

THE KINGS OF MAINE

by

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Contact:
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**"Monsters are real, and ghosts are real too.
They live inside us, and sometimes they win."**

-- STEPHEN KING

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Dust. Old furniture. Sunlight from a cobwebbed window penetrates the shadows.

The creaking of feet on stairs. A boy steps into the darkness, STEPHEN (11). He looks around, apprehensive. An attic is a scary place for a boy.

He takes the plunge; enters the musty space. Dust mites dance in a single shaft of sunlight.

Stephen drags over an old chest and opens it. He fishes out a moth-filled BLOUSE; digs deeper. Just his mother's OLD CLOTHES. Nothing interesting.

He pushes the chest aside; spies a wooden crate. The side reads: **DRINK MOXIE SODA. MAINE IN A BOTTLE.** The lettering is red and faded.

Stephen drags the crate over and peers inside. **Bingo.**

The crate is filled with old PAPERBACKS. He scoops one out and holds it up. The cover shows a MONSTER with DEVIL HORNS emerging from between two GRAVESTONES. The title is **THE LURKING FEAR AND OTHER STORIES.** The author is **H.P. LOVECRAFT.**

He puts the book back and pulls out another one. A scantily clad woman is being devoured by rats, her skin scratched and bloody. The cover warns: "AFTER THE H-BOMB, BEWARE OF... **THE COMING OF THE RATS.**" Jackpot.

Stephen replaces the books and weaves his hands through the handles of the crate. He's about to lift it when--

A voice from behind him; a man in shadows.

His father, DONALD.

DONALD
(stern)
Stephen.

Stephen drops the crate; whips around. No one's there.

STEPHEN
Hello?

Nothing. Must have been his imagination.

He leans over, drags the crate a few more feet, then...

DONALD
 What do you think you're doing,
 Stephen? That don't belong to you.

Stephen peers nervously into the corner of the attic. A dark figure walks towards him.

STEPHEN
 Dad?

DONALD
 I told you not to touch my things.
 Damn kids, taking things that ain't
 yours.

STEPHEN
 I'm sorry, Dad.

DONALD
 You think you're better than your
 old man? Is that it? You think
 you're better than your old man,
 Stevie?

DONALD steps out of the shadows.

DONALD (CONT'D)
 You're not the only one with
 dreams.

DONALD's eyes turn RED. He bares **VAMPIRE FANGS** and LAUGHS.

Stephen SCREAMS.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - NIGHT

STEPHEN KING (20s) wakes from a nightmare. He's all grown up; a husky, hulking figure with shaggy hair and a thick mountain man beard.

His wife, TABITHA, a cute country girl with a bob of curly hair, sleeps soundly beside him.

A baby begins to cry. Stephen throws back the covers. Tabitha stirs as he leaves the bed.

TABITHA
 (sleepy)
 I'll get her.

STEPHEN
No. I'll do it.

Stephen hoists himself up and walks over to a CRIB. He lifts up his crying infant daughter NAOMI, comforting her.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
It's okay, sweetie.

INT. KITCHENETTE, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER

Stephen opens the FRIDGE, baby in arms, and takes out a BEER, cracking it open with his free hand. He slams it back as Naomi's cries lessen. She eyes her father curiously.

STEPHEN
(to Naomi)
Daddies need milk too.

Naomi grins and giggles.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
At least someone's happy 'round here.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MORNING

Light streams through thin, ragged curtains. Stephen wakes to the sound of SIZZLING bacon. He groans, rubs his eyes and squints against the sunlight.

INT. KITCHENETTE

Tabitha tosses bacon in a frying pan. She's wearing a HOUSEDRESS; her cupid face framed by oversized PRESCRIPTION GLASSES.

Naomi sits in a highchair; watches curiously as her mother prepares breakfast. Stephen lumbers into the kitchen area. He's wearing dirty jeans and a tee shirt that says **MAINERS DO IT BETTER.**

Stephen steals a piece of bacon from the frying pan.

TABITHA
That all you're havin'?

STEPHEN
I'm runnin' late. Where's my jacket?

TABITHA
Check the laundry room.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM

More a closet than a room. Piles of dirty clothes take up every inch of space.

Stephen rummages around until he finds what he's looking for: a faded denim jacket. Something in the corner of the tiny space catches his attention: a CARD TABLE with a PLASTIC CHAIR pushed under it. On the table sits an **OLIVETTI TYPEWRITER**. Stephen regards the typewriter with a mixture of love and hate.

INT. KITCHENETTE

Tabitha burns the bacon. Smoke rises from the pan.

TABITHA
Shit!

She opens the trash can, is about to scoop the bacon in when something catches her eye.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM

Stephen puts on his denim jacket; is about to leave when Tabitha enters.

TABITHA
What's this?

He turns around. Tabitha's holding up an EMPTY BEER CAN.

STEPHEN
(sheepish)
I needed something to help me sleep.

TABITHA
You ever heard of countin' sheep?

STEPHEN
It was just one beer, Tab.

Tabitha pulls something out of the other pocket of her housedress. It's another EMPTY BEER CAN. Stephen sighs.
Busted.

The PHONE rings in the kitchenette.

INT. KITCHENETTE

Stephen scoops up the phone as Tabitha throws the beer cans back in the trash.

STEPHEN
Hello?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Hello, Steve?

STEPHEN
Ayuh?

INT. DOUBLEDAY, NEW YORK CITY

A bustling publishing house. BILL THOMPSON sits at his desk. A portly man with a kind demeanor, Bill is the sort of editor every writer dreams of: passionate, smart and invested in his clients.

BILL THOMPSON
Steve, it's Bill Thompson at
Doubleday.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE

Stephen raises a surprised eyebrow at Tabitha.

STEPHEN
Bill! Good to hear from ya. How you
been?

Tabitha's ears prick up at the mention of Bill's name.

INTERCUT BETWEEN STEPHEN AND BILL

BILL THOMPSON
Disappointed, to tell you the
truth. I may as well say up front
I'm calling with bad news.
(beat)
The sales board passed on the book.

Tabitha watches as Stephen deflates. He tries to keep a cheery countenance.

STEPHEN
Wow. So they passed, huh?

Tabitha sighs. Not again.

BILL THOMPSON

I'm sorry. Science fiction's a hard sell right now.

STEPHEN

That's okay, Bill. Thanks for trying.

BILL THOMPSON

You got anything else?

STEPHEN

You mean another book? Not really. I've been focusing on short stories. They pay faster.

BILL THOMPSON

Well when you've got another one you send it to me, okay?

STEPHEN

I will.

BILL THOMPSON

You're a talented guy, Steve. We'll get something through eventually.

STEPHEN

All right. Thanks for the call, Bill.

BILL THOMPSON

Don't mention it.... and Steve? Watch out for those Maine bears, okay?

Stephen laughs.

STEPHEN

Will do.

Stephen hangs up. Tabitha frowns.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

They passed. Again.

TABITHA

I'm sorry, hon. Those sales boards don't know anything. That book is great.

STEPHEN

(beat)

I really thought this would be the one.

TABITHA

Maybe you can sell it to a magazine. Get it serialized.

STEPHEN

Maybe.

TABITHA

Hey.

Tabitha puts her arms lovingly around her husband.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

It'll happen. You'll just have to write another one.

STEPHEN

Forget it. I don't have time to work on something that's never gonna get published. Not when short stories are paying the bills. Anyway, I'm all outta big ideas. If a "marathon to the death" isn't enough to get these New York bigwigs excited, I don't know what is.

Tabitha gives him a sympathetic smile.

TABITHA

You'll think of somethin'. You always do.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER

Stephen walks out the front door; lights a cigarette. We see the DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER in all its dilapidated glory.

A **RUSTED BUICK** sits in the driveway, held together by **BALING WIRE** and **DUCT TAPE**.

Stephen gets behind the wheel and says a Hail Mary.

STEPHEN

Please God.

He steels himself and turns the KEY in the ignition. Miraculously the car starts. "Layla" by Derek and the Dominos blasts from the radio.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
 (looking towards the
 heavens)
 Thanks, big guy.

INT. INDUSTRIAL LAUNDRY, HAMPDEN, MAINE - DAY

Stephen pushes a GIANT CART down a line of INDUSTRIAL SIZED WASHERS. The sound of the machines is deafening.

He finds an EMPTY WASHER; opens the enormous door and tips the contents of the cart inside. He closes the door and turns the machine on. The sheets spin round and round, dancing with each other.

Stephen stares into the washer as if hypnotized, his mind a million miles away.

INT. INDUSTRIAL LAUNDRY - LATER

A row of HAND PRESSES and SHIRT-FOLDING UNITS. Workers operate the machines with barely concealed boredom.

Stephen stands in front of an IRONER AND FOLDER. On the other side of the machine stands TONY, his co-worker.

They each take an end of a dirty sheet and feed it into the machine. Tony shouts above the whirr of the engine.

TONY
 (to Stephen)
 You ask me, people need to give Nixon a break. So what if he's a crook? They're all crooks! That man's done a lotta good for this country...

Stephen spaces out. He stares into the JAWS of the machine, feeds in another sheet. BIG METAL TEETH grab the linens, DEVOURING them.

Tony's voice BUZZES in his ear. Stephen grabs another sheet, pushes it towards the FEEDER, when...

Tony's hand CATCHES in the linen. METAL TEETH come down, WRENCHING THE SHEET towards the mouth of the machine. Tony's HAND is TORN OFF. Blood POURS from the wound.

The LINENS turn SCARLET RED. STEPHEN SCREAMS. Tony looks at Stephen, annoyed, as blood spurts in the air in front of his face.

TONY (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing, Steve?

Stephen wakes as if from a dream. He looks at Tony's hand. There's no bloody stump; no mangled hand. It was just his imagination.

TONY (CONT'D)

You can't doze around these machines, man. It's dangerous.

Stephen nods shakily, rattled by the vision.

STEPHEN

Sorry.

INT. BREAK ROOM, INDUSTRIAL LAUNDRY - LATER

A bleak wood-paneled room with a few PLASTIC TABLES, some CHAIRS and a COFFEE MACHINE. A poster of a forest trumpets **MAINE. THE WAY LIFE SHOULD BE.**

Stephen sits eating a TUNA SANDWICH. He flicks through a dog-eared copy of LIFE MAGAZINE someone has left on the table. A story catches his eye:

TELEKINESIS: FACT OR FICTION?

Beneath the headline is a PHOTO: a woman stares at a PLATE as it HOVERS IN THE AIR. Stephen reads, eyes widening with every word.

Tony strolls in. He opens the fridge, looks inside and scowls.

TONY

Goddamn assholes in here drinkin' all the Coke.

(to Stephen)

What the hell's got your attention so bad?

STEPHEN

Humph? Oh, just this article.

TONY

Oh yeah? What's it about?

STEPHEN
Telekinesis.

TONY
Tele-what?

STEPHEN
It's where you can move stuff with
your mind.

TONY
You believe in that shit?

STEPHEN
I dunno.

TONY
Every time I come in here you're
readin' something weird. You sure
are an odd guy, Steve.

Tony exits. Stephen barely notices. The article has him
enthralled.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL LAUNDRY - LATER

Stephen kicks open the back door and lumbers outside. He
lights a cigarette; enjoys a moment of quiet. Suddenly he
hears the sound of approaching SINGING. The voice is deep and
husky.

VOICE
(singing)
*Baby, can you dig your maaaaan? He's
a righteous man... baby, can you
dig your maaaaan??*

A man walks by wearing COWBOY BOOTS, DARK BLUE JEANS, a DENIM
SHIRT and DUSTY DENIM JACKET. In his hand is a FLASK.

Stephen watches with envy as the man takes a drink. He tips
his flask towards Stephen and smiles. Stephen nods shyly in
return. The man disappears around the corner, Stephen staring
after him.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - AFTERNOON

Stephen pulls up in the Buick, gets out and checks the MAIL
BOX. There's mostly bills and some junk mail. There's also an
envelope from **CAVALIER MAGAZINE**.

Stephen tears it open. Inside is a CHECK for FIFTY DOLLARS. He smiles. It's not much, but it's something.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen strolls proudly inside, holds up the check for his wife to see.

STEPHEN

We're in the money. Fifty bucks!

Tabitha sounds far from happy. She gestures to the baby in her arms.

TABITHA

Steve... something's wrong. She won't stop crying.

The joy drains from Stephen's face. He feels his baby's forehead.

STEPHEN

Hey Naomi... what's wrong? You not feeling well?

TABITHA

I think it's her ear.

Stephen looks in Naomi's ear. He touches a large bulge in the EARLOBE. A thick trail of YELLOW PUS oozes out.

STEPHEN

Jesus Christ!!

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - EVENING

Naomi sits on a cold steel table, clinging desperately to her Daddy. The doctor pokes at her ear with a swab. She cries louder.

DOCTOR

It's an ear infection, all right. Pretty bad one too. She'll need some antibiotics.

Stephen and Tabitha exchange a concerned look. How much is that gonna cost?

EXT. SHOP 'N SAVE PARKING LOT - EVENING

Stephen walks out of the DRUG STORE holding a BROWN PAPER BAG. He gets in the Buick and takes out a vial of BRIGHT PINK GOO; waves it playfully at his daughter.

STEPHEN

(scary voice)

Ooooo... look at this, Naomi! "The Pink Stuff." Sounds like a nuclear concoction that turns rats into monsters.

(jokingly to Tabitha)

Sure we should be giving this stuff to our kid?

TABITHA

(tense)

We paid enough for it.

Stephen tries to assuage Tabitha's fears.

STEPHEN

Come on, Tab. We're okay.

TABITHA

We're okay now. But for how long?

STEPHEN

It won't always be like this.

TABITHA

Sometimes I think it would take a miracle to change things.

Stephen sighs as he starts the engine.

STEPHEN

I'm working on it.

INT. BATHROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MORNING

Stephen looks in the mirror; inspects himself with judging eyes.

STEPHEN

Fee Fi Fo Fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman...

He runs a hand through his thick, grubby beard; picks up a STRAIGHT RAZOR.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
So long, old friend.

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen walks down an empty high school hallway. He's CLEAN SHAVEN and wearing a SUIT. The mountain man beard is GONE. He's a man who means business.

INT. OFFICE, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen sits in front of MR. ULLMAN, the principal of Hampden Academy.

MR. ULLMAN
I'm sorry, Mister King. We just don't have any teaching positions available at the moment. Probably won't have for quite some time.

STEPHEN
You don't have anything? Anything at all?

MR. ULLMAN
Teaching jobs are few and far between these days. When they do become available, they're snatched up almost immediately.

STEPHEN
Isn't there some way I can get to the front of the line?

MR. ULLMAN
I can keep your details on file; give you a call if something comes up.

STEPHEN
And you're sure you don't have anything?

MR. ULLMAN
The only job we've got going at the moment is for a janitor.

STEPHEN
I'll take it.

Mr. Ullman looks at Stephen quizzically. He flicks through his resume.

MR. ULLMAN

Mister King, you have four years of college--

STEPHEN

--and I'm working in a laundry. If I'm here as a janitor, then maybe when one of those teaching positions opens up, you'll think of me first.

Ullman looks at Stephen sympathetically. The guy sure seems desperate.

INT. BAR - AFTERNOON

Stephen pulls up a stool at an empty bar. The bartender, LARRY, saunters over.

LARRY

Evenin', Steve.

STEPHEN

Hi Larry. Little slow tonight?

LARRY

Ayuh. What can I get ya?

STEPHEN

Hair of the Dog that bit me.

LARRY

Bourbon on the rocks?

STEPHEN

You got it.

Larry brings him a bourbon.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Can I get a beer too?

Larry brings over a Bud. Stephen quickly slams back the bourbon in one mouthful; waves the empty glass at Larry.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

One more of these, Larry.

Larry raises an eyebrow; pours him another.

LARRY

Knockin' 'em back a little fast, aren't ya Steve?

STEPHEN

I gotta lot of work to do tonight.
Gotta get my buzz on.

He slams the drink back as Larry disappears into the back room. A voice pipes up from the other end of the bar.

VOICE

What kind of work do you do?

Stephen looks over. He sees the denim-clad man he saw outside the laundromat days before. This is R.F. He's drinking a whiskey, a mischievous glint in his eyes.

STEPHEN

Technically, as of today, I am a janitor.

R.F.

Makes sense. If I was cleanin' toilets I'd wanna get shitfaced too.

STEPHEN

Actually that's just my side-gig. I'm really a writer.

R.F.

A writer, eh?

STEPHEN

Well, I'm tryin' to be.

R.F.

What kinda writin' do you do?

STEPHEN

Short stories, mostly. Sci-Fi, some horror...

R.F.

That's cool.

R.F. extends his hand.

R.F. (CONT'D)

The name's R.F.

STEPHEN

Steve King.
(shakes hand)
Good to meetcha, man.

R.F. downs his whiskey; slams the glass on the bar.

R.F.
Fancy a game of pool, Steve?

INT. POOL TABLE, BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Pool break. R.F. sends the balls scattering across the table as Stephen watches. A nearby **TELEVISION** runs a news report about an embassy bombing. Stephen watches with dismay.

STEPHEN
Scary stuff happening in the world.

R.F.
Sometimes you have to push back.
Can't let fuckers walk all over
you.

R.F. lines up his next shot; sinks a few balls. Stephen eyes him with a hint of trepidation.

R.F. (CONT'D)
So... a horror writer, eh?

STEPHEN
That's right.

R.F.
What's that all about?

STEPHEN
What do you mean?

R.F.
I mean something pretty fucked up
must have happened to you when you
were a kid to make you write that
shit.

STEPHEN
Bambi.

R.F. looks up from his shot.

R.F.
Excuse me?

STEPHEN
When I was a kid my Mom took me to
see Bambi. It was the first time I
ever got scared. I mean really
scared. It was when the woods
caught on fire and Bambi and his
Mom were trying to get out.
(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Bambi asks his Mom what was in the woods that caused the fire. Bambi's mom turns to him and says: "MAN was in the woods." Goddamn if that line didn't make me shit my pants in fear. It got me thinkin'... how bad can man be? Then Bambi's Mom got shot, and I found out.

R.F. gives Stephen an amused look.

R.F.

If you say so.

R.F. shoots and misses.

STEPHEN

So what do you do for a livin'?

R.F.

Travellin' salesman.

STEPHEN

No kiddin'?

R.F.

That's right. The open road is my home.

STEPHEN

Huh. My dad was a salesman.

R.F.

No shit?

STEPHEN

He ran out on us when I was just a kid. Seems he favored the open road too.

R.F.

Well, you can't really judge him for that. Man's gotta do what he's gotta do. It's like a wolf that bites its own paw off to get out of a trap.

Stephen grows wary of the conversation. He looks at his watch.

STEPHEN

Well, I better be getting back. The wife'll be getting suspicious.

R.F. looks over towards the bar. Larry is nowhere to be seen. He walks over and reaches behind the counter; grabs a bottle of BOURBON from the well.

Stephen walks over and whispers...

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

R.F. extends the bottle to Stephen.

R.F.
One for the road.

STEPHEN
I can't take that!

R.F.
Sure you can.

STEPHEN
Listen, you may be new in town, but I gotta tell ya... Larry's a friend of mine. We go way back.

R.F.
The amount of money you spend in this joint? Your buddy Larry owes you. Come on. You took a shit job today. You deserve it.

R.F. pushes the bottle into Stephen's hands. Stephen's about to hand it back when Larry reemerges from the storeroom. Stephen quickly stuffs the bottle into his jacket.

LARRY
(oblivious)
Heading off?

STEPHEN
(nervous)
Yeah Larry. I'll see you around.

He quickly exits, face pale, as R.F. smirks behind him.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - EVENING

Tabitha is putting on her work uniform: a pink DUNKIN' DONUTS dress. Stephen strolls in; attempts to hide his drunkenness.

STEPHEN
Hey! It's my girls!

He ruffles Naomi's hair before pulling Tabitha in for a kiss. She looks at him suspiciously.

TABITHA
How many have you had?

STEPHEN
What do you mean?

TABITHA
You stink of Altoids.

STEPHEN
I wanted my breath to be nice! I've been thinking about kissing you all day...

They kiss. It's long and passionate. When they part Tabitha gives him a disappointed look but decides to let it go. Naomi, as if sensing her mother's imminent departure, begins to cry. Stephen picks her up and comforts her.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Awww, come on baby. Everything's okay. Mommy will be back soon.

Tabitha picks up her handbag and makes for the door.

TABITHA
Love you.

She pecks Stephen on the cheek.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
Don't stay up too late.

STEPHEN
I won't.

Tabitha exits. Stephen walks into the kitchen and opens the pantry door. He takes the BOTTLE OF BOURBON from his jacket pocket and stuffs it inside, pushing it all the way to the back.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
(to Naomi)
Sssh. No telling.

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen pushes a MOP and BUCKET down a long, empty corridor. He's wearing overalls and sneakers, hunches over the mop like the Hunchback of Notre Dame. On his overalls is a sewn-on name-tag: **JANITOR**.

INT. GIRLS LOCKER ROOM

Stephen SCRUBS the rust-stains off the wall in the girls locker room. He looks around, takes in the SHOWERS with PINK PLASTIC CURTAINS.

On the wall he spies something that perks his curiosity. He stops scrubbing and walks over to take a closer look. It's a **TAMPON MACHINE**.

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - LATER

The SCHOOL BELL sounds, sending students pouring into the hallway. Stephen pushes his mop past the oblivious students. Suddenly a DISHEVELED-LOOKING TEEN rushes past him, almost knocking him over.

STEPHEN

Hey! Slow down!

The girl whirls around; looks past Stephen with wide, frightened eyes. Her hair is ratty and unbrushed; her dress more like a POTATO SACK. This is SONDRÁ.

Stephen turns in the direction of her gaze. Two MEAN GIRLS, all pretty dresses and perfect make-up, are following close behind.

MEAN GIRL #1

My God - look at her dress!

MEAN GIRL #2

Doesn't she have any self-respect?
I'd rather kill myself than look
like that.

Stephen watches as Sondra quickly disappears down the corridor, looking like a frightened animal.

Stephen stares after her, lost in memory as we--

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Stephen (12) hurries down the street as he's chased by two KIDS.

KID #1

My Dad says your Dad went for cigarettes and never came back. He says you're nothing but a bastard.

STEPHEN

That's not true! My Dad's in the Navy!

KID #2

You lying bastard!

The Kid pushes Stephen over. He falls to the ground, grazing both his knees. The Kids laugh as they run off.

INT. BATHROOM, THE KING HOUSE - FLASHBACK CONTINUES

Young Stephen sits on the sink while his mother RUTH dabs his cut knees with MERCUROCHROME. Stephen winces.

RUTH

Don't be a big baby. It ain't nothin' but a scratch.

He tries to be brave.

STEPHEN

Mom? Did Dad leave us? Am I a bastard?

Ruth hesitates. She keeps dabbing at her son's grazes.

RUTH

Your father's in the Navy. And don't cuss.

STEPHEN

When's he coming home?

Ruth ignores the question. Instead she examines her handiwork.

RUTH

There. Much better.

(beat)

Don't you listen to those boys no more, 'kay? They ain't nothin' but gossips and small minded fools.

STEPHEN

Okay, Mom.

CLOSE on Stephen's teary eyes.

MEAN GIRL #1 (PRE-LAP)

What are you lookin' at, goober?

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - FLASHBACK ENDS

Stephen shakes himself from the memory. The Mean Girls look at him with disgust.

MEAN GIRL #2

Why don't you take a picture? It'll last longer.

Stephen quickly hurries away, head bowed, as the girls snigger behind him.

STEPHEN (PRE-LAP)

I tell ya, these girls were meaner than bulls with jack handles up their asses.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - EVENING

Tabitha listens as she sits across from Stephen at the kitchen table, CALCULATOR in hand. In front of them is a pile of **BILLS**. Tabitha calculates as Stephen talks.

STEPHEN

This kid looked so frightened. It reminded me of a girl I went to school with. She was so weird. She didn't even know what a period was. Got it the first time in the locker room. All the other kids started makin' fun of her. She thought she was dying.

TABITHA

Jesus. That's awful.

STEPHEN

You said it. The next year she prettied herself up, dropped the weight and got a makeover. It didn't help. In fact, the teasing got worse.

(beat)

(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

I heard she killed herself a few years back.

TABITHA

Oh God. That poor girl.

STEPHEN

(beat)

You know, sometimes I wish I'd done somethin'... said somethin'. But hey, if they were pickin' on someone else, it meant they weren't pickin' on you.

TABITHA

High school sure is brutal, even for good lookin' folks like us.

Stephen chuckles. He looks down at the mountain of bills.

STEPHEN

Speaking of brutal, how we doin'?

TABITHA

We'll scrape by this month. You'll have to cut down on cigarettes.

Stephen frowns. He turns to Naomi as she plays TOY BLOCKS on the floor.

STEPHEN

You got a job yet, Naomi? This ain't no free ride.

TABITHA

God forbid she wants to be a writer like her parents.

Stephen looks down glumly at the pile of bills.

STEPHEN

You said that right.

Tabitha continues her calculations; speaks as she adds.

TABITHA

Well, maybe there's something in this.

STEPHEN

In what?

TABITHA

Those girls you saw at school.
Maybe this is your chance to work
through some unresolved issues.

Stephen raises an eyebrow. The wheels start turning in his head.

That's not such a bad idea.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MORNING

Stephen walks outside in his robe. He opens the MAIL BOX and pulls out a pile of envelopes. He cycles through them. Bills, junk, then finally... an envelope from **WEIRD TALES MAGAZINE**.

He tears open the envelope, expecting to find a CHECK. Instead he finds a REJECTION LETTER:

Dear Mr. King,

Thank you for your submission. Unfortunately your story was not what we're looking for right now...

Stephen's hands tremble. His eyes bulge.

The letter BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

MAILMAN

Hey, Steve!

The MAILMAN waves to Stephen as he rides by on his bicycle.

STEPHEN

Hey, Terry.

The mailman rides off. Stephen looks at the letter in his hands. There's no fire, no smoke. Just another weird imagining. He shakes his head ruefully.

His imagination will be the death of him.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen storms into the laundry, filled with a mixture of anger and determination. He stares down the OLIVETTI TYPEWRITER, sizes it up as a gunslinger would his opponent.

STEPHEN

Okay, asshole. Let's do this.

He slams his ass in the seat and gets writing.

MONTAGE/INTERCUT:

-- LAUNDRY ROOM: Stephen writes; fingers flying over the keys.

-- HIGH SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM: Stephen walks through the rows of lockers, makes his way over to the showers. He explores them. The tiles are covered in BLOOD.

-- HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR: The MEAN GIRLS move in slow motion, flicking their hair back, laughing cruelly.

-- HIGH SCHOOL SHOWER: SONDRRA, the teen he saw being chased down the corridor, sits in the corner naked, head buried in her chest, as a chorus rings out around her. *PLUG IT UP! PLUG IT UP! PLUG IT UP!* Then, all of a sudden...

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE

Stephen STOPS writing. He tears the paper from the Olivetti and reads it, frustration setting into his features. He shakes his head.

It's wrong. All wrong.

He looks at the small pile of pages beside the typewriter. It's no good. Any of it.

STEPHEN
Goddamnit it, Steve.

He picks up the pile of papers and walks out of the laundry into the--

INT. KITCHENETTE

-- where he throws it all in the trash.

He turns to the pantry and opens it; pushes aside jars of green beans and condensed milk. Finally he finds it - the BOTTLE OF BOURBON stashed at the very back. He grabs it and heads out.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Stephen hikes along the side of the road, swaying a little. The bottle of bourbon is in his hands, half drunk.

VOICE (O.S.)
You look like you're walkin' to
beat the devil.

Stephen looks up. R.F. is walking along the road towards him, carrying a SPORTS BAG.

STEPHEN

Hey there. Fancy runnin' into you again.

R.F.

I was headed to the woods; do some shooting. What are you doin' out here?

STEPHEN

Nothin'. I was just clearing my head.

R.F. notes the bottle of bourbon in Stephen's hand.

R.F.

Told ya that would come in handy.
(beat)
Why don't you come with me? Have a few brewskies?

STEPHEN

(reluctant)
I should really be gettin' back.

R.F.

Come on, man. Live a little.

Stephen mulls it over. Finally he shrugs.

STEPHEN

Screw it.

R.F. claps him on the shoulder.

R.F.

That's more like it!

EXT. THE WOODS - LATER

BANG. The sound of a REVOLVER. Stephen covers his ears. A BEER CAN sits on a ROCK as DUST swirls around it.

R.F. cocks his gun and fires again. This time the beer can goes FLYING into the air!

R.F.

Woo-hoo! I got you that time, sucker!

R.F. tries to hand the gun to Stephen.

R.F. (CONT'D)
Go on, man. Take a shot.

STEPHEN
Nah. I don't like guns.

R.F.
Don't be such a pussy.

STEPHEN
No thanks.

R.F.
Suit yourself.

R.F. aims and fires again. The bullet CAREENS off the rock.

R.F. (CONT'D)
Goddamnit.
(to Stephen)
What's up your ass, man? You're
messin' with my mojo. You and the
wife have a fight or somethin'?

Stephen opens up.

STEPHEN
I'm just having one of those days
when I feel like the worst writer
on the planet.

R.F.
Whoa. Heavy shit.

STEPHEN
Maybe I'm not cut out to be a
writer. Maybe it's all just a pipe
dream.

R.F.
You could be right. I mean, what's
the chances of becoming a literary
superstar when you're nothin' but
poor white trash from Maine?

STEPHEN
(defensive)
It's not all bad. There's a guy at
Doubleday who wants to see my next
book.

R.F.
Did he see your last book?

STEPHEN
Um, yeah...

R.F.
And?

STEPHEN
They didn't think it was right for them.

R.F.
How many times has that happened?

STEPHEN
(glumly)
Three.

R.F.
They rejected three fuckin' books?
Damn.
(beat)
Oh well. Maybe you're right. Maybe the next one will catapult you to literary stardom.

Stephen remembers Tabitha's words.

STEPHEN
These things just take time.

R.F.
None of us are gettin' any younger. Life is for living! You should be enjoying yourself, not sittin' here moping.

STEPHEN
I can't be a janitor the rest of my life.

R.F.
Ain't nothin' wrong with workin' for an honest wage. It's better than dreamin' about shit that ain't ever gonna happen.

STEPHEN
It'll happen. It has to. Things wouldn't be so bad if I wasn't flat broke.

R.F. sits down beside Stephen and cracks open a beer.

R.F.

That's the problem with havin' a family to support. All they do is drag you down. Me? I got something more important than family.

STEPHEN

Oh yeah? What's that?

R.F.

Freedom.

Suddenly a RABBIT comes out of the clearing. R.F. cocks his gun. Stephen looks up in alarm; tries to stop the inevitable.

STEPHEN

Wait! DON'T!

R.F. shoots. The rabbit's stomach EXPLODES. R.F. views his kill with satisfaction.

R.F.

Bull's-eye.

R.F. notes Stephen's expression of horror.

STEPHEN

Don't be sad, Steve. It probably had rabies.

Stephen stares at the rabbit in horror, its entrails glistening in the sun.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - LATER

Tabitha comes home with Naomi, a grocery bag in her arms. MUSIC drifts from the bathroom: a radio playing "**Rocket Man**" by **Elton John**. The sound of Stephen singing emanates after it. Tabitha puts the groceries on the bench and Naomi in her crib.

TABITHA

Steve!

No response as Stephen continues to sing. Tabitha shakes her head in amusement.

She starts unpacking the groceries. Her attention is diverted to the TRASH CAN where she notices the discarded pages of Stephen's story.

She pulls them out, dusts off coffee grinds and cigarette ash. Stephen continues to sing in the bath tub, oblivious to her discovery. Tabitha sits down at the table and reads.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tabitha takes the typed pages into the bathroom. Stephen is sitting in the bathtub, smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer. Tabitha waves the pages at him.

TABITHA
What's this?

STEPHEN
What?

TABITHA
I pulled these out of the trash.

STEPHEN
(beat)
That's nothin'. I'm not gonna finish it.

TABITHA
Why not?

STEPHEN
Because it's no good.

TABITHA
Well I think it's good.

STEPHEN
(surprised)
You read it?

Tabitha sits down on the toilet seat and flicks through the pages.

TABITHA
A lot of people will be able to relate to this, Steve. I think you've really got something here.

STEPHEN
Forget it. I can't write women.

TABITHA
Yes you can. This is proof that you can.

STEPHEN
It's too long for a short story.

TABITHA
Then make it your next novel.

STEPHEN
I'm not wasting time writing
another novel.

Tabitha gives him an admonishing look. Stephen becomes
petulant.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
No one's gonna want it.

TABITHA
Steve, it's good.

STEPHEN
(hopeful beat)
Really?

TABITHA
I want to know what happens to this
girl. Write it for me. Please.

Stephen leans out of the tub, runs his hand up Tabitha's leg.

STEPHEN
(playful)
And what are you gonna do for me?

TABITHA
(nervous beat)
I'm gonna give you another mouth to
feed.

Stephen gives Tabitha a perplexed look.

STEPHEN
What are you sayin'?

TABITHA
I'm sayin'... that I'm pregnant.

Stephen's eyes grow wide.

STEPHEN
Pregnant?

TABITHA
Uh huh.

STEPHEN

(beat)
Again??

TABITHA

Yes, again!
(beat)
I found out last week. I missed my
period. I didn't know how to tell
you.

Stephen looks down, pensive. Tabitha searches his face for a response; becomes increasingly nervous.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Well??

Stephen slowly looks up. There's a GRIN on his face. Tabitha breathes a huge sigh of relief.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

You son of a bitch!

Stephen laughs. He grabs her arm and pulls her into the tub for a bear hug.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

No!! Don't get me wet!!

Stephen ignores her cries as he pulls her in. She laughs as he wraps his wet arms around her. She doesn't see that his eyes are wide with trepidation.

INT. RUTH KING'S HOUSE - DAY

A modest shingled house. Stephen opens the locked door with a key and heads in. The sound of a TV set blares from the living room.

STEPHEN

Ma?

RUTH

In here.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Stephen enters the living room. His mother RUTH sits in a sofa chair wrapped in a blanket, cigarette in hand.

STEPHEN

Hey, Ma.

RUTH
Hello, son.

Stephen leans over; kisses her cheek. He notes the cigarette.

STEPHEN
I thought you were trying to cut
down.

RUTH
This is cutting down.

STEPHEN
(sheepish)
Can I have one?

Ruth tosses over the pack.

RUTH
Help yourself.

Stephen sits next to her on the sofa; lights a cigarette.

STEPHEN
What're you watching?

RUTH
Some old pile of rubbish.

They watch the TV for a moment in silence.

STEPHEN
I've got some news for you.
(nervous beat)
We're, uh, having another baby.

Ruth tenses.

RUTH
Well. You and Tabby sure don't
waste any time, do you?

STEPHEN
This wasn't anything we planned,
believe me. I'm very aware this is
not the right time to be having
another kid.

RUTH
There's never a right time for
children. You just make it work
with what you have.

STEPHEN
 (unconvinced)
 You mean like Dad did?

RUTH
 Don't talk nonsense, Stephen.
 You're nothing like him.

Stephen remembers a memory and smirks.

STEPHEN
 The Navy, huh?

Ruth snorts.

RUTH
 What was I meant to tell you? Not
 the truth, that's for sure. It
 would have broken your heart.

She pats him on the knee.

RUTH (CONT'D)
 Everything will be fine, Stephen.
 Children are a blessing.

Stephen manages a thin smile.

STEPHEN
 I know, ma. I know.

INT. CLASS ROOM, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen tentatively approaches the door of an empty classroom. A teacher stands at the chalkboard writing out the next day's lesson. Stephen knocks quietly. The teacher, KURT BARLOW, looks over.

KURT
 Good. You're here. Let me show you
 where it is.

Stephen wheels his MOP and BUCKET inside; follows Kurt to the back of the classroom. There's a big puddle of VOMIT on the floor amongst the tables.

KURT (CONT'D)
 It was that damn Vern Tessio. I
 watched the kid eat a whole apple
 pie at lunch.

Stephen takes the mop out of the bucket and begins to clean up the vomit.

KURT (CONT'D)
You're Steve, right?

STEPHEN
Ayuh.

KURT
(extends hand)
Kurt Barlow.

They shake.

STEPHEN
Good to meet you, Kurt.

KURT
I heard on the grapevine that
you're a writer. I dabble in a
little writing myself.

STEPHEN
Oh yeah?

KURT
Nothing serious. I've written a few
articles; some short stories. It's
just so damn hard to get published
these days.

STEPHEN
You're telling me.

KURT
You had any luck?

STEPHEN
Here and there.

KURT
(surprised)
Really?

STEPHEN
(shrugging)
Just a few magazines.

KURT
That's great. Where?

STEPHEN
(embarrassed)
You heard of Cavalier magazine?

Kurt is slightly taken aback.

KURT
 You mean the nudie mag?
 (beat)
 Well, hey... that's cool. I mean,
 it's still publication, right?

STEPHEN
 Right.

There's a small uncomfortable lull in the conversation.

KURT
 Well... keep up the good work.

Kurt leaves Stephen to clean up the vomit.

STEPHEN
 Yeah. Thanks.

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - LATER

Stephen struggles as he drags a trash can across the floor. He's wearing THICK RUBBER GLOVES; screws his nose up at the awful smell.

WHAM! A group of JOCKS shamble past, KNOCKING the TRASH CAN from his hands. The contents spill out all over the ground.

JOCK
 Watch where you're goin', mop-jockey!

Stephen gets down on his hands and knees and starts picking up the trash. Mr. Ullman appears beside him.

MR. ULLMAN
 Steve? Got a minute?

STEPHEN
 One sec, Mr. Ullman. I gotta get this cleaned up.

MR. ULLMAN
 It's fine. You can leave it for the moment.

Stephen is immediately nervous. Is he about to get fired?

INT. OFFICE, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen sits across from Mr. Ullman. He's still wearing the rubber gloves; looks broken and disheveled from his duties.

MR. ULLMAN

So Steve... how are you enjoying it here?

STEPHEN

Uh, I like it here just fine, Mr. Ullman.

MR. ULLMAN

Good. Because one of our English teachers just up and quit on us. You asked me if I'd think of you first, so here we are.

Stephen almost looks disappointed.

STEPHEN

Teaching?

MR. ULLMAN

Uh huh.

STEPHEN

Full time?

MR. ULLMAN

That's what it says on the packet.

STEPHEN

Uh, would there be much extra curricular work?

MR. ULLMAN

You're beginning to make me think you don't want this, Steve.

STEPHEN

No, I do, it's just that.. well, I'm trying to focus on my writing at the moment. I just started this new book...

MR. ULLMAN

Steve, I know this is none of my business, but as a man who was once young and full of big ideas, take it from me... do it for your family.

EXT. SARAH SPRUCE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Stephen knocks on the door of a small house with a neatly manicured lawn. The door opens. Stephen gives a big, overly enthusiastic smile.

STEPHEN

Hey Sarah.

SARAH SPRUCE, Stephen's MOTHER IN LAW, stands with Naomi in her arms, looking unimpressed. Stephen quickly moves his attention to Naomi.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

There's my little girl!

Naomi reaches for her father. He takes her.

SARAH

(terse)

I hear congratulations are in order.

STEPHEN

That's right! Another little one on the way.

Sarah's disapproval is obvious.

SARAH

You still workin' up at that school?

STEPHEN

Yup, and I've had a few stories published too. Everything's going good.

SARAH

I hope so. Two children is a big responsibility.

Stephen's cheery facade falters.

STEPHEN

Well, thanks for babysitting.

SARAH

Don't mention it.

Stephen carries Naomi to the car, Sarah's judgmental eyes following him the entire way.

INT. DUNKIN DONUTS - THAT EVENING

Tabitha leans behind the counter, writing in a notebook. She's deep in thought; doesn't hear the chime as the front door opens.

STEPHEN

We heard you got some good eatin' here.

Tabitha looks up; sees her husband and daughter. She beams.

TABITHA

Well! What a nice surprise!

Stephen hands Naomi over the counter into her mother's arms. He spies the notebook.

STEPHEN

You working on a new poem?

TABITHA

Ayuh. When I can.

(to Naomi)

Hey, babe. You want some donuts?

Naomi nods her head. Of course.

INT. DUNKIN DONUTS - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen and Tabitha sit in a booth eating donuts. Tabitha wearily lifts her arms and stretches. Stephen looks at his wife sadly; notes her growing belly.

STEPHEN

You okay?

TABITHA

Hm? Yeah, I'm okay. Just tired.

STEPHEN

(beat)

So... a teaching job came up at the school.

TABITHA

(excited)

Really?

STEPHEN

Uh huh.

TABITHA
Well?? Did they offer it to you?

STEPHEN
They did.

TABITHA
Are you kidding? That's fantastic!

Stephen tries to act excited.

STEPHEN
It doesn't pay much more, but every extra bit helps, especially now, and I can still write at night, I guess.

Tabitha recognizes his reluctance. She takes his hand.

TABITHA
Sweetheart - thank you.
Everything's going to work out the way we want it to. I just know it.

Stephen gives an upbeat smile.

STEPHEN
Yep. Me too.

He takes a tense bite of his donut.

STEPHEN (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
"I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt; I fear; I think strange things, which I dare not confess to my own soul."

INT. CLASSROOM, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen stands in front of a bored looking class, reading from a copy of '**DRACULA**'. He's wearing a tweed jacket and khaki pants; looks uncomfortably "teacherly". He looks out at the fidgeting class.

STEPHEN
"God keep me, if only for the sake of those dear to me!"
(beat)
So... what'd you think?

No response from the class.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Anyone?

STUDENT #1

It was boring.

STEPHEN

What do you mean 'boring'!?

STUDENT #3

It wasn't scary.

STEPHEN

Are you telling me you wouldn't be scared if you came face to face with Count Dracula?

STUDENT #3

No way!!

STUDENT #2

If I saw a vampire, I'd punch him right in the face.

Laughter from the rest of the class. Stephen sighs heavily. God help him.

INT. TEACHERS LOUNGE - LATER

Teachers sit on cheap sofas, smoking and drinking coffee. Stephen walks over to the coffee machine and pours himself a cup. KURT BARLOW calls over to him from the sofa.

KURT

Hey Steve! Didn't recognize you without your overalls.

Stephen laughs good-naturedly.

STEPHEN

Never thought I'd say it feels good to wear tweed.

Kurt turns to the other teachers.

KURT

Steve's also a writer.

(to Stephen)

I was just telling them I'm about to be published. Can you believe it? Now Hampden Academy will have two published writers on staff.

STEPHEN
That's great, Kurt! Congrats, man.

KURT
Thanks. It's not a big deal.

STEPHEN
What's the publication?

KURT
Harper's.

Stephen falters a little.

STEPHEN
Wow! Harper's?
(beat)
That is a big deal.

Kurt waves away his compliment.

KURT
Not really. No one reads that
literary stuff.

STEPHEN
Well I'll be sure to buy a copy.
Congrats again.

KURT
Thanks. Comin' from another writer,
that sure means something.

Stephen walks out of the lounge and quickly realizes he's left his coffee behind. He's about to go back in when he catches the tail end of a conversation.

FEMALE TEACHER (O.S.)
Where exactly was he published?

Stephen stands just outside the door, listening from around the corner.

KURT (O.S.)
You heard of 'Cavalier'?

MALE TEACHER (O.S.)
The porn magazine??

FEMALE TEACHER (O.S.)
How do you know about that?

Laughs all round.

MALE TEACHER (O.S.)

I may have perused it once or twice. They publish a lot of trashy sci-fi and horror stories.

KURT (O.S.)

It still counts as being published.

FEMALE TEACHER (O.S.)

It's no Harper's.

MALE TEACHER (O.S.)

Well, he was the janitor. Trash is obviously his trade.

A smattering of laughter. Stephen scampers away down the corridor, humiliated.

INT. SARAH SPRUCE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Tabitha enters her mother's house. She's dressed in her Dunkin' Donuts uniform; looks drained and tired. She calls out.

TABITHA

Mom?

SARAH (O.S.)

In here!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Tabitha enters the living room; finds her mother on the sofa in front of the TV while Naomi plays on the floor. Tabitha immediately goes to her daughter.

TABITHA

Hi sweetie! You have a good day with Grandma?

SARAH

She's been a doll the entire day.

TABITHA

Thanks for looking after her, Mom.

SARAH

Don't mention it.

Tabitha takes a seat on the sofa next to her mother. She rubs her growing stomach protectively. Her exhaustion is clearly showing.

SARAH (CONT'D)

How was work?

Tabitha attempts to feign enthusiasm.

TABITHA

Okay. It's pretty slow in there which is good. I can get some writing done.

SARAH

A woman in your condition shouldn't have to work.

TABITHA

Mom, it's fine. Really.

Sarah removes something from her apron pocket: a wad of cash. She hands it to Tabitha.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

(off the cash)

I don't need this.

SARAH

Just take it.

Tabitha reluctantly takes the money.

TABITHA

Thank you.

SARAH

(beat)

So how's that husband of yours?

TABITHA

He's good. He's working on a new book.

Sarah makes no attempt to hide her disapproval.

SARAH

Tabitha, it's not all about him, you know. I'd hate for your talent to go to waste.

TABITHA

It's not like that, Ma. Steve supports my writing just as much as I support his. It's just that poetry doesn't pay anything. His short stories are keeping us afloat.

SARAH
If you say so.

TABITHA
Steve and I are in this together.
It's gonna happen for us. You'll
see.

Sarah decides to let the matter drop. She shakes her head ruefully at her daughter.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - EVENING

Tabitha returns home with Naomi and steps into a trailer filled with darkness.

She looks at the BED, expecting to see Stephen curled up under the covers. It's EMPTY.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM

Tabitha pads in quietly to find Stephen hunched over his typewriter, fast asleep. She lightly shakes his shoulder.

TABITHA
Steve? Honey, it's time for bed.

Her foot hits something that clinks noisily. A beer bottle goes rolling across the floor. Stephen isn't asleep. He's passed out.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MORNING

Stephen comes to. The room is bathed in sunlight. He shields his eyes; accidentally hits an empty beer bottle on the desk, sending it crashing to the ground. He groans miserably.

INT. KITCHENETTE

Tabitha makes breakfast; her displeasure obvious. Stephen gingerly makes his way towards her.

STEPHEN
Mornin'.

TABITHA
Good morning.
(tense beat)
Looks like you had quite a party
last night.

STEPHEN

I was having trouble writing.

TABITHA

I'm surprised you remember.

Stephen becomes surly.

STEPHEN

Give me a break, Tab. I didn't drink that much.

TABITHA

You were passed-out. With the rate you're drinkin' you'll be dead by the time you're twenty-five.

Stephen suddenly explodes in frustration.

STEPHEN

What do you care what happens to me?

TABITHA

Excuse me??

STEPHEN

I'm just a no-good bum who can barely take care of his family, right??

TABITHA

You sure are good at feelin' sorry for yourself this morning.

STEPHEN

Tab, listen--

He tries to take her arm but she shrugs him off.

TABITHA

You listen. I don't care if you never publish another story ever again. I don't care if we have to live in this trailer for the rest of our goddamn lives, as long as you're a good husband and a good father, and you're good to yourself.

She takes hold of Stephen's face, forcing him to focus on her. She's never been more serious.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 I will support your writing and
 your dreams, but I won't support
 you being a drunk.

Stephen grows petulant.

STEPHEN
 Then maybe you'd be better off
 without me!

He shakes free of her and makes for the door.

TABITHA
 Stephen! WAIT!

He grabs his jacket and heads out the door, slamming it
 behind him.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Well shit.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

The diviest of all dive bars; a place for serious drinkers
 only. Stephen slams back shots of JACK DANIELS amidst the
 other rowdy revelers.

R.F.
 WOO-weeeee! That's what I'm talkin'
 about!

Stephen turns around. R.F.'s standing behind him, a massive
 grin on his face.

STEPHEN
 R.F! My man! What're you doin'
 here?

R.F.
 Gettin' a buzz on, that's what I'm
 doin'. Didn't know a place like
 this would be your scene.

STEPHEN
 It is tonight.

R.F. motions to the bartender.

R.F.
 Rack 'em up, barkeep! We're just
 gettin' started!

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

The bar is hoppin'. **Lynard Skynard's "Free Bird"** blares from the jukebox. R.F. and Stephen are well and truly soused as Stephen tells R.F. about Kurt Barlow.

STEPHEN

Can you believe it? That son of a bitch, talkin' about me behind my back.

(beat)

Still, the guy's being published in Harper's. No wonder he thinks I'm a goddamn loser.

R.F.

Man, who gives a fuck what that preppie motherfucker thinks? He can keep his tweed jacket and his posh literary bullshit.

STEPHEN

You know what? You're right! Hey barkeep!

Stephen signals the bartender.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Another round!

A skanky-looking BARFLY gives R.F. the side-eye. R.F. sidles up to her.

R.F.

Hey, mama. How's about letting loose those cow udders? Daddy needs his milk.

BARFLY

Fuck off, asshole.

She throws a drink in his face. R.F. grabs the woman roughly.

R.F.

You don't wanna be doin' that to me, darlin'. I am a very dark man.

STEPHEN

(intervening)

R.F. Hey. It's all good, buddy...

Stephen tries to pull him away. R.F.'s gaze is still fixed on the woman, who stares at him with wide, frightened eyes. He breaks into a grin.

R.F.
 Hell, baby... I was just kiddin'
 around! Bartender, another drink
 for the lovely lady here.

R.F. throws a twenty dollar bill on the bar.

BARTENDER
 (unimpressed)
 All right, buddy. You've caused
 enough trouble. Go on... get outta
 here.

R.F.
 Gladly. This place is a fucking
 dump.

R.F. downs his shot and winks at the lady.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 Thanks for the free drink, doll.

EXT. DIVE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen and R.F. roll drunkenly out of the bar and head towards the Buick. Stephen stops suddenly. In front of him is an enormous SAINT BERNARD. It stares at Stephen with mean, glowing eyes.

The dog begins to growl as Stephen backs away.

STEPHEN
 Nice doggy...

The dog LUNGES. FOAM drips from its MOUTH. Stephen shields himself from the impact of the dog's bite when R.F. steps in between them.

R.F.
 Get outta here you crazy mutt! Go
 on! Get!!

The dog whimpers and runs away.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 (casually)
 Guess I have a way with animals.
 (beat)
 Come on. Let's get the fuck outta
 here.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BANGOR - MOMENTS LATER

A 31-foot tall statue of PAUL BUNYAN stands proudly by the side of the road, massive AXE slung over his shoulder. Stephen's Buick comes speeding past.

INT. BUICK

R.F. drives as Stephen sits bleary-eyed in the passenger seat. Ominous black clouds fill the skies. **Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away"** plays on the radio.

R.F. devours a cheeseburger as he drives. He looks out the window and gestures at the statue.

R.F.

Hey, Steve! What did Paul Bunyan say when he crapped his pants?

(beat)

It was an "axe-I-dent"!

Hysterical laughter from R.F. He flings the burger from the window. It slaps Paul Bunyan RIGHT IN THE FACE.

EXT. BUICK - MOMENTS LATER

The Buick comes to a stop at a red light. A **1958 RED PLYMOUTH FURY** pulls up beside them. Behind the wheel is a tough-looking GEARHEAD, his equally tough-looking BUDDY seated beside him.

The gearhead smirks at them. R.F. revs the engine.

INT. BUICK

STEPHEN

You're not seriously thinking of racing that guy??

R.F.

You're damn right I am.

STEPHEN

This car can barely do fifty miles an hour! You race that guy, it's gonna fall apart!

R.F. locks eyes with the driver. The gearhead's buddy leans over.

BUDDY
 (to R.F.)
 Eat shit, creep!

R.F.
 I eat shit for breakfast, and I
 wash it down with a cold glass of
fuck you.

The light turns GREEN. They PEEL OUT.

EXT. STREET

The two cars RACE SIDE BY SIDE down a SUBURBAN STREET.

INT. BUICK

STEPHEN
 OH MY GOOOOOD!

R.F.
 Yee-haw!!!!

EXT. STREET

The Buick SCREECHES around a corner. They've got the drop on the gearhead, but he's gaining.

INT. PLYMOUTH

BUDDY
 He's gaining on us, man!

The gearhead casts a concerned look in his REARVIEW MIRROR.

EXT. STREET

The Plymouth SWERVES next to the Buick. They're NECK AND NECK.

R.F chooses decisive action and SLAMS the Buick into the side of the Plymouth! The Plymouth wobbles as the driver tries to take back control.

INT. PLYMOUTH

GEARHEAD
 WHAT THE FUCK??

INT. BUICK

STEPHEN
 WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?? I
NEED THIS CAR!

R.F.
 What you need Steve is a PAIR OF
BALLS!!

EXT. STREET

The Buick RAMS the PLYMOUTH, sending it CAREENING OFF THE ROAD!

INT. PLYMOUTH

SCREAMS from the gearhead and his buddy. The gearhead tries to right the wheel. The Plymouth lands in a DITCH.

INT. BUICK

Maniacal laughter from R.F as they drive off. Stephen looks back at the Plymouth; watches as the driver gets out to inspect the damage.

The gearhead kicks his tires in a rage. His buddy gives them the finger.

Stephen shrinks back in his seat, traumatized.

R.F.
 Man! Wasn't that something! We sure showed those shitters what we can do!

He takes out his flask and drinks; notes Stephen's pale, frightened face.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 Come on, Steve! Where's your sense of adventure?

STEPHEN
 Stop the car. I'm going to be sick.

R.F.
 Stop your bitchin'. You'll be fine.

Stephen rolls down the window and SPEWS out the side. He pulls his head back in. R.F. offers him the flask.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Have some of this. As my old man used to say, the only cure for a hangover is to keep drinkin'.

Stephen shakes his head.

STEPHEN

I've had enough.

R.F.'s tone abruptly changes.

R.F.

Are we going to have a problem here, Stephen?

STEPHEN

Are you serious?

R.F.

I'm as serious as a heart attack, my friend.

He shoves the flask closer to Stephen.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Drink, or I'll run this shit box right off the road.

Stephen reluctantly takes the flask; manages a small sip.

R.F. (CONT'D)

MORE!

He takes a larger mouthful and grimaces.

R.F. (CONT'D)

When are you gonna learn, Steve?

STEPHEN

What are you talkin' about?

R.F.

I'm talkin' about your shitty life, man! You could do anything you wanted to if you weren't tied down.

STEPHEN

I have responsibilities. I-I have--

R.F.

(mimicking Stephen)

"I have responsibilities!

(MORE)

R.F. (CONT'D)

I have a wife and a baby and
another one on the waaaaaaay!
Waaaaaaahhhhh!!!"

STEPHEN

You just don't get it 'cause you
don't have a family!

R.F.

Oh, and like you're the father of
the year? Face it... you're just
like your old man. Trapped and
lookin' for a way out.

STEPHEN

That's not true!

R.F.

Hey Steve... watch this.

R.F. takes his hands off the steering. As the car veers from
the road Stephen frantically makes a grab for the wheel.

STEPHEN

Jesus Christ!! ARE YOU TRYIN' TO
KILL US??

R.F. takes the wheel again. He calmly surveys the road ahead
and starts singing...

R.F.

*Baby, can you dig your maaaaan? He's
a righteous man... baby, can you
dig your maaaaan??*

He SLAMS DOWN on the ACCELERATOR. The Buick SCREAMS down the
HIGHWAY at an INSANE SPEED.

Something twigs in Stephen. He looks at R.F. Something isn't
right.

STEPHEN

Who are you?

R.F. cackles.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Who are you?? WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM
ME???

R.F.

I'm your guardian angel, Steve, and
I'm gonna take you away from all
this.

R.F. SLAMS DOWN on the accelerator. Stephen SCREAMS.

STEPHEN
OH MY GOD!! STOP!!!!

R.F. laughs crazily. Stephen looks at him in horror. His eyes are as RED as FIRE.

R.F.
BUCKLE UP, STEVIE!!!!

Stephen HOLDS ON FOR DEAR LIFE as the car CAREENS off the road and SMASHES into a TRAFFIC LIGHT as we--

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. BUICK - MOMENTS LATER

Darkness. Stephen lies slumped over the steering wheel. He comes to with a gasp.

STEPHEN
HUH!?!?

He flinches in pain; touches his forehead. His hand comes away bloody. He looks around. The car is empty. He's confused. Where the hell is R.F.?

EXT. BUICK

Stephen gets out and looks around. A MOTORIST stops his car and gets out.

MOTORIST
Hey! You okay?

Stephen quickly makes up a story.

STEPHEN
Yeah, I... I just thought I saw a cat.

MOTORIST
A cat??

STEPHEN
Ayuh. On the road.

MOTORIST
You want an ambulance?

STEPHEN

No. I'm okay.

The motorist gives Stephen a skeptical look. He's about to leave when Stephen asks him a question.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Hey, uh... did you happen to see anyone else around here?

MOTORIST

What do you mean?

STEPHEN

I mean, was there someone else, another guy, who was, I don't know... running away or something?

MOTORIST

You think someone ran in front of your car?

STEPHEN

No, I think someone was in my car.

MOTORIST

(concerned)

You sure you don't need a doctor?

STEPHEN

No, no.

(beat)

I'm okay.

The motorist gives Stephen a look like he's crazy. Stephen's starting to suspect that maybe he is.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - LATER

The sound of an approaching engine. The Buick comes into view, headlights sweeping across the front of the trailer. Tabitha watches anxiously from the window as Stephen stumbles from the car.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE

Stephen quietly enters. Tabitha stands with her back to him; pretends to be fixated on washing dishes.

STEPHEN

Tab?

(beat)

Tab, I'm sorry...

She whips around.

TABITHA

Where the hell have you been?! I've been worried sick, AND I had to cancel my shift!

STEPHEN

I kinda lost track of time...

Tabitha notices the cut on Stephen's forehead. Her tone shifts from outrage to concern.

TABITHA

What in God's name happened to you?

STEPHEN

I had a little fender bender. The car's fine. It's just a scrape.

TABITHA

And what about you? Are you fine?

Stephen looks helplessly at his wife. Tabitha searches her husband's blood-shot eyes.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Goddamnit, Steve. You look like you've seen the devil.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tabitha dabs at Stephen's forehead with antiseptic.

STEPHEN

Owww!

TABITHA

Don't be such a baby.

She continues cleaning the wound. Stephen proceeds cautiously.

STEPHEN

Tab... have you ever, uh, seen something that wasn't there?

TABITHA
What're you talkin' about?

STEPHEN
I'm talking about something, you
know, like a hallucination.

Tabitha looks at her husband with a mix of concern and
amusement.

TABITHA
You been seein' stuff, Steve?

He looks down, ashamed. Tabitha lifts his chin with her hand.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
You can tell me. You can tell my
anything.

STEPHEN
It's nothin'. Probably just the
booze.

TABITHA
That's what I thought.

Tabitha goes back to cleaning the wound.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
I'm worried about you.

STEPHEN
I'll be fine. I'm just under a lot
of pressure.

TABITHA
So am I, Steve. Sometimes I think
you forget there are two writers in
this house, not just one. I've got
dreams too, you know.

Stephen frowns. She's right.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry.

Tabitha takes his face in her hands.

TABITHA
I have so much faith in you.
(beat)
Don't let me down.

Stephen wraps his arms around her.

STEPHEN

You know something? You're the toughest broad I know.

Tabitha finally smiles.

TABITHA

My Daddy didn't name me after a warship for nothin'.

EXT. HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen steps out of the front entrance as students stream around him.

He stops to light a cigarette. Looking up he sees Sondra waiting by the curb. Stephen watches from a distance; thinks about going over and talking to her. He's just about to make his move when a STATION WAGON pulls up.

The door swings open. Inside is a severe-looking woman wearing a CONSERVATIVE BLACK DRESS with UNRULY HAIR. From the dashboard hangs a **CRUCIFIX**. On the bumper bar is a sticker: **HAVE YOU FOUND JESUS?**

The woman calls out impatiently.

SONDRA'S MOTHER

Come along, Sondra. I haven't got all day.

Sondra quickly ducks into the car. Her mother gives Stephen a withering glare as they drive off. Stephen watches them go; another idea forming in his head.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - NIGHT

Stephen sits at the typewriter, thinking. Next to the typewriter is a bottle of bourbon. He looks at it, looks at the page, then--

R.F.

Too early for a night cap?

Stephen lets out a SCREAM of surprise. His chair goes FLYING back and he hits the floor, HARD. R.F. leans over him and laughs.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Holy shit! Look at you! You look like you're about to crap your pants!!

Stephen struggles to catch his breath.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Aww, don't be sore. Just thought I'd give ya a little scare. I thought you liked bein' scared.

STEPHEN

Get the fuck outta here.

R.F.

That ain't no way to talk to a friend.

STEPHEN

You're not my friend. I don't even know if you're real.

R.F.

If I'm not real, then how am I here?

STEPHEN

You're here because I'm going insane.

R.F.

Brother, you're not going insane... you've been insane.

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT (STEPHEN'S MEMORY)

Stephen and R.F. play pool together the night they met.

JUMP CUT - SAME SHOT - (ALTERED FLASHBACK) -- suddenly it's ONLY STEPHEN at the pool table, playing against himself.

CUT TO:

R.F. reaches over the bar and grabs the BOTTLE OF BOURBON from the well.

JUMP CUT - SAME SHOT - (ALTERED FLASHBACK) -- it's STEPHEN taking the BOURBON from the well and hiding it in his jacket.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - RESUMING

Stephen is distressed by this revelation. He VOMITS in the laundry sink. R.F. winces. Gross.

Stephen wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

STEPHEN
Other people saw you.

R.F.
No... they didn't.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (STEPHEN'S MEMORY)

The BARFLY throws her drink in R.F.'s face.

JUMP CUT - SAME SHOT - (ALTERED FLASHBACK) -- it's STEPHEN's face being dowsed in booze.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - RESUMING

STEPHEN
Why are you doing this?

R.F.
You mean why are you doing this.

STEPHEN
So what are you telling me? That I've got a split personality?

R.F.
Let's just say I'm your better half. The dark half. The part that knows how to cut loose and have a good time. The part that doesn't mind getting a little blood on his hands...

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY (STEPHEN'S MEMORY)

The RABBIT comes out of the clearing. Stephen watches in horror as R.F. aims and SHOTS.

JUMP CUT - SAME SHOT - (ALTERED FLASHBACK) -- it's STEPHEN's gun pointed at the RABBIT. He FIRES.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - RESUMING

Stephen buries his face in his hands at the thought of the dead rabbit.

STEPHEN
Oh God! OH GOD!!

R.F.

Don't be so dramatic, Steve. So you like a drink every now and then. So what? There's no crime in that. Look around you. This place is a fucking dump. It's no wonder you drink. All this pressure is killing you. I'm here to save you.

STEPHEN

I don't need saving.

R.F.

You're hurting my feelings.

STEPHEN

How do you think I feel? I thought you were a real person!

R.F.

I am real. I'm as real as you. Whenever you need me, I'm always there. All you have to do is pick me up off the shelf.

R.F. picks up the bottle of bourbon from the desk; waves it in Stephen's face.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Now... how about we have another drink?

Stephen stares at the bottle, a rage of conflict brewing inside him. R.F. raises an eyebrow at him. What's it gonna be?

INT. CLASSROOM, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen teaches his class. His suit is slightly askew; he speaks with a tremble in his voice.

STEPHEN

The character of Count Dracula is what we call a "paradox." A paradox is something that has contradictory qualities, that can be two things at once. Dracula may be a monster, but he is also a man...

His lesson is interrupted by an announcement from the OFFICE.

P.A. (O.S.)
 Attention please... there is a
 phone call for Mister King in the
 administration office... Mister
 King, please make your way to the
 office....

A flicker of concern on Stephen's face.

STEPHEN
 (to students)
 Excuse me.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen grabs the phone from the waiting RECEPTIONIST.

STEPHEN
 Hello?

He hears crying from the other end.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
 Tabby? What is it? What's wrong?

TABITHA (O.S.)
 (beat)
Oh... Stephen...

INT. BUICK - LATER

Stephen drives, stoney-faced, while Tabitha sits beside him, teary-eyed. Naomi grizzles from the backseat.

EXT. MAINE GENERAL HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

The Buick pulls up in the parking lot of Maine General Hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Stephen and Tabitha walk in. Stephen's mother, Ruth, is propped up in bed. She's awake but looks weak, her face pale and drawn.

Tabitha approaches first, Naomi in her arms, as Stephen lags behind, looking shell shocked.

TABITHA
 (consoling)
 Hey Ruth.

RUTH
 What's this? You didn't have to
 come all this way.

TABITHA
 (to Naomi)
 Say hello to Grandma...

Naomi reaches for Ruth. She takes her in her arms. As they
 cuddle Ruth's eyes lock on Stephen's. He doesn't know what to
 say. He's overwhelmed with emotion.

STEPHEN
 Ma...

Ruth tries to keep the conversation light.

RUTH
 Stevie, hand me my cigarettes,
 would you?

Stephen and Tabitha exchange a concerned glance.

STEPHEN
 I don't think that's such a good
 idea.

RUTH
 (beat)
 I don't think it really matters
 anymore, does it?

Stephen tries to hold it together. His body shakes with the
 effort.

INT. HALLWAY, HOSPITAL

Stephen and Tabitha listen to the doctor as he describes
 Ruth's condition.

DOCTOR
 It's cancer. Started in the uterus.
 It's very aggressive but we do have
 options. We're going to begin
 treatment right away. We'll make
 her as comfortable as possible.

Stephen can barely take in the words. He stares off blankly
 into the distance; fighting back a storm of emotions.

TABITHA
 (to doctor)
 Thank you.

The doctor leaves. Tabitha puts a hand on Stephen's arm.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 Are you okay, hon?

STEPHEN
 (beat)
 Maybe I need a minute.

Tabitha's heart breaks for her husband. She tries to stay strong.

TABITHA
 Okay. I'll take Naomi downstairs
 for a soda. You want anything?

Stephen manages a smile.

STEPHEN
 No thanks.

Tabitha kisses her husband.

TABITHA
 It's going to be okay.

She takes Naomi down the corridor. Stephen watches her go, grappling with how things can fall apart so easily.

INT. RESTROOM, HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen storms into the restroom, trying to contain his panic.

He turns on the faucet; splashes cold water on his face. He looks back up at the mirror and sees R.F. standing behind him, all faux concern.

R.F.
 How you doing, buddy?

Stephen remains stoney-faced. He turns off the faucet.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 Tough break. First your Dad leaves
 you, now your Mom. I guess some
 people just aren't meant to have a
 family.

Stephen whirls around and pushes R.F. against the stall wall. R.F. meets his steely gaze with one of his own.

R.F. (CONT'D)
Easy, big fellah. I'm your friend.

STEPHEN
You're not my friend. YOU'RE the goddamn cancer! YOU!!

Stephen gives him one last shove before letting him go. R.F. straightens up, adjusting his scuffed collar.

R.F.
You should be nice to me, Steve. I'm the only real friend you got. Mom's on her way out, and it's only a matter of time before Tabby sees what a loser you really are. When everyone else is gone, I'll still be here.

STEPHEN
I don't need you.

R.F.
(beat)
Try getting through this without me.

Stephen gives R.F. a reproachful look before exiting.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAYS LATER

Stephen sits in a chair by his mother's bedside. He's reading "**The Haunting of Hill House**" by Shirley Jackson. Ruth stirs awake and sees her son; notes the book in his hands.

RUTH
You always were a bookworm. Just like your father.

A thin smile from Stephen.

STEPHEN
I thought you said we didn't have anything in common.

RUTH
Well, that wasn't exactly true. I didn't want anything I said to put you off your writing.

STEPHEN
My writing?

RUTH
Suppose there's no harm in tellin' you now. I ain't one to be taking secrets to the grave. Truth is your father tried to make it as a writer too.

Stephen can't believe what he's hearing.

STEPHEN
My father wanted to be a writer?

RUTH
Never got any further than a few short stories. As soon as he got rejected he lost interest.

An awkward silence. Stephen can barely comprehend what she's saying.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Who knows? Maybe that sorry son of a bitch is where you get all your talent from.

CLOSE on Stephen as he grapples with this revelation.

INT. HOSPITAL COFFEE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen approaches the cashier, looking flustered.

STEPHEN
Gimme a pack of Marlboros.

The cashier puts the cigarettes on the counter. Stephen pulls out his wallet, stares at the cigarettes as we--

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. THE KING HOUSE - DAY

TODDLER STEPHEN (2) stands hanging on to the edge of his crib. He surveys the living room. A man is sitting in a sofa chair; his father, Donald. He smokes a cigarette and appears deep in thought.

Stephen's POV as Donald looks over at his son for a brief moment before stubbing out his cigarette in an ashtray.

DONALD
 (calling out)
 Ruth! I'm goin' to get some more
 cigarettes!

RUTH (O.S.)
 Okay, hon. Can you pick up some
 milk?

DONALD
 Milk? Sure.

Donald pulls on a jacket and puts on a hat. He looks down pensively at his son.

DONALD (CONT'D)
 See you round, kid.

He leaves. Stephen starts to cry, his shrieks getting LOUDER and LOUDER as we--

END FLASHBACK.

INT. HOSPITAL COFFEE SHOP - RESUMING

Stephen stares dumbly at the cigarettes.

CASHIER
 (off cigarettes)
 You still want those?

Stephen nods glumly. He hands over a twenty.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Stephen walks down the corridor towards his mother's room. There's a commotion outside. NURSES run back and forth.

Stephen drops the cigarettes. He breaks into a jog; reaches his mother's room as a NURSE gives him a sad look and shakes her head.

He looks in, sees his mother lying peacefully with her eyes closed as the nurses unhook her IV.

CLOSE on Stephen's devastated face.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Stephen wearing the same despondent look. It's his mother's funeral. Tabitha holds Stephen's hand as Naomi plays amongst the headstones.

Stephen listens silently as the priest reads the eulogy.

PRIEST

Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil...

Tabitha gives his hand a supportive squeeze. He tries to smile but can only manage a grimace. His world is shattered.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

The state fair. The bright colors of the rides compete with the cries of the barkers. Punters try their luck at gaming booths. A FERRIS WHEEL circles endlessly in the distance.

Stephen walks with Tabitha while she pushes Naomi in a stroller. Tabitha points out the lights of the MIDWAY.

TABITHA

Look Naomi! See the pretty colors!

Stephen glances over at the midway; sees a CLOWN holding a bunch of BRIGHTLY COLORED BALLOONS. The clown leers silently at him. R.F. appears beside Stephen.

R.F.

What the fuck is that clown lookin'
at?

TABITHA

Steve? Are you okay?

Stephen quickly snaps back.

STEPHEN

Yeah. I'm fine.

TABITHA

(sympathetic)
We can go home if you want to.

STEPHEN

No. It's fine. Naomi's having fun.

R.F.
 (sarcastic)
 Good for Naomi.

TABITHA
 I just thought this might help take
 your mind off things.

STEPHEN
 I know. It's good. I'm enjoying
 myself.

R.F.
I know what would make this
 enjoyable.

Stephen looks at R.F. with exasperation.

STEPHEN
 (to Tabitha)
 Hey listen... I'll be right back,
 okay?

TABITHA
 Steve--

STEPHEN
 One minute. I just need to take a
 leak.

Stephen breaks away from his family and moves towards the BIG
 TOP. He trots behind the tent; looking cautiously behind him.
 He removes a FLASK from his jacket and takes a drink.

KURT
 Steve!

Kurt Barlow appears from around the corner.

KURT (CONT'D)
 I saw you on the midway. How you
 doin'?

STEPHEN
 Uh, okay.

KURT
 Great Fair this year.

STEPHEN
 Sure.

KURT
 (off flask)
 Whatcha got there?

Stephen looks down at the flask; instinctively pockets it.

KURT (CONT'D)
 (condescending)
 Hey... it's okay. You don't have to worry. I won't tell anyone. I get it. We all enjoy a little nip every now and then. But if anyone else saw you, well, I don't know how to say this... you could get a reputation.

Stephen's eyes burn with fury. He steps up to Kurt.

STEPHEN
 Is that a threat?

KURT
 (confused)
 What? No! I said I wasn't going to tell anyone!

STEPHEN
 You've got a lot to say about everything, don't ya Kurt? You and everyone else. You're nothing but a bunch of judgmental hypocrites who can't mind your own damn business.

KURT
 Steve, listen -- I'm just trying to help you out here.

Stephen gets in Kurt's face.

STEPHEN
 You breathe one word of this to anyone, and I swear to you, I will come after you with a goddamn baseball bat.

KURT
 (alarmed)
 Steve--!

STEPHEN
 (mocking voice)
 Steeeeeeeve!!

Kurt regards Stephen with wide, terrified eyes. Stephen's tone suddenly changes.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
 Hey, man! I'm just kiddin'!
 Seriously, thanks for lookin' out
 for me. I appreciate it. This can
 be just our little secret, okay?

Kurt nods quickly.

KURT
 Yes. Of course.

STEPHEN
 Good man.

Stephen walks off, leaving a clearly traumatized Kurt standing alone. He walks out from behind the big top and sees his wife. She's CROUCHED OVER on the ground, a small group of people gathered around her excitedly. Stephen rushes over to her.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
 Tab, what's wrong? What happened??

She looks at him with wild, startled eyes.

TABITHA
 My water just broke.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM, MAINE GENERAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Tabitha lies on a hospital bed, her legs up in stirrups. Doctors and nurses mill around as her face contorts with pain. Stephen holds her hand tightly.

DOCTOR
 All right now, one last push--

Tabitha bears down and SCREAMS. A baby CRIES.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 Here he is! Mister and Mrs. King,
 you've got a baby boy!

TABITHA
 A boy!! Stephen, it's a boy!!

Stephen looks at his son in wonder. Tears fill his eyes.

After the death of his mother, it's a bittersweet moment.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - DAYS LATER

Stephen sits at his typewriter trying to write. He's interrupted by the sound of a baby crying. He sighs in frustration as R.F. appears beside him.

R.F.
Goddamn. That new baby sure is a drag.

STEPHEN
(to R.F.)
Don't you ever shut up??

Tabitha appears at the door.

TABITHA
(to Stephen)
What was that, hon?

Stephens turns to Tabitha.

STEPHEN
Hm?

TABITHA
You said somethin'.

STEPHEN
It's nothing. I'm just... talking a scene out in my head.

TABITHA
(skeptical)
Oh. Okay.

Tabitha leaves. R.F. gazes after Tabitha lustfully.

R.F.
I'd like to talk her right outta that dress.

Stephen keeps trying to type but the baby's cries get louder and louder. He throws up his hands in frustration.

STEPHEN
Goddamn it!

INT. KITCHENETTE

Stephen wanders out of the laundry and walks over to the crib. He tries to hide his annoyance.

STEPHEN

What's wrong, baby Joe?

JOE lets out a wail as Stephen picks him up. Tabitha sits at the kitchen table, trying unsuccessfully to scoop baby food into Naomi's mouth.

TABITHA

He's just tired.

Stephen bounces Joe up and down in an attempt to placate him. Baby Joe promptly SPEWS UP all over Stephen's shirt.

STEPHEN

Awww *Jesus*...

Tabitha sighs.

TABITHA

That's just great.

She puts down Naomi's spoon; heads into the kitchen for a wash cloth.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Here...

She hands the washcloth to Stephen and takes the baby. Stephen dabs ineffectively at the stain.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

I thought you were writing.

STEPHEN

It's kinda hard when the baby's cryin'.

Stephen takes a cigarette out of his pocket and lights it.

TABITHA

Goddamn it, Steve. I thought you were giving up!

STEPHEN

Sorry.

TABITHA

Not around the baby. Please.

R.F. appears by the refrigerator.

R.F.

Don't let her talk to you like that. This is your house.

STEPHEN
 (to R.F.)
 Stay outta this, would you?

Tabitha's jaw drops.

TABITHA
 What did you say to me??

STEPHEN
 (frustrated)
 I'm not talking to you!

TABITHA
 No, you're not. You're yelling.

STEPHEN
 (exploding)
 God, I can't stand this anymore! I
 NEED TO GET SOME WORK DONE!

TABITHA
 THEN GO DO IT! This isn't my fault,
 Steve! Babies cry! I'm sorry it's
 such a damn inconvenience to you!!

R.F. slides up beside Stephen. In his hands is an AXE.

R.F.
 Stephen, I swear to God. If you
 don't shut this bitch up... I will!

R.F. RAISES the axe above his head. HE SWINGS!

Stephen LEAPS for Tabitha!

STEPHEN
TABBY!!! LOOK OUT!!!!

Stephen THROWS her to the ground; shields her body with his own as the AXE comes down.

Then-- NOTHING. Stephen and Tabitha are lying on the ground. R.F. has disappeared, along with the axe. Tabitha begins to struggle.

TABITHA
 Let! Me! Go!!

She breaks free from Stephen and leaps up. She looks at her husband with incomprehension as Naomi cries louder.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
 WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU????

Stephen's face is red; his eyes wide and startled.

STEPHEN

Tab! I'm sorry! I thought I saw--

TABITHA

Saw what??

Stephen has no answer. Sweat drips from his forehead. He tries to catch his breath as his wife stares at him with utter bewilderment.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Stephen stands in front of the mirror; looks at his red, startled face. He opens the bathroom cabinet and takes out a bottle of EXCEDRIN; pops a few and chews.

He closes the cabinet. Written on the mirror in BRIGHT RED CRAYON is the word **REDRUM**.

Stephen stares at the word, eyes wide with confusion and terror. He grabs some TOILET PAPER; quickly wipes the word away with a trembling hand. Red crayon SMEARS all over the mirror, looking for all the world like BLOOD. R.F. appears behind him.

R.F.

Typical. Never doing what needs to be done.

STEPHEN

(defiant)

I am doing what needs to be done.

I'm writing.

He throws the paper in the trash and walks out.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Stephen sits down at the typewriter; lights a cigarette. He puts his trembling fingers on the keys; takes a deep breath. He's about to start writing when--

TABITHA (O.S.)

Stephen.

Stephen's shoulders slump. He buries his face in his hands; emits a long, drawn out sigh.

STEPHEN

What??

Tabitha stands nervously in the doorway.

TABITHA

(beat)

We need to talk.

Stephen lifts his head and stares at her with deranged eyes, a creepy grin on his face.

STEPHEN

Do we?

He slowly gets up. Tabitha takes a defensive step back.

TABITHA

I'm just... concerned.

STEPHEN

(taunting)

You're concerned?

Tabitha treads softly.

TABITHA

I know you're upset about your Mom. So am I. But you've been acting strange for a long time, even before she got sick.

STEPHEN

Is that a fact?

TABITHA

(nervous beat)

I was thinking, maybe, you should see a doctor...

STEPHEN

Of course you were! There's always something wrong with Stephen! It's always Stephen's fault!!! Why can't you just be happy, Steve? Why can't you just pull yourself together??

TABITHA

Stephen, please. Don't do this. Just calm down. I'm trying to help you.

STEPHEN

Maybe I'm upset because I'm trying to get some work done, AND NO ONE WILL LET ME CONCENTRATE!

Tears fill Tabitha's eyes.

TABITHA

I don't know how much longer I can do this.

Stephen laughs cruelly.

STEPHEN

Well, isn't that just a kick in the nuts? I mean, where would Steve be without Tab and the kids to weigh him down??

He sits down; rolls another piece of paper into the typewriter. He starts typing.

Tabitha takes a deep breath.

TABITHA

I'm taking the kids.

Stephen stops typing. Tabitha presses on.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

I'm taking them to my Mom's... just for a night or two. That way you can have some space, you know... to think things through.

R.F. appears next to Stephen. He laughs.

R.F.

Checkmate.

Stephen slowly stands, his eyes glinting with malice. Tabitha takes a few steps back.

STEPHEN

Well. That's just fucking great isn't it. After all I've done. After how hard I've worked. I'm trying to give us a better life. I'm trying to get us out of this fucking hell hole. And all for what? FOR NOTHING!!

Stephen SCATTERS the pages of his unfinished manuscript across the floor.

TABITHA

Stephen! What are you doing??

R.F. bursts into gales of laughter.

R.F.

Whoa! This is gettin' good!

Stephen proceeds to TRASH the laundry room.

STEPHEN

All our hopes!! All our dreams!!!
FOR NOTHING!!!

Stephen PICKS UP his TYPEWRITER; hoists it OVER his SHOULDER.

Tabitha screams.

TABITHA

STEPHEN!! DON'T DO IT!!!!!!

He HURLS IT out the WINDOW. The typewriter SMASHES to the ground outside.

Tabitha bursts into tears.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

NOW YOU'VE DONE IT!!!!

She runs from the room. Stephen screams after her.

STEPHEN

Fine! FUCKING GO!! YOU'RE BETTER
OFF WITHOUT ME ANYWAY!!! YOU ALL
ARE!!!

In the next room Tabitha quickly packs a bag for the kids, bundles them under her arms and makes for the front door. She takes one last sad look around her home before leaving. The door slams shut. Tabitha is gone.

Stephen's shoulders slump. R.F. pats him on the back.

R.F.

I think it's time for a drink.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - NIGHT

Stephen and R.F. sit drinking in the trailer. **Alice Cooper's "No More Mister Nice Guy"** plays on the radio.

R.F.

How does it feel to be a free man?

STEPHEN

It feels pretty fuckin' good.

R.F.

Told ya.

Stephen becomes drunkenly contemplative.

STEPHEN

You know... I think my old man had the right idea. I used to be angry at him for leavin' us, but I'm not anymore. I don't blame him for not stickin' around. Nothing you do is good enough for anyone. Might as well be on your own.

R.F.

I knew you'd come round.

STEPHEN

So what do we do now?

R.F. holds up his beer bottle.

R.F.

We keep drinking.

The clink beer bottles, chug them back as we **SMASH CUT TO:**

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MORNING

Stephen is lying on the floor, asleep. He is surrounded by EMPTY BEER BOTTLES.

He comes to. Broken light shines through the windows of the trailer. He squints. The trailer is dead quiet. No music. No R.F. No baby crying. No Tabitha.

He stands up, looks around his broken home. His face fills with regret. What has he done?

INT. CLASSROOM, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Stephen stands at the front of a packed classroom. His eyes are red; his hair disheveled.

STEPHEN

One of the attractions of a horror story like "Dracula" is that it allows us to indulge in antisocial behavior. We get to experience what it feels like to be a monster without actually hurting anyone.

(MORE)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

This is what's known as
'catharsis.'

Stephen writes the word **CATHARSIS** on the board.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

For this reason horror stories
actually serve an important role in
society. They provide an outlet for
our darkest emotions, the ones we
would prefer to keep hidden from
the people around us...

INT. CORRIDOR - LATER

Stephen exits the classroom with his briefcase. Someone **SLAMS**
in to him: Sondra. She looks up at him, eyes wide and
alarmed.

STEPHEN

What's going on?

Stephen looks past her shoulder, sees the Means Girls
loitering innocently by the lockers. Stephen holds Sondra by
her shoulders.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

What happened?

Sondra hesitates; looks around in a panic. Stephen tries to
capture her attention.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Hey... it's okay. You can talk to
me.

Sondra trembles in his hands.

SONDRA

I hate them. They'll never leave me
alone.

STEPHEN

I'm going to talk to them--

SONDRA

NO! Please don't.

STEPHEN

We have to do something!

She leans in; speaks in a whisper.

SONDRA

I wish we could blow them all up.

She breaks free of his grasp and runs down the corridor. He looks after her, helpless. The Mean Girls shrug and walk away. Suddenly, something occurs to Stephen. An idea.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - LATER

Stephen bursts into the trailer, brimming with ideas. He throws down his briefcase; shuffles through a pile of magazines on the kitchen table. He finds the copy of **LIFE MAGAZINE** he was reading at the LAUNDROMAT. He opens it and finds the article:

TELEKINESIS: FACT OR FICTION?

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen PICKS UP HIS TYPEWRITER off the ground and dusts it off. A few of the keys are broken but it's nothing he can't fix.

He throws it under his arm and goes back inside.

INT. KITCHEN TABLE, DOUBLE WIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen sits at the table with the typewriter. He takes a TUBE OF SUPERGLUE and a BAG OF BUTTONS from Tabitha's SEWING KIT. He carefully GLUES a LARGE BUTTON on one of the broken keys; blows on it to make the glue dry quicker. He tries it out. The key WORKS. Stephen smiles triumphantly.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM, DOUBLE WIDE

Stephen bursts into the laundry carrying his newly repaired typewriter. He picks the pages off the floor, dusts them off and sits down.

He starts to write. He types FASTER and FASTER. As he does OBJECTS start to LEVITATE off the table. An ASHTRAY, the LAUNDRY DETERGENT, his PACK OF CIGARETTES. The FASTER he types the HIGHER they go. They HOVER above his head as he TYPES to the end of the page, then--

RIIIIIIP!!

Stephen TEARS the page triumphantly from the typewriter. The objects FALL BACK into place. He looks at the page, thrilled. There might be some life in this story yet.

He's about to get back into it when--

R.F.

What the fuck are you doin'?

Stephen doesn't respond. He keeps typing.

R.F. (CONT'D)

Hey. Asshole. You look at me when I'm talking to you.

Stephen still doesn't respond.

R.F. (CONT'D)

HEY!!

Stephen keeps typing.

STEPHEN

You're not here. You're not here because I don't want you to be.

R.F.

It doesn't work that way. You can't just wish me away, motherfucker. I'm not going anywhere.

Stephen stops typing. He turns to R.F. with a newfound strength.

STEPHEN

You've ruined me, R.F. You took everything from me. My family. My talent. My sanity. Well I'm getting it all back. This ends now.

Stephen goes back to writing. R.F. gives him a defiant look.

R.F.

We'll see about that.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen is deep in the writing zone when he smells something. He stops typing; sniffs the air. Then he hears it. The sound of CRACKLING.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER

Stephen walks out of the laundry. His face is immediately bathed in a RED, FIERY GLOW. The curtains of the trailer are in flames. The trailer is ON FIRE!

R.F. stands in the middle of the trailer, laughing like a maniac.

STEPHEN
WHAT DID YOU DO??????

R.F.
I'm settin' you free, prisoner!
BURN, BABY, BURN!!!

Stephen rushes to the kitchen and SNATCHES a POT from the stove top. He fills it with water, races back and DOUSES the curtains. They SMOLDER with BLACK SMOKE.

Stephen races back to the kitchen to refill the pot. He desperately throws the water on the remaining flames.

The fire is EXTINGUISHED. R.F. cackles amidst the chaos.

R.F. (CONT'D)
Wooo-weeeee! Nearly had you then, didn't I? We were this close to freedom. Oh well. There's always next time. Like they say, practice makes perfect.

Stephen advances on R.F, teeth gritted in rage.

STEPHEN
I want you OUT.OF.MY.HEAD.

TABITHA
Stephen?

He turns around. Tabitha is standing in the doorway, staring in horror at her husband. She looks at the carnage of her home. BEERS CANS are strewn all around the room. ASH TRAYS are overflowing. CURTAINS smoldering.

TABITHA (CONT'D)
I just... came back for some things.
(frightened beat)
What's going on? Who were you talking to??

STEPHEN
Nobody, just... myself...

Tabitha takes a cautious step back.

TABITHA
What do you mean you were talking to yourself?

R.F. advances on Tabitha.

R.F.
I've had just about enough of
you...

Stephen pushes him back.

STEPHEN
LEAVE HER ALONE!

Tabitha gives Stephen a look of bewilderment.

TABITHA
STEPHEN!! WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO??

Stephen looks at Tabitha imploringly.

STEPHEN
Tabby, please, I need help.

R.F.
You sure do.

Stephen grabs R.F. by the lapels; pushes him up against the wall.

STEPHEN
SHUT UP!!!!!!

This is too much for Tabitha. She flees. Stephen drops R.F. and gives chase.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Tabby! Please!!!

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER

Tabitha gets in the car, slams the door and takes off.

Stephen drops to his knees.

STEPHEN
Tabby, please!! DON'T LEAVE ME!!!

Her tail lights dim in the distance. Stephen hangs his head sadly.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER

Stephen walks back inside the trailer, head bowed, a defeated man. R.F. leans casually against the wall.

R.F.
That woman just ain't no good for
us.

Stephen emits a long, drawn out sigh.

STEPHEN
You know what, R.F?
(beat)
You're right.

R.F. eyes Stephen suspiciously.

R.F.
What are you sayin'?

STEPHEN
It's done. My marriage is over. And
this goddamn book. Who's going to
give a shit? A girl with
telekinetic powers? It's a bunch of
crap, just like the rest of my
books.

Stephen looks R.F. straight in the eye.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
I'm sayin' I give up.

R.F. slowly nods. The two men, separate but one, stare at
each other with resignation.

R.F.
It's about time.
(beat)
Let's hit the road.

INT. BUICK - MOMENTS LATER

The Buick SPEEDS down the highway.

R.F.
FREE AT LAST! FREE AT LAST! THANK
GOD ALMIGHTY, WE ARE FREE AT LAST!
I knew you'd come around. We can go
wherever we want. I say we head on
down to Florida. From now on it'll
be sand, skirts and scotch for us.

Stephen signals for a turn-off.

STEPHEN

Sounds good my man! But first we'll need supplies, am I right?

R.F.

Yeah. We've got a long drive ahead of us. Libations are in order.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - LATER

Stephen walks out of the store carrying a large DUFFEL BAG. He looks nervously towards the Buick. R.F. eyes him suspiciously; yells out the open window.

R.F.

Damn, man. What the hell did you buy?

STEPHEN

It's a long way to Florida!

Stephen puts the duffel bag in the TRUNK of the car and opens it. The bag is FULL of BEER. He takes one out and closes the trunk.

INT. BUICK

Stephen gets in and throws a beer over to R.F.

R.F.

Thanks, partner.

Stephen cracks open a beer himself, sculls it back and starts the engine.

STEPHEN

Florida, here we come!

INT. BUICK - NIGHT

The Buick cruises along the road. The highway is surrounded by thick, green woods. R.F. belches loudly. Stephen downs the last of his beer and chucks the can out the window.

STEPHEN

Man. I gotta take a piss.

He pulls off to the side of the road; kills the engine.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

This'll only take a minute.

He fumbles for the door and drunkenly staggers out.

R.F.
Take your time. Think I'll grab
myself another beer.

EXT. HIGHWAY

They both exit the Buick. Stephen, appearing suddenly sober, goes round to the back and opens the trunk. He UNZIPS the duffel bag. His hand plunges DEEP amongst the BEER CANS and grabs hold of something. He carefully pulls it out.

It's a SHOVEL.

He casts a cautious eye in R.F.'s direction. R.F. is seemingly oblivious to what he is doing. He stands by the side of the road, singing as he relieves himself.

R.F. (O.S.)
*Baby, can you dig your maaaaan...
he's a righteous man, tell me,
baby, can you dig your man...*

Stephen slowly approaches R.F. from behind and RAISES the shovel. He gets closer and closer, is about to swing when--

R.F. whips around, grabbing the shovel effortlessly with one hand!

R.F. (CONT'D)
You really thought I wouldn't see
you coming?
(beat)
You damn fool. I am you.

R.F. swiftly brings his elbow up to Stephen's face, knocking him to the ground. Stephen's consciousness fades as we--

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Deep amongst the trees. R.F. drags Stephen's body behind him, shovel slung over his shoulder.

R.J.
*Blue moooooon... you saw me
standing alooone...*

Stephen slowly comes to. He looks around wildly; tries to grab onto branches and bushes as they pass but can't quite manage it. R.F. notices he's awake.

R.F.
Come on, Steve! Sing it with me!
*Without a dream in my heaaaaaart,
without a love of my owwwwwwwn...*

R.F. throws the shovel down, dropping Stephen abruptly.

R.J.
This looks like a nice spot. Damn,
these woods are creepy. It's like
something out of a horror story,
huh?

Stephen moans a response. He frantically tries to crawl away.

R.F.
Where do you think you're going?

R.F. drags him back by the scruff of his shirt.

R.F. (CONT'D)
You're a real pain in the ass, you
know that? We were home free, and
you had to go and fuck it all up.
Again.

R.F. kicks Stephen in the stomach. Stephen rolls over, clutching his gut. R.F. picks up the shovel and starts digging.

R.F. (CONT'D)
We could have lived the good life.
The only thing stopping us was you.

Stephen attempts to stand but the pain is too great. He falls back down in the dirt as R.F. keeps digging.

R.F. (CONT'D)
So I'm gonna have to get rid of
you, buddy. Sorry, but you're
dragging us down.

R.F. grabs Stephen by the ankles; drags him over to the freshly dug hole as Stephen pleads for his life...

STEPHEN
Wait! You're right! I'm sorry!!!

R.F.
 (mocking)
 I'm sorrrrrry, R.F. I'm
SORRRRRRRRRY. Christ, Stephen - man
 the fuck up!! If you weren't such a
 pussy we wouldn't be in this
 goddamn situation.

R.F. THROWS him in the hole. Stephen lands face down; coughs
 up a mouthful of dirt. R.F. picks up the shovel and starts
 filling him in.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 You think you don't need me? Well,
 I don't need you.

Stephen tries to sit up. He gets a face full of dirt.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 Look at you. You're pathetic.

He lays back down. He's given up hope. R.F. stops scooping
 dirt. He leans on the shovel; looks at Stephen accusingly.

R.F. (CONT'D)
No wonder your father left you.

Something fierce awakens in Stephen. He LEAPS UP like a
 ZOMBIE out of the grave; WRAPS HIS HANDS around R.F.'s THROAT
 and SQUEEZES. R.F. scrambles for Stephen's hands; tries to
 pull them off but they're too strong.

He HEAD BUTTS Stephen, sending him STAGGERING BACK. Stephen
 GRABS the SHOVEL; swings it WILDLY in R.F.'s direction. It
 connects. A thick SPRAY OF BLOOD pours from a wound on R.F.'s
 forehead. He staggers towards Stephen.

R.F. (CONT'D)
 I'm gonna kill you, you son of a
bitch.

STEPHEN
Think again.

Stephen SWINGS the shovel once more, knocking R.F.
 unconscious as we--

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. THE WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

R.F. comes to. He's lying in the makeshift grave. Stephen frantically shovels dirt over him as R.F. pleads for his life.

R.F.

Steve - come on, pal. I was just kidding around. Let's forget the whole thing, okay?? I'll leave you alone. You'll never see me again. I promise.

Stephen continues to shovel dirt onto R.F. He grunts with exertion as R.F. becomes frantic.

R.F. (CONT'D)

You think you can get rid of me?? You'll NEVER be rid of me! I'll always be with you! You can bury me, but you can't kill me. I'm part of you, just like I was part of your old man--

Stephen lifts the shovel HIGH above his head; brings it down with a resounding THWACK!

R.F. is finally silenced. Stephen stares at his lifeless body; throws the shovel down triumphantly.

STEPHEN

I'm not my father.

He turns to walk out of the woods. Suddenly, from behind him, the sound of LAUGHTER. Stephen stares in terror at the mound of dirt. It's moving. Stephen makes a run for it. He sprints through the trees, his clothes catching on overhanging branches, tearing at his skin.

R.F.'s laughter becomes god-like; omniscient. His voice echoes through the wilderness.

R.F.

I'll see you round, Steve. Sooner or later, I'll see you around...

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - MORNING

Stephen pulls up in the Buick and gets out. He's covered in dirt; his clothing ripped and torn. He takes the duffel bag from the back of the Buick and slams the trunk shut.

EXT. BEHIND THE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Stephen opens the beer cans one by one. He pours the contents out into the grass and throws the cans into the trash.

EXT. DOUBLE WIDE

A car pulls up. It's Tabitha in her mother's VW. She gives the trailer a look of resignation before killing the engine. She gets out.

INT. DOUBLE WIDE

Tabitha steps inside; looks around apprehensively.

TABITHA

Hello?

No answer.

INT. BATHROOM

Tabitha opens the bathroom cabinet; starts putting toiletries into an overnight bag. She glances through the window and sees Stephen outside. She watches as he empties the beer cans into the ground. Her face softens.

EXT. BEHIND THE TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

Tabitha walks behind the trailer; regards Stephen curiously from a distance. Stephen is so absorbed in the task he doesn't even notice her.

TABITHA

Hey.

Stephen looks up; sees Tabitha. He looks down again, ashamed.

STEPHEN

Hey.

He continues with the task at hand. Tabitha watches him for a moment, undecided. Finally she kneels down beside him; starts helping him empty the beer cans.

TABITHA

My mother always said I was the
most stubborn girl she ever knew.
(MORE)

TABITHA (CONT'D)

"Tabby," she'd say, "you're like a dog with a bone. You never know when to quit."

Stephen looks at his wife with enormous affection.

STEPHEN

Tab... it's over. I promise. No more drinking.

TABITHA

It's not over. It's something you're going to have to work at every single day of your life.

Stephen gives his wife a look of resolve.

STEPHEN

I can do it.

Tears brim in Stephen's eyes. Tabitha tries to remain stoic. She gestures to the remaining beer cans.

TABITHA

Go on. I'll finish this.

Stephen looks at Tabitha quizzically. She smiles.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Don't you have a novel to write?

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - LATER

The Ramones "Blitzkrieg Bop" revs up as Stephen gets back to work.

MONTAGE:

-- LAUNDRY ROOM: Stephen pounds the keys like a madman. He's gonna lick this sucker.

-- DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER: Stephen and Tabitha lie in bed. Tabitha is reading pages of the manuscript. Stephen watches nervously. She gives him a thumbs up. He smiles with relief.

-- TEACHERS LOUNGE: Stephen sits reading the LIFE MAGAZINE article about TELEKINESIS. He takes notes. KURT enters and gives him a wary smile. Stephen smiles back happily. He's in a better place now.

-- HAMPDEN ACADEMY: Posters are going up for the PROM. Stephen looks at them, inspired.

-- LAUNDRY ROOM: The end run. Stephen types and types, until...

He pulls the last sheet out of the typewriter and throws it down on the manuscript pile.

He turns the manuscript over; exposing the title page.

"CARRIE"

By Stephen King

He looks at the page with satisfaction. "CARRIE" is complete.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Stephen walks down the street in an enormous coat, bundled up against the chill. A thick package is in his hand. He pauses before a MAIL BOX and reads the address.

**ATTENTION: BILL THOMPSON, EDITOR
DOUBLEDAY
1745 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

He takes a deep breath, opens the mailbox, and puts the package in the slot.

EXT. YARD, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - DAY

Sondra sits by herself on a wooden bench, picking at a sandwich. Stephen walks outside; catches a glimpse of her. He makes a split-second decision then decides to walk over.

STEPHEN

Hey.

Sondra eyes him cautiously.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

We haven't been properly introduced. I'm Steve. Uh, Mister King. I teach English. You're not in any of my classes, are you?

Sondra shakes her head.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

What's your name?

SONDRA

Sondra.

STEPHEN
Mind if I sit down?

Sondra gives a small nod. Stephen takes a seat, looks around at the other students playing in the yard.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
This shit's hard, isn't it?

Sondra is startled by his use of an expletive.

SONDRA
What??

STEPHEN
You know. This. High school. Life. I wish I could tell you it gets better, but it doesn't. Not really. One thing I know, you've gotta fight life every step of the way. Don't let it gang up on you.

Sondra frowns; doesn't say anything.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
I'll tell you what. I'm gonna keep fightin' this world if you will too. If you ever need a friend, someone to talk to, you come find me, okay?

Sondra finally smiles.

SONDRA
Okay.

Stephen nods. He spies a ruffled paperback beside her:
"Valley of the Dolls" by Jacqueline Susann.

STEPHEN
And one more thing...

Sondra looks at him expectantly. Stephen motions to the book.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)
Don't stop reading.

INT. BATHROOM, DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - DAY

GRAPHIC: MONTHS LATER

Winter. The trailer is effectively snowed in. Tabitha stands in front of the mirror blow drying her wet hair. The HAIR DRYER shorts. She shakes it.

TABITHA

Shit.

Stephen appears at the door.

STEPHEN

What's wrong?

TABITHA

Damn thing broke.

STEPHEN

I'll get you a new one on the way to work.

TABITHA

We can't afford it.

Stephen looks out the window at the snow.

STEPHEN

Honey, it's freezing out there. You'll catch cold.

TABITHA

I'll be fine. I'm more concerned with having money to keep the heating on. They cut back on my shifts again. We'll have to keep the phone disconnected for another week at least.

Stephen wraps his arms around her.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry, Tab.

TABITHA

Don't worry. I'm sure you'll hear back from Bill Thompson soon.

He snuggles into her shoulder.

STEPHEN

You have a lot more faith than I do.

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPDEN ACADEMY - LATER

Stephen is walking down the hallway when an announcement comes over the intercom.

P.A. (O.S.)
Phone call for Mister King. Mister King, you have a phone call at the office.

INT. OFFICE, HAMPDEN ACADEMY

Stephen races into the main office, grabs the phone from the RECEPTIONIST.

STEPHEN
Tab? Everything okay?

BILL THOMPSON (O.S.)
Steve! It's Bill Thompson.

Stephen takes a deep breath.

STEPHEN
Bill! What a surprise.

BILL THOMPSON
You're a hard man to get a hold of.
I've been calling for days!

STEPHEN
Yeah, we're having some problems
with the phone at home.
(beat)
Is everything okay?

BILL THOMPSON
Are you sitting down?

STEPHEN
Uh... do I need to?

INT. DOUBLE WIDE TRAILER - EVENING

Stephen sits nervously at the kitchen table. There's a BOX in front of him. The headlights of the Buick swing into the driveway.

Stephen straightens in his chair. He's chomping at the bit. Seconds later, the front door opens. Tabitha hurries in with the kids.

TABITHA

Christ on his throne, it's freezing out there.

She hands baby Joe to Stephen, starts taking off Naomi's winter coat. Stephen picks up the box off the table; hands it to Tabitha. She looks at it quizzically.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

What's this?

STEPHEN

A gift.

TABITHA

We can't afford gifts.

STEPHEN

Open it.

Tabitha opens the gift. It's a HAIR DRYER.

TABITHA

Oh Steve. You really shouldn't have. This is too much.

STEPHEN

You're the best damn mother there ever was, and the best damn wife.

Tabitha becomes alarmed at Stephen's sudden show of emotion.

TABITHA

Stephen? What is it? What's wrong?

Stephen hesitates before answering; draws out the moment.

STEPHEN

I sold "Carrie."

A triumphant smile breaks out on Tabby's face.

TABITHA

You did???

Stephen nods, grinning from ear to ear.

TABITHA (CONT'D)

Oh my God! That's wonderful!

(off hair dryer)

Still, you shouldn't have spent so much--

STEPHEN
 Tab-- it sold for four hundred
 thousand dollars.

Tabby drops the hair dryer. It SMASHES on the ground into tiny pieces.

TABITHA
WHAT??

STEPHEN
 We did it, Tabby. You and me. We really did it. It's over.

Tabitha looks around at the tiny trailer, looks down at her kids, looks at her husband. Stephen takes her in his arms, the two of them crying and laughing.

They've been through so much together: poverty, heartache, and failure.

And now they'll be together in success.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE TONIGHT SHOW - EVENING

GRAPHIC: FIVE YEARS LATER

Stephen sits on the sofa next to Johnny Carson. The crowd APPLAUDS WILDLY for him. Stephen smiles and waves.

JOHNNY CARSON
 You're the scariest guy in America,
 and they still love you!

LAUGHTER from the crowd as the applause politely dies down.

STEPHEN
 What can I say? In all honesty I actually have the heart of a small boy. I keep it in a jar on my desk.

LAUGHS all round.

JOHNNY CARSON
 So Stephen-- your first book, 'Carrie', made you a household name. Your latest book, 'The Stand', is about a very bad man named **Randall Flagg** who tries to take over the world after the apocalypse.

STEPHEN

It is, Johnny. It's about the struggle between good and evil, between men and monsters...

JOHNNY CARSON

Do you believe in monsters?

STEPHEN

I do, but not in the traditional sense. I don't think there's a Boogeyman hiding in your closet or under the bed. But monsters are real. They are the dark sides of who we are. They live inside us, and sometimes they win.

(beat)

Sometimes.

JOHNNY CARSON

And your wife Tabitha is also a talented author.

STEPHEN

That's right. She has a new book coming out as well.

JOHNNY CARSON

You must be very proud of her.

STEPHEN

You have no idea. She's definitely my better half... in every way.

INT. GREEN ROOM - LATER

Stephen strolls into the green room and is greeted by Tabitha and the family. NAOMI (7) and JOE (5) run towards their father.

NAOMI

Daddyyyy!!!

JOE

Daaaad!

They LEAP into his arms. He embraces them affectionately.

STEPHEN

Hey gang!

Tabitha walks over. In her arms is another baby, OWEN.

TABITHA

Hey, tiger.

Stephen and Tabitha kiss. The kids giggle and make "yucky" sounds.

STEPHEN
How's my baby boy?

TABITHA
Doin' good. Teethin' a little.

STEPHEN
Hey, Owen -- what do you think about all this showbiz stuff, buddy?

TABITHA
I think he's pretty proud of his Dad.

Stephen and Tabitha exchange a knowing smile.

STEPHEN
Let's go home. New York ain't my scene.

EXT. THE TONIGHT SHOW STUDIOS - EVENING

Stephen exits to the CHEERS of his waiting fans. He gets down to the business of signing autographs.

He spots a familiar figure amongst the sea of faces. It's R.F. Stephen nods in his direction, acknowledging his presence. R.F. stares back menacingly.

Stephen's the one in control now. He was right: he doesn't need R.F. He can do this on his own.

The crowd cheers LOUDER and LOUDER. They call his name. Stephen smiles as we...

CUT TO BLACK.

END CRAWL:

"He is two men - he has ALWAYS been two men. That's what any man or woman who makes believe for a living must be. The one who exists in the normal world... and the one who creates worlds. They are two. Always at least two."

- Stephen King, "The Dark Half"