# COMPLICATIONS

"Patient Hernandez. Gunshot wound."

Written by

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**TEASER**

OPEN ON:

The face of DR. JOHN ELLIS (40). He's handsome, intelligent-looking, with black hair just beginning to gray at the temples. Under closer inspection, we notice he is a little out of sorts: his face is SLIGHTLY BRUISED, and his white doctor's coat is stained with a FEW DROPS OF BLOOD.

He stands at a window. Thinking. As we pull back, we see we are in...

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

A small, comfortable office on the fifth floor of Pasadena's Arroyo Hospital. Medical degrees hang on the wall.

John looks down at a parking lot three stories below. Patients come and go. An old woman pushes a man in a wheelchair. A dad carries a young boy in an arm sling.

An ambulance pulls up to the ER, its siren muted through the glass. John watches the EMTs unload a PATIENT from the back. The man writhes in agony, but his cries are tiny, distant...

JOHN squints, watching with careful attention. Then:

JOHN
I think that man's going to die.

A CLOCK TICKS offscreen... finally, a woman's voice responds.

VOICE (O.S.)
Why do you say that?

JOHN
You see enough people die, you get a kind of... sense.
(thinks, then:)
It's something about the way he's moving... He's trying to scream, but he can't catch his breath. I'm not saying I can make a diagnosis from three stories up, but...

As John watches, the man falls back on the gurney, limp. The EMTs check his vitals, alarmed-

JOHN (CONT'D)
...there he goes.

John watches an EMT try to calm a sobbing, screaming woman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Know what always seemed strange to me? We act like people *die at the hospital*. Some do, obviously, but for most of them... there was an earlier point in time, *a last moment*, they could've been saved.

In the parking lot, the man is wheeled inside. John watches.

JOHN (CONT'D)
And that moment is long gone by the time they get here.

John turns. An attractive woman in her 30's, DR. LASTER, sits at the desk. She smiles.

DR. LASTER
Dr. Ellis? Why don't you have a seat? We should get started.

John gives her a wan smile as he sits.

JOHN
Were you on call? I hate to ruin your day off. I tried to convince Jay this wasn't necessary, but... He disagreed.

Dr. Laster flips through a file, notes the time...

DR. LASTER
That's not a bad place to start, actually. Why do **you** think you're here?

John exhales, looking up at the ceiling...

JOHN
It's been a while since my psych rotation, but off the top of my head? I'd say I had an inappropriate response to a clinical situation, possibly indicative of an affective disorder. How's that?

DR. LASTER
I don't think-

JOHN
(holds up a hand)
Wait, don't tell me.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I can get this. How about “possible psychosis due to post-traumatic stress?”

DR. LASTER
Let’s leave clinical terminology out of this. Just try to forget your medical training.

JOHN
You think that’s a good idea? My patients tend to be very attached to my medical training. It helps me identify those squishy things inside their bodies.

DR. LASTER
Dr. Ellis... I’m on your side, here.

John chuckles dryly...

JOHN
Are you, now? My side. Well, that’s great to know. Glad we’re all in this together.

DR. LASTER
I’m just saying, I’m familiar with your case. I know you’ve been through a lot. My job is just to understand what happened, and-

JOHN
And report back so my fate can be decided.

DR. LASTER
(sighs)
Listen, this isn’t going to be productive if you don’t-

John raises his hands in mock surrender.

JOHN
Fine, fine... I’ll play ball.

Dr. Laster looks at him, waiting. John looks back at her. The clock ticks offscreen... Tick. Tick. Tick. SMASH TO:

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - EARLIER THAT NIGHT**

John RUNS down a hallway in the Arroyo Hospital ER.

CONTINUED:

He CRASHES into a cart filled with medication, sending it flying as he runs past. The action is quick and kinetic as he ducks around gurneys and equipment, heading for...

THE DOOR that leads to the waiting room. A heavyset security guard - LEWIS (28), tenses as he approaches...

LEWIS
Doctor?

JOHN
Move.

LEWIS
Doctor, I don't think-

JOHN
I am *done*. I'm not putting up with this any more. I'm going out there.

LEWIS
I can't let you do that.

JOHN
Get out of my way, Lewis.

Lewis hesitates, but he does not move. John's face reddens as he ROARS, grabbing an IV stand...

JOHN (CONT'D)
I said GET OUT OF MY WAY!!

All eyes on John as he raises the IV stand... Lewis stumbles backward as John SMASHES the security glass in the door. As he runs through, Lewis keys his radio, yelling:

LEWIS
ALL UNITS TO ER RECEPTION! I repeat-

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - FRONT RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS**

John is now in a CHAOTIC EMERGENCY ROOM RECEPTION AREA. People are running, backing away from the door...

John ROARS at a group of YOUNG MEN IN GANG CLOTHING.

JOHN
Get out. All of you. Now.

One of the men, CRUZ (23) steps forward. He has a shaved head, and multiple tattoos. He stares hard at John.

CONTINUED:

CRUZ
What you think you're doing, doc?

JOHN
I'm telling you to get the hell out of my Emergency Room.
(then)
I know why you're here. You want to hurt somebody? Hurt me.

CRUZ
You should watch how you talk, man. Might get what you're asking for-

Cruz steps forward, shoves John in the chest...

...and John EXPLODES.

He charges Cruz, SWINGING THE IV STAND. It connects, knocking him aside before smashing a rack of magazines.

Instantly, the OTHER GANG MEMBERS join the fight. John swings at them, badly outnumbered but making up for it with sheer fury...

After a moment, Lewis and four other SECURITY GUARDS rush into the ER, trying to break up the fight...

John takes advantage of the distraction to lunge at Cruz with the IV stand again; it hits one of the windows, cracking it-

Two security guards rush John, who struggles...

...as several more security guards usher the gang members out the doors and into the hospital parking lot.

John hits the floor with a hard THUD, the security guards on top of him. The ER doors slide shut as we CUT BACK TO:

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

John looks at Dr. Laster evenly.

JOHN
Why am I here, Dr. Laster? You could say I'm here because I used an IV stand for a clinically nonstandard purpose. You could also say I'm here because I assaulted several people in the emergency room reception.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
And I’m confident there are many who would say I’m here because I went batshit crazy. Take your pick.

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

John sits across from Dr. Laster, watching her. She looks over some papers.

DR. LASTER
Let's start with a little background. You're... married?

JOHN
Yes, I am. Our son Oliver is six.

DR. LASTER
And how long have you been in Emergency Medicine?

JOHN
Ten years. I did my residency at Harbor Medical, then came here after they expanded the ER in 2008.

DR. LASTER
How's work been going, recently? Has it been particularly stressful?

JOHN
I work in an ER. The E stands for "emergency." Which implies a certain amount of stress.

DR. LASTER
Tell me about that.

JOHN
Not much to say. It's what I signed up for.

DR. LASTER
Have you experienced any burnout?
(a beat)
It's common among doctors in your specialty. As I'm sure you know.

John smiles a little... looks out the window.

JOHN
Burnout? I'm not sure I'd call it that.

DR. LASTER
What would you call it?

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I don't know. How about "the unwelcome intrusion of reality on an appealing fantasy"?

DR. LASTER
Tell me more about that.

JOHN
Why go into emergency medicine? The hours are terrible. God knows there are easier ways to make money. You go to the ER to be a hero.

DR. LASTER
And then?

JOHN
And then you see who's actually **in** the ER. A few kids with broken legs, some folks with stomach pain, and every poor son of a bitch who's fallen through the cracks and has nowhere else to go.

DR. LASTER
And you don't want to treat them?

JOHN
Of course I do. I want to treat every Goddamn one of them. But then you run into the other reality: you have maybe ten minutes per patient. Six hundred seconds to take on whatever combination of miserable luck and destiny landed them in the ER. And most of the time? You fail.

Dr. Laster nods, makes a note. She looks up...

DR. LASTER
What about patient Mauricio Hernandez? Was he a failure?

JOHN
That's... a complicated question.

DR. LASTER
That's why we're here.

John sighs... looks out the window.

CONTINUED:

JOHN
Where do you want me to start?

DR. LASTER
Let's start with Thursday morning.

ON JOHN as he leans back and closes his eyes... MATCH TO:

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

John stands in the middle of a busy ER, his eyes closed. It's 4AM in the Arroyo Hospital ER. It's loud. Doctors give orders, nurses talk to techs. A family is in the middle of a heated argument; a patient screams somewhere...

DAN (O.S.)
John. Hey John... You with us?

John opens his eyes and looks over at DAN BRENNAN, a fellow doctor in the ER. He's 35, a bit of a jock, with a quick gallows wit honed in a decade of ER work. John looks over.

JOHN
Yeah, I'm... yeah. Headache. Just resting my eyes.

Dan pours a cup of coffee from a cheap desktop coffee maker.

DAN
Good. I was about to defibrillate you. Here. Drink this.

He hands the coffee to John who takes it gratefully.

JOHN
Thanks.

DAN
You okay, buddy? You need a provigil or something?

JOHN
No... coffee's fine. I'm just tired. Had a patient code yesterday as I was leaving. She tried to die on me until almost eight...

DAN
Who was the code? The old lady with the PE?

JOHN
Yeah. I sent her up to cardiac-

CONTINUED:

DAN
Uh huh... and in cardiac she had the mother of all ischemic strokes.

Dan mimes pulling a plug, makes a “game over” sound.

JOHN
Okay. That’s depressing.

DAN
Did you look at her? Her problem wasn’t cerebral thrombosis. She had a bad case of too many birthdays.

John glances at the patient computer; a name is flashing.

JOHN
Bay 3 is flashing... you think my bloodwork’s back?

DAN
It’s Arroyo at 4 AM. You seriously think your *bloodwork’s* back?

John shrugs. Takes a drag on his coffee as he goes.

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

John walks into a small exam room. It’s decorated in bright colors, with a bland inspirational poster on the wall. A friendly-looking young man in a sweatshirt, HENRY MAXSON (22), lies in the bed.

Nurse GRETCHEN POLK (late 20’s, pretty) is there. She’s an excellent nurse, but a bit of a dark soul... a young woman who never entirely outgrew her goth rebel years.

JOHN
What’s up? Do we have labs?

GRETCHEN
(arches an eyebrow)
Uh... *no.* We do not have labs, doctor.

JOHN
What is it?

Gretchen looks at Henry...

GRETCHEN
Maybe it’s better if he tells you.

CONTINUED:

HENRY
(hesitates, then:)
You know the other doctor? The blond one?

JOHN
Yes, Doctor O'Neill. What about her?

HENRY
Uh, she saw the... the medicine. That you gave me. And she took it.

John looks at Gretchen - this is true?

GRETCHEN
I suggested she talk to you first. She suggested I go to medical school before I talk to her about patient protocols.

HENRY
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get you in trouble.

JOHN
It's not your fault, Henry. Just... Hang on.

John goes out into the Emergency Room Hallway...

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

John finds DR. BRIDGET O'NEILL (35) entering some information into a computer. She's smart, ambitious, and pretty in a brittle, unfriendly sort of way...

BRIDGET
John, I know what you're going to say, and you can save your breath.

JOHN
You're seriously going to do this, Bridget? His foot is gangrenous-

BRIDGET
Stealing insulin from the hospital pharmacy isn't going to save it. You want to admit him? Admit him.

JOHN
He can't afford-

CONTINUED:

BRIDGET
Then talk to the insurance desk. Listen, if you keep handing out free drugs every time a patient comes in, you're just prolonging a situation-

JOHN
It's *Henry*, Bridget. You're talking about him like he's not in here every week-

BRIDGET
I'm well aware of his frequent flyer status, John. Which is why I suggest you get him ambulatory and out of here. He'll be back soon enough, and we can use the room.

She walks off. John turns and goes back...

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

Gretchen looks at John as he returns...

GRETCHEN
So?

JOHN
So let's up the O2. See if we can get any to that foot...

GRETCHEN
And the insulin?

JOHN
Bridget's off shift in an hour. I'll see what I can do.
(to Henry)
It's gonna be okay.

HENRY
Am I gonna be able to walk on it? I'm supposed to go back to work-

JOHN
That's... not a good idea.
(sighs)
For now, let's just focus on getting your blood sugar down.

Gretchen checks the computer... another PATIENT RECORD FLASHING. John sees it...

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Is that me?

GRETCHEN
That's us. I'll take you over.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Gretchen and John emerge from the exam bay...

GRETCHEN
Caucasian male, 47. Severe back pain. History of lumbar disk disease.

JOHN
Right. The ever-popular "emergency back pain." Any primary physician?

GRETCHEN
He's either on vacation, or died, or has a 'wrong phone number.'
(off John's look)
Patient's been waiting since noon. He re-did his paperwork four times.

JOHN
Let's get this over with.

John and Gretchen go into the examination bay...

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

John and Gretchen find ROGER HARDY, a wiry man in his early 20's, sitting on a gurney.

JOHN
Mr. Hardy? I'm Dr. Ellis.
(looks over the chart)
Some trouble with your back?

ROGER
Yeah. It's real bad. All around here, by the bottom of my spine.

JOHN
On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the worst pain possible, how-

ROGER
Ten.

John looks at Roger for a beat, then:

CONTINUED:

JOHN
You know, often people with ten out of ten pain can't stop screaming long enough to answer questions.

ROGER
Maybe a, uh, eight? But it's bad. Usually, you guys just give me something for the pain.

JOHN
Of course we do.
(checks the chart)
I see you're allergic to a lot of painkillers. All of the non-narcotic ones, specifically.

ROGER
Yeah. I get sick from the allergic ones... uh... Vicodin works best.

JOHN
It says here you're allergic to Tylenol. Are you aware that Vicodin contains acetaminophen? Which is what Tylenol is made of?

Gretchen suppresses a smile. Roger looks alarmed...

ROGER
Uh... that's not- that was a mistake. Tylenol's okay.

Gretchen hands Roger the chart and a pencil. She points at the allergy section.

GRETCHEN
Right here.

Roger carefully removes Tylenol from his allergies as John writes a prescription and pulls a brochure from a drawer.

JOHN
This is for forty Vicodin. Take with meals and avoid alcohol. Also, because Vicodin can be addictive-

Roger takes the prescription and the brochure, entitled "The Facts: Prescription Narcotics." He mumbles a thank-you as he hurries out... John shoots Gretchen a weary look.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Makes you proud, doesn't it?

**EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - MORNING**

John drives, bleary-eyed, through a Pasadena neighborhood at dawn. He presses a fist to his eye, breathing through the pounding in his head as he pulls his 2004 Lexus into the driveway of a pretty, two-story house.

He rubs his eyes, looking at the house. It has been a very long night. Finally, he gets out.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING**

Laughter fills a sunny kitchen as John tickles his son, OLIVER (6), at the breakfast table.

JOHN
I think I found something, here, in your tummy.

OLIVER
There's nothing in my tummy!!

JOHN
No, I'm a doctor. I think I feel something. I think it's an octopus.

OLIVER
I don't have a octopus!

JOHN
Are you sure? I can get it...

John tickles Oliver; the boy screams in delight. The Ellis's dog Zeke barks at them, trying to join in. John's wife, SAMANTHA (35) calls to them from the stove.

SAMANTHA
Okay, guys. That's enough. If he pees in his pants, John, you're in trouble.

JOHN
I was checking him for octopuses. Octopi. He's clean.

John hugs Oliver for a long moment, holding him tight...

OLIVER
Daddy. You're squishing me.

JOHN
Right. Sorry. Go pee. Or daddy's going to get in trouble.

CONTINUED:

As Oliver runs off, followed by Zeke, Samantha looks over. John rubs his temple... the headache still isn't gone.

SAMANTHA
You okay?

JOHN
Yeah. Just... a hard night. Bad headache.

SAMANTHA
You've been getting those a lot. Should you get it checked?

JOHN
It's okay. I don't need it checked.

SAMANTHA
But couldn't it be... I don't know. Something worse?

JOHN
It'd be a very exotic brain tumor that managed to hurt only at work. I just need food and a shower.

SAMANTHA
That I can do. You want breakfast or dinner?

JOHN
You're already making breakfast. Breakfast is fine.

SAMANTHA
So... we have your niece's birthday later. Are you going to make it?

JOHN
Yeah. I'll catch Hell if I don't.

Samantha comes over to him. She rubs his temples for him.

SAMANTHA
You can say you picked up a bug at work. Heather's so paranoid about the baby catching anything, she'd **thank** you for staying home.

JOHN
We did that for the christening, remember? I'll go. Fortify me with eggs, and I'll go.

**EXT. JOHN'S BROTHER'S HOUSE - DAY**

The front door of large tract-home McMansion opens. HEATHER (36) is there; she's an attractive blonde mom, holding a one-year-old girl with a paper crown on her head.

HEATHER
Heeeeyyy! Look who's here!
(to the baby)
Uncle John and Aunt Samantha came.
And Cousin Ollie...

Samantha holds out a wrapped present... John smiles.

SAMANTHA
Happy birthday!

HEATHER
Come in, come in. Everybody's here...

Everybody files in as we CUT TO:

**INT. JOHN'S BROTHER'S HOUSE - LATER**

A small party's in progress. A couple dozen people eat cake and chat; Oliver runs around with some kids his age. Samantha sits with the baby on her lap as Heather wheedles free medical advice from John.

HEATHER
...don't want to be paranoid, but she gets so blotchy, and-

JOHN
It's fine. Between sensitive skin and time on the floor, that just happens with babies-

HEATHER
It's something on my floor? Toxins?

JOHN
No, it's just... short of encasing her in plastic, rashes happen.

John looks to Sam, who gives him a do-your-best smile.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You could try some Vaseline-

CONTINUED:

John's brother Rob comes over, holding a beer. 38 years old, a successful lawyer. He's a nice enough guy - pleased with where he is in life, doing his best not to be smug.

ROB
C'mon, doesn't family get the good stuff? A prescription or something?

JOHN
I'm not holding out on you. In this case, Vaseline is the good stuff.

ROB
Well, you're the expert. You heard the man, Heather. Grease the baby.

Heather rolls her eyes at Rob, kissing him as she and Samantha head across the party. Rob turns to his brother.

ROB (CONT'D)
Hey, glad you could make it.

JOHN
Thanks for having me. Great party.

ROB
Listen... as long as I've got you alone? Dad's in the kitchen.

JOHN
Rob, seriously? You know he-

ROB
I know, I know. I'm just trying to keep the peace, family-wise. Just go pay your respects, you're done.

Rob claps his brother on the shoulder.

ROB (CONT'D)
You can do this.

John sighs, dreading what's coming as he goes to the kitchen.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

John wanders into the large, well-appointed kitchen. His father, GARY (70), fishes a beer from the fridge; he's a guy who has not been particularly well-treated by life. It shows.

JOHN
Hey, Dad. How you doing?

CONTINUED:

Gary looks over, a little surprised, as he opens his beer...

GARY
We're talking, now? I miss a memo?

JOHN
Thanksgiving was a while ago.

GARY
I guess. I'm doing all right. You?

JOHN
Fine.

There's an awkward pause, then:

GARY
What do you think of your brother's new place?

JOHN
Nice. Big.

GARY
Yeah, no kidding.
(looks around)
I remember when you were going to be the rich one. When did doctors stop getting rich?

JOHN
About the same time lawyers *started* getting rich. I'm pretty sure it wasn't a coincidence.

Gary sips his beer. More uncomfortable silence.

GARY
You cure cancer yet?

JOHN
Yeah, I did, as a matter of fact. Sorry I didn't mention it sooner. You know how it is... you get busy.

Gary sips his beer, letting John's joke die slowly. Finally:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I found tumors in a few people, if that counts.

GARY
Huh. They live?

CONTINUED:

JOHN
The didn't die during their ER visit, if that's what you mean. I referred them to an oncologist.

GARY
Of course you did. God help them.

Gary pats his son on the back and heads out into the party.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON**

It's later that day. John is in his bedroom with Samantha, changing clothes after the party. He's furious...

JOHN
Every time. Every Goddamn time I see him it's the same.

SAMANTHA
Why do you take it personally? You *knew* he had a problem with doctors when you enrolled in med school. That's half the reason you *went.*

JOHN
Is it crazy to expect his thinking to *evolve* a bit? After 15 years-

SAMANTHA
Crazy if you're talking about Gary, yes. And FYI, some of us work in jobs that never get respect from *anyone.* Try telling people you're a social worker for a few weeks.
(she massages his shoulders)
*I'm* proud of you. *Ollie's* proud of you. That's all you need to know. Now please relax. You're exhausted. You need to get some sleep.

JOHN
Ow... it feels like I have a roll of quarters in my neck.

Samantha kisses him. He kisses her back...

SAMANTHA
You need me to relax you?

JOHN
I'm not sure I'm up to it.

CONTINUED:

SAMANTHA
That's okay. It's fun trying...

She slips out of her dress, revealing her silky lingerie as she kisses him. He warms to the attention, running his hands over her back and thighs... And then, offscreen, A DOG BARKS.

Samantha ignores it, kissing John's neck... MORE BARKING.

JOHN
Is that Zeke?

SAMANTHA
It's fine. Let him bark.

Samantha kisses John again. John frowns, distracted.

JOHN
He'll wake Ollie up from his nap.

SAMANTHA
John-

JOHN
Don't go anywhere. I'll be back.

**EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON**

Zeke BARKS at a bush in the yard. He's a nice dog, but you can see the wild animal in him as he POUNCES on something.

There's growling and barking and tearing of leaves until a VOICE interrupts from offscreen.

JOHN (O.S.)
Zeke! OFF!

John hurries across the lawn and grabs Zeke by the collar.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Zeke! Leave it! Leave it!

Zeke backs off. John frowns, looking into the bushes. He searches around in the shrubbery, wincing as he sees... a SQUIRREL, stunned and panting. John turns to Zeke.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Seriously? Fifty-two bucks a bag for the fancy food, and you've got to eat the squirrels, too?

Zeke watches, a plaintive growl in his throat as John pulls off his tee-shirt and carefully wraps the squirrel in it.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

John has the squirrel on the kitchen table. His MEDICAL BAG sits next to him; he is working on the squirrel, delicately stitching up a gash in the animal's side.

Samantha comes in with some ointment, a robe quickly thrown on over her lingerie.

SAMANTHA
Will this work?

JOHN
I think so. Not an expert, here...

He takes the ointment, applying it to the panting animal.

SAMANTHA
Do squirrels need antiseptic?

JOHN
Well, they do if they're in danger of getting sepsis.

SAMANTHA
I thought dog mouths were clean.

John frowns, wiping away dirt from the wound...

JOHN
Cleaner than human mouths, maybe. But that doesn't mean Zeke-slobber is a disinfectant...

Samantha watches, smiling at the little ball of fur.

SAMANTHA
He's so sweet. How'd you get him to sleep?

JOHN
I had a little anaesthetic in my kit. Guesstimated on the dose. He's breathing, so I think we're okay. There's an animal rescue in East Pasadena I can take him to-
(off her look)
Sam, he won't make it if I don't.

SAMANTHA
But you haven't slept in forever-

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I'm all right. I...

John rubs his temple, his headache pounding...

SAMANTHA
What?

JOHN
Nothing. It's stupid. It's a squirrel, I know, but... if it dies right now, I don't think I can take it. I need to do this.

Samantha looks at him, worried... he forces a smile. Finally, she gathers the squirrel up and hands it to him.

SAMANTHA
Go. Just... hurry back.

He kisses her head and gathers up the squirrel.

**INT. JOHN'S BMW - DAY**

John drives down a street in a rough area of East Pasadena. The squirrel lies in the passenger seat, a bundle in a towel. John talks on the phone as he drives.

JOHN
...I'm bringing him now. I did the best I could... it's a lateral tear in the abdomen, but it didn't look deep. I disinfected the wound and put in a couple of sutures... Uh huh... I'm not sure. I can check.

He reaches over to the squirrel in the passenger seat.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey, little guy. I just need to see something...

He reaches over and pulls back the corner of the towel... and flinches at what he sees. He takes the phone...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Actually I... I won't be coming in.

John hangs up. He stares at the road... then puts on his blinker on and pulls over.

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

A mixed-use street in East Pasadena. Liquor stores, a handful of pedestrians... not a great area. John's oblivious to his surroundings, though, as he unwraps the bundle on the trunk of the car.

JOHN
Christ...

John stares at the squirrel, the hopeless little lump of fur staring lifelessly up at him.

John's eyes well up, and he wipes at them, angry...

And then, from offscreen, he hears a LOUD BANG. There is a screech of tires and more BANGS as we hear the unmistakable sound of AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE. He looks over, surprised...

Fifty yards away, A BOY is lying in the street, screaming, bleeding from a bullet hole in his chest.

A souped-up HONDA barrels down the street...

As John watches, a YOUNG MAN runs over and kneels by the screaming boy, yelling for help.

John freezes, stunned. PEDESTRIANS scatter.

John stares at the two men... It's clear that the one lying on the ground (MAURICIO, 11) has been shot.

John hesitates, then almost without thinking, takes a step toward them.

His steps get quicker. He breaks into a run, alarmed, as the second young man, MONDO (20), starts CPR on the boy.

MONDO
Don't close your eyes! Dude, please-

As John arrives, the scene is a mess. Mondo's hands and arms are slick with blood, which spurts from the BULLET WOUND in Mauricio's neck in time with the CPR compressions.

JOHN
Stop that!

MONDO
He's dying! That dude shot him--

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I'm a doctor! You're pumping an artery-

MONDO
What?

John gets down and SHOVES Mondo aside. He leans over and examines the wound. Mauricio MOANS, in shock, trying to move--

MAURICIO
It hurts...

JOHN
You're going to be okay. Hold still-

As he works, John looks over at MONDO.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Call 911. Tell them we need an ambulance--

Mondo's not paying attention. He stares, terrified, up the street. John turns, and FROM HIS POV we see that the car containing the shooters has STOPPED.

It turns, and then begins to accelerate toward them.

Mondo's eyes go wide.

MONDO
Shit, man...

Mondo REACHES INTO HIS POCKET for a PISTOL, but his bloody hands are slippery... he drops the gun. Panicked, he starts to back away...

THE CAR GETS CLOSER...

And Mondo TAKES OFF RUNNING, leaving John kneeling over the injured boy in the street.

In SLOW-MOTION, John looks down at the bloody GUN sitting on the ground next to the injured boy.

Almost as if in a trance, he grabs the gun and turns toward the car, which is BARRELING STRAIGHT AT HIM--

John FIRES. It is a defensive reflex, but it hits the mark; the bullet spiderwebs the windshield. THE CAR KEEPS COMING.

HE FIRES AGAIN. And AGAIN. Two more bullet holes bloom in the windshield of the car...

CONTINUED:

AND FINALLY THE CAR VEERS OFF COURSE, colliding with a lamppost and taking off down a side street.

JOHN LOOKS DOWN at the bloody gun in his hand, stunned...

OFF HIS LOOK, we SMASH TO BLACK.

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

**EXT. STREET - DAY**

The street is filled with police cars and emergency vehicles.

We FIND John in the street, flanked by a couple of beat cops. He is talking to DETECTIVE DORSEY of the Pasadena P.D., a middle-aged African American man in a blazer and slacks.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
...found it a couple of blocks away, crashed into a fence. The driver was dead.

JOHN
How did he... what caused it?

DETECTIVE DORSEY
We're still determining that, but it appears he died of multiple gunshot wounds to the torso.

John takes this in, stunned.

JOHN
And the victim? Is he...

DETECTIVE DORSEY
He's on the way to the hospital.

JOHN
Which hospital? Arroyo?

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Does it matter?

JOHN
I work there.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Well, you may get to spend some more time with him, then.

Detective Dorsey considers John for a moment, then...

DETECTIVE DORSEY (CONT'D)
You told the other officers you had no connection to the victim or the shooter, is that correct?

CONTINUED:

JOHN
No. I... I heard the shots, and I went to help.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
I understand something was found on the hood of your car. The corpse of a small animal? Can you tell me what that was doing there?

JOHN
It's... uh... it's a squirrel. My dog got to it. I was on my way to the animal rescue, on Foothill-

DETECTIVE DORSEY
I see. Well, we'll need to take you in to write up a full report.

JOHN
Wait, am I being arrested?

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Just need to ask some questions. We talked to the other witnesses. As long as everything lines up, you should be done in a few hours.

JOHN
All right.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
One more thing. According to the notes I got, the car was up by the market when you fired? That right?

JOHN
Yeah... About there.

Dorsey looks at John, curious...

DETECTIVE DORSEY
You have any firearms training?

JOHN
When I was a kid I shot cans at the dump with my dad a few times...

DETECTIVE DORSEY
You fired three rounds at 100 yards at a moving car. All three hit the driver, center mass. That's... remarkable. Any explanation?

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I just pulled the trigger. I guess I just got lucky.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Lucky. If I were you, I'd consider investing in a few lottery tickets. Would you follow me, please?

He leads John to a waiting police car. John gets in, dazed.

**INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS**

John looks out the window as they pass the cross street where the shooter's car turned...

FROM JOHN'S POV, we see a SMASHED CAR by a fence. The bloody body of a YOUNG MAN is being loaded onto a gurney behind a hearse. Off John, we CUT TO:

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

John sits across from Dr. Laster.

DR. LASTER
I read the police report. What you did was very brave. I imagine it was also quite traumatic.

JOHN
As in, traumatic enough to explain what happened today in the ER?

DR. LASTER
Let's not worry about that for the moment. Just tell me what you remember feeling at the time.

JOHN
I wasn't really thinking about my feelings. I was focused on my patient, the boy... I remember thinking that he probably only had a partial arterial rupture...

DR. LASTER
What about you? Try to remember.

JOHN
I don't know. I remember thinking that my headache was gone.

CONTINUED:

DR. LASTER
How did you feel about the young man who died? The driver.

JOHN
Honestly? Angry. Angry he put me in a position where I had to do that. Tell me: How am I supposed to feel in that situation? Guilty? Sad?

DR. LASTER
This isn't a test.

JOHN
But it *is* a test. You're evaluating me. Maybe there's no right answer, but there's certainly a *wrong* one, at least if I want to keep my job.

DR. LASTER
That's not-

JOHN
No. No, hear me out. I mean, say I had *no* reaction. I felt **absolutely nothing** when I shot a 19-year-old kid. Clearly unhealthy. And at the other end of the spectrum, say I was **completely overwhelmed** and stopped functioning. Unhealthy. But between the two there's a perfect mix of pain and dissociation. Juuust right. So where is that?

DR. LASTER
I'm afraid I can't answer that.

JOHN
Why not? I can give patients an optimal O2 SAT number, or blood pressure range.

DR. LASTER
There's no objective standard. It's a question of how well you function-

JOHN
As in, how many reception rooms you bust up with an IV stand?

DR. LASTER
That could be one indication.

CONTINUED:

JOHN
Then this is already over.

DR. LASTER
It is if you don't answer my questions. I need to know how you processed this trauma-

JOHN
(snaps)
What do you want me to say? I wasn't "processing my trauma." *I had a patient.*

Off John's look, we SMASH BACK TO:

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - SURGERY CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

John BANGS through the side door of the Arroyo Hospital surgery center; he is on the phone with Samantha.

JOHN
I'll be right home, honey. I just finished up at the police station.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Why did it take so long? Are you sure you're okay?

JOHN
They just had a lot of questions. Mostly just variations on "tell us what happened." Anyway, I'm done.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
I told you, I can pick you up. They're covering for me at work-

JOHN
There's no need for that.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. DAY CARE CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

Samantha is at Oliver's day care; kids run around, yelling and playing on a play structure. She looks very worried.

SAMANTHA
Okay. I'm just dropping Ollie off. I'll be home in five minutes.

CONTINUED:

Samantha wipes away an anxious tear; Oliver stands over with a group of kids, watching. She shoots him a reassuring smile.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
If you need anything-

JOHN
I don't need anything, Sam. I'll be right there.

John hangs up as he steps up to a reception desk. The RECEPTIONIST looks up, startled.

RECEPTIONIST
Dr. Ellis. I heard... I'm so sorry-

JOHN
Thank you. I'm fine. I need the status of Mauricio Hernandez. Is he still in surgery?

RECEPTIONIST
(checks the computer)
He's, ah... just coming out. 214-B.

John gives her a grateful nod as he hurries to the elevator.

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - LATE AFTERNOON**

John stands outside a surgery theater talking to DR. BELL (45), a good looking African-American surgeon. He's still in scrubs, stripping off his gloves as he and John confer...

DR. BELL
The bullet behaved itself pretty well, for a bullet. Aside from the tear, there was a pseudoaneurism on the subclavian artery.

JOHN
How was the lung? He was aspirating pretty badly by the time the ambulance got there.

DR. BELL
Trauma to the right apical segment. I removed half the superior lobe. The bullet trajectory was probably a centimeter from the heart, though, so you gotta figure a chunk of lung's a small price to pay.

CONTINUED:

John looks through the small window of the surgery theater. Inside, nurses finish dressing Mauricio's wounds...

JOHN
How much blood did he lose? How many units did he need?

DR. BELL
At least four after I came in to do the surgery - before that, I'd have to check the chart.
(off John's look)
If you're asking whether stopping the blood loss before the ambulance got there saved the kid's life, John... Yeah. It did.

Dr. Bell goes as the nurse and a tech wheel Mauricio past.

JOHN
Hang on just a moment.

John takes the chart from the gurney, looks it over. He checks the units of blood, the log of surgical procedures... then looks at Mauricio. He looks tiny and pale, lying on the gurney with a tube in his nose. John puts the chart back.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Thanks.

John watches him as he's wheeled up the corridor to the recovery rooms; as the doors close we CUT TO:

**INT. JOHN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

John sips a glass of scotch, sitting across from Samantha in their living room.

JOHN
It's all going to be worked out. There's some kind of investigation, but they said they won't charge me with anything. It'll be fine.

SAMANTHA
Fine? John, you *shot* someone.

JOHN
Yeah. I'm aware.

SAMANTHA
(exasperated)
John, you're acting like...
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
like you got a traffic ticket or something. Is this for my benefit? Are you worried I can't take it?

John stares, trying to get his head around it.

JOHN
It's not that. It just still feels like it happened to someone else.

He takes her hand, squeezes it. She squeezes back. She looks at him for a moment, then...

SAMANTHA
Who was he? The boy... in the car.

JOHN
His name was Raul Mendoza. He had a few assault convictions. A "known gang associate." San Gabriel Kings, to be precise.

John sips his scotch, thinking.

SAMANTHA
I can't even imagine. It must have been horrible, seeing him...

JOHN
It was rough. But... I've seen a lot of bodies...

SAMANTHA
John, *you don't have to be okay*. If you want to talk to someone-

JOHN
I had enough talking with the cops today. They said they'd have more questions after the coroner's report, too, so...

SAMANTHA
Well, Jay called from the hospital. He was very nice - said you should take all the time you need. I said we'd call when you were ready-

JOHN
What? No. I'm going in tomorrow.

SAMANTHA
Is that a joke? John-

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I'd be there tonight if they hadn't already covered my shift.
(a beat)
Sam. It's something I need to do.

Samantha is about to argue, but something about the look on John's face makes her reconsider. Finally, she sighs:

SAMANTHA
Fine. Let's just... talk about this in the morning.

John allows himself to be led off toward the bedroom. CUT TO:

**INT. SPEEDING CAR - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE**

We are in the speeding car of the drive-by shooter. The driver, RAUL, is heading down the street, his foot to the floor; there is a GUN in his lap.

The scene is somewhat surreal, the colors off; the images JUMP FORWARD IN TIME a few frames at odd intervals, changing perspective abruptly in the way of dreams.

The engine whines loudly. We pan around to find JOHN sitting in the passenger seat...

He turns, terrified, and SCREAMS at Raul:

JOHN
STOP! STOP THE CAR!

Raul does not stop; he accelerates, staring out at the road ahead of him...

JOHN (CONT'D)
PLEASE! STOP!

Raul acts as if John is not there, focused on something in front of him.

**EXT. ROAD - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE**

And we are OUT ON THE ROAD with John, as he is trying to save Mauricio. Mondo is looking at the car, fumbling with the gun, as before, only this time in SLOW-MOTION.

He looks up the street at the CAR APPROACHING, his eyes wide. He drops the gun and runs.

John picks up the gun, as before, and we are BACK IN THE CAR:

**INT. SPEEDING CAR - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE**

John is sitting in the passenger seat across from Raul; he is CRYING NOW, wiping away tears as he yells at the boy:

JOHN
STOP THE GODDAMN CAR! PLEASE!

Raul keeps driving... John looks out the window and sees HIMSELF, taking aim with the gun...

OUTSIDE, with John in the street, as he FIRES at the windshield of the approaching car....

INSIDE, with John in the car as the bullet SLAMS through the window and into Raul's chest.

OUTSIDE with John as he continues firing...

INSIDE, with John as more bullets pierce the windshield and he screams:

JOHN (CONT'D)
Stop! Stop! STOP!

Another BULLET hits the glass...

**INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING**

AND WE ARE IN JOHN'S BEDROOM. John starts awake in bed, his face wet with tears. Samantha is looking at him, her hand on his chest - she has clearly been trying to wake him.

SAMANTHA
John. John! You were talking in your sleep.

John collects himself for a moment, then:

JOHN
Just a bad dream. Go back to sleep.
(forces a smile)
I'm fine.

He lies there staring at the ceiling. Push in on John... he may be many things, but "fine" is not one of them. CUT TO:

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

**EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING**

The sun is low in the sky over the San Gabriel Mountains. We FIND John's car on a suburban street...

**INT. JOHN'S BMW - DAY**

John drives. Oliver sits in the back, lunchbox on his lap.

JOHN
How are you back there? Need music?

OLIVER
No thanks.
(then)
Why are you driving me to school? Usually mommy drives me.

JOHN
I thought I could drive you today. You know how Dad sleeps in the day most of the time? I didn't today. I slept at night, like you and mommy.

OLIVER
Because of the thing that happened.

John frowns, looks at Oliver.

JOHN
Ollie... what do you know about the thing that happened?

OLIVER
I heard Mommy on the phone with the police. She said I wasn't supposed to be listening. That it was privacy for our family.

JOHN
Well, I'm part of our family. You can talk to me.

OLIVER
I heard what... What you did.

John takes a deep breath, then:

JOHN
How do you feel about that?

CONTINUED:

Oliver does not respond. He watches his father in the mirror.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

OLIVER
No.

JOHN
You're sure?

OLIVER
No. I understand.

JOHN
Really? What do you understand?

OLIVER
You told me, when I got my shots.

JOHN
What did I tell you?

OLIVER
When you're a doctor, to help someone... sometimes you have to do something that hurts.

John looks at his son, who is looking out the window; apparently, the matter is settled.

OLIVER (CONT'D)
Dad, stop. This is the school.

John does as he's told, brought back to his drive by his son's words. As he pulls over, Oliver gets out. He runs to the driver's side window and kisses his father.

John watches Oliver run off. After a moment, he pulls into the street. He signals left, to go back the way he came...

Then stops himself, thinking. After a beat, he turns right.

**INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY**

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! A gun FIRES at a shooting range.

Reverse to John, wearing ear protection and holding a .45 semi-automatic. A sign behind him reads SAN GABRIEL GUN CLUB.

John sets the safety. Looks at the gun, sets it down.

CONTINUED:

He pulls up the target - a silhouette torso on heavy paper. Three misses. Two high and to the right, through the printed scoring and range information. The third is through the shoulder of the figure, outside the scoring ovals.

John fingers the holes... Then reloads, methodically putting bullets into the clip, then slides the clip into the gun. His motions are not clumsy, but they're not expert, either.

He slides the target back and fires again. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Three times in quick succession.

He checks the target. Another miss; two shots in an arm of the target and a third in the lower left corner.

He frowns, slides the target back...

And he is interrupted by his phone vibrating. He checks it; it's Samantha. He sets the pistol down, removes his ear protection, and answers..

JOHN
Hello?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
It's me. Where are you?

JOHN
I'm... running an errand.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Jay called, from the hospital again, about your time off-

JOHN
Did you tell him I'm coming in?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Yes, but-

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Someone on another lane empties a clip at a target. John flinches.

SAMANTHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What was that?

JOHN
It's... I'm at the auto shop, the car was making a noise. It's the, you know, the rivet thing.

CONTINUED:

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Well, get home as soon as you can. Your dad is coming over... I guess Rob told him what happened-

JOHN
Seriously? I just saw him. What does he want-

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
What do you think he wants? He's worried about you.

JOHN
(voice tight)
I'll be home in a minute.

John hangs up. Pissed, he picks up the gun, takes off the safety, and FIRES three more times. BLAM, BLAM, BLAM!!

The slide locks back; the clip is empty. John pulls up the target... it's not even halfway there when we see: THREE SHOTS, CENTER MASS.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY**

John lets himself into his house; Samantha is sitting in the living room with some coffee. She looks up as he walks in.

SAMANTHA
There you are. I was about to call-

JOHN
Sorry. Just... took a wrong turn.

SAMANTHA
Gary's in the back. I offered him coffee, but... he's Gary.

JOHN
Yeah. Thanks.

SAMANTHA
Listen, I have to go to work... I have a client placement at a project on Orange Grove, but if you need me I can come back...

She kisses him on the cheek, glances at the yard again...

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Good luck. I love you.

CONTINUED:

John looks at the sliding glass door, steeling himself.

**EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - MID-DAY**

Gary sits in John's back yard in a lawn chair, watching a sprinkler click across the yard. Zeke is next to him, nuzzling his leg.

After a moment, John walks out the sliding glass door.

JOHN
Hey, Dad.

GARY
You're getting dandelions.

JOHN
Good to know.

GARY
You should have your boy pull 'em. Remember how you and your mom used to do that? Even after she got sick, you two did it... remember?

JOHN
I remember. Thanks for coming over.

GARY
You don't have to pretend to be happy to see me. I'm your father. I get to worry about you even when you don't want me to.

JOHN
I guess that's fair.

GARY
Samantha filled me in on the situation. How are you holding up?

JOHN
Okay.

GARY
You going back to work?

JOHN
Tonight. Sam doesn't want me to, but I have a patient-- patients I want to follow up with.

CONTINUED:

GARY
You talk to a lawyer at all?

JOHN
No... The police seem satisfied.

GARY
Well, that can change. People that weren't there start second-guessing you. That's Vietnam in a nutshell.

John watches the sprinkler tick for a few moments, then:

JOHN
I have a question about that.
(off Gary's look)
Were you good at it?

GARY
Good at what? Good at Vietnam?

JOHN
Good... at war.

GARY
Yes. Yes, I guess I was.

The sprinkler ticks back to its starting position...

JOHN
Did you know you would be? Before you went?

GARY
Nah. I was just another scared little shit in a uniform. I got there, just kind of did what I had to. Turns out that's pretty much the bar for being a good soldier.

JOHN
Did it... bother you? After?

GARY
Why? It bothering you?

JOHN
Some.

GARY
In my first firefight, I got stuck behind this dead tree thing.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GARY (CONT'D)
I'm trying to keep my head down and not crap my pants. Heard a sound, thought it was the L-T come to tell us to fall back. It was two NVA's coming out of the jungle thirty feet off. I shot 'em before I could even think about it.

JOHN
You never told me that.

GARY
Didn't much like thinking about it. Got a commendation... but that didn't stop me from shaking so bad I thought I had brain damage.

JOHN
When did the shaking stop?

GARY
You want the truth? Next firefight.
(off John's look)
Give it time. You did good.

Gary gets up. He pats his son on the shoulder, then pauses...

GARY (CONT'D)
One more thing. I want you to have this.

Gary pulls a gun from his waistband, a small snub-nosed .38 revolver. John looks at it, nonplussed.

JOHN
Put that away. I don't want that.

GARY
Now John, you got your wife and my grandson to protect.

JOHN
Protect them from what? I don't-

GARY
Just saying. Those guys you tangled with may have friends.

He hands the gun to John, closes his fingers around it. Gary goes... John stands there, staring at the gun in his hand.

**END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

**EXT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - EVENING**

John parks in the Arroyo employee lot. As he grabs his stuff, he talks on the phone with Samantha.

JOHN
I'm telling you, honey: I. Will. Be. Fine.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
If you have any problems, call-

JOHN
Of course I'll call. Seriously, though... I'm at work. Same as every day for the last eight years.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
It's not the same, though. John, something like this...

As Samantha talks, John looks at the front of the hospital, where two TRICKED-OUT CARS are parked, idling at the curb...

SAMANTHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...it has effects you may not be aware of. It just does.

John watches the CARS drive away, disappearing up the street.

SAMANTHA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
John?

JOHN
Uh huh?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Did you hear what I said?

JOHN
Yes. And I appreciate it. I love you, too. Kiss Ollie for me. I'll talk to you in the morning.

John hangs up as he goes to the hospital's employee entrance.

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - EVENING**

As John opens the employee door and puts away his access card he's greeted by the entire ER STAFF, lined up and APPLAUDING. He half-smiles, surprised, as DAN claps him on the back.

CONTINUED:

DAN
There he is! Dr. Dirty freakin' Harry!

JOHN
Guys, this... This really isn't necessary.

DAN
What do you mean? We got a hero in our midst! The nursing staff made you a cake. Sherry, show him...

SHERRY (40's), the chief nurse, steps forward with a sheet cake. There's a drawing, in icing, of John with a gun and a stethoscope - like something out of a marvel comic.

JOHN
Wow. That's... seriously, everyone. Thank you. That cake is amazing.

SHERRY
I just baked the thing. Gretchen did the frosting. You see that?

GRETCHEN
(shrugs)
Six months of art school.

JOHN
You gave me fourteen inch biceps.

DAN
Hey, action man... the way you're going, we're all wondering what else you got that's fourteen inches-

This earns a laugh from the assembled techs and nurses...

SHERRY
Why'd you have to go and say that? Now everyone's gonna fight over the same piece of cake.

More laughs... until some of the techs see something behind John and straighten up. John turns and sees JAY BUTLER (51), the ER Administrator. Dan arches an eyebrow.

DAN
Whoah. Boss is here. Party's over.

Jay gives a good-natured (if somewhat forced) smile.

CONTINUED:

JAY
Don’t let me spoil the fun... Just be sure the cake winds up in the break room. I’d rather not explain an outbreak of frosting-transmitted MRSA at the department meeting.

A couple of techs take the cake away as the ER staff hurries back to their duties. Jay turns to John...

JAY (CONT’D)
Can I talk to you for a minute?

JOHN
Sure. Should I have someone cover-

JAY
This won’t take long.

DAN
(grins)
It better not... ‘cause those sons of bitches *will* eat all the cake. I’ve seen it before.

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - EVENING**

Jay meets with John in a hallway near the ER, out of earshot of the staff and patients.

JAY
Listen, ah... I wanted to talk to you about... the situation.

JOHN
Is there a problem?

JAY
Let me just say, first, that like everyone, I admire your bravery. Not many of people could have done what you did, and I speak for everyone at Arroyo Hospital when I say we are very proud-

JOHN
Thanks. Jay, what’s the problem?

JAY
I don’t know how to put this. This situation, with you, and Mauricio Hernandez... it’s not good.

CONTINUED:

JOHN
I heard he's stable. I checked on him yesterday, and-

JAY
That's not what I mean.
(he sighs, then)
We asked you to take some time off. The board, our insurance company... they just don't want you here right now.

JOHN
What are you talking about?

JAY
John... think about it. What if, God forbid, there were an issue with a patient? Two days after-

JOHN
That has *nothing* to do with my performance as a physician.

JAY
Well, our insurance company disagrees. There are concerns from other MDs as well-

JOHN
Who? Bridget? It's Bridget, right?

JAY
Let's leave names out of this.

JOHN
Fine. Just tell the insurance company and the anonymous mystery doctors that if they have a problem with how I practice medicine they can talk to **me.** And show me where in my contract it says you can suspend me without cause.

Jay sighs, cleaning his glasses. Then:

JAY
No. Per your contract, you can practice, however unwise that may be. So... there we are. I believe you have patients waiting.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - EVENING**

John walks through the ER, pissed; Gretchen falls into step beside him...

GRETCHEN
Something wrong?

JOHN
Yes. Our entire medical system. Who's up next?

GRETCHEN
Female, 25. Cara Spens. Severe headache. History of fibromyalgia.

Gretchen hands him a chart. John's expression hardens...

JOHN
Right. Unverifiable severe pain syndrome. Have we seen her before?

GRETCHEN
At least every two weeks since May. I can keep looking if you want-

JOHN
Don't bother.

John pulls back the curtain on the ER examination bay.

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - EVENING**

CARA SPENS (25), a pretty young woman with blonde hair who is clearly used to getting what she wants, waits inside. She plays with her cell phone as John and Gretchen enter.

JOHN
Ms. Spens, I'm Dr. Ellis. Why don't you tell me about this headache?

CARA
It's bad. It's like, the worst headache of my life.

JOHN
OK. The worst of your life? You have headaches frequently, then?

CARA
Yeah. Gets so bad I can't see-

CONTINUED:

JOHN
So the text you were sending when I walked in, you sent that even though you couldn't see the screen?

Cara starts to say something, but John cuts her off.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Your severe visual impairment also didn't affect your ability to specify that you respond best to 60mg morphine tablets.
(squints at the chart)
The purple ones. That's helpful. Thanks for that.

CARA
It's just, those are the ones I got-

JOHN
No need to explain. But here's the thing. If you're having a headache so bad you're going *blind,* you may have an aneurism. So pain meds will have to have to wait until after the spinal tap, the CT scan, and-

CARA
It's a headache. I don't need any-

JOHN
Oh? You're a medical professional? Tell me, doctor: why do you think you **don't** have a bleeding aneurism?

CARA
What the hell is your problem?

JOHN
I'll tell you my problem: tonight I don't feel like being a drug store for addicts who can't even be bothered to come up with convincing lies to get the drugs they want. So here's what I'm going to give you:

John takes a prescription pad and scribbles something on it.

JOHN (CONT'D)
A prescription for Suboxone. It'll help with your withdrawal.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
You'll need it, because I'm notifying all the area ERs that you have a lethal reaction to every known opiate. And if I ever see you here again, I expect to see to see blood, or splintered bone, or another problem worthy of our time. Understood?

John holds out the prescription to Cara. She nods, sullen, then snatches the prescription and goes. Gretchen raises an eyebrow at John... then breaks into a slow clap.

GRETCHEN
That? That was the best thing I have ever seen.

JOHN
Thanks. Apparently I'm an insurance risk. I might as well act like one.

Off John's look, we cut back to:

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

Dr. Laster eyes John across her desk.

DR. LASTER
Do you think that was appropriate? Talking to a patient like that?

JOHN
You should've seen her labs. Her blood plasma was technically a schedule one narcotic.

DR. LASTER
There are procedures to follow in those cases. You threatened-

JOHN
*She's a drug addict.* You think she needs another pamphlet? Oh, and for what it's worth, she filled the Suboxone prescription - I checked.

DR. LASTER
You're saying it wasn't influenced by your traumatic experience? It was strictly a medical decision?

John looks at Dr. Laster. The clock ticks.

CONTINUED:

JOHN
You tell me something, Dr. Laster: when I shot Raul Mendoza, was *that* a medical decision?

DR. LASTER
I'd have to say no.

JOHN
It kept my patient alive.

DR. LASTER
You killed someone.

JOHN
So if I'd run away and left Mauricio Hernandez to die... would *that* have been a medical decision?
(off Dr. Laster's look)
Result's the same. One kid dies, one kid lives. The only difference is that it's *my patient* that dies. That's a better outcome?

DR. LASTER
It doesn't make firing a gun a *medical* decision-

JOHN
So the gun is the issue? How about if I stayed in the street and focused on clamping the axillary artery? Medical decision?

DR. LASTER
Yes. I would say it is.

JOHN
In which case I'd have been killed with my patient. Two deaths, versus one in either previous scenario. A real victory for medicine.

DR. LASTER
Touché, Dr. Ellis.

Dr. Laster shuffles through her papers, finds one...

DR. LASTER (CONT'D)
Here's the thing, though. The body count in this incident **is** two.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

DR. LASTER (CONT'D)
According to the death certificate you filled out, Mauricio Hernandez fell victim to post-surgical complications. Tell me about that.

John stares at Dr. Laster for a long moment. Considering her. Clearly, there is something more to this...

JOHN
I think we should leave him out of this.

DR. LASTER
I'm afraid we can't do that.

JOHN
You're here to evaluate *me,* not-

DR. LASTER
Patient Hernandez is part of that evaluation.

JOHN
Dr. Laster... it is better for all concerned to leave him out of this.

DR. LASTER
Unfortunately, I can't do that. I can either do my own investigation, interview your colleagues, etc., or you can talk to me about this now.

John considers this, weighing how to proceed...

JOHN
There are patient confidentiality issues I expect you to respect.

DR. LASTER
I assure you it won't be an issue.

John looks at her, clearly not so sure... as we SMASH TO:

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

It's later, around midnight. John sits in an ER admin office, going over some papers. Bridget and Dan are there, working. Bridget looks over at him...

BRIDGET
How did your talk with Jay go?

CONTINUED:

JOHN
Good. The administrative office is very proud of me, apparently.

Bridget looks at John expectantly, waiting for more...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Something to say, Bridget?

BRIDGET
No. Just...

JOHN
Then why are you staring at me?

BRIDGET
I wasn't staring.

JOHN
Your eyes are fixed in a forward direction toward my position in the room. Either you're staring or you're having absence seizures. Which could be a liability issue for the hospital, incidentally.

Bridget and John square off for a moment, then:

BRIDGET
I have a patient.

Bridget leaves. Dan arches an eyebrow at John.

DAN
That was enjoyable.
(looks over a chart)
Hey, would you check me on something, here?

John comes over, looks at the file. It's an X-ray of a face. There is a fracture across the nose and cheekbone.

DAN (CONT'D)
I got a kid in earlier, said he was in a fight. Multiple fractures, tissue damage, a concussion... I'm just trying to figure out whether to deal with the sinus first-

JOHN
(squints at the X-ray)
What happened? He get hit with a board, maybe? Or a bat?

CONTINUED:

DAN
He just said it was a fight. He's not a talker. I can't even get his clothes off for a full examination. Mean little son of a bitch.

John looks at Dan, struck by this...

JOHN
He won't take off his clothes? Why?

DAN
Probably just a bad case of Recent Criminal Activity Syndrome. Judging from the tissue damage, the break is at least a day old.

JOHN
A day old.

DAN
Or two.

John checks the chart. From his POV we see the age and race of the patient - 19, Hispanic - John frowns.

JOHN
Where is he?

Off Dan's look, we cut to:

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

John stands with Dan outside the exam bay, looking through the Exam Room window. Inside is a SHORT HISPANIC MAN with a shaved head, wearing jeans and a flannel shirt. His face is bruised, an eye swollen shut.

DAN
That's him. Came in with a couple of guys who said they found him on the street. Reception said they were knife-and-gun club types.

JOHN
You're sure about that? Did they say anything else-

DAN
What is it?

JOHN
I don't know. Maybe nothing. Maybe-

CONTINUED:

As John talks, the patient looks over at the window and sees him standing there.

For a moment, they lock eyes. There is a flicker of recognition, of fury... And then he looks away.

John watches him, then turns to Dan, his voice urgent.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Get security. Now.

**END OF ACT FOUR**

**ACT FIVE**

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Gretchen, a Security Guard, and two techs have joined John and Dan in the hallway. John glances in at the patient, then turns to Gretchen.

JOHN
I just need to be sure, before we do anything. You were clear? You asked him to take off his clothes-

GRETCHEN
I didn't ask, I *told* him. Threatened to kick him out of the hospital if he didn't.

JOHN
Could the concussion be affecting his comprehension?

GRETCHEN
It's not affecting his ability to come up with synonyms for the word "bitch." In English and Spanish.

JOHN
Has he been drinking? Drugs?

GRETCHEN
Why? Are you thinking of compelling treatment?

JOHN
Yes... *If* he's impaired.

GRETCHEN
(smiles)
In that case... yes. I'm confident he's been drinking. He's unable to make competent medical decisions on his own behalf.

Dan looks at them both, uncomfortable.

DAN
Just remember, I gotta treat this kid-

CONTINUED:

JOHN
We'll just go in and ask him politely to take off his clothes. If he does, you treat your patient.

DAN
And if he doesn't?

JOHN
Then... we'll play it by ear.
(to all of them)
Shall we?

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

Dan waits as John and two techs come into the examination room, followed by Gretchen and the Security Guard. Dan tries to remain casual as he talks to the patient (TICO)...

Tico stays in the bed, lying down, but tense. His eyes keep flitting back to John.

DAN
So... I hear you still aren't removing your clothes. I need to talk to you about that.

TICO
I'm keeping 'em, guero. I got hurt on my face. You can see that fine.

JOHN
That's not how this works. You have to take off your clothing and get into a hospital gown.

TICO
(to Dan)
What is this? Ain't **you** my doctor?

DAN
We both are. I need you to do what he said.

TICO
Not gonna happen.

John shoots a look at the techs. As one, they move in and GRAB TICO BY HIS ARMS AND LEGS.

TICO (CONT'D)
HEY! LET GO OF ME! BACK OFF!

CONTINUED:

Gretchen moves in and begin expertly cutting off Tico's clothing as the young man thrashes...

TICO (CONT'D)
NO!

As Gretchen cuts up the side of Tico's pants, something shiny it falls out of Tico's pocket... It is a large KNIFE.

GRETCHEN
KNIFE!

Tico grabs for the knife, as do the techs; Tico gets there first and SLASHES with the knife, opening a long, shallow gash on John's bicep through the doctor's coat...

JOHN
Get that thing!!

The Security Guard goes for the hand holding the knife as TICO thrashes, trying to break free...

TICO
Get off me! Get the fu-

The Burly Tech SMASHES Tico's arm against the rail of the gurney; Tico SCREAMS as the knife falls to the ground.

Gretchen grabs the knife as the techs finally grab hold of the flailing Tico and pin him to the gurney.

TICO (CONT'D)
Get off me! I said get off!!

JOHN
50cc Halcion, now!

GRETCHEN
There's not-

JOHN
Ativan, then! ANYTHING!!

Tico is struggling, flailing at the techs and guard; they've got him overpowered, but it's still pretty hectic.

Gretchen hurriedly fills a syringe with sedative, then tries to stick it in Tico's arm. He fends her off, knocking her back... she lunges in and JAMS THE NEEDLE INTO TICO'S CROTCH.

CONTINUED:

Tico HOWLS as she slaps the plunger down on the syringe. His body relaxes, but he does not lose consciousness, glaring at them as Gretchen finishes cutting off his pants, pulling a tape-wrapped PISTOL from a pocket. She holds it up.

GRETCHEN
Now we know why he was so attached to those clothes.

JOHN
(glares at the tech)
Did nobody search this guy when he came in?

John grips his arm, bleeding through his fingers...

DAN
John, let me look at that.

JOHN
In a second.

John takes the gun, holds it up in front of Tico's face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Was this for my patient? Was this for Mauricio Hernandez?

Tico just glares at him, glassy-eyed but still malevolent. John YELLS at him; it's the first time we've seen him really angry since the flash at the beginning...

JOHN (CONT'D)
You came into MY HOSPITAL to kill MY PATIENT? IS THAT WHAT THIS IS?

John is really brandishing the gun as Dan pulls him away...

DAN
John! John, just... cool off.

JOHN
(glares at Tico)
*Answer me.*

Tico gathers his strength and SPITS at John... Then lies back and closes his eyes. Off John's look we cut to:

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - LATER**

Gretchen helps John bandage the wound on his arm, while he talks on the phone.

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm saying I believe this patient was involved in Thursday's shooting of Mauricio Hernandez, yes.

John looks at Gretchen, wincing as she disinfects the cut. INTERCUT as he talks...

**INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT**

A weary-looking Detective Dorsey sits in the police station bullpen in the middle of the night.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Why do you think that, exactly?

JOHN
He came in with a facial fracture - his zygomatic bone, his ethmoid bone and his supraorbital foramen, all fractured at the same time.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
And that means...

JOHN
Usually? An MVA. A face full of dashboard. He was probably the passenger in the car, the one pulling the trigger.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
I thought you said you couldn't see-

JOHN
I couldn't. All I know is... he knew *me*.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
All right. We'll have forensics out in the morning, check him against what we found in the car. We have your statement?

JOHN
I gave it to the arresting officer, yes.

DETECTIVE DORSEY
Good. I may call you if I have more questions.
(a beat, then:)
You be careful, doctor.

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

As John hangs up, Dan comes in. He looks at John's wound, concerned...

DAN
You all right, there?

JOHN
Yeah. It's just... it's not that bad.

DAN
Hey, listen... just a heads up? Stay out of reception. It's gang central. They cleared out when the cops were here, but they're back.

John nods, taking this in...

DAN (CONT'D)
Maybe you should go home, John.

JOHN
I can't do that.

DAN
Uh... yeah, actually, you can. That's what people do when they get stabbed at work.

JOHN
I didn't get stabbed. I got cut.

DAN
My mistake. Except here's the thing: you know what people do when they get *cut* at work? They go home.

JOHN
I'm not going home, Dan.

DAN
Listen... maybe it's not my place to say this, but you're taking this whole thing a little personally. I gotta be honest, I was kind of worried you were going to shoot that guy.

JOHN
I'm just trying to take care of my patient.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)
(then)
Speaking of, I want to go up to surgical recovery, check on him. Can you cover me?

DAN
John, I-

JOHN
*Can you cover me?*

DAN
(sighs, then:)
Sure, man. Consider yourself covered.

**INT. SURGICAL RECOVERY - NIGHT**

John talks to the Security Guard in the hallway outside of Mauricio's room.

JOHN
...and no one goes in. Not friends, not family, no one.

SECURITY GUARD
What about visitors for the other patients in the unit?

JOHN
Family only, and you check I.D.s.

SECURITY GUARD
Daryl comes in an hour...

JOHN
Good. Tell him what I told you. And make sure they keep an eye on ER reception and the parking lot.

The Guard nods. John looks over at Mauricio, in the bed, and sees that his EYES ARE OPEN. He looks at John... he speaks, croaking in a barely audible whisper.

MAURICIO
What's... what's going on?

John goes over to him...

JOHN
Everything's fine. Just making sure you're safe.

CONTINUED:

Mauricio squints at John, thinking...

MAURICIO
Wait... Who are you?

JOHN
I'm Dr. Ellis. I'm, ah... one of the doctors dealing with your case.

MAURICIO
(smiles)
You... You're the guy that helped me? From the street, right?

JOHN
Yeah. I'm the guy from the street.

Mauricio holds out a hand... John hesitates, then takes the young man's hand. Mauricio grips it tightly. John smiles, a little awkward, then looks over at Mauricio's heart monitor. It's flashing; his heart rate is going up...

JOHN (CONT'D)
You need to rest, all right?

MAURICIO
Am I... How sick am I?

JOHN
You're going to be fine. Rest.

Mauricio leans back and closes his eyes. John looks at him again, then goes to the door. He looks at the Security Guard.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I just told him he was going to make it. Don't make me a liar.

As the door closes, we SMASH TO:

**END OF ACT FIVE**

**ACT SIX**

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - FRONT RECEPTION - NIGHT**

John stands at the front reception desk, watching the waiting room through a security window. From his POV we see a group of GANG MEMBERS conferring - including the man he fought in the opening, Cruz.

VOICE (O.S.)
Um... Doctor?

JOHN
Yes?

John turns to MIA (20's), the pretty ER receptionist. She's staring at him, as are a couple of TRIAGE NURSES.

MIA
Are you all right?

She nods at his shirt; blood from his knife wound has soaked through the bandage and is dripping on the reception counter. John grabs a tissue and wipes it up.

JOHN
Sorry. Just... need a new bandage.

John nods at the gang members...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Have they done anything besides sit there?

MIA
They text. A guy brought them Burger King about an hour ago.

JOHN
Did we talk to the police?

MIA
Yeah. They sent a car by. They came in and stood around for a while... said to call if anything happened.

As the PARAMEDIC BELL RINGS, John turns to a Triage Nurse...

JOHN
That mine?

The nurse checks the patient assignments on the computer...

CONTINUED:

TRIAGE NURSE
Yours.

JOHN
What is it?

TRIAGE NURSE
Police responded to a domestic disturbance... found a Caucasian woman, 20's. Contusions, possible fracture. Says she slipped.

John rubs his eyes... He looks tired, on edge. Mia and the Triage Nurse exchange looks.

MIA
You sure you're okay?

JOHN
Yeah. Yeah, I'm okay. Page me if anything changes out here.

**INT. ER EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT**

John stands in an ER bay with Hillary (22), a blonde with mascara smeared from crying. She has several bruises on her face. Her boyfriend, SETH (28) is with her, hovering by the bed. He's a muscular guy with a scruff of beard...

John is on edge as he examines an X-RAY on a computer screen. Gretchen is with him; she is preparing a sling.

JOHN
So. Tell me about what happened.

HILLARY
I was just in the back yard...

SETH
She fell off the porch.

JOHN
Let's let her answer, please.

John keeps looking at the X-ray, his tone casual...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay. So the bruises... that's where they came from, too?

Hillary glances at Seth, then back at John...

CONTINUED:

HILLARY
Yeah.

JOHN
And you're sure you only fell once? You have bruises on *both* sides of your body. It's just unusual to see that happen from a single fall.

SETH
Yeah, she *told* you-

JOHN
And I'm confirming what she said, sir. Please... It's best if you wait in the lobby-

SETH
No. I'm staying with her.

JOHN
We can't-

SETH
*I'm staying with her.*

Gretchen raises an eyebrow at John. John turns back to Hillary.

JOHN
So... one fall?

Hillary blinks at John for a moment...

HILLARY
I kind of rolled, I think.

JOHN
Ah. That explains it. Well, we'll set you up with a sling for the broken collarbone, and a prescription for physical therapy.
(frowns)
There's one thing that concerns me, though.

John looks down at Hillary's chart, frowning...

SETH
What is it?

John frowns as he comes to some kind of decision. Then:

CONTINUED:

JOHN
In your lab work... it seems you may have a strain of meningitis.

Gretchen looks at John, not sure what to make of this.

GRETCHEN
Um... Doctor? That isn't-

John gives her a look. She shuts up.

HILLARY
Is that serious?

JOHN
It can be very serious. But if we move quickly, it's treatable. We'll need to admit you tonight... You'll be quarantined for a few days.

He turns to Seth.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Have you had any symptoms? Headache? Stiff neck?

SETH
(hesitates, then:)
I...

John smiles...

JOHN
Tell you what. I'll have one of my colleagues check out out while we get your girlfriend up to a room.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

John walks out in the hallway. Gretchen follows him out. She watches him for a moment, then:

GRETCHEN
Excuse me, Doctor?

JOHN
Yes?

GRETCHEN
What just happened in there?

JOHN
It's nothing.

CONTINUED:

GRETCHEN
No... no, I think it is something. Her labs didn't indicate possible *meningitis.* We didn't even test-

JOHN
There was some indication of liver damage. Could be meningitis.

Gretchen cocks her head at John, with just the faintest hint of a smile...

GRETCHEN
True. It could also be a million other things that cause liver damage that we didn't test for. *My* diagnosis is that she's an alcoholic who just got the crap beaten out of her by her boyfriend, but hey, I'm just a nurse.

JOHN
Gretchen, it's nothing you need to-

GRETCHEN
If you're going to say it's nothing I need to worry about, let me remind you I have my own paperwork to do on these patients.

She steps forward, her voice low. It's a curiously intimate moment as she looks into his eyes...

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
I think you want me on your side, here.

JOHN
(a beat, then:)
Look at her records. We've seen her for four "accidents," each one worse than the last. How long before he kills her?

GRETCHEN
So... why meningitis?

JOHN
Two days of quarantine is two days of a social worker talking her into a shelter without the boyfriend around. Maybe we save her life.

CONTINUED:

Gretchen arches an eyebrow.

GRETCHEN
They say MD stands for makes decisions. I guess they’re right.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

John brisks through the ER, re-bandaging his wound as he walks. Bridget catches up to him...

BRIDGET
John, glad I found you. Listen, I wanted to talk to you about a patient of yours.

JOHN
A patient? Ah... sure. Who?

BRIDGET
Henry. Your pet diabetic with the dry-gangrenous left foot.

JOHN
Henry? Is he back in already?

BRIDGET
Yeah. He came in a couple of hours ago, while you were...
(looks at the bandage)
Dealing with that. He’s in bad shape.

JOHN
What do you mean, bad shape? Worse than usual?

BRIDGET
He tore open the foot. Some kind of work accident. It has to come off. I need you to talk to him.

JOHN
Okay... why?

BRIDGET
He didn’t take the news well. We don’t have the beds, the surgeons, or the nurses here so I set a transfer to the Rosemead Surgical Center at six. He says he doesn’t want to go. I said he had to. We kind of left it there.

CONTINUED:

John nods, then heads off.

**INT. CRITICAL CARE UNIT - NIGHT**

Henry is asleep in a bed, hooked up to monitors. Another patient, an elderly man, sleeps in the next bed. John lets himself in, goes over to talk to Henry...

JOHN
Henry?

Henry does not move.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Henry, it's Dr. Ellis. Can I talk to you?

Henry still isn't moving. John frowns, rolling him over... and sees that his LIPS ARE BLUE and his EYES ARE ROLLED BACK IN HIS HEAD.

JOHN (CONT'D)
NURSE! I NEED A NURSE IN HERE!!

John looks over at the monitor, and sees the LEADS HAVE BEEN REMOVED. Quickly, he reattaches it, checking Henry's pulse. The monitor alarm sounds as Nurse Sherry and a tech run in...

JOHN (CONT'D)
CODE BLUE!! Get Dr. O'Neill in here, now!

The tech bolts off to fetch Bridget, as John turns to Sherry.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Get him 2mg atropine. When was the last time you were in here?

SHERRY
Few minutes. Maybe five-

JOHN
Did you give him any medications?

SHERRY
Nothing. He just wanted some water.

John sees an empty water cup on Henry's bed... then sees the BAG OF MEDS on the elderly roommate's chair. He sees several missing caps and some stray pills...

JOHN
Check those! See what he took-

CONTINUED:

The tech reads the names off the medication bottles...

TECH
Digoxin, Metoprolol... Ativan, Lisinopril, Norco, Dilaudid...

JOHN
Jesus...

Bridget runs in, trailing the tech...

BRIDGET
What happened?

John starts intubating Henry as he looks over...

JOHN
Your patient OD'ed on his roomie's meds, is what happened! He's hypotensive, bradycardic, apneic-

BRIDGET
He was fine! I looked in on him-

JOHN
That's what happens when you tell a mentally ill patient you're cutting off his foot and leave him alone!
(to Sherry)
Two large bore IVs in the bilateral antecubitals, and a liter of normal saline into each arm. Tell pharmacy to get some dopamine hanging... Dr. O'Neill, let's start pacing him...

Bridget goes into action, placing the pads and dialing up the voltage as she checks the monitors...

JOHN (CONT'D)
We getting anything?

BRIDGET
Nothing. You give him the atropine?

JOHN
Yes! 2mg-

BRIDGET
Well, it's not working!

Bridget dials the voltage up more; Henry's body is now jerking back and forth. Bridget yells to John...

CONTINUED:

BRIDGET (CONT'D)
Still nothing!!

Bridget and John exchange a look as Bridget kills the power on the pacer pads and the doctors start CPR. It's hopeless, and they both know it. We pull back as they work... CUT TO:

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER**

John sits in the hallway by Henry's door, staring straight ahead. A cup of coffee sits on the floor, ignored. The hospital just goes about its business; pages come over the PA system, people talk, even laugh a bit in the hallway.

John looks back in at Henry's room... a tech does paperwork next to Henry, who lies dead, covered in a sheet. John turns back to the hallway as Gretchen comes over.

GRETCHEN
Doctor?

JOHN
Hey, Gretchen. I...

Gretchen looks in the exam room, frowns...

GRETCHEN
What happened...?

JOHN
Henry killed himself. OD'ed on his roommate's meds.

GRETCHEN
Oh. Wow... Okay.

JOHN
I just need a minute.

Gretchen hesitates, then:

GRETCHEN
Right, um... the thing is, there's a phone call for you.

JOHN
A call? Can you tell them it's not a good-

GRETCHEN
It's someone calling from the Federal Prison in Lompoc.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GRETCHEN (CONT'D)
He didn't give his name, but... I think you should take it.

John looks at her, not sure what to make of this, then gets up.

**INT. NURSE'S STATION - NIGHT**

John answers the phone at the nurses' station. The light is dim... behind him, through a window, we see the moon low in the sky.

JOHN
This is Doctor Ellis. Who am I speaking with?

On the other end of the line, there is only breathing...

JOHN (CONT'D)
I said who-

Finally, a VOICE speaks. Gravelly, with a Mexican accent.

VOICE (O.S.)
The boy you saved... I am his father.

John takes this in...

JOHN
All right. What can I do for you?

VOICE (O.S.)
Tonight... A man came in to the hospital. He cut you, yes?

JOHN
(alarmed)
Yes. How did you-

VOICE (O.S.)
You know why he was there?

John hesitates, then:

JOHN
I think he was here to... to kill your son.

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes. The others, the ones outside? They will come in, soon. To do what he failed to do.

CONTINUED:

John takes this in... finally:

JOHN
He’s safe here. There’s security-

The voice laughs, short and sharp.

VOICE (O.S.)
Listen to me, doctor: That will not stop these men. They will find a way in.

JOHN
What do you want from me?

VOICE (O.S.)
I want you to save him.

JOHN
I... I’ll try.

The voice breathes on the other end of the line.

VOICE (O.S.)
I have to go.

JOHN
Wait... I don’t understand this. Mauricio’s a child. What could he possibly have done-

VOICE (O.S.)
He did not do anything.
(a beat)
I did.

There is a click, and the line goes dead. Off John’s look:

**END OF ACT SIX**

**ACT SEVEN**

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

John returns to the ER. Gretchen looks up, expectant... John takes her aside. He waits as a couple of people pass, then:

JOHN
I need to ask you something. It's not something I have any right to ask, but I'm going to anyway.

GRETCHEN
Okay...

JOHN
I need to get Mauricio Hernandez out of the hospital. Someplace safe.

GRETCHEN
Is this... is this about the man who called?

JOHN
Yes. I don't know much. I just know Mauricio's not safe here.

GRETCHEN
What are we supposed to do? With that wound it's not like we can just stuff him in a car and drop him on someone's doorstep.

JOHN
I have an idea about that.
(a beat, then:)
Henry Maxson was scheduled to go to the Rosemead Surgical Center in an hour...

Gretchen nods, not sure where this is going...

GRETCHEN
Uh huh... and he's dead.

JOHN
The hospital doesn't know that. I ran the code, called it, but he's not in the computer yet.

GRETCHEN
So...

CONTINUED:

JOHN
We switch his records with Henry's. Get him down to transport. Let them take him over to Rosemead under Henry's name. Once he's gone I file death certificates on both of them.

GRETCHEN
And when Mauricio lands at Rosemead?

JOHN
They see he's not a 22-year-old diabetic and he becomes a John Doe with a gunshot wound. He's out of the system. Disappeared.

Gretchen nods... then steps closer to him as another TECH passes by. She looks at him...

GRETCHEN
What about the security guards? We can't just wheel him out.

JOHN
The guards in surgical recovery will come down to reception if there's a problem.

GRETCHEN
So... is there going to be a "problem" in reception?

JOHN
Yes. I just need you to get Mauricio to patient transport.

GRETCHEN
You *sure* you want to do this? I mean, if you get caught...

JOHN
It's a complication I'll have to deal with. All I know is this boy doesn't die today.

She looks at him for a long moment, then exhales...

GRETCHEN
Okay, then. Let's do this.

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT**

John walks into the emergency room... He closes his eyes, takes a deep breath.

He looks over at Lewis the security guard, standing by the entrance to the ER.

He collects himself for a moment, then pulls out his phone. He stares at it for a moment...

A text comes in - **READY.**

John puts away his phone, then turns and BEGINS TO RUN toward the door to the reception area.

He gathers speed, turning a corner and CRASHING into a cart filled with medication.

We are back in the scene from the teaser, as John approaches the door. He is panting... Lewis tenses, looks at him warily.

LEWIS
Doctor?

JOHN
Move.

LEWIS
Doctor, I don't think-

JOHN
I am *done*. I'm not putting up with this any more. I'm going out there.

LEWIS
I can't let you do that.

JOHN
Get out of the way, Lewis.

Lewis hesitates, but he does not move. John's face reddens as he ROARS, grabbing an IV stand...

JOHN (CONT'D)
I said GET OUT OF MY WAY!!

All eyes on John as he raises the IV stand... Lewis stumbles backward as John SMASHES the security glass in the door. As he runs through, Lewis keys his radio, yelling:

LEWIS
ALL UNITS TO ER RECEPTION! I repeat-

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Gretchen watches as the SECURITY GUARD leaves the door, racing off to ER reception. She slips into the recovery room...

**INT. SURGICAL RECOVERY - NIGHT**

In the dimly lit surgical recovery room, Gretchen works quickly, switching out Mauricio's records and replacing his patient wristband...

As they wheel the bed out of the room we CUT BACK TO:

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS**

Back in the Emergency Reception area, as John roars at Cruz...

JOHN
I'm telling you to get the hell out of my Emergency Room.
(then)
I know why you're here. You want to hurt somebody? Hurt me.

CRUZ
You should watch how you talk, man. Might get what you're asking for-

Cruz steps forward, shoves John in the chest...

...and John EXPLODES.

He charges Cruz, SWINGING THE IV STAND. It connects, knocking him aside before smashing a rack of magazines.

Instantly, the OTHER GANG MEMBERS join the fight. John swings at them, badly outnumbered but making up for it with sheer fury...

After a moment, Lewis and four other SECURITY GUARDS rush into the ER, trying to break up the fight...

John takes advantage of the distraction to lunge at Cruz with the IV stand again; it hits one of the windows, cracking it-

Two security guards rush John, who struggles...

...as several more security guards usher the gang members out the doors and into the hospital parking lot.

CONTINUED:

John hits the floor with a hard THUD, the security guards on top of him. The ER doors slide shut as we CUT BACK TO:

**INT. PATIENT TRANSPORT DOOR - NIGHT**

Gretchen wheels Mauricio out of a service elevator and over to a pair of doors marked PATIENT TRANSPORT.

She hands some paperwork to a TECH.

GRETCHEN
Henry Maxson. Going to Rosemead Surgical Center.

The Tech nods, scans the paperwork, then hands the gurney off to a couple of other techs. They wheel Mauricio over to an ambulance and begin loading him in...

**INT. EMERGENCY ROOM HALLWAY - NIGHT**

There is pandemonium in the ER reception as the four security guards drag John back into the ER; nurses and techs gawk at him as he they pass.

John is still yelling, struggling to get free...

LEWIS
Dr. Ellis, you gotta calm down.

JOHN
I am calm! You should be out there dealing with *them*!!

LEWIS
We're supposed to take you to administration, okay? Now you gotta stop resisting, or we'll have to cuff you-

JOHN
Fine! Cuff me, but if something happens, it's on your head-

The guards grab John tighter... as they turn a corner, John sees GRETCHEN up the hall...

He catches her eyes, shoots her a look - is it done?

Gretchen looks back with a tiny nod - it's done.

As they continue up the hallway, John turns and looks out a window... Outside, IT IS DAWN. The sun creeps over the horizon, turning the skyline a radiant orange.

CONTINUED:

John looks at it, his face calm again.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Fine. Fine, I'm done.

**INT. DR. LASTER'S OFFICE - DAY**

John sits across from Dr. Laster. She looks at him, not sure what to make of what she just heard.

DR. LASTER
This... this is the truth? This happened?

JOHN
Yes. It happened.

She holds up the death certificate...

DR. LASTER
So Mauricio Hernandez...

JOHN
Is not dead, no.

DR. LASTER
And your breakdown-

JOHN
Was faked. To save my patient. I believe the technical term is a "factitious disorder."
(a beat)
I told you this wasn't something you wanted to know.

Dr. Laster stares at her notes. Finally:

DR. LASTER
You realize, I have to report this.

JOHN
I understand your reporting obligations. I also know we discussed patient confidentiality.

DR. LASTER
This is criminal behavior, Dr. Ellis. Under the circumstances, I can't recommend that you return to work.

CONTINUED:

JOHN
That's your decision as a medical professional?

DR. LASTER
Yes. As a medical professional.

JOHN
I understand.

John leans in...

JOHN (CONT'D)
But I want you to consider something. If you report this, I lose my job.

DR. LASTER
I understand that's difficult, but-

JOHN
Let me finish.
(a beat, then:)
They'll investigate me. They'll figure out what happened to Mauricio Hernandez. The men who are looking for him will find him. *And he will die*.

Dr. Laster stares at John as he gets up...

JOHN (CONT'D)
I think we're done here. You know what you need to know. You can report me, or not. Just remember this: you took an oath to do no harm, just like I did. Doctor.

**INT. ARROYO HOSPITAL - DAY**

John walks down the hallway of the hospital, a fire in his eyes.

The hallways are crowded with the mid-day rush of people. Many pause in their work, staring at him.

He passes through the crowd, and walks out of the hospital. The sliding glass doors close behind him.

**END OF ACT SEVEN**

**BUTTON**

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

John sits in his home office, drinking a glass of scotch and looking at something on his computer.

It is an email from the hospital... unopened. The subject line reads "*Psychological Evaluation.*" It's from Dr. Laster.

John stares at it, then clicks it. From his POV we see pieces of the email - "*No indication of major mental instability,*" followed by "*...extreme stress response, but there is no reason to believe it is of a chronic or recurring nature...*" ending with "*...while a leave of absence is recommended, no revocation of hospital privileges is necessary at this time.*"

John looks at the last line. Finishes his drink.

After a moment, Samantha walks in. She stands in the doorway, looking at her husband.

SAMANTHA
So? What did the psychiatrist say?

JOHN
It looks like I get to keep my job. For now, anyway.

SAMANTHA
That's good. I'm glad.
(a beat)
Did she say anything else?

JOHN
What do you mean?

SAMANTHA
I mean, did she say anything about *you*. About... why this happened. John, this wasn't just some little hiccup at work that we can forget about. *You attacked-*

JOHN
Sam, no one was hurt-

SAMANTHA
If you want to sweep this under the rug at work, call it a little misunderstanding, fine. That's your prerogative.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
But you don't get to do that with me. I'm your wife. I need to know.

JOHN
Sam... what do you want from me?

SAMANTHA
Something happened in that street the other day. Something changed. And I need to know what it is.

John looks at Samantha, really seeing her for the first time in a while. She's barely keeping it together, hugging her arms at her sides. She blinks back tears...

John gets up from the desk and goes to her. He holds her, looking into her eyes...

JOHN
Sam, you can read the psych report if you want. It says I'm okay. It says I went through something hard, but I came out the other side of it and I'm okay. I was under a lot of pressure, and I just... snapped. I feel better, now.

SAMANTHA
That's all?

JOHN
That's all.

She leans against his chest, wanting to believe him, wiping away her tears. He holds her, then kisses her, lightly at first, then deeper... He wraps an arm around her, and together they walk down the hall. DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

John lies in bed, awake. Samantha lies on his chest, asleep... they are both naked.

John listens to Samantha's breathing, smells her hair. After a moment, John hears barking in the back yard. He sighs...

JOHN
Damnit... Come on, Zeke...

John gets up, puts on a pair of pants...

**EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT**

John walks through the hallway, pulling on a shirt...

As he starts toward the stairs, however, he HEARS A NOISE.

He stops... listens. There is MORE BARKING, outside, and then a distinct sound DOWNSTAIRS. Footsteps... Whispered voices.

John turns and walks back into the bedroom.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

John crouches by the bed next to Samantha. He puts a hand over her mouth as he wakes her up...

Samantha opens her eyes, alarmed. John puts a finger to his lips, then carefully removes his hand from Samantha's mouth. He listens again, then, in a barely audible whisper:

JOHN
Go to Oliver's room. Lock the door. Don't come out. Don't make any noise. Do you understand?

SAMANTHA
Why-

JOHN
There is someone in the house. Go.

Samantha slips out of bed with a sheet, terrified. John waits until she is gone, then grabs his MEDICAL BAG from the dresser.

**INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL - NIGHT**

As John walks down the stairs he digs down past the medical equipment to reveal the PISTOL that his father gave him. He takes the gun out, raising it...

He emerges into the living room to find MONDO, the boy who ran away during the drive-by, standing there with a couple of other young men in gang clothes.

MONDO
Hey. Remember me?

JOHN
Yes. Why are you in my house? What the Hell are you doing here?

CONTINUED:

MONDO
Tranquilo. Just came by to find out how the little man is doing.

JOHN
Mauricio? He's fine.

MONDO
What's that mean?

JOHN
He's... he's at a surgical facility under a new name. I'll need to deal with his paperwork soon, but for now... he's fine.

MONDO
Good. That's good.

JOHN
Is that all?

Mondo digs in his pocket, pulls out a cheap CELL PHONE.

MONDO
There's a number on there. You need something? Anything... You call it.

JOHN
I don't need anything from you.

MONDO
Maybe you don't... maybe you do.

He tosses the phone to John. John catches it...

MONDO (CONT'D)
You have a good night, doc.

Mondo and the other men turn to go, walking out the door...

**EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

It's a beautiful night; the moon lights up the neighborhood and Santa Ana winds rustle the trees. John watches Mondo and the others walk to their car and drive away. He stands there, silhouetted in the doorway, gun in one hand, medical bag in the other... as we SMASH TO BLACK.

**END OF SHOW**