

THE DEVIL'S TEETH

ONE-HOUR DRAMA TELEVISION PILOT
(MATURE AUDIENCES)

The following is the teaser from a pilot for a crime drama series meant for mature audiences. Set in the '90's, the series is about a middle-aged ex-con that discovers a snuff tape depicting his missing wife's murder, setting him on a rogue crusade through the back alleys and dive bars of 90's New Jersey. His mission complicates when estranged daughter gets involved... especially when he discovers that during their years apart she's become a rookie police officer.

This sequence is written to set up our gruff anti-hero in compelling way by showing his toughness, affability, and humanity. This is all done while establishing that the show's inciting incident has deep emotional impact.

The full series is a dark, gritty two-hander with noir undertones. It also carries strong social messages about economic status and race.

AWARDS RECEIVED:

FILM INDEPENDENT EPISODIC STORYTELLING FELLOWSHIP (2018)
SUNDANCE TELEVISION LAB FINALIST (2018)

PRELAP: The DRONE of highway traffic. Muffled GRUNGE ROCK.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE TREASURE CHEST GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - DAY

Noonday sun hangs over a windowless building. Busty pirates airbrushed on brick stucco flirt with a pitiable parking lot. A Ford Taurus parked by the door, and a --

MOTORHOME

-- old and ugly enough to give this roadside eyesore pinkeye, takes up three spots at the far-end.

SUPER: SOMEWHERE IN DELAWARE, 1995

INT. THE TREASURE CHEST GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - CONTINUOUS

A STRIPPER dances for the near empty club. She doesn't care. She only has eyes for the...

TELEVISION

... beaming *The Jerry Springer Show* over the bar. Perched on a stool beneath the boob-tube sits...

JEFF SHOCKEY

... a hard lived mid-40's. Rough edges, smooth smile. His bruised knuckles grip a Bic pen, etches letters into the New York Times Crossword. He has one eye on the paper, the other on...

BUSINESSMEN

... in expensive suits at the table near the stage. Jeff eyes the LARGEST and most inebriated of the businessmen.

FLYNN (O.S.)

Shockey!

FLYNN, the club's owner, marches to Jeff. A package in hand.

FLYNN

How many times I gotta tell you? No personal mail sent to my club!

JEFF

(sarcastic)

But how'm I gonna get my *TigerBeat* fix?

Jeff smirks to himself, eyes still on the paper. Flynn isn't amused. The owner tosses the slim package on the bar-top.

FLYNN

I get so much as a Super Saver with your name on it and you're on your ass. And that four-wheeled shit house I let you park in the lot? I'll sell it for scrap. Get me?

Flynn's threats bounce off Jeff as he inspects the package.

ON PACKAGE: Thick brown paper packaging, tightly sealed. No return address. The postmark reads *Sept 30, 1995: Mincey, NJ.*

Jeff zeroes in on the postmark, apprehensive.

FLYNN

Hey! You get me or what?

JEFF

Yeah. Yeah, I get you.

FLYNN

Lose the paper. You're on the clock.

Flynn stomps to his back office, SLAMS the door shut. Jeff eyes the package. He starts to open the--

STRIPPER (O.S.)

Git! Off!

Glass SHATTERS behind Jeff. He turns to face the stage.

JEFF POV: The stripper stands on the stage's edge, cursing out the large businessman. He's on his back, nursing his eye.

JEFF

Ah, Christ...

Jeff pushes himself from the bar, takes his newspaper with him but leaves the package behind.

THE STAGE

Jeff approaches the stripper.

JEFF

You alright, MARCY?

MARCY

This perv tried to check my oil, Jeff! Nail his ass!

Jeff turns around. The other businessmen are helping the big man to his feet -- a nasty black eye already forming.

JEFF

Think you beat me to it.

Jeff climbs off the stage, approaches the businessmen.

LARGE BUSINESSMAN

That bitch hit me! I oughta sue!

MARCY

You made me miss Jerry's Final Thoughts, you prick!

LARGE BUSINESSMAN

You can't hear shit in this place!

MARCY

I read lips!

JEFF

Gentlemen! I think it's time for some fresh air. Why don't we --

LARGE BUSINESSMAN

I want that whore fired!

Jeff is unappreciative of the businessman's demeanor.

JEFF

Yeah... that ain't happening, DON.

The large businessman drops his foul mood. He stares at Jeff.

JEFF

Don Strayer. Denver, Colorado. Right? And your partners Hank Dublinski and John Lobdell. You boys have fun last night? Hope y'didn't treat any of those ladies as poorly as Marcy. In my experience, karma's got a hard-on for shitty people.

The three are dumbfounded. -- *Who the hell is this guy?*

JEFF

I see you got questions. Well, if you step outside I'll explain how you boys get damned loud after a couple of shooters. Hard not to get pulled into your conversation. Especially the line about...

Jeff opens his paper and reads from NOTES etched in the crossword. -- *A litany of incriminating information written in the squares and margins.*

JEFF

"Taking those whores to The Motor Inn and charging the company card."

Jeff looks up from his notes, grinning.

JEFF

Donny-boy. You may have a hard time explaining that black eye to the missus but it'll be cake compared to telling your boss what you're up to with the company AmEx.

Confusion and panic meet on Don's face, he takes a swing at Jeff. Jeff side-steps. Don's momentum is too much given his drunken state, he topples to the floor.

Jeff pulls a butterfly knife from his back pocket. It dances in his hand. The other businessmen back off, terrified. Jeff keeps the knife in motion as he kneels beside Don.

JEFF

You're full of poor choices, pal.

Jeff grips Don's wrist and presses it against the wood floor. Don stares, wide-eyed, as Jeff raises the blade. Don shuts his eyes, grimaces. *CHOCK!*

THE BLADE

Stands upright before Don's eyes -- pinning his sleeve, and by extension him, to the floor. Don reaches for the knife, Jeff presses his boot heel onto Don's free hand.

JEFF

Gentlemen. We got two options. I call the cops and I hand today's paper over to my buddies on the force. Or, second option, the three of you pack your shit and take a flying f--

SMASH TO:

EXT. THE TREASURE CHEST GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Tires SQUEAL as a Ford Taurus speeds out of the lot. Jeff watches from the door, package in-hand. Marcy beside him.

MARCY

Since when're you friends with
cops?

JEFF

I ain't.

Marcy playfully punches Jeff's shoulder, walks back inside.

JEFF

You okay without me?

Marcy gives Jeff a thumbs up without breaking her stride for the television.

INT. JEFF'S MOTORHOME - DAY

The messy cabin rocks as Jeff steps inside. The opened package in one hand, he pulls from it a typed note. Jeff takes reading glasses off the book shelf, squints.

ON NOTE: "01:01:40 -- I am ashamed. Please watch alone."

Jeff pulls out the package's contents: A VHS tape, an aged sticker on the side labels it as --

ON VHS LABEL: "*FEVER'S SACRED SONG*"

INT. VCR - LATER

The tape slides into the cold chamber of a VCR. Drums and rollers flip the top, stretches the tape inside. Chrome spindles rotate.

INT. JEFF'S MOTORHOME - SAME TIME

The blue glow of the screen washes over Jeff's face. Nothing plays, he furrows his brow. Then recalls the note...

Jeff groans as he rises from his seat, stiff joints CREAK as he reaches for the VCR's console.

ON VCR DISPLAY: 00:59:01 flits to 01:01:37. Resumes normal play speed. 01:01:38... 39...

SHRIEKING explodes from the television.

Jeff scrambles to stop the video. He reaches the panel... but something on screen has him transfixed.

And then it's quiet, the seven seconds of hell is over.

Jeff trembles, stunned silent, in the screen's blue light.

EXT. THE TREASURE CHEST GENTLEMEN'S CLUB - SAME TIME

Flynn stomps across the parking lot.

INT. JEFF'S MOTORHOME - SECONDS LATER

Jeff is on his knees. Shoulders trembling, face buried in his hands. BANGING at the door does nothing to move him.

FLYNN (O.S.)
Shockey! What the hell'd you do to
my club!?!

Jeff looks skyward, his anguished face wet with tears.

JEFF
(sotto)
Why? Why, God?

More BANGING. Jeff's head drops, still weeping.

FLYNN (O.S.)
Hey! Get out here! Now or I swear
to god I'll make your life hell!

Jeff turns to the door. He wipes his tears, and...

EXT. JEFF'S MOTORHOME - SAME TIME

... The cabin rocks. Movement inside. Flynn grins.

FLYNN
Attaboy.

The motorhome's engine RUMBLES. Flynn backs away, stunned.
Tires SQUEEL as the motorhome peels out of the parking lot.