

ELIZABETH

Written by

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Elizabeth, New Jersey. Spring.

The crickets chirp and the raccoons rummage. The trees
sough and sway in cool Northern winds. A creek trickles
in the moonlight. A sprinkler *ticks-ticks-ticks*.

It's quiet.

It's four square miles of *quiet*.

It's four squares smiles thirty minutes from the center
of the world.

Who comes to Elizabeth seeking The City?

Who comes to Elizabeth seeking silence?

Who in Elizabeth never asked for either?

OPEN onto **SCOTS FARMS**, a convenience store, drab and dilapidated. Across its top: garish milkmaid icons on either side of cheesy red script. Dark spots--burned-out bulbs--all over. The "C" in "SCOTS" blacked out.

The place is *falling apart*.

THE CARETAKER (34) limps into the frame. His filthy long hair is knotted and shorn, his hand-me-down clothing worn to shreds, his shoelaces untied, his socks unmatched. We can practically *smell* him.

He's falling apart too.

CAMER STAYS EXTERIOR as **THE CARETAKER** enters **SCOTS FARMS**, goes straight up to the **CASHIER (Indian, 25)**. You think this guy would shoo **THE CARETAKER** out of the place.

Instead he welcomes him.

THE CARETAKER says nothing as the **CASHIER** puts a fifth of whiskey on the counter, wraps it in a brown bag, hands him a pack of cigarettes and a lighter.

THE CARETAKER swipes up the goods and limps out.

Outside, **THE CARETAKER** pulls out a cigarette, opens the fifth.

CLOSE UP on his face. He's got a full gray beard and tired, rawhide skin. But his EYES are striking: sensitive, youthful, and a deep green.

How *old* is he? *Who* is he?

THE CARETAKER lights the cigarette and puffs, takes a pull of the whiskey. A grin comes over his face as both enter his system ...

And then he's *laughing, cackling--shuddering*. The pleasure *overwhelms* him.

It disturbs *us*.

THE CARETAKER stumbles forward.

2 **EXT. UNION AVE. - NIGHT**

2

He turns the corner onto **UNION AVE.** This is the central artery of **ELIZABETH.** Yet on a Sunday night, everything is quiet, everything is still.

There's not a person in sight.

THE CARETAKER smokes and pulls, hums an unintelligible tune, laughs his crackling laugh. He passes a line of closed-up storefronts: pizza places, bagel shops, barbers, pharmacies, banks. Small-town stuff.

Out of nowhere, he lets out of a *scream* of joy. His voice echoes and reverbs all around.

He takes a pull and a puff, screams again.

He's the King of ELIZABETH.

For a time.

CLOSE UP ON HIS SCREAM AS WE SMASH TO:

3 **EXT. UNION AVE. - FLASHBACK TO '94 - DAY**

3

A **BOY (12)** on a bicycle *whips* around the corner onto the same sidewalk. It's daytime, and the streets are well-populated, the people dressed in vibrant 90's fashion. The stores have *barely* changed over the years.

The BOY weaves through people sliding out of his way, cursing at him as he passes: he just hollers back.

It's like THE CARETAKER's howl ... but different.

He rides on until the short strip of stores comes to an abrupt end, and the town's central municipal buildings--**CITY HALL, POLICE STATION**--rise up.

ELIZABETH is a *small* town.

He swerves left up another street.

CAMERA STILL ON THE CORNER AS WE SMASH TO:

4 **EXT. UNION AVE. - PRESENT - NIGHT**

4

THE CARETAKER stands at the same corner. He's trembling now--all over. There's *pain* in his eyes. *Fear.*

What *happened* to him?

(CONTINUED)

PAN to the municipal buildings, squat and drab like SCOTS FARMS: they haven't changed a bit either. The mottled fluorescent light of a high-end mega-supermarket--**WHOLE FOODS**--bleeds across the street.

It means WEALTH. It doesn't seem to fit with this town. But we'll come to understand its contradictions.

PAN CONTINUES: beside the WHOLE FOODS, also drenched in its light, we see a local store, its windows shuttered--a red FOR RENT sticker on its front--and above, an apartment.

Someone is sitting in the window.

THE CARETAKER looks towards them ...

5

INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - MARLENA'S ROOM - NIGHT

5

CLOSE UP on **MARLENA SANCHEZ (17)**, sitting at the edge of her bed, looking out at THE CARETAKER, cheap earbuds in her ears, some pop song playing loudly. She's a moony high school junior dreaming of college, life outside little ELIZABETH. But she's got an edge about her. She's *determined*. Just like her mother.

PAN to her room, filled with "American girl" things: posters of hyper-relevant pop icons; mounds of makeup on a dresser; bright clothes spewing out of a hamper ... but as the PAN continues another mound of things emerges, another bed--another *person*.

This is **GABRIELA SANCHEZ (9)**. She's fast asleep.

BACK on MARLENA, CLOSE UP. Her phone buzzes. She reads, smiles, and, after a pause, sends something back.

She looks out the window at THE CARETAKER, still standing there. She gives him a little wave.

Her phone buzzes again. She looks in at the screen. This time, her eyes go WIDE.

6

EXT. UNION AVE - PRESENT - NIGHT

6

With a gasp, then a trembly pull and swig, THE CARETAKER turns the corner.

REVEAL ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL as he turns. THEN--

SMASH TO:

7 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - FLASHBACK TO '94 - DAY** 7

The BOY swerves--and there's movement *everywhere*. Cars parking and pulling out, parents tearfully kissing and hugging their embarrassed teenage kids, older kids hanging by the bike racks, cliques swarming, splitting and reforming.

It's the first day of school. Anything is possible.

SMASH TO:

8 **INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - MARLENA'S ROOM - NIGHT** 8

MARLENA is in a silent frenzy, wildly sorting through her mess of clothes, the makeup on her bureau.

Nothing seems to work.

MARLENA

Shit.

GABRIELA stirs. MARLENA doesn't notice.

MARLENA

Calm down, Marlena. *Think.*

She picks up a few more things, decides on a lacy white blouse, jeans.

Another BUZZ: she pounces on her phone. She chews her finger, writes something back, and then throws the phone from her in disgust.

MARLENA

Bad ... so bad .. stupid, boring--

BUZZ: she picks it up ... and it's *fine*. All *fine*.

MARLENA

Okay! Okay--you're okay.

She gets picks eyeliner, blush, red lip gloss. She begins with her face.

GABRIELA stirs and sits up, rubs her eyes.

GABRIELA

Marlena?

MARLENA whips around, half her face done. She looks *clownish*.

(CONTINUED)

MARLENA

Shhhh.

But GABRIELA is up, intently watching. Learning.

GABRIELA

Why are you--

MARLENA hushes her (*she isn't being silent exactly*).

MARLENA

Gabriela! Shut UP!

MARLENA turns back to the mirror. She's quick but assured. She seventeen, and she can do her makeup.

9 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - PRESENT - NIGHT**

9

THE CARETAKER stands in the shadow of EHS.

He laughs his *split-open* laugh.

Pull, puff--he splits open in front of us.

ANGLE ON a *wrought-iron door, a stoop, behind him*.

SMASH TO:

10 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - FLASHBACK TO '94 - DAY**

10

The BOY pulls up to a bike rack, locks up his bike. He's in the thick of it now: kids scream and laugh, push and shove. Everyone's with another person.

But not the BOY. He's *alone*.

He sneaks through the crowd to the SAME wrought-iron door. He pulls out a book, **TREASURE ISLAND**, and sits on the SAME stoop.

He's scrawny, bony, awkward: sensitive.

Incapable of putting up a fight.

SMASH TO:

11 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - PRESENT - NIGHT**

11

THE CARETAKER pulls from the bottle with a kind of vehemence. A wild mood-shift again. He pulls out another cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

THE CARETAKER
Yo-ho ... Long John ... Long John
...

His voice is like *gravel*, like *dust*.

ANGLE ON a new building wing further up the street. It's modern, slick, steel-lined. It looks luminescent against the main building, an old military fort.

This contradiction, again. WEALTH, again.

SAME ANGLE ON: a car, a shiny black Mercedes, passing slowly behind the new wing ...

12 **INT. WOOSUK'S CAR - NIGHT**

12

WOOSUK KIM (52, Korean), in the Mercedes. WOOSUK works for some megalithic Asian company in **THE CITY**. He wears a well-cut suit, a nice gold watch; his hair is slicked back in a tight masculine cut. He's scowling, but a smile dances around the edges.

Right now he looks *spent*. It's been a *long* day of work.

WOOSUK smokes a cigarette out his window. Some American sports talk show plays over the radio.

Then his phone, thrown on the passenger seat, lights up.

It's a call from **HYUN-JI KIM (45)**, his wife. She lives in **SEOUL**. He works, saves money, provides an American education for his kids. But she's in **KOREA**. She's home.

It's been like this for years.

He lets the phone ring and ring ...

13 **INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - MARLENA'S ROOM - NIGHT**

13

MARLENA finishes with her makeup. She looks at her angles, then throws up her hands.

MARLENA
(mutters)
Fuckin' I don't know. I don't know
...

BUZZ. She checks it--and she's in a frenzy again, falling over herself. Making *noise*. It's not subtle.

GABRIELA watches her agape.

(CONTINUED)

MARLENA gets herself together and looks at herself in the mirror one last time. CLOSE UP on her reflection. She looks afraid, unsure. She's crossing a Rubicon.

Then she goes up to GABRIELA, grabs her face.

MARLENA
Gabriela, do not say *anything* to
Mama. Do you understand?

GABRIELA
Where are you going?

MARLENA
Out.

GABRIELA
But--

MARLENA
Gabriela. Not a *word*.

GABRIELA accepts this. MARLENA is her idol.

MARLENA grabs her phone and purse and sneaks out.

GABRIELA begins to cry. She doesn't know why.

14 **EXT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT**

14

WOOSUK pulls into his driveway. His is a split-level home, a little ugly.

Not what we would've expected.

WOOSUK flicks the cigarette, puts in a piece of gum, grabs his phone, and heads inside.

15 **INT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT**

15

WOOSUK takes his shoes, sets them beside a neat row of men's footwear. Beside is a jumbled mess of basketball shoes, white Keds, sandals--more.

WOOSUK goes over to the kitchen. He strips off his coat, lays it folded on the dining table as he passes. He opens the fridge and pulls out a SAMUEL ADAMS.

He examines the fridge door as he cracks open the beer. Photos of his young kids with HYUN-JI, photos of grandparents--scenes from their life in **SEOUL**.

BEDROOM HALLWAY

(CONTINUED)

He goes to his kids' bedrooms. Two closed doors. Light shines through a crack beneath one. The other is dark.

He knocks on the darkened door.

WOOSUK

Hyungsoo?

He knocks again, louder.

WOOSUK

Hyungsoo??

WOOSUK opens the door. It's a typical "American boy" room: laptop on a cluttered desk, posters of athletes on the walls, clothes on the floor, random crap all around.

But no one's there.

WOOSUK crosses the hall and swings opens the other door.

WHOOHYUN KIM (12), WOOSUK's young daughter, is sitting upright in her bed, dressed in pajamas, reading a book: **TREASURE ISLAND**. She is bright, mature. Poised. Her room is neat. Not really gendered.

WOOSUK

(in Korean)

Where is Hyungsoo?

WHOOHYUN

(in English)

I don't know.

WOOSUK

(in Korean)

It's a school night.

WHOOHYUN shrugs. WOOSUK whips out of the room, back towards the kitchen.

(O.S.) WHOOHYUN

Close the door!

WOOSUK doubles back, closes the door. He storms over to his coat, pulls out his phone, and calls **HYUNGSOO**.

The phone rings and rings ...

16 **INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - NIGHT**

16

HYUNGSOO KIM (17) is sitting in a parked car, a black Honda. **HYUNGSOO**, called **KEVIN** by his American friends, is attractive but thin, slick like his father. He's fashionably coiffed, fashionably dressed. He leans back confidently in his black-leather seat.

He's a player. He gets what he wants.

A white fluorescence shines in through the windshield: the **WHOLE FOODS** light. He's parked behind it.

He texts something to someone, slides open another messaging app. He's talking to a lot of people at once.

A call from "Dad" interrupts him. Dexterously he silences the call and continues typing.

HYUNGSOO does what he wants.

17 **INT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT**

17

The call goes to voicemail.

HYUNGSOO'S VOICEMAIL
Yo, this is Kevin. I'm busy or
don't want to talk to you. Leave a
message. Peace.

WOOSUK takes a long drink. He drops his arm and the bottle bottom hits the table with a clang.

But instead of the sound of the bottle hitting the wood, we hear a **GUN SHOT--**

AT GUN SHOT SMASH TO:

18 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - PRESENT - NIGHT**

18

THE CARETAKER is on his knees cowering. His half-smoked cigarette fizzles on the concrete.

THE CARETAKER
Don't ... don't ...

He *drools*, *simpers*. He's deathly afraid.

But there's no commotion, no echo of the shot ...

It's all in his head.

19 **INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

19

MARLENA tip-toes away from her room.

She passes into the kitchen, clean but full and cluttered. There's a small dining table pushed against a wall filled with family pictures, religious paraphernalia.

She tip-toes onward into a small living room. It's got an old cathode-tube-TV, two ratty-looking couches, a large portrait of Jesus on the wall. More photos.

Then she's at the door, white and blocky, several latches and bolts. There's a cross on the front. She delicately turns the locks and opens the door a hair.

With a turn she's gone. *Click - click - click.*

20 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT - CONT.**

20

THE CARETAKER hesitantly stands up. He wobbles, then stumbles away from the school, across the road and onto the school's soccer field. Across is **ELIZABETH PRESBYTERIAN**. It's a simple white building, austere.

THE CARETAKER takes a swig but misses his mouth. Whiskey sloshes onto the field. He's getting *drunk*.

The CHURCH seems to *glow* in the distance.

Then a **BOOM**, another **GUN SHOT**.

ON GUN SHOT SMASH TO:

21 **EXT. AFGHANISTAN - OPEN DESERT - FLASHBACK TO '01**

21

EXPLOSIONS - RIFLE FIRE - SMOKE - LOOSED EARTH - GUNSHOTS: it's all clang and spilling guts EVERYWHERE.

A DUST CLOUD rolls forward from the tumult and REVEALS:

THE CARETAKER (**18**) as a baby-faced soldier stumbling forward through the chaos of warfare. It's all too *massive* for him. The cacophony is overwhelming.

We see in those sensitive eyes: SENSORY OVERLOAD.

SMASH TO:

22 **INT. SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - DIANA'S ROOM**

22

DIANA SANCHEZ (42), MARLENA'S mother, lying in bed, *wide awake*. She looks older than she is. She's raised her two girls alone. And she is deeply exhausted for it.

OFF-SCREEN we hear the front door shut, the locks latch: *click - click - click*. At the sound, DIANA closes her eyes. She clutches at the rosary around her neck.

DIANA

En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo,
y del Espíritu Santo ...

She stops and sighs. It's not *enough* right now. She turns on her bedside light and sets the rosary aside. Her room is small, spartan: just photos and a cross on the wall, a dresser, a closet. The other side of her bed is neatly made, untouched.

No one has slept there. *Ever*.

DIANA sits up on the edge of her bed, picks up a picture on the nightstand. It's DIANA, MARLENA as a toothy 9 year-old, baby GABRIELA, and a big family behind, all smiling, hugging one another, arms interlocked.

Her *family*. Back home in the **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**. It's been years since she saw them all together.

She fondly runs a finger over their faces. Then she puts the photograph down, shuts her eyes.

23 **INT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT**

23

WOOSUK lifts his beer off the table, takes a long sip. His eyes are fluttering shut with exhaustion.

Then the phone rings. It's HYUN-JI.

WOOSUK's eyes snap open ...

He *has to* answer. Now.

He picks up.

WOOSUK

(in Korean)

Good morning, HYUN-JI.

24

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - NIGHT

24

HYUNGSOO texts, tweets, messages. He's leaned back in his cocky, nonchalant way. Just *waiting*.

Suddenly there's a *knock* on the passenger door window.

It's MARLENA giving a shy wave. HYUNGSOO slickly opens the locks and she climbs in. HYUNGSOO sits up, leans toward her. MARLENA just looks forward.

She's nervous, playing it coy. He's putting on moves.

HYUNGSOO
Hey, Marlena.

MARLENA
Hey, Kevin.

HYUNGSOO
It's a beautiful night ... you're beautiful.

MARLENA
Stop, I ... thanks.

HYUNGSOO
I like that shirt.

MARLENA
No, it's ... nothing, just some ... thing ...

A brief pause. HYUNGSOO just *looking* at her. MARLENA finally meets his gaze.

MARLENA
(laughing)
What?

HYUNGSOO looks away, like he *can't* keep looking.

HYUNGSOO
Nothin' ... nothin'.

Another pause. Is this *totally* contrived?

HYUNGSOO
Should we drive?

MARLENA
Okay.

He turns on the car. Music blasts. Hip-hop, heavy on the bass. HYUNGSOO revs the car a bit before pulling out. It's hypermasculine, but MARLENA likes it. She's new to this.

25

EXT. ELIZABETH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - NIGHT

25

THE CARETAKER, outside ELIZABETH PRESBYTERIAN. A sign reads: "ALL ARE WELCOME." There's a simple *white cross* illuminated by a lamp just beside it.

THE CARETAKER breaks into his hysterical laughter.

THE CARETAKER
All ... welcome ... all ...
WELCOME.

THE CARETAKER repeats this *over and over* until he's enraged, screaming with his whole body.

THE CARETAKER
ALL ... WELCOME.

He takes a pull, then spits at the sign. It's mostly booze.

THE CARETAKER
Ungrateful *country*.

Behind him, a car speeds by *blasting* music ...

26

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - NIGHT

26

MARLENA watches THE CARETAKER pass by. She waves again, but immediately feels awkward about it. She looks down at her pants, pinches something. Then she looks up at the dashboard, down at her phone--anything else.

HYUNGSOO drives slouched, left hand on the wheel, right hand on the gearshift, looking *cool*.

Suddenly the music stops. An iPhone ringer plays LOUDLY through the speakers. We see in the deck screen it's a call from someone named LUCAS.

HYUNGSOO scambles for his phone, ends the call quickly.

There's a brief silence.

MARLENA
Was that Lucas--

She's interrupted by the music *blasting* back on. HYUNGSOO gives her that *look*.

Then the music stops. LUCAS again.

(CONTINUED)

HYUNGSOO

Fuck.

HYUNGSOO picks up the phone. While he's fussing he turns a corner, stops at the red light.

27

EXT. LIBERTY RD. - NIGHT

27

THE TRAIN TRACKS run through this street. ELIZABETH turns into a different place beyond them, a place of profuse wealth. *Serious money.*

HYUNGSOO

(on the phone

Yo, what ... nah, I don't right now
... I don't know ... *because I*
don't know ... yeah, he might ...
aight.

HYUNGSOO hangs up.

MARLENA

Was that Lucas ...

HYUNGSOO

Yup.

MARLENA

(a beat)

I didn't know you talked to him.

HYUNGSOO

Sometimes.

MARLENA doesn't say anything.

HYUNGSOO

Yeah, he can be kind of a dick.

MARLENA

I ... wasn't going to say that.

HYUNGSOO

(laughs)

Yeah, you were.

Music blasts again. The light turns green. HYUNGSOO zooms off up the dark hill, winding up into **THE HILLS**.

LUCAS SCHWARTZ (17), skinny, blonde-haired, jewish--mean-looking. He's flopped upside down on a leather couch in his beautifully-furnished basement: big TV, couches everywhere, every new game console, a ping-pong-table, etc. A bong sits on the table, still smoking.

He's got his phone to his face.

LUCAS

Aight ... word ... peace.

LUCAS hangs up the phone, drops it. His eyes are bloodshot. It's not just the blood rushing to his head.

LUCAS

(screams) FUUUUUUCK.

REUBEN CARTER (17), a lanky black kid, sits upright on another couch, playing some game on his phone. He is intensely focused. His eyes are bloodshot too.

REUBEN

Call Vin.

LUCAS

Texted him.

REUBEN

Nothing?

LUCAS

Nada.

REUBEN

Kyle.

LUCAS

Out.

REUBEN

Seb.

LUCAS

It's a *fuckin'* drought, man.

REUBEN looks up from his phone at LUCAS.

REUBEN

Carly Vaccarino?

REUBEN and LUCAS look at each other. Then they burst into laughter.

(CONTINUED)

LUCAS
(laughing)
Copping ... fucking ... from ...
fucking ... Carly ... fucking ...
Vaccarino.

REUBEN
Yo but what if she's GOT? It's
probably DANK.

They laugh even harder.

LUCAS
YO! Fuck it I'm calling her.

REUBEN
Yo, *what?*

LUCAS clambers upright. He holds out the phone, makes a show of finding her contact.

REUBEN
Come on, man. She'll probably cry
or some shit.

LUCAS
... yuuuup.

He hits call.

29

INT. THE VACCARINO'S HOME - CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

29

CARLY VACCARINO (17), New-Jersey Italian, olive-skinned, overweight. She's laying in her bed, headphones in, her laptop open in front of her. She's online-shopping, humming to herself, kicking her legs. Her room is simple, middle-class, *normal*.

Her cell phone, face up beside the laptop, BUZZES. An unknown number. She ignores the call. But the phone *buzzes again*. Unknown. CARLY takes off her headphones. She ignores the call. Immediately they call back. CARLY gets up, sits at the edge of the bed. She decides to pick it up.

CARLY
Who is this?

CLOSE-UP on CARLY. We see only her side of the conversation. As she realizes she's the butt of the joke her arm falls over her stomach, as if trying to hide her weight.

(CONTINUED)

CARLY

Lucas ...

(flustered)

Um, hey, it's Carly? Um, though I guess you know that ... what am I ... uh, shorts, a t-shirt, it's Sunday night, I'm just ...

(blushing))

do I ever ... no, my family, um, no it's a church thing, no, I ... send a pict-- ... I could, I-- ... Oh, no ... No, I guess I didn't think you *actually* wanted me to ... yeah, I mean, why would you, yeah, that's so weird ... do I have weed? No, I've never even smoked ...

The call ends abruptly. CARLY looks at her phone. She swallows hard.

She doesn't want this to affect her. She *won't* let it.

CARLY

Idiots.

She throws the phone behind her. Opens her laptop.

Is she going to cry? No. Not this time. Not for *this*.

30

INT. HYUN-JI'S APARTMENT - SEOUL - MORNING

30

HYUN-JI, sitting at a granite-topped table in a clean, modern-looking kitchen. We can see out the window: this apartment room is very high-up. SEOUL thrums below.

HYUN-JI is a thin woman, serious-looking, but pretty and youthful. Her hair is up in a tight ponytail. She's dressed in a stylish business-casual piece.

INTERCUT HYUN-JI AND WOOSUK, SOEUL AND ELIZABETH.

They speak KOREAN with one another.

HYUN-JI

It's late for you.

WOOSUK

Not too late.

HYUN-JI

Was it a long day of work?

(CONTINUED)

WOOSUK

Yes.

HYUN-JI's face does not change. This is WOOSUK's manner. He does not elaborate on work.

HYUN-JI

How is Whoohyun?

WOOSUK

In bed. Reading.

HYUN-JI

What is she reading now?

WOOSUK

(in English)

Treasure Island.

It's near-perfect English. HYUN-JI smiles a thin smile. She feels two ways about this.

HYUN-JI

And is that on her syllabus?

WOOSUK

I'm ... not sure.

HYUN-JI

Your English is getting better.

WOOSUK

Whoohyun's is perfect. You can barely--

He stops himself. Takes a pull of his beer.

HYUN-JI

And her Korean?

WOOSUK takes another sip.

WOOSUK

She's getting good marks at Hagwon.
And school.

HYUN-JI

Of course she is.

A pause. They do not want to mention HYUNGSOO, the black sheep of the family. But it must happen.

(CONTINUED)

HYUN-JI
And Hyungsoo?

WOOSUK
Hyungsoo ... has many friends.

HYUN-JI frowns. She knows what this means.

HYUN-JI
Where is he right now?

LONG BEAT as WOOSUK finishes his beer. There can be no lying about this.

WOOSUK
I don't know.

SMASH TO:

31 **INT. ELIZABETH HIGH CLASSROOM - FLASHBACK TO '94 - DAY** 31

The BOY (12) stares out a window. The class is going on behind--WHITE NOISE.

What is the BOY dreaming about? Anything but here.

SMASH TO:

32 **INT. ELIZABETH HIGH CAFETERIA - FLASHBACK TO '96 - DAY** 32

The BOY (14), eating alone. Even ganglier now. But older. He's got TREASURE ISLAND in his lap.

Someone walking by flips his juice carton. It spills all over his food, his lap. Onto the book.

SMASH TO:

33 **EXT. ELIZABETH HIGH SCHOOL - FLASHBACK TO '98 - DAY** 33

The BOY (16) wheels his bike away from the SCHOOL. Kids pour out of the doors. End of the school day.

He hops on his bike, gets some speed. He tries his brakes. They're not working. He panics, wheels over to the grass just adjacent. But it's not enough: there's *nothing* else to do but fall over, to bail.

He lands awkwardly, on his ribs. Breathless, he looks at his brake-wires from the ground. They've been *cut*.

SMASH TO:

34

EXT. ELIZABETH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH - PRESENT - NIGHT

34

THE CARETAKER has his middle finger up to the school.

THE CARETAKER

FUCK you.

He spits again, onto the sidewalk. Then he stumbles around the corner.

LIBERTY ROAD INTERSECTION.

He arrives at the TRAIN TRACKS. The traffic light is red--every surface seems to reflect it back at him.

The tracks repulse him--he cannot go BEYOND them. He shakes. Takes a *big* pull.

THE CARETAKER

Un ... grateful ... country ...

THE CARETAKER takes a left as the light turns *green*.

35

INT. LUCAS'S PARENTS CAR - NIGHT

35

JULIE SCHWARTZ (55) and **IVAN SCHWARTZ (52)** drive across the **GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE**. IVAN at the wheel.

JULIE is red-haired and sharp-featured, severe. She doesn't work anymore: she intervenes in local politics.

IVAN is gray-haired, an immigrant from the CZECH REPUBLIC. He's a surgeon in the CITY. A successful one. He has a slight accent.

They're red-cheeked, jovial, more tipsy than they think. They were just at the OPERA.

JULIE

The Soprano--what's her name ...
something--wasn't her aria just,
oh, sublime?

IVAN

And her dress. The gold, the satin,
the ribbing ... she's just
... *large* ...

JULIE

Don't be rude. One must be that
size to ... project.

(CONTINUED)

IVAN

What? She was large and
magnificent. And the baritone--

IVAN sings something from THE MAGIC FLUTE, impersonating the
baritone. It's silly but not bad. JULIE laughs.

JULIE

You look like the gentleman sitting
next to us ... What's his name?

IVAN

Mr. Sarkisian? I took out his
kidney three years ago.

JULIE

You did not.

IVAN

I did! Could practically smell the
vodka wafting off it ...

JULIE

... would he have died?

IVAN

(cheerfully)

He still will. Like everyone.

JULIE

Would he have died if you hadn't
taken the liver out?

IVAN

Probably.

JULIE

How long?

IVAN

Few months. Maybe.

JULIE

And he's lived ...

IVAN

Three years. He'll have plenty
more.

JULIE looks at him with some kind of awe. She *still* doesn't
understand how he can think like this.

She looks back out the window.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE
It's a beautiful night ...

36

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR

36

They drive through curving streets lit by the odd streetlight. We can see the mouths of *long driveways*, *cast-iron gates*, flashes of huge mansions' outlines.

The CITY wealth collects *here*.

As if in deference to something, HYUNGSOO turns the music down. MARLENA studies his movements out of the corner of her eye. She takes the chance to speak.

MARLENA
It's so weird being here ... with you.

HYUNGSOO
Yeah?

MARLENA
Yeah ... like we've talked--or, like, texted ... a lot.

HYUNGSOO
True.

MARLENA
And ... I really like talking to you.

HYUNGSOO
Yeah. I like talking to you too.

An awkward pause. *Quiet* in the car. HYUNGSOO's phone buzzes once, twice. He finally silences it.

MARLENA
You talk to a lot of people.

HYUNGSOO
I'm a people person.

HYUNGSOO quickly realizes this *wasn't* smooth, and he's confused by himself. Why's he messing up?

HYUNGSOO
My dad says that just means I don't like doing homework ... Tiger Dad, or whatever.
(then, awkwardly)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

HYUNGSOO (cont'd)
You, like, don't know your Dad,
right?

MARLENA smiles. This is the side of HYUNGSOO she likes.

MARLENA
Nah, I don't remember a man being
around ever ... well ...
(laughs)
I don't know why I'm telling you
this! Okay, I remember this guy,
one time, maybe when I was 4? Or 5?
Like, walking around in a robe?

They both laugh.

MARLENA
This was in the DR ... must've
been. He had like this black robe
with green stripes ... it was so
ugly. I hated it even then ... I
remember him tying the two belt
things around his waist, picking up
a mug of coffee in our kitchen, and
... and that's it.

There's a long silence. It's HYUNGSOO's turn to talk.

HYUNGSOO
Do you, like, still have it?

MARLENA
What?

HYUNGSOO
The robe.

MARLENA
Uh, no? Why would I?

HYUNGSOO
I don't know ... my dad has one
just like it.

MARLENA
(laughs)
Yeah?

HYUNGSOO
Swear to god ...

(CONTINUED)

MARLENA
That's weird ...

Another pause. HYUNGSOO is tense. What does MARLENA think of this?

Then she laughs.

MARLENA
You're *funny*.

HYUNGSOO
Yo but seriously, it's, like, the ugliest robe imaginable.

Their mixed LAUGHTER as the scene changes--

37 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - NIGHT**

37

Huge maple trees arch above the street. Medium-sized homes on either side.

THE CARETAKER stops beside one: a ranch-home. There is some "Heritage" plaque next to it. The property is demarcated by a rotting wood fence.

THE CARETAKER sets his bottle on top of a fence pike, balances it. He waves his hands like he's performing a kind of magic trick. Then he spits, pulls out another cigarette. He flicks on the lighter.

CLOSE UP ON HIM looking into the flame--

SMASH TO:

38 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - FLASHBACK TO '96 - DAY**

38

The BOY (12), outside this very house. No plaque, then. He's holding a saxophone case. He's walking home from band practice, humming some sort of fanfare.

Suddenly, bikes at his side. Two kids, lean and mean, get off. **BULLY #1 (16)** tries to rip the saxophone case out of his hand. **BULLY #2 (16)** pushes him around.

Cars whiz by. It's rush hour. This happens *fast*.

SMASH TO:

39 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - PRESENT - NIGHT** 39

THE CARETAKER stares at the fire, muttering something. We can't tell what.

SMASH TO:

40 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - FLASHBACK TO '96 - DAY** 40

BULLY #1 has the BOY in a headlock, dangerously close to the road. Cars are honking, slowing as they pass.

BULLY #2 pulls the case from the BOY. He won't let go.

BULLY #2
Let GO, faggot!

The BOY spits at BULLY #2 in a spasm of rage. Right in his face.

BULLY #2 punches the BOY in the stomach, grabs his throat. He pulls a lighter from his pocket, raises it to the BOY's face.

BULLY #2
Get his hands.

BULLY #1 changes his grip to a full nelson. BULLY #2 raises the lighter to the BOY's lips.

BULLY #2
Eat fire, faggot. EAT IT.

CHOPPY, SUBJECTIVE: a car's *screech* and *swerve*--stern adult voices--the case on the side of the road--honking all around--the BOY touches his lips--BULLIES give him the middle finger while being dragged away ...

SMASH TO:

41 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - PRESENT - NIGHT** 41

THE CARETAKER
Eat fire, faggot ... eat fire,
faggot ...

Then THE CARETAKER cackles, swings his arms, knocks into the wooden post ... the bottle quivers ... he sets it still with both of his hands.

He picks it up and takes a *deep* swig.

42

INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - DIANA'S ROOM - NIGHT

42

DIANA checks her phone, on the bedside table. Nothing from MARLENA--she wishes there were. She checks her email. It's all junk: online dating, phony sales on kitchenware, something about a church.

She sets the phone down and decides to *just be still*. The sounds of spring night come in around her--and the electrical hum of WHOLE FOODS. It seems to *loom*, somehow.

And then, underneath it, a voice ...

It's GABRIELA.

DIANA tip-toes to the girls' room, listening. GABRIELA's voice clarifies. DIANA puts her ear to the door. She hears, in English:

(O.S.) GABRIELA
Because I said so, Marlenaaaa ...
no, you listen to me. It's late and
it's *dangerous* ... I don't care
about your stupid makeup, I have
makeup *too* ...

DIANA smiles, and she almost enters. But this is a parenting moment. She sets a frown on her face first.

Conversation is in SPANISH.

DIANA
Gabriela?

GABRIELA sits up. DIANA looks at MARLENA's empty bed. She *tries* to get angry about it.

DIANA
Gabriela, *where* is your sister?

There's something lacking in it. GABRIELA can't tell. She shakes her head, scared.

DIANA
Gabriela, answer me when I ask you
a question. Where is your sister?

GABRIELA
I don't know.

DIANA hides her surprise well.

(CONTINUED)

DIANA
You don't know? What, did she
disappear in a puff of smoke?

GABRIELA frowns. She promised she wouldn't tell.

GABRIELA
I was asleep.

DIANA
Asleep?

GABRIELA
I didn't see. I was tired. I didn't
wake up.

DIANA
Are you lying to me?

GABRIELA swallows hard.

GABRIELA
Yes, Mama.

DIANA
Where did she go, Gabriela?

GABRIELA
I don't know.

DIANA hesitates. She knows this will be painful to GABRIELA,
but she walks toward the door.

GABRIELA
Am I in trouble?

DIANA pauses.

DIANA
No.

GABRIELA
Is Marlina in trouble?

Suddenly she doesn't know, she doesn't want to watch her
daughter cry. Suddenly she *can't* deal with this.

DIANA
I don't know.

DIANA leaves abruptly. She leans against the door.

Yes, she's tired. So. Tired.

(CONTINUED)

She goes over to the kitchen.

She sits down at the table. The WHOLE FOODS light illuminates the wall full of family photos.

CLOSE UP on a portrait of her mother.

DIANA gesticulates at it.

DIANA

What? WHAT?

DIANA waves a hand. Then her head falls into her hands.

43

INT. LUCAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

43

LUCAS is *still* laughing.

REUBEN is *not*. He hates this. But LUCAS has done a lot for him.

LUCAS

She actually *told* me what she was wearing ... what are you *wearing*?

(mocking CARLY)

Uh, shorts. Uh, I've never even *smoked*.

This sets him off again. REUBEN doesn't say a word.

LUCAS

Yo but what if she had *actually* sent the pics? What *if* I had gotten Carly *fucking* Vaccarino to actually send *nudes*.

LUCAS wants a response from REUBEN.

REUBEN

That would've been nuts.

LUCAS sits up on the couch.

LUCAS

What? It would've been *what*?

REUBEN

Hilarious, man.

LUCAS

It would've been *fucking* hilarious. Man, who would want to see them?

(CONTINUED)

REUBEN
Probably everyone.

LUCAS
Probably everyone.

REUBEN goes back to his game. LUCAS, oblivious to REUBEN, picks up his phone.

The wheels are turning.

LUCAS
I'm thinking ... there's gotta be
weed in Burgher.

Now REUBEN looks up, surprised.

BURGHER is the town over. It's poorer, closer to the state's inner cities. There are no HILLS there.

REUBEN
Who do you know in Burgher?

LUCAS
I've got a few names.

REUBEN
Who?

LUCAS
Don't worry about it.

LUCAS goes back to his phone, a smirk on his face.

Then it dawns on REUBEN.

REUBEN
Nah, man.

LUCAS
Why not?

REUBEN
I said *nah*.

LUCAS
And why *not*? He's *your* cousin.

REUBEN
Yeah, but ... just don't. We'll get
high tomorrow like we do every day,
we'll--

(CONTINUED)

LUCAS
It's a *drought*, yo ... I'll tell
him you're with me. It'll be fine.

REUBEN
Yo, he's not that kind of--

LUCAS holds up his phone. The text is already sent.

LUCAS
Stop being a puss.

REUBEN shuts his eyes, rolls his head backward. He's too
high for this *shit*.

LUCAS's phone buzzes.

LUCAS
Fuck YES. He says he can't wait to
see you, cuz.

LUCAS gets up, grabs his car keys from the counter.

LUCAS
(commandingly)
Let's go, *puss*.

44

INT. HYUN-JI'S ROOM - SEOUL - MORNING

44

INTERCUT BETWEEN HYUN-JI AND WOOSUK.

HYUN-JI keeps looking at her wristwatch.

HYUN-JI
It's a school night.

WOOSUK looks worn-out. No fight left.

WOOSUK
Yes.

HYUN-JI
And Hyungsoo is not home.

WOOSUK
He is not.

HYUN-JI
Have you called him?

WOOSUK
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

HYUN-JI

Yes?

WOOSUK

He didn't answer.

HYUN-JI

Have you tried again?

WOOSUK

I'm speaking to you.

HYUN-JI's wristwatch *goes off*.

HYUN-JI

... when did you get home from work?

WOOSUK

Ten minutes ago.

Why does he stay so late? She thinks of something.

HYUN-JI

... who was with Whoohyun?

WOOSUK

I thought it would be Hyungsoo.

HYUN-JI

So Whoohyun was alone.

WOOSUK

Yes.

HYUN-JI

(getting angrier)

When did Hyungsoo go out? Did he at least tell you *when*?

WOOSUK

I have heard nothing from him all day.

HYUN-JI

Nothing?

WOOSUK

Nothing.

WHOOHYUN creeps out of her room and into the hallway. She's listening in. WOOSUK has not noticed her.

(CONTINUED)

WOOSUK
I thought that meant he was still
here. Why would I think--

HYUN-JI
Did you check?! Whoohyun is a 9
year-old girl!

WOOSUK
I checked. He did not respond.

(O.S.) WHOOHYUN
(in Korean)
I was fine.

WOOSUK looks up at his daughter.

WOOSUK
One moment, Hyun-ji.

WOOSUK lowers the phone from his ear.

WOOSUK
When did your brother leave?

WHOOHYUN
Not long ago. I told him he could
if he wanted to.

WOOSUK sighs.

WOOSUK
You're very honest, Whoohyun.

WHOOHYUN
But I'm fine.
(bragging)
I just read like half my book.

WOOSUK
That's very good, Whoohyun.
(beat)
I wish I could tell your mother I
believe you could stay here by
yourself.

WHOOHYUN
Why can't you?

WOOSUK
It's other people I worry about.

WHOOHYUN takes a second to consider this.

WHOOHYUN
... I understand.

WOOSUK
You might ... would you go to your
room? I have to speak with your
mother.

WHOOHYUN
Okay, Dad.

WHOOHYUN obediently returns to her room. WOOSUK takes a
second--he loves speaking with his daughter.

WOOSUK
(to HYUN-JI)
That was Whoohyun. She's fine.

HYUN-JI
Fine?

WOOSUK
She was just reading. She was safe.
Hyungsoo didn't leave long go.

HYUN-JI takes this in. But she wants to get angry. This
isn't *just* about the kids.

HYUN-JI
Just reading? Do you have any
understanding of her?

WOOSUK puts the phone down on the table, gets up for another
beer. *Silence* on the line as WOOSUK pulls out a SAMUEL
ADAMS. He cracks it open.

CLOSE UP the fridge interior: spare, with lots of leftover
take out.

He closes the door. We see the fridge pictures again.
Closer, we see they're all *old, faded*.

45

INT. THE VACCARINO'S HOME - CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

45

CARLY clicks, browses. She keeps looking at her phone.
There's some sort of internal war going on in her.

Something wins out. She gets up and walks straight out.

FOLLOW her as she passes through the hall. The walls are
strangely bare. It's a nice home, nothing special. Certain
areas look as if they're still being remodeled.

CARLY takes the steps down to the kitchen area.

(CONTINUED)

VERONICA VACCARINO (47), CARLY's mother, sits at the kitchen's island bar, navigating her huge phone. Her hair is done, her nails manicured, her skin tanned, her teeth bleached. She's *thin*. A thick NJ accent.

CARLY ignores her and opens the fridge.

Tension here. Lots of it.

VERONICA
(not looking up from her
phone)
Who called?

CARLY doesn't respond to this.

VERONICA
Who was it? I heard you on the
phone.

CARLY collects cold cuts, wonder bread, and sliced cheese, brings it over to the opposite side of the island. She begins to prepare a sandwich.

ANGLE ON VERONICA looking over in disgust.

VERONICA
Carly, are you kidding? Get a
fricken' plate for that ...
disgusting.

CARLY gets a plate from the cupboard. She *throws* the bread on it.

VERONICA
What, Carly? Were you gonna make it
the on the countertop?

CARLY
No, Mom.

VERONICA
Well then what.

CARLY
Nothing, Mom.

VERONICA
Sullen. I *hate* that side of you.

CARLY just makes her sandwich. VERONICA goes back to her phone. But something has set her off.

(CONTINUED)

VERONICA

You could at least talk to me.
How's your night going, Mom. Have
you talked to Daddy, Mom.

CARLY

Okay, Mom.

VERONICA

(mocking CARLY)

Okay, Mom.

VERONICA looks at CARLY with disgust.

VERONICA

So you don't wanna talk.

VERONICA reaches over to pull the plate away. CARLY jerks it
from her hands.

VERONICA

Daughter *dearest* it's midnight what
in *god's name* are you doing eating
a *sandwich*.

CARLY's moving quickly now. She wants to be *out of here*.

CARLY

I'm hungry.

VERONICA

(snickers)

Of course you're hungry. Do you
ever think, maybe I *shouldn't* eat
every time I'm hungry?

CARLY finishes the sandwich. She hurriedly puts the bread,
meat, and cheese back in the fridge.

CARLY

Night.

CARLY grabs the plate and walks back up the stairs.

VERONICA

(after her)

Do you even *care* about being
beautiful? Ever *think* of it?

And then she's back on her phone.

CLOSE UP on CARLY's face as she climbs the stairs. That
internal war again, raging beneath.

She won't let it get to her. *Will. Not.*

46

INT. LUCAS'S CAR - NIGHT

46

REUBEN and LUCAS driving in LUCAS's BMW. Contemporary hip-hop blasting from the speakers. LUCAS is into it in an overdone way, and he keeps making small adjustments to the EQ. REUBEN is just staring out the window.

They pass out of the mansions.

We see them pass over the TRAIN TRACKS, take a right down LIBERTY ROAD.

They pass THE CARETAKER. REUBEN watches him out the window.

DIALOGUE is SHOUTS over the music.

REUBEN
That's The Caretaker.

LUCAS
The fuck?

REUBEN
They call that dude The Caretaker.

LUCAS
Which dude?

REUBEN
The dude we just drove past.

LUCAS
Didn't see anyone.

They turn left at the end of LIBERTY ROAD.

47

EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - NIGHT

47

Here the houses are disheveled split-levels, townhouses with 5 cars in the driveway. The lawns are unseeded, unkempt. The people here don't have it in the budget.

This is **RESOLUTION ROAD**.

REUBEN
Why do you think they call him The Caretaker?

LUCAS
Who's they?

(CONTINUED)

REUBEN
People.

LUCAS
He's a hobo.

REUBEN
So you saw him?

LUCAS
Did I see the fuckin' hobo on the
side of the road?

REUBEN
Why do you think they call "that
hobo" The Caretaker?

LUCAS
Is that a rhetorical questions?

REUBEN
(yells)
I'm just fuckin' asking you, man.

LUCAS is taken aback. He's not at all used to being spoken
to like this.

They stop at a stop sign, the corner of RESOLUTION ROAD and
GATEWAY ROAD. On the corner, across the street, a low
one-story house. The blue hue of a TV shines out through the
window panes.

LUCAS
What's he think you're doing right
now?

REUBEN
(shaking his head)
I don't know. Just chillin'.

LUCAS
(beat)
We are just chillin'.

LUCAS takes a right down GATEWAY, towards **BURGH**.

ZOOM IN ON THE HOUSE:

A living room. All lights off except two: one from the kitchen around the corner, one from the TV, set in a large 80s-style "media" cabinet. Facing the TV is **REUBEN CARTER (48)**, Reuben's father.

REUBEN SR. is dressed in athletic gear. He's a large man, has a kind of bulk only ex-athletes get. He wears a baseball cap low over his face. On the screen there's a basketball game, but the frame is frozen.

REUBEN SR. holds out a remote, stares at the screen. There are notebooks, stills of game footage, printouts of stat lines on the table in front of him.

REUBEN SR.
What the *fuck* is this kid doin'.

REUBEN SR. picks up the notebook. He writes something down in a tight, neat scrawl. Meticulous note-taking.

REUBEN SR. finishes, hits play. The game goes on. It's REUBEN JR. playing.

He sticks out: he's playing with a bunch of small white guys. And *killing* them.

THIS SEQUENCE ON THE TV: REUBEN JR. takes someone one on one, gets *hacked* without a call on the drive, and easily lays it in over defenders. The opposing team inbound the ball quickly. REUBEN JR. *jogs* back on defense.

REUBEN SR. pauses the screen. Stares. Then:

REUBEN SR.
Doesn't want it. *Lazy*.

He takes up the notebook, writes a note.

"More sprints."

He hits play.

SEQUENCE CONTINUED: REUBEN JR. realizes it's a counter-break and picks up the pace. It looks effortless, but he's flying up the court, so much faster than everyone else. A player gets the ball in the lane, goes up for a layup: REUBEN JR. catches it midair.

REUBEN SR. pauses the screen. He breathes in deeply.

He hits plays again.

(CONTINUED)

SEQUENCE CONTINUED: REUBEN JR. looks up court, and then outlets the ball to a clapping player--LUCAS.

REUBEN SR. pauses the game. He's furious now.

REUBEN SR.
Not aggressive enough.

REUBEN SR. picks up the notebook aggressively, like he's trying to channel that aggression into the words.

CLOSE UP on his writing:

"Not aggressive. Not enough. Show. Him."

REUBEN SR. Hits play again.

KITCHEN.

Around the corner REUBEN JR.'s mother **NADIA CARTER (40)**, at the kitchen table. She's wearing sweatpants and a t-shirt. She looks *exhausted*. Her eyelids are nearly shut, and the wine glass is tilting forward out of her hand.

She's scrolling through her phone anyway.

One of REUBEN SR.'s shouts filters in. NADIA *winces*.

Another shout--she starts to *hum* an unrecognizable melody. Reminiscent of THE CARETAKER's.

After the third shout, she gets up, pulls open a drawer in the kitchen table, takes out a pack of a cigarettes and a lighter. She escapes through the house's side door.

RESOLUTION ROAD.

Sudden quiet out here. She walks to the sidewalk. She lights a cigarette, and shuts her eyes as she inhales.

49

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - NIGHT

49

HYUNGSOO turns onto a cul-de-sac. Leveled earth all around: it's an active construction site. HYUNGSOO drives to the edge of the paved cul-de-sac, where an empty lot begins, where a huge mansion will soon loom. It's dark here, but we can see for miles out over the whole county with brilliant clarity. It's beautiful.

HYUNGSOO turns off the car. HYUNGSOO and MARLENA sit in silence. HYUNGSOO isn't looking at his phone anymore.

(CONTINUED)

MARLENA
How'd you find this spot?

HYUNGSOO
I like to drive around.

MARLENA
Lucas lives somewhere around here.

HYUNGSOO
You've got some kind of problem
with him.

MARLENA
No ... I don't. *I* don't.

Long pause.

MARLENA
It's nice up here.

HYUNGSOO
(excited)
Nice? It's *ridiculous*, man.
(coughs)
But, yeah. You can see the whole
county.

MARLENA
... it's *small*.

HYUNGSOO
The county? Yeah. I've been all
over it though.

MARLENA doesn't want to think too hard about this.

MARLENA
What's your favorite part?

HYUNGSOO
I like right here.

Another "move." Saccharine at this point.

But MARLENA smiles. It's bad and she knows it. She takes off
her seatbelt, gets cozier in the seat.

MARLENA
Why?

(CONTINUED)

HYUNGSOO

Honestly? ... it feels like I'm
right in the middle of things.
Whole county in front. Behind us,
the City. I feel like I'm in both
places ...

(surprised at himself)

But also nowhere. Like I'm in the
center of it all, but no one's
looking, no one can see me.

MARLENA looks at HYUNGSOO. HYUNGSOO turns to her.

HYUNGSOO

(embarrassed)

All right, yeah, whatever. Poetry.

MARLENA

No, I get it. That's a nice feeling
sometimes. I like being hidden
sometimes.

HYUNGSOO looks back at her. She looks at him.

Is this the moment?

HYUNGSOO is unsure. He looks back out the windshield.

HYUNGSOO

Do you ever go to the city?

MARLENA is still looking at him.

MARLENA

Sometimes ... my aunt lives in the
Heights. Washington Heights.

HYUNGSOO

I've never been there.

MARLENA

It's fine. Dirty and loud. Parties
right by the Hudson.

HYUNGSOO

Sounds all right ... I like looking
at the river by the cliffs. Went to
a barbecue in the park there once.

MARLENA

Cool.

Long pause. MARLENA *STILL* waits for HYUNGSOO's move.

(CONTINUED)

HYUNGSOO

I want to move to the city. I think
I want to end up there ... maybe
I'll go to NYU. Or COLUMBIA
(laugh)
Nah, probaly not. Maybe--

MARLENA

Kevin?

HYUNGSOO looks back at her. MARLENA has that *look*.

It's time.

HYUNGSOO kisses her.

It's a little off-rhythm.

He detaches, goes in again. This time for longer.

The third time, MARLENA opens her mouth. HYUNGSOO opens his too. It's jaw-y, juvenile--but impassioned. HYUNGSOO undoes his seatbelt. He puts his hand on the upper seam of MARLENA's jeans. She shudders and detaches.

MARLENA

Wait.

HYUNGSOO takes his hand off of her.

HYUNGSOO

What?

MARLENA's face is flushed. She's waiting for her brain to catch up with her body, waiting for some kind of "no" to bubble up. But it doesn't.

MARLENA

Nothing.

HYUNGSOO

Yeah?

MARLENA

(going back in)

Yeah ... shutup ... yes.

They kiss again. Limbs and hands everywhere.

50 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - NIGHT 50

THE CARETAKER takes a left onto RESOLUTION RD. His bottle is now half-empty, the cigarettes half-smoked.

THE CARETAKER
Faggot ... country ... faggot
country ...

SMASH TO:

51 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY 51

The BOY (17) walks down RESOLUTION ROAD beside **PAUL** (17), thin and feminine like the BOY. They're laughing, smiling, flirting. Their hands flutter together.

SMASH TO:

52 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - PRESENT - NIGHT 52

THE CARETAKER lumbers on, muttering the same. His EYES seem far away ...

SMASH TO:

53 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY 53

The BOY, laughing and flirting, reaches out for PAUL.

His HAND is missing. PAUL is up ahead, running towards REUBEN's home. It looks the same.

SMASH TO:

54 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - PRESENT - NIGHT 54

He's outside REUBEN's home. He looks up. He's crying. He's stuttering over a word. A painful memory.

THE CARETAKER
P-p-p-pa-pa-pa-po-

SMASH TO:

55 EXT. THE BOY'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY 55

PAUL leads the way into the side door of REUBEN's house.

The BOY *lived here.*

SUBJECTIVE, CHOPPY. WORDS FADING OUT AS NEW IMAGES COME UP.
A MEMORY.

(CONTINUED)

PAUL
... tell her we're just studying.

Now PAUL is sitting on the counter, drinking a glass of water. The sun is shining on his face.

BOY
Get down ...

Now PAUL is holding the BOY's hand, leading him up the stairs.

PAUL
I just want to see it ...

BOY
No ... no ...

SMASH TO:

56 **EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - PRESENT - NIGHT**

56

Images of NADIA swirl in front of THE CARETAKER.

THE CARETAKER
Paul ... Paul ...

NADIA
(harsh but caring)
Caretaker, what are you ... d'you
drink all that tonight?

THE CARETAKER
Paul ... Paul ...

NADIA
Dammit, man, you need to go home
...

WORDS FADE AS PRESENT SMASHES TO:

57 **INT. THE BOY'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY**

57

The BOY, sitting on the edge of the bed, naked. PAUL, also naked, next to him, looking over.

PAUL
It's okay ... it's okay ...

They kiss, they touch. It's sensual. Sweet. The BOY looks happy. We see him *really* smile.

SMASH TO:

58 **EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - PRESENT - NIGHT**

58

CARETAKER
It's okay, it's okay, it's okay,
it's okay ...

NADIA
Are you listening? CARETAKER, you
need to go HOME.

ON "HOME" SMASH TO:

59 **INT. THE BOY'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY**

59

A *slammed* door. A voice calling from the interior of the house. This voice blends with NADIA's:

THE CARETAKER'S MOTHER
I'm HOME.

Mad dash to put clothes on.

PAUL
Next time, John.
 (winks)
Next time.

Steps pounding up the stairs. Their clothes aren't on yet.

Shit.

She's right at the door. PAUL finally looks a little panicked.

The DOOR opens with a **BANG**.

ON "BANG" SMASH TO:

60 **EXT. AFGHANISTAN - OPEN DESERT - FLASHBACK TO '01**

60

THE BANG is the sound of a missile CRACKING overhead.

GUNFIRE, MEN RUNNING FORWARD.

THE CARETAKER still walking. He gets clapped in the back and shoved forward by a **SEARGENT**.

SEARGENT
FUCK ARE YOU DOING, SOLDIER.

"SOLDIER" BLEEDS INTO SMASH TO:

61 INT. THE BOY'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK TO '90 - DAY 61

The BOY's **MOTHER** (40) stands in the doorway.

THE CARETAKER'S MOTHER
What is this? What IS this? JOHN?
JOHN? JOHN?

"JOHN" BLEEDS INTO SMASH TO:

62 EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - PRESENT - NIGHT 62

THE CARETAKER
(muttering)
John, John, John, John ...

NADIA
You're a mess, son. A mess. God
bless you.

THE CARETAKER looks at her, though he can barely see her. He spits, snarls his teeth.

THE CARETAKER
(harsh with emotion)
Ungrateful *fucking* country.

THE CARETAKER takes off down a path in the underbrush.

Only he would know it's there.

63 INT. LUCAS'S PARENT'S CAR - NIGHT 63

They make their way through JERSEY suburbs. IVAN is driving badly: braking erratically, stopping and starting. He's *drunker* than we thought.

Than he thought, too.

JULIE doesn't notice.

JULIE
Lucas.

IVAN
Lucas.

JULIE
What're we going to do with him.

IVAN
It'll straighten itself out.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

When?

IVAN

When he gets into college and he's
around *serious* people.

JULIE

And?

IVAN

They'll influence him. Best and the
brightest.

JULIE

Elizabeth has some bright ones ...

IVAN

Come on.

JULIE

What?

IVAN shakes his head. JULIE sits up.

JULIE

What? You think he's not getting a
good education?

IVAN

Do you?

A long pause.

JULIE

Did you ever think he'd play
basketball? Be on "the team?"

IVAN

It's a bad influence.

JULIE

You really think it's *that* bad.

IVAN

We've been over this.

JULIE

(resigned)

Oh, Lucas. Did we make a mistake?

(CONTINUED)

IVAN
He'll be fine.

JULIE
Yeah?

IVAN touches her face. The car swerves a bit.

IVAN
With parents like his ...

JULIE
(laughs)
Maybe. Maybe.

64

INT. THE VACCARINO'S HOME - CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

64

CARLY, back in her room. She sits on her bed and opens her computer. She takes a bite, continues to shop. We can tell she's listening to her mother downstairs.

She takes another bite, then closes her computer. Something wins out. She exhales deeply. She finds her phone and hits a few buttons: whoever this is, they're on speed dial. She takes another bite, puts the phone up to her ear. It rings and rings ...

MARLENA'S VOICEMAIL
(very clean and controlled,
good enunciation))
Hey, you've reached Marlina
Sanchez. I can't come to the phone
right now, but if you leave a
message I'll get back to you as
soon as possible. Thanks!

CARLY
Heeeey, Mar. I know it's late, but
I thought I'd try you ... just
wanted to see what you're doing.
Probably sleeping.
(sighs)
I don't want to go to school
tomorrow. It's, like, so dumb we
have to go, there's nothing to do.
Are you just watching movies in
your bio class? We watched
Awakenings on Friday, and I
actually really ... and I *obviously*
already told you all this. *Wow*, I'm
going *crazy* here.

CARLY wants to tell her about LUCAS. But she doesn't:
MARLENA isn't even on the line. She feels ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

CARLY
Anyway, something *really* weird
happened tonight. I'll tell you
about it tomorrow. All right, love
you, byyyyyeeee.

CARLY touches off the phone. She eats the sandwich, stares
off into space.

65

INT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT

65

INTERCUT BETWEEN WOOSUK AND HYUN-JI.

HYUN-JI
Woosuk?

WOOSUK is staring into the mouth of his beer bottle.

HYUN-JI
Woosuk? I can hear you.

A voice, some commotion, sounds within HYUN-JI's apartment.
She's not there alone. She glances tiredly in the sounds'
direction, then at her watch.

Like *clockwork*.

HYUN-JI
She's waking up, Woosuk.

WOOSUK coughs into his fist: a smoker's cough. He looks at
his hand as if it were the cause of his cough.

Then he goes back to the table. He picks up the phone.

WOOSUK
One day she won't.

HYUN-JI's composure breaks a little.

HYUN-JI
I hope that day is--

WOOSUK
But when it does. What then? Will I
go home?

He's feeling the beer. The work. The fatigue.

More noise in HYUN-JI's apartment. The voice is audible now.
HYUN-JI *has to* tend to it.

(CONTINUED)

HYUN-JI
(fiercely)
Are you getting behind at work?

WOOSUK takes a long drink of the beer.

WOOSUK
No, I am not behind.

HYUN-JI
Then why why do you want to come home? Do you not want to provide for our children's education anymore? Their livelihood? Your own? What does my mother dying have to do with you coming home? Do you miss me? I'll come to America when you can afford to bring me there--and my mother. Do you not want me there? You haven't made enough money yet.

HYUN-JI's mother cries out again. HYUN-JI turns toward the sound.

HYUN-JI
I have to take care of her. Call me when you have found our son.

HYUN-JI hangs up. She quickly resets her face. It's like *nothing* has happened to her.

She goes to her mother.

66

INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

66

DIANA at the table, in the darkness. We see her eyes open and shut, flutter open and shut.

A CRASH from the girls' room jolts her awake. She slams over to the room, throws open the door.

DIANA
Gabriela!

GABRIELA is on the floor, MARLENA's makeup everywhere. The contents of the desk too. GABRIELA has lipstick on, but there's an accidental line of it running across her cheek. Her cheeks are bright red with blush.

GABRIELA
(crying, in English)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GABRIELA (cont'd)
I was just sitting on the desk
doing my makeup and then all of the
sudden it was falling and I--

DIANA notices the makeup all over the rug and storms to the kitchen for a wet rag. FOLLOW HER.

GABRIELA is still prattling when she returns.

GABRIELA
And I'm so sorry I didn't mean to--

DIANA grabs GABRIELA's arm. GABRIELA stops crying.

DIANA
Stop crying and help me clean this
up. Get another wet rag, and then
put this shit back on DIANA's
desk. Stop *crying*.

GABRIELA
Okay.

DIANA
GO!

GABRIELA rushes out. DIANA washes the makeup from the rug. She barely gets any off: it just blurs and blends. She doubles-down, gets her elbow into it.

GABRIELA returns with the rag.

DIANA
Give it to me.

DIANA rips the towel from her hands. GABRIELA picks up the makeup cases.

SILENCE except for the clattering, DIANA's washing.

Then, abruptly, DIANA stops.

She's *done*. It's simple as that.

She gets up.

DIANA
Finish putting those things back on
the desk.

GABRIELA
I'm sorry.

DIANA
Okay, Gabriela, OKAY.

DIANA trudges out. GABRIELA scrubs. Door closes on her.

67

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - NIGHT

67

MARLENA is on HYUNGSOO's lap now, straddling him. Her shirt is off, she's just in her bra. It's an odd position: she has to bend her neck to fit. Then HYUNGSOO reaches out to her crotch, starts rubbing.

MARLENA
Wait, wait.

HYUNGSOO
Okay.

MARLENA
(laughing)
Hold on, my neck hurts a little.

MARLENA awkwardly gets off his lap, manages to get to her seat. She's sitting there looking happy, flushed.

HYUNGSOO, however, looks guilty, as if unsure whether he has done something terribly wrong.

HYUNGSOO
You all right?

MARLENA
(breathless)
Me? Yeah, just ... one sec ... my heart ...

HYUNGSOO
Okay. 'Cuz you just ... you know.
When I ...

MARLENA
No! No ... I just ... not yet. You know? I'm so ... nervous.

HYUNGSOO
All right. So it wasn't--

MARLENA
No ... I liked it.

(CONTINUED)

HYUNGSOO
(awkward)
Me too.

QUIET in the car. MARLENA picks out her phone. She sees CARLY has called: her contact name has a bunch of hearts after it. She also sees it's late.

MARLENA
Oh my god it's 12:30.

HYUNGSOO
Fuuuuck. School tomorrow.

MARLENA
(a little panicked)
I should *really* go home. God I hope my Mom's not up ...

HYUNGSOO
All right, all right.

MARLENA notices he sounds disappointed.

MARLENA
I mean, we could--

HYUNGSOO
Nah, it's really cool. Let's go.

MARLENA
Yeah?

HYUNGSOO
Yeah.

HYUNGSOO turns on the car, checks his phone, and sends a text while MARLENA finds and puts on her shirt. HYUNGSOO watches her while she puts it on.

He shakes his head. He *likes* her. This is different.

HYUNGSOO
Ready?

MARLENA
Yeah.

He KISSES her. *Smooth* this time.

HYUNGSOO pulls out of the cul-de-sac in a hurry.

68

EXT. SECRET PATH BETWEEN ROADS - PRESENT - NIGHT

68

INTERCUT THE CARETAKER AND THE BOY. SMASH CUTS IN BETWEEN.**PRESENT:** THE CARETAKER *runs*--the overgrown brush whips and lashes him as he goes.**FLASHBACK TO '84:** the BOY *runs* through the same path. There's a bleeding scratch on his face.**PRESENT:** THE CARETAKER mutters, trips, gets *lashed*.**FLASHBACK TO '86:** the BOY LIMPING through. It looks like THE CARETAKER's gait.**PRESENT:** The CARETAKER limps, throws his cigarette into the woods and fumbles for another, pulls from the bottle. Sloshing everywhere.**FLASHBACK TO '90:** the BOY has a black eye. But he's walking now. Not running. There's some fuming rage in his EYES.**PRESENT:** THE CARETAKER has slowed to a walk too. He's made it through to the other side, right at the intersection of the church and the school.

BEAT, then ... THE CARETAKER pukes. He wipes his mouth.

THE CARETAKER
(to no one)
Fuck you.

THE CARETAKER pukes again. He lists to the left.

69

INT. LUCAS'S CAR - NIGHT

69

LUCAS pulls up outside of a dilapidated house. No sound, but a green laser light spins in the window. There's not much around the house: just garbage and metal.

REUBEN
Why are we here, dude.

LUCAS
You know why we're here, and you
want to be here too.

LUCAS shuts off the car, starts walking to the door.

REUBEN
Fuck, dude.

REUBEN gets out, runs up to get behind LUCAS.

(CONTINUED)

They arrive at the front door. LUCAS knocks. No answer. He knocks again: *no answer*.

LUCAS
Call him.

REUBEN
You call him.

LUCAS pulls out his phone, calls. Someone picks up after a few rings.

LUCAS
Hello? *Hello?*

LUCAS looks at his phone askance.

REUBEN
Let's *go*, dude. I'll talk to him
... something came up. It'd be *no*
problem.

The door opens with a BANG. It's **EMILIO (25)**. He's aggressive-looking, though has a faraway look in his eyes. He's high on *something*.

EMILO
RUBY!! CUZ!

EMILIO gives REUBEN a *big* hug. Then he looks at LUCAS.

EMILIO
Jew-cas! Jewish kid playin' beer
pong at the party--yo what the fuck
did you say--nah *fuck* it, get the
fuck in here.

EMILIO brings them inside. It's a filthy, filthy room from what we can see: no light but the spinning laser. People in various states of high everywhere.

EMILIO
So what you lookin' for? I got
everything. Little bit of blow? How
old are you?

REUBEN
17.

EMILO
(laughing)
You're fuckin' 17, man? How about
you, Jew-cas?

LUCAS

The same.

EMILIO

(mocking LUCAS)

The same. You guys want some
fuckin' *Chex Mix*?

(laughing)

For *real* though.

He brings them over to a table covered with plastic bags.
White powder in one, some crystals in another, some black
scum in another. Twice as many bags of weed.

REUBEN

We're just lookin' for some kush.
Ounce of sour. Got it?

EMILIO

Yo what's the rush?

REUBEN

Just want a puff before bed.

LUCAS

(pointing across the table)

What's in there?

LUCAS is pointing at a bag full of white, oblong pills.

EMILIO

Jew-cas knows about the *good* shit,
eh? That's Vicodin, man.

LUCAS

No, it's not.

EMILIO gives REUBEN an eyebrow.

EMILIO

(to Reuben)

This kid got a problem?

REUBEN

Nah, man, he's just a rich kid.
He's good.

LUCAS

Can I try it?

REUBEN

(directly at LUCAS)

Yo, *what*?

(CONTINUED)

EMILO

You want to try it? 10 bucks for a taste. No samples for rich kids.

LUCAS pulls a ten dollar bill from his wallet, gives it to EMILIO. EMILIO goes over to the bag.

REUBEN

What the *fuck* are you doing?

LUCAS hands REUBEN the keys.

LUCAS

Drive us home if I bug.

EMILIO gives LUCAS the pill.

EMILIO

This is some good shit. Some good, good shit. Happens fast, Jew-cas. Real fuckin' quick. Sit your ass in a chair.

LUCAS nods, pops the pill. Just like that.

EMILIO

Fuckin' Jew-cas man you're a crazy fuckin' dude.

EMILIO'S phone rings. He picks it up.

EMILIO

Yo what's good? Aright--

(to REUBEN)

Yo, Ruby, there's an oh-zee on the table there. I gotta bounce. Get me 80 when you can. Fam discount. Say whatup to auntie for me.

EMILIO exits out a side door. REUBEN picks up the ounce, stuffs it in his shorts pocket. He looks over at LUCAS.

REUBEN

Come on.

LUCAS is feeling it though. He raises his hand, looks at it in the green light.

LUCAS

I can't even feel it. Holy shit.

(laughing))

I can't feel anything, man!

LUCAS laughs and laughs.

70

EXT. RESOLUTION ROAD - NIGHT

70

NADIA, standing in a kind of shock. She tosses the rest of her cigarette and crosses through the amber streetlight into her house.

REUBEN SR. is sitting where we left him, game footage rolling. We get another look at him: he really is a *large* man. He never takes his eyes off the screen.

REUBEN SR.
What was all that?

NADIA
The Caretaker.

REUBEN SR.
What were you doing outside with a drunk?

NADIA
Havin' a smoke.

REUBEN SR. pauses the TV, stares in, then picks up his notebook.

NADIA
What game is this?

REUBEN SR. makes his note. He puts down the notebook.

NADIA
What *game*--

REUBEN SR.
Forest Hills. 23, six, and six.

NADIA
Lost that one, didn't they?

REUBEN SR. doesn't respond to this. But his jaw clenches. He can't even *think* about losing.

NADIA sees his jaw set and tries to walk away. She goes to the left, around the staircase. She doesn't get far.

REUBEN SR.
(calling after her)
You know where he is?

NADIA
(mutters)
Livin' his goddamn life.

(CONTINUED)

The game noise abruptly cuts.

REUBEN SR.
What was that now?

NADIA
Nothin'.

REUBEN SR.
Get in here.

NADIA goes back to the TV room. REUBEN SR. *glares* at her.

REUBEN SR.
Did you say 'nothing?'

NADIA
Last I heard he was with Lucas.

REUBEN SR. looks at her with fire in his eyes. He's maybe a *violent* man.

REUBEN SR.
You got to watch out for your damn
kid, Nadia. I can't be doin' *all*
the fuckin' work around here. No
ma'am, I *cannot*. *WILL* not.

He picks up his phone. NADIA turns away.

REUBEN SR.
(shouts after her)
And quit the fuckin' bottle ...

CLOSE UP on NADIA. Yes, she is drunk. Now we see.

71

INT. THE VACCARINO'S HOME - CARLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

71

CARLY eats her sandwich. Crumbs are getting everywhere.

She grabs her phone.

CLOSE-UP on her face. We see a whole range of emotions as she composes this text. It's both impulsive and logical, angry and modest. Lots of complications.

She's flushed by the end. And *satisfied*.

72

INT. WOOSUK'S HOME - NIGHT

72

INTERCUT BETWEEN WOOSUK AND HYUN-JI:

WOOSUK looks at his phone, sees the call has ended.
HYUN-JI won't be calling for the rest of the night.

HYUN-JI gets up, walks with her proud dignity toward her
mother's cries.

WOOSUK sets down the phone and finishes the rest of the
drink. He wipes his mouth with his shirt.

HYUN-JI stands in the doorway looking at her **MOTHER (75)**.
She's a shriveled, sick woman. Breathing tubes and orange
pill bottles everywhere. Empty bedpans. It's like a hospital
in here.

Her MOTHER *gasps*, clutches at air.

WOOSUK, three drinks in, gets up, stumbles a bit, and pulls
out a pack of cigarettes from his coat pocket.

HYUN-JI takes two cotton balls from her pocket. She puts
them up her nose.

HYUN-JI
Good morning, Mom.

Her mother *wails*. She goes towards her.

WOOSUK steps out onto the back patio. SILENCE but for the
spring bugs chirping their mating song. He wheels open his
lighter. The flame turns on, and he lights his cigarette.

A look of repose as the first inhale reaches his head.

73

INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT

73

DIANA rests against the bedroom door. She breathes in and
out, but it does not soothe her. She crosses the kitchen in
the darkness and returns to her bedroom, her bed. She lays
as we first found her.

Sounds from GABRIELA's room come in. The WHOLE FOODS
electricity thrums in the silence.

She runs her hand over the untouched side of the bed. She
looks at the picture and the rosary next to it.

She picks up the necklace, wraps it around her knuckles,
tight like brass knuckles. Her face hardens.

(CONTINUED)

DIANA

En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo,
y del Espíritu Santo. Amen ... Creo
en Dios, Padre todopoderoso,
creador del Cielo y de la Tierra
...

74

EXT. LIBERTY RD. - NIGHT

74

**INTERCUT BETWEEN LIBERTY ROAD AND OPEN DESERT, AFGHANISTAN.
SMASH CUTS IN BETWEEN.**

PRESENT: THE CARETAKER, his eyes wide, listing. He starts dry heaving.

FLASHBACK to AFGHANISTAN: More soldiers pouring past JOHN--that's his name.

CLOSEUP on his face. Fear, bedazzlement, shock. We see a rocket EXPLODE in his eyes. It's beautiful and damned.

PRESENT: It looks as if THE CARETAKER wants to move forward, towards the church, town, wherever he'll go next. But he can't.

He starts hyperventilating.

FLASHBACK to AFGHANISTAN: STILL CLOSEUP. Another soldier smacks him on the back, another. His awe mounts into a sob, then a shiver, then a body-wide NO, starting in his shaking head, rippling downward.

PRESENT:

THE CARETAKER

No ... no ... no ...

THE CARETAKER pisses himself.

FLASHBACK to AFGHANISTAN: JOHN lets out a scream, a wordless, physical rejection. He takes off backwards, away from the fight.

PRESENT: THE CARETAKER drops to his knees, drops the bottle too. It shatters. He starts to crawl forward, towards the tracks. He cuts himself.

FLASHBACK to AFGHANISTAN:

JOHN

NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO ...

(CONTINUED)

NO's mixed in with soldiers running past, trying to wrap up JOHN and turn him around. Each time, JOHN wildly fights them off.

But he can't be stopped.

He's gone.

75

INT. DEALER'S HOME - NIGHT

75

CLOSEUP on LUCAS as he picks up his phone: in the glow we can see his eyes are dilated, unfocused. Suddenly he laughs *harder* than we've seen yet.

REUBEN takes the phone out of his hands and reads:

REUBEN

I'm not usually this mean, but I am so angry right now I actually just have to say this. You are a DICK, Lucas. It was so RUDE of you to call me and ask that disgusting question about sending you pictures. You're just what I thought you were, just another pathetic, horny boy who picks on girls he knows he can piss off. Well, you did, ASSHOLE. I'll be letting MARLENA know about this. Yeah, you think I don't know? She tells me EVERYTHING. Oh, one more thing: FUCK YOU.

REUBEN looks at LUCAS, cackling, *really* high now.

LUCAS

(wheezing))

She's ... a fat ... FUCK.

REUBEN just stares. Then he gets a text. It's from his FATHER. It reads:

"Get your ass home."

76

INT. LUCAS'S PARENTS CAR - NIGHT

76

IVAN and JULIE, now in the suburbs.

JULIE

What do you think he's doing right now?

(CONTINUED)

IVAN
Probably with Reuben.

JULIE
You know what they do down there?

IVAN
Video games. Drink Coors Light.

JULIE
And that doesn't bother you?

IVAN
It'll sort itself out.

JULIE
You know what? I believe you. I
just do.

IVAN
I've been a 17 year-old boy before.

JULIE
(touches his face)
You were a *handsome* young man.

IVAN
Would you have wanted me?

JULIE
Oh, yes ...

High flushes in both their faces now. JULIE looks at IVAN.
Something devilish in her eyes.

The car JERKS.

JULIE
You know what I was thinking about
during the concert?

IVAN
What?

JULIE
That time in Belize ... in the
humidity ... looking out over the
beach ...

IVAN finds the inside of her thigh with his hand. The car
JERKS again.

(CONTINUED)

IVAN

I remember.

JULIE

And I was wearing that silky thing
I sweat through in a second.

JULIE grabs his hand, then traces a finger up the length of his arm to his lips. He kisses her finger tips, sucks on one.

IVAN

I ripped it off you with my teeth.

IVAN says this *looking at her*. Something melting in his eyes.

He *blows* past a stop sign. It's the corner of WHOLE FOODS.

77

INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - CONT.

77

HYUNGSOO and MARLENA drive down the hills in a sweet silence. Both are smiling. HYUNGSOO, who typically drives with his right hand on the gears, takes it off. He opens his hand and lays it beside MARLENA. We see him peering out of the corner of his eye.

MARLENA see his hand. Then she looks up at HYUNGSOO, whose eyes dart away.

But she saw him looking.

She crawls her hand into his.

78

EXT. WOOSUK'S HOME - BACKYARD - NIGHT

78

WOOSUK, outside, still smoking.

HIS POV: he looks out onto the neighbor's house. Through the window, we see a **HUSBAND and WIFE (white, early 40s)** drinking wine, talking in the kitchen.

Nothing special about it. It's normal. But they're *together*.

HIS POV: he looks to the right, at another house's yard. Full of toys.

He looks back to his own yard: a joyless concrete slab littered with cigarette butts.

He throws another butt into the pile. He pulls out another cigarette.

Wheel. Light. Inhale.

79 **INT. THE SANCHEZ'S APARTMENT - DIANA'S ROOM - NIGHT** 79

DIANA, clutching her rosary. She's stopped again.

She looks over at the photo once more. Then she snaps it face down. She re-grips the rosary, sets her face.

She'll gather herself. *Again.*

DIANA

En el nombre del Padre, y del Hijo,
y del Espíritu Santo. Amen ... Creo
en Dios, Padre todopoderoso,
creador del Cielo y de la Tierra
...

80 **EXT. LIBERTY RD. - NIGHT** 80

INTERCUT BETWEEN LIBERTY ROAD AND OPEN DESERT, AFGHANISTAN.

AFGHANISTAN: JOHN runs into the distance, disappears into a billowing cloud of dust.

PRESENT: THE CARETAKER crawls a few more steps.

And then collapses.

AFGHANISTAN: SHOT of swirling dust cloud.

PRESENT: THE CARETAKER sprawled in the middle of the street, on the yellow divider, just beside the TRACKS.

The red stoplight reflects on the spilled whiskey, in his greasy, mottled hair.

81 **INT. HYUNGSOO'S CAR - CONT.** 81

HYUNGSOO glides down the HILL towards the INTERSECTION. He looks over at MARLENA as the road curves into the stop light.

HYUNGSOO

I just gotta say, I'm usually cooler.

HYUNGSOO glances up, sees the light's green, and drives through. He's self-aware though, and he thinks the quetion wasn't cool.

HYUNGSOO

Like, as a person. But, I don't know. You're just like ... I don't know--

(CONTINUED)

MARLENA
(screams)
KEVIN!

HYUNGSOO looks up--THE CARETAKER!!--a reflex instant later he SWERVES--LOUD SCREEEECH--HYUNGSOO throws the wheel left to try and keep it straight ... he does.

Thin smoke up from the wheels. Everything's been thrown around in the interior.

Both breathe *heavily*.

Then:

MARLENA
Holy shit. Are you all right?

HYUNGSOO
Yeah, I'm--

IVAN's car comes SCREAMING into theirs.

HUGE CRASH. CAR HORNS, TWISTING METAL, ALARMS, HISSING GAS.

THE TWO CARS SMOKE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. NO MOVEMENT FROM WITHIN.

IS SOMEONE DEAD? ARE THEY ALL DEAD?

ANGLE ON THE CARETAKER.

He groans. He vomits again.

He passes out.

SMASH TO BLACK.