

FADE IN:

EXT. HUDSON CITY - NIGHT

CAMERA GLIDES ACROSS the tarred rooftops of a crumbling, working class city across the river from the blazing skyline of Manhattan.

CAMERA DROPS DOWN into the street and PICKS UP a man wearing an old running suit, jogging at a good clip past empty storefronts, a Pentecostal church, a Dunkin' Donuts.

JOGGER (V.O.)

This old town... I grew up here...

CLOSE ON THE JOGGER, his good looks marred by a couple of scars

JOGGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Lived here all my life. Everything's changed...

A Fiat 500X cruises past as he runs along a wall plastered with brightly colored Hindi language movie posters.

JOGGER (CONT'D)

And nothing has.

A homeless man sleeps on the sidewalk, while a drunken young couple brandish cigarettes as they scream at each other outside an Irish bar.

JOGGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There's always been a darkness here...

LONG SHOT FROM ABOVE as he runs down a dimly lit, empty industrial street, old loft buildings looming around him.

JOGGER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But lately... things have gotten darker.

A *GUNSHOT* rings out.

The jogger stops, looks up at...

An abandoned loft building, as more GUN FLASHES illuminate the windows above.

JOGGER (CONT'D)

But here's the thing, the darkness always gives you a choice...

The jogger slips into an alley.

JOGGER (CONT'D)

You can fear it...

CLOSE ON THE JOGGER as he emerges a moment later, pulls a black knitted mask down over his face, two eyeholes roughly cut in it, giving him a strange, primordial appearance.

JOGGER (CONT'D)

Or you can embrace it.

As he walks toward the abandoned building, the CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see that he is...

COMPLETELY NAKED.

He steps through the doorway and vanishes into the dark.

"NAKEDMAN" appears in the blackness.

THEME AND CREDITS...

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER FRONT - NIGHT

Rusting old loading cranes loom like dinosaurs over the empty piers on the once thriving Hudson City river front.

INSERT TEXT: "**One month earlier**"

A HUGE CONTAINER SHIP, its decks piled high with multi-colored containers, glides past...

Two men sit together at the end of the pier, enjoying the cool river air and watching the vast ship slide by. DANNY COHEN (late thirties, the jogger from the previous scene) is carelessly dressed and hasn't shaved for a couple of days. His affable good nature covers a chasm of grief. Jimmy G (same age) is immaculately attired, edgy, charming, restless. He and Danny have been polar opposites and best friends since childhood.

JIMMY

Remember we used to dream of hidin'
in a box and goin'... where was it?

DANNY

Disney World.

JIMMY

Not Disney World, you dummy! That
island--with the big heads.

DANNY
Easter Island.

JIMMY
Easter Island--that's right. We
were gonna get stoned with the heads.
Remember?

They laugh.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
But we're still fuckin' here.

DANNY
It's home.

JIMMY
It used to be home. Now it's just
where we live.

DANNY
Which makes it home, *dummy*.

JIMMY
Home is where your heart is.

DANNY
Home is where your butt is.

JIMMY
Whatever.
(checks his Rolex)
Let's roll.

A moment later they walk across a parking lot past a painted sign that reads... "THE HAPPY SHARK."

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Did you lose your razor?

DANNY
It's a look. Stubbily.

JIMMY
Stubbily bum--and Good Will that
shirt.

DANNY
What are you, my mother?

JIMMY
No, I'm your boss, fuckhead.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN DINING ROOM - LATER

Large mounted fish--marlin, tuna, swordfish--gaze down with glass eyes from the walls of a big room packed with locals and families wearing Happy Shark plastic bibs and chowing down on platters of seafood, french fries, and cole slaw.

Danny leans against the wall, surveying the scene... Something catches his eye.

A new waitress is on the floor. She's dark haired and beautiful, even in a Happy Shark waitressing uniform. It's her first night--she's harried but holding her own.

Danny watches her... until a loud voice and a burst of raucous laughter catch his attention.

A table of burly BIKERS on their sixth pitcher of beer, presided over by a big, overly pumped up LOUDMOUTH.

LOUDMOUTH

So I told him to take his Yamaha and shove it up his ass.

His buddies laugh and pound the table with appreciation.

The diners at nearby tables look very uncomfortable.

Danny steps up behind the guy.

DANNY

(politely)

Excuse me, gentlemen... Sorry to disturb you, but this is a family place. Could you tone it down a little?

LOUDMOUTH

You the bouncer?

DANNY

More like the assistant manager.

LOUDMOUTH

Well it's my birthday, so go fetch me a cupcake... and a free pitcher of beer.

(back to his buddies,
loudly)

So he gets this Vin Diesel look on his face--you know the one he's been practicin' in the mirror--

DANNY
(puts his hand on his
shoulder)
Excuse me, sir.

LOUDMOUTH
Take your hand off me, or I'll bite
it off.

Danny removes it.

LOUDMOUTH (CONT'D)
And I just fuckin' nail him--BOOM!

Danny puts his hand back on his shoulder.

The whole dining room goes instantly quiet.

JIMMY, standing in the doorway, watching...

A baseball bat held discreetly behind his leg, just in case.

LOUDMOUTH (CONT'D)
I won't tell you again.

DANNY
Umm, you just did.

The Loudmouth throws a backfist at Danny. But Danny catches and traps his arm and using a Qin Na technique pries out his thumb and twists his wrist back to the breaking point...

LOUDMOUTH
AHHHH!

Forcing the loudmouth back into his chair, where he is completely under Danny's control.

SURPRISED REACTIONS from the customers and the bikers

JIMMY, enjoying the show

DANNY
(still polite)
So, you got three options. Leave.
Finish your dinner like a gentleman.
Or...
(bends his wrist back)

LOUDMOUTH
AAAHHH!... DINNER! FINISH MY DINNER!

DANNY
(releases his hand)
Enjoy.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

(beat)

And Happy Birthday.

Danny walks away, meets up with Jimmy.

JIMMY

So you can still do that stuff.

DANNY

It's like riding a bike.

They suddenly hear chairs scraping violently against the floor.

The bikers are all getting to their feet.

JIMMY

Oh shit.

Jimmy and Danny run out the door... with the angry bikers in hot pursuit.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - A MOMENT LATER

Jimmy and Danny burst out the back door. A beat later the bikers pour out, and see...

Jimmy and Danny, shoulder to shoulder in the middle of the lot, waiting for them. The bikers form a line, giving the duo their iciest stare as the loudmouth steps forward, and a heavy length of chain with a nasty looking chunk of iron at its end drops down from his hand. Danny starts to step forward, but Jimmy stops him.

JIMMY

I got this one.

(faces the biker)

So... how was your dinner? What did you have?

The biker SWINGS the chain. Jimmy deftly ducks and sidesteps the whirling iron, then brings his baseball bat into play, catching the chain, which wraps around the bat. Jimmy yanks it, pulling the biker forward and ramming the end of the bat into his guts.

The biker drops to his knees and spews out...

A GEYSER OF BEER AND SEAFOOD.

THE OTHER BIKERS react with disgust.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Oh, the gumbo. Good choice.

The angry bikers are about to rush them...

When the door to the restaurant bangs open, and the entire KITCHEN STAFF, armed with cleavers, kitchen knives, and heavy pans charges out to their boss' defense.

The outnumbered bikers instantly deflate. The fight is over.

Jimmy crouches next to him, removes the loudmouth's wallet from his jeans, pulls out the cash.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

This will cover the damages.

LOUDMOUTH

What damages?

JIMMY

Psychological... and FYI...

(reads his driver's
license)

Bernard Binkley... if anything should happen... if a brick flies through my window... if one of my people catches a beatin'... if somebody keys my car... the house at 143 High Street in Hackensack will burn to the ground... with you in it.

The look in Jimmy's eyes makes it clear that he means it.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Go home and brush your teeth.

(stands)

Oh... and one more thing.

THE LOUDMOUTH, cringing, expecting a kick in the ribs

JIMMY (CONT'D)

(sings)

Happy Birthday to you...

Danny and the entire kitchen staff join in.

ALL

Happy Birthday to you
Happy Birthday, dear Bernie,
Happy Birthday to you.

CUT TO:

INT. HAPPY SHARK BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy and Danny join the REGULARS, an assortment of colorful locals of various ages, races, and stages of alcoholism, at the restaurant's bar. Jimmy slips the baseball bat back to FRANK O'BRIEN (70s), the bartender, who stashes it back behind the bar.

REGULAR 1

Ho, there he is.

Jimmy and Danny look up at...

THE TV -

On which THOMAS STEERS, Hudson City's charismatic young black mayor, is being interviewed on the fly by a local REPORTER.

REPORTER

Mayor, how do you respond to your critics who say that this summer is no time to be cutting jobs programs and laying off cops?

STEERS

I agree with them, Tonya, but I promised fiscal responsibility when I took this office, and this city WILL NOT go bankrupt on my watch.

DANNY AND JIMMY, watching

DANNY

We used to steal his lunch money.

FRANK

Now he steals ours.

They laugh.

JIMMY

You're still pretty funny for an old fart.

FRANK

Dementia agrees with me.

Frank serves Jimmy a ginger ale and Danny a shot and a beer. Danny shoots his down, knocks on the bar for a second. Jimmy disapproves, but says nothing.

The new waitress approaches the bar.

JIMMY

Sonia, come here.

Danny watches her walk over and clams up. He's naturally shy, and he's been alone a long time.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I want you to meet somebody. This is my best friend and pain in the butt, Danny Cohen. Sonia's from Guatemala, wherever that is.

DANNY

(mumbles)

Under Mexico.

JIMMY

What?

DANNY

It's under Mexico, right next to, uh, those other countries.

JIMMY

He's a geographer.

Embarrassed, Danny retreats into his drink.

SONIA

Nice to meet you, Danny.

She picks up her drink order and heads back into the dining room.

JIMMY

She's gorgeous, huh?

DANNY

Yeah.

JIMMY

I'm setting her up in my aunt's old place in your building. Look after her. Walk her home.

DANNY

Sure.

JIMMY

(sees something)

Oh Jesus.

MICKEY "TWO CENTS" PIKOWSKI (early 40s), a too friendly local with a big gambling problem, grins at Jimmy from the far end of the bar.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Who left the doggie door open?

END OF SAMPLE