

Loose Ends

Written by

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NOTE

Anytime a FADE TO BLACK is utilised will be where binaural audio will be used.

FADE TO BLACK:

Black screen. Wind whistles all around, the creaks of metal create a sonic tug of war from left to right further ahead. A car honks its horn to the left far into an unseen distance.

The honk transitions to the ghost of someone struggling under water. Their head is raised long enough for their begging to be briefly heard before going under once more.

The cries of birds above indicate the early morning. Soft shoes pad across smooth stone dead centre.

The slide of hands across a metal railing becomes the scraping of a knife. The faded voice of a young man exiting a house and saying goodbye to his mother.

The steps stop. An engine from days gone by dies, frustrated revs and youths try to resurrect it as A PHONE rumbles to the right. A MAN clears his throat before answering his last call as the youths cheer and speed away into memory.

A deep voice, filled with experience and cold as The Channel.

X

Arthur. Where's my family?

FADE IN:

EXT. HORNSEY LANE BRIDGE. DAWN

It's early morning. A drowsy city fills the horizon. Bruised hands with cracked knuckles grip the pitifully low rails. The drop is fatal. A black abyss pulls at the bridge supports.

The phone is silent.

All the sounds of X's life fill his mind. It circles around him, outlining his smart outfit, too thin for the morning air, and his powerful build.

This man is not afraid to get his hands dirty.

The phone buzzes into life. ARTHUR's loud voice blares into X's ear, boisterous; a bone to pick with the world.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 Come on mate. You know the words.
 Say it with me now or Arianne eats
 with a straw.

X is silent. A gull cries beneath.
 (beat)

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Arthur...

X
 McGraw.

X's hands tighten their grip slightly. His face is the
 opposite of his hands: smooth, unmarked save for a scar above
 his eye and betraying no emotion.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 And don't you forget it.

The first rays of the sun are rising.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Your family are fine; probably.

Arthur calls out away from the phone.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Arianne! Babe! Tell your cardboard
 cutout of a husband how you've
 been?

Rustling from the phone. A woman's voice, the hard edge of
 someone born from suffering, more of a telling off than a cry
 for help.

ARIANNE (O.S.)
 Xander...

X immediately seizes up.

X
 You haven't called me that in
 years...

ARIANNE (O.S.)
 You're not X without the firm.
 We're not letting you close Xander.

A quick crackle and Arthurs back on.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 Arianne and I had a talk...More of
 a film and candlelit dinner really.
 Never expected *Human Centipede*
 would lead to a shag but--

A surge of anger on X's face. Sudden and breaking his cool
 composure, He lowers the phone and looks out to the water, he
 holds it out over the grasping water.

ARIANNE (O.S.)
 --Get to the point Arthur.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 Anything for you gorgeous--

X's grip gently relaxes as his face struggles to regain some
 semblance of humanity.

ARIANNE (O.S.)
 --Don't say that again.
 (beat)

X exhales and returns his phone to his ear. Arthur's back on;
 fully whipped.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 Right you are. Anyway we both know
 that you're going to make a fight
 of it. You'd call Harry at Cheetham
 Hill and I'd be facedown in the
 Thames with a suicide note by
 dinner. So...

X
 So?

ARTHUR (O.S.)
 Look over the edge.

The river below is a giant target, complete with a solid
 floor for landing.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 X. Really get a good look at that
 drop. Look the hardest you've ever
 looked in your life. Look until
 you're over it; and stop being our
 problem.

A paper plane flies across the empty expanse. Twisting and
 plummeting erratically in the wind. Arthur's motormouth is
 now pulling up with deep-toned threat.

ARTHUR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That's from a mate of mine. Shit
throwing arm but he's got his own
ways. We're watching boss.

The phone goes dead.

X looks out to the rising dawn ahead. He nearly crushes the phone in his hands but catches himself, he takes deep breaths.

Looking to his left and then his right. The footpath on either side of the bridge is totally exposed.

He looks once more to the drop, the current is picking up; exaggerating an already impossible chance of survival. He leans closely over the edge, almost a right angle.

X closes his eyes. A long-forgotten fragment.

BOY (O.S.)
I'll be back in a bit!

EXT. MOSTYN ROAD, BOW. DAWN

A simple suburban house. Totally unnoticeable in its mundanity in the neat brick line that makes up this street.

A YOUNG VERSION OF X is leaning against the staircase banister, lanky and wearing a far less expensive outfit. But the same intense stare; he gives nothing away.

He hikes up a stuffed duffel bag: it's very, very full. Every step X takes is a stomp, the clinking of hidden glass objects punctuates his steps. The dim light reveals a carpet of beer bottles and cans at the bottom.

Inside the front room by the front door is X's MOTHER, lying on the sofa, totally comatose in a crusted jumper.

He kicks aside some of the bottles and cans blocking the door but trips over a wine bottle. He crashes into the glass and metal.

There's a cut above his eye, it's deep and bleeding but X is otherwise unharmed. He picks himself up and checks into the front room.

X's mother hasn't noticed. He waves his hand in front of her sleeping face; no reaction.

He holds back tears.
(beat)

YOUNG X

Fuck!

Still nothing.

He runs to the doorway and shunts the door open.

He turns to look out towards the street before him and takes a step forward. A quick spin around and he's shouting at the house.

YOUNG X (CONT'D)

Fuck you too!

He makes it to the cutesy blue gate, he looks around, ducks down and unzips the bag.

There's a balaclava, a knife and an unlabelled spray bottle.

He gets back up and pauses by the threshold of the front garden.

He kicks over an over-stuffed bin and starts running.

EXT. ARCHBISHOP'S PARK, LAMBETH. AFTERNOON

X is sitting on the bower. Its organic and soft curves present a row of varnished wooden seats for him and his duffel bag. His cut has dried but doesn't have a plaster on it. The sun is up and the park is bright and alive.

A group of young boys are playing football nearby.

X puts his sweaty hand in his pocket and fishes out his PHONE. A voice from behind him.

YOUNG ARTHUR (O.S.)

You better get rid of that.

A YOUNG ARTHUR leers from over the bower. The same amount of aggression kept in a much smaller body; he's short for his age. Baby-faced too.

X barely jolts. He turns to look.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Eyes forward come on.

(beat)

YOUNG X

There a pond nearby?

YOUNG ARTHUR
Nah. You got a replacement?

YOUNG X
Yeah I do but I still need to get
rid of this.

He wiggles the phone above his head.

YOUNG X (CONT'D)
Can I bury it?

Arthur laughs.

YOUNG ARTHUR
Too easy.

YOUNG X
What do you mean too easy?

YOUNG ARTHUR
What would that prove to me?

A rare moment of emotion for X. A mocking tone.

YOUNG X
That I can clean up after myself, I
can be discreet. You need something
else boss-man?

YOUNG ARTHUR
Yeah. I need someone who's hard,
not a fucking janitor. You think
you're hard?

X turns over, Arthur is unbothered.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I wouldn't mate.

YOUNG X
What? You think if I start
something your boss will back you
up? Did anyone else actually
volunteer for this or did your boss
just kick you out the door?

A staredown. X's free hand is silently unzipping his bag.
(beat)

YOUNG X (CONT'D)
Face it: You're basically the dog.

Arthur breaks the silence with dismissal.

YOUNG ARTHUR

Nah nah the boss needs me to do this. No-one else can get to the newbies like I can. You starting something doesn't mean anything, I've got that encouraging face. It's too easy.

A dismissive wave.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Morals, self-defence and all that. Do it to someone who means nothing to you and then we'll talk.

X looks back to the park. Arthur grabs X's phone.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Here. You want this broken? They say the human skull is one of the hardest things in nature.

Arthur points to the lads playing football. He places the phone back in X's hands.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Prove that you're harder than that, and I'll put a word in; probably.

X grips his phone and looks out to the football kids. All similar ages to him or younger, shabbily dressed and unaware.

He rises from the bower and looks to the boys.

His eyes seem to dart over the group, analysing all angles. The boys are having a fierce game.

He turns to Arthur.

(beat)

YOUNG X

This is wrong.

YOUNG ARTHUR

Problem?

YOUNG X

Yeah. I get proving I can handle this. That doesn't bother me. But this is all wrong, you're doing it wrong.

X gestures with his phone, cane-like in its movements.

YOUNG X (CONT'D)

It's in the middle of the day,
totally open and public. There
could be parents or a coach nearby
and they're in a group. They all
have phones and can record me.

YOUNG ARTHUR

So?

YOUNG X

I hit them and they hit back; or
find someone else to do the job for
them. Either way I lose and you go
back empty-handed.

One of the boys scores a goal.

YOUNG ARTHUR

Hmmm...

Arthur strokes his smooth chin in faux-thought. His mockery
less stinging than before.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Sounds like the fact that they
actually have friends is a problem
for you. What're you going to do
about it?

YOUNG X

Separate them. Or get friends of my
own, not that you have any.

YOUNG ARTHUR

And then?

YOUNG X

Go after them so hard they won't
think to hit back.

(beat)

The boys wrap up their game. Arthur gives the laziest clap.

YOUNG ARTHUR

Yeah you'll do.

Arthur gestures for X to put his phone away.

YOUNG X

What?

Arthur seems almost disappointed.

YOUNG ARTHUR

You passed mate. You're not a psycho who's going to get caught. Boss likes initiative - Why do you think I'm in? Come with me.

He extends his hand.

YOUNG ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Names Arthur McGraw, don't ever forget it. You break that rule I break you.

The memory fades away...

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. CHEETHAM HILL ESTATE (FLAT 74 LOUNGE), LAMBETH. DAY

A succession of pneumatic stomps. Left, left, right and then a much slower right.

FADE IN:

Arthur's sweaty face fills the frame. He's in his mid-20s now. The faint outline of facial hair pokes out from the blood splattered on his cheek. The scream of someone who's had enough.

ARTHUR

My name is Arthur McGraw! Don't you fucking forget!

A MAN'S muffled screams. He's terrified and in his pajamas. A thick strip of electrical tape at an off-angle covers his mouth.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Do you want to say something mate? A good joke or something? It needs to be a good one or I might have to give you some vocal training.

Arthur waves a nail gun in the man's face and begins tracing it down his body to his balls. The man is lying on his back supported by a detached door.

He has been crucified to his own door.

There's no more furniture save for a layer of old beer bottles and cans.

The man screams more. Arthur's finger caresses the trigger.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Because you have the money. We know you do. You've been dealing on the side, we've got eyewitnesses. So how about you just put what you owe in here eh?

Arthur takes out his wallet and begins slapping the man with it.

INT. CHEETHAM HILL ESTATE (FLAT 74 KITCHEN), LAMBETH. DAY

The sound of the slaps and screams echo into the next room. Well lit and equally carpeted in bottles. Counters covered in dirty washing and pizza boxes. There's joint skins and grinders on the table, a shabby lab and meeting room all-in-one.

X and ARIANNE are sat at this table, his cut has become a fashionable scar and the rest of puberty has treated him well. They've laid out their own business work on top of the table: folders, laptops and cups of tea. Amidst quiet taps of keyboards there's small talk.

ARIANNE

He's taking his time isn't he?

X

Arthur?

ARIANNE

Yeah. Any longer and we'll be late for the lunch. I'm not missing a meeting with the boss because we were stuck watching McGraw get his McRocks off, are you?

X

Not like he's invited anyway. You should've heard him telling me the nail-gun was a good idea this morning. I'll sort this one out if you wouldn't mind packing?

Arianne gives a homely smile.

ARIANNE

Sure.

X calls back to the other room casually:

X

Done yet?

INT. CHEETHAM HILL ESTATE, (FLAT 74 LOUNGE), LAMBETH. DAY
 Arthur's irritated face is only shown to the crucified man.

ARTHUR

No. He's got nothing to say about
 the money.

A sigh from the other room and footsteps.

X

Not like this he can't.

X fully enters the room, ushering Arthur to one side,
 gripping his shoulder too tightly to be comfortable. Arthur
 is far shorter than X.

X finishes his admonishment, puts on a smile and crouches by
 the man, all the charm and polite confidence of a salesman.

X (CONT'D)

What my subordinate--

Arthur's face goes red in the background with that particular
 emphasis.

X (CONT'D)

--is telling you is that we know
 you can afford to pay us back.

He looks at the nails pinning the man's hands and then
 Arthur, mouthing for him to leave.

X (CONT'D)

However, we understand if the money
 isn't here. So, we'll give
 you...three weeks shall we say?
 Should be enough time to get what
 you've got together I'd say.

X looks to his watch. He walks out of the crucified man's
 sight, knocking aside old pizza boxes and beverages. The man
 is veering on the edge of consciousness. Blood is beginning
 to pool.

(beat)

X walks back in with a pair of pliers. He leaves it by the
 man's side.

X (CONT'D)

We'll even replace the door and
 we've already got you a doctor we
 trust.

(MORE)

X (CONT'D)
Speaking of which, he'll be here
shortly. He'll get you out safely.

X heads back into the kitchen and makes to leave with Arianne and her bags. He hangs at the edge of the man's vision. He picks up a wine bottle and turns to the man - A mixture of threat and odd support.

X (CONT'D)
He'll be watching your recovery
closely for those three weeks,
could even be a good time to kick
the habit don't you think?

He drops the bottle and leaves. The crucified man fully loses consciousness.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. X'S OFFICE, LAMBETH, DAY.

Angry and confused voices jostle each other for position all around, a fist is slammed on a table dead centre. Shoes walk across a carpet and a door is slammed.

X
I'm telling you all: I'm closing
the firm.

FADE IN:

X is now at his current age. Closer to middle-age than youth.

He's sitting at a fine desk in his office, a well-sized room, but bare in terms of furniture and decoration.

There's a crowd of ANGRY MOBSTERS in an assortment of outfits, large security professionals in tracksuits down to a delicate accountant in a suit. They're mostly standing in front of his desk, Arianne and a slightly fatter Arthur have taken the only two chairs before X's desk, standard IKEA fare and not at all matching the bare walls.

Arianne has her head in her hands as the surrounding mobsters alternate between confused probing and angry demands.

Arthur is supplying many of those angry demands.

ARTHUR
You can't fucking do that! We're
making a mint!

The mobsters continue their frantic discussion. X raises an eyebrow.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

And...

He bares that word like a knife, shutting down the other mobsters.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

We've even cleared out those fuckers east. There's nothing stopping us.

The crowd murmur in agreement, Arthur stands up. He is still shorter than the majority of the crowd.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

We've got a good thing going don't we? And you want to close all this and open a fucking kebab shop!

X takes a moment to let any remaining voices die down.

X

You're right. There is nothing stopping us. No-one in Lambeth is big enough to stop us, to stop me specifically.

Arianne raises her head. Dried tears cover her face and expensive jewelry.

ARIANNE

So why are you closing it then!

The other mobsters look nervously from their boss to his furious wife.

X

It's the perfect time to. I've done what I had to do and there's nothing in the way, I can go legitimate. Naturally I'll be writing up a list of personnel I'll be hiring on going forward.

ARTHUR

And who's going on that list X?
Who's expendable to you mate?

X looks at Arthur. A steady gaze and a nonchalant look, like calling a waiter over.

X

Whoever has shown that they can do a good job and keep their mouths shut, Arthur. They'll be hearing from me shortly if I have a place for them.

He looks to the other mobsters, he seems genuinely grateful, the salesman charm returns.

X (CONT'D)

Any who aren't hired on will be paid according to their position and I'm happy to provide a reference as long as it's not made public. You have two months to find alternatives.

A slight quiver in his voice, likely the most emotion his employees have seen.

X (CONT'D)

Thank you all.

On that note X dismisses everyone, some of the mobsters are furious but most look equally confused and disappointed.

X (CONT'D)

Arianne?

Arianne's disgust could be tasted in the air.

ARIANNE

This is a shit idea. Everything we built and you want to cut it all off? I don't remember this talk.

X

We've done everything we set out to do. No one can touch us, we can put it all behind us and do something else with our lives now. Why can't you--

If a look could burn X would be ash.
(beat)

X (CONT'D)

We'll talk about this at home.

ARIANNE

Come on Arthur!

Arthur spits on the cheaply-carpeted floor as they both make their leave. Arthur turns to X.

ARTHUR

Who're you to cut us off like this?
Cut me off? Fucking me? Arthur Mc-
cunting-Graw?

He looks ready to enter a full-on rant before being pulled back into reality by Arianne. They both leave quietly.

X looks out to the evening city view. A single window in his office.

He looks almost close to crying or screaming.

CUT TO:

EXT. HORNSEY LANE BRIDGE. DAWN

X's face has an identical expression. His eyes are close to watering and his teeth grit hard enough to press diamonds. He looks out to the thin but never-ending landing strip of water, now turning navy blue in the rising sunlight. He still has the phone outstretched in crushing hands.

He slowly puts the phone in his suit pocket.

He looks out to either side of the bridge.

There's no-one coming.

He leans out over the side.

Nothing but whispering wind and the faint echoes of gentle splashes. The drop isn't as bottomless as it seemed in the dark but survival is still unlikely.

He reaches a leg up onto the railing.

FADE TO BLACK:

The sound of X pulling himself over onto the other side of the handrails, his hands pulling at them as they support his weight. He's breathing heavily. The phone slips out of his jacket pocket and takes a few seconds before slapping the water.

More heavy breathing. A thick layer of anger growling out of X's throat.

A car pulls up. Tyres grind against loose stones. Two people approach. A woman's voice, worried and trying her best to be reassure the ex-mobster.

LILY

Hello? Can I talk to you?

X's breathing loses some of its aggression. He isn't moving. The woman stammers on.

LILY (CONT'D)

I know you feel alone. I-I don't know you but I know you feel alone. I'm not going to force you to do anything you don't want to but can I please talk to you? What's your name hun? My name's Lily.

The sound of X's legs turning around, his hands are no longer pulling against the weak handrails. The voice of a man who has lost everything. His world is gone. Lily's voice is more hopeful.

LILY (CONT'D)

Do you have anyone I can call?
(beat)

X

You.

LILY

Yes?

X

No.

A hand lifts from the rails.

X (CONT'D)

You.

A second voice picks up. Light and very out of their element.

SON

Me?

He sounds similar to X at his age.
(beat)

X

Take everything the world has to offer...And try to love your mother.

X lets go of the handrails. The woman screams and runs to the edge. The sound of whipping wind follows all the way down.

The plummet takes far longer than expected.

X hits the wall of water, all air sucked from his lungs. No real struggle, just layers of water and the sound of sirens so far away they could be in another world.

FADE OUT.