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UNPLUGGED
A Feature Screenplay

ALEX FEDERMAN
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to create a feature-length narrative screenplay, something not offered in any other Penn State film classes. Over the past year, I wrote *Unplugged*. Though the overall genre borrows from road movies, dark comedies, and movies about music, I aimed to incorporate ideas about the ways people relate to each other, whether that be through music, social media and technology, or just as people talking to each other face to face. John Cobb is a musician caught in a bubble of fame and talent, so when he is forced out into the world, he's lost. It's only through the human connection with Greg Turner that he can work through his problems, accept himself, and save the day even in a world where technology threatens to push us apart more than ever. On another level, *Unplugged* deals with the way music plays dueling roles in our society, either as a form of creative expression or as an industry for profit.

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UNPLUGGED

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OVER BLACK

The FINAL CHORD of The Beatles' "A Day in the Life" plays, but instead of fading out, other INSTRUMENTS join in. DRUMS, GUITAR, and BRASS create a beat and fill out the sound into a wild, energetic song.

Ext. CONCERT PAVILION ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Seen from above, colorful crowds of fans move towards an entrance gate with tickets in hand. The mostly college-age crowd pushes forward, and ushers attempt to control the excitement.

Immersed in the crowd is GREG TURNER (20's), who fits in perfectly, except for his frown at being jostled around. He's following JEFF, whose face is plastered with a giant grin.

The two get through the gate and continue up a hill towards the concert pavilion. Colored lights are seen flashing ahead.

Jeff gestures wildly as they walk.

JEFF

I can't believe it, Greg, we're here!

GREG

(dryly)

I can't believe I let you drag me here.

JEFF

C'mon dude, you're going to love it. Stop kidding yourself.

GREG

If you say so.

EXT. CONCERT PAVILION - NIGHT.

Greg and Jeff come up to the very back of a standing-room-only hill leading down to a stage. Their view is blocked by hundreds of fans CHEERING and SCREAMING.

JEFF
(shouting)
See, this is what happens when
you get to a concert on time.

GREG
What?

Greg strains to see what's going on at the stage.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Everyone, NOT SO FAST!

The crowd chants along with the band's name. Greg
can't see anything.

However, once they start to play, it's a different
story. The waves of music flow over the audience, and
Greg can't help but get caught up in the movement.

He closes his eyes and just listens, with a huge
smile growing.

MONTAGE

Another song. Everyone's dancing along and jumping up
and down, and Greg can't help but dance too.

During a slower song, everybody waves lighters and
cell phones in the air.

The final song. Crazy DRUM and GUITAR solos.

GREG
(shouting to Jeff)
Why didn't you tell me they
were this good?

CUT TO:

INT. GREG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Greg is seen through a camera at his desk with a
computer, in a traditional interview framing. Behind
him, newspaper clippings, posters, album covers, and
more decorate the walls.

GREG
 (to interviewer)
 And that's when I first heard
 Not So Fast play. I was
 obsessed.

TONY, a high school kid, pokes his head from around
 the side of the camera.

TONY
 I thought your site was about
 Static Chaos?

GREG
 Not so fast, Tony. You have to
 know where the band started
 before you get to where they
 are now.

Greg stands up and points to a poster of Not So Fast,
 circa-early 90's. JOHN COBB and JACK STORM share the
 center, each holding guitars, with long-haired ED
 NALES on bass and SHAWN QUITELY on drums off to each
 side.

Greg's introduction of the band is intercut with
 flashes of them playing.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Cobb plays a subdued, but emotional guitar solo.

GREG (V.O.)
 John Cobb - the center of both
 bands. His guitar playing is
 some of the best around, and
 the songs he wrote back then
 with Jack Storm are amazing.

EXT. COLLEGE BAR ALLEY - NIGHT

Cobb, Jack and Shawn joke around and enjoy drinks in
 a dimly-lit back alley. Their cases and amps are in
 the back of a car.

GREG (V.O.)

Those guys, along with their
incredible drummer Shawn
Quitely and Ed Nales on bass...
Kite Magazine said they were
going to be the next Beatles.

Greg sits down in his chair and spins around. Tony
attempts to follow with his camera.

GREG

Also happened to be the time
the band decided to split up,
right when they started to get
big. Quitely got picked up by
The Firestarters, Jack went off
to be a lawyer, but Cobb?

Greg stands up again, looking over the wall. He scans
past a t-shirt hanging on the wall and points to a
newspaper headline.

INSERT headline:

"WHERE IS JOHN COBB?"

GREG (CONT'D)

He disappeared for a year.
That's when I started my blog.
Every now and then, little bits
of info snuck out about what he
was working on, and I wrote
about it. Eventually, he
announced the formation of the
band we all know and love,

He points to an illustrated poster with the new
band's logo.

GREG (CONT'D)

Static Chaos. If Not So Fast
was Cobb's attempt to move away
from indie pop and electronic
to try and recapture the spirit
of the 60's and 70's, Static
Chaos is what I call the next
generation of good music.

A new SONG picks up with a GUITAR SOLO leading to more flashes.

INT. THEATER STAGE - NIGHT

Cobb leads the band in the chorus of a song.

We pan around the band members onstage. First up is DANNY STORM, the rhythm guitarist. He's not smiling, just playing along.

GREG (V.O.)
Cobb's the lead now, with
Jack's younger brother Danny on
rhythm guitar and backup
vocals.

Next we see TIM LANSWORTH, with all a style reminiscent of a long-haired hippie, and MILES BAKER, rough but focused, on drums. Tim energetically plays banjo while Miles keeps the beat in the background.

GREG (V.O.)
Cobb wanted to push the band
more and more, attempting to
combine folk-- think Rubber
Soul-- with rock and elements
of soul and jazz. He brought on
Tim Lansworth to play banjo,
cello, fiddle, whatever they
needed, and Miles Baker, great
in any style, on drums.

MILES going into a drum solo.

INT. LATE SHOW STUDIO - NIGHT

The band waves to the crowd, and Cobb, beaming, shakes hands with the late night HOST.

HOST
Static Chaos, everyone!

The audience goes wild with a standing ovation.

GREG (V.O.)

The huge following Not So Fast gained in the "missing year" latched immediately onto Cobb's new project. Static Chaos is everywhere.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - DAY

The band practices, with Cobb energetically moving around the group to give each member some comments. Danny tries to ask about something, but Cobb shuts him down.

INT. GREG'S BEDROOM - DAY

At his computer now, Greg presses play in a media player. One of Static Chaos's SONGS begins. Greg turns toward the camera.

GREG

I mean, every month they release something new, and it's always completely different. I bet you can't find a band with a wider range of styles.

TONY

So, how did you start your site?

Greg smiles. He brings up his blog and scrolls through it.

GREG

I've been writing about everything. When people want news about the band, they turn to my site. I have some 40,000 followers on Twitter. It's this whole community, coming together just to talk about the music.

TONY

Have you ever met anyone in the band?

GREG

Well, no. Not exactly.

Tony looks disappointed.

GREG (CONT'D)

But I feel like so much of their success is due, in part, to me. And a handful of other sites, I guess, but mine's the best.

Tony stops the camera.

TONY

Well, I think that's all I'll need. Thanks dude.

He starts to pack up the camera. Greg takes off his microphone.

GREG

Sure, no problem. I could talk about this band for ages. Hey, by the way, do you want to come over next Friday night? There's going to be a live concert on to promote the new album. Should be awesome.

TONY

Friday? I have work. Sounds cool though.

Tony heads toward the door. He sees a guitar in the corner.

TONY (CONT'D)

Do you play?

Greg tries to laugh it off.

GREG

Never got around to it... I'm trying to get it autographed someday though.

Tony exits, leaving Greg by himself in his room of colorful merchandise. He sits alone in his chair, looking at the wall, and turns the music up, leading into a MONTAGE.

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE QUAD - DAY

Greg, wearing a backpack, staples some fliers, which read "STATIC CHAOS WATCH PARTY," to a bulletin board.

INT. LIBRARY LOBBY - DAY

At the library, Greg talks to a cute GIRL behind the reference desk. He shows her a flier. She considers it, but shakes her head. Another no.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Greg talks to Jeff as they wait to pick up their orders.

JEFF

I mean, I don't really like them that much anymore. I don't know what Cobb's on, but they're making some weird shit nowadays.

GREG

Well, I love it. Hearing something new on every track. And I've been hearing rumors in the comments that there's going to be some kind of huge announcement.

Jeff picks up a coffee.

JEFF

Yeah, yeah. You and your blog.
How's that coming for you?

GREG

Really well, actually. I'm
thinking of running a contest
to give away a poster or
something. You know, get
everyone excited? You're sure
you don't want to come? My
parents are gone for the week.

Jeff turns to Greg, uninterested.

JEFF

Hey, did you get your midterm
back yet?

Greg's eyes show his disappointment.

END MONTAGE

INT. GREG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Greg sits on a couch in his moderately-sized living room, guitar on his knee, with a guitar instruction book and his laptop open on a table in front of him. He tries to play a chord, but struggles to keep his fingers on the right frets.

GREG

G Major, damn it!

He rubs his fingers, which are starting to get red, and puts the guitar down on the floor. Greg's interest shifts to his laptop, which he moves on top of his chest as he lies down on the couch.

INSERT SCREEN

A post on Greg's blog asks if anyone is around to watch the concert in Rockmore. Nobody has replied.

Greg closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

Greg suddenly stands in the front row of a packed concert crowd. He looks around behind him, then turns and sees the stage right in front of him.

Colored and flashing lights play on Greg's face as he gasps and takes in the sight before him: Static Chaos launching into one of their biggest hits, "Lenses."

John Cobb is silhouetted by the stage lights as he sings into the microphone and jams out a fast-paced solo, and for some reason Jack Storm runs out on stage with a guitar to join him.

Greg loses control, grabbing a nearby fan.

GREG

Holy shit!

He also notices Danny near the side of the stage, talking to ALICIA CAMDEN, a beautiful redhead in a red dress.

Suddenly, he hears a SECURITY GUARD for the band, wearing all black and sunglasses, to his right.

SECURITY

Excuse me, are you Greg Turner?

Greg points to himself and nods.

SECURITY (CONT'D)

Follow me for your one-of-a-kind backstage tour.

He turns and walks back into the crowd. Greg's eyes widen. He follows quickly after the guard.

As they get farther from the stage, the number of fans around quickly decreases. The guard leads Greg through a heavy metal stage door.

EXT. COLLEGE BAR ALLEY - NIGHT

The exit leads directly into the same back alley that Not So Fast was seen partying in during Greg's introduction to them. Greg looks around for the band members, but no one is there.

At the last second, he sees the guard throwing a punch straight at his head. It lands with a THWACK.

INT. GREG'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Greg jumps awake at the sound, knocking his laptop to the ground. A different sound replaces it, a frantic BANGING on the front door.

Greg looks around; the closest thing to him is the guitar, so he grabs it by the neck.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Greg runs past a staircase toward the front door, then slows down. He approaches the doorway step by step, and looks through the eyehole.

He jumps back, his hands shaking as he tries to unlock the door as fast as he can. Greg throws the door open and falls back on the stairs as John Cobb himself, nervously looking around, steps in.

COBB

Greg? Greg Turner?

Greg can't talk. He's frozen.

COBB (CONT'D)

Listen man, I need your help.

Greg leans forward.

GREG

How.. How are you here? Is this
real?

Cobb walks past him and quickly surveys the house.

COBB

Nobody here... that's good.
Whoever's doing this to me has
eyes everywhere.

(to Greg)

Is this real? I'm not totally
sure myself.

He sees the guitar.

COBB (CONT'D)

Were you about to hit me with
that very expensive-looking
guitar?

GREG

Yes. I mean... No... Maybe.

Greg stands up.

COBB

Listen, I'll tell you
everything I know, and then you
can, I don't know, start a
hashtag or something. Get the
truth out there-

Cobb takes a deep breath and leans against the wall.

COBB (CONT'D)

I'm being framed, man. The
tapes are gone, and my life,
the band, it's all over unless
you help me.

GREG

It's one o'clock in the
morning. My musical hero is
standing in front of me asking
for help. I'm still freaking
out. Why me? Do you want me to
call the pol-

Greg starts to dig his cell phone out of his pocket.
Cobb has started walking down the hallway, but he
turns around.

COBB

No no no, not yet. Sit, calm down, and listen. And put that thing away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Greg sits down at the counter, eyes still wide with confusion. Cobb paces back and forth

COBB

Every single thing is going wrong.

GREG

Listen, I want to help you, but I can't if you won't tell me anything. The last interview I saw with you, you looked fine.

COBB

Really? I must be good at hiding it then. Or I just didn't notice.

GREG

Notice what?

Cobb towers over Greg. He HITS the counter.

COBB

That my life is fucking falling apart. That everyone hates me.

Greg pulls back some. Cobb turns away.

COBB (CONT'D)

I don't know how far back this goes. Who's involved. I'm just a musician, man. This is some spy level shit.

Cobb pulls back his hair and sits on the counter.

GREG

Start from the beginning. You want me to help you, but I'm completely lost here.

COBB

Look, sorry. I was at this party...

Greg listens.

INT. TIM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rock stars and fashionably dressed groupies fill a large rooftop apartment, while lights from the city spread out in the distance behind a large glass window.

Cobb sits at a small bar, his back to the party. Tim is talking to DWIGHT, the band's manager, who wears a beige suit, but he notices Cobb sitting alone and comes over beside him.

TIM

She's just a girl, man. Not like there aren't any other ones here.

COBB

(somewhat drunk)

No one else like her, though.

He turns around to glance at Alicia, in a beautiful flowing purple dress. She's out on the balcony, making out with Danny Storm. Danny's wearing a white suit with a scarf, and it looks as horrible as it sounds.

COBB (CONT'D)

Fucking idiot. If Danny wasn't Jack's brother, I'd have a new rhythm guitarist in a heartbeat. He can't even keep up with us sometimes.

COBB (CONT'D)
(to Tim)
So what's next.

He looks around, as an idea comes to him.

COBB (CONT'D)
Let's do a bluegrass album. You
can take the lead on this one.

TIM
(smiling)
That's the spirit. Why not?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

GREG
A bluegrass album from you
guys? That sounds awesome.
Definitely different though.

COBB
Since when do I ever do the
same thing twice?

Greg smiles. This is definitely Cobb speaking.

GREG
I thought you and Alicia were
still together?

COBB
There's a lot you fanboys don't
know about me...

Greg shifts a bit, uncomfortable with Cobb's tone.

COBB (CONT'D)
Like that year off- everyone
thinks I was just putting
together Static Chaos, but
really, I was recording. After
Not So Fast broke up, I still
had year's worth of material in
my head. I recorded two fucking
amazing hours.

Greg's eyes widen.

GREG

Oh wow. Is that ever going to
come out?

Cobb hangs his head.

COBB

Where was I?

INT. COBB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door to Cobb's moderately-sized apartment opens. Cobb's silhouette sways, then leans against the door frame.

COBB (V.O.)

After the party, I went back to
my place. Alone.

He brushes for the light on the wall, and switches on a red-hued lamp. He raises his hand to block the bright light, then looks around.

His eyes widen as he sees furniture and drawers overturned.

Cobb walks through the mess, through his small kitchen, towards a dark bedroom.

COBB (V.O.)

I kept the tapes in the closet
in my apartment, in a safe.

The bedroom, full of shadows, is in a similar state of disarray. The open windows cause the curtains to wave in the breeze. Cobb turns towards the closet.

COBB

No... No...

He kneels down and picks through the pile of papers and clothes on the floor.

The safe is open, and a few heavy recording tapes lie smashed inside. The tape itself is strung out, cut up, and destroyed.

Cobb sinks back against the bed, but his gaze remains fixed on the destroyed tapes.

A PHONE RINGING kicks him out of his trance. Cobb digs in his pocket, and standing up too quickly, loses his balance. The room is swirling.

He puts it to his ear wordlessly as he stumbles out of the room. A deep, confident voice on the other end SPEAKS.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Listen Johnny- I'm only going to say this once. You're done. The band is moving on without you. Too bad about those tapes, good stuff, but I need you to know I'm serious.

A pause.

MARCUS (V.O.)

How about you leave town for a while? Maybe you can start over in a year or two. Go solo. Just don't even think about coming back. If you make any attempt to contact the band, Alicia, anyone in your life right now, the press, I'll know, and the hell I'll give you will ruin you. Forever. Lay low.

The caller hangs up. Cobb stares at the phone for a second, then drops it. It CLATTERS on the floor.

Cobb backs up against the kitchen wall. He looks around, at the window, at the door, as if someone's watching him.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

GREG
What the hell?

COBB
I know that sounds crazy. I've
never heard that voice before,
and I don't know what dirt he
has on me.

Greg looks around nervously.

GREG
Dirt? I'm sure I would've heard
something.

Cobb doesn't respond.

GREG (CONT'D)
So how'd you get here? And are
we being watched? There's only
so many places you could go.
Does he know about my site?

Cobb pulls some crumpled envelopes out of his pocket
and drops them on the table. The return address says
"Greg Turner, 514 Baker Drive."

COBB
I didn't know what to do. In my
kitchen, I had a drawer full of
fan mail. Never actually read
the things, just pulled the
first one off the pile.

Greg looks slightly embarrassed.

COBB (CONT'D)
It was either you or that other
blogger girl, the one who
hacked my email last year.

Greg rolls his eyes.

GREG

Caitlin O'Connell. Yeah, good thing you didn't go to her, she'd probably chain you to her bed or something.

Cobb runs his hands back through his hair.

COBB

God, I hate fans.

GREG

(sarcastically)

Do you want my help or not?

COBB

I don't know you, and you don't really know me, but I don't have anyone else to turn to. I know you like my music, and I hope that means something, because if anything bad comes out about me, my songwriting career is over.

Greg thinks.

GREG

Well then, we need a plan.

Cobb paces.

COBB

The concert. They can't do it without me. We have to get back, talk to the band. I don't know who's behind this... could be some other group, The Fowlers maybe, trying to steal our spotlight.

COBB (CONT'D)

(to Greg)

Do you have a car? If we get up to the studio, they're probably rehearsing now.

GREG

Yeah, my parents are away for the weekend.

COBB

Start it up, we need to get on the road.

Greg gets up and starts to open a drawer. He pauses and turns around.

GREG

Cobb... John...

COBB

Cobb.

GREG

This guy, on the phone. Is there anything in your past he can release about you? Someone destroyed your apartment... Am I in danger now?

Cobb is silent. His pale face betrays no secrets.

COBB

I don't know.

He snaps back into his normal self, leaving Greg waiting.

COBB (CONT'D)

Alright, give me those keys, I'll drive. Do you have a hat or something? Sunglasses? Bring your computer, might need it. And that guitar.

GREG

Why?

COBB

You never know, maybe I'll need it. In case something comes to me.

INT. GREG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Greg enters his room to get his laptop. He looks up at his memorabilia-filled wall.

GREG

The John Cobb.

Greg goes to get his laptop. As he closes it, Twitter can be glimpsed on the screen. He doesn't notice.

INSERT - SCREEN

"ALTROCKREPORT: Static Chaos in Chaos?"

EXT. GREG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Greg rushes to the waiting car, a green Subaru, and puts a backpack and a guitar case in the back.

Cobb sits slouched way down in the driver's seat, with a "Not So Fast" baseball cap and dark sunglasses. He taps a rhythm on the wheel nervously. Greg gets in the passenger seat.

COBB

Get in, quickly.

GREG

That's the worst disguise I've ever seen. All you need now is a fake moustache.

COBB

Yeah, yeah. Let's go.

Cobb backs the car out of the driveway way too fast, then speeds off down the road.

The car swerves, narrowly missing a parked car on the side of the road.

COBB (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's been a while.

GREG (O.S.)

Maybe I should drive?

EXT. DANNY'S TRAILER - NIGHT

A large, movie-star style trailer is parked in the loading area for Moonshine Studios, an unassuming recording complex built in a refurbished warehouse. A few overhead lights illuminate the area, but it's full of shadows.

A light in the window of the trailer is on.

DWIGHT (O.S.)
And you haven't heard from him
either? I can't believe this!

DANNY (O.S.)
I don't know why he would
just...

INT. DANNY'S TRAILER - NIGHT

This is no ordinary trailer. Danny Storm has the full rock star treatment, with a giant bed, expensive TVs, a full kitchen. Awards are prominently displayed in a case on the wall.

Danny leans back in a chair, smoking, while Dwight, in an ill-fitting suit, paces back and forth in the kitchen.

DANNY (CONT'D)
...leave like this. I mean,
Cobb's always been erratic, but
abandoning us, that's just
cold.

DWIGHT
There's only two days to go,
and he just skips rehearsal and
disappears.

DANNY
Calm down. I know the new
stuff. It's all under control.

DWIGHT
The new stuff?

Danny reaches for a folder above his head, then tosses it casually on the table. Dwight opens it and flips through it.

DANNY

Now, listen, listen, I know it's not our usual style, but this is what Johnny gave me. And it's brilliant. A new spin on the stuff everyone's listening to these days.

DWIGHT

But... Since when have we ever done what's popular? This doesn't seem right...

DANNY

Think of how much money we'll make. Top of the charts stuff right here. Easy enough to learn, too.

DWIGHT

I guess... I'll hand it out. But everyone else has a say in this too.

DANNY

This is what John Cobb told me to do. This is the new direction. Are you really doubting that?

DWIGHT

It's just-- I don't know-- Doesn't seem righ--

DANNY

Get some sleep, Dwight. You deserve it.

Dwight's posture weakens. He eyes Danny with the slightest hint of suspicion, then leaves. Danny coolly watches him go.

INT. GREG'S CAR - NIGHT

Greg has taken over the wheel. Next to him is Cobb, slouched down with his hat pulled down too.

GREG

That looks ridiculous. Who are you hiding from?

COBB

Anyone who sees me could give away my position. You obviously don't know what it's like to be famous.

Greg rolls his eyes.

COBB (CONT'D)

And I told you what happened. I can't trust anybody. Now that I think of it, how do I know I can trust you?

GREG

Well, I haven't said anything online, honestly. Though it is really hard.

COBB

I bet you're one of those people who reads every interview word for word, buys every song twice, and knows way too much about my personal life.

Greg doesn't know how to respond.

COBB (CONT'D)

How about a test. Tell me something I don't know about myself.

GREG

Uh... *Foresting* was based off your experiences getting lost in a national park as a kid.

COBB

Really? That's the best you can come up with? I thought everyone knew that.

GREG

What are you looking for?

COBB

What's something that you've noticed, that... maybe I'm ignoring about myself.

Greg thinks.

GREG

You never talk about your music, like what it means personally to you.

COBB

Hm... Well... Yeah. I can see that. I wrote it, why not let other people make up their own minds. I've never really cared about what other people think. I'd rather write, keep working the material over and over, and then let it out all at once. And then go to Hawaii or something so I don't have to listen to what people say. Start trying to write something better.

GREG

Don't you think some people would want to know what goes into that? Like "the last song," who's it about? Alicia? Some other girl?

Cobb freezes up at the mention of her name.

GREG (CONT'D)

What happened with her, anyway? All the reports said she--

COBB

Let's change the subject here.

GREG

Did she break up with you, or
did you--

COBB

(growling)

We were together, we're not
anymore. Drop it, kid.

They both watch the road. Cobb turns to Greg.

COBB (CONT'D)

If you were me, if you were
being threatened by some
mysterious voice who somehow
destroyed some of your best
material forever, who would you
think is behind it?

GREG

Well, it would have to be
someone pretty close to you,
right?

COBB

Sometimes I feel like everyone
wants to kill me.

GREG

What?

COBB

My manager needs a new record.
My fucking rhythm guitarist
can't keep a beat. Alicia,
since you asked, probably hates
my guts. Tim, Miles, you can
see it in their eyes, they
always wonder what the hell I'm
thinking. I have no idea, man.

GREG

You can trust me. We'll get to
the bottom of this.

COBB

That's great to hear Greg. Just great. I need more people like you.

GREG

So... what's the big deal with this concert then? There was that leak a few weeks back about maybe a new album announcement?

COBB

We're uh, working on a lot right now. Dwight thought it would be a good idea to try out some new songs live on the air.

GREG

Well, I'm excited. We're going to make it back, you'll rock out, and just remember, there's thousands of people like me out there waiting to hear it.

COBB

What if this blackmail thing turns out to be true? Then they'll all hate me. A huge angry mob is going to tear me apart.

GREG

Do you have any idea what they could have on you?

Cobb watches a rest stop sign fly past the window.

COBB

Hey, could we stop and get something to eat? I'm starving.

GREG

(hesitates)

Sure.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Greg turns the car into a semi-deserted gas station parking lot. In front of them, a small convenience store lights up the night with an artificial glow. "SNACK MART 7," according to the big letters on the side.

COBB

Alright, you wait here.

GREG

Wouldn't it be better if I go in? Nobody would recognize me.

COBB

But how would you know what I want? Besides, I've got my disguise.

He taps his hat.

COBB (CONT'D)

I've always wanted to try this.

GREG

But if someone recognizes you?

COBB

Then I still have you- my getaway driver. No one knows who you are.

GREG

Wait--

The car door SLAMS shut.

Even with his disguise, Cobb doesn't fit in. His confident strides across the parking lot to the store disagree completely with his undercover look.

INT. SNACK MART 7 - NIGHT

Cobb enters a small, somewhat trashy gas station market with about four rows of assorted snack foods.

A TV mounted on the ceiling in the back adds its DRONE to the pop music playing.

A REGISTER GUY near the entrance flips through a magazine with disdain.

REGISTER GUY
Welcome to Snack Mart. Seven.
Why the hell are you here so
late?

Cobb jumps.

REGISTER GUY (CONT'D)
I'm just messin' with ya, we're
open all the way til sunrise.

Cobb tips his hat and continues past.

INT. GREG'S CAR - SAME TIME

Greg taps his fingers, watching until Cobb is behind a row of shelves. He instinctively pulls out his phone and starts scrolling.

A car rolls past, the beams of the headlights briefly distracting him. He goes back to his phone.

INSERT

Several tweets mentioning "Disappearance" "Static Chaos" "rumors" "lost" "Comeback?"

A tweet: "@CobbWeb Where Is John Cobb: Redux? If you have any tips, let me know!"

Greg considers the message.

INT. SNACK MART 7 - CONTINUOUS

Cobb walks sideways through an aisle of chips, too overwhelmed to choose.

He NARROWLY MISSES a display stand. The Register Guy looks up.

Cobb picks a random bag. He heads towards the drink section.

INT. GREG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Greg picks up and puts down his phone several times.

INT. SNACK MART 7 - CONTINUOUS

Holding his drink and snack, Cobb stands staring up at the TV. A repeat of a comedy news show is on, with the headline "All Quiet on the Cobb Front".

Cobb turns and heads back toward the register.

REGISTER GUY

Hey, you look kinda like that
guy on TV. Cobblepots, or
what's his name is.

INT. GREG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Greg speaks on his phone.

GREG

I know it's unbelievable, but
I'm watching him right now. I
need your help, and you can't
tell anyone.

He pauses.

GREG (CONT'D)

If that's the only way, fine.
Tomorrow. Do not, under any
circumstances, tell anyone. And
don't call me Turner.

He hovers his finger above the end call button, then presses it.

INT. SNACK MART 7 - CONTINUOUS

Cobb stands in front of the register, trying to hunch over.

COBB
We shop at the same stores,
maybe.

The Register Guy looks him over for a second.

REGISTER GUY
Yeah, yeah. That's it. The
shirt.

Cobb takes out his wallet. He hands the Register Guy a twenty dollar bill. The register guy pretends not to notice the expensive credit cards inside.

INT. GREG'S CAR - NIGHT

Greg watches as Cobb quickly walks to the car and gets in.

COBB
That was a close one.

GREG
Really? It just looked like you
bumbling around in there to me.
What's the matter, not used to
living in the real world?

COBB
I got shaken up. Let's go.

GREG
Do you think we could rest for
a while? Tomorrow, we'll keep
driving. I know a guy who can
help us stay undercover.

COBB
I told you, no other people can
know about this.

GREG
Trust me on this one.

CUT TO:

INT. GREG'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

The Subaru is parked in a deserted parking lot near a strip mall. Both Greg and Cobb have their seats leaned back, but they both stare wide-eyed at the ceiling.

COBB
One of us has to keep guard.

GREG
...Alright.

CUT TO:

INT. GREG'S CAR - THE NEXT MORNING

Greg and Cobb are both asleep, snoring.

INT. WKRK CONTROL ROOM - DAY

An elderly man with long hair and a tie-dye shirt walks through a dark radio station control room. He roots through a tangle of wires to find a headset, which he puts on.

The man moves a microphone close to his mouth. He SPEAKS with a mixture of seasoned speaking and subtle sarcasm.

MAN
Gooooood morning Rockmore. It's your favorite station double-you-kay-are-kay with all your favorite music cued up and ready to go. We've got Bon Jovi, The Police, White Snake, so many greats I can't even name them all.

A computer screen pops on, the light blinding the man for a second.

MAN (CONT'D)

Now the station wants me to start, so stay tuned to the airwaves and, remember, rock on, Rockmore.

He takes a sip of coffee from an old coffee mug with the art from the "Woodstock" poster on it, then clicks a few items on the screen. As the OPENING of "You Give Love a Bad Name" PLAYS, he leans back in his chair and sighs.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Greg leans against his car talking on his phone.

GREG

(into phone)

I know Mom, I should've told you. But Jeff asked, and we just had to go. It's the only time it worked out this semester. We're staying at his cousin's place.

Beat.

GREG (CONT'D)

I'm a senior in college, I think I can handle it.

Beat.

GREG (CONT'D)

Alright, tell dad I said hi. Love you. Bye.

Cobb walks up behind Greg, startling him.

COBB

Who was that?

GREG

My parents, jeez. Don't you think people would notice if I suddenly disappeared without telling them?

COBB

....Good thinking.

He taps the hood of the car.

COBB (CONT'D)

Back on the road.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A man in a grey suit sits alone at a table in an empty grey modernist dining room. As we push in towards him, we only see his back.

This is MARCUS DANIELS. He's backlit by the glow of four LCD screens, and he takes a methodical bite of steak before scrolling through one of the screens with his finger.

A tough-looking ASSISTANT, dressed in all black, walks up to the man with a thin rectangular case. He opens the top and offers it to him. Six cell phones are neatly arranged inside.

Marcus selects a phone and motions the other man to leave.

MARCUS

(into phone)

I told you not to contact me.

DANNY (V.O.)

Look man, I'm sorry and all, but I need an update. The guys are questioning me, Dwight's threatening to delay the concert...

MARCUS

Mr. Storm. When you hired me,
you hired a professional.
Didn't you?

EXT. STUDIO BACK ALLEY - DAY

Danny stands frozen with his cell phone to his ear.
He hangs his head upon being talked down to.

DANNY

(into phone)

...Yes.

There's an uncomfortable pause. Danny looks at the
phone.

MARCUS (V.O.)

Cobb's been off the radar since
last Thursday night.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Marcus taps each screen once, and they display maps.

MARCUS

I have to hand it to him, he
can really disappear into his
work. If he does show, I'll be
ready for him.

DANNY (V.O.)

You better be. This concert
needs to happen. The whole
thing won't work if--

Marcus interrupts. His eyes narrow, and his tone
becomes much more serious.

MARCUS

You don't trust me? After all
that money you put in my bank
account? Mr. Storm. Dan. You
sing, I plan. The less you
know, the better.

DANNY (V.O.)

But--

MARCUS

I can disappear in a second,
but you? You're just another
headline waiting to happen.
*Guitarist Conspired to Off John
Cobb.* You could lose
everything, just like that.
Calm down. Focus on those
shitty little pop songs in
front of you. You wanted fame
and fortune. And I promise you,
you'll get it. Expect me soon.

He waits a second, silently, then ends the call.

EXT. STUDIO BACK ALLEY - DAY

Dwight sticks his head out the door and sees Danny
pocketing the phone.

DWIGHT

Going to chat with your
girlfriend all day? We have a
deadline to meet, you know.

DANNY

Yeah, yeah.

Danny follows Dwight inside, looking back at the
alley before he closes the door.

INT. GREG'S CAR - DAY

Greg and Cobb continue down the road, now heading
through a busier area of the town.

Greg taps his fingers on the wheel distractedly. He
turns on the radio. A 80'S POWER BALLAD, something
cheesy like "Centerfold," PLAYS for a minute or so.

Cobb becomes more and more agitated.

COBB
Turn it off.

Greg glances over.

GREG
Why?

Cobb laughs.

COBB
You actually listen to that
shit?

GREG
Well, sometimes. Usually I'm ok
with any- wait, what do you
mean by "shit"?

COBB
Look. Radio used to be good.
Back when you could turn on a
station and hear something
completely new. Most of what
plays nowadays sucks.

He shuffles through a few channels.

COBB (CONT'D)
The biggest hits of the 80's.
Top forty songs all about
getting drunk or little boys in
kindergarten singing about how
much they "love" their vapid,
celebrity-obsessed girlfriends.

He stops, landing on a pop dance song of the "Black
Eyed Peas" variety.

COBB (CONT'D)
(to himself)
The lyrics are mostly "la la
la's." So profound.

GREG
So you're saying there's no
good music on now?
(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)

How can you say that when your music's on all the time.

COBB

But people don't need to hear it ten times an hour. It's not just what's on, it's the variety, the whole spectrum of musical influences that's being squashed.

Greg switches the radio off. Even he can't take it.

COBB (CONT'D)

I only really listen to Oldies stations. Or used to, before they changed over to "Classic Rock." Take my what used to be my favorite station, WBIG, back in D.C., for example. The DJs there used to be so good at finding those gems that nobody knew about. Then, they got bought by DialCorp, threw out their whole library, and bought into a corporate system that somehow determined that people want to listen to "classic rock."

He turns to Greg.

COBB (CONT'D)

It's bad enough that they played the same songs over and over, but it's worse if they all sound the same. Let's bring back the 80's, and not the good ELO, Billy Joel kind of music, but Journey, Bon Jovi, Tom Petty even. All those guys who are still touring around playing the same songs to aging baby boomers today.

GREG

Wouldn't you consider, like,
The Beatles as "Classic Rock."

COBB

Classic, yeah. Rock, sometimes,
but you can't lump them in with
the rest. They tried so many
crazy things, so many different
styles. Ever wonder how Not So
Fast got its name?

GREG

I always assumed it was just a
pun or something.

COBB

It's not because our music was
slow. We played fast rock, hard
rock, some psychedelic shit,
everything from folk to jazz to
blues. You know those old
movies, where the villain came
out and revealed his plan once
the hero almost had won? "Not
so fast," eh? Just when you
thought you could pin us down,
we moved onto something
completely different.

Greg is soaking it all in.

COBB (CONT'D)

Static Chaos, though. It's just
been... a mess. Fittingly.

He stares off out the window. They're back in a more
suburban neighborhood.

COBB (CONT'D)

Where are we going, exactly?

GREG

That guy I told you about. He
lives here.

Cobb switches on the radio, as if to make sure he was right. An ad BLARES to life.

ANNOUNCER

RadioLive. Catch up with all your favorite tunes on the station that never ends. Find your favorites, make your own playlists, and more. Download it today! Only from DialCorp. Now back to the Hot 5.

COBB

That's another thing. Two songs and then an ad. And it's for some mobile app, where they're trying to sell you more ads. Is the music industry trying to kill itself off?

GREG

What about the internet?

COBB

Don't get me started on that popularity contest.

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Dwight paces back and forth in a suit in front of his desk on the phone. The sound of a INDIE-POP SONG, the kind you hear as a commercial jingle, can be HEARD in the background.

DWIGHT

This concert has to go on, Cobb or no Cobb. We have the sponsors all lined up, and they'll be furious if it's a no go. I mean, luckily, it fits in perfectly with his unpredictable swings in the past, but the only thing we can do now is move on and pretend we planned it the whole time.

(MORE)

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
They're practicing the new
songs now.

INT. PRACTICE STUDIO - SAME TIME

Tim stands in a circle of percussion behind a set of bells, practicing a rhythm. Miles, usually a wild and crazy looking guy, has headphones on playing a very subdued beat.

Tim puts down his mallets.

TIM
I've said before that I would
play any instrument, but this
is just demeaning.

MILES
I know, man. This isn't us,
it's the same beat as in
anything these days.

TIM
And where is Danny? First Cobb
drops out on us, and if we
don't have Danny, what is this,
a fucking percussion ensemble?

MILES
Punk thinks he can do whatever
he wants.

EXT. STUDIO ALLEY - SAME TIME

Dwight exits the office section of the lot and walks
towards the studio doors, still talking on the phone.

DWIGHT
(into phone)
I hear they love the new
material. Seriously. Speaking
of which, I need to check on
them right now. Talk soon.

He ends the call.

A pair of feet appear at the end of the alley. They belong to Marcus' assistant, who starts walking toward Dwight.

Dwight notices the man.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Can I help you?

The man KNOCKS DWIGHT OUT.

Another pair of feet appear, but these are wearing expensive dress shoes. It's Marcus himself.

Marcus casually walks towards Dwight. He squats down and casually picks Dwight's phone out of his hand, putting it in his own suit pocket.

He nods to his assistant, who starts to pick up the body.

Marcus enters the studio door.

INT. PRACTICE STUDIO - DAY

Tim and Miles are attempting to practice another song.

Danny enters from a side room.

Marcus enters from the main entrance.

As the band looks up, he smiles.

MARCUS
Hey guys. Dwight had to take off to try and find John, and he left me in charge. Let's keep it moving.

EXT. CUL DE SAC - DAY

The sun sets on a suburban street much like Greg's. One single-story house is painted yellow.

Greg leads Cobb from the car down a path through a small garden to the front door.

Cobb glances around at the unusual (for him) surroundings.

COBB

Greg, you sure about this guy?

They reach the door. Greg pushes the DOORBELL.

A beat.

The sound of a dog BARKING inside makes Cobb jump. A female voice SHOUTS from inside.

CAT (O.S.)

EDDIE, DOWN! Be right there-

The door UNLOCKS, then opens. Behind it is CAITLIN O'CONNELL, 19, better known as CAT. In a split second, she goes from a slightly nerdy, yet beautiful redhead to a shrieking, shaking fangirl. Her eyes are as piercing as her SCREAM.

CAT (CONT'D)

OH MY GOD! THIS CAN'T BE REAL.

She faints.

Cobb jumps, looking around behind him and inside the house. He catches her as she falls and tries to move her inside the house.

COBB

Oh shit oh shit oh shit.

Greg rolls his eyes, then dashes to stop Eddie before he runs out the door.

INT. CAITLIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Cobb attempts to pull the unconscious Cat over to an armchair, while Greg makes sure the door is closed.

GREG

Hello? Anyone here? Your daughter just fainted, I swear we're not trespassing.

COBB

What do we do? Who is this girl? Is anyone home? Shit. (To Greg) This is all your fault.

GREG

Calm down. It's like you've never had a girl faint at one of your shows before.

COBB

But I've never had to deal with it before.

He runs his hands through his hair. Greg feels for Cat's pulse.

GREG

Well, she's alive...

Cat suddenly rolls her head. Her eyes open.

CAT

Get your hands off me, Turner.

COBB

Oh. Good. That was a close one.

Cat notices Cobb standing there.

CAT

Fuck. He's so much more handsome in real life.

Cobb is momentarily taken. He smiles.

GREG

Caitlin. Cat. I know we've had our differences in the past...

Cat keeps staring at Cobb.

GREG (CONT'D)

But we, Cobb, I need your help.

He stops, frustrated that Caitlin isn't paying attention.

CAT

Hm?

Cobb snaps out of it, putting two and two together.

COBB

Hey, hold on a second. You're that crazy girl, with that website. First of all, don't put anything online, nobody can know I'm here. Second of all...

He turns to Greg.

COBB (CONT'D)

Why the fuck are we here?

He pulls Greg over to the side.

CAT

(to herself)

I'm not complaining.

GREG

Listen, as much as I hate to admit it, I don't really know what I'm doing when it comes to tech stuff. If you're being tracked, she can find out.

COBB

More like being stalked. I *hate* fans.

GREG

Gee, thanks a lot. We can deal with that later.

Cat interrupts, with crossed arms.

CAT

I suppose you're wondering why you should trust me. I'm, like, your biggest fan.

Greg scowls at that.

CAT (CONT'D)

Turner here may get more pageviews than me, despite having an incredibly bland design--

GREG

At least they're from people who appreciate good music and not an army of high-school screaming fangirls.

CAT

Back off there, bud, I could take down your site in a heartbeat.

COBB

Excuse me, ladies, why am I suddenly in the middle of a blog war? (*To Greg*) The clock's ticking.

CAT

I know, we have to stop that concert as soon as possible. I already found the specs for the arena, as for the tracking--

COBB

Wait. How do you know about...

He swivels towards Greg.

COBB (CONT'D)

Greg, I trusted you. Tell no one, I said.

GREG

Alright, I admit it, I talked to her back at the gas station. But she can help! She knows the most about computers out of everyone I know. We can figure out who's behind all this.

Cat raises her eyebrows at the compliment.

COBB

She's what, seventeen? How much could she actually do?

CAT

(suggestively)
Nineteen.

COBB

Do you know anything about how the internet works?

CAT

I might be the only person out there who actually likes (ALBUM NAME HERE), but man, you're stretching my patience now.

COBB

We're sticking with the original plan. I go and talk with Tim and the guys, we figure something out from there.

CAT

Not much of a plan.

COBB

But they'll listen to me, I know. We're done here. I'll be in the car.

He turns and marches out of the house, SLAMMING the door behind him.

Greg suddenly finds himself alone with Cat. Neither of them speaks. Greg blushes a bit.

GREG

I'm... I'm sorry about that.
It's been a crazy day.

CAT

I didn't believe you at first.
That was actually him.

Greg looks down.

GREG

Yep, that was him. I'm finding
he's slightly more annoying in
real life.

CAT

Thanks for sticking up for me,
though.

Greg looks up, though he misses the compliment.

GREG

It's just... I want to help
him, but I have no idea how.
Blackmail, betrayal... I've
written stories for classes
about this kind of stuff
before, but I have no idea how
people deal with it. And this
great idea he has to sneak into
the studio tonight, I have a
bad feeling about it.

CAT

Look, Turner... Greg. This
whole thing could be some kind
of joke, or it could be, like,
some kind of twisted character
assassination attempt. You have
no idea who you're dealing
with. Just be careful is all
I'm saying.

The horn BEEPS from outside. Greg looks towards the door.

GREG
(under his breath)
Yeah, way to stay under the radar.

GREG (CONT'D)
I will. Thanks for putting our history to the side for now. I can't do this alone, and to be honest, you're way smarter than me.

Cat smiles.

CAT
I'll keep at trying to come up with something. If you need anything, let me know.

GREG
Thanks. I better get out there before he tries to drive again.

He leaves without a goodbye.

Cat looks after him for a beat, then a realization sinks in.

CAT
Holy shit, I just met John Cobb.

INT. CAT'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Cat walks quickly to her computer, a massive set up with three flat screens. Her walls are covered with Static Chaos memorabilia, similar to Greg's, but with most of the other band members cut out.

She rubs her head as if it's spinning as she sits down at her desk. Eddie jumps up on her lap.

Cat opens a browser window to her email. Suddenly, something catches her attention. Her eyes widen.

(An advertisement for the RadioLive app is an easter egg on the screen.)

INT. GREG'S CAR - SUNSET

Greg and Cobb drive on the highway. Cobb recognizes a name on a street sign.

COBB
Get off here.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

The Subaru pulls down a road in an industrial district which leads towards the back of the rehearsal studio complex.

COBB (O.S.)
Keep going.

INT. GREG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

GREG
I don't want to get too close.
We don't know who's watching.

He pulls the car over to the side of the road near some trees.

GREG (CONT'D)
Alright, let's get this straight. You want to talk to the band, despite a warning not to go anywhere close to the people you know. Are you sure about this?

COBB
If there's anyone that can help me, it's them.

GREG
Ok, then. Let's-

Cobb is already out the door.

COBB

Stay here. I know what I'm
doing, and I don't want to drag
you into this any more than I
have already.

He starts off.

GREG

(to himself)
It's a bit too late for that
now.

EXT. STUDIO BACK LOT - NIGHT

Cobb rounds a corner into the back lot of the studio.
He passes several trailers and cars, heading for the
loading dock.

He finds the entrance to the studio, looks around,
and slips in.

INT. PRACTICE STUDIO BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Cobb walks through a maze of hallways. Displays on
the walls showcase past albums and band memorabilia.

As he walks, the SOUND of Static Chaos playing a
horrible INDIE POP SONG gets louder. Cobb grimaces at
the NOISE.

He reaches a large double door with a red lit "IN
SESSION" sign above it.

INT. PRACTICE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Tim, Miles, and a MAN with a SYNTHESIZER play,
arranged in a half circle.

In front of them, Danny is singing with his eyes
closed and mouth pressed far too close to the
microphone.

The doors to the studio BURST open, and Cobb enters.

Tim, playing the bells, is the first to notice. His eyes widen and his hands stop. It's as if he's seen a ghost.

Danny turns around.

DANNY
(to Tim)
What the hell are you stopping
for?

Miles stops playing.

MILES
John!

TIM
Holy shit man, where have you
been?

Danny whips around.

DANNY
(incredulous)
You?

COBB
What are you playing? Who is
this guy?

The KEYBOARDIST looks up.

COBB (CONT'D)
Listen, I need to talk to all
of you. I can explain why I
disappeared so suddenly.
Something very wrong is
happening.

TIM
What do you mean?

COBB
I'm being... blackmailed by
someone. I don't know who, but
after the party last week,
there was a break-in at my
apartment.

DANNY

What? How can you expect us to believe that? You check out on us and this is the explanation you're giving?

Cobb glares at Danny. He looks down and puts his hands through his hair.

COBB

I don't know who it was, but they knew about these recordings I had in a safe at my place. Which are gone now. I got a call, this guy said not to contact anyone I know, and I just panicked. I can trust you guys, right?

A figure moves behind the one-way mirror of the recording booth.

MILES

Do you have any idea what this... person has on you?

COBB

I... I don't know. But I need your help.

He walks over to Tim's percussion circle and looks at some of the music on the stand.

COBB (CONT'D)

What is this crap? Were you going to play the concert without me? What's going on here? Did Dwight make you play this?

TIM

Dwight gave these songs to us, but he left. The new guy said you wanted to change it up.

COBB

New guy?

The door of the booth opens slowly. Marcus is watching.

COBB (CONT'D)
I haven't had contact with
anyone for, like, four days.
What the hell has going on
around here?

Marcus clears his throat.

Cobb turns around.

MARCUS
I believe I can clear that up.

EXT. ROAD - SAME TIME

Greg leans on his car's hood, arms crossed. He
WHISTLES a Static Chaos song to himself. He checks
the time.

INT. PRACTICE STUDIO - SAME TIME

Marcus steps forward, offering his hand.

MARCUS
Marcus Daniels. Nice to meet
you.

Cobb doesn't shake.

COBB
Do I know you?

MARCUS
We've never met.

COBB
Your voice... you're behind all
this.

Cobb starts towards him.

COBB (CONT'D)
You bastard.

Marcus nods once. One of his men exits the booth with a gun, and points it at Cobb.

The other band members are frozen in place.

MARCUS

I hate the state of the
industry these days. No
manners.

He walks over towards a wall full of plaques containing golden records and looks up towards them.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

There's no place for
originality in this business
anymore. In the old days,
producers used to control the
music. They got what they
wanted before the words were
even written. But since the
Great Music Industry started
giving out files instead of
physical media, now music is
supposed to "belong to
everyone" or some shit like
that.

Tim starts towards Marcus.

TIM

What are you on about, man?

The keyboardist stops him in his tracks with a gun of his own.

MARCUS

So we turned to controlling the
way people see music. When you
hear a track posted online,
there's a reason it's getting
to your ears. Play in
commercials. Movie soundtracks.
With the right story, we can
make all those fans cough up
the dough like there's no
tomorrow.

He turns around.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Everything comes from something else. There would be no Vampire Weekend without Paul Simon. No "Fun." without Queen. But with the right packaging, a shiny "NEW" label, and a way to control the conversation-- Twitter does well-- people can be tricked into wanting whatever I say. That's what I do.

He waves his arm at the band.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

That's what we're working towards here today.

Cobb is on the verge of lunging forward to tackle Marcus.

COBB

How fucking dare you. This is MY BAND. MY LIFE.

MARCUS

Wait a second, Johnny. Is it okay if I call you that? Wait a minute. Of course it is. I. Own. You. I own your band. I was hired to crash this ship. I'll spin it around, give it a fresh new coat of paint, some of those bubblegum pop songs that'll drive the tweens crazy. People will flock to the newest megastars in the field. It's a dirty job, but if you do it right, you'll have millions in the bank by the next morning.

COBB

And what are you going to do with me? Have me killed by your goon squad?

MARCUS

Me? I'll just vanish. But if you make any moves, rest assured I'll see them. I have bots all over the net, like a giant spider crawling on a "Cobb" web.

He laughs at his own joke, then instantly becomes serious.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

The moment anyone says anything about you, or you show up in a photo, I'll know.

He walks slowly closer to Cobb, pulling out a phone. He scrolls through it, the light illuminating his face menacingly.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Rolling Stone just found photos of you from high school! What a loser. I sure hope they don't find that security camera footage of you selling pot out behind the old 7-11.

He looks up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It gets so much worse from there.

He looks back at the phone.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Exclusive interview with Alicia Camden, front page of the New York Times. What about that sex tape from five years ago?

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Although that actually might be good for business.

DANNY

Really, man?

COBB

I don't care about any of this stuff. It's all in the past for me.

MARCUS

Not real enough for you, yet?
Let's make a deal.

He speaks quietly so only Cobb can hear him, putting his hand on Cobb's shoulder.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

This concert is extremely important for me. If you show up anywhere near the arena tomorrow, well, let's just say former rock stars have a way of not waking up in hotel rooms. The breakup was just too much.

Cobb looks towards the band.

COBB

Guys, you have to help me here.

MARCUS

They'll be millionaires soon. I don't think they'll care.

TIM

You fucker.

MARCUS

And what makes you think I don't have shit on you too?

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Now get the fuck out of my studio. We *(he gestures towards the band)* have work to do.

Cobb dashes off, almost like a terrified rabbit. He almost knocks over a cymbal stand on the way out.

Marcus smiles.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Greg sees Cobb running down the road.

He attempts to get back in the driver's seat, but Cobb pushes him aside and gets in.

GREG
What happened?

He dashes to the passenger seat.

COBB
Shut up.

The car revs to life as Greg barely gets in. Cobb steers the car in a hasty U-turn and speeds away from the studio.

INT. GREG'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Cobb's hands grip the wheel too tight.

GREG
Where are we going?

COBB
Away from this mess. I'm tired
of showing up on people's
doorsteps and begging for help.
Of being betrayed by people I
thought I could trust.

Greg, pressed to his seat, tries to say something, but words fail.

COBB (CONT'D)
Maybe that guy's right. Maybe
this world would be better off
if I fucking disappear from it.

GREG

What happened in there?

Cobb doesn't answer.

COBB

You're just going to give up?
What about--

COBB (CONT'D)

About what, Greg? About the
fans who stalk me day in and
day out, who cling to my every
word, every song like I'm some
kind of god?

GREG

I can help you.

COBB

There's nothing you can do to
help me now, I'm screwed. Worse
than screwed, I may as well be
dead.

He turns his head toward Greg.

COBB (CONT'D)

If I go anywhere near that
arena tomorrow, this guy'll
kill me.

GREG

What guy? Watch out!

The headlights of another car shine through the
window as Cobb speeds through a stop light at an
intersection.

COBB

God damn it!

GREG

Where are we going?

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

The car pulls down a dirt road through a pine forest, arriving at a clearing with a small log cabin. The cabin, on a hill, overlooks a valley below.

INT. GREG'S CAR - NIGHT

Cobb pulls forward to a stop, then parks the car. He runs his hands through his hair and leans his forehead on the steering wheel.

GREG

I didn't know people like that existed. That guy sounds like a supervillain.

Cobb gets out of the car.

EXT. CABIN CLEARING - NIGHT

Cobb walks to the cabin. Greg gets out of the car and follows him.

GREG

You can't just give up! Do you know how many people would be disappointed in you?

COBB

Look Greg. Maybe you can deal with it, but the worst thing in life is to be a fan. You spend all your time looking at what other people have done, thinking "that's so great," that you don't make anything yourself.

GREG

Fuck you, what's wrong with liking something?

COBB

(getting hysterical)

I'm not saying you can't *like* something. I love the Beatles. They were everything to me in college. But when some bullshit music mag blaes out that, oh, "Not So Fast is on track to becoming the next Beatles," and you're only 22, with your whole career in front of you, what are you supposed to do? Try to live up to Abbey Road? You're stuck doing what people want, and then what if you can't?

GREG

But you can.

Cobb turns away.

COBB

Maybe I could've once. But not anymore.

He heads inside.

COBB (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nobody else knows about this place but me. You can stay here the night, but then you're leaving.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Greg lays on a couch, staring at the ceiling. He brings his phone up to his face, scrolling through something aimlessly.

He closes his eyes and lets his arm drop to the floor.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Cobb sits on a wooden chair on the porch looking out over the city. Sitting next to him is the guitar case from the car.

He looks down at it as if it's speaking to him.

INT. CABIN - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The sounds of a GUITAR TUNING break the silence and Greg's sleep. The FIRST FEW CHORDS of David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" PLAY slowly.

Greg hears Cobb start to sing, and sits up.

EXT. CABIN - SAME TIME

Cobb continues to sing a slow, soulful cover of the song.

INT. CABIN - SAME TIME

Greg stands and walks outside.

EXT. CABIN - SAME TIME

Greg stands at the back door listening. Cobb doesn't notice.

Cobb finishes his song.

GREG

Wow. That was beautiful.

Cobb leans back in the chair, staring at the porch ceiling.

Greg sits down in a chair beside Cobb.

COBB

Do you think people will
remember me when I'm gone?

GREG

You really still want to run away?

COBB

That wasn't the question.

Greg thinks.

GREG

That depends. Your music, definitely. I mean, in my eyes, you're up there with the greats. As a person? Nobody really has had a chance to know you.

COBB

Why should anyone care about my life? I'm just some college kid who made it big, burned out too early, and lost everything.

GREG

The troubled artist. You just try and hide behind your music. Did you ever think that maybe, people out there are going through the same exact things as you, listening to your words, your songs and trying to make their lives better? Last year this time, I failed a class and got brutally rejected by a girl I had taken two years to get up the courage to ask out. I was just listening to "Sunset Paradox" on repeat, hoping that something good would come.

COBB

Really?

GREG

I thought my life was crumbling apart.

(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)

Never would've made it through without you. And that's probably why I put so much time into running the site. There are so many people who've been affected by your music.

COBB

Well, that's... not going to happen anymore, I guess. Even if I did want to get back on that stage, I have a complete psychopath blocking the door.

GREG

I've been thinking, cause obviously neither of us can sleep... I've never been good at finishing things. But I don't want to give up on this. I have a plan.

COBB

A plan?

GREG

It's a crazy one, but yeah.

COBB

Well...

He puts his hands through his hair.

COBB (CONT'D)

I guess, what do I have to lose?

GREG

Nah. What do you have to gain?

They look out over the city as the sun begins to rise.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. COMTECH ARENA - MORNING

A reporter does an on-camera spot with a huge line running around the stadium in the background.

REPORTER

Thanks Paul. Excitement continues to mount as mystery surrounds tonight's Static Chaos concert at Comtech Arena.

Shots of excited fans showing off their band gear and cheering.

EXT. ARENA TICKETING - MORNING

Fans wearing "WHERE IS JOHN COBB?" shirts argue with ticket sellers.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Despite a sold out crowd, fans are still lined up for a chance to get into what is becoming this year's biggest music event.

EXT. CAT'S HOUSE - DAY

REPORTER (V.O.)

Above all, fans are asking where frontman John Cobb is. Cobb has previously disappeared before...

Cat opens her door, smiling at the two people standing in front of her.

CAT

I knew you'd be back.

GRAPHICS SCREEN

REPORTER (V.O.)
 ...but it is unknown if there's
 "chaos" in the band itself, due
 to Cobb's recent break-up with
 Alicia Camden, or if this is a
 publicity stunt, something
 completely new for the band.

INT. ARENA CORRIDOR - DAY

Two construction workers install a security camera.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - DAY

Marcus watches a screen of about 40 different camera feeds.

TV FEED

Graphics of tweets are shown.

REPORTER (V.O.)
 Recent tweets from radio
 station WKRK, a concert sponsor
 and creator of the popular
 "RadioLive" app, have referred
 to tonight's concert as "a new
 Static Chaos experience."

EXT. COMTECH ARENA - MORNING

REPORTER
 Either way, we'll continue to
 cover the excitement. I'm Tina
 Terrel, back to you, Paul.

END MONTAGE

INT. CAT'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Cobb, Greg, and Cat are gathered around her computer.

COBB

Listen, Cat. Before I thought you were some kind of psycho stalker, I'm sorry. Thank you for everything.

CAT

You don't know how happy I am to hear you say that. As much as I'd like for you to stay here forever, you'd better get going. The next part of the plan is crucial.

GREG

(to Cobb)

You ready?

EXT. WKRK HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

Greg and Cobb arrive in front of the massive, concrete headquarters of WKRK radio. A tall antennae and several satellite dishes line the sides of the building. Once in its prime, it looked impressive, but now, the chipping paint makes it seem like it could fall apart at any second.

Cobb looks it over as they head towards the small, illuminated doors.

COBB

This place has seen better days.

Greg's carrying a sledgehammer. He looks at the door handle.

GREG

You ready?

He readies himself to lift the hammer.

COBB

Wait.

Cobb jiggles the handle.

INT. WKRK LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The door opens. Cobb and Greg enter. Greg leans the sledgehammer down near the front desk.

Inside, the station is deserted. Slightly peeling posters of past concerts cover the walls. A long hallway reaches back into the building. Only one light is on at the end.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Miles wait to be called on. They're wearing tight, "hipster" type outfits (plaid shirts, glasses), and shuffle uncomfortably.

TIM

This isn't right, man.

MILES

I don't know what we can do.
Fucking insane.

Danny enters.

DANNY

How are you guys doing? Ready?

No response.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm just as much in the dark as you two. This sucks, but the music isn't that bad. Let's make the best of this.

INT. WKRK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cobb and Greg walk slowly down the hallway. Judging by its downtrodden state, nobody has been here for a long time. Cobb notices a sign that reads "STATION MASTER CONTROL"

COBB

Here.

INT. WKRK CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter the cluttered control room of the station (previously seen at around page 32).

Greg calls Cat

GREG

We're here.

CAT

You should see a computer running the station's feed. Find a mike, and you should be good to go.

GREG

Got it.

INT. CAT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cat watches a feed of the concert while typing away on her computer.

CAT

All systems are ready for takeoff.

Eddie BARKS.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - NIGHT

Marcus, wearing a headset, looks over the arena filled with screaming and chanting fans. He smiles and checks the time.

MARCUS

Let's do this.

INT. DRESSING ROOM HALL - NIGHT

The band is on their way to the stage, followed by Marcus' henchmen. Danny leads the way.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

The lights fade down, causing the fans' cheers to rise.

Suddenly, large screens on the stage blink to life with flashing graphics.

"FOR A SURPRISE"

"TURN ON RADIOLIVE NOW"

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - NIGHT

MARCUS
What in the hell?

He screams at TECH GUY working the light board.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Cut the power.

TECH GUY
Yes sir.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

The stage lighting, and half the arena, goes dark.

Confused fans look around. A growing MURMUR fills the air.

They start taking their phones out. Pinpoints of light start filling the arena.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - NIGHT

Marcus looks around.

MARCUS
Shit. B units. Get to WKRK and
shut this down.

EXT. ARENA PARKING - NIGHT

Two black cars speed away from the arena.

INT. WKRK CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Cobb wires up a microphone to a computer console. Greg navigates through a system of menus on the screen.

GREG

Let's see... Password is...

A SHUFFLING SOUND in the hall interrupts Greg's thoughts. Greg and Cobb look toward the door.

An older man, LEON FUNK, who was last seen kicking off the morning broadcast comes in.

LEON

Who's there?

Greg and Cobb freeze and glance up.

LEON (CONT'D)

Why if it isn't Mr. John Cobb himself.

COBB

Do I know you?

LEON

That I can't say, but I most definitely know you. Leon Funk, at your service. What brings you to old WKRK so late?

GREG

Leon, we need your help. We're about to do something that could change music forever.

LEON

So you say you want a revolution, eh? I've seen plenty myself.

(MORE)

LEON (CONT'D)

I'd always like another chance
to get back at the rat bastards
who took over this once great
station.

COBB

Do you have access to the
system?

LEON

Well, what do you think?

He crosses over to the console, thinks for a second,
and types in a password.

LEON (CONT'D)

All yours, boys.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

Even more phones are out now. Some people hold them
up like lighters at a concert, others watch them as
they illuminate their faces.

EXT. ARENA STAGE WING - NIGHT

A GRUNT pushes the band onstage. They walk slowly to
their instruments, looking out over the crowd.

INT. WKRK CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Cobb swings the microphone closer to him. He pauses
for a second, looking at Greg. Greg nods in
confirmation.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

Cobb's VOICE is heard, much louder and with an odd
echo that fills the arena.

COBB

Um. Hello everyone.

A CHEER rises, then quiets as Cobb continues to talk.

COBB (CONT'D)

Sorry I couldn't make it tonight, I'm under a bit of pressure. I'll keep this brief. My disappearance this past week was, sudden, to say the least. Last night, I was at the lowest place of my life. I was on the brink of leaving my friends, my home, my career all behind. A friend convinced me not to.

The band listens from their spots.

COBB (CONT'D)

You may love my music, or it may not live up to your standards. While I don't care what you think of it, I haven't ever acknowledged that you care enough to listen to it. And for that, I'm sorry.

COBB (CONT'D)

It's time for me to take a break. I promise, I'll be back to making music eventually.

The audience doesn't know how to respond. Some people CLAP. Some people are silent.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - SAME TIME

Marcus listens intently.

MARCUS

He's done. Let's get the band on.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

The stage lights slowly fade back up.

COBB

But there's something I'd like you all to help me with first.

The crowd cheers.

INT. CAT'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

A lighting grid control screen lights up on Cat's screen. She watches the live feed and smiles.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

A single stage light swivels on its base to face the sound booth. Marcus is caught in its beam like a rat in a trap.

COBB

This man, yes, with the
glasses, is Marcus Daniels.
Sure, he looks harmless, but
the past few days, he's sent
his thugs to break into my
apartment, blackmailed me, and
even threatened my life.

The crowd starts to BOO and SHOUT.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - SAME TIME

Marcus stands frozen, face shaking from holding back his rage.

MARCUS

Shut it down, now.

INT. WKRK CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Several GRUNTS stand enter the control room. There's no one there except Leon, who's asleep in the corner.

GRUNT

Nobody's here, boss.

Leon smiles.

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

Cobb's speech continues.

COBB

And he's behind the shadow of a
band you see on stage in front
of you. Don't let yourselves be
controlled by the industry.
Music is about way more than
the money, it's art--

Suddenly, the signal drops out, leaving everyone in
silence.

EXT. SOUND BOOTH - NIGHT

Marcus uses this as his excuse to run for a stadium
exit.

EXT. ARENA STAGE - NIGHT

Tim, Miles, and especially Danny are frozen in the
lights. The keyboardist walks towards the stage exit,
when he sees Cobb and Greg appear on the wing. He
dashes off.

Cobb turns to Greg, who hands him his guitar.

COBB

One last concert.

He turns and heads out onstage to the ROARING CHEERS
of his audience.

Tim and Miles smile. Danny stares incredulously.

DANNY

(under his breath)
How in the hell?

COBB

(to the band)
You guys ready to rock this?

Danny speaks accidentally into his microphone.

DANNY
I've had enough of this. I
fucking quit.

COBB
I never liked you anyway, Dan.
I'm not sure even your own
brother could stand you at this
point.

Greg LAUGHS offstage. Danny also heads for the exit.

COBB (CONT'D)
Well, now that that's over, how
about some chaos?

The crowd goes wild as Cobb launches into a song.
Miles and Tim improvise with the instruments they
have.

In the wings, Greg cheers along.

Cobb and his band put on the show of a lifetime.

EXT. TECHCOM ARENA - NIGHT

Outside the arena, the SOUNDS of FANS and MUSIC echo
into the night. A black SUV pulls up as Marcus runs
as fast as he can away from the arena, taking out SIM
cards from his cellphones and discarding them at the
same time.

The door opens. An POLICE DETECTIVE is waiting.

POLICE DETECTIVE
Marcus Daniels? You're under
arrest.

Two other officers attempt to pull him into the car.

Marcus sees Danny heading for a parking lot.

MARCUS
Him! He's the one who hired me.

EXT. ARENA PARKING - NIGHT

Danny is thrown to the ground by other officers.

DANNY
Get your hands off of me, don't
you know who I am?

EXT. ARENA - NIGHT

MONTAGE

The concert continues for about an hour. We see glimpses of the band, fans crying in happiness, Greg watching from the stage.

EXT. ARENA STAGE - NIGHT

Cobb, covered in sweat, looks out at the crowd. He takes in the sight as if it's the last time he'll see it.

COBB
Well folks, I hope you had fun
tonight. I know I did. I'll be
back soon.

Applause and chants fill the air.

Cobb motions to Tim and Miles, who take bows. He takes one himself. Then, he turns to Greg and nods, as if almost to say, "thank you."

INT. GREG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Greg is seen through a camera at his desk in another interview.

GREG
So that was the last time
Static Chaos played together,
but man, what a concert.

This time, instead of a high school student, A TV REPORTER is asking the questions.

TV REPORTER

Have you and John Cobb kept in touch?

GREG

Oh definitely.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Cobb walks along with a bag of groceries in one arm and his cell phone in the other. He's wearing a fedora.

COBB

I met this awesome couple today, they've covered a few of my songs. We're trying to work something out. Oh hey. Hold on.

A few teenaged boys and girls have recognized Cobb and come over to him. He attempts to shake their hands even though his are full.

COBB (CONT'D)

Hey, how's it going? Nice to meet you.

INT. GREG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Greg continues.

GREG

The stuff he's working on now is really cool. He's learning to play every part himself, and crowdsourcing fan contributions online. I also finally just got him to teach me how to play guitar.

GREG (CONT'D)

As for Danny and Marcus, the police found that Marcus had under-the-table deals with half of the bands on the top 40 charts.

(MORE)

GREG (CONT'D)

They're both waiting for trial now. I heard Tim and Miles are working on putting together a new group, so good on them.

Suddenly, he remembers something and spins around to his computer.

GREG (CONT'D)

Oh yeah. I don't know if you've seen it yet, but check this out. JohnCobbMusic.com. Now an official site, and I'm the webmaster.

CAT (O.S.)

Some people have all the luck, right?

Cat's standing by the door, smiling.

GREG

(to the reporter)

If you haven't met her, this is hacker extraordinaire, Caitlin O'Connell.

She fakes a bow.

GREG (CONT'D)

Is that all you need?

TV REPORTER

It looks like we're good.

GREG

Alright then, I forgot I had promised to take this lovely woman out to dinner.

He stands up and walks over to Cat. The news team starts packing up their gear.

CAT

It's funny how a couple months ago, this never would have happened.

GREG

Look at this room. I used to
just be one face in the crowd,
and somehow I became best
friends with a rock star,
unraveled a criminal conspiracy
behind the music industry, and
had the time of my life doing
it.

CAT

Admit it, you were probably
scared for your life.

GREG

Well, maybe. But I wasn't the
one sitting behind a computer
screen the whole time.

CAT

Oh shut up.

They both laugh as they leave the room.

The camera falls on a recently added photo on the
wall, of Greg on stage at the arena, taking a bow
with Cobb and the band.

END.

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