

TO CATCH A PREDATOR

April 2014 OWC

FADE IN

EXT. FAIR HAVEN, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY - SUMMER 1979

Beyond a neighborhood of shingled houses and picket fences is sparkling blue, Buzzard's Bay.

Gravel scrapes under a pair of beat up Converse.

JIMMY WHALEN (14), awkward, determined, lugs a backpack and an extra thirty pounds of body fat toward a quaint bungalow.

He glances disapprovingly as he passes an abused pick up truck parked in front, "TONY'S AUTO REPAIR - BROOKLYN, NY".

As he heads up the walkway, he stares toward the garage in disbelief. In the driveway is a mid-sized fishing boat on a trailer. Sign propped on it's window, "FOR SALE - \$2000".

INT. WHALEN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A bright and inviting, all-year-round beach house. On the mantle is a photo of Jimmy (12) and his dad, Mick (35) reeling in a small shark on the same boat from the driveway.

Furious, Jimmy enters the front door, slams it shut.

Startled, KATHLEEN WHALEN (33), blue eyes, warm smile, bandana over dark hair, pops out of the kitchen. Both speak with a Boston accent.

KATHLEEN

Hey, Jimmy. We need to keep it down. Tony's taking a nap.

She wipes her hands, grabs his face and kisses his cheek.

KATHLEEN

My eighth grade graduate. Next year -- high school. Can you believe it?

JIMMY

Why is there a for sale sign on Dad's boat?

Her shoulders drop, she huffs in frustration.

KATHLEEN

God dammit. I told him wait.

JIMMY

You said it was okay? How could you do that, ma?

KATHLEEN

Please lower your voice.

JIMMY

I don't care if I wake him up! You can't sell Dad's boat!

Attempting to calm him, Kathleen speaks softly.

KATHLEEN

Tony and I were trying to make room in the garage for his tools. We only discussed it. I don't know why there's a sign. -- I'll talk to him, okay?

JIMMY

I don't want him living here. You just met him two months ago. He's already borrowed money from you and now he wants to sell Dad's boat?

Kathleen gently lifts his chin, looks him in the eyes.

KATHLEEN

Jimmy, it's your boat. If you don't want to sell it, we won't.

She wraps her arms around him. His lip quivers as he fights back tears. A door creaks. Jimmy quickly composes himself.

TONY MARUCCI (35), exits the bedroom. Muscular body in a white tank, mobster wannabe swagger and Brooklyn accent.

TONY

It was so loud out here I thought you were having a party.

His smile and tone are pleasant enough to fool Kathleen, but the way he looks at Jimmy, for only Jimmy to see -- there's no mistaking the animosity he feels toward him.

KATHLEEN

Sorry. Guess I was excited about it being the last day of school.

She smiles and winks at Jimmy, who scowls at Tony.

TONY

Oh yeah. Summer vacation. I was working by the time I was thirteen so I guess it wasn't that exciting for me. Different times, huh Jimbo?

JIMMY

You're not selling my Dad's boat.

Kathleen cringes. Tony looks at him with an icy stare. Jimmy stands his ground. It's tense.

Tony puts his arm around Kathleen, smiles at Jimmy.

TONY

Sure thing, Jimbo. I was just trying to see what you could get for it. I'll take the sign off.

(kisses Kathleen's cheek)

We all good here? We good Jimbo?

Jimmy glares at Tony, grabs his backpack and heads to his room. When his door closes, Tony looks at Kathleen.

TONY

Shit. Didn't mean to upset the kid.

KATHLEEN

Just try to take it easy. This is a big adjustment for him.

TONY

And what about you Kath? You need more adjusting?

He pulls her close, smiles. They kiss passionately.

INT. JIMMY'S ROOM - DAY

It's safe to say, Jimmy likes sharks. Posters, books, trinkets, mostly all shark related.

From his bed, he stares at a plaque propped on his dresser. "1st PLACE - 1977 PRO ANGLER SHARK TOURNAMENT", with a photo of he and his Dad, large shark on their fishing line.

MICK (O.S.)

We made a great team, huh Jim?

MICK WHALEN (35), caring eyes, straggly beard, ragged Red Sox cap over stringy long hair, now sits next to him.

Jimmy smiles but his eyes don't move from the photo.

MICK

What's the first rule to catching a predator?

JIMMY

Don't let him know you're trying to
hook him.

Jimmy turns, but his Dad is gone.

From the next room, a door closes followed by giggles and muffled sweet talk. Jimmy stares intently at a poster titled "PREDATOR", of a shark with fierce black eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tony's dark eyes stare with uncertainty, at the meal Kathleen places on the small table. Fish, rice, broccoli.

Fork ready, Jimmy digs in the moment Kathleen serves him.

TONY

Fish again, Kathleen? I'm growing
freakin' gills over here.

KATHLEEN

It's bluefish. I got it today,
right off the dock.

(looks at Jimmy)

Weebs and Junior scored wicked
large while they were looking for
that shark near Daniel's Cove.

Neither Tony or Jimmy appear interested until --

KATHLEEN

It killed a guy two days ago.
They're offering ten thousand
dollars to whoever catches it.

TONY

Holy shit. Ten thousand dollars
just to catch a freakin' fish? How
hard could that be?

Disgusted, Jimmy stands, picks up his plate.

JIMMY

I'm going to eat in my room.

Sympathetically, she nods. Lost in thought, Tony doesn't notice when Jimmy leaves.

KATHLEEN

You really are an insensitive
prick, you know that?

Shocked and totally clueless, Tony looks at her.

KATHLEEN

If you can't be nice to my kid, you
and I are never gonna work out.

TONY

What? It's just the way we talk
where I'm from. I didn't mean to
insult him. Jesus.

(stands up)

I'll go talk to him.

Tony leans down, kisses Kathleen on the head and smiles.

TONY

Maybe I'll take him fishing this
weekend while you're at work. I
gotta do it sooner or later if I'm
gonna fit in around here. Right?

Forcing a smile, Kathleen half nods. Tony heads to Jimmy's
room. Appetite lost, she pushes her full dinner plate away.

INT. JIMMY'S ROOM

At a small desk, dinner plate in front of him, Jimmy runs his
fingers along the frayed edge of Mick's Red Sox hat. Mick
leans against the desk, watching him.

MICK

What's the second rule to catching
a predator?

There's a knock on the door. Tony yells in.

TONY (O.S.)

Jimbo? Can I come in?

JIMMY

(softly)

Never be intimidated.

Jimmy doesn't turn around as Tony enters uninvited.

TONY

I'm sorry Jimbo. I can be a real
insensitive prick sometimes.

(Jimmy ignores him)

So, I was thinking maybe we could -

Jimmy spins his chair, faces Tony.

JIMMY

Yeah. Let's do it. But you can't
tell Mom we're going after a shark.

TONY
How'd you know I was gonna ask --

JIMMY
It's a small house, Tony. I hear everything. -- Everything.

Jimmy puts the Red Sox hat on.

JIMMY
If we're doing this we have to leave by four. And my name's not Jimbo, it's Jimmy.

TONY
Yeah. Sure thing, kid.

Bewildered by what just went down, Tony walks out.

Happy with himself, Jimmy spins back around, looks next to the desk but Mick is gone. He picks up his fork, shovels food in his mouth.

EXT. DECK - JIMMY'S BOAT - BUZZARD'S BAY - MORNING

A gloved hand shoves a large scoop into a bucket of chum.

Blue bandana draped over his nose and mouth, Tony hurls chum into the Bay then lifts his bandana and hurls his breakfast.

INT. CABIN - JIMMY'S BOAT - CONTINUOUS

A confined space, view of the bay from every angle. Jimmy looks comfortable behind the wheel, as he circles the boat around a small area.

JIMMY
(to himself)
Rule three to catching a predator -- make them disoriented.

From the deck, complexion green, Tony yells over.

TONY
You going in circles on purpose?

Jimmy chuckles at Tony's discomfort. He shuts off the engine and walks out to the deck.

EXT. DECK - JIMMY'S BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Without skipping a beat he puts on gloves, pulls a sack of bait out of a large bucket, ties a weight to it, secures the line to a cleat, then tosses it into the Bay.

TONY
So -- what do we do now?

JIMMY
We wait.

Tony nods, looks like he's about to say something then leans over the rail and hurls -- again.

EXT. DECK - JIMMY'S BOAT - BUZZARD'S BAY - DAY

On a bench, Tony sleeps, bandana over his face. Jimmy chums with one hand, holds binoculars to his eyes with the other.

The fishing line clicks. He puts the binoculars down, watches the line in the water.

It clicks again, then bobbles. He drops everything, heads to the angler's chair.

JIMMY
Tony! Wake up!

In the chair, Jimmy straps on the harness. Tony peeks out from under the bandana.

TONY
I feel like shit, kid. Why don't we just call it a day?

JIMMY
No way. We're doing this. It's the only way I can figure to get you out of my house.

Angry, Tony sits up with a jolt.

TONY
What the hell did you just say to me, you little shit?

Jimmy anchors his feet, holds the reel tight, glares at Tony.

JIMMY
We catch this shark, we split the money, you split back to Brooklyn.

All puffed up in his white tank, Tony stands over him.

TONY
Where do you get the balls talking to me like that? I got news for you kid -- shark or no shark, I'm staying.

The line takes off. Jimmy struggles to keep the rod steady.

Relaxed on the bench, watching the scene as he soaks in the sun, is Mick.

MICK

Always stay three steps ahead of
your prey, Jimmy boy. You're doing
great. Don't back down now.

Confidence boosted, Jimmy nods, stays focused. He leans forward, winds the line till it's taut, then pulls back.

JIMMY

Maybe I should just tell Billy Luko
where you're living these days.

Tony is stunned. Jimmy leans forward, reels in more line then pulls back with all his might.

JIMMY

Told you I hear everything. And I
got his number off our phone bill --
for security.

Their attention is drawn toward a frenzy of splashing. It looks like the water is bubbling all over.

TONY

What the hell is that?

JIMMY

Bluefish feeding. That's what's on
my line. A stupid bluefish. Shit.

Pissed off, Jimmy reels the fish in. He reaches back, grabs a large net off the wall and tosses it to Tony.

JIMMY

Net this thing, would ya?

Confused, Tony holds out the net. As the bluefish surfaces, a huge shark jumps out of the water, grabs the fish and pulls it under. Tony screams, drops the net into the bay.

TONY

Holy shit! I don't want to catch
that thing. Seriously! Let's go!

JIMMY

No. I'm catching this shark.

Game face on, Jimmy tightens the harness, readies himself for a fight. He watches the shark's fin glide toward the boat.

Tony sees it too. Frantically, he paces. He enters the cabin.
Mick now stands next to Jimmy.

MICK
Always remain calm, son. Calm and steady.

Mick sees something, shakes his head and chuckles.

MICK
Jesus, this guy's a wicked moron.

A flash of metal catches Jimmy's eye. A quick glance reveals a speargun pointed at his face. Tony glares at him.

TONY
Gimme those boat keys, kid.

At first, Jimmy is scared, but a calm washes over him. His focus returns to the water.

JIMMY
You know that's for shooting underwater?

TONY
I'm sure it can do plenty of damage out of the water too. Give me the keys and we won't have to find out.

JIMMY
I'm not giving up the keys to my boat, so I guess you're gonna have to shoot me.

TONY
Don't test me, kid.

Tony holds the speargun like a rifle. Jimmy laughs.

JIMMY
You're holding it wrong.

TONY
Last chance. Give me the freakin' keys.

Just then, the shark jumps out of the water. Mouth wide open, it catches a bluefish mid air. It crashes back in the water and thrashes around, getting more tangled in the line.

The boat sways. Tony loses his balance and accidentally pulls the trigger. As the gun fires, the recoil smashes him in the face. The spear flies over Jimmy's head.

Tony stumbles backward. Then, over the side into the Bay.

JIMMY

Holy shit!

Jimmy unhooks his harness and locks the rod.

He sprints to the rail, looks over, sees Tony. Face bloody, he labors toward the boat.

Jimmy grabs a lifesaver, ties the rope to the rail then tosses it in. It lands close to Tony but he's struggling.

JIMMY

Grab it, Tony!

Tony reaches for it, arms flailing. In panic, he knocks it further away.

A frenzied splashing rapidly moves toward Tony.

JIMMY

Come on! Grab the God damned thing!

Energy just about spent, Tony finally grabs hold of the lifesaver.

As Jimmy pulls, he sees a fin pop out of the feeding bluefish. It heads right for Tony.

With all his strength, Jimmy pulls the rope. He reaches over the rail, grabs Tony's hand and hoists him back on board.

Barely able to speak, Tony lies on deck, mumbles.

TONY

Going -- back -- to Brooklyn.

The boat begins to lean and turn. With the rod on lock, there is no give in the line. The shark moves, the boat moves.

Jimmy throws the harness back on and returns to the angler's chair. He anchors his feet then unlocks the rod.

JIMMY

I'm gonna make you proud, Dad.

Immediately, the rod spins like crazy. Jimmy watches as the line and the shark move farther away.

He leans forward lowering the rod, reels in the line then attempts to pull the rod up -- but he can't. He's worn out.

JIMMY

Shit.

Mick stand next to Jimmy, looks at him sympathetically.

MICK

Last rule. One I should have paid close attention to. Never be too proud to ask for help.

Frustrated and exhausted, a tear rolls down Jimmy's cheek as he gazes out at the bay.

INT. CABIN - JIMMY'S BOAT - MOMENTS LATER

Jimmy walks in, heads to the radio. He scans a list, selects a channel and speaks into the mic.

JIMMY

Junior's Charters? This is The Wicked Whalen. Do you read? Over.

Static.

Mick stands at the cabin door, smiles as he watches Jimmy.

MICK

I'm so proud of you, son.

Jimmy turns around, but Mick is gone.

JUNIOR (V.O.)

This is Junior's Charters. Is that you Jimmy Whalen? Over.

EXT. WHALEN HOUSE - NIGHT

The boat is back on the trailer, in front of the garage.

Tony's truck however -- is gone.

INT. KITCHEN - WHALEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Kathleen places dinner on the small table, set for two.

It's fish -- again. With a big smile, Jimmy digs right in.

KATHLEEN

Junior was real impressed with you today. Said you handled that shark like a pro.

JIMMY

He offered me a job this summer.
Said he's got lots of charters
booked.

KATHLEEN

Your Dad would be really proud.

JIMMY

Junior said I could --

Their voices fade.

Leaning against the doorway, Mick smiles as he watches Jimmy
and Kathleen.

FADE OUT