

"HUNTER"

An Original Screenplay by Jason Kellerman

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FADE IN:

SLOW TRACK towards a smiley face, painted in red, on a brick wall. The red drips like blood. The face has fangs.

The sound of a roaring crowd.

INT. UNDERGROUND MMA RING- NIGHT

HUNTER, 24, clean cut, lean, coiled, with a few tattoos, loosens up his shoulders, warming up for a fight. He wears shorts, small gloves. He grins.

The ring is harshly lit, surrounded by a surging crowd.

DING DING:

CUT TO:

HUNTER mercilessly drives LAWLER back against the fence. He pounds him in the ribs and LAWLER cowers. He lands an uppercut, then a hook; LAWLER goes down. The crowd roars.

CUT TO:

HUNTER faces off with another, SHOGUN, taller, ripped, mean looking. Bigger. SHOGUN snarls. HUNTER grins. The REF stands between them, whistle in mouth.

HUNTER has a black eye coming, small cuts on his temple.

DING DING:

CUT TO:

They struggle on the ground. HUNTER is in a choke. He breaks it, and stands. SHOGUN turns- HUNTER ROUND-KICKS him in the head. He goes down, out cold. The crowd goes wild.

INT. MMA RING- LOCKER ROOM- BETWEEN BOUTS

HUNTER sits alone in the dingy locker room, wiping blood from a small cut below one eye. Bruises on his arms.

His PROMOTER, "K-RON," enters the room.

K-RON

Hey man- watch out for the  
headliner. He's big. And Stupid.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER

Let me talk to him. He'll get stupider.

The ERIC "SHOWTIME" MASTERS, huge, jacked, shirtless, wrapped, stands in the doorway-

SHOWTIME

Hey, you VanElson?

HUNTER stands.

SHOWTIME

This is MY house!

HUNTER

(glances at his promoter, then gets right in SHOWTIME's face)  
You know you're like, the fourth guy to think that tonight, right?

SHOWTIME

Listen my name is Showtime-

HUNTER

I don't give a shit what your name is man- you got a girlfriend in the audience, a fiancée...someone who'll see what's about to happen?

SHOWTIME's reaction gives it away that he does.

HUNTER

(licks lips and grins suggestively)  
Mmmmm. What's HER name?

CUT TO:

INT. MMA RING- NEXT BOUT

They face off. SHOWTIME growls like an animal. HUNTER grins. Mission accomplished. They both walk away- DING DING!

CUT TO:

SHOWTIME takes big, wild swings, overly aggressive. HUNTER evades, takes one on the chin, then: spin-backfist, superman punch, "Showtime" kick. SHOWTIME goes down.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER, looking almost nonchalant, but bleeding, mounts him, and pounds him into the ground. BLOOD spatters. The REF tries to pull him off- he shoves the REF and snarls, continuing to strike. BLOOD flies.

CUT TO:

TITLE SLUG: "HUNTER"

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- UNDERPASS- MORNING

HUNTER starts awake, coughing in the cold. He's bearded, filthy, wearing many layers of rags. Car sounds around.

He sits up. His breath steams. CARS rumble overhead.

TEXT OVERLAY: 10 months later

GILDA, 60's, overweight and toothless, leans out from a nearby nook. She holds a half empty bottle of tequila.

GILDA

Mornin' Chuckles! I was gonna head out to the Curlie Q. Almos' out.

HE doesn't respond.

GILDA

You were screamin' in your sleep again last night.

He doesn't respond.

GILDA

Supposed to storm tonight. My knees itch. This weather'll kill me.

He rubs the sleep from his eyes.

GILDA

You eat yesterday?

He shakes his head. She lumbers over, sets the last twinkie in a package down by him.

GILDA

You should try the new shelter on Monroe. Dittmar home? Food's suppose to be good...

CONTINUED:

4.

He stares forward with a lost, haunted look. The SOUND of an oncoming bus...

CUT TO:

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- FLASHBACK

ELSIE SCREAMING, BEING CARRIED AWAY.

MATCH ON SOUND TO:

EXT. BUS STATION- DOWNTOWN CHICAGO- MIDMORNING

The BUS arrives, screeching to a stop. HUNTER plugs his ears, face scrunched in pain.

The doors open, spilling business people. It's busy.

He looks out over the crowd. Suddenly, every single "SH" sound leaps out at him. It becomes a cacophony, like rain.

CUT TO:

LUGAT, IN A SKI MASK, HOLDING A KNIFE, MAKING A "SHH" GESTURE WITH A BLOODY HAND. HUNTER, BLOODY, STANDS WATCHING.

CUT TO:

HUNTER's face is blank. SOMEONE bumps him, snapping him out of it.

He timidly approaches a COMMUTER, shakes a plastic cup.

The COMMUTER adjusts an earbud and walks around him.

He tries another OFFICE WORKER, who ducks by him.

OFFICE WORKER  
(patting her pockets, which  
make coin sounds)  
Sorry, no change.

SOMEBODY drops change in his cup. He turns, but doesn't catch them. He looks into his cup, which holds a few coins.

LUKE, early 20's thin, blond, pale eyed, approaches young women, looking worried, frustrated. He's dressed stylishly.

LUKE  
Excuse me-

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER watches this. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees 2 GOTH GUYS in black step out of the bus and walk his way.

The YOUNG WOMAN, MARY, LUKE has approached removes an earbud.

MARY

Yes?

LUKE

Hi- sorry to bother you, I'm a little new to the city and was wondering if you could help me-

HUNTER looks back to the TWO MEN. A bus stops, screeching.

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- FLASHBACK

ESLIE SCREAMING. LUGAT'S "SHH." KITCHEN KNIVES.

CUT TO:

HUNTER, BLOODY, TURNS AND RUNS.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- OUTSIDE THE "L"- CONTINUOUS

Suddenly the 2 GOTH MEN wear ski masks. HUNTER cries out.

LUKE looks over. HUNTER is visibly terrified.

The 2 GOTH MEN SNARL and bear fangs. HUNTER panics and bolts, bowling people over to get away.

LUKE and MARY watch him go.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- OUTSIDE THE "L"- MOMENTS LATER

HUNTER bursts around the corner, slips on ice, and falls, spilling his change.

He kneels to pick it up, shaking horribly.

People file around him. Suddenly, the two GOTH MEN appear.

HUNTER starts and takes off. He looks back. They're chasing him, hissing, wearing SKI MASKS.

He turns a corner, ducks in an alley and dives behind a dumpster. He sits in the wet and mud, panting.

Between the dumpster and the wall, he sees the 2 MEN walk past, no masks, normal. He slumps, pants, closes his eyes.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- BACK ALLEY EVENING- LATER

HUNTER crunches down a snowy alley, huddled from the cold.

He crunches by an awning, Beneath it a HOMELESS MAN, "BAD DAY" stirs.

BAD DAY  
Hey! HEY!!!

HUNTER walks on. BAD DAY struggles to his feet, and grabs for HUNTER's shoulder.

BAD DAY  
Hey, brother-

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- LAST YEAR

ELSIE, SMILING, MOUTHING "BROTHER."

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- BACK ALLEY EVENING- CONTINUOUS

HUNTER shrugs the hand away.

He walks. BAD DAY follows close behind.

BAD DAY  
I don't want no trouble, I'm jus'  
fitty cents short of a bed for the  
night, and I know you got fitty  
cents. Just fitty cents.

HUNTER  
Screw off.

BAD DAY  
Please man. I'm sick, I'm dyin' out  
here. Please.

HUNTER turns and looks- BAD DAY looks frozen, desperate. He shivers. HUNTER grudgingly digs in his pockets.

HUNTER  
(giving him change)  
'snot much but- somebody should get  
warm tonight. Good luck.

He turns and walks away.

(CONTINUED)

BAD DAY  
I KNOW you got more'n this.

HUNTER continues walking.

BAD DAY  
(following now)  
You lyin' to me??

HUNTER  
How about you, as we just talked  
about, screw off.

BAD DAY  
You lyin' to me? C'mere son! You  
ain't gonna lie to me no more!

The BAD DAY charges HUNTER. HUNTER spins under BAD DAY's grab.

HUNTER  
You don't want trouble, man. Just  
go.

HUNTER backs away. BAD DAY makes another grab at HUNTER-

INT. MMA RING

HUNTER, wrapped for a fight, ducks a larger OPPONENT'S fist.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- BACK ALLEY- EVENING- CONTINUOUS

HUNTER tackles BAD DAY, and drives him into the ground.

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- NIGHT- 10 MONTHS AGO

HUNTER sits at the counter with ELSIE. They chop veggies with KNIVES. He has a fading black eye.

ELSIE  
Why was the strawberry sad?

HUNTER  
Who tells you these?

ELSIE  
I make em up! His family was in a  
jam!

She laughs shrilly, like glass breaking. HUNTER grins.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- BACK ALLEY EVENING- CONTINUOUS

HUNTER screams, and beats the man on the ground. Blood flies. He stops, panting, and leans back.

ELSIE (V.O.)  
Get it? Like jam?

CUT TO:

HUNTER desperately searches the prone BAD DAY. Hands bloody and shaking, he pulls a few dollars from the man's coat.

HUNTER (V.O.)  
I get it...

CUT TO:

HUNTER feverishly stumbles away, tucking the money in his coat. He looks back. The wind HOWLS.

HUNTER (V.O.)  
It's not very funny.

HUNTER  
(to the man)  
I'm sorry. I'm sorry!

BAD DAY stirs. Snow falls. HUNTER turns and stumbles away down the alley. Behind him, BAD DAY moves feebly on the ground, barely conscious. HUNTER doesn't look back.

ELSIE (V.O.)  
I guess it isn't, is it?

INT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- RECEPTION ROOM- A LITTLE LATER

DORIS, late 50's, over it, lounges behind a chipped counter.

HUNTER, shivering, approaches her and hands her 3 crumpled dollars with bloodied, trembling hands. She takes them gingerly.

DORIS  
What happened to your hands?

HUNTER hides them in his coat.

INT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- THERAPY ROOM- A LITTLE LATER

HUNTER sits, coat off in one of two metal chairs in a plain room. Fluorescent lights hum.

Matted hair, completely unkempt. He looks crazy.

The door opens and DANNI, 24, attractive, dressed down with long sleeves on, enters. She is young, but her eyes seem older than her years. She has a clipboard.

She's also nervous, but hiding it well. A golden charm bracelet jingles on her wrist.

She takes a deep breath, smiling. Silence.

DANNI

Hi!

HUNTER frowns. They stand at look at one another awkwardly. Both start:

HUNTER

(overlapping)

Where's the food?

DANNI

(overlapping)

Welcome to the Walter Dittmar center for the Homeless...

DANNI

Oh I'm sorry, you start.

He looks at her. She smiles uncomfortably.

He zeroes in on her teeth. Normal.

HUNTER

Are you...gonna bring me food...or?

DANNI

No. But I will show you where it is. Um...but first we just have to get through a few screening questions...

(rifles through clipboard)

Okay, first! How long have you been on the street?

HUNTER

Why?

(CONTINUED)

DANNI

Here at the Walter Dittmar home we rehabilitate the Homeless through therapeutic treatment, specifically talk therapy-

HUNTER

(shaking his head)

No, just food, and a bed.

DANNI

Okay...we can get to that, but first it's my job to make sure you feel comfortable here-

HUNTER

It's your job to starve me? Because that's going really well.

DANNI

I'm sorry...it's my first day...

HUNTER

Oh. Well. Keep applying. FOOD.

DANNI

...not until...

HUNTER

No, NOW!

He stands, violently shoving the table to the side.

DANNI

(seated, firmly)

No. We talk here first.

HUNTER

About what?

DANNI

About your past, how you got here-

HUNTER

I don't wanna talk about that!! I just want food! And a bed!!!

DANNI

(overlapping)

Look....look look look- no questions, no food, no bed.

He looms over her, furious. She lifts her chin and stares right back.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER

FINE!

He turns and heads for the door. He looks back, yelling.

HUNTER

But I'm getting my three bucks back  
at the door!

He leaves, and slams the door.

EXT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- NIGHT

HUNTER leaves the light of the home into a cold, dark blizzard. Wind howls. He trudges off into the night.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- UNDERPASS- LATER

HUNTER, snow crusted, ducks into a nook, shivering. GILDA's gone. An empty liquor bottle sits nearby. Fresh footsteps out into the storm. He looks. It's bad. He sighs.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREETS- SLUMS- LATER

HUNTER searches alleyways. BUMS lie, drunk, under awnings.

HUNTER

(yelling against wind)

GILDA!!

He sees "CURLIE QUE LIQUORS." She's not inside. He trudges away.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREET- QUIET ALLEY

HUNTER shivers. The snow has stopped. No city sounds- silence. Sharp, hard shadows slant across new snow. HUNTER stops, looking down.

There are 3 sets of footprints- one large and weaving, two on either side, men's. They lead into an alley.

To the side, he sees a half-finished bottle of Cuervo.

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER  
(calling)  
Gilda?!

He makes his way forward. Something CRASHES behind him- he whips around; boxing stance- a RAT runs off.

He looks around, suddenly afraid.

Near his boot a drop of blood in the snow. He doesn't see. He turns and creeps further inward, shivering.

A silhouette moves across the alley behind him.

He follows the footsteps down the alley. Another drop of blood. He stoops to it, afraid of what it might be.

There's a SCREAM. It's ABRUPTLY cut off. He stands, frozen.

The silhouette moves back across the alley.

HUNTER slowly moves forward. A wet chewing becomes audible. Shaking, he peers around a corner, and freezes when he sees PAUL, early 30s.

He can't see his face. All we see is a pair of fancy shoes, maybe a hand.

PAUL  
Keep her quiet! This is why I hate  
doing these.

PETER  
(mouth full, O.S.)  
You sweep?

PAUL  
Yeah, it's dark as shit, I can't  
see anything. Just finish up.  
Jesus.

PETER  
Fuck, I think I'm getting drunk.  
Next time, don't wait so goddamn  
long-

PAUL wheels on PETER, walking out of sight.

PAUL  
God it's cold! Hurry up- my way is  
so much easier-

HUNTER, trembling, peeks around the corner. PAUL talks with someone who squats in the shadows, hidden. HUNTER's shoulder taps an empty bottle on a trashbin- it teeters.....

PAUL  
Imagine if Volakas caught wind-

The bottle crashes to the ground.

PAUL  
What was that?

Everyone freezes- silence. HUNTER doesn't move, terrified.

PETER  
We should check-

HUNTER, panicked, slides quietly between the trashcans. He huddles against the wall. PETER and PAUL round the corner. He can see their feet and hands...

PETER  
(seeing it)  
Bottle broke.

PAUL  
Are there footsteps?

HUNTER watches from behind the trashcans, quietly pulling trash over himself. They begin to pace-

PAUL  
I can't see anything-

PETER gets down on hands and knees. HUNTER can see his face in silhouette- PETER looks at the ground.

PETER  
Here-

He lights up the phone LED. His face is bloody from nose to chin. HUNTER freezes, not daring to breathe. PETER doesn't see him.

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- FLASHBACK

FLASH SHHHH. FLASH ELSIE SCREAMING. FLASH HUNTER FACING DOWN A VAMPIRE IN HIS KITCHEN.

EXT. CHICAGO CITY STREET- QUIET ALLEY- CONTINUOUS

HUNTER clamps a shaking hand over his mouth, wide eyed.

PETER turns the light out and stands.

PETER

I can't tell which ones are yours,  
or mine, or that old cow's. Rat  
probably knocked it over.

PAUL

I'll get the van.

HUNTER watches, frozen, as a windowless white cargo van  
backs into the alleyway. He can just make out the license  
plate: H80 8522. Shaking, he scrawls it in the snow.

PAUL

No more of these. It's stupid.

PETER

It does the job. She's heavy!

PAUL

(grunting)

That's Lukey's problem.

A large THUMP as something heavy hits the back of the van.  
It rocks back on its shocks.

PAUL

Last one. It's too risky, and  
you're too stupid. Come on-

Doors slam- the van starts, and pulls away.

Cautiously, HUNTER peers out. Once they're gone, he rounds  
the corner to see the space were they were.

To his horror, a bright red splotch is being covered by  
falling snow. He staggers back.

EXT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- NIGHT- MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

HUNTER pounds desperately at the door. He kicks it. Kick.  
Kick. Kick.

DORIS, looking sleepy and surprised, opens it.

INT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- THERAPY ROOM- A LITTLE LATER

HUNTER sits, looking disbelieving. DANNI sits across from him, looking smug.

DANNI  
Cold out?

HUNTER  
Isn't there anyone else who works here?

DANNI  
Just me, this late.

HUNTER  
So why don't we call it-

DANNI  
Of course not! You're my very first client for this program. Wouldn't miss it.

Awkward silence.

HUNTER  
Super.

Silence. DANNI waits.

HUNTER  
So who are you?

DANNI  
I'm a graduate student. Masters in Psychology. Studying substance abuse, specifically.

HUNTER  
And you ask people questions, in exchange for food?

DANNI  
No. Well, therapy is part and parcel to you staying here-

HUNTER  
None of the other shelters do this.

DANNI  
It's a new-

(CONTINUED)

HUNTER

Look, I haven't eaten anything but a twinkie in three days, and-

DANNI

Wait, seriously, three days?

He stops, then nods.

DANNI

Hold on.

She stands and leaves. HUNTER watches her go. She returns a moment later with a tray full of passable food. She sets it down in front of him.

DANNI

You're lucky, kitchen's almost closed.

HUNTER grabs her arm. She freezes.

HUNTER

(sincerely)

Thank you.

He lets go. She rubs it, and sits.

He INHALES the food. She watches.

DANNI

Sure. So, I'm Danielle. What's your name?

HUNTER

(mouth full)

Hunter.

DANNI

Like, one who chases animals?

HUNTER

Like "S. Thompson?" It's a name.

HUNTER doesn't miss a beat- keeps eating. DANNI watches during:

DANNI

Okay. So, our program.

The idea is, that because of the prevalence of substance abuse and mental illness in the homeless

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DANNI (cont'd)  
community, the homeless can benefit from psychotherapeutic services, even more than everybody else. As a form of rehabilitation. Talk therapy. My specialization is with addiction and substance abuse.

HUNTER  
Why do you have to do this? Most city workers don't give a shit.

He licks his fingers one by one, quickly.

DANNI  
...I set up the program. It's my graduate thesis, actually.

He finishes, pushes forward the empty tray, and sits back.

DANNI  
So what do you say: Some questions?

HUNTER looks at her warily.

HUNTER  
More food?

CUT TO:

HUNTER sits, happy, eating a fresh plate.

DANNI  
So what's your last name, Hunter? I need to know, if you're staying.

HUNTER  
(hesitates)  
...VanElson.

She mouths the name as if she's heard it before.

HUNTER watches her closely, still eating. She makes notes.

DANNI  
How long on the street?

HUNTER  
Ten months. Two weeks. Four days.

(CONTINUED)

DANNI  
What brought you here?

HUNTER  
Friend said the food's good. But  
I...lost track of her.

DANNI  
We have a women's division...  
(HUNTER doesn't respond)  
Before this, did you live with  
family? Friends?

HUNTER  
(stops eating)  
...family.

DANNI  
Are you in contact with them?

HUNTER  
...they're...just leave that alone.

DANNI  
(a pause)  
I need to know-

HUNTER  
It's cold.

DANNI  
What?

HUNTER bats the plate of food onto the floor, and stands.

HUNTER  
The food.

HUNTER goes to the tiny window, arms wrapped around himself.  
DANNI crosses her arms and waits. He sees this, grimaces.

HUNTER  
Dad was a military pilot. Friendly  
fire in Iraq. I was 14.

DANNI  
I'm sorry.

HUNTER  
You didn't shoot him.

DANNI  
What about your mom? Siblings?

INT. VANELSON HOME- KITCHEN- FLASHBACK

VAMPIRE TEETH AND SCREAMING.

INT. WALTER DITTMAR HOME- CONFERENCE ROOM- CONTINUOUS

HUNTER takes a deep breath, barely holding it together. Realizing DANNI expects an answer, he simply shakes his head.

DANNI  
Okay.

HUNTER  
(turns toward her)  
I'm not used to talking to people.  
I used to be a fighter, you know? I  
was the BEST.

DANNI  
...okay.

Silence. HUNTER fights emotion, not looking at her.

DANNI  
Do you ever hear voices, or see  
things other people can't?

HUNTER  
No.

DANNI  
I gotta ask. Last question, then  
we'll get you a bed. What happened  
to your hands?

He looks at them- they're bloody. He quickly hides them.

DANNI  
Okay. There's no tolerance for  
violence here. None. One offense  
and you're out, am I clear?

HUNTER just stares at her, shadowed, from the corner of the room.

DANNI  
(gathering things)  
You do realize you have to keep  
doing these sessions if you want to  
stay here, right?

HUNTER says nothing.

DANNI  
(leaving)  
Okay...

HUNTER  
You ever live on the street?

DANNI  
(caught off-guard)  
Yeah, for a little bit. Not as long  
as you. But...I know what it's like  
to lose family. I'll have Doris  
show you a bed.

She makes for the door, but is stopped:

HUNTER  
Nobody ever talks to me.

DANNI  
I think I can help.

He stares at her. She turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUKE'S APARTMENT- FRONT DOOR- NIGHT

LUKE's hands shake as he fumbles keys into the lock The  
building is upscale, safe, modern. He ENTERS- number 558.

CUT TO:

INT. LUKE'S APARTMENT- ENTREYWAY- CONTINUOUS

He stomps the snow off his boots. He carries art supplies in  
a plastic bag. A WHITE CAT, MANNY, greets him at the door,  
mewling.

He pets it. PAUL greets him, excited.

(CONTINUED)