES
No-one's home.

MARK
So what?

James starts across the street.

JAMES
Fucking woman!

MARK
I'll do it.

James halts.

Mark looks past James. A beat. He moves off. We see his destination -- the bearded man's house.

A MAILMAN on a red scooter stops further up the street and feeds a mailbox.

Mark keeps walking. He looks like he might throw up in someone's garden.

The scooter whips across the street to the bearded man's house. The mailman pushes a clump of letters through a slot in the mailbox and zips away.

Mark looks from the mailbox to the house - then the garage. There's no EYE. No red 4WD. Only darkness. Mark fixates on the mailbox. The letters jut from the slot.

James watches Mark nearing the mailbox. He sees him lift his arm. James looks back to the house and sees something EMERGE from the darkness of the garage.

Mark sees it also. Moving out of the blackness of the garage is a WOMAN PUSHING A STROLLER.

Mark drops his arm and keeps walking.

James takes a step back, bumping into the bus shelter.

The woman steers the stroller down the drive.

Mark passes the mailbox.

They INTERSECT. Mark stops at the foot of the drive to let her get by. She glances at him as she pushes the stroller past. Mark nods at her and smiles at a drowsy kid. He walks on.

She pushes the stroller out onto the street and cuts a diagonal path toward the bus shelter.

James stays where he is, held in thrall.

A COUNCIL BUS shoots by Mark.

She has a moment of difficulty getting the stroller over the curb. She hails the bus close to James.

He cannot take his eyes off her or the child. There's nothing striking about either of them. Just a suburban mother weighed down by too many baby things.

The bus pulls over. The door wheezes open.

She brings the child to her chest and folds the stroller. The kid - a little boy - watches James serenely over his mother's shoulder. A carry bag gets caught up in the stroller.

The DRIVER sucks his teeth and looks through her. PEOPLE are watching from the bus.

She sees James.

WOMAN

Could you?

A beat. James moves forward to her. She gives him the stroller and steps onto the bus. She pays the driver and turns back to James. He hands the stroller to her. She smiles a 'thank you' as the doors shut.

The bus rumbles off, coughing dark smoke behind it.

Mark walks through a fog of diesel fumes. He's holding the letters. He stands beside James. They watch the bus.

Mark looks at the letters.

MARK

Ian and Kay Wright... Wright with a "W". There's a phone bill.

JAMES

That'll have their number.

EXT. TRAIN STATION/CARPARK -- LATE AFTERNOON

We see a bird's eye view of the train station.

A silver COMMUTER TRAIN slips in. Doors open. People pour out.

We follow from above as they exit the gates and trill through the rows of parked cars like mice in a maze. We see a familiar vehicle and DESCEND toward it.

The nearer we come, the clearer we see an object pinned to the RED 4WD's windshield.

A small tattered flag. A red maple leaf, grubby with dirt.

It rests against the passenger side of the windshield, clasped by a wiper.

A SHADOW falls over the hood of the vehicle.

We see the BEARDED MAN standing by the front of the 4WD. He's holding a document satchel. The low sun behind him makes it difficult to see his face.

He moves across the front of the vehicle and down the passenger side. He removes the flag from beneath the wiper like it's a leaflet for a weight-loss scam. Or a missing girl.

He takes the long way around the car, passing the EYE. We hear a BLEEP as the door-locks open.

INT/EXT. CAR/CARPARK

The bearded man places the soiled flag on the passenger seat and sets the satchel on top of it. He starts the car.

We get a good look at IAN WRIGHT.

He's terrified.

He tries not to show it but it's SCREAMING out of his eyes.

He dares a look around the carpark.

There're a lot of people doing the same thing he's doing - going home.

He backs the car out of its slot. He takes the vehicle through the carpark. He doesn't go slower or any faster than he should.

Ian Wright is hanging on by his fingernails.

INT. CAR -- LATE AFTERNOON

Sweat buds through his shirt. He hits the aircon. Gulps air. He looks over to the passenger seat. A frayed edge of the flag is sticking out from under the satchel. He looks away.

INT. CAR/ROAD -- LATE AFTERNOON

The 4WD gurgles at a red light.

Ian looks at the satchel. He stares at the exposed section of material. He looks forward again, but can't stop from looking back. He quickly reaches over and adjusts the satchel so it properly covers the flag.

Someone honks him. He jerks the vehicle ahead.

INT. CAR/STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON

The same kids are playing cricket.

Ian pulls over on the curb. He keeps his fingers curled around the wheel. He can see his house through the players. It's the same house he left that morning.

A long beat.

INT/EXT. IAN'S HOUSE/GARAGE -- LATE AFTERNOON

Ian steps out of the 4WD.

He opens an internal door at the back of the garage and enters his home.

INT. HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN/LAUNDRY

A bright hallway.

Ian sticks his head into a kitchen. There're pots on the stove and washed potatoes in the sink.

IAN

Kay.

No answer. He enters a living room.

IAN (CONT'D)

Kay!

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Outside.

Ian hurries out of the living room, through a laundry and toward a security door. He can see someone through the mesh.

His WIFE sits on a pine bench blowing soapy bubbles. A little boy splashes in a blue plastic pool shaped like a clam.

KAY WRIGHT looks at Ian and blows a stream of bubbles at him. The boy tries to grab them.

KAY

Hungry?

Ian stays inside the door. He looks around the yard. He can see sections of his neighbours' homes over three fences.

Kay looks at him carefully.

KAY (CONT'D)

Ian?

Kay turns away from her child, giving her husband her full attention. The boy claps his hands for more bubbles.

KAY (CONT'D)

Honey?

IAN

I'm going to lie down.

KAY

You're not sick?

IAN

I don't know.

(beat)

I'll see.

He goes back in the house. The boy starts to cry. She doesn't hear.

INT. HALLWAY/BEDROOM -- LATE AFTERNOON

Ian steps out of a bathroom into a hallway. His face and the shoulders of his shirt are wet.

IAN

And the wild regrets and the
bloody sweats none knew so well
as I...

He enters a bedroom, flicking the door shut behind him.

IAN (CONT'D)

...for he who lives more lives
than one more deaths than one
must die.

A large window gives a clear view of the street. He stops at the end of a double bed and looks out the window.

He can see a couple of fielders from the cricket match and a kid doing figure 8's on a bike. The sounds are neighbourhood sounds. Kids laughing. A barking dog. A boat motor.

Ian scratches his scalp. He starts to moan. Tears mix with tap water.

IAN (CONT'D)

And the wild regrets and the
bloody sweats none knew so well
as I. For he who lives more
lives than one more deaths than
one must die.

He looks over to a walk-in robe. A beat. He moves toward it and passes through its unlit entrance.

We hear the metallic clatter of wire coat hangers and then nothing. We wait for him to come back. He reappears.

He's carrying a rifle and a box of ammunition.

He puts the ammunition on a duchess and starts to load the rifle. He fumbles a bullet and it plops onto the carpet. He moves over to the window, toting the rifle.

His eyes rove up and down the street. There are no suspicious cars. The skies are clear.

IAN (CONT'D)
And the wild regrets and the
bloody sweats none knew so well
as I. For he... he...

He starts to blubber. He makes it to the bed and sits down.

He lays the rifle across his knees. He gulps. The rifle twitches.

EXT. STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON

The cricketers have gone home.

INT. BEDROOM/HALLWAY -- LATE AFTERNOON

The room is darker than it was. Ian hasn't moved.

A phone rings outside the bedroom. The rifle jumps in his lap. He bounds up.

IAN
I'll get it!

He leaves the bedroom.

The phone sits on a little table at the end of the hallway. Ian hurries to it.

IAN (CONT'D)
I'm getting it!

He's still toting the rifle. Maybe he doesn't know. The stock bumps a china hutch crowded with white-faced ceramic dolls. Ian fumbles the phone to his ear.

IAN (CONT'D)
Hello.

Ian clenches his eyes closed and listens. The muzzle end of the rifle dips to the floor. He opens his eyes.

IAN (CONT'D)

What?

(he listens again)

I don't know. I'm not sure...

What about money? Would you take money instead... But what happens if I do? I mean, I would have done something for you, but how do I-

(like he's been reprimanded)

I know. Thankyou.

He finds a pen on the phone table.

IAN (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

He has to tuck the rifle under his arm to write.

IAN (CONT'D)

Got it... That's too soon. How could I-...Don't do that. Please. Please.

EXT. TRAIN STATION -- LATE AFTERNOON

Mark stands next to a Coke machine on a railway platform. He watches James talking on a pay phone. The hum from the machine makes it difficult for Mark to hear what's being said. Maybe that's how he wants it.

There's not a soul around. It's late but still too early for the lights to come on.

James hangs up the phone. He stands motionless for a second, staring at the phone. Then he sees Mark and comes over to him. He walks like he's just had a good fuck or a bad fright.

JAMES

You were right.

(he smiles thinly)

He would have done anything.

A breeze hurls litter at their feet. Among the debris are some of the yellow leaflets; yesterday's prayers for Tanya Lee.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/ROAD -- NIGHT

Ian drives faster than he should. He's almost ossified with fear.

He passes the frontline commercial properties of the suburb. There's only forestry and scrub now.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/ROAD/FORESTRY -- NIGHT

Ian takes the turn from the main road, nearly putting the vehicle on its side.

EXT. FORESTRY TRAIL -- NIGHT

The 4WD skids to a stop. Ian gets out, leaving the headlights on and the door open. He runs into the dark.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT

A TORCH comes on in Ian's hand. The beam bobs erratically.

He stops running. He sweeps the torchbeam over the ground, searching for something.

He plunges back into the trees.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT

Ian stops. There's something wrong with the dark shapes to his left. Most of them are tree trunks and branches but one form is...

He swings the torch toward it. Nothing.

Ian emits an idiot moan. He runs.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT

Ian runs, careless of low hanging limbs and snares on the ground. He hears the sound of someone running behind him.

He wheels around with the torch. Slashes the beam through the underbrush. Whoever it is refuses to be seen. A beat. He runs.

Branches lash at his face and body, snagging his clothes, chipping his flesh. He peeks over his shoulder. There's something infantile about how scared this man is.

He CRACKS his foot against something and falls. Dust sighs up around him. The torch comes free and rolls ahead. The beam makes rocking motions across the ground before it settles.

Ian knows where he is. He recognizes the place where he left her.

He's come here to check that the skeletons are still safely in the closet. Or in the earth.

The ground is pitted from recent and indifferent work. If Ian could see through the earth, the living and the dead would be mirror images of each other.

His eyes move to the dusty end of the torchbeam.

He JOLTS back.

Ian sees the dirty frayed hem of a long white dress and beneath that a pair of dusty bare feet. They walk out of the light.

A beat. Ian Wright grabs his head. And comes apart.

INT. RED 4WD -- LATER

Ian sits in the 4WD. The vehicle is stationary. The lights are off. His eyes are red and grainy but he's cleaned himself up. He stares ahead.

We see GARY ARCHER'S HOUSE. The lights are on.

Ian lifts a bottle of Boag's beer and gulps at it.

A FLOODLIGHT comes on at the back of the house.

Ian hunkers down. Beer courses through his beard.

Someone leaves the house.

Ian watches a LEAN MALE FORM trot down the back steps and walk toward two excited WHITE DOGS tethered to a tree.

GARY ARCHER sets two bowls in front of his dogs. He pats and scratches them as they eat.

Archer walks to a tap and washes his hands. He dries himself on a towel on the clothesline, and walks around the far side of the house where Ian can't see him.

The COBRA grumbles awake. Hazard lights blaze on. Vapor spumes from the exhaust. The car withdraws from the garage like a weapon being revealed.

Ian fumbles for the keys.

In a burst of acceleration the Cobra swings out onto the street. The headlights FLARE ON, aimed perfectly at Ian.

He's caught by them.

Ian slumps down and looks away. But he can't hide himself.

The Cobra rumbles toward him.

The light gets unbearable.

Ian looks into the backseat as the vehicle nears. He sees the RIFLE sticking out from beneath a jumper.

The Cobra roars past.

Ian starts the car.

EXT. TAVERN -- NIGHT

The Cobra rolls into the carpark of a sprawling SUBURBAN TAVERN. It's a good night. The carpark is packed with cars and tradesman's utes and trucks.

Archer finds a slot for the Cobra and kills it. He leaves the vehicle, locks it and walks away.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/TAVERN

Ian watches Gary Archer move between parked vehicles toward the tavern entrance. He shuts off the headlights. And waits.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD -- LATER

Ian looks down at his lap as headlights sweep over him.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/TAVERN -- LATER

Some trucks and utes have gone.

A MAN AND A WOMAN emerge from the tavern. She wants to get away from him. He keeps up with her. His mouth works quickly. She stops, but keeps her arms crossed. He puts his hands lightly on her hips. She lets him.

Ian watches them walk off together.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/TAVERN -- LATER

Headlights skim over Ian's face. He hardly flinches at all.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mark sits at a study desk in his bedroom. We see textbooks on his bed. He's very still. We creep toward him and see his face.

His thoughts aren't on homework.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

In Chasely's bedroom, the red lights are on.

James lies in Chasely's bed staring a hole in the ceiling. He's smoking her pot.

Chasely, still in school uniform, lies on the floor listening to music through oversized headphones. She watches James.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD

Ian stares off. It's as if he's watching Chasely.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

Chasely gets up. She tugs on the headphone chord. The jack comes out of the stereo. Music erupts.

She starts dancing with the dopey headphones still on. She tries to dance sexy and touch herself but starts giggling.

James' eyes stay on the ceiling.

Chasely pouts like she's heartbroken. She sways and undulates over to James and climbs onto the end of the bed. She growls and stalks toward him on her hands and knees.

She's not a very scary tiger.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD

Ian seems to be watching Chasely crawl toward him. Headlights probe his face. He doesn't flinch at all.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

Chasely sits up. She eases herself onto one of James' legs. He looks at her. She fucks his knee.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD

Ian stares.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

Chasely moves faster and harder against his kneecap.

INT/EXT. RED 4WD/TAVERN

Archer exits the tavern.

Ian leaves the 4WD.

EXT. WATER -- NIGHT

We look up through a dark ceiling of water. WHOOMF! A LARGE FORM slaps against the surface.

EXT. TAVERN

Archer veers toward the tavern wall. He puts a foot up on the garden edging and undoes his fly. He pisses on bark chips.

Ian edges toward him through the rows of parked cars.

EXT. WATER

We're in dark water. A HUMAN BODY sinks toward us.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

Chasely grinds her hips faster.

EXT. TAVERN

Ian quickens his pace toward Archer.

EXT. WATER

The body settles on the bottom.

We're in a SWIMMING POOL.

We move nearer to the body.

We're looking at the water-magnified features of MARK VINCENT.

His eyes are closed.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

Chasely yelps. She arches her back until she nearly turns back on herself.

EXT. TAVERN

Ian has a clear run to Archer. The rifle LIFTS from his side.

EXT. WATER

Underwater, Mark opens his eyes.

EXT. TAVERN

Ian raises the rifle. The stock settles against his shoulder.

Someone walks in front of Ian.

The FIGURE is looking away so Ian remains undetected.

Ian watches the figure move quietly and with purpose through the carpark.

Ian sees a SECOND FIGURE. They are both making a circuitous but clear route to Archer.

Ian drops the rifle back to his side. Something SPRINGS out of the darkness beside him.

We see WHITE TEETH, the gleam of SMALL EYES. A DOG bites down at Ian's face, just missing his cheek. It strains against a chain on the tray of a truck, barking and biting at air.

Archer turns toward the barking dog. He sees Ian. Ian stares back.

A THIRD FIGURE steps out of the shadows close to Archer.

THIRD FIGURE (MALE)
Evenin' fuckhead.

Archer turns to the voice. LIQUID is thrown in his face. He screeches and claws his eyes.

THREE MEN rush at Archer. Fists rain down.

The dog doesn't know who to bark it so it barks at everything.

A hand rises up holding a stout, short object. It CRACKS down on Archer's shoulder.

Ian stands and stares like he's feeble. Somehow he hasn't been discovered.

Archer swings blindly. Someone swears.

Archer is brought to the ground. Boots are added to fists.

The tavern wall is suddenly AWASH with LIGHT. The shadows of three figures are thrown against it.

We know these men.

They were at Archer's house. They're cops. But they're not in uniform tonight. They brazenly stare into the light.

We move toward the light source. The red 4WD's headlights have been turned on to high-beam.

Ian stands behind the open driver's door. Even though he can't be seen, or seen clearly, he can hardly look in their direction.

The most senior of the three puts his hand out shielding the light from his eyes. He was the PLAIN-CLOTHES DETECTIVE from the raid on Archer's house. He can just make out Ian's form.

DETECTIVE
Forget this one.

Ian fidgets.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
If I told you what he did you
wouldn't care if he got up. If
you're a father you'd make sure
of it.

The detective puts his hand down. A beat. He walks away. The other two follow.

Ian watches them until they're gone. Then he looks back at the still form of Archer, though he almost seems to be looking at...

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM

...Chasely's limp figure on top of James. She lifts her head and looks at him through her fringe.

JAMES
Where's the pot?

A beat. She nods toward a bedside table.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL

Mark stares up from the concrete bottom of a swimming pool.

His cheeks bulge. Bubbles stream from his nose and mouth. He kicks upwards and comes up GASPING in a backyard pool.

Mark settles his breathing and floats in the dark.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

We move restlessly through a school library. We sight Mark sitting at a study booth and zero in on him. He looks like any other student - like he's made an effort to fit in.

James sits down in an empty booth beside Mark. He leans over.

Mark stares at James' once-bleached hair. It's been dyed BLACK.

JAMES
Sleep alright?

The boy is jittery, like he's had a bucket of coffee.

Mark can't take his eyes off James' jet locks.

JAMES (CONT'D)
I haven't been to bed but I feel good.

James sees Mark's fixation with his hair. He smiles. It's a little crazy.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Chase did it... Out of respect.

Mark looks horrified.

James produces a blister pack of PILLS. He pops one and throws it in his mouth.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Do you think he did it yet?

Mark picks his books up and leaves. James goes after him.

INT. LIBRARY

Mark strides down an aisle. James follows closely.

JAMES
I want to know if he got his
surprise.

Mark keeps walking. He won't look at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Did you hear? How do we know if-

Mark drops his things, wheels around and seizes James. He
THROWS him against a shelf. Books fall.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Let the fuck-

Mark SMASHES his head against a steel shelf. James screeches.

MARK
What kind-

James tries to break away. Mark puts an elbow into his throat.

MARK (CONT'D)
What kind of weak cunt are you?
(James gargles something)
Are you such a coward that
you're going to keep being
afraid of him? Even now?

James' face turns the same colour as a spanked arse.

MARK (CONT'D)
You made this happen. However it
goes, you fucking well deal with
it.

Mark glances at the end of the aisle. FORMS have gathered.

MARK (CONT'D)
Now deal with it...

Mark gets close to him.

MARK (CONT'D)
...tiger.

Mark releases him. James stumbles away.

JAMES
Don't come near Chasely again.

MARK
You own her, do you James?

James stops retreating. He works up a vicious little smile.

JAMES
You know what she says about
you?

Mark says nothing but he's listening.

JAMES (CONT'D)
Not a thing.
(beat)
She doesn't talk about you...
think about you... you don't
figure in her life, except when
you're with me.

Now that James has made himself feel better, he leaves.

A beat. Mark picks up his things.

EXT. SCHOOL -- AFTERNOON

Mark makes his way through an outgoing tide of students.

He sees someone he knows standing at the school gate. Mark halts. He looks around for James but sees only Chasely. She stands with her back to him.

MARK
Chasely.

She turns around. Mark knows that she thought he was James but he doesn't mind.

CHASELY
Hey, you haven't seen James?

Mark looks for the answer somewhere over his shoulder.

MARK
Hours ago.
(beat)
You?

She shakes her head and gnaws her lip. She looks at a long line of parents' cars, shunting along the curb. She searches a mob of students at the head of the pick-up line.

She suddenly stands straighter, like an animal sensing danger. She watches a RED 4WD move to the head of the line. The vehicle idles. No-one approaches it.

Mark is looking back toward the school. He hasn't seen the Red Car or Chasely's alarm.

She reaches out to grasp Mark's hand, then drops it.

A TEENAGE BOY and GIRL clamber into the 4WD. Doors shut and the vehicle moves off. There's no EYE. False alarm. Chasely brightens.

CHASELY

I thought of something to put on your shirt.

She closes her eyes to remember. Mark's eyes rove across her face.

CHASELY

"He who joyfully marches in rank and file has already earned my contempt".

She opens one eye.

CHASELY (CONT'D)

Albert Einstein.

MARK

I love it.

She opens both eyes and affixes Mark with one of her relentless looks. Mark is up to it today.

CHASELY

You're always good to me.

MARK

That's easy.

We see it happen. For the first time Chasely asks herself whether this boy has feelings for her. Mark sees it also and looks like he'll answer if asked.

Chasely grasps Mark's hand. He looks at her hand enveloping his own. He looks at her face and sees she's peering at something over his shoulder.

Mark turns around.

The COBRA moves to the head of the line of pick-up cars.

Chasely lets go of Mark's hand and RUNS toward the car. Mark makes a grab for her shoulder but she's too fast.

She stops at the passenger door and peers into the vehicle.

Mark sees why she ran and what she's looking at.

JAMES sits in the front seat between two WHITE DOGS. He watches Chasely out of the corner of his eye, too terrified to move.

The driver has the sun visor down, covering his face, but Mark knows who it is.

Archer.

Chasely hauls open the back door of the vehicle.

Mark moves. He trips on the front tire of someone's bike and collapses onto his knees. He looks up. The back door of the vehicle is open but Chasely is missing.

She got in.

Mark gets to his feet. He gazes at the car. Bikes graze past him. Students cluster on the pavement kidding around.

The Cobra idles patiently.

INT. COBRA

The car moves away from the curb.

Mark sits primly beside Chasely in the dark cool of the backseat.

James turns around as far as he dares. His face has been scuffed up. He's been crying.

JAMES
(to Mark)
He knows.

James says more but the sound speakers blare to life, drowning him out. His mouth keeps moving though he can no longer be heard.

The dogs' muzzles quiver with territorial hatred. One snaps its jaws but its bark is lost in the distorted music.

Mark looks at Chasely, then up to the rearview mirror. He sees the driver's ruddy eyes set in swollen and blackened flesh.

EXT. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT -- LATE AFTERNOON

We look down on a newly commenced canal development and see right away that it used to be the derelict drive-in.

The bitumen ramps have been torn up and the speaker poles stacked into a prickly mound. Half of the candy kiosk is gone. The screen lies on its face. A bulldozer and an excavator sit quietly together.

The Cobra stalks through the site. It creeps to a stop in the shadow of a new hill. The engine shuts off, leaving the music.

INT. COBRA

Then the music ceases and Chasely is heard loudly.

CHASELY
--ANYTHING TO YOU!

She realizes the music has cut out.

CHASELY (CONT'D)
If you don't want us running
straight to the police you
let us out now. NOW!

ARCHER
Do what you like.

Archer's diction is mushy.

James looks toward the door handle. There's a big dog in the way.

Chasely cracks open her door. Mark does the same. Chasely looks at James. He hasn't moved.

CHASELY
Come on, James.

James moves his hand off his lap toward the door handle. He grazes the dog's back and rips his hand back.

He sits there and cries.

JAMES
I can't... I can't...

ARCHER
Kelly.

The dog closest to the window looks at Archer. It bounds over James' lap. He gasps and shoves himself back in the seat. Both dogs are between James and Archer.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
Don't run. They chase anything
that runs.

Archer lifts his damaged eyes to the rearview. Mark is there to look back.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
They can't help themselves.

James opens the door.

EXT. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

James leaves the car slowly, not taking his eyes off Archer's dogs. He backs away cautiously.

Mark gets out on the passenger side. Chasely follows him.

The two dogs barrel out James' door. He freezes as they gallop past him.

Chasely goes to James. Mark keeps away from the couple.

Archer leaves the car. He walks toward the trunk. Two of his fingers are taped up. His face is a BLACK and YELLOW MASK, torn, monstrous.

He walks high and lightly - like he's denying an immense injury.

One hand goes to his ribs but he wills it back to his side. Mark sees why Archer's diction is distorted -- his lips are shredded.

The cops knew what they were doing.

Mark casts his gaze around. Archer's picked a good place for it - open, flat ground, no cover within quick reach.

The two dogs snuffle the freshly turned earth behind them.

Chasely grabs James' hand and pulls him away. He won't go. She tries again. He's planted to the ground.

JAMES

He won't let us.

CHASELY

(to Archer)

Can we go now?

ARCHER

I'm not stopping you.

Archer halts at the trunk.

CHASELY

The boys too!

He says nothing. He opens the trunk and puts his arms in.

Archer lifts out a WHITE COMPOUND BOW. Five ALUMINIUM ARROWS are clasped to the body of the weapon.

James moans.

The dogs go still and quiet at the sight of the bow.

CHASELY
Put that back.

Archer fits an arrow. He takes a few steps toward James and Chasely. The bow points to the ground.

ARCHER
What do I 'know', Ja-ames.

James gulps a look at Mark.

Mark communicates nothing back.

Archer half cocks the arrow.

CHASELY
That's enough!

ARCHER
What do I 'know'?

JAMES
You know what we did.

ARCHER
What did you do?

Chasely looks at James. The conversation is registering. James can sense Mark's eyes on him but is unable to look anywhere else but Archer and the arrow.

JAMES
We made someone hurt you.

ARCHER
How do I know, Ja-ames?

JAMES
I don't... I don't...

ARCHER
HE TOLD ME!

Archer wrenches back the arrow and lifts the bow.

CHASELY
DON'T!

Chasely rushes in front of James.

CHASELY (CONT'D)
YOU DO NOT!

Archer jerks the bow until it's above his head. He releases the shaft. The arrow shoots into an afternoon sky, vanishes.

James and Chasely keep looking. It's been fired directly above them. It'll land among them.

Strangely, Mark is looking around the development site, uncaring of the arrow or Archer.

ARCHER
(re: arrow)
You won't see it.

The arrow THUDS into the ground in front of Archer.

CHASELY
Finished? Had your fun?!

Archer fits another arrow.

Mark's eyes rove restlessly over the site. He peers into heavy shadows around the machinery. His gaze ranges over the peaks and troughs of a ridge of displaced earth.

ARCHER
What I don't "know" is how you two cocksuckers made a normal bloke walk out of his house in the middle of the night to come looking for me.

James looks at Mark again. Neither of them offers anything.

Archer lifts the bow and shoots.

James and Chasely squint into the sky.

Mark's gaze lingers in the gap between two FREIGHT CONTAINERS. The sun doesn't reach all the way in, leaving a scrim of shadow. Mark stares harder into the shadows.

The arrow plunges into the ground close to James and Chasely. A dog trots over and sniffs at it.

Archer reloads.

CHASELY
He's one of my friend's fathers. I got sick at a birthday party when I was little and he came into the room where I was lying down and tried to put his cock in my mouth. It was my idea to contact him. I told him I'd tell his wife, his kids, the people he worked with, that he tried to rape a 10-year-old girl.

Archer turns his eyes on Mark.

ARCHER
That true?

Mark drags his stare away from the containers.

ARCHER (CONT'D)
It was her idea?

MARK
What do you reckon?

ARCHER
(to Chasely)
And you didn't get one bit of
encouragement?

CHASELY
Just you.

She almost spits the words at him.

ARCHER
Your fucking stooge didn't know
any names.

CHASELY
He'd say that wouldn't he.

ARCHER
Said some young fuck called him
up. Told him where I lived. What
kind of car I drive. Where I
might be. Made him write it all
down. He showed it to me. They
knew everything. Like I was an
obsession or something.

CHASELY
Can we please go?

ARCHER
Go ahead.

CHASELY
All of us!

MARK
You go, Chasely.

JAMES
No!

ARCHER

He's shitting bricks whatever way you fucked him. Wouldn't say much.

(beat)

But I knew. I worked it out.

His lips have begun to bleed.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Easy. Just asked myself who'd I know that was so fucking gutless they'd send someone else to fight their battles?

He swivels the bow to point at Mark - his answer.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Fuckface there spilled his guts as soon as I got him alone. If you're gonna be a hard man, Mark, you gotta find yourself a stauncher partner. You gotta be able to rely on the other bloke.

Archer reefs the arrow back.

Mark cringes.

Archer grins. His teeth are red. He rips back the arrow so far that he can hardly hold onto it.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

You wouldn't have rolled over so fast would you, Mark?

James can't deal with it and covers his eyes.

Archer's hand is rattling.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

You can cope.

It might be his injuries that are making Archer's eyes run.

His hand quakes violently.

Chasely walks in front of Mark. She doesn't want to but she must.

Archer lifts the bow as the arrow comes loose. It shoots over Chasely's head - barely. Archer stares at Chasely, distressed at how close he came to killing her.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Kelly. Molly.

The dogs trot over to Archer. He grabs their collars.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Run.

James' eyes bug out of his head.

CHASELY

What?

ARCHER

RUN!

CHASELY

We're not going to run.

But James is already gone. He sprints across the raw earth, running for the back of the drive-in.

The dogs buck in Archer's hands but he keeps them restrained.

Chasely sets off right away. She'll go wherever James goes.

Archer drools blood. He looks weary, despondent.

ARCHER

Run.

He's barely audible. But Mark hears enough. He runs.

Archer kneels down to his dogs. They watch Mark flee into the trees.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

Mark runs.

Underbrush claws at him.

He sights Chasely ahead; James down on his haunches behind her.

Mark surprises Chasely. She wheels on him holding a rock, ready to smash his skull in. She looks fierce, capable of doing anything to protect James.

Mark looks past her to her boyfriend.

He's wheezing. His body hitches and deflates as he tries to breathe. He looks up at Mark through wet and frightened eyes.

JAMES

Why...

(he wheezes and sputters)

Why'd he tell?

MARK
Why'd Wright tell Archer?

James nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
TO FIND US!

Mark, James and Chasely look back. They hear the dogs.

The rock slips. James gets up and lurches away. Chasely goes with him.

Mark stares back. The trees give up nothing. He runs.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY

Archer jogs through bushland. A full quiver of arrows judders between his shoulder blades.

His expression is fixed. He stops and supports himself against a tree. His hand goes to his ribs. He grits bloodied teeth. He can hear the dogs in front of him. But he turns his head to look back.

He screws down the pain and peers into the trees.

He takes his hand from his ribs and slips an arrow from the quiver. His eyes rove the forest around him.

EXT. FLOAT CEMETERY -- DAY

Mark and Chasely help James toward the floats. His wheezing has turned into a grotesque asthmatic rasping.

Mark looks behind them.

The two dogs spring across a stormwater ditch.

Mark and Chasely reach the outer wall of the float cemetery and help James off the ground. Chasely follows him up.

The dogs reach them as Mark hoists his legs out of range.

The animals leap and bite the air but cannot reach them.

Chasely looks at Mark. She nearly smiles.

An arrow buries itself in the side of the float close to James. The sight of it energizes him. He scampers away.

Chasely and Mark go with him.

EXT. FLOAT CEMETERY

They thread through the stacks of floats, keeping off the ground.

James begins to lag. Mark assumes the lead.

CUT TO: Mark leads them through ragged plaster and steel structures. He stops at a gap between floats and peers down. One of Archer's dogs is quietly watching him from the first tier of floats.

CUT TO: Archer stalks the labyrinthine corridors of the float cemetery. One of his dogs trots at his side.

Archer scrutinizes each level of floats, plumbing for places to hide. His gaze jags on a DARK HOLLOW at the uppermost tier.

ARCHER

I see you!

CUT TO: Mark crouches lower. He's someplace dark.

Chasely nurses James. He tries to rise at the sound of Archer's voice but she holds him down.

ARCHER (O.S.)

I'm looking right at you!

CUT TO: Archer discharges an arrow into the shadows.

ARCHER (CONT'D)

Ja-ames! How you doing up there?!

Archer fits another arrow. He points the bow at his target. A beat. There's no movement, nothing hints that the darkness is occupied.

Archer moves on.

The second dog joins him.

CUT TO: James' fingers claw at his rattling throat.

MARK

(to Chasely)

He'll hear that.

Chasely is in tears.

CHASELY

He's dying.

Mark looks away.

CUT TO: Archer charges into a new avenue. He looks about him. He sees the dogs are not with him.

He retraces his steps and peers around the bend.

The dogs are half way along the lane, staring off down a side avenue of floats. They're so still, it could be a photograph.

CUT TO: James' hands fall away from his throat. He's hardly breathing.

CUT TO: Archer steps beside his dogs. The three of them stare into a CANYON OF TIERED FLOATS.

We follow Archer's sightline. On we go toward a trio of floats stacked high at the end of the canyon.

We move into the middle float. We see a LAUGHING MOON and STARS and a HAPPY SUN. We move closer to the moon. We see BLACKNESS through its mouth.

CUT TO: James stops breathing.

A beat. Mark pushes Chasely away and gets close to James' face. The boy's mouth works but nothing comes out. His eyes bulge.

MARK

You're safe. Nothing's going to happen to you. Chasely wouldn't let it.

The panic shrinks from James' eyes.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're safe.

James takes a breath. Then he gobbles air like he can never have enough. Something moist and red flicks across his face.

Mark grunts. He lifts his arm up and marvels at the barb of an arrow peeping out of the meat of his forearm.

James would scream if he had the breath. Chasely does.

CUT TO: The dogs go mad at the sound of the scream. They spring at the floats, claws scabbling for a hold.

ARCHER

ANYBODY DEAD?!!!

Archer fires another bolt into the mouth of the moon.

Two bodies exit their hiding place.

Chasely and Mark dart off along the third tier of floats, each taking different directions.

Archer's mind starts working; his legs follow. He can't go forward so he bolts back the way he came.

The dogs pass him effortlessly.

CUT TO: James stares up at an arrow embedded in the ceiling of the moon. His face is a small, bright beacon of fear.

CUT TO: Mark nurses his pierced arm as he picks his way through obstacles. The arrow protrudes through his flesh but he refuses to acknowledge it. It's the only way he can deal with it.

CUT TO: Chasely weaves through floats. She has a simple notion to draw Archer away from James.

CUT TO: The dogs race up a corridor of floats.

CUT TO: The arrow becomes hooked up in a web of wire and Mark is made to acknowledge it.

CUT TO: Chasely hears his scream and screams back.

CUT TO: The dogs separate at a T-junction, hunting alone.

CUT TO: Mark clambers off the floats.

CUT TO: Chasely also drops to the ground. She sprints, looking back constantly.

We see Chasely run past the mouth of a corridor.

A beat. We follow her.

CUT TO: Mark sees a galloping dab of white over his shoulder. The dab gets bigger.

Mark reaches a new corridor and is confronted with a wall of floats.

The dog follows him around.

Mark jumps up onto the first tier of floats, cheating the dog. The arrow jounces in his arm and he screams again.

He pushes himself on his back to the float's far side and rolls down. He gets up and runs, his arm a dead weight.

CUT TO: We pick up pace until we are moving at great speed through the corridors. We sight Chasely again. We shift direction to RENDEZVOUS with her.

CUT TO: A dog flies past the entrance to a short corridor and is lost from view. A beat. It reappears at the entrance, sensing something of interest.

It enters.

CUT TO: Chasely barrels around a bend. We're there to meet her. She screams at what she sees.

We come closer.

CUT TO: Mark runs.

Archer steps in front of him. The bow is fully drawn, the arrow aimed at his face.

Mark instinctively throws his arms up.

Archer sees Mark's arm, transfixed with his arrow.

The tension on the bow eases.

ARCHER
Fucking hell.

CUT TO: A section of a float thumps into the ground behind the dog, sealing it in.

It looks up. Hackles raised. Ears back. Growling.

CUT TO: Mark's knees buckle.

ARCHER
I'm not sorry.

Mark staggers back and plonks down onto the steel rim of a slashed tire.

Archer lowers the bow. He finds his own makeshift seat and they sit across from each other.

Fear and fury leach away.

Mark looks down at his arm and watches blood drizzle off his fingers. Then he looks at Gary Archer.

MARK
I am...

Archer swallows thickly.

ARCHER
Hurt?

Mark's response is sluggish and Archer is already gone by the time he recognizes that they've both heard a sickening scream.

CUT TO: Archer charges down the length of a corridor. His gaze whips down each offshoot. He looks frantic.

CUT TO: Mark hobbles after him, but Archer's left him far behind.

CUT TO: Archer pulls up suddenly. He stares down a corridor.

He sees a hand rise up beyond a mound of rubbish and then descend. He hears a muffled thud. The hand reappears. It's holding something red and jagged.

Archer mechanically moves forward. The red object is a chunk of concrete. It's being used to kill his dog. The scream Mark heard came from the animal.

James looks over his shoulder and sees Archer. He moves away as Archer climbs over the rubbish. James could try and get away but he just stands there, breathing free and deep.

Archer goes down on one knee to the animal, shedding the bow.

James has been thorough. It doesn't look like a dog anymore. He casually lobs the bloody chunk of concrete to the ground.

JAMES

Gawd, you're a sook.

Archer's eyes are streaming.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Tresswick, Less-Dick.

Archer looks at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say it!

Archer comes at him. James' defense is feeble. He gets belted to the ground. He tries to rise.

Archer knocks him down again. He uses his feet as well as his fists. He looks around for something to break bone and finds the blood-caked bit of concrete.

Movement draws his eye.

Mark runs at Archer, knocking him off his feet. His momentum puts him on top of Archer. The arrows are thrown loose of the quiver.

Archer's clawing hand finds Mark's pierced arm and reefs the arrow over. The shaft breaks and Mark screams.

Archer pushes him aside. He looks up and sees James standing over him.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Say it, you little cunt!

The boy hurls down the piece of concrete.

It skids off Archer's skull, scooping skin, hair and bone.

There's nothing human left in Archer after that. He kicks at James' knees. The boy crumples.

Archer gets up after the second try.

He looks for the boy but his eyes have filled with blood. He scrapes the wetness away and finds James. Archer kicks him in the temple and the boy's body spasms. He finds one of the arrows and drops down beside James.

He stabs down with all his force.

The arrow buries in the gritty soil beside the boy's throat.

Archer flicks blood from his eyes and lifts the arrow again.

The BULLET enters Gary Archer's left shoulder and exits out his ribcage.

Archer sits down heavily like a toddler that has tired of walking. He looks down at the puncture in his body.

A beat. He looks up.

IAN WRIGHT stands on the far side of the obstruction.

Chasely Keys is with him.

She has the rifle.

She drops it like she has no memory it was ever in her hands. She scrambles over the enclosure and goes to James.

Archer watches her dully.

She drags James' deadweight away from Archer and sits with him, pulling his limp body close and wrapping her arms around him.

James opens his eyes. He sits perfectly still.

Mark hasn't taken his eyes off Ian.

Ian can't look away from them.

They make a ghastly tableau. Blood, dirt and violence have taken away their identity. We don't know these people.

Archer wheezes. He lifts his lolling head and looks at Mark.

He tries to say something but the words are interred beneath an eruption of liquid from his mouth.

He looks down at himself and is amazed by his pulsing wound.

Archer's head settles on his shoulder. His eyes return to Mark.

The wheezing stops. He won't ever take another breath.
Utter silence. Utter stillness.

Ian picks up the rifle. He doesn't put it to his shoulder,
but neither does he hang it by his side.

A long beat. The rifle slowly flags.

IAN
Nothing happened here.
(beat)
I can make it that this never
happened... if it makes us
strangers again.

Mark looks around at the others. James is barely conscious
and Chasely is aware only of James.

MARK
We got into his car. People saw
us.

IAN
I'll handle it.

Mark's eyes go to Archer. His dead gaze stays fixed on Mark.

IAN (CONT'D)
I'll handle it.

Mark looks at Ian. Ian looks back. Mark knows what's being
said.

IAN (CONT'D)
Isn't this how it was supposed
to go?

His reply is in James' hollow stare and Mark's haunted eyes.

INT. RED CAR -- NIGHT

Ian drives.

Steetlights and headlights reveal his passengers.

Mark, Chasely and James sit in the backseat of the Red Car.

They look lost.

INT. CHASELY'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mark twists the volume control of the stereo up to full and
jerks the headphone jack out. Music blares.

With his good hand he twists around a chair to face into a corner. He lowers himself into it like an old man. His face and body are stained red from the lights. He looks off and sees Chasely ease James onto her bed.

Mark lifts his arm onto the chair's armrest. The broken shaft still skewers his flesh. He won't look at it.

Mark's good hand feels for, finds, and encircles the broken end of the shaft. He begins to draw it back through his arm.

Chasely puts her hands to her face and watches. Mark has spared her much of it by facing the chair into the corner.

His screams are soaked up by the music.

Chasely retreats to the far end of the room. She sags onto the floor, cocooning herself in the drapes. Her small, white face gapes from a cleft.

Mark gets the arrow clear of his arm and puts it across his knee like some sort of scepter. He can't hear the music anymore.

Blackness. Oceans of it.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

We see a bird's eye view inside a school classroom.

We move across neat rows of neat students.

We see a familiar figure and descend.

Mark takes notes in an exercise book. The effort makes his eyes run.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Mark lies on his bed reading a biology textbook.

A PHONE RINGS outside his bedroom. His eyes move to the closed door. The phone continues to ring.

The book lowers to his stomach.

The ringing ceases. It's been answered or aborted. His stare remains on the door. He's dreading it opening.

The door stays shut. He lifts the book.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Mark sits at a study booth. Textbooks surround him.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR

Mark passes James in a busy school corridor. James tries his best not to see him.

EXT. POOL -- NIGHT

Mark lies at the bottom of the swimming pool.

He runs out of air and comes up quickly. When he gets his breath, he floats in the dark and watches the stars.

EXT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR/CLASSROOM -- DAY

Mark walks past an empty classroom. Chasely is sitting alone at a desk. She's peeling a mandarin and crying her eyes out. A long beat. Mark moves on before he's seen.

EXT. STREET -- MORNING

Mark walks along a footpath on his way home from school.

His course begins to wander. He moves off the path, onto the easement and then into the middle of the street.

He stops in the center of a quiet intersection. He turns and peers down each street.

He's conspicuous and vulnerable. He isn't afraid.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM/HALLWAY/STAIRS -- NIGHT

Mark sticks his head out of his bedroom and into a hallway.

He hears it again.

He runs for the stairs and descends in twos.

MARK
I'm getting it!

He arrives at the front door and organizes himself.

He opens the door. It's been raining.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

Mark sits cross-legged on his bedroom floor.

He watches Chasely rummage through her tackle box. Her hair is damp. She finds what she's looking for and moves nearer to Mark.

CHASELY
Close your eyes.

Mark shuts his eyes, listens to the rain and Chasely's breathing.

She works on him carefully. We see what Mark is becoming.

Chasely is turning him into a tiger.

She regards Mark's face in mid-transformation. Her hand quavers and stops.

Mark's eyes roll behind their lids.

Chasely's throat works.

CHASELY

Am I evil?

MARK

There's no such thing.

Her eyes rove across Mark's face. She's overcome.

She leans forward and kisses him. Mark flinches. He opens his eyes. She's kneeling close. She kisses him again and this time she closes her eyes.

It's a longer kiss. Then she sits back and opens her eyes. She smiles.

It takes him longer but Mark smiles back. Thoughts and emotions are mired in joy and disbelief.

Mark remembers his painted face.

MARK (CONT'D)

What am I?

Chasely's smile teeters.

CHASELY

I told you.

She keeps looking at him, urging him to understand.

The depth of his smile tells us he does.

INT. ROOM -- LATE NIGHT

We see a shirtless figure standing in a dark room.

Headlights from a passing vehicle reveal Mark. He is watching his tiger face in the wardrobe mirror.

A bright prong of light comes through the window and rubs itself over the walls. The light oozes over Mark's painted face.

It should move on but the light remains there.

The Tiger turns to the window and blinks into the light. He can hear it idling in the street, a big surly engine.

The Tiger moves to the window. An engine roars. Tires squeal.

The Tiger gets to the window and there's nothing to see. He listens to the vehicle going away until he can't hear it.

The Tiger looks out onto a silent suburban street and wonders.

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Mark carries a stack of reference books toward a study booth. He stops. His eyes fix on something.

We see a row of windows and JAMES moving out across the oval toward a fence and a familiar line of dark trees.

EXT. FENCE -- DAY

Mark scales the fence, wincing at the strain on his arm. He moves to their regular rendezvous area.

James isn't there.

EXT. FOREST

Mark hardly makes a sound, his steps cushioned by a deep litter of pine needles.

He picks his way down unkempt rows, weaving through wheels of bracken. He stops, unsure if he should go on.

He looks around at the regimented trees and clogs of bracken and sees something that makes him scamper back.

The COBRA sits on a firebreak.

Mark stumbles back and scrapes his wounded arm on a tree. He screams into his fist. Blood blooms through his shirtsleeve. He sets his teeth against the pain and gazes forward.

The tinted windows forbid a glimpse inside but he can guess who's in there. For whatever reason, James is meeting with Ian Wright.

EXT. FENCE -- LATER

James Tresswick trudges back to the fence, steeped in thought.

Mark steps out from behind a tree and startles him: a conscious imitation of James' original prank.

MARK

You want to explain that, James?

James smirks.

JAMES

That's what he wanted, Mark.

MARK

What's to explain?

James shrugs.

JAMES

He's trying to understand it.

MARK

He knows all that.

JAMES

Well, he's having trouble with our version of events.

MARK

What's that mean?

JAMES

He doesn't believe us. He can't quite figure out how it happened and he really, really wants to know.

MARK

You shouldn't even be talking to him.

James gives up on Mark. He tries to walk around him but Mark sidesteps to get in front. Mark's hands clench.

JAMES

You still got that in you, Mark?
(beat)

He called me up. At home. I hung up on him, he called back, said if I hung up on him again he was coming around in person. He wanted to meet. We met.

MARK

What's the shit with the car? He said he was going to look after it.

JAMES

He is.

MARK

He's driving it around. Everyone can see it.

JAMES

They're meant to. He's making it visible so the last time we got in it doesn't look bad for us. He'll get rid of it when he thinks we're safe.

(James smiles bitterly)

We made a friend.

MARK

Does he want to talk to me?

JAMES

Yes.

MARK

What about Chasely?

JAMES

I don't know.

MARK

Why would he? It wasn't her idea.

JAMES

No, it was my idea, wasn't it? I dreamt it up.

MARK

I went along with it. I'm as fucked as you.

James looks hard at Mark like he's trying to see through a wall. He gives up.

JAMES

I've got a rich uncle in Adelaide who thinks the sun shines out of my arse -- for some reason. I asked him for a job. Actually, it was more like begging.

(beat)

I'm getting on a bus four o'clock tomorrow morning and I haven't even told my folks.

James snorts like he's thought of something funny.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'm not going to finish school.

He walks by Mark and Mark lets him go. He hops over the fence and looks back.

JAMES (CONT'D)
We'll never stop running.

A beat. James' eyes are wet stones. He walks away.

We never see him again.

Mark stays on the wild side of the fence, dark trees at his back.

INT. MARK'S ROOM -- LATE NIGHT

Bright light courses through Mark's room, soundlessly probing the darkness as if it's seeking something. The light seeps across Mark's sleeping face. He wakes.

The vehicle is gone before Mark gets to the window.

He switches on a bedside light. The sheets are smeared with blood.

EXT. SCHOOL/GARDEN -- MORNING

Mark unbuttons his school shirt.

Chasely looks away.

They're sitting in a WILD UNTIDY GARDEN that backs onto a tennis court. It looks like a secret place. Every school has one.

A school bell sounds somewhere.

Mark shucks his shirt off and catches Chasely checking him out. She rocks back, laughing. It's a terrific sound to hear.

She hands him a red t-shirt and he slips it on. He smooths out the front and reads what's there. It's the Einstein quote.

He surprises both of them by kissing her quickly.

A bell sounds again. Mark starts to get up. Chasely clutches his knee to keep him seated. Her eyes are large and bright and keenly affixed on Mark.

CHASELY
We've still got time.

She curls up beside Mark, putting her head on his lap. She wraps herself up in his arms and looks out at their secret place.

Sunlight glimmers through a shawl of branches. Hardly a sound reaches them from beyond the garden's leafy walls. There's only the two of them - safe and together.

Chasely shuts her eyes, opens them, then keeps them shut.

EXT. SCHOOL -- AFTERNOON

Another spry schoolyard evacuation.

Sunlight flashes off bikes and windscreens.

Mark stands beside the school gate, away from the tide of bodies.

He can only be waiting for Chasely.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES -- AFTERNOON

The hemorrhage has slowed.

Small clots of students stand around waiting for late buses.

Mark stands alone. He watches the school, waiting to see her. A bland, gray sweep of cloud crawls up behind him.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES -- AFTERNOON

Mark stares toward the school.

The last bus moves off.

He's on his own. Mark takes a few steps toward the school.

Then Mark runs.

EXT. FOREST -- AFTERNOON

Mark charges out of the forest onto the firebreak.

It's the same place he saw the Cobra the day before.

He looks one way, then the other. Nothing. No-one.

Rain patters down like cinders.

EXT. ROAD -- AFTERNOON

Clouds scowl above. The patter has become a torrent.

Mark walks home in the rain. He's soaked to the skin.

A flash of Chinese red lodges on the edge of his vision. He looks toward the road and sees the RED 4WD.

Chasely is inside.

The rain on the window makes her look spectral. She doesn't see him and he doesn't see much of her.

The vehicle moves past him and continues on. The EYE looks back at him.

Mark runs.

He chases the car onto the road.

For a short time, he keeps an even distance between himself and the EYE.

Then it jumps ahead. The EYE shrinks. Traffic nudges Mark to the curb. He watches the diminishing vehicle. He can't possibly catch it.

But he keeps running.

The vehicle is so far away now it's losing detail. It's a crimson stain washed away by the rain.

Mark is moaning.

Then the green halo of the traffic lights turns a sick yellow.

The vehicles ahead of the 4WD slow to a crawl.

Hope.

The yellow smudge transforms to a furious red.

The 4WD is caught at the lights.

If possible, Mark runs even faster. Passing cars pelt him with spray.

A strap on his school bag breaks and the contents spill out. Mark throws the bag off.

He plows through expanding puddles, never taking his eyes off the 4WD.

The Eye looms closer. Closer.

Mark loses his footing and goes down. He lands in a muddy puddle. He looks up, filthy water sluicing from his mouth.

The light is still red. The 4WD is still there.

Mark jumps to his feet. He dashes onto the road. Into the traffic.

He threads through the idling cars.

Mark sprints toward the 4WD. Rain courses off the rear windscreen. He sees only a jittering smudge where Chasely is.

The light turns green.

Mark's hands rip at the door handle.

Locked.

Chasely turns to him. Her face is featureless behind the wet shroud of the window.

The 4WD lurches forward.

Mark's fingers scrape against the side of the car as it slips past. They catch on the rear door handle. He tears at it. The door opens. And he swings himself inside.

INT. RED 4WD

Mark grabs for Chasely from the back seat. She is already turning. His hand contacts her shoulder and she recoils from him.

Mark looks into the frightened eyes of a STRANGER. It isn't Chasely. She stares back at him, hugging a sixpack of Boag's beer against her belly. This close, she doesn't even look like Chasely.

DRIVER (O.S.)
Don't be frightened...

Mark sees IAN WRIGHT looking back at him from the rearview. He doesn't look a bit surprised to see Mark in the backseat.

IAN (CONT'D)
...He's harmless.

The girl looks unconvinced.

IAN (CONT'D)
Lives down my street. Mows my lawn for pocket money, don't you, Mark? You got lawns in Norway, Petra? Or just fiords?

She relaxes.

PETRA
We have lawns.

Her accent is heavy.

IAN
Good. Who wants a beer?

Petra hands Ian a beer. He twists the top off and drinks.

Mark looks at the girl. She's older than Chasely. He looks at her deeply tanned arms and face. Her small, white teeth and light-blue eyes are luminously bright. Her hair is cut short like a boy's - a sensible haircut for a traveler.

Mark eyes a hefty yellow backpack taking up half the backseat. He looks back to Petra. She holds a beer out to Mark and smiles encouragingly.

IAN
Don't worry...

Mark looks to the rearview. Ian is looking back.

IAN (CONT'D)
She won't tell your mum.

A beat. Mark limply takes the bottle but does nothing with it.

Petra takes a beer for herself, opens it and drinks.

IAN (CONT'D)
They got beer in Norway?

She laughs.

PETRA
Yes! Better beer!

IAN
She's giving us stick, Mark.
Cheeky wog.

Her laughter becomes less honest after that.

Mark looks out the streaming windows. He can make out the wavering forms of high fences and gray sheds. They're moving through the industrial fringe of the suburb.

His expression sharpens. He sits forward.

MARK
Where we going?

IAN
Dropping Petra off.

The sheds vanish behind them and dark bushland leans closer to the road. We came through here with Ian once before - when his mind was shredding itself. The forestry turn off is somewhere ahead.

MARK
Where's that?

PETRA
At the park.
(a beat)
I'm meeting friends there.

Ian looks over at her. He mugs a frown.

IAN
Thought you were on your own.

PETRA
(too quickly)
They're new friends.
Australians.

Ian winks at Mark in the mirror. Petra sees him do it. It makes her sit lightly and alert.

Rain batters the roof. The road disappears and returns as the wipers do their job. The trees are a dark green smear, closer to the road than before.

IAN (O.S.)
What do you reckon, Mark?

Mark comes back from the trees. Ian watches him in the mirror.

MARK
What?

IAN
What do you think of her?

Petra's piercing eyes get a little sharper.

IAN (CONT'D)
Haircut makes her look like a
dyke but she's got good tits.

MARK
Shutup.

IAN
Good little arse too.

PETRA
Let me out.

Mark looks for the turn off into the forestry.

IAN
These Aryan bitches hardly have
a hair on them. Unless you like
hairy pussies?

PETRA

Stop! Now!

Ian steers the car to the edge of the road. It slows.

IAN

Y'know in some of those countries over there it's legal to fuck animals. Women are fucking snakes and pigs and it's normal.

Ian's gaze flits from the road back to Mark.

IAN (CONT'D)

What do you reckon, Mark? She look like she might've had a snake up her?

Mark spots the forestry turn off through the windscreen.

PETRA

Let me leave.

The vehicle slows a little more. Ian puts the indicator on.

The turn-off looms.

MARK

Keep going!

The girl glances at Mark. Ian watches Mark too. He forgets Petra and the road.

IAN

Not your type, Mark?

Ian grins. He reefs the wheel and takes them back onto the road. Horns erupt behind them. Ian kills the indicator.

Mark glimpses the razor-straight forestry road, then it's gone.

IAN (CONT'D)

I can't put you out here, honey. It's not safe. The park's up ahead.

(beat)

Won't be long.

He sounds reasonable again. But Petra's eyes stay on him.

Mark droops back into the seat.

IAN (CONT'D)

Were the Norwegians Vikings?

Petra stares at him.

EXT. THEME PARK CARPARK -- AFTERNOON

The red 4WD threads its way through a massive parking lot. Vast puddles reflect a bleak sky.

The 4WD stops at the foot of a high staircase leading to the theme park's entrance. The vehicle has hardly stopped before Petra throws open the door and gets out. She hurls it closed.

Mark gets out with her. He drags out her backpack. Petra snatches it from him and starts up the stairs. Mark starts to follow her up. One step, then two...

IAN (O.S.)

Mark...

Mark turns back. He's never really looked away.

IAN (CONT'D)

We've got to talk.

MARK

We've talked.

IAN

Our talk.

Another step.

IAN (CONT'D)

We can have it now or I'll see you back at your house. Up to you.

Mark stops. Ian stares ahead, confident of the outcome.

Petra gets to the top of the stairs. She looks back. The boy is getting in the car, this time in the front seat. Her legs falter. She sits down heavily and watches the red car leave the carpark. She begins to cry.

INT. 4WD

Ian cranes forward and checks the skies. Mark stares past the dreary swish of the wipers.

IAN

Rain's stopping.

(beat)

Bums me out when the rain stops.
It's that same shitty feeling
you get when you cum. Always
gets me down.

Swish. Swish. Swish.

IAN (CONT'D)
How did you find me, Mark?

Mark gives an impatient sigh.

MARK
We found your stupid car at the station. Followed it back to—

IAN
The first time. When I was... vulnerable... How'd you find me that day?

A beat. Mark looks forward.

MARK
Bad luck.

IAN
I've spoken to James. You'd know that. We had a long talk. James said the three of you were after Archer's dope crop. You'd been at it for months. There was a plan to rip him off.

MARK
Least we could do.

IAN
How'd you know about a dope crop?

MARK
Everyone knows.

IAN
Who?

MARK
It's common knowledge. He didn't work. He had to make money somehow.

IAN
How'd you know?

MARK
Picked it up somewhere.

IAN
James?

MARK
Maybe.

IAN

James said you told him. He was pretty sure of it. Admitted it was his idea to steal it or burn it or whatever you had planned but you brought it up.

MARK

I don't remember.

IAN

No-one does. I asked. As far as I can tell the only reason Gary Archer went out there was to shoot his little bow and arrow around. None of his loser mates knew anything about a crop.

MARK

Then we must have been looking for you.

Ian chortles.

IAN

No, Mark, just you.

Mark shakes his head as if he's listening to the street corner tirade of an inventive lunatic.

IAN

Know what I think?

MARK

Is that possible?

IAN

I think the whole dope story was a little white lie you told to keep James and his girlfriend... sorry, your girlfriend... tramping around out there with their eyes wide open.

Mark snorts. It's all so stupid.

IAN (CONT'D)

That's right. Doesn't make sense, does it? Unless...

(beat)

...unless it was meant to seem like you weren't looking for me.

MARK
Ever heard of a coincidence?
Know what that means?

IAN (CONT'D)
Why were you looking for me,
Mark?

MARK
I wouldn't look for you, Ian. If
it'd been up to me you would've
been dragged out of your house,
away from your wife and baby—

Ian reaches over and Mark flinches back. But he's only opening the glove box. Ian takes something out and flicks it at Mark. It's a YELLOW LEAFLET. TANYA LEE'S face looks up at Mark from his lap.

IAN
Did he kill her?

MARK
How would I know?

Mark throws the leaflet over his shoulder into the backseat.

IAN
Cops think so. Archer frequented
the area. Car was seen out there
at the time. They know he
rebuilt the whole front-end of
his shitbox not long after she
went missing. He's a habitual
violent offender. He was angry
and he was stupid. Sounds like a
reasonable suspect to me.

Mark shakes his head and mutters.

IAN (CONT'D)
But you think it was me. I'm
your man.

Mark says nothing. That's saying plenty.

IAN (CONT'D)
Did Archer tell you that?

MARK
Why would he tell me anything?

IAN
He might've been scared. Drunk.
Sick with guilt. We find a way
to confess.

IAN (CONT'D)
Doesn't matter if you're a panty
sniffer or the worst Nazi
torturer who ever lived.
(beat)
He told you about me, didn't he?
What he knew anyway.

Mark looks away. Ian watches him closely.

IAN (CONT'D)
You filled in the rest. And it
gave you an idea. Find me and
I'd find him.
(beat)
They let you down, Mark...
teachers, coppers, your folks...
anybody who's meant to look out
for little kids. They failed
you... not me... I wouldn't have
a choice.

Mark blinks back tears. He hates himself for it.

MARK
None of this shit was my idea.

IAN
Stop hiding.

MARK
James has the ideas.

IAN
You put them there.

MARK
What shit—

IAN
"He could live in one of
these..."

EXT. STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON -- FLASHBACK

Mark looks at each house as they walk by. TV's can be heard
in some. Forms pass windows in others. Mark's rabbit face has
been obliterated.

CHASELY
Who?

MARK
Red Car.

EXT. STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON -- FLASHBACK

James, Chasely and Mark move toward a PHONE BOOTH.

MARK
Wouldn't be hard to find
him... just find the car.

CHASELY
What? A red car? Not many of
them around.

JAMES
It's not a car... it's a four-
wheel drive.

They draw closer to the booth.

CHASELY
They're everywhere.

MARK
Not with an eye.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH -- LATE AFTERNOON -- FLASHBACK

MARK
Wonder if he's rich...

Mark enters the phone booth. James is watching him closely.

MARK (CONT'D)
Because I'd give everything I've
got...

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN
...to stop this happening".

Mark stares at Ian. He's rattled by the ambush.

IAN (CONT'D)
That's close enough isn't it?
You let James think he was
running things. He
underestimated you. Archer, too.
Even your little girlfriend...
but not anymore from what I've
seen.

MARK
Don't talk about her.

Ian sniggers and celebrates with a drink.

MARK (CONT'D)

You're so far off. Even if I could be fucked looking for you for whatever reason, I wouldn't need anyone else. I'd do it myself.

IAN

"Three's better than two". Remember saying that? And two's better than one. It's a fair whack of timber out there. You'd need help. Other reasons, too. It's easier to wear the kind of guilt you were fitting for yourself if you share it around.

(beat)

And you just liked being around Chasely. You had to have James in for that to happen.

MARK

Are we done? You can drop me off anywhere.

IAN

Did y'know she was in a car accident when she was little? Tanya Lee. Her dad's fault. Cracked her head on the dashboard and stayed eight years old. Nothing wrong with her physically. A casual look at her and you'd think she was a big, healthy teenage girl...Good looking girl...

Mark kicks into the footspace, rattling empty beer bottles.

MARK

Fuck this!

IAN

You wouldn't know there was a thing wrong with her, unless you looked closely...

EXT. WATER'S EDGE -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

We move carefully through a copse of trees. Ahead, we see the blaze of sunlight on water. Someone is standing on the bank, face to the water.

Her name is TANYA LEE.

IAN (O.S.)

And he'd gotten very close...

IAN WRIGHT treads quietly among the trees. A wind rips past him. He goes with it, moving out from the trees.

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN

He watched her for days. He knew which house was hers. Knew if she had a big brother or a big dog.

MARK

Finding a way to confess, Ian?

IAN

Maybe he found a way for them to be friends. Told her jokes a little kid would understand. He might have had feelings for her... and it worried him.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Ian moves nearer.

She's still watching the birds. The wind throws up her dark hair and scrapes the water.

IAN (O.S.)

She might have trusted him.

Tanya senses him. She starts to turn.

IAN (O.S) (CONT'D)

And he let her down.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

The rookery empties. Birds flee to the sky.

EXT. FORESTRY -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Tanya Lee runs in the rain. Her blouse is open and trailing like broken wings. Her arms are raked with scratch marks. Blood mingles with water.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Tanya steps out of the trees, onto a forestry trail.

She looks up at a slice of stormy sky. The entire front of her body is wet with blood. Her nose is broken. An EGRET flies overhead. Tanya tracks the bird with a blank gaze.

The impact folds her over.

Her arms slap down on the hood. One side of her face bursts against the metal.

The car brakes, throwing her body forward.

Tanya cartwheels and rolls. Limbs jangle and salute at impossible angles. The vehicle stops but she stays in motion.

Her body skids along the track. Momentum kicks her on, then only swipes at her. A leg or an arm flops over and Tanya's body eases into the deep grass in the center of the track.

The Cobra idles. Distorted bass from the speakers thrums like an adrenalized heart.

Then the music ceases. The door opens. And GARY ARCHER gets out.

Molly or Kelly peeps its white head out.

Archer comes forward. His feet are cinderblocks. His eyes stay on the cradle of grass that nurses Tanya Lee. He sees his car. There's a V-shaped indentation punched into the front-end and a divot pressed into the hood.

It's the REDNESS smeared across everything that makes Gary Archer look away.

CUT TO: We look up out of high grass - Tanya's last seconds of life. We see trees, impossibly high, canting inwards, crowding out the sky. The trees move closer, grow higher, and the sky is gone and there's only BLACKNESS forever.

CUT TO: Archer stares into the grass. He's bawling. He looks away and his eyes snare on something.

He stares into the trees.

IAN WRIGHT looks back.

IAN (O.S.)
Gary Archer figured it out as soon as he saw him. He could see how it'd happened and, for once, it wasn't his fault.

EXT. CARWASH -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

The Cobra passes through a carwash. We see the damaged front-end.

IAN (O.S.)
But it wouldn't matter. It was his car. He was driving. She was dead. And he was Gary Archer.

INT. COBRA/CARWASH -- FLASHBACK

Archer stares out through a sodden windscreen.

His two dogs lie asleep beside him. He runs a hand over their warm bodies and watches as the vehicle is scoured clean.

IAN (O.S.)
There wasn't anybody who
wouldn't think he was capable.
(beat)
So he made an arrangement...

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

Mark watches Ian. Ian watches the road.

IAN
...and tried to cope.

Swish. Swish. Swish.

MARK
Anything else you want to get
off your chest?

IAN
Why did he hate you so much?

Mark takes his time finding an answer. He's looking for the right one.

MARK
We acted like victims.

IAN
You Mark. Not James. He outgrew
James a long time ago.

MARK
Tell James that.

IAN
James' problem was you.

MARK
You don't fucking know!

Ian stamps the accelerator. Mark is pushed back in the seat. The engine roars.

IAN
He's in that big cunt of a car.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

James, Chasely and Mark are sprinting along a street.

Their backs are INCANDESCENT.

IAN (O.S.)
The three of you are in front of
him. You're running for an
intersection.

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

Ian gears up. The 4WD bucks ahead. A T-SECTION looms.

IAN
You stay in the middle of the
road because you don't want him
to know which way you're going
to go.

EXT. INTERSECTION -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

James, Chasely and Mark reach the intersection. The Cobra
reaches them.

IAN (O.S.)
James and Chasely go right. You
go left...

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

Ian reefs the wheel left. He just makes the corner.

IAN (CONT'D)
...and he goes with you.

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

Mark sits on the curb, his face in darkness. His shirt is
ripped and pulled out of shape.

CHASELY (O.S.)
Mark?

Mark looks up. There's a sluice of blood coming out of his
mouth and nose and lot of blood where his eyebrow stud used
to be. The stud from his ear is also missing. So is part of
his earlobe.

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

MARK
It was my turn.

IAN
It was always your turn.

MARK
You weren't there.

IAN
James was. And Chasely...

MARK
She doesn't know anything.

A long beat. Rain patters the roof lightly. The wipers count out the silence like a couple of metronomes.

IAN (CONT'D)
You know he was working at a bakery?... Archer... He was learning how to be a baker. That's a job, isn't it?
(beat)
You never really get a fix on anyone, do you?

Ian drains the last of his beer and gestures toward the floorspace at Mark's feet.

IAN (CONT'D)
One for the road?

Mark keeps his hands primly on his lap.

IAN (CONT'D)
Give us a break.

A beat. Mark glances down. He sees only empty beer bottles.

IAN (CONT'D)
Under the seat. They roll back there... the young fella digs them out like a week later. Thinks they're titty bottles.

Mark stoops over. He steers a hand under the seat and rummages around. His fingers clinch on something and he drags it out.

Mark peers down between his knees at what he's dug up.

He's aged ten years in half as many seconds

Mark lifts Chasely's silly SCHOOL BAG onto his lap -- the one that looks like a tackle box.

Ian spares him a glance and then looks back to the road.

MARK
Where is she?

His diction is lazy; sluggish -- like Archer's in his final hour.

IAN
Do you see the resemblance?

MARK
She didn't do anything.

IAN
Same build. Sexy shoulders.
Those long, swan necks that
drive you fucking nuts. They
could be sisters, Tanya Lee and
Chasely Keys.

MARK
Where is she?

IAN
Say please.

Ian's eyes gleam at some remembered injury.

MARK
Please tell me.

IAN
You first.

Mark stares like a halfwit.

MARK
Where is she?

IAN
Who we talking about?

Mark's lips twitch but fail to make an answer.

IAN
What's my 'type', Mark? You
gotta know by now.

MARK
WHERE IS SHE?!

IAN
Where's Tanya Lee?

Swish. Swish. Swish. Mark slouches. Deflates.

MARK
He never said... I don't know.

IAN
Archer didn't tell you?

A shallow nod of Mark's head.

IAN (CONT'D)
But you knew everything else?
All about me? How it happened?
Archer told you all that?

Another nod.

IAN (CONT'D)
Then you didn't just bump into
me out there? There wasn't any
"coincidence"?

MARK
No.
(beat)
Give her back.

IAN
He lied to you, Mark.

MARK
It doesn't matter.

IAN
It does. First time I saw Gary
Archer was a few days ago. Never
seen the guy before in my life.

MARK
I don't care.

IAN (CONT'D)
All I know about Tanya Lee is
what I've read. We weren't...
intimate. Whatever happened,
happened without me.
(beat)
I don't shit in my own backyard.
Somebody that's going to be
missed is not my type.
(beat)
Straight up. I wasn't there. I'm
not responsible.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH - DAY -- RECENTLY

Ian treads quietly among the trees. A wind rips past him. He goes with it, moving out from the trees. Tanya Lee isn't here. There are no birds.

Ian Wright is alone, on the edge of an acre of cold water. He's come here to understand, playing detective, figuring it out.

It's many months later and it's not even the same place we saw Tanya watching the birds. Ian Wright was never with her.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL - DAY -- RECENTLY

Ian stands in the gloom among the trees. He's watching the trail. He's alone. There's no Gary Archer. No Cobra. No broken body in the grass. It's not even the same place where Archer accidentally ran down Tanya Lee.

It happened months ago and Ian Wright was never there.

INT. 4WD -- BACK TO PRESENT

MARK

He knew about you. He told me.

IAN

What'd I look like? How old was I? What'd we talk about?

MARK

You were there.

IAN

Specifics.

MARK

You had to be there.

IAN

Why would I lie about this? What reason?

Mark starts shaking his head and can't stop.

IAN (CONT'D)

Accident or no accident. Archer knew her or he didn't. It was premeditated or it wasn't. I don't know what happened. All I can be one thousand percent on is I wasn't part of it.

MARK

He knew about you. You were there. You're a liar.

Ian clicks his tongue. He cracks his neck. Then he RIPS the wheel over and the 4WD leaves the road.

Mark buttresses himself against the dash as the vehicle bucks over guttering and rough ground. Ian brakes hard and the 4WD loses its footing. Mark shoves open the door and...

EXT. ROADSIDE

...flees the vehicle. Mark is still hugging Chasely's school port.

A VAST ROADSIDE BILLBOARD hulks over Mark. He sees it and flinches. It's moving.

A PIRATE SHIP swings across the breadth of the billboard, cutting the air like a scythe. Giant copy announces some knock-off theme-park thrill ride: "Raiders of the Barbary Coast".

When Mark remembers Ian, the driver is out of the 4WD and coming around the front of the stationary vehicle. Ian's got something in his hands. Mark crouches to run.

Ian nurses an armful of BEER BOTTLES. He's drinking from one. The others are empty.

Mark steadies himself but he's poised for flight.

Ian leans over and screws an empty beer bottle into the rain-softened soil. His boot heel drills it all the way in.

IAN

Do you know what a sexton does?

Ian starts to pace out a line, taking precise steps. He gulps from a bottle. Beer glistens on his beard.

IAN (CONT'D)

Traditionally, a sexton was an officer of a church.

Ian stops after six steps.

IAN (CONT'D)

They looked after the clergyman and performed duties relating to the church.

Ian stoops down and stabs in a second bottle.

IAN (CONT'D)

That could be ringing bells. Cleaning vestments. Digging graves.

Ian stomps the bottle so the base is flush with the ground.

IAN (CONT'D)

They're called that too... gravediggers.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

A MALE FIGURE moves through rain and darkness carrying a shrouded form. Redness has bloomed through thin material. The figure passes beneath a NATURAL ARCHWAY formed by interlocking trees.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- BACK TO PRESENT

The pirate ship sails the air behind Mark. It seems to scythe lower and closer with each slicing arc.

Ian begins to pace out another line. The two beer bottles have made two corners.

IAN

When a sexton lays someone to rest, something goes on the grave to mark the resting place...

Ian flips a bottle and catches it by its throat.

IAN (CONT'D)

...a grave marker. It doesn't have to be fancy. What matters is it lets the sexton know what ground is available... and what isn't.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

Muddy hands lift a shovel high and bring it down with force.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- BACK TO PRESENT

Ian shoves, then stamps the third bottle into the earth, making three corners of a square. He paces out the last side.

IAN

Because you need a system. You need to know what's going on down there.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

We see frail torchlight through trees and rain and a FIGURE immersed in a trench. The figure stares into the pit, fixated on something we can't see.

EXT. ROADSIDE -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN

Because if you don't know and there isn't a system... you can get into trouble...

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

Bright torchlight sears the upper body of a woman. She's curled away from us, hands clasped in front of her as if in prayer.

There's a lot wrong with those hands. The flesh has dwindled in places, red bone and black tendons showing through.

Poking through ashen-blond hair is a column of thoracic vertebrae. Whoever she was, she's been in the earth a long time.

We withdraw. We see drooling walls of soil. We see a pool of rotten water. We see a mud-spattered Dolphin torch.

We see a grave.

We shrink further back. We leave the grave. We see a FIGURE on all fours, his face bent to the ground like a beast. He's deranged at this moment.

We lift a little higher and see why...

Close enough for him to touch lays the shrouded broken body of TANYA LEE. We can see the dips and peaks of her lifeless face through the sopping material.

It's the sickest joke. A guy goes to bury a body and finds somebody else's...

EXT. ROADSIDE -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN
He got into trouble.

Ian kicks in the last bottle, caging himself inside.

Secret mechanisms at the back of the billboard grind and crack.

MARK
You hurt her?

IAN
Haven't touched her.

Ian walks back to the 4WD.

Mark sets off after him in a slow, sickened lumber.

INT. 4WD - LATE AFTERNOON

Cowed trees and wet rooves stream by. The canals are engorged with rain.

Mark sees none of it. His eyes stay on Chasely's school port, held across his knees.

INT. 4WD

Mark lifts his face and returns to the world. He sits up.

Ian taps the horn.

EXT. STREET -- LATE AFTERNOON

A group of boys move out of the way to let the car through. They were playing cricket last time we saw them.

Ian waves and slaps the horn again.

The boys launch improvised sailing boats into a flooded gutter and chase after them.

The 4WD turns into Ian Wright's garage.

INT. GARAGE

Ian kills the engine and gets out.

Mark leaves the vehicle and stands in the dark.

There's a bleep as the car doors lock. Ian moves through the gloom toward the back of the garage.

MARK

Send her out.

Ian opens a door leading into the house.

IAN

Get her yourself.

Ian steps through the doorway and is swallowed up.

INT. DOORWAY/HALLWAY -- LATE AFTERNOON

Mark stares into blackness trying to see down the hallway. He's got Chasely's school port in one hand, a shifter spanner in the other. He lifts the spanner and takes a step.

He can hear a TV. He takes another step. There's a doorway. He looks in. It's a bathroom. There's feet-shaped puddles on the floor. The tub hasn't been emptied. Dollops of shaving cream prickled with hair float on the surface.

Another step. He can hear a clothes-dryer somewhere. He gets to a second doorway and looks inside. A kid's bedroom. Needs tidying.

He looks forward. Ian is there. He watches Mark for a beat then leaves the hallway.

Mark is in agony. He can't move himself for a moment, then a clog of backed-up commands break through and he lunges forward.

Mark charges through a doorway and turns to stone.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Mark sees Chasely right away...

He knows it's Chasely though he can't see her face.

They've dressed her in a thrift shop wedding dress, saffroned with age and use.

Ian's graveside torch-lit vision makes more sense now -- the dirty frayed hem of a long white dress and a pair of dusty feet.

Perhaps Mark sees the LITTLE BOY sitting quietly in front of a TV. Or its father sitting on the edge of a couch, watching Mark keenly. But there's no questioning Mark's awareness of the object that has been placed over Chasely's head. It isn't a veil.

IAN (O.S.)
And the wild regrets and the
bloody sweats...

It's a box. Plainly made. It locks around her neck. There is a piece of PVC piping for Chasely to breathe through and nothing to see or hear out. From the sound she's making, the piping fits deeply into her mouth.

IAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
None knew so well as I...

Chasely's hands are clasped to the side of the box where her ears would be. It makes her look like she's trying to block her ears or grasp her temples to scream.

IAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
For he who lives more lives than
one...

She is standing because she can't fall down. Eyelets on the box radiate a length of twine that curls around an exposed ceiling beam.

IAN (CONT'D)
More deaths than one must die.

Mark turns to Ian, moving like he's a hundred.

IAN (CONT'D)
You have to give her up.

Mark remembers the spanner and waggles it.

IAN (CONT'D)

She's not like us. Six months, a year, two years, she'll tell. No matter how she feels about you, she'll tell. It's too much for her.

Mark looks back to Chasely.

IAN (CONT'D)

She doesn't know you're here.

(beat)

She won't know you're gone.

(beat)

Give her up.

Mark goes to Chasely.

IAN (CONT'D)

Don't!

But he does. He almost gets to her... when someone else enters the room.

Ian's WIFE jabs Ian's RIFLE at Mark. Mark reels back. She dogs him with the rifle, jabbing him like it's a bayonet.

IAN (CONT'D)

Kay!

The little kid jumps. Big blue eyes watch Mark lose his hold on Chasely's school port. It ruptures on the hard tile floor, spilling Chasely's private things.

The BRIDE oscillates toward the noise. Chasely heard.

Mark falls back on a couch. KAY WRIGHT stabs at him with the rifle, breaking skin beneath his eye.

She's dressed in a dowdy bathrobe but when she moves or stoops over she shows tattooed and pierced tits.

IAN (CONT'D)

He can't hurt us, Kay.

She looks at Ian. Tears have gouged tracks through her make-up.

KAY

They'll take you away from me.

IAN

That isn't possible. We're too strong.

KAY

I couldn't stand it.

She digs the muzzle into Mark's face.

KAY (CONT'D)
He hates us.

IAN
He can't hurt us.

She tries to believe it... and isn't able.

KAY
I couldn't stand it.

She tilts her face to the stock. Shuts her eyes.

IAN
Tell her, Mark!

Mark lifts his eyes from the muzzle's abyss.

IAN (CONT'D)
She's going to kill you. Tell her!

MARK
I don't know what—

IAN
Where's Tanya?

For a second, Mark forgets to be afraid. He stares stupidly at Ian as the injuries to his face spill bloody tears.

IAN (CONT'D)
You heard! Where is she?

MARK
He didn't tell me.

IAN
Archer didn't know.
(beat)
You're the liar, Mark.

MARK
I told you everything.

IAN
You haven't told me one true thing.

Kay viciously pecks Mark with the rifle, opening his face again.

MARK
Tell me what to say.

The little boy starts howling. He grabs handfuls of air trying to lure his mother. He's invisible to her.

Not to Chasely. The noise pierces Ian's imperfect prison and she hears. She fights her tethers, bucking like a snagged marionette.

Ian goes to the boy.

IAN
Where is she, Mark? Where's
Tanya Lee?

MARK
How could I know that?

Ian picks up his little son. The boy tries to burrow under his dad's arm.

IAN
You were there, Mark.

Mark blinks.

IAN (CONT'D)
Had to be.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

She's curled away from us, hands clasped in front of her as if in prayer. There's a lot wrong with those hands...

Whoever she was, she's been in the earth a long time.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- BACK TO PRESENT

Ian gently drums the boy's back. He stops crying but watches his mother closely.

IAN
There was a coincidence. Not the one you wanted us to buy. Catching me with my pants down, that was just reward for your effort. The real coincidence, the one you're trying so hard to disown, was our first proper introduction.

EXT. FORESTRY -- NIGHT -- FLASHBACK

We leave the grave. We see a figure on all fours. His face is bent to the ground like a beast. He's deranged at this moment.

We lift a little higher and see why...

Close enough for him to touch lays the shrouded broken body of TANYA LEE. We can see the dips and peaks of her lifeless face through the sopping material.

A guy goes to bury a body and finds somebody else's...

The figure lifts his head and makes a sound that only a broken mind could make.

It's Mark.

EXT. LIVING ROOM -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN

It's a 14-minute drive from the station to here. The afternoon you left your little gift for me I don't remember a second of it. Why was that you think?

(beat)

Because I was thinking about you, Mark. How it was a stranger's decision whether I could keep my little life or it was about to change into something I wasn't ready for... never even imagined. By the time you called I would have done anything, promised anything, humiliated myself in any way you wanted.

(beat)

I know why he hated you, Mark.

(beat)

You made Gary Archer a victim.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Archer stares into the grass. He's bawling. He looks away and his eyes snare on something.

He stares into the trees.

MARK VINCENT looks back.

EXT. FORESTRY/TRAIL -- DAY -- FLASHBACK

Mark is on his knees. His mouth and nose are bleeding. Archer is screaming at him and slapping into the back of his skull.

There's no art to the attack. It's born of blind, spastic fury. Hot tears stream from Archer's blood-gorged eyes. He's grieving the end of his own life as much as that of the girl who stumbled in front of his car.

In contrast, Mark's face is devoid of emotion. He barely flinches as he takes delivery of every blow.

EXT. LIVING ROOM -- BACK TO PRESENT

IAN

It worked. Not perfectly.
There's no way you could have
expected me to get in touch with
Archer. Sorry about that, but I
had to find you. You got your
outcome anyway. Secret safe.

(beat)

You don't leave with anything
else.

Blood and tears mingle on Mark's face.

IAN (CONT'D)

Finding a way to confess, Mark?

Rose-coloured water drips off Mark's jaw.

IAN (CONT'D)

That's all we'd get, isn't it?

(beat)

He can't hurt us, Kay.

She tries to believe it...

KAY

GET OUT!

Ian corrals Mark toward the front door.

Kay watches him all the way out.

Mark sees Chasely one final time. She has stopped struggling.
The rope takes more of her weight than before. She's given
up.

Mark leaves Ian's bride caged in darkness and silence without
hope of an end to either.

EXT. HOUSE

Mark lingers on the doorstep, unsure what to do with himself.
Ian Wright fills up the doorframe. Mark isn't coming back
inside.

IAN

You're sharp enough to know
they'll take a special interest
in this. You'll come through it.

(beat)

We both know how well you cope.

Ian looks back inside as if someone has called him. Then he
turns back to Mark and allows him to occupy his mind one last
time.

IAN (CONT'D)

Go home.

Ian Wright closes the door. We hear it lock.

Mark stands uselessly in the rain. The arched trellis gives him no shelter. The sailing boats and their captains have gone home.

Mark does too.

EXT. FORESTRY/MARSH

Mark moves through the trees. Ahead, he sees the blaze of sunlight on water. Someone is standing on the bank, face to the water.

Her name is Tanya Lee.

A wind rips past him. Mark goes with it, moving out from the trees.

She hasn't seen him.

Mark moves nearer. She's still watching the birds. The wind throws up her dark hair and scrapes the water.

Mark stops, almost within touching distance. She senses him. She starts to turn.

Tanya smiles and it's as dazzling as the light on the water.

Mark smiles back.

Tanya Lee fades away like an apparition.

The rookery empties. Birds flee to the sky.

We move across the water. There's a FIGURE on the far bank -- a MAN with an old yellow dog. The man is dragging something from the water. We move closer. He's hauling out a long link of chain, interspersed with blunt hooks.

Tanya's FATHER gathers in the chain and pitches it deep into the water. He waits until it settles then starts to draw it in. Hand over hand he reels it back.

He's dragging the marsh. He looks tireless.

For the moment, the earth keeps its secrets.

It won't forever.

It never does.