

FADE IN:

**SUPERTITLE: HURRICANE HUGO SEPTEMBER 22,  
1989**

EXT. OFF THE COAST OF CHARLESTON, SOUTH  
CAROLINA - NIGHT

Blinding rain, deafening wind: The dark Atlantic is cosmic chaos. Then, like the head of a giant serpent, a twenty-foot wall of water slowly rises to pitch above the violent churning ocean, finds its mark, and races like a beast of prey toward the port city of Charleston. We roar toward the defenseless city, its puny lights glittering on the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAVIS AND TREY JACKSON'S  
WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Lines of cocaine and shot glasses filled with tequila tremble on a small table. MUSIC blasts. In the spooky, flickering light of a hundred CANDLES, a YOUNG REDHEAD, college-aged, dances in oblivious, flailing tribal fury. The storm inhabits her. Two FACELESS young men, TRAVIS and TREY JACKSON, dance in toward her. The three bodies are lacquered with sweat. LARGE FIXTURES SWAY overhead.

LATER

The Young Redhead falls back onto a sofa, then accepts a tequila from one of the men. The second man, who sits on the floor beside her, turns and LICKS the inside of her exposed thigh, then downs his shot. She pushes his face away, laughs, then downs her own. The storm intensifies. The walls breathe, paintings fall, and at any moment the place should come apart. The three are too drunk to comprehend.

YOUNG REDHEAD

I wanna bath. I  
wanna cool, cool  
bath.

LATER

Water fills the tub. In the other room both men appear to have passed out, one in a chair, the other on a sofa.

Eyes closed, the wasted Young Redhead lies in the bath surrounded by wildly flickering candles. Debris machine-guns against the outside walls. The sound of a B-52 fills the room. The roof may collapse onto her.

A naked man's SHADOW appears on the wall. The Young Redhead opens her eyes, glances back over her shoulder.

YOUNG REDHEAD  
(cont'd)

You nasty boy. Go  
away.

She turns back, closes her eyes. A hand comes down on her shoulder. She ignores it. The hand SLAMS her head under water. She struggles, writhing under the water. We *see* her wide-eyed scream. But the deafening storm is all we hear. Until her eyes close in darkness.

END OF  
FLASHBACK  
:CUT TO

**SUPERTITLE: THE PRESENT**

INT. TRAVIS AND BROOK JACKSON'S BEDROOM  
- NIGHT

Darkness. Ear-ringing silence. TRAVIS JACKSON'S professionally handsome face is glazed with sweat. His eyes *fly* open, then *jerk* toward the bedside PHONE. He waits. Slowly reaches for it. His fingers touch it. It RINGS. BROOK JACKSON, his wife, lies motionless, stares into nothingness, an intensely hurt and troubled look. Travis, early 30's, mumbles something

serious into the phone, we're not sure what. When he pulls back the covers, we get a look at Brook, early 30's too, and see why he married her: Large breasts and star-quality face.

BROOK

Let me guess, yet another client crisis.

(No reply)

Why is it that you get calls and I get hang-ups; why is that, Travis?

(He doesn't answer)

Who is she, Travis?

In another room their baby daughter, ANGELA, whimpers.

BROOK (cont'd)

I can't live like this.

Travis, dressed now, starts for the door, when: the PHONE rings a second time. They both look at it, at each other. It rings again. And again. Neither moves. Travis steps forward; Brook has the phone.

BROOK (cont'd)

Listen, bitch!

The baby cries louder. Brook looks away, holds the phone at arm's length.

BROOK (cont'd)

Brother dearest.

MOMENTS LATER

Brook lies in the dark facing the wall. The bedroom door shuts behind Travis. The baby cries, and cries.

BROOK (cont'd)

(sings quietly,

hauntingly  
y)  
...down came the  
rain and washed the  
spider out...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BOWERY NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

FERRAL SNOPEs, a 50ish COP who sweats grease, rests against his unmarked cruiser smoking a cigarette and mopping his face with a handkerchief. Travis's SUV parks beside him. Travis stuffs a hundred into the cop's palm as he strides toward the club entrance. Ferral trails along a step behind.

TRAVIS  
Thanks, Ferral.

FERRAL  
Hotter'n a whore in  
a pepper patch,  
ain't it,  
counselor?  
(still  
trailing)  
Good thing I was  
around when the  
call came in, huh,  
bossman? The TV  
guys, you know  
they'd love this.

TRAVIS  
(not  
breaking  
stride)  
Thanks, Ferral.

Ferral stops, looks down at the money  
in his hand.

FERRAL  
Any time, bossman,  
any time.

INT. THE BOWERY CLUB - SAME TIME

The old beach club is PACKED. College  
kids laugh and shout over the MUSIC.

One attractive CO-ED holds a lascivious though unsteady pose. A HAND holding a pencil recreates her face on a sketchpad. At the crowded bar, Travis passes his credit card to the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

Hope this one's got  
lots of headroom.  
He's been buying'em  
drinks all night.

Travis turns. The artist is Trey Jackson, Travis's **IDENTICAL TWIN**. The drunk co-ed glances up at Travis, who now stands behind Trey.

CO-ED

Ooh, spooky. You  
two are like sooooo  
identical you look  
just alike.

Travis takes Trey by the arm. Trey reaches for his drink.

TRAVIS

Let's van Gogh,  
Rembrandt.

Drunk Trey crosses his fingers, anti-vampire.

TREY

Please, brother,  
use me and abuse  
me, but don't  
torture me with  
your mixed  
metaphors.

Travis gives him a tug, and Trey rises and begins dealing out his pencil portraits to the young women standing around his table. The co-ed's eyes water.

CO-ED

You make me  
prettier than I am.

TREY

(putting  
his  
finger to  
his  
heart)

I draw what I see.

Travis has Trey by the arm, pulling him through the crowd of onlookers. People are staring. Trey breaks into song:

TREY (cont'd)  
He ain't heav-  
eeeeeeee, cause  
he's hol-loooooow!

The crowd loves him. Travis pushes his brother outside. Left behind on Trey's table is one unclaimed sketch: THE FACE OF THE MURDERED YOUNG REDHEAD.

INT. TRAVIS'S SUV - MINUTES LATER

TREY  
What *was* dream  
girl's name?

TRAVIS  
In there?

Trey gives him a look that says, Don't bullshit me.

TREY  
Oh, the curse of  
the universal mind.  
Share and share  
alike, huh, Travis?

They ride in silence.

TRAVIS  
Dad called.  
(Trey's  
face is  
blank)  
Mother's dead.

TREY  
(No  
expressio  
n still)

Surprise.  
Surprise.

INT. TREY'S WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - LATER

Drunk Trey sits at a small table, surrounded by canvasses, paintings, and painting supplies. On his way to the door, Travis sets a cup of coffee in front of him.

TRAVIS  
Sober up. Dad wants  
to see us in the  
morning.

Trey salutes. Travis pauses at the door.

TREY  
If I miss the  
meeting, tell him  
I've come home for  
the last time.

INT. TRAVIS'S SUV - MINUTES LATER

Travis's cell rings. He looks down at the caller ID. Gives it a troubled look. Lets it ring.

INT. TRAVIS AND BROOK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Travis studies an old photo: His parents' wedding photo.

Brook lies sleeping. Travis touches her face, hesitates, then bends and gently kisses her. He whispers:

TRAVIS  
I'm sorry.

EXT. ON THE ROOF OF TREY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Trey, who works under halogen lights, paints like a madman.

INT. TREY'S WAREHOUSE APARTMENT - DAWN

We follow the yellow sunlight rising through the apartment, past a sleeping

Trey, up the CANVAS of the Mother Mary,  
(Trey's mother): a whore, holding a  
beast with a baby's head (baby Trey),  
the two WRAPPED IN CHAINS, SURROUNDED  
BY THE FIRES OF HELL.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OF SAM JACKSON - DAY

The study suggests SAM JACKSON'S world  
and his place in it: rich, powerful,  
masculine. Travis looks out the window  
across the spacious antebellum lawn.  
Behind him, his father, SAM, late 50's,  
sits at his huge mahogany desk.

SAM

I was up all night  
hoping...  
I guess he's not  
gonna show.

Travis turns from the window.

TRAVIS

Sometimes, Dad, you  
just have to--

SAM

You're both  
worthless. You  
never appreciated  
the sacrifices. The  
woman literally  
comes back from the  
dead to give *you*  
life, then *she*  
lives a life worse  
than hell. And  
where were you?  
Chasing trailer  
trash. And Trey?  
Chasing his next  
drink.

TRAVIS

What do you want  
from me?

SAM

You owe something  
to her, to her



memory at least.  
What I want is for  
you to *be* somebody.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

The room is CROWDED with THE SOUTH'S  
ELITE, including THE GOVERNOR and THE  
U. S. SENATE MAJORITY LEADER.

SAM  
Thank you for  
coming, Governor.  
I think you know my  
son, Travis.

GOVERNOR  
(to  
Travis)  
In Washington,  
there's talk. A  
race for the  
Senate. Am I  
correct?

Standing apart from Travis, Brook  
turns, sees RUSSEL LASHER, the  
Assistant DA, 40ish and nondescript.  
One glance at LAUREN LASHER, his young  
20ish very blonde wife, and we know she  
didn't marry Russ for his looks. The  
two make their way toward Brook.

RUSS  
Brook. You've met  
Lauren. How is Sam?

Travis and Sam stand over the open  
coffin, giving us a good look at the  
DEAD WOMAN.

SAM  
What will she take  
to her grave,  
Travis? What? You  
decide.

Trey arrives, disheveled, paranoid,  
manic. The scene is surreal to him. He  
is drunk but somehow maintains control.  
He spots Sam and Travis beside the  
coffin, recoils for a second, then  
forces himself through the crowd. Sam

spots him, steps forward to embrace him. Sam's tears show.

SAM (cont'd)

I love you, son.

Sam holds his son close, then, realizing that Trey is drunk, turns to ice, releases him, looks over at his dead wife, then back at Trey.

SAM (cont'd)

But I can never  
forgive you. Never.

TREY

I know.

Sam walks away. In the crowded unrealness, Trey has the look of a drowning man. He panics, turns, sees the door, takes a step, when a VISE-LIKE WOMAN'S HAND grips his arm: MILLIE, a black woman about Sam's age. Frightened, Trey looks for an escape. The two stand over the casket. Trey looks down in horror, can hardly breathe.

MILLIE

(looking  
at the  
dead  
woman)

Thirty years, she was like my baby, son. She wasn't crazy. If every person who had the gift of visions was crazy, the Bible would be full of them--and it *ain't*. Trey backpedals into the crowd. Suddenly he feels swallowed. He panics, bumps into someone: Brook. They exchange a look of surprise, apprehension. They both glance about.

Brook extends an  
awkward hand.

BROOK

Trey.

Their eyes meet, then quickly turn  
away, Brook's toward Travis. As she  
walks away, Trey touches her hand.

MOMENTS LATER

Inside a bathroom stall at the funeral  
home, Trey sucks down bourbon from a  
pint bottle, drains it. The bathroom  
door OPENS. Trey freezes in terror. Sam  
enters the stall beside Trey. Sam  
breaks down, SOBS uncontrollably. Trey  
is a trapped animal, tortured by shame  
and addiction. Then, Sam stands in  
front of the washroom mirror, pulling  
himself together. He turns on the  
water to wash his face. When his HANDS  
ENTER THE WATER, we see Trey: PINNED  
against the wall, eyes wide and insane.

CUT TO:  
DREAM/FLA  
SHBACK/VI  
SION

INT. HOME OF SAM JACKSON, 1973 - DAY

Young Trey, about three years old, is  
alone in the bath. He looks up. His  
TOWERING MOTHER LOOMS over him. She  
GLARES down at him. Then she's holding  
his head under the water, PRESSING HIS  
SMALL FACE AGAINST THE PORCELAIN. The  
child's body flails about. The  
possessed woman holds his head under.

MOTHER JACKSON

I can't. I can't  
let you do it. I  
love him; I love  
him.

Young Travis rushes to the open  
bathroom door, PAUSES in fear and  
wrenching indecision, then, finally,  
turns and runs away, knocking over a  
VASE in the hallway. At the sound of

the CRASH, the mother snaps out of it,  
releases Trey, who gasps for breath and  
CRIES in fear.

TREY  
Mama! Mama! Travis!  
Travis!!

The mother lies on her bed, sobbing.  
Young Trey screams in terror, screams  
so hard no sound comes out, alone in  
the bath. Young Travis runs out of the  
house, looking back over his shoulder,  
seeing his pleading brother. He flees.  
In the distance, beyond the long  
antebellum lawn, he sees Sam KNEELING  
before a tombstone.

END OF  
FLASHBACK  
:CUT TO

EXT. CHARLESTON CEMETERY - DAY

Ferral Snopes, the cop, and Russ  
Lasher, the Asst. DA, are among the  
pallbearers carrying the casket. The  
crowd is a large one, but we are drawn  
to WOODY HANKS, a man of Sam's age with  
the face of a bulldog.

LATER

Trey stands alone at his mother's  
casket. He looks tenderly at Sam, who  
stands at a distance, also alone, his  
back to him. Trey takes a deep breath.

Gently, Trey touches Sam's shoulder.

SAM  
Nice of you to show  
up.

TREY  
Maybe I can change  
things now--

SAM  
Damn you. You  
killed her, twice.

Standing alone again, Trey watches as Sam steps into the limo and drives away. Trey's face is like cold stone.

INT. THE LIMO - SAME TIME

Sam, Travis, Russ, and Ferral are inside the limo as it slowly winds through the old cemetery. Ferral passes a large envelope to Sam, who removes its contents: a **photograph of two lovers**.

SAM

What's this?

FERRAL

Cooperation.

SAM

Who's the woman?

Ferral shrugs. Sam passes the photo to Travis, who gives it a good look before placing it *inside his briefcase*.

SAM (cont'd)

No.

FERRAL

If Woody Hanks knows we can sprinkle a little dirt on his boy--

SAM

No. Forget it.  
(to Russ)  
Do you have a warrant?

RUSS

We're all set.

FERRAL

No such thing as too much leverage, bossman.

TRAVIS

Ferral's right. We can cut a deal, quietly. From a

publicity angle, a  
big trial, bright  
lights, TV cameras-  
-could be a big  
mistake.

Sam looks scornfully from Ferral to  
Travis as if he doesn't recognize the  
two men.

A Live Eye CAMERA CREW tapes the limo  
as it passes.

TRAVIS (cont'd)  
Why this? Why now?

SAM  
(looking  
out at  
the  
cameras)  
Because it's still  
a world of men.  
*Because* everybody's  
watching.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLESTON POLICE INTERROGATION  
ROOM - DAY

Travis watches through the two-way  
mirror. Woody Hanks, his son, JUNIOR  
HANKS, about Travis's age but working  
class, and Woody's DEFENSE ATTORNEY sit  
at the table. Ferral stands apart,  
smoking. Sam enters.

WOODY  
(to Sam)  
This better be  
good.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY  
I'd have to advise  
you--

WOODY  
(to Sam)  
Let's get outta  
here.

INT. MAGNOLIA'S, AN UPSCALE CHARLESTON  
RESTAURANT - LATER

Sam and Woody are having lunch.

SAM

At some point you'd  
cash in. You know  
it, I know it.

WOODY

I can appreciate  
your problem, Sam,  
but a trial's gonna  
have the TV guys  
living on our  
doorsteps.

SAM

Which means the  
news boys forget  
about a couple of  
dead black dope  
dealers, right,  
Woody? Think about  
it.

The two exchange a serious look.

SAM (cont'd)

There's gonna be a  
trial, Woody. This  
or another one. I  
don't have to tell  
you which is better  
for both of us.

WOODY

Depends on what  
side of the bars  
you stand on.

SAM

We'll plead down.  
Gotta be done.

WOODY

I ain't doing time  
so you can pull  
strings in  
Washington, Sam.

SAM

This one can't end  
in a draw. I gotta  
make a future for  
my son.

WOODY

His future is  
chasing ambulances  
and cheap skirts.  
Who are you  
kidding?

SAM

We share the same  
problem, Woody.  
We've allowed our  
sons to be boys for  
too long.

WOODY

Wasn't for a roll  
of the dice, I'd be  
sitting in your  
chair, you in mine.

SAM

I've never  
forgotten that.

WOODY

You drew a number  
that got you to law  
school. I drew one  
that got me to  
Vietnam. You  
learned the law of  
the land, Sam. But  
I learned the law  
of the jungle. I  
ain't doing no  
time.

SAM

That's not your  
choice to make.

Ferral steps up behind Woody, flashes  
the handcuffs.