

**478**

Written by

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*Based on the airline accident that occurred in July of 2002  
and on the events that took place 478 days later.*

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The endless black sky filled with stars. There are no clouds, not a sound.

Only black, stars and deep silence.

Then something that looks like a cloud crosses the sky. But it's not a cloud, rather SMOKE. Smoke riddled with millions of PARTICLES of different sizes.

The black is completely consumed, it's practically gone. Everything has been covered by the smoke, growing denser and denser, and the particles, among which tiny white spheres now appear. They look like...

PEARLS.

TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

"VIKTOR"

OPEN TO:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

VIKTOR (44) walks with the sun in his face, observing a crane at work on a large building under construction. He's wearing a worker's helmet, street clothes and boots.

The activity on the site is animated, there are WORKERS everywhere laboring diligently.

Viktor takes his walkie-talkie off his belt and turns it on, still looking over at the crane.

VIKTOR

Jack, those racks don't go up there.

Viktor's ACCENT is hard to identify, perhaps northern European, like his features.

The crane stops. Viktor's walkie-talkie spits out a voice.

JACK (V.O.)

What do you mean?

VIKTOR

Those go in the parking lot. The ones with blue plastic go up there.

JACK (V.O.)

Okay. Sorry. I didn't realize.

VIKTOR

Don't worry about it.

The crane and Viktor both start moving again. Viktor passes some stairs leading down to what will eventually be the building's parking lot.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

(without stopping)

Those steps need to be secured!

Viktor addresses a WORKER laboring by a cement truck. He's right, the steps are loose, poorly secured. The worker nods and goes to work on them.

Viktor reaches the office located in a metal TRAILER.

INT. SITE OFFICE - DAY

Viktor enters the office, takes off his helmet and sits down at one of the two tables inside.

MATT (55), overweight and nearly bald, is seated at the other table.

MATT

Viktor, have they finished the frame on the sixth floor?

VIKTOR

Yes.

They both keep staring down at the papers and blueprints on their desks.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

They should be done with the frame on the seventh floor in about three hours. We fixed the problem with the spokes in the basement. If we start with the enclosures tomorrow we'll be one day ahead of schedule.

Matt looks at Viktor, still concentrating.

MATT

Go home.

Viktor didn't hear him. He takes notes on some papers. Matt gets up and goes over to him.

MATT (CONT'D)

Viktor, go home.

Viktor finally hears him.

VIKTOR

What? Why?

MATT

Your family's arriving today, right?

Viktor nods, slightly disturbed by the idea.

VIKTOR

(checks his watch)

They fly in late tonight. I have plenty of time.

MATT  
Go on, go home. Get everything  
ready for them. It's a big day.

VIKTOR  
I have some things to finish.

Matt glares at him with authority.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Okay. You're right, it's better to  
go early, in case there's traffic.

Viktor gets up and looks at Matt gratefully.

MATT  
And tomorrow you have the day off.

Viktor shakes his head.

VIKTOR  
Matt, I'm grateful, but I'm not  
going to miss work.

Matt puts his arm around Viktor's shoulder, escorting him to  
the door.

MATT  
How long has it been since you've  
seen them? Welcome them here. Help  
them get settled. Make love to your  
wife. Take your daughter to  
McDonald's. If I see you on this  
site tomorrow, I'll call security!

Viktor chuckles.

VIKTOR  
Thanks.

EXT./INT. VIKTOR'S CAR - DAY

Dusty and dented, Viktor's SUV drives along a city freeway in  
Seattle.

EXT. SUBURB - DAY

Viktor stops outside a small one-story house with an unkempt  
front yard.

He gets out of his SUV and empties the car of wrinkled handkerchiefs, plastic cups and parking tickets.

INT. VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor enters the LIVING ROOM, where we catch a glimpse of some balloons taped to the ceiling.

CUT TO:

In the BATHROOM, Viktor takes a shower, completely covered with lather.

CUT TO:

In the BEDROOM, Viktor puts on a clean shirt. He's pensive, distracted, and he misses one of the buttons.

His eyes wander to a FAMILY PHOTO on the dresser: Viktor posing with his WIFE and DAUGHTER, the three of them seated on a dark sofa. Viktor's face is BLURRED because he moved when the photo was taken.

INT. VIKTOR'S CAR / CAR WASH - NIGHT

Suds cover Viktor's SUV. Streams of water and foam cover the windows.

Inside the vehicle, Viktor busies himself cleaning dirt from one of his fingernails.

INT. ARRIVAL LOUNGE, AIRPORT - NIGHT

Rows of SCREENS accumulate information on arriving flights. Company, flight number, city of origin, estimated time of arrival... Viktor scans through all the data.

CUT TO:

Viktor approaches an AIRPORT EMPLOYEE working behind an information desk.

VIKTOR

Hi. I'm waiting for a flight and it's not showing up on any of the screens.

EMPLOYEE

Do you know the flight number?

VIKTOR

(checks a paper)

AX-112. It's coming from Moscow,  
with a layover in Frankfurt.

SUPERVISOR (O.S.)

AX-112?

Viktor turns and sees the SUPERVISOR (56), a tall woman with  
a worried look on her face.

VIKTOR

(checks the paper again)

Yeah. I don't think I wrote it down  
wrong.

The supervisor nods.

SUPERVISOR

Please come with me.

Viktor hesitates a moment, then accompanies her across the  
spacious terminal.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Can you tell me your name?

VIKTOR

Viktor. Viktor Kozlov.

SUPERVISOR

Can I see your ID?

Viktor hands her his ID.

VIKTOR

My wife and daughter are coming.  
All their papers are in order. I  
hired a lawyer, there can't have  
been any problem.

SUPERVISOR

I'm sure there wasn't.

Her voice doesn't sound very convincing.

VIKTOR

Where are we going?

SUPERVISOR

I'm taking you to a room where  
you'll be informed of everything you  
need to know.

VIKTOR

What happened, did it land early?  
Are they here?

The supervisor swipes her ID through a scanner and a door  
clicks.

SUPERVISOR

This way, please.

INT. WAITING ROOM, AIRPORT - NIGHT

The supervisor and Viktor enter a waiting room with chairs  
lining prefabricated wall panels.

TWO FAMILY MEMBERS are seated inside, one of them speaking on  
the phone. They both look worried.

There are FOUR CLOSED DOORS across from them.

SUPERVISOR

One moment.

The supervisor opens one of the doors and Viktor glimpses a  
small office with a WOMAN speaking to a CORPULENT MAN, both  
looking serious.

The supervisor shuts the door and opens the door next to it:  
it's an office, identical to the last, but empty.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Wait here.

INT. OFFICE, AIRPORT - NIGHT

Viktor enters the office and sits in a chair across from the  
empty desk.

SUPERVISOR

Somebody will be right in to speak  
with you.

The supervisor leaves Viktor alone. The office has nothing to look at: the walls are bare, nothing on the desk. It looks like an interrogation room.

Suddenly he hears A MOAN coming through the wall, probably from the adjacent room, where the corpulent man was sitting. Viktor stares at the empty wall, listening as the moan gets louder and turns into someone CRYING OUT IN PAIN.

The office door suddenly opens and EVE SANDERS (39) walks in with several files under her arm and a friendly look on her face.

EVE  
Viktor Kozlov.

Eve places Viktor's ID on the desk, returning it to him.

VIKTOR  
Where is my family? Was there a  
problem?

Eve sits down and gives Viktor a frank look.

EVE  
My name is Eve Sanders and I'm one  
of the Contact People assigned by  
the Airport Management Office. I  
need you to listen very carefully to  
what I have to say.

The groaning in the next room slowly fades. Eve opens one of the files and checks information. Then she looks up, making herself look Viktor in the eye.

EVE (CONT'D)  
The airplane your wife and daughter  
were traveling in has had a very  
unfortunate accident. There's still  
no official confirmation, but we  
need to keep in mind that with this  
type of accident it's unlikely we'll  
find any survivors.

Viktor doesn't react. He stares at Eve without seeing her.

EVE (CONT'D)  
Mr. Kozlov. I'm very sorry. It's  
the worst news anyone can ever  
receive.

Viktor suddenly rises to his feet.

VIKTOR

Where are Marina and Alisa?

EVE

Mr. Kozlov, I'm terribly sorry that I have to do this. Please understand that it's my job to be completely straight with you.

(pause)

Your wife and daughter's plane has had an accident.

VIKTOR

Where are Marina and Alisa?

A LOUD THUD SHAKES THE WALL.

Stunned, like he's moving in slow motion, Viktor looks at the wall.

THE WALL SHAKES AGAIN POWERFULLY. We hear a SCREAM.

EVE

Mr. Kozlov, it's important that you understand what I'm saying.

But Viktor stares at the wall, WHICH SHAKES AGAIN, this time even more strongly. A crack appears in the panel.

EVE (CONT'D)

Viktor...

CRASH!!! A FINAL BLOW BREAKS THROUGH THE WALL, OPENING A HOLE.

Viktor sees a fist pull away, offering a view of the adjacent office. He sees the corpulent man from before, panting, his eyes filled with rage and blood on his knuckles.

Viktor and the corpulent man make eye contact through the wall.

Then Viktor collapses on the floor.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. INFIRMARY, AIRPORT - NIGHT

Viktor is seated on a bed, staring off into nowhere, holding a small empty plastic cup in his hand. A MALE NURSE takes his blood pressure.

Eve is still with him, she hasn't left his side.

EVE

I'm going to prescribe you some  
sedatives that might help.

VIKTOR

No.

EVE

You're not required to take them.  
Keep them just in case. You might  
not need them right now, but you  
could tomorrow or the next day or  
next month.

Viktor nods indifferently. Eve shows him an open notebook.

EVE (CONT'D)

Are this address and phone number  
correct?

VIKTOR

Yes.

EVE

Are there any other family members  
we should inform?

VIKTOR

No.

EVE

Nobody? Not here or in your country  
of origin?

VIKTOR

No.

Silence. The nurse finishes taking his blood pressure,  
removes the armband and walks out.

Eve speaks again, with understanding and sweetness, trying to  
make her words sound gentler.

EVE

Are you feeling any better?

VIKTOR

Yes.

EVE

The Family Support Center has been  
set up in a hotel nearby.

Eve hands him a sheet of paper with the information.

EVE (CONT'D)

You'll have access to medical and  
psychological treatment and social  
services. That's also where you'll  
be updated on any news that comes  
in. When you're feeling better we  
have vehicles to take you there.

VIKTOR

No.

EVE

If you'd rather be alone, you can do  
that there too.

VIKTOR

No.

EVE

Would you rather go home?

VIKTOR

Yes.

EVE

As you wish. I would recommend you  
go there tomorrow, when you're  
feeling stronger.

(points at the sheet)

You also have my email, cell phone  
and my department's phone number.  
Please don't hesitate to call me if  
you need anything.

Viktor nods.

INT. PARKING LOT, AIRPORT - NIGHT

Viktor walks to his SUV, gleaming under the lights in the parking lot. He stops and looks at it before getting in, so shiny and clean.

INT. VIKTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Viktor enters his home, shuts the door and turns on the lights in the LIVING ROOM: the ceiling is covered with balloons of all colors. There's a sign on the wall that reads "WELCOME" and two small flags, one American and one Russian.

Viktor crosses the room and enters the BEDROOM, which is dark. Without turning on the light, he sits on the edge of the bed, closes his eyes... and tries to disappear.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

TELEVISION FOOTAGE:

A NEWS PROGRAM shows footage of the accident: scattered wreckage spread across a valley and hill.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The two planes collided in the air at over 35,000 feet for reasons that have yet to be clarified. The wreckage of both planes has been scattered across an area spanning several miles along the border of Wyoming and South Dakota.

The images show a destroyed plane engine. The rest of the wreckage consists of thousands of tiny unidentifiable pieces. It looks like a huge disaster area.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Investigators still haven't found the black boxes from either plane. Recovery efforts are focused on finding as many bodies as possible, a particularly difficult task due to the nature of this tragic accident.

INT. LIVING ROOM, VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor stares at the TV screen, seated on the sofa, wearing the same clothes as the day before. He looks like he hasn't slept a wink.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Authorities have confirmed that 116 passengers were on board, including the crew. 75 American citizens. 31 German. Eight Russian. Two Ukrainian. One Spanish.

Viktor doesn't blink, staring at the footage of the accident site, repeated in a loop.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The two airlines involved have released a joint statement regretting the accident and assuring that they are already fully cooperating with investigators in order to clarify what happened.

A cell phone vibrates on the table. Viktor turns down the volume on the TV and answers it.

VIKTOR

Yes?

EVE (V.O.)

Mr. Kozlov, it's Eve Sanders. We spoke yesterday.

(silence)

How are you feeling today?

VIKTOR

Fine.

Viktor stares at the TV footage, now silent.

EVE (V.O.)

Have you taken any of the pills I prescribed you?

VIKTOR

No.

EVE (V.O.)  
Were you able to sleep? Have you  
rested at all?

VIKTOR  
Yes.

Viktor continues to stare at the footage on screen, but  
something in his face seems to change slightly.

EVE (V.O.)  
Good. Like I said, I think it might  
help if you come to the Family  
Support Center.

Viktor gets up from the sofa.

EVE (V.O.)  
If it's okay with you, I'll send a  
car to pick you up-

Viktor hangs up without letting her finish. He grabs his car  
keys and leaves the house.

INT. VIKTOR'S CAR - DAWN

Viktor drives, staring straight ahead, with troubling  
determination in his face.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Viktor's SUV advances down a two-lane highway in the middle  
of the night.

INT. VIKTOR'S CAR - DAWN

The sun is rising. Viktor drives across a mountain  
landscape, taking huge bites of a sandwich and drinking from  
a bottle of water.

EXT. PARKING LOT / BASE CAMP, DISASTER AREA - DAY

The car door slams.

Viktor looks around: there's a BASE CAMP set up behind the  
improvised parking lot with two large tents.

Viktor walks towards them, noticing several REPORTERS with cameras approaching the disaster area.

INT. TENT, DISASTER AREA - DAY

UNIFORMS OF ALL KINDS: police, doctors, military personnel, forensic experts, firemen... Everyone is busy working with urgency.

Viktor approaches two fold-out tables with handwritten signs that read: "FAMILY MEMBERS," "VOLUNTEERS" and "INFORMATION." TWO WORKERS help anyone who comes in. One of them is trying to calm THREE FAMILY MEMBERS who look nervous and desperate.

FAMILY MEMBER 1

You can't stop us from going in!

WORKER 1

I'm not stopping you, I'm only asking you to wait with the other family members until your Contact Person gets here. He will help you.

FAMILY MEMBER 1

We want to help with the search!

FAMILY MEMBER 2

(distressed)

What you're doing is cruel.

WORKER 1

It will only be a few minutes. They're in a coordination meeting right now. As soon as he gets out he'll be able to update you and take you to the crash site.

One of the family members bursts into tears. Viktor approaches the other worker.

WORKER 2

Hi. Are you here to help with the search?

VIKTOR

Yes.

WORKER 2

Are you a relative or friend of any  
of the victims?

Viktor looks at the worker in silence.

VIKTOR

No.

WORKER 2

Have you ever been in a similar  
situation? Have you helped with any  
other accidents or worked with  
victims...?

VIKTOR

No.

The worker holds out a piece of paper.

WORKER 2

Okay. Read this carefully. You  
need to be properly informed about  
what you're going to find out there.  
I'll go get your equipment and I'll  
be right back.

The worker leaves the table and Viktor looks at the title on  
the paper: "IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR DISASTER AREA  
VOLUNTEERS." He folds the paper and puts it away.

EXT. DISASTER AREA - DAY

Viktor is wearing a WHITE PLASTIC SUIT, GLOVES AND FACE MASK.  
He's holding a BLACK PLASTIC BAG in his right hand.

He walks through the plane debris, surrounded by devastation:  
there's not a single square foot without pieces of the  
fuselage; smoke is rising from the ground; there are patches  
of anti-incendiary foam; the strong smell of kerosene; the  
air is dirty, hard to breathe.

On the other hand, it's impossible not to appreciate the  
beauty of the landscape surrounding the site, a valley and a  
dirt hill with white granite opening out to a forest and  
taller mountains in the background.

COORDINATOR  
Nobody takes off their gloves or  
mask under any circumstances!

Viktor looks at a FEMALE COORDINATOR giving instructions to  
several VOLUNTEERS searching the area.

COORDINATOR (CONT'D)  
Remember, every single piece of  
debris goes in a bag.

A few yards beyond, Viktor sees the first human remains:  
another VOLUNTEER places an arm in a black bag and walks over  
to one of the TRUCKS parked throughout the area for gathering  
debris.

The second piece of human remains is gathered by Viktor  
himself. Beside a piece of the fuselage where we can see  
windows from the plane, there's a burnt female torso without  
extremities. With difficulty, Viktor puts it in a bag and  
carries it over to the vehicle, where another COORDINATOR  
greet him.

COORDINATOR (CONT'D)  
Good, put it there.

Viktor takes out another empty plastic bag and starts  
searching again.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER, Viktor walks by a SMALL CRANE raising one of  
the plane's engines in the air.

Viktor stops when he sees something on the ground. He picks  
up a SMALL PEARL NECKLACE from the debris. It's broken. His  
eyes turn sad... Something is wrong.

Viktor starts walking again, faster now. His breathing is  
choppy.

VIKTOR  
Marina...

TWO VOLUNTEERS see Viktor walk through the area they're  
searching, with several HUMAN REMAINS. Viktor sees the  
remains, even turning one of the bodies over to see its  
face...

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Alisa...

...but he keeps walking. The volunteers watch him without understanding.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Marina...

CUT TO:

Viktor gets farther and farther away from the base camp, crossing the area where less people are searching. He's breathing faster, his muscles are tense.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Alisa... Marina... Alisa...  
Marina...

EXT. FOREST, DISASTER AREA - DAY

Viktor reaches the forest, with more scattered wreckage. He passes several WORKERS gathering up suitcases and other personal belongings.

VIKTOR

Alisa... Marina... Alisa...  
Marina...

Viktor searches and searches, growing more and more nervous, until in a moment of desperation and fatigue he looks up and...

HE SEES HER.

Caught in the lower branches of a tree, MARINA'S BODY (6) hangs motionless, miraculously intact, covered by a partially ripped white dress.

Viktor takes off his gloves and mask.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Marina.

Viktor approaches the tree, trembling, but with strength enough to free his daughter, lower her from the tree and cradle her in his arms.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Marina.

Viktor gazes at his dead daughter's face, her soft and partially burnt skin...

Then he takes out the broken pearl necklace and puts it around her neck.

He bursts into tears.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
(sobbing)  
Marina...

Viktor collapses to the ground on his knees, weeping in agony, which attracts the attention of the other workers and volunteers, who slowly approach him.

INT. SPORTS FACILITY - NIGHT

A basketball court is covered with BLACK PLASTIC BAGS ordered in several rows. MEDICAL PERSONNEL and other WORKERS are organizing the debris coming in.

Several PEOPLE are seated in the practically empty bleachers, most of them by themselves.

Viktor, no longer wearing the white suit, is seated on the floor of the basketball court to one side, completely silent, next to TWO BLACK PLASTIC BAGS.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

First thing in the morning, a GARDENER seated on a lawnmower cuts the grass on a hill in a large cemetery.

The lawnmower passes between graves, leaving the grass perfect, releasing a fresh green scent.

The gardener spots A BULKY OBJECT behind a large tree. He stops the lawnmower and gets off, annoyed.

The gardener walks over to the bulky object, A MAN LYING IN FETAL POSITION, sleeping in the grass besides two graves.

GARDENER  
Hey. Wake up.

The gardener taps the man's shoulder and he turns, awake.  
It's Viktor, with a thick beard and several pounds lighter.

GARDENER (CONT'D)  
Come on, get out of here. Don't  
make me call the cops again.

Viktor sits up, looking at his family's graves: ALISA KOZLOVA  
and MARINA KOZLOVA.

GARDENER (CONT'D)  
I get in trouble every time you  
spend the night here, don't you get  
it?

Viktor isn't listening. He glances over at the graves,  
saying goodbye, and walks away.

The gardener watches him cross the cemetery, like a vagabond,  
like a ghost.

HOME VIDEO FOOTAGE:

INT. VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor (three years ago) speaks to the camera, smiling.

VIKTOR  
I can say with absolute certainty  
that she's hiding in the living  
room.

Viktor, followed by the unstable handheld camera, enters the  
LIVING ROOM. He raises his voice, obviously so that his  
daughter will hear him.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
I can think of several places where  
Marina could be. One: behind the  
sofa.

Viktor checks behind the sofa: nothing.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Two: behind the curtain.

Viktor checks behind the curtain: nothing.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Three: under the table.

Viktor checks under the table: nothing.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Although where I actually think she  
might be is... by the fish tank.

Viktor moves closer. Through the water he can see MARINA  
hiding behind the fish tank, looking at him, completely  
still.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Maybe I'll ask the fishes if they've  
seen her.

Marina GIGGLES, giving herself away.

Viktor steps around the fish tank and grabs his daughter.

MARINA  
Nooo!!

Marina and Viktor burst into laughter, clinging to each  
other, playing.

DING DONG.

THE VIDEO FREEZES.

INT. LIVING ROOM, VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor is holding the DVD player remote. On screen we see  
the frozen image of his and Marina's faces.

DING DONG.

The doorbell rings again.

Viktor slowly rises to his feet. The carpet has huge stains  
and there are still popped balloons on the floor.

TESSA (O.S.)  
Mr. Kozlov, my name is Tessa  
Corbett. I'm a journalist. I've  
left you several messages over the  
last few months.

Viktor stops before reaching the door.

TESSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
I know you're in there.  
(pause)  
I don't want to bother you.  
(pause)  
I only came because I'd like to  
share some of my articles with you.

Silence. A couple of NEWSPAPERS slide under the door.

TESSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Like I said in the messages I left,  
I'm writing a book about the  
accident and I'd like to ask you a  
few questions. I'll leave you some  
of my articles that have been  
published. You'll see that I'm  
trying to be faithful and respectful  
to the facts.

Silence.

TESSA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Take a look if you get a chance.  
I'll come back to see what you  
think.

We hear footsteps walk away and disappear.

INT. LIVING ROOM, VIKTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The crunching of newspaper pages is the only sound in the  
living room.

Seated at the table, Viktor turns the pages until he finds an  
article about the accident signed by "TESSA CORBETT." It's  
an article written about Viktor himself. There's a PHOTO of  
Viktor smiling, posing with his work helmet with the logo of  
the company he works for.

Tense, Viktor scans the text of the article, where he reads  
this sentence: "AS MIRACULOUS AS IT MAY SOUND, KOZLOV ALSO  
FOUND A PEARL NECKLACE HE HAD GIVEN HIS DAUGHTER ON HER  
BIRTHDAY."

DING-DONG.

The doorbell startles him.

DING-DONG.

MATT (O.S.)

Viktor?

Viktor gets up when he hears Matt's voice and opens the door. Matt is standing there holding a large TUPPERWARE container, looking friendly.

MATT (CONT'D)

You haven't answered my calls for days so I thought I'd stop by.

VIKTOR

Wait.

Viktor goes outside.

EXT. VIKTOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Viktor shuts the door behind him. He looks at Matt timidly.

VIKTOR

The house isn't presentable.

MATT

You haven't seen mine.

Viktor smiles slightly.

MATT (CONT'D)

My wife made meatballs and she insisted I bring you some.

VIKTOR

Thanks.

Viktor sits on the steps at the door. He opens the tupperware and looks inside. Matt sits beside him.

MATT

She makes them with mushrooms. They're awesome.

VIKTOR

I bet.

The neighborhood is dark and quiet. There's nobody in sight. We only hear a cat meow in the distance.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
How is work going?

MATT  
Same old. Everything goes a little slower without you there.

Viktor nods.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Hey, I don't mean anything by that.  
Come back whenever you want.

Viktor stares down at the meatballs.

MATT (CONT'D)  
How are you? Are you feeling any better?

VIKTOR  
No. Fine. Better, better. I'm trying to get organized, tying up loose ends around here.

MATT  
Sure.

VIKTOR  
I have to go back to work, but I need a little time to settle back in.

MATT  
There's no hurry, Viktor.

Viktor takes a meatball with his fingers and puts it in his mouth. Matt watches, surprised. Viktor chews, his lips and fingers stained by the brown sauce.

MATT (CONT'D)  
They're not as good cold...

VIKTOR  
I need to spend less time at the cemetery, you know? I go there and before I realize I haven't got time for anything else.

Viktor reaches into the tupperware again and splits a meatball in two. He eats a piece.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

The thing is, Marina and Alisa are there and they can't leave. I'm the one who has to go there and see them. Because they can't go anywhere. It makes sense. But on the other hand...

(loses track of what he was saying for a moment)

On the other hand, I have to do stuff around here and clean up.

Viktor wipes the sauce on his fingers on his pants.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

In fact, there are things I should be doing right now.

Matt reacts quickly, rising to his feet.

MATT

Of course. I'll leave you to it.

Viktor gets up, holding the tupperware.

MATT (CONT'D)

I might have a barbecue at home this weekend. You have to come, okay? I'll pick you up and drag you there if I have to.

VIKTOR

Of course.

MATT

Take care, Viktor.

VIKTOR

Yeah.

Matt pats him on the back, saying goodbye.

MATT

I'll call you.

Matt gets in his car and drives away. Viktor is about to go inside, but he realizes he left the cover of the tupperware on the steps.

He picks it up and closes the container as Matt's car disappears down the street.

Right when Viktor's about to turn and go back in the house, he spots SOMEONE in the shadows.

Viktor stops, surprised, looking at the silhouette of someone approaching, raising her hand. Her hair is up, her shirt is wrinkled and she looks young and ambitious. TESSA CORBETT (28) greets Viktor.

TESSA  
I'm Tessa Corbett. I left you some  
newspapers under the door this  
morning.

Viktor looks at her, completely still, with a neutral look on his face. Tessa approaches the steps.

TESSA (CONT'D)  
I don't mean to disturb you, but I'd  
like to speak to you whenever you  
have a moment.

Viktor clutches the tupperware with both hands, reaches back and... hits Tessa with it as hard as he can.

Tessa wobbles and steps back onto the unkempt grass. Viktor charges her and hits her with the tupperware again. The container opens and the contents fly out all over the front yard.

Tessa turns and steps away several yards, terrified.

She looks at him, panting, frightened, without understanding.

TESSA (CONT'D)  
(shaking her head)  
What are you doing?

Then Tessa disappears into the darkness.

Viktor is left on his knees in the grass, stained with sauce and meatballs. He chokes back tears rising up from his stomach.

EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

Fresh flowers on Marina's and Alisa's graves.

Viktor wipes away dried flowers. He still looks like a total mess. His gaze is still distant.

EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING

Viktor walks down a quiet street in an area that looks more industrial than residential.

He reaches a six-story building under construction. The front is covered by SCAFFOLDING.

Using his professional experience, he slips between the bars of the scaffolding and starts climbing up the steel structure with skill.

EXT. SCAFFOLDING - EVENING

Viktor climbs up with firm steps, quickly gaining altitude.

He quickly reaches THE HIGHEST POINT ON THE SCAFFOLDING. He has a good partial view of the city from there, the buildings already lit up.

He slides his body through the railing, stepping out into the open air, clinging tightly to the bars. The wind messes up his hair.

He takes one last breath, closes his eyes and... opens his hands, letting himself fall.

Viktor's body falls too close to the scaffolding and unfortunately one of his legs hits a bar. His body crashes into the railing, flips in the air and a split second later hits the ground with a thud.

Silence.

With the right side of his face on the pavement, Viktor keeps his eyes open. His breathing is broken and tired.

TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (V.O.)  
 "If death weren't a prelude to  
 another life, then this present life  
 would be a cruel joke."

OPEN TO:

EXT. DISASTER AREA - DAY

Standing at a small PODIUM positioned near the beginning of the forest, a MASTER OF CEREMONIES addresses a group of more than FIFTY PEOPLE.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES  
 That other life which the greatly  
 admired thinker and politician  
 Mahatma Gandhi spoke of, that  
 feeling which tells us that our  
 loved ones are somewhere else,  
 somewhere better, is the feeling  
 that must prevail on a day like  
 today.

The landscape has changed considerably: nature has covered the signs of the crash, all the debris is gone and the spot is dominated by TWENTY GRAY SPHERES MADE OF POLISHED CEMENT, about six feet in diameter, spread across the location, connected by a ROPE.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (CONT'D)  
 One year ago we were struck by a  
 tragic event. Many lives were lost  
 unjustly, incomprehensibly and  
 unexpectedly. But today the spirits  
 of the people we lost are somewhere  
 else, watching us.

We spot Eve Sanders among the people listening.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (CONT'D)  
 And they can see that on a day like  
 today we remember them and pay  
 tribute to them.

The corpulent man Viktor saw in the airport is also there.

## MASTER OF CEREMONIES (CONT'D)

And to keep this memory alive, to  
keep it ingrained inside of us, and  
in this place, today we inaugurate  
this monument, this Memorial to the  
Victims.

Everyone applauds as the master of ceremonies turns towards  
the monument of large spheres.

Among those in attendance clapping the hardest, we see  
Viktor.

He looks like a new man, in many ways: his hair is short,  
he's clean-shaven, dressed appropriately and has a SCAR on  
the right side of his face by his temple.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER, the crowd has scattered around the area.  
Several people, including Eve, are reading the COMMEMORATIVE  
PLAQUE explaining the monument. Many others walk among the  
spheres, either alone or in small groups.

Viktor walks by himself over to one of the spheres and  
touches it with his hand. Then he looks over at the forest a  
few yards away, towards the spot where he found his daughter  
Marina's body.

The corpulent man approaches him, looking friendly.

ANDREW

Viktor Kozlov.

Viktor nods.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I'm Andrew Berg.

They shake hands. ANDREW (50) is tall and wide. Everything  
about him is heavy, even his voice.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I lost my wife and my in-laws in the  
accident.

VIKTOR

I'm very sorry.

Andrew nods gratefully. The two men walk slowly among the spheres.

ANDREW

I read the story in the paper about your daughter's necklace. It's nice they used it as inspiration for the monument.

Viktor nods.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Do you like it?

VIKTOR

Yes.

Silence. Andrew stops and touches one of the spheres.

ANDREW

What do you...

Andrew stops himself. It looks like he needs to get something off his chest. Viktor looks at him curiously.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I... I don't know what to do.

Viktor listens without understanding.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I get up in the morning and... I don't know what to do.

(pause)

It's not that I don't know what to do for the whole day, it's that I don't know what to do for the next hour, the next minute...

Viktor nods as Andrew vents.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Sorry I'm being so honest...

VIKTOR

No, go ahead.

ANDREW

Sometimes I think of things that  
will distract me, to try to think  
about something else, but I  
immediately forget and decide not to  
do them. I sit there at home, not  
knowing what to do.

(to himself)

And that can't be good.

VIKTOR

It won't be easy, but sooner or  
later you'll find something that  
will help you get out of bed.

Andrew listens to these words and his eyes light up.

ANDREW

You think so?

VIKTOR

I know it.

ANDREW

(his voice cracking)

That's what I need, damn it.

VIKTOR

Be patient. You'll get through it,  
you'll see.

ANDREW

(his voice cracking)

Have you gotten through it?

VIKTOR

(doubting)

Yes.

Andrew can't take it anymore and he breaks down, weeping.

ANDREW

(sobbing)

I haven't gotten through it.

Andrew wants Viktor to hug him. Viktor tries his best to  
console him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

I haven't gotten through it.

Andrew cries on Viktor's chest. Viktor stares at the cement sphere.

EXT. HOUSE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Viktor, wearing a WORK SUIT, places some pink-colored wood planks across the front of a house in his neighborhood. He's surrounded by tools and concentrated on his work.

The front door of the house opens and his NEIGHBOR (67) comes out with two cans of beer.

NEIGHBOR  
How's it going?

Viktor doesn't stop working.

VIKTOR  
Fine.

NEIGHBOR  
Come on, it's time for a break.

VIKTOR  
That's okay. I want to try to finish this side today.

NEIGHBOR  
(holding up the two cans)  
I already opened them.

Viktor smiles and stops what he was doing. He goes over to his neighbor and takes the beer.

VIKTOR  
Thanks.

The two men drink. The neighbor takes out an envelope.

NEIGHBOR  
This week's pay.

Viktor takes an envelope gratefully.

VIKTOR  
Thanks.

His neighbor looks at the front of the house.

NEIGHBOR  
You're doing a great job.

They drink.

NEIGHBOR (CONT'D)  
If I liked the color my wife picked,  
it would be amazing.

EXT. VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor parks outside his house, gets out of his car, locks it and walks towards the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM, VIKTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

Viktor enters the living room, now more cleaned up, turns on the TV to a news channel and disappears into the bedroom.

WEATHERMAN (V.O.)  
We had plenty of sunshine today and  
we will tomorrow and the day after  
as well. Atmospheric conditions  
will remain stable and temperatures  
will increase slightly.

We see PAPERS gathered on the living room table, organized in piles of similar height.

Viktor comes back in the living room without his work suit, wearing underwear, holding a bottle of water. He sits on the sofa across from the TV.

WEATHERMAN (V.O.)  
But next week the situation will  
change. A low pressure front will  
be moving in from the west and will  
stay with us for a few days.

We get a closer look at the papers on the table and see that they're NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE CLIPPINGS AND SOME PIECES OF PAPER WITH HANDWRITTEN NOTES ON THEM.

What catches our eye is that everything we see, the clippings on top of each pile, mention the AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER involved in the accident. His PHOTO AND NAME appear highlighted on several of the documents:

"PAUL BONANOS."

WEATHERMAN (V.O.)  
Temperatures will drop and there  
will be scattered showers across the  
state.

INT. LAWYERS' OFFICE - DAY

A spacious conference room with a long, old wooden table  
occupying most of the room.

Viktor is seated on one end, alone and quiet. There's a  
large shelf filled with legal textbooks behind him. A ficus  
languishes in a corner. We hear cars in the street.

The door opens and TWO LAWYERS and a REPRESENTATIVE from the  
air traffic control company walk in.

REPRESENTATIVE  
Mr. Kozlov.

Viktor greets him with his eyes without getting up.

REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)  
I don't think you know the lawyers  
representing the airlines, John and  
James Gullick.

The two lawyers, JAMES GULLICK (44) and his brother JOHN  
GULLICK (47) shake hands with Viktor. The three men sit  
down, opening briefcases and files, spreading documents on  
the table.

REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)  
Did anyone offer you something to  
drink?

VIKTOR  
I'm okay, thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE  
Sorry to keep you waiting, the  
meetings with the victims' families  
have been carrying over these days.

VIKTOR  
That's okay.

REPRESENTATIVE

Allow me to say that most of them have been very fruitful. Agreements are being reached. And that's why we're here today: to reach an agreement.

The representative looks at some papers.

REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

Mr. Kozlov, you're the only family member who has chosen to sue the company by himself, without a lawyer and without signing up with any of the victims' associations.

(pause)

I'd like you to know that you have our complete respect and that to us it makes no difference. Our proposal will be exactly the same.

Viktor nods.

REPRESENTATIVE (CONT'D)

James.

James slides several sheets of paper stapled together across the table and they stop in front of Viktor.

JAMES

Mr. Kozlov, this is the framework agreement we're proposing to the families.

Viktor inspects the contract.

JAMES (CONT'D)

It's a friendly agreement between you and the air traffic control company in which you withdraw all claims and lawsuits against the company. In exchange, the company will take care of your family's funeral expenses and any medical or psychological treatment that have been necessary to date. As well as any that may be necessary in the future.

(pause)

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

The company also agrees to pay you damages in the amount of 75,000 dollars for your daughter's death and 85,000 dollars for your wife's. 160,000 dollars in total.

James and the representative await a reaction from Viktor, but it never comes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

There are also minor clauses in the contract, for example, you will automatically receive Premium Client status from the airlines within our group and will be able to benefit from those and other advantages, but these are details you should read carefully because they're clearly explained in the contract.

The lawyers and the representative wait for Viktor to answer. Viktor nonchalantly takes out his wallet and retrieves A PHOTO, which he unfolds: it's the photo he had on his night stand in which he appears with Marina and Alisa, seated on a dark sofa, his face blurred.

VIKTOR

Do you have children, James?

James shakes his head, surprised by the question.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

(to John)

Do you?

John shakes his head. Viktor looks at the representative.

REPRESENTATIVE

Two.

(pause)

Five and eleven years old.

Viktor nods.

VIKTOR

One million dollars.

The representative listens impassively. James whispers something into John's ear.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
If you want to reach an agreement  
with me, put a million dollars on  
the table...  
    (looks at the  
        representative)  
...and the bodies of your wife and  
two children.

The three men look at him, stunned. Viktor gets up.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
They don't have to be dead.

Viktor walks to the door and exits the room.

EXT. HOUSE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Viktor finishes placing the last two wood planks on the front  
of the house.

Once the last one is in place, he stares up at the finished  
house, a job well done.

RING.

Viktor takes out his cell phone and answers it.

VIKTOR  
Yes?

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)  
I found him.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Viktor waits at the back of the diner, seated at a table by  
the window. Lights from cars passing flash outside.

Suddenly he feels a SHARP PAIN in his temple, causing him to  
touch his scar.

Right then Tessa, the journalist he assaulted outside his  
house, crosses the diner and sits across from him.

VIKTOR  
Hi.

TESSA

He lives in Detroit. He works at a travel agency four blocks from his house.

Viktor's eyes light up slightly. Tessa stops. She thinks a moment, hesitating.

VIKTOR

Well? Have you got his address?

TESSA

I don't know if...

VIKTOR

What's wrong?

TESSA

I'd like you to use this information in the correct way.

VIKTOR

There is no correct way or incorrect way. It's not that simple.

Tessa doubts before speaking.

TESSA

I don't think revenge is ever the answer.

Viktor looks at her gravely.

VIKTOR

This isn't revenge.

(pause)

It's punishment.

Those words increase Tessa's doubt. After a silence...

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

I just want to look him in the eye. Show him the photo of my family. I want him to apologize.

Tessa shakes her head. She takes a breath. Finally she tells him:

TESSA  
Apartment 774. 1403 Orleans Street,  
Detroit.

Viktor grabs a napkin and takes out a small pencil he had in his pocket with his coins. He writes down the address.

TESSA (CONT'D)  
Pat Dealbert.

Viktor looks at her.

TESSA (CONT'D)  
His name is Pat Dealbert now.

Beside the address, Viktor writes: PAUL BONANOS / PAT DEALBERT.

Tessa gets up, about to leave.

VIKTOR  
Where are you going?

Viktor takes out an ENVELOPE and slides it across the table to her. Tessa looks at Viktor one last time. She can't wait to get out of there.

TESSA  
Goodbye.

Without taking the envelope, Tessa leaves the diner.

Viktor observes the napkin with the name and address. The pain in his temple is gone.

EXT. HIGHWAY, DETROIT - DAY

Viktor's car drives along the left lane of a congested highway, reaching the city limits.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET, DETROIT - DAY

Viktor parks his car on a small, discreet street, full of trees.

He gets out, opens the trunk and takes a KNIFE with a black handle and a six-inch blade from the gap by the spare tire. He hides it in his clothes and shuts the trunk.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Standing outside the front door of an apartment building, Viktor checks the address on the napkin. "1403." The number matches.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Viktor enters the building, which has a reception desk on the left. We see a bucket and a mop and we hear a MAN WHISTLING.

Viktor senses that the janitor is about to appear, so he avoids him by nimbly walking towards the stairs.

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Viktor walks slowly down the silent corridor and stops outside apartment "774."

His apartment.

Viktor's face can hardly contain the tension.

He dries his hands on his jacket.

HE RINGS THE BELL.

RING!

TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

"PAUL"

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING

PAUL (41) and CHRISTINA (39) make love on wrinkled sheets. They move with intimacy, closeness.

INT. BEDROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING

LATER, Paul opens the bedroom door and walks quietly over to the small bed where SAMUEL (5) is fast asleep, wearing airplane pajamas, hugging a STUFFED GOAT.

Paul sits at the foot of the bed and gazes at his son, lit only by the light shining in from the hallway.

We hear the sound of a faucet turning off. Seconds later, Christina appears in the hallway and peeks in. She walks over to Paul, looking affectionate.

The two of them gaze at Samuel and at the flattened goat under his arm.

PAUL  
(whispers)  
When I was a kid, I couldn't sleep  
without my little stuffed dog.

Christina smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
His name was Ismael.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
Ismael? That's a weird name for a  
dog.

PAUL  
(whispers)  
Yeah, I don't know.  
(pause)  
When we took trips I always had to  
take him with me or I wouldn't be  
able to sleep. My mom said I would  
cry my eyes out if we forgot him.  
And I didn't grow out of it until  
much later.

CHRISTINA  
(whisper)  
How much later?

PAUL  
(whispers)  
I don't know.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
Until you were thirty. Until you  
met me.

Paul smiles. Christina gives him a kiss.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
You always say that you can't sleep  
without me.

PAUL  
(whispers)  
That's true.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
I don't know what to think now. Is  
that all I am to you? Ismael's  
substitute?

PAUL  
(whispers)  
Being Ismael's substitute is a huge  
honor.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
Did you have sex with Ismael too?

Paul chuckles and gets up.

PAUL  
(whispers)  
I'm late.

Christina follows him to the door.

CHRISTINA

(whispers)

If you didn't have to work, I'd make  
you sleep on the sofa tonight.

PAUL

(whispers)

No way.

They leave the room.

CHRISTINA

(whispers)

On the sofa with no stuffed animals.

Paul shuts the door.

EXT. PARKING LOT AND ENTRANCE, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER -  
NIGHT

Paul parks his car in a parking lot with plenty of open  
spaces. He gets out and walks to a SECURITY DOOR, then  
slides his card through the scanner.

There's a small sign by the door:

"AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - SIOUX FALLS - SOUTH DAKOTA."

INT. CONTROL ROOM, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

Paul crosses the room with a cup of coffee and sits down at  
his desk.

There are three other work stations, but only one is  
occupied. THOMAS (35) is the other controller working  
tonight.

THOMAS

Two sips and you'll be rushing to  
the bathroom. Remember who warned  
you.

PAUL

I'll remember you while I'm in the  
bathroom, if that's what you want.

Paul goes back to his routine, watching a large BLACK SCREEN  
where we see each airplane marked with a dot, the flight  
number and its altitude.

There's a panel on his desk where he has LONG MARKERS that also represent each flight.

It looks like there's little traffic at this hour. Everything is quiet. Thomas gets up and walks by Paul, touching his shoulder.

THOMAS

I'm going to grab a snack. I landed the last one and there's nothing on deck.

PAUL

Okay.

Thomas nonchalantly walks out as Paul handles what little air traffic crosses the airspace managed in this room.

He drinks coffee while watching the screen. Everything looks under control.

TECHNICIAN (O.S.)

Good evening.

Paul turns towards TWO TECHNICIANS who have just entered the room. They're wearing work uniforms and carrying tool boxes.

PAUL

Good evening.

The two technicians start working on a control panel filled with wires on one of the walls.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)

(with a Russian accent)

Radar SD. Good evening. This is AX-112 bound for Seattle, requesting permission to climb to 36,000 feet.

Paul checks the screen and sees that flight AX-112 is flying at 26,000 feet.

PAUL

Roger, AX-112. Wait for confirmation on that climb.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)

Copy that.

The two technicians go over to Paul.

TECHNICIAN

We're doing some maintenance on the telephone lines. We're going to put them on "security mode." They should work fine, though the signal is weak sometimes. It'll just be five or six minutes.

PAUL

Okay.

The technicians leave the room as Paul speaks to another plane on screen.

PAUL (CONT'D)

NA-1979, descend to 30,000 feet.  
Thank you.

Right then a COWORKER enters the room and goes over to Paul with a MARKER.

COWORKER

Thomas stepped out?

PAUL

(nods)  
What's up?

COWORKER

An unexpected flight landing in  
Sioux Falls. EF-135.

Paul takes the marker.

PAUL

Thanks.

Paul wheels his seat over to Thomas' work station. He places the marker on the desk and studies the panel where the EF-135 appears.

He picks up the phone.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Sioux Falls Airport.

On the line: BEEPING. The phone doesn't work.

Paul checks the clock and goes back to his work station.

Paul looks at his screen again and contacts the Russian flight.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
AX-112. Permission to climb to  
36,000 feet confirmed.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)  
Copy that, thank you.

Paul goes back to the other station and tries to call the airport: BEEPING. He tries again, with no luck.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)  
(on the other radio)  
AX-112 at 36,000 feet.

Paul goes back to his station where the Russian pilot is trying to talk to him.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)  
AX-112 at 36,000 feet.

PAUL  
Copy that.

Paul goes back to Thomas' station without realizing that A NEW PLANE HAS APPEARED ON HIS SCREEN: DH-616. It's flying at 36,000 feet.

BEEPING. The telephone still isn't working, so Paul turns on the radio to speak directly to the plane preparing to land.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Airbus EF-135. This is Radar SD.

EF-135 PILOT (V.O.)  
EF-135. Good evening.

PAUL  
I'm having problems with the phone lines and I can't get in touch with Sioux Falls.

On screen at Paul's work station, without him realizing, flights AX-112 and DH-616 are both flying at 36,000 feet and they're slowly getting closer to each other.

We hear radio static:

DH-616 PILOT (V.O.)  
 DH-616. Good evening. We're  
 getting a warning from our Traffic  
 Collision Avoidance System telling  
 us to descend. I repeat: the TCAS  
 is telling us to descend.

But Paul is still talking to the Airbus at the other work station.

PAUL  
 Contact them directly. I repeat:  
 contact the airport directly.

EF-135 PILOT (V.O.)  
 Affirmative.

DH-616 PILOT (V.O.)  
 (on the other radio)  
 This is DH-616. Do you copy?

Paul wheels his chair back over to his screen. He quickly checks it and finally realizes that flights DH-616 and AX-112 are heading straight for each other, both flying at 36,000 feet.

Holding back his surprise, he quickly turns on the radio.

PAUL  
 AX-112. Descend to 30,000 feet.  
 Descend to 30,000 feet.

Paul sees the two planes on screen getting closer and closer to each other. We hear static on the radio at the other station but Paul can't take the call.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
 AX-112?

His right hand moves a pen frantically.

AX-112 PILOT (V.O.)  
 Descending.

Paul watches both planes on screen, at the same altitude, until flight AX-112 drops to 35,000 feet.

Paul sighs, relieved, and turns to the other station without realizing that flight DH-616 has also dropped to 35,000 feet and without hearing the pilot's brief message:

DH-616 PILOT (V.O.)  
Descending.

ON SCREEN the two dots get closer and closer to each other... until they finally touch.

A STRANGE SILENCE...

...broken by the radio at the other station, where Paul is sitting.

EF-135 PILOT (V.O.)  
EF-135. We talked to the airport.  
Everything's in order. Runway  
confirmed.

PAUL  
Copy that. Thanks.

Paul goes back to his work station and checks the screen.  
FLIGHT DH-616 HAS DISAPPEARED and flight AX-112 appears at  
26,000 feet.

Surprised, Paul turns on the radio.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
AX-112?  
(silence)  
AX-112?  
(silence)  
AX-112?

ON SCREEN the white dot and the data from AX-112 suddenly becomes a RED DOT.

Paul turns white.

He checks the screen, frozen. Without realizing, his right hand starts shaking wildly.

INT. CORRIDOR, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

Paul walks behind a CLERK (40) down a long, silent corridor.

Paul stares blankly at the back of the man's head as they reach the end of the corridor.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - NIGHT

The clerk opens the door for Paul, who enters a conference room where two men are waiting for him, both standing. One is his coworker, Thomas, and the other is ROBERT (60), the Chief of Operations.

ROBERT

Paul.

Paul doesn't answer. He can barely look him in the eye.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Let's sit down.

Thomas squeezes Paul's shoulder as he passes by him on his way to sit down.

The clerk leaves and the three men sit down at one end of the long conference table.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Paul, I need you to tell me every detail of what happened tonight in the control room.

PAUL

What happened?

ROBERT

It's still too soon. We don't have all the information yet.

Paul finally looks his superior in the eye.

PAUL

Robert, what happened?

Robert takes in air.

ROBERT

There was an accident.

PAUL

What kind of accident.

ROBERT

We still don't know.

Paul's eyes fill with tears.

PAUL  
How many dead?

ROBERT  
We don't have official figures. We  
aren't even exactly sure what  
happened. That's why we need your  
help.

PAUL  
How many dead?!

Robert looks at Thomas.

ROBERT  
We think the two planes collided in  
the air at high altitude.  
Apparently there's wreckage from  
both planes in a valley several  
miles west of Hot Springs. Near the  
18.

Silence.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
It's unlikely anybody survived.

Paul bursts into tears.

PAUL  
(sobbing)  
How many people were on those  
planes?

Thomas goes over to Paul and hugs him. Paul breaks down  
completely.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(nearly inaudible)  
How many people...?

INT. OFFICE, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - DAWN

A printer spits out several RECENTLY PRINTED SHEETS OF PAPER.

The clerk waits until they all come out. He gathers them and  
walks to the door. He opens it.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - DAWN

The clerk hands the papers to Robert.

ROBERT

Thank you.

Paul is sitting at the table, more composed but exhausted. Thomas is still there with him, as well as the lawyer, James Gullick, who has joined the meeting.

The clerk leaves the room.

JAMES

Your statement during the first few hours is very important. There are details you might forget later.

Paul nods.

ROBERT

Let's go over it all again. Step by step. All right?

Paul nods. Robert picks up a pen and starts going over the printout.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

You arrived at the control room at 22:05. You sat at your station. At approximately 22:20 you stepped out for a cup of coffee. You came back five minutes later.

INT. CORRIDOR, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - DAY

Paul walks down the corridor, this time following Thomas and James. The corridor is just as lonely and silent as before.

ROBERT (V.O.)

At 22:25 Thomas told you he was going to take a break and he left his station. At 22:30 flight AX-112 requested permission to climb to 36,000 feet.

INT. LOBBY, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - DAY

James, Thomas and Paul meet with TWO POLICE OFFICERS.

James speaks to the two officers and gives them both controllers IDs.

ROBERT

At 22:33 two technicians entered the control room to do some maintenance work on the phone lines. At 22:38, approximately, you were informed of an unexpected plane landing in Sioux Falls.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Paul is riding in the back of the vehicle, staring out the window at the cars driving in the other direction.

His telephone vibrates, an incoming call from "CHRISTINA." He doesn't answer it.

ROBERT (V.O.)

You went to Thomas' station to process the other plane. You called Sioux Falls, but the phone line wasn't working.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Tired and stunned, Paul speaks to one of the officers, accompanied by James, the lawyer.

ROBERT (V.O.)

You went back to your station and gave flight AX-112 permission to climb.

CUT TO:

When he's finished, Paul gets up and walks out, where he crosses paths with Thomas. The two friends look at each other in silence.

ROBERT (V.O.)

You tried to call the airport again, but the phone still wasn't working.

INT. WAITING ROOM, POLICE STATION - DAY

Paul waits in a chair, thinking. He's holding his phone in his hands. On screen we see: "12 MISSED CALLS" from Christina.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Meanwhile, flight AX-112 confirms its new altitude. At 22:45 you contact the Airbus waiting to land and tell it to communicate directly with the airport.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

Paul is riding back in the police car.

ROBERT (V.O.)

That's when you first spot flight DH-616 on the monitor. At 22:47, approximately.

EXT. PARKING LOT AND ENTRANCE, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - EVENING

Paul is standing by his car, completely still, staring off into nowhere.

ROBERT (V.O.)

You realize the two planes are headed straight for each other and flying at the same altitude. You tell flight AX-112... to... descend...

JAMES (O.S.)

Paul.

Paul doesn't react. James touches his shoulder, trying to get his attention.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Paul.

Paul finally reacts. He looks at James curiously.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't talk to anyone, okay? Don't answer the phone, don't leave the house, don't go anywhere. We'll talk again tomorrow.

Paul nods.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Is that clear?

PAUL

Yes.

James touches his arm, trying to encourage him.

JAMES

Be strong.

Paul nods. James walks away, leaving him alone.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul parks his car by the curb because Christina's car is blocking the garage. There's a LIGHT on in the living room window.

Paul slowly gets out of his car and crosses the front yard, where we see a few of Samuel's toys lying on the ground. He reaches the door.

FROM OUTSIDE, THROUGH THE LIVING ROOM WINDOW, we see Christina before the television, seated too close to the screen: the news are showing footage from the crash site with information about the accident inserted below on screen.

When she hears the door, Christina quickly turns off the TV and turns, rising to her feet. She looks like she's been crying.

We observe the scene from outside. Paul appears in the living room, not knowing what to say. Christina nervously asks him something we can't hear. Paul nods. She goes over and hugs him.

Paul and Christina stand there embracing each other for a few seconds, completely still.

She looks outside, towards the window, imagining what is yet to come.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. CORRIDOR AND LIVING ROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - DAWN

Soft morning light streams into the empty CORRIDOR of the house.

A bedroom door opens and Samuel appears, looking asleep, wobbling.

We hear what sounds like the television in the background.

Samuel takes little steps to the LIVING ROOM. He finds the TELEVISION ON, but the room is empty and the lights are off.

REPORTER (V.O.)

After analyzing all the information from the black boxes, testimony from the people involved, evidence found on-site and all the other data made available to the press, we can arrive at some conclusions.

Samuel watches TV for a moment, but obviously finds none of it very interesting. He looks for the remote to change the channel but he can't find it.

REPORTER (V.O.)

It will probably be frustrating to look for one person to blame, because what happened that fateful day was much more complicated than that.

Samuel checks between the sofa cushions, the coffee table, on the floor...

REPORTER (V.O.)

There are relevant factors that played a crucial role in what happened and we're going to analyze them carefully.

Then Samuel freezes. He senses something. A presence?

His eyes turn to the corner of the dark living room...

...and find Paul standing there.

SAMUEL  
(uneasy)  
Daddy?

PAUL  
Samuel.

SAMUEL  
What are you doing there?

PAUL  
I'm watching TV. I can't sleep.

SAMUEL  
Can I put on cartoons?

PAUL  
You can't sleep either?

SAMUEL  
I'm not sleepy.  
(pause)  
I'm hungry.

PAUL  
Let's have breakfast.

Paul steps out of the corner and pats Samuel on the head.  
Samuel follows him into the OPEN KITCHENETTE.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
First: there was only one air  
traffic controller in the control  
room managing the airspace where the  
accident took place, instead of two,  
which is the minimum recommended.

Paul puts a frying pan on the stove and turns on the heat.  
He takes eggs, bacon and sauces out of the refrigerator.

PAUL  
I'm hungry too, you know.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Second: there was maintenance work being done on the telephone lines, which delayed and complicated the work of the controller on duty.

Samuel climbs up on A STOOL AT THE KITCHENETTE COUNTER and watches his father fry bacon on high heat.

PAUL

When you can't sleep, it's better to get up, have a hearty breakfast and get things done.

Paul stares at the frying pan.

REPORTER (V.O.)

The Traffic Collision Avoidance System, known as the TCAS, was working in both airplanes and should have been given priority over any other order. The controller gave the Russian plane an order that contradicted the TCAS and the Russian plane decided to follow that order.

PAUL

After breakfast let's go jogging. What do you say?

SAMUEL

Jogging where?

REPORTER (V.O.)

Who were the people directly involved in the events we have just described?

PAUL

Jogging. We can jog to the park, do some sit-ups and come back.

Samuel doesn't look too excited about the plan. Paul opens one of the two jars of sauce and smells it. He holds it to his son's nose.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Smell.

Samuel smells it. The vinegar and spices make him roll his eyes and crinkle his nose. Paul reads the label on the jar.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Green chiles, vinegar, garlic,  
thyme... Yummy, huh?

Paul pours the sauce in the frying pan.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I love thyme.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
Let's start with the control room.  
Paul Bonanos and Thomas Fichman-

The TV suddenly turns off.

Paul and Samuel turn towards the living room and see Christina, who has just turned off the TV.

CHRISTINA  
PAUL.

Christina glares angrily at Paul.

SAMUEL  
Good morning, Mommy.

CHRISTINA  
Good morning, sweetheart.

Christina enters the kitchenette and gives her son a kiss. Paul takes two plates out of the cupboard.

PAUL  
You hungry?

CHRISTINA  
No.

Paul adds some more sauce to the frying pan and serves the bacon and eggs on two plates.

PAUL  
All set.

He takes the plates to the counter and puts one in front of Samuel. Christina looks at the breakfast he's prepared: the bacon is burnt and the sauce is mixed with the eggs, still practically raw.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Dig in.

Samuel doesn't look very enthusiastic either. Christina takes his plate away and heads for the counter.

SAMUEL

(in a faint voice)

I want cereal.

Paul goes over to her from behind.

PAUL

What's wrong?

Christina inhales, trying to stay calm. Paul grabs the plate to give it back to Samuel.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Why are you taking it away?

CHRISTINA

Let go.

They struggle for a moment, the Christina blows up and slams the plate into the sink. It shatters.

Silence. Samuel looks at his parents, not understanding what's happening. He wants to cry.

PAUL

Christina...

Christina leaves the kitchen without looking at him, holding back tears.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER - DAY

The clerk puts a plastic cup of coffee in front of Paul and exits the conference room, leaving the door open.

Paul stares at the steaming coffee while listening to JAMES AND ROBERT'S VOICES, keeping their voices down, speaking near the open door, outside the room.

JAMES (O.S.)

It will affect us, of course it will affect us. Obviously not as much as the airline, but it will affect us.

Paul looks towards the door: he can see Robert's shoulder and part of James' face.

ROBERT (O.S.)

The airline is screwed. Yesterday I heard they've fired 30 percent of their onboard staff. And the criteria they used was weight.

JAMES (O.S.)

Seriously?

ROBERT (O.S.)

They fired all the fattest people. Every pound you take off a flight is worth half a cent per hour of flight time. They also eliminated the company magazine. And they fill the tanks halfway with water and soap. They'll save 700 grand a year.

JAMES (O.S.)

In any case, those are desperate measures. I don't think they'll weather the storm.

ROBERT (O.S.)

It's a disaster.

JAMES (O.S.)

Let's go.

Robert and James finally enter the room, smiling pleasantly.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Paul.

ROBERT

How are you?

Paul nods.

PAUL

Fine, thank you.

JAMES

If it's okay with you guys, let's get to the point. We don't want to keep you waiting any longer.

PAUL

Sure.

JAMES

There's still no trial date, and it will take a while. But you know the company will give you all the legal coverage you need. So that's all we're thinking about at this point.

ROBERT

We're thinking about you.

(pause)

It's the second time I've offered, but we all agree that you could use some psychological support.

(pause)

I know Christina agrees with us on that one.

PAUL

Right.

Robert looks at James, not convinced. He changes the subject:

ROBERT

As far as work goes, there are several options. You can stay here, doing administrative work.

Paul keeps hanging his head.

PAUL

I don't know.

ROBERT

But we can also try to get you something in one of the companies belonging to the group: travel agencies, hotels, theme parks... In that sense, Paul, you could make a radical change if you want. Not just another job, but another city, another home...

JAMES  
Another life.

Paul listens in silence.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY

The sun shines in through the window. Music is playing on the radio. Christina is driving, Paul is in the passenger seat and Samuel is in the back seat, in a child's seat, smiling from ear to ear.

CHRISTINA  
(looking at Samuel in the  
rear-view mirror)  
We'll have to pick between a lake  
and a mountain.

SAMUEL  
Lake!  
(thinks)  
No, no, mountain!

Christina smiles. You can tell she's trying to make it a happy moment. Paul remains silent.

CHRISTINA  
Are you sure? A picnic by a lake  
can be fun...

SAMUEL  
I know.

CHRISTINA  
But I don't think we'll see deer or  
goats at a lake.

SAMUEL  
Mountain!

CHRISTINA  
It's decided then.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Christina, Paul and Samuel push a cart towards the refrigerated section with PREPARED SANDWICHES.

SAMUEL  
I want ham and cheese.

CHRISTINA  
Let's see what they have.

Christina takes a look at the sandwiches.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
Tuna. Chicken. Potato salad. Ham  
and cheese!

SAMUEL  
That's what I want.

CHRISTINA  
I'll take a... vegetarian. How  
about you, Paul?

Paul looks undecided.

PAUL  
Pick whatever.

CHRISTINA  
Tuna or chicken?

Paul doesn't answer.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
I'll take one of each.  
(to Samuel, whispering)  
A good picnic always has a little  
food left over.

Christina puts the sandwiches in the cart and turns, looking  
for other sections.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
Let's get some drinks and something  
for dessert.

SAMUEL  
I want a chocolate shake.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Paul Bonanos?

A WOMAN (55) looks at Paul. She's wearing a dirty bathrobe  
and it looks like she hasn't slept in a week.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Are you Paul Bonanos?

PAUL  
Yes, I am.

WOMAN  
My husband's name is Edward.  
(pause)  
He meant everything to me.

Her voice quivers.

WOMAN (CONT'D)  
Everything.

Christina takes Samuel's hand, trying to get him away from the scene.

CHRISTINA  
Come on, Paul.

The woman suddenly steps forward and SLAPS Paul, who doesn't flinch.

WOMAN  
You took him away from me.

Christina pulls Samuel away.

CHRISTINA  
Paul!

The woman SLAPS PAUL AGAIN. Paul still doesn't flinch. He's devastated.

PAUL  
(in a faint voice)  
I'm sorry.

Sobbing, the woman walks away, ashamed and hurt, as other CUSTOMERS watch, stunned.

Samuel holds back tears, clinging to his mother.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - EVENING

Christina parks outside the garage door and gets out with a briefcase and her purse. Paul's car is parked by the curb.

Samuel is sitting on the lawn in the front yard coloring in a notebook with COLORED FELT PENS.

CHRISTINA  
(worried)  
Sweetie, what are you doing out here  
by yourself?

SAMUEL  
Coloring.

CHRISTINA  
You know you can't be out here all  
alone. Where's your father?

SAMUEL  
He didn't want to play.

CHRISTINA  
Is he inside?

Samuel nods.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
Come on, honey. You can color  
inside.

Samuel gets up, gathers his pens and walks towards the house.

Christina follows him to the front door, where she stops when she sees something on the door at eye-height:

Someone has scratched a word on the front door: "MURDERER."

Christina stares at the door, unable to breathe. She looks around at the street and goes inside.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

Still with her briefcase and purse, Christina peeks in the bedroom and sees Paul lying on the bed face-down, half-dressed.

INT. LIVING ROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul and Christina are silent, sitting on stools at the KITCHEN counter.

They don't speak. Christina looks like she's waiting for an answer. She looks into Paul's eyes.

Silence.

Finally she decides to speak.

CHRISTINA

I love you very much, Paul.

(pause)

I love you as much as ever. But I think this is the best thing for Samuel. For me. For us. And I think for you too.

PAUL

Where is Samuel right now?

CHRISTINA

At my sister's.

PAUL

And I can't say goodbye to him?

CHRISTINA

You don't have to say goodbye. You can see him whenever you want. You don't have to say goodbye.

PAUL

Did you tell him? What did you say to him?

CHRISTINA

Only that we're going to sleep at his aunt's for a few nights.

(pause)

You know he loves having a dog and cats around.

PAUL

He won't understand.

CHRISTINA

He will eventually. Maybe not right now, but he will some day.

Paul shakes his head.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
We're not breaking up, Paul. I want  
to make that clear to you. We're  
separating temporarily. We're doing  
it so that we can be together again  
and be a family again. We're doing  
it for our son. And for us.

PAUL  
For Samuel.

CHRISTINA  
And for us.

PAUL  
And for us.

Paul nods slightly, but it looks artificial, unnatural.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
(mumbles)  
For us.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

MEN AND WOMEN of all types play slot machines. Many are  
smoking.

Seated at the casino bar, Paul drinks in silence. He's lost  
weight. He looks awful.

The BARTENDER fills his glass.

PAUL  
Thanks.

Then Paul notices that the bartender's neck is bruised and  
excessively swollen, a grotesque deformation. And his left  
eye is bloodshot.

Suddenly the waiter gags. He puts his fingers in his mouth  
and extracts a tiny white pearl, which he immediately drops  
in Paul's drink.

Paul watches the pearl fall to the bottom of his glass.

Behind him, the cigarette smoke mixes with the lights and music from the slot machines, creating an unreal, oppressive atmosphere.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul is seated at the far end of a black leather Chesterfield-style sofa. A PSYCHOLOGIST (60), bald and kind-looking, is sitting across from him.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Today let's try to focus on the positive feelings you've had this week.

PAUL

I'm here for the pills.

PSYCHOLOGIST

On those moments when you feel at ease. Maybe doing things you find satisfying. They may be silly, but they make you feel good.

PAUL

The pills make me feel good.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Think about your daily routine. At home, in your neighborhood, places you go, people you see over the course of the week.

PAUL

I just want the prescription.

PSYCHOLOGIST

A stroll, a TV program, talking to a friend, a meal, a pet...

PAUL

I don't feel good strolling, or eating, or seeing anyone, or talking to you. Give me the fucking pills or I'll rob the pharmacy on the corner.

Silence.

They psychologist's face changes.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Then let me publish my notes on your case.

Paul doesn't understand.

PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

I've been collaborating for years with a medical journal in which I've written about similar cases... But none with this kind of media attention. I'd be very interested in speaking freely about your file. If you give me your authorization, you'll get your fucking pills.

Paul looks at the psychologist, stunned.

INT. LIVING ROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

It feels like the living room is lifeless, on its deathbed. Samuel's toys are all gone and there are no plants or fruit in the fruit bowls. The windows are dirty.

Sunk on the sofa, Paul watches TV, surfing channels with the sound turned off.

A basketball game.

Another basketball game.

A classic movie.

Cartoons.

A news program.

Another news program. An insert below the footage catches Paul's eye: "ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGEDY."

We see footage of the memorial inauguration: the master of ceremonies giving his speech, the crowd filled with emotion, the flowers, Eve Sanders...

And also Viktor...

Paul watches the images of the large cement spheres.

What little left inside of him that wasn't broken is breaking as we speak.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul is sitting on the edge of the bed. He has AN EMPTY BOTTLE OF PILLS in his hand.

On the night stand there's a glass of water and ANOTHER BOTTLE OF PILLS, also empty.

After several seconds, sitting there perfectly still, he looks almost like a photograph, finally Paul leaves the empty bottle on the night stand. He sits there, motionless, seated on the bed.

Little by little Paul's body begins to cower until he finally COLLAPSES on the floor at the foot of the bed.

Lying face-down, with his face resting on the floor, turned towards the bed, HIS EYES OPEN.

He lets himself go.

But then Paul sees something: on the floor, under the bed, one of Samuel's GREEN FELT PENS.

Paul blinks, staring at his son's pen. His eyes fill with tears.

Suddenly he coughs and tries to get up.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

EXT. PAUL'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul parks his car outside a THREE-STORY HOUSE in a clean residential neighborhood with big trees.

He gets out and shuts the door. He looks good. Everything about him is calm and stable.

As Paul walks towards the front door, we see a sign in the back window of his car: "FOR SALE."

MOTHER (V.O.)  
It's a Spanish recipe I learned in  
my cooking workshop.

INT. KITCHEN, PAUL'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

PAUL'S MOTHER (70) is at the stove, wearing an apron,  
stirring something in a metal pot with a wood spoon.

MOTHER  
Garlic soup. It's the second time  
I've made it. It's delicious,  
you'll see.

Paul watches his mother, smiling softly, seated in a chair.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
Later, right before I serve it, I'll  
poach a couple of eggs, one for each  
of us.

His mother takes out the wood spoon, covers the pot and  
lowers the heat.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
It's almost ready.

His mother sits beside him, affectionately taking his hands  
in hers.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
I'm so happy to see you.

Paul nods. His mother gives him a serious look.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
How are you?

Paul inhales. He's about to answer, but she interrupts him.

MOTHER (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry your father isn't here. I  
tried to get him to stay, but...  
You know how difficult all of this  
has been for him.

Paul nods.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

The worst thing is he'll regret this, I know he will because I know him. He'll feel badly tomorrow and he'll ask me about you. But... I just couldn't convince him.

PAUL

That's okay.

MOTHER

He insists almost every day that you should be in jail. And don't think I don't agree. I do. People have to be held responsible for their actions. That's how we raised you and that's what we believe in. A man has to pay for his mistakes, no matter how costly.

Paul lets his mother's words float away. He's heard this speech before.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

But your father doesn't understand that we're not the ones who should decide your punishment.

(shakes her head)

We argue almost every day.

Paul nods.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

But let's not talk about unpleasant things today, okay?

PAUL

Sure.

MOTHER

Today we're going to eat...

(in Spanish)

...sopa de ajo, and after that you can give me a foot massage.

Paul nods, smiling sadly.

INT. BEDROOM, PAUL'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul walks quietly down the CORRIDOR until he reaches a bedroom... HIS BEDROOM.

There are photos of him as a boy, toys, school materials, drawings and a sign written and colored by hand: "PAUL."

Paul looks around the room, taking in the wave of memories.

On the bed there's a STUFFED DOG, used and worn out. Paul picks it up and observes it carefully, smiling to himself. He hadn't seen Ismael in a long time.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - DAY

There's a flashy sign on the lawn that reads: "FOR SALE."

On the door, the word "MURDERER" has been covered with DUCT TAPE.

Paul exits the house with a SUITCASE and walks straight over to a TAXI waiting for him.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE - DAY

Samuel colors a drawing with his GREEN FELT PEN. He's concentrated on what he's doing as his father watches, captivated.

PAUL

Are you going to draw birds too?

SAMUEL

There aren't any birds at Auntie's house.

PAUL

That's true.

SAMUEL

But if you want I can draw one here, in the sky.

PAUL

I'd love that.

Samuel changes pens.

Christina comes over and sits next to Samuel, leaving her cell phone on the table.

CHRISTINA  
Sorry. It was work.

Paul nods.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
You were telling me about the car.

PAUL  
Yeah, anyway. It's nothing important. The buyer wanted to pay more than the asking price.

CHRISTINA  
Really?

PAUL  
He was an older guy, really nice. He said the price I was asking was too low. That he wanted to pay a thousand dollars more.

CHRISTINA  
And did he?

PAUL  
It was a tough negotiation, but I didn't let him.

Christina smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I deposited half the money in your account.

CHRISTINA  
You know you didn't have to.

Paul nods.

PAUL  
And the house... We'll see how long it takes. The agency thinks it will be easy to sell.

CHRISTINA  
There's no hurry.

PAUL

Are you sure you two don't want to go back?

CHRISTINA

(shakes her head)

We'd better not. I think this is the right time for a change.

(pause)

And for the time being we're fine staying with my sister.

Paul nods. Christina looks at the SUITCASE next to him.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

What time does your bus leave?

PAUL

At five.

(remembers something)

Oh. I almost forgot.

Paul takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and puts it in front of Christina. She reads it: "PAUL DEALBERT. Apartment 774. 1403 Orleans Street. Detroit."

CHRISTINA

(whispers)

Pat Dealbert?

PAUL

I didn't pick it.

She looks at the paper, smiling.

CHRISTINA

I think I like it.

Paul smiles. It looks like the chemistry between them is still there, somewhere waiting to be dug up.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

(pointing at his suitcase)

That's everything?

PAUL

Yeah.

CHRISTINA

I'm impressed.

PAUL  
It's almost everything I need.

Christina nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Look.

Paul pulls the suitcase over and opens the top zipper. HIS STUFFED DOG'S FACE peeks out.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
Ismael?

Paul nods. Christina exaggerates her surprise, amused.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
(without making a sound,  
only moving her lips)  
He's ugly.

Paul takes on of Samuel's pens and writes something on the back of the paper with his address.

He gives it back to Christina, who reads it: "IF YOU COME, I'LL KILL ISMAEL."

Christina looks at Paul with a smile filled with doubt... but also hope.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

A travel agency with four tables for FIVE EMPLOYEES. We see flyers offering tours along the Detroit River, trips to Canada, excursions in the Great Lakes...

One of the employees is Paul, helping a 50-year-old COUPLE. There's a small sign on his desk: "Pat Dealbert."

PAUL  
Personally I think that if you go to Canada, you can't miss Montreal. It's a fantastic city, beautiful. And it's only a one hour flight from Toronto.

The couple appears interested. Paul checks his computer.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Let me give you some prices...

CUT TO:

LATER, Paul finishes gathering his things. He leaves his desk orderly, zips up a file and heads for the door.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Goodbye.

His coworkers say goodbye nicely.

EMPLOYEE 1  
See you Monday.

EMPLOYEE 2  
Have a good weekend, Pat.

PAUL  
You too.

EXT. STREETS, DETROIT - DAY

Paul walks down the sidewalk, looking around, enjoying the walk.

He checks his watch and picks up his pace, entering a grocery store.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Paul reaches his building carrying two large PAPER BAGS and enters the door: "1403."

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Paul advances down the corridor to his door, number "774."  
He puts the bags on the floor and opens the door.

INT. KITCHEN, DETROIT APARTMENT - DAY

The kitchen is in full gear, with ingredients of all types spread out on the counter. Paul isn't very skilled, but he gives it his all.

CUT TO:

Paul pours dressing on a salad. He puts a bottle of wine in the fridge. He cuts bread. He sautes vegetables.

RING!

The doorbell rings.

Surprised, Paul checks his watch. He stops what he was doing and leaves the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM AND ENTRANCE, DETROIT APARTMENT - EVENING

Paul crosses the living room, decorated with the minimum. You can tell he hasn't been there long.

He goes to the door and... OPENS IT.

It's Samuel.

Wearing a backpack. Alone. Containing his laughter.

SAMUEL

Is Pat Dealbert home?

PAUL

Um... Yeah, that's me.

Samuel is bursting with shame and laughter at the same time.

SAMUEL

We're here to stay the weekend.

PAUL

Great, come on in. Welcome.

Samuel runs in, avoiding his father. Christina appears at the door.

CHRISTINA

Hi.

PAUL

Hi.

CHRISTINA

We rehearsed his lines the whole way here.

PAUL

Good job.

Christina enters, wearing a backpack as well.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Let me help you.

Paul takes her backpack and shuts the door.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(smiling)

I thought you were coming later.

CHRISTINA

Yeah, I think I gave you the wrong arrival time.

PAUL

Have a seat while I finish making dinner.

CHRISTINA

It smells great.

SAMUEL

It smells great.

Samuel looks at his parents from the sofa, where he's sitting like he's been there his whole life.

INT. LIVING ROOM AND ENTRANCE, DETROIT APARTMENT - NIGHT

After dinner, their plates still on the table, Paul and Christina speak intimately, keeping their voices down because Samuel is already asleep on the sofa.

PAUL

Who did you tell him Pat Dealbert was?

CHRISTINA

I told him it's like Bruce Wayne or Clark Kent.

Paul smiles.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

It's the name you use here so nobody will know you're a superhero.

PAUL

SuperPaul.

CHRISTINA

That's right.

Paul takes a sip from his glass of wine. Christina looks pensive.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

So how does it feel to start over again, with a new apartment, a new job, a new name?

PAUL

It's...

(thinks)

...clean.

(thinks)

And a little unreal. Sometimes I feel like I'm a fictional character.

CHRISTINA

I think the idea appeals to me.

PAUL

Yeah? Well now's your chance. The best way to becoming a fictional character is joining another fictional character.

She looks at him curiously.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You quit your job, you move here with Samuel... and, the most important thing, you pick a good name.

Christina nods doubtfully.

CHRISTINA  
We'll take things slow.

Paul's smile fades.

PAUL  
Of course.

She regrets having said that.

She gets up and slowly moves closer to him. She touches his hair. She sits in his lap. She gives a short, soft kiss.

CHRISTINA  
Let's go to sleep.

PAUL  
I got the bed ready for you two.  
I'll sleep on the sofa.

CHRISTINA  
Excuse me?

PAUL  
That was the plan.

CHRISTINA  
I was planning on all three of us  
sleeping together. In the bed.

PAUL  
If that was your plan...

CHRISTINA  
Yes.

PAUL  
Then my plan is no longer my plan.

CHRISTINA  
Good.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Christina and Paul ride TWO BICYCLES in the park, between the trees. Samuel is riding behind Christina in a CHILD'S SEAT.

Paul, following them, passes Christina very close as Samuel  
reaches out, trying to touch him.

EXT. BOAT - EVENING

On the stern of a tourist boat, Samuel is sitting on Paul's shoulders. The three of them look towards the Detroit River and the buildings in the city.

The wind kicks up and messes up their hair. Samuel grabs Paul's head, trying to keep his balance.

INT. BEDROOM, DETROIT APARTMENT - DAY

Silence. It's early in the morning.

Paul, Christina and Samuel are asleep, tangled up with each other in a ball between the sheets.

RING!

The doorbell rings.

Christina wakes up and frees herself.

CHRISTINA  
(whispers)  
Paul.

Christina gets up and gazes at Samuel and Paul, both sound asleep.

RING!

INT. LIVING ROOM AND ENTRANCE, DETROIT APARTMENT - DAY

Christina crosses the quiet, empty living room. She's barefoot, still half-asleep.

RING!

Christina stops at the door. She hesitates before opening. After all, she doesn't live there.

Finally SHE OPENS THE DOOR.

IT'S VIKTOR.

TO BLACK

OVER BLACK:

"478 DAYS"

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

VIKTOR OBSERVES CHRISTINA, undecided. When he was planning this he never considered the possibility of finding anyone else there. Only Paul.

CHRISTINA

Hi.

VIKTOR

I'm sorry, I must be mistaken.

Viktor looks down the corridor, uncertain.

CHRISTINA

Are you looking for Paul?

VIKTOR

Huh? No.

Christina realizes that she might have put her foot in it by calling him "Paul."

CHRISTINA

Pat Dealbert?

VIKTOR

Yeah, I must have the wrong floor.

Viktor leaves without looking her in the eye.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Christina shuts the door, finding it slightly odd.

INT. STAIRWELL, APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - DAY

Viktor hurries down the stairs, faster and faster. He's regretting it, he doesn't know if he regrets going there or if he regrets having left.

He needs air. He stops, gripping the rail. It looks like he's having an anxiety attack.

Viktor squats down, trying to slow his heart down.

EXT. SHORECREST MOTOR INN - DAY

A modest TWO-STORY MOTEL with a PARKING LOT across from the front of the motel with all the doors to the rooms.

Viktor's car is parked in the spot furthest from RECEPTION.

INT. MOTEL ROOM, SHORECREST MOTOR INN - DAY

Viktor weeps, sitting across from a small table by the window. The room is simple and functional, though it needs to be cleaned.

There's a bottle of vodka on the table. His pain festers as he weeps inconsolably.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - EVENING

The sun stains the front of the building with reddish tones.

Viktor walks towards the building again. The vodka slightly slows his pace.

INT. SEVENTH FLOOR, APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - EVENING

Viktor walks down the corridor until he reaches apartment "774." He could swear he hears voices through the door.

HE RINGS THE BELL.

RING!

Seconds later, Paul opens the door.

PAUL AND VIKTOR, FACE TO FACE.

PAUL

Yes?

Viktor recognizes Paul Bonanos immediately. He's seen his face a thousand times in the press and on television. He has hundreds of clippings.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

VIKTOR

Do you know who I am?

Paul doesn't answer. Viktor shows him THE PHOTO OF HIS FAMILY in which the three of them are sitting on a dark sofa.

Paul turns white.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
This was my family.

Paul looks lost. He doesn't react.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Look at the photo.

Paul forces himself to look at the photo.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
You killed them.

Paul nods somberly, his shoulders sinking more and more.

Viktor puts away the photo and stares at him with misty eyes.

Silence.

Paul can sense what's coming.

PAUL  
(in a low voice)  
Not here.

But suddenly, without having seen him take out the knife,  
Viktor raises his arm and STABS PAUL IN THE NECK.

Paul lets out a muffled cry. He takes a step back.

Viktor steps forward and stabs him again in the CHEST.

INT. LIVING ROOM AND ENTRANCE, DETROIT APARTMENT - EVENING

PAUL FALLS TO THE FLOOR as Viktor shuts the front door.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)  
Paul?

Christina comes out of the bedroom and enters the living room. She sees Paul crawling on the floor through a pool of blood and her face fills with horror.

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)  
Paul!!

Viktor steps between them and threatens her with the knife.

VIKTOR

No.

Viktor pushes Christina against the sofa, forcing her to sit down. He points at her.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

Don't move.

Viktor YANKS THE PHONE CORD OUT OF THE WALL beside her.

Then Samuel appears, puzzled and terrified.

SAMUEL

Mommy?

Samuel runs to his mother's arms, not wanting to look at what's happening to his father. Christina clings to him on the sofa, holding back tears.

CHRISTINA

Samuel!

Paul lets out a GUTTURAL SOUND, unable to speak because of the stab wound to his neck. He tries to keep crawling and get up...

But Viktor goes over to him and stabs him in the BACK. Paul falls again.

Christina is sobbing inconsolably. She SCREAMS.

Nearly out of strength, Paul turns over so he can see his murderer.

He waves his hands in the air, trying to avoid the inevitable: Viktor stabs him three, four, five more times until Paul's arms drop to the floor.

He's not moving. His body is lying face-up, inert, his chest and neck soaked in blood.

Viktor takes a deep breath, contemplating his consummated revenge. There's slight confusion in his eyes; perhaps he thought he would feel relieved, or some inner peace which he isn't feeling.

He drops the knife on the floor and takes several steps backwards, towards the sofa, staring at Paul the whole time.

Viktor's feet bump into the sofa. He sits down, still staring at the body, breathing heavily.

Next to him, Christina trembles with fear and pain, clinging to Samuel, covering his eyes.

Paul, Christina and Samuel remain on the dark sofa in a tragic print that reminds us of the photo of Viktor's family.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING, DETROIT - EVENING

Viktor walks away from the building, stunned.

He has blood on his hands, arms and chest. He looks lost. He walks slowly, wobbling.

In the background we hear a SCREAM.

Viktor stops. He looks exhausted. Like he'd reached the finish line after an endless, painful race. His vision grows cloudy.

The tense, unintelligible VOICES of several NEIGHBORS get louder and louder.

TO BLACK

OPEN TO:

INT. PRISON CAFETERIA - DAY

A spoon emerges from a full bowl of soup.

Viktor eats at the far end of a table without speaking to the other PRISONERS eating around him. The YEARS have taken their toll and he has abundant WRINKLES AND GRAY HAIR. He's lost weight, which accentuates the bags under his eyes and give his gaze more power.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Viktor smooths out the blanket covering his narrow bed. On the opposite wall, lying in the other bed, his CELLMATE reads the last chapter of a book out loud.

CELLMATE

"Antonio Claro's funeral took place  
three days later.

(MORE)

## CELLMATE (CONT'D)

Helena and Tertuliano Máximo Afonso's mother played their roles, one weeping for a son who wasn't hers, the other pretending the dead man was a stranger."

Viktor goes over to a tiny table with more BOOKS. He sits on the chair and places a TOILETRY KIT and a small, old TRAVEL BAG on his lap, willing to wait.

## CELLMATE (CONT'D)

"He had stayed home, reading a book about ancient Mesopotamian civilizations, the chapter about the Arameans. His phone rang. Without thinking it could be one of his new parents or siblings, Tertuliano Máximo Afonso picked up the receiver and said: Hello."

Viktor listens to footsteps approaching in the corridor. Seconds later a CORRECTIONS OFFICER stops outside the cell, looking at Viktor.

## CELLMATE (CONT'D)

"On the other line a voice identical to his own exclaimed: Finally."

The officer opens the door.

## EXT. CEMETERY - EVENING

Viktor carefully cleans Marina's and Alisa's graves. Their tombstones have deteriorated over time, covered with dried flowers and leaves.

Once clean, Viktor stands there a moment staring at them, looking serious. He is not a relieved man. On the contrary, he still seems to carry a heavy burden on his shoulders.

Behind him, in the distance, a BLURRY FIGURE is standing by a tree, completely still.

Viktor turns and leaves their graves behind.

INT. BUS - DAY

Viktor rides in a bus, staring out at the rainy countryside through the window.

EXT. DISASTER AREA - DAY

Viktor approaches the COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE at the accident memorial.

It's cloudy and it looks like it rained recently. The grass and POLISHED CEMENT SPHERES are wet. There's nobody visiting the memorial.

After reading the plaque, Viktor walks among the spheres towards the forest.

Next to a small path, Viktor finds a stone bench. He decides to sit down.

Viktor looks sadly up at the sky and contemplates a white streak left by an airplane crossing the sky.

Then he looks down at his feet. A strange premonition appears in his mind. The pain in his temple overtakes him. He closes his eyes and puts his hand on his head. He squeezes his jaw tightly, nearly groaning in pain...

When he opens his eyes, Viktor sees a STRANGER (25) approach on foot.

The stranger reaches the bench and sits at the other end. He nods in greeting and Viktor nods back.

The two men sit there for a few seconds in silence. Finally the stranger speaks.

STRANGER

It's the first time I've been out here. Did you know this place?

Viktor nods. His pain seems to be gone.

VIKTOR

Last time I was here was twenty years ago.

STRANGER

That's a long time.

Viktor looks around, remembering.

VIKTOR  
The grass has grown. There's more  
vegetation.

The two men look towards the forest in silence.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
The forest now is thicker.  
(inhales)  
And it smells like thyme.

After a silence.

STRANGER  
That isn't thyme.

Viktor looks at him, surprised.

STRANGER (CONT'D)  
It's savory.

VIKTOR  
Yeah?

The stranger nods.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
Smells like thyme.

STRANGER  
(certain)  
But it isn't.

Viktor nods, made slightly uncomfortable by the dialogue. He inhales again and gets up.

VIKTOR  
Nice to meet you. Have a good day.

STRANGER  
You too.

The stranger watches Viktor walk away. His eyes tremble and they suddenly grow moist, like he's been holding back tears of rage the whole time.

One second later, the young stranger, who looks familiar to us for some reason, stands up and starts walking in the same direction as Viktor.

Several yards ahead, Viktor disappears behind one of the spheres.

When the stranger reaches the same sphere, he disappears as well.

TO BLACK.