

Ghosthunting

written by

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SHANE hangs upside down on the monkey bars, in silhouette.

SHANE

(deadpan)

Just as the spring ends, the day
does too.

Childhood slips through my fingers
like playground-mulch. I'm not
ghosthunting. I'm just standing on
a playground in the dark. My life
is no longer a story worth telling.
It's like ripping off a bandaid.

The shift is visceral. A one-way
trust fall where nobody catches
you. The playground morphs from a
pirate ship, a jungle, a castle, to
a repository for sub-par graffiti.
A place for the adolescent and the
unemployed and the going nowhere to
smoke. Drink. Commune in the dark.
Fuck around and die.

He touches his face. it leaves a dark smudge.

SHANE (CONT'D)

It's still warm. The sticky warmth
of five summers ago when nothing
mattered but who you ate lunch
with. When nothing mattered but if
the monkey bars were too hot to
swing on. I touch the metal to
check. It hasn't released the heat
of the day. It's not the blistering
heat of noon, though. It's more
like the smaller heat of another
body.

SHANE swings his legs up onto the monkey bars.

SHANE (V.O)

Let go.

He lets go and swings downward by his knees.

SHANE (V.O) (CONT'D)
 Free fall. The blood rushes to my
 head. I see the bushes ripple on
 the other side of the playground.

The bushes rustle.

SHANE (V.O) (CONT'D)
 Some small, warm part of me hopes
 it's a ghost. A fairy. A
 fantastical explorer. A story worth
 telling.

JAKE's shoe pushes through the bushes.

SHANE (V.O) (CONT'D)
 First his crooked nose, then the
 rest of his crooked body.

A pause. JAKE (16, freckled, crooked, hungry) emerges,
 battered, puffed. Neither boy moves, eyes locked on each
 other. Titles appear.

3 EXT. PLAYGROUND - IMMEDIATE

3

JAKE cocks his head.

JAKE
 (hesitant)
 Shane?

SHANE V.O
 Last time I saw him, he was trying
 to break my nose.

He approaches SHANE and crouches so their faces are level.
 SHANE bristles.

JAKE
 (guilty, strained)
 It's been a while.

SHANE
 Right.
 (pointedly)
 How's Ricky?

Hackles rise. Tension flickers. JAKE exhales: long, slow, a
 smoker's exhale. SHANE hops down and rights himself, standing
 over JAKE, who looks up at him. He leans in close enough for
 JAKE to taste his breath.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Tell him I say hi.

SHANE turns to go.

JAKE

Shane-

RICKY (18, drunk, wolfish, sweating gold) crashes through the bushes. He wears a beanie, baggy jeans and a smudged tank top.

RICKY

Jake!

He lurches forward.

JAKE

I swear to god, I don't have your keys.

RICKY

You and God are both liars. I know you have them.

JAKE

Go bother Alicia. She probably took them to keep you from killing yourself on accident.

RICKY hurls himself at JAKE. He dodges, hands up, empty.

RICKY

Jake, give me my fucking keys!

JAKE

I don't have your keys! You're drunk!

RICKY throws a punch. SHANE watches, arms crossed, unsurprised. RICKY's fist catches JAKE on the jaw. He stumbles back, holding up his hands in surrender. Ricky shoves him.

RICKY

(screaming)

I know you have them!

He knocks him down, knee on his chest, holding him by the shoulders. JAKE thrashes.

JAKE
 (struggling)
 Ricky, please don't. I don't have
 your keys, I swear.

He lifts his hands in surrender. RICKY pauses, considering.
 Then he punches him in the face. JAKE's voice melts and
 cracks into frantic desperation.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 (screaming)
 Ricky! I don't have them! I don't
 have them! Stop it!

RICKY punches him. His head jerks to the side. He doesn't
 look at SHANE. There's nobody in the world but him and RICKY.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 (louder, voice breaking)
 I don't have your goddamn keys!

RICKY punches him again.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 (thrashing)
 I DON'T HAVE YOUR GODDAMN KEYS
 KEYS!

RICKY put his hands around JAKE's throat, wringing a strained
 noise from him. SHANE winces.

SHANE
 Hey!

RICKY's gaze shifts to SHANE. His eyes are heavy with booze
 and rage.

RICKY
 (cooly)
 Hey, Shane. It's been a while.

SHANE
 (yelling)
 Get the hell off him.

RICKY
 What are you going to do?

JAKE thrashes under RICKY, who turns his attention back down.
 SHANE lunges at RICKY, grabbing him under the shoulders and
 wrenching him off JAKE. JAKE pushes, red faced and scrabbling
 at RICKY's chest. A lucky elbow catches RICKY's nose and he
 scrambles sideways. JAKE breathes again, aching and frantic.
 RICKY sees stars.

RICKY (CONT'D)
 (holding his face)
 Agh!

JAKE falls out of consciousness. RICKY struggles to his knees. SHANE throws himself down next to JAKE.

SHANE
 Jake. *Jake!*

RICKY is half-way to his feet. SHANE shakes JAKE by the shoulders.

SHANE (CONT'D)
 Shitshitshit. WAKE UP!

SHANE drag-carries JAKE toward the treeline on the other side of the playground. RICKY doesn't follow, just stares after them, laughing an animal laugh that shocks through the night. SHANE and JAKE breach the trees.

SHANE (CONT'D)
 Jake?
 (a pause)
 Jake?

A shift. JAKE comes to.

JAKE
 (groggily)
 Yeah?

SHANE
 You gotta help me.

SHANE hauls him up to unsteady feet and loops an arm around his shoulders.

JAKE
 (pained)
 Agh. Where are we?

JAKE leans on SHANE with most of his weight.

SHANE
 The woods. Come on. Work with me,
 here. Just a bit further.

They cling to each other the rest of the way to a large, tree. The silence is oppressive.

JAKE
 How long was I out?

SHANE

Shhh.

JAKE

(groggily)

Shane, how long was I out?

SHANE

(hesitant, whispering)

I dunno. A minute. Less.

JAKE

(whispering)

Is Ricky alright?

SHANE crouches down to be level with JAKE.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Tell me he's okay. You didn't hurt him, right?

He trails off into quiet, shaky breaths.

SHANE

You're lucky you're alive.

JAKE collapses into soft sobs, trying desperately to keep them in his mouth. SHANE sits down next to him and drops his head down into his hands. JAKE steadies, slowly, going from little, staccato sobs to even breaths. Time passes. Nobody emerges from the woods.

JAKE

(almost inaudible)

It's like we're ghost-hunting again.

SHANE

Hm?

JAKE

(whispering, smiling)

Do you remember when we were like twelve? We used to go 'ghost-hunting' in these woods all the time, right?

SHANE says nothing.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Shane?

SHANE

Sure. We snuck out the windows to trudge around in the woods every night.

JAKE sniffs.

JAKE

(laughing)

I went through the door.

A crack and rustling is heard. SHANE whips around.

SHANE

Shut up.

A pause. Both boys look around. Silence.

JAKE

(earnest)

It's the ghosts.

4 EXT. PLAYGROUND - 6 DAYS AFTER, MIDNIGHT

4

SHANE hangs upside down on the monkey bars, in silhouette. He swings lightly, hands hanging just above the tanbark.

SHANE

The hospital room is cold.

5 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

5

The room is lit bluish by fluorescents that flicker like the a heart on life support. Framed on either side by blue, disposable curtains, JAKE sits on a bed, cross-legged. SHANE sits with his hands in his lap in a peeling pleather chair.

SHANE V.O

The fluorescents make the room feel even colder. Gone is the muzzy heat of summer. My T-shirt suddenly feels insubstantial. It's just a vessel for sweat to dry in.

SHANE looks over at JAKE.

SHANE V.O (CONT'D)

Nonfatal strangulation and concussion. Shortness of breath. Confusion. The delirium is wearing off. Still, he lies remarkably well. "No ma'am, I didn't know him.

(MORE)

SHANE V.O (CONT'D)

Some druggie. I think he thought I was someone he knew." he has two CT scans. They determined he wouldn't have a stroke if he was left alone. I can't leave him alone, anyways. He has to be monitored for 24 hours in-case the concussion gets worse. Or in case his airway collapses suddenly. The doctors said that could happen at home, though.

JAKE flops onto his back. His head hangs off the edge of the bed and he's looking at SHANE. His neck is smeared purple already.

SHANE

Don't do that. It's gonna make your headache worse.

JAKE makes no effort to move.

SHANE (CONT'D)

God, I wish I just walked away. Find someone else to look after you when you get home.

JAKE

(Hesitantly)

I don't think I *can* go home.

He covers his face with his hands.

SHANE

What?

JAKE

(from behind his hands)

Ricky's gonna kill me, you know. He's *actually* going to kill me. I'm not even joking - you saw him try.

SHANE says nothing. JAKE stares with dilated pupils though his splayed fingers.

SHANE

Not my problem.

JAKE

You know how much I hate to ask you this, really, I swear.

SHANE scrubs a hand down his face.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Come on. Don't make me beg, man.
Please.

SHANE
(coldly)
Go home to Ricky.

JAKE
Shane. Please, man. I know I messed
up, but I really need this.

SHANE stalks toward him and squats so their faces are level.

SHANE
(whispering)
Fuck you.

JAKE
Shane-

A NURSE (early thirties, soft, southern) pushes through the curtains, holding a clipboard. SHANE stands up, smoothing his jeans. JAKE rights himself.

NURSE
Alright, hon.

She looks at her clipboard.

NURSE (CONT'D)
You're free to go. If you could
just sign here, please.

His signature is shaky.

JAKE
Thanks, ma'am.

He hands her back the clipboard.

NURSE
No problem at all, hon.
(To SHANE)
Make sure you - or you boys'
parents or someone - is with him
for the next twenty four hours,
yeah? If he gets worse, don't
hesitate to bring him back, okay
hon?

SHANE
 (sarcastic)
 Sure thing. Mom and dad are going
 to be thrilled.

NURSE
 (oblivious)
 I bet. They must be worried sick!

JAKE shoots SHANE a look that he pretends not to see.

6 EXT. PLAYGROUND - 6 DAYS PRIOR, MIDNIGHT 6

SHANE sits atop the monkey bars, in silhouette.

SHANE
 I'm meeting JAKE for the first time
 again. We're fresh out of primary
 school. Summer is just creeping in
 around the edges. Summer still
 means freedom.
 (laughing)
 He just stole my bike.

7 FLASHBACK: EXT. PLAYGROUND, SUBURBS, OUTDOOR PUBLIC POOL - 7
 LATE AFTERNOON, FOUR YEARS PRIOR

SHANE V.O
 Heat shivers off the playground in
 waves. The pool's closed for
 maintenance. Scores of kids seek
 shelter in the woods.

YOUNG SHANE (12, uninterested, ungainly) and MARTIN JENSON
 (12, malleable, sweating) are halfway up a tree, each sitting
 on different limbs. SHANE reads a comic book.

SHANE V.O (CONT'D)
 Martin Jenson's dad had a record
 collection. Martin had a host of
 issues.

MARTIN
 If I fell out of this tree onto
 someone else, who'd get more hurt?

SHANE turns a page. No response.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
 What if it was like an old lady,
 though? Or a little kid?

SHANE V.O

Martin occasionally said really messed up stuff. When he didn't, he didn't say much at all. His dad's record collection had The Smiths and Anti Flag, though.

MARTIN

I think it depends on the angle, right?

SHANE closes the comic.

YOUNG SHANE

(exasperated)

Let's just go. I gotta be back before the streetlights turn on.

MARTIN hops down from the tree.

MARTIN

Tomorrow.

Martin leans up against the swings.

YOUNG SHANE

(focused on climbing down, comic held in his mouth)

Over by the swings? Next to yours.

Martin laughs. Shane jumps the last bit to the ground and turns around to see his bike is missing.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)

Shiiiiit.

MARTIN

You know, I did see some kid leave on a bike.

YOUNG SHANE

(exasperated, around the comic still in his mouth)

Right. And you didn't think to check?

MARTIN

I mean, why would anyone steal a messed up, repainted bike, right?

SHANE sighs around the comic.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I didn't think it would be one of ours! I thought he just had a bike!

SHANE spits the comic into his hand and leans against the swingset.

YOUNG SHANE

Are you coming with me to get it?

MARTIN

Sorry, man. My dad says I gotta be home before the streetlights turn on.

YOUNG SHANE

Did you at least see where he went?

MARTIN gestures vaguely down the road and swings his leg over the bar of his bike, leaning down with his arms folded haphazardly on the handlebars.

MARTIN

Good luck.

He hops onto the seat and starts off in the other direction. YOUNG SHANE flips him until he's out of view, then turns and starts to walk in the other direction.

SHANE V.O

The Smiths and Anti Flag. Bad Religion and Iron Maiden and The Ramones. Radiohead. *Jeff Buckley*.

YOUNG SHANE continues down the street, past a cul de sac where some kids play cricket. The ball hurtles through the air for an eternity. YOUNG SHANE watches it as he walks. He continues along a path, coming up on another street, which he follows past typical suburban houses from thirty years ago, toward the small sprawl of the town centre. By now the sun is setting. No bike. The streetlight above YOUNG SHANE flickers on and he pauses to look up at it. He lingers for a second, then continues on, turning a corner past the public pool, and pulls up short.

SHANE V.O (CONT'D)

I almost didn't see him. No reason look into a closed pool. No reason Except for the familiar gleam of a hand-painted racing stripe.

Past the bike, YOUNG JAKE floats face-up in the pool, fully clothed.

SHANE V.O (CONT'D)
I could have just taken my bike.

YOUNG SHANE
Hey!

No response.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
Hey!

YOUNG JAKE (12, feral, tender) turns his head to look at YOUNG SHANE through the fence.

YOUNG JAKE
What's up?

YOUNG SHANE
(pointing)
That's my bike.

YOUNG JAKE
Oh, that was yours? I just took the first one I saw.

A pause

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about that.

YOUNG SHANE
Alright. I'm taking it back.

He hops up onto the seat and goes to start pedalling.

YOUNG JAKE
Hey, wait up?

Shane stops, leaning against the fence with one foot back on the pavement.

YOUNG SHANE
(exasperated)
What?

YOUNG JAKE
I'm sorry for taking your bike. I feel really bad about it. I just took the first one I saw. I swear.

YOUNG JAKE rights himself and swims to the edge of the pool. The red tile glimmers subtly, maybe like blood, maybe like strawberry flesh.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
I needed it to get away from
someone.

YOUNG SHANE looks him up and down, considering.

YOUNG SHANE
(narrowing his eyes,
hiding his excitement)
The cops?

YOUNG JAKE
Nah, I wish. It was just my
brother.

SHANE deflates.

YOUNG SHANE
Oh. Why?

YOUNG JAKE shrugs. He doesn't meet SHANE's eyes.

YOUNG JAKE
Just a crazy game of tag.

YOUNG SHANE
Oh.

YOUNG SHANE idles between leaving and staying.

YOUNG JAKE
Your bike is pretty cool, though.
Did you paint that stripe?

YOUNG SHANE
(suppressing a smile)
Yeah.

YOUNG JAKE smiles.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
Last year. It's just spray paint.

YOUNG JAKE
Woah. Hey, how come I haven't seen
you around?

YOUNG SHANE
I dunno.

YOUNG JAKE
What school do you go to?

YOUNG SHANE

Aridia. I'm going to Ridge next year.

YOUNG JAKE

Oh my god, I'm going to Ridge too. Dude, what a coincidence!

YOUNG SHANE

(grinning)

Maybe I'll see you around, then.

He makes to leave, falters, looks back.

YOUNG JAKE

Do you... wanna stay for a little bit? In case I don't see you around?

YOUNG SHANE

My mum wanted me home before the streetlights turned on.

YOUNG JAKE

They turned on ages ago, so you're gonna be late either way.

YOUNG SHANE

(smiling)

I guess. This is just like a movie.

YOUNG JAKE grins from ear to ear, looking at YOUNG SHANE like he's the only person in the universe. YOUNG SHANE hooks his fingers into the chain link, hoisting himself up. His sneakers scabble for purchase for a moment, but he catches himself and hauls his weight over the fence. He hangs, then drops, stumbling on the pavement. JAKE laughs.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)

So. Tell me about your brother?

YOUNG JAKE

He's...

He considers, a dark look coming over his face. It passes quickly

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)

(adoring)

fifteen. He likes movies but he hates books. He doesn't believe in ghosts. Sometimes he-

(hesitates)

(MORE)

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
His name is Ricky. We don't get
along.

A question forms and reforms on YOUNG SHANE's lips, but Jake
continues before he can ask.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
Are you gonna get in?
(exaggerated posh accent)
The water's fine.

YOUNG SHANE
In clothes?

YOUNG JAKE
Come on, it's just water.

Before he has time to rethink, YOUNG SHANE rushes forward and
cannonballs, sending up a splash that dissipates, shimmering,
in the air. He resurfaces, floating on his back, hair making
a swirling halo. They, gazing up at the dusk sky for a few
moments.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
(softly)
Do you believe in ghosts?

YOUNG SHANE
I dunno.

YOUNG JAKE's face falls.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
No proof either way.

YOUNG JAKE
They're real, though.

YOUNG SHANE simply stares up at the gathering stars, chewing
on the thought.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
You seriously don't think so? I'll
take you ghost-hunting sometime.
Bet you anything I can change your
mind in a night.

YOUNG SHANE
That mean we're friends?

YOUNG JAKE pauses to consider.

YOUNG JAKE
I guess so.

YOUNG SHANE grins, anonymous in the gathering dark.

YOUNG SHANE

(amused)

I think I was supposed to be home
an hour ago.

JAKE

Fuck that.

A mischievous look passes over YOUNG JAKE's face.

YOUNG JAKE

Hey?

YOUNG SHANE

Yeah?

YOUNG JAKE abruptly flips onto his front and swims at YOUNG SHANE, taking him by the shoulders and shoving him under. YOUNG SHANE lets out a gleeful shriek and pulls YOUNG JAKE under with him. They resurface, spluttering, and YOUNG JAKE takes off sprinting toward the edge. YOUNG SHANE follows, and they reach the wall at the same time, sending a torrent of chlorine and laughter over the edge.

8 FLASHBACK: OUTSIDE THE POOL, STREETS, SHANE'S HOUSE - 8
IMMEDIATELY AFTER

A Soaked YOUNG SHANE and YOUNG JAKE stand against the chain link fence, in the waterfall of light cast by a streetlight. YOUNG SHANE rests his left hand on the handlebars of his bike. Both boys are obviously stalling.

YOUNG SHANE

Wanna walk me home?

YOUNG JAKE

(trying valiantly to play
it cool)

Sure.

YOUNG SHANE pedals in meandering circles around YOUNG JAKE. YOUNG JAKE kicks a stone along ahead of him.

YOUNG SHANE

Favourite movie?

YOUNG JAKE

Honestly, I dunno.

YOUNG SHANE

C'mon. I don't judge.

YOUNG JAKE

You so do. Anyways, I don't even have one.

YOUNG SHANE

(affronted)

Actually?

YOUNG JAKE

Yeah?

YOUNG SHANE

I *have* to show you some of my favourite films, then.

YOUNG JAKE

Films? That's something only a dad would say.

YOUNG SHANE

If I'm old, then you're ancient.

YOUNG JAKE

(in an exaggerated old-person voice)

Shut the hell up, young man.

They dissolve into giggles. YOUNG SHANE's gray-blue house looms at the end of the cul-de-sac. A headstone waiting to bury the night. YOUNG SHANE pulls up short.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)

Am I gonna see you again?

YOUNG SHANE

Maybe.

YOUNG JAKE

How about tomorrow?

YOUNG SHANE

I'm gonna be grounded tomorrow.

YOUNG JAKE

Ah, of course.

A pause.

YOUNG SHANE

I've never snuck out before.

YOUNG JAKE
I mean, I guess there's a first
time for everything, right?

YOUNG SHANE
'Sure is.

They set off again, going the rest of the way in easy
silence. As they reach the door, the porch light flicks on.
SHANE tries the handle. Locked.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
Shit.

YOUNG JAKE
Don't you have a key?

YOUNG SHANE
No. Never needed it.

YOUNG JAKE
Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit.

YOUNG SHANE
We could-

He's cut off by the door opening, revealing his mother. She
stands like a vengeful queen in the rectangle of white light.

SHANE'S MOTHER
(enraged)
Where have you been? What have you
been doing? Who is that? Do you
know how long you're grounded for?

A pause.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Why are you soaked?

Taken by the absurdity of the situation, YOUNG SHANE and
YOUNG JAKE laugh.

END FLASHBACK.

9 EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

9

SHANE stands, leaning one shoulder against the side of the
monkey bars, in silhouette.

SHANE

I was grounded for a month. We had to re-enact the balcony scene every night.

(laughing)

"Romeo, Romeo! Where for art thou, Romeo?" It wasn't so bad, though. There's something... *romantic* about sneaking out. the whole town is asleep. Makes you feel like the centre of everything. The air's crowded with their hushed, sleeping breath. The world has deep bass. This is what I wanted. An interesting thing. A story worth telling. All those stars crushed in above you, You feel more real than ever. You feel smaller than ever, too. Even the bus stops look like sleeping castles.

10 EXT/INT. BUS STOP OUTSIDE HOSPITAL, BUS, SHANE'S HOUSE - 10
NIGHT

A bus stop. Concrete. Chewed gum. Darkness presses in on all sides. SHANE and JAKE shelter in the moon-pool of a buzzing overhead light.

JAKE

I can't believe she thought we were brothers.

SHANE

Ha. I can't believe she *let us out*. Unaccompanied minors in the middle of the night, et cetera.

JAKE

(smirking)

I tend to have that effect on people.

SHANE

Letting you go too soon?

JAKE

Ha.

The silence is heavy.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Ugh.

SHANE

What?

The light buzzes. A car idles by.

JAKE

My head hurts. A lot. Like a whole lot.

SHANE

That'll be the concussion.

JAKE

Ughhhhhhh.

SHANE

Why did you let him do that?

JAKE stiffens.

JAKE

I've had worse.

SHANE

I know.

The bus. Empty. A tired driver nursing an extra large americano waves them in. SHANE takes a window seat and JAKE sits next to him.

JAKE

Hi.

SHANE makes a face.

SHANE

Hi. Where do you get off?

JAKE

(staring dead ahead)
Shane, I can't go home.

SHANE

What do your parents think of that?

JAKE

I can call in the morning and tell them I stayed with a friend or something.

SHANE

You payed for that with family health insurance. Don't you think they know?

JAKE punches the seat in front of them hard enough to make a dull pop through the carpet.

JAKE
 I dunno, Shane. I'll figure that out. Right now my head really hurts, hurts like a lot, and I just wanna go to bed.
 (a beat)
 Please, dude.

SHANE sits back, head hanging back ward over the seat behind him. His eyes are pools of glass, cold and fragile.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 (turning toward Shane)
 You can drop me off by my house but I'm not going inside. I see it this way, you've got a choice, man. I can be on the streets tonight or you can take me home with you.

SHANE's gaze cracks. He stares at the ceiling for a few more moments, considering. He looks at JAKE. JAKE doesn't meet his eyes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Please.

SHANE
 Fine.

JAKE
 Thank you. I promise I won't, like, get in the way, or anything. it'll be like I was never even there.

SHANE's silence is heavy. Somewhere, quietly, the night flips from very late to very early. JAKE sighs.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Shane?

No response. JAKE sniffs, clearly holding back tears. SHANE averts his eyes.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Does this mean we're friends again?

SHANE
 No. That's our stop.

They exit. The bus trundles away, empty, leaving them on the sidewalk.

SHANE starts off down the street toward a blue-gray suburban number with a lot of pavement and not very much garden. The sky hangs over them, thick and heavy with stars.

JAKE

Wow. it's exactly the same.

SHANE

Yup.

SHANE's keys jingle as he pulls them off the carabiner on his belt loop and opens the door. JAKE lingers in the doorway.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Do you need a formal invitation,
Kiefer Sutherland?

JAKE

(matching SHANE's volume)

I'm sorry, who?

SHANE

Never mind. I forgot about the bad
taste. Get in here.

JAKE obliges.

JAKE

Should I take off my shoes?

SHANE

Sure.

SHANE shuts the door with a soft click. JAKE bends to unlace his sneakers, straightening to toe them off. SHANE leads him past a lounge room, through a darkened hallway and past a bathroom, glowing from behind its door with the dull, fuzzy yellow of a forgotten bulb. SHANE turns into his room, at the end of the hall. JAKE follows.

JAKE

Woah.

SHANE

Woah, what?

He shuts the door behind him. The walls are papered in posters, tacky-gloss recreations of every piece of art, film or music that SHANE saw and loved. Folded and worn, with fuzzy white folds cutting lines across ashed-up faces.

JAKE

Just, that's a lot. Like, a lot.

He gestures at a formless desk, hunched in the corner under several massive stacks of notebooks and loose sheets. Over it, another, scrawnier shadow-creature leans. Upon further inspection, it's a book shelf, packed with notebooks, novels, CDs, DVDS and schoolbooks.

JAKE (CONT'D)

What is all of that?

SHANE

Assignments, stuff I've written, journals, notebooks, movies, books.

JAKE

There's so much, though. How many years worth of stuff do you have in here? Is that even all of it?

SHANE

I just have a lot of stories. There's more on my computer.

JAKE yawns. SHANE takes this as a cue, opens the sliding door of his closet and rifles through. Eventually he emerges, hurling a shirt and gym shorts at JAKE.

JAKE

Thanks.

Shane chucks some spare pillows, sheets and blankets onto the floor. The creamy folds make paper-slices in the low-light.

SHANE

Go get changed.

JAKE hovers, unsure.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Bathroom's down the hall.

JAKE starts toward the bathroom with it's blonde halo. The door creaks as he closes it behind him. His reflection in the mirror is smudged and dishevelled. Purple rings his left eye. His lip is split. The bruises on his neck curve like shackles around his jugular. He leans in to look closer. He places his hands around his own neck, matching the bruises. He prods a hand-mark with two fingers, wincing. He doesn't meet his own eyes in the mirror.

He takes the toothpaste form the cup by the sink and squeezes some onto a finger, placing it in his mouth. Then, he cups his hands under the tap, bringing his broken face down to fill his mouth with water. He swills it around, taking in the bathroom with its beige tile and stark glass.

He shucks off his shirt, eyeing the smudges of bruise and playground dirt on his ribs, then the shower. He sighs and just pulls SHANE's shirt over his head, doing the same with the rugby shorts.

SHANE (OFFSCREEN) (CONT'D)
 (from outside)
 You done yet?

JAKE
 (startled)
 Yeah, Just a second!

Tenderly, as if holding someone's heart, he brings the collar up to his nose and closes his eyes. It smells exactly the same as two summers ago. He doesn't meet his eyes in the mirror. JAKE opens the door to find SHANE, holding a glass of water and a packet of painkillers.

11 EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT 11

SHANE sits, cross-legged at the base of the monkey bars. When he moves, tanbark crunches.

SHANE
 I fall asleep easy and dream of
 ghosts.

12 DREAM SEQUENCE: EXT. WOODS BY THE PLAYGROUND - NIGHT 12

A memory. The woods are drenched in quiet. YOUNG SHANE and YOUNG JAKE carry torches through the trees, shoes mincing the undergrowth.

YOUNG SHANE
 What are we even looking for?

YOUNG JAKE
 I think we'll, like, know when we
 find it.

YOUNG SHANE
 Will we?

YOUNG JAKE
 I will.

YOUNG SHANE
 Sure.

They walk on in comfortable quiet. Something deeper into the woods keeps. YOUNG SHANE shivers, clutching his flashlight.

YOUNG JAKE
See?

YOUNG SHANE
(unsteady)
That was a bird.

YOUNG JAKE
(grinning)
Sure it was.

Abruptly, YOUNG JAKE veers off the path, crashing through long grass. YOUNG SHANE follows, hesitant.

YOUNG SHANE
Where are we going?

YOUNG JAKE
Does it matter?

YOUNG SHANE
It matters when we need to get back.

JAKE's torchlight paints pale imitation-branches on SHANE's face.

YOUNG JAKE
I don't think that's my problem right now.

SHANE bristles.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
are you coming, or are you chickenshit?

YOUNG SHANE
Fine.

YOUNG JAKE
By the way, I know exactly where we're going, and it's this way.

He turns abruptly, sending shadows keening across YOUNG SHANE's face. They break through a dense wall of trees and into a clearing. SHANE turns his face upward. The stars are brighter out here. YOUNG JAKE flicks his flashlight off.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
Still scared?

YOUNG SHANE
 (feigning confidence)
 I wasn't scared, and I'm not now.
 Sky's pretty, though.

YOUNG JAKE
 So turn off your torch.

YOUNG SHANE swallows. His torch beam dies in his hand.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
 I think the stars are brighter this
 way.

YOUNG SHANE
 (looking up)
 Yeah.

YOUNG JAKE
 And it makes the ghosts a lot
 easier to spot.

YOUNG SHANE returns his gaze to JAKE, barely an outline in
 the deep, blue gloom.

YOUNG SHANE
 Yeah?

YOUNG JAKE
 Yeah.

YOUNG SHANE
 Have you ever actually seen one?

YOUNG JAKE
 Yeah, once, when I was little,
 Ricky took me out with him. We were
 out in the woods, not far from
 here, actually. We were walking and
 while he's looking down at his
 phone I see something tall and
 white walk across the path off in
 the distance.

YOUNG SHANE bristles. He grips his flashlight.

YOUNG SHANE
 You expect me to believe that?

YOUNG JAKE
 (murmuring)
 No, I don't, but here's the good
 part:

He beckons YOUNG SHANE in.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)

(whispering)

when I see this I obviously nearly,
like, jump out of my skin. And I
guess I make a noise, because Ricky
asks me what's wrong. I tell him
what I saw. He says he doesn't
believe me. Says it could have been
anything. But then, I hear
something:

A beat. YOUNG SHANE's breathing is the only sound. Abruptly,
YOUNG JAKE screams. YOUNG SHANE jumps out of his skin at the
wail, high and animal. Once YOUNG SHANE's breathing has
calmed and YOUNG JAKE's laughter has subsided, YOUNG JAKE
leans back in.

YOUNG SHANE

Screw you.

YOUNG JAKE

You first. Anyways, we hear that
from right in front of us. Now, we
don't think about it, we just run
like hell, all the way home. And
that's how I saw my first ghost.

The memory begins to shift, unmoored. A white shape crawls
across the far side of the clearing. SHANE turns to look and
it's gone. He turns back and YOUNG JAKE is gone, too. The
stars spin overhead like heaven, or a ceiling fan. SHANE
pivots. The grass swirls as if underwater. The clearing is
deep and wide, hanging like a bowl under a too-close moon.
Perspective renders SHANE at once tiny and titanic. A shape
drops from the white skin of the moon. It's formless, as it
falls, and as it's caught by something that almost looks like
a man painted red. The ALMOST-MAN is featureless and
breathless, holding the crumpled white mass like a favourite
toy. SHANE looks closer, and it's a sheet, a child's ghost
costume.

ALMOST-MAN

Long time, no see.

It keens its face downward to take a bite of the mass in its
hands. Shredding it with its not-teeth. SHANE gasps. Its head
snaps up.

ALMOST-MAN (CONT'D)

Do you want some?

It holds out the dripping mass. SHANE shakes his head.

SHANE
Are you a ghost?

ALMOST-MAN
No. I'm worse. I'm alive and I have
teeth.

It opens its mouth to show SHANE.

SHANE
I'm not scared of you.

ALMOST-MAN
You should be.

SHANE frowns and points at the SHEET GHOST.

SHANE
What's that?

The ALMOST-MAN smiles and best it can and holds out SHEET GHOST. It seems to take a shape of its own, unfurling. A cartoonist's ghost, suspended over an invisible shape. Two eye holes. It opens a ragged mouth. It has teeth, too. SHANE shivers.

SHEET GHOST
(in YOUNG JAKE's voice)
Tell me a story.

SHANE screams.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

13 INT. SHANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

13

Careful light. Bed sheets. SHANE lies, crumpled, asleep in his bed. Below, JAKE stretches out, face peaceful like a saint. In this moment, the bruises on his face could be shadows, swept away as the sun crawls up toward noon. He shifts. The illusion shatters. He's just bruised. Without warning, SHANE's alarm blares. Both boys are hurled into consciousness.

JAKE
(breathless, slurred)
No! Ricky!

SHANE
(groggily)
Is he all you think about?

JAKE winces. SHANE bats at the clock until it swallows its tongue. JAKE sighs and flops back down, sending up a soft puff of blankets.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Freud would have loved you.

JAKE
I gotta go take a piss.

He stumbles to his feet and down the hall. SHANE lies back, eyes on the ceiling. The sunlight on his face shifts with the breeze. He sits up, looking at the pile of blankets JAKE left behind. He picks up a notebook from his bedside table and tares a blank page out. He pulls a pen from a jar on the windowsill. The note reads: "Making breakfast. Stay here." in short, spiky handwriting. He pads down the hallway, into the kitchen, where his mother sits, brewing tea.

SHANE
Morning.

SHANE'S MOTHER
Morning, bud.

He sets to work, putting four slices of toast in the toaster and selecting a jam jar from the fridge.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Do you need a ride to work tonight?

SHANE
I can walk. Thanks though.

SHANE'S MOTHER
Are you sure?

SHANE
Yeah, I'm sure. I'll be home by 9:30.

SHANE'S MOTHER
What are you doing for the rest of today?

SHANE
Maybe going out with some friends.

She grins, inquisitive, smelling a secret.

SHANE'S MOTHER
Which friends?

SHANE

You know, Sadie, Will. maybe Jake?

SHANE'S MOTHER

Jake? I haven't heard about Jake in a while.

The toaster beeps, ejecting the toast.

SHANE

Me either. We haven't spoken in a while.

SHANE'S MOTHER

You know, I don't think he's good for you, hon. Remember how bad it was when you...

She gropes for a phrase that isn't "broke up".

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

When you stopped... you know.

SHANE laughs, filling a glass of water.

SHANE

It's alright. We're both more mature now.

SHANE'S MOTHER makes a small noise, caught between care and disapproval. She makes to say something, then stops, dismissing her thought.

SHANE'S MOTHER

(curious)

That's a lot of toast.

SHANE

I'm a lot hungry.

The kettle beeps. He ducks into the pantry to pocket two Panadol while her back is turned. He pads back down the hallway. JAKE is cross-legged on the floor when SHANE comes in.

JAKE

Hi.

SHANE

Hi.

He puts the plate on the floor, then the cup, finally holding out the Panadol to JAKE.

JAKE
 (through a mouthful of
 toast)
 Thanks.

JAKE dry-swallows the Panadol, then sips the water.

SHANE
 I need you out by five. I have
 work, and I'm not letting you hang
 around here without me.

JAKE
 Can't I just come with you?

SHANE
 No way.

JAKE
 C'mon, man. What else am I gonna
 do?

SHANE
 Go home? I don't care. I'm not your
 dad.

JAKE
 I'll sit outside or something,
 maybe just wander around until your
 shift is over. I don't care what
 you say, I'm going with you.

SHANE sighs.

SHANE
 No.

JAKE
 (through a mouthful of
 toast)
 Why not?

SHANE
 Because I don't like you. Because I
 don;t want you to follow me around
 like a dog. If you wanna sit for
 four hours be my guest. Don't
 expect a treat.

JAKE
 I don't have anywhere else to be.

SHANE sighs and picks up the empty plate.

14 INT. SKETCHY PIZZA PLACE - SUNSET

14

A greasy restaurant table. JAKE sits alone. He looks at SHANE, who stands behind the counter, clad in store uniform and a thin, plastic smile that doesn't reach his eyes, serving a customer.

SHANE

Was that all for today?

CUSTOMER

Oh, one more thing. One cheese pizza with jalapenos and anchovies.

JAKE laughs. The customer gives him a look. SHANE rolls his eyes.

SHANE

Could I get a name for that?

CUSTOMER

Ronald.

JAKE stifles a giggle. The CUSTOMER frowns.

SHANE

Ronald. Should be ready in ten.

CUSTOMER

Great, thanks.

SHANE

Thanks. have a great night.

He turns and leaves. SHANE's smile drops. As soon as the door klunks closed, SHANE is stalking toward JAKE. JAKE looks up at him.

JAKE

Hi.

SHANE

Stop messing around.

JAKE

(mocking)

Yes sir, sorry sir!

SHANE takes a long, slow breath.

SHANE

Why are you being a dick?

JAKE
(grinning)
Because i'm bored, and you're easy
to annoy.

SHANE
No, you're just annoying. Nobody's
asking you to be here. I asked you
not to be. Please leave.

JAKE
If I order a pizza you can't make
me leave, right?

SHANE doesn't dignify this with a response. He walks away,
grabbing a new pair of gloves on his way past the counter. He
grits his teeth and gets to work on the wall of orders
accumulating on the board. Two pizzas in, he checks the
clock. 6:00. He sighs.

CARTER
Shane.

SHANE jumps out of his skin.

SHANE
Hi. 'Scared the shit out of me.

CARTER's muscled frame laughs. He cracks the tab on his
energy drink.

CARTER
Who's that out front?

SHANE clicks a button and an order disappears from the board.

SHANE
Long story. He's been following me
around all day.

CARTER
A stalker?

SHANE
Not quite.

CARTER
Friend of yours?

SHANE
Guess again.

CARTER pauses to think.

CARTER
Did you lose a bet or something?

SHANE
Nah. He's, uh, sleeping on my
floor. I gotta take care of him.

CARTER takes a sip of his energy drink. SHANE goes into the
fridge for more dough.

CARTER
(calling out to him)
Can I ask why?

SHANE (OFFSCREEN)
(yelling)
What?

He reappears with a stack of pizza bases half his height.

CARTER
Can I ask why he's on your floor?

SHANE dumps the bases on the bench and slathers one with
sauce.

SHANE
His brother won't stop punching his
face in.

CARTER knocks back half of his energy drink and puts on some
gloves.

CARTER
And I thought my house was crazy.
Anyways, I think he wants to order.
I'll take make for a sec.

SHANE
Sure.

When he turns around, JAKE is leaning over the counter.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Hi.

JAKE
Hi. Can I order?

SHANE rolls his eyes.

SHANE
(saccharine)
What can I get for you.

JAKE

Uhhh...

SHANE

You don't know?

JAKE

Jesus, okay. I'll just get a mini cheese pizza. And a lemonade.

SHANE

Cheese pizza? Are you five?

JAKE

Yes. How much do I owe you?

He takes out his wallet.

SHANE

Eight dollars.

JAKE hands over a stack of coins. SHANE groans. The cash register clicks open.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(monotone)

Great. Should be ready in ten. Have a great night.

JAKE

(cheery)

I will.

15

INT/EXT. SKETCHY PIZZA PLACE - LATER THAT NIGHT

15

SHANE, ruffled and covered in pizza sauce, shucks off his apron and clocks out.

SHANE

(yelling)

Bye, Caleb!

CALEB (OFFSCREEN)

(yelling)

Bye!

SHANE passes the counter, taking off his hat and smoothing his hair back. JAKE is fiddling with his phone. SHANE stops in the doorway.

SHANE

Coming?

JAKE
Oh. Uh, yeah.

16 INT. SHANE'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT

16

SHANE startles out of sleep. It's impossible to tell if it's very early or very late.

JAKE
(whispering)
Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to wake you up.

He has one foot out of the door and one arm in his jacket.

SHANE
(groggily, whispering)
Where are you going?

JAKE
Home, to see Ricky.

SHANE
Why?

JAKE
'Cause I miss him, and 'cause I need to talk to him about all this, and 'cause I need to, like, go back to living in my own house at some point.

SHANE
Is...

He squints at his alarm clock.

SHANE (CONT'D)
2:00am the best time for this?

JAKE
2:00am is the time I can leave without your parents seeing me. Don't worry, he's awake. He's practically nocturnal, or something.

SHANE
Don't. Do this in the morning.

JAKE
Shane. I'm going.

SHANE sighs.

SHANE
You're just going to get your face
bashed in. Let the concussion heal
first.

JAKE pulls his jacket on the rest of the way.

JAKE
He's more reasonable when he's
sober.

SHANE shakes his head.

SHANE
(resigned)
Alright. Maybe don't come back.

JAKE frowns.

JAKE
I hope I don't have to. Don't wait
up for me.

SHANE slips back into sleep. Time passes, though he isn't sure how much. He's awoken again by the door closing. JAKE leans against it. SHANE doesn't move, keeps his eyes half-lidded, breathing even. Passably asleep. JAKE looks over at him. His gaze lingers. SHANE watches through his eyelashes. JAKE sighs. And crumples to the floor. His shoulders start to shake first, then the rest of him. Soft sobs echo in the dim. SHANE's breath catches. Fresh bruises paint JAKE's face. Something in SHANE's gaze tightens. He wants to get up and hold him. He closes his eyes and goes back to sleep.

17 INT. SHANE'S HOUSE - MORNING

17

SHANE's bedroom. Light falls in dappled stripes across SHANE's sleeping face. Soft sounds issue from somewhere else in the house. Slowly, he wakes up, first looking up, then down at the pile of blankets where JAKE should be. He gets up and follows the sounds to the kitchen.

JAKE
'Morning.

SHANE
You came back.

He stands over a pan of eggs and bacon, nursing a mug of coffee.

JAKE
Mhm. Coffee?

SHANE nods.

SHANE
You're lucky my parents left for work early.

JAKE hands him a steaming mug. SHANE tries to seem like he isn't looking at JAKE. The fresh bruises are more pronounced in the light.

JAKE
Are we doing anything tonight?

SHANE
I'm not. I dunno about you.

JAKE
You are now. I'm taking you ghosthunting.

SHANE slips his coffee. It's too hot. He winces.

SHANE
How do you figure.

JAKE pokes at the eggs with a spatula.

JAKE
Well, we can go out your window, and it's to too much of a walk out to the woods.

SHANE
And why should I?

JAKE
Because if you don't, I'm gonna go on my own.

A beat.

SHANE
Like last night?

JAKE doesn't meet SHANE's eyes. He busies himself loading up two plates with eggs and bacon.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Jake.

JAKE pauses, not looking at SHANE.

JAKE

I guess, yeah, like last night. And I'm probably gonna get my face punched in again.

He passed SHANE a plate.

SHANE

(hesitant)

Thanks.

JAKE

Dude, it's not gonna poison you.

SHANE opens a drawer and extracts two forks. He passed one to JAKE.

SHANE

(though a mouthful of egg)

You never know.

18

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

18

Shane sits atop the monkey bars, silhouetted.

SHANE

(softly)

Into the woods. Directionless. Only deeper. I guess he was taking me less of a place and more of a time. He pulls me back into two summers ago. The trees are full of leafy potential. The air is clear. Everything is louder at night. Clearer. So is the ache in my chest. Now, the truth comes at me through the trees. I've missed him. I don't think anyone's known me like he did - since or previous.

He lies back, head hanging off the edge of the bars.

SHANE (CONT'D)

It was nice to have him back. Like going back to a childhood home. Like feeling summer roll around again. Watching your mom's favourite movie for the fifth time.

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

A little like reopening a wound.
Four years makes for a lot of scar
tissue.

A pause.

SHANE (CONT'D)

We've never actually found ghosts
before. No concrete proof. I think
I could feel them then, though. The
ghosts of two kids.

19

EXT. WOODS BY THE PLAYGROUND - EVENING

19

The woods are a silent stack of black hands, closing around
SHANE and JAKE.

SHANE V.O

I think they'd been haunting me for
a while.

JAKE and SHANE stick to the path, walking shoulder to
shoulder.

SHANE

Why don't you have an EMF reader?
Or a night vision camera?

JAKE

Why don't I have what-now?

SHANE

You're hell-bent on convincing
people ghosts exist. I figured
you'd want proof.

JAKE

That stuff is, like, total
bullshit, man.

SHANE

Ghosts are bullshit.

JAKE

No they're not, you've just never
seen one.

SHANE

You'd be able to convince me if you
had proof.

JAKE

Yeah, but... Doesn't it feel sacrilegious to you? Bringing that stuff out here, I mean?

SHANE pauses. A bird keens, deep in the woods.

SHANE

Not really.

JAKE

One day, you're gonna see one, then you'll know what I'm talking about.

The certainty in his voice when he says 'one day' gestures at the rest of a life spent together.

SHANE

I'll believe it when I see it.

They continue in silence.

JAKE

Come on.

He veers off the path to the right, pulling up short when SHANE doesn't follow.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(mocking)

Are you scared? Scared the imaginary ghosts might be real?

A beat.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Scared the imaginary ghosts might be real *and* hungry?

SHANE

Pfft. No.

He points his flashlight at SHANE.

JAKE

Okay, then prove it.

SHANE squints in the glare.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(grinning)

Lead the way.

SHANE

Lead the way *where*.

JAKE

I don't think it matters, to be honest. The ghosts are gonna find you if they wanna find you.

SHANE laughs and walks ahead of JAKE, who follows close behind. They walk in silence, save for the bend and snap of twigs beneath their feet. JAKE's flashlight flicks off. SHANE whips around. JAKE is gone.

SHANE

Ah! Jake?

He whirls around, searching the trees. Before he can call out again, there are hands on his shoulders. He jumps.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Agh!

JAKE laughs, keeping hold of SHANE's shoulders. SHANE tries to look unimpressed, but laughter bubbles up in his chest quickly. He leans back into JAKE's hands, slightly.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(laughing)

Screw you.

JAKE

Come on, we've still got a fair way to go.

They set off, again. JAKE turns occasionally, abruptly veering off into a different copse of trees. SHANE watches the back of his head. Suddenly, JAKE stops.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Did you see that?

Neither boy breathes.

SHANE

(whisper)

See what?

JAKE

You've got to be kidding me, you really didn't see that?

SHANE

Maybe you're just schizophrenic.

JAKE only stares back at him. SHANE sighs.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Fine. What was it?

JAKE
Like, a flash of white between
those trees over there.

He gestures vaguely to their left.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It wasn't just a flash, though. It
was more of a flicker, like
something was phasing in, but it
blinked out just as quick.

SHANE shivers, disquieted. JAKE grins at him, thrilled.

SHANE
It was probably just old fabric. A
big leaf, maybe.

JAKE
(grinning)
Look at you, man! Not even you
believe that. I saw *something* and
you know it.

SHANE squints into the gloom.

SHANE V.O
I wanted to believe it. It was a
story worth telling.

JAKE
Turn off your flashlight.

SHANE
Hm?

JAKE
Just do it.

A beat.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Pretty please with a shiny
maraschino cherry on top?

SHANE rolls his flashlight in his hand before flicking it
off. JAKE turns his off, too.

They peer into the dark together, watching shadows collect and disperse in the breeze. No flash of white. JAKE deflates. SHANE leans against a tree, arms crossed.

SHANE

I'm not seeing anything. You?

JAKE kicks the tree. It spews leaves into SHANE's hair.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Screw it.

He frowns and walks toward the space between the trees, pulling up just short. He holds his breath as he takes the final few steps. JAKE watches from behind. He leans down and it's an eternity before he comes back up, holding something.

JAKE

What's that.

SHANE

A bottle.

And it is. In the new light of realisation, a ghost becomes a bottle that catches torchlight and throws it back.

JAKE

Ugh. I was sure we had something.

JAKE only stares at him. SHANE pulls out his flashlight and shines it on the bottle, moving to to and fro. The reflection flickers and catches like fire. Recognition flicks across JAKE's face. He nods.

SHANE

No ghosts.

JAKE looks at SHANE. Suddenly, he can't suppress a laugh. SHANE narrows his eyes.

SHANE (CONT'D)

What?

JAKE

(grinning)

C'mere?

SHANE takes a step toward him. JAKE takes his face in one hand. SHANE's breath catches, and it comes out something like a laugh. JAKE's brow furrows in concentration as he brushes the leaves out of his hair.

SHANE

What are you doing.

JAKE

You have leaves in your hair.

He retrieves the last leaf and pulls back.

SHANE

C'mon. We have forever to find a ghost. It's getting late - early.

JAKE sighs and follows him back the way they came.

20

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

20

SHANE hangs upside down on the monkey bars.

SHANE

I almost believed we were gonna see a ghost. It was like being a kid again. For a moment, anything was possible. I was back two summers ago. The world wasn't so bad. Like a dream. Except my dreams are never good these days.

21

DREAM SEQUENCE: EXT. CLEARING IN THE WOODS - NIGHT

21

The clearing. The moon is too full and too low, SHANE is almost able to reach out and touch it. The playground sits, displaced, in the middle of the clearing.

SHANE

Jake?

The silence rings.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Jake?

He approaches the playground, which looks as if it's never been anywhere else. The ladder is solid as he climbs. A faint, white glow spills over the platform and onto his face.

ALMOST-MAN

Shane.

The ALMOST-MAN stands to one side of the slide. something white hovers on the other side, moulded roughly around the shape of the ALMOST-MAN. Twin sentinels.

SHANE

There's two of you?

SHEET GHOST
 (in YOUNG JAKE's voice)
 No, it's just me.

The image resolves. A sheet hung over invisible, imitation shoulders.

SHANE
 I didn't recognise you.

SHEET GHOST
 You need to adapt, if you wanna survive.

The ALMOST-MAN nods.

SHEET GHOST (CONT'D)
 Look, I can be, like, whatever shape I want.

The structure beneath the sheet melts, making itself shapeless, before forming into a dog. The sheet hangs lopsidedly over the canine form, pooling on the platform.

ALMOST-MAN
 I taught him everything he knows.

The SHEET GHOST moulds itself into a bottle. The shape of it is expensive, alcoholic, something parents tell their kids not to touch. The ALMOST-MAN laughs and picks up the bottle. SHANE bristles. The ALMOST-MAN slams the bottle against the railing, and it shatters, painting the sheet red with blood. The ALMOST-MAN puts his bloody fingers to his mouth and licks.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

22

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

22

SHANE sits atop the slide like a king on a throne.

SHANE
 Fall asleep. Wake up. Go get groceries. Don't let Jake go home. Same as before. Same heat, too. Same summer. Time is a flat circle. Time is a gas stove. Summer is the dial, turning the heat all the way up.

23 INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

23

A grocery store. It buzzes lightly with the force of a thousand fluorescent lights. One of those mom-and-pop joints with no security cameras and a minimum eftpos charge. SHANE brandishes a box.

SHANE (V.O.)

Every summer is this summer and this place hasn't sold a thing since I was last here.

SHANE

(bored)
Need any...

He pauses to read the label.
Wonderbleach?

JAKE

No? Why would I need wonderbleach?

SHANE

Dunno. Why would you?

JAKE

Making chloroform and napalm, obviously.

SHANE

Okay, Tyler Durden. It's creepy that you know that.

JAKE

It's pretty much common knowledge, though, right?

SHANE

Still weird.

JAKE

I am Joe's useless knowledge.

SHANE dumps a spray bottle of nameless all-purpose cleaner into the basket.

SHANE

Was that a Fight Club reference?

JAKE

I am Jack's self-satisfied nod.

SHANE

I didn't think you remembered. You were asleep. The whole time.

JAKE

Was I really?

SHANE

I am Jack's abject surprise.

JAKE

(grinning)

You are Jack's terrible memory.

SHANE dumps a packet of paper towel into the basket.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Is that everything?

SHANE consults a ratty shopping list. Beetroots. Bread. Milk. Eggs. Paper towel. All purpose cleaner.

SHANE

Yeah.

They weave through the maze of aisles toward the checkout. One girl sits behind the counter, frizzy haired and many-braceleted.

CLERK #1

Hey there, what can I do for you?

SHANE

Just these, thanks.

She eyes JAKE, who hangs back.

CLERK #1

Sure. You know it was Joe, in the book.

She rings it up and SHANE pays.

JAKE

(from behind SHANE)

I am Joe's useless knowledge.

She makes a face.

SHANE

Thanks. Have a good day.

He grabs the paper bag, smiles and leaves. JAKE follows. The bell on the door rings hollowly as they leave.

JAKE pulls a lollipop from his pocket and pops it in his mouth. SHANE stares.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(amused)

You didn't seriously steal a lollipop.

JAKE

I am Jake's second-hand petty-theft habit.

SHANE

Why?

JAKE

Just 'cause.

The door swings open. Both boys turn.

CLERK #1

'Scuse me.

Her crimped hair bobs as she speaks. Her voice is large for her short body. She points a bejewelled finger at JAKE's face.

CLERK #1 (CONT'D)

You gotta pay for that.

JAKE laughs. The CLERK winces.

CLERK #1 (CONT'D)

Seriously, you can't leave until you pay for that.

He shoves her. Not nearly as hard as he could have, but hard enough, against the wall, forearm across her collarbones. She's taken off guard. She only stares at him. JAKE raises his fist, lining it up with her nose. She blinks.

CLERK #1 (CONT'D)

I'll call the cops.

SHANE

Jake. What the hell?

He slides his forearm up against her neck. Her breathing quickens. SHANE takes JAKE around the waist and wrenches him back.

CLERK #1

You still gotta pay.

SHANE holds his hands up in surrender.

SHANE

Let it go.

She crosses her arms. SHANE hands her a fifty-cent coin. She flips JAKE off. SHANE puts a hand on his shoulder.

JAKE

This never happened, alright? We aren't real.

CLERK #1 makes no indication she heard him. JAKE turns on his heel and drags SHANE, shell shocked, around the corner. SHANE tugs his arm out of JAKE's grip.

SHANE

What the hell was that?

JAKE stops.

JAKE

I stole a lollipop.

SHANE

You failed to steal a lollipop. Then you threatened some girl.

JAKE makes a sound around the lollipop.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Who the hell are you? Ricky?

JAKE

It's not my fault you're such a tight ass.

SHANE

That's Ricky talking and you know it.

JAKE

Shane, everyone steals, it's really not a big deal. Just 'cause I stole a lollipop doesn't make me the freakin' Antichrist.

SHANE rolls his eyes.

SHANE

Shut up.

JAKE

Don't tell me to shut up!

SHANE

(louder)

Shut up! That's not the problem.
You assaulted some girl!

JAKE

So?

SHANE

You don't *care*?

JAKE

I didn't hurt her!

SHANE

And that makes you better than him?

JAKE

Just because you've never loved
someone before, doesn't mean you
get to keep shitting on Ricky! Not
everyone is a hero.

SHANE

You're such a coward.

JAKE shoves him. SHANE shoves back, turning away before JAKE can get a word in.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Find another floor to sleep on,
Ricky.

JAKE kicks the nearest object.

24

INT. SHANE'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

24

SHANE readies for bed, listening to music through a pair of beat-up headphones. He nods along as he picks up notebooks and clothes off the floor, shunts them out of the way, piles them up in corners. The ghost-bottle shines on his nightstand. A knock at the window. SHANE stands, statue-still. The knock sounds again. He pauses his music and shifts his headphones down, around his neck. As he draws the curtains away from the glass and JAKE's beaten face bobs out of the twilight. SHANE considers for a moment before sliding the window to the side and speaking through the screen.

SHANE

What the hell do you want?

Now that he's closer, face pressed almost against the screen, he can see how badly bruised JAKE is.

JAKE
I wanted to tell you I'm sorry.

SHANE
Sorry about threatening that clerk
or sorry that Ricky beat your ass?

JAKE flinches.

JAKE
I'm sorry about all of it.

SHANE
(sharply)
I don't care.

A beat.

JAKE
he's my brother, but you're my best
friend.

He falters. A beat. SHANE only stares at him.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You gotta understand, he's my
brother, and I love him a lot. Even
when he does stuff like this to me,
he's family.

He gestures at his face. SHANE sighs and crosses his arms.

JAKE (CONT'D)
He practically raised me.

SHANE
It's not that you keep throwing
yourself at Ricky. Do that all you
want. I don't care. It's that you
haven't changed since you were
eleven.

JAKE falters. SHANE presses in closer.

SHANE (CONT'D)
You're stupid. You hate yourself
and you make it everyone else's
problem. Worst of all you don't
learn. You're not even a person,
you're just Ricky's mini-me!

JAKE
(working himself up)
I'm learning now!
(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

That was him talking, and I shouldn't have threatened that clerk! All I know how to do is fuck things up but I'm trying to learn. I'm here in the dead of night, outside your goddamn window, telling you I'm sorry, am I not?

SHANE stares across the few inches between them.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Come on, Shane. Say something?

A beat. JAKE swallows his pride.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(softly, head pressed against the screen, looking down)

Tell me a story?

A long silence. He sits back on his haunches.

SHANE

(coldly)

Once upon a time, there was a street dog. Smallest of the pack, always scrabbling for food and attention with his brothers. The oldest brother hated him. He took more than he needed just to see the youngest starving. Bit him just to hear him whine. The little dog's teeth were just as sharp. But he never had the same strength. But he had *rage*. But he never bit back.

JAKE

Shane.

SHANE

He was scared of what would happen if he tried. Because he still *loved* the his brother. He worshipped him. Worshipped him like he'd turn around and love him back. Wanted to be just like him. So he bit the middle brother. If he couldn't be the best, he could be the second best. He took power where he could. He was *pathetic*.

JAKE

Shane.

SHANE

(more and more worked up)
The little brother got snagged on a
barbed wire fence one day chasing
rabbits. The middle brother had it
with him. He stood back and
watched.

(breathing raggedly)
Watched him tear and tear at his
skin, trying to get free. He was
just digging the barbs deeper into
his side. Neither brother cared
enough to help. They left him. Came
back once he was dead.

(whisper-shouting)
Street dogs can go weeks without a
good meal. Can't blame them for
eating their brother's meat. He
didn't feel it, but if he did he
wouldn't have cared. He'd probably
just be giddy that he was finally
of use to the oldest brother. Blah
blah, hero-worship. Blah, blah,
symbolism-

JAKE slams and open plan on the screen. As it rattles, SHANE
refocuses.

JAKE

Shane, I know I fucked up. Please
just stop. I don't wanna hear about
me, and I don't wanna hear about
you and I sure-as-hell don't wanna
hear about Ricky.

(voice cracking)
You don't know what it's like,
having a brother who hates you. You
don't know what any of this is
like, Shane.

(whisper-shouting)
And - and I'm sorry I hurt you but
I can't even try to fix it until
you let me.

A long pause. The silence is heavy. JAKE can't meet SHANE's
SHANE lets out a breath. He retrieves a screwdriver from his
bedside drawer and sets it to work on the screen. In a few
moments, the screen is coughing dust onto the windowsill as
it's pulled from its frame. JAKE crawls through, to sit
cross-legged in front of SHANE.

SHANE

Do you still want that story?

JAKE
 (eyes downcast)
 Yeah.

SHANE lies down, leaving space for JAKE, who follows suit. They stare up at the ceiling together, not quite touching.

SHANE
 You know the woods?

JAKE
 Yeah?

SHANE
 Deep, further than we've gone, is a graveyard.

JAKE
Shane.

SHANE
 (laughing)
 Don't worry, it's cute. I swear.
 Two murder victims are buried next
 to each other on the same day.

JAKE makes a face. SHANE makes a face right back at him.

The earth is cold. Leeching-cold that eats your body heat. Ghosts don't have much in the way of body heat anyways. When they feel the sun, they crawl up through the soil. The sun shines right through them, but the warmth is almost like being alive again. Scratch that - it's more like *holding* someone living. Now, both of these ghosts were lonely when they were alive. One never felt like he fit in, and the other never wanted to. In the dawn, they find each other. One says "so I guess we're neighbours,". And the other says "Sorry I didn't make you a casserole,".

JAKE laughs.

JAKE
 I thought you didn't believe in ghosts.

SHANE punches his shoulder.

SHANE

Shut up and listen. The first ghost laughs, and nobody's ever bothered to laugh at the second ghost's jokes. Ghost Two loves to pretend to hate everything. He likes Ghost One a lot, though.

JAKE

I said I didn't want a story about you.

SHANE

Oh, get screwed with a chainsaw. Do you wanna hear the rest or not?

JAKE

(laughing)
Alright, alright.

SHANE

"What do we do now?" Ghost One asks. Ghost two has about as much idea as he does. They decide to test all the myths. Turns out ghosts can walk through trees. Ghosts can levitate. 'Living can't see them, though. They can pick stuff up if they focus. They can throw little stones at kids that venture too far in. They can hold hands. they only try once. It's clammy and awful. They can taste food, but they can't digest it. It just kinda sits there. "That casserole is sounding less and less useful by the second." one of them says.

SHANE leaves a pause for JAKE to laugh, but it's left empty. He looks over. JAKE is asleep. SHANE smiles and turns out the light.

25

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

25

SHANE idles to one side of the slide.

SHANE

A summer is a summer is a summer.
Is every summer. The wallpaper in
JAKE's house hasn't changed.

26 FLASHBACK: INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - DAY

26

The door opens inward. YOUNG JAKE motions for YOUNG SHANE to enter first.

YOUNG SHANE
Should I take off my shoes?

YOUNG JAKE
I guess so.

YOUNG SHANE ducks down to take off his battered converse, and YOUNG JAKE takes the opportunity to pretend to kick him in the face. YOUNG SHANE flinches and falls back onto the carpet. YOUNG JAKE laughs. YOUNG SHANE looks up at him for a moment. Soon, he's laughing, too. YOUNG JAKE extends a hand to help him up, and he takes it, still grinning.

YOUNG SHANE
(smiling)
Get violently screwed.

YOUNG JAKE
You first.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
C'mon. We just renovated the basement. We've got a pool table down there now.

JAKE extends an arm down the hall toward the stairs. SHANE obliges.

YOUNG SHANE
I'm so bad at pool.

YOUNG JAKE
Me too, that's the fun of it!

They continue down the hall and the stairs to a door. JAKE opens it with a light creak, gesturing for SHANE to go ahead. RICKY (15, wiry, kinetic) and a girl (15, lovely, choppy) sit on the pool table, making out. RICKY holds a mostly-empty bottle of vodka on one hand, and a fistful of her hair in the other. JAKE closes the door.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)
(quieter)
Oh. Uh, that's just Ricky and his girlfriend. We can go to my room instead.

They start back up the stairs, but JAKE stops when he hears the creak of the door.

YOUNG RICKY
Why are you sneaking around?

He sees SHANE.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)
And who's that?

YOUNG JAKE
(mumbling)
Shane, meet Ricky. Ricky, Shane.

YOUNG RICKY starts down the hall toward them, smiling.

YOUNG RICKY
Hi Shane, I've heard a lot about
you. How's it going?

YOUNG SHANE prickles.

YOUNG SHANE
Alright, you?

YOUNG RICKY is charming in the way a wolf is. A magician
holding a trick-noose.

YOUNG RICKY
I'm doing great. Do you guys wanna
come in? We were just about to
start a round of truth or dare.

YOUNG SHANE
(cold)
I don't wanna interrupt.

YOUNG RICKY
The more the merrier. Get in here,
we need extra players.

The boys exchange a look. YOUNG RICKY leads the way into the
basement. It's impossible to tell how big the room is in the
dark. A pool table sits dead-centre. The balls and cues are
scattered around the room like shrapnel. Instead, a pretty
girl with long, curly hair sits there, smoking a cigarette.
She's holding the vodka.

ALICIA
(friendly, clearly drunk)
Hey, Jake! Long time no see! How
are you?

YOUNG JAKE
I've been doing okay, how about
you?

ALICIA
I'm doing *amazing*. Who's your
friend?

YOUNG RICKY
Shane, Alicia. Alicia, Shane.

YOUNG SHANE
Hi.

ALICIA gives him a little wave.

ALICIA
Hi there.

YOUNG RICKY pushes himself up onto the table next to ALICIA
and motions for the boys to join him.

RICKY
I was just telling these two how we
were starting a game of truth or
dare.

ALICIA
Ooooh! I this should be fun! Wait -
how old are you?

YOUNG SHANE
Twelve.

ALICIA
Perfect.

She blows smoke in his face thoughtfully.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Old enough to contain interesting
truths, but not too old to turn
down a good dare.

YOUNG SHANE
Something like that.

ALICIA
Can I go first?

Nobody argues.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Ecstatic! Shane, truth or dare?

YOUNG SHANE
Truth.

YOUNG RICKY
'You scared, or something?

ALICIA
Oh, leave him alone. He's *twelve*.

YOUNG RICKY frowns.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
(to YOUNG SHANE)
What do you wanna do with your
life?

YOUNG SHANE
I wanna tell stories. Write them.
Something like that.

ALICIA
I think you have the soul of a
poet.

YOUNG RICKY
(mocking)
Are you gonna be the next Kerouac,
Shane?

YOUNG SHANE
I dunno. Maybe.

ALICIA frowns.

ALICIA
Don't. He's so overdone.

YOUNG RICKY
And he was a total fairy.

Awkward silence.

YOUNG SHANE
Truth or dare, Ricky?

YOUNG RICKY
Dare.

YOUNG SHANE
Chug the rest of that.

He points at the vodka bottle, three quarters empty.

YOUNG RICKY
Easy.

He downs it. YOUNG JAKE is briefly impressed. ALICIA rolls her eyes over the cigarette.

ALICIA
Ugh, now I have to get the other bottle.

She gets up and leaves, swaying slightly.

YOUNG RICKY
My turn, I guess. Jack. Truth or dare?

YOUNG JAKE
Truth?

YOUNG RICKY
(without missing a beat)
Don't be such a fucking pussy.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Wicked. Kiss Kerouac here on the mouth.

A lengthy pause. SHANE shifts uncomfortably.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)
Come on. You have to. That's the rules.

YOUNG SHANE
(to YOUNG JAKE)
You don't have to do anything he says.

YOUNG JAKE
(to YOUNG RICKY)
No.

YOUNG RICKY catches him by the wrist and wrenches his arm behind his back.

YOUNG RICKY
No?

YOUNG JAKE shakes his head. YOUNG RICKY twists his arm. Jake thrashes.

YOUNG JAKE
(panicked)
Agh! Quit it, Ricky!

YOUNG RICKY pushes his arm further. JAKE cries out in pain.

YOUNG SHANE

Stop it!

YOUNG RICKY

'can't turn down a dare.

YOUNG JAKE

Screw you.

YOUNG RICKY moves so that his other arm is across JAKE'S throat.

YOUNG RICKY

What was that?

He presses down. YOUNG JAKE's mouth moves soundlessly. He thrashes, but YOUNG RICKY is stronger than him.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)

(in Jake's ear)

Are you gonna do it?

YOUNG JAKE, red in the face by now nods frantically. Ricky lets go of JAKE and shoves him toward YOUNG SHANE, who is still on the table. He stumbles and the other boy catches him, giving him time to recover.

YOUNG JAKE

(in Shane's ear)

I'm sorry.

YOUNG SHANE

(whispering)

Screw that.

YOUNG SHANE holds YOUNG JAKE at arms length so he can look him in the eyes.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)

We doing this?

JAKE sways a little and places his hands on SHANE's knees for balance.

YOUNG RICKY

You gotta.

YOUNG SHANE moves in a few inches and tilts his head, eyes on YOUNG SHANE's mouth. They hover, unsure, for a second and YOUNG SHANE laughs, nervous. Without warning, RICKY grabs JAKE by the neck and pushes him the rest of the way. They nearly fall back, onto the table. The kiss is open-eyed and awful. YOUNG RICKY laughs.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)
 (laughing)
 You fucking fags. You liked that.

YOUNG SHANE blinks.

YOUNG RICKY (CONT'D)
 You're both fucked in the head.

YOUNG SHANE
 Fuck you.

YOUNG RICKY only laughs.

YOUNG RICKY
 I think Jake's got that covered.

YOUNG JAKE
 Can we go now?

YOUNG RICKY
 We haven't finished the game.

YOUNG SHANE
 You-

ALICIA opens the door, holding another bottle.

ALICIA
 (singsong)
 Tonight is a fine night - day, a
 warm night - day, a wine -

She pauses to look at the bottle.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 Bourbon drinking night, a moony
 day!

She saunters over to YOUNG RICKY and puts an arm around him.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 And a day to hug your girl and talk
 and spit and be heavengoin'!

She bows unsteadily.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 In case you didn't notice, or I
 butchered it too much, that was
 Kerouac.

Only YOUNG RICKY returns her laughter. YOUNG SHANE and YOUNG JAKE sit silent and tense.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

What happened?

YOUNG SHANE

We have to go.

ALICIA

Oh, why?

YOUNG JAKE

(through gritted teeth)

Homework assignment, you know how it is.

ALICIA

Alright, well don't work too hard.

She smiles wide, tipsy. Behind them, YOUNG RICKY laughs. They make a quick exit, up to YOUNG JAKE's room. YOUNG JAKE closes the door behind them and flops down on the bed. His head hangs, upside down, off the side. YOUNG SHANE sits, cross-legged on the floor, so that their faces are level.

YOUNG JAKE

I'm sorry about Ricky. I swear, he's not usually this bad.

YOUNG SHANE

Don't worry about it. Screw him.

There's a pause. The room is papered in posters for movies and sports teams. Domestic debris is arranged sporadically on the floor.

YOUNG JAKE

I love him, but
(whispering)
sometimes I wish he was dead.

YOUNG SHANE

Anyone would.

YOUNG JAKE

I shouldn't think that, though. He only picks on me 'cause I'm weak. I'm a fucking pussy.
(voice breaking)
If I was him I'd hate me too.

YOUNG SHANE

Everyone hates themselves. You're not weak.

YOUNG JAKE starts to cry and YOUNG SHANE pulls up short. YOUNG JAKE wipes his face frantically with the heels of his hands, like he's trying to push the tears back into his eyes. He sits up so that YOUNG SHANE can't see his face.

YOUNG JAKE
(loud, unsteadily)
See? I'm such a *fairy*. I'm just as weak as he says!

YOUNG SHANE
No you're not. If your brother's too shit-for-brains to see that, then screw him.

YOUNG JAKE
No, no! It's me. It's not him, it's me!

A pause.

YOUNG SHANE
(softer)
Forget him. You have me. Brothers don't just have to be blood.

YOUNG JAKE sobs quietly. The bed creaks as YOUNG SHANE hoists himself up to sit behind him, A hand on his shoulder. YOUNG JAKE shrugs him off.

YOUNG JAKE
Get screwed. I don't want another brother, I want *him*.

SHANE startles, wounded. After a second, his face hardens.

YOUNG SHANE
(defeated)
Shut up. You don't know anything.

YOUNG SHANE turns around so they're back to back and leans against him, comforting him without the burden of being observed. YOUNG JAKE sobs quietly.

END FLASHBACK.

27

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

27

SHANE sits, silhouetted and small beneath the looming slide.

SHANE

It might just be the buzz of the fluorescents, but I'm getting deja vu again. Nothing worthwhile happens in grocery stores. Have you ever heard a story that happened in one?

a beat.

SHANE (CONT'D)

'cause there's none worth telling. I hate grocery stores.

28 EXT. GROCERY STORE CAR PARK, ABANDONED COURTS - DAY

28

The parking lot is empty, save for JAKE and SHANE. SHANE pedals his bike slowly. JAKE walks.

SHANE V.O

Nobody talks about dry heat and wet heat. Summer here is sopping. The heat of someone holding you in a fist. The sweat, too.

The pavement sweats and shimmers.

SHANE

You put cinnamon in your cereal?

JAKE scrunches up his nose.

JAKE

Yes?

(laughing)

What exactly is so wrong about that?

SHANE

It doesn't mix. It just sits on top. How is that enjoyable?

JAKE

Well when the cereal runs out, I don't just wanna eat *milk*.

SHANE

(gesturing animatedly)

You're using too much milk. It should absorb the taste of the cereal.

JAKE

It's not tea, you don't sit there
and let it steep cause that, like,
gets it all soggy.

SHANE

And cinnamon is the solution?

JAKE

Yes.

SHANE

I'm not convinced.

JAKE

(feigning indignation)

Well I'm not convinced we can be
friends anymore! You-

JAKE pulls up short.

SHANE

What?

JAKE turns abruptly and walks the other way, taking two steps
before turning back and continuing the way they were going.

JAKE

(hushed)

Come on, let's go.

SHANE

Go where?

JAKE jerks his head over at the hedges on the other side of
the parking lot.

RICKY (O.S.)

(yelling, faraway)

Come on!

It's unmistakably him. JAKE presses forward with resolve.

SHANE

Where are you going?

JAKE

It's Ricky over there.

SHANE

Yeah and?

JAKE ignores him and presses forward.

SHANE (CONT'D)
 You want him to concuss you again?

No response.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Jake.

JAKE
 (over his shoulder)
 Dude, It's not my fault you're
 scared.

SHANE
 Aren't you? All he does is hurt
 you.

JAKE
 You met him once when he was drunk
 and we were, like, twelve. So, tell
 me again how this is gonna go with
 my own brother, or, grow a pair and
 go over there with me.

JAKE sets off again. SHANE trails behind, walking his bike .

RICKY (O.S.)
 (shouting)
 Come on!

Distant laughter. SHANE and JAKE approach the fence, diving through a hole in the chain-link. An abandoned basketball court. RICKY. With him stand two girls (ragged, siren-eyed, long-legged) and two boys (beanied, greasy, thinly muscled beneath tank tops). Wrecked aerosol cans and beer bottles cluster around them. The asphalt gleams with broken glass. One of the girls throws a shoe through the hoop. A boy screams with intoxicated glee.

JAKE
 Ricky!

RICKY and co. turn. The shoe goes bouncing off toward a downed mini stadium light.

RICKY
Jake.

JAKE
Hey.

A beat.

SHANE V.O
Even the silence sweats.

A beat.

RICKY
What do you want?

JAKE
I wanna come home. Please tell me
you'll let me.

A blissed-out hyena-laugh from GREASY BOY #1.

RICKY
It's so peaceful without you,
though.

JAKE quiets, hurt.

RICKY (CONT'D)
(to SHANE)
I remember you.

Someone picks up the shoe.

RICKY (CONT'D)
(to ALICIA)
Remember him?

ALICIA
(to SHANE)
Yeah, you're the one from the
basement.

SHANE
'Didn't think you'd remember.

ALICIA
Of course I remember.

She smiles, thin-lipped.

GREASY BOY #1
I don't.
(to RICKY)
Ricky, who the fresh hell is this?

RICKY
This is Juliette and his Romeo.

Laughter. JAKE squirms.

JAKE

We're not - he's not -

RICKY

Sorry. This is My kid brother and his poet boyfriend.

SHANE

Shut up.

RICKY

What did you say, Kerouac?

SHANE laughs - half afraid, half amused.

RICKY (CONT'D)

How long have you been choking on my brother, Kerouac?

Laughter. RICKY stalks past the fence and right up to SHANE, forgetting JAKE altogether.

SHANE

I'm not. I've been with your mum around a year, though. She seems to like me a lot.

A breath.

SHANE (V.O.)

I finally get what people mean by seeing stars.

A punch collides with SHANE's jaw. He falls. JAKE catches him and drags him back by his elbows. RAGGED GIRL #1 catches him and shoves him forward, back onto SHANE.

SHANE (V.O)

I'd never fought anyone but JAKE before.

SHANE struggles to his feet and lands both hands on RICKY's chest, shoving him back. JAKE flails against GREASY BOY #2. RICKY shoves SHANE back and he trips over his own feet, going down on both knees. RICKY leans down. JAKE knees someone in the crotch, goes down flailing with them. RICKY breathes on SHANE's face.

RICKY

I don't need my dick sucked, Kerouac.

SHANE throws his head forward into RICKY's nose. RICKY reels back. His foot comes down on SHANE's neck.

JAKE flying-tackles RICKY, hands claws in his shirt. SHANE is face-up beside them on the asphalt. Someone kicks him in the ribs.

SHANE (V.O.)
Humid air. The inside of a fist.
Summer is a punch. There is no air
in my lungs.

JAKE goes down beside him. RICKY kicks SHANE in the head. The world goes dark.

29 EXT/INT. ABANDONED COURTS, GROCERY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON 29

SHANE and JAKE lie face-up, battered on the empty courts. SHANE stares up at nothing. Twin bruises. Twin eyes glowing in the twilight. SHANE opens his eyes and stares up at nothing.

JAKE
(softly)
Are you okay?

SHANE remembers where he is.

SHANE
No.

A beat.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Are you?

JAKE
Yeah, I think so. It, uh- It wasn't
as bad as usual. I've had a lot
worse.

SHANE
Is he coming back?

JAKE
No, he's not.

A breath.

SHANE
What now?

JAKE
Now, we never do that again.

SHANE wipes his nose on his sleeve. He looks down and there's blood on his sleeve. On his face. JAKE sees, too.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(softly)
Shit. Come here.

He pulls his sleeve over his hand and puts it under SHANE's bleeding nose.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It doesn't look broken. Does it feel broken?

SHANE
(muffled)
I dunno. 'Never been broken before.

JAKE
Well, it doesn't look broken.

SHANE
How's your head?

JAKE
Not the greatest.

SHANE
We should get home.

A breath.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Go home and sleep. Don't go back out to find him.

JAKE
Don't worry, I won't. I swear, now I've learned my lesson.

It's clear he's finally given up on RICKY.

SHANE
Sorry.

JAKE
you shouldn't be.

SHANE
No. For making fun of this. It's the worst. I didn't know shit.

A dry laugh.

JAKE

It's alright. Nobody gets what it's like to meet Ricky until they've met him.

A breath. JAKE's sleeve is soaked in SHANE's blood. He removes it, tentative. The bleeding has slowed to a manageable trickle.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Do you wanna go watch a movie?

SHANE nods. Shaky exhale. JAKE stands and holds a hand out to SHANE. He takes it.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Well then we need movie snacks, come on.

SHANE

Jake.

JAKE

Don't worry, I have money.

SHANE

Jake.

JAKE

Just come on, dude. Trust me, you're freaked. Bright lights and security cameras are gonna help.

SHANE only looks at him.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Trust me. I've done this a few times. Plus, If you're gonna pass out again, I'd rather you do it someplace safe - safe-ish.

SHANE sighs.

SHANE

Fine. You're paying.

The store doors close around them. The clerk eyes them.

CLERK

Are you okay?

SHANE ignores her.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Do you need me to call someone?

JAKE

Do you believe in ghosts?

CLERK

What?

JAKE

You look like you've seen one.

CLERK

Do you need me to call someone?

JAKE

(grinning)

Don't bother. We're not real.

30 INT. SHANE'S HOUSE - SUNSET

30

The door opens to reveal SHANE, battered. He steps inside, pauses, listens for a second. The TV is on. He passes behind the living room, where his mother watches a renovation show. She hears him and turns. He freezes.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Hey, bud. How was your day?

He doesn't turn around.

SHANE

(the the wall)

Pretty good.

SHANE'S MOTHER

(pointedly)

How's Jake?

A beat.

SHANE

Good.

A beat.

SHANE'S MOTHER

And why are you talking to the wall?

SHANE says nothing.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Shane.

Silence.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Turn around.

A beat. SHANE turns. She gasps.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

I knew this would happen.

SHANE

It wasn't him.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Then who was it?

SHANE doesn't reply. She gets up, approaching him.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Bud, he's not good for you. I swear, he's not good for you. You can't keep coming home like this.

She touches his face. He flinches.

SHANE

It wasn't him. I swear.

SHANE'S MOTHER makes a face.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Do I need to take you to hospital?

SHANE

I'm okay.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Are you sure? I'd rather you get looked at.

SHANE

I'm just gonna go to bed.

SHANE'S MOTHER

Shane.

SHANE

If it's bad, I'll go in the morning. Right now I just wanna go to bed.

She makes a face. He smiles lopsidedly.

SHANE'S MOTHER
You promise?

SHANE
I promise.

He turns to go.

SHANE'S MOTHER
Shane.

SHANE
Yeah?

SHANE'S MOTHER
No more Jake.

A beat.

SHANE'S MOTHER (CONT'D)
Okay, bud?

SHANE
(to the wall)
Okay.

As soon as he makes it to his room he opens the window. JAKE stands at the window, holding an armful of technicolor packets, grinning. SHANE fishes the screwdriver out of his drawer.

JAKE
What took you so long?

SHANE
Shh. Just Mum.

He dislodges the screen and brings it down with practised ease.

SHANE (CONT'D)
She thinks you did this.

He gestures at his face. JAKE laughs and crawls in through the opening. They huddle on SHANE's bed.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Why are you so happy about all of this?

SHANE pulls his computer from under the pillow and opens it. Laptop light paints their faces blue between the bruises.

JAKE
Shane, *I'm free.*

JAKE types something, presses a button. SHANE cracks open a packet of chips.

SHANE
(through a mouthful of
chips)
You're gonna give my computer a
virus.

JAKE
I will do no such thing.

SHANE lifts the laptop off JAKE's lap. He types for a second.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Just adding "free movie full" to
the name isn't gonna help.

SHANE types for a second, then sits back, smug.

SHANE
What was that?

JAKE pops a chip in his mouth, grumbling.

JAKE
I don't wanna watch a video
recording of someone's TV screen.

SHANE
So find something better.

They squabble briefly over the laptop, which throws coloured light over their smiles.

31 EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT 31

SHANE's silhouette mixes with the black outline of the monkey-bars.

SHANE
Wanna know why I keep a screwdriver
by my bed?

32 FLASHBACK: INT. SHANE'S BEDROOM - FOUR YEARS PRIOR, NIGHT 32

YOUNG SHANE sits on his bed, holding a torch in his mouth over a notebook and pen. A tap-tap rings out and he nearly jumps out of his skin. He listens.

Another tap, more insistent. He peels back the curtain. YOUNG JAKE motions for him to open the window. YOUNG SHANE obliges.

YOUNG JAKE
(loudly)
Hey, I wasn't sure if you'd be
awake.

YOUNG SHANE
Shh!

He glances at the door.

YOUNG JAKE
(Whispering)
Oh, sorry.

His face is made awful by pink-red blotches the size of fists.

YOUNG SHANE
Coming in?

YOUNG JAKE
Am I, like, allowed?

YOUNG SHANE
Are you allowed to be here?

YOUNG SHANE scrabbles for a second with the screws on the fly screen.

YOUNG JAKE
What are you doing?

YOUNG SHANE
unscrewing it.

He gets up, digging around in a pile of discarded clothes. He reaches into the pocket of a pair of jeans and comes out with a coin. He lets the jeans slump to the floor and sets to work on the window.

YOUNG JAKE
You should start keeping a
screwdriver in a drawer, or
something.

YOUNG SHANE
Planning on visiting in the dead of
night again?

YOUNG JAKE
I'd love to, if you'll have me.

YOUNG SHANE laughs and YOUNG JAKE helps him lift the screen out of the frame and onto the floor. It spews dust over them. YOUNG JAKE sneezes and crawls through the frame. The bruises are more defined in the light and proximity of YOUNG SHANE's room.

YOUNG JAKE (CONT'D)

Hi.

He sits cross-legged on YOUNG SHANE's unmade bed. YOUNG SHANE tucks his notebook under his pillow.

YOUNG SHANE

Hi.

YOUNG JAKE

Dude, what are you staring at?

YOUNG SHANE

Your face.

YOUNG JAKE looks away.

YOUNG JAKE

I know it's bad, but it's not that bad. It looks way worse than it is.

YOUNG SHANE

Why do you let him do that?

He doesn't - can't - meet YOUNG SHANE's eyes.

YOUNG JAKE

I don't wanna talk about it, Shane. Like, the entire reason I'm here is 'cause I don't wanna talk about it.

A moment. A strange something comes over YOUNG SHANE's face.

YOUNG SHANE

Do you wanna get him back?

YOUNG JAKE

Shane, please, I *really* don't wanna talk about it.

YOUNG SHANE

Shut up. Both of us could take him. Or we could draw on his face while he's asleep. Something like that. We could steal his shoes. We could - uh-

YOUNG JAKE

No, you shut up. We're done with this. He's my brother and you're just some guy, do you really think I'm choosing you?

A pause.

YOUNG SHANE

(hurt)

You don't want *me* dead.

YOUNG JAKE

Everyone thinks that about their siblings sometimes, though, right? You think I actually meant that crap?

A beat of silence.

YOUNG SHANE

Yeah. Yeah, I did.

YOUNG JAKE

This isn't a story, Kerouac. Not everything always pans out all happy.

YOUNG SHANE

Get the fuck out.

33 DREAM SEQUENCE: INT. SHANE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

33

A memory.

YOUNG JAKE

Hey, Shane?

The boys sit on YOUNG SHANE's bed. Refuse of a day together is scattered around them.

YOUNG SHANE

Yeah?

YOUNG JAKE

What do you want to, like, do with your life?

YOUNG SHANE

(with conviction)

I wanna write stories. You?

YOUNG JAKE

I dunno, if I'm being honest. I'll just get an Office job, probably.

YOUNG SHANE

No dream?

YOUNG JAKE

Nah, I need something, you know, real. I wanted to be an actor or an astronaut, but I grew out of that.

YOUNG SHANE

But it sounds so boring. Aren't you looking for *something more*?

A pause.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)

Don't you feel... pointless?

YOUNG JAKE

Not really, no.

YOUNG SHANE

Aren't you bored, though?

YOUNG JAKE

Like, right now?

YOUNG SHANE

In general.

YOUNG JAKE

Nah.

YOUNG SHANE closes his eyes, and when he opens them SHANE is in bed, alone. The SHEET GHOST sits, person shaped and cross-legged on the floor.

SHEET GHOST

Hi.

When it speaks, the inside of its' mouth is red. The new background shows how sharp its teeth are.

SHANE

Hi. 'been a while.

SHEET GHOST

I was busy getting whole again.

SHANE

Oh.

SHEET GHOST
(in the ALMOST MAN's
voice)

You're not whole. You're just me,
but a different colour. I'm still
holding you up on the inside.

SHANE shivers. The SHEET GHOST swallows.

SHEET GHOST (CONT'D)
Sorry. I ate him, but I couldn't
kill him. Not quite, at least. He
does that sometimes.

SHANE
Does it hurt?

SHEET GHOST
It did on the way down.

The SHEET GHOST sees SHANE's concern.

SHEET GHOST (CONT'D)
Hey, it's alright. I think I'm a
whole person now.

SHANE
Why'd you do it?

SHEET GHOST
It was gonna happen eventually.

SHANE frowns.

SHANE
Are you okay?

SHEET GHOST
I'm whole now. He can only hurt me
on the inside.

SHANE
But are you okay?

A pause. The room shifts, eerily. The moon hangs, too fat,
out the window.

SHEET GHOST
No.

A beat.

SHEET GHOST (CONT'D)
But I'm better than I was.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

34 EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT 34

SHANE wanders in a slow orbit around the swings. Everything is black and blue.

SHANE

I wake up. I go through the whole day wondering if I'm still dreaming. It's hot. The heat feels far away. Humid. It doesn't feel like breath. It just feels like humidity.

He sits down on the swing.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Stars burn and die. Carbon flutters down from the atmosphere. We are born star stuff. We die far quicker than the stars. Jake and I make up. Jake and I fight. Jake wakes up on my bed. Jake and I make up. My whole life is forgiving and unforgiving. Jake and I fight. I take off the screen of my window. Jake hates me. I hate Jake. He wakes up on my floor. Stars die and it takes eight minutes for the switch to reach earth. We make up. Just like four years ago.

35 FLASHBACK: EXT. SHANE'S PORCH - FOUR YEARS PRIOR, NOON 35

SHANE's front door swings open to reveal JAKE.

YOUNG JAKE

Hey.

SHANE sighs and leans heavily against the doorway.

YOUNG SHANE

What do you want?

JAKE doesn't meet his eyes.

YOUNG JAKE

Wanna come for a walk?

YOUNG SHANE

No.

A breath.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
No. I don't. Go home.

YOUNG JAKE
You're meant to say maybe.

YOUNG SHANE
Go home.

YOUNG JAKE
Shane, please, give me a chance.

YOUNG SHANE
A chance to do what?

YOUNG JAKE
A chance to apologise.

YOUNG SHANE
Are you gonna actually apologise?
Sorry for putting my asshole
brother over my best friend. Sorry
for using you as a shoulder to cry
on. Sorry for never doing anything
about my problems. Sorry for taking
you for granted. Sorry for hero-
worshipping so hard I pushed away
the only person who ever cared
about me.

YOUNG JAKE kicks a driveway stone. It goes skittering off, useless, into the heat haze. He doesn't - can't - meet YOUNG SHANE's eyes.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
You're a coward! Worse, you can't
fucking admit it. Are you too
preoccupied with *being a man*? Not
being a *fairy*?

YOUNG JAKE turns and makes to say something, mouth hanging open.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)
You can't even function if Ricky
isn't breathing down your neck.

YOUNG JAKE
Get screwed.

YOUNG SHANE

One day you tell me you wish he was
dead. The next you're his mini-me.

YOUNG JAKE hurls himself at SHANE, shoving him over onto the
asphalt. YOUNG SHANE only looks up at him.

YOUNG SHANE (CONT'D)

You're so desperate for his
approval. It's pathetic! You're
pathetic!

YOUNG JAKE drops to his knees to punch YOUNG SHANE in the
face. It's less a punch and more an open-handed, wild blow.
It sends YOUNG SHANE down onto his back. YOUNG JAKE crawls
forward, scrabbling. It's all savage hands and flailing. Less
of a fight and more of a struggle. At some point, YOUNG SHANE
is under YOUNG JAKE, who pushes down on his shoulders. He
thrashes. YOUNG JAKE only screams in his face.

YOUNG JAKE

Am I pathetic? Who's on the fucking
floor? Man the fuck up and fight me
Kerouac!

YOUNG SHANE spits in his face. JAKE punches him, his hand
hitting just as much ground as flesh, mincing his knuckles.
At some point, the light blurs back into a struggle, and
SHANE is able to push JAKE off. YOUNG SHANE fights with his
teeth and with his nails, forcing YOUNG JAKE onto his back on
the asphalt. He pins his hands on the floor, one knee on his
chest. The struggle freezes for a second, save for their
breathing and bleeding. A drop of blood rolls from YOUNG
SHANE's nose and onto YOUNG JAKE's face.

YOUNG SHANE

(murmuring)

Go back to Ricky.

He keeps a foot on YOUNG JAKE's chest until he's standing
again. He looks down for a second, nothing but contempt in
his gaze, before turning on his heel and shutting the door
behind him. YOUNG JAKE lies, spread out on the porch. He
punches the ground beneath him, tears coming hot and slick
down his cheeks.

36

FLASHBACK: INT/EXT. SCHOOL, BUS STOP

36

A classroom. A school bell. YOUNG SHANE snags his messenger
bag off the floor and leaves. The hallway is already crowded.
He pushes through, a straight shot for the main doors. He
emerges into open-air and heads for the bus stop. JAKE and
RICKY idle by the sign.

JAKE sees him before he can turn around. Before YOUNG SHANE can react, YOUNG JAKE is across the grass. He punches SHANE, who falls, hard onto the pavement. A small ring of students has formed around them. YOUNG RICKY is smiling.

37 FLASHBACK: INT. SHANE'S HOUSE - THAT EVENING 37

The door opens inward to reveal YOUNG SHANE, battered and bruised.

SHANE'S MOTHER
(OFFSCREEN)
Hey, bud. How was school?

YOUNG SHANE takes off his shoes and chucks them aside. He meanders toward the living-room, where his mother nurses a laptop. She looks up and sees his bruised face.

END FLASHBACK.

38 EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT 38

SHANE sits, silhouetted, on the platform above the slide.

SHANE
It's funny how you can feel an
ending coming up.

39 INT/EXT. SHANE'S ROOM, SUBURBS, JAKE'S HOUSE - DEAD OF NIGHT 39

SHANE shakes himself awake. Silence. Darkness. JAKE breathes quietly on the floor. He rolls onto his back, eyes on the ceiling. He spends a long moment like this, before looking across at JAKE. The bruises on his face are dark. He breathes softly, curled up like a child, brow furrowed. SHANE gives him a fond look. He drags himself up, wincing at the rustle of sheets. JAKE doesn't stir. SHANE pulls on some jeans and a jacket. JAKE stirs. SHANE freezes.

SHANE
(whispering)
Are you awake?

A beat. No response. SHANE turns and unscrews the window quietly. He slips outside, leaving the screen on the bed. He throws JAKE one last look as he leaves. Shadows crowd the street. SHANE sticks to the streetlight. He pulls the hood of his jacket over his head. The way to JAKE's house is silence, pocked with the snap of a twig or the rush of air behind SHANE. He whips around every time. He is not at home among the night animals.

Whenever the looks behind him, though, there's nothing he can see. SHANE finds the house and hops the fence. Soft light emanates from the sliding doors. SHANE peers in. The living room. RICKY is asleep on the couch. SHANE tries the handle and it slides with a squeak.

SHANE (CONT'D)
 (under his breath)
 Shit!

He waits for RICKY to stir, but no movement comes. The TV is on, blaring something blasphemous, late-night and technicolor. RICKY breathes a lot like JAKE, when he's asleep, like all the awful has fallen out of him. SHANE pauses. RICKY almost looks like a little boy. SHANE shakes off the feeling and shuts the door behind him. Soon, he's standing over Ricky. He fishes a sharpie out of his jacket pocket, opens it, holds it millimeters from RICKY's face. A beat. The pen touches skin. SHANE writes "FUCK YOU RICKY", gingerly, in capital letters before RICKY stirs. SHANE freezes. A beat.

RICKY
 (Slurred)
 Jake. Fuck off, Jake.

SHANE pulls the pen away. RICKY opens his eyes. A moment of perfect silence.

RICKY (CONT'D)
 (intoxicated)
 I'm gonna fucking kill you.

SHANE bolts for the door, but RICKY catches him by the back of his jacket and wrenches him back. The TV blares something pornographic. SHANE's arms come up around his head as he tries to defend himself. RICKY punches him. He throws sloppy punches back. SHANE gets pushed back into the kitchen, slipping on floor tile. RICKY has him up against the kitchen island. He fumbles in a drawer and suddenly there's a bread knife in SHANE's face. The serrated blade presses up against his collarbone.

RICKY (CONT'D)
 Why are you in my house?

SHANE says nothing, only thrashes. RICKY presses the knife closer, higher.

RICKY (CONT'D)
 Why are you in my house?

SHANE
 Why did you break my fucking face?

RICKY shoves the knife higher, the flat of it pressing into SHANE's air supply.

RICKY

Give me one reason not to kill you
right now.

SHANE gets his hands on RICKY's shoulders and shoves. The knife slashes SHANE's shoulder. RICKY rights himself in an instant and SHANE is left holding his shoulder, against the island. RICKY pushes him further back, elbows either side of him, knife presses point against his chest. SHANE spits in his face. RICKY swings the knife down, a perfect arc toward SHANE's face. SHANE brings his forearm up to catch the blow. Blood. SHANE wheels back, scrambling onto the bench top and catching RICKY with a kick to the teeth. He stumbles. A crash hurls them to a stop. JAKE, battered, throws himself into the glow of the TV.

JAKE

What the hell is going on?

RICKY

Jake. It's been a while.

JAKE

Shut up.

RICKY points the knife at him.

RICKY

What?

JAKE

(voice shaking)

I said shut up. Shane, we're gonna
go home now, and Ricky, you're
gonna let us go.

RICKY

Home? This is your home, Jake. I
practically raised you.

SHANE hops down from the bench, bleeding. RICKY rounds on him. JAKE takes the opportunity to run, seize a knife from the drawer and take a wide slash at RICKY's back.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Ah!

He abandons SHANE and turns around, flailing the knife toward JAKE, who ducks. JAKE jams the knife into RICKY's throat, tearing it out with just as much force. Adrenaline eliminates hesitation. RICKY collapses, sputtering.

JAKE collapses with him. SHANE rushes over, catching him by the shoulders dragging him up, back. The knife clatters to the floor. RICKY sputters. SHANE catches his face and drags it back up to look him in the eye. RICKY bleeds out behind them.

SHANE

No. Don't look at him. Look at me.

JAKE

(destraught)

I need to call an ambulance.

SHANE

He's gone. We're not gonna call anyone. We're gonna clean this up. After that, we're gonna bury him.

JAKE nods. Tears well up. He drop his eyes to the floor.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Look at me.

JAKE looks him in the eyes. Little, aching sobs wrack his frame. SHANE pulls him into a fierce embrace.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Everything's gonna be okay.

JAKE

(voice breaking)

No, it's not.

Over JAKE's shoulder, SHANE quietly steadies his own breathing.

SHANE

Yeah it is. Everything is gonna be okay.

40

EXT. PLAYGROUND - MIDNIGHT

40

SHANE looks at the audience, feet planted on blue-black tanbark. He's bandaged, bloodier, forearm deep in black dirt.

SHANE

It still smells like summer. Like chlorine. Like tanbark. Underneath it, I smell blood. Something interesting has finally happened to me. I want more than anything to go back.

(shaken)

(MORE)

SHANE (CONT'D)

We killed him. It almost doesn't feel real. Like the ending of a movie. The logical conclusion. Occam's razor. We killed him and dragged him to the place where nobody would find him. We killed him. We killed him. We killed him.

JAKE (OFFSCREEN)

Shane?

SHANE turns his attention away from the audience. He steps into frame, caked in blood. Tear tracks cut white lines down the gore on his face.

SHANE

(tenderly)

Yeah?

JAKE says nothing.

JAKE

Are you going?

SHANE

What?

JAKE

I wouldn't want to stick around if I was you.

SHANE

Where would I go?

JAKE nods and collapses on SHANE's shoulder. His voice is muffled by SHANE's shirt.

JAKE

It's all my fault.

SHANE

No it's not. he would have killed you if you didn't.

JAKE

Maybe I should have let him.

SHANE

I would have died.

JAKE looks him in the eyes.

SHANE (CONT'D)

You saved me. Thank you for saving me.

JAKE

(tearing up again)
I'm sorry. I shouldn't have ever let him even get near you.

SHANE

It's okay.

JAKE

I killed him, Shane.
(voice breaking)
I killed my own brother.

SHANE

He was killing you.

JAKE collapses into SHANE's shoulder again. When wracking sobs aren't enough, he screams, hands fisted in SHANE's shirt. When his lungs have crumpled in his chest, he takes a shuddering breath. Silence.

SHANE (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

JAKE pulls back meets his eyes.

JAKE

(shakily)
Yeah.

They walk, arms around each others shoulders, into the woods, to the clearing. There, next to a shallow, makeshift grave RICKY's corpse sprawls, SHANE's jacket over his face.