

KILLING TIME

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT 1

An empty stretch of road splits a lush forest, brushing the edges of the horizon. Trees cast jagged shadows on the pale dirt. Cicadas BUZZ. A waning moon rises.

A small car ROARS into view, breaking the stillness.

The car stops, starts, then stops again, jerking and sputtering to a halt on the side of the road with a teeth-grinding SCREECH.

2 INT./EXT. DOUG'S CAR (CONTINUOUS) 2

The driver's side door opens, revealing DOUG (early 30's, weathered and broad, silver ring on his left hand, an unreadable glint in his eyes). I'M ALIVE from NEXT TO NORMAL PLAYS over his sound system until he shuts the car off with a sigh.

3 EXT. ROAD SHOULDER - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 3

He pops the hood open and is greeted by a thick cloud of acrid black smoke.

He inhales and falls forward reflexively, catching himself as he is overtaken by a coughing fit. He hacks out a lump of spit, desperately trying to get the taste out of his system.

DOUG

Eugh - shit.

He slams the hood closed and climbs to a seated position on top of it, still coughing.

He pulls his phone out of his pocket. The screen blinks sadly at him:

NO SERVICE, TEN PERCENT BATTERY

He sighs, putting away his phone and looking up at the sky.

4 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT 4

Another car blinks into view. It's doing at least seventy or eighty miles an hour, the headlights blinding.

Doug scrambles off of the hood and runs up to the side of the highway, waving his arms at the driver.

The car slows as it approaches Doug's position, pulling to a rough stop.

5 EXT. ROAD SHOULDER - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 5

The driver's side door opens, revealing ELLIOT (19, control freak, hair-trigger temper, a windbreaker bulging at the waist). He slowly approaches Doug, raising his voice over the din of the forest.

ELLIOT

I noticed you're having a bit of -
uh, car trouble there. I can help
you out if you like.

DOUG

Thank God. Just got the thing and
it's already giving out on me.

Elliot's eyes widen in shock as Doug steps out of the darkness. *Fuck*. He swallows down the feeling and reaches out his hand towards Doug, rolling with the punches.

His knuckles are raw and bruised, covered in small scars. These hands should belong to a larger and more violent man - on Elliot, they seem out of place.

ELLIOT

I'm Elliot.

Doug firmly grips his hand.

DOUG

Doug. Nice to meet you.

6 INT./EXT. DOUG'S CAR - TRUNK - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) 6

Doug goes to open the trunk, waving Elliot over as he searches for tools. Elliot stands behind him, pretending to look.

His eyes take in every detail of Doug - calculating the broad muscle of his arms, the bent of his fingers, the toughness of his boots.

(CONTINUED)

He silently reaches for the hunting knife sheathed on his belt, hidden by the windbreaker, his hands shaking.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I think there's a jack back here
somewhere, if you could -

Elliot takes one, two steps before stopping directly behind Doug, trapping him against the car. He draws the blade and holds it against Doug's throat.

Doug is frozen in place. The knife scrapes against his throat, drawing a few thin beads of blood.

ELLIOT

(leaning in)
Put your hands behind your head,
and walk away from the car.

7 EXT. INTERSTATE SHOULDER - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

7

Doug complies, locking his hands behind his head and unwittingly trapping Elliot's arm.

As he moves backwards, he steps on Elliot's foot.

Elliot lurches back with a muted curse. The recoil drives the knife further into Doug's neck, scoring a thin line into the soft flesh.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Here - just move this way -

The pair stumble around the shoulder, desperately trying to untwist from the ridiculous position they've locked themselves into.

Elliot grabs Doug's right hand and shoves it down, allowing his arm to slip through.

He flips him facing forward, the knife still resting against his throat.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You won't move if you know what's
good for you.

Elliot removes a pair of handcuffs and a roll of thick duct tape from his belt.

He cuffs Doug's wrists behind his back and adds a hefty layer of duct tape over the cuffs and over his ankles, finishing with two pieces of tape over his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

He moves Doug onto the ground behind his car, propping his torso up on the bumper.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

God, that was way harder than I thought it'd be. Wow. Okay.

Elliot breathes deeply, centering himself. The stage is his.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't know who I am. You don't remember - Wait.

Elliot stops in his tracks. Doug looks at him with confusion as he clears his throat, preparing to try again.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't know who I am. You don't remember me - *Goddamn it*. No. That doesn't work. It's not -

Elliot pauses again, gathers himself.

He silently sounds out the words, rolling them around his mouth as he begins to pace, thinking.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't - you don't - FUCK!

He stops abruptly, turning to face Doug.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm still workshopping the monologue. You know how it is. You think you have it down, then you get on stage and it doesn't roll off the tongue like it used to. And the kill won't be as satisfying if you don't do the monologue beforehand, you know what I mean?

Elliot looks to Doug for an answer before remembering the duct tape layered over his mouth.

He crouches in front of Doug and rips the tape off.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You know what I mean?

DOUG

Can't say I do.

(CONTINUED)

ELLIOT

Your loss. Okay, just, let me try this again.

He stands and pulls a marked-up script page out of his jacket. He looks at it, studying the words intently before folding it and placing it back in his pocket.

Doug picks at the tape around his wrists, his fingernails unable to catch the edges.

Elliot jumps, shaking out his limbs. He sings a few vocal trills before reciting a tongue twister under his breath.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Big black bugs bleed blue black
blood but baby black bugs bleed
blue.

He claps twice in rhythm to finish off the twister, ending with a flourish.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't know who I am. You don't remember me, do you?

(aside, to himself)

Yes.

(back to audience)

Why would you? Why would you remember me? After all, it was you who said I was a waste of talent, that I'd never - *shit*. FUCK!

(grasping at straws)

This is *your* fault. You aren't my audience, you stupid asshole. I had this whole night planned, and you had to show up and ruin everything. I wrote this script for *Allen*, not his fucking husband.

Doug's gut drops.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

It's supposed to go like this - the car breaks down, I tie him up, and then he learns why he shouldn't have ignored me before I gut him like the pig he is. It's the opening scene of the play, Doug. He's the first on my list!

(intercepting)

Ah, no need to lie about him, I know that's his car.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I've been tracking the license plate for a few weeks, tampered with a few hoses under your hood yesterday.

DOUG

... What do you want with Allen?

Like it isn't obvious.

ELLIOT

I want him gone, Doug. He crushed my dreams like a bug under his boot - ooh, wait, let me write that down. Hold on, hold on.

He pulls his script back out and jots the line down in the margins.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Anyways. He was the first one to tell me I couldn't do it, that I "didn't have the vocal range for Pippin", that my puppet remake of Wicked "needed work", so I thought I'd start with him.

He takes a seat on the hood of his car, shoulders sagging as he looks at Doug.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I've just been... killing time these past few years, waiting for the right moment, but I couldn't even manage that.

(throwing his hands
in the air)

Forget the monologue. Fuck it! This speech isn't even for you! You're no Allen, but I can work with the understudy - it'll hurt him either way. Let's just get to the main act.

Elliot reaches for the knife -

DOUG

Wait! Wait. Hold on, please.

We see the gears in Doug's mind whirring.

DOUG (CONT'D)

You've got the talent.

(CONTINUED)

Elliot stares openly, stunned. He's gone completely off script.

ELLIOT

Huh?

DOUG

... I'm serious. I don't know how he didn't see it. You can play a menacing villain like nobody's business. Not everyone can sell that kind of performance.

ELLIOT

(laughing)

I'm nineteen, I'm past my prime. I've already missed my opportunity. I mean, it's not like I even had one in the first place, no thanks to your husband.

DOUG

Listen, I love Allen, but he's not the end-all be-all on who can act. He's made some pretty questionable casting decisions in the past. Did you see his production of *The Music-*

ELLIOT

(overlapping)

The Music Man? Oh, it was atrocious.

DOUG

I told him that that the girl he picked for Marian couldn't hit a high A if she had boxing gloves, but he didn't listen to me.

ELLIOT

I know, right?

Elliot laughs *much* harder at that than Doug does.

DOUG

Can I offer you some advice? I'm actually also a theatre teacher, I'm down at Greenville High. I've got some experience with this stuff.

Elliot nods.

(CONTINUED)

Doug's fingernails finally catch on the duct tape, ripping a sizable tear near the bottom. He grits his teeth.

DOUG (CONT'D)

When it comes to workshopping a piece, you have to give every word the time and appreciation it deserves, even if you don't think it fits at first. Once you do that, you can begin to infuse emotion into the text. I can tell you've got a pretty good grasp of your character arc so far, but in order to make use of it and see what actually works you need to get back to the words themselves.

ELLIOT

... Thanks. Let me - let me just try this one more time.

Elliot begins another warm-up routine, exaggerated to the nth degree.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

All I want is a proper cup of coffee, made in a proper copper coffee pot - red leather, yellow leather, lavender leather - Unique New York, New York's unique, you know you need unique New York.

He settles into position, head drooped down, finding his stillness.

He locks onto Doug with an fiery stare. Every hair stands on end.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

You don't know who I am. You don't remember me, do you? Why would you? Why would you remember me? After all, it was you who said I was a waste of talent -
(breaking character)
Ugh. It's still not flowing right, you know? It's got the wrong mouthfeel.

Doug nods.

(CONTINUED)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(in character)

That I would never make it out in
the big, wide world - FUCK!

Elliot slams his fist against his car before kicking the
front tire.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Elliot slides down the side of his car, sitting hard as
tears spring to his eyes.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Every time, every goddamn time.
Sometimes I wonder why I don't
just give up on the whole thing.

Hidden from view, we see that Doug has managed to rip
through the tape around his wrists, fingers red and
smarting.

His left thumb shifts and twists under his skin, popping
out of place with a quiet grunt of pain from Doug - but
he's finally able to get his hand out of the cuffs. His
hand is tender, the thumb already swelling and
blackening.

DOUG

There's no shame in that. You like
acting, sure, but it may not be
the best path for you. You've got
potential, but it's up to you how
you use it.

He reaches his hands down underneath his legs and begins
to hurriedly tear at the back of the tape around his
ankles.

ELLIOT

There is *nothing else* out there
for me. I don't have any friends,
I can't hold down a job, I failed
out of Lake Wobegon. This is all I
have.

(shaky, heaving)

And I can't have it if you're
here. It's you, it's Allen, it's
all of you fuckers who think that
I don't deserve to shine!

Doug rises shakily, freed from his duct tape bindings.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG

That's not how casting works!

Elliot looks at Doug's left hand in horror.

ELLIOT

Did you *yank out your fucking thumb* -

Doug rushes him. Elliot lurches backwards, scrambling away & around the back end of the car.

Doug gives chase, feet pounding the asphalt as they loop around the car once, twice.

DOUG

You cast the best person for the role!

Elliot stumbles, allowing Doug to get in close.

A punch from Doug's right hand sends him sprawling, nose bloody, hands grasping for his knife on the pavement. Doug kicks the knife away.

DOUG (CONT'D)

You might see the most talented person you've ever met, but if they don't fit the role it won't work out! It's not about you. You're not that special!

A kick from Doug lands squarely on his ribs. Elliot coughs and gasps for air.

DOUG (CONT'D)

And I can guarantee you are *not* the most talented person Allen's ever met! A girl in one of his classes went to Juilliard three years ago!

The second kick lands in his gut, leaving him to retch as Doug plants a boot firmly on his chest, grinding it into his bruised ribs.

DOUG (CONT'D)

And don't you ever threaten him again, you piece of shit.

Surging upward, Elliot grabs Doug's thumb and pulls, wrenching it further out of place.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (8)

7

Doug cries out as he falls forward, clutching his hand as he lands hard, rolling onto his back. His thumb now hangs at an odd angle, ripped out of the socket.

Elliot grabs the knife and lunges at Doug, looming over him. Doug manages to catch his wrist with his lame hand.

Elliot struggles to break the deadlock, angling the knife towards Doug's chest as Doug tries to wrench it away from his body.

ELLIOT

It's his fucking fault I'm like this! It has to be you!

Doug's grip falters. The knife arcs downwards - and into his calf.

Doug SCREAMS, wrenching his leg out of Elliot's grasp, kicking him in the face with the other leg, hauling himself off the ground, crawling away from him -

- and onto the road.

8 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

8

He drags himself over the road and onto the opposite shoulder, his arms shaking from the strain.

DOUG

(calling out)

Help! Someone, please! Help me!

Elliot steps onto the now far side of the road, deliberate and slow, taking his sweet time with Doug.

ELLIOT

And who's out there to save you?
No one is coming, Doug. I've choreographed this performance out to the last detail -

The ROAR of an engine.

Headlights shining BRIGHT.

Tires SQUEALING.

A horn BLARING.

Elliot turns to face the music, but it's already too la-

CUT TO:

8.1 INT. TRUCK

8.1

We see the DRIVER in silhouette from the backseat, their head tilted back & eyes closed. The truck ROCKS with an impact to the front bumper, JOLTING as if passing over a speed bump.

A head pops up from the driver's lap, wiping their lips.

PASSENGER

Was that a deer?

BACK TO:

8.2 EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

8.2

The truck swerves, skidding on viscera, before speeding off into the night, fading into the horizon and out of sight.

Doug rises onto unsteady feet, limping, shock setting in at the sight of Elliot's body.

He's... mangled. The back of his skull is cracked open and leaking on the gravel, his spine snapped, his limbs crushed under the truck's wheels. Doug retches, choking back bile.

DOUG

... Jesus.

He nudges Elliot with his foot. No reaction.

He kicks him more forcefully. Nothing.

Well, shit. What now?

He pats his pockets, feeling for his keys, maybe - his car is out of commission. Double shit.

He looks around desperately before his eyes land on the other car parked next to his. One that works perfectly well.

He pats around Elliot's pants & jacket before fishing the car keys out of his jacket pocket. A little crushed, but they should get the job done.

We get one last good look at Elliot, almost mournful.

(CONTINUED)

DOUG (CONT'D)
(half to himself)
There's only so much we could have
done. It wasn't our fault you
weren't happy.

He looks at the knife still stuck in his leg, grimaces,
and unlocks Elliot's car.

9 INT. ELLIOT'S CAR (CONTINUOUS)

9

He gingerly sits in the driver's seat, closing the door
behind him. The car lights up as soon as he sticks the
key in the ignition.

As he buckles his seatbelt, a song starts to play over
the speakers - I'M ALIVE from NEXT TO NORMAL.

Despite it all, Doug laughs.

He puts the car into drive, tearing away from the
shoulder. The car jerks and bumps as he drives past where
Elliot's body was - oh, well. Not like he can feel it.

Doug breathes deeply as the song CRESCENDOS.

His phone lights up with a call from ALLEN, his service
restored. He grits his teeth as he hits the answer
button, raising it to his ear.

ALLEN (V.O.)
Babe! Finally, thank god, I was
starting to get worried. Thanks
for letting me borrow the van,
hauling Audrey Two around is such
a pain -

DOUG
(cutting him off)
Allen, honey, I am going to *kill*
you.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.