

"THE DOGS AT THE ACROPOLIS"

a screenplay by

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## ACT I: "ARE YOU MARTIN WECHSLER?"

EXT. FOREST PARK, SAINT LOUIS, MO-SUMMER DAY

Forest Park is a large urban park in Saint Louis, Missouri, full of woods, green spaces, golf courses, and winding roads.

A minivan pulls over to the curb and stops. A man gets out of the driver's door and comes around and opens the rear passenger door. He leads a GOLDEN RETRIEVER dog out of the van by a leash. The dog is excited, but she sits down on the grass when he tells her to. He takes the leash off her collar and tells her to stay. He gets back in the van and drives off down the road.

The dog watches the car go away. She wants to run after it but stays, fidgeting and whimpering. She yelps a little.

The van stops, reverses back to where the dog is waiting, stops. The man gets out, comes to the dog, takes off her collar, then gets in the van and drives away.

The dog waits. She lies down. It gets dark.

EXT. FOREST PARK-NIGHT

The golden retriever is chased from her waiting spot by a car full of teenagers who throw beer cans at her as they drive by.

She roams the park. Dawn breaks.

EXT. FOREST PARK-DAY

The dog stands still and watches as a light rail train glides by on tracks that cut through the park.

INT. LIGHT RAIL TRAIN-DAY

MARTIN WECHSLER, a pudgy, 30 year old man in a short jacket with a patch over his right eye sits reading a Robert Heinlein novel. There are dark scars bleeding out from his hairline and from the eye patch. His face is slightly drooping as if he's had a stroke. A young man stands next to him, rapping loudly and wearing headphones.

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY STEPS-DAY

A substantial crowd of homeless men has gathered near the entrance. Martin joins them and waits. He nods in greeting to some of them. They nod back.

GERALD

Hey, Martin. Martin, man.  
What did one earthquake say  
to the other?

Martin smiles at him.

MARTIN

I don't know, Gerald. What?

GERALD

This is your fault!

Martin chuckles.

MARTIN

That's good. I like that one.

The library doors open and the men stream in.

PUBLIC LIBRARY ENTRANCE HALL

The men walk in, Martin amongst them. A library staff member stands by the door and is clearly offended by the odor coming from the men. Martin breaks from the group and heads towards the STAFF ONLY doors while the rest of them aim for the restrooms and reading rooms.

MONTAGE

Martin pushes book carts through the library stacks, shelves books, eats lunch, leans against the shelves reading. A man approaches Martin's book cart and Martin scans the pile and hands the man a certain book. The men in the library sit at long tables reading the newspaper. They snooze in hard chairs. Dust motes drift in the sunlight of the main reading room.

LIBRARY STAFF AREA-EVENING

Martin collects his backpack and jacket and heads for the door.

INT. LIGHT RAIL TRAIN-EVENING

Martin sits and reads. The train stops and the doors open. A few people exit. A man in a suit, JASON SHAPIRO, carrying a briefcase, steps on, looks around for a seat. They're mostly full. He remains standing. He looks over at Martin.

JASON SHAPIRO

Martin? Sorry, are you Martin Wechsler?

Martin looks up at him.

MARTIN

Yes.

Jason approaches him, smiling and holding out his hand. Martin puts out his hand but looks uncertain. They shake hands.

JASON SHAPIRO

Man, it's been a while. Since law school, isn't it? How are you? Are you working downtown now? Which firm?

Martin stares at him.

MARTIN

I...uh...

JASON SHAPIRO  
It's Jason! Shaps? Come on,  
it's only been four years.  
You didn't forget me, did  
you? Hey, what's with the  
patch? Is it Halloween  
already? Arrr!

Jason reaches for Martin's eye patch. Martin flinches  
back.

MARTIN  
No, no. I work at the  
library.

JASON SHAPIRO  
But you are Martin Wechsler.

MARTIN  
Yes.

JASON SHAPIRO  
Well, I know you. I knew you.

Jason looks at his friend, the patch, the scars under  
it, his jacket, the blank look on Martin's face. He  
rises from the seat beside Martin.

JASON SHAPIRO  
Sorry, man. I didn't know  
that anything...I hadn't  
heard. Sorry, Martin.

Jason Shapiro walks away, stands holding onto a bar near  
his head, looking forward. The train carries them along  
the track.

INT. WECHSLER DINING ROOM-EVENING

The dining room is small and neat. Martin sits back in  
his chair. LIZ WECHSLER, Martin's mother, ladles green  
beans onto his plate.

MARTIN  
Thank you, Mother.

Liz Wechsler sits down. They eat. Martin takes a break  
from eating, drinks milk from the glass and sets it  
down, breathes.

LIZ WECHSLER

You have a healthy appetite tonight. I like to see that.

MARTIN

Did I go to law school?

Liz freezes for a moment, the fork halfway to her mouth, then she comes unstuck and eats, smiles.

LIZ WECHSLER

Why do you ask that?

Martin crosses his arms.

MARTIN

On the train today. A man thought he knew me. Someone I had never seen before.

LIZ WECHSLER

You mean he took you for someone else?

Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN

He knew my name.

Liz tosses her head.

LIZ WECHSLER

A coincidence?

MARTIN

No. He knew my name. My full name. It seemed like we were good friends. I don't remember him. I don't remember...

Martin is breathing hard. Liz puts her fork down and lays a hand on his forearm.

LIZ WECHSLER

Martin? Martin, dear? Some things might come back. Other things are not going to come back. But you're okay now. You're here with me. You remember me, growing up with your brother. But other things...

She is stroking his arm, which is tense with his fist balling up against the table.

MARTIN

I know. I know. It's because I was shot.

LIZ WECHSLER

That's right. During a robbery.

MARTIN

I feel it, in my head, like an itch. I can almost remember. Almost. But there's nothing. There's a hole. A hole in me. In my mind.

She stands and cradles his head against her belly. He allows himself to lean into her, tensely, angrily weeping.

LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Martin and Liz sit on a couch watching television. There is a bowl of popcorn between them. She smiles at the television and eats popcorn. Martin is rigid and blank, with his hands on his thighs.

FADE  
OUT/IN:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MARTIN'S ROOM-MORNING

Liz straightens her dress. She knocks gently on the door, then pushes it open.

IN MARTIN'S ROOM

The room is small, too childish for a 30 year old man. High school trophies sit on the dresser.

LIZ WECHSLER

Rise and shine! Coffee's ready, dear.

Martin rolls over in the twin bed, holding the pillow around his head. There is a pile of paperback fantasy novels on the floor beside the bed.

MARTIN

I got a bad headache.

Liz perches on the edge of the bed, leans over to stroke Martin's head. She recoils a little at the missing eye, the scar over the indentation where something is missing. But she controls herself and puts a hand on his head.

LIZ WECHSLER

Think you can come to the farmer's market with me this morning? Or is it one of the bad ones?

MARTIN

It's pretty bad. I'll stay in bed a little longer.

LIZ WECHSLER

But not too long. It'd be a shame to waste a beautiful Saturday like this one just lying around.

Martin leans back on the pillow.

MARTIN

No, not too long.



EXT. WECHSLER HOUSE-DAY

The garage door opens and Liz backs out a big gray Checker taxi car. It rolls down the black driveway beside the close cropped lawn. The car stops a moment, backs into the street, turns and drives down the street in the leafy sunlight.

MARTIN'S ROOM

Martin lies in bed, listening. When the sound of the car's engine has faded away, he waits a moment longer, then throws off the covers and stands up. He pulls on his pants and shirt from the day before and slips his bare feet into his shoes.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL-DAY

Martin opens the door, flips on the light and descends the stairs.

INT. BASEMENT-DAY

Martin pulls strings that hang from the ceiling, turning on bare bulbs. He goes to a corner where there are several cardboard boxes stacked on top of old furniture.

He hoists a box down, places it on the floor and opens it, rifles through a few papers near the top, reads one of them, digs down into the box, pulls out and examines another, puts it back and closes the box, pushes it aside.

He cracks open another box, pulls out a few papers, a notebook.

CLOSER ON HIM

Martin grips the notebook and reads. His eye grows wide and his whole body tenses up. He stands up suddenly with the notebook in his hands, still reading, and knocks his head against the hanging bulb, making it swing and the shadows rock drunkenly on the basement walls.

He lowers the notebook from in front of his face, kneels and puts it back in the box.

BACK AWAY LITTLE

As he does so, a half sheet of paper falls from the notebook. Martin hoists up the box, sees

CLOSE ON THE FLOOR

the paper on the floor, bends down and grabs it, folds it into his

CLOSE ON HIS PANTS

pants pocket.

WIDER ON THE STAIRS

He carries the box up the stairs.

INT. BREEZEWAY WECHSLER HOUSE-DAY

Liz Wechsler carries paper bags of produce and other things from the farmer's market. She sets them down, opens the kitchen door, brings the bags in.

INT. WECHSLER KITCHEN-DAY

Liz Wechsler sets the bags and her handbag on the counter.

LIZ

(calling over her shoulder)  
Martin? Are you up?

There is no answer. She leaves the groceries in the kitchen and walks through the

HALLWAY

hallway to his bedroom door. She knocks on it, it is not quite closed. It comes open. She sees

MARTIN'S ROOM

Martin is sitting on the floor with his back against his bed. The box is beside him. Papers and notebooks are scattered everywhere. There is a dark suit hanging from the closet door behind him. He looks up at her from a notebook he is reading.

LIZ

Martin dear, are you all  
right? What are you doing?

Martin smiles at her.

MARTIN

I was a lawyer. I worked for  
Dobson and Walsh. I was  
married. I had a wife.

He picks up a handwritten sheet of paper from the floor.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Carolyn. Where is she?

Liz falls to her knees in the doorway.

LIZ

Oh, no. Oh, Martin. Martin,  
I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry  
you found all this.

On the floor, she reaches out for some of the scattered  
papers, as if to gather them up. Martin leans towards  
her.

MARTIN

Don't touch them! These are  
mine! These are my things.

Liz recoils from him, stands up with a hand over her  
mouth, escapes the room.

LIVING ROOM-NIGHT

Liz watches television alone on the couch. Not smiling  
at it anymore.

MARTIN'S ROOM-NIGHT

Martin lies in bed asleep on his back in his clothes on  
top of the covers. A report is splayed on his chest.  
More notebooks, papers, photographs are strewn on the  
bed around him.

MOVING

There is a worn wallet, a driver license, credit cards.

CLOSER

Near his hand is a photograph of himself, his face thinner and more animated, without the eye patch, smiling with Carolyn. They are high up on some kind of observation deck, with a city all around and below them. Their cheeks are touching, her hair whipped around both their heads. Part of his arm is in the shot, as if he reached out and took the picture himself.

INT. LIZ'S CHECKER TAXI-MORNING

Martin sits in the passenger seat. He is wearing an oxford and a tie. His mother wears a floral print dress and a matching hat. Martin holds a plastic card before him, reading it.

MARTIN

But I could drive, Mother.  
Legally. See?

He holds it out for her.

MARTIN (CONT.)

It's not even expired yet.

She looks ahead, not glancing at the driver's license.

LIZ

Yes, I know what it says, but  
you don't have any insurance-  
-

MARTIN

Maybe you could call them  
tomorrow and have them add me  
to the policy? It would make  
things easier for you. I  
could do some of the errands,  
drive myself to the doctors.  
Maybe even get my own car...

He smiles. Liz shakes her head.

LIZ

Martin, darling. It's impossible. That license is from before. They wouldn't give you one now. I'm sorry, dear. You can't drive a car. It's because of your eye.

He looks away from her, out the side window at the neighborhood turning past.

LIZ (CONT.)

You're right, of course. It would be a help. But I asked at the DMV already. It has to do with depth perception. Martin, can you hear me?

MARTIN

Fine.

EXT. SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER-DAY

The Checker Taxi eases up against the curb and parks. Men in suits, boys in white shirts, girls and women in dresses stream towards the church entrance. Liz and Martin join the general procession towards the doors, Liz waving and greeting people she knows.

INT. SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER SANCTUARY-DAY

MONTAGE:

Martin and his mother crossing themselves with holy water, reciting Hail Mary, the Lord's Prayer, kneeling and clasping hands, rising, singing. The congregation moving in unison, murmuring together.

THE PRIEST

Christ is risen and shines  
upon us, whom he has redeemed  
with his blood.

The movement of people out of the pews, Martin taking communion, walking back in line with his hands pressed together.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT-DAY

Martin is sitting at a large, round table next to his mother. Also at the table are several older ladies who talk amongst themselves with a cheerful energy. Martin stares blankly in their midst. An old lady leans toward him and speaks loudly into his face.

OLD LADY

And how is our Martin this morning? You are looking very dapper!

Martin does not react and the old lady leans in closer.

OLD LADY

Hmm?

Liz notices and turns to them.

LIZ

Martin? Martin? Josephine just paid you a compliment and asked how you were doing?

Martin is surrounded by peering old lady faces.

MARTIN

Fine, fine. Thank you. It's very nice.

He pushes himself backwards in his chair, stands up.

MARTIN

Mother, I'm going for a walk. I'll take the bus home.

He wanders away from them, through the room full of chatting, smiling adults and restless children, out the door.

EXT. SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER-DAY

Martin emerges from the main doors into bright sunlight, shields his eye, hurries down the stairs and off along the sidewalk.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT-DAY

Liz sits amongst the women at the table. After a moment, she rises.

LIZ

Please excuse me.

She walks away. The ladies watch her go.

DOROTHY

Poor Liz. She's had her share of trials.

EVELYN

And more.

LOUISE

She's very strong. I don't know what I'd do if I lost my John so young, let alone him and a child.

DOROTHY

It changed her. Driving around in that huge car.

EVELYN

And now she's got Martin to care for.

LOUISE

It's a very safe car.

They nod.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAINT LOUIS-DAY

The sidewalks are deserted on a Sunday. Martin walks along the sidewalk looking up at the buildings, reading the addresses, muttering to himself.

MARTIN

Seven forty...seven twenty...

He stops in front of one of the big skyscrapers, looking up at it, leaning back.

MARTIN

Seven ten Olive. Suite  
twenty-four hundred. Dobson  
and Walsh.

MARTIN'S POINT OF VIEW

His old building towers in front of him, reaching up into the sky and growing narrow at the top. All around him are tall buildings, soaring and powerful.

VIEW OF STREET FROM LOBBY OF 710 OLIVE

Martin wheels around, staring up, loses his balance. He tumbles down backwards onto the sidewalk. A security guard rushes out to him.

MARTIN'S POINT OF VIEW

The buildings receding into the distance of the sky. A face looms into view, a voice asking

SECURITY GUARD

You okay, buddy? Don't move.  
Don't move yet. You hit your  
head?

VIEW FROM ABOVE THEM.

The guard bends over Martin, who lies on his back on the sidewalk. Martin laughs and points.

MARTIN

I used to work up there. Way,  
way...up...there.

DISSOLVE  
TO:

EXT. SOUTH SIDE SIDEWALK-DAY

Martin walks along in his robotic way. As he walks, his mother's Checker Taxi pulls to the curb beside him. He stops, walks over to the car and gets in. The car drives off.



EXT. VIEW INTO THE FRONT OF THE CAR

Martin gazes out and his eye moves over the world, taking in the environment as if it is all new. He smiles, frowns, looks puzzled, seems expectant.

Liz grips the wheel hard and frowns.

INT. WECHSLER KITCHEN-DAY

Martin and his mother are eating. Martin becomes suddenly as still as if he were having a stroke. Liz looks up from her plate at the silence.

LIZ

Martin? Dear?

She rises, snaps her fingers. There is a smudge of blood trickling from beneath his hair where he smacked it on the pavement.

LIZ

Martin!

She gets up out of her chair.

MARTIN

I was robbed. You said.

LIZ

Yes. You were robbed.

MARTIN

And I was shot by the person who robbed me.

He waits a moment for confirmation.

LIZ

That's right.

MARTIN

Someone shot me, robbed me, left me for dead on the street.

The wait is longer this time.

LIZ

Yes.

Martin pulls something from his back pocket.

MARTIN

But I still have this. They  
didn't take this.

He holds up a worn, black leather wallet. Unfolds it,  
pulls something from one of its slots.

MARTIN (CONT.)

I still have my driver's  
license,

He pulls things out one by one, naming them, lining them  
up on the table. He pushes his plate aside to make room.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Visa card, MasterCard,  
building security I.D.,  
Target gift card, Barnes and  
Noble gift card, bank debit  
card, social security card. I  
even have...

He counts.

MARTIN (CONT.)

Twenty-six dollars in cash.

He stares down at the row of items. She looks at it too,  
holding a fist hard against her mouth.

MARTIN

Mother...Mother?

She looks up at him, wide-eyed and frightened.

LIZ

What?

MARTIN

I wasn't robbed. Someone  
tried to kill me. Why?

She shakes her head back and forth.

LIZ

No...no...

MARTIN

What happened to me?

LIZ

No!

MARTIN

Tell me the truth!

Liz goes silent. She stands, climbing up from her chair with her fists on the table.

LIZ (WHISPERED)

Ask God, Martin. Ask God why  
he kills everyone I love.

She turns from him, hurries from the room. A door opens and closes hard. Martin sits there with the table full of food, the contents of his wallet laid out.

MARTIN

But I'm not dead!

EXT. LIGHT RAIL STATION-MORNING

It is raining. Martin stands on the platform holding an umbrella. He is wearing the dark pinstripe suit that he found with his things in the basement. Sneakers. No top coat. His backpack strapped on over the suit. The train arrives and he steps on.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY-DAY

Liz's Checker Cab glides through rolling hills, under trees, along winding roads. It pulls to the side of the narrow drive and stops. Liz Wechsler gets out and walks onto the grass.

AT THE GRAVE

Liz kneels down in the grass.

## VIEW OF THE HEADSTONES

One reads, "Edward Wechsler Beloved Father and Husband 1939 - 1989." The other: "Edward Wechsler Beloved Son and Brother 1968 - 1987."

WIDER ANGLE ON LIZ AT THE GRAVES.

She is kneeling in the grass, talking to the stones.

EXT. PUBLIC LIBRARY-EVENING

Martin emerges from the main doors, hoisting his backpack over his suit jacket.

INT. LIGHT RAIL TRAIN-EVENING

The train is crowded. Martin holds his paperback with one hand and holds onto the overhead rail with the other. He looks up and sees a man in a similar suit eyeing him. Martin looks at the man's dress shoes, then at his own sneakers, the man's briefcase, his own backpack. He goes back to reading his book.

INT. WECHSLER HOUSE HALLWAY-EVENING

Martin swings open the door to his room, enters.

MARTIN'S ROOM

The box is gone. The papers are gone, the pictures, the notebooks, the letters. Everything is tidy and empty-looking. His bed is freshly made.

MARTIN

Mother!

He turns and storms out, through

THE HALLWAY

into the

## LIVING ROOM

where the glass fireplace doors have been left open. He kneels before the fireplace, reaches a hand in, draws it back, grabs a small fire shovel, picks up a clod of smoldering paper, pulls it close, blows on it as if to put it out. It disintegrates into nothing.

## CLOSE ON HIS FACE FROM INSIDE THE FIREPLACE

His face is contorted. He reaches both hands into the space before him, the fingers closing into fists. He is groaning, growling.

## LIVING ROOM

He stands, heaving breaths in and out, a high wheezing like a broken bellows. Liz enters the room.

LIZ

It's best, dear. A clean  
break.

He turns to her, unable to speak or walk. He reaches a hand out to her, pointing.

MARTIN

You...

His eyelid flutters, the eyeball rolling back. He collapses to the floor.

## EXT. FOREST PARK-DAY

The golden retriever wanders the park, through its forests and its open spaces, past its shuttered zoo and dark museums. She drinks water from a lake. She finds food in overflowing trash cans.

## ACT II: "DIRECTIONS FROM HERE"

LONG FADE IN FROM HAZY OBLIVION:

VOICE OVER (MALE  
DOCTOR)

Now, Mrs. Wechsler, your husband has suffered very serious head trauma. He's lost an eye and a small part of the frontal lobe, here, as well as pieces of the skull.

EXT. HOSPITAL COMPLEX-DAY

Cars, busses and trucks go by. Taxicabs idle near entryways. Men and women in white coats hurry along sidewalks between buildings. Patients in white gowns are pushed along in wheelchairs.

VOICE OVER (MALE  
DOCTOR)

We are optimistic about his recovery. He's very lucky. He's doing astoundingly well for having gone through what he has. But you must know, Mrs.--Carolyn. He is different now.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY-DAY

MOVING, CAROLYN'S POV

Walking down the hallway. Dazed looking patients in gowns tread uncertainly about, some with family members at their elbows, some alone.

VOICE OVER  
(CAROLYN)

He's still Martin. He's still my husband.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY-DAY

(Carolyn's POV.) Turn to the right. A door.

VOICE OVER (MALE  
DOCTOR)

He is. And he is not.

The door opens.

INT. MARTIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM-DAY

(Still Carolyn's POV.) Two chairs are set up facing the door, in an attempt to recreate a sort of parlor. In one, Martin sits upright with his palms on his thighs, but slumping a little, almost dozing. A bandage covers half his head. In the other chair, Liz sits leaning on one chair arm and smiling. As Carolyn walks in, she stands up. Martin stands also. Liz takes his arm.

LIZ

Martin, dear? This is  
Carolyn. This is your wife.

Martin holds out a hand. His speech is worse than we have heard so far. He makes a great effort to get the words out.

MARTIN

Hello, Carolyn.

CLOSE ON CAROLYN. MARTIN'S AND LIZ'S POV

She is trying to keep her mouth from turning down, grimacing and losing the fight. She gives up, comes toward him.

CAROLYN

Oh, Marty, Marty.

BACK A LITTLE WIDER

She holds him close and familiar, crying, kissing his cheek, his neck, her hands around his head, careful when they touch the bandages.

CAROLYN (BETWEEN  
SOBS AND KISSES)

You're going to be fine. We  
are. Everything's going to be  
okay. I'm here. You're here.  
Oh, God. Marty, I was so  
afraid.

Martin lifts his hands to return the embrace, but without enthusiasm.

MARTIN

Yes. Okay.

Carolyn breaks from him but holds his hands.

CAROLYN

I brought someone to meet you. Someone very special.

Liz raises her hands, cautioning.

LIZ

Now, dear, dear. We agreed. Not just yet.

Carolyn ignores her.

CAROLYN

Wait here, Marty. Just like that.

MARTIN'S POV

Carolyn turns and opens the door to the hallway. There is someone out there Martin can't see. They are doing something, working together. Carolyn turns back to face him. She is holding a newborn.

CAROLYN

Her name is Catherine, just like we agreed. (to the baby)  
Meet your daddy, baby girl.

CLOSE ON CAROLYN, THE BABY AND MARTIN

She holds the baby out for him to see, to kiss. He puts his lips against the baby's face, takes them away.

WIDER ANGLE

Martin backs away from them, leans on the edge of the bed, stares at the wall.

CAROLYN

Marty, Marty? Is everything--



Liz comes to Carolyn, puts her hands on her shoulders.

LIZ

It's too soon, dear. He's  
only been out of the coma for  
three days. Give him time.  
It's too much all at once.

Carolyn ignores her, holds the baby in front of Martin.

CAROLYN

Marty, say hello to your baby  
daughter.

Martin goes blank. He does not seem to see or hear  
anything around him. Carolyn persists.

CAROLYN

Marty, say hello. Say hello.

CLOSER ON HIM

He is blank and slack. His eye does not move, does not  
look at the child in front of him.

CAROLYN

Look what a precious daughter  
you have, Marty. A baby girl  
who needs you. Say hello to  
Catherine. Say her name, just  
once? Marty? Marty?

The bandage over his eye has darkened and swollen out a  
little. A stream of blood escapes from beneath it, runs  
down his cheek. Spittle drips from his mouth.

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. WIDE SUBURBAN AVENUE-DAY

A bus pulls to the curb. The avenue has a green median  
down the center and is lined with tidy brick houses. The  
sign on the bus says "CROSS COUNTY." The bus sits for a  
moment, then continues on. It has left Martin on the  
shoulder behind it. There are no sidewalks. He looks  
around, chooses the right direction, walks.

## SUBURBAN STREET INTERSECTION

Martin walks along, looking at a folded sheet in his hand. He pauses next to a stop sign, reads the street names, turns and continues on.

## ON CAROLYN'S STREET

## MOVING, FOLLOWING BEHIND MARTIN

Martin walks along, looking over his shoulder. The street winds a little.

## WIDE ANGLE ON STREET

Up ahead and across the street, there a small silver van parked in the driveway of a low, serene ranch house. All its doors are open, like a sprung pocket knife.

A young woman, Carolyn, wearing jeans and sandals, comes around the van carrying a child safety seat. Martin moves behind a car to hide himself. He watches her over the top of it.

## MARTIN'S POV

She sets the child seat down, unclasps the straps and lifts the toddler out, twirls her in the air once. The kid laughs. Carolyn's husband comes out of the house. Carolyn sets the kid down and she runs to her stepfather. They all carry groceries into the house. Carolyn returns for more, stops and looks over at Martin, turns and looks again, holds her hand over her eyes to shield them from the sun.

## CAROLYN'S POV

A figure wearing a short jacket and a backpack walks away, disappearing around the bend in the road.

## INT. SAINT LOUIS POLICE STATION MAIN HALL-DAY

The station is loud with many shouting voices echoing under the high ceilings, phones ringing, door locks buzzing and clacking as they are unlocked remotely, opened, closed. Cops, prisoners, and civilians move through the space in apparent chaos.

## WOODEN BENCH AGAINST A WALL

Martin sits and reads his thick fantasy paperback. Beside him on the bench, a gnarled old man in a light colored suit and a stained tropical fedora leans out, looks him up and down.

A large blond man, ROBERT TEASDALE, in a tan corduroy sport jacket walks into the waiting area holding a manila folder.

TEASDALE

Martin Wesh-ler?

Martin rises from the bench.

MARTIN

Yes, I'm Martin Wechsler.

TEASDALE

Sorry. Wechsler. I'm Rob Teasdale. If you'll come with me we can talk privately.

Martin follows him away from the bench. The old man cackles and shakes a finger at him as he goes.

OLD MAN

Yeah, see there! I knew it! I knew you was a travelin' man!

## HALLWAY

Martin follows Teasdale down the hall. The big man stops at a door and points.

TEASDALE

Right in here, Mr. Wechsler.

## CONFERENCE ROOM

Spare, utilitarian, ugly. Teasdale indicates a chair for Martin. They sit with a corner of the table between them.

TEASDALE

I understand you've requested an update on your case. Okay, so, I'm your case manager, I'm in the Victim Services department. Now, I personally hate that word, but that's what they call it. Now, what I do is, I keep you informed about the case as it works its way through the system and make sure you are aware of your rights, your benefits, and the services you can use. Things can be confusing, so I'm here to help you make sense of all this bureaucratic stuff.

While he's talking, he opens the manila folder and sifts through some papers.

TEASDALE

Let's see...you're doing rehab work at BJC, is that right?

Martin cranes his neck around trying to read the files.

MARTIN

Yes.

Teasdale doesn't look up from the page. He pulls it away from Martin's seeking eye.

TEASDALE

How is that going for you?

MARTIN

Fine, I guess. What I want to know is--

TEASDALE

And it looks like you took advantage of your vocational re-training benefit. That's good. Where are you working now?

MARTIN

I work at the library. Can you tell me if they've--

TEASDALE

Oh, good. Good. I take my daughter there sometimes. It's very nice. Do you like it there?

Martin leans back in his chair and crosses his arms.

MARTIN

It sucks.

Teasdale closes the folder.

TEASDALE

Oh? What's the problem?

MARTIN

I'm a lawyer. I was a lawyer. I had a wife, a child. Someone shot me and now...

Teasdale folds his hands on the table.

TEASDALE

I understand. You've had to make some adjustments because of your injuries.

Martin pounds the table.

MARTIN

They took my life from me!

TEASDALE

I understand. Your life is different now. You're still on the road to recovery. But longitudinal studies show that five years after most--

MARTIN

Have you found them? Does it say that in there? Who did this to me? Why? Where are they? Do you know? Does anyone here know?

Teasdale looks down at the folder.

TEASDALE

We have counselors who can help you as you work towards full recovery. Why don't you let me make an appointment--

MARTIN

What does it say in there?

He taps the folder. Teasdale sighs long and loud, shrinking down in his chair. He looks across the room. He speaks as if the words are painful.

TEASDALE

It says, OPEN.

Martin spreads his hands in expectation of more information.

MARTIN

Open. Open. What does that mean?

TEASDALE

It means they're working on it.

HALLWAY

The door flies open and Martin storms out, leaving Teasdale slumped at the table.

OLD MAN

There goes a travelin' man!  
Yeah! A travelin' man!