

UNTITLED HARLEY PEYTON PROJECT

Pilot by Harley Peyton

ACT ONE

EXT. AKRON, OHIO - AERIAL VIEW - NIGHT

CAMERA STARTS at a HIGH ANGLE looking down at city lights in the dark. A SUPER spreads across the screen. It reads: **AKRON, OHIO**. Then CAMERA DESCENDS until the first SUPER is replaced by a second. **RUBBER CAPITAL OF THE WORLD**.

AKRON BUS STATION

The Akron Bus Station is like most bus stations. Downtown, a little down and out. A BUS rolls to a halt. The DOORS open with a HISS. A pair of Floursheim Chelsea MOD BOOTS step from bus to pavement. The boots have seen better days. The kind you keep for sentimental reasons.

CAMERA PANS UP to introduce **MAURICE MILLER (25)**. Maurice has hard-cut eyes, an easy smile, a big afro that he curates with the Angel Food Cake Cutter stuck in his back pocket. And an ease born of something much older and more dangerous than we know.

"Trouble Man" by Marvin Gaye PLAYS. Because obviously.

EXT. BUS STATION - PARKING LOT

Maurice carries an old leather valise into the bus station parking lot. There's a convertible Porsche parked in a handicapped space, radio blaring, and "Trouble Man" morphs from soundtrack to diegetic.

BUD RINK (30s), beefy, bovine, definitely not handicapped, SEES the young black man coming. He flicks his cigarette to the pavement at his feet. Maurice grins like he didn't.

MAURICE

How you doin'?

BUD

I'm doin' *'get the fuck away from my Porsche --*

MAURICE

Nice night. Cool breeze. I think I'm going to like it here.

BUD

I got a better idea. How 'bout I put your ass on the next bus and send you back to where you came --

Bud's about to rise up out of the convertible. But then without warning Maurice GRABS him by the arm, finds his eyes, and:

MAURICE

Listen to me.

Bud suddenly and inexplicably fills with the desire to do one thing and one thing only. Listen.

MAURICE

I need a ride and you're going to give me one. Take me anyplace I want to go.

In this moment, Bud cannot imagine doing anything other than what Maurice just told him to do.

BUD

Hop in.

MAURICE

Much appreciated.

Maurice TOSSES his valise into the back and --

EXT. AKRON, OHIO - SOUTH MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The Porsche knifes through the night. Maurice busies himself at the radio, looks for and finds a station to his liking. Bud faces the road. A glimmer in his eyes suggests he is aware, however dimly, of the involuntary nature of his predicament. Maurice sees a sign up ahead. **COMMERCE PARK.**

MAURICE

Turn in here.

EXT. COMMERCE PARK - NIGHT

It's late so the park is deserted. Bud guides the Porsche to a halt in a small parking lot. Then we SEE it. The way the COERCING GLAMOUR evaporates. Bud returns to his default. Beefy, bovine. Also unpleasant.

BUD

What the hell -- ?!

MAURICE

Thanks for the ride.

BUD

What did you do to me?

MAURICE

I asked you for transport and you were kind enough to give it to me.

BUD

That's not how it felt. *Asshole.*
What're you, some kinda hypnotist --

MAURICE

I'm not a hypnotist.

BUD

Then what the fuck are you?

MAURICE

Hungry.

Two IMPOSSIBLE THINGS happen in rapid succession. FANGS DROP inside Maurice's mouth. Maurice LATCHES ONTO BUD'S NECK in a shocking instant.

Maurice FEEDS on all that rich BLOOD. Bud STRUGGLES but he doesn't stand a chance. Maurice GROWLS a wet INHUMAN GROWL.
CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The SCREEN is BLACK. We HEAR a young man's VOICE OVER:

MAN'S VOICE

Hey, baby. Welcome to Mega Male Voice.

Bright MIDDAY LIGHT. An APARTMENT BUILDING that needs paint. CAMERA MOVES toward an OPEN WINDOW on the third floor. The young man's VOICE continues OVER. If the late great Barry White was a 28 year-old white guy he'd sound just like this:

MAN'S VOICE

I've been waiting for you to call.
My name is Roddy Dodge. How may I fuck you?

A SUPER spreads across the SCREEN. It reads: **NOT HIS REAL NAME**. And with that, CAMERA GLIDES through the OPEN WINDOW --

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA MOVES about the apartment INTERIOR. We HEAR Roddy -- not his real name -- continue OVER:

RODDY DODGE'S VOICE Sure, baby. I can do that. Just close your eyes and grab your cock.

(beat)

I'm six foot three. I weigh one hundred and seventy pounds dripping wet. My body is sculpted like Michaelangelo's David.

CAMERA REVEALS a high-backed chair FROM BEHIND. All we SEE is the top of Roddy's head. Then his voice, smooth and sexy until now, finds a MORE accurate register when he corrects:

RODDY DODGE'S VOICE Oh, no. 'David' is actually a statue in the Uffizi Gallery. It's really beauti --

(beat)

Nevermind.

Roddy reverts to form. Sexy and smooth!

RODDY DODGE'S VOICE My body is sculpted like a porn star. Long legs. Washboard abs. But I'm not *too* too, you know? More like an Olympic platform diving gold medalist who does a little lifting on the side.

Okay sure, Roddy's a sex phone operator. But if you listen carefully the come-on sounds less performative and more like wishful thinking. At least until Roddy, aware of his own drift, gets back to business:

RODDY DODGE'S VOICE

But I'm guessing what you really want to talk about is my cock.

CAMERA MOVES around the chair to finally reveal Roddy at the precise moment he says the word 'cock'. Whoa, wait. Roddy doesn't look like his voice sounds or an Olympic platform diving gold medalist either. He wears a headset. Also boxer shorts and a *MODEST MOUSE* rock band tee. Roddy is, for lack of a better or kinder word...FAT.

A correcting SUPER spreads across the SCREEN: **REGINALD BASKIN**. And then: **ACTUAL SIZE**.

Reginald (28) has ease, wit and intelligence in his voice. Reginald's telephone stylings do not match his physique. He is about to describe the cock he doesn't have when the CALLER interrupts. Reginald reacts, and:

REGINALD

Wait, are you all right?...Oh,
well, sure. Everybody gets lonely.
That's why Roddy Dodge is here.

Reginald is trying to get the call back on track. But then he listens for a beat, and drops the pose entirely. He's just Reginald now.

REGINALD

How old are you?...That must be
really difficult...Can you talk to
anyone about how you're feeling?
Maybe someone in your family?
(beat)
Bullies are the worst. I can't
imagine what it must feel like to
be bullied by your own family.

Reginald (not Roddy) is empathetic as well as smart.

REGINALD

But the good news is? You'll be out
of the house soon, on your own. And
sure, there will still be bullies.
But they're a lot easier to avoid.
Would you mind telling me your
name? Don't worry, you can tell me
the real one. My real name is
'Reginald.'

Reginald listens for a moment.

REGINALD

Andrew. I'm going to give you a
phone number for a different kind
of chat line. So you can talk with
a professional who can help you
deal with what's going on right
now. But I need you to promise me
you'll make that call.

(beat)

Awesome. The number is 800 --

But then the caller interrupts. One last request before he goes. Reginald answers it.

REGINALD

You bet. Call me at this number.
'Roddy Dodge' is open for business
every day at this time...Oh, sure.
That's cool. If you want. I can be
'Reginald' instead.

EXT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The same apartment facade. Darkness falls.

INT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

There's a mirror in Reginald's bedroom, empty of reflection. But we HEAR someone shuffling about the interior. Then Reginald SLIDES into view. Reginald stands at the glass and inspects his reflection. The phonecall makes him a little more thoughtful than usual. Reginald wears a colorful uniform, bright orange, bright yellow, **SLUSHY SHACK!** emblazoned across the chest.

When Reginald's on the phone as 'Roddy Dodge' he sounds like a man who knows the answer to every question. But when he's not, when he's just 'Reginald', life poses a completely different set of questions that he cannot always answer.

EXT. AKRON, OHIO - NIGHT

Reginald rides through the falling dark on a recumbent bicycle. He rolls into a parking lot and we SEE his destination. It's a big garish A-frame, bright orange, bright yellow, and signage that shouts **SLUSHY SHACK!**. Reginald CIRCLES around to the employee entrance in the back.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Reginald enters, bicycle helmet in hand. He hangs the bike helmet on a peg, then moves to grab a yellow and orange **SLUSHY SHACK!** cap from another. But then a BIG MUSCULAR ARM intrudes, and **TODD GERBER (28)** nearly shoves, Reginald aside and takes a cap for himself.

TODD

Hey, Regi-world. Regi-round.

Todd is outlandishly handsome, a perfect physical specimen who buys his clothing one size too tight. His name tag reads **MANAGER**. Todd is also, as the SUPER says, **THE BULLY**.

TODD

Regi-wide.

Reginald turns to face him. Then, he quietly launches:

REGINALD

I'm so fat I have my own zip code.

TODD

Ha. Good...one.

REGINALD

I'm so fat my favorite necklace is the food chain. I'm so fat that when I step on the scales it says "to be continued."

Todd did not see this coming. Todd is not amused.

REGINALD

I'm so fat that when I went to the beach Greenpeace showed up and pushed me back into the ocean. I'm so fat that when I wear a yellow raincoat people hail me like a taxi. I'm so fat --

TODD

Gotcha. Super funny. I'm about to die laughing from how funny you are about being obese.

Todd shoves past Reginald to the door that leads to the front counter. Reginald calls after him with less confidence than before:

REGINALD

I'm so --

Reginald stops short. Because when Todd moves past him, **SARAH OWEN (28)** is revealed having just entered through the back door. Reginald changes mode/outlook in an instant:

REGINALD

Hey, Sarah.

SARAH

Hey, Reginald.

There's familiarity and affection in her greeting. Sarah is smart, funny, confident. She also represents everything Reginald believes he cannot have. Reginald camouflages that by playing the role of the friend you can count on when a friend is needed. But that's not how he feels inside. So: **THE DREAM**. Sarah grabs a cap and steps past Todd through the counter door. Todd, not unaware of Reginald's feelings, takes pleasure in:

TODD

Never. Not once. 'No thank you, Reginald I don't like you like that.' *Forever.*

The sad thing is, Reginald doesn't disagree.

REGINALD
Shut up, Todd.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - NIGHT

Reginald and Sarah work the counter registers, **CUSTOMERS** lined up at each.

TIME CUT - **CLAIRE**

CLAIRE (12) is wise beyond her years. She has a distinctive mop of red hair. It's a little late for her to be out like this but Claire's preternatural confidence ameliorates Reginald's concern. Reginald opens peppy:

REGINALD
Welcome to Slushy Shack how may I help you?

CLAIRE
You don't have to say that every time you know.

REGINALD
Actually, I do. It's in the manual.

Reginald likes Claire like the kid sister he never had. Claire gives as good as she gets:

CLAIRE
There is no manual and we both know it. I'll take a Chocoholic Blast but I want you to put just a pinch of the Tropical Coconut in there with it but not too much or I get a weird aftertaste in my mouth.

The SUPER reads **THE LONELY GIRL**. Which, given her attitude, comes as a surprise.

REGINALD
An exact pinch.

CLAIRE
It's just an expression but imagine taking a pinch of slushy with your fingers and adding it to my Slushy but use a spoon to add the same amount instead.

REGINALD
Got it. Right away, Claire.

Reginald steps off. HOLD ON Claire long enough to see that she is less confident than she projects because we're not calling her 'Lonely Girl' for nothing.

TIME CUT - **MAURICE**

Reginald and Sarah work the counter registers. It's getting late. Sarah rings up a **CUSTOMER**. Reginald watches Sarah. He watches her a lot. The customer steps off. Sarah speaks quietly in a Scottish accent which is weird:

SARAH
"I have no quarrel with you, Good Sir Knight, but I must cross this bridge."

It's a game they play. Reginald loves playing it.

REGINALD
"Then you shall die. I move for no man."

Reginald's accent is atrocious but these are lines from their favorite Monty Python movie and he's doing the best he can.

SARAH
"So be it!"

Sarah makes the sounds of combat, a SLASHING SWORD. Then:

SARAH
"Now stand aside worthy adversary."

REGINALD
"Tis but a scratch."

SARAH
"But your arm's off!"

REGINALD
"I've had worse."

SARAH
"You liar!"

It's playful synchronicity, emblematic of why Reginald looks at Sarah the way he does. Reginald smiles at her now. But this time Sarah smiles back. Then a customer INTERRUPTS with sufficient suddenness that Reginald reacts with a START.

MAURICE
How you doin'?

It's Maurice Miller. Same hard cut eyes, easy smile. The Angel Food Cake Cutter in his back pocket. We know who and what Maurice is. Reginald doesn't have a clue and that may be the end of him.

REGINALD
Excuse me? *Sorry*, we were just --

MAURICE
Banana Boat.

SUPER: **MOTHERFUCKING VAMPIRE!**

REGINALD
Sorry. We're all out of that.

MAURICE
Too bad.

REGINALD
Right?

Reginald is drawn to the stranger and he's not sure why.

MAURICE
Sweet Caramel then.

REGINALD
We've got that!

MAURICE
I hope.

REGINALD
Have we...met before?

Reginald meets Maurice's gaze. Maurice doesn't blink. In truth, he rarely does. Reginald feels a weird shiver inside because he's moderately sure he couldn't look away if he wanted to but of course that makes no sense so --

MAURICE
Naw. I'm new in town.

Reginald is suddenly unmoored. Reginald defaults peppy:

REGINALD
Welcome to Slushy Shack! How may I help you?

MAURICE
 (halfway grin)
 Gimme time. I'll think of
 somethin'.

It sounds like a promise or maybe a threat. Reginald reacts to that. Sarah, at the next register, does too.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

It's late. Reginald enters the break room with a bag full of garbage. Todd and Sarah sit at a table. They're in mid-conversation and Sarah laughs at something Todd said. Her laughter is like a spear in Reginald's chest. But Sarah, back to the door, doesn't see him yet. Todd does. He rubs it in, performative:

TODD
 You're so right, Sarah, I never
 thought about it like that before.
 I love the way your mind works.
 (looks past Sarah)
 Hey, Regi-nald. Third snack?

Reginald continues to the back, mutters as he opens the door:

REGINALD
 Nothing funnier than the comedy
 stylings of Todd Gerber at the
 Slushy Shack. *Ladies and Gentlemen,*
he's here all week!

There's a weary note in that. Because Todd is Todd. Because he said it in front of Sarah. Reginald closes the door behind him.

EXT. SLUSHY SHACK! - IN THE BACK - NIGHT

Reginald tosses the garbage bag into a dumpster. He stops to look at the dark sky. A long beat. Then a surprise. Reginald speaks into the night:

REGINALD
 Dear God and/or Grown-Up Baby
 Jesus.

It sounds like a prayer that we did not see coming.

REGINALD
 Whatever down payment was paid
 before I was born, before I was
 sperm looking for its egg, whatever
 (MORE)

REGINALD (CONT'D)

was *promised* -- I want a refund. Every cent. All of it. Or I will report you to the Better Business Bureau or the Pope. And possibly the Mormons if they turn out to be relevant.

Definitely a prayer. But weird and disarming.

REGINALD

I was promised much that I did not receive. The marketing was deceptive. And sure, I may not know exactly how it works, what life gets handed out to who and why. But I'm beginning to think a mistake was made pretty obviously not in my favor.

It's about his larger circumstance. It's about Sarah too.

REGINALD

As a result, I am *not* completely satisfied and in addition to a refund I would like a personal apology. I would also like bug-free summers. Less active sweat glands. Someone to talk to outside of the Slushy Shack. And maybe, just one time, *once*...a lucky break.

Reginald exhales sorrow and regret. That's when Maurice Miller appears out of nowhere and Reginald nearly JUMPS right out of his shoes.

REGINALD

Whoa, wow. You scared me half to death. Where did you come from? I didn't even hear you --

MAURICE

What's your name?

REGINALD

Reginald Baskin.

MAURICE

Call me Maurice.

REGINALD

Hi, Maurice.

Reginald thinks about turning back inside. Except for some weird reason he's not entirely sure he can. No matter:

MAURICE

I read once that self-directed talk is a healthy instinct that assists in stimulating, directing, and evaluating action.

REGINALD

I was asking for things I don't have.

MAURICE

Like a prayer.

REGINALD

I'm an atheist, actually.

MAURICE

I'm not.

REGINALD

How much did you...hear?

MAURICE

I believe everyone deserves a refund. Someone to talk to. Bugless summers too --

Then another sudden interruption. The back door SWINGS OPEN and Todd Gerber sticks his head out. Maurice recedes a little bit into the dark.

TODD

Closing time. Grab a mop.

Todd returns inside. Reginald sighs, about to follow. But:

MAURICE

You really like her, don't you?

REGINALD

(nods)

Her name is Sarah.

Maurice takes a long assessing look as if to weigh a life or death decision. And then Maurice decides, or more accurately, changes his mind.

MAURICE

Maybe you should do something about that. Ask her out. Take her to dinner and a movie.

REGINALD

Very funny. I bet you'd like Todd.
He's *hilarious*.

MAURICE

You're afraid.

REGINALD

No. Just a man familiar with his
own limitations.

There's surrender in that, acceptance too. Reginald has a
finely calibrated sense of his strengths and weaknesses.

MAURICE

Truth, Reggie? Everybody gets to
write their own story.

REGINALD

Okay, I like a good fortune cookie
as much as the next guy but in the
world *I* live in? There are certain
immutable laws --

Then without warning Maurice GRABS Reginald's arm, finds his
eyes, and:

MAURICE

Listen to me.

Reginald suddenly and inexplicably fills with the desire to
do one thing and one thing only. Listen.

MAURICE

Go back in there. Do not be afraid.
Ask Sarah if she's busy Friday
night because if she isn't? You
think it'd be fun if the two of you
went out. Maybe to dinner and a
movie. If she says 'no' -- that's
okay, just tell her it's cool,
maybe some other time. But if she
says 'yes', smile like you mean it,
totally comfortable with your good
luck, and then say, 'Great. Friday.
You and me.'

(beat)

'You and me' is a promise not a
description. Communicate that to
her. Then walk away like you just
did the thing you were always meant
to do.

In this moment, Reginald cannot conceive or even imagine doing anything other than what Maurice just told him to do. Maurice nods at the door. Reginald nods back, then steps off. Maurice watches him go, mutters:

MAURICE
Good luck, kid.

'Kid.' Which is weird because Maurice looks younger than Reginald but by now you know he's probably a whole lot older than he appears, and --

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - CONTINUOUS

Todd and Sarah clean up inside. Todd's got the mop and he's not happy about that.

TODD
About time.

Reginald does not reply. He's a man on a mission. Reginald, this new and inexplicable Reginald, walks right up to Sarah, bold as can be, and --

REGINALD
Hello, Sarah.

SARAH
Hey.

REGINALD
Are you busy Friday night?

Todd can't believe what he's seeing right now.

SARAH
Friday?

REGINALD
That's right.

SARAH
No, I'm not busy.

REGINALD
I think it would be fun if we went out. Maybe to dinner and a movie.

SARAH
I'd like that.

Todd buckles. Reginald accepts this good fortune like he earned it. Then he says it just like Maurice told him to.

REGINALD
Great. Friday.

He pauses. Because this is a promise not a description.

REGINALD
You and me.

Reginald turns with unusual grace, leonine, and walks out the front door. Todd can't believe his eyes/ears. Then, without missing a beat:

TODD
Are you busy *Saturday* night?
Because I think it would be even
more fun if we --

There's surprising emotion in that. Because Reginald isn't the only one with dreams deferred.

Sarah replies while watching Reginald move off into the parking lot.

SARAH
Not a chance, Todd.

TODD
Gotcha. Cool. Completely
understand.

There it is again. A brief glimmer of vulnerability in Todd, the boy behind the bully.

EXT. SLUSHY SHACK! - CONTINUOUS

Reginald steps through the empty parking lot. Then, and with every step he takes, the magic evaporates, his confidence fades and disappears. Reginald returns to his default. And his default is nothing like the young man who just asked Sarah Owen out on a date.

CAMERA VIEWS the transformation in his expression. A comical metamorphosis from the lofty heights of surety to *What the hell just happened to me?*

Reginald stands stock still. It's like he's waking from a dream but it's not his dream it feels more like someone loaded it into his head instead. Which is more or less what just happened to him. Reginald Baskin stands in the empty parking lot beneath a big moon and fills with wonder.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Midday. The facade of an apartment building in Akron, Ohio. Yes, we've been here before. CAMERA MOVES toward an OPEN WINDOW on the third floor. We HEAR a man's VOICE OVER and we've been there too --

REGINALD'S VOICE

Hey, Booby. Welcome to Maga Mule Voice. My name is Robby Podge. How fay I much you?

Okay. It didn't sound like that the first time. And he really doesn't sound like Barry White.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA MOVES about the apartment interior. We HEAR Robby -- Roddy! -- continue OVER:

REGINALD'S VOICE

Sure can. I do baby that. Just close your cock and grab your eyes.

Well that's just great. Because Reginald Baskin is back in the high-backed chair wearing the headset and apparently he's still a phone sex operator --

REGINALD

Close your eyes and grab your baby. Baby cock. NO God no --

But due to the full-on PANIC ATTACK he's having including EXCESSIVE PERSPIRATION Reginald is likely the worst phone sex operator in the known universe.

REGINALD

Hello? *Hello?*

Nothing but dial tone.

EXT. THE SLUSHY SHACK! - NIGHT

The Slushy Shack! is an oasis in the night. CAMERA HOLDS, establishes, and --

Maurice Miller EASES into FRAME out of nowhere with the usual supernatural grace. He steps toward the entrance and his nocturnal slushy. Then, with considerably less grace, Reginald Baskin BARRELS out of the dark and SKIDS to a halt in front of him. JUMP SCARE for us. But Maurice doesn't blink. Again.

MAURICE
Hey, Reggie. What's up?

REGINALD
*We need to have a very serious talk
right now.*

A SUPER reads **TOMORROW NIGHT IS DATE NIGHT!**

MAURICE
How's that?

REGINALD
I'm going on a date with Sarah Owen
tomorrow.

MAURICE
That's a *positive* development,
isn't it? You asked Sarah out and
she said 'yes.' Kudos.

REGINALD
But that's part of what I don't
understand.

MAURICE
That she said 'yes'?

REGINALD
(nods)
It's like I was there and not-there
at the same time. Like there was
this physical barrier between my
perception of the moment and the
moment itself. I was Reginald and
Not-Reginald at the same time --

MAURICE
Might be overthinking things,
Reggie. It's just dinner and a
movie --

REGINALD
Which under normal circumstances,
'no problem.' But as I've never
been on a date before it is a very
big problem for me!!

MAURICE
Bull...shit.

REGINALD
Why would I lie about something
like that?

MAURICE

No dates. Not even one time?

Reginald nods. Maurice studies him for a beat. He feels some vague responsibility. Which is less than the total responsibility he should feel but Maurice has an amoral world view we've not yet fully mined. (Not to mention a hard and fast rule about involving himself in the lives of strangers.) But then:

MAURICE

Where does she live?

REGINALD

Magnolia and 40th.

MAURICE

Near Wicker's.

REGINALD

The bowling alley.

MAURICE

Meet me at the bowling alley one hour before your date.

REGINALD

I'm not sure that's enough time for all ten frames.

MAURICE

We're not going bowling.

REGINALD

Oh. That's a relief. I suck at bowling --

MAURICE

Meet me there and I will prepare you. *Advise* you.

REGINALD

Do you really think you can teach me that fast? I mean I'm a pretty quick study. But we're talking about an arena in which I have zero experience, less than zero confidence -- I'm already backsweating at a rate that *can't* be healthy for a man my size --

Reginald is falling apart. Maurice studies him some more.

MAURICE
Do you trust me?

REGINALD
Completely but I have no idea why I do.

MAURICE
I get that a lot.

REGINALD
But --

MAURICE
I'll tell you what to do. Every step. And then...you'll do it.

Maurice is going to do what he did the first time. Do the thing that helped Reginald get what he wanted most. Though this feels like a tougher needle to thread.

REGINALD
Okay. It seems highly unlikely that this will end in anything other than disaster but --

MAURICE
I would like to purchase my nightly slushy now.

Maurice steps off toward the Slushy Shack! without another word. Reginald turns to follow --

EXT. WICKER BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

A bowling alley exterior. The MUFFLED SOUND of bowling balls BUSTING into pins inside. A beat of silence. Then Reginald steps into view. He's got his best fitting pants on, his nicest shirt. He's scared shitless but he cleans up pretty good. A SUPER SPREADS across the SCREEN. **DATE NIGHT.**

INT. WICKER BOWLING ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

Maurice waits for Reginald at a small table in the bowling alley cafe. He styles his afro using the Angel Food Cake Cutter he keeps stuck in his back pocket. Reginald steps to the table. Maurice watches him approach, sees the change in him, best pants, nicest shirt. He nods approval, and --

MAURICE
Lookin' good.

TIME CUT - REGINALD & MAURICE

A WAITRESS delivers beer, steps away. REVEALS Reginald now sitting opposite.

REGINALD
Maybe I should stay sober.

MAURICE
One beer won't hurt.

Maurice drinks. A beat. Reginald drinks too. Then:

MAURICE
Tell me somethin'. Why have you never been on a date before? Not one single time?

REGINALD
Are you serious right now?

MAURICE
Okay. You're a big dude. But --

REGINALD
Chubby, husky, need to lose weight, fat, obese. In that order.

MAURICE
So. Since you were a kid.

REGINALD
Girls are not attracted to guys like me. I'm the funny friend you tell your troubles to including about the boyfriend who doesn't treat you like you deserve.

MAURICE
Maybe they don't know the real you?

REGINALD
It feels like they have a pretty good idea.

Reginald says it without complaint or the need for pity. It's just a fact set to him.

MAURICE
All right. Pep talk over.

REGINALD
That was a pep talk?

MAURICE
Forty-seven minutes until your
first date.

REGINALD
But what can you possibly --

Maurice grabs Reginald's arm, finds his eyes, and:

MAURICE
Listen to me.

Reginald suddenly and inexplicably fills with the desire to do one thing and one thing only. Listen. Maurice leans a little closer to him. But then he looks past Reginald into the distance and utters an unexpected curse.

MAURICE
Shit.

REGINALD
As you wish.

Reginald bears down, Maurice corrects:

MAURICE
Not *you*, Reginald.

Reginald hears urgency in that. It clears his mind. He turns to follow Maurice's gaze.

WHAT THEY SEE

Two couples approach. Late 20s. They are supernaturally beautiful. The women, one blonde, one brunette, are perfectly groomed, styled, they seem to move in a breeze that doesn't exist, their cheekbones high and perfectly set. The men have a sixteenth inch of stubble that looks, well, perfect. They are rugged and feminine at the same time. Like they could chop some serious wood without ruining their nails.

The men are immaculately dressed and a closer look suggests some fealty to the 80s. The women are no less turned out but their clothing is redolent of another, older era. But these are subtle distinctions in either case.

REGINALD
Friends of yours?

MAURICE
Not even a little bit.

Maurice steps to meet them. Reginald can't help but stare at the perfect people. After a brief, argumentative discussion, Maurice returns to the table.

MAURICE

Sorry. I need to handle this.
Shouldn't take long.

REGINALD

Forty-four minutes until my first date.

MAURICE

On the clock, got it.

Reginald looks past Maurice to the young men and women. Then a surprise. The blonde woman licks her lips. Then the brunette woman licks her lips too. And then one of the men with perfect stubble licks his lips like the women do.

REGINALD

They seem nice.

The blonde makes a slow beckoning gesture with one delicate finger. Reginald does not, cannot, refuse. His legs prop him up as if of their own will and he finds himself facing them before he knows what happened or how he got there.

BLONDE WOMAN

What's your name?

REGINALD

Roddy Dodge --

Hey, it seems like a good idea at the time.

BLONDE WOMAN

Nice to meet you, Roddy. I'm Moira.

MOIRA extends a gloved hand, feline. Reginald feels himself want to bend at the waist and kiss it but then he catches Maurice's eye and shakes her hand instead.

MAURICE

Moira, stop that shit now.

Moira looks at Maurice, frowns. Reginald feels the real world return like a splash of cold water, like a broken spell.

MOIRA

Is he yours?

MAURICE

Reggie, this is Moira, Penelope, Charles, and Isaac. They need a couple minutes of my time.

One of the young men, **CHARLES**, eyes Maurice with contempt. The brunette, **PENELOPE**, coos.

CHARLES

More than a couple, I'd think.

PENELOPE

Maurice has been baaaaad --

That does it. Maurice lets the darkness out.

MAURICE

Charles and Isaac need to spend a couple minutes with me out back tryin' to intimidate me and pretend they can tell me what to do. Which they motherfucking *cannot*. But then, pretending otherwise, they'll run on home like good little errand boys and you and me can finish our business. That okay with you?

Reginald is now wondering what the hell is happening here. But it seems politic to agree so --

REGINALD

I'll wait here.

MAURICE

Nuh-uh. The women are staying here.

REGINALD

That is not a problem for me.

Yes, it is.

MAURICE

Best if you come with us.

Charles and Isaac turn toward the exit. Maurice guides Reginald forward. Reginald dares one last look at Penelope and Moira. Penelope mouths the words *I'll miss you*. Which seems random and the most appropriate thing in the world at the same time to him. Which explains Reginald's little wave as Maurice ushers him out the door.

EXT. WICKER BOWLING ALLEY - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Maurice and Reginald follow Charles and Isaac into the parking lot out back. Scattered cars, two dumpsters. Maurice puts a hand to Reginald's arm, and:

MAURICE

Listen to me. Stay here. You won't be interested in anything we're gonna talk about.

Reginald nods utter assent. He leans sideways against a dumpster. Maurice steps off with Charles and Isaac. Reginald is happy to remain in place and do exactly as he was told.

Despite that, watching the three men from a distance, the gist of their conversation emerges. A reprimand for Maurice, so official that Charles even takes out a sheaf of documents and tries to give them to Maurice like a server handing over a summons. But Maurice just laughs in their faces.

MAURICE, CHARLES, ISSAC

Your defiance...Bigotry...Don't bite the messenger...Say it to her face...

CLOSE ON REGINALD

Suddenly there is a sensation on his ear. A PUFF of very cold breath on his neck and a sexy voice that purrs:

MOIRA'S VOICE

We couldn't stand to be away from you.

Then, at his other shoulder, another cold breath.

PENELOPE'S VOICE

Reginald Reggie Roddy.

Reginald finds himself FACE TO FACE with Moira and Penelope.

REGINALD

Reginald, actually. You smell amazing.

MOIRA

Do you want to be ours?

PENELOPE

We're happy to share.

REGINALD

When you say 'share'..?

Reginald falls and falls into their eyes. Then, without warning, with supernatural fucking speed, Moira is on one side and Penelope is on the other, their mouths and tongues on his neck. But then their tongues give way to FANGS. Then comes a PAIN unlike any he has ever felt and Reginald SCREAMS but it's hard to tell if it is an exclamation of pleasure or pain because probably it's both.

We VIEW it all from Reginald's POV.

Then, also without warning, the two women FLY BACKWARD and land on the pavement. Because somehow Maurice THREW THEM THERE. Reginald feels like his head has been severed from his neck, his shirt is wet with HIS OWN BLOOD, and then Reginald's perspective changes and falls against the dumpster and slumps down to the ground.

We VIEW it all from Reginald's POV.

Maurice YELLS like some kind of beast. The two women SKITTER backwards on their hands and feet, CHESTS UP, moving like crabs. Maurice rounds on Charles and Isaac, returns to where they are standing SO FAST that Reginald believes he must have lost a blink of consciousness. Charles backs away. But Isaac SHOVES Maurice in the chest. Bad idea. Maurice PUSHES BACK and suddenly Isaac FLIES BACKWARD across the parking lot, STRIKING a car, the car folding half around him, the car/Isaac hybrid then SLIDING into a lamppost that falls over in a HAIL OF SPARKS.

We VIEW it all from Reginald's POV.

Suddenly. Maurice is back at Reginald's side, he checks the damage with sorrow and anger. But then, IN A FLASH, Isaac appears in front of Maurice, not dead, not even hurt. Isaac's hands go to Maurice's throat and he BARES his FANGS, fingers like claws but then he STOPS SUDDENLY, backs away, his hands up in the air like a supplicant --

Maurice holds a weapon in his right hand. It's the ANGEL FOOD CAKE CUTTER. There's a BLUR as his arm moves at Isaac and Isaac DISINTIGRATES into FIRE. Charles, Moira, and Penelope make odd noises of surrender, and back away into the night.

REGINALD & MAURICE

Maurice returns to Reginald. BLOOD pools beneath his best clothes that he wore for his first date.

REGINALD

What...happened? How did you...?

MAURICE

Cake cutter's tipped with wood.

That's as good an answer as any. Reginald closes his eyes, lets sleep, or something worse, take him. **CUT TO BLACK.**

INT. SARAH OWEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sarah Flake sits in her living room. Sarah checks her watch. Reginald is late. She TEXTS into her cell. **CUT TO BLACK.**

EXT. WICKER BOWLING ALLEY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Reginald OPENS HIS EYES. Reginald is still on his back in the parking lot and there's BLOOD everywhere and something is really wrong with his neck, like it was RIPPED IN TWO. Maurice kneels over him.

REGINALD

Would you mind telling Sarah I'm going to be late? You can use my cell --

MAURICE

Reggie. *I can fix this.* But I can't do it without your say-so. The decision has to be yours.

REGINALD

...Decide?

MAURICE

That's right. Decide to die now, a few minutes early.

REGINALD

Why would I want to do that?

MAURICE

So I can save you.

Then trust is given without cause and that's a kind of hope.

REGINALD

Okay.

Maurice COVERS Reginald's mouth and SMOTHERS him. Blood runs down Reginald's throat. Then Maurice BITES HIS OWN WRIST and BENDS EVEN CLOSER and there is a GREAT FLASH OF LIGHT and then everything goes BLACK and this time it stays that way.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOEXT. ON A HILLTOP - NIGHT

Reginald Baskin lies on the ground in a huge POOL OF BLOOD. Maurice Miller watches and waits. A beat. Reginald sits up, burps, looks around him. Reginald is sitting on top of a forested hill, a cliff-side scenic outlook aimed at the city below. Reginald looks at the lights of the city. They look like inverted stars. Reginald puts a hand to his neck but his neck shows no sign of injury.

REGINALD

Last night I had the weirdest dream.

MAURICE

It wasn't a dream.

REGINALD

Riiiiight. I get it. I'm still dreaming like I woke up from the first dream but this is actually the second dream. It's a sequel.

MAURICE

It's not a *sequel* neither.

REGINALD

Well of course you'd say that. You're a projection of my unconscious mind. Whoa, wait a second --

Maurice leans closer. Maybe Reginald is about to see what's really happening here. But Reginald's GRIN EXPANDS --

REGINALD

I'm not just dreaming. I'm *lucid* dreaming.

Reginald gets to his feet with greater ease and grace than usual. After all, he's...dreaming.

REGINALD

I usually try to manifest Rihanna.

Maurice rises too, if only to stop Reginald from doing something stupid. Too late.

REGINALD

But sometimes...I *fly*.

Reginald RACES at the cliff's edge, LEAPS, EXTENDS his arms like MAJESTIC WINGS...

And DROPS like an anvil in a Roadrunner cartoon, SMASHING into the side of the hill then BOUNCING, ROLLING, and CRASHING all the way to the bottom, pinballing from tree to tree as he goes, OOFING COMPLAINT with every CRASHING IMPACT. A deadpan beat. Maurice shakes his head, sighs.

TIME CUT - MAURICE & REGINALD

Maurice CARRIES unconscious Reginald on his back all the way back to the top of the hill. **CUT TO BLACK.**

EXT. ON A HILLTOP - NIGHT

Reginald wakes a second time in the big, now CONGEALING, POOL OF BLOOD. Reginald sits up, looks around, sees Maurice seated opposite. Reginald notices the POOL OF BLOOD.

REGINALD
Whoa. This is...

MAURICE
Blood.

REGINALD
It can't be *my* blood. There's gallons. I'd be dead.

MAURICE
Yeah. You would be.

REGINALD
You brought me here?

MAURICE
Couldn't stay at the bowling alley. Cops were on their way.

The bowling alley.

REGINALD
...I'm not dreaming, am I?

MAURICE
'Fraid not.

REGINALD
Where are we?

MAURICE

Overlook at the park. That's I-17
down there.

Maurice indicates a bright ribbon in the valley below.

REGINALD

But...that means we're half an hour
away from town. By car. Do you have
a -- ?

MAURICE

I carried you here.

REGINALD

Well, gosh, I'm not sure it's
really possible to carry a man my
size that far even if you were
adrenalized to an unusual degree --

MAURICE

Now is not the time to be stupid,
Reggie. Now's the time to face
facts.

There's rebuke as well as impatience in that. Reginald gets
to his feet, the same ease and grace he didn't have before.
Reginald takes in his surroundings. He blinks rapidly.
There's definitely something wrong with his eyes.

Reginald looks at his blood-stained hand. The blood looks
PEARLESCENT like it was LIGHTED from within.

MAURICE

Notice a change in your eyesight?

REGINALD

Did I hit my head?

MAURICE

Read that billboard down there.

REGINALD

Well that's crazy it's miles
away from --

Reginald looks anyway. He reads:

REGINALD

"Happy Summer Value Days at Village
Honda."

And yes, that's exactly what it says.

MAURICE

I can see the sign on the top of the liquor store on Harvest Street in Munroe Falls. That's ten miles from here. I can read farther at least until the curvature of the Earth prevents it. You can too.

Reginald reacts with growing confusion and dismay.

MAURICE

The bowling alley. Out back. Moira, Penelope, Charles, and Isaac. Assholes every one of 'em. Isaac is dust now. But while I was dealin' with that, Moira and Penelope got to you --

(beat)

Reggie, you were gonna die one way or the other. I asked you if you wanted to live because I could fix that and you said --

REGINALD

"Okay."

Reginald looks back to the lights in the valley, inverted stars.

REGINALD

What did they want from you?

MAURICE

The Boss Vamp that sent them wants me to take the knee. I don't do that for anyone.

REGINALD

But what did they want from *me*?

There's sorrow in that. But Maurice needs Reginald to move past it.

MAURICE

Moira and Penelope like to play with their food.

A long beat. Reginald processes, comes to a conclusion. It's written on his face. He turns to Maurice, and:

REGINALD

I know what happened. Don't I? It's so...obvious. And I have to face the truth.

MAURICE

That's right. The truth will set you --

REGINALD

I'M DEAD AND THIS IS HELL AND THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED I'VE GONE TO THE INFERNAL PLACE WHERE I WILL BURN FOR AN ETERNITY WHY DIDN'T I GO TO CHURCH I ALWAYS MEANT TO -- OMIGOD DID YOU GO TO HELL WITH ME?!?

MAURICE

Oh, for fuck's sake --

(a torrent)

The only way to save you was to make you a vampire like I am and that's what you are, a vampire -- no dream, no Hell, just another way to be.

REGINALD

But vampires aren't *real*. They're just a story.

Maurice OPENS his mouth in a sharp, fast motion. FANGS DESCEND from his upper incisors.

MAURICE

Check it. You got them too.

Reginald feels his teeth. No, he doesn't. But then FANGS DESCEND without warning, SPEARING his finger and drawing blood.

REGINALD

I still feel like the most likely hypothesis is that I am dreaming or in Hell.

MAURICE

Reggie, you're a motherfucking vampire. *Undead*. You will never age, never grow old. And you will never die unless you get staked or stranded in the sun. And of course you'll have to drink human blood.

REGINALD

(after a beat)

Can I...still eat pizza?

MAURICE

Sure. I guess.

REGINALD

How about ice cream?

MAURICE

Ice cream too.

REGINALD

So my taste buds still taste.

MAURICE

You're placing way too much emphasis on pizza and ice cream right now.

REGINALD

But if my digestive system works like it did before --

Reginald sounds like he's trying to solve a math problem. Maurice is trying to introduce him to his new life.

MAURICE

You can eat all the damn pizza and ice cream you want. Your taste buds *still taste*. But what they want to taste most is *blood*.

REGINALD

I don't want to talk about that.

MAURICE

Gonna have to, Reggie. Sooner or later. Blood's the only thing that nourishes you.

REGINALD

Every...day?

MAURICE

Your body will tell you what it needs.

REGINALD

How often do you -- ?

MAURICE

I'm good a couple times a month. But I been doin' this for a while.

A beat of silence. It's a lot to take in. Another beat. Then finally, a kind of quiet acceptance.

REGINALD
I'm a motherfuckin' vampire.

MAURICE
Say it loud, say it proud.

REGINALD
I'm a motherfuckin' vampire.

MAURICE
That's the spirit.

REGINALD
Undead.

MAURICE
Completely.

REGINALD
I will *never* age, *never* grow old.

MAURICE
Okay. Now you're just repeating
what I said.

REGINALD
What other superpowers do I have?

MAURICE
I wouldn't call 'em 'superpowers'
exactly -- it's like, whatever you
could do before you can do better
now.

REGINALD
Superspeed. Vampires have that,
right?

MAURICE
Well, sure. But like I said --

REGINALD
I'M A MOTHERFUCKIN' VAMPIRE.

MAURICE
Gotta workshop the catch phrase.

REGINALD
I can see for miles and miles.

MAURICE
True. But that doesn't mean --

REGINALD
I'm not the man I used to be.

MAURICE
Factually accurate, yes. But --

Reginald puts hands to hips like a Marvel superhero. He shouts, a little more deranged than before --

REGINALD
SUPERSPEED!!

Reginald takes off LIKE A ROCKET into the woods, trees BLURRING all around him, his arms PUMP, his legs THUNDER. The world SPEEDS BY as if in a dream --

REGINALD
I'M A MOTHERFUCKIN -- !!!

But then EVERYTHING ROTATES END TO END and Reginald FACEPLANTS into a ROCKY OUTCROPPING and his NOSE BREAKS spewing BLACK BLOOD and then CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. ON A HILLTOP - NIGHT

Reginald regains consciousness on the hilltop for the third time. Maurice watches, waits.

REGINALD
What...the...hell?

MAURICE
Don't try that again.

REGINALD
No shit. Why am I breathing? Why am I sweating? I'm supposed to be dead.

MAURICE
The thing that makes us vampires changes us. It alters the functions of all our organs and every system. It allows us to heal really *really* fast. But you got to understand -- our organs still *function*. We can run fast because our muscles heal as fast as we can damage them. We can be shot and stabbed through the lungs not because we don't need to breathe but because we can heal the damage the instant it happens.

REGINALD

Is this just...you know...FYI?

MAURICE

Are you familiar with the process that goes into whether a person will be approved for a sex change?

REGINALD

This feels like an unnecessary tangent.

MAURICE

Hear me out. It's more than a medical procedure. Patients got to go through rounds of therapy and counseling and hormone treatments. All with the goal of makin' sure they really want to commit to irreversible change and preparin' them for that.

REGINALD

Still not seeing the connection.

MAURICE

Problem is, you're not equipped, you didn't have time to prepare. And I'm sorry about that, Reggie, but I didn't want to let you die.

REGINALD

Appreciated.

MAURICE

Yeah, well. You may not thank me later. See, you're more powerful than you've ever been. But a vampire's enhancement is always relative to their condition at the time of their change. I was fast when I turned and it made me even faster. I was strong but it made me stronger. Thing is, most vampire prospects prepare for this. They spend years, gettin' ready for the change.

A beat. Then the bad news he's been building to:

MAURICE

Because the body they die with is the body they will have forever.

REGINALD

You're kiddin' me right now.

MAURICE

I wish I was but I'm not.

REGINALD

(after a beat)

So. Just to sum up. I'm going to be like this for an eternity and there is nothing I can do about it.

MAURICE

Sorry but it's true.

REGINALD

Dieting is not an option.

MAURICE

Was it ever?

REGINALD

You know what I mean.

MAURICE

No dieting. Also...there are other potential problems.

REGINALD

And you're just thinking of them *now?!*

MAURICE

Reggie. Given your shape and...size.

REGINALD

You can say 'fat' I've heard it before.

MAURICE

Okay, 'fat.' Bein' fat may cause a problem within the larger vampire community.

REGINALD

Like your friends in the parking lot?

MAURICE

Vain, bigoted, fat-shaming sons of bitches.

REGINALD

I'm not unfamiliar with the attitude.

MAURICE

So...that's why we got to keep all this on the down-low until I can figure out the consequences.

REGINALD

Are you saying I may not be welcome in the vampire community? Do they pose, like -- a *threat to me*?

Maurice nods, Reginald sighs.

REGINALD

Some things never change.

MAURICE

Everything changed, Reggie. We just got to figure the best way to work through this --

REGINALD

You don't get it. Why would you? You don't know what it's like to be me. Dead or alive.

Reginald turns back to the city below, lights like inverted stars.

REGINALD

I will always be *this*. Forever.

Maurice steps up beside him, puts a consoling hand to Reginald's shoulder. There are red streaks in the dark sky.

MAURICE

Sun's comin', Reggie. Time to go home.

Reginald and Maurice face the dawning of the new day.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREEEXT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The familiar facade of Reginald's apartment building. This is when we usually hear Roddy Dodge's VOICE OVER, Reginald's telephone sex operator day job. But not today.

INT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Reginald stands in the spray of a hot shower washing all the blood away. But he can't wash away what happened to him, the way he feels about it too.

TIME CUT - AT THE MIRROR

Reginald faces the mirror in his bedroom. He looks for signs. He checks his neck, no wound, no damage. He checks his teeth. No fangs and he's not sure why.

But then Reginald GAGS, and BURPS UP a BUCKET of DARK BLOOD all over the floor. Reginald chokes back an involuntary SOB. That fucking does it.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Reginald faces CLOSED CURTAINS in the living room. The window he usually keeps open. All the sunlight on the other side. Reginald TAKES HOLD of the curtain's edge. He pulls it back just enough to stick his other hand into the light. Reginald's hand SIZZLES and BURNS. He RETRACTS his hand, winces with PAIN.

But we SEE intention in his expression. Reginald is going to bathe in the light and end the nightmare he's living. He pulls back the curtain, inch by inch, but then --

SUDDENLY: the PING of an incoming text interrupts. Reginald looks from the curtain to his pants pooled on the floor. Reginald steps to his pants and takes out his phone. It's a TEXT from Sarah Owen. It FLOATS across the SCREEN. Appears, vanishes.

What happened to you last night? Are U ok?

And then another from the night before:

Reginald, are U still coming?

And another after that:

Did u just stand me up? Dude.

REGINALD

Sarah...

Reginald forgot all about Sarah. But now he remembers. And that changes everything.

INT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - TIME CUT

Reginald is back at the mirror but he looks different than he did before. Reginald is a man on a mission. He wears a red OHIO STATE COLLEGE hoodie snug over his head. He wears a big hat over the hoodie. He wears OVEN MITTS on his hands. Reginald pulls the hoodie a little tighter and --

EXT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The familiar apartment facade. Reginald ROLLS his recumbent bicycle out the front door into the light of day. Reginald moves with great care. If only to see if all that sun protection works. And it does.

REGINALD

Sarah.

That's right. You can kill him. You can turn him into an undead monster. But Reginald made a promise to the girl of his dreams and Reginald is a man of his word.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY

Reginald rides carefully through bright sunlight. He gains confidence as he goes. He even starts to sing and no he's not a great singer but there's real emotion in the old Jefferson Starship song he sings:

REGINALD

(loud)

*Sara, Sara, storms are brewin' in
your eyes
Sara, Sara, no time is a good time
for goodbyes
Danger in the game when the stakes
are high
Branded, my heart was branded while
my senses stood by
I'll never find another girl like
you, for happy endings it takes two
(louder still)
We're fire and ice, the dream won't
come true --*

Yes he sounds deranged. But give him a break. Reginald's having a very weird day. But then it goes from weird to worse. Reginald turns left and that's the way to Sarah's house but it's also east and that means Reginald is driving RIGHT INTO SUNLIGHT --

Reginald's face feels like he was napping on a bed of hot coals. His skin BUBBLES and BOILS, he hears himself SCREAM. His cheeks SAG, MELT, become LIQUID. His vision BLURS and then becomes a FLAT FEATURELESS BLACK. Reginald can feel the gelatinous contents of his eye sockets INCHWORM down his cheeks. His scream disintegrates into a WET GARGLING SOUND. Reginald is going to die right here right now.

Reginald CAREENS to the curb, turning away from direct sunlight, face covered by the hoodie. CAMERA HOLDS on him there. A SHUDDER rolls through his body. A very long beat. Then Reginald sits up. He traces his face with the oven mitts. CAMERA FINALLY reveals his FACE so we can SEE it too.

Reginald HEALS with supernatural speed. His skin UNBUBBLES and returns to its natural state. The contents of his eye sockets ROLL UP his cheeks, BACK INTO the sockets where the gelatinous goo becomes eyeballs again.

INT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - DAY

The empty apartment. Then the door opens, Reginald steps inside. He removes the hoodie, the big hat, tosses the oven mitts, and hurries toward the familiar mirror in his bedroom.

AT THE MIRROR

Reginald looks at his face in the glass. His face is unmarred, completely healed. His eyes are back where his eyes should be. Reginald looks at himself with faint wonder. Because it's starting to feel more like a superpower than an unending curse. Starting.

TIME CUT - LIVING ROOM

Reginald enters the living room, phone in hand. He taps a REPLY. He answers the last text Sarah sent him. It FLOATS across the SCREEN, appears, vanishes.

LONG STORY! I'M SORRY! SEE YOU AT WORK!

Reginald smiles for the first time since he bled out in the bowling alley parking lot.

INT. THE SLUSHY SHACK! - NIGHT

Early evening. Todd works one of three registers out front. It's early, no customers. Then the door to the break room OPENS and Reginald steps to the middle register.

Reginald is wholly different than he was before. And on some weird buried level Todd is aware of that. He looks at Reginald.

TODD

So. Regi-*nald*. How was the big date?

Reginald stares straight ahead, he will not meet Todd's gaze.

REGINALD

Does Sarah work tonight?

TODD

Dinner and a movie. That was the deal, right? You and *Sarah*.

Reginald still won't meet his gaze.

TODD

What I can't figure out is why she'd waste her time on an obvious loser like you. Unless this is some kinda Make-A-Wish pity party or *maybe Sarah's a loser just like --*

Todd still feels the sting of her rejection. No matter. Reginald moves at Todd with SURPRISING SPEED, face to face.

REGINALD

Keep her name out your mouth.

There's primal force in that. Todd takes a backward step.

REGINALD

I don't care what you *think* about me. I don't care what you *say*. But if you ever talk shit about *Sarah* again -- ?

Reginald STOPS SHORT. Because Reginald can TRACE every ARTERY, every VEIN, on Todd's face and on his neck.

TODD

Sorry. I was just making conversation. I didn't mean any --

Reginald can HEAR Todd's BEATING HEART. He can SMELL the BLOOD in him. Reginald, now fully panicked by his own blood lust, BOLTS OFF without further explanation, back to the break room. Todd calls after him:

TODD

Freak!

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reginald OPENS the refrigerator in the break room, and SHOVES the contents, all of it, into his ravenous maw. Lunch meats, cheese slices, several cartons of yoghurt, an avocado and an apple too. He emits a LOW GROWL as he eats, indication of his new and perilous nature -- not to mention the fact that not a single bite is making him feel any better --

ASHLEY WEEKS (26) wears a Slushy Shack! uniform. She just walked in the employee entrance. Ashley stands very still and watches Reginald with mute horror. A SUPER spreads across the SCREEN. **ASHLEY WEEKS**. Ashley emits a disgusted yawp. Then **THE RECOVERING BULEMIC**.

Reginald turns to her, his face smeared with gore. (Well, not gore. More like lunch meats and yoghurt.)

ASHLEY

Oh, Reginald.

Then he sees it again. ARTERIES, VEINS, all the RICH BLOOD PULSING inside her. BLOOD he can almost TASTE. BLOOD he needs to TASTE right now --

ASHLEY

B.E.D. -- Binge Eating Disorder -- is no joke. Believe it or not, I once suffered from debilitating eating disorders.

Ashley sets her purse on the break room table, TURNING AWAY from Reginald, her back to him. She takes pen and paper from her purse. She WRITES on the piece of paper, artful cursive.

ASHLEY Overeaters

Anonymous is an excellent resource. I'll give you the contact information.

Reginald doesn't hear a word. Instead, he BOLTS to the break room table, leans CLOSER to her EXPOSED neck, the ROADMAP OF BLOOD, the SMELL, and now the SOUND OF HER BEATING HEART.

Reginald's fangs DROP with a CLICK. Ashley's too busy helping a fellow B.E.D. sufferer to notice. Reginald tries to RESIST, but an OVERPOWERING URGE forces him CLOSER, his mouth now WIDE OPEN, ready to BITE --

ASHLEY

They're super helpful. But like I always say...change starts with choice. And the choice is yours --

Reginald FORCES his mouth SHUT. (Because 'choice.') But then it OPENS, FANGS OUT, involuntary. Reginald, despite his best efforts, is almost there. Her BARE NECK, his FIRST MEAL.

ASHLEY

I have helpful literature I could share with you. That might be a good place to start --

CAMERA VIEWS Ashley folding the piece of paper in half. We HEAR a faint WHOOSH at her back, air displaced. Ashley TURNS BACK to Reginald holding the paper out to --

Reginald is NOWHERE IN SIGHT. Reginald bolted from Ashley like he bolted from Todd.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - FRONT COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Reginald BARRELS back to Todd at the front counter. But then an even worse surprise. Sarah is at the counter on the customer side in mid-conversation with Todd.

SARAH

I texted back to tell him I didn't work tonight but he never answered.

TODD

Weird. He never showed up. Classic Regi-nald.

Todd sows misdirect. Reginald doesn't have time to correct the latter because the instant he SEES Sarah his fangs DROP with an AUDIBLE CLICK. Reginald CLAPS a hand over his mouth and BLURS BACK inside the break room. It all happens in a blink. Because vampire super-speed. And all Sarah SEES is a ghostly swinging door at Todd's back.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reginald, now trapped in his very own ROADRUNNER CARTOON, BLASTS BACK into the break room, running from Sarah and the way she made his fangs drop --

Reginald, aiming for the back door, RUNS RIGHT INTO THE WALL instead, BOUNCING back to the floor, on his back, and PROJECTILE VOMITING everything he ate up into the air like the worst possible geyser. And what goes UP must come DOWN.

Reginald sits up covered in yuck. He HEARS a familiar yawp and there's poor Ashley running out the counter door as fast as she can, pamphlets fluttering to the floor in her wake. Reginald, dazed, confused, fucked every way including sideways, picks up a pamphlet, reads. ***Why can't I stop eating? How to curb your compulsion.*** And that would be funny if he wasn't --

SARAH'S VOICE

Reginald...?

Sarah calls out from the other side of the door. The door starts to open. We HEAR another WHOOSH of displaced air. Sarah enters but Reginald is long gone by then.

EXT. SLUSHY SHACK! - NIGHT

Midnight. Maurice steps through the dark with the usual grace, Angel Food Cake Cutter (also vampire-killer) stuck in his back pocket. He's here for his nocturnal slushy --

Then a comical HISSING in the dark. It's Reginald hiding in the shadows. Reginald is a rank, sweaty, unholy undead mess. Maurice looks Reginald up/down and:

MAURICE

So. On a scale of one to what-the-fuck, good day or *bad* day?

REGINALD

DO I LOOK LIKE I'M HAVING A GOOD DAY TO YOU RIGHT NOW?!

MAURICE

The vomit and the sweat are clues, sure, but hope springs --

REGINALD

'Eternal'?! Hah. I get it. Like the eternity I'm condemned to suffer, like the eternal hunger that is burning me up inside -- I can't look at anyone without seeing their veins, *smelling* their blood --

MAURICE

Food.

REGINALD

They are not food to me.

Then, as if on cue, Claire rolls into view on a kick scooter. Just twelve, mop of red hair, wise beyond her years. Claire sees Reginald and Maurice on the periphery.

CLAIRE

Hey, Reginald.

REGINALD

Hi...Claire.

CLAIRE (statement of
fact)

You look like shit.

Claire shoves off for the bright lights of the Slushy Shack! without another word. Reginald and Maurice resume.

REGINALD

Also I can't control my fangs which pretty much compromises the whole 'keep it on the down low' concept.

MAURICE

Quick question. What made you think comin' in to work tonight was a good idea?

REGINALD

I stood up Sarah while I was being transformed into an undead creature of the night -- thanks again for that, BTW -- and I really wanted to tell her I'm sorry. Also I tried earlier but my face burned off --

MAURICE

Slow down, Reggie. Take a very deep breath.

(he does)

Good. Now take another but slower.

(he does)

Your fangs aren't something that happens to you. Your fangs are something you own. Focus on that. Make them go away.

CLICK. Reginald's fangs RETRACT. He reacts with relief.

MAURICE

See? Your hunger creates panic and confusion. Panic and confusion make
(MORE)

MAURICE (CONT'D)

it harder to control your new abilities. Fangs included. Control your panic, control your confusion. Everything sorta falls into place. Naturally.

REGINALD

There is nothing 'natural' about this process.

MAURICE

You need to feed. Or every damn person you see will look like a blood bag. Do you understand that?

Reginald nods however reluctantly.

MAURICE

One more thing.
(off Reginald)
Until you do. Until you regain control of your faculties. Everyone you know is at risk. Sarah is at risk and I know you do not want that.

REGINALD

I'd rather step into the sun.

MAURICE

I hear you. That's why you owe her more than just an apology and we both know it.

CLOSE ON Reginald. He knows what Maurice means but it's the very last thing he wants to do.

INT. SLUSHY SHACK! - BREAK ROOM - NIGHT

Sarah cleans up the mess in the break room with mop and bucket. She's in street clothes because it's not her shift. But she helps anyway because that's the kind of person she is. The back door OPENS and Reginald enters. He doesn't look any better than he did before. Sarah sees that but she's not repulsed she's worried --

SARAH

Reginald, what's wrong?

Reginald wants to tell her more than anyone in the universe but he also knows she's the last person he can tell so:

REGINALD
We need to break up.

SARAH
 I didn't know we were together.

REGINALD
 I mean we can't see each other anymore.

SARAH
 But we never did see each other.

Sarah's puzzled and who can blame her. Reginald is determined to do what needs doing.

REGINALD
I don't want to go out on a date with you and it was a mistake to ask you in the first place.

SARAH
 Okay. Sure. Whatever.

There's a note of disappointment in that. Reginald wants to make it better. But when he opens his mouth to speak his FANGS DROP with a CLICK. Reginald CLAPS a hand over his mouth.

SARAH
 Reginald? Did you chip a tooth?

Reginald emits a muffled MOAN, and SPEEDS out the back door.

EXT. SLUSHY SHACK! - CONTINUOUS

Reginald leans back against the door as if to stop Sarah from following. Tears fall from his eyes. Tears of frustration, tears of sadness too. Also tears that are mixed with undisgested blood that make RED STREAKS down his face.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUREXT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ON THE ROOF - NIGHT

Reginald sits at the edge of the roof of his apartment building and watches the moon go nowhere in the sky. Reginald HEARS FOOTSTEPS on the roof but does not turn. Maurice appears out of the dark, sits down beside him.

REGINALD

I knew it was you without even looking.

MAURICE

Who else were you expecting?

REGINALD

But I *knew*.

MAURICE

I'm your sire. We shared blood. That makes for a very strong connection. Wherever you are I *know* where you are. Whatever you feel I can feel it too.

A beat of silence. Then Reginald turns to Maurice. RED TEAR TRACKS still on his cheeks.

REGINALD

I didn't like my life much. It was problematic in a lot of ways. But I think I'm going to miss it and I'm not sure that feeling will ever go away.

MAURICE

It will. Might take time. But trust me on this. One day? Your old life will feel like somethin' out of a dream you had, one of those lucid ones --

REGINALD

Are you one hundred percent sure about that?

There's a plea inside the question. Maurice just meets his gaze. Because Maurice knows everything there is to know about 'old lives'. PRE-LAP funky MUSIC. The Politicians and "Free Your Mind." Wah-wah guitar that cuts like a knife. Then --

EXT. OAKLAND - FLASHBACK - DAY

CLOSE ON a pair of brand new Floursheim Chelsea mod boots. The MUSIC plays. ANOTHER ANGLE reveals Maurice Miller walking through sunshine, the familiar ease and authority, even at 25.

Wait a fucking minute. Maurice is walking THROUGH DAYLIGHT like it's not a threat and we realize that it's not. A SUPER SPREADS across the screen. **OAKLAND, 1972.** Then we SEE the BLACK EYE, newly made, on Maurice's face. The SIMMERING ANGER he feels inside, anger that's about to burn him down to the hot pavement --

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - FLASHBACK - DAY

GHETTO KIDS line up for breakfast. Bright-eyed and hungry. **BLACK PANTHERS** serve them food with smiles and small-talk. Some wear berets and leather jackets, some wear shades. Everybody wears an apron. There's a poster on the wall that reads ***Survival Pending Revolution.*** A SUPER SPREADS across the SCREEN. **FREE BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM.**

Maurice grabs an apron, slips into the serving line. He ladles scrambled eggs onto plates. There's a woman beside him, 30 years old, matching afro. She sees the BLACK EYE, reacts.

ANGELA

What happened there, young soldier?

A SUPER SPREADS across the SCREEN. **ANGELA COHN-BENDIT.**

MAURICE

Kids wrenched open a hydrant,
playin' in the water. Cops chased
'em off for no good reason. I took
exception to that.

ANGELA

Looks like it.

MAURICE

Wrong end of a nightstick. What I
get.

There's something weary in that, defeated. Angela takes a closer look. She wonders, she considers, she decides.

ANGELA

Why don't you and me go out tonight
and talk about *what you get.*

Then we SEE it. The big PURPLE PARASOL Angela keeps close by.
A SECOND SUPER rolls into view. **THE SIRE.**

EXT./INT. TRADER VIC'S - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

The bar called Hinky Dinks changed its name to TRADER VIC'S;
palm trees, Polynesian theme, the first one of its kind in
the USA.

INSIDE - AT THE BAR

Maurice and Angela sit at a long bar. Tiki torches, two big
tropical drinks. Maurice is drunk. He indicates his drink.

MAURICE

What you call this?

ANGELA

It's a Mai-Tai.

MAURICE

Tastes good.

Maurice looks a little younger than his years.

ANGELA

What do you want, Maurice? Out
there in the world. What is it that
you *want*?

MAURICE

Justice.

ANGELA

How's that goin' for you?

MAURICE

How do you think?

ANGELA

What if I told you there was
another way to fight. A way to
break the motherfuckers --

MAURICE

I would want you to tell me exactly
what that is. And then I would
break them.

ANGELA

It's a change, Maurice. I can do
that for you if you give me your
permission.

MAURICE
This...change. Is that something
you did?

ANGELA
Yes.

MAURICE
When did you do that?

ANGELA
One hundred and fifty years ago.

EXT. TRADER VIC'S - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Suddenly. An ALLEY out back. Angela SLAMS Maurice into the wall, nearly KNOCKING the breath out, and then she RIPS away the high collars of his shirt, EXPOSING his neck --

MAURICE
Dammit, Angie. Didn't need to tell
me a story if all you wanted was
sex --

ANGELA
Not askin' for sex, Maurice.

MAURICE
Well I'm gettin' seriously mixed-up
vibes right now.

ANGELA
Do you want to fight?

MAURICE
I said that clearly.

ANGELA
Do you want to be like me?

MAURICE
What the hell is that 'sposed to --

ANGELA
Do I have your permission?

MAURICE
Bitch, do what you gotta do but I
think you're confused about what's
happening here --

Angela's fangs DROP with a CLICK. Maurice sees them. Angela repeats more quietly.

ANGELA

Do I have your permission?

Maurice does not speak. He can't find the words. So he NODS assent instead. THEN IT HAPPENS. Angela BITES deeply into his neck, TEARING at his flesh, feasting on the blood beneath it. Maurice's legs go weak, he can feel the life DRAINING right out of him. It's like fucking and dying at the same time. Angela pulls back, mouth smeared with blood and gore and --

ANGELA

You're dyin', Maurice.

MAURICE

No shit.

Angela bites into her own wrist, mines her own blood, and:

ANGELA

DRINK.

Angela SLAMS her wrist into his mouth and Maurice reacts, uncertain, but then he starts to DRINK and DRINK and DRINK.

EXT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ON THE ROOF - NIGHT

BACK TO PRESENT. Reginald and Maurice sit side by side at the roof's edge beneath a full moon. Reginald reacts with surprise, deeper emotion.

REGINALD

I like your origin story better than my origin story. What happened to Angela?

MAURICE

I don't want to talk about Angela.

REGINALD

Did she teach you how to live like this?

MAURICE

Nah. Had to learn that on my own.

REGINALD

Is that a hard and fast rule?

MAURICE

Why?

REGINALD
Because I'm really hoping you will
teach me.

MAURICE
(after a beat)
Okay. I can do that.

REGINALD
I'm hoping you will be my friend.

MAURICE
Reggie. I got a rule about making
friends. Sooner or later --

REGINALD
...Please?

MAURICE
(after a beat)
I can do that.

Reginald reacts with quiet relief. Then, quietly:

REGINALD
The night we met behind the Slushy
Shack. Were you going to feed on
me?

MAURICE
Yes.

REGINALD
Why didn't you?

MAURICE
I guess I'm just a sucker for true
romance.

Reginald nods approval and looks back to the moon in the sky.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Charles, Penelope, and Moira walk up a brick path to a mansion. The last time we saw them was in the bowling alley parking lot. But they do not exude the same airy confidence.

CHARLES
It's not our fault.

PENELOPE
Maurice killed Isaac.

MOIRA
Off with his head!

They're afraid and it shows. Though Moira is closer to hysterical.

INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Charles, Penelope, and Moira enter, continue through a foyer.

CHARLES
She will understand.

They move into a spacious living room. A fire burns in a hearth the size of a Prius. A woman, SEEN FROM BEHIND, sits on a couch facing the flames.

CHARLES
She will make him *suffer*.

The woman gestures for them to step forward. Charles, Moira, and Penelope SKITTER to couch and fireplace. CAMERA VIEWS them over the woman's shoulder. We do not SEE her face, only the outline of her unruly hair. The trio bows obeisance.

CHARLES
We summoned Maurice as you requested.

PENELOPE
But he ignored your command.

MOIRA
So I ate his companion.

That's off-topic. Charles reacts, redirects:

CHARLES
Maurice killed Isaac.

PENELOPE
Isaac is very much *dust*.

MOIRA
He tasted of Cornish game hen.

Moira's annoying culinary tangent is the last tangent she will ever make. The woman CHARGES at Moira, SHOVES her into hearth and fire, then RETURNS to the couch IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

Moira BURNS howling pain and regret. Then she is ASHES. It all happens with TERRIFYING SPEED. Charles and Penelope FREEZE. Tears leak from their eyes, bloody streaks. They beg:

CHARLES
Justice deserved.

PENELOPE
Justice served.

CHARLES & PENELOPE
Spare us please.

CAMERA REVERSES and finally REVEALS the woman seated on the couch. It's ANGELA COHN-BENDIT. Maurice's sire. She looks at the quaking survivors. There's anger in her eyes. Some of that is about Maurice. Some of that is not. Then:

ANGELA
Tell me about this Fat Vampire.

INT. REGINALD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's late. Reginald is back in his apartment, alone. MUSIC PLAYS and it's "Fire It Up" by Modest Mouse (remember the rock band tee?) that matches his mood. Because Reginald feels better than he did before.

Reginald experiments with his new body. He tries some JUMPING JACKS. FASTER and FASTER until he nearly BLURS. Reginald stops, breathless. But no vomiting this time. He files the information away for future use. He's mapping the boundries of his abilities.

TIME CUT - LIVING ROOM

Reginald sits in the high-backed chair. There are magazines on the coffee table. Reginald takes a magazine and LEAFS through it. Then something strange happens. Reginald realizes he is reading REALLY REALLY FAST. The pages BLUR right by until he reaches the END of the magazine. Reginald sits back, amazed. Then, quietly, to himself, a test:

REGINALD
Page 44. "Post-Grammy win, a brand new world is opening up for Billie Eilish."

Reginald flips to page 44. Checks the first words on the page. They are exactly like he remembered.

REGINALD

Page 62. "By late 1979, Prince and his band were playing their first club showcases."

Reginald flips to the page. He got it exactly right. Reginald reacts, giddy with it. Reginald takes a thick book from a bookshelf. INFINITE JEST by David Foster Wallace. Reginald reads the 1,079-page book in approximately the time it takes to shuffle a deck of cards. Reginald fills with wonder. He tries one more test:

REGINALD

Page 377 --

The DOORBELL CHIMES. The MUSIC STOPS. Reginald hurries to open it.

REGINALD

Maurice. You won't *believe* what I can [do] --

But it's not Maurice. It's Sarah Owen instead. She launches:

SARAH

This may come as a surprise to you and it probably interferes with your plan to break up with me even though we *were never together* but I gave it some thought and I *reject* your imaginary breakup and believe we need to have an open and honest conversation about what's happening between us because I know how you look at me when you think I'm not looking but what you *don't know* is how I sometimes look at you.

Sarah's confession is the second most surprising thing that happened to Reginald this week. It's like a dream he had that came true though probably not at the best possible moment --

SARAH

May I come in now, please?

A SUPER SPREADS across the SCREEN. **FOOD.**

REGINALD

Okay.

Sarah STEPS PAST Reginald into the living room. Reginald remains. Then his FANGS DROP with a CLICK. **CUT TO BLACK.**

END OF PILOT