

KENNEL

by

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INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK (DREAM SCENE)

We focus on a tired, gaunt, bloodied face. The man's name is JACKSON HAYES, (late-thirties).

Everything is quiet. The orange light coming from the window in front of him bathes his face in a strange, burning glow. The blood looks black.

His eyes are fixed on something off to the side. He looks up. He clenches his jaw occasionally and licks the blood off his lips. We see his Adam's apple going up and down as he swallows.

Jackson is revealed to be tied to a chair, his shirt covered in sweat. Hands behind his back. There is a huge mirror behind him, hanging off the far wall. We can see someone's silhouetted reflection on it. The orange glow coming from the window behind the yet unknown figure eclipses its face and body. It is standing in front of Jackson, looking down on him.

Another man, LEVY SMITH (early-thirties), sits on a sofa to the right, quietly watching him with interest. There is a cell phone in one of his hands. He seems to be waiting for a phone call.

Jackson looks at Levy. We see the DARK FIGURE one more time. We flow into it from behind Jackson's back. It is still only possible to perceive a silhouette.

Jackson grows agitated. He looks scared as he faces the dark figure once more.

The sound of a cell phone ringing is heard to the right. It's Levy's. Jackson seems to be on the verge of tears.

LEVY (ON THE PHONE)

Hello?

Beat as Jackson gives Levy a despairing look. Static can be heard very faintly behind his voice.

LEVY (CONT'D)

Yes. I'm not hurt.

(beat)

Yes. I can see him right now.

(beat)

All right.

We hear Levy hanging up the phone. Jackson remains silent, but it is apparent how frightened he is.

We hear Levy getting up from the couch. Footsteps. He goes by the window sill, behind the dark figure. Sits on it. He leans his head against the glass and stares Jackson down.

The dark figure next to them keeps getting more and more distorted.

JACKSON
(controlling his tone)
I do not care anymore, do you
understand?

Levy continues staring.

The dark figure begins advancing slowly towards Jackson.

Touching it with his forearm, Levy brakes the glass window behind him.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (BEDROOM) - EARLY DAWN(06:30AM)

Jackson opens his eyes. He is laying in bed with his wife, SAMANTHA, (late-thirties). Everything is silent in and outside of the house.

The alarm clock still hasn't gone off, and Jackson doesn't want it to wake Samantha up, so he cancels it.

He picks the neatly folded clothes from one of the chairs in the room and gets dressed. We hear Samantha moaning something in her sleep and turning over. Jackson slows his movements down and sits by her side, at the foot of the bed. He's careful not to touch her legs.

Dogs start barking outside, making Jackson flinch in surprise. It's nearly six thirty in the morning, half an hour before he normally wakes up.

Everything feels out of place, and there is a certain dreamlike quality to the early dawn inside the house. Jackson slowly pulls down the white sheet covering Samantha to reveal her long hair and naked back. He wants to feel something known and meaningful and dear to him, but we can only read despondency in his eyes.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM/STAIRCASE) - EARLY DAWN(06:30AM)

Jackson makes his way down the living room staircase to find the expensive TV set switched on. No sound coming from it. He doesn't remember leaving it on, but he also doesn't remember switching it off.

The early morning news are on: mute images of a large thunder storm, which capture Jackson's attention for a moment. He watches for a little while before picking the remote up from the couch, and turning the television set off.

The sun is starting to come around. The living room looks immaculate; clean and organized. Someone obviously puts effort in order to make the place look its best.

We see the black television screen. Jackson's faded reflection bouncing off it. He is sitting on the couch,

motionless. After a while, he opens his arms and stretches them across. He lets his head fall back.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAWN(07:00AM)

The coffee boiler's in the stove. The morning coffee -utterly essential. He sits in front of the table, forcing himself to eat a couple slices of buttered toast. He takes a few big bites out of them, and then throws the rest in the trash.

A thin line of vapor ascends into Jackson's face as the coffee's poured inside a mug. It smells good and familiar. He tries to drink it as quickly as he can. His wrist watch shows him that it's five past seven.

He puts the dishes in the sink and picks up an apple before he leaves the kitchen.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (HALLWAY/BEDROOM) - DAWN(07:15AM)

The bedroom door was left slightly ajar, and he's careful not to make any noise as he approaches it. An instinctive reaction... He listens in, trying to understand if his wife is still sleeping. Seems to be.

Jackson enters the bedroom and goes by her side of the bed. He sits next to her. Her breathing is deep and nearly inaudible.

JACKSON
(softly)
Wake up... Sam, wake up...

She opens her eyes slowly and takes a couple seconds before looking into Jackson's. He leans down to kiss her on the cheek.

JACKSON
I'm going now. It's past seven.

She glances at the alarm clock on the nightstand, promptly returning her eyes to Jackson.

SAMANTHA
Did you eat anything?

JACKSON
Yeah, i did. I am, still.

He shows her the partially eaten apple.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
(smiling)
I'm okay.

Samantha grabs his necks, pulls him down and kisses him.

SAMANTHA

I know you are Jack, but i don't
want you getting thinner, and
vanish...

LONG BEAT. Jackson smiles.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

(making a face at him)
I'm kidding.

JACKSON

(leaning in to her)
...That's too much Sam, this early
in the morning.

He gives her a quick peck on the lips and gets up, then walks over by the window and draws the blinds. The sun shines on Samantha. She looks beautiful, even after waking up. He takes a bite out of the apple.

JACKSON

I'll take the trash out.

SAMANTHA

Okay. Don't come home late,
please.

Jackson stops by the door and takes one final look at Samantha. He nods.

JACKSON

See you later.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - DAWN(07:15AM)

Jackson gets the black trash bag out of the trash can and puts a new one in. He throws the apple core inside and ties the bag.

The car keys are in his front pocket and his work briefcase near the door. He picks it up as he makes his way outside.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAWN(07:15AM) - CONTINUED

It is now a little past seven fifteen, and the sun shines brightly on the couple's house. A car is parked on the driveway. Jackson leaves his briefcase by the car and goes to the garbage bin to dispose of the trash.

He feels as if he's the only person awake in the neighborhood. The clean suburbs. Every house displaying the same energy and lifestyle. Each one a piece of a mosaic that paints a monochromatic, dull picture.

Two dogs sprint by him. We see them only for a brief moment. One of them a greyhound, carrying a muzzle on its mouth; the other one, a smaller dog, holding some type of rag. The rag flaps about in the air; it has a dark red stain covering about half of it, off-setting it's natural pale color.

Tiny droplets of blood are scattered across the road in their wake, shining brightly in the morning sun.

EXT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - MORNING(07:45AM)

We see Jackson parking his car in front of a modern looking building, somewhere near the center of town.

Like him, people are already going about their daily routines. They look focused and rather self-absorbed. Some talking into their cell phones, some carrying briefcases.

He steps out of the car and locks the door. He sees two guys outside of the small building adjacent to the one he works at. One of them, HARVEY (late-thirties), is smoking a cigarette. When they see him, Jackson lifts his arm in greeting.

The other man, BRIAN (early-thirties), immediately interrupts the conversation to call Jackson out:

BRIAN

This one here almost burned down
his house last night!

He explains as he points to Harvey.

HARVEY

Jack, he doesn't know what the
fuck he's talking about.

Brian explodes in laughter, bending his body and clapping his hands.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Don't listen to him- he's drunk
already.

BRIAN

'Course i do, i was there.

JACKSON

...What happened?

HARVEY

I'll tell you about it during
lunch.

BRIAN

Tell him now, he's not gonna mind...

HARVEY

Yeah, he'll mind, he's a... busy man.

Jackson considers it.

JACKSON

You're right fellas, i am. Tell me during lunch.

He smiles and goes inside. Brian continues laughing.

INT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - MORNING(09:00AM)

Jackson's working hours for the past few months have mostly been occupied with designing and perfecting arguably the biggest job of his career as an architect, a sixteen storey building a few blocks away from the geographic center of town. We see him revising various schematics and construction documents, looking at past drawings, etc...

He handles them with care, but seems distracted. He looks at the window. Sun comes through the partially drawn blinds. He winces for a second, averting his eyes from the glare. He looks down at an old drawing of the building.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON(01:00PM)

The place is nearly empty. It's around one in the afternoon and only a few solitary businessmen seem to be at the tables. They either choose one near a wall or one up against a pillar, apparently finding the proximity with something bigger than them comforting.

Brian, Jackson and Harvey are amongst these people, having lunch together like they agreed, like they usually have. The three sit at a circular table, all facing the center. Lunch is already on the way, each has his own small tray in front of them, filled with entrees.

Harvey is the only one using chopsticks. You can tell he knows how to use them. He eats fast and without paying much attention to Brian, who's doing most of the talking. Jackson listens, slightly amused by the frantic nature of his tone.

BRIAN

...i could see all of it from my window, y'know? When i began hearing the firetrucks, seeing the lights and all that stuff, i'd come down into to the kitchen to get me something to eat, cause both me and him got home super late yesterday, and then i could see the blue lights spinnin around

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)
on the walls. What time was it..?
When we got home yesterday?

Brian turns to Harvey, who looks confused for a moment, like he hasn't been listening to anything that's been said.

HARVEY
...Around two? Or two fifteen--

BRIAN
-right, so i saw the guys coming
at about three in the morning, and
at that time Jenna had been asleep
for like four hours already, so
she says didn't hear a fucking
thing! Can you believe it? I think
that's hard to believe, but
anyway...

Jackson looks at Brian in silence. His food is on the plate, barely touched.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I go outside, and i see his wife
and his kids on the lawn - his
kids crying - and still, he's
running around like a madman,
filling buckets with water, trying
to put the already fucking huge
flames out...

Brian starts laughing again, but tries not to go overboard.
Harvey just nods his head, an annoyed look on his face.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Holy shit...
(Beat)
Well i mean, i'm laughing now, but
i was concerned for them. I
couldn't do much to help him,
neither. Thankfully the firemen
came and just told him to stop
doing whatever he was doing. They
took care of it. I got to talk to
him when he calmed down- Claire
also didn't know what the hell had
happened- and then he explained it
to me...

Beat as Brian stares at Harvey for a moment. Finally:

BRIAN
C'mon now. It's your turn...

Harvey turns to Jackson.

HARVEY
(to Jackson)
Do you really need to hear the
rest of it?

Beat.

JACKSON
I'm curious, but if you don't feel
like talking about it, it's fine--

BRIAN
-Of course he wants to talk about
it, i've already told half the
fucking story.

HARVEY
(a nervous grin)
It's goddamn embarrassing, man... It
was such a stupid thing.

Harvey gives in and proceeds to tell the rest, his voice
falling out as dry as a bone:

HARVEY
Like he said, we got home pretty
late. We got held up at this guys
house- a client... The guy insisted
on throwing drinks at us all
fucking night. Wine, brandy... Then
later on whiskey- beer, you know,
just kept pouring. I thought the
combination was disgusting right,
but i drank anyway. And time flies
like that. Talking and drinking...

BRIAN
He was probably trying to get us
wasted. Which he did.

HARVEY
He wasn't. The man was drunker
than us when we left. Nobody tries
to get an advantage on these types
of things by getting drunk along
with the people that are
supposedly being worked over...

We are now fixed on Jackson, who seems to be getting a bit
restless. He tries to get another bite of food in his mouth.
He finds it hard to take in, so he gives up on the idea of a
second one, and lays the fork down across the plate. He fills
his chest with air as he chews, occasionally tapping his
fingers on the table.

BRIAN
He was still very articulate by
the end of the night--

HARVEY
(loudly)
-the man fell on the goddamn floor
when he was walkin' us out.

BRIAN
Yeah, because he tripped on some
fucking chair or something. He
wasn't that drunk. It was dark for
some reason, remember?

JACKSON
Gentleman.
(smiles)
Guys, i'm sorry, let's put the
story on hold for a moment. I have
to go to the bathroom.

HARVEY
Sure. You ok?

BRIAN
(using a light chinese
accent)
Chinese no good for you?

Jackson pulls out a quick stupid smile.

JACKSON
I'll be right back.

Jackson stands up and leaves the table. We follow him from
behind, through the restaurant. He walks fast but composed.
Some people eye him, with some kind of stoic curiosity on
their faces. They notice something.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT (BATHROOM) - AFTERNOON(01:15PM)

The mirror holds his reflection. A pair of eyes looking into
his own, inverted. His face still wet and dripping. He grabs
his forehead with his hand and slides it all the way down to
the neck. He holds tight for a moment. He runs his other hand
up and down the side of his face; through his hair.

Jackson gets his phone out and calls Samantha. He leans
against the sink, waiting for her to pick up.

SAMANTHA(V.O.)
Hi...

JACKSON (ON THE PHONE)
Hey.

Beat.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
What's up?

JACKSON
Well, it feels like the weather's
nice, huh?

Samantha laughs.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
Yeah, not too warm...

JACKSON
...and not too cold. Look at that.

Beat. Samantha continues laughing.

JACKSON
How many pants did you sell today?

SAMANTHA(V.O.)
I'm on my lunch brake, Jack.

JACKSON
Me too.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
But you don't have a lunch break.
You have lunch when you want.

JACKSON
I guess so.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
Is everything okay?

JACKSON
I just wanted to hear your voice
for a little bit. I'm sorry.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
Don't be sorry, it's okay.

Beat.

JACKSON
I feel exhausted, Sam.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
Did something happen?

JACKSON
No. It's a normal day. I just feel
it weighing on me.

At this point, we hear somebody entering the bathroom. That person goes into one of the stalls in front of Jackson. We see him follow the person with his eyes. His face displaying a very subtle amount of anger.

JACKSON
Nevermind, we'll talk later, all
right?

She says nothing but we can feel her getting tense.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
All right. What time are you gonna
get home today?

Jackson lowers the phone for a moment. He stares vacantly.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)
(distant sound)
Jack?

He snaps back.

JACKSON
Yeah?

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON(01:30PM)

HARVEY
I get the eggs out of the frying
pan... Mind now, the thing's filled
with oil- I put them on a plate,
and then i walk back into the
living room. Can't even remember
what i was watching... i must've
been really drunk, because when i
started smelling the smoke, i
didn't even try to understand what
it was or where it was coming
from.

BRIAN
So good thing you didn't fall
asleep.

HARVEY
Yeah, you bet.

Beat.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
All of a sudden, i start seeing
these lights in front of me, like
flickering and bending on the
walls... I turn back, and i see
the-, i see they're coming from

(MORE)

HARVEY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
the corridor, and I don't really
know what i was thinking, i don't
think it even crossed my mind it
was a fire. So i get up slowly to
check on it, and the moment i step
out of the living room, the smell
of smoke... uh, overwhelmed me. I
was panicking man,- i ran into the
kitchen, and the frying pan's on
the ground- i didn't hear it
falling, apparently- the metal's
all twisted up, piece of shit...
The oil was all over the floor,
and there's smoke and fire
everywhere- i guess it caught onto
some towels we had hangin' around.
Our table was on fire too...

Beat as Harvey looks mildly embarrassed.

HARVEY (CONT'D)
I forgot to turn the stove off
after i finished with the eggs.
It's not that big of a deal...

Brian begins to laugh, the sound growing louder and louder.
Jackson joins in, bending his face in discomfort. The humor
Brian so clearly sees in Harvey's account is not getting in
the same way to Jackson, but he tries his best to look
engaged in the outcome.

HARVEY
Fuck, i didn't even know that that
could happen, that the oil would
burst into flames if you leave it
long enough like that... I can't
blame it all on being drunk, you
have to be at least a tiny bit
stupid to let something like that
happen. I could've gotten us all
killed...

BRIAN
(still chuckling)
Oh, shit...

HARVEY
(to Jackson)
Looking back, though: i tell you
it almost kinda feels like an
appropriate conclusion, to... a
night that began with... some off-
key singing, in a certain sense...
those were some strange fucking
hours. It was one of the most
absurd nights of my life...

EXT. JACKSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON(7:00PM)

The door to the office is ajar and Jackson is on the outside, peaking in. He brings his head back, then he locks it. The day is done and some relief comes over him. He goes down the stairs, onto the ground floor. JENN, (late-twenties) is just returning to her desk. A small fan is blowing the pages of a phone book to the side, turning them one by one. Jackson stops for a moment and turns around.

JACKSON

I'm not sure if i'm coming
tomorrow. If Mr. Daniels calls and
i'm not here, be sure to tell him
to reach me on my cell phone.
(Whispering to himself)
He has my number.

JENN

All right Mr. Hayes. Is everything
okay?

JACKSON

It's fine Jenn. Have a good night.

He walks out.

INT. JACKSON'S CAR - AFTERNOON(7:00PM)

Jackson is driving at sundown. He seems extremely distraught, completely overwhelmed with something. We are looking at him in profile, his face bathed in orange glow, his eyes focused, intense. He sees something, something beyond the wheel, beyond the road. He is in auto pilot, his mind elsewhere...

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX (DREAM SCENE) - UNSPECIFIED TIME

Jackson is walking in the middle of a road; his hair blown back by strong winds. We see him only in profile as we follow him all around this modern looking building. It seems as if it's going to rain at any moment. We can only hear the wind and something like faint static churning in a loop.

Jackson's eyes do not shift away from it: we see only the back of his head for long periods of time. A few steps after he turns the first corner, there is a body sitting on the pavement, head to the side, leaning against the building. It is pale and limp; lifeless. Jackson never stops, and he does not turn his head away. He simply trudges forward.

More and more bodies start to appear as he goes over the second corner. They're displayed in all sorts of manners; just a long line of decay and death, and we can see that reflected on the building as well: It appears to be increasingly worn down; there are empty holes scattered

around where the glazed windows used to be, and some of them seem to be leaking something out; we can look at destroyed suspended ceiling tiles and hanging broken tube lights on the inside. The entire building seems to be rotting from the inside out.

The wind is intensifying. Where the last corner should be, there is only a hole, oblong in shape, about two and a half meters tall. We cannot see past it's outer layer of darkness.

A small pile of bodies lay at the entrance. Over them, the DARK FIGURE stands. It extends an amorphous arm in Jackson's direction; it's hand cupped upwards, as if asking for something. The whole thing exudes some kind of black mist.

Jackson stops, staring, paralyzed.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (HALLWAY/STAIRS) - AFTERNOON(7:30PM)

Three months have past.

Samantha is coming out of the bedroom upstairs, opening the door gently with her pale hand, exiting the room almost as though she had never left the house.

She has an elegant black satin dress holding her whole body tight, giving the immediate impression that the night ahead is not going to be an ordinary night.

The silence that reigns throughout the house is broken by the thumping of her heels, as she slowly descends the stairs onto the living room. It's a glossy sound; it echoes with a laidback character of rigid momentum.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM/STAIRCASE) - AFTERNOON(7:30PM) - CONTINUED

The dinner table is set. She circles it slowly, finally stopping by her anointed seat, contemplating the lurid purple glow coming from the window.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING(08:30PM)

A small boy's chest. The t-shirt wrinkled and striped white and red, grappling with the bent position of his upper body, concave; it twitches at the occasion of his unpreoccupied movements, in the close bond of a perfect fitting. The boy, KEVIN, (ten years old) is sitting on the floor with his back against the couch, his torso twisted and bent to his right, towards the lit screen of the laptop next to him. He is absorbed in the light. His determined expression holds the stillness of one who is focused yet relaxed. Samantha's right hand rests on top of his head, we do not know for how long it's been there... She sits on the couch; Kevin, on the floor, close to her legs...

Levy is by the opened window, smoking, looking at them both; looking outside and blowing the smoke. The opal curtains dance gently as he turns and invites the air to move around him. ALICE, (early-thirties, Jackson's sister) appears holding two glasses of red wine. She motions one of them to Levy.

ALICE

Here...

LEVY

No, not now.

Their voices sound hushed, almost whispered: their intimacy seemingly related by simple movements and soft looks.

Alice sits on the couch, opposite to Samantha. She extends her the glass, and, hesitating for a moment, Samantha takes it and drinks. Kevin takes the laptop and puts it on his outstretched legs, shifting himself away from the couch, giving his back to it.

ALICE

...You two discussed it further?

SAMANTHA

What?

ALICE

What you and me- when we talk,
usually end up talking about...
'cause i can be like a broken
record...

SAMANTHA

Ah.

Beat. She looks at Kevin's blondish hair; timid blue strands glistening all around him in a neon halo. She glides her right hand over the couch, the tips of her fingers only; a forward movement, then the palm, sliding.

SAMANTHA

(concentrating)

I always try to talk to him as if
i understand him. But sometimes i
don't.

ALICE

And you don't think that's normal?

SAMANTHA

(whispering)

I understand most about him. But,
he can say these things, and mean
them- or apparently, he seems to
mean them, and i... i don't know

(MORE)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

what to make of it. Because it feels like... sometimes, it feels like he's playing this game with me. To try to... get something out, - like a reaction, like a bad reaction maybe.

Beat.

ALICE

Is this something recent, Sam?

SAMANTHA

Honestly, i don't know. He's always been a caustic person, - and serious, you know like a good combination if you want to be some sort of comedian passing judgment on things, but... well lately i guess i'm noticing it more... or i'm taking him more seriously than i used to; than i should, maybe- I don't know. Maybe the humor that used to be there is gone. Maybe that's what i feel. I'm really afraid he isn't happy anymore, Alice. Too focused on things that i can't really get to.

ALICE

But you think he's concerned about something he's not telling you?

SAMANTHA

Maybe. But he was never secretive with me. I still don't feel like he is. He hints at something like a passing crisis. But what does he have to give up for it to get solved, or what does he need? I'm afraid of that...

Beat.

ALICE

Well, he needs a vacation for now Sam, and that's what he's gonna get. Every crisis is a passing crisis, one way or another. People get sucked in until it's okay for them to snap out. And it won't be at your expense, i know that, my darling. He loves you. Our Jack's always been honest, give or take, and he'll tell you whatever. He just needs time to formulate it better... Whatever it is.

SAMANTHA
(whimsically)
Hmm... He loves me.

ALICE
You don't think he does?

Kevin's head turns ever so slightly to his right. A passing distraction, perhaps; or maybe a precocious interest in the word LOVE, when it floats like that, carrying a deep meaning concealed behind ambivalent truth. Alice returns him the glance.

SAMANTHA
He does...

Beat.

SAMANTHA
(resolutely)
But i won't be less preoccupied,
even if it's not about me.

ALICE
I know you won't. But i wish you
were, Sam. When he knows, you'll
know, and you can both settle it
then.

Samantha smiles tenderly. Those were the right words.

LONG BEAT.

ALICE
(slowly, measured)
One thing i want to say, though.
One thing, Sam... that i know i'm at
fault with... I really feel like i
should be more present, you know,
and i know i'm not. I think
sometimes we should all be less
concerned about ourselves and our
immediate ones,
(stealthily throwing her
chin in Kevin's
direction)
and be more concerned about
others--

SAMANTHA
-What are you talking about, Ali--

ALICE
-No, wait... i'm talking about
empathy. I think we tend to put
other people, and other people's
feelings in the backburner- or

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

rather, I tend to do that, and i
just wish from now on to pay you
two more attention. It can't just
happen when these occasions come
to be. I have to care more...
Genuinely care more. Because i
know i can. We barely ever call
each other. Really talk to each
other...

Samantha is a bit confused by the unexpected suddeny and
demeanor of the quiet outburst, but some of the words ring
true; and as for the nature and origin of what she could duly
process in that small amount of time, she manages to give in
to the thought that what was spoken was something that did
deserve to be said. Without taking her eyes of Alice, she
gently leans her head to the side, and rests it on the sofa's
smooth arched back.

We hear Levy's footsteps approaching, and the single seat
sofa perpendicular to the one the two women are sitting at
exhaling with the downward motion of his body-weight filling
up it's empty space.

SAMANTHA

You know very well that for that
to happen, both sides have to play
it just the same.

ALICE

No Sam... we don't play it the same.
I know my brother can, but you
don't... Sammy, let's not dwel
(gives the word a sort of
British accent)
on the particulars. Just accept
what i said, accept the apology.

Beat.

SAMANTHA

(smiling)
You're a silly girl...

We find Levy staring defiantly at the two, on the edge of his
seat.

LEVY

(to Kevin, pretend-
whispering)
Hey... are you listening?

KEVIN

To what?

Samantha and Alice shift their attention to both of them.

LEVY
To what they're saying...

KEVIN
No.

LEVY
You shouldn't. You shouldn't
listen to particulars. Especially
not to those... because they're
particular to the ones who are
engaging in the... seriousness of it
all.

Kevin lifts his head to face his father.

KEVIN
And you shouldn't be so annoying
sometimes!

ALICE AND SAMANTHA
Yeah!

Levy laughs.

LEVY
Well look, he's an adult now.

ALICE
Just go light up again.

Kevin twists his body towards Alice in a decided manner, and
slaps her nearest shin with the back of his hand.

KEVIN
Mom, don't say that.

A few seconds of silence. Levy shows this huge grin and lays
himself horizontally on the short couch, letting his shoes
dangle a few inches above the satin carpet. His head bends
backwards; his neck points to the ceiling; his Adam's apple
shinning like a spear-head in the faint white glow coming
from Kevin's computer screen.

SAMANTHA
...You're all silly.

LEVY
Well, if it weren't for that,
then... Jesus-fucking-Christ.

Levy shuts his eyes. With the same previous smile Samantha
strokes Kevin's hair; for a few moments... but we can see her
expression changing as she falls back into waiting, for some
kind of something, distracted by half-formed thoughts and
apprehensions. She begins once more to have an unpleasant

feeling about the coming week, and she senses her whole body getting restless. They wait on.

We see the dining room table, set and sparkling motionless and white, symmetrical. We see the wide fish tank above the fireplace. The small fish swimming aimlessly amidst the floating algae and typical fishbowl props distributed across the tank. We see the stairs to the first-floor on the left-hand corner of the living room, twisted and blackened... all of these enshrouded by the lingering darkness that pervades the crimson hour.

LEVY
(smooth and calm, in a
low tone)
It's getting late people, where is
he?

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - EVENING(08:30PM) - CONTINUED

The long, rectangular kitchen is shown briefly. A large casserole is waiting on the stove, and further along the counter, a turtle splashes about in the filtered waters of her small habitat. Faint yellow light mixes with the pale green tiles on the wall, creating a sort of cozy, melancholic atmosphere.

ALICE
(in that same calm, low
tone of voice)
Almost here...

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING(08:30PM) - CONTINUED

We now approach that same living-room window where Levy was smoking at. The opposing opal curtains flow gently to the small breeze, not actually touching each other, leaving a small, 11 inch opening in the middle, by which we can see two beams of light shooting out of Jackson's decelerating car, who's at the moment pulling himself up the driveway, to the right of our P.O.V.

SAMANTHA
I'll get dinner.

Samantha gets up and walks towards the kitchen. Alice follows after a few seconds.

Kevin grabs his laptop, gets up and takes a seat, this time on top of the sofa, leaning himself against its comfortable arching back. The laptop is almost at his kneecaps. Kevin stares at his father.

We hear Jackson's set of keys dangling faintly just before one of them is inserted into the lock. Kevin looks towards

the door. Pale soft cheek and blondish sinewy hair profiled against the blue light. A pleasant-looking kid.

Jackson twists his body to see to the door-shutting, and then faces Kevin and Levy with his characteristic, placid body language. Walks a couple of steps, still with the briefcase in his hand.

JACKSON
(addressing Levy and
pointing with his head
to Kevin)
Who's that guy?

KEVIN
(with a good, confident
outburst)
Who're you!?

We linger on Jackson's amusement for a moment. He blinks.

INT. DINNING ROOM - EVENING(9:00PM)

They eat with pleasure, with a renewed sense of strengthened familiarity after leaving the initial expectations for the gathering in the past. Done and dealt with. They haven't been together like this in over a year and a half.

JACKSON
(to Levy)
...any sort of recent renovations we
should know about?

LEVY
Unfortunately no, not really. You
know, but then again, we wouldn't
talk about 'em.--

ALICE
-I would.

LEVY
--if there were any. It'd be a
surprise. No, you wouldn't. You'd
want to see big brother's
reaction.

JACKSON
(to Alice)
Would you?

ALICE
You have long resided in my
highest-estimation big brother,
but no, it wouldn't be top
priority. I'd blurt it all out as
(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)
soon as i had the chance,- Sam
would know already, and as of
right now i'd be telling you about
the star-shaped porch we built
near to that little... uh- grove,
next to the main entrance.

Beat.

LEVY
(loudly)
You fucking didn't!

Samantha bursts out laughing.

KEVIN
(to Jackson)
She's lying.

ALICE
Hey!

LEVY
You really can't hold nothin' in,
Jesus Christ! I've been counting
on his soon-to-be-amazed reaction
to that... future burning effigy we
got goin' there, and you wrecked
it.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
They're both lying.

Samantha continues laughing. Jackson decides to play along.

JACKSON
A star shaped-porch... Where'd did
you get an idea like that?

LEVY
Tv.

ALICE
(half-correcting Levy)
Soap-operas.

SAMANTHA
I thought you didn't like tv.

ALICE
Oh, now i do. Ever since we
stopped paying for the internet we
kinda got into it.
(derisively)
T'was starting to get too booooring
around the house.

Levy bends his neck sideways in an effort to catch Alice's eyes.

LEVY
(putting on a front)
Oh what, so you're saying that's
my fault now?

ALICE
Who the hell said that? I didn't...
(beat)
Kevin, was it you?

Beat as they all face the kid.

Kevin looks mildly embarrassed, pretending his way into the joke being played.

KEVIN
(slowly)
Yeah... it was me. You're boring,
dad.

Kevin finishes it off with a smile. Levy reclines dejected in his chair.

LEVY
Jesus, so even my kid makes a
punchline out of me...

ALICE
Kevin, don't say that to your
faaather...

Alice rolls out the word "FATHER" with deliberate affectation, while she extends her arm across the table to Levy, lays her head down on it's softer side, and taps her fingers in successive rapid motion.

Levy lashes out a slight guffaw at her weird exhilarated state. Jackson and Samantha laugh in a controlled but genuine manner at the trio's playfulness.

SAMANTHA
Strange, lovely people we got in
our house.

ALICE
Well... i'm a sister to your
husband.
(beat)
Guess that should explain both
ends of that remark.

KEVIN
...What?

JACKSON
(smiling)
Smart, too...

LEVY
Little miss here has been like
this the whole week. I don't know
how much more i can take.

They all knew what Levy meant by that. Alice had been very excited about spending time with the brother and sister-in-law she seldom sees, and this did reflect on her recent mood. Jackson felt something like a bitter sadness at the thought of her expectations for the coming week. He hasn't been feeling right for the last few months, and couldn't be sure how much of this had Samantha actually relayed to her.

ALICE
You can stay here, take care of
the fish.
(to Samantha)
Who- who's gonna take care of
them, by the way?

SAMANTHA
Hmm... a friend couple, two houses
over.
(pointing in the
direction of the house)
Thatta' way.

ALICE
Have we met them?

JACKSON
No, i don't think so. Sam and i
knew them before they moved here...
about...
(looking at Samantha)
eight months ago. You never met
them.

ALICE
Are they good?

JACKSON
(smiling)
They're good.

SAMANTHA
Good people.

A few seconds of silence. They had pretty much done eating at this point. Silverware strewn around, small sips on the tinted wine glasses. Kevin mostly observed, caught in the general good mood. Not quite a smile on his face, but you

could say his countenance was relaxed, yet alert, as if waiting for some kind of cue.

LEVY

Remind me... you guys have been here for... five years or so?

SAMANTHA

Five, yeah... give or take. Five and a half.

LEVY

Made friends here? Apart from that couple you just mentioned..? I mean, you were friends before...

JACKSON

Yeah.

(beat)

No, i guess we know people around here, but i won't actually call them friends,- real friends, anyway. Neighbors. Good neighbors... that's it. Speaking for myself.

Jackson looks at Samantha.

SAMANTHA

It's hard to get to know somebody well... Everybody's so busy all the time. Mostly middle-aged couples like us, with a few children...

Beat. Alice looks at Samantha intently after the word "CHILDREN". She gives a start but quickly checks herself, opting instead to shift the conversation away from a topic she knows she has a hard time remaining objective about.

ALICE

Wasn't there like these people that used to call the cops all the time..? Or the cops used to be at their house constantly or something?

JACKSON

There were- this older couple, yeah.

ALICE

What was it?

SAMANTHA

It seemed like... just- things weren't going well for them.

ALICE

But was it like domestic problems?
They didn't get along?

JACKSON

We don't really know.

SAMANTHA

I think there was some of that,
sure... But people said the husband
was sick, said his mind was
starting to go... that he had
dementia... and the wife had a hard
time dealing with it.

LEVY

How old were they?

SAMANTHA

Seventy-something, thereabouts.
Later on, i know the daughter
got'em a full-time nurse, until he
died. After that she took the old
lady with her, sold the house, and
some new people moved in...

ALICE

No more cops...

SAMANTHA

Nope.

ALICE

But why were they calling them? Or
was somebody else calling, because
of them? Were they loud?

SAMANTHA

Yeah, they could be.

LEVY

You'd guys hear'em?

JACKSON

Sometimes we could hear the man
shouting. We couldn't make up what
he was shouting about, though.
They lived on the first house,
this side, from the main street,
so about 60 or 70 meters from us.
When it was quiet, at night, we
could hear. We don't know for sure
who was calling the cops, but it
probably was them.

ALICE
It was them?

JACKSON
Yeah.

Kevin takes the instance of silence to let his young whispering voice float towards his mom's ear. It brakes them off from their respective thought pathways.

KEVIN
(leaning quietly towards
Alice)
Mom, can i go?

ALICE
Go where?

KEVIN
To the bathroom, and then the
computer...

Alice checks her watch.

ALICE
A little over an hour and then get
ready for bed, ok?

SAMANTHA
Kev, we got ice cream in the
freezer...

KEVIN
(already getting up)
No, that's ok.

LEVY
Early tomorrow kid, remember...

KEVIN
I'll remember when i wake up.

Levy shifts in his seat and sighs, mildly exasperated.

Jackson waits a bit and then continues.

JACKSON
(thoughtful)
This area used to have somewhat of
a problem with stray dogs roaming
around. An uncommon amount of
them, going through the trash-
going through whatever they could
find... It was such a strange thing,
you know?

ALICE
Why do you say that?

JACKSON
Say what?

ALICE
That it was strange...

EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE - DAWN (FLASHBACK) - CONTINUED

V.O. with the sounds of the dinning room, as Jackson thinks about how he should answer Alice. For a brief moment we look at the tarmacked road just outside Jackson and Samantha's house. On the other side of it, we can see a tiny parcel of a green rectangular lawn. A prevailing blue-grayish hue overhangs the shot. It's the early dawn. The audience can't tell if it's a flashback or if Jackson is imagining it.

JACKSON (V.O.)
I don't know... just seemed strange
to me.

We see the muzzled dog we saw earlier walk into frame, spin after himself a couple of times and lay down on the road, next to the sidewalk. Head over tail; searching, uncertain eyes.

INT. DINNING ROOM - EVENING(9:00PM) - CONTINUED

ALICE
Do you think *that* and the old
couple and the cops were related?

Jackson thinks for a bit.

JACKSON
(distant)
I think so...

Beat. Samantha gives Jackson a worried look. There's something in Jackson's off-key conviction that gives them all pause, putting them at a loss for words.

SAMANTHA
This was happening at the same
time?

JACKSON
Yeah... You remember.

SAMANTHA
No, i don't. I never thought about
it that much, never connected the
two.

JACKSON
Well, it doesn't matter.

Beat.

ALICE
(to Jackson)
When we go tomorrow, you point out
the house for me.

LEVY
Why?

ALICE
I don't know. I wanna see it.

JACKSON
Okay.

LEVY
(hint of sarcasm)
Okay...

ALICE
(to Levy)
Yeah!

LEVY
(not paying her
attention)
Uhh... 7am we leave, right?

SAMANTHA
(laughs)
Yeah, something like that...

ALICE
What point is there in going so
early? I don't get it.

LEVY
Feels better that way. This has
been talked about, it's set...
that's it, alright?

ALICE
You'll have to drag Kevin out of
bed and into the car.

LEVY
I don't care. Our stuff's in there
already, there's no need to pack
anything, he can go in asleep for
all I care. Just please don't make
me drag you out of bed.

Alice scoffs at him.

SAMANTHA
Our bags are ready. We just have
to load them in the car.

LEVY
We should do that now.

Beat.

SAMANTHA
Okay...

LEVY
(to Jackson)
Hey, let's smoke first, c'mon.
Jackson doesn't smoke. Not that it matters.

JACKSON
Yeah, i'll go with you.
The two of them get up and go outside through the sliding
glass door. It shuts back with a thud.

ALICE
(to Samantha)
I could go for some ice cream...
I'll get it.
She gets up in a hurry.

SAMANTHA
It's in the middle drawer.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - EVENING(21:00PM) - CONTINUED

Alice sprints past the door into the softly lit kitchen. She
opens the freezer and takes out the box of ice cream, putting
it on the counter next to the electric stove. She looks at
the turtle while she opens one of the wood cabinets to get
the glass bowls. She takes three out.

ALICE
(to the turtle, softly)
You'll be all alone...

She goes through the silverware drawers to get something to
scoop the ice cream out with. She looks for a bit.

ALICE
(shouting)
Sam, d'you have an ice cream scoop
or something?

KEVIN
(from the living room,
shouting)
What?

We hear a loud crash followed by a high-pitched short scream coming from somewhere outside the kitchen, not too distant.

ALICE
(half-worried, half-
excited)
Sam!?

She rushes out.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (HALLWAY) - EVENING(9:00PM) - CONTINUED

There's Samantha holding a plate in her hand, at the end of the hallway, just outside the dinning room. She's looking down at the broken mess on the floor: five regular sized plates, four soup plates and three glasses, broken and shattered. All over the place. Some pieces manage to capture the light coming from the kitchen and from the dinning room. They shine with an equal measure of washed up despondency. The light hits Samantha sideways. For a moment she looks overwhelmed with fatigue...

SAMANTHA
(slightly distraught)
I bumped against the door frame...

Kevin sticks his head out of the living room. Alice goes back into the kitchen to grab a broom. Samantha turns the hallway light on, then makes her way through the pieces with her foot and sets the remaining plate on top of a console table. Jackson and Levy show up at the doorway.

JACKSON
Whoa.

LEVY
(quietly)
Yeah, no more bottled water for
you, Sam...

Samantha is picking up the larger pieces. Jackson and Levy start gathering whatever bits are close to them with their feet. Alice shows up holding a broom and a dusting pan. She sets it on the floor, vertically up against the wall. She returns to the kitchen and starts sweeping away, sending the pieces gliding in Samantha's direction. Kevin continues looking from the living room door frame, with large black headphones around his neck.

ALICE
(to Kevin)
Come help.

He tucks the overhanging headphone cord further into the pocket of his shorts and crouches down next to Samantha, gathering pieces with the palm of his hand.

Silence and intimacy and a thin coating of child-like embarrassment rule the scene. A couple of dogs, barking lazily outside.

INT/EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE (DINING ROOM/BACKYARD) - NIGHT(10:30PM)

We see Jackson looking outside at the backyard, his face faintly lit by the big fluorescent light bulb they have attached to a socket a few meters away from the glass doors.

He slides the door and steps outside, alone. He pulls a straw chair away from the table at the center of the porch and sits. The porch is fully clad in red tiles that look brownish in the nighttime, even with the strong light shining above them.

There's a covered medium-sized pool to the right, and to the left, a thin dirt path that cuts through the grass and turns at an angle into a small gated area where the Hayes's have a few square meters of plotting grounds with some vegetables growing. A tiny shed to the northwest, past the plotting grounds. The squared backyard is fully enclosed with an iron fence. On both sides of the fence, we can also see metal grates standing upright on top of them, serving their function for both the Hayes's and for their neighbors.

Some dogs continue their barking somewhere not too distant. We hear a very faint conversation coming from one of the neighboring houses. Their voices ebb and flow in tone and intent, in the fresh and pleasant nocturnal air. Jackson spins around slowly in his seat and looks towards the house, where undrawn curtains diffuse the weak yellow light coming from the ceiling of the dining room. No sound making it's way outside. After a brief moment, a moving shadow forms in the curtain, approaching. It's Alice. She slides the door and steps outside.

ALICE
Hey...

Jackson's foot slides the straw chair perpendicular to him away from the table, in order to make space for Alice to sit. She picks up the chair and turns it over towards the same direction that Jackson is facing. She sits down, and languorously stretches her arms and legs at the same time, emitting a lazy moan-like exhalation. He looks at her. We are watching them both from their backs.

ALICE
This place looks changed...

JACKSON
Does it?

ALICE
Yeah, looks different.

Beat.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(pointing to the plotting
grounds)
Last time we were here... that
wasn't like it is now, was it?

JACKSON
(making an effort to
think)
No... we uncovered that patch of
dirt about a year ago. It used to
be just grass, same as the rest.

ALICE
It that you or is it Sam?

JACKSON
Well, i... i look at it quite a bit...

Alice laughs. He does too for a moment.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Nah, it's mostly Sam goin' at it.

ALICE
And you, what are you, busy or
lazy?

JACKSON
Both, i guess.
(beat)
Which means i'm fucked,
(she laughs again)
for the time being.

Beat.

ALICE
Nonsense, Jack. Right now you're
on vacation, same as we are.
(beat)
So you should lighten up...

JACKSON
You don't think i am?

Alice shrugs.

ALICE
Oh, i don't know... You look tired.
And Sam does too.

Beat. He scoffs.

JACKSON
(slightly bitter)
Right... Tired as in implicating
something else, no? Just leave it,
Alice...

ALICE
(looking at him)
I'm not implicating anything Jack,
relax...

LONG BEAT.

JACKSON
You think Samantha looks tired?

ALICE
A little bit.

JACKSON
And why do you think that is?

ALICE
I think... worrying is making her
look tired.

JACKSON
(defiantly)
And what is she worrying about?

He looks at her. She looks right back.

She suddenly gets the feeling she may have gone too far, too soon, and tries to work around it.

ALICE
Well, i think she's worried about
her life... and your life, Jack.
(beat)
It's something worth worrying
about...

Beat.

JACKSON
Everything happening around us
Alice, even before we were born,-
it made us into the people we are
today. Right to this moment.

Alice smiles. Her smile widens.

ALICE

And what's your point with that?

JACKSON

My point is there's no point in worrying. It's... it's nothing but a byproduct of fear- and it's futile. It's all been taken care of.

Beat.

ALICE

Well, but in that case worrying got you here along with everything else. Everytime you were concerned about something in your life, or... you know, those times were just as important as anything else for the person that you are right now... I think we had this conversation already, Jack- or a version of it, at least.

Jackson thinks. He knows she's right. He also has the vague impression he has thought those very words in the past. He smiles and stands up slowly, but stays by the chair, looking ahead.

JACKSON

You're right.

ALICE

Are you mad about something?

He thinks.

JACKSON

It's not that.

ALICE

What is it then?

JACKSON

...I can feel strange sometimes.

He immediately regrets saying it.

ALICE

In what way?

JACKSON

...I think life is pushing me somewhere i don't wanna go.

ALICE
Then you shouldn't go...

JACKSON
It's not that simple.

Beat.

ALICE
(musing)
...I know that. Sure, i know that
too...

He sits back down again.

ALICE
Just tell me you're not going
crazy, Jack.

He thinks. He laughs.

JACKSON
(conviction in his voice)
I'm not.

She turns around so she can look him in the eye.

ALICE
And tell me... you're gonna try to
push back no matter what.

JACKSON
(hesitating a bit)
I'm gonna try.

She continues to look at him. Samantha has definitely talked
to her about him.

ALICE
Don't talk to me. Talk to Sam... let
your mind go, let it unwind.

He looks down with vacant eyes. Then straight at her. He
blinks, averts his eyes. A stealthy smile draws across his
lips.

ALICE
You're not feeling up for the
trip?

JACKSON
I am. I wanna go.

ALICE
Good. I missed you very much big
brother.

He smiles and stands. He goes by the darkened poolside and leans against it, turning around to face his sister.

JACKSON
I missed you too.

With his right hand he plays with the pool cover, pushing it up and down gently, letting the overflowing water run through his outstretched fingers.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (GUEST ROOM) - NIGHT(11:00PM)

Levy is in bed already. He's posted on his right elbow, waiting for Alice to decide to get in there herself. She has her elbows on her knees and she's looking down at Kevin, who's laying down on a smaller mattress next to them. He's covered with a white sheet up to his shoulders.

KEVIN
Bye.

ALICE
(smiling)
Bye.

She picks up her corner end of the sheet and lifts it. Her legs slide in. Levy turns the light off.

INT/EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE (BACKYARD/SHED) - NIGHT(11:30PM)

The wooden door to the shed is opened. You can barely see anything. Jackson flips the plastic light switch to his left, and the green, hospital-like fluorescent illumination comes on.

To his right, tools are hanging on the wall, they are lying around on a small table, there's a vice, a large tin trash can, etc... On the other side, a big compartmentalized shelf with nails, screws and the like... On the northwest corner we can see his fishing equipment leaning still against the wooden planks.

He picks out two fishing rods and searches in the shelves for the rest of the gear. He puts it all on the table and stares at it.

The light bulb hums.

EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE (BACKYARD) - NIGHT(11:40PM)

From the porch we can see the light in the shed turn off. Samantha is sitting by the table.

We can discern Jackson's lean silhouette moving through the penumbra, carrying the fishing equipment. Getting clearer and clearer as he steps on the porch.

Samantha gets up, giving him a hand with the stuff. They don't carry it inside yet, instead they let go of it on the porch floor, against one of the stone pillars.

JACKSON

Let's go to bed, Sam.

SAMANTHA

Let's go.

They move towards the camera. Jackson puts one arm around Samantha's neck and kisses it. She squirms a little, clutching her fingers hard on his ribs. His posture bends and they laugh quietly, in intimacy.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT (DREAM SCENE)

A black TV screen is in front of us. In the living room where it stands, a few shades of moonlight enter through the curtains, coloring the walls in a pale, translucent tone. The silent night reaching in as if somehow alive.

The curtains flutter and the walls capture their displacement of tenuous bare color - like ripples in still water...

ALICE (V.O.)

(faint static)

Jack, i had this dream not very
long ago... and i think you were in
it.

The TV screen keeps staring at us. It engulfs us.

ALICE (V.O.)

(faint static)

I didn't realize it at the time,
but i can remember you- I can
remember your presence. I can even
remember seeing you...

It turns on.

INT. FAMILY HOUSE (BEDROOM) - UNSPECIFIED TIME (DREAM SCENE)

We observe Alice waking up silently in a small bed.

The feeling is nightmarish and oppressive.

She immediately posts herself on her right elbow, looking to the bedhead behind her: a low rectangular bedhead; empty space and wooden polls alternating all along its length. The room is almost totally dark, except for this puddle-shaped

spot we can suddenly see, lighted up with a glittering intensity on the wall behind the wooden polls. The light contrasts obscenely with the surrounding darkness. On the middle of the puddle is the shadow of a closed fist, continuously twisting and turning in a strange way. From her P.O.V. we see that same puddle, same fist, same light, projected on the ceiling directly on top, just a meter away.

Panicking, she looks on towards the rooms exit, and sees a large, tower-shaped figure of nearly indistinguishable clutter: toys, clothes, pieces of furniture, etc... all crumpled up together. It stands erect in the middle of the adjacent room, almost defiantly; it looks dark and malignant. Crimson red reflections dart throughout it's body. We now realize that the room Alice encounters herself in is actually an attic with two divisions. A wall without a door separates both rooms.

We follow as she jumps out of the bed, rushing towards the stairs behind the strange sculpture. We catch Jackson just for a second, seated in the darkness, on a sofa to the right. Alice does not seem to notice him, and continues to go down. All is a blur...

ALICE (V.O.)
(faint static)
There you were...

INT. FAMILY HOUSE (GROUND FLOOR/PARENTS BEDROOM) - UNSPECIFIED TIME (DREAM SCENE) - CONTINUED

On the ground floor, she runs to a sort of plastic sliding door, forcing it open, screaming in a distorted, garbled tone, almost as if she is speaking under water.

ALICE
(panicking)
Somebody changed things, someone
in the room. Somebody changed
things- MOM, mom, MOM.
Somebody changed things.

Alice's mom leaps unnaturally from the bed, almost sliding instead of walking, passing by with an awful grin on her face; actually bumping Alice on the way out. Repeating the same things as she disappears into the living room.

ALICE'S MOM
(in a pleading,
artificial tone)
No, there's no one there. There's
no one. You're wrong. There's no
one there.

Absolutely disjointed by her mounting terror, Alice whimpers in desperation, and tries to find her father's eyes from

where she stands, her feet bolted to the spot. He is half covered by the gray sheets and looks at her with drugged out, sick eyes; mute and absent. He turns in bed without taking his eyes of her.

Darkness abounds, and light coming from the shaded window to the left is pale blue, very weak at best; the genesis of an opal dawn arising. Alice notices a chair to the right of her parents bed. There's a large metal pot with water in it, with something which we can not discern floating in at the surface.

Mom returns into the room, again sliding past Alice, to drop something in the pot. Alice retreats and runs to the kitchen.

INT. FAMILY HOUSE (KITCHEN) - UNSPECIFIED TIME (DREAM SCENE) - CONTINUED

To her dismay, she finds all the electric equipment, utensils, table and chairs, all of these scattered around, displayed throughout the room with no discernible sense or order, in asymmetrical positions in relation to the walls, to each other. She gasps and cries in horror.

INT. FAMILY HOUSE (BEDROOM) - UNSPECIFIED TIME (DREAM SCENE) - CONTINUED

She mounts up the stairs again, and finds that the sculpture is no longer where it was; she doesn't look for it, nor does she care. Instead, she immediately gauges with her trembling vision a pair of legs going out from her bed in the adjacent room. Someone is sitting on it. We watch the figure through the doorless hole in the wall, only able to see the legs. The rest of whoever is sitting there blocked out of sight by the right-hand wall.

Alice stops abruptly. The couch to her left, where Jackson was previously seated in, rushes at her in full force, forcing her to wake up. She does so, but still in that same bed, still in that same room...

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (GUEST ROOM) - DAWN(06:00AM)

Alice jerks awake. Her whole body is tingling with fear, and for several moments she lays next to Levy feeling extremely confused. He is still fast asleep. Faint light comes into the room.

KEVIN
(whispering)
Mom?

The sound of Kevin's voice snaps Alice out of her bewilderment, and she looks over down at him.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
(whispering)
What's wrong?

ALICE
(exhaling)
I had such an awful dream, my god.
She puts her head back on the pillow.

KEVIN
I could hear you.

ALICE
What was i doing?

KEVIN
You were making noises.
(beat)
What was the dream about?

He waits for an answer that doesn't come, and sits upright in his bed.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Mom, what was the dream about?
Alice looks at him, still thinking.

EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE - DAWN(06:30AM)

The house looks peaceful from the outside. We see the lawn, and the two cars parked on the driveway. One is the Hayes's car, the other the Smith's. A jeep.

The rising sun already warms part of the house. We see one of the windows having its blinds drawn up.

INT. HAYES'S HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - DAWN(06:30AM)

Jackson is sitting on the bed, covered in white linen up to his bent knees. Samantha is stretched out underneath the sheets, next to him, looking at the ceiling; her face displaying the workings of a full nocturnal replenishment.

Jackson looks into her eyes, head over crossed arms over bent knees. She starts humming a little nursery rhyme, and meets his gaze; smiles.

EXT. HAYES'S HOUSE - MORNING(07:45AM)

Levy is the first one out the door, carrying a large duffel bag. All the others come following, holding bags, plastic

bags; Jackson has his fishing gear, etc... Being the last one out, Samantha locks the front door.

The sun has advanced its reach on the house substantially.

The yellow jeep is somewhat packed already but they manage to fit all of it in. Levy turns to face them all.

LEVY
(rhythmically clapping
his hands)
Nothing left, no more space, we're
late already, let's go.

Kevin yawns.

LEVY (CONT'D)
Jack, you gotta move the car.

JACKSON
The keys are inside.

Levy lets out an exasperated laugh as Samantha hands Jackson the keys to the house. He runs to the door.

ALICE
(imitating, mocking Levy)
C'mon, feels better this way...

INT/EXT. SMITH'S CAR (CUL-DE-SAC/CITY OUTSKIRTS) -
MORNING(08:00AM)

Levy drives at a moderately low speed as they approach the first empty intersection after leaving the driveway.

JACKSON
(pointing)
That's the house, over there.

They all look to the right with some degree of interest, especially Alice. The house Jackson pointed to looks just like any other in the cul-de-sac: bright and composed; well-cared for.

We can make out part of the green metal grates for a dog kennel at the end of the house's backyard. Seemingly empty; looking back. Jackson's face is thoughtful, worried.

In that moment, the front door opens, and a MIDDLE-AGED MAN walks out suitcase in hand, followed by a YOUNG BOY and a YOUNG GIRL, (ages 6-8). They're left behind as the jeep makes a left at the intersection.

ALICE
(to the Hayes's)
Do you know them?

Alice turns her body sideways, looking over her left shoulder to Jackson and Samantha, who are seated side by side in the back seats.

SAMANTHA

Uhhh... i don't think we've ever exchanged words for more than a minute, so no, we don't- i don't, at least.

JACKSON

I don't either.

Levy turns the radio on at a low volume. We hear the overly excited voices of a couple of male and female voice actors doing an infomercial for an insurance company. He changes channels as the conversation inside the car progresses.

ALICE

(thoughtful)

...Can you still recognize that old couple in the house?

JACKSON

What do you mean?

ALICE

I mean their presence... d'you see it still manifesting anywhere? Or does the place look too different now?

SAMANTHA

Uhff... i- i barely remember how it looked back then... I think it looks cleaner than it used to.

(Beat)

They installed a new fence, and painted the house and... changed the windows mayb--

Jackson feels strangely triggered by Alice's question.

JACKSON

-But why would you think their presence would manifest in any way? Why would you ask that?

ALICE

Well, because every object carries some type of meaning from the past... and... it's just that some of these do a better job of conveying what they went through. Particularly a house, you know? There's always a lot of history attached that you can point your

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

finger to. But you're saying these new people did renovations, and changed things... so i don't know, maybe it's all gone... Did they live here all their lives? Do you know that?

JACKSON

We don't.

KEVIN

(to Levy)

Dad, that one!

Samantha shakes her head.

SAMANTHA

...but this was their home for at least a decade, from what we heard.

Levy changes the station again, but then backtracks to the one Kevin was referring to.

LEVY

(to Kevin)

This?

ALICE

That's sad...

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Yeah.

JACKSON

What is?

Levy adjusts the volume slightly. A pop song with a surrealistic tinge is playing, something of a hit with kids Kevin's age.

ALICE

It's sad that they've been so thoroughly forgotten by the material side of things, that... all they amount to now are, like the untrustworthy recollections in other people's minds... makes my skin crawl. I think that's always sad when that starts to happen- like the most obvious and immediate side of them is finally gone for good, for ever.

Levy looks askance towards Alice, - who's siding him in the passenger seat -, with a slight touch of derision in his eyes.

Alice reflects for a second.

ALICE (CONT'D)
...you know, but i'm jumping way
ahead - it's probably too soon for
them. Also... right- right, just
remembered- the lady's not dead
yet, is she? Do you know?

SAMANTHA
No...

JACKSON
(frustrated tone)
What's this concern with these
people?

Alice rotates her torso and locks her gaze in the road in
front of them.

ALICE
It's not concern...

JACKSON
(moderately raising his
voice)
Then what are you saying then
Alice?

Samantha looks at Jackson in reproach and squeezes his left
forearm gently.

Alice pays no mind to Jackson's clutching question, and after
a moment, abruptly addresses Levy.

ALICE
(to Levy)
I don't wanna be cremated when i
die.

LEVY
Wha--

ALICE
-or rather, if am, i don't want my
ashes spread. I want them to be
kept.

LEVY
What the hell's gotten into you?

Alice smiles and looks through the passengers window,
inspecting the row of houses to the right.

KEVIN
Mom's saying these things because
she had a bad nightmare.

LEVY
(facing Alice with a
smile)
Oh yeah..? Is that all this is?

SAMANTHA
What did you dream about?

Beat.

ALICE
I dreamed about us, Jack- i think...

JACKSON
Us?

She faces Jackson.

ALICE
Me and you. And about mom and dad.

They were beginning to approach the outer reaches of the urbanized area next to the Hayes's home, and the first few buildings were strolling by at a moderate speed. A small city on the outskirts of a larger metropolis...

They stay silent for a moment, waiting for Alice to proceed. She turns back.

LEVY
...And what else? What happened?

ALICE
I got scared.

LEVY
What did you get scared about?

Beat.

ALICE
You nevermind that. Dreams have
the right to scare you sometimes...
It's not a big deal.

Levy shrugs his way into an awkward silence that lasts for a handful of seconds.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(to Kevin)
Both your grandparents were good
people. But they had difficult
lives- they weren't lucky in most
other ways other people are.

Samantha, and then Jackson, both look at Kevin, who becomes flustered by the unexpected attention thrown his way.

KEVIN
(embarrassed)
I know.

ALICE
We talked about this before,
haven't we?

KEVIN
Yeah...

JACKSON
(to Alice, sternly)
Do you consider that luck was the
thing they were missing the most
in their lives?

ALICE
I think it was up there...
Along with other things tha--

JACKSON
(in a commanding tone)
-when you use the word "luck" in
that sense, you're implying that
they could've been in any way
different from what they were, but
things don't work like that. Luck
doesn't exist - nor does the lack
of it, for that matter.

ALICE
You misunderstood me the--

JACKSON
(raising his voice)
No i didn't, Alice!

SAMANTHA
Jack! Christ...

ALICE
(upset)
Then i made myself be
misunderstood, then.

LEVY
Dude, you need a little break or
something?

JACKSON
(Glaring at Levy)
A break!?

SAMANTHA
Yeah, you're being rude...

Beat.

LEVY

Look guys, we have young,
impressionable minds in the
vehicle, and mine is just about
questioning its frame of reality
and purpose at eight am in the
first full day of our long-awaited
get together... let's dial it back
down a bit, all right?

They stay silent for a moment, as the radio continues to
transpire its own fabric of unimpressed sound throughout the
car. It mixes with the low frequency hum of the engine.

Jackson catches himself in the brief meantime, and shows
Samantha a repentant look.

JACKSON

...Yeah, i'm sorry, sorry... You had a
bad dream, and i didn't sleep
well- well enough- i'm anxious.
I'm a bit anxious from fatigue- i
get impulsive with the things i
say. I'm sorry...

He lets out a forced smile.

SAMANTHA

Alice...

Alice turns back again, with a smile on her lips. She places
her right hand next to the headrest of her seat, and then her
chin on top of it, so as to make her lips touch the soft
skin. Her eyes look pleading and emotional.

Levy lowers the volume coming from the speakers.

LEVY

We'll get there in something like
three hours from now, and i'll
make lunch immediately- or if you
guys prefer, we stop and eat on
the way... and then we'll unpack
ourselves, and we'll enjoy the
sun, and whoever's up for it can
fish for as long as they want to-
an i fuckin know i will... - and
we'll relax, and rest, and enjoy
each others company the whole
time. Okay? Those are my two
cents. Those are my wishes.

Alice is looking intently at Kevin.

KEVIN

What, mom?

ALICE
You'll be our little beacon of
permanence...

EXT. LAKE HOUSE (FRONT) - AFTERNOON

A dirt path slopes upwards through the woods to meet a large, elegant house, whose front of dark polished wood is spotted bright by patches of sunlight. They manage to cut through the surrounding, abundant leafage. The remaining shadow cut-outs dance to the gentle breeze.

The front door is opened. We cannot see inside, past the mosquito net, past the darkness.

KEVIN (V.O.)
What's that?

Beat.

ALICE (V.O.)
It means that your dad and i will
always be here. We'll be here
through you, and through your
children- and their children, and
so on. You'll stretch our
existence, just as i and your
uncle continue to do with your
grandparents. And like you do, as
well.

Beat. Levy snickers.

LEVY (V.O.)
Okay, i'm gonna stop the car now.
I'm gonna grab a pack of
cigarettes. Anybody want anything?

EXT. LAKE (FISHING SPOT) - AFTERNOON(02:30PM)

We see a section of the lake where both margins begin to adjoin, producing a thinner, bottle-necked extension of water; dark green, puffy vegetation on both sides. Levy and Jackson stomp through the tall grass to get to a small clearing by the edge of the lake.

They settle, dropping their stuff on the ground.

JACKSON
I admire your loyalty to this
spot.

LEVY
We'll bring the boat tomorrow.

Folding chairs are unfolded. Levy gets two beers out of the thermal bag, gives one to Jackson.

LEVY
(handing him the beer)
You feel like going off the rails
on the first night?

JACKSON
I feel like going into a coma.

Levy laughs, Jackson smiles.

They stretch out the fishing rods, pick the buoys, bait, etc... with focused, careful movements. The sun is high up, and both of them wince under the heat.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON (02:30PM)

Kevin is crouching by the vast wide lake, looking on at the fizzling effervescence of light and tiny movement on the water's surface. The dusty heatwave: overcoming the body with a heavy leaded feeling, capable of inducing trance-like flutterings on the tired mind. He drops backwards to his butt, his back almost touching the ground with the momentum.

Samantha is stretched on a beach towel, right next to Alice. Both of them are wearing swimsuits. They're under the partial shade of a tall tree, several dozens of feet away from Kevin and the lake's edge. From the kneecaps down, Samantha's legs are illuminated by the pale-white glow of the burning star. She lifts her right leg to an oblique angle in relationship to the rest of her body, gazing at the sun's rays being driven away from the skin by the obliterating shadow.

Meanwhile, Alice is handling her cell-phone, searching for a number. She brings it to her ear.

ALICE (ON THE PHONE)
Hi, little dove. How are you?

She laughs, listening to the answer.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Yeah, we're here at the lake-
we're waiting for you.

Beat.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Okay.
(beat)
Kevin misses them very much. All
right, we'll be here. See you soon
honey- love you, bye.

She hangs up the phone and drops it next to her.

ALICE
She says they'll be here after
four.

Samantha checks her wrist watch.

SAMANTHA
Let's go for a swim.

ALICE
All right.

Alice gets up, followed by Samantha.

As they walk on towards Kevin, Alice gets both of her pinkie fingers to her mouth and let's out a prolonged, blisteringly loud whistle-blow.

EXT. LAKE (FISHING SPOT) - AFTERNOON (04:00PM)

The buoy drops on the water, causing it to ripple around. A couple of fish swim inside a circular fishing net that had previously been bolted to the ground a few meters away from the fisherman. There's one more person with them now, Edgar Sullivan, (60~).

Levy's buoy jerks timidly up and down, indecisively.

LEVY
...I think they wanna take it home
with them. Look at'em- they're
trying to untie the knot.

He's crouching by the pole, preparing himself to yank it backwards.

MR. SULLIVAN
It's the heat- makes'em less
hungry.

LEVY
(to Mr. Sullivan)
You think they'll go for a beer?

MR. SULLIVAN
You could try...

The buoy settles. Levy slowly stands up straight, looking disappointed.

LEVY
...get the fuckers drunk.

Jackson lets the rest of his beer fall into the water. They all stare at the place where it fell, waiting for something

to happen. After a couple seconds, a fish jumps up at the surface in a close by spot, making a plopping sound. They burst out laughing.

EXT. LAKE (FISHING SPOT) - AFTERNOON (05:00PM)

Jackson is holding the fishing rod without much conviction. His face looks drowsy.

LEVY
(to Jackson)
You wanna call it a day?

JACKSON
(slightly slurring)
You want to?

LEVY
Another half an hour and you'll be
snoring with your face on the
ground.

A drunk smile on Jackson's face. He has five cans of beer around him. Levy starts reeling in the line for the last time.

LEVY
(looking at the net where
the fish are)
We got three. Small ones. Yyyuup-
we'll get the boat tomorrow,- you
wanna come with us, Mr. Sullivan?-
Tomorrow...

MR. SULLIVAN
Ahhh- don't think so Levy, thanks
but no, i like it here. N' Cindy
likes having me around...

LEVY
Does she come fish with you as
well?

MR.SULLIVAN
Oh no, but she sits with me
sometimes, keeps me company.

Jackson starts to reel in slowly, as Levy goes by the net to throw the fish back in the lake.

LEVY
How's she doin?

MR. SULLIVAN
As good and as stubborn as she's
always been.

LEVY

...that's my type of women, you
know? I'm married to one just like
that.

Mr. Sullivan laughs in approval. Levy turns to Jackson,
inspecting his stumbling body language as he puts the fishing
rod down and gets a line cutter from the accessory box.

LEVY

(with a boozy guffaw)
You all right there buddy?

Jackson stands up straight, holding his head; ground
spinning...

JACKSON

Fuck...

MR. SULLIVAN

You boys be careful with this heat
an wit the drinkin, huh?

LEVY

We'll do... Jackson here's used to
drinkin milkshakes from a straw...

Levy laughs. Jackson looks at him, annoyed with the sound of
his voice.

JACKSON

(in a frustrated tone)
Just be quiet man.

Beat.

LEVY

(serious)
Don't worry bout this, sit down.

Levy drops the net on top of the other stuff. Jackson has his
hands on his hips, looking down at the things near him.

Levy gets a line cutter and takes care of his fishing rod,
looking at Jackson with the corner of his eye. He remains in
the same spot, with the same absent, drowsy expression in his
face.

LEVY (CONT'D)

How've you been sleepin lately?

Jackson looks at Levy in the eye, his countenance changed to
a lighter channeling of effort.

JACKSON

(with a half-smile)
Not well...

LEVY

The booze and the tired mind, you
know? Like two lovebirds in a car
wreck...

Levy stares at him; the necessary pause for a punchline...

JACKSON

What?

LEVY

They stick to each other.

Jackson's face bends in a wider smile. Then he releases a
string of spit from his lips.

LEVY

...you gotta separate the fuckers
with a crowbar and a blowtorch.

EXT. INCLINED DIRT ROAD - AFTERNOON(05:15PM)

Levy and Jackson are pulling upwards on the inclined road
that leads to the straight and narrower dirt path to the
house. The jeep bobs up and down with the movement.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE (FRONT) - AFTERNOON(05:15PM) - CONTINUED

Levy stops the jeep in the shade of a tall tree next to the
garage's entrance.

They step out, shutting the doors with a thud. It gets quiet;
we can hear their steps and a few birds chirping.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (GARAGE) - AFTERNOON(05:20PM) - CONTINUED

Levy untethers the shoelace strings that fasten the polyester
canvas to the white boat. The boat hasn't been unloaded from
the trailer since the last time they've been to the lake
house. He pulls the canvas away, unleashing a cloud of
glinting dust motes to revolve around in the lean rectangular
frame of sunlight coming from the window on the right-hand
wall.

He waves his right hand in the polluted air: an instinctive
movement, coupled with a scowl. A group of small spiders
scatter away in fright.

JACKSON

You wanna clean this first?

LEVY

Might as well, right?

JACKSON

When?

Beat.

LEVY

Wanna do it tomorrow morning?

JACKSON

Sure.

Levy covers the boat again.

LEVY

Yeahh...

Jackson starts walking towards the door.

JACKSON

I'm gonna take a shower and lie down before dinner.

LEVY

You're not coming?

JACKSON

No, i'm too tired... I'm gonna try to sleep it off for a couple of hours.

Jackson's hand grasping the copper doorknob, turning it to the right and to the left, to the right and to the left, to the right and to the left...

LEVY

I don't know if your bed has any clean sheets yet...

JACKSON

That's okay, the couch is fine.

(beat)

You mind if i cook dinner?

(murmuring to himself)

i wanna keep busy...

LEVY

No man, go right ahead. She left the meat and the fish in the freezer- you'll have to look for everything else, cause every year things get put in a different place in this house.

JACKSON
 (stepping into the
 corridor with slow heavy
 movements)

...Everything's on the counter...

Jackson goes inside without looking back, leaving the door ajar and Levy feeling strangely embarrassed.

LEVY
 (nodding his head
 awkwardly)

Ok...

INT. LAKE HOUSE (BATHROOM) - AFTERNOON(05:30PM)

We hear the jeep start, and then Levy driving away with it.

Jackson is alone now, and he feels some degree of relief right away. He looks at the shower curtain, pulls it aside and starts getting undressed.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (BATHROOM) - AFTERNOON(05:30PM)

Cold water down his face and neck; down his torso, his legs; his whole body electrified and screaming with the difference in temperature, especially in its upper half, where the sun had absent-mindedly burned the skin to a brownish red. Tiny droplets of water bouncing off him in every direction. The mind has a clearer sense now, of where it is, and what it's doing; a clearer sense of the overarching purpose and contour of reality, even if they do remain too amorphous to be translated into words.

The light coming from the opaque window to the left reverberates and mirrors itself against the white walls. He is in the middle of the bathroom now, his right hand grabbing a towel by the waist; his face apparently struggling with the strong clarity: he clenches his jaw and lets his eyelids slide down with tiny spasmodic inflections over his eyes, until they are totally covered; he presses down hard, trying to diffuse the acidic vibration stemming from the cornea, that seems to echo all around his facial muscles. He opens them again. His surroundings seem to adjust in depth and brightness, now more defined, less overwhelmingly bright.

Jackson looks at the window. He augers in on the spot where the sun shines the strongest: an incandescent epicenter, with a surrounding cloud of light that grows slightly dimmer as it stretches itself in waves way from it's piercing genesis.

Now, Jackson is looking on towards the door, to the opposite side of the window. He sees the shadow of his upper torso and head, black strong against the white texture, framed inside the shape of a rectangle. There is also the cast image of a

vine next to him, with its leafs twisting around in a spiral... but confusion dawns upon his face... something is not right: the angle from where the sun casts its rays on the window, to where they end up shadowing him on the wall cannot be right - it bends upwards, obliquely. In Jackson's projected shadow, his head, - about where his forehead should be, - is even touching the juncture where the wall and the ceiling meet, causing it to distend further into the ceiling.

He lifts his left hand to it, and then looks back at the window. His shadow should be in a straight line, thrown downwards from the incandescent spot. But it's not. The whole frame is higher than it should be. He closes his eyes again, and rushes out of the bathroom with a frightened expression.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(07:00PM)

Now that the sun is lower; less fiercely hot, Alice, Samantha and Levy, along with a new couple - MARY (27) and ROBERT (29) - have gathered closer to the edge of the lake, where there are no trees to provide them with any shade. They lay on top of their bundled beach towels in the golden, bare sand, conversing with each other.

The first cloudy streaks of purple and pink are announcing the end of the day. Kevin and two other kids slightly younger than him, - Mary and Robert's children -, play nearby, kicking and throwing and punching a football, in and outside of the calm waters. They run around, constantly splashing, yelling, pushing. Their names are ELIZA (10) and OLIVER (8).

There are more people scattered around, couples mostly, from the small villages in the vicinity.

Alice has her head on Mary's lap, her hair still wet from before. Mary is a rather fragile-looking, soft-spoken young woman, with pale skin and golden red hair. The group is gathered around in a circle, with Alice's head being the closest to a kind of geometric center.

They are playing a game in which somebody introduces an imagined scenario using only a few words - could be anything the speaker desires -, and then each member of the playgroup has to expand it into a story, without veering off the course too abruptly.

MARY

A boy and his dog went into the woods.

SAMANTHA

Both the boy and the dog were barefoot, as they both forgot to put shoes on before leaving the house.

Beat.

LEVY

Well, because... they'd been drinking from the boy's father's stash of alcohol: whiskey and coke- the kid mixed it with coke, they got hammered.

ROBERT

They went around the woods- or stumbled round the woods, looking for this magical fountain.

Beat.

ALICE

The magical fountain granted whoever drank from it the ability... to... envision where aaaall the other magical fountains around the world were located, and those were the magical fountains that granted the more interesting, juicy powers...

LEVY

Juicy powers?

They laugh.

MARY

Keep it respectable, Alice.

More laughs.

MARY (CONT'D)

So it was almost nighttime and they still hadn't found anything, so they decided to take a rest on top of this big boulder that was shaped like a birds-nest.

SAMANTHA

...But when they got up on top of the boulder they found a large snake sleeping in it already.

Beat.

LEVY

...So the kid asked the snake:
"Hey, who the fuck are you?"

A couple of snarky laughs.

ROBERT

And the dog growled "HEY, he asked you who the fuck you are!"

Same as before, only with a bit more conviction this time.

ALICE

The snake awoke from her slumber
and... first said- guys, relax, and
then said: i am the guardian of
the magical fountain, and if you
want to know where it is, you have
to grant me *my* wish first.

MARY

The boy asked the snake "what is
thy wish, o thou snake?

Beat.

SAMANTHA

The snake replied... i wish... for
both of you to offer me a piece of
thy flesh, so i can taste and
decide whether thou art worthy of
drinking from thy fountain or not.

LEVY

Hmm... so then the boy said ok, and
offered him a taste of his little...
pinkie, toe, and while the snake
was busy biting the boy, the dog
got busy biting the snake.

ROBERT

The dog bit the snake to death,
and both him and the boy feasted
on the snakes bodily flesh...

ALICE

Ok, now they knew where the
magical fountain was. They were
actually sitting on top of it...

LEVY

Oh, how wonderful.

ALICE (CONT'D)

There was a small hole that the
snake was hiding beneath her, and
this happened to be the spot from
where the magical water would spew
forth.

Beat.

MARY

(to Alice)

...But it didn't, right?

ALICE

No, not yet...

MARY

Ok, so the dog asked "what do we do now master?"

SAMANTHA

The boy answered him, "i think we should go to sleep, because this is probably a day fountain, and it only works in the daytime.

LEVY

...the dog said "nah, i think i'll just piss in it.

Laughs.

LEVY (CONT'D)

...try to see if i can start it from this side...

ROBERT

And so he did, and that actually did the trick, cause then the hole shot water upwards, and it fell all around them.

ALICE

The boy drank from the water,--

MARY

-very gross.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(quoting Crime and Punishment)

--and right away knew where all the other magical fountains were...

(beat)

but alas children, "He could not, that evening, bring his thoughts to bear long upon anything; he only felt! Life-full, real, earnest life, was coming, and had driven away his cogitations.

They fall silent for a couple of seconds, looking at Alice.

A smile dawning upon her face.

MARY

Are you quoting somebody?

ALICE

Yeah!

LEVY
...You killed the game.

ALICE
(smiling)
It reached an endpoint!

LONG BEAT.

ROBERT
This was a good one, though...

All of them internally agree with Robert, presenting each other with thin smiles full of earnest contentment.

It felt like an appropriate conclusion.

The momentary gap left by the absence of words is quickly replaced to their ears and senses by the children's voices, as they now sat still on the dark wet sand, speaking to each other in sober tones, almost like a reflection of the older group, of the group of grown-ups they themselves would eventually become.

The golden sun darts off of Levy's green iris, and is met by Mary's own quiet gaze. She rotates her neck in order to follow his trail, and almost immediately all the others look in that same direction, with the fluidity of a domino effect. Alice still has her head in Mary's lap, but doesn't bother with lifting herself up: she turns her body round and places her left cheek on it, instead.

MARY
(calling out to the kids)
Guys, wat'cha doin?

ELIZA AND KEVIN
(in unison)
Nothin!

They are enjoying the mounting tranquility of the closing hour in each other's company, in the company of their children, - who have lives of their own and dreams that are solely theirs -, but the impact shared by all quickly draws an uncomfortable feeling in Samantha, who suddenly feels a bitter pain; the pain of someone who is missing something very important and cannot be sure if it is ever going to come back, - or in the case of her ever having any children, if it is ever coming to be.

The pleasant lines in her face grow somber and apprehensive, and all of a sudden, she feels the need to go back to the house.

SAMANTHA
(to Levy)
What time is it?

LEVY
(glancing at his wrist
watch)
Almost... seven thirty.

ALICE
(to Mary)
You two and the kids are coming
over to have dinner with us.

MARY
No no no no- it's too lat--

ALICE
(cutting her off)
-No yes, you will. It's not too
late, don't be silly.--

ROBERT
-There's too many mouths to feed,
Alice.

Alice finally lifts her head from Mary's lap.

MARY
Cooking dinner for all these
people takes time; and it's late
already, and we're still here,- n'
the drive to your house takes some
twenty minutes.

ALICE
We'll eat later--

ROBERT
-You know, you could have dinner
with us, we're closer by...

ALICE
No we can't, because my brother's
not here... so we'll eat later,- who
cares?

LEVY
(calling out to the kids)
Lizzy, Oliver- you wanna have
dinner with Kevin at our house?

ELIZA
Yeah!

OLIVER
(faintly)
Yeah.

KEVIN

Yeah!

ALICE

Look, see? That's that then.

Beat.

LEVY

Anyway, like i said before, Jack wanted to cook dinner...

MARY

But he's not counting on four other people to show up!

ALICE

(to Levy)

Call him, see what he's up to.

SAMANTHA

I'll call him.

LEVY

I don't know if he's awake yet, he seemed in rough shape when i left him.

Samantha gets her phone from her back pack.

MARY

...He's been doing fine, right? He's not sick?

LEVY

No, I don't think so.

They look at Samantha, who just got her phone and was about to call Jackson.

SAMANTHA

H- he's not- he's tired... There's been of lot of pressure on his shoulders... dealing with the final permits for his last job and constantly meeting with consultants... just lately has his head risen above the water.

ALICE

(to Samantha)

...But now it's finished...

Beat.

SAMANTHA

Well, he's going himself to act
more as a consultant from now on.

ALICE

(eyes wide, bragging on
Jackson's behalf)
It's a sixteen storey building...

Samantha gets the phone to her ear. There is some eagerness
in her face.

We see Alice thinking of something, momentarily off somewhere
else.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

The top of the apartment building we saw earlier in the film
is shown, but this time it does not appear like it did to
Jackson: there is no decay at all; it is pristine looking -
shinny and clean and new -, and the sky above it is mostly
colored in a clear, strong, blue tone. There is however, to
the right, in the far off distance, an incoming conflagration
of dark clouds; they look menacing and full of intent. A
yellow strike of lightning shoots from one cloud into
another, forming an arch, like the branch of a tree.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(7:30PM) - CONTINUED

Returning from her daydream, Alice's half-smile flows in
Samantha's direction, whose phone is faintly emitting the
first tone of the call to Jackson.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (MASTER BEDROOM) - UNSPECIFIED TIME (DREAM
SCENE)

We are observing Jackson as he stands in the doorway to the
master bedroom, looking inside, calmly. The large room is
dark, and so is the hallway behind him.

Downstairs, a phone starts ringing. Jackson slowly looks in
the direction of the stairs, to his left, seemingly
conflicted about taking his eyes off the bedroom. He turns
his head towards it again.

The DARK FIGURE is laying down on the bed, just as if it's
asleep on it, it's back turned to Jackson. A thin layer of
black mist hovers about it. The phone keeps ringing. Jackson
slowly leaves the doorway in order to go downstairs, to pick
it up.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - AFTERNOON(7:30PM)

Jackson gasps the air around him, jolting wake. Right away, he gets his hands to cover his face, moaning in despair. His phone is ringing somewhere. It stops as he searches for it.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(07:30PM)

SAMANTHA
(apprehensive)
He's not picking up...

MARY
(to Alice)
Sweetheart, we'll go tomorrow, i
promise.

Beat.

ALICE
(pleading)
Nooooo!

LEVY
Alice- shush.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - AFTERNOON(7:30PM) - CONTINUED

Jackson just picked the phone up from the woolen rug on the floor, and is checking the caller ID. He throws it disdainfully atop of the center table in the middle of the living room, with an expression of nausea splattered across his face. It clangs off the glass and falls back to the floor. He sits back down on the sofa, exhaling...

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(07:30PM) - CONTINUED

Alice, Robert and Samantha get up. They clap the sand off of their hands, dust themselves off, etc... They start rustling about, gathering things in order to leave...

ALICE
(to Eliza and Oliver)
Hey, kids- dinner's off.

KEVIN
What?!

ELIZA
Why?!

Oliver just looks.

ALICE
Your mom and dad seem to think
that if you don't eat exactly at 8
o'clock, you'll starve to death.

MARY
(to the kids)
We'll go tomorrow...

KEVIN AND ELIZA
(pleading)
Nooo!

Alice and Robert smile. Towels are flung in the air, things get picked up, put in bags, etc... The kids continue pleading with them.

INT/EXT. JEEP - LATE AFTERNOON (19:45PM)

They're driving out of the lake area; silent, but alert to their surroundings, - except for Kevin, who just looks at his phone.

After a few moments, Samantha's phone starts to ring. It's Jackson. She answers it.

SAMANTHA (ON THE PHONE)
Hi...

JACKSON (V.O.)
Hey, i'm sorry i didn't pick up- i
was asleep.

SAMANTHA
That's okay.
(beat)
What're you doing?

JACKSON (V.O.)
...i'm gearin myself up to cook
dinner.

SAMANTHA
What are you making?

JACKSON (V.O.)
I took the rabbit out.

Beat.

SAMANTHA
We left the lake just now. Mary
and Robert were here...

JACKSON (V.O.)
Mary and Robert...
(MORE)

JACKSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(beat)
I barely remember them...

Beat.

SAMANTHA
We'll be there in a bit.

JACKSON (V.O.)
All right.

SAMANTHA
Bye...

JACKSON (V.O.)
Bye.

Samantha hangs up. Alice, who's been looking the whole time, turns her body back towards the road.

ALICE
Now he calls...

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING(8:45PM)

They're gathered round the table, beginning to dig into the food. Kevin has his eyes on the plate: wide; his mouth slightly twisted.

LEVY
This is good, man...

Alice sniffs the food three or four times, imitating a dog.

JACKSON
(with a touch of sarcasm)
You're too kind.

Samantha is profiled against the blue light of the barely audible television, her eyes jumping from Levy to Jackson and back.

LEVY
I mean it, really. It's very good...

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING(9:30PM)

Alice is laying down on the sofa, her feet on Samantha's lap. The television is glaring at them in the dim light.

We see Samantha looking out into the backyard.

There's Jackson, Levy and Kevin on the porch outside. She looks at them through the opened curtains. The sliding glass door is half-opened, but no sound comes from it.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (BACKYARD) - EVENING(9:30PM) - CONTINUED

Levy is searching for a number on his phone, a couple of meters away from the table where Jackson and Kevin sit. They remain quiet. Kevin has a tall glass in front of him with ice and some type of drink. He keeps looking at his father, or past him, off into the large trees; into the night.

Jackson has his body bent with his elbows on top of his knees, and is sort of in a daze, gazing at nothing in particular towards Kevin's side of the table.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - EVENING(9:30PM) - CONTINUED

Jackson looks into the living room, and his and Samantha's eyes meet briefly: an unconformable half-second, where they both wish they hadn't been caught looking. Samantha looks back at the tv.

SAMANTHA
(anxious tone)
I feel so worried for him.

Alice stares at her. Samantha responds in equal measure.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
I can't shut it off...

INT. LAKE HOUSE (BACKYARD) - EVENING(9:30PM) - CONTINUED

Levy steps away further into the backyard, talking on the phone.

Jackson feels like he has to say something to Kevin, but nothing occurs. Kevin takes a gulp out of his drink.

Jackson gets up, goes inside.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE (FRONT) - MORNING (9:30AM)

Kevin turns the hose on and walks a few steps to the right, where Jackson and Levy are waiting for him, by the boat. It's positioned a couple of meters away from the entrance to the garage, on top of the trailer. The jeep's rear is attached to it.

Levy picks Kevin up and puts him on top of the boat.

LEVY
(picking Kevin)
Up!

Next, he opens the drain in the boat's deck. The water trickles down from it.

Jackson has a pump spring in hand, and he's going around the discolored hull, squirting some type of chemical on it.

Levy watches, smoking a cigarette.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE (FRONT) - MORNING (9:40AM) - CONTINUED

Jackson, Levy and Kevin are now scrubbing and waxing the boat.

Alice and Samantha come out of the front door, and stand by, observing, chatting.

Alice goes by the detergent bottles on the ground and picks one up.

ALICE
(to Levy)
Toilet cleaner!?

He takes a breather.

LEVY
Yes...

He drops the brush on the ground.

LEVY (CONT'D)
All right, this is done.

Beat. He picks it up again.

LEVY (CONT'D)
(to Alice)
We can go...

ALICE AND KEVIN
Waaait...

Kevin runs inside. Levy gets a cigarette out of the pocket of his shorts, looking annoyed and out of breath.

ALICE
(to Levy)
No rushing, all right?

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - DAY (11:00AM)

We see Kevin walk/run towards the water front, where the jeep is driving the boat backwards into the water.

Alice and Samantha are watching the whole thing from a distance.

ALICE

...there's a tiny part of myself
that thinks he does it just so he
can brag about it back home, to
his friends.

(beat)

The fish don't taste good... they
have a stale... taste.

SAMANTHA

I can understand the appeal of
what they're doing...

ALICE

Oh, me too, but every year's the
same thing- he spends more time
with that boat than with us.

Beat.

SAMANTHA

...You know, don't be greedy...

Alice scoffs.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - DAY (11:00AM) - CONTINUED

Jackson and Kevin push the boat on the water while Levy is at
the wheel of the jeep.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - DAY/AFTERNOON

The sun advances through the firmament, shortening every
shadow; lighting everything with a frantic buzz of
electricity.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON (02:00PM)

Both Levy and Jackson's white hats glare on top of their
heads, in the middle of the lake. Jackson stands up on the
boat and throws the line.

Robert is sitting by the water with his legs inside of it,
smoking and relaxing and enjoying the sun. We hear the
children playing somewhere near. He gets hit by a football on
his side, splashing him with water. He then picks it up and
throws it on the lake.

OLIVER

(freaking out)

Go get it!!

The three women are shaded underneath the tall trees, mostly
observing the kids and talking to each other.

ALICE
(looking at Kevin and
Eliza)
They like each other, right? It
seems pretty obvious...

MARY
Well, Kevin's cute. I understand
why she likes him. They get along,
and he's a sweetheart.

Alice thinks, then shifts her attention to Samantha.

ALICE
Sam... you talk to him- maybe that's
what he's missing, and he doesn't
know it...

Samantha looks taken aback, kind of surprised and embarrassed
Alice would engage in that conversation with Mary around; but
seeing as Alice had acquired the custom of bringing the
conversation up whenever they were together, she quickly
forgets about her embarrassment.

Mary looks, but doesn't bother asking.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Go for it now, now that you guys
are on a different setting, away
from everything that makes up for
your normal routine...

SAMANTHA
(tentatively)
I don't think routine's the issue...

ALICE
Are you afraid of talking to him
about it?

SAMANTHA
(a bit offended)
No Alice, i'm not afraid of
talking to him about it,- you know
we did, several times.
(beat)
I don't know... i don't think he's
up for it at the moment, and
continuing to press him is not the
right thing to do. I don't want
him to do something against his
will, just to accommodate for
mine... You know that would never
work out. He should sometimes, but
not when it comes this.

Beat.

ALICE

(considering it)

...I think being a father would
shift his whole spectrum of
concern in a really positive way.
And i risk saying he'd love it,
too.

(Beat)

Jack's anything but heartless...

SAMANTHA

He's the one who has to make the
decision. I don't wanna try to
influence him any more than i have
already. It doesn't feel right.

They both consider it. Mary pretends like she didn't hear
anything.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (DINNING ROOM) - EVENING(9:00PM)

The Tv is black silent, the light around the room hangs,
rather than illuminates, and everyone in the group is
simultaneously caught looking at each other over their empty
plates, as if whatever was driving forward the collective
motion of words and utterances had to make a stop, - take a
five second brake -, not out of embarrassment or lack of
pathways to explore, but out of respect for what had already
been spoken.

ROBERT

(using a slow, affected
tone)

...I shall hereby curtail this
silent moment of reflection by
trying to get across to all of you
what it is that i would like to
achieve during my increasingly
short lifespan... and you will see
thus why i am speaking in this
here way.

(Beat)

I would very much want to be like
little Eddie, our homeless
character back home, who even
though has never really anything
substantial to say,- ever-, always
manages to have--

ELIZA

(interrupting Robert
midway)

-I don't think he's homeless...

ROBERT (CONT'D)

--interesting things come out of his mouth when he speaks. Some people have that gift. Now why do you think that is..? Unfortunately i don't think that it's one of mine...

LEVY

Does little Eddie take drugs on a regular basis?

The kids laugh.

ROBERT

I have no idea, but that might just be the case.

ALICE

Well, Robert, if it's not too much of an inconvenience, i would ask for you to tell us his story,- please.

ROBERT

I will.

We look at Jackson, whose face betrays - to anyone who gives a closer look -, an expression of resentment, absentia, and apathy.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(humorously)

Well, Little Eddie is an homeless man. But he wasn't born this way. No- in fact, little Eddie was beget in a home,--

OLIVER

-What's beget?

MARY

...Born.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

--he grew up to maturity in a home, and even managed himself to acquire and pay out for a home, in full... So, after taking all this into consideration, and knowing beforehand where he has in fact ended up, you might say that his life shared many similarities to a running train... the sort of running train that.. eventually becomes... a running train wreck.

Laughs.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

How did Little Eddie became the way he is today? Well, he would tell you himself if you happened to ask him,- wholeheartedly: "I did things to myself, bad things- and i have screwed myself in the ... , ruthlessly; with the push of the driver and the burnt match of ignition"- that's what he'd say,

(speaking lower, in
between the lines)

although the first half of it is partially a product of my own imagination-

(normal voice)

Was that substantial? No... but it was darn interesting, the way he said it.--

LEVY

-Seemed substantial to me...

ROBERT

--Lemme finish.

Robert smiles playfully.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

So what happened to him? It seems Little Eddie was an all-nighter type: he didn't sleep much. He couldn't. Why? He'd tell you, and it was interesting, but you weren't able to pick up a common thread throughout whatever it was that came out of his mouth; no way in hell the gist of it would amount to something coherent. So you kind of had to assume some things in order to complete his story... and we have all assumed a little about him and his story in our small little town. We assumed little Eddy had a wife, and we assumed little Eddie had kids, and we even assumed he had a good deal of money at one point in time. When he was about forty, he quit his job... He'd held a position as a contractor doing work for this local firm with a respectable reputation from around where we lived- and the firm had clients,

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
you know? It wasn't like it was lacking business or anything like that when he stopped working for them,- and it's actually still around today... But anyway, this man, he quit his job without much of an apparent reason. You could only speculate... His wife and his kids were gone already by the time, and after this happened, he and his dog became their own sole companions. This was all before he was little Eddie, just to make sure you get it- he appeared to be a stable person by this point, and he was viewed by others as a normal member of society... But apparently, he didn't sleep nights - i guess nobody knows exactly why -, and as time went on, people began seeing him roam around town at late hours with the dog, to increasingly isolated spots in our little country area.

OLIVER
This is a sad story...

Throughout the length of this monologue, Jackson's face goes from apathetic to amused, being triggered into interest at the sound of the word "dog".

ROBERT (CONT'D)
(in a lower, more serious tone)
-He's seen speaking with it, more and more so. To anyone's knowledge he didn't drink or do drugs. I mean, drink any more than the normal person would.

(beat)
People reported times where they'd seen him force the dog to run ahead through the streets, while he chased it, yelling at it, and calling it things... even threw rocks at it, like somehow he was trying to distance himself from something bad he'd seen in the animal- the man obviously had mental issues,- has them... but that's the thing, nowadays you can't really imagine him do something like that to anybody or to anything... Then he'd stop... call him out again. He'd stay there,

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 sitting on the road... waiting for
 the dog to come back. One day,
 somebody found it with it's throat
 slashed- the dog.

(beat)

And... well, it was after that that
 he became little Eddie... this
 frail, older-than-his-years lookin
 old man... But nobody was afraid of
 him. He was always amicable and
 polite, and smiled at people with
 this... connected, and focused
 smile... something like that; that
 at the same time didn't show hints
 of containing any malice, or even
 mental instability. You just look
 at him as a strange individual, if
 you happened to know his story.

(softer)

I kinda of overplayed his crazy
 side a little, for humorous
 purposes, but--

MARY

-he's a sweet old man...

ROBERT (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Yeah, well... We asked him, you
 know- people asked him, "who did
 you think did that to your dog?",
 and he- he'd just shrug and say "i
 figure nobody did nothin at all",
 and when somebody asked if... he did
 it to him, he'd say "no no", "no".
 Those weren't very... satisfying
 answers, but he never assumed
 responsibility for the fact, and
 so we all had to believe-
 speculating about it just seemed
 mean, for some reason- to me at
 least... but the fact of the matter
 is that the animal's death seemed
 to have brought him some kind of
 peace of mind, that made him
 become the person he is today- so
 yeah, you connect the dots and you
 suspect, but somehow that doesn't
 feel ri--

From amusement, to an increasing interest, to great sadness
 and even glints of anger shown throughout his face, we see
 Jackson not being able to take any more and abruptly getting
 up from his seat, nearly sending the chair tumbling towards
 the floor, screeching away from him.

He walks out of frame, filling the room with a heavy silence.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (GUEST ROOM) - NIGHT(03:00AM)

We are looking at Jackson from the side, carefully watching his movements. He's on the bed, awake, his head above the pillow, both elbows by the side of it. He is rubbing his eyes hard with the carpal bones in his hands, his fingers feeling and massaging the scalp. He does this for a few seconds until his eyes get overwhelmed by the blinding light amidst the darkness.

When he removes his hands, we can discern his gaunt and distraught features in the penumbra, his hair completely disheveled. The last couple of months have been like this: he barely sleeps, and when he does, it is a restless slumber, permeated by vivid, strange dreams.

Something captures his attention in the corner of his eye.

He stares in disbelief towards the inferior corner in his side of the room. The audience cannot see what he is looking at. His breathing is staggered, his heart feels like it's going to explode.

...The nightmare finally seeping into reality... He turns his face away, looking at the wall in front of his head, not actually seeing anything. Gets his hands to his face, trembling.

JACKSON

(murmuring)

Oh my god...

He risks another peek. It's no longer there... but panic overwhelms him: He turns to Samantha, who's sleeping at his side, and grabs her hand; he puts his face next to hers.

JACKSON

(frantic)

Sam- Sam, wake up- please.

She wakes up in alarm.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Sam, i'm sorry- please, i feel so strange...

SAMANTHA

Jack, what is it? What's wrong?

JACKSON (CONT'D)

(crying, thrusting his
head in her arms)

Please...

He convulses in her arms. She tries the best she can to shelter him; her worst fears confirmed...

SAMANTHA

(terrified)

Jack, calm down- try to calm
yourself down. Try to calm down...

He looks at her in the darkness.

JACKSON

Are we here?

SAMANTHA

Yes, we're here Jack. You're just
confused- it'll pass. You'll feel
all right...

Samantha turns the nightstand light on. He looks at her, then at the corner of the room. She gets her hand to his face, driving his eyes into her own. We can see tears in his face. She pushes his hair away from his forehead. She then envelops his head with her arm, and brings it to her chest.

His breathing is heavy, tired.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (GUEST ROOM) - DAWN (06:30AM)

They lay together again, with the lights turned off. The walls are clearer now, the sun is rising.

Jackson is facing away from Samantha; both of them are awake. His eyelids are heavy, they slide up and down telling him to let go of wakefulness... but he does not. He turns towards her.

JACKSON

(whispering)

Please don't say anything to them
about what happened- i feel better
now.

Beat.

SAMANTHA

(measuring her words)

We need to talk about this Jack.
This is very serious, you
understand? I think you've been
gradually sliding in towards this
state, and we need to figure out
what's going on...

JACKSON

I know, but not right now- not
here... not to my sister. Please,
Sam.

Beat as she considers.

SAMANTHA

I won't say anything to them, but
we cannot spend the whole week
here like this. I don't feel
comfortable, i'm getting scared..
You're always so distant, Ja--

JACKSON

(pleading)

-Sam, i was dreaming- i was
dreaming. I got confused when i
woke up.--

SAMANTHA

-It's not just tonight Jack.
Something's up..
(beat)
isn't it?

Beat.

JACKSON

(bitterly)

All right.

He gets out of bed.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

I'm going to the bathroom, Sam..

Jackson leaves the room, closing the door gently. Samantha is
left alone with her thoughts, feeling nauseous.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON (06:00PM)

The boat is lassoed to the wooden dock, gently rocking in a
sideways motion.

Alice is a few meters away from Jackson and is looking at
him, at his back and profile. He is staring ahead towards the
water, picked up on his elbows against the sand.

Samantha is next to him, fully laid down on a towel,
absorbing the sun's heat in her back. Mary sleeps by Alice's
side.

Finally, Alice gets up and crouches right next to Jackson,
looking directly at him.

ALICE

(softly)

I wanna talk to you.

JACKSON

You can talk..

Samantha picks her head up and observes.

ALICE
(grabbing his hand)
Come with me.

JACKSON
Why do i ha--

ALICE
-i wanna go for a swim too.
(beat)
Jack... Come on.

Jackson looks unsure. Suddenly, Samantha gets her hand on his back and pushes him up. Alice still has his hand in hers, and so they both drive him to his feet.

They walk a few steps towards the water...

EXT. LAKE (BOAT) - AFTERNOON(06:00PM)

Jackson brings the rope inside the boat and pushes against the upright log, sending the boat floating away from the dock.

He then starts the engine.

They move across the lake. We can hear the hull slapping against the water, the engine vibrating the air around it.

ALICE
(shouting)
Jack, you can stop...

He doesn't seem to hear what she says; or maybe he just wants to go further... The boat drives through the waters a few more feet. They stop.

They look at each other; at the beach. The increasing silence seemingly acting like an anchor as the boat settles.

He feels her eyes scrutinizing him.

JACKSON
I'm not a child. You don't get to
do this to me.

Alice scoffs, looks away.

ALICE
(shrugging)
I'm your sister- i want what's
best...
(Beat)
You are amongst people who love
you, Jack.

He looks away.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Tell me what you think is best for
you right now.

LONG BEAT as he seems to be making an effort to think. He
finally exhales.

JACKSON
(shaking his head)
...the words don't come. I don't
feel'em... settling inside of me. I
think more and more i'm becoming
speechless.

ALICE
What do you feel inside of you?

Beat.

JACKSON
I feel stuck. Stuck and without
means... And at the same time like
i'm being driven for action.

ALICE
-Have a baby with Sam.

He laughs.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I mean it! It'd be the best thing
for you.

JACKSON
I'd be a terrible father.

ALICE
You don't know that... And Sam
doesn't think that.

He continues smiling.

ALICE
(resolutely)
Jack, have her child.

JACKSON
(looking her in the eye,
shaking his head)
...i won't. Ever.

Spurred on by the silence, we see the sun embittering their
faces.

ALICE
You know what i dreamed the night
before we came here?

(MORE)

ALICE (CONT'D)

(beat)

I think... i dreamed you were
responsible for a lot of the
things that happened in our lives.

JACKSON

What things?

ALICE

...Things that changed our lives a
lot. My life... mom and dad's life...
things that had a big impact on
us.

Beat.

JACKSON

(shaking his head
slightly)

...I can't possibly know what you
mean by that.

Alice doesn't turn her eyes away from his. A slightly
derisive smile appears on her face. A couple of seconds of
silence.

JACKSON

(bitter)

I'm fucking sick of all the
scattered words, and all the
little scattered thoughts, and all
the little riddles that life puts
in our heads... I'm really
exhausted.

Beat.

ALICE

(dryly)

You're not a machine, Jack.

She gets up.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Come get me.

Alice dives into the water, disappearing from sight. Jackson
waits for her to pop back up, but after about ten seconds or
so he dives in after her.

EXT. LAKE (INSIDE) - AFTERNOON(06:00PM) - CONTINUED

We see Alice trying to steady her body horizontally about
midway down from the lake's surface. She swings her arms
downwards, in a motion perpendicular to her body. Jackson
appears in frame from the side, also swimming horizontally,

reaching her from the feet, going below her; they are now parallel to each other.

She grabs his hand and locks him in an embrace, smiling into his eyes. She kisses him on the cheek. Jackson lets himself stay motionless in her arms for a couple of seconds, closing his eyes, but then tries to get both of their bodies headfirst towards the faint glow of light above.

He starts swimming with one arm, the other one enveloping Alice by the waist. She shifts her head away from his almost imperceptibly, in order to better scrutinize his face, a mischievous smile appearing on her face.

He swims with her for a few meters, but then eventually her expression starts to change to a more apprehensive display, and she gently pushes his torso away from her own. The glow from above grows brighter and brighter...

Jackson looks confused by her increasing efforts to unleash herself from him, but figuring this is just one more of her capricious stunts, he holds on to her tighter and tighter.

At first it was confusion - now outright panic in her face.

When she unleashes her first scream, Jackson flinches away from her face in a state of utter disorientation, which only makes him swim harder and faster. The bubbles of oxygen caused by her screams speed away from them, going downwards.

The glow grows brighter and brighter... She passes out on his arms and grows limp. Jackson has his face bent in a mesh of strain and terror.

First his outstretched arm, then his head and then her back: the impact at the bottom of the lake lifts a cloud of dust that lingers around them like smoke. Where there was light, there is only now darkness; it abruptly shifted, like a light that went out when they hit bottom. We can now understand that our P.O.V. was the same as Jackson's: inverted. Utterly dismayed and disoriented, we can barely see his facial expression in the dark waters; we can only hear his frantic, garbled screaming.

With all the strength he has left, he lunges himself and Alice in the opposite direction with his feet.

EXT. LAKE'S SURFACE - AFTERNOON(06:00PM) - CONTINUED

Jackson gasps for air at the surface, screaming, coughing, whimpering. He grabs on to the boat's side and tries to wrestle Alice's body into it. We can already hear Samantha's frantic shouting, echoing his name through the air.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(06:00PM)

The group is gathered by the edge of the lake, anxiously waiting for the boat's arrival. Kevin stands by his father side, while Samantha, Mary and Robert pace about. They speak to each other exuding a palpable feeling of dread. Eliza and Oliver watch all of this with an apprehensive but electrified curiosity.

When the boat finally rams its hull in the sand, Levy and Samantha are the first to get to it's side.

JACKSON
(almost inaudible,
panicking)
I killed her- i killed her, Sam.

Levy takes Alice from Jackson's arms.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
I killed her, Sam...

She looks at him with a terrified, helpless expression, not able to say anything.

LEVY
(bursting out to Jackson)
Shut up!!

Kevin follows his father closely to the spot where he sets Alice down on the sand, but doesn't say anything: he can't. His eyes are already filled up with tears.

Levy gets his head to her chest and mouth, murmuring to himself.

LEVY
(to himself, scoffing)
You killed her...

He can't feel her heart beat. The others are gathered round, but are too scared or too respectful to really encroach on Levy's space over Alice. Mary is the only one who is capable of kneeling by his side, and she then tries to perform mouth-to-mouth on Alice. Levy immediately stands up, looking for Jackson. He stands horrified, away from everybody else by four or five meters.

LEVY
(screaming)
What did you do!?

Levy continues to scream at Jackson, walking in his direction. Jackson slowly backs away.

When Levy gets near him, Jackson turns his back to him, still walking.

LEVY
(violently pushing him
down)
What the FUCK did you do!?

Jackson lands on the sand with his hands and knees, stopping the momentum of the fall with his face. He turns round to an enraged Levy, crawling away from him.

JACKSON
(crying)
I'm sorry...

Kevin sprints by them both, his feet making the sand fly upwards in his wake.

Levy runs back to Alice's side.

Samantha sees Jackson on the ground, but she chooses to let go of that image, and goes after Kevin instead.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(06:15PM)

We find Kevin crouching with his arms around his knees, hiding his face in them. His body shaking as he cries. He ran away in panic from his mother's body, to a distance of about 50 meters across the beach.

Samantha gets to his side, and envelops him in her arms. He continues to cry.

We can see Jackson from far away, still sitting on the ground as more people start to gather.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(06:15PM) - CONTINUED

We see Levy off to the side, basically in the same position as Kevin, crying, not trying to hold back.

Suddenly, he gets up and rushes towards Jackson, pointing his finger.

LEVY
(shouting)
You stay there!! You don't move!!

Levy stares at Jackson, who's already somewhat calmer. He does so for a moment. Neither Levy nor the audience can read his facial expression with ease: it seems glinting with defiance, whilst at the same time showing hints of embarrassment, like a kid who got caught doing something he shouldn't have.

Levy turns away in disgust. Somebody already called the police and an ambulance. Now they had to wait...

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - AFTERNOON(06:30PM)

The paramedics are tending to Alice's lifeless body.

Mary's face is even paler than usual, as Robert holds on to her. They inspect the whole scene, tears streaming out of her eyes.

Levy talks to two policemen, still not being able to keep in check his wracked emotions. We cannot hear what they are saying.

After that, one of the policeman approaches Jackson, - who has not moved from the same spot -, and motions him up. He puts handcuffs on his wrists.

Jackson looks around for Samantha, but she is nowhere to be seen... Neither she nor Kevin.

The policeman drives Jackson into the patrol car.

INT/EXT. LAKE (PATROL CAR) - AFTERNOON(06:30PM) - CONTINUED

Inside it, he can take a look at Alice's body through the front windshield. It's inside a black back, on a stretcher next to the ambulance. His gaze more awake and more focused than it's been for the last couple of days, maybe the last couple of months...

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING(21:00PM)

Jackson follows the DETECTIVE'S (late-forties) movements with his eyes, absent-mindedly absorbing everything he sees him do.

The detective ends up sitting down at the rectangular table, on the chair perpendicular to Jackson. He sets a recorder running in the middle of the two, a little off to the side.

DETECTIVE

Mr. Jackson, tell me what happened
in that boat. Tell me what
happened.

Beat.

JACKSON

I got confused...

DETECTIVE

You got confused? You got confused
about what exactly?

JACKSON

I- i got... disoriented.

DETECTIVE
You got disoriented... In the boat...

JACKSON
No. In the water. After i dived in
after my sister.

DETECTIVE
She dove in the water.

JACKSON
Yes.

DETECTIVE
And you went in after her.

JACKSON
Yes.

DETECTIVE
Why did she dive in the water?

JACKSON
I don't know.

Beat.

DETECTIVE
And why did you dive in after her?

JACKSON
Because she asked me to. Because
she was taking too long down
there...

DETECTIVE
She asked you?

JACKSON
Yes.

DETECTIVE
And when you got to her... she was
fine?

JACKSON
Yes.

Beat.

DETECTIVE
Your wife told one of the police
officers down at the scene that
you were under water for at least
one minute- and that's not
accounting for your sister, whom
she says she... she couldn't even
(MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
see her get in... Did you spend time
looking for her?

JACKSON
Not much. But she wasn't right
under the boat.

DETECTIVE
Do you have any idea how long it
took for you to get to your
sister?

JACKSON
I don't think it took that long. I
don't know. Maybe less than twenty
seconds... i don't know.

DETECTIVE
And then what happened, when you
got to her?

LONG BEAT as Jackson tries to come up with the most honest
answer he can.

JACKSON
...I don't know.

DETECTIVE
You said you got disoriented.

JACKSON
Yes.

DETECTIVE
At what point did you get
disoriented?

JACKSON
I don't know exactly.

Beat.

DETECTIVE
Mr. Jackson, various persons have
told the police officers that
you'd gotten to the shore
repeating that you had killed your
sister. What made you say this?

JACKSON
(in a hurry)
I said it because i was
responsible for her drowning-
because i'd gotten her to the
bottom of the lake-, she was
trying to brake free from me.

The detective knits his eyebrows at this point, feeling confused about the whole thing.

DETECTIVE
You did this intentionally?

JACKSON
I don't know... i got disoriented.

The detective tries to conceal his annoyance at Jackson's indecisive statements.

DETECTIVE
Do you know right from wrong, Mr. Jackson?

JACKSON
(looking him in the eye)
I do.

DETECTIVE
Do you kn--

JACKSON
-I do from a moral standpoint.

DETECTIVE
What other standpoint is there?

JACKSON
(with conviction)
The absolute one.

Beat as the detective scrutinizes Jackson's expression. He chooses not to go down that road.

He exhales.

DETECTIVE
Mr. Jackson, how did you get along with your sister?

JACKSON
We don't see each other often. She lives across the country from here. We were staying at their summer house.

DETECTIVE
You're saying she lives- she doesn't, anymore.

JACKSON
I'm aware of that.

Beat. Jackson scoffs, looking at the detective.

DETECTIVE

When you and her were together,
how did you two fare along?

JACKSON

Like other people... There's history
attached to a relationship,
there's always history attached.
Whatever that type of relationship
might be. We had plenty of times
we didn't get along, and we had
plenty of times we loved each
other. It often happens like that
between two people who share
something like what we do.

DETECTIVE

And what is that?

Jackson gives him a surprised look.

JACKSON

Family.

Beat.

DETECTIVE

How do you feel about what
happened?

LONG BEAT. Again he searches for an honest answer; his face
straining.

JACKSON

...I feel bad.

DETECTIVE

You feel bad.

JACKSON

Yes.

DETECTIVE

Is that the word you wanna use to
describe how you feel?

JACKSON

It's a general purpose word- i
don't know exactly how i feel.

DETECTIVE

Then you should say that- if
honesty's what your going for...

Jackson stays silent.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

When you say you were responsible
for her drowning- let's set this
straight- you held her,
underwater, and you swam with--

JACKSON

-i swam with her, and drove her to
the bottom of the lake. She was
screaming in my face, trying to
brake free from me.

DETECTIVE

(hesitating)

...But did you mean to do this?

JACKSON

You already asked me that. I don't
know. I got disoriented- but i
don't know if i meant to do it or
not.

Beat as a thin smile appears on the detective's lips. He
inhales, exhales; clicks his tongue.

DETECTIVE

All right.

They look at each other in silence for a moment.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

I want you to tell me more about
yourself, Mr. Jackson.

JACKSON

What can i possibly tell you that
you can't find out for yourself
with some better degree of
certainty?

DETECTIVE

I want you to tell me... tell me
more about yourself, from a
psychological standpoint.

Jackson opens up a smile. He looks at the detective,
defiantly.

JACKSON

I think i'm a mess.

DETECTIVE

How so?

JACKSON
(shaking his head
slightly)
I don't wanna tell you that...

DETECTIVE
You have to answer my questions.

JACKSON
Well, the ones i choose to answer.
(beat)
That's private- i retain my rights
to privacy. I answer you the way i
want to.

DETECTIVE
I play a big role in this, Mr.
Jackson.

JACKSON
You play *this* role in my life,
nothing more. It's not as big as
you might think. It impacts
everything else to some degree,
but so does this chair that i'm
sitting on.

The detective is at a loss for words. He can only come up
with the cliché.

DETECTIVE
Is that how you wanna approach it?
You won't make non of this easy on
yourself.

Jackson smiles.

JACKSON
I don't care about that.
(beat)
One thing i can tell you: ever
since i can remember... i've always
felt that i've a big capacity for
wretchedness.

DETECTIVE
How do you mean?
(beat)
Mr. Jackson! How do you mean?

Beat.

JACKSON
I feel it in me. I feel like i'm
quite prepared to do awful things.

DETECTIVE

Give me an example of what you are talking about.

JACKSON

(shrugs)

...You know what i mean, sir.

DETECTIVE

Honestly, i don't. I imagine that due to circumstances, any given person can be prepared to do awful things,- or be driven to do awful things... but the criteria varies. I'd like to know what that criteria is for you. What would lead you to do something awful...

JACKSON

I have no idea. Quite a number of things, i imagine.

Beat.

DETECTIVE

Did your sister do something of the sort? Something that would lead you into behaving in any way you'd regret?

JACKSON

No. Not at all.

The detective takes a handful of seconds to examine Jackson's expression.

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Not at all...

DETECTIVE

What do you think is gonna happen to you now?

JACKSON

I don't know... i'll go to jail.

DETECTIVE

Is that what you want?

Jackson shrugs his shoulder, like a child.

JACKSON

I've told you what happened-that's what happened. I know right from wrong.

The detective look unsure, he feels something is wrong in all of this; feels like Jackson is quite probably a very disturbed person.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
...I can speak better now.

EXT. LAKE (BEACH AREA) - NIGHT(01:00AM)

We see the boat tied to the dock, rocking gently in the moonlight illuminated waters.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE (FRONT) - NIGHT(03:00AM)

The jeep is by the entrance to the garage, the silver colored trailer still attached to it. Everything is quiet.

INT. LAKE HOUSE (LIVING ROOM/BACKYARD PORCH) - NIGHT/EARLY DAWN(05:30AM)

From inside the living room, we see Levy sitting on the porch, bent with his elbows on his knees; a glazed look on his face, a lit cigarette drooping from his mouth.

Opposite to him, there's Samantha with her back to us, looking at the deep blue sky of a primordial dawn, past the tall trees. The lights in the porch are out, but we still can see them this way, in the penumbra.

INT. COURT ROOM. - AFTERNOON(03:00PM)

Several days have past since Alice's death. Jackson's trial has reached a conclusion, and he is now ready to receive his full sentence.

We find Jackson looking back in the direction of the elongated court seats, where the few people attending are waiting for the verdict. He is dressed in an orange jumpsuit, on his feet, next to his DEFENSE ATTORNEY (40~). His face is filled with longing, and for a moment, that longing lingers on Samantha, who establishes eye contact with him, immediately trying to prevent a sudden onset of tears.

Levy is present, waiting and wishing for all of it to be over. The other people are mostly from Levy's side of the family. A few policemen are distributed around the room.

Jackson faces the JUDGE (late-fifties) only after he begins speaking.

JUDGE
Mr. Hayes, after hearing all the words from the witnesses to this

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

case, and attending to the referred fragility of your mental state at the time of the incident, i do believe there are certain pertinent considerations to be taken in account when deciding whether mitigating factors should or not apply... Tending to the fact that there is no legitimate way of ascertaining with a reasonable degree of certainty what actually went on in that boat, other than your rather dubious personal take on the matter, we are left with little to work with... You have made a confession, and you have given your version of what happened, and as far as i can tell it was an honest assessment on your part... and i commend you for that. But Mr. Hayes, I do believe that you can and could very well distinguish what is right from what is wrong, and i also do believe that your purported mental state at the time is not in any way sufficient to completely exonerate you from taking in responsibility for what has happened. I do not think there was a premeditated intent on your part to commit murder, but there was nonetheless a considerable amount of reckless conduct on your behalf, and as a result from it, a person's life was taken. And so the court, in balancing in all of these factors, is going to ascribe to you the sentence as follows: you are to be incarcerated in the --- department of corrections for a fixed sentence of no less than eight years, followed by an indeterminate time period of seven years, making for a total unified sentence of fifteen years on the count of second degree murder. Mr. Hayes, you have a right to appeal your conviction and sentence, with the court of appeals- if you can't afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you, and that attorney will be equipped with the necessary records required to handle your appeal. That request

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

has to be made within forty-two days.

(beat)

This has been a painful and very unfortunate case to administer, and i wish all of the involved a full and timely mental recovery. That is all, ladies and gentleman, court dismissed.

As the judge speaks, Jackson gradually lets go of his former expression and assumes a more composed stance. He stubbornly looks down at the stand throughout the sentencing.

As soon as the judge is done, Levy gets up and exits the courtroom, followed by the people that are with him. Kevin is not there.

Samantha stays in her seat, her eyes on Jackson's downward gaze as he is accompanied by a police officer to a side door. He does not look up. You can read guilt and despair in her face.

She gets up, leaves.

EXT. COURT HOUSE - AFTERNOON(03:00PM) - CONTINUED

Samantha walks down the steps of the courthouse. The bright sun hits her full on, hot and confronting.

She makes her way to a bench nearby, on the sidewalk; sits down. She wipes tears from her eyes with the back of her hand. Her face is swollen with effort and heat.

On the other side of the avenue, we can see a few stores, a coffee shop, a dog, sitting in an upright position next to a hydrant. People walk by.

INT. JAIL CELL - AFTERNOON(07:00PM)

Jackson sits himself down against one of the walls in his cell. Opposite him, there is a small window. Golden sun goes through it; goes to him; marks his tranquil chest. He notices it.

He gets up and walks to a corner, away from the light. He sits down once more, and resumes looking at the window. It gets nearer and nearer.

INT/EXT. SMITH'S CAR (CUL-DE-SAC) - EARLY DAWN (FLASHBACK)

JACKSON (V.O.)

(murmuring rhythmically)

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight- two, three, four,

(MORE)

JACKSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 five, six, seven, eight- three,
 four, five, six, seven, eight-
 four, five, six, seven, eight-
 five, six, seven, eight- six,
 seven, eight- seven, eight- eight-

We see the house that belonged to the old couple once more, as Jackson and Alice and Samantha and Levy and Kevin drove past it a couple of weeks ago. They are all together again now, in the jeep, driving past it one more time. The prison cell's late afternoon colors corrugating well with the early dawn inside Jackson's flashback.

Jackson is looking at the green metal grates of the dog kennel in the house's backyard, same as when they drove by (they are now clearer), but where there used to be nothing but emptiness looking back, now stands the muzzled greyhound, meeting him with tiny black eyes.

JACKSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 One, two, three, four, five, six,
 seven, eight- two, two, three,
 four, five, six, six, seven,
 eight- three, four, four, five,
 six, six, seven, seven, eight-
 five, four, five, six, seven,
 seven, eight, eight- five, six,
 five, six, seven, eight- six,
 seven, eight- seven, seven, eight-
 eight- eight-

The image gets brighter and brighter as it fades away from him. It gets brighter and brighter and brighter until it totally dissolves into white light...

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY(12:00AM) EIGHT YEARS LATER

The downturned rectangular window of a tall building bounces light at us from above, gleaming like a phosphorus grenade shooting a stream of content into our eyes; Jackson's eyes...

He tosses his head away from the projection, and after a moment they come into focus; into a busy street, a busy day at noon, in the downtown of a metropolitan area. He has a duffel bag with him, and he has just finished doing his mandatory fixed sentence of eight years. He was released a few hours earlier, and is now wandering around through the city.

He looks at the building: tall, business-like, like the last one he had designed. He looks around him. Sees a bus pulling up to a bus stop in a corner of the intersection farthest away from him; a few people getting in. He goes towards it.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET (BUS STOP) - DAY(12:15AM)

Jackson is waiting for the next bus that comes by on that same stop. After a moment, it arrives, and an old lady next to him carrying a couple of plastic bags signals the driver to stop. He does so and they both mount the steps.

INT/EXT. BUS/CITY STREETS - DAY(12:15AM) - CONTINUED

Jackson sits himself on one of the front seats, and settles his posture up against the window. He hasn't ridden the bus in more than a decade, and his spent, older-looking face appears to greatly enjoy the experience: his tired eyes move from one object to another with fluidity, and his cheek bones perk up, lifting his lips in a half-smile whenever he looks above him. There's some people talking inside the bus, somewhere behind him, indistinctly. Traffic sounds; the sound of the engine; a radio...

After a few moments elapse, he presses the stop button and exits.

EXT. CITY STREETS (JACKSON'S DESIGNED BUILDING) - DAY(12:30PM) - CONTINUED

Jackson steps out onto the street with his neck already bent towards the other side of the road, like he couldn't have waited any longer to finally contemplate his finished work: alive, out of the framework of fantasies and dreams, now a part of so many people's lives. He slowly walks to the plastic siding of the bus stop without taking his eyes off the building, and leans on the front metal pole, taking his time to look at it from top to bottom.

Some people passing him by on the sidewalk notice his interest, and look upwards as well, although they still continue to move just as they were. Vehicles drive by at a reasonable speed with nearly non-existent trails of shadow following them from behind. The panorama is bright; sunny.

Nothing like Jackson had seen before, in his distress.

He grabs his bag, crosses the street and enters the building.

INT. JACKSON'S BUILDING (LOBBY) - DAY(12:30PM) - CONTINUED

The lobby is large, circular, elegantly furnished. He looks around, notices the objects, the people. He heads for one of the elevators.

INT. JACKSON'S BUILDING (LAST FLOOR) - DAY(12:30PM) -
CONTINUED

The slick metal doors open up, and Jackson exits, alone. He is now on the last floor that the elevators have access to.

He steps out to a large squared area, with nothing but doors going around the walls; a few pots with plants inside of them, here and there.

Designed as a big conflagration of store-rooms, Jackson walks the floor without meeting anybody. He heads for a narrow hallway to the left of the main space, and at the end of it he finds another door. Behind it, the building's main staircase. He goes up the stairs, and lets the door shut with a loud thud.

INT/EXT. JACKSON'S BUILDING (ROOF) - DAY(12:30PM) - CONTINUED

The maintenance door to the roof is wide open. He walks out, to the scorching sun. He stands on a low sloping roof, a typical feature of that type of building. Drains, A/C units, ventilation shafts, hot and buzzing. He goes towards the edge, carrying his bag, and gives a good look at the wide expanse of sky descending all around him. For a number of miles, Jackson stands the tallest.

We hear the faint smacking sound of the door, shutting tight a floor below. He leans over the edge and peers down at the glazed windows; at the street.

A woman crosses the frame of the maintenance door, lighting a cigarette as she steps onto the roof. Jackson brings his head back from the external side of the ledge, and looks behind him. Her striking resemblance to Samantha locks him in position. He stares.

She is dressed in some sort of cleaning overalls. Notices him, his bag, his stare. She waits for a bit, just enough for it to become unconformable.

CLEANING LADY
(voice raised)
Hello...

JACKSON
Hi.

Beat. He looks back towards the city.

CLEANING LADY
Do you work here?

Her voice sounds close to Samantha's, but not quite. It's rougher than hers; it displays a bitter edge.

JACKSON
I'm just visiting...

She says nothing. She doesn't trust him. He turns to her.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
...I'm visiting the place.

CLEANING LADY
Huhmm... Ok.

Beat.

JACKSON
(grinning)
I think i made the design for it.

CLEANING LADY
You think?

JACKSON
Yeah- as strange as that sounds.
I'm an architect.
(beat)
Now i'm not so sure if this is
mine.

Beat.

CLEANING LADY
Is it very different from what you
imagined it would be?

JACKSON
I imagined it a couple different
ways...

CLEANING LADY
Maybe they didn't build it like
you wanted to.

Beat.

JACKSON
(smiles)
Maybe... Or maybe some time needs to
go by before it becomes what i
saw.

She says nothing.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
Do you work here?

CLEANING LADY
I work alotta places.

beat.

JACKSON
 So you're not here everyday.
 Trusting him less and less.

CLEANING LADY
 No.

JACKSON
 That's good...
 LONG BEAT as he looks away from her, the sun making him
 wince.

CLEANING LADY
 You talk like that to people who
 do work here every day, and
 they're gonna kick you out.

JACKSON
 ...I don't see why they'd do that.
 Beat.

CLEANING LADY
 You strike me like the type of
 somebody who sees what they wanna
 see...

She flicks the partially smoked cigarette off to the side.

CLEANING LADY (CONT'D)
 (tossing her head towards
 the door)
 I gotta go...

She leaves. He turns to the city once more; his hair blown
 back by strong currents of air. He exhibits a disconnected
 smile, which makes his face seem to change into something
 slightly repulsive. We hear the door shut.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS/ CAR LOT - AFTERNOON(05:00PM)

Jackson walks along the side of a road that appears to be
 situated in the outskirts of town: more vegetation; small
 houses; a large dirt path running parallel to the main road,
 on the other side of a row of tall trees. Cars edge him by.

He comes up to a wide lot filled with multiple cars; marked
 with colorful signs that read: "NEW"; "USED"; "DIESEL". He
 crosses the open gate.

INT. CAR LOT OFFICE - AFTERNOON(05:00PM)

A YOUNG MAN (25) sits at the desk, writing on a piece of paper. As soon as Jackson walks in, he lifts his head. A tiny bell reverberates.

YOUNG SALESMAN
(looking bored)
Hi, what can i do ya for?

JACKSON
I'm here to buy a car.

The young man sets his pen down, and lifts himself from his chair, holding a smile.

YOUNG SALESMAN
(hand-gesturing forward)
Let's go, my friend. Follow me.

The bell rings once more.

INT/EXT. JACKSON'S CAR (CUL-DE-SAC) - EVENING(08:30PM)

Jackson is parked on a familiar road. We see the old couple's house up ahead, about 50 meters away, standing in the corner of the intersection, facing Jackson and his car.

The kitchen is lit from above, and the middle-aged man we saw before is leaning against the counter, talking to a WOMAN (48), that we presume to be his wife. A TEENAGE BOY appears into view, taking something from the table at the center of the kitchen. Jackson is dozing off in the partial darkness: the only source of light hitting the car is a tall yellow lamp on the other side of the sidewalk. No radio, no sound; just him, half-asleep behind the wheel from exhaustion.

INT/EXT. JACKSON'S CAR (CUL-DE-SAC) - EARLY DAWN(07:00AM)

We find Jackson still behind the wheel. He is wide awake now, watching the house.

After a few moments, the front door opens and the man comes out with the two teenagers. All of them older now. The teenagers have less colorful backpacks, and carry themselves more deliberately than last time we saw them: the giddiness of childhood replaced by a self-awareness that can both be bad and good, just as it's absence had also been bad and good.

The garage door opens and a family van comes out, with the woman in the driving seat. They all get in the car and drive off.

They pass Jackson by, who looks down at the wheel as they do so.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC (OLD COUPLE'S HOUSE) - EARLY DAWN(07:00AM)

He is on foot, walking by the sidewalk in front of the old couple's house. He moves to a certain angle, from which he is able to see the dog kennel. He stops, looking intently at it.

Jackson tries to approach the fence as inconspicuously as he can, and after a bit of a look around, he climbs over it into the backyard.

With small, careful steps, he advances towards the green kennel. Empty; closed: no dog, no food bowl, no water tray, nothing. Just an old and worn cement dog house in the northeast corner, and two large cement stalls sitting upright next to each other.

Jackson lingers for a moment, looking anxious and disappointed.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC (HAYES'S HOUSE) - EARLY DAWN(07:15AM)

Jackson is sitting by the curb, in front of his former house. The house has been sold to someone else; Samantha has moved. He looks at it. The sun shines partially upon the inclined roof. There is a car on the driveway.

Suddenly, Jackson gets up and walks in a brisk step towards the front door. When he gets near to it, - just a couple of paces off -, he notices a YOUNG BOY (4) in his pajamas, looking at him with curiosity from the living-room window.

Jackson stops in his tracks. At first, his face betrays surprise, - almost dismay -, but then it morphs into a kind, polite smile.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC (OLD COUPLE'S HOUSE) - EARLY DAWN(07:30AM)

We see Jackson's head and back peeking out backwards from the side of his car. He is in front of it, sitting on the curb, profiled in relationship to the old couple's house.

Behind him, an empty lot.

The muzzled greyhound comes into view from the cul-de-sac, cutting through the empty lot in order to approach Jackson.

He only sees him/hears him when he is at about four meters from where he sits.

Noticing that Jackson saw him, the greyhound stops. Jackson is paralyzed, staring at him. The greyhound approaches slowly, and Jackson turns towards his lean frame. He then sits on his haunches, and the dog comes closer, into arms-length.

Carefully, Jackson untethers the muzzle.

GREYHOUND
(gruff distorted voice,
enveloped in static)
Thank you.

The muzzle hangs from his limp hand. Jackson is not afraid; he is not confused. Jackson feels whole.

EXT. INTERSTATE ROAD - AFTERNOON(06:30PM)

He has been driving for almost two days straight now, across the country. His car rolls along an interstate, in the middle of a deserted area: nothing but iron rail, sand, and small shrubs on either side.

Eventually, what looks like to be a small city fully constructed out of pipes, tanks and towers, announces itself from the left, seemingly burning with heat in the low hanging sun: an oil-refinery. He takes an exit out of the interstate.

EXT. OIL REFINERY (PARKING LOT) - AFTERNOON(06:45PM)

Jackson stops his car somewhere in the enormous parking lot of the refinery. Rows upon rows of cars, shining in the sun.

He leaves the car, and tries to find his way through the maze, into something that looks like a reception area.

INT/EXT. OIL REFINERY (RECEPTION) - AFTERNOON(06:45PM)

The doors slide in front of Jackson, and he enters into a large room. Chairs all around; a circular table in the corner, with some pamphlets and magazines on it, and the large reception desk in front. The WOMAN (35~) behind the desk promptly lifts her head and looks at Jackson with a smile.

RECEPTIONIST
(sounding cheery)
Hi, good afternoon!

JACKSON
Hi. I'm looking for a man named
Levy Smith. I'm wondering if he
still works here- he's a chemist.

RECEPITONIST
Levy... Smith. I'll have to check,
i'm sorry.

JACKSON
That's fine...

EXT. OIL REFINERY (FRONT) - AFTERNOON(07:00PM)

Jackson paces about to the left of the entrance canopy to the reception area, going up and down the length of the pointed iron fence. On the other side of it, a tangle of pipes and containers of all sizes as far as the eye can see.

He glances at them from time to time.

The sliding glass doors open and Levy comes out, dressed in a white lab coat. He sees Jackson immediately.

Jackson starts walking in his direction. They stop at a good six meters from each other. Levy's hair is noticeably grayer.

JACKSON

I came here to talk- I don't want any trouble.

LEVY

(shrugs)

You won't get any trouble from me. Don't worry.

(beat)

Where are you stayin?

JACKSON

I've been driving the last couple of days... I just got here.

Levy presents him with a derisive smile.

LEVY

I'm doin five to one. Can you hang around till then?

JACKSON

Sure.

LEVY

We'll go to this place that's open all night.

JACKSON

All right.

LEVY

(walking back)

I'll meet you at the gate afterwards. I'm driving an olive colored sedan...

EXT. OIL REFINERY (GATE) - NIGHT(01:45AM)

Jackson is in the car, parked to the side of the prefabricated guard booth. We can see the fluorescent

lighting inside the shack, and the guard signaling to a car exiting the compound. Jackson glances at the clock: 01:48 in the morning. He shows no signs of being anxious.

After a while, a car puts his headlights on Jackson's side window and flicks them on and off. He starts the engine. It's the olive sedan.

Jackson follows.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - NIGHT(02:15AM)

Jackson trails Levy closely from behind. We see nothing but the car's twin tail of red light. Levy signals him to start veering off to the right, into a wide lot. They are approaching a place called "Nick's all nighters", written in yellow neon sign, placed high above the rustic facade.

They stop.

They exit the car silently. We can feel the tension between them. Levy walks in front, not looking back at Jackson, who takes the moment to study him, his demeanor, his body language.

INT. BAR - NIGHT(02:15AM)

Levy steps up next to a bar stool and leans on the counter.

LEVY
(to the bartender)
Hey, can i get a beer?

The BARTENDER (45) approaches them from the side, looking at Levy with a crooked smile.

BARTENDER
(to Levy)
How you doin?

Levy slowly waves his head from side to side.

The bartender looks inquiringly at Jackson.

JACKSON
...The same.

He walks away.

The two beers are put in front of them.

Levy takes a big sip, finally looks at Jackson.

LEVY
What do you wanna say to me?

Beat.

JACKSON
I wanted to see how you were... and
how Kevin's doin...

Levy clicks his tongue, turns his face away with a bitter smile.

LEVY
(scornfully)
What do you think, man?
(beat)
We keep movin along... It's in the
past, and nothing changes anything
now. Kevin's doing his second year
in college, and i'm still working
at the refinery.
(beat)
I've re-married.

Jackson doesn't look at him. After a brief silence, Levy continues.

LEVY (CONT'D)
When d'you get released?

JACKSON
Three days ago.

LEVY
Was it eight years..?

JACKSON
Yeah. It's over with now...

LEVY
(snickering)
Christ...

LONG BEAT.

JACKSON
I wanted to ask you if you know
where Samantha is.

LEVY
She's not at your place?

JACKSON
No, we sold that- it's not our
place anymore.

LEVY
I don't know then- last time we
talked, i didn't ask.

JACKSON
When did you talk to her?

LEVY
About a year ago. When Kevin got
into college.

Beat.

JACKSON
Was she with somebody?

LEVY
I think so...

Jackson smiles into the bottle.

JACKSON
That's good for her, i think
that's positive...

LEVY
(looking at Jackson)
Do you mean that? I remember you
always being so protective of her.

JACKSON
I mean it... She can protect
herself.

LEVY
That's not what i was sayin...

JACKSON
I got what you said.

A slight pause.

LEVY
(just a hint of sarcasm)
You've always been such a smart
guy...

Jackson looks at him.

LEVY (CONT'D)
No, i mean it. Smart fella.

JACKSON
I am what i am.

LEVY
(laughs)
That's such a stupid thing to say,
man.

Levy drinks the rest of his beer in a single take.

LEVY (CONT'D)
You still do that... You should cut
that shit down.

JACKSON
(smiling)
Words are hard to handle. Whether
you're the one saying them, or the
one hearing them, they don't
always come out the way you want
them to. I never said i was good
at it.

LEVY
Well, i'm not a fuckin philosopher
either- don't worry about it.
(calling out to the
bartender)
Nicky- Nick!

The bartender approaches with a smile.

LEVY
Are you Nick?

BARTENDER
Fuck off...

LEVY
(pointing to the beer
bottle)
Two more please.

JACKSON
What's Kevin majoring in?

LEVY
(some bitterness)
He's going to be an aeronautical
engineer, you figure that...
(beat)
He's very left brain, like his
dad... Likes things and things and
things, and things... and that's
most of what i see in him
nowadays... i should've re-married
earlier, i guess.

The bartender returns with the beers.

LEVY (CONT'D)
Nicky boy! No- Jeffy boy- there
you are.
(to the beers)
there they are.

Jeff the bartender lingers, smiling. Looks at Jackson.

JEFF
(to Levy)
New colleague?

LEVY
No- Alice's brother.

You can barely make out Jeff's surprised expression in the dim lights.

JEFF
Oh.
(to Jackson)
It's good meetin you. Sorry for
your loss.

Jackson says nothing.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(to Levy)
You need anything, you lemme know.

LEVY
We'll do.

Jeff moves away.

LEVY
So what'll you do now? You gonna
track Samantha down or something?

JACKSON
I don't plan to.

LEVY
(getting more serious)
I'm not going to give you her
phone number- just so you know in
advance.

JACKSON
That's fine.

Beat.

Levy continues to drink.

LEVY
(anger swelling up)
When did you become like this?
Huh? This morose, depressed, sad-
lookin man with barely anything to
say. I don't remember you this
way...

Levy swells down immediately after saying it, and looks somewhere else. Jackson's expression changes little.

JACKSON

That's just ignorance disguised as honesty.

Levy laughs.

LEVY

Is it? What am i being ignorant about?

Beat.

JACKSON

You're talking through a filter of emotion, and that diminishes your ability to perceive things the correct way. This isn't depression, nor a lack of things to say- not anymore, at least. I should say: honest ignorance... because you're expressing yourself in an honest manner, which then just becomes the glaring showcase for all the things that you're ignorant about.

Levy laughs again.

LEVY

Fight a question with an arrogant answer, in which nothing is answered.

Levy tanks his second beer.

LEVY (CONT'D)

Like i said, you cut that shit out, or else i'm leavin, got it? Hold that thought, i'm gonna take a leak.

(walking away from the counter)

You finish your drink!

Jackson is left alone at the counter, along with an older man sitting on a stool by the end of it. Jeff the bartender is leaning against the kitchen doorway, in front of the older man.

He steals a glance at Jackson, which then turns into a prolonged stare.

Jackson finishes one beer and begins with the second one.

INT. BAR - NIGHT(04:30AM)

The man in the stool is now gone. The bar has substantially quietened down. We can hear billiard balls slapping against each other from time to time in a backroom somewhere.

The empty beer bottles have been cleared out of the counter.

Jackson has one half-filled beer bottle in his hand. Jeff is pouring Bourbon in a small glass in front of Levy. He drinks it like a shot.

JEFF

Easy, boy...

Levy gets his bearings back.

LEVY

(to Jeff)

...That's it.

JEFF

What?

LEVY

(looking around)

This is. The effortlessness with which this place can recreate the drunken, beat-down mood is very impressive.

JEFF

That's cause your drunk.

LEVY

I'm not. It's still a longways...

(to Jackson)

You know that Rose came here only once, and she got it figured out instantly. Maybe that's where this judgment comes from, i can't remember. From her...

JEFF

I didn't meet her...

LEVY

(shaking his head)

You didn't. She doesn't fit in here. Her personality doesn't go for these types of places...

Jeff is a bit more tentative with Jackson around, sensing that the subject of women is a delicate one to touch, knowing something about these men's past.

JEFF

A special lady, huh?

Levy exhales some kind of laughter.

LEVY

Yeah... I'm talking shit, sorry.
She'll fit great wherever she
wants to.

(to Jackson)

You know, we've been fantastic to
each other for the last three
years,- and her smile lasts on her
face for ages, without ever
becoming disingenuous or... or
annoying. She imparts that on
other people, and i've never met
anybody like that.

Jackson looks at Levy with severity. The bartender moves
away.

LEVY (CONT'D)

(his voice breaking a
bit)

Someone can have an influence like
that over your life, it disarms
you, kind of makes you feel weak,
even if it does save you from a
bad stretch... 'n i was in a rut
motherfucker, let me tell you
that. I was in bad shape for a
long time. I should have re-
married earlier, like i said. It
could've spared us all from the
confusions, from the
misunderstandings, the badly
placed words and all that terrible
shit that does nobody any good.
Now... now it stayed in the past, it
coasted Jack, all's well like it
has to be.

(beat)

And you Jack, how was prison, was
it fun?

Jackson blinks but does not interrupt his gaze on Levy.

JACKSON

It wasn't fun.

They look hard at each other. Levy smiles. He's drunk.

JACKSON(CONT'D)

But you need something like that
in your life after you've become
what you did. It brought me closer

(MORE)

JACKSON(CONT'D) (CONT'D)
to myself and all that was
scattered around inside me--

LEVY
(slurring, smiling)
-again with the fucking talk, you
piece of-

JACKSON
--like shreds... I felt relieved
Levy, after it happened... all my
life i knew i'd become something
like this. I don't know where it
comes from or why it is the way it
is- i didn't asked for it- it
presented itself... and pushed into
me. Now things make more sense.
You get what it is that i'm
telling you?

Levy's face is seething with anger now, hearing this;
something that Jackson doesn't seem to realize, absorbed as
he is by his own need of externalization and catharsis.

LEVY
(making an effort to
control himself)
It pushed or you pulled?

JACKSON
I don't know. I think that it's
all the same. I wonder...

Beat.

JACKSON
Did my sister ever tell you that
our father predicted his own
death?

Levy's face changes into something approximating
bewilderment.

LEVY
And how did he do that?

Jackson shakes his head.

JACKSON
I guess it was something natural
in him- it was inside of him. And
at a certain point he had access
to it.
(Beat)
I think i've been granted access
to it as well.

Levy laughs, clearly shaken by emotion.

LEVY
(shouting)
Enough of this shit!! No more!

Jeff gives a start.

LEVY (CONT'D)
(breathing fast)
What is this? What do you want? Is this a different confession? Cause we all heard what you said back then. And i believed you... *I believed you*. I just thought you needed help, i see you still do... I felt really sorry for you, honestly. I felt fucking sorry for you. I continue to feel sorry for you right now.

JACKSON
(shaking his head)
Well, don't...

Levy looks at him in the eye, unsure of what to do or how to try to feel. His posture cools down.

LEVY
I wanna get out of here... let's get out of here.
(to Jeff)
Hey!

The bartender had been following the conversation from a distance, and he promptly springs from his stool.

EXT. NICK'S BAR - NIGHT(04:40AM)

We follow Jackson into his car. Nearby, Levy shuts the door to his own vehicle, and we see him through the side glass, staring down at something. Jackson starts the engine, and advances through the dirt over towards the same direction from where they came. After a little while, Levy comes following; dust flying everywhere, in a brown cloud of light.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - NIGHT/EARLY DAWN(05:00AM)

Jackson looks at Levy through the rearview mirror. He's just flipped the dome light on his car, and appears to be looking for something down on the floor. He comes up with a cell phone, which he then continues to hold against the steering wheel. Levy seems to be shaking his head and speaking to himself, holding the cell phone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DUSK (FLASHBACK/DREAM SEQUENCE)

We see Levy sitting on the couch like in the first scene of the movie, a cell phone hanging from his limp hand. Him, staring at Jackson.

The image burns out of view like a polaroid in reverse.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - NIGHT/EARLY DAWN(05:00AM)

Levy flips the dome light off, and lets the car slow down before suddenly increasing its speed. He hits Jackson as hard as he can on the right side of the car, the momentum strong enough to send it swerving off to the left, towards the deep ditch on the other side of the road. The nose of the vehicle hits the exterior slope full-on, which causes it to flip around, so that the car now points in the direction from where the two were coming from.

EXT. DESOLATE ROAD - NIGHT/EARLY DAWN(05:00AM)

Levy watches the car wreck from the top of the slope. It's dark. The only light coming from Jackson's car are the twin red ones in the rear. Levy waits. Waits. He descends slowly, trying not to slip as he makes his way down. We hear something dripping somewhere.

Levy flips the dome light on to reveal Jackson bent over backwards on top of the transmission clutch, a big head-sized dent on the front wind-shield. Jackson was not wearing a seat belt, and was thrown against it on impact, not violently enough to completely break through, but with sufficient force to partially dislodge it from its place.

Levy reaches in the car and grabs Jackson by the shirt, pulling him up in order to look at his face. His eyes are partially closed; he does not seem to be fully conscious of his surroundings. He has blood sliding down from the top of his head.

Levy grabs one of the shards of glass scattered around the car and jams it in Jackson's carotid artery. We could see that just before Levy stabs him, Jackson's face produces an instinctive reaction, like its preparing itself to receive the full brunt of a slap, wincing and slightly turning away from the incoming shard of glass.

We can hear a gurgling sound and see Jackson bleeding profusely for a couple of seconds. Nothing was said.

Levy climbs the slope back up again. We see the car once more, dimly lit and bloodied, Jackson's body fallen just as Levy found it, crumbled over the clutch.

From inside the ditch, we see the deep nautical blue sky of the early dawn as a background for Levy's pitch black

silhouette. His lower body indistinguishable from the black hills beneath. Wind turbines spin around languorously on top of them. There's something in the darkness hovering about Levy's silhouette. Very faintly, but we immediately think of the black figure.

He has his phone in hand, and for a second hesitates to do something with it. We hear him draw spit from his lungs, which he then lunges violently towards the car wreck. He presses his phone and pushes it against his ear. Waits for an answer.

LEVY (ON THE PHONE)
Hello ...I wanna report an accident.
(Beat)
Yes. I'm not hurt.
(Beat)
Yes.
(Beat)
I'm looking at him now.

Levy starts walking sideways, away from Jackson and the car.

LEVY
(faintly)
All right.

We can hear him talking indistinctly until only silence remains.

The turbines spin around softly on top of the black hills.

END