

EDDINGTON

Written by

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- A COVID-19 Western -

**EXT. DESERT - EVENING**

We begin on a CU of a weathered, sunwashed old sign on the ground. "Say Yes to HOPE in 2016. VOTE TED GARCIA for Mayor."

In the BG, the bare, ravaged feet of a homeless man walks toward us. The feet arrive at us and, avoiding the sign, start walking left and we TRACK ALONGSIDE THEM. As we track, we begin BOOMING UP along his body, passing his hand, which clutches a dead pigeon. We finally arrive at a profile close-up of the man's MOUTH AND WET NOSE, glistening. We are tracking left with the mouth and nose, keeping them centered as the man rants to himself, spraying spit. This man has a cold (or worse). This is LODGE's mouth.

LODGE

Oh God, why did I let go?! I was holding her hand. I'm still...! So why wasn't it there??

(suddenly struck by a paranoid thought)

Did HE? Oh God. No. Why would he take her, why would he take her?

We stop tracking, allowing Lodge to pass, to reveal that we are centered on a giant sign for a data center development. "GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL." A logo for Solidgoldmagikarp in its corner.

LODGE (V.O.)

I ASKED you to help! Yes! But you got your box. Your little precious box? Little box of MUUUUD. You think it's yours? You think YOU did it?

From off-screen, Lodge throws the dead pigeon at the sign. *Thunk!*

LODGE (V.O.)

What if I take the *liights* out?! The lights-out tights-out *fiiights-out!* What now? You think I'm locked out? Look again, bitch. *I'm* the one inside! And I have SPIT you out!

Meanwhile, we have had just enough time to begin reading the sign before we RACK FOCUS past the sign to a HILL in the distance with a blinking red light.

**EXT. 5G TOWER - SAME TIME**

We have punched in from the last shot to a LONG LENS WIDE SHOT OF THE HILL, revealing the blinking red light to belong to a 5G tower. Lodge (small in the shot, profile) is walking along this ridge, from left to right.

LODGE (V.O.)

I'll make you a million dollars in one day. I will make you SEVEN million dollars in SEVEN days! The money's comin here. There's devils that can get you rich in two minutes if you just knowed what they wanted.  
Praise to leviathan! Praise to the idols that cannot see or hear or waaalk-walk!

**EXT. GRAND DESERT VISTA - NIGHT**

The edge of a hill sloping downward (away from us) in the foreground. Below is a glorious view of Eddington, surrounded by lonely NM desert. Lodge's back enters frame to walk down the hill, toward Eddington.

LODGE

More wicked boxes! And I know who set 'em here. The Lord God gonna SHOW His will to you that smile with the pride a pigs and all the pigs will listen when it's too late. The pigs and liars will burn forever when it's too late and all your boxes will be sand!

A TITLE HAS APPEARED OVER THIS: *LATE MAY, 2020*

Lodge disappears from view.

**INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - NIGHT**

We are on the back of a SHERIFF as he sits in the driver seat of a parked car, eating a burger. This is JOE CROSS (50), an upright man with friendly eyes. His phone, mounted on the dash, plays a Youtube video (*about convincing your partner to want to have children*). Outside is only darkness.

Headlights appear ahead (through the windshield), shining toward us. It is an oncoming vehicle, revealed to be a police car when its gumballs flare.

We cut to the POV of the oncoming **CAR** (a PUEBLO POLICE CAR). It drives up to the side of Joe's car, driver windows facing each other. Inside the Pueblo vehicle are two officers: an TRIBAL OFFICER (wearing an anti-5G baseball cap) at the wheel and OFFICER BUTTERFLY JIMENEZ (30s), a solidly built Native American officer (mask on chin), sitting passenger.

TRIBAL OFFICER

What's this?

JOE  
Can I help you?

TRIBAL OFFICER  
That's our question to you.

JOE  
Okay. Then no.

BUTTERFLY  
This is Pueblo.

JOE  
Uhhhh, no it's not. I was just at a residence right back there. That's Sevilla County.

The Tribal Officer starts rolling his window halfway up.

TRIBAL OFFICER  
Well, *that* might be. But right there is the border. This is Santa Lupe.

BUTTERFLY  
You guys don't ever come when we ask for your help--

TRIBAL OFFICER  
The real problem is that you're directing your breath at us without a mask--

JOE  
What is this? You drove up to me!

BUTTERFLY  
You're trespassing!

TRIBAL OFFICER	*	JOE	*
(admonishing)	*		*
Butterfly.	*		*
(to Joe)	*		*
People are dying of this	*		*
thing. One of our medicine	*	You sure that's not from the	*
men is in a coma. When we get	*	diabetes?	*
sick, we don't get your help.*	*		*
We don't get aid. We're on	*		*
our own. And your naked	*		*
mouth? Like a spit in our	*		*
face!	*		*

JOE (CONT'D)  
'S not even over this one's nose!

Joe is referring to Butterfly's mask, which barely covers his mouth.

JOE (CONT'D) \*  
 Listen to me: officers: \*

TRIBAL OFFICER \*  
 I *am* listening to you! Shut up! \*  
 When you're on our soil, you put on \*  
 your mask. \*

Joe just stares at him. \*

TRIBAL OFFICER (CONT'D) \*  
 Put on your mask, Sheriff. \*

Butterfly opens his door with the threat of stepping out. Joe \*  
 looks intimidated. \*

The stare-down is interrupted by the hiss of Joe's RADIO. \*

MICHAEL (V.O.) (ON RADIO) \*  
 04 to monitoring units. Got a call \*  
 into the office advising about a \*  
 disturbance. \*

Joe is still looking to Butterfly and the Tribal Officer. He \*  
 then takes the call: \*

JOE \*  
 08, 04. \*

MICHAEL (V.O.) \*  
 Hi sheriff. It's another disorderly \*  
 conduct with Lodge. Was gonna see \*  
 where Guy's at. \*

JOE \*  
 (staring at the Pueblo \*  
 police) \*  
 ...I'll take it. \*

Joe shifts his gear into Drive. He then puts a mask over his \*  
 face. The Pueblo Police Car drives on, satisfied. \*

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SAME TIME**

MICHAEL (25), a well-built Black deputy, is at his cubicle in \*  
 the sheriff's office. On his desk is a big book on \*  
 Cryptocurrency. \*

MICHAEL \*  
 Okay. You sure? It's at the mayor's. \*

A moment of silence.

MICHAEL (CONT'D) \*  
 Sheriff? \*

JOE (V.O.)

I *heard* you. What does that mean?  
His office? His house? The bar?

\*

MICHAEL

Bar... But I was about to see where  
Tooley's at.

\*

**INT. JOE'S CAR (MOVING) - SAME TIME**

Back to Joe, staring back out at the bushes where the Land Grant hostiles are poised for battle. He kicks the gear into reverse.

JOE

I'll take it.

Joe reverses.

\*

**EXT. ROAD - NIGHT**

Joe's car roars over a hill, passing a "Now Entering" SIGN for the town of *EDDINGTON, NM (Population 2,435, Elevation 6,072)*. The title "**EDDINGTON**" remains illuminated on the sign after the headlights pass it.

Beyond the sign holding our title: Eddington, a mile ahead, its lights twinkling in the otherwise desolate void.

The police cruiser disappears over the hill.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Two TEENAGED BOYS stand on a lonely sidewalk in the heart of town. They are ERIC GARCIA (19), Hispanic, and BRIAN (18), White. With masks on their chin, they share a joint while Brian watches a TEEN GIRL pointing to progressive captions (accompanied by DaBaby) on TikTok.

ERIC

Blonde bitches named Sarah think  
they're Rosa Parks.

BRIAN

If I added her on snap, what would I  
say?

\*

\*

ERIC

Take a pic of you with me. Show that  
you're a ally.

BRIAN

No, really.

ERIC

Send her a dick pic. See if she can  
guess what it is.

Joe's cruiser appears around the corner. Eric turns to covertly stub out the joint (and conceal it) as the cruiser peels up to the curb. Joe emerges from it.

ERIC (CONT'D)

No mask, bro?

JOE

Nah, I'm good. "Bro."

As Joe walks past them, making his way toward the other side of the street:

JOE (CONT'D)

(meaning the weed)

What's that smell, by the way?

They don't answer. "That's what I thought." Joe resumes walking toward the bar (called *GARCIA'S*) in the BG. Standing at the door is Lodge, who intermittently pulls at the locked door while yelling:

LODGE

Suckin up your spirit and spittin out money  
and puttin you to *sleep!* Guardin yer little  
cage from the *in-side!*

\*  
\*  
\*

**INT/EXT. GARCIA'S BAR - SAME TIME**

A WESTERN-STYLE BAR. This is the only bar in town, as well as its social nucleus. Mayoral campaign posters for Ted Garcia are especially prevalent here (one poster features a wholesome image of Ted and his son Eric, whom we just met).

Standing at the bar are three men. TED GARCIA (50s), a handsome Hispanic man wearing a KN-95. Beside him: his advisor WARREN (mid 40s), a Hispanic man with a mask on his chin. Sitting at the bar (6 ft apart) is PHIL (60s), a town council member. They are ignoring Lodge, who bangs away in the BG. On the wall is a banner that reads "*Mayoral Decree: 2 Take-Away Margaritas = Price Of 1! Every Tuesday and Saturday.*"

WARREN

And then, just the spillover: two, three  
hundred construction jobs, ongoing. The  
solar offset's a whole 'nother  
development--

\*

PHIL

Sure, but we let 'em build this -  
whatever it is, data complex - and they  
up and close it for whatever reason? We  
just gotta eat that?

TED

Phil: there's clawbacks on everything.  
Gross receipt taxes, payback a  
property. Ain't no wishing Tech away.  
Whether we jump on the boat now or get  
bulldozed, these guys are bringing a  
actual *infrastructure* for the future--

Joe, who has lingered outside the window through this, TAPS on  
the glass. Ted starts walking over, adding to Phil:

TED (CONT'D)

We can count on your "yay" tomorrow?

Phil wavers. Warren leans to whisper in his ear. Ted gets to  
the window, where Joe waits (and where Lodge is addressing  
him):

JOE

There a problem here?

Ted points incredulously to Lodge.

JOE (CONT'D)

He's outside.

TED

I had to lock the door to *keep* him out.  
It's been a whole hour like this.

JOE

(re: mask)

Can't understand you.

TED

Yes you can.

Ted pulls his mask to his chin, anyway.

TED (CONT'D)

He's disturbing the peace. Again. He's  
blockin the entrance.

Joe looks to Lodge, incredulous. We hear Lodge say "If you  
just drop your remote and steer yourSELF and work for me. Can  
you cut it off your brain?"

JOE

Whose entrance?? What're you even  
doin? It's take-away drinks only.

TED

Those are town council members inside.  
That's essential business.

JOE	*	TED (CONT'D)	*
Okay: you can't just call	*		*
whatever you want essential	*		*
business. This is a bar, not	*	It's a council meeting	*
Town Hall.	*	wherever council people	*
		<i>congregate</i> . It's the Mayor's	*
		Office when I'm inside.	*

LODGE (O.S.)  
 (showing money)  
 Four little days! Watch what this turns  
 into!

JOE	*	TED	*
Well, you're open then. You	*		*
got a payin customer bein	*		*
locked out, tryin to make a	*	Customer. Okay. He's	*
purchase.	*	aggressive. He's <i>dangerous</i> .	*
	*	He needs to be locked up.	*
Where d'you want him to go??	*		*
Tell me and I'll take him!	*		*
These are <i>your</i> streets you're	*		*
lockin down, all except this	*	A <i>la vez!</i> They're YOUR	*
bar!	*	streets! To make safe! AND	*
Not when I'm	*	you never have a mask on!	*
outside, talkin to you	*		
through glass, that's right--	*		

Lodge has managed to shake the door OPEN. The sound of the inside knob hitting the floor and rolling. Lodge is now inside.

PHIL (O.S.)  
 Shit!! He don't have a mask.

Joe runs in to go after Lodge, who reaches over the bar to grab a bottle. Phil and Warren have retreated to the corner.

LODGE  
 Look, I paid! I paid! Arrogance!

Lodge is referring to a torn five dollar bill (stained brown with dry blood) that he slapped onto the counter. Winded, he COUGHS.

PHIL  
 He's coughin!

Joe seizes Lodge and tries to forcibly usher him out. Lodge resists mightily. It is messy.

LODGE  
 HE SEES THIS!

JOE	*	LODGE (CONT'D)	*
Ugggh, Jesus, your breath...	*	I GOT A HOLE IN MY TOOTH!	*

Lodge's struggle intensifies until he and Joe are on the ground. As they wrestle clumsily, Joe sees Eric behind the window, **FILMING** this on his phone. A goofy smile lights his face.

Lodge now gets the upper hand, pins Joe's back to the ground and defensively slaps and hits Joe crazily about the face. Joe struggles to grab Lodge's hands.

LODGE (CONT'D)	*	JOE (CONT'D)	*
Think you can hurt me?!	*	Offa me! Off!	*

Lodge scrambles, jamming his foot into Joe's stomach and launching himself toward the door. He runs out.

LODGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(frightening force)  
PIGS!!!! You'll SEE what I am...

Joe drags himself off the ground, his shoulder hurt. He pulls an **INHALER** from his pocket to take a puff. As he does so, Ted sees Lodge's left-behind five dollar bill on the bar-top.

TED  
Fuckin left his dirty-ass money...

JOE  
(tears in his eyes)  
Satisfied?

TED  
How'm I gonna be satisfied? What do  
you think you just did?

Joe trudges to the door, dusting his clothes, rubbing his twisted shoulder. (Does Joe go back and snatch the money off the counter?)

**EXT. GARCIA'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe emerges to see Lodge up the road. He then turns the other way, walking past Eric, who still wields his phone.

JOE  
(with disdain)  
You get your little Instagram there?

ERIC  
(mockingly)  
Yeah, I got my little "Instagram."

Joe continues off.

**INT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

A framed photo portrait of a severe, uniformed **SHERIFF** (60s) sitting upright. This was **RICHMOND**.

It is mounted onto the wall of a FOYER with an incense holder at its base and a miniature memorial garden (small plants) underneath. A candle burns beside the garden. Snoring off-screen, as well as a low-volume speech playing from a laptop:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

- let's talk about the number 56 for a minute! Jesuit-educated Gavin Newsom said to California as he became the first governor to lock down his state, quote- "56 percent of you will get corona in 8 weeks," which is exactly 56 days. Of course they keep looking at that lab in Wuhan China, and if you look at when that lab in Wuhan was established, it was 1956. Of course that's the year Tom Hanks was born, the first celebrity to *get* the virus! Mr *Sleepless In Seattle*.

An offscreen door opens, letting in porch light and illuminating the portrait. Joe trudges in, holding the flower bouquet. He walks to the **LIVING ROOM**, where the fold-out couch has been converted to a bed, taking up half the room. One wall is dominated by embroidery and handmade dolls. If the art is on the amateurish side, it is also evidence of a teeming and perhaps disturbed imagination.

DAWN (70s), a strong woman in a nightgown, sleeps - and snores - on the fold-out mattress. On the coffee table is an open laptop, which is plugged into an old printer that holds a dense stack of paper. A video on 4Chan plays on the laptop:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

This is Gematria. Ancient practice of coding numbers into words, it's a simple practice, it's elementary--

Joe pauses the video and tiptoes past. He goes to the kitchen to cut the stems off the flowers.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Joe enters to find LOUISE (late 30s), a beautiful but depressed woman, sitting on the bed, her back to us. She's putting the finishing touches on a handmade DOLL. Penetrating it over and over with a sewing needle. Focused. A VIDEO plays on her phone: a handsome man with many tattoos, named VERNON JEFFERSON PEAK, addresses the camera. *As with the living room, handmade dolls adorn one wall.*

VERNON (ON VIDEO)

So, how many coincidences need to occur before we call this pattern a design--

Louise, seeing Joe, TURNS OFF her phone. Ignoring that, Joe sets the flowers down on a countertop.

JOE

For you.

LOUISE

Oh, they're beautiful. Thank you.

Joe begins to disrobe.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Was it anything? At the tower?

JOE

False alarm. Wasn't my jurisdiction.

LOUISE

You were gone a while, then.

JOE

Got another call. Some nonsense at the bar.

Louise becomes alert - almost pale - at the mention of the bar.

JOE (CONT'D)

Not with Ted. Just Lodge again.  
(off Louise's lack of recognition)  
The homeless.

LOUISE

You didn't say Ted's name to mama?

JOE

Why'd I say his name if it wasn't him? She's asleep anyhow.

Joe finishes undressing. He sees a NEW EMBROIDERY on the table: an image of a woman's face framed by a man's fist (instead of hair) and a man's silhouette in each eye, instead of pupils.

JOE (CONT'D)

What's this one about?

LOUISE

I dunno. Just a image I had.

JOE

("I like it!")  
Very weird!

It's clear that Joe doesn't know how to talk about Louise's art, but is eager to be supportive.

LOUISE

I sold two more from the new dolls.

JOE

Incredible! Which ones?

LOUISE  
Spider-legs and girl-sleeping-on-tongue.

JOE  
Amazing! That's wonderful, Weez.

Joe sees a stack of printouts from the internet on the dresser. Blogs/articles with titles like "A *History Of The CRIMES Of The FEDERAL RESERVE. The Sinking Of The Titanic Was No Accident.*"

JOE (CONT'D)  
Can't she just email you?

LOUISE  
She does, but then she checks my phone to see if I opened 'em.

JOE  
I told you to put a passcode.

He climbs into bed, curls up to Louise. She subtly shifts over.

JOE (CONT'D)  
You remember the deal when she moved in?... About it bein 'til April?

LOUISE  
You remember there's still a pandemic? I don't like it either. She took my work space.

JOE  
I told you I'd set her up in a place nearby. If she was a invalid, that'd be one thing, but you even said it feels like she's watchin you all the time.

LOUISE  
I said it's like I'm bein watched all the time. Not just by her.

JOE  
Maybe it *feels* that way, rabbit, but I promise it's not. I promise.

He extends a peace offering of a kiss. She submits to the kiss, but not with great enthusiasm.

JOE (CONT'D)  
(seductively)  
Okay?

He tries again. She gives him a longer kiss to appease him. His hand strokes along her body to reach her breast.

LOUISE  
Joe...

He has stopped. She looks him directly in the eyes. A message is sent. He retracts his hand.

JOE

Sorry.

LOUISE	*	JOE (CONT'D)	*
<i>I'm sorry.</i>	*	No no...	*

Joe turns away. He then goes for his phone and starts scrolling through Facebook. First up, an article: "*Many Towns in NM Have Seen Zero Cases of COVID-19, So Why Are We Condemning Their Businesses to Death?*" Joe clicks "like".

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I *am* getting better.

JOE

What?

He turns to her.

JOE (CONT'D)

I know you are.

He kisses her. They go to bed.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING (START OF DAY 2)**

Joe wakes groggily in an empty bed. Through the wall, Dawn and Louise are heard arguing in the kitchen.

DAWN (O.S.)

Please: ask yourself: why are we using Zoom now instead a Skype? What even is it? And it appears right at the same time as Deepfake? AND lockdown!

LOUISE (O.S.)		DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)	*
So why're you on the computer then, mama??		'Cause it's too late! But at least I'm <i>conscious</i> .	*

Joe deflates. Grabs an INHALER from his bedside table and takes a puff.

**INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER**

Dawn stands at the sink, washing dishes. She lectures Louise, who sits at the table in her nightgown.

DAWN

You think this is any different from them puttin fluoride in the water? Buildin up the iron in our bodies? Iron's what kills people.

Joe enters.

JOE  
Hot water got all used up.

DAWN  
(to Joe, re: laptop)  
Did you hear about this? Clade X?

JOE  
I'm sure, through the wall.

DAWN  
In 2018 - this is not secret, please,  
look it up - they did a whole pandemic  
modeling exercise at Johns Hopkins.

Joe pours himself some coffee.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
Now how d'you simulate a pandemic two  
years before the pandemic even  
happens? Please: ask yourselves that!

JOE  
(helping self to breakfast)  
Because that's what these places do.  
They simulate a thing to work out a  
response.

DAWN  
Okay. Well, last year they did a whole  
'nother simulation, Event 201 -  
(reading on laptop)  
- "to prepare government and health  
officials and business people" -  
*business people!* - "for the breakout  
of a unprecedented virus", and not  
*just* a virus, "a coronavirus." They  
used that word in 2019!

Dawn picks up the laptop to bring it over to Louise.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
Please just read this all the way  
before you argue.

JOE  
You need to get your own laptop, Dawn.

DAWN  
Right. When you never used this once.

LOUISE  
(taking laptop)  
You still need to read what I sent  
*you*.

DAWN  
 (already annoyed)  
 I did.

LOUISE  
 You said you only started it.

DAWN  
 Yeah, it got right to the point.  
 About the oncologist.

LOUISE	*	DAWN (CONT'D)	*
<i>Pediatric</i> oncologist. Who was*			*
molesting his children with *		"Molesting."	*
<i>cancer</i> by the <i>hundreds</i> . *		They use that word	*
		as a catch-all.	*

DAWN (CONT'D)  
 (trying to not condescend)  
 Sweetie. Just be careful. There're  
 whole industries whose only point is  
 to tangle up the real stories with  
 the fakes ones. And distract us.

Louise, stifling frustration and avoiding conflict,  
 grudgingly starts to read Dawn's article.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
 In a way it's a wonderful time.  
 Everything comin out. Your daddy was  
 up against all these things - the  
 corruption. It was just more buried.

Louise steels herself at the mention of "daddy." Dawn has  
 made herself sad by bringing him to mind. (Joe sits down with  
 them.)

DAWN (CONT'D)  
 (reaching out)  
 With this quarantine, it does feel even  
 harder, doesn't it? Not havin him.  
 Losin our house.

Louise nods, ignoring. Joe sits with his plate as Louise  
 closes her eyes and clasps her hands, as if in prayer. Beat.  
 Dawn looks incredulous. "Is she saying grace?"

JOE  
 (noticing she looks tired)  
 Feelin okay, Lou?

LOUISE  
 (eyes still closed)  
 I'm outta sleepin pills.

Joe opens his phone. He goes to *The Albuquerque Journal* website and finds an article about different mayors supporting further mandates set forth by the governor.

DAWN

You were at Ted Garcia's last night?

Joe looks at Louise: "Why would you tell her?"

LOUISE

I said you just went to the bar.

He shakes his head in deprecation and returns to his phone.

DAWN

It was *his* complaint, right? He rings his little bell and you come runnin.

Dawn walks to the photo of Richmond and replaces the candle which has almost melted to the base. (This flame never goes out; even when it's replaced, one must light a new candle before blowing out the old one.) Meanwhile, Joe takes Louise's hand under the table. She smiles at him. They try to focus on their breakfast.

DAWN (CONT'D)

The fact that you can just stroll on over there, business as usual... Whadayall say to each other when you get to 'im? "Hi?" "How are ya?"

LOUISE

Mama: that's enough.

DAWN

What is?

(to Joe)

Where even *is* your anger? That's *my* question. People lettin him get away with it is how he got this far.

(leaning to catch Joe's eyes)

That's your wife, Sheriff. And people're gonna vote him right back in 'cause nobody stopped him at the start.

(then to Louise)

Where's *your* anger, Lou?

Close on Louise. The anger is there.

DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hello??

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) - MORNING**

Joe drives past a lone shuttered flower store (with the sign "CLOSED FOR NOW! STAY SAFE!") to approach town. Playing from his car radio (bluetooth linked to phone):

RADIO VOICE (V.O.)

- more reported cases in New Mexico  
prisons than in all but four counties  
in the state, yet these counts are  
dumped into the state totals every day!  
Why on earth? They're in jail!

Up ahead is a GROCERY STORE with a queue of seven masked people, all lined up (6 ft apart) against the building. At the entrance, an OLD MAN (unmasked) tries to enter, but a MASKED EMPLOYEE seizes him by the arm.

JOE

The hell?

Activated, Joe turns off his radio, flashes his gumballs and turns to stop in the middle of the road (outside the entrance). He steps out, instinctively masking up.

JOE (CONT'D)

Whoa whoa, hey! What's goin on? Fred?

EMPLOYEE

He can't go in without a mask, sheriff.

JOE

Says who? You can't handle him like that. Get your hands off. Let 'im in.

FRED

I can't breathe in the mask.

EMPLOYEE

Sheriff, it's the mandate. Isn't it? Since last week.

JOE

There's a way to do it. There's a way to treat people. Let 'im in.

Fred hesitantly steps inside. One person half-heartedly utters "*Sheriff, what the heck...*"

JOE (CONT'D)

What? He can't breathe in the mask. You gonna make him starve too? I can't breathe in it neither!

Joe then has a realization. Pause. He takes off his mask. Beat. He goes to the back of the queue, leaving his car in the road, and gets in line. Against the wall is a giant "Re-Elect Ted Garcia" banner. Everyone stands, uncertain.

**INT. GROCERY STORE - MINUTES LATER**

Joe, unmasked, steps into the store. He watches over Fred who scans the aisle nearest to the produce. The eyes of the other shoppers (all masked) are glued to them. The mood is tense.

Having made sure Fred isn't being bothered, Joe walks past the first aisle, only to notice TED looking through the cereals at the other end. Joe can't believe it.

JOE  
(to self)  
Gotta be kiddin me.

**MOMENTS LATER**

Joe stands in the medicine aisle. Holding melatonin, he pulls SLEEPING PILLS from the wall. Suddenly the sound of hushed commotion near the front of the store.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
GET OUT! OUT!

Startled, Joe goes back to the start of the aisle to look toward the entrance, where he sees Fred being ushered out of the store by the masked OWNER, leaving behind his GROCERY CART. The WOMAN who screamed is pointing at the door, making sure he leaves.

FRED  
(as he leaves)  
I can't breathe in it!

WOMAN  
That's liable to get even worse when  
you're in line for a ventilator!

A few masked customers clap their approval. One of them (a large, masked man) is right behind Joe. Joe looks at him, disgusted. Oblivious, the man burps into his mask.

Joe, hearing feet in front of him, turns to see the Store Owner approaching.

OWNER  
'Scuse me, Sheriff. I *am* sorry, but you  
need a mask if you're gonna be in here.

JOE  
Yeah I'm good.

Joe notices someone filming them from the end of an aisle.

TED (O.S.)

Joe--

Joe turns sharply to see Ted behind him (and behind the burping man).

TED (CONT'D)

If a healthy person *with* a mask gets exposed--

JOE

A mask like *that*?

Joe gestures to an ELDERLY WOMAN talking to a cashier with her mask pulled halfway down (so they can hear her as she screams). The Owner goes over to her to politely ask her to put the mask all the way on.

TED

If a healthy person with a mask gets exposed to a COVID-positive person *without* one, they got a 70 percent chance a catchin it -

JOE

Man, you guys got the best numbers.

What's 1.5 percent a nothin? And what's it gonna change to tomorrow?

TED (CONT'D)

- but if we ALL wear 'em,  
\* chance a transmission goes  
down to 1.5 percent.

\*

TED (CONT'D)

Actually Joe, this is simple *because*:  
There Is A *State Mandate*.

JOE

Which is *Not Enforceable*.

TED

It *is* enforceable! Made so by the Governor and the Department a Health.

JOE

Okay: lemme help you *and* the Governor with this: you're talkin about policy. You don't want me in here without a mask? Change the law! County commissioners are right here in Eddington. Put it on the agenda and get yourself a county ordinance prohibiting ME, Fred and the rest of us from livin our life without a mask. But until then...!

Joe, feeling the eyes on him, looks back to see an employee starting to unload Fred's left-behind grocery cart.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey. Is that Fred's? Leave that alone.  
(or better yet)  
Bring it here.

The employee, confused, starts wheeling it toward Joe. Joe then grabs some nearby sewing needles and thread.

JOE (CONT'D)

(re: needle and thread)  
You know who these are for?

Joe brings this to the nearest cashier. As he does, Joe adds to Ted:

JOE (CONT'D)

The way you be Mayor is ya build your town up. You don't hold its head down and stick a knife up its ass.

**EXT. GROCERY STORE - MINUTES LATER**

Joe walks out of the store, holding two bags. Fred is standing outside, distraught, taking manic photos of the grocery store on his phone.

Joe walks up to Fred and hands him a bag of groceries (after pulling out a six-pack of beer and a bottle of water).

FRED

What's this?

JOE

You have yourself a nice day.

Fred is stunned. As Joe walks off:

FRED

Sheriff! Wait! A pitcher! A pitcher!

Fred runs up to Joe to take a SELFIE together. Joe smiles for the photo and then continues off.

FRED (CONT'D)

THANK you! THANK you, sheriff!  
DECENCY!!! DECENCY!!!

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS**

Joe gets into his car, which he had left in the middle of the road outside the grocery store, and starts driving. Fraught. Wavering between feelings of humiliation and pride.

His phone DINGS with a notification. He has been tagged in a photo on Facebook. He opens it to see that it's the selfie (that was just taken), posted by FRED BROWN. The caption: "One *DECENT* man left in Eddington!!!! Thank you, sherrif!!!!"

Joe smiles. Then a THOUGHT strikes him. Hold on his face, and then **CUT TO:**

**A PHONE CAMERA RECORDING.** The phone mounted on the car dash. Joe, still in his car, speaks directly to us.

JOE

Ladies, gentlemen, what-have-ya - this is Joe Cross, Sheriff a Sevilla county, and FIRST off: allow me to SAY: I'm asthmatic - I know, who cares - but I *do* find it very difficult to breathe in these masks. *Second* off: there is no COVID in Eddington, there is no COVID in Sevilla county, yet a state mandate - pushed by our mayor and *his* governor - says *I* cannot shop for food without riskin a asthma *attack* and you can't exercise your freedom a choice without gettin publicly shamed! Because what I just saw - just a moment ago...*real* cruelty, but worse: commonplace. Not only not frowned upon, but applauded? I just... *How did we get here?!* And what's more: is it *worth* it? Is it worth it to combat some virus that's not even here at the cost a bein at war with your neighbors and your family, because that's what a community is. It's a *family*. Because you can ruin another man's day or you can *do* the right thing and *be* kind and you can FIX his heart. We need to FIX each other's hearts.

(beat)

And that's why I'm runnin for Mayor. Mayor of Eddington. I served this county as Sheriff for seven years and it'll be my honor to serve you as Mayor. And I will *continue* to fight for your rights, even against the government if that's what that means! Don't fall for the lies. 'S time to reopen our businesses. COVID may be a problem, but it sure ain't our problem. Thank you super-duper very much.

**EXT. EDDINGTON SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING**

Joe parks in front of the sheriff's office. Across the street stands LODGE, head tilted up, staring directly into the beating sun.

\*

Joe gets out of his car, holding a bottle of water. He reels back to toss it to Lodge. \*

JOE

Hey! \*

Joe throws the bottle and it lands at Lodge's feet. Confused, Lodge turns to Joe. \*

LODGE

Yeah right! \*

Joe enters the SHERIFF'S OFFICE. It is a large space with a holding cell in the back. There are three main desks. The empty one is Joe's. The others belong to MICHAEL, the Black deputy we met last night (his web browser displays "*Bitcoin Halving: How it works and Why it matters*"), and GUY (30), a self-serious, swaggering White deputy. His uniform is pristine and he sits upright. On one wall: a framed photo of Richmond, Joe's deceased father-in-law (the same man memorialized in Joe's foyer). Beside that is a memorial photo of a fallen 45 YEAR OLD BLACK OFFICER (Michael's father). Beside *that*, a poster for identifying fentanyl. \*

Michael and Guy, who was just watching (probably re-watching) Joe's announcement, look to him expectantly. \*

GUY

Sheriff? This for real? \*

JOE

You for real? We gotta make up for lost time. \*

TEEN BOY

Okay, here comes another one. Three cops for one kid. I'm not talkin to anybody else. \*

Joe has gone to a CHALKBOARD. He wheels it to the center of the room. As he does, he sees an impaired TEEN BOY in the holding cell. \*

JOE

Who's this? \*

MICHAEL

Day-drinker. O.W.I. \*

TEEN BOY

I'm not gonna tell you any more because 1: I don't have to, and 2: \*

JOE

(writing on board) \*

How much you drink, kid? \*

TEEN BOY

Honestly: low-key: not enough for  
you to put me in here.

MICHAEL

He refused to take the field test.

Joe has written at the top of the chalkboard "SLOGAN IDEAS."  
His E looks like a Disney E.

JOE

Let's get goin on a sign. One a you  
has Photoshop, right?

MICHAEL

My uncle does, but I think it expired.

JOE

Un-expire it and get yourself to  
Kinko's in Las Cruces. "Joe Cross for  
Mayor." Guy, you can draw, right?

GUY

I can, but just stick cartoons.

MICHAEL

I can draw!

JOE

Guy: draw me up a man wearin a face  
mask but he got X's for eyes 'cause  
he's dead.

(off their confusion)

Okay, this is what we're doin now.  
It's the same thing. You boys're  
bein deputized. This is our  
campaign office.

TEEN BOY

(turning emotional)

Look: I know I made a mistake. Okay? I  
know what you guys are tryin'a do.

Joe has walked to Guy's desk and leans over.

JOE

Okay, before I forget: Guy: do me a  
favor. Can you get a friend to buy one  
more a Louise's dolls? I'll pay you  
straight back.

Guy goes to an AMATEUR WEBSITE featuring all of Louise's dolls  
and embroidery. They are priced at either \$60 or \$80.

GUY

Yes can do. Which one?

JOE

One of the new ones. Snake people  
eating people-people.

\*

GUY

Is sixty bucks right? Should he  
barter, to make it seem real?

\*

\*

\*

JOE

You don't *barter*. Pay what it says.  
Comment that you love it.

\*

\*

Meanwhile Joe is TEXTING Louise: "*Will be home late tonight.  
Got big news! Trust me.*"

\*

MICHAEL

Sheriff: real quick:

\*

Michael pulls up a photo on his phone of a TARGET SHEET  
bearing five bullet holes. Joe walks over to him.

\*

JOE

What is that? Three hundred yards?

\*

MICHAEL

Three-fifty. No scope. I still got the  
AR out for practice.

\*

\*

JOE

(walking off)

Beautiful. But y'ain't shit 'til ya  
beat mine.

\*

Joe is referring to a TARGET SHEET displayed on the wall,  
five bullets in the head. He passes it on his way to his  
desk.

\*

\*

The PHONE rings and Michael answers.

MICHAEL

Sheriff's Department.  
(to Joe)  
For you, Sheriff.

\*

\*

\*

Joe sits at his desk.

\*

GUY

If you win, Sheriff, what's that mean  
for here?

\*

\*

JOE

You'll be gettin a bigger budget,  
I'll tell ya that.

\*

\*

Joe answers the phone. He MUTES it momentarily to tell Guy:

JOE (CONT'D)

Guy. We gotta get goin on signatures.  
Get ourself on the ballot.

Guy spins himself in a circle in his chair. Joe UN-MUTES the phone: \*

JOE (CONT'D)

Sheriff's Department!

TED (V.O.) (PHONE)

Joe, I'm outside your office.

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Joe steps out to find Ted across the street. Joe approaches with his phone sticking out of his breast pocket.

JOE

(re: phone in his pocket)  
I'm recording this. Fair warning. \*

TED

That really necessary?

JOE

You're a public servant.

TED

So are you.

JOE

So I think it's better if we just keep it  
all out on the table. I got nothin to  
hide, you got nothin to hide.

Joe arrives near him at the other end of the street.

TED

Okay. Well... First I just wanted to  
apologize - if I offended you this  
mornin, or last night--

JOE

No apology needed. You didn't.

TED

Okay. 'Cause if I *did*...then that might  
help me understand.

JOE

Your term is up and your town is dead.  
How can I help you unnerstand?

Beat. Ted bites down his anger to offer, too sensitively:

TED

Look. We never talked about it. The whole...*whatnot*...

Joe plays dumb.

TED (CONT'D)

Can we just talk? The two of us?

JOE

We are.

TED

(dropping pleasantries)

Okay: then maybe I'll just talk to your video. Ask where all your deputies went.

JOE

Then why don't you ask your Governor about her little Catch And Release policy. If it wasn't for that, maybe I'd be able to *keep* my deputies. *And* the people we *arrest*!

TED

I know one of 'em got fired for excessive force. Another was FORCED to quit by a Youtube first amendment auditor.

JOE

Yeah. The same auditor that drove away your worthless police department. Now I'm servicing the whole county!

\*  
\*

TED

Your Undersheriff died from a FENTANYL overdose--

Ted has crossed a line.

JOE

From HANDLING fentanyl! He confiscated it without gloves! It was devastating!

TED (CONT'D)

Your captain AND your chief deputy took jobs in Rio Rancho! You can't keep your own office goin, but you're gonna take over mine?? Leave your mess here and make a whole new one?

\*  
\*  
\*

Joe is livid.

TED (CONT'D)

And I *do* wonder if this is 'cause a the person that's name you might not want me sayin on camera.

That does it. Joe pulls out his phone and frames the video camera on Ted.

JOE

TED (CONT'D)

So then say her name on camera, then! You're the one that wouldn't want that!

\* I do think - I think it's 'cause a that.

\*

\*

JOE (CONT'D)

Well, you don't think too GOOD, Ted. But here's what *I* think. I used to think you were some big deal. But now I can say flat-out to your face that I am a much better human being than you. And I know that I will be a better, stronger and more honest *leader* than you. So let's just give it to the voters.

\*

Beat. Ted laughs to himself ("I tried") and walks away.

TED

You're makin a mistake.

JOE

Is that why you ran here all panicked?

TED

I came to save you from embarrassment.

JOE

(mock-touched)

Gee wiz, I'm tearin up!

TED

You made a mistake.

Ted's eyes are buzzing with anxiety/rage as he walks away.

WE CUT FROM THIS TO:

A glitchy image of TED, eyes still buzzing, fills the screen. There are FIVE OTHER PEOPLE on the call. (To the side of the screen is a CHAT thread, which has citizens chiming in - mostly in confusion.)

TED (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)  
 We're not rural, we're *frontier*. That means we're on our own and local revenue won't get us through--

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN cuts in, her image taking over the screen. This is PAULA.

PAULA	*	TED (CONT'D)	*
What local revenue?	*		*
Everything's closed!	*	But this is gonna actually	*
		make things BETTER, and not	*
		just for us! Cloud-computin, -	*

A TEXT MESSAGE appears in the corner of the screen from Warren: "*bring up the park*"

TED (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)  
 - remote learning, telehealth, puttin in a brand new *park*--

PAULA (ON ZOOM)  
 And forfeittin 30 years a property taxes?! How are we just skimming right past that?

TED (ON ZOOM)	*	PAULA (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)	*
When it brings this level of	*		*
investment? Makin us grow,	*		*
giving us a future, bringin	*		*
in jobs? Hell yes!	*	What jobs? It's all gonna be	*
		servers!	*

A TEXT MESSAGE from Warren has appeared: "*dont be so defensive she sounsd crazy. just laugh*"

PAULA (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)  
 And who even is it? Some anonymous Tech company that's name you won't say 'cause a some NDA you signed, but you want a "Yay" from everyone here--

COUNCIL MEMBER (ON ZOOM)	*	PAULA (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)	*
He explained this already,	*		*
Paula.	*		*
	*	Explained what? Why doesn't	*
	*	he explain about the water	*
	*	and energy these data centers	*
	*	consume when we're in a	*
TED (ON ZOOM)	*	drought??	*
Yeah. And we're--	*	Yes exactly.	*
We're <i>always</i> in a	*		*
drought. And we're makin up	*		*
for the energy and water with*	*	Okay, so - so let's	*
the solar we're bringin in.	*	talk about the solar!	*

**INTERCUT / INTO TED'S HOME OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Ted sits at his desk, facing his computer. Warren is visible on the couch in the other room (laptop on lap), watching Ted.

TED	*	PAULA (ON ZOOM)	*
No: I'm sorry: you know what?*			*
Call the question, Phil. We	*		*
gotta just call this.	*	Excuse me??	*

PHIL, whom we met at Ted's bar, now takes over.

PHIL (ON ZOOM)	*	PAULA (ON ZOOM) (CONT'D)	*
Okay, uh: item 50. Third	*		*
readin of a resolution	*		*
approvin a series of six	*	No! What??	*
industrial revenue bonds for	*		*
the construction of a	*		*
proposed hyperscale data	*		*
campus in Eddington, New	*	Excuse me? A question needs	*
Mexico...	*	to get seconded and I am the	*
	*	agreed-upon Chairwoman!	*
	*	And we need to ALL be present	*
Point of order! Council	*	for our votes --	*
members MUTE theirselves until	*		*
it's their turn to speak, and	*	Nuh-uh! No you don't! Not	*
I now call the question!	*	without it being seconded!	*

During that, Ted has muted himself on Zoom to urgently ask Warren:

TED	*	WARREN	*
Can we not fuckin shut this	*		*
bitch up??	*	Try and chill.	*

PAULA (ON ZOOM)  
 Do I have to point to Schott Solar? 16 billion dollars in grants, in the garbage! Those were the same kinda high interest bonds you're talkin about here!

**EXT. TED'S HOUSE - DECK - LATE AFTERNOON**

Ted's front deck, in front of the house.

Warren tosses a DRAFT OF A BILL onto Ted's lap. Its title: *"Consolidated Report On Tech Advancements/Innovations In Global Communication/Remote Learning/Telehealth Programs For Employment Growth, Improved Quality Of Life, And Accelerated Pandemic Relief"*, followed by a pen. Warren raises his phone and trains his camera on Ted.

WARREN  
 Mask over nose. Like you're writing.

Ted adjusts his mask and pretends to be jotting notes onto the bill as Warren takes photos.

WARREN (CONT'D)

Maybe actually *read* that while you're reading. You're forgetting half of it.

Ted nods, "yeah yeah."

WARREN (CONT'D)

Don't treat these things light. After this, whatever else you wanna do as mayor: great. Pleasure yourself. But the money that's gonna be *funding* it happens to believe we're inviting *them*, not that we need to be convinced.

Warren sees that Ted is distracted. He points to the bill.

WARREN (CONT'D) * <i>That's</i> where you need to * focus. Not your dumbass * Sheriff. Just the shit with * his wife's mental health: we * shut him right down-- *	TED * I said already: I don't wanna * go there. I meant that. *	* * * * * * * *
---	---	--------------------------------------

Warren just looks at Ted, frustrated.

WARREN (CONT'D) * Okay. So you fucked her. 'S a * small town. *	TED (CONT'D) * No I did NOT. We went out a * coupla times twenty years * ago, she was weird, she * wouldn't let me <i>touch</i> her, so * I dropped it. Then outta * nowhere her wackadoo ma came * after me like six months * later when she <i>apparently</i> got * pregnant. *	* * * * * * * * * *
---	--	--

Eric has emerged from the front door in the BG to approach, pass them, and then approach a CAR in the BG.

TED (CONT'D)

(quietly to Warren)

And that was six months *after* I never touched her. See how it sounds, though? And her mom who *is* crazy is very online.

In the BG, Eric pulls mail from the box (on his way to the car).

WARREN

(pulling out a gift)

Governor says "thank you," by the way.

Warren hands Ted the gift. It's a box. He opens it to find a silver watch. An engraving on its back reads "*From a Grateful Governor to a Marvelous Mayor. Here's to a brighter future!*"



TED	*	ERIC (CONT'D)	*
Good for her. What am I	*		*
s'posed to do with that? You	*	(starts getting in car)	*
wanna send her a letter? She	*	I'm just sayin. Okay,	*
ain't dropped us any pins	*	whatever, who cares?!	*
lately.	*		*

As Eric closes the car door, Ted sees that he's holding mail.

TED (CONT'D)  
 And wash your little hands! COVID  
 stays alive on paper for 5 weeks!

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Michael, Joe and Guy watch TED'S CAMPAIGN VIDEO (posted one month ago) on Michael's computer. Michael stands behind Joe, his phone poised. (As they watch, Joe will point to details that they should emulate for *their* video. He's mostly engaging with Michael. Guy notices.)

TED (ON VIDEO)  
*When my son and me woke up one morning to find that my wife, his mother, had abandoned us - without a note, without a word - we were devastated. All hope seemed lost. But we had our community to lift us up. We had Eddington.*

JOE  
 Beautiful.

TED (ON VIDEO)  
*And when I first ran for Mayor, it's 'cause I wanted to give back to the town that has given me so much. Since then, we've helped the Governor in her mission to start buildin a 100% clean energy economy and sell that clean energy to other states, we're working to provide homes to new technologies and create new, reliable, secure jobs.*

JOE	*	TED (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)	*
Yeah, just not for your	*		*
actual voters.	*	And as we walk towards a new	*
		term, I'm ready to continue	*
		LEADING our town. And to	*
		continue fightin this	*
		pandemic and the racial and	*
		economic inequities that	*
		COVID only made worse.	*

The video moves into a montage of Ted working with the community, bumping elbows with people on the street, taking a bite of a local taco (and putting his mask back on to chew), and playing piano in the middle of Main Street.

Also: an interracial, masked couple "kissing" and an unplanned passerby yelling "you the man" at a surprised Ted.

JOE (CONT'D)

Racial inequities? The fuck is he doin to fight that?

MICHAEL

Ain't he Hispanic?

JOE

Exactly. In New Mexico? Fuckin conquistadors?

(points to smiling Black Man shaking Ted's hand in video)

Where'd he get the black dude? That guy's not local.

\*  
\*

The video is wrapping up.

TED (ON VIDEO)

*Re-elect Ted Garcia for mayor. We can't go back. We can only go better.*

End of video. Joe turns to Michael.

\*

JOE

I'll race you to come up with a better slogan.

GUY

I already put up six on the board.

Guy points to the "ideas" board, covered in uninspired slogans. Joe starts toward it.

\*  
\*

MICHAEL

How 'bout: wait: theirs goes "We can't go back, we can only go better." So we go "yeah, we can't go back! But we can learn by our mistakes."

Joe considers it. Likes it. Claps his hands with excitement. Starts writing it down.

\*  
\*

JOE

Yes!

MICHAEL

We can use the video to get county residents on the blockchain, too. Get 'em motivated.

<p>GUY *                  I got in with the city clerk,*                  too. We need a treasurer and *                  a chairperson and I already *                  got 43 names on the petition.*                  We need 150. *</p>	<p>MICHAEL (CONT'D) *                  *                  *                  *                  *                  *                  *                  *</p>	<p>And Sheriff:                  Sheriff: I ran through the                  council meetins that're all                  on Youtube. Lookit this.</p>
---	--	--

Joe hands the marker to Guy, tells him to finish writing the slogan. He then walks over, covertly TEXTING Louise: "Baby? How we doing?" \*

Joe looks up to see that Michael has pulled up a council zoom video on Youtube. Joe gestures for him to hit PLAY.

<p>PHIL (ON ZOOM) *                  Council member Garcia moves *                  approval, seconded by council*                  member Sandoval-- *</p>	<p>PAULA (ON ZOOM) *                  *                  *                  *                  *                  *</p>	<p>No!  <i>The man that's forcing this                  item through is the man                  that's turned off his                  people's lights in the middle                  of a global health pandemic!</i></p>
---	---	---

**EXT. JUANITA'S RESTAURANT - EVENING**

Joe and Michael walk up to the town's most popular restaurant, *Juanita's*. (Guy goes off down the other street with flyers and a clipboard in hand. Does he stop someone to get their signature?) A banner over the restaurant reads "As of May 28, *Operating At 50% Capacity!*" A masked Latino Man standing at the side gate hands take-away food to customers. Paula's dialogue from the zoom recording continues over this. \*

PAULA (V.O.)  
 (continuing from last scene)  
 He says this means money? Then for who??  
 And I mean asides from him -- I mean  
 asides from you, Ted. What about your  
 constituents?

**INT. JUANITA'S RESTAURANT - EVENING**

Joe and Michael sit with Paula at a table in the lovely courtyard. They are deep in conversation; Paula spilling beans about the data center tax incentive resolution vote:

PAULA (V.O.)  
 What about THEIR businesses that  
 YOU shuttered?!

PAULA  
 I'm goddamn sure him and Warren are  
 gettin kickbacks. Warren's the one that  
 got Ted to run in the first place!

Joe is nodding, eyes wide. He squeezes Michael's leg under the table. Michael smiles, feeling appreciated.

JOE  
And what *is* this company? Like  
Microsoft? What?

PAULA  
Not even. 'S some random, like, AI  
or Deep Learnin or some *crap*.

JOE  
(sudden shift, feeling good)  
How would you feel about me doin a  
Town Hall here?

**EXT. DIRT TRACK PARTY - NIGHT**

POV: a PRETTY GIRL wearing a mask (17) stands with her friend, confidently holding court. She holds the book *Women, Race and Class* by Angela Davis. (This is the girl from the Tik-Tok that Brian was watching when we first met him.)

This is the POV of Brian and Eric, and we are at a "party" at an isolated dirt track (in the middle of the desert). Many young people from the surrounding small towns (late teens to early twenties) have gathered to smoke weed and drink beer. One kid rides around on a motorbike. Most of the kids wear masks on their chins.

BRIAN	*	ERIC	*
Okay, I'm gonna go. Fuck.	*		*
Okay... What if, like, mid-	*		*
conversation... I just was	*	Mid <i>what</i> conversation?	*
like "oh I have COVID, by the	*		*
way." Would that be funny?	*		*

ERIC (CONT'D)	*
I'm done with this, bro. I wouldn't say	*
anything because she's annoying as fuck.	*
(downs beer, starts walking)	*
She's worse'n my dad with her Social	*
Justice Warrior shit.	*

Brian has looked up the Wikipedia page for Angela Davis. \*  
Noticing that Eric is going off: \*

BRIAN	*
Where are you going?	*

ERIC	*
Getting another beer.	*

BRIAN	*	ERIC (CONT'D)	*
Dude, you have to drive us	*		*
back.	*	You have to eat your own	*
		fist.	*

Eric walks off to the drink station.

Brian works up the nerve to approach the girl, whose name we will soon learn is SARAH.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Oh shit, I love that book.

SARAH

Oh yeah? What part?

BRIAN

All of it...! You know she was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize by the Soviet Union?

SARAH

(skeptical)

I didn't read that part yet.

BRIAN

I'm Brian.

SARAH

Hi.

BRIAN

I know you're Sarah. You were like a year above me, I think.

Sarah's friend (TINA) speaks up.

TINA

(to Brian)

I'm Tina. From Las Cruces.

BRIAN

...You guys want a beer?

They sort of nod, sort of shrug.

Brian awkwardly recedes and heads over to the DRINK AREA, where he grabs three beers from a kiddie pool filled with melted ice. A kid nearby is rolling around, way too drunk. Brian then turns around to SEE:

Eric is now conversing with Sarah. She looks reticent, but then Eric says something that provokes a LAUGH. Brian watches this, incredulous. After a moment, he begins to walk over.

Halfway there, Brian hesitates awkwardly. Not sure how to penetrate. Sarah and Eric are already flirting. Tina walks up to Brian.

TINA

What's your friend's name?

BRIAN

I dunno.

TINA

She's just tryin'a make her old-ass boyfriend jealous.

BRIAN

(disappointed)

Where is *he*?

TINA

Not here.

BRIAN

So how's this gonna make him jealous?

TINA

She'll find a way to get it to him. Probably through me.

BRIAN

Who's her boyfriend?

TINA

They're not like dating anymore. She dumped him 'cause he's a cop. Or then he broke up with *her*. Whatever.

BRIAN

...What's his name?

TINA

Michael something.

Brian is already looking this up. He's gone to Instagram.

BRIAN

Is he online? How old is he?

Tina takes his phone to search. She finds MICHAEL'S PROFILE.

TINA

There he is.

BRIAN

Oh shit, *that* one??

In the BG, we hear "*Bernieeee, whyyy??*"

#### **MINUTES LATER**

Brian and Tina are back with Sarah and Eric. Eric waxes cynical about the social justice sacred cows. Sarah looks impressed.

ERIC

Yeah, just seein all these white people  
- not like you, you guys are chill -  
but like so many privileged white kids  
suddenly crying about "anti-racism"--

\*  
\*  
\*

SARAH

No, totally, it's true.

ERIC

It's just like, you're in the wrong  
neighborhood bro, but go off, I guess.

SARAH

Totally. It's just another display of  
privilege.

ONE KID

(too high)

Uhhh, I think I'm fucked, bro. I  
think I did too much.

BRIAN

(irked, to Eric)

But like, at the same time, not all  
white kids are all *that* privileged  
either. Like, there's different sorta  
privilege. Like just the difference  
between race and, like, *class*.

Sarah and Eric look at him. He's skating close to thin ice.

ERIC

You drop your red cap back there, Bri?

BRIAN

(laughs, embarrassed)

Shut up! You know what I mean.

They all laugh, but Brian is mortified. Brian gives Eric a  
look: "*What the fuck!*" Eric returns a "*what can I say?*" look.

32

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

32

Down the block, Guy is putting up photocopied flyers that  
read "*YOUR BEING MANIPULATED! KEEP BIG TECH OFF OUR LAND. No  
More Ted Garcia, No More Corruption*".

Meanwhile, Joe is excitedly painting a slogan ("*Keep TECH's  
Business Out Of YOUR Business. Vote Joe Cross for MAYOR!*") onto  
butcher paper that's been taped to his sheriff's cruiser.  
Michael, painting another sign on butcher paper on the sidewalk,  
sneaks a peek at his phone to see SARAH'S INSTAGRAM PROFILE. She  
just put up a new photo of herself with Eric, standing with  
affected apathy, cigarette dangling from her lips.

JOE

We need a blown-up picture of Ted and Warren...

Michael TEXTS Sarah: "*i thought you was anti gatherings*"

Suddenly inspired, Joe turns to Michael.

JOE (CONT'D)

You know, I'm promotin you. \*

MICHAEL

...Really? \*

JOE \*

Don't you think? \*

MICHAEL \*

Yeah. Of course. So what? Sargent? \*

JOE

Of course. \*

(beat) \*

You like that? \*

MICHAEL \*

Yeah! Thank you, Sheriff. I'm actually older than my dad when he was Sargent. \*

JOE \*

Yeah, well - and - when I was deputy, he was Captain. So we all gotta take these steps. Congratulations. \*

MICHAEL \*

Thanks. \*

JOE \*

You're welcome. You earned it. \*

MICHAEL \*

Maybe I'll earn captain too one day. \*

JOE \*

Sure. After Lieutenant. \*

MICHAEL

(ribbing) \*

If you ARE even sheriff by the time that happens. Office might need a new one. \*

Awkward beat. \*

MICHAEL (CONT'D) \*

If you get mayor I mean. It'd be vacant. \*

JOE  
Oh it *will* be vacant.

\*  
\*

MICHAEL  
(small beat)  
And this ain't 'cause a the news?

\*  
\*

JOE  
What news?

\*

MICHAEL  
...Yeah. Cool. Great.

Two TEXTS from Sarah have hit Michael's phone: "*i thought i was too young*" followed by "*are you going to arrest me?*"

**EXT. DIRT TRACK / BLEACHERS - SAME TIME**

Brian sits on bleachers at the party, which has died out. He's high and drunk, watching Sarah, Eric and Tina (from a distance) huddled around Sarah's phone in a fever of shared outrage. They are higher up on the bleachers.

Brian, sulking, starts scrolling down his Twitter timeline.

Brian scrolls past a *Time* article: "*In a First, Twitter Adds 'Unsubstantiated' Warning to 2 of President Trump's Tweets.*"

He then scrolls to an ARTICLE that reads: "*Hundreds Demand Justice In Minneapolis After Police Killing*"

He scrolls past this, ignoring two more posts about George Floyd's murder, a "*my plans/2020*" meme, and then...

He arrives at a quote tweet of the Floyd article POSTED BY SARAH with the text "*BLACK LIVES MATTER!!!!*"

An idea seems to be kindling. He LIKES the tweet.

**EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Joe's cruiser - decked out with a few unfinished signs - rolls up to an unlit house. Joe hops out - a pep in his step - and pulls a handmade "*Joe Cross for Mayor*" SIGN from the trunk. Its slogan is "*I CAN'T BREATHE*" and features a cartoon of a dead man in a mask (with X's for eyes) on his back, clutching his throat.

He PLANTS the sign in front of the driveway.

**INT. JOE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A dark, empty house. Joe steps in, holding the pharmacy goods. Nobody seems to be home.

JOE  
Hello?

Joe notices a shattered coffee cup on the floor of the kitchen. Dried coffee has splashed all over the floor and spattered the wall.

Joe goes to his bedroom door, which is shut. He tries the knob, but it's LOCKED.

JOE (CONT'D)

Lou?

Joe roams away from the door, confused.

JOE (CONT'D)

Dawn?!

Joe now notices that the laptop is open on the kitchen table, near where the coffee cup fell. Taking the laptop out of sleep mode, it reveals Joe's announcement video.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oh brother...

Joe closes this to reveal the next open TAB (there are many). *"Is Hillary Already In Gitmo? (And Before You Answer, Remember: She Has A Body Double)"*.

Joe closes that tab, only to be faced with a BLOG POST platforming a VIDEO by "Vernon Jefferson Peak," featuring his face and a photo of a distraught woman: *"Her Husband Sold Her Daughter To A Congressman. Now She's Begging Him To Disclose The Location Of Her Body"*. He scrolls down to find another video: *"How Masks Make It Easier To Smuggle Children."*

Joe hangs on this, and then goes to Dawn's unmade bed (converted from the fold-out couch). He starts removing sheets.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING (START OF DAY 3)**

Joe is asleep on the sheetless fold-out couch. Warm morning light plays on his face.

The sound of a CAR idling to a stop outside. This WAKES Joe. He looks to the front door to see Dawn and Louise entering. Louise walks past Joe, avoiding eye contact. Dawn stands at the door, trying to summon eye contact.

JOE

Where were you?

DAWN

You don't tell her what you're doin,  
why should *she* tell you?

Louise arrives at the bedroom and tries the knob. She is confused to find it locked.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I got it.

Dawn walks up to the door and UNLOCKS it with a key.

JOE

What'd you, take that from the drawer?

Louise enters the **BEDROOM** and starts getting undressed in the closet. She's TEXTING with somebody. Joe walks to the doorway. Louise hides her body as she changes, keeping her back to him.

JOE (CONT'D)

Where'd you go?

Louise ignores him.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're mad at me.

Louise scoffs. She continues getting changed - with greater agitation.

JOE (CONT'D)

I was worried about you.

(after no answer)

Why don't we sit down tonight? Have dinner together.

Louise stops dressing. She just stands there, back to him. Seething.

JOE (CONT'D)

...Lou?

DAWN

(from the living room)

Actions have consequences. You think we wouldn't'a understood you challenging Ted Garcia? I'd applaud if you showed even but a *second's* thought to the office that you inhabit. The torch that your own *father-in-law* gifted you--

LOUISE

(on "father-in-law")

*Oh!*

Louise storms up to the door and SLAMS it in Joe's face. This works Dawn up further.

DAWN

*Has she not gone through enough??*

Joe rushes out of the house.

**EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Joe has rounded the house to go to the WINDOW of his bedroom. Louise is lying on the bed. She turns her back to him.

JOE  
Louise baby?

Louise doesn't respond.

JOE (CONT'D)  
I'm doin this for *us*, rabbit. I shoulda told you first, I got too excited and I just *did* it to not overthink it. But, baby: the whole county's just lyin down. If we see what's happening and we see that it's wrong and we can't see this as a opportunity...to do the right thing... We got a chance to save this place! To build it back *up*. Make us *relevant* again. People don't even-- Did you know this used to be a copper minin town--

Louise finally turns and speaks:

LOUISE  
You need to be QUIET. I'm sorry. I don't know how you don't remember what they said. About her not havin *stress*, and how she *can't* have it, but she *can't*. I'm not being dramatic. I can't slip again.

JOE  
You won't slip. I'll catch you.

LOUISE  
People're gonna be *lookin* here now. Stickin their noses\* in. Shaming her. \*

JOE (CONT'D)

No one's lookin, Weez. \*

JOE (CONT'D)  
Try to say "me," baby, not "her."

This confuses Louise, which agitates her further. Meanwhile, Dawn has appeared around the corner, outside.

DAWN  
(hurt coming through)  
You really just don't give a damn what happens to his department??

LOUISE  
(measuredly to Joe)  
I don't want this thing with Ted.  
(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You unnerstand? That's *your* thing, and  
mama's. 'S not mine.

JOE

I'm defending you, rabbit.

Louise puts her back to him again. Shaking her head.

JOE (CONT'D)

Lou? Baby? Let's have dinner tonight.  
Can we do that? Just you and me. I'll  
cook.

DAWN

Oh my goodness, he'll *cook!*

JOE

Rabbit? We can talk through  
it all. I'm your husband. I  
won't do anything you don't  
want.

Baby? Rabbit? Please? We can  
decide together. I'll retract  
it if you want. If you decide  
that. At dinner? Lou?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DAWN (CONT'D)

Your *real* husband won't hafta  
say 'I'm your husband,' Lou!  
He'll *listen* to you. He'll  
understand you. He won't need  
to wave your vows in your  
face.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

LOUISE (O.S.)

Fine! Just go!

JOE

Yes? Dinner?  
(taking it)  
Okay. Good. Tonight! Great!

Joe claps his hands and he's off on his way.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

Joe stands outside a HARDWARE STORE doubling as an  
ANTIQUUE/SECONDHAND SHOP, talking to the Owner. The front  
window features a racist LAWN JOCKEY welcoming visitors. Joe  
extends a sign toward the owner, who shakes his head no. Joe  
points the owner's attention across the street to a very big  
campaign banner covering the outside wall of another  
establishment. A man sits on a bench outside this store.

JOE (V.O.) (OVER SPEAKERS)

If y'ever look at the mayor's staff  
list, you'll see that he's got a thing  
called a Advisory Board. Well, that  
board is actually one man and that man  
is Warren Sandoval. Eddington's quote-  
City Economic Development Official.

The man on the bench looks camera right and we PAN further down the street to find Michael hanging another sign in a store window. It reads "*Eliminate The Middle Man. BITCOIN is the world's first globally accessible public money. Free your money. Free yourself. Vote Joe Cross.*"

**EXT. STREET / INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) - DAY**

Joe's cruiser is now completely decked out in signage, including two blown-up photos of Warren and Ted. And on top of the cruiser, a speaker-box also serves as a four-sided sign demonizing Garcia. Joe drives slowly down one of the main streets, speaking into his microphone (so his voice blares). He's videotaping himself on his mounted phone while Michael films him in the passenger seat.

JOE (OVER SPEAKERS)

And when Mayor Garcia talks, it's Sandoval's voice you're hearin. But who's *Sandoval* speakin for? It ain't you! Maybe it's for your Governor, who he's been on vacation with. Maybe it's for the people that got the mayor to get that expensive new road built out there in the desert, with YOUR money! Did you ask for that? And did you know that it leads out to a top-secret development *just* within city limits? Well, you should! They've annexed 800 acres, it's been re-zoned, the development and utility agreements are gettin into place--

During all that, ERIC has ridden up on a bike, holding out his phone and filming Joe through the open passenger window.

ERIC

Bro, who're you talkin to? There's no one here.

JOE

(into the mic)

And here we got a Eddington youngster. He ain't entered the workforce yet, so he doesn't know what it's like--

ERIC

Hey, tell 'em about the time you arrested your wife!

Joe stops the car as Eric accelerates past. Enraged, Joe drops the mic and stops recording.

MICHAEL

Do I cut?

JOE

Doesn't even make sense, talkin to  
empty fuckin shuttered...

He stares daggers at Eric's back as he rides away. Eric, up ahead, stops for a moment (looking to his left), then looks back at Joe and proceeds to ride off.

JOE (CONT'D)

Fuck you too.

Joe starts driving ahead again and turns left at the next street, swiveling his head to keep eyes on Eric.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Oh--

Joe looks ahead to see A SMALL GATHERING of twelve kids (none Black), including BRIAN and SARAH, right in front of him. They are touting signs and tepidly protesting. Joe HITS THE BRAKES.

JOE

Christ!

PROTESTERS

BLACK LIVES MATTER!

Joe looks to Michael, incredulous. Michael's eyes are on Sarah with Brian. Joe steps out of the car and walks toward the pitiful gathering. Brian holds up his phone and films Joe's approach.

JOE (CONT'D)

What's goin on here, guys?

SCRAWNY KID

Hands up, don't shoot!

SARAH

We have a right to assembly!

JOE

Assembly?? About what? What're we doin?

BRIAN

NO JUSTICE!

CROWD

(on cue, chanting)

NO PEACE!

NO RA-CIST POLICE!

NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!

NO RA-CIST POLICE!

NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!

JOE

The fuck?

Who's racist?? When?? A third  
a my department...

Joe gestures helplessly to Michael. Michael steps halfway out his door.

MICHAEL

Take this outta the street, guys!  
You're blockin through traffic.

\*



Others are personal endorsement's for Ibram Kendi's *How To Be An Anti-Racist* and Robin De-Angelo's *White Fragility*. Eric "likes" every post.

Eric then clicks on her Instagram STORIES. The first is a flyer for an EVENT that Sarah is attending: "*Black Lives Matter Eddington*." Posted by "*black.lives.eddington.brian*".

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SAME TIME**

Joe, Michael and Guy are watching NEWS coverage of George Floyd's murder on Joe's computer. We hear the coverage as they take it in. Michael seems to already be privy to the information. Joe's head is swimming.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The man identified as George Floyd by the lawyer representing his family was later pronounced dead at the hospital. Today the mayor called it wrong at every level. The mayor says four officers involved in the incident have now been fired, adding "this was the right call."

JOE

What'd they pull this guy over for in the first place?

REPORTER (V.O.)

In an initial press release, police said they'd arrived at the scene for a reported forgery in progress and that the suspect appeared to be under the influence and physically resisted officers.

GUY

What's gonna happen when they put out the footage of him resisting? The officers gonna get their jobs back?

JOE

(to Michael)

When did you see this?

MICHAEL

Yesterday.  
(then)  
Ain't good for cops.

JOE

Yeah well, if that's the case, I won't be worried about the cops.  
(a sudden concern)  
How're ya doin, Mike? You all right?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Okay. Whadaya mean?

Joe picks up a SIGN to put up in the window: *"TOWN HALL TOMORROW! At Juanita's! 5 PM! Joe Cross For MAYOR! Free Food! Free Margaritas! Free Eddington - From Tyranny!!!"*

GUY

(finds an article)  
 Jesus Christ, lookit this! Minneapolis.  
 AND Texas. AND Missouri! Rioters goin  
 into small towns. Settin fire to  
 buildings, blowin things up!

After putting up the sign, Joe TEXTS Louise *"8 pm for dinner?"* It appears green.

GUY (CONT'D)

Sheriff!

Guy is pointing to the mounted TV. It's NEWS footage (on mute) of a BLACK PICKUP TRUCK driving into a city CHURCH and smashing down its doors, followed by a PUNCHED-IN FREEZE-FRAME of the driver: a masked man dressed in black. *"Antifa gear."*

GUY (CONT'D)

The fuck're these fuckers doin? Drivin into churches!

JOE

Okay. All right. Look! That's not a here problem! That's across the country. It's a bad apple 3000 miles away. He made some *bad* decisions. What we gotta worry about is *here*. We don't engage. We let those kids blow off their steam. *Michael, are you okay?!*

**EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

The kids are now all down on one knee, in silence. One kid is timing the silent kneeling on his phone. Another kid finds something on his phone:

KID

(looking at phone)  
 Oh my GOD! They're shooting rubber bullets! They're planting looters in the protests so they can use force!  
 (gasps)  
 Bro! In Chicago the cops are driving through protesters!

Meanwhile, LODGE has appeared in the BG. He's walked up to the protester who's timing the kneel, standing uncomfortably close. The protester moves slightly away. Lodge follows him.

PROTESTER

I got no cash.

LODGE

I'll MAKE you cash.

Lodge COUGHS theatrically. The protesters move away from him.

LODGE (CONT'D)

My tooth's infected! Spreading in my head!

Sarah turns to Brian.

SARAH

How many people did you invite?

BRIAN

Should be more comin.

SARAH

There's a protest at the Round House in Santa Fe. That's where we should *really* be. We can't just feel happy with ourselves.

BRIAN

Yeah I mean I obviously agree with that.

SARAH

And you called yourself anti-racist earlier, but do you know what that would *actually* take? I'm not anti-racist either. We're playing now at being *maybe* White Critical. *MAYBE* we're White Traitors, but the goal is to be White Abolitionists. That means actually "*changing institutions, dismantling whiteness* -

**INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - EVENING**

Brian sits at the dining table for dinner, explaining the eight white identities to his MOTHER and FATHER (both 60s). This is a gun-friendly home (antique rifle displayed, several guns in gun cabinet, hunting rifle resting against wall).

BRIAN

- and not allowing whiteness to reassert itself." But we're pretty much light-years away from that.

Long silence.

BRIAN'S FATHER

Are you fuckin retarded? You're white.

**INT. CROSS HOUSE - EVENING**

The clock on the wall, in the kitchen, reads **6:45**. Through the window, Joe is seen running up to the house from his car. He scurries in with two grocery bags and a bouquet of flowers.

JOE

Lou?! Dawn?!

Silence.

Joe plops down the groceries in the kitchen, starts filling a pot with water, and begins using wet-wipes to sanitize the items in his bag.

**INT. JOE'S KITCHEN - EVENING**

Water boils on the stove while Joe chops vegetables. A sauce pan has onions and garlic simmering. A *Lydia's Kitchen* recipe video plays on his phone.

He suddenly feels woozy. Needs to sit down. Quickly recovers. He returns to the stove, pauses the cooking video, and opens a voice recorder to dictate:

JOE

Remember to film Mike's promotion ceremony. Put it on TikTok.

**INT. JOE'S BATHROOM - EVENING**

Joe stands bare-assed over the toilet, trimming his pubic hair with an electric trimmer.

**EXT. HOUSE - BACK PATIO - PRE-NIGHT**

Joe, dressed in a shirt and tie, has set the table on the back patio. He is now placing a hot bowl of freshly prepared pasta in the center. He then lights a candle and checks his watch: **7:52**.

He goes to the corner to look expectantly to the road.

**LATER**

Joe's watch now reads **9:33**.

A half-empty wine bottle rests beside an empty one. A plate has been placed atop the pasta bowl to retain heat/freshness. Joe's laptop is now on the table and playing live Fox News coverage of black-clad "protesters" lighting a SIGN OF FLAMES on a building that reads "*DEFUND PIGS*". Joe is ASLEEP at the table.

The SOUND of approaching steps WAKES Joe.

Near-distant chatter precedes Dawn and Louise with THREE FRIENDS (two men and a woman) appearing on the back steps to the patio. One of them - a young man - is holding court. \*

YOUNG MAN

...you commit suicide, you can't be buried in the Mossad cemetery, so why's he there if not as a message to say "it wasn't suicide, we killed him"?

 \*

Louise, upon seeing Joe at the table, is stricken by guilt.

LOUISE

Oh, Joe!

DAWN

LOUISE (CONT'D) \*

(to the group)  
This is the son-in-law.

Joe, I wrote you, but I just saw my text didn't go through!

Dawn, who is clearly tipsy, strolls over to the patio to see the set-up.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Aw, here we go. And a bouquet! Sheep's clothing.

VERNON (early 30s), the handsome and charismatic young man, walks up to Joe. He is adorned in TATTOOS and talks at a consistent clip, ideas spilling forth. (Viewers will recognize him as the blogger that Louise follows.) The other two, WILL and NICOLETTE (50s), come to stand at the back door.

VERNON

Hi there! Son-in-law? Husband?  
(keeping it going)  
Sheriff? Mayor? Mayor-to-be!

JOE

(at a loss)  
Yeah. Ha.

VERNON

(offering his hand to Joe)  
Sorry: hello: Vernon.

JOE

...Vernon? Jefferson Peak?

VERNON

(taken aback)  
I'm at a disadvantage!

JOE

(shaking his hand)  
Joe Cross.

VERNON

This is Nicolette. Her husband Will.

Joe waves at them, confused.

DAWN

(assessing the kitchen)

Are you kids hungry? How much did you make?

JOE

Enough for two.

DAWN

(lifts plate to expose pasta)

Cold!

JOE

Would you people like a seat?

VERNON

Thank you!

Vernon takes one. Everyone else follows suit. Louise sits beside Vernon. Will and Nicolette uneasily sit on a bench.

\*  
\*

JOE

...Where y'all comin from?

DAWN

A potluck.

VERNON

With no food!

Dawn and Louise LAUGH at this, as if it's an inside joke. Joe looks incredulous, stunned by this dynamic. Dawn has started helping herself to Joe's pasta.

JOE

Can I get anyone somethin?

VERNON

No no. We're stuffed!

More laughter. Vernon rises to enter the house and approach the wall of Louise's dolls. Dawn walks over to the open door, just behind Joe.

\*  
\*

VERNON (CONT'D)

These are really something.

DAWN

Those're all Lou! She been makin 'em just like that since she was ten.

VERNON  
(to Louise)  
You're a compulsive artist.

LOUISE  
'S just a hobby.

DAWN  
Ever'body needs one! The worst times  
a my life is when I fell outta  
function with my hobbies.

JOE  
They been really sellin, though, too.

Vernon passes an embroidery of a child being attacked by bees inside her home. The next embroidery depicts a peculiar scene: a girl's back, sitting on grass, some of which is tangled like tendrils around her.

VERNON  
Wow.

DAWN  
(walking over)  
That one must be new.

JOE  
That's been there for a month.

VERNON  
(to Louise)  
You can call being an artist a hobby,  
but it's higher than that. When it's  
real. That's God speaking through you.  
You speaking back.

Joe's eyes are on Louise (to see how she's taking this). She clearly feels "seen" by Vernon. Vernon arrives at a photo of Richmond.

VERNON (CONT'D)  
This one gets a lotta real estate.

DAWN  
That's Lou's father. The original  
sheriff! Passed away seven years ago.  
(to Joe)  
You were with 'im.

Joe's silence concedes. A fraught memory.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
Heart just stopped in his chest.  
Apparently. Who knows if he coulda  
actually made it...

JOE  
(coolly defensive)

I do.

Vernon is watching this dynamic with inspired eyes. \*

VERNON  
When *my* dad died, my brain completely  
reset. He was a Civil Engineer in DC,  
working for the government -  
(to Joe)  
- just like you're about to, right?  
When you win?

JOE  
Well, for the people. Not the  
government. Is the idea.

DAWN  
Your brain reset how? What does that  
mean?

VERNON  
Breakdown. It took five years'  
experimental therapy to unlock even just  
fragments of memories. Some of which  
were that I'd been very effectively  
brainwashed.  
(to Louise)  
We talked about this...

Louise nods.

JOE  
Do we ask you now what the memories  
were?

Vernon looks to Louise. "I know I'm being made fun of, but  
I'll play along for your sake."

VERNON  
The *memories* are of being gifted off,  
*by* my father, to his colleagues. Who  
exactly they were, I don't know. I do  
know there were ten other kids and we  
were taken to a private forest grove in  
Northern California where we were  
stripped nude and photographed and -  
things I hope you can't imagine. And  
then they released us and hunted us  
down. And I escaped. I was the *only* one  
to escape. And those are my memories.  
Which are now extremely vivid.

Joe just stares.

DAWN

(confused)

Then - if they're hunting you down, why would they release you?

VERNON

The game was to catch us.

JOE

Okay. So - I'm tryin to be respectful. Who did this? Who would do this? I don't understand. And then you escape? How?

Louise looks hard at Joe, defensive.

JOE (CONT'D)

(putting up hands, innocent)

I really am...

VERNON

Your question is to make me feel shame. I didn't escape on my own. I couldn't have. You want things simple and neat. You think that because something's evil, there can't be love? That makes it worse. When there *is* love - *that's* the confusion. And evil *is* sentimental. And a predator *can* fall in love. And he can help his victim *escape*. And I can't ever say his name -

(points meaningfully to all the phones in the room)

- but they called his death an overdose like five days after he let me go.

Louise has started nervously wagging her foot. The story has gotten her wired. Joe notices.

VERNON (CONT'D)

And my father committed "suicide" that same week. He was just another name on a list that they won't ever release 'cause they're the ones *making* the list.

Joe is gawking now.

VERNON (CONT'D)

I understand. It *is* unbelievable. It sounds insane to *me*, just hearing it coming out of my own mouth. My brain still hasn't truly accepted that I'm actually talking about myself, or my own history, or that this actually happened to me.

JOE

Well. I really *don't* understand, I guess. I can't imagine.

LOUISE

You *do* get it. You know it.

Joe is taken aback by this. A new side of Louise.

VERNON

It's *easier* to not get it.

LOUISE

It's evil.

VERNON

(to Louise)

Your father was sentimental.

DAWN

What does that mean?

JOE

What *does* that mean?

VERNON

(to Joe, suddenly forceful)

We are in a fight against evil. And part of that is fighting against denial and DENYING denial.

Dawn's eyes have gone wide. She suddenly seems extremely alert.

VERNON (CONT'D)

(pouring out feverishly)

I just told you *my* story. Will and Nicolette helped each other escape a 10 by 10 foot cellar when they were *pre-teens*.

(to Will and Nicolette)

You go to Brussels next week.

(to Joe and Dawn)

Their testimony's under review by the International Common Law Court of Justice.

LOUISE

Evil!

Everyone looks to Louise, who has picked up Vernon's energy.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

If you wanna know a society, you look first at what it does to its children -

(to Will and Nicolette)

What you two went through?

(MORE)

(to Vernon)  
What *your* daddy...!

DAWN  
Lou. Sometimes it's just - to listen--

LOUISE  
(goes to laptop, searches)  
You can't just ignore. The average pedophile abuses between 50 and 100 children in their lifetime! Per abuser! And they keep these kids quiet by makin 'em think it's only THEM, like it's this rare thing that just happened TO THEM! And they DO fill these kids with shame so they never even ASK, so they don't ever realize that maybe it *happens* so much 'cause there's a whole entire *network*, that all these demons are maybe actually in LEAGUE with each oth--

Dawn BURSTS out of her spot.

\*

DAWN  
*Okay!*

Dawn goes to the kitchen sink and loudly DROPS her plate into the pile of dishes.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry. I don't even know what this is. I can't just not get any sleep at *all!* Last night was the same thing. I've had two hours in two days.  
(to Louise)  
I'm sorry! But I can't just let you turn this into a free-for-all!

Joe looks to Louise, who looks humiliated. Dawn walks out of the room to her fold-out mattress.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
I plainly need to go to bed. I need to sleep. I'm sorry.

She gets into bed, turning her back to them. Vernon leans over to Louise and says very quietly:

VERNON  
You know what that is. It's at herself.

Louise is in thrall to him. She nods. Joe watches this, unnerved. Vernon rises.

VERNON (CONT'D)  
It's late!

47

**EXT. CROSS HOUSE - NIGHT**

47

FROM JOE'S POV: Louise stands with Vernon at his Winnebago. They HUG goodbye. Will and Nicolette sit waiting in the car.

Joe stands at the window, watching this.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joe is on his side, awake.

Mumbling sounds get his attention. They're behind him. He turns to see Louise half-hunched over the bed, facing down, eyes shut. She's talking to herself, but too quietly to make out. Is she asleep?

JOE  
Baby? You okay?

LOUISE  
(without reacting, mumbly)  
...Yeah. Just thinking about somethin  
unrelated.

JOE  
Unrelated to what?

Long silence.

LOUISE  
I think I'm still asleep.

She lays down, her back to Joe. After a beat:

JOE  
Louise? Can I ask?

Louise doesn't turn to him.

JOE (CONT'D)  
I haven't in ten years... The baby.  
I'll never mention it again.

Louise remains stolid.

JOE (CONT'D)  
What did happen that day? At the  
market.

LOUISE  
I was takin it to the police. I  
thought she was lost.

Beat.

JOE

I'm not shaming you. But you know I saw the surveillance footage. After I picked you up.

LOUISE

After you arrested me.

JOE

(defensive)

Did I handcuff you? Did I take you to jail? I just took the call.

LOUISE

Yeah.

Beat.

JOE

You saw her with her dad...

Louise doesn't react at first. Then shakes her head "no."

JOE (CONT'D)

You watched him go round the corner and you took her outta the carriage and you walked straight out.

Louise is silent.

JOE (CONT'D)

I do understand why you'd do that, you know. You say you're certain you don't want children. And I want whatever you want. But maybe if some part a you...

Silence.

JOE (CONT'D)

Did your dad ever...to you - with you - anything?

Beat. She chuckles, barely. Then, hardly audible:

LOUISE

...how should I know?

JOE

Was that the thing? Was not...Ted...?

Long silence.

LOUISE

I thought she was lost. I was takin her to the police.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joe is awake in bed. He can't sleep. It's **5:35 AM**.

He grabs a glass of water on his bedside table. Takes a sip. It hurts to swallow. He pauses at this. He swallows again. It is indeed sore. Weird.

He takes his phone and opens Facebook. He scrolls until he finds an amateur VIDEO of TWO MASKED MEN (dressed in all black) on a rooftop, holding sniper rifles. They run from side to side, shooting down at police officers. The caption: "*PORTLAND RIGHT NOW! COURTESY OF GEORGE SOROS!!!*"

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NEXT DAY (START OF DAY 4)**

A VIBRATING PHONE (in Joe's hand) WAKES JOE UP in an empty bed. It's **3:55 PM**. He clears his throat - throat is more sore than last night - and answers the phone. \*

JOE	GUY
Hello?	It's here, sheriff! The riots are HERE!

A CALL from "*John - antique store*" comes in.

JOE (CONT'D)  
What? Hold up.

Joe answers the new call.

JOE (CONT'D)	ANTIQUÉ STORE OWNER (V.O.)
John--	<i>Where the hell are you?! All my goddamn windows smashed to hell and I cant get a fuckin--</i>

**INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY**

Joe is driving quickly. He's on speakerphone with Paula.

PAULA (V.O.)	JOE	*
We gotta just obviously cancel this Town Hall.	That's not obvious, Paula, this is a blip. We'll disperse it.	

Joe then NOTICES a campaign sign in front of a business: "*The Future Is Knocking? Ted Garcia Wants To OPEN The Door!*"

JOE (CONT'D)  
What? That was *my* sign...

As his head swivels, tracking as he overtakes the sign (while slowing down), someone JUMPS onto the hood of the car, bouncing the car. Joe BRAKES and looks ahead to see:

A boy with an "I CANT BREATHE" sign. He runs past the cruiser to round the corner ahead.

JOE (CONT'D)

The hell?

PAULA (V.O.)

What's wrong?

Joe starts idling toward the corner.

JOE

Kid with our sign. I gotta...

Confused (and a little hopeful), Joe rounds the corner to now see a PROTEST of about SIXTY YOUNG PEOPLE (many holding signs of police brutality). ERIC stands at the center, holding a SIGN which we can't make out from here. Sarah stands beside him with a "POLICE THE POLICE" sign.

JOE (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Joe kicks the car into reverse.

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY**

Joe arrives at the office. Guy, standing defensively in the back, is wearing RIOT GEAR. He is clearly in a panic. Michael sits at his desk.

JOE

(to Guy)

Why aren't you out there?? Why do I even have you guys?

\*

\*

GUY

I was, but they're filmin.

Joe rushes to his desk. He fetches his fancy sheriff's regalia (the one he saves for ceremonies). He starts changing into it. \*

On the TV is coverage of a Santa Fe protest on the local news. Guy yells at the TV while Joe changes clothes in the corner.

TEEN GIRL (ON TV)

GUY (CONT'D)

This happens constantly and so many people were not named because we don't have footage of them being murdered in front of us. We don't want to hate police. They are supposed to be here to protect us.

What footage? There's no footage 'cause it happens once a year!

\*

\*

We are fuckin protectin you!

Guy changes the channel to Fox News, where Tucker goes at it.

TUCKER CARLSON (ON TV)

In San Jose, looters armed with crowbars stormed the highway and attacked vehicles, trying to pull drivers from their cars...

MICHAEL

(getting Joe's attention)  
Sheriff... I dunno.

Joe has turned to him, now wearing half of his regalia.

JOE

You dunno what?

Michael gestures to his computer. Joe hurries over. A HEADLINE reads: *"Photo Reveals Police Brutality In Eddington, NM."*

JOE (CONT'D)

What does that mean, "police brutality"?

Joe moves into Michael's seat, which Michael clears. He reads the article, which features an INSTAGRAM POST FROM ERIC. It is the PHOTO, taken by Eric, of JOE WRESTLING LODGE (from the beginning of the movie). The caption reads: *"We let Sheriff Cross disgrace the Badge. We gona let him disgrace the Mayors Office now too??!!"*

\*  
\*

JOE (CONT'D)

FUCK!

GUY

(carefully, not aggressively)  
Do you get this, Mike?

\*

MICHAEL

Do I get *what*, "Mike"?

GUY

I just know you ran into this\*  
yesterday, so I'm tryin'a \*  
unnerstand why it's ten times\*  
bigger today. \*

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Yeah. With the Sheriff. \*  
It's ten times bigger \*  
everywhere! The fuck? \*

Okay. Don't *on purpose*  
disunderstand me. I'm askin a  
normal question.

Joe has been reading the article in a fever. Outside the window, an IRATE WOMAN has appeared.

\*  
\*

IRATE WOMAN

What is going on?? There's a riot  
happening right in front of your face  
and you're checking our email??

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*



Amid all that, Joe has arrived at the protest to begin walking through. The Auditor stays on his tail. Most protesters react. *"Oh here they come!" "You gonna fuckin kill us too??" "How do you sleep at night?! How can you just be here?! How aren't you ashamed?!" "Hands up, don't shoot!" "Hillary was hanged in 2018! Where's THAT video?!"*

\*

TEEN GIRL  
*If you're not with us, and you're not for Black Lives Matter, then get the fuck outta here!!!*

OLD MAN  
*Then stop fuckin tearin our fuckin town down!!!*

\*  
\*  
\*

The Old Man sees Joe walking past. He appeals to him:

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
 Who's stoppin this, Sheriff???

JOE  
 \* I know, Greg. We got it.

\*

We hear one protest leader yelling *"Remember, guys! They can't arrest all of us! We gotta stay as a unit and fill the jails if we need to!"* Guy sees one PROTEST LEADER helping to boost morale.

PROTEST LEADER  
 We gotta just keep the energy high and the tension low! To affect the people around us with a message of hope and positivity, Okay?

GUY  
 (stepping up)  
 So what's "no justice, no peace," then? That's positive? That's a threat.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

OTHER KID  
 And fuckin SWAT gear?! *That's* a fucking threat!

\*  
\*

PROTEST LEADER (CONT'D)  
 WE ARE -

CROWD  
 WE ARE!

PROTEST LEADER  
 - CHANGE!

CROWD  
 CHANGE!

Meanwhile, Joe has spotted ERIC, holding his BIG SIGN. Eric turns it, concealing it from Joe. Joe instructs Michael to follow him, and storms the kids. Many kids react defensively. *"Don't touch me!"* Seeing Sarah, Michael stops a bit short. As Joe approaches, Eric hands his phone to a kid, instructing him to film the following interaction.

JOE  
 What's goin on here, guys?

ERIC  
 We're exercising our right!

\*

JOE (CONT'D)

Show me a permit. You gotta square this with the county commission. Where're all these people comin from, anyhow?

ERIC

We are talking right now on stolen land -

Joe laughs. "What???"

ERIC (CONT'D)

- and we are calling for the defunding and abolition of the fucking corrupt and homicidal police state!

JOE

*Defunding?* What police state? You wanna see my budget??

SARAH

Yes! Take away money from the people MURDERING people with IMPUNITY and give it to people who *DON'T* murder!

\*

An IRATE MIDDLE-AGED MAN steps out of the ANTIQUE/HARDWARE STORE (of which he is the owner) down the block. One of its windows has been smashed.

ANTIQUÉ STORE OWNER

Sheriff, LOOK at this! Look what they done. Thousands a dollars a goods they took.

A YOUNG PROTESTER yells at him.

YOUNG PROTESTER

*So don't put racist fuckin lawn jockeys on your Nazi-ass window!*

ANTIQUÉ STORE OWNER (V.O.)

*I'M a Nazi?! You're fuckin destroyin property!*

\*

Joe now sees that two protestors have been training their phone cameras on him, and Eric's sign is now turned in his direction: it features the photo of Joe wrestling Lodge.

JOE

Okay: that's misrepresentation!

ERIC

*What is it?*

JOE

That's slander! It's libel and it's not true. I can arrest you.

ERIC

For what?

JOE

For disturbin the peace. Misleadin  
the public. HE pulled ME down! You  
saw *exactly* how it happened!

Sarah jumps in:

SARAH

JOE (CONT'D)

\*

This isn't ABOUT you! It's  
about a dead man! It's about     It's not? That's my life!  
a whole system -- You still \*     That's my reputation!  
HAVE your life! You can  
reBUILD your reputation!

We CUT AWAY for a moment to BRIAN, who is watching this from  
a block away. He looks livid. His thunder stolen.

TEEN GIRL (O.S.)

REDNECK

\*

And this was only the one  
that got VIDEOTAPED! There  
are so much more!

FUCK ANTIFA! FUCK YOU!

Sarah finds Michael and confronts him:

SARAH

Do you just not even have an opinion  
about what happened, Michael?? Not as  
a cop. I'm really asking you!

MICHAEL

(thrown)

'S a outrage. 'S a horrible incident! No  
one hates bad cops more than cops.

SARAH

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

\*

*"Bad cops"??* Evil racist  
*murdering* cops!

\* Yeah! You think I'm arguin  
with that??

Brian, now closer, summons the courage to yell:

BRIAN

You're wearing the uniform for a system  
built on hundreds of years of  
institutionalized racism!

Michael gives Brian a very intimidating look. Brian backs  
off. An aggressive kid adds fuel to the fire with:

AGGRESSIVE KID

(to Michael)

You know you got Aryan Nation boys  
with you?? You know that? Your family  
is fuckin ASHAMED of you!

SARAH

No! Fuck off!

(to Michael, who stonewalls)

Michael, not that, but you should be joining us! Why aren't you?! I know I haven't experienced racism, but you have! I'm a hypocrite, but all I can do is fight for justice! Stand with us for justice, Michael!

\*

AGGRESSIVE KID

Can you take a kneel? Let me see you take a kneel!

Back inside the crowd, Joe is being cowed into silence.

ERIC

POLICE VIOLENCE IN EDDINGTON! POLICE VIOLENCE IN EDDINGTON!

A kid trains his phone on Eric and Joe. Joe clocks this, panicked. He tries to find Michael to bring him into this.

JOE

Mike?!

The owner of the antique store calls out to Joe.

ANTIQUÉ STORE OWNER

SHERIFF! WHAT THE HELL DO I GOTTA DO?! 'Cause I didn't put up your little sign??

Joe addresses Eric:

JOE

Do you know who your dad *actually* is, Eric? Do you know what he's done?

ERIC

You mean to your wife?

Joe sees red. He decides to escalate:

JOE

Or what about your *mother*? Where'd *she* go? She didn't just vanish into thin air!

Eric has gone pale. Then:

ERIC

*What about your fuckin crazy whore wife! Stealin babies? Her batshit mom sendin crazy shit to my house my whole life! Maybe THAT was somethin to do with it!*

Joe now sees that a girl is training her PHONE on Eric as he screams this! Joe SEIZES the phone, only to then realize that he's crossed the line.

JOE

Okay, I'm sorry, but just -

Joe looks into the camera and explains to potential viewers:

JOE (CONT'D)

I didn't take it. I'm givin it back. I just wanted to explain.

SARAH

That's assault! You grabbed her!

\*

Joe gives the phone back to the girl.

JOE (CONT'D)

You're seein I'm givin it back. Accident!

OLD MAN (O.S.)

I SAW! HE WAS PROVOKED!

\*

Joe is walking backwards now...

JOE (CONT'D)

(to antique store owner)

I'M FIXIN THIS, JOHN! STAY PUT! I...

Meanwhile, most of the kids are now getting down on the asphalt to lie on their stomachs, arms behind their backs.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to an overwhelmed Michael)

Michael! Stay! Keep this under control!

Michael looks like he's drowning. Joe RETREATS, getting Guy's attention.

JOE (CONT'D)

Guy! With me. Town Hall.

Guy looks torn. Should he leave this?

JOE (CONT'D)

Michael's got it.

As Joe emerges, he passes the two old men that were chatting over each other in the grocery store, now lecturing part of the crowd, while they're videotaped.

FIRST MAN	*	SECOND MAN	*
Stop 'em from comin in! If	*		*
you don't let 'em come in,	*		*
they don't start a fuss to	*		*
begin with! All the residents	*	Just like I was sayin! Yep!	*
come out with guns, the	*		*
threat leaves! Simple!	*	Yep. Stop 'em not even with	*
		force. Just the promise a	*
		combat. They ain't trained.	*

BRIAN awkwardly integrates with the crowd, his eyes on Eric and Sarah. Sarah seems to be consoling Eric, who then storms off, leaving the crowd. Sarah follows him. Michael is also watching this.

**EXT. STREET - VERY LATE AFTERNOON** \*

Joe, sweat-drenched, speed-walks down the street, eyes buzzing. Kids follow behind, filming. \*

JOE \*  
I can't. I can't. Shit. \*

He checks the time and rigidly picks up his pace. He swallows. Rubs his throat. Quietly hacks. \*

**INT. JUANITA'S RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe enters the back door of the kitchen. He swallows. Rubs his throat. Quietly hacks. \*

JOE \*  
I can't. I can't. Shit. \*

A Mexican woman, listlessly preparing food, eyes him as he walks through.

**INT. JUANITA'S RESTAURANT - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Joe stops in a corner, scoping out the courtyard. Panicked. Only eight people are in the audience. Paula is a nervous wreck, not sure what to do. Guy, still in riot gear, is eating nachos at the snack table. He has one hand on his holstered gun, paranoid.

Joe gets Guy's attention. Guy walks over.

JOE  
I can't.

GUY  
Why? The protest? Or this turnout?

JOE  
I can't.

Guy nods, "understanding." Not helpful.

JOE (CONT'D)  
(swallowing again)  
And my fuckin throat...

Guy pauses at this.

**EXT. JUANITA'S RESTAURANT - COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER**

Joe now stands in front of the meagre crowd, lost. He picks up an unnecessary microphone.

JOE  
Guys, gals... Thank you for bein here.  
I know you saw what's happening out  
yonder, but...we're not gonna let 'em  
distract from the real...  
(snapping to, pulling out notes)  
So! Would I be runnin for mayor if this  
didn't happen? If our whole town wasn't  
shut down to *die* 'cause our governor  
and her pet mayor - *our* mayor - had  
investments in *lettin* it die? Kill off  
your businesses and replace 'em with  
data farms? And by the way, that same  
Governor: when the Public Regulations  
Commission tried to stop her from fast-  
trackin this big secret deal, she got  
'em evicted outta their own buildin!  
That's the kinda executive power you  
get in a quote-unquote State Of  
Emergency, which she can just keep  
renewin for as long as she wants. And  
the mayor is right there with her! All  
while you're stuck inside your little  
adobe box with a diaper on your face.

Beat.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Let's just open this up to a Q and A.  
If anyone got any...

Joe looks up. Nothing from the audience. Guy raises his hand with a rehearsed question. Only him.

JOE (CONT'D)  
Okay, well...  
(beat)  
Look: all right: this ain't the turnout  
I hoped for. Obviously. But how're you  
supposed to get here when you gotta  
wade through that? And my deputies are  
out there, makin it safe. But ain't it  
a coincidence: here I'm a peace  
officer, callin for unity, and now I'm  
the one being hit with a, what?  
Brutality accusation?! Ain't that rich?  
(MORE)

When that night, the night in question,  
Lodge - known vagrant - you all know  
who that is in the picture - he pulled  
*me* down. I hurt *my* shoulder. But people  
can just say whatever they want now.

Uncomfortable silence in the audience.

JOE (CONT'D)

And yes: these protests: it's a real  
thing, the imbalance in this country,  
what happened to that man, it's  
undefensible. Absolutely disgraceful  
conduct. And that officer - the  
individual that committed that action -  
he's a *despicably* bad apple. Evil. Cut  
'im off the tree! But this crap on the  
other side? Gatherin, lootin, scarin  
folks, dividin...

Joe is starting to pace.

JOE (CONT'D)

And I'm not the problem here. If y'all  
believe that, you're just eatin outta  
the palm. Y'all think the *police* is  
where the power is?? It's the  
leadership. Leadership a this country!  
On down to the leadership a this  
community! Y'all wanna talk brutality?  
I kept this town safe for the better  
half a my life, but if *I* got any shame -  
truly? - it's in keepin quiet about  
somethin that *never* set right with me.  
About Ted Garcia. Our mayor. Because  
the man is...purely and simply...a  
predator.

(stops pacing, beat)

Ted Garcia...is a sexual predator.

(beat)

Okay?

People look around. Guy looks confused and a little worried.  
But Joe just nods.

JOE (CONT'D)

Yes. All right?... And how do I know?  
Well, I *should* know. My wife? When she  
was sixteen years old? He gets her  
pregnant. Forces her to - abort.  
Little innocent baby. Murdered. Ted  
turns his back. *Her* life's ruined. But  
*Ted's* life? Off to the races! And for  
what? You just go ahead and vote him  
back in. You'll find out for what.  
Just look at his *own* wife. Which you  
can't, 'cause she's gone. Took off.

(MORE)

But that's none a my business. I can only speculate why. Look to history! And what that man did to *my* wife: make no mistake: that's predator behavior.

(beat)

What's more: it's rape. Let's face it. Statutory. Ted Garcia. Let's call him what he is.

Joe nods, feeling some momentum. The tiny audience is stunned.

JOE (CONT'D)

And we're gonna say it and we're gonna be sayin it over these next few days and weeks. Because that's what this election is about. So vote Joe Cross. Take back our community. Save our soul.

Joe looks both fired up and...unnerved. He steps off toward the back corner, where Guy is waiting.

GUY

...Good?

JOE

...Post it.

GUY

Okay. Yeah?

Joe looks at him, ambivalent but addled.

JOE

Don't make me think. Post it.

**EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - EVENING**

The crowd of young protestors marches down a residential street. Brian walks among them.

CROWD

(chanting)

*NO JUSTICE! NO PEACE!*

*NO RACIST PO-LICE!*

Brian's phone VIBRATES with an incoming text from ERIC. He opens it to find a PHOTO OF ERIC KISSING SARAH in the car (she's clearly unaware of being photographed), with the attached text: "*wish you were heeere!!!*"

Brian's eyes harden.

**EXT. DESERT - EVENING**

A very stressed Michael runs through empty desert, firing an AR\* 15 rifle at a lineup of bottles 200 yards to his right. \*

His headphones play a Youtube video (about Bitcoin as generational wealth) from his smartphone. He cocks the rifle and fires, then cocks again, fires again. Neither shots connect. \*

He stops, swings to the left and FIRES the rifle at a target sheet 400 ft away. This one HITS the target's foot. \*

DING! An alert for an Instagram MESSAGE REQUEST appears.

He opens Instagram. It's an obscured PHOTO MESSAGE from an unknown account (Brian's). Michael opts to VIEW the photo, revealing the pic of Sarah and Eric kissing. Michael's heart jams in his throat.

**EXT. CROSS HOUSE - NIGHT**

Joe's cruiser peels up to the house. Its headlights shine onto LOUISE who stands upright in the driveway. Dawn stands at the front door, suspended anxiously. *Dawn's energy suggests that she saw (before this scene) Louise behave in a way that frightened her.*

JOE

Okay.

Joe turns off the engine and opens the car door. Louise is staring at him with wide, penetrating eyes.

JOE (CONT'D)

Baby?

Louise is looking at him with a newly animated hatred.

JOE (CONT'D)

I needed to. He can't get away with it.

Joe hears a vehicle behind him. He turns to see an APPROACHING VEHICLE - a very nice winnebago - in the near-distance. He turns back to Louise.

JOE (CONT'D)

...Rabbit?

Joe looks back at the winnebago. It's coming toward them.

JOE (CONT'D)

Is that comin here?

Louise finally speaks, with true revulsion and a sort of animal fear at the unfamiliarity (or is it sudden familiarity?) of the man before her.

LOUISE

You are not my husband. You are not real.

Joe is stunned.

The winnebago arrives, kicking dust toward them. VERNON steps out, silhouetted by harsh headlights. Louise starts walking toward him. As she passes Joe:

JOE

Don't say that. Rabbit? Please  
don't say that. What do you mean?

Vernon helps Louise into the passenger seat. Vernon, still obscured by the headlights, looks to Joe. Joe vaguely shakes his head no.

Vernon continues to the driver seat, climbs in, and DRIVES OFF.

Joe stands frozen in the car's wake. Dawn remains suspended by the door.

**INT. CROSS HOUSE - SECONDS LATER**

Joe enters the LIVING ROOM. The dolls in Louise's collection are all still there. The room is eerie. It feels all wrong.

DAWN

The way you did it is repugnant,  
but tonight's the most you ever  
done for that girl in your life.

Joe just continues toward his bedroom.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joe sits on his bed. Slowly, steadily, feeling overwhelmed, he takes two sleeping pills. Swallows them with water. Then he takes another.

**INT/EXT. JOE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON (START OF DAY 5)**

Joe is asleep on top of his bed, lying in the same spot where he was sitting last night. The sun shines brightly. It's **4:16 PM.**

DAWN (V.O.)

This is my fourth message now.

This was heard from outside, WAKING Joe. He looks haggard and \*  
has been sweating (COVID). He sits up and looks out the \*  
window to see Dawn outside, pacing on the phone.

DAWN

What you done today...no matter what  
excuse you come UP with, no matter when  
you come to your SENSES - you have  
wrought destruction upon our home, and  
upon me, and on *Facebook*?!

This makes Joe reach for his PHONE, which has dozens of texts from several outraged sources, furious about the protests, property damage, etc. The top text is from GUY: "You ok sheriff?"

DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
With words that don't even...

Joe goes to Facebook, clearly fatigued.

DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
What are you SAYING?! Your life is a  
fiction?! So *WHO* then? Who is your abuser?  
AM *I*?? Say the name if you call me a liar!  
Your *mother* a liar! With no warning! No  
honesty! Just poison!... *BITCH!*

Dawn hangs up outside, fraught. Through the preceding dialogue,  
Joe has found a new FACEBOOK POST BY LOUISE. It is a VIDEO of  
her talking to her WEBCAM. Joe plays it.

LOUISE (ON VIDEO)  
My name is Louise Cross. Louise Bodkin. I  
am speaking now to deny my husband's  
announcement last night, which was false.  
And a falsification of my true life. I  
*was* abused, but not by Ted Garcia. That  
is a fiction invented by my mother and  
kept alive by her and by my husband. But  
it is not *my* shame, it is my abuser's,  
and he was one of millions. *I* am one of  
millions. We are not a coincidence.

Joe's stomach has dropped. A CALL comes in from Guy. He answers.

GUY (V.O.)  
Sheriff, you okay?

Joe, stunned, is thinking. And not about Guy's question.

GUY (V.O.)  
Sheriff? We got a noise complaint on  
the mayor's house. I guess he's doin a  
fundraiser.

Joe is still silent.

GUY (V.O.)  
Sheriff? Is it too touchy? Do we leave  
it? We *do* leave it, right? 'Course we do.

#### **EXT. TED'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

An outdoor PARTY at Ted's house. Tables of food are outfitted  
with industrial tubs of hand sanitizer. About 50 people mingle  
(most wearing masks). Signs enforcing "*6 FT APART.*" Another  
sign: "*Together We Survive This. Together We BEAT This.*"

JOE'S CAR (still outfitted for campaigning) pulls up under a  
tree, whose low-hanging branches scrape against the top of the  
campaign speaker-box. Red and blue flares (from the gumballs)  
streak across the party, disturbing the atmosphere.

Joe emerges, chest puffed, to walk through the party. (He will \*  
cough a few times in this scene.) Warren, manning a sign-in \*  
table, smiles at Joe. Behind him a FLAT-SCREEN TV (plugged into  
a laptop) displays LOUISE'S VIDEO POST, which plays on loop.

Joe stops at this, then walks over, UNPLUGS THE TV. He then  
proceeds across the lawn, walking past a mystified Ted to go  
straight to the speaker system. He turns the music down and  
immediately starts speed-walking back. As he nears Ted:

TED

*What're you doin'?*

Not able to speak, Joe ignores.

TED (CONT'D)

*You're not here on rape charges?*

Joe passes Ted. Ted talks to Joe's back as he continues off.

TED (CONT'D)

*That didn't really pan out for ya, huh?*

Joe keeps walking. He nearly arrives at his cruiser when  
suddenly the MUSIC VOLUME BLASTS LOUDER THAN BEFORE.

Joe freezes. He thinks for half a second and then storms back  
toward the speakers. He turns it down again, *lower* than  
before. Ted immediately turns it right back up.

JOE

**TURN THE NOISE DOWN!**

Ted SLAPS Joe across the face. Joe is stunned. A look of  
shock and disbelief plastered onto his face.

Beat. Ted isn't satisfied. He SLAPS Joe again.

Joe looks insane. He stands motionless for a long time, the  
music blasting. His face is almost purple. After a moment,  
Joe stiffly turns around and starts toward his car. He walks  
past Warren, who avoids his eyes.

Continuing on, Joe looks off to see ERIC and SARAH covertly  
smoking weed at the far-end of the back side of the house.  
They look over their shoulders to follow him with their eyes.

Joe arrives at his CAR and opens the driver side door. He  
turns sharply back to the party. A sudden RUSH of purpose  
overtakes him - *to do what? Return to Ted?* He hesitates. That  
kills it.

He enters the cruiser and shuts the door. He sits.  
Conflicted. Aware that everyone is staring at him. After a  
beat, he JAMS the key into the ignition and drives in  
reverse.

The speaker box atop the cruiser gets caught on a low-hanging but thick tree branch. The box is torn off the top of the car and falls off.

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) - EVENING**

Joe drives down Broadway Street, still purple with rage but also inscrutable. He drives past the sheriff's office, whose window bears a sign: *"Over 60 million Americans have police interactions per year. Many of these result in lives being saved."*

Joe then sees a MAN walking his dog on the sidewalk. He gestures incredulously to Joe:

MAN WALKING DOG

You're drivin the wrong way!

Joe then realizes that he's driving in the wrong direction on a one-way road. Further ahead is a car driving toward us. Joe turns onto the first available street and continues ahead.

Coming up on TED'S BAR, Joe sees that ONE OF THE WINDOWS HAS BEEN SMASHED (a trash can sticks halfway out). Inside the unlit bar is a figure rooting around.

Joe, riding past the bar, immediately makes a U-turn and stops the car outside the bar. He steps out. COUGHING is heard from within. It's LODGE. Joe unholsters his gun and approaches.

**INT. GARCIA'S BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Lodge, red-eyed, stands behind the bar. He COUGHS violently, hoarsely - like a BARK. He holds two bottles of liquor - vodka in one hand, whiskey in the other. His back is to the door, but we see enough of his profile to see his chin glistening.

Joe has entered to stand at the door. His eyes are saucers.

Lodge swigs from one bottle, coughing. He says "fuckin same." Then he swigs from the other bottle.

LODGE

No difference!

He smells both. It's hard to tell if he's scared or giddy:

LODGE (CONT'D)

Wine into water. Wickedness!

Lodge is pulling more bottles and drinking. He turns and sees Joe.

LODGE (CONT'D)

YOU devils! YOU called this plague!

Lodge COUGHS, which hurts his head. He squeezes it, moaning from a sudden rush of pain. He turns and start pulling more liquor to smell.

LODGE (CONT'D)

Fuckin *head*. Fuckin *tooth*. Sickness  
bein pump-pump-pumpt into me and no  
single ONE a you cares! Don't *nobody*,  
*nobody*, *NOBODY*, fuckin -

He SLAMS his head against the counter.

LODGE (CONT'D)

- CARES ABOUT ME!

Joe turns to see a FACE SHIELD on the hostess stand. He slowly picks it up and straps it on. He then picks up a glass candle from a table. Holds it.

Lodge, having swigged from another bottle, launches into a hacking, painful cough.

Joe suddenly and fiercely THROWS the candle at Lodge. It hits the bottles in front of Lodge, JOLTING him. Recovering from the shock, Lodge turns and THROWS a bottle at Joe. The bottle shatters against the wall. Joe flinches.

Lodge grabs another bottle. Throws it. Joe pivots to avoid it hitting his head.

Lodge grabs another bottle, and as he reels to throw it--

Joe pulls his gun and FIRES THREE TIMES in quick succession. Two bullets hit Lodge in the torso, the third shatters the mirror behind him. Lodge is down.

**LATER**

Joe, still wearing the face shield and now also a mask (as well as blue latex gloves), has closed most of the blinds on the windows. He closes the last blind, dropping the room into darkness.

**LATER**

Joe uses a pocketknife to dig the one bullet that didn't hit Lodge out of the wall.

**LATER**

Joe, now in T-shirt, uniform off, starts putting Lodge's legs into an oversized, heavy-duty trash bag. He then whips out another bag from the box. A mop and bucket are nearby, ready to be employed.

**EXT. BACK ALLEY - MINUTES LATER**

The alley beside Ted's bar. Joe DRAGS Lodge's corpse, now wrapped in trash bags, out the back of the bar. The trunk of his parked car is open and also layered with trash bags.

**EXT. RIO GRANDE RIVER - NIGHT**

\*

Joe, still wearing mask and face shield, drags Lodge's corpse toward the Rio Grande river. He unceremoniously ROLLS Lodge's corpse into the water and it is carried off by the current.

Joe drops in exhaustion. His TEETH HAVE BEGUN TO CHATTER and chills take over his body. He looks like he might pass out. A fever. His eyes are addled as a terrible thought invades.

**INT. TED'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

The end of the night. GIANT WINDOWS and a WIDE SLIDING-GLASS DOOR distinguish one wall of Ted's living room. They overlook a DECK (littered with un-retired party ephemera), and beyond the backyard: A VAST HILL.

Ted enters from the kitchen (having made himself tea), now wearing sweatpants and a T shirt. He plops down onto his recliner and turns on the TV by remote.

He watches TV for a second, but then notices a PURSE on the coffee table. He stares for a moment.

TED

Eric?!

Off-screen, from his room:

ERIC (O.S.)

Yeah?

TED

(calling out)

I thought we agreed Absolutely No  
One in the house?

ERIC (O.S.)

Yeah. I know.

TED

So what's this purse??

ERIC (O.S.)

What purse?

TED

C'mere and look at what purse. You  
think I didn't see you with that girl--

*PING!*

A BULLET pierces the sliding-glass door (preceded by a MUZZLE FLASH from the outside hill) and strikes the back of Ted's chair. A HOLE is blown out of Ted's chest, spattering the entire room with blood. *He isn't dead.* He tries to take a breath in, the pain so terrible that he breaks into trembling spasms. Eyes monstrously wide.

Eric, alarmed by the sound, comes to the doorway and steps in. He sees Ted's dead body, face locked in a wretched gasp.

Eric takes a few steps toward his father, but freezes when he realizes. He looks to the glass door. Beat. A MUZZLEFLASH appears on the dark hill beyond the house. The glass door SHATTERS and a bullet STRIKES the doorpost behind Eric, blasting wood and dust into the air.

Eric snaps out of his mortified trance. He turns to run, but a final bullet STRIKES Eric in the back. He is propelled forward, crashing face-first into a closed, mostly-glass door (one of two double-doors). He falls *through* the glass, killed instantly, his feet twisted in the jagged remaining shards in the doorframe. TV sounds continue.

**ELEVATED POV (a scope's CROSS-HAIRS dead-center):** a high angle view of the living room. The back of Ted's chair - motionless. Eric's corpse lying face-down, blood pooling beneath him.

**EXT. HILL - SAME TIME**

JOE draws his eye away from the SCOPE of his rifle. He then rises from his belly, lifting the rifle with him. He looks down to survey the stagnant, bloody scene from his elevated perch.

Joe bends down to gather two spent bullet casings and starts down toward the house. Every step is accompanied by a rattling sound - like a pebble bouncing against tin.

**MOMENTS LATER**

As Joe approaches the back of the house, he casually removes his shoes. Now in socks, his steps are painful against the rocky earth as he continues toward the stairs to the deck.

**INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - SECONDS LATER**

Joe carefully walks through the obliterated sliding-glass door, avoiding the shattered glass.

He crosses the room, passing Ted and walking to Eric - avoiding stepping in the expanding pool of his blood - to peer down the empty hall. He then looks down at Eric. Disturbed, he quickly needs to look away.

Joe returns to the living room, pulling an AEROSOL CAN OF SPRAY PAINT out of his pocket. This is the source of the rattle.

Joe walks to a bare wall, shaking the can. He starts to SPRAY the wall, writing something. Then he notices a POCKET WATCH (in an open box) atop the credenza beside him. He picks it up. The watch bears the engraving: "*From a Grateful Governor to a Marvelous Mayor. Here's to a brighter future!*"

Joe POKETS this. As he re-commences spray-painting, his teeth begin to chatter again. We return our attention to Ted's corpse, continuing to bleed profusely. We return to Eric's corpse, pitiful in its arbitrary face-down position. Aerosol sounds continue.

Joe has finished writing. He steps back to judge his work.

Spray-painted on the wall: "*NO JUSTICE NO PEACE*"

**EXT./INT. HIGHWAY - PRE-DAWN (START OF DAY 6)**

Pre-dawn. The sun is about to rise. *The landscape is a graphic match to the last shot.* Joe's cruiser speeds down the highway.

Joe, now wearing a T-shirt, looks ill as he drives. He tries calling Louise. It rings once and then goes to voicemail. He puts his phone in Airplane Mode.

The car speeds past a City Limits sign for a new town.

**EXT. DRIVE-THRU TESTING SITE - MORNING**

A mobile testing site. Joe's car is at the end of a queue of 6 cars in another town.

**LATER**

Joe's car has pulled up to a MEDICAL WORKER, who leans in through his window with a swab.

JOE

I got exposed to someone three nights ago that I saw again last night and I think he definitely had it--

The medical worker JAMS the swab deep up his nostril.

JOE (CONT'D)

(genuinely worried)

Ah! Did you go too far? I think you went too far. You broke through a layer.

MEDICAL WORKER

Results in 24 to 48 hours.

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) - MORNING**

Driving back, Joe hesitates before taking his phone out of AIRPLANE MODE. An avalanche of panicked texts pours in - from Guy, from Bob, from John, from Michael, etc.

A CALL FROM GUY comes in over this. Joe answers.

JOE

Yeah.

GUY (V.O.)

Sheriff--

**EXT. TED'S HOUSE - MORNING**

Joe's car pulls up to Ted's house, which has been cordoned off by police tape. Guy waits for him out front, by the yard entrance, and Michael emerges from the far side of the house. Both wear booties.

Joe gets out of the car, back in his uniform and wearing a mask. His eyes are buzzing with nervousness. Michael, queasy, walks up to him.

MICHAEL

(walking up)

Hi sheriff.

GUY

Sheriff. You gotta be ready, I mean it's fuckin' *bad*, but I think you're mayor now.

Joe sees BRIAN, standing a small distance away. He has stiffly turned his back to them. \*

JOE \*

How long he been here? \*

GUY \*

Oh. He's new. \*

Joe sees an old man, TOM, standing with his dog, near where Michael is. Joe walks up to him.

JOE

Hi Tom. You found it?

TOM

Hi sheriff. I did. Sammy broke off from me on our walk. Had to chase him all the way here. Found him inside, lickin' up the mess. I figured not to go inside, though. I just called it straight in.

Joe now notices a PUEBLO POLICE CAR in the desert just beyond the house.

JOE

What's that?

GUY

He called them, too.

TOM

Just, for - if they needed a look.

MICHAEL

They been stayin outside. This is I guess the Pueblo border.

JOE

Uhhh, no it's not. Negative.

MICHAEL

I think yes, though?

TOM

It is yes.

As Tom starts to explain, Joe proceeds to the BACK DECK...

TOM (CONT'D)

We're on the county line here. This is Sevilla County, but just past the house is Pueblo. 'S the same thing at mine.

**INSERT:** A SIGN ON THE HILL announcing that this is the border between Eddington and the Pueblo. Ted's house looms in the BG.

**BACK ON THE DECK:** Joe looks out to see an indigenous officer on the hill from which Joe fired the shots. He's rooting around.

JOE

Who is that? Butterfly?

MICHAEL

And the Pueblo sheriff down here.

Michael points to an OLDER INDIGENOUS MAN (60s) below the deck. This is the PUEBLO SHERIFF.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(quietly)

That one's not police, apparently. A new one gets appointed every year and they handle all Pueblo matters? Or he blesses them?

JOE

This *isn't* a Pueblo matter. This is Eddington.

(pointing to house)

He's the *mayor* of Eddington.

Joe incredulously to Michael and Guy.

MICHAEL

You wanna go look inside first?

**INT. TED'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe stands in the kitchen, just outside the crime scene, where the corpses of Ted and Eric are festering. Guy and Michael stand behind Joe.

GUY

I couldn't reach you, Sheriff, so I just been lockin it down as good as I can.

Joe, wiping his nose with his sleeve, tries to think.

JOE

You call for the warrant on this?

MICHAEL

I did. Called the magistrate judge right after the security closure.

JOE

How 'bout OMI?

GUY

Didn't wanna call 'em 'til you got here.

BUTTERFLY (O.S.)

*I called 'em!*

Joe looks out the kitchen door to see OFFICER BUTTERFLY JIMENEZ (30s), a solidly built Native American officer (mask on chin). He has ascended the stairs to stop at the back porch.

BUTTERFLY (CONT'D)

They're on their way.

(then, to Joe)

Hi Sheriff. Thought you might be sitting this one out.

He turns to Michael, holding up a ZIP-LOC BAG containing one spent RIFLE CASING.

BUTTERFLY (CONT'D)

Took forever, but I found one single casing. 300 blackout. How many impacts you count?

He and Michael have clearly been talking.

MICHAEL

(directed to Joe)

Four. Or three -

(to Butterfly)

- if that one on the floor's the same as hit the chair.

GUY  
(incredulous)  
Why don't you give 'im your salary, too?

BUTTERFLY  
Found some super legible tire prints  
back there, too.

Joe hesitates at this.

MICHAEL  
Also checked for CCTV. Hard-drive got  
took.

Butterfly crosses to the other side of the deck and looks to  
the spray-painted sign. He notices the idiosyncrasy of the E,  
resembling a Disney E.

BUTTERFLY  
That's for a handwritin expert.

GUY  
(to Joe)  
More lootings in town, too. All  
smashed up.

Butterfly points to the PURSE on the coffee table.

BUTTERFLY  
And there's that.

They all look.

GUY  
Wife's purse?

JOE  
Wife's gone.

Michael takes a careful step into the living room to take a  
zoomed-in photo of the bag. The purse bears a BLM pin. Guy,  
wearing gloves, walks over to it. He reaches into the bag.

BUTTERFLY  
Whoa whoa.  
(to Joe)  
Is this how you guys do this? This  
is a murder scene. Pre-forensics.

Guy has frozen.

JOE  
Too late now.

BUTTERFLY`  
Good point. Why don't you pull your  
dick out and fuck the fuckin purse?

Joe gestures to Guy to continue searching the bag.

BUTTERFLY

Gettin to be grateful you boys never  
help us with jack shit.

<p>GUY</p> <p>But now you wanna help us.</p> <p>What's your boys's system out* there? Whiskey in your holsters?</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>BUTTERFLY (CONT'D)</p> <p>Not "out there." Right here.</p> <p>I went to Quantaco, redneck.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>
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Guy finds Sarah's ID in the bag. \*

GUY (CONT'D)

Sarah Allen. Born 2003.

Michael is frozen at the mention of Sarah.

GUY (CONT'D)

(re: the pin on the bag)

And Blacks Lives Matters, too. This  
is the one that was shriekin at you  
in the riot. \*

BUTTERFLY

(to Joe)

Anything we find here gets thrown away  
now. You understand that? Unless you  
find a judge even stupider'n this one.

GUY

(losing temper)

For real, bro! Don't you got some  
alcoholic domestic shit at one a  
your casinos? This ain't yours.

JOE

It's true, Butterfly. It's not.

BUTTERFLY

Shooter was on tribal ground. This is  
a Pueblo case.

GUY

Victims are Eddington!

BUTTERFLY

(laughing)

Good for you! We got the shell casing!

<p>JOE</p> <p>So you do what you want with the casing. There's no cross-commission here. We respect your sovereignty. You respect ours.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>	<p>BUTTERFLY (CONT'D)</p> <p>(incredulous)</p> <p>You respect our <i>sovereignty</i>?? Okay! Then let's just call the Feds and the BIA right now, see what <i>they</i> wanna do. Easy.</p>	<p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p> <p>*</p>
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Butterfly pulls out his phone and looks to Joe. Joe returns the stare and then turns to Guy:

JOE (CONT'D)

Let's run Sarah Allen her purse back.

Joe walks off. Guy reluctantly follows ("*that's it??*").

BUTTERFLY

Okay. That's nice. Well, we got it from here.

GUY

(to Michael)

Don't let him dink with the crime scene.

BUTTERFLY

What crime scene? It's your toilet now.

\*

**EXT. SARAH'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - AFTERNOON**

Sarah (masked) stands opposite Guy and Joe, 6 ft apart, on the front porch of her house. Sarah's phone is poised in her hand, as if she froze while texting. She is very emotional.

JOE

We're just tryin to get a picture a the night. So you're there with your boyfriend--

SARAH \* JOE (CONT'D) \*

He's not my boyfriend. He \* \*

wasn't. We barely even just \* \*

met. \* \* *Whoever the boy was to you:* \*

\* *you're there yesterday,* \*

\* *you're in his house, and* \*

\* *later that night he's dead,* \*

\* *his dad's dead, your purse is* \*

\* *in the room. I'm just tryin--* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

\* \*

I was hardly there! \*

SARAH (CONT'D)

*Yeah, because I forgot it. I*

*don't... What're you trying to say*

*that's supposed to mean?*

GUY

We seen your social media. The little

donations you make? Antifa bail-outs?

Aiding riots? You ain't done yourself

any-all favors--

SARAH \* GUY (CONT'D)

I'm just trying to help! I \* (reading phone)

don't *know* the people \* How's this quote, from you:

rioting. None of the actual \* "free your communities, arm

protesters are part of that! \* yourselves against the

(now pleading to Joe) \* oppressor." Dismantle this,

No, that's out of context! \* defund that! Preachin riots

Not literal arms. \* and lootin. Bein accessory to

\* terrorism. That *is* terrorism, \*

Terrorism?? The looters and \* kid. \*

rioters are completely \* \*

separate! They're being \* \*

planted! \*

We reveal that Sarah has been composing an unsent text to

Michael on her phone. It reads: "*Michael, your sheriff is at*

*my house and I'm being*"

**INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

SARAH'S MOM stands nervously at the end of the hall, watching the police interview with her daughter through the distant open door.

SARAH	GUY	
They're part of the Right!	*	
They're making it look like	*	
it's the protesters so that		*
scared old white people won't		
complain when Martial Law	"White people."	*
happens!		

**EXT. TOWN HALL - PRESS CONFERENCE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Joe stands before CAMERAS manned by NM reporters. He stands with Michael and Guy at his side. A formally dressed woman stands behind them. Guy nods along. Butterfly watches from off-camera, bemused.

JOE

(slightly nasal-sounding)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.  
 My name is Joe Cross. Joseph Cross.  
 Sheriff of Sevilla County. I'm standing  
 here with several, uh - a lot of  
 support. I'd like to introduce  
 lieutenant Guy Tooley, Captain Michael  
 Cooke -  
 (gestures to woman behind  
 him)  
 Samantha Pedilla with, uh...city...  
 (to Guy)  
 Is the coroner's...?  
 (to the crowd)  
 All right. Well. We come before you  
 today with heavy hearts. As a family,  
 a community and a Sheriff's  
 Department to grieve the loss of two,  
 uh - main members of the community.  
 Last night around midnight, Ted  
 Garcia and his son Eric Garcia were  
 fatally struck down in their home by  
 cowardly sniper fire. I do believe we  
 have sufficient *evidence* to believe  
 that the perpetrator was a member -  
 or *members* - of the ANTIFA terrorist  
 group, capitalizing on the recent  
 tragic events in Minneapolis to sow  
 chaos. This was a organized attack  
 meant to spread fear and panic and to  
 damage our faith in the Second  
 Amendment at a vulnerable time a  
 national unrest.

**INT. CROSS LIVING ROOM - EVENING**

JOE'S PRESS CONFERENCE CONTINUES ON TV.

Dawn is watching this on the couch. Eyes buzzing with worry. On her lap is a laptop: she's composing a post on Facebook. What she's written thus far: *"Yesterday my daughter put up a video accusing me and accusing my son-in-law"*

JOE (ON TV)

(continuing)

Now, to the criminals that perpetrated this act: you will soon find out what justice looks like in Sevilla County. You will find out. It will not be tolerated. And on top a the new curfew of 8 PM, I have a message to the individuals plannin to take their criminal conduct outta the streets and into the neighborhoods: I would tell *them*: if you value your life, you should think twice, because the people of Eddington *like* guns, I encourage them to *own* guns, and they're gonna be in their homes tonight with their guns loaded. And if you try to break *into* their homes to steal, to set fires, to cause physical injury or death - I'm highly recommendin that they blow you outta the house *with* their guns.

The news cuts to an Anchor.

NEWS ANCHOR

Eddington, New Mexico, despite its meagre population, is quickly being co-opted in online circles as a poster town for anti-government, anti-police violence.

**EXT. PRIVATE JET - EVENING**

A PRIVATE LUXURY PLANE COURSES WITH OMINOUS, SILENT PURPOSE OVER DESERT TERRAIN. It's moving toward us, its image rippling in the heat - like a mirage. A giant orange sun behind it.

The news anchor's voice continues over this.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Meanwhile, Albuquerque's new public safety department - designed to relieve stress on the city's police -

**INT. PRIVATE JET - CONTINUOUS**

A gloriously decorated private plane. Everything - from the chairs to the carpet to the gilded mouldings on the ceiling - suggests obscene wealth. The TV continues to play the same news here.

## NEWS ANCHOR

- will deploy unarmed personnel made up of social workers, housing and homelessness specialists, and violence prevention coordinators...

We are creeping down the aisle, on the backs of TWO SITTING MEN (one thin and one muscular). On the floor in the BG is an athletic, shirtless THIRD MAN doing push-ups (the top of his head to us); he will soon rise to do BATTLE ROPES (which extend toward/under camera). One of the sitting men (the nearer of the two) wears a tye-dye t-shirt, although this is mostly made clear by his MUSCULAR, SUNBAKED ARM resting on the armrest. We creep in on the nearer, muscular man. A black, unapplied face mask dangles from his ear as he smokes from a cigarette, exhaling a sustained stream of smoke into the air. We push in toward the mask until it fills the frame with BLACK.

A long moment of BLACK...

...and then we begin to slowly PULL BACK to reveal a white header and footer, as on Instagram. The black has revealed itself to be a black square posted on Instagram on June 2, 2020, by *bribrifrazee*. Beside the handle on the header is a blue checkmark. \*

CUT TO:

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Joe wakes up, covered in sweat. His teeth chattering. He pulls the covers onto himself, freezing. He then gets up to check the thermostat. It's 75 degrees.

He grabs another blanket and gets under the covers.

**INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - DAY (START OF DAY 7)**

Joe is reclined on his bed, in underwear, teeth chattering more lightly now. He stares at the ceiling, in intense thought. A thermometer protrudes from his mouth. On his laptop: "*Coronavirus Symptoms to Be Concerned About.*" Near one hand is his cell phone. Near the other is a notepad with the following names: "*Sarah (BLM, purse, ANTIFA) / Ted's assistant / Brian - Eric's friend / John? - revenge 4 property*"

Suddenly Joe has a thought and picks up his smartphone. An unsent text to Louise waits. The text reads "*Dear Lou. My love. I love you*"

Joe stares. What to write? He then has an idea and turns to the list on his notepad. He adds: "Dawn"

**INT. JOE'S KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER**

Dawn, eyes baggy from lack of sleep (and sitting in the same spot as last night), looks up to a uniformed Joe emerging from his bedroom. He looks pale.

DAWN

(queasily)

I had to post a whole statement  
against her *video*. Her *phone's* not  
ringin. Vernon *blocked* me...

Joe, not having a response, moves to the kitchen to pour himself coffee.

DAWN (CONT'D)

Can you try her again? See if it rings  
for you?

JOE

I *been* tryin. It doesn't.

DAWN

So what's that mean?? Did she block you?

Joe sips the coffee. Winces. He dumps his cup into the sink.

JOE

Did you even put any coffee in this?

He opens the machine to see that the used filter is stuffed with wet coffee.

DAWN

Or did something happen to her? Did  
you pay the phone?

JOE

It's automatic.

Joe smells the damp coffee grounds in the filter. Touches them to his tongue. *Have I lost my taste and smell??*

DAWN

So she did? She *blocked* us??

Dawn looks to Joe, fraught. Joe looks back, distracted by his loss of taste. Then:

JOE

If it wasn't Ted, who was it?

DAWN

What?

JOE  
If it wasn't Ted...

DAWN  
Who's *saying* it wasn't Ted? ... Asides  
from a hateful, spiteful video.

Joe just looks at her.

DAWN (CONT'D)  
It wasn't even her *words*. She doesn't  
talk that way. You *know* she doesn't.

JOE  
How did she meet Vernon? You  
introduced her?

DAWN  
...*She* found him. What? All *I* did is I  
encouraged her to do her own research.  
And she was mad at *you*, so I took her \*  
to Albuquerque. He was there to do a  
talk. A lecture. I didn't like some a  
the things he was saying, but I was  
relieved she was gettin involved! He  
was questioning things. *I thought her*  
*head was comin outta the sand.* \*

A TEXT FROM GUY hits Joe's phone with a *DING!* Joe looks. It \*  
reads: "*Come to office! Kid with info*" \*

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) / EXT. GARCIA'S BAR - DAY**

Joe, driving through town, sees BUTTERFLY standing at the side  
door to Ted's bar. He is talking to the man who was walking his  
dog when Joe drove in the wrong direction. Butterfly notices  
Joe driving by. Joe's paranoia has been triggered.

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe's cruiser pulls up to the office. He steps out to see  
Butterfly's cruiser coming down a side street in the near-  
distance. Butterfly parks on the other side of the road and  
begins approaching.

JOE  
(hesitant)  
Still on vacation over here?

Butterfly just smiles as he approaches.

JOE (CONT'D)  
How's that goin?

BUTTERFLY  
Great. You?

JOE

Yeah. Good. Think I'm onto something.

Butterfly raises his eyebrows, mock-intrigued.

JOE (CONT'D)

What's that?

Butterfly makes an innocent face: "What's *what?*"

JOE (CONT'D)

Maybe actually: shooter on a Pueblo hill? I could might need to go question some folks on the Reservation.

BUTTERFLY

Good point! I wonder if anyone on my Pueblo knew the victims. Maybe someone that was fighting with 'em? Or maybe in a sorta public competition with one of 'em.

Unnerved, Joe smiles and nods at Butterfly, not sure what to do with his face. He proceeds to the front door of the sheriff's office. \*

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

Joe enters the reception room. Butterfly behind him. The Antique Store Owner waiting. BRIAN, teary-eyed, is a few seats apart from him. \*

ANTIQUÉ STORE OWNER \*

I actually ain't movin 'til somethin gets done. \*

Joe continues past them to enter the office, where Guy walks up to him. \*

GUY \*

(covertly) \*

Hey Sheriff. \*

(re: Brian) \*

Kid says he'll only talk to you. Been avoidin eye contact like he's on somethin. \*

Joe looks to the kid and then to the front window, where he sees Butterfly inspecting his tires. \*

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MINUTES LATER** \*

Brian sits. Joe sits across from him, listening as Brian struggles through a story. \*

BRIAN

Next mornin, after I sent the picture to - him, out there...

JOE

To Michael.

Brian nods.

BRIAN

The next mornin I went to Eric's house to see if, y'know, that girl was there, if she slept over, whatever.

JOE

Sarah.

BRIAN

(nods)  
But that's when I saw police cars.

JOE

Okay, wait a minute. I need my phone.

Joe gets up, goes to the door and enters the main space of the office.

JOE (CONT'D)

Guy? Just you.  
(gestures for him to enter)  
I'm grabbin my phone.

We go to MICHAEL, whose eyes narrow with burgeoning suspicion. Guy walks over to the interrogation room while Joe runs outside. Michael looks over to Butterfly, who looks back at him.

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - MINUTES LATER**

Joe's phone is on the desk, recording audio. The recording is now 5 minutes long.

JOE

Do you know Michael?

BRIAN

No, I just - by sight. I did see him talk to Sarah at a protest, and he looked...I mean, it *looked* like he could kill somebody. He looked at *me* like he could.

Joe looks to Guy, who looks mesmerized. Brian becomes defensive:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

But I obviously didn't actually think that! I never woulda ever sent the picture...!

Guy says into Joe's ear:

GUY

(whispering)

We gotta get to his place like now, right? Before he can flush anything.

BRIAN

Can I leave? Can you not do anything with me here? If he knows it's me...!

GUY

He ain't doin shit to you, kid.

JOE

You can step outside, Brian.

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER**

Brian steps out of the interrogation room. He and Michael face each other. Awkward. Brian doesn't know where to look.

**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME TIME**

Guy is conspiring with Joe. \*

GUY

If there's anything to it, we gotta move now. Or else he gets ahead, gets rid a evidence. Now or never.

Joe is in his head, listening to Guy, thinking.

GUY (CONT'D)

Crime a passion makes sense, with Garcia's kid. Then on top a that, he's ambitious, cozying up to you, gettin close - maybe he kills mayor, you win, ya help him get sheriff, I dunno...

Joe is following the logic. Ambivalent.

GUY (CONT'D) \*

OR...just...why couldn't he'a been spyin this whole time? \*

JOE \*

What whole time? His dad was here first. \*

GUY

Look, I'm not makin this about - I hardly even noticed before this Blacks Lives Matter stuff. But now here it is. Okay? So who is he *now*? Is he more of a officer or is he more...? You think he's actually *separate* from this whole anti-White *religion*? You do it from the *in*-side.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

JOE

Ted *wasn't* white, though.  
He's Hispanic.

GUY (CONT'D)

Blacks hate Hispanics, too!  
*They've* told me. *All* the other colors is just fake minorities takin their coupons away. They hate 'em *more* than whites.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER**

Joe and Guy exit the interrogation room to approach Michael.

GUY

Okay, Mike, pull up your phone.

MICHAEL

(mimicking tone)  
Okay, Tooley, suck on my dick.

\*

JOE

Michael.

MICHAEL

Sheriff?

\*

Joe gestures to Brian that he can leave, which he does. Joe sits down beside Michael. Guy hovers.

\*  
\*

JOE

Did you get sent a photo recently?

GUY

Pull up your Instagram, please.

MICHAEL

(to Joe)  
Did something happen?

JOE

*Did* you?

MICHAEL

I ain't checked Instagram for a while.

JOE

Evidence shows that this particular message - sent to you - was "Seen." Unless someone else had your phone?

Michael is silent.

JOE (CONT'D)

Can I see it? With your permission?

Michael reluctantly starts to hand over his phone.

JOE (CONT'D)

Sorry: can you open your Instagram?

Michael goes to Instagram. He hands his phone to Joe, who finds the message. Before he opens it:

GUY

Wait. Okay, so that's already been opened. Yeah? As you can see?

\*

Joe holds it up for Butterfly, who hangs in the reception area. Guy takes a video of the screen. Joe opens the message and clicks on the photo.

\*

\*

MICHAEL

What're you guys doin'?

Joe shows him the photo.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Yeah. I know. That's Eric Garcia, right?

JOE

You didn't think to show us this?

MICHAEL

Does it say somethin'?

GUY

The day before he gets SHOT?

Michael is trying to get his head around this.

GUY (CONT'D)

That's him with your girl, right? Takin pictures with your little girlfriend?

MICHAEL

What? No. Oh what the fuck! I hardly know her.

\*

\*

\*

Guy walks away, roaming outside. Butterfly watches that, bemused.

\*

\*

JOE

How old is she?

MICHAEL

...I dunno. Like eighteen.

JOE

*Like* eighteen? So *Not* eighteen?

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

No: she is. But even if she wasn't: I stopped it before it started. Not that it woulda been wrong if I didn't.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

JOE (CONT'D)

So that picture didn't bother you?

MICHAEL

It bothered me that someone *TRYIN'*a bother me. But then I forgot it.

(laughing)

What *is* this, sheriff?

\*

Guy appears at the back door.

GUY

Sheriff! Come out here please!

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY**

Joe walks **OUTSIDE** to the parking lot and sees Guy standing by Michael's car. Michael follows.

GUY

Look what's on the back seat.

MICHAEL

(realizing)

Bro. Okay. I was bringin that back.

\*

Joe walks up to Michael's back window. An AR-15 RIFLE pokes out\* from under blankets on the back seat.

GUY

Looks like a AR to me.

\*

MICHAEL

GUY (CONT'D)

Yeah, which you knew. I was  
takin it out for target  
practice.

Sheriff: you told me to  
practice.

Why'd I ever use a gun that I  
know you know I got?? How  
stupid am I gonna be?

(appealing to Joe)

Sheriff. Are you for real? I  
*did* get the picture last  
night - three nights ago. I  
*did*. But that gun is there  
'cause I didn't even think  
about it. You think I'd keep  
that shit here if I used it  
for *murder*??

(to Guy)

Man, FUCK you! The fuck you  
tryin'a do? Tryin to frame my  
ass? Did YOU do this shit?

Why HAVE you been practicin  
so much? You gotten pretty  
good too, ain't ya?

Just a coincidence, right?!  
Just the same gun with the  
same caliber bullet!

Yes, you did, you did! And  
now you got a gun that uses  
the same bullets that fuckin  
shot 'em dead in your fuckin  
car right now.

Joe looks to Butterfly, who looks pointedly back.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This is simple. It's here 'cause I'm  
returnin it. I forgot it was there. I'm  
not worried 'cause 's not the same gun.

Joe suppresses a cough.

JOE

You forgot there was a gun in your car?  
That you hid?

MICHAEL

GUY

That I put under blankets so  
it's not a gun that's OUT.  
(to Joe)  
Please: give it to  
ballistics! You will see that  
it is not the same gun 'cause  
it's not!

So you *didn't* forget it was  
there! You put blankets on  
it!

JOE

What's your alibi, Mike? Two nights  
back. Where were you at?

MICHAEL

...My house.

JOE

I think we need to search this  
vehicle, Mike.

MICHAEL \*  
 For what? I agree, the gun is \*  
 there. It's there! \*

JOE \*  
 Do we have permission from you? \*

MICHAEL \*  
 You don't need my permission to \*  
 search my unit. \*

JOE \*  
 I know that, but I'm askin you. \*

MICHAEL \*  
 Well, I got nothin to hide, so! \*

Guy starts going, strapping on gloves. \*

MICHAEL (CONT'D) \*  
 Don't worry about those gloves. \*  
 You're not touchin my car. I don't \*  
 give HIM my permission! \*

JOE \*  
 Why not? \*

MICHAEL \*  
 'Cause I don't trust him. \*

JOE \*  
 All right. Actually: okay! Why then \*  
 doesn't our Pueblo friend do it? \*  
 (to Butterfly) \*  
 You prefer that? That way there's no \*  
 question, no conflict... \*

Michael looks to Butterfly.

MICHAEL \*  
 Fine. \*

Michael steps back to make room. Beat. Butterfly relents.  
 "Okay, let's play this game."

Seen from Michael's POV, Butterfly roams to the driver door. He looks under the seat and in the center cubby. He then goes to the back seat, moves the blanket off the gun, looks under the seat. And then crosses to the passenger door, looking to Guy and then Joe.

Still from Michael's POV, Butterfly opens the passenger door and checks the glove compartment. He looks under the seat and PAUSES with an eyebrow raised. He reaches underneath to pull out a WATCH BOX. The same box that Joe took from Ted's house. Butterfly reads the engraving and slowly, skeptically holds it \*  
 up. Joe is stoic. \*

GUY  
The fuck is that?

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
The fuck *is* that? Bro. What?  
That was not there.

Guy walks up to Butterfly to look at the watch. He reads the engraving: "*From a Grateful Governor to a Marvelous Mayor... Here's to a brighter future!*"

GUY (CONT'D)  
"To a marvelous mayor."

JOE  
What's that? It *says* that?

MICHAEL  
'Scuse me??

\*

GUY  
This is his fuckin watch.

MICHAEL  
(genuinely shocked)  
*What? The fuck? No! What're you guys  
actually doin?*

Joe comes over and looks at it. Reads it. Looks nauseous.

GUY  
You know what that says,  
Mike?

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
That is not from me!

\*

Butterfly, again, seems more interested in Joe than the watch. Joe ignores that.

GUY (CONT'D)  
(looking at the gun)  
And the gun *is* a AR.

\*

MICHAEL  
You knew it was!

Beat. Joe turns to Michael.

\*

JOE  
Oh fuck, Mikey...

\*

\*

It hits Michael. He's being arrested. He starts panicking.

\*

MICHAEL  
*Sheriff. Please.*

Guy pulls his CUFFS. Michael backs up.

\*

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
*Wait, though. No. Because... Just  
wait a SECOND. That was NOT there.  
Sheriff:*

\*

\*

JOE

You said it yourself. If it ain't  
the same gun, it'll take one day  
for ballistics to tell us.

GUY

You got the right to remain  
silent.

MICHAEL

*But - I never EVER seen that  
watch before!*

Guy is reaching Michael. Michael instinctively gets on his  
knees and puts his hands behind his head. \*

MICHAEL (CONT'D) \*

Sheriff, please! Why're we even  
goin through this process? I don't  
know about that. \*

Guy has cuffed him and starts leading him back into the building.  
Joe stays behind. \*

MICHAEL (CONT'D) \*

I knew it. I fuckin knew this shit,  
man... \*

JOE

(racked by guilt)

I'm sorry, Michael. \*

Michael and Guy disappear inside. Fierce ambivalence raging  
in Joe's eyes. He turns to Butterfly, who is watching him  
closely. \*

JOE (CONT'D) \*

What? \*

BUTTERFLY \*

Pretty incredibly stupid to keep  
that watch in the car. *With* the  
gun. *And* drive it here. \*

JOE \*

Yeah. Good intel. \*

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - VERY LATE AFTERNOON**

Guy deposits Michael into the TINY PRISON CELL (a closet-sized  
room with a toilet) at the end of the office.

MICHAEL

Wait--

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Michael is seen through the window.  
Butterfly enters the Office to watch as Joe roams over to his  
desk.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Sheriff! Why would I do it? Why would I do it??

JOE

Guy: put the watch and gun in evidence and call ATF in Cruces to see if they'll test it.

\*

MICHAEL

What about my three calls?! Sheriff. If I'm really arrested, I need to call my uncle -

(appealing to sentiment)

- my dad's brother. Sheriff.

GUY

(walking off to fetch the gun)

Call all the brothers you want. See what good it does.

Joe has walked to his desk to pick up a CORDLESS PHONE. He walks it to Michael. This is seen from BUTTERFLY'S POV. Joe's body language betrays that he knows he's being watched.

Opening the door, Joe hands Michael the phone - Michael looks Joe in the eye, but Joe avoids him - and closes the door.

Joe goes to his desk and looks at Michael, whose back is now turned to the door as he makes his call. Joe's expression is inscrutable. He feels Butterfly's eyes on him.

MICHAEL

(from behind cell door)

Uncle Jamie, I'm in the holding cell at the Sheriff's Office in Eddington. I just got arrested, I'm been set up. They planted shit on me, I need a lawyer, I need help. I love you and Aunt Kyra. I love you.

Michael hangs up. Redials. Joe stifles a cough. *He's starting to look bad.* Our attention (Butterfly's, that is) travels from Joe to the "SLOGAN IDEAS" chalkboard. The slogans themselves have been half-heartedly erased, but the title half-remains.

Butterfly notices the style of the E on the chalkboard. *It matches the E in the spray-painted sign at Ted's.* He HANGS on this.

Joe can sense a shift in the atmosphere.

BUTTERFLY STORMS OFF. Joe's eyes go to him, alert.

Butterfly has run across the street to get into his cruiser and DRIVE OFF.

Guy now looks over to see that Joe is already running to his cruiser.

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER - VERY LATE AFTERNOON**

Joe gets into his cruiser. He's starting to sweat.

A few blocks ahead is Butterfly's diminishing cruiser. Joe starts his car and ACCELERATES to catch up.

When Joe is a block and a half behind Butterfly's car, he slows down to maintain a healthy distance.

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER / EXT. CANDLELIGHT VIGIL - CONTINUOUS**

As he does this, he notices: to his side, a block away, is the TOWN PLAZA, where a CANDLELIGHT VIGIL has assembled. Many people are still lighting their candles, but the space is already warmly illuminated by the glow of illuminatas. On the central gazebo, WARREN stands at a microphone before the crowd.

WARREN

As darkness surrounds us - a good man  
and a bright boy, struck down before  
they could do their work -

Joe has slowed down to take this in. He sees that BRIAN is on the stage behind Warren (he's the next speaker).

WARREN (CONT'D)

- towards a better, more equitable,  
more *connected* future in this town.  
Work that'll STILL be done, and we'll  
see TO it that it's done, in their  
memory and their honor.

Joe speeds off to catch up to Butterfly.

**INT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) / EXT. CROSS HOUSE - EVENING**

Joe remains on the tail of Butterfly, who arrives at the driveway of **JOE'S HOUSE**. Joe idles to a stop on the side of the approaching road, having a distant but clear view of his property. He fetches binoculars from the back seat to see: \*

BINOCULAR'S POV: Butterfly has parked his cruiser in front of the house. He walks to the door and knocks. \*

While Joe watches this, he is hit by a wave of sickness. His head pounding, he closes his eyes and makes a pained moaning sound. He pulls a couple aspirin from a bottle and downs them with water. It tickles his throat and he COUGHS, which further agitates his headache. He forces himself to look ahead.

JOE'S POV: Butterfly has come down the porch and is now roaming, peering in through windows. He disappears behind the house.

*DING!* Joe looks at his phone. It's a notification for an EMAIL. His COVID results.

Joe stares at the notification, too afraid to open it. Distant chattering brings Joe's eyes (now beginning to fog over) back up to his house.

JOE'S POV: Butterfly is circling back to the front door to meet a distraught DAWN, in her nightgown on the porch. She is desperately telling Butterfly a story. Butterfly looks overwhelmed.

Joe goes to his phone to open his DoorBird app. He pulls up PORCH CAM FOOTAGE of Dawn and Butterfly. He turns up the volume to hear:

DAWN (ON VIDEO)

--'cause a my daughter? She was just-- just here!

BUTTERFLY (ON VIDEO)

Ma'am: I'm investigating the Garcia murders--

DAWN (ON VIDEO)

I'm  *talking*  about the murders!

BUTTERFLY (ON VIDEO)

...Okay.

DAWN (ON VIDEO)

My daughter was brainwashed  
and she went off with a man \*  
and she ceased all contact. I\*  
think he's keeping her from \*  
usin her phone. And I think \*  
they - or she, or HE - were \*  
just back here. I was on a \*  
walk, hardly gone at all - \*  
they musta been watching the \*  
premises, because when I came\*  
back, all a her stuff was \*  
gone, all her artwork - \*  
everything--

BUTTERFLY (CONT'D)

I... Ma'am...

Okay, ma'am: I'm sorry:  
that's... I'm just here to  
ask you:

(shows photo on phone)

Do you have a gun like this  
in the house? Please look. \*

DAWN (CONT'D)

...I don' know, they took everything! \*

BUTTERFLY

But THIS kinda gun: have you seen--

STATIC HISSES FROM THE POLICE RADIO, and then GUY'S VOICE:  
*"Sheriff? Come in, sheriff!"* Butterfly reacts, having heard  
 it from the Door Bird. Joe frantically MUTES the radio.

\*  
 \*

DAWN (ON VIDEO)

Do you think THEY coulda took it? Could  
 he'a done the murders?? His name's Vernon  
 Peak! It was the same day they went  
 missin. Or the *next* day! My daughter  
 couldn'ta done it, but she's *with* him!

Joe's phone starts VIBRATING. He looks. It's GUY. He answers.

GUY (V.O.)

*Sheriff! Dumpster afire!*

**INT. JOE'S CAR (MOVING) / EXT. CANDLELIGHT VIGIL - DUSK**

A now-frantic Joe drives past the VIGIL. (It has thinned out,  
 but is still in progress.) Brian is on the stage now, provoking  
 the ire of a frustrated crowd. As Joe drives past, we hear:

BRIAN

...and they got killed by that same  
 system! Even the killer's a victim of  
 it! And *I'm* a PART of it! I'm just  
 another privileged White kid and my job  
 is to sit down and LISTEN, which is what  
 I plan to do after making this speech,  
 which I have NO right to make!

Someone is subtly pulling the mic away from Brian. He grabs  
 it.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

*This vigil is happening on stolen ground!!*

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - EARLY NIGHT**

\*

Joe frantically parks and runs to the office. The DUMPSTER next  
 to the building has been set afire. It blazes intensely. GUY has  
 been waiting for him outside, distraught.

\*

GUY

*I was puttin the stupid gun and watch  
 into evidence!*

\*  
 \*  
 \*

Joe runs past Guy and into the building.

\*

JOE

The gun and watch are stupid?

\*  
 \*

**INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

\*

Joe enters and stomps to the front of the office.

\*

GUY \*  
 I swear on God, sheriff. I wasn't even \*  
 gone one minute. \*

JOE \*  
 You weren't supposed to be gone at \*  
*all!* \*

He looks by his desk for the extinguisher. \*

JOE (CONT'D) \*  
 Where's the fuckin stinguisher at? \*

GUY \*  
 I used it all, it wasn't enough. \*

Joe turns to now see Michael's cell, whose door has been \*  
 opened (the key still in the lock). The cell is now EMPTY. \*  
 Joe is stunned. Guy sees and immediately. \*

GUY (CONT'D) \*  
 ("before you say anything") \*  
*I know, I know, I know, I know!!* \*

JOE \*  
 What the fuck! \*

GUY \*  
 That was the other thing. That's \*  
 the new thing. \*

Joe goes into the holding cell. \*

JOE \*  
 What is this? What am I lookin at? \*

He then sees that the key is in the door? \*

JOE (CONT'D) \*  
 Whose fucking key is this? Is this \*  
 your fucking key? \*

GUY \*  
 No, I... \*

Guy checks his key ring and then his desk. Joe is already \*  
 moving out the door. \*

**EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE / JOE'S CRUISER - CONTINUOUS** \*

Joe opens the trunk of his car to fetch a FIRE EXTINGUISHER. \*  
 He then SNUFFS OUT the fire. \*

JOE \*  
 WHERE THE FUCK IS HE?! \*

Guy doesn't have the answer. \*

JOE (CONT'D) \*

You go down Zia, I'll take Main. \*

GUY \*

Yeah. Yeah. \*

JOE \*

(rushing to his cruiser) \*

Is it just him? Someone had to'a  
let him out, right? \*

Guy doesn't know the answer. \*

JOE (CONT'D) \*

Fuck you! Go! \*

Guy runs to his cruiser. As Joe gets into his car, he sees  
Guy's car go RACING. Joe turns on his engine and turns to  
drive in the other direction. \*

#### **INT. GUY'S CRUISER (MOVING) - NIGHT**

Guy speeds ahead, determined to the point of possession. He  
turns his TORCHLIGHT from side to side, illuminating every  
dark space he finds, searching with piercing eyes.

#### **INT/EXT. JOE'S CRUISER (MOVING) / THROUGH TOWN - NIGHT**

Joe drives, manic. His eyes are busy as he tries to devise a  
plan. For a moment, he looks hypnotized by panic.

Arriving at the end of a long road, he turns down a side road  
toward Main Street, but slows down as he sees something ahead.  
A distant fire glows in his eyes as he gawks ahead and we pull  
back to reveal the reflection of a flaming arrow pointed  
upward in the glass of the windshield.

Joe has stopped to gaze on the street beyond the next major  
intersection. The street rises up a hill and curves at the top  
to disappear into desert, and DRAWN IN FIRE on the asphalt is  
a GIANT ARROW POINTED UPWARD.

Joe, marveling at this, suddenly sees SOMEONE ON THE ROOF of a  
building - a shuttered flower store - to his left. He DUCKS  
under the steering wheel. After a moment of inactivity, he  
rotates his head to look up. It's a human-sized ZOZOBRA doll on  
a store's rooftop ("*White Supremacy*" written across its torso).

Joe speeds forward, turning up the hill indicated by the  
flaming arrow. He drives *through* the sculpted fire.

#### **EXT. HILL - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe's cruiser, leaving asphalt, speeds up to the TOP of a  
dirt hill. Here he gains a panoramic view of the surrounding  
desert. He sees a lone FIRE burning in the valley below.  
MICHAEL stands next to it.



JOE  
(appealing, scared)  
Mike, what is this?? What're you doin out  
here?!

Guy has started walking carefully forward again.

MICHAEL  
They PUT me here! Lord Jesus, please,  
they--

At that moment, AN EXPLOSIVE IS DETONATED 10 FT TO THE LEFT  
OF GUY, BLOWING HIM AWAY. Michael, 20 ft back, is blown  
backwards. Guy's cruiser windows shatter and the tires blow.  
JOE (FARTHER BACK) IS BLOWN 7 FT BACK. The blast-wave has  
filled the air with violently swirling dust and debris.

The site of the explosion has IGNITED a CONTROLLED FIRE THAT  
SPREADS RAPIDLY TO THE LEFT AND RIGHT to violently form a  
FLAMING "O." (The fire has coursed across Guy's torso and  
encircled the car.) Joe is just beyond the fire, his feet  
almost touching the bottom of the O. The fire is heard  
spreading swiftly in opposing directions, beyond the O.

Michael, face riddled with bits of shrapnel, lies unconscious.

Joe, covered in dust, lies in a stunned daze. Momentarily  
blinded and coughing, Joe struggles to rise off his back. He  
turns to his right to see that the fire is spreading briskly to  
the side (at an impressive distance) like a FLAMING TRAIL OF  
DOMINOES. It seems to be some sort of S.O.S. sign.

We cut briefly to an extreme high angle (being recorded by  
the drone) that reveals the flaming sign as it fully  
materializes: "NO PEACE"

Joe pries himself off the ground. Now on his knees, he feels  
for his holster to pull his gun, but it's gone. He doesn't  
remember that he was holding it before the blast. He starts  
looking for it.

As he pats around, coughing and searching, he sees GUY'S BLOWN-  
OFF ARM, STILL HOLDING A PISTOL several yards away. Joe crawls  
to this and pulls the pistol free from Guy's disembodied hand.  
He then stumbles onto his feet, delirious. He points the  
pistol up at the drone and SHOOTS at it.

400 yards ahead: The SOUND of a CAR'S ENGINE STARTING.

Joe turns to see a TRUCK in the distance, parked beyond a  
nearby arroyo (beyond the flaming sign extending toward it),  
its headlights off (and a masked man at the wheel, operating a  
remote?). The drone has started to retreat and descend toward  
the truck. Is the driver operating it? Joe then SEES...

A thin MASKED MAN - wearing an ALL-BLACK OUTFIT - standing about three-fourths of the way between Joe and the truck, training his PHONE CAMERA on Joe and the fire. \*

Joe instinctively swings his gun and takes aim at the masked thin man. The man sees this and turns to retreat. As he does so, his smartphone's FLASHLIGHT accidentally turns on. \*

Joe FIRES his gun at the fleeing man. Misses him. Starts to pursue, although he is incredibly weak. The thin man DROPS HIS PHONE (visible because of the flashlight) and continues toward the truck, leaving the phone behind. \*

Joe FIRES his gun again. Just then, an ONSLAUGHT OF MACHINE GUN FIRE comes from the driver of the truck. Bullets kick up dirt all around Joe. He drops to the ground, lying on his stomach as the surrounding earth is chewed apart. The stream of bullets then trails off to Joe's CRUISER, demolishing its windows and tires. \*

The thin masked man arrives at the truck and jumps into the passenger seat. The TRUCK ACCELERATES IN REVERSE, swings a 180, and speeds off. \*

Joe remains on his belly, wheezing. \*

**EXT. DESERT / OPPOSITE SIDE OF ARROYO - MOMENTS LATER**

Joe limps to arrive at the MASKED MAN'S DROPPED SMARTPHONE, its flashlight still beaming. The flaming sign burns tepidly in the BG.

Joe picks up the phone, which is still recording VIDEO. Joe stops the video and sits down on the dirt. He goes to the PHOTO LIBRARY, which is all videos. Joe clicks on one.

It is a VIDEO of the muscular masked man - wearing a BLM duffel bag - dumping gasoline into the dumper outside the police station. Then the thin one ignites the fire with a road flare. \*

Joe goes to another VIDEO. It features the muscular masked man throwing a burning Bible into a farmhouse window.

Joe goes to the next VIDEO, from the POV of someone in the passenger seat of a truck, fixed at first on the black-clad masked man at the steering wheel. He laughs as he accelerates and the camera swings forward to the windshield as the car speeds toward a Louisiana CHURCH. The car smashes through the entrance, collapsing the wall. Congregants scream and panic.

Joe cycles through more videos, each featuring acts of domestic terrorism - throwing a molotov cocktail into a rural police station, igniting the words "PIG ROAST NEXT" onto a prison wall, and finally a video of THREE MASKED MEN IN ALL-BLACK firing SCOPED RIFLES from the roof of a building down at bystanders. *This is the same video that Joe saw on Facebook.*

Joe's teeth have begun lightly chattering again. He looks up from the phone, eyes wide. He has a fever.

#### **MOMENTS LATER**

Joe walks over to Michael, who lies unconscious, face pocked with bloody flesh wounds. Joe bends down to confirm that Michael is breathing. He is.

Joe gently slaps his face to rouse him. Michael doesn't stir.

JOE

Okay.

(rising)

I'll be back.

#### **EXT. DESERT - NIGHT**

Joe walks heavily through the desert, a trail of dust floating in his wake. He holds the masked man's smartphone in one hand and his gun in the other. He coughs a dry cough.

#### **EXT. DRIVEWAY / CROSS HOUSE - NIGHT**

Joe is coming up on his driveway. The windows of his house glow. Parked in front is a TAXI CAB whose engine is running.

Over Joe's confused face: the sound of a phone VIBRATING. Joe looks down at the masked man's phone. GUY is calling. He answers.

GUY (V.O.)

*Sheriff! Dumpster afire!!*

Joe looks at the phone. The phone is asleep. No call.

#### **ARRIVING AT HOUSE**

Joe arrives at his house. He looks into the TAXI, gun half-poised, where a cab driver waits. The driver looks at Joe, mystified, and Joe stares vacantly back as he continues toward the back door. They keep staring at each other as Joe disappears around the house...

#### **INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Joe enters through the back to find an empty bedroom. The lights are all off. He pauses to look around and see that all of Louise's dolls and needlework are now missing. He then hears hurried but quiet movement in the bathroom.

Joe crosses to his closet, where he finds a RIFLE. He sets it on a surface and then finds bullets for his handgun. He starts loading the pistol, but then hears the bathroom door open.

He looks to the hallway through the open door to see Louise move swiftly down the hall and over to the living room.

Frozen, Joe quietly slides the half-loaded magazine into his gun and moves into the hall. He creeps to the end of the hall to peer into the **LIVING ROOM** and see:

LOUISE, barely visible in the darkness and wearing an overcoat, has just gathered two suitcases by the back window (behind the couch). She turns to start toward us when--

JOE

FREEZE!

She stops, obscured by the dark. Silhouetted by the window.

JOE (CONT'D)

Put the bag down. Right now. I'm protecting you.

Louise just stares. Joe steps into the living room to look out both windows.

JOE (CONT'D)

I've *been* protecting you.

He turns back to Louise. It's impossible to make out her expression in the dark.

JOE (CONT'D)

I finally did it. You weren't even here. You couldn't even wait one day. And now you're back. Do you even *know* why you're back? The fact that it's right now, at this moment. They're coming after me. It's gotten bigger every step. What I did started something, it started a *wave* of something, and every step I take, the way has been cleared for me. It wants me to finish.

Louise now speaks, but it's DAWN'S voice.

DAWN (O.S.)

I've got to leave. I cannot be here.

Beat. Joe looks confused. We cut to his POV to reveal that he is indeed looking at DAWN, wearing the same overcoat. It was her the whole time? Joe is devastated.

DAWN (CONT'D)

I asked the Indian officer and he said you arrested your deputy.

JOE

I did, but they let him out.

DAWN

Who did?

JOE

(looking out the window again)  
Which means that what I did *reached*  
them. They need to stop it. They know  
what I started.

DAWN

What if it was Vernon? And Lou? What if  
they're back for us? If they *did* kill  
Ted? What if they want to kill *me*?

\*

Joe looks squarely at her.

JOE

*I* killed Ted.

Silence from Dawn. Joe steps toward her. Her weight transfers  
from the front of her feet to her heels. He feels it.

JOE (CONT'D)

*I* did it. Vernon is fake. He was a  
false temptation and she let herself  
get tricked and she went with him. She  
didn't see that *we* were the place.  
We're the ones that fucking *care* about  
her. *I'm* the one that's taken action.  
You *told* me to take action. And the  
instant that I did, it blossomed. It  
bloomed. All *I* had to do was start it.

Something outside the BIG WINDOW (to Joe's right) gets his  
attention. A glint of vague light.

JOE (CONT'D)

But now we need to finish it. We're at  
the center of it now. We're in history.

Harsh VIBRATION. In Joe's back pocket. He reaches to pull out  
the masked man's PHONE. A "Restricted Number" is calling. He  
holds it up for her, as if this is divine proof.

JOE (CONT'D)

See??

Joe answers the vibrating phone and puts it to his ear. All he  
hears are night insects and a rumbling, idle car engine. Beat.  
He's looking out the big window.

DAWN

Who--

Then a brief FLASH from behind Dawn, the sound of a MUFFLED  
GUNSHOT (muffled, that is, by a silencer) over the phone, and--

SMASH! The WINDOW BEHIND DAWN SHATTERS.

A bullet whizzes past Dawn to strike the wall just behind Joe and fill the air with plaster dust. Dawn SCREAMS. Stunned, Joe looks to the shattered window.

As Joe gawks stupidly, BLOOD dribbles into his eye, rendering half of his POV dark red. *A vague sound of shattering outside (in front of the house) goes unacknowledged.*

Joe touches his temple to realize that BLOOD IS POURING DOWN HIS FACE. The bullet grazed the top of his head, causing a minor flesh wound which is nonetheless bleeding profusely. He then turns to see Dawn standing frozen with shock.

Now activated, Joe runs to Dawn (as he does, another distant muzzleflash) and he TACKLES her to the ground. This happens just as a bullet strikes the far wall, narrowly missing her.

DAWN (CONT'D)

*Aaah! MY BACK!*

*(then)*

*It's them! Is it them?!*

JOE

Stay down! Stay...!

Joe starts scrambling on his belly, getting onto ALL FOURS and crawling desperately toward the front door. Blood continues to flow down his face as he gets to the door.

114

**EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS**

114

Joe crawls outside, moving down the steps toward the TAXI, whose engine is still rumbling. The right side of the windshield has been pierced by a bullet and the driver's head rests on the steering wheel, the back of his head sporting an exit wound.

Joe opens the driver door and starts to pull out the driver's corpse, but behind Joe (and to his left) shatters the driver window.

Joe falls back onto his ass and starts crawling backwards. He looks to the far road and sees a distant muzzleflash (from the window of a truck), whose ensuing bullet kicks sand violently into Joe's eyes. Joe scrambles up to his feet and runs away. As he does so, he hears tires rolling from the source of the last gunshot. He looks to see the truck's vague shape (and the faint glow of its rear taillights) starting up his driveway.

**EXT. DESERT - STEEP HILL / GIANT CACTUS BUSH**

Joe runs down the hill that slopes steeply downward (toward a valley, beyond which are tall hills) to the side of his house. He hears feet now running distantly to the left and then a controlled rolling/scraping down a hill.

Joe continues running downhill. Behind Joe and to the right, the less-distant sound of TIRES spraying rocks as a truck starts accelerating over new gravel.

Joe descends the steep incline, careful to not fall - but not careful enough. He trips and tumbles down the sandy hill. Grabbing sand, he scrapes to a stop, and then runs ahead through a tree-pocked valley. He looks to his right to see the TRUCK now driving almost in parallel with him (600 feet away, still slightly behind) on rough terrain. It bounces mightily as it gains ground.

Just then, a MUZZLEFLASH (let's say this belongs to "sniper 1") appears to Joe's left, about 1,000 feet away. The bullet strikes a tree in front of him (just to his right).

\*  
\*  
\*

Joe arrives at a clearing in the middle of the valley and sees the truck starts to curving toward him to his right. Just then, another muzzleflash from sniper 1 kicks up dirt near Joe's feet.

The truck, its suspension jostling as it trundles messily over rocks, is driving on an off-road curving toward Joe. It BLASTS through a giant cactus bush, only to then ride up onto a VAST TANGLE OF CACTI. The tires get caught, riddled now with giant thorns, and the truck finds itself suspended atop the cacti. The driver leans on the gas, but the tires spin impotently. The driver tries to go in reverse, but no luck.

The HEADLIGHTS TURN ON, illuminating the cacti beneath the truck and the road ahead as Joe, faintly visible, nears the end of the clearing.

The passenger door opens, and a black-clad MUSCULAR MASKED MAN - source 2 - leans out, propping himself up with one foot on the door's storage compartment. He hoists up a SEMI-AUTOMATIC ASSAULT RIFLE (with silencer), takes aim, and fires a rapid succession of rounds at the fleeing figure of Joe. Orange muzzleflash strobes the desert.

We track laterally with Joe as a hailstorm of bullets kicks up dust all around him, chewing away at the surrounding earth. This happens just as Joe gains cover from a giant tree, behind which we still feel the strobing muzzleflash and the headlights. The tree dances and shakes wildly from the bullets. Joe is panting, crying, COUGHING - nerves shredded.

Joe arrives the base of a tall rocky cliff. He starts to climb it. *We hear the truck revving in reverse and breaking away from the cacti.* One more bullet from sniper 1 (behind Joe and to his left) strikes the rock beside Joe. He scrambles a little higher, gaining cover.

Now from a more objective view, we TILT UP and PAN with a very small Joe as he starts to ascend the hill, tilting/panning past him to arrive at the top of the tall hill and reveal the back of the monolithic water tower that stands erect over Eddington.

**EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER**

BRIAN is pinning printed photos of him and Eric to a memory board of Eric and Ted on a corner of the street.

He then hears the sound of distant wheezing, coughing and running. He looks up to the Eddington water tower, where he sees Joe's silhouette arriving at the top and then descending toward us.

117 **EXT. EDDINGTON WATER TOWER / HILL - MOMENTS LATER** 117

Panting and coughing, Joe is now halfway down the hill, running toward town. He runs through several cactus patches (this hill is especially riddled with cacti) and is on a trajectory toward two roofs at the end of the slope.

Joe arrives at the end of the slope, but the hill ends abruptly, presenting a 15 ft drop and leaving 20 ft between him and the house whose roof he was running for. He hears distant running to his left side and a vehicle trundling distantly on the right. Suddenly a MUZZLEFLASH from his left delivers a bullet to a tall cactus beside him. It explodes toward Joe.

Joe reacts by jumping off the hill and dropping 20 ft to land on a TABLE. It collapses underneath him, breaking his fall.

118 **EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS** 118

Joe rises, in pain, and moves toward the BACK DOOR of the small EDDINGTON MUSEUM. He kicks the flimsy door (near the knob). It doesn't break open. He then BREAKS the door from the frame by using his shoulder.

119 **INT. EDDINGTON MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS** 119

Breaking through the door, Joe runs through the tiny Eddington museum - a collection of antiques, photographs and miscellany from Eddington's illustrious past. (Also, a family of lifelike Native American statues sits about.)

120 **EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS** 120

The museum door swings open and Joe comes running out. He is bounding for the BANK ATM DRIVE-THRU across the street when we hear a soft *tock* from behind (to Joe's left). A bullet creates a SPARK in the pavement just ahead/to the right of Joe.

He turns looking up, backpedaling. Another *tock* accompanies a muzzleflash atop a tall building (two buildings down from the one he just exited). A sniper's silhouette aims a rifle.

Joe disappears under the sheltering ROOF of the ATM drive-thru just as another shot is fired, striking the top of an ATM.

Joe is safe for the moment. Wheezing and coughing, he turns to run along the length of the BANK and approaches a glowing LAUNDROMAT on the next block (beyond the next road).

Joe, crossing the street, almost reaches the laundromat when another bullet strikes the pavement in front of him. He turns to see the sniper's silhouette, now on top of another building to the north (he clearly just went jumping from roof to roof).

Joe changes his trajectory to now be running south. As he runs through an INTERSECTION, two muzzleflashes appear two blocks to his right (from a truck window). Both bullets just miss Joe, one striking a trash can.

Joe clears the intersection, and another muzzleflash from behind (the sniper on the roof) delivers a bullet to the sidewalk at Joe's feet.

Seeing a GLASS DOOR to his right, Joe throws his body sideways to SMASH through. We PULL OUT to reveal the store of the shattered door: *GUNTHER'S PISTOL PALACE*

**EXT. GUN SHOP / STREET - MOMENTS LATER**

The street outside the gun shop. It's quiet. EMPTY. Wind blows.

Suddenly Joe emerges manically from the shattered door, holding a .338 NORMA MAGNUM MACHINE GUN. He has a full bandolier (ammunition belt) strung slash-style over his shoulder, and over his shoulder is an AR-15. Immediately upon exiting, Joe FIRES EXTREMELY LOUD ROUNDS into the darkness from which the last muzzleflash appeared.

BUTTERFLY (O.S.)

*FREEZE!!*

This is heard from behind Joe, followed by the sound of a gunshot and a bullet hitting the wall beside Joe's head.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT**

123 Startled by this, Joe swings his massive gun, FIRING IT 123 as he spins 180 degrees, riddling every storefront on the way with massive bullets...

Joe finishes spinning around, still firing the immense gun. Having turned 180 degrees, he fires unknowingly at Butterfly. ONE ROUNDS HITS BUTTERFLY IN THE LEG - just below his knee, blowing the bottom half of his leg off/backwards.

Butterfly hits the pavement, head towards Joe, screaming.

JOE

AH!

Joe runs to the wailing Butterfly, who is trying to sit up.

JOE (CONT'D)

You stupid...! Stay down! Stay down!

As Joe arrives at Butterfly, who writhes in pain, a distant *phump* is heard (from behind), followed by a bullet striking the top of Butterfly's crown, EXPLODING his head into a flap.

Joe spins to the source of the gunshot. He then sees a single, distant MUZZLEFLASH (again, from the darkness of the north side), followed by an echoey *whump*. A bullet impacts the muzzle of Joe's massive gun with a metallic *ting* (a blinding SPARK flashes), sending vibrations through Joe's body and almost knocking him to the ground.

In panicked response, Joe FIRES HIS MACHINE GUN at the darkness, and RUNS in terrified retreat.

Joe now runs through a vast parking lot. Another muzzleflash strobos the intersection three blocks in Joe's wake and shatters a CAR WINDOW beside Joe.

Joe turns, backpedaling. Another muzzleflash from the same sniper sends a BULLET WHIZZING BY JOE'S EAR, and Joe offers a brief barrage of return fire. Having stopped firing, Joe is able to see shooter running off to the right and disappearing.

Joe continues through the parking lot (the gun and bandolier rattling as he goes), only to then hear running footsteps to his right. He slows to confirm, then sees the sniper who was recently on the rooftops now running alongside him in parallel (two blocks to his side). Joe fires his machine gun at the sprinting sniper, but no shots connect before the sniper clears out of view. Joe has now run out of bullets. He throws the giant gun and switches to the AR-15.

Joe continues to the end of the road, coming up on an INTERSECTION.

124

**EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS**

124

Joe is now facing the right, running sideways, knowing to expect an attack from the north. A muzzleflash appears behind the pillar of an archway in front of a small business. The bullet misses Joe, but Joe was ready. He unleashes hellfire in response, demolishing both the pillar and the sniper behind it.

Joe, standing in the center of the street, swings around. He's catching his breath. Deranged. He starts running again down the next street (just needing to get out of the intersection).

Getting to the end of the next block and nearing a new intersection, Joe hears a rustling from the hill to his right. He then hears footsteps to his left and turns to see a VAGUE FIGURE running across the back of a near-distant PARKING LOT to hide behind an old van. Activated, Joe pursues, laboriously aiming the machine gun and FIRING at the van. Joe doesn't cease firing until he's riddled the car with bullets.

Joe halts in the middle of the large **PARKING LOT**, struggling to breathe. He starts scanning desperately. He has arrived at a spot that leaves him utterly exposed.

Joe turns to face one direction, then the next (always aiming the gun), gasping for breath. He hears movement on top of the building to his side. His attention darts crazily between that rooftop and the car (behind which the running figure disappeared).

Suddenly Joe hears distant RUNNING - boots against gravel - coming from behind him. Joe TURNS toward the sound, but before he can see the source, A BULLET CHEWS PAVEMENT AT HIS FEET. Joe staggers, looking up to see the MUSCULAR MASKED MAN running toward him, aiming a PISTOL.

Joe SCREAMS and tries firing at the man, but his gun CLICKS (out of ammo, or jammed). The masked man (now only about 100 ft away) fires again, HITTING JOE IN THE ARM. Joe drops the gun and scream in pain. The man pulls the trigger again, but *his* gun clicks.

The Masked Man drops the gun and swiftly reaches for his hip to PULL A HUNTING KNIFE.

JOE (CONT'D)

*Ah ah ah! No no no--*

The Masked Man swings the knife upward and arrives at Joe to SWIFTLY BRING THE KNIFE DOWN ONTO JOE'S HEAD, eliciting a deep grunt. The blade lodges into the skull, not very deep.

The Masked Man YANKS back the knife, brutally dislodging the blade, and he SWINGS IT BACK DOWN INTO JOE'S TEMPLE.

We cut briefly to Joe's POV as the blade imbeds itself into his skull/brain. ELECTRIC ZAP/CRACKLE SOUNDS as neurons explode/die. The masked man releases the knife handle and we stumble back, moaning stupidly (like a lobotomized cow). The masked man disappears from view as we FALL WOOZILY BACKWARDS. A loud, hollow KONK as the back of our head knocks the asphalt.

Suddenly - and we leave Joe's POV for this - a GUNSHOT is heard, and a BULLET hits a wall beyond the Masked Man.

The Masked Man turns to see the source of the gunshot. It's BRIAN, running 50 ft in front of the destroyed car that the figure (revealed now to have been Brian) hid behind.

He looks terrified as he trains a pistol on the Masked Man while also training his phone's camera on his pistol (the video resembles a first-person shooter game). He FIRES again.

The bullet misses. The Masked Man wobbles into a defensive stance. Brian jogs forward, FIRING his gun again. And again. And again. (We see this from the POV of Brian's video.)

The Masked Man reaches for his belt. Brian keeps firing his pistol - HITTING THE MAN IN THE CHEST OF HIS BULLET-PROOF VEST, THEN IN THE CROTCH, and then IN THE SIDE OF THE FACE (exploding the side of his head). He is spun away from Brian, who fires once more. This shot hits the back of the masked man's head, which causes his face to BURST APART at the nose, although his mask remains intact. He falls onto his stomach.

BACK TO JOE'S POV. Knife still visibly lodged in our head. We are letting out a sustained, barely audible moan as we stare up at the night sky.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Oh my God! Sheriff!

Brian comes into view. He leans down to confirm that we are breathing. Our unbroken exhale sounds like the inside of an industrial freezer. In the distance, the sound of an incoming SIRENS.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Sheriff! Oh my God! I saved you!

The sky beginning to subtly change colors with the flashing of offscreen gumball lights. But our eyelids are beginning to shut.

**EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

When our eyes flutter back open, refusing to fully shut, we reveal ourselves to DRIFTING QUICKLY AND BUMPILY below the night sky. Offscreen ambulance lights streaking across our vision. We are being pushed. On a gurney? A masked PARAMEDIC - the one who's pushing us - dips in and out of view.

Suddenly the AWNING OF AN **EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE** COMES INTO VIEW and then a HOSPITAL GUARD, wearing a mask and face shield, looking down at us.

GUARD

Jesus.

PARAMEDIC

Knife wounds to the head, bullet in the arm. Non-responsive.

The guard reads our temperature with a no-touch, infrared thermometer.

GUARD

One-oh-one.

(shaking head, shooing away)

Take him to the tent.

The paramedic shakes his head in deprecation ("gonna die on his way to the tent") and pulls us away from the awning to cart us in the other direction.

Our eyes roll back into our head, BLACKING US OUT.

**EXT. DESERT - LATE AFTERNOON - SEVEN YEARS AGO**

FADE IN. Louise sits on a deck chair in the hills behind her off-screen house. She is looking out at the landscape, while finishing the sewing of a doll's head. Her phone plays an interview with Jacob Needleman about Gurdjieff's teachings.

Joe, clean-shaven (save for a well-groomed mustache), steps out. He is "well dressed." He stands in front of her, barely concealing a giddy smile. He looks at her as if to say "guess what??"

Beat. She turns off her phone.

LOUISE

You won.

Joe smiles, almost ready to cry. Louise puts on a happy face.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

Congratulations!

(rises, goes to him)

Wow. Great.

JOE

We won.

Joe receives her. They hug.

LOUISE

You did it.

JOE

I remember the deal, I promise. We still move after this. You won't need to remind me. Then I get Sheriff wherever we go. 'Cause we set the precedent here. We leave in the *right* way, we start our *family*, we keep growing...

LOUISE

I know.

She keeps the smile plastered on her face. Joe senses the reticence. He looks firmly into her eyes.

JOE

If we don't do this together, then I haven't won anything. It's ours.

LOUISE

I know. It's true.

JOE

I'm scared, too. But it's a good scared, though, right?!

She smiles. A real smile this time.

JOE (CONT'D)

Are we doing this? I'm only doing it if we both are. It's not too late to stop it. It's not.

LOUISE

Let's do it.

JOE

I love you.

He kisses her. We hold on her face.

JOE (CONT'D)

I love you.  
(kisses again, and again,  
and again)  
I love you, I love you, I love  
you...

Fade out on her face.

After a moment of BLACK...

126

**INT. VAN (MOVING) - DAY - ONE YEAR LATER**

126

Still in JOE'S POV, we are now in the center of the back seat of a van being driven on the highway. Our view of the car is obscured by a SMARTPHONE being held horizontally for us (basically filling the frame) by someone reaching back from the passenger seat. On the phone plays a heavily edited TIK-TOK video, titled *One Year Anniversary of the Eddington Protest Terrorist Attack*, comprised of the following footage (accompanied by triumphant/sentimental music)...

**EXT. TIK-TOK VIDEO - PARKING LOT (VIDEO FOOTAGE) - NIGHT**

- Slow-motion footage of Brian running/shooting at the masked man.

- Brian surrendering to police as they arrive at the scene.

- Slow-motion footage of a tearful Brian hugging one of the responding officers.

**INT. TIK-TOK VIDEO (NEWS FOOTAGE) - DAY**

Footage from Fox News of Brian with the responding police. Headline reads: "*Antifa Terrorists Murder Mayor, Teen and Two Police Officers.*" This transitions to a photo of Brian and the headline "*Armed Teen Vigilante Neutralizes Threat.*"

**INT. TIK-TOK VIDEO (ARTICLE ON SCREEN) - DAY**

- A screen-shared ARTICLE briefly takes over: "*Marjorie Taylor Greene nominates Brian Frazee for the Congressional Gold Medal.*"

**EXT. TIK-TOK VIDEO - BRIAN'S JACKSONVILLE HOUSE - DAY**

- BRIAN - now a year older (with peach fuzz for a mustache) - posing for a video in front of a new house in Jacksonville, Florida. He stands beside a new GIRLFRIEND.

**EXT. TIK-TOK VIDEO - DESERT FIRE - NIGHT**

- Brian and girlfriend kiss in slow-motion while sitting beside a desert fire at night. Heart emojis dance.

**INT. TIK-TOK VIDEO - PODCAST - DAY**

- Brian hosting a podcast. Behind him are ads for an energy drink he's launching. He interviews Jon Voight--

THE VIDEO (AND THE PHONE) IS SUDDENLY PULLED AWAY FROM US before finishing (and corded headphones are yanked carelessly from our ears) as the person who was holding it for us, revealed now to be WARREN, hastily re-takes his seat. DAWN, hair done up and dressed regally in a suit, is driving.

WARREN

Show you the rest later so I don't get us pulled over...

Through the windshield, we see that we are approaching a HUMONGOUS, NEWLY BUILT DATA COMPOUND. It looms off the side of the freeway, in the center of the desert. The stereo, drawing bluetooth off Dawn's phone, plays:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (OVER STEREO)

- and when they broadcast the 18 gigahertz signal for one minute three different times as a pulse, it'll cause these lipid nanoparticles that are baked into the shots to swell and release those pathogenic contents--

**EXT. DATA COMPOUND - DAY**

From Joe's POV, we're at the RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY. Dawn's back stands before us as she speaks into a microphone at a podium. A two-sided sign reads "**SolidGoldMagikarp** Supercomputing Data Center, June 2021 Opening."

DAWN

- but today is about a major step forward in the Tech industry here in New Mexico. And my son-in-law, the Mayor of Eddington - Mayor Cross -

She gestures back to us and all eyes go briefly to us. Sitting right beside us (and in our view) is the [EX] PUEBLO SHERIFF (from the first scene), now wearing a pristine white suit. He looks to us with disdain.

DAWN (CONT'D)

- wants to take this opportunity to give a warm thanks to *SolidGoldMagikarp* for choosing as their home Sevilla County AND Antiga Pueblo, on whose shared land this data center now resides.

(some humor now)

In fact, we put half y'all's chairs today on Pueblo land and half on Sevilla. And no, I ain't tellin you which is which!

Polite chuckles from the audience. One guy provides a loud "HA!"

DAWN (CONT'D)

We are now, both and together, one a the privileged places where the future is being built. And at this moment, when unheard of, *wicked* things are being perpetrated by our governments...

Our POV has settled on the front of the crowd, where MICHAEL stands. He wears a sheriff's uniform and trains his SMARTPHONE on the stage, clearly taking a video...

DAWN (CONT'D)

World Economic Forum, population control through disease and vaccine - with the people that created the virus now giving us the cure... all of us Wasteful Eaters. The opportunity at this dark moment to sculpt a *brighter* future is something to be cherished. And earned.

We CUT now to an EXTREME CLOSE UP of JOE'S EYES. They are fixed intensely, one eyebrow arched hideously.

JOE'S ENHANCED POV: We have punched in on Michael's aimed smartphone. We rack focus past it to find a sheriff's badged affixed to his breast pocket.

We then TILT UP to Michael's face, POCKED WITH SCARS from the bomb that killed Guy. His eyes are glued intensely to his phone.

DAWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And we are now home to an advanced supercomputing infrastructure powering the future of a technology that will indeed change everything and solve problems we *never* been able to solve -

MICHAEL'S PHONE: He is filming Dawn's speech. But we ZOOMS IN past Dawn and the ex-Pueblo sheriff to become a CLOSE-UP of JOE, who is now consigned to a wheelchair. He's PARALYZED, mouth twisted into a hideous contortion, one eye locked alarmingly open (and staring directly at us).

DAWN (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

- and all while using the least amount a energy and water as any data complex in the southwest! And that's 'cause a what we're doing in solar. And what the Pueblo's doin, too!

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**EXT. DESERT - DAY**

133

A community building is being restored in the Pueblo. It bears a large new MEMORIAL MURAL featuring Butterfly's heroic face. Beyond this building: a few massive wind turbines. Dawn's speech continues over this.

DAWN (V.O.)

They got their new wind farm buildin up, takin part in New Mexico's 370 billion dollar investment in renewable energy -

We punch out to reveal the whole of SANTA LUPE PUEBLO in the distance. Several community buildings are being reconstructed or built anew, as new money seems to be getting distributed generously about. An array of WIND TURBINES looms just beyond.

DAWN (V.O.)

- pushin advancements *in* wind, *in* solar, *in* geo-thermal, and soon the Governor's hoping to announce *hydrogen* too!

A car speeds past us in the FG and we PAN with it, revealing its back to be that of Joe's wheelchair accessible van.

**EXT. DESERT / JOE'S NEW HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

Dawn drives the van up a dirt hill, arriving at a LARGE, LAVISH HOUSE. The van parks in front of this, their new home.

**EXT. JOE'S NEW HOUSE / JOE'S VAN - MINUTES LATER**

Dawn stands outside the van as Joe, in wheelchair, is slowly descended by the van's built-in escalator.

DAWN

Plane hits a building - two buildings - they don't fall that way. That's how they go in controlled demolitions. You detonate the bottom...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

**INT. HOUSE / ENTRYWAY - LATE AFTERNOON**

The front door opens and Dawn wheels Joe in. She pushes him up a ramp, facing a wall that is dominated by a photo of Richmond.

**EXT. BACK DECK - LATE AFTERNOON**

Dawn - in a robe - cuts Joe's hair on the back deck, overlooking a mountain view. A hot tub waits in the FG, jets bubbling.

\*  
\*  
\*

**INT. JOE'S NEW HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

\*

Joe, now in pajamas, sits in his wheelchair, a blanket draped over his lap. He faces an 85" TV (mounted on a glass wall, overlooking the mountain view). John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln* plays. Dawn sits on a comfy chair, laptop propped on her lap. She's scrolling through 4Chan while the following audio plays:

\*  
\*  
\*

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

I'm not calling it "The Great Reset"! That's the literal title of his book. His father moved 18 billion dollars into Swiss banks for the Nazis and now he's doin just what they did.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Dawn GASPS.

\*

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Mass murder on a global, global scale --

\*  
\*

She pauses the audio. She was searching "seed oils" and stumbled on an anti-government group - *THE KNIGHTHOOD* - whose mascot is ONE OF LOUISE'S DOLLS. It wears the group's UNIFORM and INSIGNIA.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Dawn starts desperately searching for more. She comes to an INVITATION TO A RALLY whose main image is an embroidered image of the mascot, also clearly by Louise's hand. This is evidently the group's identifying image.

Dawn is audibly distraught. Joe, whose chair is turned away, tries to look over, but is unable to move his head.

**LATER**

Dawn sits beside Joe as they both watch a VIDEO on the laptop.

THE VIDEO: a RALLY taking place in a public park. On stage is VERNON. He makes an impassioned speech at a microphone, preaching with intense charisma. (Behind him is a GIANT, INFLATABLE VERSION OF ONE OF LOUISE'S DOLLS, as well a GIANT EMBROIDERED SIGN, also made by Louise.)

VERNON

It's the arrogance of self-pity  
bolstered by the illusion that you're  
the only victim and it keeps you from  
being an agent of Actual Change and it  
keeps them right where they are,  
destroying lives, COLLECTIVE lives, a  
collective that could just as easily  
UNITE. And rise UP! And FIGHT!  
Because evil is powerless if the good  
are not afraid. So guess what? You're  
NOT alone. Guess what? Your pain is  
not a coincidence. You are not a  
coincidence. WE are not a coincidence!  
Will you fight? I will! I'll do it for  
me as a child and I'll do it for my  
future children and I will do it for  
your children and your future  
children. And I will win because I  
have fortified myself in Christ, and  
I'm talking about the Lord Christ,  
Jesus God! And with the Holy Spirit as  
our shield and Christ as our sword ---

The video has cut away to a few of the people sitting behind Vernon. Among them is LOUISE. She looks totally different. She has several tattoos on her arms, one tattoo across her chest, her hair is dyed black, and she's fervently nodding along to Vernon's sermon. She is pregnant.

The video cuts away from Louise, and Dawn quickly rewinds it to PAUSE on Louise's image.

Joe and Dawn gaze on this, destroyed.

CU of Louise on the video. Happier and more self-possessed than we've ever seen her.

**INT. JOE'S NEW HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Dawn, now in her nightgown, uses a Lift to transfer Joe from his wheelchair to a king-size bed. He hangs midair in a sling as Dawn prepares the bed for him. \*

DAWN \*

Is that comfortable? \*

(waits for blinks) \*

Do you want looser? \*

Now that Joe is strapped in, Dawn crosses to the other side of \*  
the room to climb into the other side of the bed. She curls up \*  
and TURNS OFF THE LAMP, dropping the room into darkness, save  
for the eerie moonlight.

DAWN (CONT'D)

G'night.

They lie in silence.

The faint crackle of a distant gunshot, barely audible.

**EXT. DESERT - MICHAEL'S SHOOTING RANGE - NIGHT**

Michael lies on his stomach, aiming a rifle at a target sheet  
(very far away) in the same area in the desert where his  
unconscious body was abandoned by Joe after the explosion.

He fires once, hitting the target's neck.

He cocks the gun and fires again, hitting its chest.

He cocks again and fires once more. This one strikes the HEAD.

On the three separate swells of the gunshot's echo, we CUT  
OUT silently to a contained wide shot of the area (recalling  
a shot of the night that Michael was stranded there by the  
bonfire), and then CUT OUT to an even wider, more vast wide,  
and then we CUT OUT TO:

**EXT. DESERT - NIGHT**

A highly composed tableau.

In the distance, the twinkling lights of Eddington. In the  
FG, the massive data complex. It looms large, a castle  
perched above its kingdom.

Roll credits over this shot.