EXT. OUTSIDE SCHOOL - DAY

MASON waits outside his elementary school, laying in the grass staring up at the clouds. In the distance, the school door opens and Mason's MOM, Olivia, walks toward him.

MOM
Hey, love bug. You ready?

He is quickly on his feet and they are walking toward the car.

MASON
Yeah. Hey, guess what, Mom?

MOM
What?

MASON
I figured out where wasps come from.

MOM
Oh, yeah? Where?

MASON
Well, I think it must be if you flick a rock into the air just right, it'll turn into a wasp.

MOM
Dang...

MASON
Yep.

MOM
That's cool.

INT. CAR - DAY

Driving...

MOM
So how was your day at school?

MASON
Fine.

MOM
Hey, I had a good meeting with Miss Butler this time. I kinda liked her.

MASON
What did she say?
MOM
Well... she said that you weren't turning in your homework assignments. And I told her, "I know he does them, 'cause I check them every night." She said she found a big chunk of them crumpled up at the bottom of your backpack.

MASON
She didn't ask for 'em.

MOM
Well, baby, she doesn't have to. You're supposed to turn them in. And she said you're still staring out the window all day.

MASON
Not all day.

MOM
And she said that you destroyed her pencil sharpener.

MASON
Not on purpose.

MOM
Wait, she said that you crammed a bunch of rocks in it.

MASON
I thought if it could sharpen pencils, maybe we could sharpen rocks.

MOM
(stifling laugh)
Well, what were you gonna do with a bunch of sharpened rocks?

MASON
I was trying to make arrowheads for my rock collection.

MOM
Hm.

She glances back at him, with an understanding sigh.

EXT. HOUSE/DITCH - DAY

Mason rides his bike across the front yard and heads down the street. Soon he and his friend TOMMY are riding down the embankment of a large drainage ditch.
EXT. DITCH - DAY

Mason runs up, as Tommy is spray-painting a drawing on the concrete wall of the drainage ditch.

MASON
Dude, when's my turn?

TOMMY
I don't know.

Tommy hands Mason the can of spray paint. Mason begins to spray-paint a letter on the wall.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
calling out
...Maaason.

TOMMY
Samantha!

SAMANTHA
Oh! Tommy! Is Mason down there?

TOMMY
Yeah.

SAMANTHA
Well, tell him he has to come home for dinner.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mason lays on the floor watching a cartoon.

There's a knock at the door, and Mom comes out to answer it. It's TED.

MOM
Hey.

TED
Hey, sweetie. Why aren't you ready? Hey, Mason.

MASON
Hey, Ted.

TED
Come on, come on, hurry up. Let's go.
MOM
What time is it?

TED
It's nine. Let's go, let's go.

MOM
Okay, I meant to call you, 'cause Janice flaked out. I don't have a sitter.

TED
Why didn't you call somebody else?

MOM
Well, I can't get a baby-sitter now, it's nine o'clock. But you're welcome to hang out with us.

TED
Well, no. I mean we have plans. The guys are expecting me.

MOM
Well... you can go.

TED (O.S.)
All right. Yeah, well, I'll come back in a couple of hours. Is that okay?

MOM
Yeah. Yes.

TED
All right.

MOM
It's okay.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The kids lie on either side of Mom, as she reads a story aloud to them.

MOM
(Reading)
"Turn back! Turn back! I don't wanna talk to Moaning Myrtle." "Who?" said Harry as they backtracked quickly. "She haunts one of the toilets in the girls bathroom on the first floor," said Hermione. "She haunts a toilet?"

(MORE)
MOM (CONT'D)
"Yes, it's been out of order all year because she keeps having tantrums and flooding the place."
"I never went in there anyway if I could avoid it. It's awful trying to have a pee with her wailing at you."

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mason lies awake in bed listening to his mother argue with Ted.

TED (O.S.)
Why can't you just say that?

MOM (O.S.)
I'm sorry. I don't want to go with you.

TED (O.S.)
You're sorry, that's bullshit!

MOM (O.S.)
That's right, I wanna stay here with my kids. That's what I'd rather do.

TED (O.S.)
All right. Would you stop using your kids as an excuse?!

MOM (O.S.)
I'm not using my kids as an excuse! You don't even know--

TED (O.S.)
I know you have to stay here with your kids! You're acting--

MOM (O.S.)
You have this immature life--

TED (O.S.)
And why do I always-- Why--

MOM (O.S.)
You have no responsibility.

TED (O.S.)
I have an immature life! I have an immature life?
MOM (O.S.)
And I have responsibilities, okay, you don't know what it's like to be a parent.

TED (O.S.)
No, I don't! And why am I responsible for your mistakes in life?

MOM (O.S.)
If you had any idea. You don't think I wouldn't--

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mason peeks around the corner to watch as the argument continues.

MOM
Don't call my kids mistakes! Don't!

TED
I'm not responsible for your life choice-- I didn't call your kids--

MOM
You said, "Your respons-- your mistakes in your life," pointing at my kids.

TED
I know what I said, you know what, and immediately you use your kids again.

Mason peeks through the doorway.

MOM (O.S.)
This is the reality: I'm a parent!

TED (O.S.)
That's, that's hysterical.

MOM (O.S.)
That means responsibility.

TED (O.S.)
I know you're a parent.

MOM (O.S.)
I would love to have some time to myself! I would love to just go to a fuckin' movie! You don't think I'd like that?

(MORE)
MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Go have some dinner, go to a bar! I
don't even know what that's like. I
was someone's daughter, then I was
somebody's fucking mother! Okay, I
don't know what that's like.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Mason is comfortably asleep. Samantha slowly pulls the pillow
out from underneath his head and smacks him with it.

SAMANTHA
(singing)
"Oops, I did it again... I played
with your heart. Got lost in the
game. Oh baby, baby..."

Mason throws a stuffed animal at her that she deflects.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
"Oops, you think I'm in love. I'm
sent from above. I'm not that
innocent."

Another stuffed animal. She continues to sing.

MASON (O.S.)
Stop! Quit it!

SAMANTHA
"You see my problem is this. I'm
dreaming away. Wishing that heroes
truly exist. I cry watching the day.
Can't you see I'm a fool in so many
ways..."

MASON
Quit! Mom!

SAMANTHA
"But to lose all my senses-- that
is..."

He tries to drown out this last bit with a sustained scream.
Soon the door flies open and Mom enters, angry.

MOM
What the hell is going on in here?!

Samantha has instantaneously shifted from singing to crying.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you guys know what time it is?
SAMANTHA
(through tears/sobs)
He's throwing things at me...

MOM
Mason! Do not throw things at your sister!

MASON
She's faking, she hit me first!!

MOM
Listen, both of you! I am going back to bed. I don't wanna hear another peep out of here for an hour. Go to sleep.

Mom slams the door behind her. Samantha is suddenly fine, almost cheerful.

MASON
(to Samantha)
Faker!

MOM (O.S.)
Hey!

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Mason swings on a large outdoor swing, while Tommy sits thumbing through a catalog. Immediately after, we see Mason and Tommy looking through the lingerie section of the catalog together.

MASON
(laughs)
Ohh!

TOMMY
(pointing, giggling)
Look what I found in the street!

MASON
Dude!

TOMMY
I know, right?
(turns page)
Look at those.

MASON
Hm, look at those!
BOYS
(giggling)
Ohh!!

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Moments later we see Mason having an introspective moment as he gazes upon a deceased bird's carcass in the dirt.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mom, Samantha, and Mason eat lunch.

MOM
So listen, guys, I wanna talk to you about something, and you might not like this idea at first but... we're moving to Houston.

When?

MASON

MOM
Well, soon. We should be out by the first, so we don't have to pay two rents next month.

SAMANTHA
No, Mother, we're not moving. Nope, nope, sorry Mom. Nope. Nope.

Smack, smack, smack...

MOM
Samantha, I have to go back to college so I can make us a better living.

Smack.

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
With this job I can't take care of us the way I'd like to. I can't keep going this way. And Grandma said she'd help us out... and it would be nice to be near her.

SAMANTHA
Fine, Mother. You can do whatever you want but
(shrugs)
We're not moving.
(Smacks)

Mason moves his fork around in his bowl.
MASON
What about our friends?

MOM
Oh, baby, we can e-mail them or write. We can come back to visit. And guess what?

She reaches out to touch Samantha's arm.

MOM (CONT'D)
This place that Grandma found us, you'll each have your own room. Right?

Samantha shrugs.

MOM (CONT'D)
And there's a pool.

Samantha shrugs again, clearly not sold on the idea.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT
Mason and Mom are lying on his bed together.

MASON
Mom, do you still love Dad?

MOM
I still love your father... but that doesn't mean it was healthy for us to stay together.

MASON
What if after we move he's trying to find us and he can't?

MOM
Oh, that won't be a problem. He can call Grandma and she'll tell him or he can call Information. We won't be hard to find.

She pushes back his hair lovingly.

MASON
Is he still in Alaska?

MOM
Well, that's what your uncle says.

MASON
Probably taming polar bears or something.
MOM
Yeah... well, I hope they're taming him.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The moving van drives off as mom puts another item in the pile of stuff to be left at the curb.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mom and Mason are getting ready to paint in the empty bedroom. They're looking at the two lone murals, which look a little odd without the bunk bed in front of them.

MOM
Here, wanna help me out?

MASON
Sure.

MOM
Okay. Take this paint... very carefully... and paint any little smudge or mark or anything on the baseboard there, behind the door, and all around the doorways on the inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Meanwhile, Samantha is talking on the phone.

SAMANTHA
(on phone)
She says we're gonna come visit and I'm gonna write and call you. Oh, wait, hold on a second. I'm getting another call.
(Pushes Flash)
Hello? Sorry, Tommy, Mason can't come over today. We're moving. And I'm on the other line. Bye.
(Pushes Button)
Althea? I'm gonna be sending Sailor Scout instructions. Email, and write back telling me how the other scouts are doing. Well, because you're the leader now.

During the last bit of this conversation, Mason slowly paints over the "growth chart" lines on the bedroom door jamb.
EXT. OUTSIDE FRONT DOOR - DAY

Carrying their final belongings from inside the house, they slowly exit the front door and head over to the car.

MOM
Okay, let's go, 'cause I wanna get there before it gets dark.

SAMANTHA
Goodbye yard, goodbye crepe myrtle, goodbye mailbox. Goodbye box of stuff Mommy won't let us take with us but we don't wanna throw away. Goodbye house, I'll never like mommy as much for making us move.

MOM
Samantha! Why don't you say goodbye to that little horse shit attitude? Okay? 'Cause we're not taking that in the car.

Just before he gets in the car, Mason is looking out at the neighborhood.

MASON
Goodbye old lady who listens to rock music and rides a motorcycle.

Soon the car is pulling away. As they drive off, Mason notices out his side of the car, Tommy approaching on a bike in the distance, gesturing toward the car. Mason watches him out the window, but says nothing as Tommy recedes into the distance.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mason and Samantha are restless and energetic, letting their childish energy get the best of them as they wrestle, hit, and squeal at each other in the back seat of the car. It is all well-intentioned though, as the two share a laugh after Mom tells them to quiet down.

SAMANTHA
Eeeee! Don't!

MOM
Hey! Hey, what's happening back there? Stop, put the barrier up.

SAMANTHA
Ahh! Stop! No!
Mason punches the pillow barrier between himself and Samantha, while his Mom speaks.

MOM
Hey, put the pillow between you. Make a barrier, come on. Stop. We're gonna play a game called The Game of Silence. Whoever can stay quiet for the longest period of time wins. You guys think you can do that? Okay, go!

The family's car moves on toward the Houston skyline just as dusk arrives.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mason appears grumpy, trying to shove what he needs for the day into his backpack quickly.

MOM (O.S.)
The bus'll be here in ten minutes.

MOM (CONT'D)
(steps into doorway)
Put that homework in your backpack!

MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Go eat! Baby, go eat!

MASON
I am!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Samantha places pancakes on their plates while talking to Mason in a cryptic language, reminiscent of pig latin.

Samantha
...I affatay servay yoohay.

MASON
Speak English! Shut up. Mom! She's speaking that stupid language again!

MOM
Samantha!

Samantha
I was speaking perfectly clear English, Mother. You know, he's a little slow in the head. He did officially flunk first grade.
MOM
Sit your butt down.

SAMANTHA
Yes sir, Mother sir!

She salutes.

MOM
All right, listen up guys. Grandma's gonna pick you up after school. Your dad is in town for the day so you're gonna spend the afternoon with him.

SAMANTHA
Hmm.

MASON
Is he moving back?

MOM
I don't know.

SAMANTHA
We haven't seen him in about eighty years.

MOM
Like... a year and a half.

MASON
(points to Samantha)
Ha-ha.

SAMANTHA
Oh please...

MOM
Can we please eat, here? The bus is coming. Who wants syrup?

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason plays Oregon Trail on a classroom computer, while his TEACHER speaks in the background.

TEACHER (O.S.)
All right, nice cursive. Okay, Mason, when I check the mobiles, am I gonna find yours?

MASON
No.
TEACHER
And why not?

MASON
'Cause I didn't finish it.

TEACHER
Well, it's time to finish it.

MASON
Just a minute.

TEACHER
No, let's do Apple Quit.

Mason cuts a sheet of construction paper in the shape of the state of Texas, presumably to finish his mobile. He sits across from a female classmate, GIRL IN RED, who teases him.

GIRL IN RED
Time to finish your work, Mason. "Apple Quit."

INT. GRANDMA'S HOUSE - LATER

Samantha sits with her GRANDMA, Catherine, showing off her good grades on various school reports. Mason sits in his own chair, playing with a Gameboy.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
So this is my history test...

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Mm-hm. A+, very good.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
And that's another history test.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Mm-hm, and another A.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, well, it doesn't have a plus but... oh well.

GRANDMA
Oh.

Grandma strokes Samantha's hair proudly.

SAMANTHA
And then um, that's my report on lizards...
GRANDMA
Oh, let me see your pictures.

SAMANTHA
And then, um... Oh yeah, these are my pictures.

GRANDMA
What is that?

SAMANTHA
Well, that's called a dewlap.

GRANDMA
A dewlap, okay.

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah, this is a math test.

GRANDMA
Oh, "A" again.

Mason reaches into candy dish on the table.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Mase, that's the last candy, okay?

MASON
Okay.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Okay. We need to put this stuff up.

EXT. STREET/FRONT PORCH - DAY

A Pontiac GTO pulls up outside.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
That's him.

DAD gets out of the car and hurries to the door. Samantha squeals, as she runs out to greet him.

SAMANTHA
Daddy! Hi!

DAD
Oh my! Look at you, you're so big!

He hugs them both.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, MJ! What's happening, buddy? Are you guys ready to have some fun?
MASON AND SAMANTHA

Yeah!!

DAD

Yeah! Alright. Hey, Catherine, how are you?

GRANDMA

Mase. I'm good.

DAD

Good to see you.

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Yeah.

DAD

What time should I have these rascals back?

GRANDMA (O.S.)

Oh, I don't know, around 7:30, I guess. I gotta get 'em home by 8:00.

DAD

Aw, you know what, why don't I take them over to their mom's?

A moment of tension passes between them.

GRANDMA

No, that's okay. She's expecting me.

DAD

Oh no, that's alright. You guys know where it is, don't you?

SAMANTHA

Mm. Yeah.

DAD

All right, I'll do it. It's no problem.

GRANDMA

I don't think that's such a good idea.

DAD

Look, it's no problem. Alright?

GRANDMA

(rolls her eyes)

Okay...
DAD
You guys ready to go?

MAISON AND SAMANTHA
Yeah!

DAD
Let's do it, go!

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Whoa. Wait a minute, you gotta get your stuff.

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah.

GRANDMA
You got backpacks, your purse. Homework. Go to the bathroom.

DAD
Can't believe how big they are.

GRANDMA
Yeah. Time is goin' by.

DAD
Mm. Must be nice for you, having 'em here in Houston.

GRANDMA
I love it, yeah. I'm volunteering at their school.

DAD
Oh yeah? What you doin' over there?

GRANDMA
I'm in the library. You know, reading to the little ones.

DAD
Huh. Great.

GRANDMA
So -- Alaska, huh?

DAD
Yeah.

GRANDMA
Are you back?

DAD
We'll see. How's Liv?
GRANDMA
She's a busy girl. Yeah. She's back in school. But she's working, and single parenting... a lot to juggle.

DAD
You guys got everything, huh?

MASON AND SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD
Alright, say goodbye to your grandmother.

MASON (O.S.)
Bye!

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Bye grandma!

DAD
Alright, let's roll. Now wait a second. You're not the type of kids who like presents, are ya?

SAMANTHA
Yes!

DAD
Naw, you don't --

MASON
Yeah!

SAMANTHA
'Course we are!

DAD
Really? Let's do it!

MASON AND SAMANTHA
Yeah! Yay!

MASON
I call front seat!

SAMANTHA
I wanted the front seat, though.

DAD
Alright. Well, Mason gets it on the way there and Samantha gets it on the way back, huh? Hop in there.
GRANDMA  (O.S.)
Seat belts!

DAD
Seat belts. Alright.

He motions to Grandma that he's got it covered.

DAD (CONT'D)
Seat belts. Not like this car has any seat belts.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - LATER

Samantha is bowling, her pink ball hurdling down the lane toward the pins.

DAD (O.S.)
Nice... Nice... Nice...

Strike!

SAMANTHA
Yay!

DAD
Yeah! Alright!

Dad is clearly impressed and excited for Samantha, as he stands to embrace her.

DAD (CONT'D)
Come here, come here, yes! That was awesome! Get up there Mason, get up there!

SAMANTHA
Daddy!

DAD
(to Samantha)
It was so good!
(to Mason)
Come on. Let 'em know who you are, buddy. Let 'em know who you are.

Dad kisses Samantha. Mason throws his bowling ball.

DAD (CONT'D)
Yes! Yes! Yes! Alright, alright...

Gutter ball.

DAD (CONT'D)
Don't worry about it.
MASON
Wish we could use the bumpers.

DAD
Bumpers are for kids. You know, what're you, two years old? You don't want the bumpers. Life doesn't give you bumpers.

Mason tosses the ball again.

DAD (CONT'D)
There we, there we go, there we go! We got something there! We got something! We got something! Ooooh!

Another gutter ball.

MASON
Last time I went bowling we had bumpers and it was a lot more fun!

Dad gets up to bowl.

DAD
You don't want the bumpers, alright? You bowl a strike with the bumpers and it doesn't mean anything. Trust me. Just lay it out on the lane. One, two, three and...

Samantha mimes smoking, points to Dad, as if to say that he smells of cigarettes. It's Dad's turn to bowl.

DAD (CONT'D)
Ka-blam! Let's hear it for the father! Whoo!
(To Samantha)
Get up there, get in there...

SAMANTHA
Yay! Great job!

DAD
Get out there, girl, get out there!

Score-keeping screen flashes an animated alligator that reads: STRIKE

EXT. Street as car burns (on TV screen)

TV NEWSMAN (V.O.)
Four Blackwater operatives have been viciously attacked in their cars in (MORE)
Fallujah. The bodies and cars were set on fire, after insurgents started shooting, killing American citizens.

DAD (O.S.)
Look at this. It's a disaster.

TV NEWSMAN (V.O.)
But the ambush didn’t end there. The bodies of the four men were savagely ripped apart...

INT. BOWLING ALLEY CAFE - EVENING

The family sits around a table enjoying their snacks, while Dad smokes a cigarette.

DAD (O.S.)
Alright, let me tell you what's happening in Iraq, alright? Exactly what every thinking person in the world knew was gonna happen before they got started. Bush and his little numb-nut fanatics he's got around him, they don't give a rat's ass.

SAMANTHA
That's a quarter.

DAD
What's a quarter?

SAMANTHA
You said a-s-s.

DAD
Oh, sorry. My bad.

SAMANTHA
And my teacher says it's a good war, because it's better to be safe than sorry.

DAD
That's what they're teaching you in school? Alright, listen to me. Listen to your father, okay? That is the lie. That's the big lie. Iraq had nothing to do with what happened at the World Trade Center. You know that, right?

SAMANTHA
I guess.
DAD
Alright. Who are you gonna vote for next fall, MJ?

MASON
I don't know.

SAMANTHA
He can't vote. He's not eighteen.

DAD
Yeah, oh -- alright, who would you vote for?

MASON
Kerry?

DAD
Anybody but Bush! Okay?

SAMANTHA
Are you gonna move back?

DAD
Uh... I'm plannin' on it. You know, I gotta find a job.

MASON
Are you and mom gonna get back together?

DAD
I don't know. That's not, uh... entirely up to me, you know?

SAMANTHA
I remember when I was six, you and mom were fighting like mad. You were yelling so loud and she was crying.

DAD
That's what you remember, huh?

SAMANTHA
Yep.

DAD
You don't remember the trips to Galveston, camping in Big Bend, all the fun we had?

SAMANTHA
Nope.
DAD
You ever get mad at your mother?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD (O.S.)
You ever get mad at your brother?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah. You ever yell at him?

SAMANTHA
Oh yeah.

DAD
Yeah. Doesn't mean you don't love him, right?

SAMANTHA
Mmm...

DAD
Look, the same thing happens when you're grown up, alright? You... You know, you get mad at people. You know, it's not a big deal.

MASON
What'd you do in Alaska?

DAD
I worked on a boat for a while.Um, I tried to write some music.

MASON
Did you see any polar bears?

DAD (O.S.)
No, but I saw a Kodiak bear. It was fuckin' huge.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Dad! That's fifty cents for the F-word!

Dad reaches into his wallet.

DAD
I'm sorry. Here, take a dollar, alright? Keep the change.

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
You guys are gonna be seein' a lot more of me. Okay? I missed you two real bad, while I was gone. Okay, I want you to know that. I just needed to take some time. You know, to...
Just... Your mom and me, okay...
Well, your mother, okay, is a piece of work. Alright, I think, I think you know that by now. Alright? And I'm just, I'm so happy to be with the two of you. Okay. And I'm sorry about that bumper business. Alright. I'm gonna get better at stuff like that, okay?

As a token of reconciliation, Dad high fives them both, smiling.

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mason shows Dad his collection of arrowheads and a long feather, all laid out on top of a skateboard. Mason describes each of the pieces to his Dad.

MASON
I got that one at Dripping Springs...

DAD (O.S.)
Mmmmm.

MASON
And um, my friend Rodney gave me that one.

DAD (O.S.)
Yeah?

MASON
And I bought that one.

DAD
You bought this one?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
You found this at Dripping Springs?

MASON
Uh-huh!

DAD
Wow! What else do you got?
MASON
Well, um, these are snake vertebrae.

DAD

They both share a laugh.

DAD (CONT'D)
Is this the feather I sent you?

MASON
Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is.

Samantha enters the room carrying photos and a stuffed animal. She sits down next to Dad, interrupting Mason.

SAMANTHA
Oh, Dad! Um, I forgot to show you these, um, these basketball pictures.

DAD
You're on a basketball team?

SAMANTHA
Yeah!

DAD
Wow! Check you out!

MASON
Yeah, and these are-- these are beaver claws.

DAD
Beaver claws?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
I know. That's me.

DAD (O.S.)
What, you hunting beaver, huh?

MASON (O.S.)
(laughs)
No.

SAMANTHA
You see, that's McKinney, that's Meg, and that Gem. They're all my friends --
MASON
...And this is dried Canadian grass...

DAD
Uh-huh. What position do you play?

SAMANTHA
Um, guard.

MASON
This is dried Canadian grass... And, and uh...

DAD
Uh-huh. Wait, you scoring any points?

SAMANTHA
Well, about eight or ten a game.

DAD
Eight or ten a game? That is awesome!

SAMANTHA
Yeah!

MASON
Once she didn't score any and she cried!

DAD
You cried?

SAMANTHA
Well, only a little bit.

DAD
Awww.

Dad kisses Samantha's forehead.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - MOMENTS LATER

MOM
Hello!

SAMANTHA
Oh, Mason, Mom's home!

MASON
Mom's home!

Dad quickly shifts from playful to nervous.

DAD
Hey, Mom's home.
SAMANTHA
Mom, hi!

MOM
Hey.

SAMANTHA
Oh, look at this owl Daddy gave me! Isn't it cool? See, its head spins! And look at this bracelet! It was made by Indians in Alaska.

MASON
And Mom, Daddy made this cool hand carved grizzly bear and this tiki.

MOM
It's a totem. Wow.

SAMANTHA
And guess what else? We went bowling and I made four strikes!

MASON
Yeah, and we got to ride around in Dad's car!

MOM (O.S.)
Wow.

DAD
Hey, Liv.

MOM
Hey.

DAD
I know you wanted me to drop them off at your mom's. I just thought it'd be easier if I brought 'em over here.

MOM
Well, it really screwed up my plans.

MASON
Well, we just wanted to show him our rooms.

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

MOM
Did you guys eat anything?
SAMANTHA
Well, we had some french fries at
the bowling alley.

MOM
Did you do your homework or...

MASON
No.

SAMANTHA
Not yet.

MOM
Okay. Can I talk to you outside for
a second?

DAD
Yeah. Sure.
(as he exits)
They had more than french fries.

The children scramble to find a suitable spot for
eavesdropping but their parents are inaudible.

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha and Mason look out the window, down at their parents
having an argument below.

MASON
Do you think he's gonna spend the
night?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Doesn't look like it.

Mom walks away from Dad. He stands there for a beat, then
saunters off. The kids are visibly disappointed.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

Mason and Mom walk across the campus lawn.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A professor, BILL, lectures to the class. Mason and Mom are
seated in the classroom audience.

BILL (V.O.)
Okay. An unconditioned stimulus,
something that produces an unlearned,
involuntary, unconditioned response.
(MORE)
BILL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now in Pavlov's experiment, what was the stimulus, that he used? Come on now, people! Tough weekend? What's the deal, here? Meat. Right? Meat. Meat powder, actually. Whatever meat powder is, it worked on this dog. Okay. He put the meat powder in there and it produced an unconditioned response in the dog, which was? Salivation. Alright. Now, who can give me another example of an unconditioned stimulus-response pair that happens to you everyday. It's probably happening to some of you right now.
(pause)
How about sex? Sure, you know. You see an attractive member of the opposite gender, you have an automatic response. You don't have to think about it. Mick Jagger wrote a song about... Oh, when they call your name, I salivate like a Pavlov dog.

Class laughs.

BILL (CONT'D)
Thank you very much. Class dismissed.

Students leave, as Mason and Mom approach the professor.

MOM (O.S.)
Doctor Welbrock, this is my son Mason.

BILL
Ohh.

MOM
Mason, this is Dr. Welbrock.

BILL
Your son. Now see, I thought this was a boy genius who was taking my college course.

Mason laughs. He and Bill shake hands.

MOM
He wasn't feeling well today, so I thought I'd bring him with me.

Bill touches Mason's forehead.
BILL
Ah! No fever. It's a con job. I can tell because I have a nine year old son, he pulls this all the time. Same kind of deal. Hey, you play soccer?

MASON
Mm, no.

BILL
Neither does my boy. He hates soccer. He likes computers. My 11-year-old daughter, loves soccer. Who can figure? Hey, maybe we can get all you guys together sometime, huh?

MOM
Maybe, yeah. Well, you ready to go?

MASON
Yeah.

BILL
Nice to meet you, Mason.

MASON
Nice to meet you, too.

BILL
And thanks for coming to my class.

Mason walks ahead of them as Olivia and Bill speak a little more intimately. It's clear that they have more than just a professor-student relationship. Mason notices a bit of this and looks on, confused.

BILL (CONT'D)

Olivia.

MOM
Hm?

BILL
Nice kid.

MOM
Thanks.

BILL
So you think, uh, Grandma might be available for a little baby-sitting?
MOM  (O.S.)
    (giggles)
    Maybe.

BILL
    Really?  Well, great.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Mason and Samantha play an outdoor trampoline game with Randy and Mindy, their new stepbrother and stepsister. They are in the big backyard of their new home, where Dr. Welbrock and his children have lived.

GRANDMA
    Hey kids, they're here!

KIDS
    Oh, they're home, they're home!

GRANDMA
    Hurry!  Hurry!

They all scramble inside and quickly assemble for a big welcome home ceremony in the front entryway. A sign reads, "Welcome Home Honeymooners, We Love You Mom & Dad". Olivia and Bill open the door to enter the house.

MOM
    Hey!

KIDS
    Mom!  Daddy!

BILL
    Oh!  We're here!  Hey, we've returned!

Hugs all around. The family talks over one another. Bill notices the "Welcome Home" sign the kids made.

SAMANTHA AND MASON
    Hi Dad!

BILL
    Samantha, Mason, look -- Thank you. That's very nice.

MOM
    (to Randy and Mindy)
    Hey guys!

The group all speaks at once.
BILL
(To Grandma)
Hi, Mom. How are you?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Mom, Mom, Mom, Mom! Look at the sign we made!

BILL
(To Grandma)
They give you any trouble?

MINDY
Samantha and I made it all ourselves.

BILL (O.S.)
I know the boys helped you with that a lot.

MINDY
No, not at all!

The group continues to speak at once.

BILL
That's good... Oh, pass out the goodies.

Mom passes out a bag of presents to each of the kids.

MOM
This is for the girls, this is for the girls...

BILL
(to Grandma)
Don't worry, we got you some absinthe or something.

GRANDMA
Oh, let's pour it.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The family sits around the table, swapping fun stories and pictures from their time apart.

MOM
You take this big elevator up, and when we got to the top, we flew a paper airplane off.

RANDY (O.S.)
And what happened?
MOM (O.S.)
It flew!

BILL (O.S.)
It flew away. It went for miles. Went onto the Arctic Trail.

They laugh.

SAMANTHA
Oh, did you guys kiss under the Bridge of Sighs?

MOM
Yes.

BILL
Yes, we did.

Bill leans in to kiss Olivia.

MINDY
Hey, Mom, can we see your wedding ring?

MOM (O.S.)
Oh, sure.

Mom hands over her wedding ring. The boys look at a 20 Questions game.

MINDY (O.S.)
(Eyeing the ring)
Wow.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
(Holding the ring)
Technically that's a fancy step cut surrounded by miniature brilliant.

MASON
I wish we could've gone to Europe.

RANDY
Yeah.

BILL
Yeah, we'll go as a family next time. But you didn't miss much, really. We just stayed in the hotel room the whole time playing video games.

Mom laughs.
MASON
Really?

BILL
And the hotels are really small and really old. Squeaky.

The WAITER comes over.

WAITER
Can I get you anything else? Would you like to see a dessert menu?

BILL
(To Randy)
Listen, I told you to put that away.
(To Mom)
Would you put that in your purse, please? Computer games at the table.
(To Waiter)
Yes, uh, please, another bottle of wine.

MASON
(to Waiter)
Um, Coke.

MOM
Um, you know what? Mason, you're okay with water. No more Cokes.
(to Waiter)
Thank you.

BILL (O.S.)
(To Randy)
Now how 'bout you? Did you finish your science project?

RANDY
Not quite yet.

BILL
Well, did you work on it? I mean, did you build anything, or plan anything, or..?

RANDY
A little.

BILL
(to Mindy)
Did he work on it at all, Mindy?

MINDY
No.
BILL
(to Mindy)
Did he sit around playing video games
with Mason the whole time?

MINDY
(laughs)
Yeah.

BILL
Mm. You were supposed to finish
that by the time I got back.
Remember? Hey.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Our gang of kids, plus two more (NEIGHBORHOOD BOY and NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL) walk home from school together. The boys walk in a pack slightly in front of the girls.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
Grievous is the best, man.

MASON
Yoda! Yoda, man.

RANDY
No, Yoda is!

MASON AND RANDY
Yoda!

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
He has four arms.

MASON
Yoda! Represent.

MINDY
I hate Ms. Billingsly. Everybody's been saying she's lesbian.

NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL
She is. She hit on Stacy.

MINDY
Man, that's gross.

SAMANTHA
Think it's true?

NEIGHBORHOOD GIRL
She's always walking in the locker room.
RANDY
I think I still have a couple of those--

PAUL, overly large/mentally impaired neighborhood teen they seem familiar with, walks by awkwardly bouncing a basketball.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY (O.S.)
Hey, Paul. Tell us a joke.

PAUL
Damn. Fuck. Go to hell. Ass.

The kids look at him quizzically and keep walking.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Mason and Randy are playing a video game.

MASON
Uh! Blew you up.

RANDY
Aw heck, man. That was not fair.

MASON
No, actually it was. That's like the fairest thing ever.

RANDY
Ugh.

MASON
Oh, once again I take you down.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Samantha and Mindy sit with Mom on the sofa, laughing, while Mason and Randy sit opposite them. Bill is up first, as the whole family plays charades.

MASON
Three Musketeers?

RANDY (O.S.)
First word.

MASON AND RANDY
Chicken? Bird?

Mom and the girls laugh.

BOYS
Second word.
RANDY
Um... hood?

MASON
Big hair? Uh. Robin Hood!

BILL
(tapping his nose)
Ah!

Mom applauds.

BILL (CONT'D)
Brilliant child!

Samantha stands to take her turn.

MOM AND MINDY (O.S.)
Second word.

MINDY (O.S.)
Blanket?

MASON
Hey, you can't use props!

Samantha turns to smack mason with the blanket.

BILL
Hey, hey, hey, hey. Cut it out.
Hey, uh-- Judges speak: No props.
No props. Can't use props. You can
do it without that. Think, think, think.

MOM (O.S.)
Um, bunch!

MINDY (O.S.)
Folding? Is it like...

MOM
The gathered? Folded.

MINDY
Uh...

The boys laugh.

MINDY (CONT'D)
Messing around with a blanket...
Wrinkling it, uh...
MOM
Wrinkling clothes... A Wrinkle In Time!

Mom and Mindy clap and cheer at their victory.

INT. BOOK RELEASE PARTY - NIGHT


BOOK TRIVIA JUDGE
What are the guards at Azkaban?

Samantha rings the bell first, as Mason fumbles for the correct answer.

SAMANTHA
Dementors!

Samantha got it right.

EMCEE
(onto a microphone)
Front of the line, are you ready?

All four kids cheer.

EMCEE (CONT'D)
Count down with me, ladies and gentleman!

The rest of the crowd joins in.

EMCEE AND GROUP
Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!
Five! Four! Three! Two! One!

EMCEE
Let's go! Whoo!!

The kids each pass through the long line, all smiles as they receive their books.

MINDY
Thank you.

MAN
Next.

SAMANTHA
Thanks.
EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Mason, Randy, and Bill are practicing at a golf course. Bill is advising the boys on their stances and golf swings.

BILL
(to Randy)
Oh no, no, no, no. Back up and take a practice swing first, remember? Nice and easy. Sweep the floor. Sweep the floor. That's good. Don't swing too hard, Randy.
(to Mason)
He always swings too hard.

Randy takes a swing.

BILL (CONT'D)
Hey, alright! Very good.

It's Mason's turn to take a swing.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to Mason)
Back your feet up a little bit. Yeah, like that. Now you're gonna hit it straighter. Okay. Alright, go up and hit it. That's good. Nice slow swing is going to be better for you.

Mason swings.

BILL (CONT'D)
Alright!

Later, Randy putts the ball and misses.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to Randy)
I don't know man, you must've been... See, your feet are too open, Randy.

Mason sets up to take his putt.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to Mason)
Nice and natural.

Mason hits the ball into the hole. Bill high fives him.

BILL (CONT'D)
Yes! Go! Alright! Give me five. Good putt, son, good putt.
(MORE)
BILL (CONT'D)
Did you see that, Randy? That's the way to do it!
(to self)
Alright, birdie putt.

Bill misses the easy putt.

BILL (CONT'D)
Goddamn it. Son of a bitch.
(to Mason and Randy)
Get my clubs, would you? Get the ball.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Bill and the boys drive up to the local liquor store.

BILL
This is just in case we have guests this weekend.

Bill gets out of the car.

RANDY
He always says that. But we never have guests.

The boys are chewing green bubble gum. Randy blows a big bubble and Mason pops it with his hand.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Bill pours a generous amount of vodka into a large, opaque cup. He then hides the vodka bottle behind some detergent in the laundry cupboard.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha and Mindy are busy loading the dishwasher. Bill enters the room, drink in hand.

BILL
Samantha, I think I heard your dad pull up.

SAMANTHA
Oh, alright.

BILL
You guys finish your chores?

MINDY
Not quite.
SAMANTHA
Just about.

BILL
How 'bout the dusting, Sam?

SAMANTHA
I haven't done that yet.

BILL
Well, I saw you working on your art project. You mean you had time to finish your little art project but you didn't have time to finish your chores? I thought we talked about that.

MINDY
Dad, it's fine. I can finish the dusting. I have all day here.

BILL
No, it's not fine, Mindy. You have your own chores to do and Sam has hers to do. Huh? It's simple! Poor choice there, Sam. Hurry up.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY
Mason is pulling weeds, while Randy rakes the lawn.

BILL
(yelling from the porch)
Mason! Your dad's here...

As the boys approach...

BILL (CONT'D)
You guys aren't settin' any speed records, are you? What'd you do, get about half done? Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. So did you finish?

MASON
No.

BILL
Is the job complete?

Mason shakes his head "No".

BILL (CONT'D)
So, what are you going to be doing tomorrow? Same thing, right?
Yeah.

BILL

Okay. Go.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mom is doing work at the kitchen table, as Samantha and Mason kiss her goodbye.

MASON

Bye, Mom.

MOM

(to Mason)

Bye, baby. I love you.

SAMANTHA

Bye, Mama.

MOM

(to Samantha)

Bye, honey. Have fun with your dad.

BILL (O.S.)

Just a minute, Mason.

(to Mom)

The boys didn’t finish raking the leaves. Samantha did not finish dusting. So tomorrow, when they come home, instead of swimming and all the other little stuff that they want to do, they're gonna do their chores. Right?

MOM

Right! Okay, guys, you had this conversation, you understand?

The boys nod.

MOM (CONT'D)

Tomorrow?

The girls nod.

MOM (CONT'D)

Okay.

BILL

Thank you. I just wanted you to back me up on that so I'm not the only one yelling at them all the time.
MOM  
Okay, I back you up. You guys got that?

Mason nods.

MOM (CONT'D)  
We all agree, everybody agrees, right? Tomorrow, chores?

Samantha nods.

BILL  
Well, they don't hear it, you know. It goes in one ear and out the other.

SAMANTHA  
But Dad, I mean, dusting is pointless.

BILL  
It's not pointless, you just don't like to do it.

SAMANTHA  
But I mean, who dusts anymore?

BILL  
You do when we ask you to! And don't -- Olivia, don't let her back-talk me in front of the other kids, please. Thank you.

MOM  
Samantha, please...

SAMANTHA  
Whatever!

Samantha turns to walk away from the conversation.

BILL (O.S.)  
Bye-bye, have a wonderful weekend.

MOM (O.S.)  

The other kids follow Samantha as she exits. Bill sits down at the table with Mom.

BILL  
I'm sorry, but I thought we talked about it. You have to draw a line, you have to back it up.
MOM
Okay. It's just... you have so many lines Bill. Everything's a line.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY
Dad is parked in the drive way. He gets out of the car to greet the kids.

DAD
Hey, Randy!

RANDY
Hey!

SAMANTHA AND MASON
Bye.

RANDY AND MINDY
Bye.

DAD
Hey, you two. How you doin'? Oh.

MASON
Shotgun.

DAD
Here, let me get this bag here. You doin' okay, darlin'?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah? Ah. What about you, cowboy?

MASON
Pretty good.

Dad throws the kids' bags in the trunk.

DAD
Yeah? Alright. Let's roll!

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY
They drive down the street in Dad's car.

DAD
You guys ready for the big game?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.
DAD
Sam, who are the Astros playing tonight?

SAMANTHA
I don't know.

DAD
Milwaukee Brewers. Alright, get to know 'em, get to hate 'em. Mase! How you been, huh? How was your week?

MASON
Pretty good.

DAD
Yeah? What you been up to?

MASON
Not much.

DAD (O.S.)
No? You still hangin' with that kid Joe?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah, he's still your best friend?

MASON
Yeah, I guess.

DAD
Okay.
(To Samantha)
How 'bout you? How was your week?

SAMANTHA
Fine.

DAD (O.S.)
What you been up to?

SAMANTHA
Nothin' really.

DAD
You um, you still working on that sculpture project?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Yeah.
DAD (O.S.)
Yeah?

SAMANTHA
Almost finished.

DAD (O.S.)
What's it of?

SAMANTHA
Nothing.

Dad pulls the car over and parks.

DAD
Alright, no-no-no-no-no. Nope, that is not how we're going to talk to one another. Alright? Now, I will not be that guy. You can not put me in that category, alright? The biological father who I spend every other week with and I make polite conversation, you know, while he drives me places and buys me shit. No! Talk to me.

He turns to Samantha in the passenger seat.

DAD (CONT'D)
Samantha, how was your week? Uh, I don't know Dad, it was kind of tough. Billy and Ellen broke up, and Ellen's kind of mad at me because she saw me talking to Billy in the cafeteria. And you remember that sculpture I was working on? Well, it was a unicorn and the horn broke off. So, now it's zebra. Okay? But I still think I'm going to get an 'A'. Alright?

Dad turns around to address Mason in the back seat.

DAD (CONT'D)
Mason, uh, how was your week? Well Dad, you know it was kind of tough. Joe, he's kind of a jerk, actually. He stole some cigarettes from his mom and he wanted me to smoke 'em. But I said no, cause I knew what a hard time you had quittin' smokin', Dad. How 'bout that? Is that so hard?
SAMANTHA
Dad, these questions are kind of hard to answer.

DAD
What is so hard to answer about what sculpture are you making?

SAMANTHA
It's abstract.

DAD
Okay. Okay, that's good. See, that's, I didn't know that. I didn't know you were even interested in abstract art.

SAMANTHA
I'm not. They make us do it.

MASON
But Dad, I mean why is it all on us though? You know, what about you? How was your week? You know, who do hang out with? Do you have a girlfriend? What have you been up to?

DAD
I see your point.

Mason smiles.

DAD (CONT'D)
So we should just let it happen more natural, right? That's what you're sayin', right?

Mason nods.

DAD (CONT'D)
Okay. That's what we'll do. Starting now.

EXT. BUTTERFLY MUSEUM - DAY

Dad, Samantha, and Mason are pointing out different butterflies they find, using a nature chart. A butterfly lands on Mason's shoulder.

MASON
Hey, check this out.
SAMANTHA
That would be a... That would be a Magnificent Owl. Caligo Atreus.

DAD
What's that one? Look at this.

Dad opens his hands and shows them a butterfly in his palms.

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Whoa.

DAD
What kind is that?

SAMANTHA
That looks like a Zebra Longwing.

DAD
Alright.

SAMANTHA
Cool.

DAD
This one's incredible. That's the owl one, right?

SAMANTHA
Yeah. Magnificent Owl.

DAD
I think he went pee-pee on you, bud.

Dad laughs.

EXT. SCULPTURE GARDEN - DAY

Dad, Samantha, and Mason play tag around a large outdoor sculpture.

MASON
One, two, three, four, five...

Soon they are running in circles around it.

DAD
Ahaa! Ahh! Get away from me! Get away from me! Get your sister -- Ahh!

EXT. PARK - DAY

Dad is tossing a football with Mason and Samantha.
DAD
Yo, Mase, look at me here. Make a
diamond with your hands, alright?
Fingers and thumbs. Keep your hands
soft. Hey, Sam.

Samantha throws the football to Dad.

DAD (CONT'D)
Very nice. That's how you want to
catch it, just like that. Even when
you're runnin', that's what you're
thinkin' about, that diamond. That
diamond, and soft hands.

Dad throws the ball to Mason.

DAD (CONT'D)
There it is.

Mason throws the ball back to Samantha.

EXT. PARK - MOMENTS LATER

Dad, Samantha, and Mason crouch down into starting line
positions.

DAD
Down! Set! Hut! Ahhhh!

Dad releases the ball down the hill and the three of them
chase after it.

DAD (CONT'D)
No no no no no!

The ball kicks up and into Samantha's hands. They are now
chasing after her.

Samantha
Yes!

DAD
Don't let her get -- No no no no no!

INT. BASEBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

Dad, Samantha, and Mason watch a live baseball game.

DAD (O.S.)
Let's go, Roger!

The crowd reacts to the game.
DAD (CONT'D)
Guy's incredible. He's unhittable this year! Now just so you know, what we're watching here, is history. Now you see this guy out here? This dude is like forty-three years old and he's strikin' out guys half his age. This guy's ERA is 1.47, alright, can you believe that? Now if the Astros could just get a few runs maybe we'd win a game.

MASON
Dad, do you have a job?

DAD
Ha! Why would you ask me that?

MASON
I don't know. Mom wanted to know and I didn't know what the answer was.

DAD
Mom wanted to know. Alright. Well, you can tell mom that I just happen to have passed my second actuarial exam, alright? So... you tell her that. How's she doing?

SAMANTHA
Great.

DAD
She finishing school?

SAMANTHA
Yep, all 'A's.

DAD
All 'A's huh? Like mother, like daughter, right?

The kids leave to get hot dogs, etc. Mason puts mustard on his.

They return to the game. A clutch Astros home run and the crowd is cheering. Our guys celebrate with high fives, etc.

DAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You got this! That's outta here!
That's out-- Oh! Oh!

Fireworks go off. The crowd stands to their feet.
DAD (CONT'D)
Yeah!! Fuckin' A!

INT. DAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV is playing the horror film HOSTEL. JIMMY sits on the couch watching the movie, as Dad and the kids enter.

SAMANTHA
Hi, Jimmy.

JIMMY
Hey, Samantha!

MASON
Hey, what's up, Jimmy?

JIMMY
What's goin' on, Mason, man?

Mason and Jimmy fist bump.

MASON
Astros won.

JIMMY
You went to the game?

Dad enters the room.

DAD
What, I'm the only one with any arms around here? Nobody else can carry anything, huh? Help their old man out?

MASON
What you watching?

Jimmy gestures for silence.

DAD
Aw, come on Jimmy, man! You knew the kids were comin' this weekend.

Dad clears dirty dishes and paraphernalia from the table.

DAD (CONT'D)
Can't you just help me out a little bit, just --

JIMMY
I'm sorry, muffin.
DAD
Yeah, don't "muffin" me, alright?
Don't put me in that position.
Alright, I'm not your fuckin' Tony Randall.

SAMANTHA
Dad, it's always a mess.

DAD
It was not a mess this morning.
Okay?

JIMMY
I mowed the lawn.

DAD
Oh yeah, great.

Dad stretches out beside Samantha on the couch.

DAD (CONT'D)
Oh, come on man! Turn this shit off. Come on, give me that thing.

Dad takes the remote control away from Jimmy.

DAD (CONT'D)
Did you watch the game?

JIMMY
(laughs)
No.

DAD (O.S.)
Lane won it with a three-run homer.
It was beautiful, wasn't it?

Samantha shrugs.

DAD (CONT'D)
Sam lost her mind! She's a huge Astros fan.

SAMANTHA
Sure.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - LATER

Dad plays the piano and sings, while Jimmy plays guitar.
The kids sit at the kitchen table, listening intently.
DAD
"Well Saturday night was a lunar eclipse, I sang 'em a song, went somethin' like this: Well go to sleep, my weary babies, Let the sounds roll on by, Tonight we're safe here in Houston, With this, your daddy's lullaby. Your mother's got a new husband now, He seems alright, I wonder if he's readin' them stories, And kissin' them goodnight? Well babysitters say they miss me, I know I shouldn't hope it's true, The teacher says my son paints pictures of a family all in blue, She says she caught him whispering to the window, Will Daddy please come home? I know I could call him up, but what if his mother answers the phone?"

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Samantha is lying in her bed, listening to her iPod.

DAD
You brush your teeth?

She removes her ear buds.

SAMANTHA
What?

DAD (O.S.)
Did you brush your teeth?

SAMANTHA
Oh. Yeah. Yeah.

DAD
You gonna fall asleep with those things in your head?

SAMANTHA
Maybe.

DAD
Yeah well, try not to, alright?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Okay.

DAD
You want me to turn off the light?
SAMANTHA
Sure.

DAD
Okay, goodnight Sam.

SAMANTHA
'Night, dad.

JIMMY
(leaning in doorway)
Goodnight, Sam.

SAMANTHA
Goodnight, Jimmy.

DAD
Hey... that was a fun day, right?

SAMANTHA
Yeah it was. Sorry.

DAD
Why?

SAMANTHA
That Mason had to be there, you know.

DAD
(laughs)
Goodnight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mason is lying on the couch in the dark, trying to sleep. Dad is lying on the other couch, reading a book.

MASON
Dad? There's no like... real magic in the world, right?

DAD
What do you mean?

MASON
You know, like elves and stuff. People just made that up.

DAD
Well, I don't know. I mean what makes you thinks that, that elves are any more magical than something like... like a whale?

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
You know, I mean, what if I told you a story about how underneath the ocean, there was this giant sea mammal that used sonar, and sang songs, and it was so big that its heart was the size of a car? And you could crawl through the arteries? I mean, you'd think that's pretty magical, right?

MASON
Yeah. But like... right this second, there's like no... elves in the world, right?

DAD
No. Technically no elves.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY
Dad, Samantha, and Mason pull up in the GTO. They sit in Mom's driveway, saying their goodbyes.

DAD
Love you guys.

MASON
See you, Dad.

DAD
Alright. Be well. Okay. Have a great week. Sam, I'll see you next weekend?

SAMANTHA
Alright. Oh yeah, that's right.

DAD
What?

SAMANTHA
Susie has a birthday party next Saturday.

DAD
A sleepover?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

DAD
Alright. I'll talk to your mom about it.
SAMANTHA
Bye, dad.

DAD
Don't worry about it, okay? Have a
great week.

SAMANTHA
Had a great time.

DAD
Okay.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Mason, Randy, and the Neighborhood Boy sit around a computer
screen. They appear to be looking at something illicit.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
Aw, man. How do you guys not know
how to do this? I'll make you some
bookmarks. Just a second. Shit,
guys.

A knock on the door interrupts them. They close the laptop
immediately and turn around, trying not to look guilty.

MINDY
Randy, and Mason, Dad wants you guys
downstairs.

RANDY
Why?

MINDY
You're getting haircuts.

The boys stand to exit.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

Mason sits for his haircut, while Randy and Bill wait to the
side. Mason is clearly distressed as the barber glides an
electric razor over his head.

BILL
This is gonna look so much better.
You're gonna look like a man instead
of like a little girl. You're takin'
the eyebrows off next, right, Byron?

Bill nudges Randy, and laughs. Mason does not find it funny.
INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MORNING

The kids wander down the hallway, filing into Mason's bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Randy, Samantha, and Mindy enter one at a time, to let Mason know they are leaving for school.

RANDY
Mason, we're leavin'.

SAMANTHA
You're not sick.

Mindy is the last to leave the room, shaking her head in disbelief.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

The kids file down the stairs. Mom is getting ready to go.

MOM
Bye, guys.

KIDS
Bye, mom.

MOM
Where is Mason?

RANDY
He doesn't feel too good. I don't think he's going to school.

SAMANTHA
He's totally faking it.

MOM
Bye.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mom knocks on Mason's door, then enters the room.

MOM
Mason, what's goin' on?

MASON
I don't feel good.

MOM
Yeah? Well your head feels fine. So get your ass out of bed.
(MORE)
MOM (CONT'D)
I'm gonna drive you to school, you
got five minutes and don't make me
late.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom is dropping Mason off at school.

MASON
I mean, he didn't even ask! He just
cut it. I mean, it's my hair!

MOM
Well, no wonder you were angry. I'd
be angry too.

MASON
I look like a martian now.

MOM
Honey, you know what? I'm gonna
talk to him about it later, okay?

MASON
Yeah, I tried to call you but you
didn't answer your phone.

MOM
I'm so sorry. I've been so busy
with school... Hey.

She touches his hair, lovingly.

MOM (CONT'D)
For what it's worth, it's hair and
it will grow back. Now I can see
your pretty eyes and your foxy face.

MASON
Why'd you even marry him? He's such
a jerk.

MOM
Well, Bill has his good qualities.
You know, nobody's perfect. And now
we have a family.

MASON
We already had a family.

With this, Mason turns and exits the car.
INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mason walks down the hall, towards his classroom door.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason enters the classroom, just as his class begins reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

STUDENTS
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Students snicker at Mason's new haircut.

TEACHER (O.S.)
Please join me in the Texas pledge.

STUDENTS
Honor the Texas flag, I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one and indivisible.

TEACHER (O.S.)
Thank you. You may be seated.

The students continue laughing at Mason.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Alright! Alright class, as you know, we've been working on our mythology projects. And we're going to be writing papers about gods and goddesses. We've listed those gods and goddesses here on the board. We added a couple of monsters, for some of you who might be interested in that. And you're going to write your essay about your god or goddess, and to make sure that you cover everything, let's make sure that we do all of these things right here...

Mason is handed a note from across the room.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
First of all, we need to name your god or goddess, and you need to include who, what, when, where, why, and how...

The note reads: Mason, I think your hair looks kewl! - Nicole
TEACHER (CONT'D)
So make sure that you cover all those things when writing your essay.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Mason and Randy ride their bikes, while the Neighborhood Boy skateboards alongside them.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY
There's a bump right there.

Neighborhood Boy skates off in a different direction.

NEIGHBORHOOD BOY (CONT'D)
Alright, I'll see y'all later, guys.

RANDY
Yeah.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Mason and Randy pull up to a half open garage and drop their bikes outside. Mom can be seen laying on the floor of the garage, crying.

MASON
Mom, are you okay?

RANDY
What happened?

MOM
No -- Go in the house! Go! Go in the house! Go in the house!

BILL
Your mother had a little accident. Now she's being dramatic.

Mom is still crying as the boys exit. Bill enters the garage with a drink in his hand.

BILL (CONT'D)
Get off the fucking floor Olivia, for Christ's sake!

Mom continues to cry.

INT. DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Bill walks in angrily, carrying a bottle. He loudly bangs things on the table, and pours himself a drink.
BILL
I'm having a drink with my dinner.
Anybody else have a problem with
that?  Hm?  Samantha?

The family is seated at the dinner table, practically frozen.

SAMANTHA
No.

BILL
Mindy?

MINDY
No.

BILL
I didn't think so.

He drinks the entire glass, and slowly zeros in on Mason.

BILL (CONT'D)
You don't like me much, do you Mason?
That's okay, I don't like me either.
Think that's funny, huh?  You think
that's fuckin' funny?

Bill throws his empty glass at Mason's plate, shattering it.

MOM
Oh!

BILL (O.S.)
(to Randy)
What's the matter, you feeling a
little left out?

Bill throws the empty whiskey bottle past Randy.  It shatters
on the floor.

MOM
Oh!

BILL
Clean it up, goddamnit!  Clean it
up!

MOM
Bill!  Bill!

BILL
Clean it up, goddamnit!  I hate
squash!

Bill walks away, leaving the shocked family at the table.
INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

Mason watches THE LANDLORD web video on his laptop. The other kids lounge about the room, listening to the audio.

SAMANTHA
How many times can you watch that, Mason?

MASON
It's funny.

A moment passes as Mason watches his video.

MASON (CONT'D)
Has he ever gotten this bad before?

RANDY
No, but he's yelled a lot.

MINDY
Yeah, but he hasn't thrown and broken stuff.

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Bill sits on the coffee table, facing all four kids in a row on the sofa.

BILL
Give me your cell phones. So nobody talked to her, huh?

The girls shake their heads no. Bill is checking their phone call histories.

BILL (CONT'D)
Mason?

MASON
No.

BILL
Mindy?

MINDY
No.

BILL
I'll believe you... Samantha?

SAMANTHA
No.

Bill holds her phone screen out, as if to prove her wrong.
SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
I didn't talk to her. She left a message.

BILL
What'd she say?

SAMANTHA
Nothing much.

BILL
What did she say?

SAMANTHA
She said she'd be back later.

BILL
And that's all? "I'll be back later," click?

SAMANTHA
She said, "Stay in your rooms. I'll be back later."

BILL (O.S.)
I'll be back later, stay in your rooms. And that's all? Hm?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

BILL
Where is she?

SAMANTHA
I don't know.

BILL
Where is she?

SAMANTHA
She didn't say!

BILL
Alright, everybody get in the car. Hurry up! Get in the car!

EXT. LIQUOR STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Mindy stands at the ATM. The screen first reads: PLEASE TAKE YOUR RECEIPT. Then: INSUFFICIENT FUNDS. She walks over to Bill's car window.

MINDY
It's still not working.
BILL
Ohh, bullshit. She took it all.

INT. DRIVER'S SEAT - CONTINUOUS

Bill sloppily writes out a check. It's obvious that he has been drinking.

BILL
Alright, Randy, go cash this. Uh...
Tell him I'm not feeling well or something. I don't know. Mason, go with him. Here. Here's my ID.

Mindy gets back into the car, as Mason and Randy exit.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Mason and Randy enter the liquor store.

CLERK
Hi, good afternoon, fellas. What can I do for you today?

Randy lays the check and driver's license down on the counter, for the Clerk to examine.

CLERK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Now what's this? Can't read this. Hey! This isn't you, who is this?

RANDY
(pointing outside)
It's our... dad.

Bill waves from the car.

RANDY (CONT'D)
He's not feeling well.

CLERK
Oh! Hey! Yeah, I know him. Okay, here we go. Five hundred bucks. One, two, three, four... Five hundred bucks. Alright? Don't forget your dad's ID.

The boys leave the store, while the Clerk calls after them.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Alright, take care of your dad now, son. You've only got the one.
INT. CAR - DAY

Bill is impatiently stuck behind a slow-moving car.

BILL
Damnit. Get outta the way! Jesus Christ. God!

The children SCREAM as Bill weaves in and out of traffic trying to pass the car.

BILL (CONT'D)
Calm down!

MASON
What the hell?!

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mom walks into the front entry, but stops there. She has a friend, CAROL, waiting behind her.

MOM
(shouting)
Samantha! Mason! Samantha!

Samantha is at the top of the stairs observing the scene. Bill approaches the front entry.

BILL
Where the hell have you been?

MOM
I'm leaving you, Bill. We're moving out.

BILL
I doubt that.

MOM
Samantha and Mason! Come down!

BILL
No, mm-mm, don't think so. Oh, who's this?

CAROL
I'm not here for you!

BILL
Oh, really? Oh, I know, you're here to protect my wife from me. Well, thank you so much, you two.

He reaches towards her.
MOM
Okay, stay back! Now behave!

BILL
Why don't you come inside here, huh?
Come inside here.

(To Samantha and Mason)
Where the hell are you goin'? Get your ass upstairs, you're not goin' anywhere.

MOM
Stop!

(to Samantha and Mason)
Come on!

BILL
Where the hell do you think you're going?

Bill notices Randy and Mindy listening.

BILL (CONT'D)
Get upstairs! What the hell--

MOM
Hey!

BILL
Nobody's going anywhere, goddamnit.

MOM
Stop it!

BILL
No, goddamnit!

Bill moves to block them from leaving the house with his arm.

MOM
Don't touch my kids!

BILL
Alright, take 'em. Go on, go on.

MOM
Don't touch them!

BILL
Take 'em!

CAROL
Come on. It's okay, it's okay, it's okay.
BILL
Well take 'em then, just take 'em!
Go!

Bill turns back to Mindy and Randy.

BILL (CONT'D)
(to Randy and Mindy)
Get upstairs!
(calling down the
street)
Olivia!

MOM
Seat belts! Put your seat belts on.

The car backs out of the driveway and leaves.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA
Where are we going?

MOM
We're going to stay with Carol and
her family for a while.

Samantha and Mason look around.

MOM (CONT'D)
Don't look back.

CAROL (O.S.)
It's gonna be okay.

INT. CAROL'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mason and Carol's son, LEE, play a boxing game on Nintendo
Wii, while her daughter, ABBY, sings in the background. Mom
brings the boys a snack.

MOM
Hey, Lee and Mason. Take a break.
Here's a snack.

Abby continues to sing. The room is tense.

CAROL
Hey, Abby, why don't you come help
me with this, huh?

SAMANTHA
Why couldn't Randy and Mindy come
with us?
MOM
I'm not their legal guardian, honey. That would be kidnapping. I can't just...

SAMANTHA
Well, what's gonna happen to them? What happens when their legal guardian is dangerous and abusive?

MOM
You know, I don't know honey. I called their mom. I called the Child Protective Services. You know, I have you and your brother. We were in a dangerous situation. You're my responsibility.

SAMANTHA
Are we ever gonna see them again?

MOM
I don't know. And I hope so.

SAMANTHA
How much longer are we gonna be here?

Mom fights back tears.

MOM
Not long. We're...
(starts crying)
Oh, I don't -- I don't know. I don't have the answer to everything.

CAROL
Hey, listen. We are happy to have you here as long as you want. As long as you need. This is fun for us, isn't it?

ABBY
Mm-hmm.

CAROL
Yeah, it's like having a big sister? Like having a brother.

MOM
We're gonna help out, right? You're not even gonna know we're here.

CAROL
Okay.
EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom pulls up to drop Samantha off at the front doors of her new Junior High School.

SAMANTHA
Mom, this is awful. You're dumping me in some parking lot of this school where I don't even know anyone! I'm leaving all my friends and I didn't even get to say goodbye! I don't know where to go!

MOM
Okay, Samantha. You go right through that door. The office is right there. They're expecting you, they're gonna give you your schedule. Here's your lunch money. I will pick you up right here at 3:30.

SAMANTHA
I'm wearing dirty clothes! Because you wouldn't even let us get our stuff! We don't even have a place to live! This sucks!

Samantha gets out of the car, slamming the door behind her. Mom screams out of the window as she walks away.

MOM
Samantha... I'm doing the best I can! And you're right, it sucks! But it doesn't suck half as much as having a drunk fool slam your head against a wall! So cut your horseshit attitude.

Mom turns to Mason in the back as he climbs toward the front seat.

MOM (CONT'D)
Put your seat belt on!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mom is walking Mason to his class.

MOM
You know if you need anything I'm in room 112, right?

Mason nods.
MOM (CONT'D)
Okay. This is Mrs. Darby's room.
Oh, honey, it's gonna be okay. Okay?

Mom leans in to kiss him.

MASON
Mom...

Mason walks away, embarrassed at her public affection.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The students all make small talk as they wait for class to begin. Mason enters and looks to Mrs. Darby for instruction.

MRS. DARBY
Hi! Are you Mason?

MASON
Yeah.

MRS. DARBY
Hi. I'm Mrs. Darby. I'm glad to meet you. Why don't you sit here?
(to Kenny)
Kenny! Off!

Kenny climbs down from on top of his desk and takes his seat.

KENNY
Yes ma'am.

MRS. DARBY
Kenny. This is Mason and I want you to show him around today, okay?

KENNY
Got it.

MRS. DARBY
Okay.

KENNY
Hey dude. Welcome to the suck.

The boys trade a casual low five and exchange a smile.

MRS. DARBY (O.S.)
Everybody, listen up. We have a new student joining us today. His name is Mason, he's sitting in the back row.

(MORE)
MRS. DARBY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Kenny's gonna be his buddy, but I
want each one of you to take the time
today, to introduce yourselves, and
welcome him to school. Okay?
Alright? Let's get started.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Mason pushes an Obama/Biden campaign sign into the ground,
before he and Samantha walk across the street. Samantha
waits in the street with more signs, while Mason knocks on
the RESIDENT's front door.

RESIDENT (O.S.)
What?

The white-haired Resident is standing to Mason's right,
beneath his carport.

MASON
Oh, hi. Can I put an Obama sign in
your yard?

RESIDENT
Do I look like a Barack Hussein Obama
supporter?

Mason shrugs.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
No.

Mason turns to leave.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
This is private property. Get off.
I could shoot you!

He rejoins Samantha at the street.

MASON
What a dick.

SAMANTHA
He had a Confederate flag on his
house.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha is now talking to a young, BLONDE HOUSEWIFE.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE
I love it!

(MORE)
BLONDE HOUSEWIFE (CONT'D)
Young Obama supporters out on the trail. This is great! Are you doing this through your school?

SAMANTHA
Um. Our dad's a big supporter.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE
Oh, that's great. I mean, we've just got to pull together to get this win, right?

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE
Oh, I just love him so much. I mean I have these dreams where I'm just kissing him because I just love him so much! He's so cute, isn't he?

SAMANTHA
(laughs)
Yeah.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE
Do you know, I made these t-shirts for my kids. "My Momma's for Obama!" Do you like it? It's good, right?

Yeah.

Samantha turns to walk towards the street.

BLONDE HOUSEWIFE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thanks for the sign!

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
No problem.

Dad pulls up in his car, arriving to pick them up.

DAD
Hey, alright! Looks good! How many you got left, two? Alright, alright, we're done. Let's get out of here. Come on, Sam.

Dad spots a McCain sign in the front yard across the street.

DAD (CONT'D)
(to Mason)
Go get that McCain sign, would you?
MASON
(hesitating)
What?

DAD
Get the McCain sign! Go rip it up, come on! Get it, get it, get it... Go! Go! Go!

Mason runs across the street to grab the sign.

DAD (CONT'D)
Good job, buddy. Yeah. Proud of you, son.

Dad closes the stolen sign into the trunk of his car, before the three of them drive off down the street.

SAMANTHA
You guys are gonna get us arrested.

DAD
Hey, look. I'm a patriot, alright? Sometimes in this life, you gotta fight.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY CAFE - EVENING

They sit around a table talking.

DAD (O.S.)
And what is it that you do at these parties?

SAMANTHA
I don't know... talk, dance, listen to music.

DAD
Uh-huh. And that's more fun to you than going camping with your brother and your father who love you?

SAMANTHA
Yes. Sorry.

DAD
Wow. Is there gonna be alcohol there?

SAMANTHA
Probably not. Maybe some of the seniors.
DAD
Mm-hmm. I know what this party is. The parents are out of town, right? Somebody's uh, scored a keg, right... You guys are gonna have a good time, trash the whole house... Right? Am I right?

SAMANTHA
No.

DAD (O.S.)
No? No?

SAMANTHA
No, Dad. Amy's really responsible.

DAD
Mm-hmm. Who's gonna be there?

SAMANTHA
Marie, Christine, Amy... Everyone.

DAD
Is uh, is that guy on your Facebook page, is he gonna be there? Hm?

SAMANTHA
Who?

DAD
Come on, the guy that has got his arm wrapped around you with his hair over his eyes and --

SAMANTHA
Garrett?

DAD
Garrett, is that his name? Alright, is Garrett gonna be there?

SAMANTHA
Probably?

DAD
Probably.
(to Mason)
Uh-huh, you see? I learn more about her from her Facebook page than I do from our scintillating conversation.
(to Samantha)
Is he your boyfriend?
SAMANTHA
Kind of.

Dad turns to Mason for further information.

DAD
Have you met him? Has he been around the house?

MASON
Sometimes.

DAD
Sometime-zz? Zzz?

Dad turns his attention back to Samantha.

DAD (CONT'D)
You have a boyfriend... Wow. Have you heard of Sarah Palin?

SAMANTHA
Yes.

DAD
What's the one thing that you know about Sarah Palin's seventeen year old daughter?

SAMANTHA
She's pregnant?

DAD
That's right. And what is the one thing that you are not going to be in a couple of years when you turn seventeen?

SAMANTHA
Pregnant?

DAD
That's right! Alright, now what are the, the two ways that you can achieve that goal? The first is... not have any sex. Okay? That's the first way. Okay? Just not engage in that. That did not work out very well for your mother and me. And what's the second way?

Mason stands to leave the table.

DAD (CONT'D)
Where are you going?
MASON

Bathroom.

DAD
You don't have to go to the bathroom.
Sit down, Mason. Just... Just sit down. What's the second way?
Alright? Has your mother talked to you guys about this stuff?

SAMANTHA
Oh, Dad. Dad.

DAD
No, come on. Has she talked to you about... contraception?

The kids are visibly uncomfortable with the conversation.

DAD (CONT'D)
Huh? What has she -- condoms? Has she talked about that?

SAMANTHA (O.S.)
Oh, Dad. Please!

DAD
What? What?

SAMANTHA
That's enough.

DAD
Well. Does Garret have a condom?

SAMANTHA
Ohh! God! Dad!

DAD
What? What, come on Sam. We have to be able to talk about this.
Alright? Come on, we do. We can do it. We can do it. Just stay with me here. Alright? It's as hard for me as it is for you. But, seriously though, alright, I read an article in the paper the other day... that said that although U.S. teenagers are not the most sexually active, we have the highest rate of teenage pregnancy. Okay?

A woman, TAMMY, walks up to the table, interrupting their conversation.
TAMMY
Hey. What's goin' on?

DAD
Oh, hey. Hey, Tammy. How you doin'?

Dad stands to greet Tammy.

TAMMY
Nice to see you.

DAD
Wow, yeah, good to see you. Um, Tammy, this is my daughter Samantha.

TAMMY
Hey.

DAD
And this is Mason Junior right here. Tammy.

TAMMY (O.S.)
Mason Junior.

DAD (O.S.)
Say hi.

MASON
Hi.

TAMMY
Hi, Mason. Nice to meet you. Heard a lot about you guys.

DAD
Yeah, yeah. What're you doin' here? You uh...

TAMMY
Oh, I'm just here with some friends.

DAD
Oh, well, uh....

TAMMY
Yeah. What are you guys up to?

Dad sits back down at the table.

DAD
Um, we're going camping. Well no, this one is not going camping. This one is going to a party.
TAMMY
(to Samantha)
Ohh... Fun.

DAD
We, the men, are going camping.

TAMMY
Boys are going camping. Alright, very nice. Well uh, we still on for tomorrow or...?

DAD (O.S.)
Yeah --

TAMMY
Yeah?

DAD
Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'll drop him off at seven and then I'll just call you, alright?

TAMMY
Okay. Great. It was really nice meeting you both. Take care.

DAD
I'll see you.

TAMMY
Talk to you soon. Bye.

Tammy walks away. Mason smirks at his dad.

DAD
Don't -- don't, don't look at me like that, alright? I just -- look, just to finish the point -- okay? I was twenty-three when your mom had you, alright? So was she, alright? And we didn't put ourselves in the best position to be great parents, and I wish that -- I wish I were a better parent to you guys. Alright? And I, I hope that you can learn from my mistakes. Okay? So, wear a condom. Or get Garrett to -- I don't know. Whatever.

Samantha cringes, as Dad laughs. Mason can't help but smile.
INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Dad and Mason are driving along the open road, listening to a song by Wilco.

DAD
Now... listen to this song, alright?

Sings along:

DAD (CONT'D)
"I try to stay busy" It's just straight up, the lyrics... it's a straight up old school country song.

SONG
"I do the dishes, I mow the lawn..."

DAD
Listen to the production of this. Production's like uh, like "Abbey Road" or something.

SONG
"I try to keep myself occupied"

Dad sings along.

DAD
"Even though I know you're not comin' home." You know, his old woman's gone... straight up. Nothin' fancy.

DAD AND SONG
"I try to keep the house nice and neat. Make my bed. I change the sheets."

EXT. RIVERBED - DAY

Mason and Dad walk along the rocks, mid-conversation. They sit down near the water and begin taking off socks and shoes.

MASON
Yeah, I think she's about to get her master's degree.

DAD
Well, then she's gonna start applying for teaching jobs?

MASON
I think she already has.
DAD
Really? Where?

MASON
(shrugs)
All over.

DAD
All over Texas?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Well, if you gotta move, you gotta move, you know? It's no big deal. We can handle that. I'll still come get you every other weekend. I mean, unless she moves 500 miles away or something, it'll just be a little more car time. No big deal.

MASON
I'm just kinda sick of moving.

DAD
Well, I bet you are. But you know, you never know. I mean, I might have to move, right? I'm working for this insurance company now. These places get bought and sold all the time. You know? We'll just roll with it.

They take off pants, walk up to the water in boxer shorts.

MASON
I thought you were a musician?

DAD
I am but... life is expensive, you know. Guy's got to be responsible. What do you think?

Mason pushes his Dad into the water, then dives in himself.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, hey, you bast -- Oh you, punk kid! You got no respect!

Dad splashes his son and they both begin to swim.

CUT TO:
EXT. FOREST - DAY

Mason and Dad are now hiking through the woods.

MASTON
You know that redhead at the bowling alley?

DAD
Sure. What about her?

MASTON
Do you know her well?

DAD
Ahhh, you know, we've hung out a little bit.

MASTON
Is she your girlfriend?

DAD
How do you mean?

MASTON
Like... have you kissed her?

DAD
Um... Yeah. Yeah. I've kissed her. What about you? You got a girlfriend?

MASTON
Sort of.

DAD
Really. Have you uh, have you kissed her?

MASTON
Not really.

DAD
Yeah. Well, what have you done?

MASTON
Well, we talked on the phone.

DAD
Oh yeah? How'd that go?

MASTON
Pretty terrible.

DAD
Oh yeah?

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
(Laughs)
Why?

MASON
Well, when we're at school, we got plenty to talk about, but when we're alone or on the phone, it's like we have nothing in common.

DAD
Nothing?

MASON
Uh, she's not interested in music or video games or... the three best movies this summer...

DAD
All right. What?

MASON
Tropic Thunder, Dark Knight and Pineapple Express.

DAD
Yeah, what about 'em?

MASON
She said they all sucked.

DAD
Okay, well what's she interested in?

MASON
I don't know. Goin' to the mall with her stupid friends.

DAD
Alright. Well, is she cute? Watch your step there.

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Yeah? Alright. Well, here's what you do. Alright. First off, you gotta ask her a lot of questions. Then you have to listen to the answers, alright, actually be interested in her. Alright, if you can do those things, you're gonna be light years ahead of all the other guys.
EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Dad and Mason sit around the campfire, making s'mores.

DAD
Okay, this is the best s'more I ever made in my life, alright.

MASON
Dad...

DAD
This is absolute peak. Look at this.

MASON
Ah, that's just perfect.

DAD
Honey brown, no burn... look at that, huh?

Mason laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)
Sell that in the store. Mmm.

MASON
That's like advertisement worthy.

DAD
Mm-hm. Advertisement quality.

MASON
Yeah.

Dad laughs.

DAD
You think they ever will make another "Star Wars"?

MASON
I don't know. I mean, I think if they were to make another one that the period where the game is set is where it would have to be, 'cause there's nothin' after, really. At the end --

DAD
Yeah, no, "Return of the Jedi" it's over. There's nothin' --
MASON
Yeah, there's nothing else to do there. But --

DAD
You know, you can turn Han Solo into a Sith lord. I mean --

MASON
Yeah, what are you gonna do?

They share a laugh.

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

Dad is singing and playing guitar -- "L.A. Freeway." -- from inside the tent.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

Dad is standing over the campfire, peeing on it. Mason steps out of the tent.

DAD
Good mornin'.

MASON
Mornin'.

DAD
You gotta pee?

MASON
Sure.

DAD
Ah. Hit the campfire. Ancient, uh, Native American custom. You're gonna give back to the Earth what you take from it and you don't burn the forest down.

Mason pees onto the fire.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mom pulls up to drop the kids off at school.

MOM
Okay guys, you have a good day. Mason, don't forget, I have to teach late today. Sam's gonna pick you up. Right, Sam?
SAMANTHA
Yeah.

MASON
Alright.

MOM
Okay. Bye, guys.

MASON
See ya.

Mason exits the car and walks toward the school building.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mason walks down the hall with his classmate TONY.

TONY
Hey. That's who I was talking to you about.

MASON
Yeah. Good luck with that.

TONY
See you, man.

Mason stops to get new books out of his locker.

INT. REST ROOM - DAY

Mason fixes his hair in the mirror. Two BULLIES are vandalizing the walls. Bully #1 turns and wanders over to Mason, suddenly bumping into him.

BULLY #1
Don't bump into me! Little bitch!

MASON
I didn't!

BULLY #1
You callin' me a liar?

MASON
No.

BULLY #1
Don't act like you're tough shit, motherfucker.

Bully #2 walks over to join the altercation.
BULLY #2
I don't think pretty boy's hair's good enough.

Bully #2 tries to mess with Mason's hair. Mason blocks his hand.

BULLY #2 (CONT'D)
Hey! Don't touch me, faggot!

Another student enters. The two bullies start to walk away. Bully #1 shoves Mason and flips him off, as they exit.

BULLY #1
You're a fuckin' asshole.

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Mason leans against the wall of the school, waiting for Samantha to pick him up. When he realizes she isn't coming, he starts to walk away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS - MOMENTS LATER

Mason is now passing through an alley with JILL, who walks her bike alongside him.

JILL (O.S.)
Hey, Mason!

MASON
Hi Jill.

JILL
So, where are you going?

MASON
Over to the college.

JILL
What's going on there?

MASON
My mom's a teacher.

JILL
Oh, cool! What does she teach?

MASON
Psychology... I think. What are you up to?

JILL
Oh, my mom owns Needleworks.

(MORE)
The arts and crafts store over there?
So I'm just kind of hanging out.
But I'm supposed to be going to the hospital soon.

MASON
How come?

JILL
You know Courtney? Girl with the dyed black hair and the nose ring?
Wears Hot Topic every day?

MASON
I... think so.

JILL
We used to be best friends growing up, but we've kinda grown apart.
She sorta got all emo. She thinks I'm a prep. But, I still consider her a friend!
Anyway, she cut one of her wrists. I don't know how bad, but I think I should go visit.

Jill glances down at the book in Mason's hand.

JILL (CONT'D)
So what are you reading?

MASON
Oh, it's uh, "Breakfast of Champions". Kurt Vonnegut.

JILL
I think my older brother likes him. I'm reading "To Kill a Mockingbird" for the third time. My friends make fun of me. I think I'm the only girl in the whole school who doesn't like the "Twilight" books. Have you read them?

MASON
Sure haven't.

JILL
I tried... but it was so cheesy! So how do you like San Marcos?

MASON
I like it alright. It's a lot smaller than Houston, but it seems pretty cool. Have you always lived here?
JILL
Yeah. If you want the big city around here, you have to drive to San Antonio or Austin. Have you been there yet?

MASON
I went to San Antonio for a day, but... I haven't been to Austin yet.

JILL
That's where all the high school kids go, on weekends, for shows and stuff.

MASON
That's what I've heard.

JILL
So are you going to Shauna's party next weekend?

MASON
Um... I think I heard about it. I'm not really sure, though.

JILL
Well you should!

MASON
Why's that?

JILL
Well -- LeeAnn has a big crush on you and I know she was hoping you would go. You don't have a girlfriend, do you?

MASON
Not currently.

JILL
Well then, you should come. I'll tell Chase to make sure you're there.

MASON
Okay.

JILL
But don't tell LeeAnn I told you that. She'd kill me.

MASON
I won't.
JILL
Well, I better get going. See you later.

MASON
Bye.

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

Mason walks into his mother's classroom. He takes a seat to observe from the back, while she lectures.

MOM (O.S.)
His cognitive series, his interviews with orphans, Ethology theorists' work... And then he in turn was supported strongly by Harry Harlow's rhesus monkey study. Now you guys, you gotta think, this is the 1950's, this was radical! This flew in the face of traditional learning theory, of B.F. Skinner's classical and instrumental conditioning. Now, Bowlby is going to argue that human survival depends on us falling in love. It depends on me falling in love with my mother, and my mother falling in love with me. And if that doesn't happen, we're pretty much doomed. Now think about it. A tiger chases our tribe out of a cave. Now an ideal mother goes, "Huh! My baby! I love you! I'll protect you!" Or... "Well you, why am I going to pick you up? You're going to slow me down. You... are... tiger kibble!"

The class laughs.

MOM (CONT'D)
So next week we are gonna get into Bowlby's four stages of attachment -- oh oh, uh, Professor Douglas and I -- some of you might have classes with Elena -- she and I are hosting a little pre-Thanksgiving get-together at my place, so if anyone wants to come, please stop by.
(pause)
I'm not the greatest cook...

The class laughs again.
INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Mason opens the door as he and his mother enter the house.

   MOM
   Thanks.

Mom drops her purse on the table and then walks down the hallway to Samantha's bedroom. She knocks on the door before walking inside.

   MOM (CONT'D)
   Samantha!

Samantha is sitting on her bed, listening to music with a friend, GABY.

   SAMANTHA
   Okay! Mom...

   MOM
   Why in the hell didn't you pick up your brother like you said you would?

   SAMANTHA
   Mom, I know what you're gonna say. She was running late and we couldn't turn around.

   MOM
   No, no! No excuses! The bottom line is you didn't do what you said you were gonna do. You stranded your brother!

   SAMANTHA
   It's embarrassing to ask my friend to turn around and go get some kid at the middle school.

   MOM
   What do you mean "some kid"? He's your brother! And you know what? We've helped Janie out before. I mean, she lives right around the corner. It's no big deal.

   SAMANTHA
   Sorry.

   MOM
   You know what, Samantha? You need to start thinking long and hard about who you want to be.

   (MORE)
MOM (CONT'D)
Do you want to be a cooperative person, who is compassionate and helps people out? Or do you want to be a self-centered narcissist?

SAMANTHA
You know what? You're right. I am this horrible person... But honestly, he's not a baby anymore. You don't have to treat him like one. He's in eighth grade and he can find his way home if he wants to.

MOM
You know what? When Gaby leaves, you and me are gonna have a chat.

Mom leaves the room.

SAMANTHA
(to Gaby)
Awkward...

Gaby and Samantha laugh together.

GABY
Dude, that sucks.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY
CHASE approaches Mason's front door and knocks. Mason answers the door.

MASON
Hey man. What's up?

CHASE
Hey, we're going camping tonight. You in?

MASON
Uh, who's goin'?

CHASE
My brother, one of his friends, and Tony... Maybe.

MASON
Yeah, let me check with my mom.

INT. MOM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER
Mom is sitting on her bed grading papers.
MASON
Hey, Mom. Can I go camping with Chase tonight?

MOM
Camping? Where?

MASON
Uh, at that house that his family's building. It's pretty much finished.

MOM
Well, will any adults be there?

MASON
(shrugs)
His brother's a senior.

MOM
You have your cell phone?

MASON
Yeah.

MOM (O.S.)
Is it charged?

MASON
Mm-hmm.

MOM
Okay, do me a favor. Leave his parents' number and the address on the counter.

MASON
Okay.

INT. CAMPING HOUSE - NIGHT

Mason, Chase, and Tony are now with two older guys, CHARLIE (Chase's older brother) and his friend (SENIOR GUY). The boys are drinking beer and breaking wooden boards with their feet.

SENIOR GUY
Yeah! That's what I'm talkin' about!

The boys murmur indistinctly.

SENIOR GUY (CONT'D)
You ready? Check this shit out. That was alright, but this is gonna be badass.
CHARLIE
Alright, let me see, let me see what you can do.

SENIOR GUY
Alright. This -- is your face. I'm about to break his face, right here...

Senior Guy kicks through the wooden board.

BOYS
Ohh shit, alright. Nice.

CHARLIE
Alright, alright.

CHASE
Alright, alright. Now check this out. You might want to move.

Chase picks up a circular saw blade and throws it into a large piece of sheet-rock with the outline of a body on it.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Oww, that'd be painful. That's like the liver, stomach, something --

TONY
That's like the belly button --

MASON
Check this out, man.

Mason also heaves the blade into the human outline.

TONY
Whoa! Pancreas!

MASON
That shit's lethal.

CHASE
Yeah, that would be painful.

CHARLIE
(To Mason)
Man, have a beer, man. That was awesome. Here.

Mason takes the beer and opens it, winning the boys' approval.

SENIOR GUY
It's beer-30, children.
CHASE

Nice.

Chase offers a beer to Tony.

TONY

Aw, no thanks.

CHASE

Come on, man.

CHARLIE

What, are you a pussy?

TONY

No, I just don't feel like drinking a beer right now.

CHARLIE

Man, if you're too chicken shit to even have a beer, I know for a fact that you have never gotten any pussy.

TONY

Like you guys have.

CHASE

Sure have.

TONY

When?

CHASE

Last summer.

MASON

With who?

CHARLIE

It was awesome. Chase went down easy street and fucked this whore Nancy. At least that's what he said.

CHASE

I did. Would I lie?

SENIOR GUY

Bullshit. Quick, where were you?

CHASE

At Tobler's house. And, she fucked a couple other guys, too.
CHARLIE
Oh man, his first piece of ass was sloppy seconds.

The boys all laugh.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
What about you, Mason? You ever got any?

SENIOR GUY
Yeah, you ever made her, uh, howl into the night?

MASON
A few times.

TONY
(skeptical)
Really?

SENIOR GUY
Yeah, right. What was her name, Lucky?

MASON
Nooo. Jennifer. She doesn't live here, though. She's back in Houston.

CHARLIE
You're fucking lying.

MASON
I don't care if you assholes believe me or not.

SENIOR GUY
Let me guess -- you were pulling all kinds of ass back home, but once you got down here... lefty.

Senior Guy motions with his left hand.

MASON
Hey, fuck you. I would, but none of the girls here want to.

CHARLIE
Dude, it's not what they want, man. It's what you want.

SENIOR GUY
True dat.

Senior Guy toasts, as Mason rolls his eyes.
CHARLIE
You know what you should do? Join a band. That's all it takes, man.

MASON
Oh yeah?

CHARLIE
Fuck yeah, dude. You don't even have to play that well. I mean, you start playing your instrument, and they line up to give you blow jobs. (Points to Tony) Except for you. It doesn't impress the ladies so much when you play flute for the marching band.

TONY
I'm not in the fucking marching band.

SENIOR GUY
Ah dude, you sure? I heard you play the skin flute.

TONY
Alright, I got a question for you guys. If you think you're so cool, why are you hanging out with a bunch of eighth graders on a Friday night?

SENIOR GUY
Hey, fuck you, you little penis wrinkle. You know, you're lucky to even be here. This is our camp out. The only reason you little cum gums are here is because fucking Charlie's mom made him bring his little asshole brother, and then he drags along you little dice danglers. Fucking fuzz nut, talking shit!

Senior Guy throws a beer just past Tony.

CHARLIE
It's all good, man. These little fuzz nuts are going to get their chance soon enough. We got some whores coming by later.

CHASE
Yeah?

SENIOR GUY
Hell yeah!
CHARLIE
Now, I know Chase will fuck anything. I mean, I've seen this kid mount boulders before. But what about you guys? You in?

MASON
Whatever.

CHARLIE
Alright.

SENIOR GUY
Alright, good man. What about you, Peter Puffer?

TONY
I don't know. Maybe.

SENIOR GUY
Dude, it's okay to be gay. We understand. Just, you know, sleep over there.

TONY
I'm not gay.

CHARLIE
Give it some time, man. You'll realize.

TONY
Fuck y'all.

CHARLIE
See, that's exactly my point, man. Nah, but we don't have whores coming over, we were just fucking with you to see what you'd say.

SENIOR GUY
Yeah, and you just earned your Vag Badge.

CHARLIE
Put it next to your bitch card.

SENIOR GUY
Yeah, 'cause you know, you're a bitch. Now hold this, like the bitch you are, bitch.

The boys return to breaking boards.
SENIOR GUY (CONT'D)
Alright, this shit is called the Death Punch.

Senior Guy breaks the board in half with one direct punch.

BOYS
Ohh! Jesus!

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mom is hosting a pre-Thanksgiving get-together with 10-15 people all drinking wine and talking

MOM (to Mason and Samantha)
Hey, you guys made it! Good.

Mom places a cheese plate on the living room table.

MOM (CONT'D)
Oh, there you are.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS hands Olivia a glass of wine.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
And here you go, hostess.

MOM
Oh, thank you. Hey, can I get you a bite?

INT. MASON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mason sits on his bed, chatting with a COLLEGE GIRL, who looks around his room. There is a large graffiti mural on the wall behind him.

COLLEGE GIRL
(points to the mural)
Oh, that's cool.

MASON
Thanks.

COLLEGE GIRL
You did that?

MASON
Yeah.

COLLEGE GIRL
Wow. How long have you been doing that for?
MAISON

Not very long. Um, I went to this
camp thing just this past summer.

COLLEGE GIRL

They have a camp for graffiti?

MAISON

Well, they call it "urban art".

COLLEGE GIRL

Oh.

MAISON

So it sounds, you know, less illegal,
but... it was really just a way to
get free spray paint.

COLLEGE GIRL

Cool. So is this your tag? Is that --
do they still call it...?

MAISON

Yeah, but you know, it's just letters
that I'm good at writing.

COLLEGE GIRL

Oh. K...

MAISON

E.

COLLEGE GIRL


MAISON

It doesn't really mean anything,
though.

The College Girl notices a picture of Mason and his Dad
leaning against the GTO.

COLLEGE GIRL

Is that your dad?

MAISON

Yeah.

COLLEGE GIRL

Where's he live?

MAISON

In Houston.
COLLEGE GIRL
Get to see him much?

MASON
Yeah, yeah. Some weekends, and over the summer.

COLLEGE GIRL
Cool.

MASON
So you're a student of my mom's, right?

COLLEGE GIRL
Mm-hm. Yeah, she's uh, I got one class with her. Yeah, she's cool.

MASON
How's she doing? You know, is she -- is she a good teacher and everything?

COLLEGE GIRL
Yeah! She's great. She's super smart and she cares, you know, she makes it interesting. She's probably even my favorite teacher.

Mason nods.

INT. DINING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

One of Mom's students, JIM, tells a story while the group sits around the table eating.

JIM
...So anyway, we figured out a way to rig up our iPods to the external speakers on the ASV. So every time we come rolling into town, you knew the 456 was there, 'cause we were bumping House of Pain. It was like, "Jump around, Jump around." And the whole family's coming outside, and you got the kids and the mom and the dad, and they're all bouncing up and down. We're throwing out candies for the kids, and soccer balls, and Beanie Babies, and Frisbees... Um, like, smokes for the adults. And they loved, they absolutely loved, Gatorade. But for some reason, you know, they hated the lemon-lime flavor. I don't know what it was. Yeah. Couldn't give it away.
The group laughs.

MOM
How long were you over there?

JIM
Uhh... I did two tours in Iraq and one in Bosnia.

MOM
Wow.

MASON
Did you enlist?

JIM
Mm-hmm. Yeah. I was, um, Army National Guard. And, uh, you know coming straight out of high school. Needed money for college. Seemed like a decent paying job. And, uh, did my tour. And whenever I got done, I told them if there's, you know, a world-changing event, I'll come back. And, uh, 3 months later 9/11 happened. And I was back 9/12. And I'm proud to say the 456, the whole time we were there, we never lost a guy. Not one casualty.

MOM
But is that odd? Is that unusual?

JIM
Yeah. Almost impossible. Like the guys that came along after us and replaced us, they didn't listen to any of our advice. They, you know, did basically the polar opposite of what we did, and they lost seven guys in the first month.

MOM
Wow. What did you guys do differently?

JIM
Well, I'd like to think it's just a matter of mutual respect, you know. I mean, all the time we spent over there building trust, I mean these guys basically destroyed it in three days.
PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
So, what did the locals think about why we were there?

JIM
Oil. Plain and simple.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The College Girl is now playing guitar and singing "Wish You Were Here" along with others in the living room. At some point, Mason notices Mom talking with Jim outside on the porch.

EXT. CAR - NIGHT

A station wagon pulls up in front of Mason's house. The teenagers inside are listening to music, about to drop Mason off at home.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Mason is in the far back of the station wagon, making out with a BLONDE GIRL.

CHASE
Hey, Mason.
(hands Mason a joint)
One last hit.

Mason takes a hit of the joint.

CHARLIE
(in the driver's seat)
Hey! Mickey Mouse Club. Get the fuck out of my car. Just crawl out the back window or something, man.

Mason climbs out the back window of the station wagon.

BLONDE GIRL
I'm gonna miss you.

MASON
I'll see you on Sunday night.

BLONDE GIRL
Alright. You better text me.

MASON
Mm. Do you have any gum?

BLONDE GIRL
Um... yeah, I do, actually. Here you go.
MASON
Thanks. See ya.

Mason kisses her good-night.

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mom is hosting a small get-together, and is currently talking with Professor Douglas.

MOM
...And they're buying this party line that they're supposed to feel bad and trade off their own pension, as if that's what's corrupting this nation.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Yeah, because those who hear Fox, in my opinion, are being lied to.

MOM
Yeah, thank God for Wisconsin. I mean, we have to follow that example.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
You're right.

Mason enters the front door.

JIM
Hey, Mason. What time is it?

MASON
Uh, like 12:15.

JIM
Happy birthday.

Mason smiles.

MOM
Huh! Happy birthday!

Mom kisses Mason. Professor Douglas walks over to join them, taking an interest.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Mason, it's your birthday?

MASON
Uh, just now, I guess.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Yeah, how old are you?
MASON
Fifteen.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Fifteen! Give me a hug.

Professor Douglas hugs Mason.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS (CONT'D)
Happy birthday. Oh my goodness!

Professor Douglas rejoins the party.

MOM
(to Mason)
Have you been drinking?

MASON
Have you?

MOM
Yeah, a little. Have you?

MASON
A little bit.

MOM
Have you been...?

Mom mimes smoking reefer.

MASON
A little bit.

MOM
Oh... okay.

MASON
I'm gonna go to sleep.

MOM
Talk in the morning, huh?

EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Dad and Jim stand around in front of the house. ANNIE opens the doors to the new mini-van, so the kids can load their overnight bags.

SAMANTHA
Hey, Dad!

DAD
Hey! How you doing?
Dad kisses Samantha on the cheek.

SAMANTHA
Good! Whose car is that?

DAD
That's our car. Hop on in there.

SAMANTHA
(to Annie)
Hey!

ANNIE
Hey, sweetie.

Annie give Samantha a hug. Samantha peeks in the side door of the mini-van, finding baby COOPER in a car seat.

SAMANTHA
Hey Cooper! Hey, how's it goin'? Hello little brother!
(to Annie)
He's so cute.

EXT. JIM'S SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Mom talks with two workers about an exposed pipe in the yard.

MOM
Can we just replace that part of the pipe?

WORKER
No, no it's no good. Everything is no good.

MOM
(attempting Spanish)
Todo... Total?

WORKER
Everything, yes... Mira.

He shows the broken pipe with his shovel. He asks the other worker to demonstrate the strength of the replacement pipe by standing on it.

WORKER (CONT'D)
See this one is...

MOM
Gusto... it's stronger?

WORKER
Yes. It's better. Yes, yes, yes.
EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

DAD
(to Jim)
Hey listen, uh, thanks for that camera you got Mason.

JIM
Oh, yeah... Mason's --

DAD
He's loving that thing.

JIM
He's all into the photography thing right now.

DAD
Yeah, I know.

JIM
He's actually talking about turning his, uh, his closet into a dark room. The red light and developing, the whole nine...

DAD
Yeah? You alright with that?

JIM
I probably won't see him for a week...

DAD
Yeah... Right... Well...

JIM
But, you know. He's having a good time.

DAD
At least he's focusing on something.

JIM
Yeah, yeah.

DAD
You know? That's what I like.

JIM
Yeah, he's all about it.
EXT. JIM'S SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

MOM
(pointing to the pipe)
Okay... Let's go grande.

WORKER
It's good?

MOM
It's good.

WORKER
It's good. It's better. Yes.

He instructs the other worker on how to get started. Mom turns to join the others in front yard.

MOM
Hey, you know, you're smart. You should be in school.

WORKER
I like school, I need school, but it's hard. I work all day...

MOM
Go to night school. At community college. It's -- It's pretty affordable.

EXT. JIM'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

DAD
You're doing a nice job with the house though, it's looking great... really great.

JIM
Thanks. Yeah, you know, some fix-its here and there, you know. We got a good deal on the foreclosure... So, now I'm finding out why. You know?

DAD
(laughs)
Yeah. Right?

Mason walks outside, carrying a duffel bag.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey bud! Hey, Happy Birthday!

The mini-van catches Mason's attention.
MASON
What's that?

DAD
What's that? That's our new car! Get in it.

Dad gives Mason a hug. Jim shakes Mason's hand.

JIM
Alright, have a good weekend.

Mom arrives at the front yard and greets Dad with a hug.

MOM
Hi.

DAD
Hey, how you doing? Good to see you.

MOM
You too.

(to Annie)
Hey!

ANNIE
Hey, how are you?

Mom gives Annie a hug.

MOM
You look great.

ANNIE
Oh, thanks.

MOM
Aww, look at him! Ooh. He's got Mason's nose.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, isn't he cute?

MOM
Yeah.

Dad gets into the van, as the family closes all the doors.

DAD
Alright!

MASON
Love you guys.
DAD
We got a big drive ahead of us.

MOM
Bye, Sam.

JIM
You guys drive safe.

DAD
Alright. Well, we'll be back tomorrow night.

MOM
Bye, honey. I'm so glad you were born!

Dad, Annie, and the kids drive off for Houston. Mom and Jim are left standing in the front yard, as they watch the van drive away.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

MASON
So, this is like Annie's car and... and you drive the GTO? I guess you can't really put a baby seat in that thing.

DAD
Yeah, no... But I had to sell that anyway.

MASON
You what?

DAD
Yeah, I had to sell that.

MASON
So... so it's gone?

DAD
Yeah, some sucker collector from California paid twenty-two grand for it, which is great 'cause I basically got to pay for this in cash. I only paid eighty-five hundred for that thing way back when. I mean, you know, cars are generally a terrible investment. You know? Soon as you drive them off the lot you got a used car on your hands, and the value's only dropping from there.

(MORE)
But... if you take care of it, you know, and you get lucky and it's a classic, you know, the value starts going up again. I mean shit, you got guys paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for some Shelby Cobra.

After a long silence, Dad notices Mason is unusually quiet.

DAD (CONT'D)
What?

MASON
You don't remember?

DAD
Remember what?

MASON
Really? You said that was going to be my car when I turned sixteen.

DAD
(laughs)
What? No, I didn't. I never said that.

MASON
I remember. I was in third grade and you were taking me over to Anthony Nagar's house for his birthday... and we were there early, so we gave him a ride around the block. And he was talking about how much he loved your car and so you were all like "Oh. This is going to be Mason's when he turns 16."

DAD
What are you...? Alright, first off, I have no memory of that, alright? Second of all, I would never say that. Never.

MASON
Yeah. You did though.

DAD
What? Mason. Come on, what about your sister? I'm just gonna forget about her? Come on, how's that fair? Huh? Anthony Nagar, what the?

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)

(laughs)
Are you...? Oh, come on! I mean, you're not... Ughh.
Look, you can sit there like there's a death in the family, alright, but bottom line is that was my car. Alright? I paid for it, I took care of it, and I can do whatever I want with it. Alright? I'm sorry if you had other ideas about it but when you get older you can save up and buy a car of your own. And be cool like I used to be. Or... you can get a mini-van.

Annie and Samantha watch a Lady Gaga music video on Samantha's cell phone in the back seat.

ANNIE
Does your mom actually let you watch this?

SAMANTHA
Yeah. She likes it too.

ANNIE
(laughing)
Oh, my god... Okay, well.

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

ANNIE
Have you ever seen her in concert?

SAMANTHA
No. But she's coming to Houston in April.

ANNIE
She's coming to Houston?

SAMANTHA
Mm-hmm.

ANNIE
Oh you know, your dad and I could get you tickets, and you could stay with us.

SAMANTHA
That'd be great.
ANNIE
Yeah.

DAD
Hey, hey, Annie? Will you get me
the, the little birthday present for
Mason?

ANNIE
Yeah, babe.

Annie hands a small wrapped present to Dad. Mason unwraps
the gift to reveal a CD set.

DAD
Alright. This one, this one needs a
little explanation, okay? Open it
up. I call that "The Beatles' Black
Album". Alright, what it is, is the
best of John, Paul, George, and Ringo
solo, post-break up.

MASON
Thanks.

DAD
Yeah, basically, I put the band back
together for you.

Annie Laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)
You know, whenever you listen to too
much of the solo stuff, it kind of
becomes a drag, you know? But you
put 'em next to each other, alright,
and they start to elevate each
other... and then you can hear it.
Huh! It's The Beatles. You know?

MASON
I don't know. I think I always just
liked Paul the best.

DAD
It doesn't matter, you know, you're
missing the point. There is no
favorite Beatle! That's what I'm
saying. It's in the balance. That's
what made them the greatest fucking
rock band in the world. Okay? You
know, and there's this decade of
music out there that's been scattered.
Alright?

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
And now it has been carefully found, arranged, and ordered for you, by your loving father.

ANNIE
Very arranged and very organized, over and over again by your loving father.

DAD
Yes, yes, yes. So, I mean, look at that--look at that, uh, top of Volume II, first four tracks... You've got "Band on the Run" into "My Sweet Lord", into "Jealous Guy", into "Photograph". I mean, come on. It's like the perfect segue. You got Paul, who takes you to the party, George who talks to you about God, John who says no, it's about love and pain, and then Ringo who just says hey, can't we enjoy what we have while we have it? It's a good record. I shit you not.

MASON
Cool.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY
The mini-van drives along a dirt road lined with trees and parks outside of a small ranch home. GRANDPA CLIFF and NANA come outside to greet their guests.

DAD
Hey there, Cliff.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Hey, how you doin'? 

DAD
Oh, good. How you doin'? 

NANA
(to Mason)
Oh, hi, birthday boy! It's good to see you.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Good. Good to see you.

DAD
Ah, it's great to see you.
GRANDPA CLIFF
You made it alright, huh?

DAD
Yeah, we sure did. We sure did.

GRANDPA CLIFF
(to Annie)
How are you, darling?

INT. KITCHEN – DAY
Annie and Nana quietly light the candles on Mason's birthday cake.

DAD
Alright, we ready?

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah, get started --

NANA
Wait, wait, wait...

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

DAD
Hey, Sam.

He subtly indicates for her to get off her laptop and join the family. They take their seats in the living room.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, still sleeping here?

GRANDPA CLIFF
Oh, yeah, sawin' logs.

DAD
You ready?

The family sings happy birthday to Mason. Nana brings in the birthday cake, complete with lit candles.

ALL
(singing)
Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Mason...
Happy birthday to you!

DAD
Make a wish, make a wish.

Mason blows out the candles. The family cheers.
NANA
Real good! Presents! Wait, wait, wait. Here, sweetie.

Nana hands Mason a wrapped gift.

DAD
Hey Sam, would you get us a knife so we can cut this up? Hey? Alright.

Sam walks into the kitchen to grab a knife.

NANA
I hope you like it. I heard you didn't have one, so.

He unwraps the gift.

NANA (CONT'D)
It's a Bible. Is this your first Bible? Look, there's your name...

MASON
Wow.

NANA
...In gold. And wait-wait-wait-wait. Look at this. It's a Red Letter edition, and that means that everything Jesus said is in red.

MASON
Thank you.

NANA

ANNIE
And this one's from us.

Annie hands Mason a large gift box.

DAD
It's not going to make all your dreams come true, here, you know. Just keep your expectations low. No, no, no, no, you need it. It's...

Dad pulls a blue dress shirt, blazer, and tie out of the box.

DAD (CONT'D)
It's -- hey! Come, on right? You gotta have it. You need this.
NANA
Wow!

DAD
You've got life ahead of you. You know --

ANNIE
And the shirt is blue, and I know you like blue.

DAD
You've got dances --

NANA
It's beautiful!

DAD
-- And job interviews. Here, I'm going to get it all wrinkled here.

Grandpa comes out of the kitchen with a covered gun.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Mason?

DAD
(whispers)
The Black Album was from me.

NANA
Uh-oh.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Come here, son. Pull that off.

Mason walks over and pulls the case off to reveal a shotgun.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)
There's a 20 gauge shotgun.

MASON
Wow.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Yeah. My dad gave it to me when I was a little younger than you, and his dad gave it to him, and well, you're fifteen and I'd like for you to have it. Alright? Here, you hold it. Yeah.

MASON
(taking the gun)
Thank you.
GRANDPA CLIFF
Congratulations, son. I'll teach you how to clean it, teach you how to fire it. I'll teach you a little bit of safety.

The family laughs, as Mason holds the gun pointing precariously across the room.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Samantha holds a pistol, ready to shoot. Dad is helping her aim. There are bottles and cans lined up as targets.

DAD
Now cock it. Alright, there you go. Now, what you want to do is line up the front sight with the back sight, here, you see this little V right here --

SAMANTHA
Mm-hm.

DAD
Now which one you aiming at?

SAMANTHA
Ah, the middle can.

DAD
The middle can? Alright, alright. Now fire at will, alright?

SAMANTHA
Okay.

Samantha shoots the can.

DAD
Ho. Whoa!

Dad claps as Samantha lowers the pistol.

SAMANTHA
Yeah!

GRANDPA CLIFF
Howdy!

DAD
Mason holds the shotgun, taking aim. Grandpa Cliff throws a chunk of wood up into the air as a target.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Ready?  Pull!

Mason misses the fist shot.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)
You uh, you uh, hit a little low. Wait until it gets up high and then shoot. Alright? Cause then it's a better aim coming down. Remember, second trigger.

MASON
Mm-hm.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Ready?

MASON
Mm-hm.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Pull!

Grandpa Cliff throws another piece of wood into the air. This time, Mason hits it.

GRANDPA CLIFF (CONT'D)
Hah!  Hah! Look what you did!  Well, you nailed it, didn't you?  How's that feel?

MASON
Felt good.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Yeah, it felt good.  Good.

EXT. RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT

The family sits out on the porch in a circle.  Dad plays guitar as the family sings along.

DAD  (singing)
Well, I want for us to be together forever.

ANNIE  (singing)
But to wander wherever I may.
DAD
(singing)
I want you to be easy and casual.

ANNIE
(singing)
But still demand I stay.

SAMANTHA
(singing)
I want for you to know me completely,
but still remain mysterious.

MASON
(singing)
Consider everything deeply, but still
remain fearless.

DAD AND ANNIE
(singing)
Climb to the top, look over the ledge.
Dance barefoot on a razor's edge.
Reach for the stars, grab the tiger
by the tail.

MASON
(singing)
If I don't try, I'll never fail.

DAD
Good!

DAD AND ANNIE
(singing)
If you go home, you're rolling the
dice. Can't step in the same river
twice. If you love too much it'll
turn to hate. If you never leave
home you'll never be late. If you
eat too much, you're gonna get fat.
If you buy a dog, you'll piss off
your cat.

Grandpa Cliff and Nana both laugh.

DAD AND ANNIE (CONT'D)
Take a deep breath, and enjoy the
ride. Cause arrivals and departures
run side by side...

Annie's parents cheer as the song concludes.
DAD (O.S.)
Alright, you're our first audience, you know? Mason demanded we work on it the whole drive.

GRANDPA CLIFF
It was really wonderful. That's sweet. Sweet.

NANA
Thank you, thank you, thank you.

GRANDPA CLIFF
Impressive.

DAD
It's a work in progress.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY
A small country church.

PREACHER (O.S.)
A week later -- we don't know why Thomas wasn't there the first time -- but a week later, Thomas comes back and joins the other disciples. They say, "Hey, the Lord's alive, we saw him!"

INT. CHURCH - DAY
The preacher stands at the front of the church holding an open bible. The family sits among the congregation. Mason is wearing his new suit.

PREACHER
"I won't believe it until I put my finger into his side and I'm gonna see those nail prints in his hands."
Poof! About that time, here comes Jesus, standing right next to him. Okay? And he turns to Thomas. Don't you know Thomas felt some shame? And he turns to Thomas and says, "Thomas, here, stick your finger in my side. Look at these nail prints. It's me." And Thomas says, "My Lord, and my God, I believe."

Annie's parents nod in agreement.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
And Jesus said, "Well, that's good."
(MORE)
PREACHER (CONT'D)
But blessed are those who can believe without seeing." It's a lot easier when you can see, and feel, and touch. But like us, we haven't seen him in the flesh. We haven't felt him in the flesh. But we have experienced him in the spirit. At least I have, and I hope y'all have too.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The family walks through the woods. Annie holds Cooper to her chest in a cloth carrier. Mason has his camera in hand. Dad chews on a piece of straw.

ANNIE
The pond's right up here. Ooh, it's low.

DAD
Yeah.

ANNIE
You know, my dad could take you fishing next time you're here if you want.

MASON
Nice.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
(to Cooper)
Hi, baby. What's goin' on?

Mason and Samantha walk down to the pond. Annie sits on a picnic bench with Cooper.

ANNIE (CONT'D)
You know, I think we're just gonna hang out here for a minute.

DAD
Want me to stay with you?

ANNIE
No, it's okay.

DAD
You sure?

ANNIE
Yeah, thanks.
Samantha pushes a stick into the mud. Mason photographs pond.

SAMANTHA
Mason, why are you such a stick-in-the-mud?

MASON
What are you even talking about?

DAD
Hey, you guys don't mind coming back here on the 20th, do you, for Cooper's baptism?

MASON
No, it's fine.

DAD
Sam?

SAMANTHA
Okay.

DAD
I appreciate it. It means a lot to Annie and her folks, you know.

MASON
Were we baptized?

They share a look and laugh.

DAD
I wasn't the least bit concerned with the state of your soul. We can do it now, though, if you want.

MASON
No, nah, I think I'm alright.

DAD
You and Cooper together, you know. Dunk your heads.

SAMANTHA
You're not becoming one of those God people, are you, Dad?

DAD
And what's that supposed to mean, hm?

ANNIE
I can hear you!
DAD
Well, I think that shotgun should live at my house, huh. I don't think your mom would love that.

Dad picks up a rock.

DAD (CONT'D)
Hey, look out, Sam. Let me show you how it's done.

Dad skips the rock across the pond. Mason photographs it.

SAMANTHA
Nice, Dad.

She laughs.

DAD
Still got the goods, hmm?

INT. DARKROOM - DAY

Mason is developing a picture in the darkroom. His teacher, MR. TURLINGTON, wanders in.

TURLINGTON
How long you been in here, Mason?

MASON
I'm not sure.

TURLINGTON
I'm sure. All class. Did you complete your image diary?

MASON
Not yet.

TURLINGTON
Completed your, uh, digital contact sheet?

MASON
Not quite, but... I mean, it's not gonna take me long.

TURLINGTON
Not yet. Not quite. Darkroom time is extra-curricular. I mean technically, you don't ever have to be in here these days, and certainly not until you've completed your assignments. That's the deal.
MASON

Sorry.

TURLINGTON

I'm worried about you, Mason.

MASON

Why is that?

TURLINGTON

I'll tell you why. The images you're turning in, they're cool. You're looking at things in a really unique way. Got a lot of natural talent.

MASON

Thanks.

TURLINGTON

Yeah, but, that and fifty cents will just get you a cup of coffee in this old world. I've met a lot of talented people over the years. How many of them made it professionally without discipline, commitment, and a really good work ethic?

Mason shrugs and shakes his head, unsure.

TURLINGTON (CONT'D)

I can tell you. I can count it on two fingers. Zero. It's not gonna happen for you, Mason. The world is too competitive. There are too many talented people who are willing to work hard. And a butt-load of morons who are untalented, who are more than willing to surpass you. As a matter of fact, a lot of them are sitting in that classroom out there right now. Hm? You know what they're doing? They're doing their assignments, which is what you're supposed to be doing, but you're not. You're in here. Why is that? Are you special, Mason?

MASON

No, but I mean the things you're talking about, like work ethic or whatever, I feel like I do work pretty hard. I spend the whole weekend taking pictures a lot of times.
TURLINGTON
You like football, Mason?

MASON
Not really.

TURLINGTON
Yeah, I know you don't. That's why I've just assigned you to shoot the football game tonight. Okay? It starts at 7:30. I want you to get there early. I want you to shoot a full card, three hundred images, and I want 'em downloaded, I want 'em sorted, and I want to see them very first thing Monday. Okay? You want to know why I'm doing this?

MASON
I guess.

TURLINGTON
Who do you want to be, Mason? What do you want to do?

MASON
I want to take pictures. Make art.

TURLINGTON
Any dip-shit can take pictures, Mason. Art, that's special. What can you bring to it that nobody else can?

MASON
That's what I'm trying to find out.

TURLINGTON
Try harder. Hey, maybe in twenty years you can call old Mr. Turlington and you can say, "Thank you, sir, for that terrific dark room chat we had that day."
(walking away)
Get back to class and do your work.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mason walks back to his computer. NICK sits at the neighboring computer.

NICK
Hey man. You're walkin' a little funny.
MASON

Fuck you.

NICK

I'm just saying, you guys were in there for a long time. Just hope he bought you dinner first.

Mason playfully jabs Nick in the arm.

INT. JIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Jim sits at the kitchen table, opening a beer. Mom and Samantha prepare dinner in the kitchen. Mom walks over to the stairs to call up to Mason.

MOM

Mason! Honey, come down for dinner.

On her way back to the kitchen, Mom notices the screen on an open laptop.

MOM (CONT'D)

Samantha! You didn't post these pictures and their descriptions? Come on, this auction is going to end on Sunday, honey. You've got to get those posted.

SAMANTHA

Why are we even doing this? It's like an online junk shop. I thought you had a good job?

MOM

I do. We're what you call house poor. Everyone's got to do their part. Your brother took the pictures. You have to help.

SAMANTHA

Who even buys this shit?

JIM

Hey, Sam, watch your mouth, alright? Don't disrespect your mother. You like a roof over your head, don't you?

MOM

Yeah, and you like having electricity so that you can charge your cell phone?
SAMANTHA
I'm not even gonna be here next year.
I'm a senior. I should be having
fun.

Mason enters. He sits down at the table. He has blue nail
polish on his fingernails.

JIM
Nice nails.

MASON
Yeah, some girl did that in sixth
period.

JIM
You planning on keeping them?

MASON
Until it comes off, I guess.

JIM
Last summer it was the earrings, and
now the nails. You got a, uh, you
got a purse to go with all that?

SAMANTHA
A lot of guys do that. He's just
trying to be cool.

JIM
When I was in high school, having a
job, being responsible, being able
to afford a car, that was cool.

MOM
Mason, honey, why don't you get you
and your sister some water.

Mason gets up to help set the table.

EXT. FOOTBALL GAME - NIGHT

An announcer comments on the game over the loud speaker.
The crowd cheers and the band plays. Mason is on the
sidelines, photographing details he finds interesting. He
scrolls through the images on his camera.

NICK
Hey man, Turlington says to cut the
artsy crap and shoot the game. So
take your lens and point it that
way.
MASON
Jesus Christ.

NICK
Also, we got a ride tonight.

CHASE
McCormick gonna take us to the party. We're gonna head out after the game. You're goin', okay?

MASON
Okay.

NICK
Shoot the game.

A player catches the ball and is tackled.

EXT. PARTY - NIGHT

"She's Long Gone" by the Black Keys plays over the party. Mason fills a cup at the keg. Samantha takes a shot with a boy. Kids play beer bong.

BEER PONG GUY
Kobe...

It goes in - guests react.

GABY
Oh! First one. What was that? What was that? What is up?

Nick plays drums with teen band. Mason approaches SHEENA. He nudges her shoulder.

SHEENA
Hey, what's up?

MASON
Hey. How's it goin'?

SHEENA
Pretty good. How long have you been here?

MASON
I don't know. Awhile, I guess.

SHEENA
Awhile? Yeah.
EXT. QUIET SPOT - MOMENTS LATER

Mason and Sheena sit and talk.

MASON
I just feel like there are so many things that I could be doing and probably want to be doing that I'm just not.

SHEENA
Why aren't you?

MASON
I mean, I guess it's... just being afraid of what people would think. You know, judgment.

SHEENA
Yeah. I guess it's really easy to say, like, I don't care what anyone else thinks, but, everyone does, you know? Deep down.

MASON
Exactly. I find myself so furious at all these people that I'm in contact with just for controlling me or whatever, but you know, they're not even aware they're doing it.

SHEENA
Yeah. So... in this perfect world where no one's controlling you, what's different? What changes?

MASON
Everything. I mean, I just wanna be able to do anything I want, because it makes me feel alive. As opposed to giving me the appearance of normality.

SHEENA
Whatever that means.

MASON
I don't think it means much.

SHEENA
You're kinda weird, you know that?

MASON
Yeah?

(MORE)
MASON (CONT'D)
(Laughing)
Is that a compliment?

SHEENA
I don't know. Do you wanna be weird?

MASON
I mean, I don't want to like... scare kids at the park, or anything like that.

Sheena laughs.

MASON (CONT'D)
I really like talking with you. I don't usually even try to like vocalize my thoughts or feelings or anything. Just, I don't know, it just never sounds right. Words are stupid.

SHEENA
So, why're you trying with me?

MASON
I don't know. I guess I feel comfortable.

SHEENA
I'm glad.

EXT. JIM'S HOUSE - LATER

Mason comes home late. Jim sits outside on a chair surrounded by empty beer cans and one in hand.

MASON
Hey, Jim. I'm sorry I'm so late.

JIM
What time were you supposed to be home?

MASON
I don't know. Awhile ago.

JIM
Awhile ago like, thirty minutes ago, an hour ago? Cause, truthfully, nobody even knew where you were until your sister told us. She's been home for awhile.
MASON
I'm sorry.

JIM
Yeah, been hearin' a lot of that lately. See, but you don't actually care. You just kinda... kinda come and go as you please and you don't care if your mom's upset or what time you gotta be home... Is that what's up?

MASON
I don't know what to tell you.

JIM
Stop mumbling! You know, speak up! I can't understand a word comin' outta your mouth. It's just like, "uh uhh nuhh" and I ask you questions and you just--

MASON
Man, can I just have one day where everyone isn't all over my ass!?

Jim gets up abruptly and advances on Mason.

JIM
I'm up your ass? This is my house. Now, if you wanna live in my house then you get home when you say you're gonna be home.

MASON
You know, Jim, you're not my dad.

JIM
No, I'm not your dad! You know how I know that? Cause I'm actually here. I'm the guy with the job, paying the bills, taking care of you, your mom, your sister... Huh?! Huh?!

Mason goes inside.

JIM (CONT'D)
I'm that guy...

Jim sits down.
INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mom sits at the kitchen table surrounded by bills and papers. Mason comes down the stairs.

MASON
Morning.

MOM
Morning. Hey, which one of you guys used the downstairs bathroom last night?

MASON
I don't know. I didn't.

MOM
That tall guy, what's his name?

MASON
Phillip?

MOM
Yeah, Phillip. He did it. Can Phillip read? I mean, there's a big sign on the door, it says, "Do not use this bathroom, it's broken." I mean, how difficult is that?

MASON
I don't know. I'm sorry.

Mason prepares cereal.

MOM
I think I'm gonna put the house on the market.

MASON
Why?

MOM
This house is too big for us. I mean, you're going to school eventually... It's too expensive. I'm done.

MASON
Well why did you even buy it in the first place, then?

MOM
Because I really enjoy making poor life decisions, keeping us on the (MORE)
MOM (CONT'D)

brink of poverty. I mean, I've spent
the first half of my life acquiring
all this crap and now I'm gonna spend
the second half of my life getting
rid of all this stuff.

MASON

Really? Like what?

MOM

Like - Well, I got rid of a couple
husbands, now I'm gonna get rid of a
mortgage, some maintenance, the
tchotchkes, the, the homeowner's
insurance, the property tax, the
plumbing... Ahhh. You know what?
From now on I am gonna be Mommy Monk.
Simple. Celibate.

MASON

Don't be gross, Mom.

MOM

Fine. I'll be a poor whore with a
big house.
(Laughs)
Is that better?

MASON

Okay.

Mason starts to walk away.

MOM

Mason -- Mason, please, don't leave
me that dirty dish to wash.

MASON

I do dishes all day.

MOM

Well, great honey, then you're a
professional. Come on, you could do
one or two more for you poor old
mom.

Mason walks over to the sink.

MASON

Okay.

MOM

Thank you.
EXT. MOM'S HOUSE

Mason gets in truck, drives away.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN

Music plays in the background. Mason is in uniform, he carries in a bus tub of dirty dishes, one with uneaten battered shrimp on it. He sticks one in his mouth and flirts with APRIL, a waitress.

    MASON
    You want one?

    APRIL
    Ugh. God --

    MASON
    (Laughing)
    She didn't even touch them, seriously.
    I watched her the whole time.

April takes one.

    APRIL
    Yeah, I bet you did watch her, you little pervert.
    (Laughing)
    It's like we're on a date. Cheers.

They clink battered shrimp.

    MASON
    It's a night of romance.

    APRIL
    Yeah, except I'm not gonna kiss you.

She heads back out to the restaurant floor.

    APRIL (CONT'D)
    I will blow you, though.

Mason brings the dishes over to the industrial washers. His boss, MR. WOOD, storms in.

    MR. WOOD
    Mason! We are in the weeds out here!

    MASON
    I'm goin' as fast as I can.

    MR. WOOD
    Oh!
    (MORE)
MR. WOOD (CONT'D)
Then I must be confused then, cause I just saw you chattin' it up with April when I gotta salad bar that needs a refill, I gotta six top, two four tops I can't use, because they haven't been bused.

MASON
Enrique is not here. I'm tryin'.

MR. WOOD
Well, while you're tryin', we're dyin'! What am I supposed to tell my customers? "Oh, I'm sorry that your table's got dirty plates on it, but Mason's tryin'. Least that's what he told me, after he was flirtin' with April and eatin' your leftover shrimp." Now it is a challenge out there today, I know, but I wanna share somethin' with you, I got you pegged for fry cook this summer, now that's a lot more responsibility. It's also more money. How's that sound?

MASON
Good.

MR. WOOD
I know you can handle that money... but can you take the responsibility? I think you can, because I believe in you. But I need you on the floor. Now leave the dishes. Giddyup. Right, come on, don't let me down!

Mason exits.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY
Mason sits on the stairs video chatting with Dad on his phone.

DAD
Well, so it's -- it's runnin' okay? That alternator's not messin' up anymore?

MASON (Holding Phone)
No, it's fine. It's up for the trip.
DAD
(Laughing)
Well, you gonna see your sister when you guys are in Austin?

MASON
Yeah, she said I can stay at her dorm, which is cool, and I guess her roommate's out of town so it's no big deal.

DAD
Alright, well, did you apply there yet? Did you get that application in to UT?

MASON
Not yet, but Sheena's pretty much in, though.

DAD
Yeah, right. Well, if you know that's where you wanna go, you should probably do that early acceptance thing. You know? I mean seriously, let 'em know you're a man who knows what he wants.

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
A bit of decisiveness goes a long way in this life, alright?

MASON
Yeah.

DAD
Great. And uh, what about work? How's that goin'?

MASON
Uh, I don't know. It's, it's alright. Today kind of sucked, this guy didn't show up. But it's definitely an interesting perspective on the world. People are slobs.

DAD
(Laughing)
Well, when people ask me about you I say, "Oh, Mason, he's doing great. He's got a job, he's really cleanin' up."
Mason laughs.

DAD (CONT'D)
(From Phone)
Alright, hey, hey, say hi to Annie and Cooper, will you?

Dad pans the phone to Annie and baby.

ANNIE
Say hi to your big brother. Hey, big brother.

MASON
Hey, Annie. Hey, kiddo.

ANNIE
Can you say bye-bye?

BABY
Bye-buh!

ANNIE
(Laughs)
We'll see you soon.

DAD
(From phone)
Alright, alright, well, be careful when you're driving, alright? Don't be texting, don't be doing any of that. Alright? Just, you're Obi Wan. You're centered, patient, right? You watch three cars ahead, two behind. It takes two bad drivers to have an accident okay?

MASON
Okay.

DAD
(From phone)
Right, and listen, tell your sister to pick up her phone or call me back or something.

Mom comes down the stairs and drops a bag at Mason's feet.

MASON
Okay.

DAD
Alright, buddy! You have a good one.
MASON
Bye, Dad.

MOM
(Motioning to the bag)
Hey, honey, take this to your sister.
Throw it in the truck, okay?

MASON
Okay, I will.

MOM
So where is Sheena staying?

MASON
At her friend Emily's.

MOM
Is Emily a real person?

MASON
(Laughing)
Yeah. Yeah, she's a sophomore. She has an apartment.

MOM
(Holding out money)
Okay, this is in case of emergency.
Don't spend it. I want it back.

MASON
Okay. Thanks.

MOM
Did you do your homework?

MASON
Most of it, but... I can finish tomorrow night.

MOM
Honey! Eleventh grade is really important for college. Don't blow it.

MASON
I know! I know. I mean, we're going to UT and everything.

MOM
I know, and don't you want me to come? Come on, Sheena, road trip with Mom! I'll pay for gas.
MASON
Umm...

MOM
I'm just kidding. I have work.

She kisses his forehead.

MOM (CONT'D)
Call me when you get there.

MASON
I will.

MOM
Have fun!

Mason exits.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY/ INT. TRUCK

"Suburban Wars" plays. Mason drives, Sheena is in the passenger seat.

SHEENA
... That sounds to me like just another extreme Mason view of everything.

MASON
Not at all! I finally figured it out. It's like when they realized it was gonna be too expensive to actually build cyborgs and robots... I mean, the costs of that were impossible. They decided to just let humans turn themselves into robots. That's what's going on right now.

SHEENA
Oh, right now?

MASON
Yeah! I mean, why not? There are billions of us just laying around, not really doing anything. We don't cost anything. I mean we're even pretty good at self-maintenance and reproducing constantly. And as it turns out, we're already biologically programmed for our little cyborg upgrades.
SHEENA
How?

MAISON
Seriously. I read this thing other day about how, like, when you hear that ding on your inbox you get a, like a dopamine rush in your brain. It's like we're being chemically rewarded for allowing ourselves to be brainwashed. How evil is that? We're fucked.

SHEENA
So you deleting your Facebook page is gonna change all that? Remember when Trevor deleted his Facebook page last year and everyone just hated him? You made more fun of him than anyone.

MAISON
I still make fun of Trevor, though.

SHEENA
But it looked like he was so pathetically desperate for attention. Or to be different, or something.

MAISON
That's just 'cause they did that lame story about it in the school paper.

SHEENA
And then he had to make a big announcement about it when he came back a month later.

MAISON
That's the thing though, I'm not doing it for attention. I just want to try and not live my life through a screen. I want, like, some kind of actual interaction. A real person, not just the profile they put up.

Sheena's looking at her phone.

SHEENA
Oh, I'm sorry. Were you saying something?

She laughs.
MAISON
Yeah, okay, I know you're joking, but, I mean, it's kinda true you have been, you know, checking your phone this whole time, and so what are you really doing? You don't care what your friends are up to on Saturday afternoon but you're also obviously not fully experiencing my profound bitching so... it's like everyone's just stuck in, like, an in-between state. Not really experiencing anything.

SHEENA
It's not an experience, it's just information. Look, for example, I just got the address of the club where we're meeting them later, so we won't be wandering the streets of Austin lost for an hour tonight. Thank you very much, Facebook. And I just texted my mom back.

MAISON
Oh, that's -- that's groundbreaking. She hasn't seen you in, like, 55 minutes?

SHEENA
Oh! Oh my god, most importantly, Meg's family just got a miniature pet pig.

Sheena hands him the phone.

MAISON
(looks at phone photo)
Hm!
(Laughs)
Okay, you're right. That is a --

SHEENA
Right?

MAISON
That is a really cute, tiny pig. Our lives can go on.

SHEENA
I want one.
INT. POOL HALL

Gotye's "Somebody That I Used To Know" plays. Patrons chatter. Mason plays pool with Samantha's BOYFRIEND. Samantha and Sheena sit and talk.

BOYFRIEND
Nice shot.

Samantha
Yeah, just give the lady at the front y'all's I.D.s and, uh, she should let you in.

Sheena
I see. Cool.

Samantha
Yeah.

Sheena
It's room 2-0-6, right?

Samantha
Mm-hm.

Sheena
Awesome. It's not like weird that we're staying there?

Samantha
No, it's fine. Have fun.
(Laughs)

Sheena (O.S.)
Thank you. So how long have you guys been dating?

Samantha
About three months. Yeah, we met at a party and it's been, ya know, chill.

Sheena
Yeah, he seems cool.

Samantha
Yeah. He is.

The guys are shooting pool.

Sheena (O.S.)
Does he go to UT too?

Samantha (O.S.)
Yeah.
SHEENA
Cool. What is he studying?

SAMANTHA
He's studying history and uh, Italian, I think?

The girls laugh.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
His minor, yeah.

SHEENA
Does he wanna... does he wanna teach?

SAMANTHA
I don't know, I think, I think he's still figuring stuff out. Yeah, he'll figure it out, he's smart, he's smart. So where are you thinking about living when you come here?

SHEENA
Um, I'm not really sure yet. We're gonna look at apartments tomorrow, um, but I know my parents sorta were expecting me to live in a dorm.

SAMANTHA
Yeah.

SHEENA
Yeah. But I mean, I'm paying my way through college, so it doesn't really matter that much.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, you don't have to listen to your parents after you turn eighteen. I mean, especially if they're not helping you financially.

They laugh.

SHEENA
That's what I figured.

SAMANTHA
But I mean, living in a dorm isn't so bad.

SHEENA
Yeah.
SAMANTHA
I mean especially if it's a coed dorm. I mean, I've never been around like, so many cute guys at once. Like, college is really fun.

They laugh.

SHEENA
I'm excited.

SAMANTHA
It's great, yeah.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT
The sidewalk is populated with college students. The teens walk together in couples and pass a street musician and a woman hula-hooping.

BOYFRIEND
Watch out.

SAMANTHA
Oh!

They laugh.

INT. CONTINENTAL CLUB - NIGHT
A four man band plays as our guys watch from the audience.

MUSICIANS
(singing)
"On the day that I was born I started growin' old. No one told you life would be so lonesome and cold. I had a grey hair by the age of 23, this hard-luck livin's gonna be the end of me. The old black crow leaving tracks all across my face, and everywhere I go I seem to be in the same damn place. Hard livin's gonna be the end of me."

EXT. CONTINENTAL CLUB - NIGHT
Sheena and Mason wander out of the club and walk up the street.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT
Sheena and Mason are seated at a table at a late-night diner, full of a variety of people.
The last death at the Hoover Dam construction site was his son, Patrick Tierny, who died on December 20th, 1935, exactly thirteen years to the day.

Sheena notices a table of sorority girls and practically whispers to Mason.

**SHEENA**
See those sorority girls over there? I've just decided, if you delete your Facebook page, I'm pledging.

**MASON**
Yeah, in just a few years that's you (Indicates Girls) And that's gonna be me.

He subtly indicates the Man Alone guy, still sitting at his booth, giving a lecture of some kind, with data, etc.

**MAN ALONE IN BOOTH**
...Also inlaid into the terrazzo floors was a star map, a celestial map of heavenly bodies so accurately displayed that one could chart the procession of the Pole Star fourteen thousand years into the future, such that future generations upon...

(Continuing Indistinct Under)

**SHEENA (O.S.)**
I wonder what his deal is. I mean, he obviously has money to eat here.

**MASON (O.S.)**
He just said. He's a UT professor, tenure and everything.

**SHEENA**
Look at all these people. What are they even doing here at 3:00 in the morning?

**MASON**
What are WE even doing here at 3:00 in the morning?

**SHEENA**
We know what we're doing here.

She dips a chip into a bowl of queso.
SHEENA (CONT'D)
Queso. We have a purpose.

MASON
Hell yeah.

SHEENA
HELL yeah.

MASON
You know, by, like, next summer this'll just be our lives.

SHEENA
Mm-hm.

MASON
Stayin' out all night and goin' to shows... whatever we want.

SHEENA
We ever gonna go to class?

MASON
Sometimes.

SHEENA
When it feels right. When the inspiration hits.

MASON
Only then.

A WAITRESS comes by their table.

WAITRESS
Anything else?

SHEENA
Uhhh... more queso?

MASON
(nodding)
Yeah.

WAITRESS
Mm-hm.

She leaves, and Mason just takes it all in.

MASON
Ah, Jesus.

SHEENA
What?
MASON
I don't know, doesn't it all seem a little overwhelming? I mean, college? I mean, I like the idea of being away from home and gaining skills and getting better at photography. I just, I don't know, I'm not counting on it being some big transformative experience.

SHEENA
I don't think it's that transformative. I just see it as the next step.

MASON
But it's like a pre-ordained slot that's already got your name and number on it. I don't think it's the key to my future. Cause, like, I mean, look at my mom. She got her degree, and got a pretty good job, she can pay her bills...

SHEENA
Well, I like your mom.

MASON
Well, I like my mom, too. I just mean, basically, she's still just as fucking confused as I am.

Waitress drops off more queso.

SHEENA
(to Waitress)
Thank you.

MASON
Thanks.

Mason and Sheena dip chips into the bowl of queso.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Mason and Sheena walk on the sidewalk.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - SUNRISE

Mason and Sheena walk across a parking garage rooftop.

They watch the sunrise. Mason stands behind her and wraps his arms around her. She turns to him and they kiss.
INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Mason and Sheena lie in bed under the sheets. Sam's roommate comes in.

ROOMMATE
Hello?

MASON
Hey. Um, did uh, did Sam tell you we were gonna stay here?

ROOMMATE
(laughs)
Uh -- no.

MASON
(laughs)
Sorry. Um, she uh, she said you were out of town for the weekend.

ROOMMATE
Yeah, I was. I just got back. Are you her... brother?

MASON
Yeah, I'm, I'm Mason.

Awkward laugh.

ROOMMATE
Right.

MASON
Um, this is Sheena.

ROOMMATE
Hello. Uh, great. Alright. I'm... gonna leave my stuff here, if it's okay, and get something to eat and...

MASON
Okay.

ROOMMATE
... I'll just come back in a little bit...

MASON
Yeah, yeah we have to, we have to get outta here soon anyway, so...

ROOMMATE
Alright. It's nice meeting you.
She turns to go.

MASON
Yeah. You, too.

SHEENA
(under sheet)
Sorry!

The roommate exits. Sheena and Mason hide under the sheets.

MASON
That was so awkward.

INT. SCHOOL PHOTO EXHIBIT - DAY

There is an exhibit of various art works set up. Mason enters and walks over to a series of photographs he took of Sheena. He starts to take them down. One of the school's teachers comes over.

TEACHER
Mason... silver medal winner. Congratulations!

MASON
Thank you.

TEACHER
Heard you got a scholarship.

MASON
Yeah. Yeah, every little bit helps, you know.

TEACHER
Yeah. When you gonna go out there?

MASON
End of the summer I think. You know, work some more before then, try to save up some money, at least.

TEACHER
Yeah, before you have to fend for yourself.

MASON
Yeah, yeah, that's the idea.

TEACHER
Yeah. Well how're feeling about it?
MASON
Excited, you know. But kind of half-excited, half-terrified.

TEACHER
Yeah, kind of that voluptuous panic.

MASON
Yeah. Exactly.

TEACHER
Well, it's gonna be good. It's gonna be crazy good. I liked college a lot better than high school. You kinda find your people in college, you know?

MASON
Exactly.

TEACHER
Well you'll be fine, you've got a good heart. Just follow your heart, yeah?

MASON
Thanks.

TEACHER
Good luck. Don't forget to floss.

Mason's phone dings. He takes it out.

Cell phone text message graphic:
Mason - Can't, I'll just see you tomorrow. Sheena - What's your deal? Meet me at the tree.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY
Sheena and Mason are sitting on bleachers outside the school, under a tree overlooking a practice field. They are in mid-argument.

SHEENA
I just don't get why you're being so fucking childish.

MASON
I'm not being childish. You're the one who made it into this big thing by telling everyone.

SHEENA
I haven't told anyone.
MASON
So Cynthia just magically knows you're going to the prom with this loser even though you're not dating him anymore?

SHEENA
She's my best friend.

MASON
Well, your best friend has a big fucking mouth.

SHEENA
Take it up with her, then.

MASON
Why don't you just tell Miss Fuckin' Rubber Jaws she can keep on talking as long as she includes the truth, which is that we wouldn't be having this conversation if your college boyfriend weren't out of town this weekend.

SHEENA
You had already bought the tickets. It's just prom, it's not like it matters. I'm just tryin' to be friends with you.

MASON
Now it's just humiliating. I can't... I can't do that.

SHEENA
Mister I-Don't-Care-What-Anyone-Else-Thinks-Of-Me.

MASON
Fuck anyone else. I care what I think of me. Which isn't much right now. King of the Pity Prom.

SHEENA
Fine. We're not going.

MASON
Great.

A long pause.
SHEENA
Why are we even... I mean, we both knew this was coming. I'm just the one who did something about it.

MASON
Yeah, fucking some college guy...

SHEENA
Oh, fuck you!
(a beat)
I don't regret anything.

MASON
(Bitter Laugh)
Of course you don't.

SHEENA
You know, it's actually kind of a relief not to have to be around someone who's so gloomy all the time. The world's not so horrible. Not everything's some big conspiracy against humanity.

MASON (O.S.)
It's great that you can think that way. And you know, I'm sure dating a jock really helps to clear the mind.

SHEENA
He's not a jock, okay? He just happens to be on the lacrosse team. We're all going to other schools next year anyway, it's not some super serious relationship.

MASON
Great. I feel so much better now.

SHEENA
We're just having fun.

MASON
I bet he's having fun.

SHEENA
Grow up, Mason.

MASON
It's not like I haven't been with anyone else.
SHEENA
Who?

MASSON
What do you care?

SHEENA
Who?

MASSON
Does it matter?

SHEENA
You're the one who brought it up.

A pause.

SHEENA (CONT'D)
This is pointless.

She gets up and starts to walk away.

SHEENA (CONT'D)
Now you're just trying to be an asshole.

EXT./INT. NICK'S CAR

Nick drives Mason home from graduation.

NICK
Holy Crap, I would rather have my balls clawed off than ever sit through anything like that ever again!

MASSON
Well, we never, ever have to.

NICK
Oh my god, thank you.

MASSON
Gimme that.

Nick hands him a flask.

NICK
Dude, it's all you. Drink up. So you coming out with me tonight, brother? Should be some pretty awesome stuff happening.
Naw, dude, I'm goin' to this like, show with my dad in Austin. His friend's playing.

Gosh, have fun with that, I guess.

Nick pulls into Mason's driveway and parks.

Fuck, there's so many cars here. I don't wanna go in there.

Dude, you will have so much fun. Your family loves you. You'll have a swell time.

Fuck you. You're coming in with me.

Oh, no. Shit no. No.

Yes! Yes, you are. My mom loves you. You have to say hi.

Just --

Do you want to hurt her feelings?

Mm-mm.

(Shakes head slightly)

Well then, let's go get 'em.

Just for a second. Just a second, seriously.

Nick "tests" his breath in his hand. They get out of the car.

Family and friends chit chat throughout the house. Mom prepares snacks, while Dad and Annie talk with UNCLE STEVE.
UNCLE STEVE
You know you're in sort of in enemy territory here.

DAD
(laughing)
We're aware.

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS
Cake graphic: "Congratulations Mason!"

Olivia and Carol prep food. Nick and Mason come in the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

DAD
Uh, look who's here!

ALL
(cheer, applause)
...Whoooo!

MOM
Hey!

She hugs Mason.

UNCLE STEVE
Get a job!

Mason takes off his graduation cap.

MOM
No-no-no-no, wait. We're gonna take pictures. Put it back on.
(To Carol)
Hey, can you get a camera?
(To Nick)
Hey Nick!

Grandma comes over and hugs Mason.

GRANDMA
Oh! Back on. Oh... Congratulations, baby.
(to Nick)
I don't know you, but congratulations!

She hugs him too.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Oh, pictures, pictures, Carol.
MOM (O.S.)
Quick, put your hat on.

CAROL
Alright, look here...

They pose and Carol takes the picture with a phone.

MOM
Smile.

CAROL
Here we go. Oh, that's a good one. And... good! Got it.

GRANDMA (O.S.)
Oh, we need -- Sam, where are you? Samantha!

MOM
Sam!

GRANDMA
And where's Mason senior? I'm feeling generous.
   (to Dad)
   Come here.

Another picture is taken.

CAROL
Great. And... beautiful! I'll email these to everyone.

Uncle Steve stands up and points his finger at Dad.

DAD
   (to Uncle Steve)
   No, don't even start, don't start, don't start.

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

The guests help themselves to the array of dishes and appetizers on the table. Buffet style. Mason drifts into a conversation with Carol and her daughter Abbey.

MASON
Can't believe you guys came all this way. It means a lot to me.

CAROL
We wouldn't have missed it for anything! I'm so proud of you.
   (MORE)
CAROL (CONT'D)
Congratulations. I'm really sorry that Lee couldn't be here. He's on his Senior Trip.

MASON
No, no. Tell him I said hi.

CAROL
I will.

SAMANTHA
Abby, I didn't even recognize you. How old are you now?

ABBY
I'm thirteen.

SAMANTHA
Wow.

Mason's boss, Mr. Wood, enters.

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Across the room, Professor Douglas has her ever-present wine glass.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
(Pouring wine)
Alright, let's top her off. You want some, doll?

WOMAN AT PARTY
Um... Sure, whatever. Yeah, totally.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Yeah, sure why not.

MR. WOOD
(To Mason)
I got you something.

MASON
What is it?

MR. WOOD
That is a savings bond. That is worth something. It's better than money - you'd just spend that.

MASON
Yeah.
MR. WOOD
God - is that your mom?

MAISON
Yeah, yeah. That's her.

MR. WOOD
Wow.

One of the little cousins drops fruit.

UNCLE STEVE
It'll be -- three second rule. Put it on your plate.

WOMAN AT PARTY
(laughing)
Such a good dad. Really.

UNCLE STEVE
I know, I'm trying to help.

MOM (O.S.)
Come here, you guys. I want to make a little toast to Mason.

She holds up her glass of wine.

GUESTS
(reacting)
Whoo! Yeah! Alright!

MOM
Now Mason, I know you really didn't want to have a party today but... we did.

Laughter.

MOM (CONT'D)
And you only graduate high school once in your life... So I want to celebrate you and this next phase. And you're going to learn so much in college. You're going to have so much fun. You're going to have inspiring teachers. You're going to learn more about your art. I love you babe. I'm so proud of you... To Mason.

ALL
To Mason!

(MORE)
ALL (CONT'D)
(indistinguishable chatter)
Hear! Hear!

UNCLE STEVE
(to Dad)
Alright, you're up, kid.

DAD
Oh, uh... Alright, uh, well... Mason, I'll make a toast to the future. To your future. You know, it's been a little sketchy this... end of the school year here, trying to figure out what school to go to. Mason told me that, uh, he wanted... to get as far away from home as possible. But still honor our agreement that we pay in-state tuition, which I do appreciate. He's a prudent man, and uh, he's going to have a great future. So, here's to you buddy.

GUESTS
(reacting)
Whoo! Future!

DAD
Congratulations.

UNCLE STEVE
Mason Junior! High school graduate, eighteen and straight! Ha-ha-ha!

Dad subtly puts his hand over his brother's mouth and pats his chest.

DAD
Alright, that's enough. Just ignore him. My brother needs to learn to pace himself.

MR. WOOD
Well, I've not known you as long as everybody here, but uh, since I have known you, you've grown a lot. And uh, I don't know, I'm proud of you. So if this photography thing doesn't work out, you know you always got a job. Lose that earring. But, uh, you know, maybe I can get you in front of house. Alright, to you buddy!
MOM
Sam, say something!

DAD (O.S.)
Come on, Samantha.

GRANDMA
Come on, darlin'.

SAMANTHA
(hesitating)
Good luck?

Mom and Mason embrace. A little later, Professor Douglas has Mason cornered.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
So you broke up with your girlfriend?

MASON
Yeah, yeah, just recently.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
What was her name?

MASON
Sheena.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Sheena. She's... gonna go to college with you?

MASON
No.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
No, oh.

MASON
She's staying in this part of Texas.

PROFESSOR DOUGLAS
Oh, okay. You need a ride to college?

INT. LIVING ROOM - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Dad and Annie talk to Grandma.

GRANDMA
I just wanted to say hello before you got out of here. I haven't gotten a chance --
DAD
You guys met before, haven't you?
Annie, Catherine...

ANNIE
Yeah, yeah, we met at uh--

GRANDMA
Sam's graduation.

DAD
Oh yeah.

ANNIE
Yes, that's right.

GRANDMA
And with your little one. Where is he?

ANNIE
Oh, he's at home.

DAD
Yeah, yeah. Remember, he was such a pain at Sam's thing that, you know...

GRANDMA
Oh, I would love to see him.

ANNIE
Well, we have a special weekend this weekend, so...

GRANDMA
I'm so glad you found her. I really am.

(to Annie)
You, you've got him at a good time, I think.

ANNIE
I think so, too.

GRANDMA
Yeah. It's good to see you two.

DAD
Nice to see you, too, Catherine.

GRANDMA
I'm so proud of your boy.

DAD
Yeah, yeah we all are.
Grandma walks off. Dad whispers to Annie.

DAD (CONT'D)
If you think she's a bitch now, you should have seen her fucking twenty years ago.

They laugh.

INT. DEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS

Later, Uncle Steve, Dad, and Mason have a manly discussion.

UNCLE STEVE
You got to remember, you're going to college, though, alright? And if you're anything like me or your old man, you're gonna be pulling down some serious wool. You're gonna be tapping some masterful gap.

DAD
Steven...

UNCLE STEVE
You're gonna be doing some good work out there. Think about it, awful lot of flowers in that bouquet. But, you gotta do me a favor. You're going to be vulnerable this summer, alright. Remember to use protection during breakup sex.

He puts his hand on Dad.

UNCLE STEVE (CONT'D)
This guy knows exactly of which I speak. Look what happened to him. Viola'.

Uncle Steve gestures to Mason.

DAD
Steven...

UNCLE STEVE (laughing)
Cheers.

DAD
It's not that simple.
UNCLE STEVE  
(chanting)  
Four more years. Four more years.  
I'm just saying.  

INT. KITCHEN - GRADUATION PARTY - CONTINUOUS  

Later Dad enters the kitchen where Mom happens to be.  

DAD  
Do y'all recycle? Should I --  

MOM  
I have one started there.  

DAD  
Oh, yeah, right. Okay, great. Okay. Am I, uh, am I your only ex at this party?  

MOM  
Yes, but I'm not your only wife here, though.  

DAD  
Yeah.  

MOM  
Can you believe they're both out of high school?  

DAD  
No. No, I can't.  
(a beat)  
You did a great job with both of them, by the way.  

MOM  
Thanks for saying that. I never thought I'd hear you say that.  

DAD  
Well, it's true. Thank you.  

MOM  
And you're doing it all over again, huh?  

DAD  
I know, I know, right? It's gonna be uh, fifteen years till I have an empty nest. But hey, I'd love to pitch in, help with this, if I could.  
(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
I mean, it's so great that you did this. I was just going to give you a little. I'd appreciate it if I could.

He pulls out his wallet.

MOM
Sure. Yeah.

DAD
Yeah. But I don't have any cash. It's in Annie's purse. I'll be right back.

INT. ANTONE'S - EVENING

Mason and Dad are wandering through the green room area while the band is doing a sound check.

DAD
...So it sucks. I mean, the guy's a college lacrosse player. I mean, what are you gonna do?

MASON
She didn't even like sports.

An iced-down bucket of drinks beckons.

DAD
You want a beer?

MASON
No, that's alright.

DAD
You can have one.

MASON
It's okay.

They continue their conversation out of the green room to a little area overlooking the stage.

DAD
Yeah, well, for what it's worth, we've all been through the exact same thing, at one point or another.

MASON
It's not the same, though. I mean, you never got to know her.
DAD
No, I know, I know. It's not the same.

MAISON
I just don't know what I did wrong.

At this point Dad yells down to Jimmy, his roommate from years before, briefly interrupting the sound check.

DAD
Hey, Jimmy. Hey, man. Hey --

JIMMY
Hey, Mason.

DAD
We're up here raiding the green room. Hope that's okay.

JIMMY
That's totally cool.

DAD
Alright.

JIMMY
Wow! Is that M.J.?

DAD
Uh-huh. Right?

JIMMY
Unbelievable.

DAD
Well, we just decided to come a little early, check you out.

JIMMY
That's cool man, let me finish up, I'll be up in a minute.

DAD
Alright, alright.

He and Mason slowly start to drift around the venue.

DAD (CONT'D)
(back to Mason)
I guarantee you, you didn't do anything wrong. These high school love things, they never work out. Here, come here.

(MORE)
DAD (CONT'D)
I mean, everyone's just changing so much. The odds of two young people staying on the same wavelength are...

MASON
Yeah, but still --

DAD
Look, and I also guarantee you that every day of your life that you spend crying over some silly girl is a complete waste of time.

MASON
She wasn't a silly girl, though. I mean, she's a serious person. I really thought we were --

DAD
What?

MASON
I don't know.

DAD
Here's the truth. Women are never satisfied. Ok? They're always looking to potentially trade up and that's, I'm sorry to say, what I think has happened to you my fine feathered friend.

MASON
What does that even mean?

DAD
It means don't hand over the controls to your self-esteem to Sheila.

MASON
Sheena.

DAD
Alright. It means you are responsible for you, not your girlfriend, not your mom, not me. You. And if you truly take care of you, you will be amazed at how much girls like Sheena start lining up at your front door.

MASON
Great.
DAD
Yeah, you know, you just gotta separate yourself from the pack in some way. Excel at something, you know, and then you have your pick of the litter when them front-running hussies start sniffing around.

MASON
So what you're saying is, I should take up lacrosse.

DAD
Exactly. Or you could, you know, start a band. Worked for me a long time ago. I think it's still working for Jimmy. Or you just keep taking pictures.

MASON
She hated the pictures I took of her.

DAD
Alright. I'm sick to death of her, okay? I only met her a few times and yes she was cute, alright. But, truth be told I always thought she was a little bit, you know, a little bit too square for you. Y'know, not quite the same vibe.

MASON
You really thought that?

DAD
On some subtle, lower level. I mean, uh, I wasn't surprised when it turned out she was interested in some knucklehead lacrosse player, okay? I mean, bottom line is, it's all timing with these things. Y'know. I mean, uh, take your mom and me. Y'know I think I probably turned into the boring castrated guy she wanted me to be fifteen or twenty years ago, y'know? And man I'm not saying she was wrong to be pissed. I'm not, I'm just saying that, y'know, she could have been a little more patient... a little more forgiving.

MASON
Would've saved me that parade of drunken assholes.
Dad gestures zipping his lip, saying nothing.

MASON (CONT'D)
So what's the point?

DAD
Of what?

MASON
I don't know, any of this. Everything.

DAD
Everything? What's the point? I mean I sure as shit don't know. I mean, but, neither does anybody else. Okay, we're all just winging it, you know? I mean the good news is you're feeling stuff. You know? And you got to hold onto that. You do. I mean you get older and you don't feel as much. You're skin gets tougher. The point is those pictures you took. Thousands of submissions from all over the state and you won.

MASON
Well, I got silver. And nine other people did, too.

DAD
I'm gonna kill you. I'm tryin' to tell you that I believe in you, Mason. I think you're really special, and if some girl doesn't see that, then fuck her, y'know?

Jimmy's at the mic.

JIMMY (O.S.)
Hey, this next one goes out to a young man in the house --

DAD
Woo-oho!

JIMMY
Known him since he was just a small boy, now he's all graduated from high school, making me feel old. Happy high school graduation, Mason.

He plays his guitar, and the band kicks in... sounding pretty great.
INT. CAFE - DAY

Mom, Mason and Samantha sit down at a table. A waitress places menus.

MOM
Thank you. Okay guys, let's be clear. I'm going to break this into four categories. One. Anything you wanna keep from your childhood and your taking with you. Two. Throwing away. Three. Donating. Four. Whatever you wanna try to sell at the garage sell next weekend, whatever we don't sell, we're donating.

MASON
Doesn't the apartment have like an attic, or storage or something?

MOM
No. You're missing the point. We're not going to drag a bunch of crap to mom's tiny apartment.

SAMANTHA
Can't believe we're moving again.

MOM
No, I'm moving! You moved two years ago. You have an apartment in Austin. Mason is moving the fall. I'm done. This will be great for me. I'll have all these options. I could take a sabbatical. I could get some writing done and try to get published.

MASON
What about Christmas, though? What are we gonna do?

SAMANTHA
I'm not sharing a room with him.

MOM
One of you will sleep on the couch, and we'll use that blow-up mattress.

SAMANTHA
How am I supposed to do my laundry?

MOM
Sam, I'm gently pushing you out of the nest.

(MORE)
MOM (CONT'D)
And on your way down you may magically
find some quarters that you use to
do laundry in your own apartment.
Come on! You guys are adults. You
need to take some responsibility!
And what do you want?

Mom puts her glasses on.

MASON
I'm gonna get the veggie burger.

SAMANTHA
I'm not having anything, not hungry.

Mom takes her glasses off.

MOM
What's wrong with you?

SAMANTHA
I'm sick.

MOM
What is it, your head? Do you have
a fever?

MASON
She's pregnant.

SAMANTHA
(weak laugh)
No. To be honest, I drank way too
much last night.

MOM
You weren't driving, were you?

SAMANTHA
No. No. Carrie's back home, too,
and we just hung out. You know,
peach Smirnoffs, they just go down
so easy.

MOM
No, no. Hey - that's not an excuse.
You can still pack boxes. These
people want to move in as soon as
possible.

The assistant restaurant manager, who'll we'll come to know
as ERNESTO, approaches the table.
ERNESTO
Hi guys. I'm Ernesto, how are you?
(to Mom)
Uh, you probably don't remember me, but I worked on your septic line years ago.

MOM
Oh, yeah.

ERNESTO
Believe it or not, you changed my life. Yeah, you told me that day that I was smart and that I should go to school. I took your advice! I signed up for English classes and then a year later I went to community college and I got my associates degree. And I'm working on my bachelors now at Texas State. And I'm also one of the managers here.

MOM
That's great.

ERNESTO
Uh, it's good to see you. Because I really wanted a chance to thank you for that. Gracias. It really meant a lot to me. Don't worry about lunch. It's on me. It's the least I can do.

MOM
Thanks.

ERNESTO
You guys should listen to her. She's a smart lady.

MOM
Thank you.

Ernesto walks back toward the kitchen, leaving the three seated at the table.

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Mason, now with a scruffy beard, is wedging a duffel bag and bin into the bed of his truck. He walks back toward Mom's new apartment.
INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Mason is packing a box, in mid-conversation with Mom, who is seated in another room.

MASON
...Isn't that kind of crazy though, that a computer knows who you are from just twenty questions off a form? I guess there are really only like eight types of people in the world.

Mom goes to the kitchen and pours coffee into a mug.

MASON (CONT'D)
I mean there are subsets, like male and female, but apparently we're not as unique as we want to think we are.

MOM
Have you even talked to this guy yet?

MASON
No, but we've been trading emails. He seems pretty cool. He's studying literature, and uh, anthropology, and he's way into Bright Eyes... so that's not so bad. But anyways, he was telling me about how the system they use for assigning roommates is kind of spooky. Like, the Freshmen satisfaction rate for new roommates used to be like 60%, and now it's 100%. Just cause of the computer.

MOM
Well. Sounds like he'll be a good roommate, then.

MASON
Yeah. But we've pretty much decided that soon they won't even need a questionnaire. Because they'll just let the NSA scan your digital ghost, and they'll tell you who your roommate is, based on everything you've ever said, written, or clicked.

Mason walks back into the living room, carrying a box. He holds up a framed picture.
MASON (CONT'D)
Did you -- Did you put this in here again?

Mom laughs.

MASON (CONT'D)
I don't want it.

MOM
Come on, it's the first picture you ever took.

MASON
Well, I mean, all the more reason to leave it behind, right?

Mason goes to put the picture back in his room, while Mom suddenly breaks into quiet sobs.

He comes back out, wearing a backpack, and notices Mom crying.

MASON (CONT'D)
What?

MOM
(crying)
Nothing.

MASON
No, what is it?

MOM
Nothing!

MASON
Mom...

MOM
This is the worst day of my life.

MASON
What are you talking about?

MOM
I knew this day was coming. I just -- I didn't know you were gonna be so fuckin' happy to be leaving.

MASON
I mean, it's not that I'm that happy. What do you, what do you expect?
MOM
You know what I'm realizing? My life is just gonna go, like that! This series of milestones. Getting married, having kids, getting divorced, the time that we thought you were dyslexic, when I taught you how to ride a bike, getting divorced AGAIN, getting my masters degree, finally getting the job I wanted, sending Samantha off to college, sending YOU off the college... You know what's next? Huh? It's my fuckin' funeral!

A beat.

MOM (CONT'D)
Just go, and leave my picture!

Stunned, Mason doesn't know what to say.

MASON
Aren't you jumping ahead by like, forty years or something?

MOM
I just thought there would be more.

Mom sits at the table crying. Mason does not know how to comfort her.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Mason drives his pick-up truck through the open roads and mountains of West Texas.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Mason stops at a gas station to fill up. While he waits, he takes pictures.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Mason pulls into the parking lot of his University and parks.

INT. DORM - AFTERNOON

Mason walks through a hallway area and finds his dorm room. He enters to find it half decorated with music going. He throws his bag up on the available bed and starts to unpack and get situated. DALTON enters.

DALTON
Hey, you must be Mason.
MASON
Yeah. Dalton, right?

DALTON
Yeah, man, it's nice to finally meet you.

MASON
Definitely.

DALTON
Are you cool with this side of the room?

MASON
Yeah.

DALTON
Got in this morning, just moved my shit in, man.

MASON
(laughs)
Well, yeah. I don't- I don't care. No worries.

He unzips his bag, but keeps the conversation going.

DALTON
Cool. Can I help with anything, man? Any bags? Any last stuff you need brought in?

MASON
I just got like one... box left, I packed pretty light. But I appreciate it.

DALTON
My pleasure, man. Of course.

MASON
Um, are you goin' to the orientation mixer thing?

DALTON
Orientation mixer thing? Fuck no, man! I'm not goin' to that and neither are you, by the way. We got way better stuff to be doin', dude.

BARB, Dalton's girlfriend, drifts into the room.

BARB
You ready?
Yeah. Hey, Barb, this' my roommate Mason. Mason, Barb.

They shake.

Hi.

Hey. You comin' with us?

Where're you going?

Hiking.

Yeah, man, you should come. If we leave now we can catch the late afternoon at Big Bend. You ever been before, man?

Yeah. But not since I was really little.

Oh, well then all the more reason to come now, man. That's why we're here, dude.

Barb's roommate, NICOLE, is now hanging out by the door.

Oh, Mason. This is Nicole, Barb's roommate.

Hey, what's up?

Hi.

Barb is reaching in her bag for something.

Mason, Nicole.

(to Mason)

So, you game?
MASON
Sure.

She has produced a chunk of brownie that she hands to Mason.

BARB
Here. Have the rest of this. Got it timed perfectly. It'll kick in when we get to the mountains.

Mason takes it, a little amused, looks at the others (confirmation), then starts to consume.

MASON
Awesome.

DALTON (O.S.)
Let's go.

They roll out of there.

EXT. BIG BEND – LATE AFTERNOON

Mason, Nicole, Dalton and Barb hike through a BIG canyon. Nicole talks to Mason about teaching dance.

MASON
Do they let you major in that here?

NICOLE
Well, it's not that serious here, so I kinda like train outside the university, but I'm taking all my basics like History of Dance and all that.

MASON
Nice.

NICOLE
Yeah.

MASON
What do you teach?

NICOLE
Oh, gosh. Ballet, tap, jazz, lyrical, hip-hop...

MASON
Wow. Which one's your favorite?

NICOLE
Tap.
MASON

Yeah?

NICOLE

Yeah. You can make up all your own sounds and there's no rules.

MASON

Right...

NICOLE

Just, like, creative freedom.

MASON

That's great.

Yeah.

MASON

Right.

NICOLE

... So to be a part of bringing it back to the kids...

MASON

Right, keep it going.

NICOLE

... Is really rewarding. Yeah.

MASON

How old are they?

Six to eight.

MASON

(laughs)

Wow.

NICOLE

(laughing)

Yeah. They have like no fear, and they're not self-conscious at all.

MASON

They haven't reached the awkward years yet.

NICOLE

Yeah, not yet. It's coming.
The group continues walking over a ridge as the sun is setting.

EXT. HIKE - LATER

As Barb and Dalton coyote call on the rocks, Mason joins Nicole sitting on a rock overlooking the river and sunset.

NICOLE
Hey.

Dalton and Barb continue like coyotes, much to Nicole and Mason's amusement.

NICOLE (CONT'D)
Dalton can be crazy sometimes.

MASON
He seems cool, though.

NICOLE
Yeah. Yeah, they're both really cool. How are you feeling?

They both laugh.

MASON
Great. Really great, to be honest.

NICOLE
Good. I'm really happy that you're hangin' out with us.

MASON
Yeah. Me too.

Meanwhile, over on a big rock, the coyotes are now yelling words.

DALTON (O.S.)
This moment's having a multiple orgasm! It's like as if all of time has unfolded before us so we can stand here and look out and scream - Fuck yeah! Wooo!

Back with Nicole and Mason laughing.

NICOLE
You know how everyone's always saying, "Seize the moment"?

Mason nods yes.
NICOLE (CONT'D)
I don't know, I'm kinda thinkin'
it's the other way around. You know,
like, the moment seizes us.

MASON
Yeah. Yeah, I know. It's constant,
the moments, it's just... it's like
always right now, you know?

NICOLE
Yeah.

They trade smiles.

FADE OUT