

... but with a whimper.

by  
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#### CHARACTERS:

MARVIN – 40, a homeless man who has reached the end of his rope. He had a perfect life: great career, comfortable, and the perfect marriage. It all changed quickly as he lost his wife, job and house within a year of each other and, after five years on the streets, wants nothing more than to rejoin his wife. He is intelligent, kind and tired.

JACK – 17, is a loner, angry, and orphan due to the fact that his father murdered his mother. He has never gained closure or sought help. He is a bomb waiting to explode. He sees no future for himself and makes no plans. He has lived with Vienna's family since his father was arrested. He walks with a slight limp.

VIENNA – 17, is the assistant manager of the store and a high school senior. She is Jack's girlfriend, but while Jack is going nowhere, she has plans to get out of this town and build a future. She is sympathetic, bright, and fighting to break the cycle the town perpetuates.

#### SETTING:

Alley behind a convenience store in a generic small town. UPSTAGE RIGHT is the back door of the store with a light over it. UPSTAGE LEFT is a box compactor/bailer with a metal door. Otherwise, the stage is empty.

/ = A point of overlap by the following line

≠ = Pause in overlapping line until previous line's end

LIGHTS UP on an alley behind a convenience store.  
VIENNA and JACK, each wearing jeans, t-shirt and store  
smock, enter. They are carrying stacks of boxes.

VIENNA

So, at the end of your shift, you will bring the empty boxes out here to bundle for the recycling truck in the morning.

JACK

K.

VIENNA

Now, this is supposed to be locked, but we lost the key. Make sure you put the lock back on when you're done. And turn it so it looks like it's locked. / Sam'll be pissed when he finds out, so we haven't told him yet.

JACK

Cool. ≠ Yeah.

VIENNA

Now, Jackie, ya gotta do this right or we will never hear the end of it. K?

JACK

Yeah. Yeah. K.

VIENNA

You gotta be real careful with this thing, too. It'll take off your hand if you let it.

JACK

Damn.

VIENNA

Yeah. 's pretty brutal.

They put their stacks down. VIENNA looks around, then moves in for a kiss. At first JACK pulls back, then, realizing they are alone, joins her.

JACK

I'm gonna like this job.

VIENNA

So, how was your first day at work, baby?

JACK

's alright. My trainer was fuckin' hot!

VIENNA

Well, I'll have to have a talk with her. Let her know you ain't up for grabs.

JACK

Yeah, I think you better.

VIENNA

Well, let's get this shit done so we can go home.

JACK

Cool.

He turns to pick up the boxes as she opens the door of the compactor. As she does, she lets out a scream.

VIENNA

*(Slamming the door.)*

Oh, my GOD!

JACK

What?! What is it?!

VIENNA

There's a man in there!

JACK

What?!

VIENNA

A man! A FUCKIN' MAN!

JACK

*(Looking for something to use as a weapon.)*

Fuck! Hold that closed 'til I find something!

MARVIN

*(From inside the compactor.)*

It's alright. / I won't hurt you. / Hurt anyone...

VIENNA

Shut up! ≠ SHUT THE FUCK UP!

JACK  
Shitshitshit!

MARVIN  
Really! I won't hurt you. I...

JACK  
Shut up! You heard her!

MARVIN  
Yes, but, I can expl...

VIENNA  
*(Banging the door.)*  
SHUT UP!

JACK  
I'm gonna call the cops!

MARVIN  
No! Please! / Please don't call the police!

JACK  
Shit! My battery... V? You got your... Fuck you! I'm callin' 'em!

MARVIN  
Please! Calm down!

VIENNA  
No! Mine is inside!

MARVIN  
*(Banging on the door now.)*  
PLEASE! Please don't call them!  
*(Everything stops. Silence... then, quietly.)*  
I'm begging you. Please don't call the police.

VIENNA  
Why are you in there?

MARVIN  
Just sleeping.

VIENNA

What?

MARVIN

Sleeping. It was raining earlier. I needed cover.

VIENNA

Yeah?

MARVIN

That is all. I just needed to get out of the rain.

JACK pulls a pocket knife out. He nods to VIENNA to let him out. She is not so sure.

VIENNA

What the hell is that?

JACK

A knife! For protection.

VIENNA

You really think... Y'know what? Never mind.  
*(to MARVIN)*

You won't hurt us?

MARVIN

No. I'm not.

JACK readies himself as she slowly opens the door. She, then, runs behind him for protection. MARVIN, an emaciated homeless man wearing an expensive, but badly worn suit, rolls out of the compactor and on to the ground. He starts to rise.

VIENNA

Stay there. Don't get up. Just sit there for a minute.

MARVIN

*(His head lowered.)*

I'm not looking for any trouble.

JACK

Well, you found it, man!

Put it away, Jack. VIENNA

But... JACK

I think we're safe. VIENNA

JACK  
*(Reluctantly stowing his pocket knife.)*  
Okay. You better not try nothin', though. It's away, not gone.

Smooth. VIENNA  
*(to MARVIN)*  
You okay, mister?

Yes. MARVIN

'cause you don't look so good. VIENNA

Duh. JACK

Stop it. VIENNA  
*(to MARVIN)*  
When was the last time you ate?

I'm not sure. MARVIN

So, nothin' today, anyway? VIENNA

No. Nothing today. MARVIN

Jack. Go get 'im a sandwich, chips / and a drink. VIENNA

You don't need... MARVIN

I know I don't need to. Jack?

VIENNA

But, V...

JACK

Go on. It's okay.

VIENNA

You sure?

JACK

Yes. I'm sure.

VIENNA

Fuck. Fine. Whacha wanna drink, man?

JACK

Alright. Just water is fine.

MARVIN

You sure you don't wanna beer or somethin'?

JACK

No. Just water, please.

MARVIN

Get a bottle of good stuff. Evian or somethin'.

VIENNA

Don't you do nothin' to her. You do an' I'll take care of ya.

JACK  
*(Getting in MARVIN's face.)*

Jack, just go.

VIENNA

He exits back into the store, then comes back.

JACK

What kinda sandwich you want?

JACK

Whatever is cheapest.

MARVIN



Don't worry about that. VIENNA

I don't want to... MARVIN

Really. It's alright. Ham and swiss? VIENNA

I guess so. MARVIN

Make him a large, Jack. VIENNA

Fine. JACK

He exits. VIENNA watches him leave, then returns her attention to MARVIN.

Sorry about that. VIENNA

That's alright. MARVIN

What's your name? VIENNA  
*(pause)*

Marvin. MARVIN

Marvin what? VIENNA  
*(beat)*

Just Marvin. MARVIN

Everyone has a last name. VIENNA

MARVIN  
That's true.

VIENNA  
*(beat)*  
So?

MARVIN  
It really doesn't matter.

VIENNA  
Sure it does.

MARVIN  
There comes a point where certain things don't matter. Not much matters anymore.

VIENNA  
But your name is who you are.

MARVIN  
Not really.

VIENNA  
Would you be who you are with a different name?

MARVIN  
Probably. A name is just a label.

VIENNA  
But...

MARVIN  
It's not the name that's great. It's the man.

VIENNA  
But, what about it Beethoven. Mozart. That other guy. The president. Abraham Lincoln.

MARVIN  
None of those names meant anything until they did something with them.

VIENNA  
What?

MARVIN

Well, if Beethoven had been a baker, or a farmer, or any of the other myriad jobs in the world, his name would be just another collection of letters on a headstone.

VIENNA

Oh. *(beat)* Yeah. I guess so.

MARVIN

You have to do something with your name to make it mean something.

VIENNA

And you haven't.

MARVIN

*(Regarding his condition.)*

What do you think? *(beat)* You?

VIENNA

Huh?

MARVIN

Your name?

VIENNA

Oh! Sorry. Vienna.

MARVIN

That *is* a great name. Named after the city, I presume.

VIENNA

Yep. 's where my dad knocked my mom up.

MARVIN

That's... beautiful. I was in Austria myself. Many years ago...

VIENNA

Oh. Not that one. My parents ain't never been outta here before. Outta the United States. Vienna, New York. That's the town.

MARVIN

I have never heard of that one.

VIENNA

Yeah. Not many people have. It's a teeny tiny town in the middle of New York state. See, they was on their way back from their honeymoon at Niagara Falls and they decided to go back roads. See more of the country, y'know? As they hit Vienna the mood caught them and they just had to stop and take advantage of being alone on that road. I guess no other people around equals in the mood to them. Nine months later... ta-da!

MARVIN

Your parents are from here, then?

VIENNA

Yep. All their lives. How 'bout you? You from these parts?

MARVIN

No. I'm from New York City.

VIENNA

Really?! I have always wanted to go there! Some day I will.

MARVIN

It's great. If you can afford it.

VIENNA

Is that why you're here?

MARVIN

*(Straightening himself.)*

I needed to get out of there. The grind, you know, can be brutal.

VIENNA

*(Laughing uncomfortably.)*

's what I hear. *(pause)* Where is he?

*(Calling.)*

Jack! *(beat)* JACK!

JACK (OFF STAGE)

Coming!

VIENNA

*(beat)*

He'll be out in a minute.

SOUND: Car pulling up slowly.

A spotlight shines on VIENNA, MARVIN hides before it catches him.

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

You alright V?

VIENNA

*(Under her breath.)*

Damn him!

*(to POLICEMAN)*

Yeah. Everything's fine, Marty.

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

We got a call that there was a disturbance. Some homeless guy.

VIENNA

Yeah. He's gone now.

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

Which way?

VIENNA

Huh?

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

Which way did he go? We'll need to pick him up.

VIENNA

Why?

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

Can't have some vagrant runnin' around town.

VIENNA

Oh. Okay. That way. I think. I turned around and he was gone.

POLICEMAN (OFF STAGE)

Well, if he comes back, let us know.

VIENNA

Yeah. Okay. No problem.

SOUND: Car driving away.

MARVIN comes out of hiding.

MARVIN

I'm sorry. I don't want to cause you any trouble. I'll leave.

VIENNA

No. You're gonna eat first... If he ever gets out here, that is.

JACK enters empty-handed.

JACK

Where are the...

VIENNA

Cops, Jack?

JACK

Yeah.

VIENNA

Why didja call 'em? There's no problem here.

JACK

I thought...

VIENNA

Jack! Can't you see this guy just needs something to eat?

JACK

But...

VIENNA

No. Just go get him a sandwich. Come on!

JACK

Come on, V, this is not good.

VIENNA

It's fine.

JACK

*(Exiting.)*

Whatever. Fuck!

VIENNA

*(Shouting after him.)*

And bring me a bottle of water, too! *(beat)* And don't call the cops again!

*(to MARVIN)*

Sorry about that.

MARVIN

That's alright. He's just worried about you.

VIENNA

Not sure how true that is.

MARVIN

He's carrying a torch for you.

They fall into silence.

VIENNA

You have a wedding ring. Where's your wife?

MARVIN

I don't want to talk about that.

VIENNA

Sorry.

MARVIN

It's alright.

VIENNA

Can I ask you how long you've been... out... on the...

MARVIN

Homeless.

VIENNA

Yeah.

MARVIN

Five years. Tonight.

VIENNA

Why?

MARVIN

I have no home.

VIENNA

*(pause)*

Oh. Sorry.

MARVIN

*(Laughing halfheartedly.)*

A joke.

VIENNA

*(Smiling.)*

Oh.

MARVIN

*(pause)*

You have plans for your life? Something beyond here?

VIENNA

Plans? Like, for when I graduate and stuff?

MARVIN

Yes.

VIENNA

Doesn't everyone?

MARVIN

You would be surprised.

VIENNA

Don't be so sure.

What are yours?

VIENNA

I wanna try to go to college, I guess. Get married after that. Have kids. The usual, I guess.

MARVIN

The usual.

*(Silence.)*

We all have plans. We all have dreams. They don't always play out the way we hope. The way we imagine.

VIENNA

Shit happens.



MARVIN

Invariably.

*(He looks up at the sky.)*

Do you appreciate the clarity of the sky here?

VIENNA

Sky?

MARVIN

The stars.

VIENNA

Stars. Yeah, the stars are pretty.

MARVIN

But do you appreciate the fact that you can see them all here? You can see any of them.

VIENNA

I don't know what you mean.

MARVIN

In the city you can't see them. At all. Urban blight. Just a fancy way of saying too many lights. But out here, you can see everything. I had forgotten what they look like. To see them in real life instead of on a star map or in the planetarium... *(beat)* We are so small.

VIENNA

*(Looking up.)*

Yeah. *(beat)* Yeah.

MARVIN

Never lose the sense of wonder. *(pause)* High school.

VIENNA

Huh?

MARVIN

You're in high school.

VIENNA

Oh, yeah. Senior year.

MARVIN

And they let you work here this late at night?

VIENNA

Only on the weekends.

MARVIN  
Don't let this become your life.

VIENNA  
I won't. Believe me.

MARVIN  
Good.

VIENNA  
*I need* more.

They fall into silence again. After a moment, JACK enters carrying the food. He hands a sandwich and a bottle to MARVIN.

JACK  
Here.

MARVIN  
Thank you.

VIENNA  
Don't be a dick, Jack.

MARVIN unwraps the sandwich and starts to eat.

JACK  
*(to VIENNA)*  
How long we gonna let 'im stay here?

VIENNA  
Dunno. All night if he wants. You don't have to stay. You can go home.

JACK  
I ain't leavin' you here alone.

VIENNA  
Fine. Of course, you still have some things to do before we lock up.

JACK  
Like what?

VIENNA  
Like mopping, like what.

JACK  
Dammit.

VIENNA  
Sucks, don't it?

JACK exits, muttering to himself.

MARVIN  
That didn't make him happy.

VIENNA  
He'll get over it.

MARVIN  
Probably.

VIENNA  
It doesn't take much. I know the button.

MARVIN  
Oh. So, you two are...

VIENNA  
Yeah. A couple years now.

MARVIN  
And the future? How does he fit into your future?

VIENNA  
Dunno. Once I leave here, who knows?

MARVIN  
He's not going to college, too?

VIENNA  
Odds are against it. He's not the sharpest knife in the drawer.

MARVIN  
Aren't his parents pushing him?

VIENNA  
No. His parents... They aren't exactly a part of his life.

MARVIN  
Oh.

VIENNA

Yeah. He has been living with my parents since we were in middle school, actually.

MARVIN

Raising someone else's child is not easy.

VIENNA

No, it's not. But, it's not like we were strangers. Our parents were friends had known each other for years. We practically lived together already. There are no other family members for him to go to. Grandparents are all dead. Parents were only children.

MARVIN

An island.

VIENNA

What?

MARVIN

The saying, "no man is an island" has just been refuted.

VIENNA

Oh. Yeah, I guess.

MARVIN

*(pause)*

Dead.

VIENNA

What?

MARVIN

My wife. She died almost six years ago.

VIENNA

Oh. I'm sorry.

MARVIN

Thank you.

VIENNA

How? If it's okay to ask.

MARVIN

*(Silence as he takes a drink.)*

Cancer. *(beat)* Everyone says that it's an awful disease. And it is. But you really have no idea how awful until you watch the one person left to you in the world is being ravaged by it. One day she's running, working in the yard – she loved gardening – playing in the moonlight... *(beat)* Sorry. I just...

VIENNA

I get it. I do.

MARVIN

Some day you'll *know* it. I hope. Someday you'll meet that person. Unless you already have.

*(She shakes her head.)*

That's right. College. Well, some time down the road you will have that. The real problem, though, is when you lose it *after* having it. Whoever said "'tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" obviously never had. Vacuous sentiment, at best.

*(Pause. He is lost in thought.)*

Every morning she would have fresh flowers on the table. Every day. You know, you never think about those types of things until someone thinks of doing them for you. She would make scones for breakfast. From scratch. The whole house would smell of scones and flowers. Never told her I have allergies. She never asked why I always sat in the far chair. *(beat)* She might have known, but never said anything.

*(Smiling at the memory.)*

I could never figure out how she had the time to do all of that. She did so much for me. For us. *(beat)* She ran her own shop. On top of everything else she did around the house, she ran her own shop. Little tea shop. Rarely turned a profit, but she didn't care. She had her regulars. She loved that shop. She spent a year planning it. Decorating it.

VIENNA

*(pause)*

You have any kids?

MARVIN

No. Therein lies the irony, actually. That's how we found out. We decided we wanted to start a family, so she went to the doctor for a check up. *(beat)* I remember it was a dark day. The weather foreshadowing what was to come. You never see the signs until it's too late. *(beat)* She came home from the doctor, went to our bedroom and locked the door. After a few minutes I went to the door and listened. She was crying. The oddest cry I have ever heard. Somewhere between a sob and hiccup. *(beat)* She finally came out three hours later and she looked like she always did. No sign of tears. Hair perfect. She looked at me and started to laugh. *(beat)* You know those times when all you can do is laugh at the situation? Of course, I'm still in the dark about what is happening, but I know it's not good. And she... she is standing there in the hallway laughing so hard tears are coming.

*(MORE)*

MARVIN (*cont'd*)

She hugged me and in the millisecond it took to throw her hands around my neck the gates flung open. (*beat*) I don't know if you have ever had a moment like this in your life, but in that moment I felt the most helpless I have ever felt in my entire life.

VIENNA

More than now?

MARVIN

Excuse me?

VIENNA

More helpless than you feel now?

MARVIN

I don't...

*(Stops himself to really think about the question.)*

I'm not so sure I feel helpless now.

VIENNA

No?

MARVIN

I'm not sure I feel much of anything.

VIENNA

Out on the streets every day.

MARVIN

This isn't... How much do you control?

VIENNA

Of my life?

MARVIN

Anything? You are a manager here, I assume.

VIENNA

Assistant manager.

MARVIN

Do you feel like you are in control of this place while you are here?

VIENNA

Yes. *(beat)* Well... I don't know. I have the stuff I *have* to get done every day. Sell overpriced gum to kids. Stock and order shit. Run the numbers at the end of the night. Deposits.

MARVIN

Alright. But are you in control of anything here? You told me what you do, but are you in control?

VIENNA

*(Searching for the right answer.)*

I guess... not?

MARVIN

Okay. Why?

VIENNA

I guess because I'm still working for someone else.

MARVIN

Well, yes, but, there is more to it than that.

VIENNA

Customers.

MARVIN

You cannot control everything. A lesson hard-learned for some of us. You make plans. You work toward goals. And the randomness of life rises up and slaps you down. *(beat)* You can live a clean life, never do anything that could threaten your health. Don't drink or smoke, do drugs. Don't live near power plants or test sites. Eat healthy. Exercise. Then, one day, they find something in a blood test or on an x-ray, some scan. In that moment, that flash, your life is taken over and your life becomes a fight to the death. *(beat)* You do anything you can to win this fight. And when you think about it, what are you winning? What are you preserving? They slice up your body. Take out damaged pieces, slice into your very soul. Each cut takes you a little further down the hole. And, as if that's not enough, you have to fight insurance companies just to get the care you *should* get. That you *need*. *(beat)* That's the real kick in the teeth. Insurance companies.

VIENNA

Yeah.

MARVIN

Have you ever had to deal with them?

VIENNA

No. But, I've heard stories.

MARVIN

They love that "Denied" stamp. As fast as the cancer spread, we did not have the time to fight them. We, finally had to just start paying for the treatments and hope for reimbursement. Problem is, once you start paying you give them an out. You expand their comfort zone. Give them time to regroup and formulate a battle plan. (*beat*) We had a nice savings. Preparing for a family a house, all that stuff you're supposed to do. Supposed to want. Life takes care of plans. Doctors and insurance companies take care of the balance.

VIENNA

Why wouldn't they pay?

MARVIN

This is rich. They tried to claim it was a pre-existing condition. My firm had just changed providers six months before. We fought that for a few months with the hospital extending us credit in the hopes it would all get worked out. Of course, if I had not had a friend in administration there I can guarantee you we would never have gotten that consideration. Don't get me wrong, I understand business decisions, bottom lines and such, but the human factor has got to enter into the decision-making process somewhere. I swear, we have completely lost sight of what's important in this country. I mean, truly important.

VIENNA

I know what you mean. Last week I caught a kid trying to lift a candy bar. I know this kid. Paul. Lives down the street from my friend. I was all for kicking him out for a while, y'know, just to teach him a lesson. We're the only Stop 'n' Shop in this town and to kick a kid out forever, I think, is way too much. Problem was my boss was here at the time, so, of course, he had to throw the book at him. Kick him out forever. Call the cops. It was a fucking candy bar!

MARVIN

So, the kid can't come in here anymore?

VIENNA

I'll let 'im. I think he has been scared straight. If Sam finds out he'll probably fire me.

MARVIN

How long have you worked here?

VIENNA

Year-and-a-half.



MARVIN

Feels like forever at your age, doesn't it?

VIENNA

Oh, yeah.

MARVIN

I worked for my firm for ten years. You pack so much into a day you live a month in a week in that business.

VIENNA

What business?

MARVIN

Advertising. Account executive. I was up for partner soon, then...

VIENNA

*(pause)*

Why did you quit?

MARVIN

Fired.

VIENNA

Really?! They can do that?

MARVIN

They will always find a way.

VIENNA

Shit.

MARVIN

Always protect yourself. Make deadly sure who you can trust. I trusted the partners when they said they would work with me. Work around what I had to do for my wife. There was a lot to do for her. *(beat)* Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining, just saying that there is a lot to do when you take that stuff on yourself. You use up the Medical Leave Act time pretty quickly. They waited the appropriate amount of time after I got back, but once they had an opening, I was out on the street.

VIENNA

That sucks.

MARVIN

The real problem is that in that situation, no one is going to hire you. My price tag was too high. I was fired. They don't give a lot of second chances in that business. *(beat)* At that point I didn't much care. She was wasting away and fighting the insurance company became a full-time job. Every day the savings is shrinking. There goes college for the kids. There goes the house. *(beat)* It didn't matter by that point. We knew it was just a matter of days. Maybe a couple of weeks. *(beat)* Three years. She fought for three years. *(beat)* In the end she was so weak. Frail. She was skin and bones. *(beat)* The last time I talked to her... The last time she could talk to me...

He stops himself. VIENNA is not sure what to do. She looks at the door.

VIENNA

Well...

MARVIN

She looked at me. Her eyes looked so tired. She knew. *(beat)* She struggled for every breath. I wish I could tell you she said something profound, or deeply moving, but the reality is, at that moment in life, in the state she was, there is very little coherent thought. She moved her lips, some sound came out, but I have no idea what she said or what she meant to say, what she thought she was saying. You can make things up in to try and make yourself feel better, but in the end you know. You cannot escape the fact that your one true love is nothing but a shell. An empty shell.

*(He sinks down to sit against the wall.)*

She was so beautiful.

VIENNA

I'm sorry, mister. Really.

*(Pause as she thinks of what to say next.)*

There are some things you never get over, huh?

MARVIN

No.

VIENNA

Did you try to get a job after?

MARVIN

Sure. You try to get on with your life. Tell yourself that life has to go on. Cling to that good old Christian ideal that you will meet on the other side. Be reunited in heaven. All you have to do is live right, work hard and prepare yourself for the hereafter. I don't know. It all seems so pat. Almost trite after what you have been through. There is, though, in the back of your mind, the thought that none of it is true.

*(MORE)*

MARVIN (*cont'd*)

Just a way to make you feel guilty and get ten percent of your income out of you. But, there is always the hope that it is true. They fight it out there in the back of your head and all you can do is cover your bases.

VIENNA

(*pause*)

Have you ever thought of, you know, doing it yourself?

MARVIN

What?

VIENNA

You know. Taking care of it yourself.

MARVIN

You don't know a lot about Christianity, do you?

VIENNA

No. My parents aren't much for church stuff.

MARVIN

Well, I don't know a religion that allows for that and getting to a good part of the hereafter. Not a Christian religion, at least. It needs to happen more... randomly. Just a part of life. Otherwise, no heaven. No... well, no eternal happiness.

VIENNA

How do you know she's in heaven. It's sort of a bitch question, but...

MARVIN

I know. She is.

VIENNA

(*Looking at the sky.*)

Heaven...

(*Starting to put it together.*)

Oh, my God. You were... Oh, my God!

MARVIN

Please.

VIENNA

No! Oh, my God! You can't... That...

*(She starts for the door.)*

You need ... I'm calling...

He grabs her pulling her away from the door and pinning her against the wall.

MARVIN

Please don't do that! / I can't go there!

VIENNA

What? ≠ Let me go! You need help!

MARVIN

I know! I need help to get back to her! I can't do it alone!

VIENNA

So you were going to let us... no *make* us murder you!

MARVIN

It wouldn't be murder. It would be an accident. Some homeless guy was asleep in your... thing there... your crusher.

VIENNA

That's sick!

MARVIN

Please! I can't do this anymore!

VIENNA

Why don't you fall asleep on the railroad tracks? Step off an overpass or something?

MARVIN

I can't. I can't! I...

*(He lets her go.)*

I just can't. I can't take that chance.

VIENNA

Did you ever think what you are doing to the person who pushes that button?

MARVIN

Yes.

VIENNA

And you still want to do it?

MARVIN

It wouldn't do anything.

VIENNA

How can you say that? After what you've been through?

MARVIN

I've been watching. You push the button and you walk away. / Whoever does it would never know.

VIENNA

Shit! ≠ They'd know. Someone would find out. Whoever found you would certainly start asking questions.

MARVIN

Look, I...

VIENNA

Besides, how is this random if you have been watching? You know the schedules. The fact that it is done almost every night.

MARVIN

Almost. There's no pattern.

VIENNA

What do you mean?

MARVIN

There is no set schedule. It's not done every night, nor is it done on a set schedule, say every Tuesday and Friday, or...

VIENNA

So! You can't do this! You...

MARVIN

Have so much to live for? Is that it?! I have nothing to live for! Nothing! No house! No job! No... No... Do you think I wanted this? I DID NOT WANT THIS!

He breaks down. Caught off-guard, she tries to comfort him.

VIENNA

I know. I know. *(beat)* There's got to be something else you can do. Somewhere you can get help.

MARVIN

Where? Who?

VIENNA

Someone to help you get over this?

MARVIN

I am not going back there.

VIENNA

Alright... okay...

They sit in silence for a moment, she is holding him as he attempts to compose himself.

MARVIN

I need this to end. *(beat)* I need it over.

JACK enters.

JACK

Hey, babe, I'm done with...

*(Seeing them huddled together.)*

Shit! Get off her, you fuck!

He rushes over, pulls MARVIN away throwing him to the ground.

VIENNA

Jack! What are you doing?!

JACK

Keep your filthy fucking hands off her!

VIENNA

Jack!

JACK

*(Straddling MARVIN about to punch him.)*

Asshole!

VIENNA jumps on his back trying to stop him, but he flings her off and punches MARVIN.

Oh, my God! STOP!

VIENNA

JACK stops, looks at MARVIN laying below him and notices that he is doing nothing to protect himself.

What the hell is going on here?

JACK

Leave him alone!

VIENNA

She rushes to him and pushes him away from MARVIN.

Okay. There's some weird shit going on here.

JACK

Shut up, Jack! / Just shut up!

VIENNA

Shut up?! ≠ Tell me what is happening here or I swear to God I kick your ass next!

JACK

Real mature.

VIENNA

*(She pushes JACK away and helps MARVIN up.)*

You alright?

*(to MARVIN)*

Yes. I think so.

MARVIN

*(VIENNA helps him sit against the wall.)*

Jack. Come here.

VIENNA

*(Leaving MARVIN.)*

No.

JACK

Grow up, Jack and get your ass over here.

VIENNA

JACK

*(Eyeing MARVIN while he crosses.)*

Don't you fucking move. You hear me?

VIENNA

Stop that. We have a problem here.

JACK

Yeah? Kinda obvious, ain't it?

VIENNA

He knew what he was doing.

JACK

What?

VIENNA

He knew what he was doing! He was trying to kill himself.

JACK

Just now?

VIENNA

No, you idiot. Before. In the crusher. He got in there on purpose.

JACK

What?!

*(to MARVIN)*

You were trying to get yourself crushed in there? What is fucking wrong with you?

VIENNA

Leave him alone. Come on. He's sad.

JACK

Sad? Boo-fuckin'-hoo! We're all sad, pal!

VIENNA

Not the same thing, Jack.

JACK

Fine. Whatever.

*(to MARVIN)*

Didja ever think about who would have to clean that shit up? Huh?! *(beat)* Didn't, didja? Think you were just gonna disappear? No muss, no fuss?



Jack...  
VIENNA

No! This is bullshit!  
JACK

THAT IS ENOUGH! *(beat)* We need to find some way to help him.  
VIENNA

Just call...  
JACK

*Without* calling the cops.  
VIENNA

Whatever.  
JACK

I need the phone book.  
VIENNA  
*(She heads for the door.)*

Yeah. Yeah. You go inside and call someone.  
JACK

Don't you do anything, Jack.  
VIENNA  
*(She stops, turns on him.)*

I won't.  
JACK

I mean it!  
VIENNA

Fine! Shit! Whatever!  
JACK

Give me the phone.  
VIENNA  
*(beat)*

What?  
JACK

VIENNA

My cell. Give it to me.

JACK

*(Handing it over.)*

Fuck! Fine. Here.

VIENNA

Just keep him here. Don't hurt him. Don't even touch him.

JACK

Alright. Yeah. Fine.

She exits. JACK eyes MARVIN.

MARVIN

Nothing was going on.

JACK

Whatever. Just sit there and shut up.

MARVIN

*(pause)*

How old are you?

JACK

Shut up!

MARVIN

*(pause)*

I am willing to bet we're not so different. You seem very protective. *(beat)* Very...

JACK

Look, I don't wanna talk to you, alright?

MARVIN

I didn't mean anything by it.

JACK

Uh huh.

MARVIN

Just trying to help.

JACK

Help? You help me?

MARVIN

Maybe.

JACK

You, just sit there and shut up until they come for you.

They remain in silence for a few moments, MARVIN sizing JACK up.

MARVIN

What's it like?

JACK

Ya want me to kick your ass again?

MARVIN

I just thought, since we are stuck out here together, to pass the time.

JACK

You thought wrong.

MARVIN

Really?

*(He waits for a response. Doesn't get it.)*

When I was your age... Well, I remember certain things. Specific events. Mostly, though, I remember feelings, dreams, aspirations... I remember that I thought I was too good for just about everything I was required to do at that time. School. After-school jobs. I know...

JACK

Dude, you have no clue.

MARVIN

The world hasn't changed so much since I was your age.

JACK

Yes, it has. / Computers, other... technology...

MARVIN

Alright, that's true. Some things in the world have changed. I'll tell you what hasn't, though, the need to break out. To make your own place in the world. Prove yourself. Become your...

JACK

I don't gotta prove myself.

MARVIN

Everybody does and it's the smart man that can realize it early. So much easier when you can tackle it early. Know what you want. *(beat)* Do you know what you want?

JACK

I... It's...

*(He looks at the door.)*

I know she is part of it.

MARVIN

Don't you have any ideas about what you want to do?

JACK

Not really.

MARVIN

You are going to have to do it most of your life.

JACK

Yeah. I know.

MARVIN

Well, what interests you?

JACK

I dunno.

MARVIN

Something has to. Do you like school?

JACK

Nah. Never had much fun there.

MARVIN

Do you think school is important?

JACK

For some.

MARVIN

Not for everyone?

JACK  
No.

MARVIN  
So, no college, then.

JACK  
God, no.

MARVIN  
Didn't you ever have any dreams when you were a kid?

JACK  
Dreams?

MARVIN  
About what you would be when you grow up.

JACK  
*(Thinking, staring at MARVIN, then  
frustrated...)*  
Look... Shut up, okay!

MARVIN  
Just wondered.

JACK  
Yeah, well, don't.

They fall into silence again.

MARVIN  
So, this is your first day?

JACK  
*(Exasperated.)*  
Yes.

MARVIN  
If I am such a problem, you could just go inside.

JACK  
Yeah?

MARVIN

Yes.

JACK

She told me to stay out here with you.

MARVIN

You're a big boy. You can do what you want.

JACK

She said...

MARVIN

So.

JACK

She's the boss.

MARVIN

Well, *I'm* a big boy. I can take care of myself.

JACK

Yeah? Right. You wanted to... You know...

MARVIN

Yes. Well. I think I'm over it now.

JACK

Uh-huh.

MARVIN

Really. I think your beating cured me of it.

JACK

Now, see, I know you're fuckin' with me. All your sarcastic bullshit.

MARVIN

A little joke.

JACK

You think you're in a place where you can make jokes?

MARVIN

You mean this town? Or metaphorically?

JACK

God! Shut up!

MARVIN

*(pause)*

So... You and her?

JACK

*(Rushing him.)*

Don't you fuckin' talk about her!

MARVIN

I meant nothing by it.

JACK

*(Backing off.)*

Yeah. Well. I'm starting to think you mean something by everything.

MARVIN

Sometimes a question is just a question.

JACK

Except when they're asked by you.

MARVIN

Not everyone is out for something.

JACK

Uh huh.

MARVIN

No. Really. *(beat)* Do you have any friends?

JACK

Of course I have friends.

MARVIN

Who is your best friend?

JACK

Why?

MARVIN

Humor me.

JACK

*(beat)*

Fine. Fuck. Vienna. But, you knew that, huh?

MARVIN

I assumed.

JACK

What are you, a shrink?

MARVIN

Not really.

JACK

Then, shut up.

MARVIN

*(beat)*

You don't have any other friends, do you?

JACK

Yeah, I do.

MARVIN

Who?

JACK

None of your fuckin' business.

MARVIN

Why is that?

JACK

What?

MARVIN

You have no other friends?

JACK

I didn't say that.

MARVIN

You didn't have to. I get it. It's hard to make friends / in a world you don't belong.



JACK

I have friends... ≠ I don't belong? Fuck you! *I* have a house!

MARVIN

That's not what I meant.

JACK

Who doesn't fuckin' belong?

MARVIN

We can all belong, can't we? Just in different ways.

JACK

Quit talkin' around.

MARVIN

Around what?

JACK

In circles! You are talkin' around in circles.

MARVIN

You need to lighten up. Let people know you.

JACK

No way, man. Only leads to problems.

MARVIN

A bit cynical for someone your age. *(beat)* What about Vienna?

JACK

What about her?

MARVIN

Does she know you?

JACK

Some.

MARVIN

How much is some?

JACK

Enough to know what she wants.

And that's you. MARVIN

Yeah. You think different? JACK

No. I just see... MARVIN

What? *(beat)* JACK

Nothing. MARVIN

No. What do you see? JACK

You don't want to hear me talk. MARVIN

Don't fuck with me, man. What do you see?! JACK

Alright. You wanted to hear it, though. Remember that. MARVIN

Whatever. What do you see? JACK

Well, I see a kid - you - who doesn't want anyone to be close to him. Know him. Care for him. MARVIN

That's not true. JACK

What? MARVIN

What you said? JACK

MARVIN

What part? The loner? The unemotional?

JACK

Yeah.

MARVIN

Both? Interesting.

JACK

You think I ain't emotional?

MARVIN

I think you are singularly emotional. I think the only real emotion you access is anger.

JACK

That's not true.

MARVIN

Prove it.

JACK

How the hell am I supposed to do that?

MARVIN

All I have seen from you is anger.

JACK

Fuck you, man!

MARVIN

Nice. *(beat)* Do you love her?

JACK

Who?

MARVIN

Vienna. To whom do you think I would be referring?

JACK

Whadda you think?

MARVIN

You already know what I think.

JACK

You're a dick. *(beat)* Whadda you know about it anyway?

MARVIN

I know love. I know what it looks like. Feels like. How it can change your life... Especially when you lose it. If you had ever felt it you would know what I mean. You would answer. Quickly. You wouldn't think about it. It would float out of your mouth. Your heart would skip to even think about it. You... You are incapable.

*(JACK stares at him through angry slits.)*

Would you like another shot? *(beat)* Do you love her?

JACK

Yeah. *(pause)* I'm pretty sure.

MARVIN

Ah.

JACK

Come on! Fuck! What the fuck is the matter with you, anyway?

MARVIN

You need it.

JACK

What?

MARVIN

Love! What have we been talking about?

JACK

Whatever.

MARVIN

Not whatever. You need it. Everyone needs it. Sometime. *(beat)* Do you even know what love is?

*(pause... No answer.)*

That's what I thought. *(beat)* It's everything. Should be. Still, you don't have to let it take all your time, but it certainly makes life / worth something.

JACK

Life. ≠ Life ain't nothin' but time.

MARVIN

What does that mean?

JACK

Life ain't nothin' but the time 'til you die.

MARVIN

And you shouldn't be happy during that time?

JACK

Whatever happens happens. If I am happy, fine. If not? That's life.

MARVIN

That's really how you see it?

JACK

How should I see it?

MARVIN

That there is more out there. Something to make it all worthwhile.

JACK

Yeah, well, 's easy for someone like you.

MARVIN

Someone like me? Look at me. I'm on the street. You said it yourself.

JACK

Then why all this shit?

MARVIN

I had happiness at one point in life.

JACK

Uh huh. Well, for me and my... for people my age, it's pretty nasty out there. Ain't no jobs. Ain't no money.

MARVIN

That's not entirely true.

JACK

Then, get one.

MARVIN

Now...

JACK

No. You stand here trying to give me life advice and you fuckin' gave up.

MARVIN

No, I didn't. I fought for a long time. In the end it was the random. You can't fight random.

JACK

See!

MARVIN

But you also can't live your life fearing it. The very nature of randomness is that you will not see it coming. No matter what you do.

JACK

You don't regret anything you've done?

MARVIN

I didn't say that. I never lived in fear, though. To fear what you cannot see, what hasn't come, is paralyzing and counterproductive. You need to be out in the world. Know what's going on. Living in a cocoon never helped anyone.

JACK

I don't live in a cocoon.

MARVIN

This town might as well be.

JACK

I ain't joinin' the army!

MARVIN

There are other ways to get out.

JACK

Not for me. Besides, I know what's going on out there. I see the world. I watch the news.

MARVIN

You see someone else's view of the world.

JACK

So, there's no way for me to understand your big fuckin' ideas 'cause I ain't been around? Is that what you're sayin'?

MARVIN

Not necessarily. It seems as though you have no desire to experience anything yourself. Any of the places or things you see on the evening news.

JACK

Why? What would it do for me to go out there and deal with all that shit?

MARVIN

This place has done so much for you? What have you got anyway?

JACK

*(Charging MARVIN, pinning him against the wall.)*

ASSHOLE!

JACK throws him to the ground and starts to kick him. MARVIN opens himself up to it. VIENNA enters.

VIENNA

Holy shit!

*(She rushes over to JACK, pulls him away.)*

Leave him alone! What the hell is your problem?

JACK

This fuckin' guy! He's...

VIENNA

He! HE! 's always someone else's fault!

JACK

This time it is!

VIENNA

Get in there!

JACK

No! I ain't leavin' you alone with him!

VIENNA

Go!

JACK

's like my fuckin' father! *(to MARVIN)* Asshole!

VIENNA  
Go! Now!

JACK  
*(Exiting.)*  
Fuck this shit!

MARVIN  
Well! Chivalry is *not* dead after all.

VIENNA  
*(Helping MARVIN up to sitting.)*  
You alright?

MARVIN  
*(Clutching his ribs, coughing.)*  
Quite the hair trigger.

VIENNA  
Yeah. He's pretty quick to pick fights.

MARVIN  
Has he ever gotten help?

VIENNA  
Help? Psycho help? Uh... no. He wouldn't go for that.

MARVIN  
Has he always been like that?

VIENNA  
Not always. Just the past few years.

MARVIN  
Hmm.

VIENNA  
Since the verdict.

MARVIN  
Verdict? He committed a crime?

VIENNA  
His father.



Ah. MARVIN

's on death row. VIENNA

That would do it, I suppose. MARVIN

Yeah. VIENNA

What did he do? MARVIN

I don't know if I should be talking about it. VIENNA

(*beat*) MARVIN

Your boyfriend in there could really benefit from some help.

I don't doubt that. VIENNA

(*pause*) MARVIN

Who did his father kill.

His mother. Jack's mother. VIENNA

He saw it? MARVIN

Yeah. VIENNA

Hm. MARVIN

It was bloody. Ugly. He tried to stop his father and got knocked across the room for it. VIENNA

MARVIN

Explains a lot.

VIENNA

Yeah. *(beat)* You know what's weird? He thought he could excuse it all, his father, by telling the world that she had an affair. She lied to him. All that shit.

MARVIN

That's a very painful thing. An affair rips people apart. Drives a stake. Insidious.

VIENNA

You ever cheat on / your wife.

MARVIN

No. ≠ Never.

VIENNA

She ever cheat on you?

*(He does not answer.)*

Anyway... He hasn't seen his father since the verdict. Before that he only saw him in court. He refuses to visit him.

MARVIN

Can you blame him?

VIENNA

I guess not. *(beat)* Are you alright?

MARVIN

As good as can be expected.

VIENNA

What can I get you?

MARVIN

Nothing. I'm fine.

VIENNA

You sure?

MARVIN

Yes. *(beat)* Does he love you?

VIENNA

I don't know. I don't really care.

MARVIN

So, you're just passing time.

VIENNA

Aren't we all.

MARVIN

What is it with you kids? I thought you had goals. Ambition.

VIENNA

I do.

MARVIN

So, what is all this about "passing time?"

VIENNA

This place. What else is there here? Day to day bullshit. I need more. My life won't begin until I get out of this place. Him... He's goin' nowhere. I know it. Don't know how he can't. But me... I have to get out.

MARVIN

*(beat)*

What do you think will happen to him?

VIENNA

*(She thinks about it, looking at the door.)*

I don't know. I can't worry that much about it.

MARVIN

I can see that.

VIENNA

It is draining to think about.

MARVIN

I'm sure.

VIENNA

There are times I watch him without him knowing. Sort of spy on him, y'know? He just... stands there sometimes. Staring at nothing. I can't help but think he is looking at his future. An empty wall. Black hole.

MARVIN

Has he ever told you what he wants?

VIENNA

Other than me. No. *(beat)* Why do you care so much?

MARVIN

I just do.

VIENNA

That's not good enough.

MARVIN

I have a hard time seeing someone with no hope. Everybody needs some hope. *(beat)*  
You have hope.

VIENNA

Y'know, I understand how he feels. I just think he needs to get over it.

MARVIN

Can't be easy.

VIENNA

No, I'm sure it's not. *(beat)* You know, I tried to get him to get help... once. He was...  
He... He flew off... *(beat)* That was the only time he ever did anything to me. Physically.  
Tried to do anything to me.

MARVIN

It seems to be his initial reaction to everything.

VIENNA

Yeah. Usually. Except with me. Since that time, especially, he has taken a few seconds to  
think before reacting to something I say or do.

MARVIN

He feels something for you.

VIENNA

Yeah. I guess in his own twisted way he loves me. Or he fears what I would do.

MARVIN

*(Chuckling.)*

I'm sure.

They fall into silence.

VIENNA

I wonder where they are?

MARVIN

Who?

VIENNA

The people from the... The people I called.

MARVIN

You really think they can help me?

VIENNA

Can't hurt.

MARVIN

You have no idea.

VIENNA

You've been there? To that kind of place?

MARVIN

When I first lost the house. First out on... I had a little incident.

VIENNA

Oh.

MARVIN

I was in one of those places for about two weeks before I found a way out. All I wanted to do... *(beat)* I just wanted to grieve. To...

VIENNA

I get it. It's alright.

MARVIN

All I want is to be with her again. That's my hope.

VIENNA

The afterlife?

MARVIN

The only hope I have left. Fighting for so long has a way of knocking the hope right out of you. Every day you wake up alone...

VIENNA

I cannot even imagine someone feeling that way about me.

MARVIN

It is rare, but when you find it you will see the next world.

VIENNA

The next world.

MARVIN

Yes. *(beat)* To have it and lose it, though... There is no pain to compare. *(beat)* And if you still have hope in this life, keep it safe.

VIENNA

Look...

SOUND: Telephone ring inside the store.

MARVIN

I should go.

VIENNA

No. No. Just wait here. I'll be back in a minute.

She exits. He tries to get up, but falls back against the wall.

MARVIN

Dammit!

He gets up, slowly, using the wall for support. He is still wobbly. JACK watches, unseen by MARVIN.

JACK

Sorry 'bout the ribs, man.

MARVIN

Yes, well...

*(He stumbles.)*

I...

JACK  
(*Catching him.*)

Here. Sit down.

MARVIN

Thanks.

JACK sits next to him. They sit in silence.

JACK

Why you wanna die, man?

MARVIN

You can't put it together?

JACK

Why you tryin' to get me to give a shit, then?

MARVIN

I have trouble seeing young people thinking they have no future.

JACK

(*pause*)

Why doncha just do it yourself?

MARVIN

What?

JACK

You know, *it*.

MARVIN

I can't.

JACK

Can't? Won't.

MARVIN

I've got enough working against me as it is. I can't take the chance.

JACK

... okay ...

MARVIN

I don't expect you to understand.

JACK

Are you calling me stupid again?

MARVIN

No.

JACK

It sure sounded like you were calling me stupid or whatever the smart word for it would be.

MARVIN

Oh, we use stupid, too.

JACK

Fuck you.

MARVIN

*(beat)*

Figure out what you want to do with your life?

JACK

God! Not again! You think you're a fuckin' guidance counselor?

MARVIN

You think that girl in there wants someone with no ambition?

JACK

What do you know about it?

MARVIN

I know she wants more than this town. Some go-nowhere life.

JACK

She ain't goin' nowhere.

MARVIN

What is she doing after high school?

JACK

How the fuck should I know?

MARVIN

You have never talked about it?

JACK

Yeah, but I think she changed her mind.



MARVIN

What did she tell you she wants?

JACK

I think she wanted to go to college or somethin'.

MARVIN

And she doesn't want to anymore?

JACK

I don't think so. I think she wants to stay with me.

MARVIN

Think again, commander.

JACK

You don't know nuthin'!

MARVIN

When was the last time you two talked about anything important?

JACK

Every day.

MARVIN

Alright.

JACK

What'd she tell you?

MARVIN

She didn't tell me anything. Much.

JACK

*(Looking at the door.)*

Fuck!

MARVIN

What?

JACK

Shut up!

MARVIN

Do you love her?

JACK

You already asked me that.

MARVIN

Your answer was less than satisfactory.

JACK

To who?

MARVIN

Whom?

JACK

What?

MARVIN

To whom.

JACK

This ain't no fuckin' English class.

MARVIN

*(He grabs JACK and pulls him in face-to-face.)*

That woman in there deserves no less than everything you can give her! And that had better be everything you can muster in life if you think you're going to be the one! You... You have got to figure out what is important and what you want to do in life because if you don't she's going to look at you one night, see your future could fit inside that store and walk out the door! She has plans for a better life than you can give her, from what I can see here at least!

*(He releases JACK who moves back. JACK, standing against the wall, stares at him.)*

If you think you deserve someone who has dreams when you have none, you are deluded.

JACK

You... Fuck!

MARVIN

Didn't your father ever teach you anything about women?

*(JACK glares at him.)*

What?

JACK

Nuthin'.

MARVIN

No. Out with it. You have something to say.

JACK

My fuckin' father never taught me nuthin' about nuthin'.

MARVIN

Nothing at all?

JACK

Nuthin' good.

MARVIN

Ah. *(beat)* Did you know him?

JACK

My mother wasn't some white trash trailer bitch!

MARVIN

How old were you when he told you about girls?

JACK

None of your business.

MARVIN

He didn't, did he?

JACK

Didn't have to. I learned ok by myself.

MARVIN

You learned well.

JACK

Look, asshole, you have no fuckin' idea what I know.

MARVIN

You are right there, I have no clue what you know. I have no earthly idea *if* you know anything.

JACK

*(He approaches MARVIN, grabs him by the lapels.)*

(MORE)

JACK (*cont'd*)

What my father taught me was not to take any shit from loudmouthed assholes like you.  
*(He throws MARVIN aside. MARVIN stumbles catching himself on the gate of the compactor.)*

Why would I listen to some suicidal, homeless piece of shit like you, anyway?

MARVIN

You don't have to.

JACK

*(Pacing.)*

Goddamn right! Fuckin'-A right!

MARVIN

Your father still around?

JACK

Around? Fucker ain't around here. He was hardly ever around. And when he was, it was rough. On all of us. Ma got it the worst. He would beat the shit outta her every chance he got it seemed. When I was little I would just hide in my room. Listen to her yellin' for help. No one ever came, though. Y'know, I don't remember her having any friends, really. The neighbors just got sick of tryin' to help and all they would do is call the cops when somethin' happened. *(beat)* This one time... I was like four or five... It was one of those times when he was really fucked up. Tweakin' and drunk. He drove freight, so he was home maybe three days every coupla weeks. It was usually the first night he was home and still loaded from the haul that shit would go down. He would drive half the country over the time he was gone and... *(beat)* Anyway. I was four or five and he was fuckin' loaded and lookin' for anything for an excuse. See, he wouldn't start it, necessarily, but he was good at pullin' the cord that would start that engine, y'know? He wanted a fight, but he wasn't gonna be the blame of it.

*(He looks at MARVIN looking for a reaction.)*

So he was bangin' on her pretty good this one night and I hear her yellin' for help from the other room. Wakes me up from a dead sleep. I was a heavy sleeper when I was a kid. *(beat)* I think this was the last time maybe. *(beat)* So, he's smackin' her around and yellin' about, I dunno, bills or some shit like that. He's bitchin' about no money in the bank and how could she let it get so fuckin' low... *(beat)* I have no idea what came over me. Why I thought I could do any damage. But, anyway, I grab this little bat I got, he gave me it on my birthday... a pretty solid little piece of wood, this bat, and I go at him like a fuckin' caveman or somethin', y'know. And I jump on his back from the chair and I start just poundin' on his head, y'know, with the bat, y'know. Just fuckin' BAM! BAM! BAMBAMBAM!

*(He takes a moment.)*

He throws me off his back and I suddenly see the blood comin' from his head. He's got, like, I guess, five or six cuts on top of his head.

(MORE)

JACK (*cont'd*)

Blood is comin' outta his head and runnin' down his face and he keeps wipin' it with his hands and arms and shit, but it just keeps comin'. He turns to me and for the first time ever in my life I see the look that is, like... like... that look serial killers have in movies? I couldn'ta told you then that that was what it was, but when I got older and saw those movies, I knew what the fuck he was thinkin'. He stood there, lookin' at me like, "You little fuckin' shit!" Y'know? He was wantin' my blood now. I just knew I had to get outta there. (*beat*) He takes a step to me and I fuckin' ran like hell! All I heard was a big crash and my mom screamin' like crazy, "Oh. My God! You killed 'im! Oh, my God! He's dead!" So, I stop and go back, real slow. Huggin' the wall like he can't see me if I am close to the wall. When I get in the livin' room I see him layin' on the floor, glass everywhere. He fell on the coffee table and my mom is thinkin' he's dead, y'know. She screamin' something about get the phone or some shit like that. She runs outta the room pushing me over and calls nine-one-one 'cause her husband is dead and her son killed him. She shoulda been thankin' me, but, instead, she's tryin' to save *him*!

MARVIN

So, he was alright?

JACK

Yeah. He was fine after they stitched up his head. He never looked at me right again. He tried to make friends with me at first, but then he knew I didn't fuckin' care about him and he stopped. My mother, though, she shoulda left him, but she didn't. (*beat*) I shoulda fuckin' killed him.

MARVIN

That's quite an expectation for a four-year-old.

JACK

I started the job, but...

(*He goes silent.*)

If I...

MARVIN

If?

JACK

Nuthin'.

MARVIN

If you had finished?

JACK

Yeah. (*beat*) If I had finished.

MARVIN

*(beat)*  
So, where's your dad now?

JACK

You know where he is.

MARVIN

How would I?

JACK

You ain't stupid. You know he's in jail.

MARVIN

Oh.

JACK

I'm sure she told you that.

MARVIN

Why?

JACK

'cause she's got a big mouth.

MARVIN

Why is he in prison?

JACK

Murder. My mother. How else does that shit end?

MARVIN

Not always.

JACK

Ain't no other way around here.

MARVIN

This is a regular occurrence in this town? / I find that hard to believe

JACK

Regular enough that no one bats an eye when my mother is killed.

MARVIN

No one?

JACK

You know what I mean. Just another trailer park chick in a bad relationship gets buried.

MARVIN

That's a little low, don't you think?

JACK

Would you have seen it any different?

MARVIN

I would like to think I would.

JACK

Yeah. Right.

MARVIN

A human being dying is a not a trivial matter.

JACK

Not when it happens in a mansion.

MARVIN

If you're not going to accept my understanding. My support...

They fall silent again. Neither looking at the other.

JACK

I saw it. I saw it happen. He was really fucked up that night.

MARVIN

How old were you.

JACK

Fourteen.

MARVIN

So, just a few years ago. That must be hard.

JACK

What do you know about it?

MARVIN

I know what it's like to have to live without someone.

JACK

You handled it good.

MARVIN

Be as flippant as you like, all I'm saying is that you are not the only one to go without.

JACK

You watch them go? Huh? You see the last bit of their life go?

MARVIN

Yes. *(beat)* You try to stop it?

JACK

Yes. I...

MARVIN

Not strong enough?

JACK

You ever try to take out a speed freak? He was so fucked up. *(beat)* I walked in... I was out with friends. Friday night. They stayed home. They were watching a movie and drinking and God knows what else. Anyway, I get home to shit breaking all over the place and my mother's yellin' for help. Again. I open the door and he's got her off the ground, up against the wall and screamin' some shit at her about not havin' somethin' stupid done. Trash taken out or some shit. He looks at me and it's like his fuckin' eyes are glowin' or somethin'. He says somethin' to me, but I don't hear it. I'm high. I hear it in, like, slow motion. Like it's a record that playing at the wrong speed. He let's go of her and comes after me. She drops to the floor like a sack. Just lays there crying and staring at me and screamin' "leave him alone" but, I'm not sure if she's sayin' it to me or him. He grabs me and pins me up to the wall. The hate in his eyes. They're still glowin', but with a burnin' look in 'em. Like in some monster movie. He growls somethin' at me. Can't tell what it is. All I can think is that this is my fault. That I should have killed him when I had the chance. Y'know? If I had done it, things would be different.

MARVIN

You don't know that.

JACK

My mother would still be alive!

MARVIN

I don't know that. You don't know that.



JACK

That fucker wouldn'ta killed her, that's for fuckin' sure!

MARVIN

Assumption.

JACK

Fuck you!

MARVIN

How could he have stopped you and taken care of her at the same time?

JACK

*(He grabs MARVIN, pins him to the wall.)*

He slams me up against the wall, yellin' somethin' about how I can't beat the devil and then throws me to the fuckin' floor!

*(He throws MARVIN down.)*

Wanna know what he did then? Huh?! He then stomps on my leg and breaks it clean in two!

*(He stomps, missing MARVIN's leg. Then he leans down, face-to-face with MARVIN.)*

Fuckin' get that?! My own Goddamn father snapped my leg like he was breakin' up kindling!

*(He breaks away.)*

FUUUCK!!!

*(He kicks the door of the compactor.)*

Fuck.

*(He limps away, faces out.)*

My fuckin' leg. *(beat)* After he breaks my leg he looks at me so satisfied. So... Happy. He looks down at me and says... This I hear. It's amazing how quick a broke leg can sober you up. He looks down at me and says, "Believe, motherfucker. Believe!" *(beat)* He walks over to her. He's so calm. Like it's his fuckin' job. Like he's been training for this, y'know? He goes to her and all she is sayin' is, "Leave him alone." Over and over like it's one of them... them... mantras. He reaches down and grabs her by the hair. The fuckin' hair! Like a caveman or some shit. He lifts her off the ground and she's clawing at him, trying to get away. He lifts her like she's a fuckin' doll, he lifts her over his head and then... So fuckin' fast! He slams her head down into the floor. When she hit her fuckin' feet were in the air! All I can do is fuckin' lay there and watch her head sorta compress, change shape, like a kickball! Then she just sorta goes still, blood pouring out onto the rug. Her mother's rug.

*(He stops for a moment.)*

One of the neighbors heard and called the cops. They were outside yellin' at him while he did it. He didn't care. Didn't fuckin' care. *(beat)* When the cops get here, they break the door down, but it's too late. I saw all these feet walkin' around me, but it was gettin' blurry. The pain was makin' everything weird. Blurry. Ringin' in my ears.

*(MORE)*

JACK (*cont'd*)  
(*He looks at MARVIN.*)

I could have saved her. I should have saved her. (*beat*) The whole thing... The whole fuckin' thing was my fault.

MARVIN

No it's not. It's all random. Life is random.

JACK

Bullshit!

MARVIN

Who your parents are. Where you will live when you are born. How long you will live. How you will die. It's all random. Everything. The fact that your father was finally pushed far enough to do something like that is...

JACK

What?

MARVIN

What?

JACK

My father was what?

MARVIN

Pushed. You know, pushed to point that he thought that was an acceptable thing to do.

JACK

How can you fuckin' say that?

MARVIN

You never know what's going on inside someone else. What they are fighting. What makes them be the way they are.

JACK

This shit ain't random! He *chose* to do drugs and shit! He fuckin' *chose* to beat on her...

MARVIN

No. The random happened when they met. Fell in... whatever they were in with each other. No. I'm just saying that some people just rub other people the wrong way.

JACK

Rube each... Fuck you!

MARVIN

You have no idea how some people can push and prod others to do things they wouldn't normally do.

JACK

My father is pile of shit! He made himself that way!

MARVIN

Did you ever try to understand him?

JACK

What are you saying?!

MARVIN

You don't know what it's like to love someone so much that the slightest deviation from the life you have built is destructive. The smallest indiscretion. The tiniest lie. Love is a precarious perch upon which we sit with another. A razor's edge. The slightest weight shift and you slide down one side or the other. Worse, right down the blade. Sliced in half. Nothing said after that point could put it right again.

JACK

Oh, my God!

MARVIN

Have you ever been in the position where someone you trusted beyond anyone else in the world betrayed you? Forget it being someone you love. Just anyone who you put your trust in.

JACK

I learned pretty early not to trust anyone.

MARVIN

Well, there are times that make you question your decisions. Your choice of companions. The person to whom you entrust your life. When they come home, time and again, and kick you in the teeth you feel it deep inside. Knocks the wind out of you. If it happens enough, you start to wonder if you should be looking for a way out. But, you love that person so much that to live in the same world as her, but without her... That is the greatest pain I can imagine. Especially if you live in the same city. Have friends in the same circles. No. You cannot share her. You cannot see her. On someone else's arm. In someone else's bed. (*beat*) You make emotional choices. Rash decisions. The fact that you hurt that someone emotionally, sometimes psychologically... sometimes physically...

JACK

What are you saying?

MARVIN

Sometimes it is warranted. Justified. Sometimes they are asking for it.

JACK

Holy fuck!

MARVIN

You don't know what it's like. You have no clue what it's like to have to put up with betrayal. You don't know. You never will until you can feel love for another. Have that with another. *(beat)* Winter day. You come home early in the afternoon. To surprise her. She always closes early on Mondays in the Winter. Right after lunch. Monday afternoons in Winter the shop is empty, so she closes up early. So, one Monday you decide to leave work early and surprise her. Buy her a gift on the way home. Get home about three and the house is empty. Call the shop, but, no answer. The cell phone. No answer. Now you get a little worried. She always answers her cell, at least. You start calling friends. No one's seen her. *(beat)* She doesn't call back for more than an hour. When she does, you hear in the background what sounds like...

*(He waits for a moment for a response.)*

Nothing. It is quiet, with a little echo, like a room with wood floors. Like an apartment or a house. You ask her where she is and she tells you she is waiting for a train. Why? The house is within walking distance of her shop. Where is she? She's not at her mother's or friends or... You ask her where she is. What she's been doing. Again and again she evades. Ignores. Lies. Wait for her to get home while you think back over the previous year or two realizing that this is not new behavior. Couldn't be. The question arises regarding whether she closes early on Mondays for some other reason? Had this really been going on that long? Had she been closing up and meeting him every week for *two* years? You go from having to know to knowing positively. She's been messing around on you for two years. Worse, she has lied to you every day since it started. Outright betrayal. Made a fool of you. Cuckolded.

JACK

That ain't no excuse.

MARVIN

No! She had no excuse! He gave her everything!

JACK

So, you're saying...

MARVIN

I'm saying that, maybe, you were trying to save the wrong person.

JACK

You can't be serious!

MARVIN

When you put all of your trust, your whole life in one person, you become a part of them. Once they do something like that they are severing the part of you that lives within them. The part that you gave them. You handed over willingly. And when that happens, when your heart is destroyed by their actions, what do you have left? *(beat)* What do you have left? The only thing you have left is to cut them out of you!

JACK

You piece of shit!

JACK rushes at MARVIN grabbing him and throwing him against the wall. JACK begins beating on him.

MARVIN

*(Taking it.)*

You can't save her. It's too late.

JACK

I can fuckin' well save someone else! / I can keep it from happening again!

MARVIN

Who?! You?! Who are you going to save? There's no one left!

JACK

You never believed in me! Never thought I could be anything!

*(His attack on MARVIN increases in ferocity.)*

I should have fuckin' killed you years ago, motherfucker!

JACK grabs MARVIN by the jacket and drags him to the compactor. He throws open the gate and throws him to the ground, kicking him in. MARVIN rolls in, a wicked smile tracing his lips. JACK pushes the button.

SOUND: Compactor starting up and running.

He slams the door closed and locks it.

VIENNA runs in as JACK, realizing what is happening, tries to stop the compactor, but the button is covered by a plate on the door.

VIENNA

What the fuck are you doing?!

I... He... FUCK!

JACK

BLACK

SOUND: Compactor finishes, stops.