

THIRTEEN STEPS

"Higher Power"

Pilot Episode
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Based on the Graphic Novel
by
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TEASER

OVER BLACK

Hard rain BEATS THE SHIT OUT OF BLACKTOP.

SMASH IN WITH THE SOUND OF THUNDER INTO

EXT. COUNTRY HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Somewhere in the middle of butt-fuck-nowhere. A truck with an irredeemably flat tire squats by an embankment.

A TRUCKER (late 30's, plaid and tubby) enters the rain-buffeted frame, rolling a spare. He has no rain gear, and he's PISSED about it.

Trucker lets the spare PLOP to the wet road, grumbling as he regards his tools - drenched next to the flat he has to repair in this shit sandwich of a night.

As he bends down:

A HOWL SHAKES THE FALLING RAIN

The AWFUL SOUND OF A PREDATOR. Raging. Feral. Hungry.

Trucker looks around. Great. First-this-now-that. He picks up a tire iron, shaking his head.

AND HEARS A SECOND HOWL

Louder. Meaner. Closer. Trucker re-doubles his efforts.

TRUCKER

S'nothing. Work the lugnuts...work
the lugnuts.

POP! A lugnut FALLS TO THE ROAD. Trucker works the second...

LIGHTNING. THEN THE CRACK OF THUNDER

Trucker STARTS - turns his back against the vehicle, holding out the tire iron like a cutlass...

...nothing but the storm.

Trucker settles into his haunches. Relaxing. CHUCKLING even.

Silly rabbit. It's just the -

MMMMRRRRRRROOOOOOOWWRRR!

Something SPRINGS from the dark.

Red eyes. Claws. Fangs.

Trucker SCREAMS and FLAILS the crowbar.

LIGHTNING - A FLASH! OF THE ATTACKER

The massive head of a ravenous, WOLF-LIKE CREATURE - a quadruped lifting itself by its hind legs, coiled with the promise of ultra-violence.

SLAM!

The crowbar finds purchase on the wolf's head. A wet, thudding CRUNCH that sends it reeling away just enough for -

- Trucker to roll away and TEAR ASS out of there.

Now it's rain, mud and adrenalin. Trucker TUMBLES DOWN THE EMBANKMENT - his face and torn clothes covered with something - blood? Filth? Does it matter?

LIGHTNING. THUNDER.

FLASHES OF THE SLEEK, DETERMINED PURSUER -

INTERCUT

- with Trucker's increasingly-ragged TRUDGE.

Claws DIG into mud. Sharp teeth FLASH in darkness. Water SPLASHES on obsidian fur. Red eyes BEAR DOWN. Speed-engorged muscles PUMP LIKE PISTONS.

Trucker makes his last mistake - he looks back -

ZOOM IN ON TRUCKER AS THE BEAST POUNCES

- and DROPS THE CROWBAR as his arms raise to the defensive.

THE CREATURE

Lands on Trucker. Jaws SNAP OPEN.

CUT TO BLACK

SCREAMS. HOWLS. Trucker's cries die in a CHOKING GASP with the sound of WET FLESH RENT ASUNDER.

SMASH CUT TO AN EYE SNAPPING OPEN AT

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Meet JUSTIN ULLRICH (21, Joseph Gordon Levitt) - naked - barely covered by a sheet - waking with a wracking COUGH.

His room? Covered with high school trophies and Minor League pennants. The space of a young athlete who should have moved away for bigger and better...but didn't.

Lifting hand to pounding head, Justin realizes that something is terribly wrong. He whisks the sheet away. The bed is filthy - covered in dirt, twigs and mud.

Justin reacts with a dread that cuts through the POUNDING HURT in his head. Pushing himself back and stumbling to the floor, he sees his legs, also covered in filth and scratches.

JUSTIN

Oh god - oh -

The words catch in his mouth with another lung-busting COUGH.

INT. ULLRICH KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Justin, in boxers, BARRELS into the shabby, lived-in space.

JUSTIN

Ma! Where are you? Ma!

MA ULLRICH (O.S.)

I'm in the laundry, hun -

JUSTIN

(with building panic)

I broke the cage! I broke the -

He coughs again, putting his hand on the worn counter for support as MA ULLRICH (50's, life-worn and one too many cigarettes on the wrong side of middle age) enters, carrying a basket which she puts down the moment she sees her son.

MA ULLRICH

Oh my - Justin -

Ma steps up to and inspects him as he tries to get to the kitchen window - slowing him down.

MA ULLRICH (CONT'D)

What happened? Let me get some peroxide or something -

JUSTIN

I broke out last night -

MA ULLRICH

You're gonna get an infection.

JUSTIN

(needing her to focus)

Did you hear me? I broke the cage.
I was out there.

MA ULLRICH
 You can't have - that cage held
 your grandfather for forty years -

JUSTIN
I woke up in bed. Did you let me
 out this morning?

MA ULLRICH
 (a nervous head-shake)
 No - I mean -
 (denial kicking in)
 - this isn't right - this isn't -
 let's sit down - eat something.

Justin takes Ma by the shoulders and brings his message home:

JUSTIN
 I'm not hungry. I'm really full.

The two lock eyes - knowing exactly what that means.

MA ULLRICH
 Oh god. No.

EXT. ULLIRCH BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Justin and Ma rush toward a large, ramshackle shed.

JUSTIN
 Did you hear anything last night?

MA ULLRICH
 I had on my sleep apnea machine.

JUSTIN
 (looking ahead)
 Oh...Jesus.

REVEAL THE SIDE OF THE SHED

A tangle of BENT CHICKEN WIRE AND RIPPED TWO-BY-FOURS. This was never the most elegant construction, now it looks like something drained from Bob Vila's bowel.

MA ULLRICH
 Oh, Justin - what did you do?

JUSTIN
 (in full-on freakout)
 I don't know. I don't remember. I
 never remember.

Justin COUGHS again - this more violently. Ma reaches out for him, but he shoos her away...then, as he recovers:

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(trying to strategize)

OK. We can handle this. You're gonna have to keep an eye on the news - see if I did anything - and tonight's the last full moon, so I'll drive up to the woods.

MA ULLRICH

(no freakin' way)

And have some hunter shoot you? You're gonna go to Home Depot - we can get this fixed by night -

JUSTIN

Credit card's maxed out...and I gotta open up the rink...and I have a game this afternoon.

(putting up a brave front)

It's not like they're packing silver rounds, right?

MA ULLRICH

That is a myth.

(then, her heart breaking)

I'm so sorry son.

JUSTIN

'bout what?

(looking her in the eye)

Having me?

MA ULLRICH

When I didn't get it - this...thing - I thought it was done with. I didn't know it'd skip a generation.

(tears streaming)

I don't want to know if you did anything...

JUSTIN

(lying to himself too)

I'm sure I was just out there running. I'm not a killer.

MA ULLRICH

I don't want to watch the news -

Justin holds her tight, trying to convince himself as well:

JUSTIN

It's gonna be OK. It's gonna be OK.

The COUGHING begins again. This time it will not be denied. There's something inside this boy and IT WANTS TO COME OUT.

Justin grabs knees. Ma tries to comfort him. He pushes her away and runs into the house.

INT. ULLRICH BATHROOM - MORNING

Justin barrels in. Sticks his head in the sink - retching - spasming - HEAVING.

COUGH! PLINK!

Something metallic hits the porcelain basin. Justin rises to see himself in the mirror, then looks down.

Justin's face tells the story. This is bad. Really bad.

His hand rises. The mirror image shows what came out of him.

The thing stuck in his gullet, gumming up the works - finally out...held between thumb and forefinger.

A wedding band.

This is pretty fucking far from OK.

CUT TO MAIN TITLE

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**ESTABLISHING MONTAGE****EXT. AGRARIAN MIDWESTERN CITY - DAY**

Farms and Meth. Strip malls and strip joints. A squat concrete downtown that looks like Soviet Minsk in the 70's.

FIND JUSTIN - WALKING DOWN A DOWNTOWN STREET

Alongside his best friend MILKWEED (20's - a chubby Lebowski wannabe - riding an age-inappropriate BMX Huffy).

Justin now wears the wedding band on a cord around his neck.

MILKWEED

- so you invite all the best booty-dance crews in the tri-state and have them shake their thing on wheels, we call it "Booty Skate!"
(off Justin's apathy)
Dude. Giving you gold. Wasn't even baked when I came up with that.

JUSTIN

I'm trying to think here.

MILKWEED

Hey - you don't want your roller rink to succeed? Don't want your family business to flourish?

JUSTIN

Milkweed. This place is a suckhole.

Justin stops and motions to their shared destination:

EXT. ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - CONTINUOUS

A shabby roller rink that barely survived the 70's.

MILKWEED

Why you gotta stomp on my entrepreneurial spirit like that?

JUSTIN

Always been a suck hole, and won't stop being a suck hole no matter how many dumbass marketing schemes -

MILKWEED

Dude. What's it gonna cost to print up some flyers? Throw a party? Make some cash?

JUSTIN
More than I got.

Justin takes out his keys, opens the front door...then:

MILKWEED
Bad night? Girl trouble?

JUSTIN
Don't want to talk about it.

MILKWEED	JUSTIN
That girlfriend of yours -	
Erin - she's a real bucket of drama -	She's not my girlfriend anymore.

MILKWEED
This have to do with the wedding band? Knock her up or something?

JUSTIN
No. OK. Let it go? Please.

MILKWEED
All right, but know I'm here to listen. Milkweed abides.

The door gives way, Justin holds it for his friend:

JUSTIN
You gotta stop watching that movie.

Milkweed trudges in. Justin looks out to see:

A BULLET GREY OLDMOSBUICK - PARKED ACROSS THE STREET

A large Black Man in the driver's seat. The two lock eyes. Black Man DRIVES OFF. Justin watches. Who was that guy?

INT. ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - MOMENTS LATER

Milkweed SWEEPS UP. Justin throws a few withered dollars from a worn pouch into the register...when the front door SLAMS open to admit a very large Eastern European man.

This is JONAS - thick neck, all muscle, would be home in an Eli Roth movie - squiring in a model-pretty waif, PENNY.

She's in four-years-out-of-fashion Juicy sweats. Frilly bra visible under too-open-a-zipper. Bare midriff. Her tramp-stamp peeks over plummeting low-riders.

JUSTIN
We're closed for another hour.

PENNY
 (begging Jonas)
 I wanna skate. Tell him I wanna!

JONAS
 The lady wants to skate.

Penny leans over the counter, flashing Justin her assets.

PENNY
 To ABBA Gold. Please?
 (pleading to Jonas)
 Ask him pretty please?

Jonas puts a wad of bills on the counter.

JONAS
 With sugar on top.

Milkweed's hand reaches in, TAKING THE CASH.

MILKWEED
Mamma Mia...Winner Takes it All?

<p>PENNY <i>Dancing Queen!</i></p>	<p>MILKWEED (hands Justin the cash) Give the lady some skates.</p>
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Milkweed steps aside as Penny makes eye contact with Justin.

PENNY
 And some socks. I forgot my socks.
 (slowly, seductively)
 You do have loaner socks, right?

Justin puts a pair of skates on the table, then socks. Red.

PENNY (CONT'D)
 My favorite color. I'm Penny.

JUSTIN
 (gulps)
 Justin.

PENNY
 (looking at his chest)
 Nice wedding band.

Penny smiles and turns away, tramp stamp in full view.

MILKWEED
 That them there's like sex on Jell-
 O...and that face.

JUSTIN

Few more years on the pipe, we'll
see how that looks.

MILKWEED

Harshing on my mellow, man.

Justin watches Penny go. She turns back and SMILES.

THE SKATING RINK LIGHTS UP - THE DISCO BALL RAINS LIGHT

ABBA'S *Dancing queen* BLARES. Penny skates backwards into frame. Lost in song. She glides beautifully. Could have been a pro, but right now, she's just a girl dancing with abandon - taking respite from a hard life we can only guess about.

A broken angel.

PENNY

YOU CAN DANCE! YOU CAN FLY! HAVING
THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE! OOOOOOH!

JUSTIN WATCHES HER - SMITTEN

Until Jonas steps in his line of sight:

JONAS

Stop staring at the merchandise.

EXT. ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The mouth of the alley frames Jonas, squiring Penny into a Town Car. Justin enters the alley, carrying a garbage bag.

As Justin locks eyes with Penny through the Town Car window, the garbage bag BREAKS, LEAKING all over the ground.

JUSTIN

Ah...crap...

He bends to pick up the trash as the Town Car speeds away - smells something - nose wrinkling like a dog - or a wolf.

Justin squats and overturns a piece of waste to REVEAL a familiar pair of red socks...he smiles, picks them up...

...then looks around - guilty - and SNIFFS them.

BUT A SMOKY FEMALE VOICE BREAKS HIS REVERIE

FEMALE VOICE

You're pathetic.

Justin turns, the socks still guilty in his hands, to see:

ERIN (21, RAVEN HAIR, CREAM SKIN, TIGHT JEANS, LEATHER BOOTS)

Coming down the alley. All hips and lips: you know that psycho ex you can't stop yourself booty calling over and over again? No? Look it up on Wikipedia, you'll find Erin's photo.

JUSTIN

Erin. What are you doing here?

She stares into him. There's something about how she walks and talks. The look of fuck. In a completely psycho way.

ERIN

You know what I'm doing. I miss you. Can't a girl miss her man?

She's in his space now. Pushing him against the wall...

JUSTIN

I'm not you "man."

ERIN

I know you love me.

...kissing his neck. He can't break free. She's irresistible:

JUSTIN

I broke up with you.

ERIN

No you didn't...

JUSTIN

I did.

ERIN

Come on, J...for old time's sake?

She pours it on. Justin could rip off her clothes right now - but he doesn't. He takes a deep breath as she moves down to his chest, summoning all his strength to PUSH HER AWAY.

JUSTIN

Jesus, get AWAY from me -

ERIN

The hell's the matter with you?

JUSTIN

I told you. I don't want anyone. I have...problems, OK?

ERIN

Like sniffing some slutty teen's socks in an alley?

JUSTIN
You are a stalker.

ERIN
 And you're in denial.

JUSTIN
 I'm no - dammit, Erin - I don't -
 every time we do it it's like -

ERIN
 Like what?

JUSTIN
 (an uncomfortable truth)
 Like you're sucking the life out of
 me.

That hurt. Erin SHOVES him into the wall. Hard. Justin looks
 down, not wanting to see the pain in her eyes.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 I gotta go to my game.

ERIN
 Yeah. Minor league. That's you.
 (walking away)
 Loser.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - DAY

Justin sits in darkness. Legs crossed. Arms tight around his
 chest. The cord tight around his neck as he clutches the
 wedding band tightly around his hand.

JUSTIN
 Forgive me, Father, for I have
 sinned. It's been...a while since
 my last confession...

FATHER FRANK comes in closer through the confessional screen -
 a nice guy in his fifties, everyone's friend in the parish.

FATHER FRANK
 Is that you, Justin?

JUSTIN
 Hey Father Frank.

FATHER FRANK
 You're gonna be late to your game.

JUSTIN
 Nah. Still got time. Time to talk -

FATHER FRANK
Better be all good and warmed up
when you hit the field, son.

JUSTIN
Don't worry. I'm gonna be fine.

FATHER FRANK
Hope so. I got money on that game.

This isn't quite going where Justin needs it.

JUSTIN
Father Frank. I gotta talk but - I
don't know how to say what I -

FATHER FRANK
God already knows your sin.
Unburden yourself, son.

JUSTIN
I don't know that he knows -

FATHER FRANK
He made you what you are.

JUSTIN
Yeah. Well - look, I'm worried that
- that maybe I kinda hurt someone -

Kinda?
FATHER FRANK

JUSTIN

I don't know. Sometimes I
think I could do some pretty
awful things. I can't really
describe it -

FATHER FRANK
Oh, Justin. Take a deep breath.
It's gonna be OK.

JUSTIN
How? I think there's something -
really bad - inside me.

FATHER FRANK
That's just the pre-game jitters
talking, son. I heard about the
Major League scout coming - but you
know what? You're gonna hit that
ball, and you're gonna get out of
this town. I've known it since I
coached you in the little league.

Justin shakes his head, staring at the wedding band.

JUSTIN

Thanks Father Frank, I appreciate it. This was...helpful.

FATHER FRANK

You're gonna kill, today.

As Justin drops his head into his hands:

SMASH CUT TO A BAT - HITTING A BALL AT

EXT. MINOR LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

No lights. Shabby bleachers. A sparse HOMETOWN CROWD - including Ma and Father Frank, sitting next to one another - STAND to watch Justin's hit clear the infield.

ERIN

Stands beside the bleachers. Away from view.

JUSTIN RUNS THE BASES

Fast. Like a wolf.

THE SMALL CROWD OOH-S AND AW-S

All except for the Black Man previously seen car-stalking Justin...sitting dispassionately on the bleachers.

POP! ANOTHER BASE HIT

Another lupine run from Justin.

POP! A HOME RUN!

The crowd bursts into CHEERS - all but the black man.

JUSTIN RUNS THE BASES

Focused. Taking none of the adulation.

FATHER FRANK TURNS TO MA ULLRICH

FATHER FRANK

What do you feed that boy?

INT. BASEBALL FIELD - LOCKER ROOM - SHOWERS - LATER

Justin sits cross-legged under scalding rain - nothing on but the ring hanging around his neck - A pair of TEAMMATES strides past the shower entrance.

TEAM MATE #1
Later Justin. Good game.

TEAM MATE #2
I think you're clean already,
man. Go home.

Justin shuts his eyes, letting the hot water fall.

INT. BASEBALL FIELD - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Justin walks to his locker, alone, in a towel. He opens the door - then stops. Wrinkles his nose - SNIFFING SOMETHING.

JUSTIN
Gun oil, shoe leather, Old Spice.
You smell like cop.

WIDER TO REVEAL THE BLACK MAN: standing by a bank of lockers - broad-shouldered, blue collar, cheap suit. This is STANLEY.

STANLEY
You sniff like a bloodhound and run
like a greyhound. I bet you got
ears like a foxhound. Prolly hear
the pitcher's knuckles on the ball.
What's it like knowing where you
get those gifts?

It's all Justin can do to keep from fleeing.

JUSTIN
Am I in trouble?

STANLEY
Oh, trouble you got...the kind
that's got nothing to do with my
chosen line of work.

The more Stanley talks, the faster Justin dresses.

JUSTIN
I gotta go.

STANLEY
You bet your ass you do. Night's
just ticks away. Last of the full
moon. So, you gonna lock yourself
up? Drive to the woods? You got a
basement full of hooks and chains?

It's all Justin can do to keep from freaking out as he slips on his shoes and slings his duffel over his shoulder.

JUSTIN
I gotta get out of here.

Justin tries to BRUSH PAST TO THE DOOR. Stanley puts arms akimbo, setting his weight against the young man's escape.

STANLEY

No way out for you. This is an intervention. Ever hear of that? You got a beast on your back. I'm here to get it off.

JUSTIN

You don't know what you're talking about.

STANLEY

I know why you never take up that MLB scout on his offers. I know why you haven't left this punk-ass town. I know you got less than an hour before the darkness comes -

JUSTIN

(tick-tock...tick-tock...)
What the hell do you want from me?

Stanley holds up a business card: on it is a logo reminiscent of the triangle within a circle of Alcoholics Anonymous.

STANLEY

You got to take the first step to recovery. You gotta admit you're powerless over addiction and your life has become unmanageable.

JUSTIN

(...boom!)
GET OUT OF MY WAY!

Justin heaves an ALMOST FERAL CRY and knocks Stanley back into the lockers. The wind flies out of Stanley on impact - a loud, throaty GROAN as his back DIVOTS into sheet metal.

Then silence. The two men stare at each other as Justin struggles to catch his breath:

STANLEY

Full moon's not even out and already you're wolfin' up.
(off Justin)
Oh, I've seen it before. After the first taste of human blood...that's the turning point for every predator. The first kill. When the wolf stops waiting for the moon.
(MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)

That's when the wolf knows it has you - when it starts coming out just because you want it to.

JUSTIN

I'm not a killer.

STANLEY

I know. But the wolf don't.

(bringing it home)

You are losing control, and you will feed again, unless you grab that leash and control the wolf.

(holding out the card)

There's a meeting every night, kid.

Justin shakes his head, then turns and RUNS.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The full moon RISES OVER THE TREES. Justin's car squats on the roadside. Justin steps out - taking off his shirt and tossing it on the drivers seat; followed by the wedding band.

Justin SLAMS the door shut and RUNS through the undergrowth -

FASTER AND FASTER

- all his and pain, fear, guilt and frustration expresses itself in a gait that grows more feral by the nanosecond.

And as he STREAKS behind massive trees...he CHANGES. Like Henry Hull in *The Werewolf of London* - every time a tree obscures the frame, Justin's shape is different -

- his jaw EXTENDS into a muzzle - his eyes become a lambent blood red - his knees REVERSE-JOINT as leg muscles ENGORGE - his feet BREAK THROUGH THE LEATHER OF HIS SHOES into claws.

The last trunk clears frame. There's no Justin left:

ONLY A MASSIVE QUADRUPED TEARING ACROSS THE DARK NIGHT!

The beast REARS its fang-filled head into the back-lighting moon and LETS OUT THE MOST HORRIFYING HOWL EVER HEARD.

MATCH CUT TO THE BARREL OF A GUN

ENTERING FRAME ELSEWHERE IN THE WILDERNESS

In the hands of one of two HUNTERS - each REACTING - as Justin's howl ECHOES, shaking the leaves around them.

HUNTER #1
Came from over there.

HUNTER #2
Stay frosty, Earl. Keep your eyes
peeled and we get what we came for.

Hunter #1 motions to move in and steps out of frame...a nervous beat from Hunter #2...and as he exits:

MMMMRRRRWWWRRRGH!

Hunter #1 - face bloodied - SLAMS! back into his friend - DRIVEN by Justin's dark and overpowering mass!

BANGGGGGG! HUNTER #2'S GUN GOES OFF

IN QUICK CUTS

Justin SPOOKS BACK onto his hind legs - claws FLASHING!

Hunter #2 ROLLS OUT from under his friend to see him -

HUNTER #2 (CONT'D)
No! Please no!

Justin SLAMS down on his forequarters - baring his sabers:

STANLEY (O.S.)
Don't do it, boy!

JUSTIN'S HEAD TURNS TO REVEAL STANLEY

At the clearing's edge - holding a Maglite above a pistol!

Hunter #2 scampers out from under - dragging his friend as Justin looks ahead: his eyeline matching Stanley's.

THE TWO STARE AT ONE ANOTHER

STANLEY (CONT'D)
You ain't killed anyone tonight.

There's something about Stanley's voice - like James Earl Jones crossed with God himself - something that makes even this wild beast take notice.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
You got a choice, Justin. You listen up and make the right one!

JUSTIN PUSHES HIMSELF BACK WITH HIS FRONT LEGS, COILING

Red eyes FLASHING with something resembling cognition, reason - compassion. Then he SHRIEKS: an animal cry of human agony...

AND RACES OUT OF THERE

And off Stanley, the hunters at his feet - lowering the gun:

SMASH CUT TO JUSTIN'S EYE, SNAPPING OPEN AT

INT. JUSTIN ULLRICH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Justin SPRINGS STRAIGHT UP - going from dead sleep to sitting - shaking his head - clearing the fog of raging animal to think like something resembling a human being.

He looks down and sees a business card on his lap.

He lifts it to see the AA-like logo. And on the back, handwriting:

THERE'S A MEETING EVERY NIGHT

And off Justin - freaked the fuck out.

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**SMASH INTO A DESOLATE CITY STREET**

Industrial. Corrugated and barbed-wired. Justin trudges through, staring at the business card...finally reaching:

EXT./INT. THIRTEEN STEPS GROUP BUILDING - DAY

A bunker. Justin steps through a door hinged into a garage gate - entering a large, loft-like space.

A MEETING TAKES PLACE UNDER INDUSTRIAL LIGHTS AHEAD

The attendants sit in folding chairs - backs turned to Justin - who looks around, taking further tentative steps inside.

It looks like any twelve-step meeting. Large pot of coffee. Motivational posters on easels. Store-bought cookies on a table. Cigarette smoke. A woman (MINA) dominates the discussion:

MINA

So now I'm volunteering at the city morgue and doing my best to stay away from the temptations of the flesh. Thanks for listening.

Polite APPLAUSE. An attractive, career woman type in a black suit steps up: this is DOCTOR EDNA STEIN (imagine Sela Ward).

DOCTOR STEIN

See? This is a program. You work it and it will work. Now I want to turn the floor over to someone who just re-earned his one-year chip -

STANLEY

(stepping up)
Hi. My name is Stanley -

THE GROUP

Hello Stanley.

STANLEY

- and I'm a vampire.

Justin can't for the life of him help but exclaim:

JUSTIN

What the hell?

The group turns: a grotesquely obese man who appears completely nude, a red-skinned geezer, a gorgeous woman with grey flesh and weeping sores, a hipster with pointy ears...

...and if you find this comical. If you're about to giggle. Stop. This ain't the fucking *Munsters*. It's a Fincher movie.

STANLEY

Uh, folks - I'm sorry, this is the young man I been telling you about -

DOCTOR STEIN

(offering him coffee)

A meeting, Justin. This is the place where people like you work to master your compulsions.

Justin SWATS the coffee away. SPLASH! into the wall.

JUSTIN

People like me?

DOCTOR STEIN

A werewolf. Mina's a zombie. You've met Stanley, who says he wants to be your sponsor. Carl is a Fire Demon. Eddy's a kind of - four armed pan-dimensional imp -

EDDY

That's racist. The proper term is "sprite."

DOCTOR STEIN

I'm sorry, Eddy...I'm Doctor Stein, I founded the program.

Eddy lifts one of FOUR ARMS to wave off the apology.

Shocked and stunned by the revelation that monsters walk the Earth, Justin REELS into a poster. The easel CLATTERS down.

STANLEY

Deep breaths, kid. It's real. It's happening, and you're in it.

Doctor Stein moves to the grotesquely obese man:

DOCTOR STEIN

Harry's a cannibal.

EDDY

SOB doesn't belong here -

HARRY

I'm in the room!

EDDY

You're not really one of us - go to Overeaters Anonymous already!

HARRY

And what exactly am I supposed to tell them I'm overeating, ya four armed freak?

EDDY

Wanna hunk of me, tubby? Get some.

STANLEY

Hey! Can we tone down the rhetoric?

DOCTOR STEIN

Enough! Stanley's got the floor.

The room QUIETS DOWN. Stanley takes over, looks at Justin:

STANLEY

We got a new recruit and he's going through a hard time. He only just had his first taste of human blood, he has no idea how to stop the wolf, and it's news to him that folks like us walk the Earth...just like most of you when you first came. How about we give him some help cottoning to his new reality?
(to Justin; helpful smile)
You got questions. Let 'em out.

JUSTIN

Questions? Let 'em out?
(shocked disbelief)
You let me into a roomful of - god-know-what - and I'm supposed to -

MINA

We're all just like you.

EDDY

You didn't think you were the only one, did you?

CARL

We're all addicts.

JUSTIN

I don't believe it -

EDDY

This from a guy who turns into Fido when it's that time of the month.

DOCTOR STEIN

You're not alone. The reason every one of these...people -

EDDY
Again - racist.

DOCTOR STEIN
- can live out in the world
and have productive lives is
because The Thirteen Steps.

JUSTIN
Thirteen Steps. You mean like
twelve steps?

ERIN'S VOICE (O.S.)
No, he means like Thirteen Steps.

SPIN WITH JUSTIN'S EYELINE TO REVEAL ERIN - ENTERING

Justin is fuckstruck: what is she doing here?

ERIN
Sorry I'm late, guys.

JUSTIN
Did you follow me?

Erin shrugs, guilty, but also relieved:

ERIN
Oh, Justin. I told them about you.

EXT. THIRTEEN STEPS BUILDING - NIGHT

The exit door BURSTS open. Justin CHEWS SIDEWALK out of there. Erin gives chase.

ERIN
Justin!

JUSTIN
Get away from me you -

Erin STREAKS around him with superhuman speed. Justin double-takes - and now finds himself face-to-face with her.

ERIN
Succubus.

JUSTIN
Succubus?

ERIN
I sleep with men. They die.

JUSTIN
Is that what you were doing to me?

ERIN

No!

JUSTIN

You're a killer.

ERIN

It was different with you.

JUSTIN

You hurt me.

ERIN

I didn't want to...and I
couldn't kill you

JUSTIN

Oh please -

ERIN

I mean it. You're different. It was
different with you. 'cause of what
you are.

(off his stare)

Think I like this? Think I don't
deal with the same crap you do day
in and day out? 'least now we can
talk about it.

JUSTIN

This is sick.

ERIN

We're both sick. That's why I want
you in the program.

JUSTIN

Go to hell, Erin, you and the whole
damned freak show.

ERIN

Been there.**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Justin RUNS - faster than ever - so hard his legs CRUMBLE and he STUMBLES into a storefront doorway - SUCKING for air...maybe even SOBBING as he rests on his haunches, leaning against the doorway...grabbing at the wedding band.

INT. TOWNIE WATERING HOLE - NIGHT

Milkweed REELS. Justin's head lies on the bar - surrounded by shot glasses...occasionally turning to look at a BLUE COLLAR GUY by the pool table, arguing with his TRASHY GIRLFRIEND.

MILKWEED

You called. We drank. Now you unload. Otherwise, there's a massive bowl back home with my name on it.

JUSTIN

That bitch.

MILKWEED

Erin? What'd she do now? Hook up then never call you? Your life really is hell.

JUSTIN

Can't I just meet someone nice -

MILKWEED

Why would you want someone nice?

JUSTIN

- someone like Penny?

Milkweed motions for the BARTENDER to pour another round.

MILKWEED

Penny? Oh, she's a catch. Package deal too: Meth, thick-necked pimp who'll put your lungs on a dish, crotch-flaming case of herpes.

Justin's focus keeps TURNING to Blue Collar Townie, whose argument with Trashy Girlfriend ESCALATES into rough arm holding, body slapping, and verbal ugliness.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

The hell are you looking at?

Justin's voice is quiet. Slurred. Directed at Milkweed.

JUSTIN

A rube picking on a girl.

MILKWEED

Nothing! We're good!

JUSTIN

Wife-beating creep.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

Do we got a problem?

JUSTIN

Ask him what it's like being a predator.

MILKWEED

Easy brohim. It's all copacetic.
(to Justin, *whispering*)
Any time you want to stop poking the bear, I'm OK widdat.

Blue Collar Townie now has several BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE BUDS forming up beside him.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

I don't do copacetic. "Brohim."

JUSTIN

Tell that bloodsucker to step away.

Milkweed stands, arms in a peace gesture.

MILKWEED

So he's drunk...and I'm gonna take him home and we're gonna increase the peace, right? Squash it!

Blue Collar Townie grabs Milkweed and THROWS him against the bar - he's out. Justin SHOVES Blue Collar Townie.

BARTENDER

Hey! Take it outside!

EXT. TOWNIE WATERING HOLE - ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Justin FLIES OUT THE EXIT DOOR: tossed by Blue Collar Townie.

JUSTIN

You don't wanna do this.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

Really?

WHAP! Blue Collar Townie lands a vicious PUNCH to Justin's face, sending him careening into the alley wall.

JUSTIN

Gonna mess you up...

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

(to his mates)

Hear that? He's gonna mess us up!

The Townies DESCEND on Justin, busting out a full Rodney King...only the more they hit him...the more Justin's features wolf out.

Eyes go red - teeth SHARPEN - hair GROWS.

This is what Justin WANTS. An excuse.

JUSTIN

Do it! Come on! Do it!

The Townies pour it on, not realizing what's happening until:

STANLEY (O.S.)

That's enough!

JUSTIN

Turns to see Stanley - and his eyes RETURN TO NORMAL.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

Back off old man - this is between us and him!

STANLEY

You pudknockers have no idea what you're about to let loose - you best be on your way.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE

Don't make me hulk out on you.

STANLEY

You wanna see a Hulk out? You wanna see a freakin' Hulk out?

STANLEY TRANSFORMS INTO A SWARM OF BATS

Yes: it's as sudden as it reads. His body disintegrates into a blinding black storm of flapping leather.

BLUE COLLAR TOWNIE AND HIS CRONIES ARE ENGULFED

As the UNEARTHLY SHRIEK OF A THOUSAND FLYING RODENTS turns the soundscape into a fever dream.

JUSTIN LOOKS ON IN COMPLETE SHOCK

As the Blue Collar Townies GET THE FUCK OUT OF THERE.

THE SWARM OF BATS RE-RESOLVES INTO THE SHAPE OF STANLEY

Standing nude by his pile of clothes.

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Man, I gotta figure out how to do that without winding up buck naked.

(MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)
 (looking up at Justin)
 We need to talk.

Justin backs into the alley wall. Scared and speechless.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
 (grabbing his underwear)
 Come on, kid. The way you're
 running your house, you're gonna
 kill again if you don't put it in
 order. Already the wolf is fighting
 to come out and kill whenever it
 damn wants to. You need me.

JUSTIN
 You can't fix me.

STANLEY
 Really? I fixed me. I ain't had a
 pint of innocent blood in twelve
 months, and I used to suck the
 stuff down like it was Schmirnoff.
 (locking eyes)
 You gotta take the first step,
 Justin. You gotta admit your life
 is out of control and you're
 powerless over your addiction.
 (holding out a handshake)
 The way I see it, you don't have a
 lot of other options. You let me
 sponsor you, and I'll get you off
 the meat but good.

Justin regards the semi-naked black man standing before him,
 offering redemption. Then stands and turns to go:

JUSTIN
 Put your pants back on.

And off Stanley, watching him go....

INT. JUSTIN ULLRICH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Weary and beaten, Justin stumbles in to find Ma - watching TV
 on a chair. On the side table sits a bottle of wine and
 several prescription bottles.

Ma's zonked out of her mind.

MA ULLRICH
 Hey Justin...how was your night?

JUSTIN
 Fair.

MA ULLRICH
That's nice.

Justin steps to the easy chair, squatting to her eye level:

JUSTIN
Hey...ma...when grandpa was wolfing
out...did he ever meet others?

MA ULLRICH
Other what?

JUSTIN
Other...predators...

MA ULLRICH
(taking a drink)
Oh god no. He was alone. All alone.

JUSTIN
He never said anything.

Ma looks ahead at the TV. She's beyond conversation.

MA ULLRICH
I like this show.

JUSTIN
What if I told you I'm not alone?

MA ULLRICH
Oh Justin. If there were others,
everyone would know.
(stroking his face)
It's just you. Poor little you.

INT. JUSTIN ULLRICH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Justin pushes the door open and wrinkles his nose: then follow-spins his sense of smell to see Penny - in a corner, in Daisy Dukes, a belly shirt and flip-flops.

PENNY
Hi Justin.

JUSTIN
How'd you get in here?

PENNY
(coming closer)
I know how to get what I want.

She DRIVES him on the bed - kissing him hard as she slides her hands under his shirt, peeling it off to reveal his chest as she lays him down, KISSING his bruised but rock-hard abs...working the zipper on his jeans...

JUSTIN
Penny...wait...just...

...and that's when he looks down to see:

ERIN'S FACE ON PENNY'S BODY

As she slowly pulls down his pants to REVEAL his boxers.

Holy. Shit. This is some heinous psychosexual mindfuckery.

JUSTIN SCRAMBLES TO THE HEAD OF THE BED

Reaching for his pants, wrestling them away from Erin as the rest of her body MORPHS to her long, lithe form.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Erin - what the hell?

ERIN
I know what you want.

JUSTIN
Stop it -

ERIN
I can give her to you.

Erin CHANGES BACK AND FORTH. Penny's face plays across hers:

JUSTIN
I don't want you!

ERIN/PENNY
I can live with that.

JUSTIN
Stop it - please -

ERIN/PENNY
No...

Justin's eyes go red. His voice becomes a DARK GROWL:

JUSTIN
GO AWAY!

Penny MORPHS back into Erin, afraid...but turned the fuck on.

ERIN
You're calling the wolf? Bring him.
I can take him and he can take me.

Justin TOSSES her across the room. She hits the wall with an agonized BODY CHECK - then turns to look at him:

AS HER ARM BECOMES A REPTILIAN TENDRIL, POINTED AT HIS FACE

ERIN (CONT'D)

I don't have to screw you to kill
you.

JUSTIN

Fine! Put me out of my misery!

They square off for a moment...

...and then - as her weapon retracts back to human form - she
shakes her head, rejected and devastated.

CUT TO A RED SOCK - CLUTCHED IN JUSTIN'S HAND AT

EXT. NEON-LIT ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Justin squats on the ledge, SNIFFING the sock as he looks
across the street to see what has been stalking:

ACROSS THE STREET - A CHEAP HOTEL

On the STREET BEFORE THE HOTEL, the Town Car, with Jonas
standing on the sidewalk, smoking a cigarette.

TILT UP TO SEE THROUGH A WINDOW SEVERAL STORIES UP

Penny sits on the bed - dimly lit by a lamp on the dresser -
face like a painted whore - removing her heels as her JOHN
(30's, overgrown fratboy) enters: taking off his jacket and
roughly EXTRACTING a kiss from her lips.

John's hands travel over Penny's torso as he pins her to the
mattress - then SLAPS her.

JUSTIN'S HAND CLUTCHES THE RED SOCKS

As he shakes his head. This is none of his business. He
doesn't know tis girl.

He turns away...but his ear WIGGLES...and he hears Penny -
CRYING OUT IN PAIN.

He spins about-face and BREAKS INTO A RUN - eyes turning red -
footfalls SPEEDING UP - RIPPING OFF HIS SHIRT to reveal a
newly hairy torso - heaving a RAGING HOWL -

JUSTIN LEAPS ACROSS THE STREET INTO

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KERRRASH! Justin SHATTERS THROUGH THE WINDOW -

THIS GOES DOWN FAST AND NASTY - LIGHTS DIM AND SHADOWS HEAVY

- Justin ROLLS to his feet - his face an AMALGAM OF MAN AND WOLF, hands halfway to claws - nails long and razor sharp.

Which - justifiably - FREAKS OUT BOTH JOHN AND PENNY -

- but especially John, as Justin picks him up like a doll and TOSSES him into a dresser - SMASHING the mirror above.

John SCRAMBLES to his knees - looking up at the beast bearing down on him from the shadows:

JOHN

Please - don't - I have a family!

Penny LEAPS FROM THE BED onto Justin's back, SCREAMING - pulling at his hair - until he SHAKES HER OFF and she DROPS to the floor, taking with her the wedding band on the string.

Penny lifts her neck to see the cord and ring in her hand - and as the John SCRAMBLES for his clothes:

PENNY

Justin?

(pleading for her life)

Please don't hurt him...Jonas
...he'll kill me...

Justin's eyes lock with hers: flashing with understanding.

JUSTIN LETS OUT A PAINED SCREAM AND LEAPS OUT THE WINDOW**EXT. CITY ROOFTOPS - MOMENTS LATER**

Justin races across the skyline, HOWLING...until a DARK SHADOW PASSES OVER HIM -

AND TRANSFORMS INTO A FACEFUL OF STANLEY

- changing from bat to nude man. WRESTLING HIM down.

The two men ROLL TO A STOP just before running out of building. Justin gets on top, SNAPPING HIS FANGS into Stanley's forearm. TEARING OFF A BLOODY CHUNK.

Stanley's forearm HEALS instantaneously. Justin BITES DOWN AGAIN - HOLDING ON like a pit bull.

STANLEY

Taste good? I'm undead! We can do this all night! Or you can pull your shit together and talk this out with me like a man!

(MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Come on kid, FOCUS! You called out
the wolf, now call him in! CALL HIM
IN!

Justin TRANSFORMS back and rolls off Stanley, who rolls away
on his back - looking at his now-intact forearm.

STANLEY (CONT'D)
Damn that stings.
(turning to Justin)
You just called the wolf home, kid.
You did good.

And off Justin - wiping blood from his mouth...not sure how
happy any of this makes him...

FADE TO BLACK

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**FADE IN****EXT. CITY STREET - SIDEWALK/STANLEY'S CAR - NIGHT**

Justin pulls a pair of sweatpants from the back of the Oldsmobuick and tosses them over into the alley to REVEAL Stanley - who catches the sweats and slips them on.

JUSTIN

So how many cheap suits have you lost this way?

STANLEY

(walking to the car)

Save the comedy, kid, you almost ripped out some douchebag's throat tonight...and for what?

(pulling out a sweatshirt)

Sticking his beef in some meth-head pro you thought was your soulmate?

JUSTIN

Great. I got no end of stalkers.

STANLEY

I'm your sponsor. I keep tabs on you. That's the deal.

Justin turns away - FRUSTRATION AND RAGE FLARING - then:

JUSTIN

I don't need a damn babysitter!

STANLEY

You're a werewolf, dumbass, you need a hell of a lot more than a babysitter or you're gonna cut a major swath - you dig?

JUSTIN

(hard and defensive)

I didn't kill him.

STANLEY

'cause I'm on you like fat on a mother-in-law. 'cause I'm watching you 24-7. 'cause I'm always present and accounted for - forcing you to make the right decision.

(then)

And that's how it shall remain 'til you start working the program.

(MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)

'cause I've walked in your shoes
and I know - I take my eyes off you
for a second, you're gonna be
chowing down.

(conclusively)

So what's it gonna be, Justin?

And off Justin, locking eyes with his new sponsor...

INT. ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - BATHROOM - DAY

Justin SCRUBS the tile floor with vicious intensity, working
a brush on the end of a broomhandle as Milkweed enters.

MILKWEED

So I'm done shining up the
hardwood, think I'm gonna go ahead
and open up your family business if
that's something you wanna know
about.

(off Justin's silence)

OK, how about this one? "Hey buddy,
how are you doing? You still
hurting from that concussion - you
know, the one you got when your
alleged best friend picked a bar
fight with a bunch of scrubs right
before he abandoned you?"

JUSTIN

You already know I feel like crap
about that.

MILKWEED

Because of that weak-ass "sorry"
you mumbled when you came in? Yeah.
Made a world of difference.

JUSTIN

Penny come in?

MILKWEED

(throws up his arms)

Penny? The Meth-head?

JUSTIN

She come in while I've been here?

MILKWEED

That's how it is? I'm here with a
lump on my head, cleaning your
joint like a freakin' Haitian and
you're all about that?

(off Justin's look)

(MORE)

MILKWEED (CONT'D)

Well shut the front door, Justin Ullrich finally found someone who's a hotter mess than he is and he's passing the savings on to me the consumer!

JUSTIN

You know what?

(stops scrubbing)

I'm redlining here, Milk. You best -

MILKWEED

- best what? 'cause I was thinking I best quit the wage-slave-earning job at the roller rink with the best-friend-abandoning boss who's never around and doesn't care if the place looks fit for human consumption.

(off Justin's look)

You're so butt-hurt over some messed up teenage hoebag that you can't mind the store? Fine, give me the keys and let me run the store, 'cause what you're doing? Uncool.

Justin leans on the brush, puts on a conciliatory face:

JUSTIN

Hey, man -

MILKWEED

Hey man yourself. Buy her a bus ticket to some rehab away from that Ukrainian scumbucket who's turning her out - because that aside, all you're otherwise accomplishing is making my life a hell.

(triumphantly)

Oh. And today? We're playing Phish. That's my payback.

And off Justin, as Milkweed SLAMS the door...

EXT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAY

Justin steps out of the passenger door of the Oldsmobuick as Stanley makes his way inside.

JUSTIN

Is this the part where you rob the blood bank?

STANLEY

I feed on deer, raccoons and household vermin.

JUSTIN

Tasty.

STANLEY

Not really. Drinking deer blood's like swilling warm Night Train that's already been through a homeless man. Plus you feel like you murdered Bambi.

JUSTIN

So how come you're out in the sun?
(off Stanley's look)
You're a vampire, right? How come you're out in the sun?

STANLEY

Black don't crack, son. Black don't crack.

And off Justin, taking that as read...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Trucker - whom you may remember from the teaser - reclines in bed - oxygen tubes UP HIS NOSE, MISSING arm, stump STITCHED AND COVERED IN BANDAGES, other arm STUCK WITH AN IV...

...and STARING at Justin and Stanley: confused.

STANLEY

Young Justin has already taken the first step - admitting that he is powerless over his addiction. The second and third steps are recognizing a higher power and entrusting himself to that higher power. Fourth step is, of course, the fearless moral inventory - after which comes the fifth: making amends to those he's injured.

TRUCKER

I don't understand...you said
...you're a cop.

JUSTIN

Yeah - he is, but uh...we're not here in an official capacity.

TRUCKER

Yeah, no, I got that...but...uh...
my arm was bitten off by a wolf.
(off the looks)
A big wolf.

STANLEY

Your point?

Trucker looks at the visibly uncomfortable Justin.

TRUCKER

Why would he - Justin - make amends
to me? I mean, what's he gonna do,
go out there with a shotgun and
bring back a pelt?

Justin looks away from the uncomfortable truth - what can he
possibly do for this sad, maimed man? Stanley takes in
Justin's regretful expression face, then:

STANLEY

See, we're part of a special
program...helping the people Justin
actually harmed is just not...
(looks at Justin, then)
...a possibility.

TRUCKER

(to Justin)
Holy crap, kid. What did you do?

STANLEY

(cutting in)
The point being that we do things
like this on a volunteer basis. We
help you for the sake of those we
can no longer help. Right, Justin?

TRUCKER

(off Justin's SAD NOD)
OK...works for me...I mean, one
minute I'm fixing my rig, the next
I'm here missing an arm...
(looking down)
...and my wedding band. Nineteen
years I had that cheap hunk of low
carat crap on my finger - and
Sarah, she only passed a year ago -
lymphoma - so it was...my one
reminder...you know?

Trucker's face falls as he stifles a tear. If you've been wondering how much worse Justin could feel, now you have a metric for that calculation.

STANLEY

(to Justin)

Tell him you're sorry for his loss.

Justin looks at Stanley, breaking his speechless impasse:

JUSTIN

I'm...so sorry about your loss.

TRUCKER

I can still feel it - my arm, hand - fingers...the ring. I keep looking down for it.

(off the awkward silence)

The good news is I got my union disability benefits...rep came in last night, had me sign the papers...

(off the polite smiles)

...and told me that if I didn't kick back forty percent to him on a weekly basis he'd see to it that my paperwork got buried so deep I'd spend the rest of my natural life in bankruptcy court.

And off Justin and Stanley, taking in THAT shit sandwich:

INT. THIRTEEN STEPS GROUP BUILDING - NIGHT

Justin stands before the gathered group.

JUSTIN

It makes no goddamn sense - I freakin' eat people because I don't have a choice - but this asswipe?

(trying not to lose it)

Stealing some armless cripple's pension? What the hell? Who does that?

Doctor Stein and Stanley share a look. Stanley nods. Doctor Stein shakes her head.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

What's that? Why are you shaking your head like that?

MINA
Predators feed, or they die.

STANLEY
A man can't survive on deer blood
his entire life.

HARRY
Eventually the hunger comes for all
of us...and it won't be denied.

JUSTIN
All of us?

The members of the group look to one another in agreement.

THE GROUP (IMPROV)
Yup - sure does - can't be
helped -

JUSTIN
I came here because you -
(indicating Stanley)
- because he told me you
could help - now you're
telling me I'm gonna kill? I
have no choice?

DOCTOR STEIN
We can help...but sometimes help
isn't enough.
(coming closer)
The addiction wants what it wants.
That's why there's the Thirteenth
Step.

THE GROUP (IMPROV)
The Thirteenth Step.

ERIN
Kill With Purpose.

JUSTIN
Kill with purpose?

EDDY
Thirteenth Step's why I don't blow
my brains out every morning.

Stanley finds a file, which he brings over to Justin. Stanley
opens the file as he speaks - and Justin's face

STANLEY
Let me show you...this man's name
is Todd Truman. Look at his face.
He raped and murdered one of his
girlfriend's sons. Stuffed the body
in one of those blue plastic
storage boxes.

(MORE)

STANLEY (CONT'D)

Chucked it in the river. The sickest part of it is, he managed to frame his girlfriend. We've been building the evidence for this kill for months now -

JUSTIN

Who's we?

EDDY

We is us. We agree on the job, we do it together. Stanley found this one, so he gets first dibs on the carcass.

JUSTIN

First dibs? You said you've been off blood for a year.

STANLEY

I very specifically said "innocent blood."

JUSTIN

What about deer and vermin -

DOCTOR STEIN

Takes time to build a case for a righteous kill.

Justin can't believe what he is hearing - Stanley pushes the file on him before he can speak:

STANLEY

Let me tell you something - Todd Truman - and every one else out there like him - is a bigger monster than anyone in this room.

HARRY

Speak for yourself.

STANLEY

Maybe someday you'll decide your union rep has a little payback coming. Maybe someday, you don't see an unfair situation and feel like you got nothing you can do.

JUSTIN

I don't want to kill anyone - that's why I came.

ERIN

There's no way out, Justin. Alcoholics can live without alcohol - but we can't do without food.

DOCTOR STEIN

(off Justin)

This is not a traditional twelve step program. Abstinence is not an option.

ERIN

We're predators.

STANLEY

Not feeding is death.

DOCTOR STEIN

So why not do it for the right reason?

JUSTIN

You said this was a way out.

Erin strides over puts a hand on his shoulder:

ERIN

There's no fighting what we are. That's what I've been trying to tell you since -

HARRY

(off Justin's silence)

Listen to your girlfriend. She knows what we're all about.

JUSTIN

Shut up, fatman - there's no "we" - I'm not a killer like you monsters - and she's not my girlfriend -
(a moment, then to Erin)
Whenever we hooked up, I felt like I was being killed. You hurt me!

ERIN

(sad and hurt)

I know.

JUSTIN

And you liked it? Knowing you were stealing the life out of me?

ERIN

If I liked it I wouldn't be here!

JUSTIN

Bull.

(heading for the door)

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

You can keep your damn program. I'm staying in the cage.

STANLEY

Justin, wait. Remember that hotel room? You hated that guy and wanted him dead for what he was doing -

JUSTIN

I made a choice -

STANLEY

That's all we're saying here, you can make a choice the right way -

DOCTOR STEIN

Let him go, Stan. He'll do it on his own time.

JUSTIN

There isn't gonna be a choice -
(loud and clear)
- I am not a killer.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Framed by a window, Trucker has a HEATED CONVERSATION with his UNION REP (40's, hefty, clearly an intimidating fellow), who has set his open briefcase on the night table.

FIND JUSTIN - ON THE PARKING LOT BELOW - WATCHING

Getting more and more pissed by the moment.

JUSTIN'S EAR WIGGLES

And he hears the last part of the conversation as Union Rep SNAPS shut the briefcase.

UNION REP

I'll see you next week. Good luck with rehab.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Dark. Union Rep makes his way out the entrance to his car...

...only to find Justin, standing by the car door - a harsh shadow from the sodium light above keeping his face partially shrouded in darkness.

JUSTIN

You're the rep from Local 1028 - truckers and transportation worker's union?

UNION REP
Who the hell are you?

JUSTIN
Someone who hates what you're doing
to the one-armed guy in there.
(off Union Rep's look)
Yeah. He told me about your little
arrangement.

UNION REP
Shame. He wasn't supposed to talk.
That's gonna cost him.

JUSTIN
I don't think so -

Union Rep steps up and GUT PUNCHES Justin - hard - doubling
him over with the force of the blow...

UNION REP
I didn't ask...and you look way too
scrawny to be anyone's muscle.

...and that's when Justin SPRINGS up, his eyes red and teeth
turned to fangs as his clawed hand GRABS a handful of Union
Rep and his voice becomes a HORRIFYING GROWL.

JUSTIN
YOU WILL GIVE THE MONEY BACK!

Union Rep doesn't move. Doesn't speak.

He just SHAKES...

AND WETS HIS PANTS

Justin's face returns to normal as he looks down at the
SPREADING POOL under Union Rep's pant leg...

...Union Rep just stares in COMPLETE, PARALYZED FEAR.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
You're gonna walk your piss-pants
right back into that hospital and
give my friend back his money...and
if I ever hear about you coming
around again...
(snapping his jaws - like
Val Kilmer in *Top Gun*)
...do we understand each other?

And off Union Rep, NODDING VIGOROUSLY...

EXT. JUSTIN ULLRICH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Justin approaches his house - smiling all the way - maybe even WHISTLING.

For the first time in this story, Justin Ullrich feels good about himself.

Justin takes out his front keys and goes for the lock: but the door just PUSHES OPEN.

JUSTIN
(entering)
Ma?

INT. JUSTIN ULLRICH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dark. Justin SNIFFS as he enters...

JUSTIN
Penny?

...and turns a corner to see her on the living room couch...tears rolling down her cheeks.

PENNY
Hey. Justin.

JUSTIN
Penny. What are you doing here - are you OK? Did someone hurt you?

PENNY
Sure, but what else is news?

Penny steps into light to reveal a black eye. Justin blanches.

JUSTIN
Jonas? Did he do this -

PENNY
I'm not here about - look, I don't know what happened last night...I don't understand what I saw...but...I just wanted to tell you that - it was sweet that you wanted to save me and all...but I...I do what I do and...

Now she's up against him, putting arms around his chest... Justin buries his nose in her hair, taking a deep breath...

JUSTIN
...you don't want me to save you.

PENNY
Look...I've made some pretty messed
up choices in my life...it's
just...I'm just...so sorry.

Justin takes his nose from her hair, looks her in the eye:

JUSTIN
You're sorry...Why?

WIDER TO REVEAL JONAS

Entering.

JUSTIN'S NOSE WRINKLES

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Oh crap...

Before Justin can react, Jonas extends his arm to deploy a COLLAPSIBLE BATON, which - in a swift and practiced move probably learned in the Slavic armed forces - he uses to COLD-COCK JUSTIN ACROSS THE BACK OF THE HEAD.

JUSTIN FALLS - HE'S OUT COLD

Penny's tears turn to full-blown weeping...and as Jonas looks down at Justin...

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**SMASH IN ON THE SPLASH! FROM A BUCKET OF WATER**

THROWN into Justin's face as he comes to at:

INT. INDUSTRIAL/LOFT-LIKE SPACE - NIGHT

Justin's eyes SNAP open through a wet blur as Jonas resolves in his field of vision, holding the bucket.

Justin tries to stand, but he is bound to the Steelcase chair on which he sits: a very tight chain around his neck.

JONAS
(looking away)
Boss! He is awake.

Justin struggles - GRUNTING - but quickly realizes the futility - his hands are cuffed, and the cuffs are secured with high-tensil steel chains.

Even the wolf would have a problem getting out of this.

JUSTIN
Listen...you don't want to do
this...whatever it is...
(straining)
...you don't know what I can do.

Jonas regards Justin contemptuously, then looks away:

JONAS
Boss. He's making threats now.

A door opens across the room -

THROUGH THE DOOR

- can be seen a number of work tables, and on them, cash-counting machines, manned by men who could be Jonas's clones - all of them big, strapped, dark-suited and -spirited - putting the counted bundles of cash into zippered bags.

Jonas's Boss steps through, shutting the door. This is GEARY (50's, imagine William Hurt in *A History of Violence*).

GEARY
Hello, Justin.

Justin doesn't answer. Jonas SLAPS him across the face:

JONAS
Say hello back.

JUSTIN
 (stunned)
 Hello.

Geary gets to Justin, sizing him up, then bends to talk to him eye to eye. Geary's every move is calculated - there's nothing over the top about this guy - he's a businessman.

GEARY
 Do you know who I am?

JUSTIN
 No. I don't know you -

GEARY
 That's right, you don't know me...

JUSTIN
 (pleading)
 ...and I don't have to know you.

GEARY
 You know why you don't know me?
 (off Justin's look)
 The reason you don't know me is I don't go to your roller skating rink and traumatize your paying customers. That is the difference between me and you.

JUSTIN
 It won't happen again. What I did. I made a mistake. I swear.

GEARY
 You're right. It won't.
 (motioning to Jonas)
 Bring her in.

JONAS OPENS THE DOOR BEHIND GEARY

The men in the back room enter with Ma, tied up, gagged and blindfolded.

JUSTIN
 Ma -

Justin immediately understands what's at stake - but even as his rage and frustration grow, there's a tone of desperation to his voice: he does NOT want to wolf out on this shit.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Listen you asshole. I will mess you up. You do not want to do this.

Geary's men TAKE OUT THEIR GUNS and take aim at Justin:

GEARY

Asshole? Really? I thought you and I could keep this businesslike. First warning is we break her leg with a lead pipe. Second warning is we burn down your family business with your mother and your stoner buddy inside...you live to go to their funerals.

(to Jonas)

Do the leg.

Jonas steps toward Justin's scared and WHIMPERING mother as Justin STRUGGLES to get free:

JUSTIN

Don't! No!

Ma SHAKES her head and body in a feeble attempt at escape. Jonas gestures with the baton, which EXTENDS ominously.

Jonas LIFTS THE BATON - winding up to do some serious damage - but before he can send his message:

A REPTILIAN TENTACLE REACHES DOWN FROM ABOVE

And GRABS A HOLD OF JONAS BY THE NECK - LIFTING up to the rafters...

WHERE ERIN PERCHES IN THE SHADOWS

ERIN

Hey, big boy -

Jonas gags. Erin's teeth grow into MULTIPLE ROWS OF RAZOR SHARP FANGS as her tentacles extend to his chest and crotch:

JONAS

NO!

And as she CHOMPS DOWN:

THE MEN BELOW LIFT THEIR WEAPONS

Just as Eddy **BAMFS!** into scene behind them in A PUFF OF BLACK BRIMSTONE...

(yes - Eddy is a pan-dimensional sprite, not only does he love the taste of human flesh, he can also teleport - think of Alan Cumming in *X-men 2*).

...and as Eddy's four arms grab a hold of one of Geary's men and PULL HIM APART -

CLOSE ON MA

- her face SPLASHED with blood.

GEARY'S MEN OPEN FIRE INTO EDDY

But he **BAMFS!** out of the way of the bullets -

AND REAPPEARS BEHIND MA

Grabbing her right before **BAMFING!** out of the room - taking her with him!

AS JUSTIN STRAINS AGAINST THE CHAINS

Until - just like Bill Bixby in the old The Incredible Hulk TV series - he has had enough and his eyes go red.

IN QUICK CUTS

The chains SNAP! around Justin's GROWING LUPINE MUSCLES as he LEAPS and takes one of the men by the throat...but before too much of the ensuing bloodshed can register on camera:

THE LAST OF GEARY'S MEN

DRIVES HIS BOSS TOWARD THE DOOR - protecting him from the intense supernatural carnage - but when he opens the door -

REVEAL STANLEY - TEETH TURNED TO FANGS!

Stanley SHOVES Geary away and grabs his man by the throat:

STANLEY

I. Am. Parched.

And as Stanley CHOMPS down on his SCREAMING prey -

GEARY

Scampers into the room, trying to avoid a horrible fate - only to be CORNERED by a very large, very vicious wolf:

GEARY

No! Please! No!

And this is the first time the wolf appears full-on under the light - a majestic, fearsome creature whose red eyes can only hint at the fury contained inside...

...and as the wolf POUNCES -

ANGLE ON ERIN

- watching with delight as:

GEARY SCREAMS UNDER THE ONSLAUGHT

...until he doesn't anymore.

THE WOLF REARS BACK AND HOWLS IN AGONY AND ECSTASY

As TRANSFORMS back into Justin - panting. Horrified and ecstatic at the same time.

And then silence among the dispersing cordite smoke.

Justin Ullrich has taken the Thirteenth Step.

STANLEY STEPS UP - FLANKED BY A DESCENDING ERIN

Wiping blood from his mouth...and putting the other hand on Justin's shoulder.

STANLEY

You did the right thing, kid.

Justin SLAPS his hand away:

JUSTIN

Where's my mother?

Before anyone else can answer, Eddy BAMFS! into the room:

EDDY

She's already home. Sleeping. Won't remember a thing.

(off Justin)

Mind wipe. I'm a pan-dimensional sprite... what?

Eddy turns to step out through the door into the next room as Justin stumbles to his feet...regarding the human detritus all around him:

JUSTIN

We killed them - all of them.

STANLEY

Pushers. Pimps. Bad men had it coming. We just did in two minutes what my brothers in the local 5-0 haven't been able to do in years. This was a higher power at work. Wrath of god.

Stanley's words hit Justin like an atomic bomb.

ERIN

Your ma would appreciate what you
just did for her.

Justin doesn't know how to react...but before he can opine...

HARRY (O.S.)

Clean up crew!

HARRY enters - still nude - carrying a massive knife and a
very large fork. Mina steps up behind him.

HARRY (CONT'D)

We late?

STANLEY

Just in time.

MINA

These are some tasty looking dudes.

HARRY

I get the muscles, you get the
brain.

MINA

Harry. You're the only one who
understands me.

Justin turns away - clearly ambivalent - as Harry and Mina go
to work (and though none of his eating is actually seen,
there's a lot of very uncomfortable SLURPING and CHOMPING in
the soundscape for the remainder of this scene).

Eddy re-enters, carrying several BAGS OF CASH.

EDDY

I got the cash - how long until
Carl shows up to torch the place?

STANLEY

Give Harry an hour -

HARRY

(between bites)
An hour? I could be here all
night!

STANLEY

One hour - then the fire demon does
his thing.

JUSTIN

What are you doing with the money?

STANLEY

Amends, kid. Lots of amends.

Justin shakes his head, regarding his work...and then, as he exits the room, Erin sidles up to Stanley...

ERIN

Thank you. For bringing him in.

STANLEY

You did the same for me.

ERIN

You were easy. You love me.

Stanley looks at Erin. For a moment, there's a vulnerability to him - a crack in his usual unflappable veneer.

STANLEY

That was a hundred years ago.
Literally.

ERIN

I know.
(off his look)
Justin's special. With him on our side, we're going to do some amazing things.

STANLEY

I hope you're right.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL/LOFT-LIKE SPACE - AN HOUR LATER

Justin stands on the sidewalk, watching as Stanley and Eddy put the duffel bags of cash in Stanley's trunk as Harry exits the building, carrying some large pieces of god-knows-what wrapped in tinfoil...

...as Carl pulls up in a Vespa - dismounting, to share a look with Stanley, who gives him a "GO AHEAD" gesture.

CARL OPENS HIS MOUTH AND HEAVES A STREAM OF FIRE

The flames stick to the side of the building - LIGHTING UP Justin's face as Stanley, Eddy, Mina and Harry step up...

STANLEY

I'd get out of here now if I were you.

EDDY

I know I am.

EDDY BAMFS! OUT OF THERE.

Carl gives everyone a THUMBS UP. VROOM! He's outta there.

STANLEY

There's a meeting every night, kid.

Stanley gets in his car, along with Harry and Mina. But Justin just stands there - as Erin comes up behind him.

ERIN

I'm so hot for you right now.

Justin turns to look at her - the orange glow from the burning building lighting her beautiful - and lethal - face.

JUSTIN

There's a meeting every night. I'll see you there.

The sound of FIRE ENGINES fills the night...Erin looks at Justin, her pain and rejection clear as she shakes her head then TURNS AND GOES...

...and off Justin, half his face still lit by flames, half in darkness, watching Erin as she VANISHES into the dark...

CUT TO BLACK

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

WIPE IN FROM BLACK TO

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Justin sits with his back to the wall - his body language making his resignation clear.

JUSTIN

Forgive me Father, for I have sinned...it's been a month since my last confession.

FATHER FRANK

Justin - is that you?

JUSTIN

Hey, Father Frank.

FATHER FRANK

Big game this week - you already feeling the jitters?

Justin's voice is steely and intense - full of clarity:

JUSTIN

I didn't come to talk about that.

FATHER FRANK

(mock taken aback)
Sounds serious.

JUSTIN

I killed two men and caused three more to get killed.

A long pause as Father Frank realizes that could be for real...and then COMES CLOSER to the confessional screen.

FATHER FRANK

Tell me this is a joke. Please.

JUSTIN

It isn't.
(shaking his head)
You said god knows my sins. You said god made me the way I am.

FATHER FRANK

I didn't mean -

JUSTIN

I accepted the existence of a Higher Power...I handed myself over to God...he gave me the hunger and the power to do what I did.

FATHER FRANK

Justin. If you really did...
something...this awful you have to
turn yourself in.

JUSTIN

Do you have any idea how much money
those men were making?

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. INDUSTRIAL/LOFT-LIKE SPACE - NIGHT

SMOULDERING. Lit by Police and Fire vehicle lights, CORONERS
drag stretchers from the building into their black vans.

JUSTIN (V.O.)

Getting young girls hooked on
meth...turning them out. Now those
men are gone...and anyone who tries
to take their place is gonna to
hear what happened to them.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY - CONTINUING THE MONTAGE

As Trucker enters his room - dragging an IV on a stand - to
see something on top of his bed...a thick envelope...

JUSTIN (V.O.)

And all the money they made?

INSIDE THE ENVELOPE, A STACK OF BILLS AND HIS WEDDING BAND

JUSTIN (V.O.)

It's being used to make amends to
people who truly deserve it...

Off Trucker's surprise and gratitude:

EXT. REHAB FACILITY - DAY - CONTINUING THE MONTAGE

A sign: **HESTER HOUSE - ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTER**

TILT UP FROM THE SIGN TO FIND PENNY

STEPPING OUT, carrying a backpack, trading hugs with a NURSE.

JUSTIN (V.O.)

...people who suffered are getting
better because I did those murders.

Penny looks fresh and scrubbed, far from the strung out girl
at the All-Skate. As she looks ahead...

FOLLOW PENNY'S EYELINE TO FIND JUSTIN

Standing next to Stanley by his car...and as Penny rushes over to them...

RESUME ON JUSTIN IN THE CONFESSIONAL

JUSTIN

So I need to know, Father Frank: If God knows my sins...if God made me in his image...if I accept that...

Justin shuts his eyes, a difficult admission coming:

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

...shouldn't I be happy? Shouldn't I be at peace?

FATHER FRANK

I don't want to believe this.
(peering at Justin)
And I can't tell you it's God's will. God's will is that you be tortured when you do bad things - God's will is that you repent.

JUSTIN

I don't know if that's an option.

FATHER FRANK

(finding his own strength)
So help me, if I find out this true, I will break the confessional seal and turn you in myself.

JUSTIN

It's all in God's hands, isn't it?
(standing to go)
And by the way, all that money you made betting on my games? You better be kicking it back to the parish...gambling's a sin.

Father Frank takes a deep breath, terrified as Justin EXITS.

INT. ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - NIGHT

Justin walks by a signs on the wall - it reads BOOTY SKATE TONIGHT! Loud, fun CURRENT music plays on the PA as Justin makes his way to the front counter -

- where Ma Ullrich takes cash from the first person in a long line as Milkweed HANDS OUT THE RENTAL SKATES.

JUSTIN

How we doing tonight?

MA ULLRICH

I haven't seen these many people in here since the Bay City Rollers were big.

MILKWEED

I told you all it'd take was a little marketing...a little sprucing up of the place...

JUSTIN

Just make me my money back.

MILKWEED

(handing skates to a customer)

The way we're marking up the sodas, we'll be in the back in no time!

(getting a dirty look from the customer)

Like you thought we didn't - go skate!

Justin stifles a smile...then turns to go:

MILKWEED (CONT'D)

Where you going, Justin? We're swamped over here!

JUSTIN

You're the new manager, Milkweed, you figure it out...I have a meeting.

MILKWEED

A meeting?

INT. THIRTEEN STEPS BUILDING - NIGHT

Justin spigots a cup of coffee from the big dispenser, then grabs a cookie and steps toward the group...

...everybody is there: Mina, Harry, Carl, Eddy, Erin and Stanley. Doctor Stein stands before a placard listing the Thirteen Steps.

DOCTOR STEIN

...because there comes the time when you say "I can't handle it, God" - or whatever higher, or -
(favoring Carl)

(MORE)

DOCTOR STEIN (CONT'D)
- lower, power you choose - "you handle it." You surrender and you will understand the way. There's Thirteen Steps here - we follow them, we work them, and at the end, we benefit not just ourselves, but also the world at large...but you need to keep coming back, it works if you work it. Who'd like to speak first?

Justin raises his hand. Stanley nods as he takes the floor:

JUSTIN
Hi, I'm Justin and I'm a werewolf.

EVERYBODY
Hi, Justin.

And as Justin speaks...a young and very troubled guy trying to figure out his place in the world...

FADE TO BLACK

END OF PILOT