

DOG PARK

Written By

Matthew Perrett and Gregory Gutierrez

First Draft Completed: August 18, 2010

EXT PARK - DAY

A middle-aged man and his medium-sized dog are playing fetch in a dog park. The sun is beginning to set. The dog retrieves his ball and brings it to the man, who takes it and rubs the dog's head lovingly.

MAN

Who's a good boy? That's right,  
you're a good boy!

The man holds the ball over his head as the dog wags furiously in anticipation.

MAN

One more time, and then we gotta  
go home. Down, Jake! Are you  
ready? Are you ready?  
(pause)  
Okay, go get it!

The man throws the ball and the dog takes off like a shot. The ball rolls into the bushes with the dog right behind it, disappearing from sight. The dog roots around in the bushes, when suddenly a pair of gloved hands grabs him. The animal lets out a muffled yelp and struggles to get free, but another pair of hands opens a large black bag and stuffs him inside.

MAN

(impatiently)  
Come on, buddy, daddy needs his  
din-din!

The two figures quickly toss the dog in the back of an undistinguished white van, then slam the doors and hop inside the vehicle. The man hears the sound and heads into the bushes to investigate. He accidentally steps on the ball, which squeaks loudly.

MAN

(worried)  
Jake? Where are ya, pal?

The van roars to life and speeds away as the man rushes out of the bushes. Putting two and two together, he chases after the van, but is too late.

MAN

Where are you going with my dog?!  
Come back! COME BACK!

The van rounds a corner and vanishes, leaving the man alone in the falling light. He stands there for a long moment, unable to move or speak.

INT DOGFIGHTING ARENA - NIGHT

The van pulls into the loading dock of an old warehouse. Two men get out and open the rear doors of the vehicle, then pull out the squirming black bag. They roughly drag the dog out of the sack and duct-tape its mouth shut while it struggles and yelps with fear. Once finished, they throw the shivering dog into a small room lit only by a single hanging light. A large black male mastiff mix emerges from the shadows and snarls menacingly. The light reflects off a polished gold cross, revealing a dimly-lit figure standing in the corner.

MAN IN THE CORNER

You know what to do, Titan...go  
get 'im.

Titan leaps on the defenseless dog and savagely attacks him. The two men outside hoot and holler at the spectacle, but the man in the corner merely watches carefully, studying Titan's performance. Titan kills the stolen dog in short order, then pads over to the man in the corner and sits. The man wipes the blood off Titan's muzzle while the other two come inside and begin cleaning up the mess.

MAN IN THE CORNER

Good dog, Titan. You're almost  
ready for the big show.

INT BAR - DAY

A MAN sits in a bar in the middle of the day, staring glumly at a shot of alcohol.

THE MAN

A white man of average height with short, unkempt brown hair and a five o' clock shadow named CONNOR DALTON. He is 42 years old and wears a slightly faded, un-ironed olive suit without the tie, the jacket dumped on the counter next to him.

The bar is empty except for Connor and the bartender. In the background, a news report comes on the TV.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Today also marks the one-year anniversary of the Flight 963 disaster, a tragedy which claimed 214 lives. The plane was on its way to Italy when a catastrophic engine failure caused it to crash into the Atlantic Ocean. There were no survivors. We now go live to the memorial gathering at--

Connor picks up the glass and gazes into the amber liquid, then downs the shot. He sets it down next to another empty glass and resumes his thousand-yard stare at the counter.

CONNOR

(quietly)

Could you change the channel, please?

The bartender goes over to the TV and changes the channel to another news report.

REPORTER (O.S)

--one year since the crash of Flight--

Giving up, the bartender turns the TV off. He glances over at Connor.

BARTENDER

You lose someone in the crash?

CONNOR

...let me have one more.

EXT SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

Connor exits the bar, shielding his eyes as he adjusts to the sunny weather. He walks over to a leashed DOG tied to a parking meter.

THE DOG

An adult male red basenji named DUKE. He wears a dark purple collar and leash with a bone-shaped dog tag.

Connor kneels down and pets Duke, who wags happily.

CONNOR

Hey Duke, you miss me? That was a very good wait!

Duke licks Connor's face in response. Connor starts to untie Duke while the dog bounces around in anticipation.

CONNOR

(laughing)

Calm down, Big-Ears! I can't untie you if you won't hold still!

Finally releasing Duke, the two head back to Connor's apartment.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Connor and Duke walk up to a large, multi-story apartment complex. A huge, brightly-colored poster advertising the brand new apartments covers one side of the building, with the walls freshly painted in an attractive beige-peach color. Connor enters the passcode and opens the glass door, then enters with Duke in tow and lets the door close behind him.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Duke lies on the floor of the bedroom and watches Connor unpack boxes, taking occasional breaks to clean himself. The apartment is new and spacious, with one bedroom, a kitchen, a living room, and an office. The office is not in use, and currently holds a mountain of sealed boxes. The living room has an entertainment center with a large TV

and DVD player, as well as a big leather couch and a bookshelf filled entirely with DVDs. The walls are a pleasant off-white, with plush light-brown carpeting on all the floors outside the kitchen. The apartment is several stories up, and the window in the living room leads to a fire escape.

Connor takes some clothes out of a box and puts them away in the closet. Visible are a few sets of woman's clothes and a pair of children's shoes. He then opens another box and, rummaging through it, finds a framed picture of his wife and daughter. He picks up the picture gently and stares at it for several seconds with a melancholy expression, looking as if he is about to break. Duke barroos to get his attention, snapping him out of his funk.

CONNOR

Aww, have I been ignoring you?  
C'mere, boy.

Duke jogs over to Connor, who gives the dog a big hug.

CONNOR

That's right, you ARE the best dog  
in the whole world! What do you  
say we check out that park we saw  
after we finish this box?

Duke barroos right in Connor's face, making him recoil.

CONNOR

(mock seriously)  
Hey hey, not in the face, you big  
furball!

Connor rolls Duke on his back and rubs his stomach playfully while Duke squirms and flails.

EXT HUNTER'S PARK - DAY

Connor and Duke enter the park, which a sign identifies as MrLaren Park. Eucalyptus trees and pale brown grass cover the landscape, with paved paths snaking over the rolling hills. Looking around, Connor is surprised to see an old WOMAN in a lawn chair beckoning him over.

THE WOMAN

A short black woman with curly white hair. She is 77 years old, wears a bright pink tracksuit and is holding a smartphone with ear buds plugged into it.

WOMAN

Don't be shy, sonny! Come on over and say hello to an old lady!

Slightly confused, Connor obediently heads over.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Tell me, dearie, did you see a taco truck on Mission on your way in?

CONNOR

(shaking his head)

Uh, I don't think so, no.

The woman tsks with annoyance and checks her phone.

WOMAN

They tweeted they'd be here at three...oh, looks like they got held up at their last stop.

The woman looks up with a start and extends a hand.

WOMAN

Now that was just plain rude of me, rambling on without so much as a how-do-you-do! I'm Beatrix, Beatrix Kincade.

Connor takes BEATRIX'S hand and shakes gently.

CONNOR

Connor Dalton.

Beatrix laughs and grips his hand firmly before letting go.

BEATRIX

No need to treat me like I'm made of glass, young man!

Winking, Beatrix looks at Duke.

BEATRIX  
And who's this adorable puppy dog?  
Is he friendly?

CONNOR  
His name's Duke, and yeah, he  
won't bite.

Beatrix holds out a hand for Duke to shake.

BEATRIX  
(to Duke)  
Can you shake? Very good! Other  
paw! Yes, you're a good boy,  
aren't you?  
(to Connor)  
You're new in town, aren't you?

CONNOR  
Yeah, how did you know?

BEATRIX  
(grinning broadly)  
Because I don't know you yet, of  
course!

CONNOR  
(jokingly)  
Oh, you're one of THOSE old  
ladies!

BEATRIX  
(laughing)  
I sure am! Been here since World  
War II, and never left except to  
travel.

CONNOR  
Oh, where have you been?

Beatrix chuckles and taps at her phone.

BEATRIX

Be faster to say where I HAVEN'T  
been! Want to see my travel map?  
I have an app for it!

CONNOR

(shaking his head)

Maybe some other time. Sounds  
like you're not pining for the  
good ol' days.

BEATRIX

Damn right I'm not! Everything's  
better now than it was then,  
except for the gangs. When I was  
a girl the gangsters at least had  
some class. Now they're just a  
bunch of hoodlums, and into worse  
stuff than booze and grass.

CONNOR

(curious)

Like what?

Before Beatrix can answer, a man comes over and looks at  
Beatrix pleadingly. It is the same man who lost his dog in  
the park earlier.

MAN

Have you seen Jake anywhere,  
Beatrix? I've looked all over for  
him.

BEATRIX

No, David, I haven't. Did you  
talk to the police?

The man nods miserably.

MAN

They won't help... 'just a dog,'  
they said. I've got to find him  
before he misses his din-din...

The man trails off and wanders away. Beatrix just shakes  
her head sadly.

BEATRIX

That poor man lost his dog three days ago, and he's been in a daze ever since. He's not the only one to lose a pet around here, either.

CONNOR

To what, coyotes?

BEATRIX

No, it's people alright...real bad people. You keep a close eye on Duke in the park, y'hear?

CONNOR

(nods)

I will. Thanks for the heads-up.

Beatrix smiles and pats Duke's head.

BEATRIX

Anyway, I've kept you two long enough. When you get a chance, go by the north side of the park. There's a dog park up there where you can let this sweet puppy dog off-leash, and he can go for a swim in the lake.

CONNOR

That's sounds great. We should have time to check it out today before we go home.

BEATRIX

Good for you! Oh, and try to stay on the trail. It's easy to lose your way if you go off the path.

CONNOR

I'll keep that in mind.

A food truck pulls up nearby and honks. Beatrix beams and rubs her hands together.

BEATRIX

Oh good, they're here! Be a dear and help me up, will you?

Connor helps Beatrix out of her chair.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)

Thanks, sweetie. You go have fun with your dog - momma's got a chicken tikka masala burrito with her name on it!

Beatrix waves goodbye and makes her way over to the food truck, immediately chatting with the owners. Connor waves and heads deeper into the park with Duke.

EXT DOG PARK - DAY

Connor and Duke arrive at the dog park section of the park. It is a large, grassy field enclosed by a short metal fence and ringed by trees. A small lake nearby is set aside for the dogs to swim in, and there are benches and tables for the dogs' owners. Several people are in the park watching their pets run and play. In the far corner, three young men sit on a table observing the area attentively. With them is Titan, the large black mastiff from earlier. The other people in the park keep their distance from the group.

Connor closes the gate behind him and takes Duke's leash off. Duke runs around and starts to approach the three men. Titan utters a low growl, but Duke stands his ground and growls back.

CONNOR

Come here, Duke! Come!

Duke takes a step back, then turns and runs over to Connor. The three men confer quietly for a few minutes while looking at Duke. Connor cautiously puts the leash back on Duke.

CONNOR

Stay close, okay buddy?

One MAN breaks away from the group and approaches Connor confidently, but without smiling.

THE MAN

A tall Hispanic man with short brown hair. He is 24 years old and wears jeans, a T-shirt, a loose sport jacket, and a modest gold cross necklace. He is the man seen earlier in the warehouse with Titan.

MAN

Hey, sorry about that. Titan's very...protective.

CONNOR

It's fine. Is Titan your dog?

A thin smile crosses the man's face.

MAN

Yeah, he's a tough son of a bitch alright. Your dog has some cojones to stand his ground like that. I'm Gabriel, by the way. You new to Hunter's Park?

GABRIEL holds out a hand, and Connor hesitates a moment before shaking.

CONNOR

Connor, and this is Duke. I thought this was McLaren Park?

Gabriel chuckles and crosses his arms confidently.

GABRIEL

Heh, not around here it isn't.

Gabriel squats down and pets Duke before Connor can say anything. Duke's lips pull back, but Gabriel chuckles and scratches behind his ears, appeasing Duke a little.

GABRIEL

Got a good lookin' dog here. Real healthy, too. What breed is he?

CONNOR

He's a basenji.

Gabriel raises an eyebrow.

GABRIEL

Oh, you don't say? They're one of those barkless dogs, right? Don't see them much around here.

CONNOR

My wife found him in South Africa and insisted we bring him back. She couldn't say no to his eyes, and I couldn't say no to her.

GABRIEL

She's gone now, huh?

Connor nods sadly, but doesn't elaborate. Gabriel stands and glances back at his companions, then puts an arm around Connor's shoulder.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Connor my man, I've got a business proposition for you.

CONNOR

I'm not sure I follow.

GABRIEL

Let's just say that I run a special service for the folks around here. If someone wants an animal, any kind, any breed, they come to me to find it for them.

CONNOR

What does that have to do with me?

Gabriel grins and points at Duke.

GABRIEL

It just so happens, homes, that a customer is looking for your kind of dog. Same breed, same color, the works! I could put a little money in your pocket, and take the pooch off your hands.

Connor pulls himself free and puts some distance between himself and Gabriel.

CONNOR

I think you have the wrong idea,  
mister--

Gabriel holds his hands in the air and laughs.

GABRIEL

Hold on there, man! You haven't  
even heard the figure yet. How  
does \$500 sound?

CONNOR

What? No!

Gabriel lowers his arms to his sides, his friendly façade  
dropping.

GABRIEL

\$1000, that's my final offer.  
You'd be doing me a big favor--

Connor glares at Gabriel, gripping the leash tightly and  
putting Duke behind him.

CONNOR

You don't get it, do you? I don't  
know what you think my situation  
is, but I'm not here for a payday  
like you are. This dog is my  
life, not some obligation I put up  
with! But then, you'd know that  
if you ever had a pet you really  
loved. Come on, Duke.

Connor storms off with Duke in tow, slamming the gate  
behind him. Gabriel glares at Connor's back as the man and  
his dog walk down the path.

GABRIEL

(mutters)

Yeah, I did.

Gabriel's two friends approach with Titan.

GANG MEMBER #1

You just got dissed, homebody!

GANG MEMBER #2  
(imitating Connor)  
'This dog is my life!' What a  
tool, eh?

Gabriel's friends continue giving him a hard time about his failure. Fuming, he clenches his jaw and strokes Titan's head firmly.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Connor and Duke return to the apartment complex. Connor accidentally types in the passcode incorrectly, and struggles to remember how to reset it. Duke growls at something behind him, but before he can turn around a blow to the back of the head knocks him to the ground.

GANG MEMBER #1  
Shoulda said yes, sucka!

As Connor's vision fades to black, he can faintly hear Duke's muffled cries, the slam of car doors and a large vehicle speeding away.

Connor wakes up a short time later to see a man standing over him, shaking him gently.

MAN  
Hey, are you okay?

Connor groans and feels the back of his aching head.

MAN  
You're not bleeding, but it looks  
like someone hit you pretty hard.  
You get mugged or something?

Connor slowly gets to his feet and leans up against the wall for support.

CONNOR  
I...I'm not sure. Where's Duke?

MAN  
(confused)

Duke? Who's Duke?

Looking around with rising panic, Connor sees that Duke is nowhere in sight.

CONNOR

(gesturing)

My dog! Have you seen him? About yea high, red fur, big ears?

MAN

(shaking his head)

No, I haven't seen any dogs around here. Are you okay now? I gotta go, I'm late for work.

CONNOR

I'll be fine, but I have to find my dog!

The man shrugs and walks off. Connor pulls out his cell phone and dials 911 as he starts searching the area.

MESSAGE

You've reached the 911 Emergency Hotline, all circuits are busy right now. Please hold for the next available operator and be prepared to give the nature of your emergency and your cell phone number.

CONNER

Dammit! Duke! Where are you, boy?!

911 OPERATOR

911 emergency.

CONNER

Oh, thank God! Some guy knocked me out, and I think they took my dog!

911 OPERATOR

'They,' sir? Was it one man, or multiple assailants?

CONNOR

I don't know, I never got a look at them.

911 OPERATOR

Well, sir, if you'd like to come down to the station and file a police report--

CONNOR

What about my dog? He's missing and I think they stole him!

911 OPERATOR

I can transfer you to animal control, but right now it's not a police matter. What's your location, sir? Sir?

Connor hangs up and curses loudly. Suddenly, a realization hits him.

CONNOR

The park!

Connor runs into the park as the sun begins to set.

EXT HUNTER'S PARK - DAY

Connor races into the park, searching frantically. Seeing Beatrix reclining in her chair, he rushes over to her.

BEATRIX

What's the matter, Connor?

CONNOR

(panicked)

Beatrix, have you seen Duke anywhere? He's missing!

BEATRIX

You didn't let that poor pup run off without you, did you? 'Cause I know I told you it was dangerous for him out here.

CONNOR

No, it wasn't like that! Someone hit me, and when I woke up--

BEATRIX

Whoa, slow down there, sonny!  
Tell it to me from the beginning.

Frustrated, Connor takes a deep breath.

CONNOR

I went up to the dog park, and some guy named Gabriel tried to buy Duke from me.

Beatrice stiffens when she hears Gabriel's name.

BEATRIX

Gabriel Barajas?

CONNOR

I don't know, he didn't say! Do you know him?

BEATRIX

(grimacing)

He used to pet-sit for us when me and my husband, God rest his soul, went out of town. Up to his neck in some bad stuff now, though.

CONNOR

Like what, being a gang leader?

BEATRIX

Gabriel doesn't lead shit, but I hear he trains dogs for the Hunter's Park Boys. Rumor is they run a dogfighting ring, and that they sometimes take pets as bait animals.

CONNOR

Bait animals?

BEATRIX

(reluctantly)  
You know, to...train their  
fighters.

Horrified, Connor is too stunned to speak. After a long  
silence, his face hardens.

CONNOR  
Where can I find them?

BEATRIX  
Don't go looking for trouble with  
them, Connor! A white boy like  
you--

CONNOR  
(shouting)  
Tell me!

Beatrice is silent for a long moment.

BEATRIX  
...Hunter's Point Shipyard,  
warehouse 16B.

Connor turns to go, but before he can leave, Beatrice calls  
out to him.

BEATRIX  
That dog might cost you your life,  
you know!

CONNOR  
...he's worth it.

Connor dashes out of the park towards his apartment to get  
his car. Beatrice lies back in her chair in the fading  
light, making no move to phone the police.

BEATRIX  
Damn fool.

INT DOGFIGHTING ARENA - NIGHT

Gabriel's two companions pull Duke out of the van while Gabriel takes Titan into the next room. They tape Duke's mouth shut while he whimpers and whines.

GANG MEMBER #1

(grumbling)

I don't see why we always have to be the ones to do this.

GANG MEMBER #2

'Cause you whacked our guy at the SPCA.

GANG MEMBER #1

He knocked up my sister and ran, homes! You expect me to let that shit go?

When they finish binding Duke, they throw him inside the small room and slam the door shut. Duke scratches at the door anxiously, but turns suddenly when he hears a low growl behind him. Titan steps out of the shadows and bares his teeth. The large dog looks back at Gabriel for approval before attacking.

GABRIEL

He's all yours.

Titan returns his attention to Duke and stalks forward slowly, growling loudly. Duke cowers by the door, terrified and defenseless, and backs into the corner in a vain attempt to escape Titan's relentless approach. Titan lets out a ferocious bark and launches a ferocious attack. Gabriel crosses his arms and leans against the wall, settling in to watch the one-sided fight.

EXT HUNTER'S POINT SHIPYARD - NIGHT

Connor drives through the night towards the shipyard, his windows rolled down. He scans each building quickly, searching for any sign of the warehouse he's looking for.

CONNOR

Duke! DUKE!

In the distance, Connor can faintly hear a dog barking and snarling. As he gets closer, a familiar-sounding cry of pain enters the mix.

CONNOR

Oh God! Duke!

Panicked, Connor zeroes in on the source of the noises as quickly as he can. Before he can arrive, however, the sounds fade away and vanish into the background ambience of the city. A few minutes later, Connor finds the right warehouse, but is too late. A small group of young men chat and banter outside the building, and they all turn as Connor pulls up in his car and leaps out. Gabriel sits in the back by a large black sheet of plastic, stroking a pleased Titan. His two associates approach Connor menacingly.

CONNOR

Where's my dog? What did you do to him?

The group laughs.

GANG MEMBER #2

(mockingly)

Aww, the poor little white boy lost his puppy dog!

GANG MEMBER #1

Oh, he does look like he's in bad shape! What do you say, guys? Should we help the bolillo find his mutt?

The crowd jeers and mocks Connor while two men pick up the black plastic and bring it forward. When they get close enough, they hurl it at Connor, and the unexpected weight knocks him to the ground. Connor frantically pulls the sheet away, revealing Duke's mangled, bloody body.

GANG MEMBER #2

You can have him back, ese! No fight left in him now!

GANG MEMBER #1

Titan went to TOWN on his ass,  
dog!

GANG MEMBER #2

(laughing)

'Dog!' That's some funny shit,  
yo!

The two bump fists while the gang cheers and makes bad jokes.

Lost in grief, Connor barely hears them. He pulls the tape off Duke's mouth and scans the body for any signs of life, but finds nothing. He cradles the dog's limp body gently as his mind struggles to process what has happened.

CONNOR

Duke? Come on, buddy, wake up.

Getting no response, Connor clutches the dog to his chest tightly, not caring about the blood on his clothes. He squeezes his eyes shut in a vain effort to shut out the horror of his reality.

GANG NUMBER #1

(leaning over Connor)

What, you gonna cry now? Cry,  
white boy, cry!

GABRIEL

That's enough.

Gabriel stands and makes a motion for Titan to stay. Moving forward through the crowd, he pushes his friends aside. He draws a pistol from the back of his pants and presses it against Connor's head. Torn out of his grief, Connor trembles in fear, unsure of what the man will do next.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

If you tell anyone what happened  
here, we'll kill you. Got that?

Connor nods fearfully, unable to speak. Gabriel doesn't move for a second, then pulls the gun away. He gestures with it at Connor's car.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Get out of here, before we change  
our minds and jack your car, too.

Opening his eyes, Connor stands slowly. He picks up Duke's body and puts him in the passenger seat of his car. Getting inside, he slams the door and starts the engine. Before he leaves, Connor catches Gabriel's eye, and the two stare at each other in silence. Gabriel breaks away first, turning his back on Connor and putting away his gun. Connor pulls away and leaves as Gabriel receives the rowdy praise of his companions.

EXT DOG PARK - NIGHT

Connor trudges up the hill to the dog park, carrying Duke's stiffening body. The park is empty, save for the occasional huddled mass on a bench. Passing by a small shed, Connor spies a shovel that a worker left out. He picks it up, careful not to drop Duke, and continues on his way. Entering the dog park, he closes the gate behind him and walks towards a patch of dirt in the corner illuminated by a street lamp. He sets Duke down carefully and digs the shovel into the hard earth.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Um, hello?

Connor stops his work and turns slowly to see a WOMAN standing at the edge of the pool of light.

THE WOMAN

A tall white woman with wavy red hair neatly cropped at the shoulder. She is 37 years old and wears a red and green striped wool sweater and dark green slacks.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Did something happen to your dog?

CONNOR

He's dead. They, they killed him,  
and they laughed while I...oh God!

Connor's strength vanishes and he falls to his knees, the shovel slipping out of his hands. He weeps into his hands

as the stranger approaches slowly. She has an eager, almost hungry look in her eye that she quickly hides behind a more sympathetic expression.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, it must have been horrible. I'd ask if you're okay, but it's pretty obvious that you're not.

The woman stands behind Connor and reaches out a hand hesitantly, then pats him on the shoulder. Connor leans back and sits, drying his eyes and trying to control his emotions.

CONNOR

Sorry, I just...I don't know how I'll live without him.

WOMAN

(chuckling nervously)  
Hey, you don't have to apologize to me. A pet's a hard thing to lose, even when it's peaceful.

They stay there for a minute, not moving or speaking. The woman's eyes dart over to Duke before looking back at Connor, leaning in closer.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

But...what if you didn't have to lose him?

Connor glances back over his shoulder at the woman.

CONNOR

What are you talking about? He's-  
-

WOMAN

(interrupting)  
--dead, I know. But what would you say if I told you I could give him back to you?

Connor looks at the woman like she's crazy, then drops his gaze to the ground and laughs mirthlessly.

CONNOR

I'd say you'd have to be one hell  
of a miracle worker.

The woman pulls a business card and pen out of her pocket and writes quickly on the card. She hands it to Connor, who squints to read it in the dim light. The card identifies her as Dr. AMANDA ALGREN, and has "Miracle Worker" written on it with a smiley face.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Amanda Algren?

AMANDA

(nodding excitedly)

That's DOCTOR Algren, but yes,  
that's me! Note the MD and PhD?  
That means I know what I'm talking  
about.

CONNOR

I still don't see how--

AMANDA

I'm working on an experimental  
process that, in layman's terms,  
restores the dead to life exactly  
as they were before they died.

Connor's eyes widen in disbelief.

CONNOR

Back from the dead?

Amanda gestures vaguely.

AMANDA

It's more 're-creates' than  
'resurrects', but...you know, this  
would all be easier to explain -  
and much more believable - back at  
my lab.

CONNOR

(hesitantly)

I don't know...

AMANDA

Come on! You look like a dreamer,  
am I right?

CONNOR

(mumbles)

Not usually--

AMANDA

Well, tonight you dream big and  
win big! Besides, if it turns out  
I'm a crackpot, what do you have  
to lose?

Connor thinks about that for a moment.

CONNOR

Not much.

AMANDA

That's right! So let's get you  
off the dirt, uh...I never got  
your name.

CONNOR

Connor.

AMANDA

Right, right. On your feet,  
soldier!

Amanda helps Connor to his feet and slaps him on the back.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Now then, Connor, you get Fido  
here--

CONNOR

Duke.

AMANDA

Whatever. Grab Dukey-baby and  
we'll get back to my place before  
we lose any more time!

Connor squats down and picks up Duke's body gently. Standing, he follows Amanda out of the dog park and down the hill towards the east entrance of the park.

EXT HUNTER'S PARK - NIGHT

Connor and Amanda arrive at her vehicle, a beat-up old gray SUV with peeling paint. Amanda unlocks the driver's side and hops in, then leans over and opens the passenger side for Connor.

AMANDA  
(motioning quickly)  
Come on, get in!

Connor climbs inside and closes the door, keeping Duke on his lap. Amanda starts the engine and takes off with enough speed to make Connor nervous.

CONNOR  
What's the big rush? Duke can't get any...

AMANDA  
More dead? Maybe not, but the longer we take, the more difficult this will be. Extended brain death and tissue decay just make my work harder, especially when it comes to collecting good DNA samples.

CONNOR  
Didn't they get DNA from mammoths that died thousands of years ago?

AMANDA  
(scoffs)  
Sure, if you want this to take months instead of hours. Trust me, we both want this to go as smoothly as possible.

EXT AMANDA'S LAB - NIGHT

Amanda pulls her car up in front of an old, dilapidated building in the shipyard and parks. Most of the windows are broken, and graffiti covers the walls. Connor, carrying Duke, eyes it skeptically as the two get out of the car.

AMANDA

It doesn't look like much on the outside - or on the inside, for that matter - but it suits my needs. Namely, it's big, cheap, and no one bothers me.

Connor shivers in the cold ocean air.

CONNOR

Looks cold. And like it should be condemned.

Amanda laughs and unlocks the thick chain on the door.

AMANDA

It's structurally sound, you big baby. If you have enough layers and blankets, you don't even notice it's chilly.

Amanda opens the door and steps inside the building, with Connor following behind her.

INT AMANDA'S LAB - NIGHT

Amanda pulls the chain on a hanging light and closes and locks the door behind her. Amanda leads Connor down into the basement, where she flicks on a light switch to reveal an expansive and sophisticated laboratory.

A large medical supply cabinet stands next to the door, and a nearby desk holds a computer, a microscope and various lab tools. A huge bookcase stands on the other side of the desk, filled to the brim with books and journals. Beside the bookcase is an old, brown cloth couch. Two morgue tables sit in the middle of the room near two odd-looking devices. One is a boxy object that resembles a small MRI machine, and the other is a large, yellowish-liquid-filled

tube on an elevated platform, big enough to hold a tall man. Hung around the tube is a dark shower curtain, and above it hangs a large light with multiple bulbs. A series of metal shelves in one corner holds a variety of glass jars, test tubes and other scientific equipment. In another corner close to the tube is a heavy-duty and somewhat battered kennel big enough for a large dog. An old-fashioned incinerator dominates the far wall.

A makeshift kitchenette and bedroom take up two small adjacent rooms. A closed door behind the tube leads to a third room. Despite the fact that everything not related to her research looks pre-owned or rescued from salvage, the space is immaculate and well-organized. It is simple, and contains little beyond the essentials of day-to-day life and work.

AMANDA

Ta da! What do you think?

Connor looks around the room in wonder.

CONNOR

I'm amazed...you'd never know this was down here.

AMANDA

And that's just the way I like it. Set your dog down on one of those tables.

Connor lays Duke on one of the morgue tables.

CONNOR

So, how exactly does this work?

Amanda shrugs on a lab coat and ties her hair back.

AMANDA

Think of it as a modified cloning process. I take a DNA sample from the subject, implant it in an embryo, stimulate cell reproduction, and...

Amanda dances over to the tube and gestures enthusiastically.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

...grow it in here! It still needs a good name, but right now I call it the Second Life Machine, or SLM for short.

Connor follows, eyeing the yellowish liquid warily.

CONNOR

What is that stuff?

AMANDA

It's an oxygen-rich fluid with a concentrated mix of nutrients and a potent drug cocktail. Kind of like amniotic fluid on steroids.

Connor crinkles his nose as he notices a faint odor.

CONNOR

It smells like blood.

Amanda shrugs.

AMANDA

You get used to it. Anyway, this baby grows the subject's new body at an accelerated rate. The computer analyzes a cell sample, which the SLM uses to match the age of the new tissue to the old tissue. That way, you won't have to wait five years for your pup to grow up, and he'll come out good as new!

CONNOR

He won't be the same then, right? I'd be replacing the old Duke with a new Duke?

Amanda pauses and crosses her arms.

AMANDA

(soberly)

That's true, yes. This will create a functionally identical clone of your pet, but the original is still and always will be gone. Should I go on, or is this not going to work for you?

Conner shakes his head wearily.

CONNOR

It's too early to say, but I'll hear you out.

Amanda beams, perking up immediately. She uncrosses her arms and gestures at the lights above the tube.

AMANDA

Great! As the subject grows, these lights bombard it with the full spectrum of light that we're exposed to outside in order to toughen the skin. A blood sample provides the anti-bodies from the old body to rebuild the immune system.

Connor glances up at the shower curtain.

CONNOR

What's the deal with the curtain?

AMANDA

(grinning)

For the subject's privacy, of course! Also so that you don't get a face-full of concentrated UV light.

Amanda bounces over to the short, boxy object and leans on it.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Now then, this charming cube is responsible for the last and most important part of making the new model the same as the old model.

CONNOR

Looks a lot like an MRI machine.

AMANDA

That's because IS an MRI machine!  
A modified one, to be exact.

CONNOR

(curiously)

So how does it work?

Amanda presses a button, causing a hatch to open on the top of the machine.

AMANDA

First, I extract the subject's  
brain--

Connor looks a little queasy at the thought, which Amanda quickly notices.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

--but there's no need to go into  
the gruesome details. The machine  
then analyzes it and feeds the  
data into the SLM, which grows the  
new brain to match the old one.

CONNOR

You mean, he'll remember who I am?

AMANDA

Exactly! Tricks, where you feed  
him, the smell of your old socks,  
the works! I can't guarantee  
every single memory - some loss is  
inevitable due to decay - but  
he'll be at least 95% as good as  
new.

Amanda glances at her watch.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Maybe 94%.

Amanda looks back up at Connor with a serious expression.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Moment of truth, Connor. If you want me to go through with this, I need to start now. What's your decision?

Connor thinks about it for a long moment before finally nodding.

CONNOR

Do it.

Amanda grins and heads over to the supply cabinet, pulling out a surgical mask and a pair of rubber gloves. Putting them on, she spins around to face Connor and snaps the gloves on tight.

AMANDA

(excitedly)

Alright, let's get to work!

(pause)

Actually, you probably don't want to watch any of this. Besides, you look exhausted! Go get some rest!

Amanda shoos Connor into the bedroom and closes the door. He sits heavily on the bed and takes off his shoes, then rolls over and tries to sleep. The unnerving sound of a bone saw briefly jars him awake, but he soon drifts off into fitful slumber.

INT AMANDA'S LAB - DAY

Connor awakens several hours later to the quiet hum of electricity. He puts his shoes back on and opens the door to the lab. The curtain obscures Connor's view of the tube, though he can hear the liquid inside bubbling. Amanda sits in a rolling chair, reading a journal and eating an apple. She looks up when he comes in and smiles.

AMANDA

Morning, sleepyhead.

CONNOR

Morning? What time is it?

Amanda glances down at her watch.

AMANDA

A little before five. You were  
out for quite a while. Hungry?

Connor nods, yawning. Amanda tosses him an apple, which  
takes him by surprise, but he manages to catch it.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

If that doesn't do it for you,  
help yourself to anything in the  
fridge. There should still be  
some coffee left the pot.

Connor heads into the kitchenette and pours himself a cup  
of coffee.

CONNOR

How's Duke doing?

AMANDA (O.S.)

He's coming along nicely!  
Shouldn't be long now.

Connor takes a bite of his apple and wanders around the lab  
idly.

CONNOR

I still can't believe how clean it  
is down here.

Amanda sets her journal down and spins around in her chair  
to face Connor.

AMANDA

(wryly)

Boot camp habits die hard.

CONNOR

You were in the military?

AMANDA

Yeah, for the scholarship money.  
I thought about making a career  
out of it for a while.

Connor looks over his shoulder at Amanda.

CONNOR  
What changed your mind?

Amanda leans back in her chair and crosses her arms.

AMANDA  
Some asshole shot me.

CONNOR  
(wincing)  
Sorry to hear that.

Amanda shrugs.

AMANDA  
It was a wake-up call. I took my Purple Heart and went to med school, and now I'm doing better things than shooting brown people in the desert.

Connor raises an eyebrow, but doesn't comment. He takes a sip of coffee and walks over to the kennel in the corner. The wire mesh on the door, dense enough that he can barely see into it, is dented and warped in places, and scratches cover the thick plastic.

CONNOR  
What did you put in here, a mountain lion?

AMANDA  
Rats and cats, mostly. A raccoon once.

Connor stares back at Amanda with wide eyes.

AMANDA (CONT'D)  
(hastily)  
My earlier experiments weren't as successful as they are now. You don't have anything to worry about.

Connor eyes the kennel nervously before quickly moving away from it. Amanda keeps a close eye on him as he moves towards the closed door.

CONNOR

What's--

AMANDA

(interrupting)

It's just a storage room. You're full of all sorts of questions today, aren't you?

Connor turns to face Amanda and smiles sheepishly.

CONNOR

Just trying to take my mind off of...you know.

A timer starts beeping, and Amanda wheels her chair over to the computer.

AMANDA

Well, wait no more, 'cause--

Amanda taps a few keys, causing the liquid to noisily drain out of the tube. She spins around and leaps out of her chair, holding out her arms dramatically.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

--Duke is reborn!

Connor hurries over to the front of the tube as Amanda steps up onto the platform. She opens the door on the front of the tube and steps aside, Connor waiting in breathless anticipation. He cannot see anything through the foggy glass, but a few seconds later a dripping wet Duke takes a shaky step into the cool air. Connor is almost too stunned to react.

CONNOR

(whispering)

Duke!

(joyfully)

Duke! Come here, boy!

Duke barroos weakly and totters down the stairs. Connor rushes up to him and sweeps him into a huge hug, unconcerned by the residue coating the dog.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

(tearfully)

Oh, thank God! I thought I'd never see you again, buddy! It's a miracle!

Amanda laughs and raises a fist in the air.

AMANDA

No, it's SCIENCE! But, you know, any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic and all that.

Connor starts, remembering something, and looks up at Amanda.

CONNOR

Wait, where are--

AMANDA

His remains? Don't worry, I took care of them already. You just concentrate on nursing your pup back to health. He'll be weak for a little while.

Duke licks Connor's face, who chuckles and wrinkles his nose.

CONNOR

You smell awful, boy. You need a bath, you terrible stinky dog you!

AMANDA

You hop in the shower with him and clean some of that gunk off, and I'll dig up some towels. Oh, and leave your clothes outside so I can throw them in the wash.

Connor looks down, realizing for the first time that dried blood and yellow fluid cover his clothes.

CONNOR

(wryly)

I smell pretty bad too, don't I?

Amanda playfully pushes Connor towards the bedroom.

AMANDA

Nothing some soap and water won't  
fix! Now get in there!

Connor and Duke get into the shower, and Connor scrubs the residue off the dog as best he can. A short while later, he walks out into the lab with a towel wrapped around his waist. Amanda eyes him hungrily, but he doesn't notice.

CONNOR

Better?

AMANDA

Much.

Duke follows Connor out and begins to shake himself dry, but Amanda tosses a towel over him before he can spray water everywhere. Connor kneels down and starts rubbing him dry.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I laid out some bedding for him so  
he can take a nap. He needs the  
rest.

Connor finishes drying Duke and leads him over to the pile of towels. The dog curls up and falls asleep almost immediately, and Connor stands and faces Amanda.

CONNOR

What about you? You've been up  
all night.

Amanda gazes at Connor seductively and walks towards him with slow, deliberate steps.

AMANDA

Oh, I'm not ready for sleep just  
yet.

Connor senses the shift in tone, but is unsure how to respond.

CONNOR

So, uh, are my clothes ready yet?

Amanda, tiring of the game, struts up and kisses him deeply. She breaks the kiss several seconds later and gives him a smoldering look.

AMANDA

Trust me, big boy, you don't need them right now.

Amanda kisses Connor again, and he finally responds. They stumble back into the bedroom and Amanda slams the door shut. Duke lifts his head at the noise, then pads over and lies down in front of the door, watching it patiently.

A few hours later, Connor and Amanda rest together under the covers, their arms wrapped around each other. Amanda traces a pattern on Connor's chest and smiles.

AMANDA

You're a useful guy to have around. I may have to keep you.

CONNOR

(chuckling)

I'm glad. It's been a while for me.

AMANDA

I figured as much. For a while, I thought you'd need landing lights to the bedroom!

The two laugh. Connor toys with Amanda's hair idly.

CONNOR

You know, you're awfully perky for an ex-soldier. Were you a cheerleader in high school?

Amanda shakes her head and smiles mischievously.

AMANDA

I beat up a cheerleader once.

CONNOR  
(wryly)

I'm pretty sure that doesn't count.

AMANDA

I liked military school better, anyway. Except for the lame jokes.

CONNOR

Oh yeah? Like what?

Amanda rolls her eyes.

AMANDA  
(dryly)

Like "She's a man, duh!"

Connor tries to hold in a laugh, but fails. Amanda gives him a stern look, then laughs along with him.

CONNOR

Oh, that's terrible! That's physically painful!

AMANDA

I'll give you painful, buster!

Amanda hits Connor with a pillow playfully, Connor trying to defend himself with one arm. He finally gets the pillow away from her and puts it down behind him.

CONNOR

You're really full of surprises. I never expected you to jump me like that.

Amanda grins, her eyes sparkling.

AMANDA

What can I say? Science excites me, and creating life turns me on.

Connor starts at a sudden realization.

CONNOR

I just realized - we didn't--

Amanda's cheerful expression drops away, and she absentmindedly touches a scar on her lower abdomen.

AMANDA

Don't worry about it. I can't  
anyway.

Connor looks down at the scar he hadn't seen before, and his face softens.

CONNOR

Because of your injury?

Amanda nods, but doesn't elaborate.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Does it bother you?

AMANDA

Sometimes.

The two lie there in silence for a short while.

CONNOR

I couldn't think about it before,  
but now that Duke's back I'm just  
so...angry. At the men who took  
him, and the dog that did that to  
him.

Amanda rolls over onto her stomach and crosses her arms on Connor's chest, gazing at him seriously.

AMANDA

You shouldn't blame the dog, you  
know.

CONNOR

(fiercely)

Why shouldn't I? He--

AMANDA

That's like blaming a gun because  
a soldier used it to kill.

CONNOR  
(unconvinced)  
What's your point?

AMANDA  
Animals don't know right from  
wrong. All they know is survival,  
and if they're social, acceptance.  
(pause)  
Kind of like the gangs out here,  
actually.

Connor looks at Amanda with surprise.

CONNOR  
Are you comparing them to animals?

AMANDA  
No, no! I'm just saying that they  
want to be part of a group that  
makes them feel safe and get by.  
They have fewer options, but that  
doesn't excuse the choices they  
make.

Amanda taps Connor lightly on the forehead.

AMANDA (CONT'D)  
It's what's in here that makes the  
difference. You wouldn't call a  
wolf evil because it kills a deer,  
would you?

Connor shrugs, not wanting to argue about it.

CONNOR  
I guess not. I never thought  
about it like that.

The two lapse into another short silence.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
Why are you doing this by  
yourself, anyway? Something this

amazing should have no trouble getting funding.

Amanda shrugs noncommittally.

AMANDA

The Pentagon didn't see any military advantage in cloned animals, and they're strangely squeamish about cloning people.

Connor hesitates, not sure how to proceed.

CONNOR

Have you tried it? Cloning a person, I mean.

Amanda stiffens at the question.

AMANDA

(firmly)

I'm just doing animal testing right now. It's not ready for human testing.

CONNOR

But eventually, you could--

Amanda rolls away from Connor, then gives him a sharp look.

AMANDA

Whether or not you believe we have souls, a human is a lot more complicated than an animal. Trust me, you're not ready to face that monster yet.

Amanda gets up and starts dressing, leaving Connor in the bed, disappointed and confused.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I should get you home. Your dog needs food, and I have work to do.

Amanda pauses and flashes Connor a quick smile. Relieved, Connor rises and wraps a towel around his waist. He opens

the door to see Duke waiting for him. He rubs the dog's head playfully.

CONNOR

Hey there, Duke! Ready to get out of here?

Duke simply barroos in response.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Amanda parks her SUV outside Connor's apartment. Connor gets out and opens the side door for Duke, who hops down. Connor leans back inside the car to speak to Amanda.

CONNOR

I don't know if I said it before, but...thank you. You're a real lifesaver.

AMANDA

(smiling)

Don't mention it. Just keep me updated on how Duke's doing. You still have my card?

Connor nods and pats the pocket on his jacket.

CONNOR

Actually, I almost forgot to ask...do I owe you anything for this?

Amanda drops her smile.

AMANDA

(deadpan)

You mean for the sex?

CONNOR

(panicking)

No, no, that's not--

Amanda burst out laughing, unable to contain it any longer.

AMANDA

Oh, you're too easy! No, you don't owe me anything. Your help with my research is enough for me. That said, if you want to invest in my work, I'll take your money!

CONNOR

(chuckling)

I'll think about it.

AMANDA

Good! Remember, he needs some time to recover his strength. Don't push him too hard for a couple days. He'll be extra hungry, so let him eat what he wants. Call me if you notice anything unusual!

CONNOR

Sure thing, Doc!

Connor slams the doors of the SUV shut and waves goodbye to Amanda as she pulls away. Duke appears slightly subdued, but follows Connor up the stairs and into the building.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Connor stands in front of the toilet, relieving himself. Duke sits outside and watches Connor carefully, paying close attention as the man reaches out and flushes the toilet. Connor zips up and turns around, seeing Duke behind him.

CONNOR

Hey buddy, what are you looking at?

(imitating a police officer)

Nothing to see here, move along.

Connor walks out of the bathroom, clean-shaven for the first time in days. His clothes are clean and wrinkle free, and there is an energy in his gait that he lacked before. Entering the kitchen, he notices teeth marks and a substantial hole in the large bag of dog food in the corner. Connor tries to give Duke, who looks entirely

unrepentant, a stern look, but gives up. He kneels down and rubs the dog's cheeks.

CONNOR

How can I get mad at a face like that? You're just hungry, after all!

Connor gets Duke another bowl of food, which the dog sets into with gusto.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Duke lies in front of the window, panting. Connor comes over and pets him sympathetically.

CONNOR

You hot, pal?

Connor opens the window, then yawns and stretches.

CONNOR

Hope that helps. Make sure no one comes in, okay, Duke?

Connor heads back into the bedroom and gets into bed. Duke waits in the living room with ears perked up, listening carefully. A short while later, Duke rises and pads over to the bedroom. Seeing Connor sound asleep, he jogs back out and leaps through the open window. The dog runs into the park, quiet as a ghost.

INT DOGFIGHTING ARENA - NIGHT

The warehouse appears quiet on the outside, but a raucous affair is in progress within. Over a hundred people of all sorts, from businessmen to gang toughs to ordinary city dwellers, are talking, placing bets and drinking. Duke prowls in the background, unseen as he slips through the shadows. The dog stealthily makes his way into the back rooms of the warehouse. Hearing familiar voices, he bares his teeth and hides, waiting for his moment to strike.

Gabriel and his two associates stand around talking, waiting for the fight to start. Titan sits at attention next to Gabriel, who idly scratches behind the dog's ears.

GANG MEMBER #1

This is gonna be one sick show, man!

GANG MEMBER #2

Hell yeah, homes! Titan'll rip the face off their mutt!

Gabriel crosses his arms and smirks.

GABRIEL

Raul's a good dogman, but his prospects aren't champions. I'll take half his business when Titan takes down Savage.

GANG MEMBER #2

Man, I just can't WAIT for the show to start! I got five G's riding on our boy!

The other man slaps Gabriel on the back, causing Titan to curl his lips back. Gabriel puts a firm hand on Titan's back and the dog settles down.

GANG MEMBER #1

Only five? Son, you got no faith in my man here! Gabe, tell this fool what you put down.

GABRIEL

20 grand. Gonna send my son to school on my winnings.

GANG MEMBER #2

Damn, ese! I woulda done that, but I didn't have the cash after I took my girl to Vegas.

GANG MEMBER #1

(laughing)

I keep telling you, you gotta think about the future! It's all about instant gratification with you!

The door opens and a third gang member sticks his head into the room.

GANG MEMBER #3

Hey, Carlos wanted to see you guys. Fight's gonna start soon and he hasn't intro'd Gabe yet.

Gabriel's friends high-five as he walks Titan over to the far side of the room and has the dog lie down.

GANG MEMBER #1

Aww yeah! Time for Raul to panic like the Titanic!

GANG MEMBER #2

Man, that's the worst rhyme ever.

The men walk out of the room and close the door, leaving it open a crack. Titan lays down his head to rest, then perks up a moment later when he hears the door creak open. Duke prowls into the small room menacingly and bares his teeth. Titan rises and utters a low growl, but Duke is not intimidated. The two dogs circle each other briefly before finally leaping into battle, biting and snarling. Duke quickly gains the upper hand, and Titan's yelps of pain and terror go unheard over the roar of the nearby crowd.

CROWD

Titan! Titan! Titan! Titan!

Gabriel and his friends return and are shocked to see Titan lying on the floor, dead. Gabriel rushes over to check on his fallen dog.

GABRIEL

Come on, Titan, get up! Get up!

Gabriel's associates wander into the room, too stunned to react. When they move away from the door, Duke darts out of the shadows and dashes outside. The two men draw guns and race after him, popping off a few shots before he

disappears around the corner. Giving up, they re-enter the room to see Gabriel kneeling by Titan's body. They approach him slowly, putting away their weapons. One man tentatively puts a hand on Gabriel shoulder.

GANG MEMBER #2

You okay, bro?

Gabriel angrily shrugs off the man's hand and leaps to his feet. He storms out of the room, the two men anxiously following close behind him.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Duke hops back inside through the open window, scratched but otherwise unfazed. He is slightly damp for some reason, and shakes to get some of the water off him. He creeps down the hall to the bedroom and, seeing Connor still asleep, walks in and lies down at the foot of the bed. Curling up, his tail wags briefly before he falls asleep as well.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Connor wakes up and stretches, yawning loudly. He gets up and walks out into the kitchen to see Duke polishing off a bowl of food.

CONNOR

Still hungry? You're going to have to go back on your usual feeding schedule soon, puppy dog.

Duke finishes eating and rushes up to Connor, wagging his tail and demanding attention. Connor laughs and leans over to pet him.

CONNOR

Well, look who's full of energy this morning! Are you tired of staying inside? You want to go to the park today?

Duke barroos excitedly and bounces around in anticipation.

CONNOR

Hold on there, wild dog! We're not going anywhere until I get dressed!

Connor throws on some clothes and slips into his shoes while Duke follows him around eagerly. After dressing, Connor gets out a roll of bandages and a dog cone. He puts the cone around the dog's neck, who whimpers and fidgets while the man wraps up some nonexistent wounds.

CONNOR

I know it's uncomfortable, buddy, but it's just for a little while. I'll take it all off when we get home, okay?

EXT HUNTER'S PARK - DAY

Connor and Duke stroll through the park, enjoying the warm, sunny day. Beatrix jogs around a bend in the road and stops dead in her tracks at the sight of the two.

BEATRIX

Connor?

Beatrix stares at Connor in disbelief and covers her mouth with her hands.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)

Oh, bless my soul! I haven't seen you since - I thought those thugs-

Connor smiles and shakes his head.

CONNOR

No, Duke and I are fine. They roughed us up a little - Duke got the worst of it - but we're still breathing.

Beatrix beams and claps her hands together.

BEATRIX

And thank the Lord for that!  
After a few days, I really feared  
the worst. Oh, excuse me for a  
sec.

Beatrix pulls her phone out of her pocket and types a quick  
message.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)  
Sorry sonny, but I just HAD to  
tweet about this! It's a vice,  
but at least it's a mild one.

Beatrix takes a few steps closer and looks down at Duke.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)  
I can hardly believe Duke came out  
of that in such good shape! Most  
animals aren't so lucky.

CONNOR  
(chuckling nervously)  
Duke's a fighter, alright.

Beatrix reaches out to pet Duke, but the dog curls his lips  
back slightly and she hesitates.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(quickly)  
He's still skittish after...you  
know.

Beatrix stares at Duke as if there's something different  
about him that she can't quite put her finger on.

BEATRIX  
(absently)  
Oh, of course.

Shaking herself out of her daze, Beatrix straightens and  
smiles at Connor.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)  
Anyhoo, I should get going - I  
wanted to catch the crème brûlée  
guy at the end of my run.

Connor arches an eyebrow curiously.

CONNOR  
It's good, I take it?

Beatrice laughs and starts jogging in place.

BEATRIX  
Good? Honey, it's to die for!

Beatrice jogs away and waves goodbye.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)  
(calling)  
You two take good care of  
yourselves, now!

Connor waves as Beatrice disappears down the path, then continues on with Duke. He only gets a short distance before he sees Gabriel and his two friends storming towards him. Duke growls, but Connor shushes him.

GABRIEL  
You're going to pay for what you  
did to my dog, ese!

Connor stands his ground, meeting Gabriel's eye resolutely.

CONNOR  
I don't know you're talking about.

Gabriel stands in front of Connor while his companions fan out to watch for anyone coming up the path.

GABRIEL  
Don't lie to me! I saw your  
goddamn dog at the warehouse last  
night, so cut the crap!

Connor looks confused, but stands firm.

CONNOR  
Duke was with me all last night.  
I don't know where your dog is--

Gabriel waves a finger in Connor's face angrily.

GABRIEL

He's dead, asshole, and I know  
your mutt had something to do with  
it!

Connor gives Gabriel an incredulous look, and gestures at Duke.

CONNOR

Seriously? Titan nearly killed my  
dog a few days ago. You really  
expect me to believe that Duke's  
capable of that in his condition?  
Whoever put down your monster, it  
wasn't us.

Gabriel grabs Connor's coat and slams him against a nearby tree, causing him to drop Duke's leash. Duke growls, but makes no move to intervene.

GABRIEL

Don't mess with me, homes! I lost  
EVERYTHING when that fight got  
ruined!

CONNOR

(glaring)

Maybe you deserve it, after all  
you've done. I don't know how you  
can wear that cross without it  
burning your skin.

GABRIEL

You expect me to let my family go  
hungry?! To let my kid grow up to  
be a cholo like his dad?!

Two joggers run up the road, but one of the gang members chases them away.

GANG MEMBER #2

Hey, go jog somewhere else! Yeah,  
you better run!

Connor and Gabriel stare each other down in silence for several seconds.

CONNOR

Let me go, or I'll press charges  
for assault.

Gabriel's lips curl back in a menacing smile.

GABRIEL

You'd like that, wouldn't you? To  
sic the law on an evil brown man  
for daring to touch you? Well,  
Whitey can't protect you now. Out  
here it's the law of the wild.

The other two men close in, one pointing a finger at Duke.

GANG MEMBER #1

(mockingly)

Yeah, maybe we'll finish what we  
started with your sweet, adorable  
puppy--

Without warning, Duke launches into action and bites the  
offending finger clean off. The man screams bloody murder  
while the dog sits there with a satisfied look, crunching  
up the severed digit like a dog treat. The men are too  
stunned to react at first, and Gabriel releases his hold on  
Connor.

GANG MEMBER #1 (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, man! He took my  
fucking finger!

The other gang member quickly pulls off his bandanna and  
wraps it around the man's hand in an effort to stem the  
flow of blood.

GANG MEMBER #2

Gabe, we gotta get Hector to a  
doctor! He's bleeding like crazy!

Gabriel backs away from Connor and Duke, intimidated by the  
dog but trying not to show it. He gives Connor a hard look  
before turning to help his friend.

GABRIEL

This isn't over, cabron!

Connor stares at the men as they retreat down the road, then glances down at Duke.

CONNOR

No, it isn't.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Connor paces around the living room, talking to Amanda on his cell phone.

CONNOR

It was unreal. The guy's finger was just gone. I didn't think a dog could do that.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Well, it sounds like he was highly motivated.

CONNOR

I'm worried about Duke. They destroy dogs for attacking people, much less maiming someone.

AMANDA (V.O.)

(scoffs)

Relax, sport. It's not like those guys can go to the cops about it. I'd stay out of their side of the park for a while, though.

CONNOR

Yeah, you're right. Still, there was something about the way it happened that bothers me.

Connor pauses, then shakes his head and sighs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I don't know, I can't put my finger on it.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Your dog's healthy, right? No obvious problems or issues?

Connor glances inside the kitchen, where Duke is noisily scarfing down his food.

CONNOR

He still eats like a horse, and he scratches a lot, but otherwise everything's normal. It's more the subtle changes in his behavior, like he's doing the same things for different reasons.

(chuckling)

I bet that sounds pretty crazy.

AMANDA (V.O.)

You know him best. I should remind you, though, that I never promised 100% restoration. As for the physical symptoms, he's essentially a newborn. They'll fade over time.

Connor passes by the picture of his wife and daughter while Amanda talks. Taking a step back, he picks it up and stares at it intently for a few seconds before speaking.

CONNOR

I meant to call you about this earlier...I don't know where this is going, but I think we should take things slow at first. I lost my wife and family recently, and...

Hearing no response on the other end of the line, Connor trails off. After a short pause, Amanda begins laughing loudly.

AMANDA (V.O.)

There's no 'we,' Connor. You're not my boyfriend, and I'm not your girlfriend. We used each other for sex, that's all! We - you were lonely, and I wanted to celebrate. No need to play the dead wife card to get out of it.

CONNOR  
(taken aback)  
Amanda, that's not what I--

AMANDA (V.O.)  
(firmly)  
That's Doctor Algren. Call me if  
his condition changes!

Amanda hangs up, leaving Connor worried and confused. He turns to see Duke sitting in the doorway, watching him closely.

CONNOR  
What did I say?

The dog gives him a look, then gets up and pads away.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Duke lies in front of the closed living room window and pants, trying his trick a second time. Connor, sitting in a chair across the room, shakes his head and shivers.

CONNOR  
(grumpily)  
Forget it, dog. I don't know how  
you could possibly be hot, but I'm  
freezing.

Connor stands and stretches.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(yawning)  
I'm going to get under the covers  
and get warm. See you in the  
morning, Big-Ears.

Connor walks out of the room, turning off the lights before getting into bed. Duke waits in the dark for Connor to fall asleep, the moonlight reflecting off his eyes.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

A familiar white van pulls up outside the apartment complex. Two gang members jump out and stroll boldly up to the door of the complex, one carrying a pizza box. The man holding the box is Gabriel's unhurt friend, the other a younger man seen earlier at the arena. They look around carefully, but see no one.

GANG MEMBER #3

Man, what the hell we doing out here? That dog messed Hector all kinds of up!

GANG MEMBER #2

That's why, homes! A mutt with that much game is worth some serious bank! You just handle the bag, and let me do the real work.

The younger man clears his throat, trying to cover up his nervousness.

GANG MEMBER #3

I ain't scared. So, uh, how we know where he at? Carlos got someone inside?

The older gang member chuckles and scans a list by the door, then points at a listing that reads '208: Dalton'.

GANG MEMBER #2

Nah, these nice places make it easy. See, that's our boy right there.

The young gang member eyes the pizza box hungrily, and lifts the top to get a look and sniff. The other man snatches it away.

GANG MEMBER #2 (CONT'D)

(irritated)

What are you, stupid? That's our way in!

GANG MEMBER #3

What, we gonna buzz him?

The older man shakes his head and sighs.

GANG MEMBER #2

No, pendejo, we buzz someone else!  
There's gotta be somebody who  
ordered a pizza, and no one pays  
any attention to the help.

The man with the box presses the buzzer by the first name on the list. A few seconds later, the front door buzzes and clicks open.

GANG MEMBER #2 (CONT'D)

(whistles)

Damn, that was easy! They  
trusting around here!

He throws open the door, and the two head inside.

GANG MEMBER #3

Now can I get a slice? I'm dying  
over here!

GANG MEMBER #2

Help yourself, homeboy!

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

When Connor is out for the night, Duke prowls around the house, searching for a way out. Suddenly, the dog's ears perk up at a faint sound outside the apartment. He sniffs at the air, then wags his tail happily in anticipation and creeps off without a sound.

The two gang members stop outside the door and work quickly and quietly to pick the lock. Opening the door, they creep inside, having discarded the pizza and donned masks and gloves. The older gang member draws a taser, while the younger man follows behind him with a large black bag. Not seeing Connor, they move deeper into the apartment, unaware that Duke is watching them.

When the older man enters the living room, Duke leaps out and sinks his teeth into the arm holding the taser. The bones in his forearm snap, and he drops the taser with a scream of pain.

GANG MEMBER #2  
Get 'im off! GET 'IM OFF!

The younger gang member freezes in fear, unable to move. The other man frantically reaches for the taser, but Duke releases his hold on the man's arm and launches himself at his jugular. The gang member reflexively raises his good arm to protect his neck, falling backwards as Duke latches onto his wrist. The dog rips through his protective clothing and tears open his artery as he shrieks in agony. His companion finally snaps out of his daze and tries to pull Duke off the man, but a ferocious look and growl send the man fleeing for terror down the hallway.

The wounded man takes this chance to escape as well, lurching out of the apartment with Duke nipping at his heels. Connor stumbles out of the bedroom with a golf club as Duke dashes outside.

CONNOR  
(sleepily)  
What the hell?

The older gang member makes it to the elevator at the end of the hall just before the doors close with the younger man inside. He whirls around to see Duke launching himself into the air, bloody jaws gaping. The impact knocks the man back into the elevator doors, and he struggles desperately to protect himself while the dog savages him. A wild kick knocks Duke off him just long enough for him to throw himself into the stairwell and slam the door behind him. His momentum sends him tumbling down the stairs and crashing into the wall. He lies there, unmoving and bleeding, as Duke scratches at the door and barroos triumphantly.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Connor sits on the stairs of the complex in his robe and a blanket at dawn, nursing a cup of coffee. Duke sits next to him, blood still on his muzzle, and Connor keeps a tight grip on the dog's leash. EMTs carry a body bag on a stretcher down the stairs and load it into an ambulance, and a small crowd of curious onlookers watched the proceedings from the other side of the police tape. One

police officer approaches Connor, though he stays outside of Duke's limited range. Connor looks up anxiously.

CONNOR

They aren't going to take away my dog, are they?

The cop shakes his head.

POLICE OFFICER

Relax, Mr. Dalton. It's a pretty cut-and-dried case of self-defense, so you're in the clear. Still, you shouldn't take your dog out in public until the investigation ends.

Connor nods. The police officer turns to go, but something occurs to Connor.

CONNOR

Officer? Do they know how he got into the building?

The cop glances back at Connor and shrugs.

POLICE OFFICER

Someone on the first floor said he had to buzz the pizza guy in twice. Our perp isn't talking, so there's no way to know for sure. No one'll miss this scumbag, anyway.

Connor stares into his coffee and doesn't respond, lost in thought. The police officer starts to walk away, then stops when he sees Beatrix coming.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

(disapprovingly)

Bea, who let you past the tape?

BEATRIX

(waving dismissively)

Bill did. Connor's a friend of mine.

The cop chuckles and steps aside.

POLICE OFFICER  
Who isn't? And Bill's a soft  
touch!

Beatrix moves past the police officer, patting him on the  
arm.

BEATRIX  
Thanks Tommy, you're a dear.

The cop shakes his head and walks off, calling back and  
Beatrix as he leaves.

POLICE OFFICER  
(mock seriously)  
Hey, it's Officer Gillespie out of  
here!

Beatrix reaches out a hand to touch Connor's shoulder, but  
stop short at a look from Duke. Connor glances up at her  
tiredly.

CONNOR  
What are you doing here so early?  
You should be in bed.

BEATRIX  
I came as soon as I heard. I  
don't sleep much at my age.  
Connor, are you alright?

CONNOR  
I guess so. I'm too tired to be  
angry. I just...

Connor rubs the bridge of his nose in frustration.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
Why can't they leave us alone?  
Haven't they hurt us enough?

Beatrix doesn't respond. Connor takes a sip of his coffee,  
grimacing at the bitter flavor.

BEATRIX

Connor, you should take Duke to a  
vet.

Connor stiffens and looks away. Duke sniffs and fixes his  
gaze on Beatrix, which she tries to ignore.

CONNOR  
(evasively)  
What? Why?

BEATRIX  
This aggression isn't normal.  
There might be something wrong  
with him.

Connor puts a hand on Duke possessively.

CONNOR  
(weakly)  
He's just been through a lot. I  
know he killed someone, but it was  
self-defense. That's not unusual.

Beatrix raises an eyebrow skeptically.

BEATRIX  
For an attack-trained dog, maybe -  
not for someone's pet! Why are  
you so afraid of losing him?

Duke growls and takes a step towards Beatrix, who backs  
away fearfully. Connor quickly pulls the dog back.

CONNOR  
(admonishing)  
Stop it, Duke! She's okay!

Duke reluctantly sits, but continues to glare balefully at  
Beatrix while the elderly woman struggles to regain her  
composure.

BEATRIX  
I should go. I still have a lot  
of packing to do.

CONNOR  
(curiously)

Taking another trip? Where to?

BEATRIX

(smiles wanly)

Well, I thought the...Middle East would be nice this time of year. I think these old bones still have one adventure left in them! Just have someone look at Duke, okay?

Beatrice waves goodbye and hurries away before Connor can say anything. He watches in silence as she pulls out her phone and makes a call as she departs.

BEATRIX (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hi, Damascus Travel? I'd like to plan a trip...

INT CONNER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor ties Duke's leash around the leg of the heavy recliner chair in the living room and sets out bowls of food and water. The man looks exhausted but on edge. Duke lies on the floor and watches him with an almost irritated look.

CONNOR

It's just for a little while, buddy.

Duke lays his head down with a huff. Connor opens the window partway, then drops the blinds. He kneels down to scratch Duke's head briefly.

CONNOR

You'll be fine, you big baby.  
You'll be free in a few days.

Connor shuts off the light and heads for the bedroom. Duke broods while he waits for Connor to drift off, and after a short wait begins tugging at the leash experimentally. The chair moves, but the knot holds firm. Duke begins to gnaw through the leash, then jerks his head up attentively at the noise from the bedroom. When no further sounds emerge, Duke returns to his work. He finishes chewing himself free

and moves to the window. The dog slips under the blinds and, after pushing the window up with his head, slips out into the night.

EXT HUNTER'S PARK - NIGHT

Duke runs through the park, pausing occasionally to sniff the ground. The trail he follows takes him east towards the Bayview Projects. The dog easily avoids notice in the dimly lit area, skulking from shadow to shadow. Picking up on another, more familiar scent, Duke jogs towards one building in particular. Lurking outside the window, he hears Gabriel talking and bares his teeth.

INT GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Unaware that Duke is waiting outside, Gabriel carries on a cell phone conversation with an unknown person. He keeps his voice low so the sound doesn't carry.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

Yeah, Felix was here earlier. He was with Vicente when the B and E went sideways.

Gabriel paces in the cramped and untidy living room while the other person speaks.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

He's dead? Shit, I told him that dog wasn't worth it! Anyone tell Maria yet?

(pause)

No, I'll tell her - Hector's still in shock. Yeah, she's gonna freak! He wanted to get her a ring, before--

Gabriel rubs his forehead in frustration.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

I know, I know. So when am I  
getting a new dog?

Gabriel's eyes widen as he listens, and he raises his voice  
angrily.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

What do you mean, no new dog?  
What happened to Titan wasn't my  
fault!

(pause)

I think I was that guy's dog, but  
I didn't see him, so I don't--

Cut off by the other speaker, Gabriel struggles to keep  
from yelling.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

No, I don't do that stuff anymore!  
I just train dogs!

A few seconds later, Gabriel visibly deflates.

GABRIEL

(into phone)

Fine, I'll do it. An hour? Yeah,  
I'll be there.

Gabriel hangs up and puts his phone away, then collapses  
into a chair, his face in his hands. Hearing a noise, he  
looks up to see a sleepy-looking four-year-old boy.

GABRIEL

(smiling weakly)

Hey Berto, did I wake you?

The boy nods and totters over to Gabriel, who picks him up  
and sets him on his lap.

BERTO

Daddy, when's Titan coming home?

Gabriel sighs and looks his son in the eyes.

GABRIEL

Titan's not coming home. He's in  
heaven, with God.

BERTO

(curiously)

But why?

Gabriel smiles and tousles his son's hair.

GABRIEL

Well, it's hard to know with God,  
but I think He wanted Titan around  
to feel safe. You always felt  
safe with him, didn't you?

The boy nods, yawning.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Yeah, so did I. Hey, you say your  
prayers yet?

Berto shakes his head, and Gabriel feigns dismay.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

What? Come on, let's do this, you  
and me.

Gabriel folds his hands and closes his eyes, and his son  
quickly follows suit.

GABRIEL / BERTO

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray  
the Lord my soul to keep. If I  
die before I wake, I pray for God  
my soul to take. Amen.

Opening his eyes, Gabriel kisses the boy on his forehead  
and lowers him gently to the floor.

GABRIEL

Alright, back to bed with you.  
Daddy has to go somewhere, but  
I'll be back before you wake up.

Berto looks up at his dad and beams.

BERTO

Promise?

Gabriel kneels down and gives his son a hug.

GABRIEL

I promise. Now go on, vamos!

The boy stumbles back to his bedroom and shuts the door. Gabriel eyes the door longingly, then shakes his head and sighs. He gets his gun off a high shelf in the closet, puts on a jacket and heads out the front door.

EXT GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As he walks into the night, Gabriel passes Duke's hiding spot, but he does not see the dog and Duke does not pursue him.

INT GABRIEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A sudden sound causes Berto to open the door to his room. The child wanders out curiously and comes face-to-face with Duke, who leapt through the window into the apartment. The dog issues a low, menacing growl as the boy waves cheerfully.

BERTO

Hi, doggie. Are you a good doggie?

Duke barroos in response, then leaps to the attack.

Gabriel returns home a couple hours later. He looks drained, and there is blood on his shirt and jacket. He closes the door wearily and trudges down the hallway, absentmindedly flipping on a light. A scene of horror and destruction greets him, and he freezes in his tracks. Glass from the broken window litters the floor, furniture knocked over and splatters of blood on the wall. There is no sign of Berto except for some torn cloth and a mangled child's shoe.

GABRIEL

Berto?

Hearing no response from his son, the man searches the apartment with rising panic. Drawing his gun, Gabriel quickly clears each room, though Duke is long gone. When the only room left is the boy's bedroom, Gabriel pauses, trying to steel himself for what might be inside. He pushes the door open slowly, his eyes confirming his worst fears. A limp, ravaged form of the small child rests on the floor, perfectly still. Gabriel loses his grip on his gun, and it falls to the floor as he gapes in shock.

GABRIEL

No, no, no, no, no...

Gabriel stumbles forward and falls to his knees in front of Berto's body, shaking him gently. Picking him up, Gabriel presses his son tightly to his chest and squeezes his eyes shut. Unable to contain it any longer, he lets out a terrifying scream of rage and anguish that echoes through the house and the courtyard outside.

Slowly regaining his composure, Gabriel stands and lays Berto on his bed. Tearfully, he closes the boy's eyes and puts him in a peaceful pose. Gabriel smooths his son's curly hair and wipes away his tears, then sets his face in an icy mask. Storming out of the bedroom, he picks up his gun and goes to the closet and pulls out a few extra clips of ammunition. He puts a fresh clip in the gun and tucks it away, then marches out into the darkness with murder on his mind and vengeance in his eyes.

INT CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor wakes up at the sound of the toilet flushing. He tries to ignore it and go back to sleep, but a few minutes later it flushes again. Blinking, he gets up and staggers groggily down the hallway.

CONNOR

(grumbling)

Last thing I needed to deal with  
right now...

As Connor gets closer, he hears water splashing and quickens his step. Entering the bathroom, he can see the outline of Duke's body in the unlit room, the dog's head in the toilet bowl.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
Dammit, Duke, you have a water  
dish for a reason!

Connor flicks on the light, and is shocked awake by what he sees. The toilet bowl is full of reddish water, with more splattered on the floor and toilet seat. Duke lifts his head and stares at Connor with demonic eyes, his muzzle covered in drying blood and dripping wet.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(stunned)  
How did you--

Duke severed leash catches Connor's attention, and his eyes widen as he puts the pieces together.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
What did you do?

Duke gets down from the toilet and slips past Connor, padding into the living room. Connor's fear turns to anger, and he explodes with suppressed emotion.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Whose blood is it this time? The  
butcher, the baker, the  
candlestick maker?! Hey, get back  
here!

Connor follows Duke into the living room. The dog ignores the man completely and digs into his food bowl hungrily, infuriating Connor further. He snatches up the dish and stands in front of Duke, holding it in the air.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
What do I look like, your waiter?  
You must think I'm pretty stupid!

Dude glares up at Connor and growls quietly.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You stop that! I love you, but  
you're my dog and you'll do what I  
say!

Connor points at the food bowl and rattles it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Want this? Down, Duke! Down!

Duke intensifies his growl and snaps at Connor, taking the man aback. Realizing that he is losing control of the situation, Connor attempts to regain dominance.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Stop it! Bad dog! Down!

Duke snaps at Connor, forcing him to retreat a step. The dog stalks forward menacingly and snarls, pushing the frightened man towards the corner. Connor trips as he stumbles backwards and drops the dish, sending the food scattering across the floor. Duke ignores it and presses his advantage until Connor's back is to the wall. Getting in his face, the dog bares his teeth and snaps, missing the man's nose by millimeters. Terrified and certain that this is the end, Connor screws his eyes shut and turns his head away from the dog's hot breath.

Suddenly, Duke's ears perk up and he whips his head towards the window, sniffing loudly. He wags his tail in anticipation, then slips under the blinds and out the window. Trembling in the corner, Connor slowly opens his eyes and looks around. Seeing that Duke is gone, he gets to his feet and walks shakily to the bedroom. He throws on some clothes as he regains his composure, and as he storms out the door in search of Duke he wears an expression of fierce determination.

EXT APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Gabriel parks his car on a side street by the complex and rolls down the window. He stares at the building for a moment, then draws his gun. Just before he can get out of the car, Duke barrels around the corner and charges towards him. Startled, Gabriel is unable to react at first. Quickly recovering, he fires off several rounds without a

word. However, the small dog is a difficult target in the dim light, and none of his shots connect.

Duke rapidly closes the distance and throws himself at Gabriel's car, snapping at the man inside. The dog's ferocity takes Gabriel by surprise, and in a frantic effort to keep him out of the car loses his grip on his gun. The weapon drops to the pavement out of reach, and Gabriel swears as he weighs his options. Duke makes another attempt to climb inside and savage his nemesis, but Gabriel shoves him back as he starts the car. He peels away and drives into the park with Duke chasing after **him**, barrooing loudly.

Connor emerges from the complex in time to see Duke and Gabriel disappear into the park. Seeing Gabriel's gun, he jogs over and picks it up. Casting a glance back at the park, he gets in his car and drives after them.

INT AMANDA'S LAB - NIGHT

Amanda sits at her desk, reading the obituaries in the paper and sipping a cup of coffee. She glances up, surprised, when Connor barges into the lab unexpectedly. Nonplussed, she folds up the newspaper and leans back in her chair, crossing her legs and arms.

AMANDA

If this is a booty call, you  
needed to call WAY before  
midnight.

Conner shakes his head agitatedly.

CONNOR

I'm looking for Duke, Amanda!  
Have you seen him?

Amanda gives Connor quizzical look. She appears to want to comment on him not calling her Doctor, but refrains.

AMANDA

Why would I have? What's the  
problem?

CONNOR

The problem is he's going on a goddamn killing spree! He hurt at least two people that I know of, maybe more! I tried to stop him, but he--

Connor pauses and runs a shaking hand through his hair.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

God, I've never been so scared in my life. What the hell's wrong with him?

Amanda doesn't respond, raising Connor's ire.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you don't have any ideas! You're the 'genius scientist' who made it all happen!

Connor's eyes widen as he makes the connection.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You knew this would happen, didn't you?

Realizing that Connor is on to her, Amanda grimaces.

AMANDA

(coolly)

I had reason to believe that it might. I hoped that your dog would be different, that he wouldn't exhibit the...quirks of my earlier test subjects.

Connor stomps up to Amanda and stands over her, glaring angrily.

CONNOR

Quirks like KILLING PEOPLE?!

Amanda shoots up out of her chair, getting right in Connor's face and glaring back at him.

AMANDA

I'm not some timid housewife you can boss around! If you want to know what I know, you need to step back! Otherwise, I will kick your fucking ass! Do you get me?!

The two glower at each other a few moments longer before Connor reluctantly backs off. Amanda smooths back her hair and continues.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

After I got past the more...obvious physical and mental issues, I started noticing subtler differences. The mice were stronger relative to their size - something I never thought to test until one bent the bars of his cage and escaped.

Connor glances at the kennel in the far corner.

CONNOR

I wondered why that thing looked so durable.

Amanda lets out a dry laugh.

AMANDA

That's my fourth one, too. They performed exceptionally well in the maze tests as well. They also had one other thing in common...

CONNOR

The aggression.

AMANDA

(nodding)

Right. The early subjects either wanted to claw out my eyes or theirs. Later ones universally hated me too, they were just better at hiding it. I used to think it was a result of the laboratory setting, but now...

Amanda trails off, looking down at the floor.

CONNOR

(sarcastically)

What, a hatred for all that lives?

Amanda glances back up at Connor and shakes her head.

AMANDA

(quietly)

I think they remember dying.

Amanda falls silent. An expression of dawning horror crosses Connor's face as everything he's heard sinks in.

CONNOR

Oh God...an unnaturally strong,  
intelligent dog hunting anyone he  
thinks hurt him. And he turned on  
me because I got in his way.

A thought occurs to Connor, and he jerks his head up sharply.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Wait, that would mean...you killed  
your test animals yourself?

AMANDA

At first, yes. I needed to do  
before and after comparisons,  
after all. When I moved on to  
larger animals, I had...supply  
issues, and I had to switch to a  
less desirable source.

CONNOR

Who?

Amanda rolls her eyes and crosses her arms in annoyance.

AMANDA

Don't be so dense, Connor! The  
gang, of course!

Connor recoils, disgusted and angry.

CONNOR

How can you work with those thugs?!

Connor eyes Amanda accusingly, but she holds his gaze without flinching.

AMANDA

It was a mutually beneficial arrangement. I needed bodies, and they needed to dispose of bodies. It didn't hurt that they were cheap, and didn't ask questions.

Connor turns his back on Amanda and leans on a nearby table. After a short pause, he glances back over his shoulder at her.

CONNOR

So why me? Why Duke? Were you going to buy him, too?

Amanda approaches Connor slowly and touches his shoulder gently.

AMANDA

I didn't know him...and I didn't know you. I was there, you know - at the warehouse that night.

Connor doesn't look at Amanda, not shying away from or welcoming her touch.

CONNOR

You were?

AMANDA

I followed you into the park. It was too good an opportunity to pass up. A chance to help a desperate man in need, and to get some valuable real-world data.

Connor whirls around to face Amanda.

CONNOR

And you thought creating a monster  
that looked like my dog would help  
me how?!

Amanda takes a step back with a huff.

AMANDA

I didn't KNOW he'd be a monster.  
I hoped he'd be different in a  
loving environment with your  
support.

CONNOR

But he wasn't!

Connor pauses and takes a deep breath in an attempt to calm himself. He paces around the room deliberately, eyeing the machinery and equipment. Amanda eyes him warily, unsure of his intentions.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Where is he?

Amanda cocks her head to the side, confused.

AMANDA

Your dog? How should I know?

CONNOR

Not the doppelgänger. I mean MY  
Duke.

Amanda gets a shifty look and tenses up.

AMANDA

I told you, I took care of his  
remains days ago.

Connor looks over his shoulder at Amanda and gives her a chilling glare.

CONNOR

I don't believe you. Is he in  
here, maybe?

Connor gestures at the mysterious closed door he didn't open before, and starts walking towards it. Amanda hurries to stop him from opening it.

AMANDA

There's nothing you need to see in there! It's just--

Amanda is too late, and Connor throws open the door. He walks in slowly, stunned by the sight of innumerable animal brains and tissue samples in jars on shelves that line the walls. A morgue table in the middle of the small room holds a sheet-covered form. After a moment's hesitation, Connor pulls the sheet away to reveal Duke's remains, the top of his skull removed and his brain missing. Connor looks over the shelves in silence.

CONNOR

Which one is his?

Amanda reluctantly points at a jar labeled with date of Duke's death. Connor takes it off the shelf and wraps it up with Duke's body in the sheet. He picks up the bundle and stalks out of the room.

AMANDA

Connor--

CONNOR

(coldly)

Get me a shovel.

Carrying his dog's remains, Connor walks up the stairs and out of the building, Amanda following a short distance behind him.

EXT AMANDA'S LAB - NIGHT

Connor buries Duke in a patch of dirt near the building while Amanda watches unhappily. When he's finished, the two walk back to his car without speaking. Connor gets in and is about to start the car, but Amanda taps on the window. He rolls down the window and looks up at her.

AMANDA

What are you going to do now?

CONNOR

I need to find him before he hurts anyone else. He's my responsibility, and my mistake.

Amanda nods, but doesn't respond. Connor moves to start his car, then remembers Gabriel's gun and picks it up. He holds it out to Amanda with an embarrassed look.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Could you, uh, show me how to use this thing before I go?

Amanda takes the gun, checks the clip and chambers a round before handing it back to Connor.

AMANDA

Just click off the safety and pull the trigger. You only have one clip, so don't run out of bullets or you're screwed.

CONNOR

(dryly)

Gee, thanks.

Amanda raises an eyebrow and gives Connor a halfhearted smile. Connor takes the gun and sets it on the passenger seat gingerly. He glances at Amanda and opens his mouth to say something, then changes his mind and turns on the car. Amanda watches in silence as he drives away, and once he's out of sight turns away and heads back inside.

INT DOGFIGHTING ARENA - NIGHT

Gabriel races into the warehouse and slams the door shut, both furious and panicked. Hector sits at a table, eating a sandwich while he guards the door. A thick cocoon of bandages covers the hand with the missing finger. He looks up in surprise, swallows quickly and puts his food down.

HECTOR

Yo Gabe, whatchoo doin' here so late?

Gabriel rushes up to Hector, scanning the building frantically.

GABRIEL

It's that fucking dog! He killed Alberto, and now he's coming after me!

Hector turns white as a sheet and leaps out of his chair, knocking it over.

HECTOR

The dog's coming here?!

GABRIEL

I left him in the dust, but I'm not taking any chances! Hector, where the hell is everyone?!

Hector draws his gun and looks around wildly.

HECTOR

They left, homes! Carlos went down to the club!

Gabriel searches the shelves and toolboxes in the room, cursing loudly.

GABRIEL

Son of a bitch! I need a goddamn weapon!

HECTOR

I just got my piece! What happened to yours?!

Gabriel storms up to Hector and holds out his hand. The other gang member doesn't see him approaching, forcing Gabriel to shout to get his attention.

GABRIEL

Hector. Hector!

Hector whirls around to face Gabriel, nearly pointing his gun at him.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I need your gun, ese.

Hector clutches the gun to his chest protectively.

HECTOR

No way, man! Not with that  
monster coming for the rest of me!

Gabriel holds up his hands in a pacifying gesture.

GABRIEL

Fine, whatever!

Gabriel puts his hands on the terrified man's shoulders and  
shakes him slightly.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Hey, hey! Get a grip, okay? You  
just watch the door while I find a  
weapon. That's all I need you to  
do. Can you handle that?

Hector nods fearfully.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Good. We're gonna get through  
this, man, you and me.

Gabriel releases his hold on Hector and runs into the next  
room, leaving him alone. The wounded man clumsily cocks  
his gun with shaking hands and fixes his sights on the  
door. He talks to himself quietly in a desperate attempt  
to buttress his faltering confidence.

HECTOR

(whispering)

Yeah, that's right. You wanna  
mess with H-man's shit, dog? You  
gonna get fucked--

Suddenly, Duke leaps through a side window, spraying Hector  
with shattered glass. With one smooth motion, the dog  
lands and hurls himself at the unprepared man, who screams  
like a terrified child.

In the other room, Gabriel tries to ignore the sound of  
snarling, gunshots and screams as he hunts for something to

defend himself with. When his feverish search turns up nothing, his gaze falls on a nearby gas can. Quickly hatching a drastic plan, he picks up a sturdy-looking piece of wood and wraps the end in some rags laying on a table. He douses the rags in gasoline and, whipping out a lighter, set them ablaze. Ready for battle, Gabriel throws open the door to see Duke standing over Hector's lifeless body.

GABRIEL

You want me, cabron? Here I am!

Duke growls and lunges at Gabriel, but the man ducks and lets the animal fly over him. The two spin to face each other, and before Duke can attack again Gabriel advances, swinging the flaming board. Duke circles Gabriel carefully, staying out of reach and searching for an opening. When the man appears to tire, Duke jumps in and snaps at his arm, but Gabriel narrowly dodges and unleashes a devastating counterattack.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Goddamn dog! Kill my kid, kill my friends, kill my dog!

Duke backs away, hurt. Gabriel presses his advantage and starts to push the dog towards the wall.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Sneaking around like an assassin!  
Can't come at me like a fucking  
MAN!

Duke bumps into the gas can, which Gabriel neglected to replace the cap on, and knocks it over. Gabriel smiles grimly as the gas drains out onto the floor.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna enjoy watching you burn.  
And when you're dead, I'm gonna  
beat you until there's nothing  
left but ash!

Gabriel strikes at Duke, who drops his act of feigned weakness and rushes the man's legs, knocking him off balance. Gabriel falls flat on his face, dropping his makeshift torch into the pool of gasoline. The fire quickly spreads to the walls of the room and begins to

consume the board. Before the flames completely cover it, Gabriel snatches it up and swings at Duke, catching the dog in the middle of an attack. Unprepared, Duke takes a blow to the leg, knocking him back.

Gabriel struggles to get to his feet and stumbles towards the door, seeking Hector's gun in the outer room. Before he can get out of the room, however, Duke leaps on his back and knocks him prone. Helpless, Gabriel screams and desperately tries to dislodge the animal as Duke savages his head and neck. Unable to stop the onslaught, he soon succumbs and collapses on the floor, dead.

EXT DOGFIGHTING ARENA - NIGHT

Connor drives around the shipyard, searching for Duke and trying to remember the location of the dogfighting arena.

CONNOR

Duke! Come here, boy!

Connor sniffs, smelling smoke, then scans the area for its source. He soon spots a thin plume of smoke rising from a warehouse nearby, the building lit from within by a flickering light. Connor speeds towards it, and as he arrives he sees the car Duke chased earlier parked outside. Parking quickly, he leaps out of his car with Gabriel's gun and runs into the building. The smoke and heat nearly overwhelms him, but he presses on.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Duke! Where are you, buddy?

Connor hears Duke barrow over the roar of the flames and heads deeper in. He finally sees Duke through the haze, standing over Gabriel's body proudly and howling in triumph. As Connor approaches, the dog hunches down and growls threateningly.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Easy, Big-Ears! I'm on your side!

Connor motions for Duke to come to him.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You got the bastard, didn't you?  
You got them all, Duke! Come to  
daddy, and we'll go home where  
it's safe!

Duke appears wary, but reluctantly limps towards Connor. The man fingers the gun in his pocket, but can't bring himself to try and shoot. Glancing around rapidly, he sees an opportunity and pulls off his jacket, tucking Gabriel's gun inside it. He holds up the bundle and shakes it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Hey, guess what I have! Something  
of Gabriel's! You want to rip it  
to shreds, don't you?

Duke snarls, keeping his gaze firmly fixed on the ball of cloth. Gabriel teases the dog with it for a moment before lobbing it over Duke's head into the small room.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Yeah? Yeah? Okay, go get it!

Duke spins to go after the jacket, and Connor makes his move. He rushes up and slams the door shut, then pushes a workbench in front of the doorway, trapping the dog inside. Turning to leave, he hesitates for a moment when he hears Duke howling and scratching at the door.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Goodbye, Duke.

Steeling himself, Connor ignores his pet's cries and runs out of the burning warehouse. He leans on his car, coughing and retching from the smoke inhalation. Before he can get his breath back, Duke flies out through the broken window and throws himself at Connor. Winded and surprised, the man is completely unprepared for the attack and throws his arms up reflexively.

The dog's momentum knocks Connor to the ground, and he struggles desperately to fend off Duke's powerful jaws to no avail. The animal tears into him savagely, opening deep wounds in his arms and face and causing the man to scream in agony. He manages to push Duke off him and kicks him

away, buying him a moment to scramble for some means of defense.

Connor's frantically seeking hands finally latch onto a rusty, jagged piece of metal lying in a pile of junk. He pulls it out just as Duke lunges at him again, holding it in front of him like a spear. Unable to alter his trajectory, the dog lands on the sharp metal, impaling himself. Duke strains to reach Connor, snapping just shy of the man's face, but his energy rapidly depletes as the mortal wound takes its toll.

Duke finally slumps over on Connor's chest, wheezing painfully. The man, badly lacerated and bleeding profusely, releases his hold on the spike. With labored breaths, he musters up enough strength to wrap his arms around the dying animal.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
(panting)

It's over...Duke. See--

Connor coughs violently, hacking up blood.

CONNOR (CONT'D)  
See you...on the other side,  
buddy.

Connor curls up with his beloved pet, holding him gently. As his vision fades to black, he hears the distant sound of sirens, then silence.

INT AMANDA'S LAB - DAY

Connor slowly drifts back into consciousness. Everything is black, but he can hear Amanda singing quietly somewhere nearby.

AMANDA  
(singing)  
Get up, get up, get out of bed...

Connor looks around, his movements ponderous and heavy. As he breathes, he notices the sound of air bubbles moving through water.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

(singing)

Get up, get up, you sleepyhead...

Reaching out, Connor's hands rap on a smooth glass surface. Disoriented and confused, his breathing intensifies. Suddenly, something strips away the darkness, blinding him with brilliant light. His blurry vision slowly recovers, adjusting to the light and coming into focus. The first thing he clearly sees is a lithe, redheaded figure looking up at him with a broad grin.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Morning, big boy!

Connor scans his surroundings, recognizing Amanda's lab. The two morgue tables each hold a sheet-draped form, one dog-shaped and one human. With a jolt, he realizes where he is: inside the tube of the Second Life Machine, naked.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Welcome back, Connor! Bet you thought you were a goner, huh?

Panicked, Connor runs his hands over the glass walls of his prison, desperately seeking a way out. Amanda appears not to notice or care about his distress.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Luckily for me - and you - I managed to get you out of there before anyone showed up. That means you get the honor of being my first human test subject!

Connor stops and stares as Amanda walks over to the human-shaped form and pulls back the sheet, revealing his dead body, minus the top of his skull and brain.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Ta da! You turned out pretty good, if I do say so myself! I'll have to run some tests, of course...

Horrified, Connor screams in soul-rending agony, the sound muffled by the glass enclosure. Amanda beams up at him like a child with a new toy.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

They might hurt a little...but  
come to think of it, I never did  
have much of a problem with  
hurting people...