>>>>> Trying to make an elaborate story about this wifi payment we struggle to pay monthly (60 pages maybe), having that be a plot device to explore the main aspect of family interactions and personal experiences. I am aiming to illustrate how we interact as a family while in conflict and in dispute with one another. How isolation is both fruitful and disturbing. Some subplots and themes like religion, custody battles, increased tensions and so forth are introduced. By making the Wifi payment become the regular monthly appointment, it sets itself up, figuratively, to act like a political summit between disputing parties. Repressed opinions and focused-talking points are expected in order to keep things civil. Yet, within that month, and throughout the story, I am the only one with access to each room of the house. Wanting to draw attention to the struggle and weirdness of having to cooperate for a bill payment once a month, just to regain possession and comfort in our own individual space. Staying in closed rooms day and night without much communication—a practice used for avoiding confrontation. We rely on rumors and overhearing conversations as our stored ammunition for an emerging family debate. Each room comes with a story or theme through the knowledge and perspective of the speaker.

* Snippet: Sister’s room: Two mattresses lay on the floor for cold children living off one meal a day. They grieve over the loss of family as I once did when I was their age. Their maternal parent and her mother hold on to their strong resentment while the kids lack nutrition and family.
* The two mattresses on the floor are the resting place for the cold children while the negligent mother gets the elevated bed, laying her pillows against the wooden headboard, as she talks to her man in jail. Her unnatural laughter keeps the kids tired at school every morning.
* Surprising fact to me is that phones are smuggled into jails quite frequently. Somehow, they get connected to Wifi as well. My house and jails are no different. Street-talkers can rely on a slick tongue as a weapon for exploitation. My household is filled with former street-talkers, conscious of the bylaws and codes from the outside. We use those methods as an offensive strategy to have household control.
* The naïve and young-hearted older sister again becomes the victim of false love. A love with a financial end. That’s the repeated fairly-tale gone bad.
  + She chases the illusions, the mistakes and errors that gravely marked her father’s history.
  + Kicked out of here home many times yet returns because she has nowhere else to go. Rejected by society. Burned bridges.
  + Thinking the father’s rejected love can be scooped up in her resistance. Her paralleling stories to my father, her aggressive tactics to reclaim custody of her kids after giving them up during her chase.
  + The hereditary feature of manipulation and control passed down from the father’s days of addiction.
  + The lies that silenced her baby daddy in court, which got him deported off a DUI charge.
  + Kids undergoing serious hurt with silence and threats lingering around them. Every symptom of heartache is palpable from the next room as one obstacle stands in the way of a brother and grandmother taking over as their rightful guardians.

After a month of being stuck in our little sector of the house, our fine moments of solitary confinement were disrupted by the Wifi signal being cut off. We grew aware that a disconnected router meant we were summoned for a monthly appointment with my uncle to discuss business. Thus, we all unlocked our doors from where we would retreat and entered the hazardous outside spaces where business and family become a bad mixture. The tension between family members was undeniable. The scorching heat was detected under the eyes and skin of everyone around me. Their bodies stand at separate corners of the kitchen table as my uncle, supervisor of our regulated privileges to the Internet, repeats the same rules on the same day of every month.

“No loud music.” “No FaceTiming after 11.” The usual shit that would disrupt my uncle in his sleep after coming home from long days at work or playing pool with friends.

Meanwhile, everybody else remained halfway focused on this temporary transaction. I watch three bodies violently tremor with a loose twenty-dollar bill dancing between their fingers. The focus was within the eyes of a nearby rival, which were inflamed with the memories of their initial fallout. Their boiling frames stand tall and irate like the last minutes before a volcanic eruption. I could predict the silence and awkwardness was about to end soon if this meeting was not quick and simple.

The situation thus required some type of intervention that could postpone this explosion at a later date. That is where I came in. I was the only man imaginative enough to reinvent the last scenes that concluded the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. You see, I was the cash bearer for the three parties, making me responsible for taking the monetary shares of each resident and dumping the collected amount into the mouth of the volcano to restore peace. This short adventure was vital to not only reclaiming our space but continuing for another month with hopes that the potential toxicity does not disrupt our current room temperature. However, I was no heroic figure in a fictional story. Nah, in a real sense, I was more like the unguarded power plant threatened to be rundown by the lava flow at any given moment. Later, I expect to hear the threat to come knocking on my door, but for now, in my neutral space, keeping the internet and electricity running for the residents was sort of my thing.

You see, I was a part-time peace-maker. My full-time job had me exchanging verbal messages between mother and sister—that was my responsibility. In these exchanges, I had to protect my mental well-being at all cost. I had to shut down all sensitivities, repress any confrontational opinions, in order to not jeopardize the relationship that was left standing between us all. My use of the language has never felt so restricted. One wrong word could lead this custody battle to detrimental heights. One wrong placement of a name in a sentence could result in a slammed door breaking our connection with the kids. A locked door was used to hide the young stories deprived of an uncle and grandmother who could teach them what their mother has not. Yet, every day, I was reduced to only knowing the basics.

Have the kids eaten today? Have they taken a shower? Have they brush their teeth before bed? You see, I am stuck in the middle of this custody warfare, ducking into my platoon for the night and hoping not to be caught in the crossfire of verbal combat. We rested in our poor, restricted positions angry at the world for its inequalities, yet more angry at our own blood for their favoritism. Home became nothing more than a bed and a locked door behind us. Doors locked all around the house; it was a mini-jail for the interpersonal offenders. While the lock doors protected us from being victims of a neighborhood robbery, it also managed to encage us in our rooms with our technology. The EBT phones flashing in the dark as we try to maintain relationships outside of the house. Our limited aspirations and funds leading us to make the irrational decision of choosing to stay home angry. Avoiding bankruptcy and foreclosure was the only chapter I was paying attention to all my life. I couldn’t move forward nor walk away. Economically and spiritually, we were broken down easily and I felt like the last hope for restoring peace on many occasions. I just had to watch my temper. <<<<<<<<<<<

>>>>>>> Perhaps, I was the physical form birthed to withstand the bad and misquoted theology recited by the residents. Those who were keen on reminding me of my role in the family hierarchy. You see, I was someone who was susceptible to the persuasive tongue because I liked the darker side of any story. I was bringing connection to my people on the 11th day of every month. A little slower than what the Holy Father has ever done, yet, if I blame it all on the physical form, I believe my pace would be justified. A chronic lung disease is one of many errors in my mortal design.

* Acrimonious gluttonous after I graduated from both a university and an unhealthy relationship. I let it follow me home.
* To my Mexican relatives across countless counties, depression and mental instability were all theories and myths excusing what they called severe laziness. What they didn’t see nor feel is that I was mentally and physically pressurized through the quarter systems, confining my body to hospital beds on a weekly basis.

Four years of an institution and I came back to Salinas confined to a hospital bed with swollen eyes, one collapse lung and a bachelor’s degree—my most memorable version of a commencement ceremony. For many reasons, this lead me to accept my confinement to my room like I accepted my last two years spent in dorms and the previous two spent on couches and in cars. The only connection to humans I have, and always had, was through the channels of social media. Like a God with their signs, I had a keyboard and emojis. I grew comfort in not being seen at all by the outside world. Along as they got the message, I didn’t mind being heard from a distance or left on read.

Believe me, there is no complex to my development; just a horrible attempt of filling up this space with substance. My empty room needs it. Besides, I knew I wasn’t God. Who, in their right mind, will speak out and yell out fraud to an entity we also fear? Why consider a mystical being outdated when you do not know whether they possess the power to come at you unexpected like Pusha T in a diss record? Nah, I was a free agent of the spirit. In fact, I am a free agent in almost everything that involves taking sides. I dread the uncertainty of decisions that feel too much like gang initiations. A gang where eighty percent of the time you were expected to choose squads. A gang where rent and visitation rights were held hostage for financial means and better living conditions. These were the margins I was forced to squeeze into as a resident of my own childhood home. My family were the toughest gang members holding down their fort, their small territory, while I was the carrier pigeon with a clipped wing comparing himself to God. Although I was willing to learn about the marriage between heaven and hell, I just didn’t want to choose which one I was destined for during my stay. I desired to practice my own private theology as I sit here in my room reading the bible with some rolling papers and a grinder on the side of me.

>>>>>>>I liked what I saw, what I read, but I was hesitant to enter the real doors of any Catholic Church. I only went to Church a few times in my whole life. Occasions included weddings, confirmations, a few funerals, and the annual anniversaries of those funerals. In total, you probably saw me in Church a handful of times. No sermons were strong enough to breach and corrupt my belief system though. The words given to me were not enough of a natural force to knock down the pillars I constructed around ideas that were free of ghosts. I wanted to believe in God, the man and myth, however, I was just the asshole who always questioned his credibility—his cool factor with the secular ladies.

Not all visits were filled with boredom and contradictions though. I’ve heard great personal stories too. Once I took the religious interference out of the equation and just focused on the experience of a once lost soul, everything was game. You see, I went to this church to support my sister who, at the time, was searching to be on a higher spiritual plane.

* The preacher, a recovering addict from East LA, spoke the words of redemption to every Salinas faithful in attendance. Sister crying for forgiveness. I never saw a former gang member who grew tired of the perpetual cycles of violence and hopelessness capture his experience so vividly in a speech…Those personal triumphs, however, always end up turning into a tragedy.

>>>>>>>> In my neighborhood, you are guilty by association. Like murals fading into the brick wall over time, what was once a beautiful site with fresh colors is now claimed by the streets in all its discoloration. All I can say is that the streets took him unnaturally. The aims to disembody a redeemed spirit came with a selected number, an assignment, and a territory in mind. His killer wanted a name and rank in the closest thing they had to a family. The priest, on the other hand, just wanted his family. He wanted his wife and kids after missing too many years serving his time to the streets and to the prisons of California. The streets took him in front of his family, at a home where his story both started and ended.

>>>>>>>>>>The home can be difficult to manage. I was away from home for two years, nine months, and six months, respectively, all for different reasons. I always returned with little hope, a wallet with no cash, and a broken-down car. I grabbed my key and opened the locked front door……

Hugging my mom is beautifully complicated. Her hugs were an unsigned peace treaty, surrendering them to me during our time of interpersonal reconstruction. We leave this proposed treaty unsigned because we both know that we are too stubborn to accept a draw in our battles. Our hunger to finish the war has not left our bodies. Instead, I just focus on the warmth of her arms that were tightly wrapped across my shoulder blades like a heavy blanket. The smell of Vicks on aching limbs and varicose veins was the reminder of my mother’s limited time. Too many years have gone and pass without reconciliation nor rehabilitation. The brown skin, which was kissed by the sun, is now holding onto her son like an informal apology. Our last moments together under this roof were hostile.

* Her room is where information of foul-play was shared about other people. Where tears for the cold children living across the house are shed. Where letters are offered to me as a means to help her win her custody battle against her daughter. I write for the illiterate grandmother wanting her grandbabies safe. The room where her and I watch our words and opinions carefully like we were tip-toeing across a minefield. It was obvious, she didn’t want to lose her writer while I didn’t want to lose a second parent.

>>>>>>>>>>Sooner or later, as rocky times came across us more often, financial woes repositioned our relaxed position to something easily irritated and reactive. We grew comfortable with half-hearted side hugs and selective hearing. Our rooms were at separate ends of the house yet quite similar in appeal. Our bodies in need of machines at night to keep us alive.

* Nebulizer vs CPAP machine. Asthma nebulizer sitting comfortable on the bed, ready to calm down the wheezing from the saran-wrapped lungs. A disability I couldn’t imagine dealing with at the age of 22.
* Mother messages me on FB to come rub Vicks on her feet and back before she goes to bed. Technology bridging our connection to the opposite end of the house.
  + Using my thumb to press down and massage each ankle and shoulder blade in a circular motion.

“Mio, keep my door unlocked for me. I’m scare something is going to happen to me.”

* “Like what exactly?”
* “I don’t know, Mio. I’m just scared for us. I feel weak and sick.
* “We’ll be alright, mom. Just get some rest.”
* “I hope we are, Mio. Just keep my door unlocked please.”
  + - “Are you sure, mom?”
    - “Yes, son, leave it open. I’ll call for you if I need you.”
  + Leaving the door unlocked was a very unusual request from my mom. I immediately reminded myself to charge my phone and computer when I get back to my room. You know, in case she calls for me. I now feel useful for the right reasons. Grateful to be a dependable source but at what cost? Will my mom be okay in the morning? Would I be able to hear her from across the house when she needs me?
    - The questions remain: does this curb their tensions? Has he finally relinquished his hostile spirit against his warrior mother? The woman warrior who survives the war and still experiences pain in victory. Were the years away worth it? Health deteriorating both the mother and son’s bodies. Has he matured in one way and grown more scared for the years to come? What funerals await? Is it two or one? He cries himself to sleep, wondering if mother will be okay in the morning.

Kendrick Lamar pride

The hurt becomes repetition, the love almost lost that

Sick venom in men and women overcome with pride

A perfect world is never perfect, only filled with lies

Promises are broken and more resentment come alive

“ICE is the most evil American shit of my lifetime.”

Coming to Salinas. Watching the news of agricultural workers getting

You should try to profit from the experience.

Yellow/orange hue

Sedition—conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of a state or monarch.

Mother’s room was the main forum for heavily guarded discussions about family news.

Serious control like a military compound. Years of paranoia and repression.

“People under this kind of tight censorship, people become more, I think, creative. Take a look, careful reading, there may be something between the lines, messages.” –U Thiha Saw

Recidivism--the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend.

Mother’s dilemma: Either gain custody of her grandbabies or move away. When sister discovers and conceals the documents. My mother begins losing her stuff.

June 12th: Mother scene.

June 15th –Ex girlfriend’s sibling just picked up a box full of her items left at my house. I watched her leave while remaining inside my gated fence. Return to my room, going through scrapbooks full of memories, I began to question why things ended the way they did. Replaying the Facebook message in my head? Through sickness and health? Didn’t happen. Resentment killed the joy of what we had. Confined to my bed. She’s free, was I the one bringing her down?

The sound of a slammed door and my sister barking her orders derailed this dreamful . Both kids need just got picked up from school. The little girl went to the nurse office faking a stomach ache while my nephew got in a fight with another boy in school. The narrative begins focusing on the kids. Why does aggression and deceit begin at an early age? Their reactionary spirit, the spirt of the house, follows them we they go outside the gated fences. The pain and hurt transmuted into visible anger. Who were their role models? Who was setting the example? I stand by door to hear both kids confess to their mother they were growing tired of being picked on for having cheap clothes. That’s all we can afford. Mother does not respond. I just the hear two lashes from the belt and a return to civil conversation. I stand by the door with a destroyed look on my face. I wasn’t alone in the listening party however. Their grandmother overhears from the hallway. She smiles sadly at me before walking in anger and disgust. I followed her with no plan to say anything, just remained curious. I watch as she scrambles through her purse, grabbing two loose credit cards and walking right past me with another forced smile. The smile uttering the words, “I got this, Mio.” She locks her room door from behind her and drives off to buy the kids clothes with the little money she has in her checkings. I head back to my room only to receive a small job opportunity through a text message.

June 19th—Credit card payment and Car Insurance: both due tomorrow. Rejected from another job. Left with no income. Goal is 280 dollars by the end of the night. Just finished writing a speech on civil forfeiture laws in New Hampshire for someone for around 130 (opening line). It was their last assignment for the university. I get the money wired to me. He thanks me as he celebrates *earning* his diploma. I haven’t graduated from much. Still 150 dollars short, what to do? Sell half an ounce for 150 and 4 norco pills for 5 dollars a pop to make up the rest of the money. RESEARCH articles for drug pushing. Only customer I have in contacts is interested. Selling outside of my house brings paranoia to what might be said about me. I walk out the gated fence only to run into my sister talking through some headphones, staring at her phone screen. As my sister smokes her cigarette outside, I feel her watching me make the transaction. In the passenger seat, I keep looking back at her. Her cold stare is frightening as she blows the smoke and meticulously studies my every move. Wasn’t she haven’t a conversation? Would this be used against my mother in her custody battle? Would I be in any legal trouble by just trying to make ends meet? Where is her evidence? At the end of the night, I collected over 300 bucks. Put the extra 20 dollars away for the internet payment next month.

June 20th—Birthday spent in isolation. My buys a rocking chair for me with credit card. Nine bucks. We talk outside as I sit on the chair. We stand inside the gated fence around our front yard. Are we still sanctioned from the outside world? All our stories are filled with what we do outside yet every time we walk out of this gate, we do not know how to play by the rules. Mother jokes that I will never get out of the room now. (Short chapter,10 pages).

June 21st—Sister calls me over to her room. She

June 25th—Empty Rooms. Talking about the empty rooms where. Memories exist tenderly. Entertaining the idea that this house use to be open for anyone willing to enter. The amount of trust in both family and outsiders.

* The son always happy to have a new job but has nothing steady. Thus, producing this anxiety within him to make ends meet. It looks volunteer for jobs because its something he likes to do.
* College tracks where mother and son walk for health reasons; a tethering ball on top of a cemented tire, located in front of the house; —all introduces this motif involving circular motions. Massaging the mother in circle motions. Hitting the tethering ball every time we come home. We punch it without looking back. We know the string and ball will return to its natural form. Circle motions on the shoulder blades. Mother is sick, hoping my hands will thumbs pressing the stress found in the body would bring back to a normal state. My mother and I walking on the school tracks during the last scene. Working on our health to return to the normal state. Drawing circles with my niece. Health getting in the way of making a perfect circle. Tremors and mid-coughs during the process, caused me to losing precision. Really flesh out this idea.
* Conversational appointments & deadlines: Being quick and cohesive before being asked to pause and wait until something is over. Technology inference with the interpersonal.
* External pressures keeping the characters in check. No room for the imaginative state. There are rules to oblige by. Certain ways of talking and handling business. Main character, in between these moments of conflict, find reprieves in their head space. Finding the colors and rhythm that makes the world fantastic and romanization of the reality. The reality itself is dull, gray, gloomy.

Full sectors of this house, much of it, in fact, are off-limits. Cramped quarters (sister’s room)

* Believing my sister then getting hit with a lie.
* Like a squeamish rat chewing through the walls of my living quarters, hoping to find food or freedom, shelter or familiarity, wooden floors or concrete—I was lodged, anxiously, in between two places, physically and mentally, as the rat was in between two barriers with two inches of space.
* Sister’s voicemail: “Chris, don’t ever start. Do not be swearing to me either. I’ve got shit to do. I have to go to work, okay? I have to be at work at six o’ clock. I am going to drop them off at the baby sitter so don’t tell me ‘I swear.’ *They’re my kids*. Don’t act like you are raising them
* Angry, congestive space.
* Junkyard dog
* “He said Mexico is going to pay for the wall one way or another, several times. They are. With their children as hostages.”
* “Me listening to corridos about selling drugs and killing people on my way to a regular 9-5 job.”
* Money, or the lack of, destabilized me more than anything else. No money to travel a few yards, trapped in a cage like a junkyard dog.”
* My value for speech had been beaten dead. The monologues I recited cut into paragraphs. The paragraphs I spoke shortened to sentences. The sentences I faintly remember chewed down to words. Words processed into what? Uh? Repeated questions and numbers frequent in thought? I don’t know what natural jaws of life lunched on my power to speak, but I convince myself it was something unknown that caused all this grief. Greif devasted by silence. The night breathed without ghosts in its lungs for the first time yet here I was lucked out of second-chances to get out of my own head.
  + I think about the house once again. I wonder what they were doing today.
  + Leaving Facebook because of the paragraphs, finding comfort in the characters. Instagram, wasn’t confident enough?
* This was me in the whole social scene: I played different personalities like a wrestling gimmick, sometimes insensitive. I treated my last name like a brand, a certain flair the crowd could respect. Yet, I was the one they wanting to see hit the ropes harder. I was careful not to speak too much on tragedies and the rumored outcome because it’s not popular within this circle of indifferent supporters. I talked simple and discreet. Besides, they most likely think their tragic-comedies are much better. Those Shakespearians, I was the bingo-halls compared to their dramatic production. It’s not like I favor having full-
* membership to hearing self-pity all that much, I already committed to dozing off like a heroin addict midway through their monologue. At least I knew I was good at clapping for them at the right moments.
* They convinced themselves it was my horrible health that shaped this medicated version of a longtime friend struggling with aimless resentment. Its like their ears study the decline of my youthfulness and energy through my mumbled speech patterns. Their eyes watch as a once determined vessel of flesh and bone forfeits his passion for communication and connection. Aye, probecito, they probably thought to themselves. Hell, maybe they didn’t think anything at all. They probably just stared me into existence. To them, I am nothing more than a mouthful of muscle relaxers and a handle of tequila in a locked room: a death symbol. An existential crisis gone wrong.
  + That’s why I opt out of social meetings ninety-five percent of the time. I rather let them workshop through their misconceptions without me being present to hear their advice. I rather be pronounced dead publicly and remain to myself like Pacal in his sarcophagus or Tupac in Cuba. I just rather be somewhere else, undisturbed and resting. I want to paint the future in my sleep and let my spirit be written into history. I want my name carved out of stone to lay in halls, museums, or at the bottom of the sea. I want it all. I just couldn’t figure out what role I would have to play for the listening party. The faithful bodies that will build temples for me without breaking a sweat. One click of the retweet button to spread the bad news. That’s where the five percent comes into effect, making me dread the social experiment even more as I get older, intolerant, and impatient.
* “You’ll be crazier than a rat in a coffee can”
* How much punishment can a mind and body tolerate? It’s the one question that keeps me going. I did not have the authority to decide whether I want to be robbed or rewarded time. I accept the prognostications as they come, you see, letting my imbalanced days decide for me. Stand upright, be optimistic, I trained myself to say. Act like you own a small percentage of your choices. Unfortunately, when the card turns over, people found out the hard way: house always win. And the spirit of the house follows me everywhere.
  + Sometimes, I want to pickpocket the universe out of its secrets, mugging natural forces out of its freedom and forcing them to take me to the land, ocean or fire that would accept my body for its years. Other times, I romanticize the unknown too much that an unnatural death sounds plausible.
  + I once desired a selfish death. I guess I just wanted to know whether there was power in losing. I wanted to know how much air this body can squeeze out before the toes cease movement. I wanted to know whether tightening the tragedy to gift yourself this illusion of full control would be seen as a heroic or cowardly act of cleverness.
  + Was I truly loved or was I the vagrant, the beggar, the sluggish and unloved body stained by resentment and sickness? What would be said at the funeral? Far too often, I’ve seen the most redeemed characters taken in their early twenties, carted away, in spit, by every word that dare repeats, “Well, he was no angel.” It was often used by those closest to you, it was a failure of human recognition.
  + Instead, these memorial services were nothing more than muffled speeches and clouded memories working to erase the child, the innocent, the pure soul, the son of God before he confronted the vindictive world in his strength and was dismembered by the bodies and structures that wanted to see him go.
  + Would my death be a story for the ages or forgotten due to its scripted errors? I assume the earth wrote my name in a production, in a language I couldn’t rehearse for confidently. Sometimes, I just want to know how much a body can endure before it taps out. Coates brilliantly said protect the body, I drowsily say test it at your own will. Tell me how much pain, scars, tears, deaths, love, fiction, promises, handicaps, absences, and conclusions has to be experienced to find amity? I grow tired in my thoughts and drown in my moods. The challenge is not cutting things short.