

INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN

Written by

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Based on Indestructible Man,
directed by Jack Pollexfen

Disclaimer:

This is a black comedy that features dialogue, voice-over, characters, and situations that are intentionally stilted. If at any point in time you find yourself taking any of what follows seriously, put the script down/ stop reading immediately. Thank you for your time.

INT. OKLAHOMA STATE PENITENTIARY - H-UNIT - NIGHT

LOWE, 50, wearing a suit and holding a briefcase, walks down a cement-walled hallway with a GUARD, 35. They approach a corner and slow.

GUARD
Five minutes.

LOWE
Sure thing.

Guard stays put and Lowe turns the corner. There is wall at the end of the hall, where an isolated cell is tucked away.

BENTON, 57, sits on a cement-framed bed, looking coldly across the bars.

LOWE (CONT'D)
Another change to the will.

Benton looks through Lowe.

Lowe opens the briefcase and removes a manila folder. He places it down in the meal slot, and takes a step back.

Benton watches Lowe another moment, then stands and takes the folder. He opens it to find a contract at the top of a stack of papers. He lifts up the contract, revealing a printed picture of a woman (40s) kissing a man (30s). Benton frowns at the contract, then notices the picture. His face doesn't change.

BENTON
(quiet)
What the fuck is this?

LOWE
(coy)
What's it look like?

Benton slaps the picture against the bars - THWONG - Lowe jumps back to the wall.

BENTON
I don't give a damn about her and I don't give a damn about you!

GUARD (O.S.)
What's going on?!

Lowe glances down the hall, then grabs the picture back. The Guard rounds the corner and hurries toward them.

Benton starts to laugh. Lowe watches him, a little disturbed.

GUARD (CONT'D)

Lowe!

Lowe can't look away from Benton.

BENTON

I'll see you in hell.

LOWE

I'll see you in the gas chamber

Guard grabs Lowe by the shoulder.

LOWE (CONT'D)

I'm done.

GUARD

No shit.

The Guard avoids looking at Benton. Benton stands at the edge of his cage. Not finished. The documents and pictures from the folder cover the cell floor.

Somewhere a clock TICKS...

INT. SHERIFF STATION - BULLPEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

DICK, 45, follows the second hand on his watch as it reaches the 12 and nudges the minute just past midnight. He exhales and looks out the window.

DICK (V.O.)

I don't know what I expected, to tell you the truth. The moment it finally happened to old Benton.

Dick takes a sip from a coffee cup. He's the only person in the dim station.

DICK (V.O.)

Maybe I didn't think I'd be alone.

He props his head up with his hand, watching the stars, looking a little sad.

INT. OKLAHOMA STATE PENITENTIARY - WITNESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A group of thirty people sit, facing a window to the gas chamber. Benton's limp body is visible, strapped to a chair. A clock ticks on the wall by the window. All are quiet in the room. Seated towards the back, VERONICA, 40, seems relatively stunned.

EXT. ABANDONED CLINIC - MISSOURI - MORNING

The paint appears faded on the building, even in the early morning light. Three gas-powered generators HUM in the parking lot. Thick extension cords run from the generators to the building via a hole in a blacked-out window.

A gas station and McDonald's are across the street, with signs faintly brighter than the sun.

A windowless van slows by the businesses and turns towards the clinic.

INT. DICK'S APARTMENT - OKLAHOMA - CONTINUOUS

Dick is asleep in bed. An empty fifth bottle sits on the nightstand. PHONE RINGS next to the bottle.

Dick stirs... then looks at the ceiling as it rings a couple more times. He reaches and answers.

DICK

Yeah?

(eyes tighten)

Don't fuck with me...

EXT. GRAVEYARD - THIRTY MINUTES LATER

A Cadet stands on either side of the road into the cemetery, enforcing a line of caution taped tied between brick columns in front of the cemetery gate. A large plaque reading: **St. Andrew's Cemetery** is mounted on the column on the left.

Dick pulls up to the entrance and parks. He hops out and walks around his car, then stops before the caution tape. He looks at the nearest uniform.

The Cadet raises his eyebrows, then realizes, and lifts up the tape. Dick nods and walks under the tape, towards an office building a few dozen yards away.

DICK (V.O.)

Maybe somewhere the line lifts itself.

One Cadet gives a fake stern look to other Cadet.

DICK (V.O.)

Somewhere far from Pittsburg County.

INT. GRAVEYARD OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dick steps into the lobby area. The door to a small room behind a reception desk is open and filled with two people.

JANE, 45, the Captain, stands behind a TECH, 30.

JANE

Rewind it.

The Tech plays a clip of security footage, camera looking from the office to the road and entrance. Dick leans in to see, standing in front of the doorway.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN:

A hearse comes into view as it approaches the office, slows up to the entrance columns, then turns onto the road...and drives out of sight of the camera.

BACK TO SCENE

DICK

Is that it?

JANE

Pretty much.

(to Tech)

Show me south-facing, again.

The Tech switches to another angle, showing the hearse coming into sight down the cemetery road.

DICK

Who's on the pallbearers?

JANE

None of them showed.

DICK

What about the Medical-Examiner's people or the backhoe driver?

JANE

They're with Davis and Michelson.

DICK

I should be there.

JANE

You're here, Sergeant.

The Tech looks uncomfortable.

DICK

Yes, sir.

Tech switches the angle of the footage, displaying more of the graves.

DICK (V.O.)

There's an old saying I heard in a bar: 'I'd rather be broke in jail than be dead and rich'.

Tech switches to footage of the hearse entering the graveyard.

DICK

Benton, you cheating bastard...

The Tech stares at the screen, very aware of the fact that Dick is standing in front of the doorway.

JANE

That was out loud, Dick.

Dick looks down, embarrassed.

DICK

Sorry.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - CONTINUOUS

A mound of dirt sits behind a covered grave and tombstone in the middle of a long row. The tombstone reads: **Charles Benton** with an open padlock engraved underneath.

DICK (V.O.)

We go back a while: Jane, Benton, and I. Farther back with Jane than I care to remember most nights.

EXT. ABANDONED CLINIC - OKLAHOMA - CONTINUOUS

The back of the van is docked against the entrance to the building. A loud (electronic) SNAP is audible inside the clinic- Lights cut off on the McDonald's and gas station signs.

INT. ABANDONED CLINIC - OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Benton's head is restrained in what looks like a dentist's chair. His cheek twitches. His eyes open.

CUT TO BLACK

INSERT TITLE: Indestructible Man

INT. ABANDONED CLINIC - OPERATING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Benton's pupils move around, he almost looks scared. His face contracts into a pout, and he starts to SOB and WALE, as the restraints on his forehead and chin work hard to keep him still. Though his body looks a man in his 50s, his pout exudes the innocence of a child.

INT. ABANDONED CLINIC - SANITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room has been converted into something of a control room. VON, 40, stands behind the window, helpless to Benton's pain in re-entering the world.

Veronica hurries in from the hallway.

VERONICA

How is he?

VON

I think he's cold.

VERONICA

The power's back on.

VON

That's good.

VERONICA

That's important.

VON

I know.

VERONICA

No one notices the missing murderer, and no one notices the un-abandoned free clinic.

VON

(looks down)

I know.

He turns to Benton. Veronica pauses, then turns. She takes a breath, watching him.

VERONICA
He's fine.

VON
How can you tell?

Benton tries to look up at the source of the noise. Veronica takes Von's hands in hers.

VERONICA
We did it. That's what matters
right now.

They look into each other's eyes. Von is eased, some. They lean in and kiss.

Benton JERKS the heavy chair forward. They look up - he's still confined to the restraints around his head, arms, hands, legs, and ankles.

Veronica watches him, a different look on her face.

VON
He shouldn't be that strong.

VERONICA
...He wants to see us.

VON
What?

VERONICA
Maybe he's cold. I don't know.

Benton JERKS the chair again. Von puts his hand against the window, watching him too. Benton JERKS closer.

Veronica turns and grabs a HazMat suit off the wall, and steps into the white polyethylene coveralls.

VON
You'll terrify him!

Chair JERKS closer.

VERONICA
He doesn't know what to
expect.

VON (CONT'D)
What about infection?

VERONICA

I'm going through the sterilizer.

Von skeptically watches her zip the suit and tighten the respirator mask...

VERONICA (CONT'D)

(muffled)

I love you.

Chair JERKS

VON

I love you too.

Veronica opens the door and walks into the small transitional room. She presses a button on the wall and a burst of de-lousing foam SPRAYS from the ceiling.

She brushes off the excess foam and enters into the stark white operating room. Benton tries to move his head, but the restraint around his forehead keeps him only wriggling.

Veronica looks back at Von, then steps up to the chair.

OPERATING ROOM

Veronica gets within Benton's restrained sight. They lock eyes. Benton drools a little, then forms a smile.

Veronica is floored, having doubted this feeling was possible. Benton moves his mouth and spittles. Veronica laughs a tear.

SANITATION ROOM

Von covers his mouth with his hand, blinking many tears away. Veronica turns to look at him and share the moment. Benton makes slow nonsensical noises.

Von smiles and puts his hand on the glass. Veronica makes a heart with her gloved hands. They look each other in the eye through the glass and Veronica's mask.

OPERATING ROOM

Benton snots some half dried black blood, half fresh boogers, then resumes drooling. Veronica smiles at the baby-like, yet wrinkled Benton.

VERONICA

(cooing)

That's your new dad in there,
sweetie.

INT. LAW FIRM - CORNER OFFICE - MORNING

Lowe sits at his stately desk, on the phone and playing with the cord.

LOWE
What are you wearing?
(listens on edge of seat)
What about-
(listens to more)
Mmm huh...?

Lowe wipes a little drool from the corner of his mouth.

INSERT TITLE: One Year Ago

The light illuminates on the desk-phone for a call on another line. Lowe rolls his eyes.

LOWE (CONT'D)
...Give me a minute, Cristal.

He hits a button on the phone console.

ANN (O.S.)
Sergeant Chasen is here.

LOWE
In front of you or in the lobby?

ANN (O.S.)
The lobby.

He bites his lip, and considers a moment.

LOWE
I'm not here.

ANN (O.S.)
Okay, Paul.

Lowe looks up and mouths 'Okay, Paul' to the closed door, then hits the button for Cristal's line.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIVE STAR MOTEL - LOWE'S ROOM - MORNING

Lowe sits at a small table with a bottle of vodka and a revolver in front of him. One of the two double beds is covered with boxes of paperwork. A couple suits hang in plastic from the door.

INSERT TITLE: Today

He drinks the last shot of vodka. He tosses the bottle and it bounces off the carpet. A vanity mirror is mounted on the wall across from the table.

Phone rings on the table, eliciting no reaction from him. He waits a Mississippi second, and answers.

LOWE

Yeah?

(Someone took Benton's
body)

...What?

(It was like a heist,
apparently)

For what?

(For him)

He's a dead man.

(I know)

Lowe grabs the pistol.

LOWE (CONT'D)

They're probably some kind of
"Butcher" Benton nuts, right?

(That's what they're--)

Lowe drops the phone and fumbles open the revolver... No bullets.

LOWE (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

He turns to the mirror and looks himself in the eye, seething... He picks up his phone.

LOWE (CONT'D)

Hello...?

(Yeah)

Take me to Walmart.

Lowe hangs up, still holding the gun.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dick and Jane sit across from AGENT 1, 45, and AGENT 2, 50.

AGENT 1

Bodies don't just up and leave.

DICK
People up and leave. Bodies stay
put.

AGENT 1
Sergeant-

DICK
It *feels* like the only answer you
want is: 'He up and left, and
here's the tape.'

Jane glances at Dick.

AGENT 1
Do you need to take a five?

JANE
He put Benton in cuffs way back
when.

DICK
If you're able to emotionally
associate the files you read with
actual human beings.

JANE
Take a five, Dick.

Dick quietly pushes his chair back and walks to the door
without looking at anyone. He quietly pulls the door closed
behind him.

JANE (CONT'D)
Anything on your end?

AGENT 2
We'll share all developments as
we're able.

JANE
Great. I'll let you about Organized
Crime's assessment of gangs with
possible Butcher Benton ties.

AGENT 2
Please.

JANE
Though I still don't see what
they'd want with a body.

AGENT 2
It's not for you to see, Captain.

Jane looks at him a moment, unamused.

JANE
Of course not.

He smiles.

AGENT 1
Give Dick our best.

Jane gives something resembling a smile.

EXT. ABANDONED CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

The parking lot is empty. The extension cords are gone. A local city cop car drives past the businesses and pulls into the lot. The COP, 31, parks close to the door, lingers a few moments, and exits.

COP
Approaching eleven ninety-one Piney
Point.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

COP (CONT'D)
Police. Open up.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

COP (CONT'D)
Police.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

COP (CONT'D)
Police. Anyone home?

Cop tries the knob on the front door. Locked. There is a hole in the window insulation where the cables used to thread through.

Cop tries to stretch up enough to get a clear view through the six inch hole.

INT. ABANDONED CLINIC - SANITATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Through the window, the operating room appears derelict and the dental chair is nowhere to be found. Part of Von's fingerprint is visible on the glass in the dim light.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - BULLPEN - CONTINUOUS

The sea of desks and cubicles are occupied with busy officers, cadets, and deputies. Dick stands in the doorway with his arms crossed. Jane walks out of her office and across the bullpen to him.

JANE
Let's go outside.

DICK
Let's.

They walk through the door to the lobby, then Dick opens the door for them to step outside.

EXT. SHERIFF STATION - CONTINUOUS

A small gravel courtyard lies between the station entrance and the street.

DICK
Take me off the case.

JANE
You're also on leave for the next two weeks.

DICK
What?

JANE
You're becoming a liability.

Dick is hurt.

JANE (CONT'D)
That shouldn't surprise you.

DICK
It's *completely* surprising me.

JANE
Take a month.

DICK
Jane, I need this.

She looks down.

JANE
I know. That's bad for everyone.

He looks at her like she betrayed him.

JANE (CONT'D)
You'll thank me.

DICK
Yes, sir.

He turns and walks off. She watches blankly a moment or two, then turns and heads back inside.

EXT. ABANDONED CLINIC - MISSOURI - CONTINUOUS

The Cop steps into the still-running city cop car, glances back at the insulated window, and drives out of the parking lot...then across the street to the gas station.

DICK (V.O.)
Have you ever thought about why you
do what you do? Why you let some
stuff slide, and let the others
make your blood boil?

EXT. SECLUDED COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The charming little place is mostly surrounded by trees. No signs of civilization aside from a narrow road dirt road are present around it.

DICK (V.O.)
What do you want? Have you ever
wondered if it's really for you, or
if it's for someone else?

EXT. WALMART - CONTINUOUS

The parking lot is busy.

DICK (V.O.)
(swallows whiskey)
Have you ever gotten only what you
need and nothing that you want?

Von pushes a cart full of bags of essentials out of the massive store and over to his car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

They're parked in front of Lowe's motel room. DALE, 40s, sits in the driver's seat, and Lowe sits shotgun, loading bullets into his revolver.

DALE
(voice from the phone)
What'd this guy do, boss?

Lowe looks at the road a moment or two, as though not hearing him, then:

LOWE
Everything.

Dale looks at him, then gives a nod like he's up for it.

LOWE (CONT'D)
He had some money coming to him
when they put him away. We wanted
it.

DALE
Now someone else does.

LOWE
(with dead eyes)
I hope so.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - VIEWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jane watches CRAIG, 33, through one-way glass. Craig sits across a small table and tape-recorder from DAVIS, 48, and MICHELSON, 40.

DAVIS
Please state your name for the
record.

CRAIG
Craig LaHue.

DAVIS
Mr. LaHue, are you aware of the
fact that you're entitled to have
an attorney present?

CRAIG
Yes, sir.

DAVIS

And you're choosing to waive that right?

CRAIG

That's correct.

DAVIS

What happened at the cemetery this morning?

CRAIG

We were all there by seven O'clock: The Priest, the Medical Examiners...We waited for the family about thirty minutes. Which is very unusual.

MICHELSON

What happened after the thirty minutes?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - FLASHBACK - MORNING

Craig leans against the backhoe a few yards from the grave. A PRIEST, 60, and three Medical-Examiner's Office EMPLOYEES, 40s, stand around the covered grave and pine coffin/crate atop it. No one looks happy.

Across the path from Benton's would-be grave is another covered grave, either recently dug or filled. Craig tries to read the tombstone.

PRIEST

I won't be able to do the service. I'm sorry. I'm scheduled for another service at nine.

EMPLOYEE

Whatever you have to do, Father.

PRIEST

Thank you. I was looking forward to it. I had spoken with him.

EMPLOYEE

(nods)
Take care.

PRIEST

God be with all of you.

EMPLOYEE 2

And you Father.

The Priest nods and walks back to the parking lot next to the office.

CRAIG (O.S.)

We all wanted to leave. He was the only one with a good enough excuse. Imagine saying you're late for God.

EMPLOYEE

Do you have any other burials?

CRAIG

Not till noon.

EMPLOYEE

We'll be gone by then.

A hearse enters the cemetery and drives down one of the paved roads that stretches through the property. The Priest pauses, then continues to his car. All notice it after a moment or two.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Is anyone else working?

CRAIG

Just me.

The hearse makes its way toward them.

EMPLOYEE

Maybe you're double-booked...

CRAIG

She never schedules less than an hour apart.

No one seems to know what to make of this information. The hearse slows and parks across the street from the Medical-Examiners van. The windows and windshield are tinted. Employee gives a wave, more confused than suspicious.

Craig leans against the backhoe, frowning as he looks at the windows.

The doors open to the hearse and two people exit, dressed in black and wearing ski-masks, a man and a woman. Employee's mouth opens in shock. Veronica, masked, raises a double-barrel shotgun. Craig raises his eyebrows. Everyone stands still, cowering in fear and surprise.

EMPLOYEE
Wha-what do you want?

EXT. MAZE - DREAM - AFTERNOON

Dick walks from around the center of a rectangular hedge-walled maze. He can easily see the different possible paths over the foot-high hedge.

He keeps moving forward, looking for but not noticing a path out. He picks up the pace and rounds a corner. There no longer seem to be choices in paths.

Dick checks his watch. In place of his hand is an oversized Deputy's badge, with a normal-sized watch and wrist leading up to it. He breaks into a jog, trying not to hit himself with big badge hand.

Out of nowhere comes Jane, running toward him in sneakers and exercise gear. He takes a hard step to avoid her and the bush-

INT. DICK'S APARTMENT - SUNSET

-And KICKS himself awake in bed. Dick is dazed by the sudden waking, then the hour.

He sits up and looks out the window. The sun is beneath the horizon, but some light still remains. He rubs his eyes...and nestles back down.

INT. COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Veronica and Von sit across from one another at the dinner table. Benton sits between them in the dental chair, wearing a loose T-shirt, a bib, and a diaper, restrained at the waist from falling. A metal serving bowl of mushy peas is welded to the tray attached to the chair.

VERONICA

I've been thinking about the first week.

Von holds his fork.

VON

Yeah?

VERONICA

It might be tough.

VON

We talked about it being tough.

VERONICA

...I'd want help.

They notice Benton's nose is covered in mushy peas. They smile at him, almost too suddenly happy to laugh. They each put a hand on Benton's shoulders. Benton smiles, letting out some mushy pea tinted drool.

INT. LIMOUSINE RENTAL - CONTINUOUS

The office is crammed to provide maximum parking lot space. A desk sits a few yards from the door. A CLERK, 32, sits behind it, reading.

The door opens and a security tone goes off to highlight it. Jane and Michelson enter. The Clerk looks up, notices the badges and becomes serious.

JANE
Good afternoon, sir.

CLERK
Good afternoon.

JANE
It's my understanding that you rent hearses. Is that right?

CLERK
Yes, ma'am. We do.

JANE
Could I see the rental log?

CLERK
Of course...

He types and looks at the screen, not entirely sure of himself.

JANE
(showing badge)
I'm Captain Lauder. This is Sergeant Michelson.

CLERK
Oh, wow. It's a pleasure. I...

He types and clicks and clicks...

CLERK (CONT'D)
Here we go. ...It's a pleasure.

Clerk turns the thin monitor around as far as it will go with the cords dangling behind it.

Jane and Michelson look at the robotic CRN log. Clerk circles the mouse at the top of the list.

JANE
(squinting)
What's it say?

CLERK
The last person was Cecilia
Fletcher. Rented on the tenth and
returned the tenth.

Jane nods. Michelson sighs.

JANE
Thank you.

CLERK
Sorry.

JANE
We appreciate your help, sir.

CLERK
(nods)
No problem, Captain.

Clerk turns the screen back around as they walk out.

CLERK (CONT'D)
-Oh.

Jane and Michelson stop at the door.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Someone had a reservation for last
night but never picked it up. They
lost their deposit-

MICHELSON
Holy shit.

Jane smiles. So does the Clerk, having done good.

INT. DICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dick lies asleep. The doorbell RINGS

EXT. DICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

EVA, 30, leans against the wall. The door opens and Dick answers.

DICK
Hey, Eva.

EVA
Hey, Dick. Could I put you out for
some sugar?

DICK
Sure.

He walks back in and leaves the door open for Eva to follow.

INT. DICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Dick leads them into the kitchen. He walks over and opens a cabinet.

EVA
I don't really need sugar. I just
said that.

DICK
Oh.

He closes the cabinet.

EVA
I need your advice...

DICK
Are you sure?

EVA
There's no one else-

DICK
Wanna sit down?

EVA
No. Just be honest with me. Do you
think Bill will stick around?

Dick takes a breath, not wanting to answer.

DICK
I guess I could see him going.

Eva nods.

EVA
So could I.

He doesn't know what to say. He tries to look reassuring. She puts her hand on his shoulder.

EVA (CONT'D)
Thanks, Dick.

He nods. She walks out.

INT. COTTAGE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Benton lies on a sheet-metal reinforced doctor's office table, wearing only a diaper. Thick stitches run down his collarbone to his stomach. His body is blotted with yellow patches of dead skin. He seems content moving his mouth to produce sporadic noise.

Von wears his dinner clothes plus a doctor's coat with a smiley face pin. He examines a fist sized patch of yellow on Benton's belly, holding a clipboard with charts.

VON
Can you sit up for me buddy?

Benton lets some drool out as he looks at Von. Von smiles and puts his hand on Benton's shoulder.

VON (CONT'D)
It's okay, buddy.

Von gently applies pulling pressure on Benton's shoulder. Benton makes more noise with his mouth open, content lying down. Von pulls with all his might, starting to get red in the face.

VON (CONT'D)
Come on. Up buddy. You can do it.

BENTON
Duh-ih...

Von stops pulling before he can fully process the moment. They look each other in the eye.

VON
What did you say?

Benton spittles a moment, then:

BENTON
Duh-ihhh...

VON
Did you say 'daddy'?

Benton drools and looks around the room.

VON (CONT'D)
Veronica...!

Footsteps in another room, the door swings open in the hall and Veronica runs down and into the living room.

VERONICA
Did he say something?

VON
He said 'daddy'.

Veronica covers her mouth.

VERONICA
Damn it.

Von grins.

VON
He can still hear the volume and the cadence even if he can't see your expression or understand the vocabulary.

VERONICA
He's a chip off the old block.

Von makes an 'I didn't need that' face.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
I can't believe how lucky I am.

VON
How lucky we both are.

VERONICA
Me, especially.

Von turns to Benton.

VON
I don't believe her. Do you?

Benton smiles.

VERONICA
Now *that's* damaging.

VON
What? I involved him in the conversation.

DOORBELL RINGS

Benton smiles and Veronica's and Von's eyes bulge as all the family fun is sucked out of the room.

BENTON
(more like the doorbell)
Duhh-ihh...

They lean in and whisper:

VERONICA
Do you think it's a cop?

VON
From where?

VERONICA
I guess we'll find out...

Veronica keeps put and gives a smile for Benton.

VON
We're not answering it?

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

VERONICA
Hell no.

They wait a moment for another ring or knock.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
If they were cops they would've
said something, right...?

Von looks at the floor, then looks up to smile for Benton.

BENTON
Dih-dihhh...

Veronica makes a face at the noise. Von glances towards the front of the house. Veronica smiles at Benton and instinctively makes the quiet sign over her mouth.

VON
Did you hear a car before the
doorbell?

VERONICA
No.

VON
...Maybe they're kids.

Veronica slowly nods. They both look at the floor, as though to better hear the silence. Benton mouths quietly to himself. Several moments of nothing but the wind on the windows...

VERONICA

We should get him to bed.

Von nods.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Eyes bulge.

COP (O.S.)

Police. Open up...!

Veronica mouths: '*Fuck*'.

INT. COURTROOM - FLASHBACK - MORNING

The PROSECUTOR, 40, paces between the jurors and Benton, 42, sweating in the witness stand.

INSERT TITLE: Fifteen Years Ago

PROSECUTOR
Is it fair to say you're a career
criminal, Mr. Benton?

Benton pauses to consider, a little hot under the collar.
Lowe, 35, sits behind the defense desk, sweating more.

LOWE
Objection, your honor.

JUDGE
(50)
Overruled.

PROSECUTOR
Are you a career criminal, Mr.
Benton?

BENTON
I was.

The Prosecutor nods. Lowe pretends to reference something in his yellow pad. He takes a deep breath, with the shoulders of the other defense attorneys shielding him from the jury.

PROSECUTOR
What were you doing at the time of
your arrest?

BENTON
Buying drugs.

PROSECUTOR
What kind of drugs were you buying,
Mr. Benton?

BENTON
Cocaine.

PROSECUTOR
Was it for you or did you plan on
selling it?

BENTON
(eyes dart to Lowe)
It was to sell.

The Prosecutor nods. Lowe whispers something to the attorney next to him.

PROSECUTOR

What are you on trial for, Mr. Benton?

LOWE

Objection, your Honor.

JUDGE

Overruled.

PROSECUTOR

What are you on trial for, Mr. Benton?

BENTON

Two counts of kidnapping and two counts of first degree murder.

Prosecutor nods to Benton. Neither appears affected by these words. Prosecutor approaches the jurors.

PROSECUTOR

Mr. Benton's idea of going straight is selling narcotics to people who don't know any better. Drug-addicts and young people.

LOWE

Objection, your honor.

JUDGE

Sustained.

Benton looks a little annoyed. He tries to avoid looking at the jury, facing the closed courtroom doors.

PROSECUTOR

Do you recall your conversation with your wife on June twenty-first?

BENTON

No, sir.

PROSECUTOR

Would you remember if I read you her statement?

Lowe nudges the ATTORNEY, 40, next to him.

ATTORNEY
Objection, your honor.

JUDGE
Sustained. Settle on a line of
questioning, Counselor.

PROSECUTOR
I'm establishing a history of
violent and recidivist behavior.
His (spouse)--

JUDGE
--Do so without leading your
witness.

The Prosecutor is livid, staring daggers into the Judge's eyes. Lowe scribbles something down in his pad, hiding his elation.

PROSECUTOR
(looks down)
No further questions, your Honor.

The Judge turns to Lowe and the Prosecutor takes his seat at the District Attorney's table. Lowe gets up, and paces halfway between Benton and the jury.

LOWE
Mr. Benton, how old are you?

BENTON
I'm forty two.

LOWE
How many years did you spend in
jail or prison?

BENTON
About fifteen.

LOWE
More than a third of your life.

BENTON
Yes, sir.

PROSECUTOR
Objection, your honor.

JUDGE
Sustained.

LOWE

Do you want to go back to prison,
Mr. Benton?

BENTON

No, sir.

Lowe nods and paces towards the jury.

LOWE

Twenty or twenty-five years might
be different. Half or more of your
life behind bars and you might
prefer it there. Maybe try to go
back.

PROSECUTOR

Objection, your honor.

JUDGE

Sustained. Stick to your witness,
counselor.

Lowe nods and paces back towards the witness stand.

LOWE

What were you doing at the time of
the murders?

BENTON

Selling drugs.

LOWE

Where were you selling them?

BENTON

My cabin. Off Route thirty-one.

LOWE

That's outside of town, isn't it?

BENTON

Yes, sir.

LOWE

Why don't you work in town? There's
jobs at the plant, aren't there?

PROSECUTOR

Objection, your honor.

JUDGE

Overruled.

LOWE
Mr. Benton, why can't you get a
normal job in town?

BENTON
They're not hiring felons.

Lowe nods.

LOWE
How far from the crime-scene do you
live?

BENTON
About twenty miles.

LOWE
Mr. Benton, did you drive twenty
miles to a place you've never been
and know your not welcome to kill
two strangers in cold blood?

Benton raises his eyebrows, a little taken aback.

BENTON
No. No, sir.

PROSECUTOR
Objection, your honor.

JUDGE
Sustained.

LOWE
No further questions, your honor.

Lowe walks across the courtroom to take his seat. A Bailiff escorts Benton back to the defense desk. The Prosecutor rises.

PROSECUTOR
I'd like to call my next witness,
your honor.

JUDGE
Proceed.

PROSECUTOR
The people call Deputy Richard
Chasen to the stand.

Jane, 30, watches from amongst the crowd of people in the courtroom as Dick takes the stand. She's nervous for him.

DICK (O.S.)
I swear that the evidence that I shall give, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help me God.

Jane takes a breath as Dick settles in the chair.

PROSECUTOR
How long have you been with the Sheriff's department, Deputy Chasen?

DICK
Five years, sir.

PROSECUTOR
How long had your former partner been with the Sheriff's department?

DICK
Five years.

PROSECUTOR
Could you see yourself staying another five years?

DICK
...Yes, sir.

LOWE
Objection, your Honor.

JUDGE
Sustained.

PROSECUTOR
Do they teach you at the Sheriff's Academy how you're supposed to cope with your partner's murder?

Jane's face wrinkles as Dick hesitates to answer. She looks down, hoping Dick doesn't notice.

LOWE (O.S.)
Objection, your Honor.

JUDGE (O.S.)
(pauses to consider)
Overruled.

Jane looks at Dick as he remains silent. She manages a small smile, hoping he'll see it. She nods encouragingly.

DICK (O.S.)
 Not really. No, sir...There's a
 group. Counseling.

Benton sits at the end of the defense desk, watching the
 Prosecutor with cold eyes.

EXT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

SUE, 40, the woman in the picture, stands with her ear to the
 door, growing worried.

SUE
 (under her breath)
 Don't listen to goddamn Lowe.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COTTAGE - LIVING ROOM - SUNSET

Benton lies, eyes closed, on the doctor's table. Von sits on
 the floor, hands covering his also closed eyes. Von opens one
 up to check that Benton's are still closed.

VERONICA (O.S.)
 We would have noticed. We were in
 the middle of dinner.

Benton squints open an eye to check Von's are still closed.

COP (O.S.)
 What's the best number to reach
 you?

VERONICA (O.S.)
 Nine-one-eight, four-three-two,
 seven-four-five-seven.

COP (O.S.)
 Nine-one-eight, four-three-two,
 seven-four-five-seven. Yeah?

VERONICA (O.S.)
 Yes, sir.

COP (O.S.)
 Thank you. Sorry for the
 disturbance.

VERONICA (O.S.)
 No problem, officer.

Von holds his breath.

COP (O.S.)
Have a good night.

VERONICA (O.S.)
Likewise.

Veronica closes the door and quietly walks back into the living room. Von breathes.

BENTON
Ahhh...

Veronica leans against the wall, not looking at either of them yet. Von looks at Benton with relief.

Veronica listens to the door shut on the cop car, and remains silent as it drives away from the cottage.

VERONICA
Jesus Christ...

Von shakes his head 'no-no' at Benton.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
How did we not hear that?

VON
All our attention was on him.

This stops Veronica.

VERONICA
...We need a security system.

Von nods.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
And we probably could've done the physical in the basement.

VON
His first physical wasn't going to be in a cavern.

VERONICA
Better than in custody.

Von rolls his eyes

VERONICA (CONT'D)
And his *room* is the basement. You
think we're keeping him in a
cavern...?

VON
It crossed my mind.

Veronica can't believe what she's hearing. Von looks at
Benton a moment, then looks away.

VERONICA
Do we need to move, now?

VON
I don't know.

VERONICA
Why would you.

Benton looks a little confused.

VON
I'm glad he gets to see to how it
works around here.

Veronica clenches her jaw and takes a breath.

VON (CONT'D)
You wanted to do this, by the way.

Veronica turns to Benton. She tries a smile for him. He's
still looking pouty/ confused.

VERONICA
We're sorry, buddy...

VON
Are we?

Benton drools a little.

VERONICA
We are...

Von takes a slow breath, confused and frustrated.

VERONICA (CONT'D)
What kind of parent do you think
you'll be?

VON
How do you want me to answer that?

VERONICA

Are you going to be the pushover or the disciplinarian?

VON

Neither sound like good parents.

VERONICA

But when it comes down to it, what will you be?

VON

You're saying I'll be the pushover.

VERONICA

You won't...? Because I'm pretty sure the next few days are the last I'll get before he *hates* me for always saying (no)--

VON

--Sterilizer or not, you ran into that room not knowing what it could do to him or you. Whatever parent that makes you, I'm *happy* to be the opposite.

The words hit Veronica in the gut. Benton's expression darkens past confusion.

VON (CONT'D)

(looks down)

I didn't mean that.

VERONICA

Which part?

VON

...It was messed up, truth be told. I think we should talk about it...I didn't mean to blurt it out like that.

VERONICA

Can you express in an opinion in the moment, or do you physically need to wait till it's 'told you so'?

VON

I told you so in the moment!

Veronica is slightly taken aback by the volume. Benton CRIES and WALES. Loud.

VERONICA

Nice.

Von glares at Veronica. She turns as Benton wales louder. He looks at Von, then back at Veronica.

VERONICA (CONT'D)

What's the matter, buddy...? I'm sorry.

Von steps up to the table to stand beside Veronica. Benton looks them over, still sobbing.

VON

It's okay, buddy. We're sorry.

Von puts his arm around Veronica. Benton's eyes tighten-

Benton grabs Von's hand and YANKS - SLAMMING his head into the metal table.

CUT TO:

INT. DICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dick lies asleep in bed. KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK on the door.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK from the gavel. Dick sweats, only stirring.

COURT VOICES (O.S.)

Order, order, order...!

Dick kicks himself awake. He catches his breath, not too excited this time.

KNOCK KNOCK

Dick glances at the clock: 9:04 PM

EXT. DICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

No one's around. A doormat sits in front of the door. The door opens and Dick looks around: no one. A manila envelope sits on the doormat. Dick closes the door, leaving the envelope.

Lowe leans his head into the hall from the staircase, and notices the envelope hasn't moved.

LOWE

Fuck.

Dick's door opens, Lowe darts out of the way. Dick walks over the envelope, still not noticing it, and knocks on the door of the next apartment. Lowe peaks out to see, frowning in confusion as Dick waits outside the apartment door. The door opens, Lowe retreats into the shadows. Eva answers the door.

EVA
Hey Dick.

DICK
Hey.

He looks down, hesitating.

DICK (CONT'D)
You don't need Bill.
(shakes head)
Whether you stay with him or not-
You don't need him.

EVA
You think so?

Dick nods, doing his best to look like he means it.

DICK
Don't let anyone tell you what you
can or can't do.

Eva looks at him a moment.

EVA
Thank you.

Dick nods.

DICK
You're gonna be great.

She puts on a smile.

EVA
Thanks.

Lowe watches the door close. Dick walks to his door, then hesitates, and heads for the stairs. Lowe's eyes almost bulge out of his head. He quickly turns, then hesitates- no way to act natural. He pulls out his phone as Dick approaches. Dick looks at him, puzzled, but shrugs it off, and starts to descend the stairs. Lowe bites his lip, then turns to Dick.

LOWE
(almost corny)
Is that-? Oh my god, Dick Chasen?

Dick turns, a little surprised.

DICK

Yeah.

Dick squints at him, not recognizing him. Lowe turns his head a little, giving him his profile. He smiles.

LOWE

I'm Paul Lowe-

Dick makes a face, remembering.

LOWE (CONT'D)

We worked together a long time ago.

DICK

(nods)

You represented Charles Benton.

Lowe gives a nod.

LOWE

I can't believe what happened.

Dick looks at him without giving anything away. Lowe looks back at him, abandoning pretenses.

LOWE (CONT'D)

That was quite a speech you gave.

DICK

No one ever said anything to my mom like that.

Lowe gives a nod.

DICK (CONT'D)

Please leave my building now.

Lowe glances around.

LOWE

I kinda like it.

Dick walks up the stairs, Lowe watches, a little amused. Dick gets in Lowe's face.

DICK

I lied to her because she's a good person, but I won't lie to you-

Lowe looks a little serious.

DICK (CONT'D)
I'm not who you remember.

Dick looks at him, making sure it's registering. Lowe looks back at him, serious, but refusing to look intimidated.

DICK (CONT'D)
Don't come here again.

Dick turns and heads down the stairs. Lowe, looking to be at rock bottom, watches him, too frustrated to move just yet.

INT. COTTAGE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The lights are off. The doctor's table is covered with a blanket. The white tile looks pristine in the dark.

DICK (V.O.)
I used to believe that things happened for a reason. And that it was my job to defend innocence and justice and freedom, and reason...and other ideas, essentially.

The light is on behind the basement door.

DICK (V.O.)
I realized that nothing happens for a reason. And if it did, my job would probably be useless.

An oak tree is visible through the window looking out to the back of the cottage.

BENTON (O.S.)
Mih-mihh...

DICK (V.O.)
We're all *dying*. And for what?

"The Thrill Is Gone" by B.B. King plays.

EXT. COTTAGE YARD - CONTINUOUS

A few yards from the oak trunk lies a 6 foot long, 2 foot wide fresh-dug patch of dirt.

VERONICA (O.S.)
(terrified)
It's okay...

FADE OUT.