

Playing Cards as a Deadly Yet Inexpensive Means of Self-Defense

-by-
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1 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

The sun rises over green hills. Kangaroos bask in the patches of light, lazily soaking it up.

2 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAWN

On one of these hillsides rests a small COTTAGE, a dark blue, dusty BMW parked beside it.

3 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE BEDROOM - DAWN

ELLSWORTH VALENTINE--early twenties, soft-spoken, with a six day growth--wakes alone in a double bed.

He throws his feet over the side, easing them into slippers.

Ellsworth shuffles to the bathroom, swaying on the spot half-asleep as he pees.

In no hurry, he moves to the kitchen, flicking on the kettle.

Ellsworth yawns, fixing coffee.

4 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAWN

Ellsworth exits the cottage with two steaming coffee mugs in the one hand.

He walks around back, grabbing a thick CHAIN where it's firmly bolted to the wall, running his hand along until it disappears under the house.

He tugs on it twice.

Nothing.

ELLSWORTH

You should come out. I have coffee.

A girl appears there, her clothes torn, face and hair dirty. EMPATHY LEE--similar age, attractive, kind of a bitch, even when not chained up under a house. The chain's other end is padlocked tight around her neck.

ELLSWORTH

Well, hot water at least. There was only enough coffee for me.

He gives her one of the mugs and she sips it fast, burning her lips.

ELLSWORTH

I said it's hot.

She glares at him.

Ellsworth sits on the rear stairs, sipping from his own mug. He stares out across the sloped paddock.

ELLSWORTH
Eighteen months, Em.

5 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - NIGHT

Delicate piano plays through the scene... sombre, haunting.

Ellsworth, a little younger here, enters his home in something of a daze.

He drops his keys on the floor.

ELLSWORTH
Empathy?

A massive MUTED TELEVISION in the living room, the phone out of its cradle, swinging in the breeze.

ELLSWORTH
(shouts)
Em?

6 EXT. MALIK'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellsworth, younger again, leans on the hood of his new BMW smoking a joint, parked in front of a mcmansion in a wealthy oceanside neighborhood.

The large gate begins to roll open before MALIK NOBLE appears at the front door, lighting a cigarette, closing it behind him.

He takes the joint from Ellsworth before they get into the Beamer.

It pulls away from the curb.

7 INT. ROYAL CASINO - EVENING

Malik and Ellsworth, dressed somewhere between smart and casual, stride through the crowded casino lobby with an obvious agenda.

They weave their way between rows of poker machines, toward the casino's HIGH ROLLER ROOM.

They sit at opposite ends of a BLACKJACK TABLE, with a drunk HIGH ROLLER between them and the DEALER opposite.

They play a few hands.

A nearby SECURITY MAN watches them play.

8 INT. MALIK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When Malik and Ellsworth return, Empathy and LACEY LEE-- Empathy's younger, more successful sister, as well as Malik's girlfriend--wait for them on the couch, watching a DVD on Malik's big plasma screen while chatting over drinks. Both are in their early twenties.

Hearing the guys enter, Lacey turns off the TV, both girls standing, already dressed to go out.

LACEY
Got your coat?

Malik and Ellsworth enter the living room.

MALIK
Ready?

EMPATHY
(to Ellsworth)
How did you go?

ELLSWORTH
Pretty good.

She wraps her arms around him, smiling, nose brushing his chin.

EMPATHY
How good?

He kisses her briefly.

9 INT. GAIJIN NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Coming through the front door, Malik breaks away from the group to shake a BOUNCER's hand. He goes to the bar next, leaning over it to kiss one of the BAR GIRLS on the cheek.

As Malik returns, they weave their way through other CLUBBERS to take a reserved booth, all squeezing in tight as Ellsworth carefully tears strips off a sheet of ACID under the table.

The four each eat a strip, ignorant of whoever may be watching.

10 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

The dusty BMW traces tyre tracks in the landscape, away from the house.

11 EXT. ROAD HOUSE - DAY

Ellsworth, three years older, dirtier, punches numbers into a PUBLIC PHONE.

He listens for a minute, then hangs up.

12 INT. MALIK'S HOUSE - CEILING - MORNING

Malik and Ellsworth, back in the day, crouched in the ceiling crawl space, handling BUNDLES OF CASH, stacking them in piles under a blanket.

ELLSWORTH

How temporary?

MALIK

Like two weeks, tops.

ELLSWORTH

Dude you've been saying two weeks for about three months now.

MALIK

If you can think of a better place--

ELLSWORTH

The bank.

MALIK

Fuck the bank. Banks ask questions.

ELLSWORTH

This has got to be the first place a burglar would look.

MALIK

What are you kidding? This is a stroke of genius on my part. Who in their right mind stores hundreds of thousands of dollars in a fucking ceiling of all places?

ELLSWORTH

We do.

MALIK

(points at him)
Exactly!

ELLSWORTH

It's not secure.

MALIK

We'll get a storage locker.

ELLSWORTH

When?

MALIK

When I have enough cash.

Ellsworth sighs.

MALIK

Man, I'm just kidding! You've got to relax a bit. Here, do some coke.

Malik offers him a satchel.

ELLSWORTH

I'm good.

Malik stares him down.

MALIK

Ellsworth. Dude. Dude?

Ellsworth sighs again, taking it from him.

ELLSWORTH

(annoyed)

For fuck sake. It's not good to start doing this stuff before lunch time.

MALIK

We're in a ceiling. No windows?

ELLSWORTH

Yeah that's... great.

Ellsworth taps some of the powder out, between his thumb and index finger, then snorts it, his face instantly contorting with pain.

ELLSWORTH

Fuck me! It burns!

MALIK

Wait the coke's in my pocket.

ELLSWORTH

(palm pressed to eye)

What did you give me?

Ellsworth's eye begins turning red, bloodshot.

MALIK

Don't worry. It's awesome. Here I'll have some too.

13 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - NIGHT

The piano resumes, as Ellsworth's scene in the oceanside house continues, the chronological midway point between his casino antics and the country cottage scenes.

Ellsworth reacts to a noise from upstairs. Men in coats appear at the top--plain-clothes POLICE OFFICERS.

ELLSWORTH
Who are you guys?

OFFICER #1
Ellsworth Valentine?

ELLSWORTH
(hesitant)
Um. Yeah?

Another officer steps forward, holding a HEROIN PARCEL wrapped in clear plastic.

OFFICER #2
Is this yours?

ELLSWORTH
I don't think so.

14 INT. ROYAL CASINO - NIGHT

Malik and Ellsworth on another night in the high rollers room.

This time the casino is crowded, the room full of tipsy SUITS and ELEGANT WOMEN.

A different SECURITY GUY approaches the table, wrapping a big, meaty hand around Malik's elbow.

SECURITY GUY
What are you doing?

Ellsworth freezes, watching it unfold as everyone else in the room begins paying attention.

MALIK
Huh?

SECURITY GUY
What are you *doing*?

MALIK
Sitting.

He yanks Malik off his seat as a second SECURITY GUY quickly approaches Ellsworth, dragging him away too.

15 INT. ROYAL CASINO BACK ROOM - NIGHT

They toss the pair into a small, nondescript room and lock the door.

ELLSWORTH
What the fuck man?

MALIK
Shut up. The room's probably mic'd.

ELLSWORTH
What the *fuck*?

16 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - NIGHT

The piano continues.

Ellsworth sits at his big dining table with three of the officers.

Resting on the table between them is a small pile of heroin parcels.

OFFICER #2
Here's where I struggle. Let's say we believe all this heroin isn't yours. You say they were *planted* here by a... *Malik Noble*? The same man who tipped us off to their being here.

He looks up at Ellsworth, as if to confirm.

ELLSWORTH
Correct.

OFFICER #2
Well that's a problem. There's no such person.

OFFICER #3
There never *has* been a Malik Noble in this country. Not as far as we can tell. And we can tell stuff.

OFFICER #2
So basically, this guy lied to you from the moment he met you, split town with your girlfriend, and planted heroin all over your house for us to find?

ELLSWORTH
(distracted)
My money, too. He took my money.

OFFICER #1
How much money roughly?

ELLSWORTH
All of it.

A long silence.

OFFICER #2
Do you mind if I ask why?

Ellsworth thinks for a long time, staring at the muted TV.

17 INT. ROYAL CASINO BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Malik shuffles a pack of PLAYING CARDS while he and Ellsworth wait for their captors to return.

Malik removes both jokers, tossing them across the room.

The door opens to reveal an aging CASINO COP, locking it behind him before sitting at the room's plain oak interrogation table.

Malik and Ellsworth take seats opposite the man as he opens a paper folder, taking the time to skim over several pages of records and surveillance screenshots.

CASINO COP
You'll get the contents of your pockets back when we release you. In case it wasn't explained clearly before, you're being held on suspicion of manipulating the odds in a game of high-stakes Blackjack. Under new state legislation any loss over nine-thousand dollars as a result of such manipulation can be pursued by the casino for a maximum sentence of twelve years. Congratulations, gents. In the space of twenty-five minutes you well and truly surpassed this amount.

Ellsworth's shoulders slump.

ELLSWORTH
(under breath)
Shiiit.

CASINO COP
You've obviously mistaken us for morons. You seem to think that we're oblivious to the kind of shit you've been pulling under our noses these last nine months.
(MORE)

CASINO COP (cont'd)

But rest assured... we *do* know you. We know your strategy. We know your dumbshit faces. We've been watching you two fucking idiots for a *long* while. We're going after that twelve years, boys. And we mean to back it up with some mighty convincing video evidence.

(long pause)

What? You thought they only did that stuff in Vegas or--huh--hgh--
ssshhhhhhhrrrk.

Ellsworth watches in stunned silence as the casino cop contorts, then flops forward on the table, face-down.

He slowly looks over at Malik, who slumps in his chair.

Under the table, the toe of Malik's shoe, buried in the casino cop's solar plexus. A dark crimson stain spreads on the shirt around it.

Malik gets up, wiping the small matt black BLADE and his shoe with a napkin. He pats the security guy down for a set of keys.

Ellsworth still sits at the table, staring in disbelief as blood pools at the casino cop's feet.

MALIK

We've got to go.

ELLSWORTH

What... what...?

Malik pulls Ellsworth to his feet, looking him hard in the eye.

MALIK

Ellsworth. We've got to go now.

18 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - NIGHT

Piano continues.

Ellsworth exits through big double doors at the back of his home, looking out over the dark sea, joint and whiskey bottle in hand.

He walks, a little shaky, to where the view is best.

A wine glass lays broken on the lawn there. Beside it, something like a whiteout pen. He picks it up, blinking through the liquor haze, examining it.

A POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST.

The piano trails off as Ellsworth sits on the grass.

19 EXT. CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

Malik and Ellsworth stop running where the light barely penetrates a dirty inner-city alley. They lean on their knees, struggling to catch their breath.

ELLSWORTH
What did you do?

MALIK
Ellsworth...

Ellsworth shoves him against a dumpster, pinning him there by the throat.

ELLSWORTH
(holding back tears)
What did you do to that fucking
casino guy?

MALIK
Only what one of us needed to.

Ellsworth walks away, pacing in little circles, still catching his breath.

ELLSWORTH
You fucking asshole, Malik! You
crazy fucking fuck. They know what
we *look like*. They're probably
already waiting at our houses, man.
We're going to jail because of you.

MALIK
You really think that guy was
telling the truth about all that?

ELLSWORTH
You *don't*?

MALIK
I figure he was trying to scare us.
Why go through the whole spiel if
he had enough evidence to put us
away?

ELLSWORTH
(manic)
Then why fucking kill him??

MALIK
Because he might have been telling
the truth. Twelve years is a long
time. Haven't I always looked out
for us?

ELLSWORTH

You're hardly--

MALIK

We can't let people like, like *him*, some casino fuck who doesn't even know shit about who we are or what we're about... we can't let that guy end our lives because of something we *didn't even know was illegal*.

Ellsworth is silent for a long time, staring at the ground, breath slowing.

ELLSWORTH

I just... don't know where we go from here.

MALIK

The truth is... it's done. It's not something I ever *wanted* to do, but the need arose and I acted. It's over now... there's no going back, no matter how much either of us might want to. All you can ever do is relive it.

Ellsworth glares at Malik, emotion rising and falling within him as the right words come and go.

Malik pats him on the shoulder, then keeps running.

Ellsworth stares after him a long moment before following at a jog.

20 INT. MALIK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Empathy turns the plasma screen off as Malik and Ellsworth return from the botched casino visit.

EMPATHY

What the fuck happened to you guys? We're freaking out!

MALIK

We went bust.

LACEY

Are you okay?

EMPATHY

Bust?? How?

She crosses the room, trying to look Ellsworth in the eye.

EMPATHY
What happened baby?

MALIK
He'll tell you later.

Ellsworth meets her gaze briefly.

ELLSWORTH
I'm gonna push off.

EMPATHY
I thought we were going out?

MALIK
Can't go out without money.

Ellsworth sits on the couch, taking off his belt to tie it around one leg below the knee, while Malik runs upstairs, unbuttoning his shirt.

21 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - DAWN

Piano continues.

Ellsworth sleeps on the kitchen floor, flat on his back, spilled bottle of Bombay Sapphire by his side.

A set of heeled boots click like horse hooves across the tiles, stopping by Ellsworth's head.

He wakes to see Lacey, standing over him.

She too has been crying.

22 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - MORNING

Lacey sits at the dining table with Ellsworth, both drinking scotch, passing a joint back and forth.

The piano still lingers, background noise now.

LACEY
I can't help thinking he's been keeping me docile with smack, so I wouldn't notice what was going on.

Ellsworth says nothing, taking long drags of smoke.

LACEY
Do you think they're together now?

ELLSWORTH
I'm certain of it.

LACEY

(pause)

How can you be so sure?

ELLSWORTH

Because it's too perfect. Too well-executed. She's not ruthless enough to pull something like this off on her own. She's not bitter enough.

LACEY

But Malik? Of all people. My sister and my boyfriend... how *Springer*.

ELLSWORTH

Empathy followed the junk.

LACEY

She's not in that deep.

ELLSWORTH

Deeper than she let on, to you or anyone. She was struggling, these last few months. She knew I was trying to stop. Didn't want to be the last rat left on that particular ship. Malik's a pretty safe bet there. Probably the only person on Earth whose consumption dwarfs her own.

Lacey sighs into her drink.

LACEY

So are we just the world's biggest suckers?

ELLSWORTH

No. Malik Noble is just the world's biggest asshole.

LACEY

I'll drink to that.

23 EXT. MALIK'S HOUSE - EVENING

Ellsworth stands at Malik's front door, rubbing his hands, shielding himself in the doorway from a cold sea breeze.

The door opens, revealing Lacey, clad in dressing gown.

More piano, rising and falling.

ELLSWORTH

Everyone he's ever known. Every place he's ever been. Make a list, be thorough as you can.

Lacey says nothing for a long time, searching his eyes.

LACEY
What's it going to take for you to
let this go?

ELLSWORTH
(shrugs)
Closure?

24 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - NIGHT

Ellsworth sits on the back steps of the cottage, eating a frozen dinner with plastic knife and fork, chewing with real effort.

ELLSWORTH
(mouth full)
Ugh. This is fucking awful.

He stands, tossing the plastic plate at the dirt, its contents scattering.

Empathy's chain is still fastened to the building, but disappears beneath the porch.

EMPATHY (O.C.)
Well that's just rude.

Ellsworth stifles a dry chuckle.

ELLSWORTH
Yeah.

The distant rhythm of cicadas grows closer with the silence.

After a moment, he looks at the chain, as if about to speak, but stopping himself.

EMPATHY (O.C.)
Do you ever think about those first
few weeks? Was it good after that?

He looks back out to the moonlit field.

EMPATHY (O.C.)
Did too much other stuff get in the
way?

Ellsworth picks stringy beef from his teeth.

EMPATHY (O.C.)
Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH

Ellsworth had to go away. He
couldn't deal with the shit you
brought to his world.

The cicadas slowly fade, leaving a loaded silence.

25 EXT. ABANDONED SHOPFRONT - DAY

Piano continues.

Ellsworth leans against the dirty glass of a long-abandoned store just inside city limits, peering in.

26 EXT. GHETTO APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

Ellsworth buzzes apartment #51, over and over, with no response.

He walks back out to the street, looking up at rows of balconies.

27 EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Ellsworth uses a service lane to reach the rear of one in a series of old warehouses.

He checks padlocks on the big roller door, noting that they're brand new.

28 INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Complete darkness.

A scratching sound outside, then two loud metallic cracks.

Light streams in as the roller door lifts, the BMW idling with its high beams on behind Ellsworth, who wields a crowbar and flashlight. A light rain falls, loud inside the empty steel building.

He enters the warehouse, shining light around its edges to reveal empty packing crates, but not much else.

Ellsworth investigates the front office, a single chair and desk inside.

When he pulls out the chair there are two PLAYING CARDS on its cushion. Both jokers.

29 EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Piano.

ELLSWORTH

Uh... I was kind of counting on you
buzzing me in after I said Malik
Noble. That's all I had.

JOANNE (V.O.)

What is that, a name? It sounds
made-up.

ELLSWORTH

Okay, how about this... did you by
chance ever have a boyfriend who
got you hooked on heroin then
disappeared with all your money?

He looks at the door again. This time it buzzes, clicking
open.

ELLSWORTH

Brilliant.

32 INT. JOANNE'S GHETTO APARTMENT - NIGHT

JOANNE--a strung-out ex-junkie--sits on her couch sipping
herbal tea, facing Ellsworth, who sits on the lone leather-
bound chair, a glass of water on the coffee table in front of
him.

Her small television is muted.

JOANNE

I didn't see him again. They kicked
me out of my flat... I lived on my
brother's couch for a year.

ELLSWORTH

It took you a year to kick the
habit?

JOANNE

Six. Still struggling.

ELLSWORTH

I'm sorry.

JOANNE

So... you're trying to find him?

ELLSWORTH

Yeah.

JOANNE

Why?

Ellsworth frowns.

ELLSWORTH

You're not the first to ask me that.

JOANNE

Listen, you should stop. Yeah?

ELLSWORTH

Stop what? Looking?

She nods.

JOANNE

It won't do you any good. Even if you find him... he can only hurt you more. If your plan is to let him know how much pain he's caused, and hope that he somehow feels guilt... you're barking up the wrong tree.

ELLSWORTH

I don't know what I'll do when we meet again.

JOANNE

Kill him?

ELLSWORTH

Is that what you'd do? Given the chance?

She thinks about this for a long time.

JOANNE

No. Probably not. Hubert Blatt may be deeply unconscious of the person he's become, but he has as much right to life as any other living thing.

ELLSWORTH

Did you just say... Hubert... Blatt?

JOANNE

That's his name. His real name. When we went out he was calling himself Victor Maximo, but he had to use his legal name on the marriage license.

ELLSWORTH

You were married?

JOANNE

Did I not mention that?

ELLSWORTH

No... so you would have met some of his family?

Joanne grows uncomfortable.

JOANNE

Once. His mother, before she died.

ELLSWORTH

Do you remember where she lived?
All I need is a starting point.

She shifts, uncomfortable.

JOANNE

That kind of depends.

ELLSWORTH

I don't follow.

Joanne looks him in the eye.

ELLSWORTH

Oh. Right. Yeah, of course.

Ellsworth takes out his wallet, throwing cash on the table.

JOANNE

Thanks.

She leans across, taking it, then stands.

JOANNE

They buried Mrs. Blatt on his parents' property in Esperance. Let me grab a pen.

ELLSWORTH

Blatt... jeez. That's got to explain some of it at least.

33 EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Back in the day, Malik and Ellsworth--both fucked up on a cocktail of LSD and Peyote--step off a train at Edgewater Station.

It takes them a while to work their way through the simple exit and over the open skywalk, stopping to run their fingertips across every physical item between the stairs and car park.

MALIK

Dude what station is this?

Ellsworth tries to read the sign.

ELLSWORTH
I think it says... Purple... Town.

MALIK
Purpletown? Did we go too far?

ELLSWORTH
Wait... there's no Purpletown.

MALIK
Where are we?

Ellsworth struggles to read the sign.

ELLSWORTH
I think it says... *Purple*... Town.

MALIK
Hey. This is my car.

Reveal Malik and Ellsworth standing beside the only car--a gunmetal grey Jaguar--in the car park.

ELLSWORTH
Holy shit, you're right.

They get in, Malik driving.

34 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Malik squints, trying to see through the windshield but having a hard time of it. Ellsworth tries to navigate, but doesn't fare much better. They move at about 60km/h.

ELLSWORTH
Okay go straight... keep going...
keep going... okay that's a tree.

Malik SLAMS ON THE BRAKES.

35 EXT. MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Wide shot reveals the Jaguar stopped across lanes on wide-open road, not a tree in sight. Tyre smoke wafts from the wheel wells.

36 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Back in the car, Malik stares at Ellsworth.

MALIK
Dude, do you really think I should
be driving on acid *and* Peyote?

Ellsworth considers this.

ELLSWORTH
No, you're probably right...

37 EXT. MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

They both get out, switching seats.

The Jag pulls away, speeding up a few seconds before braking hard again.

38 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Ellsworth stares at Malik.

ELLSWORTH
I think I hit something.

Malik opens his door, looking around.

MALIK
What did it look like?

ELLSWORTH
A camel made of fireworks.

MALIK
Nope. We're good.

They speed up once more, Malik yanking his door closed.

ELLSWORTH
Now where are we going?

MALIK
(blank stare)
Going??

39 EXT. MAIN ROAD - NIGHT

Establishing shot. A long bend.

A high-pitched roar out of the darkness, then Malik's Jaguar comes screaming around the corner, its headlights off.

40 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Ellsworth leans forward over the steering wheel, still trying to see.

He glances at Malik, who lights a joint and cigarette at the same time with a miniature butane torch.

ELLSWORTH
Wait... why are we going so fast?

MALIK
Gotta get to work.

ELLSWORTH
We don't have jobs, dude.

MALIK
Fuck it, let's just go to the beach
then.

ELLSWORTH
That could work.

They keep driving in silence.

ELLSWORTH
Dude where's the beach?

Malik takes long drags on the joint, then passes it to
Ellsworth.

MALIK
What?

ELLSWORTH
Where *is* the beach?

Malik thinks about it.

MALIK
It's pretty close to the ocean.

ELLSWORTH
Right but how do we *get* there?

MALIK
(beat)
Fuck.

ELLSWORTH
Yeah.

41 EXT. THE BEACH - NIGHT

The grey Jag pulls into the beach parking lot, stopping near
a concrete path that leads down between the dunes, parked
across three bays.

They get out, Ellsworth following Malik toward a playground
that looks out over the beach, turning back briefly to point
keys as the Jaguar's alarm chirps twice.

42 EXT. BEACH PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

Malik makes for the swings, standing on one.

MALIK
Check out Antarctica.

ELLSWORTH
I don't think Antarctica is in that direction. Oh, there it is.

A freighter's lights blink every few seconds on the horizon.

MALIK
Dude they're signaling to us.

ELLSWORTH
What does it say?

Malik watches the lights for a long time.

MALIK
I... don't know. Do you understand Morse Code?

ELLSWORTH
Horse comb?

MALIK
Morse Code. Remember on Discovery?

ELLSWORTH
S-O-S? Ah... dash dot square?

Malik stares at Ellsworth, wide-eyed.

MALIK
Dude what the *fuck* are you talking about?

ELLSWORTH
Morse codes, man!

Malik looks back to the lights.

MALIK
What does it say?

Ellsworth gazes out to sea.

ELLSWORTH
I'm pretty sure it's... S-O-S. I saw that somewhere once. It's the only one I know.

MALIK
Sus? What do they mean?

ELLSWORTH
Ah... fuck man I dunno. Antarctica is all over the place tonight. They're out of their element.

MALIK

So should we like... swim out there
and see what's up?

Ellsworth looks from Malik, to the ship, then back again.

ELLSWORTH

I don't see any reason why not.

43 EXT. THE OPEN SEA - NIGHT

Malik cuts through perfectly calm water shining pearl black under bright moonlight. Ellsworth follows close behind.

Ellsworth slows, then Malik stops, treading water there, seeming to choose between Ellsworth and Antarctica.

Malik goes back to Ellsworth, urging him on.

They keep swimming toward the lights.

Ellsworth stops again, overwhelmed by the alkaloids.

MALIK

What's wrong?

Ellsworth begins to cry, trying to hide it from Malik at first.

Malik hugs Ellsworth.

44 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - DAY

More piano.

Ellsworth's BMW pulls up five minutes walk from a small farmhouse, at the end of its dirt driveway.

As he makes his way along the narrow drive, he notices that all the fields are barren. There are no crops or cattle as far as he can see.

Nearing the house, the sound of a television grows louder.

Ellsworth knocks on the front door.

A CRAZY OLD FARMER answers. More crazy-*looking*, than crazy-by-deed. He looks Ellsworth up and down.

CRAZY OLD FARMER

(gruff)
Yeah?

ELLSWORTH

Uh... does a Mrs. *Blatt* live here?

The farmer leans forward.

CRAZY OLD FARMER

Who?

ELLSWORTH

How about Malik Noble? Ever heard of him?

CRAZY OLD FARMER

Who the hell are you?

Ellsworth looks around, then turns to leave.

ELLSWORTH

Never mind.

45 EXT. THE OPEN SEA - DAWN

Malik and Ellsworth, wrapped in blankets, sitting toward the bow of a small FISHING BOAT, cutting through the swell.

Both of them come down off the acid, cold and alone.

Ellsworth glances at Malik, who stares out to sea.

46 EXT. THE BEACH - MORNING

Malik and Ellsworth, still wet, walk back up the concrete path to Malik's Jag.

At the car, Ellsworth pats himself down for keys, unsuccessful. He looks back out to sea.

47 INT. TAXI - MORNING

Malik and Ellsworth in the back of a cab, both staring out opposite windows.

48 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

Ellsworth lays on the cottage's berber carpet, staring up at the ceiling. A pair of baby t-shirts are flattened on the floor beside him, one light blue, one dark blue.

49 INT. MALIK'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Malik's Jaguar is parked next to Lacey's Pulsar in his four car garage. Its trunk and both doors are wide-open.

Malik and Ellsworth enter, a few days after their acid adventure.

MALIK

...so take five pounds of hydro from Perth to Sydney, double our cash and sink it in coke, which we then drive to Melbourne, doubling our cash again. No trucks, no trailers, nothing that would make a cop even blink. Just you, me, a high-performance vehicle, and the open road.

ELLSWORTH

(beat)

You want us to smuggle massive amounts of Schedule A narcotics, stuffed in the trunk of your Jag...

MALIK

Uh huh...

ELLSWORTH

Across state lines?

MALIK

That's pretty much the gist of it.

Ellsworth sighs.

ELLSWORTH

Malik...

MALIK

Coming home in that taxi was the first time in a long while that I've felt like there are no options left for me. We've had our fun, our time off. The blackjack thing is on hold indefinitely, so what else is there?

ELLSWORTH

Maybe we could get jobs?

MALIK

Heh.

50 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - EVENING

The piano continues, unimposing.

Ellsworth slumps in the driver's seat, watching the warehouse again while speaking into a cell phone.

ELLSWORTH

The Blatt thing's a dead end. There was nothing in Esperance but a farmhouse, complete with crazy old farmer. I'm back at the warehouse now. ... Yeah well, wait and see I guess. ... Okay, later.

51 EXT. SOMEWHERE WEST OF THE WA/SA BORDER - NIGHT

Establishing shot--a vast, flat desert landscape.

52 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Malik drives while Ellsworth ties off his left arm, plugging a syringe into it. Thumbing its plunger, he leans back and draws in a slow gasp.

ELLSWORTH

Ohhh... jeez.

Malik takes another full syringe from the cup holder, steering with his knee a moment to flick it and tie off.

Ellsworth stretches out in the passenger seat, eyes glazed over with opiate lust.

Malik shoots into his forearm, just above the wrist.

He takes some time to adjust to the high, struggling to keep his eyes open, rigid.

MALIK

Take the wheel a second.

Ellsworth takes it, not even looking at the road.

Malik's eyes roll back in his head, his jaw grinding left and right.

MALIK

What *is* this shit? Fuck!

Ellsworth limply nods his agreement.

ELLSWORTH

It's got something... of a *kick*.

They begin to drift over lane markers, toward the middle.

MALIK

This is quite possibly the greatest junk I've ever had. Kalgoorlie's been holding out on us, Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH
Let's stop there again. On the...
way back.

MALIK
Agreed.

Malik takes the wheel once more, steering them back to the left lane.

53 EXT. THE NULLABOR PLAIN - NIGHT

Malik's Jaguar roars across the flat, open road.

54 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR

Ellsworth drives now, Malik sorting through his glove box.

MALIK
I'm sure I had acid in here.

ELLSWORTH
Some acid would really hit the spot
right now. The Nullarbor Plane is
so *boring*.

Malik comes back with a film canister.

MALIK
Ah *huh!*

ELLSWORTH
Found it?

He shakes it.

MALIK
Nope, not acid.

ELLSWORTH
What then?

MALIK
Pure DMT.

ELLSWORTH
DMT?

MALIK
You know, the active ingredient in
mescaline? Most powerful
hallucinogen known to man?

ELLSWORTH
Ohhhh D-M-T. Do we eat it?

MALIK

Smoke it.

ELLSWORTH

Should I... pull over first?

MALIK

Nah screw it.

ELLSWORTH

You do put forward a pretty convincing argument.

55 EXT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

A hood-mounted shot looking back at Ellsworth and Malik through the windshield. A lot of vibration seems to be bleeding through the Jag's suspension.

56 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Ellsworth continues to drive, a little spaced now.

ELLSWORTH

I don't even feel it yet. Are you sure I smoked enough?

Malik looks outside.

MALIK

Uh, Ellsworth?

57 EXT. THE NULLABOR PLAIN - NIGHT

Reveal Malik's Jag, cutting through a barren, darkened FIELD, parallel to the road but a good fifty feet from it.

58 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Ellsworth slumps in the driver's seat, weakly pawing at the wheel.

59 EXT. THE NULLABOR PLAIN - DAWN

Malik's Jaguar is no longer anywhere near the road, tyres tearing up the desert sand.

It continues to cut across the dry, flat land at a good hundred clicks per hour. The ride is a tad bumpy.

60 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - DAWN

Ellsworth and Malik, pupils wide as saucers, stare through the windscreen, transfixed by the desert as it rushes by beneath them. Ellsworth still drives.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

Mushrooms made me aware of it. Acid brought me a stone's throw away. *DMT*, it broke me in half, the physical and the *metaphysical*, squeezing my consciousness through cracks in the wall of reality. Free of the self, I found it impossible to recall pain as anything but an association. Without ego, there was no suffering, no *feeling* at all, in the traditional sense.

ELLSWORTH (CONT'D)

(speaking now)

There was only blissful reflection... a glimpse of the place I had come from, and would no doubt soon return to.

Malik turns to Ellsworth, brow creased.

MALIK

What?

Ellsworth turns to Malik.

ELLSWORTH

(long pause)

What?

61 EXT. THE NULLABOR PLAIN - DAWN

Malik's Jag drives toward the sunrise, still cutting through desert.

62 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - DAWN

Malik drives now while Ellsworth sleeps beside him. They're back on a road, but not *the* road.

He pulls into a petrol station that's just opening up, a single ATTENDANT turning keys in one of the two pumps.

The window slides down as Malik pulls up beside him.

MALIK

Hi there... I'm wondering, where are we exactly?

The attendant spits on the ground.

ATTENDANT

Earth.

MALIK

See, that joke's been going around the city for years already.

ATTENDANT

I like your car.

MALIK

Thanks.

ATTENDANT

I was thinking about buying one of these myself.

MALIK

But then you remembered that they cost a lot of money, right?

63 INT. SYDNEY WEED DEALER'S HOUSE - EVENING

A pair of STONERS, sunk deep in leather beanbags, a bong between them, watching cartoons. Smoke hangs thick on the ceiling.

They react to a knock at the door.

Urban stoner #1 leans back to part the vertical blinds.

STONER #1

Dude it's Malik. And some other guy.

STONER #2

With the weed?

The knock again.

STONER #1

You ordered more weed?

STONER #2

What are you, high? We ordered five fucking pounds of hydro from Perth you dolt.

STONER #1

That's tonight?

Another knock, impatient now.

STONER #2

Dude just get the door.

64 EXT. SYDNEY WEED DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Malik and Ellsworth exit the home with an empty sports bag, both high as shit.

ELLSWORTH
Well that was a lot less intense
than I expected.

Malik disarms the Jag's alarm.

MALIK
Just wait til you meet the coke
dealers.

Ellsworth stops walking.

ELLSWORTH
Please don't fuck with me when I'm
paranoid.

Malik shrugs, getting in.

65 EXT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Malik's Jag pulls up outside of a Villawood home.

66 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

Malik stuffs bundles of cash into his coat pockets.

67 EXT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As they get out of the car he locks it, then lights a cigarette, the empty sports bag over one shoulder.

68 INT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Two COKEHEADS, Derek and Omar, sit at opposite ends of a big leather couch, watching a wildlife documentary on their widescreen TV.

The doorbell rings. They look at each other.

69 EXT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Malik and Ellsworth wait on the front stoop, the door eventually sliding open just a crack.

Derek opens it wide when he recognizes Malik, shaking his hand.

DEREK

Mate!

70 INT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Derek leads Malik and Ellsworth into the living room, where they sit down on a second leather sofa.

DEREK

(thick NZ accent)
Omar, this is Malik and...

ELLSWORTH

Ellsworth.

DEREK

(shaking his hand)
Ellsworth, Derek mate.

OMAR

Are these the guys from Perth?

Derek returns to his seat, chopping a small pile of coke on the glass coffee table into four lines with a credit card.

MALIK

Yeah, that's us.

OMAR

I suppose you'll be wanting that fucktonne of cocaine we purchased on your behalf then.

MALIK

If you don't mind.

71 EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Piano continues, lighter than before.

Back at the warehouse, the same two truckers back their mid-sized truck up to the roller door, then jump out. They find both locks broken yet again.

TRUCKER #1

Well this is just getting ridiculous. What's that, four times?

TRUCKER #2

Four or five.

TRUCKER #1

What a shitty world we live in.

TRUCKER #2
It's just a couple of padlocks.

TRUCKER #1
No, it's the principle.

TRUCKER #2
That's what you say about
everything.

They open it up and go inside.

72 INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lights begin to blink on in the darkness, illuminating the massive empty space.

Trucker #2 sniffs the air.

TRUCKER #2
What *is* that?

Ellsworth steps out of the office, crowbar in one hand, Zippo lighter in the other.

ELLSWORTH
A whole lot of petrol.

TRUCKER #1
(surprised)
Whoa!

ELLSWORTH
Don't move, okay?

TRUCKER #2
Why not?

Ellsworth seems perplexed by the question.

ELLSWORTH
Because I'll torch the place if you
do, retard.

TRUCKER #1
Hey there's no need for any of
that.

ELLSWORTH
How exactly are you two clowns
affiliated with Malik Noble?

The truckers look at each other.

ELLSWORTH
Talk quick, I'm a busy guy.

He flicks the Zippo lid open.

TRUCKER #1

Look I don't know who Alec Moby is, but if it's the same guy who contracted us to run packages between here and Esperance then you can tell him he owes us four months of payments.

Ellsworth watches his eyes.

ELLSWORTH

Esperance?

TRUCKER #2

Yeah.

ELLSWORTH

Then what's the deal with this warehouse?

TRUCKER #1

We're trying to start a freight business.

Ellsworth scratches the back of his head, hesitant.

ELLSWORTH

Oh. Okay. Wow. I guess I... I'm sorry about the whole... oh man, now I feel really bad about pouring fuel all over the place.

He closes the Zippo lid.

TRUCKER #1

So... you're *not* going to torch the warehouse?

ELLSWORTH

No. Again, sorry.

A KNOCK at the roller door.

The piano halts, abrupt.

Everyone looks at the door.

Trucker #1 suddenly makes a dash for Ellsworth while #2 runs to the door, screaming.

TRUCKER #2

The guy's *here!* He's in here with us now!

Trucker #1 tackles Ellsworth, smacking his lighter across the room before bringing him down.

They grapple on the floor, Ellsworth fighting back with the crowbar, landing a few good blows before #1 manages to knock that out of reach also.

The first trucker begins to strangle Ellsworth as his buddy lifts the roller door for MALIK NOBLE.

Malik steps in through the doorway, watching Ellsworth struggle.

As his eyes begin to turn bloodshot and the colour drains from his face, Ellsworth catches a glimpse of Malik, standing there watching him lose.

MALIK

Ellsworth? Hey buddy, how you been?

TRUCKER #2

Kill that fucker Andy!

MALIK

You can't.

TRUCKER #2

What?

MALIK

I'm the only one who can kill him.

TRUCKER #2

Are... are you fucking high?

MALIK

Look, it's a long story. I'll tell you about it in the car.

The trucker stares at Malik with utter confusion.

MALIK

Unless you want to stay here and take your chances?

Malik and the trucker exit, the latter taking a reluctant look back before Malik slams the roller door shut.

Still watching the place where Malik stood, Ellsworth slowly stops fighting trucker #1, letting leathery hands cut deeper into his throat.

Ellsworth stares into one of the huge fluorescent lights, something like a choir feint in his ears, as if bleeding through the cold concrete beneath.

The trucker relaxes his grip as Ellsworth's eyes stop twitching.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
 On the precipice. Everything that
 time will ever touch, laid bare.

The trucker stares, watching Ellsworth's lifeless eyes for a long time.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
 For just this instant, not long
 enough to grasp even a fraction,
 all the keyholes line up.

As the trucker shakily stands, Ellsworth inhales, convulsing to life, kicking the guy's feet out from under him, bringing him down face-first on the concrete.

Ellsworth lays there on the warehouse floor, gasping.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
 Pain is the precursor to change,
 without fail. Because even *dying*
 passes, eventually.

That one fluorescent light above him blinks out.

The trucker groans, punch-drunk.

Ellsworth looks over at the trucker. He crawls to the unconscious man, patting down his various pockets. From one, he produces a mobile phone.

73 INT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A pile of COCAINE PARCELS are now stacked on the coffee table, Malik counting out the bundles of money from his pockets.

He pauses, looking at Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH
 What's wrong?

Malik stares for just a little longer than is comfortable. Cold and distant. He snaps out of it, throwing down the cash.

MALIK
 Oh jeez.

OMAR
 Hm?

MALIK
 Well this is just a little
 embarrassing.

DEREK
 What's wrong?

MALIK
We're five hundred short.

ELLSWORTH
What?

OMAR
You're joking.

MALIK
'fraid not. Must have been the
stoners. They shorted us and I just
didn't count right.

OMAR
I don't see how it's our problem.

Malik begins stuffing the cash back in his pockets.

MALIK
It's not, no. Look why don't we
run to the ATM and fix it up?
There's got to be a Seven-Eleven
near here, right?

Malik goes to stand up but Omar stands first, putting a hand
up to halt him.

OMAR
Just a second.

Ellsworth seems to freeze up.

DEREK
Hey it's all good--

OMAR
I said *just a second*.

A tension filled moment for everyone in the room.

OMAR
How do we know you're coming back?

Malik's eyes dart to Ellsworth.

MALIK
Ellsworth will stay.

Everyone looks at Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH
Wait--

DEREK
Okay, no worries. See? We're cool.

Omar slowly nods.

OMAR

Yeah. Okay.

Malik stands, moving toward the door. As he opens it, he takes one last look back at Ellsworth.

MALIK

I'll be back.

74 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

More recently, Ellsworth drives the dirt-encrusted BMW along a small country road, reading directions from the trucker's mobile phone.

He moves the phone aside to reveal the small cottage from our first scenes.

That soft piano starts up again, flooding audio.

He drives uphill, over grazing grass, cutting the engine halfway there to walk the rest. Getting out of the Beamer, he takes a baseball bat from the back seat.

As he nears the cottage he begins to tread carefully.

Going around back, Ellsworth tries the screen door to find it open. The cheap plywood door is locked, but three hard shoves with his shoulder make it give, caved in at the middle, cracked around its handle.

Storming inside, he heads for the master bedroom, finding it empty.

Proceeding quickly to the ensuite, he stops halfway through the door, finding Empathy there--curled up on the floor, shaking violently.

He drops the bat.

ELLSWORTH

Empathy Lee. Well I'll be damned.

She looks up at him, her face stained by smeared mascara.

EMPATHY

(shocked)

Ellsworth?

Empathy tries to get up but he punches her in the throat, sending her back to the cold floor, coughing and wheezing.

EMPATHY

I'm... (sob)... I'm so sorry,
Ellsworth.

He crouches by her face, uncomfortably close.

ELLSWORTH

You've got it all wrong, baby. I'm not here for you.

EMPATHY

(hesitant)

Malik?

ELLSWORTH

Eventually. But first, there's something I'm sure you've been just dying to tell me.

EMPATHY

I don't... (sob) ...do you know, then? Someone told you? Oh God... oh no... I'm so sorry. I'm so... sorry...

ELLSWORTH

You poor, dumb, piece of shit junky. I've known since that night. I've known since I found your pregnancy test on the lawn, fucktard. It's the only reason I would come this far.

EMPATHY

Oh Jesus...

ELLSWORTH

Where's my baby, Empathy? Does he have it?

Empathy cries so hard that she roars, her whole body shuddering with the raw emotion washing over her.

ELLSWORTH

Tell me where to find Malik. Tell me where my baby is. I promise... it will save your life.

She takes control of herself, calming down, still laying face down on the bathroom floor.

EMPATHY

I'll show you.

Ellsworth stands, unsure.

ELLSWORTH

Or you could tell me.

EMPATHY

(vacant)

I'll show you.

75 INT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellsworth looks about the room uncomfortably as Derek and Omar return with another small baggie of coke.

They sit down again, Derek chopping up while Omar leans over toward Ellsworth.

OMAR
So your friend, he knows his way
around here?

Ellsworth shrugs, beyond nervous.

ELLSWORTH
I... would have thought so. But I
mean, forty-five minutes... what's
up with that?

DEREK
Have another line.

ELLSWORTH
Nah, I'm still flying.

DEREK
Have another line, man.

Ellsworth looks at Omar, then stands, kneeling beside the coffee table to snort one of the monster lines of cocaine.

Their pile of coke parcels still occupies half the table space, intrusive--a constant reminder.

Ellsworth sits down again.

DEREK
Your friend doesn't owe you money
or anything?

OMAR
Yeah. Or maybe you've got some dirt
on the guy?

ELLSWORTH
Well he... he has several hundred
thousand dollars of my money, for
like, safekeeping.

DEREK & OMAR
Oh.

ELLSWORTH
What? That doesn't mean anything.
Let me try calling again.

Derek tosses him the cordless phone.

ELLSWORTH
(dialling)
I'm sure he just ran out of fuel.

76 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DUSK

Ellsworth follows Empathy uphill, the sun setting to their right.

77 EXT. HUME HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Malik speeds along the Hume Highway, leaving Sydney.

78 INT. MALIK'S JAGUAR - NIGHT

His cell phone begins to ring.

Malik picks the phone up, looking at it a second before answering.

MALIK
This is Malik. ... Yeah, I got it.
... Not any time soon I'm afraid.
... No, I can't do that Ellsworth.
... I'm sorry. I hope that maybe,
in time, you can forgive me for all
of this.

A burst of static audible through the phone.

MALIK
This isn't payback, Ellsworth. It's
not about anything you did or
didn't do. It's just the way I am.
It's what happens when you become
involved with a man like me. Good
luck, and I sincerely hope you make
it out of there alive.

He hangs up, switching it off.

79 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

Empathy vacantly counts out her steps then looks around, pointing at a fresh MOUND OF DIRT without actually looking at it. Ellsworth catches up, blinking at the place where she points.

ELLSWORTH
I don't...

He trails off, turning suddenly ashen. Slowly, he begins to weep, dropping to his knees beside it.

Clawing at the small pile of dirt, he blinks through tears, digging faster with his hands.

Empathy turns away, also crying. She sits with her back to him, huddled against the cold wind.

80 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - EVENING

A wide shot of the small cottage as the sun sets behind it. The landscape is eerily still. The piano rises and falls.

81 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

In the dying half-light Ellsworth continues to dig, about two feet down now.

It's here that his fingernails scratch against a dirty cardboard lid--the oversized box that used to contain a Versace leather trench coat.

Ellsworth pauses, staring for a long moment, before digging the box out.

Laying it down beside the shallow grave, he hesitates again.

Close on Ellsworth as he removes the lid. Tears stream down his face.

ELLSWORTH

What?

Understanding seems to creep across his strained features.

Reveal the open cardboard box, a pair of tiny human skeletons, facing each other, their foreheads touching.

For the longest time he just looks, unable to stop crying.

82 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - EVENING

Ellsworth, caked in dirt, sits at the dining room table, staring at the open window.

After a long while he blinks, slowly becoming aware of his surroundings again.

ELLSWORTH

Empathy?

Nothing.

He walks to the bathroom, finding her collapsed against the shower screen, a tourniquet cutting into her bicep, needle hanging out of the arm.

Ellsworth pulls it out, slapping her softly, then harder. He takes hold of her by the wrists and drags her, groggy but protesting, through the house and down the back steps, across gravel and mud, around the side, where his car is parked.

He opens the boot and reaches in, throwing a rolled-up chain over one shoulder with effort before taking out a cordless drill and toolbox.

He acts without thought, as if on autopilot.

83 INT. SYDNEY COKE DEALER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The doorbell rings.

Ellsworth, soaked with sweat, seems to perk up.

ELLSWORTH

I told you guys he was fucking with me.

Derek opens it, four more SYDNEY COKEHEADS streaming in.

They all eye Ellsworth suspiciously.

ELLSWORTH

Oh shit.

Omar stands over Ellsworth, intimidating.

DEREK

Oh shit is right bro.

ELLSWORTH

Are you guys gonna fuck me up?

OMAR

You can't even imagine... the things we're gonna do to you.

Ellsworth freezes, staring at Omar.

Omar suddenly starts laughing, then everyone besides Ellsworth joins in.

Omar gets the other cokeheads an eight-ball, exchanging it for cash.

Ellsworth breathes a huge sigh of relief as Derek walks them to the door.

OMAR

But seriously, Ellsworth... what are we gonna do about all this coke?

ELLSWORTH

Have you ever heard the phrase,
*Playing Cards as a Deadly Yet
Inexpensive Means of Self-Defense?*

OMAR

No? Is that from the Bible or
something?

ELLSWORTH

What if I said we can make twice
what that coke's worth in under
ninety minutes at a blackjack
table? You guys *do* like money,
right?

84 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - NIGHT

Ellsworth sits on the back steps smoking a joint, a few feet
from where Empathy eats cat food out of the can with her
hands.

ELLSWORTH

I'm only going to ask you this once
a day.

EMPATHY

(mouth full)
Go fuck yourself.

ELLSWORTH

Where is Malik Noble?

She tosses the can at him, Ellsworth unflinching as it
ricochets off the wall behind him.

He brushes flakes of tuna from one shoulder.

Empathy makes a leap for him, jerked back off her feet by the
chain.

She rolls about in the dirt, gagging.

ELLSWORTH

This can only get worse for you.

He stands and goes inside, locking the brand new door.

She gets to her feet, shouting after him.

EMPATHY

He left me *too*, you fucking
asshole!

85 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

An old orange Nissan Pulsar ambles up the hill toward the cottage, pulling up next to Ellsworth's BMW.

86 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

Ellsworth washes a plate and cup in the kitchen, finishing up to answer a knock at the front door.

He greets Lacey, letting her in.

LACEY

Hey. It's in the boot of my car.

ELLSWORTH

Okay.

LACEY

Where is she?

Ellsworth leads Lacey to the back door.

87 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

Empathy sits with her back to the steps, head down as if deep in thought.

LACEY

I can't believe you really found her.

Empathy reacts to the voice, turning to look at Ellsworth and Lacey.

LACEY

Oh Empathy... look at you.

EMPATHY

What's she doing here?

ELLSWORTH

She wants to help.

EMPATHY

I don't need help like hers.

ELLSWORTH

I didn't say she's helping you.

Empathy fights back tears.

EMPATHY

I couldn't stop him, Ellsworth. I didn't even know. I would have died for them.

(MORE)

EMPATHY (cont'd)

He dosed me with the uncut shit and when I woke up they were dead... he had already buried them. They just wouldn't stop crying.

LACEY

What's she talking about?

Empathy begins to cry again.

EMPATHY

They were probably already addicted. They couldn't even help it... they were just born that way. He said if I didn't make them stop... I didn't think he had it in him.

LACEY

Ellsworth?

EMPATHY

I stayed here with him, instead of bolting... and he killed them.

Ellsworth walks away, toward the front of the cottage, Lacey kneeling in front of her sister.

LACEY

Oh no...

She touches Empathy's cheek.

LACEY

He killed your baby?

Empathy looks up at her.

EMPATHY

(soft)
He hated them so much...

A tear runs down Lacey's cheek.

LACEY

I promised myself I'd never feel pity for you again.

Empathy turns cold.

EMPATHY

That's your biggest problem. All you ever *could* feel for me was pity.

LACEY

That's just not true.

Empathy abruptly snaps out of her malaise to throw a concealed loop of chain over Lacey's head, pulling it tight around her throat, using her as a shield.

EMPATHY
(shouting)
Ellsworth!

Nothing.

EMPATHY
(shouting)
Ellsworth come back here!
(to Lacey, hissing)
You have no idea, the delight I would take in crushing your fucking windpipe. I hate you in a way that even I don't understand. Every time I see you Lacey, from the moment I knew how to hate, every time I see you I just want to cut your beautiful head right off. You probably think I'm jealous, but that would be too easy. It's because of the way you look down your nose at everything I am without ever knowing that you're doing it.

Lacey tries to gasp, unable.

EMPATHY
(whispering)
I love you, Lacey. But I can't live in a world that has you in it.

Ellsworth comes back around the house with a long, Russian WWII-era rifle levelled at Empathy. He squints through the attached modern scope.

ELLSWORTH
Empathy. I'd hate to have to kill you now, after we've come so far.

Empathy loosens her grip just slightly, seriously considering her options.

Lacey swings her head back hard into Empathy's face, BREAKING HER NOSE with a loud crack.

EMPATHY
(shouts, nasal)
Fucking doucheturd!

Lacey slides out of the chain, spinning around to clock Empathy, again in the nose.

EMPATHY
(shouts, more nasal)
GOD WHY!

Lacey stumbles back to rest on the stairs, bruises already appearing around her throat, sucking in air.

Empathy rolls around in the dirt, holding her face.

Ellsworth lowers the rifle.

ELLSWORTH
That hurt.

88 INT. SOL CITY CASINO - NIGHT

Ellsworth strolls up to the cashier at Sydney's Sol City Casino, slapping down a single pile of hundreds.

Omar and Derek, dressed in slick suits now, stand in the background trying to look nondescript.

89 INT. SOL CITY CASINO - NIGHT

Ellsworth and Omar sit at opposite ends of a '\$500 minimum bet' blackjack table, two other GAMBLERS between them.

Derek sits at the closest poker machine, absently pressing buttons while he watches the game.

Omar takes his chips and gets up, walking toward the bathrooms.

Ellsworth continues to bet the minimum amount, playing it safe.

Omar stands across the room, where he can see Derek but not Ellsworth.

Ellsworth makes eye contact with Derek, pinching the bridge of his nose, rubbing his eyes.

Derek nods to Omar, who begins walking back to the table.

Omar takes his seat again at the table, setting three piles of \$500 chips down before sliding them across to bet.

Ellsworth stays at the minimum.

The DEALER's one showing card is a Queen.

Ellsworth is dealt a ten and a nine. The gambler next to him gets a seven and eight. The next, a ten and a jack.

Omar is dealt a KING and an ACE.

Everyone opts to stay then the dealer turns over a five. She hits, going bust with another QUEEN.

Omar maintains his calm exterior while the chips come back doubled.

90 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Establishing shot, the hills cast long, deep shadows as the sun rises over Western Australia.

91 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE BEDROOM - MORNING

Ellsworth and Lacey lay back-to-back on the double bed. She's under the covers, him on top.

LACEY

Awake?

ELLSWORTH

Yeah.

LACEY

Want to go to the roadhouse for breakfast?

ELLSWORTH

'kay.

Neither of them move.

ELLSWORTH

I honestly can't be fucked.
Doing... anything. Ever again.

Lacey's eyes narrow, listening carefully, wanting to turn but afraid it will derail his train of thought. She wants to hear what she senses is coming next.

ELLSWORTH

I didn't even know them. You might think I don't have any right to miss them...

LACEY

I don't think that.

ELLSWORTH

But I grew used to the notion. Of having a child out there, waiting for me. To come and find it. To rescue him. Or her. To be a hero. And one day be able to tell my kid the story of how close he/she came to never growing up.

As she begins to cry, Lacey remains still, silent.

ELLSWORTH
And now look. Look what went and
happened.

Lacey rolls over now, seeing Ellsworth's far away stare.

ELLSWORTH
I don't even feel it.

LACEY
Feel what?

ELLSWORTH
Anything.

LACEY
It's too much. It's normal.

ELLSWORTH
Maybe.

He finally looks at Lacey, becoming aware of her state. He watches her for a long time.

ELLSWORTH
There were two of them.

Lacey finally breaks, unable to keep her composure. Ellsworth pulls her closer, a tight hug. She sobs into his ear.

92 EXT. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COUNTRYSIDE GRAVE - EVENING

Ellsworth sits cross-legged by the twins' grave, rebuilt now with stones and a wooden cross.

He shuffles a pack of cards, separating the Ace and King of Hearts.

He digs an inch-deep trench, laying the pair of cards face-up, side by side, before burying them.

From the shade of the distant house, Empathy watches Ellsworth.

93 INT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAY

Lacey and Ellsworth sit facing each other at the small jarrah dining table, a pot of coffee on it.

They both make an effort to ignore Empathy's pounding on the outer wall.

LACEY
What will you do with her?

ELLSWORTH
She's going to help me find Malik.

LACEY
What makes you think she even knows
where he is?

ELLSWORTH
She knows.

LACEY
If you haven't already beaten it
out of her...

ELLSWORTH
I haven't beaten her.

LACEY
She said you punched her in the
throat.

ELLSWORTH
Oh. Yeah.

LACEY
Are you going to kill my sister,
Ellsworth?

He blinks.

LACEY
I don't know if I can keep helping
you.

He looks down at the table, deep in thought.

LACEY
She's my sister. I know she's done
everything wrong... but she's my
family.

ELLSWORTH
I'm not going to kill Empathy.

She searches his eyes.

LACEY
Then what? What happens now?

Ellsworth stands, clearing the table.

94 EXT. COUNTRY COTTAGE - DAWN

Ellsworth kneels over Empathy, who sleeps curled-up in a ball
by the stairs.

He unlocks the padlock with a set of keys, waking her when he removes the chain.

She flinches, scampering back.

Lacey watches from a safe distance.

EMPATHY
This is it, then?

Ellsworth walks away, rolling up the chain.

ELLSWORTH
Yep. You're free to go.

She follows a few feet behind him to the BMW, watching Ellsworth return the chain to its trunk.

EMPATHY
Are you joking? You're going to shoot me with that rifle when I run.

He slams the trunk shut.

ELLSWORTH
No. You're free to go.

EMPATHY
Why?

Ellsworth shrugs, walking past her.

ELLSWORTH
You're clean now. You're free of it. Free of *him*. If you go back with a clear head, knowing what you know, then it's your call. Your own damn choice. Sink or swim, live or die, as of today it's all up to you.
(beat)
So *bye*.

Ellsworth and Lacey go back inside, locking the door.

Empathy begins to walk downhill, occasionally glancing back at the cottage.

95 INT. SOL CITY CASINO - DAWN

Omar now has trouble seeing the cards for his chips.

A CROWD has gathered, a lot of them betting on his hands.

A CASINO SECURITY MAN pushes between them, laying a hand on Omar's shoulder.

Omar looks at it.

Ellsworth stares, freezing up.

CASINO SECURITY MAN
Sir, we're going to have to ask you
to leave.

OMAR
Have I done something wrong?

A pair of chips rattle in Ellsworth's trembling hand.

The security man removes his hand.

CASINO SECURITY MAN
No sir, you're just too damn good
for us.

Omar slowly smiles.

OMAR
I'll tell you what. Just this once,
I'm going to let you guys off
cheap. But next time I come here...

He stands, a CASINO FLOOR MANAGER stepping forward to stack
the chips into a rack.

OMAR
Next time, you better have enough
cash on you to cover my badass
Poker skills.

CASINO SECURITY MAN
You mean Blackjack?

OMAR
Right.

The security man nods, indicating the nearest cashier.

Ellsworth puts another chip on the table.

ELLSWORTH
(to dealer)
Okay deal me some of that guy's
cards, because I'm fucking *broke*.

96 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - AFTERNOON

Ellsworth and Lacey sit in his BMW, parked in a lot across
the street from a Greyhound bus terminal.

LACEY
Should one of us go in there?

ELLSWORTH

Why risk being seen? All we need to do is watch those buses...

Lacey nods.

LACEY

This feels like that movie with all the staking out...

ELLSWORTH

You mean *Stakeout*?

LACEY

No.

ELLSWORTH

Another Stakeout?

LACEY

No.

ELLSWORTH

Um... *Lethal Weapon 2*?

LACEY

Maybe. Was that the *Lethal Weapon* where he gets dragged behind a car?

ELLSWORTH

I think they all have him being dragged by a car.

LACEY

Oh.

ELLSWORTH

It's the one where the bad guys have diplomatic immunity.

LACEY

And Mel Gibson is like, all suicidal and in-your-face crazy, right?

ELLSWORTH

That's pretty much all of them too.

LACEY

Oh.

97 EXT. SOUTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Ellsworth's BMW follows one of the big Greyhound coaches, a good distance behind.

98 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - NIGHT

Lacey sleeps on Ellsworth's bundled-up jacket, pressed against the passenger window.

Ellsworth glances over at her, blinking away sleep.

A town approaches in the distance, lighting up the empty night.

The bus begins to slow, indicating left, pulling in at a roadhouse.

Ellsworth drives past slowly, watching it stop near fuel pumps.

He pulls up in a parking area on the other side, next to an old ute.

Ellsworth adjusts the rearview to watch passengers getting off the coach.

Lacey begins to stir, Ellsworth becoming noticeably anxious the longer he watches the bus.

LACEY

Where are we?

ELLSWORTH

Dunno. Some roadhouse.

LACEY

What's wrong?

ELLSWORTH

She didn't get off the bus.

LACEY

Are you sure?

ELLSWORTH

I need your hat and scarf.

99 EXT. ANONYMOUS HIGHWAY ROADHOUSE - NIGHT

Ellsworth, concealing his face with black beanie and dark red scarf, approaches the roadhouse with his head down and hands in pockets.

He stands at the window, trying not to be too obvious about looking inside.

Dissatisfied, he moves to the bus.

100 INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Ellsworth climbs the first two steps, leaning over the top three to peer down the long aisle.

He treads stealthily between pairs of seats, looking left then right, mostly at people's belongings on the seats, but he also encounters the occasional SLEEPING PASSENGER.

The rear toilet flushes a second before the door opens.

Ellsworth spins around to collapse into the nearest seat, next to a sleeping OLD LADY.

He tilts his head forward, pretending to sleep as Empathy staggers past, fucked-up on heroin. He watches from beneath the beanie's rim as she negotiates the bus stairs and ambles away from the pumps to light a cigarette.

The old lady is awake now, staring at him.

OLD LADY
(scared)
Who *are* you?

ELLSWORTH
(beat)
Ah... this isn't my... bus. Seat.
Bus seat.

Ellsworth gets up, jogging off the bus.

101 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - NIGHT

Lacey waits as Ellsworth gets back in the car.

LACEY
What happened? Was she there?

He watches the bus in a side mirror.

ELLSWORTH
Yeah, she was in the port-a-loo
pushing off.

Lacey sighs.

LACEY
Well there it is.

ELLSWORTH
Uh huh.

LACEY
You might as well say it.

ELLSWORTH

I figure why be a dick about it?

LACEY

I *should* feel sorry for her, but in a way--in a very *big* way--I'm just really glad her life's so shit-tastic. Am I a bad person for that?

ELLSWORTH

Probably.

102 EXT. SOUTH-WESTERN AUSTRALIAN HIGHWAY - DAWN

Ellsworth's BMW continues to follow at a safe distance behind the Greyhound as morning sun lights the sky.

103 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - DAWN

Ellsworth keeps driving, while Lacey keeps sleeping.

104 EXT. SYDNEY AIRPORT - DAWN

Omar's black Ford Explorer pulls into two minute parking at the airport.

105 INT. OMAR'S EXPLORER - DAWN

Omar drives, Derek sitting in the passenger seat. They both turn around to Ellsworth in the back seat, Omar handing him an envelope stuffed with cash.

OMAR

This will get you back to Perth at least. I figure you don't need much, just stop by a casino when you get home.

ELLSWORTH

Only one casino in Perth, and I'm not allowed to go there anymore. But thanks, I appreciate it.

DEREK

So why don't you take the blackjack thing on tour? Plenty of places in the world to gamble.

Ellsworth nods.

ELLSWORTH

You know... maybe I'll do something like that.

OMAR

Well good luck, Ellsworth bro.
Don't let that fucker off easy.

DEREK

Give us a call if you come back to
Sydney. We'll check out a casino or
two. And tell Malik I said go fuck
yourself.

ELLSWORTH

Will do. Thanks again for not
killing or raping me, guys.

OMAR

Hey man, thank you.

106 EXT. ESPERANCE GREYHOUND STAND - AFTERNOON

Ellsworth's BMW pulls into a used car lot opposite where the
coach lets off about half of its PASSENGERS, the DRIVER
retrieving their luggage from a side compartment.

Empathy stands apart from them, no luggage at all, trying to
hail a cab.

107 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - AFTERNOON

Ellsworth cuts the engine, slumping back in his seat while
adjusting the rearview.

LACEY

Where the hell did she get money
for a bus and heroin?

Ellsworth coughs. Lacey turns to him.

LACEY

No! Fuck off. She wouldn't...

ELLSWORTH

Who knows what that girl is capable
of.

Lacey looks back at the mirror, frowning.

LACEY

Do you want me to drive for a
while?

ELLSWORTH

I think we're nearly there. I can
hold out a little longer.

LACEY

You figured out where she's going?

108 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - DAY

A flashback to Ellsworth's farmhouse visit--the piano resumes.

Ellsworth walks back toward the car, pausing a moment to look around at those barren fields, then at the house.

109 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE - DAY

The farmer's breath echoes in the darkened claustrophobic space, a single shaft of light falling across his eyes as he squints through a crack in the boarded-up front window.

His POV of Ellsworth, overexposed by harsh midday sun in the distance.

110 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - DAY

Ellsworth continues to his car.

111 EXT. ESPERANCE HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

The BMW follows a few vehicles back from Empathy's TAXI on a moderately busy highway that traces the southern coastline.

112 EXT. ESPERANCE HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

On an open stretch of road, Ellsworth speeds up, into the opposite lane.

He overtakes the one vehicle between them, gaining on the taxi fast.

ELLSWORTH

Hold that map up to your window.

Lacey unfolds the big ROAD MAP, obscuring their view through the passenger window as they roar past the cab.

LACEY

What are you doing? You'll lose her.

ELLSWORTH

It's okay. I know where she's going now.

113 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The crazy old farmer sits alone in an aging recliner, a roaring blaze in the open fireplace.

He smokes a self-rolled cigarette.

The peace is shattered as Ellsworth kicks the front door open, coming inside with his long rifle levelled at the old man's head.

ELLSWORTH
(screaming)
You lied to me, dickhole! Where is
he?!

The farmer sits, still calm, entirely undisturbed. He takes another long drag before looking up at Ellsworth.

CRAZY OLD FARMER
Help you with something?

Ellsworth presses the rifle's barrel to the farmer's cheek.

ELLSWORTH
I'm only going to ask you this
question once a day.

Crazy old farmer takes one more long drag, before flicking the cigarette across the room.

Ellsworth cocks the hammer.

ELLSWORTH
Where is Malik Noble?

The old man suddenly slaps the barrel aside, leaping at Ellsworth in the one impossibly fluid motion.

114 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - AFTERNOON

Lacey leans against the BMW's hood, parked behind the farm house out of view.

A GUNSHOT rings out from inside, startling her.

She runs around the house, pausing when she sees Empathy stopped halfway up the long dirt driveway, staring right back at her.

There's a long, drawn-out moment where their eyes meet... pistols would be drawn here, were they available.

Empathy BOLTS, back the other way.

Lacey sprints after her, closing the distance between them quickly.

At the end of the driveway Lacey catches up, taking a big fistful of Empathy's hair, forcing her to the ground, kneeling in the back of her knees.

EMPATHY
You fucking bitch!

LACEY
Okay now's the time to shut the
fuck up.

EMPATHY
Is that like... the first time you
ever swore?

LACEY
(growls in her ear)
I'll put my foot through your whore
teeth.

115 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Empathy enters the house slowly, followed by Lacey, who still clutches a good fistful of her hair.

Lacey is shocked to see Ellsworth lying on his back, pinned to the floor under his own rifle, muzzle shoved down his throat by the farmer, who periodically hammers his fist into the butt. Ellsworth gags on it, spitting blood, writhing about.

LACEY
Oh shit--take it out, you're
killing him!

The farmer glances up at Lacey, still using Empathy for a shield.

He takes the barrel out of Ellsworth's mouth, pointing it at Empathy's chest.

LACEY
Don't--!

He FIRES, Empathy collecting it in the breastbone, slamming back into Lacey, collapsing on top of her in a dark corner by the front door.

Crazy old farmer stomps over to where they fell, rolling Empathy off Lacey with one boot, cycling the rifle's bolt action.

Lacey throws up her hands as he points it at her face, pulling the trigger.

CLICK. The firing pin finds nothing.

Behind the farmer, Ellsworth stands.

ELLSWORTH

Thank God that rifle is a piece of
shit. Only takes one round, since I
bought it.

He produces a handful of bullets from his coat pocket,
lobbing them all into the open fireplace.

ELLSWORTH

It's over. Give up.

The farmer tosses Ellsworth's weapon aside, adopting a hand-
to-hand fighting stance, approaching him with practised
confidence as the ammunition begins to crack and ping.

ELLSWORTH

(flinching)

Wow tossing live ammunition into a
fire? Pretty bad idea. Also, please
stop advancing on me like that. I
didn't come here for a *fight*, man.
I only wanted to shove you around
some.

Lacey leaps on the farmer from behind, biting his neck.

He drops to one knee, rolling her over his shoulder and
across the dirty wooden floor, where she skids hard into the
wall.

Crazy old farmer advances on Ellsworth, blood spurting from
the open wound on his neck.

ELLSWORTH

Ohhh, I'm fucked. I don't suppose
you want to call it a draw?

116 INT. AIRCRAFT CABIN - EVENING

Piano continues as Ellsworth sleeps, the seats next to him
unoccupied.

He's woken by the squeal and bump of landing gear touching
down.

117 INT. TAXI - EVENING

Ellsworth watches Perth scenery pass by from the back seat of
a cab.

118 INT. OCEANSIDE HOUSE - NIGHT

Ellsworth enters his home in something of a daze.

He drops his keys on the floor.

ELLSWORTH

Empathy?

A massive muted television in the living room, the phone out of its cradle, swinging in the breeze.

ELLSWORTH

(shouts)

Empathy?

The piano slows, fading.

FADE OUT.

119 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

FADE IN.

Ellsworth slowly comes to, sporting a range of fresh injuries, from cigarette burns to cuts and bruises. His jaw swells unnaturally beneath the skin.

He finds himself slumped in one corner of a small, damp room with very little ambient light.

Ellsworth can hear somebody else breathing.

He squints at the darkness.

ELLSWORTH

Even in the dark... you're one distinctive-looking motherfucker.

Malik Noble steps forward, into the half-light.

Bound by pain and exhaustion, Ellsworth tries to lift his head but can't.

MALIK

He hates women, Ellsworth. You shouldn't have brought her here. He killed my mother. He killed my first girlfriend. He told Empathy if she ever came looking for me here again he'd kill her too... and she didn't even listen.

Malik sits down in front of Ellsworth with his legs crossed.

MALIK

You've been through a lot.

ELLSWORTH

Only what was needed.

MALIK

Lacey seems to think you've come all this way because you hate me so much.

ELLSWORTH

You doubt it?

MALIK

You *wish* you could hate.

ELLSWORTH

But you know me better than that.

Malik meets his gaze, both unflinching.

ELLSWORTH

You *knew*... on the boat. You sensed it too.

MALIK

Boat?

ELLSWORTH

The fishing boat. When we were swimming...

MALIK

That wasn't a boat. I remember being rescued by the Coast Guard helicopter.

ELLSWORTH

There's no Coast Guard in Australia.

MALIK

I only found that out after.

ELLSWORTH

You were tripping.

Malik slowly nods.

MALIK

So how did we get back to the beach?

ELLSWORTH

The fishing boat.

MALIK

What was it called?

ELLSWORTH

I... didn't see.

MALIK

What did they look like? The fishermen?

Ellsworth's blank stare.

MALIK

What colour was the boat, Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH

I don't remember.

MALIK

What do you remember about that night?

Ellsworth breaks his stare, avoiding Malik's eyes.

MALIK

If you think about it real *hard*...

He grows more uncomfortable.

MALIK

It was the last time... right?

ELLSWORTH

What do you mean?

MALIK

Was it the last time you felt human?

Ellsworth snorts, bemused.

ELLSWORTH

No. The last time was... (thinks) when I found the grave.

MALIK

As it became clearer what had happened, what was lacking, I started to test a theory.

ELLSWORTH

Of course. So that's what was going on in Sydney? Just testing a theory?

MALIK

Yes.

ELLSWORTH

You left me there to die, to... see if you could?

MALIK

I think so.

Ellsworth slowly shakes his head.

ELLSWORTH

You can't blame everything on the sea.

MALIK

No. Not everything. But *something* changed.

ELLSWORTH

(pause)
Yeah.

MALIK

Ellsworth... did we die already? In the ocean?

Ellsworth sneers, as if about to deride the idea on face value alone, before rethinking.

ELLSWORTH

That's... idiotic.

MALIK

I dream that we're still there... all the time. And it fucks with me. Truly owns me, day and night now. Because how would we really know? What if this is an afterlife? Walking around thinking that you're still alive on Earth, interacting with what you think are the people from your life... what if this is Hell?

Ellsworth sighs, rolling his head, semi-conscious.

ELLSWORTH

Welcome home.

MALIK

I tried to kill myself three times, since that night.

ELLSWORTH

Try harder cunt.

MALIK

I didn't always have my shit together, Ellsworth. You've spent eighteen hours alone with my dad. Does it really surprise you, the way I am?

ELLSWORTH
Too easy. You don't... eighteen--
has it been that long?

MALIK
You were out a while too.

ELLSWORTH
Where's Lacey?

MALIK
You shouldn't have brought her...

Ellsworth struggles to sit up, wincing with the pain.

ELLSWORTH
Dude. Where is she?

MALIK
He's making her dig a grave.

Tears shimmer in Ellsworth's dark eyes.

ELLSWORTH
Malik... you can't let him kill
her.

MALIK
It's not up to me now.

ELLSWORTH
You've already taken so much...
don't take her too.

Malik seems slightly taken aback. He thinks a moment,
puzzled.

MALIK
You two didn't... *hook up*? You're
not vengeance-fucking my ex, right
Ellsworth?

Ellsworth closes his eyes.

MALIK
You sly dog. You're boning Lacey!
I'll be *darned*.

Malik stands, climbing a small set of wooden steps to a
trapdoor that he unlocks with keys.

It slams shut behind him.

Ellsworth looks around the room, still struggling to focus.

Muted by the walls and distance, he hears Lacey scream.

He pushes back against the wall, sitting up further.

The trapdoor opens again and Malik drags Lacey down the steps by her hair.

LACEY

Stop fucking pulling my hair you
fuck!

Malik tosses her on the floor, alongside Ellsworth.

As her eyes adjust to the light she spots Ellsworth, overwhelmed by the severity of his injuries.

LACEY

Oh, Ellsworth... are you okay?

He laughs, then so does she, while Malik paces in the background.

She sits up beside him, touching his face softly.

MALIK

It's true then? Yooooo fucking
slut.

LACEY

What?

Malik stands over them, where he sat before.

MALIK

Is that what you wanted all along?
Lacey and Ellsworth... together at
last. You fucking--

LACEY

Are you kidding me with this shit?
YOU LEFT ME FOR MY FUCKING SISTER!

Malik takes a deep breath, as if to retort, then leaves the way he came, locking the trapdoor's deadbolt from the other side.

ELLSWORTH

So how about you?

LACEY

Huh?

ELLSWORTH

Did they hurt you? Are you okay?

LACEY

Better than you.

ELLSWORTH

No doubt.

LACEY
Better than Em.

ELLSWORTH
Is she dead?

LACEY
Not yet. Bleeding out in the living
room. He's going to bury her.

Ellsworth coughs.

LACEY
Got a big escape plan in mind?

ELLSWORTH
Oh. You wanted *me* to get on that? I
was just sitting around being
unconscious.

LACEY
I don't suppose you still have that
old Zippo?

120 INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Another brief flashback, the trucker leaps at Ellsworth,
smacking the lighter from his hand.

121 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Ellsworth looks away.

ELLSWORTH
I lost it. Somewhere.

122 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lacey has taken Ellsworth's place in the corner, Ellsworth
lying flat on his back with his head on her lap.

ELLSWORTH
Because I only care about having a
cause... I don't know how to feel
bad about it. I'm nothing but a
martyr.

LACEY
Don't say that.

ELLSWORTH
Why not?

LACEY

Martyrs always *die*, Ellsworth. It's all they do. It's the last thing you ever want to be.

They both react to the sound of the deadbolt unlocking.

Lacey helps Ellsworth to his feet. His knees barely support his weight.

A JERRY CAN, its lid undone, tumbles down the steps, spilling its load of petrol.

LACEY

(sniffs)

Is that petrol?

ELLSWORTH

He... stole your idea.

The trapdoor locks again.

Empathy cries out in pain from upstairs.

123 INT. ESPERANCE FARM HOUSE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Thick grey smoke has begun to seep through the upstairs floor.

Lacey and Ellsworth hear two car doors slam shut outside.

The sound of a Jaguar engine starting, then driving away.

Ellsworth climbs the stairs, careful not to tread in the spreading pool of petrol.

He punches the trapdoor a couple of times but it doesn't budge.

Lacey begins to kick the wall where its wooden planks are most warped.

Ellsworth watches her a moment, then tries punching another warped plank.

The small basement room is thick with smoke now, the roar and crackle of fire growing louder upstairs.

When his knuckles begin to bleed Ellsworth looks at the jerry can.

He tips the last of the fuel out, jumping back with the can as the stairs spark up, then the gas puddle's surface, all at once.

Ellsworth pats out a fire on his sleeve, shielding his face from the wall of heat.

He hefts the empty can above his head before running at the place he was punching.

It bounces off the plank with a loud clang, making a dent there.

Black dirt begins to trickle in through the cracks.

Ellsworth lifts the can once more while the far wall goes up in flames behind him.

He slams the jerry can home again, collapsing beside the big hole it makes as dirt comes pouring in with small shafts of eery orange light from above.

The flames creep around both sides, along the ceiling and floor.

Lacey leans into the hole, frantically beginning to dig.

Ellsworth struggles back to his feet and tears away more of the broken wood.

124 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - NIGHT

Fire consumes most of the farm house, bathing the area around it in a harsh firey glow.

At the back, dirt continues to sink through the hole Ellsworth made while smoke plumes out of it.

Ellsworth's bleeding HAND claws through the dirt, followed by the other. He squeezes between the broken planks and caved-in dirt, hauling himself to flat ground before turning to pull Lacey out too.

They collapse a few feet away, both coughing hard.

Empathy screams again from inside.

Ellsworth and Lacey look at each other, unable or unwilling to move.

125 EXT. ESPERANCE FARM - DAWN

Ellsworth's BMW comes roaring back up the dirt driveway, skidding to a stop just before it hits paved road.

The driver's side door pops open, Ellsworth jumping out to look at the road under his low beams. Reveal dirt tracks curving right onto the road.

He runs back to the car.

126 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - DAWN

Ellsworth jumps back in, flooring it to go fishtailing right.

She tends to a deep cut on his left shoulder while he drives, accelerating to the BMW's upper limit.

LACEY

What's the plan then?

ELLSWORTH

Everything that's just happened is the reason I don't make plans.

LACEY

Right, but we don't have a gun anymore, and Malik's dad is kind of... *Robocop*.

ELLSWORTH

Yeah.

LACEY

I'm just saying you should at least have an idea of how you're going to approach this whole thing.

ELLSWORTH

Okay, open the glove box.

She opens it.

LACEY

What am I looking for?

He leans over her, digging around amongst the clutter.

LACEY

Ellsworth--

ELLSWORTH

Hang on, it's in here.

LACEY

No you--

ELLSWORTH

Yeah I--

LACEY

(flinching)
Ellsworth!

Something slams against the hood before being dragged under, the whole car shuddering.

Ellsworth slams on the brakes.

Ellsworth and Lacey both watch through the passenger window in sheer amazement as they skid right by Malik, standing at the highway's edge with a tyre iron in one hand.

Behind him is the same Jaguar he drove in flashbacks, only with new plates. It's jacked up with the rear right wheel missing.

ELLSWORTH
You've gotta be--

127 EXT. ESPERANCE HIGHWAY - DAWN

Malik watches them go squealing past on a cloud of tyre smoke, staring back with the same dumbfound look on his face.

MALIK
--fucking *kidding* me!

The BMW comes to a halt twenty feet up the road. The reversing lights blink on then the engine whines as it backs up at top speed.

128 INT. ELLSWORTH'S BMW - DAWN

Ellsworth brings it around to face Malik, engine straining beneath the hood.

Malik drops the iron and throws up his hands, blinded by the headlights.

Lacey looks out her window, at a ten metre-long crimson smear on the road.

LACEY
Oh jeez.

Ellsworth doesn't take his eyes off Malik, while Lacey can't seem to take her eyes off the stained road.

ELLSWORTH
We hit his dad?

LACEY
"We"?

ELLSWORTH
You see how things just work out when you don't have a plan?

LACEY
I'm seriously gonna be sick.

Lacey claps a hand over her mouth and opens the door to throw up.

A mangled FOOT is on the road there, jutting out from beneath her side of the BMW.

She screams, muffled by her own hand, reeling back, spinning around to her right to vomit in Ellsworth's lap.

He continues to stare at Malik, grimacing.

ELLSWORTH
You... just booted in my lap,
didn't you?

LACEY (O.C.)
(muffled)
I'm so sorry.

ELLSWORTH
It's okay.

He reaches into the glove box blind and comes back with a sheathed HUNTING KNIFE.

129 EXT. ESPERANCE HIGHWAY - DAWN

Malik looks around for an escape route as Ellsworth steps out of the car, holding the sheathed knife.

MALIK
(lowering hands)
What, no more guns? Are you high or
suicidal?

Ellsworth offers only a cold stare.

Malik turns to leap the hood of his Jag, running uphill and over sand dunes toward the coastline.

Ellsworth takes off after him.

130 EXT. ESPERANCE COAST - DAWN

Malik makes his way down a sloped rocky outcrop, landing on beach sand just as Ellsworth crests the hill behind him.

Malik runs for where the tide laps at wet sand, splashing through it.

Ellsworth is halfway down the beach when Malik turns, waist-deep, holding out a hand.

MALIK
(shouts)
Stop! Hold it a moment.

Ellsworth halts, hesitant.

MALIK

(shouts)

You know I'm a better swimmer,
Ellsworth. You want to die? *Again?*
Halfway to...

Malik turns, looking out to sea.

MALIK

(quiet)

Antarctica?

Malik dives into the water, swimming for all he's worth out to sea as Ellsworth keeps running, pocketing the knife.

Ellsworth splashes through the shallows, diving into the water about ten seconds behind Malik.

131 EXT. THE OPEN SEA - DAWN

Malik and Ellsworth cut through choppy water, Ellsworth gradually closing the distance.

Ellsworth glances back briefly to see Lacey, small on the rocky outcrop, waving with both arms.

He keeps swimming, trying to keep Malik in sight with the worsening conditions.

132 EXT. THE OPEN SEA - DAWN

Ellsworth reaches for Malik's foot, Malik kicking him away, spinning around to face him while treading water.

MALIK

Okay stop! Wait a second, don't
kill me yet okay? Just let me talk!

Ellsworth treads water a few feet away.

ELLSWORTH

You talk... and you talk... and all
I ever hear are lies.

MALIK

I just want a chance to explain!

ELLSWORTH

Do you honestly think there's an
explanation in all the world, to
justify what you've done?

Malik slowly shakes his head.

A wave hits them, Malik spluttering.

They drift closer together, almost arm's reach.

MALIK
Ellsworth...

Malik begins to cry.

MALIK
(through tears)
I don't know how to make things
right.

ELLSWORTH
Because it doesn't work like that.

MALIK
There's so much stuff I've done...
that I can never take back. I know
that, Ellsworth. I really do.

ELLSWORTH
Knowing it isn't enough.

MALIK
I didn't set out to intentionally
hurt you, or *anyone*.

ELLSWORTH
It just kind of worked out like
that.

MALIK
(sobbing)
Ellsworth... please... please give
me another chance. I'm not ready
yet... there's so much I've still
got to make up to people.

Ellsworth seems to soften, reaching out to Malik.

ELLSWORTH
It'll be okay...

Malik sobs into his shoulder as they embrace.

MALIK
(muffled)
I'm sorry, Ellsworth. I'm so sorry
for... everything. I wish... I
wish...

Ellsworth rubs his back.

ELLSWORTH
Shhh. It's okay now. It's okay.

A dark red cloud begins to spread in the water around them.

MALIK

Ellsworth?

ELLSWORTH

Yeah?

Malik's eyes wide with fear, he struggles to meet Ellsworth's cold gaze.

MALIK

It wasn't dying that made me empty... it was like that from the start.

Ellsworth slowly nods.

ELLSWORTH

I know...

Wide on the pair, alone together, jostled by the swell.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

Malik Noble and Ellsworth Valentine.

Malik struggles to keep afloat, taking short, wet gasps.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

They shared the same death. The same fate. Every day since, they were intertwined. The only way two people can ever really be joined.

Another big wave hits, separating them.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

Playing out a co-dependant karma.

The inky cloud continues to grow around Malik as they slowly drift apart.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

Until the waves would call them back.

After losing sight of Malik, Ellsworth leans back into the water, staring at the morning sky while he floats, peaceful despite the chop.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)

To finally give themselves up. To take an active part in the completion of their collective tale.

133 EXT. THE OPEN SEA - MORNING

Ellsworth floats on his back in the choppy sea, eyes closed, no land in sight.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
The sea gave them time.

Muted and warped by the water in his ears, the sound of a helicopter grows louder.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
Because time is all the sea has.

Ellsworth opens his eyes.

He raises one hand, slowly waving to it.

Reveal Ellsworth reaching for the chopper, COAST GUARD stenciled down the one side.

ELLSWORTH (V.O.)
And he knows then, like he knows
now... that it all ends well, for
Malik and Ellsworth.

ROLL CREDITS.

FINI(SHED).

Please contact Rob Hackney should you wish to discuss this spec screenplay. He has several other film and television projects for both the Australian and US Marketplace.
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