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The Backup Plan

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The Backup Plan

by

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Report

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Abstract

The Backup Plan

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This report documents the production process of my thesis short film, *The Backup Plan*, produced as partial requirement for a Master of Fine Arts degree in Film & Media Production in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin. *The Backup Plan* is a drama about a father and son facing eviction from their home. The film follows Randall, the father, as he resorts to ever more desperate measures to save his home. This report details the difficult decision to forego production of a different script in favor of *The Backup Plan* and follows its production of from development through post-production.

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FOREWARD

God doesn't believe in the easy way.

-James Agee

It should come as little surprise that a film titled *The Backup Plan* was just that – a backup plan. The title was sort of a personal joke from the first draft of the script. It just happened to be appropriate for the plot of the film I had written as well, and coming up with a good title that isn't cheesy or obtuse is a painstaking endeavor.

In a way, it feels like I made two thesis films, rather than one. I began working on the original concept for my thesis, what I would eventually title *Nimrod*, in June of 2016 and didn't abandon it until late February – nearly 8 months into the project. *Nimrod* barely made it into pre-production. By comparison, I wrote, produced, directed, and edited *The Backup Plan* in the same amount of time. Therefore, it seems necessary to describe both the thesis film I finished and the thesis film I spent equal time working on in some detail.

Since abandoning the project, *Nimrod* has gone on to have a second life, in a way. One of the co-producers of *The Backup Plan*, Dio Traverso, directed a version of the project for his thesis, entitled *Jack Rabbit*.

INTRODUCTION

It still seems funny to me that I would make a movie inspired by my hometown and the people in it. I spent a lot of my life hating Gaston County. Strip mall after strip mall, countless fast food chains, redneck conservatives, drugs, dilapidated downtowns, a church on every corner – it's everything you would expect from a crumbling former textile center in the South. I never felt like I belonged there.

When I graduated from Appalachian State University, I couldn't stand the thought of going back to Gastonia. It's an easy place to get trapped. I wanted to move to Portland or Austin – somewhere hip, more accepting – but I needed money or a job. It was the middle of the Great Recession, and I wasn't having any luck finding a job in radio or television. After six months of unemployment and a brief stint as a seasonal employee at Toys'R'Us, I was hired by NASCAR Media Group.

Working at NASCAR was fine for a while. It was a great first job out of college, but I didn't love it. I had spent most of my life writing short fiction and collecting DVDs. I loved narratives. I didn't care about watching 200-mile-per-hour billboards turning left for three hours. After finishing my undergraduate degree, I was burnt out on education. I never thought I would go back to school, but over the six months of unemployment, when I had exhausted all my other options, I had begun to research graduate school. I had developed an unshakable idea in my mind. I didn't just want to work in radio or TV; I wanted to make movies.

For much of my life, filmmaking seemed like an impossibility. Movies were made in Hollywood and New York, thousands of miles from Gastonia, North Carolina. I didn't even know anyone with a camera; they were too expensive. We were still shooting on DV tape at Appalachian State. Movies were just something fun to watch and talk about.

I think I first began to consider filmmaking as a real possibility in the fall of 2008. I was music director of the campus radio station. One day, I got a call from a radio promoters trying to get us to play his bands – maybe Doug at Pirate!, Sean from Planetary, or Rob at AAM. I was new, so he asked me what I was studying. When I said that I was studying broadcasting and creative writing, he responded, “sounds like a screenwriter to me.”

It didn't hit me at that moment, but the thought lingered. I'd never considered being a screenwriter. It seemed like a way to get into movies without needing money and equipment. When it came time to register for classes, screenwriting never fit into my schedule. I even asked the screenwriting professor if I could do a special project with him, but he didn't have time. That rejection may have been the impetus for coming back to school, as slow-moving as it may have been.

Work at NASCAR picked up soon after I was hired. Within months, I was editing videos and working on multiple television shows 50 to 60 hours a week. After a year, I took the GRE. It would be another two years before I could apply to graduate school. I considered applying to screenwriting programs, but I thought I would have a better chance of getting into a production program. When I finally got the chance to get out of Gastonia and move to Austin – one of my dream cities – I couldn't have been more ecstatic.

Over the course of the program at UT, I focused on storytelling and screenwriting over other facets of film production. I took pride in writing my own films. As I wrote

more scripts and developed more concepts, I began to notice a trend. My first two films were centered on Austin and inspired by things I saw around town, but they didn't feel like me. My next projects leaned much more heavily on the southern culture I had been around all my life.

It's strange how, after moving a thousand miles away from my hometown, I suddenly started writing films about the South and southern people. After filming my pre-thesis film, *Barrow*, which was a Southern Gothic drama, I took a feature writing class with Stuart Kelban. The screenplay I wrote for the class was about my hometown, specifically a labor strike that happened there in the 1920s. The first script I wrote for my thesis, and eventually abandoned, was based on an Appalachian folk tale.

When I found myself in a pinch on this thesis film, I once again fell back on the adage, "Write what you know." I needed to write a script quickly, so I drew inspiration from Gaston County. The characters were based on people I had met back home – friends, acquaintances, family members. The story itself came from a local news story I remembered hearing about someone stealing catalytic converters at a car dealership. I knew how the film needed to look, sound, and feel because I had built the world of the film around the one I had known all my life. *The Backup Plan* is as much Gastonia, North Carolina as it is Austin, Texas.

NIMROD: THE PLAN BEFORE THE PLAN

In the spring of 2016, I was in the midst of editing my pre-thesis film. With a few weeks left in the semester, Don Howard, who was teaching the post-production course, assigned the cohort a presentation about our plans for our thesis films. At the time, I didn't have a concrete plan for my thesis, but I had some concepts that I was interested in exploring.

In the presentation, I talked about two main genres that intrigued me. One was the Southern Gothic drama. My pre-thesis film, *Barrow*, was a Southern Gothic film, and I felt that the production was fairly successful, so I was considering writing another film in the same vein. Since learning that nearly all Southern Gothic films made over the years are adaptations of other written works, the idea of creating Southern Gothic works originally written for the screen has been enticing. However, at the time, I was more intrigued by the idea of writing a film in my favorite genre, magical realism. While I knew that it could also potentially make production more difficult, I felt that magical realism would allow for more creativity and more playful cinematic elements. I had seen a number of recent of lower-budget feature films use simple concepts to create magical elements, and I hoped to do the same. Films like *The One I Love*, *Ruby Sparks*, and *Midnight in Paris* created magical altered realities without visual effects, and a few others had done so with only simple or minimal post-production effects.

Also, mentioned in the presentation were the types of characters I was hoping to create, namely anti-heroes and Byronic heroes. I like characters whose senses of morality are ambiguous or flawed. In both of my previous narrative films, *Laundry Day* and *Barrow*, a character is wronged and seeks revenge. The audience is left to question whether their actions are justified and the retribution warranted. I'm also intrigued by characters who are inherently outside of or act contrary to mainstream society. Perhaps this is why I'm so interested in Southern Gothic fiction, a genre defined by outsider and outcast protagonists.

Over the course of my studies at UT, I had also been searching out other southern filmmakers to see what kinds of films they had made and what had made them successful. Until as recently as twenty years ago, southern directors and films about people in the South were few and far between. However, southern directors like David Gordon Green, Jeff Nichols, Ramin Bahrani, David Lowery, and Kat Candler had found early success with very grounded realistic dramas, often based around family dynamics, before moving on to bigger projects and genres. While I greatly enjoy their films, I hoped to do something less conventional with my thesis film. Still, in researching these southern directors, I had begun to feel an obligation to represent the South in whatever ways possible – through literary tradition, culture, setting, cinematic sensibility, etc. This in turn led me to the Jack Tales.

As an undergraduate at Appalachian State, the North Carolina mountain culture was ingrained in the way people lived, from music, crafts, and food all the way down to the pace of living. Storytelling is one of the most hallowed traditions in Appalachian culture, as time-honored as bluegrass music. A local storyteller named Orville Hicks would often come to the university to tell stories that had been passed down through his family for generations, called Jack Tales. The same Jack who climbed the beanstalk and

slayed the giant had countless other adventures that were less famous but no less fantastic. The Jack Tales seemed like a great vehicle for creating a magical realist narrative that incorporated southern culture.

I should also mention that before the presentation I had also been mulling a few possible concepts that had popped into my head over the course of the program. However, I was fairly set on starting from scratch on a new idea. I planned to take the summer to develop an idea and write a script. When the fall semester rolled around, I wanted to have a script ready to workshop, so that I could go into production during the winter break.

Going to War with “Soldier Jack”: Developing *Nimrod*

I began my research into the Jack Tales at the most logical place: the library. I checked out a few books of Jack Tales and spent the next few weeks reading them while also doing research online. After reading a couple of the books, I wasn't finding anything particularly inspiring in them. I had forgotten just how folksy and naïve many of the Jack Tales are. Many included elements that I would never be able to film: giants, bulls, wild and mystical animals, flying machines, demons.

One Jack Tale did pique my interest – a story titled “Soldier Jack,” which, incidentally, had been made into a 40-minute short in 1988. In this tale, Jack is coming home from the war when he meets an old man begging for food. Jack gives him a loaf of bread. In return, the old man gives Jack a sack that can hold anything if he says the magic words and a glass that, when filled with spring water, will allow anyone to see Death through it. Jack uses the glass and the sack to save the king's sickly daughter from Death who was standing by her bedside. Hundreds of years go by with everyone getting older

but never dying until Jack meets an old woman who looks terribly old and decrepit. He feels sorry for her and decides it's time to let Death out of the sack. When he does, Jack is the first person who Death kills.

I wracked my brain for weeks trying to find a way to adapt the story into a film without being a literal translation of the story, like the 1988 film directed by Tom Davenport. I needed to think of a fresh angle for the story. Even after a trip back home to North Carolina and a couple weekends in the Appalachian Mountains, I still wasn't feeling especially inspired. I had gotten as far as transposing the "Soldier Jack" story to modern times and making it about a boy saving his grandmother from death. I knew I wanted the film to take place in the rural South. I was toying with the protagonist being a hunter (hence the title *Nimrod*), and I knew he was living with his grandmother because his parents had died when he was young. Or, at least his mother had died; some early notes included a harsh or deadbeat father. However, the big picture eluded me. I couldn't figure out the plot, the metaphysical mechanics of stopping Death, or even what Death should look like. At this point, I began to consider other script ideas, including a Southern Gothic story about two boys searching for a missing dog and meeting the Devil (somewhat based on "The Devil and Tom Walker"), and a more straightforward drama about a boy fixing up his mother's old truck. Yet, with the fall semester approaching, I didn't have time to begin developing those concepts.

I knew the fall semester was going to be rough. I was TA'ing two narrative production courses while also proctoring at the computer labs, and I knew I would have to direct a dogme 95 short film later in the semester (on top of a media studies course and the thesis work). When classes began, I was almost immediately overwhelmed by the workload, and I began to consider working with a screenwriter, something I had never done before.

In the first few weeks of the fall semester, the professor of the thesis production course, PJ Raval, required each of us to pitch our thesis ideas. On the first day of the class, PJ had shown us a series of short films and stressed two ideas that we should consider for our thesis films: 1) Think about your brand and what you want your identity to be as a filmmaker, and 2) Be bold and stand out. With those points in mind, I chose what felt like the boldest of the concepts I was mulling over; I pitched the story about the boy saving his grandmother from Death. The reaction from the cohort and Professor Raval was overwhelmingly positive, so I decided to commit fully to producing the concept.

Soon after pitching the concept, I met with my thesis committee chair, Richard Lewis, for the first time to discuss my plans for the thesis film. We discussed my busy semester and he agreed that working with a screenwriter might be best if I wanted to go into production by January. I asked screenwriting Professor Stuart Kelban if he could recommend any screenwriters. He then sent an email to the UT screenwriters, informing them that I was looking for a collaborator. The first screenwriter to reach out was Heathyr Clift. I had been in a couple of classes with Heathyr and had read a few of her scripts. They weren't necessarily in the vein of the story I wanted to tell; however, Heathyr was familiar with the kind of work I wanted to do. I also met with Jason Kessler about the project. By the time I met with Jason, Heathyr had sent me multiple log lines and treatments. It was hard to turn down the opportunity to collaborate with someone so enthusiastic and hard-working. I sent Heathyr notes about the concept I had been working on, and she was eager to start writing.

Three Variations on Death: Scripting *Nimrod*

Over the next few months, the story about a boy saving his grandmother from Death went through three major iterations with three different writers. Heathyr Clift and I began collaborating on the first version in early September. My producer, Dio Traverso, decided to take a crack at the script in mid-November. Shortly after that, I wrote my own version of the script, going back to the tonal foundations I had established over the summer.

SCRIPT 1: *UNTITLED DEATH MOVIE*

As mentioned before, I had never collaborated with a screenwriter. I wrote the scripts for the only two narrative films I had ever made. I was apprehensive that another writer could write the story I hoped to tell and that I would be able to guide the writing process. However, writing has always been a slow, laborious process for me, and if I wanted to go into production in January, I simply didn't have time to write the script myself.

Working with Heathyr didn't necessarily assuage my concerns. While I knew Heathyr was a fast writer, I wasn't certain her writing style aligned with the story. Collaboration was also hindered by the fact that Heathyr was living in Los Angeles, and we had to communicate through email and over phone calls. Nevertheless, I felt it was worth trying to work together.

From the outset, I was concerned about tone. I wanted something that felt like a dark folk tale, a blend of the Southern Gothic and magical realism genres. I sent Heathyr some films to reference, including *Donnie Darko*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, and *Take Shelter*, as well as the short films *Boneshaker* by Frances Bodomo, *Skin* by Jordana

Spiro, and Kat Candler's *The Rusted*. These films create both a sense of mystery and magic with dark undertones.

One of our first goals was to figure out the mechanics and look of Death. For the sake of ease and budget, we decided to make Death mostly human, though I knew it was like walking through a veritable mine field to avoid ripping off other movies and television shows; there are multiple "Twilight Zone" episodes with human versions of Death and various other similar representations ("Dead Like Me", *Meet Joe Black*). I simply didn't want the stereotypical robed figure with a scythe. Our strategy was to make Death an old man only visible to the boy, similar to Frank in *Donnie Darko*. The boy would discover who this mysterious old man is over the course of the film – his deceased grandfather come to take his wife to the next realm.

From there, Heathyr outlined a story that included the young boy (Luke) trying to understand who the old man is that he keeps seeing around town and outside his house. The grandmother, a heavy smoker, collapses and has a brush with Death that sends Luke into battle mode, fortifying their home with a hodgepodge of protective objects like garlic, amulets, salt, and holy water. Luke and his friend launch an assault on Death with the salt and holy water to no avail. Death makes his way to grandma who collapses in a coughing fit to hear death. The script ends with grandma's spirit assuring Luke that Death (who had assumed the form of her husband, Herman) is taking her to a better place. She assures Luke that he will be taken care of, and the story ends with the implication that his friend's mother will be his caregiver.

I workshopped the outline in the thesis production class with my cohort and solicited feedback from my committee. After a few changes to the plot, including upping the stakes, Heathyr had the first draft of the script written by late-October. I then workshopped the draft with the cohort.

Reactions to the draft were mixed, and I had mixed feelings about it as well. People liked parts of the script, but no one loved it. There was a lot of plot and a lot of dialogue that needed to be ironed out or clarified. The main grievance I had was that the tone still felt off to me, and I wasn't in love with the characters. I kept getting the comment that it felt like *The Goonies*, which was nowhere near the tone I wanted. It was also a long script. I was aiming for 15 pages, and this draft was 23. I couldn't see how to trim it down as much as I needed. My producer, my committee chair, and some trusted friends all agreed that the script was fine, but it didn't feel like the movie I wanted to make, or even the movie I had pitched. I felt lost.

By this point, I had decided to push my shooting dates back from January to Spring Break. Yet, there was another important deadline approaching. The Moody Innovation Fund grant application was due on December 9th, and I was running out of opportunities to workshop any new scripts before the deadline. I was in the thick of production on my dogme film and as busy as ever with teaching responsibilities. Despite all this, I made the decision to write the next version of the script myself.

SCRIPT 2: *JACK RABBIT*

In early November, I was having dinner with Dio at Kerbey Lane. He had just read Heathyr's draft and given me similar notes to what I had heard from my thesis advisor, except he compared it more to *The Twilight Zone* than *The Goonies*. I told him that I wanted to write the next draft of the script, but I was swamped with work. I don't remember the exact details of the conversation, but he eventually offered to write the next draft of the script. He pitched taking the script in a weirder direction and turning it into more of a black comedy. Then he began outlining the script there in the restaurant.

I was hesitant to agree – not because Dio is bad writer, by any means. I had a specific vision for what the film should be, and I just didn't think anyone else could write it. Reading Heathyr's draft had solidified that opinion. Dio and I also have very different sensibilities and make very different films. I didn't really want to make a black comedy, and as my producer, Dio knew that. I think somewhere in the back of my mind I was also concerned about losing my producer if I didn't want to direct his script. However, the semester had drained me, and I needed a draft quickly. I had scheduled a workshop for the following week. I told him I needed a script fast. He said he would have it done in a few days. So I agreed.

Regardless of Dio's offer, I began writing my own version of the script. The following week, I showed up to the workshop session without the promised script. It would be two weeks before I could workshop anything new. I received the draft from Dio later that day. In short, I had a small panic attack. Dio's draft, titled *Jack Rabbit*, took a hard left-turn from the film I had envisioned.

In *Jack Rabbit*, Luke is mute. His grandmother is still a smoker. Together, they hunt and trap game. One day, Luke traps a rabbit that turns out to be a magical talking rabbit-man (Jack Rabbit) who gives him a pair of goggles that lets him see Death. Death in this script is a giant black dog. The black dog comes for grandma, and Luke traps him in a hole outside their trailer. Forty-odd years go by with Death trapped in the hole. Nothing can die. Grandma is hacking up tumors, and Luke, now in his 50s still takes care of her. Jack Rabbit shows up wanting his goggles back. He's been searching for death for years unable to find him. Struggling over the goggles, Luke and Jack Rabbit fall into the hole with the black dog. Jack Rabbit dies, to his own delight. The black dog escapes the hole and heads for grandma. But instead of killing her right away, he allows Luke to give her one final puppet show with all her favorite taxidermied animals.

While it adheres more closely to the original source material, “Soldier Jack” – i.e. trapping death, seeing the consequences, a device that lets people see Death – the *Jack Rabbit* script was intimidating, both in its tone and ability to be produced. The script felt like a show written for Adult Swim. Though I typically love Adult Swim’s content, I wasn’t trying to make a film with gross-out humor and mask-wearing punk rock rabbit men. As far as producing, the script called for animals, puppets, firearms, effects makeup, post-production VFX, stop motion animation, and a great deal of production design. Producing the *Jack Rabbit* script felt like it would take a lot of effort and resources I didn’t have and could potentially cost a lot of money. It was a lot to consider with only weeks before the Moody Innovation Grant deadline.

I sought feedback from classmates and my committee chair as quickly as possible. Responses were polarized from the few people I consulted. I had a difficult decision to make.

I thought I was making the right choice when I told Dio that I wouldn’t be producing his script and that I was working on my own draft. However, breaking the news was as awkward as I had anticipated. His reaction was somewhere between disappointed and angry. What really floored me was when he said, “If you don’t make the script, then I will.” Dio himself had been mired in writing his thesis for much longer than I, and he saw this new script as an opportunity to end his year-long struggle with a script that wasn’t working. I couldn’t believe it, since I had already begun incorporating elements of his script into my draft. I expected to lose not only my concept, but my producer as well.

Nevertheless, I persevered. Dio eventually apologized for the situation he put me in, and I continued writing the third draft of the script.

SCRIPT 3: *NIMROD*

Writing a script as a student is a juggling act. I find it more difficult to write creatively when I know that I will have to direct, produce, finance, and edit the film I'm writing. The spring semester of 2016, I wrote a feature script for Stuart Kelban's advanced screenwriting class. It was freeing to write a script that I knew I wasn't going to have to make. I could focus on the characters and writing the best story that I could. With *Nimrod*, I had the normal student film pressures to juggle, but also content from two other scripts that I felt guilty about abandoning and a two-week deadline.

My plan for the draft was to take the elements that I liked from both scripts and combine them in the style I had originally set out to achieve. I wanted to take the rabbit and dog from Dio's script, and the shape shifting Death and selective visibility from Heathyr's script, and I wanted to create a narrative utilizing my own sensibilities, referencing many of the films I sent to Heathyr months earlier.

Nimrod begins with Luke hunting in the woods by himself when he hears a rabbit struggling in a rabbit trap. Before he can put the rabbit out of its misery, it speaks to him, telling him to free him from the trap. Luke does this and as he does a woman appears. She, like Jesus giving sight to the blind, rubs a mixture of spit and dirt over his eyes. When Luke opens his eyes, she's gone, but a snarling black dog stands where she was. It attacks.

Luke wakes up in bed, screaming. Mawmaw, his grandmother, comforts him and tells him to get ready for church. After the preacher's sermon concludes, Mawmaw faints among the pews. There, sitting at the altar, Luke sees the black dog.

As Mawmaw is tended to by an in-home nurse, Luke seeks out the black dog. After discovering that only he is able to see the black dog and that it guides the souls of the deceased to the next realm, he knows he has to stop it from taking his grandmother.

He sets a trap for the dog by cutting off Mawmaw's oxygen tank. When the dog shows up to take Mawmaw's soul, he traps the dog and locks it in the shed.

The next day, he wakes to see that Mawmaw isn't the same. She doesn't seem to recognize him, and she keeps trying to go into the shed. He pulls out the family photo album to try to jog her memory. There he sees an old photo of himself with his father and mother – the woman from his dream.

Luke grabs his gun and goes into the shed. There he confronts a man hiding in the shadows. He demands to know what's happened to his grandmother. The tells him that it's time for his grandmother to move on and that nothing he can do will save her. Luke is about to pull the trigger when the figure steps from the shadows; it's his father. Luke collapses in tears. The film end with Luke watching the black dog take Mawmaw's spirit onto the next life while her body is loaded into a waiting ambulance.

I finished the draft just in time to be workshopped by the cohort. I sent the draft to Richard Lewis as well. Another draft, another round of tepid reactions. Again, there were elements of the script that people enjoyed – the animals, the tone, the characters; however, there were a lot of questions about plot, character motivation, and the mechanics behind the mystical-spiritual aspects of the story. Richard had little positive to say about the script and pitched a number of alternative approaches to the concept. Dio agreed and again pitched his script to me. All of this was very discouraging, to say the least. Nevertheless, I felt strongly enough about the direction of the new draft to submit a revised version for the Moody Innovation Fund grant the following week.

A Winter in Limbo: Pre-Production on *Nimrod*

After submitting the Moody Innovation Grant application, it felt like everything was up in the air. The feedback on the *Nimrod* drafts was disappointing. The budget necessary to produce the script was more than I could afford. If I didn't receive enough from the Moody grant, it would be difficult to go into production. The relationship with my producer had also become strained after turning down his draft of the script. I could see that he was no longer enthusiastic about the project, and I felt guilty about asking him to do any producing work.

When the fall semester ended, I immediately began scouting locations and taking care of as much producing as I could in case I was left to do the bulk of the work in the spring. I contacted the Texas Film Commission for a list of possible locations, and I would begin visiting them over the next month. Meanwhile, I halted working on the script, because I was uncertain of what direction to take it. I was hoping for feedback from the Innovation Fund or Richard before the holidays, but that never materialized.

Shortly before Christmas, I attended a get-together with a few other current and former UT graduate students. Again, Dio brought up the Moody grant. I had had a couple weeks to process the script feedback and the budget, and I was starting to worry about the feasibility of the project. Even if I did receive the grant, I would still need \$4,000 on top of the maximum \$8,000 the grant could provide. Dio seemed to think it was more likely that I would get \$2,000 or \$3,000, which would barely cover the cost of an animal trainer. Dio was also still struggling with his own thesis project. He had recently begun working on a new concept, but it wasn't going well. He knew that I had other concepts in my back pocket, so rather than pitching that I shoot his *Jack Rabbit* script, he suggested that I let him direct it and write a cheaper script for myself. I remember having to keep myself

from laughing, simply because I had already started to consider the same thing. I didn't agree to the deal then, but over the next few weeks, he would bring up the proposition every time we saw each other.

I took a break from everything between Christmas and the new year. I was exhausted from the semester and sick of thinking about the thesis. I decided then that I wanted to do whatever was going to be easiest and would allow me to graduate on time. I had already pushed my dates back once, and I felt like it would be a tough slog to be ready to go into production on *Nimrod* by March. If I needed visual effects, finishing the film by May would be impossible. A few days into the new year, I began outlining the concept that would become *The Backup Plan*, but I wasn't ready to give up on *Nimrod*.

I had agreed to help with art direction one day on Vanessa Uhlig's pre-thesis film during the break. It was there that I got the idea to bring on another producer. Alec Ploof, one of my narrative production students, was helping to produce Vanessa's film and a few other projects over the break. I told him I needed a second producer for my thesis, and he eagerly agreed to join the project. I also learned that director of photography, Isaiah Rendon, who had signed onto the project in December, had just moved to San Antonio. Despite this, he assured me that he would be able to work on the film without much hassle, so he and I began planning camera tests and our approach to the film. I also informed Isaiah that I was considering doing a different script, but he was on board for either film.

As the spring semester was starting, I was wrapping up the first draft of *The Backup Plan*. Dio felt it was a much stronger script and again urged me to make a deal with him to produce the script if I didn't get enough money from the Moody grant for *Nimrod*. This time I agreed.

When the Moody Innovation Grant funds were released on January 20th, it was both a blessing and a curse. I never expected to receive as much money as I did. I had already started to lean toward producing *The Backup Plan*, so, in a way, I was hoping to receive much less money. Even though I received \$6,400, the film would still need at least another \$5,000 for production. Still, \$6,400 was too much to turn down. If I decided to make *The Backup Plan*, I would have to forfeit all of it. I also took it as a good sign that receiving so much money meant that the committee liked my script and I wouldn't need the backup. I had a tough decision to make, but after a few days, Dio, Alec, Isaiah, and I all met to start planning production on *Nimrod*.

We were running into a few production obstacles, including finding the right locations for the main house and church in the script, securing an animal trainer, and finding a solution for the scenes involving potential harm to a rabbit. Dio was also having to take on more responsibility producing Joe Cornelison's thesis shoot, which meant he could devote less time to my film. We decided to push the production dates back three weeks, to March 30th.

A week after receiving the Moody Innovation Grant notice, I got an email from Richard Lewis, asking if we could meet about my script. I was enthusiastic to hear what the committee had said about my script, since I had been hoping for feedback for nearly a month. The meeting was devastating. Richard said that even though I received a lot of money from the grant, the committee basically hated the script. They didn't understand it. He also questioned how possible it was to produce the script, with its animal and location requirements. He again pitched a total overhaul of the concept and a brand new take on the script. I was stunned. Why couldn't I have been warned sooner, rather than languishing in limbo for weeks, waiting on feedback about the script only to be given conflicting messages about the project's viability? I took the meeting to mean that I

couldn't go into production on the *Nimrod* script. Before leaving the meeting, I told Richard that I had a backup script that I had written, but that it was a different concept entirely. He said he would read it, but producing it would mean losing my funding. I left dejected and unsure of what to do.

I sent Richard the script for *The Backup Plan* and awaited feedback. Meanwhile, Isaiah, Dio, Zach Morrison, and I conducted a camera test with the Arri Alexa. We drove to an abandoned property that I had scouted near Dripping Springs. Later that night, Isaiah and I tested the camera in low light situations around the UT campus. He was pretty set on using the camera, but I was interested in the new Panasonic Varicam LT that the school had just purchased. The footage from the Alexa was great in daylight; however, I was concerned how it would impact production if I decided to direct *The Backup Plan*. The two scripts were polar opposites in terms of their day scene to night scene ratio.

The Decision to Abandon *Nimrod*

When I left the last meeting with Richard, I didn't know whether to take his feedback seriously. Why would the grant committee give me so much money to produce a script that they didn't like or think I could produce well? Richard's meeting left me feeling like I was being pushed to make a movie I didn't want to make, rather than being helped to make the movie I did want to make. His pitches for the concept were similar to the ones he pitched when I turned in Heathyr's draft of the script, but I wasn't willing to significantly change the tone or story. I had put so much time and effort into *Nimrod*, and I had told my key collaborators that it was the project I would produce. Isaiah and Alec loved the concept and felt it was stronger than *The Backup Plan*. I didn't want to let it go,

but there was no time to overhaul the script again. It was already February, and I needed as much time as possible to have everything ready for production by the end of March. I was already committing to a summer graduation by shooting that late. Pushing the production back again could have meant that I would have to graduate in December.

The day after the February 6th camera test, Richard sent me feedback on *The Backup Plan* script. It was succinct and positive. His only major criticism was that it needed more tension, something I could easily fix in the next draft of the script.

I met with Dio again. He assured me that if I wanted to make *The Backup Plan*, we could be ready to go into production by the current production window. He also argued that we could do it for the same amount of money that I would be spending out-of-pocket for *Nimrod*, and that if I needed to push production back again, I would have to pay a lot more for another semester of tuition. Graduating in December wasn't an option.

Choosing which script to put into production was probably the toughest decision I have ever had to make. On one hand, I had a script that I had spent months developing and that two of my key collaborators thought was the better concept. It would take more work and more time to do well, but it had the most potential. On the other hand, I had a script that I thought was good, that my advisor and my producer thought was better, and that could possibly save me a lot of time and money. I think the decision came down to time, money, and not having the energy to put up a fight. At a certain point, practicality has to be placed before pride. I was tired of getting pushback from my producer and my committee chair. I needed to shoot this project before May. I'm not one to take the easy way out, but shooting a film in the middle of the semester was becoming more than I could handle.

I thought back to the summer when I first started writing the script for *Nimrod*. I was never particularly inspired by the Jack Tales that I had researched. The entire time

that I had been developing the script, I had been trying to force myself to make something based on source material I didn't fully connect with. I remembered that I had abandoned two other concepts to focus on the *Nimrod* concept, one of which was the initial inspiration for *The Backup Plan*. The only reason I was even pursuing the *Nimrod* concept was because I decided on a whim that it was the right script to pitch in class. I had more ideas, and I was tired of wasting all my time on this one script. I needed to move on.

With that thought, I made the decision to produce and direct *The Backup Plan*. I told Dio he could produce *Jack Rabbit* as his thesis, and we began moving forward with the production.

THE BACKUP PLAN

Making *The Backup Plan* has felt like a whirlwind. The script was written quickly. The film was produced quickly. We shot everything quickly. The only thing that has been afforded any length of time is post-production, and I say that with great hesitation. Throughout much of the film's production, there was no time to dwell on anything. We had to do the best we could with what we could find the fastest and the cheapest.

The Script

The Backup Plan is really a combination of two stories. I had come up with the idea for a story about a kid trying to fix up his mom's old truck in the summer of 2016. It was a really dark story, with an abusive father and the kid dying of carbon monoxide poisoning while sleeping in the truck. That idea was eventually combined with a news story I remembered hearing about catalytic converters being stolen from a local car dealership in my hometown. The early outlines for *The Backup Plan* were much darker as well, with the son killing his father over trying to sell the truck. Over time, the script became about more about dealing with grief and poverty.

Writing the script for *The Backup Plan* was so much easier than writing any draft of *Nimrod*. That may be because I didn't try to include magical elements that would be

hard to film. Everything was based in contemporary, normal, everyday life. It may be because I didn't have any pressure. It was potentially a throwaway script that I had little intention of making when it was written. Or, it could possibly be because I started with structure and a plan rather than just writing a story from beginning to end. I mapped out the story beats using Dan Harmon's story circle, based Joseph Campbell's *The Hero's Journey*, and wrote the scenes from that outline. The story seemed to flow pretty easily from that point. I began outlining a few days after the new year and had a draft a couple weeks later, writing between stints on different friends' sets.

The script begins with Jonas and Randall working on Jonas' car, an old Mustang left to him by his deceased mother (Randall's wife). Randall has been struggling to make ends meet since being laid off from his job at a muffler shop. The landlord and his son arrive and give Randall an ultimatum: if he doesn't pay the four months he owes in rent by the end of the week, he's evicted. Randall tries to earn money the honest way, but things don't go well – a painting job gets cancelled and his pressure washer breaks down. Then he meets a shady guy named Mike who gets Randall to steal catalytic converters and sell them to a garage. When the fence man stiffes them, Randall becomes increasingly desperate.

In the original draft, Mike is a more active part of the script. He and Randall go to the dealership rather than Jonas. When the police show up, he ditches Randall and drives off. Randall, after evading arrest at the dealership, has to call Jonas from a payphone. Jonas drives the car that he has repaired to pick Randall up. The film ends with the two of them deciding to sell the car to pay off the landlord.

Subsequent drafts worked to increase the tension between Randall and Jonas, and to make Jonas a bigger presence in the film. It was suggested that I make Jonas tag along with Randall on all his jobs and exploits, much like *Bicycle Thieves*. However, I couldn't

do this for practical reasons. Filming in the middle of the school year made it impossible to have a minor on set for that much filming. Therefore, my solution was to have Randall bring Jonas to the car dealership to steal catalytic converters. Realistically, there were only two significant drafts of the script. The third, which became the shooting script, contained only a few minor changes to characters and dialogue.

If there is anything I could have changed about the script, I would have worked on the dealership scene more and continued to work with the dialogue. When we were filming the dealership scene with the police officer, I realized that I only had a vague idea of how it could be blocked and shot. The distance between Randall and Jonas feels awkward, and we lose touch with Jonas completely. I think I rushed through trying to solve Richard's note about bringing Jonas along with Randall. It also became obvious during the editing process that many lines were awkward and unnecessary. Another pass with the dialogue could have tightened things up.

Pre-Production

Pre-production began in earnest the first week of February. We split up the major responsibilities among Alec, Dio, and myself. Alec and I took care of casting. Dio and I did most of the location scouting. Dio headed up crewing and paperwork. I oversaw the overall vision of the film and production design. In addition to casting, Alec was charged with finding food donations, running the Kickstarter campaign, and helping with locations as needed.

Most of the pre-production duties happened concurrently. We knew that locations would be a challenge, so we began there. Our other main concerns were finding picture cars and catalytic converters. I wanted to start a Kickstarter to help fund the production,

since I gave up all Moody Grant funding and would be paying for everything out-of-pocket. While we had a lot of early success, many elements of the production came together in the final days before principal photography.

LOCATIONS

For the most part, I enjoy location scouting. When there's enough time to properly search for and visit potential locations, it's one of my favorite aspects of filmmaking. However, with this film, we had a limited time to find five major locations that needed to meet certain aesthetic requirements. Randall's house needed to be lower class and junky. The garage needed to be seedy. The dealership had to be functional for the story. We had to have streets that were quiet enough to film on and that met lighting needs. We needed a job site that looked like it was being painted or renovated. Finally, we had to have a house with a driveway that could be power washed.

Dio and I made multiple trips to find the main location – Randall and Jonas' house. We drove to a few houses listed on the Texas Film Commission scouting site. We searched all over east Austin and parts of north central Austin, looking for small unkempt houses with a garage or carport. We weren't finding anything. We left flyers in mailboxes, but no one called us.

A few days later, I made a trip to Manor, TX. I had scouted the town for my last film, *Barrow*, and I knew the right house had to be there. I walked around the town and left flyers in a dozen or so mailboxes. The last house I saw was absolutely perfect. It was a small one-story house with a carport and workshop out front. There was junk scattered all over the yard and side of the house. To top it off, there was a red 1960's Mustang

sitting in the yard – the exact car that I had written into the first draft of the script. Perfect.

Later that day, a couple of the homeowners called Dio, and we set up tech scouts. As we drove to the first house, I remember pointing out the perfect house to Dio and Isaiah, telling them I had hoped it was that one. We drove past and soon realized that we must have missed the address of the house we were looking for. We turned around and drove back up the road. I nearly jumped out of my seat when I realized that we were indeed going to the perfect house.

As we talked to the homeowner, Jed Sprinkle, it became incredibly uncanny how much he resembled the main character in the film. Jed is a single father raising his 16-year-old son. His wife had died a few years back (after the divorce). He's a self-employed handyman and electrician. Randall, the character I had written, is a single father raising his 16-year-old son. His wife had died a few years back, and he's a handyman who works odd jobs to pay the bills. During production, on the day that we were filming the scenes with Randall's landlords, Jed's landlord even showed up because he was late paying the rent. When I first met Jed, I joked about casting him in the film because it was obviously written just for him. Jed was incredibly accommodating. He was willing to let us use his home and any of his tools for the film. It was a dream come true.

Big Rob's garage was fairly easy to find as well. I made a map with possible garages and dealerships around Austin, and Dio and I set out to check them out. Don's Automotive was the very first stop we made. Tony and Don were immediately open to letting us film at their garage. Aesthetically, it was perfect. We checked out a few other possibilities before deciding on Don's that same day.

The other locations were more difficult to find. Alec and I drove around much of north Austin, talking to car dealership owners, but no one was willing to let us film at their business. A few weeks later – the same day we found the garage – Dio and I drove through south Austin and found two dealerships that agreed to let us film. After a scout with Isaiah and Sarah Hennigan, our gaffer, we chose 512 Auto Ranch both for its lighting and functionality.

Finding the other locations was a nightmare. We needed two homes – one with a driveway to power wash and one to use as a job site. I searched all over Craigslist. I called real estate agents. I visited homes under construction. Nothing. Just over a week before production, I hit the pavement again, dropping flyers in mailboxes in West Campus and Enfield. We got a response from a homeowner with a small driveway. It wasn't ideal for the pressure washing scene, but it would have to work.

For days, I visited construction sites around Austin. I was turned down over and over. Eventually, I found a great site near West Campus, where I talked to one of the owners. He seemed willing to let us film and said to give him a call with more details. I called and called, trying to get in touch with him. I sent email after email. No response. But it was the only hope I had. We were days away from production when I went to the construction site again. There I found another number to call. Finally, I got in touch with the other owner. She was willing to let us film, but not on a day that worked with our schedule.

It was crunch time. It was a week before production and days before paperwork was due for approval. I was all out of options. I laced up my shoes and went for a run, hoping an idea would come to me. I was only a few minutes into my normal route around West Campus when I saw a sign I hadn't noticed before. A law office I often passed on Lamar Boulevard had been sold to a developer and was currently vacant. I called the

number of the real estate agent right then and left a voicemail. A few moments later, she sent me the contact info for the property owner. Within a few days, I had permission to use the property however we needed. The scenes were written to take place outside, but this building was right next to a very busy road. I wasn't sure it would work, but it was better than nothing.

CASTING

Casting was possibly one of the most painless parts of making the film. Alec sent out a casting call to multiple casting resources in Austin and scheduled applicants. We held auditions the last weekend of February and callbacks the following weekend. Because we didn't have a great turnout for a few roles, an additional session was needed

Our strategy for casting was to cast the main roles – Randall, Jonas, Bobbi, Mike, Cheryl, Big Rob, Mr. Harrell, and Steven – and pull actors for any other roles (Officer and Homeowner) from the actors we didn't cast in the main roles. Our first round of auditions consisted of solo reads with a couple of adjustments. For callbacks, I paired different actors together and ran entire scenes to see how the actors worked with each other.

There were only a few choices for each role worth bringing back for callbacks. For the role of Randall, I had narrowed it down to two actors after the first round of auditions, but one of them cancelled. Still, I called in a second actor for the sake of auditioning actors for Jonas. The choice for Jonas was a little more difficult. I needed an actor who looked like a high schooler, but nearly all the actors who showed up were in college. Daltyn was the only actor under 18 to audition. However, he had never acted before. I was also hesitant about choosing Daltyn because I hadn't seen him act against

my choice for Randall. Yet, both Todd and Daltyn gave the most sentimental performances in the callbacks, so I thought they would work well together in the film.

I was worried about casting a younger actress for Bobbi, but I liked Cara's edginess. All the other actresses who tried out for Bobbi felt too clean-cut and motherly. Bobbi needed to be able to kick ass and play against Mike. When I cast Matt Sledge for the role of Mike, I felt that a younger Bobbi made sense.

Finding Big Rob was difficult. I needed someone who was imposing and a little scary. No one from the auditions fit the bill. I remembered seeing Lawson in a friend's horror film, but he didn't have any lines. Still, I called him in to the callbacks. He was definitely green, but I decided to cast on looks anyway. It was too important for Randall to stand up to an intimidating Big Rob. The only way to accomplish this was through physical size.

The choice for Mike was possibly the most complicated. When we sent out the casting call, we never specified the race of any characters. I prefer to judge talent and cast characters based on ability and what can work for the story. This presented a complicated circumstance with the actors auditioning for Mike, who is a shady, low-life, pot-smoking thief. The best actor to audition by far was an African American guy. He completely blew me away. However, the only other actors to audition for the other parts were Caucasian or women. Even though the actor was heads above the rest, I felt that it was a bad choice for representation to have the worst character in the story be an African American male when all the other characters are white. Dio agreed, and I cast Matt Sledge for the part.

All the other parts were no-brainers. Steve Uzzell and Charles Conoly were my first choices from the first round of auditions for the landlords and worked well together in call backs. Keturah was easily the best Cheryl. Pietro, though he didn't work for the role of Mike, made a perfect police officer. The only role I didn't cast right away was the

homeowner, which was an oversight and caused a slight panic the first few days of production.

PRODUCTION DESIGN, WARDROBE, AND VISUAL STYLE

While Dio and Alec helped with many aspects of the film, the overall look and feel of the film was left to me. This included not just finding locations and casting, but overseeing production design, wardrobe, and visual approach as well.

Much of the visual approach was developed alongside the director of photography, Isaiah Rendon. Isaiah and I decided to bring a lot of the same visual approach we discussed for *Nimrod* to this film as well. We wanted to maintain the high-contrast, low-key lighting that we had discussed for *Nimrod*, greatly influenced by the cinematography of Bradford Young. The main difference between the approach to *The Backup Plan* and the approach to *Nimrod* is that we decided that the film should be handheld. This film is a more intimate, family-centered story, so we wanted to give the frame an organic feel. We also decided to work within a red and blue color scheme as much as possible with neutrals filling out the palette.

For inspiration, I looked to filmmakers and films that tell stories about working class people in rural environments. Directors David Gordon Green, Jeff Nichols, and David Lowery instill an indelible sense of place in their stories about the rural South. They do so not only through plot, but through their characters, cinematography, and the pacing of their films. David Gordon Green's *Joe*, Jeff Nichols' *Mud*, and David Lowery's *Ain't Them Bodies Saints* are key touchstones to how I approached *The Backup Plan*. Kat Candler's *Hellion*, about a troubled father-son relationship, is also an important source of inspiration, as well.

Everything, from the locations to wardrobe and PD, stemmed from this visual foundation. When I met with our wardrobe supervisor, I told her to find simple clothes – jeans and t-shirts – with lots of reds, blues, and neutrals. Our locations needed to have a very worn, country aesthetic. Production design needed to be very cluttered and blue-collar.

While I began working with a production designer nearly two months before principal photography, I ended up having to take on more of the production design responsibilities than I had anticipated. In the weeks before production, I noticed that a lot of the work that needed to be done wasn't happening. I was especially worried when nothing was accomplished over Spring Break – the last free week before production. Soon after Spring Break, my production designer left the project. A week before production, only one of the many picture vehicles was secured (the one Dio and I found), nothing had been purchased to dress any of the sets, the catalytic converters (essential to the film) had not been located, let alone sourced, and we had no idea what props still needed to be sourced. We were essentially starting at square-one. After trying to be proactive by bringing a key collaborator on board early, now a significant part of the production would have to be done at the last minute.

Luckily, we were able to bring Caleb Saucedo in to help with production design duties the last week before production. He and I split the responsibilities for getting everything ready for the first weekend of shooting. He found props and purchased items needed for production design. Meanwhile, I sourced the dozen catalytic converters and found the picture cars.

After the first weekend of shooting, we recruited Nancy Lemus to take over production design. Her expertise was essential to making our second weekend possible.

While Jed's house was stocked with great set decorations, it needed an experienced hand to wrangle it into an aesthetically coherent and functional set.

CREW

Finding crew turned out to be a significant hurdle. Even a week before production, the only crew members attached to the project were the director of photography, the gaffer, and two camera assistants. Shooting in the middle of the semester meant that most students could only help on weekends and evenings. Those who could help had to skip at least a day or two. That meant looking for substitutes or making plans for absent crew. After bringing on Sarah Hennigan as gaffer, more crew members fell into place. Avery Wood came onboard the week before production as well as a first assistant director and helped fill out the rest of the crew.

The audio department was by far the most difficult to recruit. We were operating on a tight budget, and I couldn't really afford to pay crew members. Paying for an audio mixer was the last thing we wanted to do, but no one was willing to do it for free. Finally, Rodd Simonsen graciously agreed to help for free on the days he was available. That left us with three days where we would need a substitute. Luckily, Cameron Quevedo was able to fill in on day one, but we had to bite the bullet and pay a sound recordists for days two and eight.

We reached out to a non-student for those two days after all other leads had fallen through. I had never met the guy or heard his work, so I was a little skeptical. During production, it became clear that he wasn't up to par and we hired Matt Kluchin to fill his remaining day.

During production, it was a challenge to constantly adapt to the changing lineup of audio mixers, production designers, PAs, grips, script supervisors, and camera assistants. Over the course of the film we had six camera assistants, four sound recordists, three production designers, and four gaffers. The only crew members to work the entire film were me, Dio, Alec, Isaiah, and Avery. Each day with new crew members required more time at the beginning of the shoot day to get everyone acclimated and on the same page. It also hindered us from moving as quickly as we needed to move in order to make our scheduled days. We often found ourselves combining and cutting shots to make our days, either because set-ups took longer than expected or the takes themselves were flawed.

Production

It took nearly three days for us to schedule the production. Ideally, I would have scheduled 10 days for the production. For a script that was over 22 pages, 10 days would have given us enough time to adequately shoot each scene without having to rush setups or make any company moves. However, scheduling the film around location availabilities, actor availabilities, crew availabilities, and picture vehicle availabilities became a Rubik's Cube of moving parts that never seemed to line up. Eventually, we were able to schedule everything over two weekends – five 12-hour days and three half-days. We would have to shoot more than 3 pages per day – a tall task for a student production. To accomplish everything we needed to accomplish, we would have to be efficient and move at a break-neck pace.

Stress does strange things to me. Not only do I routinely develop twitches from stress, but my jaw has locked up for weeks at a time, and I've even developed mysterious

illnesses. In the final week leading up to production, I had to secure picture vehicles, find our job site location, source catalytic converters, hold rehearsals and wardrobe fittings, find a sound recordist for our first second day of production, TA classes, and work two shifts at my job. Despite the chaos, I had been keeping the stress in check. That is, until two days before production. I held final rehearsals and fittings with the cast. It was there I learned that the actor playing Mr. Harrell was dropping out of the production. It must have been the final straw that broke the camel's back. I started feeling sick, and before long, I had developed an uncontrollable cough. I was downing every cough medicine I could find trying to shake it, but it kept getting worse. On top of everything, the director of photography and a bunch of equipment were staying with me in my tiny one bedroom apartment.

This would be the most physically and emotionally demanding two weeks of my life.

DAY 1

If we made one great scheduling choice, it was scheduling only a half-day at Don's Automotive for production day one. (If we made another, it would be scheduling Mr. Harrell's scenes for the final day.) It was a great location and made for awesome footage that immediately got everyone on-board with the production. It was an easy lighting setup, and though it had the potential to be emotionally intense for the actors, it was not essentially so.

Despite starting on time, we quickly fell behind schedule. The first shot required a lot of blocking changes and adjustments for the actors. Todd Essary, who plays Randall, was great. I could tell from our rehearsals that he knew the character and was a seasoned

actor. Matt Sledge, playing Mike, was an interesting actor to work with. Between takes, he would step away from the set to help stay in character. Lawson, who plays Big Rob, had never had dialogue in a film, took a lot of time warming up to the scene. I was also finding it difficult to concentrate on anything other than suppressing my cough during takes. By the end of the night, I could barely go more than a few seconds without coughing. I was reluctant to talk to the actors and give direction for fear of making it worse. Half-way through the shots, it became apparent that the camera operator, Zach Morrison, who was also under the weather, was getting worse, and Isaiah had to step in from time to time.

We got through the major shots that we needed inside the garage with only 45 minutes until we needed to wrap. We still needed to get inserts of Randall removing catalytic converters from a car and an exterior shot of the car pulling into the garage. We decided to shoot the exterior and come back for the inserts if we had time. We soon found that our plan for shooting the exterior wasn't going to work. The car's turning radius wouldn't allow it. We quickly devised an alternative and managed to finish the shot with 15 minutes to spare. We looked at shooting the inserts while the crew began packing up, but it wasn't meant to be. It would require too much time and possible damage to someone's car. Due to our shortened schedule, I was already expecting to do pickup shoots at a later date, so we decided to save the shots for pickups. Nevertheless, we got the main shots we needed without burdening the location owners and over-extending the crew on the first day.

DAY 2

I expected day two to be the most difficult shooting day, but I significantly underestimated how stressful it would be. Isaiah and I had only been able to scout the location the day before. We were going to have to figure out how to shoot a scene written as an exterior inside this new location. On top of that, the scenes required the most actors on set of any scenes in the script, as well as extras. This was also the first day for our substitute audio recordist. Around sunset, we had also scheduled a company move to shoot some night shots in West Campus.

The day got off to a slow start. Everything felt uncoordinated. After Dio dropped off breakfast and left again to make lunch, things began to slow down. Alec was left in charge of wardrobe, so he couldn't manage the set. The audio guy was taking a long time to set up. I wasn't sure if the blocking we had figured out for the main scene was going to work. I was having to pick up the slack of the production design department. Everyone was spread out inside of a confusing labyrinthine office building. The level of chaos was too much. I started panicking. Eventually, I found unoccupied room in the building and hid from everything for a few moments. I had to sit down and concentrate on breathing and fighting back tears. After some time, I remember hearing someone calling me to set.

We shot the first exteriors pretty quickly. I knew the audio would be virtually unusable, since we were next to a highway, and there was little we could do for lighting. After only a few takes of the two shots, we moved inside.

I eventually found out the sound recordist was using his own mixer, a Zoom H6, rather than our far superior Sound Devices 633. I knew the Zoom didn't have enough audio inputs for all the actors in the scenes. The recordist took a long time getting everyone mic'd for the next scene and their mics kept falling off. It troubled me that I couldn't monitor the audio. We kept having to wait for him to change batteries in his

Zoom. He was significantly slowing down the production. Finally, during a break between shots, the boom operator came to me and said he thought the audio guy didn't know what he was doing. That's when I called Dio to find a replacement. By lunch Matt Kluchin was on set and ready to step in. We told the guy he could stay and help Matt or leave. Surprisingly, he stayed to boom op until the company move.

Again, we were plagued by too many shots having to be rushed. Transposing the scene from exterior to interior meant that we had to adapt on the fly. Some shots were combined and new shots were created altogether. Because we were running out of time, we missed a key shot of Mike entering the scene, which I would discover in post-production. Still, the rest of the shots at the job site went smoothly. We wrapped the location and made the company move to West Campus.

The West Campus shoot began with a small emergency. We realized that the person in charge of props didn't have anything we needed for the next scene. Dio then rushed out to get them while we made the company move.

The West Campus shoot was mostly improvised. We found a quiet street with enough lighting to do the dialogue scenes. Despite the no-parking signs along the street, we assumed we would be fine. Things began well enough, but we soon fell behind schedule. The first shot involved a moving vehicle, and though it seemed like a simple shot, it took eight takes to get it right. We then moved on to the dialogue scenes. I began to feel Isaiah growing frustrated. He took a long time to get the lighting he wanted for the scene, and then completely changed his mind. The whole day had been rushed, and I could tell he was feeling the pressure.

On our last setup, some drunk college students came walking down the street. They yelled some obscenities at us and knocked over a C-stand. After our camera assistant nearly got into a fight, we went back to shooting. We were closing in on 12

hours for the day. The final shot was taking a long time, and Isaiah wasn't happy with it. When we reached 12 hours, we polled the crew and decided to keep shooting until we got the shot. That's when the cops showed up. They parked their car right in front of where we were shooting. We thought someone had complained about us, and we were being told to leave. That wasn't the case. The officer asked if we had seen some drunk guys going around smashing stuff. We kindly pointed out the house they had gone into.

Though we were relieved the police hadn't come for us, we were still stuck. The police car's headlights were pointed directly into our actors' faces. We had gone over 12 hours and still needed to finish this scene. Then inspiration struck. I don't remember whose idea it was, but someone from G&E grabbed a flag and blocked the police car's headlights enough for us to finish shooting the scene. We got two more takes before more police arrived and we were forced to call it a night.

DAY 3

We knew the dealership scenes would be difficult. Shooting in a way that made it seem like the main character was trapped and his only option was to attack a police officer would be tricky. Building enough tension and maintaining believability would be key.

When we arrived at the dealership, the cars had been rearranged, so we had to take a lot of time to park the crew's vehicles in a way that let us shoot how we needed to. We were also working with time constraints on the police car and the actor playing the police officer. We needed to wrap by three a.m. to have enough time for the following day's shots.

We began filming shortly after sunset. For the most part, filming went smoothly. This was Daltyn's first time acting in a film, so it took a few extra takes to get his performance where it needed to be. Otherwise, the first few shots went smoothly. Then we moved to the more difficult scene with the police officer. It required coordinating the police officer arriving in his car, giving his lines, then Todd crawling out from under a truck and deciding whether to attack the officer. This was the scene in the script I wish I could have spent more time with, and when we were filming it, something just didn't seem right. It's easier to identify the problems now, but on set, I couldn't diagnose what was wrong. Randall doesn't feel desperate enough, we lose track of Jonas for a long time, the physical relationship between Randall and the police officer is strange, and Jonas saving Randall from hitting the cop simply doesn't work. I remember thinking that I had messed up the scene while we were filming it. I'm still not sure what I could have done to make the scene better given the location and our limitations.

DAY 4

The fourth day of filming began with a small panic attack. The production designer was supposed to come to my apartment with the props needed for the day's shoot and drop off some other items. After showing up late, he proceeded to lock his keys in his car. We were already late for first meal, and I couldn't be late for crew call. Luckily, the set was only a few blocks away, and one of the props was a wheelbarrow. I loaded all the props into the wheel barrow and started pushing it to set.

It only took a block before I was shaking and fighting back tears. After feeling like I had ruined the most crucial scene of the film the night before, this shoot day was nearly derailed before it began. I was still sick and I felt like I was letting everyone down.

And there I was, late to set, pushing a wheelbarrow full of pressure washing equipment through West Campus. When I reached the set, I dropped the wheelbarrow and took off walking down the street. I needed to calm down before dealing with the production again.

The day's shoot didn't go the way I expected. We were again dealing with a less than ideal location, so we had to adapt. We needed the pressure washer to smoke, so we used a hazer and angled it to look as though the smoke was coming from the pressure washer. Coordinating the hazer to the scene took a lot of time, and I don't know that we ever got it completely right. One happy accident did happen. On one take, Todd forgot to put the oil cap back on the pressure washer, so when he went to start it, oil sprayed everywhere. It was the best shot we got all day.

After filming the pressure washing scenes, we did some documentary-esque filming with Todd walking around the neighborhood with the wheelbarrow, knocking on doors, asking the residents if he could pressure wash their driveways. It was fun, and the neighbors were surprisingly responsive to a group of students randomly asking to film at their houses.

That night we filmed the rest of the night scenes on the streets of West Campus. First, we staged a crew member's car on a quiet street and filmed multiple angles of another car driving by Todd stealing the catalytic converter from the vehicle. We then did some more improvisation with Todd and Matt walking through West Campus, looking under cars and "stealing" catalytic converters. We wrapped up the night by filming some quick driving shots and inserts of Todd and Matt putting catalytic converters in the trunk of Mike's car.

A THREE-DAY BREAK

The three-day break in filming was necessitated by actors' schedules, crew availability, and location availability. Though it was a break for most of the crew, it was anything but for me. I still had to attend class. Alec and I began looking for an actor to replace Steve Uzzell as Mr. Harrell. I also began working with Nancy Lemus, who would take over as production designer. After an intense weekend in which I had to pick up the slack and direct every production design decision, I needed a more experienced person who could act more autonomously.

I was more optimistic about the second weekend of filming. We would be at one location for most of the weekend, rather than different locations each day. Jed's house would make for a great set both visually and in terms of lessening the burden on the production. I then received an email from Steve Uzzell saying that he was back on for the production. The incessant cough I had been fighting all weekend had begun to improve. Things were looking up.

DAY 5

Chaos reigned on day five. I chose 512 Auto Ranch for the dealership scenes because it had a great parking lot across the street where we could film the scenes immediately preceding and following the dealership. After we scouted the location, I asked Alec to call the property owner and obtain permission for us to film. He later informed me that since it was a school, it would take time for the shoot to be approved – well after our shooting days. Rather than continuing to pursue a faster approval, he assumed it would be fine. I learned the night before the shoot that we didn't have permission to film at the parking lot.

I also learned that the 1967 Buick Skylark that we had rented for the film was having electrical issues and the owner was having second thoughts about letting us use it. The tail lights and brake lights weren't working. He wanted to let his trusted mechanic work on it first. I began scouring Craigslist for a replacement while Dio negotiated with the car owner. I spent the entire day before our 7 p.m. call time pleading with random people on Craigslist to let us rent their vehicles. In the end, Dio persuaded the owner that we would be able to work with the car as-is.

Isaiah rode with me to the Skylark owner's home to pick up the car. I drove through rush hour traffic with Isaiah following closely behind in my car. When we arrived on set, Nancy's boyfriend went to work on the car. It would be impossible to do the scheduled driving shots without working lights.

After everyone arrived on set, it wasn't long before the police showed up and asked us to leave. After the parking lot had filled up with a bunch of cars, people, and a U-Haul truck, the principal had called the police. We packed everything up as quickly as we could and left. At least we had gotten the Skylark repaired.

We all met up again at the nearby Wal-Mart to figure out how we could salvage the shoot day. We concluded that we could shoot the scene at a nearby theater where our sound recordist often worked. We also noticed that Isaiah was missing.

We loaded up and went to the theater. There, we walked through how we could shoot the scene, but I just wasn't seeing it. Then Isaiah arrived at the theater. He had been scouting other locations. He showed us an alternative location behind a nearby car dealership. Dio told him we were just going to shoot the scene here, but he protested. He was adamant that this new location would be better. I was inclined to believe that anything would be better. However, it meant another company move, which the crew was not happy about.

I had a difficult choice to make, and I had to make it fast; either stay at the theater and shoot a lackluster version of the scene or anger the crew by moving to a risky location that we knew nothing about. I began to panic. As I started to hyperventilate, I walked away from everyone, down the street. After I'd calmed down, I went back to the theater.

We had to shoot somewhere else, and Isaiah's location was the only lead we had. We loaded up a vehicle with only the essential lighting and grip supplies and cut unnecessary crew. Dio, Rodd, Sarah, Isaiah, our two actors, and I reconvened at the new location a short time later.

In many ways the new location turned out to be better than the original. It was grittier and possessed a sense of danger that the original did not. When we began filming, we were only a couple hours behind schedule. We made the best of what time we had, and in the end, we only had to cut the four driving shots that were scheduled for the end of the night.

DAYS 6-8

After the chaos of day five, we were all looking forward to the relative calm of being at the Sprinkle home for our final three days of filming. Still, we had a packed schedule, with 66 shots scheduled over the three days.

Generally, things went just as expected. Most of the scenes and setups were rushed. We had to be respectful of the homeowner's schedule, and our 14-year-old actor needed to be home at a decent hour on school nights. We combined shots when we could and cut shots as needed. By this point, everyone on the crew had rotated through most of the positions in their department and had a good handle on their responsibilities. Having a

competent, experienced production designer made directing considerably better. I could focus on the actors and camera set ups rather than having to dress sets and keep track of props. However, the cough that I thought was getting better returned with a vengeance and wouldn't fully dissipate until after the shoot had wrapped.

We didn't run into any major issues over the first two days. One of the picture vehicles broke down on day seven. We had to rearrange the schedule while it was repaired, but it didn't affect things too much.

Day eight was another story. I picked up the Skylark and began driving to set. Then it started to rain. I turned on the windshield wipers. As the rain picked up, the wipers began to slow, then stopped working altogether. It was pouring buckets, and I had no windshield wipers. I was late to set and we needed the car for half the day's shots. I pulled into a parking lot and called Dio, who dispatched Alec to come back to get me. I sat in the parking lot trying to think of a solution. I began messing with the wiper controls and found that the wipers worked if I held down the button that sprayed wiper fluid. After Alec showed up, we decided to convoy to set. It was one of the scariest things I've done, driving down the highway in a '67 Buick beater with engine problems in the pouring rain, spraying wiper fluid for 12 miles.

We also had a hodgepodge crew on the final day of shooting. Jim Hickcox came on to gaff and J.D. Devergiliis to key grip. Our camera operator and camera assistants were unavailable, so the DIT, set photographer, and a production assistant stepped in. We hired Matt Kluchin as sound recordist for the day as well. The set moved slower than normal throughout the day. We were forced to shoot a daytime shot at night, we had to condense and cut shots in each scene, and it came down to the wire at the end of the night. Despite all that, we covered everything on the schedule.

WRAP

Wrapping the production felt underwhelming. It was too late at night to celebrate, and everyone had class the next day. I was glad to be done with the production, but the spectre of pickups and reshoots loomed on the horizon. We moved so quickly through the schedule that I had no idea if I had what I needed to edit the film or if it would even be good. I only knew that we had cut a lot of shots. My sole focus for the production had been just getting through it – survival, managing the chaos. Quality had barely entered the realm of consideration, and evaluating the sheer amount of footage we had shot was inconceivable.

It was a nice bonus, however, to learn that we had stayed within our budget. I had set a window of \$5,000 to \$7,500 for production, and we barely went over \$5,000. Another important thing that we managed on the set was to treat crew members kindly and foster a good learning environment. After the shoot, I was pleased to learn that, even though I was constantly putting out fires on set and everything felt chaotic, my stress didn't transfer to the crew. General feedback indicated that the shoot went well.

Post-Production

Ideally, I would have begun editing *The Backup Plan* immediately after wrapping production, but life returned to normal, and other obligations arose. I knew that with the forthcoming obligations, getting everything edited by August would be a challenge. I sought out an assistant editor to get things rolling and help me cut scenes down the road.

I also applied for the next round of Moody Innovation Grant funding for post-production. Though I had given up a \$6,400 grant when I decided not to make *Nimrod*, I

was eligible to get it back for post-production expenses. Thought I didn't recoup the entire \$6,400, I did receive \$3,600. I planned to use the funds to license music, hire a music composer, and pay for pickups and reshoots.

EDITING

I worked for more than three years in post-production before coming to graduate school, so it's the area of filmmaking that I'm able to move most fluently. Yet, contrary to what one might expect, I've grown less confident in my ability to edit since I've been in graduate school. I've also learned that I'm too sentimental about editing my own footage, so I was excited to have an assistant editor who I could routinely ask for feedback and show cuts of the film. However, things didn't get off to the best start.

After doing production design work on a classmate's film, I was leaving Austin to work on a feature film in Big Spring, TX. I asked my assistant editor to export string outs of each scene for me to watch over the three weeks I would be away. Due to his schedule, I had to export most of the string outs myself. The job in Big Spring was more time-consuming than I expected, so I didn't get to watch as much of the footage as I had hoped. I had also hoped my assistant editor would be able to start syncing audio to the footage while I was away, but that didn't happen either. With all those setbacks, editing only began in earnest the first week of June, giving us two months to complete the film.

Editing moved pretty quickly once we got rolling. After the initial rough cut, Joey and I took turns working on cuts of the film. We tried different approaches to cut the film down from the initial 34 minutes. I hoped to get it down to 25 minutes, because festivals are reluctant to program shorts that are any longer.

I sent the first cut of the film to my committee on June 19th and another the following week. Though most of the feedback was positive, there were some concerns about the story – Randall’s motivation to put his son at risk, his relationship to the car and his wife, and what the audience is supposed to feel at the end of the movie. There were also some technical considerations concerning the opening of the film, leaving the dealership, and the final shot of the film. These were all concerns I had expected. After the feedback, I began planning pickups and reshoots.

After the pickups, I quickly put together another cut that included the new footage. I needed to get a picture-locked cut to my composer with enough time for him to work on the score. I continued to make small changes up until the final delivery date.

PICKUPS AND RESHOOTS

I had planned to do pickups even before principal photography. Our filming schedule was so hectic that I expected us to miss something or cut shots. Though we got through the bulk of the shot list in principal photography, we had to cut a handful of shots. We never got to do any inserts of catalytic converters being removed from cars, and we had to cut some driving shots.

Reshoots, on the other hand, I was not expecting to do. After sending out the first cut of the film, Richard had concerns about the amount of conflict in the script between Randall and Jonas. He had given a similar note on the script, except concerning the overall conflict. His idea back then was to have Jonas more present in the script and witness his father’s behavior. I thought I had solved that by making Randall bring him to the dealership. I could see his point, but it’s an issue that should have been addressed in the script, not after principal photography.

I consulted with Dio about what to do for pickups. It seemed as though we had two options – fix Richard’s note about conflict or address the smaller problems throughout the film. If we were going to add conflict between Randall and Jonas, it seemed like we would have to reshoot at least three scenes, beginning at the midpoint of the film. I contacted the actors while Dio reached out to locations. We found that our options were limited. Todd only had two or three days to film everything the first weekend of July. Jed was reluctant to let us use his home again and wanted a higher location fee.

It turned out that removing catalytic converters from cars was a bigger hassle than expected. No junkyard would let us film at night, so I decided to scrap those shots. I wanted to fix the note about conflict, but I couldn’t shoot three new scenes. I decided that I could rewrite the scene at the midpoint to have more conflict in a way that would work with the rest of the film. In the end, we scheduled two half-days of filming. One day consisted of driving shots and leaving the dealership. The other was a day at Jed’s house to fix the opening and ending of the film and to reshoot scene 20.

I now know why so many filmmakers are against doing pickups and reshoots. Though production itself went smoothly, we had to deal with a number of challenges. We had a different crew; Isaiah was unable to DP. We had to fake police lights at our second dealership location because we could not obtain access to their property. The Buick Skylark had been painted (luckily the same color red). Jed had done a lot of remodeling around his home, so we weren’t able to frame shots the way we wanted. The biggest challenge was that the actors’ performances weren’t the same. It was more difficult for Todd and Daltyn to get into their characters and into the scenes. Their performances were inconsistent and didn’t mesh seamlessly with the earlier footage.

Nevertheless, we got the shots we needed and all feedback indicates that the new footage helps the film.

MUSIC LICENSING AND COMPOSITION

I began searching for music soon wrapping principal photography. I needed references to list on the Moody Innovation Grant. I began searching for music that had an edginess and southern twang to it. I fell in love with a song by The Black Angels, called “Bloodhounds on My Trail.” I loved the blend of rock and roll with twangy guitars. I then sought out other songs with a similar feel, which led me to the band Songs:Ohia. I knew their song “Hold On Magnolia” would be the perfect song to end the film. I incorporated the songs into the edit, and when it came time to work with a composer, I used these two songs as major touchstones. Over the course of the edit, I fell in love with how the songs worked in the film, so I looked into licensing them. I got a quote for the Songs:Ohia track, and I knew that I would only be able to afford to license one or the other. I felt that the power of “Hold On Magnolia” at the end of the film was far more important than The Black Angels track, so I obtained a year of festival rights for the song.

I reached out to Nathan Felix about composing a score in late June. He was interested in the project, so we met to discuss scoring the film. However, even with the Moody Innovation grant, I was unable to afford his quoted price. I then reached out to the composer of my last film, Brian Satterwhite.

Brian was ecstatic about working on the film but could only do so with certain limitations. He would be out of the country from July 24th through my sound mix, so I would have to get him a cut of the film earlier than I wanted, and we would only have a couple weeks to finalize the score. Still, his quote was within my budget, so I agreed.

Music and score composition are possibly the most difficult parts of post-production. I thought Brian understood that I wanted a rock and roll sound with a twinge of twang and blues – “dirty,” as he described it. His first pass at the score was as far from what I wanted as I could have imagined. His score included a lot of ethereal synth pads, airy piano, guitar harmonics, and cheesy blues guitar riffs that sounded like they were straight out of *Lethal Weapon*. We met several times over the next two weeks. It was a slow process of walking back most of the work he did. I wish now that I had been more up front about how much I didn’t like the first pass. I did, however, send him some references to help shape the sound moving forward. It seemed as though very little changed from one feedback session to the next. Once the original foundation was set, he was reluctant to make any major changes. The cues and placement of music was fine, but the overall tone was too clean and airy.

I then sought out a guitarist from a band I had seen a few months prior – Brian Johnson of the band Hardcore Sex. The band plays dirty delta blues rock, and the tone on his guitar was what I had hoped Brian Satterwhite would have been able to incorporate into the score. I asked him if I could license one of the band’s songs for a montage sequence and if he would be willing to record some guitar work. He agreed to record the guitar as part of the deal for licensing the song. He recorded a couple takes of guitar that covered the entirety of the film, but it didn’t really blend with Satterwhite’s score. Yet, it did work fairly well as a standalone score.

SOUND DESIGN AND MIX

I was expecting to do sound design since the edit first began. I asked a few students if they had time, but no one was available, or they wanted money. With all the

other obligations – editing, score, color correction, etc. – I only managed to do sound design intermittently and at the very last minute.

I scheduled an ADR session with Pietro Rotondi, Susanne Kraft, and Matthew Sledge in early July. I needed to record some alternate lines for the police officer to say over the radio, a dispatcher to respond, and some phone dialogue that we never got from Matt. I had originally envisioned the officer responding to an alarm at the dealership, so I wrote lines that fit with a breaking and entering scenario for the dealership building. The way that we shot the scene, it looks as though the officer is checking the cars rather the building, so the lines no longer made sense. While we were recording Matt's phone dialogue, we went ahead and ADR'd all of his dialogue in the film. I wish I could have done the same for Todd's dialogue, but he was unavailable after we shot pickups. I recorded Susanne's lines for the dispatcher the next day. I considered having her say them into a walkie-talkie, but I assumed we could futz that in the mix.

For sound design, I scoured the UT sound effects library and various online resources. I wish I had had time to do a foley session and to record sounds specifically for the film; however, there just wasn't time. Re-recording mixer Evan Dunivan supplemented sound design during the sound mix.

The first day of the sound mix focused on organization, dialogue, and backgrounds ambiences. Much of the sound design elements were incorporated on the second day. We also addressed the music. Both Brian Satterwhite and Brian Johnson sent me options for music. I wasn't completely satisfied with either. I had worked with Satterwhite over a couple of weeks to get the score into shape, but there wasn't enough time to perfect it before he left the country. Brian Johnson recorded the guitar that he felt fit best with the movie, not attempting to blend it with Satterwhite's score. It was almost a standalone score. Evan and I worked through the two options and found where they

could be incorporated into the film, sometimes using either the score or guitar, sometimes using a blend of the two. The final day of the sound mix consisted of finishing some minor things and solidifying the mix.

FINISHING THE FILM

After spending two days color correcting and grading the film with director of photography Isaiah Rendon, *The Backup Plan* was finished and exported on August 9, 2017. When we wrapped production, I had no idea how well the film would turn out. Everything happened so quickly, it was difficult to evaluate. Post production was similarly fast-paced. Once I began editing in earnest, I had a little more than a month to picture lock the film.

Each time I watch the film, I become more self-conscious about it. I'm proud of what I was able to accomplish in such a short amount of time and considering the circumstances surrounding the production. However, when I show people the film, I feel obligated to explain why things aren't as good as I wanted them to be. I can't help but wonder what the film could have been if had had more time to work on the script, if production hadn't been so chaotic, if I had had more money for production, and if post-production weren't so rushed. Maybe the film is really fine, and I'm just overly sensitive.

The film does, however, objectively have its strengths and weaknesses. It's beautifully shot. Production design and the locations turned out really well. We did a great job creating the world of the film. However, I feel that the directing is the weakest part of the film. I'm not sure how well the catalytic converter theft feels on the screen. I myself know it's completely unrealistic. I wish the scene at the dealership could be redone; I don't feel the tension and the resolution feels unrealistic, or at least off in some

way. There are some strong performances. Todd Essary did an amazing job as Randall, and Matt Sledge did great as Mike. I'm less confident about the other performances. I was working with a lot of new and untested actors. Daltyn, who plays Jonas, had never acted before. Most of the other actors were inexperienced, and I'm not sure if I was able to get the best possible performances from them. It took a lot of editing to make the performances believable.

The film is also quite long. At over 28 minutes, it far exceeds the length I was hoping for. Though it moves pretty well, there are times when I can feel the film dragging. There are scenes I wish I could cut altogether. Down the line, I will most likely do a shorter cut of the film for festival submission.

I plan to submit the film to a few small and mid-level festivals. After spending too much money submitting my pre-thesis film to festivals that I was never accepted to, I plan to be more selective about submitting *The Backup Plan*. However, many festivals are reluctant to program shorts longer than 25 minutes, so I will most likely need to trim the film down

CONCLUSION: REFLECTING ON GRADUATE SCHOOL

Find what you love and let it kill you.

-Charles Bukowski

I recently reconnected with a co-worker from my job at NASCAR. He said he had always considered film school, but didn't know if it was right for him. He asked me how I liked it. It was a difficult question to answer. Honestly, I told him, film school has been a mixed bag.

In a lot of ways, I feel exactly the same as I did when I entered the program, and even when I finished my undergraduate degree. I came into the program after doing mostly post production for nearly four years, and I feel like that's where I'll end up again. One of the main reasons I came to graduate school was that I wanted to get behind the camera more and get experience with other on-set jobs. I wanted out of the edit room. Between focusing on my own coursework, teaching, and working a part-time job, I never felt like I had the time to work on other people's sets. That, or I was never asked. Any roles I did have on sets were ancillary and limited. It seems like the assumption that I was a post-production guy stuck with me throughout the program. I'm also terrible about reaching out and being assertive, so I didn't create many opportunities for myself. It's the thing I regret most about my time in Austin.

The other goal for coming to graduate school was to learn narrative film production. All my previous work and coursework had been in news, sports, documentary, and advertising. I wanted to learn how to bring the stories I loved to write to life. In that regard, I think I succeeded – despite all my films being rejected by every festival I entered. After writing, directing, and editing three short narratives, I feel like I’m equipped to keep making narrative films. I have a number of concepts that I would like to develop. The only problem is that I’m not exactly sure *how* to continue making films. They’re expensive, and I’m going to be broke for a long time.

Teaching is something I never thought I would pursue, but going through this program has opened the possibility. I found that I really enjoy helping students learn, especially cinematography and film production. In a way, I took more pride in seeing my students make great films than I did in making my own. I may try to teach in a few years, but for now, I want to focus on working in the industry and getting some films under my belt. Although, realistically, I’ll have to see what opportunities present themselves.

I just wanted to end by reiterating a comment I made during the question and answer session following my first narrative film screening. Filmmaking is difficult. Even short films made for class projects. Anyone who can do it and do it well should be proud. It takes an intense amount of effort and time.

Megan Gilbride was the first person to ask why I wanted to be a filmmaker. It was during our first pre-thesis production class. Only weeks before, for various reasons, I had seriously considered leaving film school. My answer to her question: I’m a glutton for punishment.

It’s largely true. Ninety-percent of filmmaking involves fighting my natural instincts of being alone and self-reliant. Networking is the singular thing I’m worst at doing, and as a filmmaker, you must have collaborators. You have to trust people with

your project and communicate your ideas. Over the last three years, I've fought those instincts tooth and nail to produce and direct four short films.

I sometimes think about how I could have easily had a different life, languishing in comfortable obscurity in my hometown, and it's nice. But then I remember what drove me to apply to graduate school, what drove me to pursue radio, video, and creative writing in undergrad, what drove me to get a 4.0 GPA in high school. Creeping, haunting dissatisfaction. If I'm not pursuing something bigger, better, more difficult, I get restless. I feel like I'm missing out and I need to be doing more. I feel like a disappointment. Until graduate school, I had no singular aim. I was just trying everything. Now that I've experienced filmmaking, I don't know that I could do anything else.

Appendix A: Untitled Death Movie 1st Draft

UNTITLED DEATH MOVE

Written by

Heathyr Clift

Version 1.3 (10/116/16)

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

A clean, well-lit drug store. A boy enters, skinny and disheveled. Approaches the pharmacy counter. He is LUKE, 10.

HERMAN, 63, pale, gray-haired, haunting eyes, fills prescription bags behind the counter.

Luke clears his throat.

LUKE

'Scuse me. Is... is Victor here?

HERMAN

You must be Luke.

LUKE

How-?

HERMAN

Victor said you might be coming in today. Refill time, is it?

Luke hands him an RX written for a Barbara Embry. Herman grabs it, pausing until Luke looks him in the eye.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

How's she doing, your grandma?

LUKE

Fine.

HERMAN

Good, good.

Herman hands him Barbara's prescription.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be alright, son.

Luke leaves, sneaking a candy bar into the prescription bag.

EXT. DRUG STORE - DAY

Luke exits the small town drug store, makes his way back to his bike where his best friend, TOM, also 10, awaits.

TOM

Did you get it?

Distracted, Luke gives no response. He's looking back at the drug store. Unsettled by the interaction with Herman.

TOM (CONT'D)
Helloooo? Did you get it?

Luke hands him the candy bar, shoves the bag in his backpack.

TOM (CONT'D)
Yes! Man, I need a sick grandma so
people let me steal shit.

Tom tears into the candy bar, holding it in his mouth as they hop on their bikes and ride off.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

The boys arrive at a run-down trailer park, Luke coming to an abrupt stop as he eyes a beat-up Honda Civic parked in front of a small, older model trailer. COUGHING sounds from within.

As Tom speaks, Luke drags a cinder block to the open trailer window, stands on it.

TOM
My mom says she does that all day
now. The coughing. She can hear it
all the way at our place.

Luke stares into the window, seeing the back of a woman's head, smoke lurching from a cigarette in her hand (GRANDMA).

Across from her is a man in a CHEAP SUIT, 27, flipping through papers on a clipboard and taking notes.

TOM (CONT'D)
Who's that in your house?

CHEAP SUIT (O.S.)
I'm an ally, Mrs. Embry, not an
adversary. I merely assess the
overall health of the home in order-

GRANDMA (O.S.)
You can keep your fancy words, son,
we both know you're here to check
up on me. Make sure I ain't beatin'
the boy. You think just 'cause his
daddy took off makes me a bad
mother?

CHEAP SUIT
No, I-

GRANDMA
Good, 'cause I ain't! I did the
best I could with that boy. He just
never understood the concept a
responsibility! Ain't my fault, I
did all I could as a mother!

CHEAP SUIT
I'm sure you-

GRANDMA
Don't interrupt me, boy, I'm old
enough to be *your* grandmother!

CHEAP SUIT
Yes ma'am.

GRANDMA
Lucas is a good boy and he ain't
goin' nowhere. So you mark up your
papers and do what you gotta do.
But don't you dare try an' take my
grandbaby from me.

Luke stumbles, knocking the cinder block against the trailer.

GRANDMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Luke?

GRANDMA, 67, sees Luke in the window. Starts coughing again.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Get on in here.

Tom looks across the trailer park to see his mom, MRS.
PORTER, 35, waving at him from a nice double-wide.

TOM
(to Luke)
Gotta go. The old lady gonna let
you come to the quarry this Sunday?

GRANDMA
Luke?!

Grandma's at the window now.

TOM
Hey, Mrs. E!

GRANDMA
You get outta here! I told your
mother what you did to my plate!

TOM
The wind knocked it over!

Grandma's coughing worsens. Luke shoots Tom a look like maybe it's his fault, then runs inside.

TOM (CONT'D)
Later!

INT. LUKE'S & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - DAY

The trailer is decked with homemade throws, a mish-mash of cheap furniture, and Princess Diana collector's plates.

CHEAP SUIT
Are you alright, Mrs. Embry?

Luke enters to find Grandma bracing herself against her cough. Luke runs to her aid, but she shakes him off and composes herself.

GRANDMA
Fine. Just getting over a cold.

CHEAP SUIT
(to Luke)
You must be Luke. How are you?

Silence.

GRANDMA
Answer the man.

LUKE
I'm fine.

CHEAP SUIT
I guess you're a fine family!

Suit waits for a laugh that doesn't come.

GRANDMA
(to Luke)
Go on an' sit down.

LUKE
(to Cheap Suit)
You sending me back?

GRANDMA
That's never gonna happen.

CHEAP SUIT

Don't worry, Luke. As long as your
grandma's here to fight for you,
you won't ever have to go back to
the group home. I'm just here to
check on you, make sure everything
is okay... Is everything okay?

Luke, who's been eyeing Grandma's cigarette with concern,
turns to Cheap Suit with an emphatic nod.

EXT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - EVENING

Grandma's COUGHING emanates from within the trailer as Cheap
Suit climbs into his car.

A man's black dress shoes step toward the trailer, framed in
the cuffs of black slacks.

I/E. MR. MEYER'S CAR/TRAILER PARK - EVENING

Mr. Meyer glimpses the man as he drives away, seeing a middle-
aged man with dark hair in a double-breasted black suit.

CHEAP SUIT

Uncle Jack?

He turns to look again, but only sees the man's back as he
walks toward Luke and Grandma's trailer.

Suit shakes it off and drives away.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - EVENING

Grandma's coughing fit won't quit. Luke gets the prescription
bag from his backpack, hands Grandma an inhaler.

As she sucks in the relief, he goes to the other room, brings
back a wheeled cart containing an oxygen tank. Over the next
dialog, he readies the machine and hands her the nasal tube.

LUKE

Why'd ya have to smoke?

GRANDMA

Keeps me calm.

Luke loses it, starts to yell.

LUKE

I can't go back to that place!
Those kids are evil! They'll chop
me in pieces and feed me to the
dogs! You have to stay and take
care of me!

GRANDMA

Calm down, nobody's choppin' up
anybody! I'm not going anywhere and
neither are you.

She clenches him tight until he calms down.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Now go on an' get ready for dinner.

She puts a pot on the stove as Luke heads to his room.

Outside the living room window: The man in the black suit
watches their activities... It's Herman, the pharmacist.

Grandma grabs her chest. Can't breathe, despite the oxygen.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - LUKE'S ROOM - EVENING

Luke's tiny room is littered with dirty clothes and toys. He
slips on his pajama top, then-

A THUD sounds from the other room.

INT. LUKE'S & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - EVENING

Grandma is collapsed on the floor. The pharmacist is just
outside the window now, but Luke doesn't notice. He shakes
his grandma, shouting to anyone who might hear:

LUKE

Help! Help!

Herman stands over him now - the door open behind him.

LUKE (CONT'D)

She's not breathing!

Herman doesn't move. He just stares at Grandma.

Luke dashes for Grandma's purse, finding her flip phone and
dialing 9-1-1 as Herman leans over Grandma.

LUKE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

7.

Herman looks up at him, revealing he has no face - just a blur of black smoke with myriad faces flickering across it.

Luke lunges at him, dropping the phone as a woman comes on:

OPERATOR (O.S.)
(through phone)
9-1-1, what's your emergency?

Luke crashes to the floor, his arms grasping nothing - the "man" nowhere to be found.

Grandma wakes up gasping for air.

Luke clutches her, crying. She comforts him.

GRANDMA
You're okay, sugarbug. I'm right here.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - GRANDMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grandma lets Luke help her into bed.

GRANDMA
Be a good boy and pray with your grandma.

Luke kneels next to her bed.

GRANDMA & LUKE
The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures... *

[* QUICK CUTS through prayer. Complete dialogue in appendix]

Grandma asleep now, Luke checks her breathing then grabs the Bible off her nightstand.

He flips through the pages, finding an illustration of Death - a blank-faced Grim Reaper that makes Luke shudder. He shuts the book and returns it to the nightstand before curling up next to Grandma.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Luke fidgets in his seat. Grandma taps his leg, signaling him to stop, but he starts up again soon after.

Over the dialogue below: Luke's gaze shifts all around the room.

Across the aisle, Tom lifts his suit jacket to reveal a hidden water gun. He shoots it at Luke, who smirks and does the same, revealing his own water gun. The priest eyes them, alerting Grandma to what's going on. She takes the gun away from Luke and glares at Tom.

PRIEST

And when that day comes, my friends, do not wither in fear. For fear is the Devil's handmaiden. By fear he will lure you away from God's gentle embrace. No, my children, do not fear that great and terrible day, but simply let go and let God. Amen!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

PRIEST

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to ask you all to join me in praying for our own Barbara Embry. May she conquer the Devil in her lungs and may the good Lord bless her with a long, healthy life. Amen!

CONGREGATION

Amen!

The parishioners stand, filing toward the priest to shake his hand. A few well-wishers shake Grandma's hand or pat her on the back, nodding their blessings - including Mrs. Porter.

Luke spots a man in a black suit in the back of the crowd - it's Herman. Luke rushes over, but Herman slips away.

He spots him again as Herman passes by a gaggle of women. An older woman does a double-take, commenting on Herman:

OLDER WOMAN

Was that Ethel... wearing a suit?

ANOTHER WOMAN

Ethel passed years ago, remember?

Luke follows Herman as he exits to-

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY - DAY

A long, narrow hallway. Luke pursues the man.

LUKE
I know who you are! Stay away from
my grandma!

HERMAN
I go where I'm commanded.

LUKE
Yeah? Well I'm commanding you to go
to Hell!

Herman gives a warm smile.

LUKE (CONT'D)
I mean it!

HERMAN
You would make a fine commander,
Luke. But alas, I can have only
one.

He points up so as to indicate God.

LUKE
God wouldn't do that! He wants me
with my grandma, that's why He took
my mom and sent my dad away!

HERMAN
Your grandma doesn't have much time
left.

LUKE
What do you mean?!

Tom approaches.

TOM
Who are you talking to?

LUKE
It's him! He tried to kill my
grandma!

Off Tom's look, Luke turns back to find Herman gone.

LUKE (CONT'D)
He was just there, I swear!

TOM
Don't worry. I'm pretty sure all
the garlic in Italy couldn't kill
the old bat.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The boys re-join Grandma and Mrs. Porter, catching the tail-end of their conversation.

GRANDMA

I just thought it was time we put
it in writing, is all.

MRS. PORTER

Of course.

The priest joins.

PRIEST

You're looking well, Mrs. Embry.

GRANDMA

I'm feeling much better, thanks to
your prayers, father.

LUKE

(to the priest)
If God loves us, why does he make
us die?

GRANDMA

Luke!

PRIEST

It's quite alright. That's a good
question, Luke. Our Father loves us
so much, He can only bear to be
away from us for so long. And when
He can't take it any longer, He
calls us home.

LUKE

What if we don't wanna go?

PRIEST

It's a terrible thing to deny God,
Luke. To reject His love is to
wither and die inside. And that is
the worst kind of death.

Luke struggles to understand.

MRS. PORTER

You boys are gonna miss your ride
to the quarry.

The boys run out as Grandma, Mrs. Porter, and the priest head
to another room.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Tom and Luke run toward a church van filling with younger kids, shooting each other with their water guns. Luke stops short of the van, letting Tom get a few extra shots in.

TOM

You comin' or what?

LUKE

There's somethin' else I gotta do.

TOM

What?

LUKE

Just go without me.

TOM

No way! Where are you going?

LUKE

You wouldn't understand.

TOM

I understand you're leaving me with a bunch of rugrats! You were supposed to save me!

LUKE

Well I gotta save somebody else right now.

TOM

Who?

Luke hops on his bike and speeds off, leaving Tom perplexed.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Luke searches the phrase "how to beat Death" online, a stack of books piled up next to him with titles like *Defeating Death*, *The Secret to Living Forever*, etc.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Luke rides his bike down the street, backpack full. He passes by the drug store, then stops and turns back.

INT. DRUG STORE - DAY

Luke approaches the pharmacy counter to find VICTOR, 30s, standing at the register.

VICTOR

Hey, little man! You pickin' up?

LUKE

I already did. On Friday. Where were you? There was some creepy old dude here.

VICTOR

Don't know what you mean, man. I was here all day. We don't have any creepy old dudes that I know of.

They're both perplexed.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - DAY

Grandma and Mrs. Porter enter with a plate of homemade cookies as Luke sits amid a stack of books, reading one called *Warding Off Death*. But it's about a fad diet, so he tosses it aside and picks up a thick tome titled *World Traditions for Staving Off Death*.

GRANDMA

What is this mess?

LUKE

Did you know the average Japanese woman lives to be eighty-six? All they do is eat fish and rice! We can eat that, right?

Ah, now they know what this is about.

LUKE (CONT'D)

(indicating a book)
And this guy says fresh vegetables and fruit are nature's cure-all. That means you never have to be sick!

GRANDMA

Guess we better throw out all these cookies then.

Mrs. Porter chuckles as Grandma heads to the kitchen with the cookies, sucking on her inhaler.

LUKE
Wait! I can eat those.

GRANDMA
Not if you wanna be healthy.

LUKE
I don't need to be, just you.

GRANDMA
Still, just to be safe...

She opens the trash can, hovering the cookies over. Sees her cigarettes all crushed up in there.

Luke hangs his head as she gives him a stern look.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

It's Tom.

TOM
Hey, what's the big emergency?

LUKE
Come here.

Carrying the giant book, Luke pulls Tom into the other room. Mrs. Porter crosses to see what Grandma's looking at.

MRS. PORTER
He's worried about you.

The look on Grandma's face makes it clear she's worried about him, too.

MRS. PORTER (CONT'D)
He'll be okay.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - LUKE'S ROOM - DAY

Luke pores over the book as Tom looks on, clearly disinterested.

LUKE
It says here "when the soul sees Azrael" - that's Death - "it 'falls in love', and thus is withdrawn from the body as if by a seduction."

TOM
I don't get it.

LUKE

This is how Death retrieves his victims! If we can head him off at the pass, he won't be able to take my grandma!

TOM

Wait, so you're saying the guy you saw - the one you were talking to at church - is... Death?

LUKE

Have you been listening at all?

TOM

That doesn't make any sense.

LUKE

We just have to keep him away from my grandma, that's all.

TOM

I don't think it works like that.

LUKE

We have to try! Or do you want me to get shipped off to an orphanage?

TOM

Of course not.

(off Luke's pleading gaze)

Okay, what do we have to do?

Luke dumps his backpack, revealing sundry items - bulbs of garlic, gathered sticks, Popsicle sticks, balls of yarn, hammer, nails, a horseshoe, and a bag of rock salt.

TOM (CONT'D)

Garlic?

LUKE

Works on vampires.

TOM

Right.

Luke hands him some sticks, laying out photos of different kinds of crosses, including traditional Christian, St. Brigid's, and faery crosses.

LUKE

Here, let's start with these.

QUICK CUTS of the boys making various handmade crosses, then stringing the garlic with hanging loops.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Grandma has fallen asleep on the couch, television blaring, as the boys hang their handmade trinkets around the home and the horseshoe above the door.

They nail the windows shut before heading outside - Luke carrying the book with him, several pages marked with slips of paper.

EXT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

They pour the salt around the perimeter and spike the crosses into the ground.

In the distance, Herman observes the boys' efforts with mild amusement and what seems to be genuine affection.

Luke drives the last cross into the ground.

TOM

Are we done now?

LUKE

Did you hang the garlic over her bedroom door?

TOM

And in your room and the kitchen and the living room. We even put some in the bathroom. Are we done?

LUKE

I guess so...

TOM

I don't know what you think this is gonna do.

LUKE

This is just step one. Defensive measures. Now we need an offensive strategy.

TOM

Offensive. You mean like, kill Death?

LUKE
I think he's already dead.

Luke picks up the book, flips to a marked page.

LUKE (CONT'D)
But there are some good ideas in here... This Joshua guy stole Death's knife so he couldn't kill him with it. Maybe we could try that.

TOM
You mean that giant blade thing?

LUKE
This just says it was a knife. He probably carries more than one weapon.

TOM
Yeah. Gonna be a little hard to steal, don't ya think?

LUKE
That's not the whole plan. This says salt can harm evil spirits... and there's always Holy water.

TOM
Is Death an evil spirit?

LUKE
He wants to take away the only person in the whole world I have to take care of me. I'd say that makes him pretty evil, wouldn't you?

Makes sense.

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - MORNING

Luke - still in his pajamas (which are inside out) - stands at the stove, flipping pancakes amid the mess he's made of the kitchen.

GRANDMA
You better clean all that up before you run off to school.

She tries to get up from the couch, but only manages to lean forward enough to glimpse Luke's pajamas.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
What's with your pajamas?

LUKE
They're my regular pj's.

GRANDMA
They're inside-out!

LUKE
You should try it! I read if you
sleep with your pj's inside-out,
it'll help your wish come true.

GRANDMA
I think your head's inside-out,
too.

He brings her a stack of pancakes and a bottle of syrup.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
And what's with all this crap
hanging? It smells like Chef
Boyardee's armpit in here!

LUKE
It's for protection.

GRANDMA
That's silly. Take it all down.

LUKE
I have to go to school... Don't
worry, you'll be safe while I'm
gone.

GRANDMA
Safe from what?

He dashes out the door, flinging on his backpack.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Boy lost his mind.

EXT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - MORNING

Luke exits the trailer, backpack in hand, noticing some of
his crosses have fallen over and bulbs of garlic are strewn
on the ground.

HERMAN (O.S.)
Windy night.

Luke looks up to see Herman across the way.

LUKE

Get away!

HERMAN

You're wasting time, Luke. Valuable time you should be spending with your grandma. It won't be long now.

LUKE

You wanna take her, you're gonna have to go through me first!

He grabs a handful of salt and flings it at Herman, who shrinks back. Salt lands on his shoe, causing it to smoke a little. This bolsters Luke's confidence.

HERMAN

You cannot stop the march of life toward death. No one can.

LUKE

I will, you'll see!

Luke sets to repairing his defense system as Tom walks over and sees Luke shouting at the air.

TOM

Gonna miss the bus.

LUKE

I can't go to school. I have to stay here and protect my grandma.

TOM

Right. From the invisible man.

LUKE

He's not invisible, he's-

Herman is nowhere to be found.

LUKE (CONT'D)

He was just here.

TOM

Yeah... I'll bring your homework.

LUKE

Will you bring the bazookas, too? I already got the Holy water... It's gonna happen soon, I can feel it.

TOM
Sure, whatever.

Tom dashes off to the bus, which is pulling up in front of the trailer park. Luke heads inside, shouting to Grandma:

LUKE (O.S.)
Totally forgot! It's a Teacher Work Day!

Herman watches the trailer, still standing in the same spot as before.

INT. LUKE'S & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - DAY

Tom arrives to find Luke making spaghetti. He sets a stack of papers on the tiny dining table.

TOM
Where's the old lady?

LUKE
Taking a bath.

Tom shudders at the thought.

TOM
Got your homework. Good luck with the math. It's a bunch of stupid word problems. Hate that crap.

LUKE
You bring the other stuff?

Tom responds by opening his backpack and removing a water bazooka. Just one.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Where's the other one?

TOM
I... couldn't find it.

LUKE
What? So look harder! We can't attack with one gun!

TOM
I looked everywhere, okay?

LUKE
It has to be somewhere! It can't just disappear!

TOM
You mean like you're disappearing
man?

LUKE
What are you talking about?

TOM
I'm talking about you and this
crazy "battle" of yours.

Luke goes to the window and points outside where, sure
enough, Herman is lurking.

LUKE
Crazy? Look at him! He's out there!
He's just waiting for me to slip up
so he can come and take her!

TOM
There's nobody there! It's all in
your head!

LUKE
My grandma almost dying, was that
in my head, too?

TOM
Grandmas die, okay? That's what
they do! They live for like a
hundred years and when they get
totally bored, they die. Get over
it already!

LUKE
Go to Hell!

TOM
Happy to!

Tom storms out, slamming the door behind him. Luke watches
from the window as he walks right by Herman, not
acknowledging his presence at all.

Herman shakes his head, admonishing Luke.

Luke goes to the kitchen and fills the bazooka from a bucket
labeled "holy water."

INT. LUKE & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - TWILIGHT

Luke helps Grandma sit at the dinner table, which is already
set with full plates.

LUKE
Here you go, Grandma, just how you
like it.

He sits facing the window, keeping a close eye on Herman who
now steps toward the trailer.

LUKE (CONT'D)
(to self)
Oh, no you don't.
(to Grandma)
I'll be right back, okay?

He gets up, gathers his weapons - the water gun and a sack
full of small balloons - and exits.

EXT. LUKE'S & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - TWILIGHT

Luke trains the gun on Death.

LUKE
Stop right there.

HERMAN
I've given you all the time I
could, Luke.

He steps toward the boy, who launches a full-on assault
unloading the water gun on him... It does nothing. Herman
continues to advance.

LUKE
Holy water, my ass!

HERMAN
Nothing Holy can harm a Holy
presence.

LUKE
You're not Holy! You're evil! You
wanna leave me all alone!

HERMAN
That's not true.

Luke tosses the balloons at him. They burst at Herman's feet,
causing the same smoking as before - they're filled with
salt. In the meantime-

IN THE TRAILER WINDOW, Grandma can be seen struggling to her
feet.

The balloons have driven Herman back a bit, but Luke is running out of ammo.

Grandma reaches the window, tapping on it to get Luke's attention, then... she COLLAPSES.

Luke drops his weapons and runs inside.

INT. LUKE'S & GRANDMA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Luke rushes to her side, screaming. Shaking her. Clasping onto her as if it will keep her Earthbound.

Death is right there. Looming. Again. His "face" flickering as before.

LUKE
Noooo! You can't take her! She's
all I have!

Death advances as Luke continues to plead. Death kneels at Grandma's side, leaning down so his face meets hers - Luke punching him the whole time, his little fists passing right through.

For a moment, it's just-

GRANDMA AND HERMAN

Faces nearly touching as she opens her eyes.

Luke's pleas fade into the background. Herman's gentle face is illuminated as Grandma looks into his kind, loving eyes.

GRANDMA
Herman?

HERMAN
Yes, my love.

LUKE

Covers his grandma's body as if to keep her from leaving.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
I'm so sorry, sugarbug.

Luke looks up to see Grandma at Death's side... Though her body is still underneath him.

LUKE
Nooo! Don't go!

She shushes and soothes him.

GRANDMA

I thought we'd have more time, too.
But I have to go now. But there's
someone I'd like you to meet first.

She turns toward Herman, whom Luke still sees only as shadow-faced Death.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

This is my husband, Herman. Your
grandfather. He passed when you
were just a baby, but he's come to
take me home now.

She smiles up at him. Luke now sees him as Herman once again.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

You've done such a good job taking
care of me. But you don't have to
do that anymore. It's your turn to
be taken care of.

HERMAN

You're a brave boy, Luke.

GRANDMA

I'm so proud of you. And I'm not
going anywhere, not really.

HERMAN

She'll just be watching from
farther away is all.

Luke looks up at her peaceful face, now calm and free of
pain. Smiles as a blinding light fills the room, finally
subsiding to reveal-

Tom and his mom coming through the door, Mrs. Porter wrapping
Luke up in a hug.

He is calm. Resigned. Accepting.

FULL PRAYER:

GRANDMA & LUKE

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall
not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green
pastures: he leadeth me beside the
still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me
in the paths of righteousness for
his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil: for thou art
with me; thy rod and thy staff they
comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in
the presence of mine enemies: thou
anointest my head with oil; my cup
runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of
the Lord for ever.

Appendix B: *Jack Rabbit* 1st Draft

JACK RABBIT

Written by

Dio Traverso

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A dreary place by a pool of water. Its gray, probably late winter or fall. A RABBIT pokes its nose around some twigs, not minding much of anything. It pokes its head at some nibblet skewered on a stick... surrounded by a rope loop...

Thwap! The snare trap springs.

A bush rustles, STANDS UP. This is LUKE (11), he's wearing camouflage face paint and a Ghillie suit that is faaar too big for him. Luke scampers happily to the rabbit and holds it up proudly.

Another bush RISES. MAWMAW (80), straightens out her crackling back.

MAWMAW
Bring 'em here, Luke.

Luke brings the rabbit to MawMaw. She inspects it, exaggerating for Luke's benefit.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Hmph.

Luke waits nervously.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
A clean kill. Didn't suffer none.
Its best that way. Good work,
you're a real trapper now!

She puts a bushy arm around the young boy and they walk off.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. KITCHEN - DAY

Close on Luke's face. He yanks on something off screen, a little SPURT OF BLOOD hits him in the face. He grins.

Luke hangs the skinned rabbit on a hook by the window. MawMaw wipes lights a cigarette near an open window.

The tiny trailer is packed to the brim with taxidermy animals and pictures of MawMaw and Luke. A GLASS GUN CASE is prominently featured in the living room.

MawMaw coughs roughly, forboding. Luke looks at MawMaw, worried.

MAWMAW

Oh don't you worry baby.

She holds up her pack of cigarettes - ORGANIC in giant bold letters above a PICTURE OF A CANCEROUS LUNG.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

All natural.

Luke frowns, not convinced. He opens the old refrigerator.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- 1) An empty blender.
- 2) Broccoli tumbles into the blender.
- 3) Grapes next.
- 4) Wheat Grass.
- 5) Mushrooms.
- 6) Luke, disgusted, dumps beef liver into the blender next.
- 7) And a dollop of Cottage Cheese.
- 8) BLENDING MESSILY.
- 9) Luke dips a finger into the concoction, tastes it. GROSS!

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MawMaw is flipping through hunting shows, infomercials, and cartoons on her wood-paneled television. She's sitting in her favorite chair.

Luke carries a TV tray to her. On it, A GLASS OF THE HOMEMADE REMEDY.

MawMaw keeps flipping through the channels.

MAWMAW

MawMaw thought she told you she don't need that stuff.

Luke picks up the glass and holds it in front of her. MawMaw turns from the television. Luke's eyes plead with her to take the glass.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Oh, alright.

She takes the glass and sips, struggles to swallow.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Ah, I can feel it working already.

MawMaw puts the glass back down. Luke lingers. MawMaw notices him waiting.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
(I give up)
Ok, ok. You win, doctor.

MawMaw takes a big drink, really forces it down.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Think you can add little sugar,
next time?

Luke smiles. MawMaw puts the glass down and scoops the boy up in her arms. He jumps up on her lap.

On the television screen, a cheetah tackles a gazelle.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A late night infomercial for a set of steak knives on the TV. MawMaw and Luke snooze in the same spot. A RUMBLING GARGLE, low and distant.

Luke stirs. He sleepily looks for the noise. Finally he lands on MawMaw. He puts her head on her chest and the noise GETS LOUDER, is in time with her breathing.

MawMaw pats Luke's head sleepily.

MAWMAW
(half-asleep)
Think it's time for bed...

MawMaw lifts Luke up, then falls back down in the chair. Back to sleep.

Luke climbs off of her lap. The RUMBLING gets louder.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Luke has been replaced with a blanket on MawMaw lap. Luke, in underoos, places a glass of the concoction next to her. He shakes her knee.

MawMaw erupts into a coughing fit, frightening Luke. She's sweating, green. MawMaw slips a few words between coughs.

MAWMAW
Think you'll have to take care of
grub today. MawMaw's not feelin'
herself.

Luke hesitates.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Its alright. It's the way of things. You're grown enough now, you don't need MawMaw looking after you so much.

Luke shakes his head slowly. MawMaw puts a hand on his shoulder.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Besides, I gotta take care of myself. Doctor's orders, right?

Luke thinks a moment, then nods his head.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING

Luke, in full gear, sets a snare trap. He leaves a big carrot as bait.

Proud of himself, he turns to go find a hiding spot. Suddenly the snare springs behind him.

JACK RABBIT (O.S.)

Damnit!

Luke turns around to see a struggling rabbit, dangling by its back leg. Luke peers into the rabbit's doll eye - *was that you?* The rabbit just dangles, struggling to be free.

Luke puts his hand around the rabbit's neck, but he's not used to seeing them like this, struggling. He hesitates.

Luke pulls the trap down to the ground and unties the rabbit's foot. He sighs - this is hard without MawMaw.

JACK RABBIT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Oh thank you!

Luke falls back on his butt. The rabbit hops over to him.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)

Man, I thought I was a goner for sure. You got that whole First Blood thing going on. Thank Peter you have a heart.

Luke blinks. Inbetween one, the rabbit TRANSFORMS into JACK RABBIT, a full-grown man in a dingy rabbit mask (that's more Texas Chainsaw Massacre than party store), leather jacket, ripped jeans, and dirty Ugg boots. Around his neck hangs a PAIR OF GOGGLES. The Bunnyman offers Luke a hand. Luke doesn't move. A beat.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
You know its rude to refuse a
helping hand.

Luke cautiously places his hand in Jack Rabbit's. The
Bunnyman pulls him to his feet roughly. He dusts the kid off.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Ah there we are. On the same level
now.

Jack Rabbit's chin has to touch his chest to look at Luke.
The boy can do nothing but look up at the weird creature.
Jack Rabbit smiles insanely at the kid beneath rubber teeth.
Jack starts to nod slowly, as if responding to Luke.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Right, you'll want something in
return. Came out here to get
something, right? Can't go back
empty handed.

Jack pats himself down, searches through his pockets.
Eventually his hands land on the GOGGLES.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Let me see. Ah, ah, ah, ahahahahah.
AHA!

He slips the goggles from around his neck presents them. Luke
takes them, doesn't get what's so special.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Yeah, I know. They aren't my style
either. But theses are special. And
not in a euphemistic way. You know
what these can do?

Luke's silence is the only reply.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
They can see Death! Yeah, pretty
impressive right?

Luke's eyes go wide. Jack Rabbit smiles broadly.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
I use these things to stay one step
ahead of Dis Pater. That's
important in my line of work.

Jack Rabbit's actions have finally caught up with his
thoughts.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Wait- give them back.

Luke shakes his head. Jack tries to snatch them but Luke pulls them away. Luke sprints into the bushes.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Damnit!

Jack sprints after him.

EXT. FOREST. FURTHER ON - CONTINUOUS

Jack Rabbit runs past a particularly dense bush, screaming.

JACK RABBIT
Gimme those baaaaaack!

We linger as Jack Rabbit's howling fades into the distance. Luke rises from his hiding spot, inspects his prize.

They look like their from the 1920s, airman stuff. Luke slips them on over his painted face. Looks around.

Nothing looks out of the ordinary, just a little darker. Luke focuses his attention on a SPIDER'S WEB. A Spider menaces a struggling fly. Luke examines it, but there's nothing-

Except A LARGE BLACK DOG lurking in the distance, eyes focused on the web. The Fly BUZZES LOUDLY, it knows what's coming. Luke rips the Goggles off.

The Black Dog is gone. Luke holds the Goggles in front of his eyes.

The Black Dog is near him now, eyes focused on the web. Luke holds his breath.

The Spider sinks its teeth into the fly. The fly buzzes loudly.

The Black Dog, ever so gently, touches the fly with his nose. The buzzing stops. Everything is quiet again.

Then the Black Dog LOOKS AT LUKE.

Luke BOLTS out of there.

INT/EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - DAY

Luke sits on the steps of the trailer, the Goggles on, a .22 RIFLE sitting on his lap. He scans the horizon, waiting.

INSIDE

MawMaw watches TV, a hunting program, cigarette in hand. She calls out to Luke through an open window.

MAWMAW

Honey, we goin' to run out of food
if you don't get us something.

OUTSIDE

Luke sighs, gets up and goes to the window. He points at the TV tray, and the glass of goop on it. He makes a drinking motion.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Oh come on, that aint food.

MawMaw has another coughing spell. Luke rolls his eyes. Then spots something.

THE BLACK DOG is lurking outside the kitchen window. He slowly pushes the window open, stepping lightly onto the counter. MawMaw coughing gets worse.

INSIDE

Luke bursts through the door.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

What the hell?

Luke levels the gun at The Black Dog. It turns its head, yips curiously at Luke.

BLAM! Luke fires a shot into the kitchen, grazing the Black Dog. But instead of running off, it lingers, looking right at Luke. A beat - Luke and Death size each other up while MawMaw goes crazy about the gun.

MawMaw summons her energy and rises, snatches the gun out of Luke's hand.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

What's got into you kiddo?

Luke points. The Black Dog is slipping back out of the window. MawMaw looks.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Ain't nothin' there.

Luke smiles, nods triumphantly. The Black Dog is gone.

MawMaw grumbles. She waddles to the gun case and returns the rifle to its spot next to the others, locks the case with a key. Luke realizes what's happening, presses his face on the glass, then looks up at MawMaw.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Seems like you're still too young to
be trusted after all.

MawMaw's disappointment sets in. Luke looks over to the kitchen window and MawMaw starts coughing again.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MawMaw is in her usual spot, the TV playing infomercials. Luke lies on the floor, Goggles on, watching MawMaw. A beat, then he turns to the TV, frowns. A plan is hatching.

CUTAWAY: A SHOVEL PLUNGES INTO THE EARTH

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Luke wipes his brow. He's standing underground. He examines the sides of the hole he's dug and looks satisfied. He sticks the shovel into the side, steps on it, and climbs out of the hole.

Luke peeks his head into the window with the Goggles on. MawMaw is sleeping noisily, no Black Dog in sight.

He grabs a tarp from under the trailer and covers the hole. He puts a rock at each end of the tarp to hold it up.

The sky starts to get a bit brighter.

CUTAWAY: THE TV'S CORD HAS BEEN CUT

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - DAY

The tarp has been covered with dirt and leaves, looks nearly indistinguishable from the group around it. A lawn chair's been set up at the end closest to the trailer. Much of the taxidermy animals have been arranged outside.

Luke leads MawMaw out of the trailer. The old woman is grumbling.

MAWMAW

Dang mice musta chewed up my wires.
Is that what you were shooting at?

Luke nods.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Kiddo, that's a bit overkill.

Luke leads MawMaw carefully around the pit trap to her seat.
She collapses into the seat, coughs again.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Now how am I going to watch my
stories kiddo?

Luke raises a finger. He disappears into the trailer and
comes back out carrying the TV tray. On it are the usual
glass of goop, and the TV clicker. He sets it next to MawMaw
and hands her each.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Whatcha doing?

Luke walks around the trap stands up straight and still. A
beat - MawMaw doesn't get it. Finally Luke breaks and points
at the clicker.

MawMaw points the clicker at Luke.

Luke bursts into a dance routine. MawMaw chuckles. She
clicks.

Luke turns arounds, wraps his arms around his chest, and
starts making kissing noises. MawMaw laughs and clicks again.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- 1) Luke, bandana around his face, "operates" on a taxidermy
raccoon. A taxidermy deer, with her own bandana, acts as his
nurse. MawMaw wipes nervous sweat from her brow. CLICK!
- 2) Luke with a blanket cape, looks up worried. He shuffles
into the right spot for the taxidermy raccoon fall into his
arms. MawMaw cheers. CLICK!
- 3) Close on Luke, focused. He nods, flings a dart. It hits
the edge of the dartboard - no score. Luke kicks the dirt,
tries to look professionally disappointed. MawMaw snaps her
fingers. Luke hands the darts off to the deer. CLICK!
- 4) The raccoon stands motionless all alone. Luke pokes his
head from the bushes, makeshift ears and Dracula teeth. He
pounces! MawMaw averts her gaze.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - EVENING

Luke sits, legs sprawled, exhausted. MawMaw's pats her legs.

MAWMAW
Come here, kiddo.

Luke rises and around the trap. MawMaw hugs Luke.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Luke hugs his grandma tight, happy they've made up. But the RUMBLING in her chest starts.

MawMaw starts to cough really really bad. Luke slips the Goggles on and scans the area.

There, behind a tree, lurks the Black Dog. He snarls at the sight of Luke.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
(between coughs)
Luke?

Luke motions for MawMaw to stay put. He steps around the pit trap and walks toward the Black Dog. He stops a just outside the trap. He makes a "come and get me" gesture at Death.

But the Black Dog just lingers. Luke makes a bigger gesture. The Black Dog slips back into the bushes.

Luke scans the area for the Black Dog. Where'd he go?

The lawn chair SCRAPES against the ground. MawMaw is getting up, dragging the chair, and getting DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE PIT TRAP. Luke holds his breath.

MawMaw clears the edge of the trap. Luke let's out a little sigh of relief before-

THE BLACK DOG LEAPS FROM THE BUSH past Luke, heading STRAIGHT FOR MAWMAW. Luke scrambles to catch up!

MawMaw's at the door too far from the trap. And looks not going to get there in time! He falls to the ground, watches as the Black Dog is closing in.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Oh, right I forgot.

MawMaw turns around and goes back to the TV tray. The Black Dog changes course.

She raises the glass of goop and finishes it, smiles toward Luke.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Gotta take my medicine, doc.

The Black Dog FALLS INTO THE TRAP. Mawmaw is shocked by the commotion. She peers into the empty hole.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Did you do this?

Luke trots up. With the Goggles on he can see The Black Dog licking a wounded leg. It looks up at him and whimpers.

Luke looks up, beaming at MawMaw.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
What the heck you doin? I could
have broke my neck!

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Close on a TV screen. Someone's flipping the channels. As we go past we catch glimpses of:

- a Nascar driver pulls himself out of the burning wreckage of a car. The stands are mostly empty.
- a few grisly looking people holding up signs reading "Rights for the Accident Prone." One of the protesters has a lead pipe through his chest.
- a DEERHUNTER-esque scene of two people playing Russian Roulette. The gun goes off against a man's temple. A moment passes and he rises. "Guess I lost."
- a NEWSCASTER remarking on the recording breaking reign of the Queen of England, she's 135 years old. She refuses to abdicate.
- images of a perpetual war with the lower third reading "Conflict goes into its 45th year."
- a hunting program where the hunters hold paintball guns. One hunter throws his paintball gun on the ground and exclaims "this isn't fun anymore!"

LUKE (56) clicks the TV off. He's sitting on the floor legs crossed. He looks back to MAWMAW (125) who hasn't left her favorite chair in a decade. She breaths roughly, eyes barely open. Half awake, half asleep. Half alive, half dead.

MAWMAW

Nuthin' good on TV anymore...

Luke gets up and goes into the KITCHEN. He opens the refrigerator - nothing but overgrown, overripe fruits and vegetables. He grabs a few and plops them into the blender.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Luke places a TV tray with two glasses of goop next to MawMaw. The liquid swirls and bubbles - the plants are still alive despite being blended. Luke quaffs down his drink. He wipes his mouth. He reaches next to MawMaw's seat - a bottle reads "Happy Tummy Indigestion Relief." He tosses a few capsules in his mouth.

MawMaw's eyes go wide and she begins a horrible, hacking cough. Luke grabs a towel from the kitchen and holds it over MawMaw's mouth. MawMaw coughs, and coughs, and coughs.

Finally she stops, and slips back to sleep. Luke moves the towel from her mouth - a pulsating glob of blood and tumor twitches inside the towel. Luke wraps it up and takes the towel outside.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Luke stands near a fire pit and throws the towel into the flames. It lands open, and the TUMOR SQUIRMS under the heat. Luke gags a bit from the smell.

Luke heads back to the trailer. A YIP issues from near the trailer.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Luke removes a wooden board from the pit trap. The Black Dog sits up, at ease but ready. Its patient.

Luke looks down at Death. The two hold their gaze, a silent war of attrition between them.

MAWMAW starts her hacking, horrible cough again. The Black Dog turns an ear to the noise. It turns its head, staring into Luke - *How much longer will this last?*

A tear runs down Luke's face. He wipes it away and sticks his tongue out at the Black Dog. Replaces the board.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Luke strolls through the forest. He looks around - the forest is FULL of animals. He smiles, its like a woody heaven.

Luke takes another step and-

THWAP! Suddenly he's upside down. He struggles a bit before-

JACK RABBIT (O.S.)
Oh, is it you!

JACK RABBIT, human form, white hair down his back, the same, now much more disgusting rabbit mask, a bitemark in one of his ears, rushes up to Luke. He shoves his nose into Jack, sniffing all over.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Yes, yes! AHA!

Jack jumps up and down, pumps his fist.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Found you, you little thief! Now, gimme back those Goggles.

Luke shakes his head.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Listen, you better give me back those Goggles or else I'll...

Luke waits. Jack Rabbit can't think of a good threat in this post-mortality world. He cracks, starts sobbing.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Come on, man! Be cool! Do you know how long rabbits are supposed to live? Like six years, tops. I'm 48 now and life is hell. I gotta find Death.

Jack Rabbit beats his hands against Luke's chest. Luke takes Jack Rabbit's hands, and gestures with his head to his feet above him.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
You mean-?

Luke nods.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Oh thank you!

Jack Rabbit pulls down on Luke and with great effort unties him. Luke collapses to the ground. Jack Rabbit picks Luke up and dusts him off again. Luke smiles, grateful then-

Luke TAKES OFF INTO THE WOODS. Jack Rabbit can't believe it, chases after him.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)

Thief!

Jack Rabbit tries to catch up with Luke, but he's an old bunny and he doesn't move that fast. Luke is soon in the distance.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - DAY

Luke trots up to the trailer, confident he lost the rabbit. A YIP from the Black Dog gets his attention. He frowns and walks over to the side of the trailer, picks up a cinder block, and places it on the corner of the board. He goes back and picks up another cinder block-

JACK RABBIT (O.S.)

Found you!

Luke turns to see Jack Rabbit, even more deranged, panting heavily. The Black Dog YIPS. Jack Rabbit looks at the pit trap.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)

Is that Him? Did you-

Jack Rabbit figures it out. He looks at Luke, a standoff.

Jack Rabbit makes a break for it. Luke drops the cinder block and ambles over it, slowing him down. The Black Dog barks excitedly.

Jack Rabbit throws the first cinder block off of the board before Luke GRABS him. Jack Rabbit bites Luke's hand, and scratches his face. Luke shoves Jack Rabbit, who loses balance. He's going over! The Bunnyman grabs onto Luke's shirt and the two go spilling into the pit trap.

EXT. PIT TRAP - CONTINUOUS

Luke scrambles up, presses himself up against the dirt wall. He pulls out the Goggles and holds them up to his face. The Black Dog just stares at the other end of the pit, waiting patiently.

Jack Rabbit groans, his ear bent oddly. He touches it gingerly.

JACK RABBIT
Hraka! That smarts.

Then he remembers. Luke watches the Bunnyman scurry around, trying to find it.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
(to Luke)
Where is he? He's in here isn't he?
Please, it hurts to move! I can't
take it anymore. It's not natural!

Jack Rabbit has tears in his eyes. Luke can see the real pain behind the weird mask.

Luke points at the Black Dog. Jack Rabbit turns, crazy eyes, hands out stretched. He calls out as if Death were his pet.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Where are you? Come here, boy.

The Black Dog let's out a sad, pitying whimper. It steps forward and nuzzles Jack Rabbit's hand, licks him. Jack Rabbit smiles through tears.

JACK RABBIT (CONT'D)
Oh, there you are old friend.

Luke blinks, and Jack Rabbit is nothing more than an old bunny lying in the earth.

The Black Dog looks up at Luke. It walks slowly over to him. Luke tries to scramble up the pit, but he can't reach the top.

Luke spins around and closes his eyes. A beat as he waits for the end. MAWMAW STARTS HER HORRIBLE COUGHING. Luke opens his eyes. The Black Dog looks mournfully up toward MawMaw, let's out a gentle, sad whine. It looks at Luke, whines again, imploring him.

CUTAWAY: MAWMAW CAUGHT IN A HORRIBLE COUGHING FIT.

Luke kneels down at eye level with The Black Dog. Death looks mournfully at Luke. Luke nods, The Black Dog nods.

Luke jumps up at the board lying across the hole. He hits it up, gradually slipping it past the edge of the hole. The board clambers into the hole.

Luke sets the board up as a ramp for The Black Dog, who happily scampers up the board. Luke starts to follow him until-

CRRRACK! The Board snaps in half. The Black Dog peers from over the hole at the stuck human. Then the Black Dog disappears. A beat. ANOTHER BEAT.

Luke panics and tries to climb up the hole. THUNK! The shovel lands in the hole next to Luke. Above, the Black Dog opens its mouth, sticks out its tongue, and pants as if laughing.

INT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER. LIVING ROOM - SOON AFTER

MawMaw gets control of another coughing fit. There's blood and black gunk on her hand and down her chin. Luke and the Black Dog stand in front of her, both looking on with pity. Luke wipes the blood and gunk from her face. MawMaw smiles, in her delirium she murmurs a long forgotten memory.

MAWMAW

Its alright. It's the way of things. You're grown enough now, you don't need MawMaw looking after you so much.

The Black Dog starts forward. Luke claps, and The Black Dog stops, turns to him. Luke holds up one finger and gives Death a pleading look. The Black Dog turns his head in curiosity.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - LATER

MawMaw and her chair have been dragged outside. Luke presses the TV clicker into MawMaw's hand. MawMaw's eyes flutter.

MAWMAW

Nothing good on TV anymore.

Her eyes open up more, and she sees before her a parade of taxidermy animals. Luke runs over to his staging area. He slips the Goggles over his face. The Black Dog sits next to MawMaw, his tail wagging.

MawMaw smiles, summons up all her energy and clicks the remote.

Luke starts his dance routine. MawMaw chuckles slowly. Even The Black Dog laughs. Click.

Luke turns around, and does his make-out bit. MawMaw giggles. Click.

Series of Shots

1) Luke does his doctor bit, performing CPR on the raccoon. He puts his ear on the little chest, looks sad. MawMaw feigns great sadness, but is beaming. Click.

2) Luke has his blanket cape on. He's waiting for something to fall into his arms. This time its a taxidermy BEAR that send him to the ground. MawMaw flinches. Underneath the Bear, Luke gives a thumbs up. MawMaw applauds. The Black Dog howls approvingly.

3) Luke has a mop on his head, a cigarette in his mouth, and is wearing MawMaw's Ghillie suit. He hunches over like MawMaw did in her "prime." MawMaw laughs.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

That don't even look like me!

The Raccoon has on Luke's old Ghillie suit from the beginning. Luke puts on face paint, then "helps" the Raccoon do the same. MawMaw smiles sadly. The Black Dog looks at her.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - EVENING

A taxidermy rabbit hangs from a snare trap. The Raccoon, in its Ghillie suit, sit underneath stool. Luke in his MawMaw costume comes over and inspects the rabbit, making a big show of it. Then he taps the Raccoon on the head. Luke turns to MawMaw.

She's still. Luke holds the Goggles in front of his eyes.

No sign of the Black Dog. He let's the Goggles fall to the ground, crushes them under foot.

EXT. MAWMAW'S TRAILER - MORNING

Luke tamps down the dirt with a shovel. In place of the pit trap are two graves, one human sized, on rabbit sized. Luke hammers a human sized cross into the ground, followed by a rabbit sized one, above the respecitve graves.

Luke takes a step back, takes a moment before the graves. In the distance, a HOWL.

Luke goes inside the trailer and shuts the door.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE: JACK RABBIT.

Appendix C: *Nimrod* Script

NIMROD

Written by
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Story by
Dio Traverso
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EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Luke(12), decked out in camo and hunting attire, stalks through the woods, BB-GUN in hand. He scans the landscape as he walks, looking and listening for movement among the leaves.

He leans against a tree, gun raised. He exhales and whips around the tree, firing. PING! A tin can falls from a nearby log.

Luke sits, carving his name into a tree. He exhales deeply and checks his watch.

Suddenly, he looks up, startled. He hears a RUSTLING in the distance. Then the sound of a RABBIT SQUEALING.

He picks up the BB-gun and heads for the sound.

EXT. CLEARING - LATER

Luke steps out into a clearing, gun at the ready. He walks over to a rabbit trap. A FLUFFY WHITE RABBIT is caught in the trap. It screams and writhes in agony.

Luke stares at the rabbit. He raises his gun and takes aim. The animal continues to scream.

Luke contemplates. He exhales, finger on the trigger. He hears a voice.

VOICE (V.O.)

Please.

Luke turns, looking all around for the voice.

He raises his gun. Again, he hears the voice, this time clearly from the rabbit.

RABBIT (V.O.)

Free me.

In disbelief, Luke lowers the gun and cautiously begins to free the rabbit.

Luke watches the rabbit scamper into the underbrush. He picks up his gun and stands. He turns to leave and immediately runs into something -- a person. He falls to the ground.

In front of him stands an hulking, bearded MOUNTAIN MAN dressed in frontiersman garb. Luke shrinks away in fear.

MOUNTAIN MAN
Hell of a thing you did there.

LUKE
But it just asked--

The mountain man stoops down to Luke's level.

MOUNTAIN MAN
And you didn't have to.

He bends down and picks up a handful of dirt. He spits into the dirt and begins rubbing his hands together. Luke watches, transfixed.

LUKE
What are you doing?

He reaches out his hands, now covered in dirt and spit, toward Luke's face.

MOUNTAIN MAN
Shhh. The peril of living is far greater than any peril there can be in dying.

He places his hands over Luke's eyes and begins to rub the dirt over them. Luke squirms but cannot not pull away.

MOUNTAIN MAN (CONT'D)
There.

The man climbs back to his feet.

Luke rubs his eyes before opening them. The mountain man is gone.

A SHARP WHISTLE echoes in the distance. Luke snaps awake, sitting against a tree, his name half carved into it.

LUKE
Shit!

He gets up and jogs through the trees.

TITLE: NIMROD

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Luke jogs through the woods. He hears a sound and begins to slow. He looks around. A look of fear comes over him. He begins running full-tilt. The camera follows, closing in.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Luke jogs up to a dilapidated farmhouse, breathing heavily.

Just as he reaches the porch, out steps MAWMAW(60), dressed in her Sunday best. She pulls out a pack of CIGARETTES and begins to smoke.

MAWMAW
There you are.

LUKE
Mawmaw, there's something--

MAWMAW
What have I told you about hunting
on Sundays?

She sees the dirt on his face.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
And what's that mess on your face?

She pulls him close and tries to rub the dirt off with her finger. Luke tries to answer but isn't given the chance.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
You know what, I don't even want to
know. Go on and get washed up for
church.

LUKE
Yes, Mawmaw.

Luke slinks past her into the house, sneaking one last glance toward the woods.

Mawmaw lingers on the porch, smoking. She opens the door and shouts.

MAWMAW
And get a move on. I want a good
seat today.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Luke pulls off his shirt and looks at himself in the mirror. The dirt from the mountain man streaks his face.

MAWMAW (O.S.)
You just like your daddy was.
Always into something.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

The bell rings on the small church as a BEAT-UP CAR pulls into the parking lot.

Luke and Mawmaw climb from the car.

MAWMAW

I told you we was going to be late.

She pauses for a second as she tosses her cigarette butt.

Luke continues toward the church. He realizes Mawmaw's not following.

LUKE

You okay, Mawmaw?

Mawmaw is holding herself up against the car.

MAWMAW

Yeah, just a little light-headed.
That's all.

She composes herself and they continue walking to the church.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The PREACHER stands at the front of the congregation, giving his sermon. Luke and Mawmaw sit in the pews.

PREACHER

We are accustomed to think of dying as the most terrible crisis of our history; the hour of supreme peril to our souls; the appalling event which decides our fate forever.

Luke is lost in his own thoughts, remembering the strange man in the woods.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

It is a great mistake. Our dying does not decide our future fate --
It is our living which does that.

Mawmaw, now clearly sweating, has begun to fan herself with the SERVICE PROGRAM.

MAWMAW

(whispering to Luke)
Could it be any warmer in here?

He snaps out of his trance, and looks at her.

LUKE
(whispering)
I'm fine.

Mawmaw fans herself more vigorously.

PREACHER
And if you live each and every day
in Christ -- you give yourself to
Him morning, noon, and night --
when that fateful day arrives --
you won't have anything to fear.
For the gift of God is eternal life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ORGAN MUSIC plays as the congregation begins shifting and standing. Luke hops off the pew. Mawmaw struggles to stand. She stumbles as she makes her way to the aisle.

Mawmaw clutches her chest. Her eyes roll back in her head. She staggers and collapses in the aisle. Parishioners gasp and rush to her side.

Luke looks on in terror. He bends down to help her. Something catches his eye beyond the crowd of parishioners. A LARGE BLACK DOG sits at the altar, watching intently.

FADE OUT.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON: An array of pill bottles on the coffee table. Mawmaw's hand reaches out and picks one up. She breathes heavily through an oxygen tube. She shakes the bottle and looks disappointed.

MAWMAW
Luke! Honey!

She fights off a coughing spell. She gets up from the recliner and struggles to walk to the front door, pulling an oxygen tank with her. She opens it and yells into the yard.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Luke shoots cans from a nearby fence. He hears Mawmaw calling his name and turns to the house.

Luke walks up to the porch where Mawmaw is smoking a cigarette.

LUKE
Mawmaw! You know you ain't supposed
to be smoking no more.

MAWMAW
I know. One every now and again
ain't going to kill me.

He gives her a stern look.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
I'm out of the Diovan.

She holds up the empty bottle.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Can you ride into town and pick up
my prescription?

She tries to hand him the pill bottle, but he doesn't take
it. He looks at the cigarette.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Fine.

She stomps out the cigarette, and he takes the pill bottle.

Mawmaw goes back inside. Luke picks up his BMX bike from the
side of the house.

Just as he's about to hop on, he stops abruptly. He sees
something running down the road: The Black Dog. Luke jumps on
the pedals and follows it.

EXT. WILLIS HOUSE - DAY

Luke pedals up to a small ranch house. A MIDDLE-AGED MAN
comforts a WOMAN crying on the front porch.

Then Luke sees it. The Black Dog. It walks past the couple,
followed by MR. WILLIS(60's). The grieving couple don't seem
to notice them.

The dog leads Mr. Willis into the woods behind the house.
They stop and look back at the house before fading into
nothingness.

Luke pedals off as he hears an approaching AMBULANCE SIREN.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Luke drops his bike outside the house and goes inside.

INT. LUKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A Billy Graham sermon plays on the TV. Mawmaw, asleep in the living room recliner, jumps awake at the sound of Luke entering.

Luke grabs his BB-gun and starts loading it.

MAWMAW
Where's my medicine?

He hasn't heard her.

LUKE
You ain't seen a big black dog
around here, have you?

MAWMAW
What black dog? I needed that
refill today. I swear, boy.

She looks at the clock.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Maybe I can make it down there in
time.

She grabs her keys and puts on her shoes.

She sits down on the couch next to Luke. He avoids eye contact, instead staring at the FISH BOWL, where an orange GOLDFISH lazily swims.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)
Look, I know you've had a rough go
of it, but I need you to stay
strong for me.

LUKE
I'm fine.

He picks up the fish food and drops some flakes into the bowl. The goldfish begins gobbling them up.

MAWMAW
Fine or not, I think it's best if
Pastor Beyer comes by tomorrow.

LUKE
Whatever.

She stands to leave.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Want me to come with you?

MAWMAW
No. I can manage. Why don't you get
started on supper?

Mawmaw leaves, and Luke watches her drive away.

In the distance he sees the Black Dog.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Luke carries a dead rabbit by the hind legs through the door.
He sets it down in the front yard, and whistles for the dog.

He runs back onto the porch and readies his BB-gun. He waits.

The dog doesn't move.

Luke thinks for a moment then goes back inside.

Luke comes back out carrying the fish bowl through the front
door. He sets it down on the porch.

He runs back inside and comes out with a plate and small net.

He sets the plate down next to the fish bowl.

He catches the fish in the net, and dumps it onto the plate.
The goldfish gasps for air and flops around on the plate. He
carries the plate into the yard and sets it down.

Luke watches the fish for a few moments as it struggles less
and less. He looks up. There is the Black Dog approaching in
the distance.

Luke runs back inside the house; he's forgotten his gun.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Luke watches through the window as the Black Dog creeps
toward the fish.

He waits for a moment, then grabs his BB-gun.

The dog stands over the goldfish. Luke watches as the dog
looks sympathetically at the fish.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Luke busts through the front door. He raises his BB-gun.

Luke fires off a shot, but it misses.

The dog turns and runs.

Luke cocks the gun. He fires again at the dog, now half-way across the yard.

The dog lets out a slight yelp as it disappears out of sight.

Luke hops off the porch and checks on the fish. It isn't moving. He dumps it back into the fish bowl, but it sinks to the bottom. He lifts the bowl and shakes it to see if the fish comes around. It doesn't move. The fish is dead. Luke frowns.

LUKE
Sorry, Gilbert.

Behind him, Mawmaw pulls up in her car.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Luke sets the fish bowl down on a table. He walks off without looking at the fish. He busies himself in the kitchen.

Mawmaw enters, a pharmacy bag in her hand.

MAWMAW
What on earth were you doing
outside with my fish? Don't think I
didn't see you.

She bends down to look at the fish.

Gilbert swims lazily around the fish bowl.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Luke rushes to turn on the stove and sets out some pots and pans.

MAWMAW
You ain't even started dinner! Lord
have mercy.
(MORE)

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Good thing I ran into Pastor Beyer
in town. He's coming by for supper
tomorrow.

Luke looks at her sheepishly.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Might as well not even bother now.
This medicine's got my appetite all
out of whack anyhow.

LUKE

What am I going to do?

MAWMAW

You on your own. I need to lay
down.

She goes into the bedroom. Luke cuts off the stove and walks
into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Luke collapses onto the couch and eyes the fish bowl where
Gilbert swims merrily.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Luke peeks in on Mawmaw who appears to be resting peacefully.
He steps into the room and she rouses. He ducks around the
corner.

MAWMAW

You're not afraid of me now, are
you?

Her voice is raspy and harsh. She begins coughing
uncontrollably. She breathes deep into an inhaler.

She motions for him to come closer. He sits on the bed, and
she pulls him near.

MAWMAW (CONT'D)

Everything's going to be all right.
I promise.

She holds Luke's hand and slowly drifts off to sleep. The
HISS of the oxygen tank fills the room. Luke stares at the
tank, thinking.

INT. CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Luke opens the closet door and searches for something. He pulls out a LARGE SHEET and closes the door.

I/E. SHED - EVENING

Luke opens the shed and picks up a CAMPING LANTERN.

Luke checks the sturdiness of the doors, putting his weight into them.

He checks the inside of the shed for holes and ways to escape.

He picks up a BOARD and sets it outside the shed.

He finds a HAMMER and NAILS.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Luke stands at the foot of the bed, watching Mawmaw sleep.

He walks over to the oxygen tank and slowly turns the valve. The hiss of flowing oxygen ceases.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Luke crouches behind an armchair, waiting, listening. He sighs, about to give up on his plan. Then he hears a scratching at the door. His heart begins to pound.

He stands up and moves to open the door. Before he can get there, it opens.

In walks the Black Dog.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mawmaw slowly crawls out of the bed, her face expressionless. She stands and looks back at the bed where her body still lies. She turns and walks to the door.

The Black Dog pads into the room and sits at the foot of the bed. Mawmaw stoops to pet the dog.

Just as Mawmaw's about to touch the dog, Luke springs from the shadows and wraps the dog in the sheet. It whimpers and whines as it struggles. Luke collects the ends of the sheet, trapping the dog inside.

He drags it through the house to the front door.

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Luke drags the writhing, snarling mass of bedding across the yard to the shed.

He takes a deep breath before heaving the dog, sheet and all, into the shed. He slams the door and locks it. The dog barks and claws at the doors.

Luke takes the hammer and nails a board across the shed doors, sealing the dog inside. The dog pounds the doors again and again. Luke waits, watching to see if the doors will hold.

Hesitantly, Luke turns to go back inside the house.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mawmaw lies still in the bed. Luke remembers the oxygen tank and rushes to turn it on. He twists the knob, then checks grandma's pulse. He searches for it. Finally, a sigh of relief.

Luke crawls into bed next to her and falls asleep.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

The sound of a DOOR CLOSING snaps Luke awake. He looks around. Mawmaw's gone.

LUKE

Mawmaw!

No response. He jumps out of bed and searches for her.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Luke searches the rooms in the house. He stops at a window. Mawmaw is standing in the middle of the yard, still dressed in her nightgown.

EXT. SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Mawmaw stares blankly at the shed. Luke comes running up to her.

LUKE
Mawmaw. What are you doing out
here?

She steps toward the shed.

LUKE (CONT'D)
No, you can't go in there.

Luke walks over to the shed and checks that it's still
secure.

The dog pounds against the door and begins to bark.

Luke jumps back.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Come on, let's go back inside.

He walks toward the house. Mawmaw's not following. Luke sees
that she's just staring into space. He takes her hand and
leads her back to the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Luke sets Mawmaw down on the couch.

LUKE
How about some breakfast? I can
make bacon and eggs.

No response. He goes into the kitchen.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Well, that's what I'm having. You
can eat some if you want.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Luke rummages through the PANS. He pulls out a small one and
a large one.

LUKE
One for bacon. One for eggs.

He sets them on the stove.

LUKE (CONT'D)
How do you want your eggs?

No response.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Luke looks into the living room. Mawmaw's gone, the front door wide open. He sighs in frustration.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Luke leads Mawmaw back inside. He sets her down on the couch again and sits beside her.

He takes her hand. She looks down at him.

LUKE
Why do you keep going out there?

She doesn't respond.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Huh? Answer me.

Nothing.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Can't you talk? Don't you remember me? Who am I?

Mawmaw stares blankly ahead, then begins to cough uncontrollably.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Here, take your medicine.

He grabs a pill bottle and dumps some pills into his hand. He gives them to Mawmaw. She looks at them puzzled before dropping them in the floor.

Luke, on the verge of tears, puts his head in his hands. He looks up and turns toward the shed where the Black Dog is trapped.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Luke calls through the door to Mawmaw who is strapped to a chair. She wriggles, trying to get free.

LUKE
I'll be back soon. Don't try to follow me.

He turns on the TV to Billy Graham preaching.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Watch some TV.

He shuts the door and locks it. He picks up his BB-gun and the lantern and walks toward the shed.

EXT. SHED - MOMENTS LATER

Luke stands in front of the shed. He sets down the BB-gun and lantern. He pries the boards from the door. The padlock on the door pops open.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

The shed door creeps open. A shaft of light cuts through the darkness.

Luke sticks the lantern inside the door, then pokes his head in. Seeing nothing, he jumps through the crack and shuts the door.

Luke looks around. No dog in sight. His eyes land on a pair of SHOES. Luke raises the BB-gun.

BLACK DOG
That wasn't very nice, what you did.

A large figure sits on a CRATE in the corner, its face obscured in shadow. Luke is taken aback.

BLACK DOG (CONT'D)
You shouldn't shoot at animals and lock them in the shed.

LUKE
What did you do to her?

BLACK DOG
I didn't do anything.

LUKE
You did something. She don't talk. She don't even recognize me.

BLACK DOG
A soul is a pretty important thing.

Luke lowers the gun.

LUKE
Huh?

BLACK DOG
She wants to move on. She needs me.

INSERT: Mawmaw's hand turns the front door knob.

LUKE
No she doesn't.

The figure laughs.

BLACK DOG
It's time. Without my guidance,
she's lost. But here I am, and so
lost she shall remain.

INSERT: The front door stands wide open.

LUKE
No, it doesn't have to be.

The figure chuckles.

BLACK DOG
What are you going to do? Keep me
locked up forever?

INSERT: Feet walking through grass.

LUKE
Maybe. I just want Mawmaw to have
more time.

BLACK DOG
Or do YOU want more time?

Behind Luke, the shed doors start shaking. He turns around
and holds them closed with one hand.

EXT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Mawmaw pulls at the shed doors.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Luke tries to keep the doors shut with one hand while keeping
an eye on the Black Dog.

LUKE
Mawmaw, I told you not to come in
here!

The figure stands.

LUKE (CONT'D)
No. Don't come any closer.

Luke raises the gun again.

BLACK DOG
The peril of living is far greater
than any peril there can be in
dying.

Luke's finger shakes on the trigger.

The figure steps forward into the light. It's Mawmaw.

MAWMAW
Everything is going to be fine. Let
me go.

Luke drops the gun to the ground. Mawmaw steps closer to
Luke. He moves out of the way. She pushes the shed door open.

EXT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

The Black Dog steps out of the shed, Luke following behind.

Mawmaw bends down and pets the black dog. She smiles at Luke.

EXT. LUKE'S HOUSE - LATER

Luke sits on the front porch, wiping tears from his eyes.

The preacher appears in the doorway. He sits next to Luke and
places his hand on Luke's shoulder.

Luke's POV: Mawmaw and the Black Dog walk into the distance,
slowly fading into nothingness.

FADE TO BLACK.

Appendix D: *The Backup Plan* Shooting Script

THE BACK-UP PLAN

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Version 3
3/12/17

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EXT. HOUSE - DAY

JONAS(16) is bent over the open hood of a late 60's BUICK SYLARK. His father, RANDALL(35) works on the car underneath.

RANDALL
Why they always gotta put these oil filters in the most awkward places?

JONAS
Then it wouldn't be no fun.

RANDALL
Oh yeah? If it's so fun, why am I the one under here? Huh?

Jonas gives a shy smile, but it quickly fades.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
What? Who's that?

A newer model BMW pulls into the gravel drive.

MR. HARRELL (late 50's) climbs from the car along with his son, STEVEN (30's).

Harrell strolls over to the Skylark.

HARRELL
Y'all still ain't got this thing on the road? It's a shame for it to sit around like it does.

JONAS
It's gettin' there.

HARRELL
Your daddy home?

Randall climbs from beneath the car and wipes the oil off his hands.

RANDALL
Mr. Harrell. Steven. That time of the month again?

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Harrell and Steven sit at the kitchen table while Randall washes up.

Randall dries off his hands and grabs a beer from the fridge. He offers one to his guests. They refuse.

HARRELL
Listen, Randall, there's no easy
way to say this.

He searches for the words.

HARRELL (CONT'D)
I guess what I'm trying to say is
I'm just starting to feel like a
broken record, coming here and
saying the same thing over and
over. Hearing the same excuses over
and over.

RANDALL
Look, I'm trying, but it's hard to
find anything stable around here.
You know what my background check
looks like.

Steven sneers and looks away.

HARRELL
Yeah. And I give you all the time I
could, but I'm gonna need you to
start paying rent again, or we'll
have to find another tenant.

Randall lights a cigarette.

RANDALL
What's the damage up to?

HARRELL
Come the first, it'll be four
months.

STEVEN
Three grand.

Randall winces and takes a long drag.

RANDALL
I hate to say it, but I ain't got
it.

HARRELL
Not even a month's--.

RANDALL
I said I ain't got it.

STEVEN
You piece of shit.

RANDALL
The fuck did you say?

HARRELL
Now, Steven --

STEVEN
I said you're a lazy piece of shit.
You been getting a free ride for
too long. I'm surprised you can
even take care of that boy.

Randall flicks his cigarette at Steven. Steven lunges, but Harrell holds him back.

RANDALL
Don't you say another goddamn word.
Get the fuck out. Both of you.

EXT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Randall ushers Mr. Harrell and Steven through the front door.

RANDALL
Come here and talk shit to me in my
own home. You don't know nothing,
you smug motherfucker.

Steven walks toward the car as Mr. Harrell stands, frozen. Jonas emerges from the carport.

STEVEN
It ain't your goddam house. I want
every cent of what you owe by the
end of the week or you're out on
your ass.
(to Mr. Harrell)
Come on, dad.

Steven and Mr. Harrell walk to the car and get in.

Randall and Jonas share a concerned look as the BMW drives away.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Randall smokes at the kitchen table. A PHONE BOOK and NEWSPAPERS are splayed out in front of him. He hangs up the phone and scans the paper.

Jonas enters and grabs a DRINK from the fridge.

JONAS
Well? Any luck?

He sits down.

RANDALL
Your aunt Bobbie's got a painting
gig tomorrow. She's gonna see if
they'll bring me on. But who knows.

JONAS
I can start mowing lawns again.

RANDALL
You'd need to cut an awful lot of
grass.

A long, heavy silence.

JONAS
We could always sell the car.

Randall is immediately defensive.

RANDALL
No.

JONAS
Why not? If we could just get it
running--.

RANDALL
I said no. Your momma left it for
you, and that's how it's gonna to
be.

He stamps out his cigarette and gets up from the table.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
This ain't for you to worry over.
Don't stay up too late.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Randall steps out of the house dressed in paint-splattered
clothes and throws some painting supplies into a waiting
PICKUP TRUCK. BOBBIE(mid 30's) sits behind the wheel. Randall
climbs in.

RANDALL
I appreciate you doing this.

BOBBIE
Sure thing. How you holding up?

RANDALL
Fine.

The truck pulls out of the driveway.

EXT. JOB SITE - DAY

Randall and Bobbie pull up to a dingy-looking house and get out. They're quickly met by CHERYL(40).

BOBBIE
Cheryl, this is my cousin, Randall.

Cheryl and Randall shake hands.

CHERYL
Sorry you came out here for nothing, Randall.

RANDALL
What do you mean?

CHERYL
We're sending everyone home. Check bounced.

BOBBIE
You're shitting me.

CHERYL
Sorry, Bobbie. We'll call you for the next one. Nice to meet you, Randall.

She gives Bobbie a reassuring pat on the shoulder and hurries off. Bobbie pulls out a cigarette for her and Randall.

RANDALL
Wait, what happened?

BOBBIE
Client doesn't pay them, they can't pay us.

RANDALL
Fuck! I really needed this.

MIKE (30's), a sketchy-looking dude, saunters up to them carrying a PAINT BUCKET.

MIKE
Oh shit, B. Can I bum one of those?

Bobbie rolls her eyes and fishes out another cigarette.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Ooh, CBK's?

BOBBIE
If you don't want it--.

She starts to put it back in the box.

MIKE
Alright, damn.

He takes the cig, and searches his pockets for a lighter.
Randall reaches over with a LIGHTER and lights him up.

MIKE (CONT'D)
'Preciate it. Fucking sucks, right?
Coulda stayed my ass in bed.

He looks to Randall.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Hey man, I seen you somewhere
before. Yeah, you worked at that
muffler shop on Franklin.

Randall eyes him, trying to place him.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Thursdays, 10 a.m.

RANDALL
Oh shit, you used to deliver parts.

Mike extends his free hand.

MIKE
Mike.

RANDALL
Randall.

MIKE
You ain't working on cars no more?

RANDALL
Doing a little bit of everything
since the shop closed down.

MIKE
I feel that. It's tough. (beat) You
know what.

He sets the bucket down and reaches into his wallet.

MIKE (CONT'D)
And forgive me if I'm imposing, but
I heard you saying you could use a
little income.

He hands Randall a BUSINESS CARD.

MIKE (CONT'D)
It ain't exactly on the up and up,
but we could use someone who knows
his way around cars. Give me a call
when you want to make some real
loot.

He picks up the paint bucket and walks to a waiting car.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Thanks for the cig, B.

BOBBIE
(to Randall)
Tear that shit up. For real.
Motherfucker's a walking rap sheet.

They get into Bobbie's truck and leave.

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

Randall climbs out of Bobbie's truck.

BOBBIE
I'll let you know if I hear
anything. Something'll come up. It
always does.

She waves and pulls out of the driveway.

Randall walks to the back of the house where he pulls the
TARP off an old PRESSURE WASHER. He puts some GAS in it, and
fires it up.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Randall pulls the pressure washer down the empty street.

He stops in front of a house, steeling himself.

MONTAGE: Randall knocks on a series of doors, each resulting in no response or a curt dismissal.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Randall hooks the pressure washer up to a HOSE. He cranks it up and begins pressure washing the driveway. The HOMEOWNER keeps a watchful eye on him.

Randall is making progress on the driveway when the pressure washer suddenly cuts off. SMOKE boils out from the engine.

RANDALL

Fuck me!

He rushes to cut the pressure washer off.

He checks the oil and tries restarting it to no avail.

Frustrated, he kicks the machine with all his might, sending it toppling to the ground.

The Homeowner looks on with disappointment.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Randall throws the tarp back over the pressure washer.

He walks back to the front of the house where Jonas works on the Skylark.

JONAS

Hey. I'm going to clean the spark plugs. Want to give me a hand?

RANDALL

Not right now, bud. Maybe tomorrow.

INT. HOUSE - LATER

Randall reaches into his pocket and pulls out the business card given to him by Mike. He flips it over, contemplating. He picks up the phone and dials.

RANDALL

Mike? This is Randall.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNSET

Randall stares out the window of Mike's OLD BEATER as it pulls to a stop.

MIKE

This looks like a good spot. I saw a couple SUV's back there.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Mike fires up a joint. He takes a hit and extends the joint to Randall.

RANDALL

I'm good, man.

MIKE

Suit yourself.

RANDALL

You've done this before, right?

MIKE

Oh yeah. Easy money.

RANDALL

How much are we talking?

MIKE

Couple grand, probably.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Randall and Mike walk down the street. Mike carries a BACKPACK filled with TOOLS. They stop beside a late model SUV.

Randall crawls under the SUV. He pulls out a small flashlight and looks for the catalytic converter.

RANDALL

All right, hand me the bag.

Mike slides the bag of tools under the truck. Randall pulls out a wrench and goes to work removing the converter.

Mike stands watch. He lights up a cigarette.

Randall wipes sweat from his eyes. He hears a car and stops working.

Mike ducks down, out of sight of the passing car.

MIKE
We're good. We're good.

The car keeps going. Randall resumes working and Mike retakes the watch.

Randall removes the final bolt on the catalytic converter.

He crawls out from under the car with the part in-hand.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Dope. On to the next.

MONTAGE:

-Randall crawling under another vehicle.
-Putting the converters into the trunk of Mike's car.
-Mike and Randall driving, looking for targets.
-Mike standing watch.
-Randall taking a catalytic converter off a truck.

INT. MIKE'S CAR - NIGHT

Randall throws a catalytic converter into the pile of converters in the back seat of Mike's car.

Mike talks on the PHONE in the front seat.

MIKE
All right. We'll be there in 30.
All right. Peace.

He hangs up. Randall climbs into the passenger seat.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Time to deliver this shit and get that money.

RANDALL
We got enough?

He glances in the back seat.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
We only got --
(he counts)
Five plus the seven in the trunk.

MIKE
Yeah, man. We're good. We gotta unload these before Rob closes up.

Randall sinks down in his seat, unsure whether to protest.
Mike starts the car and drives away.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Mike's car pulls into the open bay of a gritty urban garage.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Randall and Mike climb out of the car. Randall scopes out the scene.

A beefy MECHANIC appears from the far end of the garage. Mike saunters up to him and gives him dap.

MIKE
What up, Big Rob?

Rob eyes Randall suspiciously.

BIG ROB
Chillin'. What'd I tell you about
new faces?

MIKE
It's all good. He's cool.

BIG ROB
What you got for me?

Mike pops the trunk on his car, revealing the catalytic converters.

MIKE
Got some strays for you. Some
diesels. Mostly domestics. Bread
loafs.

Big Rob picks up a converter and shines a flashlight down inside. He frowns.

BIG ROB
How many?

RANDALL
A dozen.

BIG ROB
I'll give you a grand for all of
it.

MIKE
All right. We can do that.

RANDALL
Wait, hold up.
(to Mike)
You said two grand at least.

BIG ROB
You're crazy. This beat up domestic
shit is probably just going to end
up as scrap.

RANDALL
Fifteen hundred. You can get five
for the torpedoes alone.

BIG ROB
(to Mike)
Who is this motherfucker?

MIKE
(to Randall)
Man, come on.

RANDALL
No, he's trying to shit us.

BIG ROB
This shit's hot. Who else is going
to buy it?

RANDALL
Fifteen. I need that money.

BIG ROB
Twelve.

Randall and Big Rob share a tense moment.

MIKE
Come on, man. Quit fucking around.

Randall finally breaks, and begins unloading the car.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Mike's car pulls up to Randall's house. Randall gets out and
goes to the driver's side.

MIKE
I'll give you a holler.

RANDALL
When you thinkin'?

MIKE
Maybe next week sometime.

RANDALL
What about tomorrow night?

MIKE
Nah. Don't want to get too hot too quick.

Mike begins pulling away.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Be easy.

Randall, annoyed that the lights were left on, walks toward the carport. He reaches to turn off the lights, but is surprised by Jonas. *

JONAS *

RANDALL *

JONAS *

RANDALL *

JONAS *

Randall knows he's caught. Jonas opens the hood of the car and searches for the fuse box. *

JONAS (CONT'D) *

Randall begins fiddling with some nearby tools. *

RANDALL *

JONAS *

(MORE)

JONAS (CONT'D)
But I think I finally got it ready
to sell.

*
*

RANDALL
I told you we're not selling the
car.

*
*
*

JONAS
You got a better plan? We're
running out of time.

*
*
*

RANDALL
No one's going to buy it if it
don't run.

*
*
*

Jonas gives Randall a knowing glance. He hops in the Skylark,
and puts the key in the ignition.

*
*

JONAS
Moment of truth.

*
*

He turns the key. The engine starts to turn but suddenly cuts
off. Randall watches in anticipation. Jonas tries again.
Nothing.

*
*
*

JONAS (CONT'D)
Must have killed the battery.

*
*

RANDALL
Sounds like it.

*
*

Jonas slinks from the car.

*

JONAS
I know I can get it running.

*
*

RANDALL
We're not selling it! Everything
your momma went through while I was
away, she still managed to keep it.
I can't sell her car. I can't let
her go. Now get to bed.

*
*
*
*
*
*

Jonas slips away toward the house. Randall shuts the
Skylark's hood. He lingers a moment before turning off the
lights.

*
*
*

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

KNOCKING at the door. Randall walks sleepily to the front
door and opens it.

BOBBIE
'Bout time. Out late last night?

RANDALL
What is it?

BOBBIE
Cheryl called me up about that gig.
You still need money, right?

Randall goes to the kitchen. Bobbie follows him inside.

BOBBIE (CONT'D)
Get your ass in gear.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Randall trashes a few empty beer cans and starts to make a pot of coffee.

BOBBIE
We can get coffee on the way.

RANDALL
I don't even know if it's worth it.

BOBBIE
Well, how much you still need?

RANDALL
'Bout two grand.

BOBBIE
Damn. That's a lot of money.

RANDALL
You think I don't know that?

BOBBIE
What are you gonna do?

Randall shrugs.

BOBBIE (CONT'D)
Well, it ain't going to do no good
moping around here. Come on.

INT. JOB SITE - DAY

Randall sets down a paint bucket and begins stirring paint.
He turns suddenly when he hears Mike arguing with Cheryl.

MIKE
I was only a little bit late.

CHERYL
For the third time this month.

MIKE
Oh come on, Cheryl. Don't do me
like this.

CHERYL
You done it to yourself. We don't
need you.

MIKE
Whatever. I don't need this fucking
job anyway.

Mike leaves, slamming the door on his way out.

EXT. MIKE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Randall jogs to catch up with Mike.

RANDALL
Hey, Mike.

MIKE
Oh, what up man? You see that shit?

RANDALL
Yeah. Look, I know you said you
don't want to boost anymore cats
for a while, but I could really use
the money.

MIKE
Oh yeah? I got that impression
after that shit you tried to pull
with Rob.

RANDALL
I'm sorry, man. I need this.

Mike thinks for a minute, then climbs into his car.

MIKE
I'll make some calls.

He starts the car and pulls away. Randall walks back to the
house where Bobbie waits.

BOBBIE
What'd I tell you about that guy?

RANDALL
Don't worry about it.

BOBBIE
All right, but don't waste your one
call on me.

Randall brushes her off and goes inside.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Randall sits on the front porch with a phone in one hand,
smoking. He bounces nervously. He checks the time.

He dials Mike's number. It rings and rings.

MIKE'S VOICEMAIL
This is Mike, leave it.

Randall hangs up, frustrated.

Jonas opens the front door and walks out.

JONAS
Shouldn't you be packing?

RANDALL
That'd be the smart thing to do, I
suppose. (beat) I just hate it's
come to this. I shoulda done
better.

He gets up and walks over to the Skylark.

JONAS
We could still sell it. I bet Mr.
Harrell would buy it in a
heartbeat, even if it don't run.

RANDALL
You tried starting it again?

Jonas shakes his head.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
Go get the keys.

Randall lifts the hood of the Skylark, and Jonas returns with
the car keys. Jonas climbs in the driver seat. Randall stands
over the engine, watching.

I/E. SKYLARK - CONTINUOUS

Jonas puts the key into the ignition and turns. The car struggles to start.

RANDALL
Give it some gas.

Jonas pushes the pedal and the car roars to life. Jonas grins with excitement.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
Sounds good.

JONAS
Can we drive it?

The phone RINGS. Randall jumps to answer it.

RANDALL
Hello?

MIKE (V.O.)
Randall?

His voice is barely audible over the sounds of a party.

RANDALL
Hey Mike, what's goin' on?

He motions for Jonas to cut the engine.

MIKE (V.O.)
I was just letting you know I ain't gonna make it tonight. I had something come up.

Randall sinks.

RANDALL
Goddammit.

MIKE (V.O.)
Easy. I'll hit you up some other--.

RANDALL
No. You don't understand. I have to have that money **tonight**.

JONAS
Who is that?

MIKE (V.O.)
I mean, shit, if you're that hard
up, I could tell Big Rob you're
bringing something. But you're on
your own.

Randall turns to Jonas who is wiping the dash of the Skylark.
He contemplates.

MIKE (V.O.)
Hello?

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Skylark fires up and pulls out of the driveway and down
the street.

EXT. DEALERSHIP - NIGHT

The Skylark pulls behind a small car dealership.

INT. SKYLARK - NIGHT

Jonas looks at Randall incredulously.

JONAS
Are you for real?

RANDALL
Serious as a heart attack.

JONAS
What about cameras and alarms?

RANDALL
Shouldn't be a problem as long as
we're careful.

He reaches into the back seat and grabs some TOOLS. He sees
that Jonas looks nervous.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
All I need you to do is keep watch.
That's it. We do this, we keep the
car, we keep the house. That's what
you want, right? Come on.

Jonas steels himself. They open their doors and climb out.

EXT. SKYLARK - NIGHT

Jonas and Randall grab their tools and slink away toward the dealership.

EXT. DEALERSHIP - NIGHT

Randall slips under an SUV and goes to work. Jonas ducks beside the vehicle and keeps watch.

Randall removes a converter and hands it to Jonas.

JONAS
You can get money for these?

RANDALL
Yep.

Randall slides out from under the SUV and crawls under a small truck. Jonas examines the catalytic converter.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
You're watching out, right?

Jonas returns his gaze to the front of the dealership.

Another catalytic converter appears from beneath the truck. Randall follows.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
Go put these in the trunk and come right back. I'm going to work on those Beamers.

Jonas picks up the parts and sneaks off toward the car.

Randall grabs his tools and shimmies under a BMW.

EXT. SKYLARK - NIGHT

Jonas sneaks over to the car and puts the converters in the trunk.

He closes it and begins walking back to the lot when he stops suddenly.

JONAS
Oh no.

EXT. DEALERSHIP - NIGHT

Randall works under the BMW when he hears a car door shut. He peeks his head out from under the car.

A POLICE CAR is parked a few yards away.

Randall begins to panic. He looks around for Jonas, but he's nowhere in sight.

An OFFICER gets out of the car and approaches the dealership.

Randall ducks back under the car. He starts to hyperventilate.

OFFICER
(into radio)
No sign of forced entry. Have you
contacted the owner?

Randall waits. The officer shines his flashlight around the lot.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
10-4. Owner is on his way.

The officer walks across the lot, shining his flashlight into the vehicles. Randall watches as the officer walks past him, in the direction of the Skylark.

Randall crawls from under the BMW. He watches the officer move closer to where the Skylark is parked.

Randall reaches into the bag of tools and pulls out a socket wrench. He feels its weight. He stands, then crouches again, reconsidering. He gives one last look toward the officer's direction.

He stands, ready to pursue the officer when Jonas appears behind the BMW. Randall pulls him close. They duck down.

JONAS
I didn't want to leave you.

Randall shushes him before hugging him tighter.

JONAS (CONT'D)
I found another way out.

Randall peeks over the BMW before signaling Jonas to go back to the car.

Randall and Jonas stealthily make their way across the car lot back to the Skylark.

INT. SKYLARK - NIGHT

Randall and Jonas drive home, neither saying a word.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Skylark pulls into the driveway.

INT. SKYLARK - NIGHT

Randall shuts off the engine. They sit in silence. Randall searches for what to say.

RANDALL

Your momma never let me drive it,
you know. Said she didn't trust
anyone else behind the wheel. She
always had to drive everywhere. It
don't feel right being in her seat.
If she were here, she'd have my
ass.

He holds back tears. Randall pulls the key from the ignition.
He holds them out for Jonas to take.

JONAS

Keep 'em.

Randall begins to speak, but Jonas cuts him off.

JONAS (CONT'D)

I don't need it.

RANDALL

You've been working so hard to get
it on the road.

JONAS

We got by this long without it. If
selling the car keeps a roof over
our head, then that's what we
should do. Okay? Just let it go.

Randall is speechless.

JONAS (CONT'D)

Besides, this thing's a tank.

Randall chuckles.

RANDALL

For a tank, it's got some get up.

He sighs and turns the keys over in his hand.

RANDALL (CONT'D)
You have to at least take it for a
spin.

Randall hops out of the car, Jonas slides into the driver seat. Randall climbs into the passenger seat. Jonas starts the car.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The Skylark backs tenuously out of the driveway and speeds off down the street.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Randall sits at the kitchen table. He puts money into an envelope, and scribbles "RENT" on the front.

A CAR HORN honks outside.

Jonas appears from a bedroom and heads for the front door.

JONAS
Come on, old man. Don't wanna be
late.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Bobbie's truck idles in the driveway.

Jonas bolts out of the front door and snags a paint bucket. Randall follows.

JONAS
I got shotgun.

Randall doesn't put up a fight. He locks the front door and walks to the truck.

RANDALL
Cheater.

He reaches into the passenger window and tousles Jonas' hair.

He stops at the truck bed, and looks to where the Skylark once stood. He climbs into the bed of the pickup and sits facing the tailgate.

24.

As the truck pulls away, Randall lights up a cigarette, his gaze fixed on the house slowly vanishing into the distance.

Appendix E: Shooting Schedule

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES
DAY 1							
(1st MEAL 6:00PM)							30 min
6:30 PM - EST 01:00 - SET UP							
7:30 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 1 – Friday, March 31st, 2017 – Time Estimate: 6:30 hrs							
INT. GARAGE - NIGHT 7:30 PM - EST 11:00 PM 1 6/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3,9							
19 A	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	MASTER			40 min
19 B	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	2 SHOT OTS		RANDALL + MIKE	25 min
19 C	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	ROB MCU OTS			25 min
19 D	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	MIKE MCU OTS		over robs shoulder	25 min
19 E	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	RANDALL MCU	CLEAN		25 min
19 F	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	RNDALL CU	OTS	over robs shoulder	25 min
19 G	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	ROB CU	REVERSE^	over randalls shoulder	25 min
19 H	INT	GARAGE	NIGHT	INSERT	TRUNK SHOT	converters in the trunk	20 min
EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT 11:00 PM - 11:30 PM HARD WRAP 1/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3,9							
18 A EXT GARAGE NIGHT Car drives into open garage 30 min							
INSERTS							
16 inserts INT 11:30 PM - 12:00 AM HARD WRAP hand inserts working 30 min							
A INT							
etc INT							
12:00 AM - EST 1:00 AM - BREAK DOWN TOTAL PGS: 1 7/8							
1:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 1 – Friday, March 31st, 2017							

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES
DAY 2							
(1st MEAL 12:30 PM)							30 min
1:00 PM - EST 2:00 PM - SET UP							
2:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 2 – Saturday, April 1st, 2017 -- Time Estimate: 6:00							
EXT. JOBSITE - DAY 2:00 PM - 3:15 PM 7/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3							
24 A EXT MIKE'S CAR/JOB SITE DAY 2 SHOT MLS MASTER Single of Randall? 25 min							
24 B EXT MIKE'S CAR/JOB SITE DAY MS RAND Single of Mike? 25 min							
24 C EXT MIKE'S CAR/JOB SITE DAY MS MIKE Single of Mike? 25 min							
INT. JOB SITE - DAY 3:15 PM - 4:30 PM 4/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3,7							
23 A INT JOB SITE DAY MS RAND Turn into an OTS? Rack to wide of Cheryl and Mike? 30 min							
23 C INT JOB SITE DAY INSERT paint 20 min							
23 B INT JOB SITE DAY MS 2 SHOT Cheryl & Mike 25 min							
EXT. JOBSITE - DAY 4:30 PM - 7:00 PM 2 5/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3,4,7							
6 A EXT JOB SITE DAY EST. MASTER Randall & Bobbie leaving 30 min							
6 G EXT JOB SITE DAY WS 15 min							
6 B EXT JOB SITE DAY MCU CHERYL 20 min							
6 C EXT JOB SITE DAY 2 SHOT OTS of CHERYL/MIKE Reverse ^ // also covers Mikes dialouge 25 min							
6 D EXT JOB SITE DAY MCU RAND. OTS of BOBBIE 20 min							
6 E EXT JOB SITE DAY MCU MIKE 20 min							
6 F EXT JOB SITE DAY MCU BOB OTS of RAND 20 min							
7:00 PM - 2nd MEAL - 7:00 PM - 7:30 PM							30 min
7:30 PM - COMPANY MOVE - 7:30 PM - 8:30 PM							
8:30 PM - CONTINUED SHOOT DAY 2 – Saturday, April 1st, 2017 – Time Estimate: 4:30 hrs							
EXT. CAR NBRHOOD - DAY 8:30 PM - 9:25 PM 2/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3							
13 A EXT NBRHOOD NIGHT EST. mikes car pull up on the spot (possibly move to D4) 30 min							
13 B EXT NBRHOOD NIGHT MCU RAND a closer look at RAND 25 min							
INT. CAR NBRHOOD - NIGHT 9:25 PM - 10:20 PM 4/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3							
14 A EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT MCU MIKE Fires up a joint and begins dialogue 30 min							
14 B EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT MCU RAND Reverse ^ 25 min							
INT. CAR NBRHOOD - NIGHT 10:20 PM - 12:00 AM 6/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,3							
17 A EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT MCU RAND start on part being thrown, tilt up to R's expression 25 min							
17 B EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT CU RAND OTS focus on Randal 25 min							
17 C EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT MCU MIKE REVERSE REVERSE ^ 25 min							
17 D EXT NBRHOOD/MIKE'S CAR NIGHT 2 SHOT FRONTAL shot from the backseat 25 min							
12:00 AM - EST 1:00 AM - BREAK DOWN TOTAL PGS: 5 4/8							
1:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 2 – Saturday, April 1st, 2017							

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES
DAY 3							
(1st Meal 6:30 PM)							30 min
7:00 PM - EST 8:00 PM SET UP							
8:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 3 – Sunday, April 2nd, 2017 – Time Estimate: ??:00							
EXT. DEALERSHIP - NIGHT 8:00 PM - 10:30 PM 7/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
31 A EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT MCU RANDALL moves with Randall? 40 min							
31 B EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT MCU JONAS MCU Jonas 25 min							
31 C EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT MED 2 SHOT Wider 2 shot? 25 min							
31 D EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT WS Even wider shot for when Jonas leaves the scene? 25 min							
31 E EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT ECU INSERT Inserts of Randall working 20 min							
EXT. DEALERSHIP - NIGHT 10:30 PM - 12:30 AM 1 2/8							
ACTORS - 1,2,9							
33 D EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT MS RANDALL>2SHOT MS Randall for most of scene, can become 2S 35 min							
33 H EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT WS Wide shot to end the scene? 25 min							
33 A EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT CU CU on Randall under car, ground level 25 min							
33 B EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT WS POLICE CAR GROUND LEVEL POV of police car 25 min							
33 C EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT MS OFFICER MS officer getting out, walking around 25 min							
12:30 AM - 2nd MEAL - 12:30 AM - 1:00 AM							30 min
33 E EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT WS OFFICER RANDALL POV POV of Randall watching officer 20 min							
33 F EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT ECU RAND EYES Maybe some ECUs of Randall 20 min							
33 G EXT DEALERSHIP NIGHT ECU HANDS WRENCH Insert Wrench in Randall's hand 20 min							
2:00 AM - EST 3:00 AM - BREAK DOWN TOTAL PGS: 3 3/8							
3:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 3 – Sunday, April 2nd, 2017							

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES
DAY 4							RUN AND GUN MOBILE UNIT
(1st MEAL - 2:30 PM)							30 min
3:00 PM - EST 4:00 SET UP							
4:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 4 – Monday, April 3rd, 2017 – Time Estimate: ??:00							
EXT. NBR'S HOUSE - DAY	4:00 PM - 5:55 PM			4/8 pgs		RANDALL ATTEMPTS TO POWER WASH FOR HOME OWNER	
ACTORS - 1,10							
10 A	EXT	NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE	DAY	RANDALL MCU		Randall hooking up pressure washer, starting it	35 min
10 B	EXT	NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE	DAY	RANDALL MS		MS Randall pressure washing, Homeowner in BG...Switch&be w/Homeowner?	20 min
10 C	EXT	NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE	DAY	RANDALL CU		CU Randall	20 min
10 D	EXT	NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE	DAY	RANDALL MS		MS Randall, trying to fix pressure washer	20 min
10 E	EXT	NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE	DAY	INSERT		Insert: Pressure washer smoking	20 min
EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY	5:55 PM - 7:15 PM			1/8 pgs		RANDALL SOLICITS DOOR TO DOOR	
ACTORS - 1							
8 A	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	EST. WIDE		Wide estab of Randall walking down street	20 min
8 B	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	MCU		Randall in front of house, takes a moment	20 min
8 C	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	POV MWS		POV of house, Randall walks into it?	20 min
8 D	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	MS RAND		MS Randall getting turned away, Quick pace	20 min
EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY	7:15 PM - 8:00 PM			1/8 pgs		RANDALL SOLICITS DOOR TO DOOR	
ACTORS - 1							
9 A	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	MONTAGE		House 1, no answer	15 min
9 B	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	MONTAGE		House 2, Slammed door from int	15 min
9 C	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	DAY	MONTAGE		House 2 or 3, slammed door from ext, Randall disappointed, walks out of frame	15 min
8:00 PM - 2nd MEAL - 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM							60 min
EXT. NBRHOOD - NIGHT	9:00 PM - ??:00			6/8 pgs		MIKE AND RANDALL ARE NIGHT THIEFS	
ACTORS - 1,3							
15 A	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MLS 2 SHOT		Mike and Randall creeping up on their first car (Covers the entrance and exit.)	30 min
15 B	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MCU RAND	PROFILE	camera aimed under the car	25 min
15 C	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MCU MIKE	PROFILE	camera eye level with mike, Pan over to show car driving by behind Mike.	30 min
15 D	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	ECU RAND		Show intensity of his expression as he works on the car	20 min
15 E	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	ECU HANDS	PARTS	Reverse ^ Detailed shot of the Actual converter being mechanically removed	20 min
EXT. NBRHOOD - NIGHT	??:00 PM - EST 7:00			1/8 pgs		MIKE AND RANDALL ARE STILL NIGHT THIEFS	
ACTORS - 1,3							
16 A	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MONTAGE			40 min
16 B	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MONTAGE			35 min
16 C	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MONTAGE			35 min
16 D	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MONTAGE			35 min
16 E	EXT	NEIGHBORHOOD	NIGHT	MONTAGE			35 min
2:00 AM - 3:00 AM - BREAK DOWN							TOTAL PGS: 1 5/8
3:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 4 – Monday, April 3rd, 2017							

THREE DAY BREAK

DAY 5							
(1st MEAL - 7:00PM)							
7:00 PM - 8:00 PM SET UP							
8:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 5 – Friday, April 7th, 2017 – Time Estimate: ??:00							
EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT	8:00 PM - 8:45 PM			1/8 pgs			
ACTORS - 1,2							
28 A	EXT	PARKING LOT	NIGHT	WS	ESTAB	Maybe just a wide?	
EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT	8:00 PM - 8:45 PM			1/8 pgs			
ACTORS - 1,2							
30 A	EXT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	WS	ESTAB	Grabbing tools, walking to dealership	
EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT	8:45 PM - 9:30			2/8 pgs			
ACTORS - 2							
32 A	EXT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	WS-MS		walking to car, looking into trunk	
32 B	EXT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	MS-CU		closing trunk, walking away...Reverse of ^	
EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT	9:30 PM - 11:00 PM			5/8 pgs			
ACTORS - 1,2							
29 C	INT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	2 SHOT		From back seat	
29 A	INT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	MCU RAND			
29 B	INT	PARKING LOT/SKYLARK	NIGHT	MCU JONAS			
11:00 PM - 12:00 AM CREW BREAK DOWN							TOTAL PGS: 1 1/8
INT. SKYLARK - NIGHT	11:00 PM - 12:00 AM			1/8 pgs		RANDALL AND JONAS DRIVE HOME IN SILENCE	
ACTORS - 1,2 BONE CREW: Dir., DP, Sound							
34 A	INT	DRIVING/SKYLARK	NIGHT	RANDALL MCU		Hostless tray?	
34 B	INT	DRIVING/SKYLARK	NIGHT	JONAS MCU			
**** A	EXT	STREET	NIGHT	WS	DRIVING	SkyLark driving down road	
**** B	EXT	STREET	NIGHT	WS	DRIVING	SkyLark driving down road	
12:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 5 – Friday, April 7th, 2017							

DAY 6							
(1st Meal 11:30 AM)							
12:00 PM - 1:30 PM SET UP							
1:30 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 6 – Saturday, April 8th, 2017 – Time Estimate: ??:00							
INT. HOUSE - DAY	1:30 PM - 2:00 PM			3/8 pgs		RANDALL WAKES UP TO BOBBIE AT THE FRONT DOOR	
ACTORS - 1,4							
21 B	INT	FRONT DOOR	MORNING	MCU RAND	OTS OF BOBBIE	Reverse MCU ^ camera on the porch	
21 A	INT	HOUSE	MORNING	MS-MCU-OTS> WS		shot starts on Randall walking up to the door -> OTS OF BOBBIE at the door.	
INT. HOUSE - DAY	2:00 PM - 3:30 PM			5/8 pgs		BOBBIE AND RANDALL TALK IN KITCHEN	
ACTORS - 1,4							
22 A	INT	HOUSE/KITCHEN	MORNING	MASTER MEDIUM	2 SHOT	MASTER	
22 B	INT	HOUSE/KITCHEN	MORNING	CU RAND	CLEAN PROFILE		
22 D	INT	HOUSE/KITCHEN	MORNING	INSERTS	INSERTS	coffee being made	
22 C	INT	HOUSE/KITCHEN	MORNING	MCU BOBBIE	OTS 3/4		
21 C	INT	HOUSE	MORNING	WS-MS		Reverse of the wide	
INT. HOUSE - DAY	3:30 PM - 4:30 PM			2/8 pgs		RANDALL PAYS RENT	
ACTORS - 1,2							
38 B	INT	HOUSE	DAY	WS		Jonas enters room, leaves through front door	
38 A	INT	HOUSE	DAY	CU RANDALL		Putting money in envelope	
38 C	INT	HOUSE	DAY	INSERT		Envelope/money	
EXT. HOUSE - DAY							SC7: 3/8 pgs SC11: 2/8
EXT. HOUSE - DAY	4:30 PM - 6:00 PM			1/8 pgs		RANDALL IS DROPPED OFF AND PICKS UP POWER WASHER	

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES
ACTORS - SC7: 1,4 - SC11: 1,2							
7 A	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	MS RAND		Rack focus as he approaches camera and the house	
7 B	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	MS RAND	OTS BOBBIE	Truck drives out of frame > WS of the house and Rand.	
7 C	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	MS RAND		Randall walks to the back of the house	
7 D	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	INSERT		Putting Gas into it, Firing it up	
6:00 PM - 2nd MEAL - 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM							
EXT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON 6:30 PM - 7:30 2/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
11 A	EXT	HOUSE	AFTERNOON	MS RANDALL		MS Randall putting tarp on pressure washer	
11 B	EXT	HOUSE	AFTERNOON			MCU Jonas > OTS MS Randall walking around front, dialogue	
11 C	EXT	HOUSE	AFTERNOON			MCU Randal > randal walks off frame RACK > WS jonas	
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 8:00 PM - 9:30 PM 7/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
25 A	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MWS RANDALL	MASTER		
25 B	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MCU RAND	PROFILE	Follows him as he goes to car?	
25 C	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MS JONAS		MS Jonas	
25 D	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	INSERT		Insert: Randall Hands, opening hood of car	
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 9:30 PM - 11:00 PM 1 3/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
26 A	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	MS RAND	PROFILE	At front of car?	
26 B	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	MCU JONAS	PROFILE	Inside car (aiming toward driver window?) Or have both?	
26 C	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	MCU RAND		Single of Randall on phone?	
26 D	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	CU IGNITION	INSERT		
26 E	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	CU PEDALS	INSERT		
11:00 PM - 12:00 AM BREAK DOWN TOTAL PGS: 3							
12:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 6 - Saturday, April 8th, 2017							

DAY 7							
(1st MEAL 11:30 AM)							
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM SET UP							
1:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 7 - Sunday, April 9th, 2017 - Time Estimate: ??:00							
EXT. HOUSE - MORNING RANDALL GETTING INTO BOBBIE'S TRUCK FOR FIRST PAINTING JOB							
ACTORS - 1,4 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM 2/8 pgs							
5 A	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	RAND PROF.	PAN > 2 SHOT	Camera in front of Bobbie's truck Pan with Randal approaching the truck and land in 2 shot.	
5 C	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	BOBBIE MCU	OTS RAND		
5 B	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	RANDAL MS	Bobbie's POV		
INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM 1 1/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
4 A	INT	HOUSE	NIGHT	EST. MASTER			
4 B	INT	HOUSE	NIGHT	RAND MCU	SHOT		
4 C	INT	HOUSE	NIGHT	JONAS MCU	REVERSE		
4 D	INT	HOUSE	NIGHT	CU RAND HANDS	INSERT	Smoking, phone, phonebook, etc.	
INT. HOUSE - DAY 5:00 PM - 5:30 PM 2/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1							
12 A	INT	HOUSE	DAY	RAND. MLS			
5:30 PM - 2nd MEAL - 5:30 PM - 6:00 PM							
EXT. HOUSE - DAY 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM 4/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2,4 FINAL SCENE LEAVING HOUSE END OF THE FILM							
39 A	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	WS		Establishing	
39 B	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	MWS		Camera at tail gate of truck covering Randall get into the truck	
39 C	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	POV HOUSE		Randall's pov of house, where car stood	Camera in moving truck
39 D	EXT	HOUSE	MORNING	CU RANDALL		Randall's final expression in the film, camera in moving truck bed	
INT. SKYLARK / EXT. HOUSE - NIG 8:00 PM - 11:00 PM 1 1/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2							
36 A	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	CU RANDALL	OTS	More clean to show internal isolation	
36 B	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	CU JONAS	OTS	More dirty to show connection	
36 C	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	INSERT	KEYS		
36 D	INT./EXT.	HOUSE/ SKYLARK	NIGHT	2 SHOT	FROM BACK SEAT	Changing seats	
11:00 PM - 12:00 AM BREAK DOWN TOTAL PGS: 3							
12:00 AM - END SHOOT DAY 7 - Sunday, April 9th, 2017							

DAY 8							
(1st Meal 11:30 AM)							
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM SET UP							
1:00 PM - BEGINNING SHOOT DAY 8 - Monday, April 10th, 2017							
INT. HOUSE - DAY 1:00 PM - 3:30 PM 1 5/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,5,6 KITCHEN DEBATE W/ STEVE, HAROL & RANDALL							
2 A	INT	HOUSE	DAY	EST. EXT WIDE		Wide EST, shot of INT. HOUSE, Kitchen in Background.	
2 B	INT	HOUSE	DAY	MASTER		Full Master shot framing all character Profiles in Kitchen	
2 C	INT	HOUSE	DAY	HARREL MCU	OTS	(pan to steven on his lines)	
2 D	INT	HOUSE	DAY	RANDALL MCU	OTS		
EXT. HOUSE - DAY 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM 1 pg							
ACTORS - 1,2,5,6 OPENING EXT. SCENE							
1 A	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	JONAS CU	PROFILE	Open on hands working, tilt up to face	
1 B	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	RAND. CU	PROFILE	Randall underneath car	
1 C	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	MWS		Establishing shot the reveals the BMW	
1 D	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	JONAS MCU			
1 E	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	2 SHOT	OTS of JONAS	Reverse of ^	
1 F	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	MCU	RANDALL	Randall climbs out from under the car and begins wiping the oil from his hands	
1 G-K	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	INSERTS		TOOLS, RADIO, CAR, INTERESTING STUFF IN WORK AREA	
5:00 PM - 2nd MEAL - 5:00 PM - 5:30 PM							
EXT. HOUSE - DAY 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM 4/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2,5,6							
3 A	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	EST. MASTER			
3 B	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	2 SHOT	OTS of RAND		
3 C	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	JONAS MCU	OTS of RAND	Shot (long lens)	
3 D	EXT	HOUSE	DAY	RANDAL MCU	OTS of JONAS	Reverse (long lens)	
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 7:30 PM - 10:00 PM 1 4/8 pgs							
ACTORS - 1,2,3							
20 A	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	2 Shot/ MS		Randal getting out of car and walking around to driver window NOTE: camera in front of car	
20 B	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MCU MIKE	OTS of RAND		
20 C	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MS RAND	RAND	RANDALL walking up to porch. Pan over the shoulder to JONAS	

Shot	INT/EXT?	Location	TOD	TYPE	TYPE 2	DESCRIPTION	TIMES	
20 D	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MS RAND	OTS of JONAS	Wana play with blocking here		
20 E	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MCU JONAS		Wana play with blocking here		
20 F	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MS RAND		Closing the scene		
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT		10:00 PM - 10:20 PM						
ACTORS -								
27 A	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	WS		Car leaving house with speed, from behind		
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT		10:20 PM - 10:40 PM		1/8 pgs				
ACTORS - 1								
28 A	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	ESTABLISHING				
EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT		??:00 PM - EST ??:00		1/8 pgs				
ACTORS - 1,2								
37 A	EXT	HOUSE	NIGHT	MS 2 SHOT+WS		From front of car to see their faces		
??:00AM - EST ??:00 Break Down				TOTAL PGS: 4 58				
??:00AM - END SHOOT DAY 8 - Monday, April 10th, 2017 - Time Estimate: ??:00								

***** DRIVING SHOTS OF SKYLARK

17 X	EXT	STREET	NIGHT	WS	RAND/MIKE LEAVING STREET...TRANSITION TO GARAGE
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