

KING

CHAPTER ONE: 'FISH OUT OF WATER'

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EXT. UNDERWATER METROPOLIS - STREET LEVEL - NIGHT

A vast and grubby underwater city lies in nightly repose. City fish, crustaceans and mollusks keep to themselves, fedoras turned down over their antennae. Welcome to Seaside.

TERRY, a smartly dressed gangster MUSSEL, emerges from a shadowy alley, clutching a LADY TILAPIA tightly by the fins. Her blonde hair covers her face. Terry hurriedly escorts his companion into a shitty motel as a lit cigarette reveals **KING**, a down-on-his-luck shrimp in a dirty trench. King's a missing fish detective who hasn't found shit. He pulls out a photo (which we don't see) as a passed-out HOMELESS HERMIT CRAB (his shell reminiscent of a Skid Row tent) stirs awake.

HOMELESS HERMIT CRAB

Change?

KING

I wish.

INT. SEASIDE MOTEL - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Inside, GEORGE, an obese GROUPER, sits behind a desk. King enters and spots the Mussel hurrying his companion upstairs.

GEORGE

Can I help you?

King makes his way up the stairs, verbally bulldozing George.

KING

You guys do wedding blocks? You do?
Great. Just gonna check the rooms.
See if they're up to snuff for the
guests. In-laws are pretty uppity.
Classy fish like you gets it.

GEORGE

You can't go up there. Hey!

Too late. King's gone. George grabs the phone.

GEORGE (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)

It's me. We got a problem.

INT. SEASIDE MOTEL - TOP FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

An exhausted King approaches a door. He puts his ear to it, trying to listen but can't hear shit. King spots a broken bottle nearby. He grabs it, putting the cork end into his ear and the jagged end onto the door. It does the trick.

TERRY THE MUSSEL (FROM INSIDE)
 ...Well, I hope you like long sharp
 knives? Cuz I do. <MENACING LAUGH>.

INT. SEASIDE MOTEL - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Blonde Tilapia is now in lingerie as Terry lays naked on the bed. The Tilapia pries open Terry's shell with a knife while scratching his exposed protein with her fin.

TERRY THE MUSSEL
 Yea--yea, *that's it--*

Suddenly the door bursts off it's hinges as in crashes King.

BLONDE TILAPIA
 <HORRIFIED SCREAM>

TERRY THE MUSSEL
 King?! What the *fuck*, man?

King takes in the Mussel and the Tilapia. Very confused. King turns to the Tilapia who covers herself with a sheet.

KING
 Linda?

BLONDE TILAPIA
 (shaking head, no)
 Michelle.

King pulls out the photo again (which we still don't see).

KING
 Shit.

The Tilapia who we'll now call 'Michelle' turns to Terry.

MICHELLE
 You better not be tryna to pull
 some fucked up threesome, Terry.
 You only paid for pearl play.

KING
 This was clearly a mistake. I'll
 just be on my way.

Terry pulls a gun out and points it at King.

TERRY THE MUSSEL
 No you won't.

King's pincers shoot for the sky, as the photo he was holding
lilts to the floor by Michelle. She looks at the photo.

KING

I was just following a lead, Terry.

BLONDE TILAPIA

Honey, you think I look like *this*?

We finally see the photo. The resemblance is non-existent.
Might as well be a dolphin.

TERRY THE MUSSEL

You gotta be the worst fucking
missing fish detective.

KING

According to what metric?

TERRY THE MUSSEL

You've never solved a single case.

KING

Okay. It's been a *bit* of a drought.

Suddenly, two HULKING MUSSELS rush into the room with guns
drawn with George, the front desk manager, not far behind.

TERRY THE MUSSEL

Good timing, boys. Was just about
to teach Mr. King here a lesson,
but now the class is all yours.

George, Terry and Michelle exit as the MUSSELS approach King.

KING

Or--hear me out--what if instead of
class, us three skip school and
grab a drink. My treat--

One of the Mussels socks King in the face. FADE TO BLACK.

KING

FADE IN on King as he's lifted off the ground by one of the
Mussels. Blood pours out of his nose.

KING (CONT'D)

Lesson learned. I'm good to go--

King is socked again. FADE TO BLACK. For real this time.

CHAPTER ONE: FISH OUT OF WATER

ACT ONE

INT. KING'S P.I. AGENCY - WAITING ROOM - DAY

DEION, King's secretary (Cod, over-worked, over-this-job) works in the waiting room as King enters with two black eyes. Deion pulls out two bags of frozen algae from a fridge while King scans the mail, tossing bills in the garbage.

DEION

There's a new case in your office.

King peers into his office and sees the silhouette of a fish.

DEION (CONT'D)

Hard to believe, I know.

Deion hands the bags of frozen algae to King.

KING

Tell 'em to leave. I'm indisposed.

Deion pulls the bills out of the garbage.

DEION

You're not indisposed. You're in debt. Go. And be nice.

KING

I'm always nice.

DEION

No, you're always an asshole.

KING

But at least I care?

DEION

Do you?

KING

<sigh> I dunno.

INT. KING'S P.I. AGENCY - KING'S OFFICE - DAY

A disinterested King enters with the frozen bags covering his eyes, bumping his way past his cluttered office. Sitting in a chair is an ANXIOUS FLOUNDER in a hat and thick sunglasses.

KING

So who's missing and when was the last time you saw them?

King lowers the frozen bags and takes in the Flounder. King turns to his bar with a smile as he pours a drink.

FLOUNDER
It's complicated.

KING
This complication got a name?

King pours a second glass and offers it to the Flounder who turns it down. King shrugs and dumps the glass into his.

FLOUNDER
Cass. But I'm not here about her.
I'm here about a necklace she took.

The Flounder puts two photos on the desk. One of a necklace. The other of a Femme Fatale RED SNAPPER, on stage at Seaside's seediest cabaret, THE GOLDEN BLOWHOLE.

KING
Looks like you should start at the
Golden Blowhole.

FLOUNDER
That's your job, isn't it?

KING
No. We find fish here. Not things.

FLOUNDER
It'll be worth your time.

The Flounder takes out a check book.

KING
No it won't.

FLOUNDER
I need that necklace back. It has
incredible sentimental value--

KING
To your wife? Or your mistress--
excuse me. *Cass*.

The Flounder is caught off guard but plows ahead.

FLOUNDER
This is a serious matter, Mr. King.

KING
Because you're married? Or because
you're the mayor?

The Flounder is speechless.

KING (CONT'D)
Both? It's both isn't it? Hot damn
I'm on today!

The Flounder removes his hat and sunglasses, revealing that the fish is in fact Seaside's mayor: MAYOR DALTON.

MAYOR DALTON
I didn't think you recognized me.

KING
I didn't. I recognized your pen.

CLOSE UP on the pen in the Mayor's breast pocket.

King reaches into his desk and pulls out the same pen.

KING (CONT'D)
Stole mine on a tour of city hall.
(off glass of booze)
And then you passed up a drink. How
long has our beloved mayor been on
the wagon? Four years?

MAYOR DALTON
Four and a half.

KING
Well if there's anyone who loves a
come back story, it's not me.

MAYOR DALTON
Will you help me or not?

KING
Sorry Mayor. But it's like I said.
We find fish here--

MAYOR DALTON
--Not things.

Mayor Dalton walks to the door. He pauses.

MAYOR DALTON (CONT'D)
I never claimed to be perfect.

KING
Hey, I'm not your maker.

MAYOR DALTON
(considering/somber)
No. No you're not.

The Mayor heads out of the office. Deion rushes in.

DEION
Holy shit was that Mayor Dalton?

KING
Yup. Asked me to find some jewelry.

DEION
You said yes, right?

KING
This isn't a lost and found, D.

DEION
No, it's a lost and never found.
(off his silence)
I'm sorry--

KING
It's been a long day. Why don't we
clear our heads and pick this up
first thing tomorrow afternoon.

King gets up, grabs his coat and heads out.

DEION
We need this case.

KING
It's not a case. It's a headache.

King shuts the office door. As Deion takes a seat, we zoom in on the photo of Cass. As we get closer we SEE A PROMINENT TATTOO OF A 3D CUBE WITH A LOCK INSIDE IT ON CASS'S NECK.

INT. 'RIP TIDE' DIVE BAR - AFTERNOON

It ain't happy hour in here, not ever. A handful of low-down degenerates slug sludge out of shot glasses while a pair of a OFF-DUTY COPS (overweight Halibut) play pool. King enters.

OFF-DUTY COP 1
Well if it isn't Seaside's most
shriveled dick...

King ignores them and heads straight for the bar where OTTO, a one-eyed crab, polishes glasses.

OTTO
Whatcha drinkin', King?

KING
Usual--couple usuals--eh, let's
just make it three usuals.

OTTO
You got money for all these usuals?

King pulls out the photo of Linda from the Motel mix up. He slides it over to Otto.

KING
Nope. But there's always a few
bucks for info.

King digs a few bills from one of his coat pockets and slides it under the photo. Otto pockets the money then takes a long look at the photo. After a long beat:

OTTO
You've shown me this photo before.

KING
No?

OTTO
Like a hundred times.

KING
Fuck.

King drops his head onto the bar.

OTTO
You okay? You look like shit. And
you looked like shit to begin with.

KING
Honestly, I don't know. These dead-
ends are killing me.

The <THUD OF TWO EMPTY GLASSES> on the bar raises King's head. It's one of the OFF-DUTY COPS ready for a refill. Otto grabs the glasses and heads down bar. The Cop turns to King.

OFF-DUTY COP 1
Heard Terry and you got into it
last night. Or was it you who got
into Terry. <CHUCKLES>

KING
Funny. I didn't think you could
hear a thing with all that grease
Terry puts in your ears.

The Cop grabs King by the collar.

OFF-DUTY COP 1
What you tryna say, King?

KING
You're a dirty cop on the take.
Wasn't that obvious? Felt obvious.

Otto jumps over the bar and gets between King and the Cop.

OTTO
Alright, you've had enough.

KING
I haven't even had one!

As Otto drags King out, they pass a drunk fish holding a full beer. King grabs the beer and chugs it.

KING (CONT'D)
Now I've had one!

EXT. 'RIP TIDE' DIVE BAR - ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The door opens as King is shown the alley.

KING
Too crowded in there anyways.

King tries to light a cigarette but his light won't work.
King tosses the lighter and starts to leave.

OTTO
Hold up, King.
(looks around, then)
I don't know what's what here but I
heard the track's been *busy*. After
hours. Lotta fish coming and going
and they ain't the jockey type.

King tips his hat and heads towards the street.

INT. SEASIDE SEAHORSE TRACK - STABLES - DUSK

King walks through a spooky row of cramped stables filled with TIRED SEAHORSES, all with a dead look in their eyes.

King sneaks a few feet and then spots an open office.

INSIDE OFFICE: A STEROID-INFLATED LOBSTER hands an envelope to a HEAVILY TATTOOED EEL.

BACK ON KING: King watches closely from a stable when a SEAHORSE creeps into frame, close to King's head.

SEAHORSE KING
What are we looking at? <scared jump>

SEAHORSE (CONT'D)
What?! What happened?!

KING
(whispers)
Nothing. Sorry. I just forgot you
can talk.

SEAHORSE
Ohhhh. You're an asshole. Got it.

KING
I'm not. I just forgot--

SEAHORSE
If you sound like an asshole. And
if you act like an asshole. Yaaaaa
might be an asshole.

King sees the lobster's ear twitch like he heard something.

KING
Shhhhh.

SEAHORSE
Did you just shush me in my own
stable?! Dave--Dave! This shrimp
just shushed me.

DAVE, a very pregnant (male) Seahorse, approaches. He's so pregnant he's bursting out of his racing saddle wrap.

DAVE THE SEAHORSE
In your own stable? Fucking
asshole.

KING
Please---

DAVE THE SEAHORSE
Please what? Shut up and run?
You're just like every other fish.
Think you can treat us like shit
just because we were blessed with
the ability to run rapidly and
beautifully around an oval.

King takes one look at Dave's protruding pregnant belly.

KING
Beautifully?

The Seahorses all stare at King for a beat, then:

ALL THE SEAHORSES
 FUCK YOU! / UGLY ASS SHRIMP. /
 DAVE'S BODY IS BEAUTIFUL!

The Lobster and the Eel both turn and see King getting berated by the Seahorses. King spots them looking at him.

KING
 Shit.

The Lobster and the Eel *bolt* in different directions. The lobster heads up stairs while the eel ducks down a hallway.

KING (CONT'D)
 <ANNOYED SIGH>

King takes one look at the stairs and heads after the Eel.

INT. SEASIDE SEAHORSE STABLES - CONTINUOUS

The Eel slithers in and out of the dank stables, under and over the pissed off seahorses as King sprints after him.

ANGRY SEAHORSE (O.S.)
 Look who's running now bitch.

EXT. SEASIDE SEAHORSE TRACK - MEZZANINE LEVEL - DUSK

King bursts through an open-air egress to find: a gigantic empty seahorse track. Not a soul to be seen, just rows of empty seats leading down to the massive dirt-covered oval--*FWAP!* King's immediately knocked down by the Eel hiding just outside the door. King tumbles down the stairs.

The Eel slithers down to finish the job, but King surprises him with a kick to the guts. King does his best to put the Eel in an 8 arm bear hug but the Eel head-butts King and pulls his pistol out. King covers his face with all 8 hands as a GUN SHOT RINGS OUT...

After a beat, King uncovers his eyes. The Eel's gone. King looks for entry wounds. There aren't any. He's fine. But then he spots a strange stream of air bubbles extending upwards.

KING
The hell?

As King stares at the water vapors, Dave the Seahorse surges around the track's dirt oval, all alone and giving birth to thousands of little stringy horsy babies.

KING (CONT'D)
Shit. That *is* beautiful.

And then, in the blink of an eye, A HUMAN HAND, twice as big as King's entire body, swiftly scoops King up off the ground.

And just like that... King's gone.

INT. RESTAURANT - DINNER TIME

Like a baby emerging from the womb, King shoots out of the calm surface of a FISH TANK in an over-the-top novelty seafood restaurant, held by the hands of an IDIOT CHEF. King tries to speak, but he can't. Because he can't breathe.

The Idiot Chef lays King on a cutting board, right next to the Eel he was chasing. The Eel looks at King, terrified. The Idiot Chef grabs the Eel, lays him down, chops him up into tiny uneven chunks and throws them into a scalding pan.

King throws up all over himself, panicking. He can see the knife laying right next to him. He's next. Tears and horror fill King's eyes when suddenly A CONFIDENT WAITER enters and dresses down the Idiot Chef. There appears to be some confusion but we can't understand the *alien* language. King watches the Confident Waiter open a laminated menu, point to a photograph of a SHRIMP and wag his finger, 'No.'

Annoyed, the Idiot Chef cavalierly grabs King... and chucks him back into the fish tank.

King's body free-falls towards the tank in SLO-MO. As his body hits the water, we SMASH TO BLACK.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. CEDARS SEASIDE - DAY**

A sweaty KING startles awake in a hospital bed in scrubs with a bandage wrapped around his head.

KING
DON'T EAT ME!

King takes in the room, aghast, confused, still horrified. A CLAM in a nurses's outfit enters the room, <HUMMING>.

KING (CONT'D)
What is this? Who are you?

The CLAM takes in her own outfit, cheerfully *pretending* to be surprised by her own name tag.

CLAM NURSE
Guess I'm *Nurse Wendy*. And I guess
you bumped your head!

KING
Wendy. We have to leave. We're not
safe here! There were these things--
these giants! And they had knives.
Bigger than you and me! And there
was an eel. He tried to kill me but
then they cut him up. Into pieces!

The Clam Nurse fidgets with nobs on medical machines.

CLAM NURSE
(Mary Poppins-esque)
Did you know electricity can be
extremely moody?

KING
What? Did you not hear what I said?

CLAM NURSE
It can be positive or negative.

KING picks up things he hadn't noticed before. The glassy look of her eyes. Her shell, constantly fidgeting.

CLAM NURSE (CONT'D)
Why didn't you laugh? Did you not
like my joke? I'll start over.
Electricity can be positive-- no,
moody. It can be *moody*! Dammit
Cynthia!

KING
Cynthia? I thought you were Wendy.

King stares at the Clam Nurse who suddenly darkens.

CLAM NURSE
You're looking at me like they do.

ORDERLY 1 (O.S.)
IN THERE!

Two ORDERLIES (BUFF HADDOCKS) burst in and tackle The Clam.

ORDERLY 1 (CONT'D)
Do it! Do it!

ORDERLY 2 takes out a syringe and sticks The Clam.

ORDERLY 1 (CONT'D)
Eassssy now.

The Clam is sedated. The Orderlies pick her up by the shell as in walks DOCTOR FRYMAN, a cheery German Haddock in scrubs.

DOCTOR FRYMAN
You gave us a good scare, Cynthia.

Doctor Fryman bops the Clam on the nose as the Orderlies drag her out. Doctor Fryman turns to King.

DOCTOR FRYMAN (CONT'D)
Mr. King! Up and at 'em, I see.
(off King's confusion)
Don't worry. Cynthia will be fine.
She escaped her room this morning.
Was on quite a tear, too. Fisted a
comatose jellyfish and performed an
impromptu puppet show for the
minnows in the natal wing. She's
one of our *bigger* personalities
here in the psych ward.

King tenses up at the sound of "psych ward."

KING
I'm in the... loony bin?

DOCTOR FRYMAN
Goodness no! Just a room in it. The
ER was slammed when the paramedics
brought you in. A puffer fish had
the hiccups on a packed train
during rush hour.
(with a big smile)
(MORE)

DOCTOR FRYMAN (CONT'D)

It was quite the blood bath.

(then, cheerful)

This was the only available room.

The Doctor stares hard at King.

DOCTOR FRYMAN (CONT'D)

Why? Are you feeling ok, Mr. King?

King looks to the hallway as the Orderlies accidentally drop the Clam, her unconscious head smacking against the linoleum.

KING

Never better.

EXT. SEASIDE - STREET - DAY

An out-of-it King stumbles the streets of Seaside. A once familiar town now feels completely foreign and disconnected from the horrible truth that only King knows.

A <RAGTIME TUNE> turns King's attention to a STONE CRAB BUSKER performing a robot routine for a SMALL MOUTH BASS DAD and DAUGHTER. The Busker gives the Daughter a piece of coral, which she sweetly offers to King. King stares at the coral, as it suddenly appears to fade and die in her hand. King stumbles away in fear, leaving the Daughter behind, confused, holding a perfectly pristine and very much alive coral.

As King stumbles on, he looks up to the heavens, or at least what he thought was the heavens. Suddenly a large shadow appears. Fear grips King as the shadow grows and grows, reminiscent of the giant alien claw that ensnared him at the racetrack, until he snaps out of it and sees it's actually just a garbage bag.

He quickly sidesteps the bag as it lands inches from him. An ANGRY LOBSTER yells from a window above.

ANGRY LOBSTER

Watch it! You tryna git killed, you
dumb shrimp fuck?!

King stares at the lobster. Disoriented.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey Mister. Got a light?

King turns and is faced with the EEL from the racetrack, holding a cigarette. The Eel's face suddenly slides in one direction while his torso slides in another, as if being sliced into pieces. King reels in horror and runs off.

But cutting back, The Sliced Eel isn't there. Instead, there stands a very alive, and very offended, Generic Seaside Eel.

GENERIC SEASIDE EEL
Yea, I get it. Smoking kills.
What's so good about your life?

We follow King as he runs, frantic and full of fear.

PRE-LAP: <BANG> <BANG> <BANG>

EXT. DEION'S HOUSE - END OF DAY

Deion throws open the door and finds a disheveled King.

King
Deion. Something horrible happened--
is happening!

VOICE (O.S.)
Sweet-pea, who's at the door?

DEION
(yelling back)
It's nobody.
(to King, hushed)
What are you doing here?

VOICE (O.S.)
They're only nobody 'til they're
somebody inside your house...

The door opens wider, revealing Deion's husband, NED, a sweet COD in glasses and an apron.

NED
Then they're guests! Or squatters.
(offering a fin)
Ned. This perfect angel's soulmate
and roommate. In that order. And
you are?

Off King's confusion we match cut to...

INT. DEION'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

King sits across from an excited Ned and a perturbed Deion.

NED
The King?! Wow. It is great to
finally meet you after all these
years!

(MORE)

NED (CONT'D)

Deion didn't tell me you were coming by! But I guess that's how you dicks operate, right? Veil of mystery. Life in the shadows. Smoking cigarettes before a breakfast you're too traumatized to even eat.

(then, proudly)

I'm a writer.

King grabs a book on the table. On the back of the book is a picture of Ned sitting in the same chair he sits in now in the same exact outfit and same exact dumb smile on his face.

King examines the cover of the book: Two fish holding hands on a beach, staring at a sunset, a knife under one of the chairs. The title reads: "Love Don't Cost a Thing... Yet."

NED (CONT'D)

You can keep that--

King tosses the book on a coffee table, clearly uninterested.

KING

I need to talk to D. Alone.

NED

Of course! How about a drink? I just opened a very friendly zin.

KING

Brown stuff. Lots of it.

Ned heads out for drinks giving Deion a chance to grill King.

DEION

So you blow off five years of dinner invites and then just barge in here in the middle of the night?

KING

Something crazy's going on, D.

DEION

You solved a case?

KING

I was on one. At the track. Had a beat on an eel. When out of nowhere this massive--I don't know *what*--reaches down and just *scoops me*. Right out of Seaside. Like it was nothing! I couldn't breathe. I'm choking. We both are. Me. The Eel.

(MORE)

KING (CONT'D)

Then, these, *monsters*, they take this giant knife and they start cutting the Eel. So much cutting--

DEION

Oh I get it. You're hammered.

King crawls to Deion, desperate.

KING

I *wish* I was drunk, D. I wish this was some gin-fueled nightmare, like that time I paid a hooker 600 bucks to kiss me on the forehead and tell me I didn't have a fever...

DEION

Jesus King--

KING

But it *happened*. And I need you to believe me. Cuz I'm losing my mind and it's scaring the shit outta me.

Deion stares at King, not sure what to think, when Ned re-enters holding King's drink.

NED

There's good news and better news. Good news is I got our drinks.

DEION

What's the better news?

NED

I woke the kids up so they can meet their mommy's boss!

Ned steps aside revealing two exhausted YOUNG CODS in pj's.

PRE-LAP: <SFX: TIMER DING>

INT. DEION'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

King stares at the drink in his hand. The exhausted kids rest on the table. Ned serves food while Deion inspects her plate.

DEION

Is this our wedding china?

NED

(To King, ignoring Deion)
Hope you brought an appetite.

Ned spoons some food onto King's plate. King grabs a fork and knife. He stares at the knife, haunted, his mind drifting back into the nightmare that was the Alien Kitchen.

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

King. KING!

King snaps out of it. He's sweatier than usual. Deion stares at him. Maybe something *is* wrong with him.

NED (CONT'D)

The boys wanted to ask you a question.

KID 1

No we don't.

NED

Kids.

KID 1

Mom says you never solve anything.

NED

That's not a question.

KID 1

How come?

NED

Good job.

Ned smiles. King looks on annoyed.

KING

Well. Until today. I just thought it was bad luck.

KID 2

What happened today?

King stares at D while he answers the question.

KING

I realized we live in an enclosed hell-scape, where hope is a lie and we'll die in the grips of blood thirsty monsters.

The kids look like they're about to cry.

DEION

Okay. I think dinner's over and King will be leaving now.

NED
But we only had mains.

DEION
(to Ned, sternly)
It's getting late.

NED
(to Deion, sternly)
We have company from your company.
(to the room)
Who wants to hear the dessert menu?

KING
Menu?

King is suddenly hit with a...

FLASH BACK: The "aliens" from the restaurant point to a menu with a picture of the shrimp.

BACK TO SCENE as Deion stares at a sweating King.

KING (CONT'D)
I have to go.

KIDS
YAY!

King gets up and heads out. We hear the front door <SLAM SHUT>. The kids get up and leave as Ned drops the niceties.

NED
Some drunk you work for.

Deion just stares at King's drink. He didn't have a sip.

INT. KING'S P.I. AGENCY - WAITING ROOM - DAY

It's the next morning. Deion enters the office and goes to flip on the lights but they're already on. There's commotion from King's office. She enters and finds:

INT. KING'S P.I. AGENCY - KING'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

King manically pinning up photos of missing fish onto a cork board, in tightly organized columns. Deion <KNOCKS>.

DEION
King. We need to talk--

KING

I figured out why we've never cracked a single missing fish case. The fish were never missing! They were eaten! Those things. Those monsters. They were pointing at something with photos on it.

King rifles through his desk and pulls out a fish food delivery menu. He unfolds it and holds it up for Deion to see. The photos of menu choices are arranged exactly like the missing fish photos pinned to the cork board.

KING (CONT'D)

It was a menu! A fucking menu!

King turns to Deion with a huge knowing smile. All she can do is stare, stunned. At him. And the menu. Finally. She speaks:

DEION

Yea, I can't do this.

KING

D--

DEION

Nope. I have stuck with you through a lot of shit. The time I had to sign up as an organ donor just so you could get my free lollipop from the DMV. Those two months you paid me with empty bottles I had to recycle. Or the countless times I picked you up off the floor of who knows where 'cuz you were too drunk to walk. No matter what bullshit you put me through I still showed up the next day because I thought what we were doing was important. But *this*. Monsters. Menus. *This* is nuts. The kind of nuts where I draw the line.

KING

What are you saying?

DEION

I'm saying I'm done.

Deion stares at King. Finally, after a beat:

KING

Soooo can you do me one last favor?
(off Deion's disbelief)
(MORE)

KING (CONT'D)
If it's your last day... you still
work for me... all day? Right?

Off Deion's anger we cut to:

INT. KING'S CAR - DAY

King drives while Deion flips through photos of the "missing" fish. King parks in front of a perfectly lovely brownstone.

KING
This it?

Deion holds up the photo of a YOUNG TILAPIA in a cap and gown, shrouded by proud TILAPIA PARENTS.

DEION
Jane and Bob Donaldson. Parents to
Skip, who's been missing 8 months.

KING
Missing? More like scalding. In a
giant cast iron pan.

DEION
(ignoring him)
What are we doing here?

KING
Telling them that.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

A shocked Deion sits across from Jane and Bob Donaldson, the nicest, rosiest TILAPIA you've ever met. There's confused shock on their faces while King nods solemnly.

JANE
So you're saying... Skip was eaten
by... alien... restauranteurs?

KING
That's the headline, yes.

BOB
I knew you were dumb but holy shit.

KING
I wanted you to hear it from me,
Bob. Personally.

BOB
You know we're not paying you?

KING
Oh for sure.

King grabs Jane by the fin.

KING (CONT'D)
I'd say stay safe out there but we
all know that's impossible now.

King gets up and leaves. Deion follows King to the door. She pauses and turns back to the Tilapia.

DEION
I'm sorry?

A flying vase explodes against a wall behind a ducking Deion.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - MOMENTS LATER

King stands outside the house, smoking a cigarette and staring curiously at an UNMARKED PARKED CAR. The car peels out and races away as Deion closes the door behind her.

DEION
Well that was terrible.

KING
Who's next?

Off Deion's <SIGH>, we CUT TO A **MONTAGE** of King "telling the truth" to the families of "missing" fish:

INT. DILAPIDATED TOWNHOUSE - DAY

King gesticulates wildly, conveying his chaotic journey to a horrified GERIATRIC KUSHI OYSTER who grips a pillow. On the pillow is a screen print of her missing KUSHI OYSTER HUSBAND.

INT. SHABBY DUPLEX - DAY

King tries again, this time with a dry erase board, to a family of ABALONE. They are equally lost.

INT. DECENT CONDO - DAY

Deion consoles a large FAMILY of WEEPING ANCHOVIES packed into a couch while King throws back some nuts.

INT. SLIGHTLY NICER CONDO - END OF DAY

King weeps WITH a pair of WEEPING PUFFER FISH while Deion throws back some nuts. An angry PUFFER DAD starts to swell. King signals for them to quickly leave.

INT. RITZY CONDO - END OF DAY

King holds up all eight of his fists as Deion pulls him away from a fight with a FAMILY of pissed off BRANZINO.

INT. KING'S CAR - NIGHT

Deion slumps into the car. King doesn't look phased at all.

DEION

That's it. No more. Thank god.

KING

<HEH> Some god.

DEION

So what are you gonna do now?

KING

What do you mean?

DEION

Not that I believe anything you've said, but if there's no missing fish since they've all been eaten by giant aliens in a slaughterhouse diner, what's the point of you?

(off King's confusion)

I mean your job.

King doesn't respond. He just stares at his side view mirror. For the first time all day, Deion actually feels bad for him.

DEION (CONT'D)

You know it's customary for a fish to get taken out for drinks on their last day of work.

Something in the mirror catches King's eye.

KING

(barely paying attention)

Should have a nip in the glove.

Deion tries to open the glove compartment but struggles.

KING (CONT'D)

Let me.

Just as king leans over A BULLET CRASHES the rear view mirror, barely missing King's head.

KING (CONT'D)

Get down! GET DOWN!

King covers Deion as bullets riddle the car. King turns and sees the source: the same UNMARKED CAR from before.

The UNMARKED CAR peels out, fleeing the scene but King yanks his steering wheel, <CRASHING> his bullet-pocked car right into the passing sedan.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

King gets out and swims over to the driver side door of the crashed car. A bloody besuited SWORDFISH with his sword-nose severed off his face tries to hobble away. King tackles him.

KING

Who are you?!

SWORDFISH

Fuck... you... King!

King punches the Swordfish right in between the eyes.

KING

How do you know my name?!

An injured Deion stumbles over to the other side of the car.

DEION

King? What happened?

KING

Stay away!

SWORDFISH

You should listen to your own advice.

The Swordfish seems to make up his mind about something.

DEION

King! Watch out!

The Swordfish grabs his broken shard of nose and STABS himself seppuku style. King grabs the rapidly dying fish.

KING	SWORDFISH
Who sent you!? WHO SENT YOU!	<LAST BREATH GURGLES>

Nothing. The swordfish expires. Deion's eyes suddenly widen.

DEION
You fucking asshole.

KING
Me? I just saved our lives!

Deion rushes over to the car and grabs a photo (WHICH WE DON'T SEE) from the files in the back. She shows it to King.

Look. DEION

REVEAL the photo of the mayor's femme fatale with her TATTOO OF A 3D CUBE WITH A LOCK INSIDE IT. King lowers the photo and there, on the dead Fish's dead fin, is the same tattoo.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. KING'S P.I. AGENCY - KING'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY**

Deion talks into the phone, her desk covered in books.

DEION

I've talked to every tattoo artist
in Seaside. I've taken out every
symbology book in the library. I
can't find a thing on this tattoo.

EXT. STREET - PAYPHONE - INTERCUT

King clutches a phone to his ear.

KING

Keep looking.

DEION

Where are you?

KING

Seeing if I can catch a beat on the
Mayor's missing side-fin.

King turns, revealing 'The Golden Blowhole' Cabaret in B.G.

DEION

Be careful.

KING

I thought you quit?

<DIAL TONE>. King smiles and hangs up.

INT. THE GOLDEN BLOWHOLE CABARET - DAY

King enters the cabaret, which of course is a charitable euphemism for a strip club. A few DEAD-EYED CARP circulate, offering drinks to slimy clientele. These places are never fun in the day. A GUPPY DANCER sips a cocktail at the bar. King slides Cass' glamour shot across the bar.

KING

Know where I can find her?

GUPPY

Who's asking?

King hands the Guppy a 10, which she stuffs in her cleavage.

GUPPY (CONT'D)
Cass ain't been 'round for weeks.

KING
Didn't feel like saving me ten
bucks, huh?
(off her shrug)
Any clue where she might be?

The Guppy stares at King. He slides over another 10.

GUPPY
Nah. Cass was a ghost, barely even
worked here. Didn't make too many
friends. Don't even know why she
had a locker, really.

KING
She still got it?

The Guppy sticks out her fin. King gives her one last 10.

GUPPY
Some swordfish in suits came by a
few days ago. Cleaned it out.

KING
Swordfish?

GUPPY
Yea. Seemed like government types.

King's eyes go wide as the Guppy sizes him up.

GUPPY (CONT'D)
Hey big fella, want a dance?

KING
No thanks. I'm going through a bit
of a philosophical reckoning.

GUPPY
Mr. Midnight broken?

KING
Something like that.

King heads toward the bathroom but slyly diverts into the
Cabaret dressing room.

INT. THE GOLDEN BLOWHOLE - DRESSING ROOMS - MOMENT LATER

King spots a conspicuously empty locker. The only thing there is a dangling broken makeup mirror.

STRIPPER FISH (O.S.)

Hey!

REVEAL a STRIPPER-GROUPER in fish(net) stockings.

STRIPPER GROUPER

You can't be back here.

KING

(feigning drunk)

This ain't the john?

STRIPPER GROUPER

Fucking day shift.

(yelling O.S.)

Vince! VINCE!

The Stripper Grouper hurries out. King re-adjusts the broken mirror which is when he notices a very subtle **X** on a brick in the mirror's reflection. He turns and heads over.

King wiggles the brick loose. The brick slips out and lands heavy on the floor. But King could care less, because he only has eyes for what was behind it: THE MAYOR'S NECKLACE.

SECURITY FISH VINCE (O.S.)

The fuck you doing back here...

EXT. THE GOLDEN BLOWHOLE - DAY

Vince (swore BLUE CRAB) throws King out. As soon as the Fish heads back inside, King makes sure the necklace is still in his pocket and in one piece. Which it is. King smiles.

EXT. SEASIDE CITY HALL - END OF DAY

Reporter DIANE RIDGES (middle-aged conch, hard shell, hard everything) talks to camera on the steps of City Hall.

DIANE RIDGES

We're at City Hall where Mayor Dalton is unveiling his "Lights On" initiative. But with the city budget already in tatters and crime surging, some wonder if this is the best use of government resources.

(MORE)

DIANE RIDGES (CONT'D)
Only time will tell. For Channel 7
news. I'm Diane Ridges.

CAMERA FISH (O.S.)
And you're out.

DIANE completely drops the on-air smile.

DIANE RIDGES
Where are my smokes?

KING (O.S.)
You know you should quit that.

REVEAL King smoking a cigarette nearby.

DIANE RIDGES
King. What brings you to city hall?
Your unemployment run out?

KING
Mayor's an old friend. Thought I'd
stop by and say hello. Good to see
you *upright* Diane.

Diane smirks as King turns his attention to MAYOR DALTON, mid
speech, exuding everything a politician should. Next to the
lectern sits a very large lever.

MAYOR DALTON
No longer will Seaside citizens
cower in fear of night. We are
taking our city back from the fear
mongers and the crime mongers...
all the mongers! It's time to turn
the LIGHTS ON!

Mayor Dalton drags the lever down, which triggers a
magnificent light show as street lamp after street lamp
brightens the otherwise dim downtown district. The crowd
tepidly applauds. Mayor Dalton hugs and kisses his loving
wife JOANNE, a jolly FLOUNDER in a conservative sweater vest.

MAYOR DALTON'S POV: He enjoys the moment but then notices
King standing stock-still amidst a sea of news photographers.

EXT. SEASIDE CITY HALL - LATER

Mayor Dalton excuses himself from his immense security detail
and scurries over to King. The conversation is hushed.

MAYOR DALTON
You shouldn't be here.

KING
Your wife's a lovely woman. Be a
shame if she found out about this:

King discreetly flashes the necklace.

MAYOR DALTON
You found it?!

KING
Yea, I heard you had your goons go
looking for it at The Golden
Blowhole. Hope Cass had an easier
time with them than I did.

MAYOR DALTON
What are you talking about. I
didn't send anyone.

Mayor Dalton sees his wife staring at him.

KING
I call bullshit. And I bet the
chief of police will too.

Mayor Dalton shushes King.

MAYOR DALTON
We can't talk here. Meet me at your
office. Tomorrow morning. 8:30am.

KING
I'm more of an 11:30 guy.

MAYOR DALTON
8:30 and I'll tell you *everything*.

KING
I think I can wake up for that.

MAYOR DALTON
Just don't let that necklace out of
your sight.

Mayor Dalton puts on a fake smile and jogs back to his wife.

King watches the mayor leave. He turns and looks up at the
newly installed lights. One flickers.

KING (V.O.)
When I first started in this
business, I saw Seaside in black
and white. Fish were missing, or
they weren't.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

King enters his apartment. It's a mess. Clothing piled up. Plates piled up. Booze and cig butts everywhere.

KING (V.O.)
I knew I wasn't the best. I wasn't
even top five in a four detective
town.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

King cleans up his apartment. Throwing bottles of booze into garbage bags and clothing he doesn't need out the window.

KING (V.O.)
But I cared. Hard. Turns out, there
was nothing to care about. Found
that out on a cold slab of metal
next to pieces of an Eel who tried
to kill me only seconds earlier.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

King opens the freezer and spots a bottle of vodka. He looks at it. His eyes drift to the frozen algae next to it.

KING (V.O.)
What did those monsters teach me?
Maybe everything. Maybe nothing.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

King sips warm soup at a sad excuse for a table, watching TV.

ON TV: Diane Ridges delivers the report we saw taped earlier.

KING (V.O.)
Maybe they just reminded me that
this world is full of misery and
emptiness and hookers who'll kiss
you on your forehead and tell you
you don't have a fever.

King puts the soup down and unbuckles his pants.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

King shaves for the first time in awhile.

KING (V.O.)
Nothing matters in Seaside. I know
that now more than ever.

King cleans his face with a towel and looks in the mirror.

KING (V.O.)
And the crazy thing is, I've never
had more to live for. Fuck me, huh?

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - LATER

King's in a robe, holding a phone to his ear.

KING
(into phone)
Thanks for seeing this thing
through with me, D. You're the only
thing I can trust in this world, or
whatever this is. See you tomorrow.

King hangs up, opens the freezer and delicately hides the Mayor's necklace inside a bag of frozen algae. Just as King's about to close the freezer door, he takes another long look at the vodka. *Fuck it.* He grabs the bottle.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

An <ALARM> blares. A hungover King stirs and turns over. The clock reads "8:00." King turns the alarm off, grabs the empty bottle of vodka on his night stand and gets out of bed.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

King enters the living room and is shocked to find it in complete shambles. He turns to the empty bottle in his hand.

KING
Guess I have you to thank for this.

INT. KING'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

King enters the kitchen and places the empty vodka bottle on the counter and heads for the fridge.

VOICE (O.S.)
Morning sunshine.

REVEAL: CASS, the SULTRY RED SNAPPER, sitting with a gun, her neck tattoo illuminated by the early morning light.

KING
Cass, right?

King gives his ransacked apartment a once-over.

KING (CONT'D)
I see you've been busy.

King opens the fridge. Out of the corner of his eye he sees the necklace poking out of the frozen algae bag.

CASS
Where's my necklace, King?

King grabs some frozen waffles and closes the freezer.

KING
Your necklace? Or Mrs. Dalton's?

CASS
You think-- wow. You think I was having an affair? With the *Mayor*?

KING
He's not so bad for a grouper.

Cass just stares at King, in disbelief.

CASS
You really got no idea what kinda deep shit you're swimming into.

KING
Listen, I met god a couple nights ago, so forgive me, but when it comes to "deep shit" I've already hit porcelain.

CASS
You did *what*?

KING
Stared god right in the face. Two of 'em actually.

CASS
Wait. You've... seen them?

KING
You've seen them?!

CASS
The necklace... The necklace is...
(snapping out of it)
(MORE)

CASS (CONT'D)
It's something you don't gotta
worry about anymore. Goodbye King.

Cass raises the gun and just as she's about to shoot King--
CRACKKKKKKK! Cass goes down like a bag of bricks.

REVEAL: DEION with King's empty vodka bottle in her hand.

DEION
Expecting someone else?

KING
I was expecting to die.

DEION
You'll have to wait your turn.

Deion tosses a newspaper to King. King is horrified.

KING
Holy shit.
(then, off newspaper)
They closed O'Clamigans!

King turns the newspaper to Deion, pointing to a photo of a
bar with an "Out of Business" tarp hanging above it.

DEION
No. Not--

KING
That place was the best. You could
get *anything* in that bathroom.
Talkin' drugs--

DEION
King!

KING
Eh, mostly just drugs.

DEION
KING!

Deion points to the paper. The camera pans to a larger
headline that reads: "LIGHTS OUT FOR MAYOR DALTON." Under the
headline is a black and white photo of the murdered Mayor.

KING
I told you this would be a
headache.

END OF PILOT