## THIRTEEN STEPS

Pilot Story By Javier Grillo-Marxuach From the Graphic Novel By Phil Hester and Chuck Satterlee First Draft **12.20.10** 

# THE PREMISE

A tortured young man harbors a dark secret - at night, when the moon is full, he becomes a wolf and feeds on the flesh of the living. Alone and isolated, the young man lives with self-loathing...until he becomes a member of a unique twelve-step program designed to help him control his superhuman cravings...a recovery program with a unique thirteenth step: <u>kill with purpose</u>.

### THE TONE

Dark and scary with a slice of life and a healthy side of gallows humor...Breaking Bad and Friday Night Lights meets Dexter and True Blood. Shot in a naturalistic, documentary style, Thirteen Steps is neither a classic horror movie nor operatic doomed romance. This is a show about real people, struggling with the trials of life while living a horrifying double existence.

# THE STORY

#### TEASER

A TRUCKER fixes a flat tire on the side of the road on a rainy night...and is set on by a WEREWOLF. The wolf is shown in hideous, terrifying FLASHES: Jaws, not Twilight. Desperate and scared shitless, the trucker manages to scramble away from the creature and run into the embankment toward an arroyo. The creature stalks the trucker through the dark and frightening terrain - then pounces, RIPPING OFF THE TRUCKER'S ARM.

And off the cries of agony...

...JUSTIN ULLRICH wakes up at home in bed, shirtless - buff and toned but bruised and mussed. Justin is a kid who might have gone somewhere had he been born anywhere but a forgotten meth town nestled in the middle of nowhere. Justin's room is decorated with baseball trophies from High School and pennants for the minor league team in which he plays. Justin stumbles out of his bed to find his MA in the kitchen. She's sweet - and a little senile. They live in near-poverty and he runs the family's skating rink...but right now, he's talking to his mother about how "the cage broke," and she replies "but it was strong enough to hold your grandfather." She knows about his condition - an unfortunate genetic defect carried on to the men in the family - and they talk about it as they might the chicken pox. Justin shakes his head - he's going to have to drive to the woods upstate for the last night of the full moon. Ma asks Justin if he remembers anything about last night. He tells her no - he seldom remembers...and then has a coughing fit. Justin rushes to the sink...and retches out a wedding band.

Now he knows EXACTLY what he did.

### END OF TEASER

## ACT ONE

Justin walks and talks to the family business with MILKWEED his best friend who also works at the rink. Milkweed is an amiable, The Dude-like stoner who has all sorts of hare-brained schemes to make the rink profitable. Justin tells Milkweed to back off. The place is a shithole, has always been a shithole and will so remain. <u>Milkweed asks Justin why he is wearing a</u> <u>wedding band on a string around his neck</u>. Justin says "forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown." Justin notices he is being followed by a black man in an Oldsmobuick.

This is STANLEY. More about him later.

At the roller rink (ULLRICH'S ALL-SKATE - one of our standing sets) Justin and Milkweed get the place ready to open when two people enter in spite of the CLOSED sign on the front door. These are PENNY and JONAS. She is girly and awesome if damaged flirtatious - imagine Britney Spears during her head-shaving period. He is a thick-necked thug who drives her around and "takes care of her." The place is closed, Justin tells them, but Jonas slips Justin some cash to let her skate. She asks him for socks to wear under her skates - she doesn't have any. Justin takes the money, gives Penny a pair of socks and lets her skate...all the while ogling this incredibly hot girl as she tears up the rink. Milkweed tells Justin that she likes him: <u>he</u> <u>has a shot at tapping that</u>. Jonas has been listening and ominously tells Justin to not even dream about it: this girl is DEFENDED. Milkweed tells Justin that she is some Russian Mobster's girlfriend - he'd better back off.

Later that afternoon, Justin cleans up before leaving the rink in Milkweed's care for the night.

Taking out the garbage to the alley, Justin finds Penny's socks and sniffs them...only to be interrupted by his clingy, trashy ex-girlfriend ERIN, who finds him pathetic for crushing on the clients. The two of them have been broken up for a while, but Erin tries to seduce Justin in the alley. He rebuffs her. Justin doesn't want to be with her - he doesn't like their relationship and tells her that every time they have sex, he feels like she is sucking the life out of him. She is a volatile, mercurial and exhausting girl who literally tires him out. Erin hates him: he's the only man she has ever loved. He tells her that he can't be with anyone, not long term, not the way she wants. She calls him out on his tortured lone-wolf bullshit, but he sticks to his guns: he's going to be late to the game and there's no lights at the Stadium. Embittered, she rags him: minor league, that's all he's ever gonna be.

Justin goes to confession at his local church before the game...he tries to explate his guilt, but is unable to talk about why he feels so tortured - about the actions that brought him here...but all FATHER FRANK, can talk about is the Big Game coming up. Father Frank is a big fan of the local minor league team and wants to talk about the stats. Justin gives up on trying to confess: no one can truly understand him.

The Big Game. Justin kills it and his team wins. He is almost supernaturally endowed as an athlete.

Stanley confronts Justin in the locker room. Justin knows that Stanley is a cop because he smells like gun oil and cheap shoe leather. Even in human form, Justin has the gifts of the wolf. Justin wonders...is he busted? Could the cops know about his wolfen ways? Stanley: "yes, you are busted," but the laws of man have nothing to do with what he is here to say. Stanley: "You're good at this because you're a wolf. You're ashamed because what makes you good at the game comes at the cost of the flesh of the living. There's help for people like you." Stanley gives Justin a card with a strange logo - like the AA logo (the triangle inside a circle), but slightly, well...different.

Justin throws the card away once Stanley gets out of there.

That night, Justin goes off into the woods. The full moon comes out and the transformation finally takes place on screen. It's <u>horrifying</u>.

Justin RUNS FULL TILT through the woods - letting the wolf out in all of its fearsome majesty. That's when he finds and almost kills a HUNTER...but something stops him...he sees Stanley stalking up to him...shouting in an INHUMAN VOICE...Justin and Stanley make eye contact...<u>and Justin gets scared away</u>.

Justin wakes up the next morning in his own bed - with a new calling card on his chest.

# END OF ACT ONE

#### ACT TWO

Justin attends his first meeting in the Thirteen Steps Support Group ("Hi, I'm Justin and I'm a werewolf"). It looks like any other recovery meeting: the big pot of coffee, a plate of storebought cookies, inspirational posters on the walls. Meet the group. Harry the cannibal. Eddy, the four-armed imp. Mina, the vampire. Herbert the fire demon. Last, but not least, is Dr. Stein who runs the program. The group banters, tells their stories and they even give one another shit (including a lot of talk about why harry would even be here - he's a cannibal, not a supernatural creature - he should be at an Overeaters Anonymous meeting).

Justin is horrified: how the hell do all these people LIVE in the world without being discovered? Dr. Stein: "it's the program, boy. We all have lives, we all live by the thirteen steps." "You mean twelve steps," Justin corrects him. "No, thirteen," says a familiar voice...it's Erin, who shows up late. <u>She's a creature of the night too</u>. Justin is horrified to see her there and rushes out.

Erin confronts Justin outside the meeting. "I'm a succubus," she admits. It's only because he is a wolf that he can be with her without dying - his wolfen strength gives him some protection from her ability to seduce men and suck their souls for nourishment. They have a destiny together. Justin reels - he refuses to accept this and wants no part of this freakshow.

Justin walks away...

...and as he gets deeper and deeper into the city, he gets jumped by a gang armed with lead pipes. They call him a "human lover" and tell him that he should be running with them or his brethren will hunt him down like prey. They have been watching him and have a simple message to deliver: wolves have no place in recovery. The members of the gang all wear fetishes around their necks - made of human molars.

# YES - THIS IS A TANTALIZING GLANCE AT OUR SERIES MYTHOLOGY

Justin tries to get away but the gang corners and beats him telling him to let his true nature out. Stanley appears and tells the gang to get away. The gang refuses. Stanley VAMPS OUT - turning into a swarm of bats that terrorizes the attacking gang - and saves Justin.

Stanley returns to human form: naked. As he gathers his clothes, he tells Justin that he has to figure out a way to do this without ending up in the buff. Then, as Stanley gets dressed, comes the talk. Yes, those were werewolves - coming out to recruit him. Our kind is everywhere, and not all of us want to live among people in peace. Stanley: "I'm your sponsor. I'm gonna be there to help you every step of the way. If you think you can go it alone, you help yourself - but make no mistake, we can help you control this shit, we can help you take charge."

Back at the rink, Justin banters with Milkweed when Penny shows up again, wanting to skate. Jonas smears Justin more cash...and lets Justin skate with her. Their chemistry is undeniable. She wants him. Jonas watches them, then gets a call and breaks them up. Time for her to see her next customer. <u>She's a hooker. He's her pimp</u>. Jonas: "You want to love that, you can go ahead and pay for it like everybody else." Jonas squires Milkweed - holy shit, Penny's a hooker. Who'd a thunk it?

Dejected, Justin goes home to his mother...the full moon is over. No more wolfing out for a month. He can rest easy now.

Justin goes to bed...and Penny shows up in his room, trying to seduce him...but something is strange. He recognizes her scent: <u>this isn't Penny</u>. Penny transforms into Erin - who has the power to shape-shift to seduce her prey! They argue. Justin reels even as a werewolf, his world has become a very weird place, and he doesn't want any part of it. Erin reaches out for Justin - her arm TRANSFORMING into a grotesque, H.R. Giger-style tentacle. "Do you know how many times I could have killed you?" Erin asks, making it clear that she is the stronger one in this relationship - and that she always gets what she wants. She kisses Justin. Justin kisses her right back: he is definitely attracted to her, even as he is simultaneously repulsed - and the hotter it gets, the more Erin's limbs transform. Justin snaps out of it and recoils from her before racing out of the house.

Walking the streets of the city, Justin takes Penny's socks from his pocket and SNIFFS them...he can track her like a bloodhound: his wolfen gift with him even in the human state.

A while later, Justin squats on a rooftop watching Penny - in the back seat of a town car, made up and dressed like a slutty a schoolgirl as Jonas drives to her next gig in a seedy motel.

As Penny and her John do their business, Justin BREAKS IN through a window and demands that the John let Penny go. The John gets violent and hits Justin with a fireplace poker - until Justin WOLFS OUT and almost kills the John, but then sees Penny, begging him not to because Jonas will kill her. Justin rushes out.

Justin rushes across the rooftops, until Stanley appears in his bat form. Justin attacks Stanley and takes him down. Stanley takes human form...and Justin keeps biting him - taking pieces out of him. Stanley keeps regenerating. Stanley "I'm a vampire, we can do this all freakin' night if you want to - but I'm your sponsor, kid, I'm gonna be on your ass like white on rice." Stanley talks Justin down - gets him to transform again into a person. Justin: "Holy shit - I can control this." Stanley: "only if you work the program."

# END OF ACT TWO

#### ACT THREE

Justin and Stanley walk toward a hospital. Justin wants to know about the steps: especially the mysterious thirteenth step. Stanley doesn't want to talk about the thirteenth step. Justin: "What am I doing here?" Stanley: "the ninth step: making amends." Inside, Justin and Stanley talk to the TRUCKER from the teaser. Now a one-armed wretch, the trucker is desolate - his livelihood is ruined, his wedding band - his prized possession from his nineteen-year marriage - is gone with his arm, and worst of all? His crooked union rep is skimming from his disability pay either he pays forty percent or the disability goes away altogether. Obviously, neither Justin nor Stanley can tell the Trucker the truth behind their visit, so Stanley tells the Trucker that he and Justin are part of a program designed to make amends to people in need - the Trucker looks at them, why would they make amends to him? Stanley smiles - "let's just say young Justin can't help the people he harmed, so he needs someone to stand proxy." Justin looks at Stanley - how can he possibly make amends for this?

Justin and Stanley reconvene at the Thirteen Steps meeting. The attendees finally talk about the Thirteenth Step: kill with purpose. "The predatory lust is no ordinary addiction," explains Doctor Stein. "There will come a time when everyone in this room must feed - and if that is the case, then they might as well kill sons of bitches who have it coming." Justin looks around: has everyone in the room done this? All hands go up. Justin is horrified: no. He came here because he doesn't want to kill, because his own self-loathing was eating him from the inside out, and now they are telling him to do it? Stanley looks at Justin: he almost killed the John in the hotel room, the Thirteenth Step is already within him. Justin glares: "but I didn't kill him." Stanley tells Justin that it's inevitable - he will kill again. Justin shakes his head: he made the choice not to kill the John, even when he was in the wolf state. What he wants is control - not some half-assed rationalization to keep killing!

Justin watches from across the street of the hospital...through the window, he can see the Trucker, in heated conversation with his UNION REP. Justin's dog hearing catches the conversation: the trucker pleads for his livelihood. The Union Rep tells him it's just the way the game is played. Trucker hands over the cash. Union Rep puts it in his pocket...

...and as Union Rep walks to his car, Justin confronts him, trying to reason with him, asking why he feels the need to rip off an unfortunate man who has hit on hard times. The Union Rep is not only defiant, but nasty. Justin loses his temper, and tells Union Rep that he cannot believe that someone who has a choice would prey on his his own kind - Union Rep shoves

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Justin...and Justin wolfs out. Union Rep tries to run - Justin grabs him with his clawed hand, then changes back and makes it clear to Union Rep that he is going to return all the money he has stolen, beginning with the Trucker...he has now seen what Justin can do. Scared shitless, Union Rep agrees to do anything Justin says.

Proud of himself and feeling like a superhero, Justin comes home to find the house darkened and empty...and Penny sitting in the living room. Penny comes on to Justin, embracing and kissing him - distracting him...then tells Justin that she's sorry. Justin looks at her, wondering what she means...and then something hits Justin's nose...the smell of a cologne he remembers from the rink: Jonas. Justin turns around and finds himself face-to-face with Penny's driver, who SMACKS him across the head, knocking him out.

## END OF ACT THREE

#### ACT FOUR

Justin comes to, hands cuffed, as Jonas drags him out of the Town Car toward a large guonset hut in the farmlands outside of the city. Inside the building, Justin sees a number of young women like Penny, taken into rooms by clients. Further inside, thick-necked men in suits and gun straps count large sums of money...and in the deepest room in the building, Jonas's boss. Justin gets dumped in the floor before the boss, who makes it clear that he can't have people disrupting his business the way that Justin disrupted Penny and her John. Justin warns the boss - he has no idea what he can do. The boss nods to one of his men...and they bring in Justin's mother, her head covered by a sack. The boss makes it clear to Justin that is he so much as moves, she dies - so he had better sit still and watch as they break her bones before his eyes. Justin looms around - he's surrounded by men with guns. Even in a full wolf-out, he'd be helpless here. One of the men takes out a bat, but before he can strike Justin's mom...

...a tentacle reaches out from the rafters up above and grabs the bat-wielding thug. It's Erin: and she dispatches the thug quickly, then moves over to the next one. Justin takes this as his cue and wolfs out. Gunfire erupts in the room as the boss tries to escape, but Stanley enters the room and tears out the man's throat, feeding to his heart's content. In seconds, every man in the room is dead... ...and Erin turns to look at Justin. "I'm so hot for you right now." Engorged with bloodlust, he kisses her hard, but Stanley breaks up the love connection. He has the clean-up crew at the ready. Eddie, the four-armed imp, touches Ma with one of his hands and knocks her out - he has psychic skills and wipes her memory. Harry, the cannibal, arrives to dispose of the bodies...and the fire demon? He's here to finish the job and burn this place to the ground. Justin looks around - what about all the money in this place?

Stanley just smiles - how does he think they fund all the amends they have to make?

Moments later, the crew stands outside the burning quonset hut -Stanley looks at Justin: that's the Thirteenth Step, kid. How'd it feel. Justin looks up at his sponsor...it didn't feel good, but it sure felt right.

### END OF ACT FOUR

## ACT FIVE

A month later. Justin wakes up in his bedroom - with Erin beside him. He looks at her, and she tells him not to worry, she's fine with this being a causal thing...for now. Besides, tonight, she has to seduce and kill a scumbag who beat his wife to death and got off on a technicality.

Downstairs, Ma tells Justin that the full moon is coming: he needs to fix the cage. Justin smiles - there's no need for that: he has it all under control.

At the roller rink, Justin has put Milkweed in control: not only are Milkweed's schemes to make the place more profitable being put into play, an army of remodelers is beautifying the family business...all paid in cash provided by the Thirteenth step.

That night, Justin squires Penny - fresh out of rehab - into a bus out of town...and then leaves a package at Trucker's doorstep...his wedding band and an envelope full of money.

Trucker doesn't know who left it there, but Justin watches from Stanley's car: amends have been made.

Stanley pulls away...but camera lingers to see the gang of werewolves previously seen: watching Justin. The leader of the pack looks at his crew, declaring that Justin is a traitor...and soon, he will be dead, along with the rest of his support group...

...and off the ominous portent...

END OF PILOT