

GIDEON

Written by

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Inspired by true events

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EXT. AFGHANISTAN- MORNING 1997

Sun rising, and the announcement for the morning prayers begin. The small town starts waking up to begin their day- Farmers are present, milling around and gathering their things to start their day. Fuzzy shot of a flower comes into focus as it becomes apparent that it's an opium poppy... and we see fields of it. Collage of various stages of farming and processing. At some point we see the product in a laboratory setting, being processed further and loaded onto planes.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD-GIDEON WV- TWILIGHT- FALL

Plane flying overhead Beautiful Mountain landscape

TITLE Over

Senior Night Gideon, West Virginia 1997

TATE (V.O.)
When I was a little boy, my grandpa
used to say that these mountains
are what protects us...

Players walk onto the field, seniors holding hands.

TATE (V.O.)
...No hurricanes or earthquakes
around these parts. But when the
pills came to West Virginia, we
learned the same mountains can trap
you just as easy...

Shots of football fans, cheerleaders, and characters that
will come later.

TATE (V.O.)
...Switchback country roads, going
somewhere and nowhere, then dying
up some abandoned holler. Like so
many of us did.

CUT TO:

EX. FOOTBALL FIELD-NIGHT

Kickoff- LEJUAN catches the ball at the 20 yard line and takes off. It's a wonderful return. His teammates are cheering him on down the field from the sidelines. LeJuan makes it 50 yards, and gets leveled by an opposing player. He shows no sign of movement initially, then pops up quickly, animated and congratulates the player who hits him, and gives an ok to his family, reassuring he's fine.

Continuing collage of big hits and action.

CUT TO:

Halftime: The seniors are introduced and walk onto the field, escorted by their parents.

ANNOUNCER
Tonight, we commemorate the last home game of our Gideon High Seniors with the introduction of their family to the 50-yard line. Through the generosity of the Gideon Ruritan Club...

Muddied LeJuan interlocks arms with his father WALTHER and his mother IVOLENE.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
...and Mountain Field and Farm, our Senior classmen and their parents will be invited to a banquet held in their honor this weekend at the fairgrounds at Draper Memorial Park.

Tate, his mother DEEDEE and Grandpa STANTON holding hands on the sideline.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Senior Tailback, Team Captain and President of the Honor Society, LeJuan Carter! Escorted by his mother Ivolene and father Walther Carter.

LeJuan and his parents walk together to the 50 yard line.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Senior Linebacker and editor of Gideon High Press, Tate Hanlin! Escorted by his mother Deidre Hanlin, and his grandfather, Stanton Dotson.

INT. LOCKER ROOM-AFTER THE GAME

The football team sits around the coach. The team is muddy and defeated. LeJuan has his leg elevated with ice on it as well as his shoulder.

COACH MORTON is around 45, balding but in fantastic shape

COACH MORTON
Gentleman, it's been one hell of a season with y'all. Here we are at the last game of the year, and for some of you, the last game of your life. You played your guts out, and you lost with dignity and damn, boys...

He looks around, pausing to reflect for a moment.

COACH MORTON (CONT'D)
I take my hat off to you.
(players show signs of life)
(MORE)

COACH MORTON (CONT'D)

As your coach, and as a man, that's all I could ever ask of you. Look at ya- with your half assed whiskers- some of ya old enough to go. Some of you will stay around, work in the mines, become linemen or work timber with your dads and uncles. Some of y'all will head off to college and become doctors, teachers or businessmen. As you grow up, you'll look back on your days playin' this rough and tumble kids game as the simpler times. Times when you worked on yourselves as athletes and people. Gentleman- Seniors- During your lives, you're gonna have the chance to do some good...to make choices that'll make other people's life better. See to it you take em'. You don't know it yet, but the things you learned lookin' out for one another on this dirty old field, is gonna guide your hand steady, and your heart true. Because your quarterback don't stand a chance without the O-line.

The boys start cheering.

COACH MORTON (CONT'D)

And boys, that's how this game is played-football, and life. You watch out for your family, your friends and neighbors. You keep your head up and work your asses off. Through that work, you'll find purpose of being and your place in this world. Remember your roots and, but above all, you remember to love one another. Hell, if you can just manage that, I promise you, God's grace will shine upon you and yours. Because, you ain't cubs...y'all's tigers, ain't you?

TEAM

Yes Coach Morton!

COACH MORTON

You're warriors!

TEAM

Yes Coach Morton!

COACH MORTON

Now get in here...right here with me...one last time, seniors! I love you like sons, each and every one of you. It's been an honor and a privilege. Pastor, please take us home...

PASTOR

Let us pray...

A shifty, cheaply dressed pastor recites the Lord's Prayer in his thick country drawl. We see the weary emotion on the boys' faces. At the window of the locker room we see a figure looking in on the scene.

COACH MORTON
Tigers on 3! 1, 2,3- Tigers!

BLACKOUT

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOM-NIGHT

Enter COYOTE who was informally adopted by Tate's when he was 15. He's dressed in a Morbid Angel t-shirt, and a flannel. His hair is long and he has silver rings on both hands.

Coyote has his head down, with his hands on the fence- he's abruptly brought back from his meditations as Tate tackle-hugs him from behind.

TATE HANLIN is a high school senior and aspiring writer. He's fiercely loyal with an introspective and brooding nature.

TATE
Damn Coy Dog, I didn't know you
were gonna come all the way from
Savannah for the game!

COYOTE
(Hugging Tate)
Caught the hell hound after class
yesterday morning, little brother.
You know I wouldn't miss you and
LeJuan busting heads for the last
time.

TATE
I can't believe they even let your
scraggly ass in here. Ain't you got
some sort of lifetime ban from
school sanctioned events?

COYOTE
Had to grease a palm or two. Ain't
no thing.

TATE
You ain't changed a bit. You seen
our family yet?

COYOTE
Nah, I made it here right before
halftime. Figured I'd see mama and
them at home.

LeJuan enters the conversation from behind, with an icepack on his shoulder.

LeJuan howls like a Coyote.

LEJUAN
Motherfuckin Coyote!

COYOTE
 (Hugging LeJuan)
 O.G. LeJuan! You running your pop's
 store yet or what?

LEJUAN
 Gettin' there, bro. Takes time.

COYOTE
 I saw y'all in the locker room half
 naked praying with that country-ass
 preacher.

TATE
 What was you looking in the window
 for anyway, queer.

COYOTE
 Shit, I forgot about more pussy
 than you ever had.

LEJUAN
 Those Anthony Center twink boys don't count, bro!
 Everyone laughs.

COYOTE
 You always did joke about the wrong
 shit.

Enter JACKI JONES: smart, beautiful.

JACKI
 My boys! Y'all did it!
 LeJuan's shoulder is iced up and he's noticeably limping.

JACKI (CONT'D)
 Baby! LeJuan, baby, you ok? How's
 your shoulder?

LeJuan holds his arm up triumphantly.

LEJUAN
 I'M FUCKING DONE WITH FOOTBALL!! It
 feels weird to say out loud, y'all.
 I mean, what the hell?

He laughs nervously, trying to hide his sadness.

TATE
 So you ain't considering that
 Fairmont scholarship? It ain't a
 full ride but you'd maybe get P.T.
 as a freshman.

LEJUAN
 Nah man. I'm a dope receiver.
 Better than most around these
 parts, but I'm like "country" good,
 ya know? Them Georgia boys, Florida
 boys and them'll mess my skinny ass
 up.

JACKI
Y'all remember when LeJuan ran for
5 touchdowns against Roane County
back in 8th grade?

LEJUAN

Putting his arm around Jacki
I dedicated that game to you, Jacki
girl.

JACKI
(Poking gentle fun)
Oh yeah. Then you just went home.
Big talk.

TATE
Well, you played it as good as
anyone I've ever seen. You've been
somethin' to watch over the years,
man, for real.

LEJUAN
It's been a ride with you, Tater.
I'm gonna miss it, but at the same
time...well I'm glad I'm done with
two a days and suicide runs up that
mountain. Besides, I ain't trying
to be no damn cripple like Johnny
Halstead. Walkin around Wal-Mart
all humped over like Quasimodo.
Talkin about "Let's get you over to
customer service..."

Mimicking Johnny Halstead's damaged walk. Everyone laughs.

TATE
But Johnny got a bad beat though.
Got leveled by that big ol' boy
from West Liberty. I remember
seeing the footage wonderin' if
he'd get up from a hit like that.

LEJUAN
Not me Tater- I ain't built for
that shit. I'm tryin to smoke some
weed, have some babies, run this
business, maybe do a little
travelin' or somethin'.

COYOTE
Look at y'all. Sappy motherfuckers,
Jesus. Whenever you're done givin'
each other hand jobs, can we please
go smoke some of this hotlanta
Chronic I got stuffed down my
pants?

LEJUAN
Coyote, my dude right here! You
always show up with some shit. I'm
tired of this redneck homegrown
Tate been gettin' from down the
creek anyway.

TATE
 You wasn't sick of it last weekend
 when I smoked you out and you
 started pretending like you was
 Jamaican and shit.

LEJUAN
 (In a Jamaican accent)
 You know me family's be island
 peoples now. The herb just puts me
 in touch with me ancestors!

LeJuan sings a reggae song and dances comically.

JACKI
 You sound like my Irish Uncle
 Seamus.

Everyone busts up laughing.

LEJUAN
 Only some white folks would laugh
 at some shit like that.

TATE
 I thought your dad was from, like,
 Cowen or something?

Everyone laughs again.

LEJUAN
 Weren't but like 3 brothers in
 history ever from Webster County-
 I'm pretty sure they all got
 lynched.

COYOTE
 Y'all joke about that shit, but
 those Klan motherfuckers are still
 around. They tried to recruit my
 brother before he got sent to Mt.
 Olive.

TATE
 For real? What'd he do?

COYOTE
 Fuckin Shooter. Him and Jaybird
 flipped on em. Showed up like they
 was fixin to sign up for the white
 robe, ended up pistol whippin 'em
 and takin their 4 wheelers.

LEJUAN
 Your brother crazy as hell. I was
 sorry to hear he got sent up the
 river, man. Respect.

COYOTE
 Yeah, He's been in and out since he
 was a kid. Hell, he's got more
 friends inside than he does out in
 the world.

JACKI
I always thought Shooter was a lil cutie. All muscles. Just makes a girl wanna get religion.

LEJUAN
Damn, Jacki. You better Slow your goddamn roll.

TATE
10 years is a stretch though. Not somethin' you can just shrug off, no matter how hard you are.

JACKI
Y'all always talkin about depressing stuff. How bout we just pile in my truck, turn on some music and catch a buzz?

LEJUAN
See, now that's what's up. You think Jasper is working the register at the Poke n Tote?

TATE
Hell yeah, I think Friday is his night. Dude always lets us jack whatever we need...but he might need some incentives.

Tate and Coy start laughing, LeJuan just shakes his head.

JACKI
It takes a team, I reckon. Hell, I don't mind. He's sweet anyway.

INT. POKE N TOTE CONVENIENCE STORE- NIGHT

Jacki goes in first and starts chatting up the guy at the counter, while the boys head to the cooler and start stuffing their pants with beer and cigarettes.

JACKI
Hey Jasper, how you been, honey?

JASPER is on the spectrum, and overweight.

JASPER
Aww you know just a... well. Workin' and stuff.

JACKI
Uh huh, I hear that. You still collectin' comics?

JASPER
Yes ma'am. Going to the convention in Huntington next month. Hopin' to get some old X-Men.

The boys are in the back, stuffing their pants full of goods.

TATE

Hey Coy, can you grab me a
Mickey's? I'll get us some Camels.

LEJUAN

Oh shit, they got Old E. Grab me
that 8 ball.

COYOTE

That shit makes me crazy, man. I
swear they put crack or something
in there.

LEJUAN

Nah, that's that Cisco. You ain't
never seeing my black ass drinkin'
that shit. My uncle fucks with it
and I swear he ain't right.

The boys get what they need and head out of the store...Jacki
stays behind chatting with Jasper.

JACKI

It's always nice seeing you, honey.

Unhooking her bra, she lays it out on the counter. Pulling up
her shirt, she flashes her titties to Jasper.

(JACKI CONT'D)

This is for you.

JASPER

Aww, Jeez Jacki. Uhh, yeah, I. Come
back soon- I work every Friday! And
Tuesdays! And every other
Wednesday!

JACKI

Winking at him
Sure thing, sweetie.

INT.JACKI'S SUV-NIGHT

TATE (V.O.)

Jacki was always like one of the
guys...

Everyone drinking, smoking weed and laughing with southern
hip-hop playing on the radio.

TATE (V.O, CONT'D)

Even though most of our friends
were secretly in love with her, she
knew how to handle it without
making us feel silly or awkward.
She came from money, but hanging
around with all of us you'd never
know it. She always had this glow
that kinda danced around her. When
she smiled, you couldn't help from
doing likewise.

JACKI
Y'all wanna drive over to Booger
Hole and build a fire or somethin'?

LEJUAN
Man, there ain't never anything
going on around here. All we do is
drive around in circles.

JACKI
We got it good, the way I see it.
We can just do whatever we have the
mind to. Plenty of dirt roads to
get lost on. I don't know what I'd
do in a city. Heck, I'd be scared
driving around there.

LEJUAN
I got cousins in Pittsburgh. Every
time I go up there, shit's poppin.

COYOTE
Savannah's pretty badass. Lots of
whacked out art students. Great
drugs though.

LeJuan takes a hit off the joint.

LEJUAN
I second that shit.

TATE
Booger Hole. Y'all ever think about
the weird, country ass names for
some of the stuff around here? I
swear it's like they had a contest
at some point to see who could come
up with the most ass backwards
shit.

LEJUAN
No doubt. You ever just pull up a
state map and look at the little
towns? Droop, Pax, Muddlety...

JACKI
Ooooooh, that's a good driving game!
We'll take turns sayin' out
bumfucked names of towns we know,
and whoever has the best one, wins!
Jane Lew!

LEJUAN
(in a twangy accent)
Bet, Bet... Delbarton!

TATE
How bout Paw Paw?

The weed is kicking in and they're all laughing now.

JACKI
Bozoo! Woo hoo!

LEJUAN
Big Ugly!

TATE
There ain't no town called Big Ugly.

LEJUAN
No, for real, though- ain't that where Red mama from?

TATE
How you gonna talk shit about Red's mom, bro? That woman's a saint.

LEJUAN
Yeah, but she still look like Irish Jabba the Hutt and shit.

TATE
You can't pick on gingers. They're a marginalized people.

Everyone laughs.

COYOTE
(Deadpan))
Fuckin Erbacon.

Everyone gets quiet for a second- they look at each other and start howling with laughter.

TATE
Hell! Fuckin Erbacon for the win!

EXT.FIELD WITH BONFIRE-NIGHT

They pull into a field and there's already a party underway. About 20 people are gathered around a fire, blasting music, drinking beer and chatting. Most of them are friends from football and school.

TATE
What's up fuckers?

Enter RED FOSTER- a close part of their friend group. Coming from a blue collar and musical background.

RED
Great game, Tater. You want a cold one?

TATE
Thanks Red. Nah man, I got a 40 doing me just fine.

LEJUAN
Get over here, Red. Coy got some chronic if you tryin' to blaze.

RED
Like some two-toke or somethin'?

COYOTE

Nah bubba, this shit is that next level. Even better than that green we stole from your Uncle Dale that time.

RED

Holy hell! I don't know if I need any of that then. That stuff Dale had like to put me in the hospital.

LEJUAN

All I know is ain't feelin' no pain right now. That linebacker from Bluefield brought the wood to my knee.

RED

That was a hell of a kickoff return. I woulda sworn you was long gone.

LEJUAN

I was in fourth gear, no doubt.

LeJuan mimics like he's running a ball with a joint in his mouth Everyone laughs.

LATER...

RED

Talking to Coyote

Yessir, I'm headin' to Logan with Pa after graduation. Gonna be settin' spads for Eagle Creek.

JACKI

I don't why you in such a hurry to get in the mines and get your killin' done.

RED

Come on, Jacki. Your dad worked the same mines as my dad and uncles. Sure as hell what paid for that fancy ride you showed up in.

JACKI

Yeah, well I didn't have much say in that, did I?

RED

Both our families come from the mines and we're damn proud of it. I know I am.

JACKI

That's because y'all don't know no damn better. No, everyone drives around in their jacked up \$60,000 pickup trucks like they're hot shit, not thinking about the money that paid for it.

(MORE)

JACKI (CONT'D)
 Rippin' off the tops of the
 mountains, fuckin up our drinkin'
 water.

RED
 You sound like one of those
 hardcore liberals. Coal money runs
 our town. Runs this whole state.

JACKI
 Operator's money, maybe. Not our
 money. Anyway, Wal Mart runs it
 now. No, I mean... it just feels
 like we been set up is all. Some
 kind of conspiracy or something. I
 ain't smart enough to figure out
 how or who's behind it, I just feel
 we're all the butt of some joke or
 something. You can call me a
 liberal or a Yankee or whatever,
 but I know when something ain't
 right.

RED
 Ain't nothin perfect in this world,
 Jacki. Hell, I can make close to a
 hundred grand a year right out of
 high school. Really provide ya
 know?

JACKI
 I didn't mean to get worked up
 about it. It's hard not to think
 about when you stare at it every
 day. I don't know if my daddy's
 ever gonna pull through. Hell, my
 cousin just turned 40 and his lungs
 are about half gummed up with
 silica. It's just sufferin' is all.
 All around. Sometimes I wonder if
 that's all we're good for.

RED
 Goddamn, I need a drink! Any y'all
 need a pull of this?

Red pulls out a pint from his back pocket and takes a swig.

TATE
 Hell, Red. A cool breeze makes you
 wanna drink. Me and you got what
 they call the curse of the Irish.

COYOTE
 What? Little peckers and freckles?

Tate spits out his drink into the fire laughing.

TATE
 I'm gonna whip your ass!

They start to play around and slap box, while conversations
 are overheard across the fire.

VOICE (O.S.)
 Who brought fuckin' Snoop Dog?

We see a group of rednecks with their pants pulled down to their knees and their hats on sideways, mimicking LeJuan and making racist gestures.

JACKI
Just ignore those assholes, honey.

VOICE
You at the wrong fuckin' fire, boy.

LEJUAN
People always got some shit. Nah man, chill. I ain't trying to let these necks ruin senior night.

TATE
Jacki, could you hold my drink, darlin? I'm fixin' to have a talk with these boys.

Suddenly a figure comes out of the darkness, and into the firelight, seemingly out of nowhere. CURTIS TYLER is a gruff, bearded, dark natured character who doesn't talk much, but has a hollow and sinister air about him.

CURTIS
Y'all got lotta opinions on things.

JACKI
I guess it don't hurt nobody just talkin' about stuff.

CURTIS
Mmm.

COYOTE
Shit, I thought I recognized you. You're Bumper's little brother.

CURTIS
Depends who's askin'.

Tate gets irritated and walks up to Curtis.

TATE
You got a problem or somethin, bud?

COYOTE
Chill out, little brother. Curtis is aight. I was tight with his brother when we was in Anthony Center back in the day.

CURTIS
I heard of you.

COYOTE
How's that crazy fucker anyway?

CURTIS
Dead as hell.

COYOTE
Jesus, what happened?

CURTIS
I just found him one night. People
got thoughts on it, but I reckon we
all got thoughts on things.

JACKI
I'm real sorry to hear about your
brother. It's Curtis, right?

CURTIS
Life's a bitch. But I got some good
beans if y'all trying to get high.

COYOTE
Shit, man. What you sittin on?

CURTIS
Oxy 40s.

COYOTE
I ain't heard of that- they like
percs or something?

CURTIS
More like morphine, but about twice
as good without all the puking.

COYOTE
Bullshit- Ain't nothin better than
Morphine but Dilaudid, and that
shit's like a cancer fairytale.

CURTIS
Well man, you got twenty bucks, you
can find out for yourself.

COYOTE
Whatchu think Tater? You wanna give
em' a go?

TATE
Nah, bud. Gonna stick to booze this
evening. Take it easy, though.
Never heard of this shit, and I
don't know anything about this
dude.

Suddenly, another guy walks up to the fire from the group
that was antagonizing LeJuan. Friends with Curtis, he's drunk
and looking for trouble. He's lanky and tall, with wild eyes,
dressed in camo pants and a KKK T-shirt that says "The
Original Boys in the Hood"

RACIST REDNECK
(directed towards Tate)
You like ta run that cocksucker of
yours, don't ya?

TATE
Shit...reckon it's none of your
goddamn business what I say, or who
the fuck I say it to.

Racist Redneck flips his cigarette into the fire and walks up
to Tate.

RACIST REDNECK
Bout had enough of your shit, boy.

TATE
Nice shirt, asshole.

Tate takes off his coat and hands it to Coyote and goes nose to nose with him. About two tense seconds pass as they square off next to the fire.

JACKI
Tate, stop it now. We didn't come out here for this!

COYOTE
Aw, Jacki, these boys'll work it out.

Tate punches him in the face and knocks him down, hard. Everyone surrounds them, but the fight is over quick.

JACKI
Jesus, Tate- I swear to God!

RED
By God, that'll learn em'!

CURTIS
Looks like your boy just whupped my buddy's ass.

COYOTE
Fuck it- You still tryin' to get high?

CURTIS
Yessir.

INT.CURTIS'S TRUCK-NIGHT

Curtis hands Coy a pill and pops one into his mouth.

CURTIS
Suck on it for a minute or two to get the coating off- spit it out once it's white. After that, we'll bust it up and hoot it off this.

They both methodically suck the coating off the pill, spitting the residue out of the window. Curtis wipes the pill off with a handkerchief, and holds it up to the overhead light.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
You see that? That's the shit right there.

Curtis breaks up the pill, and cuts it into 4 lines. They clean off the tray and Jacki watches them intently.

COYOTE
Got a kick to it,huh?

CURTIS
You'll see in about 5 minutes.

Music playing as they start to nod off in the truck as the drugs take hold. Jacki watches them through the window and bites her nails.

DISSOLVE TO

EX.DAY-STANTON'S HOUSE LATE SPRING- 1997

Outdoors on a perfect sunny day. Everyone is getting set for the big graduation party. All the women are sitting around in a circle, stringing beans and cleaning corn.

TATE (V.O.)
People always made a big deal about graduation here. Mama said it's a bittersweet time for parents because they're happy their kids made it through, but sad on the account we wasn't kids anymore.

They chatter and drink beer. Deedee is at the center of it all, as happy as a mother could be. Jacki and some of the high school girls are helping too.

TATE V.O.
Everyone was talkin' about the jobs they got lined up, or the schools they were taking off to.

Some of the dads are playing horseshoes while the young kids are running around chasing dogs and playing tag. Tate, LeJuan, Red and some of the boys are filling their red solo cups at the keg and they notice grandpa Stanton tending the coals for the pig roast.

TATE
Hey Pap- you need some help over here?

STANTON
I reckon got everything I need. Y'all gonna do some square dancin' later?

LEJUAN
Uhhh, I don't know Mr. Dotson. Maybe if I get drunk enough.

TATE
I ain't too much on the old timey stuff these days, Pawpaw. But if you're gonna be callin'...

STANTON
Well we ain't gonna get too crazy with it. It'd do your mama's heart good to see you dancin' this evening. Hell, when you was a boy, you'd clog around like you was D. Ray White!

RED
I love all that old stuff. My pap
been teaching me to pick a guitar
since I was small. Picked up the
fiddle a little while back too.

STANTON

Well. you just keep at it, Red. It's important that young
fellas like yourself keep this music alive. You feel up to
sittin' in with the boys for a spell when the music gets on?

RED
I mean, heck yeah. I don't know if
I could keep up, but I'll give it a
go if you think they wouldn't mind.

STANTON
Aw hell, them boys'll be half
kicked in the ass by the time you
come up. You could play circles
around em' by then.

TATE
Shoot Red, I ain't seen you play in
front of folks before. That's cool,
man.

LEJUAN
(cheers everyone)
Now this is gonna be a god dang hoe-
down!

STANTON
Boys, we got a pig in the ground,
music to play and enough corn
liquor for a log rollin'. Things'll
get complicated for y'all soon
enough, but right now, here with
your kinfolks and buddies, these
are the good times. You don't owe
no one shit, and everything in your
life all out in front of you.

DEEDEE
(hollers at Tate))
Tate, y'all mind taking these half-
runners out back to soak?

TATE
Yeah mama. You need a beer or
something?

DEEDEE
Tell Daddy I said for you to bring
over his Mason Jar.

TATE
That time already, huh?

DEEDEE
Tate, honey, I'm done workin- Hell,
I'm about done raisin' my baby boy.

Messes up Tate's hair, smiling

Might as well catch a buzz. After
18 years, I think I've earned it.

Tate brings over the jar of moonshine and hands it to his
mom. She takes off the lid, pours some on the table and
lights it on fire.

TATE
Jesus mom, you tryin' to burn down
the house or something?

DEEDEE
Shoo- your daddy gets the best
moonshine from those Nicholas
County boys. None of that peach pie
nonsense. See that blue flame?
That's the real deal right there.

She takes a drink from the jar, without flinching.

DEEDEE (CONT'D)
Now, we can have some fun... I'm so
proud of you, baby.

TATE
Thanks, mama. Appreciate you and
pap puttin' on this big spread for
us.

DEEDEE
So you gonna go off and be a
writer, huh? You always were a
reader. I used to have to pull your
little chapter books out of your
hand when it was dinner time.

TATE
I dunno. I'm gonna try it out. I
don't feel like I'm too cut out for
much else.

DEEDEE
Tate, honey, you're gonna be
whatever you want to be. You got a
good head. Your only problem is you
tend to overthink things. You got
that from your daddy. Jesus, I wish
he could be here for this.

TATE
He's here in spirit, mama.

LeJuan and Jacki walk up and, overhearing, join the
conversation.

LEJUAN
That writing scholarship to WVU
gonna get you someplace, Tater. You
ever come down with, what, that
writer's block, maybe you should
try telling a story about us. About
growin' up around here.

JACKI
Oh Tate. No, really, that would be cool. Somebody from here, telling about it.

DEEDEE
Jacki, how's your mom keepin'?

JACKI
You know her. Between church and those horses, she's the only person I ever met that just stays happy for no good reason.

TATE
How's your dad?

JACKI
(unsteadily)
Poorly. He stays in his chair a lot. There and in bed. Since the accident, it just seemed like he lost his spark or something.

DEEDEE
From what I know about Paul Michael Jones, it's hard to imagine anything keeping him down.

JACKI
He pretty much just sits around the house smokin' cigarettes, messed up on pills.

DEEDEE
I hate to hear that, honey. It's hard for some people to get off of them once they been on em' for awhile. I had a girlfriend had to get treatment, just to get off that hydrocodone they gave her after her surgery. Your daddy wants to be careful about those pills.

JACKI
I forget the name of what they put him on. Whatever it is, it's got him down.

Tate and LeJuan comfort Jacki- Deedee changes the mood.

DEEDEE
Jacki, don't you let Tate be out squiring around with that Wolverton girl. You know her family ain't right.

JACKI
I'll try Mrs. Hanlin.

TATE
Yeah mama, but she likes to party.

DEEDEE
 Hell, Tate, Everyone likes to party. How about partying with a girl whose family ain't locked away in Highland?

TATE
 But she's real cute...

DEEDEE
 LeJuan, will you please talk some sense into this child?

LEJUAN
 I heard she's double jointed!

LEJUAN and TATE laugh and high five.

DEEDEE
 Uh huh. Okay. Don't come cryin' to me when her uncle Ronnie shows up with no draws on, speakin' in tongues. Half of that family just takes fits like that, right out of the blue.

Enter AUNT JUDY with her red bandana and Grateful Dead t-shirt- She's Deedee's younger sister-She's got a wild sense of humor and has helped raise Tate and his friends.

AUNT JUDY
 Aw hell, Deedee, that ain't nothin' but the holy spirit moving through him.

DEEDEE
 Oh sure. Flopping around on the ground. Judy Kay, don't you be puttin' no crazy ideas in these boys' heads.

AUNT JUDY
 They're just tryin' to have a little fun. Not near as bad as we were, anyway.

TATE
 Here it comes...

AUNT JUDY
 You know they called your mama Dirty Deedee back in school?

DEEDEE
 I'm gonna waller you in front of dad and everyone.

Everyone starts laughing.

Aunt Judy steals the mason jar from Deedee's hand.

AUNT JUDY
 Bulldog mouth, hummingbird ass. What kinda' grade school teacher drinks moonshine anyhow?

DEEDEE

taking the cigarette from her hand
Only the best kind, Judy Kay.

AUNT JUDY
You are surely touched in the head.

DEEDEE
(rolling her eyes at Judy)
So LeJuan, you meet any nice church
goin girls or anything?

LeJuan stares at Jacki.

LEJUAN
No ma'am. Just waitin' for the
right one I guess.

DEEDEE
Well, you boys are gonna have to
settle down and find a woman some
damn day. No sense going through
life drunk and lonesome.

RED
Hey, I wrote a song one time called
"Drunk and Lonesome!"

Everyone laughs.

TATE
We all got you, and crazy Aunt Judy
here. That oughta do for a while,
anyway. No sense in getting too far
ahead of ourselves.

Tate puts his arms around Deedee and Aunt Judy.

DEEDEE
You boys are impossible. I just
worry myself sick sometimes.

TATE
What about you? Been seven years
since pop passed. You ought to find
someone to settle down with.

DEEDEE
There ain't much in the way of
fellers around here. Besides, my
1st Graders keep me plenty busy.

TATE
I know there ain't no one like pop
and all, but you're still young.
When I go off to school, who's
gonna take care of you?

DEEDEE
Takin care of me? Shit, last time I
checked, I been doing all the
cookin, washin' and bill payin'.

TATE
You know what I mean. I just want
you to be happy is all.

STANTON
(joining the conversation)
Your mama's too mean to be
courtin'. Hell, she's had fellers
been lined up to take her out for
years.

DEEDEE
Old man, you must have gone plumb
around the bend.

AUNT JUDY
Deidre Ann Sweeney!

STANTON
Doc MacWilliams has been sweet on
you since y'all were in 4-H camp.
He'd make a good man for you.

AUNT JUDY
See, Daddy knows!

DEEDEE
Sure. Uh huh. The town
pediatrician and the school
teacher. Hallmark Channel love
story for the ages.

STANTON
Don't act like I didn't tell you
then.

DEEDEE
(Under her breath)
Lord, there is not enough
moonshine.

Stanton goes up to the band and starts talking to them in
between songs. They're all laughing and happy to be having
whatever conversation they're having. Stanton grabs the mic.
Red joins the players onstage.

STANTON
All right, all right. Y'all go on
and find ya a dancin' partner for
this next one. Kids and beginners
welcome for the Virginia Reel!

Everyone starts pairing up- Kids, parents... Tate pairs up with
his mom, and Aunt Judy pairs up with Red.

LeJuan walks up to Jacki to ask her to dance, when a LITTLE
BOY comes to her and pulls on her shirt.

LITTLE BOY
You wanna be my partner?

LeJuan looks down at the little boy and smiles.

LEJUAN
Looks like you may have a full
dance card on your hands.

JACKI
He might have beat you to the
punch, darlin'.

LeJuan squats down to talk to the little boy.

LEJUAN
Ok, this is what you need to do-
Jacki is a heck of a dancer, but
she needs a good partner like you
to really get goin'. Now, I've
known her since we was about your
age, so I know that she likes her a
partner who likes to laugh and
smile. You think you can do that?

LITTLE BOY
Yessir... I reckon. She's pretty.

LEJUAN
(under his breath))
Don't I know it, buddy.

LeJuan gives the young boy's hand to Jacki and smiles.

JACKI
Don't run off on me now.

LEJUAN
Oh, I'll be right here. Someone
gotta protect this keg from these
buckwild kids.

Jacki rolls her eyes, and looks lovingly at LeJuan as she
walks out on the dance floor with the kid.

Everyone is lined up across from their partner and the band
starts playing.

Stanton takes the microphone onstage.

STANTON
Alright y'all...Bow to your partner!
(everyone obliges)
STANTON (CONT'D)
Meet your partner with a right hand
swing!
(everyone obliges)
STANTON (CONT'D)
Meet your partner with a left hand
swing!
(everyone obliges)
STANTON (CONT'D)
Now do-si-do!

DISSOLVE TO:

The party is under way: everyone is eating, drinking beer and
having a blast. The old timers are broken off into their
circles, and the kids likewise. Stanton, Mason jar in hand,
comes up and grabs the mic.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 I reckon y'all about half in the
 bag by now. Lord knows I am.

People laugh and yell in reply.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 These boys have been up here
 pickin' up a storm and I wanted to
 take this time to thank them for
 coming out, playin' some honest to
 God mountain music. My pawpaw used
 to take me campin' when I was
 little. And around the campfire,
 he'd pull out his guitar and play
 some of these same tunes. Me and my
 uncles would sing along. Lots of
 memories.

CUT TO

Deedee and Judy chuckling good-naturedly at Stanton's boozy
 sentimentality, then back to Stanton.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 We're gathered today to celebrate
 these young men and women here as
 they're finishin' up their
 schoolin'. The boys are gonna tune
 up their guitars and whatnot and
 play one of my favorite old fiddle
 tunes. We got a guest coming up for
 this next one. Keep your eye out
 for this young man.

Stanton tips his mason jar in Red's direction.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 Y'all grab a slow dancin' partner
 and I'll see you out on the grass.

Enter DR. PERCY MACWILLIAMS. A stately, early 40s town
 doctor.

PERCY
 Miss Sweeney? Would you do me the
 honor?

DEEDEE
 Oh-well, lord, Percy.

TATE
 Doc MacWilliams, my mom would love
 to dance with you.

Smiles, taking his mom's hand and putting in Percy's.

AUNT JUDY
 If she ain't no good, I'll dance
 with ya!

The band starts playing a slow Country Irish waltz. Everyone
 pulls their partner close in the warm summer air. Red knows
 the song well, and plays masterfully with the band, and
 everyone notices.

TATE

I guess you was right, Pawpaw. Look at her. I ain't seen her smile like that in a long time.

STANTON

Your mama is gonna be ok, Tate. She's got plenty of happy years ahead of her.

TATE

Great party, Pap.

AUNT JUDY

Listen, Tate. I got something here I been wantin' to give you...

She digs around in her pocket, pulls out a folded check and hands it to Tate.

AUNT JUDY (CONT'D)

Happy Graduation, honey.

Tate looks at the check for \$1000 dollars and is stunned.

TATE

Jeez Aunt Judy this is...wow. It's too much!

AUNT JUDY

I've been savin' on this since you wrote that poem about your daddy Freshman year. I always been proud to be your aunt but after readin' that, I knew you was gonna do something special with yourself.

TATE

I don't know what to say... I--

AUNT JUDY

Don't worry about it. And don't stop. Just keep on makin' us all proud.

Aunt Judy hugs Tate, to keep from crying.

Tate, LeJuan, Aunt Judy, and Deedee are standing around the keg, silently watching everyone dance. They notice Jacki taking turns dancing with the little kids. It's magical, the way they all gravitate toward her, and she takes her time with each one. The last part of the song, Jacki goes into her own little world, dancing alone in the corner, almost like she's dancing with a ghost. Tate points her out, and they take it all in, knowing they're seeing something special.

INT.SUMMER- MOUNTAIN FARM AND FIELD- 1997

Stanton and Tate walking down the aisles of Mountain Field and Farm, a local business. Stanton is carrying his hunting rifle in its case to get it adjusted.

STANTON
Early still, but I hope Walther is
startin' to stock his buck hunting
gear.

TATE
LeJuan told me they was getting
some stuff in. You pickin' up any
ammo?

STANTON
We'll see what they have in stock
for today.

WALTHER

Fine morning to you, Stanton. Y'all had a hell of a sendoff
for our boys the other week. I ain't listened to ol' time
music like that in years. Big doin's round here.

STANTON
Walther, I'll take any excuse I can
get to put a pig in the ground and
listen to some bluegrass.

WALTHER
I heard that, now! I seen my boy in
the fishin aisle stockin' Zebco's a
few minutes ago...

TATE
Man, I learned to fish on an old
Zebco rig with an Ugly Stick. You
could pull in a 30 pound mud cat
easy a sunfish on those.

LeJuan approaches in an overly professional manner for
comedic affect.

LEJUAN
Welcome to Mountain Farm and Field,
my name is LeJuan. Is there any way
I can be of assistance today?

WALTHER

Damnit, boy. What'd I say about puttin on like that?

STANTON
Why...this young man deserves a
raise!

Stanton claps him on the back and both the boys bust out
laughing.

WALTHER
More like an ass whippin', but he's
learnin'. Had to figure it out
myself when I opened here in '79.
Teachin' him how to take inventory
this summer. Never too young to
start learnin' how to run a
business.

STANTON
LeJuan's a good man. He'll do well.

WALTHER
Better than his little brother
anyway. That boy wouldn't hit a
lick at a goddamn snake.

STANTON
You raised them up right
regardless. You and Ivolene got a
hell of thing goin' here, Walther.

WALTHER
Well I sure appreciate that,
Stanton. Now what can I help you
with today?

STANTON
You still contractin' with that
gunsmith down Logan County?

WALTHER
Mr. Carducci. Yessir. He does good
work.

STANTON
Well, I brought in this ol'
Browning. I was hopin' you'd send
it off to him. I'd like to get new
mounts, bore sighting, trigger tune
up. Maybe buff out this old stock
some.

Stanton hands Walther his rifle.

WALTHER
Shooo, Mr. Dotson, this is a fine
ol' 30-ought. She got some miles on
her, but they don't hardly make em'
like this no more. You gearin' up
to sell it?

STANTON
Just thinkin about changing up my
rig a bit. You still got that
Weatherby I saw here a few months
ago? Had a real pretty walnut
Stock?

WALTHER
I do. LeJuan, run over to the rifle
wall and fetch that Weatherby for
Mr. Dotson, please.

LEJUAN
Yes, Paw.

TATE
Something wrong with your Browning,
Pap?

STANTON
It's just too heavy to lug around
is all. I figure your back is
strong enough to pack it though.

TATE
What do you mean?

STANTON
I wanted to pass it onto you in the
same condition it was given to me,
Tate.

TATE
(Struck)
I don't know what to say, Pap.

LEJUAN
Here you go Mr. Dotson.

He hands him the new gun.

STANTON
I swear, Walther, this is some high-
tech weaponry right here. I reckon
I could get used to this. Those old
bucks up on the mountain won't know
what hit em'. Would you mind
ringing us up on this and throwin'
a couple of boxes of ammunition of
your choosing?

WALTHER
I think these 7-millimeter mags
will do you this season, Stanton.
I'll send out your Browning first
thing in the morning. Should be
ready to take home by weekend after
next.

Walther hands Tate his grandfather's gun; Tate admires it in
astonishment.

CUT TO

EXT/INT STATE ROAD WORK TRUCK-DAY

Red and Tate driving around in the State Road truck on a
scorching hot summer day.

TATE (V.O.)
Me and Red got a part time job
working for the State Road that
summer, giving us beer money and
plenty of down time to get into
trouble.

Red flipping through the radio stations.

TATE (V.O., CONT'D)
Coy was in for a couple of months,
and we had the whole crew together
for awhile until I went off to
college.

(MORE)

TATE (V.O., CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 The mines were starting to shutter,
 and the summer of '97 was one of
 the hottest on record.

A 90s country song comes on the radio.

RED
 Oh man, now this here is a jam!

TATE
 Jesus, here you go with that-

Red singing along comedically, putting his arm around Tate.

RADIO (V.O.)
 Truck 204, come in truck 204!

TATE
 Truck 204, copy. What's goin' on
 Jinx?

RADIO (V.O.)
 You boys head on over to Cherry
 Mountain Road, mile marker 57. Got
 a call that someone clipped a doe
 and busted up their radiator. Y'all
 get him over to McClain's garage
 and take care of that carcass. Tow
 truck on its way.

TATE
 Copy that, Jinx. Truck 204 in
 route.

RED
 Shit, Tater I'm waaay too hungover
 to be scrapin' up a deer up off the
 road. Gonna need some fortification
 on this one.

TATE
 Huh?

Red pulls out a half pint of whisky from his pocket and takes
 a big swig.

RED
 Shit fire and save the matches! You
 wanna pull off this?

TATE
 A little early for me, man. Listen,
 don't be all fucked up when we get
 there. Just let me do the talkin'.

RED
 You ridin' with George Jones, my
 man. Off to do the Lord's work!

TATE
 (under his breath)
 Christ on crutches...

INT./EXT. STATE ROAD WORK TRUCK/SIDE OF THE ROAD-DAY

Tate and Red show up on the scene. They see a dazed young man leaning against the guardrail smoking a cigarette next to his Dodge Neon. They both recognize him immediately as the Racist Redneck Tate fought at the fire on senior night.

RED
Would you look here.

TATE
What are the fuckin' odds? Let's keep it professional.

RED
Ah hell, Tater, you done whupped him once. I reckon he ain't gonna want no part of you. Might not even remember it anyway.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD-DAY

Tate and Red get out of the truck and walk towards the accident.

TATE
Hey buddy, we're here to give you a lift to the mechanic.

RACIST REDNECK (SLURRING)
Deer...

He coughs hard and shakes his head, as if he's trying to get his brain and his mouth wired back together.

Uhh... yeah, man. I hit this... goddamn deer... jumped out of nowhere.

RED
That radiator is busted up decent. Tow truck 'll be by directly.

TATE
Yeah, that happens a fair amount around here. I don't see it anywhere. Any idea if it ran off?

Redneck shakes his head. He stands up straight, quickly, blinking his eyes hard.

RACIST REDNECK

Could y'all just get me outta here before the cops show up?

RED
What for? Cops got better things to do than bustin' someone who hit a deer.

Tate looks into the truck and sees white powder on the seat, and a CD case covered in pill dust.

TATE
Relax, man. We ain't narcs or
anything. Pull yourself together.

EXT.DOWN THE HILL FROM THE TRUCK-DAY

Red finds a trail of blood and follows it into the woods while Tate is dealing with the driver. He stumbles onto a Rottweiler, whimpering, dying.

RED
Goddamn you! Tate! Get over here
now!

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD-DAY

Tate looks at the redneck suspiciously and rushes over the hill where Red is. He finds Red, crouched over the dog, trying to comfort it.

TATE
Jesus, Red.

RED
It's Ruby. I used to play with her
when I was in grade school. That
goddamn pill head hit my neighbor's
dog.

TATE
How bad is it?

RED
There's a .22 pistol in the glove
box of the truck. If I go up there,
I'm gonna shoot this sumbitch in
the head.

TATE
I'll fetch it...

Tate rushes up to the road, and the redneck sees the anger in his eyes, and bolts across the road immediately.

TATE (CONT'D)
Junky piece of shit!

Tate grabs the gun, brings it back to Red...they stand over the suffering dog, with Red holding the gun on the dog.

Red prays under his breath with tears in his eyes and fires.

BLACKOUT

EXT./INT. MONTAGE-VARIOUS LOCATIONS-SCAD-FLASHBACK

TATE(V.O.) OVER MONTAGE
Coy's time in Savannah had lit a
fire in him.

Coyote doing etchings in a studio.

TATE V.O.

It seemed like he found art everywhere we went. He'd take a pile of rocks, and twigs and turn them into sculptures.

Coyote with a group are art students around a beachside bonfire as he draws.

TATE V.O.
He was always scribbling, drawing in his note pad. Something about it hit a different part of him. We'd never seen him this serious about anything.

EXT. DAY -PATH TO THE SWIMMING HOLE-SUMMER 1997

Tate, Jacki, LeJuan, Coyote, Red and Aunt Judy walking down the train tracks, on the way to the swimming hole. It's a beautiful summer day, and they have everything they need for a picnic.

LEJUAN
Ay Tater, did your mama send along any of that corn pone?

TATE
Not sure, Jacki and Judy packed up the food.

LEJUAN
What'd y'all bring us to eat anyway? A brother gettin' hungry out here!

JACKI
Sandwiches, chips... got some macaroni salad and fried chicken.

LEJUAN
(playing at taking offense)
Excuse me?

Everyone laughs.

COYOTE
Hey, you know we had to bring something for everybody.

LEJUAN
I know white folks got jokes, but goddamn let me run up on that yard bird, shit!

COYOTE
I feel you LeJuan. I'm the same way. Especially Aunt Judy's chicken. Her shit don't need hot sauce or nothin'.

LEJUAN
I don't know about all that. I put Texas Pete on my goddamn Cheerios.

AUNT JUDY
My chicken don't need no hot sauce because that's grandma's special blend of seasoning there. Add it to the buttermilk, let it marinate overnight. That's the trick.

EXT. SWIMMING HOLE-SUMMER-DAY

When they arrive everyone stops to take in the beauty- the white water, the rhododendrons, blooming and sun shining through the trees. In silence, they take in the sight.

Looking at the landscape, JACKI lets out a small sound of contentment, more or less to herself. But LEJUAN and COYOTE hear it.

LEJUAN
Right, Jacki?

COYOTE
(in agreement)
Every time.

Red blows past them, heading for the water. He jumps in.

RED
YEE HAW!!!

COYOTE
Goddamn it Red! you better not have my smokes in your pocket!

Red comes up for air.

RED
Now you tell me! HAHAAHA!

COYOTE
You owe me 3 bucks, asshole!

Red swims around with a broken wet cigarette dangling from his mouth.

RED
Just put it on my tab, sir!

Everyone is laughing.

Montage of everyone swimming, eating and laughing. Everyone acting like kids, throwing rocks and playing chicken.

Red has his lip packed with snuff, tossing his fishing line in the water by the rapids. Aunt Judy assumes her caretaker role, making sure everyone has a drink and some food, as she walks around picking up trash. LeJuan can't keep his eyes off Jacki, but he turns away every time he thinks she notices.

Coyote notices LeJuan eying Jacki.

COYOTE
Why didn't you ever ask her out?

LEJUAN
(shaking his head)
I don't know, bro. Her family... I don't think they'd be too excited about the shade of our babies, is all.

COYOTE
That's some redneck bullshit. You the baddest motherfucker in Gideon.

Coyote puts his arm around LeJuan, sharing a quiet moment.

CUT TO

FISHING HOLE--

Red is fishing, and Aunt Judy walks up to him.

AUNT JUDY
Anything hittin'?

RED
Big smallmouth in this hole. I seen him surface when we got here.

AUNT JUDY
You catch anything, I'll cook it up when we get back home. I ain't had some good fresh fish in awhile. Red Eye's my favorite.

RED
Umm hmm. Partial to them myself. Blue gill fry up real nice too. A little corn meal and seasonin' is about all they need.

He sets his hook and reels in a nice fish.

AUNT JUDY
Hell yeah, Red! Catch us a mess, now. Got some ramps canned up from this Spring, I'll fry us up some taters to go along with it!

RED
(Doing his best Roland Martin impression))
Aww son!

Coy is away from the group. He's sitting on the bank of the river, scribbling away in his notebook. Tate walks up to him.

TATE
Got anything good in there?

COY
I've been workin on some stuff...I dunno. It's like tribal design stuff, but I'm trying to blend it with natural patterns. From nature, I mean.

TATE
That's cool shit, man. You learn that stuff in college?

COYOTE
Some of it, I try and find the patterns from stuff around here. Shit is everywhere if you know how to look.

Coyote points across the water.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Look, you see that patch of shrubs under that old birch tree? Look at the way they grow with the root system going into the rocks below it. It seems random. But if you look at it a while, it's like a whole other language or something, how things in the world talk to each other.

TATE
Well, Coy Dog, you old hippie.

COYOTE
Fuck you. That's all right. No, I'm trying to figure it out. I don't have it yet, but I'm trying.

TATE
I never thanked you for turning me onto all those new books.

COYOTE
They'd have found you anyway. Hell, I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for you and your family.

TATE
I'm really into the beat writers. That Kerouac is something else.

COYOTE
Talk about seekers. They were real seekers.

TATE
You hear from Shooter?

COYOTE
Got a letter from him about six months ago. Transferred him to Mt.

(MORE)

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Olive. He's made friends with some bikers in there, I guess.

TATE
Shit, like Hells Angels or somethin'?

COYOTE
Pagans. They're some real bad motherfuckers.

TATE
Damn.

Coyote skips a rock into the water.

COYOTE
Yeah, I dropped some money in his commissary and wrote back, sent some of my drawings. Ain't heard anything since.

TATE
You been gettin' any more of those beans?

COYOTE
Oxy? Here and there. Those things are too fuckin' good man. Seems like every other old boy around here sittin' on a script.

TATE
I read a story in a magazine about em' the other day. Sounds like they're some kinda miracle drug when it comes to pain.

COYOTE
Well, it's a lot of workin' folks laid up around here with busted backs and knees. I guess it makes sense.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
All I know is they make me nod out like nothin' I've ever had. Like havin' a cheat code for life, man.

TATE
We should grab some and build a fire or something. I been meaning to try em' for awhile.

COYOTE
Shit, you do a little coke at a concert, all of sudden you think you're Lou Reed?

TATE
Lots of those writers and artists use drugs to expand their mind, get new ideas. Those old beat poets all used.

COYOTE
I think you're missin' the point.

TATE
I'm not following..

COYOTE
Just puts me in mind of my favorite
West Virginia joke, right? You know
it.

TATE
(chuckles)
Yeah. Tell it again.

COYOTE indulges TATE, and repeats the joke as they look out
over the landscape. TATE smiles to hear it again.

COYOTE
So God's in heaven. Creating the
world. Separating the land from the
sky and the waters. He gets to the
part that's someday going to be
West Virginia. And he fills the
land, just fills it with beautiful
rivers, lakes, hillsides green in
the spring, gorgeous red and gold
in the fall. All the natural beauty
God can envision, he puts right
here. And he gets done, and he's so
proud. He calls the angel Gabriel
over, to show Gabriel what he's
created. And Gabriel says...

COYOTE pauses, looks over at TATE. TATE catches the look, and
assumes the part of Gabriel.

TATE
He says, "God, it is beautiful. It
is. But don't you think it's unfair
to put all this glory here, in one
place, where only one group of
people is going to be able to enjoy
it? Why not share this incredible
beauty with the whole world?"

COYOTE
And God says, "Don't worry about
it. Wait 'til you see what I'm
going to put these assholes
through."

They laugh.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Anyway. You want mind expansion, we
should get ahold of some mushrooms
or somethin. Man, I ate a bunch
when I was campin' on

Tybee Island a couple of months ago. Went way out there. I
felt like I died or somethin'.

TATE
Dyin' don't sound like much fun.

COYOTE
It's not all about fun. Sometimes
you just need to rattle your own
cage.

Tate throws a rock into the water.

TATE
Rattle my cage, huh? I'll be
damned!

COYOTE
I got my one hitter in my pack if
you wanna catch a quick buzz.

TATE
Bet. That's a bet.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/INT-MORNING-SUMMER-JACKI'S FAMILY FARM-MORNING-97

The farm is very picturesque, with fresh painted barns and gleaming white fences over 20 acres of sprawling land. The main barn has a "Mail Pouch" tobacco ad on the side. We follow Jacki as she walks the path to the barn to tend to her horses.

There's 7 horses in the stable, and Jacki starts shoveling hay into their stalls, and the horses greet her warmly.

JACKI
There you go, Sugarfoot. Yessir
you're lookin' good today. You been
takin care of these fillies? I bet
you are.

She strokes his mane and continues to talk to him.

JACKI (CONT'D)
Think you'd be up for a ride today,
buddy? I'm gonna see if I can get
daddy out of the house and maybe we
hit the trails with him for awhile.
Wouldn't that be something? I'll
tell you what...

She starts digging into her pocket and pulls out some apple slices.

JACKI (CONT'D)
I'll make you a deal. I'll give you
all these apples if you go easy on
daddy today. How does that sound,
buddy? It'll be just like it was
before. He'll be so sweet and easy
with you--

She's holding back tears by this point. She hugs the horse and feeds him the apples. Jacki's mom, LEONA, a rugged outdoorsy woman, walks into the barn.

LEONA
Oh honey. What's the matter?

She puts her arm around Jacki from behind to console her.

JACKI

I just...I was hopin' we could get
daddy out for a ride today. I just...
want him to get better.

She pulls out a brush and starts working Sugarfoot's mane.

LEONA

Daddy's back still ain't healed up
like it was supposed to. I don't
want you getting your hopes up too
much, honey.

JACKI

Mama, he's been down for over a
year. It's like nothin' interests
him anymore.

LEONA

I tell you what. After we finish up
here, let's go in and make us some
biscuits and a strong pot of
coffee. We'll take it up to him.
And if he ain't up to it, we'll me
and you'll head out.

JACKI

(holding back tears)
It sure is a pretty day.

INT.JACKI'S FAMILY HOME-DAY

Jacki and her mom walk back to the house and see Jackie's DAD
sitting in his recliner, smoking a cigarette, watching TV.

JACKI'S DAD

Jacklynn Dawn? Go on and fetch me
my medicine and a pack of smokes
from the kitchen, sweetie.

JACKI

Yes daddy. Hey you wanna ride with
me and mama for a bit? It's an
awful pretty mornin' and I got
Sugarfoot all--

JACKI'S DAD

Programs comin' on. Tell your mama
I said to rattle them pans some.
I'm powerful hungry.

JACKI

Sure daddy, but--

JACKI'S DAD

Mind me, now. Go on.

INT.KITCHEN-DAY

Jacki, noticeably upset, goes into the kitchen and starts looking around in the medicine cabinet for her dad's meds and smokes. She sees his bottle of Oxy 40's and stares at them for a few seconds. She looks around to make sure no one is watching, and takes a few pills and puts them in her pocket. She grabs her dad's meds from his weekly med pack, and slams the cabinet.

BLACKOUT

INT/EXT JACKI'S SUV/POKE N TOTE PARKING LOT-DAY

TATE (V.O.)
At face value, Jacki seemed like
your typical rich girl.

Jacki cruising around smoking cigarettes, blasting music, noticeably upset.

TATE
She was a pretty brunette with
fierce green eyes. Really put
together..

She pulls into the Poke N Tote parking lot. Pulling the pills out of her pocket she fumbles around with them in her hand.

TATE (CONT'D)
As much as we cared, and more than
a couple of us even loved her, we
never really knew her that well.
She was the one girl I ever met
that truly didn't care what people
thought of her...

Looking around, she notices Curtis coming out of the store with a case of beer. She gets out of her car to talk. They talk for a few, no sound. She ends up getting into his truck.

TATE (CONT'D)
It was the underpinnings of Jacki I
always wondered about. What was
underneath her, what propped her
up. I never quite figured. None of
us could.

FALL 1997 EXT- DAY- WVU CAMPUS

Deedee, Stanton and Judy are helping Tate get his stuff unpacked as he loads into his dorm. Tate hugs them and they get into Stanton's old Blazer.

STANTON
Alright Tate, I reckon we've done
about all there is to do.

Deedee and Judy both look a little worried. The moment's come, finally.

TATE
Don't cry now, hell, I ain't but
three hours from home.

DEEDEE
I just hate to see you go, baby. I
swear...

AUNT JUDY
You remember what I told you about
using your words. And for God's
sake, don't be knockin' any of
these girls up. I'm too young for
you to be anyone's aunt!

Everyone laughs.

TATE
Words to live by. I love y'all.
Pawpaw, I'll be home for buck
season, count on it.

He leans in the window and kisses his mom one last time.

The car drives away and Tate turns around and sees the busy
campus, he takes a deep breath to take it all in.

He pulls his journal out of his back pocket, and sits down
under a tree and begins to write. At the top of the page, we
see him write simply "Gideon" He lights up a cigarette and
begins to scribble.

INT. MOUNTAIN FIELD AND FARM- FALL- 1997-MORNING

Walther has an impromptu staff meeting with all the employees
right before they open the doors for business.

WALTHER
I appreciate everyone showing up
this mornin'. Everyone get coffee
and donuts? All right then. Now as
y'all know, I'm getting' a little
long in the tooth, and I wanted you
to hear this directly from me, that
my time here is startin' to wind
down.

Employees gasp and seem shocked.

WALTHER (CONT'D)
Now don't go worryin'. I'm just
gonna be cuttin' down my hours,
little by little, over the next
year or so while I train my
replacement. I want you to
introduce you to the new acting
Assistant General Manager of
Mountain Field and Farm, Mr.
LeJuan!

Everyone claps and cheers as LeJuan comedically shows
everyone his manager badge, and some of them begin to laugh.

LEJUAN

Thank you pop, I sure appreciate it. In all seriousness, I couldn't be happier to step into this role. This is a family business, one that means the world to me, and that makes us all family, and I hope you feel that way about this old store too. Together, we're going to continue to prosper and grow, and I'm gonna work my tail off to make sure there's more opportunities for all of you in the future. We take care of our own around here, and I plan on earning this honor alongside of you. With that said, we're gonna have a cookout next Sunday afternoon down to Draper Memorial to celebrate my dad's years of hard work. I hope to see all y'all there, and bring all your kids as well. Let's have a good shift!

Everyone cheers. People walk up to LeJuan and congratulate him. Walther pats him on the shoulder. LeJuan is on top of the world.

DISSOLVE TO

Later that day, LeJuan is walking the floor, staying busy in his new role. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees someone walking briskly towards the exit, bypassing the registers.

LEJUAN (CONT'D)

Excuse me sir! Sir, could you kindly stop there?

Flanking the guy to intercept him before he leaves the premises, he recognizes Curtis.

LEJUAN (CONT'D)

Hey now. Curtis, right? What was you doin' running off like that? Lord knows we can't afford to be havin' no slip and falls around here.

CURTIS

Lost track of time is all. I have to pick up my girl. You know how it is.

LEJUAN

Alright then, Curtis. I won't keep you from your business.

Curtis glaring at him and walking out. LeJuan hurries back into the office and pulls up footage of Curtis stealing fishing reels.

LEJUAN (CONT'D)

Motherfucker.

INT.CURTIS' HOUSE-NIGHT

Jacki, just out of the shower, is wrapped in a towel, listening to music and fixing her hair in the bathroom mirror. She looks tired and out of sorts. She starts to do her make-up. Curtis enters from behind and slams down a bottle of pills on the sink.

JACKI
Oh baby, you shouldn't have. I'll
be out in a minute, and we'll go in
the living room--

Curtis pulls her by the hair, violently.

JACKI (CONT'D)
Curtis, you're hurting me!

CURTIS
You think you can just walk around
half naked and not give your old
man any pussy?

JACKI
How about just askin'?--

CURTIS
I ain't askin'.

Curtis keeps a hold of her hair and unbuckles his pants with the other hand. He pushes her head into the sink and has his way with Jacki. She grunts in pain in between thrusts, but doesn't say anything. She blankly watches the bottle of pills on the sink as he continues to penetrate her.

He finishes, and pulls his pants back up without saying a word. Jacki grabs the bottle of pills.

BLACKOUT

FALL INT. FAMILY DEER CAMP-1997-EARLY MORNING

Tate is asleep in his uncomfortable mattress on the floor, with a couple of empty beer cans and his journal next to him. Stanton comes, dressed in his long underwear and Carhart overalls with a cup of coffee.

STANTON
Hey boy, time start gettin' ready
to head out.

TATE
(slowly opening his eyes)
Jeez, pap. What time is it anyway?

Stanton hands him the coffee.

STANTON
Breakfast time. Me and Red whipped
up some bacon and eggs. Grits about
ready too.

TATE
(Yawning)
Shit. Okay. Smells great, thanks.
Man, I can't wait to get your old
gun out in the woods. That Italian
fella really put the shine on 'er.

STANTON
Gunsmithin' is getting to be a lost
craft. I'm just happy to pass it on
down. Not sure if it'll make you
any better of a shot.

Stanton nudges Tate and they both laugh.

STANTON (CONT'D)
Morgantown rubbin' off on you at
all?

TATE
I'm getting good marks, havin' some
fun. I guess I just miss home. Sure
glad to be here for Thanksgiving.

STANTON
Listen to me, son. You have a
scholarship to a university--

TATE
I know...I'm just--

STANTON
You're just a little homesick is
all. You ought to find you a good
woman up there. Not some sorority
trollop either.

TATE
Mom and Aunt Judy told me the same
thing. Is that Red in there
playin' his guitar?

STANTON
Yessir. Those country Protestants
always played some fine music.
About the only thing about that
religion that ever made any sense
to me. The way they carry on like
that, hollerin' and such...

Stanton pause and reflects.

STANTON (CONT'D)
When I was about your age, my daddy
told me it's a hard thing to stop a
man with a song in his heart. Your
buddy Red might turn out to be a
fella like that. Like he's got
something he needs to get out.

TATE
He's got a real knack for it for
sure. It reminds of me of somethin'
I can't quite put my finger on.
Like something around here...I'll
be in to eat directly.

He takes a sip of his coffee and picks up his journal and starts scribbling, while Red plays his guitar and sings in the background.

A shot of Red with his long wild hair in a ponytail, playing his old beat-up acoustic, belting out a sad ballad with Tate's written words being spoken over the music.

TATE (V.O.)
The fog was lifting over War
Mountain. The morning songbirds and
whippoorwills roused the world
around my family's cabin...

EXT. PATH INTO THE WOODS--EARLY MORNING

The men make their way into the woods. Dressed warmly in Realtree and blaze orange, they stop at the edge of the woods to survey the beauty as the sun comes up over the ridge.

TATE (V.O., CONT'D)
Old black and white pictures hung
up on the wall, hinting at
generations of stories, told and
untold, of tough old men and
nervous boys readying for their
hunt. Old pine knots and cast iron,
black walnut and leather, kerosene
and hickory smoke, and the dull hum
of the flue pulling the last
crackle from last night's fire.

Stanton pulls a pouch of Red Man chewing tobacco from his overalls, and packs his jaw, keeping his eyes on the woods before him. He passes it over to Red and he does likewise, while Tate is smoking a Camel, checking his gifted gun.

TATE (CONT'D)
A leatherbound King James bible
collecting dust in the hallway
hutch, overflowing with work
gloves, hunting magazines and
bullets.

The men disappear into the woods, and the music slowly fades into the sound of nature.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. TREE STAND--EARLY MORNING

Tate perched about 15 feet up on a tree stand, admiring the craftsmanship of his grandfather's gun, the woodwork and heft of the bolt action 300t. He stroked it lovingly. He hears a rustling in the woods, and looks up to see a 13 point buck eating acorns in a clearing within range. He turns his hat around backwards and slowly raises his gun and audibly clicks off the safety. He has a clean shot, but hesitates. His arms start shaking from the weight of the rifle. He feels struck by the beauty of the animal.

He clicks his safety back, and puts down his gun, to watch the buck finish his meal of acorns. He smiles and pulls out his journal again, sketching out the deer he'd let pass.

MATCH DISSOLVE

TO:

INT.BEDROOM-DEEDEE'S HOUSE-EVENING

Coyote furiously sketching an abstract drawing of a deer.

DEEDEE (O.S.)
Coyote! Dinner's ready!

COYOTE
I'll be down in a few, mama!

Coyote gets up and locks his bedroom door. He digs his pills and needles out of a cigar box from under his bed and shoots an Oxy. His eyes glass over and he smiles in relief.

INT. DINING ROOM-DEEDEE'S HOUSE-EVENING

COYOTE
Good lord, mama, this smells amazing!

Coyote sits down at the table and dinner is already underway. Aunt Judy, Percy and Stanton greet him warmly.

PERCY
You feeling ok, son? You look a little peaked.

COYOTE
Never felt better- Aunt Jude, will you pass the sweet tea, please?

Percy watches him suspiciously.

INT. TATE'S TRUCK-SUMMER-DAY, 2001.

Coyote and Tate are driving around blasting music with windows down, bored and sober, they were looking for something to do.

COYOTE
Man there ain't shit goin on around here. We ought to head down the river and get some beans or something.

TATE
Dude I'm a broke college kid. I got like 30 bucks to my name.

COYOTE
It's your lucky day buddy boy. I
got \$700 burnin' a hole in my back
pocket. We're bound to find
something down there.

TATE
You think there's any chicks
hangin' around? I ain't been laid
in a month of Sundays.

COYOTE
Probably nothin you'd wanna stick
your pecker in, but I know how
romantic you get when you're
partying.

EXT. GO-MART-DAY

The boys head out of a local convenience store with a case of
beer.

INT. TATE'S TRUCK-DAY

Windows down, smoking cigarettes, blasting tunes and singing
along like kids do. They make it to an old run-down mining
town. It's noticeably on the skids- closed shops, boarded up
houses. Coyote sees a teenage boy in a cartoon print t-shirt
walking down the street and tells Tate to pull over.

COYOTE
Hey Peanut- is that you?

PEANUT is a middle school aged boy that Coyote knew when he
was a little kid.

PEANUT
Jeez. Coyote? Hey man. Hey dude!

COYOTE
Goddamn Peanut. You got all growed
up on me! What are you, like,
thirteen?

PEANUT
Fourteen.

Peanut is sweating in the sun, looking nervous.

PEANUT (CONT'D)
Hey y'all mind giving me a ride
down the road. I ain't feelin' too
good.

COYOTE
Hop in, bud.

Peanut jumps in the back and they drive down the road.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Hey how's Shawna doin these days? I
ain't seen her since junior high.

PEANUT
 She's ok I guess. She's pregnant
 with her second kid. Collectin'.

COYOTE
 Damn, you mean you're an uncle?
 That's wild, man I remember you
 when you was just a little dude.
 Always wantin' to go crawdad huntin'
 and--

Peanut vomits in the back seat- getting some on Tate's
 shoulder.

TATE
 What the fuck, man??

PEANUT
 Jeez, I'm sorry y'all. I'll clean it
 up, I promise.

Coyote hands him a Mountain Dew from the cooler.

COYOTE
 You fuckin' dopesick, bud?

Long pause.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
 When the hell did you start usin',
 Peanut?

PEANUT
 My daddy been getting C's for his
 back. Dawna too. I been sniffin'
 em' for about 6 months but we ain't
 got nothin' now. It's like the
 scripts round here just dryin' up,
 man. I don't know. I just never
 felt this bad. You ain't got
 anything, do ya Coyote?

COYOTE
 Goddamnit. Shawna oughta' have her
 ass whipped.

TATE
 We ain't giving no kids no goddamn
 beans.

PEANUT
 I know where we can score some,
 but, ya know. I just ain't got no
 money.

COYOTE
 Who you know around here anyway?

PEANUT
 There's some dude from outta town
 up the holler at Mike's place. I
 heard Shawna tellin' her girl that
 he's sittin' on lots.

COYOTE

Mike Heater? Yeah there's a name I ain't heard in awhile. I figured he'd be dead by now.

TATE

Nah, man. This don't sound good, Coy. We don't know this dude, and you barely know this Mike guy. For all we know...

COYOTE

I've known Mike for years. I ain't come all this way to head back to town with no dope. Besides, Peanut's sick and we ain't gonna leave him on the side of the road like this. It's fucking 95 degrees.

TATE

Jesus, Coy. He's a kid! If anything happens to him, everything's fucked!

COYOTE

Yeah, well. Everything's kinda fucked anyway, ain't it?

EXT.OUTSIDE A TRAILER IN THE WOODS-DAY

They pull up to a rundown double-wide. There's a bunch of malnourished looking dogs running around. They pull into the driveway and get greeted by a strung out looking old hippy in his late 50's with a shotgun.

PEANUT

Hey Mike, it's me! I got a couple of pals with me come from town lookin' for some.

Mike looks into the window and recognizes Peanut and Coyote. He gives Tate a dirty look because he doesn't look the part.

MIKE

Is that you Coy? What are y'all doin' up here?

COYOTE

Hey man, we're just headed up the river lookin' to catch a buzz. This is my boy Tate. He's cool.

MIKE

I'll tell you what, this cat posted up in my house is a little out there. Dude been up for 3 days on crystal. Geeked out his head. If you tryin' to score, just go easy.

COYOTE
 Shit, my old man used to stay up
 for weeks at a time talking to
 fucking rock monsters in between
 beatin my mom's and mines ass. As
 long as he's holdin, I'm straight.

Mike looks into the back seat.

MIKE
 Peanut, what the hell you doin
 here, boy? This ain't fuckin'
 junior high. I got about half a
 mind to call Shawna to come and
 blister your hide.

PEANUT
 Aww Mike, come on man! I been
 pukin' and shittin' for 2 days.
 We're outta C's back home. We just
 wanna get somethin and we'll get
 outta your hair. I promise.

Tate remains silent, maintaining eye contact on Mike and his
 shotgun.

TATE
 I got an old Winchester like that.
 Hell of a turkey gun.

MIKE
 Gets the job done, don't it?

TATE
 We got some cold beer in the truck
 if y'all just wanna chill out.

MIKE
 Fuck it. I reckon it ain't ever too
 early for a beer. I'll let ol' boy
 know we got company.

INT.TRAILER-DAY

The trailer is littered with beer cans and trash. People are
 nodding off on couches and chairs, The boys walk into a
 sparsely lit dining room and sit down at the table.

MIKE
 (yelling)
 Hey Montana! Got some boys out here
 wanna talk!

MONTANA enters the room, wearing a short sleeve unbuttoned
 shirt, sweating profusely, tattoos on full display. He's got
 a shaved head, with a scar starting in his scalp, going all
 the way through his eyebrow, down the length of his face. He
 has white gold caps on his bottom teeth, and a stainless 45
 shoved down the front of his pants. He's high on meth, his
 demeanor mercurial and paranoid.

MONTANA
 I told you to give me heads up when
 you had people coming through.
 (MORE)

MONTANA (CONT'D)
This ain't the way shit goes, you
feel me?

MIKE
These guys are aight. Just breezing
through lookin' to party is all.

MONTANA
So you're the guys that are
"aight"? Aight then, What kinda
party we looking for?

Montana looks them up and down, suspiciously.

MONTANA (CONT'D)
How you know these schoolboy
motherfuckers?

MIKE
Coy grew up down the road. His
brother used to date my old lady.
His boy here--

COYOTE
This here's Tate- He's about a half
a fuckin schoolboy. Lookin for our
buddy, Oscar.

MONTANA
You junkies. Y'all just mutin' your
antenna till you don't know what's
coming through. You put a big wet
blanket on over your shit, and
don't know anything about your
fuckin frequency.

Montana takes the lighter from Coy's hand, and picks up a
lightbulb from the table. He drops in a shard of meth, puts
the heat to the bulb and takes a long pull...

MONTANA (CONT'D)
See, I like my shit loud. Like a
fuckin cannon, ya feel me? Tink
tink. You hear that? That's that
glass. Volcanic shit. Boom, Boom,
BOOOM! Ya heard?

Slamming his hand down on the table, startling Tate, but not
Coyote.

COYOTE
Yeah dude, I hear you and all,
but...listen.

He reaches into his pocket, throwing money on the table.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
You want this goddamn money or not?

Montana laughs hysterically.

MONTANA
I see you! A man about his business--
Respect, respect.
(MORE)

MONTANA (CONT'D)
 Shit, why the fuck else would you
 come out here to the ass crack
 middle of nowhere, right?

Peanut retches in the next room, groaning...Montana stands up
 and sees Peanut, with his head in the wastebasket.

MONTANA (CONT'D)
 Yo, yo! Who brought the goddamn
 kid?! Is this some kind of fucked
 up hillbilly joke that I ain't
 pickin' up on? Miguel! Que te pasa
 pince cabron?

MIKE
 He's cool, man! That's my old
 lady's little brother. He got the
 flu or somethin.

COYOTE
 He ain't got no goddamn flu, he's
 dopesick, just like half the
 motherfuckers in this town.

MONTANA
 No me hondas chingon! You brought a
 kid here with you to fuckin score
 dope?

COYOTE
 Yeah man, is that gonna be a
 problem?

Montana laughs again, then gets immediately solemn.

MONTANA
 You fuckin country boys go hard,
 huh? Shit! Ok this is how it's
 gonna go down. I'm gonna serve
 y'all up with whatever. But, but. If
 this little nigga fall out, needs
 his mommy or dies or some shit,
 that's on you, Me entiendes Coyote?

Taking the gun out of his pants, he lays it on the table,
 spinning it. It stops on Coyote.

COYOTE
 Now that's just good ol'
 capitalism. Everybody got some
 issues till they see a wad a money.

Tate is shaken by the transaction.

TATE
 Yeah dude, let's just cop this and
 bounce.

Montana pulls out a grab bag of dope out of his pocket,
 throwing it on the table.

MONTANA
 I got some clean glass, not that
 bathtub crank shit. Got some 40's,
 80's, and some solid ass diesel.

Beans are \$1.50 per milli, Diesel is \$25 a stamp. Glass is \$100 a bag.

COYOTE
That money's high as giraffe pussy.
What's up with that, bro?

MONTANA
Yeah, news don't make it to these parts sometimes. They starting to crack down on pharmaceuticals now. Gettin' harder to come by. But if you don't want what I got I guess--

COYOTE
Nah man, give me like.. 4 40's, 2 80's and the rest on that brown.

TATE
Hey man, we ain't tryin' to do no fuckin heroin dude.

COYOTE
It's the fuckin same thing, Tate. People think they getting something different, but shit comes from the same flower in the same broke ass countries. White cartels, brown ones. Don't mean shit to me.

PEANUT
Hey you say your name is Montana? Man my cousin went fishin' out there. Says its real pretty country-

COYOTE
Shut up, Peanut.

Coyote pulls his works out of his pocket and rolls up his sleeve. Tate watches on incredulously and nervously lights up a cigarette.

TATE
Jesus, when did you start using needles?

COYOTE
You're wasting dope any other way.

MONTANA
I got clean gear if you boys need it.

TATE
You got a plate or something?

MONTANA
Suit yourself. Big mirror in the kitchen. There's a couple of fuckin junkies back there noddin' out. You won't bother them.

COYOTE
You need gear, Peanut?

PEANUT
 Huh? We just sniff em' mostly.
 Dawna's old man shoots it but I
 guess I aint--

TATE
 What the fuck, Coy?

COYOTE
 You never fucking know Tate. Not
 like I live around this place no
 more, but shit don't seem to
 surprise me. Peanut got a man's
 habit. I ain't happy about it, but
 what the hell can I do?

TATE
 (To Peanut)
 If you even think about using a
 needle, I'll personally whip your
 little ass. You got me?

Peanut shakes his head in agreement.

COYOTE
 I just wanted to make sure if he
 was gonna do it, he had me to keep
 him safe is all.

Tate busts up a pill and splits it with Peanut. He looks up
 to see him pulling out a baseball card from his pocket that
 he rolls into a tube, getting ready for his line. Tate lets
 him go first and he takes it eagerly, with the sophistication
 of someone who's been doing it for a long time.

PEANUT
 (Tilting his head back,
 wiping his nose)
 Man I really appreciate this,
 fellas. I'll get you back sometime,
 I swear.

TATE
 You're alright bud, but You
 shouldn't be doin this stuff
 though. You're gonna end up ruining
 your life.

Tate looks at his line, hesitating. He secretly wipes his
 line onto the floor.

TATE (CONT'D)
 Fuck this.

PEANUT
 Shawna told me the same thing, but
 she does it all the time. Heck
 seems like everyone in my family
 does. It's the only thing besides
 fishin' that makes me feel good.

Peanut pulls out a can of snuff.

PEANUT (CONT'D)
 You wanna dip?

TATE
Nah man, I'm good.

Peanut reaches in his pocket and puts a Skoal bandit in his lip, goes and sits on the floor to watch TV and enjoys his high.

Coyote goes into the bathroom, shuts the door and cooks up a large shot of heroin and shoots up...He slumps over on the toilet and falls into a dream.

INT. FLASHBACK. COYOTE'S FAMILY TRAILER-DAY

Young Coyote and his brother (6 and 10) bust in the door, from school. Sun is coming in from the window and their mom DREAMA a young, beautiful Shawnee Indian girl, in the kitchen making them boxed macaroni and cheese.

YOUNG COY
Mama, guess what?

DREAMA
I bet you're about to tell me.

YOUNG COY
Some teachers took me out of class to another room with some kids and said we was gonna be gifted!

DREAMA
Wow, honey, that's great. Did they tell you what that means?

YOUNG COY
They said something about special classes and going on trips and playing games with kids from other schools. I dunno, mama. It sounds fun.

DREAMA
You're in the gifted program now baby. That means the teachers see you're really smart and special, just like I told you. I'm really proud of you!

YOUNG SHOOTER
What am I? Chopped liver?

DREAMA
Oh Jeramiah, you're special just like your brother. You're both so smart and handsome. My handsome boys. You guys make me the happiest mom in the world.

She hugs them both..the boys look at each other while hugging their mom.

YOUNG SHOOTER
(Whispering)
You little fucking egg head.
(MORE)

YOUNG SHOOTER (CONT'D)
Dad's gonna whip you good when he gets home.

YOUNG COY
No he ain't. Mama's gonna look out for me because she's proud.

YOUNG SHOOTER
(smiling at his brother)
Well, I'll just whip dad's ass if he lays into you!

YOUNG COY
You wanna play GI Joe's at the creek after we eat?

YOUNG SHOOTER
(playfully jabs at Coy)
Heck yeah. I traded my Destro for Quickkick at school today. We can have a ninja battle!

The boys break from her embrace and sit down at the table and start gobbling up their macaroni. Dreama puts her arm on both of their shoulders.

They both hear a car pull up and look up from the table at the window in fear, hearing their father's voice.

FATHER (O.S.)
Hey! You in there? Get the fuck out here right now!

Young Coyote puts his head down in fear, closing his eyes

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM-TRAILER-DAY

Coyote eyes are closed, nodded out on the toilet. He's startled awake to someone yelling at him to get out.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
You taking a shit or what, little brother!

INT. KITCHEN-TRAILER-DAY

Coyote comes out of the bathroom into the kitchen and sees his brother SHOOTER, early 30's intensely muscled, covered in tattoos smoking a cigarette, talking with Tate.

COYOTE
(embracing his brother)
Jesus Christ, Shooter. When did you get out? How come you didn't call?

SHOOTER
They sprung me last week. Overcrowding. Gave me time served and 6 months' probation. Free like OJ, motherfucker.

Everyone looks at Shooter's collection of tats.

COYOTE

I see you made pals with the tattoo
guy in there. Look at this shit.

Shooter takes off his shirt and turns around to show off his
ink.

SHOOTER

You likes? I worked over some
wannabe banger from South
Charleston for this lifer my first
week in. Dude hooked me up whenever
I wanted work done.

TATE

Goddamn Shooter, you look like a
hitman or something.

SHOOTER

Check this one out.

Across his torso the words "REVENGE" is printed in old
English lettering.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)

You know who this one's for.
Fuckin' Jaybird got me locked up-
tried to get you locked up too, but
I wasn't about to let that happen.
I'm gonna grease that piece of
shit, first chance I get.

COYOTE

You just got out the can, you
already planning to go back in? How
about we focus on some good shit?

SHOOTER

You seen the old man at all?

COYOTE

I said good shit. Not him.

SHOOTER

I pulled a two week stretch with
him in Moundsville a couple years
back, before they sent me to Mt.
Olive. He was doing short time for
possession. He ain't changed a bit.

COYOTE

I ran into him about a year ago at
the county fair. He looked strung
out as usual. He tried to make nice
at first, then just started talkin'
shit about mom, and how he was
gonna catch her out one day. I
kinda lost it, and left him where
he stood.

SHOOTER

He's a mean old fuck. I dunno,
though, he's still our dad.

COYOTE
I hope he dies, Shooter. I ain't never forgivin' him.

SHOOTER
Shit, man. It's cool. You got any more of that Shaq Diesel on you?

COYOTE
(hesitating for a moment)
I don't want you pissin' dirty.

SHOOTER
Shit, I got that all squared away. My boy's brother is married to the probation officer's sister. I had his back inside, so he's givin' me the heads up before they piss me. I got a regiment that'll clean me out in under 24 hours.

COYOTE
Fuck it...I guess.

Coyote reaches into his pocket and pulls out his gear and passes it off to his brother. Shooter embraces him. He doesn't bother going into the bathroom, rather starts fixing in the kitchen.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
Hey bro, be easy with that shit. Bout had me puking a little while ago.

Shooter winks at his brother as he shoots the dope.

SHOOTER
Goddamn, that's better than the shit we had in the pen. God, fucking, damn that's good!

His eyes rolling back in his head, shooting the last little bit of dope into his mouth as he slides down the wall.

TATE
Jesus Coyote- What the fuck is happening?

COYOTE
You never fuckin' know how your day is gonna turn out, Tater. Peanut okay?

TATE
I guess. Little dude is in the next room noddin' out, watchin' Spongebob.

COYOTE
(laughing)
Shit. Look at this. Strung out kids, fuckin' Mexican gangbangers, and Shooter, all jammed into this nasty ass trailer up a holler. Life's fuckin' weird, Tater.

TATE
Can we get out of here?

COYOTE
Round everyone up and let's hit the river. I need some sun anyway.

They say their goodbyes to Mike. The boys and Shooter exit the trailer. Screen door slams.

BLACKOUT

INT. CLASSROOM-MORGANTOWN,WV-FALL 2001-MORNING

TATE (V.O.)
I wasn't much of a student in High School, but something changed while I was away at college...

Tate sitting in a classroom full of students, including characters we'll see later.

TATE (V.O.)
In high school, it seemed like people were trying to cram things down your throat. Things that didn't matter because it was their job, and they didn't have a choice. But I always liked reading. Didn't matter what. I just loved it...

Professor enters the classroom in a scally cap and tweed blazer.

TATE (V.O.)(CONT'D)
It was like there were all these secrets that no one had bothered to tell me.

Enter DR. SULLIVAN-A hip, intense man in his late 40s.

DR. SULLIVAN
Welcome, my name is Cormac Sullivan. I know what you're thinkin'- yeah, I have a wicked thick accent. I grew up in Dorchester. That's in Boston. I cut my teeth covering the fishing docks in Gloucester, Massachusetts for the local paper, then moved on to cover housing for The Boston Globe, and eventually became the New England Editor for NPR. Throughout the course of this class, one of two things are gonna happen. Seeing as this is a 300-level course, most of you probably feel like you're already writers. Raise your hand if you consider yourself a writer? Anybody?

About 7 out of 25 people raise their hands.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
 That's reassuring. Time to get out your notepads and prove it. I'm passing around an info packet from a murder that happened in my hometown a few years back. In it, you're going to find a police report, eyewitness testimony, crime scene pictures and a general background on the victim and their relations. Between now and tomorrow at your 4am deadline, your job is to investigate, extrapolate and come up with a print-worthy 500-word story for the Boston Globe. I'll be playing the part of the overworked, underpaid print editor ready to cut your stories into tidy ribbons. This first assignment is worth 5% of your total grade this semester. But, ah...no pressure...

The class audibly groans, becoming worried.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
 Yes, you in the back. You may speak if you take off that hideous ball cap.

JERSEY KID
 (Wearing a Yankees cap)
 Yeah, how do you expect us to come up with something like that on our first day? We haven't covered anything yet.

DR SULLIVAN
 You have all the information you need right here in this info packet. You'll learn to think fast, write fast and lean. Edit. REVISE. REWRITE! Brew a pot of coffee and have a hard copy of your story on my desk by 4am tomorrow morning. Ladies and Gents, the clock is ticking and time is your mortal enemy. One last thing...Don't ever wear a Yankees cap in my classroom again. If you happen to be from New York or Jersey, I'll let you slide with the Mets.

JERSEY KID
 (muttering under his breath)
 Freakin' Hoboken, man. Jesus Christ.

CUT TO

INT. CLASSROOM- NEXT DAY-EARLY MORNING

DR. SULLIVAN
 I'm happy to report that everyone
 made their 4am deadline,
 congratulations, you didn't get
 shitcanned on your first job!

The students all laugh.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
 I've got good news and bad news.
 I'll give you the good news first.
 You all passed your first
 assignment, but only on a
 technicality. I said you needed to
 come up with a printworthy story,
 and as luck would have it, you
 actually followed my instructions
 and printed out a hard copy. Voila!
 Printworthy!

He holds the stack of papers up in the air.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
 Now for the bad news.

He chucks them all in the waste bin.

DR SULLIVAN
 Your stories were gahbage.

The class gets riled up and starts complaining and asking
 questions as he just smiles and nods his head.

DR. SULLIVAN
 Class, I feel your pain. Now I want
 you all to take a minute, and take
 slow deep breaths. I want you to
 relax starting from your eyebrows,
 all the way down to your toes. I
 want you to listen to me. This
 feeling of disgust, defeat and
 rejection, this is your first step
 towards becoming journalists.
 Rejection is the genesis of every
 printed word you've ever read.
 Realize now, that every word in
 every textbook, novel, magazine and
 newspaper that's even passed before
 your eyes, has been scrutinized and
 ripped apart before it ever landed
 in front of you. The writers of
 these words have had their work
 scratched to shit by crusty old
 editors and spent many sleepless
 nights in revision purgatory.
 That's what journalism is, it's a
 craft. Not an art. Does anyone here
 know the difference between an art
 and a craft?

GWENEVERE is a pretty Italian med student from Connecticut.

GWENEVERE

An art is like, emotional and expressive, and a craft is a result of work that comes from learning and training.

DR. SULLIVAN

Good! You're right there, young lady. A craft arises from techniques and learned skills. A craftsman can build you a perfectly sound house to raise your rugrats. An artist like Frank Lloyd Wright can design and construct you a marvel of blended styles and intricacies with a goddamn waterfall running through your living room. Art versus craft. 97% of journalism is the latter. But if you're made of the right stuff, this humble craft can lead you to artistry. Is anyone here familiar with Gabriel Garcia Marquez?

JERSEY KID

He's that Columbian writer. Wrote Love in the Time of Cholera.

DR. SULLIVAN

Right. Does anyone wanna guess where he got his start?

TATE

(raising his hand)

At a whorehouse in Baranquilla?

Everyone laughs.

DR SULLIVAN

(laughing heartily)

Good one! The truth is he cut his teeth on the community beat writing for a local newspaper in Cartagena. The mind that conjured Macando from the ether and gave birth to magical realism, got started writing 100-word blurbs about stolen property and kids soccer games in the barrio. Can you imagine?

Dr. Sullivan reaches into the waste bin and pulls out the stack of papers that he'd just trashed.

DR. SULLIVAN

Now, at the risk of giving you all big fat heads, I'll say there were genuine sparks of creativity and wordsmithing in some of your pieces. Tact. Know your audience. You all have the sword, now I'm going to teach you how to use it. You're gonna need thick skin. I'll go through 20 red pens this semester marking up your work, and you need to be okay with that.

(MORE)

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
 Over the course of this class,
 you're all required to submit a
 weekly journal entry to our class
 message board. This is your
 participation grade, and its
 purpose is to keep you thinking,
 processing and writing. There are
 no guidelines here, just whatever
 is floating around in your minds-
 could be the beginning of a
 journalism piece, a reflection from
 a childhood memory...anything that
 moves you will be fair game. The
 last thing I'm going to say is
 this: If you come to class every
 day on time and do all your
 assignments and journal entries,
 you'll get decent marks. This class
 has a built-in fail safe, however,
 which is PUBLICATION.
 If before your final day of class,
 you get an original work of
 journalism published anywhere
 outside of WVU, you'll go up an
 entire letter grade, maybe more.
 The better the piece, the more
 prestigious the publication, the
 higher the bump. I challenge you
 all to get rejected, again and
 again, until you see your name on
 that byline.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF CLASS- MORGANTOWN WVU CAMPUS-DAY

After class, Tate is outside sitting on the steps, smoking a
 cigarette, when a girl from his writing class sits down next
 to him.

GWENEVERE
 You got an extra smoke?

TATE
 Sure.

Tate gives Gwenevere a cigarette, lighting it for her.

GUINEVERE
 Perfect. Your joke was funny. Seems
 like you know a lot about writers.

TATE
 Thanks, just trying to lighten the
 mood. Dr. Sullivan's a bit of an
 intense fella.

GUINEVERE
 He's something. I suppose you're
 writing major?

TATE
 Tryin' to be. I still count on my
 fingers so math isn't really an
 option. What about you?

GUINEVERE

I'm actually auditing this class.
I'm in Med School, but my mom is a
big fan of Dr. Sullivan's work and
I promised her I'd take the class
if I could.

TATE

Is he famous or something?

GUINEVERE

My mom is kind of an NPR slut.
Believe it or not, in certain
circles of New Britain,
Connecticut, Cormac Sullivan is a
legend, especially with the women.

TATE

Ain't that something? Not every day
you get to take a class taught by
Yankee royalty.

GUINEVERE

Who's a Yankee? You know West
Virginia broke from the confederacy
and fought for the Union, right?

TATE

Yeah, I know. We just think it's
funny to pretend like we're proper
Southerners. No one really likes to
claim us anyway, so we might as
well get a laugh from it.

GUINEVERE

Oh, I get it. You're deep.

TATE

Shit, you want deep, you ought to
come shoot pool with me at the
Metropolitan this Sunday. We'll
talk Sartre and Camus over 99 cent
drafts and pub fries.

GUINEVERE

I can't tell if you're being a shit
or asking me out.

TATE

I didn't mean to come off that way.
Truth is, my game is kinda weak. I
overcompensate by actin' like a
dipshit.

GUINEVERE

(Nudging him and laughing)
What's a good Southern boy doing
drinking on the Sabbath anyway?

TATE

I'm Catholic. Sundays are my
whiskey days.

GUINEVERE
This must be the Hemingway bad-boy
tortured writer part of your game
huh?

TATE
If you could kindly stop shattering
my fragile façade, I'd really
appreciate it.

They both laugh.

GUINEVERE
Please, I might be a city girl, but
I know when someone's playin'
possum with me.

TATE
Playin' possum, huh? I never
imagined you'd bring yourself down
to my level. Using Appalachian
colloquialisms in a sad attempt to
endear yourself to the local
population.

She busts out laughing.

TATE (CONT'D)
Shameful, really.

GUINEVERE
You're a mess.

TATE
But I'm cute, right?

GUINEVERE
You're something. Thanks for the
smoke.

Putting out her cigarette, walking away. She stops and turns
around.

GUINEVERE (CONT'D)
So, I guess I'll see you Sunday.

TATE
Yes ma'am.

Hiding his happiness until she's out of eyesight, then
smiling, shaking his head in disbelief.

EXT/INT MONTAGE-WV- MINES & BAND PRACTICE-DAY

Montage of Red working in the mines, practicing with his
band.

TATE (V.O.)
While I was doing my thing in
Morgantown, life went on back in
Gideon. Red got some weekly gigs
playin' around Fayetteville during
rafting season and was really
finding his sound...

Red practicing fiddle alone, drinking whisky.

TATE

...He'd play Johnny Paycheck and David Allen Coe to get em' worked up, but his original songs started takin' on a life of their own...

Red working underground in the mines- Dirty faced eating lunch with his dad outside the mines.

TATE (CONT'D)

...Splittin' his time playin' music and laboring in the mines with his dad in Logan County, Red was findin' his voice, soaked in whisky as it was... He was Saturday night and Sunday Morning all rolled into one.

INT. FAYETTEVILLE BAR AND MUSIC VENUE- NIGHT

A busy bar packed with rafters and locals overlooking the New River 2002. Red and his band the Coal Country Outlaws are about to play the last part of their set. Red is pretty well lit, but in fine voice, getting a great reaction from the crowd.

RED

I wanna thank y'all for the support tonight. You know me and the boys do our damndest to put on a good show and all, but I wanna say right here, right now, that this particular kind of music, and the places it comes from... well it means somethin'.

The crowd starts clapping and yelling approval.

GUY FROM AUDIENCE

Play some Hank!

RED

If you're buyin the liquor, I'll play Carmina fuckin' Burana!

The crowd laughs.

ANOTHER GUY FROM AUDIENCE

Hell, ain't you drunk enough already?

The crowd laughs and Red becomes reflective and guarded.

RED

Yessir, just like that. You know, A song can be like medicine.

Red holds up his glass to the crowd and tosses it back.

RED (CONT'D)

My grandma used to make these old poultices.

(MORE)

RED (CONT'D)
 She'd put em' on my pap's knees in the evenin after he come home from work. My pap would just smile and light up his pipe, pour himself a drink of whisky and we'd listen his old records. If we was lucky, him and my Uncle Joe would pull out a guitar and an old harmonica or somethin, and they'd play the best they could. They'd play what they knew...and I tell you what, it had a hell of an effect on me.

Red changes guitars and gives it a quick tune.

RED (CONT'D)
 I'm gonna play a song for you fine people that I wrote a couple months back, while I was trying to process these old memories. In the way I know how, doin' the best I could at that time.

Red begins playing his song. It's a slow, heartfelt piedmont style country ballad, and the crowd didn't make a peep till he was done.

INT. BAR-AFTER THE SHOW

Red noticeably drunk, sitting at the bar drinking alone. It's getting near closing time, and his band has already packed their gear into their van.

RED'S GUITAR PLAYER
 Ay Red, we're fixin' to head back up the road. Let's pack it in and do it all over tomorrow, brother.

A RANDOM GIRL sidled next up next to Red at the bar, putting her arm around him.

RANDOM GIRL
 I think he's happy where he's at.

RED
 Well, I probably ought to get back and all. I mean, hell. We got something goin' tomorrow I reckon.

RANDOM GIRL

Some of us are gonna head back to our cabin for an after party. Got some good toot, plenty of beer, a hot tub. You look like you could use a soak.

RED
 That's kind of you, ma'am, and as much as I'd like to sit in your hot tub and blow rails off your titties, I'm currently married to my music.

RANDOM GIRL
 You sonofabitch!

RED
Kenneth is my Christian name,
ma'am.

RANDOM GIRL
Wow...yeah, I think you should
probably get your friend outta
here...

RED
What, before your pencil dick
husband shows up and whups my ass?

RED'S GUITAR PLAYER
Goddamn, Red!

They start laughing as she walks off in disgust.

RED
Go on and fire up that hot tub for
me, darlin'! I'll be by directly!

Red comically falls off of his bar stool.

INT. COYOTE'S OFFICE-DAY 2001

TATE (V.O.) OVER SCENE
Coy had been back in West Virginia
about 3 years, and we were all
proud of how good he was doing...

Montage of Coyote running staff meetings and teaching people.

TATE (V.O., CONT'D) (CONT'D)
...He held down a steady job at a
local marketing agency running
their graphic design department...

Coyote unveiling a new marketing campaign with his boss, with
the staff clapping.

TATE (CONT'D)
...It was hard to wrap my mind
around the thought of my wild big
brother, dressed up in a J. Crew
button down, running an office, but
goddamn if he wasn't pulling it
off.

Coyote has his headphones on, blasting heavy metal and is
working diligently at his computer on a design project. He
has dark bags under his eyes and looks frazzled. He starts to
doze off, right as his manager walks in...

COYOTE
Sorry I was zoned out trying to
wrap up this project for the
tourism board. Everything cool?

MANAGER
Yeah- You doin' alright today?

COYOTE

You know it! I'm just dealing with some insomnia. Gonna see the doc next week to see if I can get something to help. Still crankin' though.

MANAGER

Just checkin'. By the way, some of the staff are going out to lunch today on the company dime. It'd do you good to get out of the office.

COYOTE

That's awesome. I'll probably take you up on that.

His manager leaves his office, and Coyote looks up rehabilitation centers online, biting his nails.

EXT. OUTSIDE COYOTE'S WORKPLACE- NOON

Shooter, his girlfriend and infant son pull into the parking lot in a blue Firebird.

TATE (V.O.)

But behind the scenes, it was a different story. Shooter was dating a girl whose family was arguably more fucked up than his...

Coyote comes out, on his way to grab lunch with some co-workers. He sees Shooter, MORGAN, a wild eyed country girl and their infant son were also waiting for him in the parking lot.

TATE

...His old lady, Morgan, was a stone-cold junkie and a hopeless drunk, and it didn't take long for her and Shooter to figure out Coy's pay day down to the hour.

SHOOTER

(From out the car window)
Hey fucker! I thought we was gonna hang out today?

COYOTE

What are y'all...? Dude, you know I don't get off till 5 man. You can't just be showin' up like this.

Yelling to his co-worker.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Y'all go ahead, I'll meet you at Bernie's in a few! Ay order me some onion rings, will ya?

MORGAN

Baby, let's go. Your brother don't want us here.

SHOOTER
Will you please shut the fuck up?
Coy...I'm just. We're in a spot right
now.

COYOTE
What happened this time?

SHOOTER
Putting his arm around Coy, and leads him away from the car
Fuckin Morgan got drunk the other
day and totaled her dad's truck. We
been crashin' there for awhile and
he's fixin to throw us out.

COYOTE
Shit, man. You talked to mom?

SHOOTER
Fuck her. She's so far up her old
man's ass, she ain't tryin' to help
us.

COYOTE
Aw, Bill ain't too bad of an ol'
dude. At least he's takin care of
mom.

SHOOTER
Anyway, I need to grab like 800
bucks, bro. I got a line on a place
towards Jodie.

Coyote looks at his brother.

COYOTE
I got my check this morning, but I
ain't gone to cash it yet.

SHOOTER
I got some gear in the car if you
wanna sneak in the bushes and boot
up.

COYOTE
Fuck, I gotta finish out my day.
Project deadline and shit.

MORGAN
(yelling from her car)
Hey Coy, Margie's down there askin'
about you! Just ride down the river
with us and we'll tie one on!

SHOOTER
(laughing)
She ain't too much to look at, but
that girl can suck the yellow off a
banana.

COYOTE
Fuck...Let me... I need to holler at
my boss for a minute.

(MORE)

COYOTE (CONT'D)
I'll tell him we got a family
emergency or something.

SHOOTER
Hell yeah- You need some time with
your family anyway. Your real
family.

COY
Don't say shit like that. Deedee
and her family been watchin' out
for me for years.

SHOOTER
I know man, I'm just sayin'. We
miss you. Caine misses his uncle C.

COYOTE
I'll grab my shit and be out in a
few.

Coyote walks back towards his office, cursing under his
breath.

INT. TATE'S DORM ROOM-Morgantown 2002-NIGHT

Tate is writing on his computer journal entry for class,
reflecting and thinking about the embattled history of West
Virginia.

TATE (V.O.)OVER FOOTAGE
Journal entry October 3rd 2001-In
the early 1900's the Coal Wars of
West Virginia came to a bloody
climax...

Archival footage of old miners.

TATE V.O (CONT'D)
...Beginning with the Matewan
Massacre in 1920, leading up to The
Battle of Blair Mountain the
following year, our rebellion, was
remembered as the largest, most
violent battle fought on US soil
since the Civil war...

Archival footage and pictures of men shooting.

TATE V.O. (CONT'D)
...For five grueling days 10,000
odd coal miners, armed with mostly
hunting rifles, took to the hills,
confronting the lawmen and
strikebreakers bought by mine
owners as they attempted to
unionize the southwestern West
Virginia coalfields. Fighting for
fair wages, humane treatment and
safer working conditions, the
miners took their stand...

Archival footage of Warren Harding.

TATE V.O. (CONT'D)
 ...President Warren G Harding sent troops to quell the uprising, but their battle cry was never forgotten. So, it came to pass in 1935 during the height of the Great Depression, the New Deal, enacted by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made headway for the reestablishment of the miner's unions in West Virginia, with other states following suit. Our state motto is "Montani semper liberi"... Mountaineers are always free. Which means...

Tate starts to struggle.

TATE
 (Muttering to himself)
 I don't know what the fuck that means...

He struggles with finding something to write about for his class. He starts a sentence and erases it on his laptop.

He pulls out his journal, starts to scribble, getting noticeably frustrated, ripping pages out, throwing them against the wall and the waste bin. He finds the entry he'd written from his first day on campus entitled "Gideon" He lights up a cigarette, and looks at a picture on his wall of him and Coyote. He sees another picture of Coyote, obviously high. He lights up a cigarette, cracks open a beer.

Tate starts a new document on his computer entitled "From Afghanistan to Appalachia: The Opiate Wars of West Virginia" Tate stares at his computer for a while. He takes the picture of Coy off the wall and examines it. He picks up his phone and calls him.

TATE (CONT'D)
 Hey brother...same old shit, you know. I'm working on this article, but I'm gonna need your help...No, we need to do this in person. It's gonna be an interview. I won't use your name, but yeah that's about it. Right. I get it, man. I can head down. Let's do up the mountain. I'll pick you up Friday. For sure...No doubt. I'll see you then...

INT/EXT DAY-FALL-TATE'S TRUCK

Coy and Tate driving to Beauty Mountain, taking in the majesty of WV fall on full display.

TATE (V.O.)
 I've spent my entire life in the West Virginia mountains, but the stark beauty of autumn never fails to leave me gobsmacked...

EXT.BEAUTY MOUNTAIN-DAY

The boys make their way through the foliage covered path.
Coyote stops and takes a picture of an autumn flower.

TATE (V.O.)

...For a few weeks every year, God
turns our little neck of the woods
into a staggering still life of
color, painted every bright and
beautiful hue of red, yellow,
orange and everything between...

The boys emerge from the path, standing on the rocks taking
in the magical scenery.

TATE V.O.

...capped with a sad cerulean sky,
and the golden promise of the cold
grey months that lay ahead of us.

COYOTE

Damn, I haven't been out on this
old mountain for awhile.

Tate and Coyote observe the wonder of Beauty Mountain- Coyote
picks up a rock, and chunks it off the side of the cliff.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Me and Shooter used to come here
and smoke weed out of beer cans
when we were kids. You'd hardly
ever see anyone, and so it kinda
felt like it belonged to us.

TATE

I appreciate you talkin' to me
about this. I know it's not easy,
considering everything you've been
through and all.

COY

It ain't like that, Tate. We all
been through it. My life ain't
worse than anybody else's.
At the end of the day, I'm just a
garden variety junky.

TATE

Putting his hand on his shoulder

Just because you've done some bad
shit in your life, doesn't mean
your life don't matter. I still
love you...You're still fightin'
it, and I'm still proud to call you
my brother.

COYOTE

Swingin' and missin' more like it.
Today I'm two months off dope. I
still wake up every morning with a
mouse chewin' away between my ears.
They got me on this new stuff,
Subutex.

(MORE)

COYOTE (CONT'D)
That gives me enough of a kick in
the ass to get through the day.
Still feels like cheatin'. Just
another kind of pill.

TATE
Keep at it man. Shooter's kids are
gonna need Uncle C in the game.

COYOTE
(showing signs of sadness)
Yessir.

TATE
I interviewed the prosecuting
attorney in Clay County yesterday
for this article I'm doing. You
know what this motherfucker told
me? They're callin' it hillbilly
heroin now. Can you believe?

COYOTE
(laughing sardonically,
shaking his head)
Like we're the ones manufacturing
the shit. Pushin' it up every
holler south of the Mason Dixon.
Just a bunch of uneducated hill
jacks. I'd say I was surprised, but
it's hard as hell to get a rise
outta me anymore.

They sit down on a rock and Tate pulls out a tape recorder
and a notepad. They start their interview, and you can see
them attentively talking to one another, but you can't hear
their words. We get one last majestic shot of the scenery and
the boys talking.

EXT. RED'S PARENTS' HOUSE- LATE NIGHT

Red pulls his old Jeep unsteadily into the driveway, with his
music blasting. He sits in a truck and pulls out a baggie of
crank, dipping his keys in, he takes a bump to each nostril.
He beats his steering wheel in excitement, and pain from the
burning powder. He dips his pinky into a pint of black label
whisky, snorting some up his nostrils to dissolve the powder
left in his nose. He looks in the rearview mirror to make
sure his nose is clean with wild and staring eyes. He's also
very drunk. He slams his truck door and falls down in the
driveway, cursing to himself

RED
Stupid fucking piece of shit!

INT. RED'S PARENTS HOUSE-LATE NIGHT

He stumbles into his house, where RED'S MOM, an overweight
red haired woman, is up late watching TV. A news program
about Purdue Pharma is on, and she hears Red stumbling into
the door.

RED'S MOM
Kenneth, is that you? You ok,
honey?

RED
Yeah mama- just late practice with
the boys. I'm whipped.

RED'S MOM
You ought not to be drinkin' and
drivin'. Liable to get your killin'
done.

RED
Aww don't worry bout me, mama. I'm
straight as an ol' arrow. Gotta hit
the hay.

RED'S MOM
Come give me a kiss before you head
up.

Red heads into the living room to oblige. She finally
realizes what state he's in.

RED'S MOM (CONT'D)
Lord have mercy, son. What's
happened to you?

RED
I'm just dead tired is all.

RED'S MOM
I can see that. Well, you get your
rest, darlin. Tomorrow's a new day
after all.

RED
(sighing)
Yess'm. Love you.

He kisses his mom on the cheek.

INT. RED'S BEDROOM AT HIS FAMILY HOUSE-NEXT MORNING

Red hears his mother's voice calling him from outside the
door, awakening him.

RED'S MOM
Honey, you need to get cleaned up
and ready for church. Kenneth? You
quit your sloomyin' around and get
yourself up now.

RED
Mama, I ain't feelin' too good.
Don't reckon I'll be fit for
service today.

RED'S MOM
Kenneth, you mind me, now and pull
yourself together.

Red stares up into the ceiling fan, sweat pouring down his face. He struggles with the physical and spiritual sickness. Mumbling to himself, he gets out of bed and jumps in the shower.

RED
Yes'm. I'll be down directly.

INT.RED'S FAMILY PENTECOSTAL CHURCH-MORNING

A small and simple congregation of about 50 people. Pinewood pews and in an intricately engraved pulpit for the preacher. The choir sets off in the background with the organ player, banjo, dobro, guitar and upright bass. Red's father is the guitar player. The same pastor, who recited the lord's prayer at the boy's senior night game takes to the pulpit and began his sermon.

PASTOR
Good mornin'. What a blessed and fine mornin' it is.

Congregation makes sounds in agreement.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
On warm summer mornings like this, I can't help but feel the presence of God and his only begotten son lookin' down on us. Right here in the hills of West Virginia, smilin' down as his devoted followers gather in love and admiration of his works. I look around today, and see you here in the name of Jesus, and I am humbled at the sight. Ladies and gentleman, we stand in the eyes of God as unworthy sinners, prayin' together to hear his words as they've been spoken over the centuries, handed down by his apostles, to his living Saints and evangelical congregations. We stand here today as Pentecostal Christians!

(dramatic pause)
A lot of people don't know what that means. I'm gonna spell it out to you this morning.

CONGREGATION
Yes sir! Whoo!

PASTOR
You see, our congregational name comes from the word penitent. We share sorrow and regret for having done wrong. And while we're born into this world of sin, it is upon us as God's living servants to repent of our wrong doings and transgressions.

Congregation agrees heartily.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 We know we can't do it alone, and
 brothers and sisters, we are not
 alone! Look here at this book!

holding up the bible
 Within these holy pages, lie the
 words of forgiveness. The words of
 salvation! We have his joyous
 music, and every Sunday, just like
 today, we share this fellowship.

We see different members of the congregation, choir and
 musicians, as they listen intently.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 As I stand at this pulpit, I know
 as well as you, that there's
 nothin' that brings home the word
 of God almighty like song, so I'm
 gonna give this next part to our
 choir. Please stand and follow
 along in your program as we praise
 his name on high.

The band and congregation begin their song as we see Red,
 contemplating his soul.

TATE (V.O.) OVER MUSIC
 Years later, Red told me this story
 of that day...

Red, clasps his mother's hands with his head down, sadly
 mouthing along the words.

TATE (V.O.)
 ...Sitting on the mighty banks of
 the Gauley River, He told me how
 God spoke to him that day in
 church. I told him about my own
 struggles with addiction, and how
 judgment is universal. That
 hopeless void of dependance wasn't
 just reserved for Pentecostals or
 lapsed Catholics.
 Rather a torture that seeps into
 our waters, permeating our souls.
 Like Cain and Haman reveling in
 their indulgences, setting fire to
 all that is pious in our own
 personal Sodom and Gomorrah.

His mom holds his hand, and she kisses him on the cheek.

Song ends, as the organist plays softly in the background as
 the Pastor walks around with his microphone, engaging with
 the congregation.

PASTOR
 Right now, please close your eyes.
 I want you to look into your heart,
 and feel his very presence.

I want you to know that you're not alone, I want you to hear
 the footsteps of Jesus leading you to his eternal Kingdom.

Yes! I want you to follow, bathed in his light. Do you hear him? DO YOU FEEL HIM!?

The congregation stirs and responds, drowning out Red's quiet sobbing.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 Right this very instant, I want us to take stock of our blessings, and think of our sins as we strive to follow in our lord and Saviors footsteps. Does anyone here today want to share with the congregation their personal story of salvation? Does anyone want to reaffirm their faith and dedication to our Lord and Savior? You shall be received! You shall be forgiven! If your fightin' against Ol' Beelzebub, brothers and sisters, you're a soldier in the army of God! In his name, come up and receive your ticket to salvation! Come on up!

The congregation gets up and starts shouting affirmation. One man starts dancing around wildly.

Taking his head from his hands, Red stands up and hugs his mom, wiping away his tears. He slowly approaches the pastor, as the congregation quiets down.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 Kenneth Foster, the lord is with you today. Can you feel him?

RED
 Yessir.

PASTOR
 In the name of the father, Kenneth, are you prepared to take your place in the army of God? Are you prepared to renounce Satan and all his deeds?

Red collapses to his knees with his palms facing up in penitence

RED
 I don't... I don't...

Pastor puts his hands on Red's head, praying inaudibly.

PASTOR
 Son, God knows how hard it is to say. Let Him loosen your tongue. In your heart today, are you prepared to receive Jesus Christ as your lord and personal savior?

A few men and women start to busy themselves, getting the towels, preparing the baptismal pool anticipating what's about to happen.

RED
I'm ready... I'm ready, Lord.

The congregation abuzz with excitement and gasps, with some people yelling out support and affirmation.

PARISHIONER (MAN)
We love you and Jesus loves you,
Red!

PARISHIONER (WOMAN) (CONT'D)
Glory!

The pastor motions for his mother and father to approach the baptismal pool, as he leads Red there.

Pastor speaks softly to Red as music drowns out the words. Red nods 3 times during the muted exchange as parents look on. His father is smiling, guitar strapped to his back, while his mother cries happily, holding her family bible.

Red crosses his arms, and the Pastor holds his nose, dipping him into the water. Red emerges smiling and emotional. He then raises his hand to the congregation.

RED
Thank you, Jesus!

TITLE OVER

Morgantown, WV. End of Winter Term-2003

INT- JOURNALISM CLASSROOM-DAY.

It's the last day of class, and everyone is waiting to hear their final grade.

DR. SULLIVAN
Alright folks, here we are on our final day of class. I've seen a lot of collective growth out of you this semester. Some of you might continue honing your craft professionally, but to those who are not planning careers in journalism or any writing-based profession, I hope you continue to work on writing as a passion. At the beginning of this class, I told you that if you published, you'd get a grade bump, so we have 3 names to consider now... Let's see...where's our man from Hoboken?

JERSEY KID
Present, Dr. Sullivan.

DR. SULLIVAN

I have here a gonzo travel piece you published in the Jersey City Times about a week you spent hiking the Appalachian Trail entitled "Points South of Bayonne" Great rag, wicked good piece. Atta boy!

The class claps.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

That brings us to Ms. Gwenevere Esposito, our audit. While this future medical doctor is not receiving a grade, she was published nevertheless in the Charleston Gazette, covering the Branch Mountain Bluegrass festival and is deserving of recognition. She kept a lively pace throughout the piece. Well done, young lady.

Everyone claps, and Tate whistles.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Last but certainly not least, we have Mr. Tate Sweeney, published in Graffiti Magazine. His article entitled "From Afghanistan to Appalachia: The Opiate Wars in West Virginia" consists of a series of interviews from local law officials and a local opiate addict about how their lives have been affected by oxycontin. I should mention his article has been reprinted by the Lexington Herald Ledger and the Charleston Daily Mail. It's also been referenced by a group of litigators in Austin, Texas who are working on a civil suit against Purdue Pharma. As timely and heartbreaking as anything I've read this year. Kudos, son.

The class cheers on Tate, and Gwenevere looks at him with surprised appreciation as he tries to hide his embarrassment.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

For all that are interested, we'll be meeting up at Happy's Pub this evening to celebrate you young writers. Wings and first round of pitchers on yours truly. I believe it might be karaoke night as well. Jesus, as long as no one sings anything from the Bee Gees, we should be ok. Your final grades are posted on the message board under your student ID number. Thanks, everyone, and good luck.

INT. HAPPY'S PUB-NIGHT

The journalism class is all together, celebrating Tate and the other students who got published over the term. It's karaoke night, and the Jersey kid from class belts out a Jersey rock song surprisingly well. Dr. Sullivan, wearing worn out jeans, a beat-up Red Sox Cap, a tweed blazer with elbow patches and a David Bowie T-Shirt underneath. Tate, Gwenevere and random kids from class sit around the table with pitchers of cold beer and snacks, enjoying each other's company.

DR. SULLIVAN
Hopefully you're coming to terms
with this whole idea of rejection.

Students all laugh talking amongst themselves.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
I hope one of the things you take
away from this class is that
rejection, failure really, is a
necessary part of life. If you
aren't getting better at something,
then what's the point? Right?

The class heartily agrees.

DR. SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
So with that said, let's raise a
glass of Milwaukee's best to those
who made the bylines this year.

Here's to dogged self-improvement, past and future and
rejections, and to Nomah Gahciapara!

The class all laughs and cheers.

Jersey kid finishes his song and everyone at the table starts
shouting.

CLASS
Ho-bo-ken! Ho-bo-ken! Ho-bo-ken!

As the Jersey kid is about to leave the stage, he puts on his
Mets cap and points it out to Dr. Sullivan.

DR. SULLIVAN
Atta boy, Hoboken!

Tate sits at the bar waiting to be served. He's happy, but
seems tense and brooding. He doesn't like being the center of
attention.

TATE
Can I grab a pitcher and a shot of
bourbon?

Enter Gwenevere from behind, rubbing Tate's shoulders.

GWENEVERE
Hey there, Hemingway. You drinkin'
alone tonight or what?

TATE
Make that two shots of bourbon,
sir. Thank you.

GWENEVERE
I was just thinking that this will
be the only class that we ever take
together.

TATE
Probably. You sad about it?

They cheers and take their shots together.

GWENEVERE
Nah. You made it hard to
concentrate anyway.

TATE
Is that so?

GWENEVERE
(Mock swooning)
How's a girl supposed to focus on
her writing with those brooding
blue eyes in the corner?

She pinches Tate's butt, he finally smiles and loosens up.

TATE
All right, all right. Look, I've
been wanting to talk to you about
that.

GWENEVERE
Yeah? Well?

TATE
Like, I guess I'm wondering where
we are on the matter.

GWENEVERE
You tryin' to take me outta the
game?

TATE
Maybe so?

Smiling and shy, he looks down at his feet.

DJ
Please let's give a warm round of
applause for Cormac! Cormac, would
you please report to the stage!

Tate and Gwenevere look up in disbelief as the rest of class
cheers loudly.

CLASS

Cormac! Cormac! Cormac!

Dr. Sullivan takes the stage with the poise and reassurance
of a seasoned front man.

He takes off his blazer and Red Sox cap. The accordion intro to Rod Stewart's "Rhythm of My Heart" plays, and Dr. Sullivan absolutely knocks it out of the park. The whole bar quiets down, as he gives a soulful and stirring rendition of the ballad. His student's mouths are agape with surprise.

TATE
(In disbelief)
No.

GWENEVERE
Are you fucking serious right now?

TATE
No wonder your mom thinks he's hot
shit. This is...wow.

GWENEVERE
playfully punches him in the arm
So anyway.

TATE
So anyway. You know I really like
you.

GWENEVERE
Go on...

TATE
It's like, I don't know. This feels
like we make sense. Or something.

GWENEVERE
Have you ever been laid in your
life? You're just terrible at this.
Jesus, Tate Hanlin. I figured this
would come little more natural to
you, being a writer and all.

TATE
I'm sorry. That's not what I meant.

GWENEVERE
You hush. Excuse me, bartender. Can
we have another round of bourbon?
Yeah, just put it on the Hemingway
tab

Rolling her eyes playfully, she makes sure Tate sees her. The bartender pours the shots.

GWENEVERE (CONT'D)
So here's the deal. I really like
you too... and God knows, I wish we
could have had this talk earlier,
because now I'm a little drunk.
(Taking her shot.)
I cried this morning a little
before class. It occurred to be
that maybe whatever this is might
be coming to an end. So there.

Dr. Sullivan continues to the reflective coda of the song as she continues.

GWENEVERE (CONT'D)
I don't want that. I like having
you there to look forward to.

TATE
Ok. I think we're on the same page.
So I guess..

Gwenevere interrupts him with a passionate kiss.

GWENEVERE
We're doin' this.

TATE
So, you're my girl then?

GWENEVERE
Since that day on the steps. You
just didn't know it yet.

She grabs his face and puts their heads together.

TATE
What's your Christmas looking like?

The singalong chorus at the end of the songs booms as the entire class, along with everyone at the bar starts singing along with Dr. Sullivan. The kids from the class surround Tate and Gwenevere as everyone is singing in unison. Tate wraps her up in his arms and slow dances with her, as they both sing along.

DJ
Let's give up the house one more
time for Cormac! My god, that was
somethin' special, can you believe
that?

FADE TO BLACK

INT.OLD K CAR-RURAL WEST VIRGINIA-NIGHT-1991

SUDDEN TIME, SCENE AND COLOR CHANGE. FLASHBACK TO COYOTE'S
EARLY TEEN YEARS- BLACK AND WHITE

A hot summer night in rural West Virginia. Four young men dressed in ski masks on top of their head pull up in a K car onto a rural convenience store, tweaked out on meth, blasting speed metal out of the busted speakers- pulling around the side of the store, we see a dummy plate that simply reads "Evil."

YOUNG SHOOTER
We're fixin' to run up in this spot-
Coy, you stay out here and keep
lookout. Just fuckin' stay cool and
beat on the window if shit goes
sideways out here.

JAYBIRD
Don't you worry about nothin'
little brother.

(MORE)

JAYBIRD (CONT'D)
We got some good yella crank back
up the trailer once we get this
goddamn money. Some of that ol cat
piss!

He smacks Coy on the shoulder as they exit the car.

INT/EXT CONVENIENCE STORE-NIGHT

The boys enter the store. Jaybird has a 38 revolver. Shooter has a sawed off 12 gauge shotgun. Tweeker has a baseball bat. Coyote smokes nervously outside the door watching the chaos unfold inside. Shooter is drawn down on the elderly male cashier, demanding he opens the drawer and safe as Tweeker makes as much noise as possible, intimidating the two customers inside, shaking them down for their wallets. High and nervous, Tweeker smacks a well-dressed man in the face with the bat, thinking he was going for a weapon. hurting him badly but not mortally. The blood spooks Shooter and he hits the cashier with the butt of the shotgun, knocking him out on the way out the door. He then blankly does the same to the other customer as well, assuring they are unconscious by stomping his face.

SMASH CUT TO

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE-NIGHT

All is quiet outside as young Coyote is smoking a cigarette and trying to maintain composure. Crickets and cicadas chirp loudly. They exit the store, yelling and jumping into the car.

INT. K CAR-NIGHT

The boys are screaming wildly as they got a decent haul of money. Coyote is shaken as they peel out of the gas station into the hot summer night. Shooter fires his shotgun out the window. Coyote stares blankly out of the car window. He is 13 years old.

JUMP CUT TO

INT. COYOTE'S MANAGER'S OFFICE- MORNING

Coyote stares blankly out his manager's office window, looking tired and strung out.

MANAGER

I wanted to bring you in this morning to talk to you about your performance in the office.

COYOTE
Well, near as I can tell, I've been
meeting most of my deadlines and
handling the pressure of juggling
our multiple accounts pretty well.
You must be offering me a raise.

MANAGER

I'm gonna say it straight, Coy. You're one of the most talented graphic designers I've ever met. You know these programs and software better than anyone in the office, including me. The problem we're having is your erratic behavior. Frankly, the impression I'm getting is that you're dealing with some personal issues that are spilling over.

COYOTE

I thought this was about the work. My deliverables are as good as they've ever been.

MANAGER

You've gone off on outbursts with other staff members. Your personal appearance and your general well-being have been called into question by my bosses, and by others in the office.

COYOTE

I've been dealing with some pretty tough family stuff. It's been affecting my sleep and overall health some.

MANAGER

The bottom line is we're a fairly conservative company. We have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to substance abuse. I've been ordered to conduct a urinalysis based on what I've just spoken to you about.

COYOTE

This is some bullshit, Nate. I pissed clean when you hired me. I don't think you can just randomly screen me like this.

MANAGER

When there's been formal complaints, we can. This is serious, Coy. Still, you have a choice. You can always opt not to consent to this.

COYOTE

I bled for this company. I streamlined and modernized your entire graphic design and marketing department in my first 6 months, and this is the thanks I get?

MANAGER

I'm sorry.

He places the cup on his desk in front of him.

MANAGER (CONT'D)
 You need to be at the lab in 30 minutes.

COYOTE
 This is harassment, Nate. You know what, I'm not complying with this, and I'm going to file a complaint with HR.

MANAGER
 I'm sorry to hear it. I'm going to have to ask you to clear your desk, Coy. I'm sorry this didn't work out. You're a heck of a good artist.

COYOTE
 Fuck you, Nate. I'll make sure and tell my niece and nephew who depend on my paycheck your opinions on my art. This place is an ass backwards hole in the side of a mountain anyway.

INT.COYOTE'S OFFICE-MORNING

Coy slams the door of his office and starts gathering his belongings and putting them in a box. He looks around to make sure the coast is clear, and starts putting hard drives down his pants. He hears a knock at the door.

SECURITY GUARD
 Open the door, sir.

COYOTE
 Yeah yeah! I'm gathering up my belongings, ya know? Complying?

The security guard uses his key card to open his door and enter his office. He had everything he wanted to steal already secured.

The security guard flanks him as enters the room.

SECURITY GUARD
 You need to calmly leave the premises, sir.

COYOTE
 Sure thing rent-a-cop... you need to back away from me before you catch a fuckin' smack.

HALLWAY

A small crowd, including his manager, gathers around as he's escorted out of the building.

COYOTE
 Y'all are some hypocritical pieces of shit.

(MORE)

COYOTE (CONT'D)
 Just so you know, Jesus is a lie.
 You're backing the wrong fuckin'
 horse!

EXT.MILAN PUSKAR STADIUM SUMMER 2002-DAY

Tate's Graduation with Tate's VO over top. Students line up in their cap and gown and Milan Puskar Stadium for their graduation. Names are announced, and then eventually it's Tate's turn.

ANNOUNCER
 Tate Douglas Hanlin!

TATE (V.O.)
 I was the second person in my
 family's history to earn a college
 degree, but I didn't really know
 what I was going to do next...

Tate walks onstage with his honors cords and looks out to his family- Deedee, Stanton, Aunt Judy, Gwen and Coyote all cheer loudly as he picks up his diploma.

TATE (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 ...A bachelor of the Arts- I didn't
 know what the hell that even meant.
 I'd developed a good relationship
 with Dr. Sullivan, and he
 encouraged me to continue on my
 path as a writer...

INT.RESTAURANT-DAY

Everyone is at a table enjoying drinks and food. Everyone is dressed up but Stanton, wearing his brown duck Carhartt overalls and his Realtree hunting cap. Tate sits beside Gwen and Coyote, holding her hand under the table.

TATE (V.O)
 Gwinevere was another question I
 really didn't have the answer for.

The night we graduated, we split a bottle of bourbon and professed our love for each other. When we woke up the next morning, the reality of what that meant landed on us both, as we fumbled with the uncertainty of it all.

INT. GWENEVERE'S APARTMENT-MORNING AFTER

Tate and Gwinevere wake up to a blistering hot morning with a window fan beating them in the face. Naked and hungover, Tate opens his eyes and stares at the ceiling. He rolls over and puts his head on Gwinevere's chest, caressing her warmly as she wakes up.

GWENEVERE
 Jesus, what time is it?

TATE
Judging by the sun, must be close
to noon...Goddamn, did we finish
that whole bottle?

GWENEVERE
Uhh, I maybe had two drinks out of
it.

She reaches over to her nightstand and grabs a bottle of
water, and hands it to Tate.

TATE
Aunt Judy will be pleased to hear
that her gift didn't go to waste.

He passes the bottle back to her.

GWENEVERE
Any idea what happened to my
clothes?

TATE
Jeez, I'm starting to feel like I
plied you with liquor and took
advantage of you or somethin'.

GWENEVERE
Don't be an ass. I remember our
talk, that's for sure.

TATE
Thank God. I try not to make a
habit out of telling blacked out
women I'm in love with them.

GWENEVERE
What a gentleman.

She grabs his hand and kisses it.

GWENEVERE (CONT'D)
I don't think we got past that,
really. I just want you to know
that I meant what I said.

TATE
I know. I did too.

Tate puts his arm around her, kissing her shoulder from
behind.

TATE (CONT'D)
I reckon we just need to talk about
where we go from there.

GWENEVERE
Is that what you reckon?

She laughs nervously. Awkward silence for a few seconds

GWENEVERE (CONT'D)
 So, Tate Douglas Hanlin, esteemed
 bachelor of the arts, in what
 manner do you plan on utilizing
 your degree?

TATE
 Goddamn, you're jumpin' right in
 there, huh?

GWENEVERE
 It's 90 degrees, and noon by your
 country sundial. No sense in
 pretending like this isn't
 happening.

TATE
 To be honest, I'm not really sure.
 My stepfather has a line on a staff
 writing job for me back at the
 Mountain Chronicle. It ain't The
 Times, but it might be a starting
 point.

GWENEVERE
 You're actually considering going
 back to Gideon?

TATE
 What do you mean?

GWENEVERE
 You know better than anyone what's
 happening there. Look at Coyote and
 Jacki. Look at what's happening to
 that place, Tate.

TATE
 It's not like it would be a
 permanent move. I feel like I could
 maybe help out or something. You
 could get a job at the hospital in...

He trails off when he sees how troubled she looks.

GWENEVERE
 You're making some pretty big
 assumptions. We haven't talked
 about this at all yet. We have the
 first conversation, and you've got
 me moving back to your home town to
 follow you?

TATE
 I guess that's my fault. Shit, I'm
 sorry.

GWENEVERE
 There's no reason to put blame on
 anyone, Tate. We're just trying to
 figure things out.

TATE
 Here's what I figured- We love each
 other, right?

(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)
That's been established. Only thing
left really is to decide if it's
worth it.

GWENEVERE
It is to me.

TATE
But not enough to stay in West
Virginia.

GWENEVERE
That's not fair. Why can't we
figure out something that works for
us both?

TATE
You're stonewallin' me- pretending
to be all diplomatic about this as
long as it suits you.

GWENEVERE
Now wait. Listen, honey. Your
family is wonderful. Gideon is a
beautiful little town, but starting
my career up a holler in the
epicenter of a drug epidemic
doesn't make a lot of sense. For
either of us.

TATE
A holler huh? See, now you're just
pissin' me off.

GWENEVERE
I'm just trying to talk, pick up
where we left off last night.

TATE
Oh, I see what you're tryin' to
say. I don't know when or where you
got the notion that I'm some kind
of dipshit that can't tell when
someone is talkin' down to them.

Tate gets out of bed, finds a half a beer and downs it.

GWENEVERE
Tate. That's not what I'm trying to
say at all.

TATE
Frustrated, he lights a cigarette and starts to hunt for his
clothes.

TATE (CONT'D)
Ya know, I don't have time for this
shit. I tell you what, my lease
ends in a month.
(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)
 So in exactly 30 days, I'm gonna
 take all my shit, chuck it in my
 truck, head back down to all my
 strung out pals to work a stupid
 job and who knows, maybe I'll start
 a meth lab or somethin'. You take
 care now, go on and lose my number
 while you're at it.

Tate puts on his shirt as he heads out the door, slamming the door behind him. Gwenevere sits in her bed, stunned.

LIVING ROOM--

Tate walks into the living room where Coyote is sleeping on the couch, and nudges Coyote suddenly awake.

TATE
 Grab your shit, we're goin to get
 shitfaced.

COYOTE (FUMBLING AWAKE, CONFUSED)
 Eggs first?

INT/EXT BARBERSHOP, GIDEON WV EARLY MORNING

Red walks into Stanton's barbershop with his long hair and beard, as he's been wearing it for years. Stanton, who is also the town barber, greets him warmly.

STANTON
 Mornin' Red! Looks like you could
 use a trim!

Red smiles, shakes his head and takes a seat at the empty barber chair.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 Whatchu say, inch or two off the
 length and a beard trim? Look damn
 good with that guitar up onstage.

RED
 Well, I'm playin' up to the church
 shortly, so maybe I should look
 that part.

STANTON
 (happily surprised)
 I see. Well, in that case, I'll get
 you trimmed up proper.

Series of shots: Red gets his hair washed, beard shaved, and hair shorn short and tidy by Stanton while Red looks on reflectively. He looks at himself in the mirror afterwards and smiles.

STANTON (CONT'D)
 I swear, you look like a different
 man altogether.

RED
I reckon I am, Mr. Dotson. Been a
long time comin'.

INT. KITCHEN- DEEDEE AND PERCY'S HOUSE-LATE AFTERNOON

Aunt Judy, Stanton, Percy and Deedee get ready for a family dinner with Tate. The women busy themselves in the kitchen over pots and pans.

EXT. FRONT PORCH-DEEDEE AND PERCY'S HOUSE-LATE AFTERNOON

Percy and Stanton sat on the front porch, tending to the smoker and drinking beer. Percy, reading the paper, looks up as he sees Tate's truck pull into the driveway. He stands to wave him to the porch.

PERCY
You bring any ice?

TATE
Yessir.

Tate grabs his cooler from the back of his truck.

PERCY
Just bring it on up to the porch.

STANTON
Jesus, boy. You tryin' to grow a beard or you just been layin' drunk?

TATE
(hugging Stanton)
Hey Pap. More the latter I believe.

PERCY
Let me have a look at you.

He puts his hands on Tate's shoulders and looks him up and down.

PERCY (CONT'D)
You been goin' through it.

TATE
Just stressed some... nothin' a home cooked meal won't fix. Jesus that smells good.

STANTON
Should I even ask about Gwenevere?

TATE
Goddamn, is it that obvious?

STANTON
I know a broken-hearted kid when I see one. Besides, you never was any good hiding things. Just like your mama. Big ol' heart on your sleeve.

PERCY
 (clapping him on the back)
 Steady that ship and get in the
 kitchen and hug your mama and Aunt.
 It's good to see you, Tate. We're
 all proud.

Aunt Judy comes out to smoke a cigarette and sees Tate.

AUNT JUDY
 I'll be damned! You better get over
 here! Deedee! Tater's here!

Judy runs to Tate, hugging him excitedly, kissing on his
 cheek.

TATE
 You act like I didn't just see you
 at graduation.

AUNT JUDY
 I oughtta... talkin' to me like that!

Deedee comes out to the porch, somberly and hugs her son.

DEEDEE
 I just hope you didn't spoil your
 dinner on junk food driving here.

TATE
 Shoot, mama. I ain't eat since
 yesterday.

INT.DEEDEE AND PERCY'S DINING ROOM-EVENING

The family is enjoying their dinner, passing around the food.
 Percy is serving good French wine, but there's an unsettling
 sense in the air.

STANTON
 Judy Kay, how's everything down at
 your treatment facility?

AUNT JUDY
 God...Daddy we ain't got the staff to
 deal with the number of folks
 coming in.

Judy passes around the macaroni salad.

TATE
 It's been that bad?

He eats his food slowly, looking around the table.

AUNT JUDY
 People you'd never imagine in a
 million years. Tradesmen,
 secretaries, some practically kids.
 Lotsa people dealing with addiction
 in this county.

PERCY
 (pouring Tate some wine)
 About a year ago, a Purdue Pharma
 rep came into my office trying to
 get me to push that goddamn poison.
 Cute girl, not much older than you,
 walked in with her Italian shoes,
 arms full of vouchers and
 literature.

DEEDEE
 You left the cute part out when you
 told me.

PERCY
 Anyway, I spent some time trying to
 educate her on proper opiate
 protocol, but she just went on
 about the benefits of it, quoting
 medical journals and such. It
 didn't take long to realize she
 wasn't interested in my medical
 expertise, so I sent her on her
 way.

STANTON
 I ain't ever seen anything like it.
 I know a couple of old boys myself.

Tate looks around, sensing something is wrong.

TATE
 Am I missing something?

AUNT JUDY
 While I'm not at liberty to say
 who, we've been treating some of
 your classmates, Tate.

TATE
 Christ. I can't say I'm shocked,
 Aunt Judy. All the same--

DEEDEE
 OK, honey. I know you want to come
 back and work at the paper. I know
 you miss your friends and
 everything and as much as we'd all
 love having you close. I don't
 think- we don't think Gideon is a
 good place for you right now.

TATE
 Whoah! Mama, we talked about this
 awhile back. I don't get it. I--

STANTON

Sternly, throwing his napkin on the table
 Deed, you tell him, or I'm going
 to.

DEEDEE
 (holding back tears)
 I caught Coy shooting up in the
 bathroom a few weeks ago.

(MORE)

DEEDEE (CONT'D)

We got into an argument and I told him, as long as he was using that shit, he wasn't welcome here anymore. I love that boy more than anything, but I won't abide it.

TATE

I didn't know he was using like that again.

DEEDEE

Tate. In the last year, I've lost five of my school kids to overdose. Little boys and girls that I taught how to finger paint and spell. Some of them were poor, but some of 'em weren't. There's no dodging this bullet, honey. I couldn't watch it happen to Coy. He's like my own. We're not blind either. I know his family, and I heard the other day that even sweet LeJuan has been mixed up around those boys. I know you're not them, but--

TATE

Coyote was with me just a month ago, and he seemed ok. It doesn't make sense, mama. Do you know where he is?

DEEDEE

He didn't say much when he left... I guess he was all messed up on whatever he was puttin' in his arm...Tate, he didn't even look like the same person. I don't know much about drugs, but I've been tendin' to that boy since he was fifteen. Somethin' really bad is happening to him.

TATE

We'll get this sorted out somehow mama... I'll talk to him. Get him into a rehab, maybe to Aunt Judy's clinic-

AUNT JUDY

Oh Tate... honey. Coy's brother and his crew are runnin' so much dope through this town. Their names come up every other day down at the clinic. I didn't say nothin' to Deed on the account of patient confidentiality, but they're dug in deep.

STANTON

(Standing up)

There it is, son. Now you look at me when I'm talkin' to you. We're dealin' with somethin' that love can't fix.

(MORE)

STANTON (CONT'D)
 Your old friend, this boy we've all
 taken in as family is in a place
 where we can't help him... and I'm
 not gonna sit idle and let you get
 sucked into this business.

TATE
 (Increasingly upset)
 So what you're trying to say is
 that me and him go off and get an
 education, jump through all these
 goddamn hoops and what? You just
 write off Coyote? Like his mom did?
 Like his whole family did...and on
 top of that, I'm starting to feel
 like maybe I ain't welcome here no
 more-

STANTON
 We ain't sayin' that at all. It's
 just you have options that no one
 else has. I'd be happy as hell to
 have my huntin' buddy back. But
 this town is swarming with feds and
 dumbass cops layin' in wait for
 young men like you to step outta
 line. Tate, home ain't in your best
 interest right now.

DEEDEE
 You wrote that article, Tate.
 You've seen it first-hand. What's
 happening here is rippin' our town
 apart.

Tate pulls his chair back from his table.

TATE
 I had to listen to this same shit
 from Gwenevere a few days ago. I
 thought about it real hard. I
 thought about y'all, my friends and
 this old town, and I decided that
 all of it was worth fightin' for.
 That's why I left her. I left her
 for the people I love because to
 hell with her if she's not willin'
 to stand by me. But I guess y'all
 give up on Coyote, and ain't got my
 back on comin' home...shit...

He takes a big slug of wine, throws down his napkin and gets
 up to leave.

TATE (CONT'D)
 Well, I'll see y'all around.

AUNT JUDY
 Oh baby. It's not like that...wait
 Tate, please!

TATE
 kissing her on the cheek on the way out
 I love you Aunt Jude. You're doin'
 a hell of a job at that clinic.

Deedee is crying inconsolably. Percy puts his arms around her as she sits at the dinner table to comfort her. Judy looks over to her father.

AUNT JUDY
Daddy...shouldn't we go after him?

STANTON
Judy Kay, you've all of you said your piece. We knew this wasn't going to be easy but you have to accept that he's a man. Some things he's just gotta figure out on their own.

DEEDEE
Goddamn it!

She throws her glass against the wall.

STANTON
You go on and let that outta you, honey. But don't forget that boy you raised is sharp. He's gonna see his path outta this.

Stanton gets up from the table, lighting up his pipe and stares out the window into the last bit of sunlight sitting over the mountains.

INT.TATES TRUCK DRIVING-NIGHT

Tate smokes furiously as he wipes the tears from his eyes. He listens to some edgy stoner rock as he drives around Gideon, seeing the changes in the town.

TATE (V.O.)
A palpable darkness had settled over Gideon in my absence...

Tate drives by Mountain Farm and Feed and sees a sign for a going out of business sale.

TATE (V.O.)
...The center of town felt abandoned, as some of the local family-owned businesses had closed over the last few years. The one-two-three combo punch of shuttered mines, Super Wal Mart and prescription narcotics had proven too much.
On the national stage, bipartisan shit slinging...

News footage of politicians arguing on Fox News and CSPAN.

TATE (CONT'D)
...hit the Mountain State hard, as Al Gore campaigned against fossil fuels. So, for the second time since 1935, our state turned from working collar blue, to blood fucking red.

INT.SHOOTER'S HOUSE-NIGHT

Arriving at Shooter's dilapidated house on the edge of town, Tate opens the door to find a wild party underway. He sees Coyote inside; he looks horrible, with noticeable bruising on his arms.

COYOTE
(hugging Tate)
Holy Fuckin' hell! When you blow
into town?

TATE
Just got in. Anything good floatin'
around?

COYOTE
Shit, boy. About anything and
everything. You good, man?

TATE
Yeah bro, just got into it with the
fam. Need my cage rattled a bit.

BEDROOM-

COYOTE
You tryin' to step on the gas or
pump the brakes?

TATE
Any yayo floatin' around?

COYOTE
(doing a bad Scarface
impression)
Chi chi... get tha yayo!

Coyote hands Tate a beer, and they go into his bedroom. There are several people doing various drugs. He looks up to see LeJuan in the corner, smoking weed with some other partygoers.

TATE
Still on that ganja I see?

LEJUAN
(shocked and happy)
Tater? When the hell? Damn, I
didn't know you were here.

He gives him a big hug, picking him up off the ground.

LEJUAN (CONT'D)
Congratulations bro.. I read your
article, man. That shit was way
heavy. It got a lot people talkin'
around here.

He passes Tate the joint, which he turns down.

TATE
Nah, I'm fixin' to get up on this
Bolivian shit Coy sittin' on.

LEJUAN
 You mothafuckin writers and your
 cocaine. I see you, though. It's an
 occasion after all.

TATE
 Oh yeah?

A partygoer hands Tate a green Fiesta Ware plate with lines
 of cocaine on them and a pre-rolled \$20 bill.

COYOTE
 Shooter and Morgan went down to
 Virginia and jumped the broom.
 Didn't have time to plan a proper
 bachelor party, so we just grabbed
 up a keg and bunch of dope to send
 him off in style.

TATE
 No shit?

He takes two big lines and wipes his nose, handing the plate
 and bill to Coyote.

TATE (CONT'D)
 Where's that crazy motherfucker?

COYOTE
 Last time I checked, he was in the
 kitchen with his old lady chuggin'
 whiskey.

KITCHEN--

Hard metal music playing as Shooter and some guys are bangin'
 their heads, pushing each other around like a mini mosh pit.
 Curtis is there, sitting ominously in the corner, not
 animated like the rest of the group. Jacki is also there,
 smoking oxy off of tin foil. Shooter is shirtless with a
 bottle of whiskey in his hand, waving it around like a
 maniac, dumping some on Morgan's head.

MORGAN
 Motherfucker!

She takes her beer and throws it in his face. Shooter shakes
 his back and forth, enjoying the anarchy of it all.

SHOOTER
 That's my girl right there! That's
 my fucking wife!

everyone cheers)
 Ain't nobody got a bad bitch like
 me!

He kisses her deeply and she scratches blood from his neck.

MORGAN
 Fuck yeah, baby!

Tate, Coyote and LeJuan walk in on the debauchery.

LEJUAN
(Mouthing) What the fuck?

SHOOTER
Look at this fucking college boy!

He picks Tate off the ground, swinging him in a circle.

TATE
Holy shit, man! Uhh, congrats on
the nuptials!

SHOOTER
You fuckers tryin' to meet Jesus
tonight or what?

TATE
Maybe some other time--

COYOTE
Save some whiskey for the rest of
us, shithead!

SHOOTER
Fuck it. I was just about ready to
blast off anyway! Honey, you ready
to do this?

MORGAN
Hell fuckin' yeah, baby.

Shooter sits down on a chair, as Morgan puts a tourniquet on
each one of his arms. Morgan and Curtis each fix up a needle
with crank and oxy respectively

SHOOTER
We gotta get the timing right,
y'all.

TATE
(To Coyote)
Dude, what's happening right now?

COYOTE
I ain't quite sure. My brother
ain't never been all there.

Everyone watches stunned and intrigued, as they ready to
shoot him up in tandem.

SHOOTER
Y'all time this shit right. Dope
goes in first, 2 seconds later,
push in the crank. On the count of
3! 1...2...3!

CURTIS
(staring darkly at
Shooter)
Give Dahmer my best...

Shooter's eyes roll back in his head as he gets both shots.
He sighs, and starts shaking violently.

LEJUAN
Yo man, is he fucking okay or what?

COYOTE
I'll let you know in about 10
seconds...

Morgan rests her head of Shooter's lap, holding him.

MORGAN
Fuck yeah, Shooter. Bring that shit
home!

Shooter comes to as his high levels out and looks around
nervously.

SHOOTER
(laughing maniacally With
huge eyes)
What a fucking RUSH!!

Everyone cheers him on and he jumps out of the chair, beating
his chest furiously.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF SHOOTERS HOUSE-LATE NIGHT

Everyone left is fairly trashed, as the party is winding
down. Tate, LeJuan, Jacki and Coyote sit around in a circle,
drinking beer out of red solo cups.

TATE
It's damn good to be sharing a beer
with y'all. Wish Red was here.

JACKI
I heard he got cleaned up.

LEJUAN
Yeah, I ran into him at the store a
few weeks back. Hair was all fixed
and clean shaved. Looked real
pulled together.

COYOTE
I always half figured Red would end
up thumpin' the bible. Those holy
rollers always land at the foot of
the cross. Usually on their way out
of hell.

TATE
Some folks are wired like that. You
know they play some of Red's jams
on college radio in Morgantown? I
was driving to Cooper's Rock with
Gwenevere a few months back and
there he was, singin' his heart
out. Ain't that somethin'?

JACKI
I'm glad he's turning things
around. He's so talented.

(MORE)

JACKI (CONT'D)
 I'd hate to see him wreck his
 chances on whisky. Boy's been hard
 at it since sophomore year.

looking sadly at LeJuan

JACKI (CONT'D)
 LeJuan, honey, I'm so sorry to hear
 about your family business closing.
 Town won't be the same.

LEJUAN
 I appreciate it, Jacki. Ain't no
 one competing against the goddamn
 Walton family. Besides, Pop had 25
 good years, and got some money put
 back. Him and mama gonna be fine.

JACKI
 But that was gonna be yours,
 LeJuan. You been talking about
 takin' over your family business
 since we was kids. It's just too
 sad for words.

LeJuan smiles and pulls the joint from behind his ear.

LEJUAN
 Sheeeit. Ain't nothin a little
 lambs breath won't fix.

He lights it up.

COYOTE
 Shit, if it was that easy, I'd be
 livin' on a mountain in Northern
 California somewhere

He takes the joint from LeJuan.

TATE
 Shooter straight or what? That was
 some display in the kitchen.

COYOTE
 He ain't changed a bit. I'm afraid
 his little boy is cut from the same
 cloth. I got this sick feeling that
 Morgan might be pregnant again too.

TATE
 You still trying to stay clean?

Coyote takes a hit off the joint, chasing with a beer.

COYOTE
 Fuck sobriety. That shit is for
 people who can't handle their dope.
 One day at a time... that's their
 little catch phrase, right? I want
 all my days right now...Hell, they
 shitcanned me last month at work
 because they thought I was a junky.
 Why disappoint em'?

Tate stares at Coyote incredulously.

COYOTE (CONT'D)
What's up with Gwenevere? I figured
she'd be with you.

TATE
She's not really in the picture. I
should have known better, I guess.

LEJUAN
One time! Shit!

A police car pulls up and Coyote and Jacki run inside to try
and hide their drugs, leaving Tate and LeJuan to deal with
the cops.

Officer shines his flashlight onto the porch.

OFFICER 1
I got a noise complaint. Y'all
having a party or what?

TATE
Just a couple of old friends
catchin' up. I didn't realize we
were making that much noise.
Especially all the way out here.

OFFICER 1
I reckon sound travels, don't it
son. I need to speak with the owner
of this property.

LEJUAN
approaching the officer to shake his hand
Good evening officer, my name is
LeJuan--

OFFICER 1
(putting his hand on his
pistol)
You need to stand down, son! Back
away nice and slow and keep your
hands where I can see em'!

LEJUAN
Officer Mills, there ain't no need
for that. You know me. You been
buyin your fishin' gear from my
family's store for years. Let's
just relax and--

OFFICER 2 pulls his service piston and flanks LeJuan.

OFFICER 2
He said stand down, boy. Get on
your knees and put your hands
behind your head!

TATE
What the fuck? He just came up to
talk to you! You've got your guns
out?!

OFFICER 1
Shut your mouth and back away.

LEJUAN
It's okay, Tate. We're fine. This just a misunderstanding is all. Officer, we was havin' a bachelor party for our friend. I can fetch up the owner if you need to...

OFFICER 2
I said don't move!

OFFICER 1
You smell that weed? What kinda drugs y'all got here?

Officer 2 puts LeJuan in an armbar and slams him to the ground.

LEJUAN
(Screaming in pain)
I've got a bad shoulder... please don't. I was only trying to help! Ahhhh!

OFFICER 2
(Into LeJuan's ear)
Now, you're gonna shut your mouth, or I'm gonna beat your goddamn eyes closed. You hear me, boy?

LeJuan cries in pain and shame.

LEJUAN
Yessir. Please, I'm in a lot of pain. I ain't doin' nothin. I swear.

OFFICER 1
(speaking into his radio)
We have a possible 212 at 375 Gladwell Pass. Requesting backup.

TATE
Please officer, just get off him. He's hurt bad. We're not botherin' anyone.

OFFICER 1
(To Tate)
I know your folks, and I don't know what the hell you of all people are doing here. You just stay quiet and let us do our job.

TATE (V.O.) OVER SCENE
While Gideon was losing its battle in commerce...

Tate watches helplessly as the police cuff Coyote, a shirtless Shooter and Curtis, leading them out of the house.

TATE V.O. (CONT'D)
...it was gaining an Orwellian
legal presence. The police force
had more than doubled. While the
local sheriff had thrown their hats
in with the FBI in some misguided
effort to quell the drug problem
plaguing West Virginia.

Tate and Jacki watch helplessly. Morgan yelling at the cops.

TATE V.O. (CONT'D)
Turning a blind eye was becoming
impossible. I found people that I
loved mired in hopelessness of it
all, as our community was showing
cracks in its foundation.

LeJuan lies traumatized on the ground, writhing in pain as
the scene unfolds. LeJuan closes his eyes.

BLACKOUT

INT. DAYBREAK PERCY AND DEEDEE'S HOUSE, FRONT PORCH.

Tate sits alone, coming down, trying to process everything
that happened. Sun coming up, he stares out into the same
mountains his grandfather had, hours before. Deedee finds
him...

DEEDEE
Are you ok, baby?

TATE
No, mom.

Putting his head down and beginning to cry.

DEEDEE
What happened?

TATE
I just...Shit mom. I... you were right.
About everything.

DEEDEE
I don't take any joy in that,
honey. It breaks my heart to know
that you had to find that out for
yourself.

TATE
I just don't know what to do, mama,
please. I think I need your advice.

DEEDEE
Honey, you're grown, and you're
gonna have to figure this out on
your own. All I can say is that you
have a big ol' beautiful future. I
don't know how much of any of it
you're gonna find here right now.

TATE
I shouldn't have walked out on
Gwenevere like that. She was just
so dismissive of starting a life
down here with me. Like it was some
kinda joke.

(pauses and reflects) Well, I guess the joke's on me.

DEEDEE
You love her, Tate. Maybe that's
what you fight for right now.

She wraps her arms around him from the back.

TATE
What about my friends? Coyote?
LeJuan? Jacki and Red? What about
y'all?

DEEDEE
Oh, Tate. Everyone's life takes
them on their own path. Sometimes
it's a good one, sometimes it's
hard or tragic. In the end, you
gotta find your own way. One that
makes sense only for you. You just
can't go through life carrying
everyone else's weight. It's no way
to live.

TATE
I don't know, mama. I'm just sad,
really fucking sad. I always
figured I'd come back to Gideon and
live. Maybe get a house close to
you and Pawpaw.

DEEDEE
That paint's a fine picture. Maybe
someday. But right now, baby...you
ought to give me a kiss and get
outta here while you still can. I
want you to take this.

Deedee hands Tate an envelope.

DEEDEE (CONT'D)
This is from all of us. It oughta
get you to wherever you need to go.

TATE
Goddamn mama... Thank you. I'm so
sorry.

INT. TATE'S BEDROOM-MORNING

Take looking through his stuff to see if there's anything he
wants to take when he leaves. He finds some old pics of him
as a little boy with his mom, dad and family, along with high
school pics of him and his buddies. He goes into his closet
to get his hunting rifle and it's not there.

TATE
Mama. Do you know if pap borrowed
my gun or something?

DEEDEE (O.S.)
Not that I know of, honey!

TATE
My 30-ought isn't here. I know I...

Tate frantically rummages through his closet. Deedee enters the room.

DEEDEE
Your gun is gone, honey?

Tate sits on the floor, leaning against his bed with his head in his hand.

TATE
Sure as hell ain't here.

DEEDEE
You know what I'm about to say.

TATE
You don't have to say it, mama. I
already know.

DEEDEE
After all we've done for him.
Takin' him into our family. I just
don't want to believe it.

TATE
It's not him, mama. It's the
disease. The Coyote I know wouldn't
dream of stealin' from us.

DEEDEE
(Angrily)
I just don't know how much more my
heart can take.

TATE
LeJuan has a cousin that runs a
pawn shop in Boone County. I'll
have him make some calls.

INT. MOUNTAIN FIELD AND FARM-EVENING

LeJuan and his dad say goodbye to their last customers sadly, and lock the door behind them as they leave the store, turning the closed sign around.

DISSOLVE TO:

Next scene we see him and his dad boxing up the remaining inventory to ship out. LeJuan has on a tank top, and we can see his shoulder bandaged up.

LEJUAN
We had a great run, pops.

WALTHER
We did alright, son. I hate to
close up like this though. I always
figured...well. God damn it anyway.

LEJUAN
Ain't no family run business can go
head-to-head with Super Wal-Mart.

WALTHER
How's that shoulder, son?

LEJUAN
Gettin' better. I have some flair
ups here and there, but hopefully
I'll get all my mobility back.

WALTHER
You gotta be more careful, LeJuan.
Injuring yourself playin'
basketball like that. You already
have a bad shoulder. You need to
tend to your health.

LEJUAN
It was a dumb idea. I reckon I know
better now.

WALTHER
Well, we hit a fair good lick
today, son. I'm gonna hit the head
and we'll get on home.

Walther walks out of the room, and we see LeJuan pulling a
pill bottle out of his pocket.

He winces as he rubs his shoulder and examines the bottle of
Oxy. He takes out a pill, and stares at it in his hand for a
few moments, and chases it with a bottle of water. He sits
down on a box of clothes and looks around at his father's
store, empty and lifeless.

LEJUAN
(muttering to himself) Man, fuck
all this.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TATE'S TRUCK SUMMER-DAY

Tate on 79 North, driving to Morgantown in the hopes of
catching Gwenevere before she leaves town. It's a beautiful
summer day.

EXT. GWENEVERE'S APARTMENT-DAY

He pulls into her apartment complex and sees her loading her
car with boxes. He watches her for a minute. She pulls out
her flip phone to see if anyone has called, and she continues
loading up her car.

FRONT OF BUILDING--

She rounds the corner and finds Tate sitting on the steps of her building.

TATE
I guess you really did lose my number.

GWENEVERE
Jesus. You're about as bad at breaking up as you are asking a girl out.

TATE
That's fair.

GWENEVERE
Fair's got nothin' to do with it. I just think you're chickenshit. What are you doing here?

TATE
I should have just shut my mouth and listened.

Gwenevere sits down beside him on the steps to listen.

TATE (CONT'D)
I get these notions. Mom just says I'm idealistic, but I probably am just chickenshit. It's just I can't stand the thought of someone ruining the pretty pictures I paint in my head. I settle into 'em, and just think that's just how it is. I've got this romantic conception of home and my friends, rooted in love and history and all these beautiful things. So when I think I hear someone say it's washed out, or my pals are junkies, I bristle up, get scared, mad even.

GWENEVERE
I didn't say anything that wasn't true.

TATE
Yeah, that made it way worse. I might be country, but I ain't ignorant. I knew that morning in my apartment you were telling it like it was, I was just too scared to admit you were right. I couldn't let you set fire to my pretty picture. I was scared to death. I'm not anymore.

GWENEVERE
Well, you got piss poor timing, Tate. I start my clinicals in Portland in a month. Heading there to get settled now.

TATE
You're driving to Oregon?

GWENEVERE
Maine. I think the ocean would be good for me.

TATE
God...the ocean. I've only seen it once. Myrtle Beach.

GWENEVERE
(laughing)
You're something else.

TATE
Are you with anyone? Did I...I mean...

GWENEVERE
You don't get it.

TATE
Just tell me. I know I fucked everything up. I'm an idiot, but I just need to hear it from you.

GWENEVERE
I've been waiting by my phone for over a month. Driving around town like a shithead, hoping I'd see you. Stopping in at the bars you shot pool in, hoping that you didn't mean what you said.

Tate stops her, kissing her softly, stroking her face.

TATE
I'm sorry for everything. This is what I should have been fighting for all along. And all this fucking drinking... It's not fair to you.

GWENEVERE
You want to start over?

TATE
I have 10 grand in my back pocket, a beat-up Chevy with a bunch of camping gear and fancy fucking books in the back. If you'll have me.

GWENEVERE
Yeah.

They embrace.

EXT-BEACHSIDE NEW ENGLAND-DAY

Tate and Gwenevere sit on a blanket, staring at the ocean on a pit stop during their trip to Maine.

TATE
Can I borrow your cell to make a
call?

GWENEVERE
Sure- I'm gonna walk down by the
water and hunt for sea glass.

Tate dials LeJuan's house.

INT. LEJUAN'S HOUSE-SAME TIME

LEJUAN
Carter residence.

INTERCUT-PHONE CONVERSATION

TATE
Great to hear your voice.

LEJUAN
Hey brother! I called up your moms
and she said you done hit the road.
Where the hell you at anyway?

TATE
Shit, man. I'm somewhere in Rhode
Island. Sittin' on a beach, lookin'
out at the ocean.

LEJUAN
Goddamn! What I wouldn't give! You
musta got back with your girl, huh?

TATE
Yeah man. On our way to Maine for a
fresh start. Probably end up
working on a lobster boat or
something.

LEJUAN
Man, Tater, that's that shit! I can
see you out there. A hillbilly
pirate!

(They both laugh)
LEJUAN (CONT'D)
Well, we're gonna miss you round
here, but I get you leaving and
all.

(pauses)
Which reminds me, I got some good
news, and some bad news.

TATE
Go on and give me that good shit.

LEJUAN
My cousin tracked down your 30-
ought. Found it in a pawn shop down
Mercer way. I got it back today and
dropped it off to Stanton. Still
got that shine and everything.

TATE

Holy shit! That's great. Thank you, man. So, what's the bad?

LEJUAN

It's basically like y'all thought. Ain't no mistakin' Coyote's description. Reckon he sold it to ol' boy about a month ago. Dude even described Shooter's blue Firebird parked outside.

TATE

Jesus Christ. (pause.) How's your shoulder? That night was...It's hard to even think about.

LEJUAN

It's ok, Tate. I appreciate you stickin' up for me that night, just like you always have. I just hope one day I can repay you. God knows it ain't easy bein' a nigger up in these hills.

TATE

Once I get settled, maybe you can come up here to New England. Everything is surrounded by the ocean, man. It's something.

LEJUAN

Thank you, brother. But my life is here. Shit, if I bounce the black population drops by like 27%. I gotta represent!

They both laugh.

TATE

I heard that. Hey take care of everyone and don't forget to stop by and visit mama. She still talks about you all the time. I love you, man.

LEJUAN

Bet. Kiss your girl. One.

They hang up. Tate stares out at the ocean.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.SHOOTERS HOUSE- NIGHT.

Coyote, Shooter, Curtis, Morgan and Jacki all sitting around. Everyone but Jacki is smoking meth.

SHOOTER

That's fucked up they just shit canned you like that, bro.

COYOTE

Big feeling fucking Christians anyway. Their loss as far as I'm concerned.

MORGAN

Don't even worry Coy. We got things runnin' good out here. With all of us, we'll be able to stay high and then some.

SHOOTER

Between all our quacks, my Pagan connects sendin' people down to the Florida pain clinics and ol' boys up the holler strippin' copper for the cause, we got things locked down.

COYOTE

Damn, y'all got systems and everything, huh?

SHOOTER

Things goin' good, mostly. We'll need that big ol' brain of yours to fence some of the goods Curtis's folks are gankin'. TV's, laptops, guns and whatnot.

JACKI

Y'all should fly low all the same. Since y'all got busted, 5-0 been watching all of us. Between the town cops, sheriffs, States and Feds, everyone's under a goddamn microscope.

CURTIS

Were you spoken to? You ain't got shit to do with none of this, so just layback and smoke your fuckin' spade menthol cigarettes.

(muttering under his
breath)

Dumb rich cunt.

JACKI

What'd you call me? What'd you say?

CURTIS

I said...

(backhands her violently)

Shut the fuck up, you dumb rich cunt! Grownups are talkin'!

MORGAN

Hey fucker, ain't your old lady knocked up!?

COYOTE

Curtis, me and your family go back a ways. Your brother Bumper had my back in Anthony. But if you ever raise a hand to her again, I'll hurt you permanent.

CURTIS
Yeah, he told me he took good care
of you. Said you was some sweet ass
back in the day. I'll tell you
what...

Shooter immediately breaks a bottle over Curtis' head and
overpowers him, holding the broken bottle to his neck.

SHOOTER
Goddamn Curtis, I thought you had
some sense. I want you to look
around this motherfucker and take
in the reality of your situation.

CURTIS
What's that?

SHOOTER
For starters, you ain't callin' no
shots round here. One thing Bumper
probably left out about his time in
the pen is that he was a little
fucking bitch. That's right...me and
my Pagan homies passed him around
like a pack of fuckin' smokes.
Truth is, your brother limped
outta' Mt. Olive... with his guts
fallin' out of his ass. That's on
God.

CURTIS
Fuck...get the hell off me Shooter,
so help me...

Shooter laughs, pressing the broken bottle against his neck
till it bleeds.

SHOOTER
So help you what? God? He ain't got
shit to do with your predicament,
boy. He wouldn't touch either one
of our families with a ten-foot
pole. But I tell you what, in the
spirit of business, I'm gonna give
your fuckin' garbage a pass. All
you gotta do is apologize to your
girl...tell her you was yakked out
and you didn't mean it. Go on now.

Curtis pauses and hesitates. Shooter grabs him by the balls
and squeezes hard. He starts to scream in agony.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)
Now that's how ol' Bumper used to
holler when I was fuckin' him in
the shower. After my homies got
done with him...well, let's just say
he grew a little desensitized to
it. You see, friction changes after
you take 20 cocks or so. Just
biology and what not.

CURTIS
I'm sorry. Jesus I'm fuckin' sorry
Jacki!

COYOTE
That's enough!

SHOOTER
Look at me, boy. You look into my
eyes and see. Your. Fucking.
Destruction. That's right.

Curtis is terrified as Shooter stares coldly into his eyes
for a long time.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)
Now. I'm willin' to look past this
bullshit once, and continue on with
our arrangement. That sound fair to
you, Curtis?

CURTIS
No more problems from me.

COYOTE
Let him up, bro.

JACKI
Please, Shooter! We're ok now.
Let's just go home!

SHOOTER
Ain't no one going home till we
finish this honkin' ass crank rock.
Ain't that right baby?

MORGAN
Fuckin'-a right!

SHOOTER
Jacki, go on and fix us up another
hit of this fine Mingo County
bathtub.

Getting off Curtis, and helping him up, giving him a big hug,
slapping him on the back.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)
See, I still got love for you, man.
Don't be cross, now. We're all
fixin' to put our nose to the
grindstone and make this goddamn
money. Shit, we're basically blood
brothers now, ain't we?

CURTIS
Jacki, pass that over here now.

Curtis takes a massive hit of crank.

INT.JACKI AND CURTIS'S HOUSE- SPRING 2004-EVENING

Jacki restlessly laying around the house, very pregnant,
listening to music. It's hot, the fans are blowing.

She's listening to music. She tries to stay busy cleaning and
singing. She picks up the phone and calls her mom.

JACKI
Hey mama. What are y'all doing?

INT. JACKI'S PARENTS HOUSE-SAME TIME

INTERCUT-PHONE CONVERSATION

LEONA
Oh we just finished up dinner-
Fixin to eat some pie and ice cream
out on the porch. You should just
come over.

JACKI
That sounds nice, mama. It really
does, but I'm so fat and pregnant.
Seems like all I want to do is just
sit around the house and eat
pickles and cheesecake.

LEONA
That's normal, baby. Did Curtis get
on up to that strip job out Logan?

JACKI
Naw- but he's been workin' timber
with some of his brothers up the
road. Bringin' in enough cash I
reckon.

LEONA
I swear that boy- I wish you would
have ended up going with Tate or
somethin. Those Tyler boys are
always up to no good.

JACKI
Aww, Curtis is ok, mama. I mean, he
don't talk much, but he keeps the
freezer full of meat and the gas in
the truck. He'll calm down when our
son is born. Daddy did with me.

LEONA
When you was born, the half a son-
of-a-bitch in your daddy
disappeared for sure.

JACKI
How's he doin anyway? Last time I
seen him, he didn't look so great.

LEONA
He's still down in the back. His
doctor gives him too many of those
pills. But what do I know, I ain't
a doctor.

JACKI
Well you give him a kiss for me
anyway.

LEONA

I'm loading up the horses and headed up Greenbrier riding this weekend. You should come. Your old Appaloosa needs a workout.

JACKI

As pregnant as I am, I should probably stay off that old nag...but you know what, I'll come for the company anyway. Some sunshine will do me good.

LEONA

That's great, honey. I'll come pick you up early. I'll bring the biscuits.

JACKI

Oooh mama that sounds great. Bring some pickled eggs too! Y'all have a good night. Love you.

Jacki seems happy after talking with her mom, but still restless. She starts folding laundry and putting it in drawers when she comes along Curtis's stash of Oxy. She struggles with the idea, holding the vial of pills in the air.

JACKI (CONT'D)

Fuck it.

She lights up some candles and puts on some music. She cooks up a pill on tin foil to smoke a 40. She overdoes it and passes out...

Curtis walks in on her nodding off, listening to music, knowing immediately that she's been in his stash. He stands over her, seething, quietly watching, until she eventually opens her eyes, wide, as if she's jolted sober.

JACKI (CONT'D)

Hey baby, I didn't hear you come...

CURTIS

I told you about staying outta my fuckin drawer.

JACKI

No baby, I was putting away your laundry and-

CURTIS

Your daddy made all that coal money. Real fuckin' big shot, now look at y'all both, strung out on beans just like everyone else.

JACKI

Baby no...I'm ok. We're ok, see? I'm fine!

CURTIS
And your mom thinks she fuckin
better than everyone cause she goes
to church. Butter wouldn't melt in
that bitch's mouth, would it? Hell
no it wouldn't- now just look at
you...

JACKI
(raising her voice)
What about me? What's wrong with
me, you motherfucker!

CURTIS
You ain't nothin but a pill head
bitch- layin' around feelin' sorry
for yourself on account you can't
get high no more because you're
pregnant. Now I find you like this?
Looks like you changed it up huh?.
What'd you do? 40? 80? Sentenced my
baby to death is what you done...

JACKI
I didn't, Curtis- I just took a
little for my cramps like the
doctor said! I swear...

Curtis starts manhandling her in the kitchen. Jacki tries to
protect herself.

CURTIS
Ain't having no strung out, retard
kids on account of you-

He gets a clean shot and punches her violently.

JACKI
Oh god. Jesus Christ, no!

Curtis tosses Jacki down the basement steps. All is quiet
while she's whimpering. Curtis follows her down the steps.

CURTIS
(coldly and calmly)
You're learnin' now though ain't
you? AIN'T YOU, BITCH?

Jacki stops crying as she lays at the bottom of the steps,
holding her stomach and breathing shallowly.

INT/EXT NIGHT CURTIS'S TRUCK

Curtis is driving down a rough backroad, casually drinking a
beer, with Jacki badly beaten in the back of his pickup.

INT/EXT ABANDONED MINE JOB

He pulls into an old strip mine job. He stops and
mechanically pulls her out of the back of the truck, leaving
her to die in a patch of woods on the side of the road. As he
walks out of the woods where he left her, he sees a set of
headlights pull up.

GUY IN CAR

Hey man- what's goin' on out here? Why you covered in blood?

Curtis panics, and speeds off into the night, heading south past a road sign towards North Carolina. The guys in the car load Jacki up to take her to the hospital.

SERIES OF SHOTS--INT.HOSPITAL-NIGHT

The men carry Jacki into the hospital where the doctors try to save her life. The doctors cut the baby out, and it miraculously lives. As the baby cries its first breath, Jacki codes on the operating table. The doctors deliver the news to her parents. We see them looking through the glass at the baby in the incubator.

OVER BLACK

The Needle and the Damage Done

TATE (V.O.)OVER MONTAGE
The word was finally out on Purdue
Pharma...

Archival footage of the Sackler family in court, morose scenes of overdosed bodies being treated and hauled off in ambulances. Snippets from lawmakers decrying oxycontin abuse.

TATE (V.O.)
...the country could no longer turn
a blind eye to the systemic
poisoning of our people. The
Sacklers finally started to feel
the headlines and subsequent
federal pressure for the regulation
of oxycontin...

Snippets from Jacki's funeral with all characters in attendance- LeJuan, Red, Tate and Stanton serving as pallbearers. LeJuan breaking down at the graveside.

TATE V.O.(CONT'D)
...Some years later a news story
came out. Between 2006 and 2016,
nearly 21,000,000 prescription
opioids were delivered to
Williamson, WV, a small town of
around 3000 residents...

Snippets of LeJuan in Aunt Jacki's treatment facility, working with Jacki's father who was also in recovery. We see Leona, feeding Jacki's baby. We see Red playing the guitar to his pregnant wife and their 2 year old son.

TATE V.O. (CONT'D)
...After all that, Purdue Pharma
saw fit to change the recipe for
their landmark painkiller, making
it virtually impossible to abuse
What was waiting in the wings, was
more terrifying and dangerous than
anyone could have imagined...

With an entire cross section of the American population already hooked on dope...

Montage of Coyote, Shooter and Morgan scheming and using dope. We see that Morgan is pregnant with her 3rd baby.

TATE (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 Cartels found easy work filling the void left by Oxycontin. Heroin, followed by fentanyl, flooded Appalachia from cities like Detroit in the west and Baltimore from the east...

We see Gwenevere in her medical coat, working at the ER. We see Tate and Gwenevere hiking, eating seafood. We see Tata speaking at an AA meeting. We see Tate at a fishing pier, interviewing lobstermen, smoking and writing notes.

TATE V.O.
 Mother Jones gave a speech in Charleston leading up to the Coal Wars. "It is freedom or death, and your children will be free. We are not going to leave a slave class to the coming generation, and I want to say to you that the next generation will not charge us for what we have done, they will charge and condemn us for what we have left undone." The words "slave class" hit me the hardest. We were a population in chemical bondage...a generation hitched up to the horse.

INT. MOUNTAIN STAGE WITH LEJUAN, HIS FAMILY AND TATE'S FAMILY IN ATTENDANCE-EVENING

ANNOUNCER
 I want y'all to give a warm welcome to West Virginia's own Red Foster and his Coal Country Outlaws!

Red and his band take the stage and everyone cheers.

TATE (V.O.)
 Red continued to grow as a musician, and kept true to his promise to God and sobriety. He married a nice Way of Holiness girl and had two wild sons with heads full of red fiery hair.

INT. TATE'S MAINE FARMHOUSE-WINTER-EVENING

TITLE OVER:

Damariscotta, Maine 2015

Tate home alone Sitting at his desk, he's drinking whiskey and smoking profusely while working on an article.

TATE (V.O.)

I got a job as a field reporter for NPR in Maine, largely due to Dr. Sullivan's letter of recommendation. Guinevere was working overnights in the ER at Northern Light Mercy Hospital in Portland. We'd bought an old farmhouse in Damariscotta, next to a beautiful brackish backwater. While my connections back home grew faint, Aunt Judy and mama kept me up on town matters and general goings on. LeJuan and I had a standing monthly phone chat we referred to as "Country therapy sessions." He fought an up and down battle against addiction like a warrior in Jacki's memory. It'd been hard keeping tabs on Coyote over the years as he moved around a lot. Nashville, Clarksdale, wherever him and Shooter could set up, doing whatever they were doing at the time. I found out through LeJuan that he'd moved back home to Charleston some time ago, but that was all I knew. It'd been over a year since I heard from him. I'd been sober for three years, but with Gwen due to deliver our daughter in less than a month, I was on a bender.

Becoming frustrated and increasingly inebriated, he buries his head in his hands. He looks down at his Staffy, Loretta and cracks half a smile.

TATE

I guess it's about time we turn this party up a notch. Whatchu' think pup?

Tate cracks a fresh bottle of bourbon, and takes a long pull from the bottle.

TATE (CONT'D)

(looking down at his dog)
Don't judge me, goddamnit.

Laughing to himself he lights up another cigarette, walking over to his vinyl collection, to thumb through records.

Finding one he's satisfied with, and puts it on his turntable. He picks up Loretta, and she licks his face. Carrying her to the couch with him, he pulls out a photo album and looks at old pictures from high school and college. Pictures of Jacki, LeJuan, his family, Guinevere and Coyote, he smiles and continues to drink.

CUT TO:

INT.TATE'S MAINE FARMHOUSE-NEXT MORNING

Tate is passed out on the couch with an empty bottle of bourbon and half full glass of whisky on the coffee table next to him. His Staffy jumps onto his couch and licks his face, wanting her breakfast.

TATE
(groggily waking up)
Goddamn, Loretta. Ok, ok! Dad's
gonna get your food.

Loretta continues to lick his face.

TATE (CONT'D)
I love you too, can you just cut me
some slack. Yeah, thanks honey.

Tate goes into the kitchen and starts making his coffee. He lights up a cigarette and opens up a can of food to feed Loretta. The noises of the coffee making and the dog food ritual are loud like ASMR, over exaggerated to highlight his hangover. He watches his dog sleepily as she chows down her food in the kitchen. He puts a cute WVU sweater on his dog saying

TATE (CONT'D)
We'll make it to a bowl game this
year, won't we Lo?

He lets her out into the yard to potty. He puts on his coat and winter hat.

EXT.BACK PORCH-MAINE FARMHOUSE-MORNING

He goes out onto the porch to take his coffee and have another cigarette. It's February and the frigid air wakes him up. He picks up his iPhone and starts to notice missed texts and calls.

MISSED CALL

Editor

MISSED CALL

304 Number...from West Virginia.

TEXT GUINEVERE

You were passed out on the couch when I got in from my shift.
Missed you in bed 😞

TEXT EDITOR

I tried calling earlier. Hillary is coming to Portland this evening to speak to the lobstermen. Call me back.

VOICEMAIL MOM

Give me a call when you get this. It's really cold back home, the pipes in our basement are frozen over and I just want to make sure y'all are ok.

VOICEMAIL COYOTE

This is Coy on my Obama phone! Haha! Met this great chick, and we ended up talking all night. I told her a bunch of old stories about us growing up, just got me thinking. I love you, bud. Call me today if you can. I really need to talk with you.

Tate finishes his cigarette and puts his butt out in the ashtray, yells for his dog, and goes back inside.

LIVING ROOM--

He warms his hands by the fireplace for a minute petting Loretta. He begins cleaning up his mess from the night before,

BEDROOM--

Walking into his room, he finds Guinevere wrapped up in blankets curled up in a hoodie, asleep. He watches her for a minute, then kisses her on the forehead, careful not to wake her.

BATHROOM--

His day begins at a frantic pace, as he's overslept. Taking a quick shower, he gets dressed for the cold day.

DRIVEWAY--

Shaking off his fog, he scrapes the ice off his Subaru, and shoveling his way out of his parking spot, he hits the road to start making his calls on the way into the office.

TATE

(Calling his editor)

Yeah, sorry I missed your call. I was up late last night transcribing notes and overslept.

EDITOR (V.O.)

Burning the midnight oil again? I know how it is. Anyway, this Clinton thing. Did you get the email with the details?

TATE

Mmm hmm. Yeah. Wow, I didn't know she was gonna head all the way up here.

EDITOR (V.O.)
 Showing face with the Maine
 Lobsterman, is like covering every
 fishing port in New England. She
 needs to keep the region blue if
 she's gonna stand a chance against
 Trump.

TATE
 Seriously? You think that dip shit
 stands a chance against the Clinton
 Machine?

EDITOR (V.O.)
 If you look at the voting trends,
 historically, we're slated to turn
 red. Not to mention, she's
 alienated herself with some key
 demographics with her environmental
 position.

INCOMING CALL: MOM

TATE
 People back home can't stand her.
 They think Trump is gonna bring
 back coal. Anyway, I'm 20 minutes
 out, I'll see you shortly.
 (Taking call)
 Hey mama- How y'all doin'?

DEEDEE (V.O.)
 It's been one of those mornings,
 you know where everything feels
 like it's going to shit?

TATE
 Got your voicemail about your
 pipes. Shit, mama, Percy get that
 squared away?

He reaches into the center console and pulls out a nip of
 whiskey and gulps it down.

DEEDEE (V.O.)
 Yeah, I just woke up worried sick,
 even before I knew about the pipes.
 I looked out the window and just
 felt the cold beating its way into
 my bones. I don't know baby, I just
 needed to hear your voice is all.

TATE
 Thanks mama, but you know I'm all
 right. Gwen just finishing her
 second trimester- work goin' good.
 Made some pals at the fishin' docks
 in Portland, so I'm stayin' fat on
 this good ol' Yankee seafood.

DEEDEE (V.O.)
 Y'all need to get home and help me
 eat some of this venison.
 (MORE)

DEEDEE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Between your grandpa, Percy and all
their friends, I got my deep freeze
packed down.

Tate sees an incoming call from the Kanawha County Police
Department.

TATE
Uhh, mama, I gotta go. I gotta take
this...

EXT.BANKS OF THE KANAWHA RIVER-CHARLESTON, WV-MORNING

POLICE OFFICER
Hello, is this, ah, Tate?

INTERCUT-PHONE CONVERSATION

TATE
Yessir, what's this concerning?

POLICE OFFICER
My name is officer Jackson with the
Kanawha County Sheriff's
Department. Are you friends or
family with Coyote Williams?

TATE
Yes officer, he's my best friend
since we were kids. Is something
wrong?

POLICE OFFICER
This was the last number he dialed.
Truth is, there's been an accident.
We found your friend Coyote about
10am this morning.
Looks like he might have passed
from exposure.

Everything starts to get blurry, and the voice of the cop
starts to fade into the distance as he describes the
scenario.

INT. CAR ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD OVERLOOKING BRIDGE-MAINE-
MORNING

Tate pulls over the car, just before a bridge coming into
Portland. He punches the steering wheel over and over, in
shock, he closes his eyes and sees what has happened...

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDER A BRIDGE- CHARLESTON, WV-SUNRISE- SAME DAY

Coyote wakes up wrapped in a sleeping bag under the 35th
street bridge in Charleston, just as the sun is starting to
come up. He looks over, expecting to find someone sleeping
beside him, but he's all alone.

It's 15 degrees below zero, and he's shaking violently because of the cold, and withdrawal.

He reaches in his pocket, to find his last bit of Fentanyl he'd saved from the night before. He tries to cook up his shot on the bottom of a beer can, but is having difficulty due to his shaking.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGESIDE-MAINE-LATE MORNING

Tate leans over the side of the bridge, his eyes welling with tears. He covers his mouth with his fingerless gloves.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDER A BRIDGE-CHARLESTON, WV-SUNRISE-SAME DAY

Coyote finally gets a dose ready to go. He pulls up his sleeve and sees all the bruises, sores and collapsed veins in his arms. He curses and tears start to warm his face. He pulls a bootlace tourniquet around his forearm and finds a vein below his ring finger and takes his shot. He knows immediately he's blown it, only getting some of his medicine into his vein, and the rest going into the cartilage of his hand. He curses again as he watches the blister form on his hand, getting only temporary relief.

He bundles up, knowing he has at least a mile walk to the city warming station- He pulls out his phone, and with his fingerless gloves, he dials Tate's number. It rings and goes to voicemail.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGESIDE-MAINE-LATE MORNING

Tate sits down with his back against the bridge railing as his eyes well with tears. He bangs the back of his head against the railing.

TATE
No, Coy. No, no, no! Goddammit!

CUT TO:

EXT. KANAWHA BLVD.-EARLY MORNING-SAME DAY

He starts walking towards the warming station down Kanawha Boulevard. He starts to feel his feet go numb as the wind blowing off the river takes his breath away, and his gait is slow. He's running on empty. He looks up at the sun, wondering why it's not helping him. He continues to walk, he makes it 3/4 of a mile until he finds a bench. His lungs burning, he decides to rest on a bench overlooking the river. He pulls out his phone and sends Tate a text. Shaking violently, he waits for a reply. He puts his backpack on the bench to lay down for a rest, his face to the sun.

COYOTE
Good ol' Tater.

Coyote closes his eyes for the last time.

EXT. BRIDGESIDE-MAINE-MORNING

Tate opens his eyes, and finds himself on the bridge, overlooking the Presumpscot River. He rips off his hat, and gloves, throwing them into the river. He reaches into his pocket and finds a nip of whisky. Staring at it in his hand, he throws it into the river as well.

TATE
(Screaming over the water)
I'm sorry Coy! I'm so fucking
sorry!

He collapses onto his knees.

BLACKOUT

INT.MORNING-TATE'S MAINE FARMHOUSE

Coyote sitting on his porch, looking out at the river, mourning with his wife and dog. She holds his hand and he struggles with it all.

GWENEVERE
I don't really have the words.

TATE
Neither do I.

They sit quietly for a few moments.

TATE (CONT'D)
I've been getting incoherent pieces of information about arrangements from some of his cousins online. Truth be told, it doesn't seem like they care that much. One of his half-sisters DM'd me and told me that she doesn't think they'll be a service at all.

GWENEVERE
They can't- honey, they won't do that. Have you been able to reach Shooter?

TATE
He's not online, and he's moved around so much, I don't even know where to begin...you know what? Hold on...

Reaching into his wallet he pulls out a scrap piece of paper.

TATE (CONT'D)
I think this is his wife's home number. Worth a shot anyway.

Tate dials the number on his cell phone, and Shooter's six year old son answers the phone.

INT. MORGAN'S FAMILY HOME-AFTERNOON

SHOOTER'S SON
Hi there. This Isaac.

INTERCUT-PHONE CONVERSATION

TATE
Uh...hi there. Is your daddy home?

SHOOTER'S SON
Huh?

(Talking to someone in the background)
Hey this guy wants dad...Yeah. No, I don't know...

TATE
Is your mom around?

SHOOTER'S SON
Uhh mama ain't here no more.

TATE
Oh ok... is there a grown up there I can talk to?

SHOOTER'S SON
He stuffs his mouth full of nuggets
Yeah. I got some chicken nuggets too!

TATE
Heck yeah... I love me some nuggets... you got some good dippin' sauce?

An intoxicated woman with a deep country accent picks up the phone.

COUNTRY WOMAN
Who's this?

TATE
Hello ma'am. My name's Tate, old friends with Coyote and Shooter. I was wondering--

COUNTRY WOMAN
Uh huh. I know your name. If you're lookin' to write some newspaper thing about us, don't even bother.

TATE
I actually was hopin' to talk with Shooter about his brother.

COUNTRY WOMAN
You're gonna have to call Mt Olive,
son. He got sent up for
distribution six months back.

TATE
Jesus, I'm sorry to hear that--

COUNTRY WOMAN
And my worthless fuckin niece,
Morgan...well, she died last week of
an overdose. Don't know what's
gonna happen to these kids.

TATE
Jesus, ma'am I don't even know what
to say. Coyote was...

COUNTRY WOMAN
Coyote, that doped up old queen.
Last I heard he was suckin' cock
for fentanyl on the Boulevard.

TATE
(increasingly emotional
and upset)
He actually died today. Look, I
don't know you, and if you're
watchin' out for those kids, then
God bless you. I just want to you
to know I loved Coyote- and I'd
appreciate it if you'd not speak
about him like that.

COUNTRY WOMAN
(wryly laughing)
You been gone a long time. If you'd
been around, you'd-a seen how those
boys ended up. Guess it ain't much
of a surprise considerin' who their
daddy was.

TATE
I...I left some years back. You're
right, it's been a long time.

COUNTRY WOMAN
Shit, you got out while the gettin'
was good. Ain't nothin here now but
dope and poison water.

TATE
Can you put Shooter's boy back on?
Thank you, I sure appreciate it.

COUNTRY WOMAN
Isaac! Come talk to your daddy's
friend now. You take it easy. Have
a drink on me.

SHOOTER'S SON
Hello? Hi!

TATE
Isaac, my name's Tate.
(holding back tears)
(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)
I'm good friends with your daddy
and your Uncle C.

SHOOTER'S SON
Yeah? I miss daddy. I seen him last
month over ta jail. He's big and
strong.

TATE
He is...he always was. I talked to
your Uncle C awhile back, and you
know what he said about you?

SHOOTER'S SON
You did? What did Uncle C say?

TATE
He told me that you were even
stronger than your daddy.
(Holding it together)
He told me that you was strong like
Batman, and that your little sister
was lucky to have you as a big
brother.

SHOOTER'S SON
Really? Yeah I can run faster and
jump higher than all my friends!
Uncle C said he was gonna come
visit and show my how ta draw
Batman. Can you tell him I'm
waitin'?

TATE
Sure, I will. I'll tell him right
away...You do me a favor and look out
for your little sister. She's
always gonna need someone strong
like you.

SHOOTER'S SON
Sure thing! Hey mister, Spongebob
is on so I'll see you later.

TATE
Issac... It was great talkin' to
you.

EXT. GIDEON, WEST VIRGINIA- OUTSIDE STANTON'S HOUSE-4 DAYS
AFTER COYOTE'S DEATH-DAY

Tate arrives at his grandfather's farm, the setting of his
graduation party 18 years earlier. As he walked up to the
property to unofficially celebrate the life of Coyote with
those that loved him, he encounters LeJuan pacing in front
the house.

LEJUAN
(Embracing Tate)
Goddamn Coyote.

TATE
I know, brother. I know.

LEJUAN
This is a shitty reason to see you,
Tater.

TATE
Let me look at you.
(He can tell something
isn't right with LeJuan)
TATE (CONT'D)
Hey LeJuan...hey man. You holding up?

LEJUAN
Nah... Not really.

TATE
We should pull together. Everyone's
inside waiting.

LeJuan laughs nervously.

LEJUAN
I can't do this right now, brother.
I don't have the...It's just I can't
go in there and just--

TATE
I get it. It's a lot. Look at me. I
understand.

LEJUAN
Couldn't get off work anyway.

He opens up his coat to show Tate his Wal-Mart vest with his
name tag.

TATE
Oh.

LEJUAN
Sellin' out to the mothafuckin'
man.

Tate shakes his head smiling.

TATE
I love you, LeJuan. Do what you
gotta do.

LEJUAN
You tell your mama I'm gonna come
see her next week. She gonna show
me how she makes her corn pone.
Tell Stanton my pops been askin'
about deer camp.

TATE
(Embracing one last time)
Take care of yourself.

LeJuan walks away, turning back to yell at Tate.

LEJUAN
Don't forget...Country therapy
session next week!

Tate walks up to the door and is greeted by Stanton, who has grown old and walks with a cane. He sees everyone inside the door: Deedee, Percy, Judy, Red, Walther, Ivolene.

STANTON
Welcome home, son.

Tate hugs his grandpa and walks in the door...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPLANE- DAY

Tate walks down the aisle of the plane. He stows his bag and looks around and sees the harried flight attendant getting the seat next to him a cocktail. He looks over reflectively, making eye contact with the attendant.

ATTENDANT
Would you like a pre-flight drink, sir?

Tate thinks for a second, reaching into his pocket, finding the letter that LeJuan had slipped him and looks at it for a second.

TATE
I'll take a club soda and ice, if you have it, ma'am.

ATTENDANT
Sure thing...

Tate sits down and opens his letter. The flight attendant drops off his club soda and he smiles at her. He begins to read, hearing LeJuan's voice.

LEJUAN (V.O) (OVER MONTAGE)
Dear Tate:
I want to say I'm sorry for not having the balls to go to Coy's send off...

We see LeJuan driving to work in his old Honda Civic. He works his job as a Wal-Mart Greeter, with his infectious smile. He rubs his shoulder.

LEJUAN V.O.

...I've been on the edge for awhile, now just trying to hold it together. Ever since Jacki died, I feel like part of me went missing. I haven't been able to find it yet. I've been fumbling around in the dark. She was my light, ever since I can remember. I was always in love with her, it just seems like I never found the moment to show her. I waited. Now she's gone...

We see him at the end of his shift getting into his beat-up 90's Toyota, smoking a cigarette.

He drives through town, passing his old family store, which has a For Lease sign in the window. He pulls into his double wide trailer, where he lives alone. He waves to his neighbors as he walks into his home and is greeted by his cat.

LEJUAN (V.O.)

...Hearing about Coyote wasn't exactly a shock, but it took my breath from me. Trying to stay clean, and hearing about it, I don't know, everything just felt pointless and dirty. We're all covered in it. I think about them old miners in church on Sundays I was a kid. Dressed up in their good jeans and button downs, but you could see the dirt that they carried on them. In the corners of their eyes, the creases of their hands-you spend 18 years underground, I guess some of it just won't wash away. I feel like them, Tate. It's in my fingernails now, in my creases. I don't reckon I'll ever get rid of it...

He goes to the bathroom and washes off his hands and face as he stares in the mirror. He goes into the kitchen and pulls out a cigar box tucked away in a drawer. He takes it into his living room and ritualistically takes off his shoes and socks, storing his shoes neatly in their place, placing his socks carefully in the hamper.

LEJUAN V.O.

...When I look in the mirror, it's like I don't see myself. I've been sober for 4 months and 5 days. Sometimes it's not that bad, but some days I feel like an exposed nerve. Aside from the arthritis pain from football, and my shoulder from being black in the wrong town, there's another dull pain that comes from somewhere else. I can't shake it. I know you've had your struggles and even though you got out, you're like the rest of us. Left behind, trying to make some kind of sense of it. You're about to be a dad. I'm happy for you. Hold on to Gwenevere. She's a good girl, and she was made for you. Maybe don't drink so much. Or quit if you can...

He pulls out a needle and a bag of fentanyl, carefully fixing up a shot, which he delivers between his toes. His eyes glaze over in momentary relief, and he lights up a cigarette and stares out the window.

LEJUAN V.O. (CONT'D)

Jesus, it all kind of made sense once. Way back on the river, swimming and playing ball. When I think about those times it's all vivid and bright, like a movie.

(MORE)

LEJUAN V.O. (CONT'D)
Now everything seems gray and
blurry. Seeing your face again
gives me hope, but I know it can't
last. Nothing good lasts around
here anymore. I miss driving around
in circles with my friends with
nowhere to go.
You're my friend. You always have
been.
Love,
LeJuan

FINAL SCENE- END