

BELOW ZERO

Written By

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WGA-w registered

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FADE IN:

EXT. RANCLANDS -- DAY

The sky is frozen. White. A ring of crystals casts a halo around a winter, mid-day sun. The drone of a small aircraft breaks frosted air.

BELOW

Endless miles of untouched, snow covered isolation. Everything about this place is cold. The barren landscape disappears into a vacuum of white nothingness. It's as if Mother Nature gave up on this land. Or ran out of color.

DISSOLVE TO:

A COMPLETE WHITEOUT

suddenly becomes the most terrifying thing. A blank, white page. The words:

'FADE IN'

Type across the screen in thick, black font. The cursor stops. Flashes. Dares.

INT. AIRPLANE -- DAY

JACK "THE HACK" LIARE, early-thirties, glares at the computer screen. At the cursor. Antagonizing him from his window seat.

Blocked. Constipated. Jack has spent more time polishing his imaginary Oscar than the script he hopes to someday sell. If only prunes could make words come. He adjusts his ballcap - the ironic word, 'WRITER' typed in caps across his hat. As if that will do it.

Jack dry swallows his meds. Xanax, times two. Takes a sip of ice water. Rubs at the frost covered window. Peers out.

ALL AT ONCE

The plane drops. Ice water spills. All over the laptop. Frantic, Jack mops at the wet mess. The small plane recovers.

PILOT

(shouting back)

Hey, Hollywood - you'd better put your things away. We'll be on the ground soon.

JACK THE HACK

How cold is it out there?

## PILOT

Well, it's not California. I'd say  
it's well below zero.

BELOW ZERO. Jack considers the words. Types the title onto the screen. The text disappears into clouds.

The plane starts its descent. Clouds whip through gray sky. The wind begins to whine.

EXT. AIRPORT -- DAY

Jack shivers on the curb. INSANITY - THE MOVIE is scrawled in a slightly terrifying, faded font across his worn t-shirt - only the word 'SANITY' visible from the folds of his jacket. Dressed from head to toe in studio labels, snow whips at his light clothes. Above him, icicles dangle precariously.

A silver vehicle, that looks suspiciously like the 2003 HONDA CRV that the screenwriter of this script drives, skids to a stop. Bundled from head to foot, PENNY KANT, mid-thirties, shuffles out.

Should've, Would've, Could've - Penny wishes she had. But the dreams of this bush woman have been replaced by a new need. To raise her son. To gut fish and castrate pigs with equal vigor. To survive.

She notes his California wardrobe. Dressed in black. He must be a writer.

## PENNY

(shouts over the storm)

Are you Jack? You must be freezing.  
Here...

She hands him a winter parka. A huge namepatch over the heart. FRANK. Grabs for Jack's things. Loads the trunk.

INSIDE THE CAR

Jack squeezes into the backseat. Into a huge pile of drool. A MUTT OF A DOG stares at him. This is Butterscotch. BS for short. Strings of saliva hang from the dog's mouth. Complete ick.

## PENNY (CONT'D)

Sorry we're so late. The roads are  
awful. Highway's closed.

Jack turns from the drooling dog to the young face of COLE KANT, age 9. Insane. Autistic. Evil. A creepy fucking kid.

Twisted around, Cole hangs over the headrest to study the newcomer.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Don't mind Cole. He's never met a real, famous writer before.

Jack meets Penny's blue eyes in the rear view mirror.

JACK THE HACK

I'm not famous. I'm a screenwriter. No one ever knows who we are.

PENNY

Unless you used to be a stripper. That Giblia Zoby or whatever her name was...

JACK THE HACK

Exactly...

Jack makes a scary face at the kid. Boo. Cole doesn't flinch. The car pulls from the curb. Outside, the wind starts to howl.

EXT. RANCHLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- DAY

Snow blasts the car as it winds along icy roads. Fat flakes challenge overworked wipers. The snowfall hypnotizes. Car tires crush ice filled potholes.

PENNY

You wrote your last movie, what, three years ago?

JACK THE HACK

Four. Did you see it?

PENNY

Yes. But I'm sure the next one will be good.

Ouch. Jack winces. The long journey continues.

Mother Nature's palette of white blankets the countryside. Cows stand motionless against the cold. Clouds of icy breath hang from their nostrils.

PENNY (CONT'D)

So don't they have freezers in Southern California?

JACK THE HACK

What do you mean?

PENNY

It's just you've come a long ways to hang out in mine.

JACK THE HACK

My agent said you used to be an actress?

PENNY

David told you that? Aw, yeah.  
(pleased, blushing)  
Once upon a time.

JACK THE HACK

Then you've heard of method acting.  
You could say I'm a method writer.

PENNY

Really? But he said you had writer's block. Gave me this huge list of things to get.

Penny holds up a wrinkled fax.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Said they were things you needed.

JACK THE HACK

Let me see that.

Over the seat, she hands him a copy of the fax.

PENNY

We even got you the guppy you asked for. Hope you don't mind - Cole named her Mabel.

JACK THE HACK

Fish help me to relax when I'm writing.

PENNY

Why does he call you 'Jack The Hack'?

JACK THE HACK

My agent has a somewhat 'unusual' sense of humor.

Penny laughs.

PENNY

I've never even met him. He used to send me on all these crazy auditions!

Her smile fades. She forces it. Glances at her son.

PENNY (CONT'D)

He said I was insane for moving back here. But there ain't too many roles for pregnant, new actresses either!

She snorts as she laughs.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I used to be his favorite. Guess  
it's you now.

(beat)

But he tells everyone that.

Jack's lips move as he reads the fax. He barely listens.

JACK THE HACK

He told you I needed things to be  
perfect, or I'd never get anything  
done?

PENNY

He also said if you don't have a  
script in a week he's dropping you.

She leans back and taps a cheery finger on the fax.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Right there.

Jack grimaces as he reads the note. He crumples it into a  
ball. Destroyed. The car rounds a snowy corner.

EXT. RANCLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- CONTINUOUS

The vehicle snakes its way through the winter wasteland.  
Snow drifts across ditches. Tires break virgin snow. Not a  
single vehicle for miles. Complete desolation.

PENNY

So, let me get this right. I'm  
supposed to lock you up?

JACK THE HACK

And not let me out until I'm done.

PENNY

What's your story about? Other than  
a guy who gets locked in a meat  
freezer?

Over the front seat, the creepy kid continues to stare at  
Jack. Jack stares back. Neither blinks.

JACK THE HACK

(to himself)

That's what I'm hoping to find out.

Jack roots through his bag. Finds a baseball hat. A single  
word scrawled across the cap. ANTAGONIST. He places it on  
Cole's head.

PENNY

Is it another monster movie? They say 'when you fight monsters, be careful not to become one'.

JACK THE HACK

Very profound. Did you read that on a bathroom wall somewhere?

Ouch. That stung. A little.

PENNY

I've always wanted to be a writer.  
(a beat)  
Doesn't seem like it'd be that hard to do.

Touche.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Do you ever get scared writing horror movies?

Jack holds his gaze on the little boy. Cole smiles like the devil. Watches Jack's every move.

JACK THE HACK

I never get scared.

The car plows through fresh snow. Rounds a corner.

ALL AT ONCE

COWS are all over the road.

Penny swerves. Wheels spin.

Jack lurches forward. His head smacks the seat in front.

PENNY

Whoa, whoa, whoa! Oh god!

Penny throws a protective arm out to guard her son. The car skids. Cows lumber across the road. Finally, the car settles. Under control.

PENNY (CONT'D)

For a moment, I thought we were having steak tonight.

Penny snorts. Jack frowns.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry. Veggie dog for you.

The slow, lumbering beasts gradually clear a path in the road. Make way for Penny's vehicle. Slowly.

She inches the vehicle forward, through a gap in the herd.

Jack stares out the frosted window. At the weather blasting the car. Cows retreat from the road.

Through the split wire fence. Into the field.

The slaughterhouse looms in the distance. A worn out 'FOR SALE' sign swings from rusted hinges. Almost home.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- DAY

Penny pushes open the main door. The trio enters. Jack dumps a load on the floor. Looks around.

Cold, metal shelving. Stainless steel everything. Meat hooks hang from above. Counters are wiped. Sparkling clean.

Cole scurries to the counter. Rips a long piece of butcher paper from a roll on the wall. Races into the freezer with it.

PENNY

Hey, Cole!

Cole looks up from his coloring desk.

PENNY (CONT'D)

If you're going to play in there, what's the rule?

Reluctantly, Cole rises. Goes to the door of the freezer. Props it with a huge cinderblock.

PENNY (CONT'D)

It's a safety thing. His dad locked himself in here once. Froze his face off.

Next to the cooler is an old fashioned dial telephone. Or rather, 'was'. The phone has been smashed to pieces. The receiver hangs in a broken mess.

JACK THE HACK

What happened to your phone?

Penny looks away. Suddenly awkward.

PENNY

My husband. He had a temper.

Cole climbs into a student desk. Removes crayons from the box. One by one. Organizes them neatly. From longest to shortest. Jack watches him, mesmerized by child weirdness.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I'll get the rest of your things.

Penny leaves for a second trip. Leaving Cole and Jack alone.

Finished sorting his crayons, Cole stares at Jack expectantly. Jack enters the cooler.

The room is filled with various box filled shelves. A military style cot rests in one corner. A child's desk, and a slightly larger young adult desk round out the room.

Jack squeezes himself into the desk. A tight fit. He opens the desktop. Discovers a pen and notepad inside. Picks up the pen. Clicks it twice.

Cole watches his every move.

Jack flips the notepad open. Poises pen over page.

Cole turns a fresh sheet. Clenches a red crayon in his fist.

And then, something odd happens. Jack's hand begins to shake. Really shake. He trembles uncontrollably. Slams the pen down.

Cole stares. Waits. Jack looks up. Their eyes meet. A moment passes. As if they are sharing a secret.

JACK THE HACK

What are you drawing?

Cole stares back. Barely shrugs. He stares at the blank page in front of him. Frowns.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

I know what you mean. It's easy to 'freeze up'. Nothing is as frightening as a blank page.

Jack picks up the pen. Studies it.

Cole takes his crayon. Does the same.

Jack taps the pen against his lip. Cole mimics his every move. Jack notices. Doesn't let on. Smiles to himself.

BEHIND THEM

Penny returns with a second load. She kicks the main door shut behind her. Locks winter out.

Cole turns to his blank page. Puts crayon to paper. Jack squeezes from the desk. Leaves the boy to his work.

Jack exits the cooler. Joins Penny outside the room. She removes her scarf. Jacket. Jack checks her out. There's a body beneath all those clothes. Mmmm, mmmm, good.

PENNY

Brrr! Chilly in here.

Dark, too. Jack spots a switch on the wall. SNAPS it on.

PENNY (CONT'D)

No! Don't!

A BUZZ fills the air. Jack freezes. His hand remains on the switch.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You see that tub of water? That switch you just hit activated an electric current.

JACK THE HACK

Through the water?

Jack looks at the stainless steel tub. A slight buzz ripples the water. White feathers float on top of the sludge.

PENNY

Yes. It's how we kill chickens.

JACK THE HACK

What happens if you touch it?

Penny smiles.

PENNY

Let's just say you'd be in for a shock.

Her hand covers his. Flips the switch to off.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Watch what you touch. Things around here can kill you.

Penny gestures for Jack to follow her. The tour begins.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, KILL ROOM -- DAY

A rollercoaster track of metal carpets the ceiling. Hooks, prods, and other weapons of bovine destruction dangle gently from the roof. Windchimes of torture.

PENNY

This is the kill room.

Penny pulls him to the side.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Careful. You could take an eye out.

Jack ducks slightly.

JACK THE HACK  
Or an intestine.

His head narrowly misses a dangling hook. Nearly decapitates himself.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
What do you kill? Chickens, cows...?

PENNY  
Pigs. Everything.

Penny points to the chains hanging from the ceiling.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
You hang them here. Then gut them.  
Bleed 'em out.

A skinning chair sits in the center of the room.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
That's the skinning chair. Just  
take a blade and peel the hide right  
off.

JACK THE HACK  
First step is to kill them though,  
right?

PENNY  
Of course.

They each shoot a look at one another. Strangeness ensues.

JACK THE HACK  
How long has this place been for  
sale?

PENNY  
Two years. This was my husband's  
thing. After a while, the killing  
gets to you. A lot of ghosts here.

JACK THE HACK  
Yeah. Ghosts that say 'moo'.

Penny flips the light. The room plunges into near darkness.  
Metal hooks glint.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Penny continues the tour.

JACK THE HACK  
So what happened to your husband?

Jack notices the name patch on his borrowed jacket. FRANK.

She lowers her voice.

PENNY  
Frank? We ate him. Turned him into  
frank-furters.

Jack stops.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
I'm kidding. Frank-furters.

Snort. Get it? Jack doesn't.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
You can make just about anything  
good with ketchup. But not a  
marriage.

What is this? Fargo?

PENNY (CONT'D)  
Come on. I'll show you the sausage  
room.

Jack follows. Unsure.

INTO THE SAUSAGE ROOM

A huge stainless steel bell rises up from the sausage table.  
The meat grinder is propped against the table. Everything  
is pristine. Sparkling clean.

BENEATH THE STAINLESS STEEL TABLE

The hindquarters of Butterscotch, the mangy dog, stick out.

The animal reaches for SOMETHING.

Backs out.

A human hand in his mouth.

Jack's jaw drops.

Penny turns to see what has caught Jack's attention.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
(to the dog)  
Where did you get that?

ALL AT ONCE

The hand is gone. In its place is the bony fingered claws  
of a chicken leg. The dog gnaws away. Crunches. Sick stuff.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
That dog is always digging stuff up.

The dog scrambles away.

SUDDENLY

Penny stops. Sniffs the air. Smoke. She hurries from the room.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Cole?

INTO THE SMOKER ROOM

Cole holds a burning piece of paper in his hand. Stares. Mesmerized by burning flames.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Cole! What have we said about starting fires?!

Penny swats the piece of paper from his hands. Jack stomps at the flames. Penny checks the boy's hands for burns.

Jack fans the smoke from the room. Cole runs off.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Cole! Come back here!

Cole is gone. Ignores her. Creepy fucking kid.

PENNY (CONT'D)

He's really not a bad kid. He's just 'different'. It's always been that way. That's why his father...

Penny's eyes are moist. Their eyes meet. Hold. Sadness floods her face. She smiles and frowns at once.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Let's just say his father didn't handle 'different' very well.

Jack opens his wallet. Shows her a picture of his own son.

JACK THE HACK

This is Jason. He lives with his mom. I haven't seen him in three years.

Penny studies the photo.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

You could say I didn't handle 'different' well either. Different meaning marriage, children. Second chances are hard to come by.

Penny returns the picture.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Do you think you'll ever go back to acting?

PENNY

Acting, no.

(snorts)

I'm a writer now. Just like you.  
Except good.

She hands Jack a small pop-up book from her bag.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I made this for Cole. I'd do anything for him.

Jack looks at her. Flips the book open. Admiration. Impressed. Red hot envy.

He pulls the tabs of the children's book. Tiny paper sausages push out from a hand-drawn meat grinder.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I think it's neat how you can create something that lasts longer than you do.

JACK THE HACK

Immortality.

PENNY

Right! I guess that's what I love about being a parent.

(beat)

Don't you miss that?

Jack stops. She's hit a nerve.

JACK THE HACK

Very much.

PENNY

Cole just needs a good role model.

She searches Jack's eyes with her own. Him?

JACK THE HACK

Not everyone gets a happy ending.

PENNY

I know.

(beat)

Hey, I had an idea for a movie script. Maybe you could help me with it?

Jack's smile fades.

JACK THE HACK

I always work alone.

Penny persists like every good pitcher being shot down.

PENNY

It's called 'The Fear Factory'.  
It's about this crazy woman who locks  
up a writer, and tortures him into  
writing terrifying stories.

Jack closes the book. Subdued.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'll publish it under  
a pen name. No one will ever know  
it's you.

He hands the book back to her. Smirks.

JACK THE HACK

Very cute. It's funny how everyone  
thinks they can write.

Her smile fades. She stuffs the book back into her bag.  
Snuffs out the light.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- DAY

Penny pulls open the door to the meat locker. Cole sits at  
a desk coloring on his swatch of butcher paper. Butterscotch  
sits on the floor beside him, gnawing on the chicken claw.

PENNY

What are you drawing, Cole?

Cole hands Penny a picture. It is a picture of a man, hanging  
from a meat hook. Penny smiles.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh look. You made a picture of the  
writer man.

She hands the picture to Jack. Jack turns the picture upside  
down. And back around again. He stares at mother and son  
with confusion. His spidey sense starts to tingle.

A fly buzzes. Jack swats at the insect with the picture.  
Smears it against the wall. Cole watches him kill the insect.  
Mild curiosity.

A cat rubs up against Jack's leg. He bends to pet it.

PENNY (CONT'D)

So I think everything's the way you  
wanted. Coffee's over here.

She moves through the room. Gestures to stacks of food and various items as she goes.

PENNY (CONT'D)

By the way - and this is important - make sure you don't plug too many things in at once. Or you'll blow the switch.

JACK THE HACK

The power would go out?

PENNY

Wow. You write and you're smart.

She shines a flashlight into his eyes. He squints. The cat runs off.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I'll leave this here in case anything happens.

(gestures to box)

And candles too if you need them.

You never know.

Cole sits on the floor. Jack bends to his level. Turns to the dog. Snatches the chicken leg from the startled mutt.

PENNY (CONT'D)

There's enough water to get you through the week.

Penny roots through boxes of food supplies.

PENNY (CONT'D)

The fridge is fully stocked - your agent was very specific.

Jack ignores her. His attention on the kid. He pulls on one of the tendons. The chicken fingers claw the air, as if reaching for Cole. For the first time, Cole smiles. The dog smacks its lips, watching.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Hope you don't mind, but I read almost all the screenwriting books you sent.

JACK THE HACK

Really? Wow. I haven't even read them.

Penny flips open a small box to reveal boxes of animal crackers, stationery, and other writing essentials. She rests a hand on a large red binder.

PENNY

And this is a manuscript I wrote.  
In case you get bored.  
(snort)  
I hope you like it.

Jack's interest is in the child.

Cole takes the chicken leg. Jack shows him the tendon, and Cole pulls it. The chicken claw curls.

Penny smiles at Jack and Cole's interaction. Connections between her son and anyone are rare.

Penny lifts the lid on a bucket.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh, and one lovely bidet. Don't worry about flushing. Because it doesn't.

Jack flaps at flies. Buzzing him. Lovely, lovely, lovely.

JACK THE HACK

Where are all these flies coming from? And what the hell is that smell?

Penny marches to the back of the room.

PENNY

This is Elvis. We butchered him just for you.

She whips off a plastic sheet to reveal a dead pig hanging from a hook.

JACK THE HACK

You killed a pig?

PENNY

I was told you wanted it. To set the mood.

Penny pulls a list from her back pocket. Scans it carefully.

JACK THE HACK

Yeah, but not a rotten pig!

PENNY

He's not rotten! He's a sweetheart.

She kneels. Plants a kiss on his snout. Pulls a blade from her pocket. Cuts into pork flesh. Blood floods the blade. Dribbles to the floor.

PENNY (CONT'D)

See?

JACK THE HACK

Then where are all these flies coming from? It's the dead of winter.

PENNY

Well, that doesn't matter.

(to him)

Silly. If it dies...

(rhymes)

You get flies. Hey, that rhymes!

She snorts to herself. Laughs. Man, this chicklet's cheese has all but slid off her cracker.

JACK THE HACK

Why isn't the room cold?

PENNY

What do you mean?

JACK THE HACK

This room's for storing meat, right?

PENNY

It hasn't been on for over a year. All the Freon was taken out of the lines.

JACK THE HACK

Can you get it going again?

PENNY

I can get a service guy out here, but it'll take a couple days. Maybe more with the storm.

JACK THE HACK

Great. What about the internet?

More snorts. From Penny, not the pig.

PENNY

You're joking, right?

Jack roots through his bags. Tries to calm himself. Starts to unpack his 'writing box'. Slams stacks of screenwriting books on the tiny desk.

JACK THE HACK

You know what, it's okay. Apparently if I wait for the perfect situation, I never get anything done.

Penny scans through the faxed list.

PENNY

It doesn't say anything about needing the internet. Or for the cooler to be working.

JACK THE HACK

If I had the internet - like I asked for - then I'd probably spend the whole time surfing the net anyway.

Flies buzz the silence. Jack's annoyance is thick.

PENNY

What about Elvis?

JACK THE HACK

You know...nevermind. Just leave it. Maybe he'll inspire me.

Penny wraps the plastic sheet around the dead pig.

Cole runs from the room. He sits cross-legged on the cement floor outside the room. Plays with the chicken leg. Looks back and smiles at Jack. Claws the air.

PENNY

He likes you.

Jack stares after the kid. Softens.

PENNY (CONT'D)

He doesn't like anyone. Not even me.

Penny frowns. The truth hurts. Slumps onto the cot.

JACK THE HACK

Look, if the cooler was working, I'd probably end up freezing to death. And then my agent would be really pissed.

PENNY

I'm sorry things aren't what you were expecting.

Jack lines his collection of hats on the shelf. WRITER. PROTAGONIST. ANTAGONIST. INSANITY - THE MOVIE. TOQUE.

JACK THE HACK

Look, it's not your fault. You've been very...nice. You've gone to a lot of effort.

Penny rises. Paces the length of the room. To the cinderblock.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
I just...I think I made a mistake.  
By coming here at all. I should  
probably call my agent...

BOOM!

The door slams.

Jack is plunged into near darkness.

The room shakes.

Walls reverberate. Shake violently.

Echo. The crashing sound is deafening. Surreal.

Jack spins around. Should have listened to that fucking  
spidey sense.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?

PENNY  
Your agent said this would happen.

Jack pushes at the door. Cole and Penny stand on the other  
side, watching him through the small window in the door.

JACK THE HACK  
Open the door.

PENNY  
He said you'd get 'cold feet'.

Snort. Jack glares.

JACK THE HACK  
This isn't funny. Come on. Open  
the door. Right now.

PENNY  
There's a gift for you. Under the  
bed.

JACK THE HACK  
OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR!

Cole's eyes grow wide. Penny cups his ears with her hands.  
Pulls him close.

PENNY  
Hey, language!

Jack slams the door with his fist.

JACK THE HACK  
Let me out of here right now.

PENNY  
I promised to leave you alone for five days. No distractions. The full isolation experience.

JACK THE HACK  
Penny! Goddamn it...

PENNY  
I'm not letting you out til you're done. So you may as well get started. I promised.

She crosses herself. Hopes to die.

JACK THE HACK  
I don't care what you promised! -  
Let me out!

PENNY  
I used to think that promiscuous meant 'to keep your promises'...

JACK THE HACK  
LET ME OUT!

PENNY  
We'll see you in five days.

Penny takes Cole's hand. Pulls him away. He turns back to wave at Jack with the chicken leg.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
Good luck fighting your monsters.

JACK THE HACK  
Penny...! PENNY!!!

Jack goes crazy. Slams himself against the door with his full weight. Again. And again.

OUTSIDE THE SLAUGHTER HOUSE

Penny starts the car. Pulls away. Leaves Jack. Utterly alone.

INSIDE

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
PENNY...!

Jack smashes his fists against the tiny window. Throws his body against the door. BANG!

Again. BANG.

And again.

BANG!

There is no escape.

Locked in. Five days. Starting now.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- LATER

Jack sits on the floor. A collapsed mess of exhaustion. He stares into space. Anger has been replaced. By disbelief.

His eyes land on a wrapped parcel, tucked beneath the bed. He crawls towards it. Pulls it out. Reads the label. 'HOGS & KISSES, YOUR FAVORITE AGENT (DAVID)'. Jack props himself on the floor, against the cot.

He unwraps the gift in record time. Ironic, because inside is a ticking countdown clock. 108 hours remain.

AND

A framed, black and white photo. DAVID MULLIGAN. Agent Extraordinaire - a necessary evil in the land of Tinseltown.

The swarmy agent smirks maniacally from the small frame. A 'GUESS WHO'S WATCHING YOU..' caption above his grinning mug.

Jack re-reads the caption bubble. GUESS WHO'S WATCHING YOU...

JACK THE HACK

Asshole...

Tick. Tick. Tick.

He turns. Stares at the clock. The sound is enough to make anyone crazy. It echoes throughout the room. He grabs the clock. Smothers it beneath the pillow on his bed.

He turns back to the picture.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

A script in five days, huh?

He flips the photo over. Face down. Take that. Fucker.

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- LATER

Jack makes the room 'perfect'. Pushes the desk against a wall.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

- 1) Jack squeezes into the student desk. It doesn't quite fit. Stares at the blank computer screen. A moment. Suddenly he practically leaps from the chair to do something else. Anything else.
- 2) Stacks his pile of screenwriting books in neat piles.
- 3) Posts a bulletin board above him. Sticks it full of notes. 'Leap and the net will appear', 'Don't get it right. Get it Written', and a bumper sticker for 'I Sold My Screenplay at the Great American PitchFest! Www.Pitchfest.Com'. He writes a new one. 'WRITERS WRITE.' Posts it in a prominent spot. Perfectly aligned with the others.
- 4) Settles himself in the desk. Writing hat adjusted. Boots up computer. Cursor blinks at him. Another pitchfest bumpersticker covers the make of his computer. He poises his fingers over the keyboard. Looks ready to go. Fingers his empty coffee cup. Suddenly, he bolts from the chair.
- 5) Makes coffee. Guzzles it. Burns lips.
- 6) Makes home. Unpacks his bag into neat piles. Shoes are perfectly aligned.
- 7) He drops himself on the cot. Feels the clock beneath his pillow. Tucks it beneath the bed.
- 8) Reads his thesaurus.
- 9) Pushes the pig. Watches it sway.
- 10) Watches Mabel the fish. Swimming in her watery prison. Big fat fish lips. Pulse through the bowl.
- 11) Stares into space.
- 12) Draws a picture of the three act structure map.
- 13) Paces room. Reads Blake Snyder's 'Save The Cat' while walking.
- 14) Drinks pink 'Bismal Peptal' straight from the bottle.
- 15) Does yoga.
- 16) Tries once again to sit down at the computer. To write. Another failed attempt.
- 17) Reads other scripts. Shane Black's 'Lethal Weapon'
- 18) Takes pen and writes by freehand by leaning against the door of the freezer.
- 19) Pushups. Jumping jacks. Works himself into a sweat.
- 20) Swallows more XANAX.

21) Smokes pot.

22) Watches screenwriting teacher, Pilar Alessandra on DVD. Jerks off.

23) Tries to sleep. A caffeine induced slumber. Restless. Sleeps every which way.

FADE TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

The blinking cursor on his laptop beckons. The computer fan whirs. Overheats. A constant hum.

Jack sits up. Rubs day-old stubble. His face. His hair.

Staring at the blinking screen. BELOW ZERO. FADE IN. The only words he's typed so far - and those were on the airplane.

Jack staggers. Squeezes himself into the desk.

His eyes wander the various notes on the bulletin board above. WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW. Your characters ARE you. Use personal experience to create story. Underlined. Writers write. 'If you always wait for the perfect situation, you'll never get anything done...'

Sees one last post it note. Reads it. 'Keep the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair!'

Jack undoes his belt. He wraps it beneath the chair. Straps himself in. Stares at the screen a moment. It's going to be a long few days.

ALL AT ONCE

Pilar's DVD starts to play.

ON SCREEN

Pilar addresses a roomful of students. She is sensational. She turns to a smiling student.

PILAR ON DVD

Okay, that's great! So what is the title of your script?

STUDENT ON DVD

It's called 'What Your Mama Don't Know'...

Laughter. Pilar is all smiles. A beacon of encouragement.

Jack's eyes scan the title of his script. BELOW ZERO. The cursor continues to flash.

PILAR ON DVD  
 What kind of film is it? What genre?

STUDENT ON DVD  
 A comedy.

JACK THE HACK  
 Terrifying thriller.

PILAR ON DVD  
 (prompting student)  
 That asks the question 'what if'...?

Jack pauses the tape. Furrows his brow. Thinks. Types:

WHAT IF...

Furrow his brow. Types some more.

WHAT IF SOMEONE WAS ACCIDENTALLY LOCKED IN A MEAT FREEZER BY  
 A SERIAL KILLER...WHO DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS IN THERE?

Reads this last line closely. For emphasis.

...LOCKED IN A MEAT FREEZER...

...BY A SERIAL KILLER...

...WHO DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS IN THERE.

Jack starts to type in earnest. Faster now.

THE WHITE SCREEN DISSOLVES INTO:

BLOWING SNOW

Across the frozen road. Like a gusting sandstorm.

EXT. RANCLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- DAY

FRANK ABLE speeds his tow truck along the snow covered, gravel  
 backroads of Northern Canada, eh. A magnetic 'Frank's Big  
 Tow Ltd' sign is stuck to the side door. Gnaws on beef jerky.  
 Looks out at glittering fields of white.

Frank Able. Mid-thirties. The Lone Ranger in a tow truck.  
 And another funny thing. He looks just like Jack. Almost  
 as if the same actor were playing both characters. Gotta  
 love indie filmmaking. Except for the Goddamn low budgets.

Static AM crackles country twang. Frank grabs his two-way.

FRANK  
 Big Tow, this is Little Tow. Come  
 in Big Tow.

A moment. The two-way responds.

MORTY (O.S.)  
Big hairy toe, to you, dude. Hey,  
did you find that guy in the ditch?

FRANK  
Nah. Just tracks. He must've got  
out on his own. I haven't seen anyone  
for miles.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

MORTY FABLE. Mid-thirties. Only a dog could be a better  
friend. The kind of guy everyone either knows, or wants to.  
He's the ketchup with your meatloaf, the cheese on your  
nachos. Comfort food in form of a good friend.

Morty Fable bears a striking resemblance to the photo of  
David Mulligan, the douchebag agent. Surely a coincidence.

Morty steers his tow truck along icy ruts in the road.

MORTY  
If we were smart, we'd get out of  
here, too. Weather's getting worse.  
(beat)  
Hey, what do you want on your pizza?

FRANK (O.S.)  
How about your mama?

MORTY  
Asshole.

Morty grins.

CUT TO:

INT. BIG TOW TRUCK -- CONTINUOUS

Frank looks out at the frozen fields. Frost-covered cows  
and horses stand motionless against the cold. Snow whips  
the vehicle. If it weren't so damn cold, it might be pretty.

MORTY (O.S.)  
Meet me at my sty?

FRANK  
On my way. Over...

MORTY (O.S.)  
And out.

Frank drops the walkie onto the passenger seat.

The heater blows cool air. Frank cranks the temperature. An irritating, grating noise rattles from the vents.

Frank smacks the heater. Interrupts the irritating sound for a brief moment. Smacks it again. The sound grows louder. Stops.

He looks up.

BOOM!

A cow stands dead-center in the middle of the road. Frank slams the brakes. Loses control. The truck spins. Hits the ditch. Snow sprays. The windshield smashes. The walkie smashes against the dashboard. Into a zillion pieces. The cow slams through the window. Broken glass everywhere.

INSIDE THE CAB OF THE TRUCK

The injured cow kicks wildly. Bellows in frightened agony. Frank tries to escape frantic, pounding hoofs. Smashed fingers struggle. Release seatbelt. A hard kick to the head. Frank hits the steering wheel. All turns to black.

EXT. RANCHLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- LATER

Timelapse.

Hours pass. Daylight fades to night.

The snow continues to fall. No help in sight.

The vehicle disappears beneath the thick snow. A full on blizzard.

The whiteout turns to dark.

EXT. RANCHLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- NIGHT

The driver door pushes open.

Frank falls from the truck. Staggeres in deep snow.

Eerily quiet. Only crunching of snow. Heavy breath.

Frank throws himself across the seat. Across the dead cow lying in the front of the cab. Bloodies his jacket. Opens the glove compartment. Fishes out several flares. Hits the flashers.

ON THE ROAD

Frank snaps the flares in half.

Lights up the front of the truck. The flashers blink. On. Off. Repeats.

He plants a flare behind the truck. Pockets the rest.

Frank's head bleeds. A deep gash against his forehead. He looks all around him. Shivers.

He grabs the winch. Pulls it. Staggered across the road. Towards the nearest tree. Reaches the end of the line. Leans into it. The tree is barely ten feet away. But ten feet too far. It may as well be fifty.

No one has driven this road for days. Exhausted. He lets the line go. Collapses to his knees.

He lights a flare. Shines it towards the field.

Follows the fenceline with his eyes.

EXT. RANCLANDS, MIDDLE OF FIELD -- NIGHT

Frank trudges through the field. Makes his way along the fenceline. Wind and icy snow whips at him.

IN THE DISTANCE

The lights to a small building glow faintly. A farmhouse? No. An abattoir. Where things go to die.

He points the flare to light his way. Puts one frozen foot in front of the other. Behind him, the flashers blink into the night.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

Frank slams against the door. His body frozen. Bloodied. He smashes a fist weakly against it. No answer. He tries the door. Shakes the handle. Locked tight.

He goes to the window. Brushes at the snow. A dim light shadows the room. No one appears to be inside.

Desperation. Frank tries the window. He strains. Pries.

ALL AT ONCE

It snaps open. He hauls himself inside.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

Frank lands on the stainless steel counter in a frozen heap. He groans. Lies there a moment to recover.

Finally, he pulls himself up.

Takes off his blood covered jacket.

Lays it over the back of a chair. Studies the empty, dark room. Shouts out.

FRANK

Hello? Is anyone here?

He listens. Silence.

He staggers to the sink. Runs cold water. Holds frozen, shaking hands beneath the stream.

BEHIND HIM

Movement. Unfocused. Unclear. Just movement. Something - or someone - is in the room. With him.

Frank nudges the hot water tap. Steam fills the sink. Frank rubs his fingers beneath the steamy spray. Washes blood from his face. The stainless steel turns red.

Warming, Frank reaches for a nearby towel. Without looking, he holds it to his face. It is already soaked in blood. Smears blood over himself even more.

He throws the towel down in disgust. Douses himself with more warm, clean water. Shakes the water from his hands. Turns off the tap.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

Frank turns.

Standing behind him is GOLEM, age 9. The kid bears a striking resemblance to Cole. Oh. It is the same kid. Imagine. Except, a little more insane. More autistic. And a lot more fucking creepy. Did I mention evil?

Golem takes off. Barely a flash.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, it's okay - don't be scared.

Frank leans down. Searches through the metal shelving. Beneath stainless steel sinks.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm not going to hurt you. Where are your parents?

Frank spots the kid. Shivering in terror at the sight of this stranger towering above.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I was in an accident. I need help. I'm just trying to get warm.

ALL AT ONCE

The kid's eyes widen. Fill with fear. As if he sees something behind Frank. Frank turns his head. Sees nothing.

Turns back. The kid is gone. Catches a glimpse of the terrified kid scrambling away.

INTO THE FREEZER

The door creaks. Swings open slightly. Frank cautiously follows. This kid is spooking him out.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Hey, kid, it's okay. Where are your parents?

Frank bends low. Stoops to search the shelving. Boxes of frozen meat fill the shelves. Vision is obscured. His eyes scan the room for the boy.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

Frank's shoe sticks to the floor. He lifts his foot. A sticky ooze of crimson freezes him to the stainless steel flooring. His eyes follow a thick smear of blood. Stares straight ahead. A disturbing sight. SOMETHING is wrapped in a loose sheet of plastic, so smothered with red you cannot tell what it holds.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

Like a metronome. In growing horror, Frank moves closer. Reaches for the plastic covering. Pulls it away to reveal

A DEAD SOW

That looks strikingly similar to Elvis. Phew. Just a dead pig. Frank breathes relief. Turns.

And comes FACE TO BEAUTIFUL FACE

With the stunning body of PAIGE BLANC. Mid-thirties. The kind of woman you'd change your life for. And your underwear. If you brought her home, mama would be proud. And Daddy would be jealous.

HANGING BY TIED HANDS

Deader than a doorknob.

Frank nearly trips over himself. Backs into the dead sow.

BOOM

WTF?! A door outside the freezer room slams shut. The pitter patter of dog's feet. Whine. Sniff. The sound of SOMETHING dragging along the concrete floor.

GUNNAR (O.S.)

GOLEM!

Golem, the kid, throws himself from his hiding place on a bottom shelf of the freezer. Races from the room. The freezer door sways shut. Remains open mere inches. The slobbering mutt sniffs the tiny crack. Snarls. It is Butterscotch, transformed miraculously into Satan's personal guard dog.

Frank presses himself further against the far wall.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)  
(barks to dog)  
Nein! Over there!

The dog obeys. It knows consequences.

Frank moves cautiously towards the open door. Peers out.

GUNNAR PROTEKS, mid 50's, is a human monster. The only thing this butcher loves more than his work, is eating it. It not only shows - it jiggles. Nearly four hundred pounds of fat butcher stuffed beneath an enormous bloodied apron, two rubber boots, and a carving knife. The man looks like a human sausage. After all, you are what you eat.

Like Jaws, we only ever see a piece of the Gunnar monster. A little at a time. A fat, beefy arm. A profile in darkness. Gargantuan feet jammed into rubber boots. Missing fingers - a hazard of the meat cutting profession. Scar tissue over permanently disfigured, nose and cheeks - another hazard of having a creepy fucking kid with a fetish for locking people in freezers. Hands down, he'd take first prize in the Mr. Fugly Universe Pageant.

Gunnar's back is to the freezer door. He reaches down. Hauls up the bloodied body of MRS. HATCHER, mid 50's. Slams her onto the counter. She's had better days.

FROM INSIDE THE FREEZER

Frank's eyes widen. Disbelief. Utter horror.

A cigarette burns between Gunnar's clenched lips. He grabs a cleaver. Hacks at the dead woman's limbs. The juicy squelch of meat separating from bone. He dumps her arm into the grinder.

Gunnar flips a switch. A huge industrial meat grinder jumps to life. The woman's arm sticks out from the top. Flails and bounces wildly. The jaws churn the meat into fleshy ropes of human hamburger.

He continues to hack and dump chunks of meat into the machine. Dumps the ash of his burning cigarette into the bell of the grinder.

SLOWLY

Frank steps from the meat freezer. He is less than ten feet from where Gunnar works.

ALL AT ONCE

Butterscotch, the mangy mutt lovechild of a Doberman, pitbull, and all the hounds of hell rolled into one frothy beast is there. She lets loose with a low, menacing growl.

Frank stops. The dog snarls, teeth bared. Ears pinned back. Slobber flies. The dog stares Frank into a terrified stupor.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

Shut up!

Gunnar hacks a huge chunk of meat from the body. Tosses it to the dog. The animal chokes it down. Looks for more. Is rewarded with another hunk.

Frank inches his way another step from the freezer. Watches in horrified fascination. Gunnar continues to hack away at the body. The killer dog begs for more raw meat.

SUDDENLY

Gunnar stops. His face wells up. Starts to cry. Seriously. Niagara Falls. You'd think the man was cutting onions.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

(praying)

Engel Gottes, Beschützer mein, lass mich dir empfohlen sein. Tag und Nacht.

Frank freezes. Uncertain terror.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

Ich bitte dich: beschütz', regier' und leite mich. Hilf mir leben, gut.

Gunnar hacks at the body with abandoned fury. Splatter sprays. He slams the machete into the flesh. Sobs. Years of tortured, sad, serial killer-like depression bubbles to the surface. He continues to recite the Guardian Prayer.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

Und fromm, dass ich in den Himmel komm'. Amen.

The man blubbers, snots, cries. He attacks the body with fresh vengeance.

STANDING OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Frank eyes the front door. It's a good thirty feet away.

The crying man's wails crescendo. If he weren't a deranged killer standing next to a hound from hell, you'd probably give him a hug. The arm in the grinder continues to churn.

The dog eyes him warily. Whines. Seduced and subdued. By the taste of fresh flesh.

Gunnar scoops at the chopped piles of the woman's torso and dumps them into the grinder. The blades mash the flesh and bone into a pulpy red mess.

Frank takes another step. And another. One foot. Two. He is clear. Almost three steps away from the freezer door.

BRRRIIIIINNNNNGGGG

DIRECTLY ABOVE HIS SHOULDER

The phone.

RINGS. A shrill, piercing, stab at your heart and nerves kind of thing. Frank freezes. This is where the audience pees their collective pants.

BRRRIIIIINNNNNGGGG

Gunnar takes a moment. Lets it ring. Composes himself. Throws the cigarette towards the bell of the grinder. It misses.

Falls to the floor. Rolls. Smolders.

BRRRIINNNNGGG

Gunnar turns towards the ringing phone. Frank is gone.

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- CONTINUOUS

Jack types furiously. He is on page 32 of his script and it looks surprisingly similar to this one.

For every keystroke, the echo of someone else typing away can be heard. A bell sounds as the old-fashioned typewriter reaches the end of every line.

Jack listens. Stops typing.

He rises from his chair. Goes to the door and peers out the tiny window. Into the darkened slaughterhouse.

JACK THE HACK

Hello?

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRRIINNNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRRIINNNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Penny?

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Look, if you're not going to let me out, I need to at least be able to concentrate. Can you stop that? Please? Penny?

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Goddamn it. Look, I'm sorry I got mad before. I'm writing...

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Will you please stop typing?!

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

WILL YOU PLEASE SHUT THE FUCK UP?!

The tapping of keys stops. Abruptly.

ALL AT ONCE

An attack. The horrifying sound of death meeting innocence. A struggle. The sound is terrifying - whatever our brilliant and talented sound designer imagines. Think bunny rabbit screams. And chalkboard fingers. Mix in some human misery and you've got it. Jack backs away from the door.

He spins and roots through the boxes. Finds the flashlight. Shines it awkwardly through the window. Into the darkened room.

BOOMPH

Something smashes against the door. It buckles. The flashlight drops from his hands. Jack bends to retrieve it.

When he stands, a note has been tacked to the window, blocking his view. WRITERS WRITE.

That's fucking weird. Jack looks back to the space above his desk. At the wall littered with post-it notes. Eyes stare at the blank space where his same note was just hours before. Gone. Very strange.

Jack lunges to his desk. Crawls on hands and knees. Searches for the missing note. On the floor, he finds it.

He looks back to the door. The note on the window is gone.

Jack studies the small note in his hand. Tacks it back onto the wall.

He listens. Silence. Darkness. Uncertainty.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Ummm...

(considers the words;  
calls out)

Thank you...?

No response. He sits at the desk. Cautious.

His eyes dart from 'WRITERS WRITE' to his latest note. 'Don't get it right. Get it written.'

The typing outside the room resumes.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Everything okay out there?

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Okay, I'll just...

(to himself)

I'll just get back to my writing.

He looks at his own keyboard. Resigned. He listens.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

Who the fuck is that? Doesn't matter. There is work to be done. He reaches into his laptop case. Fingers find headphones. Clamps them around his ears. Deep breath. Where were we?

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Okay. The guy's hacking at the body...He steps from the cooler...The phone rings...

Jack stares hard as he concentrates. Needs an 'aha' moment. Gets it.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Who's on the phone?

Inspired, his fingers tap the keys. He stops. Glances over his shoulder. Continues to type.

CUT TO:

TRANSITION EFFECT

THE ENTIRE SCENE REWINDS

Backwards. Fast motion.

From the phone ringing over Frank's shoulder. To Gunnar hacking at the body, and the hand spinning in the grinder. Frank tries to step out of cooler. Can't. The dog growls. To Frank discovering the awesome body of Ms. Blanc, and following the kid into the freezer. The edited footage rewinds, faster and faster. To the point where Frank climbs in the window. Lands on the counter.

THE SCENE RETURNS TO REGULAR TIME

Frank lands on the stainless steel counter in a frozen heap. He groans. Lies there a moment to recover.

Finally, he pulls himself up.

Takes off his blood covered jacket.

Wraps it around the back of a chair.

Frank spies the phone. Hanging outside the door to the freezer. Completely intact. Picks it up. Dials. The old fashioned dial spins with each turn of his finger.

INT. MORTY'S PLACE -- NIGHT

A phone RINGS. A message machine blinks next to the receiver.

FRANK

Morty, it's me. I've been in an accident. I'm hurt, but okay.

BEHIND HIM

Movement. Subtle.

FRANK (CONT'D)

The truck's stuck in the ditch though.  
I need you to come get me.

A knife is pulled from the counter.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm at some sort of butcher shop on  
the forestry road. You know these  
roads better than I do.

Frank turns slightly. Senses someone in the room.

The kid darts by in the background.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Call me back at this number as soon  
as you can, man.

Geesh. That fucking creepy kid...

Hangs up the phone. It sounds as it hits the cradle.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- EVENING

BRRRIIINNNGGG

A toaster oven sounds as it pops. Jack pours over his pages.  
Lips move as he reads.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

The cheery sound of typing continues.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRRIIINNNGGG.

Another line completed. The story outside of this room  
practically writes itself.

Jack crumples his script pages into a mediocre ball. Shoots  
a basket. Into the piss bucket. Misses.

He peers into the tiny oven. Inside is a small dish wrapped  
in tinfoil. Peels back the foil. Devours hot food by the  
forkful as he reads.

ALL AT ONCE

His chewing slows.

He lunges for the bucket. Spits it out.

Meat!

He dumps the dish into the bucket. Great. Opens the small bar fridge. Studies the packages as he tosses them.

Pepperoni.

Dumps it. Coils of sausage follow. A fullsize ham. Jerky. Cold cuts. Neatly packaged containers wrapped in foil. All meat. Throws it all out. Pissed right off.

JACK THE HACK  
 (to the typist outside)  
 Don't suppose my agent mentioned  
 that I don't eat meat...

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

He roots through the boxes. Finds a half eaten box of animal crackers.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 Or carbs.

Jack marches to the door. Furious.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 Ha ha. Very funny.  
 (shouting out)  
 VERY FUCKING FUNNY!

The room outside is pitch black. He paces the room. Back. And forth.

His eyes land on Penny's manuscript. A bright red binder. Pulls it from the shelf. Turns back to the door.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 I know what you're doing. And I  
 don't care!

Fuck. Whatever. He pulls a cracker out. Bites its head off.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 You write your little story. I've  
 got my own.  
 (to himself)  
 I'm just taking a little break.

Jack throws himself and the box of crackers into the chair. Pouts. Eats without enthusiasm. Boredom.

He stares at the flashing screen. At his notes on the wall. '...you'll never get anything done...'

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

TAPPITY TAPPITY TAP. BRRIIINNNGGG.

Jack glares at the screen. Snaps it shut. Opens the binder on top of it. Starts to read. Loses himself in the story.

TRANSITION:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES PAST JACK TOWARDS THE DOOR

It opens to the scene outside.

AT THE COUNTER

Gunnar chops at the body. Throws meat to the hell dog.

ANGLE ON

Frank's foot as it steps from the meat locker. Gunnar continues to chop at the body. Wipes at serial killer tears.

Both feet on the ground. Frank takes another step. Another.

BRRRIIIIINNNNNGGGG

The phone directly over Frank's shoulder sounds. A little more audience urine.

BRRRIIIIINNNNNGGGG

Gunnar takes a moment. Lets it ring. Composes himself.

BRRRIIIIINNNNNGGGG

Gunnar turns. Snatches the phone from the wall. Frank is gone.

GUNNAR

We are closed.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MORTY'S PLACE -- EVENING

Morty two-fists the phone and a folded slice of cold pizza. Chews, talks, swallows. All at once.

MORTY

No, no - I'm calling for my buddy.  
Frank. Is he there?

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Gunnar throws the cigarette towards the bell of the grinder. Misses. Falls to the floor. Rolls. Smolders.

GUNNAR

You have wrong number.

Gunnar slams the phone back on its cradle.

INT. MORTY'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

Morty stares at the dead phone. Curious. Still chewing.  
Hits the redial. Wipes his mouth. Puts the pizza down.

INTERCUT:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Gunnar turns back to his work. Picks up the cleaver. The phone rings again. Sigh. Can't a psychopath get anything done around this place?

GUNNAR

(barks into phone)

What?!

MORTY (O.S.)

Whoa, hang on a minute. I'm sorry to trouble you. But I'm calling for my friend, Frank Able.

GUNNAR

I told you. Wrong number.

Gunnar moves back to cradle. About to hang up.

MORTY (O.S.)

He just called me from there.

Gunnar stops in his tracks.

GUNNAR

From where?

MORTY (O.S.)

From this number.

GUNNAR

There's no one here.

MORTY (O.S.)

Said his truck is stuck in the ditch near your place.

Gunnar splits the blinds with his fingers. Peers into the wintry night.

INTERCUT:

INT. MORTY'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

Morty has stopped chewing.

MORTY

He had an accident. Sounded like he was hurt.

Cradles the phone while he talks.

INTERCUT:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Gunnar glares through the blinds. Squints. Frowns.

MORTY (O.S.)

Said he needed me to come get him from your place.

MILES AWAY IN THE DISTANCE

The soft red flashing of emergency lights. Of glowing flares. Barely visible.

GUNNAR

There's no one here!

Gunnar slams the phone on its cradle. Loses it. He smashes the phone into the receiver. Over and over. You'd think the man had violent tendencies.

Pieces of phone go flying. Rips the receiver from the wall. Slams it against the freezer door. Displaces the cinderblock holding the door open. The door snaps shut.

INSIDE

Frank backs away. Cowers in the darkened room. A soft light through the freezer door window bathes him in shadow and a bluish light. Kind of like the glow from a computer screen.

OUTSIDE

Gunnar continues his enraged temper tantrum. The dog runs for cover.

INTERCUT:

INT. MORTY'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

Morty listens. Dial tone. Hangs the phone on its cradle. What a jerkoff. Stares at the phone momentarily.

Grabs his car keys. Bright red ski jacket. Gloves. The clothing is unmistakably his. For reasons that will become apparent. Exits.

Goes for a winter night drive.

INTERCUT:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Gunnar grabs his own winter parka. Marches from the building. Into the storm. The door SLAMS behind.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

SLAM!

Sleeping. With Penny's binder propped up in his lap. Jack startles as the door to the meat cooler slams closed. Opens his eyes. Comes face to maggot-filled snout with...

ELVIS THE PIG

Jack scuttles off the bed in his scramble to get away. Lands on the floor in a heap. Gets his bearings. Looks at the pig. Not a maggot in sight. Elvis is as fresh as can be.

He shivers.

AND WE SEE HIS BREATH.

But that's not the biggest surprise. He pulls himself to his feet. Stunned, he stares at his desk.

His laptop is GONE.

In its place, an old fashioned typewriter. A single sheet of paper lined neatly along the guide.

JACK THE HACK

Where's my laptop?

Pissed right off.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

WHERE IS IT?!

Crickets. The place is dead.

Jack shivers. Exhales sharply. Again. His breath comes out in thick clouds of frozen exhalation. What the...?!

Jack spins back towards the door. Slams a fist against it.

He circles the desk. Freaking right out. Spies the piece of paper sticking out. Rips it out.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(reads)

There once was a writer named  
Jack...Who was really more of a  
hack...Locked up to freeze...He typed  
at the keys...Until his fingers were  
black.

Jack crumbles it.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

And you call me a hack...

He shoots. Misses again.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

How about...There once was a bitch  
named Penny...Who thought she was  
being funny...She locked up this  
dude...And then she was sued...

(he's at a loss)

For being a FUCKING LUNATIC!

Jack slams a fist into the door.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

I have a script to write. A fucking  
deadline! This is my life! Give me  
my goddamn computer for fucks sake.  
That laptop is my BABY!!

(suddenly)

Wait a minute. Is this a joke? Did  
my agent set this up? PENNY?!

Of course. That must be it. Jack considers as he stares at  
the frickin door. He looks back at the photo of his agent  
resting on his desk. Maybe not though. He reaches all around  
the door. He's locked in tight.

Stepping back, he charges the door. Shoulders it. Backs  
out of frame to charge again.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Frank charges the door. Slams his body against it. Full  
force. The door doesn't budge.

Frank pulls away from the door. Charges it again. And again.  
Breathing hard, fresh blood oozes from his head wound. He  
rests, hands against knees. The room spins. Sees double.  
Almost as if he has eaten poisoned meat...

Frank staggers to the door. Feels all around. No latches.  
No handles. No escape. He winces. Presses swollen  
fingertips into the tiny cracks between door and frame.

Too tight.

Frank smashes a frozen fist against the tempered glass window. Pounds it. Again and again.

He hoists himself onto a shelf. Presses against the ceiling. Bangs it with a fist. Solid. Hops down. Blows warm breath on his hands to warm them. Looks around. There is no way out.

Breathing hard. Dizzy. The room whirls. Spins. Tilts. Small droplets of sweat bead on his bloodied forehead. He staggers from exertion. Shivers.

Rubs his hands against himself. Frozen vapor escapes his lips in exhausted bursts. He stops. Studies the room.

Yellowed icicles hang from the pipes overhead. Thick frost lines the outside edges of the freezer walls. The place isn't exactly up to code.

His eyes fall on the dead girl. Paige Blanc hangs lifelessly from a hook. Tied hands hold her in place. She wears crooked glasses, slightly cracked and askew on her delicate face. He moves closer. Eyes her winter boots. Warm jacket. Her beautiful body. The scarf tucked inside her coat.

He takes a deep, reluctant breath. Starts to undress her.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS - TIME LAPSE

1) Frank pulls awkwardly at a boot. Fishes out a sock. Considers it.

2) With sock covered hands, Frank unties Paige from the hook. Nearly drops her.

3) Hands peel jeans from panty clad hips.

Frank stares at the dead girl's near naked body sprawled on the floor before him. Only bra and panties remain. He puts on her blouse. Her jacket. Not his color. Or his fit. Wraps her scarf around his face.

A morbid job. But he's warmer. And she's beautiful. Finishes putting on her things - socks and boots. Jeans over his arms. Stares at her still body.

ALL AT ONCE

A noise. From outside the room. Soft shuffling sounds. The kid?

Frank presses himself to the door. Peers out. Cautious. Sees nothing but darkness.

The noise repeats. Frank ducks out of sight. Panic. Fear. Fuck. Looks again.

He sinks to the floor. Pulls the sock from his hand. His fingers reach out. Discover rubber stripping along the base of the door. Pulls it. Peels it off in one long, slow strip.

Black rubber removed, Frank presses his eye to the small crack. Squints through the small space at the bottom.

POV FROM THE FREEZER FLOOR

Frank peers out. Nothing.

THEN

The noise!

THE PITTER PATTERN

Of a cat moves past the door.

As the cat's paws fill his vision. Frank laughs. Startled. Relieved.

FRANK

Hey there.

Sniff. Disinterested, the cat leaves. Little paws pad away. A smoldering cigarette rolls slightly along the floor. Frank blows at it. The ember glows faintly.

With shaking fingers, Frank reaches out. His fingers stretch. Knuckles press forward. He reaches. Gropes blindly. Towards the glowing cigarette. Towards freedom.

ALL AT ONCE

Frank screams. BS, the dog from hell, attacks his hand with bloody abandon. Teeth mangle. Flesh tears. Fingertips are gored. The animal is relentless.

Frank fights the dog off. Pulls his bloody hand to himself. Cradles it against his cheek in agony.

BUT

He has the cigarette. Clenching and re-clenching his injured fingers, Frank pulls a shaky good hand to his lips. Takes a deep drag. A cigarette has never been so sweet. Takes another drag. Closes his eyes. Relishes the brief joy.

Opens them again. Sweet fuck!

Paige is right in front of him. Alive and shivering in her near naked splendor. Inches away. Definitely in his space.

In his panic, he smacks his head against the back of the door.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
You're alive?!

She appears to be in shock. Lips are blue. Shaking uncontrollably with cold. He pulls her to her feet.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Your clothes...

He peels off the jacket and boots.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Oh my god. I thought...

He wraps the jacket around her. It falls from her shoulders. Her arms are so cold she cannot hold the jacket.

PAIGE  
(shivering)  
Who...

FRANK  
Who are you?

Paige can barely speak. She collapses in his arms somewhat. He holds her in an awkward bear hug. Rubs her arms.

PAIGE  
P-Paige...

FRANK  
Paige. Here, let me warm you.

She shivers. He realizes he is wearing her scarf.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
This is yours.

He wraps it around her neck.

The two cuddle awkwardly. A million questions.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
I'm Frank. Who...how did you...how did you get here?

Paige shivers uncontrollably. Stumbles the words out as she warms against him.

PAIGE  
The boy...

FRANK  
He's your son?

Paige shivers.

PAIGE  
No. S-Social S-Services...

FRANK  
You're a social worker?

Paige nods. Frank puts the pieces together.

PAIGE  
W-we came...to take the boy...

Paige starts to cry.

FRANK  
That lady...who was she?

PAIGE  
M-Mrs...Mrs. Hatcher...We worked  
together...she was my b-boss...

Paige sobs even harder.

ALL AT ONCE

The condenser pipe in the corner hisses at the couple. They startle at the intrusion. A thick blast of fog rolls from the machine's icy coils.

FRANK  
If we can keep each other warm, we'll  
get through this. Okay?

But it's not okay. The fog thickens. Frank pulls Paige closer. Heat between strangers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

A fly. Waxes its wings. Takes to flight. A thousand eyes focus on Jack as he reads Penny's manuscript. He is completely engrossed. Her writing is really, really good. The insect buzzes through the room.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

1) Bounces a ball against the wall. Catches. Throws. Catches. Throws.

2) Feeds Mabel, the guppy. She swims blissfully unaware in her glass cage. Lips balloon in and out as she catches morsels of food. Rips them to shreds.

3) Paces. Paces some more. Removes a box from a shelf. Unfolds it. Jack studies how it folds flat.

- 4) Cups a hot mug of java with both hands. Huddles over the warm liquid. Shivering. Switches his PROTAGONIST hat for a toque. Empty boxes of animal crackers litter the desk. Frosty breath.
- 5) Studies the condenser box. On hands and knees. A close up, thorough inspection.
- 6) Studies condenser pipes on the roof. Ideas brew.
- 7) Gives Elvis a gentle shove. The pig sways like a giant punching bag. MORPHS into Paige. MORPHS back. Jack rubs at tired eyes.
- 8) Straps himself into the chair. Sees the picture of his agent grinning back at him. Gives him the finger.
- 9) Types. Types some more. Types again. One friggin word after another.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

MONTAGE OF SHOTS - SURVIVAL

- 1) Frank helps Paige to her feet. She nods as he helps her run in the same spot. He does jumping jacks.
- 2) Frank staggers with exhaustion. He runs in the same spot. Paige falls over.
- 3) Frank pulls Paige close. Zips her jacket around her. All the way up. She opens the jacket. Invites him in. Together, they shiver. Bundle tight against one another. One body heating another.
- 4) Frank spreads open several cardboard boxes. Paige climbs inside. Meager insulation from the freezing cold.
- 5) Frank lights a flare from his pocket. The room fills with dazzling light.
- 6) Frank lunges at the door. Works himself into a sweat. Smashes himself into it repeatedly. The door doesn't budge.
- 7) Frozen breath clings to the air. Frank's face is white with frost. She bandages his hand.

FRANK

This is why I'm a friggin' cat  
person...

She smiles. He cups her hands in his own. Blows to warm them. They move closer together. Awkward strangers. The struggle for survival continues.

8) A frosty mist spews from the condenser coils.

TRANSITION:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

Jack stands in front of the mirror. Pours hot water from the coffee pot into a basin. Steams the mirror. It fogs over. He bends. Scoops warm water into his face. Washes his tired face, trying to revive himself. He stands. Pats his face dry.

The word:

HACK

Written in the foggy mirror.

How the fuck did that happen?

Jack stares at the mirror. Backs away. Wraps the blanket around his shoulders. His eyes search the room. He is completely alone.

HISSSSSSSSS...

He spins around.

The condenser pipe rattles to life. Thick fog rolls across the room. Surrounds him. He practically stands in a cloud.

He bundles the blanket around his shoulder. Shuffles towards the offending sound. Towards the door. Overhead pipes rain a frothy cloud of white throughout the small room.

The three day old stubble is white with frost. His breath comes out in jagged bursts of frozen air.

He slams a frozen fist against the door. Three times.

JACK THE HACK

(hoarse)

Penny..! Please... Open the door...

No response. No escape. He has obviously done this many times already. He turns back to the condenser. Shuffles on frozen feet. Shivers. And then a sound. Softly at first.

Tick Tick Tick Tick

Tick Tick Tick Tick

He stares at the clock on the shelf. It echoes through the tiny room. Almost as if picking up speed. Faster. Louder.

TICK TICK TICK TICK

TICK TICK TICK TICK

Jack backs away from the horrible sound. Clamps hands to frozen ears. The sounds slows. Echoes through the chamber. Painfully slow. Booming.

TICK

TICK

TICK

Jack turns away from the clock. Fog swirls his feet. Hollywood sneakers disappear in the mist. The noise shudders to a stop. The fog lifts. Sneakers are replaced by winter boots. FRANK.

CUT TO:

Frank turns. The frozen mist has stopped.

Except for one pipe. Directly above a shivering Paige, perched inside a cardboard box. The pipe rains a gentle cloud of mist on her.

Frank hoists himself against a shelf. Fumbles with frozen, bandaged fingers. Turns the rusted spigot closed. The plume of frozen spray stops. The silence as thick as snow.

He steps off the shelf. Pleased. A brief moment of relief.

PAIGE

Frank?

She moves closer. The pipes bulge. Shake. Groan. Frozen mist builds in the pipes. The sound builds. Pipes rattle.

CLANG.

CLANG.

The sound intensifies. Deafening. Hands clamp over ears.

CLANG. CLANG. CLANG.

The pipes rattle. The couple backs away. The sound is replaced by a new one. A slow, building hiss. The sound of evil. Pipes above vibrate slightly. Like the groan you hear when a ship is sinking in the movies. Or sometimes, before an explosion. A sound that we'll hear despite our budget.

Frank clamps a hand over Paige's frost bitten ears, and another over his own. Like an overworked laundry machine, the pipes shake. Sound builds. Like water moving through the pipes of an old building. The pressure builds. Moans. Aches. Rattles.

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap.

TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP, TAP.

Echoes. Reverberates. Crescendos.

Frank races to the condenser. Wrestles his body against it. Rocks. Strains. Tries to pull it from the wall.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

FRANK

Help me!

Together, the two strain against the frozen machine.

ALL AT ONCE

The unit gives way.

ALONG THE ROOF

One pipe after another BURSTS with frozen spray. The couple race to a corner of the room. Caked with ice and freezing spray. It's like being bathed in a never ending Slurpee.

PAIGE

We've got to get out of here!

FRANK

You don't say.

PAIGE

I don't handle small spaces well.  
I'm claustrophobic!

FRANK

Good luck with that.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM

Golem stares at the door. A wet mess of ice and sludge pours from the bottom. Creepy kid just stares.

EXT. RANGLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- NIGHT

The wheels of an old truck screech to a stop. Rubber boots step into fresh snow. Blinking flashers glow dimly from the truck in the ditch. Frank's truck. Buried beneath white.

A scratched, blood stained hand swipes at the truck. Snow falls away. 'Frank's Big Tow Ltd' across the door.

Gunnar shines a flashlight into the darkness. Into the snow covered field. At frozen footsteps in broken snow. Tracks. Leading to soft, distant lights. The abattoir.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

A chair scrapes across the concrete floor. Towards the freezer door. Little boy legs climb on top. Stocking feet. Standing tiptoe. Golem peers inside.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- CONTINUOUS

Icicles cling to icicles. Frothy, frozen spray shoots from the pipes above. Frank and Paige huddle together. Doused in wet sludge. The flare continues to light the room.

PAIGE  
You smoke, right?

FRANK  
Yeah. Why?

PAIGE  
Give me your lighter...

Frozen hands pat pockets. Pulls out a lighter.

FRANK  
Why?

She grabs it. Flicks it. It sparks. Again. Again.

PAIGE  
My fingers are frozen. I can't.

FRANK  
What are you doing?

Paige swipes the contents of a shelf onto the floor. Shoves a box at Frank.

PAIGE  
Help me rip this. We can burn it.

FRANK  
We can't light a fire in here. We'll suffocate.

Paige snaps at the lighter. Produces a flame. Lights a corner of cardboard.

PAIGE  
If we don't, we'll freeze to death.

Frank lunges for the flaming cardboard.

FRANK  
You'll smoke us out!

Paige pulls it away. The flame grows. Smoke thickens.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Stop!

Paige shields the flame with her body. Coughs as the smoke thickens.

PAIGE

Don't! Leave it!

FRANK

You're going to kill us!

PAIGE

We'll die if we don't!

FRANK

Give it to me!

PAIGE

No!

FRANK

Stop!

Frank wrestles her for the flaming cardboard. She holds it from his reach. They struggle. Push. Grope.

Flames lick at a roll of packing paper on an opposite shelf. It lights. Catches the cardboard corner of another box.

Fire burns at Paige's fingers. She drops it. Frank stomps at the flaming cardboard. Frozen fingers smash against flames. The two collapse in wet sludge. Choking against the smoke and doused flames. Paige sobs. Frustration. Anger. At the situation.

PAIGE

I'm sorry! I'm just so c-c-cold...

Frank inspects her burnt fingers. Singed flesh. Blistered.

FRANK

Does it hurt?

He squeezes her hands. They are red. Charred with ooze.

PAIGE

I can't feel them.

Frank folds her fingers over burned palms.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Is it bad?

Frank blows warm breath on her hands.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

I went to a psychic once. This line  
is supposed to be my 'life line'.

She traces the line with her finger.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

She said I'd live a long life. I  
guess she was wrong.

FRANK

What does mine say?

She takes his hand in hers. She snuffles away a tear.

PAIGE

You'll have a family. One child.

FRANK

Maybe someday.

PAIGE

You're good at taking care of others.

A moment passes. He pulls mittens over her hands. Squeezes  
them. Gently. She grimaces.

FRANK

I hate that you're here. But I'm  
really glad I'm not alone.

PAIGE

Me too.

ALL AT ONCE

Paige scrambles away in horror. Her eyes are locked on the  
window to the freezer.

Frank looks at the door. At the small boy peering in.  
Watching them.

FRANK

Who is that?

PAIGE

It's Golem. His son.

Frank goes to the door. Golem stares back.

FRANK

Golem. Open the door.

PAIGE

Please, Golem.

FRANK  
 What's the matter with him? Doesn't  
 he speak English?

Frank slams his hand against the window.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Open the goddamn door!

PAIGE  
 He doesn't talk. I don't know what's  
 wrong with him.

FRANK  
 I do. He's a fucking, creepy kid!

PAIGE  
 Golem, please. Let us out.

Golem considers. For a moment, it looks promising.

ALL AT ONCE

Golem turns his head. A sound.

The squeaking of a truck rattling into the drive. It pulls  
 to a stop. Daddy's back.

PAIGE (CONT'D)  
 You've got to let us out!

FRANK  
 Golem! Open the door!

Golem scrambles to get down from the chair he stands on.  
 Slides it across the room. Back into place.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Shhh! Listen!

PAIGE  
 What?

FRANK  
 Shhh!

They stop. A truck door slams.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 He's back!

PAIGE  
 No! What do we do?

Frank eyes the mess. Scrambles to push frozen meat from  
 sight. Clean up the cleared shelves. The flare continues  
 to burn.

FRANK  
Quick! Help me.

PAIGE  
What are you doing? We have to get  
out of here!

Frank stuffs frozen meat back into boxes.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

Rubber boots march through the snow. Approaching.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Golem runs from the room. Scrambles into the stainless steel  
drawer of a cupboard. Slides it shut behind him. Hidden  
from sight.

Gunnar pushes the front door open. Wind howls from the stormy  
night outside. He locks it out. Stomps snow from his jacket  
and boots.

GUNNAR  
Golem! Come here!

Gunnar looks around the room. No sign of the creepy kid.

DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

Gunnar spies the dripping tap. He looks around suspiciously.  
Searching for any sign of the intruder. For Frank.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

Frank shuffles Paige back to where she was hanging before.  
He ties her wrists. They argue in whispered voices.

PAIGE  
What are you doing?

FRANK  
I'm tying you up.

Paige fights him.

PAIGE  
What? No! Why?

FRANK  
If he thinks you're dead, he'll come  
back for you.

PAIGE  
So I'm...bait?

Paige stares at Frank in utter horror. Struggles harder.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Let me go!

Frank tightens the ropes on her wrists.

FRANK

Shhh! He'll hear you!

PAIGE

Don't do this! Please don't! I  
can't fight him if I'm tied up!

She looks to the door. Complete terror in her eyes.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Gunnar turns the tap to 'off'. The dripping stops. Looks around the room. Steps back. Into a sloppy mess - water from the freezer.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- CONTINUOUS

Frank covers Paige loosely with the sheet of plastic.

FRANK

He doesn't know I'm in here.

PAIGE

So that's your answer. To hide. Do  
nothing.

This hits home. The weight of her words hang between them.

FRANK

Just don't move. And keep quiet.

Frank turns. Sees the burning flare. He forgot. SHIT!

He throws himself on it. Rolls. Tries to extinguish it. The flames continue. Grimaces. It burns.

He grabs the flare. Races from view. Beneath the door. Beneath the sightline of anyone looking in. The flare continues to sputter its glow.

Her eyes follow him through a fold in the plastic. Grow wide. Wild. She chokes out a soft scream.

He spins on her. Instant anger. About to shush her. Sees her frightened eyes.

He freezes.

Above him in the window is Gunnar.

Frank holds himself still. Just barely out of view. Gunnar's face fills the window. Peers in. Directly above him.

FROM OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Gunnar scans the small room with his eyes. Sniffs the air. Smoke. Strange...

His hand reaches for the door. Thumb presses the handle.

INSIDE

Frank stares at the door. Readies himself to charge the huge man.

ALL AT ONCE...

The howling wind sounds. A door opens.

MORTY (O.S.)

Hello?

Morty - the friend who called earlier - stands there.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Gunnar's thumb lifts from the handle. He turns towards the intruder.

MORTY (CONT'D)

Hi. I called earlier. I'm looking for my friend.

FROM THE CUPBOARD

Golem watches. His father turns towards the man in the doorway. Gunnar stares icily. Silent.

MORTY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to intrude. But I'm kind of worried about him. His truck's stuck in the snow a couple miles back.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

Paige hisses at Frank.

PAIGE

Do something!

Frank shushes her. He's still trying to get the flare out.

FRANK

SHHH!!!

PAIGE

What if he leaves?

FRANK

No one knows I'm in here. It's the one thing we've got going for us!

PAIGE

Your friend can't help us if he doesn't know we're in here!

FRANK

Just let me think!

Paige struggles to free herself.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Morty wanders the room with his eyes. Sees a jacket hanging. On the back of a chair. Frank's jacket.

MORTY

So you're sure you haven't seen him?  
I saw tracks in the snow. They seemed to be headed for here.

GUNNAR

I told you. No one's been here.

Morty leans his arms on the back of the chair. On the jacket. Just as Gunnar spots Frank's jacket. The two men size each other up.

Morty spies the smashed phone behind Gunnar.

MORTY

I see your phone's out of order.

Gunnar's fist clenches.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

Frank and Paige continue to argue in whispered, hushed tones.

FRANK

Morty's like a brother to me. He knows something's wrong.

PAIGE

And we'll be frozen corpsicles by then!

FRANK

He'll figure it out! He'll get help.

PAIGE

You're going to take that chance?

OUTSIDE FREEZER

Morty pulls on gloves. Zips his jacket. Plays dumb.

MORTY

Okay. I'll be on my way then. If you see him, tell him to call me. He knows how to reach me. Sorry to trouble you.

ALL AT ONCE

Paige screams from the freezer.

PAIGE (O.S.)

NO! DON'T LEAVE!

Gunnar spins around. Startled.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

Paige continues to kick and scream against Frank's protests.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

(sobs, hysterical)

I'm in the freezer! PLEASE! HELP ME!!

FRANK

Shhh! Stop! You're going to get us both killed!

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Morty starts towards Gunnar.

MORTY

What the hell is going on? Who is that?

GUNNAR

My wife. We had a fight.

Paige continues to scream bloody murder.

MORTY

(sarcastic)

I'm sure that's what happened.

Gunnar flips a switch on the wall. A low, electrical buzz fills the room.

GUNNAR

I'm sorry.

Confused, Morty stares at Gunnar. Then turns towards the sound. Water ripples in a stainless steel tub beside him.

He turns back towards Gunnar. Sees Frank's face peering from the window. Over Gunnar's shoulder. Realizes everything too late.

ALL AT ONCE

Gunnar charges. Grips Morty in a huge bearhug. Dumps him in the vat of electrified water.

IN THE WINDOW

Frank watches. Horrified.

FRANK

Oh god...

IN THE TUB

Morty's body spasms. Water splashes everywhere. His body convulses. Feathers float to the top. A frothy mess.

Gunnar wipes at a stray tear. Hangs his head in shame. A killer with a conscience. Walks away.

Morty's body continues to shake out of control. Hands shake and claw at the air. The current paralyzes. Air bubbles to the surface.

FROM THE CUPBOARD

Golem pushes open the stainless steel door. Climbs out. Tiptoes across the room. Stands over the tub.

Morty's dying eyes stare back. He sputters. Chokes. Struggles less. Gloves float to the top.

BEHIND GOLEM

His father flips the switch to off. He leans on a stainless steel cart. A look passes between father and son. Deep sadness.

IN THE FREEZER

Frank sinks to the floor. Paige continues to sob. Scream.

PAIGE

Oh god! No!

Their last chance at escape. Gone. Frank pulls off a glove. Stares at the swollen, black skin that was once his finger. Shock. Awe. A morbid curiosity.

Above him, water drips along a yellowed icicle. Lengthening. Sharpening. The ice gleams. The fog rolls in.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

TIME LAPSE

MONTAGE OF SHOTS

1) Jack paces throughout the room. Talks into a hand recorder as he goes. Stops at a shelf. Bends to examine it. Crawls into it. Pulls his feet in with him. As if hiding.

2) Jack tapes blue and pink index cards to a structure map above him. Scribbles on the card. Sandwiches the notes between yellow post-its.

3) Jack lies on the floor of the freezer. Peels rubber from bottom of door. Plays with the rubber stripping. Snaps it like a whip. The end catches him in the face. Rubs at the welt.

4) Pants around ankles, Jack squats over the bucket. Reads Blake Snyder's book, 'THE LAST BOOK ON SCREENWRITING YOU'LL EVER READ' in large, ironic type.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Paige shivers uncontrollably in the darkened room. Barely conscious. Time has passed.

All at once, the door opens. She startles. Squints. Light floods the room. Her eyes search for Frank. Where is he? Desperation. Fear.

Gunnar pushes a stainless steel cart into the room - a metal gurney of sorts. It's cargo? A wet, human mess. Morty.

His electrified body continues to shake uncontrollably. A horrible gurgling noise escapes his lips.

The cart moves past the shelves. Box after box of frozen meats line the shelves. The cart stops. Morty comes eyeball to frozen eyeball with Frank, sprawled across a shelf. Hidden behind the boxes of meat.

Gunnar reaches up. Pulls a meathook along the ceiling rail.

With his eyes locked on Morty, Frank presses a shivering, frostbitten finger to frozen blue lips. Reveals a glowing wristwatch in the process.

Morty starts to shake even more violently. Tries to lift his arms. With everything he's got, he shakes and points to his own wrist. Tries to warn Frank.

Frank frowns. Not understanding.

Morty shakes even harder. Gurgles with effort. Slips from the cart slightly. Nearly falls to the floor.

JUST THEN

Gunnar's face looms over Morty. Hauls him back onto the cart. Frank clamps hand over wrist. Covers the glowing watch. Just in time.

Gunnar gives the cart a shove. It catches. On something. A foot. Frank's foot. Sticking out from the shelf.

Gunnar pushes. Frank's eyes grow wide.

Gunnar pushes again. Harder. A sickening crunch. The cart moves past him.

Frank's eyes flutter. Nearly passes out. Agonizing pain.

Boxes filled with packages of frozen meat fall to the floor as Frank spills from his hiding spot.

Gunnar spins around. Startled. WTF?!

Behind him, Paige grabs at him with her legs. Locks him in a tight grip. Every man's fantasy.

Gunnar slams her backwards against the metal shelving. Her breath gone, she weakens momentarily. She hangs on for dear life.

Frank has recovered somewhat. Screams as he stands on his twisted ankle. Charges at Gunnar with the metal cart. Slams him in the gut. Morty falls. The cart overturns.

Trapped between Paige's legs and the cart as it rams into his stomach, Gunnar reaches out. With enormous strength, he pulls at shelving. Rusted nails spring from the wall.

Shelves topple over. Contents spill everywhere. Meat slams the metal floor like falling hail.

A hunk of frozen meat bashes Frank in the side of the head. He falls. Dazed. The rainfall of meat continues. A box cutter slides across the floor.

As Paige and Gunnar struggle, her rope pulls loose from the meathook. They both crash to the floor. She screams as he lands on her.

In the mess, Frank spots the box cutter. Just a few feet away. Towards the door. He reaches out. Crawls. Eyes on the prize.

ON THE FLOOR

Paige grabs hold of Gunnar's leg. Bites him. He screams out. A strong fist clenches. We hear Paige scream as the fist makes contact. Silence. Her glasses skid beneath a shelf.

Frank reaches for the box cutter. Claws for it. All at once, he is pulled away. Nails drag across the stainless steel floor. Likes nails on chalkboard. His hands scramble. Find the blade. He twists. Slams it back blindly. The blade sinks into Gunnar's leg. He cries out.

But Gunnar has his ankle. SNAP. Breaks it completely.

Frank screams. Until this moment, he only thought he knew what pain was.

Frank crumples into himself. Defeated. Barely able to breathe.

Behind him, Gunnar rises. Pulls the blade from his leg. Boots limp towards Frank.

With blurred vision, Frank looks up at the evil lurking over him. Ugh. Groans as he struggles to raise his head.

AND THEN

A boot smashes down. All goes dark.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- LATER

Frank comes to. Everything is a blur. The room spins. He blinks. Focuses. Vision doubles.

Wills his eyes open. Tries to move. Can't.

Presses frozen hands against the stainless steel floor. His face is literally frozen to the floor.

He cries out as he tries to pry himself loose. Lips and nose are swollen black. Cracked. Frosted. His lip and cheek pulls as he strains to break free.

He shakes with exertion. Screams as he slowly...

RIPS

OFF

HIS FRICKIN FACE.

Swollen, tear filled eyes stare down at the disgusting glob of frozen flesh. Stuck to the metal floor. His ears are black with frostbite. If they were any more swollen he could probably fly. If he survives this, he'll have a tough time getting a date.

Frank crawls through the wreckage. Finds the frozen heap that was once Morty. Frank buries what's left of his face in Morty's jacket. Sobs for his dead friend.

Beneath a shelf, he sees the twisted frames that are left of Paige's glasses. He grabs them with a shaking hand.

There are no words. Just sadness. And a terrible emptiness in his heart. You shouldn't write that on the page. But there are no other words. Teary frightened eyes say it all.

ALL AT ONCE

The goddamn condenser rattles to life. It hisses. Spews. Adds insult to injury. Frank glares at it.

Frank pulls himself to his feet. Stands. Sways. Drags his crippled body through the room. His ankle bruised and swollen. Twisted awkwardly. The man looks like a monster.

His hands find a broken metal bracket from the twisted shelving. He pries it loose. Stands over the condenser unit. Takes a deep breath.

AND

Smashes the small box. Over and over. The rod crashes down. Again and again. Dents form. Paint chips. The little box jumps from the impact. Frank beats the hell out of it.

ALL AT ONCE

Spray bursts from everywhere. One pipe after another shoots a cold stream of wet vapor throughout the room. Not even the produce section at Trader Joe's gets this much moisture.

Frank is soaked with frozen spray. It is as if he has opened a fire hydrant. A brand new, fresh hell. The pipes gurgle as they spew their frothy mess through the room. It sounds exactly like a coffee pot at the end of its brew.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

Jack huddles over the coffee maker, willing it through its brew cycle. Bloodshot eyes. Sways with exhaustion. He looks like death. You'd think this script might kill him.

In one hand, he holds a pill bottle. XANAX. He opens the lid. Dumps it all. Into the garbage.

ALL AT ONCE

The fog is back. It fills the room like a thick cloud.

His head snaps upright as he hears a new sound.

Paige's sobs ECHO. Fade away.

Jack's eyes search the room for the haunting sound. He is alone. Or so he thinks.

His eyes squint into the fog. At Elvis. Except, it's not. Something isn't quite right.

He pulls himself to his frozen feet. Stumbles towards the hanging pig. Through the fog.

Hanging before him is Penny. He stares at her for a moment. How did this happen? What the hell is going on?

Penny hangs by her hands from the meat hook. Lifeless. Or so it seems. He stares at her for a moment. Victoria's Secret models would envy. Except her mouth is bound. A blindfold covers her eyes. Otherwise, she's perfect. Perfectly dead.

He moves down her body with his eyes. To her boots. Kneels at her dangling feet. Removes a precious boot. Compares it to his own. Maybe it'll fit? Reaches for the second.

ALL AT ONCE

Penny is alive and kicking. Complete freak-out. Her legs kick and spin. Pedal out of control like some crazed bicyclist. Without the bike.

Penny is driven by an uncontrollable terror. The toe of one boot catches Jack sharply in the jaw. His head smashes back. Against a shelf. Ouch. Fresh bloody hell. Oozes.

She lands in an awkward heap on the floor. Crabwalks blindly in a mad scramble to get away. Nearly hysterical with terror.

JACK THE HACK

Penny...stop! Just hold still...

Untrusting. Fearful. Penny tries to calm her breathing. She braces herself, fearing the worst as he moves closer. Jack removes the blindfold. And the mouthgag.

PENNY

WHERE'S MY SON, YOU FUCKER?!

Jack takes a step back. She kicks at him. Misses. But she means business.

JACK THE HACK

I don't...

PENNY

You touch a freckle and I'll carve you up so bad...

JACK THE HACK

Listen, I don't have your kid. I don't know what games you're playing here...

PENNY

WHERE IS HE?!

JACK THE HACK

I DON'T HAVE HIM! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR KID!

They both back off. Breathing hard.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

All I know is that you've been out there typing away for days. It's been making me crazy!

PENNY

I have not!

JACK THE HACK

Oh yeah? Then what's with the meat in the freezer? Or turning this room into an icebox?

PENNY

Your agent had me do it!

JACK THE HACK

Why?

PENNY

I don't know! He paid me extra. Said it was a joke.

JACK THE HACK

A joke?!

PENNY

Said he wanted to teach you what a deadline really was!

Silence. Jack considers.

JACK THE HACK

How do I know you're not making this up?

PENNY

Making what up? You're the one with the imagination, remember?

JACK THE HACK

What are you doing here then?

PENNY

I came back for you! I was worried  
about you.

This stops him. Cold. She looks away. Uncomfortable.

PENNY (CONT'D)

And to give you something.

JACK THE HACK

What?

PENNY

It's inside my jacket.

Jack reaches into her jacket. Removes the package from her  
inside pocket.

PENNY (CONT'D)

It came express. I thought you might  
need it. So I came back. But when  
I got here, there was a man.

JACK THE HACK

A man?

PENNY

Typing.

This catches Jack's attention.

JACK THE HACK

Hold still.

Quickly. Jack unties her wrists.

PENNY

I thought it was you. But then he  
attacked me. He took Cole.

Penny's hysteria returns. Grows.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Why would anyone take my Cole? This  
has to have something to do with  
you! WHO ARE YOU? WHERE'S MY BOY?

Penny breaks down. Sobs. Heart breaking. Body wracking.  
Sincere grief.

Jack reaches out to her. She snaps away. Violently. Glares  
at him like the devil himself.

PENNY (CONT'D)

DON'T TOUCH ME...

She backs away from him. Towards the desk. Bumps the shelf. The picture of David Mulligan, the agent, smashes to the floor. She retrieves it.

JACK THE HACK

I swear, Penny. I don't know what's going on. I don't know anything about your son.

Penny stares at the photo.

PENNY

That's the guy.

JACK THE HACK

Who?

PENNY

The man who attacked me! He took Cole.

JACK THE HACK

No way. That's David, my agent. He'd would never do that.

PENNY

GODDAMN YOU! HE TOOK MY SON!

Penny sends the photograph flying. It smashes against the wall. But she's not finished. She slams against Jack in a rage. Pounds at him with her fists.

Jack fights her blows. Grabs for her wrists. Outwrestles her. She collapses against him, an emotional wreck.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Why? What does this have to do with me? Why would he take my son?

He holds her. Calms her. For a moment.

JACK THE HACK

I don't know. But we're going to have to start trusting each other if we're going to get out of here.

Penny pulls away. Unsure. They eye each other warily.

Jack flops onto the bed. Exhausted.

He reaches for the FedEx package. Dumps the contents. Two scripts and a children's book. Except the book has been altered. Colored pictures and text are taped over the original. The title cover reads 'JACK THE HACK'.

PENNY

That's my book. Except, the words  
are different.

Jack flips it open. Places the two scripts next to him on  
the bed.

JACK THE HACK

Once upon a time, there was a  
screenwriter named Robert Southhill...

Penny picks up the scripts. Sits next to him. Peers over  
his shoulder as he reads.

Jack flips the page. Continues to read.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(reads)

He wrote a lame-ass script. And  
then he died.

An obituary is pasted on the opposite page.

PENNY

Who's Robert Southhill?

He doesn't answer. Stares at the book in icy silence.

Penny piles the two scripts in her lap. The titles are  
identical:

INSANITY - THE MOVIE

The one on top says 'Written by Robert Southhill'. She flips  
through it briefly. Pages and pages of studio crafted script.

Jack flips another page in the children's book.

JACK THE HACK

(reads)

Fortunately, Robert had a friend who  
also wanted to be a screenwriter.

A headshot of Jack is pasted on the page. JACK THE HACK is  
scrawled in child like letters beneath the photo.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(reads)

His name was Jack the Hack.  
Unfortunately, he wasn't very good  
with deadlines.

Jack flips the page.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(reads)

In fact, he wasn't very good at anything.

Jack pulls the book from Penny's view. She doesn't see the picture. She's looking at the scripts in her lap.

PENNY

Jack...

Penny slides the first script away to reveal the second one. 'Written by Jack Liare'.

PENNY (CONT'D)

This script has your name on it.

She flips through the pages.

PENNY (CONT'D)

But all the pages are blank.

Jack slams the book closed. Dumbfounded.

He rises. Wanders the room. The fog has lifted.

The moment of truth.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You didn't write this.

Jack hangs his head.

Penny looks at him. Confused. Incredulous.

PENNY (CONT'D)

But, you've been in here for days. You've got all these ideas and notes...

JACK THE HACK

I've never finished anything in my life.

Penny stares at him. Shock.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

I know it was wrong. But I didn't think it would matter. It's not like a 'written by' credit can help you if you're dead.

Jack paces the room.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

He died the same day he finished it.  
(MORE)

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

It would have been such a waste! I thought, 'if I could just get this first one made, I could write the next one'.

PENNY

Jack, wanting to be a writer isn't the same as being one.

JACK THE HACK

All I wanted was to be a success.

SUDDENLY

A piece of paper slides beneath the door.

PENNY

Jack..!

Jack goes to the door. Slams a fist.

JACK THE HACK

LET US OUT OF HERE! RIGHT NOW!

Penny cowers on the bed. Wraps her arms around herself. Struggles not to cry.

Jack stares out the window into the darkness. Nothing.

He bends. Snatches the paper from the floor. A poem.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

(reads)

Your time gets shorter the longer  
you wait...your child will die if  
your pages are late.

Penny rises from the bed. Grabs the poem from him.

PENNY

Every hour you write, the temperature  
will drop...Don't even think, about  
writing a flop.

Jack follows along over her shoulder.

PENNY (CONT'D)

If the script isn't great, the best  
it can be...your flesh will be ice  
and you'll never go free.

Jack follows the lines of the poem with his finger.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Your agent's a worse writer than you  
are.

JACK THE HACK

Tick Tick, get going...have you looked at the clock? Nothing like a deadline, to beat writer's block.

A look passes between Jack and Penny.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

The clock is running, your story is lame. To save your child, you must play this game.

Penny lunges at the clock. Flips it over. 48 hours.

PENNY

What the hell is this?

JACK THE HACK

Is this a joke?

PENNY

What do we do? I've never written a screenplay before!  
(glaring at Jack)  
And neither have you.

JACK THE HACK

I'm going to get your son.

PENNY

How?

JACK THE HACK

By putting one word after another.  
You're going to help me.

Jack trades places with Penny. He sits her at the typewriter.

PENNY

This isn't exactly how I thought I'd learn to write a screenplay.

JACK THE HACK

COME ON!

She reels from his anger. He softens.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Do you want to save your son or not?!

Penny swallows at the lump in her throat. Of course.

He thrusts a blank piece of paper at her. Her finger bleeds as she takes it. Ouch. Papercut. She sucks the wound. Blood on the page.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 If you wait for the perfect situation,  
 you'll never get anything done.

Penny throws him a look. Eyes the clock. Loads the typewriter.

PENNY  
 Where'd you leave off?

Jack paces the room. Like a maniac.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Outside the writing room, gloved hands adjust the temperature. Below zero.

JACK THE HACK (O.S.)  
 There was an attack...

Gloves that look strikingly similar to the ones that floated to the top of the electric chicken bath. Morty's gloves. But who is wearing them?

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Frank lies over his dead friend's body. The condenser pipe rattles away. Louder and louder with each passing second.

He pulls himself to his feet. Finds a metal brace from the shelving.

With all the rage he can muster, he attacks the condenser. Smashes it to hell. Paint flies from the coils. It sprays. Hisses. Water bursts from the pipes. Rains down on him in a fine mist.

He turns and smashes at the main door. Screams in agony. Pounds away at it with the metal rod. His voice is hoarse. Struggles to make words come.

FRANK  
 LET ME OUT, YOU GODDAMN MOTHERFUCKER!  
 LET ME OUTTA HERE! GODDAMN IT!

Frank charges at the door. Smashes against it. Hurls the rod at the glass window. Screams. Rages. Breathing hard.

He backs away from the door. The pipes continue to mist down on him. He throws the pipe to the floor.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 If you won't let me out, then you're  
 not coming in!

Angry as hell, he grabs at the shelving. Barricades the door. Adds another. And another. Fills the space with everything he can. Drags and stuffs everything into place.

Hoisting himself up, he reaches for the pipes. Strains. Pushes. Pulls. Works it loose.

ALL AT ONCE

The pipe gives way. A frothy wet spray shoots down on him.

He bends the pipe downwards. Towards the window. And the barricaded doorway. The mist is practically a stream of water now. It shoots all over the window, and the shelving. Freezes.

Jack steps back. Admires his work. Water sprays. Builds into frozen icicles.

He bumps against a cardboard box. The remaining contents spill out. Including a rusted old box cutter. Shivering, he reaches for it. Clumsily pulls open the blade. Presses it to his swollen fingers. Dull. But sharp enough. He pulls it close. Like a lover. His wristwatch beeps. He looks at it. Turns his wrist over. Traces the veins with his fingers. Considers his options.

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Golem sits at the kitchen table. His father places a plate of food on the table. Sausages. Golem's favorite.

Gunnar sits himself across from his young son. Folds his hands in prayer. With plastic fork and knife in hand, Golem bows his head. The creepy family of two prays in silence.

GUNNAR

In the name of the Father, the son...

SUDDENLY

A trickle of sludge pours from the bottom of the freezer door. The water streams like a small waterfall.

Gunnar pushes his chair back. Rises from the table.

Golem reaches towards the plate of sausages. Piles a big one onto his plate. Cuts himself a juicy slice.

Gunnar grabs the butcher's knife from the plate of sausages. Moves towards the door.

Still chewing, Golem follows his father. Quietly. As always.

Gunnar approaches the door to the meat freezer. A bloody hue of water pours out. He tries to see through the window. Completely iced over. Leans against the door. Listens.

Silence. Except for the trickling of water.

Gunnar pulls at the door. It is wedged tight. He pulls again. Not even a man of his considerable strength can open it easily.

He tries again. Leans back. Reefs on it. All his strength.

SUDDENLY

The door cracks open. He strains. Jerks it open even more. A wall of ice greets him. He stares at it. Contemplates. Laughs. Then laughs a bit more. A great big belly laugh erupts from this evil man. His son just stares.

ALL AT ONCE

A cascade of ice and water sprays down onto Gunnar as Frank pounces from the top of the doorway. He lands on Gunnar in a sprawled, frozen, bloody, and sappy wet mess.

The well used butcher knife spins madly across the floor. A good twenty feet. It lands beneath the cabinet that Golem hid in earlier.

Frank grabs the kid. Holds the box cutter against the boy's throat.

FRANK

Get back! Don't move!

Gunnar stops in his tracks.

GUNNAR

Nein! Please, he's just a boy.

FRANK

SHUT UP!

GUNNAR

Don't hurt him...

FRANK

Get down. Wrap that chain around your feet.

Gunnar sputters. Tries not to cry. You'd think he was cutting onions again.

GUNNAR

You don't know what you do...

FRANK

Do you not understand? I will cut him if you don't SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Gunnar ties the chain around his feet. Frank snaps a switch. The sound of machinery starting up fills the room.

GUNNAR

Please! You must listen to me!

Frank presses the blade against Golem's neck. Eyes widen. But the kid shows no fear.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay...

The chain tightens and Gunnar is hauled into the air. He dangles like a pig before slaughter.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

I did this for my son! I would do anything for him. You don't understand!

FRANK

Next time, try a fucking bike. Asshole.

Gunnar weeps.

Frank lowers the knife. Golem doesn't try to run away. Just stares in morbid fascination at his father hanging before him. Frank ties the butcher's hands. Behind his back. Tightly.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Where's the girl?

Gunnar just sobs. Clearly afraid.

FRANK (CONT'D)

WHERE IS SHE?!

Gunnar won't answer. Frank goes to Golem. Bends to his level. Looks him in the eye.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not going to hurt you. I promise. Did your daddy do something bad to the lady?

Golem shakes his head, no. Frank's face fills with relief.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Can you show me where she is?

The little boy takes Frank's hand. Leads him into...

THE SAUSAGE ROOM

The sound of machinery grinding away can be heard as they approach. The room is dimly lit. It takes Frank a moment for his eyes to adjust. It takes even longer for him to believe what he is seeing.

#### A SAUSAGE MACHINE

CRANKS out tubes of sausage meat. The huge stainless steel bell of a grinder spits casements of raw meat into tiny tubes.

Golem lets go of Frank's hand. Frank moves into the room. His eyes follow the process backwards. From the out of control pile of stuffed sausages spilling onto the table, to the cinched casements of meat churning out from the grinder. Up the bell itself to reveal

#### PAIGE'S ARM

Bouncing around awkwardly from within the grinder. The hand flails and churns with each grind of the blades. Bone and flesh mash into a pulpy mess.

#### BEHIND HIM

Golem steps from the room.

#### RETURNS TO THE KILL FLOOR.

To his father dangling helplessly.

Golem crawls beneath the stainless steel cabinet. Reaches for the discarded knife.

#### IN THE SAUSAGE ROOM

Frank collapses against the wall. Dazed. Stares at the spinning hand thrashing around. Almost as if it is waving. Goodbye.

#### IN THE KILL ROOM

Golem pushes a chair across the stainless steel floor. The knife clenched tightly in his tiny hands.

#### IN THE SAUSAGE ROOM

Frank returns. Stumbles slowly. Stares into space. Shock. Pain. Grief.

Gurgling sounds. Splatter. Frank turns his head.

#### TO REVEAL

Golem standing on a chair. In front of his father. Dangling helplessly. A pool of blood collects below the struggling man. His throat has been cut. Neatly sliced. As if he were an animal.

IN SLOW MOTION

Frank lunges forward. Arms out. To stop the boy. Too late.

The boy draws the knife through flesh. A thick line of crimson follows the blade.

Golem is oblivious to Frank. Continues his work. A real professional. He finishes. Looks up for approval.

Frank staggers towards the boy. Shocked at the sight before him. There are no words.

Gunnar burbles. Tries to speak. Blood pours from his throat.

GUNNAR

(gurgling)

I had to do something with all the bodies. I couldn't stop him. From killing. I just wanted to protect my son.

Golem climbs down from the chair, and moves it back a couple feet. Almost as if he knows what is about to happen. As if he has done it before.

A strange smile crosses Gunnar's face as he stares into the eyes of his killer child. A moment passes between father and son.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

I would do anything for my boy.

ALL AT ONCE

GUTS HIT THE FLOOR! Disemboweled innards pour like spaghetti from the pot. Gunnar twitches. Spasms. Dies. Gravity sucks.

Before him, Golem turns his head curiously. Stares at his dead father. Fascination. Pride. Maybe even a little joy.

Carefully. Slowly. Frank takes the knife from Golem's hand. Stares at the little monster.

The kid runs to the kitchen table. Picks up a crayon. And a partially completed picture. Of his father. Hanging by his feet. Golem draws. In bright, red crayon. A pool of blood. In the background, his father sways slightly.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

Pages fall from Penny's hands as she reads the horror described on the page. Pursed lips. She wrinkles her nose.

JACK THE HACK

Get it? It was the kid all along.

Jack grins at her from the driver's seat at the typewriter.

Crickets from the female. An open jawed stare.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

It wasn't the butcher. He was just getting rid of the evidence. To keep his kid from getting caught.

Jack tries to stand. Can't. He is still buckled to the chair.

On Penny's shock.

PENNY

Wow.

Could writing really be that bad?

PENNY (CONT'D)

It's just like every other movie out there.

JACK THE HACK

I know! Awesome!

He doesn't get how bad that really is. He grins.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Now that's what I call a 'dark night of the soul'! Kick a man when he's down!

PENNY

Or rip his face off.

JACK THE HACK

Thank you, Blake Snyder...

Jack holds a copy of Blake's 'Save The Cat' book. Kisses the cover. If the man were here, there'd be some sweet, sweet lovin'.

Penny holds two stress balls. Rolls them between her palms.

PENNY

I hate horror movies.

JACK THE HACK

It's a 'terrifying thriller'.

What the heck's that? She throws him a look. Contempt.

PENNY  
Actually. It's a BOSH.

JACK THE HACK  
(shrugs)  
A BOSH?

PENNY  
Bunch of shit happens.

Jack folds his arms on the typewriter. Lays his head down.  
Isn't writing enough torture without this?

JACK THE HACK  
It's fine.

PENNY  
Exactly. It needs to be great.

Jack gets up. Heavy sigh. Stretches against the shelves.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
It's not your kid whose life is on  
the line!

She paces. Stops.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
What do you call this script?

JACK THE HACK  
Below Zero.

PENNY  
Why?

JACK THE HACK  
Because it's...cold?

PENNY  
And?

Jack is at a loss.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
Jack, what are you trying to say  
with this story?

JACK THE HACK  
I'm not trying to say anything.

PENNY  
That's lame. Lazy writing.

JACK THE HACK  
What?

(MORE)

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

You read a book or two on how to write a screenplay, and suddenly you're an expert?

PENNY

Oh, and you are? What's the point of writing anything if you aren't willing to look at yourself? To ask yourself the tough questions? To explore where you are in your life?

JACK THE HACK

I'm in a fucking freezer, trying to save your kid!

PENNY

Don't pretend like this is my fault! Goddamn it! All your characters come from you. Your experiences! Your issues!

JACK THE HACK

What do my problems have to do with anything?

PENNY

Everything. If you can't figure out what's eating your soul right now, then what's the point of writing any of this?

JACK THE HACK

Hey, maybe I just want to rip my character's face off. What's wrong with that?

Penny gets down. In his face.

PENNY

Have your characters changed? Grown? Are they different from when the story started?

JACK THE HACK

This is why I work alone! And why I'm not married!

PENNY

Hey, I'm the one risking everything here! What stakes are you facing?

JACK THE HACK

Nothing - just stop! Leave me alone!

PENNY

Why should I?!

JACK THE HACK  
 BECAUSE I'VE ALREADY LOST EVERYTHING  
 THAT'S EVER MATTERED TO ME...!

Jack has had it.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 Because you can't have it all - it's  
 a lie! When you give everything  
 you've got to something, you lose  
 the things you do have...

He spins on her. He's spitting mad. Emotions overflow.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 You think I don't know what it's  
 like to lose something? Try gambling  
 with your integrity!

Penny stares at Jack in bewildered silence.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
 Right now, you have a little boy out  
 there. I had a little boy, too!  
 (voice cracks)  
 My son's gone.  
 (growls)  
 But don't think I don't know what it  
 feels like to lose something...

PENNY  
 No wonder you never get scared.  
 (beat)  
 You've already lost everything.

Jack looks away.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
 I believe these are yours.

Penny places Jack's balls in front of him.

PENNY (CONT'D)  
 You call your script, 'Below Zero'.  
 Why?

JACK THE HACK  
 I have a son I didn't raise. A  
 writing credit I didn't earn. All  
 I've ever finished is dinner. I've  
 been writing the same screenplay for  
 a year and a half...

PENNY  
 Below Zero. Frozen. Under achieving.  
 You're not even...average.

JACK THE HACK

I was starting to feel better...

PENNY

You've been frozen in your life.  
Theme. Title...

Jack sits up. Brightens. He gets it.

JACK THE HACK

Yeah. That's good. Write that down.

Jack rises from the typewriter. Penny takes his seat.

PENNY

What if we try...

Penny starts to type.

FADE TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- NIGHT

Gunnar and the boy sit at the kitchen table. A plate filled with sausages between them. The father stuffs a forkful of sausage into his mouth. Guzzles from a mug. The boy copies him. Exactly. As if playing a game. They chew in unison.

Water seeps from the freezer door. Gunnar gets up. Gestures for his boy to stay. Limp to the cooler door. Investigates.

Gunnar looks at the cinderblock. He ALWAYS blocks the door with it. Except he doesn't usually limp from being stabbed with an exacto-knife either.

He glances at his boy, cutting at his sausage. Decides to take a chance. He leaves the cinderblock in place.

The boy watches his father. Continues to chew sausage. Impaled on his fork. He cuts another piece. Like fingers on chalkboard, the knife scrapes against the plate.

Gunnar peers in the freezer door window. The room is filled with a fine mist. He opens the door.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

A low hanging fog swirls around the man's boots as he steps into the vault.

BEFORE HIM

Is the crumpled body of Frank Able. Deader than a doorknob.

Gunnar nudges the frozen body with his boot. Frozen solid.

He kneels down. Eyes grow moist. He rests a hand on the dead man. Closes his own eyes in prayer.

ALL AT ONCE

Golem is behind him. In the doorway. A small hand resting on the door to the freezer.

Gunnar spins around. Eyes grow wide. For the first time, we see fear.

GUNNAR

Golem, no...

Golem smiles. Mischievous.

Gunnar lunges to his feet. Golem slams the door.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)

NO!!!

Gunnar launches himself at the door. Presses against the tiny window.

Rubs desperately at the frosted glass. Clears it.

BEHIND HIM

The condenser pipe starts to rattle. To churn out a fresh blast of icy fog. Gunnar screams out from inside.

The boy smiles. Goes back to his dinner. The muffled screams of his father continue. Banging as he beats against the door.

With fork and knife in hand, Golem hacks off a huge slice of sausage. Stuffs it into his mouth. Chews. Contentment.

All at once, Golem stops chewing. Fishes something from his mouth. Pulls. And pulls.

A LONG

SINGLE

HUMAN HAIR

PULLS

SLOWLY

FROM HIS MOUTH.

Golem piles it on his plate. Continues chewing. Smiles. Cuts himself another slice. The grating sound of knife scraping plate continues. Delicious.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

Jack reads over Penny's shoulder. She is jubilant.

JACK THE HACK

Damn.

PENNY

I think it's really good...

JACK THE HACK

(sarcastic)

Well. As long as you and your mom like it.

PENNY

What's wrong with it?

Jack peers over the typewriter. Reads Penny's work.

JACK THE HACK

Some people think that just because they can spell, they can write a screenplay.

Ouch. Penny stares hard at Jack.

PENNY

You know what? Take your jealousy somewhere else.

JACK THE HACK

No. I just think it's interesting how you can take 26 letters from the alphabet, and do 'that' with them.

Penny ignores him. Frowns as she thinks about the story.

PENNY

What if the girl in the freezer worked there?

Jack roots through the boxes of food. Every box of animal crackers is empty.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What if SHE locked herself in the freezer - because she knew she liked to kill, but she also knew it was wrong?

He throws empty boxes on the floor as he checks each one.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What if it was the only way she knew to stop herself.

JACK THE HACK

She's a social worker. She came to take the boy away.

PENNY

Or...what if, she doesn't really exist? She's a figment of his imagination.

JACK THE HACK

Brought on by hypothermia.

Penny nods excitedly.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Um...no.

PENNY

Why not? It might be better. I'm just saying if she worked there...

JACK THE HACK

You should sleep.

PENNY

Have you ever played the 'Fortunately - Unfortunately' game?

JACK THE HACK

I have a feeling I might already be playing it.

PENNY

Once upon a time there was a...  
(gestures)  
And you fill in the blank.

JACK THE HACK

An exhausted writer who needed a nap.

PENNY

Fortunately...

JACK THE HACK

There was another writer who could keep things going.

PENNY

Unfortunately...

JACK THE HACK

She wouldn't listen to him, and insisted on changing things that were good.

PENNY

Fortunately...

JACK THE HACK

He could be very persuasive.

Penny yawns.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Why don't you sleep?

Penny can barely keep her eyes open.

PENNY

You're not going to change anything are you?

Jack stares at her. Intent.

JACK THE HACK

Sometimes you have to kill your darlings.

Penny is nearly asleep. Mental fatigue. Her voice is teary.

PENNY

Jack?

Jack turns.

PENNY (CONT'D)

I just want my boy to be okay.

JACK THE HACK

Me too. More than you know. Sleep.

He doesn't have to say it. She already is. He plunks himself behind the keys of the typewriter. Loads a fresh sheet. Begins to type.

FADE IN:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Frank comes to. Vision blurs. Looks around.

The room is in shambles. Morty lies in a crumpled heap beneath the wreckage. Still quivering from the effects of the electrical shock. Frank drags himself towards his dying friend. Turns him over. He's alive. Barely.

PAIGE

Frank...

Paige is a sight for shivering eyes. Her ears are black with frostbite. Hair coated thick with frost. Icicles cling to eyelashes. Her hand reaches for his. They struggle to drag themselves through the wreckage. Huddle over Morty's dying body.

Morty twitches slightly. Whether from electrical shock or the effects of the frigid air, it doesn't matter. It will be over soon.

MORTY

W-w-who...

FRANK

Shhh. It's okay. This is Paige.

A look between Frank and Paige. An acknowledgement of a change in the script.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She works here.

Morty's eyes focus on the two friends.

MORTY

Y-y-your boss...

They lean in to catch his dying words.

MORTY (CONT'D)

...is an asshole.

Frank buries himself in Morty's jacket. Struggles not to cry. Chokes up.

FRANK

Morty, hang in there. We're going to get you out of here.

Paige stares back at Morty as the life leaves his eyes.

PAIGE

Frank.

FRANK

We're all going to get out of here.

PAIGE

Frank.

Frank sits up. Wipes snot from his face. Realizes his friend is gone. Paige reaches out to him. The two strangers cling to each other. Tears for both.

FRANK

We're going to get out of here.

Something has broken inside. The hope of escape. Gone.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Gunnar storms the building. Searching.

He sees the tap dripping. Strange. Goes to it. Tightens.  
The stream stops.

Gunnar turns. Sees the jacket hanging from the back of a  
chair. Grabs it. The namepatch of FRANK on the breast.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

Frank and Paige hear Gunnar storming the building.

PAIGE

What's he doing?

FRANK

Looking for me.

PAIGE

But didn't he already see you in  
here?

The two characters clue into unwritten changes to the script.  
Figure it out.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

Right. He doesn't know you're in  
here...

FRANK

Because I was hiding...

PAIGE

And your foot got caught on the cart.

FRANK

And I knew I couldn't defeat him  
with my injured ankle. So I stayed  
in hiding.

PAIGE

You were being brave.

FRANK

Yeah.

PAIGE

So there was no struggle and he just  
left Morty here.

FRANK  
But he's still looking for me.

PAIGE  
And this is the last place he'd ever  
expect you to be.

FRANK  
But he knows I'm here somewhere.  
(considering)  
Yeah. That could work.

Paige wrinkles her nose.

PAIGE  
Nnnngh. So-so.

Great. They've filled in the blanks. The two characters  
shrug. Acceptance. Bad writing. Happens all the time.

They look around the room.

It is no longer in shambles. Neat. Tidy. Morty's body is  
back on the cart.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER

Gunnar throws open the stainless steel cabinet. Discovers  
Golem. The kid cowers. Gunnar towers over the small boy.

GUNNAR  
So, you like hide and seek?

Golem nods.

GUNNAR (CONT'D)  
Then you will like this game.

Innocent eyes stare back.

INSIDE THE FREEZER

The condenser pipe spews a fresh blast of icy mist. Frank  
eyes the machine. And the window.

FRANK  
Paige, do you trust me?

Paige looks at him curiously. Maybe. What does he have in  
mind?

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Golem pushes the chair to the window. Climbs up. Rubs at  
the window to try and clear the frost. Can't. It's on the  
other side of the window.

## INSIDE THE FREEZER

Paige and Frank see Golem's hand wiping at the window, attempting to see in. He repositions the broken pipe from above so it sprays even more at the window. Golem's vision is completely obscured.

Frank hoists Paige onto his shoulder. A yellowed, sludge colored icicle hangs from a broken pipe. She reaches. Breaks off the frozen weapon.

Frank takes the icy dagger from her. Reaches for her hand. The two move from the window. Into the recesses of the tiny room.

## OUTSIDE THE ROOM

The deadly game of hide and seek continues. Gunnar continues to search the building. For Frank. Knife in hand.

GUNNAR

(shouting)

Come out, come out wherever you are...

He searches the kill room. Wanders dangling hooks. Opens closet doors. The smoke room. Kicks open the smoker. No sign of Frank.

He stops at the sight of Golem. Tiptoe on the chair. Attempting to peer into the frosted room.

Gunnar looks over Golem's shoulder. Picks his son up. Delicately. As if the child were a flower. Gestures for him to return to the dinner table.

Golem scrambles to the table. To plates of sausage.

Gunnar moves the chair. His face fills the ice-covered window. Peers in. Through the ice.

Gunnar tries the door. It sticks slightly. Frozen shut from the mist. He puts his weight behind it. The door cracks open.

Gunnar surveys the small room. It is immaculate. As if there has been no struggle. No shelves overturned.

Paige's apparently lifeless body is covered in plastic. Hanging in the background. Next to the frozen carcass of a dead pig.

Morty's body. Draped over the edges of the cart. Stone cold dead. A sheet of plastic wrapped around his long, gone body. Frost and small icicles cling to the plastic sheet and cart.

No sign of Frank. Anywhere.

Nothing looks out of the ordinary. Unless you count two dead bodies in a meat freezer unusual. The place isn't exactly up to code. Gunnar steps into the room. Grabs the frozen cart.

The rusted wheels of the cart wobble. Push through. Sludge. Decrepit pools of frozen blood. Past Frank's frozen, jean-clad legs. Hidden behind boxes of meat.

EXT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Gunnar wheels the body towards the cutting table. Grabs a knife. Slashes the plastic sheet covering this latest victim.

He peels off the frost covered plastic. Discards it. Bumps the cart. An arm slips from the cart. Dangles lifelessly. Except, is it holding an icicle?

ALL AT ONCE

The body lurches forward. Gunnar is taken off-guard. Drops the knife. It spins madly across the room. Frank sits atop the cart. Disguised in Morty's unmistakable clothing.

The finely sharpened icicle plunges. Pierces Gunnar's neck. He falls to the floor. Upsetting the cart. Frank screams. His broken, frozen body hits the floor.

Gunnar scrambles for the spinning knife. Frank lunges after him. Gunnar's hands grab. Fat fingers grope. Frank grabs Gunnar's legs. Holds on for dear life.

AT THE TABLE

The kid nibbles at a forkful of sausage. Watches Gunnar and the stranger grapple for the knife. Like watching a crocodile devour a wildebeest.

Gunnar boots Frank off his leg. Gets the knife. Spins around to finish the job. Frank grabs his arm. Shakes with exertion. He is on the losing end of this arm wrestling match. The knife lowers. Closer. To his heart.

Frank screams as the tip of the blade pierces skin. Gunnar bears down. Goes in for the kill. Completely spent, Frank stares into the eyes of his killer.

BOOM

A cinder block. Smashes against Gunnar's head. A pool of blood drools from the man's mouth. His eyes roll back. The man is out. Cold.

Paige emerges from behind the cement block. She drops it. Steps away, horrified. Frank rolls the body over.

The two scramble away from the scene. Huddle against each other. Allow themselves a moment. Watch the pool of blood surround the killer butcher.

All at once

The cat is there. Pads its way towards Frank. Rubs at his leg. Is about to lap at the pooling blood. Frank grabs the cat away. Stands over Gunnar's body.

FRANK

I think he's dead.

Yup. Unless he jumps out at them like some cliché horror film. Not in this script.

Golem cuts another slice of sausage. Knife scrapes plate.

PAIGE

What do we do about him?

FRANK

He's a creepy fucking kid.

PAIGE

Doesn't even have any lines.

FRANK

He should be written out.

That does it. This pissy little kid rises from the table. Throws open the main door. The hound from hell charges the couple.

PAIGE

Frank!

Frank holds the cat. His eyes grow wide as the cat freaks. Claws extend. Dig into flesh. The dog races to attack.

Frank peels the cat from his body. THROWS the hissing animal into the cooler. The dog charges after it.

Paige slams the door behind the two animals. The sound of an attack. The same horrible sound from earlier. Bunny screams. Nails on chalkboard. It sounds just like a cat being chewed to pieces.

The crazed dog lunges at the window.

Frank and Paige help each other to their feet. They stumble to the door. Into the biting cold.

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

On the cot, Penny reads the latest script pages. She picks up Blake's 'SAVE THE CAT' book. Reads the title.

Shows it to Jack.

PENNY  
Did you even read this?!

JACK THE HACK  
I like to make my own rules.

Jack checks his fish. Mabel is dead. Her water is nearly frozen. He fishes her out with his fingers.

PENNY  
I'm sorry about Mabel.

JACK THE HACK  
Who?

PENNY  
Your fish. Mabel?

JACK THE HACK  
Mabel...Melba - whatever. She's toast.

He grins at his own joke. Dumps the fish.

PENNY  
Wow. Your jokes are almost as bad as your writing.

Their breath comes out in icy bursts.

JACK THE HACK  
So? Did you finish reading?

PENNY  
I liked when you gutted the fat guy.

JACK THE HACK  
How are we doing for time?

He picks up Viki King's 'How To Write A Movie in 21 Days'.

PENNY  
We don't have 21 days. We don't even have 21 hours!

Jack flips the clock over.

JACK THE HACK  
You're right. We're done.

PENNY  
(incredulous)  
We can't be.

Jack grins at her. Shows her the countdown clock. It reads 10:18 - ten hours, 18 minutes remaining.

JACK THE HACK  
We've still got ten hours?!

Oh my god. As if that could ever happen.

She grabs the clock from him. The couple allow themselves a moment to celebrate. Penny squeals. Flies into Jack's arms. They embrace. Kiss before they realize what they're doing.

All at once, Penny pulls back. Embarrassed.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
I'm...I'm sorry.

Penny is horrified. Clamps a hand to her mouth.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)  
We were...

PENNY  
Celebrating.

The couple distance themselves as far apart in the room as possible. Stare at each other. What just happened?

JACK THE HACK  
The one thing that would be good on ice is the one thing we don't have.

PENNY  
Champagne.

JACK THE HACK  
How about a rain check?

Penny stares at him. Is he asking her out?

PENNY  
I'm sorry. I don't feel like celebrating right now. I just want my son back.

Jack nods.

Breathless. A moment passes. Uncomfortable silence.

Jack screams out the main door.

JACK THE HACK  
Did you hear that, you motherfucker?  
WE'RE DONE! Now let us out of here!

Penny throws herself at the door. Slams a fist against it.

ALL AT ONCE

The room plunges into darkness. Penny screams. Jack wraps a protective arm around her. They back away from the door.

PENNY

(shouting out)

We did what you wanted. So where's my son? I want my boy back!

JACK THE HACK

Let us out of here!

Silence. Behind them, the condenser pipe hisses to life. A fog starts to fill the room, once again. The couple cuddle together. Uncertain. Afraid.

Their excitement is replaced by sadness.

Penny cries. Her cries echo through the icy chamber. The clock ticks away the seconds.

TRANSITION TO:

INT. RANCHLANDS, RURAL ROAD -- NIGHT

Jack opens his eyes. Near darkness. The world is upside down. Literally. Thick frost coats his lashes. His breath comes out in jagged, frozen bursts. His body is wedged tightly. Can't move.

He grimaces. Groans as he tries to turn his head. The fur coated leg of a dead animal presses against the side of his head. He groans. Tries to see what it is. Where he is.

Headlights. The sound of tires approaching through crushing snow. A vehicle slows to a stop. Heavy footsteps. Someone walks towards the vehicle.

A flashlight in his eyes. A familiar voice...

GUNNAR

Are you alright?

Jack squints. Groans. Gunnar tucks the light beneath his arm. Lights up the snowy night with the flashlight. Behind him in the front seat of Gunnar's vehicle, is Golem. Sitting silently. Staring back.

JACK THE HACK

No...

Jack's eyes seek the darkness. Realizes he is not in the vehicle alone.

GUNNAR

We will take care of you.

The frozen body of a dead cow fills the vehicle cab. Penny groans. Her son, Cole, trapped in a lifeless heap beneath the dead animal. The vehicle is in the ditch.

Jack tries to speak. Eyes wide. His words come out as a garbled scream.

CUT TO:

INT. SLAUGHTERHOUSE, MEAT LOCKER -- NIGHT

Jack plasters himself to the freezer door window. Screams. Pounds away at the door. The body of a near naked Penny, and her child, hangs behind him.

The camera pulls out. Leaves our protagonist screaming in terror against the freezer door. And the beautiful love interest dangling helplessly behind. The camera pans past Gunnar and Golem in prayer. Beginning their evening dinner.

The camera moves past the bell of a huge meat grinder. A woman's arm flails from within. As if waving goodbye. The camera retreats out the window. Into the howling storm. Into the frozen night.

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- NIGHT

Jack types the final words into his laptop.

THE END

Leans back. Rubs hands through hair. Punches the air. Jubilation. Like Shane Black opening his residual checks.

Jack removes his 'Protagonist' hat. Ruffles his hair. Puts on a fresh hat. Antagonist''.

JACK THE HACK

YES!

He looks at the printer setup on a nearby shelf. Moves the cursor on his screen to 'File'. A display comes up. He clicks on 'Print'.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

And print...

PRINTER ERROR

Displays on the screen.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Damn.

He's forgotten to plug in the printer. Goes to the power bar taped to the shelf. Plugs in the printer. Turns on the switch. And...

The power goes off. Lights snap to off. Pitch black. As dark as death.

Just the sound of breathing. Fumbling. Panic. The sound of a box being ransacked. Knocked over. Spilled contents fall to the floor. A flashlight fills the dark room. Very briefly. He fumbles. Drops it. The light goes out. A heavy sigh.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

I've got to meet with that career counselor.

He lights the last of the candles. Tries the flashlight repeatedly. It's busted.

All at once, the laptop sparks to life. Fills the room with harsh light. Jack leaps to his feet.

BEEP

BEEP

BEEP

Jack leans over the screen. Reads the prompt:

FATAL ERROR MESSAGE: BATTERY - CRITICALLY LOW

CORRUPT FILE

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

WHAT?! NO!

Jack hits the 'escape' key on his keyboard repeatedly.

ANOTHER MESSAGE:

SYSTEM HAS EXPERIENCED A FATAL ERROR. ANY OPEN FILES WILL BE TERMINATED.

Jack reads the error message again. Closer.

'...ANY OPEN FILES WILL BE TERMINATED...'

'...SYSTEM SHUTTING DOWN...'

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

NO!!

'In 5 SECONDS...4...3...'

He is about to lose his mind.

'...2...1...'

The bright screen pops to black. The room fills with darkness and silence. Except for the labored breathing of a young man no longer responsible for his mental capacity.

GODDAMN IT. After all that?!

Jack picks up the laptop and chucks it against the wall with everything he's got. Pieces of keyboard go flying. Broken letters cover the ground like a Scrabble game gone horribly wrong.

Jack collapses in the middle of the room. Surrounded by the scattered pile of broken letters.

SUDDENLY

He realizes his hand is bleeding. He squeezes his finger. Draws a circle of blood from the tiny cut. Stares at it. Mesmerized.

ALL AT ONCE

Jack pulls himself to his feet. Goes to the shelf. To the blank side of a cardboard box. He begins to write.

TIMELAPSE / SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) Jack scribbles in blood on every spare surface. At first, one side of the room filled with script pages from Act One. Then the middle boxes with Act 2.
- 2) He eyes Elvis, the dead pig. To finish this screenplay, he'll need more blood. A boxcutter in hand, he approaches the swaying animal. Slices into the flesh. Expertly. Drains dripping blood into a bucket.
- 3) We see Jack working his way around the room. A bucket of blood at his side. Kneeling. Standing. Always writing.
- 4) Jack sits on the cot. Balances a box between his legs. Scribbles words on the cardboard with bloodied, stained fingers. Words identical to those found on the pages you now hold. With all four sides covered, he takes the completed box to the furthest shelves.

REVEALS

The room is now filled with boxes covered with his penmanship. Jack bends. Places the box on a low lying shelf. Reaches down. To the final row. Pulls another empty box from the shelf. Act three is nearly complete. Jack grins to himself. Pours back more champagne. Straight from the bottle. He lays on the floor in the middle of the cooler. The rooms spins out of control. It's insane.

INT. MEAT COOLER (WRITING ROOM) -- DAY

BANG BANG BANG

For the first time in a week, the door to the cooler opens. The room floods with bright light.

PENNY

Wakey, wakey! Hands off snakey!

Penny is all smiles. Obviously a morning person. She holds two cups of Tim Horton's coffee. She stops dead at the sight before her.

ON THE COT

Jack is a bloody mess. Sprawled. Hungover. Unshaven. Good thing smellivision didn't work out. Cause he reeks.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Jack..?

Jack doesn't budge. Her smile fades. Her nose wrinkles at the stench.

She moves closer. Puts the coffee down. Her concern turns to alarm.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Oh my gawd...

She moves closer. Touches his shoulder. Nothing.

She shakes him. He doesn't budge.

Her hands find the pile of foolscap paper sitting next to him on the bed. She picks it up. Barely starts to leaf through the pages when...

THE FRIGGIN ALARM GOES OFF.

God. That damn agent. Talk about a ticking clock.

Penny stifles a scream. The pages go everywhere. Jack rolls over.

PENNY (CONT'D)

You scared me! I thought you...

She bends to retrieve the pages. Giggles nervously. Jack rises from the bed.

PENNY (CONT'D)

So...how'd it go?

She shivers.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Brrr! It feels cold in here.

Jack peels off his sweatshirt. Reveals his worn t-shirt. INSANITY - THE MOVIE can be read in its entirety. He steps on the pages as he walks through the room. He turns.

BEHIND HIM

The shelves are filled with plain cardboard boxes. There is not a bloody spec of writing on any of them. A savvy audience might notice. Of course, they would also have noticed the working and fully intact laptop.

Penny continues to pick up the scattered pages. Her pages.

PENNY (CONT'D)

These pages...

(confusion)

Is this my manuscript?

Jack sees Cole, the little boy, staring in at him from just outside the freezer door. He ruffles the boy's hair.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Where's your script? I'm dying to read it.

BOOM!

The freezer door slams shut. Walls shake. Reverberate.

Penny spins. Looks up from the pages spread before her on the floor. Stands.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Ha. Very funny. Are you writing comedy now?

She tries the door. Jack stands on the other side with Cole. He smiles at her.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Come on. Let me out. It stinks in here.

She goes to his laptop. Opens it. The pitchfest bumper sticker gets another flash. The computer is setup exactly as she left it nearly five days ago. It's as if the room has been completely untouched.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Do you need me to print it out or something?

JACK THE HACK

I didn't write it.

PENNY

What?

Penny looks around. At the immaculate shelves. Row after row of cardboard box. At the dead pig hanging at the back of the room. She marches back to the window.

PENNY (CONT'D)

What are you talking about?

JACK THE HACK

I read your work. You're more talented than you know.

PENNY

Oh. Thank you. I...

Jack drapes an arm around the boy.

JACK THE HACK

Sometimes all it takes is just one good idea. I have one.

Penny tries the door. She's locked in. Nervous.

PENNY

Why don't you let me out of here?  
You can tell me all about it.

JACK THE HACK

I call it 'The Fear Factory'. It's about this crazy guy who locks up a writer.

(laughs)

And he makes her write terrifying stories.

Her face pales.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Oh, don't worry. I'll publish them under a pen name. But first, I'll need your help.

PENNY

What are you doing?

Penny's hysteria grows. Eyes grow moist. Fearful.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Please. My son.

JACK THE HACK

Yes. I've become quite fond of him. He reminds me of...me.

Jack winks at the boy. Drapes an affectionate arm around Cole's shoulders. For the first time, we see the boy smile. Really smile. And the hint of evil that lurks within. He's liking this plan.

ALL AT ONCE

The condenser pipe rattles to life. Penny spins around. The fog starts to roll from the machine.

INSIDE

Penny slams herself against the door. Sobs in hysterics. She slumps to the floor as the room fills with an icy mist. Sobs. Shivers. She bumps against the shelving. A children's book falls to the floor. JACK THE HACK. She opens it.

On the page is a child's rendering of a writer slumped over a desk. A bloody knife in his back. A stick figure stands over the writer. Holding a script. A big happy face where his head should be.

The room floods with white fog. Penny shivers with fear.

OUTSIDE THE FREEZER DOOR

Jack bends to Cole's level.

JACK THE HACK (CONT'D)

Cole, do you know what a deadline is?

Cole shakes his head, no.

Cole smiles at the prospect of his first lesson. He places his hand in Jack's.

THE CAMERA MOVES PAST THE NEW FAMILY

Through the window. Into the icy sky of a bitter winter storm. Foggy whiteness fills the screen. It morphs into a page of terror - a blank, white page.

A cursor begins to flash. The sound of keystrokes as letters type across the screen:

FADE OUT

White fog billows over the page. Swallows it. Another screenplay comes to an end. For now. Until the next deadline.

FADE OUT TO WHITE:

THE END