

**The DISSECTION OF JASON MANN**

written by  
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BLACK

JASON 1985(V.O.)  
It's amazing how much you can remember  
when you try. But it's the damnedest  
thing how much you remember when you try  
not to.

FADE IN:

INT. DR. WELLS' OFFICE - DAY

We see a door, with an opaque glass window. Printed on it,  
backwards to us: Dr. Franklin Wells.

SUPER: 1985

JASON, 32 and intense, hurries in. He stands just inside the  
door of the nicely appointed office.

JASON 1985  
I'm ready.

TITLE AND CREDITS

DR. WELLS  
Ready for what?

JASON 1985  
I'm ready to tell the story.

DR. WELLS  
Which one is that?

Jason holds up a manuscript.

JASON 1985  
My story. The only one I have.

He hands the work to Dr. Wells.

DR. WELLS  
So you did the exercises--

JASON 1985  
No, I didn't do the exercises, I just  
wrote. I wrote and I told everything,  
all the things I've never told anyone  
before.

DR. WELLS

Does this tome explain anything about the mysterious Clay?

JASON 1985

Everything.

DR. WELLS

(considering the manuscript)  
This could be the breakthrough you've been needing for closure.

JASON 1985

I don't need closure, I need an exorcism.

DR. WELLS

I had a comp professor at Northwestern who would say 'writing is Ex-Lax for the soul.'

Smiling, the doctor glances up at the pacing Jason. He doesn't acknowledge the joke and Dr. Wells returns to his sober, doctor countenance.

DR. WELLS (CONT'D)

Yes, well very good. I look forward to reading this.

JASON 1985

No.

Jason's abruptness catches the doctor off guard.

DR. WELLS

No?

JASON 1985

No, I have to tell you the story now.

DR. WELLS

During your session?

JASON 1985

Yes.

DR. WELLS

Are you sure?

JASON 1985

Yes, I'm sure. I have to.

DR. WELLS

Why the sudden urgency, Jason? Why do you have to?

JASON 1985

I have to because I have to.

The doctor considers this, then thumbs through the work.

DR. WELLS

It looks like you've employed several different formats here.

Dr. Wells begins writing something on his legal pad.

JASON 1985

Yeah, narrative, stage play, novel... basically every form of writing that's been frustrating me for the last five years.

We now see what he's jotting down: "Breakthrough = not just story, but act of telling it?"

JASON 1985 (CONT'D)

I even toyed around with doing it as a children's book. You know the read-along kind?

DR. WELLS

Uhh...

JASON 1985

I don't know if they had them when you were a kid. It's the kind that starts off with...

We cut to hearing a WOMAN NARRATOR's voice, coming from Jason's mouth.

WOMAN NARRATOR (V.O.)

...this is the story of so-and-so. You can read along with me in your book. You will know it is time to turn the page, when you hear the chimes ring like this:

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE -

BOOM. Bombs dropped from planes overhead explode through the foliage of Vietnam.

ARCHIVE FOOTAGE -

Kids take drugs.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

It was the summer of sixty-nine. Soldiers were dropping napalm, kids were dropping acid, and I was dropping fruit flies into Fly-Nap.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASS - DAY

Fifteen disinterested students in varying degrees of consciousness sit behind their desks in neatly ordered rows.

An unhappy, withering spinster, MS. KOWALCHUK, teaches class.

MS. KOWALCHUK

You will get together in groups of three.  
On the board are the different animals we  
have dissected: cats, sharks, fetal  
pigs, frogs...

CLAY

Can we dissect a person?

The children laugh.

Ms. Kowalchuk pauses and sighs, then continues talking about their assignment.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

Enter Clay Walker. Clay was going into eleventh grade. I, the tenth. I was getting ahead in school. Clay was catching up. He was actually only two months older than me, but since I was born in November of 1953, I was held back. Well, not held back per se, just started in school later. Anyway... For the rest of your life, a year difference is insignificant, but at that time, it meant everything. I had a chance to be friends with an eleventh grader. Had I been the same age or older, maybe I wouldn't have been so trusting, and maybe things might have happened differently.

INT. ANOTHER CLASSROOM - DAY

Clay stands in front of a chalkboard as a teacher drills him on an oral test.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

Little known facts about Clay Walker:

CLAY

The oceans of the world...  
We SCAN across page after page of Clay's rap sheet.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

He'd been busted three times for shoplifting, but what no one knew was what he stole: a dictionary, a magnifying glass, and baking soda. Like the song said, 'signs, signs, everywhere signs.' Interesting fact number two... the only way Clay got promoted each year was

because tests in high school are based on memorization. And Clay had a system.

CLASSROOM -

After each letter Clay says, the corresponding mnemonic word appears in a graphic to his right.

CLAY

I...

(graphic: "I")

Indian Ocean. P...

(graphic: "pinch")

Pacific Ocean. A...

(graphic: "Ann-Margret's")

Arctic Ocean... Atlantic Ocean.

We SWOOP past Clay to the map behind him. Scanning closer and closer until we arrive at microscopic dot called...

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

Kulawea was, and is, a tiny little town in the Florida Panhandle, about thirty miles west of Tallahassee and two miles off ten.

Establishing shots of Kulawea.

JASON 1985 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Everybody's parents worked either at the papermill, or down highway 41 at the Clovis Tate Fish Farm, cleaning and boxing up catfish. Kids grew up, graduated, most of them, and found their place in the community. I only heard of one who came back underneath a flag, Casey Mulbrey, but that was after I left. We didn't have any protesters in Kulawea. Like a lot of things, the "Sixties" didn't get there til about nineteen seventy-four. My parents were the ones who made me take summer school. I had wanted to start working that summer as a bag boy at the Piggly Wiggly on Adair Street. If I started that summer, I could work my way up to checker by Christmas, and maybe an assistant manager next summer. I had always done well in school, always on the honor roll, starting quarterback on the J-V team at the time. I just wanted to have fun, but my parents wanted me to reach my "full potential". That's why this summer I was sitting one row up from Clay instead of putting like items in brown paper bags. Whenever people tell stories about small towns, it's usually about someone who wants to live in the big city. To escape the small town mentality of small towns.

But not me. I didn't want to leave town.  
My house maybe. No, I was perfectly  
happy there, other than not getting to  
work at Piggly Wiggly. And besides, this  
isn't my story.

INT. DWAYNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Jason, Clay, and DWAYNE enter Dwayne's lower middle class  
home.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)  
Dwayne and Clay were friends. Not good  
friends, just friends. Their bond forged  
out of convenience more than necessity.  
Dwayne's last name was Walpole.  
Clay's was Walker, so since first grade  
they had always been put with each other  
when anything was ordered alphabetically.  
Clay thought Dwayne sometimes acted like  
he was above him. Dwayne thought Clay  
sometimes pushed a joke too far. But  
let's face it, while words like 'consort'  
and 'accomplice' seem pretty cool, they  
don't apply to lone gunmen.

Clay plops down on the couch while Jason looks around.

CLAY  
You got anything to drink?

DWAYNE  
I'll check.

Dwayne exits to the kitchen. Jason thumbs through a milk  
crate of albums.

JASON  
You have the Lettermen?

DWAYNE (O.S.)  
It's not mine, it's my mom's.

JASON  
I love the Lettermen.

DWAYNE (O.S.)  
Hey, don't touch stuff, okay?  
You're going to get me in trouble.  
Where're the damn YooHoos? Do you hear  
me?

Jason cues up 'Put Your Head On My Shoulder' and closes his  
eyes as he sways to the music.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)  
You guys better not be messing

with my dad's survivalist stuff in  
the closet.

Clay and Jason exchange looks.

CLOSET -

Jason and Clay pilfer through mounds of survivalist  
paraphernalia.

CLAY

I can't believe you listen to this  
crap. It's so square.

JASON

What is this?

CLAY

It's an M-R-E. You open it up and  
there's your meal.

JASON

What music do you like?

CLAY

Have you heard 'Electric  
Ladyland'?

JASON

(shaking his head)  
Mm-mmm. Holy mackerel!

With a look of wonder, Jason lifts into frame a menacing  
hunting knife.

CLAY

Far out. Look at this.

Clay holds up a weathered, poorly constructed book, "Homemade  
Bombs: 24 Recipes Using Everyday Household Items."

JASON

Wow. So what's so great about  
'Electric Ladyman'?

CLAY

Jason, it's Jimi Friggin' Hendrix.  
Do you know who--

JASON

Yes, I know who he is. He's  
that flamboyant negro fella. So  
what's the big deal?

CLAY

He just improvises like... aagh.

JASON  
I'll bet he can't hold a  
candle to Burt Bacharach.

Clay throws a pillow at Jason. He bats it away.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Hey!

The pillow hits the record PLAYER, sending the needle off the vinyl, SCRATCHING as it goes.

DWAYNE (O.S.)  
Hey ya'll, come on. Go into my  
room, please.

BEDROOM -

Dwayne's room is adorned with a Raquel Welch poster from One Million Years B.C., speed limit and Department of Forestry signs that have been liberated, and various camouflage hats hung on the wall with nails.

Clay tosses his tattered backpack onto the bed, then stretches out himself. As the pack lands, the contents slide halfway out, catching Jason's attention: a social studies book and a Playboy magazine with Miss Nancy McNeil on the cover.

JASON  
Where did you get that?

CLAY  
I stole it. From the library.

Clay picks up the geography book and slides it back into the bag.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Don't tell anybody.

JASON  
Not the book, the Playboy.

CLAY  
Oh, from my dad's closet.

Dwayne enters and tosses the guys each a YooHoo.

DWAYNE  
Here.

JASON  
Thanks.

Dwayne makes a seat on a pile of dirty clothes.

DWAYNE

So what should we do?

CLAY

I don't know

JASON

We already know what have to do.

CLAY

What?

JASON

We're supposed to-- you guys know this, you were there. We're supposed to do something that illustrates the scientific process.

Clay looks at Dwayne, confused.

CLAY

What's the scientific process?

JASON

What's the scien--. You guys...

DWAYNE

Sometimes it's too easy.

CLAY

Okay, we're going to be serious now.

DWAYNE

Yes, serious. Heavy. Digging the heaviness.

Jason pauses, checking to see if the guys are actually listening.

JASON

Okay, I was thinking we could do an experiment where we grow two plants in different places. For one we play classical music and the other one we play rock and roll and see which grows faster.

CLAY

Like the Lettermen?

JASON

No, we could play the stuff you like, the BeeGees, whatever.

DWAYNE

We could-- never mind.

JASON

What?

DWAYNE

Nothing. Blue just had puppies, but I can't think of any experiments with puppies.

CLAY

I got it!

JASON

What?

CLAY

We dissect a person.

JASON

Come on, Clay. Be serious. I've got a football meeting soon.

CLAY

I am being serious. We explore somebody's brain, one of us. We can ask them about what's in their head.

DWAYNE

Like a shrink?

CLAY

Yeah, kind of.

JASON

So the dissection thing is a metaphor.

CLAY

Sure, yeah.

Jason considers the idea.

JASON

But how does this relate to the scientific process?

Clay paces around, excited.

CLAY

I don't know, that's your department.

DWAYNE

It sounds weird.

(beat)

Let's do it.

JASON

I don't know if this is what Ms. Kowalchuk wants. It's different.

CLAY  
It's different, exactly...

Clay's mind races to think of a way to close the sale.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
It's so different she'll probably give us  
extra credit.

Clay and Dwayne look at Jason, waiting.

JASON  
(sighing)  
Alright.

DWAYNE  
How do we start?

CLAY  
I don't know, I'm making this up as I go.  
Get some paper.

JASON  
Wait. Which one of us do we dissect?

The guys look at each other. Clay turns his gaze to Jason.

CUT TO:

CLAY  
What's your name?

JASON  
You know my name.

CLAY  
What's your name?

JASON  
Clay, I have my football meeting in--

CLAY  
Jason. I want to do this right.

JASON  
(softer)  
Okay.

CLAY  
What's your name?

JASON  
My name is Jason Avery Mann.

DISSOLVE TO:

JASON (CONT'D)

...and then after I won for Liberty County, I advanced to the state science fair competition.

Dwayne sleeps. Clay fights nodding off.

JASON (CONT'D)

I met a lot of swell kids and I ended up getting fourth, and I was sad because I really wanted to win, but it was neat because the top five kids got to meet Governor Haydon Burns, although dad says that isn't that great of an honor seeing as he was only governor for two years.

Jason's pause for breath rouses Clay. He reaches over and slaps Dwayne on the arm.

CLAY

Hey. Hey! Wake up.

DWAYNE

I am up.

CLAY

Read what we have so far.

Dwayne squints, cocks his head to the side, and rubs his eyes.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Dwayne.

DWAYNE

Hold on. Something about winning the pinewood derby in Cub Scouts. One summer his family went to Arizona and he found an Indian arrowhead.

(squinting at notes)

What is that?

Clay lays back on the bed.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

...was kissed for the first time in first grade. He likes the stalks of broccoli but not the--

CLAY

Hold on a minute.

Clay sits up.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What was that about being kissed? How did I miss that?

Dwayne glances at his scratchings, shrugs, and looks to Jason.

JASON

I had my first kiss in first grade, in Miss Shepherdson's class.

CLAY

Who was it?

JASON

Adel Peterson.

CLAY

Adel Peterson?

JASON

Yeah.

CLAY

Did she kiss you?

JASON

Uh-huh. It was a dare I think. But I didn't know that, so when she got done, I kissed her back.

CLAY

Where?

JASON

By the monkeybars after recess.

CLAY

No I mean where, on the cheek, on the lips?

JASON

The lips.

CLAY

What was it like?

JASON

It felt... sparkley.

Clay rolls back on the bed laughing like a hyena.

CLAY

Godamighty, that is hilarious. Now this is some interesting stuff.

Clay slaps Dwayne's arm.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Are you getting all this down? Listen to that, man. Jason and Adel, first grade,

like a regular, uh... like--

JASON  
Romeo and Juliet.

CLAY  
Shut up Jason. Don't talk to me like I'm  
stupid. I was going to say that.

DWAYNE  
Hey Clay, we gotta get outta here.

CLAY  
What for?

DWAYNE  
On account of I'm supposed to be at  
Piggly Wiggly in ten minutes and Jason  
here has practice.

JASON  
You work at Piggly Wiggly?

CLAY  
It takes five minutes to walk to Adair.  
Come on, let's talk about Adel Peterson  
some more.

DWAYNE  
Clay.

CLAY  
Come on, ya'll.

Jason stands up.

JASON  
Clay, we can work on the project  
tomorrow. We'll pick up right where we  
left off.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASS - DAY

Clay sits on his back row chair. Barely.

CLAY  
The stomach-- no, the liver!

MS. KOWALCHUK  
No Clay. How about we let someone else  
answer, hmm? Anyone? Stephanie?

A pretty girl with flowing auburn hair glances up shyly.

STEPHANIE  
The pancreas?

MS. KOWALCHUK

That is correct. Now please put away your dittos. We have some business to take care of before lunch. Today we choose someone to be our speaker on Presentation Day. This is the person who will explain our projects to Principal Bock. We need someone with energy, enthusiasm...  
(scanning room)  
Who will it be? Who will it...?

Clay looks at her with pleading eyes.

MS. KOWALCHUK (CONT'D)

Stephanie, how about you?

INT. NOEL MCCOY MEMORIAL LIBRARY - DAY

In the dark, a single, bobbing light makes its way down a row of books, scanning. We hear a knee HIT a shelf.

CLAY

Oww! Dammit.

SPILLING BOOKS. The light is laid on the floor, just as all the florescent lights come on. Clay kneels beside a sprawling pile of Funk and Wagnalls on the floor.

A bald, black head slowly emerges from the vertical edge of the far bookshelf, followed by two wide eyes magnified by thick glasses, and finally the entire blue-jumpsuited body of SAMUEL, the janitor.

INT. BIOLOGY CLASS - DAY

SAMUEL

...and he had these jammed in the back of his trousers, Ms. Kowalchuk.

Samuel hands her two books, one thick brown hardcover, the other a thin and large.

MS. KOWALCHUK

Thank you, Samuel. We'll take it from here.

SAMUEL

Yes ma'am.

She waits until Samuel leaves, then glances down at the books. The first is an easy-read children's book, The Goose Who Laid the Golden Egg. She smiles wryly, then holds up the second book.

MS. KOWALCHUK

Romeo and Juliet.

A beat as Ms. Kowalchuk glances over her glasses at Clay.

MS. KOWALCHUK (CONT'D)  
A little bit above your current reading  
level, don't you think?

MS. KOWALCHUK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
God, that felt good.

MS. KOWALCHUK (CONT'D)  
What do you think we should do about  
this?

Clay shrugs his shoulders.

MS. KOWALCHUK (CONT'D)  
Should we call your parents? Hmm?  
Would your mom be proud of you Clay?  
What would your father do if he found  
this out? Should I call him?

CLAY  
Are you going to?

MS. KOWALCHUK  
I just might.

CLAY  
Let me save you the trouble, Ms.  
Kowalchuk.

Clay reaches his hand far to the right and punches himself in  
the jaw.

FULL SCREEN GRAPHIC ala Batman: POW!

Again.

FULL SCREEN GRAPHIC: BIF!

He grabs the back of his own hair and slams his forehead  
against a desk.

FULL SCREEN GRAPHIC: WHAM!

Clay stands up tall, straightens his clothes, and stares  
right at his teacher.

MS. KOWALCHUK  
Leave. Please.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Class is over for the day. Jason and Dwayne stand around in  
the hall, waiting. A handful of students filter out behind  
them.

DWAYNE  
Where did you go?

Dwayne notices a red mark on Clay's forehead.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Hey, what happened to your head?

CLAY

Nothing. I took myself a field trip down to the mill, see my old man.

DWAYNE

We heard you got caught stealing books.

JASON

And that they're going to suspend you.

Clay's face shows a moment of fear, but he covers with feigned confidence and disdain.

CLAY

Hell no, they're not going to kick me out, 'cause then the teachers wouldn't have anyone to pick on. So, ya'll ready to do some exploring?

JASON

Explore--? Oh right. I can't. My dad and I are putting together a telescope this afternoon so we see where the astronauts land.

DWAYNE

Me either Clay. We getting this new scanning machine at the store and I have to go learn a whole buncha new codes.

CLAY

Come on ya'll, you can't bail out on me like this.

JASON

We're not bailing out on you, Clay. We just can't do it this afternoon.

CLAY

What about tonight?

JASON

My dad and I were going to try out the telescope.

Clay turns to Dwayne.

DWAYNE

I don't have anything going on,  
but--

CLAY

Great, then you can--

DWAYNE

Clay, I don't want to do this at  
night. For cryin' out loud, this  
is just summer school.

JASON

(to Dwayne)

It's not 'just summer school' for  
all of us. Some of us are trying  
to get the Joe Johnston Student  
Athlete Scholarship.

CLAY

That's right. And a true  
student athlete wouldn't put off an  
assignment. He'd hold off on the  
fun stuff til all the work was done.

A moment of pause for Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

The landing isn't for a couple  
of days. You can still finish the  
telescope in time.

DWAYNE

Where's the fire? Why are you in  
such a hurry up to finish this project  
anyway?

CLAY

Come on, ya'll, really. How long  
will it take?

Jason looks at DWAYNE. DWAYNE looks at Jason. Jason shrugs.

DWAYNE

(sighing)

Fine, but I still have to pick up  
the code book from work so I can't  
be there til later.

CLAY

No problem, I know where the key  
is.

Clay bounds off.

DWAYNE

(calling after him)

Don't touch anything!

Jason and Dwayne watch Clay as he disappears down the hall.

JASON

Man alive, what's the deal with  
him?

DWAYNE

Please make sure he doesn't touch  
anything.

INT. DWAYNE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dwayne breezes through the front door, tossing his code book  
onto the couch.

DWAYNE

Mom? You here? Clay?

He rounds the corner and enters his room.

BEDROOM -

Clay leans over Jason who sits slumped in a chair. He holds  
pocketwatch in front of his face.

DWAYNE

What are you doing?

Clay doesn't turn his attention from Jason.

CLAY

Hypnotizing him.

DWAYNE

That stuff doesn't work.

CLAY

Not usually. That's why I also used  
this.

Clay holds up a half empty bottle of Wild Turkey.

DWAYNE

Oh my gosh.

Dwayne takes a half step back and feels for the doorknob.

CLAY

You ain't gonna believe the stuff we  
already got.

Clay picks up a black, spiral-bound notebook and looks over  
the notes.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Check this out. Jason here has stolen

money from his mom. A long time ago, he says. I'm trying to get him to give up the goods on any bad habits he's got, if you know what I'm sayin'. That's the reason for the hypnotism and the booze.

Something catches Dwayne's eye: Jason is bound to the chair.

DWAYNE

What the hell is going on here, Clay?

CLAY

What? Oh, that's just my belt. I didn't want him falling out of the chair. I mean, look how drunk he is.

Dwayne backs up. Clay stands up.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Stop looking at me like that.

DWAYNE

This is wrong, man.

CLAY

We--

DWAYNE

Clay, if my stepdad finds--

CLAY

Shhhh. Listen to me. We covered the basic stuff yesterday. Now we gotta really get down to it, you know? Get down to the real dissecting.

Jason MOANS.

CLAY (CONT'D)

See, now you've woken him up. He's coming back around.

Dwayne walks backward out of the room.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey... HEY! DON'T LEAVE!

Dwayne bolts. Clay chases after him.

FRONT PORCH -

Clay stops halfway through the screen door, as Dwayne pedals off on his bike.

BEDROOM -

Jason lifts his wobbly head and looks around as Clay reenters

the room.

JASON  
Clay? Wassgoimon?

Clay looks surprised, then disappointed. He quickly backs out of the room.

We see Jason as we hear sounds from the next room: DOORS THROWN OPEN, CRASHING, etc.

Clay runs back into the room, clambers over the bed, piles of clothes, and remote control cars, toward Jason.

Clay brings a cloth soaked with chloroform down over Jason's face.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. SHED - NIGHT

FADE IN

JASON'S POV - Looking down, everything very out of focus

JASON  
Clay?

Clay leans in.

CLAY  
Go back to sleep. You'll need your strength.

He disappears, then pops back.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Hey, are you left handed or right handed?

JASON  
Uhhh... right handed.

CLAY  
Great.

He disappears again.

Jason FADES TO BLACK.

DAY -

Jason wakes up. He's sitting on a riding lawn mower, legs fully duct taped from his waist to his ankles.

A light is thrown on directly in his face.

CLAY

Rise and shine, sunshine. It's a big,  
fat brand new day. Are you hungry? I  
got you some food there.

Jason looks to see three Twinkies perched on the hood of the  
lawnmower. He suddenly realizes his left arm is bound.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I thought about two arms, one arm,  
no arms. No arms is just mean. Can't  
eat, can't drink. But two's a problem,  
too. I mean, you're a football player.  
Who knows what you could do to me.

(tapping notebook)

And I don't have to remind you about what  
you did to Jeremy May in fifth grade when  
he started picking on you. But don't get  
me wrong, man. You're one of the nicest  
guys I know. I like to think of you as  
one of my best friends.

Jason starts crying.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Let's get going, huh?

Clay sets up a tape in a reel to reel recorder. Little metal  
rectangles on the player and light and tv explain their  
origin: "Property of Kulawea High School." A large pile of  
books lay in the corner.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Okay, we made a lot of progress  
yesterday, but we have a lot of holes to  
fill in so we'll start at the beginning.

Clay presses record on the reel to reel.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Jason Mann, what is your earliest memory?

A long pause.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Jason Mann, what is the earliest thing  
you can remember?

Jason continues quietly crying. Clay appears not angry, but  
stumped.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Huh. I hadn't thought about what to do if  
you didn't cooperate.

(exhales)

Okay, time to improvise.

He stops the machine.

JASON

Why are you doing this, Clay? Why? Why,  
why, why...

CLAY

Oh, Jason. Don't ask questions. Not  
now. Any information that goes in your  
head, I'm just gonna have to pull right  
back out.

Jason starts crying again.

CLAY (CONT'D)

(laughing)

And it's all comin' out, man. It's all  
comin' out. So...

He restarts the reel to reel.

CLAY (CONT'D)

...Jason Mann, what's the earliest thing  
you remember?

A long silence.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Jason.

JASON

I remember...

Jason looks up to face his inquisitor.

JASON (CONT'D)

I remember my first day of kindergarten.

INT. CAR - MORNING

MRS. MANN drives LITTLE JASON to school. She turns to smile  
at her son. As she does so, we track left to see Little  
Jason, barely clearing the dashboard.

JASON (V.O.)

I remember being excited on the way there  
because my mom told me they had Lincoln  
Logs.

Little Jason looks up with a dreamy look. Softly  
superimposed over his head is the 'Lincoln Logs' logo.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

We see all the action that Jason recounts.

JASON (V.O.)

I loved Lincoln Logs. I wanted my mom to

help me make a little cabin that looked like our house. I remember she got down eye to eye with me and I asked her to come help me. And then her eyes were all wet and I said 'momma, what's wrong?' And she kissed me and she said 'you be brave, little man. I'll see you real soon.' It never occurred to me that she wouldn't be there with me. And then I remember seeing her long hair disappear around the corner, and I thought this was the meanest trick anyone could ever pull. It's like, you think you know the rules of the game and then suddenly everything changes.

SHED -

JASON  
(pointedly)  
You know what I mean?

The parallel is lost on Clay who takes copious notes. He writes 'lincoln logs' and draws an arrow to the top of the page where he scribbles down 'earlier' and circles it.

CLAY  
Uh-huh. And this was what year?

Jason sighs as he closes his eyes and does the math.

JASON  
Fifty-eight.

CLAY  
In September?

JASON  
Yeah, I guess so.

Clay continues making notes, then looks at Jason.

CLAY  
See, that wasn't hard was it? Now, what else do you remember about your first day?

Jason face reads "despair" as he now realizes the breadth and depth Clay intends for this interrogation.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Did you end up playing with the Lincoln Logs? Was there anybody in your class we still know?

JASON  
I remember they gave us a tour of the

cafeteria.

We see Clay's notes. We flash forward three times, each time more notes on the page.

Next shots done in jump cut, each time a little closer to Jason.

JASON (CONT'D)

...started in Pop Warner when I was..  
...the Halloween I had to be Peter Pan...  
...told him hitchhiking was a stupid idea  
...been everywhere, Grand Canyon,  
Washington, D.C., Mount Rushmore...  
...didn't mean to, but right in the  
middle of my recital, the loudest,  
longest fart you ever heard.

LATER -

Clay twists off the top off an RC Cola and sets it in front of Jason. Jason crams down a Twinkie. Clay casually eats his Twinkie and reviews his notes.

CLAY

You did good, man. We got a lot done  
this morning.

Jason actually smiles at the praise.

CLAY (CONT'D)

In fact, I'm willing to let you decide  
where we go from here.

JASON

Yuledngmeeguh?

Clay hands him the RC Cola and he quickly downs two gulps.

JASON (CONT'D)

You're letting me go?

CLAY

What? Oh, I see.

Clay laughs.

CLAY (CONT'D)

No, where we go from here, meaning a  
choice between two directions in how we  
do this process.

Jason's face falls.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Hey, buck up, man. I'll let you go just  
as soon as this thing is finished right.

JASON

When will that be?

CLAY

So, your choices are, we can either pick up with where we left off in fifth grade, or we can go to our first subject.

JASON

What do you mean 'subject?'

CLAY

We just need to go more in depth in certain particular areas if we're going to really explore your head. The first subject we'll do is any bad habits you have. You know, secret stuff you do that no one knows about.

JASON

I'm not going to talk to you about that kind of thing.

CLAY

It won't be as bad as you think, I promise.

JASON

Clay, there's things a fellow talks about and there's things he has to keep to himself.

CLAY

I know, normally that's the way of it. But that's why this project is so important. This isn't just about you and me, man. This is for the furtherment of science.

JASON

Clay, listen to me, please. This is going too far. It was a good idea, don't get me wrong. I think Ms. Kowalchuk will be very impressed at how creative you were. But look at what you've done, Clay. You have me tied up here like an animal. This isn't right. You know that, don't you?

Clay stares at his notebook on a table, pretending to be reading something.

CLAY

Like I said, you did good so far and if you don't want to get into that other stuff just yet, that's fine by me.

Clay picks up his notebook and turns away.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Now when we left off...

Clay turns back to Jason, picks up the RC Cola, and places it on the hood just beyond his reach.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
...we were at your fifth grade Christmas party. You had had too much punch and Christmas cookies and you threw up on Mary Ann Pennybaum.

JASON  
Claudette Davis.

Clay winks at Jason.

CLAY  
Just testing you, buddy.

NIGHT -

Clay licks the remaining traces of Twinkie off his fingers as he pages through the now-significantly-larger body of notes.

CLAY  
You've done pretty well with your sixteen years of life here on earth, Mr. Jason Mann.

JASON  
It's so crazy, I can't believe I remember all those things.

CLAY  
You feel alright?

JASON  
Yeah, I feel, man, I don't know how... alive, I guess that's what you'd say. I feel alive. It's like they say 'the unexamined life isn't worth living?' I guess this is what they mean, only the opposite.

CLAY  
The 'unexamined life.' That's pretty good. Well I'm pleased as punch you think that, cause in that case, it's only going to get better.

Clay stands abruptly, tosses the notebook onto a nearby workbench, and picks up a new one.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Now on to the good stuff.

JASON

Wait, Clay, I thought we were through.

CLAY

Who said that?

JASON

I've told you my entire life today. What else is there?

CLAY

(motioning to full notebook)

Aww man, that's nothing. I could talk to your mom or your scoutmaster or your football buddies and find out all that stuff. Now is when we get to the science part. Opening you up and looking at your insides.

Clay steals toward Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Now we meet the Jason that lives in the dark, dark part of your heart who you try to forget about. The one you hope will never show his face.

Jason looks away uncomfortably.

JASON

How do you know what's in my heart?

CLAY

Same thing's in everybody, man. Everybody's got this part of 'em that does things for them that they can't do themselves. It's like this 'other you' that most folks try to hide away. I made friends with mine.

JASON

So I tell you all my dirty secrets and then you spread them all over school? No thanks.

CLAY

Jason, I'm a scientist. And your friend. I'd never do anything to hurt you.

Jason smirks at the obvious irony.

JASON

What kind of questions are we talking about?

Clay scans a loose piece of paper he's written on.

CLAY

Let's see... question number one: Do you play with yourself?

Jason sputters.

CLAY (CONT'D)

'Masturbate', to use the right term.

JASON

Yeah, I know what you're asking.

CLAY

See, I was going to start out asking 'how often', but that would be an "assumption." You have to be careful not to make assumptions as a scientist.

JASON

You're not a scientist! And there's no way I'm going to talk to you about personal stuff like this.

CLAY

You have to.

JASON

Why?

CLAY

Because.

JASON

Because why?

CLAY

Because I have you tied up in the middle of nowhere and I'm not letting you go until you do tell me.

Jason's eyes glaze as his lip starts quivering.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Don't you start crying on me, Jason Mann. You're a football player. You're tough. You can handle this. So...

Jason glares at him in protracted silence. Clay's face is infuriatingly placid. Finally...

JASON

A couple times a week maybe. Not so much during football season.

CLAY

Why?

JASON

Football releases more tension than that.

CLAY

Do you have a Playboy or a Penthouse  
or...?

Again silence.

JASON

I use the lingerie section of the Sears  
and Roebuck catalogue.

CLAY

Mm-hmm.

Clay duly notes everything in his notebook.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Okay... girls. How far have you been?

JASON

How far have you been? Do you even date  
girls?

A beat as Clay decides to be calm and play along.

CLAY

I like, liked, this one...

Clay finishes writing 'defensive' in big letters on the  
notebook.

CLAY (CONT'D)

...this one gone little girl.

JASON

And?

CLAY

It didn't turn out so well. Okay? So,  
how far have you been?

JASON

Just some touching, that's it.

A pause.

CLAY

You said that awful quick. You're not  
holding out on me are you?

Silence, then turning back to Clay...

JASON

Yes.

CLAY

With who? Do I know her?

JASON

No.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

Twenty or thirty guys and girls hang out around a massive bonfire. We see the actions Jason describes.

JASON (V.O.)

Some of the guys, football guys, who graduated two years ago took me up to U-T for homecoming. After the game we ended up at this farm in the middle of nowhere. Everybody was sitting around this big bonfire, dancing, smoking, playing drums, what have you. They were hippies, Clay. The real deal. And I don't know where the guys' friends left off to, but we were just left standing there like a bunch of squares. It felt like everybody was staring at us. I didn't know what to do. I turned around to the guys, but they were as uncomfortable as me. My face felt like fire. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore, so I raised my hand up in the air in a fist and I yelled as loud as I could "FUCK JOHNSON!"

CUT TO:

SHED -

Jason and Clay cackle.

FARM -

JASON (V.O.)

And then everybody yelled back 'yeah, man' 'right on' and all that and then suddenly I was their long lost brother. I turned to see the guys and they were just laughing their butts off, but the hippies were talking to them too now. A little while later, this beautiful hippy girl came up to me. She said her name was Willow. She said 'That was a beautiful thing you did.' So we started talking, 'where you from', 'what sign were you born under', that kind of thing. After a while, she said 'why don't we go

talk in the barn?' So we did, and we ended up doing it on some blankets right there on the barn floor.

SHED -

CLAY

Wow, far out. That's free love, man. What was it like? Were you scared?

JASON

Yeah, some. You know, you dream about this moment day and night since like ten or eleven, and you'd think the pressure would get to you, but once you're there, something just kicks in and you know what to do, like you were made for this.

CLAY

What happened after?

INT. BARN - NIGHT

JASON (V.O.)

We fell asleep. I woke up a few hours later and she was gone and...

(softly)

I cried.

SHED -

CLAY

You cried?

JASON

No. I... don't put words in my mouth, Clay. I said 'I tried.' I tried to find the guys and we rode back to the house.

Clay returns to his detached scientist mode and consults his notebook.

CLAY

How did you feel the next morning?

A thoughtful pause.

JASON

You remember those pictures you used to look at in Highlights magazine? They had two similar pictures, but a few hidden things are changed in the second one? That's how it was. I couldn't put my finger on it, but something was different.

Jason watched Clay as he nodded to himself and scribbled in

his notebook.

JASON (CONT'D)

Is that enough for you Clay?

CLAY

Almost. Have you ever used drugs?

JASON

That night, when I was with Willow, we shared a joint right before.

This revelation lands on Clay with some weight, but he documents it in the book.

JASON (CONT'D)

...and there's some guys from Wichitucknee that I get high with pretty much every afternoon for the last year. But it's just grass, nothing crazy. Not usually.

Clay continues staring at Jason, with the face of someone who had just been punched in the gut.

CLAY

You're not the person I thought you were.

JASON

I could say the same thing.

Clay stares at him in disbelief for another moment, then stands up.

CLAY

That's all for today.

Clay turns off the reel to reel and then the light, leaving Jason in the dark.

LATER -

Clay sits amid piles of books at the workbench in the corner. To his left lay the open notebooks. He consults one, then hunches over an index card, meticulously writing.

He closes his eyes and sleeps for a moment until he falls forward and awakes. He reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small metal box, and swallows a pill he retrieves from it.

He glances over to see Jason sleeping. As Clay turns back to his work, we

PAN TO REVEAL Jason surreptitiously picking at the duct tape with his free left hand.

MORNING -

As we see the silhouette of the slumped Jason, we hear a tinny radio play, punctuated randomly by the metallic popping sound of a STAPLE GUN.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
(filtered)

...the year anniversary approaches, police say they're no closer to finding the man wanted for the rape and murder of sixteen year-old Noel McCoy. The attack occurred the afternoon of July twenty third near Lake Europa. Authorities are asking anyone with information to please contact them.

Clay looks perturbed at the radio. He starts to turn it off when he hears...

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
And now turning to the national news, the astronauts aboard Apollo Eleven are preparing to make history today as the first men to walk on the moon.

Clay rushes over to the radio and turns it up.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)  
Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin will descend to the moon later today. Stay tuned to W-T-V-Y throughout the day for live coverage. And now, the in sound from far out, but not way far out. It's the Letterman, on W-T-V-Y.

Clay is so excited, he starts jumping around and dancing to the music he hates so much.

CLAY  
Did you hear that Jason? This is so heavy. I can't believe it.

He leans down to Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
Hey Jason, you awak--

BAM. A fist right to the cheekbone. Clay grabs his face as he falls backward. Jason grabs Clay's shirt with his one free hand, trying to pull him closer, but it slips through as Clay hits the floor.

Clay pulls himself up, still holding his face.

CLAY (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

Clay throws on the interrogation light and Jason shields his face with his hand.

Seeing his friend, Clay laughs.

CLAY (CONT'D)

That's what I like about you, Jason.  
You're constantly surprising me.

Jason lowers his hand. He breathes heavy through his cracked, bleeding lips.

CLAY (CONT'D)

You're better'n a box of Cracker Jack.

Jason's only response is a dull, animal GRUNT.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Breakfast is served.

Clay lays a Twinkie on the hood of the tractor in front of him. Jason slaps it away, sending it flying into a table near Clay.

Clay looks at it, then unwraps it and starts munching. He turns off the radio, picks up his notebook, hits all the record buttons on the tape players.

Clay clears his throat to announce something, then stops short.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Oh, I almost forgot. Take a gander at my masterpiece.

He motions to behind Jason. Jason turn to see an entire wall covered in 3x5 index cards.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Jason Mann, this is your life.

Jason squints and reads one of the cards out loud.

JASON

(reading)

July four, nineteen fifty-eight: Jason  
knocks out his front teeth when his  
family is visiting Aunt Bernice in  
Dothan. August nineteen fifty-eight:  
Jason starts first grade in Miss Drake's  
class.

Jason notices an index card colored dark red.

JASON (CONT'D)

September nineteen sixty-seven: Jason  
has sex for the first time with a hippy

girl named Willow.

He surveys the whole of the work, several hundred cards. A dozen or so red cards punctuate the last right quarter of the wall.

JASON (CONT'D)

Oh my God.

CLAY

It's a timeline. I still got a few unaccounted for months, but I think we'll fill those in today because...

Clay CLEARS HIS THROAT.

CLAY (CONT'D)

(announcing)

...today's lecture will be from Professor Jason Mann entitled 'The Worst Things I've Ever Done.'

Jason hangs his head. Clay says nothing, but waits. Jason looks up at Clay.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Whenever you're ready.

Jason doesn't bother making a show of exasperation anymore. He merely searches internally then clears his throat.

Clay readies his pencil.

JASON

There was one time a few months ago when I was going to meet this guy to get some weed, but I was short on cash so... so I snuck into my little brother's room and opened his safe. Just a small one. It's got a combination, but all you have to do is turn it till you hear the click. I took about thirty dollars. I knew I wouldn't get caught because he never opened it up. He had been saving up for a trip with the youth group to North Carolina. I didn't know it, but two days later was the day they were supposed to pay for the bus ticket. He stuffed all his money in a sock. He never bothered counting it because he always knew exactly how much was there. He was so proud of that.

CLAY

So he missed the trip?

JASON

No, mom and dad covered the thirty bucks.  
But the look on his face. The confusion.  
He just turned thirteen, did I tell you  
that?

Clay shakes his head.

JASON (CONT'D)  
I made him doubt himself. And he  
shouldn't have.  
(beat)  
Can I have a cigarette?

Clay lays down the notebook and retrieves a cigarette from  
the soft pack lying on the table. He holds it out to Jason  
who stretches to reach it. The unlit smoke dangles from his  
mouth as he looks at Clay. Clay stares right back at him.

Clay slowly and deliberately moves back into Jason's space  
and lights the smoke. Jason lifts his head, takes a drag,  
and exhales.

JASON (CONT'D)  
Last summer at football practice,

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

We see the actions described by Jason.

JASON (V.O.)  
we had just finished morning drills. I  
was walking with some of the varsity  
guys, when we saw Cathy.

CLAY (V.O.)  
Clark?

JASON (V.O.)  
No, Podolsky. The retarded girl. The  
band kids were on lunch break. Doug  
Wimmer turns and says 'Watch this.' He  
goes up to Cathy and says 'Hey Cathy, you  
wanna be my girlfriend?' And her big  
stupid face just lights up. He says  
'come with me' then he motions for us to  
grab her. We dragged her into the locker  
room...

SHED -

Jason trails off into silence.

CLAY  
Did you drag her?  
(beat)  
Jason.

JASON

Dammit, just give me a minute.  
No, I didn't hurt her. I didn't touch  
her at all.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Cathy kneels crying, surrounded by the football players.

LINEBACKER

(laughing)  
What should we do with her?

DOUG

I don't know.

The players look at each other.

JASON (V.O.)

But I was the one who suggested we  
make her drink from the toilet.

SHED -

Clay looks sick.

JASON (V.O.)

What do you mean by 'surprise yourself?'

CLAY (V.O.)

Have you ever surprised yourself? You  
know, done something you didn't think you  
could do. In a good way.

AFTERNOON -

JASON

I... naaw.

CLAY

What? Come on.

JASON

I don't know if this is--

CLAY

Spit it out, son.

JASON

Okay, this last year, in Miss Vinson's  
class, you know how you have do creative  
writing?

CLAY

Yeah.

JASON

I wrote a story about a guy who's frustrated with his life and who he's become and he ends up finding a way to go back into time.

CLAY

Like that movie, The Time Machine.

JASON

Kind of.

CLAY

Far out.

JASON

Yeah, I really got into it. I even drew pictures to go with the story.

CLAY

So the guy goes back into time, then what?

We now CUT to see Jason's crudely drawn illustrations which correspond to the different parts of the story.

JASON (V.O.)

Well at first he doesn't know where he is, or what time he's landed in. But then he starts looking around and for some reason, everything seems familiar. So he asks a lady what day it is, and she says 'It's Tuesday, May third.' And he says no what year? And she says 'What an absurd question. Why it's May the third, nineteen thirty-eight.' Then he asks 'What place is this?' And the lady says 'Why this is Centerville, the most wonderful town in the world.' And the man thinks 'I grew up in Centerville' and then he realizes that not only has he gone thirty years back into the past, he's gone back into his past. So he decides to go see himself at fifteen years old. As he makes his way down the road, things start to get more and more familiar. Finally he arrives at his old home and he waits and waits, and finally he sees his younger self run outside and start rolling a hoop. And he smiles at what a good-looking kid he was. But pretty soon a bully comes along and takes his hoop. Now the man leans in, waiting to see his younger self show the bully what's what 'cause the man himself had a very short temper. But his younger self talks to the bully and before long, they're rolling the hoop together. At

school the next day, the man sees someone offer his younger self the answers to a test, but he doesn't take them. And now the man is starting to get mad, because he didn't like himself before, but seeing how good he used to be makes him hate himself even more, and now he starts hating his younger self. So he decides to tempt his younger self into doing something wrong. You know, just to see if he's as perfect as he seems. After school, the man follows him home and strikes up a conversation. After a while, the man offers his younger self a cigarette. He says no thanks. And the man says, well I have dirty picture book, if you want it. Totally free. His younger self says 'get lost.' And the man says, what if I gave you a sawbuck to look at it? Then his younger self gets scared and starts running away. And the man gets mad and chases after him and tackles him, cause like I said before, he had a bad temper. So there they are, there he is, wrestling with himself. And then he just starts hitting his younger self over and over and over. And finally it occurs to him that if his younger self died, he would die too. Then he decides that he hates himself so much, he'd rather die than keep looking at what he used to be. So he hits his younger self even harder. And his younger self tries to cover his head and yells 'Please don't kill me, please don't kill me.' And the man says 'I'm not killing you, I'm saving you.' And after a few more punches, his younger self doesn't move anymore. And the man waits and waits, but nothing happens. He doesn't die. And he just looks at his hands. For the longest time, he just sits next to himself and looks at his hands. And time passes and the sun sets and even after it's too dark to see them, he keeps staring at his hands.

SHED -

CLAY

(awed)

That's a great story. Wow. What did Miss Vinson say?

JASON

She didn't read it. I tore it up and threw it away and wrote another story

about a boy who loses his dog then finds  
him again.  
(beat)  
I got an A.

Clay looks at Jason oddly, back at notes, then back at Clay.

JASON (CONT'D)

What?

CLAY

There's something else.

JASON

What do you mean?

CLAY

There's something else you're not telling  
me.

JASON

Should we add 'psychic' to your list of  
undiscovered talents?

CLAY

I don't know why, I just have this hunch.  
If I'm wrong tell me.

A weighty pause.

JASON

This spring I was sleeping with Renata.  
A lot.

The name doesn't register for Clay.

JASON (CONT'D)

Renata. The foreign exchange student  
fro--

CLAY

--from Brazil, right. She had to leave  
early 'cause she got a stomach virus.

Jason shakes his head.

JASON

Not a stomach virus.

Gradually, the meaning of Jason's words dawn on Clay.

CLAY

Oh my God.

JASON

Is this what you wanted, Clay? To see  
somebody's guts? How's it going so far?

You having fun?

CLAY

Oh shit. This is so... strange. I wanted to be like you.

JASON

Well, congratulations. You're closer than you thought.

Clay stands numbly and walks around, in no particular direction.

JASON (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I sleep a little?

Clay shakes his head, and shuts off the reel to reel recorder. Click. A moment passes before he hits the light. CLICK.

AFTERNOON -

CLAY

Jason. Jason, wake up. You're gonna miss it.

Jason opens and rubs his bleary eyes. Clay pulls the tv cart over close to the lawnmower, adjusts the wobbly rabbit ears, then hops on the hood to watch.

The pair watch the tv in amazement.

We see the screen as the lunar module descends toward the moon.

DISSOLVE TO

NIGHT -

Neil Armstrong descends the ladder to the moon's surface.

We see Jason and Clay's faces cast in a soft blue glow as they hear one of the most famous phrases in human history:

ARMSTRONG (O.S.)

That's one small step for man... one... giant leap for mankind.

CLAY

(whispering)

That's us, Jason. We're exploring places no one's ever been before.

They continue watching in reverent silence.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Come fall, you're gonna have one helluva

what-I-did-on-my-summer-vacation essay.

NIGHT -

Clay chain-smokes as he works on more index cards. He finishes a card and meticulously colors it crimson red. He sets it on a pile of cards. Clay's eyelids droop and he drifts off to sleep.

MONTAGE -

EXT. FOREST - DAY

First person POV - girl's feet running through the woods

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

A locker closes, revealing a pretty girl, NOEL MCCOY, talking to two friends.

FOREST -

Legs pumping, racing, slipping on leaves.

SCHOOL -

Guy wipes his sweaty palms on his jeans.

FOREST -

A swirl of movement, then first person POV slamming back against the ground, looking up at the sun streaming through the treetops.

Fingers with pink nails grasp at leaves.

A figure shadows the light from the sky.

A birthday cake.

SCHOOL -

A hand scrawls 'I love No..'

FOREST -

A fly crawls on the cake.

Police tape marks off an area in the woods. Just beyond, Noel's naked body lies face down.

A flashbulb pops.

INT. MORGUE -DAY

A pale leg resting on a sliding metal table. Table slides out. The toe tag reads "Have a groovy summer. K.I.T."

SHED -

Clay's head jerks back, his eyes wide open. Mad, he slaps his face, then reaches for a bottle and taps out two pills and downs them with an RC Cola.

Carefully putting aside the stack of red cards, he opens an easy-read book on famous Greek scientists. Suddenly he hears Jason stirring.

JASON (O.S.)  
(softly)  
Clay? Clay.

Clay rubs the sleep from his eyes and walks over to Jason.

Jason motions for him to come closer. Clay leans in.

With one swift motion, Jason punches through Clay's chest, and pulls out his still beating heart. Clay blinks and looks again. Jason is holding a bloody red apple.

JASON (CONT'D)  
How does it feel, Clay?

Jason takes a monster BITE. The crunch carries over to...

Clay's eyes fly open as he sits bolt upright. Now open in front of him are the science book, a dictionary, and a LIFE 'decade in review' special. Clay checks behind him and scans the room.

He reaches for the bottle of pills again and pours out a fistful. He crunches them in his mouth, pops open another RC Cola, and drains it.

He backhands the escaping soft drink from his mouth, then reaches up and wipes the sweat from his forehead. Hot and frustrated, he pulls off his soaked t-shirt.

He lights another cigarette and sits back in his chair as he expels the first drag.

We can now see interesting self-inflicted scars on his stomach. Letters. They form a name: Noel.

SUNRISE -

Jason wakes to the metallic POPPING of the staple gun. He turns just as Clay is about to fasten the last card. There are now significantly more red cards.

JASON  
Clay?

CLAY

Not Clay. My name is Neil.

Clay steps into the light right behind Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And your name is Buzz.

Clay slaps at flies Jason can't see.

JASON

Are you okay... Neil?

Clay laughs to himself.

JASON (CONT'D)

Have you slept any?

CLAY

Mm-mmm.

JASON

Not at all?

CLAY

No time.

Clay leans in close to Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I've been learning, Buzz.

Clay pulls away and walks to the workbench with the books.

JASON

What have you been learning?

With Clay's back turned, he starts picking at the duct tape that binds him. We can see he's been furtively working at it little by little over the last three days as evidenced by the circle of frayed silver plastic and twine.

CLAY

Oh, lots of things. I been finding these words, these pretty words...

(reading)

'languid', 'har-bin-ger', 'no-men clature.' Fine, fine words.

JASON

What do they mean, Cla-- Neil?

CLAY

I don't know yet. I got this list. I'm gonna work my way through and find out what they mean. And I've been reading this book.

He holds aloft the LIFE book.

CLAY (CONT'D)

It says this whole decade was about  
(reading)  
'the slaughter of the innocents.'

Clay stops his pacing directly behind Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And I've figured out what'll be the last chapter in our experiment. See, I been reading this book about Greek scientists. Since way back when, everybody's been trying to find out what stuff is made of. It's these little atoms. But the closer they looked, the more they realized that there were even tinier parts. And those tiny parts even had tiny parts. And for hundreds and hundreds of years they've been trying to find out what makes that atom tick. And you know how they do it? They split it open. They smash that sucker and then pick up the parts to see what they find. That's what science is all about, man. Breaking it down. So what we're gonna do is--

Clay stops short. He turns his head, listening intently.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

JASON

What?

CLAY

Shhhh.

Suddenly, Clay drops to the floor, convulsing.

CLAY (CONT'D)

GET OFF ME! GET OFF OF ME!

Clay slaps at his arms, trying to scrape off the invisible monsters crawling on his skin.

He jumps up and dances around, rubbing himself against any vertical surface trying to knock off the creatures.

CLAY (CONT'D)

GET OFF!

He flees the pool of light surrounding Jason and runs to other end of the shed.

We watch Jason's face as he listens to the cacophony of

BANGING and HOWLING.

Finally, silence.

Clay slowly reenters the light. Jason furiously claws at the tape behind his back.

Small bleeding cuts pepper Clay's arms and chest.

JASON'S POV - as he looks at the cuts, then seeing the 'Noel' scar for the first time.

He reads the letters to himself, trying to put the word together. He finally mouths "Noel."

Clay MUMBLES to himself, eyes half closed, and sways as if about to collapse.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Those were my... the dirty little... I'm an astronaut, dammit. They shouldn't be...

JASON

Clay.

CLAY

Uhn?

Clay shakes his head, clearing his mind.

He steps over to the workbench where he pours the remaining pills from the box and swallows them without the aid of Royal Crown Cola, and returns to Jason.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Like I was saying, when you split the atom, then you know everything.

JASON

I don't understand what you're--

CLAY

There's something in you, Buzz, there's something in you that you don't want to tell me. You'd do anything not to tell me, including making up terrible stories to throw me off the trail, to...

(picking up a dictionary)

...'appease' me.

There's an atom inside you, and I'm going to find it, and when I find it, I'm going to split that mother wide open.

Clay circles behind Jason to the wall, coming to rest next to a blank spot.

CLAY (CONT'D)

And I think I've already found it. The third week of July. Nineteen sixty eight.

Jason SOBS.

CLAY (CONT'D)

What is it, Buzz?

JASON

Uh-uh.

CLAY

Come on.

JASON

I can't.

CLAY

Increasing speed to fifteen hundred knots. Jettison the cargo, Buzz. We're losing our window.

Tears mingle with snot running down Jason's face.

CLAY (CONT'D)

Tell me, Buzz. I'm your fellow astronaut.

JASON

I can't.

CLAY

Houston, increasing speed to three thousand knots. Tell me now.

JASON

No.

CLAY

We're almost to the moon Buzz. Don't let me down.

JASON

No.

CLAY

Yes! Confess! Confess yourself! Now!

JASON

I'm so sorry. It wasn't my idea.

CLAY

More, Buzz more. Increasing speed to five thousand knots!

JASON

Right near Lake Europa-- I can't.

CLAY

Yes you can, Buzz. Houston, give us light speed. Light speed, Houston.

JASON

I killed her. Me and some guys took turns.

CLAY

Who'd you kill, Buzz?

JASON

This little stray bitch. We're were just shootin' at squirrels with Davy's BB gun when it happened along. It yelped at first and danced around and it was funny so we kept at it.

Clay looks at the radio, then down at his scar.

JASON (CONT'D)

I didn't know the bb's were going into its little body. That little puppy dog...

Jason starts crying. Clay picks up the radio and stares at it as he moves back to Jason.

CLAY

You killed her.

Clay slams the radio into the floor, smashing it to pieces.

Jason's head jerks up, startled.

CLAY (CONT'D)

YOU KILLED HER!!

Clay twitches and slaps at the invisible bugs.

CLAY (CONT'D)

How could you, Buzz? I loved her.

JASON

Who?

Clay points accusingly at the scar his stomach.

CLAY

Her. You had every other girl, but she was the only one for me. All this time it was you.

JASON

No, not me.

CLAY

Yes you!

Clay leaps onto the tractor, standing over Jason, straddling him. He grabs Jason's shoulder roughly with his left. His right hand is a fist, hovering tenuously by his head.

Jason scratches frantically at the tape.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I'm going to hit you.

Jason's head again drops. A sob.

JASON

Okay.

CLAY

Did you hear me? I'm going to hit you.

JASON

I deserve it.

Jason pops the last span of tape, freeing his left hand.

His eyes widen in surprise.

CLAY

"I'M NOT KIDDING AROUND, JASON. I'M--"  
BIRD'S EYE VIEW -

Jason suddenly unfolds his shielded body and waits, eyes closed, both arms out.

Clay doesn't move. Jason's eyes open. Clay's fist falls towards Jason's face, then freezes.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

I remember the smell fresh cut grass from outside. I remember the musty, claustrophobic feel of rotting plywood. And the taste in my mouth, metallic, like when you wet the needle with your tongue to air up a football. I remember wondering what would Neil Armstrong would do in my position?

The picture unfreezes and Clay lets go a flurry of punches. Blood flies everywhere as Clay thwacks Jason's head left and right.

Finally, Clay relents. Jason's body hangs awkwardly in the seat of the tractor, arms flung out at unnatural angles.

Clay sits back on the hood, looking confused. He lifts his

bloody, seemingly foreign hands in front of his eyes.

HOURS LATER -

Jason's suspended body rests motionless.

The silence in the shed is broken by loud, wet, COUGHING.

Jason pulls himself up, hacking up drained phlegm and blood. He gingerly reaches up to feel his face. Meat. He looks down through his nearly swollen shut eyes at the remaining duct tape wrapped tightly around his waist and legs like a mummy.

Pulling his feet through the last remaining coils of tape, Jason steps down from the tractor. His four-day-unused muscles betray him and he crashes hard to the floor.

Crawling to the nearest corner, he pulls himself up to his knees and relieves himself.

EXT. SHED - DAY

Jason shields his eyes as he emerges from the shed.

We see blank, flat land spread out for miles. A few acres away stands a house. Nearby a tractor, a larger one, with a pull cutter attached to the back.

Clay's pickup is parked next to the shed.

Two people, a MAN and a WOMAN in their fifties, burst out of the back door and run around to the front of the house.

In the distance, Jason can barely hear a POLICE SIREN.

Jason hears a MOAN behind him. He turns to see Clay holding his left arm with his right hand. His eyes follow Clay's arm to where streams of blood escape underneath his white grip.

CLAY

I think you're supposed to cut  
lengthwise, not across.

Clay motions 'lengthwise' and 'across', revealing the deep black and red gouge in his wrist.

He laughs weakly.

CLAY (CONT'D)

I screw everything up.

JASON

What's going on, Clay?

CLAY

I told my... my aunt and uncle, didn't

know... I was here. I show up...

He holds up his bleeding arm.

CLAY (CONT'D)

...and they... freak out. Bastards. I hate 'em. Cops on their way now.

Jason looks in the direction of the approaching sound.

INT. SHED - DAY

Light explodes into the shed as Jason slams open the door.

He stands in the center of the interrogation area, dwarfed by his life now hung on the walls.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

The evolution unrolled rapidly in my mind. My sins had become notes. Those notes would soon become evidence. That evidence would become exhibits. The exhibits public record, public record news, news, stories and gossip, and as anyone who has ever lived in a small town knows, those stories and gossip would eventually become history.

Jason desperately claws off the cards, red ones first. He grabs as many as he can fit into his hands, but most flutter to the floor. A strong breeze gusts into the shed, lifting and scattering the cards.

He abandons the wall to try to catch the cards escaping to various corners of the room.

The siren grows louder. Jason panics.

He leaves his clutch of cards on the tractor seat to attack the wall with both hands. The cards drift down. Another breeze and the cards on the seat are sent flying. The others as well.

Now crying, Jason scans the room looking for a different tack.

Spotting the tapes, he grabs one and smashes it against the workbench. It cracks. Again, and it breaks open. He looks up at the workbench: Dozens and dozens of tapes.

THUNK. Clay leans heavily against the door. Over Clay's shoulder, Jason can see the flashing police and ambulance lights just now topping the furthest hill.

Jason slides to the floor, surrounded by index cards.

Jason looks over at Clay, who holds out something in his

hand.

EXT. SHED - DAY

We see the blank, gray sky, broken up by a tall black column of smoke.

PAN DOWN slowly.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

They said you could see it from thirty miles away. Not that surprising, considering how flat the land is.

The paramedics arrive, hop out, and pick up the two boys, collapsed in the grass about twenty feet from the shed.

JASON 1985 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We took off, but the cops stayed until everything settled down. Made sure nothing got out of hand. It's all they could do. They didn't know they'd need the town fire engine.

PAN to reveal the shed engulfed in flames.

JASON 1985 (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And if it was a movie, I'd have the camera pan up to sunset, and then pan up further to the moonrise.

NEIL ARMSTRONG (V.O.)

(filtered)

...the spacesuit and backpack that was our small spacecraft out on the lunar surface. We would like to give special thanks to all those Americans who built the spacecraft; who did the construction, design, the tests, and put their hearts and all their abilities into those crafts. To those people tonight, we give a special thank you, and to all the other people that are listening and watching tonight, God bless you. Good night from Apollo Eleven.

The paramedics load the boys in, shut the doors, and take off, sirens BLARING.

JASON 1985 (V.O.)

And then music as the credits roll, like C-C-R or the Stones or... no Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix. The one where he sings Kiss The Sky.

DR. WELLS (V.O.)  
That's our time.

EXT. STREET - 1985 - DAY

Jason steps out onto the street, oblivious to other pedestrians. He gaze is turned down, not sad, but not clearly any other emotion.

An intercom CLICK.

DR. WELLS (V.O.)  
Miss Clyde?

MISS CLYDE (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Yes?

DR. WELLS (V.O.)  
Don't bill Jason Mann for this session.

MISS CLYDE (V.O.)  
(filtered)  
Yes sir.

Jason walks towards us, then pauses at a mailbox. He looks up, the sun hitting him full in the face.

A faint smile.

WOMAN NARRATOR (V.O.)  
You will know when it is time to turn the page when you hear the chimes ring like this...

He walks on.

RIIING.

CUT TO BLACK

WOMAN NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Let's begin now.