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INT.A BUSTLING DINER.DAY.

LUKE is seated across the table from two other young men, MARCUS and HORATIO. All three are in some state of controlled disarray, and LUKE sips a milkshake while slouched down in his seat, implicitly under the influence of drugs (most likely marijuana). MARCUS and HORATIO are intently and energetically explaining something to him.

MARCUS:

Okay, look. This book says that Plato taught about the golden key to the universe that solved all the mysteries. But, in order to understand that key, you have to understand ratio, and proportion. Separate parts come together to make a whole, but understanding how they come together is the trick.

HORATIO:

Right. So think about this. I give you a line and tell you to cut it unevenly.

LUKE:

Why.

HORATIO:

Because if you cut it unevenly then the ratio would be one to one, and half to the whole is one to two. You can't have a proportion with uneven ratios.

MARCUS:

The golden ratio solves that though. The whole to the longer segment equals the longer segment to the shorter.

LUKE:

Okay. But why the line why not just fractions.

HORATIO:

Too complex. The actual numerical value of the golden ratio is ridiculous.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS:

A line works best, but you could do it with anything of two or three dimensions, hypothetically. You could use a dachshund if you wanted.

HORATIO:

Anyway...you can take this golden ratio and apply it to basic two dimensional shapes, to make golden spirals.

MARCUS:

It shows up in hurricane clouds, DNA nucleotides, the swirl of cream in your coffee.

HORATIO:

I see it as proof that there is a higher level of organization in all this. Life is immeasurably more complex than anything we as humans can conceive, at least at this point in our evolutionary career. This is the tip of the tip of the iceberg.

The door of the diner bangs open loudly, and a group of 20-25 year olds come in. They go to the bar, and rudely order drinks, hitting on the bartender etc. They all have very loud Scottish accents, and continue to be obnoxious as they wait for their orders.

MARCUS:

What have we here...

MARCUS looks at HORATIO, who nods. They get up and head towards the group out of the frame, leaving LUKE idly sipping milkshake and watching.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)

(tapping one of them on the shoulder)
Is that..?

The man turns around in surprise.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)

Hey! Sick Boy, it is you!

The rest of them turn around to see what's going on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
Holy shit, the gang's all here,
Horatio. You must be Renton, and
there's Spud of course.

MARCUS turns to the leader of the group, the loudest and the rudest.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
And you must be Begbie!

With the last word, MARCUS winds up and kicks him in the crotch. A brawl ensues over "Same in the End" by Sublime. The fight continues; after a moment, Luke gets up from his seat, picks up a chair and smashes it on the back of one of the men. Freeze frame on Luke as the chair splinters on the man's back. There is an uncharacteristic look of fury on his face.

NARRATOR:
My life wasn't always like this.

Cut to.int.a large auditorium.

A small boy is playing a very beautiful piece on the piano. The seats are full of smiling adults. The camera pans over them as the music plays flawlessly.

CUT TO: The boy playing piano. He is about six or seven, and is dressed in a very uncomfortable suit.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
This is me at my first piano
recital. I am six years old, and
would rather be anywhere else in
the entire world.

He finishes the piece perfectly and the audience applauds. He gets up from the piano and hurriedly exits the stage.

CUT TO: Backstage. He pulls off his blazer and sits on the floor, leaning against the wall. He pulls out a CD player and puts on the headphones. "Karma Police" by Radiohead begins playing softly.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
Since I was very young, music had
provided me with a special shelter
that I sought often. My crippling
anxiety was soothed by the flowing
melodies, and the beauty carried me
away every time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

As the narrator speaks this last line, the camera pans up above the child's head and fades to black, coinciding with the drum hit introducing the verse of "Karma Police". The black fade becomes a starry night sky over a sparkling city at night. Young Luke comes into the frame flying like superman. Wind whips his face as he flies above the city. Close-up of his face as the wind blows his hair; his eyes are closed in an expression of pure ecstasy.

CUT TO: Backstage again. Slow zoom on his face. He is perfectly content and calm.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
You see, this way once they find
me...I won't be there at all.

Opening titles over montage of Luke flying through the sky, swooping down through the city.

CUT TO: The outside lobby. A horde of chattering adults awaits.

CUT TO: Young Luke sitting backstage.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
I have left the building.

CUT TO: A teenager's bedroom. Posters of Bob Dylan, John Lennon, etc. line the walls. Teenage Luke sits at a desk with a computer. He is on the phone, clearly distraught.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
This is me many years later. I was
in love with a girl, and for a
while, she loved me back. Julia.

LUKE:
(on the phone)
Well, yeah...yes I know I told you
to think about it while you were in
Spain. Look, I just think we should
have the summer together. Okay,
but...just wait a minute...why
though? I just don't think it's the
right thing to do yet. Look I don't
know it just does! I haven't even
given you your birthday presents
yet!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

NARRATOR:

Pitifully enough, I had gone to the trouble of compiling a list of her favorite jazz tunes, then learning and recording the parts on each instrument. By the time I was finished with the project, she no longer loved me.

LUKE:

Well...is that it? That's it. Can I see you anymore? But come on, I love you!

He looks at the phone. She has hung up.

LUKE: (CONT'D)

Shit.

NARRATOR:

Still, I clung to music as a source of revival and refuge.

CUT TO: Shot of Teenage Luke sitting on a couch with a look of deep concentration on his face. He is intently writing in a notebook.

CUT TO: The page with his hand and pen in the frame. Very neatly and deliberately he is illustrating a circle of fifths. A tear or two drops on the page.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

I was 17 then.

EXT.A BUSY CITY.DAY.

Luke, older, but still quite youthful bicycling through busy city streets, weaving through traffic.

NARRATOR:

I had always wanted to be a film score composer, and through college I had done my best to hone my technique. I got sidetracked along the way though...I was working a stiff job at my dad's office, each day losing a little bit more of my soul.

Luke pulls up outside the office. It is a generic building, with neatly cut grass outside. He locks his bike in the rack, takes off his helmet, and goes inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUT TO: The lobby inside. An older, stern-looking receptionist.

LUKE:
(somewhat irritably)
Good morning, Pam.

PAM:
Hi Lucas. Nice to see you here on
time.

Luke rolls his eyes as he walks past.

LUKE:
Yeah, yeah.

He walks down the hall and opens the door to an office, going in. There is nothing remarkable about it, and is furnished with the standard desk, chair, and file cabinets. It comes as no surprise that Luke dreads spending time in such a mundane environment all day. The only touch of color in the room comes from a Mondrian art print hanging on the wall. Luke goes behind his desk and slumps down in the chair, turning to look at the art print intently. He is clearly not interested in doing any work. The door opens, and his dad comes in. He is about 60, and wears a respectable but modest suit.

DAD:
Good morning, Lucas.

LUKE:
Hi dad.

DAD:
How are you feeling?

LUKE:
(shrugging)
Can't complain, I guess.

DAD:
Have you spoken to the counselor
recently.

LUKE:
Yes, dad. We both know I'm doing
fine.

DAD:
Sure, sure. You're right. You know
it's all in the interest of your
well-being, Lucas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUKE:
Yeah, dad, I know.

DAD:
Have you been doing any writing.

LUKE:
Sometimes. You know how it is
though, who has time?

DAD:
I know. Keep at it though. I was
always so proud to have a real
writer in the family.

LUKE:
Dad..come on now, I'm no more of a
real writer than anyone else with a
pen and paper.

DAD:
You always had a gift with words,
Lucas, that's real.

LUKE:
I don't know.

DAD:
How's the apartment?

LUKE:
Ah, you know. A little cluttered
but it's cozy and private. That's
all I need, really.

DAD:
Good. Can I take you out for some
lunch today?

LUKE:
Sure, dad.

DAD:
See you then.

He leaves, shutting the door gently. Luke is clearly
exasperated, but holds it in and relaxes in his chair.

NARRATOR:
It was going to be a very long day.

INT.A CLUTTERED APARTMENT.NIGHT.

Luke's apartment. It is relatively dark and gloomy, a trait that is greatly deepened by the night. There are few traces of decoration or comfort, save for a few threadbare pieces of furniture, an old TV, etc. A grimy mirror hangs in the front hall over a small table.

A haggard looking Luke opens the door to his apartment and puts his keys on the table, taking off his coat. He looks into the mirror. The camera pans around as he looks at himself in the mirror, rubbing his face.

NARRATOR:

At night, I thought about Julia. I wanted to let her go so badly. Despite the years that had passed, she stayed on my mind constantly. The perfection of what we once had, and what we could have had, ate at me. There was once a time when I could grasp the abstract, and I could feel the blood pumping through my veins. When she left, I found myself unable to maintain that ability. I struggled to find another way; I turned to my vices.

Looks deeply into the mirror once more, then exits.

CUT TO: A bedroom in the apartment. P.O.V. of the ceiling fan as it spins lazily. Luke opens the door and walks in, turns, and shuts the door, leaning against it. He moves to sit at the bed, and pulls several pills out of his pocket. After looking at them for a moment, he pops them all in. The drugs take effect slowly.

CUT TO: Bird's-eye view over the bed. "Inside a Break" by John Frusciante begins playing. Luke collapses on his back, looking up at the ceiling. Lying on the bed, he dazedly looks around the room and sees a beautiful girl coming towards him from the doorway. She shimmers, and to the audience it is clearly a hallucination. She is pale and ghostly, and slowly she approaches him. He sighs in delight.

CUT TO: Side shot of Luke lying on the bed. She climbs atop him slowly and gracefully. She looks like an angel. Poised over his chest, she caresses his cheek, and he closes his eyes in pleasure. She leans down, and they kiss deeply. He embraces her in bliss, and they roll over together. However, as he rolls over, he suddenly finds that he is embracing nothing at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gets up in despair, and stumbles around as the room swirls about him. The lines of a Jackson Pollock art print on the wall appear to writhe like thousands of thin snakes. Frightened, he moves to the window and desperately looks out.

CUT TO: Shot from outside viewing Luke as he looks out the window sadly.

CUT TO: The bedroom. He turns back inside, leans back against the wall, and slides down to the floor. He buries his head in his arms.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

I had replaced the sweet taste of
her lips with the feverish
fantasies of my own mind. If only I
could let her go.

INT.THE BEDROOM.MORNING.

Sunlight is streaming in the window onto the unconscious form of Luke. Sheets are scattered everywhere, and the room is in a state of disarray congruent to the mental anguish of the night before. He slowly begins to stir.

CUT TO: Close-up of his eye. It snaps open suddenly.

NARRATOR:

I needed to see Brian.

Montage of Luke getting up, getting his act together over "Stumped" by Minor Threat. He changes his clothes, which he had slept in from the night before, takes a shower, and gets dressed. He looks much fresher, but the exhaustion is still apparent in his eyes. He makes some coffee and eggs for breakfast.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

Brian was my wiseman. We had known each other for many years while in school, but it remained clear that he knew a lot more about me than I knew about him. He had a tremendous aura of mysticism about him that was no bullshit, and I sought his guidance in only the most dire of situations. Currently, my past was making a concentrated effort to completely devour my present and future, and I needed help. It was time to take a trip.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUT TO: Close-up of Luke's mouth and chin. He opens his mouth and pops in two capsules over "Breakfast with Blockhead" by Aesop Rock.

CUT TO: Car on the highway. It is a slightly beat up SUV, and for some reason the trunk is open.

CUT TO: INT. Luke is in the car driving. He nervously taps his fingers on the steering wheel. He is slouched down, looking the same way he did in the diner. He is unshaven and wearing a track jacket.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

Brian was at Brown, which was where
I needed to be as soon as possible.
Luckily I was making good time on
the highway.

CUT TO: Red and blue lights flashing in the rearview mirror. He pulls over to the side of the road and the cop pulls behind him.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

Too good.

LUKE:

Fuck!

CUT TO: EXT. The officer approaches the car from the side. He is all business, and wears the widebrim hat of the state police, as well as menacing sunglasses.

NARRATOR:

The first scene of Stephen King's
"Desperation" immediately flashed
into my mind. I got nervous.

Luke shudders.

CUT TO: The officer's reflection in the driver's side window. Luke rolls it down.

LUKE:

(unsteadily)
Morning, officer.

OFFICER:

Morning fuckstick! Any idea why I
pulled this shitbox over?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUKE:
(completely taken aback)
Uh...

OFFICER:
Of course you don't know, you
fucking idiot. Your trunk is wide
open and all your shit is falling
out over my beautiful highway!

Luke looks back. The trunk is indeed wide open, and papers
are softly billowing around the back and out into the
highway.

NARRATOR:
The bastard wasn't lying.

OFFICER:
Now here's what I can do. I can
either fine you \$100 for each scrap
of paper that has fluttered out of
your car, or I can let you go and
pick it all up right now.

Luke looks back again. Paper is fluttering all over. He looks
ahead and sighs.

NARRATOR:
There was a lot of paper.

CUT TO: EXT. The highway. Luke walks around with a trash bag
picking up paper and other odd items from the road.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
Time I had. Money I didn't. I would
have to wait until that evening to
see Brian.

CUT TO: View of Luke's face squinting in the sun as he picks
up a page and looks at it. They all have typewriter typing on
them. It is a screenplay. He reads one page reflectively, and
his face remains stoic.

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)
The typed pages that now lay all
around me feet comprised a
screenplay that I had written. It
was about a woman named Jacqueline
who didn't really love her husband.
It was unoriginal shit though.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

My friend Claudius liked it, but he
was dead now. His nephew stabbed
him. So it goes.

EXT.A COLLEGE DORM AT BROWN.NIGHT.

Luke's car pulls into the dimly lit parking lot of a dorm
building. Sitting in his car, he takes out a cell phone and
dials a number.

LUKE:

(exhaustedly)

Hey, I'm here.

He hands up and gets out of the car wearing a backpack. A
young man BRIAN meets him at the door. Brian has piercing
blue eyes. They exchange a solemn greeting.

BRIAN:

How are you?

LUKE:

Very tired. What a long strange
trip it's been and all that.

BRIAN:

Well, come in. I've got the futon
made up.

They head inside. Luke is clearly exhausted, indicated by his
slumped posture, haggard eyes, and emaciated form. Brian is
bright-eyed, very calm, very awake, composed, and generally
well-put together, providing an effective contrast to Luke.
They disappear through the door.

INT.BRIAN'S DORM.NIGHT.

It is very peaceful in the room. There is an oriental rug on
the floor, a tea kettle sitting on top of the mini-fridge, a
poster of the Dalai Lama, incense, etc. Everything is in its
place and as it should be, much reflecting the mental state
of its occupant. Brian pours tea for them both. He sits in an
armchair next to a lava lamp, which casts red-tinted shadows
on the wall.

BRIAN:

What's troubling you.

LUKE:

(sipping his tea)

The past is devouring my present
and future. It sucks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIAN:

Ah. An issue of time.

LUKE:

Well, yes...in a way. It's like I'm devolving. Over time, the things that I used to be good at have begun to fade, and these tragic things that happen to me scrub out past experiences, leaving a void.

BRIAN:

What tragic things?

LUKE:

Julia leaving was the first one.

BRIAN:

And what has come of it?

LUKE:

Well. I wake up some mornings and I'm unbearably lonely. And I think about how I would literally give anything to kiss her again. But sometimes it's nice. I can hang out with Marcus and Horatio and get stoned and play with air rifles and talk about how amazing it would be to fuck Elastigirl...

BRIAN:

From 'The Incredibles'?

LUKE:

Yeah.

BRIAN:

Go on.

LUKE:

And I can do all that and not dread the phone call. I can avoid that whole dilemma of 'do I pick up?', and if I do, do I leave the room and talk? Or do I explain that I'm with friends and can't talk? And so on and so forth. But I know that getting through that was worth it every time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRIAN:

Do you miss her now?

LUKE:

I miss who she used to be, you know? She's not the same person anymore. And I'm not in love with that person. The love we shared left an imprint on me, but it can't sustain itself. I need to apply it to new love or I feel like I'll never grow, and the past will conquer everything I have for good. She's going out with some douche bag from Princeton though, and I don't think the odds of her returning to the beauty of her past self are terribly good.

BRIAN:

Well, either way you look at it, she lost that love too. I know she loved you as deeply as you loved her, and she didn't get away scot-free, as you may think.

LUKE:

True. But regardless, looking at it objectively, it's hard for me to care. It's like trying to suddenly care about a stranger.

BRIAN:

I see.

LUKE:

It's like in 'Shaun of the Dead', you know? When Philip gets bitten, and becomes one of the undead, and Shaun shouts to Barbara as they're escaping, [accent] 'Mum, there is nothing of the man you loved inside that car!'. The girl I loved has left the building, and the amount that I loved her in the past is the exact same amount of fervor with which my present and future are being destroyed.

BRIAN:

You have to fight back. Haven't you heard of 'fight the future'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LUKE:
Of course, X-files.

BRIAN:
Absolutely. But here it's fight the past, because it's attacking. And if it wins, God only knows what will comprise the rest of your life.

LUKE:
I don't know what to do though.

BRIAN:
You need to stop the cycle it's creating. You have to find love again and negate the tragic things that are happening. Write. Read. Make and listen to music. Find the beauty in the world that you forgot about since Julia left. And then you'll start moving forward again.

BRIAN: (CONT'D)
(notices Luke looking doubtful)
Hey, I know it won't be easy. But time changes everything, my friend. It's up to no one but you to steer the change in the right direction.

Brian pours more tea and they sit, sipping tea and contemplating.

NARRATOR:
He was right. But part of me still felt like Billy Pilgrim, trapped on a flatcar with my eye to the metal tube, watching helplessly as I hurtled toward the dismal years ahead. But I knew I could turn it if I tried.

Shot of the lava lamp. Fade to black.

EXT.THE DORM BUILDING.MORNING.

Luke exits the building and heads out to his car, with Brian in tow. They get to his car to say goodbye, and Brian embraces him firmly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIAN:

Be well, Lucas. Remember, I know how you feel, but trust me, you are not Billy Pilgrim.

NARRATOR:

How the fuck did he get in my head...?

LUKE:

I know, I think.

BRIAN:

You'll see. Time is the most powerful force of change in the universe, but you can harness it, trust me.

LUKE:

Thanks Brian. You're a lifesaver.

They exchange their last goodbyes, and Luke gets in the car.

EXT.A LARGE RAMSHACKLE HOUSE.DAY.

The house is badly in need of repair, as well as a few coats of paint. The shutters hang haphazardly, and a stray cat curls around a post by the stairs.

NARRATOR:

In such times of uncertainty, it can always be comforting to settle into some old routines. Just while you gather your thoughts, anyway.

Luke gets out of his car and heads toward the front door. Suddenly the door swings open to reveal HORATIO. He is jubilant. He comes out to greet Luke.

HORATIO:

(singing)

Oh, baby if I was a catfish,
swimmin' in the deep blue sea,
lord, if I was a catfish...swimmin'
in the deep blue sea.

MARCUS:

(shouting from inside)

Would you be quiet? You'll scare
away the squirrel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE:
Squirrel?

HORATIO:
Oh yeah, he's been trying to get
this squirrel with an air rifle for
days now. He never hits it though.
He's an idiot.

LUKE:
We all gotta burn something.

HORATIO:
Yeah, I guess you're right. Come on
in.

INT.A LIVING ROOM.DAY.

Horatio and Marcus' living room. There is a worn couch, a tv, a tank of fish, a coffee table. Despite the exterior of the house, it seems like a nice place. There are some board games on the table, along with a stack of philosophy books. Marcus Aurelius, Nietzsche, etc. To the side there is also a kitchen. A fridge covered with stickers and photos, a counter with fruit on it. Books also line every free space around the kitchen. The place is well-lived in; comforting, secure, carefree. A relaxing haven for Luke. Marcus comes to greet them as Luke and Horatio enter the house. He is wearing a white t-shirt, thick glasses, shorts, flip-flops, as well as holding an air rifle. He slaps Luke on the shoulder.

MARCUS:
Hello, hello my friend!

LUKE:
Hey Horatio, I didn't know you hung
out with Private Pyle.

MARCUS:
Ha, ha very funny asshole. Private
Pyle was fat and didn't wear
glasses.

LUKE:
Well, I can just call you Private
Joker in that case. How are you?

They move to the couch and sit down. Horatio busies himself in the kitchen cooking lunch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARCUS:

I can't complain. Except for the damn squirrel that keeps eating the birdseed. You look like hell though.

LUKE:

Ah, I'm fine. I just went to see Brian about some things.

MARCUS:

Still hung up on Julia?

LUKE:

Yeah...well...I don't know. I think so. It's kind of a raw train of thought still.

MARCUS:

Hey, why worry. You've got everything you need right here.

HORATIO:

(from the kitchen)

You guys want garlic or spinach tortillas for the chicken wraps?

MARCUS:

Garlic. Keeps away the vampires. Here, rip this please.

He hands Luke an elaborately colored water pipe.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)

I filled it with pineapple juice. It's lovely.

Luke drags out a deep hit from the pipe. "5/4" by Gorillaz begins playing. Luke collapses back into the chair and releases the smoke in sudden slow motion. Marcus pats him on the head, laughing. Camera rapidly circles the living room. Horatio brings food over. They continue to pass the pipe around, talking, eating, and laughing. [Sped up] Marcus looks out the window. He picks up the air rifle and goes to the patio door. [Slow motion] long profile shot of Marcus as he levels the rifle at the squirrel on the bird feeder, takes careful aim, and fires. He misses, and the squirrel jumps from the birdfeeder and scrambles up a tree. At the pause in "5/4" at 2:02: close-up of Marcus' face contorted in disbelief. 2:15: Marcus angrily shakes his fist in slow motion at the squirrel, yelling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CUT TO: INT. Frontal shot of Luke's face staring ahead. Time-lapse as Horatio and Marcus gesture, laugh, talk and walk around him. The camera remains on his face. There is a smile on his lips. The song ends.

NARRATOR:

Same as it ever was. Same as it
ever was.

Time returns to normal. Marcus, Horatio, and Luke sit around in the living room idly watching tv, smoking, etc.

MARCUS:

It's good that you're here, Luke.
Horatio and I have a little
something we've been working on.

LUKE:

(still slightly stoned)
Oh?

HORATIO:

Yeah. A little scheme we cooked up,
you might say.

MARCUS:

You are aware of the card games
Tybalt has been holding down at the
Pen?

EXT.A SEEDY NIGHTCLUB.NIGHT.

CUT TO: INT. Several men sit around a table. "Spanish Key" by Miles Davis plays. The air is filled with smoke. Cards and chips litter the table. At the head of the table sits an impressive looking man wearing a cap, shirt, tie, etc. Very sharply dressed. His sleeves are rolled up and he is constantly grinning, looking around. He grins like a wolf. This is TYBALT. The camera does a quick zoom on his face, then slows down as he continues to look around, with smoke trailing around his face. He hardly blinks at all, and his eyes are the most piercing shade of blue you can imagine. His gaze cuts through everything and everyone.

NARRATOR:

Tybalt was the charismatic owner of
the Pen club downtown. I think it
was left to him by his dad or
something. Anyway, he held weekly
high-stakes card games that well-to-
do riff-raff liked to buy into and
try and make it big.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR: (CONT'D)

Thousands of dollars filled the pot each night, but the house always took home the vast majority of it. No one ever complained though; Tybalt was not one to be crossed. He was like an arctic wolf, and his gaze could cut you clean in half.

CUT TO: INT. The living room, normal speed/sound.

LUKE:

Yes, I am aware.

HORATIO:

Once every month, the game of the night is blackjack. We can count those cards, Luke. Blackjack is the most countable cardgame there is, and the fact that he only uses a couple decks will make it a piece of cake.

MARCUS:

You think about it, if we play carefully, keep cool, and be smart, we can away with upwards of ten grand. It's a snap.

HORATIO:

We want you in on it with us.

MARCUS:

Tybalt likes fresh meat anyway. With you there, he'll be focused on cleaning you out, while we slowly rake in the chips. And you can drive 'cause we don't have a car.

LUKE:

Sure, why not.

MARCUS:

Yes! This is our best plan yet.

HORATIO:

It's this Friday. You're welcome to stay here until then. And as long as you want after, for that matter.

LUKE:

I think I like this idea. What the hell, you know? This might be what I need to get jumpstarted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCUS:

Yeah! Now why don't you go get settled in your room.

LUKE:

Okay, I'll do that.

Luke gets up and walks around, bumping into the coffee table and attempting to make his way to the room. Horatio and Marcus laugh and watch him leave the living room.

CUT TO: Luke's room. He enters and collapses into bed.

NARRATOR:

Of course, I was not Billy Pilgrim, just like Brian said. I could not look at my life like a mountain range, nor could I understand how to harness time or control my future. Regardless, I did not want to die. I had to place my trust in my friends.

He reaches over and switches off the light.

INT.LUKE'S POINT OF VIEW.MORNING.

Luke blinks his eyes open to reveal Marcus shaking him awake.

MARCUS:

Come on buddy, let's go get some breakfast.

Luke sleepily gets up. Marcus leaves and we hear him and Horatio bustling about the house.

NARRATOR:

I guess we had some planning to do.

He gets up and leaves the room.

CUT TO: INT. Luke's car. The three characters are inside talking.

MARCUS:

Yeah, but here's my idea. You should write this down, Luke, it's the next big thing: a dinosaur musical.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE:

That's the worst idea I've ever heard.

MARCUS:

No, no! Picture it: A mama-san velociraptor weeps as her sons go off to the frontline of the T-Rex wars. Meanwhile, a teenage tyrannosaur makes love to his girlfriend one last time before shipping off to fight the raptors.

LUKE:

"A mama-san velociraptor weeps"?

HORATIO:

Tyrannosaurs can't make love, they're terrible lizards.

MARCUS:

It gets better though. After the tearjerker farewell songs, maybe a t-rex and a velociraptor wind up alone together after an epic battle, and they learn to respect each other. They realize the folly of their ways. The final scene could be a song called "Different Worlds" or something, and the whole dinosaur cast would come out and hold hands...aw it'd be so beautiful.

Suddenly a car swerves out in front of them, skidding wildly. A bunch of drunken morons are yelling out the window, gesturing, etc. One of them throws a beer can, which splatters on the windshield.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)

Are you fucking kidding me?

Dream sequence (unbeknownst to audience):

Luke floors it to get alongside the car. The idiots flip them off and yell curses. Luke looks at them quietly as they race along side by side. Then, in a deft and sudden maneuver Luke yanks a gun from his jacket pocket (a la Percy killing Wild Bill in "The Green Mile").

MARCUS: (CONT'D)

What the hell are you doing!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Luke fires out his window until the gun is empty. The other car screeches out of control and crashes into the embankment on the side of the highway.

Back to reality:

Luke shakes his head. He lifts the fold of his jacket. There is nothing there.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
Luke I said speed up! I want to
throw something at them.

HORATIO:
Massachussetts license plate. Big
surprise that is.

Luke speeds up and Mercutio throws a water bottle or something at them, missing.

MARCUS:
(yelling)
I hope you crash and burn,
motherfuckers! You're polluting the
universe!

The idiots speed off, waving middle fingers and shouting.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
God I hate scumbags like that. They
make me so goddamn angry.

LUKE:
(softly)
Me too.

The car pulls into a diner. They exit the car and head inside.

NARRATOR:
Perhaps I realized then that I had
it in me to kill a man, albeit out
of anger. This was something new.

They sit down at a booth and look over the menu. The waitress comes by, fills up their coffee cups. Marcus sips his deeply.

WAITRESS:
You boys ready to order?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HORATIO:
I'll have blueberry pancakes,
please.

MARCUS:
I'm fine with just coffee, thanks.

LUKE:
I'll take toast and eggs, sunny
side up.

WAITRESS:
(winks at Luke)
Sure, hon. I'll have that right out
to you.

She heads off.

HORATIO:
She's cute!

LUKE:
I agree.

MARCUS:
Okay, okay. We need to talk. This
game with Tybalt could be very
dangerous if we screw it up.
Remember, he's like a wolf. He will
tear you to pieces if you cross
him.

LUKE:
So how are we going to hide the
fact that we're cheating.

HORATIO:
That's the tricky part. In a dive
like the Pen, counting the cards
will be easy. But if he catches on,
we could find ourselves in a world
of shit.

MARCUS:
Right. We can control the game
relatively handily, but it will be
a matter of balance between winning
and losing. Amongst the three of
us, we can take home a bundle, but
we have to keep it subtle. Tybalt
is as smart as he is ruthless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

The waitress brings out their food.

WAITRESS:
There you are, boys.

LUKE:
(smiling)
Thank you!

She walks away. Luke and Horatio look after her longingly.

MARCUS:
Come on you pinheads, focus. Now,
Luke, you don't know how to count
cards, but...

HORATIO:
Not that we don't think you're
smart enough, of course.

Luke shrugs.

MARCUS:
No, you could handle it easily. But
if all three of us start cruising
through the hands, we'll be more
obvious than a blink-182 lyric.

LUKE:
Nice.

MARCUS:
Thanks.

HORATIO:
Luke, you just play like you
usually would. Luck favors Tybalt,
and you're new so he won't spare
you a dime. However, Marcus and I
will be slowly bringing in much
more than you lose, so don't worry
about your money.

MARCUS:
It's really quite simple, no real
careful planning necessary. It's
not exactly a diamond heist. Just
be calm, be cool, and don't say
anything stupid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HORATIO:

There will be plenty of other guys there so he isn't going to pay much attention to us anyway. When he starts to look our way after we've been winning a fair amount, then we'll have to be especially careful.

MARCUS:

He's a powerful man and won't hesitate to act on suspicions.

HORATIO:

We keep it cool and take it easy. He'll call the last hand, which we'll play accordingly. Then the game will be over and we take off with the cash, never to play at the Pen again, of course.

MARCUS:

Don't talk to anyone as we're leaving, we just leave. Piece of cake.

LUKE:

Sounds simple enough.

HORATIO:

Indeed it does. With a little luck we'll be rich by this time tomorrow.

The waitress comes by and drops off the check.

WAITRESS:

You boys have a good day now. Be safe.

She smiles again at Luke.

LUKE:

We surely will. Thank you so much.

She walks away. They reach in their pockets for cash and put it together in a pile to pay the bill (foreshadowing of the pot at the blackjack game). Overhead shot of them pushing their money into the center. Luke and Horatio look at the pile of cash, silently counting it. They look up at Marcus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

LUKE: (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you're one of those guys who doesn't tip.

MARCUS:

Well, not today. It's not that I don't believe in it, and she was kind of cute. But while she was having eye-intercourse with you, Lucas, she neglected to fill my coffee more than once.

HORATIO:

Yeah, yeah, we've all heard that one before. We're coming back here tomorrow with that cash and giving her a massive tip to make up for your rudeness today.

MARCUS:

Fine by me. Don't count your eggs before they hatch though, all right? We don't need any jinxes.

LUKE:

Let's go.

They leave the money on the table and exit over "Sailin' On" by Bad Brains. Shot of them driving home on the highway.

NARRATOR:

It felt surreal. For the first time in a while, I was actually completely in the dark as to what might happen in my near future. In the past I always had some idea of what might happen the next day. School...work...Julia...now nothing. Of course, I couldn't see the future then, but it was the difference between having slightly adjust your eyes in a darkened bedroom, to swimming the ocean at midnight with them shut. I couldn't see a thing. It was tremendously invigorating.

FADE OUT.

EXT.THE HOUSE OF MARCUS AND HORATIO.NIGHT.

The three characters come out the door of the front, having changed their clothes, wearing a look of somber resolve, and generally looking pretty badass. They pause as they come up to the camera and turn to one another.

MARCUS:

Now, is there anything we need to go over before we do this?

LUKE:

Don't draw attention to ourselves.

HORATIO:

Subtle, calm, cool, collected.

MARCUS:

Precisely. We're gonna be just fine boys.

INT.THE SMOKEY BACKROOM OF THE PEN.NIGHT

Smoke billows around a card table in the Pen nightclub. Tybalt sits at the head of the table, as in the flashback. All the other players (thuggish types) are turned to look at our heroes, following the piercing gaze of Tybalt.

MARCUS:

(in disbelief)

What the fuck do you mean, I'm cheating?

TYBALT:

You, my friend, have really got some balls to come into my club and actually try to swindle me. It seems, however, that you have sorely underestimated my vigilance.

MARCUS:

(looking for a way out)

Look, asshole, you've got the wrong idea. Now I think we're just going to leave, okay?

He gets up. Tybalt immediately gets up to, followed by everyone else at the table.

TYBALT:

Something tells me otherwise, my friend. The game is just beginning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He moves close to Marcus, in his face now. Horatio and Luke stand a bit behind Marcus. The tension is palpable.

TYBALT: (CONT'D)
I suggest you and your friends take
a seat and finish the card game,
before I lose my temper.

MARCUS:
Get bent. We're leaving.

TYBALT:
If you insist. As host, however, I
feel that it is my duty to send you
on your way properly.

In a lightning quick series of shots, Tybalt thrusts a switchblade into Marcus stomach. He gasps in pain and surprise, and he collapses into Horatio's arms with a look of horror in his eyes. Tybalt smiles.

TYBALT: (CONT'D)
Ciao, amici.

HORATIO:
(desperately)
Luke, help me get him to the car!

Panicked, Horatio and Luke carry Marcus out to the car. He is gasping for air and is bleeding badly, as well as clearly being in a tremendous amount of pain. Horatio gets in the backseat with Marcus, and Luke hurriedly gets in the driver's seat, fumbling with the keys. He starts the car.

HORATIO: (CONT'D)
The hospital, now!

MARCUS:
(gasping)
No! Wait, we can't just leave.

Luke is hesitant. He looks back at Horatio.

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
Listen to me! There's a knife in
the glove compartment.

Luke takes it out, and looks at it in his hand as Marcus coughs and sputters in the backseat. Horatio attempts to calm him down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARCUS: (CONT'D)
Go back, Luke, go back for Tybalt.

NARRATOR:
Again I found myself asking the
same question. Was this the
direction my life was meant to
take? I tried to decide whether I
even cared anymore.

Luke looks back at Marcus with sadness in his eyes.

LUKE:
Okay.

Luke gets out of the car and strides purposefully towards the
back entrance of the Pen towards the back door they came out
of.

INT.THE CARD ROOM

Luke enters. The card players look up from their game.

Camera pans quickly to Luke standing in the doorway. Tybalt
comes up to him.

TYBALT:
Listen friend, I suggest you leave
lest you end up like your fiery-
tongued comrade.

Suddenly, without a word and with deadly force, Luke pulls
the knife out and shoves it into Tybalt's stomach. Tybalt
clutches his stomach and stumbles backwards. Luke is gone
before he hits the floor, and the evil cronies scramble to
chase him over "Travis Bickle" by Rancid.

CUT TO: INT. The car. Luke, who clearly sprinted to get
there, slams open the car door and gets in the driver's
seat. He floors it and they take off. The adrenaline has
taken over.

LUKE:
Oh, shit, shit, shit!

HORATIO:
Did you kill him?

LUKE:
Yes, I mean, I think so!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The car is cruising along when suddenly 2 more cars come speeding up behind them.

HORATIO:
Lose them, Luke! Jesus, Marcus is
going to die.

LUKE:
We're ALL going to die, Horatio!

Car chase sequence ensues as the music roars. The rear windshield suddenly shatters, having been hit by a bullet from the pursuers. Luke swerves around cars ahead, attempting to lose them. One of the cars doesn't make the turn and slams into a building.

MARCUS:
Ah God, it hurts, it hurts!

HORATIO:
Be quiet, Marcus!

They lose the remaining car.

MARCUS:
(weakly)
Please take me home now?

LUKE:
We're going, we're going.

EXT.MARCUS AND HORATIO'S HOUSE.NIGHT.

Luke's car hurriedly pulls into the driveway. The car shuts off, and Horatio and Luke frantically remove Marcus from the backseat, painstakingly carrying him up the stairs and into the house.

CUT TO: INT. The house. It is dark, and Horatio runs to switch the light on. When it comes on, we see Luke holding Marcus in his arms. There is a great deal of blood on both their clothes, clearly coming from a wound in Marcus' stomach. Horatio runs over to help, and they move him to the couch and lie him down. Marcus' strength is clearly waning; he can barely lift his own head up, and blood is visible in his mouth. He gropes at Luke desperately trying to sustain consciousness.

HORATIO:
Luke, he needs to get to hospital.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE:
We can't take him there, the police
will be everywhere!

MARCUS:
He...he's right, we'll be caught.

LUKE:
If not by the police, then Tybalt's
goons.

HORATIO:
But...

MARCUS:
Horatio. I'm not going anywhere.
Relax.

He grips Luke's hand. Horatio is clearly on the verge of tears, and it is clear that Marcus is not going to make it.

Montage: Gloomy shots around the house. The tap dripping in the kitchen, books spilled around the living room, etc.

NARRATOR:
Just like Brian warned would
happen, I had let time have its own
way, and I had lost all control as
a result. I was an empty vessel, a
boxcar stuck on a straight track
with my eye glued to the steel
telescope.

Marcus begins to shake. He clutches Luke's hand and we hear his last gasping breaths. Fade to black as he expires.

INT.A FUNERAL HOME.DAY

Pan shot of the funeral service. Marcus lies, his pale face visible in the open casket. "Caroline Says II" by Lou Reed plays. Luke and Horatio are seated together towards the back in one of the pews. The place is mostly empty.

NARRATOR:
But I realized then at the funeral
that maybe it wasn't too late. Time
had swept up Marcus in its
inexorable current, but I clung to
a glimmer of hope for myself.
Perhaps it was time to see Brian
again.

EXT.THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF HORATIO'S HOUSE.DAY.

Luke and Horatio pull up alongside the curb in Luke's car.
Horatio gets out and turns to look at Luke.

HORATIO:
Where do we go from here?

LUKE:
Look, it'd be easy to give up now.
But maybe it's worth it to keep
going.

HORATIO:
(mock Scottish accent)
"With God's help I'll conquer this
terrible affliction"

LUKE:
Best of luck, my friend.

HORATIO:
Bye now, Lucas.

Horatio closes the car door and turns to head to the house.
Halfway there, he pauses and looks back sadly, but only for a
second. He raises a hand to Luke, who returns the sad wave.
Luke pulls away from the curb as Horatio continues into the
house. Snow begins to fall.

NARRATOR:
I felt like a ragdoll being tossed
about by a rogue wave still. I felt
that if I could just my wits about
me...just find something to focus
on, I could get the strength to
start paddling.

INT.BRIAN'S DORM BUILDING.NIGHT.

Snow has begun to fall increasingly thicker. Brian is at the
door to greet Luke in the winter twilight.

BRIAN:
Come in, come in. It's freezing
out.

Luke hurries in.

CUT TO: Int. Brian's room. He sets down a cup of tea. They
settle down to talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIAN: (CONT'D)
I heard about Marcus.

LUKE:
Yeah.

BRIAN:
He was pretty young, right?

LUKE:
Yeah, he was.

BRIAN:
What can I help you with?

LUKE:
I don't know. I mean, my friend's
dead, Horatio's an empty
shell...and I just don't know what
to do with myself at this point.

BRIAN:
Does Horatio know what to do with
himself?

LUKE:
No. I can't end up like him, Brian.
He and Marcus, they had a good
time. But they were living in a
bubble. Just a hazy bubble that was
impervious to the outside world.
Maybe that was why everything went
to shit; Marcus dead and Horatio a
living ghost. They were so wrapped
up in hiding from time that when
they dipped their feet in the
current, it just fucking swallowed
them.

BRIAN:
You're still a part of it, Luke. It
may have devoured your friends, but
not you.

LUKE:
Yeah, I know. I almost let it
though. I think I wanted to let it.

BRIAN:
Don't let it. Look, I don't know
what to say to pick you up or kick
you in the ass and get you going.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRIAN: (CONT'D)

Just get it together, or trust me,
this world will take you down, and
you'll be spit out just like them.
You have a second chance that
neither of them had.

LUKE:

You're right. I should be on my way
though.

BRIAN:

You're welcome to stay here, of
course, but I think you know what
you need to do.

LUKE:

I hope so.

He gets up to leave.

LUKE: (CONT'D)

Bye Brian. You taught me most of
what I know.

BRIAN:

G-L-O-R-I-A spells love. Best of
luck, Lucas.

EXT.THE SNOWY HIGHWAY.NIGHT.

Luke's car makes its way along the highway as snow drifts
move across the road. His headlights cut a figure against the
snow.

NARRATOR:

There was still someone I needed to
see. Someone I needed to resolve.

The car pulls into a driveway of a neat-looking home. It is
snowing relatively hard now. Not exactly a blizzard but it's
getting thick. He gets out of the car and makes his way
through the snow to the front door, wrapping himself tightly
in his coat against the cold. He rings the doorbell and waits
on the doorstep. After a moment, a very beautiful young woman
opens the door. She is roughly of the same age as Luke. She
has very soft eyes, and a lovely warm glow in her cheeks.
Director's note: Think "Miss Cross"/Olivia Williams from Wes
Anderson's "Rushmore". It's difficult not to fall in love
with her at first sight. It is JULIA.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIA:
(clearly surprised by
Luke's arrival)
Luke! What are you doing here?

LUKE:
Um, you know. I was in the
neighborhood and I thought I'd
swing by.

JULIA:
(she knows he's lying)
Come in, it's freezing out.

He comes in out of the cold and she shuts the door behind him.

INT.A VERY COZY HOUSE/LIVING ROOM (JULIA'S).NIGHT

The interior of the house is extremely cozy and warm. There is a basic kitchen with a lone teapot on the stove. Some framed photographs line the walls and counter. They are mostly artistic shots: a bubbling freshwater stream, close-up flowers, etc. A comfortable, content place to live, in sharp contrast to the loneliness of Luke's place. He rubs his hands together, regaining warmth slowly, and brushes the snow off his shoulders. Julia watches him apprehensively.

JULIA:
Are you okay?

LUKE:
Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm fine. I just
wanted to stop by and see how you
were doing. It's been a while.

JULIA:
But why?

LUKE:
Well...I miss you.

JULIA:
Do you?

LUKE:
Well, yeah. I mean, it's not any
sort of desperate longing each day
like it used to be. But I miss the
contact we used to have.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIA:

I see. Let me put some tea on.

She sets about boiling some water while Luke looks on with a look as if he's remembering the past involuntarily.

LUKE:

(somewhat awkwardly)

So...how have you been?

JULIA:

Well, thank you. I've just been getting over this damn flu though.

LUKE:

(genuinely)

I'm sorry to hear that. How are you feeling now?

JULIA:

Better.

She sets the water on and turns to face him. He has moved to stand much closer to her.

LUKE:

I was nervous about coming over here, you know.

JULIA:

Good.

LUKE:

Yeah. I mean, I guess it's a feeling I've been getting used to. Things are changing.

JULIA:

Nothing ever stays the same, Lucas. It's a good thing.

LUKE:

I know. I guess, despite how unsettling it is, it's certainly very healthy.

JULIA:

That's true.

The water boils. She pours tea and they move to sit in the living room, which is equally as cozy and inviting as the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They walk in holding steaming cups and sit down on the couch. It seems clear that Luke has been there many times before from the way he looks around.

JULIA: (CONT'D)
Will you tell me why you really came?

LUKE:
It's just...I'm exhausted, and I want to move on. I keep telling myself that there's a chance we'll get back together someday, and I spend all this time thinking about that and it wears me out. It wears me out.

JULIA:
What do you want me to say?

LUKE:
I don't know. It's no simple thing. I just want you know that I do love you but I have to stop. It's killing me, Jules. Because I know that you don't love me.

JULIA:
I can't help you stop. When I stopped loving you, it was the hardest thing I ever did in my entire life.

LUKE:
But how did you do it?

JULIA:
(looking deeply into his eyes)
I don't know, Lucas. I'll never know.

LUKE:
I feel like I'm so close. But there's so much I still don't understand. I mean, are we supposed to even stay in touch?

JULIA:
(on the verge of tears)
I don't think so, Luke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LUKE:
I guess maybe that's the only way.

JULIA:
You still have my underwear, you know.

LUKE:
Those were a gift, and they're safe in my memory box along with every letter and note you ever wrote me. I'm not going to ever forget you, Julia. You taught me too much.

JULIA:
(a tear rolls out. She smiles sadly)
Okay.

LUKE:
I think I'm ready to go.

JULIA:
I'll walk you to the door.

They walk out to the doorway and Luke puts on his coat and his hat as he gets ready to leave. He turns to look at her one final time. She is crying now.

LUKE:
You won't hear from me anymore.
Maybe in a long time.

JULIA:
Maybe so.

LUKE:
Bye, Jules.

JULIA:
Goodbye, Lucas. You know how much I loved you.

LUKE:
And you'll probably never know how much I love you.

They pause for a moment, looking into each other's eyes. Luke then ever so gently and lightly kisses her on the lips. Tears roll down her cheeks. He caresses her hair and then leaves. The snow is showing no sign of letting up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CUT TO: Ext. The driveway of the house. Luke makes his way through the deepening snow and gets into his car. Rubbing his hands, he starts it, and pulls out.

NARRATOR:

Everything was okay then. I knew I wouldn't wind up like Marcus or Horatio. Living in the present, I could find again the things that had made me so happy as a child. Imagination, creativity...those sparks of the mind that made life worthwhile. There was a type writer and a stereo waiting for me at home, and I couldn't wait to turn them on.

Luke lowers his hand to the stereo and turns up the dial. "Height Down" by John Frusciante comes on. The car continues down the long and winding road. Fade to black.

THE END.