

FADE IN:

EXT. PHILADELPHIA GREYHOUND BUS TERMINAL - MORNING

Drab architecture houses this under-utilized and generally forgotten mode of transportation. A wall of windows separates the dingy lobby and ticket offices from the sheltered lot where the buses load passengers and luggage.

TERRY FULLER (40s) stands off to the side in his Greyhound driver's uniform. Salt and pepper stubble veils a face that is searching for the path of least resistance. He is strong, but his mid-section carries a paunch from his inactive profession. His forearms are spotted with prison tattoos.

Terry lights a cigarette to go with his morning coffee.

He watches a small crowd of passengers hand their tickets to the ticket agent and board his bus.

He focuses on SHAMIS (19), a pretty black girl with a natural scowl. She wears a red shirt and carries only a large purse.

Terry walks to a nearby pay phone. Dials.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - LATER

All the passengers are on board, but the bus is half-empty.

Terry GROANS himself into the driver's seat. STARTS the engine. Picks up the PA mic to make the announcements.

TERRY

(monotone routine)

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. Today we'll be traveling to Charleston, West Virginia with stops along the way in Harrisburg, Cumberland, Morgantown, and Clarksburg. If we don't hit too much traffic we should arrive in Charleston at the scheduled time of 9:20 pm. There's a bathroom at the rear of the coach for your convenience. I ask you to be respectful of your fellow passengers, so if you're listening to music please use headphones, and if you're going to talk on your cell phone, please do so at a reasonable volume. I'll be putting in a movie in a few hours...

(looks down)

TERRY (cont'd)

..."Driven" starring Sylvester Stallone, so anyone that's looking to see "Driven," I'll have that on for you in a few. If you have any questions, my name is Terry. Thank you for choosing Greyhound, sit back and enjoy the ride.

EXT. "THE BADLANDS" - NORTH PHILADELPHIA - DAY

One of the most blatant open-air drug markets on the East Coast. The streets are filled with hard-fiendin' addicts and hard-hustlin' dope slingers.

A few blocks from the infamous 3rd & Indiana corner, we find ourselves at the corner of Indiana & Leithgow.

Sitting on a stoop is "CINCH" (20), the corner boss. He's good-looking and ghetto fabulous; brand new Phillies cap, baggy tee-shirt, crisp jeans, and immaculate kicks.

Cinch THROWS GAME at any passing girl, every once in a while sharing a laugh with RIFF (19), his muscular #2.

A grimy ADDICT approaches Cinch, palming wrinkled money.

Cinch nods to his right, directing the Addict's attention to Cinch's BANK (15) about ten yards away.

Bank stands by a wall of plywood attached to a chain link fence surrounding an empty lot. Whoever planned to build something here has long since abandoned the idea.

The Addict approaches Bank and slips him the money.

Bank KNOCKS on the plywood three distinct times.

The Addict moves down the block to a hole in the plywood.

Cinch's WAREHOUSE (14) dispenses three vials of crack to the Addict from inside the empty lot. Deal done.

The Addict scurries down the block, excited for his score. Along the way he passes-

-JASPER (10), Cinch's lookout. The innocence and exuberance of Jasper's youth are at war with the hardships of his life. He wears worn clothes and sits against the wall, doing his math homework in a Mead notebook.

Jasper finishes SCRIBBLING an answer. He looks up at a small stand-alone vanity mirror that he's set up to reflect far down Indiana Ave.-

-and sees a BLACK SUV creeping up the block.

Jasper's focus ZOOMS IN on the SUV: City plates...extra antennae...mounted lights on the front windshield...trouble!

Jasper lets off two short WHISTLES, and then KICKS OVER a nearby garbage can.

The garbage can CRASHING sets off a swift chain reaction.

Cinch's Bank retrieves a Ziploc bag filled with filthy money from his pocket and TOSSES it over the plywood wall.

BEHIND THE PLYWOOD, the bag lands next to Warehouse. He grabs it and stuffs it into a backpack filled with vials.

THE BLACK SUV flips on its lights and SIRENS, BURNING RUBBER towards the corner.

BEHIND THE PLYWOOD, Warehouse hops on a BMX bike and pedals furiously across the empty lot towards a makeshift ramp.

He hits the ramp at full speed and-

-LAUNCHES over opposite wall, almost killing a pedestrian as he LANDS on the sidewalk.

Warehouse pedals down the block, disappearing along the railroad tracks with the stash and the cash.

BACK ON THE CORNER: The SUV SCREECHES to a halt, and a Philadelphia PD task force jumps out, guns drawn.

One cop rushes to the plywood wall, pulls himself up to see--that Warehouse is long gone.

The remainder of the task force has their weapons trained on Cinch, Griff, and Bank.

TASK FORCE COMMANDER
On the ground, all of you! Hands
on your head, dirtbags!

Cinch, Griff, and Bank all lay down on the ground, putting their hands behind their head.

Jasper watches this unfold from his lookout position.

The Task Force begins cuffing Cinch's crew.

CINCH
Is there a problem, officer?

The Commander roughly yanks Cinch's arms behind his back.

TASK FORCE COMMANDER
Yeah, there's a problem, you're
peddling crack in my community.

CINCH
Oh this is your community, too?
That's funny, I ain't never seen
you around, where you live?

The Commander is momentarily thrown by this question.

CINCH (cont'd)
(inciting smile)
Seriously, man, where you live?

The Commander looks to his men, who have been searching the area for evidence. They come up shaking their heads.

TASK FORCE COMMANDER
Where's your shit?

CINCH
Up in my ass, man, I could probably
get it to you in a couple hours if
you got some coffee.

One of the other cops finds a pistol concealed behind a cement block on the stoop. He holds it up by the trigger guard for his Commander, who smiles.

TASK FORCE COMMANDER
We got you now, son.

CINCH
You ain't got shit except a couple
niggas standin' on the corner and a
harassment case when you can't
connect that gun to me.

The cops pull Cinch and the others to their feet and begin marching them towards the SUV.

TASK FORCE COMMANDER
We'll see about that.

CINCH
Yeah, we'll see.

Before Cinch gets loaded into the SUV he looks down the block to Jasper, who awaits further instructions.

All Cinch gives him is a sly smile and a wink.

The police convoy departs, leaving Jasper all alone.

He places the vanity mirror in his bookbag along with his school books and walks away.

EXT. WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HIGHWAY - DAY

The Greyhound bus CHUGS ALONG on the hilly highway.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Half of the passengers are asleep. Some are listening to music or reading. Some are even watching "Driven."

Terry looks like an "automatic driving machine," as though every function in his brain besides driving is turned off.

Terry snaps out of it when he sees-

-POLICE LIGHTS flashing in his side-view mirror.

Terry picks up the PA mic.

TERRY

Sorry for the interruption, ladies and gentlemen, but it looks like we're being pulled over by the Pennsylvania State Police. The troopers run random stops on public transportation, but if everyone cooperates we'll be back on the road in no time. They'll be asking everyone to get off the bus while they run a routine search. Again, I apologize for the inconvenience.

MURMURS throughout the bus as Terry takes the next exit and pulls the bus into a gas station parking lot.

Terry OPENS the door, and the passengers slowly disembark.

Terry stays in his seat until the bus is empty. Pause.

Two STATE TROOPERS board the bus. They nod to Terry, and then proceed to the back of the bus, taking a look around.

They are followed ROPINSKI (40s), a hefty Sergeant with a golf ball-sized wad of chewing tobacco in his lip.

ROPINSKI
Afternoon, Terry.

Ropinski looks around. Knowing the deal, Terry holds up a tiny plastic-lined waste basket. Ropinski SPITS into it.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
So what do you got for us?

TERRY
Red shirt.

ROPINSKI
You sure?

Terry answers that with "a look."

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
(CHUCKLES)
Well, okay then.

Ropinski slips Terry a sealed envelope.

Terry opens it, retrieving two \$100 bills.

TERRY
You really don't need to put it in
an envelope.

Terry pockets the cash, throws out the envelope.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

All of the passengers stand in a staggered line, waiting to see what happens.

The troopers get off the bus, followed by Terry. Terry steps off to the side and lights a cigarette.

ROPINSKI
All right ladies and gentlemen, we apologize for the hold-up. My men and I just have to take a look through some of your personal belongings. If you're unwilling to let us search your belongings then we'll have to get a warrant, but that will take a long time and I don't think any of you want to wait that out on the side of the highway. There's nothing to worry about if you've done nothing wrong.
(pause)
Let's begin.

Ropinski's two officers walk down the line and randomly pick two people to search.

Ropinski lags behind, trying to seem casual before he ends up standing in front of Shamis.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
What's your name, Love?

SHAMIS
(snarling)
Fuck you!

Ropinski recoils with both genuine surprise and amusement.

ROPINSKI
That's quite a name! I'm sorry,
Ms. You, but I think I'm going to
have to take a look at that bag.

Shamis clutches her oversized purse, glaring through silence.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
Are you saying you want me to call
the station and order a warrant? I
can do that if you'd like.

Shamis feels the angry stares coming from the rest of the passengers, none of whom want a 3-6 hour delay.

SHAMIS
Whatever.

She shoves the bag into Ropinski's hands.

Ropinski rifles through the purse. Make-up, cell phone, wallet, Skittles...and a teddy bear.

Ropinski holds up the teddy bear.

SHAMIS (cont'd)
That's my son's.

ROPINSKI
Your son's teddy bear feels a
little bulky, Ms. You.

Ropinski RIPS the head off of the bear and pulls out-a tightly wrapped package of cocaine. Smirks.

WE FIND: Terry smoking his cigarette. He watches this go down, seemingly indifferent to it all.

ROPINSKI (O.S.) (cont'd)
So, do you think this is my lucky
day or your unlucky day?

INT. JASPER'S HOME - EVENING

A medium-sized apartment mostly filled with nothing. The kitchen has an old table with two rickety chairs. The cupboards are all open (and pretty much bare), and the counters are littered with dirty dishes and food wrappers.

The living room consists of a ratty couch in front of an old 32" TV set that only gets the basic channels.

On the couch is DESIREE (29), Jasper's mom. At one time her face could have been called elegant, but the weight of her circumstances now causes it to sag. She wears a Sbarro's uniform that could use a washing, adding to the aura that Desiree is just beginning to lose the fight for her own life.

Jasper enters. Desiree forces a convincing smile.

DESIREE

Hey baby. How was school?

JASPER

Good. How was work?

She pulls him into a hug on the couch.

DESIREE

Ahhh, I don't want to talk about work. Work is booooooring.

She GIGGLES and tickles him. He playfully wrestles free.

DESIREE (cont'd)

You got homework to do?

JASPER

Nah, I did it already.

DESIREE

You weren't around all those sirens I heard before?

JASPER

Ain't no thing. Couple of Jakes flexin' on Cinch, it's cool.

DESIREE

Boy, I want you to be careful.

JASPER

Yes, mama.

She gives him a kiss on the forehead and stands up.

DESIREE

Okay, well I'm gonna get out of
these clothes, maybe take a bath.
Stay here and watch your cartoons.

She's halfway into her bedroom when she remembers:

DESIREE (cont'd)

You hungry, Jasper?

JASPER

A little.

DESIREE

We got cereal in the cupboard.
(pause)
I'll go shopping tomorrow, baby.

She CLOSES her door.

Jasper gets up and pours himself a big bowl of Cap'n Crunch.

He moves to the refrigerator: no milk.

He walks back to the couch and sits. He opens up an X-Men comic and reads it while eating handfuls of cereal.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/OVERNIGHT LOT - NIGHT

A gated parking lot that houses the Greyhound buses when they're not in use.

Terry gets off of his bus with a small plastic garbage bag.

He locks the door and tosses the garbage in a dumpster.

INT. A J ENTERTAINMENT - NIGHT

A strip club that is called a "titty bar" far more often than it is called a "gentlemen's club."

Terry walks in, nodding to the bouncer.

He approaches the cashier and pulls out a \$100 bill.

TERRY

Lemme get a pack of Winstons and
the rest in ones.

The cashier starts the transaction.

Terry notices CHARLENE (26), an A-minus stripper amongst a herd of C-pluses.

TERRY (cont'd)
Hey Charlene.

CHARLENE
Hey honey, how you doin'?

TERRY
Won't complain. You?

CHARLENE
I'm okay. I'm going on next, so...

TERRY
I'll see you up there.

She winks at him and saunters off.

INT. JASPER'S HOME - NIGHT

Jasper is still on the couch. The bowl of cereal is empty, and he's moved on to his second X-Men comic.

Desiree emerges from her bedroom, now dressed in casual clothes that highlight her breasts.

Although her appearance may seem more "put together," Desiree moves with a subtle combination of the sways and the twitches. Upon closer inspection, we see that her eyes are glazed over, wandering vacantly from one nothing to another.

Desiree is high as a kite.

Jasper looks up, concerned but not surprised.

Desiree walks into the kitchen, opens a few drawers and cabinets, staring into each of them with no clear purpose.

JASPER
Mom, you all right?

DESIREE
Hmm? Oh, I'm fine, baby.

JASPER
Come watch TV with me.

DESIREE
I'd love to, Jazzy, but I'm going out to grab a bite with Marie.

Jasper tenses up.

JASPER
I don't want you seein' Eddie.

DESIREE

Boy, I just said that I was goin'
to see Marie!

JASPER

I know, I just...
(pause)
...don't want you seein' him.

She SHUFFLES over to him and kisses the top of his head.

DESIREE

I'll be fine, baby. Lock the door
after me, and don't wait up.

Desiree shoots him a glassy-eyed smile, and then exits.

Jasper locks the door behind her.

INT. A J ENTERTAINMENT - NIGHT

Terry sits at the edge of the stage, watching the dancers.

The song ends, and Terry puts a few ones on the stage.

Charlene sashays up to Terry from behind, draping her arms
over his shoulders.

CHARLENE

You looking for a dance, sugar?

Terry thinks about that, his hand subconsciously rubbing that
other \$100 bill that's burning a hole in his pocket.

CHARLENE (cont'd)

I'll give you two songs for the
price of one. Hell, I got twice
what any of these other girls are
offering, so you get four times
your money's worth.

TERRY

Can't argue with those numbers.

She smiles flirtatiously, traces her fingers across his face.

TERRY (cont'd)

I...got an early morning, how about
I take a rain check?
(she pouts)
I'll be back, I promise.

She leans in close to his ear, whispers:

CHARLENE
Make it sooner, not later.

She gently tugs on his earlobe with her teeth, making the hair stand up on the back of his neck.

Charlene walks off. Always leave them wanting more.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Terry puts a fifth of Wild Turkey on the counter. The cashier rings him up.

TERRY
Lemme get one of those scratch tickets, too.

EXT. MOTEL 6 - MOMENTS LATER

The shoddy motel sits a half block from the bus terminal.

Terry walks up with his paper bag full of treats.

INT. MOTEL 6 ROOM - LATER

Terry sits on the bed, scratching the scratch ticket. The fifth of Wild Turkey sits half empty on the bedside table.

Terry squints to see if he won anything, and then tosses the scratch ticket on the floor.

He drains the rest of the Wild Turkey, grits his teeth as the burn subsides. Pause.

He looks at one of those small tubes of complimentary generic hand lotion on the bedside table. Picks it up.

INT. JASPER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jasper sleeps entangled in his blankets. NOISE.

Jasper opens his eyes and listens to the sounds of Desiree coming home and CLUNKING around the apartment.

Jasper's eyes move to his alarm clock - 3:47 am.

Jasper shuts his eyes.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Establishing shot of Jasper's inner-city elementary school. Despite attempts to brighten the exterior with student-made decorations, the building looks like a prison.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The clock reads 2:49 pm.

Jasper sits in a full class of riled up kids anxious to get the hell out of there. Jasper keeps his eyes on his work, trying to pay attention to the lesson.

The TEACHER (50s) has written several multiplication problems on the chalkboard.

TEACHER

So with double-digit multiplication problems you have to go one digit at a time. First you take...

The clock switches to 2:50 pm, and the bell RINGS.

Kids immediately jump up, moving like it's a jail break.

TEACHER (cont'd)

Remain seated, please!
(no one listens)
SIT DOWN! EVERYONE SIT DOWN NOW!

The kids reluctantly move back to their desks.

The Teacher picks up a stack of tests from her desk and begins handing them out.

TEACHER (cont'd)

Your homework for the weekend is problems 1-50 in chapter four.

(GROANS)

Do the work, and if you can't come up with an answer then we'll go over it on Monday.

The Teacher places Jasper's test on his desk.

THE TEST: 96% Good work!!

Jasper discreetly stuffs the test into his backpack.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper walks out into the chaos that it 800+ kids CHARGING away from school into the weekend.

Jasper's FRIEND (10) catches up to him.

FRIEND
What's up, kid?

JASPER
Ain't nothin', what's up with you?

FRIEND
Me and the crew are gonna go sneak into a double feature at the Pearl. You in?

JASPER
I got work.

FRIEND
You still on Cinch's corner?

JASPER
Yeah.

FRIEND
Aiight, then. Holla at me later.

JASPER
Mos def.

EXT. CINCH'S CORNER - AFTERNOON

Cinch, Riff, and Cinch's Bank are all back at their normal positions. Business as usual.

Jasper walks up and plants himself at his post, setting up the vanity mirror to reflect down Indiana Ave. He retrieves another X-Men comic from his bag to pass the time.

Cinch notices Jasper, walks over.

CINCH
Ey-yo! What's good, Jasper?

JASPER
Ain't nothin'. You make bail?

CINCH
Pssh, no need, they can't hold me on some trumped up bullshit charge.

Cinch pulls out a wad of twenties from his pocket.

CINCH (cont'd)
(one twenty)
Paycheck for yesterday.
(another)
For today.
(another)
And a little bonus for the nice
spot on that undercover.

JASPER
Thanks, Cinch.

CINCH
You earned it, little man.

Cinch looks at Jasper's set up with the mirror.

CINCH (cont'd)
I don't know how you do it.

JASPER
Do what?

CINCH
I always see you over here doin'
your homework or readin' comics or
some such, but you ain't never
missed a spot.

JASPER
Is that a problem? Cuz' I don't
have to.

CINCH
Nah nah, ain't a problem, it's
just...impressive, ya know?

Cinch gives Jasper a big brother-ish rub on the head.

CINCH (cont'd)
You got promise, son. If you ever
lookin' to make some extra scratch,
then you let me know.

Jasper nods. Cinch gives him a pound before-
-returning to his stoop where he finds Riff getting off his
cell phone.

RIFF
Yo, Shamis got knocked.

CINCH
Say what?

RIFF

The boy Dante called, said the package never made it. Touched base with Shamis' people, they said she's locked up in lady state.

CINCH

Fuuuuuuuuck. Those Kentucky boys must be heated, huh?

RIFF

They ain't pleased, but they understanding of the situation.

Cinch nods, deep in thought.

RIFF (cont'd)

So what do we do next?

CINCH

Find another shorty to ride the bus. Shouldn't be hard.

INT. TERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Pitch black. Key JINGLING, a deadbolt TURNING.

The front door OPENS, giving way to Terry's silhouette. He FLIPS ON the lights revealing-

-a small, low-quality one-bedroom apartment. Terry has a very simple set-up: couch, coffee table, TV, liquor cabinet. The apartment is surprisingly neat.

The only mess comes from the many scattered ashtrays, all of which look like onions sprouting cigarette butts.

Terry hangs up his jacket. He starts unbuttoning his Greyhound uniform when he notices something.

He walks across the room to get a better look at-

-a fish tank on the liquor cabinet. A single goldfish floats at the top of the tank.

Terry stares at the dead fish.

INT. TERRY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: Toilet. PLOP! The dead fish drops in the tank.

After a brief pause, a stream of urine follows the dead fish.

So much for sentimentality. FLUSH.

Terry turns on the shower, strips off his shirt.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Jasper enters the building and starts to climb the stairs to his home when he hears:

DESIREE (O.S.)
This is bullshit, Manny!

MANNY (O.S.)
You told me Monday, it's Friday!

Jasper slows his climb, listening in.

DESIREE (O.S.)
You know I'll get it to you!

MANNY (O.S.)
I'm not hearing that anymore!

DESIREE (O.S.)
So what am I supposed to do!?

Jasper reaches his floor to see his mother arguing with MANNY (40s), the building superintendent. It is not pretty.

MANNY
YOU PAY ME! That's what you're
supposed to do! Come Tuesday
you're either settling up with me
or you're...

Simultaneously they both notice Jasper standing at the top of the stairs, watching with a hang-dog expression.

Desiree retreats to the apartment, SLAMMING the door.

Manny walks towards the stairs. As he passes Jasper:

MANNY (cont'd)
Sorry, kid.

INT. JASPER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jasper walks in to find Desiree sitting on the couch with her head in her hands. He approaches with caution.

JASPER
Mom? What's going on?
(no answer)
Are we getting evicted?

Desiree looks up, but not at him. Nods.

JASPER (cont'd)
How? I mean, why?

DESIREE
Cuz' we owe rent.

Jasper notices what Desiree is wearing.

JASPER
Where are your work clothes?
(no answer)
Don't you always work Fridays?
(no answer)
Mama, why ain't you wearing your-?

DESIREE
(finally looks at him)
CUZ' I AIN'T BEEN GOIN', BOY, GOD
DAMN WITH ALL THESE QUESTIONS!!

Heavy pause as Desiree's outburst soaks in.

Desiree averts her eyes, unwilling to look at her son.

Jasper sits down on the couch next to her. He produces the sixty dollars that Cinch gave him from his pocket.

He holds it out for her.

Desiree sees the money and her face softens.

DESIREE (cont'd)
Oh Jasper...

She pulls him in for a hug, holding back tears.

DESIREE (cont'd)
You're the sweetest boy in the
whole world, but we need a lot more
than that, baby.

Wrapped in each other's arms, both mother and son rack their brains for ideas.

DESIREE (cont'd)
(thinking out loud)
It'll be okay. Worst to worst I
can always call Eddie and...

Jasper wriggles free, incensed.

JASPER
NO!

DESIREE

I know you don't like him, but
Eddie's helped me through a lot of
hard times.

JASPER

I don't give a fuck!

DESIREE

JASPER!

JASPER

(too riled up to stop)
Eddie don't give a shit about me,
he just wants to own you, and I
don't wanna go to fuckin' Florida!

DESIREE

Well, I ain't got no one else!!!

A brief stare down between two angry faces.

Jasper realizes that Desiree is not willing to search beyond
the easy options, so he-

-stands up, crosses to the door.

DESIREE (cont'd)

Where're you goin'!?

JASPER

I got an idea. Just don't call
Eddie.

And Jasper's out the door before Desiree can respond.

INT. CINCH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A decent apartment filled with top-of-the-line furniture and
electronics. Hip hop PLAYS on the Bose stereo system.

Cinch and Riff sit on a leather couch. Riff finishes rolling
a blunt, lights it, and passes it to Cinch.

CINCH

What about Nikki from 115th?

RIFF

I don't know if Nikki's down for
the cause, knom' sayin'?

CINCH

True. She's stupid, too
(PUFFS)

What about your girl?

RIFF

She caught me out with Janelle last week, been wildin' ever since.

CINCH

(amused)

Yeah, can't trust that.

RIFF

What about your girl?

Cinch just looks at Riff. Riff recognizes his mistake.

RIFF (cont'd)

Right, right. My B.

KNOCKING. Cinch and Riff exchange a concerned look.

Riff gets up to answer the door.

Cinch digs into the couch cushions and pulls out a handgun.

Riff looks through the peephole.

PEEPHOLE: Empty hallway.

RIFF (cont'd)

No one's there.

More KNOCKING.

CINCH

Fuck is that, then?

RIFF

(calling out)

Yo, who's there!?

JASPER (O.S.)

Jasper.

RIFF

It's little man from the look.

CINCH

Oh shit, let 'im in.

Cinch stuffs the gun back in the couch as Riff opens the door to let Jasper in.

RIFF

Sorry young'n, I couldn't see you through the slot.

CINCH

Take a seat.

Jasper joins Cinch on the couch. Riff remains standing.

CINCH (cont'd)
You need anything? Soda? I think
we got some lo mein 'round here.

JASPER
No, I'm good.

CINCH
So what's your troubles then?

JASPER
I'm lookin' to make some more
money. Like you said today.

CINCH
Aight. You thinkin' you want some
more hours on the corner?

JASPER
I...dunno. I kinda was hopin' for
something bigger, ya know?

Cinch holds his eyes on Jasper, then smiles.

He looks up to Riff, who is thinking the same thing.

Cinch CHUCKLES, rubs Jasper on the head.

CINCH
My man. How you feel about goin'
out of state?

INT. JASPER'S HOME - NIGHT

Jasper BURSTS through the door, excited.

JASPER
Mom! Hey Mom!?

He searches the apartment. Desiree is not there.

Jasper plops down on the couch. Turns on the TV. Waits.

EXT. CITY BUS STOP - NIGHT

An empty bus shelter in a modest neighborhood. Not upper class, but certainly more quiet and quaint than the Badlands.

A bus WHEEZES to a stop at the bus shelter.

Several passengers get off. We follow-

-ANGELA FULLER (late-60s), a tad run-down with a wardrobe from the 2002 Sears' catalogue. Despite the frump, she has a clear sense of working class dignity, exuding strength and a little bit of charm. She carries a fold-up lawn chair under one arm, and has a purse looped around the other.

We don't know it now, but this is Terry's mother.

Angela waddles down the block to:

EXT. IVY HILL CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

A security guard sits in a booth next to the gate. He sees Angela approaching. She smiles as he gets up.

SECURITY GUARD
Evening, Angela.

ANGELA
Hiya Freddy.

He UNLOCKS the gate for her. They have an understanding.

ANGELA (cont'd)
Thanks a million.

Angela continues up into the cemetery, walking a very familiar path. Eventually she ends up at-

-a grave marker, flush to the ground. It reads:

**LAWRENCE FULLER
Beloved Husband & Father.**

Angela sets up the chair next to her husband's grave. She reaches into her purse and retrieves-

-a fifth of Jameson and two plastic cups.

She pours two fingers into one cup, placing it on top of the grave marker, and another two fingers for herself.

Angela leans back in the chair. Sips.

Enjoys a quiet nightcap with her dead husband.

WE PAN AWAY from Angela, drifting through the tombstones, past the fence, until we reach-

-the sidewalk. Hidden in the shadows we find Terry leaning against a tree. He is smoking a cigarette with a clear view of his mother.

It is as close to the ritual as he will allow himself to get.

Terry pulls a flask from his pocket. Takes a sip.

INT. JASPER'S HOME - EARLY MORNING

Jasper has fallen asleep on the couch waiting for Desiree.

KNOCKING at the door wakes him up. Jasper wipes the sleep from his eyes and answers the door to reveal Cinch.

CINCH

Rise n' shine, baby. You ready?

JASPER

Yeah, gimme one sec.

Jasper grabs his Mead notebook from his bookbag and TEARS out a sheet of paper. He quickly SCRIBBLES a note.

NOTE: Mom, I'm getting the money for us. Will be back soon. I love you. Jasper.

INT. CINCH'S LEXUS - MORNING

Cinch drives. Jasper sits shotgun.

CINCH

So you got two tickets, both round trip. Philly to Charleston, that's West Virginia. Then Charleston to Lexington, that's Kentucky. My boy Dante'll have someone pick you up in Lexington, bring you by the spot to make the trade. You with me?

JASPER

Yeah.

CINCH

You like X-Men, right?

JASPER

Uh-huh.

CINCH

Check the back seat.

Jasper turns around and grabs a brand new X-Men backpack sitting in the back seat. He pulls it onto his lap.

CINCH (cont'd)

The last bus to Lexington leaves Charleston at 9:30, and sometimes the bus from Philly comes in after that.

CINCH (cont'd)

If you miss the bus to Lexington
you got two bills in the top
pocket. Grab some take-out and
rent a room at the Motel 6, catch
the first bus out in the morning.

Jasper checks the top pocket: two hundred dollars.

JASPER

What about my backpack?

CINCH

I'll hold that for you until you
get back.

Jasper nods and begins transferring his school books and personal belongings into the X-Men bag.

He stops to pull a teddy bear, similar to the one that Shamis was carrying, out of the X-Men bag.

JASPER

What's this?

CINCH

That's the package, son.

JASPER

Oh.

CINCH

I put something else down the
bottom. For emergencies.

Jasper looks down into the X-Men bag. We don't see what Cinch is talking about, only Jasper's blank face nod.

Cinch pulls the car over to the side of the street.

He turns to Jasper, like a heart-to-heart.

CINCH (cont'd)

Now, don't talk to no one 'less you have to. Anybody asks why you're all by yourself, tell 'em your mom's is sick, so she bought you a ticket to go stay with your uncle. If they press you, just clam up and say "I don't want to talk about my mom's." Think you can do that?

JASPER

Uh-huh.

Cinch grabs a prepaid cell phone from his glove box.

CINCH
Got you a burner. I'm programmed
into the speed dial, so if you got
any questions, just holla.
(Jasper nods)
You got any questions?

JASPER
No.

CINCH
(rubs his head)
My man. You gonna do just fine.

Jasper smiles, starts to get out.

CINCH (cont'd)
Hey.
(Jasper turns)
Who's your favorite X-Man?

JASPER
Beast.

CINCH
Which one's he?

JASPER
He's all blue and covered in fur.

CINCH
Oh right. Why you like him?

JASPER
Cuz' he's smart and tough.

Cinch CRACKS UP, finding this very funny for some reason.

CINCH
Smart and tough, boy, you ahead of
the curve. See, I was just a
Wolverine when I was your age.
(pause)
Get on to it, then.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA GREYHOUND TERMINAL - MORNING

Terry smokes his morning cigarette with his morning coffee.

In the background, a female ticket agent loads the last passenger onto Terry's bus. She walks over to Terry.

TICKET AGENT
Morning, Terry.

TERRY
Morning.

TICKET AGENT
Wanted to let you know that you got
a little kid traveling alone today.

TERRY
(long pause)
So?

TICKET AGENT
(annoyed at his apathy)
So keep an eye on him! Last thing
we need is some kid disappearing or
getting picked up by a pedophile on
our route.

(no reaction from Terry)
Just...do me this one favor and
look after him. I put him in the
front row.

Terry takes the last drag from his cigarette, stomps it out.

TERRY
Okay.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOMENTS LATER

As usual, the bus is half-empty.

Jasper sits in the front seat across the aisle from the
driver's seat. His arm clutches the X-Men backpack, which
rests in the open seat next to him.

Terry shleps onto the bus, notices Jasper.

TERRY
Hey buddy.

Jasper stays silent. It's unclear if he is shy or scared.

TERRY (cont'd)
What's your name?

JASPER
Jasper.

TERRY
Good to know you, Jasper. My
name's Terry.

Again, Jasper stays silent.

TERRY (cont'd)
How old are you?

JASPER
Ten.

TERRY
You ever been on a bus before?

JASPER
Not a bus like this one.

TERRY
Let me see your ticket.

Jasper retrieves his ticket from the X-Men bag.

TERRY (cont'd)
Ah, you're with me all the way to
Charleston. That's a long haul.
(hands it back)
Don't worry, we'll have some fun.

As Jasper puts the ticket back in the bag, Terry catches a glimpse of the teddy bear.

The sight of the bear gives Terry pause. Jasper is a kid, and kids have teddy bears, but that teddy bear looks identical to the one that Shamis was using to move weight.

Terry snaps out of his brief trance, and moves to the driver's seat. Sneaks another look back at Jasper.

Terry STARTS the engine, picks up the PA mic.

TERRY (cont'd)
Good morning ladies and gentlemen.
Today we'll be traveling to...

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE - MORNING

The bus cruises along the turnpike as the suburbs just outside of Philadelphia pass by on either side.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Terry drives. Jasper looks out the window, still with an arm around the X-Men bag.

The bus HITS a big pothole, LURCHES a bit.

Jasper tightens his grip on the X-men bag. Looks around.

JASPER

Yo Terry, where's my seatbelt?

TERRY

There aren't any seatbelts.

JASPER

Oh.

Jasper looks out the window again. Pause.

JASPER (cont'd)

Where are we?

Terry checks the highway signs.

TERRY

We're about to pass a little town called Merlin. Like the wizard from Sword in the Stone.

JASPER

The what?

TERRY

Never mind.

JASPER

We pretty far from Philly, huh?

TERRY

Not really. About 30 miles.

JASPER

Really?

TERRY

Uh-huh.

Jasper marvels at the vastly different landscape rushing by outside the window.

JASPER

Feels like we're pretty far away.

INT. HARRISBURG GREYHOUND TERMINAL - MORNING

Terry's bus idles in the terminal lot.

Some passengers get off the bus, grabbing their luggage from the lower compartment.

A small group of passengers wait to board the bus.

Terry stands off to the side, smoking a cigarette.

EXT. HARRISBURG - MORNING

Terry's bus pulls onto the 76 freeway leaving Harrisburg.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MORNING

Terry drives. He looks back to see that-

-Jasper has dozed off, using the X-Men bag as a pillow.

Terry puts his eyes back on the road. Almost smiles.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - DAY

A seemingly self-sufficient concrete oasis in the middle of nowhere: two competing gas stations, a Roy Rogers fast food restaurant, and a massive Uni-Mart convenient store.

Terry's bus turns onto the off-ramp.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Terry picks up the PA mic.

TERRY

Good afternoon ladies & gentlemen.

Terry's voice rouses Jasper, who has a brief moment of panic before he remembers where he is.

TERRY (cont'd)

We're pulling over for a little rest stop. Feel free to get out, stretch your legs, or get something to eat or drink. I'll be pulling out in exactly 15 minutes, with or without you, so keep an eye on the bus and don't lose track of time.

EXT. HIGHWAY REST STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Terry's bus comes to a stop outside the Uni-Mart.

The door OPENS and passengers file out.

Jasper steps off, wearing the X-men bag.

He squints at the sunlight and walks to the Uni-Mart, passing-

-a group of four skater punks (14-15). They're the type of kids that think it's cool to wear baggy clothes and be seen with their boards in front of the Uni-Mart, even though they can barely nosegrind a curb.

Terry gets off the bus last. Lights a cigarette.

INT. UNI-MART - CONTINUOUS

Overwhelmed, Jasper stands at the entrance to this temple of impulse purchases. He looks around at all the candy, pastries, soda, chips, and cheap toys.

He smiles. "I can get anything I want."

Thinking with the nutrition concerns of any 10-year-old kid, Jasper goes straight to the Slushie machine.

He gets one of those preposterous 64-ounce monster cups and begins filling it with every different flavor of Slushie.

After he's completed his concoction, Jasper walks up to the cashier's counter.

He gazes through a smudged pane of glass at the greasy grill that heats the hot dogs, taquitos, soggy breakfast sandwiches, and nacho fixin's. So...many...choices.

CASHIER
Just the Slushie?

JASPER
(thinks HARD)
Lemme get some nachos, too. With
the jalapenos on 'em.

The cashier grabs a tray and fills it with corn chips.

He removes the lid from a cauldron of bubbling yellow cheese, and ladles a heaping glop on top of the chips.

Terry enters the store as the cashier is sprinkling jalapeno peppers on the nachos.

Terry and Jasper exchange a smile; Terry amused by Jasper's order and Jasper psyched for his junk food.

Terry walks to the pastry cabinet and grabs a donut. Moves to the coffee machine and fills a cup.

Jasper adds a pack of gum to his order, pays the cashier.

Scarcely able to hold up both the nachos and the Slushie, Jasper shuffles his way out to-

EXT. UNI-MART - CONTINUOUS

Jasper continues his junk food juggling act as he moves back towards the bus.

As he passes the skater punks, the ALPHA-SKATER discreetly rolls his board out so that-

-Jasper TRIPS on it.

Jasper HITS the ground, barely able to break his fall.

His nachos and Slushie HIT the pavement a couple feet in front of him. SPLAT!

FROM INSIDE THE UNI-MART: Terry sees this go down.

ALPHA-SKATER
Nice X-Men pack, fag.

Jasper springs back up to his feet.

He turns around and mad-dogs the punks. Jasper's stare would probably frighten an adult trying to comprehend the dark places that this 10-year-old is able to take himself-

-but these skater punks don't give a fuck.

ALPHA-SKATER (cont'd)
(feigning scared)
Oooo, he looks tough.

Jasper holds his glare for a couple seconds-

-and then retreats to the bus.

The skater punks LAUGH amongst themselves.

ALPHA-SKATER (cont'd)
What a little dink.

They never see Terry coming out of the Uni-Mart.

Pretending not to see him, Terry walks into, or more accurately walks through the Alpha-Skater.

Alpha-Skater TUMBLES forward, sprawling out awkwardly on the pavement.

The momentum of the collision sends his skateboard ROLLING.

It stops about halfway between the Uni-Mart and the bus.

Alpha-Skater jumps back up to his feet.

ALPHA-SKATER (cont'd)
Yo, what's your problem, dick!?

Terry just stares at Alpha-Skater as he inches towards his snivelly little posse. They put on their "gangsta faces."

TERRY
(dickhead smile)
Hey. You guys look tough.

The skaters don't know what to make of Terry.

Terry turns and walks about towards the bus.

He reaches the stray skateboard and-
-STOMPS DOWN, snapping it in half!

ALPHA-SKATER
Fuck! Come on, man!

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Back in his front row seat, Jasper watches this happen through the window. He's loving it.

Terry enters the bus, catches eye contact with Jasper.

Brief pause, then Terry holds up his donut.

TERRY
You want half?

JASPER
(unsure)
Can I?

TERRY
Sure.

JASPER
Thanks.

Jasper reaches forward, breaks off a piece of the donut. It's more like a fourth than a half.

TERRY
(re: the big piece)
Take this one.

JASPER
But that one's bigger.

TERRY
So?

JASPER

So...it's your donut. You get the big piece, right?

TERRY

Kid, I'm something of a fat-ass. I definitely don't need the big piece of the donut.

Jasper SNICKERS at "fat-ass."

JASPER

Okay.

They switch pieces. Terry pops the smaller piece into his mouth, demolishing it with one bite.

Terry returns to the driver's seat, STARTS the engine.

Jasper enjoys his 3/4 of a donut in the front seat.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Terry's bus exits the 76 freeway, merging onto the 220.

We have officially entered Western Pennsylvania, which is distinctly different from Eastern Pennsylvania due the noticeable ascension of the Appalachian Mountain range.

The highways weave up and down hills, in and out of valleys, giving the bus' passengers plenty of beautiful scenery to gaze upon.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Jasper isn't looking at the beautiful views, but rather he's pulled out his math textbook and Mead notebook.

Terry is in "automatic driving machine" mode.

Jasper scribbles an answer. Looks at it again. Doesn't seem pleased with it.

JASPER

Terry?

Terry snaps out of it.

TERRY

Huh? Yeah, what do ya need?

JASPER

What's twelve times twelve?

TERRY
Hundred forty four.

Jasper is part shocked, part impressed.

JASPER
How'd you know that so fast?

TERRY
Well, that's kind of a cheap one.
See, twelve is a dozen, twelve
dozen is a gross, and a gross is
one hundred forty four.

JASPER
A gross, like...nasty?

TERRY
No, no. Different meaning of the
same word. If something IS gross,
then it's nasty. If you HAVE a
gross of something, then you got
one hundred forty four of it.

Jasper thinks about that one for a second.

JASPER
What's the point of that?

TERRY
I got no idea, kid. Good question.

Jasper looks back down at his notebook.

TERRY (cont'd)
Got some math homework back there?

JASPER
Uh-huh.

TERRY
What're you learning these days?

JASPER
Double digit multiplication. It's
harder than just, ya know, single
digit stuff.

TERRY
Right.
(pause)
Well, you got any problems
multiplying by ten?

JASPER
(checks textbook)
Yeah.

TERRY
Lay it on me.

JASPER
Twenty-three times ten.

TERRY
Easy, two hundred thirty. See, any number multiplied by ten, you just add a zero onto that number.

Jasper writes this down, getting it.

JASPER
Oooooooh.

TERRY
Same thing works for multiplying by one hundred, just add two zeros on to the end of the other number.

JASPER
Damn, you gettin' all triple-digit on me!? That shit ain't until the next chapter!

TERRY
Can't hurt to be ahead of the curve, buddy.

Jasper's heard that before.

JASPER
Yeah. You right.

Jasper's eyes wander to the window. He sees a sign.

SIGN: You Are Now Leaving Pennsylvania.

JASPER (cont'd)
Whoa. We're out of Pennsylvania?

TERRY
Yep. Coming up on Cumberland, Maryland.

JASPER
We ain't gotta go through no border crossing or whatever?

TERRY
(looks back)
No. That's only when you're going
between countries.

JASPER
Oh.
(disappointed)
Thought it'd be a bigger deal.

TERRY
Sorry to let you down there.

Terry picks up the PA mic to make an announcement.

TERRY (cont'd)
Attention ladies and gentlemen,
we'll be pulling into Cumberland in
just a few minutes...

INT. CUMBERLAND BUS TERMINAL/FOOD COURT - DAY

A semi-circle of fast food restaurants surround an open area
filled with plastic tables and chairs.

TERRY (V.O.)
...I'll be taking a 45 minute lunch
break, so you'll all have time to
stretch your legs or get something
to eat...

We pick up Jasper paying a cashier for a fast food meal.

TERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
...The bus will depart at 1:35 pm,
so make sure you're back in your
seat by then. Again, 1:35 pm.

Jasper carries his tray towards the tables, looks around.

The place is pretty full, not a lot of open seats.

Jasper spots Terry sitting by himself, munching on his own
fast food meal.

Jasper stops, thinks, decides. He approaches Terry.

JASPER
It cool if I sit with you?

Terry finishes chewing before:

TERRY
Sure.

Jasper puts his tray down and unhooks the X-Men bag, resting it against the chair.

Jasper sits down and digs in.

Terry and Jasper eat in silence for a few beats until:

TERRY (cont'd)
So, uh...Jasper. Let me ask you,
how come you're traveling all by
yourself?

JASPER
My mom's sick, so she bought me a
ticket to go stay with my uncle.

TERRY
I'm sorry to hear that. What's
wrong with your mom?

JASPER
I don't want to talk about my mom.

TERRY
(pause)
Fair enough.

They go back to eating.

EXT. CUMBERLAND BUS TERMINAL - DAY

Jasper & Terry sit on a ledge outside of the terminal. Terry smokes a cigarette. Jasper clutches the X-Men bag.

TERRY
(just to talk)
This town used to be an outpost for
George Washington.

JASPER
The President?

TERRY
It wasn't when he was President, it
was when he was in the army.

JASPER
You're pretty smart, huh?

TERRY
Not at all. I've just driven this
route many, many times before.

Pause.

JASPER
So you was in jail, huh?

Terry turns to Jasper, rattled by his candor.

JASPER (cont'd)
Your arms.

Terry looks down at his faded prison tattoos: "He's got me there." Takes a drag from his cigarette.

TERRY
I was in prison, not jail.

JASPER
What's the difference?

TERRY
Jail's where they hold you.
Prison's where they keep you.

JASPER
How long they keep you?

TERRY
They kept me for a while.

JASPER
What'd they get you for?

Terry looks at Jasper, who looks right back. His innocent curiosity forces Terry to look away.

TERRY
Trafficking.

JASPER
What's that?

TERRY
Moving drugs across the state line.

JASPER
Oh.

Now Jasper looks away while Terry's puts eyes on him.

Terry takes a drag, an odd look of satisfaction on his face.

TERRY
(instigating)
What, you out of questions?

Jasper looks back towards Terry, but not at his face. His attention falls onto-

-A specific tattoo on Terry's arm. It's a stocky little demon with red eyes and a mean sneer. The demon is sitting on a fiery sun holding a flaming sword.

JASPER
What's that one?

Terry sees which tattoo Jasper is referring to.

TERRY
Ever heard of the Pagans?

JASPER
No.

TERRY
Never seen a group of dirty
roughnecks on motorcycles riding
around the city?

Jasper shrugs: "I dunno, maybe."

TERRY (cont'd)
Well, if you had, chances are they
were part of the Pagans Motorcycle
Club. Pagans pretty much own the
whole area, including Philadelphia.

JASPER
So...what's the tattoo?

TERRY
(pronounced: Zoo-tar)
That's Surtr the fire God, he's the
Pagan center patch.

JASPER
Center patch?

TERRY
Every member wears this patch on
the back of their vest. Story goes
that Surtr was at war with the
other Gods, so he squatted down
real low to make them think he was
small and weak. When they got close
he jumped up and bashed their heads
in with his flaming sword. After
that he took over hell.

JASPER
(enthralled)
Cool.

TERRY
Yeah, I thought so, too.

Terry rolls down his sleeve.

JASPER
So you ain't with them anymore?

TERRY
Nope.

JASPER
How come?

TERRY
Because I went to prison.

Terry stubs out his cigarette.

TERRY (cont'd)
Let's go.

EXT. CINCH'S CORNER - EVENING

The block is BUSTLING.

Cinch sits on the stoop, texting. Riff directs customer traffic in the background.

After taking a payment, Bank directs an addict to the hole in the plywood where Warehouse slips him the product.

Warehouse KNOCKS twice on the plywood. Pause. KNOCKS twice a second time.

Bank hears this and relays it to Riff.

Riff approaches Cinch.

RIFF
Sold out.

CINCH
Serious?
(Riff nods)
Damn, young'ns be hustlin' tonight!

RIFF
Should we re-up?

CINCH
Nah, man, fuck it. It's Saturday,
let's hit the club.

Cinch hops up and accompanies Riff and Bank over to the wall of plywood. Riff PULLS BACK a loose board.

The three of them duck under into-

EXT. ABANDONED LOT - CONTINUOUS

Warehouse is packing up his stuff. Cinch walks up, grabs the backpack. He examines it, inside and out, checking to make sure there aren't any vials left over.

Satisfied that they sold their entire inventory, he tosses the bag back to Warehouse.

CINCH
Way to step on that package, boy!

Cinch gives a few twenty-dollar bills to Warehouse.

CINCH (cont'd)
Get on wit' it.

Warehouse hops on his BMX and rides off.

Cinch turns to Riff, who is counting out Bank's money.

Finished, Riff looks up at Cinch and shakes his head.

As Riff starts counting again, Cinch puts his eyes on Bank.

Bank sees this, starts getting nervous.

BANK
Yo, what's the problem?

Cinch simply continues to eyeball him as Riff counts.

CINCH
(finally:)
How much?

RIFF
(finishes counting)
Eighty.

BANK
Nah, that can't be right. Ain't no way, count it again.

CINCH
Nigga, he just did count it again.

Bank shrinks a little.

BANK
...I'm sorry, boss. Just cut it out of my pay.

CINCH
(heating up)

Oh, so now you tellin' me what to
do? How to run this thing?

BANK
No no, it ain't like that...

CINCH
What's it like, then?

BANK
(floundering)
Just...I didn't mean to...I thought
I was on point with the count...

CINCH
But you wasn't.

BANK
Right, so I was sayin' you could
take the cut outta my pay. You
know, like last time.

CINCH
(sinister)
Right. Like last time. And that
time last month, too. And then do
the same thing next time you fuck
up. And the time after that.

Bank is shitting his pants. No matter what he says Cinch
keeps talking him into a corner.

After a few seconds looking at the two imposing bosses-
-Bank turns and RUNS for the fence.

Cinch and Riff are on him, YANKING him down from the fence.

Bank tries to YELL for help-

-but he's silenced by a BRUTAL PUNCH from Riff!

Bank HITS the ground, but Riff quickly lifts him up and HURLS
him into a nasty pile of garbage.

Cinch picks up an old garbage can.

Riff KICKS Bank, keeping him on the ground.

Cinch takes center stage and begins WAILING on Bank with the
garbage can. Over and over and over again.

The beat-down is unreasonably excessive. The fact that it is two grown men attacking a 15-year-old kid only makes it that much more difficult to watch.

It's unclear if Cinch has made his point or simply grown tired. Either way, he tosses the garbage can aside.

Bank is bloody and unconscious, laying amongst the garbage like a corpse. Pause.

CINCH (cont'd)
How much you think those Jordans go for?

RIFF
I'd say eighty.

CINCH
Grab them shits, I got a little nephew that'll love 'em.

Riff pulls the sneakers off of Bank's feet.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

The bus is stuck in some oppressive traffic. Dark clouds gather in the sky. Looks like rain.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - EVENING

Terry is bored, but he's used to it.

Jasper, meanwhile, is itching for some activity. He looks around for entertainment, fidgeting in his seat.

Jasper reaches into his bag, pulls out the prepaid cell phone that Cinch gave him.

He presses some buttons, exploring the functions, and doesn't find what he's looking for.

JASPER
Hey Terry.

TERRY
Yeah?

JASPER
Your cell phone got any games on it?

TERRY
Don't have a cell phone.

JASPER
For real!?

TERRY
For real.

It takes Jasper a second to process this information.

JASPER
But...how do you talk to your
peoples?

TERRY
I don't really have "peoples."

JASPER
What about your family then?
(Terry is silent)
How you call your parents?

TERRY
My dad's dead. Haven't spoken to
my mother in years.

JASPER
Damn, man. I'm sorry.
(pause)
You don't wanna talk to your moms?

TERRY
She don't wanna talk to me.

Jasper sits back, thinks. Then-

JASPER
That ain't true.

TERRY
Isn't your business anyway.

JASPER
(doesn't care)
Yeah, but my moms always tells me
that she'll love me no matter what.
That there ain't no bond like the
one between a mother and her child.

TERRY
Thought you didn't want to talk
about your mom.

JASPER
I...
(realizes)
...nah...I...I just don't want to
talk about how my moms is sick.

TERRY
Let's not talk about it then.

Long pause. Jasper looks out the window.

JASPER
Where are we now?

TERRY
We're in the Appalachian Mountains.

JASPER
What do they got up here?

TERRY
Hillbillies and moonshine.

JASPER
What's moonshine?

TERRY
Forget it.

Long pause.

JASPER
Can't believe you don't got a cell.

Another long pause. Terry looks down.

TERRY
You want to watch "Driven" again?

JASPER
Nah, man.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

RAIN has begun to fall, and the storm is building its way up to a torrential downpour.

Terry's bus pulls up under the shelter next to the small stand-alone terminal.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Terry is on the PA mic.

TERRY
...the time is 9:47 pm here in
Charleston. I hope you all enjoyed
the ride, thank you for choosing
Greyhound, and have a nice night.

Terry puts the bus in park, OPENS the door.

Passengers file out of the bus. Jasper remains seated.

The last of the passengers get off the bus.

Terry turns to Jasper.

TERRY (cont'd)
So, what'd you think of your first
big bus ride?

JASPER
It was aiight.

TERRY
It was "aiight," huh?

JASPER
Nah, it was cool.

TERRY
Good. Glad you had some fun.

Jasper nods, stands up.

Terry holds out his hand.

TERRY (cont'd)
It was nice meeting you, Jasper.

Jasper shakes his hand.

JASPER
You too, Terry.

Jasper descends the stairs.

TERRY
(calling after him)
Hope your mom feels better soon!

JASPER
Thanks!

Jasper moves out of sight.

Terry SHUTS the door, puts the bus into gear.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The terminal is empty except for a CLERK behind the ticket counter. He is getting ready to close up for the night.

Jasper runs in, fleeing the rain.

He walks up to the ticket counter.

CLERK
How can I help you?

JASPER
I have a ticket to Lexington.

CLERK
Last bus to Lexington already left.
You can catch the next one tomorrow
morning at 7:30.

JASPER
Aight. Where's the Motel 6?

CLERK
(re: the exit)
Take a right, just down the block.

JASPER
Thanks.

The Clerk nods as Jasper heads for the exit.

INT. MOTEL 6 LOBBY - NIGHT

LOIS (40s), a rather large and homely woman, sits behind the front desk watching a small TV.

Jasper BURSTS IN, shaking the rain off of himself.

LOIS
Hey there! Watch what you're
doin', quit makin' a mess!

JASPER
(noticing the puddle)
Oh. I didn't mean...

LOIS
"Didn't mean to" don't matter, I
still gotta mop it up.

JASPER
I'm sorry, ma'am. It's just...
that it's raining out.

Lois scowls at Jasper. This woman is filled with bile.

LOIS
What're you doing here anyway?

JASPER
I need to rent a room.

Lois LAUGHS. It is a shrill and most unattractive laugh.

LOIS
We can't rent to 8-year-olds.

JASPER
I'm ten.

LOIS
The cut-off ain't ten either. You gotta be eighteen to rent here.

JASPER
Is there any way I can get a room?
(thinks)
Um...I got \$100.

LOIS
Can't help ya.

JASPER
...What am I supposed to do?

Lois gets up and walks to a broom closet.

LOIS
I'm sure I don't know.

She grabs a mop and walks out from behind the front desk.

Lost, Jasper is still standing in his puddle.

She PLOPS the mop down in front of him and begins aggressively pushing it towards his feet.

LOIS (cont'd)
Go on! Shoo!

Without any other real options, Jasper backs out of the Motel 6 as Lois mops up the puddle.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper rushes back into the empty terminal. At least it's dry in here, so he takes a seat.

He pulls the prepaid cell out of his bag, hits SPEED DIAL.

RINGING on the other end of the line. It goes to voicemail.

VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
Yo, it's the boy Cinch. Can't take
ya call right now, but leave a
message and I'll holla back.

BEEP! Jasper hangs up the phone.

Jasper pulls out his Mead notebook, flips to the end.

Written on the back cover is a phone number: "Mom."

Jasper DIALS the number. Waits. CLICK.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
We're sorry, you've reached a
number that has been disconnected
or is no longer in service. If you
feel you have reached this
recording in error, please check
the number and try your call again.

Jasper hangs up. Looks at the phone, puzzled.

The Clerk walks over, ZIPPING up his jacket.

CLERK
Gotta lock up.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper exits, staying under the awning to keep dry.

The Clerk LOCKS the door behind him. Turns off the lights.

Having no plan, Jasper just stands there. His eyes search
the area for any possible solutions. He sees no solutions,
but he does see-

-a police cruiser skulking around the parking lot.

Wanting nothing to do with that, Jasper walks off into the
rain without a destination.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

Terry walks the length of the bus, collecting whatever trash
the passengers left behind. Once he's gotten everything, he
ties off the trash can's plastic lining.

He returns to the front of the bus and picks up an umbrella.

He POPS open the umbrella and heads out into the rain.

INT. MOTEL 6 LOBBY - NIGHT

Terry walks in and immediately SLIPS. One foot slides forward, and he's barely able to regain his balance before eating shit.

LOIS
(not looking up)
Careful. Wet floor.

TERRY
Uh-huh. How're you, Lois?

LOIS
(not a conversationalist)
Meh. Smoking room for a night on
the Greyhound account?

TERRY
Yep.

LOIS
Additional \$5 for HBO?

TERRY
Nope.

Lois hits a button on her antiquated computer and an old printer WHIRS to life.

She puts the form on the desk.

LOIS
Sign here.

EXT. MOTEL 6 - MOMENTS LATER

Terry exits his room after dropping off his stuff.

He OPENS the umbrella and begins walking towards the strip club down the street.

Terry passes a dark alley.

Something catches his eye. He stops walking. Squints.

TERRY
(calling out)
Jasper!? Is that you!?

Sure enough, Jasper is hunkered down next to the dumpster in this dark alley. He is using a large piece of cardboard as a shelter to keep dry, but the cardboard isn't very effective.

Jasper notices Terry. He averts his eyes, ashamed.

TERRY (cont'd)
What are you doing?

JASPER
My bus to Lexington don't leave
'til tomorrow, and the Motel 6
won't rent me a room.

TERRY
Of course they won't, you're ten
years old.

JASPER
(annoyed)
Yeah, I know that.

TERRY
Right. Sorry.

Some primitive instinct buried deep within Terry's mind causes him to steal a glimpse at AJ Entertainment's glowing neon sign before deciding to do the right thing.

TERRY (cont'd)
C'mon. Get up.

INT. MOTEL 6/LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

A dingy public room where guests can pay a dollar to use the rickety old washer/dryer set.

Terry OPENS the dryer, tosses in Jasper's wet clothes.

INT. TERRY'S MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Your average, ugly middle-of-nowhere motel room.

Terry has requested a cot for Jasper to sleep on. Jasper sits on it, wrapped in a blanket.

The TV is on. A cable network is showing an edited-down, uber-violent action movie (take your pick).

After a beat, Jasper's prepaid RINGS.

Jasper answers it. He hears PARTY NOISE through the line.

JASPER
Hello?

CINCH (V.O.)
Yo Jasper. I miss a call from you?

JASPER
Yeah, earlier.

CINCH (V.O.)
What chu need?

JASPER
Nothing. Had a problem before, but
I figured it out.

CINCH (V.O.)
You doin' aiight?

JASPER
Yeah. Goin' to Lexington tomorrow.

CINCH (V.O.)
That's what's up. I'll let Dante
know you're comin' in mid-day. Go
get that money, son.

JASPER
No doubt.

Jasper hangs up.

Terry enters, carrying Jasper's clothes.

TERRY
The dryer's a piece a' shit.
(checks his language)
Sorry.
(Jasper doesn't care.)
Anyway, they're pretty dry. I
could give 'em another whirl if you
want me to.

Jasper checks the clothes. Dry enough.

JASPER
Nah, that's good.

Jasper starts to get dressed.

Terry FLOPS down on the bed, lights a cigarette.

Terry spaces out for a second, watching the violent action
flick on TV. Then-

TERRY
You shouldn't be watching this.

JASPER
How come?

TERRY
You're too young.

JASPER
(as in "Bitch please!")
Please!

TERRY
No way. I loved this kinda stuff
when I was your age, but it ain't
good for you.

Terry turns off the TV. Jasper is annoyed.

TERRY (cont'd)
I don't think your mom wants you
staying up late watching this
garbage. It's gotta be past your
bed time anyway.

JASPER
I don't have a bed time.

TERRY
You don't?

JASPER
Nah, my mom's is cool like that.

Terry marinates on this information for a second.

TERRY
Well, this is my room, so what I
say goes.

JASPER
What do you wanna do then?

TERRY
Nothing. We both gotta be up early
tomorrow, it's time to turn in.

JASPER
But I ain't tired.

Terry thinks, stubs out his cigarette in the ashtray.

TERRY
Bring your homework up here, I'll
check it out for you.

Jasper pulls out his Mead notebook and math textbook.

He hops up on the bed, gives them both to Terry.

Terry opens the notebook, looks it over. Thinks.

TERRY (cont'd)
Looks like you got the first
problem right.

JASPER
Nice.

Terry looks it over some more. Thinks, concedes.

TERRY
Got the second one right, too.

INT. TERRY'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER

It's the middle of the night. Jasper lies on the cot, wrapped in the cheap Motel 6 blanket.

He is not asleep because Terry is out cold and straight LUMBERJACKIN'. It sounds like Terry's respiratory system functions like a Harley Davidson exhaust pipe.

After a few beats, Jasper can't stand it anymore.

He gets up and climbs onto the bed.

JASPER
Terry, you're snoring.

No reaction. Jasper POKES Terry.

JASPER (cont'd)
Yo, shut up!

Terry STIRS in his sleep. He doesn't wake up, but he rolls over. The change of position stops the snoring.

Jasper looks back to his cot: that thing sucks.

Jasper lays down, making sure to stay on his side of the bed, pulls the covers over himself.

Jasper closes his eyes.

INT. TERRY'S MOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Terry and Jasper are asleep. The phone RINGS.

Terry wakes up, grabs the phone.

PHONE (V.O.)
This is your wake-up call,
scheduled for...

Terry HANGS UP. He sits up, clearing his head.

He finally notices Jasper in the bed next to him. His presence startles Terry.

TERRY
Jesus Christ!

Jasper pops up, looking around like something is wrong.

JASPER
What?

TERRY
You scared the piss outta me.

JASPER
Oh. Sorry, that cot sucks.

Terry looks at the cot. It looks like it sucks.

TERRY
Don't worry about it, just gave me
a start is all.
(gets up)
C'mon, we got a bus to catch.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MORNING

Terry is now dressed in his driver's uniform. He escorts Jasper to an awaiting Greyhound bus. Passengers are already beginning to board the bus.

TERRY
This is you.

JASPER
Cool.

TERRY
You take care of yourself on the
way to Lexington, okay?

JASPER
I will.
(pause)
Thanks for being so nice to me.

TERRY
It was my pleasure, kid.

Jasper starts to walk away, but stops to say:

JASPER
Hey Terry?

TERRY

Yeah?

JASPER

I bet your mom misses you.

Terry wasn't expecting that. There's a long pause, as the cat clearly has his tongue.

JASPER (cont'd)

See you later.

Jasper approaches the ticket agent and boards the bus.

Terry stands there for a second. He lights a cigarette.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MORNING

Jasper sits in the front seat, arm around the X-Men bag.

A severely overweight and generally pissed-off BUS DRIVER (40s) is driving. Jasper is restless.

JASPER

What's your name?

No response from the Bus Driver.

JASPER (cont'd)

Where are we?

(no response)

Sir?

BUS DRIVER

Are you talking to me?

JASPER

Uh-huh.

BUS DRIVER

Do me a favor and stop, huh?

Ouch. Chastised, Jasper turns his gaze to the window.

EXT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Greyhound has parked outside the station. The terminal is in an ugly area of town, industrial buildings and cheap tract housing neighborhoods.

Jasper gets off the bus with his X-Men bag, looks around.

As the other passengers disperse, Jasper sees-

-MOSE (22), a stocky thug in baggy jeans and an oversized Colts jersey. He is leaning against a grape-purple 1985 Coupe DeVille with 100-spoke chrome rims.

Jasper approaches with caution. Mose sees him.

MOSE
You Cinch's boy?

JASPER
Yeah.

MOSE
I'm Mose. Dante sent me.

JASPER
Aight.

Pause.

MOSE
Well get in, nigga.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Terry is in "automatic driving machine" mode. The trip back to Philly is a long and tedious one.

After a few beats, something catches his eye (and ears).

SIDEVIEW MIRROR: Bikers. Lots of them. 15-20 at least.

Engines ROAR as a pack of bikers pass Terry on the left and settle into formation in front of him.

Terry looks at the horde of outlaws.

The patches on their backs read PAGANS MC, and all of them have a Surtr patches that glare back at Terry.

Terry watches his old club do their thing; a life of power, excess, and immorality. A life that he gave up

The Pagans pick up speed, weaving through traffic.

Soon they are out of sight.

Terry is left sitting alone in his driver's seat, thinking about the life he's chosen to live.

EXT. "THE HIGHLANDS" - DAY

One of the more run down neighborhoods on the outskirts of Lexington (to the northeast of downtown).

Once again we see the low-income tract housing. These cheap houses appear to be only a fraction above mobile homes.

A majority of the homes have some form a trash cluttering up the front lawn, from old cars to children's toys.

Mose's Coupe Deville cruises up the street, BLASTING southern crunk-hop. So much for being inconspicuous.

The Coupe Deville parks in a driveway.

INT. DANTE'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The front door leads into a decently spacious living room, which is furnished with overstuffed leather couches, a glass coffee table, and a huge flat screen TV.

Seated on the couch is DANTE (24). He is lanky, yet muscular, and pretty ugly in the face. He wears baggy jeans and a tight wife-beater tank top.

He is the "boss," but the term feels a little generous for this guy.

Flanking Dante are two YOUNG GIRLS (18-20). Both are decently pretty, but clearly women of loose morals that hang around for easy access to drugs and creature comforts.

At the moment, one of the girls is braiding Dante's medium-sized afro into cornrows. She's 50% done, so Dante's head is exactly one half afro and one half cornrows.

The front door OPENS.

Mose enters with Jasper trailing him.

Dante looks up. Business time.

DANTE
This him?

Mose nods.

GIRL1
(to Jasper)
Awww, hi baby. Ain't you cute.

GIRL2
He your cousin or somethin'?

Dante scowls at them, suddenly annoyed by their existence.

DANTE
Ladies. Go take a nap in my bed.
I'll wake ya'll up in a minute.

The girls semi-pout, but know to follow instructions.

Dante waits until he hears his bedroom door CLOSE before-

DANTE (cont'd)
What's your name, cuz?

JASPER
Jasper.

DANTE
Jasper. I'm Dante.

JASPER
I know.

DANTE
Course you do, I'm bein' polite,
nigga! You don't wanna be polite,
then break it out and we be done
with it.

Jasper UNZIPS the X-Men bag, pulls out the teddy bear.

He passes it to Dante.

Dante RIPS the head off of the bear, and pulls out the
tightly-wrapped package of cocaine.

Dante holds out his hand.

Mose hands him a Leatherman hunting knife.

Dante flips open the knife and uses it to make a tiny
incision in the package.

Dante pulls the knife out, bringing with it a small bump of
white powder.

He brings the knife to his nose, SNORTS.

Jasper watches.

Dante closes his eyes tight, feeling the potency.

DANTE (cont'd)
Yup, that's that shit.

He and Mose exchange a smile: "Back in business."

DANTE (cont'd)
Get youngblood his money.

Mose disappears into the back hallway.

DANTE (cont'd)
Your man Cinch got the hot connect.

Jasper nods.

DANTE (cont'd)
(re: the cocaine)
You want a taste?

JASPER
Nah, I'm good.

DANTE
You a pussy?

JASPER
(uncomfortable)
Nah...ain't like...just, I'm good.

Dante keeps his eyes on Jasper, strangely proud of himself for being able to intimidate this little kid.

Mose returns with four stacks of hundred-dollar bills.

He DROPS them on the coffee table.

DANTE
There it is, boy. Pack that shit up in ya school bag and my man'll bring you back to the station, get you on ya way back to Philly.

Jasper picks up one of the money stacks. He slowly flips through it, counting it out.

Dante and Mose look at each other.

After Jasper finishes counting the first stack, he reaches into his X-Men bag.

However, instead of packing away the money, he pulls out his Mead notebook.

Perplexed, Dante and Mose watch as Jasper opens the notebook and begins SCRIBBLING on a blank page.

After a few beats they realize...Jasper's doing the math.

Jasper gets his answer. Double-checks his work. Then-

JASPER
You shorted me.

DANTE
Got it wrong, boy.

JASPER
Each stack's got one hundred
hundreds, that's 10K. Four stacks
makes 40K. Package is 50.

DANTE
What're you, fuckin' black Doogie
Howser or some shit?

JASPER
Package is 50.

DANTE
That's what you gettin', nigga.

JASPER
What do I tell Cinch?

Dante looks at Mose, who smirks.

Dante motions Jasper towards him.

DANTE
I'll tell you what to tell 'im.

Jasper walks up to the coffee table. Dante motions him
closer. Jasper leans forward...

...BAM! Dante BANGS Jasper's head on the coffee table!

Jasper FALLS BACK, dazed. A cut has opened up just above his
hairline, and it is bleeding like he's in a prize fight.

Dante rises from the couch, looming over Jasper.

Jasper rolls over on all fours, trying to get up.

Dante doesn't kick Jasper, but rather he puts his foot on
Jasper's back and uses it to SHOVE HIM DOWN.

Jasper BUMPS his face, specifically his mouth, on the floor.

Dante kneels down next to Jasper, getting real close.

DANTE (cont'd)
You tell Cinch that I run a
business and I ain't to be trifled
with.

DANTE (cont'd)

You tell Cinch that I don't appreciate him missin' a shipment cuz' some dumb-ass bitch gets knocked on the route, and I definitely don't appreciate 'im sendin' some grade-school smart-mouth nigga like you as the back-up. You tell 'im as long as he's runnin' a shabby operation then I'm gettin' discount prices. He got a problem with that? Then tell 'im I don't give a FUCK!

Dante keeps his glare in Jasper's face as he grabs the stacks of cash off of the table and STUFFS them into the X-Men bag.

DANTE (cont'd)

Now you gonna take this money, and get yo' ass outta here.

Dante PULLS Jasper up by the collar, starts marching him towards the front door.

DANTE (cont'd)

See this like a life lesson, boy. Maybe next time you'll realize who you're talkin' to. Be more polite.

Dante OPENS the front door.

DANTE (cont'd)

Me? I'm through bein' polite wit' you. Take a walk back to the bus.

With that, Dante SHOVES Jasper off the front step to-

EXT. DANTE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jasper TRIPS, STUMBLES, and manages to TUCK and ROLL onto the trashy front lawn.

The front door SLAMS closed.

Jasper lies still for a while, BREATHING HEAVY.

After a few beats he pushes himself up to his knees.

Jasper touches his head, gets blood on his hands.

He's definitely scared, but it's unclear if he's more scared of Dante or of returning to Philly without Cinch's 50K.

Jasper weighs his options. Pulls out the prepaid.

DIALS.

INT. CINCH'S APARTMENT - SAME

Cinch is watching TV in his boxers. A half-naked girl sleeps on the couch next to him.

Cinch finishes rolling a blunt, lights it up. He exhales a monstrous cloud of smoke, leans back. Life is good.

The cell phone on the table BUZZES.

Cinch picks it up, answers immediately.

CINCH

Eh-yo! What's up, kid, you touch base wit' Dante?

INTERCUT BTW CINCH AND JASPER.

JASPER

I'm outside his spot now.

CINCH

Nice. Everything goin' smooth?

JASPER

He shorted me.

CINCH

Say what?

JASPER

He only puttin' up 40.

Cinch gets up from the couch, roughly pushing the girl aside.

He moves into another room, getting serious and angry.

CINCH

Well tell 'im that he's mistaken.

JASPER

I did, Cinch, I did. But he got all heated and threw me out the door. Like, THREW me out the door.

CINCH

What he say?

JASPER

Said it's 40 cuz' you're runnin' a shabby operation.

Cinch clenches his fist, feigns a punch to the wall.

JASPER (cont'd)
What do you want me to do?

Cinch rubs his temples for a second.

CINCH
Big day for you, Jasper. I'm gonna
need you to pick up that other
thing I gave you and go back in
there. Make it right.
(pause)
Can you do that for me?

Jasper's face.

INT. DANTE'S HOME - SAME

Dante uses the knife to dig another bump of cocaine from the package. He holds it out.

DANTE
Hit this.

Mose takes the knife, SNORTS.

MOSE
Oooo, that's what's up!

DANTE
Hell yeah, we back up n' runnin'!

CREAK. Dante and Mose turn.

The front door has swung open.

Jasper has returned, but this time he's holding a snub-nosed
.38 special with both hands!

It's a surreal sight, this little kid with a bloody scalp and
an X-Men bag aiming a pistol at two grown men.

Dante and Mose react, surprised to say the least.

DANTE (cont'd)
Whoa, whoaaaaa, what you think
you're doin', boy?

JASPER
Lemme see your hands.

Dante and Mose exchange a look, then show their hands.

DANTE
Just take it easy there.

JASPER

I need that other ten.

DANTE

Well I ain't got it.

JASPER

(wavering confidence)

I need that other ten.

DANTE

Ain't you hear me, nigga, I said I
don't got it. It ain't here.

JASPER

Go get it.

DANTE

Ain't nowhere else neither.
Forty's what I got, forty's what
you gettin'.

Jasper pauses.

DANTE (cont'd)

What you gonna do now?

(Jasper is silent)

Yeah, didn't think of that, did
you? You just a kid, you ain't
gonna be shootin' no one.

JASPER

I will if I have to.

DANTE

Bullshit, boy. Look at you, your
arms is shakin', can't barely hold
up that gun.

It's true, Jasper's young arms are tired and trembling.

DANTE (cont'd)

(starts to stand)

Now what I think you oughta do...

JASPER

Yo, sit down!

DANTE

(doesn't sit)

...is put down that piece cuz' you
ain't gonna do...

BANG! The gun GOES OFF!

Dante's head SNAPS BACK! He DROPS between the couch and the coffee table!

Mose DIVES over the couch and SCRAMBLES/CRAWLS into the back of the house.

We hear the Girls SCREAMING from the back room.

Upon closer inspection, we see that Jasper shot Dante in the head, but didn't kill him.

The bullet grazed the afro-side of Dante's head, bulldozing a canyon into his mountain of hair with a little riverbed of scorched flesh at the bottom of the valley.

Dante rolls around on the ground like a wounded animal, confused and concussed.

Meanwhile Jasper is frozen in place. He can't believe what he just did.

The girls continue SCREECHING off screen.

Jasper snaps out of his trance, frantically looks around.

His eyes fall on the package.

Jasper grabs the package and runs.

EXT. DANTE'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jasper BURSTS out the door, rushing down to the sidewalk.

He tries to stuff the package and the gun into the X-Men bag while running at full speed.

In doing so, the prepaid cell phone BOUNCES out of the bag and HITS the sidewalk. The battery POPS out.

Jasper SCREECHES to a stop.

He grabs the phone and the battery, and turns to run-

-but immediately TRIPS over his own feet, dropping the phone again. This time it SHATTERS.

Jasper pauses briefly, recognizes that the phone is dead, and then continues HAULING ASS.

Jasper runs and runs and runs some more.

After getting a few blocks away, he ducks behind a corner.

Reaching into the bag, Jasper pulls out the pack of gum.

He removes a piece and chews it like he's on the clock.

After the gum has turned into a ball of putty, Jasper pulls out the package.

He uses the piece of gum to seal the incision shut, stopping the powder from leaking out into his bag.

Jasper ZIPS UP the bag.

He looks around the corner.

He sees no visible threats, but he can hear a COMMOTION in the distance. Most likely a search party.

Jasper turns and SPRINTS towards downtown Lexington.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LEXINGTON - EVENING

A more urban area of Lexington comprised of businesses, office buildings, and luxury apartment buildings.

There is not much foot traffic.

Jasper STAGGERS down the sidewalk, PANTING. It looks like he's been running forever.

Exhausted, rattled, and scared, Jasper does what any little kid would do.

He decides to hide.

Jasper ducks into a side alley.

In the alley he finds two dumpsters and four recycling bins, all filled to the brim.

Jasper grabs the recycling bins and starts moving them closer to the dumpsters. After a few beats we realize-

-that he's building a fort.

Soon Jasper has the dumpster protecting one side of him, and the four bins protecting the other side.

Jasper pulls a piece of cardboard over his head, creating a makeshift roof.

Satisfied with his fort, Jasper hunches down behind the protective wall.

He retrieves the gun from his bag, holds it with both hands.

He waits, eyes wide open.

INT. PHILADELPHIA GREYHOUND TERMINAL - NIGHT

The bus has just arrived. Terry stands off to the side, smoking a cigarette while the passengers grab their luggage from the compartment.

A Greyhound Ticket Agent sees Terry, walks up to him.

TICKET AGENT

Hey Terry, bad news. Jack called out sick, and Cheryl quit. Gonna need you to haul to Charleston again tomorrow morning.

TERRY

Okay.

TICKET AGENT

(pause)

How come you never complain when I ask you to drive on a 24-hour turnaround?

TERRY

Get paid time and a half, right?

TICKET AGENT

Yeah, but still.

Terry drops his cigarette, stubs it out with his foot.

TERRY

Fuck else am I gonna do?

Terry walks back to the bus to clean up.

INT. TERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's late. Terry lies in bed, wide awake.

He tosses. He turns. He gets frustrated.

Terry sits up in his bed, turns on the light.

He grabs a pack of cigarettes, lights up.

Restless, something is clearly on his mind.

EXT. TERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Now dressed in jeans, a heavy flannel, and a Carhartt jacket, Terry exits his apartment building.

He walks down the silent, lonely streets.

EXT. CITY BUS STOP - NIGHT

Terry sits under the bus shelter, smoking.

The city bus PULLS UP to the stop. Terry stands up.

INT. CITY BUS - NIGHT

Terry sits on the bus, looking aimlessly out the window.

He is all alone, a passenger for first time.

His knee is bouncing up and down, a nervous tick.

Takes a deep breath.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Terry stands at the end of a walkway leading up to a quaint, lower-middle class home.

He takes a drag off of his cigarette, focused on the front door as though they're in a staring contest.

Finally, Terry flicks the butt and walks up to the door.

He RINGS the doorbell twice. Waits.

After what seems like an eternity, the lights TURN ON and Terry hears the faint sounds of someone coming to the door.

The front door OPENS revealing-

-Angela in her bathrobe.

Angela peers through the screen door that now separates her and Terry. Recognition sets in, and her jaw gradually drops.

She opens the screen door, steps into the doorway.

Terry attempts a smile.

TERRY

Hi Ma...

WHACK! Angela SLAPS him hard across the face.

Terry is upset by this slap, but not surprised.

His eyes wander to the ground.

Angela looks at her son, coming to terms with his presence.
Weighted silence. Terry nods slightly.

TERRY (cont'd)
Okay, well I'll get going...

ANGELA
Terrence David Fuller, you'll get
in the house this very instant!

Angela turns and disappears into the house, leaving the door open for Terry to follow her.

Terry stands still, more than perplexed by this exchange.

ANGELA (O.S.) (cont'd)
And if you're out there thinking
you didn't deserve that slap, then
I got another one waiting for you
in here!

Terry face: "that's my mother."

Terry enters the house, closing the door behind him.

INT. ANGELA'S HOME/KITCHEN - NIGHT

A cluttered, homey kitchen. Terry sits at the kitchen table.

Angela brings over two cups of tea. She maintains a hard, skeptical, and judgmental expression on her face.

TERRY
Thank you.

ANGELA
You're welcome.

Terry pulls out his cigarettes, refers to an ashtray on the kitchen table.

TERRY
You started up again?

ANGELA
A few years ago.

He offers her one. She takes it.

TERRY
Why?

He lights her cigarette, then his.

ANGELA

I'm an old woman, Terry, I can do whatever I want. You're the one who should quit, you're still a young man.

Brief silence as they smoke together.

ANGELA (cont'd)

Well go ahead, then.

TERRY

...Go ahead...?

ANGELA

I haven't seen you in over eight years, Terry, you obviously have something you want to say.

Terry retreats into himself. Fidgets. Finally-

TERRY

I quit ridin' bikes.

ANGELA

That's good. Good for you.

TERRY

Drive a bus now.

ANGELA

They let you work around children?

TERRY

Not a school bus, a coach bus. For Greyhound.

ANGELA

Oh.

TERRY

It's work, you know?

(redirects the conversation)

I see you're still having the Friday night cap with Dad.

This receives a look of suspicion from Angela.

TERRY (cont'd)

I take walks around the cemetery sometimes. Saw you go in there a couple months back.

ANGELA

Best part of my week. I like the routine. It helps me remember him.

Terry nods, unable to think of anything to say.

Angela stares at Terry, fed-up with the small talk.

ANGELA (cont'd)

(harsh)

I'm not entirely sure what you're looking for here, but sitting there feeling sorry for yourself, it's not doing you any favors.

Terry SWALLOWS hard. This very difficult for him.

TERRY

I was ashamed, Ma. That's where I've been all this time.

She says nothing, daring him to continue.

Terry cringes. This is the part he was dreading.

TERRY (cont'd)

(struggling through it)

I was ashamed of myself, and I knew you were ashamed of me too. For everything. For being in the can when dad died. For letting you down. Just...couldn't stand the thought of you looking at me the way you're looking at me now.

(pause)

You always told me I could be whatever I wanted to be. Never wanted to be a bus driver.

Angela's hard expression softens, recognizing that her son is doing everything in his power to open up.

ANGELA

But you don't want to be a criminal either, Terry. It took you a while to figure that out, but you figured it out. The hardest lives to straighten out are the ones that get off track.

(pause)

You're a good boy, Terry, and it's very important for me to know that.

Terry gets choked up hearing this. Eyes water.

TERRY
I am...so sorry.

ANGELA
Yeah.
(pause, means it)
I know.

He puts his hand out on the kitchen table.

Angela takes his hand in her's. Squeezes.

ANGELA (cont'd)
It's good to see you again.

We hold on these two remembering what they once meant and could mean to each other as smoke drifts through the kitchen.

EXT. ANGELA'S HOME - LATER

Night has moved on to early morning.

The front door OPENS. Terry is putting on his jacket.

Angela joins him in the doorway.

Terry opens the screen door and starts to leave when-

ANGELA
Oh, before you go.

She disappears for a second, returns with a trash bag.

ANGELA (cont'd)
Bring this out for me?

TERRY
Sure.

Terry takes the trash. He's halfway down the walk when-
-he turns around, looks at his mother. He feels like there is so much more to say.

TERRY (cont'd)
So...
(can't find the words)
...I don't know.

Angela smiles, letting him know that it's alright.

ANGELA
We can talk about it later.

TERRY
(pause, smiles)
Yeah. That sounds good.

Angela CLOSES the door.

Terry takes a breath of fresh air, starts walking.

Reaching the curb, Terry removes the lid of the trash can and dumps Angela's garbage in it.

INT. DOWNTOWN LEXINGTON - LATE MORNING

Jasper has fallen asleep leaning against the wall in his recycling bin/dumpster fort. His tiny hands are wrapped around the .38 special.

Jasper WAKES UP with a start as a truck RUMBLES by on a nearby street.

Jasper looks around frantically, trying to remember what the hell is going on.

He WINCES, touches his head.

The cut on his scalp has scabbed up and inflated into an impressive goose egg. His lip is also split and swollen.

Jasper takes a second to try to calm his breathing, which is already verging on panic.

He does a quick inventory check: gun, X-Men bag, cocaine package, cash, and bus ticket. Everything's here.

He stashes the gun in the X-Men bag.

Jasper pokes his head between the recycling bins.

The coast is clear.

Jasper CRAWLS out of the fort, STRETCHES OUT the kinks.

Standing in the alley, Jasper looks like a feral child: bloody, filthy, and disoriented.

He wanders out of the alley to a street where there a few pedestrians on the move.

Jasper approaches a man in a suit.

JASPER
Excuse me, sir.

The man looks at Jasper, but doesn't slow down.

JASPER (cont'd)
You know how to get to the
Greyhound bus station?

The man shakes his head, and continues walking away.

Jasper turns to an uptight woman in her thirties.

JASPER (cont'd)
Excuse me, ma'am.

The woman doesn't even look at Jasper, in fact she picks up the pace.

JASPER (cont'd)
Yo!

No response. Jasper deflates a little.

He looks around for a better mark.

He spots an ELDERLY WOMAN (70s) SHUFFLING down the sidewalk.

JASPER (cont'd)
Excuse me, ma'am!

Elderly Woman notices Jasper, seems happy that someone is looking to talk to her.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Well hello there.

JASPER
Hi, do you...?

ELDERLY WOMAN
Good morning to you.

JASPER
Good morning to you, too. Do you know where the bus station is?

ELDERLY WOMAN
Oh yes, let me see.

She opens her huge purse, begins DIGGING AROUND.

Jasper continually looks around, paranoid.

It feels like forever before-

-the woman pulls a Lexington bus schedule out of her purse.

ELDERLY WOMAN (cont'd)
Here we go.

JASPER
No no, I need to get to the
Greyhound bus station.

She puts on her reading glasses.

ELDERLY WOMAN
(reading)
The yellow route is close, there's
a stop a few blocks...

JASPER
No, ma'am, I need to...

Jasper sees something out of the corner of his eye-
-an off-duty taxi driving down the street.

Jasper RUNS towards the street.

JASPER (cont'd)
Hey! Stop! Yo!

The taxi doesn't appear to be slowing down.

Desperate, Jasper RUSHES INTO THE STREET!

The taxi HITS THE BRAKES!

The taxi SCREECHES towards Jasper.

Jasper CLOSES HIS EYES, prays for the best.

The taxi BUMPS Jasper, KNOCKING him to the ground!

Jasper HITS THE GROUND with an OOMPH!

A hollow silence in this quiet city.

The CAB DRIVER (40s) jumps out of the taxi, hopping mad.

CAB DRIVER
Are you crazy!? Are you fucking
crazy, what are you doing!?

Cab Driver checks the hood of his taxi. No damage.

CAB DRIVER (cont'd)
You looking for money, is that it!?
I got witnesses, no way you pin
this on me! Running into the
street like a God damn maniac!

Jasper moves to his knees, then stands up.

Cab Driver finally gets a clean look at Jasper, the split lip, and the dried blood on his head.

Cab Driver pales.

CAB DRIVER (cont'd)
Jesus. Are you alright, kid?

Jasper looks into Cab Driver's eyes with a steely focus.

JASPER
I'll give you one hundred dollars
to drive me to the Greyhound bus
station. Right now.

EXT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL - DAY

A few buses IDLE outside the terminal, waiting to board all their passengers before departure time.

In the parking lot we find Mose's Coupe Deville.

Dante sits in the passenger seat. The side of his head is wrapped in a bulky bandage. He is not a happy guy.

Dante's eyes roam the parking lot, looking for Jasper so he can unleash his rage.

Jasper is nowhere in sight.

INT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL - SAME

The terminal is moderately full. People buy tickets, say goodbye to loved ones, and sit waiting for their bus.

Mose enters the terminal. He looks around.

Some kids are running around, but none are Jasper.

Mose does a few laps, checking every nook and cranny.

Mose moves on to-

INT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL/MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mose walks in.

There is one man washing his hands, another at a urinal.

The man finishes washing his hands, exits.

Mose looks around, kneels down to check under the stalls.

He sees one pair of adult-sized dress shoes.

The man at the urinal finishes up, turns around. He almost bumps into Mose, giving him a strange look.

Mose stands back up, leaves the bathroom.

We stay in the bathroom, moving down the stalls to the handicapped stall at the very end.

Inside the stall is Jasper. He is hugging the X-Men bag, sitting on the top of the toilet tank. He looks haggard.

After a few beats, the terminal PA system comes to life.

PA SYSTEM (V.O.)

The 2:20 PM bus to Charleston is boarding passengers. The 2:20 to Charleston is boarding and will be leaving in two minutes.

Anxiety overtakes Jasper, knowing it's game time.

He steps down off of the toilet, exits the stall.

The man who was at the urinal is now washing his hands.

Jasper waits for the man to exit the bathroom. Jasper follows the man, using him as a screen.

INT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Jasper walks across the terminal in the man's shadow, keeping his head low.

Peeking up, Jasper spots Mose across the room. Luckily Mose is facing the opposite direction.

Jasper speeds up, dashing across the terminal and out to-

EXT. LEXINGTON BUS TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Once outside, Jasper runs to the idling bus.

He gives his ticket to the ticket agent and quickly bounds up the stairs.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - CONTINUOUS

Jasper FLOPS down in the front seat.

He brings himself low to the seat and peers out the window.

Jasper sees Mose exit the terminal, still searching.

Jasper ducks down, adrenaline pumping. His hands are clenched in tight fists, waiting for the bus to leave.

After an eternity, the Bus Driver enters the bus.

The Bus Driver CLOSES the door.

Jasper exhales like he's been holding his breath since birth.

The Bus Driver picks up the PA mic.

BUS DRIVER

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Today we'll be...

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The Greyhound bus pulls into the terminal, parks.

Jasper is the first one off the bus, moving directly to-

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Jasper walks right up to the ticket counter where the Clerk reads his newspaper.

JASPER

Yo.

The Clerk looks up from his paper: "Yo," huh?

CLERK

Can I help you?

JASPER

When's the next bus to Philly?

CLERK

Tomorrow morning. 7:20.

Jasper looks drained. He simply nods, turns around.

The Clerk goes back to his reading.

Jasper walks across the mostly empty terminal to-the vending machines.

Jasper buys dinner: a Pepsi, a Snickers bar, and BBQ chips.

Jasper then moves to-

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jasper enters. A man at the sink is washing his hands.

Jasper moves to the urinal, pretends to piss.

The man exits the bathroom.

Jasper opens the door to the handicapped stall.

Locks the stall door.

Jasper rests the X-Men bag on the TP dispenser.

Climbs up on top of the tank.

He POPS open the Pepsi. RIPS open the bag of chips.

Jasper starts eating. Miserable.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - LATER

Deeper into the night, the terminal is a ghost town.

The last bus ARRIVES, PARKS.

The door OPENS, and we see Terry in the driver's seat.

Bleary-eyed, he leans forward against the steering wheel as the passengers file out of the bus.

Once the bus is empty, Terry CLOSES the door.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/OVERNIGHT LOT - NIGHT

Terry exits the bus with a plastic trash bag.

He locks up the bus.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - NIGHT

The Clerk makes his rounds before locking up for the night.

He opens the door to the women's bathroom.

CLERK
Locking up, anyone in here!?

Silence. He turns off the lights.

He moves to the men's bathroom.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/MEN'S BATHROOM - SAME

The door OPENS. Clerk pokes his head in.

CLERK
Locking up, anyone in here!?

IN THE STALL: Jasper remains perfectly still.

Satisfied, the Clerk turns off the lights, leaving Jasper in a pitch black bathroom.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Terry strolls down the street as the Clerk locks the entrance to the terminal in the background.

We follow Terry as he continues down the block.

His destination is-

INT. A J ENTERTAINMENT - CONTINUOUS

Terry enters, surveys the scene. The place is pretty empty.

Moving toward the action, Terry sees-

-Charlene on stage, mid-show. She dips, swings, arches, and spins around the pole. There is no question about it: the woman is sexy as hell.

Terry takes a seat by the stage.

He catches Charlene's eyes.

Re-focusing her energy, Charlene locks onto Terry.

She seductively crawls across the stage until she is right up in his face.

She spins around, letting her ankles rest on his shoulders.

Shoots him a naughty smile.

Terry's body temperature is on the rise.

Charlene's song ENDS.

She spins around again, giving Terry a glimpse of her ass before rounding the stage to collect her tips.

After she's gotten her money, she returns to Terry.

CHARLENE

Hey sweetie. You're back.

TERRY

I keep my promises.

CHARLENE

I like that. Still interested in
that dance?

TERRY

Absolutely.

Charlene GIGGLES like she loves him, an absolute pro.

She holds out her hand.

CHARLENE

Well let's go have some fun, sugar.

Terry takes her hand, helps her down off of the stage.

CHARLENE (cont'd)

This way, honey.

She begins leading Terry towards the back rooms.

During the journey, Terry's facial expression shifts. It's an odd look, as though his mother just called him while he was in the middle of masturbating.

Something's bothering him.

They are about to reach the back room cashier when-

TERRY

What's my name?

She stops, looks at him.

CHARLENE

Come again, sweetie?

TERRY

I said, what's my name?

CHARLENE

(heavy flirting)

Now why would you go and ask that?

TERRY

Because I've been coming in here
for over a year, and I know at one
point you knew my name. I just
want to know if it was worth
remembering for you.

CHARLENE
Baby...

TERRY
Charlene.

Long pause. Charlene can't think quick enough.

Terry turns to leave.

CHARLENE
Is it Timmy?

TERRY
(walking away)
Close.

INT. TERRY'S MOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

The phone RINGS, jarring Terry from a deep sleep.

He answers it.

PHONE (V.O.)
This is your wake-up call,
scheduled for...

Terry HANGS UP, throws the covers off of himself.

Terry stands up, stumbles groggily towards the bathroom.

The ashtray on the bedside table is conspicuously empty.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MORNING

Terry enters the terminal dressed in his driver's uniform.

PA SYSTEM (V.O.)
The 7:20 bus to Philadelphia is now
boarding passengers. Again, the
7:20 to Philadelphia is boarding
passengers and will be departing in
fifteen minutes.

Terry heads towards-

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/MEN'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Terry enters and takes a spot at an open urinal. WHISTLING.

The stall door behind him CREAKS OPEN.

Terry continues PISSING and WHISTLING.

The stream slows, and then stops. Terry ZIPS UP.

He turns to see-

-Jasper looking like death warmed over.

TERRY
(stunned)
...Jasper!?

If Jasper is excited to see a familiar face, then he is barely able to express it.

JASPER
Hey.

Terry kneels down next to him.

TERRY
What are you doing...?
(gets a better look)
Jesus Christ, look at your face!
What happened to you!?
(Jasper is silent)
Who did this to you?

Again, Jasper remains silent. Terry senses that Jasper isn't looking to talk right now.

TERRY (cont'd)
Listen to me, you stay here. Stay
right here, I'll be back.

EXT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL - MOMENTS LATER

Passengers give their tickets to the ticket agent and make their way onto the bus.

Terry bulls his way to the front of the line.

TERRY
Excuse me, sorry, excuse me, gotta
get in, sorry.

Terry gets onto the bus and grabs a first aid kit that is stashed by the driver's seat.

INT. CHARLESTON BUS TERMINAL/MEN'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper now sits on one of the sinks.

Terry is running hot water and soap in the other sink.

He grabs some paper towels and dunks them in the soapy water.

Terry uses them to gently scrub away the dried blood on Jasper's scalp.

He then gets a fresh paper towel to clean out the cut on Jasper's head.

He repeats this process for Jasper's split lip.

Terry then retrieves a small bottle of hydrogen peroxide from the first aid kit.

TERRY
This is gonna sting, okay?

Jasper nods.

Terry soaks a gauze pad with hydrogen peroxide.

He then applies it to Jasper's cut.

Jasper winces.

TERRY (cont'd)
You're okay. You're doing good.

After holding it there for a few seconds, Terry removes the gauze pad.

Next out of the first aid kit is a tube of Neosporin.

TERRY (cont'd)
Gimme you hand.

Jasper holds out his hand.

Terry dabs some Neosporin on his finger.

TERRY (cont'd)
Rub that on your lip.

Jasper does.

Meanwhile, Terry unwraps a bandage. He squirts some Neosporin on the bandage before applying it to Jasper's head.

Terry takes a step back, looks at Jasper.

TERRY (cont'd)
There. That's better.

JASPER
Thank you.

Pause.

TERRY
You want to tell me what happened
now?

Jasper is silent. Terry hides his frustration.

TERRY (cont'd)
You riding back to Philly with me?

Jasper nods.

TERRY (cont'd)
Okay.
(pause)
Let's go then.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Terry's bus drives back towards Philadelphia.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Terry is driving, but he looks very different from his "automatic driving machine" status.

On the contrary it seems like Terry's mind is reeling, trying to prioritize various competing thoughts.

Pause. Then-

TERRY
Jasper.

No response. Terry turns.

TERRY (cont'd)
Hey Jasper...

He sees Jasper laid out across the front seat. Jasper's head rests on the X-Men bag, and his back is facing Terry.

Looks like he dozed off.

Terry turns his focus back to the road.

PAN OVER TO the reverse angle of Jasper.

He is in a sleeping position, but his eyes are WIDE OPEN, haunted by the events of the past 36 hours.

EXT. WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Terry's bus RUMBLES along, back in the familiar territory of western Pennsylvania.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Terry is driving, still deep in thought.

Jasper is in the same exact sleeping position.

Terry tries again.

TERRY

Jasper?

No reaction. This frustrates Terry.

Terry thinks for a few beats. He realizes that, if he's truly turning over a new leaf, then it is up to him to put effort into reaching out to others. So-

TERRY (cont'd)

I went to see my mom.

The slightest, almost imperceptible movement from Jasper.

This is enough encouragement for Terry to continue.

TERRY (cont'd)

You were right, Jasper. She missed me a lot.

(pause)

She rode my back pretty hard for some mistakes I made in the past, but that's her right.

Terry's conversation is transforming into a confession.

TERRY (cont'd)

I mean...I stole from her. Stole from my parents. I lied to her and I disappointed her and I brought disgrace to our family...but...she was willing to...well, as soon as she realized I wasn't there to ask for money, she was willing to...

(pause)

...forgive me.

(pause)

I couldn't have asked for anything more than that.

Terry looks at Jasper, who remains still.

TERRY (cont'd)

Anyway. You were right, Jasper.
And I wanted to thank you for it,
because if I hadn't met you, I
don't think anything would've...

Terry is interrupted as something catches his eye:

FLASHING POLICE LIGHTS in his sideview mirror!

Terry almost does a double-take, confused by this.

He picks up the PA mic.

TERRY (cont'd)

Uh...sorry for the interruption,
ladies and gentlemen...but...it
looks like we're being pulled over
by Pennsylvania State Police.

Supposedly asleep, Jasper snaps up into a sitting position
like he was shot out of a cannon.

Terry notices this, as well as the panic in Jasper's eyes.

TERRY (cont'd)

The troopers run random stops on
public transportation, but if
everyone cooperates we'll be back
on the road in no time. They'll be
asking everyone to get off the bus
while they run a routine search.
Again, I apologize for the
inconvenience.

Predictable GRUMBLES throughout the coach.

Terry takes the next exit, pulling the bus over in a gas
station parking lot.

Once the bus is parked, Terry OPENS the door. As he does
this he shoots Jasper a look: "Stay in your seat."

The passengers get off the bus, leaving Jasper & Terry alone.

TERRY (cont'd)

(low voice)

So social services took you away
from you mother. They dropped you
off at the station with a ticket,
sending you to go stay with your
uncle. Right?

Jasper nods.

TERRY (cont'd)
Go.

Jasper hops up, dragging the X-Men bag behind him.

Pause.

Two STATE TROOPERS board the bus. They nod to Terry, and then proceed to the back of the bus, taking a look around.

Sergeant Ropinski follows them, sucking on his trademark hunk of chewing tobacco.

ROPINSKI
Afternoon, Terry.

Terry holds up a tiny plastic-lined waste basket.

Ropinski SPITS into it.

TERRY
Didn't call you.

ROPINSKI
Well, if we don't do some of these stops randomly, then they won't be random stops, will they?

TERRY
Suppose not. Don't think I have anything for you this time though.

ROPINSKI
Can't all be winners. Or losers, that is.

Ropinski looks out the window, scanning the crowd of passengers waiting outside.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
What about the kid?

TERRY
Social services. They're sending him to stay with his uncle, told me to keep an eye on him. Looks like whoever he was living with before tuned him up pretty good.

(feigning innocence)
You don't think that he...?

ROPINSKI
Never know.

TERRY
Sick world.

ROPINSKI
Ain't it?

Ropinski SLAPS Terry on the shoulder, friendly-like.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
Don't worry Terry, we won't hold
you up long.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Ropinski and his troopers get off the bus, followed by Terry, who steps to the side.

Ropinski address the line of waiting passengers.

ROPINSKI
All right ladies and gentlemen, we
apologize for the hold-up. My men
and I just have to take a look
through some of your personal
belongings. If you're unwilling to
let us search your belongings then
we'll have to get a warrant, but
that will take a long time and I
don't think any of you want to wait
that out on the side of the
highway. There's nothing to worry
about if you've done nothing wrong.
(pause)

Let's begin.

Ropinski's troopers take the lead, randomly picking two people to search.

Ropinski can't keep his eye off Jasper. He lumbers over to Jasper, who is looking towards the ground.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)
What's your name, young fella?

Jasper forces himself to look up.

JASPER
Jasper.

ROPINSKI
What are you doing traveling all
alone, Jasper?

JASPER
(pause)
Lady from the state gave me a
ticket. Said I gotta go stay with
uncle for a while.

ROPINSKI

What's your uncle's name?

JASPER

Cinch.

ROPINSKI

"Cinch?"

JASPER

I think his real name be Charles,
but we always called him uncle
Cinch.

ROPINSKI

(CHUCKLES)

Uncle Cinch. I like that.

Ropinski eyes Jasper's X-Men bag.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)

Cool bag.

JASPER

(pause)

Thank you.

ROPINSKI

Who's your favorite X-Man?

JASPER

Wolverine.

ROPINSKI

Yeah, he's everyone's favorite.

Ropinski holds out his hand.

ROPINSKI (cont'd)

Well, you have a good trip, Jasper.

It takes Jasper a second to realize what's going on.

Finally, he shakes Ropinski's hand.

JASPER

Thank you, sir.

Ropinski looks down the line.

ROPINSKI

Anything?

The two troopers respond, shaking their heads "no."

ROPINISKI (cont'd)
Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your cooperation. We're going to get out of your hair, so please return to your seats.

The passengers move back to the bus.

Ropinski passes Terry.

ROPINISKI (cont'd)
Poor kid. Fuckin' shame.

TERRY
Yeah.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA TURNPIKE - EVENING

Terry's bus is officially in eastern Pennsylvania, drawing closer to Philadelphia.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - SAME

Terry drives. Jasper looks out the window.

The silence is very heavy.

Eventually:

JASPER
Hey Terry?

TERRY
Yeah?

JASPER
Where are we?

Long pause.

TERRY
I don't know, pal.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

The bright lights of the big city swallow Terry's bus as it returns home.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA GREYHOUND TERMINAL - NIGHT

Terry's bus rolls to a stop.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Both Terry and Jasper remain seated as the other passengers file out. Once they're alone-

-Terry turns to Jasper. A moment.

TERRY
This is it.

Jasper nods, stands up.

Terry toils for a second. Jasper notices this.

TERRY (cont'd)
Listen...is there any way I can
help you?

JASPER
How you mean?

TERRY
It's just...
(searches for the words)
...you're a good boy, Jasper. I
want you to be alright.

JASPER
I'll be aight.

TERRY
Are you sure?

JASPER
Yeah, man. I'm home now,
everything's gonna be good.

It's a tough pill for Terry to swallow, but he swallows it.

TERRY
Okay then.

Jasper reaches into the X-Men bag.

JASPER
Here.

Jasper passes something to Terry.

TERRY
What's this?

JASPER
It's for you.

Terry inspects the gift. It is a piece of Mead notebook paper, folded over several times into a makeshift envelope.

Terry opens it, can't believe his eyes...

...two \$100 bills.

JASPER (cont'd)
Thanks for not ratting me out to
that state cop.

Terry is completely dumbfounded by this gesture and everything that it means.

He looks at Jasper, wanting to say everything.

But he is speechless.

Jasper smiles at Terry and gets off the bus.

Hold on Terry, looking totally helpless.

He CRUMPLES up the makeshift envelope.

INT. CINCH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door OPENS, revealing Jasper.

Jasper looks up at Riff, who does not appear pleased.

Riff lets Jasper in, SHUTS the door behind him.

Jasper finds Cinch sitting on the couch. He looks similarly displeased, like he's been stressing out for days.

Even more menacing is the Mac-10 machine pistol that Cinch is in the process of cleaning!

CINCH
Sit.

Jasper sits.

Cinch lays the Mac-10 on the table with a CLUNK. Glares.

CINCH (cont'd)
Where you been?

JASPER
I been comin' back.

CINCH
Oh yeah? Well I been callin' you
round the clock.

CINCH (cont'd)

No word from you, no word from
Dante, I was getting ready to crew
up and head out to Kentucky my-
fuckin'-self, so you better have
some good reasoning behind all this
fuckin' hysteria.

JASPER

I lost the burner in Lexington.

CINCH

Tell me you got my money.

JASPER

Not all of it.

Cinch's face tightens up. Dark clouds on the horizon.

JASPER (cont'd)

But I got the package back.

Cinch's face loosens. Clear skies ahead?

CINCH

Say what?

Jasper UNZIPS the X-Men bag.

He produces four stacks of cash and the package of cocaine,
still sealed with a piece of bubble gum.

Cinch looks at this, then to Riff, who is just as baffled.

CINCH (cont'd)

Okay, walk me through this. What
happened out there?

JASPER

Like I told you, Dante was only
givin' up forty. So I went back in
there with the heater and told him
to scrounge up the other ten. He
said that wasn't happenin'. He
started to make a move, and the gun
went off. Hit Dante in the head.

CINCH

You killed Dante!?

JASPER

Nah. It hit him in the head, but
didn't kill him.

CINCH

So you grazed 'im?

JASPER

What's that mean?

CINCH

Like, skimmed off the side.

JASPER

Yeah. I grazed 'im.

Jasper retrieves the .38 from the bag, sets it down next to the cash and the cocaine.

JASPER (cont'd)

Anyway, Dante went down, and his boy split to the back. I knew I wasn't gettin' the money, but I didn't want to come back short.

(pause)

So I snatched the package.

Cinch is taken aback by all this.

He looks to Riff, who nods: "I'm impressed."

Cinch looks back to Jasper, and then-

-BURSTS INTO LAUGHTER. HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER.

Riff joins in on the revelry.

Jasper is odd man out, confused by this reaction.

JASPER (cont'd)

...You ain't mad?

CINCH

(still LAUGHING)

Mad why?

JASPER

I...just....didn't mean to fuck things up between you and Dante.

CINCH

Dante!? Fuck that nigga, who give a shit about Dante!?

Cinch gets up, walks over to Jasper.

He puts his arm around Jasper for a heart-to-heart.

CINCH (cont'd)

Lemme tell you somethin', there are ALWAYS more Dantes. There's a fuckin' endless supply of Dantes. But you!

CINCH (cont'd)

You, Jasper, are in short supply.
 I ain't taken a shine to a young'n
 like you in a minute.
 (totally sincere)
 You got a big future ahead of you.

Pause. Jasper doesn't know how to feel about this.

JASPER

Thanks, Cinch.

Cinch smiles, rubs Jasper's head.

CINCH

My man.

Cinch picks up one of the stacks, hands it to Jasper.

CINCH (cont'd)

Here. Investment in your future.

JASPER

(the whole stack!?)

For real?

CINCH

Hell yeah. Boy, you went out on a
 sale and came back with payment and
 the product! That's 100% gross
 return, baby!

JASPER

(confused)

Like...a hundred forty four?

CINCH

Huh?

JASPER

(still confused)

Gross, like, nasty or...

CINCH

Fuck is you talkin' about, nigga?
 Gross profit!

(waves it off)

Forget it, man, you had a long
 weekend. Go get yourself some
 sleep, handle your business.

JASPER

You still got my backpack?

CINCH

You don't want that X-Men joint?

JASPER

Nah. That's kids' stuff.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jasper RUNS through the front door, wearing his old backpack. So close to home, Jasper is unable to conceal his excitement. He BOUNDS up the stairs two at a time.

Reaching his floor, Jasper slows down and pulls his apartment keys from his bag.

Jasper gets to his apartment's door, inserts the key...

...except the key doesn't fit.

Jasper checks the key ring, makes sure it's the right one.

He tries it again. The key won't turn.

He POUNDS on the door.

JASPER

Mama! Yo, Mom!

Jasper waits. Silence. He POUNDS on the door again.

JASPER (cont'd)

Mama?

Again, silence. No one is coming to the door.

Jasper ponders for a bit.

He turns around and walks back down the stairs.

Back on the first floor, Jasper finds the door that bears a faded "Manager" sign.

Jasper KNOCKS. Pause.

We hear MOVEMENT behind the door.

Manny answers the door with a box of greasy Chinese take-out food, shoveling it into his mouth with a fork.

JASPER (cont'd)

Hey Manny...

MANNY
(irritated)
Listen, if you're looking for any
of that junk you left behind, some
of it might still be in the
dumpster out back.

JASPER
What...do you mean?

Manny's irritation slowly fades as he comes to recognize the situation. There is even a twinge of guilt in his eyes.

MANNY
Oh.

JASPER
Where's my mom?

MANNY
(chews awkwardly)
She left with your daddy. Thought
you went with them.

JASPER
My daddy?

MANNY
Yeah, tall guy I've seen around.
Shaved head, always showing off
that Rolex he's got.

What's left of Jasper's hope, trust, dignity, and childhood crumbles away. He knows who that is, but-

JASPER
That's not my daddy.

Long pause.

MANNY
Sorry, kid.

Manny CLOSES the door, leaving Jasper all alone.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Jasper exits the building, takes a right.

He wanders into a side alley.

Jasper grabs a stray milk crate and DRAGS it over to a large dumpster in the alley.

Jasper hops up on the crate, making himself taller.

He pushes open the lid of the dumpster.

Sure enough, inside the dumpster are Desiree's old TV, a small collection of dishes and silverware...

...and a big pile of Jasper's comic books.

Jasper stares at it, tears in his eyes.

He gets down off the crate.

He ambles aimlessly towards the street.

He sits on a park bench. He looks around.

There is a corner kid slingin' across the street.

A city bus DRIVES by.

EXT. ANGELA'S HOME - NIGHT

Dressed in casual clothes, Terry is KNOCKING.

Angela opens the door. Her face brightens a little.

ANGELA

Didn't expect to see you again so soon.

TERRY

(absently)

Yeah.

ANGELA

(senses it)

What's wrong?

Terry takes a moment for himself.

TERRY

I just needed a hug.

ANGELA

Why didn't you say so?

She opens her arms.

Terry hugs his mother, finding comfort in her embrace.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA - DAWN

The sun rises as the city of brotherly love wakes up.

INT. PHILADELPHIA GREYHOUND TERMINAL - MORNING

Terry enters the terminal, a cup of coffee in his hand.

He is on his way to get his bus, but he stops when he sees-

-Jasper sitting on a nearby bench with his backpack. His eyes are puffy and his demeanor is defeated, the absolute embodiment of neglect.

TERRY

Hey...Jasper?

Jasper doesn't even look up at him.

Terry walks over to him, kneels down.

TERRY (cont'd)

Are you okay, buddy?

Jasper shakes his head "no."

TERRY (cont'd)

You want to talk to me about it?

Jasper shakes his head "no." Pause.

TERRY (cont'd)

You want to take a ride today, keep
me company?

Jasper finally looks up at him. Nods yes.

Terry forces a smile.

TERRY (cont'd)

Okay.

Terry stands up. Jasper joins him.

They walk towards the bus. Terry rubs Jasper's head.

TERRY (cont'd)

It'll be all right, son. We'll
figure something out.

They reach the door that leads to the passenger loading area.

Terry holds it open. Jasper walks through.

Terry follows him. The door closes.

FADE OUT.

THE END.